



Islam, Welfare Social Services and Human Dignity: A Maqasid Approach

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Abstract

Over the last few decades, Muslim humanitarian NGOs and grassroots social work organizations have emerged worldwide, in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority societies. Unlike the 'traditional' welfare mechanisms provided by ancient Muslim institutions, these new organizations took the form of secular welfare NGOs and civil society associations, adding an 'Islamic' label to highlight their specific identity. They claim to act according to Islamic guidelines, their Muslim identity, or their faith. Although many of these Muslim organizations offer valuable and useful social services and humanitarian aid to those in need, it is common to observe practices within these organizations that contradict Islamic teachings. Based on the observation that numerous Muslim organizations inadvertently deviate from basic Islamic principles in their projects and policies, this article aims to initiate a discussion on the ways to align social work and humanitarian aid with Islamic principles. It will present examples of so-called 'Islamic-based' social services, drawn from previous sociological studies, to highlight the current situation before attempting to identify normative guidelines based on a Maqasid approach to the Islamic scriptures.

Keywords : Islam; human dignity; maqasid; welfare.

المخلص

شهد العالم في العقود القليلة الماضية انتشار المنظمات غير الحكومية الإنسانية الإسلامية ومنظمات العمل الاجتماعي في المجتمعات ذات الأغلبية المسلمة وغير المسلمة. وعلى عكس آليات الرعاية الاجتماعية "الكلاسيكية" التي توفرها المؤسسات الإسلامية التقليدية، فقد قامت هذه المنظمات الجديدة كمنظمات الرعاية الاجتماعية العلمانية وجمعيات المجتمع المدني، بتقديم نفسها على أنها "إسلامية" لتسليط الضوء على هويتها. ويزعم هؤلاء أنهم يتصرفون وفقاً للمبادئ الإسلامية أو هويتهم أو عقيدتهم الإسلامية. وبالرغم من أن العديد من هذه المنظمات الإسلامية تقدم خدمات اجتماعية قيمة ومفيدة ومساعدات إنسانية

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للمحتاجين، نلاحظ ممارسات داخل هذه المنظمات تتعارض مع التعاليم الإسلامية في مشاريعها وسياساتها. يهدف هذا المقال إلى مناقشة طرق مواءمة العمل الاجتماعي والمساعدات الإنسانية مع المبادئ الإسلامية. ويقدم هذا المقال أمثلة لما يسمى بالخدمات الاجتماعية الإسلامية، والتي استقيناها من الدراسات الاجتماعية السابقة، لتسليط الضوء على الوضع الحالي قبل محاولة تحديد المبادئ المعيارية عبر مناهج مقاصدي من الكتب الإسلامية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإسلام؛ الكرامة الإنسانية؛ المقاصد؛ الرعاية الاجتماعية

Introduction

Islamic Studies, Western Academia, and Competing Worldviews

Navigating the current intellectual discourses on Islam poses a unique challenge, particularly when it comes to Western academic views on the fact to speak about Islam from both the perspective of a faithful Muslim and intellectual. Religious discourses coming from within the Muslim community often encounter resistance from the academic realm, with critics pointing out a so-called lack of objectivity and denouncing normative content. Calls and expectations for academic 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' lead some professors and scholars to dismiss papers that incorporate Islamic normativity, showing concerns about their ideological or essentializing tones. In this regard, intellectual contributions trying to express an internal Islamic point of view are likely to face challenges in the peer-review process, with reviewers potentially highlighting concerns about normativity and the potential "essentialization" of Islam. While some critiques may be relevant, a blanket rejection of such works risks excluding valuable contributions from Muslims striving to extract principles, norms, and ideas from Islamic scriptures. However, some classic and contemporary non-Muslim scholars have also shown the capacity to study Islam and the Quran with dedication and objectivity. Instead of debating the divine nature of Revelation, they focused on textual analysis and never entered into ideological debates against the Islamic creed, such as the French scholar Jacques Berque (2002) who endorsed a constructive dialogue with Muslims throughout his life. In the field of Islamic law, we find other brilliant non-Muslim scholars who were able to approach Islamic thought without tackling the Islamic faith and principles, such as Wael Hallaq (2001, 2004, 2009). Yet, looking at the academic landscape of Islamic studies in Western European universities, such approaches seem to be rather exceptions rather than rules.

