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**POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS OF ISLAM DURING  
THE SAFAVID AND MUGHAL DYNASTIES****\*<sup>1</sup>Muntako, <sup>2</sup>Kholid Mawardi**<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri PurwokertoEmail: <sup>1</sup>244120600052@mhs.uinsaizu.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>kholidmawardi@uinsaizu.ac.id**Abstract**

This study explores the political and religious dynamics of Islam during the Safavid Dynasty in Persia and the Mughal Dynasty in India, using a library research method. Both were major Islamic empires from the 16th to the 18th century that played significant roles in shaping religious identity and systems of Islamic governance in the East. The Safavid Dynasty is known for its theocratic governance and establishment of Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion, while the Mughal Dynasty is recognized for its pluralistic approach and tolerance of religious diversity. The findings indicate that both dynasties utilized religion as a source of political legitimacy, but with different strategies and consequences. This article offers a conceptual comparison between the exclusive Safavid model and the pluralistic Mughal model, highlighting their relevance to contemporary discussions on Islam and politics.

**Keywords:** Safavid Dynasty, Mughal Dynasty, Islamic politics, Shi'ism, religious pluralism

**Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini membahas dinamika politik dan keagamaan Islam pada masa Dinasti Safawiyah di Persia dan Dinasti Mughal di India dengan menggunakan metode kepustakaan (library research). Keduanya merupakan dua imperium Islam besar pada abad ke-16 hingga ke-18 yang memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk identitas keagamaan dan sistem pemerintahan Islam di kawasan Timur. Dinasti Safawiyah dikenal dengan penerapan teokrasi dan penetapan mazhab Syiah Itsna Asyariah sebagai agama resmi negara, sedangkan Dinasti Mughal dikenal dengan pendekatan pluralistik dan toleransi terhadap keragaman agama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua dinasti menggunakan agama sebagai dasar legitimasi politik, namun dengan strategi dan implikasi yang berbeda. Artikel ini menawarkan perbandingan konseptual antara model pemerintahan eksklusif Safawiyah dan model pluralis Mughal, serta relevansinya terhadap wacana Islam dan politik di era kontemporer.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Dinasti Safawiyah, Dinasti Mughal, politik Islam, Syiah, pluralisme agama.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The history of Islam reflects not only the theological development of a religion but also the social, cultural, and political dynamics that have shaped Islamic civilization over time. Islam has served as a transformative force that has shaped institutions, systems of government, and patterns of intergroup relations within society. In the context of world history, this religion plays a significant role not only as a spiritual system but also as the foundation of state power and complex cultural expansion. One crucial period in Islamic history that reflects this complexity is the era of the emergence of various dynasties and

great empires that served not only as political rulers but also as the primary guardians and interpreters of Islamic teachings within their respective spheres of influence. Among these great dynasties, the Safavids in Persia and the Mughals in India held a highly strategic position in shaping the map of power and Islamic identity in East Asia during the early modern period (Lapidus, 2014).

These two dynasties emerged almost simultaneously, around the 16th century, yet arose from vastly different historical, cultural, and religious contexts. The Safavid Dynasty, which originated from a Sufi order that flourished in Ardabil, Persia, transformed into a major political power that established Twelver Shi'ism (Itsna Asyariah) as the state doctrine. This was a revolutionary policy, given that Persia had previously been a predominantly Sunni region. The establishment of Shia as the official school of thought was not merely theological but also a strategic move to forge a political and cultural identity that distinguished Persia from other Sunni Islamic powers, particularly the Ottoman Caliphate. Furthermore, under the Safavids, Shiism became not only a religious identity but also the basis for the state's legitimacy. Thus, Safavid power symbolized the rise of Shiism as a state power capable of challenging Sunni dominance in Islamic history (Arjomand, 1984; Madelung, 2003).

