Reactualizing Classical Islamic Power:
Reinterpreting Al-Mawardi in Post-Reform Indonesian Democracy

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Article Information	Abstract
	Imam Al-Mawardi, one of the most influential political thinkers in the history of Islamic civilization, provides a robust normative framework through the concept of al-imamah in his seminal work, Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah. Al-Mawardi emphasizes that power is not merely a tool for domination but a divine trust (amanah ilahiyah) that must be exercised to uphold justice, safeguard the public interest (maslahah), and protect the rights of the people. This study aims to analyze Al-Mawardi's concept of power and examine its relevance within the context of post-reform Indonesian democracy. The research employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review, utilizing a descriptive-comparative analysis technique to compare the normative framework of classical Islam with the principles of modern democracy. The findings indicate a convergence between the two systems regarding the legitimacy of power, public participation, and leadership accountability. Al-Mawardi, through the institution of ahl al-halli wa al-'aqdi, provides a theoretical foundation for community representation in the leadership selection process, which functionally resembles elections in a democratic system. However, there are also epistemic tensions between the two, particularly concerning the source of sovereignty (God vs. the people) and the legal basis (Sharia vs. positive law). These findings reinforce the argument that classical Islamic political thought, when interpreted contextually rather than formalistically, can serve as a source of values to enhance the quality of substantive democracy in Indonesia.
Keywords	

Kata Kunci	Abstrak
	Imam Al-Mawardi, sebagai salah satu pemikir politik Islam paling berpengaruh dalam sejarah peradaban Islam, menawarkan kerangka normatif yang kuat melalui konsep al-imamah dalam karya monumentalnya Al-Ahkam al-

Sulthaniyyah. Mawardi menekankan bahwa kekuasaan bukan sekadar alat dominatif, melainkan amanah ilahiyah yang harus dijalankan untuk menegakkan keadilan, menjaga maslahat, dan melindungi hak-hak masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep kekuasaan menurut Al-Mawardi dan menelaah hubungannya dalam konteks demokrasi Indonesia pasca reformasi. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, dengan teknik analisis deskriptif-komparatif antara kerangka normatif Islam klasik dan prinsip-prinsip demokrasi modern. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat titik temu antara kedua sistem dalam aspek legitimasi kekuasaan, partisipasi publik, dan akuntabilitas pemimpin. Al-Mawardi, melalui institusi ahl al-halli wa al-aqdi, memberikan dasar teoretis bagi representasi umat dalam proses pemilihan pemimpin, yang secara fungsional mirip dengan pemilu dalam demokrasi. Namun demikian, terdapat pula ketegangan epistemik antara keduanya, khususnya terkait sumber kedaulatan (Tuhan vs rakyat) dan basis hukum (syariat vs hukum positif). Temuan ini memperkuat argumen bahwa pemikiran politik Islam klasik, bila dibaca secara kontekstual dan tidak formalistis, dapat berperan sebagai sumber nilai untuk memperkuat kualitas demokrasi substantif di Indonesia

Introduction

Islamic political thought represents one of the most dynamic intellectual legacies within the treasury of Islamic civilization. From the classical period to the contemporary era, discourse on power in Islam has continuously evolved—shaped by changing historical contexts and the necessity to address complex political challenges in the modern age. One of the most influential classical figures in articulating the concept of power in Islam is Abu al-Hasan Al-Mawardi (d. 1058 CE). In his seminal work, Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah, Al-Mawardi elucidates that al-imamah is a central institution for maintaining the religious and socio-political stability of the Muslim community. In his view, leadership is not merely a matter of wielding power; it is a shar'i responsibility to uphold justice and promote public welfare (maslahah).[1] Al-Mawardi's concept of power is founded on a complex value structure: a leader must be just, knowledgeable, and capable of managing the state in the interest of the people. Additionally, the leader should be selected through ahl al-halli wa al-'aqdi, a representative council of the community. This system essentially represents a form of social contract institutionalized within a theocratic context, while still acknowledging the importance of collective public participation.[2] This perspective demonstrates that classical Islamic political theory is not solely authoritarian; instead, it incorporates democratic, ethical, and institutional elements.

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[1] Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam As-Sulthaniyah*, ed. M. Yusuf Musa (Yogyakarta: Pustaka LSI, 1991).

[2] Roidatul Fikhriyah, "Al-Mawardi's Perspective on The Concept of State and Leadership in Islam During The Classical Period," *Rewang Rencang: Lex Generalis Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (2025): 102–16.

