

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS IN LINE
WITH THE *MAQĀSID AL-SHARĪ'AH* :
THE CASE OF CALIPH 'UMAR IBN 'ABD AL-'AZĪZ

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Abstract

The paper addresses the practical approach of the rightly-guided caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz. Its emphasis is on the unique and successful methods used by this exceptional leader. He led the Muslim community with justice and this in itself helped regain the prestige of the Muslims. The reforms he employed helped the society achieve not only one maqāsid, but many maqāsid. How did he manage to eradicate poverty to the extent that no Muslim needed charity during his reign? Success lies in re-tracing the footsteps of those who was regard as role models that provide a better example for later generations to emulate. What could possibly have the power to rejuvenate a failing society such as ours other than the realization of the awareness of Allah the All-Mighty over everything? Thus the paper will suggest some practical utilization of those indicated methods above that the government in our current society can emulate in order to ensure a better future for human socio-economic development. The main bases of this research are the historical facts and data addressing the current situation of the Muslim community.

Keywords: *Maqāsid, maqṣad, sharī'ah, ḥaraj, zakāh, kharāj, jizyah, darūriyyāt, ḥājjiyyāt, taḥsīniyyāt, dīn, nafs, aql, māl, and 'ird, GDP, GNP.*

I. Introduction

The *maqṣad* for the existence of *sharī'ah* is to remove *haraj* (difficulty) in the life of humankind. *Sharī'ah* thus seeks to provide ease whether at an individual or societal level. Allah says:

He has chosen you (to convey His message of Islamic Monotheism to mankind by inviting them to His religion, Islam), *and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship*; it is the religion of your father Ibrahim (Abraham) (Islamic Monotheism)¹.

The ease that Islam has granted individuals allows them to attain satisfactory livelihood and this is not dependent on whether or not they have material wealth. On the contrary, the only thing that can provide this ultimate goal is nothing, but an absolute adherence to the divine guidance from Allah the All-Mighty. During the period from the leadership of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) up to the time of the four rightly-guided caliphs this *maqṣad* was achieved: people lived in a state of peace and inner satisfaction. Leadership was a key factor in the general development of the *ummah*².

Furthermore, Allah did not design this life such that all people will have an abundance of wealth. In fact worldly life would never be satisfactory or easy if everybody was wealthy. The *maqṣad* of maintaining a balance in society is a special favor and a blessing from Allah upon humankind. The Book of Allah beautifully explains the wisdom behind designing the creation on earth upon the said nature. The *Qur'ān* says:

And they say: why is not this *Qur'ān* sent down to some great man of the two Towns (Makkah and Tā'if)? Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of your Lord? *It is We who portion out between them their livelihood in this world, and We raised some of them above others in ranks, so that some may employ others in their work.*

¹ *Qur'ān*, Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 78. Al-Hilālī, Muḥammad Taqī-ud-Dīn & Muḥammad Khān. *The Noble Qur'ān, English Translation of the meaning and commentary*. Saudi Arabia: King Fahd complex for the printing of the Holy *Qur'ān*.

² The history of Islam is the best witness for this: most of the people in those days were not rich in terms of material substance, but they were content with whatever Allah granted them.

But the Mercy (Paradise) of your Lord (O Muhammad *ṣal-allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) is better than the (wealth of this world) which they amass. And were it not that all mankind would have become of one community (all disbelievers, desiring worldly life only), We would have provided for those who disbelieve in the Most Beneficent (Allah), silver roofs for their houses, and elevators (and stair-ways, etc. of silver) whereby they ascend. And for their houses, doors (of silver), and thrones (of silver) on which they could recline. And adornments of gold. Yet all this (i.e. the roofs, doors, stairs, elevators, thrones, etc. of their houses) would have been nothing, but an enjoyment of this world. And the Hereafter with your Lord is only for the *muttaqūn*³.

Therefore this inequality of wealth is necessary to protect the faith of the believers in Islamic Monotheism and to encourage socialization through cooperation and employment. If Allah had not made human beings interdependent, it would have harmed them as they are social beings. The different levels of wealth allow interaction which Allah has mentioned in the *Qur’ān* when He says:

And We raised some of them above others in ranks, so that some may employ others in their work.

Consequently the actual *maqṣad* of *sharī‘ah* is to provide happiness and a satisfactory life for humanity in general as well as the individual. This is the proven nature and purpose of *sharī‘ah*. The *Qur’ān* says:

Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e.

³ *Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Zukhruf, 31-35. The Noble Qur’ān*

Paradise in the Hereafter)⁴.

The Prophet said (*ṣal-allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*):

The satisfactory little amount of wealth is better than a distractive larger⁵ one. “‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās reported Allah's Messenger (*ṣal-allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) as saying: He is successful who has accepted Islam, who has been provided with sufficiency for his want and been made contented by Allah with what He has given him⁶.

The pleasant life mentioned by the *āyah* is not defined by material wealth and its acquisition. On the contrary it is based on the inner peace, satisfaction and heart felt contentment attained from the worship and obedience of Allah. Furthermore, the sole pursuit of wealth in of itself causes distress and distances one from happiness. The *ḥadīth* supporting this says:

Whoever has the world as his only concern, Allah will disintegrate his affairs upon him and will make distress apparent upon his face and will not grant him of worldly benefits, except that which was written for him. And [on the contrary,] whoever has his eyes set on getting the rewards in the Hereafter, Allah will organize his affairs for him and will grant fulfillment to his heart and will grant him of worldly benefits, while he considers such benefits insignificant⁷.

The abovementioned principles are necessary in any discussion Muslims may have about money, poverty and the economy to serve

⁴ *Qur'ān*, Sūrah al-Naḥl, 97. *The Noble Qur'ān*

⁵ Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, *Musnad Al-Imam Aḥmad*. (Beirut: Mu'assasat Al-Risālah), Vol: 5, *Ḥadīth* No: 197.

⁶ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, “*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*”, (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000) *Ḥadīth* No. 2473

⁷ Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn Īsa ibn Sawra. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. (Beirut: Dār Ihyā'ī al-Turāth). *Ḥadīth* No: 2347.

as a reminder of what has been revealed to humankind about worldly affairs.

After the four rightly-guided caliphs no one enjoyed peace or justice except those in power and their families due to the rampant injustice. Leadership was dominated by people who did not fear Allah in their leadership of the *ummah*. The world completely changed and fell into a state of degeneration and backwardness similar to that of current times⁸. When the corruption reached its peak and the *maqṣad* in which *sharī‘ah* is based on were neglected and ignored, people became intolerant of their unfortunate circumstances. The divine decree of Allah intervened and saved humanity from this corrupt leadership of injustice and usurping of the rights of the weak and poor. Allah chose an individual who was on the path of the righteous predecessors. This chosen person is the well-known caliph who was considered according to some scholars as the fifth caliph in Islam⁹. This is the *Amīr* of the believers ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz.

The current situation

It is worth mentioning that in present times the dominant economic system is the free market economy, though it is not purely free. This system was developed by human minds and is based on capitalism which has significantly different objectives from the *sharī‘ah*. Under this system happiness supposedly belongs to the countries that have the most wealth. Consequently, socio-economic development has been worked towards and measured from a secular perspective and the use of the Gross Domestic Product, the Gross National Product, the Gini index and other measurements reflect this. This has given rise to a materialistic consumer society and unsustainable development in developed countries. Several points of criticism have been made against these economic indicators¹⁰.

⁸ The history of Islam is the confirmation of that.

