

# Tafsir As a Political Legitimacy: The 1979 Iranian Revolution and Muḥammad Taqī Al-Mudarrisī's Political Notions in Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān

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## Abstract

In Islamic political activism, religious sacred texts have been frequently instrumentalized to achieve certain interests. However, regarding the Iranian Revolution, there is a lack of studies on how religious texts were instrumentalized to justify the political movement. In addition, the existing research is only focused on a classical Shia tafsir and a classical issue, namely the Imamate of 'Alī. It left a gap in the relationship between modern Shia tafsir and modern political turmoil. Given that, this article aims to examine a Shia tafsir which appeared amidst the 1979 Iranian Revolution, namely *Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān* by Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī. Employing Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, this paper does not only describe al-Mudarrisī's political notions but also reveals whether or not there was an attempt to establish hegemony. This article analyzes the interpretation of Qur`anic verses related to the political terms and finds that al-Mudarrisī favored human freedom and a new governmental system based on Sharia values. Additionally, the discourse in his tafsir tended to be provocative as he invited people to realize them and eradicate authoritarianism and dictatorship, showing an effort to establish a counter-hegemony against the domination of the state ruler at that time. Additionally, this article reassesses Mohammed Ayoob's statement that Shiites maintained a status quo and made peace with unfair conditions.

**Keywords:** *Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī's Political Notions, Min Hudā al-Qur`ān, Human Freedom, Sharia-Based Governmental System, Hegemony*

## Introduction

Text and political authority are two inseparable matters in the Muslim civilization. These two frequently intertwine, causing vagueness in reality. Throughout history, many political conflicts and incidents have presented religious texts as legitimation, obscuring their genuine objectives. Political conflicts, which are intended to serve power interests, become conflicts that seem to defend God's interest. *Ṣiffīn* war between 'Alī and Muawiyya, perhaps can be one of the clear examples, in which both groups raised the *muṣḥaf* to confuse others' minds. Each of the two wanted to create a perception that this conflict was a holy religious conflict, disguising their worldly goals.<sup>1</sup>

Political incident between 'Alī and Muawiyya then gave birth to several new groups and sects—such as Kharijites, Mutazilites, and Shiites—in which they also brought out the religious sacred texts, either from the Qur'an or Sunna, to support their interests and goals when entering the political arena, especially when facing political conflicts and issues. In the case of the Kharijites, for example. When the *Ṣiffīn* war occurred, they rebelled and left the ranks of 'Alī since they refused *tahkīm*, perceiving it as a human decision. By doing so, they considered that Alī had committed a great sin and violated Allah's law, so he was a *kāfir* and did need to be followed. They argued that there is no law except Allah's law (لا حكم الا الله).<sup>2</sup> According to Al-Dhahabī, Kharijites relied on several Qur'anic verses supporting their interest, such as āli 'Imrān: 97, Yūsuf: 87, al-Māidah: 44, etc. Through these verses, Kharijites created their jargon and considered that the doer of a great sin and the violator of Allah's law are *kāfir*.<sup>3</sup> This *tahkīm* event signified an attempt to internalize and instrumentalize religious discourse to legitimize the Kharijites' political view.<sup>4</sup>

In the Mutazilites case, it can be seen in the *mihna* incident when the caliph al-Ma'mūn wrote a letter to Ishāq bin Ibrāhīm.<sup>5</sup> The content of the letter was an order

<sup>1</sup> Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zaid, *Al-Khiṭāb Wa-l-Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2008), 129–30.

<sup>2</sup> Fahmy Farid Purnama, "KHAWARIJISME: PERGULATAN POLITIK SEKTARIAN DALAM BINGKAI WACANA AGAMA," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 13, no. 2 (November 15, 2016): 227, doi:10.22515/ajpif.v13i2.156.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa-l-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2012), 266–67.

<sup>4</sup> Purnama, "KHAWARIJISME," 227.

<sup>5</sup> Even though some scholars, such as Patricia Crone and Ira M. Lapidus, argued that *mihna* incident was not relevant to be considered as the Mutazilite theology manifestation since it was a moment to

intended for qadis and *ahl al-hadīth* to accept the Mu'tazila's doctrine of *khalq al-Qur'ān*. Within such a letter, al-Ma'mūn presented several Qur'anic verses as his basis of argument that the Qur'an was created, such as al-Zukhrūf: 3, Tāhā: 99, al-An'ām: 1, and Hūd: 1-2, etc. It had been done to support al-Ma'mūn's goals and interests.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, regarding the case of Shiites, it can be known from the Karbala rebellion.<sup>7</sup> In Karbala, when Imam Ḥusain met 'Umar bin Sa'ad's troops, he delivered a speech by presenting Qur'anic verses and the hadith to legitimize his special position and status as the descendant of the Prophet.<sup>8</sup> All of these examples show how political activism frequently involves religious symbols, which in the cases mentioned above are the sacred text, to realize certain interests.

Political incidents and conflicts that happened during the period of Khalifa are repeated in the modern era, in terms of involving certain sects or religious groups and presenting religious symbols as a legitimacy. One example would be the Iranian Revolution in 1979<sup>9</sup>, one of the most phenomenal political events in the Islamic world, in which Iranian residents carried out a revolution to change the state form from a monarchy to an Islamic republic. In this revolution, many parties were involved, with Ayatollah Khomeini emerging as one of the most well-known and influential figures. During the revolution, the ulama played a significant role in stimulating the movement by utilizing religious symbols, presenting the impression that this revolution was an Islamic movement. Nathan Olsen mentioned that religious symbols here refer to certain

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promote the caliph's political authority, there were also some scholars on the other side, such as Aḥmad Amin, Philip K. Hitti, Huge Kennedy, and W. Montgomery Watt, who perceived that al-Ma'mūn was moved and supported by Mutazilites, becoming a moment to monopolize Mutazilite theology by political authority. See John A. Nawas, "A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for Al-Mamun's Introduction of the Miḥna," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 4 (1994): 616 & 619.

