Zakat: Drawing Insights for Legal Theory and Economic Policy from Islamic Jurisprudence

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of complex income taxation and welfare systems in the 20th century might give the impression that progressive wealth redistribution systems are uniquely modern. In fact, religious systems that provided similar mechanisms for addressing economic injustice and poverty alleviation are centuries old. Judaism and Christianity adopted the tithe as a ten percent marginal tax on income, and both traditions developed pathways for redirecting revenue to the poor. For some people, tithes and offerings to charitable organizations for the poor remain religious obligations. Religiously motivated charitable giving is demonstrably significant in the funding of charities meeting the needs of the poor in the United States. A tradition similar to the tithe also developed in Islamic practice and jurisprudence. Zakat (sometimes transliterated as zakah in English) is the obligation of almsgiving...
within Islam. It is the Third Pillar of Islam and is a requirement for all believers.

In the early development of the Islamic community, zakat was collected as a tax by the state, and the funds were distributed to defined needy groups. Unlike some earlier vehicles for wealth redistribution (such as the Year of Jubilee in the Jewish Torah), this proto-tax and welfare system was not merely aspirational; it was legally enforced using the power of the state. Two innovations make zakat relevant for modern legal scholars. The first innovation was a progressive element in the calculation. A base amount of wealth and income was exempt from taxation (nisab). This amount was presumed to meet basic living expenses. The second innovation was the taxation of the most common form of income in a largely agrarian society (crops and livestock) along with a tax on gross wealth which was not actively invested (cash, precious metals, etc.). Muslim communities mobilized vast zakat resources to meet the needs of the poor, complemented by the growth of awqaf (the plural form of waqf, a form of trust or endowment).

Although many insights related to zakat will only have application within predominantly Muslim jurisdictions, the traditional jurisprudence and the

2. ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM (C.E. Bosworth ed., 2004) ("The obligatory payment by Muslims of a determinate portion of specified categories of their lawful property for the benefit of the poor and other enumerated classes or, as generally in Quranic usage, the portion of property so paid.").

3. JOHN L. ESPOSITO, ISLAM: THE STRAIGHT PATH 92 (1988) ("This is not regarded as charity, since it is not really voluntary but instead is owed, by those who have received their wealth as a trust from God's bounty, to the poor.").


5. Id. at 98, 287.

6. ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, supra note 2, at 411:

Zakat is due on property only if a minimum quantity is held, e.g. five camels. The zakat payable increases with the amount of property held, and where, as in the case of livestock, such increases in the property subject to zakat are not pro-rata, but set at discrete increments, each of these increments represents a further nisab, with eleven such nusub [pl. of nisab] in the most complex case, that of camels. The amount of property below the first nisab and between each subsequent nisab is termed waks/wakas. It is generally held that no zakat is due on the waks between the nusub . . . . Thus the one sheep or goat due on nine camels (the second nisab being ten) is in fact due on only five, the four additional camels being waks, and should four of the nine perish after zakat is due, there will be no proportionate reduction in the amount of zakat to be paid. Id. (citations omitted).

7. ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH: A BOOK OF READINGS 20 (Monzer Kahf, ed., 1997) ("The amount of nisab must be over and above what is required to satisfy basic needs and to pay immediately due debts.").

8. Id. at 19–20.

history of zakat systems has implications for broader legal theory, especially with regard to taxation and benefits. In particular, zakat provides an argument for combining a wealth tax with a modest income tax, made progressive by exempting amounts needed for basic living. It also supports the theoretical tax and property argument elaborated by Murphy and Nagel that property rights are in post-tax rather than pre-tax income.10

A number of contemporary Islamic scholars reject the identification of zakat as a form of tax and welfare.11 They argue that the identification with secular legal systems robs zakat of its religious and moral power.12 In most contexts, a direct comparison between contemporary tax and welfare regimes is inapt and unnecessary. When zakat is legally enforced by statute, however, it would seem to be an appropriate subject for analysis as a system of taxation and welfare law.

Recognizing the complexities related to religious context, this paper will consider the implications of legally mandatory zakat as a form of taxation and welfare. Section II begins with a thorough evaluation and synthesis of traditional Islamic jurisprudence related to zakat. Section III will identify three broad approaches to zakat adopted by modern Muslim nations, with particular emphasis on ways that zakat is institutionalized legally. Section IV will present empirical studies and analysis of the correlation of the three approaches to zakat described in Section III with (1) individual income and (2) wealth stratification. Section V will make observations and policy recommendations related to zakat in its Islamic context based on the qualitative analysis in Section III and the empirical findings in Section IV. Section VI will consider the implications of zakat jurisprudence for law and economic theory outside of the Islamic context.

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10. See generally LIAM MURPHY & THOMAS NAGEL, THE MYTH OF OWNERSHIP: TAXES AND JUSTICE (2002) (Murphy and Nagel’s core claim is that pre-tax income cannot be a moral basis for the measurement of the fairness of tax policy. Their claim is that the ultimate social justice of the entire economic system is the only proper end, of which taxation is a part. Thus taxation and the equity thereof can only be measured against the resulting end.).


12. Id. at 81 (“Zakat is an ‘Ibadah [act of worship] like Salat (five time obligatory prayers).”}).
II. CLASSICAL JURISPRUDENCE OF ZAKAT

Zakat may be translated literally as “purity” or, in its verbal form, “to be pure.” In its Quranic context, zakat is typically translated as “alms,” which Webster’s defines as “[a]nything given gratuitously to relieve the poor, as money, food, or clothing; a gift of charity.” Traditionally, alms are given out of compassion, with the acknowledgment of economic inequality, and the desire to fulfill a religious duty. Alms in the Christian and Jewish traditions might include both the tithe (a required contribution) and voluntary offerings. The Arabic word “sadaqa” is used in the Quran as a synonym for zakat; however, it often refers to the broader concept of charitable offerings. Although some overlap will be noted, for clarification purposes, zakat will generally refer to alms as a pious requirement and sadaqa will refer to optional voluntary offerings, consistent with typical Quranic and jurisprudential understandings. This section will examine the origin and apparent purposes of zakat, with particular attention given to the Quran, Sunna (tradition of the Mohammad), and classical Islamic jurisprudence. The latter part of this section will consider later movements.

A. Wealth Redistribution as Pious Duty

Zakat is the Third Pillar of Islam and a requirement for Muslims. It is rooted in a particular anthropology that understands human beings as stewards of creation. All property ultimately belongs to God, but human beings are charged with managing the earth and their individual property as trustees.
Although ownership gives the owner rights to use, develop, and dispose of property, the poor have some sort of claim on the property of the wealthy. Hoarding is specifically condemned because it keeps productive assets from being invested and grown in the community. Therefore, ownership of property carries with it attendant duties to use it wisely and productively both for the benefit of the owner and the rest of the community. Zakat represents a concrete manifestation of the obligation to keep property in productive uses and to distribute a portion to others for the common good. The mechanics of this system are found in the Quran and are elaborated in the Sunna and Islamic legal treatises.

B. Primary Sources for Zakat Rules

The primary sources for the jurisprudence of zakat are the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet or Sunna found in collections of hadith (sayings attributed to Mohammad). Both sources have a variety of references to zakat and a broader, though related, notion of sadaqa. The sources are then interpreted by the classical jurists, particularly al-Ghazali. There is some


21. See The Quran, Surah 9:34–35. This seems consistent with the teaching of Jesus regarding savings and investment in Christianity. See Matthew 25:14–30. (The parable tells of a master who was leaving his home to travel, and before going gave his three servants different amounts of money. On returning from his travels, the master asked his servants for an account of the money given to them. The first servant reported that he was given five talents, and he had made five talents more. The master praised the servant as being good and faithful, and gave him more responsibility because of his faithfulness. The second servant said that he had received two talents, and he had made two talents more. The master praised this servant in the same way, giving him more responsibility. The last servant who had received one talent reported that knowing his master was a hard man, he buried his talent in the ground for safekeeping, and therefore returned the original amount to his master. The master called him a wicked and lazy servant, saying that he should have placed the money in the bank to generate interest. The master commanded that the one talent be taken away from that servant, and given to the servant with ten talents.)


23. See Abdul Aziz Bin Muhammad, Zakat and Rural Development in Malaysia 79–101 (1993); see id. at 8–30 (on zakat and the ethics of redistribution of income and wealth in Islam).


25. See, e.g., Bashear, supra note 13.

26. See discussion infra Part II.B.3.c.
diversity among the four Sunni schools of legal thought that will be noted. Shi'i jurisprudence developed unique understandings for zakat, linking it to the Imamate and the clerical establishment. Contemporary legal scholars understand this body of thought in ways that range from the literal to the revisionist.

1. Quranic Bases

As a pious duty, zakat is often paired with prayer (salah) in the Quran. The Quran contains 32 references to zakat. A majority of these references are attributed to the Medinan period, a period that represented Muhammad's ministry after the flight of the Hijrah and tended to address more of the practical concerns of organizing a burgeoning community. Although zakat is identified with prayer and piety throughout the Quran, there is a shift from voluntary to compulsory participation in the Medinan period. This move is consistent with the needs of Muslim Medina as a growing spiritual, political, and economic community. The revelations from Mecca established general principles of stewardship and charity, and the Medinan passages transformed these principles into rules that applied within the Muslim polity.

27. The Sunni schools of jurisprudence include the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi, and the Hanbali. The Imami Shi'i school of jurisprudence is the Jafari. BERNARD G. WEISS, THE SPIRIT OF ISLAMIC LAW 11-14 (1998).

28. See generally Norman Calder, Zakat in Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence, from the Tenth to the Sixteenth Century A.D., 44 BULL. OF THE SCH. OF ORIENTAL & AFR. STUD. 468 (1981). The Imamate is the religio-political structure of governance within Shi'i Islam based on descent from the family of Muhammad, and Ali in particular. It is distinguished from the institution of the Caliphate within Sunni Islam. Id.


32. See ABDULLAH AHMED AN-NA'IM, TOWARD AN ISLAMIC REFORMATION: CIVIL LIBERTIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW (1996); see also THEODOR NOLDEKE, GESCIIICHTE DES QORANS (2d ed. 1981).

33. See THE QURAN, Surah 30:39 (an example of encouraged zakat); see also id. at 2:110 (an example of mandatory zakat).

34. See HODGSON, supra note 4, at 181.

As previously mentioned, the term *sadaqa*, which literally refers to truth and righteousness, is also translated as offering or alms. It is used more broadly in the Medinan passages to refer to all charitable offerings (including zakat). In the Quranic context, it is presumed to include mandatory alms (zakat).

The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and [for] the wayfarer; a duty imposed by Allah. Allah is Knower, Wise.

This passage is important in jurisprudence as it identifies eight proper beneficiaries of zakat, even though it uses the word *sadaqa* for offerings and alms. The first group of recipients is the poor (*fuqara' in Arabic), those who are in material need. The second group of recipients, the needy (*masakin in Arabic), are similar. Although some scholars have treated these two groups as synonymous, a more traditional view of the list in this passage is that it describes an order of priority, so that the poor take priority over the needy. Some jurists came to a different conclusion and found that the needy (*masakin*) have priority over the poor.

The third category of recipients is “those who collect them.” This has been interpreted as an allocation to cover the cost of collecting and distributing alms. Historically, when zakat was collected by Muslim states as a tax, this category was used to justify state administrative costs.

The fourth category of recipients is “those whose hearts are to be reconciled.” It is not clear whether the hearts of this group are fully reconciled

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36. See *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*, *supra* note 2, at article on “Sadaqa” (“has among its meanings that of voluntary alms, often referred to in Islamic literature as . . . ‘alms of spontaneity,’ or . . . ‘alms of supererogation,’ in distinction to obligatory alms, frequently also termed sadaqa, but more commonly known as zakat.”).
40. See *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*, *supra* note 2, at article on “Miskin.”
41. *Id.*
42. See *id.* (The normative interpretation of the Maliki school of jurisprudence is that the needy have priority over the poor.)
43. See KASSIS, *supra* note 39, at 266.
44. See discussion *infra* Part II.B.2 (discussing zakat under Abu Bakr and modern states that collect zakat as a mandatory tax).
or in the process of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, one interpretation would include only members of the Muslim community (possibly recent converts).\textsuperscript{46} Another would include those who are sympathetic to Islam, but are not yet believers.\textsuperscript{47} This second interpretation has been used to justify financial support for missionary activities and for potential converts.\textsuperscript{48}

The fifth and sixth rightful recipients are captives (\textit{al-riqab}) and debtors (\textit{al-gharimin}). The freeing of captives likely refers to ransoming prisoners captured in war or the purchasing of a slave’s freedom.\textsuperscript{49} Although debtors may include those who are enslaved, it may include others who are burdened by debt.\textsuperscript{50}

The seventh category of zakat recipients is “for the cause of Allah.” Historically, this was used to support those who served as warriors for the defense of Islam.\textsuperscript{51} However, in the absence of a limiting hermeneutic in the \textit{fiqh} (jurisprudence) literature, it could be used for a wide range of activities that support this broad purpose.