To this date, the field of Islamic studies in various Western countries tends to favor approaches that either adopt a deconstructionist stance, treat Islamic concepts dubiously, or engage with Islamic literature through historical criticism. Both approaches are supposed to comply with scientific validity, adhering to Western academic standards and avoiding normativity. In addition, their methodology often

tends to be presented as purely analytical and neutral which rejects any doubt of normativity or ideological influence. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that knowledge construction relies on underlying premises or assumptions, inevitably shaping researchers' perspectives on their study subjects. In this context, undertaking research on Islam through a skeptical and critical approach, often infused with postmodernism, is no more objective or scientific than assuming the premise that the Quran is a divine revelation (*wahy*). Indeed, approaches entail similar levels of subjectivity, rooted in assumptions whose veracity cannot be demonstrated by scientific means.

Against this backdrop, I contend that the positionality of a follower of Islam — someone believing in the fact that the last Prophet Muhammed received Allah's message through the process of revelation (*wahy*) — holds as much legitimacy as scholars following a historical-critical approach, since both are intellectual premises promoting distinct methodological and epistemological systems. Operating on the premise that the Quran as Revelation and the Sunnah as its implementation by Prophet Muhammad form the fundamentals of Islam, Islam as a *deen* emerges as a coherent and consistent message that should be approached holistically. This assertion does not negate the thesis that Islam is a 'discursive tradition' (Asad, 2009), subject to constant discussion and adaptation in response to evolving contexts. However, Islam keeps core principles that academic studies should strive to identify and analyze. In essence, this contribution assumes a normative tone as it aims to provide an intellectual reflection on Islamic teachings and principles applied to social work and welfare.

Based on the introductory elements outlined above, it is necessary to reflect on the roots of rejecting Muslim perspectives, which seemingly are related to colliding worldviews and ideologies. In many universities, particularly in the West, those who speak about Islam as a unified system are inclined to face rejection because of their supposed essentialization of religion. Conversely, the prevailing assumption is that Islam encompasses numerous interpretations supported by historical evidence of the diversification of Islamic understandings over time. Those who dare to make attempts to define Islamic teachings and norms, hindering theological efforts to extract Islamic principles and norms from within the tradition, risk being perceived as biased activists whose endeavors are not academic, but ideological. This common trend, particularly evident in Western Islamic studies departments, appears to stem from two intertwined causes. Firstly, deconstruction has become the primary methodological component of this enterprise, where skepticism and doubt guide the studies of the Islamic tradition and its scriptures, assuming that everything is supposed to be deconstructed. This trend is partly explained by the continuity of many Islamic studies departments with the discipline of orientalism developed in colonial times, often with the concern of rejecting views that could challenge Western theories and epistemologies. Secondly, many universities are strongly influenced by postmodernist views that cast suspicion on concepts of authority and tradition, going so far as to reject the concept of truth itself.

But above all, the West has experienced significant and unprecedented secularization, resulting in the marginalization of faith and religion in universities.

Moreover, we find in several Western European countries a common belief that Islam must be 'reformed', in order to align with human rights and principles of freedom and equality. This view questions the Quranic text, advocating for discussions on the status of the Quran rather than solely its interpretation. In this regard, some argue that the Quran may be a text written by humans for political reasons and some others even call for the elimination of certain verses deemed to be incompatible with 'Western values' or 'universal' principles. A common ideological trend influenced by progressivism thus challenges the idea that the Quran contains universal teachings for all times. Some Muslim academics regard progressivism as antagonistic to the Islamic doctrine, implying that society's ethical standards do not develop over time. Traditionalists, on the other hand, believe that humanity's state deteriorates throughout time, rendering the Quran's lessons eternal (Lings, 1987).

