



Book Review: Towards a Maqasid al-Shariah Index of Socio-Economic Development; Theory and Application

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The book *Towards a Maqasid al-Shariah Index of Socio-Economic Development*, edited by Salman Syed Ali, offers a new paradigm in measuring development based on the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah. This approach challenges the dominance of materialistic indicators like GDP by offering a comprehensive measure of human well-being, encompassing spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The book introduces two main methodological approaches—the achievement approach and the deprivation approach—and proposes the Maqasid al-Shariah Index (MSI) as an alternative development index. Research across chapters demonstrates that integrating Islamic values can enrich development theory and lead to more just and sustainable economic policies.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the discourse on global economic development has been dominated by the conventional economic paradigm oriented towards material growth. Indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Income (GNI) have become the primary benchmarks for a country's development success. However, this approach faces serious criticism for failing to capture the essence of human well-being comprehensively. Amidst rising social inequality, moral degradation, and environmental crises, there is a growing awareness that economic development cannot be separated from spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions.

It is in this context that Islamic economics offers an alternative paradigm rooted in the concept of *falah*—well-being that encompasses happiness in this world and the hereafter. *Falah* is measured not only by material wealth but also by the balance between physical, spiritual, and social needs. This paradigm is based on Maqasid al-Shariah, the primary objectives of Islamic law, which serve as the normative foundation for all aspects of human life, including socio-economic development.

The concept of Maqasid al-Shariah—classically developed by scholars like al-Ghazali, al-Juwayni, and al-Shatibi—asserts that true well-being is achieved through the preservation of five basic principles: religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*mal*). In the context of development, these five dimensions can be reinterpreted as pillars of comprehensive well-being: spirituality and morality (*din*), health and safety (*nafs*), education and intellectuality (*'aql*), social and demographic stability (*nasl*), and economic welfare and wealth distribution (*Rahayu, 2021*).

However, measuring development based on Maqasid faces significant methodological challenges. Conventional models like the Human Development Index (HDI) or the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) do not include the spiritual and moral dimensions that are core to development in Islam. Efforts to integrate Maqasid values into an empirical framework require an interdisciplinary approach involving economics, sociology, Islamic law, and statistics.

Through the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI)—under the auspices of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)—Salman Syed Ali and the book's contributors initiated an ambitious project to develop a development index based on Maqasid al-

Shariah. This initiative began with a series of international workshops held in Jeddah (2014), Yogyakarta (2015), and Kuala Lumpur (2015), aiming to build a conceptual framework, select relevant indicators, and empirically test its application in various member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

In his introduction, Ali (2019) asserts that the primary goal of development in Islam is not merely to eliminate poverty or increase economic growth, but to achieve "worship-oriented development"—development that enables humans to fulfill their responsibility as Allah's vicegerents on earth (*istikhlaf*). Such development must maintain a balance between worldly and otherworldly needs and ensure that material progress does not compromise moral and social values.

Thus, the development of the Maqasid al-Shariah Index (MSI) is not just a methodological innovation but also a paradigm transformation. MSI aims to measure development holistically by incorporating the spiritual and ethical dimensions that have hitherto been neglected by mainstream economic approaches. In a broader context, MSI offers a conceptual foundation for Muslim countries to formulate Maqasid-based public policies, such as tackling multidimensional poverty, improving the quality of education and health, and strengthening moral values in socio-economic life (*As-Salafiyah et al., 2022*).

More than just a measurement tool, MSI represents an "Islamic moral economy in practice"—an effort to bridge Shariah values with modern development policies. Through this index, well-being is measured not only by economic outcomes but also by the success in preserving human values, distributive justice, and social responsibility. This approach becomes increasingly relevant amidst the challenges of globalization and the growing complexity of the world's economic ethical crisis.

Against this background, this book is a significant milestone in the development of contemporary Islamic development theory. It attempts to unify the tawhidi epistemology (unity between material and spiritual aspects) with modern empirical approaches, thus paving the way for the emergence of a development model that is more sustainable, just, and consistent with universal Islamic values (*As-Salafiyah, 2023*).

REVIEW & DISCUSSION

The book, edited by Salman Syed Ali, presents comprehensive research findings from various academics and practitioners of Islamic economics associated with institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Durham University, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Universitas Indonesia, and Istanbul Medeniyet University. Each chapter examines conceptual and empirical approaches to operationalize Maqasid al-Shariah in the context of socio-economic development.

Generally, the research findings contained in this book can be categorized into four main groups, as classified by Ali (2019):

- Studies that explicitly construct the MSI index theoretically and empirically.
- Studies that offer measurement methodologies but have not fully developed an index.
- Studies that examine certain aspects of Maqasid as part of a broader index.
- Conceptual studies that question the possibility and benefits of a Maqasid-based index.

Maqasid al-Shariah Index: Quantifying Islamic Well-being

Several prominent studies, such as by Rafi Amir-ud-Din (Chapter 2), attempt to construct a Maqasid al-Shariah Index (MSI) by comparing 57 OIC member countries. Despite facing limitations in empirical data, this research shows that spiritual and moral indicators can be integrated with economic indicators to provide a more complete picture of well-being. Amir-ud-Din uses Chakravarty's (2003) geometric approach to adjust weights between dimensions, and the results show significant differences between MSI rankings and the Human Development Index (HDI), indicating that moral and spiritual development do not always align with conventional economic progress.

Houssein Eddine Bedoui (Chapter 3) expands this framework by creating a pentagonal model of the five pillars of Maqasid. This model emphasizes balance among dimensions; imbalance in one dimension (e.g., wealth inequality or low faith) will lower the overall development level. This approach demonstrates that Islamic development demands balance, not just unilateral growth.

