

The Political Thoughts of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and compare the political thought of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi in the classical Islamic political tradition. The main problem in this study is the gap between philosophical-idealistic and normative-practical approaches that are often studied separately. This research uses a qualitative method with a literature approach through the study of the main works of the two figures and SINTA-indexed journal articles. The results of the study show that Al-Farabi emphasizes the concept of an ideal state (al-Madinah al-Fadhilah) that is oriented towards shared happiness through moral and intellectual leadership. Meanwhile, Al-Mawardi emphasized the practical aspects of government through the concept of the caliphate which includes the requirements of leaders and institutional systems. These two thoughts complement each other in understanding Islamic politics ideally and practically. This research confirms the relevance of the two thoughts in answering contemporary political challenges.

Keywords: Islamic political thought, Al-Farabi, Al-Mawardi, leadership, state

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic political thought is one of the fields of study that has an important role in the development of Islamic civilization, especially in formulating the concept of state, power, and leadership based on sharia values and rationality. Since classical times, Muslim thinkers have made great contributions to building political theories that are not only normative, but also philosophical and practical. This shows that Islam not only regulates aspects of worship, but also provides guidelines in state and community life (Agus, 2002). In the history of the development of Islamic political thought, figures such as Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi occupy a very important position because they offer different but complementary perspectives. Al-Farabi is known as a philosopher who developed the concept of the ideal state through a philosophical approach, while Al-Mawardi emphasized the practical aspects of government through the *fiqh siyasah* approach. This difference in approach is interesting to study because it reflects the dynamics of Islamic political thought between idealism and reality (Karep, 2025).

Al-Farabi, as one of the great philosophers in the classical Islamic tradition, put forward the concept of the main state of al-Madinah *al-Fadhilah* which is oriented towards the achievement of sa'adah happiness for all citizens. He emphasized that politics cannot be separated from ethics and philosophy, so a leader must have moral and intellectual perfection. This thinking shows that the main goal of the state is to create a virtuous and harmonious society (Gusti Muslihuddin Sa'adi, Ahmadi Hasan, Masyithah Umar, 2024). Meanwhile, Al-Mawardi comes with a more normative and practical approach in understanding the Islamic system of government. Through his work *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, he explained in detail the concept of caliphate, the requirements of leaders, and the duties and authority of the government in maintaining the stability of the country. He emphasized that leadership is a collective obligation (*fardhu kifayah*) to maintain religion and regulate world affairs (Muien et al., 2025).

The difference between Al-Farabi's and Al-Mawardi's thinking lies not only in the approach used, but also in the socio-political context behind it. Al-Farabi lived in a philosophical tradition influenced by Greek thought, so his concept tended to be idealistic and utopian. In contrast, Al-Mawardi lived in a more complex political context, so his thinking was more realistic and oriented towards power stability. Previous studies have generally discussed the thought of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi separately, both from the perspective of Islamic philosophy and political law. However, studies that integrate the two ideas comparatively are still relatively limited. In fact, the merging of these two perspectives is important to obtain a more complete understanding of the concept of Islamic politics that includes both ideal and practical aspects at the same time (Hestyana Widya Pangesti, Muthiullah, 2024).

In addition, in the contemporary context, classical Islamic political thought is still relevant to be studied, especially in the face of modern challenges such as leadership crises, weak political ethics, and instability of the government system. Al-Farabi's ideal leadership concept and Al-Mawardi's structured system of government can be a reference in building better and just governance (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Based on this description, this study aims to analyze and compare the political thought of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi, as well as examine their relevance in the context of modern politics. This research is expected to make a scientific contribution to the development of Islamic political studies, especially in integrating philosophical and normative approaches in understanding the concept of state and leadership.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research, which is research that focuses on collecting and analyzing data from various written sources that are relevant to the topic of study. This approach was chosen because the object of research is in the form of the thoughts of figures, namely Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi, which can only be understood in depth through the study of classical and contemporary literature that discusses Islamic political thought. This literature research method is carried out by examining various data sources consisting of primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources in this study are the main works of Al-Farabi, such as *Al-Madinah al-Fadhilah*, as well as the works of Al-Mawardi, such as *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*. These two works are the main references in understanding the basic concept of political thought of each figure. The secondary sources include books, articles in scientific journals (especially SINTA-indexed journals), as well as previous research relevant to the theme of Islamic political thought.