Meanwhile, the Mughal Dynasty emerged as a result of the military and political expansion of Babur and his descendants, who were of Turco-Mongol descent and rooted in the Sunni Islamic tradition. They ruled the Indian subcontinent, a region highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, and especially religion. The primary challenge of Mughal governance was not merely managing power but also fostering social cohesion within a society comprising a Hindu majority, as well as Muslim, Sikh, Jain, and Christian minorities. Emperor Akbar, one of the most visionary rulers in Mughal history, addressed this challenge through an inclusive political approach that reflected a spirit of religious tolerance and multiculturalism. Akbar abolished the jizyah tax for non-Muslims, established interfaith discussion forums (Ibadat Khana), and even initiated Din-i Ilahi as a syncretic effort to integrate the moral values of the major religions in India. This approach marked a systematic effort to make Islamic power in India a unifying force, rather than a coercive one (Eaton, 2019; Richards, 1995).

The fundamental differences between the two dynasties reflect two major models in the relationship between Islam and power. On the one hand, the Safavid model demonstrates how theology can serve as the foundation of a state and become a tool for reinforcing the exclusive identity of a society. In this context, state and religion merge into a theocratic system where the ruler is regarded as God's representative, and only one form of religious truth is recognized. On the other hand, the Mughal model demonstrates the flexibility of Islam as a force capable of adapting to the conditions of a pluralistic society. Islam, in the Mughal context, was not constructed as an instrument of identity imposition, but as a vehicle for socio-political integration that accommodated diversity and prioritized justice and social harmony (Lapidus, 2014; Hodgson, 1974).

A comparative study of the Safavid and Mughal dynasties is important because both not only carved out a significant place in the history of the Islamic world but also left an ideological and political legacy that remains influential to this day. The Sunni–Shia polarization, exacerbated by Safavid policies, remains a source of tension across various regions of the Islamic world, particularly in the geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Sunni Arab states. Meanwhile, the legacy of religious tolerance and pluralism bequeathed by the Mughal government, especially during the reign of Akbar, offers important lessons regarding the possibility of building an inclusive and peaceful Islamic society within a multicultural framework. In the contemporary era, where the relationship between religion and the state has once again become a subject of debate in various Muslim countries, these lessons from the past are highly relevant as material for reflection and inspiration (Nasr, 2006; Eaton, 2019).

Thus, this paper aims to critically and comparatively explore the political and religious dynamics of Islam during the Safavid and Mughal dynasties. The primary focus of this study includes an analysis of religious policies, the role of religious scholars in government, sources of power legitimacy, and the socio-political impacts of implementing religious systems in both dynasties. The approach employed is historical-critical, drawing on relevant primary and secondary sources, both from classical Islamic literature and from contemporary studies in the fields of history, Islamic politics, and religious studies. It is hoped that this study will not only enrich our understanding of Islamic history but also contribute to the scholarly discourse on the relationship between religion and power in modern Muslim societies (Hodgson, 1974; Lapidus, 2014; Eaton, 2019).

## **METHOD**

This study employs a literature review method (*library research*), which involves analyzing various written sources as the primary data (Zed, 2004). In this approach, the researcher does not go directly into the field but instead collects data and information from various relevant references, such as history books, scientific journals, academic articles, official documents, as well as classical and contemporary sources discussing the Safavid and Mughal dynasties (George, 2008). The literature review method was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, namely to understand, both historically and conceptually, the political and religious dynamics of Islam during the era of these two great dynasties. This approach allows the researcher to analyze data in depth based on historical narratives that have been documented and analyzed by both Muslim and Western historians and scholars (Hodgson, 1974; Arjomand, 1984).

The research process began with the identification of the main issue, namely the relationship between political power and religious practices in the Safavid and Mughal contexts. This was followed by a data collection process through systematic literature review. Primary sources include classical works in Islamic history, such as *Tarikh al-Tabari*, *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, as well as secondary sources such as works by modern

historians, including Bernard Lewis, Marshall Hodgson, and Richard Eaton (Eaton, 2019; Lewis, 2002). Additionally, literature discussing theories of power and religion was utilized to strengthen the analysis, such as Max Weber's theory of religious legitimation in power and the concept of the ulama–umara relationship in classical Islamic politics (Weber, 1978; Lapidus, 2014).

