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Amāna and Ecological Responsibility in Classical Islamic Political Thought: Towards an Islamic Theory of Environmental Governance

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Abstract:
The growing environmental crisis has intensified scholarly interest in religious approaches to ecological ethics and sustainable governance. Within Islamic intellectual tradition, the Qur'anic concept of Amāna (trusteeship) represents one of the most comprehensive ethical principles governing the relationship between humanity, God, society, and the natural world. This study examines the political and ecological dimensions of Amāna within classical Islamic political thought and explores its contemporary relevance for environmental governance. Using a descriptive, analytical, and historical methodology, the research investigates Qur'anic foundations, classical political theories, and institutional mechanisms that transformed ecological responsibility into a practical component of Islamic governance. The study analyzes the relationship between Amāna, Khilāfah, Istikhlāf, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Ḥisbah, Ḥimā, and the Waqf institution, demonstrating how classical Muslim scholars understood environmental protection as an integral aspect of political trusteeship rather than a peripheral moral concern. It further examines the concepts of ʿAdl (justice), Mīzān (balance), intergenerational responsibility, and the rights of non-human creatures as ethical foundations of ecological governance. The research argues that classical Islamic political thought provides a coherent normative framework capable of addressing many contemporary environmental challenges, including climate change, resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and ecological injustice. By reconstructing the Qur'anic concept of Amāna within modern political discourse, the study proposes an Islamic model of environmental governance grounded in accountability, sustainability, justice, and public welfare. It concludes that ecological responsibility is not merely an environmental obligation but a divine political trust that binds rulers, institutions, and citizens alike, making Amāna a foundational principle for developing a contemporary Islamic political theory of environmental governance.

Keywords: Amāna, Ecological Responsibility, Islamic Political Thought, Environmental Governance, Khilāfah, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, Sustainability

Introduction

Environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources have become among the most pressing global challenges of the twenty-first century. While contemporary environmental discourse is often dominated by scientific, legal, and economic perspectives, increasing attention has been devoted to the ethical and religious foundations of environmental responsibility. Within Islamic thought, environmental ethics is deeply rooted in the Qur'anic worldview, where humanity is portrayed not as the absolute owner of nature but as God's trustee (*Amīn*) entrusted with the responsibility of preserving the balance of creation. Among the Qur'anic concepts that establish this worldview, **Amāna** occupies a central position, providing the moral and political foundation for responsible governance over both society and the natural environment. Classical Muslim scholars developed this concept within broader discussions of *Khilāfah*, justice, public welfare, and political authority, thereby integrating ecological responsibility into Islamic political thought long before the emergence of modern environmental theories. This study explores the evolution of *Amāna* as an ethical, political, and ecological principle within classical Islamic political heritage and examines its relevance for contemporary environmental governance. By analyzing Qur'anic teachings, classical juristic writings, and Islamic political institutions, the research demonstrates that ecological stewardship constitutes an essential dimension of Islamic governance and public responsibility rather than merely an individual ethical virtue.

Section One: The Qur'anic Foundations of Amāna and Ecological Responsibility

The Qur'ān establishes **Amāna** as one of the most comprehensive ethical principles governing the relationship between God, humanity, society, and the natural world. Rather than limiting *Amāna* to honesty or trustworthiness in interpersonal dealings, the Qur'ān presents it as a universal responsibility that encompasses religious commitment, political authority, legal accountability, social justice, and ecological stewardship. Classical Muslim scholars understood this concept as the foundation of human obligation (*taklīf*) and the defining characteristic that distinguishes humankind from the rest of creation. The Qur'ānic conception of *Amāna* also provides the normative basis for *Khilāfah* (vicegerency), making humanity responsible for maintaining justice, protecting public welfare, and preserving the balance of creation. Consequently, environmental responsibility is not an independent ethical concern but an integral dimension of humanity's covenant with God. This section examines the Qur'ānic foundations of *Amāna* through four interconnected themes: its theological meaning, its moral and political implications, its relationship with *Khilāfah* and human accountability, and its role as a guiding principle for the ethical governance of natural resources. Together, these discussions demonstrate that the Qur'ān establishes an integrated framework in which ecological responsibility forms an essential component of Islamic political ethics.

1. The Concept of Amāna in the Qur'an: The Presentation to the Heavens, Earth, and Mountains (Sūrat al-Aḥzāb: 72)

The concept of *Amāna* occupies a central position in the Qur'ānic worldview and constitutes one of the fundamental principles upon which Islamic ethics, law, and political thought are established. Linguistically, the term signifies trust, security, reliability, and responsibility.

Within the Qur'ānic discourse, however, *Amāna* assumes a much broader meaning, referring to the comprehensive responsibility entrusted by God to humanity. It encompasses every obligation that requires conscious obedience, moral integrity, and accountability before the Creator. Through this concept, the Qur'ān defines the unique status of human beings as morally responsible agents who possess freedom of choice while remaining accountable for the consequences of their actions.

The principal Qur'ānic foundation of *Amāna* appears in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb:

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضۡنَا ٱلۡأَمَانَةَ عَلَى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَٱلۡجِبَالِ فَأَبَيۡنَ أَن يَحۡمِلۡنَهَا وَأَشۡفَقۡنَ مِنۡهَا وَحَمَلَهَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومٗا جَهُولٗا﴾[1]

> Translation: *"Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and feared it; yet man undertook it. Indeed, he has been unjust and ignorant."*

This verse represents one of the most profound theological statements concerning the human condition in the Qur'ān. Classical exegetes devoted extensive discussion to identifying the nature of the *Amāna*. Al-Ṭabarī regarded it as the totality of divine obligations entrusted to humanity, including religious duties, legal responsibilities, and moral commitments. Al-Qurṭubī interpreted it as encompassing every command and prohibition revealed by God, while Ibn Kathīr maintained that *Amāna* includes all responsibilities arising from human free will and accountability. Although these scholars differed in certain details, they unanimously agreed that *Amāna* refers to the comprehensive burden of responsibility that distinguishes humanity from all other created beings.

The symbolic presentation of the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains emphasizes the extraordinary weight of this responsibility. These magnificent creations declined the trust despite their immense strength because they were not created with moral agency comparable to that granted to humanity. Human beings accepted this trust voluntarily and consequently became accountable before God for their beliefs, actions, political conduct, and interaction with the natural environment. The Qur'ānic description of humanity as "unjust and ignorant" immediately after accepting the trust serves as a warning that failure to uphold *Amāna* inevitably leads to injustice, corruption, and moral decline.

From the perspective of Islamic political thought, this verse establishes that authority is never absolute ownership but delegated trusteeship. Political office, judicial authority, public wealth, and natural resources remain under God's ultimate sovereignty, while human beings merely administer them as trustees. Every exercise of authority is therefore accompanied by accountability before God and responsibility toward society. This conception fundamentally distinguishes Islamic political theory from systems that regard political authority as an unrestricted expression of human sovereignty.

The ecological implications of this verse become especially significant when examined alongside the Qur'ānic concepts of *Khilāfah*, *Mīzān* (balance), and the prohibition of *Fasād* (corruption). Since the earth itself appears among the entities to which the trust was presented, humanity's acceptance necessarily includes responsibility for protecting the natural order established by God. Environmental degradation, excessive exploitation of resources, pollution,

and ecological injustice therefore constitute breaches of the divine trust rather than merely technical or administrative failures. Preservation of nature thus becomes an act of religious obedience rooted in the Qur'ānic understanding of *Amāna*.

Modern scholarship on Islamic environmental ethics increasingly recognizes this verse as the constitutional foundation of an Islamic ecological worldview. Rather than viewing environmental protection as a secondary ethical concern, contemporary Muslim scholars argue that ecological stewardship represents a direct manifestation of humanity's fulfilment of the divine trust. Sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity, responsible resource management, and environmental justice are therefore interpreted as practical expressions of *Amāna* within both individual ethics and public governance.

Accordingly, Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33:72) establishes *Amāna* as the theological and ethical cornerstone of Islamic political thought. It transforms humanity's relationship with nature from one of unrestricted ownership into one of accountable trusteeship, thereby providing the Qur'ānic foundation for a comprehensive theory of ecological responsibility and environmental governance.

2. Amāna as Moral, Political, and Legal Responsibility

The Qur'ānic concept of *Amāna* extends far beyond the sphere of personal honesty to encompass the entire framework of human responsibility before God. Classical Islamic scholarship consistently understood *Amāna* as a comprehensive obligation that integrates moral conduct, legal accountability, and political authority within a unified ethical system. Every position of authority, every legal obligation, and every social responsibility is regarded as a trust (*Amāna*) whose fulfilment is essential for establishing justice and maintaining public welfare. Consequently, Islamic political thought treats governance not as a privilege or instrument of domination but as a sacred responsibility entrusted by God to those who exercise authority over society.

The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes that trusts must be discharged faithfully and that justice must govern all forms of authority. Allah Almighty states:

﴿۞ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأۡمُرُكُمۡ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلۡأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمۡتُم بَيۡنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحۡكُمُواْ بِٱلۡعَدۡلِ﴾[2]

Translation: *"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice."*

This verse establishes a direct relationship between *Amāna* and justice (*ʿAdl*). Classical exegetes observed that the command to fulfil trusts is immediately followed by the obligation to judge justly, indicating that political authority itself is among the greatest forms of trust. Al-Ṭabarī explains that the verse encompasses every trust entrusted to human beings, including religious duties, public responsibilities, judicial authority, and financial obligations. Al-Qurṭubī similarly argues that rulers, judges, administrators, and all public officials are bound by this command because authority is fundamentally a trust that must be exercised according to divine guidance rather than personal interest.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ further emphasized this principle by describing leadership itself as a trust carrying immense responsibility. He warned that those who seek authority for personal gain rather than public service betray the very nature of *Amāna*. Classical jurists therefore

regarded public office not as a means of acquiring privilege but as a burden requiring competence, integrity, justice, and accountability. This understanding profoundly shaped the constitutional foundations of classical Islamic political theory, where legitimacy depended not merely upon political power but upon faithful fulfilment of the divine trust.

The legal dimension of *Amāna* occupies an equally important position within Islamic jurisprudence. Muslim jurists classified numerous legal relationships under the concept of trust, including guardianship, judicial authority, public finance, commercial partnerships, endowments (*awqāf*), and the administration of public property. These legal institutions were designed to ensure that individuals exercising authority remained accountable for protecting the rights of others. The concept therefore became one of the fundamental legal principles governing public administration and the exercise of political authority.

From an ecological perspective, the legal implications of *Amāna* extend naturally to the governance of natural resources. Since all creation ultimately belongs to Allah, human ownership is understood as conditional rather than absolute. Individuals and governments possess rights of use, but these rights are accompanied by corresponding duties of protection, conservation, and equitable distribution. Land, forests, rivers, water resources, grazing lands, and wildlife cannot be exploited without regard for public welfare or future generations because their utilization remains subject to the ethical limitations established by divine law.

