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Navigating Moral Controversies Through Fiqh al-Muwāzanāt: A Framework for Muslim American Engagement with Abortion and LGBT Policies

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"الأراء في هذا البحث تعبر عن رأي الباحث وليس بالضرورة عن رأي أئما"

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Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive application of the *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* (jurisprudence of balancing) framework to guide Muslim American scholarly and community responses to abortion and LGBT policy debates within the contemporary American political landscape. Drawing upon classical Islamic jurisprudential principles and contemporary political realities, this study demonstrates how the methodology of balancing benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and harms (*mafasid*) provides essential tools for navigating complex moral-political terrain while maintaining religious authenticity. The analysis reveals that these policy areas cannot be addressed in isolation but must be understood within the broader context of systematic constraints on Muslim political participation, particularly the pervasive influence of pro-Israel lobbying organizations that shape available political options. Through detailed examination of the essential conditions for *muwāzanāt*, including mastery of *maqāṣid*, *taḥqīq al-manāt*, *fiqh al-wāqīʿ*, consideration of consequences, and *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt*, this paper develops strategic frameworks that enable principled yet pragmatic engagement. The study argues that sophisticated application of these classical methodologies to contemporary challenges represents not compromise but rather the fulfillment of Islamic obligations to preserve faith, protect community interests, and contribute to societal welfare despite operating within fundamentally constrained political systems.

Introduction

The challenge confronting Muslim American scholars and communities in navigating contemporary moral-political controversies extends far beyond simple policy preferences or partisan alignments. The issues of abortion and LGBT policy,¹ while representing distinct theological and jurisprudential domains, converge in their demand for sophisticated strategic thinking that acknowledges both unchanging Islamic principles and rapidly evolving political realities. This convergence becomes particularly acute in the post-October 2023 American political landscape, where the systematic influence of pro-Israel lobbying organizations has fundamentally altered the parameters within which Muslim political participation operates.²

The classical Islamic methodology of *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* emerges as an indispensable framework for addressing these challenges. Far from representing innovation (*bidʿah*) or compromise with secular values, this methodology draws upon fourteen centuries of Islamic jurisprudential wisdom developed precisely for navigating complex situations where pure options remain unavailable and where action and inaction alike carry significant consequences. As demonstrated in a foundational analysis, the conditions and principles of *muwāzanāt* provide structured approaches for evaluating competing interests, anticipating consequences, and selecting courses of action that minimize harm while preserving essential religious and community interests.³

This paper advances three interconnected arguments that collectively demonstrate the

¹ Although the acronym “LGBT” (and its variants, like LGBTQ+) is usually problematic to normalize, it is employed in this paper solely as a critical analytical term to address policies pertaining to LGBT issues, supportive or oppositional, and does not imply any endorsement of the label or any desensitizing language.

² The systematic nature of pro-Israel influence on American politics has been documented extensively by scholars across the political spectrum. See John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); Grant F. Smith, *Big Israel: How Israel’s Lobby Moves America* (Washington, DC: Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, 2016).

³ Suleiman Hani, “Fiqh al-Muwāzanāt: Principles and Guidelines,” paper presented at AMJA (Dallas, Texas, August 2025).

necessity and legitimacy of sophisticated political engagement in the United States despite profound moral disagreements with prevailing policy options. First, this paper argues that the orthodox Islamic positions on abortion and LGBT policy issues, while remaining theologically non-negotiable, require nuanced application strategies that account for minority status, political constraints, and long-term community survival using the *muwāzanāt* framework. The simplistic approach of complete political withdrawal fails to protect Muslim interests and may actually facilitate greater harms to the community and society at large.

Second, the contemporary American political system's structural constraints, particularly the documented influence of organizations like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and Christians United for Israel (CUFI), create conditions where traditional political calculations must be modified in their application. When both major political parties demonstrate systematic alignment with policies enabling genocide and generally anti-Islamic rhetoric while differing primarily on domestic social issues, Muslim scholars must develop or modify frameworks for political engagement that acknowledge these constraints while maintaining strategic agency.

Third, the application of *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* to these contested issues reveals possibilities for principled engagement that neither compromises essential Islamic teachings nor accepts political marginalization. Through careful analysis of benefits and harms across multiple temporal horizons and stakeholder groups, Muslim communities can develop sophisticated strategies that protect religious freedom, advance community interests, and contribute to broader societal welfare even within severely constrained political environments.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond immediate policy concerns to fundamental questions about the nature of Islamic jurisprudence in minority contexts, the relationship between religious principles and political pragmatism, and the possibilities for maintaining authentic Islamic identity while engaging constructively with pluralistic democratic systems. As Muslim Americans face increasing pressure to choose between religious authenticity and political participation, the need for methodological frameworks that transcend this false binary becomes ever more urgent.

The Contemporary Political Landscape: Understanding Structural Constraints

The application of *fiqh al-wāqī'* (jurisprudence of reality) to contemporary American politics requires honest assessment of power structures that shape available options for Muslim political participation. The influence of pro-Israel lobbying organizations on American foreign and domestic policy represents not merely one factor among many but rather a systematic constraint that alters political calculations. This influence operates through multiple documented mechanisms that Muslim scholars must understand to develop realistic strategies.

AIPAC's influence on American politics operates through sophisticated mechanisms that extend far beyond simple campaign contributions. According to one report, pro-Israel lobbying organizations contributed over \$30 million directly to federal candidates in the 2022 election cycle, with significantly larger amounts flowing through affiliated political action committees and independent expenditure campaigns.⁴ However, focusing solely on financial contributions understates the comprehensive nature of this influence. AIPAC's

⁴ OpenSecrets.org, "American Israel Public Affairs Cmte Profile: Summary," accessed 2024, showing \$51,848,113 in contributions for the 2024 cycle, <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/american-israel-public-affairs-cmte/summary?id=D000046963>.

political strategy encompasses candidate recruitment and training, where potential legislators receive extensive preparation on Middle East policy positions before entering office; sophisticated voter mobilization networks that can deliver substantial voting blocs in key districts; media narrative management through coordinated messaging campaigns and rapid response teams; and legislative agenda setting that ensures pro-Israel bills receive priority consideration regardless of which party controls Congress.⁵

The October 2023 Gaza crisis starkly revealed this influence structure's effectiveness. Despite polling showing significant American public opposition to unconditional military support for Israel's military operations, Congress passed additional military aid packages with overwhelming bipartisan majorities. The House and Senate votes for supplemental military assistance in November 2023 demonstrated the disconnect between public opinion and legislative action.⁶ More tellingly, representatives who initially expressed concern about civilian casualties faced coordinated pressure campaigns, with several reversing their positions within days. Similarly, CUFI's role in shaping American policy through evangelical Christian mobilization adds another dimension to these constraints. With over 10 million members, CUFI leverages theological narratives about Israel's role in Christian eschatology to maintain grassroots support for policies that Muslim communities largely oppose.⁷ This religious-political fusion creates particularly challenging dynamics for Muslim engagement, as policy positions become sacralized within significant portions of the American electorate.

The systematic nature of these constraints manifests in concrete policy outcomes that directly affect Muslim communities. Legislative efforts to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which conflates criticism of Israeli policies with antisemitism, threaten to criminalize Palestinian advocacy and Muslim political expression. As of 2024, thirty-five states have adopted anti-BDS legislation, creating material consequences for Muslim organizations and individuals who engage in constitutionally protected boycott activities.⁸ These developments demonstrate how foreign policy influences create domestic constraints on Muslim political participation.

Beyond Single-Issue Analysis: Interconnected Policy Domains

The sophisticated application of *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* requires recognizing how abortion and LGBT policies intersect with broader political dynamics rather than treating them as isolated issues. The post-October 2023 political realignment has created new configurations where traditional assumptions about progressive versus conservative coalitions no longer hold. Progressive politicians who Muslim communities might align with on social justice issues demonstrate unwavering support for policies enabling genocide, while conservative politicians who oppose abortion and LGBT advocacy often couple these positions with anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies.

This interconnection becomes evident in coalition politics. Organizations that advocate for abortion rights and LGBT equality increasingly require litmus tests on Israel-Palestine issues as conditions for coalition participation. The Women's March controversies of 2017-2019, where Palestinian American activists faced sustained attacks for Palestine advocacy despite

⁵ For comprehensive analysis of AIPAC's political strategies, see Dan Flesher, *Transforming America's Israel Lobby: The Limits of Its Power and the Potential for Change* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009).

⁶ Congressional voting records available through GovTrack.us demonstrate the overwhelming bipartisan support for military aid to Israel despite public opposition documented in polling by Gallup, Pew Research Center, and other organizations.

⁷ Donald Wagner, "Christians United for Israel: An Ethnographic Study of Christian Zionism," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 4 (2013).

⁸ Palestine Legal, "Suppressing Palestine Advocacy: The Legal Assault," Annual Report 2023.

their women's rights leadership, exemplified these dynamics.⁹ Although there are moral concerns about the movement from an Islamic lens, the point here is that being pro-Palestinian was evidently a red line. Similarly, some LGBT-identifying organizations have faced pressure to exclude Palestinian solidarity from their platforms, splintering their own movements as others are passionately pro-Palestinian in their stances, and simultaneously creating artificial boundaries between human rights causes.

The practical implications for Muslim political strategy are profound. When potential progressive allies on domestic social issues demand silence on genocide as the price of coalition membership, traditional benefit-harm calculations require fundamental reconsideration. The *muwāzanāt* framework must account not only for direct policy outcomes but also for the moral and strategic costs of political associations that require complicity in grave injustices and other immoral issues.

Demographic Realities and Political Possibilities

Understanding contemporary political constraints requires serious engagement with American Muslim demographic realities and their implications for political influence. The Pew Research Center estimates the American Muslim population at approximately 3.5 million, representing 1.1% of the total U.S. population.¹⁰ While Muslim population concentration in key swing states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Virginia creates possibilities for localized political influence, the community's overall minority status necessitates strategic thinking about alliance building and priority setting.

The generational dynamics within Muslim American communities add complexity to political calculations. Younger Muslim Americans, particularly those born in the United States, demonstrate higher levels of political engagement but also face unique pressures regarding identity and belonging. Survey data indicates that 82% of Muslim Americans born in the U.S. are registered to vote, compared to 63% of foreign-born Muslims, yet younger Muslims also report higher levels of discrimination and identity-based challenges.¹¹ These generational differences affect how communities approach controversial social issues and political participation strategies.

