



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**TOWARDS AN ISLAMIC PARADIGM OF THE INFORMATON
SOCIETY**

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**TOWARDS AN ISLAMIC PARADIGM OF THE INFORMATON
SOCIETY**

BY

ABBAS GHANBARI BAGHESTAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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DEDICATION

**Dedicated to all those who are interested to be more knowledgeable and with
admiration to all Muslims scholars**



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2009

Chairman: Professor Musa Abu Hassan

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

The main purpose of this study was to understand how Muslim Communication Scholars think about the phenomenon of “information society”. The study was carried out through three research questions: 1) What is the concept of information society from the perspective of Muslim Communication Scholars? 2) How could Muslim countries achieve that information society and through which process? 3) What are the similarities and differences between Muslim and Western scholars’ opinions about the concept and process of information society? These questions aim to determine how Muslim Communication Scholars conceptualize the information society and what characteristics and components it must have to be suitable for Muslim countries.



Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative research method was used by the researcher to investigate on how Muslim Communication Scholars think about the phenomenon of information society. Among the qualitative research methods, because of the nature of research problem, “grounded theory” was used in this study. Data was gathered from eleven Muslim Communication Scholars in the field of communication who had fulfilled the criteria of sampling procedure. Respondents were selected through “snowball and chain” strategy. The data collection method employed was mainly in-depth interview with the respondents. All interviews were taped recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed. In addition, document analysis was also carried out. The validity of study was ensured through identifying the research biases, triangulation, members’ checks, and peer examination. The reliability was ensured through stating the researcher’s position, triangulation and audit trail.

The findings of this study yielded new characteristics, components and structure of Muslim Communication Scholars’ perspective that are no similar to what so called “information society” in the West. Eleven major themes and several sub-themes emerged from this study in relation to Muslim Communication Scholars’ conceptualizing of information society. Two themes were regarding question No.1 that are: 1) Strategy of Domination and 2) Building Islamic Civil Society. And also nine themes were found regarding question No.2, including: 1) Predominant of Knowledge, 2) Highly Educated, 3) Regulated Flow of Information, 4) Controlled Information and Communication, 5) Logical Freedom of Expression, 6) Participatory Political System, 7)



Free Access to Right Information, 8) Bridged Digital Gap and 9) Maintaining Traditional Culture.

According to the above themes, it was discovered that Muslim Communication Scholars conceptualize this phenomenon much different from their counterparts in the West. This study concludes that based on the findings, new model of society with different structures, components and characteristics are needed for contemporary Muslim countries. Therefore, based on their argument, the paradigm of “information society” should be changed to paradigm of “Islamic Civil Society” to be suitable for Muslims. However, as Islamic Civil Society is broader concept suggested by respondents of this study as an ideal society for contemporary Muslim countries, only its components related to the area of communication and information was discussed in this study. Specific implications and recommendation for future research are also suggested.



**Abstrak Kertas Projek Yang Dimajukan Kepada Senat Universiti Putra
Malaysia Sebagai Sebahagian Keperluan Untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah
Komunikasi**

KE ARAH PARADIGMA ISLAM DALAM KALANGAN MASYARAKAT

BERMAKLUMAT

Oleh

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Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana cendekiawan komunikasi Islam berfikir tentang fenomena masyarakat bermaklumat. Kajian ini dijalankan dengan tiga persoalan kajian : 1) Bagaimanakah cendekiawan komunikasi Islam mengkonsepsikan fenomena masyarakat bermaklumat? 2) Bagaimanakah negara Islam mencapai masyarakat bermaklumat dan apakah prosesnya? 3) Apakah persamaan dan perbezaan pendapat antara cendekiawan Barat dan Islam tentang konsep dan proses masyarakat bermaklumat? Soalan ini bertujuan untuk menentukan cara cendekiawan komunikasi Islam mengkonsepsikan masyarakat bermaklumat , ciri serta komponennya yang sesuai untuk negara Islam.