Furthermore, the data is analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach, which involves describing historical facts and then critically analyzing them to identify patterns, differences, and the implications of the political and religious policies implemented by both dynasties (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this way, the research is not merely narrative but also argumentative and interpretive. Through this method, it is hoped that the study will provide a complete and comprehensive picture of how Islam interacted with power within the context of the Safavid and Mughal dynasties, as well as highlight each dynasty's contributions to the development of Islamic civilization in the East (Lapidus, 2014; Richards, 1995).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A study of political and religious dynamics during the Safavid and Mughal dynasties reveals that both dynasties played a significant role in shaping the regional face of Islam through distinct power strategies, yet both were rooted in the interests of religious legitimacy and state stability. The findings reveal significant contrasts between the two models of power, particularly in how religion was utilized as a state instrument and how the state defined its religious identity.

### **1. The Theocratic Model and Religious Exclusivism in the Safavid Dynasty**

The Safavid Dynasty (1501–1736) marked a pivotal chapter in Islamic history by establishing a state grounded in the principles of theocracy and religious exclusivism, particularly by affirming the Twelver Shi'a school as the ideological foundation of the state in the Persian region. The rise of the Safavids was not solely due to military strength, but rather to a profound ideological and religious transformation that radically altered the political and social landscape of the region. In the Safavid model of governance, the ruler was positioned not merely as a secular king but also as a spiritual leader possessing divine authority, thereby uniting political and religious power into an inseparable entity (Arjomand, 1984). This system placed religion as the primary foundation of the legitimacy of power, while also serving as a tool for shaping a distinct socio-political identity that set the Safavids apart from other Sunni Islamic powers in the region, particularly the Ottoman Caliphate, which was their primary rival at the time. Thus, the Safavid theocracy not only strengthened the governmental structure but also consolidated ideological and cultural unity within Persian society, which had previously been diverse in its beliefs (Arjomand, 1984).

#### a. The Theocratic Legitimacy of Shah Ismail I

Shah Ismail I (1487–1524) was a central figure in the formation of the Safavid Dynasty, and his success in consolidating power in Persia was closely linked to the Sufi-oriented background of the Safavid order. This order was originally a Sunni religious movement with a strong Sufi character and a base of spiritual loyalty among its followers in Azerbaijan and the surrounding regions. However, over time, particularly in the period leading up to Shah Ismail's emergence as a leader, the order underwent an ideological transformation into a militant Twelver Shi'ite movement (Arjomand, 1984).

This transformation was not only theological but also political. Ismail utilized his spiritual charisma to form a militant force known as the Qizilbash (meaning “red-headed,” referring to their red head coverings as a symbol of loyalty to Shi'ism). The Qizilbash followers did not merely view Ismail as a worldly king, but as a semi-divine figure—that is, as a *mazhar-i ilahi* or a manifestation of God on earth. Within the extreme Shi'ite tradition that emerged during that era, such a position carried strong theocratic implications: the political leader was also God's representative or even possessed divine elements within himself (Madelung, 2003).

Based on this concept, the Safavid system of government was built on the foundation of an exclusive theocracy—a state where law, identity, and power were all based on a single interpretation of religion, in this case, Twelver Shi'ism. All other forms of belief, including Sunni Islam, which had previously been dominant in Persia, were considered deviant and, in many cases, systematically eradicated. The state served as a means to enforce conversion to Shiism, whether through proselytization, education, or symbolic and physical violence. This distinguishes the Safavid model from other Islamic dynasties, such as the Ottomans or the Mughals, which tended to be more pluralistic (Lapidus, 2014).

Within this structure, the ruler is not merely an enforcer of religious law but is an integral part of the theological construct itself. Consequently, the people are not only obligated to obey the king as a political leader but also as the embodiment of divine will. Obedience to the king is equated with obedience to God, and violations of state policy are regarded as violations of sharia. This conception reinforces the state's position as the supreme religious authority and renders its political system highly closed to diversity (Arjomand, 1984).

