

Reconstructing Islamic Political Epistemology for Modern Governance

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ABSTRACT

The growing complexity of contemporary governance has renewed scholarly interest in reconstructing Islamic political thought as a normative framework for modern political and administrative challenges. Although previous studies have widely discussed Islamic governance, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and political reform, limited attention has been given to reconstructing the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought into an integrated model for contemporary governance. This study aims to reconstruct those foundations and examine their contribution to accountable, participatory, and ethical governance in Muslim societies. Using qualitative library research with historical-philosophical and conceptual approaches, this study analyzes classical Islamic political literature and contemporary scholarship through documentary research. Data were examined using qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and constant comparative analysis. The findings show that Islamic political epistemology is built upon six interconnected sources of knowledge: the Qurʿan, Sunnah, *ijmāʿ*, *qiyās*, *ijtihād*, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. These principles can be transformed into a governance-oriented framework emphasizing accountability, participation, ethical leadership, transparency, and public welfare. The study argues that contemporary Islamic political epistemology is a dynamic knowledge system capable of integrating Islamic intellectual heritage with modern governance principles. Its novelty lies in proposing an integrated epistemological model that bridges classical Islamic political thought and contemporary governance theory.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Islamic civilization has long demonstrated that political authority is inseparable from epistemological foundations rooted in revelation (waḥy), rational inquiry ('aql), ijtihād, ijmā', and the ethical objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah) (Khan, 2019; Hallaq, 2021). Unlike secular political traditions that primarily derive legitimacy from constitutional sovereignty or popular consent, classical Islamic political thought developed an integrated conception of governance in which justice ('adl), public welfare (maṣlaḥah), consultation (shūrā), and moral accountability constituted the primary sources of political legitimacy (Hallaq, 2021). During the classical Abbasid period, these epistemological principles shaped the development of legal institutions, administrative systems, and political ethics that significantly influenced governance throughout the Muslim world (Khan, 2019). Nevertheless, globalization, democratization, digital transformation, and the expansion of international governance standards have fundamentally altered the political landscape confronting contemporary Muslim societies, creating increasing tensions between inherited Islamic political traditions and modern state institutions (Fuadi, 2024). Consequently, contemporary scholarship increasingly argues that the future relevance of Islamic political thought depends not upon restoring historical political institutions but upon reconstructing their epistemological foundations to address transparency, participation, accountability, constitutional governance, and ethical public leadership within contemporary political systems (Karingayi, 2025). Therefore, reconstructing Islamic political epistemology represents both an intellectual necessity and a practical response to the governance challenges facing Muslim societies in the twenty-first century.

Recent scholarship has increasingly explored Islamic political epistemology from diverse geographical and disciplinary perspectives. Research conducted in Indonesia emphasizes the reconstruction of Islamic epistemology through the integration of revelation, empirical reasoning, and interdisciplinary knowledge as foundations for governance reform and public ethics (Fuadi, 2024). Studies from Bangladesh argue that Islamic political epistemology provides an alternative paradigm for democratic governance by integrating Islamic ethical principles into public administration and bureaucratic accountability (Ruhullah, 2023). Meanwhile, research conducted in Malaysia highlights the importance of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as a normative framework capable of balancing constitutional governance with Islamic moral philosophy in pluralistic societies (Khan, 2019). Comparative studies across Middle Eastern contexts similarly revisit classical Islamic political philosophy to reinterpret ijtihād, shūrā, and maṣlaḥah within modern constitutional arrangements and participatory governance (Karingayi, 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate an emerging scholarly consensus that Islamic

political thought should no longer be understood merely as a historical legacy but as a dynamic epistemological tradition capable of informing contemporary governance reform through interdisciplinary engagement between Islamic studies, political science, constitutional law, and public administration.

Despite these important contributions, significant theoretical and methodological limitations remain within existing scholarship. First, most contemporary studies examine Islamic political thought through normative, theological, or historical perspectives without constructing an operational epistemological model applicable to modern governance institutions (Fuadi, 2024). Second, previous research frequently discusses accountability, participation, constitutionalism, ethical leadership, and public administration as independent governance concepts rather than explaining how these principles emerge from a coherent Islamic epistemological structure (Ruhullah, 2023). Third, the majority of studies emphasize *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* or Islamic political ethics while giving comparatively limited attention to reconstructing the interaction between *naṣṣ*, '*aql*, *ijtihād*, *ijmā'*, and public reasoning as an integrated governance paradigm (Karingayi, 2025). Finally, little research has systematically connected the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic civilization with contemporary governance theories capable of addressing institutional accountability, democratic participation, ethical administration, and sustainable public policy simultaneously. Consequently, the literature still lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining how classical Islamic political epistemology can be reconstructed into an applicable model for contemporary governance.