In the contemporary context, democracy has emerged as the predominant political system in numerous Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia. Following the 1998 Reform era, Indonesia experienced significant transformations as the authoritarian New Order regime was supplanted by a more open, participatory, and decentralized government. Key features of the post-Reformasi period include direct elections, the establishment of independent oversight institutions, and the promotion of press freedom and civil society empowerment.[3] However, Indonesian democracy continues to confront structural challenges, including electoral corruption, oligarchic dominance, and the increasing influence of identity politics that divides society.[4]

In this context, a fundamental question arises: Does Al-Mawardi's concept of power still hold relevance in the modern democratic landscape, particularly in Indonesia? Some contemporary Muslim thinkers, such as Rachid Ghannouchi,[5] Nurcholish Madjid,[6] and Abdulaziz Sachedina[7]—It can be argued that democracy and Islam do not have to be diametrically opposed. Values such as shura (consultation), justice, public interest (maslahah), and accountability are universal principles shared by both traditions. Therefore, these values can be synergistically developed within a Muslim democratic system that is rooted in religious principles.

Nevertheless, academic tensions persist. Some argue that the modern democratic system—rooted in popular sovereignty and secularism—is fundamentally at odds with the Islamic political system, which regards God as the ultimate source of legal authority.[8] In Indonesia, this tension is evident in the polarization between Islamist groups advocating for the formalization of sharia and nationalist-secular groups that oppose religious dominance in the political sphere. In this context, an integrative, value-based narrative is essential to prevent social and ideological fragmentation.

To this day, studies directly linking Al-Mawardi's concept of power to the practice of post-Reformasi Indonesian democracy remain limited. Research on Al-Mawardi tends to be either historical or normative, while studies on Indonesian democracy focus more on empirical or institutional aspects. However, Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority country with a developing democratic system, requires a robust and contextually relevant ethical-political framework.[9]

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[3] Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia's Democratic Stagnation: Anti-Reformist Elites and Resilient Civil Society," *Democratization* 19, no. 2 (2011), https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/13510347.2011.572620.

[4] Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State of in Indonesia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[5] Ghannouchi Rachid, *Al-Hurriyat Al-'Ammah Fi Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyah* (Beirut: Arab Unity Studies Center, 1993).

[6] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Religion of Humanity; Building Tradition and New Vision of Indonesian Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakap Paramadina, 1995).

[7] Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[8] Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe: Democratic Peace and Euro-Islam versus Global Jihad (1st Ed.)* (London: Routledge, 2007); Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Nadirsyah Hosen, "Religious Pluralism, Inclusive Secularism, and Democratic Constitutionalism," in *Muslim Secular Democracy*, ed. Lily Zubaidah Rahim (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137282057_10.

[9] Abd Hadi Wahib, "Islam and the Challenge of Democratization in Indonesia," *Nusantara; Journal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies* 16, no. 1 (2020): 32, https://doi.org/10.24014/nusantara.v16i1.10650; Mgs A Defrizal, Achmad Zulham, and Solihin, "Democracy in Islam: A Review of Maudhu's Tafsir'i," *Wardah* 21, no. 2 (2020): 66–79; Din Syamsuddin, "The Search for the Concept of the State in the History of Islamic Thought," *Ulumul Quran* 4, no. 2 (1991).

Therefore, it is essential to establish a theoretical dialogue between classical Islamic thought and contemporary democratic practices.

The recontextualization of Al-Mawardi's ideas will not only enrich the intellectual heritage of Islamic political thought but also provide significant contributions to the enhancement of substantive democracy grounded in the values of justice, participation, and ethical governance. This article aims to analyze the concept of power in Al-Mawardi's thought and evaluate its relevance within the Indonesian democratic system following the Reform era, employing a normative-comparative analytical approach.

This article employs a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in library research. The primary focus is not on gathering empirical field data but rather on the critical analysis of texts, concepts, and ideas found in both classical and contemporary works. The study is analytical-comparative in nature, as it not only describes Al-Mawardi's thought but also compares it with the values and practices of Indonesian democracy from the 1998 Reform era to the present.

Primary sources include Al-Mawardi's seminal work, Al-Ahkam al-Sulthaniyyah, as well as Indonesia's constitutional documents and democratic institutional frameworks. Secondary sources comprise academic literature on Islamic political theory, studies of democracy, and contemporary research related to Indonesia's political developments.

