

The Relationship Between Islam and the State from a Political Sociology Perspective: Legitimacy, Hegemony, and Symbolic Capital

Muhammad Fauzan Ahsan Hafizi¹, Normuslim Normuslim², Hamdanah Hamdanah³, Asyrof Isyraqi⁴

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia

⁴ University of Malaya, Malaysia

*Corresponding author fauzanahsan66@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received August 28, 2026

Revised September 22, 2026

Accepted October 26, 2026

Keywords: Islam and the state; political legitimacy; hegemony; symbolic capital; Islamic political sociology.

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Islam and the state remains a central issue in Islamic political studies, particularly in understanding how religious authority interacts with political power and state institutions. This study examines this relationship through a conceptual synthesis of political legitimacy, hegemony, and symbolic capital, comparing Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes classical theories and contemporary scholarship through thematic comparison and conceptual interpretation. The findings reveal distinct patterns of Islam-state relations across the five countries. In Indonesia, Islamic authority and symbols operate within a pluralistic constitutional framework based on Pancasila, serving both as resources for political participation and as instruments of social criticism. In Saudi Arabia, the relationship is characterized by the close association between religious authority and monarchical power. In Iran, religious authority is institutionally embedded in the political system, giving religious institutions a formal role in political legitimacy. In Türkiye, Islamic discourse has become an important resource in the political consolidation of the ruling party and the contestation of opposition groups, illustrating the potential use of religion to reinforce political hegemony. In Egypt, the relationship reflects tensions between state control over religious institutions and the political mobilization of religious authority. These comparisons demonstrate that symbolic capital contributes to political legitimacy only when religious authority receives social recognition and is considered credible. Religious discourse may strengthen political dominance, facilitate political mobilization, or provide a basis for resistance, depending on institutional arrangements and historical contexts. By integrating Weber's theory of legitimacy, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, this study develops a framework for understanding Islam-state relations as a dynamic process involving social recognition, the formation of consent, and the contestation of political authority. The study highlights that the political influence of religion depends not merely on its formal position within the state but also on the social conditions under which religious authority gains, maintains, or loses public recognition.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Islam and the state remains a significant issue in Islamic political studies and the sociology of religion because it involves the sources of political legitimacy, the institutionalization of religious authority, and the processes through which power is established and contested. Religion functions not only as a system of beliefs but also as a source of collective identity, moral values, and social orientations that shape public life. Politics, meanwhile, involves the organization of authority, the management of competing interests, and the construction of justifications for governing arrangements. Alfi and Romadhoni (2022) demonstrate the relevance of

a political approach to understanding the relationship between Islamic values, social institutions, and state life. From this perspective, Islam–state relations cannot be adequately explained solely through normative interpretations of Islamic teachings or the formal constitutional position of religion. They must also be examined through the social processes by which religious authority gains recognition, political power becomes accepted, and religious ideas acquire influence in public affairs. The complexity of this relationship is further demonstrated by scholarship on religion in modern public life. Casanova (1994) challenges the assumption that modernization necessarily confines religion to the private sphere, emphasizing the continuing participation of religious traditions and institutions in public life. Asad (2003), meanwhile, demonstrates that secularism is historically constructed through particular practices, institutions, and relations of power. Together, these perspectives indicate that the political influence of religion cannot be determined simply by whether a state formally separates religion from politics or incorporates religion into its institutions. Religious authority may remain influential under formally secular arrangements, while the official recognition of religion does not necessarily produce stronger public trust, democratic accountability, or political legitimacy. The analytical question is therefore how religious authority becomes socially recognized, how religious discourse is incorporated into political practices, and under what conditions these processes reinforce or challenge existing power relations.

Research on Islam, democracy, and political institutions further illustrates the diversity of Islam–state relations. Effendy (2003) examines the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia through intellectual debates, Islamic political groups, and state responses to religious aspirations. Bayat (2007) emphasizes social practices and political struggles in understanding the relationship between Islam and democracy. These contributions demonstrate that Muslim political actors do not share a single orientation toward the state, democracy, or the implementation of Islamic values. Their positions are shaped by historical experiences, organizational interests, institutional opportunities, and competing interpretations of political and religious authority. In a broader comparative perspective, Stepan (2000) highlights the importance of reciprocal accommodation between political authority and religious freedom in democratic societies. Zahir (2023) similarly questions approaches that reduce religion–state relations to fixed secular or theocratic models. This scholarship establishes the importance of examining institutional diversity and political contestation, but it also raises a further analytical question: how can the social recognition of religious authority be connected systematically to the acceptance, reproduction, and contestation of political power? Three theoretical perspectives provide complementary tools for addressing this question: Max Weber’s theory of political legitimacy, Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital. Weber (1978) explains that the durability of authority depends partly on the belief that a particular form of rule is valid and deserves acceptance. In the context of Islamic politics, legitimacy may be associated with constitutional procedures, political traditions, government performance, or claims that political decisions are consistent with Islamic values. Nevertheless, religious justification does not automatically guarantee public trust, justice, or democratic governance. The acceptance of authority depends on how political claims are interpreted and evaluated within specific social contexts. Where Weber’s approach emphasizes the acceptance of authority, Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony explains how political dominance is sustained through the formation of social consent as well as coercion. Political actors may mobilize religious discourse, national identity, and moral narratives to present particular political arrangements as natural, legitimate, or representative of the common interest. However, hegemony is not necessarily a one-directional process that benefits governing elites. Religious discourse may also provide a language through which social groups articulate grievances, demand justice, and challenge dominant political arrangements. Hadiz (2021), for example, demonstrates how Islamic cultural references can become vehicles for expressing social discontent in Indonesia without necessarily implying rejection