Thus, it can be concluded that Shah Ismail I established a system of government in which religion and power became an inseparable unity, and where religious exclusivity served as the foundation of political legitimacy. This model not only shaped the religious character of Persia to this day but also gave rise to sectarian tensions that have significantly influenced the dynamics of the global Islamic world.

## b. Shiism as the State School of Thought and Ideological Standardization

The Safavid Dynasty's establishment of Twelver Shi'ism as the official state doctrine represents one of the most significant and transformative policies in Islamic history, particularly in the Persian region. This policy not only altered the theological configuration of Persian society but also served as the ideological foundation of the Safavid state. Prior to the rise of this dynasty, Persian society generally adhered to Sunni schools of thought, particularly the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools. However, after Shah Ismail I ascended the throne and proclaimed Twelver Shi'ism as the official state school of thought in 1501, a mass and systematic conversion to the Shi'i school was carried out through various political, social, and religious strategies (Ghambari-Tabrizi, 2001).

This ideological transformation was not merely a religious process but a massive political project to build a new collective identity distinct from the surrounding Sunni environment, particularly the Sunni-adhering Ottoman Caliphate and Mughal Dynasty. In this context, sectarian homogenization became crucial as a tool for fostering internal solidarity and external differentiation. The state leveraged both administrative and religious authority to support this initiative, such as by establishing Shia educational institutions, replacing Sunni imams and khatibs with Shia scholars, and eliminating Sunni Islamic elements from worship practices and legal systems (Newman, 2006).

The Safavid government systematically removed all Sunni symbols and figures from the public sphere. The names of the Rightly Guided Caliphs other than Ali ibn Abi Talib were banned from being mentioned in sermons, Sunni religious texts were prohibited from circulation, and veneration of figures such as Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman was considered a serious offense. In many cases, Sunni scholars were even oppressed, persecuted, or forced to leave Safavid territories. Sectarian tensions escalated sharply as the state positioned itself as the sole legitimate authority on religious truth, and any deviation from the Imami Shi'ite line was viewed as a threat to state stability (Ghambari-Tabrizi, 2001).

This ideological standardization was also carried out through religious outreach and education. State-supervised religious schools were specifically designed to instill Shi'ite teachings in the younger generation. Clerics loyal to state policy were given a major role in spreading the doctrine, even to the remotest corners of the realm. In this regard, the state acted not only as a protector of religion but also as a controller of the religious narrative. Religion became a state instrument for shaping citizens who were ideologically uniform and politically loyal (Newman, 2006).

This entire process demonstrates that the political legitimacy of the Safavid Dynasty rested on theological uniformity. In this model, loyalty to the state is synonymous with loyalty to the official school of thought. Consequently, there is no room for pluralism or diversity of schools of thought. Diversity is viewed as a source of conflict and a threat to national unity. Thus, the state actively eradicates such diversity through closed and exclusive ideological policies (Ghambari-Tabrizi, 2001).

The impact of establishing Shia as the state sect was immense and long-lasting. Persia became the primary center of Shia Islam in the Islamic world, and this role persisted into the modern era with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, on the other hand, this policy also deepened the sectarian divide between Shia and Sunni, the effects of which are still felt today in geopolitical relations in the Middle East. The legacy of the Safavid Dynasty was a state that was ideologically strong, but also one that established a power system closed off to intra-Islamic diversity (Newman, 2006).

### c. The Central Role of the Ulama in the State Structure

Within the Safavid Dynasty's system of government, Shia ulama held a highly central and strategic position within the state structure. While during earlier periods of Islamic rule, particularly in the Abbasid era and even during the Ottoman period, the ulama held a relatively autonomous position as an external body issuing fatwas and providing moral oversight of the rulers, under the Safavids the ulama were officially integrated into the state bureaucracy. They were no longer merely observers and advisors but became an active part of the government. Positions such as the *sadr* (head of religious affairs), *qadi* (religious judge), and *mujtahid* (Shia jurist) were established as official posts directly appointed by the state to administer and enforce the law based on the Twelver Shia interpretation (Lapidus, 2014).

