

**RELIGION–STATE RELATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF UMAR IBN ABD AL-AZIZ (717–720 CE):
AN ETHICAL STATE MODEL IN CLASSICAL ISLAMIC POLITICS****Ahmad Siddiq Setiawan^{*1}, Hasaruddin², Syamzan Syukur³, Nasaruddin⁴**¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia² Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia³ Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia**Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between religion and the state during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (717–720 CE) from the perspective of Islamic political history. It addresses a significant gap in the existing literature, which has predominantly portrayed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as an exemplary moral ruler while paying limited attention to the structural relationship between religious and political authority under his administration. Employing a qualitative library-based method, the study adopts intellectual and political historical approaches to analyze classical Islamic sources alongside contemporary scholarship. The analysis focuses on four key dimensions: political legitimacy, the role of religious scholars, administrative reform, and the ethical orientation of the state. The findings reveal that Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz neither separated religion from the state nor instrumentalized religion solely to legitimize political power. Instead, he developed an integrative model in which religion functioned as the normative foundation of governance, while the state operated as an ethical institution responsible for realizing justice, accountability, and public welfare. This study argues that his administration represents an early articulation of the ethical state in classical Islamic political thought. Its novelty lies in reinterpreting Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's governance as an institutional model of religion–state relations rather than merely an example of personal piety, thereby contributing to a more structural and theoretical understanding of classical Islamic political thought.

Keywords: State; Religion; Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and the state constitutes one of the central themes in Islamic political discourse, both at the normative and historical levels. In classical Islamic history, this relationship never existed in a singular or monolithic form; rather, it evolved in accordance with the socio-political dynamics characterizing each period of governance. Alongside the decline of the Muslim world, modernist thinkers emerged advocating the separation of religion and state, drawing upon the paradigm of Western progress and modernization. Nevertheless, such ideas provoked resistance from scholars and intellectuals who aspired to reconstruct the relationship between religion and state in a manner consistent with the early Islamic period under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (Firdaus, 2014). During the era of the Khulafā' al-Rāsyidūn, the relationship between religion and the state was constructed within a normative-communal framework, whereas under the Umayyad Dynasty, this relationship gradually shifted toward a political monarchy that emphasized the consolidation and stability of power (Kamsi, 2012). The transformation toward a monarchical system became particularly significant during the leadership of Mu'āwiyah, who replaced the consultative mechanism for selecting the caliph with a dynastic monarchy through the appointment of his son as successor on his own initiative (Bestari, A'la, & Rochimah, 2024). Within this context, the leadership of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (717–720 CE) becomes particularly significant to examine, given his role as a figure who undertook a fundamental

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reorientation of the relationship between religion and the state amid the predominantly dynastic political structure of the Umayyad period (Setyaningsih & Imawan, 2025).

Studies on Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz have largely been dominated by normative narratives that portray him as an ideal ruler, a symbol of justice, and a representation of Islamic morality within governance. Numerous studies have highlighted his achievements in economic reform, zakat distribution, anti-corruption measures, and the strengthening of social welfare (Fitria, 2019). Other studies position Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as a pivotal figure in the codification of hadith (Qudsy, 2013). Nevertheless, the majority of existing studies remain largely descriptive and hagiographic in orientation, thereby offering limited examination of the relationship between religion and the state during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. Over the last decade, the discourse on classical Islamic politics has increasingly developed through more critical approaches, particularly in interpreting the relationship between religious authority and political power. Within this perspective, the state in Islam is not merely understood as an institution of power, but rather as a moral entity that is subject to the ethical norms of religion (Rosyidi, 2017). Meskipun demikian, Umar bin Abdul Aziz dalam konfigurasi tersebut belum banyak dibahas secara spesifik sebagai model politik Islam klasik yang menegosiasikan otoritas agama dan negara secara integratif.