of the state's constitutional foundations. In contrast, Yilmaz et al. (2023) examine how Islamic discourse has been used in Türkiye to delegitimize Kurdish opposition and reinforce the political and moral claims of the ruling government. These contrasting cases indicate that the political consequences of religious discourse depend on the actors involved, their objectives, and the power relations within which the discourse operates.

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic capital adds a further dimension by explaining how recognition, reputation, honor, and socially acknowledged authority become resources of influence. In Islamic politics, symbolic capital may be associated with the religious knowledge of ulama, the reputation of religious organizations, the perceived piety of political leaders, and the credibility of claims made in the name of Islam. Karman et al. (2024), in their analysis of the commodification of Islamic piety during Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, demonstrate how religious representations can be mobilized to construct political images through references to piety, Islamic nationalism, development, and welfare. However, the use of religious symbols does not automatically produce public recognition or electoral support. Fernando et al. (2023) likewise show that the Muslim-majority character of Indonesian society does not automatically translate into the electoral dominance of Islamic political parties. These findings suggest that symbolic resources acquire political significance only through processes of interpretation and social recognition. Their influence depends on perceived credibility, political circumstances, public interests, and the consistency between symbolic representation and political conduct. Although these bodies of scholarship offer important insights into legitimacy, hegemony, symbolic representation, and the diversity of Islam-state arrangements, their analytical contributions address different dimensions of political life. Research on religion and the public sphere explains the continuing political relevance of religion; studies of Islam and democracy illuminate institutional accommodation and political participation; analyses of Islamic discourse examine the construction of consent and the mobilization of opposition; and studies of political representation demonstrate how religious identity may become a resource in electoral competition. The present study does not claim that previous research has entirely overlooked the connections among these issues. Rather, its research gap concerns the need for a more explicit conceptual synthesis that explains how socially recognized religious authority can become a resource for political legitimacy, how hegemonic processes shape the acceptance or contestation of that authority, and how symbolic capital operates within different institutional arrangements. By distinguishing these mechanisms while examining their interaction, the study seeks to clarify why religious authority may reinforce political power in some contexts but fail to generate public acceptance or instead become a basis for political resistance in others.

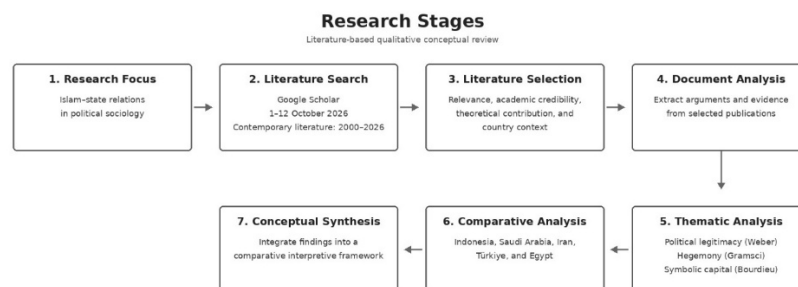
To examine this analytical problem comparatively, the study considers Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt. These cases provide contrasting configurations of religious authority and political institutions. Indonesia combines a constitutional framework based on Pancasila with religious participation and political competition in a pluralistic society. Saudi Arabia illustrates the close relationship between monarchical authority and religious foundations of the legal and political order. Iran combines electoral and republican institutions with the constitutionally established authority of religious institutions. Türkiye demonstrates that the formal principle of secularism can coexist with the political mobilization and state regulation of religion. Egypt, meanwhile, illustrates the distinction between the constitutional recognition of Islam and the actual distribution of political authority, particularly the central role of state institutions and restrictions on political opposition. Comparative discussions of constitutional arrangements, including Zada et al. (2025), and analyses of Islamic law and political authority, including Kuru (2022), help situate these differences within broader debates on religion, institutions, and governance. The comparison is not intended to establish a universal classification of Muslim-majority states, but to examine how the relationships among religious authority, political legitimacy, hegemonic processes, and symbolic

