WOMEN AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN ISLAM: 
MA’NĀ-CUM-MAGHZĀ CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC 
STUDY

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Abstract: This paper describes and analyzes the textual and contextual ḥadīth on the prohibition of women’s leadership in the public sphere. This study is a critical hermeneutic with ma’nā-cum-maghzā as an analytical tool, by which this study makes the literal origin (historical, explicit meaning) the starting point for understanding the central message of the text (implied meaning). The results of this study indicate that women may become leaders in public affairs because, textually and linguistically, the ḥadīth does not apply permanently (mu’abbad) but temporally (mu’aqqat). Contextually, the ḥadīth prohibited women from becoming leaders because the condition of women at the time of the ḥadīth did not allow them to handle social affairs due to the lack of knowledge and experience and the potential of deceit and greed, which
could happen to anyone who had ambitions of power, men as well as women. Meanwhile, nowadays, many women have the expertise, knowledge, and managerial-organizational experience to support these matters.

**Keywords**: Ḥadīth of women’s leadership; Hermeneutics; Ma’nā-cum-magḥzā.

**Introduction**

The upcoming 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) to elect governors, regents, and mayors will be held simultaneously in all regions on November 27, 2024. The General Election Commission (KPU) has appointed 18 National Political Parties (Parpol) and six local political parties to be elected. Participate in the 2024 elections. In this five-year event, there is not a bit of intrigue going on between the fans. Various religious, racial, and ethnic sentiments were raised to clash and gain votes. One of the most popular and effective is religious sentiment and gender. This can be repeated in the following regional head election and presidential election if the candidate leader is of a different religion or is a woman.¹

For example, in Jember and Malang Regencies,² female leadership candidates are often hurled at issues and become objects of religious sentiment. The Ḥadīth about the prohibition of women from being leaders and occupying important positions in the public sphere are used to attack their opponents. Not only this year, but the same thing also happened at events in previous years. For example, in 2017, the West Java governor candidate, Netty Heryawan, was rejected by 13 Islamic organizations because she is a woman.³ Sentiment in the name of religion also often occurs

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because of religious differences—for instance, the Ahok case in the 2016 Jakarta gubernatorial election.\(^4\)

Religious sentiment, in particular, has proven to be a decisive factor in influencing voter behaviour. Candidates and their campaigns frequently leverage religious affiliations to create a connection with voters and garner support. This can range from invoking shared religious values and principles to aligning campaign promises with religious teachings. In some instances, religious rhetoric has been exploited to fuel tensions and mobilize voters along sectarian lines, potentially leading to clashes between different groups.\(^5\)

Of course, a black campaign with religious sentiment as its main instrument will not happen without a cause and basis. Several verses, ḥadīths, postulations, and religious teachings explicitly seem to strengthen them until they are finally interpreted as they are for temporary purposes. This is further strengthened by the interpretation of internal figures (Islamic scholars, ķiās, and intellectuals) who take an interpretation close to the original text.

The ḥadīth used by them regarding the prohibition of women’s leadership or placing women in strategic places in the public sphere is the ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth No. 4425: “Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler.”\(^6\)

Literally, this ḥadīth contains the prohibition of society from appointing women as leaders or handing over public affairs to women because they “will not progress and prosper” (*lan yuṣfīḥ*). What does the words mean? What is the historical context of it? And what moral ideas might the ḥadīth contain? Before answering these questions, it should be stated that one must pay attention to


aspects of language, historical context, and moral ideas to understand the ḥadīth.

This paper tries to trace, examine and analyze the text and context of the ḥadīth, which are being ‘sources of problems’, ‘weapons to attack,’ and ‘instruments of religious sentiment,’ especially amid political contestation in the regional head elections. This article try to study, describe, and analyze the text and context of the ḥadīth with a critical hermeneutic approach⁷ and use the theory of ma'nā-cum-magḥzā⁸ as an analytical tool.

