

Fiqh Siyasah and the State: Mapping Paradigms of Religion-State Relations in Modern Islamic Thought

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of fiqh siyasah (Islamic political jurisprudence) in state governance and to explore the evolving relationship between religion and the state. As political dynamics shift, the relevance of fikih siyasah in modern governance remains a significant issue in Islamic scholarship. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical method, this research is grounded in normative theological approaches that refer to fundamental Islamic values. Data were collected and analyzed through a literature-based study, focusing on classical and contemporary Islamic legal texts. The findings reveal two main points: first, fikih siyasah functions as an Islamic legal instrument that guides governmental authority in implementing Islamic laws for societal welfare. Second, the relationship between religion and state is understood through three paradigms: secularistic (separating religion from state), formalistic (asserting Islam as a comprehensive system governing all aspects of life), and substantialistic (emphasizing moral and ethical values without asserting total political control). This study offers originality by mapping these paradigms within the framework of contemporary Islamic political thought, highlighting their coexistence and tension. The implications of this research suggest a need for contextual and balanced interpretations of fikih siyasah to support harmonious relations between Islamic principles and state institutions in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: Fiqh Siyasah, Religion-State Relations, Islamic Political Thought, Governance, Paradigms of Modern Islam.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran fiqh siyasah (yurisprudensi politik Islam) dalam tata kelola negara dan untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan yang berkembang antara agama dan negara. Seiring dengan pergeseran dinamika politik, relevansi fikih siyasah dalam pemerintahan modern tetap menjadi masalah penting dalam keilmuan Islam. Menggunakan metode deskriptif-analitis kualitatif, penelitian ini didasarkan pada pendekatan teologis normatif yang mengacu pada nilai-nilai Islam yang mendasar. Data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis melalui studi berbasis literatur, yang berfokus pada teks-teks hukum Islam klasik dan kontemporer. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan dua poin utama: pertama, fikih siyasah berfungsi sebagai instrumen hukum Islam yang memandu otoritas pemerintah dalam menerapkan hukum Islam untuk kesejahteraan masyarakat. Kedua, hubungan antara agama dan negara dipahami melalui tiga paradigma: sekuleristik (memisahkan agama dari negara), formalistik (menegaskan Islam sebagai sistem komprehensif yang mengatur semua aspek kehidupan), dan substansialistik (menekankan nilai-nilai moral dan etika tanpa menegaskan kontrol politik total). Studi ini menawarkan orisinalitas dengan memetakan paradigma-paradigma ini dalam kerangka pemikiran politik Islam.

kontemporer, menyoroti koeksistensi dan ketegangan mereka. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan perlunya interpretasi fikih siyasah yang kontekstual dan seimbang untuk mendukung hubungan harmonis antara prinsip-prinsip Islam dan institusi negara dalam masyarakat pluralistik.

Kata Kunci: Fiqh Siyasah, Hubungan Agama-Negara, Pemikiran Politik Islam, Pemerintahan, Paradigma Islam Modern.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary Muslim world, the relationship between religion and the state remains one of the most debated issues in political and social discourse (Albayrak, 2022). This ongoing debate stems from the diverse historical experiences of Muslim societies in managing the intersection of faith and governance (I Gusti Ngurah Muliarta, 2022). The post-colonial political landscape, marked by the struggle for identity and modernization, has further intensified discussions on whether Islam should be integrated into state governance or confined to the private sphere (Mostafa & Demery, 2010). For example, countries such as Turkey and Indonesia exhibit different models of religion–state relations, ranging from secular constitutionalism to religious accommodationism. Similarly, political movements across the Middle East (Zou & Li, 2025) and Southeast Asia (Nel, 2017) illustrate the continuing search for a balance between Islamic values and democratic governance. Therefore, the current discourse reflects the social reality that Muslims are negotiating between the demands of modern political systems and the desire to uphold Islamic principles in public life (Rokhmad & Susilo, 2017).