<sup>6</sup> See Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Rusul Wa-l-Mulūk*, vol. 8 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 631–34.

<sup>7</sup> A political conflict between Imam Ḥusain with his group and the dynasty of Yazīd bin Muawiyya, in which Imam Ḥusain had previously acquired full support from his Shia supporters to sue the government and refuse the allegiance (*bai'a*) due to Yazīd's problematic coronation and the agreement violation. See Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of (Āshūrā) in Twelver Shī'ism*, Religion and Society ; 10 (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 94–97.

<sup>8</sup> See Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Rusul Wa-l-Mulūk*, vol. 5 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 424–25.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to choose the 1979 Iranian Revolution because it was a successful political and governmental revolution that involved the Shia community. Regarding political issues and conflicts that involve Kharijites or Mutazilites, they cannot be found in the modern period or if they exist, they cannot be considered as successful as what Iranians did.

Shia religious celebrations, such as Ashura. It was mentioned that celebration symbols were raised on purpose to shape a certain paradigm within society, namely, *the Karbala Paradigm*. This paradigm, later on, was used to mobilize people, becoming a political tool.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, regarding symbols in the form of religious sacred text, it has not been revealed in that description. Whereas, it is assumed that the symbol in the form of religious text must be presented to justify that revolution. Therefore, this paper will discover how al-Qur'an, as the religious symbol, was used to legitimize the Iranian revolution that was perceived as a rebellion against tyranny, by examining Qur'anic tafsir which emerged around 1979. Furthermore, this search is necessary as the discourse that emerged in the arena of conflict is only what was initiated by Ali Shariati, an intellectual inspired by the ideas of Marxism, especially anti-colonialist scholars like Franz Fanon. He formulated a revolutionary ideology to overthrow Shah Pahlevi's regime and liberate the Iranian people from Western imperialism and influence. The popularity of Shariati's idea, later on, was utilized by Khomeini after his death.<sup>11</sup>

Qur'anic commentary that appeared around 1979 was a tafsir book titled '*Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*' written by a Twelver Shiite ulama, namely Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī. This tafsir is quite unique, as the interpreter has a serious concern with political affairs, making political discussions frequently inserted in the interpretation. As an example, al-Mudarrisī presented political discourse in his interpretation of al-Tawba: 109, saying that the mosque must have an independent influence amidst the socio-political dynamics. The mosque must be free from political interests, and the imam shouldn't rely on the ruler.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation contradicts many interpretations from Sunni tradition, even from Shia tradition. Wahba al-Zuhailī, for instance, said that this verse illustrated the difference between *mu'min* (believer) and

<sup>10</sup> Nathan Olsen, "Revolutionary Religion: Shia Islam and the Iranian Revolution," *E-International Relations*, September 3, 2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/09/03/revolutionary-religion-shia-islam-and-the-iranian-revolution/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Ansari and Kasra Aarabi, "Ideology and Iran's Revolution: How 1979 Changed the World," *Tony Blair Institute For Global Change*, accessed December 26, 2024, <https://institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/ideology-and-irans-revolution-how-1979-changed-world>.

<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2008), 330.

*munaḥfiq* (hypocrite) in establishing a mosque.<sup>13</sup> Similar articulation is also found in al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretation, saying that the context of this verse talks about an analogy of a believer's life, which is based on *taqwā* (piety), and a hypocrite's life, which is based on *shakk* (doubtfulness).<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the political nuance can also be found in al-Mudarrisī's interpretation of al-Māidah: 67, which literally does not speak about political issues. Al-Mudarrisī said that politics is the highest tier in the social system. Politics has become the summit of social order. He claimed that without the presence of good political practice, the social system would be nothing more than a scribble of ink on paper, meaning that the absence of politics leads to a disorderly situation in social life.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on this description, we argue that Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, with his *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, would loudly speak out and critically discuss the political turmoil in Iran in 1979. In addition, al-Mudarrisī would also stand up for and support the Iranian revolution to overthrow the Pahlavi's monarchical regime, and his tafsir became the legitimacy of such a movement.

Previously, several studies that aimed to explain the connection between the sacred religious text and the political issue, especially those that revealed how the Qur'an and its tafsir exist and were instrumentalized in the political sphere, were conducted. Muhammad Rikza Muqtada, for instance, examined Muhammed Arkoun's political tafsir regarding Khilafah Islamiyyah that was issued as a response to Islamists who utilized and presented Qur'anic verses as a political legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, an article entitled 'Hegemony of Involvement of Tafsir in Political Identity' discovered how certain Qur'anic verses are subjectively interpreted to support certain political interests in local political elections. Taking some Qur'anic terms as the object of discussion, such as *ūlī al-amr* and *kāfir*, the author argued that al-Qur'an and its tafsir indeed are frequently used as an instrument to create political identity, separating

<sup>13</sup> Wahba al-Zuhailī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr Fī al-'Aqidah Wa al-Shari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, 10th ed., vol. 6 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 48–49.

<sup>14</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān Fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 9 (Beirut: Muassasah al-A'lamī, 1997), 405.

<sup>15</sup> Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2008), 257.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Rikza Muqtada, "UTOPIA KHILĀFAH ISLĀMIYYAH: Studi Tafsir Politik Mohammed Arkoun," *Jurnal Theologia* 28, no. 1 (September 14, 2017): 145–64, doi:10.21580/teo.2017.28.1.1410.

between Muslim and *kāfir*.<sup>17</sup> However, these two studies I presented above did not have any specific correlation with Shia.

