

Challenging Hegemony through a Quranic and Gramscian Perspective in the Tafsir of Sayyid Qutb on Social Class

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Abstract

Sayyid Qutb's tafsir, particularly *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, presents a framework of social ethics grounded in *tawhid*, positioning it as both a spiritual principle and a basis for confronting structural oppression. His analysis of the Qur'anic concepts of *mala'* (elite classes) and *mustad'afin* (the oppressed) offers a critical entry point for understanding class struggle within Islamic thought. This study aims to contextualize Qutb's discourse on *mala'* and *mustad'afin* by engaging Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, with the goal of constructing a Qur'an-based model of counter-hegemony that responds to contemporary social inequality. Using a qualitative textual approach, the study analyzes key *Makkiyah* verses interpreted by Qutb through the *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* method. These interpretations are then integrated with Gramsci's concepts of ideological control, organic intellectuals, and war of position to assess their relevance in modern social contexts. The findings show that Qutb's tafsir aligns with Gramscian critical theory in viewing structural inequality as maintained through cultural and ideological mechanisms. The *mustad'afin* are positioned as morally empowered actors, capable of resisting hegemony through ethical leadership, ideological education, and faith-based collective action. This study affirms that the integration of Qutb's tafsir with Gramscian analysis offers a socially engaged Qur'anic hermeneutic. It demonstrates the potential of Islamic thought to address systemic injustice through a praxis-oriented framework grounded in divine justice, ethical redistribution, and spiritual resistance.

Keywords: Sayyid Qutb, Gramsci, Tafsir, Social Class, Mustad'afin

A. Introduction

The Qur'an articulates a foundational vision of social justice that continues to resonate amid persistent structural inequalities in modern society. In *Ma'ālim fī Aṭ-Ṭarīq*, Sayyid Qutb conceptualizes *tawḥīd* not merely as a theological axiom but as a radical ideological principle—one that rejects all forms of human subjugation, including those embedded in capitalism, socialism, and neoliberalism, which perpetuate entrenched hierarchies and social disparities (Qutb, 2006, pp. 109–110). His magnum opus, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*, serves as the

central exegetical source for this study, distinguished by its *ḥarakī* (activist) orientation that treats the Qur'anic text as a living discourse engaged with evolving socio-political realities (Supriadi, 2015, pp. 7–9). Yet, despite the normative strength of Qutb's theological vision, its practical articulation within the contours of contemporary social structures remains an ongoing challenge (Soetomo, 2020, pp. 103–104).

From a sociological standpoint, Qutb's reading of the dialectic between *mala'* (elite classes) and *mustaḍ'afīn* (the oppressed) reveals a striking conceptual affinity with Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony—particularly in his emphasis on collective consciousness and the role of *organic intellectuals* in resisting ideological domination (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 12–20). While the Qur'an provides normative prescriptions for the empowerment of the marginalized, Qutb reframes these ethical imperatives as the foundation for a counter-hegemonic project rooted in *tawḥīd*-conscious liberation.

Despite growing interest in Qutb's social thought, existing scholarship remains largely confined to normative or textual analyses. Studies have explored his views on slavery and the plight of the *mustaḍ'afīn* (Fitri, 2018; Hidayatullah, 2019), while others attempt comparative inquiries, such as with John Rawls on justice, though these often lack critical engagement with modern socio-political conditions (Rahman, 2012). Anthropological readings of *mala'* (Kamal, 2016) and thematic exegeses on Qur'anic solidarity with the oppressed (Affian, 2022) offer important insights, but frequently fall short of a structural critique. While frameworks such as Qur'anic humanism (Husnawadi, 2021) and Hanafi's transformative hermeneutics (Hasyim, 2019) provide valuable alternatives, they tend to diverge from Qutb's ideological militancy. Even applications of Fazlur Rahman's double movement approach (Barir, 2014) have remained hesitant in engaging contemporary social theory or confronting the ideological roots of inequality.

To date, no study has directly synthesized Qutb's tafsir with Gramscian hegemony to formulate a theoretical lens for reading class conflict through the Qur'anic text. This article addresses that gap by critically contextualizing Qutb's discourse on *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn* within the Gramscian framework of counter-hegemony. The core innovation of this study lies in its construction of a socially engaged exegetical paradigm that bridges Qur'anic ethics with critical social theory. In doing so, it not only advances the field of thematic tafsir but also contributes to a praxis-oriented epistemology that renders Islamic thought more responsive to the structural injustices of the modern world.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory research design rooted in library-based textual analysis. The primary source is Sayyid Qutb's *Fī Zilāl al-*

Qur'ān, selected for its *al-adabī al-ijtimā'ī* approach—an exegetical method that emphasizes the intersection between Qur'anic values and lived social realities. The analysis focuses particularly on Qutb's interpretation of verses that depict the structural tension between *mustaḍ'afīn* (the oppressed) and *mala'* (the elite), with a special emphasis on *Makkiyah* surahs, where themes of resistance, inequality, and hegemonic domination are frequently foregrounded.

