

The Development Experience In The Islamic World From A Socio-Philosophical Perspective: A Comparative Study Between Malaysia And Algeria

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to highlight the issue of development, which has become one of the most complex and debated philosophical and sociological issues, occupying human thought. The other side of this issue is the problem of underdevelopment, which remains one of the most complicated challenges to this day. This paper also aims to demonstrate the value of the Malaysian experience as a civilizational Islamic experience in development, which serves as a model to follow. It illustrates the greatness of societies that have managed to achieve progress within a context of cultural diversity, linguistic, and religious pluralism. In their pursuit of progress, construction, and urbanization, they managed to transform themselves into a human legacy, rising from the rubble to the highest levels of development. The main findings of the research show that economic development cannot be imagined without addressing underdevelopment in administrative, political, social, cultural, or technical aspects. Furthermore, development is a philosophy of comprehensive and conscious change, continuous and directed through national management aimed at creating political, social, cultural, and economic changes that enable continuous improvement in the quality of life within society.

Keywords: *Islamic Civilization, The Question of Development, The Malaysian Experience, Ethnic Diversity.*

Introduction:

In the context of the development crisis and modernization in the Arab-Islamic world, there are many concepts such as political Islam, Islamic leftists, progressive Islamists, Republican Brothers, etc., which are merely expressions of Islamic interpretations. They emphasize the development crisis and its urgent question, attempting to reconcile heritage and modernity. Although the connotations and meanings of these concepts may differ, they all share one common implication: the need to renew religious understanding and the legitimacy of the question of renewal, which remains controversial among conservative forces in the face of the development crisis in the contemporary Arab world. In other words, despite the differences between these concepts, they all represent variations on the question of development from the perspective of Islam and its heritage. The advantage of civilizational Islam lies in the fact that its proponents were state leaders, which made this vision a reality, especially in the field of education. Thinkers propose ideologies, and politicians lay the foundations for their construction and implementation. This is what happened in Malaysia,

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where the ruling elite developed the civilizational Islam project when they asked: How can we achieve development? And how can religion transform into a tool for development? The civilizational Islam project is based on theoretical and intellectual foundations, the most important of which is the comprehensiveness of Islam as an ideological principle. This means its suitability across history, time, and the future, as well as its extension in geography. The civilizational understanding of the objectives of Islamic law is considered an inspiring model in establishing a modern Islamic developmental philosophical discourse that engages with the era and its challenges.

The Problematic:

Why did Malaysia advance while other Islamic countries lagged behind? Is there an Asian Islam and an Arab Islam? Is the problem in understanding Islam or in its interpreters and advocates? What role did the Malaysian state play in achieving development? What policies did the Malaysian state adopt to achieve progress in various economic, social, and political areas? What lessons can Algeria learn to emulate the Malaysian developmental experience? Based on this, and in our effort to define a more precise scientific framework for this paper, we will present the following epistemological assumptions:

Since decision-makers in Algeria face political, economic, social, and human challenges both domestically and internationally, it is their responsibility to create a contemporary model of development to confront these challenges. The more contemporary Algerian philosophical discourse contains developmental and civilizational models that focus on identity and keep pace with progress and openness to modernity, the more effective its contribution to the success of development projects will be, and vice versa.

Given that unity is a crucial factor in achieving development, and that raising awareness about the future is a responsibility of Algeria's contemporary intellectual elites, the search for intellectual models of development that serve national unity projects is a necessity imposed by the dynamics of the modern age.

Research Objectives:

The research aims to activate the role of contemporary Algerian philosophical developmental discourse to continue advancing in this field. Development will remain one of the most important issues on the local and global intellectual scene, and its significance grows every day, especially in light of new regional and international changes. This necessitates focusing on it and exerting more effort to achieve it.

Study Methodology:

The research relies on a comparative critical methodology, as it is the most appropriate for the nature of the topic.

2. The Development Experience in Malaysia:

In the 1970s, Malaysia was able to transition into the world of development, similar to the Japanese model (United Japan), through its "United Malaysia" project. This project served as a bridge, allowing Malaysia to revitalize its economy, achieve social security, political stability, financial prosperity, and comprehensive development. Therefore, it can be considered a model to be followed, especially for the countries of the Maghreb, particularly Algeria, which is currently facing multiple crises, most notably the economic crisis due to the consecutive drop in oil prices.