The ma'nā-cum-magḥzā is an approach in which one explores or reconstructs the meaning and the main historical message, namely the meaning (ma'nā) and the main message/significance (magḥzā) that the author of the text may mean or understand by the historical audience, and then develop the significance of the text for the present and here context. Thus, there are three important things that an interpreter should look for, namely (1) historical meaning (al-ma'nā al-tārīkhī), (2) historical phenomenal significance (al-magḥzā al-tārīkhī), and (3) dynamic phenomenal significance (al-

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⁷ According to Palmer, the definition of hermeneutics can be divided into at least six kinds: (1) the theory of biblical exegesis; (2) a general philological methodology; (3) hermeneutics is the science of all linguistic understanding; (4) the methodological foundation of the human sciences (the methodological foundation of Geisteswissenschaften); (5) hermeneutics as existential understanding and phenomenology of existence; and (6) a system of interpretation. See Richard E. Palmer, “Postmodern Hermeneutics and the Act of Reading,” Notre Dame English Journal, Vol. 15, No. 3 (August 18, 1983), 55-84; Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), retrieved from https://www.scirp.org/(S(351jmbntvnsj1aadkposzje))/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=1359704 (accessed on January 19, 2023).

⁸ The ma'nā-cum-magḥzā is a new hermeneutic approach and theory popularized by Sahiron Syamsuddin, Senior Lecturer at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. This approach results from elaborating and developing several approaches, for example, Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Abdullah Saced and Jorge J.E. Gracia. Sahiron Syamsuddin, Die Koranhermeneutik Muhammad Shahrūr und Ihre Beurteilung Aus Der Sicht Muslimischer Autoren (Ergon Verlag, 2009), 43-78; Muhammad Fauzinuddin Faiz, “Teori Hermeneutika Al-Qur’an Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd dan Aplikasinya terhadap Wacana Gender dalam Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer,” Al-Ahwal: Journal of Family Law Studies and Islamic Studies, Vol. 7, No. 1 April (2015), 23-61.
maghzā al-mutaḥarrik) for the context in which the Qur’anic text is interpreted.9

The method used in this paper is a library research method that seeks to discover the existing theory conceptually.10 Related to this research, namely by examining the object under study, the author tries to explore data on women and political leadership in Islam. The above research is qualitative research that reveals a certain phenomenon by describing the true reality, formed by words based on relevant data collection and analysis techniques, not in the form of numbers and statistics.11 This research type is deliberately used to accommodate a complete description of the object under study.

Numerous studies have explored the topic of women’s leadership within the framework of Islam. However, these studies predominantly employ linguistic and interpretive approaches aligned with scholars who advocate for accepting women’s leadership roles.12 There is also research similar to this research, such as the writings of Syamsul Bakri,13 but he uses the method of hermeneutical takhrīj analysis and a historical approach. These two tools are also used in the ma‘nā-cum-maghzā method, but the method belonging to Sahiron Syamsuddin is the complete version.

Despite addressing an ordinary subject matter, these investigations diverge in their formal focus. In this context, the present research adopts a distinctive methodological stance by embracing the hermeneutic approach of ma‘nā-cum-maghzā, as pioneered by Syamsuddin, a renowned scholar and professor in

the field of ḥadīth exegesis at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.\textsuperscript{14}

This method facilitates a nuanced exploration of the subject matter. While sharing thematic similarities with previous inquiries, the study critically differentiates itself by delving into the hermeneutical layers of the ma'na-cum-maghzā approach. By engaging with this methodology, the research endeavours to uncover multifaceted interpretations of women’s leadership, transcending conventional linguistic frameworks and amplifying the discourse on the potential for female leadership roles within Islamic contexts.

### The Ḥadīth on Women’s Leadership

A ḥadīth of the Prophet that is often used as the basis of the argument for prohibiting women from being leaders are the ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī, al-Nasā’ī, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbāl.

Al-Bukhārī narrated the ḥadīth from Abī Bakrah, Ḥasan, ‘Aṭf, and ‘Uthmān b. Haytham.\textsuperscript{15} Abī Bakrah had the full name Nufāy‘ b. al-Ḥārith b. Kaladah b. ‘Amr. He belonged to the group of ṣahābah (the Prophet’s contemporaries). So clearly, he was a fair figure according to the rules of “kullu ṣahābah ‘udāl” (all the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad have a fair attitude).

Meanwhile, Ḥasan, whose full name is Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan Yaṣār and well-known as Abū Sa‘īd, belonged to the group of tābī‘īn (second generation after ṣahābah) or al-wuṣṭā min al-tābī‘īn (the middle tābī‘īn). According to Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd, Ḥasan was a jāmi‘ (conscientious), ‘ālim (intelligent), ṛifī (having a high degree), faqāḥ (smart), thiqāḥ (strong in memorization), ma’mūn (trusted), ‘ābid (worshiper), kathīr al-‘ilm (a lot of knowledge), faṣīḥ (voluble).\textsuperscript{16}

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\textsuperscript{15} Ḥadīth No. 4425, 1610. Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Vol. IV.