In the context of Shia, relevant studies are relatively limited. As an example, Ahmad Zainal Abidin wrote an article examining the interpretation of al-Baqara in *Tafsīr Al-Qummī* and found that Al-Qummī's author favored 'Ali and his descendants by using *ta'wīl*. Abidin argued that this tendency was driven by political motives.<sup>18</sup> The second is a similar article from the same author, but it analyzed different surahs to reinforce the argument that there was political bias in *Tafsīr Al-Qummī*.<sup>19</sup> These studies, however, only focused on early Shia tafsir, namely Al-Qummī, and discussed a classical normative issue, the imamate of 'Ali. They overlooked examining contemporary Shia tafsir, which was born amidst the modern Shia political turmoil, as happened in Iran in 1979. Their neglect of studying modern Shia tafsir is perhaps caused by a goal to look at the sectarian discourse, which is commonly found in pre-modern tafsirs.<sup>20</sup> This is confirmed by Abidin's statement that his study of *Tafsīr Al-Qummī* aimed to discover how sectarian tendencies dominated Qur'anic interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Apart from that, if there is a study focusing on modern-contemporary Shia tafsir, it will not be directed to excessively discuss the sectarian tone, but how it can be linked with a global context and a reform agenda<sup>22</sup>—a purpose for which this article is written.

As I mentioned that one tafsir emerging amidst contemporary Shia conflict is *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*. Nevertheless, the research that specifically examines this tafsir is also very limited. Firstly, a book titled *Al-Mufasssirūn Ḥayātuhum wa Manhajuhum*,

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<sup>17</sup> Saifuddin Herlambang and Syamsul Kurniawan, "Hegemony of Involvement of Tafsir in Political Identity," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 1 (May 22, 2018): 83–96, doi:10.14421/esensia.v19i1.1489.

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Zainal Abidin, "Tafsīr Al-Qummī Dan Politik: Telaah Atas Kecenderungan Tasyayyu' Dalam Penafsiran Surat al-Baqarah," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 16, no. 2 (December 22, 2016): 439, doi:10.21154/al-tahrir.v16i2.483.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad Zainal Abidin, "Shi'ite Ideology Bias in Al-Qummi Tafsir: Study of Ali Imran and Al-Nisa' Chapters," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (October 23, 2018): 185–97, doi:10.14421/esensia.v19i2.1594.

<sup>20</sup> Abdul Mustaqim said that tafsir in the affirmative period (pre-modern period) is characterized by thick sectarian nuances. See Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2010), 49.

<sup>21</sup> Abidin, "Tafsīr Al-Qummī", 443.

<sup>22</sup> Abdul Mustaqim stated that modern tafsirs existing in the so-called "reformatory period" are characterized by transformative purposes and the consideration of context. See Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer*, 51–52.



written by Muḥammad ‘Ali Iyāzī. This is a three-volume book discussing many Qur’anic interpreters, and tafsir *Min Hudā Al-Qur’ān* became one small part of a whole discussion. In this book, Iyāzī only slightly examines the method of tafsir and the interpreter’s biography.<sup>23</sup> The second is the author’s own work entitled ‘Epistemology of Tafsir *Min Hudā Al-Qur’ān*’. The focus of the work is on examining the source and the method of tafsir as well as assessing its validity. The author picked the sample from several Qur’anic verses speaking about social issues and Islamic law, which are al-Māidah: 6, 38, 57, & 67, al-Nisā’: 3, al-Baqara: 228 & 220, al-Mumtaḥana: 8, al-Aḥzāb: 33, and Āli ‘Imrān: 28.<sup>24</sup>

Even though this article utilizes the same object, the whole discussion is different from the prior work. Firstly, this article departs from the absence of discovery on how religious discourses and sacred texts were used and produced amidst the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Secondly, this article focuses on a deep examination and analysis of al-Mudarrisī’s political notions manifested in his tafsir, not a sole description of tafsir source, method, and validity. Thirdly, this article uses different samples, picking Qur’anic verses talking about political issues, such as *ūlī al-amr*, *‘adala*, and *shūra*. The verses used as the research object are al-Nisā’: 59, 82, 83, 58, 135, Āli ‘Imrān: 159, al-Shūrā: 38, and Yūsuf: 40. Fourthly, this article employs Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony as an analytical tool to discover how al-Mudarrisī constructed his political interpretation in order to establish hegemony or counter-hegemony at that time—regarding the reason of selecting this theory and its relevance, it will be explained in the later chapter. In addition, this article also aims to reveal al-Mudarrisī’s political orientation and determine his school of politics. Ultimately, this article will be the first study that deeply examines political tenets in a modern Shia tafsir that emerged amidst the modern Shia political conflict, *Min Hudā Al-Qur’ān*’.

<sup>23</sup> Muḥammad ‘Ali Iyāzī, *Al-Mufasssirūn Ḥayātuhum Wa Manhajuhum*, vol. 3 (Teheran: Wizārah al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Islāmī, 1996), 1304–10.

<sup>24</sup> Aufa Varrassiyah Nawwaf, “EPISTEMOLOGI TAFSIR MIN HUDA AL-QUR’AN KARYA MUHAMMAD TAQI AL-MUDARRISI” (Undergraduate Thesis, STAI Al-Anwar, 2023), (Sarang, Rembang), [http://repositori.staianwar.ac.id/view/creators/Nawwaf=3AAufa\\_Varrassiyah=3A=3A.html](http://repositori.staianwar.ac.id/view/creators/Nawwaf=3AAufa_Varrassiyah=3A=3A.html).

