

## Real Utopia and Dystopia in the Light of the Quran

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## Abstract :

This paper covers the notion of utopia in the light of the Quran. It, particularly, delves into the concept of 'real utopia' as embodied by the Quranic verses. This work explores the relationship standing between religious utopias and real utopias. It aims at demonstrating how the Quran, as a religious text, embraces a Divine message for the welfare of mankind. This article investigates whether the modern meaning of utopia together with its characteristics are ever covered by the Quranic text. This article challenges the argument that religious books are restricted to matters of worship as they can transcend both time and space to propose the most appropriate plans for establishing utopias and avoiding Dystopias which are the outcome of disobedience.

Keywords: Utopia; Dystopia; Quran; Real Utopia; Religious Utopia.

## ملخص:

هذا المقال يتمحور حول موضوع اليوتوبيا في ضوء القرآن وبالأخص يتناول مفهوم اليوتوبيا الحقيقية كما تجسده الآيات القرآنية. باستكشاف العلاقة القائمة بين اليوتوبيا الدينية واليوتوبيا الحقيقية، فإن هذا

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العمل يهدف الى إظهار مدى احتضان القرآن، باعتباره كنص ديني، رسالة إلهية مفادها الخير للبشرية وذلك بالبحث فيما إذا كان النص القرآني قد استوفى المعنى الحديث لليوتوبيا وكذا كامل خصائصها. هذا إذن بمثابة تحد للرأي القائل بأن الكتب السماوية مقصورة على أمور العبادة لكونها مؤهلة لاقتراح الخطط الأكثر ملائمة لتأسيس مجتمعات مثالية ولتجنب الاختلالات الناتجة عن عدم تطبيق القوانين الإلهية.

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

اليوتوبيا; الديستوبيا; القرآن; اليوتوبيا الحقيقية; اليوتوبيا الدينية.

### Résumé :

Cet article vise à présenter la notion de l'utopie à la lumière du Coran. Plus précisément, il a pour objet la clarification du concept de l'utopie réelle comme le montrent les versets coraniques. Ce travail explore la relation entre les utopies religieuses et les utopies réelles. Il vise à démontrer comment le Coran, en tant que texte religieux, porte un message divin pour le bien-être de l'humanité. Cet article examine si le sens moderne de l'utopie ainsi que ses caractéristiques ont été couverts par le texte coranique. Cet article conteste l'idée que les livres religieux sont limités au culte car, en revanche, ils peuvent même servir pour établir des utopies ainsi que pour éviter les dystopies qui résultent de la désobéissance.

Mots-Clés : L'Utopie; La Dystopie; Le Coran; L'Utopie réelle; L'Utopie Religieuse.

### 1. Introduction

Utopia is widely known as a notion restricted to the domain of literature and fiction. Most of the studies conducted on utopia deal with analyzing the classical works of utopia in which this notion is embodied as a way the authors follow to dress up the dream of an ideal society where everything functions for the welfare of its citizens. This concept, however, has deep roots in history and thus plays a vital role in the study of civilizations. In modern times, the concept of utopia in the social sciences has gained more interest and thus been revisited and gained new meanings.

Religion and Utopia have always been considered to be the two faces of the same coin. These two are interrelated in that religious texts provide real solutions for the existing ills of societies which may serve as Divine plans for ideal communities.

This project aims to investigate whether the Quran, as a religious text, has any room for the modern meaning of utopia and that through picking out the verses which bear meanings related to this subject. With this aim in mind, this paper will examine the

extent to which the Quranic text is suitable for modern societies and especially if it proposes a clear plan for planning a real utopia in the modern sense of the word.

## **2. Real Utopia**

Ideal societies where the well-being of the citizens being sought have always been the concern of man throughout the course of history. The notion of 'Utopia', though was coined for the first time in the early sixteenth century by Thomas More in his book *Utopia*, it is generally held that it has its origins in earlier writings such as in Plato's *Republic* (around 380 BC) as well as in St Augustine's *On the City of God Against the Pagans* in which the images of perfect societies being drawn.

