

## **From Exclusive to Inclusive: A Study of M. Quraish Shihab's Thoughts on the Urgency of Moderate Islamic Politics**

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### **Abstract**

The application of modern political systems in the lives of Muslims often elicits a variety of responses, both for and against. This study aims to describe the thoughts of a prominent Indonesian Muslim scholar named M. Quraish Shihab regarding the paradigm of Islamic politics amid social diversity in the state. This qualitative study in the form of media observation uses data from the YouTube channel (Najwa Shihab) which contains content on M. Quraish Shihab's views using content analysis. The results of the study show that, according to M. Quraish Shihab, it is important for Muslims to have a moderate Islamic political paradigm towards the implementation of modern political systems in the plurality of social life in a state, such as a democratic system that can be interpreted accommodatively as a modern concept of shura. This is as long as the implementation of the political system can be a medium for the benefit of pluralistic social life without neglecting religiosity. This research emphasises the importance of understanding the universalism of Islamic political values as the basis for an adaptive and inclusive Islamic political paradigm.

**Keywords:** M. Quraish Shihab, Politics, Islamic Moderation

### **Abstrak**

*Penerapan sistem politik modern dalam kehidupan umat Islam seringkali menimbulkan beragam respons, baik pro maupun kontra. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pemikiran cendekiawan muslim Indonesia terkemuka bernama M. Quraish Shihab terkait paradigma politik Islam di tengah kemajemukan sosial bernegara. Penelitian kualitatif dalam bentuk observasi media ini menggunakan data dari chanel You Tube (Najwa Shihab) yang memuat konten pandangan M. Quraish Shihab dengan pendekatan analisa isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan menurut M. Quraish Shihab, umat Islam penting memiliki paradigma politik Islam yang moderat terhadap pemberlakuan sistem politik modern dalam pluralitas kehidupan sosial bernegara, seperti halnya sistem demokrasi yang dapat diinterpretasikan secara akomodatif sebagai konsep syura modern. Hal ini selama pemberlakuan sistem politik tersebut dapat menjadi media kemaslahatan kehidupan pluralitas sosial tanpa mengabaikan religiusitas. Kontribusi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pemahaman universalisme nilai-nilai politik Islam sebagai basis paradigma politik Islam yang adaptif dan inklusif.*

**Kata Kunci:** M. Quraish Shihab, Politik, Moderasi Islam

## INTRODUCTION

To date, the debate on the meaning of the state in Islam is still ongoing (Bawazier & Zainuddin, 2022). There are two perspectives, the first of which argues that the Islamic state and Islam itself cannot be separated, because the two are an integral whole. On the other hand, the second perspective states that Islam and the state must be separated, because Islam and the state exist in two different domains so they cannot be mixed (Nurfauzi et al., 2025). In fact, Islam is a religion that regulates all aspects of life, Islamic teachings guide humanity to achieve perfection in both the worldly and spiritual dimensions. However, in the realm of Islamic politics, the issue of political dynasties can be understood as a challenge to the principles of justice and transparency that are in line with Islamic teachings. Fair and accountable leadership is a core value in Islamic politics.

The author argues that the relationship between religion and politics, more specifically the relationship between Islam and politics, is logical and even included in the basic beliefs of religion itself. Therefore, the government should do more than just regulate human relations; it should also refer to the ethical norms and justice exemplified by Islamic teachings. As a solution, Islam should be utilized for the government system in managing public policy (Jayanti, 2025).

In relation to the above discussion, a prominent Indonesian Muslim scholar named M. Quraish Shihab emphasizes the importance of Muslims' ability to generalize the principles of Islamic teachings in the context of Indonesia's diverse society (Shihab, 2018). Quraish Shihab asserts that the will of the people must be in accordance with the guidance found in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Panggabean & Harahab, 2024). This view is interesting to explore further in the context of research, particularly regarding the ideal relationship between Islam and politics in the context of a pluralistic society.

The focus of this study is to describe to describe M. Quraish Shihab's thoughts on the Islamic political paradigm in building a Muslim civilisation amid social diversity in a nation-state.. This study aims to reveal how Quraish Shihab's views on political communication in Islam function (Najwa Shihab, 2017). This study shows that Islamic political communication has distinctive characteristics, namely the use of religious symbols, moral messages, and strong language to create support and legitimacy in politics (Ridwan, 2017).