## The Profile of the Interpreter and His Tafsir Book

Muhammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī was born in Karbala, Iraq, in 1363 AH or 1945 CE. He is a descendant of many prominent Shia ulama, Muhammad Bāqir al-Mudarrisī from his father's side and Mirzā Mahdī al-Shīrāzī from his mother's side. In his debut, al-Mudarrisī is widely known as an intellectual, cleric, writer, and researcher from the Shia *Ithnā 'Ashariyya* (Twelver Shiite) school. Because of his dedication, al-Mudarrisī was provided the predicate of *marji'*, a title showing that he was recognized as part of religious authority. With this title, al-Mudarrisī is assigned to handle religious affairs. This achievement is not surprising when seeing his work and spirit in studying Islam during his youth, in which he learned with numerous Āyatullāh.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his life, al-Mudarrisī has made many contributions to the education world. He reformed and reconstructed the curriculum of *Al-Ḥawza al-'Ilmiyyah* (Shia religious school), synthesizing two paradigms, textual and contextual. According to al-Mudarrisī, *Ḥawza* needs to provide a real contribution to the social sphere. Al-Mudarrisī claimed that it is a part of Islamic intellectuals' responsibility, which is to reform and develop Islamic teaching in order to align with modernity.<sup>26</sup> In addition to reformulating the curriculum, al-Mudarrisī established other *Ḥawza*, Islamic centers, mosques, socio-religious foundations, and research centers, and also produced a lot of books in various fields of knowledge. Moreover, al-Mudarrisī was also involved in the political sphere by forming a political-religious movement. This is because he lived amidst a challenging political situation.

Al-Mudarrisī has lived in several countries at different periods. Firstly, he lived in Iraq until 1979. At that time, he faced a disorderly socio-political situation, an oppressive political regime, and deviant Islamic activism. It encouraged him to make an Islamic movement with a political orientation, namely *al-Ḥarakah al-Risāliyyah al-Marja'iyya*. This movement succeeded in reducing the influence of the Communist-Baathist regime in Iraq, expelling al-Mudarrisī from Iraq in 1970. Secondly, al-Mudarrisī moved to Syria and then Kuwait, and lived in Kuwait until 1979. His move to Kuwait coincided with many declarations of the Islamic revival movement. In Kuwait, he

<sup>25</sup> Mumaththiliyyah al-Marja'iyya, *Al-Marji' Wa-l-Ammah: Itlāla 'alā al-Sira al-'Ilmiyya Wa-l-'Amaliyya Li Samāḥat al-Marji' al-Dīnī Āyatillāh al-'Uzmā al-Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī*, 2008, 19-26.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 53-55.



started writing his tafsir *Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān`* in 1978. Thirdly, al-Mudarrisī moved to Iran in 1979, coinciding with the 1979 Iranian Revolution, precisely four months after the revolution. It was mentioned that al-Mudarrisī had a significant role in this revolution. He contributed to this political event by encouraging, provoking, and raising the awareness of Iranian residents, making the revolution successful. Fourthly, in 2003, al-Mudarrisī returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's authoritarian regime.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding his tafsir book, *Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān`*, it is a contemporary Shia tafsir that started to be written in March 1978. This tafsir is a form of integration and interconnection between static Qur`anic verses and the dynamic reality. Its author, from the beginning of the writing, aimed to make the Qur`an a practical solution for the problem of the ummah. The reason behind this purpose, according to al-Mudarrisī, is the existence of a wide gap between the result of interpretation and social reality, caused by many interpreters' orientation that tends to widely explain the meaning of the verses without connecting and implementing them to reality. This tafsir is quite unique in its methodology. Iyāzī classified this tafsir as *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī min khilāl al-rabṭ al-mawḍū`ī*, meaning that this tafsir combined analytical and thematic methods. In presenting the interpretation, al-Mudarrisī first categorized the verses into themes while maintaining their structure. These groups of verses were then analytically explained as most *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī* in general.<sup>28</sup>

### The Landscape of the 1979 Iranian Revolution

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was an effort to overthrow Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's authority, an Iranian ruler before the establishment of the Islamic Republic, who was enthroned with the involvement and intervention of the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States. Under his control, Pahlavi urged the establishment of secular and nationalist administration as well as the modernization of Iran to be in line with Western countries. Pahlavi modernized the economy and industry, elevated the military power, restructured land ownership and agriculture, and provided broader freedom of expression to women, including voting and employment rights in government offices. Given modernization, the number of Western-educated

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 85–89.

<sup>28</sup> Iyāzī, *Al-Mufasssīrūn Ḥayātuhum Wa Manhajuhum*, 3:1304–10; Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 2008), 25.

intellectuals and skilled workers had increased, causing worry for ulama, merchants, and left-wing intellectuals.<sup>29</sup>

Before the 1979 revolution, in the 1950s, Pahlavi's power was once disrupted when Prime Minister Mosaddeq gained momentum and support from ulama, merchants, and left-wing people to nationalize the oil company.<sup>30</sup> At that time, Ayatollah Khasani conducted an anti-British and anti-imperialist campaign, supporting Mosaddeq's effort to nationalize Iran's oil company.<sup>31</sup> It caused an embargo and boycott from Western countries for Iranian oil and led to economic collapse. However, eventually, Pahlavi's regime, with the assistance of foreign countries, could take over control and fire Mosaddeq.<sup>32</sup>

Actually, after the fall of Mosaddeq, Pahlavi's regime adopted and supported the interests of ulama by establishing several collaborations, resulting in religious quietism. Nevertheless, when Pahlavi's government issued economic and social policies in the 1960s, he faced the ulama's resistance and opposition again. They opposed new land ownership regulations, women's voting rights, and Iran's relationship with the United States and Israel. Additionally, the religious reform movement was developing at that time. Such movement encouraged ulama to be active in the political sphere, taking responsibility for supervising political organizations. This reform was affirmed by Mehdi Bazargen's speech in 1962, in which he justified the role of the ulama in politics by presenting Qur'anic verses and Shi'i traditions.<sup>33</sup>

