



The Utopia of Islamization: Between Distant Ideas and Inept Theories

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The past thirty years have seen a swift advance in the idea of Islamization of Knowledge (IoK) in Malaysia. The term ‘Islamization’ (meaning the reform of knowledge in Islam), has been used by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Ismail Al-Faruqi, especially in the late 1970’s. They explicate the process of Islamizing and the reformation of academia in the Muslim World, in the aftermath of the ‘malaise’ of the ‘ummah. The aim of the research is to provide a critical review of IoK within the Muslim world by looking at the ideas of Muslim scholar Osman Bakar’s view of IoK and critically examining it using a grounded theory called Sociology of Knowledge (SoK). This theory was articulated by scholars such as Karl Mannheim and later expanded by Peter Berger, Michel Foucault, Syed Hussein Alatas and Syed Farid Alatas. The focus of the paper is the conception of ‘utopia’, which will be used to analyse the style of thought of a Muslim scholar. As explained by Mannheim (1954), the utopian mentality is the opposite of ideology, where the focus is not the group who have the power, but the ‘oppressed’ groups. The oppressed groups’ intention is to change or transform the current situation that they face within the society. They can only see the negative elements in the society because their intention is too strong. They cannot see the real situation and they cannot even correctly diagnose the existing condition of the society. Furthermore, they are not concerned with what really exists but seek to change the situation that exists. It is argued that the IoK project in Malaysia is substantially related to SoK theory, which accentuates that ideas are closely related to the settings where the ideas are initiated. By looking at the works of the Muslim scholars relating to their IoK ideas, I argue that the utopian thoughts of Muslim scholars could be explained.

Key words: *Islamization, Education, Islamic Knowledge and Malaysian Education.*



Introduction

The spectacle of the ‘revival’ or ‘reform’ of Islamic education is not particularly novel, since there were many Muslim scholars who were mindful of the situation as early as the late 19th century. In the late 20th century, the revival or reform of Islamic knowledge changed its name to the ‘IoK. The term ‘IoK’ was first used in 1977 at the First World Conference on Islamic Education in Makkah. At this point in time, the debate on Islam’s compatibility with modernity had budged to a new question: ‘how can western knowledge be Islamized so that it will be compatible with Muslims around the world?’

To better understand the idea of SoK, I will be looking into the idea of Karl Mannheim, who is the founder of SoK and the person who introduced the idea into the modern world. Mannheim’s idea was used as a means of answering questions about the epistemology of knowledge. According to Mannheim, the concept of ‘utopia’ existed when oppressed groups (who were only interested in destroying or changing conditions in a society), only saw the negative elements in society. They were unable to correctly diagnose conditions in society because they were not interested in the current situation or the reality at hand. They would rather have changed it. Furthermore, Mannheim argues that those with the utopian mentality unconsciously look to the future and direct their attention towards it. They hide from reality and turn their back on everything that tends to ‘shake their belief’ or ‘paralyse’ their desire for change (Mannheim, 1954). This paper will explain in detail the utopian ideas of a Muslim scholar who had developed his ideas during the early years of IoK in Malaysia.

The Utopian View of Islamization

According to Shahrudin (2001), the utopian characteristics of a Southeast Asian Muslim include: (a) *Islam as Ad-Din* or *The Religion*, (b) the threat of secularism, (c) the image of the West in crisis, (d) the limitation of man, (e) the hierarchy of knowledge, (f) the perfectibility of the past, (g) the pursuit of the new millennium, and (h) the denial of the reality of social dimensions (Shahrudin, 2001). Shahrudin’s view on the character of a Southeast Asian Muslim is essential in discussing the utopian view of IoK scholars in this paper. However, the focus of this paper is primarily on the IoK and the utopian thoughts of Muslim scholars who instigated the ideas.

In addition, the paper will also include scholars outside of the Southeast Asian region who also contributed to the ideas. I will be using Shahrudin’s categories in classifying Muslims’ utopian style of thought, but I will divide it into three categories, which are more definitive in categorising a Muslim scholar’s utopian thought: education and Islam, the position of God and the Islamic religion and knowledge in Islam. The three categories will also be divided into subtopics, where the explanation of God in Islam will be divided into the position of God in



Islam and religion in Islam. The second part (knowledge in Islam), will be divided into several subsections related to knowledge. These include science and the image of Western knowledge.

