



Maqashid al-Shariah as a Paradigm of Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory

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Abstract

Maqashid al-shariah is a fundamental concept in Islamic law that explains the purpose of establishing sharia to realize the benefit of humans. In the development of modern Islamic legal thought, this concept is increasingly gaining attention as a methodological approach in understanding Islamic law in a more contextual way. This research aims to analyze the basic concepts of maqashid al-shariah, the development of its thought in the tradition of classical scholars, and its relevance as a paradigm in the development of contemporary Islamic legal theory. This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method through conceptual analysis of classical and modern literature on maqashid al-shariah. The results of the study show that the concept of maqashid al-shariah has been systematically formulated by the scholars of *usul fiqh*, especially Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi, who emphasized that the main purpose of the sharia is to safeguard the welfare of human beings through the protection of the five basic needs. In the development of modern thought, this concept was later expanded by thinkers such as Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur and Yusuf al-Qaradawi so that maqashid was not only understood as a theory in *fiqh* proposals, but also as a methodological paradigm in formulating Islamic law that was more contextual. In conclusion, maqashid al-shariah has significant relevance as a paradigm in the development of contemporary Islamic legal theory because it is able to explain the relationship between the text of sharia and the goal of benefit to be realized. Therefore, the maqashid approach needs to be continuously developed in the study of Islamic law in order to make a more adaptive contribution to the dynamics of modern society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic law has been revealed from the beginning not solely as a set of rigid normative rules, but as a value system that aims to realize the benefits of humans. This principle is reflected in the concept *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, namely the fundamental objectives on which Islamic law is based (M. N. Iqbal, Arfa, & Waqqosh, 2023). Theologically, this idea is rooted in the understanding that all sharia provisions have wisdom and goals that are oriented towards the benefit of humanity. The Qur'an affirms that Islamic treatises are present as a blessing for the entire universe as mentioned in the word of Allah in the Qur'an Surah Al-Anbiya verse 107 which states that the Prophet Muhammad was sent as a blessing for the universe. This verse is often used as a normative basis that Islamic law has a universal welfare orientation and is not limited to a certain historical context.

In addition, the principle of benefit is also affirmed in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 185 which states that Allah wants ease for

humans and does not want difficulties. This verse is an important basis for scholars to understand that the purpose of sharia is not only to establish obligations, but also to maintain balance and convenience in human life. Thus, Islamic law basically has a teleological dimension, that is, laws that are directed to a specific goal, not just formal rules (Ihsan, 2025).

In the tradition of classical Islamic legal thought, the idea of the purpose of sharia has been systematically formulated by the scholars of *fiqh*. One of the figures who played a major role in formulating the theory *Maqasid* is Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi through his work *Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shariah* (Muchlis & Rois, 2024). He explained that all Islamic law essentially aims to maintain the five basic human needs (*Al-Daruriyyat Al-Khams*), that is, to maintain religion (*Hifz al-Din*), soul (*HUFZ al-NAFS*), Sense (*Hifz al-'aql*), descendants (*HUFZ al-Nasl*), and treasures (*Hifz al-Mal*). This concept then becomes the foundation in understanding the relationship between the legal text and the purpose of the sharia. With this

approach, Islamic law is not understood literally, but also seen from the goals that the provisions of the law want to achieve.

Along with the development of modern society marked by social complexity, technological advancements, and changes in the structure of global life, textual approaches alone are often considered inadequate in answering various contemporary legal issues. This condition encourages the emergence of methodological reinterpretation efforts of Islamic law by making it possible for the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* as a more contextual framework of analysis. In modern Islamic legal thought, a number of scholars such as Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur and Yusuf al-Qaradawi affirm that *Maqasid* not only serves as a moral principle, but also as a methodological paradigm in the process of *ijtihad* and the renewal of Islamic law (Amir & Rahman, 2025).