The final category of recipients is the “wayfarers.” This seems to justify expenditure of zakat monies to support travelers.\textsuperscript{52} It may even apply to wealthy travelers if they do not have access to their wealth.\textsuperscript{53}

2. Clarification in the Sunna

The \textit{Sunna} of the Prophet (as recorded in \textit{hadith} collections) provides context for interpreting the Quran and supplies a large number of legal standards.\textsuperscript{54} All of the major \textit{hadith} collections contain reference to zakat.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[45] See Kassis, supra note 39, at 138.
\item[46] See \textsc{The Qur\-\-=\-an, Surat 9:60} (Yusef Ali trans.) ("those whose hearts have been recently reconciled").
\item[47] See \textit{id}. (Pickthall trans.) ("here reconciliation is not completed").
\item[48] See, e.g., discussion of zakat in \textit{Libya infra} Section III.C.3.
\item[50] \textsc{Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, Mysteries of Zakat} 65 (Nabih Amin Faris, trans., 1974) (Al-Ghazali limits the amount that a debtor may receive to the extent of indebtedness in a separate discussion from manumission payments.).
\item[51] See, e.g., \textit{id}. at 62.
\item[52] \textsc{Nicolas Prodromon Agnides, Mohammedan Theories of Finance} 527 (1916).
\item[53] See, e.g., \textsc{Al-Ghazali, supra} note 50, at 63.
\item[54] \textsc{Wael B. Hallaq, A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul}
\end{footnotes}
ZAKAT

Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim’s collections are the most authoritative within most Sunni jurisprudence, but Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Nasa’i all contain sayings related to zakat.6 The works of the four founding Sunni jurists also contain important Sunna references, but they will be addressed more specifically in the section on classical fiqh. The main issues addressed by the Sunna are the spirituality of zakat, proper distribution, legitimate recipients, the relationship between the rich and the poor, zakat as alms, and prohibitions against begging.57 This analysis will focus on sayings related to the calculation, collection, and distribution of zakat. Although a number of the hadith cited are found in multiple sources, this section will reference Sahih al-Bukhari unless a particular reference is not found in that collection.

The first element critical to calculating zakat is nisab, an amount exempt from calculation and meant to represent basic living costs.58 To the extent that the law of zakat exempts basic living costs, it has at least one progressive characteristic as a tax. In particular, Sahih al-Bukhari describes the nisab as property worth less than five uqiyas of silver (about 143.3 grams), five camels, or less than five wasqs (about 180 kg) of food.59

There are a number of rates for zakat. Crops from irrigated land are subject to a 5% tax.60 Crops that do not require irrigation are taxed at 10%.61 Found buried treasure, ambergris, and pearls are subject to a 20% zakat.62 These categories seem to represent something like income in an agricultural society reliant on cultivation. The main default rate for all other taxable goods is 2.5% of the value.63 For short-lived goods like livestock, this may function as a form of income tax as it does for crops. For durable goods, this functioned as a kind of wealth tax designed to encourage active business investment in production and trade. In Hadith 1463 and 1464, al-Bukhari exempts slaves and

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56. Id.
57. Id.
59. Id. at 876–1772.
60. Id. at 1483.
61. Id.
62. Id. at 336.
63. Id. at 335.
64. Id. at 1454.
The exemption of slaves would be consistent with the policy of encouraging investment in production. However, the exemption of horses seems inconsistent with the general application of zakat to livestock. This hadith was later contradicted by Abu Hanifa, the founder of Hanafi jurisprudence, who analogized that horses ought to be treated as other livestock.

With regard to zakat collections, the Sunna does document the authorization of intermediaries within the early Muslim community. The most important hadith authorizing the community enforcement of zakat payment is traced to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, who justified the use of force in collecting zakat from tribes refusing to pay. Abu Bakr identifies zakat directly with prayer, implying that one who refuses to pay zakat is not truly Muslim: "I will fight those who differentiate between prayer and zakat." So, from the period of the first caliphate, there is precedent for the mandatory payment of zakat to the central government, which then distributed it.

3. Classical Fiqh

Ijtihad is the art of interpretation within Islamic jurisprudence ("Ilm al-Usul al-Fiqh"), the process of seeking to form correct legal opinions through reasoning from the Quran and the Sunna. Whenever there was no clear text on a particular issue, jurists used methods of analogy and consensus and, depending upon the school of thought, custom, public policy analysis, necessity, and judicial discretion to reach a decision consistent with Quranic principles.

65. Id. at 1463–64.
66. Id. at 1454 (requires the normal payment of zakat on livestock (1/40)).
68. See, e.g., Al Bukhari, supra note 58, at 1496.
69. See Al-Qardawi, supra note 22, at 31–33 (Abu bakr on enforcing zakat).
70. Al Bukhari, supra note 58, at 1400.
71. An-Na'im, supra note 32, at 27.
73. See Hallaq, supra note 54, at 75–95.
Hanafi jurisprudence, like all the other schools of Islamic fiqh, relies primarily on the text of the Quran. The Sunna of the Prophet (as recorded in hadith) provides context for Quranic interpretation and supplies a large number of legal standards. By the eleventh century, Hanafi jurists had developed an extensive corpus of legal treatises that analogized from the text of the Quran and hadith. Their use of interpretive techniques in the classical period was broad and expressly allowed for judicial discretion. As mentioned earlier, horses are subject to zakat under certain circumstances (most clearly in Hanafi jurisprudence by analogy), even though they are specifically exempted in a Quranic reference.

While they expanded the class of wealth subject to zakat, Hanafi jurists narrowed the class of those who might receive zakat. In particular, the class of “those whose hearts are to be reconciled” did not apply once Islam was firmly established. The significance of these positions is a willingness to construe the intent of zakat broadly, without being bound by textual (particularly hadith) standards that are incongruous with social and economic circumstances. As a result, perhaps more than any of the other Sunni schools, the Hanafi tradition is most amenable to a modern reimagining consistent with the spiritual and redistributive purposes of zakat.

Hanafi fiqh identifies three categories of zakatable property: livestock, crops, and gold/silver/trade goods. Although government authorities may collect zakat, they are limited to forcibly collecting “visible” property (generally livestock and crops). Zakat beneficiaries include the categories listed in Surah 9:60, with an emphasis on the poor, needy, wayfarers, and debtors within the Muslim community. The Hanafi scholar Abu Yusuf

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75. See the discussion of istihsan in HALAQA, supra note 54, at 107–11, 130–32.
76. See DUTTON, supra note 67.
77. Id.; see, e.g., AGHNIDES, supra note 52, at 458 (Abu Yusuf excluded non-Muslims as appropriate recipients of zakat.).
78. See generally QARADAWI, supra note 55.
79. Id.
80. See AGHNIDES, supra note 52, at 527 (discussing differences in the treatment of visible property).
81. Id.
specifically excludes non-Muslims as possible zakat beneficiaries.\textsuperscript{82} Donors may not give in ways that benefit themselves.\textsuperscript{83} As a transfer of ownership, proceeds must go to proper beneficiaries rather than to public purposes such as the building of mosques.\textsuperscript{84} Abu Yusuf also recommended the appointment of a reliable man to oversee all offerings (including zakat).\textsuperscript{85} Given this concern for the effective administration of zakat, collectors of zakat receive priority in the receipt of their share.\textsuperscript{86}

\textit{b. Maliki}

The Maliki School of jurisprudence places a distinct emphasis on traditions and rules attributed to the early Muslim community in Medina.\textsuperscript{87} The treatise, \textit{Al-Muwatta}, by Malik Ibn Anas contains a significant treatment of zakat.\textsuperscript{88} Unlike the other Sunni schools, the Malikis allowed zakat to be imposed upon non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{89} Along with the Shafis, the Malikis view the beneficiaries of zakat as having an actual \textit{in rem} property right.\textsuperscript{90} Unlike Hanafi jurisprudence, Maliki jurisprudence considers all zakatable property to be subject to government collection (with no regard for whether property is “visible” or not).\textsuperscript{91} Authorities also have broader discretionary power to distribute zakat proceeds appropriately.\textsuperscript{92} Combined, these elements provide a strong basis for state collection of zakat for support for the poor.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82} See generally Abu Yusuf, Kitab Al-Kharaj (Abid Ahmad Ali trans., 1979); see also 3 A. Ben Shemesh, Taxation in Islam: Abu Yusuf’s Kitab Al-Kharaj 35–143 (1969).
\item \textsuperscript{83} Aghnides, supra note 52, at 458.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Id. at 456–57.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Norman Calder, Studies of Early Muslim Jurisprudence 154 (1993).
\item \textsuperscript{86} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{87} See Coulson, supra note 24, at 43–47 (describing the jurisprudence of Imam Malik Ibn Anas).
\item \textsuperscript{89} Id. at 109 (“Umar ibn al-Khattab used to take a twentieth from the cereals and olive oil of the Nabatean Christians, intending by that to increase the supply to Madina. He would take a tenth from pulses.”).
\item \textsuperscript{90} See generally Powell, supra note 20.
\item \textsuperscript{91} See Aghnides, supra note 52, at 527.
\item \textsuperscript{92} See Imam Malik Ibn Anas, supra note 88, at 103 (“The position with us concerning the dividing up zakat is that it is up to the individual judgment of the man in charge.”).
\end{itemize}
c. Shafi

In his book, Al-Risalah, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi‘i, who studied in Medina under Malik ibn Anas,93 was the first jurist to systematically record the general rules of interpretation, which consider analogy and consensus to be explicitly secondary sources of jurisprudence, subordinate to the Quran and Sunna.94 The Shafis do not view debt as any sort of adjustment or limitation on the amount of zakat owed.95 Although the Shafis adopt the Hanafi distinction between “visible” and “non-visible” goods, nearly all goods are considered “non-visible,” thus removing them from the collection authority of the government.96

Although al-Ghazali wrote within the Shafi fiqh tradition, his book, The Mysteries of Almsgiving, is an important source with broad influence beyond the realm of sectarian legal scholarship.97 The first section of the book addresses the calculation of zakat.98 The categories of possessions subject to zakat are livestock, gold/silver, trade goods, buried treasure or mineral wealth, and crops.99 As described earlier, some of these categories have fixed rates of zakat.100 However, the rate applied to livestock, trade goods, and crops is more complicated. Under the presumption of an annual planting season, zakat is annually owed on crops when mature and ready for market.101 Except for buried treasure, a certain base level of ownership (nisab) is exempted from zakat.102 In general, zakat is to be paid in kind.103

93. HODGSON, supra note 4, at 327.
94. See COULSON, supra note 24, at 53–61 (describing the role of al-Shafi‘i as “the father of Muslim jurisprudence”).
95. See, e.g., ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI, THE MYSTERIES OF ALMSGIVING 6 (Nabih Amin Faris trans., 1974) (“[M]ortgaged livestocks are liable to the zakat because the owner himself has been responsible for the sequestration.”). “It is also due on the debt of a solvent person capable of paying his debt.” Id. at 11.
96. See AGHNIDES, supra note 52, at 526–27.
97. AL-GHAZALI, supra note 95.
98. Id. at 5–16.
99. Id. at 5. Note that Al-Ghazali also considers food used to break the Ramadan fast as a category of zakat, but this form of zakat is separate from the annual zakat on possessions, which is the central concern of this article.
100. Id. at 11 (As in all of the other schools of jurisprudence, the Shafi‘I School fixes the rate of zakat on gold and silver at 2.5%).
101. Id. at 10–11 (“The zakat is due at the time when the fruits become ripe and the grains harden; it is actually collected after the crop has been dried and sifted.”).
102. Id. at 13.
103. Id. at 19 (“That no substitute based on the value of the zakat be offered in its stead . . . . [T]hus silver will not take the place of gold, nor gold the place of silver, even though the substitute may exceed that
The second section of *The Mysteries of Almsgiving* identifies three important standards for paying zakat. First, payment should be made promptly. This is particularly true for crops that could decompose. Second, zakat should be paid where the owner lives because the poor have a claim to wealth produced in their community. Third, zakat funds are to be divided equally among appropriate groups of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries include the eight found in *Surah* 9:60; however, the classification of “the cause of Allah” is explicitly replaced with a reference to warriors. Consistent with the redistributive values reflected in zakat, al-Ghazali emphasizes the categories of the poor and needy, whom he defines as those unable to make any living and those who do not earn enough to cover their living costs, respectively. However, Shafi jurisprudence generally requires equal distribution to the applicable beneficiary categories in order to avoid human discretion in the allocation process. Significantly, both the acts of giving and receiving zakat are considered in a spiritual context, which is consistent with the understanding that such acts are related to worship, like prayer.

