

# **DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIANISM IN INDONESIA: A CRITICISM OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL INTERPRETATION OF SYU'BAH ASA IN THE NEW ORDER ERA**

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## **Abstract**

This article analyzes the socio-political interpretation of Syu'bah Asa's work entitled "*Dalam Cabaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial dan Politik*" as a response to the authoritarianism of the New Order regime in Indonesia. With a linguistic and thematic approach, this study explores how Syu'bah uses the Qur'an to criticize justice issues, human rights violations, corruption, and pseudo-diversity. This interpretation not only offers moral solutions; the interpreter also intends to build religious and social awareness in society by using the texts of the Qur'an to reflect socio-political realities, fight for democracy, and even reflect the spirit of resistance against the practice of repressive power domination. Through contextual interpretation, Syu'bah Asa links the verses of the Qur'an with the socio-political realities of that time, such as discriminatory policies against certain groups and the silencing of civil liberties. There are at least two important findings in this paper namely: First, Syu'bah Asa conveys criticism of the repressive policies of the New Order through an interpretation of verses that highlight the issues of justice, human rights violations, corruption, and pseudo-diversity. Second, the interpretation is not only a reflection of social conditions but also offers democracy as a system based on religious morality. In conclusion, by reflecting on the verses of the Qur'an, Syu'bah Asa wants to remind and emphasize the relevance of the Qur'an in building critical socio-

political awareness and inviting civil society and the authorities (government) to continue to introspect and improve themselves, especially government officials in carrying out the mandate of the people and the Almighty God.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Syu'bah Asa, Social Political Interpretation*

## **Introduction**

Methodologically, interpretation has developed by offering a contextual reading of the Qur'an, which pays attention to linguistic and socio-historical aspects during the time of revelation and the context of the interpretation of verses (Miskiyah, 2022; Ridwan, 2016). According to Saed, interpreters need to see the relationship between text, reader, and context (reality) instead of considering the Qur'an as static. Thus, it is appropriate for interpreters to always reconstruct their interpretations with relevant realities based on the development of the times or society within the scope of the interpreter's life (Muttaqin, 2021; Saeed, 2006). In addition, it is impossible for an interpretation not to start from a situation and condition of reality that requires solutions by looking at various cases to find conclusions (Wijaya, 2017). In line with the previous explanation, this study offers a reading of the interpretation and social criticism carried out by Syu'bah Asa during the New Order. Solution-based interpretation and criticism based on the Qur'an can only be presented by studying and reflecting on the social conditions that are the main messages of the verses of the Qur'an. If we understand how the revelation of the Qur'an is related to local culture and the social dynamics of society at that time, then we can actualize the central message of the Qur'an in social change to this day (Fawaid et al., 2023; Sholihah, 2023).

In response to the social and economic situation of the 1990s, various works have been published by Indonesian Muslim scholars on political dynamics, especially in the realm of Qur'anic

interpretation. At that time, the Indonesian government, commonly called the New Order, had dictated its people to obey and submit to all policies made by the government. This helped to form a political stability and development plan, which was the main slogan of the government at that time. With an authoritarian policy, the New Order not only succeeded in dictating the people to obey and be disciplined to be good citizens but also regulated privacy and controlled ideologies and ideas that had to be in line with the government (Aliyah, 2015).

In the socio-political situation dominated by the New Order at that time, the existence of Syu'bah Asa's work with his mega-project of interpretation entitled "*Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-ayat Sosial Politik*" became material for reflection and criticism of the socio-political reality that existed at that time. In line with Kuntowijoyo, this work of interpretation is evidence and a sign that the Qur'an is alive and has value for renewing consciousness. He explained that it is possible to see Syu'bah Asa's work as a form of politicization of religion. However, all social criticism based on religious texts is considered a form of politicization of religion. In this case, all canonical texts will only be dead documents and cannot provide concrete contributions to the era's behavior, social dynamics, and developments. The interpretation carried out by Syu'bah Asa is important to be studied comprehensively to examine how an interpreter of the Qur'an views the socio-political reality that occurs around him and how the dialectical process between the primary meaning of the Qur'an and the reality that continues to change (Kuntowijoyo, 2000).

