ALSYS
Jurnal Keislaman dan Ilmu Pendidikan

e-ISSN : 2808-540X
p-ISSN : 2808-7119

Terindeks: Copernicus, Sinta 5, Dimensions, Scilit, Lens, Semantic Scholar, Garuda, Google, Base, etc.

https://doi.org/10.58578/alsys.v6i5.11553

AN ANALYSIS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S LEADERSHIP IN TAFSIR AL-AZHAR: A STUDY OF SURAH ALI 'IMRAN VERSE 159

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Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Jun 15, 2026	Jul 13, 2026	Jul 25, 2026	Jul 30, 2026

Abstract

Prophetic leadership offers an ethical framework for addressing contemporary leadership challenges, yet its contextual relevance to Indonesian society requires further scholarly examination. This study aimed to analyze Hamka's interpretation of Prophet Muhammad's leadership in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, with particular emphasis on Surah Ali 'Imran verse 159, identify the leadership values reflected in the Prophet's exemplary conduct, and examine their relevance to leadership in Indonesia. The study employed a literature review method using a contextual thematic exegesis approach. The findings indicate that Surah Ali 'Imran verse 159 emphasizes gentleness and consultation as fundamental principles of leadership. Gentleness is interpreted as a manifestation of Allah's mercy that strengthens emotional bonds and softens the hearts of followers, whereas consultation represents an inclusive and participatory principle of decision-making. The analysis further identifies trustworthiness, justice, and exemplary conduct as essential characteristics of Prophet Muhammad's leadership. These values remain highly relevant to contemporary Indonesian leadership because their implementation can promote inclusive decision-making, social harmony, justice, and public welfare. The study concludes that prophetic leadership provides a normative and practical framework for developing ethical,

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participatory, and welfare-oriented leadership. This study contributes to Islamic leadership scholarship by contextualizing Hamka's interpretation and demonstrating the applicability of prophetic leadership values to contemporary governance and social leadership in Indonesia.

Keywords: Contextual Exegesis; Indonesian Leadership; Prophetic Leadership; Surah Ali 'Imran; *Tafsir Al-Azhar*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a crucial aspect of various cultures and societies around the world. Various leadership theories and practices have developed, ranging from democratic to authoritarian, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. In the Islamic context, the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad as Messenger of Allah and leader of the early Muslim community serves as an important reference point that is relevant not only to the prophetic period but also to the social, political, educational, and community life of Muslims throughout the ages (Syahputra et al., 2025). The Qur'an not only depicts the Prophet Muhammad as a conveyor of revelation, but also as a leader who built a social order based on morals, wisdom, deliberation, and firm trust in Allah Swt. One of the verses most often used as a basis for discussions of the Prophet's leadership character is Surah Ali-Imran: 159, which emphasizes gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and trust in Allah Swt as the foundations of leadership (Anam & Supardi, 2022).

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ هاللِّ لِنْتَ لَهُمْۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى هاللِّۗ اِنَّ هاللَّ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ

The meaning: "*So, thanks to Allah's grace, you (Prophet Muhammad) were gentle towards them. If you act hard and have a rough heart, of course they will stay away from those around you. Therefore, forgive them, ask for forgiveness for them, and consult with them in all (important) matters. Then, when you have made up your mind, put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who put their trust in him.*"

This verse holds significant significance because it depicts how the Prophet Muhammad Saw led his people in challenging circumstances, particularly after the Battle of Uhud. In it, Allah emphasizes that the Prophet's gentleness was a blessing from Him; had he been harsh and harsh, his companions would have distanced themselves from him. Allah then commands the Prophet to forgive, seek forgiveness for others, consult with one another in matters, and rely on Allah after making decisions. This series of messages demonstrates

that Islamic leadership is not authoritarian, but rather a leadership that combines firmness, compassion, participation, and submission to Allah.

In the Indonesian exegesis, Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar holds an important position because it successfully connects the meaning of the verse with the social, moral, and cultural realities of the Muslim community. In his interpretation of QS. Ali-Imran: 159, Hamka not only emphasizes the personal ethical dimension, but also presents the verse as a social and political foundation containing the principles of democracy, deliberation, respect for differences of opinion, and the virtue of morality in leadership. Several previous studies have shown that Hamka views this verse as closely related to leadership based on deliberation and decision-making that is not dominated by the leader's personal will, while also containing the values of democracy, togetherness, balance, and respect for human dignity. On the other hand, other studies also confirm that QS. Ali-Imran: 159 contains four main values, namely gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and trust in God, which are reflected in the leadership character of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a figure who is gentle when reprimanding, not harsh, forgiving of others' mistakes, deliberating in affairs, and trusting in God after a decision is made (Veriandi, 2023). Thus, this verse not only contains ethical norms, but also offers an ideal leadership model that is relevant to be applied in the context of modern leadership.