⁹ This seems to be a weak opinion because if there is anyone who deserves this title more, it should be Mu‘āwiyya ibn Abī Sufyān or Ḥassan ibn ‘Aliyyu ibn Abī Ṭālib. However, he is indeed one of the rightly guided caliphs of this *ummah*.

¹⁰ Anto, MB., H. (2009). “Introducing an Islamic Human Development Index to measure development in OIC countries”, *Islamic Economic Studies*, Vol. 19 No.2,

This era although hailed for supposedly advancing humanity has produced financial crises such as the great depression of the early 1930s and the great recession of 2008¹¹. These failures which have had dire impacts on humanity have not deterred man from distancing himself from divine revelation in governance and management of the economy. It has created immense gaps between the rich and the poor of the world, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This is in contrast to the achievements of the leaders of this *ummah* who sincerely led according to the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* for the betterment of humanity. This researcher seeks to prove how implementing the policies and strategies used by 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz can help advance Muslim countries without using western developed countries as models for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation.

In this paper the focus is on answering the following questions: How did 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz manage to eradicate poverty from Muslim society to such low levels? What could possibly have the power to rejuvenate a failing society such as ours? Is there any other way other than the realization of the power of Allah the All-Mighty over everything? Success lies in re-tracing the footsteps of those who are regarded as role models that provide an excellent example for later generations to emulate. Ibn Mas'ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, said that one should take the one in the grave as his role model for the one who is alive may fail his tests in life, whereas success of the one in the grave is confirmed¹². Thus this paper will suggest a practical utilization of the methods used by 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz which the governments in our society can implement. This will ensure sustainable advancement in socio-economic development.

69-95. Accessed on 26 July 2014. http://www.irti.org/Pages/PageNotFound.aspx?requestUrl=http://www.irti.org/irj/go/km/docs/documents/IDBDevelopments/Internet/English/IRTI/CM/downloads/IES_Articles/Vol_19_No_2/Islamic_Hum_Ind ex.pdf.

¹¹ Temin, P. (2010). *NBER Working Paper Series*. "The Great Recession and The Great Depression." Accessed on 27 July 2014. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15645.pdf>.

¹² Al-Ṣallābi, 'Ali Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. *Faṣlu al-Khiṭāb fī sīrati 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb* (Askandariah: Dār al-Īmān 2002), 8.

A short biography of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was born in Madīnah 61H to the granddaughter of the second caliph of Islam, ‘Umar ibn Al Khaṭṭāb. Her name was Ummu ‘Āṣim and his father was ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz bin Marwān. He was of noble lineage and belonged to Banū Umayyah; his father was also a governor of Egypt for around 20 years. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz had three wives and his first wife was Fāṭimah bint ‘Abd Al-Malik: the granddaughter of a caliph, daughter of a caliph (‘Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwān), sister of caliphs (Al-Walīd, Sulaimān, Yazīd and Hishām the children of ‘Abd Al-Malik) and the wife of a caliph¹³.

‘Umar started seeking knowledge at a very young age and remained steadfast in his acquisition of knowledge until he became a prominent respected scholar. Numerous knowledgeable and extraordinary scholars have praised his personality. The two Imāms, Imām Mālik and Imām Ṣufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah attested to this fact when they said “he was an Imām”¹⁴. Maymūn ibn Mihrān said that “scholars were nothing in front of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz, but students”¹⁵. He also said: “‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was the scholar of the scholars”¹⁶. Imām al-Dhahabī described him with a few yet profound words. He said: “‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was an *imām, faqīh, mujtahid*, an expert of the *sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), highly respected, possessor of an excellent memory. He memorized a wealth of knowledge, devoted to Allah, and constantly returned to Allah in repentance. He characterized the justice and righteousness of his grandfather, ‘Umar ibn al-khaṭṭāb, and in terms of asceticism he was similar to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and in terms of knowledge he was considered at the level of Imām al-Zuhrī. The reason why his knowledge did not spread was because he died young, at the same time his scholars died”¹⁷.

¹³ Hayāt ibn Muḥammad ibn Jibrīl, *al-Āthār al-Wārida ‘An ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz Fī al-Aqīdah* (Madīnah: Islamic University, 2002): 51-63.

¹⁴ Ibid, 67-74.

¹⁵ Al-Dhahabī, Abū ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Siyaru ‘A’lām al-Nubālā’*. (Beirut- Lebanon: Mu’assasat al-Risālah 1998), 121-122.

¹⁶ Hayāt ibn Muḥammad ibn Jibrīl, 67-74.

¹⁷ Ibid.

‘Umar was appointed to be the governor of Madīnah during the time of Caliph Walīd ibn ‘Abd Al-Malik. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was later removed from this position as he opposed the tyranny of Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf. When Al-Ḥajjāj complained about ‘Umar’s protection towards those who opposed him, the Caliph took heed of Al-Ḥajjāj’s misguided complaint and asked ‘Umar to return to *Shām* replacing him with someone else. Caliph Sulaimān ibn ‘Abd Al-Malik took ‘Umar as an advisor during his reign and upon his death, he broke the tradition of giving rule to one’s sons. He stipulated that after him ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz should be caliph and then the caliphate should be returned to Banū ‘Abd Al-Malik (descendants of ‘Abd Al-Malik). Sulaimān made an excellent decision for selecting a man who some scholars have named the fifth rightly guided caliph of Islām. He earned this title because of how he revived the *ummah* during his reign. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said that if there is a man who is guided it is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz. He took several steps to return the caliphate to the time of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) and the four rightly guided caliphs¹⁸.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz made a great transformation of his character after he became caliph. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was famous for his love for beautiful things of this *dunyā* to the extent that he once missed his prayer because his maid was still combing his hair. His father thus ordered him to shave it. ‘Aliyyu ibn Badhīmāh said that whoever says that a gait is natural is not to be believed after seeing ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz who once had a proud gait, but walked like a monk after assuming the role of caliph. Before he became caliph he ordered a man to buy him a 400 dirham garment and he said the shirt he made from it was nice, but rough. When the same man presented a 14 dirham garment to him when he was caliph, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz exclaimed that it was very soft and gentle¹⁹. Hence when he became the caliph he adopted asceticism

¹⁸ Muḥammad Ḥāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*. Accessed on 10 March 2014.

<http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>

¹⁹ Khālīd Abū Ṣāliḥ. *‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al ‘Azīz, the Fifth Caliph*, Accessed 1st August 2014. <http://en.islamway.net/article/12705/umar-ibn-abdul-aziz-the-fifth-caliph>.

and rejected this *dunyā*. He did this to protect his *taqwā* lest he went astray at the expense of the Muslim *bait al-māl*²⁰ of Muslims.

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz was a reluctant caliph and preferred not to be in the position. He feared falling into temptation and did not want such a responsibility. The Muslims expressed their desire for his leadership and this is what compelled him to accept the position. The Caliph made the Book of Allah, the *Qurʾān*, and the *sunnah* of the Last Prophet and Messenger, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allah (*ṣal-allāhu ʿalaihi wa sallam*), the basis of his leadership over the Islamic Empire. Furthermore he took the example of the four-rightly guided caliphs as his model of leadership. Undoubtedly his knowledge benefitted him and the *ummah* during his reign. A cornerstone and pillar of his leadership was his emphasis on piety, justice, enjoining good and forbidding evil with the right measure. He feared no one except Allah in the decisions he took in governing the Muslims. This rightly guided caliph pursued exceptional transformation that lifted the *ummah* from the dire condition it was in as a result of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds by previous rulers. He employed numerous policies to achieve these objectives. He did not put himself or any of his relatives above the law²¹.

