

Ibn Ashur's Maqasid-Based Methodology of Qur'anic Interpretation: A Hermeneutic and Epistemological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Qur'anic interpretation requires methodological frameworks capable of reconciling textual fidelity with contemporary ethical and social realities. Although Muhammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr's theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* has been widely discussed, existing scholarship has primarily examined its legal dimensions, while its function as an integrated hermeneutic and epistemological methodology for Qur'anic interpretation remains insufficiently explored. This study aims to analyse Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāṣid-based interpretive methodology by examining its theoretical foundations, interpretive procedures, and epistemological assumptions. Employing a qualitative textual-hermeneutic approach, the research analyses *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* through systematic document analysis, thematic coding, and hermeneutic-epistemological interpretation. The findings identify five principal components of Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology: the eight Qur'anic maqāṣid as the interpretive orientation, inductive reasoning (*istiqrā'*), textual-*bayānī* analysis, *mutawātir* Sunnah as epistemic validation, and maqāṣid as the primary source of interpretive authority. This study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics by reconceptualising maqāṣid not merely as an objective of Islamic law but as a comprehensive hermeneutic and epistemological framework for interpreting the Qur'an, thereby advancing discussions on interpretive authority, Islamic epistemology, and the renewal of Qur'anic studies.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the interpretation of the Qur'an in the Modern era faces increasingly complex methodological challenges. Social change, scientific development, globalisation, cultural plurality, and the emergence of various problems that arise, unknown in classical times, require the birth of an interpretation model that is able to maintain the authority of the text while answering the needs of context. In many cases, an overly textual approach to interpretation has difficulty in explaining the normative relevance of the Qur'an to modern issues, while an overly contextual approach has the potential to ignore the epistemological boundaries that have been built in the Islamic tradition. This situation has led to a growing attention to the *maqāṣid* approach as a paradigm that allows integration between the text, context, and purpose of the sharia (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2021; Otaiwi, 2025).

Although the tradition of interpretation has produced a very rich intellectual heritage, various classical approaches generally focus on linguistic, grammatical, historical, and partial legal aspects. Both the *bi al-ma'thūr* and *bi al-ra'y* models of tafsir make great contributions to understanding the meaning of verses, but have not systematically developed a hermeneutic framework that makes the universal purpose of the Qur'an the main principle of interpretation (Al-Alwani, 1996; El-Mesawi, 2006a).

The atomistic tendency in the reading of verse often results in a fragmented understanding so that the relationship between the particular text and the moral vision of the Qur'an does not always appear clearly. Therefore, an interpretive model is needed that is able to bridge the textual dimension with the teleological dimension without losing its epistemological legitimacy in the Islamic tradition (Auda, 2008; Fuad, 2025).

Within the scope of modern Islamic thought, Muhammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr (1879–1973) occupies a very strategic position as one of the main reformers of the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as well as a mufasir who succeeded in integrating *maqāṣid* into the practice of interpreting the Qur'an. Through his monumental work *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* and his theoretical work *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah*, Ibn 'Āshūr seeks to reconstruct legal methodology and interpretation by placing the goals of the Shari'ah as the epistemological foundation of interpretation (Ibn Ashur, 1984, 2001). In contrast to the dominant legalistic approach in classical jurisprudence, Ibn 'Āshūr asserts that understanding the *maqāṣid* is an essential condition for grasping the universal message of the Qur'an (Al-Raysuni, 2005; Islam, 2019).

According to Ibn 'Āshūr, *maqāṣid* serve not only as an instrument of legal derivation but also as a hermeneutic principle that directs the process of interpreting texts. He identifies a number of the main purposes of the Qur'an that serve as a framework for understanding the relationship between verses and the moral orientation of revelation as a whole (Ibn Ashur, 1984; Islam, 2019). This approach reflects an important shift from textual reading to theological reading centred on the purpose of revelation. Thus, tafsir is no longer understood only as a purpose to explain the literal meaning of the text, but also as an attempt to uncover the normative vision that underlies the overall message of the Qur'an

(Auda, 2008; Ibn Ashur, 2006). Ibn 'Āshūr's contribution was all the more significant because he developed a relatively systematic method of finding *maqāṣid*. Studies have shown that the methodology relies on three main instruments, namely the inductive method (*istiqrā'*), the textual-bayānī method (*al-bayān al-naṣṣī*), and the sunnah mutawātirah method (Ibn Ashur, 2001; Rohayana et al., 2024).

