THE CALIPHATE PARADIGM AS AN ANTITHESIS TO IMPERIALISM: A THEOLOGICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS IN THE DISCOURSE OF ISLAMIC AND WESTERN CIVILIZATIONS

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Abstrak: Wacana peradaban global masih terjerat dalam asimetri epistemologis, di mana imperialisme Barat diagungkan sebagai simbol kemajuan, sementara Khilafah dicitrakan sebagai peninggalan despotisme. Studi ini mengkaji distorsi tersebut dan berargumen bahwa paradigma Khilafah yang berakar pada prinsip *tawḥīd* dalam Al-Qur'an merupakan antitesis teologis dan geopolitik terhadap dominasi antropocentris imperialisme. Melalui metode penelitian kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, artikel ini mengintegrasikan analisis wacana kritis, tafsir tematik Al-Qur'an (*tafsīr maudūʿī*), serta analisis geopolitik komparatif dengan pendekatan epistemologi dekolonial (Santos). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Khilafah memosisikan kedaulatan sebagai *amānah* ilahiah yang dijalankan melalui *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, berseberangan dengan struktur eksploitatif imperialism yang terbukti melalui sejarah penjarahan kekayaan dari wilayah-wilayah terjajah. Secara geopolitik, ideal *ummah waḥidah* (Q.S. Al-Anbiyā': 92) menantang warisan kolonialisme berupa fragmentasi, seperti Perjanjian Sykes-Picot, yang menyebabkan 78% negara berpenduduk mayoritas Muslim berada dalam kerentanan geopolitik. Dari sisi epistemologi, penelitian ini mengusulkan kerangka politik Islam yang otonom dengan mendekonstruksi konstruksi Eurocentris seperti konsep negara-bangsa, serta merekonstruksi *khilāfah* di luar narasi despotik ala orientalis (Said). Sebagai kesimpulan, Khilafah bukanlah romantisme sejarah yang usang, melainkan paradigma solutif yang berorientasi pada keadilan secara ontologis berakar pada *tawḥīd*, secara geopolitik berlandaskan solidaritas umat, dan secara epistemologis ditegakkan melalui ekologi pengetahuan yang telah terdekolonisasi. Paradigma ini menuntut pembaruan teologi politik Islam yang melampaui residu imperialisme dan menegaskan visi peradaban Islam yang autentik.

Kata kunci: *Khilafah; Imperialisme; Analisis Teologis; Geopolitik; Dekolonisasi.*

Abstract: *Global civilizational discourse remains entangled in epistemological asymmetries, wherein Western imperialism is exalted as a vehicle of progress while the Caliphate is vilified as a relic of despotism. This study interrogates such distortions, arguing that the Caliphate paradigm rooted in the Qur'anic principle of tawḥīd constitutes a theological and geopolitical antithesis to imperialism's anthropocentric domination. Employing qualitative library research, this paper integrates critical discourse analysis, thematic Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr maudūʿī), and comparative geopolitical insights through a decolonial epistemological lens (Santos). The findings reveal that the Caliphate positions sovereignty as a divine amānah, operationalized through maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, in stark contrast to the exploitative structures of*

imperialism evidenced by historical wealth extractions from colonized territories. Geopolitically, the Qur'anic ideal of ummah waḥidah (Q. 21:92) challenges colonial legacies of fragmentation, such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which has left 78% of Muslim-majority nations geopolitically vulnerable (FSI, 2023). Epistemologically, the paper advocates for an autonomous Islamic political framework by decentering Eurocentric constructs like the nation-state and rearticulating khilāfah beyond Orientalist tropes of tyranny (Said). In conclusion, the Caliphate is not a romanticized anachronism but a viable, justice-oriented paradigm—ontologically rooted in tawḥīd, geopolitically structured around unity, and epistemologically enabled through decolonized knowledge ecologies. It demands a reimagining of political theology that transcends imperial residues and asserts an authentically Islamic civilizational vision.