Scholarly literature on Islam and politics reveals a long-standing intellectual tension between secularist and integrationist paradigms (Rokhmad & Susilo, 2017). Classical Muslim scholars such as Al-Mawardi and Al-Farabi viewed governance as an extension of religious responsibility (Fikriyah, 2021), while modern thinkers like Ali Abd al-Raziq argued for a clear demarcation between religion and state affairs (Alterman, 2015). This divergence of thought demonstrates the multi-interpretative nature of Islamic jurisprudence and political philosophy. In contemporary studies, scholars such as John Esposito, Wael Hallaq, and Bassam Tibi further emphasize that Islamic political thought cannot be reduced to a single model but is contextually shaped by history, culture, and political necessity (Zou & Li, 2025). Empirical research also highlights that Muslim-majority countries exhibit a spectrum of political systems each interpreting Islamic political principles differently (Faisal et al., 2023). Thus, the literature confirms that the diversity of Islamic political thought is rooted in the interpretive flexibility of the Islamic tradition itself.

This study aims to examine the evolving paradigms of religion–state relations in Islamic political thought through the framework of *fiqh siyasah* (Islamic political jurisprudence) (Syatar & Firdayanti, 2022). The research seeks to analyze how different schools of thought conceptualize the role of Islam in governance, whether as a source of formal legal authority, a moral compass, or a sociopolitical identity. By employing a

descriptive-analytical approach, this study integrates classical sources with modern interpretations to map the main paradigms—secularistic, formalistic, and substantialistic—within contemporary discourse. Data are drawn from primary Islamic legal texts and secondary academic works that discuss the theoretical and practical manifestations of *fiqh siyasah*. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a more systematic understanding of how Islamic jurisprudence accommodates diversity in political organization while maintaining fidelity to religious principles. Hence, the study not only bridges classical and modern perspectives but also offers a framework for contextualizing Islamic governance in pluralistic societies.

This study argues that the diversity of paradigms in *fiqh siyasah* reflects Islam's inherent flexibility in adapting to changing political and social realities (Kamali, 1989). The multi-interpretative character of Islamic law allows different societies to negotiate the boundaries between religion and the state according to their cultural and constitutional contexts. Evidence from historical and contemporary cases suggests that neither strict secularism nor rigid theocracy can fully accommodate the complexity of Muslim societies. Instead, substantialistic approaches—emphasizing ethical and moral values rather than institutional dominance—offer a more sustainable model for integrating religion into governance. Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that a contextual interpretation of *fiqh siyasah* provides the most balanced framework for maintaining harmony between Islamic principles and state institutions in modern pluralistic states.

2. Methods

This study employs a normative legal research approach, which focuses on examining legal norms or rules as its primary object of analysis. Normative legal research investigates legal provisions as a systematic structure connected to specific legal phenomena. The primary aim of this approach is to provide legal arguments that serve as the basis for determining whether a particular event or action is lawful or unlawful, and how it should ideally be addressed according to legal principles. Furthermore, normative legal research may also be understood as a methodological framework or analytical procedure guided by legal doctrines, rules, and principles related to both general and specific provisions of legislation. In this study, the normative legal method involves a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary legal materials, including statutory regulations, legal doctrines, scholarly writings, and relevant jurisprudence. Through this approach, the research seeks to construct a coherent legal reasoning framework that aligns theoretical understanding with practical legal interpretation.

3. Discussion

3.1. The Role of Religion–State Relations

The issue of the relationship between religion and the state has generated a series of polemics and debates throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. This debate can

be traced back to the Turkish Youth Revolution under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in the 1920s (Madina et al., 2023), which culminated in the abolition of the caliphate, the removal of Islam as the official state religion, and the replacement of *sharia* as the supreme source of law. Turkey thus emerged as a secular republic that firmly separated religious affairs from state governance. Around the same period, an Egyptian *sharia* court judge, Sheikh Ali Abd al-Raziq, published his controversial work *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*, which not only provoked intense reactions among Al-Azhar scholars but also reverberated across the Muslim world, including Indonesia (Prihantoro, 2018).

In his concluding chapter, Abd al-Raziq asserts that Islam, in essence, does not prescribe the establishment of a caliphate or a theocratic system of governance. The institution of the caliphate, he argues, has no intrinsic connection with religious doctrine. Matters of governance and political authority are, therefore, purely human and pragmatic concerns, unrelated to divine injunctions. Religion neither commands nor prohibits such political institutions but leaves them to human reason, experience, and the established rules of political life.

From the perspective of Indonesia's national ideology, *Pancasila* serves as the philosophical foundation of the state and is rooted in the belief that the universe and all its contents form a harmonious whole created by the Almighty God. Humanity, as part of God's creation, has the duty to worship and serve Him (Ariyani, 2023). As social beings, humans depend on one another to fulfill collective needs, despite their diverse personalities and cultural backgrounds. This diversity, symbolized in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), reflects the nation's acknowledgment that human society can only endure by embracing and respecting differences.

