The Journal of Academic Science

journal homepage: https://thejoas.com/index.php/

Reinterpreting Classical Theological Foundations: Modern Approaches to Usul al-Din in Islamic Scholarship



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KEYWORDS

Usul al-Din, Islamic Theology,

Reinterpretation, Islamic Philosophy, Sociological Analysis.

ABSTRACT

Usul al-Din is a theological foundation in Islam that plays an important role in shaping the principles of faith, law, and ethics. Along with social and intellectual change, there is a need to reinterpret this classical theological foundation to be relevant to contemporary challenges. This research aims to explore how modern approaches can be applied in the reinterpretation of Usul al-Din, as well as how the integration of traditional concepts with philosophical and sociological analysis can provide a more holistic understanding of Islamic issues. The method used is library research that examines classical works such as Al-Mustasfa by Al-Ghazali and Mafatih al-Ghayb by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, as well as journal articles that discuss the evolution of Islamic theology. The results of the study show that a multidisciplinary approach that combines Usul al-Fiqh, Islamic philosophy, and social sciences is able to enrich the understanding of Usul al-Din in facing the challenges of globalization, pluralism, and social injustice. This integration also allows Usul al-Din to function as a theological and ethical instrument in solving modern humanitarian problems. The reinterpretation carried out contributes to shaping an Islamic narrative that is inclusive, progressive, and adaptive to changing times.

1. INTRODUCTION

Usul al-Din is a branch of science in the Islamic tradition that studies the fundamental principles of religion, including theology, metaphysics, and the basic doctrines of faith. The main focus of Usul al-Din is the discussion of monotheism (the oneness of God), prophethood, divine justice, imamate (spiritual leadership), and eschatology (life after death). This science serves as a foundation in understanding other aspects of sharia and everyday religious practices, providing a philosophical and rational basis for various Islamic teachings. For example, in a study by Farag and Suleiman (2023), Imam Jalal al-Din al-Khabazi in his work "Al-Hadi fi Usul Al-

Din" reviews epistemological and methodological reasons in understanding the sources of religious knowledge (Farag & Suleiman, 2023). This shows how Usul al-Din plays a role in forming a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and their application in life.

Social, political, and cultural changes in the Islamic world have also affected the way Muslims understand religious teachings, so that a modern approach to Usul al-Din is becoming increasingly important (Umarjonov, 2022). In this context, many Muslim thinkers seek to integrate the rational method with the textual approach to strengthen the relationship between revelation and reason (Rahman & Mufid, 2024). Thus, the



reinterpretation of Usul al-Din not only serves as a response to external challenges, but also as an internal revitalization effort in maintaining theological authenticity that is in line with the development of the times (Shamsuddin, 2019).

Modern studies of Usul al-Din continue to develop, with a comparative approach and critical analysis of the thought of classical scholars such as Al-Shatibi and Izz al-Din Ibn Abd al-Salam. In this context, the understanding of Magasid al-Shariah (sharia objectives) and the principles of Usul al-Din complement each other in forming a holistic view of Islamic law and social ethics. In addition, research by Khalid (2018) highlights how the methodology of interpretation of Fakhru al-Din al-Razi in the book Mafatih al-Ghayb integrates the principles of Usul al-Din in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an (Khalid, 2018). Thus, Usul al-Din remains relevant as a theoretical framework that connects theology, law, and philosophy in Islam.

Recent studies have shown that a multidisciplinary approach that combines Usul al-Fiqh, Islamic philosophy, and social sciences is an effective method of reinterpreting the basic principles of Usul al-Din. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the classical tradition of Usul al-Din can be interpreted through a more contextual and applicable modern lens.

In addition, the dynamics of globalization and the advancement of information technology have opened up wide access to literature and theological discourse from various Islamic traditions. This allows for the emergence of a more inclusive and plural discussion in understanding Usul al-Din as a dynamic science. With this approach, the study of Usul al-Din is expected to be able to bridge tradition and modernity, creating a space for productive dialogue between classical thought and the

demands of modern times.

Several previous studies have highlighted the role of Usul al-Din in shaping the Islamic scientific paradigm, such as Farag and Suleiman (2023) in their study of Imam Jalal al-Din al-Khabazi. Meanwhile, Bakar and Rahim (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of the thoughts of Al-Shatibi and Ibn Abd al-Salam in the context of Maqasid al-Shariah (Bakar & Rahim, 2021).