As for ‘Awwf, whose full name is ‘Awwf b. Abī Jamīlah and has a nickname Abū Sahal, belonged to the ones lam talqā lī šaḥābah or had never met šaḥābah, lived in Basra and died in 146 H. He was someone who is thiqab (strong in memorization) according to ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbāl, Isḥāq b. Maṣṣūr from Yahyā b. Ma‘īn, and al-Nasā’. Meanwhile, according to Abū Ḥātim, he was sadūq (honest) and sāliḥ (pious/good). According to Muḥammad b. S‘ad, he was a man who memorized a lot of ḥadīths.¹⁷

While the last name, ‘Uthmān b. Haytham (his full name is ‘Uthmān b. Haytham b. Jahm b. ‘Īsā b. Ḥasan al-Mundhir, and his nickname is Abū ‘Amr), belonged to the kibār tābi‘ al-athār group (the leading tābi’in). He lived in Basra and died in 210 AH. According to Abū Ḥātim, he is sadūq or honest.¹⁸

Al-Tirmidhī narrated the ḥadīth from Abū Bakrah, Ḥasan, Ḥumayd, and Khālid b. Ḥārith.¹⁹ Abū Bakrah, who transmitted the ḥadīth, and Ḥasan has been profiled previously. Meanwhile, al-Ṭawīl, whose complete name is Ḥumayd b. Abī Ḥumayd and is known as Abū ‘Ubaydah, falls under the category of al-ṣuḥrā min al-tābi‘in (the junior tābi’in). He resided in Basra and passed away in 142 AH. His credibility assessment (jarḥ wa ta‘dīl) includes endorsements of his trustworthiness (thiqab) from sources such as Isḥāq b. Mansūr, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, Aḥmad b. ‘Ābd Allāh al-‘Ijlī, ‘Ābd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim, and ‘Ābd Raḥmān b. Yūsuf b. Khirash. Notably, the epithet “sadūq” or honest further enhances the virtuous portrayal of al-Ṭawīl.²⁰

The subsequent individual is Khālid b. al-Ḥārith b. ‘Ubayd b. Sulaymān b. ‘Ubayd b. Ṣufyān b. Mas‘ūd b. Sukīn. Popularly known as Abū ‘Uthmān, he was associated with al-wustā min al-āthār. Residing in Basra, he passed away in 186 AH. Regarding credibility assessment, al-Nasā‘ī and Abū Ḥātim endorse him as a

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²⁰ Ibid.
trustworthy (thiqat) authority. Ābū Zuhroh, meanwhile, characterizes him as an individual of utmost honesty (saduq). 21

Lastly, Muhammad b. al-Muthanna b. ‘Ubayd b. Qays b. Dinār. He is often referred to as Ābū Mūsā, affiliated with the esteemed kibār tābi‘ al-athār faction. His residence was in Basra, where he lived until he passed away in 252 AH. ‘Ābd Allāh b. Āḥmad b. Ḥanbāl, based on Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn’s account, deems him trustworthy. Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiz, on the other hand, portrays him as genuinely honest (saduq). Ābū Bakr al-Khāṭib amplifies this endorsement, adding attributes of reliability (wā’i’ān), excellence (fadīl), and sagacity (‘āqil). Notably, al-Nasā’ī provides the reassuring note “lā ba‘is bih” or “no problem,” solidifying his standing. 22

Āḥmad b. Ḥanbāl narrated the Ḥadīth from Ābū ‘Uyaynah, ‘Uyaynah, and Muḥammad b. Bakr. 23 Ābū ‘Uyaynah, his full name is ‘Abdu al-Rahmān b. Jawshan, his nickname and year of death is unknown, but he lived in Basra. According to Ābū Zuhrah, he is a thiqah person. According to al-Tirmidhī, he is ṣaḥīḥ. According to ‘Ābd Allāh b. Āḥmad b. Ḥanbāl, he is laysa bi al-mashūr, ‘not a very popular person.’

