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Islamic Secularism In Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between Islam and secularism in Indonesia within a social, political, and educational context. Secularism is often understood as the separation of religion from state affairs and public life. However, in the Indonesian context, the relationship between Islam and secularism has distinct characteristics because Indonesia is neither a religious state nor a purely secular state. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of secularism's development in Indonesia and its impact on the lives of Muslims. The method used is a literature study with a qualitative approach through the analysis of various related literature, journals, books, and documents. The results of the study indicate that secularism in Indonesia has developed alongside modernization, globalization, and the development of democracy, particularly in the fields of education, politics, and culture. On the other hand, Islam continues to hold a significant position in the lives of Indonesian society, the majority of whom are Muslim. This situation has given rise to various responses, ranging from acceptance of modern values to criticism of secularization, which is considered to diminish the role of religion in social life. Furthermore, the relationship between Islam and secularism in Indonesia demonstrates an attempt to compromise between Islamic values and national principles. Therefore, a moderate understanding is needed to maintain a harmonious relationship between religion and the state without eliminating religious identity or democratic principles. This article is expected to contribute to thinking regarding the position of Islam in facing the development of secularism in modern Indonesia.

Keywords: Islam, secularism, Indonesia, modernization, relations between religion and state.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Education: Islam plays a vital role in the lives of Indonesians. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia embraces religious values not only as spiritual guidance but also as an integral part of its social, cultural, educational, and political life. Throughout the history of Indonesia's development, Islam has made significant contributions to the formation of national identity, the struggle for independence, and the formation of societal morals. Therefore, the existence of Islam in Indonesia is inseparable from the dynamics of national and state life.

On the other hand, the development of modernization and globalization has brought about significant changes in people's mindsets. Modernization has encouraged the emergence of various new ideas that emphasize rationality, individual freedom, and the separation of religious and public affairs. One impact of this development is the emergence of secularism. Secularism is a view that separates religion from the state system and social life. In Western thought, secularism emerged as a response to the overpowering dominance of religious institutions in political life and science. However, when the concept of secularism entered Indonesia, its understanding underwent adjustments to the social, cultural, and religious conditions of Indonesian society, which differed from those of Western countries.

Indonesia is not strictly a secular state, but it is also not a religious state. This is evident in the state ideology of Pancasila, which places Belief in One Almighty God as the first principle. This demonstrates the centrality of religion in national life. However, in practice, the relationship between religion and the state often sparks debate. Some groups argue that religion should be the primary foundation of public life and government, while others believe the state needs to maintain a neutral stance toward all religions to safeguard democracy and diversity. This debate demonstrates that the relationship between Islam and secularism in Indonesia is a complex and evolving issue.

In education, the influence of secularism can be seen in the separation of religious knowledge and general knowledge. Modern education tends to emphasize mastery of science and technology, while religious education is often viewed as merely complementary. This situation raises concerns that students' moral and spiritual values are diminishing. On the other hand, Islamic education strives to maintain the integration of science and religious values to develop individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess good morals and spirituality. Therefore, discussions regarding the secularization of education have become a crucial issue in the development of education in Indonesia.

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Beyond education, the influence of secularism is also evident in society's social and cultural life. Globalization has brought with it Western culture, which tends to be more liberal and individualistic. This has influenced the lifestyles of the younger generation, their patterns of social interaction, and even their perspectives on religion. Some people have begun to view religion as a purely personal matter and should not be overly involved in public life. This phenomenon has raised concerns about the erosion of religious values in Indonesian society, which has long been known for its religious character and its upholding of religious norms.

In the political sphere, the relationship between Islam and secularism has also been a significant topic of discussion. Since the early days of independence, debates have arisen regarding the place of Islam within the state, particularly regarding the foundation of the state and the system of government. Although Indonesia ultimately chose Pancasila as its foundation, Islamic political aspirations continue to develop in various forms. Some groups desire the application of Islamic values in public policy, while others favor an inclusive democratic system that is not dominated by any particular religion. These differing views demonstrate that the relationship between Islam and secularism in Indonesia remains a relevant issue requiring in-depth study.

Amidst the changing times, Indonesian society faces the challenge of maintaining a balance between religious values and the demands of modernity. Islam, as the majority religion, plays a crucial role in shaping society's morals and character, while secularism influences modern, more rational and open mindsets. If not understood wisely, differences in views between religious and secular groups can lead to social conflict and division within society. Therefore, a moderate and inclusive understanding is needed to ensure a harmonious relationship between religion and state without diminishing religious identity or democratic principles.