In the era of decolonial studies, it is possible to overcome this academic impasse by arguing that alternative epistemological systems had been developed outside of Western modernism. If it is legitimate to respectfully consider their notions and epistemology, then this should also be applied to the field of Islamic studies. In this perspective, this paper advocates an overt positionality, starting from the fundamental premises of the Islamic faith, meaning that Allah revealed the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad through the process of *wahy*. Consequently, this short contribution assumes a normative tone to extract principles and norms from Islamic scriptures through a methodology inspired by the Maqasid approach. Based on this premise, a critical reflection on the development of Islamic thought, schools and fiqh can then unfold. More concretely, it proposes a short and humble reflection about the ways the Maqasid Methodology developed by Shaykh Jasser Auda (2008 & 2021) could inspire social work and humanitarian practices aiming at complying with genuine Islamic teachings.

The Maqasid Methodology

One of the distinguishing features of the approaches of classical and current academics dealing with the Maqasid approach is their attempt to integrate Islamic norms and laws with higher purposes (*maqâsid*). We can cite, among others, al-Ghazâli in the 11th century, Al-Shatibi in the 14th century (Al-Raisouni, 2011), Ibn Ashur in the 20th century (Ibn Ashur, 2006), and more recently, Kamali (2008), just to name a few. This methodology has allowed these scholars to challenge some of the classical jurisprudential issues by proposing norms more in line with the spirit of the Quran and Sunnah from a teleological perspective. Expanding on this rich heritage, Shaykh Jasser Auda (2008 & 2021) goes further, suggesting that Islam, conceptualized through the study of both the Quran and Sunnah, should be approached as a coherent and wholistic system. This involves approaching the Quran and Sunnah with a wholistic view, in contrast to the prevalent partialist

readings that isolate specific verses and *ahâdith* to extract teachings and norms. The proposed wholistic approach argues for the consideration of all available scriptural sources on a given subject, analyzing the whole Revelation as a coherent and harmonious system. This perspective helps overcome the issue of apparent contradictions within the Quran and Sunnah, by weighing their significance and their importance with the context of their expression. Consequently, this process leads to the distinction of the fundamental elements from those being associated with a specific context. In cases where two verses or *ahâdith* seemingly contradict each other, they can be interpreted as articulated within different temporal and spatial contexts, elucidating the diversity of rules and recommendations on a particular subject.

Another key premise of the Maqasid Methodology is the direct reading of the original scriptures - Qur'an and Sunnah -, as recognized by mainstream Islamic communities. The Mushaf is universally acknowledged among Muslims as the revealed Quran. The prophetic traditions are also widely accepted as reliable sources documenting the prophet's speeches and actions, even if the authenticity of some remains controversial. The underlying assumption behind this emphasis on primary sources lies in the belief in *wahy*, the divine Revelation, which bestows upon these texts a sacred authority distinct from human interpretations. Consequently, this focus on primary scriptures encourages a direct engagement with the Quran and Sunnah, transcending historical Islamic interpretations developed over the centuries under several schools of thought. Historically, this approach gained prominence in the 18th century through the reformist Islamic movement known as Nahdha, whose influence continues to inspire Muslim scholars to this day, notwithstanding its historical limitations.

Purpose and Intention

To begin with, the injunction of 'spending in the path of Allah' (*infâq*) can be understood as one of the central commands of Islam. It is mentioned in many verses of the Quran that specify the ways and conditions under which it should be implemented. Before exploring these aspects, it is worth recalling that the first condition for the validity of an act according to Islam is its intention, as taught by the famous hadith recounted in al-Nawawi's compilation:

"تَمَّ الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَأَنْتُمْ لِكُلِّ أَمْرٍ مَّا نَوَيْتُمْ"

Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended.

