



## The Problem of Secularism and Formalism Models and the Relationship between the State and Religion

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Info Articles	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: 2025-05-12 Revised: 2025-05-22 Published: 2025-05-30	The discourse between Islam and the state remains a hot topic in Islamic thought. Among these, there are three models of the relationship between religion and the state: formalism, which promotes the unity of Islam and the state, and secularism, which advocates the absolute separation of Islam and the state. Both have logical foundations and refer to original sources. Debate between the two is inevitable, therefore, discussions on this topic remain heated. The authors highlight Abu A'la al-Maududi and Sheikh Ali Abd. Rajik. Both are Islamic thinkers who have written extensively on the model of Islam and the state. They have also engaged in serious debates regarding these issues.
<b>Keywords:</b> <i>Formalism; Secularism; Islamic State</i>	

### I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is diverse, encompassing a wide range of ethnicities, languages, religions, cultures, and social statuses. Diversity can be an "integrating force" that binds society, but it can also cause clashes between cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, and values. In a multicultural society, interactions between people are quite intense, so that social skills in interacting with each other are necessary for every member of society. According to Curtis, these skills cover three areas: affiliation (cooperation), cooperation and conflict resolution (cooperation and conflict resolution), and kindness, care, and affection/empathic skills (friendliness, attention, and compassion).

Viewed from a religio-political perspective, modern Indonesian history can be described as a perpetual conflict between the secularization and Islamization projects of the state and society. For example, Natsir and other nationalist figures, one of whom was Sukarno, were in a position to support the idea of the Islamization of the state, or in other words, an Islamic state. Meanwhile, Sukarno argued that religion belongs only in the private sphere and cannot be the foundation of the state. This opinion refers to Kemal Ataturk (a secular figure from Turkey) and Sheikh Ali Abd Razik (an Egyptian cleric who supported the idea of secularism) (Raziq, 1925).

Ultimately, the conflict between the two camps reached its peak around 1950 and 1959. At that time, the country was still a parliamentary democracy. The debate over whether the Indonesian state would be based on Pancasila or Islamic principles became intense between the two camps, the Islamic and the Nationalist camps, and a solution was far from imminent. Consequently, the debate led to a stalemate. This impasse led Sukarno to issue a Presidential Decree, which declared the country's return to the 1945 Constitution.

Here, the author is not in a position to champion or defend either of these two figures, who are not only national figures but also prominent figures in Indonesian Islam. At the very least, the debate above demonstrates that the relationship between religion and state has been a long, complex topic of discussion, mired in conflicting interests, both nationalist and Islamic. Ultimately, the discussion of religion and state finds itself in conflicting positions.

According to the author, there are several issues related to the discussion of religion and state, or Islam and the state. First, how does Islam view the state, and is there a necessity to establish one? Second, what kind of relationship model does Islam desire? There will be many differences of opinion regarding the concept of an Islamic state. Here, the author takes the relationship models, namely formalism and

secularism. In this paper, the author also aims to systematize the discussion of Islam and the state. First, the legality of Islamic legal sources. Second, the proposals of Islamic thinkers regarding the concept of an Islamic state, namely Abu A'la al-Maududi and Sheikh Ali Abd Razik, which they argue for in the discourse of the Islamic state in Pakistan. Finally, the author outlines the model of the relationship between religion and the state in the Indonesian context, between integralism (unity) and secularism (separation). Therefore, the approaches used are theological and political. The theological approach is used when discussing religious texts, while the political approach is used when discussing the relationship between Islam and the state.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the various models of secularism and formalism, particularly in the context of the relationship between the state and religion. Rather than testing hypotheses through quantitative methods, this research seeks to explore ideas, concepts, and practices that have emerged within the discourse of religion-state relations, especially within contemporary political and social settings.

The primary method used is library research, through which data and information are collected by examining a wide range of relevant literature. These sources include academic books, scholarly journal articles, state policy documents, as well as writings by scholars and thinkers who have addressed theories of secularism, legal formalism, and the religion-state nexus. In addition, historical and philosophical sources are also utilized to trace the conceptual evolution and ideological foundations of the models being studied.