So far, studies on social interpretation have focused on three typologies. *First*, discussing the dynamics of socio-political interpretation in general, namely looking at the Qur'an's involvement after the Prophet Muhammad's death, where the Qur'an is no longer in dialogue but needs to be invited to dialogue (Masyhuri, 2018). According to Sunarto, social interpretation is

progress that needs to be appreciated because an interpreter will be tested to analyze and actualize the values of the Qur'an in a developing social context (Sunarto, 2019). *Second*, in socio-political interpretation that focuses on a particular government, Ihsan Nursidik sees that the government has a role in infiltrating discourse in the form of interpretation of the Qur'an to perpetuate the political stage, which can be called an authoritarian interpretation (Nursidik, 2021), or at least influences the pattern of interpretation at a particular time (Zulaiha et al., 2022). *Third*, namely comparing social thinking between two different interpretations, which helps see the characteristics of the interpreter (Nopiansah, 2021), both in terms of writing the interpretation, conveying opinions, and the position of the interpreter in responding to the socio-politics around him (Humaira & Astuti, 2017). Based on the typology above, it can be seen that there is still a lack of socio-political interpretation studies that focus on one interpreter figure by looking at the context of the interpretation specifically, such as interpretations that are linked to the experience of the moral degradation of the government in Indonesia.

This article aims to add to the treasury and develop previous studies on the contribution of Syu'bah Asa's interpretation in the socio-political interpretation of Indonesianness. At the same time, it wants to answer what he offers for all socio-political criticism in Indonesia, which he conceptualizes as interpretation. This is at least reflected in the three discussions later, which will help provide the formula—first, revealing Syu'bah Asa's interpretation as the basis for legitimacy and political criticism in Indonesia. *Second*, criticism of the authoritarianism of power in the New Order government. *Third*, democracy is Syu'bah Asa's offer of a state system as a contribution in all forms of his socio-political criticism of the New Order government.

Similar research has been conducted by several previous researchers, such as research conducted by Miftahul Umam entitled “*Socio-Political Criticism of the New Order in the Interpretation of Syu’bah Asa*,” where the research emphasized that the text of the Qur’an should be read in the social context when the Qur’an was revealed, which will help find the legal morals of a verse so that it can be applied in socio-political dynamics that are continuously changing, where in this case Syu’bah Asa moves in a socio-political space that contemporary interpreters have not widely explored (Umam, 2022).

Didit Hidayatullah, with the title of the research “*Penafsiran Sosial-Politik dalam Cahaya Al-Qur’an Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial Politik Syu’bah Asa*,” where the research describes the method and style of interpretation of Syu’bah Asa, as well as the socio-political narrative in his work Cahaya al-Qur’an Tafsir Ayat Sosial Politik, as well as the major themes of Syu’bah Asa’s political interpretation as social criticism. The end of his research concluded that the method and style of Syu’bah Asa’s interpretation could be classified as tafsir bi al-ra’yi, which is presented thematically (*maudhū*) based on the socio-political context at that time. Syu’bah Asa’s contextual interpretation emphasizes the interpretation of the Qur’an as social criticism - in this case, Syu’bah Asa’s interpretation refers to the policies of the New Order regime (Hidayatullah, 2023).

In addition, Munadzir conducted a study entitled “*Konsep Kepemimpinan Menurut Syu’bah Asa*,” which shows that Syu’bah Asa interprets the letter Al-nisa’s verse 58 as a recommendation for leaders to be fair and wise, and every citizen is obliged to obey their leader according to the recommendation of the letter Al-nisa’s verse 59 (Munadzir, 2017).

The three studies above discuss the interpretation of Syu’bah Asa, but each has a different focus and novelty. Umam’s (2022) research emphasizes the importance of social context in interpreting the Qur’an, especially in finding a moral basis relevant

to the socio-political dynamics of Hidayatullah (2023). focuses on the method and style of Syu'bah Asa's interpretation, which presents a description of the socio-political narrative in the book "*Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an*" and an analysis of its interpretation as a social critique of the New Order. Finally, Munadzir (2017) examines the concept of leadership according to Syu'bah Asa based on his interpretation of the letter Al-Nisa' verses 58 and 59, which focuses on the concept of just and wise leadership and the obligation of citizens to obey the leader. This is different from this study, which focuses on Syu'bah Asa's criticism of the New Order through the interpretation of verses that highlight the issues of justice, human rights, corruption, and pseudo-diversity, as well as the offer of democracy based on religious morality as a solution.

