Application of Shariah Methods as Guidance in Leadership Selection During General Elections in the Context of Malaysia

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Abstract

Malaysia practices a parliamentary democracy in which citizens are mandated to elect the government through a General Election (GE) every five years. The selection of leaders is a Shariah obligation and a matter of scholarly consensus (*ijmaʿ*). While previous studies indicate that voter decisions are shaped by issues, geography, sentiments, and background, no consistent guideline has been applied in leadership selection during elections.This study aims to provide Shariah-based guidance for leadership selection by examining Islamic jurisprudential principles alongside the roles and essential qualities of leaders in Islam. Employing a qualitative library-based methodology with content analysis, the study draws on the Qur'an, Sunnah, Shariah maxims, ijtihad, and the views of both classical and contemporary scholars. A three-step algorithm is proposed: first, prioritizing coalitions with a majority of Muslim Members of Parliament (MPs); second, evaluating party manifestos using *Fiqh al-Muwazanat* (jurisprudence of balancing priorities) and *Maqaṣid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law); and third, assessing individual candidates on competence, integrity, and minimal potential harm. This framework enables over 14 million Muslim voters to align their choices with Shariah principles in future elections and may encourage political parties to refine their policies and manifestos in line with Islamic values.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Selection Guidance, General Election, Shariah

Introduction

Malaysia is a nation that practices a parliamentary democracy, where citizens are entrusted with the mandate to determine the formation of government through general elections (GE) (Parlimen Malaysia, 2025; Wikipedia, 2025). During the GE, voters cast their ballots to elect leaders at both the federal (national) and state levels. The current Malaysian cabinet is led by Pakatan Harapan, with YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim serving as Prime Minister.

Leadership holds profound significance in Islam as it is essential for preserving sovereignty, ensuring security, and safeguarding the continuity of a state (Engku Ahmad Zaki, 2020). The

appointment of leaders is a clear and undeniable Shariah obligation (Khairul Anuar, 2018). The consensus (*ijmaʿ*) of the Prophet's Companions in establishing the caliphate after his passing is recognized as a decisive precedent in this regard (Mohamad Zaidi, 2015). Imam al-Mawardi underscored that the responsibility of leaders is to continue the mission of the Prophet by upholding religion and managing worldly affairs. Whilst Ibn Khaldun, emphasized that the ultimate duty of leadership is to guide humanity toward eternal success in the Hereafter while managing worldly life as a means to achieve this end (Siti Fatimah, 2022).Furthermore, Islam prescribes stringent guidelines concerning the criteria and qualifications required for leadership, stressing that only individuals possessing integrity, competence, and adherence to religious principles are eligible to assume such a role (Engku Ahmad Zaki, 2020).

Objectives
The objectives of this study are threefold:
1. To analyze the primary roles and responsibilities of leaders as prescribed by Shariah.
2. To identify the qualities, attributes, and characteristics required of a leader according to Islamic principles.
3. To propose a framework for leadership selection based on Shariah principles and methods, specifically for Muslim voters in Malaysia.

Methodology
This study employs a qualitative research design, using library research and content analysis. The primary and secondary sources include: the Qur'an, Sunnah, *Fiqh al-Muwazanat, Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat, Fiqh al-Waqi', Saddu al-Zarai', Maqasid al-Shariah*, as well as ijtihad and scholarly views, from both classical and contemporary.

Literature Review
During Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE15), no consistent trend emerged regarding the traits, attributes, and characteristics of leaders preferred by Muslim voters, particularly among the Malay community. Instead, the Malay electorate appeared increasingly fragmented along ethnic, partisan, and communal lines (Bridget Welsh, 2023). Pakatan Harapan (PH) was supported primarily due to its leaders being perceived as free from scandals, experienced in governance, and composed of energetic youth with convincing leadership qualities (Junaidi, 2023). Perikatan Nasional (PN), meanwhile, was chosen by many voters for projecting itself as a clean coalition untainted by corruption. In contrast, Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates were selected for their administrative experience, perceived ability to provide stability, trustworthiness, and capacity to manage national challenges (Junaidi, 2023).

Studies focusing on youth voters in GE15 revealed that they were often confused and indecisive when making electoral choices (Nina Muslim, 2022; Suzalina, 2022). According to Zullaile et al. (2023), young voters lacked clear guidelines to determine candidate eligibility. The study recommended that a standardized framework for electoral candidate selection be developed, grounded in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Shariah principles, while also considering Malaysia's socio-political realities.