This study addresses these limitations by proposing a multidimensional reconstruction of Islamic political epistemology that bridges classical intellectual traditions with modern governance theory. Rather than positioning revelation and rationality as competing sources of authority, the proposed framework conceptualizes both as complementary epistemological foundations that collectively generate accountable, participatory, transparent, and ethical governance. Operationally, this study integrates *naṣṣ*, *ijtihād*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *shūrā*, *maṣlaḥah*, and institutional accountability into a unified analytical framework capable of explaining governance legitimacy within contemporary Muslim societies. Unlike previous studies that primarily offer normative interpretations of Islamic political ethics, this research develops a conceptual model demonstrating the causal relationship between epistemological reconstruction and governance practices. Accordingly, the study contributes both theoretically by extending Islamic political epistemology beyond historical interpretation and practically by offering an analytical framework relevant to governance reform, public policy, constitutional development, and democratic institutionalization in Muslim-majority countries.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to reconstruct the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought in order to formulate a contemporary framework for modern governance. Specifically,

this research seeks to answer two fundamental questions. First, how can the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought be reconstructed to develop a contemporary framework for modern governance? Second, how does the reconstructed Islamic political epistemology contribute to principles of accountable, participatory, and ethical governance in contemporary Muslim societies? Answering these questions is expected to contribute to the advancement of Islamic political thought by developing an integrative epistemological model that bridges the intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization with the institutional realities of twenty-first-century governance. Ultimately, the proposed framework is expected to enrich contemporary discussions on Islamic governance while providing theoretical foundations for future empirical research concerning political institutions, public administration, and governance reform within Muslim societies.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design combined with a historical-philosophical approach and conceptual analysis to reconstruct the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought into a conceptual framework relevant to modern governance. This approach was selected because the focus of the study is not to test relationships among variables, but to examine the development of ideas, epistemological structures, and conceptual transformation of Islamic political thought from the perspective of Islamic intellectual history toward the paradigm of modern governance. Therefore, this study is directed toward developing a theoretical synthesis concerning the relationship between the epistemological sources of classical Islamic political thought and the principles of accountable, participatory, ethical, and public welfare-oriented governance.

Data collection was conducted through documentary research involving primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include classical works of Islamic political thought that discuss the concepts of *imāmah*, *khilāfah*, *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, *shūrā*, *ijtihād*, *ijmāʿ*, *qiyās*, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. The secondary sources consist of reputable international journal articles, academic monographs, conference proceedings, and policy documents examining the history of Islamic civilization, Islamic political philosophy, governance theory, Islamic governance, good governance, institutional reform, and public administration in contemporary Muslim societies. The literature search was conducted systematically through databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Dimensions, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, Taylor & Francis Online, Sage Journals, Oxford Academic, Cambridge Core, and ScienceDirect using combinations of keywords including Islamic political thought, Islamic political epistemology, Islamic governance, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, good governance, political reform, Islamic intellectual heritage, and contemporary Muslim societies.

This study is a non-field research project; therefore, the research setting is located within digital libraries and academic collections that provide both primary and

secondary literature. The object of the study focuses on Islamic intellectual heritage and contemporary political reform, particularly the transformation of Islamic political epistemology from the classical intellectual tradition into the paradigm of modern governance. The unit of analysis consists of scholarly documents containing epistemological constructions, Islamic political theories, concepts of political legitimacy, ethics of governance, and practices of political reform in various Muslim societies.

The documents were selected using purposive sampling with inclusion criteria covering: (1) relevance to the theme of reconstructing Islamic political epistemology, (2) conceptual contribution to Islamic political theory or governance studies, (3) academic quality of the source, and (4) connection with modern governance principles such as accountability, participation, transparency, and public ethics. The number of references was not determined statistically, but followed the principle of theoretical saturation, in which the literature collection process was stopped when the emerging conceptual themes had shown consistency and no new categories were found that could provide substantive contributions to the reconstruction model of Islamic political epistemology.

