



# The Relationship Between Religion and Politics of Muhammad Iqbal: A Philosophical and its Relevance

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## ABSTRACT

From classical times to the modern era, the relationship between religion and politics has been a never-ending debate. On the one hand, religion is considered a moral foundation that directs political action towards justice and the welfare of the people, while on the other hand, the political world is often separated from the spiritual dimension to maintain objectivity and individual freedom. In this article, Muhammad Iqbal, a prominent Muslim thinker from the 20th century, opposes secularism and proposes a spiritual democracy system, which combines the principles of democracy with Islamic values to create a just and prosperous government. Through ijtihad, Muslims are invited to interpret Islamic teachings to be relevant to the challenges of the times. The research method uses qualitative with a literature study approach (library research). The main focus of this study is how Muhammad Iqbal views the relationship between religion and politics, and to what extent Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts are relevant in the modern era. The results of this study found two interesting things, namely: first, Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts on the relationship between religion and politics emphasize the importance of combining the principles of democracy and Islamic moral values in the system of government. Second, Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts on the relationship between religion and politics remain relevant in the modern socio-political context.

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## 1. Introduction

The relationship between religion and politics is often an important debate among Muslims, especially when faced with the influence of modernization and secularism. In many countries, politics is considered a worldly affair that should not be interfered with by religion. On the contrary, religion

is considered to only regulate matters of worship and personal life. In fact, in Islam, religious teachings cover all aspects of life, including social, economic, and even governmental affairs [1]. Muhammad Iqbal, a philosopher and Muslim thinker from India, offers a different perspective. In his renowned work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal emphasizes that religion and politics cannot be separated. He views Islam not merely as a religion that governs the relationship between humans and God, but as a comprehensive system of life that also encompasses social and political dimensions. For Iqbal, the separation of religion and politics undermines the true spirit of Islam [2].

Iqbal believes that Muslims must be able to establish a political order that is not only democratic in its system but also infused with spiritual values. He refers to this concept as spiritual democracy—a system of governance that involves the people while remaining rooted in Islamic moral values such as justice, honesty, and responsibility. This view serves as a critique of Western secularism, which separates religion from the state, as well as a response to rigid models of Islamic politics that focus solely on formal rules [3]. In the midst of moral crises, political corruption, and the weakening role of religion in public policy, Iqbal's thought is highly relevant for reconsideration. He calls on Muslims not only to adhere to old teachings but also to embrace renewal (reconstruction) so that Islamic teachings remain alive and capable of addressing the challenges of the modern era. Therefore, it is important to discuss how Iqbal views the integration of religion and politics, and what impact this has on contemporary Muslims.

This article will explore Muhammad Iqbal's views on the relationship between religion and politics, why their integration is considered important, and how these ideas can be applied in the context of contemporary national life. This research aims to provide an understanding of Muhammad Iqbal's thought on the integration of religion and politics, as well as to demonstrate the urgency and relevance of these ideas in addressing the challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era.

## 2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature study method to understand Muhammad Iqbal's views on the relationship between religion and politics, as well as the urgency of integrating both within the context of modern Islamic thought [4]. Data is collected through a review of various sources, including books written by Muhammad Iqbal (especially *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*), scholarly journals, articles, and academic studies relevant to the themes of religion, politics, and Islamic thought [5].

The data is analyzed using the content analysis method with a qualitative thematic approach, which allows the researcher to identify key themes within the texts, explore their philosophical meanings, and interpret the relevance of Iqbal's thought in the contemporary socio-political context of the Muslim world. Through this analysis, the researcher examines the structure of Iqbal's thought, which links religious values to the dynamics of politics within the framework of modernity, and evaluates the contribution of integrating Islamic values into governance systems.

As a theoretical foundation, this research employs Iqbal's theory of the reconstruction of religious thought. This theory emphasizes the importance of reinterpreting Islamic teachings to remain relevant to the challenges of the modern era. Iqbal sees stagnation in Islamic thought as a cause of the decline of the Muslim community, and thus he advocates for *ijtihad*—creative and rational interpretation that adapts religious teachings to social and political realities [6]. His intellectual trajectory begins with historical awareness, followed by a call to reconstruct Islamic teachings through a philosophical approach that integrates spirituality, rationality, and the spirit of reform. In this context, Iqbal's theory of reconstruction is used to explore how the integration of religion and politics, as proposed by him, can serve as a solution to various issues faced by Muslims in the modern era.

