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**The Issue of the Source of Political Knowledge: Epistemological Foundations of
Secular and Islamic Political Thought**

Siyasal Bilginin Kaynağı Meselesi: Seküler ve İslam Siyaset Düşüncesinin Epistemolojik
Temelleri

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ÖZET

Modern siyaset teorileri, siyasal bilginin kaynağını insan aklı, tarihsel tecrübe ve toplumsal uzlaşma temelinde tanımlayarak seküler bir epistemolojik zeminde şekillenmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, siyaset alanını metafizik referanslardan ayırmış ve normatif düzeni rasyonel ölçütlerle temellendirmiştir. Seküler epistemoloji, modern devletin meşruiyet anlayışından hukukun üstünlüğü ve kamusal alanın sınırlarına kadar pek çok temel mesele üzerinde belirleyici olmuştur.

İslam siyaset düşüncesi ise siyasal bilgiyi vahiy, akıl ve tecrübe ilişkisi içinde bütüncül ve normatif bir çerçevede ele alır. Bu yaklaşım, siyasal bilgiyi yalnızca araçsal bir bilgi türü olarak değil; ahlaki ve normatif bir muhtevaya sahip bir alan olarak kavrar. Siyaset, hukuk, ahlak ve dinî normlarla iç içe geçmiş bir faaliyet alanı olarak değerlendirilir ve siyasal meşruiyet, adalet, kamu yararı ve ahlaki sorumluluk kriterleriyle güvence altına alınır.

Bu çalışma, seküler (özellikle John Rawls ve Jürgen Habermas) ve İslamî (Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî, İmam Gazzâlî ve İbn Haldun) siyaset düşüncelerinin epistemolojik varsayımlarını karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Analiz, her iki geleneğin siyasal düzeni ve otoritenin meşruiyetini temellendirme biçimindeki epistemolojik farklarını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca çalışma, farklı epistemolojik zeminlerin siyasal krizler ve normatif belirsizlikler üzerindeki etkilerini anlamak için gelecekteki araştırmalara bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal Bilgi, Epistemoloji, Seküler Siyaset Teorileri, İslam Siyaset Düşüncesi, Siyasal Meşruiyet

ABSTRACT

Modern political theories have been shaped largely on a secular epistemological foundation, defining the source of political knowledge in terms of human reason, historical experience, and social consensus. This approach deliberately separates the political sphere from metaphysical references and grounds normative order in rational, worldly criteria. Secular epistemology has played a decisive role in numerous fundamental issues, ranging from the legitimacy of the modern state to the rule of law and the boundaries of the public sphere.

In contrast, Islamic political thought approaches political knowledge through a holistic and normative framework that integrates revelation, reason, and experience. Within this perspective, political knowledge is not merely instrumental; it embodies moral and normative dimensions. Politics is understood as a domain intrinsically intertwined with law, ethics, and religious norms, where political legitimacy is secured through criteria such as justice, public welfare, and moral responsibility.

This study aims to comparatively examine the epistemological assumptions of secular (particularly John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas) and Islamic (Abū Manşūr al-Māturīdī, Imam al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Khaldūn) political thought. The analysis seeks to reveal how these two traditions differ in the way they ground political order and the legitimacy of authority. Furthermore, the study provides a framework for future research on how differing epistemological foundations impact political crises and normative uncertainties.

Keywords: Political Knowledge, Epistemology, Secular Political Theories, Islamic Political Thought, Political Legitimacy

INTRODUCTION

The formation of modern political theory is closely related not only to the transformation of political institutions and forms of governance, but also to the radical redefinition of the epistemological assumptions concerning the source and legitimacy of political knowledge. In particular, the epistemological paradigm shift that emerged in Western thought in the post-Enlightenment period sought to detach the political sphere from metaphysical and theological references to a significant extent, and to reconstruct it on the basis of human reason, historical experience, and social consensus. In this process, politics was conceptualized as a human and worldly domain of activity, rather than as the earthly reflection of a transcendent order of truth. In the words of Charles Taylor, modern secularism refers to the reconfiguration of political and moral thought within an “immanent framework emptied of transcendence.”¹ This framework has also become a determining factor in the epistemological status of political knowledge.

In secular political theories, the source of political knowledge is largely defined in terms of individual reason and public rationality. In this approach, knowledge derives its legitimacy not from a divine or metaphysical authority, but from processes of rational justification and public acceptance. John Rawls’s theory of political liberalism is one of the most systematic examples of this epistemological orientation. According to Rawls, in modern pluralistic societies, political legitimacy must rest on public reasons that can be commonly accepted by individuals holding diverse worldviews.² For this reason, political knowledge becomes binding only when it can be rationally justified among free and equal citizens.³ Rawls’s concept of “public reason” stands out as one of the key notions that defines the epistemological boundaries of knowledge in secular political theory.

This epistemological approach aims to deliberately strip the political sphere of ethical and metaphysical content. However, this also brings with it new problems regarding the normative depth and binding force of political knowledge. Alasdair MacIntyre criticizes this aspect of modern moral and political theory, arguing that normative claims lose their meaning when they are detached from their historical and traditional contexts.⁴ According to MacIntyre, modern secular thought, by separating the foundations of political and

¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 45–68.

² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 78–92.

³ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 85–88.

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 56–78.

moral knowledge from traditional epistemic structures, has produced a fragmented and incoherent normative basis. This critique raises the question of the extent to which the epistemological foundations of secular political theory are robust.

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative reason can be regarded as an attempt to offer an alternative solution to the problem faced by secular political epistemology. According to Habermas, the legitimacy of political knowledge should not rest solely on preferences that are products of individual reason, but rather on rational and critical deliberation processes conducted in the public sphere.⁵ The concept of communicative reason is grounded in the intersubjective production and legitimation of political knowledge. In this approach, political knowledge is understood as the outcome of rational consensus achieved under ideal speech conditions.⁶ However, Habermas's model also remains within a secular epistemological framework, insofar as it grounds the ultimate normative foundation of political knowledge not in a transcendent conception of truth, but in procedural rationality.

This epistemological orientation observed in secular political theories has led to an increasingly problematic relationship between the source of political knowledge and its normative binding force. As noted by José Casanova, the modern process of secularization, while aiming to exclude religion from the public sphere, simultaneously leaves open the question of whether alternative epistemological resources capable of grounding the legitimacy of political norms are sufficiently robust.⁷ In this context, secular political theories face a persistent epistemological tension regarding how to secure the validity of political knowledge.

Islamic political thought, however, approaches the epistemological foundations of political knowledge within a different ontological and normative framework. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, knowledge is understood not merely as a product of human reason, but as something that gains meaning through the interaction of revelation, reason, and historical experience. Within this approach, political knowledge carries both normative and ethical content. Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî emphasizes the necessary role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge, while also arguing that revelation is an

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 101–123.

⁶ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 110–115.

⁷ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 12–34.

indispensable reference point for political and moral order.⁸ This epistemological framework grounds the legitimacy of political knowledge not only in social consensus, but also in a transcendent normative order.

In Islamic political thought, the relationship between epistemology and politics has also been addressed within a historical context. Ibn Khaldun demonstrates that political knowledge does not consist merely of abstract theoretical principles; rather, it is shaped by social structures, historical conditions, and relations of power.⁹ This approach shows that the epistemological status of political knowledge cannot be understood independently of its historical and social context. Ibn Khaldun's analyses clearly reveal that knowledge in Islamic political thought possesses both normative and empirical dimensions.

In the modern period, the encounter between Islamic political thought and secular political theories has generated profound debates at the epistemological level. Wael B. Hallaq argues that the epistemological and moral foundations of the modern state are incompatible with the Islamic normative order, and that the tension between these two intellectual traditions is fundamentally epistemological in nature.¹⁰ According to Hallaq, modern secular politics reduces the source and legitimacy of knowledge to a human-centered paradigm, whereas Islamic thought grounds the moral and normative dimension of knowledge in a revelation-based epistemology.

A significant portion of the existing literature on secular and Islamic political theories approaches these two traditions either on a historical or a normative level. However, studies that comparatively examine the epistemological assumptions regarding the source of political knowledge remain limited in number. This situation has led to the fundamental distinction between secular and Islamic political theories often being addressed through superficial discussions. Yet the epistemological foundations of political knowledge play a decisive role in shaping political legitimacy, normative bindingness, and conceptions of public order.