While ‘Uyaynah, whose full name is ‘Uyaynah b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Jawshan al-Ghaṭfānī al-Jawshanī and well-known as Ābū Mālik, belonged to the kibār al-tābi‘i al-athār, lived in Basra but the year of his death is unknown. According to ‘Abbs b. Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, he is laysa bib ba‘is, or ‘there is no problem.’ As for Muḥammad b. Bakr, al-Nasā’ī gave the thiqah record, while Ābū Ḥātim gave him saduq. 24

Meanwhile, al-Nasā’ī narrated the Ḥadīth from Ābū Bakrah, Ḥasan, Ḥumayd, Khālid b. Ḥārith, and Muḥammad b. al-Muthanna, 25 each of which has been introduced above.

The scheme of the chain of the Ḥadīth as narrated by al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, and Āḥmad b. Ḥanbāl is as follows:

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
Figure 1. The scheme of the ḥadīth chain as narrated by al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʿī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbāl.

The three paths above (al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasāʿī) all meet at ‘Ḥasan’, who received the ḥadīth from Abū Bakrah. So based on the continuation (ittiṣāl) of the chain of the sanad (the chain of citations or “backings” used to verify the legitimacy of a ḥadīth),26 where one narrator and another has a horizontal relationship as teacher and student, as well as the credible narrators of the ḥadīth as has been assessed by the ḥadīth scholars, then the ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ.

From the the descriptions above, some conclusions can be drawn. First, the chain of the ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbāl is a muttaṣīl (continuous) transmission system because the link between the narrators is unbroken until the Prophet. So the ḥadīth is included in the category of marjūʿ.

Second, as each ṭabaqah (degree) in the ḥadīth chain consists of three, two, or one narrator, the ḥadīth is then classified as aḥad. Third, based on the criteria for the validity of its sanad, the ḥadīth indicates the degree saḥīh, namely saḥīh li ḍhātīḥ because the chain is continuous, and the narrators are ḍabiṭ (accuracy of the process of transmission, i.e. narrators must not be prone to carelessness or known to have poor memories), thiqab, and shudhūd (irregularities, i.e. ḥadīth must not contradict a “more reliable source”)27 avoided. If it is seen from the jarḥ wa al-taḍīl, the narrators are fair, ṣadūq, and thiqab.

However, this ḥadīth gets several notes from Fatima Mernissi, mainly from the aspect of the matn (text),28 especially the sanad. In her critique, she questioned the credibility of Abū Bakrah as a ḥadīth narrator, and why Abū Bakrah only published this ḥadīth during the political turmoil in the Jamal war between ‘Ā’ishah and ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib after 23 years of the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, in which he sided with the camp of ‘Alī. In Khaled Abou El-Fadl’s view, this kind of thing tends to show an authoritarian attitude and is far from an authoritative attitude towards the Prophet’s words. Furthermore, Fatima Mernissi added the context of the ḥadīth is focused on the case of the Kiswa succession in Persia, which bequeathed the throne to her daughter, who did not have the capacity as a leader and had a deceitful

28 According to scholar Daniel Brown, in traditional hadith studies, “the possibility” of criticizing the matn as well as the isnad “was recognized in theory, but the option was seldom systematically exercised.” Scott C. Lucas, “Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet’s Legacy by Jonathan A. C. Brown,” Journal of Shi’a Islamic Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2015), 245-49.
character. So the core or magbza of the ḥadīth is actually in 2 aspects, the first is about the deceitful process, and the second is about the leader’s capacity far below the standard of ability. And if the magbza is “woman,” not the two aspects above, there will be legal confusion. And the fiqh that is built is not authoritative fiqh but authoritarian fiqh.

Women Leadership on Islamic Texts and Their Contexts

Textually, to understand the ḥadīth about women’s leadership, one must pay attention to aspects of language, historical context, and moral ideas. Regarding the language aspect, the ḥadīth contains some vocabulary that must be analyzed carefully. First, the letter lan, which in Arabic linguistic discipline (grammatical-cum-morphology) has the function of making fi’il muḍārī turned into āmīl naṣb (tansīb fi’il al-muḍārī), and it also has a function al-nafy or ‘negation’ of actions in the present (ḥāl) and future (mustaqbal). For example, the Arabic sentence “lan udakhkhin” (I would not smoke) means that I will not smoke now and in the future. However, the question is whether the provision is temporal (mu’aqqot) or permanent (mu’abbad). Abū al-‘Izzī ‘Alī b. ‘Alī quoted a statement from Jalāl al-Dīn b. Mālik stated: “Man ra’a al-nafy bi ‘lan’ mu’abbadā [it is al-Mu’tazilah], fā qawlah ‘urdud wa siwāh fā’didda” (Whoever thinks that lan negates deeds permanently (mu’abbad), then reject that assumption, and believe in other opinions, that lan does not mean nafy forever).