Methodological Innovations in Measuring Maqasid

One of the book's main contributions lies in exploring new methodologies for Maqasid-based

development measurement. M. Fevzi Esen and Adem Esen (Chapter 7) introduce a statistical approach to measure the MSI index with measurable variables such as education level, mortality rates, and spiritual indicators. Moussa Larbani and Ismail Nizam (Chapter 8) use fuzzy set theory, which allows qualitative measures like "level of religiosity" or "spiritual satisfaction" to be quantified through membership functions. Ali and Hasan (Chapter 15) apply the Alkire-Foster method, previously used in the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), but adapted to the five dimensions of Maqasid. This method assesses well-being through the level of "deprivation" relative to the minimum threshold of Maqasid. This latter approach is considered more practical as it does not require complex weighting between dimensions and is easier for policymakers to interpret. Ali and Hasan show that with this approach, the dimensions of *din* and *‘aql* have the largest contribution in reducing "Maqasid poverty" in several Muslim countries, indicating the important roles of spirituality and education in development.

Empirical Applications: Cases of Indonesia and Malaysia

The book also features applied research in various Muslim country contexts. Kasri and Ahmed (Chapter 13) test the application of the Maqasid al-Shariah-based Socio-Economic Development Framework in Indonesia. Using surveys of zakat recipients and non-monetary indicators such as health, education, and social participation, they construct a Maqasid-based Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI-MS). The results show that poverty from a Maqasid perspective is caused not only by low income but also by weak religious education, family instability, and lack of access to healthcare services. This approach offers a new dimension for zakat policies and poverty alleviation programs.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Saladin Abdul Rasool and Ariffin Mohd Salleh (Chapter 14) apply a similar framework in Malaysia. They find that non-monetary indicators—such as social security, justice, and family integrity—have significant weight in determining national well-being. This study demonstrates that Maqasid-based poverty measurement can provide a more accurate mapping of community welfare.

Integration of Philosophy and Development Paradigm

Beyond technical aspects, the book also contains important philosophical reflections on the

epistemology of Islamic development. [Necati Aydin \(Chapter 11\)](#) affirms the importance of the tawhidi paradigm as a spiritual framework that unites material and non-material dimensions. He proposes an Islamic Human Development Index (I-HDI) model that links Qur'anic objectives (maqasid al-Qur'an) with contemporary well-being indicators. Thus, development is no longer seen merely as an economic process, but as a manifestation of the purpose of human existence: to be a servant of Allah ('abd) and a vicegerent on earth (khalifah fil-ardh).

Additionally, [Muhammad Mubashir Mukhtar et al. \(Chapter 9\)](#) develop the Hayat-e-Tayyibah Index (HTI), which emphasizes the ethical and spiritual dimensions in measuring well-being. HTI adopts the concept of "a good life" (Qur'an 16:97) and links it to social indicators such as justice, empathy, and community participation.

Synthesis and Policy Implications

From the overall research, several key findings stand out:

- Islamic development is multidimensional, encompassing spiritual, social, intellectual, and material aspects simultaneously.
- Maqasid-based indices are more representative than HDI because they include moral and ethical values as explicit dimensions of well-being.
- The deprivation approach is more efficient and relevant for public policy as it is easily translated into poverty alleviation and social development programs.
- The Maqasid al-Shariah Index (MSI) can function as a diagnostic tool for policymakers to assess the extent to which national development has achieved Shariah objectives.
- Integrating zakat, waqf, and Islamic social finance with MSI can strengthen the role of Islamic economic instruments in achieving distributive justice and sustainable well-being.

Conceptually, MSI also challenges the Western dichotomy between secular and religious development. By incorporating spiritual values into economic planning, MSI shifts the focus of development from "economic growth" towards "enhancing the quality of human life" in line with the values of justice ('adl), public interest (maslahah), and equality (musawah).

CONCLUSION

The book *Towards a Maqasid al-Shariah Index of Socio-Economic Development* is a significant milestone in contemporary Islamic development

literature. It successfully bridges the gap between the normative theory of Maqasid and the empirical practice of measuring well-being. The MSI approach affirms that true economic progress can only be achieved if development is directed towards strengthening spirituality, morality, education, and social justice.

This model opens up significant opportunities for the application of Maqasid-based policy in Muslim countries and even globally. Further research is needed to test the validity of MSI with cross-country primary data and to develop statistical instruments capable of capturing spiritual dimensions more accurately. In conclusion, Maqasid-based development is not merely a technocratic model, but a manifestation of the Islamic vision of a balanced and just life—an ideal that combines material progress with moral nobility and spiritual well-being ([Rusydia et al., 2022](#)). Maqasid-based policy refers to a framework for public policy and governance that is guided by the Maqasid al-Shariah—the higher objectives or purposes of Islamic law. Instead of focusing merely on the literal application of legal rulings (ahkam), this approach emphasizes achieving the overarching aims of Shariah in promoting human welfare (maslahah) and preventing harm (mafsadah).

A maqasid-based policy offers a holistic, ethical, and human-centered framework for governance and development. It bridges classical Islamic principles with modern policy needs—seeking not only legal compliance but substantive justice, equity, and well-being. Such a framework can serve as a moral compass for sustainable and inclusive development in Muslim-majority societies and beyond.

Through conceptual, methodological, and empirical approaches, the book *Towards a Maqasid al-Shariah Index of Socio-Economic Development* not only enriches the literature on Islamic development but also offers tangible solutions to the global economic moral crisis. MSI is not just a measurement tool, but a new ethical framework for balanced and just human development. By integrating Maqasid al-Shariah into public policy and well-being measurement systems, the Muslim world has the opportunity to pioneer a more holistic development paradigm—uniting spiritual and material, moral and scientific, individual and social dimensions. This paradigm reaffirms Islam's core message that true progress is the balance between worldly success and salvation in the hereafter.

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