This study aims to comparatively analyze the epistemological assumptions of secular and Islamic political theories regarding the source of political knowledge. The article seeks to answer the following central question: What are the epistemological assumptions of secular and Islamic political thought concerning the source of political knowledge, and

⁸ Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî, *Kitâbü't-Tevhîd* (Beirut: Dârü'l-Fikr, 1990), 11–15.

⁹ İbn Haldun, *Mukaddime* (Beirut: Dârü'l-Fikr, 1982), 45–60.

¹⁰ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 23–45.

how do these assumptions ground the legitimacy of political order? The article proceeds as follows: first, the relationship between epistemology and politics will be addressed within a conceptual framework; second, the epistemological foundations in secular political theories will be examined; third, approaches in Islamic political thought will be analyzed; and finally, a comparative evaluation will be conducted. The study adopts a qualitative and conceptual analysis method, and leading texts of secular political theory as well as classical works of the Islamic intellectual tradition are examined from an epistemological perspective. By avoiding direct engagement with contemporary political debates, the research aims to discuss the epistemological foundations of political knowledge within a theoretical and philosophical framework. In this respect, the study seeks to contribute to the literature on political philosophy and Islamic political thought through an epistemology-centered approach.

1.Epistemology and Politics: A Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

1.1.The Concept of Epistemology and Political Knowledge

Epistemology is a fundamental branch of philosophy concerned with the nature, sources, limits, and criteria of knowledge. However, epistemological questions become incomplete when they are treated solely as abstract issues pertaining to individual cognitive processes. Every theoretical approach to knowledge also contains implicit assumptions regarding human beings' relationship with the world, society, and political order. For this reason, epistemology is not a secondary field for political theory; rather, it constitutes a primary reference point upon which the conceptual and theoretical foundations of political thought are established.

In the classical philosophical tradition, knowledge has generally been distinguished from opinion and belief, and defined in terms of criteria of truth and justification. This approach, which has been dominant since Plato, aimed to purify knowledge from arbitrary assumptions and ground it in rational foundations. However, from the perspective of modern and contemporary political thought, this definition is insufficient to account for the social and historical context of knowledge. In the political sphere, knowledge is not merely the product of individual mental activity; rather, it is a phenomenon that is

produced, circulated, and legitimized within collective practices, institutional structures, and relations of power.¹¹

In this context, political knowledge ceases to be a passive instrument that merely reflects reality and instead becomes a constitutive element that actively participates in the construction of political reality. The question of which knowledge is regarded as “true,” “scientific,” or “legitimate” simultaneously determines which political order is considered possible and acceptable. Michel Foucault’s analyses of the relationship between knowledge and power demonstrate that knowledge in the political sphere is not a neutral domain; rather, it is one of the primary mechanisms through which power is produced and redistributed.¹² From this perspective, the relationship between epistemology and politics is not merely a methodological debate, but a profound theoretical problem concerning the very foundation of political legitimacy.

Political knowledge can be examined under different categories depending on the nature and function of the claims it contains. In this framework, the most widely accepted distinction in the literature is between empirical political knowledge and normative political knowledge. Empirical political knowledge focuses on the observable and measurable aspects of political phenomena. Voter behavior, the functioning of institutional structures, the outcomes of public policies, and the comparative analysis of political processes constitute the main domains of this type of knowledge. Empirical knowledge aims to produce explanation and prediction; in this respect, it has been regarded as the primary bearer of the “scientific” claim of political science.¹³

Normative political knowledge, on the other hand, centers on questions concerning how political order ought to be. Concepts such as justice, freedom, equality, legitimacy, and public interest constitute the fundamental reference points of normative knowledge. Rather than excluding value judgments, this form of knowledge explicitly brings them into the scope of theoretical inquiry. The extensive literature, ranging from classical texts

¹¹ Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 21–30.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131–135.

¹³ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane ve Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15–24.

of political theory to contemporary theories of justice and democracy, demonstrates that political thought cannot be adequately understood without its normative dimension.¹⁴

However, it is difficult to speak of an absolute and impermeable boundary between empirical and normative political knowledge. Empirical analyses often contain implicit normative assumptions, while normative theories are not entirely independent of certain empirical realities. For instance, the characterization of a political system as “effective” or “successful” depends not only on measurable outcomes, but also on normative preferences regarding which goals are considered valuable. This mutual permeability complicates the epistemological nature of political knowledge and moves it beyond a simple methodological debate.

The normative–empirical distinction has played a central role in the institutionalization of modern political science. Particularly under the influence of positivist epistemology, it has been argued that the scientific character of political knowledge requires the elimination of value judgments. Max Weber’s principle of “value-neutrality” is one of the most systematic formulations of this approach. According to Weber, the scholar should suspend personal or political values when analyzing facts and distinguish normative preferences from scientific explanation.¹⁵

However, this approach has been subject to significant criticism on the grounds that political knowledge necessarily contains normative elements. Leo Strauss argues that the exclusion of normative questions from political science disconnects it from political philosophy and undermines its intellectual depth.¹⁶ Similarly, contemporary critical approaches emphasize that even empirical knowledge is produced within specific historical, cultural, and ideological contexts, thereby demonstrating that the fact–value distinction is not absolute.

In this framework, the relationship between epistemology and politics emerges not merely as a technical question concerning how knowledge is produced, but as a theoretical field of inquiry concerning the foundations upon which political knowledge is legitimized. Every choice regarding the source, criteria of validity, and normative content of political knowledge directly affects the conception of legitimacy upon which political authority

¹⁴ Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory: An Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 65–78

¹⁵ Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 54–59.

¹⁶ Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 12–22.

rests. Accordingly, epistemology assumes not only an explanatory role for political theory, but also a constitutive and directive function.

1.2. Epistemological Approaches

In political theory, epistemological approaches are shaped around different answers to the questions of from which sources political knowledge is derived, according to which criteria it is validated, and to which purposes it is directed. These approaches are not merely methodological preferences; they also involve broader theoretical assumptions regarding how political order is to be understood, on what foundations political authority is legitimized, and within what framework normative claims are to be interpreted. In this context, the positivist, normative, and critical epistemological approaches that have become prominent in modern political theory represent different ontological and methodological assumptions concerning the nature of political knowledge.

Positivist epistemology is based on the assumption that knowledge should rely solely on observable, measurable, and verifiable facts. The philosophical roots of this approach extend back to the positivist thought of Auguste Comte. Comte argued that social phenomena, like natural phenomena, could be studied within the framework of objective laws, thereby grounding the scientific status of the social sciences in this methodological similarity.¹⁷

From the perspective of political theory, the positivist approach was particularly institutionalized in the mid-20th century through the tradition of behavioral political science. This approach aimed to analyze the behavior of political actors through measurable variables, to produce generalizable explanations, and to exclude value judgments from scientific inquiry. This “objectification” of political knowledge played a decisive role in the transformation of political science into an independent discipline, distinct from normative political philosophy.¹⁸

However, the application of positivist epistemology to the political sphere has also been subject to various criticisms. First, it has been argued that political phenomena are not as readily repeatable or context-independent as phenomena in the natural sciences. Moreover, it has been emphasized that questions such as which phenomena are worth

¹⁷ Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 28–35.

¹⁸ David Marsh ve Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45–52.

studying and which indicators are considered “important” already involve normative choices. David Easton notes that political science’s exclusive focus on measurable behavior entails the risk of neglecting the meaning and legitimacy dimensions of political systems.¹⁹

These critiques have demonstrated that the explanatory capacity of positivist epistemology in accounting for political knowledge is limited; in particular, when it excludes normative and interpretive dimensions, it renders a significant portion of political reality invisible.

The normative epistemological approach argues that political knowledge cannot be reduced merely to the description of facts; rather, the question of which principles political order should be based on lies at the center of political theory. This approach evaluates the validity of knowledge not only through empirical verification criteria, but also through moral justification and rational coherence.

One of the most influential contemporary representatives of normative political theory is John Rawls. In his theory developed within the framework of political liberalism, Rawls grounds the legitimacy of political knowledge in the concept of “public reason.” Public reason refers to the requirement that political principles be justifiable to reasonable and free citizens. In this context, political knowledge is not only required to be true; it must also be defensible and shareable within the public sphere.²⁰

Normative epistemology explicitly acknowledges that political knowledge performs a guiding function. In this approach, political theory does not merely seek to explain the world; it also provides criteria regarding the moral principles according to which political institutions and practices should be organized. In this respect, normative theory necessarily connects political thought with ethics and moral philosophy.