The experience of civilizational Islam in Malaysia refers to Islam that coexists with the modern era, aligned with democracy, and close to science and technology. This concept is based on an Islamic, comprehensive perspective towards development and civilizational construction. "It focuses on many practical policies aimed at raising the standard of living, spiritual and material development, a focus on science and its achievements, and drawing from the Islamic heritage and history as a model that can be developed and built upon" (Farhat, 2011, p. 15). Therefore, the concept of civilizational Islam adopted by Malaysia draws from Islamic civilizational concepts, starting with expanding the notion of worship

and stewardship of the earth, the economic ethics in transactions, and considers trust in the liberal perspective as the foundation for market development.

1.2 Development Based on Global Values (Religious, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity):

The message of civilizational Islam was to implement the state's development plans based on concepts of universality, progress, civilization, tolerance, and preparing society to face the various challenges of the modern era, such as the revolution in communications, information, globalization, the global system, the crisis of preserving identity, selfhood, intellectual invasion, and satellite channels. The civilizational Islam project included a set of ethical and practical principles with a comprehensive social and developmental dimension. The first of these principles is awareness of the responsibility of stewardship and populating the earth, good treatment, excellence in work, respecting the principle of consultation (Shura), adhering to the value of justice as prescribed by religion, fostering cooperation with other Islamic countries, and achieving civilizational independence, which means rejecting negative practices that bind the self to colonial heritage. The focus was on science and knowledge to produce human resources and keep up with progress through continuous human development across generations. Economic development with an Islamic liberal character emphasized economic freedom, while also focusing on the state's role in providing services.

The state succeeded in providing for the essential needs, including commitment to religion, enhancing the level of education, ensuring food security, the right to own land, and guaranteeing the formation of an exceptional generation. In other words, the state focused on the social role through services and care, based on the concept of the welfare state, protecting women's rights and minorities, and embracing religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, promoting culture, and elevating morals.

Balanced economic development is only built on moral and cultural foundations that unite Islamic principles with Asian principles because, as civilizational Islam indicates, human life is not limited only to relationships and interactions between individuals, but also linked to the environment, which is the key to human happiness, through harmony with other creatures of nature.

The concept of civilizational Islam is based on practical goals, representing a cultural and value reference open to changes in reality, rather than a legislative reference for rules and positions. These are values that move within the realm of reality, not binding judgments. This is what has made the Malaysian model distinct both regionally and globally, as it succeeded in reconciling Malaysian heritage, rooted in Asian values, with the modern reality that Malaysia has drawn from to achieve what can be considered a true miracle on all levels.

2.2 The Philosophy of Development in the Malaysian Model:

The Malaysian development model is linked to a number of economic, political, social, cultural, and religious frameworks that shaped its uniqueness. We can say that Malaysia succeeded in blending and merging a set of values known as Asian values, which were considered the driving force behind development.

Malaysia succeeded in achieving its development strategy and catching up with developed nations, within a value system different from the Western model, particularly in values related to religious and ethnic agreement and coexistence. Most studies on the Malaysian experience point out that the strong driving force behind the success of the development philosophy in Malaysia is "the system of principles and values that the members of society believe in, which are suitable for achieving pioneering economic development. Despite the ethnic and religious diversity distinguishing its society, moral values were always the unifying tool for cooperation and collective work, and thus formed the main factor in achieving the social and political stability necessary for any desired renaissance" (Saniya, 2011, p. 62).

Self-reliance is one of the most important features of the Malaysian experience, manifested in focusing on internal resources, financing investments, relying on the indigenous population, rejecting foreign aid, refusing attempts to dominate the national development agenda, and focusing on the human being as the center and goal of development, enhancing their capabilities, and their contribution to the development process. It also worked on embodying social justice, based on general solidarity and social balance, which means the fair distribution of income and wealth among all members of society without discrimination based on religion, gender, age, or other factors, and closing the gap in class disparities between different ethnicities.

Education played the most prominent role in achieving this change. The development of the education system was crucial in driving development, providing society with skills, and administrative, professional, and technical expertise. Malaysia's educational policy was characterized by several features, including attention to technological education, its connection to scientific research, encouragement of private higher education, and a focus on women's education. The adoption of the Japanese work values had a significant impact on achieving development.

Political will and the active role of the state, supported by political and social stability, were behind the bold development decisions that were the key to the success of development programs. The personality of the political leader Mahathir Mohamad and his reformist vision had a clear impact on Malaysia's renaissance, transforming it from a country suffering from poverty, hunger, and underdevelopment to a nation on the path of the developed world.

