

From *Tadbir* to Strategy; The Interaction of Concepts in The Islamic World Management Discourse

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Abstract:

The encounter between the two concepts of *Tadbir* and strategy within the management discourse of the Islamic world represents a complex process of intellectual, cultural, and paradigmatic interactions. To analyze this process, the paper uses a conventional qualitative content analysis approach to examine related resources in Persian, Arabic, and English and presents a conceptual spectrum including three themes and six categories. At one end of the spectrum lies passive assimilation (first theme), in which the flow of knowledge is almost entirely unidirectional. This stage manifests itself through mechanisms (categories) of transliteration and substitution. The middle of the spectrum is the stage of tension management and boundary-setting (second theme). Here, the intellectual community in the Islamic world adopts two main approaches (categories): Islamization, which seeks to legitimize the new concept; and coexistence, which, by functionally differentiating domains, defines a separate territory for each concept. Finally, at the other end of the spectrum, deep interaction and creative co-creation (third theme) are manifested at two levels (categories): first, mutual redefinition, in which each concept acts as a critical mirror for the other; and second, integration and synthesis, which aims to create an authentic management model in which instrumental rationality and value rationality are united. In conclusion, the paper argues that analyzing this spectrum reveals not only the evolution of these two concepts but also the trajectory of an entire civilization's

intellectual development as it transitions from the position of a "knowledge consumer" to that of an "indigenous knowledge producer."

Keywords:

Tadbir, Strategy, Management Discourse, Islamic World

1. Introduction

In the age of globalization, the flow of knowledge and ideas between civilizations and cultures has gained unprecedented momentum. In this context, management science, as one of the most prominent fields of modern knowledge—deeply intertwined with the economic, social, and political structures of societies—has become one of the primary intellectual exports of the West to the rest of the world. However, the transfer of management concepts from the context in which they were born to other cultural and historical settings is not a neutral or purely technical process. Language, as the primary carrier of concepts, is not merely a tool for translation but a vessel filled with philosophical presuppositions, cultural values, and historical memory. Each word carries with it a world of implicit meanings, and when a concept travels from one language to another and from one culture to another, these worldviews collide and enter into a complex process of interaction (Filatotchev et al., 2020; Haghirian, 2010; Boje & Al Arkoubi, 2009).

The management discourse in the Islamic world represents one of the most prominent arenas of this civilizational interaction. This discourse has been extensively influenced by Western management literature, borrowing a large portion of its vocabulary and theoretical frameworks from it. Concepts such as leadership, organization, marketing, and most importantly, strategy have become central pillars of management education, research, and practice in the region. However, this introduction of modern concepts has not occurred in a cultural vacuum. Islamic culture possesses its own rich historical heritage in political, social, and governance thought, which has cultivated its own specific vocabulary and concepts for managing individual and collective affairs (Al-Anzi, 2022; Al-Sulami, 2014).

At the heart of the present research lies an analysis of the interaction between two key concepts; one indigenous and deeply rooted, namely *Tadbir*, and the other imported and dominant, namely strategy. *Tadbir*, a word with deep roots in the Islamic intellectual heritage, represents a concept far beyond mere management. This concept is linked to ideas such as practical wisdom (hikmah),

foresight, consideration of public interest (maslahah), rationality, and the administration of affairs based on ethical principles and transcendent goals. *Tadbir* does not simply mean finding the best way to achieve a goal; rather, it means choosing the right goals and pursuing the path in a wise and comprehensive manner (Ismail, 2010). In contrast, strategy, which entered management literature from a Greek root and a military origin, represents a different conceptual world. This modern concept is inherently based on the logic of competition, gaining advantage, environmental analysis, allocation of scarce resources, and achieving victory in a battlefield (the market). If *Tadbir* revolves around wisdom and public interest, strategy is built around power and competitive advantage. This subtle yet fundamental difference has laid the groundwork for a profound tension and interaction in the minds and language of Muslim managers, professors, and students.

Therefore, the main issue addressed by this research is not merely a linear evolution or a simple replacement of an old word with a new one. This paper argues that the process of the encounter between *Tadbir* and strategy in the contemporary management discourse of the Islamic world has been a dynamic and multifaceted interaction, leading to outcomes far more complex than a simple substitution. Analyzing this process is of vital importance not only for understanding the current state of management science in the Islamic world but also for grasping larger challenges such as the relationship between tradition and modernity, scientific identity, and the decolonization of knowledge in non-Western societies.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer the central question: "What has been the process of interaction between the concept of *Tadbir* and the concept of strategy in the contemporary management discourse of the Islamic world, and what forms and consequences has it had"?

2.Theoretical foundations

2.1.*Tadbir*

The lexical root of *Tadbir* is "d-b-r," which in Arabic refers to the end and consequence of matters. *Tadbir* has been defined as "contemplating the outcome of an affair" (Taj al-Masadir by Beyhaghi), "looking at the end of a task" (Muntaha al-Arab) (Nazim al-Atibba) (from Aqrab al-Mawarid) (from Al-Munjid), and "pursuing an affair, delving into its consequences, and foreseeing its end" (Ghiyath al-Lughat) (Dehkhoda, 1998). *Tadbir* has also been understood as

"the wise arrangement of things in succession" and "placing one thing behind another in a specific order to achieve a certain goal." Allamah Tabatabai considers *Tadbir* to mean arranging multiple different things in sequence behind one another in such a way that each thing is placed in its proper position, and the purpose, benefit, and aim are thereby realized (Kermani et al., 2022). Accordingly, *Tadbir* means looking at the end and consequences of an action before beginning it and organizing affairs based on the prediction of future outcomes. This characteristic intrinsically makes *Tadbir* a forward-looking and consequence-oriented activity. In contrast to some management approaches that focus on optimizing current processes, the logic governing *Tadbir* is the evaluation of each action based on its impact on the final outcome.

