

The Dynamic Relationship Between Naqli and Aqli Sources of Law in Ushul Fikih and its Implications for The Formation of Islamic Legal Products

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Abstract: This study departs from an epistemological problem in the discipline of Ushul Fiqh concerning the relationship between the sources of Naqli (revelation) and Aqli (reason) law, which are viewed as contradictory in the process of forming Islamic law. In the modern context, there is an urgent need to review the pattern of the relationship between the two so that Islamic law can respond to social, technological, and contemporary challenges without losing its normative foundation. This study aims to analyse the dynamic relationship between Naqli and Aqli sources of law within the framework of Ushul Fiqh and to review and explain how their interaction influences the direction and methodology of contemporary ijтиhad. This study uses a qualitative research method with a normative approach that focuses on the study of the works of classical scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Syathibi and contemporary thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi. The results of the study show that the relationship between Naqli and Aqli is not dichotomous, but complementary and contextual. Reason functions as a means of interpreting revelation, while revelation is a source of moral and normative values for legal rationality. The novelty of this research can be seen in the formulation of a 'conceptual synchronisation' model that combines the power of rationality and the depth of spirituality as a methodological foundation for the renewal of Islamic legal ijтиhad. Its contribution is expected to strengthen the development of contemporary Ushul Fikih theory and encourage the creation of more adaptive and equitable Islamic legal products.

Keywords: Aqli; Naqli; Islamic Legal Products; Ushul Fikih.

Introduction

Islamic law did not arise in a vacuum. It grew out of the encounter between divine revelation and human intellect. (Misbahuddin, 2022) On the one hand, Naqli (divine revelation) as contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah forms the normative basis for all laws. On the other hand, Aqli (the ability to think and reason) serves as an instrument for understanding divine messages so that they remain relevant in every era. (Aziba, 2025) The relationship between the two forms the heart of the discipline of Ushul Fiqh, which is the science that explains how Islamic law is formulated, interpreted, and applied. As time goes by, human life continues to change. Social, economic, technological, and cultural issues are developing much faster than in classical times. In situations like this, Islamic law is required to be flexible, but still remain faithful to its basic values. Therefore, there needs to be a new understanding of how revelation and reason interact dynamically to respond to the needs of the times without deviating from the corridor of Sharia.

The Qur'an never closes the door to reason. There are several verses that invite humans to think, reflect, and reason about Allah's creation. His words in Surah Al-'Imran, for example, praise those who use their reason to understand the signs of Allah's greatness in the heavens and the earth.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخِلَافِ أَلَيْلٌ وَالنَّهَارُ لَا يَلِمُ لِأَوْلَى الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَ

Meaning: "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs (of Allah's greatness) for people of understanding, (namely) those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying), "Our Lord, You did not create all this in vain. Glorified are You. Protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (QS. Al-'Imran :190-191). (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya, 2019)

Similarly, QS. Al-Zumar emphasises the virtue of those who possess knowledge.

أَمْنٌ هُوَ قَاتِنُ أَنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ^٢
إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

Meaning: "Are the polytheists more fortunate, or those who worship at night, prostrating and standing, fearing the punishment of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of their Lord? Say (Prophet Muhammad), 'Are those who know (the rights of Allah) the same as those who do not know (the rights of Allah)?' Indeed, only those of understanding (ululalbab) can accept the lesson." (QS. Al-Zumar: 9). (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya, 2019)

Based on these verses, it is clear that reason is not the enemy of revelation, but rather a bridge that leads humans to a deeper understanding of divine truth. However, the history of Islamic thought shows a tug-of-war between two major poles, namely textualism and rationalism. The textualist group adheres strongly to the literal meaning of the text, while the rationalist group emphasises the importance of contextual interpretation. This debate enriches the treasury of Islamic law, but at the same time creates an epistemological distance between revelation and reason. This difference is still felt today, especially in the practice of law in various modern contexts.

A systematic understanding of the rules of lughawiyah is the main foundation in exploring and establishing Islamic laws that are sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith in a valid manner, considering that Arabic as the language of revelation has a unique wealth of meaning, structure, and linguistic nuances. Therefore, the rules of lughawiyah cannot be separated from ushul fiqh which functions as a methodological tool for istinbāt of Allah's laws from the Qur'an and as-Sunnah, as well as an instrument in establishing furū' laws through structured and systematic rules (Zulbaidah, 2025). In a broader context, the results of the legal istinbāt do not stand in the abstract, but interact with the national legal system. Indonesian law demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the welfare of society through the formation and implementation of regulations that are responsive to the dynamics and needs of modern developments, thus opening up space for harmonization between Islamic law and positive law (Zulbaidah et al., 2025). At the social level, the reconstruction of Islamic law based on monotheism is a relevant choice for Indonesian Muslims in a pluralistic society, because it fosters awareness of transcendental, social, and national responsibilities as citizens living in diversity, while simultaneously strengthening the orientation of welfare in the renewal of Islamic law (Zulbaidah, 2024).