**d. Hanbali**

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born in Rabī in 780, and was influenced by the work of Imam Shafi‘i (whom Hanbal is reputed to have met once) as well as prominent Maliki scholars. His jurisprudence emphasized a literal reading of the Quran and *hadith*, limiting the use of analogy and other interpretive sources which tended to increase judicial discretion and innovation. According to the Hanbalis, zakat liability does not apply to debt owed on gold, silver, or trade goods in order to avoid the situation in which a person might otherwise owe zakat even when his actual net worth does not exceed the *nisab*. for which it is substituted.”.

104. *Id.* at 18–19.
105. *Id.*
106. *Id.* at 23.
107. *Id.* at 23–25.
108. *Id.* at 23–24.
109. *Id.* at 56–58.
110. See, e.g., *id.* at 25–27 (with regard to giving zakat), 64–73 (with regard to receiving zakat).
111. For an article on Ahmad ibn Hanbal, see *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*, supra note 2, at 272.
112. See *COULSON*, supra note 24, at 71–73.
113. See *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*, supra note 2, at 415 (discussing “Debts” in section ix).
5. Historical Disjunction

One challenge to the continued development of fiqh was the notion of the “closing of the gates of ijtihad.” There is a shift in the nature of legal discourse starting in the tenth and eleventh centuries from reliance on judicial interpretation (at least in the form of innovation) to a reliance on prior precedent and “imitation” (taqlid).114 As a theoretical matter, the extensive body of manuals and opinions collected by this time made the continued development of legal doctrine seem unnecessary. Although legal discourse did not disappear, it was contextualized differently, so that calls for a return to the overt exercise of ijtihad remain controversial for some scholars.115

6. Later Juridical Movements

The “modernist” approach is perhaps best represented by Sayyid Ahmed Khan, a major Muslim thinker and reformer in nineteenth century India.116 Like Muhammad Abduh in the Arabic-speaking world, he advocated a reexamination of ijtihad—a new hermeneutic.117 His writing and the institutions he founded (most famously, Aligarh Muslim University) shaped generations of Muslims under British colonial rule; his modernist approach to jurisprudence had a profound impact on Islamic legal thought by opening legal discourse to new interpretations and the implications of science.118

Another modern trend in a number of Muslim countries has been to consider state law an expression of Islamic law.119 This is true to some extent in diverse jurisdictions such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Iran. As this trend coalesces, it seems to create a new sort of Islamic discourse that has legitimacy

115. See HALLAQ, supra note 54, at 43–47.
117. See SIDDQUI, supra note 11, at 55–56.
118. Id.
as an expression of the traditions, as a new form of *ijtihad*, or as valid application of precedent (*taqlid*).\(^{120}\)

**C. Legacy Outside of the Muslim Context**

Outside of the religious context, the traditional jurisprudence of zakat made significant contributions to theories of tax and distribution. It proposes what amounts to a wealth tax combined with a modest income tax, made progressive with an exemption for basic living costs. Although we do not know details relating to the efficiency of this system in the early history of the Muslim community, we know that it was enforced relatively widely for the first few centuries of Islam.\(^{121}\) The second generalizable principle in the jurisprudence of zakat is the theory of both property and social justice that ownership rights do not apply to pre-zakat (tax) income. Beneficiaries of zakat have an actual property right in the wealth of the rich to the extent of zakat. This could be analogized to a right of the poor to benefits funded by taxes, and would argue against the libertarian notion of ownership rights in pre-tax income.\(^{122}\) These ideas will be further explored in Section VI below.

**III. MODERN STATE APPROACHES TO ZAKAT**

The modern civil codes of predominantly Muslim nations take a wide variety of approaches to zakat. The most common approach is to ignore it altogether.\(^{123}\) Another approach is for the government to establish entities to collect and distribute voluntary zakat contributions, typically in the interest of transparency and accountability. The third approach is to collect zakat as if it were a tax and to distribute it as an analog to welfare. There are a variety of permutations to the actual rules for these sorts of zakat statutes, though all are ostensibly justified according to classical *fiqh* in some sense.

\(^{120}\) Id.
\(^{121}\) See Kuran, supra note 9, at 845.
\(^{122}\) See generally MURPHY & NAGEL, supra note 10, at 31–36.
\(^{123}\) See infra app. A.
A. No Place for Zakat

Of the forty predominantly Muslim countries, twenty-four do not institutionalize zakat.\textsuperscript{124} This is true for Turkey which, in the early history of the Turkish Republic, intentionally established a secular legal system based on European civil codes.\textsuperscript{125} However, it is also true for a number of countries that actively incorporate elements of traditional Islamic law into their modern codes, in areas such as family law, inheritance, and even banking.\textsuperscript{126} This is clearly a more complex issue for countries that have decided to incorporate aspects of Islamic fiqh into their legal systems.

Which elements of traditional zakat jurisprudence are included in modern statutes, why, and in what ways? In many cases, a state-enforced system would duplicate taxation (VAT, income, etc.) and benefits programs established in the last century according to European and North American models. Perhaps ironically, there is evidence that countries with no legal rules regarding zakat in some cases have higher giving rates than those that do.\textsuperscript{127} According to one study, in 2004, 69\% of Turks gave zakat, while only 60\% of Pakistanis did (living in a country that makes zakat mandatory).\textsuperscript{128} This difference might be explained by relative wealth. It is likely that a smaller percentage of Pakistanis are obliged to give zakat, either according to classical fiqh or their own laws due to the exemption of nisab.\textsuperscript{129} In any case, zakat contributions tend to represent a small percentage of GDP regardless of whether they are required by law.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{124} Id.
\textsuperscript{125} See BERNARD LEWIS, THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN TURKEY 402–04 (1961) (historical role of secularism in the early Turkish Republic); see also Adrien Katherine Wing & Ozan O. Varol, \textit{Is Secularism Possible in a Majority-Muslim Country?: The Turkish Example}, 42 TEX. INT’L L.J. 1, 5–7 (2006).
\textsuperscript{128} Id.
\textsuperscript{129} Id.
\textsuperscript{130} Id. (listed amounts for Turkey as \$214 million and Pakistan as 4 billion Rupees.)
B. Facilitating Collection and Distribution of Zakat

In the absence of zakat laws, alms are given on a voluntary and decentralized basis. There is some economic evidence that voluntary giving to local groups or individuals favors certain categories of beneficiaries, for example, those with a relationship to the giver, and that this pattern of giving tends not to provide for sufficient redistribution of wealth to alleviate systemic poverty. For this reason, and a number of others related to transparency and accountability, some nations have established government-supported entities to receive and distribute voluntary zakat contributions. This approach has garnered more support after 9/11, when investigations of some Islamic charities revealed charitable gifts to entities related to organized “terrorist” activities. Both Muslim governments and individual donors recognized the value in ensuring that zakat was administered consistent with its religious purposes and with sufficient levels of disclosure to satisfy donors. Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar, the UAE, Indonesia, and Oman all have some form of centralized zakat collection and distribution with varying degrees of governmental oversight and involvement.

1. Egypt

Although Egypt has not institutionalized zakat as a mandatory tax, Nasser Social Bank of Egypt has a large Department of Zakat. Nasser Social Bank was established pursuant to Law No. 66 of 1971 as a financial institution reporting to the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs. It aims to expand the social solidarity base by granting soft loans and aid to those in lower income brackets. It works with thousands of local committees to collect and

131. Id.
134. See PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 67–70.
135. ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH, supra note 7, at 36.
136. Law No. 66 of 1977 (Egypt) (establishing the Nasser Social Bank).
distribute zakat funds. The bank has served as an established model for other countries interested in centralizing zakat administration. During its 2004-2005 fiscal year, the bank invested over one billion Egyptian Pounds. Zakat proceeds for the same period equaled approximately 110 million Egyptian Pounds and rose to 128 million the following year. According to one survey, 89% of Egyptians gave zakat in 1998.

Although rumors occasionally surface indicating government plans to legally enforce zakat contributions, such proposals have been met with widespread opposition even from the ulama (the community of Islamic scholars). The Islamic Research Centre of Al-Azhar University (the world’s oldest university and the most important historical center in Islamic scholarship) recently issued a fatwa (legal opinion) ruling that the Egyptian government should pay 20% zakat (the traditional amount for mineral deposits) on its oil and gas sales. This could amount to more than two billion dollars that would be redistributed largely to the poor. This fatwa seems to indicate both that poverty is an increasingly important political problem in Egypt and that Islamic legal scholars are open to creative new applications of traditional fiqh as a source of moral suasion.

2. Jordan

The Zakat Act in Jordan was passed in 1978 and established a Zakat Fund under the Ministry of Awqaf. Jordan officially encourages contributions to the Zakat Fund and such contributions are deductible from income for tax

138. Id.
139. ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH, supra note 7, at 36.
140. See Egypt State Info. Serv., supra note 137.
141. Id.
142. Id.
143. Hassan, supra note 127.
146. Id.
purposes.\textsuperscript{148} No more than 10\% of zakat funds can be used for administrative purposes (although salaries can be paid by the Ministry itself).\textsuperscript{149} In 2007, the Zakat Fund received more than 2.5 billion Jordanian Dinars (approximately US$ 3.5 billion).\textsuperscript{150}

3. Kuwait

In Act No. 5 of 1982, Kuwait established the Zakat House, which receives voluntary zakat contributions along with an annual government grant.\textsuperscript{151} As in Jordan, the Kuwaiti zakat administration is affiliated with the Ministry of Awqaf.\textsuperscript{152} All administrative costs are internalized within the ministry.\textsuperscript{153} Kuwait has recently moved toward mandatory enforcement of zakat, but only for local public and shareholding companies, which pay zakat at the rate of one percent of net profit.\textsuperscript{154} Since this change is only now coming into force, this article will consider Kuwait a voluntary zakat jurisdiction to reflect the historic data that is currently available.

4. Iran

Iran is the only Shi‘i jurisdiction that this article addresses with any particularity. Shi‘i rules for alms (zakat and the related tax of khoms in Shi‘ism) require zakat on certain goods and a donation of 20\% of income that will be distributed by the Imam or his proxy (the ulema in the case of modern Imami Shi‘ism found in Iran).\textsuperscript{155} Zakat (here referring to zakat and khums, or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} Zakat Act of 1978 amended 1982 (Jordan).
\item \textsuperscript{149} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{150} The Zakat Fund of Jordan, http://www.zakatfund.net/cutenews/news.php (last visited Jan. 9, 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{151} Law No. 5 of 1982 (Kuwait) (concerning the establishment of the Zakat House); see also ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH, supra note 7, at 36–37.
\item \textsuperscript{152} Act No. 5 of 1982 (Kuwait); see also Kuwait Zakat House, http://www.zakathouse.org.kw/AxCMSwebLive/ar_index.cms.
\item \textsuperscript{153} ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH, supra note 7, at 37 ("[A]s the House is affiliated to the ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs all its administrative expenditures are carried out by the general budget of the government.").
\item \textsuperscript{154} Law No. 46 of 2006 (Kuwait) (on zakat); Ministerial Res. No. 58 of 2007 (Kuwait).
\item \textsuperscript{155} See ZIBA MIR-HOSSEINI, ISLAM AND GENDER: THE RELIGIOUS DEBATE IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN 12 (1999).
\end{itemize}
giving of the fifth, in Shi‘ism) was viewed as a moral rather than a legal obligation by the revolutionary government. Although controversial at the time, the late Ayatollah Khomeini reinstated the Iranian income tax during the Iran-Iraq War after having earlier overturned it as un-Islamic.\footnote{156} Particularly during the war, the income tax was justified on the basis of necessity (zarura).\footnote{157} Zakat thus remains a pious, though legally unenforced, duty.