Tadbir is a wise approach to the administration of affairs and, within the scope of divine will, serves as a cause or creative agent in determining destiny (Taghizadeh Chari & Kiani Darabi, 2025; Lezgi et al., 2025; Sadra & Khalifeh, 2023). The importance of *Tadbir* and management is such that God has sworn an oath in the Qur'an by *Mudabbirs* i.e., the angels (Nazi'at: 5). In part 25 of the supplication of Jawshan Kabir, we read "O God, I ask You by Your name, O Fashioner of forms, O Ordainer, O *Mudabbir*" (Sobhani Nia, 2022).

Tadbir can be defined as a cognitive-behavioral approach to the administration of affairs, whose main characteristics are goal-orientation, holism, reflection, and value-based rationality.

*** Goal- orientation (Teleology):** *Tadbir* is inherently oriented toward a definite end and consequence. This end is not inevitably a quantitative and material goal (such as profitability) but often pertains to qualitative concepts such as *maslahah* (public interest), righteousness, and goodness. Hence, *Tadbir* concerns itself not only with reaching a goal but also with the validity and value of the goal itself. This attribute sets it apart from a purely instrumental rationality that simply looks for the most efficient means to achieve any given end, thereby infusing it with the essence of practical wisdom (*hikmah*) (Soltani et al., 2022; Ismail, 2010; Ismail, 2000; Dierksmeier, 2016).

*** Inclusiveness and a Holistic View:** The logic of *Tadbir* resists reductionist analyses. Since *Tadbir* looks toward the consequences of affairs, it inevitably must consider all the factors and dimensions involved in a situation in an integrated manner. The *Mudabbir* (the person exercising *Tadbir*) is someone who can understand a network of cause-and-effect relationships and predict the impact of a decision in one area on other areas. This holistic view makes *Tadbir* a scalable principle applicable at different levels; from *Tadbir al-nafs* (self-management)

and *Tadbir al-manzil* (household management) to *Tadbir al-djami'ah* (collective affairs management). At all these levels, the constant principle is considering the entire system and the internal interconnections of its components (Ismail, 2000; Ismail & Badron, 2015; Nik Hassan, 2009; Achouri, 2012).

* **Reflection:** *Tadbir* stands in contrast to haste and instantaneous decision-making. The word itself implies a process of thinking, reflection, consultation (*shura/mashwarah*), and weighing different aspects. This is a complex cognitive activity that requires calmness, foresight, and the ability to evaluate various options based on their long-term consequences (Ismail, 2000; Ismail & Badron, 2015; Nik Hassan, 2009).

* **Value-Based Rationality:** Even as *Tadbir* constitutes a fully rational activity, this rationality does not unfold in a value vacuum ;instead ,choices and decisions are grounded in a framework of values (such as justice, public interest and trustworthiness) .As such, rationality in *Tadbir* extends beyond a material cost-benefit calculation into a discerning calculation that likewise accounts for ethical and spiritual costs and benefits (Ismail, 2010; Nik Hassan, 2009; Martin, Petty & Wallace, 2009).

2.2. strategy

The root of "strategy" goes back to the Greek word "Strategia," which meant the art of directing and leading military forces. This military origin has shaped the concept of strategy to this day. The fundamental concepts in this paradigm include the existence of an enemy (rival), a battlefield (market), the ultimate goal of victory (gaining market share or competitive advantage), the allocation of limited resources to defeat the opponent, and the importance of information and deception. Thinkers such as Sun Tzu in the East and Carl von Clausewitz in the West established the theoretical foundations of this concept in a military context—where the goal is not achieving common interest (*maslahah*) but rather overcoming the opposing party in a zero-sum game. This logic of confrontation and binary opposition (friend/enemy, victory/defeat) is deeply woven into the fabric of the concept of strategy (Clausewitz et al., 1989; Sun Tzu, 1994).

The generalization of the concept of strategy from the military domain to management and business occurred in the mid-20th century, in response to the increasing complexity of the business environment after World War II. With the growth of large corporations, market

saturation, and intensified competition, managers sought new intellectual frameworks to guide their organizations. The metaphor of war and battle seemed surprisingly apt for describing the new market environment. In this context, companies became armies fighting each other for territory (market share) and resources (profit) (Kordnaeej, 2017). During this period, thinkers such as Alfred D. Chandler, Igor Ansoff, and especially the faculty of Harvard Business School played a key role in adapting and redefining strategy for the business world. Famous analytical tools such as SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)—directly inspired by the logic of assessing one's own capabilities and the enemy's on the battlefield—became the primary tools of strategic planning. Later, Michael Porter, with models such as the Five Competitive Forces and Generic Strategies, brought this competition-centric paradigm to its peak. From Porter's perspective, the essence of strategy is choice and differentiation; deliberately choosing a different path to create a sustainable competitive advantage that is difficult for rivals to imitate (Porter, 1996; Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962).