Existing studies on Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz have mainly focused on four themes. First, several scholars have examined his economic reforms and welfare policies, particularly regarding zakat distribution, fiscal justice, and public welfare (Kusumastuti & Ghazali, 2019; Nurhalisa et al., 2024). Second, a number of studies have discussed his leadership ethics and personal piety as an ideal Muslim ruler (Rosyidi, 2017; Rahmi et al., 2025). Third, researchers have analyzed his political and bureaucratic reforms within the Umayyad administration (Fitria, 2019; Muliadi et al., 2025). Fourth, some studies have highlighted his contribution to the codification and preservation of Hadith (Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, 2013; Setyaningsih & Imawan, 2025).

Despite these valuable contributions, the structural relationship between religious authority and political authority during his reign remains insufficiently explored. Existing studies tend to portray Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz either as a moral exemplar or as a successful reformer without examining how religion functioned as a normative framework for state governance. Consequently, the religion–state relationship under his administration has not yet been systematically analyzed within the framework of classical Islamic political thought.

The novelty of this study lies in its interpretation of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's administration as an early model of the ethical state. Rather than focusing exclusively on his personal virtues or administrative reforms, this article examines how political authority and religious authority interacted to construct a governance model grounded in justice, accountability, and public welfare.

Departing from this scholarly gap, this article aims to analyze the relationship between religion and the state during the leadership of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz through the lens of classical Islamic political thought. This article argues that Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz did not merely demonstrate personal piety within governance; rather, he constructed a model of ethical government in which religion functioned as the normative foundation of public policy and the state operated as a moral instrument for the realization of public justice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs historical research with a political approach and an intellectual history perspective. Historical sources are used as research materials, while the political approach serves as the analytical framework for examining the interaction between religious authority and political power during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. Through this approach, the study analyzes how religious values influenced public policy, administrative reforms, and state legitimacy within the Umayyad political context (Azmirrijali, 2026).

This study examines a brief biography of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, particularly focusing on his lifestyle, principles, and intellectual orientation. It further explores the leadership orientation of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, specifically regarding the manner in which he administered the

governmental system, made political decisions, and formulated public policies. In addition, this study investigates how Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz constructed a relationship between religion and the state in which both functioned as inseparable components of governance. The study also seeks to identify the shortcomings and limitations that characterized his leadership. Furthermore, this article attempts to synthesize the findings of scholarly studies on Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz published over the last decade and to systematically analyze them in relation to the discourse on the relationship between religion and the state during his reign.

To strengthen the analysis, this study does not merely reconstruct historical events but also critically examines the ideological foundations underlying Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's political thought and administrative practices. By integrating historical evidence with contemporary scholarly interpretations, it seeks to reveal how religious principles were translated into concrete mechanisms of governance rather than remaining abstract moral ideals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was born in Hulwan, a region in Egypt, in 61 AH, during the period in which his father was serving as governor of the region. He originated from a distinguished and noble family lineage. His mother, Ummu 'Āṣim, was the daughter of 'Āṣim ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, while his father, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān, served as the governor of Egypt. Through his maternal lineage, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was directly connected to Umar ibn al-Khattab, making him his great-grandson. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was raised within the luxurious environment of the royal court. As a member of the Umayyad Caliphate ruling family, he lived in considerable prosperity and enjoyed abundant privileges similar to those afforded to other members of the royal household. The wealth of his family was derived from various allowances and privileges granted by the ruling authorities to their close relatives (Azman, 2017).

From an early age, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz had memorized the Qur'an. His father subsequently sent him to Medina to pursue his studies under the guidance of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh. His period of study in Medina constituted a crucial phase that profoundly shaped the course of his life. From that time onward, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz became widely recognized for his piety and gradually abandoned the luxurious lifestyle and extravagant habits that had characterized his early upbringing. His piety also received recognition from the leading scholars of his era. Following the death of his father, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan summoned Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to Damascus and arranged his marriage to his daughter, Fāṭimah (Muslim & Afdayeni, 2019).