Education and Islam

Muslim scholars believe that the educational system is so blemished in its current form that it led to letdowns (especially for Muslims). The Muslim scholars believe the current Western based educational system has affected Muslims all over the world with many forms of blemishes. First of all, it has created a restraint in the relationship between man and God. It creates people with no relation to God whatsoever and creates Muslims who are unable to recreate, revive and understand the current system. Instead, they have to adjust themselves to a current system, derecognising Islam as the system that provides for them in everyday life. Finally, the introduction of the secular view, in every aspect of a Muslim's life, has created chaos in his life and the hereafter. The view is totally opposed to the meaning and practice of Islam. Therefore, Muslim scholars formed different ideas on how to solve the so called 'problems' which have haunted Muslims all over the world. Some of them feel there is a need to revive, reformulate and rewrite the knowledge that currently has a Western approach and imbue the spirit of Islam in it. Others are focused on the reintroduction of traditional knowledge so that it can be called Islamic knowledge. Some are focused on aspects of Islamic science, philosophy or social science that needed to be transformed. In their view, the essence of Western secular thought can be banished far away from the original thoughts and knowledge can be used or Islamized.

When we look at the background of each Muslim scholar involved in the IoK project, we could find similarities in their backgrounds. Most scholars involved in the IoK were educated in the West. Some of them did their master's and doctorate degrees (PhDs) in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). Syed Naquib Al-Attas for example obtain his master's and PhD in the UK. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ismail al-Faruqi were educated in the US, Osman Bakar received his master's degree in the UK and his PhD in the US. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman was educated in the US. Some of the scholars lived in the West for most of their lives, such as al-Faruqi, who left Palestine after the Israeli occupation and Nasr, who left after the Iranian revolution. The educational background of each scholar shows that they were a by-product of the Western educational system, but they themselves criticise the Western educational system.

The knowledge and practices that were transmitted to students were also being focused on by Muslim scholars. Some believe that the system itself needs to be revamped with the traditional system that has been used by Muslims before. For SM Naquib, Muslims have lost their 'adab, and this has caused internal problems for them. Some Muslim scholars reiterate to the meaning and terms related to teaching (such as 'adab, ta'wil and ta'dib) to make their case against Western education. 'Adab is referring to the discipline of the body, mind and soul. When they

are absent, there is a resulting loss of justice, causing an internal confusion of knowledge. They relate to the confusion of knowledge by saying that it is due to the inability of the Muslim to distinguish 'true knowledge' from knowledge that has been infused with the Western vision. The internal dimension or reason for the call for IoK stems from the basic premise that contemporary knowledge is not neutral. This requires some clarification, as there are different opinions on this topic, although one could see this issue as a problem of definition and the scope of what is being referred to when IoK is mentioned (Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, 1995).

Even though it can be understood that Muslim scholars are trying to educate Muslims using the method of Islamization, their methods seem to be incomplete and outdated in the face of modern education. It can be argued that even though the methods they use were used traditionally a long time ago, they should have envisaged a more effective way to educate their fellow Muslims. As we know, since the twentieth century, there has been lots of technological advancement. This also facilitates teaching and instruction. To ignore these advancements in the name of traditional methods is simply ignorant. Many scholars within the IoK project criticise the terms used in Islamic education, such as *ta'lim* (teaching), *tarbiyya* (training) and *ta'dib* (the process of instilling discipline). They argue these terms signify that education in Islam looks toward a passive outcome, where students are taught to be like an object to be enlightened, developed and cultured.

God's Position in Islam and The Islamic Religion

As it has been discussed by Shaharuddin in his article (2001), the most crucial idea in the utopian view of Southeast Asian Muslims is the idea of Islam as *Ad-Din*, the *Religion* which is complete in every aspect of life and the hereafter. The claim of the absoluteness and comprehensiveness of Islam includes everything in its absoluteness. It leaves no room for anything else. The totality of Islam and its absoluteness was also accompanied by a sense of sacredness and holiness which caused them to reject any idea regarded as its competitor. To Shaharuddin, the comprehensiveness and absoluteness in Islam is different from the utopian view of these cohorts. He argues they use it as an 'intellectual tool and political weapon' to demoralise their opponents. This is true regarding Muslim scholars' utopian thoughts concerning Islamization and how they used the religion of Islam to make their case against their rivals and opponents. The completeness and absoluteness of Islam does not only cover knowledge but the whole way of life of a Muslim. As explained before, ideas relating to education such as *'adab*, *ta'dib* and *ta'wil* are related to Islamization and conceptions such as *Tawhid*¹ and *'ummah*'. They use of verses from the *Qur'an* and the Islamic tradition to

