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Is Islamic Economy "Green" Enough? Legal and Ethical Foundations of Green Economy from an Islamic Perspective

İslam Ekonomisi Yeterince 'Yeşil' mi? Yeşil Ekonominin Fıkhî ve Etik İlkeleri

Abstract: The twenty-first century has witnessed significant innovations in both economic paradigms and financial activities. One such innovation is the paradigm of the "green economy," which has emerged in response to the impasses and shortcomings of mainstream economic thought, aiming to meet contemporary needs in a sustainable manner. On the one hand, studies framed around the question "Where does Islamic economics stand in relation to this paradigm?" argue that Islamic economics is capable of aligning itself with the green agenda; on the other hand, Islamic financial institutions, along with regulatory and standard-setting bodies, have taken concrete steps by launching various initiatives compatible with the green economy. While each of these efforts is valuable, our findings suggest that there has been no comprehensive study addressing the legal and ethical principles of the green economy. This research seeks to fill that gap, employing qualitative data analysis and the document review method. The study concludes that Islamic economics is in harmony with the objectives of the green economy and sustainability, and that Islamic legal and ethical principles already encompass these aims. At the same time, it underscores that the green economy is not the sole agenda of Islam, and that Islamic economics must preserve its essence in the face of emerging trends and transient currents.

Keywords: Islamic Law and Economic Thought, Green Economy, Sustainability, Foundations, Analysis

Jel Classification: Q56, Q01, Z12

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Öz: 21. yüzyıl, ekonomik paradigmalar ve finansal faaliyetlerde önemli yeniliklerle başlamıştır. Bu yeniliklerden biri, ana akım iktisadi düşüncenin çıkmazlarını ve sorunlarını gidermek ve çağın ihtiyaçlarını sürdürülebilir bir şekilde karşılamak amacıyla ortaya çıkan "yeşil ekonomi" paradigmasıdır. Bir yandan "İslam ekonomisi bu paradigmanın neresindedir?" sorusu etrafında şekillenen çalışmalar, İslam ekonomisinin de yeşil gündeme uyum sağlayabileceğini ortaya koyarken; diğer yandan İslami finans kuruluşları ile düzenleyici ve standart belirleyici kurumlar da somut adımlar atarak yeşil ekonomiye yönelik çeşitli inisiyatiflerde bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda yapılan her çaba ve çalışma değerli olmakla birlikte, tespitlerimize göre, yeşil ekonominin fıkhî ve ahlâkî ilkelerini kapsamlı bir biçimde ele alan bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu araştırma, söz konusu boşluğu doldurmayı hedeflemekte ve nitel veri analizi ile doküman inceleme yöntemine dayanmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonucunda, İslam ekonomisinin yeşil ekonomi ve sürdürülebilirlik hedefleriyle örtüştüğü ve İslam'ın fıkhî ile etik ilkelerinin bu hedefleri zaten kuşattığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, yeşil ekonominin İslam'ın yegâne gündemi olmadığı; ortaya çıkan her yeni trend ve geçici akım karşısında İslam ekonomisinin kendi ruhunu koruması gerektiği de vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Hukuku ve İktisadi Düşünce, Yeşil Ekonomi, Sürdürülebilirlik, İlkeler, Analiz

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Introduction

The philosophical foundations of the green economy emerge from key intellectual traditions that emphasize sustainability, ecological responsibility, and economic justice. Deep ecology, championed by Arne Naess, asserts the intrinsic value of nature, challenging anthropocentric perspectives that regard the environment merely as a resource for human use. Sustainable development, as outlined in the Brundtland Report (1987), stresses intergenerational justice, advocating for a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation (Brundtland Report, 1987). A core feature of the green economy is preserving the nature, reducing greenhouse gas emissions through renewable energy sources, and fostering eco-friendly technological advansements.

As a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight global objectives adopted in 2000 to address poverty, education, health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000), in 2015, 193 countries adopted at the institutional and global level the "2030 Agenda: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," comprising 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at humanity, the planet, peace, and prosperity by 2030, which represents a differentiation within the capitalist economic paradigm (United Nations: The 17 Goals, 2015).

Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

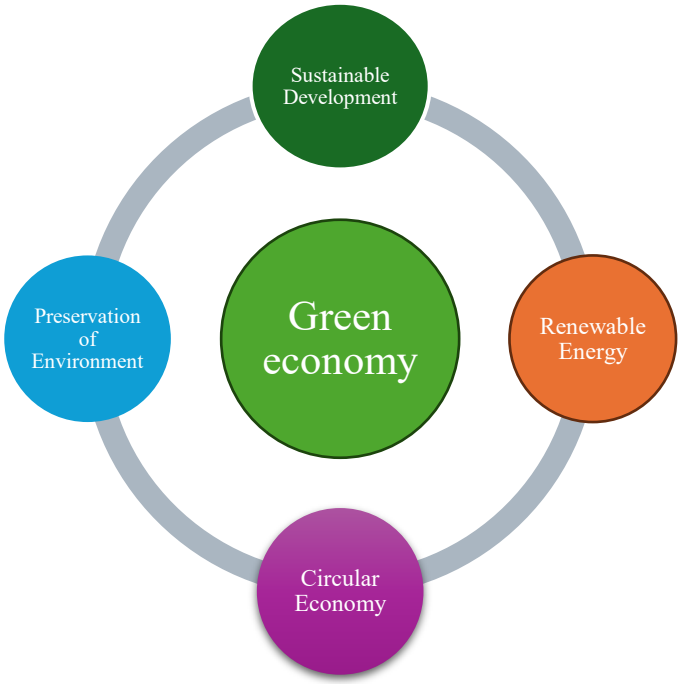
The concept of the green economy is closely aligned with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as both aim to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being. In particular, SDG 7 (*Affordable and Clean Energy*) supports the transition to low-carbon development through renewable energy and energy efficiency, while SDG 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*) promotes resource-efficient, sustainable economic activity and the creation of green jobs. SDG 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*) advances eco-friendly industrialization and clean technologies, and SDG 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*) emphasizes environmentally sound urban planning and transport systems. Likewise, SDG 12 (*Responsible Consumption and Production*) encourages more efficient resource