Following the death of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the caliphate passed to Al-Walid I. In 86 AH, Al-Walid I appointed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as governor of Medina. However, his tenure did not last long. In 93 AH, he was dismissed from office because his policies were considered inconsistent with the political orientation of Caliph Al-Walid I. In 99 AH, at the age of precisely thirty-seven, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was appointed caliph based on the testamentary nomination of Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik. When his name was announced as the successor to the caliphate, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz delivered a statement reflecting his humility: "By Allah, not once have I ever sought leadership from Allah" (Fikri, 2018).

After officially assuming the office of caliph, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz introduced numerous new policies and initiatives aimed at purifying and reforming his administration. He took the initiative to surrender both his personal wealth and that of his wife to the Bayt al-Māl (state treasury). According to reports transmitted by Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, the amount donated reached approximately 23,000 dinars. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz also refused to reside in the royal palace and instead chose to live in his private residence with his wife as an expression of simplicity and asceticism. The simplicity that characterized his personal life was subsequently extended to the royal court. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz ordered the sale of luxurious items within the palace, and the proceeds from these sales were transferred to the Bayt al-Māl. Beyond his efforts to eliminate the culture of extravagance within the ruling family, he also introduced a range of reform-oriented

policies, including the dismissal of corrupt officials, the improvement of agricultural administration, the reform of the educational system, the provision of healthcare services, the prohibition of insulting the Companions of the Prophet, as well as tax relief for non-Muslims and the abolition of tax collection from new converts to Islam (Zainuddin, 2025).

Although his reign was relatively brief, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz succeeded in establishing stability, social tranquility, and public welfare within society. In a period of less than three years, he was able to bring about significant transformations for his people. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz passed away in 720 CE. Several historical accounts suggest that his death resulted from poisoning administered by one of his own aides under the orders of members of his family. The motive behind this act was reportedly their resentment toward the numerous just policies implemented by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, which they perceived as marginalizing their interests and depriving them of the wealth accumulated during the reigns of previous caliphs. Historical narratives further indicate that the aide initially refused to carry out the act; however, the threats imposed by members of the Umayyad Caliphate elite left him with little capacity to resist or disobey their orders. Shortly before his death, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz became aware that he had been poisoned. Nevertheless, even under such circumstances, he continued to demonstrate extraordinary moral nobility by instructing the aide involved in the incident to flee immediately in order to save his own life. This action reflects the breadth of character and ethical excellence of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, for even in the midst of betrayal, he remained concerned for the safety of others. Such an attitude illustrates a virtuous personality that was not driven by worldly interests, which is why he has often been regarded as the “fifth of the Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn”, owing to the fact that his style of leadership closely resembled the governing system practiced during (Fuad, 2013).

The Leadership Orientation of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz

During the early period of his leadership, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz demonstrated a strong commitment to restructuring governance in accordance with the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith. He sought to establish the leadership model of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun Caliphate as the principal foundation for administering the affairs of the state. When Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz began his rule, the administration of the Umayyad Caliphate and the state financial system were in a deeply problematic and fragile condition. Prior to his reign, the fiscal policies of the Umayyad Caliphate had tended to burden the population through the imposition of various levies, such as *kharāj*, *jizyah*, and other forms of taxation that were widely regarded as inconsistent with the principles of justice. Consequently, the initial agenda of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz’s reforms was directed toward two principal objectives. First, he did not regard territorial expansion as the primary priority of the state; instead, he emphasized social stability, public security, and the welfare of the population. Second, he implemented a model of governance grounded in justice and equality by positioning all segments of society on an equal footing before the state, without discrimination based on class, ethnicity, or tribal affiliation (Kusumastuti & Ghozali, 2019).

