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THE PRINCIPLE OF ADVICE IN GOVERNANCE: INTEGRATING MODERN POLITICAL THEORY AND ISLAMIC ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Advice is one of the fundamental principles in ethical, participatory, and accountable governance. In the context of modern governance, the act of offering advice to leaders is not merely a form of political communication but also an essential component of checks and balances that helps prevent the abuse of power. Competent and ethical advisors can provide objective input, guide public policy direction, and assist leaders in making wiser decisions. On the other hand, in the Islamic tradition of governance, offering advice carries strong moral and spiritual significance. Giving sincere counsel to those in authority is considered a collective duty of the ummah, rooted in the values of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, and serves to uphold social justice and national stability. This article aims to examine the principle of advice in governance from two perspectives: modern political theory and Islamic thought. The study employs a literature review method, drawing upon scholarly books, academic journals, and official government documents. The findings indicate that advice plays a strategic role in shaping a government that is open to criticism, responsive to change, and oriented toward public welfare. By integrating rational and ethical values from both approaches, advice emerges as a vital pillar in strengthening democratic and civilised governance.

Keywords: Advice, governance, political ethics, modern theory, islamic perspective

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of human governance, the relationship between rulers and the people has always been a critical factor in determining the direction and quality of a civilization. Leaders are entrusted with authority to manage power for the common good, not as absolute figures immune to criticism. However, great power often comes with the tendency to isolate oneself from voices outside the inner circle of authority. In many cases, unchecked power can lead to authoritarianism, deviating from its original purpose and ultimately resulting in moral decay and a collapse of public trust. For this reason, societies require mechanisms both formal and informal that can help maintain the balance of power, one of which is the practice of offering sincere advice to leaders.

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From a philosophical perspective, advice is a form of moral communication rooted in the awareness that no human being is perfect not even those in positions of authority. No matter how capable or experienced a leader may be, they still possess limited perspectives and are vulnerable to making poor decisions. Advice, in this context, is not mere criticism; it is a collective effort to promote just, transparent, and truth oriented governance. It is not an act of opposition, but rather an expression of responsibility and care for the sustainability of a sound political system. When advice is rejected or perceived as a threat, authoritarian tendencies begin to grow, and the connection between rulers and the people starts to deteriorate[1].

In democratic systems, the existence of space for giving feedback and advice is one of the main indicators of the quality of democracy itself. Democracy is not only measured by regular elections, but also by how inclusive and responsive a government is to public input and participation. Thus, giving advice to those in power holds strategic value, both politically and administratively. It may come from various sources official advisors, legislative and judicial institutions, academics, the media, and civil society. When leaders open themselves to advice, what is fostered is not only political legitimacy, but also social trust, which serves as a foundational element for national stability[2].

Unfortunately, not all leaders possess the maturity to accept advice with an open heart. In many modern political realities, criticism is often misunderstood as an act of rebellion, and those who offer it are labeled as disruptors of public order or even enemies of the state. This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between power and morality. A refusal to accept criticism harms not only the public, but the leader as well, as it traps them in a false reality filled with sycophants and filtered information. When a leader is surrounded only by those who say "yes" to every decision, they lose the moral compass necessary to navigate the complexities of governance.

In Islamic tradition, offering advice to leaders is not only encouraged but considered a religious and moral duty. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said, "Religion is sincere advice (al-dīn al-naṣīḥah)," and when asked to whom this advice should be given, he replied, "To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and their common people." This shows that the practice of giving advice occupies a high position both spiritually and socially in Islam. Classical scholars also emphasized the importance of advising leaders with wisdom, sincerity, and without publicly humiliating them. In this context, advice serves not only as a means of accountability, but also as a tool to uphold justice, reinforce legitimacy, and prevent the abuse of power. A healthy government is not one that silences criticism, but one that transforms it into energy for self-improvement and better service to the people.

In a healthy and democratic system of governance, openness to criticism and advice is a crucial element that supports the establishment of good governance. Leaders, as the highest policymakers in a country, bear significant responsibility toward their people. However, no matter how capable a leader is, they remain human and inevitably have limitations. Therefore, the presence of honest, constructive advice grounded in moral values becomes an essential part of maintaining the balance of power, improving policies, and preventing deviations in governance[3].

[1] Blair, T. (1998). The third way: New politics for the new century. Fabian Society.

[2] Weber, M. (2019). Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press.

[3] Burns, J. M. (2022). Leadership. Harper & Row.

In the context of modern governance, the practice of offering advice to leaders holds strategic value both politically and administratively. Advice functions as a form of informal control that can originate from various parties—official advisors, supervisory agencies, academics, and even civil society. The existence of space for delivering advice indicates an open and inclusive government. Unfortunately, in many cases, leaders are reluctant to accept criticism or advice because they consider it a threat to their authority or an obstacle to their policies. Such an attitude has the potential to foster authoritarian power that deviates from the aspirations of the people.