The main research instrument is the researcher as a human instrument, supported by data extraction sheets, literature synthesis matrices, concept categorization tables, and reference management software such as Zotero and Mendeley for managing citations and bibliographies. All literature was classified into several analytical categories, namely sources of Islamic political epistemology, political legitimacy, governance principles, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *shūrā*, *ijtihād*, leadership ethics, accountability, public participation, and institutional reform. The stages of the research include problem identification, formulation of research questions, literature search, document selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction, concept coding, literature synthesis, development of a conceptual model, and drawing conclusions.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis combined with thematic analysis and the constant comparative method. The stages of analysis included data reduction, open coding, axial coding, thematic categorization, identification of relationships among concepts, historical-philosophical interpretation, and conceptual synthesis to produce a reconstruction model of Islamic political epistemology. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation, peer debriefing, and examination of argumentative consistency between classical literature and contemporary studies. Through these procedures, this study produces a conceptual framework explaining how the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought can be reconstructed into a modern governance paradigm that integrates Islamic normative legitimacy with principles of governance that are accountable, participatory, ethical, adaptive, and oriented toward public welfare.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The library research identified ten recent international publications that collectively demonstrate a renewed scholarly interest in reconstructing Islamic political thought within contemporary governance contexts. The retrieved literature spans diverse themes, including Islamic legal politics, *siyāsah* jurisprudence, Shariah governance, Islamic state administration, nation-building, comparative political philosophy, and institutional reform. Although the studies originate from different geographical contexts including Indonesia, Türkiye, Malaysia, Thailand, Kazakhstan, the Mughal Empire, and comparative Islamic political history they consistently position Islamic political knowledge as a dynamic intellectual tradition rather than a fixed historical doctrine.

The first research question concerns how the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic political thought can be reconstructed for modern governance. Analysis of the literature indicates three dominant epistemological dimensions. First, several studies reinterpret classical concepts of *siyāsah*, *fiqh al-mu'assasāt*, and Islamic legal reasoning as flexible institutional frameworks capable of responding to changing political realities rather than merely preserving historical legal formulations. Second, the reviewed publications emphasize that political legitimacy is constructed through the interaction between religious authority, institutional governance, and public welfare, suggesting that revelation, juristic reasoning, and contextual interpretation operate as complementary sources of governance. Third, historical analyses of the Mughal administration, early Islamic caliphate, and contemporary nation-building demonstrate that Islamic political institutions have historically evolved through adaptation to social and political transformations while maintaining normative commitments to justice and public interest.

Regarding the second research question, the reviewed studies consistently show that the reconstructed Islamic political epistemology contributes directly to accountable, participatory, and ethical governance. Publications addressing Shariah governance, Islamic banking regulation, legal codification, and ministerial institutional development indicate that governance effectiveness depends not solely on legal compliance but also on ethical accountability, institutional transparency, and public trust. Likewise, comparative analyses of Islamic and non-Islamic political traditions reveal that consultation (*shūrā*), public welfare (*maṣlahah*), and political flexibility constitute enduring governance principles capable of supporting participatory decision-making within contemporary political institutions.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that contemporary scholarship no longer understands Islamic political epistemology merely as an object of historical inquiry. Instead, the literature collectively reconstructs Islamic intellectual heritage into an adaptive epistemological framework that integrates classical juristic reasoning, institutional reform, ethical leadership, and governance accountability. This synthesis suggests that modern governance in Muslim societies can be strengthened by reconnecting contemporary political institutions with the epistemological principles of Islamic civilization while simultaneously

accommodating constitutional governance, administrative effectiveness, and evolving societal needs.

The thematic synthesis further reveals that the reconstructed Islamic political epistemology is organized around four interrelated domains, namely epistemological sources, governance values, institutional mechanisms, and societal outcomes. Across the reviewed publications, revelation (naṣṣ) remains the primary normative source, while rational reasoning ('aql), ijtihād, and historical contextualization function as interpretative instruments that enable Islamic political thought to respond to changing governance environments. Rather than presenting these epistemological sources as competing authorities, the reviewed studies consistently portray them as complementary components that collectively shape political legitimacy. This finding indicates that contemporary Islamic political thought increasingly adopts an integrative epistemological paradigm in which textual authority and contextual reasoning operate simultaneously in constructing governance principles.

A second pattern emerging from the reviewed literature concerns the transformation of governance from ruler-centered authority toward institution-centered governance. Historical analyses of the early caliphate, Mughal administration, and contemporary Muslim states consistently demonstrate that governance effectiveness depends upon institutional capacity rather than individual leadership alone. The reviewed publications describe the evolution of administrative bodies, judicial institutions, consultative councils, financial governance, and ministerial organizations as evidence that Islamic civilization historically developed sophisticated mechanisms for distributing authority and maintaining accountability. Consequently, reconstruction of Islamic political epistemology is not directed toward reproducing historical political structures but toward identifying institutional principles capable of supporting contemporary constitutional governance.