Indonesia's historical journey has led to the formulation of a unique model of religion–state relations that stands between the global types of secular (Ariyani, 2023), atheist, and theocratic states. The founders of the nation recognized that Indonesia's *causa materialis* lies in its own people—a religiously inclined population that acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Being. This ontological foundation affirms that citizens, as creations of God, are moral beings endowed with spiritual responsibility. Throughout history, religion and the state have shared a dynamic and complex relationship, alternating between cooperation and tension. The medieval concept of divine sovereignty (*theocracy*)—where royal authority was considered an extension of divine will—eventually gave rise to secularism, which sought to separate the institutions of religion and the state in response to the excesses of absolute power.

a. Strengthening National Integration

Indonesia is a pluralistic nation characterized by diversity in ethnicity, religion, culture, and race. Such pluralism naturally generates potential differences and tensions among various social groups. For this reason, the founding fathers established the *Unitary State of*

the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as a unified nation stretching from Sabang to Merauke. Despite its diversity, Indonesia has long been recognized as a peaceful, tolerant, and religiously harmonious society, often cited as a global example of interreligious coexistence. One crucial effort in maintaining this unity is the revitalization of national ideology as the foundation for a diverse nation. This renewal requires a more open interpretation of *Pancasila*, shifting from a sacred and rigid conception to a rational and modern understanding that still aligns with Indonesia's religious and plural character. In strengthening national integration, religion can play a constructive role in revitalizing *Pancasila* ideology. Religion, in this sense, must function as a unifying force rather than a divisive one. Through this function, the moral and ethical values of religion and *Pancasila* serve as essential social capital for fostering peace and national cohesion (Dhika Agfi Awzirizky & Safari Hasan, *National Integration*, Udayana University, 2017, pp. 1–32).

b. Religion and National Resilience

The decline of moral and civic values in contemporary Indonesian life must be regarded as a serious warning to all citizens, especially the younger generation and those engaged in governance. The current state of the nation demands critical reflection rather than passive acceptance of societal deterioration. Indonesia faces numerous challenges arising from rapid global changes and moral decay that threaten its social fabric. The values that once guided national life appear to have lost their influence, calling for a moral and spiritual renewal grounded in religious teachings. In this context, religion serves as an essential foundation for strengthening national resilience, providing ethical guidance, fostering integrity, and inspiring collective responsibility in confronting the nation's challenges.

c. Religion as a Source of Patriotism

Human existence within a state is not solely a sociopolitical reality but also reflects divine providence. The belief in the Almighty God—deeply embedded in Indonesia's spiritual consciousness—forms the moral basis of the nation's unity. The state, therefore, is bound together by divine benevolence toward all individuals. This awareness cultivates a profound love for the homeland, motivating citizens to act and contribute meaningfully toward national welfare and unity. A society grounded in sincere religious faith will naturally foster peace, solidarity, and social justice. The recognized religions in Indonesia share a universal message: to bring salvation, promote well-being, and become a blessing for humanity. Thus, religion not only strengthens individual spirituality but also nurtures patriotic devotion and contributes to the moral foundation of nation-building.

3.2. Schools of Thought in the Relationship Between Religion and the State

Throughout Islamic intellectual history, numerous scholars have made efforts to identify a middle ground in defining the relationship between religion and the state. Fundamentally, these endeavors serve two essential purposes. The first is to uncover the ideal Islamic conception of the state (Lohlker, 2021)ⁱ, emphasizing the *theoretical and formal* dimensions of governance within an

Islamic worldview. The second is to interpret the idealization of state administration from an Islamic perspective, emphasizing *practical and substantive* dimensions that reflect Islamic ethical and moral principles in the exercise of political authority. These intellectual efforts have ultimately given rise to three major schools of thought concerning the relationship between religion and the state. According to Munawir Sjadzali's framework, the discourse on this relationship in the Muslim world can be categorized into three distinct approaches: the conservative school, the modernist school, and the secular school.

a. The Conservative (Integralistic) School

The conservative school maintains the principle of an inseparable integration between religion and the state. This view posits that Islam constitutes a *comprehensive system* that governs all aspects of human life, including political, social, and legal domains. In this perspective, Islam is not only a spiritual and moral guide but also a complete political and constitutional framework. The conservative school thus adheres to what is often referred to as the *integralistic paradigm*, which envisions religion and the state as one unified entity. In such a system, the head of state functions simultaneously as both a political ruler and a religious authority. The basis of government rests upon *divine sovereignty*—the belief that ultimate authority belongs solely to God, while human rulers act as His representatives or vicegerents (*khalīfah*). Consequently, political legitimacy is derived not from the consent of the governed, but from adherence to divine law (*sharī'ah*), which is regarded as the supreme source of authority.