Keywords: *Caliphate; Imperialism; Theological Analysis; Geopolitics; Decolonization.*

INTRODUCTION

Discourse on governmental systems and global civilization cannot be separated from the dominance of narratives constructed through the lens of Western epistemology. In modern historiography, Western imperialism is often represented as the driving force behind modernization and the advancement of human civilization. Meanwhile, the Islamic Caliphate system is frequently reduced to a symbol of despotism, intellectual stagnation, and political backwardness. This disproportionate representation indicates a sharp narrative asymmetry between these two historical entities. The deeply rooted epistemological hegemony within historical writing has led to the conceptual delegitimization of the Caliphate in contemporary political science discourse (Gallien, 2024). The Caliphate's contributions to the development of legal institutions, governance ethics, and social justice are often overlooked or obscured. Therefore, a deconstruction of these biased and dominant narratives is an urgent necessity to reconstruct the Caliphate's objective position within the history of global civilization.

The roots of this issue are not merely historiographical but also paradigmatic. The Caliphate and imperialism are two entities founded upon fundamentally opposing philosophical and theological principles. The Caliphate paradigm is built on *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and the principle of transcendental sovereignty, which does not separate religion from politics and upholds the values of divine justice (Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024). In contrast, Western imperialism grows out of secularism and anthropocentric humanism, which centers human authority and prioritizes economic expansion and political domination as its main objectives. This tension produces an ontological conflict between transcendental values and secular materialism. This raises a fundamental question: is the Caliphate structurally an antithesis to imperialism? Or are there certain intersections that complicate this binary opposition? Such questions must be examined theologically and philosophically in order to gain a comprehensive understanding.

In addition to paradigmatic contradictions, there are also serious issues in the practice of power within both systems. Western imperialism has historically used the narrative of a "civilizing mission" as a moral justification for expansion, colonization, and resource

exploitation in other countries. On the other hand, the Caliphate has also faced criticism for the tendency to politicize religion in the pursuit of territorial expansion. After the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, the West launched systematic stigmatization against the idea of Islamic political resurgence. Terms such as "fundamentalism," "radicalism," and "political Islam" became instruments of delegitimization, blurring the lines between civilizational aspirations and extremism (Wijaya et al., 2025). Within this framework, the discourse of the Caliphate is juxtaposed with modernity in a false dichotomy. This hinders the emergence of a fair, scholarly, and open discourse regarding alternative models of governance based on Islamic values.

Another significant issue is the absence of a functional prototype of the Caliphate in the modern context. The lack of a contemporary institutional model that practically represents the principles of the Caliphate has led many to view it as a utopian and irrelevant concept. This situation is exacerbated by the legacy of imperialism, which fragmented the Islamic world into weak nation-states with artificial borders and sectarian conflicts (Mofidi, 2021). Such fragmentation not only weakens the political position of the Muslim ummah globally but also creates a complex geopolitical reality that is difficult to reconcile. Under these conditions, a fundamental question arises regarding the feasibility of reactivating the Caliphate as an integrative model capable of uniting the ummah (*jam' al-shaml*) in a highly fragmented postcolonial era.

Another prominent crisis is the total domination of Western civilization in the construction of global knowledge. From education and law to economics, the modern world has been built on Western paradigms and values. Amidst this hegemonic tide, the Caliphate faces a formidable challenge in formulating a counter-narrative that is not merely apologetic but genuinely constructive and solution-oriented. Ironically, many contemporary discourses on the Caliphate are still trapped within Western terminologies such as "governance," "sovereignty," and "statehood"—concepts that are not fully aligned with the spirit of Islamic political thought (Luhtitianti & Arifin, 2021). This dependency on Western concepts and frameworks reflects a deep epistemic crisis. Without epistemological independence, the Caliphate will remain merely a reaction to the West, rather than a self-standing alternative vision.

To address the complexity of these problems, this study aims to: first, analyze the paradigmatic position of the Caliphate as an antithesis to Western imperialism through theological and philosophical approaches. Second, to unravel the geopolitical dimensions of the relationship between the Caliphate and imperialism, especially within the context of the current fragmentation of the Islamic world. Third, to deconstruct epistemological biases in dominant historiography that have long distorted the legacy of Islamic political thought. Fourth, to formulate a conceptual framework for Islamic politics that is autonomous and free from the hegemony of Western terms and paradigms. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this research seeks to fill the theoretical gaps in contemporary Islamic political studies, which often remain reactive and insufficiently constructive.

