

## **From political Islam to democrat Muslim: A case study of Rashid Ghannouchi’s influence on ABIM, IKRAM, AMANAH and DAP**

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**Abstract:** Rashid Ghannouchi has been known for his adherence to the idea of Islamic Democracy, which accepted democracy and its values as part of Islamic principles. For Muslims around the globe, Ghannouchi’s non-conventional ideas are seen as something new and apt for the modern democratic age, in particular his recent epistemological departure from conventional ‘Political Islam’ to the paradigm of the ‘Democrat Muslim’. Ghannouchi’s thoughts have been quoted by several Islamic organizations in Malaysia to legitimize their departure from the conventional Political Islamic discourse towards a more inclusive approach. Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (IKRAM) and Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH) are examples of those who substantiated their departure from conventional, legalistic Islamism discourse to the idea of Islamic democracy, freedom, power-sharing and continuous dialogues and engagements with others through Ghannouchi’s ideas. On the other hand, some leaders of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a local secular party, have also been courting Ghannouchi. This study attempts to measure the influence of Rashid Ghannouchi’s thoughts on the above mentioned organizations and parties and understand the motivations underlying the influence.

**Keywords:** ABIM, DAP, Ennahda Party, Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH), Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (IKRAM), Rashid Ghannouchi.

**Abstrak:** Rashid Ghannouchi makin dikenali ramai mutakhir ini melalui ide ‘Demokrasi Islam’ yang beliau perjuangkan. Ide tersebut antara lain,

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menerima proses demokrasi dan nilai-nilainya diterima sebagai sebahagian daripada prinsip-prinsip yang Islamik. Bagi kaum Muslimin di serata dunia, ide Ghannouchi yang tidak konvensional ini dilihat sebagai selari dengan dunia demokrasi moden, terutamanya penghijrahan epistemologinya daripada ‘Islam Politik’ kepada ‘Muslim Demokrat’. Pemikiran Ghannouchi juga telah dinukilkan oleh beberapa organisasi Islam sebagai legitimasi kepada penghijrahan mereka dari ‘Islam Politik’ ke pendekatan yang lebih inklusif. Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (IKRAM) dan Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH) adalah antara contoh organisasi yang telah menggunakan pemikiran Ghannouchi untuk memberikan nilai substantif kepada perubahan pendekatan mereka dari wacana Islam yang bersifat menghukum kepada ide Demokrasi Islam, kebebasan, perkongsian kuasa dan dialog berterusan dengan pihak yang berbeza dengan mereka. Di samping itu, sesetengah pemimpin parti sekular seperti Democratic Action Party (DAP) juga telah menukikan ide-ide Ghannouchi juga dengan tujuan berbeza. Kajian ini merupakan percubaan untuk melihat pengaruh pemikiran Ghannouchi terhadap organisasi-organisasi dan parti-parti politik yang telah disebutkan tadi, serta memahami faktor-faktor yang mendorong perubahan pendekatan tersebut.

**Kata Kunci:** ABIM, DAP, Ennahda Party, Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH), Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (IKRAM), Rashid Ghannouchi.

## Introduction

Born in the year 1941, Ghannouchi has been globally acknowledged as the “intellectual leader” and ideologue of Tunisia’s Ennahda Party. He is considered as one of the world’s leading figures in the area of contemporary Islamic thought. His ideas on the issues of Islam and modernity, democracy and secularism, relations between East and West, human rights and civil society have been quoted by Islamists, Muslim intellectuals and activists around the world (al-Tawwab, 2011). He was awarded the Chatham House Prize in 2012 by Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, alongside Tunisian president, Moncef Marzouki, for “the successful compromises each achieved during Tunisia’s democratic transition” (Chatam House, 2012).