Data analysis is conducted through two primary approaches: conceptual analysis, which involves the interpretation and elaboration of Al-Mawardi's ideas on power, legitimacy, and the functions of leadership, and comparative-contextual analysis, which compares the foundational principles of Al-Mawardi's thought with the practices and values of Indonesian democracy following the Reform era. This approach also considers the differing social, political, and normative contexts.

Discussion
The Concept of Power in Al-Mawardi's Political Thought

Al-Mawardi's political thought emerged during the political decline of the Abbasid dynasty, characterized by power fragmentation and a weakening of the caliph's authority. In this context, Al-Mawardi developed the concept of al-imamah as the highest political institution in Islam, serving a dual purpose: preserving religion (hifz al-din) and managing worldly affairs (siyasat al-dunya) based on the principles of public interest (maslahah) and justice.[10] Al-Mawardi explained that a leader (imam) must possess seven qualifications, including justice, competence, knowledge, physical health, and strategic capability. The legitimacy of power is obtained through the bai'ah process, conducted by the ahl al-halli wa al-'aqdi—a group of societal elites regarded as morally and socially representative.[11] This suggests that power in Islam is not absolute; rather, it exists within the framework of trust (amanah) and public accountability.

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[10] Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam As-Sulthaniyah*.

[11] E.I.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

According to Al-Mawardi, the role of leadership extends beyond mere administration; it encompasses a spiritual dimension as well. A ruler is expected to uphold God's law, ensure social justice, and maintain societal harmony. Within this framework, al-imamah serves as a normative instrument that bridges religious authority and political power.[12]

Al-Mawardi regarded the imamah as essential for upholding religion, governing worldly affairs, continuing the teachings of the Prophet, and enforcing Islamic law (shari'ah).[13] The legitimacy of a ruler derives from divine authority, positioning the ruler as God's representative. He argued that a ruler's authority is bestowed by God, making the ruler responsible for implementing divine laws and upholding justice.[14]

The obligatory nature of the caliphate (imamah) is grounded in both revelation and reason. The necessity for leadership is supported by shari'ah and the human need for governance to resolve conflicts and prevent injustice. Emphasis is placed on the importance of Muslim unity under a single Imam. Al-Mawardi strongly opposed the existence of multiple concurrent caliphates, highlighting the need for a singular Imam to maintain the unity of the Muslim ummah. Al-Mawardi's theory is recognized as the first comprehensive model of a state in Sunni Islam. His work, Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah, is widely regarded as the most detailed elaboration of Islamic political theory within the Sunni tradition.[15]

Regarding the qualifications and traits of an ideal leader, justice is of utmost importance. Justice encompasses both honesty and impartiality. Al-Mawardi emphasized that a leader must be just in all matters to ensure fair governance and maintain public trust.[16] Knowledge ('ilm) of Islamic law and governance is essential, as the leader must possess a profound understanding of shari'ah to effectively interpret and implement Islamic principles.[17] Physical and mental health are essential qualifications for a leader, as they must be in good health to fulfill their responsibilities effectively and without impairment. Wisdom and administrative competence are equally important; a leader must possess the insight and skills necessary to manage state affairs efficiently. Additionally, courage and determination are vital traits, particularly when it comes to defending the community and upholding justice during challenging times.[18] Lastly, the requirement of Quraysh lineage, proposed by Al-Mawardi, is a controversial one rooted in historical precedent. Although it may appear exclusive from a contemporary democratic standpoint, it reflects the socio-political realities of his era.

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[12] Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*.

[13] Eni Elyati, "Muslim Intellectual Thought in the Social Sphere: The Concept of the State in Political Thought Al-Farabi, Al-Mawardi, Ibn Khaldun" 5, no. 2 (2024): 498–507.

[14] Adil Hussain Bhat, "Apprehending Al- Mawardi's Theory of Imamate," *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)* IX, no. II (2023): 42–52, https://doi.org/10.29032/ijhsss.v9.i2.2023.42-52.

[15] Bhat.

[16] Sajid Mahmood Ansari, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of Imamate," issp.edu.pk, 2023, https://issp.edu.pk/2023/05/27/al-mawardis-theory-of-imamate/.

[17] Bhat, "Apprehending Al- Mawardi's Theory of Imamate."

[18] Ansari, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of Imamate."

