

The Dynamics of Law, Politics, and Economics in the Formation of an Islamic-Based Civil Society

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Abstract: An Islamic civil society is an integrative social construct between law, politics, and economics rooted in the value of tawhid. Islamic law functions as a normative system to uphold justice and protect the public interest, based on the principle of maqashid al-shari'ah which guarantees basic human rights. Islamic politics embodies fair and participatory governance through the concepts of siyasah syar'iyyah and syura, with examples of implementation in pluralistic Indonesia and monarchical Brunei, both of which reflect Islamic morality in government. Islamic economics plays a role as a fair social welfare system with mechanisms such as zakat, infaq, waqf, and sharia finance to distribute wealth evenly and avoid exploitation, while uniting ethics with productivity as a form of social worship. The Islamic civilization of the archipelago serves as an integrative framework that harmonizes Islamic values with local wisdom, emphasizing moderation, humanity, and mutual cooperation as spiritual practices relevant to the challenges of the modern world and an adaptive and tolerant attitude. This study makes an important contribution in establishing Islamic civil society as a civilization that balances spirituality, morality, and rationality as an alternative to secularism and capitalism, placing humans as caliphs responsible for social justice and the preservation of civilization. The implications of the study's findings emphasize the importance of strengthening the foundations of Islamic values in the development of an inclusive and just society. This study has limitations in its contextual scope, which is limited to Indonesia and Brunei, so it is recommended that more extensive and in-depth research be conducted to enrich the understanding of Islamic civil society globally.

Keywords: Islamic law, Islamic politics, Islamic economics, civil society, Islamic civilization in the archipelago



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Introduction

The concept of civil society in Islam is a fundamental idea that reflects a highly civilized social order, in which spiritual, moral, and social values work together to form a balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities. Its historical roots begin with the society of Medina established by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, where legal, political, and economic elements were integrated into a single value system based on justice (al-'adl), benefit (al-maslahah), and brotherhood (al-ukhuwah) (Rahman, 2023). This model is not merely a political entity, but a representation of an ethical civilization that places morality as the highest goal in human social life.

However, in contemporary studies, there is a conceptual gap between Islamic civil society and Western civil society, which predominantly emphasizes secularism, individual freedom, and instrumental rationality. In Islam, civil society does not stand as an autonomous space separate from religion, but is a concrete manifestation of the value of tawhid, which permeates all aspects of social, political, and economic life within a transcendental moral framework (An-Na'im, 2008). This concept underlines the integration of spiritual and material values as a whole, in contrast to the Western approach, which tends to separate these dimensions.

In the Nusantara region, Islam arrived through peaceful mechanisms, namely trade, Sufi preaching, and Islamic boarding school education, so that the social transformation that occurred was the result of syncretism between Islamic teachings and local wisdom. This phenomenon gave rise to the distinctive Islamic civilization of the archipelago, namely Islam rooted in local culture with a social spirit and a universal humanitarian vision (Hussin, 2024). Values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, and tolerance are not merely customary practices, but rather the actualization of Islamic moral principles in the daily lives of the community.

However, amid globalization and modernization, Islamic civil societies face serious challenges in the form of value disorientation, which causes spiritual crises and widening social inequality. Modernity, which prioritizes materialism and secularism, often marginalizes the principles of social justice and public morality for the sake of pragmatic economic and political interests. In this context, the revitalization of Islamic law, politics, and economics as pillars of civilization is an inevitable necessity in order to restore harmony between the spiritual and material dimensions of modern society. Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam are two important representations of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia that demonstrate variations in the implementation of Islamic values within modern social structures. Indonesia presents a pluralistic and democratic Islam, while Brunei adopts a model of an Islamic monarchy that makes Sharia the main source of state law. Both models demonstrate the central role of the values of justice and the welfare of the people in building an Islamic-based civil society, albeit with different approaches.