The economic and educational profile of American Muslims provides both opportunities and constraints for political engagement. While Muslim Americans demonstrate higher than average educational attainment, with 39% holding college degrees compared to 32% of the general population, economic precarity affects significant portions of the community.¹² The concentration of Muslims in small business ownership and professional services creates vulnerabilities to economic pressure while also providing some independence from corporate constraints on political expression.¹³

⁹ For analysis of the Women's March controversies and their impact on Palestinian solidarity, see Noura Erakat, "Whiteness as Property in the Women's March," *Jadaliyya*, January 2019.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, "U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream," July 26, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>.

¹¹ Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, "American Muslim Poll 2022: A Politics and Pandemic Status Report," August 2022, <https://www.ispu.org/american-muslim-poll-2022-full-report/>.

¹² ISPU, 2022.

¹³ The relationship between economic power and political influence remains fundamental to effective minority participation in American democracy, as documented extensively in Martin Gilens' landmark study demonstrating that policy outcomes correlate overwhelmingly with the preferences of economic elites rather than average citizens. This dynamic particularly constrains Muslim American communities, where despite higher-than-average educational attainment, concentration in small business ownership and professional services creates both vulnerability to economic pressure and limited capacity for the large-scale political donations that shape policy access. See Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Geographic distribution patterns significantly impact political strategy options. The concentration of Muslim populations in urban and suburban areas of key states creates opportunities for local political influence while limiting impact on rural-dominated state legislatures where many social policy decisions occur. Understanding these demographic realities enables more realistic assessment of political possibilities and constraints.

1. Islamic Jurisprudential Foundations on Abortion

1.1. The Nuanced Classical Framework

The Islamic legal tradition's approach to abortion demonstrates remarkable sophistication that predates and transcends contemporary binary frameworks of "pro-life" versus "pro-choice." This sophistication emerges from the tradition's integration of scriptural sources, prophetic guidance, analogical reasoning, and consideration of human welfare within a comprehensive ethical-legal framework. Understanding this classical foundation is essential for contemporary application of *muwāzanāt* principles to abortion policy engagement.

The Qur'anic foundation for Islamic perspectives on human life and development appears in multiple verses that describe the stages of fetal development with remarkable detail. "We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him a drop in a firm resting place. Then We turned the drop into a clinging clot, then We turned the clot into a lump of flesh, then We turned the lump of flesh into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, and then We produced it as another creation. Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators!"¹⁴ This passage establishes the framework within which Muslim jurists developed their understanding of when human life begins and what protections it deserves at various developmental stages.

The prophetic tradition provides crucial temporal specificity through the hadith narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd: "The creation of each one of you is gathered in his mother's womb for forty days as a drop, then he becomes a clot for a similar period, then a piece of flesh for a similar period, then the angel is sent to him and breathes the spirit into him."¹⁵ This hadith's specification of ensoulment occurring after 120 days became central to jurisprudential discussions about the permissibility of abortion at different stages of pregnancy. Due to these explicit narrations, the scholars of all jurisprudential schools agree that ensoulment has taken place by 120 days from conception.

The four major schools developed distinct yet overlapping approaches to abortion that reflect their methodological commitments while demonstrating shared recognition of the issue's complexity, particularly between 40 to 120 days from conception. Within the ranks of each madhab, there are also diverging views, demonstrating the complexity of the matter. The Ḥanafī school generally permitted abortion before ensoulment for valid reasons, with some scholars allowing it even without severe justification during early stages. The prominent Ḥanafī jurist Ibn 'Ābidīn stated that abortion before 120 days is permissible, though discouraged without valid reason, reflecting the school's balance between theoretical permissibility and practical discouragement.¹⁶

The Mālikī school adopted a more restrictive position, generally prohibiting abortion from

¹⁴ Qur'an 23:12-14.

¹⁵ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 3208; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2643.

¹⁶ Ibn 'Ābidīn, *Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992).

conception except when the mother's life faces genuine threat. This stringency reflects the Mālikī emphasis on *sadd al-dharā'ī'* (blocking the means to harm) and their interpretation that human life's sanctity begins at conception. Mālikī jurists argued that once conception occurs, the process of human creation has begun and should not be interrupted without overwhelming justification. However, even within this restrictive framework, Mālikī scholars recognized that preserving the mother's life takes precedence over potential life, demonstrating the tradition's consistent prioritization of certain over potential existence.¹⁷

The Shāfi'ī school presents internal diversity; while some Shāfi'ī scholars like al-Ghazālī condemned abortion at any stage, others like al-Ramlī permitted it before ensoulment for valid reasons including family hardship or maternal health concerns.¹⁸ The Ḥanbalī school's approach emphasized textual evidence while maintaining flexibility for necessary exceptions. Ibn Qudāmah's position is that of permitting abortion before 40 days for valid reasons, becoming more restrictive as pregnancy progresses, and the madhab permits it up to 120 days when a clear need is present.¹⁹

Following the 120-day mark, Islamic law considers terminating a pregnancy to be strictly prohibited, as the fetus has achieved the status of a complete human being with a soul. From a religious standpoint, ending the pregnancy at this stage would constitute taking a human life. The sole exception occurs when a qualified medical professional confirms that carrying the pregnancy to term poses a genuine threat to the mother's survival. This exception stems from a fundamental principle in Islamic jurisprudence: certainty takes precedence over uncertain outcomes. The reasoning follows that the mother's existence is confirmed and established, whereas the fetus's ability to survive remains less certain. Therefore, when faced with preserving one life over another, Islamic law prioritizes protecting the mother's established life over the developing life that faces greater uncertainty. This approach seeks to minimize overall harm when confronted with a seemingly impossible choice.

1.2. Contemporary Medical Knowledge and Jurisprudential Adaptation

Modern medical knowledge has enriched rather than overturned classical Islamic frameworks on abortion. Contemporary Muslim bioethicists engage with advanced understanding of embryology, fetal development, and maternal health while maintaining fidelity to established jurisprudential principles. To date, numerous fiqh councils (e.g., AMJA, FCNA, Islamic Fiqh Academy, etc.) have issued detailed resolutions that synthesize classical positions with contemporary medical realities.

The question of fetal abnormalities detectable through modern prenatal screening represents a significant area where contemporary scholars apply classical principles to new circumstances. Major contemporary scholars and jurisprudential bodies have permitted abortion when severe fetal abnormalities incompatible with meaningful life are detected, particularly before ensoulment. This permission reflects application of the principle of preventing greater harm (*daf' al-ḍarar al-akbar*) and consideration of the comprehensive

¹⁷ Al-Dasūqī, *Hāshiyat al-Dasūqī 'alā al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.).

¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.); al-Ramlī, *Nihāyat al-Muḥtāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984).

¹⁹ Ibn Qudāmah, al-Mughnī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1968).

suffering that would affect the child, family, and society.²⁰

The psychological dimensions of maternal health have received increased attention from contemporary Muslim scholars. While classical texts primarily discussed physical threats to maternal life, contemporary authorities recognize severe psychological conditions as potentially justifying abortion within established parameters. This development reflects not innovation in fundamental principles but rather expanded understanding of what constitutes genuine threat to maternal wellbeing.²¹

Contemporary scholars also explicitly address cases of rape and incest, issues that classical texts addressed less emphatically at times due to different social contexts. Major contemporary authorities have permitted abortion in rape cases, based on principles of removing harm (*raf' al-darar*), preventing psychological trauma, and considering the woman's inability to consent to the pregnancy's initiation. These rulings demonstrate the Islamic legal tradition's capacity to address contemporary challenges while maintaining methodological consistency.²²

1.3. Establishing the Parameters for Political Engagement

The jurisprudential complexity surrounding abortion in Islamic law creates specific parameters for Muslim American political engagement that resist alignment with either "pro-life" or "pro-choice" movements as conventionally understood. The Islamic position recognizes fetal rights that increase throughout pregnancy while maintaining strong protections for maternal life and wellbeing. This nuanced position requires sophisticated political strategies that neither embrace unrestricted abortion access nor support absolute prohibition.

The principle of gradualism (*tadarruj*) in Islamic law provides guidance for political engagement on abortion policy. Just as Islamic law recognizes different levels of fetal development, Muslim political engagement can support graduated policy frameworks that provide different levels of protection and access at different stages of pregnancy. This approach aligns with Islamic jurisprudence while potentially finding common ground with Americans who reject both extremes of the abortion debate.²³

The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) framework emphasizes that abortion policies must balance multiple objectives including preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), preservation of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*). Political positions that absolutely prioritize one objective while negating others fail to reflect the comprehensive nature of Islamic ethical consideration. This recognition necessitates political strategies that acknowledge complexity rather than embracing simplistic slogans.

The reality of Muslim minority status in America adds another layer of necessary consideration. Classical scholars like al-Shaṭībī recognized that rulings must consider the

²⁰ See the collection of contemporary fatwas in Mohamed Ghaly, *Islam and Disability: Perspectives in Theology and Jurisprudence* (London: Routledge, 2010).

²¹ For analysis of psychological considerations in contemporary Islamic bioethics, see Aasim I. Padela, "Islamic Bioethics: Between Sacred Law, Lived Experiences, and State Authority," *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 34, no. 2 (2013).

²² See Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA), and numerous other scholarly councils who've expressed similar views.

²³ For discussion of gradualism in Islamic law and its political applications, see Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

particular circumstances of their application, including the difference between Muslim-majority and minority contexts.²⁴ In the American context, where Muslims cannot directly implement Islamic teachings, political engagement must focus on protecting space for Muslims to follow their religious convictions while contributing to policies that minimize overall societal harm.

2. Islamic Theological Foundations on LGBT Policy Issues

2.1. Unchanging Principles in Divine Revelation

The Islamic position on homosexual conduct and contemporary gender ideology derives from unambiguous scriptural sources that establish clear normative boundaries. Unlike abortion, where classical jurisprudence recognized legitimate scope for interpretive difference, the prohibition of homosexual conduct represents a matter of explicit scriptural injunction confirmed through multiple sources and scholarly consensus across fourteen centuries.²⁵ This theological clarity paradoxically creates more complex challenges for political engagement, as it requires navigating between unchangeable religious principles and pluralistic democratic participation.

The Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Lūṭ (Lot) appears seven times throughout the scripture, each iteration reinforcing consistent messages about the moral evaluation of homosexual conduct. "And [remember] Lūṭ when he said to his people, 'Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people.'"²⁶ The repetition and consistency of this narrative across nine passages and more than seventy verses indicates its central importance to Islamic sexual ethics.

The comprehensive nature of Qur'anic condemnation extends beyond mere description to establish homosexual conduct as a fundamental violation of divine order. The Qur'an employs exceptionally strong language, describing the people of Lūṭ as *musrifūn* (transgressors of all bounds), *fāsiqūn* (defiantly disobedient), and *mufsidūn* (spreaders of corruption). This terminological severity, typically reserved for the gravest violations of divine command, indicates the conduct's position within Islamic moral hierarchy. The divine destruction of these communities serves as a stark warning about the consequences of normalizing such practices.

The scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) on homosexual conduct's prohibition represents one of the most uncontested areas of Islamic law. Ibn Ḥazm, in documenting matters of consensus, listed the prohibition of homosexual conduct among issues where no legitimate scholarly disagreement exists across all schools of jurisprudence.²⁷ This consensus extends not merely to the conduct's prohibited status but to its classification among major sins (*kabā'ir*) requiring sincere repentance and fundamental life change.

²⁴ Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'a*, ed. 'Abd Allah Darrāz, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003).

²⁵ For a full contemporary treatment of the topic, see: Yaqeen Institute, "Islam and the LGBT Question: Reframing the Narrative," October 7, 2022, updated June 11, 2025, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/islam-and-the-lgbt-question-reframing-the-narrative>.

²⁶ Qur'an 7:80-81.

²⁷ Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib al-Ijmā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1983).

2.2. The Framework of Gender and Sexual Ethics in Islam

Islamic teachings on gender and sexuality operate within a comprehensive worldview that sees complementarity between male and female as fundamental to divine design. The Qur'anic principle “*And of all things We created pairs*” establishes binary gender complementarity as reflecting divine wisdom in creation.²⁸ This framework extends beyond biological reproduction to encompass spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions of human existence.

The institution of marriage in Islam serves multiple objectives that illuminate the tradition's approach to sexuality and gender relations. The Qur'an describes marriage as producing *sakīnah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (love), and *rahmah* (mercy) between spouses, establishing these emotional and spiritual dimensions as divine signs for contemplation.²⁹ The restriction of sexual expression to marital contexts between men and women reflects not arbitrary limitation but purposeful channeling of human desires toward comprehensive individual and societal benefit.

Contemporary gender ideology's assertion that subjective gender identity supersedes biological reality conflicts with fundamental Islamic theological commitments. While classical Islamic law demonstrated sophisticated understanding of biological ambiguity through detailed rulings regarding *khunthā* (intersex individuals), this recognition of genuine medical conditions differs categorically from ideological assertions that gender represents purely social construction or individual choice.³⁰ The Islamic framework acknowledges biological complexity while maintaining that such complexity operates within, rather than negating, the fundamental male-female binary established in creation.

The Islamic emphasis on *fitrah* (primordial human nature) provides another dimension for understanding opposition to practices that contradict divinely established norms.³¹ The Prophet ﷺ stated: “*Every child is born upon the fitrah*,” indicating that human beings possess inherent nature aligned with divine intent.³² Practices that fundamentally contradict this *fitrah*, including homosexual conduct and gender transition, are viewed as departing from the divine plan for human flourishing. This perspective frames Islamic sexual ethics not as arbitrary restrictions but as guidance toward authentic human fulfillment.

2.3. Recognizing Systematic Campaigns of Desensitization

Muslim communities must recognize that contemporary shifts in sexual and gender norms result not merely from organic social evolution but from deliberate campaigns designed to undermine religious convictions. The 1989 publication “After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s” by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen explicitly outlined strategies for normalizing homosexuality through systematic desensitization, presenting their approach as unabashed propaganda, firmly grounded in long-established principles of psychology and advertising.³³ The authors candidly described

²⁸ Qur'an 51:49.

²⁹ Qur'an 30:21.

³⁰ For classical Islamic law on intersex individuals, see Rowson, Everett K., “The Effeminates of Early Medina,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 4 (1991).

³¹ For more on the *fitrah*, see: Yasir Qadhi, “Reconciling Reason and Revelation in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): An Analytical Study of Ibn Taymiyya's ‘Dar’ al-Ta’arud” (PhD diss., ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2013).

³² Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 1358; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2658.

³³ Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

their goal as conversion of the average American's emotions, mind, and will through a planned psychological attack in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media.³⁴

This deliberate campaign has profound implications for Muslim communities. The constant exposure to LGBT-affirming messages through media, education, and corporate messaging represents not neutral information but calculated efforts to erode religious convictions. Muslim youth, particularly those educated in Western institutions, face unprecedented pressure through curricula, peer influence, and social media that systematically portrays traditional religious teachings as bigotry while celebrating gender fluidity and sexual libertinism as liberation. Understanding these dynamics as orchestrated rather than organic enables more effective resistance and protection of Islamic values.

The success of these desensitization campaigns among some Muslims who now advocate for "reinterpretation" of clear Qur'anic injunctions demonstrates the urgency of maintaining vigilance. When Muslims begin parroting talking points developed by those explicitly seeking to destroy religious sexual ethics, it reveals how effectively these propaganda techniques can infiltrate even religious communities. Scholars and community leaders must actively counter these influences through clear teaching, regular reinforcement of Islamic principles, and exposing the agenda behind seemingly benign diversity initiatives.

2.4. The Role of Compassion Within Clear Boundaries

While maintaining absolute clarity on the prohibition of homosexual acts and gender transition, Islamic teachings emphasize several principles that shape practical engagement with individuals experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. The distinction between experiencing desires and acting upon them remains fundamental in Islamic moral theology. Individuals who experience same-sex attraction but refrain from prohibited conduct are engaged in spiritual struggle (*jihād al-nafs*) deserving support rather than condemnation.³⁵ Many Muslims who do not experience same-sex attraction (SSA) will oftentimes forget to show empathy and understanding to Muslims who struggle with their SSA but resist it for Allah's sake. As well, many Muslims forget to distinguish between their own revulsion at prohibited acts and the language they use (e.g., expressing disgust toward people rather than practices) when discussing these issues with Muslims who are faithful and struggling with SSA.

The prophetic model emphasizes gradual guidance and compassionate support for those struggling with religious compliance. When a young man approached the Prophet ﷺ seeking permission for fornication, the Prophet responded not with harsh condemnation but with gentle reasoning that led the young man to understand and accept divine guidance.³⁶ This pedagogical approach provides a model for engaging with Muslims experiencing various forms of spiritual struggle, including those related to sexuality and gender identity.

Islamic teachings prohibit vigilante action, discrimination in worldly matters, or violation of others' rights regardless of their private conduct. The requirement for four trustworthy witnesses to prosecute sexual crimes effectively prevents implementation of penalties

³⁴ Kirk and Madsen, *After the Ball*.

³⁵ For contemporary approaches to Muslims experiencing same-sex attraction within orthodox frameworks, see the work of organizations like Straight Struggle (straightstruggle.org).

³⁶ Musnad Ahmad, no. 22211.

outside formal Islamic governance structures.³⁷ In the American context, this means Muslims oppose violence and unjust discrimination while maintaining religious teachings about moral conduct.

2.5. Parameters for Political Engagement on LGBT Issues

The clarity of Islamic theological positions on LGBT issues creates specific challenges for political engagement in pluralistic democracies where these positions increasingly diverge from social consensus.³⁸ Unlike abortion, where Islamic law recognizes legitimate diversity and contextual application, the fundamental prohibitions regarding homosexual conduct and gender transition remain non-negotiable. This reality requires sophisticated strategies that maintain religious integrity while navigating political participation.

The principle of freedom of religion and conscience provides the primary framework for Muslim political engagement on LGBT issues. Rather than seeking to impose Islamic sexual ethics on broader society, Muslim political activity first focuses on protecting religious communities' ability to maintain and transmit their teachings. This "defensive" posture aligns with minority jurisprudence (*aqalliyyāt*) principles.³⁹

The establishment of coalition parameters for Muslim political engagement requires sophisticated analysis that moves beyond simplistic categorical prohibitions. Muslim organizations must navigate complex terrain where potential partners span a spectrum of ideological positions and organizational demands. The fundamental principle guiding such navigation remains the preservation of Islamic theological integrity while pursuing legitimate community interests through strategic cooperation.

Partnerships with LGBT advocacy organizations present particular challenges that require careful differentiation. Organizations that condition cooperation on ideological endorsement of sexual practices prohibited in Islam, mandate participation in 'Pride' celebrations, or actively campaign to change religious teachings within Muslim communities represent clear cases where partnership would compromise essential religious principles. However, the political landscape includes individuals and groups who identify as LGBT but prioritize other justice concerns without demanding religious communities alter their theological positions. For instance, when Palestinian solidarity movements include LGBT-identified activists who focus on opposing genocide without requiring Muslim organizations to affirm their sexual identities or practices, limited cooperation on the specific issue of Palestinian rights may be permissible. The key distinction lies in whether the cooperation requires or implies endorsement of prohibited practices versus working together on shared justice concerns while maintaining theological disagreements.

Conservative Christian alliances present different but equally complex calculations. While sharing Muslim opposition to certain social practices, these groups frequently couple their traditional values advocacy with explicit or implicit Islamophobic positions. The October

³⁷ For analysis of Islamic criminal law's evidentiary requirements, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: A Fresh Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³⁸ Despite clear Islamic theological positions, American Muslim attitudes toward homosexuality have shifted significantly, with 52% - in one survey - saying homosexuality should be accepted by society in 2017, up from 27% in 2007, though this remains below the general population's acceptance rate. While the study has its limitations, it shouldn't be ignored by scholars and analysts navigating multiple facets of these sensitive issues. See Pew Research Center, "U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream," July 26, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>.

³⁹ For minority jurisprudence principles, see Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2003).

2023 revelations starkly demonstrated how conservative Christian support for Muslim positions on social issues evaporates when those same Muslims advocate for Palestinian rights. Moreover, many conservative Christian organizations promote theological frameworks fundamentally hostile to Islam, seeking Muslim political support while simultaneously funding missionary activities targeting Muslim communities. These dynamics necessitate extreme caution and clear boundaries that prevent Muslim communities from legitimizing organizations that ultimately threaten their existence.

The principle of issue-specific cooperation offers more promising pathways than comprehensive alliances. Muslim organizations might effectively collaborate with parental rights groups challenging specific educational mandates without endorsing those groups' broader political agendas. Similarly, working with religious freedom legal organizations on protecting conscience rights need not imply agreement with all positions those organizations advocate. This compartmentalized approach enables achievement of specific objectives while maintaining independence and avoiding problematic associations. The critical factor remains ensuring that such cooperation occurs within clearly defined parameters that all parties understand and respect.

The development of autonomous Muslim institutions and coalitions represents the optimal long-term strategy for political engagement. While tactical cooperation with various groups may serve immediate objectives, sustainable political influence requires infrastructure controlled by and accountable to Muslim communities. This includes independent political action committees, legal advocacy organizations, media platforms, and policy research institutions that can articulate authentic Muslim positions without external ideological constraints. Building such infrastructure demands significant resource investment but provides the freedom to pursue community interests without compromising religious principles through problematic alliances.

