



Necmettin Kizilkaya (Ed.).

Methodology of Islamic Economics: Problems and Solutions

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The clash of the assumptions and methodology of the mainstream economics with the classical methodology of Islamic sciences in various forms has been at the heart of the discussions of methodology. Overcoming this and creating a consistent, applicable, and functioning methodology is one of the most important existential challenges for Islamic economics today. For this, a methodology using both Muslim heritage of science and techniques used by contemporary economics needs to be developed. Interestingly, digging true methodological foundations for this field has widened the research on one hand however has puzzled the academia especially young scholars on the other. The issue is more complex and abstruse than it may apparently seem. Whilst one faction refutes any axiomatic foundations for this discipline the other is strictly critical of superfluous affixing of Islamic prefix with each theory, tool and instrument of conventional economics without adequately changing its form. Yet there are others who call for setting clear demarcation lines between Islamic Economics on one hand and Islamic fiqh on the other.

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This is what this book is devoted towards. The title, published by famous Britain based publishing house, Routledge, contains works presented at Research Center for Islamic Economics (IKAM's) 6th Islamic Economics Workshop and has been edited by a senior faculty member from Istanbul University, Necmettin Kizilkaya. The work is comprised of four sections and fourteen chapters, each of which is written by a separate author, all adroit experts of their peculiar fields. Each of the chapters brings to light a separate dimension of the methodology yet all of them are coherently connected and together help elucidate misconceptions related to methodological conundrum in Islamic economics.

Before delving deeper into this debate, what needs to be addressed at the outset is the precise meaning of methodology when used in context of Islamic economics. As Zubair Hasan, an acclaimed Islamic economist has rightly pointed in the first chapter; methodology in economics refers to two different things. In its first sense, it is related to epistemology, a branch of the theory of knowledge and hence is used to evaluate the performance of economic theory to help achieve given objectives on the ground. In its second use, methodology is a concept intrinsic to economics and as an integral part of the discipline helps in designing methods for conducting research as well as expanding its frontiers. Since there is no real economy in the contemporary world that is enshrouded in Islamic principles, the discussion of methodology regarding this subject in its former meaning is out of question. What these chapters and related literature in the discipline therefore primarily address is methodology in its latter meaning; its assumptions, axioms and foundations, its fundamental values, its substratum and maxims and their relationship with Islamic sources of law, its framework and domain, its objectives, and its micro and macro principles.

In this brief context, fourteen authors have expressed their understanding of Islamic economics methodology through their individual contributions in this title. Some authors while expressing their views reiterate others while some others stand at loggerheads in addressing these concepts. Zubair Hasan negates any possibility of existence of a methodology for Islamic economics as it exists in the conventional discipline because of the inherent differences between the two. It touches upon some degenerations in contemporary research on Islamic economics mentioning in particular the misplacement of empirical formalization and the rampant econometric syndrome. The chapter finally concludes that methodology is just a continuous interpretation of sources of knowledge in view of social dynamism. However, since testable prepositions in the field are limited because of their intention orientation and lack of data, the subject of methodology in context of Islamic economics is not worth discussing.

Asad Zaman, in the second chapter marginally touches upon the issue of methodology in its philosophical sense yet addresses in moderate detail issues pertaining to the subject's micro foundations. Following his peculiar approach, he highlights the differences between Islamic approach and conventional economic methodology that roots from the fact that the conventional approach to economics ignores the unobservables and hence excludes normative statements from the economic theory for being non-scientific. In his view, Islam takes an interventionist approach and our dealing with the material world should also rotate around the central question of how we may turn our getting and spending of wealth into worship. To him, all struggles should revolve around the ways to translate the teachings contained in the books and in our past experience into a living reality. This utopian conception of a representative Economic agent makes us fall short of Islam's claim to have a system of economics that serves all humanity and not just Muslims. Looking for ideal Islamic traits in making axioms about an individual economic agent has two problems. It firstly reduces the scope of the field to the Muslims by including only the behaviour of individuals following Islamic doctrines in its analysis. Secondly, the conjecture of an ideal Muslim as a representative economic agent takes the field from a practicable sphere to a utopian demesne that hardly correlates with the behaviour of economic agents in real life (Shafiq, 2018).