The moral dimension of *Amāna* further reinforces ecological responsibility by requiring sincerity, moderation, honesty, and compassion in all human interactions. Environmental exploitation motivated by greed, corruption, or irresponsible consumption violates not only social ethics but also humanity's covenant with God. Consequently, environmental stewardship becomes an expression of moral excellence (*iḥsān*), while environmental destruction represents a moral failure that contradicts the objectives of Islamic ethics.

Within classical Islamic political thought, these moral, political, and legal dimensions were never treated as independent categories. Instead, they formed an integrated ethical system in which governance, law, justice, and environmental responsibility operated under the overarching principle of *Amāna*. Political authority was legitimate only insofar as it protected divine rights, human rights, and the integrity of creation. This integrated conception distinguishes the Islamic understanding of governance from political theories based solely upon power, utility, or economic interest.

Accordingly, *Amāna* functions as one of the principal normative foundations of Islamic political ethics. It transforms political authority into accountable trusteeship, legal responsibility into divine obligation, and environmental protection into a manifestation of faithful obedience to God. Through this comprehensive framework, the Qur'ān establishes *Amāna* as the ethical foundation upon which justice, governance, and ecological responsibility are inseparably united.

3. The Relationship Between Amāna, Khilāfah, and Human Accountability

The concepts of *Amāna* (trusteeship), *Khilāfah* (vicegerency), and human accountability constitute three interdependent pillars of the Qur'ānic worldview. Rather than existing as isolated theological principles, they collectively establish the ethical and political framework that governs humanity's relationship with God, society, and the natural environment. The

Qur'ān presents human beings as God's vicegerents on earth who have accepted the divine trust and will ultimately be held accountable for the manner in which they exercise that trust. Consequently, *Khilāfah* is not a privilege of domination but a responsibility founded upon *Amāna* and regulated by accountability before Allah. Classical Islamic political thought consistently regarded these concepts as inseparable foundations of legitimate governance and public responsibility.

The Qur'ān introduces the principle of vicegerency through Allah's declaration to the angels:

﴿وَإِذۡ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٞ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ خَلِيفَةٗ﴾[3]

Translation: *"And when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I am placing upon the earth a vicegerent.'"*

This verse establishes humanity's unique position within creation. Classical exegetes explain that *Khalīfah* denotes one who succeeds another in carrying out assigned responsibilities rather than exercising independent ownership or unrestricted authority. Al-Ṭabarī interprets the verse as indicating that humanity has been entrusted with implementing God's commands and maintaining justice on earth. Ibn Kathīr likewise explains that human beings were appointed as successors responsible for cultivating the earth while observing divine guidance. Thus, vicegerency represents delegated responsibility rather than autonomous sovereignty.

The relationship between *Amāna* and *Khilāfah* becomes evident when both concepts are considered together. Humanity accepted the divine trust through *Amāna* and was simultaneously appointed as God's vicegerent through *Khilāfah*. The trust defines the ethical obligations of human existence, while vicegerency provides the political and social framework within which those obligations are fulfilled. Every responsibility associated with governance, administration, justice, economic management, and environmental stewardship therefore derives its legitimacy from these two interconnected Qur'ānic principles.

Human accountability forms the third element completing this relationship. The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes that every individual will be questioned concerning the trusts entrusted to him or her. Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَقِفُوهُمۡۖ إِنَّهُم مَّسۡـُٔولُونَ﴾[4]

Translation: *"Stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned."*

This principle transforms every human action into an act of moral responsibility. Political authority, judicial decisions, economic activities, and environmental management are all subject to divine judgment. Unlike secular political theories that often evaluate governance primarily through effectiveness or public consent, the Qur'ānic model introduces accountability before God as the highest standard governing all public authority. Consequently, rulers, administrators, judges, and ordinary citizens alike remain answerable for their conduct both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Classical Islamic political scholars consistently emphasized this comprehensive accountability. Al-Māwardī regarded the office of the Imām as a trust established for protecting religion and administering worldly affairs according to divine law. Abū Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ similarly maintained that political authority derives its legitimacy from fulfilling responsibilities rather than exercising power. Ibn Taymiyyah further argued that every public office represents a

divine trust whose purpose is the realization of justice and the protection of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). Their discussions demonstrate that political legitimacy in Islamic thought depends upon faithful fulfilment of *Amāna* rather than mere possession of authority.

The ecological implications of this relationship are equally significant. Since humanity exercises vicegerency over the earth through the divine trust, environmental resources cannot be regarded as objects of unrestricted exploitation. Forests, rivers, wildlife, agricultural land, water sources, and ecosystems remain part of God's creation entrusted temporarily to humanity. Every generation inherits this trust from previous generations and bears responsibility for transmitting it intact to those who follow. Environmental degradation, therefore, represents not merely poor governance but a breach of humanity's covenant with God.

Modern discussions of environmental governance increasingly recognize that sustainable development requires ethical principles capable of restraining unlimited exploitation of nature. The Qur'ānic integration of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, and accountability provides precisely such a framework. It establishes environmental stewardship as a religious obligation rooted in divine trusteeship rather than economic convenience or political expediency. This integrated vision offers a distinctive contribution to contemporary environmental ethics by grounding sustainability in theological responsibility and moral accountability.

Accordingly, the relationship between *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, and human accountability forms one of the central foundations of classical Islamic political thought. Together these principles establish a comprehensive system in which governance, justice, and environmental stewardship become inseparable manifestations of humanity's responsibility before God, thereby providing the ethical basis for an enduring Islamic theory of ecological governance.

4. Amāna as a Qur'anic Principle for the Ethical Governance of Natural Resources

The Qur'ānic concept of *Amāna* establishes a comprehensive ethical framework for the governance and utilization of natural resources. Within the Qur'ānic worldview, the earth and all its resources belong exclusively to Allah, while humanity has been appointed only as a trustee responsible for their protection, development, and equitable use. Consequently, ownership in Islam is never absolute but conditional upon fulfilling the responsibilities imposed by divine guidance. Land, water, forests, minerals, animals, and other natural resources are therefore regarded as trusts that must be managed in a manner consistent with justice, moderation, and public welfare. This understanding transforms environmental governance from a merely administrative function into a religious and moral obligation rooted in the concept of *Amāna*.

The Qur'ān repeatedly reminds humanity that ultimate ownership belongs to Allah alone. Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا﴾[5]

> Translation: *"To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens, the earth, and everything between them."*

This verse establishes one of the fundamental principles of Islamic political and environmental thought. Since Allah alone possesses absolute ownership over creation, human beings cannot

claim unrestricted rights over natural resources. Their authority is that of stewardship rather than possession. Every resource entrusted to humanity must therefore be utilized according to the ethical limits established by divine revelation. This principle forms the basis upon which classical Muslim jurists developed legal regulations concerning public lands, water rights, forests, grazing areas, and other natural resources.

The Qur'ān further emphasizes that environmental corruption results directly from human misconduct. Allah Almighty states:

﴿ظَهَرَ ٱلۡفَسَادُ فِي ٱلۡبَرِّ وَٱلۡبَحۡرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ أَيۡدِي ٱلنَّاسِ﴾[6]

Translation: *"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned."*

Classical commentators interpreted *fasād* broadly to include every form of disorder resulting from human disobedience, injustice, and misuse of God's blessings. Although environmental pollution was unknown in its modern form, the principle established by the verse clearly extends to all forms of ecological degradation caused by irresponsible human activity. Deforestation, pollution of water resources, excessive extraction of minerals, destruction of biodiversity, and climate-related environmental harm can therefore be understood as contemporary manifestations of *fasād* resulting from humanity's failure to fulfil the trust of *Amāna*.

Classical Islamic political thought consistently regarded the protection of natural resources as part of the ruler's responsibility to secure public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). Jurists maintained that public authorities possessed the duty to regulate access to common resources, prevent environmental harm, resolve disputes over water and land, and prohibit activities causing widespread damage. Their legal discussions concerning public ownership, protected lands (*ḥimā*), irrigation systems, and market supervision demonstrate an early awareness that natural resources require ethical governance rather than unrestricted exploitation.

The ethical governance of natural resources also reflects the Qur'ānic principle of moderation. Human beings are encouraged to benefit from God's blessings while avoiding extravagance, waste, and destructive consumption. Sustainable utilization ensures that natural resources remain available for future generations, thereby preserving the balance established by the Creator. This principle aligns closely with contemporary concepts of sustainability, although its foundation in Islamic thought is theological rather than merely economic or environmental.

Another significant dimension of *Amāna* concerns equity in resource distribution. Natural resources are not intended to become instruments of oppression or exclusive privilege for particular individuals or groups. Islamic political theory therefore emphasizes distributive justice, equitable access to essential resources, and protection of communal interests. Water sources, grazing lands, forests, and other public resources were historically regulated to prevent monopolization and ensure that their benefits remained available to society as a whole. Such regulations illustrate how the ethical concept of *Amāna* was translated into practical governance mechanisms within the classical Islamic tradition.

In contemporary environmental discourse, growing concerns over climate change, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable development have renewed scholarly interest in

the Qur'ānic principles governing ecological responsibility. The concept of *Amāna* provides an enduring ethical framework capable of addressing these challenges by integrating environmental protection with moral accountability, political responsibility, and social justice. It rejects exploitative models of resource management and instead promotes stewardship founded upon divine trust and responsibility toward both present and future generations.

Accordingly, the Qur'ān presents *Amāna* as one of the foundational principles of ethical environmental governance. By recognizing Allah's absolute ownership and humanity's delegated trusteeship, it establishes a comprehensive framework in which the protection, conservation, and sustainable management of natural resources become essential obligations of Islamic political thought. This Qur'ānic vision continues to provide valuable guidance for developing contemporary models of environmental governance grounded in justice, accountability, and ecological sustainability.

Section Two: Amāna and the Development of Ecological Governance in Classical Islamic Political Thought

The concept of *Amāna* did not remain merely a theological or ethical principle within the Qur'ānic discourse; rather, it developed into one of the foundational concepts of classical Islamic political thought. Muslim political theorists, jurists, and scholars understood governance as a form of divine trusteeship in which rulers, institutions, and citizens shared responsibility for preserving justice, protecting public welfare, and maintaining the balance established by Allah in creation. This understanding naturally extended to the governance of natural resources, where environmental protection became an inseparable component of political responsibility. Classical Islamic political literature consistently associated ecological stewardship with the concepts of *Istikhlāf*, *Maṣlaḥah*, *ʿAdl*, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, thereby establishing an integrated framework that linked political legitimacy with responsible environmental management. This section examines how the Qur'ānic principle of *Amāna* evolved into a comprehensive theory of ecological governance within classical Islamic political thought by analysing its relationship with vicegerency, environmental corruption, the objectives of Islamic law, and the reciprocal responsibilities of rulers and citizens in protecting the natural environment.