Overall, it is evident that voters applied diverse values and criteria in their leadership choices, and no uniform or dominant pattern was consistently demonstrated among Muslim voters.

Findings
The Roles of Leaders as Obligations to be Fulfilled
The following textual evidences and arguments highlight the roles and responsibilities that leaders are obligated to uphold according to Islamic teachings.

1. The Role of Upholding Religion by Spreading the Message of Monotheism (*Tawḥid*)
   Allah SWT commands:

   شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِۦ نُوحًا وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِۦٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا۟ فِيهِ ۚ كَبُرَ عَلَى ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۚ ٱللَّهُ يَجْتَبِىٓ إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَآءُ وَيَهْدِىٓ إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ

   "He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus – to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]." (al-Qur'an 42:13) (Mohamad Shukeri et al., 2012).

   The same message concerning the duty to uphold religion and spread tawḥīd is also emphasized in Hud (11:61) and al-Nur (24:55). The *sirah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) records how he sent letters and envoys to rulers of neighboring regions to invite them to Islam (al-Buti, 2024). Classical scholars such as al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah similarly held that one of the primary responsibilities of leadership is the propagation and preservation of religion (Mohd Azhar & Muhammad Lukman, 2012).

2. The Role of Upholding the Shariah
   The Quran further affirms the responsibility of leaders to implement Islamic law:

   ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُوا۟ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا۟ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْأُمُورِ

   "[They are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakāt and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of all matters." (al-Qur'an 22:41) (Mohamad Shukeri et al., 2012).

   Similar obligations are reiterated in surah *Ali Imran* (3:110), *al-Nisa* (4:58), and in Prophetic traditions such as Sunan Abi Dawud (ḥadith no. 2948) and Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhari (ḥadith no. 2306). Ibn Khaldun also emphasized that the central duty of leaders is the realization of *Maqaṣid al-Shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) (Mohd Azhar & Muhammad Lukman, 2012).

In summary, the obligations of Muslim leaders include upholding religion, ensuring justice, fulfilling trusts, cultivating the prosperity of the earth, implementing Islamic law, including *amar ma'ruf wa nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil), establishing prayer, administering zakat, calling to *tawḥid*, and serving the welfare of the people. These roles can broadly be categorized into two primary functions: (i) propagating Islam by spreading the message of tawḥid, and (ii) upholding the Shariah by establishing governance that embodies Islamic principles.

Leadership Roles Prohibited by Shariah

1. Leaders Who Are Disbelievers (*Kafir*)
   The Qur'an explicitly rejects disbelievers as legitimate leaders for Muslims. Allah SWT declares:

ٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ ۖ وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا۟ أَوْلِيَآؤُهُمُ ٱلطَّٰغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ ٱلنُّورِ إِلَى ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ ۗ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ

"Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their allies are Ṭaghut; they bring them out of light into darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein forever." Al-Qur'an 2:257) (Mohamad Shukeri et al., 2012).

This verse underscores that leadership rooted in disbelief stands in direct opposition to tawḥid (monotheism). The same prohibition is reinforced within the broader Qur'anic narrative, particularly in surah *al-Baqarah* (2:257), which rejects leadership that leads communities into darkness.

2. Leaders Who Do Not Govern by Allah's Law
   The Qur'an also condemns leaders who abandon divine law in their governance.
   Allah SWT proclaims:

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَا ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّونَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا۟ لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا۟ وَٱلرَّبَّٰنِيُّونَ وَٱلْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا ٱسْتُحْفِظُوا۟ مِن كِتَٰبِ ٱللَّهِ وَكَانُوا۟ عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا۟ ٱلنَّاسَ وَٱخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا۟ بِـَٔايَٰتِى ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ

"Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars, by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is they who are the disbelievers." (al-Qur'an 5:44).

Similar injunctions can be found in surah *Ṣad* (38:26) and *al-Maidah* (5:45, 47), which collectively affirm that abandoning the implementation of Allah's rulings constitutes disbelief and betrayal of divine trust. Based on these evidences, Islamic law rejects leaders who are polytheists, disbelievers, followers of vain desires, or those who fail to rule by Allah's revelation, as such leadership contradicts tawḥīd and neglects the obligation to uphold the Sharī'ah of Islam.