¹ The conception of Tawhid literally means the oneness of God, which clearly defines the singularity or oneness of God in Islam. This is evidently seen in the shahadah, which proclaims that there is only one God. This precludes the notion of many Gods, which existed during the pre-Islamic period. The concept explicates the need for Muslims to believe in only one God, while denouncing other Gods which could lead to syirk. Syirk is considered the worst of sins. The conception is also related to the concept of absoluteness in Islam, which Muslims believe

strengthen their claims. These major ideas are used side by side with their reason for Islamization and become the basis for their arguments against their opponents. This is mainly to show that their ideas are based on the holy books and backed by the words taken from the *Qur'an*. The principle of *Tawhīd*, for example, put God at the top of the hierarchy while everything else was at the bottom. 'As the Absolute Truth (*al-Haqq*), God is the source of all other truths which, however, admit of a hierarchy or degrees of relativity' (Osman Bakar, 1999). The position of the Islamic God cannot be contested by other religions. God is the final end (al-Faruqi, 1998) and absolute (Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, 1993). Other religions have lost their sacredness. They need to be rediscovered and their traditions need to be revived (Nasr, 1989).

In addition, some Islamic scholars also used terms which are foreign to Islam or taken from civilisations other than Islam. This resulted in the formation of what they called 'Islamic science' but imbued with non-Islamic elements. This can be seen in the case of Nasr, where his idea of Islamic science seems to be derived from his Persian ancestry, which is not totally Islamic in nature. Among them is the term 'gnostic'. Its definition is different from what is basically known in Islam. Sardar (1989b) criticises Nasr's view on the basis of his idea of Gnosticism. Nasr believed that the Islamic intellectual tradition has appeared in two forms, namely Gnosticism (*Irfan*) and philosophical wisdom, which was found in the teachings of earlier prophets (Nasr, 1973). In the book *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1989), Nasr explains that gnosis is '*supreme knowledge*', '*which unifies and sanctifies*' the human being. According to Sardar (1989b), this originates from a belief that gnosis is a superior being who knows the truth. From then on, Sardar argues that Nasr's idea of Gnosticism caused a lot of damage as a foreign, negative element that was absorbed into Islam from Greek mythologies, as well as neo-Platonic, Hindu and Zoroastrian philosophies. This resulted in a situation where 'the devotee is almost duty bound to limit his thought to the oeuvre of his Master and the Master's Master' (1989b, p. 151).²

The introduction of foreign elements to what the IoK scholars called 'Islamic science' had caused more confusion to the project. IoK scholars were unaware that the introduction of

permeates all aspects of thoughts and practice. The conception itself has been used by scholars even before Bakar, such as Al-Faruqi. He explains it in detail in his work *Al Tawhid: Its Implication for Thought and Life* (1992). This work explicates the notion of Tawhid and how it is related to a Muslim's life. Osman also wrote a book on the notion of Tawhid entitled *History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (1999). The book, based on his IoK ideas, put forward the ideas that he had envisaged for Malaysian society. The work is also known as *Tawhid and Science*. It was a collection of papers written by him during his time as a student under Nasr between 1984 and 1990. It was divided into four different themes; 'The epistemological foundation of Islamic science'; 'Man, Nature, and God in Islamic science'; 'Islamic science and the West'; and 'Islam and Modern Science'. The book also explains how the notion of Tawhid is related to and could be applied to Islamic science and philosophy.