If the letter lan negates an action indefinitely, or forever, then surely it cannot be limited in time for its denial. Even in the Qur’an there is the use of diction lan, which is limited in time, as in

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sūrah Yūsuf [12]: 80: “...fa lan abrah al-arḍ ṣattā ya’dhan li abī...” (therefore will I not leave this land until my father permits me).

In this verse, it appears that the negation of leaving the land of Egypt-using the word *lan* is not forever but limited in time, namely: ‘Until my father allows me (to return).’

The word *yuflih* has a meaning that revolves around the meaning of Success. It can also be interpreted as victory or triumph. At the same time, the word *qawm* has been absorbed or adopted into Indonesian. It can mean ‘People’ or ‘Class.’

In the hadīth, this word is in the form of indefinite (*nakirāb*), which contains a general and indefinite meaning that means ‘failure’ - as the hadīth above wants, it will happen to any people.

Contextually, the hadīth about the prohibition of women’s leadership did not come down in a vacuum, meaning there was a dialectical process behind the hadīth when it was said by the Prophet, which in the study of hadīth science is called asbāb al-wurūd. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Mubārakfūrī in *Tuḥfah al-ʿAḥwādī* relates the context of events that took place in the Persian Empire.

When news of the death of Kisrā b. Barwayz, King of the Persian Empire, reached the the Prophet, then he asked, “Who succeeded him as king in Persia?” The companions replied that the one who succeeded him as king was his daughter (meaning his granddaughter) named Buwaran b. Shayruwayh b. Kisrā. It is said that Shayruwayh killed his father to realize his desire to become king of Persia. His *coup d’etat* was indeed successful. It is just that this action was previously known by her father, who then


engineered to kill him as well. His father’s engineering was successful, and six months after his death, Shayruwayh died due to the poison his father had engineered on him.

Shayruwayh’s death caused new problems because he did not have a brother who could replace him as king of Persia because he had killed them due to his fear of their revenge for the death of their father. Moreover, he did not have a son to replace him. The royal family, who did not want the fall of the royal throne in the hands of others, immediately appointed Princess Shayruwayh to be the Queen of the Persian Empire. Her name is Buwaran b. Shayruwayh. Not long after, Persian rule fell apart. Thus, a glimpse of the events accompanying the Prophet Muḥammad’s words.

In another narration, it is stated that the Queen rejected the Prophet’s correspondence to the nation, and even his letter was torn up. An interesting note from the above narration is how the character of the Persian leader at that time was quite deceitful and greedy for power. And it just so happens that this character is inherent in female leaders. However, it is not fair if the connecting line that is taken is the female figure and not the evil character. Deceitful disposition, envy, greed for power, etc., can happen to anyone, male or female. So based on the context of the event and the context of the situation in the ḥadīth, what the Prophet said would be doomed, not progressing, and so on was a people or society led by a leader who was deceitful, greedy, angry, and who justified all means to rule. In addition, the patriarchal culture that was still strong at that time further strengthened the position of women’s inferiority over men.

The previous context of the above ḥadīth can be understood. First, the ḥadīth of Abu Bakrah is special in the case of succession in Persia. The Prophet is considered commenting on an event, not setting a legal precedent. Second, political leadership is a big thing, so to forbid or oblige something, having *mutawātir* verses from the Qur’an and ḥadīth is necessary.

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37 The incident is contained in the ḥadīth “*An yumazziq kull mumazziq*.” For more details, see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī* (Beirut.: Dār al-Salām, 2001), 159.

Women Leadership in Contemporary Texts and Contexts

If there is an opinion that a nation will not succeed if women lead it, this is an attitude that is not dialogical and tends to be in a hurry, which is caused by understanding the Prophet’s words as they are without looking at the context and situation in which the Prophet delivered them.