However, normative epistemology is not immune to criticism. In particular, questions concerning the possibility of universal moral principles and how consensus can be achieved among different value systems constitute some of the most controversial aspects of normative theory. These critiques have raised the issue of how normative knowledge can be legitimized in pluralistic societies.

¹⁹ David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 7–14.

²⁰ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 212–230.

The critical epistemological approach addresses the production of knowledge together with its historical, social, and ideological contexts. By arguing that knowledge cannot be considered independent of relations of power, this approach challenges both positivist claims of objectivity and abstract normative universalism. Drawing on the tradition of the Frankfurt School, critical theory maintains that knowledge should not be merely explanatory, but should also perform a critical and transformative function.²¹

According to Max Horkheimer, traditional theory is content with explaining the world as it is, whereas critical theory aims to reveal the underlying relations of interest upon which existing social and political structures are built. In this context, knowledge ceases to be a tool for reproducing the status quo and instead becomes a practice of critique that explores the possibilities of social transformation.²²

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative reason is one of the most important contributions of critical epistemology to political theory. Habermas associates the legitimacy of knowledge with communication processes free from domination. According to him, the validity of political knowledge should be tested not through power relations, but within processes of rational deliberation and mutual justification.²³ This approach makes it possible to reconsider political knowledge on both normative and critical grounds.

The critical epistemology emphasizes the historical and contextual nature of political knowledge, thereby also providing an opportunity to question the assumptions of secular modernity regarding knowledge. In this respect, critical theory constitutes an important theoretical transition point for the comparison between secular and Islamic epistemologies, which will be examined in the following sections.

2.The Foundations of Political Knowledge in Secular Political Theories

2.1. The Emergence of Modern Secular Epistemology

The epistemological foundations of modern secular political theory were shaped particularly within the framework of Enlightenment thought and a reason-centered conception of knowledge. This period represents a process in which epistemology was redefined in both methodological and normative dimensions; political knowledge began

²¹ Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 206–212.

²² Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," içinde *Critical Theory* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 188–203.

²³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 285–300.

to be grounded not merely in truths inherited from authority and tradition, but in rational deliberation, observation, and ideas filtered through critical reason.

The Enlightenment advances three fundamental epistemological assumptions regarding knowledge: (1) that access to knowledge is possible through reason; (2) that individual reason possesses the capacity to question the legitimacy of social order; and (3) that there is a direct relationship between knowledge and freedom. Within this framework, Enlightenment thinkers criticize the absolute dominance of religious and traditional authorities over political knowledge and advocate a reason-centered epistemology.²⁴

Immanuel Kant defines the epistemological axis of Enlightenment thought as “the self-confidence of reason” and, in the context of political knowledge, emphasizes the necessity for individuals to distinguish legitimate authority through their own rational judgment. According to Kant, the emancipation of the individual is possible only through the production of knowledge via critical reason.²⁵ This perspective forms the foundation of the concepts of public reason and rational legitimacy in modern secular political theories.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other hand, emphasizes the social dimension of Enlightenment thought. Rousseau treats the transformation of individual reason into a collective will within the framework of the social contract as an epistemological issue. For him, political knowledge serves both normative and empirical functions in the justification of the social contract.²⁶ This approach demonstrates that the individual’s rational capacity is central to questioning the legitimacy of social and political order.

Enlightenment thought redefines epistemology not only as an individual capacity but also as a social and political instrument. Knowledge is no longer a matter of acceptance based solely on authority; rather, it becomes a phenomenon that is produced, shared, and tested through critical deliberation and rational justification. This process constitutes the epistemic foundation of modern secular political theory and grounds the legitimacy of political knowledge not in tradition or dogma, but in reason and processes of argumentation.²⁷

²⁴ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42–50.

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 32–36.

²⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: Penguin, 2003), 48–55.

²⁷ Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015), 23–30.

The second fundamental component of modern secular epistemology is a reason-centered conception of knowledge. Reason-centered epistemology argues that the validity of knowledge can be assessed through measurability and logical coherence. This approach critiques dogmatic and authoritarian understandings of knowledge and prioritizes the grounding of political knowledge in rational and critical foundations.²⁸

John Locke is one of the early representatives of a reason-centered conception of knowledge. According to Locke, the human mind is born as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*), and knowledge is acquired through experience and reasoning.²⁹ In the political context, this understanding makes it possible to limit authority and law through rational principles and to define individuals' freedoms and rights within a framework of reason. This perspective directly shapes the epistemic foundations of liberal political theory.

David Hume grounds reason-centered epistemology in empirical foundations, emphasizing that human knowledge is based on experience and observation. According to Hume, rational reasoning can be misleading when it is not supported by data derived from experience.³⁰ This approach strengthens the need for empirical verification in political knowledge within the context of Enlightenment epistemology and contributes to the scientific orientation of modern secular political theories.

Reason-centered epistemology grounds both the individual and social legitimacy of knowledge in rational foundations, while also defining the limits of political authority. In this context, secular political theories do not rely on tradition as the source of political knowledge; instead, they focus on reason, deliberation, and empirical observation. Charles Montesquieu applies this understanding to the design of political institutions and justifies the principle of separation of powers within a rational epistemological framework.³¹

The reason-centered conception of knowledge shapes not only the methodological but also the normative dimension of modern secular epistemology. Knowledge is no longer merely explanatory; it also assumes a guiding and critical function. This development

²⁸ Steven Nadler, *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 101–108.

²⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 77–85.

³⁰ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 220–230. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 112–118.

³¹

forms the epistemic foundation of later theorists such as Rawls and Habermas, particularly in their concepts of “public reason” and “communicative reason.”³²

Enlightenment and reason-centered epistemology have determined the foundational assumptions of modern secular political theory. First, knowledge is defined not as acceptance based solely on authority, but as a phenomenon that is justified, critically filtered, and shareable. This makes it possible to ground the legitimacy of political authority in rational justifications and to explain the social contract through reason.³³

Second, reason-centered epistemology reshapes the normative dimensions of political order. Values such as freedom, equality, and justice are treated not merely as idealistic abstractions, but as principles that can be articulated and tested through rational reasoning and processes of deliberation. In this context, modern secular political theory epistemologically secures both individual and collective autonomy and legitimacy.³⁴

Enlightenment epistemology and the reason-centered conception of knowledge promote a critical and pluralistic approach to the production of political knowledge. Knowledge no longer rests on the absolute authority of a single center; instead, it is produced through a process in which different perspectives are debated and rational justifications are tested. This feature provides epistemological legitimacy for the democratic and pluralistic foundations of secular political theory.³⁵

2.2. Knowledge in Liberal Political Theory

Liberal political theory offers one of the most systematic and institutionalized accounts of the source, nature, and public function of political knowledge within modern secular epistemology. Within this framework, political knowledge is neither reduced to purely empirical data nor grounded in metaphysical truths; rather, it is defined through rational justification, public deliberation, and principles of normative legitimacy. Liberal epistemology aims to ground the legitimacy of political order in specific procedures and norms related to knowledge.

In this context, John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas are two central figures who most comprehensively discuss the epistemological limits and possibilities of liberal political

³² John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 210–218.

³³ Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55–63.

³⁴ Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents*, 35–40.

³⁵ Steven Nadler, *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, 115–120.

theory. While both thinkers focus on how political knowledge is produced and legitimized in the public sphere, they exhibit significant divergences in terms of their epistemological assumptions and normative priorities.

John Rawls's political theory is one of the most influential approaches that defines the normative framework of liberal epistemology. Rawls grounds the legitimacy of political knowledge in the concept of "public reason." Public reason refers to the requirement that political decisions and constitutional principles must be justified on the basis of reasons that can be accepted by all reasonable citizens.³⁶

According to Rawls, in pluralistic societies individuals hold different "comprehensive doctrines" of a religious, philosophical, and moral nature. This pluralism renders it epistemologically problematic to ground political knowledge in absolute truths. For this reason, political knowledge must instead be based on arguments that are publicly shareable and rationally justifiable.³⁷ This approach deliberately separates political epistemology from metaphysical truths.

