

## Islam and State Issues

Ahmad Zulbilal<sup>1</sup>, Edi Setiawan<sup>2</sup>, Andik Purnomo Sigit<sup>3</sup> M. Bahri Ghazali<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-4</sup>UIN Raden Intan Lampung

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received May, 2025

Revised July, 2025

Accepted July, 2025

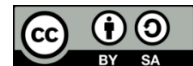
#### Keywords:

Islam and State,  
Jakarta Charter,  
Islamic Conservatism,  
Pancasila,  
Political Islam in Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between conservative Islamic thought and the state in Indonesia, tracing its evolution from early Islamic political ideals to contemporary dynamics within the nation-state. Through a qualitative literature-based analysis, the research examines key historical milestones, including the role of Islam in anti-colonial resistance, the Jakarta Charter debate, the Konstituante period, and the post-Reformasi landscape. Drawing on primary scholarly sources, the study highlights how Islamic values—such as justice ('adl), consultation (shura), and public welfare (maslahah)—have continually interacted with national political developments. While the formal inclusion of syari'ah within the constitution remains contested, Islam's influence endures through cultural, educational, and institutional channels. The study concludes that a contextualized and inclusive interpretation of Islam offers significant potential for contributing to national unity, ethical governance, and democratic resilience in Indonesia.

*This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.*



### Corresponding Author:

Name: Ahmad Zulbilal

Institution: UIN Raden Intan Lampung

Email: [uinlampung1@gmail.com](mailto:uinlampung1@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islam, as the religion embraced by the majority of Indonesians, has played a significant historical and ideological role in the formation of the Indonesian nation and state. Since its spread across the archipelago in the 13th century, Islam has been an influential cultural, social, and political force.

The Islamic kingdoms that emerged in the 15th and 16th centuries accelerated the process of Islamization and made Islam an integral part of the local identity. Archaeological evidence such as the tombstone of Sultan Malik al-Saleh and his descendants serve as authentic proof of the existence and legitimacy of Islamic rule in the past.

During the colonial period, Islam was not only a source of spiritual strength but also played a role as a tool for liberation from colonialism. Muslims in various regions of Indonesia actively resisted the dominance of the VOC and Dutch colonialism. In the view of thinkers such as Harry J. Benda and C. Snouck Hurgronje, Islam became an ideological force that united the people in the anti-colonial struggle. Therefore, Islam is not merely a personal religion, but also a value system that influences the social and political movements of the Indonesian people.

The debate over the position of Islam in the Indonesian state system became a crucial issue before and after independence. In the BPUPKI and PPKI sessions, a discourse

arose between Islamic and secular nationalist groups regarding the basis of the state.

Islamic groups proposed that Sharia law be the formal basis of the state, while other groups pushed for Pancasila as an inclusive foundation. The tension ended with a compromise through the Jakarta Charter, which was later simplified to maintain national unity. Although it did not succeed in formally establishing Islam as the basis of the state, Islamic values were accommodated in Pancasila, particularly in the first principle: Belief in One God.

Since then, Islam has played a flexible but significant role in state affairs. Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have become social forces involved in education, health, and moral advocacy. During the New Order and Reform eras, Islam's position in state development has fluctuated, but it has remained an integral element of the nation's political and social dynamics.

The presence of conservative Islam, particularly that rooted in pesantren traditions and orthodox values, demonstrates that Islam in Indonesia is not monolithic. There are various forms of Islam, each with its own strategy for articulating its political aspirations. Conservative Islam plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of religious traditions, but at the same time faces challenges in adapting to the values of democracy and pluralism that form the foundation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this study is how conservative Islam plays a role in the dynamics of the Indonesian state, particularly in the context of the formulation of the state's foundations, the struggle for independence, and the process of national development after independence. In line with this, the objectives of this paper are to analyze the historical and ideological role of Islam in the Indonesian struggle for independence, examine the dynamics of the debate between Islam and secular nationalism in the formation of the state's foundations, and assess the

contribution of conservative Islam to the development of the NKRI and its challenges in facing pluralism and modernity.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Islam and Politics: Theoretical Foundations*