1. Istikhlāf and Amāna: Foundations of Environmental Stewardship

The concepts of *Istikhlāf* (vicegerency) and *Amāna* (trusteeship) constitute the two principal foundations upon which the Islamic understanding of environmental stewardship is established. While *Amāna* defines the ethical and legal responsibility entrusted to humanity by Allah, *Istikhlāf* determines humanity's position and function within creation. Together these concepts provide a comprehensive framework through which human beings are entrusted with the cultivation, protection, and responsible management of the earth. Classical Muslim scholars regarded these principles as complementary rather than independent, maintaining that vicegerency cannot be fulfilled without faithfully discharging the trust of *Amāna*. Consequently, environmental stewardship is not merely an optional moral virtue but an essential obligation arising from humanity's divinely appointed role as God's vicegerent on earth.

The Qur'ān establishes this principle through Allah's declaration:

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِي جَعَلَكُمۡ خَلَٰٓئِفَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ﴾[7]

Translation: *"It is He who has made you successors (vicegerents) upon the earth."*

This verse affirms that humanity has been entrusted with a unique responsibility within creation. Classical exegetes explain that the appointment of human beings as *khulafāʾ* does not confer unrestricted ownership or sovereignty over the earth; rather, it signifies delegated authority exercised under the supreme sovereignty of Allah. Al-Ṭabarī interprets *khulafāʾ* as successive generations entrusted with implementing God's commands and maintaining justice on earth. Ibn Kathīr similarly explains that humanity succeeds previous generations while remaining accountable to Allah for preserving His creation and administering worldly affairs according to divine guidance.

The concept of *Istikhlāf* therefore transforms humanity's relationship with nature. Instead of perceiving the environment as an object of unrestricted exploitation, the Qur'ān presents it as a trust temporarily placed under human care. Every natural resource—including land, forests, rivers, oceans, wildlife, and minerals—forms part of the divine trust whose preservation is inseparable from humanity's vicegerency. Classical Islamic political thought consistently maintained that political authority exists to facilitate the fulfilment of this responsibility by protecting both society and the natural order upon which human civilization depends.

Environmental stewardship within the framework of *Istikhlāf* also requires the maintenance of ecological balance. Since Allah created the universe according to precise order and harmony, human intervention must preserve rather than disturb that balance. Activities leading to environmental degradation, excessive resource extraction, pollution, or destruction of ecosystems contradict the very purpose for which humanity was appointed as vicegerent. The responsibility of cultivation (*iʿmār al-arḍ*) therefore includes both productive utilization of natural resources and their long-term conservation for future generations.

Classical jurists reflected this understanding in numerous legal discussions concerning land reclamation, irrigation systems, public grazing lands, water distribution, and protected environmental zones. Their objective was not merely economic development but the realization of justice and sustainability through responsible management of public resources. Environmental stewardship thus became an integral component of good governance and one of the practical manifestations of *Amāna* within Islamic political institutions.

The ethical dimension of *Istikhlāf* further emphasizes that humanity's relationship with nature is characterized by responsibility rather than domination. Every benefit derived from natural resources carries a corresponding obligation to prevent harm, avoid waste, and preserve ecological integrity. This understanding anticipates many contemporary principles of sustainable development while grounding them in theological accountability rather than purely economic or political considerations.

Modern environmental challenges—including climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and ecological degradation—highlight the continuing relevance of these Qur'ānic principles. The integration of *Istikhlāf* and *Amāna* provides a comprehensive normative framework through which environmental protection becomes an act of worship, political responsibility,

and public service simultaneously. Rather than separating environmental ethics from governance, classical Islamic political thought incorporates ecological stewardship into the very definition of legitimate political authority.

Accordingly, the concepts of *Istikhlāf* and *Amāna* together establish the fundamental foundations of environmental stewardship in Islam. They define humanity's role as accountable trustees who exercise delegated authority under divine sovereignty, thereby providing one of the earliest and most comprehensive ethical frameworks for ecological governance in the Islamic political tradition.

2. Fasād and Isrāf as Political and Ecological Violations

The Qur'ānic concepts of *Fasād* (corruption) and *Isrāf* (extravagance or excessive consumption) occupy a central position in the ethical framework of Islamic political thought concerning environmental governance. Classical Muslim scholars regarded both concepts as serious violations of the divine trust (*Amāna*) because they undermine the balance established by Allah in creation and threaten the welfare of both present and future generations. While *Fasād* refers broadly to every form of disorder, injustice, and destruction that disrupts the natural and social order, *Isrāf* denotes excessive and wasteful consumption beyond legitimate human need. Together, these concepts establish ethical limitations on political authority, economic activity, and environmental utilization, demonstrating that the protection of nature forms an essential component of responsible governance in Islam.

The Qur'ān explicitly condemns corruption on earth after its proper order has been established. Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَلَا تُفۡسِدُواْ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ بَعۡدَ إِصۡلَٰحِهَا﴾[8]

Translation: *"Do not spread corruption on the earth after it has been set in order."*

This verse establishes one of the fundamental environmental principles of the Qur'ān. Classical exegetes interpreted *Fasād* in a comprehensive manner, including every action that destroys justice, violates divine commands, harms society, or damages the natural environment. Al-Ṭabarī explains that corruption includes all forms of disobedience that disturb the order established by Allah, while al-Qurṭubī expands the concept to include oppression, environmental destruction, unlawful exploitation of resources, and public harm. These interpretations indicate that the Qur'ānic prohibition of *Fasād* is not confined to moral or political corruption but extends to every activity that disrupts the balance of creation.

Closely related to *Fasād* is the Qur'ānic condemnation of *Isrāf*. Allah Almighty commands:

﴿وَكُلُواْ وَٱشۡرَبُواْ وَلَا تُسۡرِفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُسۡرِفِينَ﴾[9]

Translation: *"Eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not love those who are extravagant."*

Although this verse specifically addresses food and drink, classical jurists understood its principle to apply universally to every form of resource utilization. *Isrāf* therefore includes excessive consumption of water, destruction of agricultural land, unnecessary exploitation of forests, waste of public wealth, and irresponsible extraction of natural resources. Islamic political thought consequently regards moderation as an essential principle of environmental

governance, requiring individuals and governments alike to utilize natural resources responsibly and sustainably.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ reinforced this principle by discouraging waste even in acts of worship. He instructed that water should not be wasted during ablution, even when performed beside a flowing river. This Prophetic guidance demonstrates that conservation is not merely an economic concern but a moral obligation rooted in Islamic ethics. Classical scholars inferred from this tradition that unnecessary waste of any natural resource contradicts the objectives of the Sharīʿah and constitutes a breach of the trust entrusted to humanity.

Within classical Islamic political theory, preventing *Fasād* formed one of the principal responsibilities of the ruler and public institutions. Political authorities were expected to regulate markets, supervise public resources, prevent unlawful exploitation of land and water, and protect communal interests from private greed. Institutions such as the *Ḥisbah* played a significant role in monitoring economic practices and preventing activities that harmed society or damaged the environment. Thus, environmental protection was viewed not merely as an ethical recommendation but as a legal and political obligation falling within the scope of public governance.

The ecological implications of *Fasād* and *Isrāf* have become increasingly relevant in the contemporary world. Climate change, pollution, deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss, and excessive industrial exploitation represent modern manifestations of the corruption prohibited by the Qur'ān. Likewise, patterns of overconsumption, unsustainable production, and depletion of natural resources reflect the very extravagance condemned through the concept of *Isrāf*. These global environmental crises illustrate the continuing relevance of classical Islamic principles for addressing modern ecological challenges.

From the perspective of *Amāna*, both *Fasād* and *Isrāf* constitute violations of humanity's covenant with Allah. Since natural resources are entrusted to human beings rather than owned absolutely by them, their misuse represents a betrayal of divine trusteeship. Environmental degradation therefore becomes not only a technical or political failure but also a religious and ethical transgression carrying consequences before God.

Accordingly, the concepts of *Fasād* and *Isrāf* provide essential normative principles for Islamic ecological governance. They establish clear ethical limits upon political authority, economic activity, and environmental utilization while affirming that justice, moderation, and sustainability are indispensable requirements for fulfilling the divine trust of *Amāna*. Together, these principles contribute significantly to the development of a comprehensive Islamic political theory of environmental responsibility.

3. Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah and the Protection of the Environment

The theory of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* occupies a central position in classical Islamic legal and political thought because it explains the higher objectives and wisdom underlying the rulings of Islamic law. Classical jurists maintained that the Sharīʿah was revealed not merely to regulate individual acts of worship but to secure human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), establish justice, and prevent harm (*mafsadah*). Although environmental protection was not discussed as an independent legal category in classical literature, the objectives of the Sharīʿah collectively provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding ecological balance and ensuring the

sustainable use of natural resources. The Qur'ānic concept of *Amāna* reinforces this framework by presenting environmental stewardship as a divine responsibility entrusted to humanity. Consequently, ecological preservation is not an isolated ethical concern but an integral component of the higher objectives of Islamic law.

The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes that divine legislation aims at human welfare and rejects unnecessary hardship. Allah Almighty states:

﴿يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُمُ ٱلۡيُسۡرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ ٱلۡعُسۡرَ﴾[10]

Translation: *"Allah intends ease for you and does not intend hardship for you."*

This verse reflects a broader principle of Islamic legislation: the Sharīʿah seeks to promote benefit and remove harm from human life. Classical scholars such as al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, al-Shāṭibī, and Ibn ʿĀshūr explained that every legal ruling ultimately serves one or more higher objectives that preserve the well-being of individuals and society. Their discussions demonstrate that the Sharīʿah possesses a dynamic capacity to address changing circumstances while remaining faithful to its fundamental ethical principles.

According to the classical theory of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, the law seeks to preserve five essential values (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*): religion (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*ʿaql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*). Modern scholars have increasingly argued that environmental protection supports each of these objectives. The preservation of life depends upon clean air, safe water, fertile land, and healthy ecosystems. The protection of property requires the sustainable management of natural resources and the prevention of environmental degradation that destroys economic livelihoods. Likewise, future generations cannot enjoy the objectives of the Sharīʿah if ecological destruction continues unchecked.

Classical jurists did not formulate an independent environmental objective because the environmental challenges of their time differed significantly from those of the modern world. Nevertheless, their legal principles concerning public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), prevention of harm (*darʾ al-mafāsid*), moderation (*iʿtidāl*), and responsible utilization of public resources collectively establish a strong normative foundation for contemporary environmental ethics. These principles enabled Islamic governance to regulate water distribution, protect agricultural lands, establish public grazing reserves, and prohibit harmful exploitation of communal resources.