The study of the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad in QS. Ali 'Imran: 159 in Tafsir Al-Azhar shows that Hamka places gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and tawakkul as the core of prophetic leadership that builds participation and moral steadfastness in leadership. The research of Maliki (2022) confirms that in the perspective of Tafsir Al-Azhar, the concept of al-shura is an important axis present in QS. Ali 'Imran: 159, with the emphasis that deliberation is not merely a decision-making technique, but the foundation of Islamic social and political ethics. In line with that, the study "The Leadership Character of the Prophet Muhammad SAW Contained in QS Ali Imran Verse 159" found five main leadership values, namely gentleness, not being hard-hearted, forgiving, deliberating, and tawakkul, all of which show the Prophet's humanistic and transformative leadership style (Veriandi, 2023). Another study on "Teacher Personality in Islamic Education: A Study of the Qur'an Surah Ali Imran Verse 159" also shows that the values of this verse can be implemented in educational leadership through polite communication, forgiveness, and participatory decision-making, so that this verse is relevant not only to the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, but also to modern leadership practices (Uri & Anwar, 2025). In

addition, the study "The Concept of Statehood in the Perspective of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh" and the article "Ideal Leaders in the Qur'an" strengthen that Hamka's interpretation of QS. Ali 'Imran: 159 connects the Prophet's leadership character with the principles of ideal leadership in Islam, namely democratic leadership, deliberation-oriented, and spiritually and socially responsible (Mu'iz & Al-Khalil, 2022).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on this verse, the discussion of the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw in the Al-Azhar Tafsir still leaves room for development, especially if focused on a more systematic reading of the character of prophetic leadership from Hamka's perspective. Some previous studies have focused more on aspects of siyasa, democracy, or da'wah values, while explorations that place this verse as the basis for a comprehensive analysis of the Prophet's leadership are still relatively limited (Santoso, 2025). Therefore, this study is important to clarify how the Al-Azhar Tafsir portrays the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a model of Qur'anic leadership that remains relevant to the contemporary context.

The main problem addressed in this study is how the Prophet Muhammad's leadership values are reflected in the Al-Azhar Tafsir and how they are implemented in Indonesia. This study seeks to answer these questions using an in-depth qualitative analysis approach, thus providing a comprehensive picture of how these values are applied in the daily lives of Indonesian society. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of science, particularly in the study of Islamic leadership. Furthermore, this research will serve not only as an academic reference but also as a practical guide for leaders in carrying out their leadership mandate.

METHODS

This study employs a library research design with a contextual thematic exegesis approach (Hasan et al., 2025; Rukin, 2019). The choice of a literature-based design is motivated by the aim to collect, catalogue, and synthesize information from primary and secondary written sources concerning Tafsir Al-Azhar's interpretation of QS Ali-Imran verse 159, specifically discussions of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership. Primary sources include print and digital editions of Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar, the Qur'anic text, and relevant translations and introductory notes. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, contemporary Islamic studies monographs, theses and dissertations, and historical

studies that address the socio-historical context of early Medina and leadership practices during the prophetic period. Source selection followed criteria of relevance, authoritativeness, publication date, and bibliographic verifiability.

For data collection and management, the researchers conducted systematic searches of digital libraries, university library catalogs, journal indexes, and academic repositories as well as classical text collections. Search keywords combined Indonesian, Arabic, and English. Each source that met the inclusion criteria was recorded in a bibliographic matrix containing bibliographic details, a content summary, identified themes, and citations of verses or commentary related to leadership attributes. The researchers also noted variant interpretations and differences in emphasis for further analysis (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Rosidah et al., 2023).

Data analysis proceeded through the stages of contextual thematic exegesis: (1) identifying and mapping leadership-related themes emerging from the tafsir texts—for example, gentleness, consultative decision-making (*shura*), and reconciliation strategies; (2) examining the historical, social, and linguistic contexts underpinning the verse and the commentaries to understand reasons for particular emphases; and (3) triangulating across sources to assess interpretive consistency and variation. To ensure the reliability and validity of findings, the researcher applied dependability techniques such as maintaining an audit trail (documenting search procedures and inclusion/exclusion criteria), engaging in peer debriefing with colleagues competent in tafsir/Qur'anic studies, and verifying quotations against primary manuscripts (Adlini et al., 2022). Findings are presented thematically with illustrative direct quotations and contextual discussion linking the tafsir-based insights to broader conceptions of leadership and their implications for contemporary Islamic education studies.

