

## VIEWS OF SAYED MUHAMMAD NAQUIB AL-ATTA'S ON DE-WESTERNIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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### Abstract

in an era marked by globalization and the dominance of Western paradigms in knowledge production, the call for de-Westernization has become increasingly imperative. This research delves into the profound insights of Sayed Muhammad Naquib al-Atta, a prominent Muslim philosopher, on the de-Westernization of knowledge. Al-Atta offers a nuanced critique of Western epistemological hegemony and presents a compelling framework for reorienting knowledge towards indigenous and Islamic perspectives. Central to Al-Atta's discourse is the recognition of the interconnectedness between knowledge and culture. He elucidates how Western epistemologies, rooted in secularism and materialism, have not only marginalized non-Western traditions but also undermined the holistic understanding of reality. Al-Atta's advocates for a reclamation of indigenous knowledge systems, emphasizing their integral role in shaping human consciousness and fostering spiritual enlightenment.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Epistemology, Comparative Philosophy, De-Westernization of Knowledge, Ethical Comportment, Sayed Muhammad Naquib al- Atta*

### 1. Introduction

Naturally, a person or a country which has power and strength in this world affects the surroundings to follow them. The powerful figures or countries have reached certain points, claiming that they have more dominance over others. Currently, the West is more technologically advanced and more powerful in the world. Thus, the term of globalization is the core goal of the West. They want to spread their universal culture, tradition, and values to the entire world. Other countries that want to reach this point are researching to find the points of their progress to compete with them. Therefore, some countries made attempts to westernize the system in order to bring progress and prosper like the West. Radically, they thought that religion, especially Islam, was called upon to stop progress, even though Islam did not prevent it. Eventually, for this endeavor in Islamic world, scholars such as Al-Attas emerged, trying to figure out how to make and go forward for the Islamization of knowledge and at the same time to make progress. By writing this article, it aims to discuss Syed Muhammad 's idea of de-westernization and its importance to awareness of Islamization. De-Westernization is a progressive attempt to overcome the dominance of Western culture in the area of education today. Presently, de-westernization is a cycle of recognition, separation and alienation from Western components in the information body. Accordingly, there are some steps for Islamization of knowledge. Firstly, Knowledge Islamization would be done after investment in the Islamic worldview and language Islamization. Also, before de-westernizing, the westernization elements should be identified. For Attas, the language reflects someone's worldview or some civilization. Additionally, according to their vocabulary, language is placed in the category of Islam. It should be in relation to vocabulary in the world of Islam. The idea of de-westernization is considered as a main and first step before the Islamization of knowledge starts by prioritizing Islamic philosophy, since it has a significant influence on the way of thought. As I mentioned before, nowadays the West is more technologically advanced, it is not completely away from the poor and positive effect and is having an effect on culture.

From the spread of knowledge among society and tradition that later contributes to the acculturation of society and eventually to the development of civilization. It might not establish and

advance this civilization without improving and making the link with each culture (Arroisi & Sari, 2020). Furthermore, as we reside in a globalized environment, globalization is seen as a mechanism in which nations obtain universal culture, heritage and values. A powerful country would inevitably dominate the weaker ones. Western nations with their powerful economic, political and cultural facets would then believe that their values and behaviors can or should be presented as an example to other nations and thus that globalization is seen as the Westernization Process. The convincing implantation of idea, ideals, society and the Western paradigm with the exception of Westernization and globalization in order to promote knowledge, perception and Western philosophy is often achieved routinely by taking advantage of other understandings such as Orientalism, missionaries and even colonialism (Al-Faruqi, 2015).