Based on the framework of Ushul Fiqh, the Naqli sources include the Qur'an, Sunnah, and ijma', while the Aqli sources include qiyas, istihsan, maslahah mursalah, and istishab. Each source plays an important role in shaping Islamic law. Reason serves to interpret texts, weigh benefits, and adapt laws to an ever-evolving reality. (Zainuddin, 2022) In other words, reason is not a substitute for revelation, but a tool for bringing the meaning of revelation to life. Unfortunately, in practice, the relationship between revelation and reason is often misunderstood. Some people believe that the two must be strictly separated, when in fact it is their synergy that makes Islamic law alive and relevant. A rigid separation between Naqli and Aqli sources causes ijtihad to lose its creative power. As a result, Islamic law tends to be stagnant and unable to respond to rapid social changes. This has given rise to the need to review the epistemological relationship between the two sources. (Sulthon, 2019)

Previous studies have tended to view this issue from a purely normative perspective, without delving deeply into the conceptual and methodological relationship between revelation and reason. However, understanding the interaction between the two is key to developing a contextual and sustainable model of Islamic law. Syarial Dedi emphasises that usul al-fiqh must be understood not only normatively, but also philosophically, where reason becomes an epistemological instrument in understanding revelation. (Dedi, 2020) In line with this, Dwi Harimawan and Imam Sopangi show that rational logic is a constructive partner for revelation in the process of ijtihad, not a threat to it. (Wahyudi, 2023) In general, all of these studies agree that

the synergy between revelation and reason is a dynamic foundation for the development of Islamic legal methodology, but there is still room for further exploration of how the conceptual and methodological relationship between the two can be formulated into a model for the formation of Islamic law that is more contextual and sustainable.

This research gap indicates that Islamic law requires a new paradigm. A paradigm that no longer places reason merely as a supplement, but rather as an integral part of the *ijtihad* process. The Qur'an itself emphasises that law is not merely text, but a means to realise justice, balance, and benefit. Therefore, understanding how revelation and reason work together is an important part of renewing Islamic legal methodology. This study attempts to present a more balanced perspective. The relationship between *Naqli* and *Aqli* is understood not as two mutually exclusive poles, but as two mutually reinforcing forces. Revelation provides values and direction, while reason provides context and application. In the synergy between the two, Islamic law finds its vitality: principled yet flexible in its application.

The theoretical framework of this study is rooted in the concept of *maqasid al-shari'ah*, namely the noble objectives of Islamic law such as protecting religion, reason, life, lineage, and property. Through the *maqasid* approach, reason has a role to ensure that every law applied is truly in line with the values of justice and benefit. Thus, the relationship between *Naqli* and *Aqli* is not only normative but also functional in responding to the needs of modern society. The main objective of this study is to examine how the dynamic relationship between the sources of *Naqli* and *Aqli* law is formed in *Ushul Fiqh*, and how this relationship influences the way Islamic law is formulated and applied. This study also attempts to formulate a new conceptual model that can serve as a methodological basis for contemporary *ijtihad*, in which revelation and reason go hand in hand without negating each other. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the renewal of *Ushul Fiqh* and the development of more adaptive Islamic legal products. By understanding the dynamic relationship between revelation and reason, Islamic law can continue to be a living moral and social guide, not merely a text to be memorised, but a value to be actualised in human life.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive analytical method and a normative juridical perspective, grounded in literature-based research. Qualitative documentary analysis is combined with thematic content analysis to examine documents as the primary data source through systematic processes of identification, coding, and organisation of key themes in order to uncover meanings, patterns, and normative discursive tendencies. This methodological design enables an in-depth understanding of the content and context of authoritative texts, making it particularly suitable for research in Islamic law and socio-humanities that emphasises the analysis of meaning and normative implications (Zulbaidah et al., 2025; Novianti, 2024). In line with this framework, the study also employs textual analysis of the works of classical and contemporary scholars in the discipline of *Ushul Fiqh*.