Previous literature reviews show that Islamic-based civil societies have strong foundations in classical Islamic thought traditions. Al-Mawardi emphasized the importance of balance between political authority and social justice (Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah, 2000), while Ibn Khaldun highlighted the power of social solidarity ('ashabiyah) and moral leadership as determinants of civilization's progress (Muqaddimah, 1377). Al-Farabi describes an ideal society led by virtuous and knowledgeable figures as the pinnacle of social virtue (Al-Madinah al-Fadhliah, 942). Modern studies by An-Na'im (2008) and Chapra (2000) expand this perspective by linking Islamic legal reform and the vision of an Islamic economic development that is distributively just. Regional studies by Hussin (2024) and Fitriani (2025) emphasize the uniqueness of Islam in the archipelago, which places the integration of moral values and cultural practices as a distinctive feature compared to Middle Eastern Islam, which is more legalistic. The novelty of this research is its comprehensive approach that examines the conceptual and practical interactions between the three main pillars—law, politics, and economics—in the formation of a civil society based on the value of tawhid. This approach not only strengthens theoretical understanding but is also relevant in providing solutions to moral, social, and economic problems in the modern global era, particularly in the context of Nusantara Islam and the model of the Islamic monarchy of Brunei. This research offers an important contribution to the reconstruction of a just, civilized, and inclusive civil society, as well as strengthening the Islamization of science.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to analyze the conceptual and functional interactions between Islamic law, politics, and economics in building a just civil society; to explain the characteristics of Tamadun Islam Nusantara as a model of civilization that harmonizes Islamic values and local wisdom; and to offer conceptual contributions to the reconstruction of a civil society model capable of responding to contemporary social, economic, and political challenges.

Research Methods

This research method uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with the paradigm of Islamization of Knowledge as developed by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. This paradigm assumes that all scientific activities in Islam must be based on the values of tawhid and revelatory ethics. Thus, the analysis of Islamic law, politics, and economics in the context of civil society is not carried out secularly, but rather within the framework of Islamic epistemology, which places revelation as the main source of truth and reason as an instrument of reasoning (Al-Attas, 1993). This approach allows researchers to reinterpret classical Islamic concepts in a modern social context without losing their normative essence, which is important because civil society in Islam is not a rigid historical concept, but a living entity that continues to evolve according to space and time. The data collection technique used is library research with data collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include classical Islamic works such as Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah (Al-Mawardi), Muqaddimah (Ibn Khaldun), Ihya' Ulum al-Din (Al-Ghazali), and Al-Madinah al-Fadhlah (Al-Farabi). Meanwhile, secondary sources include contemporary academic works by figures such as Chapra (2000), An-Na'im (2008), Esposito (2011), Hussin (2024), and Fitriani (2025). In addition, the study refers to scientific articles, proceedings, and international journals discussing Tamadun Islam Nusantara, Islamic law, and civil society development. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction by selecting relevant concepts and theories on the themes of civil society, law, politics, and Islamic economics; presentation of data in the form of theoretical synthesis from various classical and contemporary literature; and drawing conclusions by interpreting the results of the analysis using the framework of maqashid al-syari'ah (the objectives of Islamic law) and the values of Tamadun Islam Nusantara. The analysis was conducted from an Islamic hermeneutic perspective that interprets classical texts in accordance with the modern context without losing the unity of revelation and social reality.

Results and Discussion

Islamic Law as the Foundation of Justice and Social Order

Islamic law plays a central role as a normative basis in building a civil society that is just and socially orderly. As a legal system that not only regulates formal legal aspects, Islamic law is also rooted in deep moral and spiritual values, which aim to achieve universal benefits for all of humanity. In the following discussion, we will outline the philosophical principles underlying Islamic law, how its application is contextualized in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, and the relationship between Islamic law and social ethics as a moral foundation that strengthens the sustainability of the social order in a civil society. This analysis is important for understanding the role of Islamic law in maintaining a balance between individual and collective interests in the dynamics of modern life.

First, the philosophical principles of Islamic law. Islamic law (*sharia*) is not only a collection of legal rules, but also a reflection of moral and spiritual values oriented towards universal justice (*al-'adl al-kulliy*). The main objective of Islamic law is to achieve *maslahah mursalah* (public interest) for all human beings (Al-Ghazali, 1111). In the context of civil society, law functions as a means of social moral control that ensures a balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities. The concept of *maqashid al-syari'ah*—protecting religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), reason (*'aql*), offspring (*nasl*), and property (*mal*)—forms the normative basis of the Islamic legal system. This principle guarantees the sustainability of a dignified social life. Therefore, the Islamic legal system in a civil society does not merely command and prohibit, but guides humans to live in spiritual and social harmony.

