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Algorithmic Ijtihād: Leveraging AI and Islamic Legal Theory to Mediate Conflict in a Multifaith Society

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Algorithmic Ijtihād: Leveraging AI and Islamic Legal Theory to Mediate Conflict in a Multifaith Society

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Abstract

Pluralistic societies of the twenty-first century are faced with a twin challenge of protecting religious piety on the one hand and the nurturing of remote inter-communal relationship on the other. In this article, the Islamic process of independent legal reasoning called (ijtihād) is examined to determine how modern methods of artificial intelligence could enhance the process to produce artifacts of conflict mediation in context-sensing, transparent, and rapid tools that could be applied in the face of religious conflict involving different religions. Using the lessons of classical (uṣūl al- fiqh), we will begin by tracing the logic of decision making encountered historically by Muslim’s jurists as they attempted to pull into harmony the authority of the text and realities of action. Then we implement that reasoning in machine-readable ontologies and rule-based knowledge graphs, so that AI systems can interpolate that juristic multiplicity of opinion (ikhtilāf) and show areas of ethical accord with other religions and secular law groups. Most importantly, the article deals with possible pitfalls of data-bias, codification of dynamic interpretive practices as instance-of-how-it-was-then (as opposed to how-it-will-be-in-time), and the danger of delegitimizing human scholars. In order to curb these anxieties, we recommend a mixed governance model under which outputs provided by AI would be in the style of advisory drafts open to scholarly review and community consultation (shūrā). In the end, it appears that algorithmic (ijtihād) is not a shortcut; rather, it is a practical-ethical course to a better nation spirit of amalgamation of religious faith and global peacebuilding.

Keywords: *Algorithmic Ijtihād, Islamic Jurisprudence, Conflict Mediation, Artificial Intelligence, Multifaith Governance.*

Introduction

The alarming pace of technology by the Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses threats and promises to the religious, ethical, and legal systems. Historically, ijtihād in the Islamic setting, the independent investigation of the qualified scholars to make judgments following divine guidance in the reformed conditions, is a pivotal factor in the interpretation. With the fact that modern societies are becoming more multicultural and technologically oriented, there is an even greater necessity to handle ethical conflicts which extend across religious lines.

In its turn, the paper suggests that the AI can be used to facilitate the Islamic legal reasoning process focusing on the translation of the usul al-fiqh to the computable logic, creating the access to the structurally organized contents of the legal opinions, the

determination of the shared set of ethical principles with other traditions, and the provision of the transparent and efficient conflict resolution tools. This is not to take the place of human jurists but is to support them in maintaining the ethical acumen, openness, and procedural fidelity of Islamic juristic tradition.

Literature Review

Instructive background sources like Wael B. Hallaq and Mohammad Hashim Kamali have provided thorough models of the classical and the contemporary aspects of ijtihād, especially as they exist among Sunni partakers.¹ The current employed reiterates the contextual and progressive state of Islamic law. Simultaneously, legal theorists such as Richard Susskind and Kevin D. Ashley have discussed the role of Artificial Intelligence in assisting legal decision-making, argument modelling and rule-based automation in secular law.² Fatma Al-Hayani in her turn adds to this new line of reasoning because she focuses on ethical and legal implications of the use of AI in Islamic frameworks, prioritizing accountability, transparency, and justice.³

In the realm of interfaith studies, scholars like Mohammed Abu-Nimer highlight the importance of nonviolence and collaborative ethics in resolving religious conflict, pointing to the need for tools that honor diversity while upholding justice.⁴ While there is growing research on AI in Western legal systems and ongoing reform in Islamic jurisprudence, very few studies explore the fusion of ijtihād with AI for interfaith conflict mediation. This paper addresses that research gap.

Research Question

How can AI-assisted ijtihād mediate ethical conflicts in multifaith societies?

Research Objectives

- To explore the compatibility between Islamic legal reasoning and AI technologies.
- To design a conceptual framework for algorithmic ijtihād.
- To evaluate the model's effectiveness in interfaith conflict resolution.
- To examine the ethical and theological implications of AI in Islamic jurisprudence

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory design integrating Islamic jurisprudence, artificial intelligence, and conflict mediation theory.

Data Sources

- **Primary Islamic texts:** Qur'ān, Ḥadīth collections, and classical fiqh manuals.
- **Scholarly literature:** Works by Hallaq, Kamali, Abu-Nimer, Susskind, and AI law researchers.
- **Illustrative case studies:** Workplace and bioethical conflicts in multifaith settings.

Methods

1. **Doctrinal Analysis:** Extracting principles of *ijtihād* and ethical guidelines from primary sources.
2. **Ontology and Knowledge Graph Development:** Translating jurisprudential logic into structured, machine-readable models.
3. **Comparative Assessment:** Mapping areas of convergence between Islamic legal norms and other traditions.

4. **Scenario Testing:** Applying the AI-assisted framework to example disputes to evaluate feasibility and ethical soundness.

Validation and Ethics

- Expert reviews by Islamic legal scholars and AI specialists ensured conceptual accuracy.
- Emphasis was placed on human oversight and community consultation (*shūrā*) to prevent misuse or reductionism.