Rawls's conception of public reason focuses on the mode of use of knowledge rather than its content. Political knowledge, regardless of whether it is true or false, must be understandable and acceptable to reasonable individuals in the public sphere. For this reason, Rawls maintains a critical distance from the decisive role of religious or metaphysical arguments in the justification of political decisions.³⁸ This position clearly reveals the secular character of liberal epistemology.

The concept of public reason is the epistemological complement to Rawls's theory of justice. The "justice as fairness" approach is not only a normative ideal, but also provides an epistemic framework concerning the production and legitimation of political knowledge.³⁹ Political principles acquire democratic legitimacy only when they are formulated within the bounds of public reason.

However, Rawls's conception of public reason contains certain epistemological limitations. In particular, the question of which justifications are to be regarded as "reasonable" in the public sphere has been criticized as a normative choice. In this

³⁶ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 212–220.

³⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 36–38.

³⁸ John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 90–97.

³⁹ Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 5–12.

context, Rawls's epistemology has been criticized for excluding certain forms of knowledge from the public sphere in order to preserve pluralism.⁴⁰ These critiques problematize the liberal epistemology's claim to neutrality.

Jürgen Habermas addresses the epistemological foundations of knowledge in liberal political theory on a different level from Rawls. According to Habermas, the legitimacy of political knowledge does not derive from predefined normative principles, but from communicative processes. This approach is structured around the concept of "communicative reason."⁴¹

Habermas argues that in modern societies, knowledge is not solely the product of individual reason; rather, it is produced through processes of linguistic interaction, deliberation, and mutual justification. Political knowledge, in this sense, is the outcome of rational consensus formed under conditions of free and non-coercive communication in the public sphere.⁴² This perspective shifts epistemology from static norms toward dynamic processes.

The concept of communicative reason strengthens the procedural dimension of liberal epistemology. According to Habermas, the validity of political knowledge depends less on its content than on the communicative conditions under which it is produced. Equal participation, justification, and openness to critique are the fundamental criteria for the legitimacy of political knowledge.⁴³ This approach offers a more inclusive epistemological foundation compared to Rawls's conception of public reason.

Jürgen Habermas does not entirely exclude religious and metaphysical discourses from the public sphere; however, he argues that these discourses must be translated into a secular language through a process of "translation."⁴⁴ This approach softens the hierarchy among different types of knowledge within liberal epistemology while maintaining the aim of preserving the boundaries of a secular public sphere. In this way, Habermas addresses epistemological pluralism in liberal political theory in a more flexible manner. However, Habermas's theory of communicative reason is not immune to criticism. Questions concerning the extent to which ideal speech conditions are practically

⁴⁰ Gerald Gaus, *The Order of Public Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 148–155.

⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 10–22.

⁴² Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 287–295.

⁴³ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 305–312.

⁴⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Religion in the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 24–31.

attainable, and how power relations shape communicative processes, raise concerns about the normative idealism of this epistemology.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, these critiques do not diminish the significance of Habermas's theoretical contribution to liberal epistemology; rather, they highlight the social dimension of political knowledge.

The fundamental difference between Rawls and Habermas centers on the question of whether the legitimacy of knowledge in liberal political theory should be grounded normatively or procedurally. Rawls defines the legitimacy of political knowledge within certain normative principles and the constraints of public reason, whereas Habermas grounds this legitimacy in communicative processes themselves.

This tension demonstrates the internal diversity and theoretical richness of liberal epistemology. Rawls offers a normative framework that prioritizes political stability and consensus, whereas Habermas centers democratic participation and discursive legitimacy. Both approaches have expanded the epistemological boundaries of secular political theory and deepened debates concerning the nature of political knowledge.⁴⁶

In this context, liberal political theory, as one of the most sophisticated examples of modern secular epistemology, systematically articulates the rational, critical, and public foundations of political knowledge.

2.3. Secularization and Political Authority

In modern secular political theory, secularization should be understood not only as the process by which religion withdraws from the public sphere, but also as a reconfiguration of the ways in which political knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimized. In this context, secularization represents a transformation with significant epistemological consequences. The legitimacy of political authority is no longer grounded in divine references or transcendent norms, but in historical, social, and rational justifications.

In the theoretical analysis of this transformation, Charles Taylor and Talal Asad emerge as two key thinkers who critically examine the presumed neutrality of secularism and reveal its normative character. While both approaches discuss the effects of secularism on political knowledge and authority at different levels, they commonly emphasize that secularism is neither a natural nor an inevitable process.

⁴⁵ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 70–80.

⁴⁶ Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 310–318.

Taylor distinguishes secularization from classical narratives of “religious decline” and situates it within the transformation of modern epistemic conditions. According to Taylor, secularism is not primarily the rise of unbelief, but rather a change in the epistemological status of belief. In modern societies, religion is no longer an “inescapable” truth, but has become one option among many individual choices.⁴⁷

Taylor explains this condition through the concept of the “conditions of belief.” In the secular age, political and social knowledge has become producible independently of transcendent references, and this has fundamentally transformed the basis of political legitimacy.⁴⁸ Political knowledge is now defended not “in the name of God,” but through rational and historical justifications.

This epistemological transformation also redefines the nature of political authority. In secular political theory, authority is derived not from divine commandments, but from social consent, law, and processes of public reason. According to Taylor, while this makes political legitimacy more rational, it also produces a profound uncertainty regarding the source of values.⁴⁹

Charles Taylor argues that secularism does not create a normative “void”; rather, it generates specific moral assumptions. Values such as human rights, individual autonomy, and equality are implicit normative commitments of secular epistemology.⁵⁰ In this context, secularism weakens the claim that political knowledge is a value-free domain and reveals that it rests on particular historical and cultural presuppositions.

Charles Taylor’s approach makes visible the epistemological limits of secular political theory. Secular knowledge, although it claims universality, is a product of specific historical conditions. This observation theoretically problematizes the claim of neutrality underlying secular political authority.

Talal Asad conceptualizes secularism not merely as a mode of thought, but as a regulatory regime deeply embedded in relations of power. According to Asad, secularism is not a universal principle that naturally separates religion and politics; rather, it is a form

⁴⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3–5.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 12–18.

⁴⁹ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 85–92.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 99–104.

through which the modern state legitimizes certain types of knowledge while marginalizing others.⁵¹

Talal Asad particularly emphasizes the epistemological dimension of secularism: secular political knowledge determines which forms of belief are considered legitimate in the public sphere, while confining religious forms of knowledge to the “private sphere.”⁵² This distinction is not a neutral arrangement; rather, it is the result of the disciplinary effects of political power over knowledge.

According to Talal Asad, secular political theories are based on the assumption that religion is irrational, subjective, or dangerous in the political sphere. This assumption is an epistemological presupposition that directly shapes the modern state’s understanding of authority.⁵³ In this way, secular political authority presents itself as rational and universal while adopting an exclusionary stance toward alternative forms of knowledge. Talal Asad’s approach critically reveals the way secularism produces political legitimacy. Secular political authority is based not only on legal and rational justifications, but also on specific epistemic constraints.⁵⁴ These boundaries determine which discourses are considered “rational” and which are regarded as “illegitimate.”

In this context, Talal Asad fundamentally challenges the presumed neutrality of secularism in liberal political theory. Secular epistemology excludes the religious from the public sphere while rendering its own normative preferences invisible. This situation raises the question of whether political knowledge is truly pluralistic.⁵⁵

When the approaches of Charles Taylor and Talal Asad are considered together, it becomes evident that secularism does not constitute a neutral ground in terms of political knowledge and authority. Secular political theories rest on certain normative assumptions: individual autonomy, rationality, historical progress, and the restriction of religion to the private sphere.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1–16.

⁵² Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25–30.

⁵³ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 200–210.

⁵⁴ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 181–187.

⁵⁵ Hussein Agrama, *Questioning Secularism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 45–52.

⁵⁶ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 211–218.

While these assumptions define the legitimacy of political authority within rational and legal frameworks, they simultaneously subordinate alternative epistemologies. Although secular political authority presents itself as universal, it is in fact a product of specific historical and cultural contexts. This renders the universalist claims of secular epistemology theoretically contestable.

