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The Dynamics of the Relationship Between State and Religion

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ABSTRACT

In the period leading up to and following Indonesian independence, the relationship between religion and the state was fiercely debated between supporters of a secular state and supporters of a theocratic (religious) state. Advocates of a theocratic state held that Western secularism could weaken the influence of religion in national and public life, and they wanted Islam to be the religion and the legal basis of the state. Supporters of a secular state, by contrast, held that secularism was the best choice if religion and the state were each to fulfill their own tasks and functions. After a lengthy debate, the religious-nationalist leaders and the people agreed to establish Indonesia as a religious nation-state. Such a state recognizes religious values without positioning any particular religion or religious teaching as the state religion or the basis of state law.Using a qualitative, this article aims to examine the basic concepts of the secular state and the theocratic state, as well as Indonesia as a religious nation-state and the challenges it faces. It is a qualitative library study. A critical evaluation of the literature reveals that a secular state strictly separates religious institutions from the state. A theocratic state establishes a particular religion as the state religion and positions divine law as the supreme law of the state. A religious nation-state recognizes divine values but does not adopt the teaching of any particular religion as the state religion and the basis of state law.

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Introduction

Politics and religion have always been interrelated, although the relationship between them is dynamic and changes over time. At the end of the twentieth century, the projects of modernization, communism, and liberalism promoted by secular states from the fifteenth century to the early twentieth century proved unable to answer humanity's fundamental questions. The failure of knowledge, technology, and science to address the problems of modern, secular humanity prompted scholars to restore religion as an important element in society, as it

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remains today. The relationship between religion and the state has been reformulated as one of mutual need and complementarities, a proportional symbiotic-mutuality) relationship, rather than a theocratic or a secular one.

Studies of the historical development of the relationship between state and religion identify several forms, some extreme and some moderate. In the extreme forms, the state separates itself entirely from religion and becomes purely secular, or it adopts a particular religion as the state religion and the basis of state law and becomes a theocracy. The moderate form emphasizes cooperation and a relationship of mutual benefit and respect (symbiotic-mutuality).Indonesia has developed this moderate model.

Much research has been done on the relationship between religion and the state in his study of the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia, discusses the polemics and tensions over whether Indonesia should become an Islamic (theocratic) state during the drafting and amendment of the 1945 Constitution. Hutabarat (2018), writing on the ambiguity of the differentiation between religion and the state in Indonesia, examines how religion and the state in Indonesia neither subjugate nor dictate to one another. Analyzes in depth the relationship between religion and the state according to the 1945 Constitution. Studies of this relationship in Indonesia have so far tended to address particular dimensions: the constitutional aspect, the long debate over whether Islam should become the state religion, and why religion and the state do not dictate to one another. However, no work has yet specifically examined the comprehensive forms of this relationship in the Indonesian context. This article is written to fill that gap (Sadzali, 2020; Suparto, 2019).

The article has four objectives: 1) to examine the concept of the secular state; 2) to examine the concept of the theocratic state; 3) to examine the concept of the proportional relationship between religion and the state; and 4) to analyze the challenges facing Indonesia as a religious nation-state. To meet these objectives, the article addresses each of these topics in detail.

Method

This was a qualitative library study. The entire research process drew on books, journals, and other relevant literature. The research activities consisted of summarizing, analyzing, and evaluating the existing literature in order to examine the relationship between religion and the state. The approach was descriptive-analytical. Sari & Asmendri (2020) define library research as scientific research in which the researcher gathers information or data from various scholarly literature. Khatibah (2011) and Sugiyono (2012) regard library research as a systematic scholarly activity of collecting, reading, processing, and drawing conclusions from various reading materials related to the research theme.