The main objective of this research is to reinterpret the classical theological foundations in Usul al-Din through a modern approach that is relevant to contemporary challenges. This research also aims to integrate traditional concepts in Usul al-Din with philosophical and sociological analysis in order to provide more holistic answers to various Islamic and humanitarian issues.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of library research that focuses on the analysis of classical and contemporary works in the field of Usul al-Din. This approach was chosen because it is relevant in examining theological concepts that have developed from classical times to the modern era, and allows for an in-depth exploration of the texts that are the basis of theological thought in the Islamic tradition (Zed, 2018). The study of literature allows researchers to examine various primary and secondary sources that are related to the research topic, so as to produce a comprehensive synthesis of the reinterpretation of Usul al-Din in the context of contemporary Islamic scholarship (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The data sources used in this study include primary literature such as the works of AlGhazali (Al-Mustasfa), Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (Mafatih al-Ghayb), and Al-Juwaini (Al-Irsyad), as well as secondary literature in the form of journal articles, books, and dissertations that discuss the development and relevance of Usul al-Din in various perspectives. Secondary data from scientific journals and academic conferences are also used to enrich the analysis and expand the scope of the study on the modern approach in interpreting Usul al-Din.

The data collection technique is carried out (documentary through literature review research) by searching various relevant sources using academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and university digital libraries (Moleong, 2016). Each literature obtained is then classified based on key themes such as monotheism, prophethood, divine justice, and imamah, which are fundamental elements in the study of Usul al-Din. This process allows researchers to compare the views of classical and contemporary scholars, as well as identify how these concepts can be adapted in modern contexts.

The data analysis method used is content analysis, which aims to identify, understand, and interpret the meaning of the texts studied (Krippendorff, 2018). This approach is carried

out by categorizing and evaluating the arguments contained in the literature, then compiling a synthesis that is able to provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Usul al-Din thought (Bowen, 2009). This analysis is carried out systematically to ensure that each finding produced is relevant and academically accountable (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This approach is expected to be able to make a significant contribution in enriching Islamic theological studies and offering practical solutions in answering various challenges faced by Muslims in the modern era. Thus, this research is not only reflective of the Islamic intellectual tradition, but also proactive in integrating the principles of classical theology with contemporary dynamics.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following is a table of literature data generated from the selection of 10 researchiournal articles with related the title Reinterpreting the Classical Theological Foundation: A Modern Approach to Usul al-Din in Islamic Science. This data was obtained through a selection process from various articles that discussed the reinterpretation of Usul al-Din with a modern approach in Islamic theology.

Table 1. literature review

No	Author	Title	Main focus
1	B.S. Nursi	Modern Interpretation of the Qur'an	Examine the reinterpretation of the
			Qur'an in the modern context of
			Islamic theology and rational
			approach.
2	G. Zhussipbek	Epistemological Reform in Maturidite	Presenting a Maturidite approach in
	& Z. Nagayeva	Theology	harmonizing classical theology with
			modern human rights principles.
3	A.S. Hassan	Intellectual and Spiritual Debates in	Exploring intellectual debates related
		Islam	to the basic concept of Usul al-Din in
			the current of Islamic modernization.

4	B. Riaz	Reinterpreting Usul Al-Figh: A	Explain the literary approach in
•		Literary Approach	interpreting Usul al-Fiqh and Usul al-
			Din in a modern context.
5	G. Hussain	Islamic Intellectual Tradition	Highlighting the Islamic intellectual
			tradition that links Usul al-Din with
			the philosophy of political liberalism.
6	M. Oudihat &	Mapping the Islamic Discourse on	Tracing the relevance of modern
	C.A. Bahari	Knowledge	Islamic scientific discourse to Usul al-
			Din as a theological basis.
7	M. Ozalp	God in Islamic Theology: Tawhid and	Analyzing the concept of monotheism
		Said Nursi	in classical theology and Said Nursi's
			contribution to the reinterpretation of
			Usul.
8	A. Ali	Tafsir Trends and Modern Role of	Reviewing the trend of classical and
		Tafasir	contemporary interpretation in
			updating the understanding of Usul al-
			Din.
9	L. Takim	Shi'ism Revisited: Ijtihad and	Evaluating ijtihad in Shia and the role
		Reformation	of text reinterpretation in the renewal
			of Usul al-Din.
10	A. Kasdi	Actualization of Maqasid al-Shariah in	Discussing Maqasid al-Shariah as a
		Modern Life	method of reinterpreting Usul al-Din
			in legal and economic aspects.