² Sardar directly pointed at Osman Bakar, Nasr's student at Temple, as the latest conversion to the idea of Gnosticism, which was also influenced by the idea. I will be explaining in detail Bakar's thought on the idea in the next chapter.

foreign magical and animistic elements in IoK would create problems, especially when they were incompatible with Islamic metaphysical traditions (Manzoor, 2001, p. 13). Nevertheless, there are also supporters of Nasr such as Zaidi (2006), who disagree with Manzoor's objection. Zaidi claims that the criticism seems to dismiss the fact that, notwithstanding the overriding emphasis in Islam on God's Omnipotence and Otherness, the *Qur'ān* also describes God as near (2: 186, see also 27: 62) and closer to Man than his jugular vein (50: 16, see also 56: 85). This notion somewhat contains elements of Sufism and mysticism, where God was portrayed as inhabiting a person's body. Even though it is arguably true that there are elements of *Sufism* and mysticism in the *Qur'ān* (as Zaidi had shown), we could not physically and literally translate the meaning of the *Qur'ān* and put reason (*'aql*) before revelation (*wahy*). There are reasons why the *Qur'ān* uses the word. To me, the reason is for everyone to think and not simply accept what is written in the Holy Book.

The amplification of the Islamic God, together with its absolute and comprehensive character, leaves no room for discussion. This would be a disappointing fact to non-Muslims. It is argued that even though Muslims believe that their religion is true, they should understand the reasons behind the existence of different Gods in different religions. The understanding of other religions may well open the door to a peaceful world, where people understand each other and there is no religious hatred. For one person to understand another's religion, the person needs to understand that religion, as well as expand their horizon in order to interact with and investigate the similarities of both religions. Thus, Ataman (2008) used al-Biruni's method of understanding other religions, which confirms their theory that every religion believes that they are the beholder of truth. Thus, a person needs to study other religions, using personal encounters, textual study and observation. One 'must welcome the Other in their otherness so that he/she may be welcomed by the Other' (2008, p.102).

Knowledge in Islam

IoK scholars also believe that there are limitations and shortcomings of modern science (especially western sciences) in studying nature. By looking at the negative aspects of modern science without looking at the many aspects of modern science, which have innovated the life of everyone in the modern world, IoK scholars have created a bad image of the modern West. According to Osman Bakar (1999), the most important problems faced by modern science concern its philosophical foundation. To Osman, this foundation has led to a profound state of crisis. The works of the recent Western scientific community focus on an alternative technological model in natural science (Osman Bakar, 1999, p. 203). It needs to take into consideration the concept of Islamization which is also relevant to natural science. This can be seen in the positive aspects of modern sciences. To Osman, the most important aspect of Islamization is its contribution towards the Islamization of the sciences (especially technical and engineering subjects). Looking at his idea of Islamization, Osman also added that among the areas to be Islamized is the technological application in natural sciences. It will include the

principles of Islam. Thus, what he wants to do is not just Islamize natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, and geology, but also use Islamic methods in dealing with technologies in related sciences. It can be argued that Osman looks at the practical sciences as the key to Islamization. An understanding of Islam could be easily be instilled while leaving the practical aspect unchanged. Osman provides an example of technological applications in modern biomedical knowledge: Abortions can be carried out when a fetus is found to have defects. To Osman, even though technology can determine the defects, in Islam, the legal priority should be given to the mother. Abortion can be done only if it endangers the mother (1999, p. 181).

Osman's view of the inadequacies and confines of modern science is also shared with other Muslim scholars. They believed modern science that is regulated by the west is in a process of decline. Among them is Kyrala (1989). Kyrala wrote about the decline of the west and the need for Muslims to struggle and equip themselves with technological advancements to compete with the West and to show the world that Islam is the true religion. To other scholars, like Ziauddin Sardar and Henzell Thomas (2017), a focus on technological sciences and engineering subjects is insufficient. Quoting scholars, such as Isaiah Berlin and Abdelwahab El-Affendi, Sardar argues that a focus on practical sciences, rather than human science, would eventually lead to failure. Therefore, Sardar argues that there is a need to not only focus on technology and science (even though it is essential), but to also include human sciences and ethics when reinventing and revitalising Islamic sciences. For me, Sardar is right in suggesting that there should be a focus on human sciences, rather than practical sciences, in the project of Islamization. Osman fails to look at the implication of focusing on technical science, which would eventually lead to the failure of human sciences.