The intention determines the value of the action and only the deeds that are performed for the sake of the Almighty are considered. If we take the example of *infaq* as a command of the Quran, its implementation is also connected to the higher purpose of seeking the pleasure of Allah. Like with other commands, intention remains essential for the spiritual validity of the deeds. This fundamental rule also highlights the salience of the purification of the soul (*tazkiyyat-un-nafs*), as people naturally aspire to their self and worldly interests.

Reminder of the Method

From a Muslim perspective, the sources of knowledge can be distinguished between:

- a. The divine Revelation (Qur'an, and Sunnah)
- b. The empirical reality (the study of this world)

Concretely, the Revelation provide the guidelines to follow and the rules and principles to implement. In this regard, its purpose is therefore highly normative. Yet, before acting, it is first needed to understand the context and living reality. Thus, it is crucial to study society as it is, before proposing solutions to improve it and to implement the commands of the Revelation.

A Cycle Process

The *Maqâsid* process is not linear, but cyclic which incorporates interrelated elements needed for the wholistic approach to understanding the Revelation. Therefore, it is possible to start the research process with the 'cycles of reflection' on the scriptures (Quran and Sunnah) or with an empirical study of the "reality".

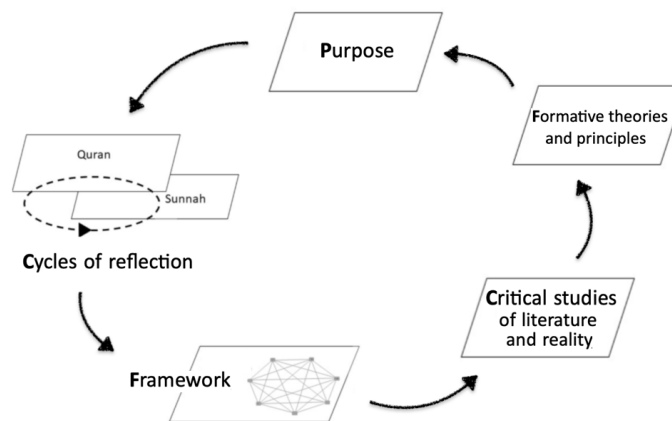


Figure 1 Maqasid Process (Brodard, 2024)

In this methodology, the purpose takes a central role based on the premise that Quran implies a teleological approach, in which the Almighty links practices or behaviors to expected outcomes, which can be called “higher objectives” or *maqâsid*. For instance, worship (*ibadah*) itself is connected to the higher objective of righteousness (*taqwa*), as clearly stated in verse 21 from Surat-ul-Baqarah.

Accordingly, the reflective process can start with the identification of the purpose (*maqsid*), which aims to understand the divine expectations for human conduct. Moreover, it permits to differentiate between fundamentals or principles, and details. This implies developing a sense of prioritization when approaching the Quran, the Sunnah and further Islamic literature, in order to understand the meaning, wisdom and purpose behind the rules and norms. After this short reminder of the Maqasid Methodology, we will now see how it can be applied to the field of social work, or how Islamic teachings should influence the provision of welfare services.

Aligning 'Islamic' Services with the Principles of Revelation:

Bridging the Divide

On the one hand, welfare social services offered by Muslim organizations are likely to be considered as 'Islamic' services or 'Islamic social work' (Warden et al., 2017). On the other hand, Islam as a *deen* implies principles, rules and guidelines that are often ignored or neglected by the providers of so-called Islamic social work. Consequently, we often find an important gap between welfare services provided by Muslims in the name of their faith and what Islam concretely teaches on the matter. This gap between Muslims' services and genuine Islamic-based social work or humanitarian aid could be bridged through a renewed interpretation of Islamic sources (the Quran and Sunnah) using the Maqasid Methodology.

As highlighted by the previous scheme, one of the five stages of the Maqasid Methodology developed by Shaykh Jasser Auda (2008 & 2021) implies the critical reflection on literature and reality. This stage aims to analyze reality as it is, from a critical perspective devoid of normativity. In this regard, it requires a sociological approach, including fieldwork, observation and interviews.