His love for justice consequently led to his death at the hands of one of his slaves. The slave was paid a 1000 dinars and promised his freedom if he poisoned ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz. The Caliph's relatives from *Banū Umayyah* had decided this would be their means of retaliation against his justice and policy of equality among the Muslims. *Banū Umayyah* had lost money, property and privileges that had been previously unduly granted to them because of their familial relations with previous caliphs. ʿUmar chose to forgive when he could have taken revenge against the slave and he advised him to run away and hide lest the people should kill him for what he had done. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz died in Damascus at the age of thirty-nine years and six months. Although his caliphate was short, he had achieved what no one achieved after the four-rightly guided

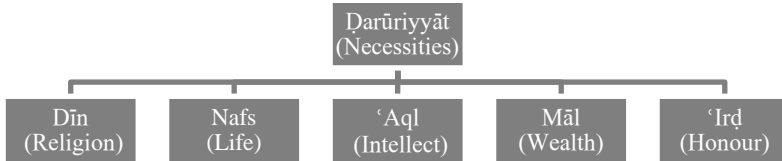
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

caliphs. He had reminded the *ummah* of the sweetness of the golden era of the Muslim caliphate²².

II. Methods used by the caliph to achieve the *maqāsid* in reforming the Muslim society

The greatest *maqṣad* that *sharī‘ah* aims to achieve as previously mentioned is to remove difficulty. In order to remove difficulty there are three *maqṣad* that should be achieved. These are the *ḍarūriyyāt* (necessities) *hājīyyāt* (needs) and *taḥsīniyyāt* (wants of human beings). The *maqṣad* of necessities has 5 essential branches: *dīn*, *nafs*, *‘aql*, *māl*, and *‘ird*.



The leader of the *ummah* or any part of the *ummah* has to ensure, by obligation, that these are protected and granted to every Muslim. It is a matter of necessity that Muslims should know who Allah is and how to worship Him, how to feel safe and secure, how to manage their mental well being, their wealth and their honor. The Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) and the four-rightly guided caliphs are examples that Allah has set for the *ummah* on how to protect the abovementioned *ḍarūriyyāt*. Hence ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz took them as his role models. He strove to emulate their wisdom, justice and, most importantly, their reliance on the *Qur’ān* and *sunnah* in their administration of the Islamic state.

²² Tamir Abū As-Suood Muḥammad, *Biographies of the Rightly Guided Caliphs from Ibn Kathīr, Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Suyūṭī*, (Egypt: Dār al-Manārah, 2001), 380-398. See also Ḥayāt ibn Muḥammad ibn Jibrīl, 100-108, 187-189. Also, Muḥammad Ḥamid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>. See also Akbar Shah Najeebabadi, *The History of Islam*, (Riyadh , Darussalam 2001),194-213.

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz implemented several important methods to achieve the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*: he re-established the *sunnah* of the four-rightly guided caliphs, revived and implemented justice as stipulated by the *sharīʿah*, corrected previous injustices and returned rights, restructured the caliphate administration, and reformed the economy: distributed *zakāh*, removed taxes and liberalized trade. This section discusses how he undertook each of the above listed methods and the results he achieved through their implementation.

Re-establishment of the *Sunnah* of the Four-Rightly Guided Caliphs

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz emphasized the revival of the *sunnah*. He understood the value of inculcating righteousness in the lives of every Muslim by first protecting their rights and reminding them about their *ākhirah*. He valued the prayer and instructed that prisoners should be cuffed in a way that did not hinder the performance of their prayers.

During his reign he told his uncle, Sālim ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿUmar, to write the biography of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb regarding his *khilāfah* so that he could use him as a role model and apply his *sunnah*. Sālim told him that he could not do it, ʿUmar asked him why and he told him that if he could he would have done better than ʿUmar because ʿUmar was surrounded by great personalities in Islamic history and ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz did not have the privilege of such noble and knowledgeable people to guide, support and cooperate with him²³.

The following event clearly showed his intention to follow his predecessors. When his aunt spoke to him about the supposedly worsening situation of his relatives because he equated *Banū Umayyah* with others (this was after he began the application of the new policy to sustain the well-being of the Muslim economy), he said to her: “O my aunt! You have to understand that when the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ʿalaihi wa sallam*) left, he left people upon a beneficial

²³ Muḥammad Hāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdul ʿAzīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>.

river. Afterward a man took over the leadership of that river and he did not decrease that river in any sense until his death. Afterward the river was taken care of by a man and he did not reduce anything from it. I swear by Allah if Allah causes me to live, I will bring it back to its original position....” ‘Umar was referring to the *bait al-māl* and how it had been protected and used appropriately before later leaders had misused its funds²⁴.

There are numerous narrations from his lifetime that illustrate how he applied the knowledge he had inherited from the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) and the caliphs. When he assumed authority he returned the *fadak* which he had inherited from Marwān justifying that Rasūlullah did not give it to Fāṭimah when she asked for it so how could he have a right to it. His grandfather, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, concerned himself over even a donkey tripping on a road in Iraq and would worry over its complaint of him. This is the degree of concern that his grandson ‘Umar had about all of his subjects. None of his subjects were insignificant and he used to say that it was his duty to give them their rights even if they did not demand it²⁵.

In addition, when ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz made his first speech he told the people not to obey him if he disobeyed Allah and this is what Abū Bakr had told the people when he became caliph. ‘Umar applied the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) that Allah hates to see a slave of His privilege over others, just like Rasūlullāh would participate in preparing a goat for dinner with his companions, and Abū Bakr would milk goats after becoming caliph, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz would also light a candle if it went out, regardless of whether his slave or was present to do it for him. He stated that doing it did not change who he was or lower him in honor or dignity. He thus did not view himself to be above others just because they were his subordinates. ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib would keep a candle for the state’s affairs and one for his personal use, and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz followed his example in this²⁶.

²⁴ Ibid .

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For more details about ‘Umar’s speeches, see Tamir Abū As-Suood Muḥammad, *Biographies of the Rightly Guided Caliphs from Ibn Kathīr, Al-Tabarī, Al-Suyūṭī*, (Egypt: Dār al-Manārah, 2001), 380-398.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz protected the Islam and *Imān* of the Muslims under his rule. His main concern was to inculcate, nurture and strengthen the *taqwā* of Allah in the hearts of the believers. The personal efforts ‘Umar made to have strong *imān* trickled to his subjects as it was reflected in the actions, decisions and policies he undertook in his administration. Consequently, the people developed a deep sense of *tawakkul* in Allah and belief in divine decree. The firm belief they had that they would get only what was written for them made them content with the sustenance Allah had provided for them regardless of how little. The general population worked hard and endured. The poor were not segregated nor discriminated against; they participated fully in society. The only time they would ponder on their situation was when an opportunity to spend in the way of Allah came their way, and they would wish they had something to spend. Allah had also made this easy for them because even where it was obligatory, the obligation to spend was removed from them, and they still got the full reward as those who did actually spend. The following *ḥadīth* by Anas ibn Mālik, may Allah be pleased with him, is evidence of that:

While the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) was in a *ghazwa* he said, "Some people have remained behind us in Madīnah, and we never crossed a mountain path or a valley, but they were with us (i.e. sharing the reward with us), as they have been held back by a (legal) excuse."²⁷

This is a mercy and blessing from Allah that He has given to those who are sincere and love to serve Him, but do not have the means. This also had a psychological benefit in the sense that it made the poor feel that they were a recognized part of society. The Prophet said (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*):

If a human is to be given two valleys of gold, he will ask for a third one, if he is to be given the third he asked for, he will ask for a fourth one. Nothing can fill the heart of

²⁷ Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. (Riyadh: Ri’āsat Idārat Al-Buḥūth Al-‘Ilmiyyah Wa Al-Ifṭā), *Ḥadīth* No. 2654.

a human being except clay.²⁸

It is only the realization that everything in this life is based on the divine decree of Allah that can bring happiness to humankind. This was what ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz achieved for the people. The *dīn* of the people was well preserved, thus the awareness was there. Society believed that everything came from Allah and this led them to believe that they could only get that which was written for them by Allah. The Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) said:

O young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]: Be Mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, then ask Allah [alone]; and if you seek help, then seek help from Allah [alone]. And know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything, they would not benefit you except with what Allah had already prescribed for you. And if they were to gather together to harm you with anything, they would not harm you except with what Allah had already prescribed against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried²⁹.