RESULTS

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw is a frequently discussed topic in various literatures, particularly in the context of Quranic exegesis. The Al-Azhar commentary, written by Buya Hamka, provides an in-depth look at the characteristics of the Prophet's leadership, particularly in Surah Ali-Imran verse 159. This verse emphasizes the Prophet Muhammad's gentle nature in leading his people and the importance of deliberation in the decision-making process. In this section, we will further analyze the Prophet

Muhammad's leadership based on the interpretation of this verse and its relevance in the context of contemporary leadership.

1. The meaning and concept of leadership in Surah Ali-Imran verse 159

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ هاللِّ لِنْتَ لَهُمْۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى هاللِّۗ اِنَّ هاللَّ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ

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Surah Ali-Imran verse 159 states, "Then by the grace of Allah you (Prophet Muhammad Saw) acted gently towards them. If you had been hard and harsh-hearted, they would have stayed away from around you." From this verse, we can draw several important points regarding the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw. First of all, this verse emphasizes the importance of gentleness in leadership. This trait is not just a character, but is a manifestation of Allah's grace given to the Prophet Muhammad Saw. He succeeded in attracting the hearts of his people through an attitude full of compassion and empathy, which prevented him from being authoritarian (Hamka, 2003).

Second, the continuation of the verse, "Therefore, forgive them, ask forgiveness for them, and consult with them in all (important) matters." This verse also emphasizes the importance of deliberation in decision-making. In the context of leadership, deliberation is not merely a procedure, but an integral part of a better and more inclusive decision-making process. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad Saw demonstrated that a leader should listen to the opinions and input of his followers before making decisions that will impact them. This leads to participatory and democratic leadership, where each individual feels empowered and recognized in the decision-making process (Hamka, 2003).

Third, the end of the verse "Then, when you have made up your mind, put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who put their trust." Leaders must trust in Allah SWT without hesitation, not waver, and bear all risks after making a unanimous decision. Although *tawakkal* means human calculation is sufficient, we believe that God has absolute power over human knowledge (Hamka, 2003).

It can be concluded that Surah Ali Imran verse 159 emphasises that gentleness is a characteristic of effective leadership and a manifestation of Allah's grace upon the Prophet Muhammad Saw; an attitude of love and empathy can attract people's hearts and prevent authoritarian attitudes. This verse also emphasises the importance of forgiving, asking for forgiveness for them, and deliberating in decision-making, so that leadership becomes participative and inclusive, and respects the voice of the people. After deliberation and unanimous decision-making, leaders are required to put their trust in Allah, handing over the results of their efforts to Him with full trust; The combination of gentleness, deliberation and resignation forms a wise and responsible Islamic leadership model.

2. Characteristics of the Leadership of the Prophet Muhammad SAW

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw can be described through several key characteristics reflected in the Al-Azhar commentary. These characteristics include:

a. Be Gentle

As stated in the verse above, gentleness was one of the main characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership. He always showed concern for his followers and understood the burdens they faced. Through his gentleness, he managed to build strong and harmonious relationships with his followers. This contrasts with harsh and authoritarian leaders, who tend to alienate their followers (Mu'iz & Al-Khalil, 2022).

b. Trust and Justice

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw was also based on the principles of trust and justice. He was known as a figure who always upheld justice, without favoring any particular group, including his own family. In every action and decision, the Prophet Muhammad Saw committed to always upholding justice for all people, regardless of their social or economic background (Syahara et al., 2026). This principle is very relevant in the context of today's leadership, where many leaders are trapped in the practice of nepotism or corruption.

c. Deliberation and Participation

The Prophet Muhammad Saw often prioritized deliberation in every decision he made. Deliberation is an effective method for strengthening a sense of togetherness and justice, while also avoiding the dominance of majority rule. In Surah Ali-Imran, verse 159, Allah commands the Prophet to consult in common affairs, indicating that every decision made must be based on sound consultation. By involving followers in the decision-making

process, leaders can ensure that the policies they adopt are more in line with the needs and aspirations of the community they lead (Doh & Quigley, 2014).