Academically, this study is expected to contribute in three key areas. First, the decolonization of the epistemology of Islamic political studies by reviving the authority of *turāth* (classical Islamic heritage) as a foundational analytical source. Second, enriching critical Islamic studies through the integration of theological and geopolitical approaches,

which are rarely addressed in conventional scholarship. Third, deconstructing the assumption that imperialism represents a historical "progress" of humanity by exposing its exploitative and destructive dimensions. Fourth, offering a new perspective within postcolonial studies concerning alternative models of governance and civilization rooted in Islam. Thus, this research is not only normative but also aims to offer substantial conceptual contributions to global academic discourse.

Practically, the results of this research hold relevance in addressing the geopolitical and identity-related issues facing contemporary Muslims. First, its conceptual findings may serve as a basis for formulating frameworks to integrate the Muslim ummah across national borders. Second, it opens space for a more objective discourse on the concept of the Caliphate, free from both historical romanticism and ideological stigmatization. Third, it can strengthen the bargaining position of Islamic civilization in the realm of cultural diplomacy and global negotiations. Fourth, it contributes to the development of a governance model based on transcendental values such as justice, trustworthiness, and public welfare, as an alternative to the secular systems currently experiencing a legitimacy crisis. Therefore, this research is not merely theoretical but also bears significant socio-political implications for shaping the future of the Islamic world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using the *library research* method, aiming to examine and analyze the discourse of the Caliphate as an antithesis to imperialism from theological and geopolitical perspectives. Data were collected from a range of primary and secondary sources, including classical Islamic works (*turāth*), contemporary literature, academic journals, and books critiquing Western civilization. This approach emphasizes a critical examination of texts to uncover the dominant narratives that shape perceptions of the Caliphate and imperialism. The analysis process is conducted thematically and interpretively by identifying patterns of thought, conceptual contradictions, and geopolitical relevance within each epistemic framework. The study also employs the theory of the decolonization of knowledge as a critical lens to deconstruct the Western narrative hegemony in historiography and modern political science. The concept of *tawḥīd* is positioned as a key analytical category to distinguish between transcendental and secular power. Works by scholars such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Edward Said, Wael B. Hallaq, and Antony Anghie serve as primary references in constructing critical arguments. Data validity is reinforced through a source triangulation approach, by comparing various literatures from both Islamic and Western traditions. Thus, this library-based research is not merely descriptive but also analytical and critical in its effort to uncover epistemic and geopolitical conflicts between two civilizational paradigms.

The entire analysis is structured within an interdisciplinary framework that integrates Islamic theology, political thought, civilizational history, and postcolonial studies. The research examines texts and discourses contextually, in order to understand how the concept of the Caliphate is constructed, distorted, and delegitimized in global conversations. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed to trace power relations and dominance within academic texts, international law, and Western geopolitical narratives. In this framework, texts are not viewed as neutral, but as ideological arenas embedded with interests and values.

The study also applies the *mawḍū'ī* (thematic) method of Qur'anic interpretation to verses related to concepts of power, justice, and leadership of the ummah. Through a normative-transcendental approach, this research not only seeks to explain phenomena but also to offer a constructive framework for reconstructing an epistemologically independent and geopolitically relevant Islamic political system. Therefore, the library research method in this study is directed toward generating a constructive synthesis of thought in building an alternative paradigm grounded in the values of *tawḥīd*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Paradigm of *Tawḥīd* and Imperial Secularism

The *tawḥīd*-based paradigm in Islamic political thought asserts that the source of authority does not originate solely from human will, but stems from the transcendental sovereignty of Allah SWT (*ḥākimiyyah*). Within this framework, the Sharī'ah functions as both a normative foundation and an ethical-political framework that governs all dimensions of governance (Fuadi, 2024). This concept rejects the secularization of power that separates religion from politics and instead upholds that religion and state are inseparable entities. Ibn Taymiyyah, in *al-Siyāsah al-Shar'iyyah*, emphasized that governance is an integral part of the Prophetic mission, as the Prophet Muhammad was sent to reform the socio-political structures of the pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyyah*) society . This paradigm gives rise to a structure of authority that is not only legal-formal but also moral and spiritual, positioning power as a divine trust (*amānah*) to be exercised within the boundaries of Sharī'ah.