In analyzing the data, this study uses several approaches, namely historical, philosophical, and comparative approaches. Historical approaches are used to understand the social, political, and intellectual backgrounds that influenced the thinking of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi. With this approach, the author can see how the conditions of the times contribute to the difference in the orientation of the two figures. Furthermore, a philosophical approach is used to examine in depth the main concepts put forward by Al-Farabi, especially related to the ideal state, political ethics, and leadership. This approach allows the author to understand the normative and idealistic dimensions in Al-Farabi's thought that were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle.

In addition, this study also uses a normative-judicial approach in analyzing Al-Mawardi's thought. This approach focuses on legal and institutional aspects in the Islamic system of government, such as the concept of the caliphate, the requirements of leaders, and the duties and authority of rulers. Thus, Al-Mawardi's thought can be understood as a representation of Islamic political theory that is practical and applicative. To obtain comprehensive results, this study also uses a comparative analysis method. This method aims to compare the political thinking of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi, both in terms of concepts, goals, and approaches used. Through this comparison, the author can identify the similarities and differences between the two figures, as well as find the relevance of their thoughts in the context of modern politics.

The data analysis technique in this study is carried out through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is carried out by selecting and focusing data that is relevant to the research topic. The presentation of data is carried out in the form of descriptive-analytical descriptions so that it is easy to understand. Furthermore, conclusions are drawn by interpreting the results of the analysis systematically to answer the formulation of the research problem. By using this method, the research is expected to be able to provide an in-depth understanding of the political thought of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi, as well as their contribution to the development of Islamic political theory, both in the philosophical and practical dimensions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography and Works of Al-Farabi

Al-Farabi was one of the leading Muslim philosophers who made a major contribution to the development of Islamic philosophy, especially in the fields of logic, metaphysics, and politics. He is known

as the "Second Teacher" (al-Mu'allim al-Tsani) after Aristotle because of his ability to develop and systematize Greek philosophy into the framework of Islamic thought (Firmansyah, 2025). Al-Farabi has the full name Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Uzlagh al-Farabi and was born around 872 AD in the Farab region (now Kazakhstan). He comes from a fairly educated family background, so since childhood he has shown a great interest in science, especially philosophy and logic (Irfan et al., 2025).

In his intellectual journey, Al-Farabi traveled extensively to various centers of science such as Baghdad, Damascus, and Aleppo to deepen his knowledge. In Baghdad, he studied logic, philosophy, and language from renowned scholars, who later formed a very strong basis for his thinking in combining rationality and Islamic values (Hafid, 2007). Al-Farabi is known as a scientist who masters various disciplines, ranging from philosophy, logic, music, politics, to psychology. This shows that he is a multidisciplinary thinker who does not only focus on one field, but is able to integrate various sciences in one systematic framework of thought (Haeruddin, 2018).

In the field of philosophy, Al-Farabi was heavily influenced by the thought of Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, but he did not simply adopt this thought, but developed it by incorporating Islamic values. He seeks to bridge the gap between philosophy and religion by stating that they both have the same goal, which is to achieve the truth, albeit using different methods. He explained that truth can be obtained through reason (ratio), while revelation is a form of truth given to the prophet, so there is no contradiction between philosophy and religion. In addition, Al-Farabi is also known to be prolific in writing scientific papers. He is estimated to have written around 100 works in various fields of science. The works not only deal with philosophy, but also include logic, politics, ethics, and the sciences of the soul, demonstrating the breadth of his intellectual insight (Subakti, 2019).

Through these works, Al-Farabi succeeded in making a major contribution to the development of Islamic political thought, especially in formulating the concept of a state oriented towards happiness and moral virtue. His thoughts not only influenced the Islamic world, but also had a great impact on the development of Western philosophy in the future (Prasetyo, 2008). Thus, Al-Farabi can be seen as one of the key figures in the intellectual history of Islam who succeeded in integrating Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings and provided a solid basis for the development of political theory and Islamic philosophy.

Al-Farabi's Political Thought

Al-Farabi's political thought is one of the important milestones in the development of classical Islamic political philosophy that integrates the rationality of Greek philosophy with the values of Islamic teachings in a harmonious and systematic manner. He does not only view politics as a mere practice of power, but as part of human efforts to achieve perfection in life through an orderly social order based on moral values. In his view, politics is closely related to philosophy, ethics, and religion, so they cannot be separated from each other in building an ideal life of society. Thus, Al-Farabi's thinking places politics as a means to achieve a higher goal, namely the happiness of human beings collectively (Hafsa, Muhammad Najibuddin, Zulfa Hamidah, 2025). This shows that Al-Farabi's political concept is holistic and is not only oriented towards power, but also on the formation of a virtuous human character.