Utopia is commonly regarded as a mere literary genre, but, in fact, utopian studies are not restricted to fiction as they are more concerned with the study of civilization. As it is mentioned by Fioretti (2017, p.18), utopia, in the first place, belongs to literature and is known as 'classical utopia', nonetheless, it is wider than that as it is preoccupied with real societies.

Utopia derives from the Greek words 'eu' (good), 'ou' (not) and 'topos' (place) to mean 'a good place which does not exist'. Following this etymology, utopia is all work of fiction that denotes an ideal imaginary place. Because of this Greek word 'outopos' which means 'no place', both Levitas (2013, p. 3) and Hartmuth Becker (2011, p. 41), maintain that utopia gained the reputation of a perfect place which does not and cannot exist. For the sake of redefining utopia away from this classical definition, a number of thinkers sought to outline new borders for utopia by substituting all of 'reality', 'the present' and 'achievability' with 'abstractness', 'the future' and 'imagination'.

First, many have given utopia a realistic shape refusing its being merely a fantasy or abstract since the majority of the utopian literary works from Plato's *Republic*, to Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), and others, are mainly designed as solutions for the problems of the actual world. Daniele Fioretti (2017, pp. 4-19), for instance defends the idea of utopia's connection with reality and that by demonstrating how More's *Utopia* is inspired from the real English political life which is in contradiction with the way it was regarded as a 'fantasy'.

The second point in which utopia is redefined is that of the present dimension as an alternative to the future. This is plainly expressed by Gordin, Tilly and Prakash's (2010, p.1) statement that "Utopias and Dystopias are indeed histories of the present". For them, utopia has nothing to do with imagined places in the future as it focuses on the study of given places at given times (Gordin et al. 2010, p. 4).

The third point is that utopia shall not be regarded as an imagined perfect place that can never be attained. Thomas More himself "did not seem to imply that *Utopia* is only a dream impossible to achieve, but only that it has not been achieved so far" which means that utopia does not exist the moment More is speaking but not that it is impossible to be achieved (Fioretti, 2017, p. 18). For James Gay (2011, p. 193), reason

has the power to lead people to actualize their dreams giving the examples of the European settlement in the Americas as well as the French Revolution during the late eighteenth century where, thanks to reason, imagined ideas turned to be “concrete actions to improve society”.

A clear sociological definition of utopia is difficult, given that there is not one single model of an ideal society in addition to the fact that utopias are constantly changing with the evolution of societies through time. It is in this regard that Fioretti (2017, p. 28) gives the example of Plato’s republic where slavery is considered as a basic feature of an ideal society which is in total contradiction with modern social studies. However, this does not mean that Utopia is shapeless as there are some basic characteristics shared among the majority of utopias.

It is true that the term “real utopia” sounds contradictory as utopia means fantasy but realists rather call for rational plans and “practical tasks of navigating a world of imperfect conditions for social change” (Wright 2010, p. 6). For Wright (n.d.), “The utopia in “real utopia” means thinking about alternatives to dominant institutions in ways that embody our deepest aspirations for a just and human world”. This modern definition makes utopia closer to reality and more distant from fiction.

When thinking about these rational plans and following Sarton’s (1951, p. 43) ideas when he says that “real progress, meaning real improvement of life, cannot be based on the idolatry of machines and gadgets; it must be based on religion, art, above all on science, pure science, on the love of God, the love of truth, the love of beauty, the love of justice”, the best plans that can fit in this case are those traced by religious texts.

### ***3. Utopia and Religion***

Utopia and religion are related to each other in a number of facets which make of them almost the two faces of the same coin. As a rule, it is in religious texts that the finest plans for utopias are to be found, making of religion an indispensable component in any utopian society (Bloch, as cited in Alicino, 2017, p. 28). This crucial role of religion is well portrayed by Bonnett (2004, p.151) who says that religious texts supply utopia with “a transcendental code of morality and salvation”.