Previous research on the relationship between Islam and politics, as explained by Quraish Shihab, shows that his views emphasize the importance of separating the functions of religion and power, while still integrating Islamic moral values into government actions. Research conducted by Hamdani, Rizqi, and Fauzan reveals Quraish Shihab's view of politics as a dynamic area of *ijtihad*, which cannot be separated from the social and historical context (Rifki, 2025). These findings are supported by Lestari's analysis, which emphasizes that Quraish Shihab's political views also involve principles of nationality, such as respect for pluralism and the concept of an open state. Overall, these various studies highlight how Indonesian nationalism is explained through Quraish Shihab's interpretation of verses in the Qur'an.

In addition, several other studies consider Quraish Shihab's thinking from the perspective of Islamic theology and ethics. Research by Ma'ruf, Hanifah, and Syamsuddin

reveals that the political views in Quraish Shihab's interpretation are greatly influenced by the ethical principles of the Prophet's leadership, which emphasize justice, deliberation, and moral responsibility. Research conducted by Hidayat, Rahmawati, and Ihsan reveals that Quraish Shihab emphasizes the importance of moral values in politics, including the necessity to avoid using religion for political interests in order to maintain the welfare of society (Manhunung & Tenrigau, 2018). Overall, these studies focus on how Islamic principles are used as a moral foundation in Quraish Shihab's political perspective.

The novelty of this research lies in the method used, which not only examines the relationship between Islam and politics in general, but also takes a more in-depth approach to analyzing the methods of Islamic political communication from the perspective of Quraish Shihab, particularly in the application of Islamic ethical principles in the current political context (Kholifah, 2024). This step aims to produce accurate data, given that the debate on the relationship between religion and the state has been written about before and remains relevant today. Therefore, the author conducted research, discussions, and studies that resulted in the Symbiotic theory regarding the relationship between Religion and the State (Herlina, 2023).

This research is important because it provides a method that combines textual analysis with empirical data, thereby creating a new understanding of the use of religious symbols, moral messages, and legitimacy in politics, issues that have not been widely researched before. The relevance of this research is even greater in the midst of the politicization of religion, which can cause division, making Quraish Shihab's moderate ideas even more important for strengthening inclusive, fair political ethics that are oriented towards the interests of society as a whole (Najwa Shihab, 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The main subject of this study is to describe M. Quraish Shihab's thoughts on the paradigm of moderate Islamic politics in building a civilization for Muslims amid social diversity in the country. To answer the main subject of this study, this study uses a qualitative research approach in the form of observing YouTube channels that contain content related to M. Quraish Shihab's views.

Content analysis was used in this study. Secondary data was obtained from various scientific literature relevant to the subject matter. Data analysis then covered three stages, namely reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (verification).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Relationship between Religion and the State**

In the symbiotic theory, the interaction between religion and politics is considered a reciprocal relationship that brings mutual dependence (Hasanah et al., 2024). In this case, religion needs the existence of the state in order to grow and develop. Conversely, the state must also depend on religion, because religion provides the moral and ethical direction necessary for the development of the state. This symbiotic theory shows that religion and

politics complement each other. This symbiotic approach emphasizes the belief that religion and politics are not separate, but rather synergize with mutual benefits. (Jayanti, 2025)

The Contribution of Islam to Statehood (Values and Ethics) In studies of Islam, the symbiotic paradigm sees that Islam does not have a fixed doctrine regarding systems of government, but rather a set of values and ethics for statehood. Religion does not have to function as a pioneer, foundation, or symbol of the state, but it can contribute to the process of statehood with religious values and ethics. In fact, religion can be used as a form of supervision if there are deviations from existing norms, and Sharia or religious law can be used as the main source of legitimacy for political reality. (Hufron, 2017).

Affirmation of Interdependence and Mutual Need In the symbiotic theory, the relationship between religion and the state is interdependent and mutually necessary. Religion needs the support of the state in order to develop optimally. Conversely, the state also needs religion as a source of ethical guidance and spiritual values for its progress (Marzuki Wahid and Rumadi, 2001: 24). Given this symbiotic nature, religious law still has the opportunity to influence state laws, and in some situations, religious law can even be used as a reference for state law. (Adi Sulistiyono, 2008: 2)

Dîn wa Niyâmah is a term that reflects how Islam functions as a teaching that combines religion and politics, where the two need each other. Dîn (religion) and Niyâmah (state) are a combination that encompasses views on the distribution of salvation, and several provisions therein indicate that these two aspects are interrelated. Dîn is a spiritual light for humans and also influences life in society, nation, and state. Religion in a political context has a role to uphold the principles of the people and create a safe situation so that the law provides real peace on earth and is in harmony with the beliefs and prohibitions of Allah SWT. (Daharis & Halim, 2017)