Another equally significant policy concerned the utilization of *ash-shawāfi* lands, namely lands whose ownership status was placed under the authority of the *Bayt al-Māl* (state treasury). Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz permitted these lands to be managed for the public benefit, yet prohibited their commercial sale, as they were regarded as public assets whose utility had to be preserved for the wider community. In addition to reforms in the agrarian sector, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz also devoted considerable attention to infrastructure development as a means of improving the economic welfare of society. Various development projects were undertaken, including the improvement of transportation routes in mountainous regions, the expansion and management of water resources in Medina, as well as the supervision of the enlargement of Al-Masjid an-Nabawi. He also carried out renovations to the mosque’s minaret structures and refined the architectural form of its *mihrab*. These various projects demonstrate that the policies of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz were not solely oriented toward administrative reform, but also toward strengthening public facilities that directly affected the social and economic life of the community. Such policies were closely connected to his intellectual outlook, which was profoundly shaped by the religious principles he upheld (Rahmi, Royyan, & Abdulrahman, 2025).

The administration of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz emerged within the political context of the Umayyad Caliphate, which had undergone a transformation from the system of *khilāfah* to a dynastic monarchy. Prior to his reign, Umayyad rule tended to emphasize political stability, territorial expansion, and the centralization of authority. Within such a configuration, religion frequently functioned as a symbolic source of legitimacy for state power. This reorientation became evident in the policies of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, particularly those emphasizing fiscal justice, the restitution of misappropriated state assets, the abolition of discriminatory practices against the *mawālī*, and the restriction of the extravagant lifestyle of the bureaucratic elite. These policies indicate that the state was no longer positioned merely as an instrument of domination, but rather as a means of realizing the ethical principles of Islamic justice. During the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, religion was not treated merely as a formal symbol of political authority, but as the normative foundation of state administration.

In the religious sphere, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz implemented a number of significant policies oriented toward the comprehensive restoration of Islamic values. He sought to return social life to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz devoted considerable attention to the spiritual development of the Muslim community, which had increasingly become influenced by worldly life and material luxury. Accordingly, he encouraged the observance of congregational prayer and revitalized the function of the mosque as a center of worship and Islamic legal instruction, following the model established during the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun Caliphate. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz also maintained close relations with religious scholars and jurists. He frequently invited religious authorities and *fuqahā'* to discuss various Islamic issues. Historical accounts narrate that every evening he would gather scholars of Islamic jurisprudence for consultation, mutual advice, and reflection upon death and the Hereafter. These assemblies were often marked by deep emotion and tears arising from their fear of the punishment of Allah Swt (Muliadi, Nurfadillah, & Bahaking Rama, 2025).

Based on the historical account authored by Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his work *Syaraf Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*, it is explained that during his reign, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz proposed a policy through letters addressed to regional governors, urging them to allocate financial support for religious scholars so that they could devote themselves fully to the study of the Qur'an and Hadith. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz did not merely instruct scholars to compile Hadith traditions; he also sought to provide them with financial assistance as a manifestation of his generosity and support toward the scholarly community of his time (Al-Baghdadi, 2021).

Within the tradition of classical Islamic thought, religion and the state were understood as possessing a complementary relationship. Religion functioned as the source of values, ethics, and moral law, while the state served as an instrument for maintaining social order and upholding justice. During the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, this relationship became clearly evident, as his political policies were consistently grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. He regarded political authority not as a means of personal enrichment, but as a trust (*amānah*) that would be accountable before both Allah and society. Consequently, his administration emphasized the principles of justice, trustworthiness, simplicity, the protection of the people's rights, and the equitable distribution of welfare.

During the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, the relationship between religion and the state appeared highly interconnected and mutually complementary. He viewed state authority as something that must be exercised in accordance with religious values, particularly the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. Consequently, his administration has frequently been regarded as an ideal model of Islamic leadership that integrated spirituality, social justice, and political governance. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz established religion as the principal foundation for the administration of the state. He understood the office of the caliph not as a means of personal power, but as a trust bestowed by Allah for which he would be held accountable. Accordingly, every political, economic, and social policy was consistently connected to the principles of Islamic law, particularly justice (*al-'adl*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), and the welfare of the people. He frequently referred to the Qur'an

and the Sunnah of the Prophet in resolving matters of governance. In this way, religion functioned not merely as a spiritual symbol, but as the ethical and legal foundation of the state.