Primary data consist of Qur'anic verses that reflect the dynamics of social stratification as interpreted through Qutb's lens. Secondary sources include literature on Gramsci's theory of hegemony—particularly his concepts of *war of position*, ideological apparatuses, and organic intellectuals—as well as academic works on Qur'anic exegesis and critical social theory. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, a thematic-theoretical integration was carried out. Relevant verses were identified and thematically categorized according to the *mustaḍ'afīn-mala'* dynamic. These verses were then interpreted through Qutb's *al-adabī al-ijtimā'ī* method, and subsequently analyzed using Gramsci's conceptual framework. This integrative approach facilitated the construction of a theoretical bridge between Qur'anic exegesis and structural social critique. Second, a contextualization process was employed. The integrated insights were applied to contemporary social conditions to assess the relevance and applicability of Qutb's tafsir in addressing modern class inequality and hegemonic power structures. This step aimed to translate the theological narrative into a sociological framework capable of diagnosing current socio-political realities.

C. Result and Discussion

1. The Qur'anic Concept of *Mala'* and *Mustaḍ'afīn*

The Qur'an frequently highlights two primary social groups within the context of structural inequality: *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn*. Linguistically, *mala'* refers to those occupying elite positions within society—tribal leaders, political authorities, or individuals of high social standing—whose opinions often shape public discourse and governance (Ibn Manzūr, n.d., p. 166, as cited in Hasyim, 2019, p. 43). The term carries connotations of superiority in intellectual, political, economic, and cultural domains, typically aligned with the societal power structure.

The term *mala'* (الْمَلَأُ) appears 30 times across 12 Qur'anic chapters. It occurs 21 times in the definite form (*ma'rifah*) with the prefix *al-* (الْمَلَأُ), such as in Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 246; Q. Yūsuf [12]: 43; and multiple verses in Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 60, 66, 75, among others. Eight instances appear in the possessive construct (*iḍāfah*), such as *mala'ahu*, *mala'ihim*, or *mala'uhum*, while a single occurrence is found in the indefinite form (*nakirah*) in Q. Hūd [11]: 38. Notably, 29 of these references are situated within *Makkiyah* surahs, underscoring the early Meccan context

wherein resistance from the elite class was a recurring motif in the prophetic mission. Only one instance appears in a *Madani* surah (Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 248).

Importantly, the Qur'an does not portray *mala'* as a monolithic or inherently negative category. Three conceptual typologies of *mala'* emerge. First, the openly antagonistic elites who reject prophetic messages and actively spread disinformation, such as those in the stories of Prophets Nūḥ, Šālīḥ, and Mūsā. Second, the hypocritical elites—exemplified in the narrative of Banī Isrā'īl—who request a king to lead their struggle against tyranny but later resist ʿĀlūt's leadership due to his low social status. Third, a more neutral or cooperative class of elites who serve in bureaucratic or advisory roles, such as those in the narratives of Prophet Yūsuf, Queen Bilqīs, and Prophet Sulaymān (Kamal, 2016, pp. 87–91).

In contrast, *mustaḍ'afīn* denotes marginalized and subjugated groups—those who are spiritually, politically, socially, or economically disempowered. Derived from the root word اسْتَضْعَفَ, the term appears 13 times in three distinct morphological forms. As a past-tense verb (*fi'l māḍī*), it occurs six times: five in the passive form (*ustud'ifū*), including Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 75, Q. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 5, and Q. Saba' [34]: 31–33; and once in the active form (*ustud'ifunī*) in Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 150. As a present-future tense verb (*fi'l muḍāri*), it appears twice—once active and once passive. As a passive participle (*ism maf'ūl*), it appears five times in forms such as *mustaḍ'afūn* and *al-mustaḍ'afīn* (al-Baqī, 1987, pp. 533–534, cited in Affian, 2022, p. 77).