Such movement acquired a new direction from 1967 to 1973 under the leadership of Ali Shariati. He established *Husayniyah Irsyad*, an institution to introduce Iranian Shiites to European social sciences. This institution aimed to harmonize and unite Shia Islamic teaching with the social paradigm, propagating the notions that Shia is the religion of protest, and eventually calling for the overthrow of the regime. Additionally, in 1971, Ayatollah Khomeini stated in his book '*Islamic Government*' that the monarchy was not an Islamic institution and encouraged a total political

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<sup>29</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 479–481.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 479.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 482.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 479.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 482.

reformation led by the ulama. He highlighted the role of the ulama in the political sphere, stating that Shi'ism was a political ideology.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the situation got worse because of several incidents during the 1970s. Pahlavi sought to control the people by using the state apparatus. Intimidations and repressive actions were intended for society. Inflation, economic and agricultural chaos, and unemployment also emerged at that time. Consequently, the government was hated due to authoritarianism and mismanagement. Pahlavi was considered to rely on the Americans' support and favor a few elites. The accumulation of those matters, from the ulama movement, the government's missteps, to the disorder in the political and economic situation, provoked widespread protests and demonstrations. The resistance movement grew larger until the end of 1978. After that, Pahlavi fled the country, and his regime could no longer be preserved.<sup>35</sup>

## Key Terms Related to Politic

### 1. *Ūlī al-Amr*

The term *ūlī al-amr*, mentioned in al-Nisā` 59 and al-Nisā` 83, has several meanings. It is defined as the rulers in the prophetic period, the imams from *ahl al-bait*, those who order goodness, and the jurists who obey God.<sup>36</sup> Al-Rāzī states that *ūlī al-amr* does not refer to certain individuals. Such a term is better interpreted as the consensus of the ummah or the agreement of *ahl al-ḥalli wa-l-aqdi* (a group of ulama). Al-Rāzī's interpretation signifies that adherence is only for the collective decision, not the particular person who issues the decision.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the imams from *ahl al-bait*, it is the interpretation of Shia tafsir perceiving that the imams are *ma'ṣūm* (free from sins and bad acts).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 483.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 483–84.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāz Al-Qur`ān*, 4th ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2009), 90.

<sup>37</sup> Muḥammad al-Rāzī Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn ʿUmar, *Mafātih Al-Ghaib*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 148.

<sup>38</sup> Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl Ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān Fī Tafsīr al-Qur`ān*, vol. 9 (Beirut: Dār al-Murtaḍā, 2006), 96.

## 2. *'Adāla*

Adāla, derived from *'adl*, meaning equity, dividing equally, or equality in reward. According to Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, there are two types of *'adl*. Firstly, something considered good by reason, such as repaying kindness to those who were kind to us. This type is timeless and will not disappear. Secondly, something considered just by *Sharia*, including several legal terms like *qīṣaṣ*.<sup>39</sup> The term *'adl* is closely related to government affairs. Wahba al-Zuḥaylī stated that *'adl* is the foundation of power.<sup>40</sup> In addition, *'adl* is also linked to law enforcement, meaning that people need to support and side with the truth, not favoring friends.<sup>41</sup>

## 3. *Shūrā*

This term, frequently defined as deliberation, is widely linked to leadership and political issues. Sayyid Quṭb interpreted that *Shūrā* is part of the Islamic governance system, even one of the foundational principles that should be fulfilled, because the Prophet directly demonstrated it. *Shūrā* is taught to Muslims since Islam is the religion of civilization. Through *shūrā*, Islam aims to establish civilization and prepare Muslims to be leaders of all human beings.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Wahba al-Zuḥayli stated that *shūrā* is one of the Muslims' characters and social systems since the prophetic era. It was illustrated in *khalīfa* selection, choosing judges or *qāḍī*, state affairs, and war planning.<sup>43</sup> Even though Wahba al-Zuḥayli's examples are mostly political affairs, *shūrā* can be used in every aspect of life.

## Al-Mudarrisī's Political Interpretations

Al-Mudarrisī's interpretations in this article are examined within the framework of the theory of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci. It is necessary to employ this theory, as the context at that time was a struggle for dominance. Gramsci's theory will help discover how Qur'anic interpretation becomes the arena of ideological struggle. This is

<sup>39</sup> al-Aṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāz Al-Qur'ān*, 551–52.

<sup>40</sup> Wahba al-Zuḥailī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr Fī al-'Aqidah Wa al-Shari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, 10th ed., vol. 3 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 130.

<sup>41</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2002), 480.

<sup>42</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Syurūq, 2003), 501.

<sup>43</sup> Wahba al-Zuḥailī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah Wa al-Shari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, 10th ed., vol. 13 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 86.

because, as understood by Gramsci, there is an ideological operation behind the formation of a new hegemony. The collective will, which is an important element in the establishment of hegemony, is formed by involving the role of the intellectual.<sup>44</sup>

Ideology, in Gramsci's theory, is perceived as a class project. It emerges from class interest and is then enhanced and transformed into a project of organizing society. Ideology is also understood as a practice of subject production. It is illustrated as the battlefield, as an arena of struggle in which two hegemonic powers meet, and ultimately forms people's consciousness, directing them to their activities. According to Gramsci, there are several instruments through which ideology is distributed and intellectuals become people organizers, called hegemonic apparatuses. It includes schools, churches, and media,<sup>45</sup> and in this case, *Tafsir Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān* becomes a hegemonic apparatus. Therefore, it is understandable to use Gramsci's theory of hegemony in examining al-Mudarrisī's interpretations, especially in terms of politics.