The Jasmine Revolution of 2010, which brought the first spark of the current ongoing Arab Spring throughout the Middle East, created a new meaning to the life of Tunisians. However, the path was not easy. The counterrevolution movements that occurred mainly in Egypt had some effects on Tunisia too. The Ennahda Party believed that this revolution

was a gift and also a responsibility for all Tunisians. To achieve it, Ennahda believed that Tunisians must come together and thus national unity should be the main priority in maintaining the revolution (Lynch, 2011). Ennahda was well aware of the size of the mess caused not only by the two dictators (Habib Bourguiba and Zainel Abiden Ben Ali), but also by their predecessor, the French colonial power (Abrams, 2011).

Ennahda's commitment in assuring unity and democracy in Tunisia can be seen from their actions. After the first ever democratic public election, Ennahda had won majority of the votes, but refused to stand alone as the winner (Abrams, 2011). Instead, Ennahda established the "Troika" coalition with the alMuktamar Party or *Congrès pour la République* (CPR) led by Moncef Marzouq who was later elected as the first Tunisian president on 12 December 2011. The other member of the coalition was the alTakattol party or *démocratique pour le travail et les libertés* (FTDL) led by Mustapha Ben Jaafar. The fact that CPR won 29 seats and FTDL won only 20 seats did not prevent Ennahda from leveraging the power to be shared with them (Mzioudet, 2011). It was believed that most of the decisions taken by Ennahda were due to the approach inspired by Ghannouchi's thoughts and insights. As he had reiterated, Ghannouchi based most of his ideas on the foundations of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, the contextualization of Islamic thoughts, human dignity (*Karamah Insaniyah*) and *ijtihad* (reasoning) (Malik, 2014).

Far and further away to the eastern side of the globe, i.e., in Malaysia, Ghannouchi's ideas and approach have been admired by some, including non-Muslims. Ghannouchi's thoughts have been identified as a remedy for radical and extreme ideologies under the banner of Islam. Ghannouchi is seen as the moderate ideologue to harmonize between Islamic ideals and Western democracy. "Ghannouchism" has been adopted by several Islamic NGOs as well as the newly established Islamic party, Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH). Similarly, non-Islamic parties such as Parti Keadilan Rakyat (Keadilan) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) have also shown interest due to the belief that Ghannouchism will be able to reconcile the best of both worlds in Malaysian politics; hence moving towards a more harmonious and democratic Malaysia (Lim Kit Siang, 2015 & Parti Keadilan Rakyat, 2015).

This paper will descriptively look at the effects of Ghannouchism on Islamic NGOs that are known for their 'moderate' and democratic

approaches, that is, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM); and two different political parties, the Islamic AMANAH and the non-Islamic Democratic Action Party (DAP). These organizations' literature, press statements, activities and leaders' speeches will be examined via discourse analysis in order to study the impact of Ghannouchi's influence on them.

### **Ghannouchi's political approach**

The Ennahda Party adhered to the concept of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* (higher objectives of Shari'ah) that was extensively developed by Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, one of the scholars of the *al-Maghreb al'Arabi* (Western Arabian region, i.e., the Northern African region) and the author of a great treatise, *al-Muwafaqat*. The theory of *Maqāṣid* was then enshrined and translated into modern application by the late great Tunisian scholar of *Usul al-Fiqh*, Syeikh Tahir Ibn Ashur. According to the *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, any act, ruling or policy undertaken or adopted by Muslims must be in accordance with the highest aims of Shari'ah that are exemplified in the preservation and promotion of five major qualities in human life, i.e. life (and quality of life), religion or belief, mind or intellectuality, wealth and progeny (Ibn Ashur, 2006). Ibn Ashur added three more qualities: freedom (*al-Hurriyah*), justice (*al-'Adalah*) and equality (*al-Musawah*) (al-Ghannouchi, 1993). Whatever decisions that were taken by Ennahda are in compliance with this vision. For this *Maqāṣid* approach to be enshrined in the party's approach, Ennahda had to abide by the rule of gradual process (*sunnah al-tadarruj*) and the rule of priorities (*fiqh al-Awlawiyat*) (Malik, 2016, pp. 115-120).