Only the passive and participle forms directly describe the oppressed class. In contrast, the active forms signify the oppressors—the agents who exercise structural domination (*mustaḍ'ifīn*). The Qur'an also associates the condition of *mustaḍ'afīn* with related terms such as *as-sā'il* (the beggar), *al-yatīm* (the orphan), *miskīn* (the destitute), *faqīr* (the poor), and *ar-riqāb* (those in bondage). These categories reflect a Qur'anic concern for the structurally excluded and those in need of social protection.

From a sociological lens, the *mala'–mustaḍ'afīn* dynamic underscores the asymmetry of power and the need for ethical redistribution. Oppression in the Qur'anic framework is not merely individual but systemic—arising from the interplay between structural control and cultural legitimization. The relationship between *mustakbirīn* (arrogant oppressors) and *mala'* reflects the broader mechanisms of hegemony. Within this paradigm, the Qur'an not only condemns oppression but positions the *mustaḍ'afīn* as potential agents of transformative change. Rather than passive victims, they are framed as a spiritually and morally capacitated class capable of challenging domination through alignment with divine justice (Affian, 2022, p. 241).

2. The *Mala'*-*Mustaḍ'afīn* Conflict in Sayyid Qutb's Tafsir: Ideological Struggle and Social Transformation

In Sayyid Qutb's tafsir, the conflict between *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn* is framed as a manifestation of structural polarization—one that encompasses not only material inequality but also ideological domination. The *mala'*, representing entrenched elites, reject prophetic calls for justice to preserve their social position, while the *mustaḍ'afīn* emerge as potential agents of transformative resistance, rooted in the ethical vision of *tawḥīd*.

In Q. Hūd [11]: 27, the *mala'* of Prophet Nūḥ's people mock both the prophet and his followers, dismissing them as socially inferior and lacking value. Qutb interprets this not merely as disbelief, but as class-based delegitimization—an attempt to discredit the *mustaḍ'afīn* through symbolic exclusion. This rhetorical strategy, he argues, illustrates how elites maintain hegemony by undermining the credibility of counter-hegemonic movements.

“They are unafraid of losing their stolen power in a society dulled by myth and enslaved by idolatrous illusion... The call to *tawḥīd* is the true liberation movement of humanity in every age and land. Hence, it has always faced resistance from tyrants, who defame its message and discredit its messengers.” (Qutb, 2003, p. 1872)

This ideological opposition is mirrored in Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 75, where the *mala'* of Thamūd question the sincerity of those who support Prophet Ṣāliḥ. The *mustaḍ'afīn*, however, affirm their belief. For Qutb, this moment reflects a social realignment—where the marginalized, through faith, embody the ethical and ideological resistance to domination (Qutb, 2003, p. 1314).

The Qur'anic description of Thamūd society in Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 74—“You build palaces on plains and carve homes in mountains”—is, for Qutb, evidence of spatial and material inequality. This is further elaborated in Q. al-Shu'arā' [26]: 147-149, which depicts the elite's monopolization of land and resources. These verses, Qutb argues, highlight how wealth becomes infrastructure for hegemony—used to normalize injustice and entrench class divisions. Q. Saba' [34]: 31-34 offers a broader pattern:

“We did not send a warner to any city without its affluent people saying, ‘We reject what you have been sent with.’”

Qutb reads this as a universal response of the elite to divine intervention. Their rejection is not theological per se, but political—a defense of privilege masked as religious skepticism. Affluence here becomes both a material shield and a psychological barrier against ethical reform (Qutb, 2003, pp. 2908-2910).

Yet Qutb also problematizes the *mustaḍ'afīn* when they fail to act. In Q. an-Nisā' [4]: 97-100, certain individuals are condemned for remaining within unjust systems despite having the capacity to migrate. Qutb interprets this as passive complicity—a refusal to engage in ideological *hijrah* despite moral imperative.

True migration, in his view, is not simply physical, but a spiritual and political rupture from hegemonic systems (Qutb, 2003, pp. 743–745). The case of Abū Dhamrah, who died en route to Medina, exemplifies this existential migration and the Qur'an's affirmation of its reward (as-Suyūṭī, 2014, p. 170). Q. Yūnus [10]: 88 further illustrates elite manipulation:

“You have given Pharaoh and his people splendor and wealth... They use it to mislead others from Your path.”

According to Qutb, Pharaoh's regime epitomizes hegemonic power that blends material control with symbolic dominance. The wealth and prestige of the elite are weaponized to seduce public consciousness, preventing the emergence of collective awareness (Qutb, 2003, pp. 1816–1817).

