

Duality and Integration: Paradigm Shifts in Islamic Higher Education Policy in Indonesia and Sudan in The Contemporary Era

NURJANAH

Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Darussalam (UID), Ciamis, Indonesia
Email: nurjanah@uidc.ac.id

MUTASIM SIDDIQ AL-JAALY

Faculty of Education, Jami'ah al-Qur'an al-Karim wa 'Ulum al-Islamiyyah, Sudan
Email: mutasim_aljali@gmail.com

RAHMAT HADI

Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Darussalam (UID), Ciamis, Indonesia
Email: rahmat.hadi@gmail.com

KHOERUL ANWAR

Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Darussalam (UID), Ciamis, Indonesia
Email: khoerul.anwar78@gmail.com

Abstract

Modern Islamic higher education continues to wrestle with an enduring paradox, the uneasy coexistence between *'ulūm al-dīn* (religious sciences) and *'ulūm al-dunyā* (worldly sciences). This study explores how two Muslim-majority nations, Indonesia and Sudan, have confronted this duality through distinct yet converging paradigms: *integration of knowledge* and *Islamization of knowledge*. Drawing on a qualitative comparative policy analysis, the research examines key documents, national education laws, ministerial decrees, university statutes, curricular frameworks, and scholarly literature, to uncover how each country conceptualizes and institutionalizes “integration.” Comparatively, Indonesia’s model is dialogical, “bottom-up,” gradual, and institutionally adaptive, whereas Sudan’s is declarative, “top-down,” and politically centralized. The contrast underscores how epistemological reform cannot be divorced from the political imagination of the state. Indonesia’s integration thrives on pluralism and negotiation; Sudan’s Islamization sought purity and control. Both, however, face common pressures: globalization, accreditation standards, and the marketization of higher education that continually test the coherence of Islamic knowledge paradigms. The study concludes that the shift from duality to integration is not a linear process

but a dynamic negotiation between theology, politics, and modernity. For Indonesia, the challenge lies in deepening integration beyond structure to substance; for Sudan, the post-2019 period offers a chance to reconstruct Islamic higher education free from authoritarian ideology. Ultimately, the cases illustrate that integration, much like faith itself, is an unfinished project, one that must be continually rediscovered in the dialogue between revelation and reason.

Keywords

Islamic Higher Education, Education Policy, Comparative Education, Indonesia, Sudan, Integration of Knowledge, Islamization of Knowledge, Dualism

INTRODUCTION

The story of duality in Islamic education is, in many ways, a story of struggle, not necessarily between good and bad, but between different ways of knowing, of being (Ahmed, 2025). For centuries, Muslim societies cultivated a harmony between the sciences of revelation (‘*ulūm al-dīn*’) and the sciences of the world (‘*ulūm al-dunyā*’) (Ali, 2007). But somewhere along the line, perhaps during the colonial period, perhaps earlier, that delicate equilibrium fractured. Madrasa systems focused on theology and law, while modern schools imported secular curricula modeled on European epistemologies (Saada, 2023). What used to be a fluid continuum of knowledge became a divided terrain, and this division still haunts Islamic education today. We might call it duality, though the term feels both precise and inadequate.

The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed ambitious attempts to repair this epistemological rift. Thinkers like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ismail al-Faruqi popularized the term *Islamization of Knowledge*, a bold, sometimes controversial movement to reframe modern disciplines within an Islamic worldview (Al-Attas, 1992; Al-Faruqi, 1982; Guessoum & Bigliardi, 2023). They believed that modern science had become detached from metaphysics, producing what they saw as fragmented, value-neutral knowledge. Their project sought to realign the intellectual order with *tawḥīd*, the unity of God and, by extension, the unity of truth (Al-Faruqi, 1992). But others, particularly in Southeast Asia, began speaking instead of *integration* rather than *Islamization* (Al-Alwani, 1995; Muslih, Khakim, & Sahidin, 2024). The distinction may sound semantic, but it reflects a profound shift in tone and purpose. Integration was not only about reclaiming or Islamizing existing knowledge, but also about fostering genuine dialogue between revelation and reason, between the Qur’an and the laboratory.