In contrast to the *tawḥīd* paradigm, imperial secularism functions as an ideological instrument that legitimizes colonial expansion by desacralizing colonized territories. Anthony Marx, in *Faith in Nation*, illustrates how European nation-states constructed their national identities by excluding religion from the public sphere, while ironically continuing to use Christian symbols to justify colonialism (Pramono & Sunarya, 2023). This is evident in the doctrine of *Manifest Destiny* in the United States and *Mission Civilisatrice* in France, which cloaked exploitative missions in the language of civilization. In this context, secularism is not ideological neutrality, but a hegemonic apparatus serving the interests of capital accumulation and global political domination.

The *tawḥīd* paradigm situates political power within a framework of transcendental accountability, wherein rulers are responsible before both God and the people. On the other hand, imperial secularism is rooted in anthropocentrism, where authority originates from human will and is detached from any transcendental ethical values (Six, 2022). Muhammad Iqbal, in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, argued that Western imperialism is the product of secularism, transforming the state into a power apparatus devoid of moral dimension. This ontological contradiction produces two vastly different political characters: the Caliphate binds rulers through the principle of *murāqabah ilāhiyyah* (divine oversight), while imperialism tends to absolutize power through *realpolitik* that recognizes no ethical limits.

The political aim within the *tawḥīd* paradigm is oriented toward realizing the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*—the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. In contrast, imperial secularism positions capital accumulation as the ultimate telos of power. Utsa

Patnaik's 2018 study revealed that 85% of India's wealth during British colonial rule was siphoned off to London, demonstrating the structural exploitation legitimized by secular ideology. Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, described colonialism as a machine for extracting resources from the Third World to sustain Western industrialization (Shabana, 2023). Meanwhile, in Islam, the concept of *khalīfah* (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 30) carries an ethical responsibility to manage the Earth with justice and trustworthiness, not as an object of exploitation.

Within the Caliphate system, political accountability is exercised through the principles of *muḥāsabah* (public evaluation) and *shūrā* (consultation), which provide mechanisms for correcting authority. Article 23 of the Constitution of Medina emphasizes the leader's responsibility to his people. In contrast, colonial imperialism implemented policies of *extraterritoriality*, granting legal immunity to colonizers within occupied territories. Historical records from Belgian Congo under King Leopold II, as documented by Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost*, show how systemic violence such as the severing of forced laborers' hands was legalized through secular legal structures. This illustrates the ethical chasm between the *tawḥīd* paradigm, which upholds divine justice, and imperial secularism, which legitimizes violence for economic gain.

The dominance of imperial secularism has produced a hierarchical world order through the construction of biased international legal frameworks. Antony Anghie, in *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*, argues that modern international law was crafted to define the non-Western world as "uncivilized" and therefore legitimately subject to domination (Persis, 2025). In contrast, the *tawḥīd* paradigm frames inter-civilizational relations within the principle of *taʿāruf* (mutual recognition, Qur'an, Al-Ḥujurāt: 13), encouraging dialogue and cooperation. The contemporary relevance of this paradigmatic confrontation is evident in the issue of humanitarian intervention, where secular states like the U.S. deploy the rhetoric of democracy to secure oil interests, as critically examined by Noam Chomsky. Conversely, the *wilāyah takwīniyyah* model—rooted in service and social justice—offers an alternative for establishing a more ethical and just global governance system.