There is no better plan for a perfect society than that made by God. This echoes More’s belief about the role of religion in shaping utopia as it is conveyed by the words of Hythlodæus when he states that to attain happiness every member of the society shall be satisfied but especially that the will of God should be adopted as the laws of the Utopians (More, 1743).

The role of religion in utopia is not restricted to prompting men to found utopias since it also serves as its guard from decay. Following Bennabi (2016, p. 87), once the ideal society is realized, it will still face hardships imposed by time and it is only the light of religion that still can enlighten the ideal ways through which utopia can be maintained. The continuity of any ideal society is possible only through the transmission

of the religious germs that initially contributed to its emergence from generation to generation (Bennabi 2016).

For nearly all of the known classical utopias, the main purpose of those works is either reaching utopia in heavens, as in St. Augustine's *The City of God*, or founding an earthly utopia, as in More's *Utopia*. The actual purpose of utopia, when planned by religion, is rather twofold as it calls for both the eternal and the earthly paradise. Benamara (as cited in Bennabi, 2016, p. 9) says that according to Bennabi's philosophy, when men establish a society that is subject to the will of God with the aim of achieving paradise in the afterlife, their lives on earth automatically become a real paradise.

In fact, utopias when guided by religion can guarantee success in both lives. Even when the sole aim is to attain the heavenly kingdom and because of following the Divine will, harmony and justice will reign in the society of men, and vice versa, when men found their society upon the laws of God and that their lives are righteous and virtuous, paradise will certainly be their reward.

Taking Islam as an example of a religion that nourishes utopia, it is indeed a religion that sets both universal and perpetual rules for all races and in all times. Maududi's statement about the goals of the state in Islam is "that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to flourish in the life of His people should be engendered and evolved and that all kinds of exploitation, injustice and disorders which, in the view of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures are suppressed and prevented [...] Keeping this outline in view the Islamic state can plan its welfare programme in every age and in any environment" (1997, p. 41). Thus, Islam is a religion in which the state being planned and organized by the will of God in a way that makes of it a universal utopia for humankind without exception.

Humanity, throughout history, has always been in need for perfect systems that would plan their societies and thus men were divided into those who chose to set their own laws following their own conditions and inclinations, and those who rather favoured God's guidance. The Tunisian scholar Ibn Ashur (1984, p. 95), presenting the different ways people set their governing systems maintains that the laws ordered by the wise like those of Athens and Sparta are good for the attainment of justice, while the Divine Laws mostly fit those peoples for whom they are addressed, and that the outstanding of them all is the Islamic law as it fits the needs of the whole mankind and is devoid of bias to any tribe or race. It is written in the Quran that "Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice" (Al-Hadîd 25).

### **3. Utopia and Religion**

The Quranic text in addition to its being the source of the Muslim's guide in his

religion, it also perfectly regulates all the facets of his existence, starting from his life as an individual, to the community. The Quran is perfect, universal and perpetual, this is what makes of it the most appropriate blueprint for utopia, as it does not need any human interference, and is suitable for all peoples in all times. While the aim of the Holy book does not differ from any other religious utopia, that is guaranteeing success in both worlds, many verses of the Quran totally cover this notion of utopia by both motivating men to found utopia and providing them with the source of the necessary laws for an ideal society.

#### ***4.1 The Quran Urging mankind to achieve Utopia***

Many verses in the Quran call for the necessity of changing the unsatisfactory existing conditions for the sake of bettering the society of believers. As man has been endowed with the power of changing his destiny, God has never let him without guidance. However, in order to change one's environment and to make of it an ideal place, the Quran insists on the necessity of starting by one's own self as it is written in the Quran: "Verily! Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state themselves" (Ar-Ra'd:11). It is from this verse that Bennabi (2016, p. 41) has drawn his belief about the necessity of perfecting the behaviors of men's souls which will be reflected in their social environment.