The analysis is carried out critically, taking into account the historical, political, and cultural dimensions that shape the emergence of particular models in the relationship between religion and the state.

This research is normative-reflective in nature, meaning that it not only describes existing phenomena but also engages in philosophical reflection on the relevance and challenges posed by secularism and formalism in the context of modern nation-states, particularly those characterized by religious and cultural

diversity, such as Indonesia. Through this approach, the researcher aims to contribute to the development of a more inclusive, just, and context-sensitive discourse on religion-state relations.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. There is not a single state model in the Qur'an and Hadith

If we claim to be Muslim, the consequence is that all our behavior, actions, and thoughts must be based on the Qur'an and Hadith. After all, the Qur'an and Hadith are the primary sources of reference for all matters concerning morality, religious rituals, and Islamic law. Political issues, social relations—except zakat and inheritance—economic issues, and other worldly matters are not regulated in detail by the Qur'an and Hadith. However, there is a basic framework or principles that have been established to be implemented, including justice, honesty, equality, responsibility, and the common good.

Still related to the above context, according to Nazih N. Ayubi, although the primary sources of Islam (the Qur'an and Hadith) do not talk much about government and state, the first issue faced by the Muslim community after the death of its formative leader, the Prophet Muhammad, was the problem of government and how to choose a successor (the Prophet's caliph). (Nazih N. Ayubi "The Islamic State" in the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World edited by Jhon L. Esposito). This emphasizes that early Muslims had begun to conduct *ijtihad* regarding the concept of state and government in Islam. Polemics also emerged, such as the accusations of the Shiites against Abu Bakr and Umar who had "usurped" the caliphate after the Prophet which, according to them, should have been the right of Ali. (Ibn Quthaibah, 1904)

The word "nation" (nation or state) compared to its Arabic equivalents gives rise to several derivations, for example, *dawlah*, *baldah*, *mamlakah*, and *wathan*. *Mamlakah* is another word for monarchy, *wathan*, and *baldah* are rarely used in the context of discussions about Islam and the state, but both have a similar meaning, namely country. Meanwhile, the word "*dawlah*" is often used in such discussions. Therefore, of the three

equivalents of "nation" (nation or state) in Arabic terms, only "dawlah" has almost the same meaning as "country" (nation or state). According to Abdul Rasyid Moten and el-Fatih A. Abdel Salam in *Glossary of Political Science Terms; Islamic and Western*, (Abdul Rasyid, dkk 2005) in general, dawlah is the similarity of the concepts of nation and state or negara in Indonesian. However, according to him, dawlah with the meaning of state is not used in the Koran and during Abul A'la al-Maududi's prophetic period, he reduced the meaning of caliph to a form of state and made it a model of the ideal Islamic state.

Once again, the concept of a state is nowhere to be found in the Quran. Does this mean that the Quran does not encourage Muslims to form a state or to make Islam a state? So why are matters like ablution and prayer—which emphasize vertical relationships—detailed, while the more important issue—horizontal relationships—barely found a place in the Quran? Is it possible that everything "clothed" in a horizontal manner will evolve, eliminating the need for detailed Quranic detail? If the issue of the state in Islam is evolutionary, why insist on one model and ignore the other? This is a fundamental question that contemporary Islamic thinkers need to reconsider, because, according to the author, there are two conflicting camps still debating the concept of the state or government in Islam.