The Qur'ān also associates balance and moderation with the divine order of creation. Human beings are therefore prohibited from pursuing economic or political policies that disturb this balance through excessive consumption, environmental destruction, or unjust exploitation of natural resources. Environmental degradation undermines public welfare and directly conflicts with the higher objectives that Islamic law seeks to preserve. Consequently, protecting ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, reducing pollution, and ensuring sustainable development become practical applications of the objectives of the Sharīʿah rather than merely optional environmental initiatives.

The concept of *Amāna* further strengthens this relationship by transforming environmental protection into a religious obligation. Since humanity exercises stewardship over creation as God's trustee, preserving the natural environment becomes one of the practical means through

which the objectives of Islamic law are realized. Political authorities therefore bear responsibility for developing policies that prevent ecological harm, regulate the equitable use of natural resources, and secure environmental justice for present and future generations. Failure to protect the environment represents not only administrative negligence but also a violation of both the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah and the divine trust entrusted to humanity.

Contemporary discussions on Islamic environmental governance increasingly employ the theory of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* as a framework for addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, environmental pollution, and sustainable development. By extending the classical objectives of the Sharīʿah to modern ecological challenges, Muslim scholars have demonstrated the continuing relevance of Islamic legal thought in responding to global environmental crises. This approach preserves the integrity of the classical tradition while allowing its ethical principles to address contemporary realities.

Accordingly, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* provides one of the strongest legal and ethical foundations for environmental protection within classical Islamic political thought. When interpreted alongside the Qur'ānic principle of *Amāna*, it establishes a comprehensive framework in which ecological preservation, sustainable resource management, and environmental justice become essential objectives of Islamic governance and indispensable requirements for fulfilling humanity's covenant with Allah.

4. The Political Covenant of Amāna: Responsibilities of Rulers and Citizens

The concept of *Amāna* establishes a reciprocal covenant between rulers and citizens that lies at the heart of classical Islamic political thought. Unlike political theories that regard authority as an expression of absolute sovereignty or merely a social contract, Islamic political thought understands governance as a divine trust entrusted to both political leaders and members of society. The ruler is responsible for establishing justice, protecting religion, safeguarding public welfare, and preserving the natural environment, while citizens are equally obliged to fulfil their responsibilities, obey lawful authority, protect public resources, and cooperate in righteousness. Consequently, *Amāna* creates a comprehensive system of shared political responsibility in which ecological stewardship forms an essential dimension of public governance.

Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَتَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقۡوَىٰۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡإِثۡمِ وَٱلۡعُدۡوَٰنِۚ﴾[11]

> Translation: *"Cooperate with one another in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression."*

This verse establishes one of the most important political and ethical principles in the Qur'ān by emphasizing collective responsibility. Classical Muslim scholars explain that the command to cooperate in righteousness extends beyond individual morality to include all forms of public life, governance, justice, and social welfare. Since environmental protection directly serves the common good (*maṣlaḥah*), cooperation in preserving natural resources becomes an application of this Qur'ānic directive. Likewise, activities that contribute to environmental degradation, unlawful exploitation of public resources, or ecological injustice fall within the prohibition against cooperation in sin and transgression.

Section Three: Institutional Dimensions of Ecological Amāna in Classical Islamic Governance

The Qur'ānic principle of *Amāna* was not confined to theological reflection or moral instruction but was translated into practical institutions within classical Islamic civilization. Muslim rulers, jurists, and political theorists developed administrative mechanisms designed to preserve justice, regulate public resources, and protect the environment in accordance with the objectives of the Sharīʿah. Institutions such as the *Ḥisbah*, *Ḥimā*, and *Waqf* played significant roles in supervising markets, conserving natural resources, preventing environmental harm, and ensuring the equitable distribution of public benefits. These institutions reflected the understanding that ecological responsibility was inseparable from political governance and public administration. Rather than viewing environmental protection as an isolated concern, classical Islamic governance integrated it into the broader framework of justice, accountability, and public welfare. This section examines the institutional manifestations of *Amāna* by analysing how classical Islamic political structures implemented ecological stewardship through administrative supervision, protected environmental reserves, charitable endowments, and the political responsibilities of rulers. Together, these institutions demonstrate that environmental governance formed an integral component of the Islamic political tradition and represented a practical expression of humanity's covenant with Allah.

1. Ḥisbah and Environmental Accountability

The institution of *Ḥisbah* represents one of the most significant administrative mechanisms through which the principle of *Amāna* was implemented in classical Islamic governance. Although commonly associated with market supervision and commercial regulation, the functions of the *Muḥtasib* extended far beyond economic transactions to encompass the protection of public welfare, prevention of harm, and preservation of communal resources. Classical Muslim jurists regarded the institution of *Ḥisbah* as a practical application of the Qur'ānic obligation to promote righteousness (*al-amr bi al-maʿrūf*) and prevent wrongdoing (*al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). Consequently, environmental accountability became an important aspect of the *Muḥtasib's* responsibilities whenever ecological harm affected the rights and welfare of the community.

Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَلۡتَكُن مِّنكُمۡ أُمَّةٞ يَدۡعُونَ إِلَى ٱلۡخَيۡرِ وَيَأۡمُرُونَ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَيَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنِ ٱلۡمُنكَرِ﴾[12]

Translation: *"Let there arise from among you a community that calls to goodness, enjoins what is right, and forbids what is wrong."*

This verse provides one of the principal Qur'ānic foundations for the institution of *Ḥisbah*. Classical scholars understood that commanding good and preventing evil included safeguarding public interests, preventing social injustice, and removing practices harmful to society. Since environmental degradation directly threatens public welfare, the supervision of environmental practices naturally falls within the broader objectives of *Ḥisbah*.

Classical manuals of *Ḥisbah*, particularly those of al-Māwardī, Ibn al-Ukhuwwah, and Ibn al-Akhī, demonstrate that the *Muḥtasib* supervised public cleanliness, regulated water distribution, prevented obstruction of roads and waterways, prohibited harmful commercial activities, and ensured that public resources remained accessible to the community. Although

these works do not employ modern environmental terminology, they reveal a sophisticated administrative awareness of issues directly related to environmental governance and sustainable public administration.

The supervision of water resources illustrates this responsibility particularly well. Water occupied a central position within Islamic civilization because of its essential role in agriculture, public health, and economic life. Classical jurists therefore prohibited contamination of rivers, obstruction of canals, monopolization of public water sources, and any activity likely to deprive communities of equitable access to water. The *Muḥtasib* possessed authority to intervene whenever such practices endangered public welfare, thereby implementing the principle of *Amāna* through administrative oversight.

Environmental accountability also extended to urban management. Markets generating excessive pollution, activities creating public health hazards, unlawful disposal of waste, and harmful industrial practices were subject to official regulation whenever they threatened the rights of the public. This demonstrates that classical Islamic governance recognized the responsibility of public authorities to prevent environmental harm before it produced wider social consequences. Such preventive regulation reflects the broader legal maxim that harm must be removed (*al-ḍarar yuzāl*), a principle that continues to influence contemporary Islamic legal reasoning.

The institution of *Ḥisbah* further illustrates that ecological governance in Islam is founded upon accountability rather than unrestricted economic freedom. Commercial interests, private ownership, and individual benefit remain subject to ethical limitations whenever they conflict with public welfare or damage the environment. Consequently, environmental protection becomes an administrative obligation grounded in the principles of justice, prevention of harm, and faithful fulfilment of the divine trust.

Modern environmental governance increasingly relies upon regulatory agencies responsible for monitoring pollution, conserving natural resources, and enforcing environmental legislation. The institution of *Ḥisbah* demonstrates that classical Islamic civilization developed comparable mechanisms based upon religious ethics and political accountability centuries before the emergence of modern environmental regulatory systems. While institutional structures have evolved, the underlying principles of public responsibility, accountability, and protection of communal resources remain remarkably consistent.

Accordingly, the institution of *Ḥisbah* represents one of the clearest historical manifestations of ecological *Amāna* within classical Islamic governance. By supervising public conduct, regulating environmental practices, and protecting communal resources, it transformed the Qur'ānic principles of trusteeship, justice, and public welfare into practical mechanisms of environmental accountability, thereby contributing significantly to the development of an Islamic theory of ecological governance.

2. Ḥimā and Public Environmental Protection

The institution of *Ḥimā* represents one of the earliest and most sophisticated mechanisms of environmental conservation developed within classical Islamic political thought. Derived from the Arabic root meaning "to protect" or "to preserve," *Ḥimā* refers to designated areas in which the use of natural resources was regulated or restricted for the benefit of the wider community

and the preservation of ecological balance. Unlike arbitrary restrictions imposed by political authority, the classical Islamic concept of *Ḥimā* was founded upon the principles of *Amāna*, public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), justice, and responsible stewardship of God's creation. Muslim jurists regarded protected lands not as instruments of political privilege but as public trusts established to ensure the sustainable use of environmental resources and prevent ecological degradation. Consequently, the institution of *Ḥimā* became an important practical manifestation of ecological trusteeship within Islamic governance.

The Qur'ān emphasizes that human beings must preserve the balance established by Allah and refrain from disturbing the natural order. Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَٱلسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ ٱلْمِيزَانَ ۝ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا۟ فِى ٱلْمِيزَانِ﴾[13]

Translation: *"And He raised the heaven and established the balance, so that you may not transgress the balance."*

Although this verse primarily speaks about the universal order established by Allah, classical scholars understood the concept of *Mīzān* as encompassing harmony, justice, moderation, and equilibrium throughout creation. The institution of *Ḥimā* reflects this Qur'ānic principle by preventing excessive exploitation of natural resources and maintaining ecological balance for the benefit of both humanity and the wider environment.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ established protected areas around Madīnah for the preservation of grazing lands and natural resources, thereby providing the earliest practical model of environmental conservation in Islamic history. These protected areas were intended to safeguard communal interests, prevent overgrazing, preserve vegetation, and ensure that natural resources remained available for future use. Classical jurists later developed detailed legal discussions concerning the establishment, administration, and regulation of *Ḥimā*, emphasizing that such protected areas could only be established when they served genuine public welfare and did not become instruments of private privilege or political exploitation.

Classical scholars such as Abū Yūsuf, al-Māwardī, and Ibn Qudāmah maintained that the authority to establish *Ḥimā* belonged to the legitimate ruler, provided that its purpose was the protection of communal resources rather than personal benefit. They stressed that protected lands should preserve forests, grazing areas, water resources, and wildlife while ensuring equitable access whenever public necessity required it. These discussions demonstrate that environmental conservation was recognized as a legitimate responsibility of political authority within classical Islamic governance.