As the Quran calls for starting by changing one's self to be an ideal citizen of utopia, it also insists on the necessity of studying history to grasp the way of founding utopias and to avoid falling into dystopia. In fact, it is through considering the rise and fall of civilizations through history that men can attain success and blessing. God says: "Allah wishes to make clear (what is lawful and what is unlawful) to you, and to show you the ways of those before you, and accept your repentance, and Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise" (An-Nisa' 26). According to Malek Bennabi (2016, p. 59), history occurs in cyclical returns and that each cycle is made up of three phases which serve as milestones that help peoples to highlight the actual position of the phase of their societies in history to better cope with the existing problems. It is for this sake that the Quran calls for considering history to found more perfect societies.

God, throughout his Holy book, Has repeatedly called people to seek the right way which can be found in history. In the preface of the Quran, which is the summary of the whole Book, it is written:

You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything). Guide us to the Straight Way. The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned your anger, nor of those who went astray. (Al-Fatihah 5-6-7)

Following these verses which sum up the whole Quran, the believer is first and foremost required to seek the just way and avoid going astray from the Will of God.



In fact, in the study of civilizations, there is a theory which states that ancient societies may have significant contemporary relevance in the study of the present world (Doubleday, 2008, p. 2). The Quran is indeed full of such stories that tell about the fate of previous civilizations and call for contemplating their meanings as it is the case with Surah Yussuf (111):

Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Quran) is not a forged statement but a confirmation of (Allah's existing Books) which were before it [i.e. the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel) and other Scriptures of Allah] and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a mercy for a people who believe.

Such historical studies are chiefly linked with the notion of reflection as in "Such is the parable of the people who reject Our *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.). So relate the stories, perhaps they may reflect" (Al 'Araf 176). The primary aim behind mentioning these stories, then, is to learn lessons from the experience of the old civilizations which serve as guidance to the Right Way. As it is stated by Mohammed Al-Ghazali (2005, pp. 95-96), this kind of stories are abundant in the Quran which helps to encompass a greater number of issues to propose appropriate remedies, and that, because of the nature of man which never changes, those stories, though belong to bygone centuries, are always graspable and fit for all times.

The Quran is absolute, as it urges men to seek lessons from bygone history, the sphere is not restricted to those civilizations that have been in one's region or related to one's race. God says "Many similar ways (and mishaps of life) were faced by nations (believers and disbelievers) that have passed away before you [...], so travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who disbelieved (in the Oneness of Allah, and disobeyed Him and His Messengers)" (Âl 'Imrân 137-138). Thus, as it is implied through this verse, believers are meant to learn even from other civilizations all over the world.

The call of the Quran for men to establish ideal societies is not exclusively addressed for a specific group of people as the whole mankind is concerned. It is written in the Holy Quran that:

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may come to know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. he is one of the Muttaqun (the pious)]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Al Hujurat 13)

This verse conveys two main points. The first bears the idea that though men are divided into races and communities, they share the same origin which serves as a reminder of their being one big family and should coexist. The second, however, provides the golden

rule of utopia which says that the only way of attaining perfection is the fear of God and the practice of His will. This echoes Sayyid Abul A'La Maududi's words (1997, p. 3):

The very first man was provided with a burning torch of light and guidance so that humanity might attain its glorious destiny. [He] was given the code of life by following which he could live a life of bliss and success. This code of life was Islam, *the attitude of complete submission to Allah, the Creator of man and the whole universe.*

Thus, there is in the Quran a message for the whole humanity to make of their communities ideal harmonious places and that the only key of utopia is the total submission to God.

#### ***4.2 Divine Guide for the Achievement of Utopia***

What makes of the Quran an adequate blueprint of utopia is that its laws are perpetual, universal and total. The Quran encourages peoples, regardless of their origins, to set their own ideal societies. Though this sacred book is fourteen centuries old, nonetheless, it is adaptable in all times. As it is said by Hitti (1970, p. 170), two thousand verses of the Quran out of six thousand are about regulations. Regarding this huge number, the Divine rules about utopia include diverse domains as politics, religion, economy and social life.

