



Beyond the Radicalism Narrative: Reconstructing Islamic Political Moderation through Shafi'i Jurisprudence in Indonesia

Muhammad Abu Dzar^{1*}, Laras Shesa², Miftahuddin³, Mochamad Syaefudin⁴, Nur Solikin⁵

¹²Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Curup, Indonesia

Jl. Dr. Ak. Gani No.01, Dusun Curup, Kec. Curup Utara, Kabupaten Rejang Lebong, Bengkulu 39119

³Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga

Jl. Lingkar Selatan KM 02 Pulutan, Sidorejo, Salatiga, 50716

⁴⁵Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Jl. Ir. H. Djuanda No. 95, Ciputat, Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15412

Email: abudzar@iaincurup.ac.id^{1*}, larasshesa@iaincurup.ac.id², miftahuddin@uinsalatiga.ac.id³, mochamad.syaefudin22sps@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id⁴, nur_solikin_22@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id⁵

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Abstract: The association of Islamic politics with radicalism has become a dominant narrative in contemporary discussions on religion and politics in Indonesia. Existing studies have largely focused on radical movements, religious extremism, and political Islam. At the same time, insufficient attention has been given to the intellectual traditions that have historically shaped moderate Islamic political engagement. This study examines how Shafi'i jurisprudence provides a normative and adaptive framework for political moderation and explores its relevance in challenging radicalism-centered interpretations of Islamic politics. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes classical Shafi'i political texts, particularly the works of al-Mawardi, al-Juwaynī, and al-Ghazālī, alongside the historical experiences of Hasyim Asy'ari, Mohammad Natsir, and Nahdlatul Ulama in negotiating the relationship between Islam, politics, and the nation-state. The findings reveal that political moderation in the Shafi'i tradition is constructed through five interconnected principles: public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), consultation (*shūrā*), preservation of social order (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*), legal realism, and public accountability. These principles enable a flexible and context-sensitive approach to governance, allowing Indonesian Muslim scholars to selectively adapt classical doctrines while rejecting elements incompatible with democratic pluralism. The study argues that the Indonesian experience demonstrates an adaptive model of Shafi'i political thought that reconciles Islamic normative commitments with constitutionalism, democracy, and national unity. This article contributes to the literature by proposing Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory, a theoretical framework introduced in this study, to explain how classical Shafi'i political principles are selectively adapted to support constitutionalism, democracy, and national unity beyond the dominant radicalism narrative.

Keywords: Shafi'i Jurisprudence; Islamic Political Moderation; Political Islam; Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory; Indonesia.

Abstrak: Hubungan antara politik Islam dengan radikalisme telah menjadi narasi dominan dalam diskusi kontemporer mengenai agama dan politik di Indonesia. Studi-studi yang ada sejauh ini

sebagian besar berfokus pada gerakan radikal, ekstremisme agama, dan Islam politik, sementara tradisi intelektual yang secara historis telah membentuk keterlibatan politik Islam yang moderat belum mendapat perhatian yang memadai. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana fiqh Syafi'i menyediakan kerangka normatif dan adaptif bagi moderasi politik, serta mengeksplorasi relevansinya dalam menantang interpretasi politik Islam yang berpusat pada radikalisme. Dengan menggunakan penelitian kualitatif berbasis pustaka, penelitian ini menganalisis teks-teks politik klasik mazhab Syafi'i, khususnya karya-karya al-Māwardī, al-Juwaynī, dan al-Ghazālī, bersamaan dengan pengalaman historis Hasyim Asy'ari, Mohammad Natsir, dan Nahdlatul Ulama dalam menegosiasikan hubungan antara Islam, politik, dan negara-bangsa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi politik dalam tradisi Syafi'i dibangun melalui lima prinsip yang saling terkait: kepentingan umum (*maṣlaḥah*), musyawarah (*shūrā*), pemeliharaan ketertiban sosial (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*), realisme hukum, dan akuntabilitas publik. Prinsip-prinsip ini memungkinkan pendekatan yang fleksibel dan peka terhadap konteks dalam tata kelola pemerintahan, sehingga para ulama Muslim Indonesia dapat secara selektif mengadaptasi doktrin-doktrin klasik sambil menolak unsur-unsur yang tidak sesuai dengan pluralisme demokratis. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa pengalaman Indonesia menunjukkan model adaptif pemikiran politik Syafi'i yang mendamaikan komitmen normatif Islam dengan konstitusionalisme, demokrasi, dan persatuan nasional. Artikel ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap khazanah literatur dengan mengusulkan "Teori Politik Syafi'i Adaptif", sebuah kerangka teoretis yang diperkenalkan dalam studi ini, untuk menjelaskan bagaimana prinsip-prinsip politik Syafi'i klasik diadaptasi secara selektif guna mendukung konstitusionalisme, demokrasi, dan persatuan nasional di luar narasi radikalisme yang dominan.

Kata Kunci: Fiqh Syafi'i; Moderasi Politik Islam; Islam Politik; Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory; Indonesia

Introduction

Recent empirical evidence suggests that the relationship between Islam, politics, and radicalism in Indonesia is far more complex than commonly portrayed in public discourse.¹ Islamic political activism is often associated with radicalism and democratic intolerance, despite the diversity of political orientations within Indonesian Muslim society.² A national survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Jakarta found that although conservative religious attitudes remain visible among certain segments of Indonesian Muslims, support for violent extremism and terrorism remains relatively low among the broader population.³ Similarly, studies conducted by the Pew Research Center indicate that Indonesian Muslims generally express strong support for religious values while simultaneously maintaining positive attitudes toward democratic governance and national identity.⁴ At the same time, public debates surrounding Islamic political mobilization, particularly following the 2016–2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the

¹ Syahrir Karim, Tita Ruslin, and Nur Utaminingsih, "Between Hijrah and Siyāsah: Transnational Islamic Movements, Contextual Islamic Law, and Democratic Governance in Post-Reform Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Keagamaan* 13, no. 1 (May 20, 2026): 361, <https://doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v13i1.10683>.

² Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation," *Asian Studies Review* 42, no. 3 (July 2018): 479–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2018.1473335>.

