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Islamic Political Studies: A Study of the Thought Movement Based on Islamic Treasures at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

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Abstract

This article examines Islamic political thought movements grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turās*) at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) as an arena of epistemic contestation between normative texts and contemporary socio-political realities. While existing studies on political Islam in Indonesia predominantly focus on political parties, mass organizations, or large-scale social movements, limited attention has been given to higher Islamic educational institutions as loci of discursive production and intellectual formation. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research draws on in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observations of academic activities to explore how political ideas are constructed, negotiated, and articulated within the university context. The findings reveal that Islamic political thought at UINSU develops across three main typologies: normative-textual, reformist-contextual, and critical-transformative. These typologies share a common reference to the Islamic intellectual heritage but differ in methodological orientation and practical emphasis. Epistemologically, political arguments are constructed through the interaction of textual authority, normative rationalization, and historical contextualization. Classical sources remain central, yet they are reinterpreted through *maqāsid*-oriented reasoning and Indonesia's socio-political experience. The academic environment functions as a deliberative public sphere in which debates on Islam, democracy, and constitutionalism occur through structured and argumentative engagement rather than ideological polarization. This study demonstrates that Islamic higher education institutions play a strategic role in shaping moderate, reflective, and context-sensitive discourses on political Islam. By mediating between religious legitimacy and democratic norms, UINSU contributes to the development of an integrative model of political Islam compatible with Indonesia's plural and constitutional state framework.

Keywords: *Political Islam; Islamic Intellectual Tradition; Epistemology; Academic Public Sphere; Indonesia; UINSU*

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, debates on Islamic politics have intensified significantly, particularly regarding the relationship between religion, the state, and democracy. These debates have unfolded not only at the global level but also within various Muslim-majority societies undergoing political transformation (Hashemi & Yeganeh, 2009; March, 2019). The post-Cold War geopolitical order, successive waves of democratization, and the political upheavals following the Arab Spring have compelled Muslim intellectuals to revisit and reinterpret foundational concepts in the Islamic political treasury such as *shūrā* (consultation), *khilāfah* (caliphate), *al-siyāsah al-syar‘iyyah* (governance in accordance with *Sharī‘ah*), and *maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah* (objectives of Islamic law) within the institutional framework of the modern nation-state (An-Na‘im, 2008; University, 2012). These developments indicate that Islamic politics can no longer be understood merely as a text-based normative project rooted in classical jurisprudence; rather, it has become an arena of negotiation in which Islamic intellectual heritage interacts dynamically with contemporary political institutions, constitutional norms, and global discourses on rights and governance.

In Indonesia, this negotiation assumes a distinctive configuration shaped by the ideology of Pancasila, constitutional democracy, and a deeply embedded socio-religious pluralism (Hefner, 2000; Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). Islamic political expression in Indonesia does not follow a single ideological trajectory; instead, it spans a broad spectrum ranging from substantive-democratic orientations that emphasize ethical contributions to public life, to formal-legalistic tendencies advocating for greater institutionalization of *Sharī‘ah* norms (Barton, 2002; Bush, 2008). This plurality complicates simplistic categorizations and demands an analytical framework that integrates normative-textual analysis with sociological and contextual approaches. Islamic political discourse in Indonesia must therefore be examined not only as doctrinal articulation but also as a socially embedded process shaped by institutional settings, actors, and power relations.

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is frequently regarded as a critical laboratory for understanding contemporary Islamic politics (Hefner, 2011). Yet much of the existing scholarship concentrates on political parties, mass organizations, electoral competition, or large-scale social movements (Hadiz, 2016; Mietzner, 2013). By contrast, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the academic sphere as a locus for the production and contestation of Islamic political ideas. This omission is significant, given that Islamic higher education institutions particularly State Islamic Universities (UIN) occupy a strategic position in shaping the intellectual orientations and normative frameworks of educated Muslim generations. The institutional transformation from IAIN (State Islamic Institute) to UIN, marked by the integration of Islamic sciences with modern social and human sciences, has expanded epistemological horizons and generated more dialogical forms of Islamic political thought responsive to modernity (Azra, 2006; Zarkasyi, 2012).