The institution of *Ḥimā* also illustrates the close relationship between environmental sustainability and public welfare. By regulating access to fragile ecosystems, preventing excessive exploitation, and protecting renewable resources, Islamic governance sought to preserve ecological systems capable of supporting both present and future generations. Such measures prevented environmental degradation while simultaneously promoting economic stability, agricultural productivity, and social justice. In this respect, *Ḥimā* anticipated many principles underlying modern protected areas, national parks, and environmental conservation policies.

From the perspective of *Amāna*, the establishment of protected environmental zones represents the fulfilment of humanity's responsibility toward Allah's creation. Since natural resources ultimately belong to Allah, neither rulers nor individuals possess unrestricted authority to exploit them. The designation of protected areas therefore reflects recognition that environmental resources constitute a collective trust requiring careful stewardship rather than unrestricted consumption. Protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural habitats thus becomes an act of obedience to Allah and a practical application of Islamic political ethics.

Contemporary environmental governance increasingly recognizes the importance of protected areas for conserving biodiversity, combating climate change, and preserving ecological resilience. The classical institution of *Ḥimā* demonstrates that Islamic civilization developed comparable conservation strategies centuries before the emergence of modern environmental law. Although contemporary environmental challenges require new administrative mechanisms, the ethical foundations established through *Ḥimā* continue to provide valuable guidance for developing sustainable environmental policies within an Islamic framework.

Accordingly, the institution of *Ḥimā* represents one of the most significant practical expressions of ecological *Amāna* in classical Islamic political thought. By protecting natural resources, regulating environmental use, and preserving ecological balance, it translated the Qur'ānic principles of trusteeship, justice, and sustainability into an enduring institution of environmental governance that remains relevant to contemporary discussions of conservation and sustainable development.

3. The Waqf Institution and Sustainable Resource Management

The institution of *Waqf* occupies a distinguished position in classical Islamic civilization as one of the most effective mechanisms for promoting social welfare, economic stability, and sustainable resource management. While *Waqf* is commonly associated with mosques, schools, hospitals, and charitable activities, its contribution to environmental governance has received comparatively less scholarly attention. Classical Muslim jurists viewed *Waqf* not merely as a charitable endowment but as a permanent trust (*Amāna*) dedicated to serving the public interest under the principles of the Sharīʿah. Through the establishment of endowments for agricultural lands, water resources, orchards, forests, wells, and public utilities, the institution of *Waqf* played an important role in conserving natural resources and ensuring their sustainable use across generations. Consequently, *Waqf* represents one of the most enduring institutional manifestations of ecological trusteeship within classical Islamic political thought.

The Qur'ān encourages believers to devote their wealth to the common good and to spend from the blessings granted by Allah. Allah Almighty states:

﴿لَن تَنَالُواْ ٱلۡبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ﴾[14]

> Translation: *"You will never attain righteousness until you spend from that which you love."*
>
> Although this verse does not specifically mention *Waqf*, classical Muslim scholars regarded it as one of the principal Qur'ānic foundations encouraging permanent charitable endowments. By dedicating valuable assets for public benefit, Muslims fulfilled the ethical ideals of generosity, responsibility, and stewardship embodied in the concept of *Amāna*. The institution of *Waqf* thus became a practical

mechanism through which private wealth was transformed into lasting public benefit.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ further encouraged perpetual charity through the well-known principle of *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (continuous charity), inspiring the development of endowments whose benefits would continue long after the donor's lifetime. Classical jurists consequently established detailed legal regulations governing the creation, administration, and preservation of *awqāf*. These regulations ensured that endowed properties remained protected from sale, inheritance, or private appropriation, thereby preserving their public function across successive generations.

Environmental resources occupied an important place within the historical practice of *Waqf*. Throughout the Islamic world, charitable endowments were established for wells, irrigation canals, reservoirs, gardens, orchards, agricultural lands, public fountains, and grazing areas. Revenue generated from these endowments supported educational institutions, hospitals, travellers, the poor, and public infrastructure while simultaneously preserving the productive capacity of natural resources. Such arrangements reflected a sophisticated understanding that environmental sustainability and social welfare are mutually reinforcing objectives.

Classical jurists emphasized that administrators of *Waqf* bore a fiduciary responsibility to preserve endowed resources and prevent their deterioration. Neglect, waste, unlawful exploitation, or misuse of endowed property constituted a violation of the trust placed upon them. This legal responsibility illustrates the close relationship between *Amāna* and sustainable resource management, as the administrator acted not as an owner but as a trustee accountable before Allah for protecting public interests.

The institution of *Waqf* also contributed significantly to intergenerational justice. Since endowed resources were intended to benefit future generations indefinitely, classical Islamic law prohibited actions that would diminish their long-term value or impair their productive capacity. Agricultural lands were maintained, water systems were repaired, and natural resources were managed in ways designed to ensure continuity rather than short-term economic gain. This long-term perspective corresponds closely with contemporary principles of sustainable development, which seek to preserve resources for future generations without compromising present needs.

From the perspective of ecological governance, the institution of *Waqf* demonstrates that environmental stewardship can be achieved through voluntary civic participation alongside governmental regulation. Whereas political authorities established legal frameworks and supervised public resources, charitable endowments mobilized private wealth to support environmental conservation and community welfare. Together, these complementary mechanisms strengthened the resilience of classical Islamic society while reinforcing the ethical principle that natural resources constitute a trust entrusted to humanity by Allah.

Contemporary environmental challenges have renewed scholarly interest in reviving the institution of *Waqf* as an instrument of sustainable development. Modern environmental endowments may support reforestation, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy projects, water preservation, environmental education, and ecological research while remaining faithful to the classical principles governing Islamic charitable trusts. Such initiatives demonstrate the

continuing relevance of *Waqf* as a practical expression of ecological *Amāna* within modern Islamic governance.

Accordingly, the institution of *Waqf* represents one of the most successful historical models of sustainable resource management in classical Islamic civilization. By preserving natural resources, promoting public welfare, and ensuring intergenerational continuity, it translated the ethical principles of *Amāna* into a durable institutional framework that continues to offer valuable guidance for contemporary environmental governance.

4. The Responsibilities of the Imām and Sulṭān in Ecological Governance

Within classical Islamic political thought, the offices of the *Imām* and the *Sulṭān* were not viewed merely as positions of political authority but as institutions of divine trusteeship established to preserve religion, administer justice, and secure the welfare of society. The legitimacy of political leadership depended upon the faithful discharge of the *Amāna* entrusted by Allah rather than upon coercive power or personal privilege. Classical Muslim jurists consistently maintained that one of the ruler's essential responsibilities was the protection of public resources and the prevention of harm affecting the community. Since the natural environment constitutes one of the greatest public trusts entrusted to humanity, ecological governance became an inseparable aspect of political responsibility. Accordingly, environmental conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and protection of ecological balance were regarded as practical manifestations of the ruler's obligation to fulfil the divine trust.

The Qur'ān emphasizes that political authority itself is a trust requiring justice and responsibility. Allah Almighty states:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُاْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُواْ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْاْ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْأُمُورِ﴾[15]

Translation: *"Those who, if We establish them in the land, establish prayer, give zakāh, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of all affairs."*

This verse outlines the ethical responsibilities accompanying political authority. Classical exegetes explain that divine empowerment in the land is not granted for domination or personal enrichment but for establishing justice, protecting society, and implementing the principles of righteousness. The obligation to enjoin good and prevent wrongdoing extends to every aspect of public administration, including the preservation of communal resources and the prevention of environmental harm.

Classical political scholars elaborated these Qur'ānic principles within their theories of governance. Al-Māwardī, in *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, identifies the preservation of public interests (*maṣāliḥ al-ummah*) as one of the foremost responsibilities of the Imām. Abū Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ similarly argues that political authority exists to administer justice, protect public rights, and prevent corruption in society. Ibn Taymiyyah further emphasizes that leadership is among the greatest forms of *Amāna*, and rulers will be held accountable before Allah for the manner in which they exercise their authority. Collectively, these scholars establish that governance is fundamentally an ethical trust rather than a political privilege.

The environmental implications of these responsibilities are substantial. Public authorities bear responsibility for protecting water resources, preserving forests, regulating grazing lands, maintaining agricultural productivity, preventing pollution, and safeguarding common resources from unlawful exploitation. Classical Islamic governance recognized that environmental degradation directly affects public welfare by threatening food security, public health, economic stability, and social justice. Consequently, the ruler was expected to intervene whenever private interests endangered communal resources or disrupted ecological balance.

The ruler's responsibility also included the appointment of qualified officials responsible for supervising environmental matters, implementing public regulations, resolving disputes concerning land and water, and enforcing legal measures designed to prevent harm. Institutions such as the *Ḥisbah* and *Ḥimā* operated under the authority of the Imām or Sulṭān, demonstrating that ecological governance formed part of the broader administrative structure of the Islamic state. Effective environmental protection therefore depended not only upon ethical guidance but also upon sound political institutions capable of implementing the principles of *Amāna* in public life.

Another important aspect of political trusteeship concerns intergenerational responsibility. The ruler is obligated to preserve natural resources in a manner that safeguards the rights of future generations. Policies leading to irreversible environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, or destruction of ecological systems violate the objectives of Islamic governance because they undermine the long-term welfare of society. Classical principles of justice and public welfare therefore require political leaders to adopt policies that balance present needs with future sustainability.

In contemporary discussions of environmental governance, governments play a central role in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource management. Classical Islamic political thought offers an enduring ethical perspective by grounding governmental responsibility in divine accountability rather than merely administrative efficiency. Political authority becomes a sacred trust requiring rulers to govern with justice, wisdom, moderation, and concern for the integrity of creation. This understanding strengthens the moral foundations of environmental policy while emphasizing that ecological stewardship is an essential component of legitimate governance.

Accordingly, the responsibilities of the Imām and Sulṭān extend beyond maintaining political order to include the protection of the natural environment as part of the divine trust entrusted to public authority. By preserving ecological balance, regulating the sustainable use of natural resources, and protecting the rights of present and future generations, political leaders fulfil one of the highest objectives of Islamic governance and demonstrate faithful adherence to the principle of *Amāna*.

Section Four: Justice, Rights, and Ecological Ethics in Classical Islamic Political Heritage

Justice (*ʿAdl*), rights (*Ḥuqūq*), and ethical responsibility constitute the normative foundation of classical Islamic political thought. Muslim political jurists regarded governance as a divine trust whose primary objective was the establishment of justice, the protection of public welfare, and the preservation of the order created by Allah. Although classical scholars did not employ the modern terminology of "ecological ethics," they extensively discussed principles

such as *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, prevention of harm, public welfare, and the prohibition of corruption. These principles collectively provide a coherent ethical framework for environmental governance. Their discussions reveal that the protection of land, water, animals, forests, and other public resources formed an integral part of political responsibility. Accordingly, ecological stewardship was not viewed merely as an individual moral virtue but as a legal and political obligation binding rulers, institutions, and citizens alike. This section examines the foundations of ecological justice, intergenerational responsibility, the rights of non-human creatures, and the practical implementation of environmental governance in the classical Islamic political tradition.