In another narration he said:

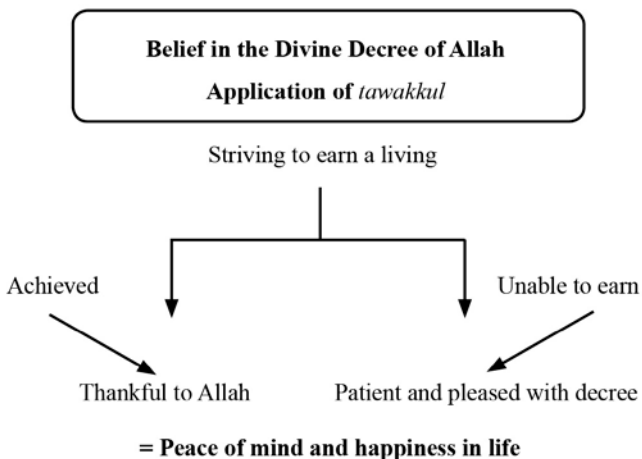
Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. Recognize and acknowledge Allah in times of ease and prosperity, and He will remember you in times of adversity. And know that what has passed you by [and you have failed to attain] was not going to befall you, and what has befallen you was not going to pass you by. And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and hardship with ease³⁰.

²⁸ Ibid, *Ḥadīth* No. 1048.

²⁹ Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn Īsa ibn Sawra. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. (Beirut: Dār Iḥya’i al-Turāth). *Ḥadīth* No. 2516

³⁰ Ibid.

Based on this the focus should be on how people protect their *dīn* and *īmān* by accepting the decree of Allah while remaining steadfast in efforts to alleviate their poverty. They should not despair of the mercy of Allah and should not look at those above them. This is taken from the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) “Do not look at those above you” (*agreed upon*). A man once left his camel untied outside the *Masjid* and asked the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), if he should leave his camel outside the *masjid* without tying it and place his trust in Allah or if he should tie it and put his trust in Allah³¹. The Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) told him to tie it and then put his trust in Allah. It is inappropriate and ineffective for any Muslim government to pursue poverty reduction strategies when it is heedless of the people’s religious situation. The best example in terms of excellence in protecting the deen of their people is Saudi Arabia which other countries can emulate. They have made *sharī‘ah* the law of the country and rightfully so. The government has endeared a culture of philanthropy which is the peak of Islamic character. The government and many individuals in their personal capacity donate to the poor in addition to the relief *zakāh* provides.



³¹ Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn Īsa ibn Sawra. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. (Beirut: Dār Ihya’i al-Turāth). *Ḥadīth* No.126

The Prophet said (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*):

Affair of a believer is amazing, and this is only for the believer. If good befalls him he is thankful to Allah and this is good for him. If evil befalls him he is patient and that is good for him.³²

Basically the establishment of the *dīn* and believing in those stated principles is the only key left for human beings to attain happiness in life. This is the reason why the caliph succeeded in having proper reforms to achieve the ultimate *maqṣad* of *sharī‘ah* which is to ease the life of people and bring happiness to their hearts. The *sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) and the rightly guided caliph sets an example of how Muslim governments should balance between *dīn* and *dunyā*.

Revival and implementation of justice as stipulated by *Sharī‘ah*

Allah says:

Verily, Allah enjoins *al-‘adl* (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allah alone - Islamic Monotheism) and *al-ihsān* [i.e. to be patient in performing duties to Allah, totally for Allah's sake and in accordance with the *sunnah* (legal ways) of the Prophet in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin (i.e. all that Allah has ordered to give them e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help, etc.): and forbids *al-faḥshā’* (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, telling lies, giving false witness, killing a life without right, etc.), and *al-munkar* (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islamic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds, etc.), and *al-baghy* (i.e. all kinds of oppression), He admonishes you, that you may take heed³³.

³² Muslim Ibn Al-Ḥajjāj, *Ḥadīth* No. 2999.

³³ *Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Nahl, 90. The Noble Qur’ān*

In another place the *Qur'ān* says:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a better protector to both (than you). So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you may avoid justice, and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah is ever well acquainted with what you do³⁴.

Islam has placed justice as one of the most important elements of *sharī'ah*. Its importance can be seen in the *ḥadīth al-qudsī* that tells us that in the throne of Allah He has written that He has made oppression *ḥarām* for Himself³⁵. Societies cannot be in peace and prosperity without everyone being given rights in full and if there is no one to seek compensation for them when they have been denied their rights.

The peak of justice has been described to mean that the leader who assumes authority has to apply negative and positive justice. Negative justice means he has to stop the oppression committed by his predecessors and return rights to those who had been oppressed. Thereafter he has to put to trial those who had oppressed others. On the other hand, positive justice means that it is *wājib* upon him to avoid falling into oppression himself. A just leader should be the strength of the weak, threatened and those intimidated by others. In addition, he has to be the hope of the poor³⁶.

The caliphate of this extraordinary leader of the believers was characterized by a love and devotion to being just. As caliph he fought against oppression in all its forms and ensured that the people under his care received what was due to them. He saw his position not as a privilege or an opportunity to amass wealth, but as an *amānah* on which he will be questioned about in the Hereafter. Ḥammād ibn Wāqid said: I heard Mālik ibn Dīnār saying, "People

³⁴ *Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, 8. *The Noble Qur'ān*

³⁵ Al-Nawawī, Yahya ibn Zakariyyah, *The Forty Hadith*, (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1994.), 72.

³⁶ Muḥammad Hāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>.

say about me that I am *zāhid* (a person who lives an ascetic life), but the real *zāhid* is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz the one who neglected *dunyā* after receiving it.” Fāṭimah bint ‘Abd Al-Malik (his wife) said I entered the room of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz and he was sitting in his prayer place and he had his hand on his cheek weeping, she asked him, “O Leader of the Believers, is there anything wrong? He said, O Fāṭimah, I took over the leadership of the *ummah* of Muḥammad (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*). I remember the hungry poor person, a sick person who is lost, and an exhausted naked person and the oppressed one that has nothing in his hand and the captive stranger and the old man. And the sole bread winner with many dependants all over the world. I realize that Allah is going to ask me about all of them. And the one who is going to fight me on their behalf is Muḥammad (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*). I thus became afraid of not having any evidence to defend myself, I pitied myself; and cried because of that³⁷”.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz understood the place of justice in Islam and its impact when applied correctly. He was once told that the people of *Khurāsān* could only be controlled with the harshness of the sword. In another incident he was told that one of the towns needed to have its infrastructure revamped. The rightly guided caliph had a similar response for both and he said justice and truth would suffice to change them³⁸.