recognition vary across different historical and institutional settings. Based on this research gap, the study aims to develop a conceptual framework that integrates Weber's theory of legitimacy, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital to explain variations in the relationship between Islam and the state. Using qualitative library research and thematic comparison of relevant academic literature, it addresses three interrelated questions: how does the social recognition of religious authority contribute to political legitimacy; how do religious discourse and hegemonic processes reinforce or challenge dominant political arrangements; and how do institutional and historical contexts shape the conversion of symbolic capital into political influence? The study argues that these processes are interconnected but neither automatic nor uniform. Symbolic capital may support legitimacy when religious authority is regarded as credible, while hegemonic processes can normalize political claims or provide grounds for contesting them. The political consequences depend on the distribution of authority, the credibility of political and religious actors, and the institutional conditions under which consent and opposition develop. The contribution of this study lies in integrating these three theoretical perspectives into a comparative analytical framework that moves beyond the formal distinction between religious and secular states. This framework enables a more nuanced sociological understanding of how religious authority and political power acquire, maintain, and contest influence across diverse configurations of Islam-state relations.

2. METHODS

This study employed qualitative library research using a conceptual literature review to examine Islam-state relations through three interrelated perspectives: political legitimacy, hegemony, and symbolic capital. The review aimed to synthesize theoretical arguments and develop an analytical framework for comparing different national contexts. Following Snyder (2019), literature reviews can integrate existing knowledge and support conceptual development. In line with Grant and Booth (2009), this study adopted a conceptual rather than systematic review approach and did not seek to provide an exhaustive inventory of all relevant publications. The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar between 1 and 12 October 2026, focusing on political sociology, the sociology of religion, Islamic politics, and religion-state relations. The principal publication period was 2000-2026, while earlier foundational works were retained when necessary. Search terms included "Islam and the state," "political legitimacy," "religious authority," "hegemony," "symbolic capital," "Islamic politics," and "religion-state relations," combined with the country names "Indonesia," "Saudi Arabia," "Iran," "Türkiye," and "Egypt." The search aimed to identify scholarship examining interactions between religious authority, political institutions, social recognition, and political power. Publications were selected according to their relevance to the research questions, conceptual contribution, academic credibility, and usefulness for comparative analysis. Inclusion criteria covered academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other scholarly publications relevant to political sociology, Islamic politics, the sociology of religion, or religion-state relations; works addressing at least one of the three analytical concepts; studies discussing religious authority, political institutions, social recognition, or political contestation; publications examining the five selected countries or providing relevant comparative theories; and sources containing sufficient conceptual and contextual information. Publications with insufficient relevance, unclear scholarly contributions, or inadequate contextual information were excluded. Where studies addressed similar issues, their distinct theoretical contributions were considered. Earlier works by Weber, Gramsci, and Bourdieu were retained regardless of publication date when theoretically necessary. The final inventory should report the actual number of sources examined, distinguishing academic books from journal articles and other scholarly publications. Accordingly, a total of [insert the actual number] publications were included, comprising [insert the number] academic books and [insert the number] journal articles and other scholarly publications.

The selected literature was analyzed through document analysis, thematic reading, and conceptual synthesis. Bowen (2009) informs the assessment of documents in terms of content, context, and relevance, while Braun and Clarke (2006) provide guidance for identifying recurring concepts and developing thematic interpretations. The analysis involved four operations: identifying the main arguments and theoretical assumptions; organizing them into the three themes of political legitimacy, hegemony, and symbolic capital; comparing conceptual similarities, differences, and relationships; and synthesizing the findings across the five national contexts. Political legitimacy was used to examine how authority is justified and accepted, hegemony to analyze how political and religious discourse shapes or contests social consent, and symbolic capital to investigate how religious reputation and recognition become potential resources of political influence. These concepts were treated as interconnected analytical perspectives rather than independent variables or a predetermined linear sequence. The comparative synthesis examined historical contexts, constitutional arrangements, the distribution of authority between religious and political institutions, and the interaction between religious recognition, discourse, and political power in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt. The same three analytical perspectives were applied across all cases to identify similarities and differences without assuming a uniform political trajectory among Muslim-majority societies. Interpretations were assessed against the arguments and contextual evidence in the selected literature, including differences in scholarly explanations. The study thus develops a conceptual synthesis of the relationships among political legitimacy, hegemonic processes, symbolic capital, and institutional arrangements. As it relies on selected scholarly literature without original fieldwork or quantitative data collection, its conclusions are interpretive rather than empirical generalizations about all Muslim-majority societies.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Relationship Between Islam and the State: The Legitimacy of Power and Hegemony