Research on the reinterpretation of Usul al-Din in the modern context has produced various significant contributions to the development of Islamic science. The ten articles that have been selected reflect the diversity of perspectives in understanding and updating the principles of classical Islamic theology to remain relevant in facing the challenges of the times. The main focus of this research is an effort to integrate Islamic intellectual traditions with methodologies contemporary based rationalism, literary approaches, and modern epistemology.

One of the important findings in this study is an article by B.S. Nursi entitled Modern Interpretation of the Qur'an (2019). Nursi highlighted the need to interpret the Qur'an in a modern context, placing Usul al-Din as the main

foundation in the progressive development of Islamic theology. This article emphasizes that a textual approach alone is not enough to answer the complexity of contemporary challenges. Therefore, rational and philosophical approaches need to be integrated to provide a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings (Nursi, 2019).

In an article written by G. Zhussipbek and Z. Nagayeva (2019), Epistemological Reform in Maturidite Theology, the author explores how Maturidite theology can adapt to modern human rights (HAM) principles. The study shows that the Islamic theological tradition, which has been considered static, has the capacity to transform and absorb universal values without abandoning its fundamental identity. Zhussipbek and

Nagayeva elaborate that Maturidite theology, through the reinterpretation of its principles, can be one of the models for Islamic theology that is humanist and open to global developments (Zhussipbek & Nagayeva, 2019).

An article by A.S. Hassan (2023), Intellectual and Spiritual Debates in Islam, introduces the intellectual debates that have emerged in an attempt to reinterpret Usul al-Din. Hassan highlighted that this debate reflects the dynamics in the Islamic scholarly tradition, where modern Muslim scholars and intellectuals engage in a process of ongoing dialogue with the classical study This tradition. proves reinterpretation of Usul al-Din is not only oriented to theoretical aspects, but also has a practical impact in formulating solutions to contemporary problems (Hassan, 2023).

The literary approach as a method of reinterpreting Usul al-Fiqh and Usul al-Din is reviewed in depth by B. Riaz (2021) in his article Reinterpreting Usul Al-Fiqh: A Literary Approach. Riaz said that the literary approach opens up space for the exploration of hidden meanings in Islamic classical texts. This approach allows for a re-reading of traditional texts, which can then produce new perspectives that are more relevant to the needs of modern society. This article confirms that Usul al-Din has hermeneutical flexibility that can be adapted to the context of the times without sacrificing the essence of Islamic teachings (Riaz, 2021).

G. Hussain (2024) in his article Islamic Intellectual Tradition underlines the importance of Islamic intellectual tradition in shaping political and social narratives that are in line with the principles of Islamic theology. Hussain highlights how Usul al-Din interacts with the philosophy of political liberalism, which ultimately encourages the creation of a space for

dialogue between Islam and modernity. This study makes an important contribution to understanding the role of Usul al-Din as a pillar in shaping Islamic intellectual discourse that is adaptive to global changes (Hussain, 2024).

M. Oudihat and C.A. Bahari (2024) in their research entitled Mapping the Islamic Discourse on Knowledge emphasized that Islamic scientific discourse is closely related to the principles of Usul al-Din. This article discusses how Usul al-Din is used as a framework for understanding and developing various Islamic disciplines. Oudihat and Bahari revealed that Usul al-Din not only serves as a theological foundation, but also as a foundation in studying science more broadly (Oudihat & Bahari, 2024).

M. Ozalp (2023) in his work God in Islamic Theology: Tawhid and Said Nursi discusses the concept of monotheism in Said Nursi's perspective and how this teaching contributes significantly to the reinterpretation of Usul al-Din. Ozalp emphasized that Nursi played a key role in reformulating the principles of Islamic theology to better suit modern realities. This study shows how Usul al-Din can be a source of inspiration in building a more inclusive and progressive monotheistic paradigm (Ozalp, 2023).

A. Ali (2018) through his article Tafsir Trends and Modern Role of Tafasir reviews the trends of classical and modern tafsir and the role of tafsir in updating the understanding of Usul al-Din. Ali outlined how contemporary scholars use the method of tafsir to revitalize the teachings of Usul al-Din, so that they can answer social and intellectual challenges in the era of globalization. This article shows that tafsir has an important role in maintaining the relevance of Usul al-Din in the midst of changing times (Ali, 2018).