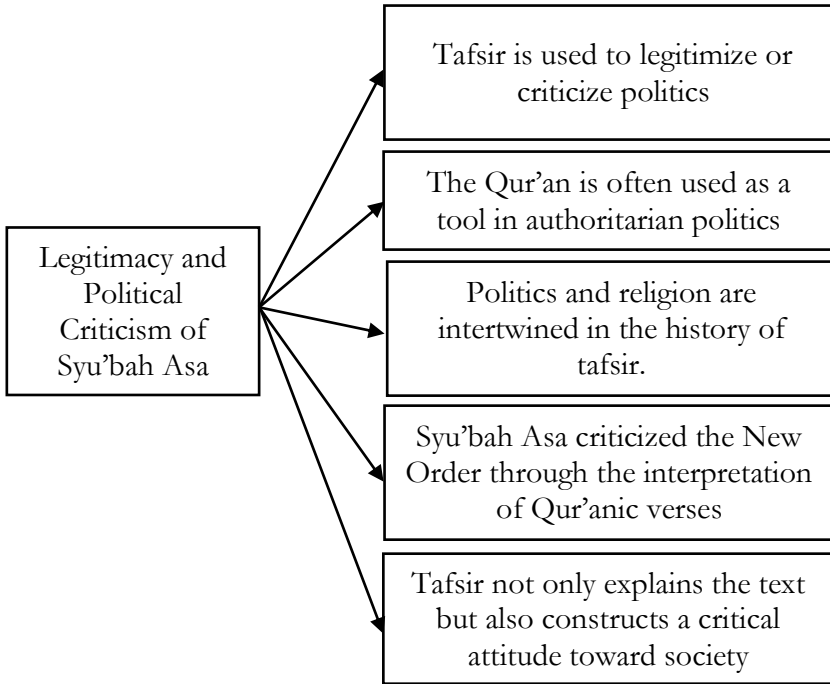
This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the concept of democracy in the context of authoritarian critique, as interpreted in the Tafsir Syu'bah Asa. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and interpretive understanding of the tafsir text and its historical-sociological context. The object of the study focuses on the understanding of democracy and critique of authoritarianism, where this study not only examines the tafsir text literally but also traces how Syu'bah Asa's interpretation of relevant Qur'anic verses shapes his views on democracy and authoritarianism. This study uses two data sources, namely primary and secondary data. The primary source is the tafsir of Syu'bah Asa in his work "*Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an*," which focuses on the analysis of Qur'anic verses that are relevant to the theme of democracy and authoritarianism, as well as Syu'bah Asa's interpretation of these verses. Secondary data is in the form of various references relevant to the research theme, including literature on democracy, authoritarianism, Qur'anic interpretation, and contemporary Islamic thought. These references enrich the analysis and provide a broader context for Syu'bah Asa's interpretation.

Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques used in this study are thematic and *content analysis* with a linguistic approach. Thematic analysis is used to identify the main themes that appear in Syu'bah Asa's Tafsir, which are related to democracy and authoritarianism. Meanwhile, *content analysis* will be used to analyze the frequency of occurrence of relevant keywords, phrases, and concepts and the relationship between these concepts. These two techniques will be used in tandem to produce a comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of Syu'bah Asa's views on democracy in the context of authoritarianism criticism, which is then linked to the socio-political conditions and intellectual framework of the interpreter who is the driving force of his ideas in Syu'bah Asa's tafsir.

### **Interpretation of Political Legitimacy and Criticism**

The Qur'an often struggles with social realities; this proves that the Qur'an is indeed in the social realm. This fact also shows that the Qur'an will fall into the hands of political authoritarianism. On the one hand, the Qur'an has a political aspect; on the other hand, politics has an element of the Word of God. These two models portray the struggle and integration between the Qur'an and politics. Politicization that builds authoritarianism is an inevitable result. The debate around the Qur'an is no longer about taking wisdom and noble teachings but lessons by the taste of power (Saihu, 2020).

As a tool for interpreting the meaning of God's Word, especially in a political context, interpretation is often used to legitimize the political claims of certain groups, or as a criticism of certain groups, so indirectly, this reveals to us the existence of politicization—the Qur'an. Inserting the Qur'an into the political realm is not about seeking the truth from the contents of the Qur'an but instead seeking the truth for specific groups with interests. The Qur'an becomes part of political groups' strategy (Al-Rassam, 2010).



**Table 1.** Legitimacy of Interpretation and Politics of Syu'bah Asa

From Table 1 above, it can be explained that one of the samples in this case, as explained above, the characteristics of interpretation that criticizes or affirms the legitimacy of particular political interests can be found in Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the Qur'an. Qutb emphasized the interpretation of the Qur'an that he did in *Fī Zilal al-Qur'ān*. *The interpretation of Fī Zilal al-Qur'ān* is criticism and rejection of the secular ideology of the Egyptian state by saying that the Egyptian state has the Jahiliyah manhaj. Therefore, this interpretation is also intended to legitimize and form a Rabbani ideological state that it carries. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the work pattern of Tafsir functions as a criticism of socio-political issues and situations that conflict with specific government policies, which are represented by the interpretation of Syu'bah Asa in *the Tafsir of Social Political Verses*. Based on the



classification of Islah Gusmian, Nurul Huda stated that the Tafsir written by Syu'bah Asa was used to criticize and oppose the New Order regime of Soeharto. The kidnapping and massacre carried out by the New Order government received much criticism. Likewise, in turn, the interpretation of the legitimacy of power is also seen in the interpretation of Bakri Syahid in *Tafsir al-Huda*, whose tafsir work is considered to be increasingly in favor of the status quo due to its closeness to power (Maarif, 2021).