This integration created a symbiotic relationship between political power and religious authority. The Safavid state derived spiritual legitimacy from the Shia ulama, particularly by presenting itself as the guardian of the purity of the Shia school of thought and the champion of the values of the Imamate. In return, the ulama gained administrative and economic authority, such as control over the management of waqf, the religious education system, and Sharia legal jurisdiction. Thus, the ulama's role within the state was not merely that of moral guides but also as administrators of the law and holders of control over many aspects of public life (Mottahedeh, 1985).

Furthermore, the presence of ulama within the state structure also served as guardians of the official ideology against external threats, particularly from the Sunni school of thought and the hegemony of the Ottoman Caliphate. The state positioned the ulama as the vanguard in combating external religious influences, whether through scholarly debates, the publication of official texts, or offensive da'wah. Safavid ulama produced numerous polemical works that attacked the theological foundations of Sunni Islam while simultaneously reinforcing the doctrine of Imamah and the superiority of the Shia school within the narrative of Islamic history. On the other hand, the state granted them full authority to crack down on doctrinal deviations or the emergence of non-conformist religious movements (Lapidus, 2014).

This fusion of the roles of the ulama and the state exemplifies an institutional theocracy, where state law is fully enforced based on official religious doctrine, and spiritual authority not only supports the ruler but becomes an integral part of the state itself. The ulama not only legitimized the Shah's power theologically but also actively participated

in day-to-day governance, from the courts to social policies. This marked a shift in the role of the ulama from critics of power to the very pillars of that power (Mottahedeh, 1985).

#### d. Conflict with the Ottoman Caliphate and Sunni–Shia Polarization

The Safavid Dynasty's policy of establishing Twelver Shiism as the state's official identity sparked serious tensions with the Ottoman Caliphate, which at the time represented the greatest Sunni power in the Islamic world. The tensions between these two empires were not merely based on territorial disputes and geopolitical influence but carried a very strong ideological dimension. The Ottomans viewed Shiism as a deviation from orthodox Islamic teachings, while from the Safavid perspective, the authority of the Sunni caliph was regarded as an illegitimate political legacy lacking spiritual foundation. This conflict frequently featured elements of sectarian rhetoric, which exacerbated tensions and deepened hostility among Muslims of different sects (Hodgson, 1974).

The resulting tensions escalated into open warfare, as in the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, where Ottoman forces under Sultan Selim I defeated the Safavid army and occupied parts of western Persia. This defeat marked the limits of Safavid military power and forced them to strengthen their internal ideology as compensation for their territorial loss. On the other hand, the Ottoman victory in the conflict strengthened their legitimacy as protectors of Sunni Islam. Each side subsequently intensified religious propaganda to justify their positions and policies. Religious texts were published to disparage the opposing sect, and scholars from both sides became part of the state's ideological apparatus (Hodgson, 1974).

This conflict had implications not only locally or regionally but also far-reaching effects across the Islamic world. The Sunni–Shia polarization, intensified by the conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans, left a long and painful historical legacy. It established a kind of ideological fault line that persists into the modern era. The tension between Iran, as the heir to the Safavid Shia legacy, and Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia is a contemporary reflection of that conflict. In other words, the sectarian division that appears to be theological is actually also a legacy of state-sponsored political conflict. Therefore, the Sunni-Shia conflict cannot be understood solely within a religious framework but must be viewed as part of the dynamics of power and political identity since the early modern era (Nasr, 2006).

The consequences of this polarization are also reflected in how each community views Islamic history. In the Sunni world, the Safavid Dynasty is often seen as the cause of the Muslim community's division and the spread of heresy, while in the Shia narrative, the Safavids are positioned as defenders of the true essence of Islam, which had been oppressed for centuries under Sunni dominance. This perspective is passed down through education, popular culture, and religious rhetoric, which continue to shape how Muslims understand one another to this day. This polarization, which began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century,

ultimately became a latent source of sectarian conflicts across various regions of the Islamic world, from the Middle East to South Asia (Nasr, 2006).

