

Seeking Ahmed al-Sharaa's Efforts to Navigate Russian-Syrian Relations Through Islamic Perspective Analysis

Wildan Budiman Saefulo¹, M Fathoni Hakim²

^{1,2}Hubungan Internasional, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: ¹budimanwildan345@gmail.com, ²fathoni_hakim@uinsa.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyzes Syria's diplomatic navigation strategy after the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime in December 2024 through the perspective of Islamic political ethics, specifically the concept of Ar-Rasikhun, with a focus on the foreign policy maneuvers of the transitional government under the leadership of Ahmed al-Sharaa in establishing pragmatic relations with Russia. This research uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods and normative analysis sourced from academic journals, policy documents, reports of international institutions, and official statements of the Syrian transitional government. The analysis was carried out using three main indicators of the concept of Ar-Rasikhun, namely the depth of wisdom in diplomacy, universal justice (al-'adl), and strategic tolerance (tasamuh). The results show that Ahmed al-Sharaa's leadership represents the implementation of Ar-Rasikhun's values through a policy of pragmatic diplomacy towards Russia, the building of domestic legitimacy based on inclusivity, and multi-directional diplomacy with regional and global actors to maintain national stability and accelerate the reconstruction of the country. These findings confirm that Islamic political ethics can function not only as a normative framework, but also as a practical instrument in national reconciliation and conflict transformation. This study concludes that the concept of Ar-Rasikhun is relevant as an alternative perspective in contemporary international relations studies to explain the transformation of conflict towards sustainable peace in post-conflict Syria.

Keywords: Ar-Rasikhun, Islamic Diplomacy, Conflict Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian conflict began as pro-democracy protests in March 2011 inspired by the Arab Spring waves but quickly degenerated into a highly fragmented civil war. According to The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2025), the root of the problem includes large socio-economic disparities exacerbated by the liberalization of economic policies that only benefit the cronies of the Bashar al-Assad regime, as well as severe environmental factors. Syria experienced its worst drought in its modern history between 2006 and 2010, forcing a massive migration of poor farmers to the suburbs and exacerbating existing social and economic tensions.

In addition, the trigger for the escalation of the Syrian conflict is the regime's response to the peaceful demonstrations in Daraa triggered by the arrest of children that equate anti-Assad graffiti with brutal military repression. This massive violence, carried out largely by the ruling Alawite Shiite elite against the Sunni majority, turned the demonstrations into an armed uprising, and by 2012, the conflict had matured into a full-scale civil war. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (2025), conflicts quickly attract foreign intervention that turns them into complex international proxy conflicts. The Syrian government maintains its power thanks to strong military and financial support from its main allies, Russia and Iran, including Iranian-backed militias such as Hezbollah.

On the other side, opposition groups and rebels are supported by Western coalitions and their allies such as the United States, Turkey, and other Arab countries. The influx of transnational terrorist groups such as ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front (which later became Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) added layers of atrocities and complexity, triggering separate military campaigns by the global coalition to eradicate them. The repeated

failures in peace talks hosted by the United Nations and the Arab League, combined with the contradictory geostrategic interests of global powers, led to a protracted conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and created one of the world's largest refugee crises.

The conflict in Syria began to subside after the al-Assad regime resigned from its seat of power. As explained by Adar et al. (2025), the collapse of the Assad regime on December 8, 2024, by the rebel alliance led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) was caused by a significant shift in regional and international power dynamics. Key factors that made the overthrow possible include Turkey's support for the rebels, the weakening of the position of Assad's key allies Iran and Hezbollah as a result of Israel's military offensive, as well as Russia's shift in priorities that has shifted its focus due to the war in Ukraine. This fall triggered a new power shift in the Levant region, where Turkey and Israel now occupy territory, the Gulf monarchy will play an important role in reconstruction, while the role and military presence of the United States in Syria remains uncertain.

The civil war in Syria, which began with protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in 2011, has officially ended following the collapse of the regime on December 8, 2024. Assad's ouster brings Syria into a fragile transition period under the control of a new interim government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa. Although the new regime promises equality for Syria's diverse population, the country is now faced with major challenges in the form of internal conflicts that have not yet been completely extinguished, tensions between minority groups, and humanitarian and economic conditions that are still very concerning (Center for Preventive Action, 2026). After his defeat against Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Bashar Al-Assad fled to the country that became his ally when the internal conflict occurred, namely Russia. Russia's participation in the Syrian conflict, which the country helped the Assad regime to maintain its rule, should worsen relations between Russia and Syria after the conflict. However, a report from Al Jazeera (2025) shows that after the conflict ended, Syria, which began to be led by Ahmed Hussein al-Shara alias Abu Mohammad al-Juliani, carried out a surprising foreign policy maneuver. Instead of being hostile to his enemy allies, the Syrian leader actually established good relations with Russia led by Vladimir Putin, who was once his enemy.