### 1. *Ūlī al-Amr*

Al-Mudarrisī stated in the tafsir of al-Nisā': 59 that the existence of a strong authority of sharia, in which people adhere to its rules and laws, is mandatory. It is an inevitable consequence because the social system cannot overcome the complexity of societal problems. According to al-Mudarrisī, this Sharia authority is manifested in the Prophet and *ūlī al-amr*. As a Shi'i scholar, al-Mudarrisī understands that *ūlī al-amr* is *ahl al-bait* (descendants of the Prophet) and ulama who are obliged to be the Prophet's successor, to bring, spread, and uphold *al-risala* (apostolic teaching) in the world.<sup>46</sup> Through this statement, al-Mudarrisī seemed to say that a social ruler must be an exclusive person – an Islamic intellectual or those having prophetic lineage – who commits to manifesting Sharia law within society. It also signifies that enforcing Sharia and making it the main ruling system is necessary.

Al-Mudarrisī's statement above was affirmed by the interpretation of al-Nisā': 82-83. Al-Mudarrisī said that the Qur'an has delivered regulations regarding political and leadership issues, and all ummah are obliged to totally adhere to the leader who

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<sup>44</sup> Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 2014), 185, doi:10.4324/9781315794396.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph A. Woolcock, "Politics, Ideology and Hegemony in Gramsci's Theory," *Social and Economic Studies* 34, no. 3 (1985): 205–6.

<sup>46</sup> al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, 2008, 2:73.

upholds the spirit of Islam and represents al-Quran, in every condition and circumstance, in order to realize sharia and Islamic values. Additionally, al-Mudarrisī highlighted that political leadership is a pivotal aspect because it is a core element of the political system. Furthermore, according to al-Mudarrisī, the political system reflects the culture, civilization, values, principles, thoughts, vision, and mission of certain ummah, aligning with and inseparable from those matters. It means that if the political system and its leader contradict those elements, they will be perceived as nonsensical and empty rhetoric, or there has been value deviation. Al-Mudarrisī presented several examples of this matter, mentioning those who claim to uphold freedom but tend to be tyrannical and authoritarian as well as those who declare to preserve piety but prefer to be impious and corrupt.<sup>47</sup> In this tafsir, al-Mudarrisī seemed to criticize Muslim society, saying that if they claim to commit to Islamic values, they should raise and enthrone political leaders who enforce religious principles, prioritizing sharia rules over everything.

## 2. *'Adāla*

Regarding *'adāla* or *'adl* (justice), al-Mudarrisī perceived this matter as a social responsibility. It is manifested in his tafsir of al-Nisā` verses 58 and 135, which literally order believers (*alladhīna āmanū*) to be fair, uphold justice, and make decisions fairly. In his tafsir, al-Mudarrisī says that *'adl* comes from individual awareness. Since it becomes a social responsibility, it should emerge from the grassroots. Every person is obliged to be the agent of justice who supervises themselves and others. This obligation is required to realize justice within society, either by preventing or eradicating oppression (*zulm*).<sup>48</sup>

In his tafsir of al-Nisā`: 58, al-Mudarrisī stated that upholding justice is a part of fulfilling the mandate and trust. Additionally, al-Mudarrisī presented the ways to solve a social conflict. He emphasizes prioritizing mutual assistance and family-based reconciliation in overcoming social issues rather than bringing them up to official authority. Viewed from the legal perspective, al-Mudarrisī encourages solving the conflict through restorative justice.<sup>49</sup> However, it is worth noting that this interpretation is preliminary remarks from al-Mudarrisī before elucidating al-Nisā`: 59.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 2:88–89.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2:138 & 72.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 2:72–73.



Even though al-Mudarrisī offered several solutions in this tafsir, he showed his pessimism about society-based reconciliation in his next interpretation, encouraging the establishment of sharia-based official authority.

### 3. *Shūrā*

Al-Mudarrisī presented a thorough inquiry into the concept of *shūrā*. In his tafsir of Ali 'Imran: 159, several attributes a leader should have are outlined, one of which is fond of deliberation (*shūrā*). According to Al-Mudarrisī, a leader is mandated to enhance the quality of the ummah through *shūrā* since it makes people more responsible. It will encourage people to think about their problems and affairs solemnly. In addition, with *shūrā*, a leader is obliged to explain and describe the existing issue from any point of view to the ummah, making them more aware of life and their obligation. However, it is worth noting that *shūrā* does not mean downgrading the level of a leader. Al-Mudarrisī emphasized that the leader should maintain his assertive position as a decision-maker. He cannot only be a moderator, collecting many opinions from participants without making any decisions.<sup>50</sup>

Al-Mudarrisī elaborated in his tafsir of al-Shūrā: 38, starting with the statement that conducting *shūrā* is the believers' character. Al-Mudarrisī then elucidated the philosophical aspect of *shūrā* comprehensively. According to him, *shūrā* is based on two basic points, life is a series of choices and decisions, as well as human needs for experience and knowledge. Human, because it has common sense, certainly desires the best matter, and al-Mudarrisī perceived that *shūrā* is a process of selecting the best one. Therefore, *shūrā* can be both an obligation and a right, especially in discussing, solving, and dealing with issues that may affect people's lives and destinies. With this perspective, a leader is not allowed to organize society affairs arbitrarily but should conduct *shūrā*, uniting other perspectives and opinions before making a decision.<sup>51</sup>

*Shūrā*, indeed, cannot only be perceived as an empty concept, as it possesses noble values that should be manifested in every aspect of life, from the smallest to the greatest scope, from family affairs to state affairs. *Shūrā* reflects the spirit of *īmān*. It regulates the relationship between a believer (*mu'min*) and his brother, upholding respect for others and their thought as well as adhering to the truth. In the economy,

<sup>50</sup> al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, 2008, 1:479.