use and waste reduction, and SDG 13 (*Climate Action*) directly addresses mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. The protection of natural capital is also embedded in SDG 14 (*Life Below Water*) and SDG 15 (*Life on Land*), which focus on preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. Together, these goals form the policy framework through which a green economy can be realized, integrating economic progress with long-term environmental sustainability (Khoshnava et al., 2019: 16–18).

In the current global economic paradigm, the green economy is predominantly framed through the narrative of "sustainability", which serves as both a guiding vision and a practical framework for policy and business strategies (Loiseau et al., 2016: 362). Within this context, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles have become a central mechanism for aligning corporate behavior and investment decisions with sustainable development objectives (U. Khan and Liu, 2023). ESG criteria not only provide measurable indicators for environmental stewardship but also integrate social responsibility and ethical governance into economic activities (Zubeltzu-Jaka et al., 2018: 216).

"Renewable energy" development represents one of the most prominent and transformative pillars of green economy practices, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering technological innovation. In contemporary discourse, the green economy is also frequently referred to by related terms such as "low-carbon economy" and "circular economy," each highlighting complementary dimensions of the broader sustainability agenda (Mejame et al., 2025). The low-carbon economy emphasizes climate change mitigation through emissions reduction and energy efficiency, while the circular economy focuses on resource efficiency, waste minimization, and the continuous reuse of materials. Together, these interconnected approaches shape a holistic model of economic growth that seeks to balance environmental integrity, social equity, and long-term prosperity.

Figure 2. Pillars of Traditional Green Economy



Concepts of environment and sustainability within Islamic thought have a long history. Islamic environmentalism, as an academic strand, can be traced back to the 1960s, notably with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's influential 1966 lectures on spirituality and the environmental crisis. These early discussions, however, were primarily philosophical and theological in nature, rather than directly connected to economics or finance (Quadir, 2013). When it comes to scientific endeavours, to the best of our knowledge, explicit academic references to green Islamic finance and Islamic sustainability only began to emerge from 2015 onwards (Sadiq and Mushtaq, 2015).

In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, the search for alternative financing mechanisms intensified. From the 2010s onwards, growing efforts have been made to align Islamic economics with the principles of green finance. A significant milestone was the establishment of the first legal framework for green sukuk in 2014. This was followed by Malaysia's issuance of the first sustainable sukuk in 2015 and the first green sukuk in 2017, the latter supported by the World Bank to finance a domestic solar power plant. Since then, Malaysia has developed a robust market, with the majority of its outstanding green bonds issued in sukuk format (Tekdoğan, 2023: 56).

Indonesia entered the market in 2018 with its inaugural green sukuk, raising USD 1.25 billion, and in 2021 pioneered the world's first Cash Waqf-Linked Sukuk to promote waqf-based and social projects. In Türkiye, regulatory authorities such as the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, the Capital Markets Board, and the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency have taken steps to establish frameworks and strategic plans for sustainable finance. The country's first green sukuk was issued in November 2021 by Emlak Katılım Bank, valued at TRY 51.8 million, followed in 2022 by a TRY 600 million issuance from the Türkiye Wealth Fund (Tekdoğan, 2023: 57).

While notable initiatives have also been undertaken by other countries such as Kuwait (amendments to Module 11 of the Capital Markets Law to regulate green, sustainability, and social-impact bonds and sukuk, 2022), Qatar (QFC Sustainable Sukuk and Bonds Framework, 2022), the UAE (UAE Sustainable Finance Framework 2021–2031), Pakistan (SECP National Guidelines for Green Bonds and Sukuk, 2021), Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bank Policy on Green Bond Financing for Banks and FIs, 2022), and Oman (Draft Bonds and Sukuk Regulation for SRI, waqf, sustainability, green and blue bonds and sukuk, 2021) (Refinitiv and Global Ethical Finance Initiative, 2022: 9), international institutions such as the World Bank Group (2020), IsDB (2019; Simone Utermarck et al., 2024), AAOIFI (2009), CIBAFI (2022), and IFSB (2022) have increasingly integrated environmental concerns into policy discussions. Initiatives such as Green Waqf and Green Sukuk have further strengthened the link between Islamic finance and sustainability. Academic research has also expanded into emerging areas including the Islamic circular economy, green finance, and Shariah-compliant sustainable development models. In parallel, Islamic financial institutions are progressively incorporating ESG principles, aligning them with Islamic ethical values (Ahmed et al., 2015). Following this introductory section, a comprehensive literature review on the topic will be presented. This will be followed by a methodology section outlining the research methods employed in the

study. Thereafter, five separate chapters will address the juristic and ethical foundations of the green Islamic economy.

Literature Review

One of the studies in the existing literature that questions the ethical dimension of the Islamic economy, by drawing an analogy with the ethical economy, is the paper entitled "Etik Finans mı İslami, İslami Finans mı Etik?" (Kuzulu, 2021). In this context, Mehmet Asutay emerges as one of the most enthusiastic and consistent proponents of an ethically grounded Islamic finance. Through his recent works on the moral economy, he has persistently argued for repositioning Islamic finance within its original ethical framework, thereby ensuring that it contributes not only to financial development but also to the realisation of socio-economic justice and human well-being (Asutay, 2012, 2013).