The relationship between Islam and politics has long been a subject of scholarly discourse. [1] asserts that Islam is not merely a set of spiritual beliefs but a comprehensive worldview encompassing moral, legal, and political dimensions. Within this framework, the Islamic state is envisioned as a political entity that upholds justice (adl), consultative governance (shura), and the common good (maslahah), aiming to realize divine guidance in societal life. Rahman emphasizes that a genuine Islamic polity does not impose dogma but fosters human flourishing aligned with the ethical mandates of the Qur'an. Complementing this view, [2] explores leadership and political succession in early Islam, highlighting the foundational role of the Rashidun Caliphate, where legitimacy stemmed from consensus (ijma'), moral integrity, and adherence to the prophetic model. She argues that Islamic governance is not rigidly theocratic but inherently flexible, grounded in ethical principles derived from scripture and tradition.

### 2.2 *The Concept of an Islamic State in Modern Political Thought*

The modern debate on the Islamic state is heavily influenced by thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb, who asserted that sovereignty belongs solely to God (hakimiyyah liLlah) and that any political system must be grounded in divine law. In contrast, scholars like [3] and [4] advocate for a more contextual approach that acknowledges the pluralistic and democratic nature of modern nation-states like Indonesia. Effendy emphasized the necessity of channeling Islamic aspirations through democratic means, while Azra pointed to Indonesia's syncretic religious culture as a balancing force against both theocratic absolutism and secular authoritarianism. Adding to this discourse, [5] revisited the debate on Pancasila and the Islamic state,

illustrating how Indonesia's foundational ideology emerged as a compromise between Islamic and nationalist visions. The inclusion of "Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa" (Belief in the One Supreme God) as the first principle of Pancasila serves as a symbolic yet meaningful accommodation of Islamic values within a broader secular-national framework.

### ***2.3 Islamic Conservatism and Traditionalism in Indonesia***

Islamic conservatism in Indonesia is deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition and the authority of the ulama. As noted, pesantren have served not only as centers of religious education but also as strongholds of cultural resistance to colonial modernity. Conservative Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Al-Washliyah, [6] UI, and Nahdlatul Wathan uphold a traditionalist framework that emphasizes adherence to classical Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), respect for the scholarly hierarchy, and the preservation of localized Islamic customs. [3] describe the rise of Islamic conservatism as a sociopolitical movement aimed at reasserting Islamic values in public life without entirely rejecting democratic institutions. This movement tends to favor legal formalism, expresses skepticism toward liberal pluralism, and aspires to shape national morality through policy interventions. Nonetheless, Islamic conservatism in Indonesia is not monolithic; it encompasses a broad spectrum ranging from cultural traditionalism to political Islamism, often shaped by specific local and historical contexts.

### ***2.4 Islam and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence***

Harry J. Benda, in *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia*, argued that Islam served as a central mobilizing force in anti-colonial resistance, offering an indigenous moral framework that resonated more deeply with the local population than secular nationalist ideologies imported from the West. Movements such as Sarekat Islam and the formation of Masyumi during the Japanese occupation exemplify how Islamic networks simultaneously fulfilled religious

and nationalist roles. From a sociological perspective, C. Snouck Hurgronje acknowledged Islam's potential to galvanize resistance against colonial rule and consequently advocated for its depoliticization through the co-optation and regulation of religious elites. However, as noted by [7] these colonial strategies often proved counterproductive, reinforcing Islamic identity as a resilient form of cultural and political resistance.

### ***2.5 Constitutional Debates and the Jakarta Charter***

The debate surrounding the foundation of the Indonesian state reached its peak during the BPUPKI and PPKI sessions, where, as noted by [8] and [9], ideological tensions emerged between Islamic factions advocating for the Jakarta Charter—which included a clause mandating the implementation of Islamic law for its adherents—and secular-nationalist groups favoring a more neutral state philosophy. The eventual compromise, marked by the removal of the Islamic clause from the Jakarta Charter on August 18, 1945, has been interpreted through several theoretical lenses. Lijphart's model of consociational democracy provides insight into the elite-level consensus-building designed to maintain national unity in a pluralistic society, while Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how the nationalist-secular vision achieved dominance by strategically incorporating limited elements of Islamic aspirations into the broader framework of state ideology.

