THE PLACE AND ROLE OF MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪʿAH IN THE UMMAH’S 21st CENTURY CIVILISATIONAL RENEWAL

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Abstract: The author of this article argues that – from the point of view of the ideals of human civilisation as set forth by the Qur’ān – modern civilisation, which is largely of Western inspiration and making, has undergone a progressive inner decay while displaying marvels of scientific and technological achievements unmatched in human history. He sees this decay as referring to human degradation or dehumanisation. In order to address his concern, he argues for a restoration of a previously lost unity, balance and equilibrium to contemporary civilisation. He argues that Islam’s main contribution to a possible solution would be an approach based on maqāṣid al-sharīʿah. He concludes by stating that an Islamic agenda of civilisational renewal (al-tajdīd al-hadārī) is ultimately congruent with civilisational renewal for humanity as a whole.

Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to provide an introductory discussion of the place and role of the higher objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah) in the pursuit of civilisational renewal (al-tajdīd al-hadārī). For the moment, only a brief and preliminary explanation is given to the meanings of the two keywords, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah and tajdīd hadārī. Both terms, maqāṣid and tajdīd, are of early Islamic origin. The word tajdīd has found popular usage among the Muslim ummah of every century, because it is traceable to a saying of the Prophet Muḥammad himself. According to a ḥadīth, “God will send to this community at the turn of each century someone [or ‘people’] who will restore [revive/renew] the religion [i.e. who will carry out the tajdīd of the religion].” The idea of tajdīd conveys multi-faceted meanings and their practical societal applications in conformity with the multi-dimensional teachings of Islam as a religion (al-dīn) and of Islam as a civilisation.

Central to its meanings is the idea of renewal which embraces the ideas of acceptance of change and preservation of permanence, harmonisation of permanence

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and change and of tradition and modernity, and restoration of principles, values, and dimensions which are traditionally integral to the identity of Islamic civilisation but which, for one reason or another, have been lost. It is in the light of this understanding of the idea of *tajdid* that it is permissible for us to speak of *al-tajdid al-haḍārī*, meaning the renewal of civilisation or civilisational renewal. In the Islamic perspective, *tajdid* of religion necessarily includes *tajdid* of civilisation, since Islamic civilisation refers to the all-embracing societal manifestations of the religion of Islam. However, since civilisation embraces all sectors of human life and thought – including the social, political-economic, and ethical-legal spheres – its renewal becomes an all-embracing societal concern. In other words, *al-tajdid al-haḍārī* should be a societal concern and a societal agenda of great priority. Appropriately the global Muslim *ummah* and its branches throughout the world should adopt *al-tajdid al-haḍārī* as its priority agenda and enterprise.\(^3\) As for the term *al-tajdid al-haḍārī* itself, it should not arouse any suspicion at all. It may be of modern origin but the two component terms on which it is based are not. As stated earlier the word *tajdid* is of prophetic origin. As for the word *haḍārī* it finds extensive usage in the new science of civilisation expounded by Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) in his celebrated *Muqaddimah*.\(^4\)

The term *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* also finds wide usage in Islamic intellectual history particularly in the domain of ethical-legal thought, much more so in the earlier centuries before the modern period than it is now. Although as pointed out by a good number of Muslim scholars of the *sharīʿah*, both in the classical and modern periods, there is no set number of *maqāṣid* and no set prioritisation among them, the most popular understanding and usage of the term among Muslims is in reference to the five rights or necessities. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn speaks of the five necessary things emphasised by Islamic law:

1. the preservation of religion,
2. the soul (life),
3. intellect-reason,
4. progeny, and
5. property.\(^5\)

However, Ibn Khaldūn also asserted that these five necessities have been emphasised in Islamic law with the view of attaining justice and eradicating injustice, since injustice brings about the ruin of civilisation.\(^6\) Thus, even the five most well-known *maqāṣid* in the Muslim discourse as produced here by Ibn Khaldūn have a presiding objective – the pursuit of justice. Metaphysically speaking, the idea of justice as an even more fundamental objective of Islamic law is fully justified since justice is a divine quality. God manifests His Names and Qualities in both...
the natural and human worlds. He wants His justice to prevail in human societies through His laws, and therefore it is the function of the sharīʿah to identify the things necessary to justice in society. The maqāṣid are an answer to the search for conditions of justice.