Second, contextualization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. In the Indonesian context, Islamic law has been accommodated in the national legal system, for example through the recognition

of religious courts, inheritance law, and sharia economic regulations. Although Indonesia is not an Islamic state, the principle of *maqashid al-syari'ah* is implemented substantively in public policies oriented towards social justice. In contrast, Brunei Darussalam formally applies Islamic law through the *Syariah Penal Code Order* (2013), which regulates moral and criminal aspects based on sharia. However, its implementation is carried out gradually, taking into account the readiness of society and the structure of the state. This reflects a model of sharia implementation that is contextual, adaptive, and not rigid, in line with the spirit of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Third, Islamic law and social ethics. Law in Islam always goes hand in hand with morality. There is no legal justice without moral justice. Therefore, Islamic civil society rejects dry legalism that is not rooted in spiritual values. As Arkoun (1984) emphasized, Islamic law is not only an external norm, but also an expression of divine ethics that animates the entire social order.

Islamic Politics as the Ethics of Power and Participation

Islamic politics as the ethics of power and participation affirms that power in Islam is not merely a tool of domination, but a moral mandate that must be exercised with the principles of justice and deliberation. The following discussion will outline the concept of Islamic political ethics that rejects authoritarianism and liberalism without moral values, focusing on the moral responsibility of leaders and the importance of spiritual legitimacy in leadership. In addition, it will also discuss how political participation and Islamic democracy are realized through the principle of shura, which, although in line with modern democracy, remains bound by ethics and Sharia law. Finally, it will elaborate on the relationship between politics and public morality in Islam, which demands the integration of the two in order to create fair and dignified governance.

First, the concept of Islamic political ethics. Islamic politics (siyasah syar'iyyah) is rooted in the concept of khilafah as a leadership mandate that must be carried out with the principles of justice ('adl) and deliberation (syura). Leadership in Islam is not absolute power, but a form of moral responsibility for the welfare of the people. Al-Mawardi (2000) asserts that the success of Islamic government depends on three things: the moral legitimacy of the leader, justice in law, and the welfare of the people. Islamic political ethics rejects two extremes: oppressive authoritarianism and liberalism that ignores moral values. It places power within a moral and spiritual framework. In a civil society, politics is understood as social worship—an effort to uphold justice for the common good (maslahah 'ammah).

Second, political participation and Islamic democracy. The concept of shura in Islam is parallel to the principle of public participation in modern democracy. However, participation in Islam is not value-free; it is limited by ethics and Sharia law. Indonesia presents a form of Pancasila democracy that is substantially in line with the values of shura—placing deliberation as a means of reaching collective decisions. In Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic monarchy-based political system emphasizes paternalistic leadership oriented toward the welfare of the people. Although structurally different, both represent two faces of Islamic politics: participatory and paternalistic, both of which are based on the principles of moral responsibility and spiritual legitimacy.

Third, politics and public morality. In the view of Nurcholish Madjid (1999), politics in Islam is not only a matter of power, but also an expression of the value of tawhid in the social sphere. Therefore, an Islamic civil society demands leaders who are moral, not merely administratively competent. Politics without morality will give rise to corruption of power, while morality without politics will lose its transformative power. The integration of the two is an absolute requirement for the creation of fair governance.

Islamic Economics as a System of Fair Welfare

The economy in Islam is not merely viewed as a material activity, but rather an integral part of social worship aimed at achieving al-falah, or physical and spiritual well-being for all human beings. The main principles in the Islamic economic system focus on social justice, balance in the use of resources, and equitable distribution of wealth so that social inequality does not occur. According to Chapra (2000), the fundamental pillars of Islamic economics consist of three main pillars, namely distributive justice, prohibition of usury, and social solidarity. These pillars guide the Islamic economic

system to avoid capitalist exploitation and structural inequality that can destroy the social order. In a civil society, the redistribution of wealth through the mechanisms of zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf are important instruments for overcoming inequality and fostering a sense of collective social responsibility known as the principle of *takaful ijtimai*. This approach emphasizes that the integration of moral and social aspects in the economy is the key to building a prosperous and just society.