From a theoretical standpoint, movements of Islamic political thought within academic settings can be examined through the sociology of knowledge, which understands ideas as products of the dialectical interaction between social structures, intellectual traditions, and knowledge-producing agents (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In Islamic campuses, classical heritage (*turās*) functions not only as a source of normative legitimacy but also as a conceptual reservoir continuously reinterpreted in response to changing socio-political conditions (Arkoun, 2002; Hallaq, 2013). Such reinterpretation generates a spectrum of approaches, ranging from normative revivalism that seeks continuity with classical models, to integrative paradigms emphasizing compatibility between Islam and democracy, human rights, and accountable governance (Esposito & Voll, 2001; March, 2019). Consequently, the university is not merely a site for the reproduction of tradition, but a discursive arena where epistemological contestation shapes the direction of contemporary Islamic political articulation.

UIN North Sumatra (UINSU), as part of the national UIN network, occupies a significant position within this dynamic. Situated in a region characterized by ethnic diversity and strong religious traditions, UINSU functions as a dialectical space in which local Islamic traditions, national political discourse, and global currents of Islamic thought intersect. However, empirical studies specifically mapping Islamic heritage-based political thought movements within the UINSU environment remain relatively scarce. Existing research tends to emphasize institutional reform or curricular integration, while leaving underexplored the epistemological configurations and

argumentative strategies underlying political discourse in the campus setting. This gap underscores the need for systematic inquiry that not only identifies ideological orientations but also analyzes their epistemological constructions and discursive implications.

Against this background, this article positions the Islamic heritage-based movement of thought at UINSU as an arena of epistemic contestation reflecting the dialectic between normative texts and contemporary socio-political realities. The study seeks to answer three principal questions: (1) What are the typologies and characteristics of Islamic heritage-based political thought movements developing at UINSU? (2) How are their epistemological constructions and argumentative foundations formulated in articulating Islamic political ideas? and (3) What contributions and implications do these movements have for the development of Islamic political discourse at local and national levels? By addressing these questions, the article aims to contribute to broader discussions on the role of Islamic higher education institutions in shaping the trajectory of contemporary Islamic political thought in Indonesia.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design that focuses on the dynamics of Islamic heritage-based political thought movements within the environment of UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU). Case studies were chosen because they allow for an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena bound by specific institutional contexts, making them suitable for analyzing the production and reproduction of Islamic political discourse in the academic space (Yin, 2018). Epistemologically, this research is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as a result of meaning construction thru social interaction and discursive practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). With that framework, the movement of Islamic political thought is understood as the result of a dialectic between intellectual actors, the tradition of Islamic heritage (*turās*), and the local socio-political context that encompasses it.

The research location is UIN North Sumatra, focusing on faculties, research institutions, student organizations, and academic discussion forums that produce and articulate Islamic political discourse. The research subjects include lecturers, researchers, and student activists who are actively involved in the development of political discourse based on Islamic heritage. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, considering their epistemic capacity, academic track record, and participation in relevant intellectual forums (Patton, 2015). This strategy allows researchers to obtain rich and in-depth data related to the construction of ideas, ideological orientations, and normative bases used in formulating Islamic political concepts.

Data collection is conducted thru semi-structured in-depth interviews, document analysis, and limited participatory observation. Interviews are used to explore epistemological constructions, normative arguments, and actors' perceptions of the relationship between the Islamic treasury and contemporary political realities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Document analysis includes faculty research works, student publications, study modules, discussion minutes, and institutional documents that contain Islamic political discourse. This technique is important for tracing the production of discourse and the representation of ideas systematically (Bowen, 2009). Participatory observation was conducted during seminars, discussions, and scientific forums to understand discursive practices and the dynamics of interaction among actors in the academic space (Spradley, 1980)

Data analysis is conducted interactively and continuously following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is carried out by identifying main themes such as typologies of thought, epistemological bases, and patterns of normative legitimacy (Huberman, 2014). Data presentation is carried out thru categorization and conceptual mapping, while verification is done by comparing empirical findings against the theoretical framework used. Additionally, this research utilizes a critical discourse analysis approach to identify the structure of arguments, legitimacy strategies, and power relations in the production of Islamic political ideas within the campus environment (Fairclough, 2010). This approach allows for a deeper reading of how the Islamic treasury is used as a source of symbolic authority in academic political discourse.