The introduction of the concept of strategy into the Islamic world occurred mainly through the translation of classic Western management works, the education of Muslim academics in Western universities, and the activities of multinational corporations in Islamic countries. With its arrival, strategy was not merely a new word but also brought with it a set of cultural and economic presuppositions, including:

Instrumental rationality: Focusing on the most efficient means to achieve predetermined goals (mainly financial).

Environmentalism (adaptation): The assumption that the organization must adapt to or overcome external environmental pressures.

Formal and top-down planning: The idea that strategy is formulated by management elites at the top of the organization and then communicated downward.

Choice and trade-off: Strategy is as much about what not to do as it is about what to do. Due to resource constraints, the organization must consciously choose which battles to fight and which arenas to abandon (Foss & Klein, 2025; Friesl et al., 2023; Eskandarinia, 2021; Rabetino et al., 2021; Tumidei et al., 2021).

Individualism and competition: Prioritizing success over rivals. Over the past three decades, however, environmental pressures have led organizations to conclude that—in order to succeed in a turbulent environment—collaborating with various ecosystem components, including

competitors and customers, is essential, and that evolution occurs not in isolation but within a network of relationships with others (Soltani, 2026; Soltani & Ahmadian, 2021; Soltani et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

The method of this research is conventional qualitative content analysis. Conventional content analysis is usually used in studies that aim to explain a phenomenon. This method is often appropriate when existing theories or research literature on the phenomenon under study are limited. In this method, researchers avoid using preconceived categories and instead, arrange for categories to emerge from the data. Therefore, data analysis begins with reading the data repeatedly to gain a full understanding of them. Based on the perception and understanding of the text under study, the researcher begins writing an initial analysis and this continues until codes gradually emerge. Finally, the researcher, through a process of abstraction, reaches categories and finally themes from the identified codes. The distinct advantage of conventional qualitative content analysis is that it obtains direct and explicit information from the study without imposing pre-determined categories or theories. Qualitative content analysis has two modes; explicit and implicit. Explicit analysis describes the observable aspects of the content, and implicit analysis talks about how to engage in the interpretation of the underlying meanings and the communicative aspects of these meanings in the text (Iman & Noshadi, 2012). In the present study, the implicit aspect of content analysis prevails over its explicit aspect. In qualitative content analysis studies, an amount of space allocated to a topic or an action under study is called unit of analysis. The unit of analysis in this study is selected parts of texts (articles and books) that talk about the concept of strategy/ *Tadbir* (unit of meaning).

In order to ensure the validity of the research in qualitative content analysis, there are several methods; a) Selecting participants with diverse experiences. In this study, a variety of resources, including articles and books, from different journals and publishers, from the Arab world and Iran, in Persian, Arabic and English were selected. b) Accuracy and proportionality of the unit of meaning (not too large, such as several paragraphs, nor too short, such as a single word). In this study, the relationship between strategy and *Tadbir* has this characteristic. c) How the research data is covered in categories and themes. In this study, no relevant data is kept out of the categorization, and no category covers irrelevant data. d) Agreement among experts. In this study, the method of classifying the data, categories, and themes identified were sent to three

experts in two stages. In the first stage, minor amendments were suggested, and finally, after the second stage, agreement was reached.

4. Analysis of the Interaction of Concepts

The introduction of the concept of strategy into the management discourse of the Islamic world was not merely a simple linguistic substitution; rather, it laid the groundwork for a deep and multi-layered interaction with the deeply rooted worldview of *Tadbir*. This interaction cannot be analyzed within the framework of a linear and binary narrative (acceptance/rejection). Instead, this process is a set of intellectual and cultural actions and reactions that can be understood along a spectrum—a spectrum that begins at one end with "passive assimilation and one-sided adaptation" and ends at the other with "deep interaction and creative co-creation."

4.1. Passive Assimilation and One-Sided Adaptation

At the first edge of the conceptual interaction spectrum lies a stage that can be described as passive assimilation and one-sided adaptation. The distinguishing feature of this stage is that the flow of knowledge is almost entirely unidirectional: from the dominant Western paradigm to the management discourse of the Islamic world, which occupies the position of recipient (Khalid & Abdul Razzaq Al-Khidr, 2023; Al-Sharrah, 2003). In this stage, the concept of *Tadbir* is not regarded as an active participant in the dialogue or as a source of alternative knowledge; rather, it is merely present as a silent cultural background, sometimes invoked to facilitate the process of absorbing the imported concept—namely, strategy. The main goal of intellectual actors in this stage is not to create a new synthesis, but to understand, absorb, and promote a new concept viewed as an indispensable tool for modernity and success in the contemporary economic world. This passive assimilation manifests itself through two main mechanisms; transliteration and substitution.