Still, this tension between Islamization and integration continues to shape how nations design their higher education systems (Sulaeman, 2000). In Indonesia, for instance, the idea of “integrating” knowledge has been embedded into state policy, a gradual, bureaucratic, almost pragmatic process of reforming Islamic universities to embrace science and social inquiry without abandoning faith (A. Abdullah & Abdullah, 2006; Kartanegara, 2005). In Sudan, meanwhile, under al-Bashir’s long Islamist regime, the emphasis fell on *Islamization*, a more prescriptive, top-down effort to infuse curricula with Islamic values, sometimes at the expense of intellectual plurality (Nur, 2022). Both approaches claim to overcome duality, yet in practice they reveal how complex and political that aspiration truly is.

We might even wonder whether the dream of integration is ever fully attainable. The modern university, by design, rests on Western categories of knowledge, departments, disciplines, epistemic hierarchies, while Islamic scholarship often resists such compartmentalization. Perhaps the challenge, then, is not to erase the boundaries but to make them porous, to allow mutual transformation rather than domination.

And so, in this comparative study of Indonesia and Sudan, we enter a broader conversation about how Muslim societies navigate this enduring duality. It’s a question not just of education policy but of identity, ideology, and imagination, how nations envision the relationship between faith and modernity, between the past and the present, between what is revealed and what is discovered.

Indonesia and Sudan stand as two fascinating mirrors in the landscape of contemporary Islamic higher education. Both are Muslim-majority nations, proud of their religious heritage, yet shaped by vastly different histories. Indonesia, sprawling across thousands of islands, built its educational identity through negotiation, between Islam, nationalism, and the pluralist philosophy of *Pancasila* (Departemen Agama RI, 1992). It never became an “Islamic state,” yet it allowed Islam to infuse the moral and intellectual fabric of the nation. The State Islamic Universities (*UINs*), once modest institutes for training clerics, gradually evolved into comprehensive universities offering medicine, engineering, and social sciences, all under the umbrella of religiously grounded knowledge. The process was slow, often messy, but remarkably inclusive (Mansur, 2005).

Sudan, on the other hand, carried the weight of a different historical trajectory. It inherited a colonial academic legacy deeply influenced by British models, secular, bureaucratic, hierarchical (Nur, 2022). But after 1989, under the rule of Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist allies, education became a central instrument of ideological

transformation. Universities were reshaped, curricula “Islamized,” and Arabic replaced English in many disciplines. Institutions such as the University of Khartoum and Omdurman Islamic University became sites of both intellectual ambition and political control (Nur, 2022). Where Indonesia’s reforms were pluralistic and developmental, Sudan’s were prescriptive, bound to a specific vision of Islam and the state.

Placing these two nations side by side is not to suggest symmetry, it’s more like comparing two different experiments in balancing faith and modernity. One operates in a democratic, decentralized environment where negotiation is constant; the other, until recently, functioned within an authoritarian framework where uniformity was enforced. Yet both share a deep anxiety: how to remain faithful to Islamic epistemology while remaining relevant to a rapidly globalizing world (Huda, Syukur, & Junaedi, 2024). This study, therefore, is not only a comparison of systems but also of sensibilities, of how education becomes a reflection of a society’s spiritual and political imagination.

Every research project begins with a few uncomfortable questions. They are the kind that resist easy answers, and maybe that’s the point. In this study, we started with a simple curiosity: how do two very different Muslim-majority countries, Indonesia and Sudan, navigate the tension between duality and integration in Islamic higher education? Yet as we dug deeper, the simplicity faded. We began to see layers: historical legacies, political ideologies, institutional experiments, and epistemological struggles that refuse to fit neatly into one box.

So, the first question we ask is the broadest one: *How have Indonesian and Sudanese national policies defined and facilitated the shift from dualism toward integration in Islamic higher education since 2000?* This period is not arbitrary. The early 2000s mark a turning point, democratization and reform in Indonesia; consolidation and later unraveling of an Islamist regime in Sudan. Both nations were redefining what it means to educate within an Islamic framework in a postcolonial, globalized world.

Our second question follows naturally: *What are the key similarities and differences in implementing this paradigm shift at the institutional and curricular levels?* We are not merely tracing policies but trying to understand how they live and breathe in universities, in classrooms, in syllabi, in the intellectual posture of graduates. Policies, after all, can declare “integration,” but whether that vision truly transforms knowledge depends on how institutions embody it.

Then comes the question that haunts almost every comparative study: *What drives these processes, and what stands in their way?* Political ideology? Economic need?