Characteristics and Qualities of a Leader Encouraged by Shariah

1. A Leader with Strength and Trustworthiness (*Amanah*)
   The Qur'an emphasizes that leadership must rest upon individuals who embody both strength and trust. Allah SWT states:

قَالَتْ إِحْدَىٰهُمَا يَٰٓأَبَتِ ٱسْتَـْٔجِرْهُ ۖ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ ٱسْتَـْٔجَرْتَ ٱلْقَوِىُّ

"One of the two women said, 'O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.'" (al-Qur'an 28:26) (Mohamed, 2018; Mohd Azhar & Muhammad Lukman, 2012).

This verse highlights two essential attributes of leadership: competence (*al-qawiy*) and integrity (*al-amin*).

2. A Leader with Knowledge and Physical Capability
   The Qur'an further describes the selection of Ṭalut as king, affirming that leadership requires both intellectual and physical strength. Allah SWT declares:

قَالَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱصۡطَفَىٰهُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَزَادَهُۥ بَسۡطَةٗ فِى ٱلۡعِلۡمِ وَٱلۡجِسۡمِ

"Indeed, Allah has chosen him over you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature." (al-Qur'an 2:247).

These qualities of competence (*al-qawiy*) and trustworthiness (*amanah*)—which stem from *taqwa* (God-consciousness)—are reinforced in surah *al-Shuʿaraʾ* (26:38), as well as in multiple hadith, including Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim (no. 60, 1825, 1828), Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhari (no. 620), and Musnad Aḥmad (no. 10745). Classical scholars such as al-Mawardi, al-Mawdudi, and Ibn Khaldun also emphasized that competence and trustworthiness are fundamental criteria for leadership (Mohamed, 2018).

In summary, the characteristics and attributes of leaders prescribed by Shariah—such as physical capability, trustworthiness, knowledge, decisiveness through consultation (*shura*), justice, compassion toward the people, and humility—reflect the embodiment of a high-quality Muslim personality, namely a believer (*muʾmin*) who is God-fearing (*muttaqi*). These traits together ensure that leadership serves both the worldly welfare and the spiritual well-being of the community in accordance with divine guidance.

Characteristics and Traits of Leaders Prohibited by Shariah

1. Oppression (*Ẓulm*)

The Qur'an explicitly condemns oppressive rulers. Allah SWT states:

إِنَّ فِرۡعَوۡنَ عَلَا فِى ٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهۡلَهَا شِيَعٗا يَسۡتَضۡعِفُ طَآئِفَةٗ مِّنۡهُمۡ يُذَبِّحُ أَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ وَيَسۡتَحۡيِۦ نِسَآءَهُمۡۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُفۡسِدِينَ

"Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions, oppressing a sector among them, slaughtering their [newborn] sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was of the corrupters." (al-Qur'an 28:4).

This verse illustrates the destructive consequences of tyranny and underscores that oppression is antithetical to legitimate leadership in Islam.

2. Betrayal of Trust (*Khianah al-Amanah*)

Leaders who betray their trust are also condemned in the Qur'an. Allah SWT declares:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَخُونُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوٓاْ أَمَٰنَٰتِكُمۡ وَأَنتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ

"O you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts while you know [the consequence]." (al-Quran 8:27).

Betrayal of trust is considered a fundamental violation of faith and governance.

Oppression (*ẓulm*) and betrayal (*khianah*) stand in direct opposition to the qualities of a God-fearing Muslim leader. The same prohibitions are emphasized throughout the Qur'an and Sunnah, including in *al-Shuʿaraʾ* (26:151–152), *al-Maidah* (5:8), *Ghafir* (40:35), *al-Baqarah* (2:188), *al-Nisaʾ* (4:29, 138–139, 144), and *al-Ṣaff* (61:2). Reinforcement is also found in several hadith, such as Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhari (no. 7150), Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim (nos. 142, 156), Sunan Abī Dawud (nos. 2929, 3580), Jami' al-Tirmizi (no. 1337), and Sunan Ibn Majah (no. 2313).

On the basis of these evidences, leadership traits such as oppression, betrayal of trust, transgression, injustice, corruption, alliance with disbelievers, hypocrisy, pursuit of office, and dishonesty are unequivocally prohibited. Such qualities directly oppose *taqwa* and disqualify individuals from legitimate leadership under Islamic law.

Guidelines for Leadership Selection: Criteria Mandated by Shariah

1. A Leader of Faith (*Iman*)

   The Qur'an emphasizes that leaders must embody true faith. Allah SWT commands:

   يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْۖ فَإِن تَنَٰزَعْتُمْ فِى شَىْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ
   إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

   "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Then if you differ in anything, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination." (al-Qur'an 4:59) (Mohamed, 2018).