<sup>51</sup> Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2008), 401.

the best economic system is the one that most adopts and reflects the value of *shūrā*, such as a cooperative-based economic system. Several principles representing the value of *shūrā*, such as mutual cooperation, sacrifice to prioritize others, and the wealthy people are prohibited from hegemonizing power, are claimed by al-Mudarrisī to be embodied in that system, making it the greatest one.<sup>52</sup>

In the political sphere, al-Mudarrisī stated that a *shūrā*-based state and social system is a necessity. Al-Mudarrisī presented several arguments, saying that *shūrā* leads to freedom of expression and guarantees people's right to choose their leader and contribute to decision-making. Additionally, many important and essential needs rely on *shūrā*, such as life affairs organization and protection for the weak from oppression. Drawing on this presentation, al-Mudarrisī then clearly mentioned the state form, namely the imamate (imam) or wilayat (guardianship) state, or it can be called *Wilāya al-Faqīh*. He claimed that this concept of statehood is closest to the principles of Sharia.<sup>53</sup> Here, al-Mudarrisī was influenced by the notions of Khomeini regarding the state form, as Khomeini is the first issuer of the *Wilāya al-Faqīh* concept. Within *Wilāya al-Faqīh*, the supreme authority belongs to *fuqahā*.<sup>54</sup>

Al-Mudarrisī is very concerned about this imamate-based state or *Wilāya al-Faqīh* since he outlined several requirements for the imam. Firstly, the imam must be a *faqīh* (expert in Islamic jurisprudence). Secondly, the imam should be just, prioritizing fairness. Thirdly, the imam should be competent in organizing administrative and security affairs. Fourthly, the imam must not act arbitrarily, as *Wilāya al-Faqīh* does not mean an absolute power.<sup>55</sup> Regarding *shūrā*, al-Mudarrisī said that the imam in *Wilāya al-Faqīh* acts as a problem solver amid disputes, being a decider and moderator when disagreement emerges, and all of this should be done within the framework of *shūrā*.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, al-Mudarrisī extremely highlighted the matter of freedom and human liberation, saying that Islam never acknowledges any form of coercion, especially in terms of power and politics. Islam has been educating its adherents to refuse all coercion solemnly. Al-Mudarrisī claimed that coercion in the realm of power is the

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 8:401–2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 8:402–3.

<sup>54</sup> See Khomeini, *Wilāya Al-Faqīh: Baḥṭh Istidlālī Min Kitāb al-Bay'* (Beirut: Al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur`ān*, 2008, 8:403.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 8:405.

manifestation of *ṭāghūt* who control humans illegally, without any right. Meanwhile, *ṭāghūt* is the manifestation of *jibt*. Al-Mudarrisī then said that the essence of Islamic teaching is to eradicate *jibt* and *ṭāghūt*, perceiving the war against these two as the precondition before believing in God since the heart having an inclination to these entities would never acquire *nūr al-tawḥīd* (the light of tawhid).<sup>57</sup>

Such statement above is affirmed by al-Mudarrisī's other remarks implying that people have a will and freedom not to submit and adhere to oppression and injustice, even people should fight against oppressive rulers. Yet, the opposition to these terms will lead to a betrayal of God's trust and mandate. Here, al-Mudarrisī showed that every community is responsible for its political system, not allowing a tyrannical system and dictatorship to take control.<sup>58</sup> At the end of his interpretation, al-Mudarrisī delivered closing remarks reinforcing his strong determination to realize human freedom, he said,

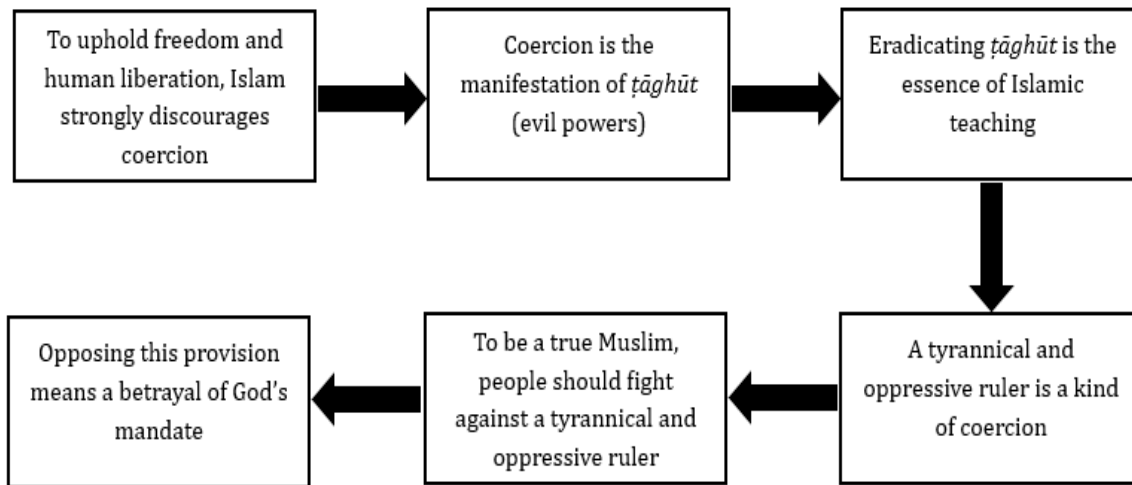
*"All of us are striving towards freedom, and we need to demand it from ūlī al-amr (the ruler). Shouldn't we start from ourselves? Shouldn't we fulfill our horizon with the aroma of freedom, and thus we can exchange our ideas with each other? Isn't the most entitled person for goodness the one who invites others to this matter? Isn't the closest way to freedom making it a reality that lives among us? Isn't freedom a weapon that we use to fight against those who seize it, while freedom is the feared power and the beauty that attracts the heart?"*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 8:403.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 8:405.