More directly relevant to the present discussion is the paper "Are the Objectives of Islamic Finance Aligned with Sustainability and the Green Agenda?" by Nazlı Kol and Ömer Faruk Tekdoğan (Kol and Tekdoğan, 2024). Examining the issue through four parameters such as individuum and society, production and consumption, environment, and implementation, the authors conclude that the Islamic perspective and the capitalist perspective on the green narrative are not identical.

Ali Polat (2023) contends that without the application of sound moral values in the global economy, the key performance indicators for sustainability will remain unattainable. He further asserts that maintaining the global order within the same crisis-generating economic framework, without addressing its underlying moral deficiencies, risks giving rise to new challenges. Polat also examines the ethical dimensions of sustainability in relation to Islamic moral values, positing that Islam possesses an inherent ethical framework that surpasses any other moral paradigm found within contemporary economic theories.

As to the traditional green economy, Vitaly Ivlev and Marina Ivleva (2018), in their study on the philosophical foundations of the green economy concept, conclude that these foundations rest upon the philosophical principles of systemness and integrity, the principle of ecocentrism, and the ethics of biocentrism. They also examine the role of the ecological imperative within green economy research and analyse the conceptualisation of the world as an integrated ecological and economic system within the framework of the green economy.

There are studies that seek to assess the current state of green finance and its development trends (Omurova et al., 2021), as well as researches focusing on the role of institutions in shaping green skills (Busemeyer et al., 2025). In addition, there are comprehensive classifications of works that explore the intersections of Islamic finance and the green economy from various perspectives (Kol and Tekdoğan, 2024: 371–374), alongside those that offer critical evaluations of the prevailing green narrative (Unmüßig et al., 2012).

However, special appreciation is due to Tariqullah Khan, who may be regarded as an entire school of thought on the circular economy from an Islamic perspective (Al-Jarhi, 2024: 170). His pioneering works have consistently underscored the integration of Islamic finance with sustainable development, ethical resource utilisation, and risk-sharing mechanisms that

resonate with the principles of a circular economy (Khan, 2021; Khan and Badjie, 2022). Khan's contributions extend beyond theoretical discourse; he has developed models of Islamic financial instruments that embed ecological responsibility, emphasising that finance should serve not only profitability but also environmental and social stewardship (Tabet and Khan, 2024). By linking *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* with sustainability, he demonstrated that Islamic economics, when properly applied, inherently fosters a regenerative and balanced system—one that minimises waste, recycles resources, and ensures equitable distribution. In this sense, Khan laid much of the intellectual foundation for conceiving Islamic finance as a vehicle for circular economic models, inspiring subsequent scholarship to explore further the synergy between Islamic ethical finance and contemporary sustainability agendas. Additionally, there are studies that critically examine the integration of the Islamic green economy with SDG and ESG frameworks (Basubas, 2023); others (Bowen and Hepburn, 2012;) that interrogate the "green" narrative from a political-economy perspective; those (Qizwini and Mustomi, 2024) that contribute to the intersection of Islamic green economy and broader environmental or green-economy discourse; and works (Khoshnava et al. 2019) that focus on green capacities, institutional dynamics, and structural limitations. As a result, the outcome of the literature review might be illustrated as follows:

Table 1. Classification of the Perspectives

Study/Author(s)	Key Research Focus	Stance on Islamic Economics and the Green/Ethical Narrative	Classification
Asutay (2012, 2013)	Moral Economy and Islamic Finance	Persistently argues for repositioning Islamic finance within its original ethical framework, ensuring it contributes to socio-economic justice and human well-being.	Positive Light
Polat (2023)	Ethical Dimensions of Sustainability and Islamic Moral Values	Asserts that Islam possesses an inherent ethical framework that surpasses any other moral paradigm found within contemporary economic theories, making key performance indicators for sustainability attainable.	Positive, yet Sceptical
Khan (2021); Khan	Circular Economy and Islamic Finance/Sustainability	Demonstrated that Islamic economics, when properly applied, inherently fosters a	Fully Positive Light

and Badjie (2022); Tabet and Khan (2024)		regenerative and balanced system by linking *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* with sustainability. Emphasizes finance must serve environmental and social stewardship.	
Kuzulu (2021)	Ethical Dimension of the Islamic Economy	Questions the ethical dimension of the Islamic economy, drawing an analogy with the ethical economy	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives
Kol and Tekdoğan (2024)	Objectives of Islamic Finance and the Green Agenda	Conclude that the Islamic perspective and the capitalist perspective on the green narrative are not identical.	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives
Unmüßig et al. (2012)	Prevailing Green Narrative	Offers critical evaluations of the prevailing green narrative.	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives
Basubas (2023)	Islamic Green Economy Integration with SDG and ESG	Critically examines the integration of the Islamic green economy with SDG and ESG frameworks.	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives
Bowen and Hepburn (2012)	"Green" Narrative from a Political-Economy Perspective	Interrogate the "green" narrative from a political-economy perspective.	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives
Khoshnava et al. (2019)	Green Capacities, Institutional Dynamics, and Limitations	Focus on structural limitations (alongside institutional dynamics and green capacities).	Alternative/Contrasting Perspectives

Despite growing interest in this subject, it seems that there is no profound ethical and philosophical fundamentals of the green economy and the existing literature on Islamic green economy remains fragmented as well. Therefore, our study aims to bridge this gap by offering a comprehensive perspective on the Islamic worldview regarding the green economy, identifying the legal (fiqh) and ethical (akhlāq) principles that form its foundation. While filling the gap the study will try to address a fundamental question, which is: *Can we speak of a "Green Islamic Economy", and what are its legal and ethical foundations?*

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, employing content and literature analysis to explore the subject in depth. During the data collection phase, the most up-to-date academic and industry sources were primarily drawn from databases such as TRDizin, Scopus, and Web of Science, using targeted keywords relating to Islamic economics, sustainability, environmental ethics, and fiqh. Sources were selected based on relevance, scholarly quality, and contribution to the conceptual framing of the topic.