Reinforcement *Maqasid* as a methodological approach is also based on various hadiths of the Prophet that affirm the orientation of benefits in Islamic law. One of the important rules that is often used as a basis is the hadith narrated by Ibn Majah which states that one should not cause danger and should not harm each other (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*). This principle then developed into a very important fiqh rule in the determination of Islamic law, namely that every legal provision must consider its impact on human welfare (Sa'ad, 2026).

In the context of contemporary Islamic legal theory, *maqasid al-shari'ah* is no longer understood only as part of the study of classical fiqh, but has developed into an epistemological paradigm that influences the way of understanding texts, *ijtihad* methods, and legal formulation of modern issues. This approach allows Islamic law to retain its normative authority while being able to adapt to changing social dynamics.

Based on this background, the study of *maqasid al-shari'ah* as a paradigm of Islamic legal theory is relevant to understand the transformation of Islamic legal methodology in facing the challenges of modernity. An analysis of this concept is not only important to trace the development of Islamic legal thought, but also to examine how *maqasid al-shari'ah* can function as a theoretical framework in formulating Islamic law that is responsive, contextual, and still based on the fundamental values of sharia.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of literature research (*Library Research*) (Rukhmana et al., 2022). This approach was chosen because of the study of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* As a paradigm of Islamic law theory, it emphasizes more on conceptual and theoretical analysis of the thoughts of scholars and the development of Islamic law methodology. Research data was obtained from various relevant literature sources, both classical and contemporary, such as works of *usul fiqh* scholars, academic books, scientific journal articles, and scientific documents that discuss the concept *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* in the perspective of Islamic legal theory.

Primary sources in this study include classical works such as the thought of Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi in *Al-Muwafaqat*, as well as the work of modern scholars such as Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur who developed the concept of *maqasid al-shari'ah* within the framework of modern Islamic legal thought. The secondary source is in the form of academic literature that examines the development of contemporary Islamic legal methodology.

The data analysis technique is carried out through descriptive-conceptual analysis, namely by identifying, studying, and interpreting the main concepts related to *maqasid al-shari'ah*. This analysis aims to understand how the concept developed from the framework of classical fiqh to a theoretical paradigm in contemporary Islamic legal thought. With this approach, this research is expected to provide a systematic understanding of the position of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the development of Islamic legal theory.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Basic Concept of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* in Classical Scholarly Thought

Understanding of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* departing from the awareness of scholars that every legal provision in Islam is not arbitrarily determined, but has a certain purpose related to human welfare (Rohman, 2018). In a theological framework, this principle is based on the belief that the sharia is a manifestation of divine wisdom and justice. The Qur'an repeatedly affirms that the laws revealed by Allah are aimed at creating balance and benefit in human life. One of the normative foundations that is often used as a basis by scholars is the word of Allah in the Qur'an Surah An-Nisa verse 165 which affirms that the

apostles were sent so that people would have clear guidelines in life and have no reason to reject the truth after the arrival of guidance. This verse is understood as an indication that sharia has a pedagogical and normative purpose in directing human life towards benefit.

In addition, the orientation of benefits in sharia can also be traced through the principles contained in various provisions of Islamic law. For example, the prohibition of khamar mentioned in the Qur'an Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 90 is not only understood as a moral prohibition, but also as a form of protection for human reason. Similarly, the provisions regarding qisas in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 179 which states that in qisas there is a guarantee of life for humans. Classical scholars see these verses as an indication that Islamic law has a rational purpose and benefits that can be understood through an analytical approach to the text of the sharia (Aryani & Hafidzi, 2026).

In the development of fiqh proposals, the idea of the purpose of sharia began to be formulated more systematically by classical scholars. One of the important figures in this process was Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali who in his work *Al-Mustashfa* explained that the main purpose of sharia is to maintain the five basic human needs, namely religion, soul, intellect, descent, and property (Mu'alim, 2022). According to him, all forms of law that aim to maintain these five elements are included in the category of benefits recognized by sharia. This concept became the basis for the development of the theory *Al-Maslahah* in the proposal of fiqh and provides an initial framework for the formulation of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*.