In this study, the information obtained from the scholarly literature was analyzed and grouped into four sub-themes of discussion: the secular state, the theocratic state, the religious nation-state, and Indonesia as a religious nation-state and its challenges. The research proceeded in seven stages: 1) determining the theme and focus of the research; 2) collecting, reading, and examining literature related to the theme; 3) grouping the materials into sub-themes and examining each sub-theme further; 4) conducting an in-depth content analysis of the

materials; 5) critically evaluating each thought and idea in the materials and seeking the logical relationships among them; 6) presenting the results of the analysis according to the themes and sub-themes developed; and 7) writing the research report presented herein (Sari & Asmendri (2020)).

Results

The Theocratic State

The term "theocracy" first appears in the work of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, scholar, and apologist of the first century CE. He coined the term to explain to non-Jewish readers the organization of the Jewish state during his era. He explained and compared the Jewish theocratic form of government with other forms, such as monarchy (supreme power held by a king or queen), oligarchy (supreme power held by a group of ruling and business elites), democracy (supreme power held by the people). Josephus insisted that the lawgiver of the Jewish people was not Moses but God himself, with Moses serving only as the channel of God's law (Driscoll, 2026).

Etymologically, "theocracy" derives from the Greek *theos* (God) and *kratein* (to rule). A theocratic state may thus be understood as a state whose system of government and political power are exercised in the name of the law and authority of God or of a particular religious teaching. A theocratic state treats God's law, or religion, as the chief source of state authority law and power (Driscoll, 2026; KPU, 2025; Umar, 2017).

The leader of a theocratic state is regarded as the representative of God or a deity, holding both religious authority and supreme power at once. The legitimacy of the leader's power derives not from the will of the people but from the will and law of God, as set out in the teachings of a particular religion. In a theocratic state, the religious institution is placed above the state, so that political decisions can not contradict religious teachings and laws, the sacred texts, or the spiritual principles that embody the will and law of God (KPU, 2025; Meanvis, 2026).

The theocratic state has several main characteristics that distinguish it from other systems of government. First, religion is the basis of state law: meaning that all legislation-including criminal, civil, constitutional, and administrative law, is drawn up on the basis of religious teaching. Second, the head of state holds religious authority and is therefore usually a religious figure or cleric. Third, religious authority strongly influences political decisions and policies. Fourth, sovereignty lies in the hands of God rather than the people. Fifth, the political freedom of the people is restricted, because excessive freedom of expression, association, and political activity may conflict with the law of God. Sixth, there is no separation between religion and the state (KPU, 2025; Meanvis, 2026). The world today still knows several theocratic or religiously grounded state states, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Brunei Darussalam, Pakistan, and Vatican City. In these states, religious teaching (Islam or Catholicism) is positioned as the basis of state law (Umar, 2017).

Secular State

A secular state is a state that remains neutral in religious matters. It does not adopt the teaching of any particular religion as the basis of its constitution, and there is a clear separation between religious institutions and the state. Nevertheless, a secular state is in principle not anti-religious, since it continues to protect the freedom of religion for all citizens. Nor does it ever prohibit a person from choosing not to adhere to any religion or belief (Jegalus, 2013). The idea of the secular state is a political idea closely tied to humanity's search for the best way of ordering a pluralistic society. This model of state was formed to defend the religious freedom of every citizen and to prevent any particular religion from dominating state or government policy (National Secular Society, 2025).

A secular state has several distinguishing features. First, there is a separation of powers between the state (government) and religion: religious bodies do not interfere in politics, law, or government. Second, it upholds the equal rights of every person: all citizens have equal rights and duties before the law, regardless of differences of religion or belief, or whether they are religious or not. Third, it guarantees freedom of religion: the state guarantees each individual the right to adhere to a particular religion or belief, to leave the religion or belief they hold, or to convert to another. Fourth, the state regards religion as an ordinary human association or organization formed by its members on personal or group initiative. Fifth, although religion is not suppressed by the state, it is not included in state policy (Jegalus, 2013).