### ***2.6 Islam in Post-Independence Nation Building***

Post-independence Indonesia continued to experience contestation over the role of Islam in public life, especially during the Konstituante period (1956–1959), which failed to reach consensus on a new constitutional foundation. This impasse led to Soekarno's Dekrit Presiden that reinstated the 1945 Constitution and reaffirmed Pancasila as the ideological basis of the state, marking a setback for formal Islamic constitutionalism but not eliminating Islam's influence in governance. [10] observed that conservative

Islamic actors such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) shifted from political confrontation to cultural advocacy by investing in education, social welfare, and moral reform—an approach that aligns with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital within civil society. Concurrently, [11] argued that while Indonesia's democratic structure is formally secular, it remains deeply permeated by Islamic values through the engagement of Islamic political parties like PKS and PPP in the legislative process.

### **2.7 Contemporary Dynamics: Islam, Democracy, and Pluralism**

Today, the intersection of Islam and statehood is increasingly shaped by globalization, digital media, and the rise of identity politics. [12] observed that moderate Islamic narratives now face challenges from both liberal-progressive and ultra-conservative currents, with the internet serving as a contested arena where traditional religious authorities compete with emerging voices and alternative ideologies. [13] cautioned against the over-politicization of Islam, emphasizing that its enduring vitality stems from grassroots social movements rather than top-down state control. Nevertheless, the influence of Sayyid Qutb's vision of Islamic formalism continues to resonate among certain groups advocating for a more rigid implementation of Islamic principles. The central and persistent challenge, therefore, is how to reconcile the ethical ideals of Islam with the practical demands of governing a democratic and pluralistic nation-state.

## **3. METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research design to analyze the intersection between conservative Islamic thought and issues of statehood in Indonesia. The choice of this approach is grounded in the need to explore complex historical, ideological, and sociopolitical dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurements. A qualitative method allows for in-depth interpretation of historical documents, political debates, and religious discourses within their proper

sociocultural and temporal contexts. This study also integrates historical analysis and content analysis, as the core materials span from early Islamic movements during colonial rule to post-independence debates on national identity and Islamic conservatism. Through this design, the study aims to understand how Islamic conservatism contributed to shaping Indonesia's state ideology and political dynamics.

The data in this research are drawn from secondary sources, including historical records of the BPUPKI and PPKI sessions (1945), political speeches and documents related to the Jakarta Charter, academic works by scholars such as Fazlur Rahman, Azyumardi Azra, Bahtiar Effendy, and Harry J. Benda, as well as contemporary journal articles from Scopus-indexed and SINTA-accredited publications discussing the dynamics of Islamic conservatism. To ensure validity, the literature was selected based on relevance, credibility, and academic rigor. Data collection was conducted through library research and document analysis using sources from academic libraries, digital repositories, and national archives. Thematic content analysis was applied, with coding based on recurring themes such as Islamic political ideology, historical resistance to colonialism, constitutional debates, and post-independence Islamic contributions. The analysis drew on interpretative frameworks including consociational democracy (Lijphart), social contract (Locke), hegemony (Gramsci), and Islamic political ethics (Rahman and Saeed), allowing the study to trace evolving patterns in the role of Islam and its conservative actors within Indonesia's pluralistic political landscape.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Islam and the Ideal of the State**

The analysis begins by exploring the foundational meanings of "politics" and "state." As stated in the paper, politics stems from the Greek term polis, meaning city-state, while state comes from the Latin status, referring to a political entity with sovereign governance over a territory. Understanding

these concepts is essential to examine the interaction between Islamic values and political structures.

Fazlur Rahman's view, cited in the discussion, positions the Islamic state as a moral and functional body. Its aims include ensuring security, justice, and the collective welfare of its citizens, thereby balancing spiritual obligations and practical governance [14]. The Qur'an, according to the text, is not only a source of spiritual guidance but also a moral framework for constructing just governance systems. Values such as *shura* (consultation), *ijma'* (consensus), and justice are emphasized as foundations of an ideal Islamic polity [15].

The legacy of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership and the early Caliphate demonstrates an ethical and consultative model of governance. However, as noted in the paper, historical deviations from Qur'anic ideals occurred post-Rashidun era, with dynastic rivalries and moral decline becoming evident [2]. Despite this, the flexibility of Islamic political theory allows adaptation to modern governance, provided it upholds justice and public interest (*maslahah*).