The practical application of these principles requires contextual judgment considering multiple factors. The nature of the specific issue at stake, the degree of theological compromise required, the potential benefits versus risks, the availability of alternative strategies, and the long-term precedential effects all merit consideration. For example, Muslim organizations facing legislation that would mandate LGBT ideology instruction in Islamic schools might find common cause with Orthodox Christian or Jewish institutions facing identical threats, creating coalitions based on shared religious freedom concerns rather than comprehensive theological agreement. Conversely, joining broad progressive coalitions that condition membership on affirming comprehensive LGBT rights would clearly violate the parameters of acceptable cooperation.

From a societal lens, the concept of peaceful coexistence within pluralistic societies has precedent in Islamic history. The Prophet's ﷺ constitution of Madinah established frameworks for multiple religious communities to coexist while maintaining distinct religious laws and practices.⁴⁰ Contemporary application of this principle suggests that Muslims can advocate for societal arrangements that protect both all individuals from violence and discrimination while preserving religious communities' freedom to maintain traditional teachings.

⁴⁰ For analysis of the Constitution of Medina's implications for pluralistic coexistence, see Ovamir Anjum, "The 'Constitution' of Medina: Translation, Commentary, and Meaning Today," Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, February 4, 2021, updated July 22, 2024, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-constitution-of-medina-translation-commentary-and-meaning-today>; and Michael Lecker, *The Constitution of Medina: Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004).

The *maqāṣid*-based analysis reveals that political engagement must prioritize preserving Muslim community identity and religious transmission across generations. Policies that mandate ideological conformity in Islamic institutions, require religious communities to violate conscience in provision of services, or prevent parents from transmitting religious values to children represent greater threats than general societal acceptance of practices Islam prohibits. This prioritization guides strategic decision-making about which political battles merit the greatest engagement at a particular time and place.⁴¹

2.6. Fiqh al-Taḥālufāt al-Mu'aqqatah (Jurisprudence of Temporary Alliances)

The complexity of Muslim minority political engagement in democratic contexts demands the development of *fiqh al-taḥālufāt al-mu'aqqatah* (jurisprudence of temporary alliances) as a distinct subdiscipline within Islamic political jurisprudence. While classical Islamic law extensively addressed treaties (*mu'āhadāt*) and alliances in contexts of Muslim political sovereignty, the unique challenges facing minority communities navigating pluralistic democracies require systematic methodological innovation grounded in authentic precedent. The Prophet's ﷺ strategic alliances during the Meccan period, including the Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl (Alliance of Virtue) which he praised even after prophethood,⁴² and his complex treaty arrangements with Jewish tribes and polytheist clans in Medina, demonstrate divine sanction for principled cooperation across religious boundaries when serving legitimate interests.

Many contemporary scholars have called for renewed *ijtihād* in minority affairs, while the European Council for Fatwa and Research and other Western councils have begun addressing coalition politics,⁴³ yet no comprehensive framework exists for evaluating, structuring, and terminating political alliances in democratic contexts with rapidly evolving political and societal changes. This gap becomes particularly acute when Muslim communities must navigate coalitions involving parties holding positions antithetical to Islamic values while pursuing legitimate community interests such as religious freedom protection or opposition to genocide.

The establishment of *fiqh al-taḥālufāt al-mu'aqqatah* requires collaborative effort among jurists, political scientists, and community leaders to develop robust methodologies addressing critical questions: What constitutes sufficient benefit (*maṣlaḥah mu'tabarrah*) to justify alliance with those opposing Islamic teachings? How should temporal limitations be structured to prevent indefinite entanglement? What exit mechanisms preserve community integrity when alliances no longer serve their intended purpose? How are these strategies employed without creating distrust between Muslims and others, if it's known that the alliances are temporary? The answers demand synthesis of classical treaty jurisprudence, contemporary political theory, and empirical analysis of minority community experiences

⁴¹ For *maqāṣid*-based analysis of contemporary Muslim minority challenges, see Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*.

⁴² The Prophet ﷺ said about Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl: "I witnessed a covenant in Abdullah ibn Jud'an's house which is more beloved to me than a prized red camel. If I was called to uphold it after Islam came, I would have agreed." See al-Sunan al-Kubrā, no. 13080; Ibn Hisham, *Seerah*, 1/133.

⁴³ European Council for Fatwa and Research, "The Seventeenth Ordinary Session," accessed 2024, <https://www.e-cfr.org/en/2020/06/23/the-seventeenth-ordinary-session-of-the-european-council-for-fatwa-and-research/>. The ECFR has addressed Muslim political participation and the need for principled frameworks for engagement with non-Muslim political entities.

across diverse contexts.⁴⁴

This subdiscipline's development represents not theoretical luxury but practical necessity, as Muslim minorities increasingly face impossible choices between political marginalization and unprincipled compromise. The intellectual foundations laid today will determine whether future generations inherit sophisticated tools for principled engagement or continue navigating political minefields with inadequate guidance.

3. Applying Fiqh al-Muwāzanāt - The Five Conditions

3.1. Condition I: Mastery of al-Maqāṣid and Legal Maxims in Political Context

The application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to abortion and LGBT policy engagement requires sophisticated understanding of how Islamic legal objectives operate in minority contexts where direct implementation remains impossible. The five universally recognized objectives—preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*)—provide frameworks for evaluating political positions and strategies rather than simple templates for policy preferences.

In the context of abortion policy, multiple *maqāṣid* intersect in complex ways. *Ḥifẓ al-naḥs* encompasses both maternal and fetal life, requiring nuanced evaluation of policies that affect both. *Ḥifẓ al-nasl* involves not merely biological reproduction but the conditions enabling healthy family formation and child development. *Ḥifẓ al-dīn* includes protecting Muslims' ability to follow religious guidance on reproductive choices without state coercion in either direction. Political positions that absolutely prioritize one *maqṣad* while negating others fail to reflect comprehensive Islamic consideration.⁴⁵

The LGBT policy domain similarly involves multiple intersecting objectives. *Ḥifẓ al-dīn* requires protecting Muslim institutions' ability to maintain religious teachings and transmit them to future generations. This includes protecting Muslim communities from systematic desensitization campaigns designed to erode religious convictions through media, education, and social pressure. *Ḥifẓ al-nasl* encompasses not only biological reproduction but the preservation of Islamic family structures and sexual ethics. *Ḥifẓ al-'aql* involves protecting children from systematic ideological indoctrination campaigns that not only contradict Islamic teachings but actively seek to corrupt the *fitrah* (natural disposition) while ensuring their intellectual development in legitimate domains. These multiple objectives often conflict in specific policy proposals, requiring sophisticated balancing.

The legal maxim "hardship brings facilitation" (*al-mashaqqā tajlib al-taysīr*) provides crucial guidance for minority contexts. The hardship of maintaining Islamic principles in societies with fundamentally different value systems justifies certain accommodations and strategic choices that might be impermissible in Muslim-majority contexts. This does not permit abandoning fundamental principles but allows flexibility in their application and protection

⁴⁴ Initial frameworks must establish hierarchies of permissible alliance types—from issue-specific coordination requiring minimal ideological overlap to strategic partnerships demanding greater alignment—with clear parameters for each category derived from *maqāṣid*-based analysis. Scholarly councils should prioritize developing standardized "coalition contracts" (*'uqūd al-tahāluḥ*) specifying objectives, boundaries, duration, and termination conditions, drawing upon the Prophet's ﷺ meticulous treaty specifications while adapting to democratic procedural requirements.

⁴⁵ For application of *maqāṣid* to bioethical issues, see Mohammed Ghaly, "Milk Banks through the Lens of Muslim Scholars: One Text in Different Contexts," *Bioethics* 26, no. 3 (2012).

strategies.⁴⁶

The principle that “necessities permit prohibitions” (*al-ḍarūrāt tubīḥ al-maḥẓūrāt*) requires careful application to political engagement. While some invoke this principle to justify unlimited political compromise, proper understanding recognizes strict conditions: the necessity must be genuine rather than convenience, the prohibited action must genuinely address the necessity, and the permission extends only to the minimum required by necessity. Political strategies invoking necessity must demonstrate these conditions rather than using the principle as blanket justification for expedience.

3.2. Condition II: Taḥqīq al-Manāṭ - Verifying the Effective Cause in Contemporary Context

The application of *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* to abortion and LGBT policies requires precise identification of what contemporary phenomena actually represent in Islamic legal categories. This process prevents misapplication of classical rulings to situations that appear similar but operate under fundamentally different causal dynamics. The sophistication of this analysis directly impacts the validity of subsequent political strategies.

In abortion policy, *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* requires distinguishing between different types of abortion procedures, circumstances, and stages. Contemporary “abortion rights” advocacy encompasses everything from emergency contraception to late-term procedures, each with distinct Islamic legal evaluations. Political positions must reflect these distinctions rather than treating all abortion-related policies as equivalent. The effective cause (*‘illah*) for permitting early abortion for rape victims differs fundamentally from elective late-term procedures, necessitating different political approaches.

The process of verifying contemporary gender-related phenomena proves particularly complex. Classical categories of *khunthā* (intersex) applied to genuine biological ambiguity with established medical criteria. Contemporary gender dysphoria and transgender identity operate through fundamentally different mechanisms involving psychological identity claims rather than biological ambiguity. Conflating these phenomena leads to misapplication of classical rulings and confused political positions. Accurate *taḥqīq al-manāṭ* recognizes that contemporary gender ideology represents prohibited innovation in understanding human nature rather than extension of classical categories.⁴⁷ This recognition becomes particularly crucial given documented strategies to normalize these concepts through calculated propaganda campaigns rather than organic social evolution.

The verification of political alliances and coalitions requires similar precision. Classical prohibitions on alliance with non-Muslims against Muslim interests arose in contexts of military conflict and exclusive loyalty claims. Contemporary issue-based political coalitions operate through fundamentally different mechanisms of temporary cooperation on specific shared objectives while maintaining distinct identities and ultimate loyalties. This distinction enables strategic coalition participation without violating classical prohibitions.⁴⁸

The identification of actual versus perceived necessities in political engagement demands

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Medina: King Fahd Complex, 1995).

⁴⁷ See Mobein Vaid, “Can Islam Accommodate Homosexual Acts? Qur’anic Revisionism and the Case of Scott Kugle,” *MuslimMatters*, 2016.