This theme recurs throughout the Qur'an—especially in narratives surrounding Prophet Mūsā—whose repeated encounters with the *mala'* underscore the perennial tension between prophetic truth and structural domination. Qutb draws clear parallels with the Quraysh elite's resistance to Prophet Muḥammad, portraying both as historical manifestations of the same ideological struggle.

In Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 246–247, the *mala'* of Banī Isrā'īl reject Ṭālūt's leadership on grounds of his humble origins. Qutb sees this as a reflection of internalized hegemony—a belief that leadership must be tied to wealth and status. Their request for a king was not backed by ideological readiness, exposing a gap between symbolic aspiration and revolutionary commitment (Qutb, 2003, pp. 266–270). Ṭālūt's eventual success, despite being underestimated, affirms Qutb's emphasis on moral and strategic leadership over class privilege.

In Q. Yūsuf [12]: 43–44, the *mala'* again display cautious indifference. When the king seeks an interpretation of his dream, they evade responsibility, fearing political fallout. Qutb interprets their silence as calculated complicity—a strategy to maintain access to power by avoiding truth that might challenge the prevailing order.

Economic inequality, too, is addressed in Q. an-Naḥl [16]: 71. Elites refuse to share their wealth with slaves, reinforcing class hierarchies. Qutb critiques this mentality as a hallmark of *jāhiliyyah* society, in which economic surplus is hoarded and wasted on idolatry rather than distributed through just means. He contrasts this with Islamic instruments such as *zakāt*, which he regards as a system of ethical redistribution essential for social liberation (Qutb, 2003, p. 2183).

Q. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 4–5 offers a profound climax to this structural discourse. Pharaoh, Hāmān, and Qārūn exemplify concentrated domination over the Israelites. The verse affirms God's intention to empower the oppressed:

“We intended to favor those oppressed in the land, to make them leaders and inheritors.”

For Qutb, this declaration is not merely spiritual—it is a revolutionary promise. The casting of infant Mūsā into the river becomes a metaphor for extreme marginalization, and his survival and rise signal the inevitability of divine justice. In Qutb's framework, faith (*tawhīd*) becomes the ontological foundation for resistance. The *mustaḍ'afīn*, when awakened to this consciousness, are destined not only to survive but to lead (Qutb, 2003, p. 2671).

3. Integrating Qutb's Tafsir and Gramsci's Theory: Toward a Qur'anic Model of Counter-Hegemony

Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of social conflict in the Qur'an reveals deep conceptual resonance with Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, particularly in his analysis of class relations between the *mala'* and the *mustaḍ'afīn*. Qutb consistently emphasizes that the *mala'*, as portrayed in verses such as Q. Hūd [11]: 27 and Q. al-A'rāf [7]: 74–75, exercise both material and symbolic power to suppress the weak, not only through coercion but by shaping ideological narratives that legitimize their dominance. This mirrors Gramsci's understanding of cultural hegemony, wherein ruling elites sustain their control by constructing collective consent around unjust social orders (Siswati, 2017; Gramsci, 1971).

In this light, Qutb's reading of *tawhīd* emerges as a form of ideological consciousness that challenges the normalization of injustice and enables the construction of a counter-hegemonic worldview. The *mustaḍ'afīn* are not only victims of systemic oppression but are framed as moral agents capable of leading social transformation through faith-driven resistance.

In Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 246–247, the *mala'* of Banī Isrā'īl oppose ʿĀlūt's appointment due to his lack of wealth and lineage—demonstrating how hegemony operates through socio-economic status and entrenched class values. Qutb interprets this as evidence that breaking free from elite control requires the dismantling of internalized classism. His emphasis on spiritual education as the foundation for liberatory awareness aligns closely with Gramsci's concept of the *organic intellectual*—a figure emerging from within the oppressed class who articulates counter-hegemonic narratives to disrupt dominant ideologies (Sardar, 2024).

The confrontation between Prophet Mūsā and Pharaoh in Q. Yūnus [10]: 88 is another example Qutb uses to illustrate hegemonic consolidation through symbolic and economic means. In Qutb's interpretation, Pharaoh's wealth and political authority are tools not just of governance, but of ideological manipulation—used to construct a perception of divine legitimacy and discourage rebellion. This parallels Gramsci's notion of the *historical bloc*, where political, economic, and cultural elements are fused to reinforce domination.

Qutb also critiques capitalism as a modern expression of this hegemonic order. He argues that economic systems rooted in usury and accumulation

produce structural inequality and moral decay, perpetuating elite control through economic dependence and symbolic prestige. This critique resonates with Gramsci's view that capitalism is sustained not only through production and capital, but also through the ideological consent of the masses.