³ Jonathan Evans et al., "Buddhism, Islam, and Religious Pluralism in South and Southeast Asia" (<bound method Organization.get_name_with_acronym of <Organization: Pew Research Center>>, 2023).

⁴ Mietzner and Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation."

emergence of transnational Islamist narratives,⁵ have intensified the tendency to associate Islamic political activism with radicalism and democratic intolerance.⁶ These developments have created a paradoxical situation in which Islamic political expressions are frequently viewed through a security-oriented lens despite the continued commitment of major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to constitutionalism, pluralism, and peaceful political participation.⁷ Consequently, the persistence of the radicalism narrative raises important questions regarding the intellectual foundations that have enabled Islamic political engagement in Indonesia to remain largely compatible with democracy and national unity. The relationship between Islam and politics has remained one of the most contested issues in contemporary Indonesia. Public debates on political Islam have increasingly been framed through discourses of radicalism, extremism, and threats to democratic order, particularly in the aftermath of terrorist incidents, the emergence of transnational Islamist movements, and the expansion of digital media.⁸ Consequently, Islamic political expressions are frequently viewed through a security lens, often without sufficient differentiation between radical activism, religious conservatism, and legitimate forms of political participation inspired by Islamic values.⁹ This tendency is significant because Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, whose religious life has historically been shaped by the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence. While public discourse often associates Islamic politics with ideological rigidity, the historical experience of Indonesian Muslim scholars demonstrates a more complex interaction between Islamic norms, political authority, and national commitment. The persistence of these competing narratives raises an important question regarding the intellectual foundations that have enabled Islamic political engagement in Indonesia to remain largely compatible with constitutionalism, pluralism, and national unity.

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between Islam, democracy, political moderation, and political Islam in Indonesia. Alvian argues that moderate Islam in Indonesia has evolved through a continuous negotiation between Islamic values and democratic institutions, resulting in a relatively accommodative relationship between religion and the state.¹⁰ His study demonstrates the capacity of Indonesian Muslim groups to adapt to democratic governance while maintaining their religious identity. Similarly, Zoelva contends that the development of Indonesian democracy cannot be separated from the contribution of Muslim actors who successfully integrated Islamic values with constitutionalism and democratic participation.¹¹ While these studies establish the compatibility between Islam and democracy, they pay limited attention to the jurisprudential foundations that enable such accommodation.

⁵ Defbry Margiansyah et al., "Beyond Radicalism: Islamist Attitudes and Democratic Support in Indonesia," *SAGE Open* 15, no. 3 (July 30, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251378287>.

⁶ The Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Jakarta.

⁷ Jeremy Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (July 2019): 415–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286>.

⁸ Yunita Faela Nisa At.al, *Gen Z: Kegagalan Identitas Keagamaan*, ed. Didin Syafruddin & Ismatu Ropi (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2018), 75.

⁹ Darlin Rizki Ahmad Nailul Murad, "Development of Religious Moderation Study on Prevention of Radicalism in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review Approach," *Potensia* 8, no. 2 (2022): 198–219, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/potensia.v8i2.20727>.

¹⁰ Rizky Alif Alvian and Irfan Ardhani, "The Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (June 2023): 19–57, <https://doi.org/10.14421/AJIS.2023.611.19-57>.

¹¹ Hamdan Zoelva, "The Development of Islam and Democracy in Indonesia," *Constitutional Review* 8, no. 1 (May 2022): 37–61, <https://doi.org/10.31078/CONSREV812>.

Meanwhile, studies on classical Islamic political thought have explored the concepts of leadership, legitimacy, justice, and public welfare in the works of al-Mawardi, al-Juwaynī, and al-Ghazālī. Putra et al. conclude that al-Mawardi's political thought remains relevant to contemporary governance, particularly concerning public accountability and welfare-oriented leadership.¹² Likewise, Ahmad demonstrates that the concept of *imāmah* can be reinterpreted within modern democratic systems without abandoning its normative Islamic foundations.¹³ In another direction, studies on radicalism and political Islam in Indonesia primarily focus on the causes of religious extremism, the influence of transnational Islamist movements, and strategies for promoting religious moderation.¹⁴ However, these strands of scholarship remain largely disconnected. Research on political moderation tends to emphasize contemporary socio-political dynamics, whereas studies on Shafi'i political thought are generally confined to historical and descriptive analyses of individual scholars. Consequently, little attention has been devoted to explaining how the epistemic principles embedded in Shafi'i jurisprudence generate a model of political moderation and how these principles have been selectively adapted by Indonesian Muslim scholars within the framework of the modern nation-state. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated analysis of the relationship between Shafi'i political thought and the development of Islamic political moderation in contemporary Indonesia. Previous scholarship has extensively examined the relationship between Islam, democracy, and political moderation in Indonesia.¹⁵ Hefner emphasized the contribution of Muslim civil society to democratic development, while Menchik analyzed the role of moderate Muslim organizations in sustaining democratic institutions.¹⁶ Mietzner and Muhtadi explored the dynamics of Islamist mobilization in contemporary Indonesian politics,¹⁷ and Umar examined the construction of moderate Islam within political discourse. Although these studies have significantly enriched our understanding of Islam and politics in Indonesia, they primarily focus on sociological, institutional, and political dimensions, leaving the epistemic foundations of political moderation within the Shafi'i tradition insufficiently explored.

Existing scholarship has generated extensive discussions on radicalism, political Islam, religious moderation, and the role of Islamic movements in democratic societies. Studies on Indonesian Islam have demonstrated the diversity of Muslim political orientations, ranging from conservative activism to moderate and accommodationist approaches. Other studies have examined the contribution of Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to democratic consolidation and social cohesion. Meanwhile, research on classical Islamic political thought has explored the ideas of al-Mawardi, al-Juwaynī, and al-Ghazālī concerning leadership, public welfare, and governance. However, these bodies of literature largely remain disconnected. Existing studies tend to focus either on contemporary radicalism or on historical political doctrines. At the same time, little attention has been devoted to explaining how classical Shafi'i political jurisprudence generates a specific model of

¹² Bayu Karunia Putra et al., "Relevance of Islamic Political Thought According to Al-Mawardi in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 9, no. 18 (2023): 827–42.