Justice, according to Al-Mawardi, is a fundamental principle for social harmony and effective governance. He regarded justice as essential for the stability and prosperity of the state.[19] Comprehensive justice encompasses all aspects of life—social, economic, and political. The ruler is obligated to ensure justice and protect individuals from harm, bearing direct responsibility for its impartial delivery and for safeguarding the rights of all individuals.[20]

Al-Mawardi's emphasis on imamah as both a religious and political institution underscores the interconnected nature of governance in his philosophy.[21] This contrasts with modern secular democracies, which often separate religion from the state, suggesting a potentially different approach to the role of religion in public life. For Al-Mawardi, the Imam's role encompasses not only the management of worldly affairs but also the upholding and promotion of Islamic principles. This integration of religious and political authority is a hallmark of classical Islamic political thought, where governance is viewed as intrinsically linked to religious values and objectives.[22] This perspective presents a contrasting viewpoint to the secular foundations of modern democracy.

The qualifications outlined by Al-Mawardi prioritize moral and intellectual attributes over lineage, although he does include descent from the Quraysh tribe. This indicates a meritocratic aspect in his framework, where competence and character are essential for leadership, even though the inclusion of lineage introduces a hereditary dimension. While the requirement for Quraysh descent may seem exclusive by today's standards, Al-Mawardi's strong emphasis on justice, knowledge, and virtue demonstrates that he valued the qualities of a leader more than tribal affiliation.[23] This combination of inherited and acquired traits offers a nuanced perspective on leadership selection within his theory.

Al-Mawardi's principles embody a holistic approach to governance, encompassing not only political authority and justice but also social, economic, and spiritual well-being. His vision for broader societal reform provides valuable insights for contemporary Muslim-majority countries striving for comprehensive development. It underscores the interconnectedness of various dimensions of prosperity within the framework of just governance. These principles extend beyond the immediate functions of the state to encompass the moral and material development of society as a whole, offering a comprehensive view of good governance that integrates religious, political, social, and economic dimensions—a perspective that distinguishes itself from the narrower objectives often found in some modern political theories.

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[19] Muhammad Amin, "Al-Mawardi's Political Thought," *Journal of Prophetic Politics* 4, no. 2 (2016): 117–36, https://doi.org/10.24252/jpp.v4i2.2744.

[20] Rashda Diana, Siswanto Masruri, and Surwandono Surwandono, "Political Ethics in Al-Mawardi's Perspective," *Tsaqafah* 14, no. 2 (2018): 363, https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v14i2.2433.

[21] Zulfikar Yoga Widyatma, "The Concept of Leadership According to Al-Mawardi," *Ijtihad : Journal of Islamic Law and Economics* 8, no. 1 (2014): 87–103.

[22] M. Din Syamsuddin, "Between the Powerful and the Powerful: Reflections on Islamic Political Thought and Practice," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 152–73.

[23] Elyati, "Muslim Intellectual Thought in the Social Sphere: The Concept of the State in Political Thought Al-Farabi, Al-Mawardi, Ibn Khaldun."

Post-Reform Democracy in Indonesia

The 1998 Reform era in Indonesia marked the beginning of a new phase of democratization following more than three decades of authoritarian rule. Among the most significant achievements were direct elections, press freedom, and increased public participation in politics. Indonesian democracy is founded on the principles of popular sovereignty, the constitution, and a system of separation of powers, which are safeguarded by state institutions such as the House of Representatives (DPR), the Constitutional Court, and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).[24] Normatively, Indonesian democracy is built upon three main pillars: public legitimacy, active participation, and accountability of power. Leaders are elected directly through periodic elections, and the public is provided ample opportunities to monitor power through the media, civil society organizations, and formal channels for public grievances.[25]

The concept of democracy encompasses several core values: popular sovereignty, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and human rights. Popular sovereignty forms the foundation of democracy, with power resting in the hands of the people. This principle is enshrined in the Indonesian Constitution, particularly in Article 1, Paragraph (2).[26] Regular democratic elections are held to select leaders at various levels, and Indonesia has conducted several elections since the Reform era, including its first direct presidential election in 2004. The guarantee of freedom of expression is recognized as a fundamental human right.[27] The right to express opinions and aspirations has become a hallmark of post-Reform Indonesia, despite ongoing challenges. The rule of law ensures that the government functions within a legal framework. Constitutional recognition of the rule of law aims to maintain order and uphold justice. The protection and promotion of human rights are essential components of a democratic state.[28]

Despite these achievements, the implementation of democracy in Indonesia faces numerous challenges, including corruption, political polarization, and issues affecting minority groups. Pervasive corruption undermines institutions and disrupts democratic processes.[29] It continues to pose a significant challenge, undermining public trust and impeding development. Political polarization is on the rise, driven by ideological and identity-based divisions. Society is frequently fragmented both politically and socially, often exacerbated by identity-driven politics.[30] Moreover,

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[24] Aspinall and Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State of in Indonesia*.