   A similar message concerning the necessity of leaders who are believers is also conveyed in Surah *al-Nur* (24:55).

2. A Leader Who Rules with Justice

   Justice (*ʿadl*) is a core criterion for leadership in Islam. Allah SWT declares:

   ۞ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلْأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُم بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحْكُمُواْ بِٱلْعَدْلِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم
   بِهِۦٓۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًۢا بَصِيرًا

   "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing." (al-Qur'an 4:58).

   This principle is reinforced elsewhere, such as in surah *al-Maidah* (5:8), where leaders are enjoined to uphold fairness and impartiality in all matters of governance.

3. A Leader Who is God-Fearing and Righteous (*Taqwa* and *Ṣaliḥ*)

   The Qur'an makes it clear that worldly leadership should be entrusted to those who are God-fearing and righteous. Allah SWT proclaims:

   وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِى ٱلزَّبُورِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ٱلذِّكْرِ أَنَّ ٱلْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِىَ ٱلصَّٰلِحُونَ

   "And indeed We have written in the Scripture, after the Reminder: 'My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.'" (al-Quran 21:105) (Mohamad Shukeri et al., 2012).

   This verse highlights that the authority of leadership and governance is designated for those who embody piety (*taqwa*) and righteousness (*salih*).

4. A Leader Who Establishes Prayer, Gives Zakat, Enjoins Good, and Forbids Evil

   The Qur'an also specifies that those entrusted with leadership must demonstrate commitment to Islamic practice and moral governance. Allah SWT states:

   ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُاْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُواْ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْاْ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْأُمُورِ

   "Those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakat and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of all matters." (al-Qur'an 22:41) (Mohamad Shukeri et al., 2012).

   This verse affirms that genuine leadership is characterized by active devotion to worship, social responsibility, and moral guardianship.

5. A Leader Whose Character Aligns Closely with the Qur'an

   During the period of the *Khulafaʾ al-Rashidin*, the Companions prioritized leaders whose personalities and conduct most closely reflected the teachings of the Qur'an, as well as those who demonstrated strong leadership in religious matters (Mohd Azhar & Muhammad Lukman, 2012).

Guidelines for Leadership Selection: Criteria Prohibited by Shariah

1.   Prohibition of Appointing Non-Believers as Leaders
        The Qur'an explicitly prohibits appointing disbelievers as leaders or protectors over Muslims. Allah SWT declares:

لَّا يَتَّخِذِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِن دُونِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَۖ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ فِى شَىْءٍ إِلَّآ أَن تَتَّقُواْ مِنْهُمْ تُقَىٰةًۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسَهُۥۗ وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمَصِيرُ

"Let not the believers take the disbelievers as allies [leaders or protectors] rather than the believers. And whoever does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself, and to Allah is the [final] destination." (al-Qur'an 3:28).

The same prohibition is reiterated in multiple verses, including *al-Nisaʾ* (4:139, 144), *al-Tawbah* (9:23), and *al-Mumtaḥanah* (60:22). These verses collectively emphasize the incompatibility of entrusting political or protective authority over Muslims to disbelievers.

2.   Prohibition of Taking Non-Believers as Trusted Allies
        The Qur'an also warns against forming intimate bonds of trust and reliance with non-believers who harbor enmity toward Muslims. Allah SWT commands:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَتَّخِذُواْ بِطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا وَدُّواْ مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ ٱلْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ أَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِى صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُۚ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ ٱلْءَايَٰتِۖ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

"O you who have believed, do not take as intimates those other than yourselves, for they will not spare you [any] ruin. They wish you would have hardship. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater. We have certainly made clear to you the signs, if you will use reason." (al- Qur'an 3:118).
Similar injunctions are found in *al-Tawbah* (9:16), *al-Maidah* (5:80–81), *al-Mumtaḥanah* (60:1), and *al-Mujadalah* (58:14–15). These verses highlight the danger of granting disbelievers intimate trust, as such alliances may undermine the faith and security of the Muslim community.

3.   Prohibition of Appointing Oppressors as Leaders
        The Qur'an forbids the appointment of unjust or oppressive individuals (*ẓalimun*) as leaders. Allah SWT states:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَتَّخِذُواْ ٱلْيَهُودَ وَٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰٓ أَوْلِيَآءَۘ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍۚ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنْهُمْۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

"O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you—then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people." (al-Qur'an 5:51).