d. *Tawakkal*

Tawakkal or surrendering to Allah Swt after trying, is another characteristic that is very important to pay attention to. In situations where human efforts cannot change the situation, resignation is the right attitude to take. The Prophet Muhammad Saw exemplified a balanced attitude of trust, where he always tried his best, but also left the results to Allah. This attitude not only provides peace of mind, but also shows confidence that Allah will give guidance and mercy to those who try (Hamka, 2013). In the context of leadership, tawakkal teaches that a leader must have faith in a bigger plan, and keep trying even if the results are not always as expected.

e. Exemplary and Inspiration

The Prophet Muhammad Saw was a perfect role model in various aspects of life, including leadership. Numerous stories from his life demonstrate how he inspired others to do good, work hard, and commit to moral values (Hidayat & Muttaqin, 2024). In the modern context, leaders who serve as role models for their followers will more easily gain support and recognition from society. Therefore, it is crucial for today's leaders to behave in accordance with the principles they teach and to demonstrate exemplary behavior in their daily lives.

3. Examples of Leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw in History

There are three prominent examples of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership in history: the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, conflict resolution, and resource management. Each of these examples illustrates not only aspects of effective leadership but also the resulting social, political, and economic implications, as well as its relevance in the modern context.

a. Treaty of Hudaybiyah

The Treaty of Hudaibiyah is an important moment in Islamic history that shows the Prophet Muhammad's ability to lead through diplomacy. This agreement, which seemed detrimental to Muslims at first, was actually a strategic move that was beneficial for the development of Islam. The five main points in this agreement, although they caused dissatisfaction among friends, the lives of Muslims became much better after the agreement. The Treaty of Hudaibiyah changed the way of peaceful Islamic preaching and was considered a victory through diplomacy even though it initially seemed detrimental (Fitri et al., 2025).

b. Conflict Resolution through Mediation

The Prophet Muhammad's leadership in conflict resolution emphasized the importance of peaceful, creative, and collaborative methods. In resolving the conflict surrounding the placement of the Black Stone (Cholil, 2016) and the Medina Charter (Ridoi, 2024), the characteristics of inclusive and just leadership are clearly visible.

c. Resource Management

The Prophet Muhammad's management of resources through the Baitul Mal (Islamic treasury) demonstrates the principles of justice and sustainability in Islamic economics. This system not only ensures equitable distribution of wealth but also creates the social stability necessary for societal growth (Jajuli, 2018).

d. The Relevance of the Prophet Muhammad's Leadership in Modern Times

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw demonstrates a highly relevant role in the modern era. In the context of globalisation and rapid social change, the leadership values taught by the Prophet Muhammad can be applied in various aspects, including political, social, and economic aspects. Contemporary leadership crises, such as corruption, abuse of power, and legal injustice, demonstrate the importance of having responsible leaders (Rahmah & Ahmadi, 2025). The Prophet Muhammad Saw emphasized that the responsibility of a leader includes responsibility in this world and in the hereafter, so his teachings are not only important, but also very relevant for today's leaders.

e. Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is one of the key characteristics demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. When faced with dynamic situations, he was able to adapt his leadership approach and strategies to respond to the challenges. He always prioritized dialogue and deliberation in decision-making, ensuring that all parties felt involved and recognized. The application of the principle of dialogue in the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw can serve as a reference for the current Indonesian government, which faces various social and political issues.

a) Implementation of Dialogue and Deliberation in Leadership

The government needs to create space for public participation in the decision-making process. By actively involving the public, a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of these decisions is fostered. Discussion forums, community meetings, or public consultations can be used to accommodate community aspirations and needs (Ichsan, 2019;

Ichsan et al., 2021, 2023). For example, the Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang) program involves various stakeholders, such as the community, community organisations, and government institutions, in regional development planning (Ayucandra et al., 2025).

b) Inclusivity in Leadership

Inclusivity is another aspect of adaptive leadership practised by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. He did not differentiate between one group and another, but instead prioritised unity and harmony amidst differences (Farrag, 2023). In Indonesia's multicultural context, implementing the principle of inclusivity is crucial for minimising social conflict. The government can adopt an inclusive strategy by developing policies that address the interests of all levels of society, such as building effective communication networks and implementing social programs that embrace marginalised groups.

c) Responsiveness to Change

In facing ever-changing social and political issues, the government needs to demonstrate a high level of responsiveness. The Prophet Muhammad Saw exemplified how he was always ready to change and adapt to the needs of society. The Indonesian government must be able to respond to current issues quickly and appropriately, which can be done by establishing a special unit to monitor and analyze social issues, developing data-driven policies, and conducting regular surveys and discussion forums (Sulistiawati & Afrilia, 2026).