The maqāṣid, regardless of their number, are now variously presented by contemporary Muslim scholars as the philosophy of Islamic law, the irreducibly universal principles of justice, and the architectonics of Islamic normative law. The term al-tajdīd al-haḍārī is only of recent usage. However, analogous to the role of maqāṣid, the future significance of the idea of al-tajdīd al-haḍārī will probably lie in its role as an integral component of the Islamic philosophy of civilisation and as a paradigm and framework for the particular tajdīd in all sectors of human life and thought, including, perhaps, the tajdīd of the maqāṣid itself.

This article, therefore, seeks to explore some aspects of the relationship between the maqāṣid and al-tajdīd al-haḍārī. The focus, however, shall be on the role of the essential components of the maqāṣid as the foundational elements of a new science of civilisation that is sorely needed for this century’s civilisational renewal.

The Need to Restore the Rightful Role of the Maqāṣid

Much has been written on maqāṣid and tajdīd in their various aspects, but little has been explored on their conceptual and other forms of relationships. More disappointingly, there exists practically nothing on the epistemological relationship between the maqāṣid and tajdīd at the civilisational level. Yet this neglected subject is not only important at the level of ideas, but also of great practical importance to the future of Islamic civilisation and, by extension, to the future of our common human civilisation. Central to this subject would be the role of the maqāṣid in the renewal of Islamic civilisation.

In the following we shall first have a look at the specific context in which the role of the maqāṣid is being discussed. The role envisaged is specific to the needs of the twenty-first century global Muslim community (ummah) and its contemporary civilisation. There is at present a wide recognition in the global ummah that its contemporary civilisation is in real need of a renewal in the sense its Arabic equivalent, tajdīd, has been traditionally understood in Islam. The present reality of Islamic civilisation dictates the need for its renewal. Under the powerful global impact of modern Western civilisation, contemporary Islamic civilisation has lost some of its traditional features and even some aspects of its traditional identity and character that have been its source of strength and dynamism. For example, there is the loss of balance between the universal and particular traits of Islam as can be seen in the domain of the sharīʿah.
Broadly understood, the *shari‘ah* comprises a universal dimension in the form of its ethical-legal injunctions, together with their underlying principles that are meant for the whole of humanity and a particular dimension in the form of ethical-legal injunctions exclusively meant for Muslim communities and the global ummah. The *maqāṣid* belong to the universal dimension of the *shari‘ah*. Due to both external and internal factors, the *shari‘ah*, which is traditionally a key element and a major driving force of Islamic civilisation, lost the greater part of its universal dimension, thus tilting the ‘ethical-legal’ balance in question in favour of its particular dimension. Included in this fateful and very significant loss are the *maqāṣid* with their meaningful societal and civilisational roles.

Traditionally, the *maqāṣid* are precisely the embodiment of ideas and the intellectual force that have helped to preserve Islamic law in both letter and spirit in a balanced way with societal balance and justice in view and to prevent literalism and legalism in all their strands from becoming the mainstream approaches to Islamic law that could only undermine the goal of societal balance and justice. The marginalisation of the *maqāṣid* in mainstream contemporary Muslim legal thought and in their approaches to Islamic law has deprived the general public everywhere – both Muslim and non-Muslim – of the means and perspectives whereby they could appreciate the real worth and significance of the *shari‘ah*.

The *shari‘ah* without its universal dimension, particularly without its *maqāṣid*, would lose much of its appeal as an ethical-legal system that transcends time and space that comes from its claim as the last divine law to be revealed to humankind. Were it to be so then it would appear as particularistic and sectarian in nature and not as universal, and as ancient and of relevance only to human societies of bygone eras but not as modern and timeless. It is only in more recent times that there has been renewed interest and commitment among Muslim academics, scholars, and thinkers to give back to the *maqāṣid* its rightful place and role and to articulate and discourse on it in the light of twenty-first century societal realities.