The normative approach is selected because it is appropriate for exploring the principles of Islamic law derived from authoritative texts and established scholarly traditions, as well as for understanding how these norms are constructed and applied in both historical and contemporary contexts. In this regard, the works of al-Ghazālī, particularly *al-Mustasfā fī 'Ilm al-Usūl*, constitute the primary reference for examining the balance between revelation and reason as the foundation of the legitimacy of *ijtihād*. Meanwhile, al-Shātibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Usūl al-Shari'ah* provides a significant contribution to the analysis of legal rationality through the theories of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* and *maṣlaḥah mursalah*. Furthermore, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's perspectives, as articulated in works such as *al-Ijtihād fī al-Shari'ah al-Islāmiyyah*, represent efforts to contextualise Islamic law while maintaining the integrity of the sources of revelation. The analysis of these three scholars is conducted comparatively and critically to identify patterns in the relationship between *naqlī* and *'aqlī* sources of law, as well as their implications for the formation of Islamic law that remains responsive to changing social realities. Through this integrative methodological framework, the study seeks to produce a comprehensive and academically accountable synthesis in the field of Islamic legal epistemology.

Results and Discussion

The Epistemology of Islamic Law: Al-Ghazali's Perspective as a Balance between Revelation and Reason

Al-Ghazali is known as a figure who sought to bridge two major poles in Islamic legal discourse, namely textualism, which emphasises revelation absolutely, and rationalism, which gives dominant space to reason. Through his work *al-Mustashfa fi 'Ilm al-Usul*, al-Ghazali views reason and revelation not as two conflicting entities, but as two instruments that must work in harmony to achieve a correct understanding of law. He rejects the dichotomy between religion and rationality, because according to him, both originate from the same divine source. Thus, the epistemology of Islamic law in al-Ghazali's view emphasises a balance between the guidance of revelation and the analytical power of human reason. For al-Ghazali, revelation serves as the primary and absolute source for establishing Islamic law, while reason acts as a tool for understanding, interpreting, and applying revelation according to context. Reason without revelation would lose its moral direction, while revelation without reason would be difficult to understand contextually. (Soimah, 2021) Therefore, in his epistemological structure, al-Ghazali places reason as a servant of revelation, not its replacement. This thinking shows a moderate intellectual attitude: not extreme in textualism, but still cautious of excessive rationalism. This relationship shows that legal knowledge in Islam does not only depend on the authority of the text, but also on the ability of human reason to uncover the meaning behind it.

Al-Ghazali's epistemology is rooted in the belief that all knowledge, both rational and spiritual, comes from Allah. Therefore, understanding Islamic law means uncovering divine will through a combination of revelatory guidance and rational reflection. (Hidayat, 2024) In *al-Mustashfa*, al-Ghazali explains the importance of deductive and inductive methods in the process of *istinbat* law. He encourages the use of *qiyas*, *istidlal*, and *ijtihad* based on *maslahah*, as long as it is still based on the principle of *nash*. This approach shows that rationality in Islamic law is not secular, but always bound to the objectives of the *Sharia*. This is where the superiority of al-Ghazali's thinking lies. He developed a rational legal system that remained spiritual and normative.

An important aspect of al-Ghazali's thinking is his view of *maqasid al-shari'ah*, namely the objectives of Islamic law. For al-Ghazali, every legal provision has a rational purpose that can be revealed through reason. Islamic law is not just a collection of rules, but an instrument to protect human welfare, religion, reason, life, lineage, and property. (Mufid, 2020) In this context, reason becomes a means of understanding the essence behind the text, not merely interpreting it literally. Thus, the concept of *maqasid* becomes an epistemological bridge that connects revelation and reason, while ensuring that Islamic law remains relevant to the dynamics of the times without losing its authenticity. In legal practice, al-Ghazali also emphasised that reason must be used with strict methodological discipline. He rejected the use of reason without the foundation of revelation because it had the potential to produce subjective and immoral laws. (Armando, 2024) However, he also opposed a rigid attitude that rejected rational reasoning altogether. For al-Ghazali, a balance between the two can only be achieved through a responsible process of *ijtihad*, in which scholars not only master the texts but also understand social realities. In this way, Islamic law can be applied in a relevant manner without violating divine principles. It is this methodological balance that makes al-Ghazali a pioneer of epistemological moderation in Islamic law. Al-Ghazali's thinking has not only influenced the formation of Islamic legal theory, but also the way Muslims think about the authority of knowledge. He succeeded in changing the paradigm that rational thinking does not mean opposing revelation, but rather is part of how humans understand the signs of Allah's greatness. (Zamhariroh, 2024) In this perspective, al-Ghazali places reason as an 'inner light' that helps humans grasp divine messages.

1. Naqli Arguments According to al-Ghazali
- The Qur'an: QS. An-Nahl [16]: 89

Meaning: 'And We have sent down to you the Book (the Qur'an) to explain everything, as guidance, mercy, and good tidings for those who submit.' (QS. An-Nahl: 89) (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya, 2019)

.... وَنَرَأَنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَبَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

In the book al-Mustashfa fi 'Ilm al-Usul, al-Ghazali uses this verse as the basis for his argument that revelation (the Qur'an and Sunnah) is the highest and most authoritative source of law for all branches of Islamic knowledge, including fiqh. For al-Ghazali, all laws must be based on revelation because it is a direct manifestation of the divine will. However, the explanation of 'everything' in this verse requires the activation of human reason to understand the context and implied meanings therein. Thus, revelation provides the basic values, while reason serves to elaborate on their application according to the times.

Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرُو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ أَنْتَرَاعًا يَنْتَرِ عُهُدَ النَّاسِ، وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ يَقْبِضُ الْعَلَمَاءَ، حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَمْ يُبْقِيْ عَالِمًا، اتَّحَدَ النَّاسُ رُؤُوسًا جُهَّالًا، فَأَفَقُنَا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ، فَضَلَّوْا وَأَضَلُّوا.

Meaning: "Verily, Allah will not take knowledge away from His servants all at once, but He takes knowledge away by taking the lives of the scholars. When there are no more scholars, people appoint ignorant leaders; they are asked questions, then give fatwas without knowledge, so they go astray and lead others astray." (Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Kitāb Al-'Ilm, Bāb Kayfa Yuqbadu Al-'Ilm, Hadith No. 100)

This hadith shows the importance of scholarly authority and the proper use of reason in understanding revelation. According to al-Ghazali, knowledge is not just memorisation of texts, but rational understanding inspired by the guidance of revelation. Therefore, a mujtahid must use his reasoning (aqliyyah) in extracting laws from naqliyyah sources, so as not to fall into narrow and rigid interpretations.

2. Rational Argument According to al-Ghazali

The Argument of Causality of Reason

فَكُلُّ أَمْرٍ وَنَهْيٍ فِي الشَّرْعِ فَإِنَّمَا شُرِعَ لِمَعْنَىٰ يَعْقِلُهُ الْعُقْلُ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْصَ عَلَيْهِ نَصِّا صَرِيْحٌ

Meaning: 'Every command and prohibition in the Sharia must have an illat (rational cause) that can be grasped by human reason.' (Kitāb Al-'Ilm, Hadith No. 2673.)

In al-Mustashfa and al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad, al-Ghazali emphasises that Sharia law cannot be arbitrary. Behind every command of Allah there is wisdom ('illah) that aims to protect human interests. Thus, reason has an epistemic role in discovering the rationality behind the law, not in creating new laws. For example, the prohibition of usury is not merely a dogmatic command, but has a rational basis to prevent economic injustice and exploitation. (Al-Ghazali, 1993)

Rational Ethical Argument

وَإِنْ كَانَ الْعُقْلُ يَعْرِفُ الْحُسْنَ وَالْمُنْكَرَ فِي الْجُمْلَةِ، فَإِنَّ الشَّرْعَ هُوَ الَّذِي يُبَيِّنُ مَقَادِيرَهُمَا وَحُدُودَهُمَا

Meaning: 'Reason is capable of knowing good and evil in general terms, but revelation determines their final measure' (Al-Ghazali, 1993)

According to al-Ghazali, reason has the capacity to judge that justice is good and injustice is bad, but revelation provides concrete moral definitions of these values. This view shows that al-Ghazali does not reject rational morality, but subjects it to the guidance of revelation. The synergy between the two gives rise to an Islamic legal system that is rooted in revelation, but is not detached from human moral consciousness and rationality. Based on the above naqli and aqli arguments, it is clear that al-Ghazali does not place reason and revelation as two separate sources of law, but as two complementary epistemic dimensions. Revelation provides normative values, while reason bridges the understanding and application of law in accordance with the conditions of society. This model is characteristic of al-Ghazali's thinking, which rejects both textualist and rationalist extremism, thereby creating harmony between spirituality and rationality within the framework of Islamic law.

Rationalisation of Maqasid al-Shari'ah in the Thought of al-Shathibi

The thought of Imam Abu Ishaq al-Shathibi (d. 790 AH) marked an important phase in the development of Islamic legal epistemology, particularly in the effort to combine the texts of Sharia with social rationality. Through his monumental work *al-Muwafaqat fi Ushul al-Shari'ah*, al-Shāthibī developed a new paradigm in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* that focused on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the objectives of Sharia) and *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (benefits not explicitly mentioned in the text). He argued that Islamic law cannot be separated from the social context of humanity, because Sharia was revealed to realise benefits in this world and the hereafter. This view made al-Syāthibī a central figure in the epistemological shift in law from textual-normative to rational-functional. For al-Shāthibī, revelation and reason do not stand in a hierarchical position, but rather are complementary. Revelation is the source of values and goals, while reason serves to reveal the meaning and wisdom behind legal provisions. He argues that all commands and prohibitions of the Sharia have rational reasons that can be grasped by human reason, as long as that reason operates within the corridor of textual guidance. In this case, revelation provides orientation, while reason interprets how it is applied in the context of a changing social life. Thus, al-Shāthibī's epistemology does not deny the text, but brings it to life through rational interpretation that emphasises the values of benefit and justice.