The Epistemic Conflict between the Caliphate and the West

The epistemic conflict between the paradigm of the Caliphate and Western civilization fundamentally stems from ontological differences in the metaphysical foundations that undergird their respective constructions of knowledge. In Islamic epistemology—particularly as articulated within the framework of *tawḥīd al-maʿrifī*—divine revelation is positioned as the highest source of knowledge, establishing an integral relationship between objective reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and ethical-normative principles (*sharīʿah*). This implies the absence of a dichotomy between knowledge and values, or between facts and morality (Mawardi, 2018). In contrast, modern Western civilization—especially post-Renaissance and Enlightenment—embraced rationalism and empiricism as its core epistemic foundations, giving rise to positivistic and secular approaches to understanding the world. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, in *Islam and Secularism*, emphasizes that the West has divorced knowledge from values, resulting in a fragmentation of truth and a spiritual crisis in modern science. The implications of this divergence are profound: the concept of *khalīfah*

as articulated in Qur'an al-Baqarah [2]:30—which is theocentric and carries a divine cosmic mandate—cannot be properly defined within the framework of the secular nation-state (post-Westphalia), which excludes theological dimensions from the legitimacy of political authority (Al-Attas, 1993). Thus, this epistemic conflict is systemic and penetrates to the deepest layers of the structures of knowledge and authority in these two civilizational paradigms.

The hegemony of Western civilization over the Islamic world has not only been realized through military expansion and economic domination but also through epistemic colonization. This process has created what Michel Foucault referred to as *regimes of truth*—discursive formations that determine what is accepted as legitimate knowledge. Within this context, Islamic knowledge has been constructed as "the Other," often depicted as irrational, stagnant, and inferior in both academic and media representations. Anthony Anghie, in *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, argues that modern international law was essentially built to normalize Western epistemic dominance and justify the subordination of the non-European world within a formal legal framework (Belhaj, 2025). In Orientalist scholarship, figures such as H.A.R. Gibb and Bernard Lewis systematically framed the Caliphate as a form of "Oriental Despotism"—a narrative that is far from neutral, but rather deeply ideological, designed to legitimize colonial intervention in the name of a civilizing mission. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, refers to this practice as a cognitive strategy that transforms Muslims from historical subjects into objects of study and colonial control, placing them in an epistemically marginalized position.

Modern historiography, dominated by Western narratives, has become a site of epistemic contestation in which Islamic history—particularly the institution of the Caliphate—has suffered from reductionist interpretations and obfuscation of its contributions. Marshall Hodgson, in his monumental work *The Venture of Islam*, candidly acknowledges that the *madrasah*, *bayt al-māl*, and *waqf* institutions under the Caliphate played a foundational role in nurturing the Islamic scholarly tradition, producing figures such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Khwārizmī, and al-Ghazālī (Tanjung, 2023). Nevertheless, mainstream narratives in Western historiography tend to associate the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate with structural inefficiency or even with the supposedly authoritarian essence of Islam itself, as argued by Bernard Lewis in *What Went Wrong?* This view is critiqued by Cemil Aydin in *The Idea of the Muslim World* as a postcolonial geopolitical construct that reproduces narratives of inferiority. In this regard, historiography becomes a site of ideological production in which the collective memory of Muslims is co-opted to reinforce secular modernity and obscure the viability of alternative civilizational models.

The epistemic conflict between Islam and the West is also evident in the contestation over the meanings of key terms and concepts in Islamic political thought. Core terminologies within the discourse on the Caliphate and *sharīʿah* have often been distorted through translation into secular and liberal Western epistemic frameworks. For instance, the concept of *ijmāʿ* is often reductively equated with liberal democratic consensus, whereas in Islamic tradition *ijmāʿ* refers to the collective agreement of scholars based on the authority of revelation, not merely the will of the majority as in secular parliamentary systems. Asghar Ali Engineer, in *The Islamic State*, stresses that *ijmāʿ* cannot be reduced to majoritarian logic (Alatas, 1985). A similar distortion occurs with the concept of *jihād*, which is simplistically

associated with violence and terrorism in global security discourse, without distinguishing between *jihād difāʿī* (defensive struggle) and *jihād bināʾī* (civilizational reconstruction), as elaborated in classical *fiqh* literature. This process of semantic displacement is a form of epistemic domination that silences Islam's capacity for articulate political expression in the global arena.