⁴⁸ Sherman Jackson, “Muslims, Islamic Law and American Politics,” in *Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square*, ed. Zahid H. Bukhari et al. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004).

rigorous analysis. Claims that Muslim communities “must” support certain candidates or policies to avoid persecution require verification of actual threat levels versus political rhetoric. The post-October 2023 intensification of anti-Palestinian sentiment and legislation represents genuine escalation requiring strategic response, while routine electoral hyperbole about opposing candidates may not constitute true necessity justifying otherwise problematic alliances.⁴⁹

3.3. Condition III: Fiqh al-Wāqi‘ - Understanding Contemporary Political Reality

The application of *fiqh al-wāqi‘* to American Muslim political engagement demands comprehensive understanding of how power actually operates in contemporary American democracy. This understanding must extend beyond formal institutional knowledge to encompass informal networks, financial influences, cultural dynamics, and the specific ways these factors constrain Muslim political options. Superficial analysis that ignores these realities produces strategies disconnected from actual possibilities.

The role of money in American politics fundamentally shapes available options for Muslim engagement on both abortion and LGBT issues. The campaign finance system advantages well-funded interest groups while marginalizing communities lacking comparable resources. Pro-Israel organizations’ financial dominance creates ripple effects across policy domains, as politicians dependent on their support become unreliable allies on any issue where Muslim interests might conflict with pro-Israel positions. Understanding these financial dynamics prevents naive expectations about political alliance possibilities.⁵⁰

The cultural shifts in American society regarding sexuality and gender create new realities Muslim communities must navigate. The rapid transition from tolerance to mandatory celebration of “LGBT identities” in many institutional contexts represents a fundamental change in social expectations. Public schools increasingly mandate curriculum promoting gender ideology, workplaces require pronoun declarations and participation in ‘Pride’ events, and healthcare systems sometimes pressure parents to affirm children’s gender identity claims. These realities require strategic responses beyond simple invocation of religious freedom.⁵¹ Muslim communities must recognize these shifts as results of deliberate campaigns designed to normalize what was previously understood as contrary to *fitrah*, requiring active resistance rather than passive accommodation.

The specific dynamics of the post-October 2023 political environment demand particular attention. The bipartisan consensus supporting Israeli military actions despite widespread documentation of war crimes reveals the depth of institutional capture by pro-Israel interests. Politicians who previously positioned themselves as progressive allies of Muslim communities demonstrated willingness to abandon those relationships when pressured by pro-Israel lobbying. This revelation of political relationships’ transactional nature requires fundamental recalibration of Muslim political strategies.⁵²

Media representation and narrative control significantly impact Muslim political possibilities.

⁴⁹ For documentation of post-October 2023 anti-Palestinian legislation, see Palestine Legal’s tracking database at palestinelegal.org.

⁵⁰ See Peter Beinart, “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment,” *New York Review of Books*, June 10, 2010; updated analysis in his subsequent writings on the Israel lobby’s influence.

⁵¹ For analysis of institutional capture by gender ideology, see Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2020).

⁵² The Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU) has documented politician position shifts on Palestine following lobbying pressure.

The systematic bias in mainstream media coverage of Palestine parallels similar distortions regarding Muslim positions on social issues. Muslim opposition to LGBT ideology gets portrayed as extremism and intolerance comparable to actual white supremacist violence, while principled positions on abortion are dismissed as misogynistic oppression. Understanding these narrative dynamics enables more effective communication strategies that preempt predictable distortions.⁵³

3.4. Condition IV: I‘tibār al-Ma’ālāt - Considering Long-term Consequences

The consideration of long-term consequences in political engagement requires sophisticated analysis extending beyond immediate policy outcomes to encompass generational impacts on Muslim community identity, religious transmission, and societal position. This temporal expansion of analysis often reveals that apparently beneficial short-term gains may produce catastrophic long-term consequences, while accepting certain immediate hardships may preserve greater future possibilities.

Short-term political victories on abortion restrictions that associate Muslims with Christian nationalist movements may produce immediate policy alignment but generate long-term consequences including: alienation of young Muslims who perceive the community as aligned with movements hostile to religious minorities; reinforcement of narratives portraying Muslims as oppressive; loss of credibility on religious freedom claims when associated with groups seeking Christian dominance; and vulnerability to backlash when political winds shift. These consequences may outweigh immediate policy gains.

Similarly, complete capitulation to LGBT advocacy demands for short-term political acceptance generates severe long-term consequences: erosion of Islamic identity among youth who receive contradictory messages; loss of religious authority when institutions compromise clear teachings; legal precedents undermining religious freedom protections; and normalization of practices that Islamic teachings explicitly prohibit. The preservation of authentic Islamic teachings for future generations outweighs temporary political advantages.

The trajectory of institutional capture by ideological movements provides crucial lessons for anticipating consequences. Academic institutions' transformation from spaces permitting diverse viewpoints to enforcing ideological conformity on gender issues illustrates how incremental compromises lead to total capitulation. Initial requests for "tolerance" evolved into mandatory celebration, required pronoun usage, and punishment for dissent. This trajectory directly parallels the strategies outlined in works like *After the Ball*, confirming that institutional transformation follows predictable patterns of calculated desensitization rather than natural evolution.⁵⁴ Muslim institutions must anticipate similar trajectories when evaluating political positions.⁵⁵

The consideration of global consequences adds another dimension to political calculations. American Muslim positions on social issues influence global Muslim perceptions of Islam's compatibility with modernity. Compromises that might seem pragmatic in American contexts can undermine Islamic credibility globally, particularly in societies viewing American Muslims as potential models for democratic participation. This global responsibility

⁵³ For media bias analysis, see Marda Dunskey, *Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵⁴ Kirk and Madsen, *After the Ball*.

⁵⁵ For documentation of ideological enforcement in academic institutions, see the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) reports.

requires careful consideration of how political positions affect worldwide Islamic discourse.⁵⁶

3.5. Condition V: Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt - Establishing Proper Priorities

The application of priority jurisprudence to abortion and LGBT political engagement requires sophisticated understanding of how these issues relate to fundamental Muslim community needs and obligations. The tendency to elevate symbolic cultural battles while neglecting existential threats represents a critical failure in priority setting that undermines effective political strategy. Proper prioritization requires honest assessment of relative threats and opportunities.⁵⁷

The existential threats facing Muslim communities in the post-October 2023 environment dramatically overshadow disagreements about abortion or LGBT policies. Congressional legislation criminalizing Palestine advocacy, expanding surveillance authorities targeting Muslim communities, and enabling military support for genocide represent immediate threats to Muslim survival and religious freedom. Prioritizing cultural warfare over these existential challenges reflects fundamental misunderstanding of relative dangers.⁵⁸

Within the specific domains of abortion and LGBT policy, prioritization requires distinguishing between core religious freedom protections and broader societal transformation attempts. Protecting Muslim healthcare providers' conscience rights regarding abortion procedures takes precedence over attempting to ban all abortions. Preserving Muslim institutions' ability to maintain religious teachings on sexuality outweighs efforts to reverse broader social acceptance of LGBT identities. This defensive prioritization reflects realistic assessment of minority political capabilities.⁵⁹

The generational transmission of Islamic faith represents a priority that transcends specific policy victories. Political strategies that achieve short-term policy goals while alienating young Muslims from their faith community ultimately fail in preserving Islam in America. This recognition requires prioritizing community unity and youth engagement over ideological purity in political positioning. For instance, the loss of future generations to apostasy or distance from Islam would represent a greater harm than suboptimal abortion policies.

The priority of building sustainable institutions capable of weathering political changes outweighs temporary electoral victories. Investment in Islamic schools that can maintain religious teachings regardless of public school policies, healthcare institutions providing Islamically compliant services, and scholarship programs developing regional Islamic thought create lasting infrastructure. These institutional priorities deserve greater resource allocation than repetitive political campaigns with diminishing returns.⁶⁰

4. Strategic Applications of Muwāzanāt to Abortion Policy

⁵⁶ See Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁵⁷ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt: Dirāsah Jadīdah fī Daw' al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1996).

⁵⁸ Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), "2024 Civil Rights Report: Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate," Annual Report 2024.

⁵⁹ For analysis of defensive versus offensive minority strategies, see Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁰ For institutional development strategies, see Ihsan Bagby, "The American Mosque 2020: Growing and Evolving," ISPU/CAIR Report, 2021.

4.1. Balancing Benefits (Maṣāliḥ) in Abortion Engagement

The application of *muwāzanāt* to abortion policy requires systematic evaluation of potential benefits across multiple dimensions. Muslim political engagement on abortion can potentially yield various *maṣāliḥ* that must be weighed against each other and against potential harms. The sophisticated application of this framework reveals strategic pathways beyond simplistic alignment with either “pro-life” or “pro-choice” movements.

The protection of conscience rights for Muslim healthcare providers represents a crucial *maṣlaḥah* achievable through strategic political engagement. As healthcare systems increasingly mandate participation in procedures that violate Islamic teachings, protecting legal exemptions for religious objections becomes essential. This defensive benefit directly serves *ḥifẓ al-dīn* by enabling Muslims to maintain their professional careers without compromising religious principles. Political alliances that advance conscience protections deserve priority even when they involve partnership with groups holding different ultimate policy goals.⁶¹

Building institutional capacity to provide Islamic reproductive health services constitutes another significant benefit. Political engagement that secures funding, regulatory approval, and legal protection for Muslim-operated health clinics enables community self-determination in sensitive medical decisions. These institutions can provide culturally competent care that respects Islamic values while serving broader community health needs. The long-term benefit of institutional development outweighs short-term political positioning.⁶²

Establishing Muslims as thoughtful contributors to bioethics discourse generates intellectual and social capital with lasting benefits. Rather than being perceived as reflexive opponents or supporters of abortion access, Muslim scholars and healthcare professionals can articulate sophisticated positions that acknowledge complexity while maintaining principled stances. This intellectual contribution enhances Muslim community credibility on other issues and creates platforms for broader influence. The benefit of enhanced social standing facilitates achievement of other community objectives.⁶³

The cultivation of strategic relationships through abortion policy engagement yields benefits extending beyond the immediate issue. Working with disability rights advocates on selective abortion concerns, partnering with maternal health organizations on prenatal care access, or collaborating with religious freedom advocates on conscience protections creates relationships valuable for other political objectives. These relationship benefits must be weighed against potential reputational costs from certain associations.

4.2. Balancing Harms (Mafāsīd) in Abortion Politics

The evaluation of potential harms from various abortion policy positions requires careful analysis of both immediate and long-term consequences. The framework of choosing the lesser evil (*akhaḥ al-ḍararayn*) provides guidance when all available options involve some level of harm to Islamic interests or values. This analysis must account for the constrained

⁶¹ See Farr Curlin et al., “Religion, Conscience, and Controversial Clinical Practices,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 356 (2007).

⁶² Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) is an example of institution building in the health sector.

⁶³ See Aasim I. Padela and Ahsan Arozullah, “Islamic Perspectives on Clinical Intervention Near the End-of-Life: We Can but Must We?” *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2015).

nature of American political options where pure choices aligned with Islamic teachings rarely exist.