¹³ Jafar Ahmad and Kata Kunci Abstrak, "Reactualizing Classical Islamic Power: Reinterpreting Al-Mawardi in Post-Reform Indonesian Democracy," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 33, no. 1 (June 2025): 188–203, <https://doi.org/10.24014/JUSH.V33I1.36559>.

¹⁴ Mietzner, M., & Muhtadi, B. (2018). *Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia*. Asian Studies Review, 42(3).

¹⁵ Khamami Zada, "Sharia and Islamic State in Indonesia Constitutional Democracy: An Aceh Experience," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 23, no. 1 (2023): 1–17.

¹⁶ Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia."

¹⁷ Mietzner and Muhtadi, "Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation."

political moderation and how that model has been selectively adapted within the Indonesian nation-state. Consequently, the epistemic mechanisms through which Shafi'i jurisprudence contributes to non-violent, welfare-oriented, and participatory politics remain insufficiently examined.

This article seeks to address that gap by investigating how political moderation is constructed within Shafi'i jurisprudence and how its principles have been adapted in the Indonesian context. Specifically, the study examines the political concepts developed by major Shafi'i scholars, particularly al-Mawardi, al-Juwaynī, and al-Ghazālī. It analyzes their relevance to the historical experiences of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and organizations. The central question guiding this study is: how do the normative principles embedded in Shafi'i political thought contribute to the formation of a moderate model of Islamic politics that is compatible with democracy, constitutionalism, and national unity in contemporary Indonesia?

This article argues that political moderation in the Shafi'i tradition is not an inherent or self-evident characteristic, but rather the result of a set of adaptive political principles rooted in the concepts of *imāmah*, *maṣlahah*, *shūrā*, *ḥifẓ al-nizām*, and *siyāsah shar'īyyah*. These principles provide a framework that balances authority, public welfare, political participation, legal realism, and social stability. At the same time, the article acknowledges the limitations and historical contingencies of classical Shafi'i political thought, including doctrines that may not align with contemporary democratic values. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that Muslim scholars did not adopt the Shafi'i tradition in its entirety; instead, they selectively appropriated its moderate and welfare-oriented dimensions while leaving aside elements that were incompatible with a pluralistic nation-state. Building upon this finding, the article proposes the concept of Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory as a new framework for understanding Islamic political moderation beyond the dominant radicalism narrative.

This study employs a qualitative legal research design based on library research. The study was selected because the primary objective of the article is not to measure political behavior empirically but to examine the normative foundations and conceptual structure of political moderation within the Shafi'i legal tradition. Accordingly, the research focuses on the analysis of ideas, doctrines, and political concepts developed in classical and contemporary Islamic legal literature.

The primary sources consist of major works of Shafi'i political thought, particularly al-Mawardi's *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, al-Juwaynī's *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, and al-Ghazālī's *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād*, *Al-Mustaṣfā*, and *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*. These texts were selected because they represent the most influential formulations of political authority, public welfare, leadership, and governance within the Shafi'i intellectual tradition. Secondary sources include contemporary studies on Islamic political thought, political moderation, political Islam, democracy, and the historical development of Islam-state relations in Indonesia published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and scholarly reports. Data were collected through systematic document analysis. The study examined political concepts embedded within the selected texts, including *imāmah*, *maṣlahah*, *shūrā*, *ḥifẓ al-nizām*, and *siyāsah shar'īyyah*. In addition, historical documents and scholarly writings related to the political thought of Indonesian Muslim scholars were analyzed to identify how these classical principles were interpreted, modified, and applied within the context of the Indonesian nation-state.

The analysis employed a conceptual and historical approach. The conceptual approach was used to identify the epistemic foundations of political moderation within Shafi'i jurisprudence. In contrast,

the historical approach was applied to trace the adaptation of these principles in Indonesian Islamic political experiences. The study further utilized comparative analysis to evaluate the compatibility of classical Shafi'i political doctrines with contemporary democratic values and to identify elements that were selectively retained, reformulated, or abandoned by Indonesian Muslim scholars. Through this analytical framework, the article develops the concept of Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory as an explanatory model for understanding how classical Shafi'i political principles have been transformed into a framework of political moderation compatible with constitutionalism, democracy, and national unity in contemporary Indonesia.

Constructing the Radicalism Narrative in Indonesian Islamic Politics

The association between Islam and radicalism in Indonesia has been shaped by a series of political and security developments over the past two decades. Following the Bali bombings (2002), the Jakarta attacks (2009), and subsequent incidents involving extremist networks, public discussions on Islam and politics increasingly became intertwined with concerns about radicalization and national security. However, empirical evidence suggests that these incidents do not represent the attitudes of the majority of Indonesian Muslims. A survey conducted by PPIM UIN Jakarta found that while conservative religious attitudes remain visible among certain segments of society, support for violent extremism remains limited. Similarly, studies by Menchik (2019) and Mietzner and Muhtadi (2018) demonstrate that major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah continue to support constitutionalism, democratic participation, and national unity. These findings indicate that the tendency to equate Islamic political engagement with radicalism often overlooks the diversity of political orientations within Indonesian Muslim society.¹⁸

A critical examination of this phenomenon requires a clear distinction between radicalism, conservatism, and political Islam.¹⁹ These categories are distinguished analytically because they represent different forms of religious and political orientation that are frequently conflated in public discourse. While radicalism refers to transformative projects that may justify coercive or violent means, conservatism concerns the preservation of religious traditions and moral values without necessarily rejecting democratic procedures. Political Islam, by contrast, encompasses a broad spectrum of political engagement inspired by Islamic teachings, ranging from electoral participation to constitutional advocacy. Treating these categories as equivalent obscures important differences in ideology, strategy, and political objectives. These concepts are frequently used interchangeably in public discourse, although they refer to different realities. Radicalism generally refers to ideological orientations that seek fundamental political or social transformation and may justify the use of violence to achieve such objectives.²⁰ Conservatism, by contrast, refers to the preservation of traditional religious or moral values without necessarily endorsing violence or rejecting democratic procedures. Political Islam is a broader concept that encompasses various forms of political engagement inspired

¹⁸ Marcus Mietzner, "Rival Populisms and the Democratic Crisis in Indonesia: Chauvinists, Islamists and Technocrats," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 4 (July 2020): 420–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2020.1725426>.