The concept of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* became the main epistemological foundation for al-Shāthibī. He defined maqasid as legal objectives designed to protect the five basic human needs: religion (*ḥifz al-dīn*), life (*ḥifz al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifz al-‘aql*), progeny (*ḥifz al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifz al-māl*). According to him, all Islamic legal provisions, both explicit and implicit, boil down to these five basic principles. Using the maqasid framework, al-Shāthibī shifted the orientation of law from mere formal compliance with the text to a substantive understanding of the objectives of the Sharia. This approach opened up space for contextual ijtihad, in which reason is used to maintain maslahah in accordance with the spirit of revelation. In al-Shāthibī's view, *maṣlaḥah* is not solely a creation of reason, but rather the result of interaction between reason and revelation. He rejects the concept of free rationality (*istihsān ghayr muqayyad*) that severs the connection with the text, but also opposes legal formalism that ignores the social context. For al-Syāthibī, *maṣlaḥah* that is valid according to sharia must be in line with the maqasid of sharia. This demonstrates a distinctive epistemological balance: reason is given space to assess benefits, but its validity is still determined by its conformity with divine purposes. Through this approach, al-Shāthibī succeeded in formulating a theory of law that is adaptive to social change without losing the integrity of revelation.

Al-Syāthibī's epistemology also emphasises the rational function of reason in understanding social sunnatullah. He believes that the laws of sharia are derived in accordance with human nature and social customs ('ādāt al-nās). Therefore, changes in the social context require a dynamic and responsive understanding of the law. Reason becomes an instrument for identifying new patterns of benefit that may not have existed in the past. However, this rationality must be rooted in *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, so as not to fall into pragmatism. This thinking provides a new direction for *ijtihad mu‘āṣir* (contemporary ijtihad), especially in the fields of economics, politics, and modern family law. Al-Syāthibī also developed a legal epistemological framework based on *al-istiqrā'* (induction), which is a method of drawing conclusions from the entirety of the texts and

practices of sharia to find general patterns that are the objectives of Allah. He argued that maqasid are not taken from a particular verse or hadith, but from the entire coherent system of Islamic law. This inductive method marks a shift from an atomistic to a systemic approach, in which law is understood as a network of interrelated values. This approach strengthens the position of reason as a tool for interpreting the global meaning of Sharia without violating its text. (Al-Syatibi, 2003)

1. Naqli Arguments According to al-Syāthibī

فَدُجِعَتْ آيَاتٌ كَثِيرَةٌ تَدْلُّ عَلَى أَنَّ الشَّرِيعَةَ جَاءَتْ لِمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

Meaning: "Many verses have come to show that the Sharia was revealed for the benefit of the servants, both in this world and in the hereafter (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an and Its Translation, 2019).

Supporting verse (QS. al-Anbiyā ' [21]: 107):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلنَّاسِ

Meaning: "And We have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy to all the worlds. (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an and Its Translation, 2019)

This verse is used as a basis by al-Shāthibī to show that all Sharia laws aim to bring benefits and mercy to mankind. Therefore, every legal ruling must consider the benefits and prevent harm (jahl al-maṣlaḥah wa dar' al-mafsadah).

2. Rational Argument According to al-Shāthibī

إِذَا كَانَتِ الشَّرِيعَةُ إِنَّمَا جَاءَتْ لِمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ، فَلِلْعُقْلِ يَشْهُدُ أَنَّهُ حَيْثُمَا وَجَدَتِ الْمُصْلَحَةُ فَلَمْ شَرَعْ اللَّهُ

Meaning: 'If the Shariah was revealed for the benefit of mankind, then reason also testifies that wherever there is benefit, there is the law of Allah.'

According to al-Shāthibī, reason becomes a witness and partner of revelation in identifying benefit. However, the validity of rationality is still determined by its conformity with the objectives of the Sharia. (Al-Shatibi, 2003)

The Synergy between Nash and Social Reality: The Perspective of Yusuf al-Qaradawi

The thoughts of Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926–2022) occupy an important position in contemporary Islamic legal discourse, particularly in the effort to build a bridge between revelatory texts (nash) and dynamic social realities. (Izzati, 2024) In his works such as *Fiqh al-Wāqi'*, *al-Ijtihād al-Mu'āṣir*, and *al-Maqāṣid al-Āmmah li al-Syārī'ah al-Islāmiyyah*, al-Qaradawi emphasises that Islamic law must be understood in the context of human life, which is constantly changing. For him, the text of revelation is fixed (*tsawābit*), but its application requires flexibility (*mutaghayyirāt*) so that Islamic law remains alive and relevant in every era. (Agus, 2014)