*Tafsir Dalam Cabaya Al-Qur'an*, as an explanatory text, not only explains the process of interpreting the text of the Qur'an but, more importantly, it is involved in social criticism and discursive practices that often contradict the central discourse echoed and practiced by the New Order regime to affirm the status quo. Thus, the practice of interpretation shown by Syu'bah Asa in his interpretation work not only captures the idea of God in the text of the Qur'an but also makes interpretation a place for constructing critical attitudes and resistance. Various gaps and social problems occur in society. There are several reasons for the communication strategy used by Syu'bah in the Qur'an. From the perspective of the subject of the interpretation, this interpretation was written by a journalist, cultural figure, and religious figure who was essentially critical of the various deviations that occurred. From the perspective of the context of the social situation, this interpretation at least has strategic momentum; this interpretation was written at a time when the reformation current was moving fast and peaked in May 1998, hitting the arrogance of the New Order rulers until they fell. In that era, people began to dare to speak out massively about the rights and freedoms to express their opinions (Umam, 2022).

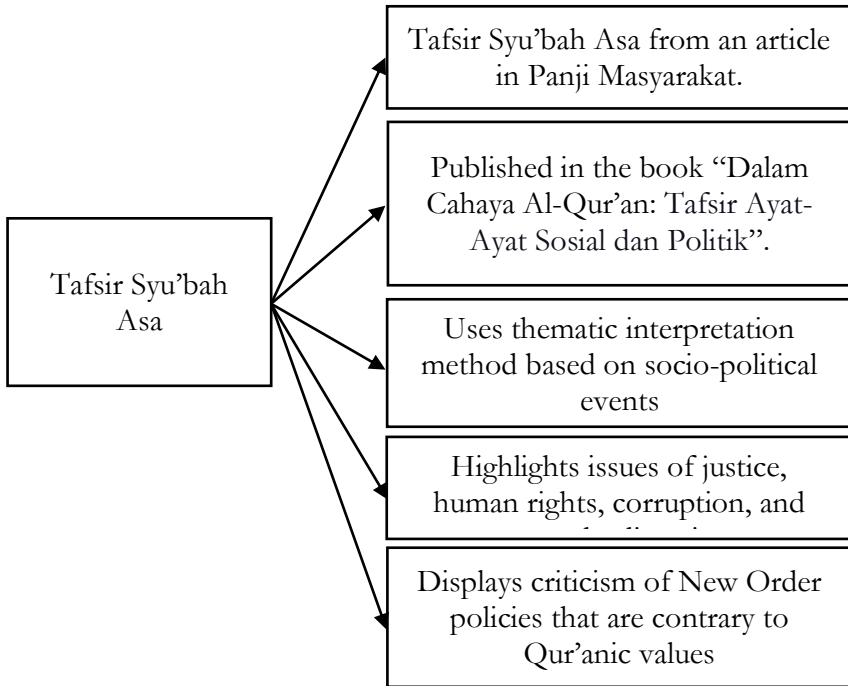
### **A Glimpse into the Tafsir of Syu'bah Asa**

Interpreters widely wrote political interpretations during the New Order era as a form of response to all government policies that suppressed the movement of Muslims; Syu'bah Asa's

interpretation is one of the many interpretations born during that period. Syu'bah Asa was an intellectual born in Pekalongan on 21 December 1941. A Syu'bah continued to grow into a theater artist, writer, journalist, and religious figure; a writing career emerged in him when he was still in junior high school around 1957, and this talent continued to develop until it led him to become a music editor at Ekspres magazine which later transformed into Tempo magazine. He resigned and joined Panji Masyarakat magazine while also becoming an editor there; at that time, he wrote many things related to social and religious problems. Syu'bah Asa died when he was 68, on 24 July 2011 (Azhar, 2023).

Tafsir Syu'bah Asa began his articles by publishing them in the weekly magazine Panji Masyarakat between 1997 and 1999. Around 2000, his critical commentary entitled *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial dan Politik* was published, and PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama assisted in the publication. This commentary uses a thematic method in its compilation because it is based on every event that emerged when the commentary was written, namely at the end of the New Order regime. Therefore every verse presented will always be appropriate and relevant to the time and problems that were happening at that time, likened to a verse of the Qur'an as a light that highlights events that were popular at that time so that the Qur'an is seen as alive and by the expression of *Ṣālib li-kulli z̤amān wa makān*, so that the Syu'bah Asa commentary is known as an interpretation that is thick with the nuances of Indonesian socio-politics during the New Order. This interpretation emerged to criticize the policies of the Soeharto regime that were not by the rules of the Qur'an. When writing his review, Syu'bah Asa was at the right moment to be able to criticize the government. From the perspective of the interpreting subject, Syu'bah Asa was a journalist, cultural, and religious figure who developed a critical attitude towards the deviations around him (Zulaiha et al., 2022). Viewed from the context of social situation

and publication space, this interpretation is at two right moments. First, Syu’bah’s interpretation was written when the reform movement strengthened to overthrow the New Order regime. Second, the press world began to take a role in conveying criticism. The Panji Masyarakat magazine became the media channel for Syu’bah Asa’s critical attitude (Sunarto, 2019).