1. ʿAdl and Mīzān as Foundations of Ecological Justice

Justice (*ʿAdl*) and balance (*Mīzān*) constitute two of the most fundamental principles of the Qur'ānic worldview and classical Islamic political thought. Classical Muslim scholars consistently maintained that justice is the primary objective of political authority, while *Mīzān* represents the universal harmony established by Allah throughout creation. Political leadership is therefore entrusted not only with protecting human rights and maintaining social order but also with preserving the ecological balance upon which human life depends. Although classical scholars did not employ the modern term "ecological justice," their discussions concerning public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), trusteeship (*amāna*), prevention of corruption (*fasād*), and protection of public resources collectively establish a comprehensive ethical foundation for environmental governance. Thus, ecological justice emerges naturally from the broader Islamic conception of justice and responsible stewardship.

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأۡمُرُ بِٱلۡعَدۡلِ وَٱلۡإِحۡسَٰنِ وَ إِيتَآيِٕ ذِي ٱلۡقُرۡبَىٰ وَيَنۡهَىٰ عَنِ ٱلۡفَحۡشَآءِ وَٱلۡمُنكَرِ وَٱلۡبَغۡيِۚ﴾[16]

Translation: *Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and generosity toward relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression.*

This verse establishes justice as a universal and comprehensive principle that governs every sphere of human life. The Qur'ānic command of justice extends beyond judicial and political affairs to include humanity's relationship with the natural environment. Since natural resources are divine trusts entrusted to humankind, their equitable use and protection constitute an essential aspect of justice. Environmental degradation, pollution, deforestation, and the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources violate the balance established by Allah and deprive present as well as future generations of their legitimate rights. Therefore, ecological stewardship is not merely an environmental concern but a practical application of the Qur'ānic principle of justice, requiring political authorities and society alike to preserve the integrity of creation.

Al-Māwardī states:

«الإِمَامَةُ مَوْضُوعَةٌ لِخِلَافَةِ النُّبُوَّةِ فِي حِرَاسَةِ الدِّينِ وَسِيَاسَةِ الدُّنْيَا بِهِ[17]».

Translation: *"The Imamate is established as the succession to Prophethood for the protection of religion and the administration of worldly affairs in accordance with it."*

Al-Māwardī presents political authority as a sacred trust rather than an instrument of domination. His definition of the Imamate encompasses every aspect of public administration

necessary for safeguarding the welfare of society. Although he does not explicitly discuss environmental governance, the administration of worldly affairs necessarily includes the protection of public resources such as land, water, forests, and agricultural wealth. Since these resources sustain the social and economic well-being of the community, preserving them becomes part of the ruler's political and religious responsibility. Accordingly, environmental conservation is consistent with al-Māwardī's understanding of legitimate governance founded upon justice and public welfare.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah states:

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُقِيمُ الدَّوْلَةَ الْعَادِلَةَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ كَافِرَةً، وَلَا يُقِيمُ الدَّوْلَةَ الظَّالِمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مُسْلِمَةً[18]».

Translation: *"Indeed, Allah upholds the just state even if it is unbelieving, but He does not uphold the oppressive state even if it is Muslim."*

Ibn Taymiyyah identifies justice as the essential foundation of political stability and civilizational continuity. His statement emphasizes that the survival of states depends upon justice rather than mere religious affiliation. This principle extends naturally to environmental governance because ecological destruction, monopolization of public resources, and environmental pollution constitute forms of injustice that violate the rights of society and future generations. A government that neglects environmental protection fails to fulfil its trusteeship over public resources and consequently undermines the very justice upon which political legitimacy depends. His political philosophy therefore provides a strong ethical basis for sustainable environmental governance.

The combined perspectives of the Qur'ān, al-Māwardī, and Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrate that ecological justice is deeply embedded within classical Islamic political thought. Justice is not confined to courts, legislation, or political institutions but extends to the responsible governance of Allah's creation. The protection of ecological balance, equitable management of natural resources, and prevention of environmental degradation are therefore indispensable expressions of *ʿAdl* and faithful fulfilment of the divine trust (*Amāna*), ensuring the welfare of both present and future generations.

2. Intergenerational Responsibility and Sustainable Political Stewardship

Intergenerational responsibility is a fundamental principle embedded within classical Islamic political thought, although the terminology itself is modern. Classical Muslim jurists understood that humanity is neither the absolute owner of the earth nor entitled to exploit its resources without limitation. Rather, each generation inherits the natural world as a trust (*Amāna*) from Allah and bears the responsibility of preserving it for future generations. This understanding shaped the Islamic conception of political stewardship, whereby rulers and citizens were expected to manage natural resources with justice, moderation, and long-term vision. Environmental sustainability, therefore, is not merely an economic or political objective but a religious obligation rooted in divine accountability and the preservation of public welfare (*Maṣlaḥah*). The continuity of human civilization depends upon maintaining the ecological balance established by Allah and ensuring that future generations inherit an environment capable of sustaining life and prosperity.

﴿ثُمَّ جَعَلۡنَٰكُمۡ خَلَٰٓئِفَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ لِنَنظُرَ كَيۡفَ تَعۡمَلُونَ﴾[19]

Translation: *Then We made you successors on the earth after them so that We might observe how you conduct yourselves.*

This verse establishes the principle of succession (*istikhlāf*) across generations. Humanity succeeds previous communities not as absolute owners of the earth but as trustees who will ultimately be held accountable before Allah for the manner in which they administer His creation. The verse introduces a long-term ethical perspective by reminding human beings that every generation receives the earth temporarily and will eventually pass it on to those who come after them. Consequently, environmental degradation, reckless exploitation of natural resources, and unsustainable development violate the responsibility entrusted to humanity because they deprive future generations of resources that rightfully belong to them. Sustainable stewardship therefore represents an essential dimension of Qur'ānic accountability and responsible governance.

Imām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī states:

«مَقْصُودُ الشَّرْعِ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ خَمْسَةٌ: أَنْ يَحْفَظَ عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ، وَنَفْسَهُمْ، وَعَقْلَهُمْ، وَنَسْلَهُمْ، وَمَالَهُمْ[20]».

Translation: *"The objective of the Sharīʿah concerning humanity is to preserve five essentials: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property."*

Al-Ghazālī's formulation of the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah provides an important foundation for intergenerational environmental responsibility. The preservation of life, lineage, and property cannot be achieved without protecting the environmental systems that sustain them. Fertile land, clean water, forests, biodiversity, and ecological stability are indispensable for the continuity of human civilization. Although al-Ghazālī does not explicitly discuss environmental governance, his theory clearly implies that policies leading to irreversible ecological degradation undermine the very objectives of the Sharīʿah. Political authorities are therefore obligated to adopt long-term strategies that preserve natural resources for future generations rather than pursuing temporary economic or political gains.

Imām Ibn Khaldūn states:

«الظُّلْمُ مُؤْذِنٌ بِخَرَابِ الْعُمْرَانِ[21]».

Translation: *"Oppression leads to the destruction of civilization."*

Ibn Khaldūn's celebrated principle extends beyond political oppression to include every practice that undermines the sustainability and prosperity of society. His analysis of the rise and decline of civilizations demonstrates that injustice, misuse of public wealth, excessive exploitation, and administrative corruption ultimately weaken states and destroy the foundations of civilization. From an ecological perspective, environmental degradation and irresponsible depletion of natural resources may likewise be understood as forms of injustice because they erode the material foundations upon which future societies depend. Sustainable political stewardship therefore requires governments to protect ecological systems as essential components of civilizational continuity.

The combined perspectives of the Qur'ān, Imām al-Ghazālī, and Imām Ibn Khaldūn demonstrate that intergenerational responsibility is deeply rooted in classical Islamic political thought. Every generation is entrusted with preserving Allah's creation and transmitting its

resources responsibly to those who follow. Sustainable governance is therefore not simply a modern environmental objective but a direct manifestation of *Amāna*, requiring political authorities and society alike to safeguard ecological balance, public welfare, and the long-term continuity of human civilization in accordance with the ethical principles of the Sharīʿah.

3. Rights of Animals and Natural Resources in Classical Islamic Political Theory

The protection of animals and natural resources occupies an important position within classical Islamic political thought. Although classical Muslim jurists did not formulate an independent theory of environmental rights in the modern sense, they consistently maintained that animals, vegetation, water resources, and public lands are part of the divine trust (*Amāna*) entrusted to humanity. Political authority was therefore expected to regulate the use of natural resources in a manner that prevented cruelty, waste, and environmental destruction while ensuring justice and public welfare. The Islamic conception of stewardship extends beyond human interests to recognize that all creatures are part of Allah's creation and possess a value that demands respect and protection. Consequently, ecological governance includes safeguarding the welfare of animals and preserving natural resources as an integral component of political responsibility.

Allah Almighty states:

﴿وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٖ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَلَا طَٰٓئِرٖ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيۡهِ إِلَّآ أُمَمٌ أَمۡثَالُكُمۡۚ﴾[22]

> **Translation:** *There is no creature moving upon the earth nor any bird flying with its wings except that they are communities like you.*

This verse presents a profound Qur'ānic understanding of the natural world by recognizing animals as organized communities created by Allah. It challenges any notion that non-human creatures exist merely for unrestricted human exploitation. Instead, animals possess an independent status within creation and form part of the ecological order established by Allah. Consequently, political policies that lead to habitat destruction, extinction of species, or unnecessary cruelty towards animals contradict the ethical foundations of the Qur'ānic worldview. The verse also broadens the concept of justice by reminding humanity that environmental governance should preserve the integrity of all living communities rather than serving only immediate human interests.

Imām Abū Yūsuf states:

«وَعَلَى الْإِمَامِ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ لِلنَّاسِ بِمَا فِيهِ صَلَاحُهُمْ، وَيَدْفَعَ عَنْهُمُ الضَّرَرَ[23]».

> **Translation:** *The ruler is obligated to consider whatever serves the welfare of the people and to remove harm from them.*

Abū Yūsuf establishes public welfare as one of the principal objectives of political authority. Although his discussion primarily concerns taxation, public finance, and state administration, the principle possesses clear environmental implications. Protecting water resources, agricultural land, forests, and ecosystems directly contributes to public welfare, while environmental degradation produces widespread harm affecting health, livelihoods, and economic stability. Accordingly, the ruler's responsibility to remove harm naturally extends to preventing ecological damage and ensuring the sustainable management of public resources entrusted to society.

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim states:

«فَإِنَّ الشَّرِيعَةَ مَبْنَاهَا وَأَسَاسُهَا عَلَى الْحِكَمِ وَمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ فِي الْمَعَاشِ وَالْمَعَادِ[24]».