According to Osman, the second aim of the Islamization of science is to apply the principles of the Islamized knowledge and science to natural sciences and their branches. To Osman, the application of these principles, in the form of textbooks and methods of instruction for each level of education, is yet to be done. Moreover, Osman (1999) identifies that there is a need to define and identify the technological needs of Muslims according to their social and economic development. In other words, before deciding to apply the technologies used in natural sciences, Osman feels that it is important for Muslims who live in different regions to recognize the extent to which it will affect them. It can be argued that it is crucial to understanding science before Islamizing it. Islamizing science from a Western to Islamic worldview would cause problems. In Osman's case, two problems existed. The first is that his idea of Islamizing the sciences like physics, chemistry, and biology was not supported by a theory or practice that indicated how to Islamize it. Secondly, Osman is a specialist in the field of physics, chemistry and biology. That can make him a suitable person to discuss Islamizing the sciences. Even though Osman did give an example of how to Islamize the engineering field, it is merely a simple syllabus and has not been applied to practice.

Science and Religion

To Osman Bakar, the most important element in *Tawhīd* is its objective, which is concerned with ‘unity of the Divine Names and Qualities’. Different areas of science such as mathematics, physics, and biology, which were developed by Muslim scientists during the peak of Islamic civilisation, can be regarded as commentaries of the ‘Beautiful Names’ (*al-asma'al-husna*) of God. Osman (1999) argues that only this knowledge and these sciences can be called Islamic sciences because they were based on and parallel with the Islamic teachings and the conception of *Tawhīd*. Osman’s argument is that only *Tawhīd* and its objective, combined with the science developed by Muslim scientists, can be called Islamic science. It puts him in the position of the Islamic utopians in Southeast Asia. According to Shahrudin (2001), they considered Islam as ‘the perfect and absolute religion, all-embracing and total in its guidance for mankind’ (2001, p. 4). According to Shahrudin, they believe that Islam is a perfect and comprehensive religion that covers every aspect of human life. This makes the believer exclude all other ideas. There could be no room for anything else. This led them to reject all forms of ideas, dialogues or debates by simply saying that Islam is above all religions.

To Osman (1996), philosophy and science in Islam were interrelated, even though the word philosophy, in general, is comprised of several disciplines. Philosophy in Islam is *falsafa* or *hikmah*. Science in Islam refers to the traditional Islamic sciences, consisting of mathematical and natural sciences. Osman also showed the efforts of Muslim scholars to classify knowledge by combining philosophy and metaphysics with different methods. This showed that Islamic science needs to include philosophy and metaphysics, although these elements are not real and cannot be experimented upon. Osman’s attempt at combining philosophy and metaphysics with science is something that would not make it into the real world, even though the Qur’ān can be used as a source of such knowledge. This is because modern science has always used an empirical approach to science. It used everything that could be observed, viewed and tested before it could be called knowledge.

Osman’s interest in combining philosophy with science shows that he is confused between the methodology and way of thinking of science (using scientific thought) and philosophy (using rational thought). Despite that, it can be argued that both led to the truth. In history (especially in the 18th century), the renaissance had caused the division between religion and science. This also led to the development of modern science and technology, believed to be free from Godly intervention. Osman’s approach to linking religion and science with Islamic mysticism was faced with criticism, especially from Western scholars. Some, like Wallbridge (2001), equate Osman’s idea to Neo-Thomism, a revival of St Thomas Aquinas’ idea of nature and the supernatural that also gives space to mysticism in science. Wallbridge believed that Osman’s approach faced attacks from two directions: firstly, he believed that seeing Islamic science in a religious perspective is ‘rather weak’ and secondly, it also marginalises the legalistic side of Islam, which is not generally acceptable to most Muslims.

Image of the West in Crisis – Modernity Crisis

Another important feature of an Islamic intellectual's utopian thinking is that Muslim scholars regarded the West, especially the US, to be in a state of 'crisis'. This criticism against the West is interwoven with ideas. These ideas relate to critics of modernity and the crisis/malaise faced by Muslims regarding their interaction with the West. Among these negative images are the secular worldview, corrupted religion, and the inability to solve world problems. Even though most Muslim scholars used the term 'West' to refer to the Western people and their religion, they did not clearly state what they meant by the 'West'. By stating that their enemy is the West, Muslim scholars created a form of generalisation. In reality, there are also Muslims living and working peacefully in the West. Even though Osman (2007) stressed that the term 'West' cannot be understood as it was traditionally known (the same is the case for how we defined Islam), Osman still uses the terminology to refer to his enemy.³ Therefore, by making such generalisations, IoK scholars were unable to specifically and effectively focus on what the real problem is. If they are referring to the whole community in the West, including the Muslims, their generalisations might be wrong. There are also Muslim scholars like Al-Faruqi who lived and worked in the West. In addition, most IoK scholars also were educated in the Western countries.