Correction of previous injustices and returning of rights

Reconstructing the Muslim *ummah* requires that previous wrongs should be corrected and people should be compensated for any rights that were taken from them. This puts wealth in its proper place and most importantly this fulfils the *maqṣad* of protection of *māl* which is one of the five indispensable necessities that Islam came to establish. An economy cannot grow if people do not feel their wealth and property are safe. In cases where people do not feel their assets are

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ For more details about ‘Umar’s justice see, Tāmīr Abū As-Suood Muḥammad, *Biographies of the Rightly Guided Caliphs from Ibn Kathīr*, *Al-Tabarī*, *Al-Suyūṭī*, (Egypt: Dār al-Manārah, 2001), 383-395.

safe, naturally they will transfer their movable assets elsewhere and will not invest heavily on their immovable assets such as land.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz understood the value of returning property that had been usurped to its rightful owners. Property that had been unrightfully confiscated by *Banū Umayyah* such as land and shops were returned to their rightful owners. For a reform to be effective it has to begin with the reformers themselves. The caliph started with himself and his family: he returned the garden of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), *fadak* to *bait al-māl* which had come to him by means of inheritance. He even gave his wife an ultimatum to either return the rare jewelry that her father ‘Abdul-Malik had given her to the *bait al-māl* or to separate from him. Subsequently he took from the rest of *Banū Umayyah* what they had acquired illegally and returned it to its rightful owners.

Undoubtedly he knew this would incite a backlash from the *Umayyahs*, but he was resolute in his intention and feared no one except Allah. This is an example of his belief that everyone was equal in the eyes of Allah and no one was entitled to the property of the believers just because they were the leaders or relatives of the leader. Allah says: “O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you”. The Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) said: “It is not permissible for somebody to take the property of a believer except with his full consent”³⁹.

Restructuring of the Caliphate Administration

Before the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz, the *Umayyahs* had ruled as a monarchy. This was a first in Islamic history starting with Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah whose father had chosen him as his heir. Hence positions of authority were given based on relation rather than *taqwā*, capability and exemplary character which was the case in the time of the Companions. Restructuring was necessary to make the administration competent and aligned with the *sharī‘ah*. He removed

³⁹ Al-Baihaqī, Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥussain. *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyyah). *Ḥadīth* No. 5492

those whom he did not see fit regardless of their position in the family and replaced them with people who would fear Allah and bring valuable input to the *ummah*. Furthermore he stopped giving the *Umayyads* allowances from the *bait al-māl* and cut off undeserved access to public funds.

One other change he made was to reduce the expenditure from the *bait al-māl*. He cut costs that were unnecessary and re-directed them towards necessities. For example, the salary and fees spent on the upkeep of the Caliph were also reduced to the bare minimum. The *bait al-māl* was then used for the welfare of the Muslims, to support the needy and people who wanted to get married, but could not afford it. Therefore only legitimate causes and petitions were given attention as there was zero tolerance for corruption in the form of bribes and mismanagement of public funds⁴⁰.

Reforming the economy: distribution of *zakāh*, removal of taxes and freedom of trade

The Caliph made drastic reforms to produce a conducive business environment that promoted economic growth. There were three primary areas that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz focused on when reforming the economy: *zakāh*, *kharāj*, and freedom in business and trade. Other strategies targeted at alleviating poverty among the Muslims and improving their well being. This section will discuss the different reforms he applied.

A. *Zakāh*

Zakāh is one of the pillars of Islam and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz believed in strict observance of the tenets of Islam. It is an obligatory charity that is prescribed by Allah upon whoever among the Muslims possesses a *niṣāb* provided that the said *niṣāb* is saved for the period of a year. It can be considered as the most important element that *shari’ah* uses to satisfy the need of poor people in the society. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz insisted in reviving the *sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) in this regard which was neglected by

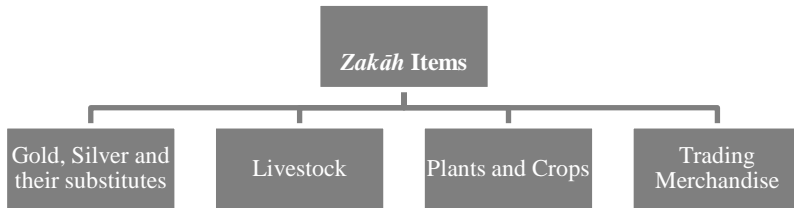
⁴⁰ Muḥammad Hāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>.

the leaders before him. He requested that knowledgeable people provide him with information from the book of the Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) and then ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb on *zakāh*. He also asked them to provide enough copies of those books so that every governor in the Muslim territories would have his own copy. The Caliph made collecting the *zakāh* from where it was due and distributing it a high priority. This was part of giving Allah His right, giving the poor their rights and also protecting the Islam of the people⁴¹.

In order to fully understand why this leader succeeded in his war against poverty and the strong need of the society, *zakāh* is discussed in brief below. There are three elements to be noted here about *zakāh*: the items where *zakāh* is taken from, the *niṣāb* for the properties, and the recipients of the *zakāh*. The following discussion explains each one⁴².

First: Items *zakāh* is taken from

Islam has prescribed *zakāh* and which items it should be taken from. *Zakāh* cannot be taken from items that Islam has not made *zakawī*.



Second: the *Niṣāb* for each of those above mentioned *zakāh* properties:

As previously mentioned, there is a fixed portion of the *zakāh* properties which if retained for a year qualifies the property for *zakāh* payment. The following tables show the *niṣāb* for each *zakāh* property.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For more details, see Al-Bahūtī, Maṣṣūf ibn Yūnus, “*Al-Rawḍ al-Murbi*” (Riyadh: Madār al-Waṭan, 2005), 37-163.

Gold and Silver

No.	Name	<i>Niṣāb</i>	Equivalent in grams	Portion to be taken (yearly)
1	Gold	20 mithqāl	85gm	2.5%
2	Silver	200 dirhams	595gm	2.5%
3	Paper currency	Equivalent to gold	Price of 85 gm of gold	2.5%

Livestock: There are four types of animals in this regard according to the view of the vast majority of the scholars:

Camel

No.	Name	<i>Niṣāb</i>	portion to be given out of the <i>niṣāb</i> (yearly)
1	Camel	5 – 9	one sheep
2	Camel	10 – 14	two sheep
3	Camel	15 – 19	three sheep
4	Camel	20 – 24	four sheep
5	Camel	25 – 35	<i>bint makhāḍ</i> (a camel that completed a year)
6	Camel	36 – 45	<i>bint labūn</i> (a camel that completed two years)
7	Camel	46 – 60	<i>hiqqah</i> (a camel that completed three years)
8	Camel	61 – 75	<i>jadh'ah</i> (a camel that completed four years)
9	Camel	76 – 90	two <i>bint labūn</i>
10	Camel	91 – 120	two <i>hiqqah</i>

Cows

No.	Name	<i>Niṣāb</i>	Portion to be given out of the <i>Niṣāb</i> (yearly)
1	Cows	30 – 39	<i>tabī'un or Tabī'ah</i> (a cow that completed a year)
2	Cows	40 – 59	<i>musinnah</i> (a she-cow that completed two years)
3	Cows	60 – 69	two <i>Tabī' or Tabī'ah</i>