This thought was then developed more systematically by Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi who is considered a central figure in the theory *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*. In his work *Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shariah*, he emphasized that the sharia as a whole was revealed to realize the benefits of humans in this world and the hereafter. Al-Shatibi not only affirms the existence of the purpose of the Shari'a, but also classifies the level of human needs into three main categories, namely *Al-Daruriyyat* (primary needs), *Al-Hajiyyat* (secondary needs), and *Al-Tahsiniyyat* (tertiary needs). This classification shows that sharia not only aims to maintain human survival, but also creates a better quality of life (Khaliq & Pangestu, 2025).

Furthermore, Al-Shatibi emphasized that the understanding of *Maqasid* is an important condition in the ijtihad process. According to him,

it is not enough for a mujtahid to understand the text literally, but also to understand the purpose behind the provisions of the law. This approach shows that even in the classical tradition there has been a methodological awareness that Islamic law must be comprehensively understood with its normative purpose in mind (Khaliq & Pangestu, 2025).

The principle of benefit as the core of *Maqasid* It is also strengthened by various hadiths of the Prophet. One of the rules that is often used as a basis is a hadith narrated by Ibn Majah which states that there should be no danger and should not harm each other (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*). This rule then developed into a universal principle in jurisprudence which affirms that Islamic law must prevent humans from damage and harm (Nurdiyanto, Musyahid, & Akmal, 2025).

Thus, the concept of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in the thought of classical scholars is not only a theoretical reflection on the goals of sharia, but also a methodological framework in understanding Islamic law in a more rational and systematic manner. Through the thought of scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Shatibi, *maqasid* developed into a fundamental principle that explains that every legal provision in Islam has the purpose of safeguarding the welfare of humans. This concept then became the foundation for the development of Islamic legal theory in the following periods, including in contemporary Islamic legal thought that increasingly emphasized the importance of a goal-based approach in understanding the sharia.

B. The Development of the Concept of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* in the Thought of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi

Concept development *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* in the Islamic legal tradition does not happen instantly, but through a long intellectual process in the tradition of fiqh. In the early stages, discussions about the purpose of sharia are still spread in various discourses about *Hikmah al-Tashri'* and concepts *Maslahah* (Umar & Bafadhal, 2025). However, along with the development of methodological needs in understanding Islamic law, scholars began to formulate the concept in a more systematic manner. In this process, the thought of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi has made a very significant contribution in shaping the conceptual framework *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*.

In Al-Ghazali's perspective, the idea of *Maqasid* rooted in the concept *Al-Maslahah* as the main purpose of the sharia. In his work *Al-Mustashfa min 'Ilm al-Usul*, he explained that all provisions of Islamic law basically aim to maintain the five fundamental elements in human life, namely religion, soul, intellect, descent, and property. The five elements are then known as *Al-Daruriyyat Al-Khams*. According to Al-Ghazali, any legal policy that aims to protect these five elements is included in the category of benefits recognized by the sharia. On the contrary, everything that damages or threatens the existence of the five elements is considered mafsadat that must be prevented through law (Rozi, Hamidah, & Arfan, 2022).

This view is inseparable from the normative foundation contained in the Qur'an. For example, the protection of the human soul is affirmed in the Qur'an Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 32 which states that killing one soul without a valid reason seems to be the same as killing the whole of humanity. This verse is understood by scholars as an indication that the sharia has the main purpose in preserving human life. Similarly, the prohibition of khamar mentioned in the Qur'an Surah Al-Ma'idah verse 90 is understood as a form of protection for human reason. Within the framework of Al-Ghazali's thought, the verses show that Islamic law has a rational and systematic structure of goals (Rozi et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, in Al-Ghazali's thought, the concept *Maqasid* still within the framework of theory *Maslahah* and has not been fully developed as a stand-alone methodological paradigm (Pertiwi & Herianingrum, 2024). He placed the benefit as one of the methods of legal istinbat used when there is no explicit textual postulate. Thus, *Maqasid* at this stage it serves more as a principle of justification for the use of *Maslahah Mursalah* in the determination of the law.