In the targeted area, concerning the question of *infaq*, the first aim is therefore to understand and analyze the charitable and humanitarian practices of faith-based organizations and Islamic NGOs. A sociological research study on charity work inspired by Islam in various European countries (Brodard, 2023a) identified several controversial issues related to concrete and recurring charity practices of Muslim faith-based organizations:

- a. the emphasis on *hasanet*-oriented motivation
- b. the ignorance of the real needs of the recipients
- c. the lack of etiquette and ethics in charity work
- d. the discrimination against non-Muslims, or simply the prioritization of Muslims
- e. the instrumentalization of welfare services as a means for da'wah

For each of these points, we propose a short discussion aiming at comparing Islamic teachings with common practices observed within Muslim organizations.

Emphasizing hasanet-oriented motivation

The first issue is related to the purposes and motivations to help the needy. In Muslim circles in the West, it has become very common to hear believers justify their acts of charity, such as distributing a meal to a destitute person, by saying that they are doing so to obtain *hasanet*. Some booklets prepared by faith-based organizations or featuring texts on websites and social media even insist on this expectation of *hasanet* as a key motivation for Muslims to help others. In a similar vein, a Muslim activist in Egypt even said: "I don't care about the poor" (Mittermaier, 2021) and even if she was very committed to distributing food to the needy, She explained that her motivation was merely to obtain rewards (*hasanet, thawâb*) from Allah. On the field, it seems that the interviewed Muslims expressing such views are sincere and

confident in the accuracy of their statements, believing that they genuinely act in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Although the idea of *hasanet* as divine retribution for an act of charity does exist in Islam, the focus on this motivation stems from a flawed understanding of Islamic principles. Indeed, a sole and central hadith of the prophet Muhammad is enough to highlight that the purpose of charitable deeds goes far beyond a self-serving quest for a return on investment:

"لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ"

None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.

This fundamental teaching makes it impossible to claim to be acting in the path of Allah (*fi sabil-iLlah*) without having concern for the welfare of others. Yet, in the field, numerous observations show that the reward for *hasanet* has become for many the central motivation for acting, which underlines a contradiction with authentic Islamic teachings.

Ignoring the real needs of the recipients

In line with the previous point, another negative trend observed in the practice of “Islamic social work” is neglecting the real needs of recipients. In many cases, faith-based organizations distribute foods or provide services to recipients without having conducted any study on their conditions, needs and demands. It is simply assumed that the needy are given what they need, often without even asking their opinion. As a result, there is often a gap and mismatch between the 'good intentions' of the social actors and the expectations of the people who benefit from their welfare services.

In social work literature, Cameron Parsell and Beth Watts questioned the social relevance and interest of direct charitable actions in favor of the homeless and suggested that the donors may benefit more from charitable interventions than the recipients (Parsell & Watts, 2017, p. 71). Moreover, the limited usefulness and potential negative consequences of charity programs were pointed out (Shelter, 2005; Watts, Fitzpatrick & Johnsen, 2018). According to these authors, social work should not only be driven solely by good intentions and motivations but also by the expected significant impact for the beneficiaries. Indeed, good intentions and charitable morals can coexist with a lack of interest in the recipients. Social actors should not be evaluated or rewarded solely based on their good intentions but rather on the effectiveness of their intervention in mitigating exclusion and bringing about structural changes that benefit the homeless (Parsell & Watts, 2017, p. 67). In other words, the focus should be on developing social work oriented towards tangible results and real social impact, in the interest of the beneficiaries rather than the providers (Parsell & Watts, 2017, p. 73).