The foreign policy maneuvers taken by the new Syrian leader under Ahmed Hussein al-Shara can be understood through the principles of diplomatic relations in Islam that prioritize peace and the benefit of the ummah. Based on research by Abdurofiq and Putra (2023), from an Islamic perspective, international relations are not always based on permanent hostility, but on efforts to avoid conflict and increase mutually beneficial cooperation. Good relations with Russia, despite being supporters of previous regimes, reflect the application of the principles of flexible Islamic diplomacy in which respect for other political entities and the achievement of universal justice are top priorities to stabilize the conditions of a country that has just emerged from a protracted crisis.

Looking at the foreign policy carried out by Ahmed Hussein al-Shara is in line with the concept of Ar-Rasikhun, which refers to the profile of individuals or leaders who have the depth of knowledge and wisdom in making decisions during a complex global situation. Therefore, the researcher is interested in analyzing this case more deeply, especially using an Islamic perspective. As formulated by Nawawi (2025), as a value framework in international relations, the concept of Ar-Rasikhun emphasizes the importance of diplomacy based on wisdom and tolerance to create a just and peaceful order. By not responding emotionally to past hostilities, the Syrian leader has shown the character of Ar-Rasikhun who is able to navigate conflicts ethically, turning the dynamics of competition into strategic partnerships to ensure the future sustainability and resilience of the Syrian nation.

The conflict in Syria is a complex phenomenon that involves internal and external dimensions. Internally, this conflict is rooted in people's dissatisfaction with the regime of Bashar al-Assad which is considered authoritarian and fails to respond to economic challenges and political modernization (Herlambang, 2018). Foreign intervention turned this civil war into a complicated international proxy conflict, where the involvement of major powers such as Russia and Iran on the one hand, as well as the support of the West and Arab countries on the other, led to a long diplomatic deadlock (Herlambang, 2018; Kinsal, 2014). A drastic transition occurred in December 2024 with the collapse of the Assad regime and the rise of a transitional government under the leadership of Ahmed al-Sharaa (Blanchard, 2025; Kharatyan, 2025). This change in leadership marks a shift from the dominance of the Assad dynasty to a new power structure that seeks to seek international legitimacy amid the remaining fragmentation of territory (Salameh and Abuhasirah, 2025).

According to Salimov (2018), leadership in international relations plays a key role in the formation of regional systems and stability. In the context of the new Syria, Ahmed al-Sharaa undertook a significant transformation of political discourse. Domestically, he emphasized revolutionary legitimacy, but internationally, he presented himself as a statesman committed to the principles of democracy and international law in order to gain global recognition (Salameh and Abuhahir, 2025). As Kharatyan (2025) explains, this political navigation includes surprising diplomatic efforts, including maintaining strategic relations with powers like Russia to balance external pressures and maintain post-conflict national resilience.

Arif (2016) explains that Islam offers an alternative lens in the study of International Relations that differs from the Western empirical tradition, with an emphasis on unique values that have been applied since the classical era. Based on the thoughts of Abdurrofiq and Putra (2023), one of the main pillars is diplomatic relations based on the principles of justice, tolerance, and conflict avoidance. In peace efforts, dialogue is a crucial instrument to bridge differences in interests between actors (Husaini, 2017). Furthermore, the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun* emerged as a value framework for leaders who have the depth of knowledge and wisdom in navigating the global order (Nawawi, 2025). This concept emphasizes diplomacy based on universal policy and tolerance, which allows a leader to take pragmatic steps for the common good without neglecting ethical principles (Nawawi, 2025). From the previous research, it can be seen that no one has seen this case with an alternative perspective, namely the Islamic perspective with its principles, one of which is the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun*.