The analysis is conducted through content analysis to explore the meanings, key ideas, and the context of Iqbal's thought, and then relate them to the socio-political realities of contemporary Muslims. This model is chosen because it effectively explains and identifies the main themes in Muhammad Iqbal's thought regarding the relationship between religion and politics. Through content

analysis, the researcher can uncover the meanings and messages embedded in Iqbal's texts and interpret how Iqbal explains the concept of the integration of religion and politics.

This analytical model also allows the researcher to delve into Iqbal's intellectual structure that connects religion and politics within the framework of modernity, analyze how Iqbal's ideas relate to the socio-political realities of contemporary Muslims, and assess the relevance of Iqbal's thought in the context of challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era, such as secularism, democracy, and the integration of Islamic values into governance [7].

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. A Brief Overview of Muhammad Iqbal's Biography

Muhammad Iqbal, also known as Allama Iqbal, was born on November 9, 1877, in Sialkot, Punjab, British India (now Pakistan). He came from a devout Muslim family; his father, Muhammad Nur, was a small-scale merchant who was also known as a Sufi figure, while his mother was known as a pious woman who had a significant influence on Iqbal's character development [8]. From an early age, Iqbal was encouraged to memorize the Qur'an and study religious sciences, which later became a crucial foundation for his intellectual and spiritual journey [9]. He completed his primary and secondary education in Sialkot before continuing his studies at Government College in Lahore. There, he earned a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Master of Arts (MA) in philosophy, English, and Arabic literature in 1899 [3]. In addition to his academic pursuits, Iqbal was actively involved in social and educational organizations, such as the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, which advocated for the welfare of Muslims in India [10].

In 1905, Iqbal traveled to Europe to further his education. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and earned a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree [11]. He also became a barrister at Lincoln's Inn, London, before pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Munich, Germany. There, he earned a PhD in philosophy with a dissertation on the development of metaphysics in Persia in 1908. His experiences and interactions with Western thought greatly influenced Iqbal's perspective on Islam and modernity [12]. After returning to India, Iqbal opened a law practice in Lahore and became a lecturer at Oriental College. However, his interest in literature and philosophy was much greater, so he began writing poetry and scholarly works in Urdu and Persian [13]. His poetic works such as "Asrar-e-Khudi" (The Secret of the Self, 1915), "Rumuz-e-Bekhudi" (The Secret of Ignorance, 1918), and "Bang-e-Dara" (The Call of the Bell, 1924) received wide recognition, both in the Islamic world and the West [14].

Iqbal is known as a classical poet and modern Muslim philosopher who carries the theme of spiritual awakening, Muslim identity, and the renewal of Islamic thought. He developed the concept of Khudi (self-awareness) as a foundation for building a strong and civilized society. Through Khudi, Iqbal encouraged Muslims to build their potential, perform *ijtihad*, and play an active role in social and political change [15]. Apart from being a poet and philosopher, Iqbal was also active in politics. He became a member of the London branch of the All-India Muslim League in 1906 and the Lahore branch in 1926, and was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly from 1926 to 1929 [16]. In 1930, in his presidential address to the All-India Muslim League session in Allahabad, Iqbal strongly proposed the creation of a separate Muslim state in North-West India. This idea later came to be known as the Two-Nation Theory, which became the basis for the creation of Pakistan in 1947 [17].

Iqbal rejected both extreme secularism and rigid theocracy. In his work "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" (1934), he asserted that the state should be a moral instrument inspired by religion, without making religion a tool of political oppression. His thinking offers a middle solution that is relevant for Muslim countries in facing the challenges of modernity and pluralism [18]. As a thinker, Iqbal also emphasized the importance of integrating Eastern and Western philosophy to renew Islamic thought to remain relevant in the modern era. He rejected extremism and proposed a progressive approach that accommodated pluralism and modernity, and emphasized the importance of freedom of thought and opinion in socio-political life [19]. Muhammad Iqbal died on 21 April 1938 in Lahore due to heart disease. He was buried near the Badshahi Mosque, Lahore, with state honors

[20]. The legacy of his thoughts and works lives on and inspires generations of Muslims around the world, especially in Pakistan, where he is remembered as the “National Poet” and the “Father of Pakistan.” [21] Iqbal's birthday, November 9, is celebrated as a national holiday in Pakistan. He is remembered with various honorifics such as Shair-e-Mashriq (Poet of the East), Mufakkir-e-Pakistan (Thinker of Pakistan), and Hakeem-ul-Ummat (Wise of the Ummah). His thoughts and works continue to be an important reference in discussions on Islamic renewal, the relationship between religion and state, and Muslim identity in the modern era [22].