4.1.1. Transliteration

The starting point and the most elementary form of encounter lie in the act of translation. An important linguistic point is that the word "strategy" was not, in the true sense, "translated"; rather, it was transliterated phonetically as "istiratijia" in Arabic, "esteratezhy" in Persian, and "Strateji" in Turkish. Transliteration is a systematic process in linguistics and translation studies

whereby words or texts are converted from one writing system to another, mapping the phonetic and morphological features of the source language onto the target script. The fundamental function of transliteration, distinguishing it from conceptual translation, is to preserve etymological fidelity, prevent semantic reductionism, and maintain a rigorous, character-by-character (one-to-one) correspondence between two writing systems. This methodological tool is particularly crucial in specialized discourses, historical studies, philosophy, theology, and comparative management, where indigenous concepts rooted in specific intellectual traditions often lack exact conceptual equivalents in the target language. By standardizing the formal representation of such terms, transliteration facilitates precise referencing, connects readers directly to the source lexical apparatus, and enables accurate cross-linguistic information retrieval and indexing without imposing the extraneous semantic baggage of the target language (Baker, 2003; IJMES, 1970). This linguistic choice is itself a noteworthy phenomenon; it is as if these languages, in their initial encounter, either did not find—or did not wish to find—an exact equivalent capable of carrying the full modern semantic load of this word. This indicates an initial sense of alienation of this concept within the target language context. The concept of *Tadbir* was broader and wiser to be reduced to the logic of combative competition. It was tied to righteousness, public interest (*maslahah*), and a holistic view that transcended mere material profit. The word "map" (or "plan") was also closer to tactical and executive aspects, lacking the philosophical depth and long-term forward-looking horizon that distinguished strategy. Accordingly, the process of transliteration was not merely a simple linguistic solution; rather, it amounted to an acknowledgment of the existence of a conceptual void in traditional management vocabulary for describing and managing the new and complex phenomena of the global economy. This action opened the door for the full entry of the Western paradigm without any modification or fundamental critique. The word "strategy" did not enter alone; it brought with it a whole system of presuppositions (such as instrumental rationality and focus on the external environment), tools (such as SWOT analysis and Porter's Five Forces), and intellectual models. In this sense, transliteration was the zero point of interaction; an act of passive acceptance that signifies the initial acceptance of the imported concept in its original form, laying the groundwork for its dominance in academic and professional discourse, and paving the way for the next stage of adaptation.

In contrast, *Tadbir*, with all its wise semantic load, also lacks an exact equivalent in English. Although translators use words such as tact, tactfulness, discernment, judiciousness, perceptiveness, savoir-faire, astuteness, prudence, foresightedness, acumen, foresight, policy, stratagem, strategy, course of action, diplomacy, plan of action, measure, scheme, plan, and tactics to translate it, it is often preferred to be transliterated as "*Tadbir*."

4.1.2.Substitution

In this approach, the problem is cleared by practically removing one of the two concepts from the key and formal domains of management. The substitution approach fundamentally embodies a kind of epistemic colonialism ;by masquerading western market rationality as universal, it peripheralized indigenous conceptual systems as archaic or sub-rational. This discursive dispossession systematically delegitimized local forms of knowing. Here, strategy is accepted not only as a new concept but also as a superior and substitute paradigm for *Tadbir* in the arena of modern organization and business. *Tadbir* is redefined as a concept belonging to the past, tradition, individual ethics, or the management of personal and household affairs, and its competence for leading complex organizations in today's competitive environment is called into question (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Knights & Morgan, 1991; Ali, 2005). This process of substitution occurs mainly under the influence of several powerful institutional and intellectual forces:

* **Pressure from educational institutions.** Management and business schools in Islamic countries, by extensively adopting Western curricula—especially MBA programs—became the primary promoters of the strategy paradigm. In this context, the standard and global language is the language of strategy, strategic planning, and strategic management. Concepts such as *Tadbir* have no place in these curricula because they lack quantitative models, codified analytical tools, and international academic literature (ElKaleh, 2019; Boje & Al Arkoubi, 2009).

* **The dominance of globalization discourse.** Multinational corporations, international management consulting firms (such as McKinsey, BCG), and global financial institutions brought the common and standard language of strategy with them to various countries. For managers in Islamic countries seeking engagement with the global economy, attracting foreign investment, and competing in international markets, mastering this language and its tools was an absolute necessity, not a choice (Venkateswaran & Ojha, 2017; Murphy, 2006; Bäcklund & Werr, 2001).

*** The attraction of objectivity and scientism.** Strategy brought with it a set of seemingly objective and scientific tools and frameworks (such as the BCG matrix, PESTEL analysis, and the value chain) that promised managers control, prediction, and success based on data analysis. In contrast, *Tadbir*, with its qualitative, holistic, and intuitive nature, appeared as a soft and unmeasurable concept, deemed insufficient for the complexities of the modern business world (French et al., 2011; Mintzberg, 1994).

Beyond a mere lexical shift, the substitution of *tadbir* with strategy orchestrated a profound ontological narrowing within Islamic administrative thought. While *tadbir* historically operated as a multidimensional synthesis—harmonizing instrumental prudence with teleological purpose, cosmological order, and moral accountability—the hegemonic discourse of modern strategy decoupled organizational maneuvering from normative constraints. Strategy instituted an ideology of pure instrumentalism, where market survival, calculated aggression, and short-term optimization supplanted the pursuit of ultimate ends and holistic equilibrium) *mizan* .(Consequently, the displacement of *tadbir* did not simply modernize governance; it fragmented it, leaving contemporary organizations technically sophisticated yet structurally disenchanting, and severing administrative practice from the very ethical and existential moorings that once constituted its core legitimacy (Al-Attas, 2014; Ali, 2005). On the other hand, some researchers, drawing on futures studies literature and within the conceptual framework of Islamic civilization, propose “foresight”, which has a closer affinity with the concept of *Tadbir*, as an alternative to strategy (Khozayi, 2018).