Therefore, if this phenomenon is only explored through the lens of Western conventional IR theory, al-Sharaa's actions will experience a reduction in meaning or even be considered anomalous. The Realist perspective, for example, tends to fail to explain why al-Sharaa chose to embrace Russia, which is the actor historically responsible for the destruction of Syrian opposition bases, without getting caught up in the motives of material revenge or security paranoia. Realism that focuses on the accumulation of *power* and global anarchy is unable to capture the ethical-transcendental dimension of peace. On the other hand, the perspective of Liberalism, which relies heavily on the compliance of multilateral institutions and economic interdependence, is also less comprehensive, given that international institutions have proven to be paralyzed during the dozen years of the Syrian conflict, and the Syrian economy is currently in a state of ruin. Both of these conventional theories ignore the fact that al-Sharaa's decision was not driven solely by the calculation of material interests, but by a vision of morality and spiritual wisdom in order to save the greater public good (*maslahah mursalah*). Therefore, the approach of Islamic political ethics through the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun* is very urgent to be used as an alternative analytical knife in order to fill this theoretical gap.

Based on the literature review, this study focuses on the analysis of diplomatic navigation and the transformation of the conflict in Syria after the fall of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 through the lens of Islamic political ethics, focusing on the maneuvers of the new leadership under Ahmed al-Sharaa against global powers such as Russia. This research seeks to answer the formulation of the problem of how the foreign policy navigation of the post-Assad Syrian leadership can be explained through the perspective of the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun* and the principle of Islamic diplomatic relations as an effort to realize sustainable peace. Thus, this study is expected to prove that an approach based on wisdom and the benefit of the people can be an effective instrument of reconciliation in building new national resilience during regional geopolitical complexity.

This study aims to analyze the navigation strategy of peace efforts in Syria after the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime in December 2024 through the lens of an Islamic perspective. More specifically, this study intends to explore how new actors, particularly alliances led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), implement Islamic political ethical values in conducting pragmatic diplomatic maneuvers against global powers such as Russia. In addition, this study aims to identify the extent to which the Islamic approach can be an effective instrument of reconciliation in bridging complex conflicts and building new national resilience for long-term stability in Syria.

The urgency of this research is the need to understand the political dynamics that occurred after the fall of the Assad regime, where there was a drastic shift from ideological hostility to unexpected diplomatic cooperation. First, academically, this research is important to fill the gap in the literature regarding the role of Islamic perspectives in the transformation of contemporary conflicts. So far, the Islamic narrative in conflict has often only been associated with radicalism, but this study offers the opposite point of view, namely Islam as the ethical basis for navigating peace and state stability.

Second, practically, the transition of power in Syria at the end of 2024 creates a very high level of regional security uncertainty. Understanding the political maneuvers of leaders like Ahmed Hussain al-Shara towards Russia through an Islamic perspective becomes very relevant for predicting the future direction of Syrian foreign policy and the chances of creating a sustainable peace. This research was conducted as an effort to evaluate how the concept of conflict resolution based on religious values can be applied in the context of a country devastated by a protracted proxy war, in order to prevent a return to the cycle of violence in the future.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods and normative analysis. The selection of a qualitative approach is based on the characteristics of the study that aims to understand the phenomenon of power transition and diplomatic navigation in Syria in depth and contextually, where the researcher explores the complexity of political maneuvers that cannot be statistically measured (Hasan et al., 2022). This approach allows researchers to grasp the meaning behind the strategic actions of the new leadership in Syria in building international legitimacy and applying the principles of Islamic political ethics, especially the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun* which has been formulated by Nawawi (2025) his operational techniques of analysis and the principles contained in it. In this process, researchers position themselves as the main instruments that actively collect, sort, and interpret data based on relevant theoretical frameworks (Hasan et al., 2022).

The data source in this study consists entirely of secondary data obtained through an in-depth documentation study. The researchers gathered a wide range of academic literature, foreign policy documents, official statements of Syria's transitional government, reports from Middle East studies institutes, as well as journal articles relevant to the dynamics of Ahmed al-Sharaa's leadership and Islamic diplomatic relations. The use of this document serves to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of wisdom-based diplomacy strategies carried out by state actors.

The data analysis techniques applied follow an interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The collected data were categorized based on the focus of the study, then analyzed to see the pattern of relationship between the application of *the Ar-Rasikhun concept* and the success of Syria's diplomatic navigation against global powers such as Russia and other regional actors. In this study, the researcher used three principles which were then used as indicators of whether this Islamic concept was relevant to the case study. These three principles are based on the Qur'an and classical interpretations, such as the works of Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi, as well as modern Islamic literature that discusses ethics in diplomacy and international relations, such as the works of Muhammad Asad and Al-Raysuni (Nawawi, 2025). The researcher adapted three principles as indicators relevant to the case study, namely:

1. The Depth of Wisdom in Diplomacy (*Hikmah*): This indicator measures the ability of leaders to make strategic decisions, not reactive or emotional, and has a careful calculation of the long-term impact of a policy in the midst of conflict escalation.
2. Universal Justice (*Al-'Adl*): Assesses the consistency of leaders in upholding humanitarian principles and non-discriminatory international law, both in domestic policy and in positioning the country on the global stage.
3. Strategic Tolerance (*Tasamuh*): Measuring the capabilities of actors in building communication and strategic partnerships with entities that have different ideologies or interests, as an effort to *tajannub al-shira'* (conflict avoidance) for the greater goal, namely peace.