Berdasarkan reka bentuk kajian, kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif telah digunakan oleh pengkaji bagi menyelidik bagaimanakah cendekiwan komunikasi Islam berfikir tentang fenomena masyarakat bermaklumat. Kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif, *grounded theory* telah digunakan. Data diperolehi daripada sebelas cendekiawan komunikasi Islam dalam bidang komunikasi yang mempunyai kriteria dari segi prosedur persampelan. Responden dipilih melalui strategi *snowball and chain*. Kaedah pengumpulan data dijalankan melalui temu bual mendalam dengan responden. Semua temu bual dirakam, ditranskripsi secara verbatim dan dianalisis. Selain itu, analisis dokumen juga dijalankan. Validiti kajian dipastikan melalui klasifikasi bias, triangulasi, senarai semak ahli, dan ujian rakan sebaya. Kebolehpercayaan kajian dipastikan melalui kenyataan responden, triangulasi dan *audit trail*.

Dapatan kajian ini mengutarakan ciri, komponen dan perspektif baharu yang berbeza dengan konsep masyarakat bermaklumat seperti di Barat. Sebelas tema utama dan beberapa subtema telah diperolehi dari kajian ini yang berkaitan dengan pandangan cendekiawan komunikasi Islam tentang konsep masyarakat bermaklumat. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa fenomena yang dikonsepsikan oleh cendekiawan komunikasi Islam sangat berbeza daripada pandangan rakan mereka di Barat. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian, model baharu tentang masyarakat bermaklumat yang berbeza dari segi struktur, komponen, dan ciri amat diperlukan bagi negara Islam kontemporari. Dua tema berkaitan persoalan pertama ialah: (1) Strategi Dominasi dan (2) Membangunkan Masyarakat Sivil Islam. Sembilan tema turut diperolehi berkaitan persoalan kedua, ialah:



(1) Keutamaan Ilmu Pengetahuan, (2) Berpendidikan Tinggi, (3) Aliran Maklumat Berperaturan, (4) Maklumat dan Komunikasi Terkawal, (5) Kebebasan Bersuara yang Logikal, (6) Penyertaan Dalam Sistem Politik, (7) Akses Secara Percuma Kepada Maklumat yang Sahih, (8) Mengurangkan Jurang Digital dan (9) Mengekalkan Budaya Tradisi.

Oleh itu, berdasarkan perbincangan mereka, paradigma masyarakat bermaklumat perlu diubah kepada paradigma masyarakat Islam sivil yang sesuai untuk masyarakat Islam. Walau bagaimanapun, memandangkan konsep masyarakat sivil sangat luas, beberapa komponen yang berkaitan dengan bidang komunikasi dan maklumat dibincangkan dalam kajian ini.



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I certify that an Examination Committee has met 29 September 2009 to conduct the final examination of Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan on his Doctor of Philosophy "Towards Building an Islamic Paradigm of Information Society" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that student be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledge. I also declare that it has not been previously and is not concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or at any other institution.

ABBAS GHANBARI BAGHESTAN

Date: 12 January 2010



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IS	Information Society
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OIC	Islamic Conference Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
R&D	Research and Development
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WSIS	World Summit on Information Society



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Towards Building an Islamic Paradigm of Information Society

Scholars and researcher in many disciplines agree that the world is witnessing the onset and emergence of new historical transformation in the world. Like all major transformations in history, it is multidimensional: technological, economic, social, cultural, political, and geopolitical.

“Information Society” is the term most often used to describe this historical transformation. A lot of researchers and scholars in different disciplines are particularly diligent in investigating the nature, aspect, components and the consequences of this new phenomenon. Communication study as a field is no exception from this matter. Communication studies have entered on the most stirring and exciting periods in its history. The quick change on communication innovations and technological generation and development continues to break down the natural barriers of the time and space and change all traditional agenda.