Results and Discussion

Typology of Islamic Political Thought Movements Based on *Turās* at UINSU

The research findings demonstrate that Islamic political thought at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) develops within a plural, layered, and non-monolithic epistemological configuration. Rather than converging into a single ideological stream, the discourse of Islamic politics within the campus reflects multiple intellectual trajectories shaped by sustained engagement with classical *turās* (Islamic intellectual heritage), contemporary political theory, and the socio-political realities of Indonesia. This plurality resonates with broader scholarship in contemporary Islamic political studies, which argues that Islamic political articulation emerges through the ongoing interaction between normative texts, intellectual traditions, and contextual political structures (Bayat, 2013; Mandaville, 2014). Within the UINSU environment, these trajectories can be analytically categorized into three dominant typologies: normative-textual, reformist-contextual, and critical-transformative. Although all three draw their normative legitimacy from Islamic heritage, they diverge significantly in their hermeneutical orientation, epistemological methodology, and strategic political engagement.

The first typology, normative-textual, situates *turās* as the primary epistemic authority in conceptualizing Islamic politics. Advocates of this orientation treat classical juridical and theological texts as foundational reference points in defining key political concepts such as leadership (*imāmah*), sovereignty, obedience, consultation (*shūrā*), and the relationship between religion and state authority. Classical works of *fiqh siyāsah*, including al-Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* and Ibn Taymiyyah's treatises on governance, serve as central intellectual anchors in articulating political doctrine. This orientation reflects a revivalist tendency that seeks to preserve continuity between classical Islamic political formulations and contemporary governance structures, emphasizing the normative completeness of inherited models (Kamrava, 2011).

Within campus discourse, the normative-textual approach frequently advocates for the integration of *Shari'ah*-based ethical norms into Indonesia's political framework, albeit within the constitutional limits of the nation-state. The argumentation pattern typically follows a deductive structure: general normative principles are derived from authoritative texts, and contemporary realities are assessed in light of those principles. Political legitimacy is therefore constructed through fidelity to textual continuity and alignment with inherited scholarly authority. In this framework, *turās* functions not merely as historical reference but as a binding normative source that shapes the parameters of acceptable political practice.

However, the empirical findings suggest that even within this typology, the approach at UINSU is not reducible to rigid literalism. While textual authority remains central, certain academic actors allow limited interpretive flexibility, especially when addressing modern issues such as electoral democracy, constitutional governance, women's political participation, and pluralism. This indicates that the normative-textual orientation, although grounded in scriptural primacy, does not operate in complete isolation from contemporary socio-political realities. Instead, it represents an attempt to maintain doctrinal continuity while cautiously negotiating the demands of modern political life.

Thus, the normative-textual typology at UINSU illustrates a form of epistemological conservatism that prioritizes textual authority yet remains partially responsive to contextual challenges. It embodies an effort to preserve the coherence of classical Islamic political thought while engaging albeit selectively with the institutional structures of the modern nation-state.

The second typology, reformist-contextual, adopts a more adaptive, dialogical, and methodologically reflexive approach in engaging Islamic political thought. While it does not dismiss *turās* as obsolete, it refuses to treat classical formulations as fixed templates for contemporary governance. Instead, it situates inherited concepts within the broader analytical horizon of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* the higher objectives of Islamic law and engages them in sustained dialogue with modern political philosophy. In this framework, foundational notions such as *syūrā* (consultation) and *'adl* (justice) are not confined to their pre-modern institutional expressions but are reconstructed as ethical-political principles capable of underpinning democratic participation, constitutional safeguards, human rights protection, and accountable governance.

This orientation aligns with reformist currents in Islamic political thought that emphasize contextual interpretation, institutional *ijtihad*, and normative renewal as necessary responses to modern political realities (Abou El Fadl, 2004; Auda, 2008). Rather than equating authenticity with

literal continuity, the reformist-contextual approach seeks fidelity at the level of moral objectives rather than historical form. In the academic environment of UINSU, this typology is particularly evident in forums promoting the integration-interconnection paradigm, where Islamic studies intersect with contemporary disciplines such as political science, sociology, and constitutional law. Through seminars, interdisciplinary research, and curricular innovation, proponents of this orientation encourage critical synthesis between normative Islamic frameworks and empirical political analysis.