Based on this description, a study of Islam and secularism in Indonesia is crucial. This research aims to understand the development of secularism in Indonesia, how Muslims respond to it, and how it impacts society's social, educational, cultural, and political life. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Islam and secularism in the context of modern Indonesia.

THE HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAMIC SECULARISM

Linguistically, the word "secularism" comes from the Latin saeculum, meaning a specific time or place. More precisely, this word refers to the present and life in this world. Therefore, saeculum in English is often aligned with the word worldly, which means worldly things. So, simply

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put, secularism can be defined as a view that focuses only on the present life in this world, without considering spiritual matters, such as the afterlife, even though that is the main core of religious teachings. Terminologically, secularism means the idea of separating the state and religion. This means that the state is seen as an institution that regulates the life of society based on worldly or secular values without the interference of religious teachings.

Secularism is a belief that separates worldly life from the afterlife in all aspects, including religion, economics, education, politics, and social life. Secularism also supports the freedom of individuals to live their lives without religious constraints. In other words, secularism believes that all human activities and decisions are solely their own responsibility, without religious interference.

Secularism has become a topic that has captured the attention of many groups, including scientists, theologians, religious scholars, thinkers, and groups that study religion. This is because the worldly thinking developed by secularism often creates various problems. Secularism itself originates from the Western world, referring to the policy of separating religious affairs from government or the state. The concept of secularism, which has become part of Western culture, has then developed rapidly, so that almost everything is attempted to be secular. In this process, people tend to prioritize material life over spiritual life. Religion is considered a private matter and should not enter into public life. According to Sayyed Hosein Nast, secularization has succeeded in eliminating the spiritual element from various aspects of human thought and life.

Islamic education is not solely oriented toward the physical advancement of Islamic civilization. The manifestation of this textual civilization is not only thought and knowledge, but also practical deeds and works that can transform the future and provide a positive orientation for humanity. Islamic education, with a vision of advancing Islamic civilization, must be multidimensional, multicultural, and oriented toward the world and the hereafter.

In general, the term secularism is a doctrine that holds the view that religion should not interfere in state affairs or worldly matters, including political and cultural issues. The scope of religion is sufficient to include religious rituals only, therefore Islam does not have the potential for the realization of secularization development. This expression is based on Muslim scholars consisting of theologians or mutakallim, commentators or mufassiriin, hadith experts or muhadditsiin, Islamic philosophers, historians and others, although their discourses vary in their fields of Islamic studies.

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OVERVIEW OF ISLAM SECULARISM

Islam is a religion that regulates all aspects of human life, including relationships with God Almighty and social, political, economic, and educational matters. Meanwhile, secularism is a belief that separates religion from state affairs and public life, thus placing religion as a private matter for individuals.

In Indonesia, the idea of secularism entered through the influence of colonialism, modernization, and globalization. However, Indonesia does not fully adopt a secular or Islamic state system. Pancasila serves as the state philosophy, placing divine values as the foundation of national and state life.

In its development, secularism is seen in the tendency to separate religious values from various areas of life, such as education, politics, economics, and culture. This situation has had positive impacts in the form of the development of science, rationality, and professionalism. However, on the other hand, it can have negative impacts such as the declining role of religion, increasing materialism, and the emergence of a moral crisis.

Therefore, the relationship between Islam and secularism in Indonesia continues to be a crucial area of study. The challenge is how to combine modern progress with Islamic values to create a balance between worldly development and the spiritual life of society.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM IN INDONESIA

Secular education is a concept that emphasizes learning that is not based on any particular religion or belief. The history of secular education can be traced back to the Enlightenment in Europe, when public education systems began to develop as part of an effort to separate religion from the state. The development of public education systems in countries such as France and Germany in the 19th century is a prime example of this concept being put into practice. In many countries, secular education serves as a foundation for building inclusive and pluralistic societies. This is reflected in educational policies that emphasize the teaching of knowledge and practical skills without favoring any particular religion or belief.

The development of secularism in Indonesia is inextricably linked to the processes of modernization, colonialism, and globalization, which have influenced people's lives over time. Historically, the idea of secularism began to be recognized during the Dutch colonial era through the educational system, government administration, and Western thought introduced to Indonesian society. The system implemented by the colonial government tended to separate religious affairs from government affairs, thus indirectly introducing a secular mindset into public

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life.

After Indonesian independence, the debate over the relationship between religion and the state became a crucial issue in the formulation of the state's foundation. Some figures desired a state based on Islamic law, while others desired a national state that was not based on any particular religion. The resulting compromise gave birth to Pancasila as the state's foundation, which places Belief in the One and Only God as its first principle. Therefore, Indonesia is neither a secular state nor a religious state, but rather a state that recognizes and protects religious life.