Al-Qaradawi's epistemology departs from the principle that the text and social reality are not two conflicting entities, but rather two sides of a single Islamic legal system. The text provides universal values and principles, while social reality provides the context that guides the application of the law. He calls this approach *fiqh al-wāqi'* (jurisprudence of reality), which is the ability to understand the conditions of society, culture, and changes over time in order to apply the law appropriately. (Asmawi, 2021) Thus, al-Qaradawi places human reason and experience as a means of contextual interpretation of revelation, not as a rival to it. Within his methodological framework, al-Qaradawi uses two key principles: *al-taysīr* (ease) and *raf' al-ḥarāj* (removal of hardship), which are derived from *maqasid al-syārī'ah*. He argues that Islam is not meant to be a burden, but to bring mercy to humanity. Therefore, every application of the law must take into account the social situation and the interests of the people. For example, in the context of the modern economy, al-Qaradawi allows new financial instruments as long as they do not conflict with the principles of justice and the prohibition of usury. This principle shows how the text is translated into social policy through the mechanism of contextual *ijtihad*.

Al-Qaradawi also rejects two extremes in understanding the law: rigid textualism that ignores reality, and legal liberalism that denies the authority of revelation. He offers a middle way through the al-wasatiyyah (moderation) approach, which emphasises a balance between revelation and reason, ideals and reality, and the past and the present. According to him, the success of Islamic law lies in its ability to adapt to reality without losing its divine values. This approach makes al-Qaradawi an important figure in contemporary Islamic legal reform that remains rooted in the classical usul al-fiqh tradition. For al-Qaradawi, reason functions as a moral interpreter of revelation. It does not create law, but plays a role in revealing the wisdom and benefits behind the provisions of sharia. Reason also serves as a tool for understanding the maqasid of sharia in a modern context, such as social justice, gender equality, and environmental protection. In this context, Islamic law is not merely a collection of rules, but a system of values that guides human civilisation towards benefit. Thus, the synergy between nash and social reality produces laws that are not only theologically valid, but also sociologically relevant.

Al-Qaradawi's methodology is heavily influenced by the intellectual tradition of al-Syāthibī, particularly in terms of rationalising maqasid and using maṣlahah as the basis for ijtihad. (Mahendra, 2022) However, he expands on this approach by incorporating the variable waqi' (empirical reality) as part of the structure of legal reasoning. By understanding social facts in depth, mujtahids are able to determine the form of law application that is in accordance with maqasid without going beyond the limits of nash. This makes ijtihad dynamic, realistic, and contextual, which is a key characteristic in the framework of modern Islamic law. In this way, Islamic law can play a strategic role in organising the lives of modern communities without losing the authenticity of revelation. Thus, the synergy between the text and social reality is not a compromise, but rather a manifestation of tajdīd (renewal) of Islamic law rooted in maqasid and the value of rahmatan lil 'ālamīn.

1. Naqli Arguments According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi

بِرِيْدُ اللَّهِ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرُ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرُ

Meaning: 'Allah desires ease for you and does not desire hardship for you.' (QS. al-Baqarah: 185) (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya, 2019)

This verse forms the basis of the principle of al-taysīr in al-Qaradawi's thinking. He argues that every Islamic law must bring ease and benefit, not hardship and difficulty. This principle is used to respond to the challenges of modern life, such as flexibility in economic and social laws.

2. Rational Argument According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi

الْفِقْهُ الصَّحِيحُ هُوَ الَّذِي يُوازِنُ بَيْنَ النَّصَّ وَالْوَاقِعِ، فَلَا يُغَيِّرُ الدِّينَ وَلَا يُجَمِّدُهُ عَنِ الْحَيَاةِ

Meaning: "True fiqh is that which is able to balance between text and reality; it does not change religion, but neither does it freeze it from life." (Al-Qardawi, 2024)

This statement reflects the basis of fiqh al-wāqi', which is rational and dynamic legal thinking. Reason serves to weigh social situations to ensure that Islamic law remains an actual and contextual guide for life.