Given that Islam is the religion of whole mankind as it is declared in a number of verses such as in Al-Furqan (1), "Blessed be He Who sent down the criterion (of right and wrong, i.e. this Quran) to His slave (Muhammad) that he may be a warner to the 'Alamin (mankind and jinn)" (Al-Furqân 1), and in Al-Anbya' (107) "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad] not but as a mercy for 'Ālamîn (mankind, jinn and all that exists.", there is no doubt that the teachings of the Quran are in turn universal.

In addition to the universality of the Quran, its laws are perpetual. Such divine laws are unchangeable (Risler, 1955), as they have been effective for so long centuries (Lebon, 2019, p. 417). This resistance of the Quranic Law to time can be explained by its being based on equality rather than on any human biased considerations (Dorani as cited in 'Ashshi, 2001, p. 307).

The Quranic laws are also characterized by their totality. Indeed, the Quran is the perfect guide, the essence of religion, the summary of all science, the origin of power, the foundation of all administration, and the sole source of legislation (Risler, 1955, p. 31). In a word, the Quran embraces all of religion, society, economy and politics.

Indeed, the Holy Quran highlights the two basic conditions of achieving an ideal community which are the belief in God together with following the righteous way and avoiding sin. God says: "You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Malruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in



Allah” (Al Imran 110). In his interpretation of this verse, Javid Husain (2016, p.130), declares that the paramount aim of Islam is the well-being and improvement of mankind.

One of the characteristics of utopia which is drawn from More’s work of the same name, is the belief in one God as it is written in the in the last chapter. More insists on the fact that the welfare of the utopians depends on their belief in a Supreme God who is the:

One eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity; as a Being that is far above all our apprehensions, that is spread over the whole universe, not by His Bulk, but by its Power and Virtue; him they call the *Father of All*, and acknowledge that the beginnings, the increase, the progress, the vicissitudes, and the end of all things come only from Him; nor do they offer divine honours to any but to Him alone. (More, 1743, p. 117)

Though the utopians are allowed to be of whatever religion they wish, they all share the same belief in the same Supreme Being. There is not the slightest doubt that the same idea is found in the Quran. God says: “Say (O Mohammad) “He is Allah (the ) One...” (Al-Ikhlâs 1).

Besides, just as the existence and continuity of the universe depends on the uniqueness of God as in: “Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) *âlihah* (gods) besides Allâh, then verily both would have been ruined. Glorified be Allâh, the Lord of the Throne (High is He) above all that (evil) they associate with Him!” (Al-Anbya’ 22), every other creation and phenomena, as the establishment of communities, depend on the same principle.

Equality between the different components of the society, is the second major marker of utopia. Both Fioretti (2017, p. 28) and Engels (1987, p. 5) believe that the achievement of utopias require the elimination of all the social inequalities among people. Many verses in the Quran uphold this idea of equality as in: “The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy” (Al-Hujurat 10) as well as “O you who believe! Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former” (Al-Hujurat 11), and in another: “And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah, and be not divided among yourselves” (Al-‘Imran 103). Following these holy words, the Quran emphasises on the necessity of the eradication of racism and of all sorts of discrimination between the different races.

Religious tolerance, is another paramount feature of a utopian society. According to More’s *Utopia*, an ideal nation is that where though people should believe in one God, “every Man might be of what Religion he pleased” (More, 1743, p. 120). For More, putting restrictions on the religious pluralism may affect the harmony of multicultural

societies. The Quran calls for this peaceful coexistence of religions. God says: “Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity” (Al-Mumtahanah 8), and says: “To you be your religion, and to me my religion” (Al-Kâfirûn 6).