Through *istiqrā'*, Ibn 'Āshūr traces the patterns of recurring goals in various provisions of the Shari'a so as to produce universal principles that can be used as a basis for interpretation. The bayānī method is used to identify the goals explicitly stated by the Qur'an, while the sunnah of *mutawātirah* serves as a source of verification of the goals of the Shari'a that have been set (Al-Raysuni, 2005; Rohayana et al., 2024). All three methods show that Ibn 'Āshūr's concept of *maqāṣid* has a strong epistemological basis in Islamic texts and traditions. Although the study of Ibn 'Āshūr has developed considerably in recent centuries, much of the research has focused on the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in general, its application in Islamic law, or the analysis of specific themes in *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* (Amir & Rahman, 2025; Islam, 2019). Some studies examine the *maqāṣid* of the Qur'an according to Ibn 'Āshūr, while others examine the application of the interpretation of *the maqāṣidī* to specific issues such as law, social ethics, and the public benefit (Otaiwi, 2025; Rohayana et al., 2024). Nevertheless, there is still very relevant research that specifically investigates the methodology of Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation as a complete system of hermeneutics and epistemology.

Existing studies generally explain the substance of *maqāṣid* without elaborating in detail how *maqāṣid* functions as a mechanism of meaning production, a source of interpretive authority, and an epistemological foundation in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. In other words, the conceptual relationship between *maqāṣid*, *hermeneutics*, and *epistemology* in Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation methodology still leaves significant research space (Auda, 2008; Fuad, 2025; Otaiwi, 2025). This void is becoming increasingly important in light of the growing need for a model of interpretation that is able to bridge the demands of contemporary relevance with the normative authority of the revelatory text.

Based on these conditions, this study seeks to fill the academic gap by analysing the *maqāṣid*-based interpretation methodology developed by Ibn 'Āshūr through the perspective of hermeneutics and epistemology. The focus of the research is not only directed at the identification of the concepts of *maqāṣid* used by Ibn 'Āshūr, but also at the methodological mechanisms that allow the *maqāṣid* to function as an instrument of interpretation of the Qur'an. Thus, this research contributes to clarifying Ibn 'Āshūr's position as one of the formulators of the modern *maqāṣidī* interpretation paradigm while offering a more comprehensive understanding of the epistemological underpinnings that underpin this approach (Fuad, 2025; Ibn Ashur, 2001)

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Development of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Its Expansion into Qur'anic Interpretation.

The contemporary revival of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah has transformed it from a legal theory concerned primarily with deriving rulings into a broader epistemological framework for understanding Islamic texts and social realities. (Kepplinger, 2025; Marjohan et al., 2025). Classical scholars such as Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi conceptualised maqāṣid as the higher objectives underlying Islamic law, emphasising the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. (Kamali, 2021; Pervez, 2023). However, modern scholars have expanded the scope of maqāṣid beyond legal reasoning into ethics, governance, economics, and Qur'anic interpretation. Recent studies demonstrate that maqāṣid has become a dynamic paradigm capable of responding to contemporary challenges while maintaining fidelity to scriptural foundations (Kamali, 2021; Wanto et al., 2021). This expansion has encouraged scholars to reconsider the Qur'an not merely as a source of legal rulings but as a text whose overarching objectives guide interpretation and application in changing contexts.

Several contemporary studies have highlighted the emergence of maqāṣid-oriented approaches that transcend traditional jurisprudential boundaries. Islam (2022), for example, argues for the development of Maqāṣid al-Qur'an as an independent paradigm distinct from conventional maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. (Fatarib et al., 2025; Islam, 2022; Jan et al., 2026; Nouman et al., 2021; Rivauzi et al., 2025). Similarly, Rohmanu and Rofiah (2023) emphasise the ethical dimensions of maqāṣid, showing how modern Muslim thinkers have reinterpreted Islamic objectives in response to contemporary moral concerns. These developments provide the intellectual background for examining the interpretive methodology of Ibn Ashur, who is widely regarded as one of the earliest scholars to systematically integrate maqāṣid into Qur'anic exegesis. (Fatarib et al., 2025; Neuwirth, 2019; Saefullah et al., 2025; Sinai, 2017)