**Table 2.** Contents of Tafsir Syu’bah Asa

From Table 2 above, it is clear that the interpretation written by Syu’bah Asa has four main topics, namely Strengthening Justice, Destruction of Human Rights, Corruption practices, and Diversity practices that are only sweeteners. These four topics are very close to the socio-political issues of the New Order regime as a means of social criticism that directly touches on the hegemony and dominance of the New Order regime. One of the verses used as political criticism is its interpretation of QS.

Al-An'ām: 65, regarding the problem of violence and human rights violations demonstrated by the New Order regime, the verse which means Allah's punishment for those who rebel against Allah SWT, is then contextualized to the corruption of the New Order regime, Syu'bah Asa combines the meaning of this verse into the context of the current Indonesian problems, he said that the New Order regime has carried out political movements that violate human rights by not providing opportunities to work in the government bureaucracy for families, relatives of activists or sympathizers of the PKI, because they have been considered to have committed a crime against the sovereignty of the state by carrying out a coup on 1 October 1965 (Cholily, 2023; Sunarto, 2019).

Using a contextual approach by positioning reality as a field of interpretation, Syu'bah Asa criticized the government's attitude by emphasizing the moral law in the verse that states that Allah SWT has the power to punish by scattering them. The references used by Syu'bah Asa as a form of his interpretation are the Qur'an, hadith, previous interpretations, and his *ijtihad* as a *Bi al-Ra'yi interpreter*. This interpretation method is included in the modern thematic category because it raises a theme chosen directly by Syu'bah with the *Adab Ijtima'i* style (social ethics) and a column writing style that can raise the imagination and thoughts of readers. In addition, this interpretation is also included in the category of plural thematic interpretations whose presentation method contains many important themes as objects of study (Zulaiha et al., 2022).

### **Syu'bah Asa's Critique of Authoritarianism of Power**

Tafsir Syu'bah Asa is popular with interpretations that are thick with the nuances of Indonesian socio-politics during the New Order era. The interpretation is intended to criticize the policies of the Soeharto regime that are not by the principles of

the Qur'an. In some of his interpretations, he does not hesitate to display the authoritarian attitude of the government to silence all parties, as he clearly states in his interpretation;

Sudah tentu tidak secara serta-merta perubahan oleh Allah itu. Bahwa proses itu lebih acap kelihatan dalam waktu yang tidak terlalu singkat ditunjukkan antara lain oleh Q. 17: 16, tentang pekerti orang-orang yang hidup mewah dan dampak sosialnya (lihat Berjalan di Antara Guncangan). Dan dalam kasus Indonesia mutakhir, ada rentang masa 30-an tahun pemerintahan yang menyebut dirinya Orbadan belasan tahun pemerintahan yang disebut Orde Lama.

Pada Orde Lama, perubahan yang sangat menentukan dalam politik negara (untuk tak memakai ungkapan "dalam diri Soekarno", yang tak kita ketahui) tentunya terjadi pada 5 Juli 1959, ketika diberlakukan Dekrit Presiden yang membubarkan Konstituante dan memberlakukan UUD 1945 sebagai pengganti UUDS 1950. Dengan itu kehidupan bebas (liberal) partai-partai dihabisi. Dengan Demokrasi Terpimpin-nya Soekarno naik ke puncak dan memegang kekuasaan absolut.

Dalam perlombaan kultus kepada Bung Karno, PKI menang. Tapi berkat budaya kultus pula seluruh bangsa mendapat hukuman. Masyarakat terbelah-belah. Gejolak politik menggelora. Dan pecahlah makar PKI pada 1965. Ratusan ribu rakyat, paling tidak terbantai. Tanah Air membuih, dan inflasi melambung sampai 650%. Kemudian sebuah rezim ambruk.

Pada era Soeharto, perubahan sudah mulai bisa diraba pada 1970-an. Dengan dukungan sebagian intelektual, penglepasan diri dari "era politik" ke "era pembangunan" ditempuh mula-mula dengan pengebirian partai-partai, setelah beberapa saat menghirup udara bebas, setahap demi setahap. Dan akhirnya dilaksanakanlah apa yang dikenal sebagai *buldozering* Amir machmud, pelindasan segala rambu yang bisa menghalangi kemenangan Golkar. Amir-machmud adalah menteri dalam negeri yang untuk kepentingan itu benar-benar berguna.