Epistemologically, the reformist-contextual group operates within an integrative structure that combines textual engagement, rational-ethical deliberation, and socio-political empiricism. Authority is not monopolized by tradition alone but negotiated through reasoned interpretation, public argumentation, and contextual relevance. Texts are approached as normative resources requiring interpretation in light of contemporary realities rather than as self-sufficient blueprints. This results in a political discourse that is neither secularized nor rigidly scripturalist, but dialogically positioned between inherited tradition and modern institutional norms.

The third typology, critical-transformative, moves beyond institutional reinterpretation and foregrounds *khazanah* Islam as a reservoir of emancipatory ethics for confronting structural injustice in contemporary politics. Rather than centering its discourse on formal doctrines of governance, this orientation prioritizes substantive ethical imperatives such as social justice (*al-'adl al-ijtimā'ī*), distributive equity, anti-corruption, human dignity, and the defense of marginalized communities. Political legitimacy, within this framework, is measured not primarily by conformity to classical institutional models, but by the extent to which governance advances justice and public welfare.

This perspective resonates with progressive and liberationist strands of Islamic thought that view religion as a transformative moral force capable of critiquing oppressive structures and mobilizing social reform (Esack, 1997; Saeed, 2006). At UINSU, the critical-transformative typology manifests in discussions that interrogate economic inequality, oligarchic consolidation of power, identity-based mobilization, environmental degradation, and democratic backsliding within Indonesia's political system. Rather than limiting analysis to normative textual interpretation, this approach engages contemporary social theories such as critical political economy, postcolonial theory, and theories of power to illuminate structural dimensions of injustice.

Epistemologically, the critical-transformative orientation operates through a critical-reflective methodology. Normative Islamic teachings are reread in light of empirical conditions and structural constraints, allowing *turās* to function as a moral compass rather than a rigid legal archive. Here, Islamic heritage becomes a living ethical resource mobilized to challenge corruption, inequality, and exclusion. The emphasis shifts from preserving institutional continuity to advancing transformative praxis grounded in Islamic ethical commitments. In this typology, the relationship between text and context is mediated by critique: inherited doctrines are evaluated against contemporary injustices, and their moral aspirations are activated to inspire reform-oriented political engagement.

Together, the reformist-contextual and critical-transformative typologies illustrate how Islamic political thought at UINSU extends beyond mere doctrinal preservation. They reflect evolving epistemic strategies that seek either integrative compatibility or transformative critique, thereby expanding the horizons of Islamic political articulation within the academic sphere.

The differentiation among these typologies clearly indicates that *turās* at UINSU is not approached as a fixed, immutable, or closed epistemic corpus. Rather, it is treated as a dynamic conceptual field that remains open to reinterpretation, negotiation of meaning, and methodological diversification. Classical texts and inherited doctrines are not insulated from contemporary scrutiny; instead, they are continuously revisited, interrogated, and reformulated in light of evolving political realities. This dynamic orientation reinforces the broader thesis that Islamic political thought in academic contexts develops through an ongoing dialectic between the continuity of tradition and the imperatives of modernity (Euben & Zaman, 2009). Tradition is neither abandoned nor absolutized; it is critically mediated through interpretive practices that seek to maintain normative coherence while ensuring contextual relevance.

Importantly, the epistemic contestation among the normative-textual, reformist-contextual, and critical-transformative typologies does not signify fragmentation or destructive polarization. On the contrary, it reflects a form of productive intellectual pluralism. Differences in hermeneutical approach, argumentative structure, and political orientation generate deliberative engagement rather than ideological closure. Competing perspectives interact through seminars, academic publications,

student forums, and interdisciplinary debates, creating a discursive environment in which arguments must be justified through reasoned analysis rather than merely asserted through authority. In this sense, epistemic diversity becomes a resource that enriches the landscape of Islamic political discourse rather than weakening it.