[25] Zaky Umar Rachman, "The Role of Democratic Pillars in Enhancing National Resilience Amidst the Challenges of Globalization," *Amendment: Indonesian Journal of Defense Science, Politics and Law* 2, no. 1 (2025): 38–46.

[26] Iwan Gardono Sujatmiko, *Political Reform and Popular Sovereignty* (Jakarta: Simposium Universitas Indonesia, 1998).

[27] Gianta Farady, "The Evolution of Indonesian Democracy: From Soeharto's New Order to Post-Reform Challenges," ppimalaysia.or.id, 2024, https://ppimalaysia.or.id/evolusi-demokrasi-indonesia-dari-orde-baru-soeharto-ke-tantangan-pasca-reformasi/.

[28] Mustafa Mustafa, "Al Mawardi's Thoughts on the Welfare State in the 1998-2019 Reform Era in Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2022): 66–93, https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v1i1.39.

[29] Ben Bland, "Politics in Indonesia: Resilient Elections, Defective Democracy," *Lowy Institute for International Policy*, no. April (2019): 24, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Bland_Politics in Indonesia_WEB_0.pdf.

[30] Pangi Syarwi, "Issue Polarization, Identity Politics and Public Divide in the 2019 Presidential Election," *Jurnal Communitarian* 4, no. 1 (2022): 591–602, https://doi.org/10.56985/jc.v4i1.228.

minority groups continue to experience discrimination and face challenges in accessing their rights.[31]

While Indonesia has formally embraced democratic values and established democratic institutions, the reality of their implementation reveals significant obstacles, highlighting a gap between normative ideals and practical realities. The transition from authoritarianism to democracy is a complex process, and the persistence of issues such as corruption and polarization suggests that institutional reform alone may be inadequate to fully achieve democratic ideals. Al-Mawardi's emphasis on ethical leadership and just governance may provide a framework for addressing these deeper challenges.

The rise of identity politics and the exploitation of religious sentiments pose significant threats to the principles of inclusivity and equality within Indonesian democracy.[32] The use of religious and ethnic identities for political mobilization poses a risk to fundamental democratic values, such as equality and social cohesion, which are essential for a healthy democracy. Al-Mawardi's emphasis on universal justice within the Islamic framework may offer ethical principles for addressing these challenges and fostering a more inclusive political environment.

The persistence of corruption, despite democratic reforms, underscores a potential disconnect between democratic processes and ethical governance. While the democratic system offers accountability mechanisms through elections, these may not always be adequate to prevent corruption. Al-Mawardi's emphasis on the moral and ethical obligations of rulers within the Islamic context could serve as a valuable complement to contemporary democratic accountability mechanisms, highlighting the significance of inner virtue and religious awareness in leadership.

Points of Convergence Between Al-Mawardi's Thought and Indonesian Democracy

Upon closer examination, Al-Mawardi's political thought and the principles of Indonesian democracy reveal several significant points of convergence. First, there is the Principle of Legitimacy. Al-Mawardi emphasized the role of ahl al-halli wa al-'aqd (a consultative body of scholars and leaders) in granting a mandate of power, which aligns substantively with the principle of direct elections in Indonesian democracy as a means of deriving legitimacy from the people.[33] Second, the Value of Justice and Public Welfare (Maslahah). Al-Mawardi argued that power should be utilized to promote social justice and the welfare of the community. The concept of maslahah is central to his political philosophy, serving as the primary purpose of governance. Democracy also emphasizes this objective through the equitable distribution of welfare and the protection of rights.[34] Third, accountability and the ethical use of power are essential principles. In Islam, power is regarded as a trust (amanah) that must be accountable not only to the people but also to God.

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[31] Johan Wahyudi and Makmun Wahid, "Minority Marginalization and the Absence of Multiculturalism in the Local Domain (Case Study of Shia Muslim Community in Sampang)," *JPP (Journal of Prophetic Politics)* 3, no. 1 (2015): 65–81, http://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/jpp/article/view/823.