Another example of dynamic traditional features of Islamic civilisation that have been lost is its holistic educational philosophy and its tawhīdic knowledge culture in which the unity of the sciences was preserved. For the greater part of its history, Islamic civilisation was spared of the kind of epistemologically conflict-ridden knowledge culture that is characteristic of modern Western civilisation. The so-called ‘conflict’ of the two cultures – the scientific-technological and the humanities – prevalent in the modern West was totally absent in Islamic civilisation. However, now – again under the impact of modern Western civilisation – the contemporary Islamic world is perpetuating within its societies the same dichotomous educational philosophy and system and the same conflicting two cultures that have been problematic to the West. Both, the dichotomous education system and the two cultures in question, have generated numerous intellectual conflicts and contributed...
significantly to the loss of balance and equilibrium in modern civilisation as well as to the rampant human degradation or dehumanisation in the modern world.

In the two examples for the lost traditional features of Islamic civilisation it is the impact of modern Western civilisation that has been most responsible for that loss. The first major impact came from European colonialism. Generally speaking, European colonial rule, wherever it may have been, weakened the position of shari‘ah law as a legal system and lowered its prestige in society by simultaneously expanding the domain of jurisdiction of European civil law and diminishing that of shari‘ah law to its minimum tolerable level. Likewise, European colonial rule sought to give the maximum space possible to Western-style secular education and to minimise the societal values and impact of Islamic education. Islam was made largely irrelevant in developmental terms in law and education, two of the societal domains in which Islam excelled and made major contributions to human civilisation. As a result, Islamic civilisation lost a significant part of its traditional identity and character.

Presenting the Case for the Pursuit of Civilisational Renewal

In the following, the pursuit of civilisational renewal shall be discussed on the basis of several considerations. First, there is a need to explain appropriately the real meaning of the idea of civilisational renewal. In the view of this writer, in accordance with the traditional understanding of tajdid and in furtherance of the earlier brief discussion of it, the idea of tajdid hadārī must include the following elements:

1. The preservation of principles, ideas, and institutions that are permanently needed by human beings both in individual and societal life;
2. the rediscovery and the restoration of principles, ideas, and institutions that have been lost through the vicissitudes of time, but that are still needed for the well-being of societies;
3. the acceptance of necessary changes in the light of permanence;
4. the synthesis of tradition and modernity or the integration of acceptable modernity into tradition.

In other words, in articulating the concept of civilisational renewal we need to address all those four fundamental issues. However, to do so would require to seek intellectual help from the science of civilisation, which is perhaps the only science competent enough to adequately deal with those civilisational issues. It is this science which deals with these issues at the level of fundamental ideas and societal principles, as Ibn Khaldūn’s Muqaddimah shows. However, for all the four issues to be adequately addressed in our present times we need to take into account the
nature and characteristics of modern and contemporary Western civilisation, which has made such a major impact on contemporary Islamic civilisation.

The second consideration for civilisational renewal is that there is a need to explain why presently it is an imperative for the global *ummah* and for humanity at large. This means that we have to describe the contemporary condition of the global human civilisation, which in practical terms is none other than an extension of the modern Western civilisation that justifies the pursuit of civilisational renewal. This necessitates essentially identifying the serious defects and pitfalls of contemporary human civilisation.

The third consideration is that, having diagnosed the major symptoms of the civilisational diseases that have for some time now afflicted modern Western civilisation, there is a need to identify their causes. Once these causes are known, we would be in a better position to come up with the right cures to these ‘diseases’. The fourth and final consideration pertains precisely to the task of finding the right cures and applying them to the ‘disease-afflicted’ civilisational body with the view of restoring its health.

The scope of this article does not allow to treat all of these issues and considerations pertaining to the pursuit of civilisational renewal, even if only briefly. Therefore, we shall deal with only some of them. What we shall seek to present in the following are arguments that seek to affirm the view that an effective pursuit of civilisational renewal presupposes the availability of a well-developed science of civilisation. Furthermore, for such a science to be well-placed for undertaking the task at hand, the contributions of the *maqāsid* are called for.

**Contemporary Western Civilisation and Its Global Extension: A Civilisation in Crisis**

The contemporary condition of Western civilisation may be best described in terms of the dominant mindsets and ideas that have shaped it and the ironies and contradictions that characterise it. The thinking of contemporary Western man in general is dominated by three related ideas, namely growth, development, and progress – understood in secular and material terms. He organises his life and thought – at both individual and societal levels – around these concepts in such a manner that all other ideas and concepts are made subservient to them. Human life has no meaning and purpose other than the practical realisation of these ideas in all areas of human affairs.