4.2. Tension Management and Boundary-Setting

After the initial stage of assimilation, the management discourse in scientific and research centers gradually moves beyond a state of passive acceptance and enters a more complex phase; tension management and boundary-setting. This is a conscious effort to determine the territory, define the relationships, and manage the potential conflicts between the two worldviews. These reactions are no longer passive; rather, they are deliberate actions aimed at organizing this dual conceptual space. Two main and distinct reactions can be identified in this middle stage; *Islamization* and *coexistence*. These two approaches represent two different strategies for resolving the created tension.

4.2.1. Islamization

Islamization is an intellectual and cultural process aimed at legitimizing the new concept and linking it with the recipient Islamic cultural identity. This process manifested itself in university textbooks, management articles, and training courses through two prominent mechanisms. The first mechanism was the invocation of historical evidence. In an effort to prove that strategy is not a completely foreign concept to Islamic heritage, many authors turned to reinterpreting historical events and the governance experiences of prophets and the Infallible Imams (AS) through the lens of modern strategy. They began to describe the management patterns of the prophets, the battle plans of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in the *Ghazawat* (military expeditions), or the military strategies of early Islamic commanders as early applications of strategy (Al-Ghanam & Al-Suhaym, 2024; Shafiei, 2024; Golchin Kouhi et al., 2020). In effect, this process aimed to authenticate the concept by granting a modern label to actions that were, in their essence, *Tadbir*, wisdom, and political and military acumen. The goal was to create a sense of familiarity and reassurance for the audience that this new knowledge is rooted in their heritage, thereby reducing their psychological and cultural resistance. The second mechanism was the soft integration of concepts. This mechanism manifested itself in the incorporation of certain value-based and ethical dimensions derived from Islamic culture into the explication of the concept of strategy. In many sources, after presenting classical definitions of strategy and its analytical tools, the author includes a discussion about the necessity of aligning strategy with Islamic law (*Sharia*) or the importance of strategy paying attention to the public interest (*maslahah*) of society (Al-Rashidi, 2020; Al-'Urayni, 2019). Despite the importance of these additions, they often appeared as an outer layer or an ethical shell placed over the unchanged, hard core of the Western concept. The analytical essence and logic of competition remain intact, and no alternative model is offered for how these values might actually influence the process of strategic analysis or decision-making. Consequently, this process is reduced to a post-hoc justification or normative labeling rather than an epistemological shift. In such a context, theorization failing to advance beyond superficial lexical matching and textual citations. (Fitriyansyah & Adinugraha, 2025; Rafiki et al., 2024; ElKaleh, 2019; Stenberg, 1996).

4.2.2.Coexistence

The second approach in this middle stage, is coexistence through the functional differentiation of domains. In this approach, rather than eliminating one concept in favor of the other, both

concepts are recognized, but a specific territory and sphere of influence are defined for each. This approach represents an intelligent boundary-setting that allows the two concepts to continue to exist alongside one another without encroaching on each other's territory or creating conflict. The main logic of this approach is that strategy and *Tadbir* answer two different questions belonging to two different realms of human and organizational life.

The realm of strategy is the world of the market, competition, uncertainty, and the logic of survival. Strategy is a tool for victory in this arena. Its language is the language of analysis, data, competitive advantage, market share, and profitability. This concept answers questions such as: "How do we overcome the rival?", "How do we allocate scarce resources to maximize returns?", and "How do we adapt to environmental changes?" This domain is the realm of instrumental rationality.

The realm of *Tadbir* is the world of governance, ethics, wisdom (*hikmah*), and the logic of public interest (*maslahah*). In this sense, *Tadbir* is sometimes considered equivalent to governance. *Tadbir* is a framework for making correct and wise decisions that consider the long-term interests of the individual, the organization, and society. Its language is the language of values, justice, balance, foresight, and responsibility. This concept answers questions such as: "What is our ultimate goal?", "What is the right and ethical decision?", and "How do we balance the conflicting interests of various stakeholders?" This domain is the realm of value rationality. In simple terms, strategy focuses on output, while *Tadbir* focuses on outcome (Rafiki et al., 2024; Nik Hassan, 2009; Kitchener & Delbridge, 2020; Malik, 2016; Khan, 2019).

This separation of domains allows managers and thinkers to work, in a sense, with both worldviews. A manager can formulate an aggressive strategy for their company using Porter's Five Forces analysis in the boardroom (the realm of strategy) and simultaneously base decisions regarding corporate social responsibility on the principles of wisdom and public interest (the realm of *Tadbir*). However, the main weakness of the coexistence approach is that it can lead to a dangerous duality; a situation where the hard, core business decisions are made based on the cold, competitive logic of strategy, while the soft ethical and value-based considerations of *Tadbir* are marginalized or treated as a secondary, decorative issue. In this situation, strategy never truly becomes wise, and *Tadbir* never truly becomes efficient and operational. In other words, the organization still faces the challenge of forging a genuine link between instrumental

efficacy and value-based legitimacy (Ismail, 2010; Ismail, 2000; Bove & Empson, 2013; Moore, 2005).