Education, too, is a fundamental criterion of a perfect society as the establishment of schools fills the younger generations with “the positive attitudes of human nature” Fioretti (2017, p. 29). In the Quran, too, a significant emphasis is put on the necessity of seeking knowledge as the very first verses revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) started with the command to: “Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), He has created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. Has taught man that which he knew not” (Al-‘Alaq 1-5). Indeed, the Quran abounds with such verses where seeking knowledge is compulsory and where scholars are said to be favoured by God: “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah” (Fâtir 28).

Contemplating nature and using reason is another significant aspect of utopia. The utopians in More’s *Utopia* believe that “the contemplating God in His works, and the adoring Him for them, is a very acceptable Piece of Worship to Him” (More, 1743, p. 124). Many passages in the Quran are devoted to the importance of contemplating God’s creation as in:

Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which is of use to mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and the moving (living) creatures of all kinds that He has scattered therein, and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed Ayat (proofs, evidences, signs, etc.) for people of understanding. (Al-Baqarah 164)

The use of reason is one of the ways of achieving utopia as it is a means of getting closer to God. Besides, reason makes men aware of how to conduct a blissful life and to share it with our fellow men (More, 1743). God says: “Say: “Are those who know equal to those who know not?” It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e. get a lesson from Allah’s Signs and Verses)” (Az-Zumar 9).

Utopia, is also the place where all people enjoy the same opportunities. As it is stated by Tideman (2011, p. 17), the fair division of the natural opportunities between the citizens is the major point to be found in every utopia. Since poverty is believed to be the source of misery in society, its eradication and the just distribution of wealth are thus the practical keys to happiness (More, 1743, p. 38). In the Quran, God says:

"Shaitan (Satan) threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit Fahshâ (evil deeds, ...); whereas Allah promises you Forgiveness from Himself and Bounty, and Allâh is All Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All Knower" (Al-Baqara 268).

Utopia dictates that the constitution of an ideal nation should embrace such rules as those of helping the underprivileged (Baily as cited in Tideman, 2011, p. 3). In fact, the Quran gives a number of rules of reducing poverty and of insuring a balanced distribution of money among people. One of the Quranic laws that aims at reducing the disproportion between the rich and the poor is that of alms or *Zakat*. The call for *zakat* is to be found in many verses such as in: "And perform As-Salat, and give *Zakat*, and whatever of good (deeds that Allah loves) you send forth for yourselves before you, you shall find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what you do" (Al-Baqarah 110). In fact, the importance of the *Zakat* lies in its being both an obligation as well as a way of worship.

Another law is that of *Jizya*, which is the equivalent of the *Zakat* and which is levied on the dhimmis. God says in the Quran: "Fight against those who believe not in Allâh, nor in the last day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allâh and His Messenger and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the people of the Scripture, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued" (At-Taubah 29). The *Jizya*, in fact, is not a burden on the dhimmis, but just a kind of a substitution for the *Zakat*. And in another verse: "Let the rich man spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship, ease" (At-Talaq 7).

Another principle of utopia is that wealth should not be the ultimate aspirations of men. As it is expressed by St. Augustine, the lust for money is a kind of a sin (Deane, 1963, p. 45). It is stated in the Quran that "Your wealth and your children are only a trial, whereas Allah! With Him is a great reward" (At-Taghâbun 15), and in: "O you who believe! Let not your properties or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allâh. And whosoever does that, then they are the losers" (Al-Munafiqun 9).

Belief in the afterlife is a significant component in utopia. According to More (1743, p. 88), belief in the eternity of the soul and in the afterlife restrains people from sin and misconduct which in turn helps in the maintenance of harmony within the society. In the Quran, God says: "The disbelievers pretend that they will never be resurrected (for the Account). Say: Yes! By my Lord, you will certainly be resurrected, then you will be informed of (and recompensed for) what you did; and that is easy for Allah" (At-Taghabun 7).