2. Ibn Ashur and the Reformulation of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah

Among twentieth-century Muslim scholars, Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur occupies a pivotal position in the reformulation of maqāṣid theory. His seminal work *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* sought to overcome the perceived rigidity of post-classical legal thought by reestablishing the objectives of revelation as the foundation of Islamic reasoning. Unlike earlier scholars who focused primarily on legal rulings, Ibn Ashur argued that maqāṣid represent universal principles embedded within the entirety of revelation and therefore should guide both legal and interpretive processes (Ahmed, 2025, 2026; Cuypers, 2015; Hefni et al., 2025).

Scholars have noted that Ibn Ashur expanded the concept of maqāṣid by introducing broader objectives such as freedom (*ḥurriyyah*), equality (*musāwāh*), social order (*nizām*), and human civilisation (*'umrān*). Kamali (2021) identifies Ibn Ashur as a key architect of modern maqāṣid thought because of his effort to establish maqāṣid as an independent discipline rather than merely a subsidiary branch of legal theory. Parrey (2024) similarly observes that Ibn Ashur's contributions mark a significant transition from classical legal hermeneutics

toward a more purposive and context-sensitive understanding of Islamic texts. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature concentrates on his legal theory, while relatively little attention has been given to the epistemological implications of his *maqāṣid*-based approach to Qur'anic interpretation. (Kamali, 2021; Parrey, 2024).

3. Maqāṣid-Based Hermeneutics and Qur'anic Interpretation

The growing interest in *maqāṣid* has stimulated the development of purposive hermeneutics in contemporary Qur'anic studies. Scholars increasingly argue that interpretation should move beyond atomistic readings of individual verses toward identifying the broader ethical and civilizational objectives of the Qur'an. (Alak, 2023; Mir, 2014; Pizzi, 2024). This trend is evident in studies that emphasise thematic coherence, ethical intentionality, and contextual interpretation as central dimensions of Qur'anic understanding.

Within this discourse, Ibn Ashur's exegetical work *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* represents a major contribution. His commentary consistently seeks to uncover the objectives underlying Qur'anic discourse, integrating linguistic analysis, contextual reasoning, and *maqāṣid*-oriented reflection. Rather than treating the Qur'an solely as a repository of legal prescriptions, Ibn Ashur views it as a comprehensive guide aimed at cultivating human welfare, justice, and moral development. His methodology, therefore, anticipates many contemporary discussions concerning ethical and purposive approaches to scripture. (Raquib et al., 2022; Shompa et al., 2025; Ubaidilah & Husna, 2023). Recent scholarship has increasingly explored *maqāṣid*-oriented hermeneutics, yet the majority of studies focus on applied issues such as Islamic finance, governance, environmental ethics, and social welfare. Although these studies demonstrate the practical relevance of *maqāṣid*, they often employ *maqāṣid* as an evaluative framework rather than investigating its role as a theory of interpretation. Consequently, the hermeneutical foundations of Ibn Ashur's approach remain insufficiently examined.

4. Epistemological Dimensions of Ibn Ashur's Methodology

Beyond hermeneutics, Ibn Ashur's thought raises important epistemological questions regarding the sources, structure, and validation of religious knowledge. His interpretive method suggests that meaning emerges through the interaction of textual evidence, linguistic analysis, rational inquiry, historical context, and the higher objectives of revelation. This multidimensional approach challenges purely literalist readings while avoiding unrestricted subjectivism. Contemporary discussions on Islamic epistemology increasingly emphasise the integration of revelation and reason as complementary sources of knowledge. Ahmed (2026) argues that Islamic intellectual traditions require methodological frameworks capable of harmonising textual authority with empirical and rational inquiry. Similarly, studies on ethical *maqāṣid* and contemporary Islamic thought demonstrate that purposive reasoning provides an epistemic bridge between scriptural norms and evolving social realities (Ahmed, 2026; Kepplinger, 2025; Rippin, 2001; Rohmanu & Rofiah, 2023). Ibn Ashur's methodology can therefore be understood as an early attempt to construct an epistemology of interpretation grounded in both textual fidelity and purposive rationality. Nevertheless, existing research tends to examine Ibn

Ashur either as a jurist or as a reformist thinker, leaving the epistemological architecture of his exegetical methodology underexplored. Few studies systematically analyse how *maqāṣid* functions as a source of interpretive authority, a criterion for evaluating meaning, and a mechanism for integrating textual and contextual knowledge.