A more comprehensive development of the concept *Maqasid* then carried out by Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi in his work *Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shariah* (Khaliq & Pangestu, 2025). In contrast to Al-Ghazali who discusses *Maqasid* in the context of *maslahah* theory, Al-Shatibi places *Maqasid* as the fundamental structure of the entire Islamic legal system. According to him, sharia as a whole is revealed to realize the benefits of human beings both in this world and in the hereafter (Khaliq & Pangestu, 2025). Therefore, understanding the purpose of sharia is the main requirement in the *ijtihad* process.

One of Al-Shatibi's important contributions was the development of the classification of human needs in three levels, namely *Al-Daruriyyat*, *Al-Hajiyyat*, and *Al-Tahsiniyyat*. *Al-daruriyyat* refers to the primary needs that are the basis for the sustainability of human life, such as the protection of religion, soul, intellect, descendants, and property. *Al-Hajiyyat* is a necessity that functions to eliminate difficulties in human life, while *Al-Tahsiniyyat* related to ethical values and moral perfection in social life (Anam & Riyanta, 2022). This classification shows that sharia not only aims to maintain human survival, but also to create a dignified and harmonious life.

Al-Shatibi's approach also emphasizes that the purpose of the shari'a can be understood through a comprehensive analysis of the entire text of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, not just through one or two partial postulates. In this case, he emphasized that the general pattern of various legal provisions shows a consistent orientation towards human welfare. This principle is in line with various hadiths of the Prophet which affirm that the Shari'ah aims to make human life easier, such as the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari which states that the religion of Islam is built on the principle of convenience (*Yusr*) and not a difficulty (Mubhar, Hawirah, & Mubhar, 2025).

Thus, the development of thought from Al-Ghazali to Al-Shatibi shows an important transformation in Islamic legal theory. If Al-Ghazali formulated the initial framework for the purpose of the Shari'ah through the concept of *maslahah*, then Al-Shatibi developed the concept into a more systematic and methodological theory. This development makes *maqasid al-shari'ah* not only an ethical principle in Islamic law, but also a theoretical framework that can be used to understand the dynamics of Islamic law more comprehensively. The intellectual contributions of these two figures then became the foundation for the development of *maqasid thought* in the discourse of modern Islamic law.

C. The Development of *Maqasid al-shari'ah* in Modern Islamic Legal Thought

The development of modern society, marked by the advancement of science, globalization, and the complexity of social problems, has led to the emergence of new needs in Islamic legal methodology. In this context, modern Muslim thinkers seek to redevelop the concept *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* as a methodological approach that is able to bridge the gap between the normative text

of sharia and the ever-changing social reality. This approach is not intended to change the basic principles of Islamic law, but rather to broaden the way of understanding the purpose of sharia so that it remains relevant in the face of contemporary problems (M. N. Iqbal et al., 2023).

The normative basis for the development of *the maqasid* approach can be found in various verses of the Qur'an that affirm that sharia has a welfare orientation. One of the verses that is often used as a basis is the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 185 which emphasizes that Allah wants ease for humans and does not want difficulties. This verse shows that Islamic law essentially has a dimension of flexibility that allows adjustment to social conditions as long as it does not conflict with the fundamental purpose of the sharia. The same principle is also reflected in the words of Allah in the Qur'an Surah Al-Hajj verse 78 which states that Allah does not make difficulties in religion. These verses became the theological basis for modern thinkers in developing *the maqasid* approach as a more contextual method of interpreting Islamic law.