Research results show that secularism in Indonesia has developed alongside the processes of modernization, globalization, and the development of democratic systems. Secularism entered through the influence of Western thought, which emphasizes the separation of religion from state affairs and public life. In the Indonesian context, secularism has not developed as completely as in Western countries because Indonesian society has a strong religious character and considers religion an important part of social and cultural life.

Indonesia adheres to the Pancasila state ideology, which places the belief in the One and Only God as the primary principle of national and state life. This demonstrates that the state continues to recognize the role of religion in public life. However, in political and educational practice, secularization has been observed, particularly in policy patterns that emphasize rationality, science, and modern approaches over spiritual values.

Furthermore, technological developments and globalization have influenced public mindsets, particularly among the younger generation. Some have begun to view religion as a private matter, deeming its involvement in the public sphere necessary to limit it. This phenomenon is one characteristic of the growth of secularism in modern Indonesian society.

SECULARISM IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

In education, research shows a separation between religious and general knowledge. Modern education systems tend to focus more on the development of science, technology, and job skills, while religious education is often positioned as a complement to the national curriculum. This situation demonstrates the influence of secularization in Indonesian education.

Several studies have shown that secularism in education can weaken students' moral and spiritual values. Education that is overly focused on material and academic aspects is considered incapable of shaping students' character and morals holistically. Therefore, many Islamic education figures emphasize the importance of integrating science and religious values so that education produces not only intellectually intelligent individuals but also individuals with good

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morals.

On the other hand, Islamic education in Indonesia continues to develop. This is evident in the government's increasing attention to religious education through national education policies and the strengthening of Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic universities.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE STATE IN INDONESIA

Secularism in education is a view that positions education as a process of developing knowledge and skills, independent of religious values. Within the secular paradigm, education places greater emphasis on rationality, objectivity, and a scientific approach to understanding various life phenomena. Religion is viewed as a private matter for individuals and therefore does not form the primary basis for curriculum development, scientific development, or the implementation of the learning process. As a result, education tends to be oriented toward academic achievement, technological mastery, and the needs of the workplace, rather than fostering students' spiritual and moral values.

The development of secularism in education in Indonesia is inseparable from the influence of the Western education system introduced during the colonial period. The Dutch colonial government implemented a modern education system that focused more on mastering general knowledge and the needs of government administration. This system indirectly created a separation between religious education, developed in Islamic boarding schools, and general education, developed in formal schools. This situation gave rise to a dichotomy of knowledge, namely the separation of religious knowledge from general knowledge, the influence of which can still be seen in the education system today.

Over time, modernization and globalization have further strengthened the phenomenon of secularization in education. Advances in science and technology have encouraged educational

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institutions to place greater emphasis on academic competency, technological skills, critical thinking, and global competitiveness. Educational success is often measured by academic achievement, test scores, graduation rates, and students' ability to enter the workforce. Meanwhile, aspects of character, morality, and spirituality development sometimes receive less attention than cognitive aspects and technical skills.

The influence of secularism in education can also be seen in the tendency of some students to view religious studies and general studies as two separate fields. Religious studies are often considered merely supplementary to the curriculum, while science, mathematics, technology, and economics are seen as more important because they directly relate to job and career needs. This view has the potential to diminish the role of religion as an ethical and moral foundation for the use of knowledge.

Furthermore, the development of information technology and digital media has brought with it a variety of global values and cultures that are not always aligned with religious values. Students have extensive access to a wide variety of information through the internet and social media. On the one hand, this situation provides significant benefits for the development of science. However, without strengthening religious and character education, students can be influenced by a culture of individualism, materialism, hedonism, and a consumerist lifestyle that contradicts religious moral principles.

From an Islamic perspective, education has a broader purpose than simply transferring knowledge. Islamic education aims to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, knowledgeable, and possess noble character, and capable of fulfilling their role as caliphs on earth. Therefore, Islam recognizes no separation between religious and general knowledge, as all knowledge essentially originates from Allah SWT and must be used for the benefit of humanity. The concept of integration of knowledge in Islamic education emphasizes that mastery of science and technology must be balanced with moral, spiritual, and religious ethical values.

In the Indonesian context, efforts to address the impact of secularism in education are implemented through various policies, such as strengthening religious education, character education, integrating religious values into the learning process, and developing a curriculum that balances the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of students. The presence of madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, integrated Islamic schools, and various religious-based educational institutions is also part of the effort to maintain a balance between mastery of knowledge and the formation of religious character.