#### **4.2 Islam in Indonesia's Anti-Colonial Identity**

The study affirms that Islam played a central role in resisting Dutch colonialism, both spiritually and organizationally. Referencing Harry J. Benda, the paper describes Islam as a liberation force. From the 17th century onwards, Dutch efforts to control the archipelago met consistent resistance from Islamic leaders and communities, who saw colonial rule as illegitimate. As Snouck Hurgronje noted, colonial governments were perceived as *kafir* powers, unfit to govern Muslims.

The ideological strength of Islam was institutionalized in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and organizations like NU, PUI, Al-Washliyah, and others. These institutions preserved Islamic knowledge and community resistance [4]. While *pesantren* were criticized for traditional, unstructured learning methods, they served as cultural

fortresses against colonial influence [16]. Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory underscore the role of *pesantren* in reproducing Islamic identity and resisting cultural domination.

The Japanese occupation further mobilized Islamic activism. Organizations like Masyumi, Hizbullah, and Sabilillah were formed under Japanese rule, laying groundwork for Islamic political participation post-independence [10], [17]. This period showcased resource mobilization and strategic adaptation under foreign regimes, confirming Islam's enduring role in shaping national identity.

#### **4.3 The Jakarta Charter and National Compromise**

The BPUPKI and PPKI sessions highlighted ideological contention between Islamic and secular-nationalist visions. While Muslims advocated for *syari'ah* inclusion, only 15 out of 68 BPUPKI members supported political Islam [18]. Despite strong Islamic representation by figures like Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, the compromise resulted in the Jakarta Charter omitting the clause mandating Islamic law, reaffirming Pancasila's more inclusive ethos [19].

The paper discusses how Arend Lijphart's consociational democracy, John Locke's social contract, and Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory help explain this compromise (Simon, 2021). Soekarno's efforts to secularize the Pancasila framework, reducing it to *Trisila* and *Ekasila* (Gotong Royong), were contested by Islamic leaders who feared marginalization of Islamic values [20]. The Jakarta Charter's legacy remains symbolic of early Islamic aspirations in state formation.

#### **4.4 The Constitutional Role of Islam: The Konstituante Era**

During the 1950s, the Konstituante assembly revisited the debate over Islam's place in the state. Islamic parties like Masyumi and NU pushed for the Jakarta Charter's inclusion in the constitution, arguing that the Muslim majority warranted Islamic representation [21]. However,

nationalist-secular forces favored maintaining Pancasila's neutrality.

The failure of the Konstituante to reach consensus led to Sukarno's 1959 Presidential Decree, reinstating the 1945 Constitution and ending formal Islamic aspirations. Nonetheless, the paper highlights those Islamic principles were still recognized implicitly via the first sila of Pancasila and policies like religious education and zakat governance [22].

This phase marked a strategic shift from formal legal advocacy to cultural and educational engagement by Islamic actors. It reflects a nuanced understanding that Islam's influence persists even without constitutional supremacy.

#### 4.5 Islam's Contemporary Role in Nation-Building

Islam's influence in Indonesia's national development remains robust. Through both conservative and modernist approaches, Islam has shaped moral discourse, education, welfare policies, and democratic participation [3], [23]. Post-Reformasi, Islamic political parties like PKS and PPP emerged as key players in legislative politics. Meanwhile, NU and Muhammadiyah advanced moderate Islam compatible with Pancasila.

Digital platforms have become tools for Islamic movements to promote values of justice, anti-corruption, and social equality [5], [24]. Initiatives by BAZNAS and digital zakat platforms exemplify how Islamic principles can drive economic and social development.

The discussion underscores the need to balance Islamic ideals with national pluralism. While syari'ah formalization remains contentious, inclusive interpretations of Islam offer pathways to reconcile religious identity with civic nationalism. The study affirms that Islam, when contextualized wisely, contributes significantly to a just and harmonious Indonesian society.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the relationship between Islam and the Indonesian state is neither static nor monolithic, but shaped by historical contestation, ideological compromise, and cultural adaptation. From its role in resisting colonial domination to shaping moral and political discourse in the post-Reformasi era, Islam has consistently functioned as a dynamic force in nation-building. While the aspiration for constitutional syari'ah has often faced resistance, Islamic principles continue to influence governance through education, civil society, and democratic engagement. The legacy of compromise embodied in the Jakarta Charter, and the continued relevance of Islamic ethics within a pluralistic state, suggest that Islam and Pancasila are not inherently opposed. Instead, they represent an evolving synthesis that, when guided by inclusive and contextual understandings, can strengthen Indonesia's democratic fabric and cultural cohesion.