There are many aspects of knowledge that were criticised by the IoK scholars. However, most of them focused on the consequences Western knowledge had on Muslims (especially the negative aspects). To Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1995), external factors such as Western intrusion and colonisation did play a role in the backwardness of Muslim societies all over the world, while Muslims themselves are to be blame because they lost their '*adab*'. The '*adab*' refers to the discipline of the body, mind and soul. Its absence results in loss of justice, causing an internal confusion of knowledge. Al-Faruqi (1988), on the other hand believes that the main agent that is disseminating Western values in Muslim countries is the educational system. It has been divided into Western and Islamic systems that have caused the decline of Islam (Al-Faruqi, 1988, p. 15-16). Osman, on the other hand, questions the subjectivity of western social science that caused the decline of Muslims. Faruqi accused that the objectivity of social science in the west as 'pretending to a false standard of objectivity' (Abaza, 2003, p. 83). Like Faruqi, Osman also had the same idea of putting the blame on the west without carefully looking at the details of what they were really talking about. First, looking back at the history of knowledge since the Greek period, objectivity has clearly been the focus of western social science. The debate still goes on until today. Another aspect of western social science that Faruqi undermined is the fact that western social sciences are also

³ According to him, the traditional term referring to the West represents the Western bloc, civilisation and the culture which can be distinguished with non-Western civilisation. Even though Osman acknowledges the existence of Muslim minorities in the West, he stressed that using the term to express the two major blocs is problematic (2007: 3-4).

critical toward western values in the face of social transformation. The scholar's idea of linking objectivity to the notion of *Tawhīd* and Islamic social order shows that their idea is merely a 'shallow moralistic statement' while his work plans were merely slogans' (Abaza, 2002, p. 83).

Most Islamic scholars' utopian views regarding their criticism against western society show that they are mostly occidentalists, the opposition of orientalist. Occidentalism of this sort is called 'religious occidentalism'. It blames the west according to religious sources. Occidentalism carries the meaning of the mere frustration of individuals or groups of people against modernity and globalization, an ideology which fuelled conflict. However, the term itself is not specific to non-Western or Eastern groups of people. It originates from the West itself (Buruma and Margalit, 2002, p. 15-20). They claim that religions such as Islam and Roman Catholicism are the major sources that paint the image of the West in the mind of the occidentalist. This is interwoven with racial sentiments, even though many of their supporters do not entirely accept the views of the occidentalist. 'This attitude is peculiar to certain strains of Islamism, the main religious source of occidentalism in our own time' (Buruma and Margalit, 2002, p. 93). I believe that Osman used the idea of a negative image of the West to create his own utopian future; a world where Muslims were in control of science and technology but at the same time were being moral, ethical and religious in their lives (unlike what they saw in the West).

In addition to blaming the West for inciting the weakness of Muslims, IoK scholars were indecisive on how to actually Islamize knowledge. They failed to realise that knowledge evolves while their discipline keeps on evolving. The evolution of current knowledge from the perspective of Western society is crucial. It cannot be stripped off easily. According to Ziauddin Sardar and the *Ijmali* group,⁴ there are two reasons why he and his group objected to the idea of Islamization (especially from Ismail Al-Faruqi).⁵ Firstly, sciences of human behaviour are constantly crossing each other's boundaries. The fields keep evolving. This means there are no distinctive disciplines to be studied and Islamized. Secondly, disciplines evolve, develop and have meaning and significance within a worldview or paradigm. Western disciplines had evolved within the Western paradigm, and they cannot be stripped of their values and metaphysical assumptions (Sardar, 1989, p.48). Therefore, Sardar argues that Islamization of disciplines is irrelevant. Muslims need to do is to develop their own disciplines within the conceptual categories and value framework of Islam.