This verse highlights that entrusting authority to oppressors is contrary to divine guidance. A similar warning is given in surah *al-Baqarah* (2:124), which underscores that leadership should not be conferred upon those who commit injustice.

4.   Prohibition of Appointing the Transgressors Who Cause Corruption
        The Qur'an further cautions against obeying or granting authority to those who transgress limits and spread corruption on earth. Allah SWT commands:

وَلَا تُطِيعُوٓاْ أَمْرَ ٱلْمُسْرِفِينَ
ٱلَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

"And do not obey the order of the transgressors. Those who cause corruption on the earth and do not amend." (al-Qur'an 26:151–152).

This underscores that leadership should not rest with individuals or groups who perpetuate harm, injustice, or disorder in society.

5. Prohibition of Appointing the Weak in Character and Competence
    Prophetic tradition (ḥadith) emphasizes that leadership is a heavy responsibility requiring strength and competence. Abu Dharr (RA) reported:
    "I said to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him): O Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me to a position of authority? He then placed his hand on my shoulder and said: O Abu Dharr, you are weak, and leadership is a trust. Verily, on the Day of Judgment it will be a cause of humiliation and regret, except for one who fulfills its obligations and carries out the duties required of it." (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 1825).

6. Leaders Who Seek Office for Personal Ambition
    The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warned against individuals who actively pursue positions of leadership for their own ambition. He said:

    إِنَّكُمْ سَتَحْرِصُونَ عَلَى الْإِمَارَةِ وَسَتَكُونُ نَدَامَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَنِعْمَ الْمُرْضِعَةُ وَبِئْسَتْ الْفَاطِمَةُ

    "Indeed, you will eagerly desire leadership, but it will be a cause of regret for you on the Day of Judgment. What an excellent nurturer leadership is (when it brings benefit), and what an evil severer it is (when it deprives people of blessings)." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari, no. 7148).

This ḥadith highlights that leadership is not to be sought for personal prestige, as its misuse can result in failure to serve the community and accountability in the Hereafter.

7. Appointment of Associates or the Incompetent
    Islamic teachings also prohibit the appointment of unqualified associates or personal acquaintances when more capable individuals are available. Al-Ḥakim al-Nisaburi narrated in al-Mustadrak:

    أَخْبَرَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُوسَى الْعَدْلُ ثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَيُّوبَ أَنْبَأَ يَزِيدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ الطَّيَالِسِيُّ ثَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْوَاسِطِيُّ، عَنْ حُسَيْنِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ الرَّحَبِيُّ عَنْ عِكْرِمَةَ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنِ اسْتَعْمَلَ رَجُلًا مِنْ عِصَابَةٍ وَفِي تِلْكَ الْعِصَابَةِ مَنْ هُوَ أَرْضَى لِلَّهِ مِنْهُ فَقَدْ خَانَ اللَّهَ وخَانَ رَسُولَهُ وخانَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

    Ibn Abbas (RA) reported that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:
    "Whoever appoints a man from a group while there is someone more pleasing to Allah than him within that group, he has betrayed Allah, His Messenger, and the believers."

This ḥadīth underscores that leadership appointments must be based on merit and trustworthiness, not favoritism or personal ties.

8. Scholarly Ijtihad: Exceptional Cases for Non-Muslim Leadership
    Classical and contemporary scholars have engaged in *ijtihad* regarding exceptional circumstances in leadership. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythami opined that appointing a non-Muslim to a position of leadership may be permissible if it secures clear public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*), especially in cases where no qualified Muslim candidate is available, or where Muslim candidates demonstrate betrayal while the non-Muslim candidate does not. However, such a leader must remain under strict oversight to prevent harm or injustice to Muslims (Jabatan Mufti Negeri Selangor, 2019).

In essence, Islamic teachings strongly emphasize prohibitions against appointing disbelievers, oppressors, corrupt individuals, or the unqualified to leadership when suitable Muslim alternatives exist. Similarly, leadership must not be conferred upon those driven by personal ambition, favoritism, or incompetence, as such practices undermine both Shariah objectives and the trust of the Muslim community.