¹⁹ Christian Lamour, "Orbán Urbi et Orbi: Christianity as a Nodal Point of Radical-Right Populism," *Politics and Religion* 15, no. 2 (June 2022): 317–43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048321000134>.

²⁰ Xianfei Yi and Zhuang Liu, "'Radicalism' and 'Conservatism': The Philosophical Argument of Human Enhancement Technologies (HET) and Its Resolution," *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 2024 17:3 17, no. 3 (June 2024): 437–54, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S40647-024-00413-4>.

by Islamic teachings, ranging from participation in democratic institutions to advocacy for Islamic social values within the public sphere.²¹ The failure to distinguish these categories has contributed to the oversimplification of Islamic political movements and has reinforced the perception that all forms of Islamic political engagement are inherently radical.

The emergence of this perception cannot be separated from the influence of media representation. Media institutions play a crucial role in shaping public understanding of political and religious issues.²² Studies on media framing have demonstrated that repeated associations between Islamic symbols and acts of violence tend to create cognitive links in the public mind between Islam and extremism. News coverage often prioritizes sensational events, including terrorism, religious conflict, and political mobilization based on religious identity, because such issues attract greater public attention.²³ Consequently, moderate and constructive forms of Islamic political participation receive considerably less visibility than radical or controversial movements. Over time, this imbalance contributes to the formation of a public narrative in which political Islam is perceived primarily through exceptional cases rather than through its broader historical and social manifestations. Therefore, this article does not argue that Islam has been widely perceived as radical by all segments of society; rather, it examines how specific security events, media narratives, and political contestations have contributed to the construction of a radicalism-centered interpretation of Islamic politics.

The development of digital media has further intensified this process. Social media platforms facilitate the rapid circulation of simplified narratives that frequently reduce complex political and religious issues into binary oppositions.²⁴ In many cases, public discussions are dominated by polarized representations that portray Islamic political actors either as defenders of religion or as threats to democracy. Such polarization leaves little room for nuanced interpretations of Islamic political traditions and contributes to the persistence of stereotypes regarding political Islam. The logic of digital communication, which prioritizes emotional engagement and virality, often amplifies extreme voices while marginalizing moderate perspectives. As a result, the public visibility of radical narratives may exceed their actual social influence.

Another factor contributing to the radicalism narrative is the presence of transnational Islamist movements. Since the late twentieth century, Indonesia has experienced the influence of various transnational ideological currents that advocate alternative political models based on particular interpretations of Islam. Organizations promoting the establishment of a global caliphate or rejecting democratic institutions have attracted significant public attention, particularly because some of their activities generated political controversy and security concerns. Although these groups represent only a limited segment of Indonesian Muslims, their visibility has often led to the assumption that they represent Islamic politics as a whole. This generalization obscures the historical reality that the

²¹ Diego Fossati, "When Conservatives Support Decentralization: The Case of Political Islam in Indonesia," *Regional & Federal Studies* 33, no. 2 (March 2023): 209–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2021.1951252>.

²² Rushain Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims Distinguish the Religious and Secular? The Dīn–Dunyā Binary in Medieval Islamic Thought," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 2020): 185–225, <https://doi.org/10.1093/JIS/ETZ048>.

²³ Hadi Wahab, "Sectarian Identity and Mobilization Amongst the Druze: How Do Sectarian Minorities Respond to Religious Terrorism?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 35, no. 5 (July 2023): 1147–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.2021892>.

²⁴ Anter Venus, Drina Intyaswati, and Witanti Prihatiningsih, "The Role of Cognitive Elaboration in Social Media Political Information Consumption and Persuasion," *Cogent Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (December 2023): 2221430, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2221430>.

majority of Indonesian Muslim organizations have adopted accommodative approaches toward the nation-state and democratic governance.

The securitization of religion also reinforces the dominance of the radicalism narrative. Securitization refers to a process through which particular issues are framed as security threats requiring extraordinary responses. In the Indonesian context, concerns regarding terrorism and violent extremism have encouraged state institutions, media organizations, and civil society actors to focus extensively on radicalization. While such efforts are important for maintaining public security, they may inadvertently contribute to the expansion of a broader discourse that associates Islamic political activism with potential threats to national stability. Consequently, distinctions between democratic Islamic activism, religious conservatism, and violent extremism become increasingly blurred within public discourse.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that such generalizations are problematic. Numerous studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of Indonesian Muslims support democratic institutions, constitutional governance, and peaceful political participation.²⁵ Major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have consistently endorsed democratic procedures and national unity while simultaneously promoting Islamic values in public life.²⁶ Their historical involvement in the independence movement, constitutional debates, educational development, and social welfare programs demonstrates that Islamic political engagement in Indonesia has often been characterized by accommodation rather than confrontation. These realities challenge the assumption that Islamic politics is inherently incompatible with democracy or pluralism.

The persistence of the radicalism narrative therefore reflects not only the existence of radical groups but also broader processes of representation, framing, and political contestation. Radical actors undoubtedly exist within contemporary Muslim societies, including Indonesia.²⁷ However, their existence should not be used to define the entirety of Islamic political thought and practice. Such an approach risks reducing a highly diverse intellectual and political tradition to a single and exceptional phenomenon. More importantly, it obscures alternative traditions of Islamic political engagement that emphasize public welfare, consultation, justice, and social harmony.

From this perspective, the central issue is not whether radical movements exist, but whether they accurately represent the dominant intellectual foundations of Islamic political thought in Indonesia. Addressing this question requires moving beyond contemporary political controversies and examining the normative traditions that have historically shaped Muslim political engagement. Among these traditions, the Shafi'i school occupies a particularly important position due to its longstanding influence on Indonesian Islamic scholarship. Rather than approaching Islamic politics solely through the framework of radicalism, it is necessary to investigate the political principles embedded within the Shafi'i intellectual tradition and to evaluate their contribution to the development of political moderation. Such an inquiry provides a more balanced perspective on the relationship between Islam and politics. It offers an alternative explanation for the relative compatibility between Islamic values, democracy, and national identity in contemporary Indonesia.