Sheep or Goats

No.	Name	<i>Niṣāb</i>	Portion to be given out of the <i>Niṣāb</i> (yearly)
1	Sheep or Goat	40 – 120	one sheep or goat
2	Sheep or Goat	121 – 200	two sheep or goats
3	Sheep or Goat	201 – 399	three sheep or goats

Plants and crops

Type	<i>Niṣāb</i>	Equivalent in kg	portion to be given out of the <i>niṣāb</i> upon the harvest	Equivalent in kg
What is watered without any effort from the farmer e.g. rain or rivers	5 <i>awsuq</i> , 1 <i>wisq</i> is equivalent to 60 <i>ṣā'</i>	Since 1 <i>wisq</i> is equivalent to 60 <i>ṣā'</i> and one <i>ṣā'</i> is equivalent to 2.40kg , thus 5 <i>wisq</i> = 720kg	1/10 one out of ten	72kg
What is irrigated through the farmer's personal effort e.g. using machines to water the plants	5 <i>awsuq</i> , 1 <i>wisq</i> is equivalent to 60 <i>Ṣā'</i>	Since 1 <i>wisq</i> is equivalent to 60 <i>Ṣā'</i> and one <i>Ṣā'</i> is equivalent to 2.40kg , thus 5 <i>wisq</i> = 720kg	0.5 / 10 or one out of twenty	36kg

Trading property

Type	<i>Niṣāb</i>	Portion to be given out of the <i>niṣāb</i> (yearly)
Anything that is provided for trading and business purposes	The value of the <i>niṣāb</i> of gold (85gm)	2.5%

As it can be seen from the tables, *zakāh* should be one of the major contributors of income to the *bait-māl*. It plays a substantial role in poverty reduction and the economy in general as it increases the state's ability to spend. If everyone is to pay what is due upon them of *zakāh* as shown in the illustration it is sufficient to remove poverty from the root. Furthermore, in modern times there are Muslims whose wealth is worth billions and what they should pay of *zakāh* is sufficient to alleviate the poverty of many Muslims.

Third: The *Zakāh* recipients

“*As-ṣadaqāt* (here it means *zakāt*) are only for the *fuqara*’ (poor), and *al-masākīn* (the needy) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah’s cause (i.e. for *mujāhidūn*), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.”⁴³

After stating what *zakāh* can be taken from and how much should be taken from it, Islam has also prescribed who qualifies to receive *zakāh*. The recipients as legislated by the *Qur’ān* and *sunnah* are:

1. *Al-Fuqarā’*: The poor one who has nothing to suffice his basic needs.
2. *Al-Masākīn*: The poor who earns below his basic needs.
3. *Al-Āmilūna Alaiḥā*: The *Zakāh* collectors who are assigned by the Caliph to go around and collect the rights of Allah from the wealth of the rich.
4. *Al-Mu’allafatu Qulūbuhum*: These are the people that we believe if given *zakāh* will motivate them to accept Islam if they are not yet Muslims. Or they may become righteous and good believers who may use their authority and power to support the religion of Islam and its affairs. These are the

⁴³ *Sūrah al-Tawbah, Ayah No. 60. The Noble Qur’ān*

people intended here whose hearts are to be reconciled, such as leaders of the tribes and their likeness, whose acceptance of Islam or the truth will make a great change in the community to benefit Islam.

5. *Al-Riqāb*: The slaves who are short in satisfying their contract for purchasing their freedom from their owners.
6. *Al-Ghārimūn*: Those who are unable to pay their legal debts.
7. *Fī sabīlillāh*: The fighters (The *mujāhidīn*) who fight for the sake of Allah. This does not include every voluntary good deed.
8. *Ibn al-Sabīl*: The travelers who do not have enough to enable them to reach their destination regardless of the size of their wealth back home⁴⁴.

When ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz became the Caliph he was faced with revitalizing the economy. *Zakāh* was a major contributor to the *bait al-māl* of the Muslims. However it was misused and misapplied by previous rulers until the quantity of *zakāh* collected had reduced significantly. Hence as the Caliph, he had to devise strategies on how to correct the situation.

Strategies used to rectify *zakāh* collection and distribution

This section highlights and discusses the measures that were put in place to collect and distribute *zakāh* efficiently and effectively.

- 1) A system was created where *zakāh* was deducted directly from the salary of workers who were supposed to pay *zakāh*. The positive effect of this was two-fold: the state was effective in collecting *zakāh*, and it also reduced the state’s expenditure of *zakāh* as a salary payment for the *zakāh* collectors. Thus the *zakāh* institution was able to save more for the benefit of the other *zakāh* recipients who needed it

⁴⁴ Al-Bahūtī, Manṣūr ibn Yūnus, 209-234. See also Ibn Qudāmah, ‘Abd Allah Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Mughnī*. (Beirut: Dār Kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2005), 125-130.

- 2) The confiscated properties and land that he had returned to their rightful owners provided a unique opportunity to collect the *zakāh* from them. This act of justice had developed a sense of trust between the Caliph and the people so it was easy to gain access to them and the *zakāh* from their wealth.
- 3) The Caliph commanded his governors to collect the *zakāh* from its rightful sources and distribute it to the people Islam had given it to.
- 4) ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz instructed the workers to ensure that *zakāh* was first distributed to the poor people of the region it had been collected from. Hence the wealthy of a region would pay *zakāh*, and it would go directly to the hands of the poor people in the same region. The *zakāh* would only go to the Caliph when the poor of that area were satisfied and even then it would only be re-directed to poor people of another region instead of it being hoarded in the *bait al-māl*⁴⁵.

B. *Kharāj*

A key area of reform that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz implemented was with *kharāj*. *Kharāj* refers to what the Islamic government takes as a tax from the people of a conquered land. The non-Muslims of that land have to pay *kharāj* for their utilization of the said land. Muslims would have gained that land as part of the booty after winning a battle. Previous rulers from the Umayyahs had abused the *kharāj*, and the income raised from it had reduced over the years. Furthermore, the Umayyahs had also confiscated the lands of the *kharāj* unrightfully. In order to reverse this, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz had prohibited the selling of any land of *kharāj* and had returned the ones that had been usurped. In addition he removed the taxes that had burdened the farmers of those lands; thus enabling them to re-invest their profits into their business activities. Empty lands were developed in order to make them profitable.

The above mentioned reforms were highly effective because this rightly guided Caliph had created an environment that was

⁴⁵ Muḥammad Hāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>.

conducive for productive land use. His government provided infrastructure that supported the producers. Good roads made it easy for them to reach the market at an affordable cost and wells allowed them to irrigate their farms. It has been recorded in history that due to these reforms, the income from the *kharāj* in Iraq alone had gone from just below 30 million dirhams to 124 million dirhams. That was the first time in Islamic history that such an income had been raised from *kharāj*. This provides an estimate of how prosperous the Muslim nation was when all the income was collected from the entire empire⁴⁶.

C. Freedom in business and trade and removal of taxes

Freedom in business and trade are essential in boosting the economy of any country. Removing taxes ensures that the growth achieved from the freedom provided is not unduly restricted. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz granted different types of freedom: the freedom to migrate in search of provision, to invest in the business of one’s choice, to set prices without government interference, and freedom in trade. He also stopped the practice of taking *jizyā* from new Muslims.