3. Capitalist Economy with an Islamic Dimension:

This approach, which was driven by environmental, value-based, historical, and political motives, aligns with the political leadership's commitment to giving economic development an Islamic dimension. This dimension was appealing to the Malays, who did not see Islam merely as a religion, but as “always a central component of the Malay way of life” (Magda, 1999, p. 119).

This drove the Malaysian government to further focus on the Islamization of development. The Malaysian government chose a capitalist economy because it was more in harmony with the Malay environment on one hand, and with the ethnic composition of Malaysia on the other hand. In contrast, communism was rejected by the Malays for several reasons, primarily because the Malays saw it as an ideology that conflicted with Islamic ethics and teachings.

Socialism, too, was not compatible with the wealth of the Chinese and the poverty of the Malays. Given these contradictions, the Malaysian government pursued a wise policy by adopting a free-market capitalist approach that was more suitable for the Malays. Additionally, this policy included a constitutional amendment prohibiting racial discrimination and the incitement of racial tensions, thereby granting citizens full freedom to teach their languages and practice their religions in ways that suited each ethnic group. This approach mirrored that of Japan and China, where economic freedom was promoted.

4. The Project of Unity and Cooperation: Malaysia United:

The union and partnership between the Malays, indigenous people, and other ethnic groups in Malaysian society contributed to erasing disparities, rejecting divisions, and strengthening the bonds of love, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. While the Chinese benefitted from privatization through their investments and stock ownership, the Malays also benefitted as a result of the partnership between the government and the private sector. The Malaysian government required the private sector to own a small share of the companies being privatized, thus avoiding the need to sell government assets to foreigners in order to obtain foreign currency to settle foreign debts. As a result, the privatization program stipulated that state-owned companies be sold to Malaysians, particularly the Malays, in order to encourage their swift participation in large-scale projects.

The Malaysian government, under Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's leadership, adopted the same approach as Japan. The Japanese economy was revitalized through a smart partnership between the government and foreign businessmen, which led to significant economic growth, financial liquidity, and substantial material gains for both parties.

Similarly, the Malaysian government sought an economic partnership that would contribute effectively to reducing the material disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous citizens. The material benefits that the Japanese people gained from Japan's post-war recovery, alongside the underdeveloped state of the Malaysian economy, were key factors in the creation of Malaysia United.

Believing that free enterprises could increase government revenue, Malaysia adopted the "Japan United" idea, establishing the Malaysia United project. The government treated each businessman as a friend—if the businessman succeeded, government income would rise, the national economy would grow, people would benefit from job opportunities, and the prosperity of the country would increase.

Following this, the Malaysian government decided to enter privatization, which was followed by the Malaysia United model, involving the partnership between the public and private sectors to expedite economic growth. A key condition of this partnership was that in case of a company's loss, the government would not receive financial compensation, making the government keen on the company's success and the welfare of society. In this way, privatization, alongside Malaysia United, contributed to the progress, development, and prosperity of the country.

5. Factors that Contributed to the Success of Malaysia's Development Experience:

5.1 Focus on the Human Factor:

The Malaysian leadership viewed the Malaysian people as the primary value for the success of development projects, and thus considered how to utilize this value and benefit from its returns (such as education and training to combat poverty and deprivation). Ensuring the success of the "Look East" policy, which emulated Japan's policy, meant adopting the characteristics and work ethics of the Japanese people, their management methods, and learning their work ethics and experience in free enterprise.

Therefore, the Malaysian government's policy saw mastering the methods adopted by Japan—a country that transitioned from a backward agricultural economy in the Far East to one of the leading industrial and technological nations—as a bridge to practicing Western life. This has led to a slight improvement in Malaysia's living standards to be closer to those of the West. The development of an advanced infrastructure network, such as roads, railways, airports, and the encouragement of local industry through protection and support, as well as transferring technology to Malaysian society, were part of this process. This also emphasized freedom within the framework of responsibility towards a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation.

The most important element of trust in society is the belief among its members that their rights and freedoms are protected. This belief is the driving force behind all political, social, and economic dynamics, which is why the Turkish experience, under the Justice and Development Party, serves as a model. The success achieved in the Turkish experience was built on many visions that emphasize the value of the human being and respect for their customs, values, and civilization.

The vision of Turkey's Justice and Development Party for the modern Turkish renaissance was based on activating the full potential of the Turkish people, unleashing their creative abilities, and providing all factors for their renaissance—linguistically, culturally, value-wise, and historically—on the basis that fundamental rights and freedoms are achievements that all developed nations have gained and are indicators of the advancement of those countries and societies.