4.3. Deep Interaction and Creative Co-creation

The essential characteristic of this stage is a conscious and deliberate movement from adaptation toward creation. Intellectual actors at this stage are no longer primarily concerned with how to embed the Western concept into the local context or how to gain legitimacy for indigenous concepts through modern tools. Rather, their goal is to create a new understanding, a novel conceptual model, and ultimately an authentic synthesis that draws on the strengths of both worldviews while simultaneously overcoming the inherent weaknesses of each. This stage is usually accompanied by a philosophical analysis (philosophy as the infrastructure of the model and the necessity of rethinking the relationship between concepts) (Rahimi Khorzooghi & Soltani, 2024; Ghazanfari et al., 2023; Mahmoudi, 2016; Bakhshi et al., 2023; Bakhshi et al., 2021). This dynamic and creative process, which has a dialectical nature, manifests itself at two successive and evolving levels: first, at the level of *mutual redefinition*, and then, at its culminating point, at the level of *integration and synthesis*.

4.3.1. Mutual Redefinition

Redefinition is the first serious step toward integration, in which each of the two concepts acts as a critical mirror for the other. This process is a two-way dialogue in which each concept forces the other to rethink its fundamental presuppositions, blind spots, and limitations. This stage is one of deep questioning, moving beyond the surface and penetrating the philosophical roots of both paradigms.

A) Redefinition of *Tadbir* in Light of Strategy

On this side of the dialogue are thinkers and managers who, while firmly believing in the value and richness of the concept of *Tadbir*, have come to understand that this concept, in order to survive and remain effective in today's complex and institutionalized world, needs to be systematized and operationalized. Systematization refers to moving from tacit knowledge to codified knowledge. Instead of being satisfied with generalities such as the necessity of foresight, researchers strive to extract the fundamental principles of *Tadbir* (such as the principle of public interest (*maslahah*), the principle of trustworthiness (*amanah*), the principle of

distributive justice, the principle of comprehensiveness, and the principle of balance between this world and the hereafter) and present them in the form of conceptual models and understandable decision-making frameworks. The goal is to create models that can stand alongside Western strategic models and help managers incorporate value-based and wisdom dimensions into the analysis process in a structured way. Operationalization focuses on the question; how can the powerful analytical tools of strategy be employed in the service of the wise goals of *Tadbir*? For example, stakeholder analysis is no longer conducted solely on the basis of their power and interest, but criteria such as their rights and needs, based on the principle of justice, are also incorporated into the analysis. The culmination of this effort is manifested in the construction and promotion of composite concepts such as *Strategic Tadbir*. By definition, *Strategic Tadbir* includes major decisions and actions that advance the society and the Islamic nation towards the horizon of reviving and reconstructing the ancient Islamic civilization and achieving a new Islamic civilization. In fact, strategic *tadbir* are meta-strategies, grand strategies, and actions beyond conventional strategic programs; their period of action and implementation is at the civilizational level, and they may be implemented and evaluated across several conventional long-term strategic plans (Ghazanfari et al., 2023). These concepts are not merely the arithmetic sum of two words; rather, they represent an effort to integrate the analytical precision and structured foresight of strategy with the teleological and holistic wisdom of *Tadbir*. The ultimate goal of this approach is to empower *Tadbir* to transform from a merely cultural-philosophical concept into an efficient, credible, and competitive management paradigm in the arena of practice. In essence, this effort is a response to the common criticism that *Tadbir* is too general, abstract, and lacking in clear executive mechanisms. This group of thinkers strives, through the intelligent employment of the tools, analytical frameworks, and precise language of strategy, to give the holistic and intuitive wisdom embedded in *Tadbir* a coherent, understandable, and applicable structure (Rafiki et al., 2024; Ismail & Badron, 2015; Nik Hassan, 2009).

B) Redefinition of Strategy in Light of *Tadbir*

On the other side of this effort lies an intellectual current that critically examines the limitations and undesirable consequences of the dominant Western strategy paradigm. This approach encompasses a critique of the instrumental paradigm of strategy, a teleological redefinition, the integration of Islamic ethical norms, and an expansion of the spatio-temporal horizon toward intergenerational responsibility. This current holds that modern strategy, with its excessive focus

on competition, one-dimensional profitability, the logic of war, and instrumental rationality, has neglected vital human dimensions such as ethics, responsibility, spirituality, and wisdom, and in practice has become a tool for justifying exploitation. Here, *Tadbir* is employed as an inspirational source and a critical criterion for humanizing, ethicizing, and giving meaning to strategy. This critical redefinition is based on the critique of teleology, the infusion of normative values, and the expansion of temporal and spatial horizons. Critique of teleology is the deepest level of critique, questioning the very purpose of strategy. The fundamental presupposition of many schools of strategy is maximizing shareholder value or achieving sustainable competitive advantage for survival and market dominance. The *Tadbir*-based approach questions this end and introduces higher goals such as realizing public interest (*maslahah*), cultivating the earth, or creating sustainable value for all of humanity as the ultimate purpose of the organization. In this view, the organization is not merely an economic enterprise but a socio-ethical institution with a mission beyond profit. The normative approach, on the other hand, seeks to integrate key concepts of *Tadbir* such as wisdom (*hikmah*), justice (*'adl*), benevolence (*ihsan*), and trustworthiness (*amanah*) not as an outer layer but as constitutive elements at the core of the strategy formulation and implementation process. For example, the principle of justice directly influences pricing policies, supplier relations, and employee compensation systems. The principle of trustworthiness implies responsibility toward natural resources and future generations, thus governing the organization's environmental strategies (Soltani et al., 2024^Y; Ul-Haq, 2022; Ismail & Badron, 2015; French et al.).