Translation: *The Sharīʿah is founded upon wisdom and the welfare of people in both this world and the Hereafter.*

Ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes that every ruling of the Sharīʿah seeks to realize wisdom, justice, and human welfare. Since environmental protection directly contributes to public health, food security, economic sustainability, and social stability, ecological stewardship falls naturally within the objectives of Islamic law. His legal philosophy implies that policies resulting in environmental destruction or depletion of natural resources contradict the wisdom and welfare upon which the Sharīʿah is established. Therefore, sustainable management of natural resources represents an important application of Islamic political ethics and faithful fulfilment of *Amāna*.

The combined perspectives of the Qur'ān, Imām Abū Yūsuf, and Imām Ibn al-Qayyim demonstrate that classical Islamic political thought recognizes the protection of animals and natural resources as an essential component of public responsibility. Environmental stewardship is not limited to preserving resources for human benefit but includes respecting the broader ecological order created by Allah. Political authority is therefore obligated to prevent environmental harm, safeguard biodiversity, and administer natural resources with justice, moderation, and accountability, thereby fulfilling the divine trust entrusted to humanity.

4. Theory and Practice: Assessing Environmental Governance in Classical Muslim States

Classical Islamic political thought presents a comprehensive ethical framework for environmental governance through the principles of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, justice (*ʿAdl*), public welfare (*Maṣlaḥah*), and the prevention of corruption (*Fasād*). Historical Muslim states attempted to implement these principles through institutions such as the *Ḥisbah*, *Ḥimā*, public endowments (*Awqāf*), and judicial supervision of communal resources. Nevertheless, as in every historical civilization, a distinction sometimes existed between normative political theory and practical political administration. While classical jurists consistently emphasized justice, accountability, and responsible stewardship, the actual implementation of these ideals depended upon the competence and integrity of individual rulers and public institutions. Evaluating both the theoretical foundations and their historical application provides a balanced understanding of environmental governance within the Islamic political tradition and highlights the continuing relevance of these principles for contemporary ecological challenges.

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوۡمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُواْ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمۡ﴾[25]

Translation: *Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.*

This verse establishes a universal principle of civilizational development and decline. Social reform, political stability, and sustainable governance cannot be achieved solely through laws and institutions unless accompanied by moral responsibility and ethical commitment. Environmental governance follows the same principle. Even the most comprehensive political system cannot successfully protect natural resources if rulers neglect their responsibilities or

citizens misuse the blessings entrusted to them. Sustainable environmental governance therefore depends upon both institutional effectiveness and ethical transformation, making accountability an indispensable element of ecological stewardship.

Imām Ibn Khaldūn states:

«الْعَدْلُ أَسَاسُ الْعُمْرَانِ، وَالظُّلْمُ مُؤْذِنٌ بِخَرَابِهِ[26]».

Translation: *Justice is the foundation of civilization, while oppression is the cause of its destruction.*

Ibn Khaldūn's political philosophy demonstrates that the prosperity and continuity of civilizations are inseparable from justice. His analysis indicates that injustice weakens political institutions, undermines economic productivity, and eventually leads to social decline. The same principle applies to environmental governance. Policies that permit excessive exploitation of natural resources, destroy ecosystems, or neglect public welfare ultimately threaten the sustainability of civilization itself. Thus, environmental justice becomes one of the practical foundations upon which enduring political stability depends.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah states:

«وِلَايَةُ أُمُورِ النَّاسِ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ وَاجِبَاتِ الدِّينِ، بَلْ لَا قِيَامَ لِلدِّينِ وَلَا لِلدُّنْيَا إِلَّا بِهَا[27]».

Translation: *The administration of the affairs of the people is among the greatest obligations of religion; indeed, neither religion nor worldly life can be properly established without it.*

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that political authority exists to protect the interests of society and establish justice through effective governance. This responsibility naturally extends to environmental administration because natural resources constitute essential public trusts upon which human welfare depends. The proper management of water resources, agricultural lands, forests, and public property therefore forms part of the ruler's religious obligation. Whenever political authorities neglect these responsibilities, they fail to fulfil the trust of governance entrusted to them by Allah.

The theoretical foundations developed by classical Muslim scholars demonstrate remarkable consistency in emphasizing justice, accountability, stewardship, and public welfare. Historical practice, however, varied according to the political circumstances, administrative capacity, and moral commitment of different Muslim states. Nevertheless, the institutions of *Ḥisbah*, *Ḥimā*, judicial supervision, and charitable endowments illustrate that environmental governance was not absent from classical Islamic civilization but formed an important component of responsible political administration. These historical experiences indicate that effective ecological governance requires not only sound legal principles but also competent institutions, ethical leadership, and active public participation. Consequently, the classical Islamic political heritage continues to offer valuable normative guidance for addressing contemporary environmental challenges through governance founded upon justice, responsibility, and faithful fulfilment of the divine trust.

Section Five: Reconstructing Ecological Amāna for Contemporary Islamic Political Thought

The unprecedented environmental crises of the modern world—including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, water scarcity, deforestation, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources—have renewed scholarly interest in the classical Islamic concept of *Amāna* as a normative foundation for ecological governance. While classical Muslim jurists developed comprehensive principles concerning trusteeship, justice, public welfare, and responsible governance, contemporary Islamic political thought seeks to reinterpret these principles in light of present environmental challenges. Rather than treating environmental protection as a peripheral ethical concern, modern Muslim scholars increasingly regard ecological stewardship as an integral objective of Islamic political philosophy. The Qur'ānic concepts of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, and *ʿAdl* continue to provide an enduring ethical framework capable of guiding environmental legislation, public policy, and sustainable development. This section examines how the classical heritage may be reconstructed to formulate a contemporary Islamic political theory of ecological trusteeship that addresses global environmental challenges while remaining faithful to the principles of the Qur'ān and the classical scholarly tradition.

1. Reinterpreting Amāna in Contemporary Environmental Political Discourse

The contemporary environmental crisis has encouraged Muslim scholars to revisit the Qur'ānic concept of *Amāna* as one of the foundational principles of Islamic environmental ethics and political responsibility. Classical Muslim jurists primarily discussed *Amāna* within the contexts of governance, judicial responsibility, public administration, and legal obligations. Contemporary Islamic political thought, however, extends this concept to encompass humanity's collective responsibility for protecting ecological systems and preserving the integrity of Allah's creation. This approach does not alter the original meaning of *Amāna*; rather, it applies its enduring principles to contemporary environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. Consequently, ecological stewardship has become an essential dimension of contemporary Islamic political discourse, reflecting the continuing relevance of classical Islamic principles in addressing global environmental concerns.

Imām al-Shāṭibī states:

«إِنَّ الشَّرِيعَةَ إِنَّمَا وُضِعَتْ لِمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ فِي الْعَاجِلِ وَالْآجِلِ.»[28]

> Translation: *"Indeed, the Sharīʿah has been established for the welfare of human beings in both this world and the Hereafter."*

Al-Shāṭibī's statement establishes that every objective of the Sharīʿah is directed towards securing human welfare in both temporal and eternal dimensions. Contemporary environmental challenges directly threaten these objectives because environmental degradation, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources endanger human life, economic stability, public health, and social justice. Therefore, environmental protection should be understood as a legitimate extension of the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* rather than as an external concept introduced into Islamic thought. Sustainable environmental governance thus represents a practical application of the classical objectives of Islamic law.

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim states:

«فَإِنَّ الشَّرِيعَةَ مَبْنَاهَا وَأَسَاسُهَا عَلَى الْحِكَمِ وَمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ فِي الْمَعَاشِ وَالْمَعَادِ.»[29]

Translation: *"The Sharīʿah is founded upon wisdom and the welfare of humanity in this world and the Hereafter."*

Ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes that justice, wisdom, mercy, and public welfare constitute the essential foundations of Islamic law. Environmental conservation directly serves these objectives by preserving the ecological conditions necessary for human survival, social stability, and sustainable development. Policies aimed at conserving biodiversity, protecting natural resources, reducing environmental degradation, and promoting sustainable governance therefore conform to the broader objectives of the Sharīʿah. His legal philosophy demonstrates that ecological stewardship is not a modern innovation but a natural application of the enduring principles of Islamic law.

The combined perspectives of Imām al-Shāṭibī and Imām Ibn al-Qayyim demonstrate that reconstructing the concept of ecological *Amāna* does not require introducing new theological foundations. Rather, it requires applying the established principles of the Sharīʿah to contemporary environmental realities. The classical concepts of public welfare (*Maṣlaḥah*), justice (*ʿAdl*), trusteeship (*Amāna*), and accountability provide a comprehensive ethical framework through which contemporary Islamic political thought can formulate a coherent and sustainable model of environmental governance.

2. Contemporary Models of Islamic Environmental Governance

The growing environmental challenges confronting Muslim societies have encouraged contemporary scholars and policymakers to revisit the classical principles of Islamic political thought in order to formulate effective models of environmental governance. Rather than separating environmental protection from religious and political responsibilities, contemporary Islamic governance increasingly seeks to integrate the principles of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *Maṣlaḥah*, and sustainable development into public policy and state institutions. This approach emphasizes that environmental conservation should become an essential component of governance, legislation, education, economic planning, and civic responsibility. By drawing upon the rich legacy of classical Islamic political thought, modern Islamic environmental governance aims to establish policies that simultaneously fulfil religious obligations, protect public welfare, and ensure ecological sustainability.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah states:

«وِلَايَةُ أُمُورِ النَّاسِ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ وَاجِبَاتِ الدِّينِ، بَلْ لَا قِيَامَ لِلدِّينِ وَلَا لِلدُّنْيَا إِلَّا بِهَا[30]».

Translation: *"The administration of the affairs of the people is among the greatest obligations of religion; indeed, neither religion nor worldly life can be properly established without it."*

Ibn Taymiyyah establishes that political authority exists to secure the welfare of society through responsible governance. Contemporary environmental governance naturally falls within this responsibility because environmental degradation directly threatens public health, food security, economic development, and social stability. Governments therefore bear a religious and political obligation to formulate environmental legislation, regulate the

sustainable use of natural resources, and establish institutions capable of protecting ecosystems from pollution and excessive exploitation. His principle demonstrates that ecological governance is not an optional administrative function but an essential responsibility of legitimate political authority.

Imām al-Māwardī states:

«فَأَمَّا سِيَاسَةُ الدُّنْيَا فَبِتَدْبِيرِ أُمُورِهَا عَلَى وَجْهِ الْمَصْلَحَةِ[31]».

> **Translation:** *"The administration of worldly affairs is conducted through managing them in accordance with the public interest."*

Al-Māwardī emphasizes that public administration must always be directed toward the realization of *Maṣlaḥah* (public welfare). In the contemporary context, environmental sustainability has become one of the greatest dimensions of public welfare because the quality of air, water, land, forests, and biodiversity directly affects every aspect of human life. Policies promoting renewable energy, conservation of natural resources, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and climate resilience therefore represent practical applications of the classical Islamic principle of governing according to the public interest. Environmental governance thus becomes an extension of the ruler's responsibility to administer society in a manner that secures lasting welfare.