5. Research Gap and Contribution

Existing scholarship demonstrates substantial progress in the study of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics, and the reformist contributions of Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr. Previous studies have explored *maqāṣid* as a legal and ethical framework (Alkhan, 2021; Kamali, 2021). examined Ibn 'Āshūr's reformulation of *maqāṣid* theory (Otaiwi, 2025; Parrey, 2024). and analysed various approaches to Qur'anic hermeneutics, including literary-historical interpretation (Neuwirth, 2019), historical-critical inquiry (Sinai, 2017), textual coherence (*naẓm*) (Mir, 1986), rhetorical composition (Cuypers & Gobillot, 2019), and the history of Qur'anic exegesis (Rippin, 2001). Collectively, these studies have significantly enriched contemporary Qur'anic scholarship by illuminating the textual, historical, rhetorical, and ethical dimensions of Qur'anic interpretation.

Nevertheless, several important research gaps remain. First, most existing studies continue to examine *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* primarily as a legal, ethical, or policy-oriented framework rather than reconstructing it as a comprehensive methodology of Qur'anic interpretation capable of explaining the entire interpretive process (Aditya et al., 2025; Otaiwi, 2025). Second, the epistemological foundations of Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretive methodology remain insufficiently explored, particularly regarding how *maqāṣid* functions as a criterion of interpretive authority, validates competing interpretations, and mediates between textual evidence, rational inquiry, and contemporary realities (Ahmed, 2026; Fuad, 2025). Third, relatively little attention has been devoted to analysing the relationship between *maqāṣid*, hermeneutics, and epistemology as an integrated interpretive system within Ibn 'Āshūr's exegetical thought. Existing discussions generally treat these dimensions separately rather than explaining how they interact to produce coherent interpretive authority.

Furthermore, comparative investigations between Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretive methodology and contemporary philosophical hermeneutics remain limited. Although scholars have examined the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Fazlur Rahman, and Abdullah Saeed independently, few studies have systematically compared their hermeneutical assumptions with Ibn 'Āshūr's *maqāṣid*-based methodology, leaving the theoretical relationship between Islamic and modern hermeneutical traditions underdeveloped (Parrey, 2024; Pizzi, 2024). Likewise, empirical applications of Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology across diverse Qur'anic themes—including governance, environmental ethics, interreligious relations, human rights, and social justice—remain relatively scarce, as recent studies continue to focus primarily on specific legal issues such as polygamy and *ribā* (Anas, 2025; Muzayyanah et al., 2026). In addition, almost no research has explored the relevance of Ibn 'Āshūr's *maqāṣid*-based methodology for emerging fields such as digital Qur'anic studies, artificial intelligence-assisted *tafsīr*, and

computational hermeneutics despite the rapid development of AI applications in Islamic knowledge systems.

Responding to these gaps, this study investigates Ibn ‘Āshūr's *maqāṣid*-based methodology of Qur'anic interpretation through integrated hermeneutical and epistemological perspectives. Rather than treating *maqāṣid* merely as the objective of Islamic law, the study reconstructs it as a comprehensive interpretive framework that integrates textual analysis, purposive reasoning, epistemological validation, and interpretive authority. By examining the theoretical foundations, interpretive procedures, and epistemic assumptions underlying Ibn ‘Āshūr's methodology, this research contributes to contemporary debates on Qur'anic hermeneutics, Islamic epistemology, and the renewal of *maqāṣid*-oriented Qur'anic interpretation. It further offers a conceptual foundation for extending Ibn ‘Āshūr's methodology to contemporary interpretive challenges, including comparative hermeneutics and emerging developments in digital and AI-assisted Qur'anic studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative textual-hermeneutic approach to examine Ibn ‘Āshūr's *maqāṣid*-based methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. Qualitative textual analysis is particularly suitable for investigating intellectual constructs, interpretive frameworks, and epistemological principles embedded within classical and modern Islamic texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2022). The primary sources consist of Ibn ‘Āshūr's seminal works, namely *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah*, which represent the principal textual foundations of his interpretive and legal thought (Ibn Ashur, 1984, 2001). Secondary sources include contemporary scholarly studies on *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, Qur'anic hermeneutics, Islamic epistemology, and modern tafsīr methodologies (Auda, 2008; Fuad, 2025; Islam, 2019; Opwis, 2017).