Munawir Sjadzali wrote regarding a review of the contents of the Qur'an regarding the order of social and state life in the closing words of his book, *Islam and State Administration: Teachings, History, and Thought*, as follows; As a result of the review of the contents of the Qur'an, it can be said that in the holy book of Muslims there is a set of principles and ethical values for social and state life. The Qur'an teaches, among other things, the principles of monotheism, deliberation in finding solutions to common problems, obedience to leaders, equality, justice, religious freedom, and mutual respect in relations between people of various religions. But beyond that, neither the Qur'an nor the Sunnah of the Prophet teaches a particular system of government that must be adopted by Muslims. The Prophet died without providing guidance on how Muslims should determine who their leader or head of

state is, on how to regulate the relationship of power between the head of state and the people, and on the limits of the power and term of office of the head of state, and on whether or not he can be removed from office. (Munawir Sjadzali, 1993)

In line with Munawir Sjadzali's writing above, Masykuri Abdillah argues that neither the Qur'an nor the hadith explicitly state whether the state is a republic or a monarchy, or whether it is a presidential or parliamentary system of government. He also adds that there is no explanation of the system for appointing and dismissing the head of state. Similarly, he also discusses the existing power mechanisms, whether there is a separation of power, distribution of power, or integration of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. (Masykuri Abdillah, n.d.)

However, it is important to note whether Islam needs a state or whether it establishes one. Although we do not find a single verse about obligations or a detailed explanation of the concept of a state or national life in the Qur'an and Hadith, we do find numerous verses that oblige us to implement God's laws. One such verse is verse 44 of Surah al-Ma'idah—which the Khawarij used as evidence for their takfir—which translates as "whoever does not judge by what God has revealed—those are the disbelievers." This clearly means that the provisions God has revealed to humanity cannot be implemented properly without the power to compel them to comply. This means that Islam requires a state as a force "outside" itself, acting as a coercive force. Therefore, for Islam, the state is merely an effective means of enforcing God's laws.

The argument used as the command to establish a state is the principle of ushul fiqh, which states: "ma la muridmu al- wajib ill bihi fahuwa wajib" (something whose religious obligation cannot be fulfilled except by its existence, then it also becomes obligatory). For example, in this case, prayer is obligatory, while ablution is sunnah. However, prayer is not valid without ablution. Therefore, ablution becomes obligatory when performing prayer. Ablution here is a means of obligatory. If we use this analogy in the context of this discussion, then what happens is that implementing God's law is obligatory, while

the means to implement God's law is the state, so establishing a state is obligatory.

Dhiauddin Rais wrote a similar sentiment, asking, "If we state that among the religious obligations are jihad, defending and protecting the state, and maintaining security stability, can all of this be achieved without a system?" (Dhiauddin, 2001). His question indirectly implies that Islam needs a state. This is because many Islamic teachings are not only in accordance with the principles of state life, such as obedience to the law and leaders, but also that Islamic teachings or doctrines will be stronger if supported by state power, thus avoiding intervention from outside parties.

Long before Dhiauddin Rais, Ibn Taymiyyah held a similar view. According to him, religion cannot be practiced without political power. Religious obligations such as jihad, justice, hajj, congregational prayer, and so on, cannot be fulfilled except through religious power and authority. Furthermore, he argued, religion without a sultan (power), jihad, and wealth is as bad as a sultan, wealth, and war without religion (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983). Based on this view, fundamentalism believes that Islam requires a state to support or fortify its doctrines. Perhaps that is the strongest reason why the Prophet established the State of Medina with the Medina Charter. The Prophet believed that by establishing a state, there would be an agreed-upon power to regulate social relations. Therefore, the obligation to establish a state is *fard kifayah* (obligatory). However, according to Gamal al-Banna, a modern Islamic thinker from Egypt and brother of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, the state of Medina during the Prophet's time was an experiment that could not be repeated. Medina possessed a privilege not enjoyed by subsequent generations: direct leadership from the Prophet. After the Prophet's death, this government ceased (Gamal, 2006).

However, somewhat differently from Gamal al-Banna, Robert Bellah does not state that modern government during the prophetic period ended after the Prophet's death, but rather points to a sociological context. Bellah argues that the political system outlined by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina and later developed by the early caliphs, particularly Umar, was far too advanced for the Arab

political organization that existed before. In fact, it can be seen as the birth of a state in a society previously based on family ties. However, if we examine its most fundamental character, the system was a state in which religion and politics were closely intertwined (Robert Bellah, 2002). It is clear that during the prophetic period, religion and the state were closely linked, inseparable. Muhammad was not only a religious leader but also a political leader. Indeed, things changed slightly after the Prophet's death, but the context of the relationship between religion and the state remained a necessity. For example, the selection of the four caliphs after the Prophet was based on their close relationship with the Prophet and their perceived superior knowledge of Islam compared to other companions. The fundamental question from the statement above is to what extent is there a relationship between religion and the state, should the entire system be Islamic or only the moral aspects of religion?