The relationship between Islam and the state involves the institutional position of religion as well as the ways political authority is legitimized, social consent is negotiated, and religious symbols are mobilized in political competition. Islam can provide ethical principles, collective identities, and a language for articulating public interests, but its political effects vary according to institutional arrangements, historical circumstances, and the strategies of political actors. Weber (1978) argues that the durability of power depends partly on whether authority is perceived as legitimate, rather than on coercion alone. In Islamic political contexts, legitimacy may derive from constitutional procedures, governmental performance, political traditions, or claims that policies reflect Islamic values. Such claims, however, do not necessarily demonstrate public trust, justice, or democratic accountability; these outcomes depend on how authority is exercised and scrutinized. Evidence from studies of religion and political authority further complicates this relationship. Fox and Breslawski (2023) found an association between state support for religion and lower individual trust in government across 54 Christian-majority countries. Because their research focuses on Christian-majority contexts, its findings cannot be directly generalized to Muslim-majority societies. Williamson et al. (2023), using survey experiments involving more than 12,000 Sunni Muslim

respondents across eleven Middle Eastern countries, found that associating religious scholars with particular political issues or movements could reduce perceptions of their religious authority, including among respondents who agreed with their political views. Considered together, these studies suggest that institutional support for religion and the political involvement of religious figures do not automatically strengthen legitimacy or credibility. Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony explains how political dominance can be sustained through social consent to ideas and arrangements perceived as natural or appropriate. Political actors may use Islamic discourse to justify policies, define ideal leadership, mobilize collective identities, or portray opponents as threats to the political and moral order. Religious discourse can therefore shape political judgments beyond formal institutions or the implementation of Islamic law. Hadiz (2021) illustrates a different use of this discourse in Indonesia, where Islamic cultural references can articulate social discontent without necessarily rejecting the country's foundational political principles. In Türkiye, Yilmaz et al. (2023) describe how the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has used Islamic discourse to frame Kurdish opposition as a threat to the political and moral order. These cases show contrasting political functions: religious references may provide a vocabulary for criticizing injustice or help governing actors delegitimize opposition. Zahir (2023) similarly challenges binary interpretations of religion-state relations that classify political systems simply as secular or theocratic. To compare Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt more systematically, this study uses four indicators: the basis of political legitimacy, the use of Islamic discourse in hegemonic processes, the position and perceived credibility of religious authority, and the space available for political criticism. These indicators link the theoretical discussion to the comparative analysis while making the evidentiary limits of each country case explicit.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Islam-State Relations through Consistent Analytical Indicators

Analytical indicator	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia	Iran	Türkiye	Egypt
Political legitimacy	Political legitimacy operates within a constitutional framework founded on Pancasila and the Constitution, while Islamic values also inform political participation and public debate.	The literature discussed in the current subsection does not provide sufficient country-specific evidence to assess the relationship between religious authority and monarchical legitimacy in detail.	The literature discussed in the current subsection does not provide sufficient country-specific evidence to assess the relationship between religious authority and the legitimacy of state institutions in detail.	Islamic discourse is involved in political competition and claims about the political and moral order; further evidence is needed to assess its relationship with public acceptance of authority.	The literature discussed in the current subsection does not provide sufficient country-specific evidence to assess the relationship between state authority and religious legitimacy in detail.
Hegemony and Islamic discourse	Islamic cultural references can articulate social discontent and demands for justice without necessarily rejecting the country's foundational	Further country-specific evidence is needed to identify how religious discourse is used to produce or contest social consent.	Further country-specific evidence is needed to identify how religious discourse is used to produce or contest social consent.	Islamic discourse can be used to frame Kurdish opposition as a threat to the political and moral order (Yilmaz et al., 2023).	Further country-specific evidence is needed to identify how religious discourse is used to produce or contest social consent.

	political principles (Hadiz, 2021).				
Religious authority and credibility	The broader literature suggests that perceived partisan alignment can affect the credibility of religious authorities; additional Indonesia-specific evidence is needed to establish this relationship.	Further evidence is needed to assess the autonomy and public credibility of religious authorities.	Further evidence is needed to assess the position and public credibility of religious authorities within the political system.	The cited discussion examines the political use of Islamic discourse but does not provide a consistent assessment of the public credibility of religious authorities.	Further evidence is needed to assess the relationship between state involvement in religious institutions and the credibility of religious authorities.
Space for political criticism	Islamic symbols can be used to articulate social criticism and demands for justice within the existing political system.	Further evidence is needed to assess how religious discourse shapes opportunities and constraints for political criticism.	Further evidence is needed to assess how religious discourse shapes opportunities and constraints for political criticism.	The cited discussion describes the use of Islamic discourse to delegitimize Kurdish opposition; further evidence is needed to assess the broader space for political criticism.	Further evidence is needed to assess how state-religion relations affect political mobilization and criticism.

Source: Author's qualitative synthesis of the literature discussed in this manuscript. Statements indicating insufficient evidence identify gaps in the current discussion and should not be interpreted as evidence that the relevant political dynamics are absent in those countries.