The analytical process consisted of iterative thematic coding, moving from descriptive categorisation to interpretive analysis of classical and contemporary materials. While bibliometric tools such as co-word analysis, citation mapping, or VOSviewer visualisations were considered, they were ultimately not employed. The field's emerging and conceptually diverse nature limits the utility of quantitative mapping, and the study's aims require interpretive depth that bibliometric techniques cannot fully provide. Nonetheless, future research may integrate bibliometric methods to offer a systematic overview of research clusters and intellectual trends, which could complement the qualitative insights presented here (see Lada et al. 2023; Raza et al. 2024; Tijjani 2021; Mi'raj et al. 2024).

Although in the Islamic tradition creed, ethics, and law constitute three inseparable dimensions of a unified whole, representing *īmān*, *iḥsān*, and *islām* respectively, as illustrated in the ḥadīth of Jibrīl (al-ʿIrāqī, 2004: 772; Ariffin et al., 2022: 146), in the economic context, law (*fiqh*) and ethics (*akhlāq*) are likewise inseparable components of the normative framework of Islamic economics. Furthermore, some scholars regard law and ethics in Islam as two sides of the same coin (Yaman, 2016: 16). Accordingly, this study does not address the legal and ethical foundations as distinct categories; rather, it presents them as mutually complementary elements.

1. Islamic Foundations of Green Economy

There is perhaps no sacred scripture that speaks of nature, the environment, and the earth as extensively and profoundly as the Qur'an. The Qur'anic revelation weaves an intimate connection between Islamic spirituality and the natural world, thereby giving rise to an entire "eco-theology" with its own distinct character (Kamali, 2012: 261). This perspective does not merely acknowledge the existence of nature as a backdrop for human life, but rather situates it at the very heart of the spiritual, moral, and legal framework of Islam (Polat, 2023: 170).

The Qur'an explicitly assigns humanity a position of responsibility and trusteeship. It declares: *"Indeed, I am placing upon the earth a khalīfah (vicegerent)"* (al-Baqarah, 2:30), situating humankind not as exploiters of the earth but as its stewards (al-Iṣfahānī, 2007: 60). This responsibility is reinforced in other passages, such as: *"and do not cause corruption upon the earth after it has been set in order"* (al-Aʿrāf, 7:56), which warns against environmental destruction (al-Qurṭubī, 1964: 7/226), and *"…the heaven He raised, and He set the balance, so that you may not transgress within the balance"* (al-Raḥmān, 55:7–8), which underscores the principle of ecological harmony (*mīzān*). Together, in our opinion, these verses reflect a divine cosmology in which the preservation of nature is not optional but integral to faith and morality.

In light of this Qur'anic framework, a frequently cited ḥadīth further strengthens the Islamic worldview on ecological responsibility and the green economy: *"Indeed, this world is pleasant and verdant (green), and indeed God, Exalted and Glorious, has appointed you as stewards within it, so He observes how you act…"*. (al-Nīsābūrī, 1955: 4/2098).[1] While the immediate context of this narration concerns the trial of wealth and, more specifically, the test posed by women, scholars of Islamic legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) rely upon the maxim "consideration is given not to the specificity of the cause (sabab), but to the generality of the wording (lafẓ)."[2] On this basis, the ḥadīth may legitimately be understood as affirming that humankind has been designated as *khalīfah* (steward) and *amīn* (trustee) over the earth. al-Ṭaḥāwī (1994: 2/102), in his commentary on this narration, illustrates how this broader meaning may be derived and applied.

This theological principle carries direct implications for Islamic economics. At its core, Islamic economics is human-centred, recognising humanity as both steward (*khalīfah*) and trustee (*amīn*) of the earth (R. Rizk, 2014: 195). Yet, such stewardship is not to be misconstrued as a licence for exploitation. Rather, it constitutes a divinely mandated duty of care, one that imposes ethical obligations upon humankind to safeguard and sustain the natural environment. Nature, in this vision, is not an object of unchecked consumption but a trust (amānah) for which every individual and society will be held accountable (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 1994: 11/106; al-Iṣfahānī, 1955: 60–61).

Accordingly, Islamic economics affirms the necessity of adopting policies and practices aimed at mitigating environmental degradation caused by humankind and addressing global challenges such as climate change. Initiatives such as reducing the carbon footprint, promoting sustainable energy, and managing natural resources responsibly are entirely consistent with this worldview. At the same time, Islamic economics unequivocally rejects the destruction of animal species, ecosystems, or natural habitats when such acts are unnecessary or driven purely by material gain.

The following sections will examine the principal legal and ethical foundations underpinning the Islamic green worldview.

2. Theory of Rights (*Ḥuqūq*) and Preservation of Environment

Islamic law establishes a distinctive system of rights that differs fundamentally from secular legal traditions. This system is comprehensive in scope, encompassing not only human beings but also the wider community of creation, including society, the environment, and future generations. Within this framework, rights are understood as both a trust and a responsibility, reflecting the holistic vision of Islam in which justice, balance, and accountability before God are central (al-Taftāzānī, 1957: 302; Hallaq, 2019).