Information society, as a new phenomenon, is along with the term “communication revolution” and almost come to be accepted as an objective description of our time and of the type of society which is emerging (McQuail, 2000; Mattelart, 2001). In fact, it is



driven in large part by the smooth integration of new media—or what so called “information and communication technologies (ICT)—with traditional media, combined with technical skill-sets, forward-looking government policies, an attitude of lifelong learning, a desire to improve efficiencies and harness innovation in a humanely and environmentally sustainable manner.

Therefore, as information society has always been strongly associated, if not fully identified, with communication (McQuail, 2000; Homis, 2005; Mattelart, 2001; Geneva Plan of Action in World Summit on Information Society, 2003), it could not be secondary phenomenon in this field that can be explained by antecedent factors. Instead, information society itself becomes the primary, fundamental and constitutive process in communication field that explains all these other factors.

Duff’s study from 1984 to 1997 also showed that communication scholars were the second most interested in the investigation on “information society”. He demonstrated that “in the academic sector itself, the department with the strongest interest in the information society is library, and information studies with 19.1 percent, while communication study with 12.2 percent were the second one. This is because the transmission of information is presumably the subject matter of media and communication research” (Duff, 2000, p. 9).



Therefore, as Duff (2000) acknowledged, it is not surprising that a lot of communication scholars are partner with social, and political, economical scholars in attempting to understand the multiple levels and strands of the emerging information society.

Global Agenda: Why Is Information Society Important?

Information society has become the central part of the new global development agenda, for example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments in 2000, and from the end of 20th century and the early of 21st century, the national and international communities have given considerable attention to this phenomenon.

The first talk of creating an “information society” dates back to the United States’ Presidential Elections of 1992. In their campaigns, the democratic candidates for presidency and vice presidency, Bill Clinton and Al Gore stressed the importance and need for “information super highways” and “national databases” for the evolving from an industrial society and emerging as an “information society”. Upon their election, Clinton and Gore started to implement their policies of creating a “national information society” as well as a “global information society”.



In his famous speech delivered before the first ITU conference held on 21 March 1994, in Buenos Aires, Vice President Al Gore identified the following five prerequisites for emerging as an advanced “information society”; they are the privatization of telecommunications, the facilitation of free and fair competition in the communications sector, the deregulation of communication activities and pricings, the consent for the independent systemization of communications, and the provision of public communication services (Motamednejad, 2003).

By the summer of 1993, all the major European states, the European Union, Canada and Japan had implemented these policies, programs and legislation to facilitate the expansion of ICT capabilities in an attempt to create “information societies”. In fact, from those years until today, this five-step process is subsequently enshrined in ITU’s constitution as the organization’s main policy and program and has since been applied throughout the world. For instance, the “National Information Infrastructure” Plans (1993) in US, the “White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment” (1993) in EU, the Bangemann Report on “Europe and the Information Society” (1994), the Asia-Pacific Information Infrastructure Strategy (1994) in Asia, the African Information Society Initiative (1996) in Africa, and the Plan of Action in the First World Summit of Information Society in Geneva (2002) are based on these policies (Motamednejad, 2003).



In the international level, in an effort to address the issues of information society and to bring about global discussion on it, the United Nations International Telecommunication Union decided in 2001 (endorsed by the UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183) to hold the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva in 2003, and the second phase took place in Tunis in 2005 (World Summit on the Information Society, 2005).

First World Summit on the Information Society

The first Summit was held from December 10th to 12th, 2003, in Geneva, and was hosted by the Government of Switzerland. The objective of the first phase was to develop and foster a clear statement of political will and take concrete steps to establish the foundations for an information society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake.

Nearly 50 heads of state or government and vice-presidents, 82 ministers, 26 vice-ministers from 175 countries as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, private sectors, and civil societies attended the Geneva Phase of WSIS and gave political support to the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action that were adopted on 12 December 2003 (World Summit on the Information Society, 2003).