According to 1998 survey information, 44% of Iranians paid zakat.\footnote{158} Alms are generally received by “bonyads,” which are religious or charitable foundations. The largest bonyad, Bonyad-e Mostazafin, supports the family members of martyrs and has $12 billion in assets and employs 400,000.\footnote{159} Bonyads in Iran are estimated to control about 40% of the non-oil wealth of the country.\footnote{160}

5. Bangladesh

Bangladesh founded its Zakat Fund according to the Zakat Fund Ordinance in 1982.\footnote{161} It is authorized to receive and distribute zakat contributions.\footnote{162} As in Jordan, contributions are deductible from income tax.\footnote{163} The Board of the Zakat Fund consists of ten Islamic law scholars appointed by the government, the Secretary of the Religious Affairs Division, and the Director-General of the Islamic Foundation.\footnote{164} The Zakat Fund is currently providing medical care to poor children; giving scholarships to poor but meritorious students; distributing rickshaws, vans, sewing machines, cattle, and poultry to help alleviate poverty; building homes for the homeless; assisting small businesses with start-up capital; and providing disaster relief to stricken areas.\footnote{165}

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{156}{HOMA OMID, ISLAM AND THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY STATE OF IRAN 141 (1994) (“Payment of such taxation is a religious duty. Just as the Muslims have an obligation to pay their religious dues, so they must also pay their national taxes to the Islamic government.”).}
  \item \footnote{157}{Id.}
  \item \footnote{158}{See Hassan, supra note 127.}
  \item \footnote{159}{ROBIN WRIGHT, THE LAST GREAT REVOLUTION 278 (2000).}
  \item \footnote{160}{Id.}
  \item \footnote{161}{See Ordinance No. VI of 1982 (Bangl.).}
  \item \footnote{162}{Id. § 3.}
  \item \footnote{163}{Id. § 13.}
  \item \footnote{164}{Id. § 5.}
  \item \footnote{165}{BANGLADESH HIGH COMM’N, Canberra Notice (2008), http://www.bangladesh-canberra.org/media/pdf/oldnotices/Notice%2016.pdf.}
\end{itemize}
6. Bahrain

Bahrain established a zakat law similar to that of Jordan’s in 1979. In 2003, the Zakat Fund had dropped to almost nothing as donors chose to contribute to other entities. With mounting pressure to fund public programs, Bahrain established a mandatory 1% "social insurance tax" on income in 2007 to help fund unemployment benefits. Significantly, this tax has not been identified as a form of zakat, and this has drawn criticism as an un-Islamic form of taxation. Like Kuwait, Bahrain will be analyzed as a voluntary zakat jurisdiction because the recent changes are not reflected in the historic economic data analyzed in Section IV.

7. United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates ("UAE") has a Zakat Fund similar to those found in Jordan, Kuwait, Bangladesh and Bahrain. Along with Kuwait and Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates has considered instituting an income tax which might include a zakat component. The UAE’s Zakat Fund has a board of directors formed under the chairmanship of the Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments. The board has the power to set general fund policy and approve distribution amounts, and also to remind Muslims of the zakat duty and urge them to pay zakat. The fund’s sources of revenue are amounts which Muslims voluntarily pay to the fund, contributions from other entities, a budget allotment from the UAE’s general budget, and amounts generated by

166. Decree Law No. 8 of 1979 (Bahr.) (establishing the Zakat Fund).
171. Malik, supra note 170.
172. Federal Law No. 4, supra note 170, art. 9.
173. Id. art. 10.
the fund’s own activities. Distribution of zakat funds is limited strictly to the eight categories mentioned in the Quran.

8. Lebanon

Lebanon has a zakat fund similar to that in Jordan. It receives and distributes zakat donations. Although the majority of the population in Lebanon is Muslim, the community is highly fragmented and the current constitution preserves disproportionate Christian representation in the Majlis (Parliament) and senior government positions.

9. Indonesia

Indonesia is unique in a number of ways. First, along with Malaysia, it is far removed from the core of the Arab Middle East. Second, Islam came to the region somewhat later and as part of a religious phenomenon with relatively less political entanglement. Third, according to surveys, Indonesia has the highest rate of zakat giving among surveyed nations at 94%, with the rate even higher for those with higher education, even though zakat is not mandatory.

Indonesia has established governmental organizations to collect and distribute zakat and regulates all private zakat collection and distribution; Regional “BAZ” are semi-autonomous zakat agencies that collect and distribute contributions. They compete (often unfavorably) with a variety of

174. Id. art. 5.
177. Id.
180. See Hassan, supra note 127.
other charities and direct giving. Ministry of Religion Decision No. 581/1999 specifically addressed the role of governmental BAZ and nongovernmental zakat collectors known as LAZ. Contributions are deductible up to 2.5% of net income. Although the percentage of zakat funds collected by BAZ went from 4% in 2000 to 9% in 2004, these governmental organizations still account for a small portion of overall zakat funds, most of which go to local individuals and mosques.

10. Oman

Direct taxation in Oman is limited. Zakat payment, although not mandatory, is administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments. Zakat funds are distributed to “eligible recipients,” and the funds also pay for printing copies of the Quran and distributing religious works to mosques, students, and other individuals.

C. Zakat as Tax and Welfare

There are a number of predominantly Muslim countries that enforce collection of zakat: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Libya, Sudan, Malaysia and Yemen. The standards for each system vary greatly though all claim legitimacy as rooted in traditional fiqh.

183. PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 67–70.
184. Id. at 21–23.
186. See PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 22.
187. Malik, supra note 170.
188. Id.
1. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has the oldest statutory system of zakat collection. It is even listed as a sort of constitutional requirement in the Saudi Basic Law. The most recent version of the law provides that all Saudi and Gulf Cooperation Council Nation citizens and companies, who conduct business in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in commercial goods, pay zakat at the rate of 2.5%. Zakat payers are required to file a declaration showing zakatable goods, properties, cash, and profits. A financial officer reviews the declaration and then informs the zakat payer of the amount of zakat that is owed. Although the traditional zakat for crops and livestock is still collected, the regulations focus on accounting details for calculating zakatable worth on cash, investments, and real estate.

2. Pakistan

One of the chief components of Zia ul Haq’s Islamization program for Pakistan was the compulsory collection of zakat under the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980 (the “Ordinance”). At least one earlier attempt was made to institutionalize zakat payment in the 1950’s. A commission suggested that the government ought to collect zakat. For a brief time, “zakat tickets” could be purchased at post offices, and the proceeds were to be distributed to appropriate beneficiaries. This earlier program was not continued, primarily due to lack of participation. Pakistan’s zakat system has been studied by a

190. Saudi Basic Law art. 21 (Saudi Arabia) (“Zakat . . . shall be levied and dispensed to its legitimate beneficiaries.”).
193. Id. art. 9.
194. Id. arts. 5–6.
195. Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980 (Pak.).
197. TANZIL UR-RAHMAN, INTRODUCTION OF ZAKAT IN PAKISTAN 8 (1981); see also Notes of the Quarter: Zakat in Pakistan, 45 MUSLIM WORLD 204, 205 (1955).
198. UR-RAHMAN, supra note 197, at 9.
199. Id.
number of scholars over the past 25 years, so data and commentary are more readily available than for most other jurisdictions.

As a tax, zakat was initially intended to provide a redistributive mechanism that might alleviate poverty within Pakistan; however its present role as a part of Islamization does not depend on its pragmatic value as a tax. Historically, it had been enforced at the state level by the Moghul Empire and was incumbent upon all Muslims.200

Data suggests that prior to passage of the Ordinance, only 5% of Pakistanis actually practiced zakat.201 State enforced income taxes were also evaded on a wide scale, so one aim of Islamization in this area was to increase buy-in for redistributive tools by rooting them in Islam.202 In fact, the Ordinance did receive support from such key religious leaders as Maulana Maududi, Shaikh Mahmud Ahmad and Khurshid Ahmad Naqui.203 However, from the beginning there was vocal opposition, particularly from non-Sunni communities.204

The most obvious mechanism for enforcing zakat in Pakistan relies on banks and other depository institutions to transfer appropriate contributions based on deposits (these are often referred to as First Schedule Zakat funds) on an annual record date, the first day of Ramadan.205 Zakat is taken at the rate of 2.5% over the *nisab*, which is considered the current value of 612.3 grams of silver.206 In 1980, this amount was calculated to be 2000 rupees.207 The advantage of this system is that it lowers collection costs by putting the onus on depository institutions to calculate and forward zakat, which can essentially be automated. One consistent disadvantage has been the phenomenon of massive withdrawals immediately before the announced date of zakat calculation and transfer.208

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203. Clark, supra note 201, at 141 (explaining Pakistan’s zakat and Ushr as a Welfare System).
205. *Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980, supra note 195, ch. 1, § 2 (xxxii).*
206. Id.
207. Mayer, supra note 200, at 67 (regarding Islamization and taxation in Pakistan).
The second form of zakat under the Ordinance is *ushr*, or a 5% zakat on agricultural goods (described as Second Schedule Zakat funds). Although the law sets forth the class of people who are subject to contributing zakat, the Revenue Department of Provinical Governments have not been assessing zakat on crops in accordance with the statute. In fact, as with traditional voluntary zakat, amounts over 5% required by *fiqh* (such as for crops from unirrigated land), may be paid directly to the appropriate beneficiaries without an intermediary. Alternatively, it may be paid to local zakat committees.

Zakat funds are managed at the federal, provincial and local levels. First Schedule Zakat is received at the federal level and is then distributed to provincial committees. Some of this money is used for provincial level projects, but most is directed to local committees who distribute first schedule zakat funds in addition to collecting and distributing second schedule zakat funds. Federal zakat administration expenses are paid by the government. Local zakat committee costs are borne locally and are limited to 10% of collected zakat. Many responsibilities at the local level are shared by volunteers in order to limit costs.

There are three oft-repeated religious criticisms of the Ordinance. The first concerns the category of persons required to pay zakat. It has been argued that zakat’s application to corporations has no precedent in Islamic *fiqh* and that the collection of zakat from the accounts of minors conflicts with Hanafi *fiqh*, which is dominant in the region. Second, distribution has been criticized. Since zakat monies are used to fund community programs, it is possible that donors might benefit from their own contributions in violation of traditional *fiqh*. Also, the emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor might limit access.

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210. RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS MINISTRY OF PAKISTAN, *ZAKAT COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM* 4–5 (2005), available at http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/ministries/religious-affairs-ministry/media/zakatCollectionandDistributionSystem.doc. Interestingly, two provinces have not received any zakat on crops (ushr) since 2000—not even voluntary contributions. The remaining two provinces collected miniscule amounts during this period, which might be attributed to voluntary contributions.
212. *Id.*
213. *Id.* ch. 5.
215. *Id.* ch. 5, § 18.
216. *Id.* ch. 4, § 8b.
219. *See*, e.g., Malik *supra* note 170 (donors may not receive back their offerings).
by other legitimate potential beneficiaries of zakat. The third category of religious criticism has focused on the collection of zakat, in particular when the default system conflicts with particular rules of legal schools. This is most obvious among Shi'a who objected to enforcement of zakat standards that are inconsistent with Shi'i fiqh. An amendment to the Ordinance responded to this problem by allowing Shi'a to opt out of the system and exempt their accounts from mandatory withdrawal. Some Sunni Muslims criticized this move on equality grounds, and gained the right to claim exemption in 1999, in the Pakistani Supreme Court.

3. Libya

Libya's Zakat Act was issued in 1971. Unlike some other similar acts, zakat is collected on livestock and crops, but not on monetary assets. A General Directorate for Zakat collects contributions, but they are distributed by the Social Welfare Department of the Libyan government. Of the proceeds, 50% are dedicated to supporting the poor and needy, and no more than 10% can support the costs of the Directorate. Thirty percent of funds are allocated to the Organization of Islamic Call, which supports Libyan promotion of Islam outside the country. This allocation is intended to cover the Quranic zakat categories of "those whose hearts are to be reconciled" and "for the cause of Allah."