Meanwhile, from the Islamic perspective, advice to leaders holds a very high position. Advice is regarded as a form of social worship and a moral responsibility of the community toward the rulers. There are numerous narrations and scholarly views emphasizing the importance of delivering advice wisely and responsibly, without undermining the dignity of the leader. Thus, the principle of advice not only serves as a control over power but also as a means to maintain social stability and uphold justice values within governance.

2. METHODS

This article employs a literature review method (library research), by collecting and analyzing scientific sources such as academic journals, political and governance theory books, as well as classical and contemporary works in Islamic thought relevant to the topic. This literature review method is chosen because it allows the author to conduct a systematic and in-depth analysis based on various reliable sources without conducting direct field research.

The data collection process involves searching, selecting, and examining scholarly materials, including recent journal articles, academically recognized reference books, and classical and contemporary Islamic texts that have strong relevance to the theme of advice to leaders. Through this method, the author can explore the concept of advice from both theoretical and normative perspectives, while also observing how these values are applied in the context of modern governance[4].

This approach not only serves to provide a solid theoretical foundation but also helps identify gaps and practical challenges in implementing the principle of advice in current governance practices. Furthermore, the literature review enables the integration of modern governance theories and moral spiritual Islamic values, resulting in a holistic and comprehensive analytical framework.

The writing structure is arranged progressively to facilitate the reader's understanding of the article's flow of thought. The first section is the introduction, which contains the background, problem formulation, objectives, methods, and structure. The second section discusses the literature review and theories underpinning the principle of advice in modern governance and Islamic perspectives. The third section provides an in-depth discussion and analysis related to the relevance and application of the principle of advice in contemporary contexts. Finally, the fourth section presents conclusions and recommendations[5].

[4] Kissinger, H. (2020). Diplomacy. Simon & Schuster.

[5] Azizah, N., & Nugroho, H. (2021). Metode Kajian Pustaka dalam Penelitian Ilmiah. Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan, 5(2), 112-120

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted literature review, several key points were identified regarding the principle of advice in governance from both modern governance theory and the Islamich approach. In modern governance theory, advice is viewed as a vital informal control mechanism that maintains accountability and transparency. Advice assists leaders in making rational decisions by accommodating various perspectives and identifying policy risks (Frederickson 2017). However, the effectiveness of this mechanism heavily depends on the leader's willingness to accept input. Rejection of advice is often associated with authoritarian tendencies and abuse of power.[6]

From the Islamic perspective, advice (al-nasihah) is regarded as a highly important moral and social obligation. It is considered a form of social worship and a communal responsibility to uphold justice and social stability (Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran: 104). The delivery of advice must be done with wisdom and respect to avoid undermining the dignity of the leader (Al-Ghazali, Ihya Ulum al-Din). Advice also serves as a control mechanism grounded in ethics, honesty, and moral courage[7].

Furthermore, contemporary governance literature highlights that the practice of offering advice impacts not only decision-making processes but also shapes the organizational culture within government institutions. Leaders who actively encourage open dialogue and discussion tend to foster bureaucratic environments that are more adaptive, collaborative, and innovative. Conversely, systems that suppress criticism often produce passive bureaucracies marked by superficial compliance and a lack of original thought. Therefore, advice can be viewed as a catalyst for policy reform and institutional renewal[7].

In the Islamic scholarly tradition, offering advice to leaders is inseparable from the values of adab (ethical conduct) and maqasid al-shariah (the higher objectives of Islamic law). Classical scholars such as Imam Nawawi and Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali emphasized that advice should stem from sincere concern and compassion for leaders, rather than serving as a means to humiliate them publicly. In this light, giving advice is also understood as part of the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (amar ma'ruf nahi munkar) carried out with social responsibility and spiritual awareness. Thus, the spiritual dimension of advice serves as an internal force that preserves political integrity and social harmony. Moreover, the dynamics between leaders and advisors are deeply influenced by the existing social and political structures. In countries with well-established democratic systems, independent advisory bodies and active civil society participation serve as crucial elements in maintaining checks and balances. In contrast, within more closed or authoritarian systems, advice tends to be delivered through informal channels and often depends heavily on personal proximity to those in power. This shows that the effectiveness of advice as a principle of governance is highly context-dependent, shaped by both institutional frameworks and political culture.

Based on the findings outlined above, a deeper analysis is necessary to understand how the principle of advice functions within various governance settings and what factors influence its effectiveness in both modern and Islamic contexts. The integration of these two approaches demonstrates that the principle of advice holds a dual role: as an administrative political control

[6] Bendor, J., Glazer, A., & Hammond, T. (2020). Theories of delegation. Annual Review of Political Science, 4(1), 235–269. [7] Fauzi, A., & Nurhayati, N. (2024). Nasihat sebagai Etika Pemerintahan dalam Perspektif Islam. Jurnal Studi Islam dan Pemerintahan, 5(1), 25–40.