Data were collected through systematic document analysis, focusing on passages that explicitly discuss the objectives of the Qur'an, the methods of identifying *maqāṣid*, interpretive principles, and the epistemic foundations of legal and exegetical reasoning. This textual corpus was then categorised thematically to identify recurring methodological patterns and conceptual relationships within Ibn ‘Āshūr's thought (Bowen, 2009; Flick, 2022).

The analytical framework combines hermeneutic and epistemological inquiry. From a hermeneutic perspective, the study investigates how Ibn ‘Āshūr constructs meaning through the interaction between textual evidence, *maqāṣid*-oriented reasoning, and the broader objectives of revelation, thereby uncovering the interpretive logic underlying his exegetical methodology (Gadamer, 2004). Simultaneously, an epistemological analysis is employed to examine the sources, hierarchy, and validation mechanisms of knowledge within his *maqāṣid*-based interpretive framework, particularly the roles of inductive reasoning (*istiqrā'*), textual indication (*bayān naṣṣī*), and mutawātir Sunnah in establishing interpretive authority (Ibn Ashur, 2001; Rohayana et al., 2024).

Through this integrated qualitative textual-hermeneutic analysis, the study seeks to reconstruct Ibn ‘Āshūr's methodology as a coherent system of Qur'anic

interpretation and to explain how maqāṣid functions not merely as a legal objective but as a hermeneutic and epistemological foundation for understanding the Qur'anic text.

Trustworthiness, Interpretive Validity, and Analytical Procedures

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study adopts established criteria of qualitative research, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through source triangulation by comparing Ibn 'Āshūr's theoretical formulations in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* with their practical application in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. In addition, relevant contemporary studies on maqāṣid theory, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and Islamic epistemology were consulted to contextualise and verify the consistency of interpretive findings (Auda, 2008; Islam, 2019; Opwis, 2017). Dependability was maintained through a systematic and transparent analytical procedure, while confirmability was strengthened by grounding all interpretive claims in explicit textual evidence derived from the primary sources. This approach minimizes subjective bias and ensures that the conclusions remain closely connected to Ibn 'Āshūr's original intellectual framework (Bowen, 2009; Flick, 2022).

Interpretive validity was established through a contextual-hermeneutic reading of Ibn 'Āshūr's texts, emphasising the coherence between individual statements, broader conceptual structures, and the intellectual context in which his ideas emerged (Gadamer, 2004; Thiselton, 2009). Rather than treating textual passages as isolated units, the analysis examined them within the wider framework of Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāṣid theory and exegetical practice. The analytical procedures consisted of four stages. First, relevant textual data concerning maqāṣid, interpretive principles, and epistemological foundations were identified and extracted from the primary texts. Second, the collected data were coded and organised into thematic categories, including Qur'anic maqāṣid, inductive reasoning (*istiqrā'*), textual indication (*bayān naṣṣī*), mutawātir Sunnah, and interpretive authority. Third, thematic patterns and conceptual relationships among these categories were analysed through hermeneutic interpretation to reconstruct Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. Finally, the findings were examined from an epistemological perspective to explain how maqāṣid functions as a source of knowledge, a criterion of interpretive validity, and a foundation of exegetical authority within Ibn 'Āshūr's intellectual system (Fuad, 2025; Ibn Ashur, 2001; Rohayana et al., 2024).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Ibn ‘Āshūr's Maqāṣid-Based Hermeneutic Methodology