220. Mayer, supra note 200, at 68.
221. Id. at 72.
222. Id. at 71-73.
223. See Pakistan v. Farzana Asa, Supreme Court of Pak., 9 Mar. 1999 (Pak.).
224. Act No. 89 of 1971 (Libya).
225. See ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH, supra note 7, at 31.
226. Id.
227. Id.
228. Id.
229. Id. at 31-32.
4. Sudan

Sudan affirms governmental authority to enforce zakat both in the 1998 Constitution and the 2005 Transitional Constitution. The shift from colonial systems of taxation to zakat was expected to eliminate the need for additional taxes. The first step in this experiment began with the zakat law of 1980, which provided for voluntary payment to a state-managed “Zakat Fund.” Participation was made mandatory in 1984. Zakat is collected on invested wealth and cash income. However, zakat on trade and agricultural products accounts for the largest portions of the amount collected, representing respectively 36% and 42%. Zakat is distributed to the eight categories named in the Quran, with the largest portion in 2003, 61%, being paid to the poor and needy. Of this amount, 40% was paid directly in cash. Another 14.5% goes to the zakat collectors, with smaller portions paid “in the way of Allah,” in administrative fees, to the indebted, to “the reconciled,” and to the wayfarer. The category “in the way of Allah” has been extended to include many types of charity, including clinical services at hospitals, digging wells and constructing canals, settlement of nomads, and placement of refugees. In 2003, money paid “to the wayfarer” helped return Sudanese nationals stranded in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

5. Malaysia

Malaysia is unique among zakat-enforcing nations in two ways. First, zakat is enforced within the federal system at the state level by State Islamic

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231. See Mohammad Ibrahim Mohammad, The Sudan, in INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF ZAKAH, supra note 196, at 420–21.
232. Id. at 419–21.
233. Id. at 421–22.
235. Id. at 2–3.
236. Id. at 4.
237. Id.
238. Id.
239. Id. at 5.
240. Id.
Affairs Councils, and there is significant diversity in interpretation and practice. Second, regional systems have existed since the colonial period, when earlier, more informal systems were institutionalized under British rule. Over the last 18 years there has been an effort to streamline and harmonize these systems, but enforcement power remains at the state level.

Zakat administration in Malaysia has struggled with two challenges. The first is not unique to Malaysia or even to zakat; that is the challenge of monitoring and enforcing payment. Modern accounting systems have provided some advantages in government access to information regarding zakatable goods. However, because state zakat agencies do not have the powers of the federal tax authorities, they have difficulty enforcing payment except when the basis for zakat is evident. This difficulty is tied to the second challenge, namely the enforcement of zakat on agricultural goods (which are somewhat easier to monitor than monetary instruments). The largest traditional category of zakat in Malaysia is zakat on rice (padi) production. Because peasant farmers tend to be some of the poorest citizens of Malaysia, it would seem presumptively unfair to only tax their production. Arguably, systematic enforcement of zakat (not to mention other protections of an overtly Islamic economy) would shift the burden from padi farmers. Some studies indicate that the emphasis of Malaysian zakat on padi creates the opportunity for strongly regressive impacts when viewed as a tax, in such a way that seems contrary to the original purposes of zakat as a pious duty and as a mechanism for promoting social justice. In an economy that

243. Id.
244. bin Ghazali, supra note 241, at 104–05.
245. Id.
247. Id. at 182–86.
248. Id. at 185 ("The practice of confining agricultural zakat (‘ushr) to a single crop, for example paddy, is probably one of the greatest anomalies committed (consciously or unconsciously) in the name of Shari’ah by the official ‘ulama’ of Malaysia.").
249. Id. at 186 ("The extension of the ‘coverage’ of zakat . . . focused only on agricultural products. If we were to extend this to include wage earners and zakat on minerals, such as tin and petroleum, the amount of zakat that could be collected would be substantial.").
250. Id. at 165.
is now largely tied to wages (which are not expressly taxed under zakat), some
scholars argue that the understanding of zakatable production ought to be
construed outside of its originally agrarian and mercantile context. This
would require new interpretations, new *ijtihad*.

6. Yemen

Like Saudi Arabia and Sudan, Yemen includes zakat authority in its
constitution. Zakat was mandatory even before the Constitution made it
an absolute requirement. Yemen takes a traditional view of what is zakatable
and makes no analogy to include income, shares, or deposits. Zakat is
assessed and collected by the Administration of Duties, which coordinates the
process at the national, governorate and local levels.

IV. POSSIBLE IMPACT ON WEALTH AND DISTRIBUTION

It is difficult to evaluate legal zakat regimes for their effectiveness. In
considering whether or how Muslim governments might choose to
institutionalize zakat, I thought that it was important to try to identify apparent
relationships with the goals of an income redistribution system. Using a
sample set of 40 nations, including nearly all predominantly Muslim
countries, I developed a database which allowed me to identify potential
relationships between the institutionalization of zakat and (1) wealth as

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251. *See generally id.* at 174–89.
252. The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen art. 21 (1994) ("The state shall collect the Zakat...
and shall spend it through its legal channels in accordance with the law.").
253. See Yemen Constitution art. 135 (1970) ("The alms tax (zakat) is one of the basic pillars of
Islam. The Government shall endeavour to collect it and to spend it correctly."), which was replaced by
Yemen Constitution art. 21 (1994).
254. *See Geralyn M. Fallon, The Taxation of Companies and Individuals in Yemen, 8 ARAB L. Q. 37,
41 (1993); see also Muhammad Yahya Hussein Al-'Adi, Yemen, in INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF ZAKAH,
supra note 196, at 439–69.
255. Hussein Al-'Adi, *supra* note 254, at 446 (noting that zakat in Yemen is not applied to property
in actual use, income, shares, or deposits).
256. *Id.* at 456.
257. The only countries excluded are those with populations less than 500,000 or those that do not
generate economic data (Palestine and Kosovo).
reflected by per capita GDP and (2) income stratification/economic equality as reflected by GINI indices used by the UNDP and the World Bank.\(^{258}\)

First, I ran regression analyses that indicated a correlation between institutionalized zakat and both wealth (higher per capita GDP) and economic equality (lower GINI index), with r's of .325 and .328, respectively. An r correlation value over .3 typically indicates a causal relationship between the independent variable (institutionalizing zakat, or not) and the dependent variable (per capita GDP or GINI index).\(^{259}\)

In order to further illustrate this correlation, I created two crosstab studies which divide countries into three categories: (1) those countries that do not legally institutionalize zakat (24 countries), (2) those countries that use law to establish a voluntary system for collecting and distributing zakat (10 countries), and (3) those countries that enforce mandatory zakat (6 countries). This serves as the X-axis for both studies. The Y-axis for the Wealth Study divides the countries roughly into thirds according to per-capita GDP (greater than $9000, between $2410 and $9000, and less than $2410). The Y-axis for the Equality Study divides countries into three groups based on GINI index (a lower number is better). Divided roughly in thirds, those countries in the good category have GINI indices under 36, the mid-range reflects GINI indices between 36 and 41, and the poor range indicates GINI indices greater than 41. As a frame of reference, Denmark has a GINI index of 23.2, the United States has a GINI index of 45, and South Africa has a GINI index of 59.3.\(^{260}\) Note that the sample pool appears to have relatively good GINI indices compared to most comparable and even some more developed economies.


\(^{259}\) See generally JACOB COHEN, *STATISTICAL POWER ANALYSIS FOR THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES* (2d ed. 1988).

### Per Capita GDP According to Approach to Zakat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per Capita GDP</th>
<th>Approach to Zakat</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater than $9000</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $2410 and $9000</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $2410</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those countries that establish voluntary zakat institutions, 50% are in the high wealth group, 40% are in the middle wealth group, and 10% are in the low wealth group. For those countries that mandate zakat, 50% are in the high wealth group, 33.3% are in the middle wealth group, and 16.7% are in the low wealth group. This is in stark contrast to the countries that do not legalize zakat. 25% of these countries are in the high income group, 29.2% are in the middle group, and 45.8% are in the low income group. For whatever reason, these countries tend to be poorer as a group. As Section II indicates, some oil-producing countries have instituted legalization of zakat, which may impact this breakdown. However, the fact that countries from all three categories have
institutionalized zakat seems to argue against the claim that these policy options are available only to wealthy countries.

Because of this surprising result, I felt obliged to consider why only two nations that have effectively legalized zakat in some way fall into the low wealth category: Yemen and Bangladesh. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world and has struggled since reunification after the Cold War to rebuild its economy.\textsuperscript{261} The socialist portion of its political legacy coming from the former South Yemen (prior to reunification in 1990) might contribute to the higher level of economic equality reflected in the country's relatively low GINI index of 33.4.\textsuperscript{262} It is possible that commitment to economic equality has been a higher value than increasing overall wealth. Bangladesh has been one of the poorest countries in the world since its founding. Lack of resources and vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly flooding, have made development a tremendous challenge.\textsuperscript{263} So, it is not surprising that it remains one of the poorer nations in the studies. However, the Government of Bangladesh and a number of private initiatives, including the microfinance movement pioneered by Muhammad Yunus, have had positive impacts in terms of both wealth and equality.\textsuperscript{264}

Other than the apparent correlation, no other clear conclusions can be drawn from the study. The countries that have legalized zakat have done so in a wide variety of ways, and it is impossible to more clearly correlate the advantages or disadvantages of these policy choices without detailed studies of the specific economic impacts of particular zakat systems. Even so, the bias towards wealth among nations legalizing zakat appears more than anecdotal and justifies more detailed studies.

\textsuperscript{261} See generally PAUL DRESCH, A HISTORY OF MODERN YEMEN (2000).
\textsuperscript{262} See infra app. A.
\textsuperscript{264} Id.
### GINI Index According to Approach to Zakat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GINI Index</th>
<th>Less than 36</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Approach to Zakat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Between 36 and 41 | Count | 10 | 2 | 1 | 13 |
| % within Approach to Zakat | | 41.7%| 20.0%| 16.7%| 32.5%|

| Greater than 41 | Count | 10 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| % within Approach to Zakat | | 41.7%| 20.0%| 33.3%| 35.0%|

| Total | Count | 24 | 10 | 6 | 40 |
| % within Approach to Zakat | | 100.0%| 100.0%| 100.0%| 100.0%|

As in the Wealth Study, the Equality Study indicates some sort of positive relationship between institutionalization of zakat and economic equality. Of countries with voluntary zakat institutions, 60% are in the high equality group,
20% are in the middle equality group, and 20% are in the low equality group. Of countries with mandatory zakat, 50% are in the high equality group, 16.7% are in the middle equality group, and 33.3% are in the low equality group. This contrasts with the countries that do not legalize zakat. Of these countries, 16.7% are in the high equality group, 41.7% are in the middle equality group, and 41.7% are in the low equality group. For whatever reason, these countries tend to have lower levels of economic equality as a group.

Although zakat might affect economic equality, it is also possible that countries institutionalizing an income redistribution system such as zakat do so to some extent because they are a priori more concerned with economic inequality. As in the Wealth Study, I am particularly interested in the outlying zakat jurisdictions with lower levels of economic equality.

Lebanon and Iran are the two countries with a voluntary legalized zakat system, while Sudan and Malaysia are the two mandatory zakat jurisdictions in this category. Lebanon, Sudan, and Iran are fairly easy to distinguish. Lebanon is still dominated by Christian political parties, such that a zakat system established for highly fragmented Muslim communities might not work efficiently as a policy tool for income redistribution. Constitutional crises, violence, and years of civil war also make Lebanon an exceptional case and justify its role as an outlier regarding economic equality. Furthermore, Sunni Muslims who would be most likely to contribute to a state-sponsored zakat fund comprise only 26% of the population. So, even with high levels of participation, this fund would be unlikely to address poverty on a national level.

A history of internal violence and political struggle between Muslim and Christian communities equally applies to the Sudan, where the redistributive goals of zakat are less important than its symbolic role as a uniquely Islamic analog for taxation and welfare. Sudan, in addition to being deeply divided religiously, has been politically turbulent for the past 25 years. As such, it is not an ideal subject for determining the impact of zakat. Sudan’s outlier status will be addressed with greater specificity in Section IV.C., below.

265. See Mallat, supra note 178, at 13, 41–42.
Although Iran is in the low equality group, its GINI index reflects more equitable distribution of wealth than found in the United States.\textsuperscript{268} As the only explicitly Shi'i jurisdiction, zakat in Iran is subject to different legal rules in terms of *fiqh*, which might make it less likely that the impact of zakat would correlate with Sunni jurisdictions. Finally, unequal distribution of oil wealth might explain the slightly higher level of economic inequality; however, no other oil producing nations are in the low equality category.