[32] Syarwi, "Polarization of Issues, Identity Politics and Public Divide in the 2019 Presidential Election."

[33] Mietzner, "Indonesia's Democratic Stagnation: Anti-Reformist Elites and Resilient Civil Society."

[34] Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam As-Sulthaniyah.*

Similarly, in a democracy, accountability is upheld through legal mechanisms and institutional oversight.[35] Both reject absolutism in governance.

Despite these points of convergence, there are also fundamental epistemic tensions. First, consider the source of sovereignty. Democracy places sovereignty in the hands of the people, whereas in Islam, ultimate sovereignty belongs to God. This raises ongoing debates about the compatibility of democracy with Islamic law (sharia) as a legitimate system.[36] Second, the Source of Law. Democratic systems tend to be pluralistic, accommodating positive law, while Islamic political thought emphasizes divine law as the ultimate legal authority. This divergence creates tension in the legislative process, especially when laws are perceived to conflict with Islamic values.[37] Third, the Purpose of Power. Modern democracy emphasizes the protection of rights and freedoms. Similarly, Islam guarantees rights, but within the framework of maqasid al-shariah (the objectives of Islamic law). These differences can result in tensions regarding issues such as religious freedom, cultural expression, and individual rights.[38]

Al-Mawardi emphasized the importance of shura (consultation) in the decision-making process of rulers.[39] He advised leaders to seek guidance from knowledgeable and competent individuals and to establish advisory councils.[40] Many Muslim thinkers have drawn parallels between shura and democratic deliberation, both of which emphasize the significance of collective decision-making.[41] The Qur'an's emphasis on shura highlights the importance of inclusive participation in governance. In Indonesia, the implementation of shura is evident through representative bodies and consultative processes. The system of musyawarah (deliberation) at various levels of government reflects a cultural and political alignment with the concept of shura.[42]

Al-Mawardi's early articulation of social contract theory, which involves mutual obligations between rulers and the people, proposed a voluntary agreement between the ahl al-halli wa al-'aqd and the imam (leader).[43] This aligns with contemporary democratic principles of government legitimacy, which are founded on the consent of the governed. The concept of popular sovereignty within Indonesian democracy is consistent with the notion of a social contract.[44]

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[35] Mark E. Warren, *Accountability and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[36] An-Na'im, *Islam and the Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*.

[37] Hosen, "Religious Pluralism, Inclusive Secularism, and Democratic Constitutionalism."

[38] An-Na'im, *Islam and the Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*.

[39] Erla S. P. Noor, Ahmadi Hasan, and Masyithah Umar, "Democracy in Indonesia Realizing People's Sovereignty," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Jurisprudence, Economic and Legal Theory* 1, no. 4 (2023): 679–93, https://doi.org/10.62976/ijijel.v1i4.196.

[40] Mahazan Abdul Mutalib and Ahmad Rafiki, *The Role of Islamic Spirituality in the Management and Leadership Process* (New York: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2021), https://doi.org/DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6892-7.

[41] Noor, Hasan, and Umar, "Democracy in Indonesia Realizing People's Sovereignty."

[42] Gunawan Saputra Adi, Suryadi, and Rozikin Mochammad, "Application Of Syura In Public Leadership (Study at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Malang)," *Journal of Public Administration (JAP)* 2, no. 2 (2011): 257–63.

[43] David Hanif, "Analysis of Fiqh Siyasah on Khilafah According to Al-Mawardi in the Book of Al-Ahkam As-Shulthaniyyah," *Jurnal Lex Renaissance* 7, no. 1 (2022): 153–66, https://doi.org/10.20885/jlr.vol7.iss1.art12.

[44] Gilang Rizki Aji Putra, "Reform in Indonesia and its Effect on Political Islam," *'Adalah* 4, no. 2 (2020): 79–86, https://doi.org/10.15408/adalah.v4i2.16490.

While shura in Al-Mawardi's thought is not identical to modern deliberative democracy, it emphasizes consultation and the consideration of diverse opinions. This underscores the potential of Islamic political thought to enrich and inform contemporary democratic practices in Indonesia by providing a faith-based framework for inclusive decision-making. The focus on consensus and collective wisdom in shura can offer valuable insights for enhancing democratic deliberation and promoting greater inclusivity in policymaking.