Gramsci's idea of the *war of position* – a long-term struggle within civil society to subvert hegemonic consensus – is reflected in Qutb's call for holistic, *tawhīd*-based education. In Qutb's view, the formation of an Islamic community is not merely a spiritual undertaking, but a political project of cultural and social restructuring. His portrayal of Abū Bakr's transition from a Quraysh elite to an advocate of redistribution through *zakāt*, and Bilāl's defiance of racial and symbolic subjugation, exemplify the formation of counter-hegemonic leadership grounded in ethical conviction and collective faith.

These historical figures embody what both Qutb and Gramsci consider essential to structural change: an awakening of critical consciousness, the rejection of inherited privilege, and the reorientation of leadership around justice and integrity rather than lineage or wealth. The *ḥalaqah* model of education under the Prophet, for Qutb, represents the nucleus of ideological transformation – where marginalized individuals become empowered through faith, knowledge, and disciplined organization. To further clarify the systemic conflict and transformational potential between *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn*, the following table presents a synthesis of Qutb's tafsir and Gramsci's hegemony theory:

Table 1. Socio-Historical Indicators of *Mustaḍ'afīn* and *Mala'*

Indicator	Mustaḍ'afīn	Mala'
Economic Position	Exploited, excluded, and deprived of resources	Control economic systems, hoard wealth, and resist redistribution
Occupation	Laborers, slaves, informal workers	Merchants, landowners, capitalists, tribal chiefs
Political Access	Marginalized and disenfranchised	Hold state power, dominate political narratives
Religious Role	Embrace <i>tawhīd</i> as liberation ideology	Instrumentalize religion to justify status quo
Access to Education	Limited or denied access	Use education to reproduce elite ideology
Leadership Legitimacy	Based on ethics, competence, and piety	Based on status, wealth, or lineage
Control over Resources	Excluded from land and capital	Dominate access to land, trade, and infrastructure
Collective Awareness	Shaped by <i>tawhīd</i> , <i>hijrah</i> , and ideological education	Suppress dissent, normalize inequality

Social Mobility Blocked by structural Preserve inequality through
barriers status maintenance

Source: *Synthesized by Author from Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾān and Gramscian theory, 2025*

This integrated framework illustrates how Sayyid Qutb's tafsir, when read through Gramscian categories, yields a Qur'an-based model of social transformation rooted in ideological resistance. It affirms that the struggle of the *mustaḍ'afīn* is not merely against poverty, but against the systems of belief, education, and authority that perpetuate their subjugation. In doing so, it elevates tafsir from a spiritual commentary to a praxis-oriented epistemology capable of confronting modern hegemony on moral, political, and cultural fronts.

4. Contextualizing Qutb's Tafsir in Contemporary Structures of Inequality

The typology of *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn* in the Qur'an reflects patterns of social inequality that are not merely circumstantial but structurally embedded and historically recurrent. Sayyid Qutb's tafsir positions these categories as more than historical constructs – they represent enduring dynamics of domination and resistance that remain visible in modern contexts. Today's *mala'* can be identified in those who control economic capital, shape sociopolitical institutions, and monopolize public discourse, particularly through mainstream media. In contrast, the *mustaḍ'afīn* are those excluded from systems of power, disadvantaged by neoliberal regimes, and trapped in cycles of structural poverty.

Media, as Qutb anticipated, has become a critical site of ideological production. It plays a dual role: reinforcing elite narratives while marginalizing voices from below. Studies have shown that the top 10% of the global population controls 76% of the world's wealth, while the bottom 50% owns just 2% (Chancel, 2022). In education, this disparity translates into unequal access and a widening cognitive gap, where wealthier groups absorb and control information faster and more efficiently, further entrenching epistemic inequality (Ahmed & Cho, 2019).

Beyond economic disparity, inequality also affects mental health, social cohesion, and collective identity. Research highlights that unequal societies suffer from greater psychological stress, intergroup conflict, and a heightened sense of alienation among the poor (Carvacho & Álvarez, 2021; Osborne et al., 2021). Psychological mechanisms such as longevity bias and status quo bias further normalize inequality, making it appear inevitable and morally acceptable (Blanchar & Eidelman, 2021). While the Qur'an upholds the principle of equality, Qutb's tafsir suggests that materialist ideologies often overpower these ethical foundations in practice.