Intellectual conviction? Or perhaps just the slow inertia of academic systems that resist change? Each country tells its own version of this story, revealing how power, belief, and pragmatism intertwine in unexpected ways. In the end, these questions are not only about Indonesia and Sudan. They gesture toward something larger, the ongoing Muslim quest to reconcile faith with modern knowledge, without losing either. Maybe we don't expect to find closure here. What we hope for is understanding: a clearer view of how integration takes root, falters, or transforms across different contexts.

Every paper needs a destination, though sometimes we only glimpse it after the journey has already begun. The aim of this article is to trace the evolving paradigms of Islamic higher education in two contrasting settings, Indonesia and Sudan, and to understand how each has wrestled with the enduring tension between duality and integration. We want to see how ideas become policy, and how policies, in turn, shape institutions and intellectual life. It sounds straightforward, but of course, it isn't. Education never simply mirrors ideology; it bends, adapts, resists.

Our focus is comparative, yet not in the cold, statistical sense. Rather, it is interpretive, reading the policies, the institutions, and the philosophical undercurrents as if they were texts. We approach Indonesia's reform of its Islamic universities not merely as bureaucratic transformation but as an epistemological experiment: can modern science be taught within a faith-based framework without collapsing into relativism? Likewise, we examine Sudan's post-1989 educational Islamization as more than a political project; it was also a vision (however rigid) of reclaiming intellectual sovereignty from Western modernity. Both cases reveal how Islamic higher education becomes a stage where politics, theology, and pedagogy meet, sometimes harmoniously, often not.

Structurally, the article unfolds in a gradual widening of focus. The first section situates the global challenge of duality and introduces the twin paradigms of *Islamization* and *Integration*. We then move to the theoretical framework, clarifying how we conceptualize "duality," "integration," and the various shades in between. The methodology section outlines our comparative policy approach, how documents, laws, and curricular frameworks can be read not just as regulations but as windows into national consciousness.

The heart of the paper lies in the two case studies: Indonesia and Sudan. Each is treated not as a static model but as a living narrative, evolving through reform, resistance, and reimagination. The comparative discussion that follows draws these narratives together, revealing patterns, tensions, and the subtle ways in which

ideology shapes epistemology. The conclusion brings us back to the question that began it all, whether Islamic higher education can truly overcome duality without losing the diversity of thought that makes it alive. Perhaps the answer is not a clear yes or no, but something in between, a recognition that integration, like faith itself, is always a work in progress.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the center of any discussion on Islamic higher education lies a rather persistent question: what does it actually mean to “integrate” knowledge? The word itself has become so familiar, used in university mottos, policy papers, conference banners, that it risks losing precision. Yet behind it sits a centuries-old debate about the unity of truth, about whether revelation and reason can coexist not just peacefully, but productively. Theoretical clarity, then, becomes essential, though perhaps also impossible in a perfectly neat way. Integration, duality, Islamization, these are not fixed categories but living tensions that shift as societies change (AbuSulayman, 2003).

To begin somewhere, we can imagine a spectrum. At one end lies *duality*, a state in which religious and secular sciences coexist but rarely converse. It’s not always antagonistic; sometimes, it’s simply practical. In many Muslim countries, you find theology taught in *madrasas* and modern disciplines in universities across the street, each producing graduates who inhabit parallel intellectual universes (Stenberg, 1997). This dualism, while efficient, fragments the moral and epistemological vision of education.

A step toward reconciliation is *correlation*. Here, educators attempt to find points of connection, ethical bridges, thematic overlaps, even shared values, between religious and modern disciplines. But correlation often feels cosmetic, like drawing lines between two maps that were never meant to align. It’s progress, yes, but still tentative.

Then there is *integration of knowledge* (Kartanegara, 2005). This is more radical. It seeks not to connect two separate worlds but to dissolve the walls between them. In an integrated model, revelation and empirical inquiry inform each other; the study of biology, economics, or psychology becomes, in some deep sense, a form of worship, an extension of *‘ibādah*. Knowledge is seen as one continuum, with God as its ultimate source. Indonesia’s “integration-interconnection” paradigm is one such attempt, idealistic, uneven, yet intellectually daring.

Islamization of knowledge, meanwhile, takes a different path. Rather than merging disciplines, it starts with critique, an insistence that modern knowledge, shaped by secular Western epistemology, carries hidden assumptions about reality, morality, and human purpose (Gill, 2020; Widiyanto, 2017). Thinkers like al-Attas and al-Faruqi sought to rebuild the foundations of modern science from within an Islamic worldview. But in practice, Islamization often turned prescriptive, emphasizing identity and orthodoxy over intellectual dialogue. Sudan's educational reforms under the al-Bashir regime, for instance, reflected this orientation, powerful in vision, yet constrained by ideology.