The more difficult case is Malaysia, which has become a model for both developing economies and for moderate Muslim states.\textsuperscript{269} Although rapid industrial development has contributed to an overall increase in wealth, it has not resulted in an even distribution of resources. Some commentators have actually indicated that zakat on crops (rice in particular) might have a regressive effect.\textsuperscript{270} Further, since nearly half of the population is non-Muslim, any system mandated for only a portion of the populace is less likely to have broad distributive effect (as in the cases of Lebanon and Sudan described above). Even so, Malaysia's zakat system has been given some credit for the amelioration of poverty and has been touted as a model for other Muslim countries.\textsuperscript{271}

\textit{C. The Wealth and Equality Studies Conclusions}

The studies seem to show some tendency toward both higher wealth and economic equality among the Muslim jurisdictions that have legally institutionalized zakat, and this correlation deserves further specific study. It may also lend some confidence to countries that are considering such systems that the existence of these systems does not appear to harm economies across the board (though there is some argument that particular policies in Malaysia and Pakistan, for example, have been problematic).\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{268} See U.N. Dev. Programme, \textit{supra} note 258, at 335 (noting that Iran has a GINI index of 43, while the U.S. has a GINI index of 40.8).


\textsuperscript{270} See bin Ghazali, \textit{supra} note 241, at 104–05.

\textsuperscript{271} See, e.g., \textit{JAMES B. ANG, FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN MALAYSIA} (2009).

\textsuperscript{272} See \textit{BIN MUHAMMAD, supra} note 23, at 165 (regarding Malaysia); Mayer, \textit{supra} note 200, at 68–71 (regarding Pakistan).
Of the countries legalizing zakat, Sudan shows the lowest level of economic equality and the fourth lowest level of wealth, making it the greatest outlier in the sample. However, as explained earlier, Sudan may be distinguished because it is deeply divided along religious and ethnic lines.\textsuperscript{273} Zakat is enforced to some extent as evidence of public Islamization in a country with large non-Muslim communities. Massive poverty, civil unrest, and political instability make Sudan a poor example of a stable society in which to analyze discrete policies like zakat.

There are opportunities for further study. As Kuwait moves from a voluntary to a mandatory system, it may be instructive to track the specific impacts of the system in more systematically collecting and distributing zakat funds. One challenge to studying economic inequality is the lack of data and openness to World Bank surveys on the part of a number of predominantly Muslim countries.\textsuperscript{274} Even for those countries that have already established zakat systems for religious or legitimacy purposes, it makes sense to study the effectiveness of these programs so that they can be adjusted to become more efficient within the constraints of traditional \textit{fiqh} (or contemporary \textit{fiqh} where applicable).

V. I\textsc{m}pli\textsc{c}ations for Muslim Countries Which Have or Are Considering Institutionalizing Zakat

The analysis of traditional \textit{fiqh} in Section II, the qualitative analysis of modern zakat jurisdictions in Section III, and the empirical studies in Section IV all have implications for countries that have or are planning to institutionalize zakat. Although this section is meant to address the particular issues raised by zakat itself, some of the comments have broader relevance for evaluating the mechanics of the system in terms of tax and distribution.

\textsuperscript{273} See generally ROBERT O. COLLINS, A HISTOR\textsc{y} OF MODERN SUDAN (2008).
\textsuperscript{274} GINI indices for the Equality Study came from the Economist Intelligence Unit which derived them synthetically in the absence of World Bank statistics. These statistics have been used in comparative studies. See, e.g., INST. FOR ECON. & PEACE, GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2008: METHODOLOGY, RESULTS, AND FINDINGS (2008), available at http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi/ home.php.
A. Observations and Recommendations

An analysis of the examples of legally institutionalized zakat reveals some patterns that might indicate ways to increase the effectiveness of these policies. First, there is the question of whether zakat payments ought to be enforced by the state. Second, the state might play a positive role in the facilitation of zakat by requiring greater transparency and accountability in the nonprofit sector. Third, states might be able to optimize administrative costs. Fourth, active state participation might provide a useful policy tool for poverty alleviation. Finally, constructive engagement with religious ideas might be helpful in societies wrestling with the appropriate relationship between law and religion.

1. Mandatory vs. Voluntary

There is precedent for both mandatory and voluntary systems within Islamic fiqh. For countries that already have established tax systems that are viewed as both legitimate and effective, it is not clear what benefits a mandatory zakat regime would provide. Countries whose tax systems are challenged as illegitimate might consider the advantages of enforcing zakat for this reason. Countries without effective taxation systems to fund public services, particularly poverty alleviation, might consider mandatory zakat if it would provide marginal benefits over existing systems. However, because most Muslim countries now have mandatory taxation (income, VAT, etc.), mandatory zakat is probably unnecessary. The empirical data reviewed in Section III does not appear to indicate a statistically significant advantage to choosing mandatory versus voluntary zakat administrations; however there appears to be some correlation between having a zakat system (mandatory or voluntary) and both higher wealth and economic equality. It will be worth studying countries that have recently shifted from voluntary to mandatory systems, particularly as other countries consider such a shift.

277. See, e.g., Arksal Salim, The Influential Legacy of Dutch Islamic Policy on the Formation of Zakat (Alms) Law in Modern Indonesia, 15 PAC. RIM L. & POL’Y J. 683, 701 (2006) (“Many zakat agencies, both government supported and privately sponsored, are intent on amending the current Zakat Law in order to
Countries might consider promoting voluntary zakat for a number of reasons. First, it provides support for charitable work that governments might not be able to fund. Second, voluntary giving provides an opportunity for building solidarity within the community by facilitating a pious obligation that also contributes to the physical well-being of some and the general welfare. Significantly, without compulsion and the threat of sanctions, contributors are less likely to resent making payment or actively avoid payment.

2. Positive Role for the State

There are a number of steps that governments might take to facilitate zakat. Like several of the countries studied in this article, they might establish a governmental or semi-governmental agency to receive and distribute zakat funds. This provides greater assurances that monies are used efficiently and for the purposes intended by zakat.

To encourage participation in the system, countries might consider making zakat contributions to the official fund tax deductible.\(^\text{278}\) In systems where charitable gifts are not normally deductible, this creates a new incentive for participating in the official system. Some systems, such as Indonesia’s, still receive only a small percentage of zakat funds.\(^\text{279}\) However, those percentages are growing and will probably continue to grow as more people become aware of the work such zakat funds can do. This relates to another element of facilitating zakat education. Studies indicate that many Muslims are unaware of the zakat obligation or how to calculate it.\(^\text{280}\) Muslim countries which already fund religious work or education might wish to educate Muslim citizens regarding zakat and opportunities for giving it.

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\(^{279}\) See PRIHATNA supra note 132, at 68–70 (explaining why only 12.5% of Indonesians pay zakat through government sponsored entities).

\(^{280}\) See, e.g., M.A. SABZWARI, A STUDY OF ZAKAT AND USHR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PAKISTAN 1–2 (1979) (study indicating a low level of understanding of zakat in Pakistan); see also PRIHATNA supra note 132, at 23 ("Most people [in Indonesia] have limited knowledge about zakat. They only know about prayers, fasting and hajj.").
a. Transparency

To foster trust, governments might require disclosure by their zakat institutions exceeding the requirements of individuals, mosques, and private charities. If donors know that operating costs are reasonable and that contributed money is used effectively, they might be more likely to participate in the official system. Studies of Indonesia’s system seem to indicate that most citizens prefer to give within their local community, presumably both because of social connections and because such contributions might be more easily identifiable within the community.281 The clearer it is that money collected by governmental organizations is used well and in ways that meet needs normally unmet by local mosques and charities, the more willing donors will be to participate in national programs.282 Rigorous transparency policies, such as those of the Nasser Social Bank, provide zakat institutions an important measure of credibility.283

b. Oversight

Regarding oversight, it is important to address the issue of Muslim charities supporting violence. Certain literature is highly critical of Muslim charities because of reported connections to organized violence.284 Investigation of some Muslim charities after 9/11 did uncover some potentially problematic connections.285 However, one must not condemn Muslim charities generally;286 many have played a vital role in poverty alleviation throughout the world. Instead, the need for oversight strengthens the argument that governments might play a constructive role in receiving zakat payments by ensuring that funds reach appropriate beneficiaries and are not used to support violence. Although one class of appropriate beneficiaries was traditionally

281. See PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 6–7 (noting that most zakat donors in Indonesia give to neighborhood funds, usually at the local mosque, or directly to beneficiaries).
282. Id. at 58–64.
284. See, e.g., Baron, supra note 133, at 315–19.
285. Id.
interpreted to include warriors who fight for the cause of Islam, it is unlikely that modern militant groups (many of whom indiscriminately target Muslims and non-Muslims alike) could be construed as “the cause of Allah.”

3. Administration Costs

One potential pitfall of government-administered zakat programs is the risk of high administrative costs. Ideally, private charities could minimize the costs of administration, but where charities do not have rigorous disclosure requirements, government programs with accountability mechanisms might minimize costs more effectively. A number of the statutory zakat programs described in Section III contain mandatory caps on administrative costs. Some adopt the fiqh tradition of limiting each beneficiary (including those who collect and distribute zakat) to one-eighth of the total contributions. Others have set more rigorous limits on costs. Some states have allowed costs to be internalized within the state budget. Perhaps the chief challenge to evaluating costs is the dearth of financial disclosure by traditional zakat...
charities and mosques related to costs and distributions. Concern for costs and questions regarding the ultimate beneficiaries of zakat monies certainly contribute to the pattern of giving directly to the poor in the community. Disclosure of and accountability for costs seems to make government funds an increasingly attractive vehicle for zakat giving.  

4. Role in Poverty Reduction

Although donors are assured who the beneficiaries will be when they give directly to the poor, such money may not be allocated to the most efficient location to combat systemic problems of poverty. Alternatively, state organized systems address broader societal patterns of poverty. Such systems can often reach the most needy rather than those most visible to individual donors. Further, coordinated systems can assure broader and more equitable distribution. Government information and resources allow them to administer rational welfare systems nationally. Note that this line of argument presumes the absence of a market of large, efficient charitable organizations which might allocate resources more efficiently than governments. In some cases, zakat money has funded community development projects and job training to equip the poor to support themselves. Although these efforts have been criticized because they are not explicitly included in traditional zakat fiqh, they are nevertheless supported by some governments which gives them some legitimacy.

293. See, e.g., PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 22 ("[Z]akat distribution through the government institutions increased 9% [based on 2004 data].").
294. Id. at 24–25.
295. Id.
297. PRIHATNA, supra note 132, at 24–25.
298. See, e.g., Abd al-Qader Dahi al-Ajeel, Kuwait, in INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF ZAKAH, supra note 196, at 276 (indicating that the zakat House in Kuwait "undertakes charity schemes such as mosques, health centers, orphanages, schools, drilling of wells, etc. outside Kuwait"); see also bin Ghazali, supra note 241, at 99–103 (listing uses of zakat funds in Malaysia, including education, scholarships, medical assistance etc.).
299. See al-Ajeel, supra note 298, at 270.
5. Significance of Religion

Although predominantly Muslim countries could (and many do) adopt secular welfare systems based on European or North American models, there are both advantages and disadvantages to adopting an explicitly religious system of taxation and welfare. Criticisms could be made from a secular or pluralistic perspective, that is, a government, particularly one that has authority over significant non-Muslim populations, ought not reify religious tradition at the level of government. This argument has particular relevance in countries with large non-Muslim populations such as Sudan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Argument against government involvement in zakat may also be rooted in a commitment to Islamic principles. Since there is no unified global Muslim community, individual state governments (most of which have no acknowledged religious authority) are not in a position to enforce zakat uniformly as in the early Caliphates. Instead, so the argument might go, such state governments ought to simply allow for the voluntary contribution of zakat by the individual believer. This perspective might prove consistent with government support of voluntary zakat programs, which might be an example of the comparative benefits of voluntary systems.

It is possible that government zakat programs have benefits without resorting to religious justifications. To the extent that supporting such programs deals with real policy challenges (e.g., poverty) or provides the state with legitimacy in such a way that non-Muslim citizens are not marginalized, these programs might be beneficial. The legitimacy argument is strengthened from a religious perspective. Governments of predominantly Muslim countries might be viewed as more legitimate to the extent that they validate and facilitate traditional pious obligations such as zakat. To the extent that these programs are viewed as equitable and efficient, they likely confer greater legitimacy.