Historically, this perspective has been reflected in classical Islamic political theories developed by scholars such as al-Māwardī and Ibn Taymiyyah, who emphasized the necessity of *imāmah* (leadership) as a means of implementing divine law and maintaining social order. According to this view, any separation between religion and political authority would lead to moral decay, social disintegration, and the weakening of Islamic civilization. The conservative school thus upholds the notion that a legitimate Islamic state must base its constitution and governance entirely upon Islamic law. This ideal is often associated with the classical *Caliphate* model, which symbolizes the unity of political power and religious authority under divine guidance.

b. The Modernist (Symbiotic) School

In contrast, the modernist or *symbiotic* school argues that Islam provides general moral and ethical guidelines for social and political life but does not prescribe a specific institutional form of governance. Proponents of this school, such as Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman, assert that the principles of justice, consultation (*shūrā*), and public welfare (*maṣlahah*) are central to Islamic political thought, yet their implementation can adapt to the changing contexts of time and place. According to this perspective, the relationship between religion and the state is mutually interdependent and complementary rather than hierarchical or oppositional.

In the symbiotic paradigm, religion requires the state as an instrument to realize its moral and social objectives, while the state needs religion as a moral compass to ensure that political power is exercised justly and responsibly. The modernist school thus advocates for a *dynamic synthesis* between religious ethics and political rationality, where Islamic values inform public policy and governance without necessitating a theocratic structure. This approach emphasizes flexibility, contextual interpretation, and rational engagement with modern political systems such as democracy, constitutionalism, and human rights. By recognizing the compatibility of Islam with modern governance, this school seeks to harmonize faith and reason, tradition and modernity, and spiritual ideals with practical realities.

c. The Secular (Disparitic) School

The third approach, the secular or *disparitic* school, advocates for a clear separation between religion and the state. This school contends that Islam, like other world religions, primarily concerns spiritual and moral guidance rather than the organization of worldly affairs. Secularists argue that political authority and religious faith operate in fundamentally distinct spheres, and their conflation leads to authoritarianism, dogmatism, and the restriction of intellectual freedom. The secular paradigm therefore promotes the idea that the state should remain neutral toward religious doctrines, ensuring freedom of belief and equal treatment for all citizens regardless of their faith.

This separationist view finds resonance in the historical experiences of Western societies, particularly after the Enlightenment, which emphasized human reason and secular governance as safeguards against religious absolutism. Within Muslim-majority contexts, this school has been represented by thinkers such as Ali Abd al-Raziq, whose seminal work *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* (1925) argued that Islam does not mandate any particular form of government and that political authority should be based on human reasoning and social consensus rather than divine command. Abd al-Raziq's thesis sparked intense controversy but also opened intellectual space for the reinterpretation of Islamic governance in modern nation-states.

From a sociopolitical standpoint, the secular approach seeks to preserve religion as a private moral force while assigning the state the role of ensuring justice, order, and public welfare through rational and empirical means. It emphasizes that religion should inspire ethical conduct among individuals but should not dictate the mechanisms of political administration. The underlying goal is to prevent the politicization of religion, which often results in sectarian conflict and the instrumentalization of faith for power.

d. Comparative Reflections

These three schools—conservative, modernist, and secular—represent distinct yet interrelated trajectories in Islamic political thought. Each offers a particular understanding of how divine principles and human authority should interact in organizing collective life. The

conservative school prioritizes divine sovereignty, the modernist school balances moral guidance with pragmatic governance, and the secular school underscores the autonomy of political reason. In contemporary discourse, the challenge lies not merely in choosing one model over another but in reinterpreting these paradigms within the plural and democratic realities of modern Muslim societies.

Indonesia, for instance, has demonstrated an indigenous synthesis through *Pancasila*, which accommodates religious values while maintaining political neutrality toward any single religion. This reflects a modern reinterpretation of the symbiotic model, where religion and state coexist in mutual respect and cooperation. Thus, the ongoing discourse on religion-state relations in Islam remains a dynamic and evolving field, continually negotiating between faith, reason, and the demands of modern governance.