"Therefore, the Turkish person must play their full role in building themselves first, and building their society with complete freedom, so that the message of the renaissance becomes the message of the citizen, the society, and the state together" (Jalloul, 2013, p. 93). This is also embodied in the German renaissance experience, a progressive modern

experience with its scientific, objective, and philosophical background, considered as a development project from which a successful development vision and strategy can be derived to overcome the predicament of underdevelopment and decline faced in the Maghreb.

The German citizen was educated on value-based principles, the most important being freedom, knowledge, well-being, reducing mythological and religious thinking, expanding the application of human rights and fundamental freedoms, personal choice, personal responsibility, and self-monitoring. There are at least four central cultural circles in Germany that can be considered sources of developmental values:

1. The Greek cultural circle, which includes democracy.
2. The Roman circle, represented by power derived from awareness and organizational thinking, Roman law, Roman administration, the ability to integrate, maintain the state's ethnic diversity, and the imperial investment to preserve unity.
3. The traditions of Christianity and Judaism.
4. The central values of the modern era—such as the Renaissance, the era of revolutions and transformations, and the Enlightenment, culminating in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Therefore, in German developmental education, "the individual must act in nature based on being part of it, or rather consider themselves a counterpart to others in creation, and must not spoil or tamper with nature. They must also recognize the need to leave this planet suitable for future generations" (Amim, 2014, p. 172-173).

As it is clear, the issue of underdevelopment can only be addressed structurally, encompassing all sectors at varying degrees, without excluding any institutions, individuals, groups, philosophies guiding programs and plans, or adopted strategies. Thus, presenting the value-based foundations of the German experience can help draw attention to what has been overlooked. Additionally, envisioning a future developmental discourse in Algeria is linked to four essential elements: the reality at hand, the experience of the advanced others, the development of programs that align with their implementation context, and finally, the ongoing monitoring, evaluation, adjustment, and renewal.

5.2 Political Stability and Good Governance Based on Future Vision:

The political leadership of Malaysia demonstrated wisdom in managing the challenges of a large workforce and a growing population, which led to a decline in wages. Through good governance, they ensured that workers were paid adequate wages, which helped align their lifestyle with the average living standards in developed countries. The quality of production, required for global economic competition, necessitated raising the standard of living of employees. Additionally, the future vision and planning played a crucial role in the successful implementation of future economic projects.

Innovation and planning were key factors that contributed to Malaysia's development, along with the successful execution of these plans. "Malaysia had regular and coherent five-year plans, in addition to twenty-year and thirty-year visions for the future. Therefore, innovative planning based on scientific and practical foundations contributed to creating a politically educated and economically advanced society" (Nasser, 2010, p. 249).

Since the 1970s, Malaysia benefited from Japan's assistance, which was used intelligently to develop its economy through well-thought-out methods. This helped Malaysia achieve its developmental goals, particularly in the production sector and infrastructure. The aid played a significant role in helping Malaysia overcome a crisis that could have devastated the country. This success was a result of good management and a competent administrative apparatus, as Malaysia is a major trade partner of Japan.

5.3 Sacred Spiritual Values: Islamic Pragmatism with Developmental Liberal Ethics:

The Islamic interpretation of development in Malaysia was an open political approach with Islamic concepts applicable to society as a whole, rather than a closed religious interpretation confined to a specific race. This dialectic lies at the heart of Malaysia's

success as a multi-religious society, where Islamic development is pragmatic and legitimate.

As Mahathir Mohamad stated, "Islam does not offer a specific model for development, but it provides a set of intellectual values that promote development" (Salim, 2000, p. 125). Islam should not be a strict guide for development in a diverse society, but the active role of Islam in development is one that imposes its values, as evidenced by the Islamic insurance project that offered an alternative to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Malaysia provided a mature understanding of the relationship between Islam and development in a multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual society, adding a civilizational dimension to this developmental experience. It succeeded in overcoming foreign civilizational methods that attempted to alienate it, achieving spiritual, moral, intellectual, and material superiority. Its people are marked by creativity and innovation, within the framework of an Islamic civilization project concerned with an economy based on ethical principles.

This economy aims to achieve social justice, price stability, human capacity development, and poverty reduction. Therefore, Malaysia's economic renaissance is conditional upon understanding the ten fundamental principles of Islamic civilization, which are: piety and faith in God, justice and integrity of government, people's independence, knowledge and competence, inclusivity and balance in economic renaissance, living standards, protecting the rights of women and minorities, cultural advancement and moral excellence, environmental preservation, and establishing national defense capabilities.