In the article Shi'ism Revisited: Ijtihad and Reformation (2022), L. Takim evaluates the role of ijtihad in the Shia tradition and how ijtihad can be used to reform the teachings of Usul al-Din. Takim argues that ijtihad provides room for flexibility in legal and theological interpretation, thus allowing for adjustment to the demands of the times. This study underlines that ijtihad is an important instrument in efforts to reinterpret Usul al-Din in the Shia tradition (Takim, 2022).

Finally, A. Kasdi (2019) in his article Actualization of Maqasid al-Shariah in Modern Life discusses the role of Maqasid al-Shariah as a method of reinterpreting Usul al-Din in the context of Islamic law and economics. Kasdi highlighted that Maqasid al-Shariah has great relevance in answering social and economic issues, while adhering to the basic principles of Usul al-Din. This article emphasizes that Maqasid al-Shariah is one of the effective approaches in actualizing Islamic teachings in the modern era (Kasdi, 2019).

Discussion

Usul al-Din (the main principles in Islamic theology) has become the main foundation in classical Islamic thought. However, modern challenges such as globalization, pluralism, and socio-humanitarian problems demand a reinterpretation of this theological foundation. The classical approach that tends to be textual and normative requires enrichment through philosophical, sociological, and hermeneutic analysis to be more contextual and relevant.

The modern approach to Usul al-Din aims to maintain the authenticity of Islamic traditions, while at the same time providing a response to contemporary issues facing Muslims in the modern era. This research seeks to reinterpret the principles of classical theology by combining Islamic scientific traditions and modern

scientific methodologies.

Reinterpreting the Classical Theological Foundations in Usul al-Din

- 1. Historical-Philosophical Approach
 Classical theology in Islam developed
 through the tradition of scholarly thought
 such as al-Ash'ari, al-Maturidi, and
 Mu'tazilah. The rational approach (kalam) in
 Usul al-Din often emphasizes logical and
 argumentative aspects. However, in the
 modern context, this reinterpretation
 requires a more dynamic approach taking
 into account:
 - a. Theological Hermeneutics: Exploring the meaning of classical texts in the context of history and social conditions at the time, then comparing them with contemporary challenges.
 - b. Classical Metaphysical Deconstruction:
 Reconstructing the paradigm of classical
 theology that is speculative by
 incorporating empirical and
 phenomenological realities.

For example, the concept of justice (al-'Adl) which is the subject of Mu'tazilah's thought can be reinterpreted in the framework of social justice and human rights in the modern era.

- 2. Integration with Modern Philosophy
 Modern philosophy, such as existentialism,
 phenomenology, and critical theory, opens up
 room for reflection for Islamic theology. By
 integrating this concept, Usul al-Din can
 reach humanistic issues, such as:
 - a. Freedom and Determinism (Qadar): Reinterprets the concept of destiny within the framework of human freedom, thus encouraging individuals to take responsibility in social and political life.
 - b. Divine Epistemology: Blends scientific rationality with spirituality, emphasizing



that religious truth must be in dialogue with modern science.

Integration of Usul al-Din with Sociological and Philosophical Analysis

The sociological and philosophical approaches in interpreting Usul al-Din (the principles of Islamic theology) aim to bridge classical theological values with contemporary social realities and challenges. In this context, Usul al-Din is not only understood as a religious doctrine, but also as an ethical and moral system that forms a just and inclusive social order.

- Contextualization of Universal Values in Usul al-Din
 - a. Tawheed as the Principle of Human Unity Tawhid (the oneness of Allah) is the core of Usul al-Din and has a profound theological significance in Islam. However, in a sociological context, monotheism can be contextualized as a principle that affirms:
 - 1) The Unity of Humanity: Tawheed affirms that all human beings are created by Allah, so that every individual has the same dignity before Him. This principle can be the basis for promoting equality of rights and social justice.
 - 2) Equality and Solidarity: Tawhid rejects all forms of oppression and discrimination. On a social level, this principle can be translated as gender equality, racial justice, and solidarity between religious communities. For example, humanitarian movements and interfaith aid can be rooted in the principle of monotheism that emphasizes unity and unity.