Presidentcbk (2010) and the National Secular Society, 2025 state that the concept of the secular state is rooted in the philosophical view that human beings can govern their own lives and societies without depending on transcendent or supernatural powers or on religious institutions. This view underlies the separation of state and religion. The concept was first developed in Europe and then spread throughout the world, including Southeast Asia, and eventually reached Indonesia.

The chief principle of the secular state is the strict separation of religion and state. This principle ensures the autonomy of religious institutions and their freedom from government influence, and vice versa. The separation is important because it removes formal ties between religious organizations and government, prevents the establishment of a state religion, and guarantees the freedom and equal rights of every citizen in matters of religion (National Secular Society, 2025). Secular states today include India, Turkey, the United States, France, and South Korea, among others.

Many statesmen have been associated with secularism, among them Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Turkey), Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (United States), and Charles de Gaulle (France). Atatürk was convinced that the total separation of religion and state was the only path by which a nation could achieve civilizational progress. Nehru, holding the same conviction, insisted on making India a secular state after independence. He believed secularism to be the best means of preventing interreligious conflict (communalism) and of ensuring that adherents of all religions, whether the Hindu majority or the Muslim, Sikh, and Christian minorities, received equal rights and treatment before the law. Lee Kuan Yew

established a very strict system of secularism in Singapore, through which Singapore built social harmony, political stability, and economic meritocracy in a multiethnic society. In the United States, Jefferson and Madison regarded secularism and religious freedom as indispensable pillars of democracy. In this connection Jefferson coined the famous phrase "wall of separation between Church and State." This separation was held to be the best means of preventing the American government from being misused by a dominant religious group to oppress minorities.

On the whole, these statesmen held that a secularist relationship between religion and the state is the best option. In such a relationship, religion cannot instrumentalize the state to deceive the people in the name of God, and the state, in turn, cannot instrumentalize religion for the interests of the ruling power. This secularist pattern is regarded as "wisdom" gained through the long history and dynamics of the relationship between state and religion, particularly in the West (Mas'udi, 2026; Saifuddin, 2015).

The Religious Nation-State

From the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, people placed greater trust in the omnipotence of science and in scientific and technological progress. The knowledge, science, and technology supplemented the role of Go and the divine. As a result, religion was rejected in systems of government, since it was seen as lacking the competitive advantage needed to sustain progress, economic prosperity, and a more efficient bureaucratic structure. The dream of becoming a powerful nation state was the basic reason for abandoning religious tradition and transitioning toward a more secular and progressive state (Uzlaner & Stoeck, 2019).

By the end of the twentieth century, however, the projects of modernization, communism, and liberalism advanced by secular states had proved unable to answer many fundamental human problems, especially those concerning the practical moral life of modern people. What is a just society? How can war be prevented? How can the migration crisis be resolved? Scientists has also failed to solve the problems of death, suffering, disease, and poverty that modern humanity experiences. Because science and technology could not resolve these difficulties, religion has become a relevant again in this century. Religionhas a rich ethical, symbolic, imaginative, and poetic content that is highly useful for renewing the values of human life, including questions about the voluntary ending of life (Uzlaner & Stoeck, 2019).

The failure of knowledge, technology, and science to respond to these human problems led scholars to restore religion as an important element in the social structure of modern society. As a result, the relationship between religion and the state was reformulated as one of mutual need and complementarity, a proportional or symbiotic-mutualistic relationship. In this relationship the state guarantees freedom and facilitates the development of religion, while religion provides the moral and spiritual foundation for the conduct of the state. Countries that have historically and academically developed such a symbiotic-mutualistic relationship between religion and the state include Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, and

England. These states facilitate religious life and use religious values as the moral and spiritual foundation of national and state life.