Around these ideas revolve his hopes and aspirations, as well as his fear and anxieties. His vision of the future of its challenges and opportunities is described in terms of these ideas and other related concepts. ‘Modern eschatology’ is described primarily in terms of economic prosperity and salvation and its contrast, economic
doom or catastrophe. Moreover, on the basis of these three ideas, he judges the past and anticipates the future. He evaluates and grades his fellow men according to the degree of their success or failure in achieving growth, development, and progress. Thus, we used to have the groupings ‘advanced’ or ‘developed’ nations, ‘developing’ and ‘underdeveloped’ nations or societies, or ‘progressive’ and ‘backward’ countries and societies.

The world in which we find ourselves today is the direct consequence of this growth, development and progress-oriented view of human life and society. Our world is undeniably a world ridden with ironies and contradictions. It is a world in which extreme opposites flourish side-by-side. We are proud of its many achievements, but at the same time we are disillusioned with its failures and chronic problems that are equally many, numerically speaking, if not even more. The shapers of our world promise many positive things for the betterment of humankind, but at the same time it is full of dangers and threats which, if left unresolved, will lead to the massive destruction of humankind, if not its complete annihilation.

Contemporary human civilisation is rich and advanced in scientific and technical knowledge, but poor and backwards in moral and spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Consequently, we are superb at solving even the most complex of scientific and technological problems and extremely successful in controlling the forces of the natural world that is external to us. But we are utterly hopeless when it comes to solving the most basic of human problems, and we fail miserably in the task of social engineering, that is, in ordering and controlling human behaviours and the inner forces of human nature which govern them.

Material wealth and prosperity is unjustly distributed and is not matched by moral strength and excellence. It is literally found side-by-side with material deprivation and poverty at all levels of collective existence. At the global level, the disparity between the very rich and the very poor nations is so wide that not only is it religiously and morally repugnant, but also politically and economically undesirable. Similarly, at the level of the nation-state, the gulf separating the rich citizens and the poor ones is getting wider than ever, so much so that it has posed numerous social and moral problems of a very serious nature.

Modern civilisation which is supposedly founded on humanism and which in fact takes great pride in having adopted it as its philosophical worldview, is also a witness to the greatest genocide in human history, one in which millions of American-Indians, Australian aborigines, and New Zealand Māori perished, purportedly committed in the name of civilisation and progress, not to mention the genocide of millions of Jews. It is the same civilisation that acts as the midwife to the birth of institutionalised racism which is clearly an affront to human dignity and man’s moral worth. It is also ironic that this civilisation which prizes very dearly mental health, even overriding spiritual health, and which is completely dedicated to its
promotion and preservation has to cope with an unprecedented incidence of mental illnesses. We can go on and on in enumerating the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes which characterise the state of human affairs prevailing in contemporary human civilisation.

In his address to the “International Conference on the ASEAN Countries and the World Economy: The Challenge of Change”, held in Bali on 4 March 1991, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, borrows Charles Dickens’s description of the Europe of 1775 in the latter’s *A Tale of Two Cities* to describe ‘the positive and negative fundamentals and uncertainties’ in our world of the early 1990s:10

It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times.
It was the age of wisdom,
it was the age of foolishness.
It was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity.
It was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness.
It was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair.
We had everything before us,
we had nothing before us.

We could add that these poetic expressions of Dickens are also very apt in describing modern civilisation right from his time until now. The character of contemporary civilisation has not changed since Mahathir’s speech. If present trends continue, then it looks like we have to contend forever with this state of civilisational disequilibrium. We are also becoming more convinced that this disequilibrium is the necessary price we have to pay for development and progress. However, an important question to ask is whether the path followed by the West in its construction of civilisation during the last four hundred years is the only path to development, progress and civilisation. Or is there a way out of this civilisational crisis? We do know that many contemporary minds – and every day their number is increasing – have sought to address this problem either in its specific aspects and dimensions or in its totality. In the process, many thoughts have been expressed, many symptoms diagnosed, a lot of data sifted and analysed, and many solutions proposed. If we have the time to glance through the fast-growing literature on the subject, we cannot fail to notice the intense debate that is currently going on between the different schools of thought.
For many reasons – intellectual as well as practical – Muslims must participate actively and constructively in this debate. Islam must play an important role in the present search for solutions to the problems of humanity and in the quest for alternative models of development and civilisation construction. We must come up with our own analysis of the problems, guided by our own religious and philosophical worldview without sacrificing objectivity and intellectual and scientific rigour. And we must put forward our own solutions to these problems, solutions which wisely take into account all the positive things the contemporary world has to offer, but which remain faithful to the letter and spirit of our spiritual and moral systems. Before we can come up with this new synthesis of ideas, which is theoretically sound and practically workable, it is imperative that we first have a clear understanding of the essential nature of the problems.

