

Vol. 06, No. 01, March 2026, pp. 17-28
<https://jurnal.iimsurakarta.ac.id/index.php/alulum>

Islamization of Science in The Perspective of Fazlur Rahman: Reconstructing Qur'anic Epistemology

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Received: 29-07-2025

Revised: 25-02-2026

Accepted: 28-02-2026

ABSTRACT

The Islamization of science has become an important issue in efforts to integrate science with the values contained in the Qur'an. This study focuses on the thinking of Fazlur Rahman, who proposed a normative and applicative approach through the double movement method. This study used a library research method with an epistemological approach. The results of the study show that Fazlur Rahman emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility in the development of science so that it does not become a disaster for humanity. According to Fazlur Rahman, the Islamization of science is not merely a matter of labeling science as "Islamic," but rather a process of epistemological reconstruction based on rationality, ethics, and context. This concept aims to avoid dogmatization and secularization in science. However, Fazlur Rahman wants to make Islam the answer to various social, political, economic, and cultural problems that occur in the modern era.

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Keywords:

Islamization of Science; Fazlur Rahman; Double Movement; Qur'anic Epistemology.

INTRODUCTION

At present, the scientific paradigm is predominantly shaped by Western epistemologies, effectively relegating the study of science to the periphery of Islamic discourse. In contrast, the Islamic tradition conceptualizes science as an enterprise intrinsically rooted in its primary sacred sources, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith. These texts can serve as the cornerstone of any scholarly work in the Islamic academia, if only they are scrutinized analytically and critically (Muslimin & Suharmanto, 2024). It is for such reasons that the Islamization of science and the branch of Muslim scholarship is meant to augment the Muslims' interest in scientific inquiry and adopt the use of the Qur'an and Hadith. This is essential for Muslims to uplift and alleviate their current situation in comparison to other nations, especially the West (Faisal et al., 2024).

Discussions surrounding the Islamization of science as a phenomenon began with the Muslim scientist and remains the domain of Muslim scientists, but still attracts the attention of the general public as well. Islamization of science is primarily normative and conceptual, consequently paying insufficient attention to the applicative methodological components. The classical methodologies are viewed as textual-historical, the modern methodologies secular and historical, and worse, normative Islam is ignored wholly. The resulting situation is one where Islamization of science progresses at a snail's pace, albeit with weak epistemology. Therefore, the Islamization of science as such requires a method. Through his thought, Fazlur Rahman provides such a theoretically relevant and pragmatically applicable Islamization of science that is a breath of fresh air.

There is an information gap on the Islamization of science influenced by Fazlur Rahman, as most scholarly work on the Islamization of science centers on the contributions of Al-Farruq and Al-Attas. Hence, the author seeks to examine the Islamization of science through the lens of Fazlur Rahman to enhance the paradigm under consideration and proposes an epistemological framework that is both ideal and executable when the Qur'an and contemporary science are integrated.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design by conducting library research (literature review). This exact study did not try to research Fazlur Rahman's works empirically, but analysed them in order to understand Rahman's works on the Islamization of science and the consequences it brought to the science of knowledge critically as a research field and as a methodology. An investigation of this study through the field is not empirical, but rather a vigorous and systematic ideological field was constructed through textual analysis.

The collection of data was classified into primary and secondary data. Primary data was taken from Rahman's principal works, such as *Islamization of Science: A Response* (1988), *The Qur'anic Concept of God, the Universe and Man* (1967), and *The Quranic Solution of Pakistan's Educational Problems* (1967). Whereas, secondary data consisted of numerous scholarly works such as books, journals (peer-reviewed), and theses that provide various critiques of Rahman's works. The collection of data was done in an orderly manner through a systematic retrieval of literature from the library and from various research-oriented academic databases.

In regard to data interpretation, the study used techniques such as descriptive, analytical, and content analysis. Of the various analytical steps, the one that concerns us most is the thematic classification of the data, which involves Rahman's intellectual genealogy, his exposition of the properties of science, the 'Double Movement' hermeneutic, and Qur'anic epistemology. Each thematic pillar is given attention to critically examine the intersection of Rahman's thought with the Islamization of science. In the end, the results of the study are sought to form an epistemological foundation that is a two-way intersection of Islamic values and contemporary science with normative and functional aspects to the present Islamization of knowledge.