The comparison provides the clearest contrast between Indonesia and Türkiye. In Indonesia, Islamic cultural references can support demands for justice within the constitutional order, whereas the cited analysis of Türkiye describes their use in delegitimizing a particular opposition group. These findings illustrate different political uses of religious discourse without implying that either case follows a single, uniform pattern. The table also exposes an imbalance in the available evidence. The current discussion does not provide enough country-specific findings to assess Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt against all four indicators. Consequently, the comparison remains a preliminary qualitative synthesis rather than a comprehensive assessment of all five political systems. Additional studies on the sources of legitimacy, the role of religious institutions, political discourse, and opportunities for opposition are needed to support conclusions across these cases. Despite this limitation, the evidence discussed here shows why the presence of Islamic discourse cannot, by itself, explain the relationship between religion and political power. Its effects depend on whether it is used to articulate social demands, reinforce governing authority, or challenge the legitimacy of opponents. The same religious tradition can thus serve different political purposes under different institutional conditions. Legitimacy and hegemony help explain these differences from complementary perspectives. Legitimacy concerns the perceived acceptability of authority, while hegemony concerns how consent

is formed around a political order. Religious discourse may reinforce both when associated with justice and accountability, but it can also become a source of contestation when used to exclude opponents or when religious authority is perceived as serving partisan interests. The relationship between Islam and the state should therefore be assessed through the interaction of institutional authority, social consent, religious credibility, and opportunities for political criticism rather than through a simple secular–theocratic distinction.

3.2. Symbolic Capital and Diverse Approaches to Islamic Politics

Symbolic capital helps explain how religious identity and authority acquire social and political value. Bourdieu (1991) defines it in terms of resources recognized as legitimate and valuable within a particular social environment. In Islamic politics, such resources may include religious reputation, public displays of piety, associations with respected scholars, and claims to represent Muslim interests. Their influence depends on social recognition rather than visibility alone. This study examines symbolic capital through three indicators: religious representation, social recognition, and political conversion. Religious representation concerns how actors communicate Islamic identity through language, conduct, and public symbols. Social recognition refers to whether audiences perceive these representations as credible and legitimate. Political conversion concerns whether that recognition translates into electoral support, policy influence, political mobilization, or agenda-setting. Distinguishing these indicators makes it possible to assess religious symbolism without assuming that its use necessarily produces political advantages. Karman et al. (2024), in their study of the commodification of Islamic piety during Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, identify representations of personal piety, Islamic nationalism, development, and welfare in candidates' campaign posts. Their findings illustrate how religious imagery can become a political resource. However, campaign representation alone does not establish public acceptance or electoral effectiveness; these outcomes require separate evidence about audience perceptions and political behavior. Fernando et al. (2023), examining the electoral competitiveness of Islamic political parties in Indonesia's 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections, further demonstrate that a Muslim-majority population does not automatically produce electoral dominance for Islamic parties. Religious identity operates alongside candidate appeal, voter preferences, party platforms, and other political factors. These studies therefore distinguish the strategic presentation of religious identity from its measurable political consequences. The interpretation of religious symbols is also shaped by discourse and organizational context. Foucault (1980) explains how discourses establish categories through which social reality is understood and evaluated. In Islamic politics, narratives about piety, ideal leadership, and Muslim interests can influence judgments of political actors. Kayane (2022), studying the development of Islamist ideology in Indonesia and the role of the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII), highlights the importance of religious organizations, outreach networks, and the circulation of ideas. Ichwan and Slama (2022) identify differing positions among Islamic actors toward Pancasila, ranging from acceptance of the state ideology to demands for a greater role for Islamic law and rejection of Pancasila. Together, these studies show how religious meanings are shaped by competing interpretations and networks of influence. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach offers a complementary perspective on the public presentation of identity. Political actors may communicate religious affiliation through language, clothing, gestures, public activities, and associations with religious figures. Duile and Tamma (2021), in their study of political language and fake news during Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, show that Islam and nationalism served as ideological reference points for both political camps. Religious symbolism is therefore not exclusive to parties that identify explicitly as Islamic. Nevertheless, public presentation alone cannot establish an actor's sincerity or credibility; those judgments require consideration of political conduct and policy choices.