3.3. The Middle Path in the Relationship Between Religion and the State

The moderation embodied in *Pancasila* represents the middle path that Indonesia has chosen in navigating the complex relationship between religion and the state. This path has successfully shielded the nation from prolonged conflicts and violent clashes that have historically plagued societies where religion and politics are in constant tension. Since independence, Indonesia has remained relatively free from large-scale strife between religious groups and the state—an achievement that reflects the strength of *Pancasila* as a unifying national ideology. The endurance of this harmony is not accidental but a deliberate outcome of the nation's commitment to *Pancasila* as a national consensus, a middle ground, and a meeting point between religious aspirations and state interests. Therefore, any attempt to pit religion against *Pancasila* is not only misguided but also counterproductive to the foundational philosophy of the Indonesian nation (Mukaromah et al., 2022).

Pancasila has demonstrated its unique capacity to reconcile the two major ideological currents in Indonesia's political landscape: the Islamic-nationalist orientation and the secular-nationalist orientation (Budi, 2022). On one hand, *Pancasila* receives broad acceptance from religious communities—particularly from Islamic circles—because it embodies and protects the moral and spiritual values central to religious teachings. On the other hand, it also garners support from secular-nationalist groups who view it as a rational and inclusive framework that preserves pluralism and civic equality. By mediating between these two ideological poles, *Pancasila* functions as a moderating force, ensuring that neither religious dogmatism nor secular exclusivism dominates the public sphere. In doing so, it provides an integrative foundation for national unity and social cohesion.

The position of religion within the framework of *Pancasila* is thus both clear and balanced (Aswandi & Roisah, 2019). *Pancasila* does not marginalize religion, nor does it impose one particular faith over others. Instead, it accommodates the *substantive and universal values* shared across all religions—values such as justice, compassion, honesty, and social solidarity. These universal moral foundations are reflected in nearly all of *Pancasila's*

five principles, which collectively emphasize the importance of belief in one Almighty God, the dignity of humanity, social justice, and democratic participation. Religion and *Pancasila* therefore stand not in opposition, but in mutual reinforcement, each enriching the other's meaning and function within the Indonesian context.

Through this symbiotic relationship, *Pancasila* has enabled Indonesians of diverse faiths and ethnic backgrounds to coexist peacefully while contributing to the nation's development. It offers a constitutional and philosophical umbrella that embraces various ideological, cultural, and political streams, ensuring that all groups feel represented within the national framework. The spirit of *Pancasila* thus transcends sectarian boundaries and affirms the unity-in-diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) that defines Indonesia's identity (Christianto, 2020).

In essence, *Pancasila* represents more than a political compromise; it is a living philosophy that integrates faith and reason, spirituality and citizenship, unity and diversity. Its moderative function continues to be a source of resilience for Indonesian democracy, providing the nation with the moral and ideological stability needed to navigate contemporary challenges. By maintaining *Pancasila* as the middle path between religious absolutism and secular extremism, Indonesia preserves its identity as a religious yet pluralistic nation—one that honors divine values while upholding human freedom and equality.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the relationship between religion and the state in Islamic political thought can be classified into three primary theoretical perspectives. The first maintains that Islam is an all-encompassing religion that integrates political and spiritual systems, thus rendering the separation of religion and state impossible. The second perspective argues for their separation, contending that Islam, like other religions, does not prescribe a specific model of governance or the establishment of a religious state. The third posits a reciprocal relationship in which religion provides moral and ethical guidance for the state, while the state supports the institutional and social realization of religion. In the Indonesian context, this interaction finds expression through the nation's philosophical foundation, *Pancasila*, which upholds *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (Belief in One Supreme God) as the cornerstone of state ideology. The strength of this research lies in its integration of classical and modern Islamic paradigms within the constitutional reality of Indonesia, showing how *Pancasila* functions as a middle path that reconciles religious formalism and secular separation. It demonstrates that *Pancasila* moderation accommodates religious values while maintaining pluralistic harmony and democratic governance. However, the study's normative legal approach limits its scope to conceptual and textual analysis, without direct engagement with empirical realities. Future research should thus expand by incorporating sociological or comparative methods to examine how the balance between religion and the state manifests

in practical governance and public life across Indonesia. Through this, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved regarding the dynamic and contextual interaction between Islamic values, national ideology, and the modern state.

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