Consequently, UINSU can be understood as an epistemic arena in which Islamic intellectual heritage is processed through multiple layers of engagement: normative fidelity to foundational texts, contextual reformulation in response to contemporary socio-political challenges, and critical reflection informed by modern theoretical frameworks. The coexistence of these typologies illustrates that Islamic political thought within Indonesian higher education institutions remains vibrant, dialogical, and responsive to shifting political realities. The campus is not merely a site for the transmission of inherited doctrines; it functions as a laboratory of interpretive negotiation where *khazanah* Islam is actively reimagined.

Within this laboratory-like setting, classical concepts are subjected to analytical refinement, ethical reconstruction, and socio-political application. Students and scholars alike participate in processes that test the viability of inherited categories against empirical realities such as democracy, constitutional governance, pluralism, and social justice. Through this iterative engagement, *turās* continues to generate new political imaginaries grounded in both fidelity to tradition and transformative engagement with modern structures of power. Thus, UINSU emerges not only as a pedagogical institution but as a living intellectual space where Islamic political thought is continuously reconstructed at the intersection of heritage and contemporary political aspiration.

Epistemological Construction and Basis of Argumentation

Data analysis shows that the epistemological construction of the Islamic political thought movement at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) does not develop thru a simple linear path, but rather thru a complex, layered, and dialogical argumentative configuration. The emerging discourse formation reveals a process of meaning production that involves negotiation between classical normative authority, reflective rationality, and sensitivity to the Indonesian socio-political context. Analytically, the configuration can be mapped into three main patterns, namely textual authority, normative rationalization, and historical contextualization. These three patterns do not stand as mutually exclusive categories, but rather interact dynamically in shaping the framework of legitimacy, normative orientation, and the direction of Islamic political praxis in the academic sphere. These findings reinforce the thesis that contemporary Islamic political epistemology develops thru a dialectical process between classical normative sources and the demands of political modernity, where text, reason, and context intertwine in constructing discourse authority (Kurzman, 1998; Masud, 1995)

The first pattern, textual authority, places the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical literature as primary sources of legitimacy in formulating Islamic political concepts. In this framework, texts are understood as normative foundations with intrinsic and transhistorical authority, so political arguments tend to be built deductively: general principles are drawn from the texts and then applied to contemporary realities. The tradition of classical *siyāsah* jurisprudence and the intellectual legacy of scholars such as al-Māwardī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyyah serve as conceptual references in discussing issues of *imāmah* (leadership), *shūrā* (consultation), sovereignty, and the relationship between religion and state. This model aligns with the typology of scripturalist Islam, which emphasizes the supremacy of texts as the source of social-political order and as the basis for normative legitimacy (Roy, 2004). In the campus context, this pattern is evident in the tendency of some groups to position texts as the primary starting point in defining the normative boundaries of Islamic politics.

However, field findings show that the pattern of textual authority at UINSU is not identical to rigid and closed literalism. Some academic actors continue to open space for *ijtihad* within certain methodological corridors, especially when dealing with contemporary issues such as electoral democracy, women's participation in politics, modern governance, and the relationship between Islamic law and the state constitution. Thus, although the text becomes the main source of legitimacy, the process of argumentation is not entirely isolated from empirical reality. The text functions as a normative horizon that provides a framework of meaning, but its interpretation still takes into account social dynamics and the needs of praxis.

The second pattern, normative rationalization, indicates a methodological shift from merely

extracting textual arguments to constructing more reflective, systematic, and ethical arguments. In this pattern, classical concepts are not merely reproduced but reconstructed thru the approach of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, public ethics, and dialog with modern political theory. Political arguments no longer stop at mere textual validity, but are expanded thru considerations of public interest, substantive justice, accountability, public participation, and respect for citizens' rights. This orientation has an affinity with the neo-reformist current that emphasizes the importance of contextual *ijtihad* and ethical reading of texts in facing modern realities (Fazlur rahman, 1982; Soroush, 2000)

In the academic discourse of UINSU, normative rationalization is evident in the effort to elaborate Islamic values as ethical principles compatible with deliberative democracy, constitutionalism, and transparent governance. The concept of *syūrā*, for example, is not understood literally as a specific political institution that must be replicated, but rather as a principle of participation and public consultation that can be realized within the mechanisms of modern democracy. Thus, modern rationality is not positioned as a threat to the authority of the text, but as a methodological instrument to actualize normative Islamic values within contemporary political systems. Texts and reason are not placed in an antagonistic relationship, but rather in a complementary relationship.