To make sense of these movements, we draw upon two complementary analytical lenses. The first is policy instrument theory, which helps us see how governments operationalize ideas through concrete tools: laws, funding mechanisms, accreditation systems, or curriculum design. Every policy is both a declaration of intent and a mechanism of control. The second lens explores epistemological conflict and harmony, how systems of knowledge either clash or align. Education, after all, is not only about institutions but also about the metaphysics of truth: what counts as knowledge, who defines it, and in whose image it is shaped.

Between these lenses, we begin to see a more complex picture. Integration is not a single model but a field of negotiations, between revelation and reason, between state and scholars, between the spiritual and the pragmatic. Duality, perhaps, never fully disappears; it only mutates. And that, in itself, might be part of the beauty and the struggle of Islamic higher education in our time.

METHOD

Methodology, though often treated as a technical section, is where a study quietly declares its soul. It reveals how we see the world, what we consider valid evidence, and how we choose to listen to it. In this study, we approach the question of Islamic higher education policy not as detached observers but as readers, readers of systems, of words, of silences. What we offer, therefore, is a *qualitative comparative policy analysis*, interpretive rather than statistical, reflective rather than predictive.

We designed this work as a comparative case study, focusing on Indonesia and Sudan, two contexts that could hardly be more different, yet curiously parallel in their search for epistemological coherence. Comparative study, at its best, is not about scoring similarities and differences but about tracing patterns of thought: how certain

ideals travel, how they are reinterpreted through local politics, and how they leave traces in documents, institutions, and even language.

Our data collection relied primarily on documentary sources, the traces left behind by states, universities, and scholars who tried to make “integration” more than a slogan. We examined national education laws, ministerial regulations, and strategic plans from ministries such as Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and Sudan’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. We studied university charters, curriculum frameworks, and accreditation guidelines. Around these, we layered secondary sources: academic books, journal articles, and policy reports that help contextualize how each nation has theorized and implemented Islamic higher education reform.

Data analysis followed a thematic and comparative approach. We identified recurring motifs, terms like *Islamization*, *integration*, *epistemological reform*, *Arabization*, and *pluralism*, and mapped how these ideas evolved across official discourse. In practice, this meant reading documents not only for what they state but for what they imply: the metaphors, silences, and contradictions that reveal deeper assumptions about the nature of knowledge. The comparative dimension emerged naturally, as patterns from one case illuminated absences or tensions in the other.

We must admit some limitations. Documentary data can be both rich and deceptive; it reflects the aspirations of policy more than the lived reality of classrooms. Official documents often sanitize complexity, presenting reforms as linear when they are anything but. We are aware, too, that translation, not just linguistic but cultural, distorts meanings. Reading a ministerial decree in Jakarta or Khartoum requires sensitivity to the unspoken politics behind the text.

Still, we chose this path because policy documents, despite their dryness, are where ideas about knowledge become visible in statecraft. They are, in a sense, theology rendered administrative. By reading them comparatively, we hope to see how two nations, both Muslim, both postcolonial, both ambitious, grapple with the same question: how can Islamic higher education honor its faith while engaging the world?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia: Systemic Integration in a Pluralistic Democracy

Indonesia's journey toward integrating Islamic and modern knowledge is, in many ways, a story of patient reform rather than revolution (Bakar & Nasr, 1992). It did not emerge from a single manifesto or charismatic thinker, but from a long, sometimes contradictory dialogue between faith, politics, and modernization. Perhaps that's what makes it fascinating: it's messy, layered, and deeply human.

The policy landscape has been largely shaped by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), which holds a unique role in global Islamic education. Unlike most Muslim-majority nations, Indonesia's state explicitly protects religion while maintaining a pluralist ideology, *Pancasila*. Within this framework, MORA functions as both guardian of Islamic orthodoxy and promoter of intellectual progress. Since the early 2000s, MORA has advanced the idea of *integrasi keilmuan*, the integration of knowledge, as the new guiding principle of Islamic higher education. This policy sought to transform traditional Islamic institutes (IAIN) into full-fledged State Islamic Universities (UINs), capable of producing scholars who could bridge revelation and reason, tradition and technology.