Globalization, rather than narrowing the gap, has exacerbated structural inequality. It empowers capital-owning elites and weakens local economies, leading to widespread economic stagnation among the lower and middle classes (Milanovic, 2016). From a sociological perspective, this aligns with Giddens'

theory of structuration, wherein social domination is perpetuated not only through formal policy but also through everyday practices that affirm elite norms and expectations (Giddens, 1984).

In the Indonesian context, these structural imbalances are reflected in policies that disproportionately benefit urban centers and corporate interests, often at the expense of rural populations. Chronic poverty, underdevelopment, and limited access to health services in rural areas highlight the persistence of internal *mala'*-*mustaḍ'afīn* dynamics (Abbassy et al., 2024; Idrus & Rosida, 2020). Although government programs such as JKN have expanded healthcare access, their structural impact on inequality remains limited (Rizal & van Doorslaer, 2019). Despite these conditions, Qutb's tafsir offers not only critique but also a constructive framework for resistance. *Tawḥīd*, as the foundational concept of divine unity, implies an ideological rejection of all forms of human subjugation. It affirms that sovereignty belongs solely to God, thereby delegitimizing domination by wealth, class, or race. This principle shapes the ethical foundation for leadership, education, and economic distribution in Islamic society.

Qutb's reading of *tawḥīd* translates into a vision of leadership based on ethical integrity and social justice, rather than lineage or economic power. In contrast to oligarchic norms, ideal leaders are those who demonstrate humility, accountability, and devotion to public welfare—embodied in prophetic models like Mūsā, ʿĪsā, and Abū Bakr. In modern contexts, this vision opposes the rise of technocratic or hereditary elites who consolidate power without moral legitimacy.

Education, in Qutb's framework, is a crucial site of resistance. It must not serve the reproduction of elite ideology, but instead cultivate awareness, independence, and critical faith. Qutb emphasizes a prophetic educational model grounded in *ḥalaqah*—intimate, dialogical, and value-driven learning circles. Contemporary parallels can be seen in pesantren systems, progressive madrasahs, and even in grassroots cultural collectives such as Taring Padi, which utilize art as a medium of ideological resistance. Media also plays a key role in this counter-hegemonic vision. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and community-based outlets such as Baznas TV have enabled the *mustaḍ'afīn* to reclaim narrative space and articulate their struggles on their own terms. Similarly, local resistance efforts such as those of the Mollo community in Indonesia exemplify the integration of spiritual values, ecological consciousness, and social protest.

In the economic domain, Qutb's emphasis on zakat and waqf reflects a redistributive ethic meant to disrupt elite accumulation and ensure collective welfare. Productive zakat and national waqf movements are contemporary instruments that can realize this vision. In Indonesia, the potential of zakat is estimated to reach over Rp 327 trillion, a figure that, if fully harnessed, could significantly reduce inequality and foster inclusive development (Kemenag RI,

2023). Ultimately, the integration of these values—*tawhīd*, ethical leadership, emancipatory education, narrative resistance, and economic justice—forms a Qur'an-based model of social transformation. Sayyid Qutb's tafsir does not merely interpret verses; it proposes a total restructuring of human relations grounded in divine justice. This paradigm challenges prevailing structures of inequality not only through critique, but by offering a viable, spiritually rooted alternative to hegemonic domination.

D. Conclusion

This study has explored the transformation of social class through the perspective of Sayyid Qutb's *tafsir*, using the Qur'anic concepts of *mala'* and *mustaḍ'afīn* to analyze contemporary structures of inequality. By engaging Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the study offered an interpretive framework that situates Qutb's ideas within broader discussions of power, ideology, and social change. Rather than treating these two perspectives as separate, the research demonstrates how Islamic and critical theories can inform one another in addressing the realities of oppression and resistance.

Qutb interprets *tawhīd* not only as a spiritual belief but as the basis for social responsibility and ethical leadership. Within his framework, the *mustaḍ'afīn* are not simply passive victims, but individuals who have the potential to shape social transformation through faith, awareness, and collective action. This understanding parallels Gramsci's concept of counter-hegemony, in which transformation begins with changes in consciousness, culture, and education.

The integration of Qutb's tafsir with contemporary challenges—such as media control, economic inequality, and social exclusion—shows how his ideas remain relevant. Ethical leadership, redistribution through zakat and waqf, community-based education, and narrative resistance are not abstract ideals, but practical responses rooted in Islamic teachings. When placed in dialogue with critical social theory, these values can offer an alternative to the dominant systems that reproduce inequality.

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