Finally, for Muslims scholars like Attas should struggle for Islamization of knowledge. Thus, in 1977 the international conference held in Makkah on Muslim education where the idea of Islamization of knowledge was first discussed. This article would analyze and explore the thought of Al-Attas for De-westernization of knowledge in world of Islam (Arroisi & Sari, 2020). The last thirty years have seen ever more rapid developments in the concept of Islamizing or de-westernization of knowledge awareness. For the first time who used the term 'Islamization of Knowledge' remains unresolved, many claims that the first International Conference on Muslim Education in 1977 at Makkah in Saudi Arabia, considering the place where the idea of de-westernization was discussed. The word de-westernization or 'Islamization,' which implies the transformation of education in Islam, was used by al-Attas and Al-Faruqi to describe the cycle of Islamization and the reformation of academia in the Muslim world in the late 1970s (Hasib, 2019). The word de-Westernization was constructed from "de" and "Westernization" according to Attas. "de" in English means "removing something", also vanishing or alleviating of something. However, "Westernization" is Westernizing or great reverence toward west.

Thus, can say that de-westernization is a process of alleviating and vanishing for any respect to West. Besides that, the word "de" within de-westernization is used to purify or blank out westernization itself. If westernization is adopted from western culture and its point of view. So, at this point de-westernization is one of the works to be liberated from the process of Westernization and also purification from the Western dimension. The influence of westernization caused by globalization, nationalism and modernism and the propulsive Muslim scholars to find a way out by weakening Western elements within Islam itself. Until moving to Islamization, de-westernization can be described as a continuing process and theoretical transition (Fauzi, 2018). Al-Attas clarified that the recent Islamization of knowledge entails two interrelated term mechanisms, distinguishing the elements and the core ideas that construct Western society and civilization. He added that even natural sciences or physical and applied sciences must also be Islamized, especially in the field of the analysis of facts and the theory formulation (Nur, 2014).

## **2. Research Method**

A research design is an investigation plan determined before scientific research begins. The present study is based on secondary sources of data, and more emphasis given on secondary data which are collected by authors through various books. At last all the data are represented through descriptive methods.

### **2.1 De-westernization of Media**

People's minds and worldviews are mostly influenced by the media. It is spread in numerous forms traditionally and digitally. Media in digital form is pervasively found everywhere since the discovery of the smartphone. Not surprisingly, smartphones are becoming prime needs for all humankind. However, this media plays as a boomerang to all, if it's used wisely and positively, it will bring good impacts to their lives. Inevitably, most media that is consumed by the majority are produced by the West. Social media, chat apps, and video streaming sites are promoted by the West. As a result, secularism, materialism, individualism, pragmatism, liberalism is found

everywhere in an instant way. If the de-westernization is not denounced and taken action yet, westernization will be more dominating. Theoretically, the main platform of islamization of knowledge is in schools and universities. But due to westernized media in students' hands, de-westernization of knowledge is much less effective. Since, the students are polluted with western values, they will be more skeptical to Islamic values. For instance, news agencies in the world are conquered by the West, they must have an agenda towards spreading the West hegemony. Many found slanted news portraying the bad sides of Islam. In social media, feeds are framed to be more West dominating contents. The giant video streaming is held by Netflix, numerous bad portrays towards Islam. It found that word of terrorism is changed to Jihadis. Moreover, with cheap subscription to this giant paid streaming video, it consisted of poisoned content consuming.

Supposedly, to tackle this issue, Muslims are encouraged to produce and consume Islamic contents, or at least the media that support Islam. One of the good countries that supports this notion is Pakistan. Instead of broadcasting western series, they aired Ertugrul, The Turkish historical TV drama, in their country. But there are found media broadcaster that came from Muslim countries but propagating liberalism and secularism as what the West did. Al-Arabiya and MBC are those following western moves. Recently, they made controversial broadcasts pertaining to supporting Israel for collaboration and cooperation. All in all, as long as the West media keep burgeoning, the realization of islamization is stagnantly decreasing. Muslim intellectuals are highly in need of Islamic discoveries to replace the dominance of western media. How could people be exposed to the cure, but they keep consuming the poison. Muslims are directed to avoid western contents, but they do not find the alternative. So that's why creating the alternative to combat the dominance of the West is a crucial thing to act upon (Adian Husaini, 2001).