The main concept in Al-Farabi's political thought is al-Madinah al-Fadhilah (the main state), which is an ideal form of state built on the basis of moral virtue, rationality, and cooperation between citizens. In this concept, the state is seen as a system that has a clear goal, which is to achieve common happiness (sa'adah) for all members of society. The main state is not just a political organization, but a forum to form

intellectually and morally perfect human beings (Nur Alisa et al., 2023) Al-Farabi emphasized that happiness cannot be achieved individually, but must be achieved through an orderly and directed social life in a good country. Therefore, the state has a strategic role in guiding the community towards a better and meaningful life.

According to Al-Farabi, the main goal of the formation of the state is to achieve true happiness, both in this world and in the hereafter. Such happiness is not only material, but also includes the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of man. In this case, politics functions as an instrument to create conditions that allow humans to develop optimally according to their potential (Yulanda, 2022) Therefore, the state must be based on the values of goodness, justice, and truth, in order to be able to direct society towards these goals. Al-Farabi also emphasized that without moral values in politics, the state will lose its direction and will not be able to realize true prosperity.

Al-Farabi explained that the formation of the state began from the basic needs of human beings as social creatures who cannot live alone. Humans have limitations in meeting their life needs, so they require cooperation with others in a community. From here, society emerged which later developed into a state as a more complex form of organization. In this view, the state is the result of a natural process driven by human needs to achieve perfection in life (Kurniawan, 2018) In describing the structure of the state, Al-Farabi uses the analogy of the human body as an integrated system. He stated that each part of the state has its own function and role, just like the organs in the human body that work in harmony to maintain balance. Leaders are likened to the heart that is the center of life, while society is another part that supports each other. If one of the parts does not function properly, it will affect the entire system in the country.

In the context of the relationship between religion and politics, Al-Farabi seeks to integrate the two in an inseparable unit. He argued that religion and philosophy have the same goal, which is to achieve the truth, albeit using different methods. Religion uses revelation as a source of truth, while philosophy uses reason. However, the two must go hand in hand in building an ideal political system. Thus, politics is not only based on power, but also on spiritual and moral values that come from religion (Said, 2019)

Al-Farabi's political thought can be understood as a comprehensive system that combines philosophy, ethics, and religion in building the concept of an ideal state. His thinking is not only relevant in the historical context, but also has actual value in answering various modern political problems, such as leadership crises, weak political ethics, and social injustice. Therefore, the study of Al-Farabi's thought remains important to be carried out as part of efforts to develop Islamic political theories that are more relevant to the development of the times.

Biography and Works of Al-Mawardi

Al-Mawardi is one of the important figures in the tradition of classical Islamic political thought who has made a major contribution in formulating the theory of government and statehood in an Islamic perspective. He was known as a scholar, jurist, as well as a political thinker who was able to integrate the concept of Islamic law with the government practices that developed in his time. His thoughts have been widely used as references in the study of *siyasah* (Islamic politics) to date because they are considered systematic and applicable in explaining the relationship between the state, leaders, and society (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat, I Made Suraharta, 2024).

Al-Mawardi's full name was Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Habib al-Mawardi, and he was born in the city of Basrah in 972 AD. He lived during the reign of the Abbasid Dynasty, a period marked by complex political dynamics, including the weakening of the caliph's power and the emergence of new

political powers. This socio-political condition greatly influenced his thinking, especially in formulating a concept of government that is able to maintain the stability of the country and the integrity of Muslims (Maghfiroh, 2023). Since childhood, Al-Mawardi has shown a great interest in science, especially in the field of fiqh and hadith. He then continued his education in Baghdad, which at that time was the center of Islamic scholarship. There, he studied with great scholars and developed his expertise in Islamic law, which later became the main basis for his political thought. His extensive scholarship made him recognized as one of the leading scholars of his time.