## **2. Religious Pluralism and Tolerance under the Mughal Dynasty**

The Mughal Dynasty, in contrast to the theocratic and exclusive approach developed by the Safavid Dynasty—particularly during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1542–1605)—presented a more pluralistic and accommodating face of Islam toward religious and cultural diversity. Akbar inherited an empire composed of a highly diverse population, with a Hindu majority and Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Christian, and various other local religious minorities. In such a complex social context, the imposition of religious homogenization was not considered an effective strategy for maintaining political and social stability. Therefore, Akbar established a political approach emphasizing religious tolerance and interfaith reconciliation as the cornerstone of his governance. One concrete step was the abolition of the *jizyah* tax previously imposed on non-Muslims, as a form of inclusion and respect for the diversity of communities within his realm (Richards, 1995).

Akbar's policies were not merely administrative but also encompassed cultural and spiritual dimensions. He established the *Ibadat Khana*, a forum for interfaith discussion and dialogue that brought together religious leaders from Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Christianity, and Buddhism. This forum served as an open space for diverse interfaith perspectives, where Akbar functioned not merely as a ruler but also as an active listener and intellectual observer of various religious teachings. This spirit of cosmopolitanism and intellectual openness became a defining characteristic that distinguished the Mughal government from other Islamic regimes of its time. As the culmination of these pluralistic efforts, Akbar introduced the doctrine of *Din-i Ilahi*, a syncretic form of belief that unites the moral and spiritual values of the major religions. Although *Din-i Ilahi* never became a widely adopted religion, this initiative demonstrated Akbar's orientation toward fostering interfaith harmony and distancing himself from exclusive dogmatism (Eaton, 2019).

Akbar's political approach demonstrated that religion was not merely a dominant tool for legitimizing power, but also a vital medium for fostering social cohesion within a pluralistic society. From the Mughal perspective, the stability and survival of the state were more easily achieved through respect for differences and diversity, rather than through the imposition of uniformity. This policy underscores the importance of cultural integration and respect for diversity as a source of political strength. It was this strategy that enabled the Mughal Dynasty to endure for centuries with a relatively low level of sectarian conflict compared to other Islamic dynasties of the same era (Lapidus, 2014).

Nevertheless, this pluralistic approach was not without challenges. Some segments of the traditional Muslim elite criticized Akbar's policies as a deviation from Islamic orthodoxy, particularly when *Din-i Ilahi* was perceived as relativizing religious truth and weakening authentic Islamic teachings. This criticism intensified during the reigns of Akbar's successors, such as Aurangzeb, who subsequently adopted a more legalistic and orthodox

approach to the application of Islamic law. Nevertheless, Akbar's legacy remains a crucial foundation in the historical narrative of Islam in India, where Islam demonstrated its capacity to coexist peacefully and creatively with existing religious and cultural pluralism (Richards, 1995; Eaton, 2019).

### **3. Comparisons and Political-Religious Implications**

A comparison between the Safavid and Mughal dynasties reveals two vastly different models of the relationship between religion and state in the Islamic world. The Safavid dynasty adopted an exclusive, dogmatic, and theocratic approach, in which the state not only established a single school of thought as the official doctrine but also used political power to eradicate all forms of religious diversity. This model produced a rigid system of power that was intolerant of differences, although it proved effective in building a strong Persian national identity consistent with the Twelver Shi'ite ideology. This Safavid approach emphasized ideological unity as the unassailable foundation of political legitimacy, thereby causing deep polarization and sectarian tensions (Lapidus, 2014; Hodgson, 1974).

In contrast, the Mughal Dynasty, particularly under Akbar's reign, adopted a pluralistic, adaptive, and pragmatic model in managing the relationship between religion and the state. Mughal power was not based on religious homogenization but on the state's ability to accommodate differences and foster social stability within a highly diverse society. Policies such as the abolition of the *jizyah* and the creation of interfaith dialogue forums demonstrate that the Mughals placed tolerance and inclusivity at the core of their political legitimacy. This approach enabled the Mughal Dynasty to maintain social cohesion while preserving power in a region that was demographically and culturally highly diverse (Lapidus, 2014; Hodgson, 1974).