To avoid speculative bias and ensure the objectivity of the analysis, the three indicators above are operationalized through a systematic process of codification of textual data.

The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the text of Ahmed al-Sharaa's speech, foreign policy documents, and official statements by mapping the units of analysis based on keywords, narrative, and substance of political decisions into the following codification matrix:

1. Codification of *Wisdom*: Done by identifying rhetoric or policy clauses that emphasize rationality, long-term calculations, appeals to refrain from *anti-revenge discourse*, and a commitment to post-conflict stability rather than emotional or reactive decisions towards the remnants of the old regime's loyalists.
2. Codification of *Al-'Adl*: Identified through official statements or transitional documents that explicitly contain guarantees of human rights, equal legal protection for all ethnic groups and religious denominations in Syria (including minorities), and insistence on compliance with international humanitarian law.

3. Codification of *Tasamuh*: Codified from a diplomatic document or memorandum of understanding (MoU) that shows the willingness of the new government to open open dialogue, maintain strategic partnerships, or make political compromises with international actors who have different ideological backgrounds or former supporters of the old regime (such as Russia and Iran), in order to achieve a peaceful resolution (*tajannub al-shira'*).

Then, to ensure the validity of the data, the researcher triangulated the sources by comparing information from various literatures, including the perspectives of international media and official documents, to ensure the objectivity and credibility of the analysis results (Naamy, 2019). Through this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic political ethics can be an effective instrument in reconciliation and the development of national resilience after the transition of power.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transition of leadership in Syria from the regime of Bashar al-Assad to the government of Ahmed al-Sharaa in December 2024 has triggered a fundamental shift in the architecture of Syria's foreign relations, particularly with the Russian Federation. For more than five decades, Damascus and Moscow's relations have been dominated by a rigid one-way logic of patronage and military dependence. However, after the collapse of the hegemony of the Assad family, this relationship is transforming into a much more complex and dynamic form of pragmatism. In the context of the study of International Relations from an Islamic perspective, this phenomenon is a crucial laboratory to test the effectiveness of leadership based on the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun*. As described by Nawawi (2025) in his article entitled "*Principles and Practices of the Ar-Rasikhun Concept in International Relations*", the profile of a *Rasikh* leader is those who have depth of knowledge, sharpness of wisdom, emotional stability, and commitment to universal justice in the midst of a storm of global crisis. Ahmed al-Sharaa's leadership is currently being tested to implement these indicators in order to navigate highly *volatile* diplomatic relations without sacrificing newly restored national sovereignty.

The Depth of Wisdom (*Hikmah*) in Diplomatic and Security Negotiations

The first indicator of *Ar-Rasikhun* is the Depth of Wisdom, which is the ability of a leader to make clear, data-driven strategic decisions and not get caught up in momentary emotional currents or sentiments. In the context of Syria, the biggest challenge for Ahmed al-Sharaa is the existence of Russian military bases that have been rooted since the Cold War era. According to a report by Al Jazeera (2025), Syrian-Russian relations have historically been very deep, marked by the existence of the Hmeimim air base and the naval facility in Tartus which is Moscow's main grip on the Mediterranean Sea. Emotionally, the Syrian people who have suffered from Russia's intervention since 2015 may want a complete severance. However, the government of Ahmed al-Sharaa showed the quality of wisdom by not taking such a radical path. Instead, Damascus chose a very cautious pragmatic negotiation path

The leader understands that Russia is too big an actor to simply ignore or forcibly expelled, especially in a transition phase that is still very fragile. A report from the *Royal United Services Institute* (RUSI, 2025) emphasizes that Russia has an existential interest in maintaining its military presence in Syria as a symbol of its global power status. With depth of wisdom, al-Sharaa sees that maintaining Russian bases, of course with new terms that better respect Syria's sovereignty, is a more rational option than creating a power vacuum. The vacuum is feared to be exploited by the remnants of extremist groups or trigger military aggression from outsiders who do not want Syria to be stable. Therefore, as analyzed by *Syria Direct* (2025), intensive discussions between ministers of the transitional government and President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on the continuation of military cooperation show that Syria is just practicing wisdom-based diplomacy that balances between geopolitical realities and national aspirations.