I agree with Sardar's criticism on the matter, especially Sardar's argument that the IoK should show originality. It should not merely create Islamic knowledge from the basis of Western

⁴ The *Ijmali* consist of Parvez Manzoor, Munawar Ahmad Anees, Gulzar Haidar and Ibraheem Sulaiman.

⁵ According to Sardar, *Ijmali* comes from the root word *jml* which means beauty and wholeness. In his book *Desperately Seeking Paradise* Sardar explains that the person who comes up with the idea to name the group *Ijmali* was Parvez Manzoor (2004: 208).

knowledge. If Muslims develop their own discipline within the conceptual and value framework of Islam, it will also attract non-Muslims to learn Islam and not simply dismiss the idea as based on Western conceptions. Moreover, defining Islamic knowledge as a by-product of Western knowledge will not attract people to Islam or return them to the true path of Islam. The negative effect is that it will also result in a situation where Muslims will try to learn the Western knowledge, where the idea originated from, because it is much easier to look at the original idea than the by-product.

The scare of secularisation that was essential in the utopian views of IoK scholars shows their utopian mentality in denying the reality of the human conditions in history (Shaharuddin 2001, p. 9). According to Stenberg (1996) values, norms and ideologies originating from Europe or North America are perceived as a challenge to the Islamic tradition. This challenge is defined as a situation where science challenges religion in its function as ideology (Stenberg 1996, p. 213). Stenberg is right when he said that Muslim scholars try to create a scare that Western culture would dominate the earth and eventually topple the Islamic religion. In reality, it is up to the people themselves to either accept or reject Western culture. The safer way for Muslims to avoid this sort of influence is by instilling an Islamic understanding of their society and culture.

Hierarchy of Knowledge

The third point regarding the utopian thinking of the scholar is the classification of knowledge. It puts God and God's knowledge at the top of the hierarchy. Therefore, some scholars believe that there is a need to reclassify knowledge so that it is compatible with Islamic religion and its teachings. Osman, for example, uses the examples of early Muslims like al-Farabi (870-950AD), al-Ghazzali (1058-1111AD) and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi (1236-1311AD) in classifying knowledge in Islam. Despite praising the book as a useful and intelligent treatment of an important topic, Leaman (2000, p. 210) claimed that Osman's argument (as supported by Nasr), was not enough to show that organising knowledge hierarchically is part of an Islamic tradition. This is due to the fact that some Islamic scholars, such as al-Farabi, derived their hierarchy of modern science from Aristotle and the concept of Organon. Some Muslim scholars, like Golshani, (2011) praised Osman's use of primary sources in writing his book *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* and for being faithful to Islamic intellectual tradition. He believes that Osman's book is a major contribution to the study of the classification of sciences as well as the philosophy of science. Although it can be argued that Osman's classification of knowledge is important in the IoK project, I agree with Leaman when he said that organising knowledge hierarchically not a part of Islamic tradition. Osman's interest was also shared by Muslim scholars who wanted to uphold the unity of the sciences (an important corollary of the principle of *Tawhīd*) and the core teaching of Islam. They wanted to put in place an educational curriculum that would maintain a harmonious balance between the permanent needs of man, society and their changing needs. According to Fadaie (2008), if a philosopher does not have a

bright enough mind to organise knowledge in a systematic way, he not only cannot understand the universe, but he cannot be considered a philosopher.

Methodology of Islamic Science Versus Western Methodology

Another important fact about the utopia of IoK scholars is in how they believe that the completeness and comprehensiveness of Islam covers every aspect of life and knowledge, including its methodology. Muslim scholars come up with lots of ideas on how to Islamize knowledge, but some of the ideas were not practical and thus resulted in failure. Al-Faruqi has the most complete step by step plan to Islamize knowledge. In his book, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (1982), Al-Faruqi gave the most complete and holistic idea. He started from the mastery of modern/Western disciplines, survey of disciplines, mastery of Islamic legacy, establishment of the specific relevance of Islam to each discipline, critical assessment of modern disciplines, critical assessment of the Islamic legacy, survey of the 'ummah's major problems, surveys of the problems of humankind, creative analysis and synthesis, recasting the disciplines under the framework of Islam, the production of university textbooks and finally, dissemination of the Islamized knowledge.