The institutional transformation from IAIN to UIN stands as one of Indonesia's most significant educational reforms (Azra, 2003). Initially, IAINs were designed to produce *ulama* and religious teachers, focusing on theology, law, and da'wah. But as Indonesia's democracy deepened and the global economy shifted, these institutions faced pressure to expand their horizons. The new UINs began to open faculties in natural sciences, medicine, psychology, and information technology, disciplines once deemed "secular." This was not simply diversification; it was an epistemological statement. Knowledge was no longer to be divided between *dīnī* and *dunyāwī*, but understood as a continuum rooted in divine unity.

This transformation was underpinned by several curricular models of integration. One is the "*waqf model*", where all students, regardless of discipline, take foundational courses in Islamic studies, ensuring that a medical student, for instance, engages with Qur'anic ethics or Islamic philosophy. Another is the "Integration-Interconnection (I-I) model," popularized by UIN Sunan Kalijaga, which seeks to infuse Islamic epistemology directly into every field (M. A. Abdullah, 2003). Under this model, economics is taught not just as market theory but as a moral economy; psychology becomes *psychology of the soul*. A third model, emerging from teacher-training traditions, is the "*Kulliyatul-Mu'allimin al-Islāmiyyah*" approach, revising pedagogical curricula to produce teachers who are intellectually modern yet spiritually anchored.

The drivers behind this transformation were as diverse as Indonesia itself. Democratization after 1998 opened space for intellectual freedom and institutional

autonomy. Globalization, with its neoliberal undertones, pressured universities to become competitive and internationally recognized. Market demands pushed Islamic institutions to produce graduates employable beyond religious sectors. And yet, behind all of this, there was something subtler, a generation of Muslim scholars who believed integration was not just a bureaucratic slogan but a moral project. Figures like Azyumardi Azra, Amin Abdullah, and others framed integration as both a return to Islamic epistemological unity and an embrace of modern intellectual plurality.

Still, the project has not been without challenges. Many faculty members trained in traditional Islamic sciences struggled to engage with modern scientific paradigms, and vice versa (Kartanegara, 2009). Integrating curriculum often meant stretching already limited institutional capacity. There were tensions, too, between maintaining Islamic authenticity and achieving global academic credibility. Critics warned that integration risked diluting religious scholarship or producing only superficial blends of theology and science. The challenge remains: how to translate a philosophical ideal into pedagogical reality.

Yet, for all its imperfections, Indonesia's experiment has become a reference point in the Muslim world, a living laboratory where pluralism and faith attempt co-existence through education. Integration here is not a finished product but an ongoing conversation, one that continues to evolve in classrooms, research centers, and policy circles. And perhaps that is precisely its strength: it keeps asking the question rather than pretending to have answered it.

Sudan: Prescriptive Islamization in an Ideological State

Sudan's story unfolds differently, more turbulent, more ideological, and perhaps more tragic in the way ideals get entangled with power (Abdile, Fadlelmawla, & Tofighian, 2024). Where Indonesia's integration emerged through gradual reform and negotiation, Sudan's *Islamization* of higher education was forged through decree and political conviction. The line between education and ideology blurred until, at times, it vanished.

The policy landscape under Omar al-Bashir's rule (1989–2019) was marked by the regime's attempt to reshape society through Islam. Education became the frontline of this project (Kindersley, 2025). The government's "civilization mission" (*al-mashru' al-hadari*) sought to purge colonial influence and rebuild national identity on explicitly Islamic terms. Universities were directed to align curricula, governance, and language with the principles of *shari'a*. Arabic replaced English as the medium of

instruction in most fields, a bold and symbolic assertion of cultural sovereignty, though one that arguably limited global engagement. After the 2019 revolution, this ideological edifice began to crack, but its remnants still shape Sudanese education to-day (Eljack, Altahir, & Mohamed, 2023).

The institutional framework that resulted was unmistakably dualistic, even as it claimed to be unified (Seri-Hersch, 2023). Sudan maintained two parallel traditions: the “national” universities, heirs of the British secular model, and the explicitly Islamic ones such as Omdurman Islamic University (OIU) and the International University of Africa (IUA). The University of Khartoum, once the pride of Africa, embodied this tension, its faculty and students often caught between academic excellence and political conformity. Meanwhile, OIU and IUA were mobilized as instruments of *da‘wah* and ideological export, attracting students from across Africa and the Arab world with scholarships that blended scholarship with indoctrination.