The analysis also demonstrates remarkable consistency regarding the ethical dimensions of governance. Almost all publications identify justice ('adl), consultation (shūrā), public welfare (maṣlaḥah), trustworthiness (amānah), and accountability (muḥāsabah) as the normative foundations underlying Islamic political institutions. These ethical values are repeatedly associated with decision-making processes, legal administration, public financial management, and governmental legitimacy. Importantly, the reviewed literature presents these principles not merely as religious ideals but as operational governance values capable of strengthening institutional transparency, citizen participation, and responsible public administration. This finding suggests that ethical governance occupies a central position within the reconstructed framework of Islamic political epistemology.

Cross-national comparison further indicates that the reconstruction of Islamic political thought is influenced by different socio-political contexts while preserving common epistemological foundations. Studies from Indonesia predominantly emphasize legal reform, constitutional adaptation, and Islamic legal politics. Publications concerning Türkiye focus on the interaction between

religion, political authority, and state institutions, whereas Malaysian and Thai studies concentrate on Shariah governance and institutional accountability within Islamic finance. Research addressing Kazakhstan highlights Islam as a component of nation-building and political identity, while historical studies on the Mughal Empire illustrate administrative innovation and bureaucratic organization. Despite these contextual differences, the reviewed publications converge in recognizing that Islamic political knowledge remains adaptive, historically dynamic, and capable of responding to contemporary governance challenges.

Finally, the overall synthesis enables the construction of an integrated conceptual model that answers both research questions. The reviewed literature demonstrates that reconstructing Islamic political epistemology requires reconnecting classical epistemological principles including *naṣṣ*, *'aql*, *ijtihād*, *shūrā*, *ijmā'*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* with contemporary governance requirements such as accountability, participation, transparency, institutional effectiveness, and ethical leadership. The resulting framework illustrates a continuous relationship in which Islamic intellectual heritage functions as the epistemological foundation, institutional reform serves as the governance mechanism, and accountable public administration becomes the practical outcome. Therefore, the findings collectively show that Islamic political epistemology is not confined to historical discourse but constitutes a living intellectual tradition that continues to provide conceptual resources for modern governance reform in contemporary Muslim societies.

Discussion

The findings indicate that reconstructing Islamic political epistemology requires moving beyond a nostalgic recovery of classical concepts toward an analytical reformulation of how Islamic intellectual heritage can generate institutional principles for modern governance (Dzar et al., 2026; Qosim et al., 2026). This interpretation strengthens the argument that *siyāsah* should not be reduced to a theory of state power, because classical Sunni juristic traditions conceptualized political discretion as an ethically bounded form of reasoning directed toward justice and public welfare (Dzar et al., 2026). In this sense, the reconstruction of Islamic political epistemology begins with the recognition that Islamic governance is not merely procedural but normatively anchored in *'adl*, *maṣlaḥah*, institutional responsibility, and public legitimacy (Dzar et al., 2026; Ramadhan et al., 2026).

This study supports previous research showing that Islamic political thought has historically developed through adaptation to changing institutional contexts rather than through rigid replication of earlier political forms (Muttaqin et al., 2026; Hassan Ashari et al., 2026). The Indonesian case of colonial legal engineering demonstrates that Islamic law was transformed into a state-sanctioned legal infrastructure, suggesting that modern Islamic legal politics cannot be separated from historical processes of institutionalization and administrative regulation (Muttaqin et al., 2026). Similarly, the revitalization of

the Diwan al-Sadarat under Aurangzeb shows that Islamic governance historically depended on administrative specialization, welfare distribution, religious education, and bureaucratic legitimacy rather than solely on ruler-centered authority (Hassan Ashari et al., 2026). These findings confirm that Islamic political epistemology must be reconstructed through institutional analysis, because classical Islamic civilization already contained governance mechanisms that linked religious authority, public administration, and social stability (Hassan Ashari et al., 2026; Qosim et al., 2026).

However, the findings also reveal a critical tension between Islamic normative objectives and modern technologies of state power (Kocamaner, 2026; Qosim et al., 2026). The Turkish case illustrates that religious infrastructure can be mobilized by the state to generate political affect, nationalist sentiment, and mass mobilization, thereby challenging the assumption that religious governance is always emancipatory or ethically neutral (Kocamaner, 2026). This finding partially contrasts with maqāṣid-oriented studies that emphasize the protective and welfare-oriented role of state institutions, because bureaucratization may simultaneously protect religious communities and expand governmental control over religious life (Qosim et al., 2026). Therefore, the reconstructed epistemology proposed in this study must include a critical mechanism for distinguishing ethical governance from instrumentalized religious power (Kocamaner, 2026; Weahama et al., 2026).