We would go along with many thinkers and scholars in the West today who strongly feel that we ought to critically re-examine all the basic presuppositions concerning growth, development and progress, which many people in the modern world have taken for granted or unquestioningly accepted as true all this while, although we do not necessarily share all their views when it comes to the solutions. In particular, we could go along with those who call for the formulation and implementation of a balanced and holistic development, although again their conception of ‘balanced and holistic’ development may not coincide with ours. In fact, there are those who speak of a balanced, integrated and holistic development without really venturing beyond the parameters and boundaries of physical development.

The Nature of the Present Crisis

The crisis of human civilisation that we are now witnessing is essentially a crisis arising out of the loss of equilibrium in human life. Contemporary civilisation is indeed suffering from a state of disequilibrium that has reached dangerous proportions. ‘Equilibrium’ is an important concept which must figure prominently in all our discussions on the present civilisational crisis. It is certainly an important concept in the medical theory of health and disease. It assumed an even greater importance in pre-modern times. But it is a forgotten concept in the modern social sciences, including economics and political science. We say ‘forgotten’ because in the social sciences of the Middle Ages, particularly in Muslim political theory, the concept of balance or equilibrium in human society was highly prized.

In Islam, this concept is represented by the term *iʿtidāl* which is etymologically related to *ʿadl*, the Arabic word for ‘justice’. In fact, the ideas of equilibrium and justice are conceptually related. Justice is one of the principles of equilibrium. Without justice, there would be no equilibrium. As applied to the totality of a system or organism, the idea of balance implies not only taking into account all its
constituent elements, but also their ordering and interrelationships. In other words, the idea of balance is inseparable from the ideas of order, proportion, harmony, justice and wholeness.

In reformulating the traditional Islamic notion of justice, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas defines justice as that “harmonious condition or state of affairs whereby everything is in its right or proper place such as the cosmos”. The broad, comprehensive meaning of justice in Islam was not lost on Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1895–1971), a leading British orientalist of the last century, when he says that “[j]ustice in this [i.e. Islamic] sense has little or nothing to do with the political or judicial application of man-made laws. It is a principle of order and wholeness: that all elements, endowments, and activities of life shall be in harmonious relation with one another, each fulfilling its proper purpose and ends in a divinely-appointed system of interlocking obligations and rights.”

Perhaps, we can gain a better understanding of the ideas of equilibrium and disequilibrium as applied to a human civilisation, and thus a better understanding of the nature of the present crisis, if we were to draw an analogy with the concepts of equilibrium and disequilibrium as applied to the human body. This way of explaining human society with respect to its structure, the functions of its integral components, and the state of its activities viewed in their totality, that is, by resorting to the symbolism of human anatomy and employing the terminologies of medical science relating to the theory of health and disease appears to be universal. The languages of mankind bear testimony to this fact. In almost every human society, there exist a considerable number of terms which become the common legacy of its political science and medical science.

This method of explanation was certainly popular among classical Muslim political theorists, many of whom, like Ibn Rushd (the Averroes of the medieval Latin West, 1126–1198) and Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl-Allāh (1247–1318), were both political leaders and administrators and practising medical doctors. For example, in his Commentary on Plato’s Republic, Ibn Rushd maintains that the theoretical and practical parts of political science stand in the same relationship to each other as do the books Health and Illness and the Preservation of Health and the Removal of Illness in medicine.

The human body is comparable to human society. Both are living organisms. Interestingly, the Qurʾān speaks of each ummah (community) as having its own life-span. Conceptions of health and disease are applicable to both the human body and the ‘political’ body, that is, human society. Health, which constitutes the norm, is defined in traditional medical theory as that condition of the body in which the physiological elements are in a proper proportion or balance, and in which the various parts or powers function harmoniously with one another.
Disease is a deviation from the norm. As health is harmony or good order in the body, so disease consists in imbalance and disharmony – an excess or defect with consequent disproportion of the elements, or the disorder of conflicting bodily process. Although the physiological elements and factors of modern medicine are different from those of traditional medicine, health continues to be conceived as an equilibrium, and disease as its loss through disorder and disproportion.