Religion and the State in the Perspective of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz

Although the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz within the Umayyad Caliphate lasted for only approximately two years and five months, his leadership is widely regarded as highly successful. During his administration, the principle of justice was implemented in a concrete and consistent manner, enabling people throughout the realm to experience security, stability, and social harmony. This achievement was closely linked to the strong relationship that Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz cultivated with religious scholars. His respect for and proximity to the scholarly community are reflected in his well-known advice: "Be a scholar. If you are unable to do so, then become a seeker of knowledge. If you are unable to do that, then love the scholars. If you are unable to do even that, then do not be hostile toward them." This statement illustrates the central role accorded to scholars in the thought of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and underscores the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the learned community for the benefit of both society and the state (Ulhaq, 2020).

In the perspective of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, the state possessed the responsibility of safeguarding and upholding religious teachings within society. It was the duty of the state to create social conditions characterized by justice, security, and prosperity so that people could practice the teachings of Islam properly. This orientation is evident in a number of policies implemented during his reign, including the eradication of corruption and the abuse of public office, the restitution of unlawfully acquired wealth to the Bayt al-Māl (state treasury), the rejection of extravagant lifestyles among government officials, and the protection of citizens' rights regardless of ethnic background or social status. In this framework, the state was conceived as an instrument for realizing the public good and promoting the welfare of the community (maṣlaḥah al-ummah).

At the beginning of his reign, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz delivered his first political address as a means of communicating to the public the policy direction that would guide his administration. This speech served as the foundation for the various social reforms that he initiated from the outset of his leadership. Several key ideas can be identified within this address. First, he expressed a firm commitment to adhering to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Unlike some of his predecessors, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz regarded these two primary sources of Islamic teaching as the principal foundation for governance and public administration. Second, he emphasized the necessity of distancing society from all forms of falsehood and deviation. He asserted that Islam contains clearly defined boundaries, regulations, and guidance that must be observed by every Muslim. According to his view, those who faithfully implement these teachings have perfected their faith, whereas those who neglect them have not yet attained the fullness of faith. Throughout his reign, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz issued a number of social jurisprudential (fiqh) rulings in consultation with religious scholars. Among his notable rulings were the prohibition of intoxicating beverages produced from substances other than grapes, the classification of animal bones and carcasses as ritually impure, the exemption of honey production from zakat obligations, and the prohibition of collecting taxes from non-Muslims who had embraced Islam before completing the tax period required for liability. These policies demonstrate the seriousness of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz in constructing a social order grounded in Islamic teachings. In pursuing this objective, he regarded da'wah as a primary instrument for cultivating society and directing social life toward greater moral and communal well-being (Hanafiah, 2021).

The relationship between religion and the state during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz is particularly evident in his implementation of justice. He demonstrated that political authority should be subordinated to the moral values of religion. Justice was not reserved exclusively for Muslims but was also extended to non-Muslims (ahl al-dhimmah). He abolished various forms of fiscal oppression and terminated discriminatory policies directed toward non-Arab Muslims (mawālī). These measures illustrate how religious principles were employed to reform and improve the social and political structures of the state (Aljedani, 2025).

The character of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was reflected in his simplicity and his close relationship with those who served under him. Historical accounts relate that on an exceptionally hot day, he asked one of his attendants to fan him until he fell asleep. Upon awakening, he noticed that the attendant had also fallen asleep due to exhaustion. Moved by compassion, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz took the fan and began fanning the attendant himself. When the attendant awoke and apologized, he replied that they were both human beings who experienced the same heat and discomfort, and therefore it was only natural to help one another and provide mutual comfort. This incident illustrates the humility of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as a caliph who did not regard himself as superior to others. Through such conduct, he embodied the principle of egalitarianism by treating individuals equally regardless of their social status, ethnic background, or religious affiliation, thereby fostering deep respect and affection among the people. Another aspect of the character of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz can be seen in his policies concerning workers' welfare. He once proposed that the wages of laborers should be increased to match the salaries of state officials. However, this proposal was rejected by the state treasurer on the grounds of budgetary limitations. As an alternative, he suggested that the salaries of government officials should instead be reduced to the level of workers' wages. This policy led many officials to resign because they were unwilling to accept lower incomes. Nevertheless, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz remained committed to his policy and opened these positions to members of the public who were willing to serve under the same salary conditions as ordinary laborers. For Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, public office was not a means of personal enrichment but a trust (*amānah*) dedicated to serving society and strengthening the state. This policy succeeded in attracting individuals motivated by public service rather than material gain. In addition to reducing the tendency to seek office for personal interests, it also contributed to improving the quality of public administration and governance during his reign. These measures demonstrate the strong commitment of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to realizing the principles of social equality and justice within government (Anzaikhan & Idani, 2022).