As for the third pattern, historical contextualization, it places Indonesia's historical experience as an interpretative horizon in understanding Islamic political practices. In this pattern, the history of the Indonesian Islamic movement from the colonial period, the Old Order, the New Order, to the reform era is understood as an arena of dialectics between normative values and power structures (Latif, 2008). Islamic politics is not read in an ahistorical and universalistic manner, but rather as a phenomenon that always interacts with specific social, economic, and political configurations. Thus, Islamic political thought is understood as a dynamic historical product bound to national contexts. This approach demonstrates a strong historical sensitivity. Classical concepts are reinterpreted in light of the Indonesian democratic experience, societal pluralism, and the dynamics of majority-minority relations. Islamic politics is not reduced to a project of legal formalization, but understood as an ethical and social process that interacts with the principles of nationalism, Pancasila, and the reality of pluralism. This perspective aligns with the historical-sociological approach in Islamic studies, which emphasizes that normative meanings are always produced and negotiated within specific social contexts (Zaman, 2012). In the UINSU environment, this pattern encourages the emergence of arguments that are more responsive to local issues such as identity politics, regional governance, power distribution, and social justice.

Overall, the epistemological construction that has developed at UINSU shows that the movement of Islamic political thought is not trapped in the literal reproduction of classical texts, but operates within a hermeneutic framework that considers the dialectical relationship between text, reason, and social context. The interaction between textual authority, normative rationalization, and historical contextualization produces a pattern of Islamic politics that is discursive, argumentative, and open to academic debate. Political legitimacy is not built thru absolute claims of normative truth, but rather thru an intellectual deliberation process that takes place in the campus public space.

Thus, the Islamic politics that has developed at UINSU demonstrates an epistemic character that is inclusive, reflective, and dialogical. It represents the dynamics of contemporary Islamic intellectualism that continuously negotiates between the continuity of tradition and the demands of modernity, between the authority of texts and public rationality, as well as between the heritage of the treasury and the reality of Indonesian nationalism. This configuration positions UINSU as a vibrant epistemic space, where Islamic political thought is produced not as a single doctrine, but as a result of the critical interaction between tradition, rationality, and the historical experiences of society.

The Dynamics of the Academic Space as an Arena for Discourse

Contestation The academic space at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) not only performs a pedagogical function as an institution for the transmission of knowledge but also serves as a strategic arena for the production, reproduction, and contestation of Islamic political discourse. The campus becomes a socio-intellectual space where ideas are not only taught but also formulated, debated, tested, and revised thru relatively systematic academic mechanisms. This process involves active interaction between lecturers, students, researchers, and other intellectual actors in building an

interpretative framework regarding the relationship between Islam and politics. Research findings indicate that seminar forums, public lectures, scientific discussions, study circles, student organizations, and even journal publications and campus media serve as the main mediums for articulating and circulating political ideas based on Islamic heritage. Thus, UINSU demonstrates the formation of a discursive ecosystem that enables the continuous and argumentative exchange of ideas.

In the perspective of public sphere theory, the campus can be understood as part of the public sphere that allows for the exchange of arguments rationally and openly through communicative reasoning (Habermas, 1989). However, unlike the secular public space that is entirely free from normative religious references, the Islamic academic space has an inherent normative dimension. The discourse that develops within it always intersects with sacred texts, Islamic intellectual traditions, and the symbolic authority of classical heritage. Therefore, academic deliberation at UINSU operates within a productive tension between scientific rationality and normative religious commitment. This tension does not lead to stagnation, but rather becomes a source of intellectual dynamism that enriches the debate on Islamic politics within the campus environment.