The long-term impacts of these two models also differ significantly. The Safavid Dynasty left a legacy of strong sectarian identity, which became the ideological foundation for the modern Shiite-based state of Iran. The polarization between Shia and Sunni, rooted in the Safavid-Ottoman conflict, continues to influence political and social dynamics in the Middle East to this day, reinforcing sectarian divides that have far-reaching implications for regional geopolitics (Nasr, 2006). Meanwhile, the Mughal Dynasty bequeathed values of tolerance and multiculturalism that continue to be reflected in the social and cultural structures of modern India. The Mughal legacy in law, education, and architectural art serves as a symbol of interfaith harmony, enabling the sustainability of pluralism within a complex society despite the empire's collapse under British colonial pressure (Richards, 1995; Eaton, 2019).

The implications of the politico-religious dynamics of these two dynasties are highly relevant to the contemporary Islamic world. The Safavid model is often cited as a reference by Shi'a Islamic political states or movements seeking total integration between religion and state, where religion serves as the primary source of law, identity, and the legitimacy of power. Conversely, the Mughal model serves as an inspiration in efforts to

build a more open, inclusive, and adaptive relationship between religion and state, particularly within heterogeneous and pluralistic societies. In the Mughal model, Islam emerges as a force capable of dialogue, building bridges across communities, and maintaining social cohesion amidst diversity (Nasr, 2006; Lapidus, 2014).

Historical studies of the Safavid and Mughal dynasties are crucial for providing a clearer perspective on the relationship between religion and power. In today's global context, where religious identity politics often serves as a source of conflict and polarization, lessons from these two extreme models offer both a warning and inspiration: the Safavid model illustrates the dangers of rigid, intolerant ideological exclusivism, while the Mughal model demonstrates Islam's potential as a tolerant and inclusive integrative force. Thus, this examination of the past serves not only as a historical reflection but also as a crucial foundation for formulating strategies to address the future socio-political challenges facing the Muslim community (Nasr, 2006; Hodgson, 1974).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on historical research and a review of the literature, it can be concluded that the Safavid and Mughal dynasties were two major powers in Islamic history that exhibited fundamentally different political and religious dynamics yet both made significant contributions to the formation of Islamic civilization in the East. Both demonstrate how the relationship between religion and power can be shaped through different approaches, depending on their respective social, cultural, and geopolitical contexts. The Safavid Dynasty adopted an exclusive theocratic model of governance by establishing the Twelver Shia school of thought as the state's official ideology and the primary foundation of its power's legitimacy. This policy not only strengthened the religious identity of Persian society—which had previously been dominated by Sunnis—but also established a highly centralized system of government in which rulers and clerics mutually supported one another in exercising power. However, this exclusivism also gave rise to deep sectarian polarization and left a legacy of religious conflict that persists into the modern era, particularly in Iran's relations with its surrounding Sunni nations.

In contrast, the Mughal Dynasty, particularly during Akbar's reign, demonstrated an inclusive and pluralistic model of governance by prioritizing religious tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and cultural accommodation as key strategies for maintaining the unity and stability of a multicultural state. Although rooted in Sunni Islam, the Mughals succeeded in building a harmonious social structure amidst the highly complex ethnic and religious diversity of India. This approach allowed them to create a rich and enduring cultural and social legacy, although the empire ultimately declined under the pressure of colonialism. A comparison of these two dynasties underscores that Islam, as both a religion and a political ideology, possesses flexibility and diversity in how it is integrated into systems of power. The Safavids exemplified an Islam that could be exclusive and ideologically driven, while the Mughals provided an example of an adaptive and inclusive Islam within the context of a pluralistic society. Thus, the relationship between religion and politics in Islam is largely determined by the prevailing social context, leadership,

and strategic needs. This study not only enriches the historical understanding of these two major Islamic dynasties but also offers an important perspective in contemporary discourse regarding how Islam can interact with states and societies that are socially and culturally diverse. An understanding of these two models is highly relevant in formulating a politico-religious approach capable of addressing the challenges of pluralism and identity conflicts in the modern world.

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