Global academic institutions—especially in the West—play a dominant role in determining the boundaries and content of scholarly discourse on the Caliphate. Through gatekeeping mechanisms in academic publishing, epistemological standards are often set according to secular-positivist paradigms that are incompatible with Islam's normative-transcendental approach (Zarkasyi, 2012). Syed Naquib al-Attas, in *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, criticizes modern social science methodologies for failing to comprehend the *ummah* as a metaphysical and spiritual entity, rather than merely a sociological one (Al-Attas, 1993). According to 2023 data from Scopus, over 90% of academic articles on the Caliphate were authored by scholars affiliated with Western institutions, typically employing approaches that discredit Islamic political systems. Walter Mignolo, in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, calls this practice *epistemicide*—the erasure of non-Western knowledge systems to solidify Western modernity as the sole legitimate paradigm. As a result, alternative perspectives rooted in the Islamic tradition face systemic marginalization and academic underrepresentation.

Addressing this epistemic challenge requires not only a critique of Western dominance but also a transformative project of knowledge decolonization. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in *Epistemologies of the South*, proposes the idea of *ecologies of knowledge*—the recognition of epistemological diversity as a means to dismantle the West's monopoly on epistemic legitimacy. In the Islamic context, this entails revitalizing the *ʿulūm al-naqliyyah* as the foundation for a political framework rooted in revelation, as exemplified by al-Fārābī's vision of the *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City). Wael Hallaq, in *The Impossible State*, emphasizes the need to recontextualize *istiṣlāḥī* methodology to keep the Caliphate concept relevant in the modern age without sacrificing its *sharʿī* integrity (Belhaj, 2025). Meanwhile, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri calls for a critical reassessment of the structure of the Arab-Islamic intellect as a first step toward an equitable epistemic dialogue between civilizations. In this light, epistemic decolonization is not merely an academic agenda but a civilizational praxis that allows Islam to reposition itself as a historical subject and a legitimate architect of the global future.

Tawhid, Power, and Global Domination

Tawhid in Islam is not merely an abstract theological concept but an ontological foundation that radically reconstructs the meaning of power. Within the framework of *tawhid*, power does not autonomously belong to human beings but is a divine trust (*amanah*) that must be exercised within the paradigm of *istikhlāf* (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 30). In this view, power is not an instrument of domination but an ethical responsibility under divine oversight (*muraqabah ilāhiyyah*) (Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, 2007). Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasizes that the ruler, in the Islamic paradigm, is merely a representative (*khalīfah*) subject to the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*—the divine purposes of law and social order. This vision rejects secular models of power à la Locke and Hobbes, which originate from

human social contracts devoid of metaphysical grounding (Ifah, 2021). Thus, *tawhid* establishes a political system that integrates normative truth (ethics) and ontological truth (reality), rather than merely institutionalizing authority. It renders Islam philosophically incompatible with modern political systems based on secularism, which divorce power from divine values.

The secularization of power, especially since the Enlightenment, has birthed political structures that sever authority from moral-religious values. Max Weber described this as the rationalization of domination (*Herrschaft kraft Interessenkonstellation*), which creates mechanisms of power based on strategic interests rather than divine justice. This process became the foundation of modern imperialism, legitimized through various secular doctrines such as the *doctrine of discovery* and the *civilizing mission*. Anthony Anghie, in *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, explains how international law was crafted to unilaterally define power from a Western vantage point, disregarding the political epistemologies of non-European societies (Mahasneh, 2021). *Tawhid*, through the principle of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*, rejects the fragmentation of life into the sacred and the secular; all aspects of existence must orbit within the divine will. Therefore, global domination that divorces ethics from power is a metaphysical deviation firmly resisted by the *tawhidic* paradigm.

Today's global economic structure is far from neutral; it reflects a form of structural *shirk*—a denial of *tawhid* in the economic realm. The usury-based (*ribāwī*) system dominating global markets stands as a primary betrayal of *tawhid*. The Qur'an (Al-Baqarah: 275) explicitly forbids *ribā* because it engenders systemic inequality. Thomas Piketty, in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, reveals that global capital remains concentrated in the hands of former imperial powers, with capital-to-GDP ratios six times higher than those in former colonies. *Tawhid*, through mechanisms such as *zakat*, the prohibition of *ribā*, and bans on monopolies, demands a just distribution of wealth rooted in social solidarity (*takaful ijtimāʿi*). Walden Bello notes that developing nations' debt—reaching $11 trillion in 2023—has become a tool of neo-imperial control that traps Muslim economies in systemic dependence. As such, the global economic order constitutes a form of contemporary *shirk* that denies divine supremacy in managing wealth and financial power.