Leadership Selection Algorithm during General Elections
Drawing upon the roles and responsibilities of leaders as prescribed by Shariah, the qualities and attributes encouraged or prohibited by Islamic law, as well as the guidelines on leadership selection outlined in the sources of Shariah, the following algorithm is proposed to evaluate and subsequently select candidates for voting during Malaysia's General Election (GE).

Step 1: Evaluate Coalitions – Prioritize a Majority of Muslim MPs
- To establish an Islamic-oriented government, a minimum of **112 Members of Parliament (MPs)** is required through a coalition. Under Malaysia's parliamentary democracy, 112 MPs constitute the simple majority needed to form the Federal Government.
- This criterion aligns with *Fiqh al-Waqiʿ* (jurisprudence of contemporary realities), as coalition-based governance reflects the practical context of Malaysia's political system. Thus, selecting a coalition becomes a matter of *maslahah* (public interest) in fulfilling the Shariah duty of appointing leaders.
- Accordingly, coalitions with a majority of Muslim MPs—based on previous GE records—should be prioritized as the **first step** in determining leadership for the formation of a government that upholds Islamic principles.
- The Malaysian Constitution currently imposes several restrictions on the full implementation of Shariah. A coalition with a majority of **112 or up to 148 Muslim MPs** would possess the legislative authority to amend constitutional provisions where necessary.
- From the perspective of *Maqaṣid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law), a coalition with such a Muslim majority is best positioned to safeguard the **five essentials *(al-ḍaruriyyat al-khams):*** protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.
- If Step 1 yields a tie or inconclusive outcome between coalitions, then the evaluation proceeds to **Step 2.**

Step 2: Evaluate Party Coalition Manifestos from the Perspective of Preserving Maqaṣid al-Sharaʿah
- ***Fiqh al-Muwazanat* (1):** A coalition whose manifesto explicitly seeks to establish the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law or *Shariah* or an Islamic state is to be prioritized over one that merely seeks to preserve Islam within the current framework of the Malaysian Constitution.
- ***Fiqh al-Muwazanat* (2):** A coalition whose manifesto commits to preserving Islam within the constitutional framework is preferable to one that provides no provisions at all regarding the safeguarding of Islam.
- ***Fiqh al-Muwazanat* (3):** A coalition whose manifesto is silent on Islamic preservation is still preferable to one that explicitly promotes the establishment of a secular state.

If Step 2 still results in a tie between coalitions, the evaluation proceeds to **Step 3.**

Step 3: Evaluate Individual Candidate Characteristics

- *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat* **(1):** A Muslim candidate should be prioritized over a non-Muslim candidate.
- *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat* **(2):** A candidate who demonstrates competence (*al-qawiy*) and trustworthiness (*al-amin*) should be prioritized over one who lacks these qualities.
- *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat* **and** *Saddu al-Zarai'* **(3):** A candidate with fewer traits of corruption (*fasad*) should be prioritized over one with evident and numerous corrupt characteristics.

Discussion

The process of leadership selection in Malaysia during General Elections (GE) differs significantly from the model practiced during the era of the *Khulafa al-Rashidin* and the early period of Islamic history, where the focus was on the appointment of a single head of state. In contemporary Malaysia, governance is not vested in an individual leader alone but is instead formed through political parties that coalesce into coalitions to secure a governing mandate. A coalition that commands at least 112 parliamentary seats is constitutionally empowered to form the federal government. The Prime Minister is subsequently appointed to lead the cabinet, supported by ministers and Members of Parliament, all of whom operate under the constitutional framework and oversight of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA).

The roles and responsibilities of leadership in Malaysia rest upon the majority party or the coalition that successfully forms the government, rather than on a single individual leader as was the case during the era of the *Khulafa al-Rashidin* and the early history of Islam. This reality underscores the importance of evaluating a party's constitution and policies, since the dominant or majority party will implement its governance agenda according to the objectives outlined in its foundational framework.The principles and constitutions of political parties thus play a decisive role in determining the direction and objectives of governance. While individual leaders may change over time, the party's constitution and policies remain binding and continue to guide subsequent leaders. This structural continuity is particularly crucial when a single party attains dominance to the extent that it can form the federal government independently, without reliance on coalitions. Historically, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) demonstrated such dominance by independently forming the federal government in the general elections of 1955, 1959, 1964, and 2004. To date, no other party has managed to replicate this position of unilateral dominance in Malaysia's parliamentary history (Wikipedia, 2025).