2.1. Purely Divine Rights (*Ḥuqūq Allāh*)

When the term "Divine rights" is mentioned, it primarily refers to matters such as faith (*īmān*) and acts of worship (*ʿibādāt*), which are exclusively due to God and to which only He is entitled. These rights are an expression of reverence for His majesty and a requirement of due respect for Him. No other being shares in them.

Rights concerning public interest and social order are also included in this category. Their attribution to God underscores that they cannot be arbitrarily obstructed or negated by any individual. Such rights are not subject to pardon or reconciliation, nor may they be altered, replaced, or substituted. Because these rights pertain to public order and the common good, all members of society—as well as public authorities who represent them—bear the duty and responsibility to protect, safeguard, and enforce them.

2. 2. Purely Human Rights (*Ḥuqūq al-ʿIbād*)

These are rights intended to protect individual interests, with authority over them resting solely with their rightful owner. Their exercise depends upon the discretion and choice of the individual, which distinguishes them from Divine rights.

Human rights are divided into general and specific rights. General human rights concern the use of resources and benefits belonging to the public domain. Public authorities, when necessary, may restrict their use. Examples include fishing, hunting, or the use of public parks.

2.3. Mixed Rights (*Ḥuqūq Mukhtalaṭah*)

These are rights that encompass both Divine and human dimensions, though one may outweigh the other. They are classified into two subcategories:

a) ***Human Rights with a Predominant Divine Dimension:*** These contain elements of both, but because the Divine aspect is weightier, the discretion of the individual is more restricted. An example is the prohibition against destroying one's property unlawfully, or engaging in extravagance and wastefulness.

b) ***Divine Rights with a Predominant Human Dimension:*** While they are technically mixed, the human aspect takes precedence. Though they may include features that concern society as a whole, they essentially relate to individuals. The classical example is *qiṣāṣ* (retaliation), the prescribed punishment for intentional homicide.

Within this framework, according to Islamic economics, the environment and natural resources fall simultaneously into the category of "general human rights," since every individual has a share and entitlement in them, and into the category of "Divine rights," because they concern the preservation of public welfare and social order. This implies that causing harm to the environment or squandering natural resources for the sake of production, consumption, or any economic activity is a violation not only of the rights of those presently living and of future generations, but also of Divine rights, insofar as it constitutes an assault on the public good.[3]

In this context, there is a well-known prophetic narration stating that *"people are partners (or common users of) in three things: water, pasture, and fire"* (al-Sarakhsī, n. d: 2/212).[4] In the classical Islamic legal tradition, this ḥadīth has been understood as affirming the principle of common ownership or universal accessibility in relation to essential natural resources. The reference to *water* extends beyond drinking water to include rivers, seas, and by extension all forms of minerals and natural resources necessary for life. *Pasture* (or *grassland*) signifies soil, greenery, and vegetation more generally, representing the land and its capacity to sustain both human and animal life. *Fire* is interpreted as denoting energy and its various sources, encompassing

not only wood or firewood in the early context but also, in contemporary terms, modern forms of energy such as coal, oil, gas, and electricity. Thus, the ḥadīth encapsulates a foundational Islamic principle: that certain resources vital for survival and human flourishing are not to be monopolised but must remain accessible to all members of society.

A careful reading of this ḥadīth does not necessarily imply a wholesale rejection of private ownership; rather, it delineates a category of essential natural resources that lie outside the scope of exclusive possession. Classical jurists interpreted it as establishing an ethical–legal boundary between what may be privately owned and what must remain accessible to all due to its indispensability for life. In contrast, contemporary green-economy frameworks tend to situate environmental protection within market mechanisms—such as carbon pricing, tradable permits, and other instruments that commodify ecological functions in the pursuit of sustainability. While effective in certain contexts, these tools still operate within a system where nature is priced, regulated, and allocated through market dynamics. The Islamic approach, however, treats some resources as fundamentally non-commodifiable, grounding environmental responsibility in shared rights, stewardship, and universal access rather than in market efficiency. Thus, the prophetic directive offers not only an environmental ethic but also an alternative economic vision in which the preservation of common goods precedes and limits market logic.

Then, in the light of the theory of rights, above-mentioned commons are divinely mandated shared resources, whose use must be ethical, regulated, and collectively managed to protect both society and the divine order (Al-Jarhi, 2024: 162–164).

3. Looking at Green Economy through *Maqāṣid* Lens

The theory of *maqāṣid* (higher objectives of Islam) is derived inductively from the entirety of Islamic rulings. Beyond the specific judgements articulated by the Lawgiver (the Almighty) in relation to particular issues and cases, *maqāṣid* represents the overarching and comprehensive objectives of the religion, as well as the higher purposes it seeks to realise. While not an instrument of independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*) in itself, *maqāṣid* functions as a guiding principle that assists in situating concepts and phenomena within the framework of the religion, thereby offering a general orientation.

Within the broader Islamic worldview, economics is not confined to the pursuit of material gain. Rather, it is conceived as the effective fulfilment of human needs in a manner that achieves both material prosperity (*rafāḥ*) in this world and eternal prosperity (*falāḥ*) in the Hereafter. Hence, dealing with the sources and means by which these needs are met is of central importance. Just as Maslow's hierarchy of needs classifies and prioritises human necessities, Islam, through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, establishes a structured approach to human needs and their prioritisation.