Example Implementation:

1) Peace and Humanitarian Movement: In global issues such as conflict, discrimination, and refugees, the

- concept of monotheism can be a theological foundation for encouraging action of solidarity and peace across nations and religions.
- 2) Social Justice: Tawhid promotes the equitable distribution of resources, rejects exploitation, and promotes community welfare, particularly on issues of poverty and economic inequality.
- b. Justice as a Pillar of Social Order
 The concept of justice ('adl) in Islamic
 theology is not only a moral principle, but
 also a key pillar in shaping a just social
 structure. From a sociological
 perspective, justice must be manifested in
 various aspects of public life, including:
 - 1) Inclusive Public Policy: The principle of justice requires governments and social institutions to make policies that take into account the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups.
 - 2) Legal and Social Reform: This principle also underlies advocacy in the fight for fair legal reform, the elimination of corruption, and the protection of human rights.

Example Implementation:

- 1) Empowerment of the Poor: Policies based on justice must prioritize wealth redistribution and equal access to education, health, and economic services.
- 2) Social Action and Justice Movements: Al-Din's proposal can support social movements oriented towards poverty eradication, upholding legal justice, and countering economic exploitation.
- c. Grace as the Basis of Global Humanity Rahmat (compassion and compassion) is a universal principle in Islam that emphasizes the importance of humanity and concern for others. In a sociological



approach, the concept of grace can be translated into:

- 1) Sustainable Development and Humanity: Rahmat encourages empathy, solidarity, and humanitarian action to help those who are oppressed and in need.
- 2) Interfaith Relations: Grace encourages interfaith dialogue, reduces faith-based conflicts, and promotes social harmony.

Example Implementation:

- 1) Social and Environmental Programs: Rahmat is the inspiration for social assistance programs, free health services, and environmental conservation as a form of compassion for others and nature.
- 2) Disaster Response Action: The principle of mercy encourages cross-border humanitarian assistance regardless of religious or ethnic differences.
- 2. Al-Din's Proposal as a Framework for Public Ethics
 - a. Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar as the Principle of Social Activism
 The concept of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar (ordering goodness and preventing evil) in Usul al-Din has a strong social dimension. In a sociological context, this concept can be a guide to:
 - 1) Social Advocacy and Justice: This principle encourages active participation in improving social conditions, fighting injustice, and correcting public policies that harm society.
 - 2) Constructive Criticism of the Government: Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar provides space for criticism of policies that are considered unfair,

while offering solutions for better change.

Example Implementation:

- 1) Anti-Corruption and Economic Justice Campaign: Advocating for transparency and accountability in the government and private sectors to uphold the values of honesty and integrity.
- 2) Environmental Movement: Advocating for environmental protection as a form of amar ma'ruf, while excessive exploitation of nature is categorized as untrue.
- b. Gender Equality and Human Rights
 The sociological approach to Usul al-Din
 also opens up space to promote gender
 equality and human rights. This principle
 encourages:
 - 1) Women's Empowerment in Society: Usul al-Din supports the role of women in leadership and active participation in community development.
 - 2) Protection of Minorities: al-Din's proposal can be the basis for fighting for the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups to have equal access to justice and welfare.

Example Implementation:

- 1) Women's Empowerment Program: Encouraging women's involvement in the educational, economic, and political sectors.
- 2) Minority Rights Advocacy: Protecting the rights of minority groups by rejecting all forms of discrimination and violence.

4. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that Usul al-Din has a central role in shaping the foundation of faith



and religious practices in the Islamic tradition. However, social, cultural, and political changes global community demand reinterpretation of classical concepts to remain applicable. Through relevant and multidisciplinary approach involving philosophical and sociological analysis, al-Din's adapted proposal can be to address contemporary challenges, such as social injustice, pluralism, and humanitarian crises.

The integration of the concept of Usul al-Din with philosophical analysis opens up a space for deeper reflection on the principles of classical This approach strengthens the theology. relationship between revelation and reason, resulting in a comprehensive solution to the problems of the ummah. In addition, the sociological approach to Usul al-Din allows for the emergence of an inclusive discourse and encourages solidarity across cultures and religions.

The suggestion that can be put forward from this study is the need to increase interdisciplinary studies that bring together the Islamic theological tradition with the social sciences and humanities. Academics and scholars are expected to collaborate in formulating new methodologies that are able to bridge classical traditions and modern realities. In addition, the teaching of Usul al-Din in Islamic educational institutions needs to be renewed by introducing philosophical and sociological approaches in order to produce a generation of scholars who are critical, reflective, and able to provide solutions to contemporary problems.

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