‘Umar granted the people freedom of movement so anybody could make *hijrā*. He said everyone should be granted the freedom to go wherever they wanted to seek the favours and blessings of Allah. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz used to say that the sea and land belong to Allah who provided these for the benefit of humankind to seek their *rizq* through them. Thus nobody was to be deprived of making use of them. Entrepreneurs were granted full freedom to set their own prices and the government did not interfere through any form of price control.

One other important change made was that *jizyā* was no longer taken from Muslims. During the era of previous leaders the tax was collected from *ahl al-dhimmah* (non-Muslims living under the protection of Muslims in conquered lands), even after their conversion to Islam. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz took a stern position to end this oppression; he wrote a statement to his governors that read: “Whoever bears witness that there is none worthy of worship

⁴⁶ Ibid.

except Allah, prays towards our *qibla* and circumcises himself, *jizyā* is not taken from him.” When ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz stopped this oppression, some of his governors complained to him that the income for the *bait al-māl* decreased because of the *Jizyā* reforms. He replied with words that should be written in gold. He said that Allah did not send Muḥammad (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) as a tax collector instead he sent him as a guide for humankind. He continued to say that he would not mind tilling the soil himself as long as the people become Muslims. When this happened, the non-Muslims realized the justice intended by the Caliph, thus they did not hesitate to join the Muslim faith⁴⁷.

D. Poverty alleviation and welfare strategies

Zakāh was the first tool the *Amīr* of the believers used to alleviate poverty. He commanded his governors to identify the poor and needy so as to give them their rights. In cases where they could not find a needy person ‘Umar would instruct them to use the money in buying slaves who were Muslims and free them. He also built *masājid* and food distribution centers for the poor where food was made available to them upon request⁴⁸.

The result of the economic reforms

The economic reforms ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz implemented had produced a strong and sustainable economy. The justice and *taqwā* of Allah that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz had convinced the people that the Caliph was not fighting for his own personal interests or satisfaction. Society considered him as a trustworthy person, and this motivated people to fear Allah regarding their wealth and take whatever was made obligatory upon them to the *zakāh* institutions.

The policies he introduced with regard to lands of the *kharāj* increased the number of people who *zakāh* was due from. In addition to that, the *da‘wah* he made to the non-Muslims living in Muslim

⁴⁷ ‘Ali Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī. *Al-Khalīfah al-Rāshid ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*. Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php?>

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Hāmid Muḥammad, *Sīrah wa Manāqib ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz*, Accessed on 10 March 2014. <http://madrasato-mohammed.com/abd%20aziz.pdf>.

territories was successful as they saw him as an honest person who did not seek to oppress or exploit people. His justice and righteousness convinced them to accept Islam which translated to an increase in the *zakāh* income. This, when combined with the justice he had put in place of returning usurped property to its owners, the removal of *jizyā* from Muslims and unjust taxes, resulted in an increase in new Muslims who remained steadfast in Islam. Apart from *zakāh*, other sources of income such as *‘ushūr* and *khums* of the *ghanīmah* were managed in accordance with *sharī‘ah*. His reforms included all of them which put everything in its proper place.

The economic and monetary reforms that were based on absolute freedom in business and trading spurred economic growth. The removal of taxes meant people were better off, and there was more *zakāh* collected from them. Agriculture also flourished which increased the nation’s food security.

Although the strategies he applied were simple and cost effective, they enabled him to achieve the *maqṣad* of removal of difficulty in society. This was especially true in terms of meeting the financial needs of the people. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz said: “‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz was only a ruler for the period of two and a half years that is precisely thirty months. I swear by Allah, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz did not die until he created a situation in which a rich person would come with a huge amount of money which was the portion of his *zakāh* and say to ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz take this money and give it away as you wish to the poor and needy. The man would remain in the place looking for somebody who needed it, and he would not be able to find anyone who was in need of it. At the end of the day he would take back his wealth because he would not be able to find anybody in a state of need. This is because ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz satisfied everyone under his leadership”.

III. How *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* should be used to achieve socio-economic development: a focus on poverty alleviation

This paper has consistently emphasized the fact that the ultimate *maqṣad* of the *sharī‘ah* is to provide a happy and pleasant life for humankind based on the principal *maqṣad* “providing good and

eradicating evil.⁴⁹” Happiness is the goal of every human being. Ibn Ḥazm in his book *al-akhlāq wa al-siyar* (Manners and Behavior) said: “I tried to search for a goal that human beings by nature are all and entirely equal in aiming to achieve, and I could not see any except one, that is ‘removing sadness from themselves.’⁵⁰” In this section focus will be on how Muslim governments can apply the principles ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz applied to achieve *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*.

International bodies and governments across the world have implemented several strategies and policies to curb poverty. In accordance with that objective they have developed economic indicators to measure the progress being made towards its achievement. One such measure is The Human Development Index which was, ironically, developed by a Muslim from Pakistan and later adopted by the United Nations Development Programme. It was designed to act as an indicator of human progress as an improvement from the flawed output focused GDP and GNP and similar measures. The index focuses on three things:

1. A long and healthy life,
2. Education and
3. A decent standard of living (IDB annual report)⁵¹

However good the intention was and as innovative as this index is, it has failed to be an accurate measure of happiness and general well-being. The words of Robert Kennedy echo the same message “...the gross national product (GNP) does not allow the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our

⁴⁹ Muḥammad Ṣālih Mūsa Ḥussain , *Sharḥ al-Farā'id al-Bahiyyah*, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah 2009), 22.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥazm, ‘Ali ibn Aḥmad, *al-Akhlāq wa al-Siyar*, (Beirut: Dār ibn Ḥazm, 2000), 76-77.

⁵¹ Islamic Development Bank, “*Annual Report 1433H (2012)*.” Accessed on 27 July 2014.

http://www.isdb.org/irj/go/km/docs/documents/IDBDevelopments/Internet/English/IDB/CM/Publications/Annual_Reports/38th/AnnualReport38.pdf.

wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile...⁵²”

These words from a non-Muslim echo what the masses already know, that human development and human well-being cannot be accounted for simply by analyzing a set of figures on the monetary value of the sugar that Nigeria sold this year. Figures like this ignore the actual benefit that a people derive from the goods produced or how it leads to the betterment of their lives.

Ibn Ḥazm was accurate in his assessment of human psychology that all of human kind is working to remove sadness; they only differ in how to achieve it and they measure their progress in different ways, some quantifiable and others not. These secular economic indicators are deficient according to secular standards and more so according to Islamic standards. They ignore many aspects of life that are important to Muslims in particular. Nonetheless there are some that can be appreciated for their innovativeness such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index, Happy Planet Index and the Basic Capabilities Index.

The author cannot emphasize enough the importance of a different approach to quantifying economic development in Muslim societies. The fundamentals of Muslim societies, let alone economies, differ vastly from their counterparts. Muslim economies should be based on attaining *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. Hence how we measure progress in attaining them would naturally differ. There is a need to take a new direction based on what matters to the Muslim according to what Islam has taught him.

General Guiding Principles in Development of a suitable index

There are overall guiding principles that the author suggests governments and other stakeholders should follow in their economic policies. In developing an index the conventional methods used such as life expectancy, GDP per capita or the literacy rate should be

⁵² Costanza, R., Hart, M., Posner, S., Talberth, J. “*Beyond GDP: The Need for New Measures of Progress.*” Accessed on 27 July 2014. http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/iss_pub.

secondary. The primary elements that should be measured are those that are directly related to the five *ḍarūriyyāt* mentioned earlier: *dīn*, *nafs*, *ʿaql*, *māl*, and *ʿird*. The attendance rate of Muslims in *masājid* for prayers, the collected *zakāh* and its distribution, the available land and its utilization, and lastly the openness of Muslim economies and the freedom available to businesses are examples of elements that can be used as indicators of socio-economic development. Interest should be eliminated because it is a removal of *barakah*, a fact Muslims cannot ignore. Furthermore, justice should be applied in all spheres of governance and should be encouraged among the people as justice is obligatory on the Muslim.