RESULTS

Fazlur Rahman's Genealogy

This paper proposes to study Fazlur Rahman, an academic born in the Hazara region of Northwestern Pakistan on September 21, 1919. Fazlur Rahman was born

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into a family of Muftis in the world's most rational Hanafi school. His father, Maulana Sahab, was a most prominent and learned member of his field and was an alumnus of Darul Ulum Deoband in India. In his youth, the scholar Fazlur Rahman received his early Islamic studies in a classical madrasa and also received sharia from his father. His father was also a classical Sharia scholar. At the early age of 10, he was able to commit the whole Quran to memory (Zaprulkhan, 2019).

Upon finishing his secondary studies at the madrasa, he attended a modern school in Lahore. He graduated in 1940 from Punjab University with a Bachelor's degree in Arabic, from the department of Oriental Studies. In 1942, he also graduated from the same university, obtaining a Master of Arts (M.A.) at Arabic Literature (Casrameko, 2019). Despite being educated in a traditional Islamic educational environment, Fazlur Rahman was educated in a traditional Islamic educational environment. This critical attitude was a trait that set him apart from the majority of graduates of the madrasa, and was also a reflection of his dissatisfaction with his traditional education, as evidenced by his decision to continue studies in the West, at Oxford University, England in 1949.

While studying in England, Fazlur Rahman had many formative experiences, one of which was developing a passion for language acquisition. It is, therefore, of little surprise that he was able to seamlessly learn English, Latin, Greek, as well as Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and Urdu. Besides, he also began his teaching career in Islamic Philosophy at Durham University in England and the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada (Arifin, 2018). Fazlur Rahman was the first Muslim to be employed as a member of the staff at the University of Chicago School of Theology (Chicago Theology). Furthermore, he was the first Muslim to be awarded the Giorgio Levi Della Vida Scholarship, a highly esteemed scholarship for the study of Islamic civilization, awarded by the Gustave E. Von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, UCLA (Muhammad et al., 2022).

Fazlur Rahman Avicenna's Physiology (1952) Avicenna's De Anima, Prophecy in Islam: philosophy and Orthodoxy (1958), Islamic Methodology in History (1965), The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra (1975), Major Themes of the Qur'an (1980), Islam and

Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition (1982), Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition (1987) (Berutu, 2021). show the diversity of Islamic Thought, Philosophy, Theology, and Law. It is evident from the list of works of Fazlur Rahman from 1950 to 1988, that Fazlur Rahman was not a fractured scholar confined to a single area of Islamic Thought.

In 1960, Fazlur Rahman had to leave his life in Europe since President Ayub Khan, who was in charge of the country via a military coup, needed his assistance in the nation-building of Pakistan (A'la, 2003). At this time, Pakistan is in a dispute with its moderates and traditionalists. Hence, Rahman is a Muslim philosopher, educator, and scientist born in a period in which Muslims are confronted with the dualistic challenges of modernity within the Islamic world. Muslims, at this time, are expected to quickly define their role, strengthen their ideological fundamentals, and meet modernity with anticipation to embrace the provisioned future (Damayanti, 2020).

During the illness that afflicted Fazlur Rahman, he had experienced a decline in his health, yet his enthusiasm remained intact during the course of his lecturing activities for both Muslims and non-Muslims, and he even undertook a lecturing course proposed to him by the government of the Republic of Indonesia in 1985, even though his doctor had warned him to curtail his activities. Indramasi Rahman stayed for 2 months in Indonesia, analyzing the condition of Islam in Indonesia, and then attending hearings, discussions, and lecturing on Islam. Rahman had also died at the age of 69 after receiving treatment at a hospital in Chicago (Maraimbang, 2018).

Characteristics of Science According to Fazlur Rahman

Islamic science is discussed by Fazlur Rahman within the framework of the history of Islamic Methodology. Rahman notes that the Qur'an implies the concept of science, '*ilm*,' which was also the Arabic term in use during the Prophet's lifetime. After the Companions period in Islam, the term 'tradition' came to be used to refer to the documents from which Muslims derived their laws. It was during this time that the term 'science' started being utilized to refer to the comprehension that was

gained from the study of documents. The term used to refer to reflection on the documents was '*fiqh*' (understanding). In the emergence of legal thought, however, the term '*fiqh*' came to be used more specifically to refer to legal systems. Consequently, its use to refer to the understanding of legal systems decreased, and a new terminology was created to refer to a system of thinking, abstracting from legal issues (Sutrisno, 2006).