Thus, secularism in education is a challenge that must be addressed wisely. Advances in

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science, technology, and modernization should not be viewed as threats, but rather should be integrated with religious values so that education can produce a generation that excels not only academically but also possesses high morality, spirituality, and social responsibility. Through this integration, education can play a role in shaping intelligent, character-driven individuals capable of facing the various challenges of life in the era of globalization without losing the nation's religious identity and noble values.

THE IMPACT OF SECULARISM ON SOCIAL LIFE

Secularism has a significant influence on social life. In general, secularism encourages the separation of religious values from various social activities, so that human relationships are based more on rational considerations, practical interests, and prevailing social norms. Over time, the influence of secularism can have both positive and negative impacts on social life.

On the positive side, secularism can encourage the creation of a more open, tolerant society that values diversity. In a pluralistic society like Indonesia, mutual respect for differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, and outlook on life is crucial for maintaining social unity and harmony. Furthermore, secularism also encourages a more rational mindset in resolving various social issues, so that decisions are not solely based on religious sentiment but also consider the common good and principles of social justice.

However, despite these positive impacts, secularism can also have various negative impacts on social life. One of the most frequently discussed impacts is the diminished role of religion as a guideline for regulating societal behavior. When religious values are increasingly marginalized from social life, individuals tend to prioritize personal interests over the common good. This situation can give rise to individualistic attitudes, weakening social solidarity and concern for others.

Furthermore, secularism also has the potential to encourage the growth of materialism, a view that places success in life solely on material achievement and worldly pleasures. As a result, values such as honesty, simplicity, responsibility, and social concern can decline. In society, these symptoms can be seen in the increase in unhealthy competition, consumerist behavior, and the decline in the spirit of mutual cooperation, which has long been a hallmark of Indonesian culture.

The influence of secularism can also be seen in changing patterns of social relationships. Technological advances and modernization, which often go hand in hand with the process of secularization, have changed the way society interacts. Social relationships that were previously built through direct interaction within the family and community are shifting to more individual

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interactions through digital media. If not balanced with moral and religious values, this condition can reduce the quality of social relationships and weaken family ties and togetherness within society.

From an Islamic perspective, social life must be built on the values of ukhuwah (brotherhood), justice, mutual assistance (ta'awun), and concern for others. Therefore, Islam views religion as having a crucial role in maintaining balance in social life and in creating a harmonious and morally upright society. The presence of religious values in social life serves as a moral guideline that directs individual behavior, oriented not only toward personal interests but also toward the common good.

Therefore, secularism has a complex impact on social life. On the one hand, secularism can encourage tolerance, rationality, and respect for diversity. However, on the other hand, secularism can also lead to a weakening of moral and spiritual values, increased individualism, and a diminished sense of social concern. Therefore, efforts are needed to balance social progress and modernization with the strengthening of religious values to create a harmonious, just, and moral society.

CONCLUSION

Secularism is an ideology that separates religion from public affairs and places it within the private sphere of individuals. In the Indonesian context, secularism developed through the influence of colonialism, modernization, globalization, and advances in science and technology. Nevertheless, Indonesia is not a secular state, as national and state life remains based on Pancasila, which recognizes the importance of divine values and the role of religion in society.

The development of secularism in Indonesia can be seen in various fields, particularly education and social life. In education, secularism is characterized by a tendency to separate religious knowledge from general knowledge, as well as an educational orientation that emphasizes academic aspects, professionalism, and the needs of the workplace. Meanwhile, in social life, secularism influences societal thought patterns and behavior through increased rationality, individualism, and materialism, as well as changes in social interaction patterns due to modernization and technological development.

Secularism has positive impacts in the form of the development of science, technological progress, tolerance, critical thinking, and professionalism in various areas of life. However, secularism can also have negative impacts, such as a weakening of the role of religion in daily life, a decline in social awareness, increased individualism and materialism, and the emergence of

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various moral problems in society.

From an Islamic perspective, religion not only regulates humanity's relationship with Allah SWT, but also regulates human relationships with others and the environment. Therefore, Islam rejects the absolute separation of religion and social life. Education, social life, and national development must remain grounded in Islamic values so that progress is not only material but also accompanied by the development of strong morals, ethics, and spirituality.

Therefore, the main challenge facing Indonesia today is how to integrate modern progress with religious values. The integration of science, technology, and Islamic teachings is a crucial step in creating a society that is advanced, competitive, and has character, while upholding moral and spiritual values in the life of the nation and state.

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