The Views of Classical Islamic Figures: Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Mawardi This symbiotic paradigm was held by Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328 AD), a Sunni Salafi figure who stated: "Religion and the state are interdependent; without the authority of the state to use coercion, religion can be in a dangerous state. Meanwhile, a state that does not comply with revealed law will inevitably become a tyrannical force." Religion and the state are two distinct entities, yet they are mutually dependent and inseparable. Al-Mawardi's (975-1059 AD) thinking also encompasses this, emphasizing that state leadership (imamah) is a tool for continuing the prophetic mission in order to preserve religion and regulate worldly affairs. (Tabrani, 2021)

Ibn Taymiyyah's Emphasis on State Law Influenced by Religion Within the framework of this symbiotic theory, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that the power that governs human life is the most important religious obligation, because without the existence of state power, religion would not be able to stand firm. Ibn Taymiyyah's view affirms that the state and religion are two different but interdependent entities. Therefore, the laws that exist within this framework do not only originate from social contracts, but can also be influenced or imbued with religious law (Agus Thohir, 2009).

Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif's View: The State as a Means (Mutual Symbiosis) Syafi'i Maarif explains that the relationship between religion and the state creates a concept of mutual symbiosis. Islam requires an instrument known as the state. The state plays an important

role in supporting religion. For Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif, the state is an essential means for religion. However, religion (Islam) should not be used as the basis for the state. Political aspirations should not prioritize Islam as the foundation of the state and formalize Islamic Sharia, but rather live according to the principles of togetherness and deliberation (*syûrâ*). This is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an, which desires the formation of an equal society through the implementation of the *syûrâ* mechanism (mutual consultation). (Herlina, 2023)

Symbiosis in the Context of Da'wah and Politics (HAMKA & Pancasila) As part of culture, da'wah is inseparable from the political arena. There are at least three perspectives related to the relationship between da'wah and politics, namely the symbiotic, integralistic, and instrumentalistic perspectives.

The symbiotic perspective sees that da'wah and politics need each other. In this context, da'wah requires political support, because through politics, da'wah can develop rapidly. This is often referred to as "preaching through politics". On the other hand, politics also needs da'wah, because da'wah can give strength to politics in the framework of ethics and moral values. This is known as "politics with da'wah". Meanwhile, the integralistic perspective considers that there is an integration between da'wah and politics. The scope of da'wah includes political aspects. Therefore, according to this view, politics can be understood as an institution that carries out da'wah. Finally, the instrumentalistic perspective places politics as a tool or means to expand da'wah. (Yakin, 20)

Within this framework, the state's thinking and perspective are divided into two principles, namely religious principles and political principles. HAMKA (1951, pp. 10–38) states that the first principle of Pancasila, namely Belief in One God (belief in God Almighty), is the basis of all the principles of Pancasila itself. Thus, the essence of Pancasila originates from religious values (Imadudin, 2023).

### **Quraish Shihab's Symbiotic Paradigm on Islamic Political Moderation in Pluralistic State**

The two main instruments possessed by society are religion and the state. Religion serves as a source of moral and ethical values, which are highly significant because they are directly related to human behavior in society (Setiawan et al., 2020). In other words, it is the basic assessment or justification for any action taken by people, both in interpersonal relationships and in their relationship with God as the source of religious teachings.

The state goes further in this aspect and has a broader influence, regulating all aspects of society and having the highest authority that allows it to enforce laws on all citizens. As a result of its impact on religion and the social structure of Muslim societies, the state can be a mixture of religious and political rules or, conversely, it can oppose religious teachings. Although its structure can vary completely depending on *ijtihad* and the circumstances of the times, a theory of the state in Islam is formulated as a universal world variety. In other words, the theme of the state among Muslims makes sense as a concept, like culture, politics, and the state, rather than as a political structure or formation (M. Fauzan, 2017).

The role of religion in state affairs should be able to keep pace with the times and adapt to various emerging challenges. Moreover, religion is not only ethical, moral, and a

source of life values, but also acts as a unifying force for the nation, providing direction for policy, and serving as the basis for legitimacy for a political system that promotes justice. Currently, although the application of religious values in the state system has not been smoothly realized, there are a number of important obstacles facing it:

first, the emergence of various ideologies and secularism has increasingly marginalized religion from the public arena. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen the understanding of religion that is relevant to current social conditions and socio-political needs. Second, there is still much work to be done because most officials and policymakers lack the ability to formulate policies that integrate religious values. Therefore, religious values have not been fully implemented in the government system. Third, the diversity of society in terms of religion and culture requires religion to serve as a unifying force for dialogue, tolerance, and social harmony. Fourth, clear legal regulations are needed so that the role of religion in the state is not abused, but runs in line with justice and the interests of the nation (Chelse Kirani, 2025).