**Figure 1:** Al-Mudarrisī's Line of Thinking Concerning Freedom

#### 4. *Al-Dīn wa-l-Siyāsa*

Al-Mudarrisī perceived, in his interpretation of Yūsuf: 40, that authority, sovereignty, and power merely belong to Allah, so the true ruler who must be adhered to is the one who acquires God's legitimacy. Departing from this perception, al-Mudarrisī invites people not to submit and adhere to any government since the original law of adhering to the ruler is restriction or disallowance, meaning that people cannot follow human power unless there is permission and order from the sacred text (الأصل في الأشياء الإباحة حتى يدل الدليل على الإباحة). It contradicts the original ruling of using worldly matter, which is permissible until there is a text prohibiting it (الأصل في الأشياء الإباحة حتى يدل الدليل على التحريم). Using this argumentation, al-Mudarrisī stated that people cannot merely obey, be silent, and be willing to accept tyrannical rule and oppressive regime, or what al-Mudarrisī called the Pharaoh-like ruler (*al-ḥākimiyya al-farā'ana*).<sup>60</sup>

Al-Mudarrisī then once again issued a statement reinforcing his previous interpretation of *ūlī al-amr*. It is implied from his words that a legitimate ruler must be a representative of Allah, relying on and committing to upholding Allah's law. Any ruling system contradicting this core value is perceived as an invalid or false ruler. Moreover, Al-Mudarrisī clearly declares that religion is politic itself, and politic is

<sup>60</sup> Muḥammad Taqī al-Mudarrisī, *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2008), 127–28.

religion itself, the two are inseparable. He highlighted the secular thoughts separating religion and politics because of difficulties in implementing two responsibilities, negatively framing those parties by mentioning them as Pharaoh (ويقول فرعونهم), Haman (ويقول هامانهم), and Korah (ويقول قارونهم).<sup>61</sup>

From these interpretations, it can be known that al-Mudarrisī attempted to offer an ideal form of social, political, and governmental system, and invite Muslim people to realize it. According to him, the ideal social and political system is what is relied on and based on divine principles. Thus, referring to Ahmad Sadzali<sup>62</sup> or Paul Cliteur and Afshin Ellian<sup>63</sup>, it can be inferred that al-Mudarrisī adhered to the principles of theocracy, opposing secularism. Additionally, referring to Mohammed Ayoob's words in his book 'The Many Faces of Political Islam', al-Mudarrisī can be categorized as a modern Islamist since he provoked people to make an ideal divine-based state. Al-Mudarrisī strongly opposed tyrannical and dictatorial system rather than maintaining the status quo as traditionalists did. This ultimately also reassesses Ayoob's statement that Twelver Shiites have accepted the unjust rule and made peace with unfair conditions through the notion of the twelfth imam's occultation.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, al-Mudarrisī loudly voiced human liberation and freedom, especially from a dictatorial system that does not reflect Islamic values. It is natural considering the situation at that time in the context of Iran when Shah Pahlavi's regime abused power by employing state apparatuses to control and intimidate people. Shah Pahlavi's regime also ruled with absolute power, even though he was raised in a constitutional monarchical state.<sup>65</sup> However, it cannot be narrowed by seeing the Iranian context only, as al-Mudarrisī experienced various phases of life in different states. In Iraq, the Ba'ath party, at that time, was the ruling party because the state leader was Ahmad Hasan Al-Bakr, a Ba'ath party member. He was accompanied by

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ahmad Sadzali, *Relasi Agama Dan Negara: Teokrasi-Sekuler-Tamyiz* (Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Hukum Islam Fakultas Hukum Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2018), 9.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Cliteur and Afshin Ellian, "The Five Models for State and Religion: Atheism, Theocracy, State Church, Multiculturalism, and Secularism," *ICL Journal* 14, no. 1 (2020): 106–7, doi:doi:10.1515/icl-2018-0056.

<sup>64</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, Reprinted (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 3–6 & 9–10.

<sup>65</sup> See Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 480.

Saddam Hussein, the leader of the Ba'ath party.<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting that the Ba'ath party adhered to socialism and pan-Arab secular nationalism,<sup>67</sup> becoming the opposition to theocracy. Drawing on this description, it can be clearly understood that al-Mudarrisī, indeed, wanted to establish a new hegemony. Through the discourse produced in his tafsir, which explicitly opposed the ruling system and political activism at that time, al-Mudarrisī desired to achieve dominance over the idea of socialism and secularism as well as the authoritarian monarchy system

## Conclusion

The discourse constructed in al-Mudarrisī's *Min Hudā Al-Qur'ān* tends to be provocative. Al-Mudarrisī did not only offer the ideal concept of the political system but also invited people to realize it. According to al-Mudarrisī, the ideal and best ruling system is the divine or Sharia-based government with Islamic intellectuals as its leaders. Additionally, the government must be an open government, prioritizing deliberation and freedom, rather than being authoritarian. Through his tafsir, al-Mudarrisī attempted to produce counter-hegemony against the dominance of secularism and authoritarian-dictator rulers by propagating human freedom and the goodness of the Islamic ruling system. This reassesses what Mohammed Ayoob stated, that Shiites preferred to maintain the status quo by making peace with unfair circumstances.

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<sup>66</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Aḥmad Ḥasan Al-Bakr | Iraqi Leader, Ba'athist, Prime Minister | Britannica," *Britannica*, January 1, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ahmad-Hasan-al-Bakr>.

<sup>67</sup> "The Iraqi Baath Party," *Al Jazeera*, accessed January 14, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/6/23/the-iraqi-baath-party>.



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