Finally, modern strategy is often trapped by short-term time horizons (a maximum of five years) and limited spatial horizons (a specific market and industry). *Tadbir*, with its inherent futures-oriented and intergenerational nature, extends the time horizon of strategy to decades and future generations. Likewise, with its holistic view, it expands the spatial horizon of analysis beyond the industry, incorporating the organization's impacts on society, culture, and the broader environment into strategic calculations. The goal is to move beyond a merely effective strategy to reach a righteous and wise strategy (Rafiki et al., 2024; Ul-Haq, 2022; French et al., 2011; Ali, 2005).

4.3.2.Integration and Synthesis

Integration and synthesis represent the most ambitious and yet most valuable stage in the interaction spectrum, marking the transition from mutual critique to shared creation. If, at the stage of redefinition, the two concepts were in dialogue and enriching one another, at the synthesis stage, the goal is to create an entirely new conceptual entity: an emergent paradigm resulting from the creative dissolution of the boundaries between *Tadbir* and strategy and the emergence of an integrated, organic whole. The fundamental difference is that synthesis is not an attempt to reform one concept by adding elements from the other. Rather, it is an effort to construct a new intellectual edifice based on the best and most compatible materials drawn from both paradigms. This new model is neither "modernized *Tadbir*" nor "ethicized strategy"; it is a third path in which analytical logic (reason) and value-based logic (heart and revelation) are interwoven and inseparable from one another. As an example, at this stage, the ideas of decolonial theorists regarding pluralism are used to propose an alternative, arguing that engaging with knowledge originating from the West is important for developing a new, liberating method of managerial thinking and action (Ul-Haq, 2022; Ul-Haq & Westwood, 2012).

Key characteristics of this new paradigm include;

- * **Epistemological unity:** This paradigm challenges the duality between fact and value that dominates modern Western thought. In this view, the analysis of "what is" (competitive situation, organizational resources) is not separate from the analysis of "what ought to be" (ethical mission, public interest of society) (Fontaine & Ahmad, 2013).

- * **Holistic definition of performance:** In the synthesis paradigm, success is redefined. Success is no longer measured solely by one-dimensional financial criteria and market share, but rather is evaluated through a Balanced Value Scorecard that places spiritual performance indicators (degree of mission fulfillment), social indicators (impact on community well-being), environmental indicators (sustainability), and human indicators (employee growth and flourishing) alongside financial indicators. Here, profit is a necessary outcome for sustainability, but never the ultimate goal (Soltani et al., 2025; Soltani et al., 2024¹; Soltani & Nejat, 2017; Soltani et al., 2016; Adnan et al., 2022).

- * **Model of wise leadership:** The manager in this paradigm is a wise leader or a strategic trustee. This leader combines high analytical and futures research capabilities with the depth of ethical and spiritual insight. Rather than relying on instrumental rationality and short-term, self-interested reactions, he / she redefines strategic decision-making as a meaningful, virtue-based

action. His / Her role is fostering capacities for value-based rationality in individuals and guiding the organization cooperatively toward a transcendent destination and fulfilling a trusteeship role toward all stakeholders and future generations (Abd Rahman & Shamsudin, 2025; Soltani, 2024; Kessler, 2020).

*** Integrated organizational architecture:** Organizational structures and processes also reflect this synthesis. Decision-making processes such as *Shura* (consultation), which emphasize and collective wisdom, are integrated into the core of the strategic planning process (Ebrahimi Ali & Moradi, 2000). Reward systems encourage not only short-term performance but also ethical behaviors and participation in achieving long-term social goals. The organizational culture is one based on trust, collaboration, and shared purpose, not internal competition and politicking (Sarif et al., 2025; Ismail & Badron, 2015; Norouzi Farani & Rashid, 2025).