One of the important figures in the development of *Maqasid* in the modern era is Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur. In his work *Maqasid al-Shariah al-Islamiyyah*, he emphasized that *Maqasid* It is not only limited to the five basic needs as formulated by classical scholars, but also encompasses broader goals such as social justice, freedom, and the public good. According to Ibn Ashur, the main goal of the Shari'ah is to create a just social order and ensure the collective well-being of human beings (Amir & Rahman, 2025). Thus, *Maqasid* It is not only understood as a theory in fiqh proposals, but also as a philosophical framework in understanding the function of Islamic law in people's lives.

Concept development *Maqasid* also conducted by Yusuf al-Qaradawi who emphasized the importance of the *Maqasid* in the process of contemporary ijtihad (Muhaki & Aziz, 2024). He argued that the understanding of the legal text must always consider the purpose of the sharia as a whole. According to him, an overly literal approach to the text has the potential to produce legal decisions that are not in accordance with the spirit of justice and welfare that is the core of sharia. Therefore, he emphasized that *Maqasid* must be used as a methodological framework in formulating laws on various modern issues such as economics, politics, and social relations.

In addition, the development of *Maqasid* In modern Islamic legal thought, it is also closely related to efforts to respond to various global challenges, such as human rights issues, social justice, and good governance. In this context, *Maqasid* is seen as a concept capable of explaining universal values in Islamic law, such as justice (*Al-'ADL*), benefits (*Al-Maslahah*), and the protection of human dignity (*Karāmah al-Insān*) (Ramadhania, 2025). These principles have a strong basis in the Qur'an, one of which is in the Qur'an Surah An-Nahl verse 90 which affirms that Allah commands justice, kindness, and giving to others.

From a methodological perspective, *the maqasid* approach in the modern era not only serves as a tool for legal interpretation, but also as a theoretical paradigm in understanding the relationship between sharia texts and social reality. This approach allows Muslim scholars and scholars to develop Islamic law that remains rooted in its normative sources, while also being able to respond to the increasingly complex needs of modern society.

Thus, the development of *maqasid al-shari'ah* in modern Islamic legal thought shows an important transformation in Islamic legal methodology. The concept that initially developed within the framework of classical fiqh has now expanded its function into a theoretical paradigm that plays a role in formulating Islamic law in a more contextual manner. Through this approach, *maqasid* not only serves as an explanation of the purpose of sharia, but also as an intellectual instrument that allows Islamic law to remain dynamic and relevant in the face of changing times.

D. The Relevance of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* as a Paradigm in the Development of Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory

The development of an increasingly complex global society requires a methodological framework that is able to explain the relationship between normative texts of sharia and changing social dynamics. In this context, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* increasingly seen as an important paradigm in the development of contemporary Islamic legal theory (R. Iqbal & Alwi, 2025). This paradigm places the purpose of sharia as an epistemological basis in understanding, interpreting, and formulating Islamic law so that the law is not only understood textually, but also

teleologically, that is, based on the goals to be achieved by the sharia.

Normatively, the relevance of the approach *Maqasid* rooted in the principle that sharia is revealed to realize the benefit of human beings (Rock, 2025). This principle is reflected in various verses of the Qur'an that affirm the orientation of justice and social welfare in Islamic law. One of the verses that is often used as a reference is the Qur'an Surah An-Nahl verse 90 which states that Allah commands justice, virtue, and concern for others. This verse shows that the purpose of sharia is not only related to ritual obedience, but also to the creation of a just and harmonious social order.

The same principle is also reflected in the Qur'an Surah Al-Hadid verse 25 which explains that the apostles were sent with the book and the balance of justice so that humans can uphold justice in social life. From the perspective of legal theory, this verse shows that Islamic law has a normative dimension that is not only legalistic, but also ethical and social. Therefore, understanding the purpose of sharia is an important element in developing Islamic legal theories that are responsive to the needs of society.