Several observations of some Muslim faith-based organizations in Switzerland show that some of the food distributions targeted people who did not

need it (Brodard, 2023a). This paradoxical situation, in which the charity volunteers almost insist that their beneficiaries accept the food, could be explained by the fact the providers aimed to do 'good' without even considering the needs of those people. This lack of interest in the needs and living conditions of the beneficiaries not only exists in Muslim FBOs but also concerns statutory social work as pointed out in the following excerpt:

The short and longer-term impacts on the homeless individuals using these facilities do not receive attention, despite being a crucial arbiter of whether these programs are a helpful addition to the landscape of homelessness services or not. Relentless attention to understanding the experiences of people who are homeless, and crucially the trajectories that allow some individuals to escape homelessness, forces a focus that extends far beyond mitigating the symptoms of this particular injustice. (Parsell & Watts, 2017, p. 73)

In order to mitigate this problematic trend, it is necessary to emphasize human dignity and to implement Quranic and prophetic teachings coherently through a deep understanding of the higher objectives (*maqâsid*) of the Revelation.

Lack of etiquette and ethics in charity work

Ignoring the needs of the recipients and neglecting the quality of the relationship with them commonly lead to shortcomings and ethical issues. A first common problem arises when the providers of social welfare services think they know better the needs of the beneficiaries than themselves. In this regard, they develop projects and provide social services without any investigation into the living context and conditions of the people they claim to help. In poor countries like Mali, one can see many abandoned development projects funded by foreign Muslim and non-Muslim NGOs. Despite the consistent financial amounts given to the projects, the lack of understanding and awareness of the context and people's needs sometimes led to the lack of involvement of local communities and the abandonment of facilities built by these foreign NGOs. Indeed, it is not rare to find abandoned buildings in some regions of the country, in front of which an old plaque mentions the project and its important funding. In short, ignoring the needs and living conditions of the people one claims to help denotes a patronizing attitude and a lack of respect, unworthy of the teachings of Islam.

Another problematic and recurring trend is filming food distributions, often without even seeking the consent of the beneficiaries. The quest for donations through online platforms is driving many social and humanitarian aid providers to insist on communication through sensational videos. Sometimes, the logic of numbers—the frantic search for funding—overshadows the primary purpose of social commitment, welfare, and mercy. It therefore often results in unethical behavior. At other times, the way some NGOs communicate about their work is inaccurate, or even deceptive: for example, a Muslim charity publicly claimed to be helping orphans in a madrasa, when in fact they were children sent by their parents

to the institution for their Quranic studies.¹ If these volunteers think they are doing the right thing by insinuating that the "end justifies the means" in the sense that the important thing is to appeal to the generosity of donors, or even if they have acted in this way out of ignorance of their field of intervention, they should be reminded that the Quran and the Sunnah impose a certain ethical standard which cannot tolerate such deviations. Indeed, Muslim NGOs leaders must communicate accurately and speak straightforwardly and according to this Quranic in Surât ul-Ahzab, ayât 70):

{يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا} (الأحزاب: ٧٠)

O you who believe! Have Taqwa of Allah and speak (always) the truth.

Discriminating non-Muslims

Another issue concerns the prioritization of Muslims over others. The following verses of the Quran (Surât-ul-Insân, ayât 8-9), among others, indicate that people of faith feed the poor, the orphans, and the prisoners without expecting any reward nor thanks as they act only for Allah's sake:

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا. إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا
(الإنسان: ٨-٩)

And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.

In the context of this verse, the captive could not have been a Muslim, which demonstrates that the potential receivers are poor individuals in general, regardless of their religious affiliation. Nevertheless, some leaders and actors of Muslim NGOs and FBOs still debate if they should prioritize Muslims over others, or even Sunnis over other denominations. In a few cases, some even state that welfare services have to be given only to Muslims, ignoring consensual Islamic teachings on the matter. However, in most cases observed in Europe, Muslim FBOs provide their services to all people regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds (Brodard, 2022). The exception here concerns the distribution of *Zakât-ul-mâl*, which is to be given exclusively to Muslims according to most interpretations (Zysow, 2012), although some other theological views argue for including non-Muslims under some conditions (Al-Qarâdawi, 1999).