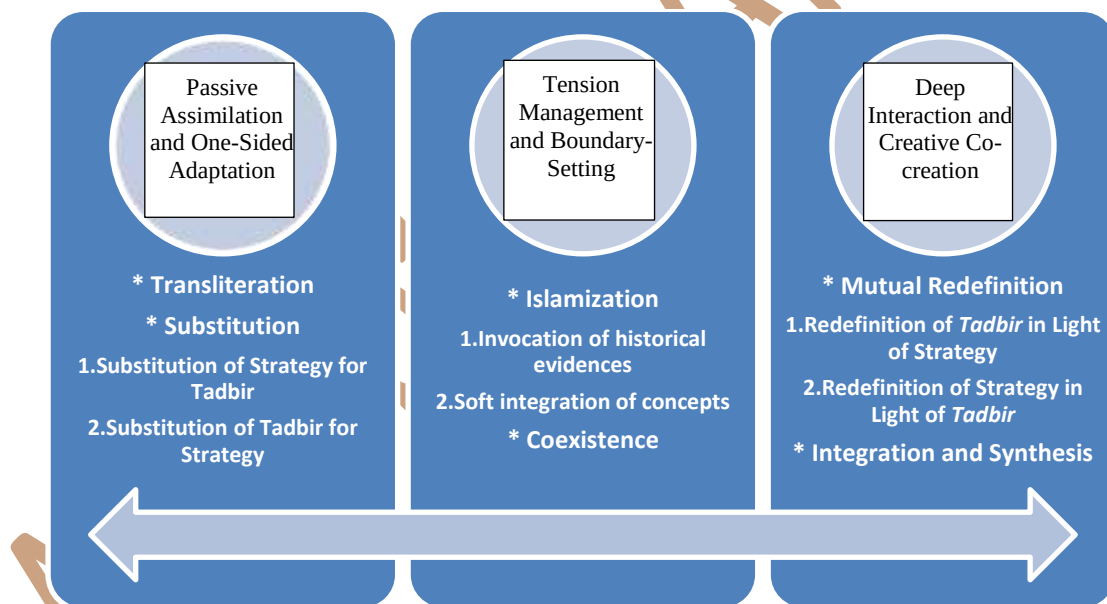


Figure 1: The spectrum of interaction between strategy and *Tadbir*

Reaching this stage represents the pinnacle of intellectual maturity and self-confidence in a civilization, marking the transition from the position of knowledge consumer to that of producer of indigenous, authentic, and universal knowledge. Although complete and comprehensive examples of this synthesis are still rare in practice, the very proposal of such ideas among leading thinkers indicates a movement toward this creative and promising pole. Among the successful examples of this approach are the model of transcendent and transcendence-giving

governance, derived from Islamic transcendent wisdom (Ghazanfari et al., 2023), and the reconceptualization of strategic thinking centered on "attention to divine traditions (sunan)" (Kabiripour et al., 2018). Advances in the field of Islamic finance and its novel instruments, such as sukuk and takaful, are also operational and practical instances of this synthesis. Rather than rejecting modern institutions (such as banks, insurance, bonds), this field has recreated them on the basis of Islamic principles. The designed instruments are not merely a superficial Islamization but a fundamental re-creation. For example, sukuk were designed instead of interest-based bonds (riba), based on joint ownership of one or more assets and the resulting returns (profit and loss) (Ghafouri et al., 2023; Tohidi et al., 2021). Or the takaful insurance model, which is based on cooperation, mutual assistance (tabarru'), and shared risk management among members (Rasouli et al., 2019). Furthermore, the Islamic tradition possesses a powerful institution called waqf (endowment) for financing public welfare. Contemporary efforts to revive and modernize this institution are brilliant examples of synthesis. Instead of the traditional waqf of real estate and properties, new models such as cash waqf and corporate waqf have been developed, using modern financial tools to mobilize resources and manage them in a more efficient and flexible manner (Mesbahi Moghaddam et al., 2009; Mesbahi Moghaddam & Shokri, 2006). Examples such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh demonstrate a synthesis between business logic (providing micro-loans for economic empowerment) and a profound social mission (fighting poverty). These models view profitability as a means to achieve a higher social goal, not as the ultimate end. This effort toward synthesis represents the most significant potential for offering an alternative management model to the world—a model that possesses both the efficiency and analytical precision of modernity and the wisdom, meaning, and deep-rooted authenticity of tradition.

◦. Discussion

The tension between *Tadbir* and strategy is a reflection of a deeper and more universal duality in modern management thought: the duality between the "why" and the "how." Strategy, in its common form, has excelled at answering the "how" question: how to analyze? How to compete? How to allocate resources? How to achieve advantage? This domain is the realm of instrumental rationality, quantitative models, and technical efficiency. In contrast, *Tadbir*, in its essence, has always been oriented toward the "why" question: why does this organization exist? What is its

ultimate purpose? What is the right and wise decision? This domain is the realm of value rationality, ultimate wisdom, and holistic insight. The great crisis of contemporary management, both in the West and the East, is rooted in the separation of these two questions from one another. An organization that is immersed in the "how" but has lost its "why" becomes an efficient but soulless machine that can move at the highest possible speed in the wrong direction, ultimately contributing to environmental destruction, social inequality, and a crisis of meaning for its employees. On the other hand, wisdom that lacks the tools of "how" remains an abstract and non-operational ideal, unable to impact the real world. In this perspective, the integration and synthesis of concepts takes on exceptional importance. This synthesis is not merely a local solution to a regional problem but an effort to repair a fundamental rupture in global management knowledge. The synthesis of *Tadbir* and strategy is an attempt to create a wise strategy; a paradigm in which the value-based compass of *Tadbir* determines the direction of the vast machinery of "strategy." In this new model, precise strategic analyses (derived from strategy) are employed in the service of realizing a transcendent mission (derived from *Tadbir*). Success is no longer measured solely by material criteria but evaluated by the degree of realization of public interest and the creation of "sustainable value" for all stakeholders. Emerging examples of this synthesis, such as the theory of transcendent governance and islamic financial instruments, show that this movement has progressed beyond mere theorizing and is creating practical institutions and tools. These efforts represent an important step in the transition from the historical position of "knowledge consumer" to that of "producer of indigenous and authentic knowledge." This process demonstrates that creative engagement with modernity passes neither through the elimination of tradition nor through the rejection of modernity, but rather through a critical and constructive dialogue between the two. In conclusion, this paper argues that the story of the interaction between *Tadbir* and strategy in the Islamic world carries a key message for the future of management knowledge; a sustainable and humane future for organizations depends on our ability to reunite efficiency with wisdom. This ultimate synthesis is neither a return to the past nor a surrender to the present, but the conscious creation of a future in which organizations are not only "successful" but also "righteous"; a future in which analytical power is employed in the service of realizing collective felicity. This is the immense potential embedded in the creative co-creation between these two concepts.

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