Indonesia as a Religious Nation-State

When the idea of secularism spread into the Eastern world, including Indonesia, Indonesian society was divided into two groups: those who accepted and those who rejected it. The group that rejected secularism suspected that whatever came from the West, with its different cultural background, was fundamentally irrelevant to Eastern culture. They also feared that secularism could weaken the influence of religion in daily life. They rejected secularism and wanted the formation of an Indonesian (Islamic) religious state. National figures who fought hard for an Indonesian Islamic state included Mohammad Natsir (a leader of Masyumi, the Majelis Syuro of Indonesian Muslims), Ahmad Hassan (a founder of Persatuan Islam), and Kartosoewirjo (who aspired to an Indonesian state founded on Islamic law). Today, Amien Rais and Hidayat Nur Wahid are still said to long for the formation of an Indonesian Islamic state (Mas'udi, 2026; Lukito, 2018; Kamdani, et al, 2025).

Conversely, the group that supported secularism wanted religion to be seen as a private matter rather than a public one (the concern of the state and government). Their reasoning was that if religion were drawn into the public sphere, it could bring disaster, as had happened in the West. For this group, secularism was the best choice so that the state and religion would to carry out their respective tasks and functions in a proper way. Religion would be concerned with moral, ethical, and personal spiritual life, while the state would deal with public and governmental matters. Nationalist figures who supported the idea of a secular state included Soekarno, Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrir. All three wanted a more neutral state institution that would not be controlled by the law of any particular religion, including Islam. They expressed this view in the early debates over the foundation and constitution of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Mas'udi, 2026; Saifuddin, 2015).

After a long debate, and with a better and more balanced understanding of the context in which secularism arose in the West, the religious-nationalist leaders and the Indonesian people agreed that the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia would be neither theocratic nor secular but proportional, or symbiotic-mutualistic. In this system, religious (divine) values continue to be recognized without positioning any particular religion as the state religion. The first principle of Pancasila, Belief in the One and Only God shows that national life remains grounded in religious values. Religion was positioned as the source of morality and ethics in national and state life, not as an instrument for legitimizing political power. Among the figures who championed this idea of the relationship between religion and the state were K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim from Nahdlatul Ulama. The idea was subsequently sharpened by academics and religious nationalists known for advancing a moderate conception of the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia, including Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Ahmad Syafii Maarif (KPU, 2025; Lukito, 2018).

Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid on the Relationship between State and Religion

In the history of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia, Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid are known as icons of the renewal of Indonesian Islamic thought, because of their progressive, inclusive, and moderate perspectives on the relationship between religion and the state in the Indonesian context. Both sought to reconcile Islam with modernity, democracy, and pluralism, and to offer a friendly and adaptive interpretation of Islam (Barton, 2006; Effendy & Fausi, 2011; Tsania, 2025).

Nurcholish Madjid held that the state and religion (Islam) stand in a proportional relationship. They proceed in balance, respect one another, do not dominate one another, and each has a moderate rather than extreme share of influence. In this relationship the state has a rational and collective dimension, while religion has a spiritual and individual one. The state is more concerned with rational and collective worldly matters. He rejected the idea of Islam as an ideology, since Islam is higher than a mere ideology. Islam therefore need not demand that the state adopt it as the state religion. In national and state life, it is the substance or essence of Islam that should be advanced, not its highly symbolic formal expression (Tsania, 2025). He affirmed that the relationship between Islam and the Indonesian state is neither theocratic nor purely secular, but is based on the ideology and teachings of Pancasila (the five principles of life for the Indonesian nation and state).

The principle "Belief in the One and Only God" in essence carries the quality of the oneness of God (tawhid) as the basic foundation governing Indonesian national and state life. Religious believers in Indonesia should therefore accept Pancasila as the foundation of national and state life, since its values are justified by, and consistent with (not contrary to), the teachings of Islam. Pancasila also serves as the point of agreement among the many diverse groups of Indonesian society for jointly realizing a shared just, equitable, and prosperous national and state life (Abbas & Danial, 2020; Tsania, 2025; Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023).