The combined perspectives of Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Māwardī demonstrate that contemporary Islamic environmental governance should not be viewed as an entirely new political theory but as the continuation of principles deeply rooted in the classical Islamic tradition. The concepts of responsible leadership, public welfare, accountability, and trusteeship provide an enduring framework for developing modern environmental institutions capable of addressing contemporary ecological challenges. By integrating these classical principles into legislation, public policy, education, and institutional reform, Muslim societies can formulate an Islamic model of environmental governance that remains faithful to the objectives of the Sharīʿah while responding effectively to present-day environmental realities.

3. Challenges to Ecological Trusteeship in Modern Muslim Societies

The implementation of ecological *Amāna* in contemporary Muslim societies faces numerous intellectual, political, economic, and institutional challenges. Although the classical Islamic tradition provides a comprehensive ethical framework for environmental stewardship through the concepts of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *ʿAdl*, and *Maṣlaḥah*, these principles are not always adequately reflected in contemporary governance or public policy. Rapid urbanization, industrial expansion, climate change, population growth, unsustainable consumption, environmental pollution, and weak institutional enforcement have intensified ecological degradation across many Muslim-majority countries. Addressing these challenges requires not only effective environmental legislation but also a renewed commitment to the ethical values embedded within the Islamic political heritage. Ecological trusteeship can only be realized when political institutions, religious scholarship, educational systems, and civil society collectively promote responsible stewardship of Allah's creation.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah states:

«إِنَّ الْوِلَايَةَ إِنَّمَا جُعِلَتْ لِإِقَامَةِ الدِّينِ وَسِيَاسَةِ الدُّنْيَا بِهِ[32]».

Translation: *"Political authority has been established for the purpose of upholding religion and administering worldly affairs in accordance with it."*

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that governance must always remain guided by the principles of the Sharīʿah rather than by personal interests or political expediency. This principle carries important environmental implications because ecological degradation frequently results from governance that neglects justice, accountability, and public welfare. When environmental policies prioritize short-term economic interests over sustainable development, political authority fails to fulfil the trust entrusted to it by Allah. Contemporary ecological challenges therefore require governments to strengthen environmental legislation, improve institutional accountability, and formulate policies that balance economic development with the protection of natural resources and ecological systems.

Imām al-Shāṭibī states:

«التَّكَالِيفُ كُلُّهَا رَاجِعَةٌ إِلَى مَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ[33]».

Translation: *"All legal obligations ultimately return to securing the welfare of humanity."*

Al-Shāṭibī's principle provides a comprehensive framework for addressing modern environmental challenges through the objectives of the Sharīʿah. Environmental degradation threatens public health, economic security, food production, water availability, and the overall well-being of society. Consequently, environmental protection is no longer merely an ethical recommendation but a practical necessity for preserving the public welfare that Islamic law seeks to secure. Contemporary Muslim societies should therefore integrate environmental education, sustainable resource management, ecological legislation, and climate resilience into national development strategies as practical applications of *Maṣlaḥah* and responsible governance.

The perspectives of Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Shāṭibī demonstrate that the principal obstacles to ecological trusteeship do not arise from deficiencies within the Islamic intellectual tradition but from shortcomings in contemporary implementation. The classical concepts of *Amāna*, justice, accountability, and public welfare continue to provide sufficient normative guidance for addressing present environmental crises. Strengthening environmental institutions, promoting ecological awareness, encouraging responsible consumption, and integrating Islamic ethical principles into public policy will enable Muslim societies to fulfil the trust entrusted to them by Allah while contributing constructively to global efforts aimed at environmental sustainability and ecological justice.

4. Toward a Contemporary Islamic Political Theory of Ecological Amāna

The reconstruction of a contemporary Islamic political theory of ecological *Amāna* represents one of the most significant intellectual challenges facing modern Islamic scholarship. While classical Muslim jurists established enduring principles of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *ʿAdl*, *Maṣlaḥah*, and accountability, contemporary environmental crises require these principles to be systematically integrated into modern political institutions, environmental legislation,

economic policy, and public administration. Rather than creating an entirely new environmental philosophy, contemporary Islamic political thought should build upon its classical heritage to formulate a coherent theory of ecological governance that addresses climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and sustainable development. Such a theory would reaffirm that environmental stewardship is not merely an ethical recommendation but an essential objective of Islamic governance and a practical manifestation of humanity's covenant with Allah.

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim states:

«فَإِنَّ الشَّرِيعَةَ مَبْنَاهَا وَأَسَاسُهَا عَلَى الْحِكَمِ وَمَصَالِحِ الْعِبَادِ فِي الْمَعَاشِ وَالْمَعَادِ، وَهِيَ عَدْلٌ كُلُّهَا، وَرَحْمَةٌ كُلُّهَا، وَمَصَالِحُ كُلُّهَا[34]».

Translation: *"The Sharīʿah is founded upon wisdom and the welfare of humanity in this world and the Hereafter; it is entirely justice, entirely mercy, and entirely devoted to human welfare."*

Ibn al-Qayyim establishes that justice, mercy, wisdom, and public welfare constitute the universal objectives of Islamic law. These principles provide a comprehensive foundation for contemporary environmental governance because ecological protection directly promotes human welfare, prevents widespread harm, and preserves the conditions necessary for sustainable development. Environmental policies that conserve biodiversity, regulate the responsible use of natural resources, reduce pollution, and protect future generations therefore represent practical applications of the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah. His legal philosophy demonstrates that ecological stewardship is fully consistent with the enduring ethical framework of classical Islamic political thought.

Imām Ibn Khaldūn states:

«الْعُمْرَانُ غَايَةُ الِاجْتِمَاعِ الْإِنْسَانِيِّ[35]».

Translation: *"Civilization is the ultimate objective of human social organization."*

Ibn Khaldūn's theory of civilization highlights the close relationship between sound governance, economic stability, social cohesion, and the sustainable management of resources. A flourishing civilization cannot endure where environmental degradation, resource depletion, and ecological imbalance undermine the foundations of human life. Contemporary Islamic political theory should therefore incorporate environmental sustainability as an essential element of civilizational development rather than treating it as a secondary policy concern. Responsible ecological governance strengthens economic resilience, protects public welfare, and contributes to the long-term stability of society, thereby fulfilling the broader objectives of Islamic political thought.

The perspectives of Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Khaldūn demonstrate that the classical Islamic intellectual tradition possesses sufficient theoretical depth to support the development of a contemporary Islamic political theory of ecological *Amāna*. By integrating the principles of justice, trusteeship, public welfare, sustainability, and accountability into modern governance, Muslim societies can formulate environmental policies that remain faithful to the objectives of the Sharīʿah while responding effectively to contemporary ecological challenges. Such a

reconstruction would reaffirm that the protection of Allah's creation is an essential dimension of Islamic political responsibility and an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development, environmental justice, and the continued prosperity of human civilization.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the concept of *Amāna* occupies a central position in the Qur'ān and serves as one of the foundational principles of classical Islamic political thought. Rather than limiting *Amāna* to personal honesty or individual moral conduct, the Qur'ān presents it as a comprehensive trust encompassing religious commitment, political authority, legal responsibility, social justice, and ecological stewardship. Classical Muslim scholars—including al-Māwardī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Shāṭibī, Ibn al-Qayyim, Abū Yūsuf, and Ibn Khaldūn—consistently interpreted political authority as a divinely entrusted responsibility directed toward establishing justice, protecting public welfare, and preserving the order created by Allah. Their writings collectively demonstrate that environmental governance was not foreign to the Islamic political tradition but formed an integral dimension of responsible governance through the principles of *Amāna*, *Khilāfah*, *Maṣlaḥah*, and *ʿAdl*.

The research further reveals that classical Islamic institutions such as the *Ḥisbah*, *Ḥimā*, and *Waqf* translated these ethical principles into practical mechanisms for protecting public resources, regulating environmental use, and promoting sustainable management of natural assets. Although classical scholars did not employ contemporary environmental terminology, their legal and political theories provide a coherent normative framework capable of addressing present ecological challenges. The study also highlights that the objectives of the Sharīʿah (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*) provide a strong legal foundation for environmental conservation because ecological sustainability directly contributes to the preservation of life, property, public welfare, and future generations.

Finally, the study concludes that the reconstruction of ecological *Amāna* within contemporary Islamic political thought does not require the development of new theological principles. Rather, it requires the systematic application of the enduring concepts of trusteeship, justice, accountability, and public welfare to contemporary environmental governance. By integrating these classical principles into environmental legislation, public policy, educational institutions, and political administration, Muslim societies can formulate a comprehensive Islamic model of ecological governance capable of addressing modern environmental crises while remaining firmly rooted in the intellectual heritage of the Qur'ān and the classical Islamic political tradition. This integration affirms that protecting Allah's creation is not merely an environmental obligation but a fundamental expression of faithful trusteeship and responsible political leadership.

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6. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, 8:494–497.

7. Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 6:218–221.

8. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, Bāb Qawl Allāh Taʿālā: ﴿أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ﴾, Ḥadīth no. 7148.

9. *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:30.

10. *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt*, 37:24.

11. *Sūrat al-Nūr*, 24:55.

12. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2006), 15–18.

13. *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*, 7:56.

14. *Sūrat al-Rūm*, 30:41.

15. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa al-Raʿiyyah* (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1998), 17–21.

16. *Sūrat al-Naḥl*, 16:90.

17. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyyah*, 19.

18. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* (Madinah: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd, 2004), 28:146.

19. *Sūrat Yūnus*, 10:14.

20. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustaṣfā min ʿIlm al-Uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Sulaymān al-Ashqar (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 1997), 1:286–287.

21. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, ed. ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Dār Yaʿrub, 2004), 1:336.

22. *Sūrat al-Anʿām*, 6:38.

23. Yaʿqūb ibn Ibrāhīm Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1979), 27–29.

24. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991), 3:11–14.

25. *Sūrat al-Raʿd*, 13:11.

26. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1:343.

27. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa al-Raʿiyyah*, 13–18.

28. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, ed. Abū ʿUbaydah Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān (Cairo: Dār Ibn ʿAffān, 1997), 2:8–10.

29. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn*, 3:14.

30. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa al-Raʿiyyah*, 19–22.

31. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2006), 27–30.

32. Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa al-Raʿiyyah* (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1998), 23–25.

33. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, ed. Abū ʿUbaydah Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān (Cairo: Dār Ibn ʿAffān, 1997), 2:9–12.

34. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991), 3:15–18.

35. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, ed. ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad al-Darwīsh (Damascus: Dār Yaʿrub, 2004), 1:348–350.