## 2.2 Islamization of western heritage (Renowned sites)

Integration of islamization is indeed important in all aspects. Currently, Muslims are so much in joy for knowing of the reopening of Hagia Sophia as a mosque. It was formerly built as a church by Roman empire but converted to a Mosque in the power of Ottoman empire, but unfortunately, Turkey fell back into secular hands, then it converted to a Museum. Surprisingly, a few days back, Hagia Sophia reopened for Muslims as the mosque. From this occurrence, it has significant impact for Muslim hegemony. Reviving Islam may be contributed by this reopening the mosque. It makes Muslims stronger to oppose the West's propaganda and dominance. When Muslims dominate geographical area, it may lead to the other ways of islamization. It is believed that, by having geographical power, Muslims are more motivated to learn and practice Islam as their ways of life. Muslims are becoming proud of their identity and belief after they were marginalized due to the September 11 attacks (Nur, 2014).

## 2.3 Criticism

The Islamization or de-westernization of the knowledge is considered as an obligation. Thus, prominent ulama such as Attas and Al faruqi struggled to find the solution and proper way for isolation of western influence on knowledge in Islamic countries particularly Attas worked for Islamizing and de-westernization of Knowledge in Malaysia. I would agree with the statement and thought of Attas the de-westernization is an attempt to get to know things with confidence or to define, distinguish and detach them from the body of knowledge. I would add that this is considering as an obligation to struggle for purification of knowledge in for the World of Islam. I would agree with this statement as well, I would express and give example for improving that the prophet Mohammed showed us that how he could systematically Islamized the society at the beginning of Islam. For example, firstly he secretly he invited people to Islam for three years, then he announced the vice of Islam on the Safa and so on. Thus, this showing that how could the prophet process for Islamization of everything at the beginning of his time. As we discussed that Attas believes that West is struggling with its power to destroy Islamic ideology by adding non-Islamic concepts that are completely the opposite of Islam such as liberalism, secularism,

pluralism, feminism and others leading to westernization. In some part I agree with the statement and some part not. I would say yes, the west struggling for destroying the Islamic Ideology, but I think the Muslims scholars did not perform the obligation well as the western scholar worked. Furthermore, as Al-Attas clarified that the recent Islamization of knowledge entails two interrelated term mechanisms, distinguishing the elements and the core ideas that construct Western society and civilization. I agree with the statement and I think the elements are important in the process to be distinguished and it would be the cause for developing of the westernization. On the other hand, Al-Attas' conception of the Islamization of Knowledge is quite distinct from that of the other scholars of the Islamization of Knowledge, because he is in complete denial of Western and Western ideology. I would argue that within Islam, Muslims can acquire knowledge from the West or other countries, except in matters of faith, because according to the hadith, a Muslim deserves knowledge first and should receive it, the prophet said "The wise statement is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it, then he is more worthy of it." Therefore, I would argue that rejecting completely everything of the west would not be the proper decision. I think the solution is that how Muslim World we can use it for their benefits and properly. And finally, I would agree with Ustaz Attas that de-westernization is the first step toward Islamization of knowledge (Muttaqien, 2019).

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the world is polluted by the West from their culture, traditions, beliefs, and their educations. These are linked to the values of secularism, materialism, individualism, pragmatism, liberalism. Indeed, these things are contradicting with the values of Islam. Thus, the western values must be eliminated to pursue for islamization. This notion is always denounced by al-Attas to revive Islam. He is in complete contrary from the West due to the ideology of secularism that it fails to interpret and recognize the original sources. It will only bring the injustice and crisis among society. Moreover, secularism and secularization ultimately cut off human relations with Truth and Reality of this world. It is found that for Attas the de-westernization is an attempt to get to know things with confidence or to define, distinguish and detach them from the body of knowledge. Also, de-westernization is the process of identifying, separating and isolating the secular elements of the body of knowledge. Attas believes that West is struggling with its power to destroy Islamic ideology by adding non-Islamic concepts that are completely the opposite of Islam such as liberalism, secularism, pluralism, feminism and others leading to westernization. Interestingly, Al-Attas clarified that the recent Islamization of knowledge entails two interrelated term mechanisms, distinguishing the elements and the core ideas that construct Western society and civilization. Finally, Al-Attas' conception of the Islamization of Knowledge is quite distinct from that of the other scholars of the Islamization of Knowledge, because he is completely denial of Western and Western ideology.

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