Adaptive leadership, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad Saw, can guide the Indonesian government in addressing complex social and political challenges. By prioritizing dialogue, inclusivity, and responsiveness, the government can not only create effective policies but also build public trust.

d) Caring and Fair Leadership

The Indonesian government has a significant opportunity to formulate public policies based on the principles of justice and compassion demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. Justice is a fundamental value upheld by the Prophet in every aspect of his life. In the context of public policy, justice can be realized through several approaches, including:

a) Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation is one of the biggest challenges facing Indonesia. From an Islamic perspective, poverty alleviation is part of social responsibility. The government can draw

inspiration from the Prophet Muhammad's approach, which prioritized social responsibility and justice. Some policies that can be implemented include (Putri & Riofita, 2025):

The Direct Cash Assistance (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai*/BLT) program provides financial support to families living at the poverty line to meet their basic needs; the Family Hope Program (*Program Keluarga Harapan*/PKH), according to the Ministry of Social Affairs, has improved the welfare of poor households by offering financial aid and access to education and health services; and skills training programs equip communities with vocational abilities to boost economic self-reliance. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the poverty rate in Indonesia reached 9.71% in 2021. Although this represents a decline, significant challenges remain, and policies grounded in principles of justice and compassion are essential to achieve poverty alleviation targets (Kemenkeu RI, 2022).

b) Protection of Community Rights

Human rights are an essential part of the justice taught by the Prophet Muhammad Saw, and the Indonesian government can implement the following measures: enact comprehensive legislation to strengthen protection of every individual's rights, including those of women and minorities, and carry out public legal-awareness education programs to increase citizens' understanding of their rights (Flora et al., 2025).

c) Building Tolerance and Social Harmony

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw is also known for prioritizing tolerance and harmony among communities; therefore, the government can organize interfaith dialogue programs to foster mutual understanding and promote joint social activities that involve diverse elements of society, including across religious and cultural lines (Soffi, 2023).

DISCUSSION

Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership refers to a leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve a shared vision. The Prophet Muhammad Saw successfully transformed the Jahiliyah society into a civilized and just one. Leaders in Indonesia today are expected to apply the principles of transformative leadership in various sectors.

a) Education Sector

In the education sector, transformative leaders can play a role in creating a conducive and innovative learning environment. They can encourage the development of curricula that are relevant to current needs and support teacher competency improvement through ongoing training. Programs such as the Smart Indonesia Program (*Program Indonesia Pintar*/PIP) and the Independent Curriculum demonstrate the government's commitment to making positive changes in the education system (Wati et al., 2025).

b) Health Sector

In the healthcare sector, transformative leadership is crucial to ensuring equitable access to healthcare services. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Health, has launched various programs, such as the National Health Insurance (*Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional*/JKN), to provide health protection to the public. Inspirational leaders in this sector must be able to integrate health policies with social programs to improve community well-being (Situmorang et al., 2025).

c) Economy Sector

In the economic sector, transformative leaders need to encourage innovation and inclusive economic growth. With technological changes and global market dynamics, leaders must be able to adapt and educate the public about the importance of entrepreneurship. Government policies that support MSMEs and create a conducive investment climate are positive steps towards sustainable economic growth (Mubarok et al., 2024).

Transformative leadership is a crucial concept for creating positive change in society. Drawing inspiration from the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw, it is hoped that Indonesian leaders can implement relevant principles to create a better, more just, and more prosperous society. Through an approach based on vision, participation, empathy, moral development, and role models, Indonesia can optimize the potential of its existing resources to achieve sustainable progress.

CONCLUSION

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad Saw, as explained in the Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, demonstrates characteristics that are highly relevant for contemporary leadership. In Surah Al-Imran verse 159, gentleness and consultation serve as primary foundations for decision-making. This emphasizes that a good leader must be able to

empathize and listen to the views of the people in order to reach more inclusive and just agreements. These traits not only foster a harmonious relationship between leaders and followers but also strengthen the legitimacy of leadership itself. An analysis of the leadership values found in the life of the Prophet Muhammad Saw shows that the principles of trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice, and exemplary conduct are key pillars for establishing effective leadership. The Prophet exemplified a commitment to justice for all people regardless of social or economic background. By emulating these characteristics, contemporary leaders are expected to create transparent and trustworthy environments while avoiding practices that harm the public.

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