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz undertook far-reaching reforms within the Umayyad Caliphate. He redirected the orientation of political authority from dynastic domination toward public service grounded in Islamic ethical values. Among his major reforms were the rigorous supervision of government officials, the reduction of royal extravagance, the promotion of transparency in the administration of the *Bayt al-Māl* (state treasury), and the strengthening of Islamic education and *da'wah*. These policies demonstrate that religion functioned as the moral guide of the state, while the state served as an instrument for the implementation of religious values. Through this framework, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz sought to ensure that political authority was exercised not for the preservation of elite interests, but for the realization of justice and public welfare (Nduru, Athifah NST, & Tariatil, 2025).

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz demonstrated remarkable courage in undertaking reforms that had not been implemented by previous rulers. Among these measures were the dissolution of the special palace guard, the sale of luxurious government-owned vehicles with the proceeds distributed to the poor, and the restoration of state assets that had previously been granted to members of the royal family as gifts or special privileges. Furthermore, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz firmly maintained that the state treasury constituted a trust belonging to the entire Muslim community and therefore had to be administered for the public good rather than for the benefit of the ruling family or political elites. In his view, all state resources should be directed toward enhancing public welfare and supporting the dissemination and strengthening of Islamic teachings. Through these reforms, he sought to realign the functions of government with the ethical principles of justice, accountability, and collective responsibility that he believed were central to Islamic governance (Sutriyono & Hidayat, 2023).

The harmonious relationship between religion and the state during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz contributed significantly to social stability and public welfare. Numerous historical accounts indicate that poverty declined substantially as a result of equitable wealth distribution and the effective administration of *zakat*. Through these measures, economic resources were directed toward those most in need, thereby strengthening social cohesion and reducing disparities

within society. His administration also succeeded in fostering public trust in the state through a style of leadership characterized by integrity, simplicity, and religious commitment. The personal conduct of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz reinforced the credibility of his reforms and enhanced the legitimacy of government institutions (Gustapu & Lukita Devy, 2026).

The policies implemented by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz during the period of the Umayyad Caliphate demonstrate that the principles of welfare in Islam can be realized effectively through sound governance. The various reforms he introduced—including the optimization of zakat distribution, the abolition of unjust levies, the eradication of corruption, and the redistribution of resources to vulnerable groups—contributed significantly to improving public welfare and reducing social inequality. These achievements not only generated positive economic outcomes but also strengthened social stability within society. Furthermore, the concept of welfare promoted by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz extended beyond the fulfillment of material needs. It encompassed social justice, spiritual development, and the reinforcement of moral values. By grounding public policy in Islamic teachings, he demonstrated that a system of governance characterized by justice, transparency, and commitment to the public good is capable of generating sustainable welfare (Nurhalisa, Hidayati, & Maulana, 2024).

The relationship between religion and the state during the reign of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was fundamentally integrative in nature. Religion served as the source of values, moral guidance, and political legitimacy, while the state functioned as an instrument for promoting justice and ensuring the welfare of society. This model of leadership demonstrates that, within the tradition of classical Islamic political thought, religion and the state were not conceived as entirely separate spheres; rather, they operated in a mutually reinforcing manner to realize the common good and advance the welfare of the Muslim community (*maṣlaḥah al-ummah*), as a result, the effectiveness of governance was measured not merely by political stability (Ejaz & Gulzar, 2024).