The health and illness of human society may be conceived in an analogous manner. Contemporary civilisation whether in the West or in the East is not well and is abnormal, because it has lost its equilibrium through various kinds of disorders and disproportions. Some of the diseases are unique to Western societies, some others to Eastern societies, and there are diseases that are common to both. The problem of restoring equilibrium in contemporary human societies is made worse by the fact that those individuals, institutions or functional groups on whom society traditionally relies to undertake the task are themselves in a state of crisis.

In the view of this writer, of all the present societal disorders the most serious is perhaps at the level of thought and worldview itself. We have lost the vision of the whole. For example, in mainstream contemporary Western thought the vision of the whole man, the whole society, the whole universe and the whole reality has been lost. There are blurs and cracks in our belief system. We no longer see the whole man, but only the partial man, such as man the social animal, man the economic animal, or man the political animal. The loss of wholeness at the level of thought has already manifested itself at the level of action and practical life in the form of societal imbalances and disharmony. The symptoms of disequilibrium are obvious to everyone. In contemporary society, the spiritual, intellectual, psychological or mental, and physical elements are no longer harmoniously related.

In the history of medicine, there has been a long debate as to whether health of the human person is better served by the general practitioner treating the whole man or by a specialist treating a special organ. The correct view would be that society needs both types of medical doctors. Similarly, the health of society would be better served when we have both generalists and specialists who understand each other’s roles and functions. When specialisation is pursued to its furthest limits without being balanced by a holistic vision of things, and by knowledge of a generalised nature, then there will definitely be disorder and disharmony in the domain of knowledge.

Microbiology informs us that animals and plants are composed of cells which are considered as the fundamental units of life. The state of health at the cellular level influences or determines the general health of the body. Similarly, society, as a kind of living organism, has its own fundamental units of life in the form of the individual and the family unit. The health of the society as a whole depends a lot on the health of its individual citizens and its family units. Today, we know that in some societies the family institution is being uprooted by radical socio-economic
changes, while in some other societies it is cracking under the impact of modern economic development.

One important consequence of the loss of wholeness in man’s vision of himself and of reality, especially the loss of his spiritual dimension, is progressive reductionism in his theory of development and progress. Development as understood by many people today has been reduced to its economic dimension. No one wishes to deny or belittle the importance to human life and society of this dimension. Our objection is to the fact that this important dimension has been conceptualised to convey a rather restrictive meaning, defined primarily in quantitative and monetary terms. This emphasis on quantification gives economics the appearance of an exact science. At the same time, however, it severely restricts the scope of economic theories by excluding qualitative distinctions that are crucial to understanding the ecological, social and psychological dimensions of economic activity. For example, energy is measured only in kilowatts, regardless of its origins; no distinction is made between renewable and non-renewable goods; and the social costs of production are added, incomprehensibly, as positive contributions to the gross national product. Furthermore, economists have completely disregarded psychological research on people’s behaviour as income earners, consumers, and investors because the results of such research cannot be integrated into the current quantitative analyses.

The reduction of value to its economic component and the further reduction of economic value to the quantifiable in contemporary economic calculus have placed other sectors of human development at a great disadvantage. Spiritual, intellectual, moral and cultural aspects of human development command scant attention and in many countries hardly any at all because their economic values cannot be calculated. As a result, the different branches of knowledge related to these non-economic sectors of human development suffer too. Thus, for example, the social sciences and the humanities are left far behind the natural and engineering sciences. The value of the latter sciences to economic development is immediately evident.

The reduction in question has also affected in a negative way our conceptions of resources, production and consumption. One aspect of this negative impact was brought out, for example, by the British economist of German origin, Ernst Friedrich Schumacher (1911–1977), who stated:

There are many activities which are totally uneconomic, but they are carried on for their own sakes. The economists have an easy way of dealing with them: they divide all human activities between ‘production’ and ‘consumption’. Anything we do under the heading of ‘production’ is subject to the economic calculus, and anything we do under the heading of ‘consumption’ is not. But real life is very refractory to such classifications, because man-as-producer and man-as-consumer is in fact the same man, who is always producing and consuming ‘at the same time’.
This reductionism in the theory of economic development has claimed – and continues to claim – other victims as well, victims which from the point of view of religion are even more important. These include social justice, equitable distribution of income, and full employment, all of which are necessary for the well-being of society.