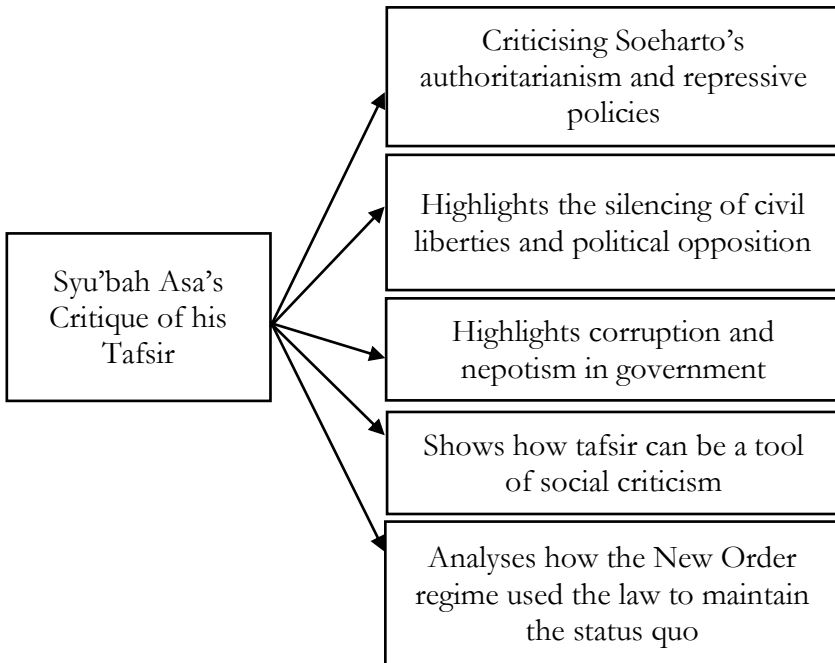
Dengan kekuasaan yang tahun demi tahun akhirnya berhasil dipusatkan pada diri Soeharto seorang, termasuk praktis kekuasaan yudikatif (ingat kasus tuduhan korupsi kepada Menhub Haryanto Dhanutirto yang begitu saja "diputihkan" oleh Presiden, dan bukan pengadilan; juga kasus dana Jamsostek yang menyangkut Menaker Abdul Latief, yang harus dianggap selesai karena "sudah langsung ditangani Pak Harto"), Soeharto, seperti pendahulunya, juga memegang ubun-ubun semua orang (Asa, 2000).

In his diction, Syu'bah Asa explicitly describes the authoritarian practices carried out by Soeharto during his term of office, as stated in the excerpt of his interpretation above, which reads: *Dengan dukungan sebagian intelektual, penglepasan diri dari era politik ke era pembangunan ditempuh mula-mula dengan pengelibiran partai-partai, setelah beberapa saat menghirup udara bebas, setahap demi setahap. Dan akhirnya dilaksanakanlah apa yang dikenal sebagai bulldozering Amir machmud, pelindasan segala rambu yang bisa menghalangi kemenangan Golkar.* Then it ended with a particular claim that all that was nothing other than the aroma of authoritarianism of power, as stated in his words: *Dengan kekuasaan yang tahun demi tahun akhirnya berhasil dipusatkan pada diri Soeharto seorang.*

In some of his interpretive comments, Syu'bah also added questions about the detained figures, which indicated the eradication of anything that could hinder his political tastes, as expressed:

Itulah yang terjadi pada hari-hari ketika "kepentingan negara" (yang sebenarnya adalah kepentingan kekuasaan) memaksa hakim mengerahkan semua pelajaran sekolahnya untuk memvonis berat para oposan demi memenuhi pesanan majikan. (Bagaimana bisa tokoh seperti H.R. Dharsono, misalnya, meringkuk di bui begitu lama? Seperti juga Muhammad Natsir, pada masa Bung Karno? Sementara Eddy Tansil dengan nyaman melenggang keluar penjara?) (Asa, 2000).

When Soeharto Insulted His Critics, Brigadier General HR Dharsono, who was known as the Commander of KODAM Siliwangi, crushed the communists and helped smooth the New Order government but did not get a strategic seat in the military during Soeharto’s era; he had been ambassador to Cambodia and Thailand. In addition, he expressed his disappointment with the role of ABRI during the regime, saying: “The role of ABRI at the beginning of the New Order and now is different. Now ABRI seems insensitive to the aspirations of the “people” and has signed the Petition of 50, which is an expression of concern from figures towards Soeharto. Because he was considered dangerous for the regime, Dharsono was imprisoned for five years on the grounds of having links to the bombing of the BCA Pacenongan office in 1984 and was accused of participating in meetings after the Priok incident. (See Tirto.id; Tragedi H.R. Dharsono: Kala Soeharto Menistakan Pengkritiknya).