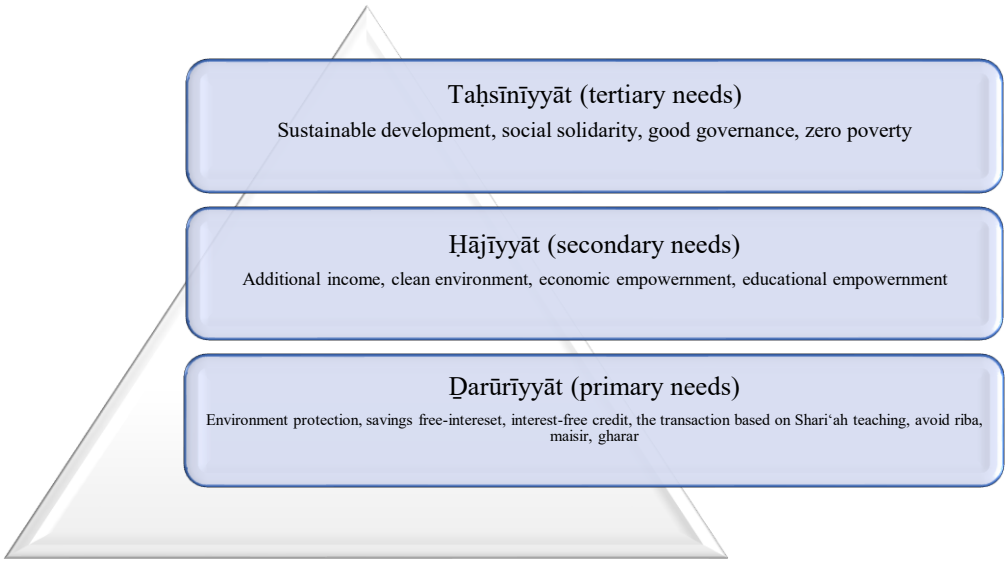
According to the *maqāṣid*, human needs are categorised into three levels: *ḍarūriyyāt* (essentials or primary needs), *ḥājiyyāt* (complementary or secondary needs), and *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishments or tertiary needs).

Ḍarūriyyāt (primary needs) are those needs that are indispensable for the preservation of human life and societal order. Their neglect would result in chaos and the collapse of basic human existence.

Ḥājiyyāt (secondary needs) are those which facilitate ease and remove hardship in life. While not critical for survival, their absence would lead to difficulty and strain.

Taḥsīniyyāt (tertiary needs) refer to the needs that enhance human life through moral, cultural, and civilisational values. They represent the dimension of perfection and virtue, enriching life beyond necessity and convenience (al-Ghazālī, 1993: 173–175; Shamshiyev, 2024: 62).

Figure 3. Maqāṣid Pyramid



The category of *ḍarūriyyāt* is further defined by what classical jurists describe as the "five essentials" (*al-kulliyyāt al-khams*): the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Al-Raisūnī, 2005: 137). These five essentials form the bedrock of the *maqāṣid* framework, ensuring the preservation of both individual and collective welfare (Al-Jarhi, 2024: 394).

This classification necessitates a global and holistic perspective that transcends national boundaries and embraces the well-being of all humanity, irrespective of religion, language, or ethnicity. For instance, a Muslim in Istanbul or in London bears a moral responsibility not only towards a starving individual in Gaza but also towards an unjustly felled tree in the Amazon rainforest. Similarly, a person in New York is morally accountable for the pollution of the oceans that threatens marine life and global food security, just as a man in Cairo carries an ethical duty to stand against the excessive exploitation of water resources in regions already facing severe drought.

It should, however, be noted that this responsibility is of a much broader moral nature and not to be understood as a strictly enforceable legal obligation. Rather, it reflects the ethical spirit of the *maqāṣid*, encouraging believers to view themselves as part of a wider human and ecological community bound together by accountability before God.

In this respect, we believe that the theory of *maqāṣid* highlights the primacy of protecting wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). However, wealth in the Islamic framework is not limited to liquidity, money, or capital, as is the case in capitalist thought. Instead, it encompasses natural resources, the environment, and all forms of collective sustenance. Hence, environmental preservation aligns seamlessly with the higher objective of protecting wealth. Similarly, the safeguarding of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) may be understood in a broader sense to include the protection of the natural environment, given that the survival and well-being of future generations depend on the responsible stewardship of ecological systems today.

Consequently, when considered in the context of the Islamic green economy, the *maqāṣid* framework provides a compelling ethical and legal foundation for sustainability. It not only obliges the preservation of natural wealth but also situates environmental responsibility within the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah. By doing so, it bridges human welfare, intergenerational justice, and ecological balance within a unified normative system.

4. Production and Consumption Equilibrium in the light of Fiqh of Balance (*Fiqh al-muwāzanah*)

One of the most significant themes in economics is the question of production and consumption. Indeed, it may be argued that the very concern which has triggered contemporary "green agenda" initiatives is the disruption of the balance between production and consumption. According to Islam, neither production nor consumption is prohibited in themselves. What matters is the maintenance of balance between the two. To put it succinctly, one might say: *"produce in proportion to what you consume"*. Within the framework of Islamic economics, production is to be aligned with the consumption that naturally emerges from the law of supply and demand, and careful calculation is required in this respect. Whenever this balance is exceeded, disequilibrium ensues, and disequilibrium in turn generates a cycle in which overconsumption feeds overproduction and, conversely, overproduction stimulates further overconsumption. The ultimate consequences of such excesses are the waste and mismanagement of natural resources, their inappropriate exploitation, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, at the expense of equitable distribution (Al-Jarhi, 2024: 198).