The Root Causes of the Problem

The ideas of growth, development, and progress in themselves are not to be blamed for the present crisis. These ideas are legitimate and even necessary. They are not peculiar to modern civilisation alone. These ideas are as old as human civilisation itself. Of course, the modern understanding of these ideas is fundamentally different from the pre-modern one, such as the one we have in traditional Islamic civilisation.

In pre-modern societies, these ideas were understood within the framework of a God-centric worldview that features one or more well-defined systems of relationships involving God, the universe and man. In these societies, these ideas derive their meanings from a religious or spiritual conception of human life and human perfection. The final goal of human development is spiritual perfection and human progress is primarily defined in spiritual and moral terms. While the general emphasis in all these religious societies and cultures is the same – that is on the spiritual dimension of growth, development and progress – their social systems are different from each other. In all of them, the idea of wholeness and balance is very much emphasised. Still, some societies and civilisations were clearly more holistic and more successful in achieving civilisational equilibrium than others, in both theory and practice.

The ultimate test of the inherent strength and effectiveness of a social system is its ability and capacity to adapt itself to changes in time and space without its foundation being undermined. This ability and capacity has a lot to do with its inherent power through which it can maintain balance and equilibrium.

There are primary and secondary causes of the present crisis of human civilisation. The root cause of it may be traced back to that particular moment in Western history when the God-centric worldview was abandoned in favour of the man-centric worldview where the vision of the whole man has been lost. In the modern West, following the rise and spread of secular humanism, the ideas of growth, development and progress underwent a long process of secularisation to become completely devoid of spiritual meaning and significance. Without doubt, secularisation brought certain gains to Western man, but it has also unleashed numerous destructive forces which in due course of time threaten not just the West but the entire world.

As a result of Western colonialism and cultural imperialism, secularism flowed to other continents. The Muslim world in particular was badly affected. Today, the
Muslims too have lost their vision of wholeness and their civilisational renewal agenda must seek to recover this wholeness or tawḥīdic vision. The present crisis has also a lot to do with the fact that Western civilisation has no religiously sanctioned law comparable to the *sharīʿah* of Islam or to the law of the Jews. As a consequence, in its long history it has never really known and experienced balance and equilibrium in the true sense of the words. Instead, it has been oscillating from one extreme to the other. It is important to remember that the *raison d’être* of the *sharīʿah* is to maintain equilibrium in society.

**Civilisational Renewal: Toward a New Science of Civilisation to Restore the Civilisational Health of Contemporary Humanity**

Contemporary humanity in general and the Muslim ummah in particular are in urgent need of a new science of civilisation deemed appropriate and sufficient for their twenty-first century needs. What is understood here as appropriate and sufficient means that the science in question would have to be comprehensive and developed well enough to generate ideas, outlooks, practices, and institutions that can unleash the forces of societal change for civilisational renewal or ‘rebirth’. In other words, a plea to the twenty-first century global ummah and the whole humanity is this: Let us have a new science of civilisation so that we can have a civilisational renewal.

In this new science, the idea of civilisational renewal and its pursuit go hand in hand with that of civilisational conservation, preservation and restoration. The new science has first of all to be authentic, meaning that it has to conform to all the necessary epistemological requirements. As true of every authentic science, the new science must possess well-defined foundational assumptions.

To those familiar with the Islamic intellectual legacy the treasury of Islamic thought appears as quite rich enough to be able to make meaningful intellectual contributions to the formulation and articulation of these assumptions. They would be able to tell us further where to look in the treasury for ideas precisely needed for the formulation in question. Not surprisingly, in the light of our foregoing discussion, the location of the ideas points to that sector of the Islamic thought treasury concerned with the *sharīʿah*, of course as this term is understood in its broadest and most universal sense. This understanding is inclusive of the place and role of the *maqāṣid*. It is only in this sense that we could claim that in Islam, the principles governing the organisation of human society and the creation of human culture and civilisation are mostly embodied in the teachings of the *sharīʿah*.