In Islamic history, many Muslim women have emerged as leaders. ‘Ā’ishah, the wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, was recognized as a muftī (a Muslim or Muslimah legal expert who is empowered to give rulings on religious matters).39 Even history records that she had been a commander in the Jamal war. Al-Shifā, a woman who was good at writing, was assigned by the Caliph ‘Umar b. Khattāb as the head of the market in the city of Medina.40 The Qur’an also mentions Queen Balqis of the Prophet Sulaymān, who led her people well, full of wisdom and justice.41

In understanding a ḥadīth, it must be from the spirit and its ‘illab (legal causes) as the rules of fiqh proposal:42 al-ḥukm yādīr ma‘a ‘illatih wa yādīr wa ʿadam (the ruling is linked to its reason, existing and non-existing). While the ‘illab of the Prophet’s statement was that the condition of women at that time did not allow them to handle public affairs due to their lack of knowledge and experience. Moreover, there is a deceitful nature that can happen to anyone who has ambitions of power, male or female.

Meanwhile, nowadays, many women have knowledge and experience in these matters. A notable shift has emerged in contemporary times, showcasing the increased presence of knowledgeable and experienced women in various fields. The current global landscape reflects a significant departure from historical norms, when several countries, including those with a Muslim-majority population, are being helmed by women leaders.43 Angela Merkel served as the Chancellor of Germany, exhibiting

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39 Syamsuddin, “Metode Penafsiran.”
successful leadership. In neighbouring Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina’s tenure as Prime Minister has garnered international recognition for its achievements. Similarly, Sheikh Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain has made significant contributions as President of the United Nations General Assembly.44

Conversely, some endeavours faced challenges. For instance, Benazir Bhutto’s leadership experienced both triumphs and setbacks in Pakistan, indicating the complexity of navigating a traditionally male-dominated political landscape. Despite these variations, the evolving narrative underscores women leaders’ potential and influence across diverse cultural and religious contexts.45

In the Asian context, Tsai Ing-wen, the President of Taiwan, has demonstrated her expertise in global relations, effective pandemic response, and technological advances. His leadership was crucial in elevating Taiwan’s status in the international arena.46 In Indonesia, Megawati Soekarno Putri, the daughter of Sukarno, is also a successful president.47

In the present context, it is certainly different from the past.48 Women have been provided access to information, managerial knowledge, strategy, and organization, as well as men; there is no distinction between the two. In other words, men and women have the same access, potential, and failure as leaders. So contextually, the diction of the hadith would be: ‘Never will succeed such a nation if it is led by men or women who are not experts in their fields and are dishonest and greedy in their leadership.’

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Conclusion

The use of the ḥadīth from Abū Bakrah as an argument for the prohibition of women from becoming leaders is not necessarily correct because this ḥadīth begins with the letter ‘īlan’, which, according to the scholars of ‘usūl fiqh does not mean permanently/mu‘ābbad (negating for eternity) and does not function as ta‘kid (strengthens the nafī). In addition, the editorial of the ḥadīth is kalām khabar (news) and not kalām ṭalab (instructive), which by itself does not mean the necessity to carry it out. The meaning of the ḥadīth, which is newsworthy, must be related to the sabab al-wurūd (things that lie behind the emergence of the ḥadīth).

Therefore, ḥadīth must be understood with a socio-historical approach by looking at social history and settings at the time when the ḥadīth was spoken. Indeed, textually, women are not entitled to serve as heads of state, community leaders, judges, or various positions of the same level. The ḥadīth was uttered by the Prophet when he heard reports about the succession of female leadership named Bauran b. Shayrawyh b. KISRā in Persia in 9 AD., when the Persian Emperor, King Yazdarid III, who had the title ‘KISRā’ died without a son. Meanwhile, Bauran’s condition is known to be weak regarding leadership to occupy the position of emperor. And at that time, in terms of Persian history, the position of head of state was only held by men. The degree of women in the eyes of the society was still considered minor compared to men. Women are not trusted to care for the public interest, especially state affairs. In addition, the princess who asked to be the ruler was deceitful and greedy for power. It is these contexts that underlie the Prophet’s words.

However, it is not fair if the connecting line taken is the female figure and not the evil character. Deceitful disposition, envy, greed for power, etc., can happen to anyone, male or female. So based on the context of the event and the situation in the ḥadīth, what the Prophet said was about people or society led by a leader who was dishonest, greedy, angry and who justified all means to rule. In addition, the patriarchal culture that was still strong at that time further strengthened the position of women’s inferiority over men.
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