Secularization is not merely a methodological transformation in the production of political knowledge; it is also a normative and epistemological reconfiguration. The contributions of Taylor and Asad render visible the epistemological limits of secular political theory and enable a deeper analysis of the relationship between political authority and knowledge. This analysis provides a critical and solid theoretical foundation for the comparative examination with Islamic political thought in the following sections.

3.Epistemological Foundations in Islamic Political Thought

3.1. The Sources of Knowledge: Revelation, Reason, and Experience

In Islamic political thought, epistemological debates are not merely abstract issues concerning theoretical knowledge production; they are directly connected to the legitimacy of political authority, the source of law, and the normative framework of social order. In this context, knowledge is not grounded in a singular or reduced source, as in modern secular epistemology; rather, it is defined through a multilayered balance among revelation, reason, and experience. This triadic structure constitutes the fundamental element that defines the epistemological distinctiveness of Islamic political thought. Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî systematically establishes the balance between reason and revelation, offering an early example of rational legitimacy. Al-Ghazali deepens the normative dimension of political knowledge through his emphasis on moral responsibility and social order. Ibn Khaldun, in turn, centers experience and sociological analysis, integrating this balance with historical reality. Together, this triad represents the normative and empirical richness of Islamic epistemology along the axis of revelation, reason, and experience.

In Islamic thought, debates concerning the sources of knowledge have been shaped from the early period within the disciplines of theology (kalâm), jurisprudence (fiqh), and philosophy (falsafa), and issues related to the political sphere have been addressed within this epistemological framework. Knowledge is neither reduced to a purely rationalist account nor confined to a rigid textual literalism. This constitutes one of the key factors explaining the normative strength and historical continuity of Islamic political thought.

Revelation is regarded in Islamic epistemology as the ultimate and transcendent source of knowledge. However, this does not imply that revelation directly and mechanically regulates the political and social sphere. Rather, revelation functions as a reference point that establishes the normative boundaries and moral framework of political knowledge.⁵⁷

In Islamic political thought, revelation forms the foundation of law and legitimacy, yet it does not exclude processes of interpretation and rational reasoning. The Qur'an and the Sunnah do not present a detailed blueprint of political order; rather, they establish fundamental principles such as justice, trustworthiness (*amānah*), public welfare (*maṣlahah*), and responsibility.⁵⁸ This creates an epistemological space for the reinterpretation of political knowledge in accordance with different historical contexts.

In this respect, revelation in Islamic political thought is not a closed and static source of knowledge, but rather a dynamic normative ground that interacts with reason and experience. This approach is particularly evident in the classical Sunni theological tradition.

Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî is one of the most systematic thinkers in Islamic thought in addressing the relationship between reason and revelation. Maturidite epistemology does not reduce the source of knowledge to revelation; rather, it defines reason as an independent and reliable means of knowledge.⁵⁹

According to Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî, human reason possesses the epistemic capacity to distinguish good from evil and justice from oppression. This approach demonstrates that political knowledge can be grounded not only in textual evidence but also in rational deliberation.⁶⁰ In this context, the legitimacy of political authority is associated not solely with obedience to divine command, but also with principles of justice and public welfare (*maṣlahah*).

Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî's epistemology particularly opens the way for moral rationality in the political sphere. The legitimacy of the state is directly connected to the ruler's just conduct and the pursuit of public welfare. This understanding strengthens the normative

⁵⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5–10.

⁵⁸ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37–45.

⁵⁹ Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî, *Kitâbü't-Tevhîd* (Beyrut: Dârü'l-Kütübi'l-İlmiyye, 2001), 69–75.

⁶⁰ Ulrich Rudolph, *Al-Mâturîdî and the Development of Sunnî Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 145–152.

dimension of political knowledge while also epistemologically constraining arbitrary forms of political authority.⁶¹

Moreover, Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî emphasizes that knowledge is not merely a theoretical matter; it also produces practical consequences. Political decisions should be shaped under the guidance of reason and within the moral boundaries established by revelation. This approach represents an early example of the idea of rational legitimacy in Islamic political thought.

In Islamic epistemology, experience holds an important place as a third fundamental source of knowledge. Since the political sphere is inherently changeable and historical in nature, knowledge based on experience and observation is indispensable. Classical Islamic thinkers acknowledge that political order must be understood not only through theoretical principles but also through historical practices.⁶²

Experience, particularly in the contexts of governance, public order, and social relations, enables the applicability of political knowledge. In this respect, Islamic political thought avoids rigid normativism and offers a flexible epistemological structure that takes historical reality into account.

Al-Ghazali redefines the relationship between reason, revelation, and experience by addressing the sources of knowledge within a multilayered structure. According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge occurs at sensory, rational, and spiritual (intuitive/discursive) levels.⁶³ This approach emphasizes the irreducible plurality of knowledge.

Al-Ghazali does not reject reason entirely; rather, he considers it an indispensable instrument for understanding revelation. However, he clearly delineates the limits of reason. Reason is not the ultimate source of metaphysical and moral truths; in this regard, revelation plays the decisive role.⁶⁴ This balance preserves both the rational and normative foundations of political knowledge.

In the political context, Al-Ghazali regards the preservation of order (*niẓām*) as a fundamental value.⁶⁵ The state is a necessary institution for the protection of religion and

⁶¹ Mâturîdî, *Kitâbü't-Tevhîd*, 312–318.

⁶² Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 44–50.

⁶³ İmam Gazzâlî, *el-Munkız mine'd-Dalâl* (Kahire: Dârü'l-Ma'ârif, 1990), 35–42.

⁶⁴ Gazzâlî, *İhyâu Ulûmi'd-Dîn* (Beyrut: Dârü'l-Ma'rifa, 2005), I, 15–20.

⁶⁵ Gazzâlî, *Nasihatü'l-Mülûk* (Tahran: İntişârât-i Dânişgâh, 1987), 60–68.

society. However, this necessity does not grant unlimited legitimacy to political authority. The legitimacy of authority is constrained by justice, public welfare (maşlahah), and the maintenance of social order.

Al-Ghazali's epistemology places the moral dimension of political knowledge at its center. Political decisions should not be based solely on technical considerations or power calculations, but on a sense of moral responsibility. This approach offers a strong alternative to the value-neutrality claim of modern secular epistemology.

As illustrated in the cases of Maturidi and Ghazali, Islamic political thought is epistemologically grounded in the principle of balance and integration. The equilibrium established between revelation, reason, and experience encompasses both the normative and practical dimensions of political knowledge. This structure epistemologically limits the arbitrariness of political authority and places moral legitimacy at its core.

In this framework, Islamic political thought rejects the assumption—unlike secular epistemology—that knowledge can be value-free. Political knowledge is always embedded within a moral and normative context. This approach constitutes the theoretical axis of the comparative analysis between secular and Islamic frameworks in the following sections.

3.2. Political Knowledge and Legitimacy

In Islamic political thought, political legitimacy is not reduced merely to the factual existence of power or the exercise of force; rather, it is evaluated within specific epistemological, moral, and legal criteria. In this context, political knowledge emerges as a fundamental element that both establishes and constrains the legitimacy of authority. Legitimacy is not an arbitrary acceptance but a knowledge-based normative status.

The relationship between political legitimacy and knowledge in Islamic thought differs from, yet is no less systematic than, the notions of “legality” or “rational justification” in modern secular political theory. This structure is shaped particularly through a multilayered relationship among sharī'a-based knowledge, ethics, law, and politics.

Sharī'a-based knowledge constitutes one of the central reference points of legitimacy in Islamic political thought. However, this form of knowledge is often mistakenly reduced in modern literature to merely a set of positive legal rules. In contrast, in classical Islamic

thought, sharī'a-based knowledge refers to a comprehensive epistemological field that integrates normative principles, moral values, and legal rulings.⁶⁶

While the source of sharī'a-based knowledge is revelation, this knowledge is not transferred to the political sphere in a direct and unmediated manner. Rather, it is adapted to historical and social contexts through epistemic instruments such as ijtihād (independent reasoning), analogy (qiyās), public interest (maşlaḥa), and custom ('urf).⁶⁷ This demonstrates that Islamic political thought is grounded not in a static conception of legitimacy, but in a dynamic and contextual understanding of legitimacy.