Religious identity may also generate solidarity and boundaries between groups. Arifianto (2021), examining the shift from ideological to political sectarianism between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, shows that intergroup tensions can involve political interests as well as ideological and ritual differences. Organizational identity can strengthen collective representation, but it can also be mobilized to distinguish one group from another and intensify political competition. These dynamics help contextualize different approaches to Islamic politics. Deconfessionalization emphasizes political participation not determined solely by religious identity; domestication situates Islamic political expression within state institutions and regulations; sectarian mobilization makes religious group identity a resource in political competition; approaches that separate, connect, or integrate religion and the state define different institutional relationships; and cultural Islam emphasizes Islamic values through social practices, education, and culture without necessarily seeking an Islamic state. These orientations are analytical categories rather than mutually exclusive models, and their relevance depends on the historical and political circumstances of each case. Religious education provides another setting in which symbolic authority is reproduced. Surawan et al. (2022) examine the roles of *kyai* and *ustaz* in shaping understandings of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Although their study does not directly examine state-religion relations, it illustrates how recognized religious figures influence the interpretation and transmission of Islamic values. Anwar et al. (2023), using qualitative library research and content analysis, emphasize the internalization of Islamic moderation as a means of countering radicalism and terrorism. These studies demonstrate the social role of religious institutions, although educational influence should not be equated automatically with political legitimacy or hegemony. The literature thus provides examples of symbolic capital in electoral communication, religious organizations, group identities, and education. To support comparison across Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt, the three indicators must be applied consistently to country-specific evidence. Table 2 specifies the questions and evidence needed for that comparison.

Table 2. Comparative Indicators of Symbolic Capital in Islam-State Relations

Indicator	Analytical question	Evidence to examine in each country
Religious representation	How do political and religious actors represent Islamic identity and authority?	Religious language, public displays of piety, political narratives, relationships with religious institutions, and references to Islamic values.
Social recognition	How are these representations recognized, accepted, or contested by relevant social groups?	Evidence of public perceptions, religious credibility, competing interpretations, organizational support, or documented contestation.
Political conversion	Is social recognition associated with political influence?	Evidence of electoral support, policy influence, political mobilization, agenda-setting, or changes in the relative position of political actors.

Source: Author's analytical synthesis based on Bourdieu (1991) and the literature discussed in this subsection.

For Indonesia, the cited studies offer material on campaign imagery, interpretations of Pancasila, organizational identity, and religious education. These sources provide evidence of religious representation and the circulation of religious ideas, but they do not uniformly establish whether those representations gain public recognition or produce specific political outcomes. The three indicators must therefore remain analytically distinct even when applied to the same case. The literature presented in this subsection offers less comparable evidence for Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt. Without additional country-specific studies, it is not possible to determine systematically how symbolic capital is represented, recognized, and converted into political influence across all five countries. The current comparison consequently establishes an analytical framework rather than a ranking of countries or a complete account of their political differences. The main

implication is that the political value of religious symbols depends on more than their visibility or institutional presence. Their influence rests on the relationship between public representation, social recognition, and political outcomes. Symbolic capital may reinforce authority when religious claims are regarded as credible, but it may also be contested or used to sharpen group boundaries. Its effects must be demonstrated through evidence of reception and political consequences rather than inferred from symbolic expression alone. Symbolic capital complements Weber's concept of legitimacy and Gramsci's theory of hegemony by explaining how religious actors and representations acquire recognized authority. Legitimacy concerns the acceptance of power, hegemony concerns the formation of social consent, and symbolic capital explains how recognition can give particular actors political value. Applying these concepts across the five countries requires comparable evidence on all three indicators, rather than inferring political differences from constitutional arrangements or religious identities alone.

3.3. Models of Governance in Islamic Politics and Their Relevance to the Relationship Between Islam and the State

The relationship between Islam and the state cannot be adequately explained through a binary distinction between Islamic and secular states. Political systems also differ in the constitutional status of religion, sources of legitimacy, the distribution of authority between political and religious institutions, and protections for political participation and civil liberties. Weber (1978) provides a framework for examining the acceptance of authority, while Stepan (2000) emphasizes the autonomy of religious and political institutions through the concept of *twin tolerations*. Linz and Stepan (1996) further highlight the institutional conditions necessary for democratic consolidation. These perspectives allow formal constitutional arrangements to be distinguished from the actual exercise of political power. This comparison uses four indicators: (1) the constitutional status of Islam, (2) sources of political legitimacy, (3) the distribution of political and religious authority, and (4) political participation and citizens' rights. Together, these dimensions connect institutional arrangements to the article's central concepts of legitimacy, hegemony, and symbolic capital.

Table 3. Comparison of the Relationship Between Islam and the State in Five Countries

Dimension	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia	Iran	Türkiye	Egypt
Constitutional status of Islam	Pancasila serves as the state ideology; religious values are recognized within the constitutional framework.	The Qur'an and Sunnah constitute the primary foundations of the state's legal order.	Islam and the principles of the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence hold constitutional status.	Secularism is a state principle; religion remains regulated through state institutions.	Islam is the state religion; the principles of Islamic law constitute the principal source of legislation.
Sources of legitimacy	Elections, the Constitution, Pancasila, and public support.	Dynastic monarchy and religious legitimacy.	An electoral republic alongside the constitutional authority of the Supreme Leader.	Elections, the Constitution, and political competition within a secular framework.	The Constitution, state institutions, and executive power.
Distribution of authority	Constitutional political institutions coexist with diverse religious organizations.	Monarchical authority operates alongside religious institutions within the state framework.	Elected institutions coexist with bodies vested with religious authority.	State institutions regulate religious affairs; religious authority is not the highest constitutional	State institutions and the executive dominate, while religion retains constitutional status.

				source of power.	
Participation and citizens' rights	Competitive elections, accompanied by challenges concerning the protection of rights and civil liberties.	Political participation and accountability of power are limited.	Elections take place but are constrained by the authority of non-elected institutions.	Electoral competition takes place amid challenges concerning freedom and political opposition.	Opposition and political participation are restricted by authoritarian practices of governance.