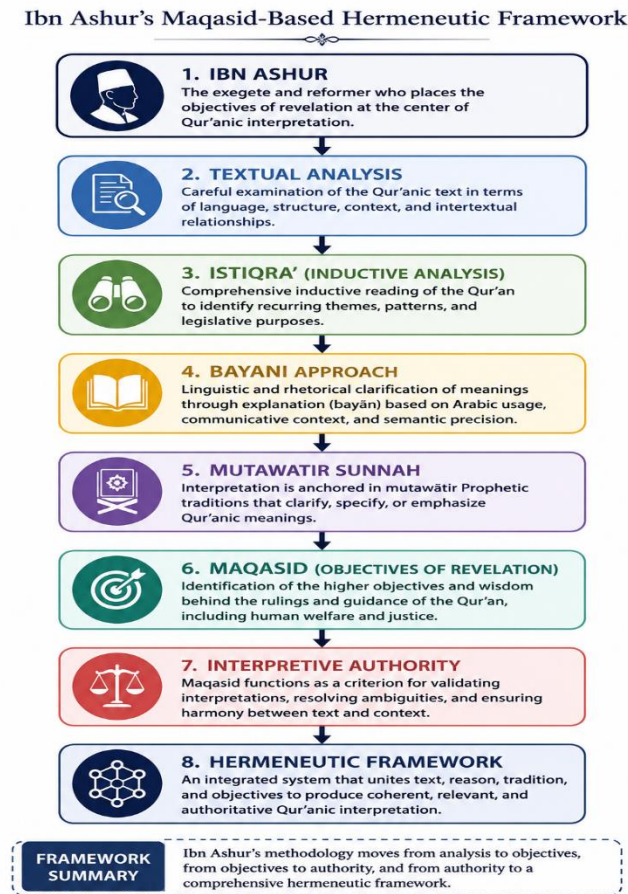


Figure 1 illustrates the analytical framework employed in this study. The framework reconstructs Ibn ‘Āshūr's methodology of Qur'anic interpretation as a sequential hermeneutic process beginning with textual analysis, followed by inductive reasoning (*istiqrā'*), *bayānī* linguistic analysis, and validation through *mutawātir* Sunnah. These methodological components converge in the identification of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which subsequently functions as the basis of interpretive authority and culminates in an integrated hermeneutic framework. This conceptual model guided the thematic coding, hermeneutic analysis, and epistemological interpretation conducted throughout the study.

Figure 2 Model hermeneutika Ibn 'Āshūr

Figure 2. Ibn 'Āshūr's Hermeneutic-Epistemological Model of Qur'anic Interpretation



Figure 2. Illustrates the sequential hermeneutic framework of Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. The interpretive process begins with **textual engagement**, followed by **linguistic analysis** (*al-tahlīl al-lughawī*) to examine lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical dimensions. It then proceeds through **istiqra'** (inductive analysis), whereby recurrent Qur'anic patterns are identified, before applying **bayānī reasoning** to establish coherent textual meaning. The model subsequently incorporates the **mutawātir Sunnah** as the primary prophetic interpretive authority, followed by **maqāṣid al-sharī'ah**, which functions as the overarching framework for identifying the higher objectives and wisdom of revelation. These interconnected stages culminate in **interpretive authority**, enabling juristically and theologically sound conclusions that can be translated into **contextual application** for contemporary realities. The model ultimately demonstrates that Ibn 'Āshūr integrates textual fidelity,

inductive reasoning, prophetic tradition, and *maqāṣid*-oriented interpretation into a comprehensive epistemological framework for contemporary Qur'anic exegesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1

Why does *maqāṣid* become the organising principle of Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology?

The first explanation lies in Ibn 'Āshūr's attempt to overcome the limitations of literalist Qur'anic interpretation that had long dominated classical *tafsīr*. His formulation of the eight Qur'anic *maqāṣid* demonstrates that the Qur'an should be understood as an integrated moral and civilizational discourse rather than as a collection of isolated legal rulings. Consequently, *maqāṣid* functions as the overarching interpretive horizon that connects individual verses to the comprehensive objectives of revelation. This explains why the study identifies the eight Qur'anic *maqāṣid* as the foundation of his interpretive methodology rather than merely one analytical component. Unlike many classical exegetes who primarily emphasised philological precision, Ibn 'Āshūr reconstructs interpretation around purposive coherence, thereby shifting the centre of interpretation from isolated textual meanings toward the ethical architecture of the Qur'an. From a comparative perspective, this orientation shares certain similarities with Hans-Georg Gadamer, who argues that understanding emerges within a broader horizon of meaning rather than through isolated textual fragments. However, whereas Gadamer's *fusion of horizons* is shaped by the historical dialogue between text and interpreter, Ibn 'Āshūr limits interpretive openness through the normative objectives of revelation. In other words, Gadamer's horizon is historically negotiated, whereas Ibn 'Āshūr's horizon is teleologically determined by *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Thus, the present findings indicate that Ibn 'Āshūr transforms *maqāṣid* into a normative interpretive horizon rather than a merely philosophical one. (El-Mesawi, 2006b, 2006a; Gadamer, 2004; Ibn Ashur, 2001)