## REFERENCES

- [1] M. Ulfa, "The Concept of Morality According to Fazlur Rahman," *Tasfiyah*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 87–110, 2023.
- [2] A. Mohiuddin, "Religious authority in Islam: resilient patterns of evolution from the formative period to contemporary times," in *Navigating Religious Authority in Muslim Societies: Islamist Movements and the Challenge of Globalisation*, Springer, 2023, pp. 117–163.
- [3] L. C. Sebastian, S. Hasyim, and A. R. Arifianto, *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- [4] A. Azra, *Islam in the Indonesian world: An account of institutional formation*. Mizan Pustaka, 2006.
- [5] M. N. Ichwan, "The making of a Pancasila state: Political debates on secularism, Islam and the state in Indonesia," 2012.
- [6] F. Lukman, "1. Islam and Muslims in the State of Indonesia," *Open B. Publ.*, 2022.
- [7] Y. Sriwahyuni, "Indonesian Muslim Women's Lives in the Era of Neoliberalism and Islam (Neo) conservatism: A Case Study in Indonesia," 2023, *State University of New York at Buffalo*.
- [8] A. Nugroho, "Wacana Islam dan Negara Era Pra-Kemerdekaan: Pergulatan Ideologis Kelompok Islam dan Nasionalis Sekuler," *Afkaruna Indones. Interdiscip. J. Islam. Stud.*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 129–147, 2013.
- [9] A. Shalihah, "Dinamika Perdebatan 'Syariat Islam' Dalam Historisasi Piagam Jakarta (Jakarta Charter)," *As-Shahifah J. Const. Law Gov.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 44–54, 2022.

- [10] F. F. Saenong, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A grassroots movement advocating moderate Islam," *Handb. Islam. sects movements*, pp. 129–150, 2021.
- [11] S. Mujani and R. W. Liddle, "Muslim Indonesia's secular democracy," *Asian Surv.*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 575–590, 2009.
- [12] M. Tadros, "Sexuality, Development and Islamophilia in the Arab Uprisings: The missing links," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 315–327.
- [13] N. Wahyudhi, M. H. Basyar, D. Mashad, M. F. Ghafur, and D. Margiansyah, "The New Faces of Political Islam in the Middle East".
- [14] M. AHMED, "Key Political Concepts in the Qur'an," *Islam. Stud.*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1971.
- [15] N. Mohamed, "The Role of the Qur'anic principle of Wasatiyyah in guiding Islamic movements," *Aust. J. Islam. Stud.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 21–38, 2018.
- [16] M. Nuryazidi, "Collective social entrepreneurship as a tool for decolonization: ethnographic case studies from pesantren in Indonesia," 2024, *University of Southampton*.
- [17] S. Aisyah, "Dinamika umat Islam Indonesia pada masa kolonial Belanda (Tinjauan historis)," *Rihlah J. Sej. dan Kebud.*, vol. 2, no. 01, pp. 120–127, 2015.
- [18] K. H. Dewi, *Indonesian women and local politics: Islam, gender and networks in post-Suharto Indonesia*, vol. 14. NUS Press, 2015.
- [19] M. Künkler, "Constitutionalism, Islamic law, and religious freedom in post-independence Indonesia," 2017.
- [20] R. Hartono and U. Ilyas, *Bung Karno: Nasionalisme, Demokrasi & Revolusi*. PT Berdikari Nusantara Makmur, 2013.
- [21] G. Argenti, "Ideologisasi partai islam masyumi di indonesia," *J. Polit. Indones.*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 37–57, 2020.
- [22] S. Hasyim, *The Shariatization of Indonesia: The Politics of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI)*, vol. 52. Brill, 2023.
- [23] W. Akmaliah, P. Sulistiyanto, and Sukendar, "Making Moderate Islam in Indonesia," *Stud. Confl. Terror.*, vol. 47, no. 11, pp. 1495–1509, 2024.
- [24] N. Alhidayatillah, "Dakwah dinamis di era modern (pendekatan manajemen dakwah)," *An-Nida'*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 265–276, 2018.