Political authority, in this context, acquires legitimacy to the extent that it conforms to sharī'a-based knowledge. However, this conformity is not limited to mere adherence to formal rules; it also encompasses normative objectives such as the establishment of justice, the prevention of oppression, and the protection of public welfare.⁶⁸ Therefore, sharī'a-based knowledge performs an epistemological function that does not absolutize political power, but rather constrains it.

This approach demonstrates that political knowledge cannot be reduced merely to the practice of power; rather, it is subject to specific moral and legal criteria. In Islamic political thought, legitimacy is epistemologically associated with conformity to correct knowledge.

One of the most distinctive features of Islamic political thought is that it does not draw sharp distinctions between ethics, law, and politics. These three domains are treated as epistemologically complementary forms of knowledge. Political knowledge cannot be conceived independently of moral principles and legal norms.⁶⁹

Ethics constitutes the normative dimension of political knowledge. Concepts such as justice, trust (amānah), responsibility, and merit (liyāqa) define the moral foundation of political order. These concepts are not merely individual virtues; they are criteria that determine the legitimacy of political authority.⁷⁰ In this respect, Islamic political thought

⁶⁶ Wael B. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66–72.

⁶⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 267–274.

⁶⁸ Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyya* (Kahire: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998), 5–10.

⁶⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 102–108.

⁷⁰ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2002), 215–222

epistemologically rejects the claim of “value-neutrality” found in modern secular theories.

Law functions as the institutionalized form of moral principles. The fiqh tradition provides the epistemic framework of norms governing the political sphere. However, this conception of law does not embody rigid positivism; rather, it gains flexibility through principles such as *maşlaḥa* (public interest) and *istiḥsān* (juristic preference).⁷¹ This enhances the practical applicability of political knowledge.

Politics is the realization of ethics and law within concrete historical conditions. In this sense, political knowledge is a mediating form of knowledge between theoretical norms and practical reality. Political authority is considered legitimate only to the extent that it maintains balance among these three domains.⁷²

In Islamic political thought, legitimacy is neither absolute nor unlimited. Political authority is epistemologically constrained. These constraints are defined both by the normative framework established by revelation and by rational and moral principles. Oppression, arbitrariness, and injustice are key factors that undermine the legitimacy of political power.⁷³

This approach demonstrates that political knowledge has a critical function. Political knowledge does not merely legitimize authority; it also subjects it to scrutiny. In this respect, Islamic political thought does not situate authority within an unquestionable sphere of sanctity.

This epistemological limitation of legitimacy reflects the balance established by classical Islamic thinkers between political stability and moral responsibility. The existence of the state is considered necessary; however, this necessity does not imply absolute obedience.⁷⁴ This balance is one of the key elements that demonstrates the theoretical maturity of Islamic political thought.

In Islamic political thought, legitimacy is associated not only with conformity to normative principles but also with social acceptance. Concepts such as *bay‘a* (allegiance),

⁷¹ Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 289–295.

⁷² Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 63–70.

⁷³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya* (Riyad: Dār al-‘Āşima, 1998), 12–18.

⁷⁴ Patricia Crone, *God’s Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 245–252.

shūrā (consultation), and ijāmā' (consensus) express the social dimension of consent in political knowledge.⁷⁵

These concepts demonstrate that political knowledge is not a one-directional production of authority, but is shaped through interaction with society. Political authority must, epistemologically, rest both on principles and on social reality. This approach offers an indirect parallel with modern discussions of democratic legitimacy.

In Islamic political thought, political knowledge and legitimacy are inseparable concepts. Legitimacy is epistemologically defined through conformity with correct knowledge, moral principles, and legal norms. This structure both grounds and limits political authority.

This framework offers a strong theoretical alternative to secular theories of politics that define legitimacy in rational and legal terms. Islamic political thought argues that knowledge cannot be separated from values and therefore treats political legitimacy as an ethical field of responsibility.

3.3. The Sociology of Political Knowledge in Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun occupies a distinctive position in Islamic political thought from an epistemological perspective. His originality lies in grounding political knowledge not merely in normative principles or legal regulations, but in a structural and historical analysis of social reality. This approach extends the source of political knowledge beyond the duality of revelation and reason, establishing a sociological epistemology based on experience and observation.

In Ibn Khaldun's thought, political knowledge is neither a purely ideal system of norms nor a random historical narrative. Rather, political phenomena emerge, develop, and decline within the framework of specific social laws. This approach represents an epistemological rupture within Islamic political thought.

At the center of Ibn Khaldun's epistemological contribution lies the concept of 'ilm al-'umrān. The science of 'umrān is a comprehensive field of knowledge that examines the formation, continuity, and decline of human societies.⁷⁶ According to Ibn Khaldun, political events are not simply the result of individual will or moral intentions; rather, they are determined by social structures and relations of power.

⁷⁵ Al-Farabi, *Al-Madina al-Fadila* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1995), 92–98.

⁷⁶ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime* (Beirut: Dārü'l-Fikr, 2004), I, 45–50.

This approach makes empirical observation and historical comparison necessary in the production of political knowledge. Criticizing traditional historiography, Ibn Khaldun questions the epistemological reliability of narrative accounts based solely on transmission (riwāya), and instead proposes testing political knowledge through reason, observation, and the principle of causality.⁷⁷ In this respect, his method is remarkably close to modern social-scientific epistemology.

The science of ‘umrān does not exclude the normative dimension of political knowledge; however, it maintains that norms cannot function independently of social reality. The continuity of political order depends not only on the ideal of justice, but also on forms of social solidarity, economic structures, and balances of power.⁷⁸ This approach establishes the sociological context of political knowledge as an epistemological necessity.

One of the most well-known concepts in the political epistemology of Ibn Khaldun is ‘aşabiyyah. ‘Aşabiyyah refers to a group’s capacity to generate political power and establish authority. However, this concept cannot be reduced merely to tribalism or lineage; it also encompasses elements such as shared purpose, solidarity, and collective consciousness.⁷⁹

‘Aşabiyyah forms the empirical foundation of political knowledge. According to Ibn Khaldun, states are established upon strong ‘aşabiyyah, and when this social cohesion weakens, political authority begins to disintegrate.⁸⁰ This observation shows that political legitimacy is related not only to legal or moral principles, but also to forms of social solidarity.

In this context, Ibn Khaldun moves political knowledge away from an idealist framework toward a causal and explanatory epistemology. The emergence, rise, and decline of states are not random phenomena; rather, they are processes that can be explained through social laws. This approach offers a distinctive analytical depth within Islamic political thought. In Ibn Khaldun’s framework, the state is not merely a legal institution but a necessary outcome of social organization. Human beings are by nature social, and this sociability

⁷⁷ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime*, I, 6–10.

⁷⁸ Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun’s Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 89–95.

⁷⁹ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime*, I, 264–270.

⁸⁰ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime*, I, 311–318.

necessitates a regulating authority.⁸¹ However, this necessity does not imply the absolute legitimacy of political authority.

The legitimacy of the state is directly linked to its capacity to maintain social order. When this capacity weakens, political authority also loses its legitimacy in epistemological terms. At this point, Ibn Khaldun demonstrates that political knowledge assumes a critical function: knowledge is not produced to sanctify power, but to understand and limit it.⁸²

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun approaches the role of religion in political order from a sociological perspective. Religion can function as a factor that strengthens ‘aşabiyyah and reinforces political unity; however, it does not, on its own, guarantee the sustainability of political order.⁸³ This observation reflects a realist epistemological stance that avoids romanticizing the relationship between religion and politics.

The political epistemology of Ibn Khaldun represents one of the most concrete examples of the balance between revelation, reason, and experience within Islamic thought. He does not reject the normative framework of revelation; however, he considers experience and observation indispensable in explaining political phenomena. This approach reveals the epistemological pluralism of Islamic political thought.

Compared with modern secular social sciences, Ibn Khaldun’s approach is non-reductionist. He does not explain social reality solely through material factors; rather, he incorporates moral, cultural, and religious elements into his analysis.⁸⁴ In this respect, Ibn Khaldun offers a distinctive synthesis between secular epistemology and normative religious thought.

One of the most significant contributions of Ibn Khaldun is his emphasis on the historical and transient nature of political knowledge. States are born, develop, and eventually decline; these processes are neither universal nor immutable.⁸⁵ This insight serves as a strong epistemological warning against the absolutization of political knowledge.