In his effort to realize the welfare of the Muslim community by establishing religion as the primary source of values and law, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz devoted considerable attention to the Qur'an and Hadith. His concern for the preservation of Hadith prompted him to initiate the systematic compilation and documentation of prophetic traditions. This initiative was motivated by his fear that the Hadith of the Prophet might gradually disappear with the passing of its transmitters and memorizers if it was not promptly recorded and preserved in written form. During his reign, Islamic education also experienced significant development, particularly in the fields of Hadith and Hadith studies. The strong emphasis placed on Hadith scholarship contributed to the growth of the tradition of *riḥlah fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, whereby scholars traveled extensively to different regions in search of authentic prophetic traditions, studying under reliable teachers and transmitting the knowledge they acquired. This intellectual movement not only strengthened the preservation of Hadith literature but also laid an important foundation for the subsequent development of the Islamic scholarly tradition and the institutionalization of Hadith studies in the Muslim world (Tyas & Bahrudin, 2018).

The leadership of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz brought about profound transformations that were directly experienced by society. From the moment he succeeded Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik, the policies he implemented succeeded in improving public welfare, stimulating economic growth, and establishing a more effective and equitable system of state financial administration. The needs of the population were met more evenly, while the rule of law was enforced without regard to social status or lineage. Owing to his unwavering commitment to justice, the leadership of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz has often been compared to that of Umar ibn al-Khattab. During his reign, individual rights were protected, and society enjoyed a notable degree of security and social tranquility. The high level of public trust in the government stemmed not only from the fairness of his policies but also from the personal example he set, as he consistently embodied the principles of justice in both his private conduct and public leadership. Consequently, his administration became a model of ethical governance in which political authority was exercised as a means of serving society rather than advancing personal or dynastic interests (Irvanul Vaza, 2023).

Although Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz is frequently regarded as one of the greatest caliphs in Islamic history, his administration was not without limitations and challenges. The reforms he introduced, including the abolition of privileges enjoyed by members of the Umayyad family and the restriction of luxury among state officials, generated dissatisfaction among segments of the political elite and provoked resistance to his policies. Furthermore, his measures to grant equal rights to non-Arab converts to Islam, including exemptions from certain forms of taxation, contributed to a reduction in state revenues and prompted complaints from several provincial governors. At the same time, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz prioritized internal reform, religious outreach (da‘wah), and public welfare over territorial expansion. As a result, some observers have argued that the pace of military expansion and the geopolitical influence of the Umayyad Caliphate diminished during his reign. Nevertheless, these policies reflected his enduring commitment to justice, social stability, and the welfare of the population, even when such objectives came at the expense of political expediency or imperial ambitions (Faizi, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the administration of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz represented a significant transformation in the function of the state within classical Islamic politics. Rather than serving merely as an instrument of political domination, the state was directed toward the realization of justice, accountability, and public welfare. The findings indicate that Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz developed an integrative model of religion–state relations in which religion functioned as the normative foundation of governance, while the state operated as an ethical instrument for implementing Islamic values in public life.

The study further reveals that the relationship between political authority and religious authority during his reign was characterized by cooperation rather than domination. Religious scholars served not merely as sources of political legitimacy but as moral partners who contributed to policy formation and public guidance. This interaction produced a model of governance that balanced political administration with ethical responsibility. The main contribution of this article lies in its interpretation of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz’s administration as an early form of the ethical state within classical Islamic political thought. This perspective enriches contemporary discussions on religion–state relations by demonstrating that classical Islamic governance was neither fully secular nor purely theocratic, but rather integrative in nature. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on textual and historical sources and does not provide a comparative analysis with other Islamic political experiences. Future research may explore comparative studies involving the Rashidun, Abbasid, or Ottoman periods in order to further examine the diversity of religion–state relations in Islamic history.

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