

The Discursive Antagonism in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb: A Study Based on Selected Components of Laclau and Mouffe's Theory

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Introduction

Sūrat al-Aḥzāb addresses a wide range of issues, including rulings on adoption, the Battle of the Confederates, the campaign against Banū Qurayzah, the Prophet's (s) marital life and his wives, the admonition of the Prophet's wives, the divorce of his adopted son's wife and the Prophet's marriage to her, the verse of purification (āyat al-taḥīr), threats against the hypocrites and disbelievers, and other matters. The diversity of topics has led some to perceive the sūrah as lacking thematic coherence. Critics have, based on such diversity, described the Qur'an as a disorganized text. Furthermore, the verse concerning the Prophet's marriage to his adopted son's former wife has triggered negative judgments about the Prophet's character.

However, given the contextual and situational coherence of Qur'anic discourse, Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, like other sūrahs, possesses a central communicative purpose. This study argues that by employing components of Laclau and Mouffe's political discourse theory, particularly in relation to antagonism and discursive conflict, this coherence and purpose can be identified and demonstrated.

Methodology

This research is based on a descriptive-analytical approach, relying on library sources. Drawing upon select components of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory-including discursive antagonism, floating signifiers (dāl-s), nodal points (dāl markazī), and hegemonization strategies-we analyze the verses of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb accordingly. In addition to tafsīr literature, we also examine ḥadīth reports, which illuminate the situational contexts of many verses.

Findings

The content of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb reveals that two conflicting discourses confronted one another at the time of its revelation. The discourse of īmān (faith) was supported by God, the Prophet, and the true believers. Key features of this discourse included unwavering belief in divine promises and sincerity in faith. Its central signifiers were belief in the divine nature of the Prophet's mission, the special status of the Prophet's family, and the finality of prophethood-khātam al-nabiyyīn-which functions as the nodal point of this discourse.

In contrast, a competing discourse of ignorance and hypocrisy (jahl wa nifāq) emerged, represented by hypocrites and those whom the Qur'an describes as having diseased hearts. The signifiers of this discourse included: doubt and unstable belief, the diminishing of the Prophet's divine status, and portraying succession to the Prophet as hereditary. The latter functioned as the

nodal point of the anti-Prophetic discourse. This analysis is supported by both the Qur'anic text and relevant traditions.

The sūrah presents both the antagonistic actions of the nifāq discourse and the hegemonizing strategies of the īmān discourse. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's framework, we identify several hegemonization methods used in the sūrah:

- Exposing the hypocritical nature of the opposing discourse,
- Emphasizing the Prophet's position as God's messenger and last prophet,
- Recasting political actors: the Prophet is not the father of any man, but the Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets; his wives are mothers of the believers; Zayd is not the Prophet's son,
- Employing "accessibility strategies" to explain complex issues,
- Using "credibility strategies" to establish truth through tangible examples, such as the fulfillment of divine promises in the Battle of the Confederates.

Conclusion

Discourse analysis of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb through the lens of Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical framework reveals a coherent structure with a unified nodal point. While the sūrah appears, at first glance, to contain disparate themes, discursive analysis demonstrates that all its components serve a singular purpose.

The discourse of ignorance and hypocrisy sought to reinterpret prophethood as a human institution, invoking pre-Islamic traditions that enabled succession through hereditary means—particularly the adoption of Zayd as the Prophet's heir. Since the Prophet had no biological sons, this view cast Zayd as a potential successor.

Sūrat al-Aḥzāb counters this narrative through strategic hegemonization, clarifying the Prophet's status as the final messenger of God and negating the possibility of hereditary prophethood. The central meaning of the sūrah thus lies in affirming the Prophet's khātamiyyah (finality of prophethood) and the non-hereditary, divine basis of succession.

Keywords

Qur'an, Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, Discourse Analysis, Laclau and Mouffe, Nodal Point.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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