Hakan Saribas in the third chapter also mainly sheds light upon the objectives of the scientific research especially in context of Islamic economics and claims his to be the first contribution of its kind. He argues that the objective of Islamic economics is to discover the Sunnah of Allah. Criticizing both the approaches he thinks are prevalent in contemporary literature i.e. Usul ul fiqh and Islamization of knowledge, he puts forward his own approach that he claims, covers the deficiencies of both the aforementioned tendencies. By naming the societies that denounce revelation as type I realm and the contrary ones as type II realm, the author argues that the objective of Islamic economics is to discover the proper Sunnah of Allah for Type-II realm of existence.

Akram Khan in the next chapter explains in great detail his dissatisfaction with the current state of Islamic economics and identifies eleven dilemmas he thinks have caused the sluggish progress in this field. In his view the academic fraternity at large is still sceptical about the possible existence of a religion based economics hence its message should be put across on rational grounds rather than grounding it in authority of religion. He draws a comparison between the conventional and Islamic economics disciplines and argues that besides the two sources of knowledge conventional economics rests upon i.e. human intellect and observed behaviour,

Islamic economics has an additional source, revelation, hence has a broader canvas. To him, the field is a social science hence should integrate the human understanding of divine sources of knowledge into the study of the economic problem in a dynamic manner. Discussing Islamic teachings about economic affairs in general and Zakah law in particular, he presses the need for Islamic economists and religious scholars to join hands and make it relevant for the contemporary social reality. He vaguely mentions the need for translating certain concepts from the religious scriptures that reflect the invisible hand of God into cause-effect relationships. Nonetheless, all of these concepts may not be quantifiable hence have to be thought in context of the true Islamic world view. The author also touches upon the important topic of Riba, however visits it in his typical way and calls for its revised concept, interestingly backing his argument with nothing but some practical inefficiencies of the contemporary Islamic financial institutions.

Hafas Furqani and Aslam Haneef have co-authored the chapter that explains Usul Al-iqtisad approach and its relevance in developing the foundations of the discipline. Commenting on the difference between usul fiqh and usul al-iqtisad, the writers note that the former primarily deals with the textual sources to derive the Shari'ah rulings however the latter means dealing with texts (nusus) and human action in economic sphere in an interactive and integrative approach. They keep the foundations of Islamic economics i.e. the world-view, doctrine, epistemology, and fundamental values at the centre. This rests in another set of elements (philosophy, concepts, methodology, instrumental values, etc.) in their venn that reflects the scientific conceptual scheme of the field. Referring to the issue of methodology, they stress the need for an integrative approach to deal with the sources of knowledge: the Quran and Sunnah, the intellectual reasoning and fact observation by using Islamic epistemological framework to develop unique theoretical constructs that reflect the true Islamic worldview.

Mohd Mahyudi explains in great detail each stage of the development of this discipline that still appears to be in its infancy followed by the argument that Islamic economics cannot be detached from economics per se for they share the same subject matter. He, like some other contributors in this work is wary of the lilliputian progress the discipline has made since its inception. The author tends to share Nienhaus' (2013) fear for normative dimension of Islamic economics being a potential deterrent to a constructive engagement between conventional economists and Islamic economists. What instead should be understood is that modern economics too is cognizant of heterogeneities in behaviour of economic agents hence

is no more a fully a positive science. Additionally, the normative nature of this discipline is actually what makes it distinct from the conventional discourse and Islamic economics emanates from its Islamic worldview.

Several other authors in this work dig deeper into the inquiry of relationship between Islamic economics and fiqh. Monzer Kahf, another Islamic economist of great renown, stresses upon the need for revision of conventional discipline to take the field to a higher level of humanism and purify it from biased postulates (i.e. homo economicus etc). He argues that the dispute about tools of analysis is rarely witnessed between the two disciplines since mathematical logic and empiricism are the main tools used in Islamic fiqh as well. While explaining the interrelationship between the two, Kahf notes that, while Islamic economics' methodology aims at finding ways to understand human behaviour, fiqh methodology attempts to find normative rulings for this behaviour. The difference only is that the former uses a blend of theoretical and empirical approaches to understand the behaviour of an individual economic agent whereas the latter uses an analytical approach to discover the individual normative rulings.