As noted by Aziz (2019) Fazlur Rahman, in his piece entitled "The Qur'anic Solution to Pakistan's Educational Problems," that "all science begins with observation and experimentation" (Rahman, 1967). Rahman asserts that "science is always in the process of becoming," and that it is not "static" (Fazlur Rahman). According to him, "stagnation and repetition... signify the death of science." He further states that "all science, deductive or inductive, is... a continuous creative process." Citing the Qur'an, he classifies human sciences into three categories. The first type is "science of the natural world" that has been "created for man" (e.g., Physics). The second, and more critical, type of science is "history and geography." The Qur'an, according to Rahman, "invites man to traverse the earth" and to "study the vestiges of various civilizations," and to do so critically to understand their rise and fall. The last type is the science of man (Aziz, 2019).

As previously stated, all sciences can be traced back to three sources: nature (the physical universe), humanity (the composition of the human mind), and history (the systematized study of human interactions). With respect to the first source, nature, there are certainly phenomena to be investigated, and such a study, to all intents and purposes, should be unceasing. A knowledge of the laws governing nature can be obtained from the integration of the knowledge of the universe. With respect to the second source - humanity, more than a passing description is required. The Qur'anic injunction to study the inner world, the human soul (*al-anfus*), is relevant here. The findings of such an inquiry are to be human behavior, and the motivations underlying such behavior, as well as the moral and spiritual equilibrium, which, to the extent that balance is lacking, evil is to be countered, and

with the establishment of such equilibrium, a moral construct, the evolution of humanity is to be achieved.

DISCUSSION

Islamization of Science: Fazlur Rahman's Perspective

Fazlur Rahman commences describing the Islamization of science from the symbolic meaning of the Qur'an, which depicts the creation of humans as caliphs on earth (Rahman, 1967). At this point, the Qur'an elaborates that humans are indeed better than the angels, as humans are the only creations that possess reason, which was a gift from Allah SWT. Rationally, humans are able to acquire knowledge that even angels do not have. To Rahman, such an ability should cultivate an awareness of responsibility among the people.

Thus, Rahman elaborated on the responsibility to explain the correlation between science and responsibility. This is similar to the analogy of a sword that is given to children, as it is dangerous and can injure them, unless there is a sense of responsibility that governs their actions. This analogy, however, is precisely true to adults, particularly the scientists. However, Rahman explains that it is the adults and the scientists who most of the time neglect and ignore their responsibility (Rahman, 1988). Consequently, their science becomes a menace to themselves and to society. This is as Allah states it in the Qur'an, Surah al-Ahzab, verse 72, and Surah Abasa, verse 23.

Fazlur Rahman further argues that the neglect of the moral and ethical aspects of human science is the central quandary in the Islamization of science. This is for the reason that contemporary society has abused science. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with science per se. Rahman has described the contemporary society as one that has massively advanced and developed from a body of science that is not Islamic. It then follows that the concerning matter in the Islamization of science hinges on instilling a sense of moral responsibility in the application of science that the people have acquired (Wijaya, 2020).

Fazlur Rahman argues that the incorporation of science into one's framework should not pose issues of concern. Science is good since the Qur'an affirms that it is a

discipline that, among other things, can oppose the preconceived notions and customs concerning the period of Ignorance in Arabia before Islam. Nevertheless, the problematic nature of science is a function of how it is dealt with (Arifiyanto et al., 2014). Decisions about its applicable use are a function of ethics. Science should be directed at the constructive, not the destructive. A nuclear physicist has the potential to ethically use his knowledge and skill to harness energy for the benefit of mankind. Nevertheless, a sizeable account of his moral responsibility is absent, thus he instead produces an atomic bomb, a moral catastrophe to the community (Nata, 2018). The dominion of the craving for science over the intellect, while at the same time, a moral impetus to tackle the problem is absent, is primarily the basis for the rationalization of the abuse of science.

Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Method

The modernist thinker Fazlur Rahman, in *Islam and Modernity: The Transformation of Intellectual Tradition*, developed what he called a Double Movement and transformed it into a theory that deals with an exigent need in socio-historical contexts and periods where the Qur'an was revealed, then moves in a reverse order to contemporaneity, where ideal moral values are attained (Hibatullah et al., 2025). Historically, the Qur'an is a charter that addresses the moral, religious, and socio-political dimensions. Hence, the purpose of the Qur'an does not lose its significance in socio-political contexts. The links between historical records and social moral values are interwoven, and thus the historical records lose significance. The reader, Fazlur Rahman, in this theory, has to participate in two Double Movements, which he calls First and Second Movements. First Movement deals with the understanding of the Qur'an in the context of the *Soorah*, while Second Movement deals with negating the specific contexts, to pose general moral and social questions. The overriding purpose, in this theory, is the general guidance that the Qur'an enjoins its followers. The interlinking essence of the meaning, laws, and objectives is the crux of the theory.