In that context, UINSU can be positioned as an academic public sphere, a deliberative space that combines modern scientific traditions with the heritage of Islamic scholarship. Islamic political ideas are not accepted a priori based solely on the authority of tradition, but are tested through scientific argumentation, peer review, and interdisciplinary dialog between Islamic studies, political science, sociology, and constitutional law. The ongoing contestation not only reflects differences in opinion but also differences in epistemological paradigms in understanding the relationship between religion and state. As stated by Eickelman and Piscatori the development of modern Islamic politics often occurs through discursive arenas involving educated actors and higher education institutions as the main mediators of discourse production (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996). In this case, the dynamics at UINSU show that the campus is a strategic locus in the formation, transformation, and legitimization of contemporary Islamic political discourse.

The contestation that develops in the academic space of UINSU shows a continuous negotiation between normative Islamic values and the principles of Indonesia's constitutional democracy. Some academic actors emphasize the urgency of articulating Islamic values in public regulation as an expression of religious identity within the framework of the nation-state. This approach is based on the assumption that Sharia norms have normative relevance in shaping public policy and providing moral legitimacy to state governance. On the other hand, there is a more substantive tendency that views Islam as a source of social ethics emphasizing distributive justice, anti-corruption, protection of citizens' rights, and government integrity. This approach aligns with the argument that democracy and Islam can interact productively through the internalization of ethical values in political practice, rather than merely through symbolic formalization (Hefner, 2011; Stepan, 2000)

Interestingly, this dynamic did not give rise to extreme polarization between "formalistic Islam" and "substantive Islam." On the contrary, the academic space of UINSU operates within a relatively fluid and open discursive spectrum. Debates take place through data-based arguments, normative analysis, and theoretical references, rather than through emotional mobilization or absolute claims to truth. This indicates the formation of a relatively established deliberative academic culture, where the legitimacy of ideas is determined by the coherence of arguments, methodological consistency, and empirical relevance. In the framework of discourse theory, this process reflects the practice of communicative action that enables the gradual formation of normative consensus through rational dialog (Habermas, 1984)

Furthermore, the dynamics of this academic space contribute to the formation of a contextual and Indonesian-oriented Islamic political identity. That identity is not built on an antagonistic logic against the state or the democratic system, but rather through a dialogical process with a constitutional framework and the reality of a pluralistic society. The campus functions as an intellectual laboratory that mediates between the treasures of Islam and the practice of Indonesian democracy. Normative traditions are tested in the context of nationalism, while political modernity is negotiated through the lens of Islamic ethics.

Overall, Islamic politics within the academic space of UINSU develops as a discourse that is reflective, adaptive, and argumentative. It does not stop at normative rhetoric, but continues to move in the dialectic between theological aspirations and constitutional demands. This dynamic illustrates

how the Islamic academic space can play a strategic role in shaping a political discourse that is moderate, deliberative, rooted in the Islamic intellectual heritage, and responsive to the challenges of contemporary Indonesian democracy.

Contributions and Implications for Islamic Political Discourse

Substantively, the movement of thought based on Islamic heritage at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) contributes beyond mere discourse, as it also shapes the epistemic orientation and political praxis of Islam at both local and regional levels. The contribution is multidimensional: normative-theoretical in enriching the conceptualization of Islamic politics, epistemological in building a dialogical interpretative framework between text and context, and institutional in shaping a deliberative academic culture that supports the systematic articulation of ideas. In this context, UINSU not only functions as a location for the production of ideas but also as a space for intellectual transformation that brings together the classical Islamic tradition with the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian politics in a reflective and argumentative manner.

First, this movement strengthens the academic tradition that places *turās* as the basis for critical reflection on contemporary socio-political issues. The classical treasury is not positioned as a final and closed historical heritage, but rather as a conceptual source that is continually revitalized thru the processes of *ijtihad*, reinterpretation, and recontextualization. This approach demonstrates that Islamic tradition has the internal capacity to respond to modernity thru creative and reflective epistemic reconstruction (Hallaq, 2009). The continuity between normative heritage and contemporary political challenges is understood as a process of ongoing dialog, rather than a literal reproduction of historical models. Thus, the evolving Islamic politics is not trapped in the romanticism of the past or symbolic formalism, but rather operates within an analytical framework that is responsive to issues such as democracy, governance, distributive justice, and the protection of citizens' rights.