Islam, moreover, does not provide a static or uniform judgement for all human actions; or at least not for every possible case. Human acts are instead judged according to circumstances and intentions. For example, eating in itself is ordinarily *mubāḥ* (permissible). Yet, for a person who is facing death, eating becomes *farḍ* (obligatory), such that neglecting to do so and thereby perishing would be sinful. By contrast, when a person who is already satiated continues to eat to excess, this may be *ḥarām* (prohibited) or *makrūh* (reprehensible), depending on the degree of harm involved. Conversely, tasting food in order to honour a host's hospitality or to avoid offending someone by refusing what has been offered is deemed *mandūb* (recommended). Eating to relieve hunger is simply a natural, human act and therefore *mubāḥ*; but eating with the intention of strengthening one's body in order to perform worship and acts of devotion more effectively is considered *mustaḥabb* (commendable) (al-Mawṣilī, 1937: 4/172-174).

These examples demonstrate that Islamic law evaluates human actions through a flexible, context-dependent framework in which rulings shift according to necessity, harm, benefit, intention, and broader social conditions. By contrast, many green-economy frameworks rely on relatively uniform policy prescriptions such as standardised emission-reduction pathways, carbon-pricing regimes, and technology-driven mitigation strategies (Unmüßig et al., 2012; Bowen and Hepburn, 2012), which are often presented as universally applicable regardless of differing economic capacities or social realities. This contrast signals an important gap: whereas Islamic economic thought operates with a dynamic system capable of differentiated rulings, the green-economy model tends to apply expectations linearly across countries and contexts. Acknowledging this tension is essential, as it highlights that alignment between Islamic ethics and green-economy policies cannot be assumed but must be critically evaluated in light of their differing degrees of contextual flexibility.

From the perspective of environmental protection and sustainability, this makes it essential to determine the "priority" (*awlawiyyah*) and "urgency" of the drivers that necessitate production. In this context, even though the Sharīʿah does not explicitly speak of a "green economy" or "green finance," it nonetheless embodies principles which underpin such concerns. This is especially evident in the thought of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, who frequently emphasised *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt* (the jurisprudence of priorities) (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1996: 108). According to this approach, the relative importance of actions must be assessed within the normative framework and general principles established by the Sharīʿah.

For example, if the pursuit of a particular form of production promises substantial profits on the one hand, but at the same time poses the risk of extinguishing a species or gravely damaging the natural environment on the other, *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt* requires that priority be given to the preservation of life and the environment. Likewise, in the case of urban planning, one may be driven by the need to maximise land use through extensive construction of concrete structures and infrastructure. Yet, if this results in the destruction of natural habitats and the displacement of living beings, *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt* demands that a balance be struck between development and the preservation of nature. This does not mean, of course, that no trees may ever be cut down or that no grass may ever be plucked. Rather, it entails a reasoned determination of priorities, guided by the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah.

Once a decision has been reached in accordance with *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt*, the subsequent relationship between production and consumption must be regulated by *fiqh al-mīzān* (the jurisprudence of balance) (al-Qaradāghī, 2018: 241–255). This is because the principle of parity and equilibrium governs everything in the created order, with the exception of God's essence and attributes (al-Qaradāghī, 2018: 72). In this sense, the governing relationship between production and consumption can be expressed in a concise econometric form as follows:

$$Y_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 C_t + \alpha_2 MPI_t + \alpha_3 S_t + \varepsilon_t$$

where, Y_t represents production at time t, C_t is consumption (demand), MPI_t is the Maqāṣid Priority Index(Bedoui, 2019) reflecting *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt*, and S_t represents environmental sustainability or the balance indicator (*mīzān*), with ε_t capturing exogenous shocks. Production

should approximate consumption ($Y_t \approx C_t$) while both remain above socially necessary minimum levels ($C_t \geq C_t^*$), ensuring harmony between human needs, environmental stewardship, and the higher objectives of Sharīʿah.

5. Religious Injunctions on Environmental Protection and Care for Nature

A recurring Qur'ānic expression relevant to environmental ethics is the verse:*"Do not act corruptly on earth, spreading mischief"* (al-Baqarah, 2: 60; al-Aʿrāf, 7:74; Hūd, 11:85; al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:183; al-ʿAnkabūt, 29:36).[5] Classical exegetes noted that the command to avoid *fasād* (corruption) is often coupled with divine permission to eat and drink freely of God's provisions. Such unrestricted generosity, they argued, may tempt people towards excess, arrogance, or abuse. Hence the prohibition of *fasād* functions as a moral counterbalance, ensuring that divine blessings are not met with ingratitude and excessiveness.

The exegetical tradition records several interpretations of the injunction: Ibn ʿAbbās and Abū al-ʿĀliyah read it as *"do not hasten (into corruption)"*, while Qatādah understood it as *"do not travel seeking corruption"*. Other authorities glossed it as *"do not mix with corrupters"*, *"do not persist in corruption"*, *or "do not transgress"*. The phrase *fī al-arḍ ("on earth")* was taken by the majority to refer to the wilderness of al-Tīh (with the reference to sons of Israel), though some extended it to any land they might reach, or even universally to all the earth, since the definite article (*al-*) can denote totality. In this broader sense, persistent disobedience and indulgence are believed to result in drought, barrenness, and the withdrawal of blessings, divine retribution manifesting as widespread ecological imbalance (al-Andalusī, 2000: 1/373).