²⁵ Menchik, "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia."

²⁶ Alvian and Ardhani, "The Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations."

²⁷ Nurul Solihin, "Understanding The Radicalism Movement In Indonesia: A Conflict Approach To The Rise Of Terrorism," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017).

Foundations of Political Moderation in Shafi'i Political Thought

Political moderation within the Shafi'i tradition cannot be understood simply as a matter of religious identity or theological affiliation. Rather, it is shaped by a set of political principles that guide how Muslims understand authority, public welfare, consultation, and social order.²⁸ Classical Shafi'i scholars such as al-Mawardi, al-Juwaynī, and al-Ghazālī developed political concepts intended to address practical problems of governance while remaining faithful to Islamic normative commitments.²⁹ These concepts include legitimate political authority (*imāmah*), public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), consultation (*shūrā*), social stability (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*), and pragmatic governance (*siyāṣah shar'iyyah*). Together, these principles provide a framework for managing political disagreement, maintaining social cohesion, and pursuing collective welfare through lawful and institutional means rather than through coercion or violence.

One of the most important concepts in Shafi'i political thought is *imāmah* or legitimate political authority.³⁰

الإمامة موضوعة لخلافة النبوة في حراسة الدين وسياسة الدنيا

*"The imamate is established as a successor to prophethood in safeguarding religion and governing worldly affairs."*³¹

This formulation indicates that political authority is not intended merely as an instrument of power, but as an institution responsible for preserving both religious values and public order. The emphasis on governance (*siyāṣat al-dunyā*) demonstrates that political legitimacy is linked to social stability and collective welfare rather than ideological domination. This principle provides an important foundation for political moderation because it prioritizes institutional governance over revolutionary or coercive forms of political change.

Classical Shafi'i scholars regarded political leadership as a necessity for preserving social order and protecting collective interests.³² For al-Mawardi, political authority was not primarily a mechanism for ideological domination but an institution designed to safeguard religion, administer justice, and maintain public order.³³ The legitimacy of leadership therefore depended not merely on power but also on the ruler's ability to fulfill public responsibilities. This perspective differs significantly from radical political movements that often prioritize ideological purity over institutional legitimacy. In Shafi'i political thought, authority must be exercised through recognized institutions and legal procedures rather than through revolutionary violence. The emphasis on legitimate authority reflects an important principle of moderation because it rejects political chaos and encourages stability as a prerequisite for justice and social welfare.

²⁸ Antony Black, "The History of Islamic Political Thought : From the Prophet to the Present (New York: Routledge, 2001): 105., " n.d.

²⁹ "Al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam As-Sulthoniyyah Wa Al-Wilayah Ad-Diniyyah, 1st Ed. (Bairut: Al-Maktab Al-Islami, 1996): 13-14., " n.d.

³⁰ Ahmad and Abstrak, "Reactualizing Classical Islamic Power: Reinterpreting Al-Mawardi in Post-Reform Indonesian Democracy."

³¹ "Al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam As-Sulthoniyyah Wa Al-Wilayah Ad-Diniyyah, 1st Ed. (Bairut: Al-Maktab Al-Islami, 1996): h.5."

³² Karunia Putra et al., "Relevance of Islamic Political Thought According to Al-Mawardi in Indonesia."

³³ "Al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam As-Sulthoniyyah Wa Al-Wilayah Ad-Diniyyah, 1st Ed. (Bairut: Al-Maktab Al-Islami, 1996): 13-14."; Kamal Fiqry Musa, Achmad Zubairin, and Eva Nugraha, "Re-Examining the Consistency of Al-Māwardī's Interpretative Method on Jināyāt Verses," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 26, no. 1 (2026): 81–98.

Nevertheless, Shafi'i political thought should not be romanticized. Certain aspects of al-Mawardi's theory were shaped by the political realities of the Abbasid period and may not be compatible with contemporary democratic values.³⁴ His requirement that the supreme leader should descend from the Quraysh tribe illustrates the historical limitations of classical Islamic political theory. Such a requirement cannot be applied within modern pluralistic societies where political legitimacy is derived from constitutional principles and popular participation rather than lineage.³⁵ Recognizing these limitations is important because political moderation cannot be built upon the uncritical acceptance of classical doctrines. Instead, moderation requires a selective engagement with the tradition by preserving its universal principles while reinterpreting historically contingent elements.

Another crucial foundation of political moderation in the Shafi'i tradition is the concept of *maṣlaḥah* or public welfare. Although discussions of public welfare can be found throughout Islamic legal literature, Shafi'i scholars developed sophisticated approaches to balancing textual authority and social needs. Al-Ghazālī in particular emphasized that the objectives of Islamic law include the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.³⁶ Political authority therefore exists not for its own sake but as an instrument for achieving these objectives. From this perspective, governance should be evaluated according to its capacity to produce social benefit and prevent harm. Such an approach creates a flexible framework for political decision-making because policies are assessed based on their consequences for society rather than solely on ideological commitments.

The significance of *maṣlaḥah* becomes particularly evident when compared with radical political narratives.³⁷ Radical movements frequently define political legitimacy through rigid ideological criteria and often prioritize symbolic goals over practical outcomes.³⁸ By contrast, the Shafi'i tradition emphasizes that the public good should guide political decisions. This orientation encourages compromise, negotiation, and pragmatic solutions to political problems. However, the concept of *maṣlaḥah* also requires critical scrutiny because excessive reliance on claims of public welfare may be used to justify authoritarian policies. Consequently, public welfare must be balanced with accountability, justice, and legal constraints to prevent its misuse.

Political moderation in the Shafi'i tradition is further reinforced by the principle of *shūrā* or consultation.³⁹ Although classical Islamic societies did not practice democracy in the modern sense, consultation functioned as an important mechanism for limiting arbitrary power and incorporating collective judgment into political decision-making. Al-Juwaynī emphasized the necessity of involving qualified members of the community in matters of public concern, reflecting an understanding that governance should not be based solely on personal authority.⁴⁰ The principle of *shūrā* therefore

³⁴ "Al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam As-Sulthoniyyah Wa Al-Wilayah Ad-Diniyyah, 1st Ed. (Bairut: Al-Maktab Al-Islami, 1996): 13-14."