**Table 3.** The Focus of Syu’bah Asa’s Interpretation of the New Order

## The Offer of Democracy as an Alternative to the State System of Syu'bah Asa

Democracy, from the Islamic perspective, is often associated with the concept of social justice, which is the core of the teachings of the Qur'an. This can be seen that **the works of interpretation** produced by official institutions under the auspices of the State, such as the Ministry of Religion, usually have a **control-oriented character**, which reflects how the State tries to integrate Islamic values into public policy (Mursyid, 2021). The criticism that Syu'bah Asa expressed was not merely a rejection that he wanted to convey; in fact, Syu'bah intended to offer a system that should run and is ideal according to him, which means none other than "democracy" which is a key principle for maintaining the balance of government, he said. However, Syu'bah emphasized several notes that must be underlined regarding democracy itself, considering that this system has been implemented since the beginning of the Indonesian government in the hands of Soekarno. Still, many factors become stumbling blocks, so the system does not run normally.

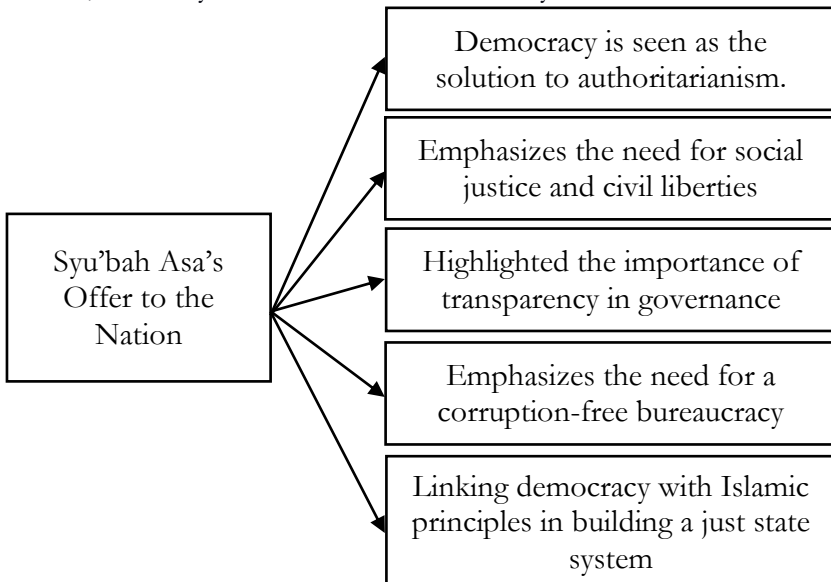


Table 4. Syu'bah Asa's offer for the state



In Table 4 above, it can be concluded that Syu'bah Asa did not merely criticize the government but also offered a solution. He explicitly stated the solution in some of his interpretation's sub-chapters entitled "Tapped Phones". Here is the wording;

Faktor yang bisa sama, antara yang terjadi di Indonesia dan yang di Yugoslavia, adalah ini: lepasnya sebuah bangsa yang selama puluhan tahun hidup di bawah tekanan besar, yang kemudian merasakan "kebebasan seluas-luasnya" dan kesadaran akan ke mampuannya untuk "berbuat apa saja". Di antara contoh-contoh pertama semangat pemberontakan yang makin kuat menghadapi tekanan itu—di panggung politik—bisa dilihat perlawanan warga PDI Megawati (1996) dan kemudian perlawanan besar warga Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (1997) yang dipaksa tunduk pada aturan-aturan kepartaian dan pemilu yang dibikin (dan diketahui rakyat sebagai cuma dibikin-bikin) hanya untuk selalu mempertahankan *status quo*.

Itulah pendidikan kekerasan oleh rezim Soeharto: suasana mirip pertempuran, lengkap dengan pembakaran, dan korban-korban, menyala di jalan-jalan Ibu Kota dan, pada 1997, di beberapa kota besar lain. Jalan-jalan tertentu dipenuhi panser dan senjata. di samping batu-batu yang melayang dan ban-ban mobil dibakar -dan bukan hukum, yang sudah lama diketahui hanya dikangkangi oleh para aparat (dan bos-bos konglomerat). Maka bila orang menolak memprediksi akibat-akibat sebuah sistem yang opresif, dan mengira bijaksana *melulu* mengambil segala "manfaat yang mungkin" dari satu tatanan rusak sebuah rezim yang sungguh tak punya kuping, ia akan menuai buah bencana yang "tidak sekali-kali hanya akan menimpa orang-orang kamu yang aniaya" Dan itu sudah kita alami.