Association with extreme anti-abortion movements that demonstrate hostility toward religious minorities represents a significant potential harm. While these movements may share Muslim opposition to elective abortion, their broader agendas often include Christian nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and Islamophobic rhetoric. The harm to Muslim community standing and security from such associations may outweigh any benefit from temporary policy alignment.

Conversely, alignment with unrestricted abortion access advocacy contradicts fundamental Islamic teachings and alienates religiously committed community members. The harm to religious credibility and internal community cohesion from perceived abandonment of Islamic principles proves severe. Young Muslims seeking authentic religious guidance become confused when community leaders appear to endorse positions contradicting clear Islamic teachings. This internal harm to religious transmission may exceed external political costs.

The political capital expended on abortion battles that could address more pressing Muslim community needs represents an opportunity cost harm. When Muslim organizations invest limited resources in abortion policy debates while surveillance legislation, anti-BDS laws, and Palestine advocacy criminalization advance unopposed, the misallocation of effort constitutes strategic harm. The quantification of political capital as finite resource requiring strategic deployment guides these calculations.⁶⁴

The precedent effects of certain political positions create long-term harms exceeding immediate considerations. Supporting broad “reproductive freedom” frameworks to protect Islamic abortion exceptions may establish precedents undermining religious freedom in other domains. Similarly, endorsing restrictive frameworks to limit elective abortion may create precedents used against Muslim religious practices. These precedential harms require sophisticated legal analysis beyond immediate policy impacts.⁶⁵

4.3. Balancing Benefits Against Harms: The Comprehensive Calculation

The most complex application of *muwāzanāt* involves weighing qualitatively different benefits and harms against each other. This calculation requires moving beyond simple quantification to evaluate different types of impacts across various stakeholder groups and time horizons. The framework provides structure for these complex evaluations while acknowledging that perfect precision remains impossible.

Consider Muslim organizational response to state-level abortion restrictions following *Dobbs v. Jackson*. Supporting such restrictions might yield benefits including: alignment with Islamic teachings on limiting elective abortion, enhanced credibility among religiously conservative Muslims, and potential alliance building with other religious communities. However, the harms might include: association with groups hostile to Muslim interests, alienation of Muslim women needing reproductive healthcare, precedent for state interference in religious matters, and expenditure of political capital better used elsewhere.

⁶⁴ For political capital theory applied to minority communities, see Rodney Hero, *Faces of Inequality: Social Diversity in American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ Legal precedent analysis based on amicus briefs filed by Muslim organizations in relevant Supreme Court cases.

The calculation must weigh religious authenticity benefits against practical community harms.

The temporal dimension adds crucial complexity to these calculations. Short-term benefits from political positioning may transform into long-term harms as circumstances change. The Muslim organizations that strongly aligned with conservative Christian groups on abortion faced significant challenges when those same groups supported anti-Muslim policies after October 2023. This temporal shift illustrates how *muwāzanāt* calculations must incorporate probability assessments about future political developments.⁶⁶

The stakeholder analysis reveals how abortion policy positions differentially affect various Muslim community segments. Healthcare professionals face different impacts than religious educators, women of reproductive age experience distinct consequences from male community leaders, and convert communities may have different perspectives than immigrant populations. Comprehensive *muwāzanāt* must acknowledge these varied impacts rather than assuming uniform community effects. The weighting of different stakeholder interests requires transparent principles rather than arbitrary preference.⁶⁷

The consideration of alternative strategies enriches *muwāzanāt* analysis. Rather than binary choices between supporting or opposing specific legislation, Muslim communities might pursue parallel tracks: developing internal religious guidance while avoiding external political positioning, focusing on healthcare access improvements that reduce abortion demand, or emphasizing conscience protections without broader policy engagement. These alternatives may optimize benefit-harm ratios compared to direct political confrontation.

5. Strategic Applications of Muwāzanāt to LGBT Policy

5.1. Navigating Benefit-Harm Calculations in LGBT Policy Landscape

The application of *muwāzanāt* to LGBT policy engagement presents unique challenges due to the fundamental incompatibility between Islamic sexual ethics and contemporary gender ideology. Unlike abortion where Islamic law recognizes legitimate exceptions and graduated positions, the prohibition on homosexual conduct and gender transition remains categorical. This clarity paradoxically complicates political calculations by eliminating middle-ground positions that might facilitate strategic compromise.⁶⁸ Moreover, Muslim communities must navigate these calculations while actively resisting systematic desensitization campaigns designed to erode religious convictions through media, education, and corporate messaging.

The primary benefit achievable through strategic LGBT policy engagement centers on protecting religious freedom for Muslim institutions and individuals. As societal consensus shifts toward mandatory affirmation of LGBT identities, securing legal protections for religious dissent becomes crucial for community survival. These protections encompass multiple domains: educational institutions' ability to maintain religious teachings on sexuality, healthcare providers' conscience rights regarding gender transition procedures, and employers' freedom to maintain religious conduct standards. The achievement of robust

⁶⁶ See for example the concept of *fiqh al-mustaqbal* in Section VI: Integrated Political Strategy.

⁶⁷ For stakeholder analysis methodology, see R. Edward Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁸ See Mobeen Vaid, "And the Male is Not Like the Female: Sunni Islam and Gender Nonconformity," *MuslimMatters*, 2017.

religious freedom protections represents essential *maṣlaḥah* for community preservation.⁶⁹

Building coalitions with other religious communities sharing traditional sexual ethics creates strategic benefits extending beyond immediate policy goals. Orthodox Jewish, traditional Catholic, and conservative Protestant communities face similar challenges in maintaining religious teachings within increasingly hostile cultural environments. These coalitions provide enhanced political influence, shared legal resources, and mutual support networks. However, such alliances must navigate significant theological differences and historical tensions while maintaining focus on specific shared objectives.⁷⁰

The establishment of support systems for Muslims experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria within Islamic frameworks represents both religious obligation and strategic benefit. By developing compassionate approaches that maintain religious principles while addressing real human struggles, Muslim communities demonstrate sophistication beyond simple condemnation.⁷¹ Articulating Islamic positions on sexuality and gender in intellectually sophisticated ways that engage contemporary discourse generates long-term benefits. Rather than relying on simple scriptural quotation or emotional appeals, Muslim scholars who demonstrate deep understanding of contemporary gender theory while maintaining principled Islamic positions enhance community credibility. This intellectual engagement creates possibilities for meaningful da'wah and positions Muslims as thoughtful contributors rather than reflexive opponents.

5.2. Evaluating Cascading Harms from Policy Positions

The potential harms from various LGBT policy positions require careful evaluation across multiple dimensions. The framework recognizes that in current political climates, all available options involve some compromise or harm, necessitating sophisticated calculations about relative damages and strategic prioritization. The evaluation must consider both immediate policy impacts and longer-term consequences for Muslim community integrity and survival.

Complete opposition to anti-discrimination protections for LGBT individuals, while maintaining religious principles, generates perceived or real harms including: reinforcement of narratives portraying Muslims as intolerant,⁷² alienation of potential allies on other justice issues, and exposure to legitimate criticism regarding selective religious freedom claims. When Muslim organizations oppose basic protections against employment or housing discrimination while seeking similar protections for religious minorities, the inconsistency might undermine credibility in some circles.

Conversely, endorsement of comprehensive LGBT rights frameworks that include ideological mandates generates severe religious harms. Requirements for religious institutions to affirm gender transitions, educational mandates contradicting Islamic teachings, and healthcare policies forcing participation in procedures violating religious conscience represent

⁶⁹ Analysis of religious freedom legislation and case law affecting Muslim institutions, compiled by First Liberty Institute and Becket Fund.

⁷⁰ Clear boundaries must be established that these coalitions focus solely on protecting religious freedom without requiring mutual endorsement of each other's theological positions or broader political agendas.

⁷¹ These support systems serve multiple benefits: fulfilling religious obligations of community care, preventing vulnerable Muslims from leaving Islam, and countering narratives portraying Islamic positions as inherently cruel. The benefit of preserving Muslim souls while maintaining authentic teachings outweighs costs of developing such programs.

⁷² By liberal progressive groups, and in today's climate it is not unique to Muslims as the Republican party has openly resisted many of these issues and reversed some pro-LGBT policies.

existential threats to Islamic identity transmission. The harm of institutional capitulation to ideological demands exceeds any temporary political benefits from progressive alliance building. Young Muslims receiving contradictory messages from religious institutions lose confidence in Islamic authority.⁷³

The legal precedent harms from poorly crafted religious freedom arguments deserve particular attention. When Muslim organizations make broad claims that religious freedom permits any discrimination based on religious belief, they create precedents potentially used against Muslim practices. Similarly, arguments that parental rights override all state interests in child welfare might protect Islamic teachings on gender but could undermine Muslim homeschooling or religious education rights. Strategic legal positioning requires sophisticated understanding of precedential effects.

The association harms from alliance with groups promoting broader agendas hostile to Muslim interests present complex calculations. Some religious freedom organizations defending traditional sexual ethics also support Christian nationalism, anti-immigrant policies, or Islamophobic positions. The immediate benefit of legal support on LGBT issues must be weighed against longer-term harms from legitimizing organizations that threaten Muslim community security. The post-October 2023 revelations about conditional nature of many alliances reinforces needs for careful evaluation.⁷⁴

5.3. When Benefits and Harms Intersect

The most challenging applications of *muwāzanāt* to LGBT policy involve scenarios where benefits and harms prove inseparable within single courses of action. These situations require nuanced evaluation that acknowledges complexity while maintaining principled decision-making frameworks. The analysis must resist false binaries while recognizing that practical politics requires actual choices despite imperfect options.

Consider Muslim institutional responses to educational policies mandating LGBT-affirming curricula in schools receiving public funding. Accepting such mandates to maintain funding access yields benefits: continued ability to provide Islamic education to students who might otherwise attend fully secular schools, preservation of institutional infrastructure built over decades, and maintenance of employment for Muslim educators. However, the harms include: compromise of core Islamic teachings on sexuality and gender, confusion among students receiving contradictory messages, and precedent for further ideological mandates. The calculation must weigh educational access benefits against religious integrity harms.

The engagement with corporate diversity initiatives presents similar complexity. Muslim professionals and organizations face pressure to participate in “Pride” celebrations, use preferred pronouns, and affirm gender ideology as condition of employment or partnership. Participation might yield benefits of economic security, institutional influence, and platform for other advocacy. The harms encompass religious compromise, normalization of prohibited practices, and contribution to ideological environment pressuring other Muslims. Individual and organizational calculations must consider both personal/institutional survival and collective community impact.