³⁵ Mohammad. Fadel, "Political Liberalism, Islamic Family Law, and Family Law Pluralism.," 2012, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1163/187633712X632248>.

³⁶ Imam Ghazali, "Al-Iqtishod Fil I'tiqod. 2nd Ed. Bairut: Darul Kutub Ilmiyyah, 2015.," n.d.

³⁷ Hudzaifah Achmad Qotadah et al., "Cultured Meat for Indonesian Muslim Communities: A Review of Maslahah and Prospect," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 2 November (December 2022): 329-46, <https://doi.org/10.29240/JHI.V7I2.5476>; Husnul Fatarib et al., "Progressive Legal Reasoning in Contemporary Islamic Legal Reform: Negotiating the Maqāsid and Hermeneutic Approaches," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 24, no. 2 (December 17, 2025): 277-94, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i2.16123>.

³⁸ Asma. Afsaruddin, "Jihad: What Everyone Needs to Know.," 2022.

³⁹ Mular Ibnu Syarif, Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie, and Arip Purkon, "A Comparative Analysis of Minority Political Participation from an Islamic Perspective in Indonesia and Singapore," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (October 2024): 527-50, <https://doi.org/10.29240/JHI.V9I2.11124>.

⁴⁰ "Juwayni, Imam. Al-Ghiyathi. 2nd Ed. Qotar: Qotar University, 1981.," n.d.

establishes an ethical foundation for participation and deliberation. While its institutional form differs from contemporary democratic systems, its underlying logic is compatible with modern notions of political participation and collective responsibility.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that classical formulations of *shūrā* were often restricted to elite groups rather than the broader population.⁴¹ Consequently, contemporary applications of this principle require reinterpretation in light of democratic norms and equal citizenship. Political moderation emerges not from reproducing classical institutions in their original form but from adapting their underlying values to contemporary contexts. In this regard, the principle of consultation provides an important bridge between Islamic political ethics and democratic governance.

The concept of *hifẓ al-nizām* or the preservation of social order constitutes another key component of political moderation.⁴² Classical Shafi'i scholars consistently viewed political disorder as a major threat to the welfare of society. Social stability was considered necessary for the implementation of justice, economic prosperity, and religious life. For this reason, many Shafi'i jurists preferred gradual reform and institutional continuity over abrupt political upheaval.⁴³ This preference should not be interpreted as unconditional support for existing political authorities. Rather, it reflects a concern that political chaos often generates greater harm than imperfect governance. The principle of preserving social order therefore encourages political actors to pursue reform through lawful and peaceful means rather than through violence.

Closely related to this principle is the concept of *siyāsah shar'iyah*, which reflects a realistic approach to governance.⁴⁴ Shafi'i scholars recognized that political life involves changing circumstances that cannot always be addressed through literal applications of legal texts. Consequently, rulers were granted limited discretion to formulate policies that advance public welfare while remaining consistent with the broader objectives of Islamic law. This approach demonstrates a form of legal realism that distinguishes Shafi'i political thought from rigid and literalist interpretations. Political moderation emerges because governance is understood as a process of balancing normative commitments with social realities rather than imposing abstract ideals without regard for context.

Taken together, the concepts of *imāmah*, *maṣlaḥah*, *shūrā*, *hifẓ al-nizām*, and *siyāsah shar'iyah* reveal that political moderation in the Shafi'i tradition is rooted in a coherent epistemic framework.⁴⁵ This framework does not eliminate disagreement or political contestation, but it provides mechanisms for managing them through legitimacy, consultation, public welfare, social stability, and legal adaptability. At the same time, the historical limitations of classical Shafi'i political thought necessitate critical reinterpretation rather than unquestioning acceptance. Understanding this

⁴¹ Ali Aqajani, "Shūrā' and Conditional Maximalist Political Participation (Delegative-Agential)," *Journal of Contemporary Studies on Religion and Science (JCSRS)* 1, no. 1 (October 2025): 92–111.

⁴² Krismiarsi Krismiarsi and Rayno Dwi Adityo, "The Urgency of Community Service Imposed as Punishment on Juvenile Delinquents: A Study of Al-Shatibi's Maqhasid Al-Syariah Concept," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syariah* 17, no. 1 (2025): 132–48, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v17i1.31246>.

⁴³ George Mousourakis, "Continuity, Diversity, and Change in the Islamic Legal Tradition," 2025, 247–71, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-94669-1_9.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Mutawalli Mukhlis et al., "Regional Autonomy System: Delegation of Authority and Power of Regional Government in Indonesia in the Study of Fiqh Siyasah," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (September 2024): 505–26, <https://doi.org/10.29240/JHI.V9I2.9709>.

⁴⁵ Abdul Rashid Moten, "Al-Siyasah Al-Shar'iyah: Good Governance in Islam," *Qur'anic Guidance for Good Governance*, 2017, 55–81, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57873-6_4.

dynamic relationship between continuity and adaptation is essential for explaining why the Shafi'i tradition has remained influential within Indonesian Islam and why it continues to offer resources for constructing a moderate model of political engagement in contemporary society.

Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory in Indonesia

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that political moderation within the Shafi'i tradition is rooted in a set of interconnected principles, including legitimate authority (*imāmah*), public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), consultation (*shūrā*), social order (*ḥifẓ al-niẓām*), and legal realism (*siyāsah shar'īyyah*).⁴⁶ However, the significance of these principles cannot be fully understood without examining how they have been interpreted and applied in specific historical contexts.⁴⁷ The Indonesian experience is particularly important in this regard because it illustrates a process of selective adaptation through which classical Shafi'i political principles were transformed into a framework compatible with constitutionalism, democracy, and national unity.⁴⁸ Rather than reproducing classical political doctrines in their original form, Indonesian Muslim scholars reformulated them in response to the social, cultural, and political realities of the modern nation-state.