If we look at Al-Faruqi's method of Islamizing knowledge, we can see that there are many questions and shortcomings in his ideas. Faruqi did not specify how long he needs for each step of his work plan, whether it is going to be an ongoing project or whether it can be done within a specified time. In comparison to Naquib Al-Attas, who wants to focus his method on contemporary knowledge, Faruqi did not specify which knowledge he wants to Islamize. For example, it would take a very long time to Islamize knowledge since the Enlightenment. At the same time, Faruqi did not put any effort into creating new knowledge, but simply tried to Islamize existing knowledge. This is surprising since knowledge cannot be based on accumulated knowledge in the past, however purified or Islamized it is (Siddiqi, 2007, p. 19).

Naquib Al-Attas also believes that morality should be the basis for a happy and prosperous life. Therefore, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1993) put morality as the basis of all actions when he said that in Islam, a person needs knowledge to liberate him from the injustice that he has done to himself. Such knowledge includes knowledge of faith and belief (1993, p. 148). Even though it can be understood that Naquib Al-Attas is trying to educate Muslims using the method of Islamization, his methods seem to be incomplete and outdated in the face of modern education. It can be argued that even though the methods he used have been traditionally used in Islamic civilisation, Naquib Al-Attas should have envisaged a more effective way to educate his fellow Muslims. As we know, since the twentieth century, there have been lots of technological advancements that also facilitate teaching and instruction. To ignore these in the name of traditional methods are simply ignorant.

In an article published in 2004, Halstead criticises the verb forms used by Naquib Al-Attas to express the idea of an Islamic education within the IoK project. The forms include *ta'lim* (teaching), *tarbyya* (training) and *ta'dib* (process of instilling discipline). He argues they signify that education in Islam looks toward a passive outcome, where students are taught to be like an object that is to be enlightened, developed and cultured. Moreover, Halstead claims the verbs also show that Islamic education is like a progressive initiation of the learner into the received truths of the faith. The trajectory, process, and outcomes are clear, linear, and known (Halstead, 2004, p. 519).

To Osman, the method for Islamizing knowledge lies in what he called an 'Islamic science'. In his book, *Tawhid and Science*, Osman defined 'Islamic science' as a combination of mathematical and natural sciences, including psychology and cognitive science. It was developed and reintroduced during the ninth century. According to Osman, the methodology of Islamic science is different from modern science regarding its goal and basis. Islamic science has based its primary aim on 'The Unicity of Nature', as derived from the basis of revelation and intellectual intuition. To Makarand, Osman's claims that Islamic science's concern with rationalism and empiricism (backed by an emphasis on the golden age of Islam), runs the risk of causing 'nostalgia and apologetics'. This refers to a longing for intellectual and cultural parity with the modern West, which is often a characteristic of colonised peoples. Makarand Paranjape claims that modern science does not concern itself with such questions, 'even if its presence or absence in different parts of the world is influenced by them' (Paranjape, 2011, p. 15-16). Others, such as Loo (1996), argued that Islamic science based on the 'unity of truth and knowledge' is conceptually flawed. For Loo, science, as practiced universally, is materialistic in its philosophical approach. In contrast, Nasr and Osman take a dualistic philosophical stance (Loo, 1996, p. 288).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explained the main actor of IoK in Malaysia. They played a major role in contributing to the idea of IoK in Malaysia and in the Muslim world. The main focus of the paper is the style of thought of the Islamizers (IoK scholars) and their utopian vision. I have critically analysed the vision of the scholars and the flaw in their thought as part of Mannheim's utopian theory. On the other hand, since the initiation of the IoK, two institutions of higher knowledge have been established in Malaysia. These are the International Islamic University (IIUM) and the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC). The formation of these institutions is partly because of the government's ideology (especially to gain support from the people). However, it can be argued that not much has been seen in terms of the development of the ideas of the IoK, especially those forwarded by IoK scholars such as Tan Sri Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Ismail Al-Faruqi, Osman Bakar and AbdulHamid AbuSulayman. In other words, not much progress has been seen other than the establishment



of the two institutions in Malaysia. The two institutions have also recently been merged. ISTAC is now under IIUM after its founder Tan Sri Syed Muhammad Naquib's contract was ended. However, it cannot be denied that the formation of the two institutions has contributed much to the people of Malaysia. They provide education, especially to those who are comfortable to study under the banner of Islam and Islamic education.

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