It is also evidenced by al-Sharaa's use of the language of diplomacy reflecting a very mature long-term analysis. In various forums, he emphasized that Russian bases should be transformed into strategic assets that provide security guarantees for Syria, not tools to oppress the people. As noted by *The Arab Weekly* (2025) in the article "*Syria pushes balanced relationship with Russia*", Damascus is beginning to push the narrative of equal relations. This strategy is in line with the principles of Islamic diplomacy that prioritizes peace (*salam*) and respect for international agreements as long as it brings benefits to the country. The wisdom here is that al-Sharaa's ability to "tame" a great power through the negotiating table, ensuring that Russia remains a security partner without having to be the master who dictates Syria's domestic policy.

Universal Justice (*Al-'Adl*) and the Transformation of Government Legitimacy

The second indicator, Universal Justice (*Al-'Adl*), demands consistency in policies that prioritize human rights, equality, and law enforcement for all citizens without exception. The biggest challenge for Ahmed al-Sharaa post-December 2024 is to rebuild domestic and international legitimacy on the rubble of a fragmented state (Blanchard, 2025). The Assad regime leaves behind a legacy of systemic injustice, the massacre of civilians, and the marginalization of minority groups. This is where the profile of the leader that *Rasikh* must emerge to heal the national wounds through just policies. The transitional government under al-Sharaa consciously sought to distance itself from the authoritarian image of its predecessor by emphasizing a narrative of inclusivity.

The implementation of *the Al-'Adl* principle is evident in efforts to protect minorities, such as the Druze in the south and Christians in major Syrian cities. According to Kharatyan (2025) in his report published by VIIMES, al-Sharaa has repeatedly provided security guarantees for these communities as part of national reconciliation efforts. This is not just an image strategy, but a crucial step to kill Russia's excuse for intervening under the pretext of "minority protection." By showing that the state is capable of being fair to all elements of the nation, al-Sharaa breaks the cycle of justification of foreign aggression that often uses humanitarian issues as a shield for geopolitical interests.

In the dimension of foreign relations with Russia, this principle of justice translates into the demand that diplomatic partnerships are no longer based on the status of "subordinates" or "clients," but on equality as fellow sovereign states. Based on the analysis of political discourse by Salameh and Abuhasirah (2025) in the article "*Language and power: Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse analysis in Arab and international media*", there is a significant linguistic shift. Al-Sharaa has consistently used international legal terminology such as "democratic institutions," "constitutions," and "people's sovereignty" in his interviews with global media such as the BBC and Al Arabiya. This is a real effort by a leader who applies the values of *Ar-Rasikhun* to align himself with global norms in order to gain legitimate international recognition. Universal justice here means ensuring that the Syrian people have the right to determine their own future through the 2025 parliamentary election plan, while Russia remains positioned as a witness and supporter of stability, not a determinant of political outcomes (New Arab, 2025).

Strategic Tolerance (*Tasamuh*) in the Global Geopolitical Labyrinth

The third indicator, Strategic Tolerance (*Tasamuh*), in the context of International Relations is understood as the ability of an actor to build partnerships and dialogue with entities that have different, even conflicting, interests in order to achieve the greater goal of the benefit of the people and peace. Syria is currently in a very sharp dilemma: on the one hand, they must maintain relations with Russia, which is a major military ally and holder of veto rights at the UN; on the other hand, Syria must reproaches with actors who were previously staunch opponents of the Assad regime, such as the European Union, the United States, Turkey, and Arab countries in the Arab League (European Union Institute for Security Studies [EUISS], 2025).

The government of Ahmed al-Sharaa demonstrated the qualities of *strategic Tasamuh* by not being trapped in the dichotomy of a rigid power bloc. They refused to be pawns in the zero-sum game between Moscow and Washington. Al-Sharaa implements a policy of balanced diplomacy that allows Syria to remain aligned with Russia in security matters, while at the same time opening the door wide to Western investment and reconstruction funds from the Gulf states. Based on an analysis from *Syria Direct* (2025), the need for reconstruction funds that reach hundreds of billions of dollars forces Damascus to be tolerant and adaptive. For a *Rasikh* leader, tolerance does not mean weakness, but a shrewdness to put the interests of the people above the ideological sentiments of the past.