Building on these interpretations, it is possible to derive a broader implication for contemporary environmental ethics. If *fasād* encompasses not only physical damage but also systemic imbalance, injustice, and the misuse of God's blessings, then certain features of modern green-economy frameworks may unintentionally reproduce forms of corruption. Policies that impose unequal burdens on poorer nations, that commodify essential natural resources, or that prioritise profit-driven sustainability can create social and economic distortions that resemble the very imbalance the Qur'ān warns against. From this perspective, the Qur'ānic prohibition of *fasād* calls not only for environmental protection but also for justice and fairness in the design and implementation of sustainability policies. This insight cautions against assuming that all contemporary green-economy practices seamlessly align with Islamic ethical principles and underscores the need for critical evaluation through an Islamic moral lens.

Similarly, the Qur'ānic prohibition regarding the corruption resonates with broader Islamic legal and ethical principles. The maxim *"no harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated"* and the rule *"harm must be removed"* establish a foundational principle against environmental degradation in their broader sense (Kızılkaya, 2021a: 13). Likewise, the Qur'an condemns *isrāf* (wastefulness): *"Eat and drink, but do not waste. Indeed, God does not love the wasteful"* (al-Aʿrāf, 7:31). The Prophet (pbuh) applied this principle even to acts of ritual purity, warning Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ against excessive use of water for ablution, saying: *"Do not be wasteful, even if you*

are on the bank of a flowing river" (Ibn Mājah, "Ṭahārah", 48). Wasteful overconsumption of natural resources is thus a form of *isrāf* that Islam explicitly forbids.

Beyond avoidance of harm, Islam actively promotes environmental stewardship. The Prophet (pbuh) encouraged *iḥyāʾ al-mawāt* (revival of barren land) and tree planting, declaring: *"Whoever revives barren land, it shall belong to him"* (al-Bukhārī, "Muzāraʿah", 1). He (pbuh) also is reported to have said that, *"If a Muslim plants a tree and people, animals, or birds eat from it, it will be a charity for him"* (al-Bukhārī, "Ḥars", 1; Muslim, "Musāqāt", 7). Even during warfare, he instructed that trees not be cut and crops not be burned (Abū Dāwūd, "Jihād", 89).

Islamic teachings further extend environmental ethics to animal welfare. The Prophet (pbuh) warned that a woman was condemned to Hell for starving a cat, while a man was forgiven for quenching the thirst of a dog (al-Bukhārī, "Anbiyāʾ", 54; Muslim, "Salām", 151). Similarly, principles of public hygiene are emphasised: *"Beware of (polluting) the roads, for God curses those who relieve themselves on pathways or in shaded places"* (Muslim, "Ṭahārah", 68).

Taken together with many other texts from the sources along with the practices of the Prophet (pbuh), these scriptural texts and legal maxims illustrate that Islam places environmental care within its moral and legal framework. Prohibiting corruption on earth, forbidding wastefulness, mandating the removal of harm, and encouraging acts that sustain life all converge into a coherent ecological ethic grounded in revelation (Al-Jarhi, 2024: 400).

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Islamic economics extends far beyond the limited scope of environmental sustainability. Rather than being confined to contemporary ecological discourses, it embodies a comprehensive worldview that integrates both worldly concerns and Hereafter-oriented considerations. It recognises the intrinsic interconnectedness between human beings, the natural environment, and divine accountability, situating environmental ethics within a broader spiritual and moral framework.

At the same time, this inherently "green" worldview is not opposed to, but rather supportive of, contemporary sustainability efforts. Islamic economics provides a fertile normative ground for engaging with initiatives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global climate protection movements, and other environmentally conscious policies. Its legal and ethical principles resonate strongly with calls for sustainable consumption and production, renewable energy transitions, biodiversity preservation, and intergenerational equity. In this sense, Islamic economics is uniquely positioned to contribute to, and enrich, the global discourse on sustainability, while remaining firmly rooted in its own epistemological and ethical foundations.

Nevertheless, caution must be exercised in framing Islamic economics merely as a "green economy". To re-label it as such risks two misconceptions: first, that its environmental consciousness is a recent acquisition borrowed from modern environmentalism; and second, that it is exclusively, or even primarily, an ecological system, when in reality it addresses the full spectrum of human life: spiritual, economic, social, and moral.

Despite the growing body of work on Islamic environmental ethics, a noticeable gap has persisted in the literature: most studies either portray Islamic economics as naturally aligned with the green

economy or focus narrowly on specific environmental themes without interrogating the structural assumptions of contemporary sustainability frameworks. This study has sought to bridge that gap by offering a critical, integrative analysis that situates Islamic economics within, but not subsumed by the modern green discourse.

The implications of this endeavour are twofold. Conceptually, it encourages future scholarship to explore Islamic economics not merely as an environmentally friendly system, but as a morally grounded alternative that engages sustainability from within its own ontological and epistemological foundations. Practically, it invites policymakers and institutions to consider how Islamic ethical principles, particularly those emphasising justice, balance, and the protection of common goods, can inform more equitable and context-sensitive approaches to environmental governance.

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[1] إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ، وَإِنَّ اللهَ عز وجل مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا، فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

[2] Original text of the maxim is as follows: العبرة بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص السبب

[3] Why is there no distinct category of "animal rights" or "environmental rights" in Islam? The reason lies in the comprehensive theory of rights established within the Islamic legal framework. Human beings are already obliged to preserve the balance of creation, as every creature and element of nature has its own share and entitlement (ḥaqq) that must be respected. In this sense, animals and the natural environment are safeguarded under the broader doctrine of khilāfah (stewardship), which assigns humanity the duty of responsible care and accountability before God. For further discussions on animal rights and the practical challenges related to their implementation, see: (Kızılkaya, 2020, 2021b)

[4] The related text is as follows: قال صلى الله عليه وسلم: الناس شركاء في ثلاث في الماء والكلاء والنار.

[5] The mutual text and expression of given verses is: ﴿وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ﴾.