Using welfare services as tools for da'wah

A last recurring problem in social services undertaken in the name of Islam is the confusion between the mission of charity and that of religious spreading and the call to Islam (*da'wah*). The Quran and Sunnah validate that Muslims have to help people, spread compassion on earth and be useful to society. Besides, one of the main injunctions in Islamic scriptures is to convey the Islamic message to people. While

¹ Personal field observation in Dakar, Senegal (April 2023).

both of these duties should be taken separately, as they are tied to different intents and domains, we can observe nowadays that some da'wah projects instrumentalized social work or humanitarian aid as tools or means to meet the so-called higher need of spreading Islam (Brodard, 2023b).

However, Islamic principles derived from the Quran and Sunnah do not suggest equating the duty of welfare with the call to Islam. Rather, some verses of the Quran and ahâdith highlight that doing good to others, feeding the poor and spreading compassion (*rahmah*) on earth are objectives per se, while others promote the idea of spreading Islam. In brief, both duties are necessary and important, and one should not use the other as a simple means to achieve its objectives.

On the field, these remarks often remain unknown or deliberately ignored. Some argue that because salvation requires adhesion to Islam, da'wah has a much higher purpose than helping people to live better in this temporary world. In this regard, some of them do not hesitate to use welfare social services as a means to attract people to Islam, as some Christian evangelical organizations did in poor countries. By doing so, they seem to forget the Quranic teaching implemented by the Prophet Muhammed, who insisted on the importance of helping others and behaving for the improvement of people's lives. Moreover, some act as if "the ends justify the means", considering the ends being the conversion to Islam and the means anything that could lead to it. It can also be argued here that this is a modern misunderstanding of the *deen*, that neglects the fact that Muslims have to behave in accordance with the principles of the Quran and Sunnah, putting their trust in Allah instead of betraying certain ethical principles in the name of rational strategic considerations.

The few points mentioned above illustrate some of the discrepancies in the practices of charitable and humanitarian organizations claiming to be based on Islam and the fundamental Islamic teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

According to the Maqâsid methodology, it is necessary to conduct a circular analysis of both Islamic scriptures and concrete field practices. In doing so, further projects and actions can be guided by the knowledge of Islamic principles based on an appropriate methodology for reading the texts and extracting their key principles. As an example of such an approach, the scheme below gives a non-exhaustive overview of what the Islamic texts (Quran and ahâdith) may teach about the practice of 'giving' (*al infâq*):