300. See, e.g., Recommendations, supra note 296, at 473–77.
301. The contrary may be observed in Pakistan, where equitable enforcement has been heavily litigated and continues to be a source of contention. See supra Part III.C.2.
B. Challenges for Muslim Countries Instituting Zakat

Zakat systems pose a set of common challenges for the countries that choose to institutionalize them. As a matter of economic policy, governments ought to consider the concrete impact of zakat on the poor; in tax parlance, this would include regard for progressivity. In terms of benefits law, it would consider the identities and needs of zakat beneficiaries. As described earlier, modern Muslim countries have adopted a wide variety of zakat collection measures. The efficiency of these options ought to be considered by governments considering adoption or modification of zakat policy. The question of who collects and distributes zakat raises similar considerations. Because zakat is rooted in religious law, its enforcement by a modern state raises questions regarding the appropriate role of religion in government. These issues are particularly salient for religious minorities. The adaptation of Islamic jurisprudence also raises questions related to the appropriateness of new interpretations. Finally, since most Muslim countries have incorporated many European notions of law, including tax and benefit law, the introduction of zakat may inefficiently duplicate or compete with existing systems.

1. Progressive

In the simplest sense, a progressive tax takes a larger percentage from the income of high-income people than it does from low-income people.\(^{302}\) Although tax progressivity is sometimes defined as a tax whose rate rises as income rises, as in the U.S. system of graduated income tax brackets, this paper will assume the simpler meaning which can still be distinguished from regressive or proportionate taxes.\(^{303}\)

Tax exemption to the extent of \textit{nisab} ensures some degree of progressivity in zakat as a tax regime. This is particularly true if \textit{nisab} accurately measures minimal costs of living. However, at the upper end of the wealth and income spectrum, there is a drop in progressivity because rates are fixed.\(^{304}\)

\(^{302}\) See, \textit{e.g.}, \textsc{Charles O. Galvin} \& \textsc{Boris I. Bittker}, \textit{The Income Tax: How Progressive Should It Be?} (1969).


\(^{304}\) See \textit{id.} at 1907 ("The progressivity of a tax rate structure is defined by the effective tax burden
The degree of progressivity also depends on the item taxed. Agricultural products which are measured annually are likely to represent something like income, particularly in agrarian societies. As a form of income tax, these 5-10% rates are subject to critique as regressive, particularly because those who produce well above their needs pay the same rate as those who make just over nisab. However, the 2.5% tax on wealth does not function as an income tax and is less subject to such criticisms.

Some mandatory zakat systems emphasize the elements of zakat that function as income tax (Malaysia). Others emphasize tax on wealth (Pakistan). Others claim to enforce zakat according to classical jurisprudence (Yemen). Each of these options creates particular advantages and challenges for making zakat an effective system of poverty alleviation. Emphasis on taxing agricultural production risks putting a disproportionate burden on a poorer segment of society. Emphasis on taxing wealth creates challenges in both estimating and collecting zakat. In Pakistan, deducting zakat from bank accounts on a fixed date caused massive withdrawals to avoid compliance. Countries that enforce zakat in its multiple classical forms might create particular avoidance strategies, but Saudi Arabia seems to have systematized collection, creating the appearance that it is enforcing its tax code like any other wealthy country. Obviously, voluntary systems avoid having to address these issues.

on differing income classes. Under a progressive tax, the percentage of income paid to the government, or average tax rate, rises as income rises.

305. Id. at 1907–08.
307. See BIN MUHAMMAD, supra note 23, at 185–86 (zakat in Malaysia emphasizes paddy production).
308. Mayer, supra note 200, at 68 (Pakistan emphasizes zakat on depository accounts.)
309. See Hussein Al-‘Adi, supra note 254, at 439–48 (Yemen has historically collected zakat on a regional basis, and its current institutional form relies directly on the fiqh tradition).
310. See BIN MUHAMMAD, supra note 23, at 185–86; bin Ghazali, supra note 241, at 96.
311. See supra Part II.B.3 for references to disagreement over visible versus non-visible assets. See also Shakow & Shuldiner, supra note 306, at 578 (noting valuation is one of the major problems with any wealth tax).
312. See Aazim, supra note 208.
2. Beneficiaries

Another challenge for both mandatory and voluntary zakat regimes is how to allocate resources to appropriate beneficiaries. Some systems attempt to distribute portions (in some countries equal portions) to all eight of the Quranic categories described in Section I.B.1., above. Some systems clearly emphasize particular groups, especially the poor and needy. To the extent that groups other than the poor and needy are the beneficiaries, poverty alleviation is not likely to be served even though the distribution is jurisprudentially justified.

Most zakat systems distribute money, although some distribute goods or services. Because all of these systems distribute limited amounts, there is inevitably a high demand for distributions. In Pakistan, announcement of zakat distributions has led to rushes by potential beneficiaries to reach distribution sites, resulting in injuries and occasional violence.

The notion that the poor have a legal claim on the property of the rich in the form of zakat bears some resemblance to the principle of the “preferential option for the poor” in Catholic social thought. Roman Catholic liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez coined the term “preferential option for the poor” in the 1960’s, although it is deeply rooted in the scriptural and theological tradition of the Church. Under the principle, it is a moral imperative to create conditions for marginalized voices to be heard, to defend the defenseless, and to assess lifestyles, policies, and institutions in terms of their impact on the poor and the excluded. Similarly, zakat is an imperative to share resources with the poor and needy in such a way that constrains ownership rights. Both Catholic and Islamic jurisprudence view property rights in terms of stewardship rather than as absolute. In both cases the strongest

314. See bin Ghazali, supra note 241, at 99–101 (noting the state of Selangor, in particular, allocates zakat to all eight of the Quranic beneficiaries).
315. See, e.g., Zulfiqar Memon, Sindh in Danger of Losing Zakat Funds, DAWN, May 27, 2008, available at http://www.dawn.com/2008/05/27/nat13.htm (“About 100,000 deserving people of the province who depend on Zakat funds for their needs have to wait longer than expected for the second installment . . . .”).
316. See id.
317. See id. at 374–76.
319. Id. at 12–14; see also GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREREZ, A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION: HISTORY, POLITICS AND SALVATION 108–12 (Sister Caridad Inda & John Eagleson trans. & eds., 1973).
claim of right can only be made after obligations to others (rooted in the preferential option for the poor or zakat, respectively) are met.

3. Collection Mechanisms

Collection regimes for states that enforce zakat vary widely. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan attempted to streamline the process by having depository institutions enforce the contribution on a fixed date every year. Some states such as Malaysia have local enforcement personnel who estimate the productivity of agricultural resources. Saudi Arabia appears to have a sophisticated system for monitoring and estimating zakat. Even so, there is evidence that some voluntary systems (as in Indonesia) result in higher participation and collection rates than countries with mandatory zakat (Pakistan for example).

4. Administrators

Although administrators are eligible to receive money from zakat revenues as valid beneficiaries, it is less clear what qualifications they ought to have. In most mandatory systems, collectors are government officials (or perhaps local officials in a federal system such as Malaysia). Ideally, the Pakistani system required almost no resources for collection because the onus was placed directly on depository institutions. In countries with voluntary systems, administrators may be government employees or they may simply be the employees of the semi-governmental entity established to receive and distribute zakat. In voluntary systems, the role of government calculation and enforcement of zakat falls away, so there is less administrative cost.

320. See Ordinance No. VI of 1982, supra note 161, §§ 1–2 (valuation of zakatable property is made at the beginning of the zakat year, the 1st day of Ramadan).
321. See Bin Muhammad, supra note 23, at 140–42 (describing the selection process and collection protocols for zakat collectors who must estimate the zakat owed on particular plots of land).
322. See generally Abdul Aziz M. Rashid Jamjoon, Saudi Arabia, in Institutional Framework of Zakah, supra note 196, at 403.
323. See Hassan, supra note 127 (noting that 60% of Pakistanis paid zakat according to the survey, as opposed to 94% of Indonesians).
324. See Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980, supra note 197, ch. 2, § 3 (depository institutions are obligated to collect zakat and forward funds to the Central zakat Committee).
Regardless of who is designated to administer zakat, that person will have to be compensated to secure their services. This might be challenging in systems that use traditional caps on the amount that zakat collectors may receive (1/8 or 1/10).325

5. Encouraging Piety

As described earlier, some countries have institutionalized zakat in order to foster Islamic identity and piety. Both Indonesia and Malaysia (a voluntary and a mandatory zakat enforcement jurisdiction, respectively) have high rates of zakat participation.326 Perhaps ironically, Pakistan, which has the most truncated collection system, also has one of the lowest rates of zakat giving. One explanation might be that most Pakistanis own less than the *nisab* and are exempt from zakat liability. Another explanation might be that the automatic system generates resentment of attempts to enforce traditional piety, leading to avoidance.327 Even within predominantly Muslim societies, state encouragement of piety might not be considered an appropriate policy goal. In some traditional Muslim societies, however, encouraging devotion and piety might be a significant concern of government. Voluntary systems tend not to generate resentment in the way mandatory enforcement might. By providing incentives like tax deductibility of contributions, states can incentivize zakat contributions without the risk of alienation that mandatory systems pose.

6. New Exercise of Ijtihad

A number of commentators have observed that zakat systems might become more effective if they are reimagined consistent with the Quranic principles but not necessarily according to the rules of traditional *fiqh*.328 As

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325. See bin Ghazali, supra note 241, at 87–88 (compares Malaysian states that subsidize the costs of zakat collection as opposed to those that only allow a fixed portion of zakat revenues to be used for this purpose).
326. See Hassan, supra note 127 (80% of Malaysians and 94% of Indonesians gave zakat according to the survey).
327. See Aazim, supra note 208 (describing mass withdrawals from accounts in order to avoid zakat valuation and deduction).
328. See, e.g., BIN MUHAMMAD, supra note 23, at 182–89 (recommending changes to zakat in Malaysia, some of which would necessitate new interpretations of the textual sources).
an example, some scholars argue that *nisab* ought to be recalculated to reflect basic cost of living rather than relying exclusively on measures of commodities (whether gold, silver, wheat, rice, or cows) that have different values in contemporary economies.\textsuperscript{329} This move would allow countries to ensure that basic living costs are exempt from zakat and contribute to progressivity, but it would require a reinterpretation of the sources of *fiqh*. Because such interpretation has generally been disallowed in Sunni jurisdictions for more than 700 years, this would reflect an intentional opening of the "gates of *ijtihad*.\textsuperscript{330} If modern jurisdictions could disregard or modify the *fiqh* tradition, they could shift from a legal interpretive posture of imitation (*taqlid*) to one of broader interpretive authority.\textsuperscript{331} Although a number of Islamic scholars have proposed a renewed *ijtihad*, no country has openly claimed to be engaging in new *ijtihad* in the formation of zakat systems. On the contrary, justifications rooted in *fiqh* and the *usul al-fiqh* lend these systems legitimacy.\textsuperscript{332} The role of traditional *fiqh* in modern statutes raises fascinating questions for future study: who writes these zakat statutes, what is their training in Islamic *fiqh*, on what basis do the statutes claim legitimacy, and does it matter?

7. Minorities

The question of how to treat minorities within a legal zakat framework is complex. The statistical analysis in Section III seems to indicate that countries with social unrest and religious division (Sudan and Lebanon in particular) might have less prosperity and economic equality.\textsuperscript{333} Zakat as a form of tax levied only on Muslims reinforces the classical distinction between Muslims

\textsuperscript{329} Id. at 185.

\textsuperscript{330} See generally Wael B. Hallaq, *Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?*, 16 INT'L J. MIDDLE E. STUD. 3–41 (1984) (describing the dispute over whether the need for new interpretation ended in or shortly after the third/tenth century once legal rules in the school of jurisprudence were well-developed).

\textsuperscript{331} See LOMBARDI, supra note 119, at 83–92 (describing and contextualizing modern efforts to restore the traditions of *ijtihad*).

\textsuperscript{332} See Recommendations, supra note 296, at 475.

The Conference calls upon zakat institutions to ensure that their performance of the collection and distribution of zakat must be compatible with the provisions of Shari'ah, bearing in mind that zakat is an act of financial worship. In addition, this will help to promote the confidence and trust of the zakat-payers and increase the efficiency of zakat institutions.

\textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{333} See supra Part IV.
and non-Muslims which legally disadvantaged non-Muslims even if the system provided for religious toleration.\textsuperscript{334} Of the countries that enforce mandatory payment of zakat, Sudan and Malaysia, in particular, must wrestle with the consequences of alienating large non-Muslim communities.\textsuperscript{335} Legalizing a religious system of taxation that reinforces outsider status might undermine national integrity and solidarity.