Kata kuncinya, kemudian, memang demokrasi—ketika semua orang merasa, nasib apa pun yang menyimpannya, tidak satu pun haknya dizalimi. Tetapi buah perbuatan "orang-orang kamu yang aniaya" kiranya masih akan kita telan untuk beberapa masa. Hukum belum benar-benar tegak. Soeharto belum diadili untuk kemungkinan kejahatan

kehartaan, jangan lagi, seperti yang di sodorkan Amien Rais, untuk dosa-dosa kemanusiaan yang menyangkut hak asasi. Kolusi eksekutif dan yudikatif masih tercermin kuat, misalnya, dari pembicaraan telepon Presiden Habibie dan Jaksa Agung Ghalib yang dibocorkan, yang memberi asosiasi ikhtiar "penyelamatan" mantan presiden itu.

Untuk kebersihan sepenuhnya aparat dan birokrasi, siapa tahu masih harus ditunggu pensiunnya para pejabat yang sudah puluhan tahun dididik dalam budaya loyalitas yang penuh upeti, pungli dan segala bentuk korupsi. Tapi begitu juga untuk etika para pengusaha yang telanjur bejat. Bahkan pola hidup bengkok yang sudah terserap di masyarakat bawah. Siapa tahu masih diperlukan, katakanlah, satu generasi lagi ketika seorang anak lahir di Indonesia, dan tidak menghirup apa pun di sekelilingnya kecuali udara yang benar-benar bersih: sebuah negeri yang layak untuk didiami, untuk bekerja dan beramal saleh. *Wallāh al-Hādī* (Asa, 2000).

In the interpretation, the author means an explicit statement with *Kata kuncinya, kemudian, memang demokrasi*, Syu'bah wants to confirm that all forms of oppression that emerge are rooted in the killing of democracy by silencing civil liberties and the bias of bureaucrats toward one camp, namely Golkar and its cronies so that the people are sacrificed for all greed that desires full power.

His work, *Cahaya Dalam Al-Qur'an (In the Light of the Qur'an)*, still has many critical interpretations, which he meant to revive democracy so that it runs according to its tracks and the fulfillment of rights is guaranteed and protected. However, the author only cites this excerpt of the interpretation. It is enough as concrete evidence because it is stated clearly, straightforwardly, and on target so that the message of this critical interpretation can be captured, which is also a spiritual evaluation for authoritarian governments and their cronies because, according to Syu'bah, it happened based on human greed. Because the interpretation above is a contextualization of the understanding of the verse *Amar makruf-nahi munkar* in QS. Ali Imrān :110 (Asa, 2000).

## Conclusion

From the description above, it can be concluded that Syu'bah Asa, through the interpretation of *Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an*, has succeeded in linking the socio-political problems that occurred in the era of the New Order regime with the topics contained in the verses of the Qur'an that he interpreted, the structure of his criticism is quite touching on every layer of the rottenness of the New Order which becomes the core problem of his interpretation. His contribution by pushing back substantive democracy and adhering to religious values will not give birth to the authoritarianism of power because that is the basis of all the polemics that occur by realizing and implementing the basic principles of the state, which are correct based on Pancasila.

Syu'bah Asa offers a relevant alternative state, and by the structure and culture of Indonesian society, he completely dismantles the New Order government because all authoritarian actions it carries out are contrary to the law and are inversely proportional to the reality of Indonesian society, which has ethnic, cultural, tribal, and linguistic diversity that requires respect and freedom of expression. So that everyone feels protected and their rights as citizens are fulfilled. This is why the democratic system is his main contributor to the state system relevant to the Indonesian context.

The implications of this study are quite significant in two main aspects. Academically, this study contributes to the understanding of socio-political interpretation as an instrument of criticism of authoritarian regimes and opens up space for further analysis of the relationship between interpretation, power, and democracy in the Islamic tradition. Practically, this study can be a reflection material for Muslim policymakers and thinkers in developing a democratic system that is not only based on positive law but also rooted in the values of social justice in the Qur'an.

Although this study has succeeded in revealing how Syu'bah Asa's interpretation of "Dalam Cahaya Al-Qur'an" became an instrument of social criticism of authoritarianism in the New Order era, several limitations need to be noted. First, this study is still limited to analyzing Syu'bah Asa's interpretation within the scope of New Order policies without further exploring how it impacted the post-reformation Islamic intellectual movement. Second, the approach used in this study focuses more on the socio-political aspect of interpretation. In contrast, the study of the hermeneutic and epistemological methods underlying Syu'bah Asa's thinking still needs to be expanded. Third, this study has not explicitly examined the response of society and government to Syu'bah Asa's interpretation and how this interpretation is received in contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse.

As a recommendation for further research, further studies can be focused on several aspects. First, a comparative analysis between Syu'bah Asa's interpretation and other mufasssirs who have similar tendencies in criticizing authoritarianism in Indonesia and other Muslim countries. Second, a deeper exploration of the influence of Syu'bah Asa's interpretation on contemporary Islamic thought movements, especially in building democracy based on Islamic values. Third, further research can examine how Syu'bah Asa's contextual interpretation can be applied to understanding and criticizing modern political policies, especially in digital democracy and globalization.

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