Theme 2

Why are *istiqrā'*, *bayānī* analysis, and *mutawātir* Sunnah integrated?

The second explanation concerns Ibn 'Āshūr's epistemological commitment to balancing textual certainty with interpretive flexibility. The integration of *istiqrā'*, *bayānī* analysis, and *mutawātir* Sunnah reflects an effort to ensure that *maqāṣid* are not derived from speculative reasoning but from cumulative textual evidence supported by prophetic practice. This explains why the findings consistently demonstrate that linguistic analysis remains indispensable despite Ibn 'Āshūr's emphasis on purposive interpretation. His methodology therefore rejects both excessive literalism and unrestricted contextualism by grounding every interpretive conclusion in a multilayered process of textual verification.

This finding differs from Paul Ricoeur's theory of textual autonomy. Ricoeur maintains that once a text is produced, it acquires semantic autonomy and continually generates new meanings through interpretation. Ibn 'Āshūr similarly acknowledges the richness of textual meaning, yet he rejects unlimited semantic plurality by insisting that interpretation must remain anchored in

linguistic evidence, inductive textual analysis, and verified Sunnah. Consequently, whereas Ricoeur emphasises the productivity of textual meaning, Ibn 'Āshūr prioritizes epistemic validity through cumulative textual verification. The present findings therefore suggest that Ibn 'Āshūr constructs a controlled hermeneutic model in which interpretive creativity remains subordinate to textual and epistemological authority. (Al-Alwani, 1996; Auda, 2008; Ibn Ashur, 1984, 2001; Ricoeur, 1976; Yakar & Yakar, 2021)

Theme 3

Why does *maqāṣid* function as interpretive authority ?

The third explanation relates to Ibn 'Āshūr's effort to reconcile revelation with changing social realities without sacrificing the normative authority of the Qur'an. The study finds that *maqāṣid* functions not only as the objective of interpretation but also as the criterion by which competing interpretations are evaluated. This transformation enables the interpreter to select among several linguistically plausible meanings according to their consistency with justice, public welfare, human dignity, and moral reform. Accordingly, interpretive authority is relocated from purely literal readings toward purposive reasoning guided by the higher objectives of revelation. This conclusion partly converges with Fazlur Rahman's theory of *double movement*. Both scholars reject rigid textualism and emphasise the universal ethical principles underlying Qur'anic revelation. Nevertheless, Rahman reconstructs meaning by moving from the historical context of revelation to contemporary application, whereas Ibn 'Āshūr derives normative authority inductively through the comprehensive structure of revelation itself. Similarly, Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach distinguishes between universal values and context-bound instructions, granting substantial interpretive authority to contemporary socio-historical realities. By contrast, Ibn 'Āshūr allows contextual adaptation only after interpretive authority has been established through *maqāṣid* derived from the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. Therefore, unlike Rahman and Saeed, whose methodologies prioritise

The structure of the discussion is: contextual reconstruction, Ibn 'Āshūr develops a teleological epistemology in which contextual relevance remains constrained by the enduring objectives of divine revelation. (Amir & Rahman, 2025; Auda, 2008; Azmi et al., 2022; El-Mesawi, 2006a; Ibn Ashur, 2001; Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2006)

Finding → Why → Theoretical Explanation → Comparison with Previous Scholars → Contribution