Coalitions are formed to establish the federal government in situations where no single party is able to secure sufficient seats to govern independently (Wikipedia, 2025). Across eleven general elections, party coalitions have been required to achieve a parliamentary majority. On certain occasions, more than one coalition has been formed within a single electoral cycle. This occurs when the primary coalition established before the election fails to secure the threshold of 112 parliamentary seats, prompting the formation of a secondary coalition after the election to meet or surpass the required number for government formation. Such secondary coalitions are typically temporary in nature, dissolving once the governing mandate has concluded. This phenomenon was notably observed during the periods of 1972–1973, 2018, and 2022. Consequently, the assessment of the direction, objectives, and

manifestos of these coalitions becomes a critical responsibility for voters, as they directly shape the trajectory of national governance.

The outcomes of Malaysia's two most recent General Elections, GE14 (2018) and GE15 (2022), demonstrated that no single party possessed sufficient dominance to form the federal government independently. Should this trend persist, the act of voting for a coalition will increasingly become the decisive factor in determining the formation of the federal government. Within Malaysia's parliamentary democracy, the minimum requirement of 112 parliamentary seats remains the threshold for government formation. Accordingly, casting a vote for a coalition is effectively an endorsement of that coalition's mandate to establish and lead the federal government of Malaysia.

Conclusion

The act of voting to select and appoint leaders constitutes a Shariah-based trust and obligation. This study has clarified the fundamental duties and core characteristics of leadership in Islam, which include upholding religion, ensuring justice, and maintaining integrity, while rejecting tyranny, corruption, and dishonesty. In guiding the process of leadership selection during Malaysia's General Elections (GE), the study proposes a coalition capable of forming a Muslim-majority government, thereby safeguarding the objectives of *Maqaṣid al-Shariah*. The second step requires evaluating coalition manifestos in light of *Maqaṣid al-Shariah* and *Fiqh al-Muwazanat*, emphasizing objectives that promote the preservation of Shariah principles while minimizing harm to religion. The third step involves filtering candidates based on their faith, competence, integrity, and trustworthiness, while excluding those with significant risks of corruption (*fasad*). This approach establishes a method of prioritizing electoral choices in accordance with primary Shariah texts and secondary jurisprudential principles. With the availability of such an algorithmic framework, Muslim voters are better equipped to make decisions consistent with Islamic teachings, thereby fulfilling their obligation to appoint leaders. Ultimately, the overarching purpose of leadership within a Muslim society is to realize *maṣlaḥah,* that is the attainment of success in both this world and the Hereafter, by seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT.

Table 1

Summary of the Sequential Algorithm for Leadership Selection during General Elections

Steps	Parameters
1	**Evaluate Party Coalition**: Select the coalition that holds a majority of Muslim Members of Parliament (MPs).
	If the outcome remains tied, proceed to Step 2.
2	**Evaluate Coalition Manifesto from the Perspective of Preserving Maqaṣid al-Shariah**: a) Select a coalition whose manifesto explicitly commits to establishing comprehensive Shariah or an Islamic state takes precedence over one that only seeks to preserve Islam within the provisions of the Malaysian Constitution.
	b)Select a coalition whose manifesto commits to preserving Islam within the constitutional framework is preferable to one that provides no provisions at all for safeguarding Islam.
	c) Select a coalition whose manifesto is silent on preserving Islam is still preferable to one that explicitly aims to establish a secular state
	If the outcome remains tied, proceed to Step 3
3	**Evaluate Candidate Characteristics**: a) Selection of a Muslim candidate is to be prioritized over a non-Muslim candidate.
	b) Selection of a candidate who demonstrates competence (*al-qawiy*) and trustworthiness (*al-amin*) is to be prioritized over one who is less competent.
	c)Selection of a candidate with fewer corrupt traits (*fasad*) is to be prioritized over one with significant corrupt characteristics.

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by synthesizing classical Islamic jurisprudential principles such as *Maqasid al-Shariah* and *Fiqh al-Muwazanat* into a structured algorithmic framework for leadership selection during election time. Contextually, it addresses a critical gap in the Malaysian electoral landscape by providing Muslim voters with a religiously-guided decision-making tool tailored to a Malaysia's sosio politics and parliamentary democracy system. The findings advance existing knowledge by operationalizing abstract Shariah concepts into actionable voting guidelines, thereby enriching the discourse on practical Islamic values and governance. Its significance lies in offering a practical and structured algorithmic steps that aligns democratic participation with Islamic values, promoting spiritually-informed political engagement in a unique and multicultural society.

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