### **3.2. Philosophical Study: The Relationship Between Religion and Politics from the Perspective of Muhammad Iqbal**

Muhammad Iqbal argued that religion and politics in Islam cannot be separated. According to him, Islam regulates all aspects of life, including social, economic, and political, not just matters of worship. Iqbal criticized the separation of religion from politics that has developed in many countries, because it has caused the loss of moral values in government. He believed that Islam is a comprehensive religion and provides guidance on how to create a just and prosperous society. In his view, an ideal government in Islam must be based on the moral principles contained in the Qur'an and Hadith, not merely seeking power [2].

Muhammad Iqbal's view on the relationship between religion and politics in Islam is that his ideas offer solutions that are very relevant to the modern world. Religion and politics must go hand in hand, not separately, because religion provides moral guidance that is very necessary in social and political life. In many cases, the separation of the two, as seen in secularism, often leads to the loss of human values and social justice that should be the basis for managing the state.

Muhammad Iqbal also proposed the concept of spiritual democracy, a system of government that combines democratic principles with Islamic moral values. In this system, people's participation remains important, but political decisions must reflect moral values that bring goodness to the people. Democracy according to Iqbal is not only about the freedom to choose a leader, but also about building a society based on Islamic morals and ethics. In addition, Iqbal opposed secularism, which separates religion from the state, because he felt that secularism could not provide moral solutions to social and political problems. He emphasized that religion, especially Islam, must be involved in politics because it provides moral guidance that can help solve life's problems [23].

Iqbal's views on spiritual democracy are also very interesting. In a world often divided by political and economic interests, Iqbal's idea of democracy based on Islamic morality can be a bridge to create a government that is not only just in terms of political freedom, but also just in terms of social welfare. Thus, the democracy proposed by Iqbal is not only about the right to vote, but also about moral responsibility towards society. Iqbal also believes that Islam remains relevant in the modern world and Muslims must be able to reinterpret Islamic teachings so that they can be applied in today's social and political context. He encourages Muslims to carry out *ijtihad*, or reinterpretation, of religious teachings to answer the challenges of the times, including in the political field. In addition, Iqbal invites Muslims to play an active role in building world civilization, not only focusing on domestic politics, but also contributing to international politics in order to create justice and welfare for humanity as a whole [24].

In a world that continues to develop with new technologies and social challenges, it is very important for Muslims to maintain the relevance of religious teachings without getting caught up in rigid or unsuitable understandings of the times. Iqbal invites Muslims to think more critically and creatively in finding solutions based on Islamic principles, which of course, are very necessary in today's era. However, the application of the integration of religion and politics in the modern world can be a challenge in itself. There is the potential to get caught up in extreme interpretations or political Islam that can lead to intolerance or authoritarianism if not managed wisely. Therefore, although Iqbal proposed a model of moral and just government, to realize this requires a very careful and unhurried approach, by paying attention to the diversity of opinions and broader human values. Overall, Iqbal's thinking is a middle ground that combines the moral principles of religion with the socio-political progress needed in the contemporary world. This provides a clear framework for Muslims to play an

active role in building a more just country and civilization, without losing the essence of the teachings of religion itself, and proposing a system of government based on Islamic values, namely democracy that brings social goodness and justice.

### 3.3. Muhammad Iqbal's Thoughts: The Relationship Between Religion, Politics and Its Relevance Today

The relationship between religion and politics is very important in Muhammad Iqbal's thinking because according to him, religion, especially Islam, not only regulates personal worship, but also provides moral guidelines that must be applied in social, economic, and political life. For Iqbal, Islam has values that are very relevant to forming a just government and bringing goodness to the people. He rejects the separation of religion from politics because this will eliminate the values of humanity and justice that must exist in a government. According to Iqbal, politics must be based on religious teachings, so that every policy and decision taken must reflect the moral principles contained in Islam. That way, the government does not only focus on power, but also on justice and the welfare of the people.