Comparative Analysis of the Thought of al-Ghazali, al-Shatibi, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi on the Relationship between Naqli and Aqli in Usul al-Fiqh

1.1 Comparative Table of Thought

Aspect of Analysis	al-Ghazali	al-Shatibi	Yusuf al-Qaradawi
Epistemological Background	Positions revelation as the absolute source	Emphasises that reason serves to	Develops an epistemology of

	of truth, while granting broad scope to reason to comprehend the objectives of the Shari'ah. Reason functions as an instrument of verification and legal interpretation (Al-Mustasfa fi 'Ilm al-Usul).	uncover the wisdom underlying legal rulings. Legal epistemology is oriented towards achieving the maqasid al-shari'ah as the rational objectives of revelation (Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shari'ah).	Islamic law grounded in maqasid and contemporary ijihad, wherein reason interprets revelation in accordance with social context without altering the substance of the texts (Al-Ijtihad fi al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah).
Relationship between Revelation and Reason	Complementary relationship: revelation provides direction, while reason offers explanation. There is no contradiction, as both originate from Allah.	Functional relationship: reason is required to actualise the values of revelation through considerations of public interest (maslahah).	Dialogical relationship: reason adapts Islamic law to new realities so long as it does not conflict with the principles of revelation.
Methodological Principles	Prioritises balance between text and reason; rejects both textualist and rationalist extremism.	Establishes maslahah mursalah and maqasid as the rational basis for legal determination.	Encourages collective ijihad (ijihad jama'i) and tajdid to interpret the law dynamically and contextually.
Approach to Ijtihad	Ijtihad must be exercised under the guidance of revelation and sound reason; reason without revelation is considered morally directionless.	Ijtihad is directed towards discovering the legal wisdom that supports public welfare and the continuity of Shari'ah values.	Ijtihad must be contextual and responsive to the modern age, while remaining anchored in the principles of maqasid al-shari'ah.
Orientation of Legal Objectives (Maqasid)	Justice, balance, and social order as reflections of the divine will.	Human welfare as the core objective of Islamic law.	The relevance and sustainability of Islamic law in addressing the global challenges of modernity.
Implications for the Formation of Islamic Legal Products	Offers a legal model balanced between normativity and rationality.	Produces a legal approach grounded in public welfare and the rationalisation of Shari'ah values.	Leads to the formulation of Islamic law that is contextual, adaptive, and relevant to modern society.

Formulation of the Dynamic Relationship Model between Naqli and Aqli in the Formation of Contemporary Islamic Law

The development of contemporary Islamic law requires the emergence of a new epistemological model that is capable of bridging the two main sources of Islamic law, namely naqli (revelation) and aqli (reason), in order to remain relevant to modern social complexities.

(Nurhidayati, 2020) In this context, the relationship between the two is not dichotomous, but dynamic and dialogical. Naqli functions as a source of values and normative legitimacy, while aqli becomes an interpretive instrument that adapts these values to the needs of society. This model emphasises that true ijтиhad is not based solely on text, but must also consider context.

This dynamic relationship is formulated based on the principle that revelation provides direction, and reason determines the steps. In Islamic law, revelation establishes moral objectives and maqāṣid shariah such as justice, mercy, and benefit. However, translating these objectives into concrete legal policies requires rational thinking and empirical analysis. (Syarif, 2024) For example, the principle of prohibiting usury in the Qur'an is not only interpreted as a literal prohibition against interest, but also as an effort to reject all forms of economic exploitation. This is where reason works to adapt normative principles to the modern financial system without denying the substance of revelation.

This model of relationship also emphasises that reason does not stand as a substitute for revelation, but as an epistemological partner in understanding the intentions of sharia. This approach avoids two extremes: textual legalism that ignores the social context, and rational liberalism that denies the limits of revelation. The dynamic relationship places both in a hermeneutic dialogue: revelation becomes a 'fixed norm', while reason becomes an 'adaptive function' that allows Islamic law to evolve with the times. Thus, Islamic law is not rigid, but alive and responsive to the realities of society. In terms of methodology, this model can be formulated in three stages of analysis: (1) verification of the text, which is identifying the legal basis from the Qur'an and Sunnah; (2) maqasid analysis, which is tracing the moral and social objectives of legal provisions; and (3) rational-conceptual synthesis, which is the use of reason to formulate new legal applications that are in line with maqasid. Through this step-by-step approach, ijтиhad is not only a process of exploring the law, but also a process of social and ethical reasoning. The actualisation of revelation in the midst of the dynamics of the times takes the following forms, among others:

1. Dalil Naqli (Revelation as a Normative Foundation)

وَنَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِنِيَّاتِنَا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

Meaning: 'And We have sent down to you the Book (the Qur'an) to explain everything, as guidance, mercy, and good tidings for those who submit.' (QS. an-Nahl: 89) (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya, 2019)

This verse indicates that revelation (naqli) is the main source for all aspects of life, including the legal system. However, the explanation of revelation is *tibyānī* in nature, providing general guidelines rather than technical details for every situation. In the context of dynamic relations, this verse emphasises the role of the Qur'an as a normative value map that requires rational interpretation (aqli) in order to be applied in an ever-changing social context. Thus, revelation provides universal principles, while reason articulates their application in the form of contemporary law.