## **B. The Concept of an Islamic State: between Abul A'la al-Maududi, Sheikh Abd. Razik**

The Islamic perspective on the state is inseparable from the discussion of the caliphate and the imamate. This is because, in Islam, both in the context of religious rituals such as congregational prayer and in social contexts such as region, tribe, and nation, a leader is required. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, the caliphate or imamate is essential in the context of state and religion. According to al-Mawardi (d. 450 AH), the imamate is the successor to the Prophet in maintaining religion and the sustainability of the world. Therefore, leadership is an obligation for the people to determine. The obligation of the imamate is *fard kifayah* (an obligation for all humans in a certain region but the obligation is waived if it is carried out by only a few), as are jihad and seeking knowledge (Al-Mawardi, n.d.; 5). Meanwhile, the term caliph (the successor to the Prophet's position in the social and religious fields) only emerged after the appointment of Abu Bakr as the first caliph.

Abul A'la al-Maududi – hereinafter referred to as Maududi – is of the opinion that the correct form of human government, according to the Qur'an, is the state's recognition of the

leadership and power of Allah and His Messenger in the field of legislation, handing over all legislative powers and supreme legal sovereignty to both of them and believing that the caliphate is the true Judge, namely Allah SWT (Maududi, 1984). From the information above, it can be concluded that Abul A'la al-Maududi tends to say that the system of government or the concept of state in Islam is the caliphate. According to him, this caliphate doctrine is the will of Allah. Humans, in this case, are appointed as caliphs, have no power and ability except what is given by Allah. Therefore, humans are not rulers or owners of themselves, but they are only caliphs or representatives of the true Owner, namely God (Maududi, 1984).

From a political theoretical perspective, Maududi's viewpoint is a theocracy. According to him, the most important foundation for this state is legislative power and supreme legal sovereignty, vested in God. This is because human government, he believes, is essentially a representation of the Creator. Maududi himself refers to state politics as the "kingdom of God," or what is often called theocracy. However, he argues that theocracy in Islam differs from the theocracy that existed in Europe. The course of theocracy in Europe gave rise to social classes. The clergy, in this case acting as law enforcers, act as they please in the name of God. This type of government, according to Maududi, is more satanic than divine (Maududi, 1984).

According to Maududi, a theocracy built on Islam does not place power under a particular religious class but rather in the hands of the entire Muslim community. Muslims are obliged to run the government in accordance with the holy book (the Qur'an) and the Sunnah. Maududi called the system of government he designed theocracy or divine democratic government (Maududi, 1984). If democracy is power in the hands of the people, then theocracy is limited power of the people under the authority of God.

For Maududi, the state has two primary goals. First, to uphold justice in human life, to end injustice, and to destroy tyranny. This goal is correlated with the Qur'an, which states that the purpose of the Prophet being sent to earth with the Scriptures was so that people could act justly (QS 57:25). Second, to

uphold a system regarding establishing prayer and paying zakat through all the government's resources and means, a system that forms the most important aspect of Islamic life (Maududi, 1984).

From the state goals outlined by Maududi above, it is clear that Maududi wanted to establish—to borrow Bahtiar Effedy's term—a legalistic-formalistic Islamic state. This means that Islamic laws, such as prayer, zakat, fasting, amputations, flogging, and so on, would be made the law of the land without regard for local cultures or traditions that treat matters differently from Islam. This formalistic Islamic state is the primary goal of Indonesian Islamic fundamentalist movements, such as HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia), which seeks to enforce Islamic law in Indonesia.