The curricular models that emerged under Islamization were more prescriptive than integrative (Mohammed, Elfaki, & Othman, 2023). Every student, regardless of field, was required to study *shari‘a* and Arabic, often through courses detached from their main discipline. Attempts to “Islamize” modern sciences were typically top-down, mathematics with Qur’anic quotations in the preface, biology books opening with verses about creation. The effort was sincere, even inspiring at times, but it often lacked epistemological depth. In many cases, “Islamization” became a rhetorical gesture rather than a genuine intellectual synthesis (Abdelgadir, Yahaya, & Arshad, 2023). Arabicization of instruction, meant to strengthen Islamic identity, also had unintended consequences: a generation of students found themselves isolated from international scholarship and scientific collaboration.

The drivers of this system were overtly political. The al-Bashir government viewed Islamization not only as moral reform but as a means of legitimizing state power. Education became a tool of ideological reproduction, a way to ensure loyalty and consolidate control (Brown, 2023). Yet within this system were many educators who genuinely believed in the project’s spiritual purpose: to decolonize the mind, to heal the split between revelation and modernity. Some of them continued to write, teach, and debate long after the regime fell, their hopes mingled with disappointment.

But the challenges were enormous. Chronic economic crises and international sanctions drained university budgets, while political purges eroded academic independence. Intellectual life suffered from censorship and self-censorship alike. The 2019 revolution, driven largely by students and youth, brought a new wave of reflection: what had gone wrong? Could the post-Islamist era imagine a new kind of

integration, one less ideological and more dialogical? For now, the answers are still uncertain. Sudan's universities remain in transition, struggling to rebuild after decades of politicized Islamization.

And yet, in that uncertainty, there is a kind of fragile hope. The idea that Islamic higher education could be both faithful and free still lingers in Sudan's public imagination. The revolution did not erase the dream of integration; it merely stripped it of its authoritarian costume. What comes next will depend on whether Sudan's scholars and policymakers can reclaim that dream, not as dogma, but as dialogue.

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

Comparing Indonesia and Sudan is a little like comparing two languages that share a few roots but diverged long ago into distinct dialects of thought. Both sought to escape the inherited dualism between *'ulūm al-dīn* and *'ulūm al-dunyā*, both proclaimed an allegiance to Islamic epistemology, and both spoke of "integration." But the tone, the rhythm, the intent, these were worlds apart.

At the broadest level, there is convergence in aspiration. Both systems reject pure dualism. Both desire an intellectual order in which faith and reason no longer sit on opposite ends of the classroom. In Indonesia, this desire appears as an institutional reform, the evolution from IAIN to UIN, where integration is framed as national development policy and as a cultural necessity. In Sudan, it appeared as an ideological commitment, the Islamization of knowledge as a way to assert spiritual sovereignty against Western modernity. The aim was similar: to restore wholeness. Yet, in practice, the pathways couldn't be more different.

Indonesia's model feels almost organic, growing within a pluralist democracy that values negotiation and compromise. The state, through MORA, functions more as a facilitator than a commander. Policies evolve through dialogue between policymakers, university leaders, and scholars, leading to a more distributed form of change. Integration here becomes a gradual cultural practice, an ongoing calibration between tradition and modernity. The resulting institutions, though uneven, embody pluralism as pedagogy, spaces where science, faith, and culture are meant to meet, argue, and coexist.

Sudan's model, by contrast, was distinctly top-down. The al-Bashir government instrumentalized education as part of its Islamist state project, transforming universities into ideological extensions of the regime (Yahia & Elsheikh, 2023). The Islamization of knowledge became a state doctrine, rigid and prescriptive. While it

succeeded in asserting a cultural identity against Western hegemony, it often reinforced the very dualism it sought to abolish, theology and science remained separate, their integration proclaimed but rarely practiced. In that sense, Sudan's project was both ambitious and self-defeating: it tried to legislate a worldview.

The role of the state thus becomes crucial in understanding these divergent trajectories. In Indonesia, the government acted as a *custodian* of religious education within a pluralistic framework, mediating between secular and sacred knowledge without collapsing one into the other (Ekembe, Harvey, & Dwyer, 2023). In Sudan, the state was the *ideologue*, seeking to dominate the epistemic field and shape universities into instruments of its theological-political vision. The difference is subtle but profound, one sees education as a dialogue; the other, as declaration.