This approach prevents the sacralization of political authority and opens the way for critical thinking. Political knowledge must be understood as a product of specific

⁸¹ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime*, I, 92–98.

⁸² Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 112–118.

⁸³ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime*, II, 473–480.

⁸⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 71–78.

⁸⁵ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 55–61

historical conditions. This perspective represents an uncommon level of epistemological maturity in both classical Islamic political thought and modern political theory.

4. Comparative Analysis: Secular and Islamic Epistemologies

4.1. The Source of Knowledge

The most fundamental epistemological distinction between secular political theories and Islamic political thought lies in their assumptions regarding the source of political knowledge. This distinction is not merely about the preference for different sources of knowledge; rather, it rests on divergent ontological and normative assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge, its limits, and its function within political order.

Modern secular epistemology grounds the legitimacy of political knowledge largely in the autonomy of human reason. With the Enlightenment, reason becomes emancipated from external authorities—particularly religious references—and is established as the primary source of knowledge in the political domain.⁸⁶ In this framework, reason is not only an instrument for producing knowledge but also the ultimate criterion for political legitimacy.

This reason-centered epistemological framework is based on the assumption that political knowledge can be universal, impartial, and binding for all. John Rawls's concept of public reason and Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative rationality represent different theoretical articulations of this assumption.⁸⁷ However, what is noteworthy in both approaches is the deliberate exclusion of transcendent or metaphysical sources from the formation of political knowledge.

In Islamic political thought, the question of the source of knowledge is not reduced to a single reference point. Revelation, reason, and experience are treated as hierarchical yet non-exclusive sources of knowledge.⁸⁸ In this approach, revelation provides the ultimate normative framework of knowledge, while reason and experience determine how this framework is applied within historical and social contexts.

Ebû Mansûr el-Mâturîdî epistemology is one of the most systematic examples of this balance. According to Maturidi, reason is the foundation of human moral responsibility and accountability; however, it does not possess the capacity to generate absolute norms

⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant, *What Is Enlightenment?* içinde *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54–60.

⁸⁷ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 212–220; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 118–131.

⁸⁸ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 91–97.

independently of revelation.⁸⁹ This approach makes it possible for political knowledge to rest on both rational and normative foundations.

In secular epistemology, the central position of reason also brings with it the assumption that political knowledge can be purified from values. Political decisions are thought to be legitimized through neutral procedures and rational consensus mechanisms.⁹⁰ However, this assumption has been subject to significant criticism in recent political theory literature. In particular, it has been emphasized that secular reason itself carries historical, cultural, and normative presuppositions.⁹¹

Islamic political thought, by contrast, begins with the premise that knowledge can never be separated from values. In this context, revelation is not merely a religious text; it is a constitutive reference that defines the moral boundaries of political knowledge. This is clearly evident in the epistemology of Al-Ghazali. According to him, reason possesses the capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood; however, this capacity ultimately remains in need of divine guidance.⁹²

This difference is also decisive in terms of the function of political knowledge. In secular theories, political knowledge is often oriented toward governability and stability. In Islamic political thought, however, political knowledge is directly linked to normative principles such as justice, trust (amānah), and moral responsibility.⁹³ This orientation enables political knowledge to address not only the question of “how should we govern?” but also the question of “how ought we to govern?”.

However, Islamic epistemology does not present an approach that excludes or marginalizes reason. On the contrary, the balance between revelation and reason is intended to protect political knowledge from arbitrary or instrumental interpretations. Reason plays a critical role in preventing the misinterpretation or misuse of revelation.⁹⁴ In this respect, Islamic political thought offers not a dogmatic conception of knowledge, but rather a balancing and pluralistic epistemological structure.

⁸⁹ Mâturîdî, *Kitâbü't-Tevhîd* (Ankara: DİB Yayınları, 2003), 15–22.

⁹⁰ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 223–230.

⁹¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 543–550.

⁹² Gazzâlî, *el-Munkız mine'd-Dalâl* (Kahire: Dârü'l-Menâr, 1964), 38–42.

⁹³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 349–356.

⁹⁴ Wael B. Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28–34.

In conclusion, while reason-centeredness in secular epistemology emphasizes the autonomy and universality of political knowledge, the balance between revelation and reason in Islamic political thought secures its moral and normative dimensions. The difference between these two approaches is not a simple opposition between “rational” and “irrational,” but a deeper epistemological divergence concerning the source, limits, and political responsibility of knowledge.

Analyzing this distinction is also crucial for understanding the crises of political knowledge in the modern world. Contemporary political debates are increasingly shaped not only by questions of what counts as true knowledge, but also by questions of what counts as legitimate knowledge.

4.2. The Question of Normativity

One of the key epistemological differences between secular political theories and Islamic political thought becomes particularly evident in their approaches to the normative status of political knowledge. This distinction is not merely about whether “values should be included in the political sphere”; rather, it reflects a deeper theoretical divergence concerning what grounds the legitimacy of knowledge itself.

Modern secular political theories have long regarded normativity as a problematic domain in light of the claim to scientific objectivity. Under the influence of the positivist legacy, it has been assumed that political knowledge should be purified of value judgments, and normative claims have been considered subjective and relative.⁹⁵ In this approach, political science is expected to describe what is, while avoiding judgments about what ought to be.

However, this assumption has been subject to significant criticism, particularly since the second half of the twentieth century. Normative political theorists such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas acknowledge that a completely value-free form of political knowledge is not possible.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, in secular normative theories, the source of values is often restricted to procedural consensus, rational justification, or communicative agreement.

This situation gives rise to a “value problem” in secular theories. Values are not rejected; rather, they are deprived of a transcendent or binding foundation. Normative principles

⁹⁵ Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 50–58.

⁹⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 3–11; Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 65–73.

acquire legitimacy through social consensus or historical conditions.⁹⁷ While this approach increases the flexibility of political knowledge, it simultaneously weakens its normative binding force.

Thinkers such as Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre have highlighted this dilemma in secular normative theories, arguing that modern political reason conceals its own value presuppositions under the guise of “neutrality.”⁹⁸ According to these critiques, secular political theories do not eliminate normativity; rather, they implicitly reproduce it while attempting to exclude it from view.

In Islamic political thought, normativity is not an external addition to political knowledge; rather, it is a constitutive element of it. Revelation does not merely offer moral advice for the political sphere; it establishes foundational normative principles such as justice, trust (amānah), public welfare (maşlaḥa), and responsibility.⁹⁹ These principles define both the limits and the objectives of political knowledge.

In Islamic political thought, the normative foundation does not take the form of an arbitrary or ahistorical structure. On the contrary, the traditions of uşūl al-fiqh (legal methodology) and theology (kalām) developed a dynamic methodology that allows norms to be interpreted through reason and experience.¹⁰⁰ This enables normativity not to become rigid, but to be operationalized in a way that is sensitive to historical context.

In particular, the concept of maşlaḥa (public interest) makes the pragmatic dimension of normativity visible in Islamic political thought. Political decisions are evaluated not only in light of ideal norms, but also through considerations of social benefit and harm.¹⁰¹ However, this pragmatism does not entail the abandonment of the normative framework; rather, it enables a purposive interpretation of norms.

In this context, Islamic political thought, unlike the normative indeterminacy often encountered in secular theories, epistemologically legitimizes the moral dimension of

⁹⁷ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 107–115.

⁹⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 495–502; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 204–210.

⁹⁹ Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 89–97.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 37–44.

¹⁰⁰ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003)

¹⁰¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 267–274.

political knowledge. Normativity is not a constraint on political knowledge; rather, it is the very ground that renders it meaningful.

In secular political theories, normativity is often treated as a problematic domain that requires justification, whereas in Islamic political thought, the normative foundation is accepted as an inevitable and legitimate dimension of political knowledge. This distinction demonstrates that political knowledge is not merely functional, but also a form of knowledge that carries moral responsibility.

4.3. The Legitimacy of Political Authority

The relationship between the epistemological structure of political knowledge and the legitimacy of political authority occupies a decisive place in both secular political theories and Islamic political thought. Political authority gains meaning not merely through the exercise of de facto power, but through the question of what knowledge it is based on and the justificatory grounds on which it is considered legitimate.

Modern secular political theories construct political legitimacy largely on rational justification and procedural principles. A classic formulation of this approach can be found in the legitimacy typology of Max Weber. Weber argues that modern political authority operates primarily on the basis of legal-rational legitimacy.¹⁰² In this model, the legitimacy of political power derives not from the moral superiority or virtue of rulers, but from conformity to rules and institutional predictability.