One of the clearest examples of this adaptive process can be found in the political thought of Indonesian ulama during the struggle for independence.⁴⁹ Unlike transnational Islamist movements that sought to establish a universal caliphate, Indonesian Muslim leaders generally adopted a pragmatic approach toward state formation. Their primary concern was not the formal implementation of a particular political structure but the realization of collective welfare and the preservation of national unity. This orientation reflects the influence of *maṣlaḥah* as a guiding principle of political reasoning. For many Indonesian ulama, the legitimacy of political arrangements depended less on their formal labels than on their ability to protect the interests of society and secure the common good.

The debates surrounding the Jakarta Charter provide an important illustration of this approach. During the constitutional negotiations preceding Indonesian independence, Muslim representatives advocated for a greater recognition of Islamic principles within the constitutional framework. Nevertheless, many Muslim leaders ultimately accepted the removal of the so-called "seven words" from the Jakarta Charter in order to preserve national cohesion and avoid political fragmentation. From a purely formalistic perspective, such a compromise could be interpreted as a political concession. However, from the perspective of Shafi'i political reasoning, it reflects a preference for *maṣlaḥah* and *ḥifẓ al-niẓām*. The preservation of national unity was regarded as a higher priority than insisting upon a constitutional formula that might threaten social stability and interreligious coexistence.

⁴⁶ Morteza Motahhari Fard and Assistant Professor, "The Distinction between the Principles and Evidence of the Jurisprudence of Judgment and The Enjoining Good in the Thought of Allama Na'ini," *Journal of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* 11, no. 3 (November 2025): 123–46, <https://doi.org/10.22034/JRJ.2025.72560.3030>.

⁴⁷ Mohammad Hasan, "Al-Wasāṭiyah Al-Intiqā'iyah Al-Taqlīdīyah: Dirāsāt Haula Harakāti Wa Afkārī Kiāi Hāṣim Asy'arī Fī Fiqh Al-Siyāsah Al-Ijtimā'iyah Bi Indūnīsiā," *Al-Ihkam, Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial*, no. Vol 16 No 2 (2021) (2021): 595–623.

⁴⁸ Zuairiyah Zuairiyah et al., "The Concept of Bughat in Islamic Political Fiqh," *Tasyri': Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 1 (January 2026): 49–62, <https://doi.org/10.53038/TSYR.V5I1.435>.

⁴⁹ Mustafa Demir and Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Journey to Independence and the Evolution of Political Islam: A Historical Perspective," 2023, 59–80, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-7980-6_4.

A similar pattern can be observed in the famous Jihad Resolution (*Resolusi Jihad*) issued by Hasyim Asy'ari in 1945.⁵⁰ Although often interpreted solely as a call for armed resistance against colonial forces, the resolution also reflected a broader understanding of political authority and collective responsibility. The defense of Indonesian independence was not framed as an attempt to establish an exclusive religious state but as an obligation to protect society from foreign domination. In this context, political action was directed toward safeguarding the welfare and dignity of the nation rather than imposing a particular ideological project. The resolution therefore demonstrates how Islamic political commitments could coexist with inclusive forms of nationalism.

The adaptive character of Shafi'i political reasoning can also be identified in the writings of Hasyim Asy'ari, particularly in *Qānūn Asāsī* and *Muqaddimah Qānūn Asāsī*.⁵¹ In these works, Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the importance of unity (*al-ittihād*), consultation (*shūrā*), and obedience to legitimate authority as essential foundations for social order and collective welfare. Rather than advocating a rigid political structure, he stressed that political leadership should serve the interests of society and prevent social disintegration. His emphasis on preserving communal harmony reflects the Shafi'i principles of *maṣlahah* and *ḥifẓ al-niẓām*, demonstrating that political legitimacy is closely linked to public welfare rather than merely formal institutional arrangements.

The adaptive character of Shafi'i political thought is equally evident in the ideas of Mohammad Natsir. As one of Indonesia's most influential Muslim intellectuals, Natsir consistently argued that Islam provides ethical guidance for political life without necessarily prescribing a fixed institutional model of government.⁵² His support for the Integral Motion (*Mosi Integral*) reflected a commitment to national unity that transcended regional and ideological divisions. Rather than advocating a rigid model of Islamic governance, Natsir emphasized the importance of justice, moral responsibility, and public welfare. Such a position illustrates how classical concepts of *maṣlahah* and *shūrā* could be translated into the language of constitutional politics and democratic participation.

Natsir's Integral Motion of 1950 provides another important example of adaptive political reasoning.⁵³ Rather than promoting an exclusive Islamic state project, Natsir argued that national integration constituted a higher political objective necessary for safeguarding the welfare of Indonesian society. His position illustrates a practical application of the Shafi'i concept of *maṣlahah*, in which political arrangements are evaluated according to their contribution to collective benefit and social stability. In this regard, constitutional unity was considered more important than ideological fragmentation, reflecting a political orientation grounded in public welfare and national cohesion.

The acceptance of Pancasila by major Islamic organizations further demonstrates the selective adaptation of Shafi'i political principles.⁵⁴ Historically, some observers interpreted the acceptance

⁵⁰ Fajri Matahati Muhammadin and Fairuz El-Mechwar, "Masyumi's" Djihad Dan Qitaal" and Islamic Laws of War: Ahead of Its Time?," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 18, no. 2 (2023): 320–41.

⁵¹ Abdul Aziz, Ali Fikri, and Ida Kurnia Shofa, "The Articulation of a Maqāṣidī Approach in Hasyim Asy'ari's Qur'anic Interpretation," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 1, no. 1 (June 2023): 86–109, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JUIT.2023.1.1.86-109>.

⁵² Nurhayati Manto, "Contribution of Islamic Law to the Indonesian Constitutional System (Legislative Challenges Amid Legal and Religious Pluralism)," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, no. 6 (November 2024): 2496–2509, <https://doi.org/10.31004/INNOVATIVE.V4I6.15341>.

⁵³ Ismail Marzuki Hasibuan, Nur Widad Mazaya, and Mulia Sari, "Educational Concepts from Mohammad Natsir's Perspective and Its Relevance to Education in Indonesia," *At-Tasyrih: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (June 2023): 273–82, <https://doi.org/10.55849/ATTASYRIH.V9I2.182>.