⁷³ This outcome directly serves the agenda of those who have explicitly strategized to undermine religious sexual ethics through systematic propaganda campaigns.

⁷⁴ October 2023 coalition fractures documented through countless organizational statements and withdrawn partnerships.

Political endorsement decisions in the post-October 2023 environment exemplify extreme complexity in benefit-harm calculations. Candidates supporting Palestinian rights often champion comprehensive LGBT advocacy including mandates violating religious freedom. Conversely, candidates respecting religious conscience on LGBT issues typically support Israeli apartheid and genocide. The impossibility of finding candidates aligned with Islamic values on both issues forces excruciating calculations about priority of harms. Some Muslim organizations chose complete non-endorsement, accepting political marginalization to avoid complicity in either form of injustice. CAIR's 2024 survey data reveals that 98.2% of Muslim voters expressed dissatisfaction with Biden's handling of the Israeli government's genocide in Gaza, with international human rights, religious freedom, and hate crimes ranking as top concerns.⁷⁵

The development of alternative institutions represents strategic response to impossible calculations within existing frameworks. When mainstream options all involve unacceptable compromises, creating parallel structures may optimize benefit-harm ratios. Islamic schools operating without government funding maintain curriculum control while accepting resource limitations. Muslim professional networks providing mutual support reduce dependence on corporate structures demanding ideological conformity. These alternative institutions require significant investment but may represent optimal long-term strategy.

6. Integrated Political Strategy

6.1. The Post-October 2023 Recalibration

The genocide in Gaza beginning October 2023 fundamentally altered American Muslim political calculations across all issue domains. The bipartisan consensus supporting Israeli war crimes while criminalizing Palestinian advocacy revealed the depth of structural constraints on Muslim political participation.⁷⁶ Organizations previously allied with Muslims on social justice demanded silence on Palestine as prerequisite for continued partnership. Feminist groups expelled Palestinian voices, LGBTQ organizations celebrated Israeli "pinkwashing,"⁷⁷ and progressive coalitions fractured along Zionist fault lines. This revelation of conditional alliances, combined with documented AIPAC spending defeating progressive Democrats like Bush and Bowman, necessitates comprehensive strategic recalibration affecting all political engagement, including abortion and LGBTQ policies.⁷⁸

The complexity of contemporary constraints requires frameworks acknowledging interconnections between issue domains while maintaining principled foundations. Single-issue approaches fail to account for how positions in one domain affect credibility and

⁷⁵ Council on American-Islamic Relations, "CAIR 2024 Election Survey of American Muslims Shows Jill Stein & Kamala Harris Tied at 29%, Gaza Genocide a Top Concern," August 2024, https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-2024-election-survey-of-american-muslims-shows-jill-stein-kamala-harris-tied-at-29-gaza-genocide-a-top-concern/.

⁷⁶ The significance of these constraints becomes evident when considering that CAIR estimates over 2.5 million registered Muslim American voters nationwide, with significant concentrations in swing states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. See Council on American-Islamic Relations, "CAIR Releases Data Indicating Over 2.5 Million American Muslim Voters," February 2024, https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-releases-data-indicating-over-2-million-american-muslim-voters/.

⁷⁷ Pinkwashing is a portmanteau of "pink," long associated with LGBTQ+ identity, and "whitewashing." It denotes the strategic use of pro-LGBT rhetoric by states or organizations to cultivate an image of liberal progress while obscuring or diverting attention from human-rights abuses. Critics argue that this tactic co-opts authentic struggles for equality and undermines solidarity with other marginalized groups, notably Palestinians under occupation. For further reading see Jasbir K. Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 1–16; and Jason Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel–Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary," *Antipode* 47, no. 2 (2015): 228–242.

⁷⁸ For documented spending by AIPAC's affiliated super PACs against progressive incumbents, see Democracy Now! "Rep. Cori Bush Loses Primary After AIPAC Spent Over \$9 Million to Defeat Her," *Democracy Now!*, August 7, 2024; and Nicholas Fandos, "AIPAC Unleashes a Record \$14.5 Million Bid to Defeat a Critic of Israel," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2024.

alliance possibilities in others. The strategy of rapid pivoting emerges as valuable for navigating intolerable choices, articulating broad principles while maintaining flexibility in specific applications, grounded in consistent Islamic frameworks applied contextually rather than unprincipled opportunism.⁷⁹

Building issue-specific coalitions with limited scope represents necessary adaptation. Rather than comprehensive alliances requiring ideological agreement, Muslim organizations can engage tactical cooperation on narrow objectives. Working with disability rights groups opposing selective abortion or partnering with religious freedom advocates on conscience protections requires no commitment beyond specific shared goals, reducing vulnerability to ideological capture while achieving concrete objectives. The development of autonomous Muslim political infrastructure, including independent political action committees, media platforms,⁸⁰ and advocacy organizations operating outside traditional progressive-conservative binaries, becomes increasingly necessary as mainstream channels prove systematically hostile.⁸¹

6.2. Sequential Priorities: Reframing Defensive and Offensive Strategies

The strategic emphasis on defensive preservation over offensive societal transformation throughout this analysis warrants clarification. This prioritization does not represent permanent abandonment of Islam's transformative mission but rather sophisticated understanding of sequential priorities necessitated by current realities. The distinction between defensive and offensive strategies reveals not mutually exclusive approaches but complementary phases of long-term community development.

Defensive preservation encompasses both protecting religious freedom and building positive community infrastructure. This includes safeguarding Muslim institutions' autonomy to maintain Islamic teachings, protecting conscience rights, preserving parental authority in religious education, and developing educational and healthcare facilities operating according to Islamic principles. The concept extends beyond mere protection to constructive capacity building that enables authentic religious transmission across generations.

The comparison with Christian conservative success in advancing societal transformation illuminates why Muslims require different strategies. Christian communities operate from accumulated advantages: demographic weight (65% of population), centuries of institutional development, billions in financial resources, deep cultural integration, and sophisticated political infrastructure from local to federal levels. These structural advantages enable mobilization of existing power rather than building from foundations, a fundamentally different position than Muslim Americans who constitute 1.1% of the population while simultaneously constructing basic infrastructure and defending against existential threats.⁸²

⁷⁹ For instance, the impact of the Gaza genocide on Muslim political behavior became starkly evident in CAIR's 2024 exit poll, which showed 53.2% of Muslim voters supporting third-party candidate Jill Stein, compared to only 20.3% for Kamala Harris and 21.4% for Donald Trump. See Council on American-Islamic Relations, "CAIR Exit Poll of Muslim Voters Reveals Surge in Support for Jill Stein and Donald Trump, Steep Decline for Harris," November 2024, https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-exit-poll-of-muslim-voters-reveals-surge-in-support-for-jill-stein-and-donald-trump-steep-decline-for-harris/.

⁸⁰ Zeteo by Mehdi Hasan is a great case study to prove this point, being independent from typical Western, pro-Zionist, or corporate interests.

⁸¹ Palestine Legal, "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack," 2023 Update.

⁸² AIPAC spending documented by OpenSecrets.org and analyzed by The Intercept.

6.3. A Three-Phase Sequential Model

Understanding these differential capacities points toward sequential development recognizing transformation as long-term possibility requiring prerequisite and overlapping foundations: immediate, medium-term, and long-term phases. As for the immediate phase of defensive preservation, it focuses on securing religious freedom protections, building essential institutions, developing local scholarship addressing American contexts, and protecting against surveillance, criminalization, and systematic marginalization. This phase establishes the non-negotiable foundations without which future progress becomes difficult or, in some cases, impossible.

The medium-term phase of constructive engagement focuses on gradual expansion through intellectual contributions gaining broader recognition, strategic coalitions on shared values transcending defensive necessities, local and regional influence in areas of Muslim concentration, and cultural production offering attractive alternatives to prevailing narratives. This phase builds bridges between Muslim communities and broader society without compromising religious principles. Finally, the long-term phase of transformative influence focuses on the potential for broader societal impact through accumulated moral authority from decades of constructive contribution, institutional capacity rivaling established religious communities, sophisticated political networks at all governmental levels, and cultural integration allowing Islamic values to shape broader discourse. This phase remains aspirational but provides direction for community development.⁸³ It goes without saying that these three phases sometimes operate simultaneously and overlap in resource allocation.

This sequential understanding reframes the defensive-offensive distinction as developmental stages rather than permanent strategic divergence. Alternative pathways toward transformation complement rather than contradict defensive priorities: building exemplary communities modeling Islamic values, developing sophisticated intellectual frameworks critiquing contemporary ideologies, Muslim professionals offering alternative approaches within their spheres, economic development, financial sustainability in Islamic institutions, investment in cultural production embodying Islamic values, and focus on local transformation where Muslims have sufficient concentration.

The wisdom of sequential priorities recognizes that premature attempts at comprehensive transformation risk provoking backlash undermining even defensive achievements. By building strength gradually while maintaining principled positions, Muslim Americans position themselves for sustainable long-term influence rather than temporary victories followed by devastating defeats.

6.4. Fiqh al-Mustaqbal: Toward A Focused Subdiscipline

The challenge of temporal calculations in Islamic jurisprudence opens a broader discussion about futures studies and their application to contemporary minority fiqh. The field would benefit significantly from developing a multidisciplinary framework for *fiqh al-mustaqbal* (jurisprudence of the future), which represents a methodological evolution beyond traditional *i'tibār al-ma'ālāt* (consideration of consequences).

While *i'tibār al-ma'ālāt* focuses on anticipating consequences of present actions through

⁸³ For integrated frameworks, see Farid Senzai and Hatem Bazian, *Bay Area Muslim Study* (ISPU, 2013).

linear projections based on precedent and analogical reasoning, *fiqh al-mustaqbal* employs structured foresight techniques including horizon scanning, cross-impact analysis, and “causal layered analysis” (CLA) to map multiple plausible futures.⁸⁴ This approach recognizes that contemporary challenges facing Muslim minorities operate within what futures researchers call “postnormal” conditions marked by high uncertainty, contested values, and decisions that demand urgent action despite their long-term, often irreversible consequences.⁸⁵

This integration proves especially valuable when we consider that classical principles like *istiṣhāb* (presumption of continuity) were formulated for relatively stable conditions, whereas Muslim minorities today navigate rapidly shifting sociopolitical landscapes where historical patterns provide increasingly limited guidance.⁸⁶ Traditional jurisprudential frameworks, while foundational, require enhancement to address discontinuous change, emerging technologies, and what Inayatullah terms “civilizational worldview shifts,”⁸⁷ forces that fundamentally reshape the contexts within which Islamic law operates. *Fiqh al-mustaqbal* addresses this gap by enabling jurists to develop adaptive strategies responsive to multiple plausible scenarios rather than relying on single-point predictions. This approach recognizes that the accelerating pace of change demands not just extrapolation from past precedents, but systematic consideration of alternative futures that may diverge significantly from historical trajectories.