This strategic tolerance is also tested in relations with Turkey and Kurdish factions in the north. Al-Sharaa showed a willingness to engage in dialogue in order to create a stable safe zone, which in turn would reduce the burden on Russia's military in the region. As explained in the EUISS report (2025) entitled "*Russia-Syria Ties: A Changing Relationship*", Russia itself realizes that the new Syria can no longer be ruled absolutely. Therefore, the tolerance shown by al-Sharaa is actually a way to create breathing space for Syria to become self-sufficient slowly. The ability to manage the conflict of interests between Russia (which wants military dominance) and the West (which demands political reform) is the pinnacle indicator of the quality of *Ar-Rasikhun's* leadership that is able to balance various variables of conflict for the sake of the broader stability of the region.

This *Tasamuh indicator* can be clearly seen in the handling of the triangular dynamics involving Turkey and the Kurdish faction (SDF/AANES) in the northern and northeastern regions of Syria. This relationship is fraught with tensions due to existential clashes: Turkey demands the complete dismantling of the Kurdish autonomy structure that it considers an extension of the PKK, while the Kurdish factions insist on maintaining their political and military autonomy. Faced with this geopolitical labyrinth, al-Sharaa chose the path of tactical compromise in order to prevent a military escalation that could destroy the transition of a country that has just reached a de-escalation of the conflict.

Initially, on March 10, 2025, al-Sharaa and SDF Commander Mazloun Abdi signed an eight-point agreement mediated by the United States as the basis for initial integration. However, its implementation had been at an impasse for almost a year due to fragmentation of interests and pressure from Ankara. Tensions culminated into brief military clashes in January 2026 in the Northeast Syrian Offensive. However, al-Sharaa responded to the crisis not with a war of total annihilation, but through a presidential decree on January 16 and 18, 2026 that surprisingly granted important cultural concessions to the Kurdish minority. In the official statement, al-Sharaa declared ethnic Kurds as a "*fundamental part of the Syrian people*", recognized Kurdish as the national language that has the right to be taught in public schools, and inaugurated the celebration of Newroz as a national holiday.

At its peak, through intensive U.S. mediation, the transitional government consolidated a pragmatic compromise in the Comprehensive Agreement by January 30, 2026. According to a report by *the Institute for International and Strategic Relations* (IRIS, 2026), this agreement ends the prospect of full political autonomy of the Kurdish factions in Rojava and integrates civil institutions as well as the oil-rich regions of the northeast into the state's administrative structure in Damascus. Nevertheless, al-Sharaa implemented *political Tasamuh* with tactical accommodations: instead of conducting offensive forced disbandments, SDF fighters were integrated into three brigades under the newly formed Hasakah Provincial Military Division under the Syrian Ministry of Defense, as well as appointing SDF-nominated representatives as Deputy Defense Minister for the Eastern Region and Governor of Hasakah.

Damascus' accommodative move on the one hand secures control of oil fields, ISIS prisons, and international borders, but on the other hand, the adjustment of the clause by the end of January 2026 deprives Turkey of some of the absolute gains it originally expected from the military Kurdish cleansing operation. Al-Sharaa's ability to tolerate the Kurdish cultural and military presence within the confines of state integration, while at the same time damping full-blown military aggression from Turkey, is a testament to the success of *Ar-Rasikhun's* diplomacy. He was able to navigate this regional zero-sum game into a *resolution of tajannub al-shira'* (conflict avoidance), sacrificing ideological absolutism in order to secure Syria's territorial sovereignty and national resilience more inclusively.

Summary of Ahmed al-Sharaa's Diplomatic and Geopolitical Impact

To clearly summarize the entire operationalization analysis above, the following table summarizes how Ahmed al-Sharaa's concrete actions were codified into the concept of *Ar-Rasikhun* as well as its impact on Syria's macro stability:

Indicator Ar- Rasikhun	Diplomatic Action & Empirical Policy	Impact on geopolitical stability (Syria-Russia-regional)
Depth of Wisdom (Hikmah)	Rejecting the radical option of the Russian military's forced expulsion from the Hmeimim and Tartus bases. Renegotiating military cooperation contracts intensively directly with Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Changing the narrative of the Russian base from a "tool of regime repression" to a "common security asset".	Prevent a <i>power vacuum</i> that can be exploited by extremist groups. Taming the potential for Russian aggression after the collapse of Assad while maintaining Russia's position as a veto shield in the UNSC without dictating Syria's domestic politics.
Universal Justice (Al-'Adl)	Issue written security guarantees for Druze and Christian minorities. Transform the official political language using the terminology of international law (<i>people's sovereignty, democratic institutions</i>). Designing inclusive parliamentary elections without external intervention.	Breaking the narrative and pretext of humanitarian intervention by Moscow to "protect minorities". Changing Syria's status in the eyes of Russia and the world from a "client/subordinate" state to an equal sovereign partner.