Madjid also stressed that Indonesian Muslims need to explore and live out their Islamic identity (Islamic-ness) and their Indonesian identity (Indonesian-ness) in an integrated way. Islamic-ness refers to the values of Islamic teaching derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith, which uphold the principles of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy for all creation), justice, honesty, humanity, noble character, and the prosperity of all Indonesian people. Indonesian-ness refers to the identity and national consciousness rooted in the history of the Indonesian struggle, the values of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the spirit of unity amid diversity of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion (Unity in Diversity). The two are not to be set against one another (Abbas & Danial, 2020; Tsania, 2025; Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023).

This integration has in fact already taken concrete form since Indonesian Muslims accepted Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the foundation of national and state life. In Indonesia, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution hold the same position and function as Constitution of Medina-which drawn up in the Arabian Peninsula in 622 to end internal social conflict, build unity and harmony, guarantee freedom of religion, and uphold justice and equality. Madjid asked what

would be the use of a state that became an Islamic state if its content were not Islamic (Abbas & Danial, 2020).

When the New Order established Pancasila as the sole foundation of national and state life through Law No. 8 of 1985, Madjid was not worried that the role and influence of Islam in the country would be reduced. He even held that, although no political party fought for an Islamic state, Islam would remain a source of inspiration and aspiration for Indonesian nationhood. In this context, he coined a famous slogan in the 1970s: "Islam, yes. Islamic party, no" (Abbas & Danial, 2020).

As a consequence of this thinking, Madjid firmly rejected the concept of an "Indonesian Islamic State." In his view - the concept distorts the proportional relationship (a stable and constant relationship) between religion and the state in Indonesia. In that relationship, religion and the state need one another, work in synergy, respect one another, and interact in balance. Each has a clear share, function, and limit, without dominating or eliminating the other. He insisted that what matters most in national and state life lies not in the label "religion" attached to the state - but in the extent to which the values of goodness, justice, honesty, and prosperity taught by religion are truly lived and upheld in society (Abbas & Danial, 2020).

On the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid held that the existence of the state is essential for avoiding anarchy, and that Islam has no concept of the state. This means that the existence of Indonesia as a relatively secular and rational state must continue to be recognized and respected, so that the state can function as an institution that upholds law and maintains public order and does not fall into social chaos. Without a rational, just, and independent system of law and rules, the state cannot enforce law and order needed for the security and justice of common life, without favoring any particular group, ethnicity, religion, or faction (Rochmat, 2014).

Wahid affirmed that the Qur'an and the Sunnah never dictate a fixed form, system, or format for how a state must be founded, run, and defended. Islamic teaching offers no constitutional blueprint of the kind put forward by Marxism or capitalism, and it knows no fixed doctrine on the form of the state, whether kingdom, republic, or caliphate. Islamic doctrine emphasizes the substance of Islam rather than its symbols. What Islam stresses is not the formalization of a religious state or "Islamic State" but substantive values such as goodness, justice, honesty, equality, humanity, and welfare. Insofar as a state is able to realize justice and prosperity and to protect its people, as set out in the values of Pancasila, that state is consistent with the essence of the universal teaching of Islam (Rochmat, 2014).

Because Islam has no concept of the state, Muslims need not insist on establishing an Indonesian Islamic state and are instead open to accepting the Pancasila state. This openness rests on the plurality of the Indonesian nation and on the theoriesof the social and political sciences that the role of religion in social life will weaken, though not disappear, as modernization advances. In addition, the Charter of Medina has justified an inclusive Islamic politics that gives priority to the substance and universal values of Islam: goodness, justice, freedom, democracy (shura), and prosperity. These universal values of Islam accord with the values of the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights (Rochmat, 2014).

In the context of this relationship between religion and the state, Wahid advanced the idea of the indigenization of Islam, in which Islam consistently positions itself as a mercy or blessing for the whole universe (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). Islamic teaching should therefore be packaged and developed as a source of values for realizing peace, justice, and prosperity for all Indonesians, regardless of background. Islam has a universal mission: to spread peace, justice, honesty, and goodness, and to strive for the prosperity of Indonesian people and nation (Al-Quran Online, 21:107).