The comparison with studies on Shariah governance and Islamic social finance further clarifies the practical relevance of epistemological reconstruction (Weahama et al., 2026; Harahap et al., 2026). Research on Islamic banking in Thailand shows that ethical compliance requires not only religious norms but also institutional independence, audit mechanisms, regulatory leadership, and capacity building (Weahama et al., 2026). In a similar direction, the codification of Islamic social finance in the blue economy demonstrates that maqāṣid al-sharī'ah can become a legal and governance framework when translated into binding policy instruments that protect vulnerable communities (Harahap et al., 2026). These studies support the argument that Islamic political epistemology becomes operational only when classical concepts such as maṣlaḥah, ḥifẓ al-māl, and istinbāt are connected to regulatory design, institutional accountability, and enforceable public policy (Harahap et al., 2026; Weahama et al., 2026).

Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic political thought by positioning epistemology as the bridge between classical intellectual heritage and contemporary governance theory (Yaqoob, 2026; Dzar et al., 2026). The comparative philosophical analysis of Greek and Islamic traditions shows that Islamic philosophers integrated political wisdom, happiness, prophetic authority, and spiritual purpose into a more holistic theory of the polity (Yaqoob, 2026). This strengthens the claim that modern Islamic governance should not be framed merely as legal compliance, because its deeper epistemological foundation concerns the ethical formation of public authority and the moral purpose of political order (Yaqoob, 2026; Ramadhan et al., 2026). The study therefore expands previous literature by proposing that accountable,

participatory, and ethical governance should be interpreted as outcomes of an integrated epistemological structure rather than as imported concepts added externally to Islamic political thought (Dzar et al., 2026; Qosim et al., 2026).

Practically, the findings imply that contemporary Muslim societies need governance models that combine normative Islamic principles with institutional safeguards, constitutional accountability, and participatory mechanisms (Ramadhan et al., 2026; Weahama et al., 2026). The comparative study of Abu Bakr's caliphate and the English Interregnum shows that political stability depends not only on rapid succession but also on legitimacy, acceptance, and institutional continuity (Ramadhan et al., 2026). The Kazakh case further indicates that Islam may function simultaneously as a cultural resource, political symbol, and state-building instrument, which means that Muslim societies must carefully prevent Islamic identity from being reduced to symbolic nationalism without ethical governance substance (Tungatarov & Zholdybalin, 2026). Accordingly, the reconstructed framework proposed in this study has practical implications for policy makers, Islamic institutions, and governance reformers by emphasizing that Islamic political reform must integrate ethical legitimacy, institutional transparency, public participation, and social welfare into one coherent governance architecture (Harahap et al., 2026; Qosim et al., 2026; Weahama et al., 2026).

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that the reconstruction of Islamic political epistemology should be understood not as an effort to revive historical political institutions, but as a systematic reformulation of the epistemological principles that underpinned classical Islamic political thought to address the demands of contemporary governance. The synthesis of recent international scholarship reveals that the enduring concepts of *naṣṣ*, *'aql*, *ijtihād*, *ijmā'*, *shūrā*, *maṣlaḥah*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* collectively constitute a coherent epistemological foundation capable of supporting accountable, participatory, transparent, and ethically grounded governance. The principal novelty of this study lies in proposing an integrative conceptual framework that connects Islamic intellectual heritage with institutional governance, demonstrating that epistemological reconstruction functions as the critical bridge between normative Islamic values and modern public administration rather than treating them as separate domains.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the advancement of Islamic political thought by repositioning epistemology as the central analytical framework through which governance legitimacy, institutional accountability, and ethical leadership can be understood within contemporary Muslim societies. Practically, the proposed framework provides policymakers, Islamic institutions, and governance practitioners with a conceptual basis for designing governance reforms that integrate constitutional principles with Islamic ethical values. Within the broader literature, this study extends previous research that has largely emphasized legal, historical, or theological dimensions by offering a

comprehensive governance-oriented epistemological perspective. Nevertheless, this research is limited by its exclusive reliance on qualitative library research and published scholarly literature, which prevents empirical validation of the proposed framework in real governance settings. Future studies should therefore employ comparative case studies, qualitative fieldwork, mixed-method approaches, or policy evaluation across Muslim-majority countries to examine how reconstructed Islamic political epistemology is translated into institutional practice. Such empirical investigations would strengthen the explanatory power of the proposed model while contributing to the development of a more contextual, evidence-based, and globally relevant theory of Islamic governance.

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