2. Rational Argument (Rationality as a Partner of Revelation)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَنْهَا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Meaning: 'Verily, Allah will send to this nation at the beginning of every hundred years someone who will renew (renew the understanding of) its religion.' (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an and Its Translation, 2019)

This hadith is the rational basis for ijтиhad and *tajdīd* (renewal of Islamic law). Epistemologically, renewal necessitates the active role of reason in re-reading the text in accordance with developments in reality. This is where the concept of dynamic relations arises:

revelation remains the normative foundation, but reason is mandated to carry out reinterpretations in accordance with the maqasid of sharia and social conditions. Therefore, every generation needs legal thinkers who are able to 'renew religion' without violating the principles of revelation.

3. Additional Rational Arguments (Qur'anic Rationality)

أَفَلَا يَتَبَرَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبِ أَفْنَانِهَا

Meaning: 'Then will they not ponder the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked?' (QS. Muhammad: 24) (Soenarjo, Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya, 2019)

This verse shows that reason (tadabbur) is an epistemological instrument commanded by the Qur'an itself. Tafakkur and tadabbur are not merely intellectual activities, but part of scientific worship to understand the meaning of Allah's law in depth. In the context of contemporary legal product formation, this verse serves as the basis for legitimising rational activities such as research, social analysis, and maqasid-based legal reconstruction.

4. Epistemological Synthesis

The two types of naqli and aqli arguments interact complementarily: Naqli guarantees the normative validity of the law (based on divine revelation). Meanwhile, aqli guarantees the contextual relevance of the law (based on human reason and social reality). The formulation of dynamic Islamic law requires tawāzun (balance) between the two, as emphasised by the scholars:

مَنْ اعْتَمَدَ عَلَى النَّقْلِ فَقَطْ فَقَدْ تَعَصَّبَ، وَمَنْ اعْتَمَدَ عَلَى الْعُقْلِ فَقَطْ فَقَدْ تَجَرَّدَ، وَمَنْ جَمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا فَقَدْ تَوَسَّطَ

Meaning: 'Whoever relies solely on texts becomes rigid, whoever relies solely on reason becomes detached, and whoever combines the two is on the middle path.' (Al-Ghazali, 1997) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1991) (Al-Qardhawi, 2021) (Al-Wani, 2004)

Based on the context of the formation of contemporary Islamic legal products, this model is highly relevant to addressing modern issues such as bioethics, digital technology, Islamic economics, and the environment. It is impossible to resolve every new issue with textual nash alone, as many of them were unknown in classical times. This is where the role of aqli becomes significant, exploring universal principles from revelation and then applying them to new situations. Thus, Islamic law can continue to provide moral guidance and practical solutions without losing the authenticity of its sources.

This dynamic relationship finds strong legitimacy in the thinking of great scholars such as al-Ghazali, who emphasised the balance between 'aql and naql; al-Syāthibī, who developed the theory of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah and maṣlaḥah; and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who expanded it into fiqh al-wāqi' or the jurisprudence of social reality. All three demonstrate the continuity of the paradigm: Islamic law must be rooted in the text, but it must grow in context. This is the conceptual foundation of the 'dynamic relationship' model, the integration of rationality, spirituality, and the interests of the ummah. Thus, the dynamic relationship model of naqli and aqli not only answers academic needs, but also provides practical direction for contemporary ijtihad and the renewal of Islamic law. This approach emphasises that Islamic law is not merely a normative doctrine, but a living and evolving system of knowledge. Its success lies in its ability to harmonise two sources of authority, namely divine revelation and human reason, to bring justice and benefit to all of humanity. It is within this framework that Islamic law finds its relevance and vitality in the modern era.

Conclusion

The relationship between *naqli* and *'aqli* sources of law in the formation of Islamic law is dynamic and complementary rather than antagonistic. Al-Ghazali emphasises the importance of maintaining a balance between revelation and reason in understanding the law as a form of rational obedience to the Divine will, in which reason functions as a means of comprehending and actualising the guidance of revelation. Al-Shatibi, on the other hand, highlights the rationalisation of *maqasid al-shari'ah* and the principle of *maslahah* as the primary foundations of contextual *ijtihad* oriented towards human welfare. Meanwhile, Yusuf al-Qaradawi demonstrates a synergy between text and social reality within the framework of moderation in Islamic law, positioning revelation as the normative foundation and reason as an instrument for adapting to changing times. Through the integration of their respective perspectives, an adaptive, contextual, and sustainable epistemological formulation of Islamic law emerges; consequently, this study offers a conceptual contribution to the development of contemporary *ijtihad* methodologies that remain rooted in the sacred texts while effectively responding to the complexities of modern challenges.

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