In conclusion, religion can play an effective and significant role in state affairs if religious values are coherently integrated with the system of government and state administration. Therefore, among the aspects that need to be addressed are the promotion of moral education and religious leadership discipline with political implications, and the improvement of the official competence of state institutions in life planning mechanisms. Meanwhile, history tells us that this is very realistic and rational when it comes to the practice of state administration in general.

Education on morality and religious-based leadership training must also take place to improve the quality of religious leaders. In other words, the role of religion in state affairs is very important if religion can make a positive contribution to the economy and society in general.

The coherence between religion and the state often gives rise to differing opinions (Munandar & Amin, 2023). According to Quraish Shihab's perspective, he reveals that religion, especially Islam, does not conflict with politics; on the contrary, politics is an inherent part of its teachings (Najwa Shihab, 2017). This opinion is unique in its attempt to protect negative views of politics by linking them back to their true essence, namely political wisdom. This concept explains that politics is a fundamental necessity for achieving mutual prosperity, where political efforts and actions are directed towards achieving mutual benefits. In this view, religion serves as a supporter and source of validation for constructive and solution-oriented politics, making politics not merely an arena for conflict, but a noble means of improving the welfare of the people and the state.

Quraish Shihab's view on the relationship between religion and politics shows that the two are not in opposition, but rather need each other (Marzuqoh et al., 2025). He rejects the notion that religion, especially Islam, must be completely separated from the political sphere, because according to him, Islamic teachings already contain basic principles that are relevant to the management of society and the state (Najwa Shihab, 2017). This perspective shows that politics is not inherently dirty, but rather becomes corrupt when it is carried out without moral values and responsibility. Thus, the integration of religious values into

political practice is considered important in order to restore politics to its noble purpose, namely the welfare of the people.

The concept of wise politics offered by Quraish Shihab emphasizes that ideal politics should be based on wisdom, ethics, and value considerations (Najwa Shihab, 2017). Within this framework, politics is understood as a fundamental need of society to achieve collective welfare. Therefore, political actions should not be directed toward the interests of certain groups, but rather toward the achievement of collective benefits that touch all levels of society. This view also serves as a critique of political practices that are often filled with intrigue, conflict, and manipulation, and invites society to reexamine the essence of politics as a means of improvement, not destruction.

Through this framework, Quraish Shihab positions religion as a source of moral legitimacy for constructive and solution-oriented politics. Religion does not serve to regulate all the technical details of politics, but rather provides values, guidelines, and ethical boundaries so that power is not abused (Najwa Shihab, 2017).

Thus, politics can become a noble form of service, rather than merely an arena for the struggle for power. This analysis shows that Quraish Shihab's ideas offer a new, more optimistic perspective on politics, namely as a tool to strengthen the welfare of the state and improve the quality of life of the people through the values of justice, wisdom, and humanity.

Consultation or demography is explained by Quraish Shihab as one example. The explanation he provides regarding the guidance from the Qur'an on this matter is quite limited and only covers a few general principles. Apart from the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad SAW also explained a lot through the general guidance of the Qur'an, but regarding deliberation, it was not explained in detail and did not even provide a specific pattern to be followed. Therefore, the succession methods applied by the four caliphs varied due to the absence of specific details or patterns and forms of deliberation, indicating that Islam encourages community participation in matters that concern them.

The details of how the community is involved, the patterns, and the methods are left to each community, because one community may differ from another. In fact, certain communities may have different views from time to time. According to Quraish Shihab, this attitude of the Qur'an gives each community the opportunity to adapt their Shura system to their personality, culture, and social conditions.

An important finding from Quraish Shihab's perspective is that religion (Islam) and politics are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other in achieving the good of the people. He clearly rejects the idea of a total separation between religion and the state (secularism) because Islamic teachings already encompass the basic principles for managing society (Najwa Shihab, 2017). His main concept, wise politics, emphasizes that the ideal way of doing politics must be based on wisdom, ethics, and religious values to direct politics towards its higher goal, which is the common welfare of all levels of society, not just the interests of one group. Religion serves as a source of moral legitimacy and provides ethical guidelines to avoid abuse of power, so that politics can become a place of noble service and a means to strengthen the state.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that M. Quraish Shihab needs a moderate Islamic political paradigm for Muslims in the midst of social pluralism in state life, so that it can synergize with a democratic system that can be interpreted as a modern concept of shura. Quraish Shihab's view affirms the relationship between religion and politics, namely rejecting total secularism and the ideologization of religion.

This research contributes to the importance of a moderate and contextual Islamic political paradigm for the application of modern political systems in pluralistic social life. However, this research is still descriptive-normative and does not include case studies. Therefore, further research is important.

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