An ideal society is administered through an ideal system which may offer justice for every single man regardless of race or status. In Plato's *The Republic*, as well in

Augustine's *The City of God* justice is presented as the basis of the ideal state and is indispensable for a harmonious society where no individual is allowed to take the rights of his fellow citizens. One of the Quranic verses says: "Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind can may keep up justice..." (AL-Hadid 25) and in another: "Verily, Allâh commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice" (An-Nisa 58). Justice, then, is undoubtedly the sole way through which the equilibrium of the society of men attained.

Wisdom and righteousness are the two qualities of a ruler in utopia. Though Augustine firmly believes in the necessity of absolute devotion for God, he does not undervalue the role of man in keeping order in society. And for him, the welfare of people depends on the qualities of virtue and piety together with the power of their ruler (Deane, 1963, p. 130). Though God is the Supreme sovereign as it is declared in the Quran : "... The decision is only for Allâh, He declares the truth, and He is the Best of Judges" (Al-An'âm 57), but God through a number of verses reveals how He sustains the idea of men being governed by men such as in: "O Dawud (David)! Verily! We have placed you as a successor on the earth; so judge you between men in truth (and justice) and follow not your desire — for it will mislead you from the Path of Allah"(Sad 26), as well as in "So they routed them by Allah's Leave and Dawud (David) killed Jalut (Goliath), and Allah gave him [Dawud (David)] the kingdom [after the death of Talut (Saul) and Samuel] and Al-Hikmah (Prophethood), and taught him of that which He willed." (Al-Baqarah 251. In the second verse, the word king is followed by the word wisdom which is in tune with Plato's theory which states that the wisest are the best qualified in making righteous decisions about the citizens over whom they reign (Plato, 1991 p. 153).

According to the two verses where God says "He grants *Hikmah* (wisdom) to whom He pleases, and he, to whom *Hikmah* is granted, is indeed granted abundant good. But none remember (will receive admonition) except men of understanding" (Al-Baqarah 269), not all men are endowed with wisdom which means that the ruler should belong to that category. Thus, the qualities of a ruler according to the Quran fit Augustine's descriptions which say that the role of the wise ruler is to "frame the laws that he is making for a particular people at a given time in accordance with the eternal law of God" (Deane, 1963, p. 90). Following St Augustine, the ruler in any ideal society shall be completely obeyed as it is written in the Quran:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last

Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination. (An-Nisa'59)

In Utopia, the Divine law is believed to be the most appropriate for governing a happy and harmonious community. In St Augustine's *The City of God*, citizens ought to obey two main commandments which deal both with their relationship with God as well as with their fellow men (Deane, 1963, p. 33). In the Quran it is said: "Surely, We have sent down to you the Book in truth that you might judge Book between men by that which Allah has shown you (i.e. has taught you through Divine Revelation), so be not a pleader for the treacherous" (An-Nisa' 105). For Augustine, there is another category of laws which should be imposed on people to guide their materialistic lives (Deane, 1963, p. 73). A verse in the Quran says: "And of those whom We have created, there is a community who guides (others) with the truth, and establishes justice therewith" (Al-A'râf 181).

### **5. Dystopia in the Quran**

Dystopia, at the first glance seems to be simply the opposite of utopia as it is the place where everything is bad. Dystopia, however, in the field of social studies, is like utopia, a society that has been planned to be perfect, but at the level of achievement, while the former turns to be a reality, the latter turns into a nightmare (Gordin et al. 2010, p. 1). Dystopia, as it is dealt with in the Quran may be divided into two types; that place where people have deliberately chosen to establish their societies away from the will of God, and that where prosperity has blinded people from the right way.

To start with the first type of Dystopia which is the outcome of getting away from the Divine guidance is well presented in the Quran. It is worth quoting Deborah porter's words (as cited in Khalil, 1992, p. 164) about the fact that the whole universe is subject to the will of God except Man who has chosen to set his own laws instead of following God's Will.