In contrast to al-Mawdudi, Sheikh Ali Abd Razik, a student of the Egyptian modernist thinker Muhammad Abduh, stated that the Prophet Muhammad was purely a messenger (messenger) for a religious mission (Razik, 1924). He thus explained that the Prophet Muhammad had no royal or governmental mission. The consequence of Sheikh Ali Abd Razik's statement above is that Islam lacks the concept of a state. Ultimately, a Muslim is not obligated to establish a state to implement religious law.

Sheikh Ali Abd. Razik wanted a clear distinction between religion and politics. Therefore, he dichotomized religion and politics. As he emphasized, the guardianship (waliyyah) of an apostle or prophet over his people is a spiritual domain (ruhiyyah) formed by faith rooted in the heart. Meanwhile, the guardianship of a king is a material guardianship (madiyyah) formed by the submission of the body. The guardianship of the prophet is a guide to God, while the guardianship of the king is a guide to managing the welfare of the earth. The first is called religion and the second is the world. The first is the divine domain and the second is humanity. The first is religious leadership and the second is political leadership (Razik, 1924).

He continued his explanation of the dichotomy between religion and politics, distinguishing the status of a king and a prophet. A king is someone who has the right to coerce and rule over people. A prophet, on

the other hand, has no right to coerce, except as a transmitter of messages (Sheikh Ali Abdul Razik, 1924). Because there is no compulsion in religion.

Sheikh Abd. Razik based his views on the 188th verse of the Qur'an, surah al-A'raf, verse 188, "Say: I have no power to gain benefits for myself nor can I reject harm except by the will of Allah. And if I knew the unseen, I would certainly increase my virtues and I would not be beset by harm. I am nothing but a warner and bringer of good news to those who believe."

From the above description, Sheikh Ali Abd. Razik does not provide space for interaction between religion and politics within the scope of Islam, whether in the form of theological or doctrinal interactions or social interactions (Charlez Kuzman, 2003), and thereafter. Because Islam, in his view, does not provide and explain matters of state and government. However, matters of government or power are handed over to humans. The evidence is the hadith of the Prophet which states "you know better the problems of your world" (Sahih Muslim).

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

##### A. Conclusion

The points below are the author's conclusions from the discussion regarding Islam and the state:

1. Islam requires the state as a means or supporter of Islamic teachings and doctrines to maintain them. This is illustrated by the Prophet's initiative to establish a state, namely Medina. Conversely, the state needs religion as an emotional anchor and control over state policies. Religion also fosters patriotism, which is seen as a form of jihad.
2. The author assumes that Islam does not establish itself in a single form of government or model of state. Rather, Islam commands justice for everyone, whether bureaucrats or ordinary citizens.
3. Al-Maududi attempted to formulate the concept of an Islamic state. However, the author believes that implementing Sheikh Abd Razik's secularism is also unfounded, as Indonesia is known to have a Muslim majority. Therefore, majorities and minorities can only be accommodated

through a system of substantialism or integralism.

4. The best option for Indonesia at this time is a country that is essentially Islamic. This is because the Indonesian context is very different from Middle Eastern culture. Islamic law is the result of a dialogue between religion and culture. As M. Hatta said, "Islam in Indonesia is like salt stirred in water; its color doesn't change, but its taste does."

##### B. Suggestions

Based on the discussion presented, it is recommended that the discourse on Islam and the state be approached contextually, avoiding a rigid dichotomy between formalism and secularism. Emphasizing Islamic ethical values such as justice, equality, and public welfare is more relevant in a diverse society like Indonesia.

Furthermore, studies on the concept of the Islamic state should adopt an interdisciplinary approach—considering historical, political, and sociological perspectives—for a more comprehensive understanding. The ideas of scholars like Abul A'la al-Maududi and Sheikh Ali Abd al-Raziq should be critically examined as part of a broader reflection, rather than viewed as absolute truths.

This study is intended to contribute to the development of a more inclusive, dynamic, and contextually relevant discourse on Islam and statehood in the modern era.

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