This concept of Islam as a mercy to all creation (*lil 'alamin*) should serve as the ethical and philosophical foundation of the practice of dakwah (Islamic propagation). In a modern society that is highly complex and beset by problems arising from globalization, religious and cultural pluralism, and the threat of extremism, Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin must continually reinterpret and actualize itself in order to remain relevant and effective amid societal changes. This reinterpretation involves treating dakwah no longer as merely the delivery of religious sermons but as an active and holistic effort to build a civilization that is inclusive, just, respectful of diversity, and prosperous. Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population and a wealth of diversity, is rightly an important laboratory for the actualization of dakwah rahmatan lil 'alamin (Tsania, 2025; Azra, 2002).

The Challenges Facing Indonesia as a Religious Nation-State

The agreement between nationalist leaders and the Indonesian people that the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia is neither theocratic nor purely secular has drawn protests from certain radical Islamic groups to this day. These groups continue to press for Islamic *sharia* to serve as the reference for national and state governance. For example, some time ago Senayan, Jakarta, was shaken by massive demonstrations demanding the enforcement of Islamic law in Indonesia. The demonstrations were organized by the FPI, the PPMI, and several hard-line Islamic mass organizations, which demanded that wording from the Jakarta Charter be included in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution as part of their effort to promote *sharia*. This alliance of conservative and radical Islam has often demanded the repeal of Pancasila as the Sole Foundation of the Guidelines for the Comprehension and Practice of Pancasila, and the comprehensive implementation of *syariat* in Indonesia. This old issue is raised repeatedly and not infrequently triggers polarization in society (Amelia, 2025; Sucahyo, 2018).

The demands of these radical groups have consistently been opposed by Indonesia's two largest Islamic mass organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. These moderate organizations regard the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Pancasila as a final agreement and the most effectives means of preserving harmony amid Indonesia's diversity of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Both see Indonesia as the common home of more than 280 million people spread across 38 provinces, with diverse languages, cultures, and religions. Preserving unity amid difference is clearly no easy task. Yet Indonesian history shows that *ulama* and religious leaders stood at theof the independence struggle. They united religious fervor and nationalism in one and the same struggle. The nation's independence was won not only through political and

military struggle but also through spiritual struggle. The *ulama* opposed colonialism during the independence struggle not merely for the sovereignty of the homeland but also to safeguard the dignity of the Indonesian people in accordance with divine values. From this came expressions now familiar to the Indonesian people, such as *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love of the homeland is part of faith) and "100% Catholic and 100% Indonesian" (Amelia, 2025). Utomo (2025) explain that the application of syariat as a state system is no longer relevant, because the ideologization of religion reduces it's essence. It amounts to treating religion as a merely complementary element in the concept of the nation-state, whereas the Pancasila state is already final. Moreover, Indonesia is a large nation composed of many ethnic groups, religions, and cultures. If this diversity is not properly accommodated by the nation and the state, it may give rise to social conflict and national disintegration.

A Pew Research Center survey conducted between 2018-2023 across of 102 countries asked two questions: how important religion is in your life, and how often do you pray? (Tempo, 2024). The results show very high religious commitment in Indonesia (98%), with daily prayer reaching 95%. By contrast, Indonesia's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index shows its ranking falling from 99 to 109 out of 180 countries. This indicates that Indonesians' view of the importance of religion and their diligence in worship have not greatly influenced the formation of the ethics and morality within Indonesia society and the nation (Transparency International, 2025; Masruro, et al, 2022).