The question of minorities is not limited to the Muslim/non-Muslim axis. Many Muslim countries have a patchwork of diversity among Muslims—representing all four of the Sunni schools, the traditional Shi'a communities, and even communities that self-identify as Muslim but are not viewed as orthodox by other Muslims. Perhaps the best example of this tension is found in Pakistan, where the greatest challenge to mandatory zakat has been made on the basis of diversity. Early on, Shi'a communities objected to the Ordinance because it applied a standard rooted in Hanafi fiqh that was quite different from the Jafari Shi'i rules.\textsuperscript{336} These communities won an exemption from the system on that basis.\textsuperscript{337} The Ahmadi community, which is not considered to be Muslim by the Pakistani government, argued that its members could not be subject to the Ordinance unless the government conferred upon them legal status as Muslims.\textsuperscript{338} Unwilling to do this, Pakistan instead exempted Ahmadis from paying zakat.\textsuperscript{339} Perhaps the most significant challenge came from Sunnis who argued that they should be allowed to opt out as well if they followed a particular school of thought (\textit{madhhab}) or tradition that conflicted with the Ordinance.\textsuperscript{340} As a result, many wealthy Pakistanis


\textsuperscript{335} See infra app. A (noting that both countries have large non-Muslim populations: Sudan 30% and Malaysia 40%).

\textsuperscript{336} Mayer, \textit{supra} note 200, at 72 ("[The government of Pakistan] underestimated the strength of the opposition to the new tax by members of the Shi'a community.").

\textsuperscript{337} Zakat and Ushr Ordinance of 1980, \textit{supra} note 195, ch. 1, § 3(a). [N]o Zakat or Ushr shall be charged or collected . . . [from a] person who [swears before a magistrate and two witnesses] . . . that he is a Muslim and follower of the recognized fiqhs . . . and that his faith and the said fiqhs do not oblige him to pay the whole or any part of zakat or Ushr . . . .

\textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{338} Pakistan Zakat Levy, \textit{Asian Recorder}, June 2, 1988, at 15578.

\textsuperscript{339} U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, FREEDOM OR RELIGION, HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (2002) (noting that non-Sunni and non-Muslim citizens are now exempt from the collection of zakat).

\textsuperscript{340} See Pakistan v. Farzana Asa, \textit{supra} note 223; Clark, \textit{supra} note 201.
avoid the automatic withdrawals from their accounts by filing the appropriate exemption form every year.\textsuperscript{341}

Every country must address the treatment of various Muslim and non-Muslim groups under zakat rules. Classical jurisprudence provides some answers, but not all. It is certainly a topic that warrants further consideration by Muslim legal scholars and policy makers.

8. \textit{Integration within a Comprehensive Economic System}

Zakat was not originally enforced as or expected to be a modular policy that could be dropped into economies with values antagonistic to Islam. It was a devotional act of piety with redistributive effects that played a role within a larger set of economic mechanisms intended to promote social justice.\textsuperscript{342} Zakat originated in a largely agrarian society with a significant trade infrastructure.\textsuperscript{343} Social and economic relations generally followed family, clan, and tribal lines.\textsuperscript{344} These relationships created an expectation of support within the group.\textsuperscript{345}

Islam challenged some practices that were presumed to prevent prosperity and equitable distribution of resources by prohibiting exploitive trade, interest, and risk that could not be calculated.\textsuperscript{346} With the recent massive upheavals in Western-style capitalism, some scholars have started to reflect on the possible advantages of alternative systems, including Islam.\textsuperscript{347} Classical Islam values

\textsuperscript{341} See Aazim, supra note 208 (noting that by 2007, many depositors (presumably Sunni and Shi'a) exercised the right to be exempt from zakat on religious grounds, while some still withdraw cash from accounts prior to the valuation date).


\textsuperscript{344} See CHARLES LINDHOLM, THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE EAST: TRADITION AND CHANGE 84-88 (revised ed. 2002) (describing the importance of family, clan and tribe affiliation in the period of the early Caliphs, who are the source of much of the Sunna of zakat).

\textsuperscript{345} \textit{Id.} at 49-62 (discussing kinship obligations in the Arab Middle East).


Some may accuse the author of lifting longstanding prohibitions in the Islamic framework merely to satisfy global commercial demand. However, it seems clear from current experience that at some level the demands of the marketplace will reign supreme under any modality. The only question is
private property rights, but in the context of divine ownership and human stewardship. It encourages trade, investment, partnerships, and trusts. Honesty, integrity, industry, and innovation are all valued. Contracts presumed to be exploitive are prohibited. The charging of interest is (presumably) prohibited. Risk that results in the inability to value a business interest is prohibited. This system could potentially apply to futures, derivatives, and the class of instruments that nearly bankrupted the entire American financial sector. Zakat is an instrument intended to provide relief for the poor and disadvantaged when families and communities are unable to meet basic needs. Thus, it fits into a larger complex of economic values, relationships, and institutions.

Some scholars argue that zakat cannot meet its potential outside of that context. The set of countries that have legally institutionalized zakat have a variety of approaches to these other issues. Some, like Iran, view zakat as a small part of the overall Islamic economy. Others, like Jordan,

whether to adopt a system that acknowledges this reality while retaining a distinctively Islamic character infused with populist notions of social justice and fairness, or to deceive the Muslim populace with elaborate obfuscatory measures intended to retain the form of profit-sharing while concealing the substantive reality of debt and risk-based finance.


348. VOGEL & HAYES, supra note 346, at 56 (“We thus find fiqh statements that everything is God’s property, and that man deals with it only as agent. Every worldly benefit comes to mankind from God, as his providence.”).

349. See id. at 53–178.
351. VOGEL & HAYES, supra note 346, at 74–93 (describing the prohibitions against riba (usually translated oversimply as “interest”) and gharar (“risk”)).
352. Id. at 77–87; see also Hamoudi, supra note 347, at 111–14.
354. VOGEL & HAYES, supra note 346, at 154 (“The chief problem is that the conventional tools for risk management, hedges and derivatives of various kinds (futures, forward contracts, options, swaps, etc.), are presumptively invalid under Islamic law.”).
355. See Oran & Rashid, supra note 342, at 83–85, 90–93.
356. See, e.g., Ilyas Ba-Yunus, A Note on the Social Implication of Zakah in Modern Times, in SOME ASPECTS OF THE ECONOMICS OF ZAKAH 180, 180–81 (M. Raquibuz Zaman ed., 1979) (“Zakah, therefore, cannot be successfully implemented in a non-Islamic social and economic environment. Zakah is only a part of the total Islamic system. Unless the whole Islamic system is introduced, introduction of Zakah will bring very little fruit.”).
357. See generally Parvin Alizadeh, Introduction to THE ECONOMY OF IRAN: DILEMMAS OF AN
Indonesia, and Malaysia have not attempted to entirely replace the capitalist colonial institutions they inherited in the 20th century with Islamic ones. If there is some relationship between institutional commitment to zakat and economic prosperity and equality, it might not be necessary to artificially Islamize an economy; however, Islam’s role in the economy, whether in banking, securities, derivatives, or trade, remains a potent political question in many Muslim countries.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-MUSLIM LEGAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Although the religious elements of zakat may not have relevance for secular tax and welfare systems, there are a number of insights that law and policymakers might glean from this rich tradition of jurisprudence. As a practical matter of tax implementation, zakat is an example of a modest wealth tax combined with a form of income tax. As a theoretical matter, zakat supports the ethical conclusions of philosophers and tax scholars who contend that property rights are attached to post rather than pre-tax income. To the extent that zakat is considered a principal source of revenue for public programs, it might imply a limited role for government, focusing on equitable distribution of goods. I take a pragmatic approach to considering potentially illustrative or beneficial ideas from religious traditions. However, I recognize that some object to including ideas drawn from religious tradition in legal and policy discourse.

A number of prominent tax scholars, including Deborah Schenk, David Shakow, and Reed Shuldiner, have proposed the possibility of using a wealth tax along with an income or consumption tax in the case of Schenk, or an earned income component in the case of Shakow and Shuldiner. These scholars posit that a wealth tax might be superior to the current form of U.S. income tax and that studying wealth taxes, at the very least, provides helpful

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insights on tax theory. Zakat, as a form of taxation, argues for the practicability of such systems, since it has actually been enforced in a variety of contexts over the past fourteen-hundred years. Further tax scholarship might find fertile opportunities for exploring the impacts of wealth taxes in those jurisdictions that currently enforce zakat collection. The most obvious countries to examine would be those that have implemented zakat broadly and successfully. These would likely include Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Kuwait will also be an interesting jurisdiction to study, since it is in the process of converting from a voluntary to a mandatory system of zakat. Pakistan and Sudan have both had economic and legal challenges to their zakat systems that make them less suitable candidates for studying the impact of wealth taxes. Although Libya has not encountered similar difficulties, its enforcement of zakat has not included wealth tax elements.

Zakat emerged from a religious tradition that views property rights in the context of ultimate divine ownership. Thus, human property interests are rooted in stewardship rather than an absolute right. Even so, Islam takes this property interest quite seriously, and in such a way that it might be considered analogous to common law notions of property. However, Islamic visions of justice differ from most libertarian models in their concern for equitable distribution. Perhaps the clearest example of this value is found in zakat tradition, which gives the poor a vested right in pre-tax property to the extent of zakat (although there is not agreement among the schools as to whether this right is in personam or in rem). This understanding of property appears to be consistent with the ethic proposed by Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel, and arguably for the same fundamental reason—that justice must be evaluated in terms of an entire economy rather than in the narrower sense of tax justice.

In other words, fairness must be measured for society as a whole, rather than for a single policy in isolation. Their solution to this problem for tax theory is to imagine property rights in post-tax income only. Taxes are a necessary precondition to the opportunity for generating wealth, particularly in complex economies like the U.S. or the European Union. So the claim to property rights according to Murphy and Nagel can only be made on the amount that remains after taxes have been collected sufficiently to support the infrastructures that make wealth creation possible.

363. Id. at 500.
364. See AL-QARDAWI, supra note 22, at 543-44.
365. See MURPHY & NAGEL, supra note 10, at 44-45, 73-75.
366. See id. at 74.
related to property provides an opportunity to explore these ideas in a comparative and historical context that might add depth to the discourse of moral and political philosophy in this area.

To the extent that Islamic jurisprudence limits governments to the traditional taxes in the *fiqh* tradition, it seems to envision a society in which political power is primarily exercised to provide security and ensure a fair distribution of wealth. The legal claims of the poor are limited to zakat distributions (although the extensive network of charitable trusts that evolved also provided for the material needs of the poor as a complement). The legal claim of legitimacy in taxation was limited to the traditional taxes (zakat, poll taxes on non-Muslims, duties, etc.), so that a government’s impulse to spend would be inherently constrained by its right to exact taxes. This sort of fixed limit on government power to tax could provide insights for theories of the state and government power outside of the Islamic context.

Some readers will likely object to my proposal that theory and practice rooted in religious tradition ought to play a role in public reason. I am sympathetic to the concern that religion and religious ideas have been used to justify or effect oppression but have three responses to this concern. First, the proposal to consider religious ideas in public discourse assumes as a general principle that including more ideas adds depth to public discourse even when those ideas are rejected. Second, the catastrophic failure of the U.S. economy, particularly the financial sector, justifies creative, pragmatic thinking—including analyses of economic systems that have not been considered before. Third, if religion has been a source of oppression when it has been included in public discourse, considering religious ideas that might promote social justice and subvert oppression might be theoretically justifiable as a counterbalance. In fact, one can hardly argue that religion does not currently play a powerful, and at times pernicious, role in the formation of law and policy, though it is often masked with other justifications. Openly considering ideas from religious traditions for their role in contributing to justice, rather than subverting it, provides transparency and may actually counter the impact of oppressive religious discourse, rather than magnifying it.  

VII. CONCLUSION

The *fiqh* of zakat provides a rich and varied body of jurisprudence. Modern statutory attempts to codify this tradition have actually furthered the development of this interpretive tradition despite prohibitions against *ijtihad*. Evidence that zakat is positively correlated with both wealth and economic equality and that it has contributed to poverty alleviation justifies its further study. Muslim states may wish to consider the experience of those countries that have institutionalized zakat in considering zakat measures or reforms. Non-Muslim law and policy makers may find further study of zakat helpful in developing alternatives to current assumptions regarding tax theory, even though the tradition is rooted in religious thought. Sincere interest in this Islamic legal tradition may also contribute to deeper understanding across cultural and religious boundaries and promote constructive dialogue that leads to cooperative efforts to achieve the mutual goals of social justice and poverty alleviation in particular.
### APPENDIX A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Per Capita GDP</th>
<th>Approach to Zakat</th>
<th>GINI Index</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>31,900,000</td>
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</tr>
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<td>62.9</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>Zakat Rate</th>
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