[7] Wijayanti, R., & Hartono, D. (2024). Integrasi Nilai-nilai Islam dalam Praktik Tata Kelola Pemerintahan yang Baik. Jurnal Governance dan Kebijakan Islam, 3(1), 15–30.

mechanism and as a moral-spiritual obligation. Both complement each other in forming effective, ethical, and responsive governance[8].

Advice in modern governance functions as an informal yet crucial control mechanism that enhances accountability and transparency in decision-making. It enables leaders to access diverse perspectives, mitigate risks, and formulate well-informed policies. This role is essential in democratic systems where the flow of information and feedback supports checks and balances among governing institutions.

However, the effectiveness of advice depends heavily on the leader's openness and willingness to accept critical input. In many contexts, reluctance to receive advice may lead to authoritarian tendencies, where power becomes centralized and less responsive to public needs. Thus, the principle of advice acts as a barometer for democratic health and good governance.[9] From an Islamic perspective, advice transcends a mere procedural role and embodies a moral and religious duty. It integrates spiritual values with social responsibility, as the act of advising is viewed as ibadah (worship) and a means to uphold justice and social harmony (AlQur'an, Surah Ali Imran: 104)[10].

Islamic teachings emphasize that advice should be delivered with wisdom and respect, ensuring that it strengthens rather than undermines the dignity of leaders (Al-Ghazali, Ihya Ulum al-Din). This ethical approach balances the need for power accountability with social cohesion, reflecting a holistic governance model. The integration of modern governance theory and Islamic principles offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and applying the principle of advice in government. Both approaches recognize advice as essential for accountability and the prevention of power abuse, though they emphasize different dimension politicaladministrative in modern theory, and moral-spiritual in Islam[11]. This integration suggests that effective governance requires not only institutional mechanisms to facilitate advice but also cultural and ethical foundations that encourage

sincere, wise, and respectful communication between the governed and their leaders. Such a framework can contribute to creating governments that are ethical, just, and responsive to their people's needs[12].

The combined insights from modern and Islamic perspectives highlight several implications for good governance:

1) Encouraging openness and inclusivity by institutionalizing advisory roles for multiple stakeholders, including civil society and experts.
2) Promoting ethical communication based on respect, honesty, and moral courage in delivering advice.

[8] Kurniawan, T. (2024). Nasihat kepada Pemimpin: Telaah Perspektif Islam dan Demokrasi. Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Politik, 9(2), 88–102.

[9] Hood, C. (2018). The blame game: Spin, bureaucracy, and self-preservation in government. Princeton University Press.

[10] Peters, B. G. (2018). Advanced introduction to public policy. Edward Elgar Publishing..

[11] Putri, S., & Hadi, S. (2022). Kewajiban Moral Nasihat dalam Perspektif Islam terhadap Pemimpin. Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Hadis, 4(2), 33–48.

[12] Svara, J. H. (2020). The ethics primer for public administrators in government and nonprofit organizations. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

3) Balancing power and responsibility by ensuring leaders remain accountable not only legally and politically but also morally and socially.
4) Fostering social stability and justice through a governance culture rooted in both democratic principles and religious values.

4. CONCLUSION

The principle of advice in governance is a crucial element in ensuring the establishment of good governance and responsible leadership. From the perspective of modern governance theory, advice functions as an informal control mechanism that maintains transparency, accountability, and public participation in the decision-making process. This helps create a balance of power and prevents authoritarian practices that can harm society. On the other hand, in Islamic tradition, advice not only serves an administrative function but also carries a high moral and spiritual dimension. Advice is a social obligation and form of worship aimed at upholding justice, social harmony, and community stability. The delivery of advice in Islam must be done with wisdom, respect, and ethical grounding in order to be accepted and effective.

The integration of these modern and Islamic approaches provides a more comprehensive perspective on the importance of the principle of advice as a dual instrument both as an administrative-political control mechanism and a moral-spiritual obligation. Thus, advice not only functions to prevent the abuse of power but also builds a healthy and harmonious relationship between leaders and the people. Strengthening effective, just, and responsive governance can be achieved through developing institutional mechanisms that support the open and responsible delivery of advice. Furthermore, fostering a communication culture based on honesty, respect, and moral responsibility is also an important factor in the success of this principle.

Therefore, the practical and conceptual implementation of an integrated principle of advice is vital to address the complex challenges of modern governance while preserving the noble values of Islamic tradition. Governments and all stakeholders need to promote constructive and inclusive dialogue spaces so that advice can serve as an effective tool in improving policies, enhancing leadership quality, and maintaining social stability. Collective awareness and commitment to these values will contribute significantly to building governance that is not only effective and efficient but also just and oriented toward the common welfare.

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