The iteration of this particular period is related to the movement's starting point and is expected to pivot to current-day issues and eventually to focus on the

current-day issues' moral value of current-day issues that is contained in the holy Qur'an within this range of movement. Hence, the moral values that the Qur'an contains should be used in practice (Wijaya, 2009). This second stage of the process at this point in time serves to double down on the first stage and its resulting process of comprehension. Not being able to exercise this comprehension on the current state of the world would be to fundamentally misapprehend the world. This is because the world in its current state would own an entirely new set of challenges that the world of the past would have no bearing on. Thus, make the of intellectual jihad to further the understanding, and moral jihad to apply the ideal values within the world of today to develop a framework and approach that would be deemed systematic.

Reconstruction of Qur'anic Epistemology

Informed by the Double Movement approach, the construct Qur'anic Epistemology was developed by Rahman, who aimed at seamlessly integrating the Qur'an with the Quran and the empirical realities of the day, the goal of which is the development of an all-encompassing science relevant to the modern-day challenges, thereby making science comprehensively understood in an unfractured way. This is because to understand science is not to understand it solely on the empirical and rational levels, for it should also be integrated with the values of the Qur'an. For Rahman, this integration was not only technical but also epistemological. He explained that the Qur'an should be interpreted with a technique he calls 'double movement', which requires one to retrace the historical background and subsequently abstract the principles to the contemporary realities. This ensures that the science of religion is not too dogmatic and that modern science does not lose direction morally (Farhan, 2025). Rahman maintains that integration of science towards the unification of the two is not only about integration of two diverging branches of science; it is an epistemological reconstruction that acts to restore the religious science to its *raison d'être* of its intellectual and moral essence. In Qur'anic Epistemology, Rahman focuses on three main themes: rationality, ethics, and contextuality, thereby underlining the importance of each.

First, there is a need to identify the point he makes when he argues that within the Qur'an, there are certain rational activities that are to be employed rather than dismissed. This means that religious studies ought to be able to promote a certain level of critique. Rahman also prioritizes the point on the ethics of a particular situation given that it is only within ethics that there is protection from anarchy. Hence, there has to be a sense of responsibility within the domain of science towards the Creator and the community. He takes the Qur'an to be the main point of reference for morality and critical epistemology. According to Irawan (2019), he speaks of those of the Qur'an, that stem from Faith, Islam, and Piety. This set of ethics is Qur'an-centric and represents the heart of Islam.

Third, contextual orientation assumes that religious science must develop the ability to constructively engage with modernity. In this respect, Fazlur Rahman embodies both secular and theological reductionism, which he points out as the limitation to the understanding of science. He advocates for science to be historically, critically, and socially relevant. So, it may be understood that Qur'anic epistemology evolves with the integration of revelation and rationality, which are not dichotomous but rather are synergistic as they complement each other. Quranic Epistemology also posits that *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) must be grounded on the existing order of society (historical context), as the messages of the Qur'an are inherently pliable. However, its relevance to contemporary issues must not be overlooked. In a way, Fazlur Rahman seeks to make Islam a response to the plethora of social, political, economic, and cultural problems. Rahman posits that the Qur'anic epistemology indeed demands the full realization of the rationality of man and that the framework of Qur'anic epistemology demonstrates the capacity to confront modern critical *Ilm* with its fundamental principles intact.

CONCLUSION

According to Fazlur Rahman, the Islamization of science is more than just a simple process of formal assimilation and requires a reconstruction process of the ever-evolving Qur'anic epistemology. Rahman also mentioned the significance of understanding and developing science through rational, ethical, and contextual

pathways. Essentially, knowledge is inherently good and thus must be channeled towards humanitarian ends. The double movement method provides a useful instrumentality for harmonizing revelation with contemporary realities. Thus, Fazlur Rahman continues to hold invaluable importance in fostering a critical and humanitarian Islamic scientific mindset to provide solutions to the problems at hand.

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