It is essential for Islam to play a key role in shaping comprehensive development. This was reflected in the establishment of the Malaysian Takaful Company, a subsidiary of the Islamic Bank, and the Hajj Fund institution, a major specialized banking institution set up to assist Muslims in saving for and performing the Hajj pilgrimage. The Zakat and Waqf institutions in Malaysia also play a significant role in the country's development process. Zakat has an important role in addressing the needs of the poor and those who have lost their ability to work due to poverty. "Zakat, which carries a universal call" (Hud, 2006, p. 77), has helped eradicate poverty, incentivize needy students, spread Islamic culture, aid the afflicted, and fund local schools. The distribution of zakat funds collected by the Malaysian Islamic Bank has increased from year to year, aiding in alleviating poverty and improving the social conditions of the needy. Malaysia forms a rich base of Islamic development concepts, which differ from those of other Islamic countries.

Another practical reason behind Malaysia's successful developmental model is its openness to developed countries, particularly Japan, China, Singapore, and South Korea, and its entry into the world of manufacturing driven by the need to progress. It benefited from the successful experiences of these countries and a concern for the future, which added a competitive edge to its economy while fostering cooperation with advanced nations.

Furthermore, Malaysia did not limit itself to the oil industry but also pursued manufacturing, acquiring technology, and channeling wealth to serve all segments of society. It established partnerships with developed countries through smart partnerships, learning from multinational corporations' weaknesses through the experience gained from the Malaysia United model—a partnership between the government and the private sector. Malaysia avoided falling into debt, thus preventing problems with the International Monetary Fund and major financial institutions.

Early selection of a capitalist path and a development direction toward Japan, while maintaining religion, language, and identity, and respecting the culture of others without offending the cultures of these races, helped Malaysia avoid conflicts with major countries that use oppressed minorities as a pretext for interfering in the affairs of independent nations.

The Malaysian model is practical, and its philosophy is based on the logic of give and take. This enriches the experience through the daily practice of development within its Islamic framework. "It requires learning from mistakes, failures, and setbacks, then searching for what is positive, useful, and beneficial for Malaysian society" (Nasser, 2010, p. 258). This contrasts with what is found in other Islamic countries, where the concept of development

remains confined to narrow theories and visions.

This is also echoed by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who acknowledged that in Arab countries, where socialist and communist ideas replaced Islam and spiritual values, development was rejected within its Islamic framework, leading to contradictory and chaotic ideas. In contrast, "spiritual values can help Muslims withstand materialism and achieve happiness" (Mohamad, 1986, p. 115).

Conclusion:

The results of this study, in which we aimed to highlight an important and complex philosophical issue that has occupied human thought, particularly Arab thought, is the issue of development, which remains one of the most challenging topics today.

We concluded the following:

- The Malaysian development experience, as a global Islamic civilization model, highlighted the creative capacity of humans and the greatness of societies that knew how to achieve progress in an environment of cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. In its pursuit of progress, construction, and urbanization, Malaysia was able to truly transform into a human legacy, rising from the rubble to the highest levels of advancement.
- In our view, this experience deserves admiration as it proved that human development is the key to building civilization, even in the face of limited resources and natural wealth. It will, in our perspective, remain, like the German and Japanese experiences, one of humanity's most valuable treasures if we learn to benefit from them effectively.
- We intended for this work to raise awareness about the role of philosophical discourse in the process of development. As we believe that development has become a priority issue in our time, receiving increasing attention both in terms of thought and application, we believe that the philosophy of development is a civilizational process that involves a combination of administrative, political, and social efforts. It is not just about numbers, tables, and economic statistics; thus, mere economic growth does not necessarily mean achieving true development.
- Development is a comprehensive and conscious philosophy of change, a continuous process directed by an independent national administration to bring about political, social, cultural, and economic changes that allow for the continuous improvement of life quality in society.

We have concluded that the issue of development is a priority and remains a complex and difficult matter, given the internal circumstances in Algeria and the surrounding regional and international factors. The changes that have swept across the Arab world, along with other security threats, have added to its complexity. However, this does not mean that development is impossible; it is achievable if we start with a deep understanding of our Algerian society's reality, relying primarily on our own capabilities and learning to use our resources wisely and correctly. In the end, development remains a choice and a political will, rooted in future-oriented visions and plans.

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