Seif I. Tag el-Din is also cognizant of the dormant status of the discipline and point out the deficiencies of the contemporary methodologies. The author then proposes his own all encompassing maqasid based methodology. He builds upon the work of Al-Shatibi who divides the objectives of Shari'ah into three main qualities: Necessities, Needs and Perfections. Furthermore he states that the five necessities (religion, self, progeny, mind and wealth) are the founding stems of maqasid. Since these five Necessities are recognized in all human creeds, it attaches a feature of universality to the logical framework of maqasid. The author then grounds his own 3-stage development model (3SDM) to transform an economy from strategic foundational bases to higher socioeconomic horizons. However, to transform it into a maqasid-3SDM, the strategic foundational elements must be qualified according to the Islamic moral policy. The author also notes that the research paradigm resting in 3SDM is naturally multidisciplinary hence maqasid-3SDM is not a theory of economics and does not purport to validate or invalidate any economic theory which instead is the job of economists.

Necmettin Kizilkaya, who is the editor of this title, mentions the existence of a methodological problem in the Islamic sciences in general and Islamic economics in particular, and expresses his concern for the scientific amnesia in the discipline. He also makes mention of two of the problems he thinks have sprouted from debates on methodology. Firstly, the researchers in the discipline invariably begin

by grounding their studies on Islamic economics in their own views and then furnishing their interpretations by Quran and Sunnah i.e. economic salafism, as he calls it. Secondly, certain jargons are often gleaned from disciplines of *usul al-fiqh*, *kalam*, and *tasawwuf*, nevertheless, researchers offer new interpretations regarding these concepts without referencing the context in which they were used in the classical resources. Kizilkaya states that we cannot speak of a methodology in the field of Islamic economics since the two preconditions for something to qualify as methodology are not met i.e. an inherited scientific traditions and overall validity. He then concludes that the methodology adopted by the Islamic sciences should be taken as the basis for studies in Islamic economics.

Masudul Alam Choudhury in his idiosyncratic style examines the issue of methodology in context of the *tawhidi* knowledge-centred worldview of the Quran in a way that can be explicated to form a distinct epistemological foundation for explaining all socio-scientific phenomena. He claims this methodology to be more substantive and different from the epistemology of all received bodies of thought in the natural and social sciences.

In the next chapter, Shamim Ahmad Siddiqui explains at length the definitions pertaining to methodology found in economics literature. He also makes note of different methodologies mentioned in works of several Islamic economists like Asad Zaman, Salleh, Furqani and Haneef, to name the few. He thinks that allowing methodological pluralism within Islamic economics could be one strategy for the progress of the discipline since Islamic economists have differing opinions over the topic of methodology yet share a common worldview. This may in turn lead to Islamic economists coming with new ideas, theories and implementable policies instead of indulging into unnecessary dogmatism.

Abdulkader Mahomedy discusses the incursion and evolution of rationalist epistemology and its impact on science and human thought. He explains how almost all the development that occurred in different sciences, including natural and social disciplines was grounded in rationalist epistemology. He particularly mentions the fact that it was probably only economics that endured the most fundamental alteration in its character after embracing rationalism and its central tenets. In its aspiration to become a full science (like positive sciences), it aggressively adopted mathematization and quantification. Drawing this brief context, the author asks for reasons to why the Islamic economists did not recognize that their dissatisfaction with the mainstream economics could not be limited to merely the institution of interest or exclusion of ethics from the discipline.

Towards the end of the book, Ismail Cebeci enumerates the research that has surfaced so far particularly in the last 50 years, primarily in Turkish language. While doing so he also reflects upon the themes that were addressed by the contemporary authors. Prior to this chapter however, Valentino Cattelan draws an interesting analogy between the Shakespeare's Tragedy of Hamlet and the plight of Islamic economics. Referring to Naqvi's (2003) book he parallels moral economy of Islam to Hamlet's ghost on the backdrop of Islamic economics. However to Cattelan, the persistent incompleteness of Islamic economics methodology derives from the global epistemology of social sciences that is still deeply dominated by Western postulates. He thinks that a deep distance characterizes the relation between the "economy" and "morality" in the West and in Islam, since the two elements are epistemologically, detached in the former however unified in the latter. Against this scrim, he suggests Islamic economics to liberate itself from the orientalist legacies of conventional economics and Western cultural domination.

The book is a holistic summary of all dimensions of Islamic economics methodology debate and is a necessary library shelf title for all researchers who want to delve deeper into the epistemology, philosophy, concepts, and methodology of the discipline. Though some authors brush the surface of methodology debate, others however discuss the topic at length making the title under review no less than a magnum opus on Islamic economics and its methodology.

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