Second, the dynamics of thought at UINSU play a crucial role in shaping young intellectual cadres who possess normative awareness as well as contextual sensitivity to the political realities of Indonesia. This process of cadre formation takes place thru curriculum integration, scientific discussions, student research, and participation in public discourse. The campus, in this case, functions as an agent of intellectual political socialization that shapes a reflective and critical habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Students are not only trained to understand normative texts, but also to read social structures, power relations, and the dynamics of democracy analytically. In line with Hefner's findings, Islamic higher education institutions can serve as the foundation for the formation of an educated Muslim middle class with a democratic orientation and a commitment to pluralism (Hefner, 2000). Therefore, UINSU's contribution is not limited to the production of discourse, but also to the formation of intellectual actors who have the potential to influence the direction of Islamic politics in the future.

Third, the treasure-based intellectual movement at UINSU has the potential to serve as a bridge for dialog between Islamic tradition and the modern democratic system. Democracy is not positioned as a foreign or antagonistic entity to Islam, but as a political system that can be internalized thru Islamic ethical values such as *'adl* (justice), *syūrā* (consultation), and public welfare. This approach is consistent with the argument that democracy in Muslim societies can develop thru the internalization of Islamic moral and ethical values into modern political institutions (Esposito, 1996; March, 2009). The campus serves as a conceptual mediator that connects religious legitimacy with democratic legitimacy, so that both are not understood as two sources of authority that negate each other, but rather as normative bases that can mutually reinforce each other.

The implications of this dynamic indicate that Islamic politics on campus do not operate within the framework of a binary opposition between religion and state, or between sharia and democracy. On the contrary, it develops within an integrative model that seeks to synthesize normative Islamic values with the plural and constitutional reality of Indonesian nationalism. The relationship between Islam and the state is not understood in the dichotomy of theocracy versus secularism, but thru a model of normative coexistence that allows religion to contribute in the public sphere without dominating or negating the principles of democracy (Casanova, 1994). In the context of Indonesia, this synthesis is reflected in the effort to position Islamic values as a public ethic that strengthens democracy, rather than as an instrument of political exclusivism. More broadly, these findings indicate that Islamic campuses, particularly UINSU, play a strategic role in shaping the direction and

character of moderate, reflective, and intellectually-based Islamic political discourse. The campus is not only a space for articulating ideas but also an arena for forming a dialogical, contextual, and deliberative political orientation. In the long term, this contribution has the potential to strengthen Indonesia's inclusive, argumentative, and constitutionally compatible Islamic political tradition. Thus, the intellectual movement at UINSU can be understood as part of an intellectual current that seeks to construct an Islamic politics that is not exclusive or confrontational, but rather adaptive, ethical, and oriented toward public welfare within the framework of a modern nation-state.

Conclusion

This research found that the movement of Islamic political thought based on Islamic heritage at UIN Sumatera Utara (UINSU) develops within a plural and non-monolithic spectrum. Empirically, there are three main typologies that emerge, namely normative-textual, reformist-contextual, and critical-transformative. All three start from *turās* as a source of legitimacy, but differ in their interpretation methodologies and practical orientations. The epistemological construction that emerges shows an interaction between textual authority, normative rationalization, and historical contextualization. Classical texts remain the foundation of argumentation, but they are not treated literally; they are reinterpreted thru the *maqāsid* approach, modern rationality, and Indonesia's historical-political experience, resulting in reflective and contextual formulations of Islamic politics.

Furthermore, the academic space of UINSU functions as an arena for deliberative discourse contestation, where Islamic political ideas are produced, tested, and negotiated thru scientific forums and intellectual interactions. The contestation between formal and substantive approaches does not create extreme polarization, but rather forms a dialogic and argumentative discursive spectrum. Substantively, this movement contributes to the strengthening of critical academic traditions, the formation of Muslim intellectual cadres that are both normative and contextual, as well as the articulation of Islamic politics compatible with the principles of Indonesia's constitutional democracy. Thus, UINSU plays a strategic role as an epistemic space in shaping the character of moderate, adaptive Islamic political discourse oriented toward public welfare within the framework of a modern nation-state.

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