Strategic Tolerance (Tasamuh)	Refusing to get caught up in <i>the zero-sum game of</i> the West vs East bloc; opening the door to reconstruction funds to the Gulf and the European Union while maintaining a defense pact with Russia. Issuing a Decree of January 16 & 18, 2026 (recognition of culture, language, and the Newroz holiday for Kurds). Signed the Comprehensive Agreement on January 30, 2026 integrating the SDF into the official military (Syrian Ministry of Defense).	Resecure northeastern oilfield assets, ISIS prisons, and territorial boundary sovereignty without a war of total annihilation (<i>tajannub al-shira'</i>). Easing full-scale military tensions with Turkey, while reducing the operational burden of Russia's military in northern Syria.
--------------------------------------	---	---

CONCLUSION

The transition of the post-Assad Syrian leadership under the government of Ahmed al-Sharaa marked a crucial phase in the world of diplomacy that succeeded in blending the realities of foreign policy with Islamic ethical values through the framework of *Ar-Rasikhun*. This phenomenon proves that national stability and state sovereignty do not have to be achieved through radical confrontation, but through strategic intelligence that balances global interests with domestic interests. Through the indicator of the depth of wisdom (*wisdom*), al-Sharaa was able to transform the relationship of military dependency with Russia into a more equal and dignified pragmatic partnership without losing national identity. Meanwhile, the principle of universal justice (*al-'adl*) is consistently implemented through domestic inclusivity policies to restore the legitimacy of the government that had been fragmented due to prolonged conflicts.

In the regional dimension, strategic tolerance (*tasamuh*) is effectively realized through multi-directional diplomacy that allows Damascus to maintain security cooperation with Moscow while opening investment opportunities from other international actors for national reconstruction. The success of this maneuver shows that the *Ar-Rasikhun* principle is not just a normative concept, but a practical and strategic instrument that is highly relevant for Muslim leaders in navigating the complexities of contemporary geopolitics. Theoretically, this achievement sets an important precedent for the study of International Relations by showing that the strength of a country is measured not only by military or financial power, but also by the moral qualities and intellectual intelligence of its leaders. With a strong commitment to the interests of the people, this new diplomatic navigation holds great hope for Syria's transformation into a sovereign actor that actively contributes to global stability and peace.

However, this study has limitations because it focuses on the situation in Syria which is still in a very fluid transition phase over the period of 2025 to mid-2026, so the long-term stability of Ahmed al-Sharaa's policy still requires a longer time test. Therefore, the future research agenda of Islamic IP is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to test the consistency of actors in maintaining the value of *Ar-Rasikhun* in the face of new crisis pressures, as well as to expand the operationalization of Islamic political ethics indicators at the level of non-state *actors* in the Middle East in order to enrich the hybrid and non-Western theoretical treasures.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdurofiq, A., & Putra, G. R. A. (2023). Hubungan diplomatik dalam Islam. *Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Syar-i*, 10(5), 1439–1450. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v10i5.35220>
- Adar, S., et al. (2025). The fall of the Assad regime: A regional and international power shift. *Comment SWP*, (9). <https://doi.org/10.18449/2025C09>
- Al Jazeera. (2025, Desember 24). *Syria ministers discuss military cooperation with Putin in Russia*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/24/syria-ministers-discuss-military-cooperation-with-putin-in-russia-report>
- Anwar, M. (2016). *Teori hubungan internasional Islam: Pendekatan dan perspektif*. Rajawali Press.
- Arif, M. Q. 'A. (2016). Kebangkitan perspektif Islam dalam studi hubungan internasional kontemporer. *Dauliyah Journal of Islamic and International Studies*, 1(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311086824_Kebangkitan_Perspektif_Islam_dalam_Studi_Hubungan_Internasional_Kontemporer <https://doi.org/10.21111/dauliyah.v1i2.600>
- Ben Berliner. (2025). *Understanding the relationship between Russia and Syria*. Aspen Institute. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/understanding-the-relationship-between-russia-and-syria/>
- Blanchard, C. M. (2025). *Syria: Transition and U.S. policy* (Report No. RL33487). Congressional Research Service. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/RL33487>

- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2025). *Russia's strategy in the post-Assad era*. <https://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=55831>
- Center for Preventive Action. (2026, 18 Februari). *Conflict in Syria*. Global Conflict Tracker. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria>
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2025, November 19). *Conflict in Syria*. Global Conflict Tracker. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria>
- European Union Institute for Security Studies. (2025). *Russia-Syria ties: A changing relationship*. https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_Russia-Syria.pdf
- Encyclopaedia Britannica [editorial]. (2025, November 13). *Syrian civil war*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War>
- Firdaus, M. I. (2025). Nilai-nilai Islam dalam politik dan hubungan internasional. *Cendekia: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengkajian Ilmiah*, 2(10), 1932–1941. <https://doi.org/10.62335/cendekia.v2i10.1660>
- Frontiers in Political Science. (2025). The geopolitics of Syrian transition. *Frontiers in Political Science*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2025.1489285/full>
- FDD. (2026, 27 Mei). *Political Exclusion of Syrian Kurds Threatens SDF-Damascus Deal*. Foundation for Defense of Democracies. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2026/05/27/political-exclusion-of-syrian-kurds-threatens-sdf-damascus-deal/>
- Hasan, M., et al. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Tahta Media Group.
- Herlambang, A. (2018). Mengurai benang kusut konflik di Suriah. *Jurnal Transborders*, 1(2), 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.23969/transborders.v1i2.794>
- Husaini, N. K. R. (2017). Dialog sebagai solusi konflik Suriah dalam bahasa channel Al-Alam Iran (Analisis kognisi sosial Teun Van Dijk). *Ibnu Burdah: Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.14421/jkii.v2i1.1080>
- IRIS. (2026, Februari). *Major Defeat for the Kurdish National Movement in Syria*. Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques. <https://www.iris-france.org/en/major-defeat-for-the-kurdish-national-movement-in-syria/>
- Kharatyan, S. (2025). *The evolution of power and governance in Syria: From Hafez al-Assad to Bashar al-Assad to Ahmed al-Sharaa*. Vienna International Institute for Middle East Studies (VIIMES). <https://viimes.org/publication/the-evolution-of-power-and-governance-in-syria-from-hafez-al-assad-to-bashar-al-assad-to-ahmed-al-sharaa/>
- Kinsal, M. H. (2014). Penyelesaian konflik internal Suriah menurut hukum internasional. *Lex et Societatis*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.35796/les.v2i3.4662>
- Kremlin.ru. (2025). *President of Russia news on Syrian relations*. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/78213>
- Marzuki, et al. (2025). Diplomasi dan komunikasi politik internasional. *Jurnal Mudabbir*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.56832/mudabbir.v5i2.1382>
- Munandar, A., & Susanti, E. (2025). Peran dunia Islam dalam membangun perdamaian global: Perspektif hubungan internasional. *Mondial: Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 2(1), 331–349. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36722/mondial.v2i1.4707>
- Naamy, N. (2019). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif: Dasar-dasar dan aplikasinya*. Sanabil.
- Nawawi, B. A. (2025). Prinsip dan praktik konsep Ar-Rasikhun dalam hubungan internasional. *SOSMANIORA: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 4(1), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.55123/sosmaniora.v4i1.4719>
- New Arab. (2025). *Post-Assad pragmatism: New logic in Russia-Syria relations*. <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/post-assad-pragmatism-new-logic-russia-syria-relations>
- Rohmah, C. N., & Hubur, A. A. (2024). Hubungan internasional dalam perspektif Islam. *Jurnal Greenation Sosial dan Politik*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.38035/jgsp.v2i4.214>
- RUSI. (2025). *Russia's enduring grip on Syria*. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-enduring-grip-syria>
- Salameh, R., & Abuhasirah, R. (2025). Language and power: Ahmed Al-Sharaa's discourse analysis in Arab and international media. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.58256/rts12e49>
- Salimov, S. (2018). The concept of leadership in international relations. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 5(8), 4954–4956. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v5i8.08>
- Syria Direct. (2025). *Why is Syria seeking rapprochement with Russia despite its unpopularity?* <https://syriadirect.org/why-is-syria-seeking-rapprochement-with-russia-despite-its-unpopularity/>
- The Arab Weekly [editorial]. (2025). *Syria pushes balanced relationship with Russia*. <https://the arabweekly.com/syria-pushes-balanced-relationship-russia>