And yet, these differences are not simply political; they are epistemological. Indonesia's "integration" tends to invite hybridity, ambiguity, and coexistence, values that reflect its democratic ethos and social diversity. Sudan's "Islamization," on the other hand, emerged from a vision of purity, of returning to a unified Islamic essence. The former thrives on negotiation; the latter on certainty. Perhaps both are necessary in some measure, yet when certainty is monopolized by power, knowledge risks becoming sterile.

In the end, both systems face similar pressures: globalization, neoliberal market forces, and the encroachment of Western accreditation standards that subtly reshape what counts as "quality education" (Curle, Holi, Alhassan, & Scatolini, 2022). The global university model pushes both Indonesia and Sudan to adopt metrics and managerial languages that often sit uneasily beside their theological ideals. Integration, then, becomes not just an epistemological struggle but an economic and institutional one.

If we listen carefully, what we hear from both countries is not resolution but resonance, two different melodies played on the same theme: how to educate the modern Muslim mind without severing it from its spiritual roots. Indonesia's experiment whispers patience and plurality; Sudan's warns of ideology's heavy hand. Together, they remind us that integration is not a destination but an ongoing conversation, one that every Muslim society must conduct in its own accent.

CONCLUSION

If we return, finally, to the question that opened this study, the uneasy relationship between duality and integration in Islamic higher education, what emerges is not

a neat comparison, but a meditation on complexity. Both Indonesia and Sudan have, in their own ways, tried to heal the epistemological split between revelation and reason, between faith and modernity. But they have done so under very different skies.

In summary, Indonesia's reforms represent a gradual, systemic attempt to institutionalize integration through democratic governance and academic inclusion. The transformation of IAINs into UINs, the introduction of interdisciplinary faculties, and the intellectual leadership of reform-minded scholars show a model of integration that is both pragmatic and visionary. It operates not through coercion but through persuasion, slowly embedding unity of knowledge into the bureaucratic and curricular DNA of the nation. Sudan, in contrast, pursued an overtly ideological Islamization. Under al-Bashir, higher education became an arm of the state's theological project: sincere, perhaps, but heavy-handed. The result was paradoxical, a system that sought to unify knowledge under Islam yet often reinforced the very dualism it sought to transcend.

From a theoretical standpoint, this comparison invites us to see "integration" not as a single model, but as a spectrum shaped by context. Political ideology, state structure, and intellectual climate all inflect how integration is defined and pursued. Indonesia's pluralistic democracy produces a discourse of dialogue, between disciplines, between faith and nation. Sudan's authoritarian Islamization produced a discourse of purity, an insistence that knowledge must conform to revelation. Both approaches speak to deep questions about epistemic authority: Who defines what counts as Islamic knowledge? Can faith guide inquiry without constraining it?

The practical implications are equally revealing. For Indonesia, the challenge ahead is depth, moving beyond structural reform to epistemological synthesis. The curriculum may be integrated on paper, but true integration demands that scholars learn to think and write from within an Islamic worldview that engages global knowledge on its own terms. For Sudan, the challenge is redefinition. After 2019, as the ideological scaffolding crumbled, a new horizon opened: the possibility of reclaiming Islamic education as a space of critical thought rather than state orthodoxy. The task now is to rebuild trust, in the university, in the scholar, in the very idea that faith and intellect can coexist without coercion.

In the broader scheme, these two cases remind us that integration is never linear. It advances and retreats, shaped by revolutions, elections, and the quieter revolutions of thought. It is not a formula but a process, one that must be reinterpreted by every generation. Perhaps, in this sense, both Indonesia and Sudan are still at the

beginning of their journeys. Integration, like belief, is never finished, it lives in the tension between what is and what ought to be.

Future research might look at how graduates of these reformed institutions embody or challenge the ideals of integration in their professional and intellectual lives. Longitudinal studies could trace whether integrated education translates into integrated thinking, or whether duality simply reappears in subtler forms. For Sudan, in particular, post-2019 developments deserve close attention: will the collapse of ideological Islamization give birth to a more open, self-critical model of Islamic scholarship? And for Indonesia, the question persists: can the state continue to nurture integration without bureaucratizing it into irrelevance?

If nothing else, this comparison shows that the struggle between duality and integration is not a weakness but a sign of vitality. It is evidence that Islamic higher education, in all its contradictions, remains alive, questioning, reforming, and searching for the unity of truth in a fragmented world.

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