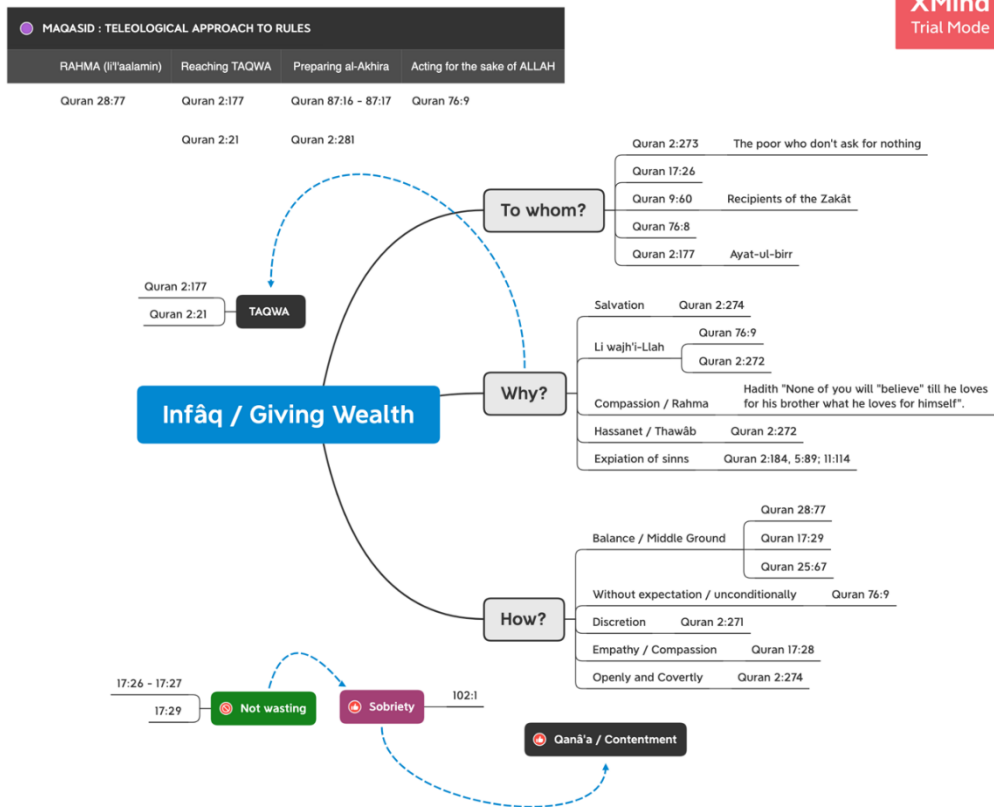


Figure 2. Infaq (Brodard, 2024)

Based on a rapid study of scriptural sources, it then becomes possible to deduce injunctions concerning the modalities, conditions and raison d'être of practice (in this case, that of *infâq*). Furthermore, it can be observed that the practice of giving is interconnected with other Quranic concepts such as righteousness or heedfulness (*taqwa*), contentment (*qanâ'a*), and compassion (*rahma*).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the overarching concern in various fields and among numerous so-called Islamic organizations lies in the disregard for the principles of Revelation, stemming from a flawed methodology coupled with a presumptive familiarity with Islam. The inherent risk of a partialistic approach to religious texts is that it exposes Muslims to the arbitrary selection of elements that suit their needs or desires. Only through a holistic approach can a sound methodology be established, which can then lead to a valid understanding of the purpose, value, and context behind the rules derived from Revelation. The Maqasid Methodology (Jasser, 2009 and 2021) has emerged as an effective tool to unveil the intent behind Quranic verses and *ahadith*, paving the way for a comprehension of the divine message and the implementation of coherent and appropriate rules and principles in society.

Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the fundamental scriptural sources of Islam (Qur'an and Sunnah) through the Maqasid approach highlights certain Islamic principles that should guide charitable and humanitarian aid, revealing the gap between Islamic teachings and the actual practices of Muslim organizations. In the realm of social welfare services, charity, and humanitarian aid, it is imperative to reform Muslim organizations to align with Islamic principles. Failing to do so will perpetuate confusion between a broad Islamic identity depending on its followers' profiles, and Islam as a worldview that defines a way of life and establishes clear principles and rules for concrete action.

In addition, this paper emphasizes the salience of prioritization in the process of studying and applying Islam, which implies distinguishing between fundamental principles and secondary aspects. The central principle of *rahma*, translated as compassion, represents one of the core duties of humans on earth. Embracing Islam as a way of life and worldview, rather than merely a religion, involves worshipping the Almighty and manifesting compassion towards all creation. The prophetic hadith, translated as "None of you will experience true faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself"² also expresses this view. Similarly, another common hadith stating that the best among people is the one most useful for the common good serves as further evidence for this claim, among many other texts.

Numerous Islamic texts from the Quran and Sunnah emphasize the purpose of human behavior as unconditional compassion (*rahma*) and service (*khidmah*) to God's creation. Humanitarian and social work projects inspired by Islam should focus on these fundamental objectives. While positive side-effects such as strategic outcomes, particularly in the area of da'wah, as well as community interests, may emerge, they should not overshadow the primary goal of serving humanity for its welfare and general interest.

In this context, it is crucial to consider that the work of *da'wah* should not replace or instrumentalize welfare or social work under the pretext of its supposed higher value for the common good. While Da'wah relates to another important dimension and aspect of religious life, it should not overshadow the fundamental purpose of Islam and the clear guidelines outlined in both the Quran and Sunnah.

² Hadith (reported by Bukhari and Muslim): عن أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يحب لأخيه ما يحب لنفسه

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