This approach offers significant advantages for the functioning of the modern state. Political authority is depersonalized and placed within an institutional framework. However, this also leads to a gradual weakening of the moral content of legitimacy. Rational legitimacy answers the question of “how governance is carried out,” while often leaving the question of “why governance exists” outside its scope.¹⁰³

Thinkers such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas attempt to address this limitation by re-grounding legitimacy in the concepts of public reason and communicative consensus.¹⁰⁴ According to this view, political authority is legitimate if it rests on the rational agreement of free and equal individuals. However, this approach also tends to reduce the binding force of legitimacy to social consensus to a significant extent.

¹⁰² Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 212–216.

¹⁰³ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 34–41.

¹⁰⁴ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 137–145; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 449–457.

At this point, a structural tension emerges within secular theories: social consensus is variable and dependent on historical conditions. Consequently, political legitimacy lacks a stable and transcendent foundation. This condition helps explain why debates over legitimacy tend to intensify rapidly in modern political crises.

In Islamic political thought, by contrast, the legitimacy of political authority is not reduced solely to rational procedures or social acceptance. Legitimacy is assessed within a moral and religious framework.¹⁰⁵ Revelation serves as the primary normative reference that defines the boundaries of political authority. However, this does not imply the absolutization of political power.

In Islamic political thought, the legitimacy of political authority is not reduced solely to rational arrangements or social acceptance. Instead, legitimacy is evaluated within a moral and religious framework. Revelation constitutes the fundamental normative reference that defines the limits of political authority. However, this does not imply the absolutization of political power.

In classical Islamic political thought, authority is defined as a form of trust (amānah). The ruler is not the owner of divine commands but an agent responsible for implementing them justly.¹⁰⁶ This understanding derives political legitimacy not from power itself, but from how that power is exercised. The violation of justice thus implies the erosion of legitimacy.

In this context, Islamic political thought treats legitimacy not merely as a purely normative claim, but in connection with principles of moral responsibility and accountability. Al-Ghazali links the continuity of political authority to justice and emphasizes that injustice is one of the primary factors leading states toward decline and collapse.¹⁰⁷ This approach clearly reveals the critical function of political knowledge.

The thought of Ibn Khaldun complements this moral-religious conception of legitimacy with a sociological framework. According to him, political authority must be supported not only by religious references but also by social solidarity and power relations.¹⁰⁸ Otherwise, legitimacy cannot be sustained in practice. This approach offers an important

¹⁰⁵ Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 601–607.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Māverđî, *el-Ahkâmü's-Sultāniyye* (Beyrut: Dârü'l-Kütübi'l-İlmiyye, 1985), 5–9.

¹⁰⁷ Gazzâlî, *Nasihatü'l-Mülük* (Kahire: Dârü'l-Ma'ârif, 1967), 63–69.

¹⁰⁸ İbn Haldun, *el-Mukaddime* (Beyrut: Dârü'l-Fikr, 2004), I, 311–318.

epistemological advantage to Islamic political thought by preventing its normativity from becoming detached from social reality.

Table 1. Comparative Dimensions in Secular and Islamic Political Epistemologies

Dimension	Secular Political Theories	Islamic Political Thought
Source of Knowledge	Human reason, historical experience, social consensus	Revelation (normative framework), reason, and experience (balanced interaction)
Normativity	Procedural consensus and public justification; values are implicit or relative	Constitutive and explicit normativity; principles of justice, public interest (<i>maṣlahā</i>), and trust (<i>amānah</i>)
Legitimacy	Rational justification, legal-rational authority (Weber), public reason	Moral responsibility, conformity to Shari‘a, justice, and social consent (<i>bay‘a</i> , <i>shūrā</i>)
Public Sphere	Restriction or translation of religious/metaphysical arguments	Interweaving of religion, morality, law, and politics; public sphere governed by normative constraints
Ethics–Law Relationship	Claim of value-neutrality; separation between ethics and law	Holistic relationship; ethics forms the foundation of law and politics

The fundamental difference between secular and Islamic conceptions of legitimacy lies in the ultimate reference point of authority. In secular theories, this reference point is primarily human reason and mechanisms of consensus. In Islamic political thought, the ultimate reference is divine norms; however, the interpretation and application of these norms are left to human reason and social context.¹⁰⁹

For this reason, Islamic political thought, contrary to common claims, does not offer a static or theocratic model of legitimacy. On the contrary, it develops a multi-layered conception of legitimacy that both constrains political authority through normative principles and relates it to social reality.

In secular political theories, the legitimacy of political authority is constructed on rational and procedural foundations, whereas in Islamic political thought, legitimacy takes the form of a structure supported by moral and religious norms but balanced by reason and experience. This comparison shows that political knowledge is not merely a tool for legitimizing power; rather, it provides an epistemological framework that both constrains and critically examines it.

¹⁰⁹ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 147–153.

CONCLUSION

This study has comparatively examined the epistemological foundations of political knowledge within the contexts of secular political theories and Islamic political thought, aiming to identify the main points of divergence and convergence along the axes of the source of knowledge, normativity, and the legitimacy of political authority. Within this framework, it has been argued that political knowledge is not merely a technical or functional instrument, but also a moral, normative, and historically constructed form of knowledge.

The analysis has shown that modern secular epistemology constructs political knowledge largely on a reason-centered, procedural, and autonomous foundation. Although this approach—shaped by Enlightenment thought—claims to secure the universality and neutrality of political knowledge, it generates a structural ambiguity regarding the source of normative bindingness. Theories such as Rawls’s concept of public reason and Habermas’s communicative rationality represent important attempts to overcome this ambiguity; however, they ultimately ground political legitimacy in historical and social consensus.

In contrast, Islamic political thought conceptualizes the source of political knowledge within a balancing epistemological structure formed by revelation, reason, and experience. This framework affirms the normative dimension of political knowledge from the outset, while simultaneously developing methodological tools that prevent this normativity from becoming detached from historical context. The reason–revelation balance in Maturidi thought, Ghazali’s emphasis on moral responsibility, and Ibn Khaldun’s sociological analyses clearly demonstrate the epistemological pluralism of Islamic political thought.

This study has deliberately avoided reducing the difference between secular and Islamic epistemologies to a simplistic “rational–religious” opposition. Instead, it has shown that both traditions offer distinct possibilities and limitations regarding political knowledge. While secular epistemology strengthens the critical and pluralistic dimension of political knowledge, Islamic political thought secures its moral and normative responsibility.

One of the theoretical contributions of this study is the demonstration that the normativity of political knowledge is not an “obstacle,” but an epistemological necessity. Political knowledge is inevitably value-laden, and concealing these values does not enhance

neutrality; rather, it renders normative presuppositions unquestionable. This finding offers a critical contribution to both secular political theory literature and studies in Islamic political thought.

Furthermore, the study suggests that Islamic political thought can be approached not only as an “alternative” model in the face of modern political problems, but also as a critical epistemological resource. Particularly in discussions of political legitimacy, justice, and moral responsibility, Islamic thought offers important conceptual tools for addressing normative dilemmas that secular theories struggle to resolve.

For future research, several directions are proposed. First, comparisons between secular and Islamic epistemologies should be extended beyond classical texts to include contemporary political practices and institutions. Debates on the modern state, law, and citizenship provide a fruitful field for observing the concrete implications of these epistemological differences.

Second, different epistemological approaches within Islamic political thought—such as Ash‘arism, Salafi thought, or contemporary reformist perspectives—should be examined comparatively in order to overcome homogenizing tendencies in the literature. Such studies would make the internal plurality of Islamic political thought more visible.

Finally, interdisciplinary analyses of the relationship between the epistemology of political knowledge and ethics, law, and sociology may offer more comprehensive responses to the current crises of political theory. This study has aimed to provide a theoretical foundation for such an interdisciplinary approach.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis of the epistemological foundations of political knowledge offers a non-reductive, critical, and constructive dialogue between modern political theory and Islamic political thought. This dialogue has the potential to contribute not only to academic literature but also to the development of deeper and more responsible approaches to the contemporary problems of political thought.

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Etik Beyan / Ethical Statement

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It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.

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