⁵⁴ Hafizul Husni, Zuhdiyah Zuhdiyah, and Maryamah Maryamah, "Social and Political Dimensions in Islamic Studies: An Analysis of the Contemporary Relevance of Sharia Values," *Jurnal Al-Ijtima'iyyah* 11, no. 2 (December 2025): 241–56, <https://doi.org/10.22373/AL-IJTIMAIIYYAH.V11I2.32515>.

of Pancasila as evidence of the secularization of Indonesian Islam. However, such interpretations overlook the intellectual processes through which Muslim scholars reconciled Islamic values with the national ideology. For many Indonesian ulama, Pancasila was not viewed as a substitute for religion but as a political framework capable of protecting religious freedom, social harmony, and public welfare. This interpretation reflects the principle of *siyāsah shar‘iyyah*, which allows flexibility in political arrangements as long as they remain consistent with the broader objectives of Islamic law. Consequently, support for Pancasila did not represent the abandonment of Islamic political values but rather their contextual application within a pluralistic society.

The 1984 decision of Nahdlatul Ulama to accept Pancasila as the sole foundation of the organization further illustrates this adaptive process.⁵⁵ The decision was not framed as a rejection of Islamic teachings but as a political interpretation consistent with the objectives of Islamic law. NU scholars argued that Pancasila did not contradict Islam because it guaranteed religious freedom, social justice, and national unity. This position demonstrates a contextual application of *siyāsah shar‘iyyah*, whereby political institutions are assessed according to their ability to realize the objectives of the Shari‘ah rather than their formal religious labels.

The Indonesian experience also reveals that adaptation involves the rejection of certain elements of classical political doctrine. While Indonesian Muslim scholars preserved principles such as consultation, justice, public welfare, and social order, they generally did not adopt doctrines that were incompatible with modern constitutional governance.⁵⁶ For example, the classical requirement that the supreme leader should belong to the Quraysh tribe was not considered relevant within the context of an independent nation-state. Similarly, the institutional structure of the classical caliphate was not regarded as a necessary condition for implementing Islamic values in public life. Instead, legitimacy became associated with constitutional procedures, democratic participation, and public accountability. This selective approach demonstrates that fidelity to the Shafi‘i tradition does not require the literal reproduction of historical institutions.

The process of adaptation described above can be conceptualized as an Adaptive Shafi‘i Political Theory. This theory refers to a model of political reasoning that preserves the normative objectives of Shafi‘i political thought while allowing institutional flexibility in response to changing social realities. Unlike rigid approaches that identify Islamic politics exclusively with a particular state structure, Adaptive Shafi‘i Political Theory focuses on substantive values rather than formal arrangements. Its primary concern is the realization of justice, public welfare, consultation, social stability, and accountable governance. As a result, different political institutions may be considered legitimate provided that they effectively promote these objectives.

The concept also offers an alternative perspective to both secular reductionism and ideological Islamism. Secular reductionist approaches often regard religion as an obstacle to democratic politics, whereas ideological Islamist approaches tend to equate Islamic authenticity with the implementation of specific political structures. Adaptive Shafi‘i Political Theory rejects both assumptions. It recognizes the continuing relevance of Islamic ethical principles while simultaneously affirming the importance of contextual adaptation and democratic participation. In this respect, the Indonesian

⁵⁵ M. Hasan Ubaidillah, "Aswaja Reconstruction as Social Ethics: The Roots of the Theology of the Nahdlatul Ulama Moderation," *At-Tasyrih: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Hukum Islam* 11, no. 1 (August 2025): 475–90, <https://doi.org/10.55849/ATTASYRIH.V11I1.335>.

⁵⁶ Robert W Hefner, Timothy Shah, and Nathan A Berkeley, "Islam and Institutional Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *Religions* 2021, Vol. 12, Page 415 12, no. 6 (June 2021): 415, <https://doi.org/10.3390/REL12060415>.

experience demonstrates that Islamic political thought can contribute to constitutional democracy without abandoning its normative foundations.

Ultimately, the Indonesian case illustrates that political moderation is not simply the absence of radicalism. Rather, it is the product of a continuous process of interpretation, negotiation, and adaptation. Through this process, Indonesian Muslim scholars transformed classical Shafi'i political concepts into a framework compatible with the realities of a modern nation-state. The result is neither a secularized form of Islam nor a replication of medieval political institutions, but a distinctive model of Islamic political engagement that balances religious commitment, democratic governance, and national unity. This model provides a valuable contribution to contemporary debates on Islam and politics and demonstrates the continuing relevance of Shafi'i jurisprudence in addressing modern political challenges. Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory refers to a model of political reasoning in which the normative objectives of Shafi'i jurisprudence are preserved while their institutional expressions are reformulated in accordance with contemporary democratic and constitutional realities.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the dominant tendency to associate Islamic politics in Indonesia with radicalism fails to capture the complexity of the Shafi'i political tradition. The findings reveal that political moderation in Shafi'i jurisprudence is not an inherent characteristic but is constructed through interconnected principles of *imāmah*, *maṣlaḥah*, *shūrā*, *ḥifẓ al-niẓām*, and *siyāsah shar'īyyah*. An important finding of this study is that Indonesian Muslim scholars did not simply inherit these principles; rather, they selectively adapted them to support constitutionalism, democracy, and national unity within the modern nation-state. This study contributes to the literature by shifting the discussion of political moderation from sociological and institutional explanations toward its epistemic foundations within Islamic legal thought. It also proposes the concept of Adaptive Shafi'i Political Theory to explain how classical Shafi'i political principles can be reformulated in response to contemporary political realities. In this regard, the study extends previous findings on the compatibility of Islam and democracy by identifying the intellectual mechanisms that make such compatibility possible. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on library research and its focus on the Indonesian Shafi'i tradition. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to all Muslim societies or used directly as a basis for policy formulation. Future research should incorporate broader empirical evidence and comparative perspectives involving different legal schools, political contexts, and contemporary Islamic organizations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic political moderation.

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