Source: Author’s comparative synthesis, informed by Weber (1978), Stepan (2000), Linz and Stepan (1996), Zahir (2023), Syarif et al. (2024), Zada et al. (2025), Kuru (2022), and Kilinc et al. (2026). Constitutional descriptions and assessments of political rights should be verified against relevant legal texts and country-specific empirical sources.

The comparison shows that constitutional recognition of religion does not necessarily determine how political authority is exercised. Indonesia accommodates religious aspirations within the Pancasila framework, where religious organizations participate in public debate. Syarif et al. (2024) discuss the relationship between divine and popular sovereignty in democratic processes, while Khaliq (2024), comparing Indonesia and Pakistan, highlights the importance of institutional arrangements governing religious authority. Their work supports examining religious accommodation alongside pluralism, accountability, and human rights rather than treating these principles as inherently incompatible. Saudi Arabia and Iran illustrate distinct institutional arrangements for religious authority. Saudi Arabia’s Basic Law identifies the Qur’an and Sunnah as foundational to the state’s legal order within a monarchical system. Iran combines republican and electoral institutions with the constitutional authority of the Supreme Leader and religious oversight bodies. The key comparative issue is how these arrangements distribute authority and provide or limit, mechanisms for political accountability. Kuru (2022) and Zada et al. (2025) may inform this analysis where their findings specifically address these institutional differences. Türkiye and Egypt demonstrate a different contrast between constitutional principles and political practice. Türkiye establishes secularism as a state principle, yet religious affairs remain subject to state regulation and Islamic discourse continues to feature in political competition.

Egypt recognizes Islam as the state religion and Islamic Sharia as a principal source of legislation, while executive authority and restrictions on opposition shape its political environment. These cases illustrate why constitutional provisions alone cannot establish how religious authority operates in practice or how effectively citizens’ rights are protected. The four indicators reveal different configurations of religious and political authority rather than a single continuum from secular to Islamic government. They also require distinctions between the article’s three theoretical concepts. Weber’s legitimacy concerns the grounds on which authority is accepted; Gramsci’s hegemony explains how discourse and ideas help produce or contest social consent; and Bourdieu’s symbolic capital addresses how religious identity and reputation acquire political value through social recognition. A government may invoke Islamic principles to legitimize its authority without ensuring broad public acceptance, while religious symbols may influence public debate without necessarily producing electoral support or policy outcomes. Stepan’s (2000) concept of *twin tolerations* further directs attention to the relationship between religious participation and the autonomy of elected institutions. Religious actors must be able to participate in public life, while political authorities must respect lawful religious activity and institutional boundaries. In combination with Linz and Stepan’s (1996) account of democratic consolidation, this approach highlights the importance of political competition, institutional oversight, and civil liberties alongside constitutional arrangements. Overall, the five-country comparison demonstrates that Islam-state relations are shaped by the interaction of constitutional rules, sources of legitimacy, institutional

distributions of authority, and opportunities for political participation. Neither the formal presence of Islam in state institutions nor a constitutional commitment to secularism is sufficient to explain these relationships. A more comprehensive assessment requires attention to how political authority is exercised, how religious discourse shapes public consent, and how institutional arrangements affect accountability and citizens' rights.

4. CONCLUSION

This study integrates Weber's theory of legitimacy, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital to explain how religion interacts with political authority. The synthesis distinguishes three interconnected mechanisms: legitimacy shapes the acceptance of authority, hegemony influences social consent, and symbolic capital enables religious recognition to become a potential source of political influence. Their interaction depends on institutional arrangements and social contexts rather than on religious doctrine or symbolism alone. The comparison of Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Türkiye, and Egypt highlights the diversity of Islam–state relations. The constitutional status of Islam does not independently determine how political authority is distributed, how religious discourse is mobilized, or how citizens' rights are protected. These outcomes must be understood in relation to each country's political institutions, historical development, and relationship between religious and state authorities. Practically, the framework encourages policymakers and religious institutions to consider public accountability, the credibility of religious authority, and the protection of pluralism when developing policies concerning religion and governance. Civic education and public dialogue may also help citizens critically evaluate religious claims used in political debate while preserving legitimate religious participation in public life. As a conceptual literature review, this study provides an analytical framework rather than an empirical test of how these mechanisms operate across the five countries. Future research should apply consistent indicators to each case, examining public trust and accountability as dimensions of legitimacy, religious discourse and political communication as manifestations of hegemony, and public recognition of religious actors as a dimension of symbolic capital. Comparative studies combining interviews, public-opinion surveys, institutional analysis, and political communication data could test these relationships and identify how they change over time. Particular attention should be given to cases for which the existing literature provides less detailed evidence. Overall, the framework offers a basis for investigating Islam–state relations beyond the secular–theocratic dichotomy. Its explanatory value will depend on further empirical testing that accounts for differences in political institutions, social conditions, and historical contexts.