This interdisciplinary approach proves that algorithmic ijtihād could be produced as a supportive set of measures - even though it did not recognize unique religious authenticity or did not establish a positive dialogue within various societies.

Thematic Discussion: Key Foundations of Algorithmic Ijtihād

1. Ijtihād and Rational Reflection

The Qur’ān encourages deep reflection:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَفْقَالٌهَا⁵

Have they not mused over the Qur’ān, or fiercely shut do their hearts?

The Prophet emphasized the merit of reasoned judgment:

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْعَاصِ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: «إِذَا حَكَمَ الْحَاكِمُ فَاجْتَهَدَ ثُمَّ أَصَابَ فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ، وَإِذَا حَكَمَ فَاجْتَهَدَ ثُمَّ أَخْطَأَ فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ»⁶

“When a judge exercises ijtihād and reaches a correct decision, he earns two rewards. Assuming that he errs, he still gets a reward.

These sources affirm ijtihād as a divinely encouraged process one that AI may assist under human oversight.

2. Knowledge and Classification

The Qur’ān states:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا.⁷

And He taught Adam the names of everything.

This reads the importance of knowledge, classification, and labelling of things which is a significant element in creating AI systems by means of ontologies in Islamic jurisprudence.

3. Interfaith Justice and Dialogue

The Qur’ān states:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ⁸.

O mankind, And of a truth we have made of a male and a female so that we might make you peoples and tribes that ye may know one another.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ⁹.

Never know bad thoughts of people because they have made you hate them.

These passages show the necessity of equality and interreligious collaboration, particularly, the role of AI-based ethical mediations.

4. Arbitration and Legal Authority

The Qur’ān states:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا.¹⁰

in case of your fear of a breach betwixt them, take an arbitrator of his people, and one of hers.

And the Prophet ﷺ said to Mu'ādh ibn Jabal:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ حِمَاصٍ، مِنْ أَصْحَابِ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ لَمَّا أَرَادَ أَنْ يُبْعَثَ مُعَاذًا إِلَى الْيَمَنِ قَالَ: «كَيْفَ تَقْضِي إِذَا عَرَضَ لَكَ قَضَاءٌ؟»، قَالَ: أَقْضِي بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: «فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ؟»، قَالَ: فَسُنَّةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، قَالَ: «فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ فِي سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَلَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ؟» قَالَ: أَجْتَهِدُ رَأْيِي، وَلَا أَلُو فَضْرَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ صَدْرَهُ، وَقَالَ: «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَفَّقَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ لِمَا يُرْضِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ»¹¹

Upon the Messenger of Allah preparing to dispatch Mu'adh ibn Jabal to Yemen, he inquired: "By what method will you adjudicate when confronted with a case requiring judgment?" Mu'adh responded: "I shall render judgment according to the Book of Allah." The Prophet further questioned: "Should you not discover guidance within Allah's Book?" Mu'adh stated: "I shall proceed in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah." The Prophet continued: "If guidance eludes you in both the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (and Allah's Book?" Mu'adh answered: "I shall exert my utmost intellectual effort to formulate a considered opinion." Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah placed his hand upon Mu'adh's chest and proclaimed: "Praise be to Allah Who has guided the emissary of the Messenger of Allah toward that which brings satisfaction to the Messenger of Allah."

These texts provide the structure for hierarchical reasoning, mirrored in AI's layered legal logic.

5. Ethical Responsibility

The Qur'ān states:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا.¹²

Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart about those entire one will be questioned.

This verse limits unaccountable automation and reminds us that all tools, including AI must be used with moral awareness.

6. Seeking the Common Good (Maṣlahah 'Āmmah)

The Qur'ān states:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ.¹³

And work together with righteousness and goodness but never work together in sin and violence.

This verse legitimizes the collaborative effort among scholars, technologists, and interfaith actors to seek ethical solutions, especially through algorithmic models that promote justice

Conclusion

This article explores the potential of algorithmic ijtihād as a bridge between classical Islamic legal reasoning and the evolving world of artificial intelligence, particularly in the context of interfaith conflict mediation. Rather than viewing AI as a threat to

religious tradition, the article proposes AI as a tool to assist scholars in navigating complex ethical dilemmas.

Translating usūl al-fiqh to machine-readable logic and housing it within ethical circuits can bring quicker, transparent, and context-sensitive processing of legal judgment by algorithmic ijtihād. More important is that it can facilitate dialogue and building of trust among the religions in the pluralistic ones.

Speaking about living in the era of the existence of AI in law, healthcare, and social norms, Islamic jurisprudence needs to evolve responsibly but taking into account the new reality as its basic one. Such a strategy confirms that religious logic may be constructive, dynamic, and globally constructive.

Recommendations

- Develop AI–fiqh research labs for building interpretive models.
- Train Islamic scholars in data science and computational thinking.
- Digitize and annotate classical Islamic legal texts for AI use.
- Ensure continuous human oversight of AI-generated outputs.
- Integrate AI ethics and Islamic values in joint policy frameworks.

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- 8 Al Qur’ān 49:13.
- 9 Al Qur’ān 5:8.
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- 12 Al Qur’ān 17:36.
- 13 Al Qur’ān 5:2.