Many of Indonesia's social problems, such as corruption, nepotism, and terrorism, are caused in part by insufficient appropriation of the noble values taught by religion. The universal values contained in religion, such as goodness, justice, peace, and prosperity, have not been integrated into daily conduct, including civic and national life. He therefore proposes that religious teaching and *dakwah (proclamation)*give greater priority to contextual and reflective approaches. In Islam this approach is expressed in the principle *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love of the homeland is part of faith). In Catholicism it is known as the principle of *Invocatio Dei* (inviting God into the life of the state). In Protestant Christianity, it is the principle of the Kingship of God (the Kingdom of God realized through living out social values animated by the teachings of Christ. In Hinduism it is the principle of *Dharma Negara* (the sacred duty of defending the homeland). Integrating religious values into a more contextual way of life is an obligation that every Indonesian citizen should take up. Combining religious values with national values in daily life is a source of strength for nation-building and for the empowerment of religious organizations themselves (Muvid, 2025; Kamdani, et al, 2025; In Hinduism, there is the principle of *Dharma Negara* (the sacred duty of defending the homeland). Integrating religious values into a more contextual way of life is an obligation that every Indonesian citizen should take up. Combining religious values with national values in daily life is a source of strength for nation-building and for the empowerment of religious organizations themselves (Muvid, 2025; Sucahyo, 2018).

Conclusion

A theocratic state is a state in which the system of government and political power is exercised in the name of God and a particular religion. It places God's law and religious teaching as the chief source of state law and power. The leader of a theocratic state is regarded as the representative of God or of a deity, simultaneously holding both religious authority and supreme power. The world today still recognizes several theocratic states, most notably Iran and Vatican City.

A secular state is a state that remains neutral in religious matters. There is a clear separation between religious institutions and the state. Even so, the state does not adopt an anti-religious stance; rather, it continues to protect freedom of religion and belief. The concept of the secular state is rooted in the philosophical view that human beings can govern their own lives and societies without depending on transcendent or supernatural powers. Secular states include India, France, the United States, South Korea, and Turkey, among others.

In the period before and after Indonesian independence, the relationship between religion and the state was fiercely debated between supporters of a secular state and supporters of a religious state. Those who rejected the secular state suspected that whatever came from the West, with its different culture, was fundamentally irrelevant to Eastern culture, especially Indonesia's. They feared that secularism would marginalize the influence of religion in national and state life. Supporters of a secular state held that religion should be seen as a private rather than a public matter. If religion were drawn into the public sphere, it could bring disaster, as it had in the West. A secular state, they argued, is the best choice if the state and religion are each to carry out their own tasks and functions in a proper way.

After a long debate, and with a full and balanced understanding of the context of the rise of secularism in the West (the Western secular state) and of spiritualism in the East (the Eastern theocratic state), the nationalist and religious-nationalist leaders and the Indonesian people agreed that the relationship between religion and state in Indonesia would be proportional (symbiotic-mutualistic). In this relationship, religious (divine) values remain recognized without positioning any particular religion as the state religion. Among those who championed this idea wasK.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, later reinforced by other religious-nationalist figures such as K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim (Nahdlatul Ulama), Nurcholish Madjid (Nahdlatul Ulama), and Ahmad Syafii Maarif (former General Chairman of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah).

The challenge facing Indonesia's religious communities today is how to make religion truly a source of moral and ethical life in civic and national life. The problems of corruption, collusion, nepotism, intolerance, and radicalism in Indonesia show that religion is not yet fully practiced as it should be. Indonesia as one of the world'smost devout nation, the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index shows its ranking falling from 99 to 109 out of 180 countries.

Recommendations

First, the official religious institutions in Indonesia need to strengthen the idea of a proportional (symbiotic-mutual) relationship between religion and the state, without making any one religion the state religion. Indonesia is highly plural,

and this approach helps avoid social conflict that could threaten the unity and integrity of the nation.

Second, Indonesia is a religious country, yet its religious values have not been lived as they should be. Religious teaching therefore needs to become more contextual. The universal values of religion, such as goodness, justice, honesty, humanity, solidarity, noble character, and prosperity, must be able to build awareness and shape the thinking and conduct of all Indonesians and national leaders, so as to foster an Indonesian society and nation that is just, safe, and prosperous, as set out in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution.

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