5. REFERENCES

- Alfi, A. M., & Romadhoni, M. W. (2022). Pendekatan politis dalam studi Islam. *Qolamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 8(1), 96–115. <https://doi.org/10.55120/qolamuna.v8i1.662>
- Anwar, K., Surawan, S., & Saefulloh, A. (2023). Internalization of Islamic moderation values to counter radicalism and terrorism. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 6(10). <https://www.ijassjournal.com/2023/V6I10/4146663647>
- Arifianto, A. R. (2021). From ideological to political sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the state in Indonesia. *Religion, State & Society*, 49(2), 126–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1902247>
- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford University Press.
- Bayat, A. (2007). *Making Islam democratic: Social movements and the post-Islamist turn*. Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. University of Chicago Press.
- Duile, T., & Tamma, S. (2021). Political language and fake news: Some considerations from the 2019 election in Indonesia. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 49(143), 82–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2021.1862496>
- Effendy, B. (2003). *Islam and the state in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Fernando, H., Larasati, Y. G., Abdullah, I., Jubba, H., Mugni, A., & Persadha, P. D. (2023). The de-existence of Islamic political parties in general elections: A case study of Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1), Article 2225838. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2225838>
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977* (C. Gordon, Ed.). Pantheon Books.
- Fox, J., & Breslawski, J. (2023). State support for religion and government legitimacy in Christian-majority countries. *American Political Science Review*, 117(4), 1395–1409. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422001320>
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith, Eds. & Trans.). International Publishers.
- Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009). A typology of reviews: An analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 26(2), 91–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x>
- Hadiz, V. R. (2021). Indonesia's missing Left and the Islamisation of dissent. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(3), 599–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1768064>
- Ichwan, M. N., & Slama, M. (2022). Reinterpreting the first pillar of the nation: (Dis)continuities of Islamic discourses about the state ideology in Indonesia. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 23(4), 457–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2022.2139687>
- Karman, Hamad, I., & Rusadi, U. (2024). Commodification of instrumental Islamic piety in Indonesian political contestation 2019. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 34(3), 265–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2295871>
- Kayane, Y. (2022). Historical formation of Islamist ideology in Indonesia: The role of the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (DDII). *Critical Asian Studies*, 54(1), 47–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2021.2008261>
- Khaliq, S. (2024). Democratisation and state–religion relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia and Pakistan (1998–2018). *South Asian Survey*, 31(1), 63–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09715231231223848>
- Kilinc, R., Kayaoglu, T., & Ugur, E. (2026). The empty quest for Muslim democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 37(1), 134–149. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-empty-quest-for-muslim-democracy/>
- Kuru, A. T. (2022). Muslim politics between sharia and democracy. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(1), 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i1.50>
- Linz, J. J., & Stepan, A. (1996). *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Surawan, S., Anshari, M. R., Azmy, A., & Adi, M. I. P. (2022). Finding religious moderation in pondok pesantren: Religious moderation education at pondok pesantren in Central Kalimantan. *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam*, 6(2), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v6i2.4507>
- Stepan, A. (2000). Religion, democracy, and the “twin tolerations.” *Journal of Democracy*, 11(4), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2000.0088>

-
- Syarif, N., Zulbaidah, & Septiadi, M. A. (2024). Political theology: How God's law is applied in the context of Indonesian democracy based on Pancasila. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1), Article 2407104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2407104>
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press.
- Williamson, S., Yildirim, A. K., Grewal, S., & Kuenkler, M. (2023). Preaching politics: How politicization undermines religious authority in the Middle East. *British Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 555–574. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000712342200028X>
- Yilmaz, I., Demir, M., & Shipoli, E. (2023). Authoritarian use of religion to delegitimize and securitize the opposition. *Religions*, 14(5), Article 596. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050596>
- Zada, K., Faizin, A., Abdillah, A. M., Hifni, A., & Wahyudi, J. (2025). The constitutionalization of Sharia in Muslim countries: Historical and political struggles in Indonesia, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia. *Mazahib*, 24(2), 435–455. <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v24i2.11679>
- Zahir, A. (2023). Beyond fixed political models of religion–state relations. *Religions*, 14(3), Article 384. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030384>