Within the framework of contemporary Islamic legal thought, the *Maqasid* making an important contribution in expanding the *ijtihad* methodology. Modern scholars consider that a literal approach to legal texts is often insufficient to answer the new problems that arise in modern society, such as technological developments, the global economic system, and complex humanitarian issues (Priyatna, Nurjanah, Hermanto, & Zulaikha, 2025). Under these conditions, the approach *Maqasid* allowing scholars to interpret the legal text with the universal purpose of the shari'a in mind, so that Islamic law can remain relevant without losing its normative basis.

A number of modern thinkers such as Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur assert that *maqasid* should be understood as a philosophical framework that explains the general orientation of Islamic law, namely realizing benefits and rejecting harm. Meanwhile, Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasized that understanding *maqasid* is the key to formulating moderate and contextual *ijtihad*. According to him, Islamic law should not be understood narrowly based only on literal texts, but must be seen in the framework of the goals that the sharia as a whole wants to achieve.

In the perspective of legal theory, the *maqasid approach* also has important implications for how to understand the relationship between legal norms and social reality. If in the classical approach the main focus lies on the interpretation of the text, then in the *maqasid paradigm* attention is also directed to the social impact of the application of the law. This approach is in line with the principle contained in the hadith of the Prophet narrated by Imam Malik regarding the rule *of lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*, which emphasizes that the law must not cause harm or harm to humans. This rule then developed into a universal principle in jurisprudence that emphasizes that every legal policy must consider aspects of the public interest.

The relevance of *maqasid* as a paradigm of contemporary Islamic legal theory is also seen in efforts to integrate Islamic universal values with the development of the modern legal system. Values such as justice, protection of human rights, and social welfare can be explained through the *framework of maqasid* as the fundamental goal of sharia. With this approach, Islamic law is not only understood as a normative system that regulates individual behavior, but also as a system of social ethics that functions to maintain balance and justice in people's lives.

Thus, *maqasid al-shari'ah* has a very significant relevance in the development of contemporary Islamic legal theory. This approach allows Islamic law to adhere to its normative sources while being able to respond to evolving social dynamics. In this framework, *maqasid* not only functions as a concept in *fiqh* proposals, but also as a theoretical paradigm that provides direction for the development of Islamic legal methodology in the modern era.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

The study of *maqasid al-shari'ah* shows that this concept has a fundamental position in the development of Islamic legal theory. Historically, the idea of the purpose of sharia has emerged in the tradition of classical scholarly thought who understood that every provision of Islamic law has an orientation of benefit for humans. This thought was then formulated more systematically by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali through the concept of protection of the five basic human needs, which was further developed methodologically by Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi within the framework of the theory of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. Through this

approach, Islamic law is not only understood as a collection of normative rules, but also as a legal system that has a rational and ethical purpose.

In the development of modern Islamic legal thought, the concept of *maqasid* has expanded its function from a mere theory in fiqh to a more comprehensive analytical framework in understanding the dynamics of Islamic law. Modern thinkers such as Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur and Yusuf al-Qaradawi place *maqasid* as a methodological approach that allows Islamic law to interact more adaptively with the social, economic, and political changes occurring in contemporary society.

Thus, *maqasid al-shari'ah* can be understood as an important paradigm in the development of contemporary Islamic legal theory because it is able to explain the relationship between the sharia text and the normative goals to be realized. This approach provides room for legal interpretation that remains grounded in the basic values of Islam while being responsive to the needs of modern society. Therefore, strengthening the *perspective of maqasid* is a strategic step in maintaining the relevance of Islamic law in the midst of the ever-changing development of civilization.

B. Suggestions

The development of studies on *maqasid al-shari'ah* needs to continue to be carried out in more depth, especially in the context of its application to various contemporary legal issues. Academics and researchers of Islamic law are expected to develop a *maqasid* approach not only at the conceptual level, but also on a practical analysis of actual issues such as the modern economy, digital technology, and governance. In addition, the integration of *maqasid studies* with social science disciplines and modern legal theory is also important to enrich Islamic legal methodologies so that they are able to make a broader contribution to the development of legal thought in the global era.

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