The application of the theory of reconstruction of Muhammad Iqbal's religious thought in the context of politics and social life can be done through several concrete steps that integrate Islamic moral values in the system of government and community life. One of them is the application of democracy based on Islamic values, which not only prioritizes individual freedom, but also integrates moral principles such as justice, transparency, and social responsibility [7]. For example, Muslim countries can develop policies that ensure the provision of basic services such as adequate education and health for all citizens, and require honesty and transparency in political and administrative processes. In Indonesia, for example, policies such as BPJS Kesehatan and the Family Hope Program (PKH) reflect efforts to realize social welfare that is in line with the principles of social justice in Islam.

In addition, the implementation of an economy based on social justice is also part of this reconstruction theory. Muslim countries can develop an Islamic economic system that prioritizes fair distribution of wealth, avoids usury, and ensures the welfare of the people. For example, Islamic banking that avoids interest and prioritizes profit sharing, as well as economic empowerment policies for the community such as tax reductions for small businesses, are applications of the concept of a just Islamic economy. Iqbal also taught the importance of social jihad, which is not only a physical struggle but also a moral and intellectual struggle to build a more just and prosperous society. Social movements that aim to eradicate poverty, improve the quality of education, and fight for gender justice can be used as examples of the implementation of Iqbal's social jihad. Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT), which is active in the fields of humanity and economic empowerment of the community, such as empowering women and building infrastructure for poor areas, is an implementation of social jihad that emphasizes better social change.

Furthermore, Iqbal also encouraged Muslims to conduct *ijtihad* in responding to modern social and political problems. The application of *ijtihad* in this context can be seen in the interpretation of Islamic law related to contemporary issues, such as digital trade, cryptocurrency, or rights to technology that are not yet in classical *fiqh* texts. In several countries, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, scholars have conducted *ijtihad* in legal matters related to technology and social media, by issuing fatwas that regulate the ethics of using social media in accordance with Islamic teachings. Finally, the application of Iqbal's theory of reconstruction of thought also focuses on avoiding secularism that separates religion and state. Iqbal emphasized that the state must implement policies that reflect religious values in governing and creating social justice [25]. In Turkey, although the country has a more secular system of government, there have been efforts to integrate Islamic moral values into political and social policies, such as through welfare state programs that provide access to education and health care for all citizens regardless of religious or ethnic background [26]. Overall, the application of Iqbal's theory of reconstruction of thought in political and social life aims to create a system of government and society that is more just, prosperous, and in accordance with Islamic moral principles. By integrating religious values into democracy, economy, and government systems, Muslim countries can face the challenges of the modern era while maintaining their religious identity.



Iqbal's thought remains relevant in addressing contemporary socio-political problems by prioritizing *ijtihad*, social justice, and community participation.

#### 4. Conclusion

The conclusion of the research in this article found two interesting things, namely: First, Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts on the relationship between religion and politics emphasize the importance of combining the principles of democracy and Islamic moral values in the system of government as very important. Iqbal rejected secularism and emphasized the urgency of *ijtihad* as a way for Muslims to adjust religious teachings to the demands of the times. The concept of spiritual democracy that he carried became an alternative offer for a modern political system that remains rooted in Islamic ethics. Although it has the potential to be misused, Iqbal emphasized the need for active involvement of Muslims in building a just, prosperous political order based on religious moral values. Second, Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts on the relationship between religion and politics remain relevant in the modern socio-political context. Iqbal's thoughts on the importance of Islamic moral principles in forming a just and prosperous government have proven to be applicable in social policies such as BPJS, PKH, and Islamic banking in Indonesia. The concept of *ijtihad* promoted by Iqbal is also relevant in responding to the development of contemporary issues such as technology and social media. Even in a secular country like Turkey, Islamic moral values remain integrated into public policy. Thus, the reconstruction of Iqbal's thoughts provides an ethical and practical foundation for Muslim countries to face the challenges of the times without losing their religious identity. For further research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study of the application of Iqbal's ideas in various Muslim countries, as well as further exploration of Iqbal's concept of *ijtihad* in responding to contemporary issues such as digital technology, the environment, and media ethics.

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