Given the nature and the scope of the societal and civilisational issues under consideration their foundational or governing principles have to be of universal nature as well. But such a kind of principles could hardly be provided by a limited
and sectarian understanding of the sharīʿah now widely found among the Muslims. The proposal made here is to utilise the maqāṣid as the source of the fundamental assumptions of the new science of civilisation which has to be a vast improvement on the one founded by Ibn Khaldūn. The hope is that if the new science is widely taught in the institutions of higher learning and applied in society we would be able to produce new mindsets and ideas that will help to restore the civilisational health of present humanity through the restoration of balance, equilibrium, and justice in society. The five necessities in the maqāṣid will be part of the core foundational assumptions. Other maqāṣid, both traditional and new, have to be added. Apart from the societal balance, equilibrium, and justice we have to add to the list of maqāṣid other civilisational imperatives such as the common good, moderation, food security, and inter-religious peace.

The five necessities – preservation of religion, life, intellect-reason, progeny, and property – may be seen as perennial in nature in the sense that these are relevant at all times. But these traditional necessities need to be re-conceptualised and articulated in the context of twenty-first century life and thought. It is within the framework of a tawḥīdic vision of these five necessities and other maqāṣid that we would be pursuing a holistic and balanced human and societal development. Islam’s tawḥīdic worldview proves indispensable in this task of identifying the maqāṣid for the twenty-first century humanity and of viewing them as a system in which they are interrelated as well as complementary to each other.

Some Recommendations

The task of civilisational renewal as expounded in this article is vast in scope and formidable to be undertaken in practice. It requires the cooperation of many individuals, groups, and institutions.

• For a start, it is suggested that IAIS Malaysia and similar-minded institutions will work together in promoting the ideas of the maqāṣid and al-tajdīd al-haḍārī through activities such as seminars and conferences and publications of writings on the two themes, particularly from the civilisational point of view.
• There is a need to identify scholars and academics with the interest and the necessary expertise to help develop the new science of civilisation in question.
• The issue of the interrelationships between the maqāṣid and civilisational renewal has to be put high on the priority list in the collaborative research and publication programmes among the Islamic think tanks and other research organisations.
Notes

1. Hereafter, for the purpose of brevity, just the word *maqāṣid* is used to refer to *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* or the ‘higher objectives’ of Islamic law.


3. Since its inception, IAIS Malaysia has been promoting the pursuit of civilisational renewal as an important component of the global Muslim *ummah*’s agenda in the twenty-first century. Towards this end IAIS publishes the present quarterly journal, featuring mainly articles that are related in one way or another to the general theme of civilisational renewal. It also organises academic and scholarly activities, such as seminars and conferences that are of significance to the quest for civilisational renewal. For a preliminary exposition of the concept and agenda of *tajdīd haḍārī*, as understood and adopted by IAIS, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Civilisational Renewal: Revisiting the Islam Hadhari Approach* (Shah Alam [Malaysia]: ARAH Publications, 2008). For a discussion of *tajdīd haḍārī* as a fundamental aspect of Islamic reform see Osman Bakar, “Islam and the Challenge of Diversity and Pluralism: Must Islam Reform Itself?” *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 1, no. 1 (October 2009), 55–73.


5. Ibid., 2:107.

6. Says Ibn Khaldūn: “It should be known that this is what the lawgiver [i.e. Allāh] actually had in mind when he forbade injustice. He meant the resulting destruction and ruin of civilisation, which ultimately permits the eradication of the human species. This is what the religious law quite generally and wisely aims at in emphasising five things as necessary: the preservation of religion, the soul, the intellect, progeny, and property” (Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 2:107).

7. For a discussion of these various descriptions of the *maqāṣid*, see Robert Dickson Crane, *The Natural Law of Compassionate Justice: An Islamic Perspective* (Fl. Washington MD: Read 1 Communications, 2010), especially ch. 1.


9. Especially mentioned should be the initiatives by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), based in Herndon, Virginia, and the IAIS Malaysia. IIIT has translated a number of classical and modern works on the *maqāṣid* into several languages, including English. It is also preparing (as a 20-year project) to publish a 20-volume *Encyclopedia of Natural Law and Justice*.


15. For a discussion of this theme, see Osman Bakar, “Economics as a Science: Insights from Classical Muslim Classifications of the Sciences”, *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 1, no. 3 (April 2010), 425–44.

16. For a critique of modern economics as an authentic science see ibid.