Comparison Summary

Scholar	Source of Interpretive Authority	Hermeneutic Orientation	Difference from Ibn ‘Āshūr
Hans-Georg Gadamer	Fusion of horizons between text and interpreter	Philosophical hermeneutics	Ibn ‘Āshūr restricts interpretation through divinely grounded <i>maqāṣid</i> rather than historical dialogue.
Paul Ricoeur	Semantic autonomy of the text	Symbolic and narrative hermeneutics	Ibn ‘Āshūr accepts semantic depth but limits plurality through linguistic evidence, <i>istiqrā’</i> , and <i>mutawātir</i> Sunnah.
Fazlur Rahman	Universal moral principles reconstructed through the double movement	Ethical-historical hermeneutics	Ibn ‘Āshūr derives universal principles inductively from the Qur'an instead of primarily through historical reconstruction.
Abdullah Saeed	Contemporary contextual values guided by universal ethics	Contextualist hermeneutics	Ibn ‘Āshūr permits contextualization only after interpretive authority has been established through <i>maqāṣid</i> rooted in revelation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr’s *maqāṣid*-based methodology constitutes one of the most significant contributions to the epistemological renewal of contemporary Qur’anic interpretation. By placing the higher objectives of revelation (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*) at the centre of the interpretive process, Ibn ‘Āshūr integrates fidelity to the Qur’anic text with responsiveness to changing social realities. From a hermeneutical perspective, meaning is derived not solely through linguistic and historical analysis but also through identifying the normative purposes underlying revelation (Auda, 2008; El-Mesawi, 2006a; Ibn Ashur, 2001). The findings reveal that Ibn ‘Āshūr’s interpretive methodology is constructed upon five interrelated components: the Qur’anic *maqāṣid* as the overarching interpretive orientation, inductive reasoning (*istiqrā’*), *bayānī* textual analysis, validation through *mutawātir* Sunnah, and *maqāṣid* as the principal source of interpretive authority. Collectively, these components form an integrated hermeneutic and epistemological framework that bridges textual meaning, rational inquiry, and contextual application while preserving the normative authority of revelation. (Ibn Ashur, 1984; Umami & Ghofur, 2022; Zuhriyah & Rohimah, 2024).

Theoretically, this study contributes to contemporary Qur’anic hermeneutics by reconceptualising *maqāṣid* not merely as the objectives of Islamic law but as a comprehensive hermeneutic and epistemological framework for

Qur'anic interpretation. It extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that interpretive authority in Ibn 'Āshūr's thought emerges through the interaction between textual evidence, purposive reasoning, and epistemological validation rather than through literal textualism or unrestricted contextualism alone. This reconstruction enriches contemporary debates on Islamic epistemology, interpretive authority, and purposive approaches to Qur'anic exegesis. (Auda, 2008; Fuad, 2025; Parrey, 2024; Pizzi, 2024).

Methodologically, the study offers a systematic analytical model for examining maqāṣid-oriented Qur'anic interpretation through an integrated textual-hermeneutic approach. By combining thematic document analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and epistemological inquiry, the research provides a replicable framework that can be applied to the study of other Muslim exegetes, maqāṣid-based interpretive traditions, and contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics. (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2022; Gadamer, 2004).

Practically, the findings provide an interpretive framework capable of addressing contemporary issues while maintaining fidelity to the normative foundations of Islamic revelation. Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology offers valuable guidance for scholars of Qur'anic studies, Islamic legal theory, and contemporary *tafsīr* by demonstrating how purposive reasoning may be employed to engage questions of social justice, governance, human rights, environmental ethics, interreligious relations, and other emerging challenges without undermining the authority of the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. (Ahmed, 2026; Kamali, 2021; Otaiwi, 2025)

Despite these contributions, this study is limited to a conceptual and textual reconstruction of Ibn 'Āshūr's methodology based primarily on *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah*. Future research should empirically evaluate the applicability of this framework across diverse Qur'anic themes and compare it systematically with other contemporary hermeneutical approaches, including those of Fazlur Rahman, Abdullah Saeed, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. Further studies may also explore the relevance of Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāṣid-based methodology for digital Qur'anic studies, artificial intelligence-assisted *tafsīr*, computational hermeneutics, and other emerging interdisciplinary fields, thereby extending its contribution to the future development of Qur'anic interpretation. (Ahmed, 2026; Parrey, 2024; Pizzi, 2024; Raquib et al., 2022).

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