The implementation of Islamic economics in the archipelago, particularly in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, demonstrates the concrete form of these principles. In Indonesia, the development of Islamic economic institutions such as Islamic banking, the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS), the Zakat Agency (LAZ), and Islamic boarding school cooperatives has played an active role in optimizing the management and distribution of wealth from the perspective of society and the state. Conversely, Brunei Darussalam implements an Islamic economic system within the framework of a Malay Islamic monarchy that makes the welfare of the people the responsibility of the state based on Sharia principles. These two models demonstrate the important role of Islamic economics in the management of public policy oriented towards social justice and shared prosperity. In addition to its practical aspects, Islamic economics also has a humanitarian ethical dimension that rejects exploitative and immoral economic growth. The civil economic system places humans as ethical subjects with social responsibilities, not merely economic objects. This paradigm balances profitability and spiritual values, emphasizing the balance between profit and piety—between gain and devotion. According to Asutay (2007), Islamic moral economics is not merely a financial system, but a paradigm that prioritizes humanity in economic activities, so that it is not only oriented towards material aspects but also towards spirituality and social ethics.

Overall, the Islamic economic system, as an integral part of civil society, offers a comprehensive approach that integrates the values of distributive justice, social solidarity, and moral responsibility. The application of these principles in economic policies and practices in various social contexts proves the relevance of Islamic economics in helping to create a society that is not only materially prosperous but also socially intelligent and morally responsible.

Integration of Islamic Civilization Values in the Archipelago as a Learning Model

Islam Nusantara is a unique manifestation of Islamic civilization that integrates universal Islamic values with local culture, particularly traditional customs such as *adat basandi syarak*, *syarak basandi Kitabullah* (customs based on Islamic law, Islamic law based on the Holy Book). The growth of Islam in this region was not confrontational, but rather through harmonious cultural *da'wah*, so that Islam played a role as a moral force that guided social life without eliminating local wisdom. This approach created a model of civilization that balanced Islamic spiritual values and local cultural traditions. The characteristics of Islam Nusantara are marked by five main complementary and reinforcing traits. First, moderation (*wasathiyah*), which rejects all forms of extremism and rigidity in religious practice. Second, religious humanism, which places humans as noble creatures of God and the center of attention in Islamic teachings. Third, cultural dialogue that respects the diversity of customs and cultures of diverse communities. Fourth, social ethics of mutual cooperation that encourage solidarity and social awareness among citizens. Fifth, spiritual transformation that directs both physical and spiritual development towards the common good. The combination of these characteristics makes Islam Nusantara a unique force that is relevant and capable of contributing to the development of a civil society at the global level.

In the context of globalization and facing the phenomena of secularization and humanitarian crises, Tamadun Islam Nusantara offers an alternative paradigm of civilization based on dynamic and inclusive values. This model proves that Islam can interact positively and constructively with modernity without losing its spiritual and moral identity. As concluded by Esposito (2011), Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia is a living example of harmonious coexistence, adaptation without losing moral integrity, and the ability to establish peaceful coexistence amid cultural and religious plurality.

Conclusion

An Islamic civil society is formed through the integration of three main pillars—law, politics, and economics—based on the values of tawhid. Islamic law serves as a normative system that upholds justice and public welfare within the ethical framework of maqashid al-syari'ah to protect basic human rights. Islamic politics embodies fair and participatory governance through the concepts of siyarah syar'iyyah and syura, with examples of implementation in Indonesia and Brunei that reflect Islamic moral values. Islamic economics functions as a fair social welfare system with mechanisms such as zakat, infaq, waqf, and sharia finance that ensure equitable distribution of wealth and avoid exploitation, combining ethics and economic productivity as social worship. The Islamic civilization of the archipelago is an integrative forum that harmonizes Islamic values with local wisdom, showcasing moderation, humanity, and mutual cooperation as spiritual practices, and is relevant to the modern world with its adaptive and tolerant attitude. This study emphasizes that Islamic civil society is not only a historical legacy but also an image of civilization that balances spirituality, morality, and rationality as an antithesis to secularism and capitalism, with humans as Allah's caliphs responsible for social justice and the preservation of civilization. The implications of this research are important for strengthening the foundations of Islamic values in the development of an inclusive and just society. The limitations of this research include its contextual scope, which is limited to Indonesia and Brunei, so further research involving a broader and more varied context is recommended to enrich the understanding of Islamic civil society globally.

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