In this kind of Dystopia, then, societies turn into chaos when their citizens reject the guidance of God and finish by losing their morality. As it is maintained by St Augustine (1998, p. 961), virtue is found only in those who fear God. Thus, immorality results from those societies where God is not obeyed. In the Quran, it is written: "Shall We treat those who believe (...) and do righteous good deeds as Mufsidun (those who associate partners in worship with Allah and commit crimes) on earth? Or shall We treat the Muttaqun (the pious) as the Fujjar (criminals, disbelievers, the wicked)?" (Sad 28).

According to the Augustinian philosophy, a republic shall be defined as a group of reasonable individuals who are united by the object of their interest (Markus, 2007, p. 65). God says "And of mankind are some who take others besides Allah as rivals. They love them as they love Allah. But those who believe, love Allah more (than anything else). If only, those who do wrong could see, when they will see the torment, that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is Severe in punishment" (Al-Baqarah



165). This is why those who choose other ways than those of God, are banished from His mercy (Mattox, 2016). This idea of punishing those who appreciate other than God is recurrent in the Quran such as in: “But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Qur’an nor acts on its teachings.) verily, for him is life of hardship, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection” (Ta-Ha 124), and in “And let those who oppose the Messenger’s commandment ... beware, lest some *Fitnah* (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing, overpowered by a tyrant) should befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them” (An-Nur 63).

The second type of Dystopia is that which results from an excess in opulence. Though opulence is generally the reward of believers as in His saying: “And if the people of the towns had believed and had the Taqwa (piety), certainly, We should have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they belied (the Messengers). So We took them (with punishment) for what they used to earn (polytheism and crimes)” (Al-A’râf 96).

But, when man is blinded by his material gains and turned away from his Creator, he gets the wrath of God. According to Bennabi (2016), when luxury and comfort are paramount in a society, this may result in losing its ethics which in turn leads to its decline when the irresistible luxuries of life triumph over reason. God says:

And when we decide to destroy a town (population), We (first) send a definite order (to obey Allah and be righteous) to those among them [or We (first) increase in number those of its population] who lead a life of luxury. Then, they transgress therein, and thus the word (of torment) is justified against it (them). Then We destroy it with complete destruction. (Al-Isra’ 16)

Tyranny, too, is one of the fundamental characteristics of dystopia which is presented in the Quran. In St Augustine’s work, lust for domination is considered as a feature of the dwellers of the City of Man, as this is against the will of God and it engenders oppression and slavery (Deane, 1963, p. 114). God in the Quran mentions how hardships and misery in this world have always been the punishment of tyrants:

Saw you ... not how your Lord dealt with ‘Ad (people) of *Iram* (who were very tall) like (lofty) pillars, the like of which were not created in the land? And (with) Thamûd (people), who hewed out rocks in the valley (to make dwellings)? And (with) Fir’aun (Pharaoh) who had the stakes (to torture men by binding them to the stakes)? Who did transgress beyond bounds in the lands (in the disobedience of Allah). And made therein much mischief. So your Lord is Ever Watchful (over them). (Al-Fajr 6-14)

Thus, it is a rule in the Quran that oppressors end up with torment as: “This is so! And for the Taghun (transgressors, ..., criminals) will be an evil final return (Sad 55).



#### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to study and analyse utopia and dystopia in the light of the Quran. It precisely dealt with real utopia which suits social studies together with the study of civilizations. The question was whether the Quran had devoted any space for the theme of real utopia which is a modern concept.

This study found that the Quran owing to its totality, universality, as well as perpetuity as a holy text, perfectly fits for proposing an appropriate full plan for designing an ideal society for the whole humanity at all times and places. Though the word Utopia has not been mentioned as such or been directly alluded to, when compared to the standard known definitions and depictions of real utopia, it has been observed that the Quran is full of direct messages which promote the foundation of ideal communities. Besides, it is found that the Quran not only calls for establishing utopia, but even provides a blue print for an ideal society and that by organizing all of the social, economic, social and religious life in a perfect and ideal way.

As the Quran covers almost every single field of life including the social sciences, theology, and the natural sciences, further studies may investigate other modern theories in the light of the Quran though the new concepts are not literally mentioned in this Holy text.

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