Importantly, this methodological synthesis enhances rather than abandons classical jurisprudential principles. It expands the epistemological toolkit available to Islamic legal scholars by incorporating futures studies methodologies specifically into the domain of consequence consideration (*i'tibār al-ma'ālāt*), thereby strengthening the predictive and adaptive capacity of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence.

6.5. Temporal Strategies and Generational Responsibility

The application of *muwāzanāt* across extended time horizons reveals strategies not apparent in immediate calculations. Preserving authentic Islamic teachings for future generations takes precedence over immediate political gains that compromise religious transmission. Young Muslims growing up where Islamic positions on sexuality and gender are portrayed as uniquely oppressive face tremendous pressure toward apostasy and away from the Islamic worldview. This pressure intensifies through deliberate desensitization campaigns systematically targeting religious convictions. Political strategies reinforcing these narratives for short-term alliance building may contribute to generational loss of faith.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Sohail Inayatullah, “Causal Layered Analysis: Poststructuralism as Method,” *Futures* 30, no. 8 (1998): 815-829. See also Sohail Inayatullah, ed., *The Causal Layered Analysis Reader* (Taipei: Tamkang University Press, 2004). Inayatullah’s appointment as UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies at the Islamic Science University of Malaysia represents a unique convergence of Islamic scholarship and futures methodologies.

⁸⁵ Ziauddin Sardar and John A. Sweeney, “The Three Tomorrows of Postnormal Times,” *Futures* 75 (2016): 1-13.

⁸⁶ For the classical principle of *istiṣhāb*, see Muhammad Nozari and Ali Mahdavi, “The Principle of the Presumption of Continuity (*Istiṣhāb*): A Comparative Study of Its Formation, Evolution, and Scope of Application in the Principles of Jurisprudence in Islamic Sects,” *Journal of New Issues in Islamic Jurisprudence* 1, no. 1 (2023): 115-140.

⁸⁷ Sohail Inayatullah, “Alternative Futures of War: Imagining the Impossible,” in *Beyond 9/11 and the Iraq War: In the Shadow of War*, Vol. 4, ed. Arthur Shostak (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005), 155-165. See also his work on “Ibn Khaldun: The Strengthening and Weakening of *Asabiya*,” *Periodica Islamica* 6, no. 3 (1996): 3-11, which connects classical Islamic cyclical thinking with futures methodologies.

⁸⁸ Investment in scholarship addressing contemporary challenges through authentic Islamic frameworks creates resources for future generations. Educational institutions producing scholars versed in both Islamic sciences and American contexts provide sustainable leadership. The cultivation of converts and second-generation American Muslims as community leaders creates bridges between Islamic teachings and American realities. These long-term investments may require redirecting resources from immediate political campaigns but serve essential functions for community survival.

Practical Implementation Guidelines

Translating theoretical frameworks into political action requires specific guidelines maintaining principled consistency while acknowledging community diversity. Local consultation mechanisms (*shūrā*) must incorporate scholars providing religious guidance, professionals understanding policy implications, and involving and educating community members young and old. Documentation systems recording rationales, tracking outcomes, and analyzing results build institutional wisdom preventing repeated mistakes.

Resource allocation frameworks ensure strategic deployment of limited assets through clear criteria: alignment with Islamic principles, probability of meaningful impact, sustainability of required effort, and opportunity costs. Communication strategies must address multiple audiences, messages emphasizing religious authenticity for Muslim communities differ from those emphasizing shared values for broader publics, while maintaining underlying principled consistency.

The post-October 2023 environment reinforces sequential thinking by revealing how quickly apparent political gains evaporate when minority communities lack structural power. Politicians courting Muslim votes while supporting progressive social agendas abandoned those relationships when forced to choose between Muslim support and pro-Israel lobby pressure. This demonstration of vulnerability argues for greater investment in autonomous capacity building before pursuing transformative agendas dependent on unreliable partners.

This framework ultimately suggests Muslim Americans need not choose between defensive preservation and transformative aspiration but must sequence priorities according to developing capacities. Current emphasis on defense builds foundations for future offense, creating conditions where subsequent generations might pursue broader influence from positions of strength rather than vulnerability. This developmental understanding transforms apparent limitations into strategic patience, recognizing that sustainable transformation requires power, legitimacy, and wisdom that Muslim American communities continue developing through deliberate cultivation rather than premature assertion.

Conclusion: Toward Principled Engagement in Constrained Contexts

The application of *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* to Muslim American engagement with abortion and LGBT policies demonstrates both the sophistication of Islamic jurisprudential traditions and the complexity of contemporary political navigation. This analysis establishes that neither complete withdrawal from political participation nor unprincipled compromise serves Muslim community interests or fulfills Islamic obligations toward societal welfare. The conditions for proper *muwāzanāt*, mastery of *maqāṣid*, verification of effective causes, understanding contemporary reality, considering consequences, and establishing proper priorities, provide structured methodology for complex political calculations while preventing arbitrary decision-making. This framework's grounding in classical scholarship ensures religious authenticity while addressing contemporary challenges.

Through the *muwāzanāt* lens, abortion policy reveals possibilities for nuanced engagement that maintains Islamic principles while recognizing graduated fetal development, legitimate exceptions, and maternal rights. Similarly, LGBT policy engagement enables principled navigation between religious authenticity and political institution-building, emphasizing mostly defensive preservation of religious freedom rather than offensive transformation.

The post-October 2023 political landscape fundamentally reshapes these calculations. The systematic constraints imposed by pro-Israel lobbying, conditional progressive alliances, and criminalization of Palestinian advocacy demand strategic adaptation without abandoning principled engagement. These interconnected challenges prevent treating abortion and LGBT issues in isolation from broader dynamics of marginalization.

The temporal dimension emphasizes generational responsibility over immediate political gains. Strategies that preserve authentic Islamic teachings while demonstrating sophisticated contemporary engagement serve long-term community interests better than temporary political victories. Implementation requires community-wide consultation mechanisms, institutional learning systems, and multi-audience communication strategies.

This analysis ultimately demonstrates that Muslim Americans need not choose between religious authenticity and political engagement. The sophisticated application of classical Islamic methodologies enables principled navigation of complex terrain while acknowledging severe constraints. The path forward demands intellectual courage, spiritual grounding, and strategic wisdom to maintain Islamic integrity while contributing constructively to American society.

For a long time, it seems, if not indefinitely, Muslim American scholars will have to regularly apply the principle of choosing the lesser of two evils in various aspects of political strategy. If anything merits regular reinforcement among the community and emerging religious scholars who seek societal engagement, it is Ibn Taymiyyah's essential reminder: "If two evils (*mafāsīd*) conflict in a setting where both cannot be avoided, one must ward off the worse by tolerating the lesser. One never repels small evil by causing larger evil, nor removes lighter harm by producing greater harm. Thus, whatever evil cannot be wholly eliminated must be diminished as much as possible, with the lesser of two evils not being truly *ḥarām* in such cases, though described as prohibited in general contexts."⁸⁹

As Muslim communities face intensifying challenges, *fiqh al-muwāzanāt* offers frameworks for principled decision-making amidst complexity. The responsibility for navigating these challenges falls upon our generation; the consequences will shape generations to come. This reality demands our most careful thought, principled action, and reliance upon divine guidance.

⁸⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 23:343; 20:57. This principle establishes that context transforms the legal status of actions, where normally prohibited acts become permissible when preventing greater harm.

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Appendix A: Managing Internal Dissent and External Criticism in Muwāzanāt Application A Framework for Scholarly Councils and Community Leaders

I. Anticipating and Categorizing Dissent

Scholarly councils implementing muwāzanāt-based strategies must anticipate criticism from multiple directions. Internal dissent typically manifests in three primary categories: *purist opposition* arguing any political engagement compromises Islamic principles, *pragmatist criticism* advocating fuller integration despite theological costs, and *procedural challenges* questioning the authority or methodology of decision-makers. External criticism often employs the "sellout" narrative, suggesting scholars have compromised Islamic principles for social acceptance or worldly gain.

II. Structured Response Protocols

Effective management of such dissent requires comprehensive pre-emptive education regarding muwāzanāt methodology, its classical foundations, and contemporary applications. This educational initiative must operate across multiple registers, including detailed *fiqhi* discussions for religious scholars, accessible presentations for community activists, and simplified explanations for general congregations. Furthermore, transparent documentation of decision-making processes proves essential, with councils providing written rationales that detail evaluated benefits and harms, consulted scholarly sources, considered alternatives, and final justifications. Such transparency preempts misunderstandings while

establishing clear reference points for community discourse.

III. Addressing False Accusations

When confronting accusations of religious compromise, councils should acknowledge the legitimacy of vigilance against unprincipled capitulation while distinguishing it from principled flexibility. Historical precedents demonstrate how eminent scholars navigated complex political realities using similar methodologies offer instructive parallels. Councils must articulate clear boundaries between non-negotiable principles and areas permitting adaptive flexibility, while establishing accountability mechanisms that allow community input without undermining scholarly authority.

IV. Constructive Channeling of Dissent

Constructive channeling of dissent requires formal consultation structures incorporating diverse representation within shūrā committees, where minority opinions receive documentation alongside majority decisions. Rather than merely opposing current approaches, critics should be challenged to develop detailed alternative strategies, transforming criticism into productive discourse. When facing significant opposition, implementing strategies as limited pilot programs with clear evaluation criteria allows testing of controversial approaches while maintaining community trust.

V. Communication Best Practices

Communication strategies must recognize the sophisticated reasoning underlying *muwāzanāt* calculations, which not all community members can fully comprehend. Relatable analogies prove valuable, comparing acceptance of political trade-offs to accepting medical treatment side effects, or likening coalition strategies to business portfolio diversification. Regular updates on political engagement outcomes, coupled with strategy adjustments based on results, prevent suspicion while demonstrating responsive leadership. Youth-specific engagement requires particular attention, utilizing their preferred platforms and addressing their distinct concerns regarding perceived compromises.

VI. Maintaining Unity Despite Disagreement

The ultimate objective is not eliminating dissent but managing it constructively while preserving community cohesion. Scholarly councils must balance unwavering commitment to Islamic principles with flexibility in their application, creating space for legitimate disagreement while preventing destructive fragmentation. Success depends on establishing trust through consistent principled action, accessible communication adapted to diverse audiences, and genuine responsiveness to community concerns, all while maintaining scholarly integrity in applying Islamic jurisprudence to complex contemporary challenges.