The primacy of social justice in Islam, as articulated in Al-Mawardi's writings, aligns with Indonesia's post-Reform democratic aspiration to create a just and prosperous society. This convergence provides a robust ethical foundation for incorporating Islamic values into democratic policymaking, particularly in addressing socio-economic inequality. Islamic principles such as equitable wealth distribution, compassion for the vulnerable, and the fulfillment of basic needs resonate with democratic ideals of social justice. These concepts can serve as a moral and philosophical basis for public policy initiatives in Indonesia.[45]

Al-Mawardi's formulation of a conditional mandate, in which a ruler's legitimacy hinges on fulfilling duties to the people, resonates with contemporary democratic principles of government accountability and the consent of the governed. This historical precedent within Islamic thought can strengthen the theoretical foundation of democratic governance in Indonesia, underscoring its compatibility with Islamic values. The notion that authority is not absolute but rather based on a reciprocal agreement with the people is a central tenet shared by both Al-Mawardi's theory and modern democracy.[46] This shared concept of a conditional mandate establishes a robust connection between classical Islamic political philosophy and contemporary democratic governance.

Towards a Moral Democracy

In the context of ethical crises within Indonesian democracy, classical Islamic political thought—particularly that of Al-Mawardi—can play a vital role in establishing a moral and principled democracy. Values such as maslahah (public interest), amanah (trust), shura (consultation), and justice can provide an ethical framework to improve the quality of Indonesia's democracy. This can be achieved not through the formalization of sharia, but by integrating these values into public policy and the behavior of political elites.[47] Al-Mawardi's ideas are not a static legacy; rather, they serve as a source of normative and practical inspiration for the development of democratic, participatory, and just governance in a Muslim-majority country such as Indonesia.

Islamic ethical principles—such as justice, honesty, trustworthiness (amanah), and accountability—are essential for shaping moral politics. These values can serve as a foundational moral framework for leaders and political institutions. Al-Mawardi emphasized the moral responsibility of rulers toward the ummah, asserting that leaders have a sacred duty to govern in

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[45] Syamsuddin, "Between the Powerful and the Powerful: Reflections on Islamic Political Thought and Practice."

[46] Fikhriyah, "Al-Mawardi's Perspective on The Concept of State and Leadership in Islam During The Classical Period."

[47] Syamsuddin, "The Search for the Concept of the State in the History of Islamic Thought."

the best interest of the Muslim community. Religious values play a crucial role in promoting good governance and preventing corruption. Islamic ethics provide a robust basis for fair and principled political policies.[48]

Islamic political thought, particularly Al-Mawardi's framework, provides a valuable source of ethical principles that can enhance the moral and just foundations of democracy in Indonesia.[49] By emphasizing concepts such as justice, accountability, and public welfare, this school of thought can serve as a moral compass for political actors and institutions, potentially reducing corruption and promoting more ethical governance.[50] The ethical framework provided by Islamic political thought transcends procedural democracy by emphasizing the moral character of leaders and the just nature of governance. Incorporating this ethical perspective could foster a more substantive and morally grounded democracy in Indonesia.

The historical and ongoing involvement of Islamic organizations in Indonesia's democratic process demonstrates the potential for Islamic values to be actively integrated within a democratic framework. Therefore, the recontextualization of classical Islamic thought—such as that of Al-Mawardi—is not merely a theoretical exercise; it has practical implications for fostering a more morally conscious democracy in the country. The active participation of Islamic organizations in various aspects of Indonesian democracy—from advocating for social justice to promoting ethical political behavior—highlights the practical significance of Islamic values in shaping the nation's democratic trajectory.

The selective adoption and adaptation of Islamic principles within Indonesia's democratic system demonstrate a nuanced approach, integrating universal Islamic values while navigating the complexities of a pluralistic society. This indicates that reinterpretation and contextualization are essential for effectively utilizing the ethical resources of Islamic thought to strengthen democracy in Indonesia. Given Indonesia's unique context as a Muslim-majority country with a secular state ideology, a thoughtful and prudent approach is required to incorporate Islamic values into its democratic framework.[51] This includes the process of ijtihad (independent reasoning) to ensure compatibility and to prevent the imposition of a specific religious framework on all citizens.

Comparative Analysis

The fundamental difference in the source of legitimacy—divine versus popular—shapes the entire framework of authority in Al-Mawardi's thought when compared to modern democracy. This distinction has far-reaching effects on how leaders are selected, to whom they are accountable, and the primary purpose of governance.[52] Al-Mawardi's framework perceives rulers as divinely

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[48] Diana, Masruri, and Surwandono, "Political Ethics in Al-Mawardi's Perspective."