***Zakāh* as a tool to alleviate poverty and spur socio-economic development**

The real *maqṣad* of *zakāh* is to ease the financial affairs of the poor and the needy in Muslim society. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz did not lift people out of poverty by giving them money from the *bait al-māl* without restriction. He took a multi-pronged approach and one of the tools he used was *zakāh*. He kept ploughing *zakāh* back into the community until everyone had taken his right from it. If Muslim governments and leaders of Muslim communities emulate this ruler in his policy towards *zakāh* and the achievement of its *maqṣad*, the situation will completely change for the best.

The role of agriculture in poverty alleviation

Regardless of modernization and exponential advancement in technology, agriculture still remains a priority. This is because food is still a basic necessity of humanity and food security is vital in any country. The size of the land in Muslim countries does not tally with the population as the size of the land exceeds the needs of the smaller sized population. There are several strategies that governments can follow to apply what ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd Al-ʿAzīz did:

1. The government should design clear projects that are focused on utilization of any empty land. If the land belongs to the state, it may lease it to farmers who do not have land of their own and they can pay *the kharāj*. In situations where the arable land belongs to individuals, but they do not have the means to

- cultivate it, the government should give them interest-free loans to enable them to acquire necessary tools and machinery.
2. Agricultural projects should be supported with infrastructure such as the building of roads, irrigation systems and access to markets where the produce can be sold.
 3. In addition, the government should not tax them for the land; the only thing that should be taken from them is *kharāj* for the lease plus the *zakāh* after the harvest. This is wholly dependent on whether or not the produce harvested meets the *niṣāb*.
 4. The governments should set up public-funded think tanks that research on methods that can be used to increase food production.
 5. Scientists and agricultural experts should cooperate and design programs which take advantage of specialization and comparative advantage across countries in order to encourage trade amongst OIC countries.

Agricultural produce should be used to feed the local people first before it is exported to other regions. They may be given the choice to purchase or be told that a certain amount of produce should be reserved for the local market. The reserved produce should be set aside for a certain portion of the duration of perishability in the case of perishable goods. However the government should not interfere through price control. The producers may sell the rest anywhere they wish.⁵³ Narrated Anas ibn Malik: *The people said: Messenger of Allah, prices have shot up, so fix prices for us. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah said: Allah is the one Who determine prices, Who withholds, gives lavishly and provides, and I hope that when I meet Allah, none of you will have any claim on me for an injustice regarding blood or property*⁵⁴.

An important observation is that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz

⁵³ In the case of Fresno County, which is the leading agricultural county in the USA, 45% of its farm workers are food insecure. Krege, L. & Woodsworth, G. “*Hunger in the fields.*” Accessed on 27 July 2014. <http://civileats.com/2011/09/26/hunger-in-the-fields/>

⁵⁴ Abū Dāwūd, Sulaimān ibn al-Ash‘ath *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, (Beirut : Dār ibn Ḥazm , 1997) *Ḥadīth* No. 3451

followed the *sunnah* and applied the *Qur'ān* in his management of the economy. He let people participate in any form of business or industry they desired and allowed them to move anywhere they wished. The only condition he had was the dictates of Islam, that it should be *sharī'ah* compliant. He thus opened the doors of opportunity and provided justice and security to encourage farmers and entrepreneurs to invest in the Muslim lands and participate in economic activities.

Muslim countries should aim to emulate the period of 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz's caliphate in light of the fact that he achieved sustainable and *sharī'ah*-compliant socio-economic development that saw the needs of the Muslims being met. He achieved it to the level that people were not in need of *zakāh*. There are two important lessons that can be learnt from 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz. *Firstly*, he was able to meet the objectives of *sharī'ah* during his very short reign, around 30 months. This is an extremely short period compared to the estimated time needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The reason is that he was simply applying what the *sharī'ah* dictates, with no worldly gain in mind. On the contrary modern economies have more money and resources at their disposal, yet a country like the United States of America as, the richest in the world, still has hungry people. *Secondly*, his methods were simple and action was taken in accordance with what was obligatory and of high priority according to *sharī'ah*.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the writer reiterates what has been mentioned before, that alleviating poverty in of itself is not a *maqṣad* of *sharī'ah*. Rather, the main objective of Islam is to remove difficulty and thus bring happiness. This is a more comprehensive goal than just alleviating poverty. The writer has stated that governments should tackle all the five *ḍarūriyyāt* (necessities) in managing the affairs of the people. This is because it is an obligation upon them as the leaders of any portion of the *ummah* . The Muslim governments do not need to follow the development path of the developed non-Muslim countries, rather they should prioritize the way 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz did: giving people their due rights, protecting

them and giving them an opportunity to fend for themselves.

The approach that this rightly-guided Caliph of Islam used is brilliant from different aspects: it is based on Islam, simple and cost effective. Some may argue that his times were less complicated than ours and therefore we cannot take such a simplified approach. The writer responds to this criticism by stating the fact that Islam is a universal religion that is not time or geographically bound hence its *maqāṣid* can be used as the basis for socio-economic development. The Prophet (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) ruled only Madīnah at one point using the same approach and it worked. When the Muslim territory expanded during the time of the four-rightly guided Caliphs, the same principles worked for them and the same can be said of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz. Hence a strong point of his approach is that it can be applied at the community and national level.

Allah says:

If any do wish for the transitory things (of this life), We readily grant them - such things as We will, to such person as We will: in the end have We provided Hell for them: They will burn therein, disgraced and rejected. Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter, and strive therefore with all due striving, and have Faith, - They are the ones whose striving is acceptable to Allah. Of the bounties of Thy Lord, We bestow freely on all-these as well as those: the bounties of Thy Lord are not closed (to anyone). See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence⁵⁵.

The Prophet said (*ṣal-allāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*):

Whoever has the world as his only concern, Allah will disintegrate his affairs upon him and will make distress apparent upon his face and will not grant him of worldly benefits, except that which was written for him. And [on the contrary] whoever has his eyes set on getting the rewards in the Hereafter, Allah will organize his affairs for him and will grant fulfillment to his heart and will

⁵⁵ *Qur’ān*, *Surah al-Isrā’* 18-21 *The Noble Qur’ān*.

grant him of worldly benefits, while he considers such benefits insignificant⁵⁶.

The principles given in the āyah and *ḥadīth* are that the Muslim should focus on the *ākhirah* in order for Allah to set his affairs in order. Indeed the success of this *ummah* in alleviating poverty lies here. Although a country like the United States of America is rich and has abundant resources, it has not managed to eliminate poverty, even though it spend billions trying to find a solution to it⁵⁷. Hence the problem is not a financial one rather it is rooted in how much people submit to the Will of Allah.

⁵⁶ Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn Īsa ibn Sawra. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. (Beirut: Dār Ihya' i al-Turāth). *Hadīth* No.2347

⁵⁷ Tanner, M. "War on poverty at 50 despite trillions spent poverty won." Accessed on 29 July 2014
<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/01/08/war-on-poverty-at-50-despite-trillions-spent-poverty-won/>.