Tawhid necessitates the unity of humankind under transcendent values. In Islam, the principle of *ummah wāḥidah* (Qur'an, Al-Anbiyā': 92) rejects all forms of ethno-nationalist fragmentation—legacies of imperialism. Colonial projects such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Balfour Declaration (1917) deliberately partitioned the Muslim world into over fifty nation-states to facilitate control and geopolitical exclusion. Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, states that the modern political map of the Middle East is a Western construct designed to sustain dominance (Ifah, 2021). In contrast, the Constitution of Medina—crafted by Prophet Muhammad—demonstrated a pluralistic political model rooted in *tawhid*: ethnically inclusive but united by divine consciousness (*taqwā*). The 2023 Fragile States Index shows that 78% of Muslim-majority countries fall into high-risk categories—a consequence of colonial legacies that fractured *ummatic* solidarity into weak political entities. Hence, *tawhidic* geopolitics is not a utopian fantasy but a realistic alternative to the dysfunctional architecture of global politics (Al--Attas, 2014).

The solution to the crisis of unequal and hegemonic global power lies in epistemic decolonization rooted in *tawhid*. Ashis Nandy, in *The Intimate Enemy*, asserts that the deepest form of colonialism is the colonization of the mind, which strips individuals of their ontological framework. In the Islamic context, the reactivation of *tawhid* entails constructing a system of power that reinstates God as the central source of legitimacy—not man or secular institutions. This can begin with political reform toward a model of *khilāfah rāshidah* emphasizing *shūrā* (consultation) and *'adālah* (justice), standing in opposition to oligarchy and populism. In the economic sphere, Umar Vadillo advocates for a return to the gold *dīnār* as a usury-free monetary system. In geopolitics, Ibn Qayyim proposed the concept of *dār al-'ahd*—a model of international relations based on peaceful contractual coexistence rather than antagonism. As Frantz Fanon declared, "Imperialism is the sickness of modern man." Thus, *tawhid* is not merely a spiritual doctrine but an architecture of liberation: a project to build a post-imperial world that is just, meaningful, and rooted in divine values.

CONCLUSION

At the theological and epistemic levels, the Caliphate paradigm grounds political authority in the concept of *istikhlāf*—a divine mandate that necessitates moral and spiritual accountability. Unlike the secular and contractual structures of Western political systems, the Caliphate does not regard power as a human right or possession, but rather as a sacred trust (*amānah*) to be exercised within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This paradigm systematically resists the fundamentalist values of domination that underpin imperialism. Thus, the epistemic conflict between the concept of *tawḥīd*-based authority and secular capitalism is not merely doctrinal but strikes at the very legitimacy of the modern civilizational order.

Geopolitically, the legacy of imperialism has fragmented the Muslim world into weakened nation-states constructed through pro-Western international law and divide-and-rule strategies. The Caliphate paradigm offers an integrative vision rooted in the *ummah wāḥidah*, transcending national borders and reinforcing transnational solidarity based on a shared spiritual sovereignty. This affirms that the Caliphate is not merely a historical political system, but a viable geopolitical alternative for a just global civilization, free from ethno-nationalist domination and foreign intervention.

Therefore, any conceptual transformation of the Caliphate must go beyond nostalgic or reactionary impulses; it must be constructed as a project of epistemological decolonization encompassing political, economic, and legal reform. Reconstructing a governance model based on *sharī'ah*-oriented law, ethical justice, and social integrity provides not only moral legitimacy but also practical solutions to the post-imperial world order crisis. In this context, the Caliphate paradigm emerges as an alternative discourse that is not merely normative but also solution-oriented—offering a value-based framework for realizing a global system grounded in universal welfare and transcendental justice.

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