Apart from being a scholar, Al-Mawardi was also active in the government as a judge (qadhi) and political advisor to the Abbasid rulers. His experience in the world of government had a great influence on his thinking, so that he not only understood political theory normatively, but also understood the reality of the practice of power directly. This makes his thinking realistic and applicative compared to other more philosophical thinkers. Al-Mawardi is known as a thinker who has great concern for political stability and social order in the country. He tried to formulate a concept of government that was able to maintain a balance between power and the interests of the community. In his view, the state has an important role in maintaining religion and regulating world life, so a strong and well-structured government system is needed. In the field of scientific work, Al-Mawardi is a very productive figure. He wrote various works covering the fields of jurisprudence, politics, ethics, and Islamic law. His works not only discuss theory, but also provide practical guidance in running the government in accordance with Islamic principles. This shows that Al-Mawardi is not only a theorist, but also a practitioner who understands the real needs in state life (Latif et al., 2025).

Through his work and thoughts, Al-Mawardi made a major contribution to building the foundations of Islamic political theory that are both normative and practical. His thinking was not only influential in the classical period, but also remains relevant in the modern context, especially in discussing the system of government, leadership, and relations between the state and society in an Islamic perspective.

Al-Mawardi's Political Thought

Al-Mawardi's political thought is one of the important foundations in the classical Islamic political tradition which emphasizes the close relationship between religion and the state in maintaining social order and stability of government. He views that the political system in Islam must be built on the principles of sharia which aim to maintain religion while regulating world life in a balanced manner. In this regard, Al-Mawardi not only develops normative political theory, but also provides a practical framework that can be applied in the administration of government. His thoughts are much contained in his monumental work *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* which until now has become the main reference in the study of Islamic siyasah (Damanhuri & Sofwan, 2025).

One of the main concepts in Al-Mawardi's political thought is the importance of the institution of the imamah or caliphate as a system of government in Islam. He stated that the existence of a leader is a collective obligation (fardhu kifayah) for Muslims to maintain religion (hirasat al-din) and regulate world affairs (siyasat al-dunya). Without a leader, society will experience chaos and disorder, so that the existence of the state becomes a necessity in human social life. Al-Mawardi also formulated in detail the conditions that must be possessed by a leader (imam/caliph), including fairness, knowledge, physical and spiritual health, and having the ability to manage the government. He emphasized that the legitimacy of leadership is not only determined by power, but also by the moral and intellectual capacity of the leader in carrying

out his duties. Thus, leadership in Al-Mawardi's perspective is not just a political position, but also a mandate that must be accounted for morally and religiously (Muhammad Yasir, 2024).

Al-Mawardi also discussed the duties and responsibilities of leaders in running the government. He said that leaders must maintain security, enforce the law, manage state finances, and protect the region from external threats. In this case, the state has a very important role in creating order and public welfare. Therefore, leaders must have good managerial and policy skills in managing the country. In addition to the internal aspects of government, Al-Mawardi also discussed the concept of foreign policy, one of which is through the concept of jihad which is positioned as part of the state's strategy in maintaining sovereignty and security. It places jihad not only as a war, but also as a political instrument organized by the state to protect the interests of Muslims. This shows that Al-Mawardi's political thought covers a wide dimension, both in domestic and international aspects (Fanani, 2022).

In the context of political ethics, Al-Mawardi emphasized that the relationship between leaders and the people must be based on the principles of responsibility, justice, and trust. Leaders should not act arbitrarily, because the power they have is a mandate that must be used for the benefit of society. On the other hand, the people also have an obligation to obey the leader as long as it does not contradict religious principles (Sakhi et al., 2024). This concept shows the existence of a reciprocal relationship between rulers and society in the Islamic political system. Al-Mawardi's thought also shows a balance between idealism and political reality. He not only discussed the ideal concept of government, but also provided practical solutions to various political problems that occurred in his time. This makes his thinking relevant not only in the historical context, but also in facing modern political challenges, such as leadership crises, injustice, and weak government systems (Muhajir, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the political thought of Al-Farabi and Al-Mawardi shows two different but complementary approaches in the Islamic political tradition. Al-Farabi emphasizes a philosophical and ethical approach through the concept of an ideal state oriented towards shared happiness, with leadership based on moral and intellectual perfection. Meanwhile, Al-Mawardi focuses more on normative and practical aspects through the concept of caliphate that systematically regulates leadership, institutions, and government tasks.

The integration of these two ideas provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Islamic political system which is not only based on ideal values, but also on the implementation aspect in the life of the state. The implications of this study show that the concepts of ethical leadership and structured governance systems of the two figures are still relevant to be applied in facing modern political challenges, such as leadership crises, weak political ethics, and instability of the governance system. Therefore, further studies are needed to develop Islamic political thinking that is adaptive to the development of the times.

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