[49] Bayu Karunia Putra et al., "Relevance of Islamic Political Thought According to Al-Mawardi in Indonesia," *Scientific Journal of Wahana Education* 9, no. 18 (2023): 827–42, http://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/JIWP/article/view/5887.

[50] Bhat, "Apprehending Al- Mawardi's Theory of Imamate."

[51] Masykuri Abdillah, "Religion and State Relations in the Context of Political Modernization in the Reformation Era," *Ahkam* 13, no. 2 (2013), https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/937/823.

[52] Zainuddin, "Islam and Democracy," uin-malang.ac.id, 2013, https://uin-malang.ac.id/r/131101/islam-dan-demokrasi.html.

ordained, tasked with the implementation of God's law. In contrast, modern democracy places sovereignty in the hands of the people, rendering governments accountable to them. This fundamental distinction impacts all aspects of political organization and the exercise of power. The table below presents a comparative analysis between Al-Mawardi's classical Islamic political thought and modern democracy.

Aspects of Power	Mawardi's Thought	Modern Democratic Theory
Sources of Legitimacy	Divine Authority	Popular Sovereignty
Leader Selection	Selection by *ahl al-halli wa al-'aqdi* (appointed electors)	General Elections by the People
Accountability	To the *Ummah* and Islamic Law	To the People and the Constitution
Scope of Authority	Defined by Islamic Law	Defined by the Constitution and Statutory Law
Core Values	Justice, Upholding Religious Values, and Promoting Public Welfare	Freedom, Equality, and Human Rights

Table 1. Comparison of Al-Mawardi's Thought in Classical Islam and Modern Democracy

In the context of leadership selection, Al-Mawardi asserted that only qualified individuals were permitted to vote, while modern democracy bestows full voting rights upon the general population in accordance with established regulations. This distinction highlights differing interpretations of representation and the optimal degree of citizen engagement in political decision-making. Al-Mawardi's model emphasizes the wisdom and competence of a select group of knowledgeable individuals in the process of choosing a leader.[53] In contrast, modern democracy emphasizes the right of every citizen to participate—either directly or indirectly—in the electoral process, reflecting a belief in the collective wisdom of the populace.[54]

Both models acknowledge the significance of constraining the authority of rulers, although their mechanisms and justifications vary. Al-Mawardi emphasizes the necessity of adhering to Islamic law, whereas modern democracy is founded on constitutionalism and the separation of powers.[55] Nevertheless, both classical Islamic and modern democratic models recognize the potential for the abuse of power and seek to establish mechanisms to prevent it. Al-Mawardi's framework utilizes religious law as a check on the ruler's authority, while modern democracy employs constitutional principles and the separation of governmental functions to limit power.

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[53] Widyatma, "The Concept of Leadership According to Al-Mawardi."
[54] Kurnia Yunita Rahayu, "24 Years After Reform, Indonesia's Democracy Is Still Vulnerable," kompas.id, 2022, https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2022/05/20/24-tahun-pasca-reformasi-demokrasi-indonesia-masih-rentan.
[55] Bhat, "Apprehending Al- Mawardi's Theory of Imamate."

Conclusion

This study highlights the key points of convergence and divergence between Al-Mawardi's concept of power and modern democratic theory. The fundamental difference in the source of legitimacy—divine versus popular—has far-reaching implications for the structure and function of government. However, concepts such as shura (consultation) and the emphasis on social justice in Al-Mawardi's thought provide valuable insights that can enhance and strengthen democratic practices in Indonesia.

Reinterpreting Al-Mawardi's ideas within the context of contemporary Indonesian democracy presents both challenges and opportunities. While certain aspects of his theory—such as the requirement for leadership to be derived from Quraysh lineage—may not be directly applicable today, his fundamental principles of justice, consultation, and ethical leadership remain highly relevant. Integrating Islamic ethical values into democratic governance can help address ongoing challenges such as corruption and political polarization, which continue to impede the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia.

Ultimately, Al-Mawardi's enduring emphasis on justice, consultation, and ethical leadership remains highly relevant to the future of Indonesian democracy. By selectively adopting and adapting these principles, Indonesia can progress toward a democracy that is not only procedural but also moral and just—reflecting both Islamic values and the aspirations of its people.

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