It is based on this consideration that Ennahda believed that the preservation and maintenance of freedom and justice that were the direct results of the Jasmine Revolution should be top of the list of its priorities then and in the years to come. Ennahda also believed that it cannot deliver this responsibility alone (Lynch, 2011). However, Ennahda did not wish to establish an Islamic republic or an emirate. It also did not wish to implement a certain set of criminal punishments, neither at the present nor in the near future (Momin, 2012; Shadid, 2012).

As the leader cum ideologue of Ennahda, Ghannouchi strongly adhered to the approach of *Maqāṣid* in whatever decisions taken and to be taken by the party. Ghannouchi always insisted that Ennahda must serve

the Tunisians based on the firm ground that Tunisia is for all Tunisians and not for Muslims only. In achieving that, Ghannouchi made sure that Ennahda would always adhere firmly to the principles of freedom of politics, freedom of speech, freedom of ideas and all other values that constitute a civilized country (Muasher, 2011). For that matter, Ennahda itself is not restricted to a certain category of people with a particular appearance. Ideally *Maqāsid* requires that *Shura* (mutual consultation) and mutual respect (*tasamuh*) bind Ennahda together and uphold what is considered as Islamic duties and good deeds in the field of politics (Malik, 2014).

Echoing the prominent Algerian thinker, Malek Bennabi, Ghannouchi stressed that a comprehensive understanding of the essence of Islam would lead to the appreciation of democracy (al-Ghannouchi, 1993; 2000; 2009; 2012). Democracy, with an Islamic element would endow men with a value that surpasses merely political or social value, that is, a value that honors the dignity of human beings. In addition, according to Ghannouchi, democracy is but the upshot of a far-reaching historical evolution that the Europeans benefitted from Islamic civilization in creating profoundly enlightened conceptions of social values whose fruit was the emergence of liberal democracy (Tamimi, 2001).

However, the central theme in Ghannouchi's conception is that democracy is compatible with Islam, and that Muslims need to incorporate it into their political thought in order to institutionalize the concept of *shura* (al-Ghannouchi, 1993a). Ghannouchi asserted that more importantly, the inherent values of democracy as depicted during the time of the Prophet and his companions are implemented based on the principles, and not the model itself. He claimed that democracy is a Western version of Islam's *shura* (mutual consensus) that had been suspended since the era of the rightly guided Caliphs who had succeeded the Prophet until modern times (al-Ghannouchi, 1993b, p. 56). He further asserted that a true Muslim is one who adheres to democratic values - hence, a Muslim is, by default, a democrat (al-Ghannouchi, 2012).

Ghannouchi stressed that an Islamic model of democracy would not be restricted to granting man with political or social rights, but would also endow him with a value that surpassed every political or

social value, a value where the divine element within man is taken into consideration and not just the human or social aspect as in the other models (Al-Ghannouchi, 1993a; 1993b, p. 56). Similarly, Ghannouchi also emphasized on the idea of *muwatanah* (citizenship) for all citizens of Muslim countries (al-Ghannouchi, 2012, pp. 182-187). Ghannouchi insisted that the classical demarcation between Muslims and non-Muslims within a country is no longer applicable in modern nation-state countries. Citizens in a modern state should all be treated equally and must enjoy equal rights and responsibilities, due to the social contract, which had created the state initially.

In explaining Ennahda's approach to politics in Tunisia, Ghannouchi in many of his interviews, emphasized that inclusivity, democracy and openness are the main principles the party adhered to (Momin, 2012; Shadid, 2012; Lynch, 2011). He refused to be associated with radicalism, conservatism and any vision to establish a theocratic state in Tunisia. In contrast, he insisted on the need for power-sharing and collective leadership to bring the country forward instead of a monopoly or domination of power by any single party or movement that would eventually lead to dictatorship and autocracy (Lynch, 2011; Muasher, 2011; Abrams, 2011).

Ennahda has proven in many situations, even at the expense of losing its power in the government, that it will ensure that the spirit of the revolution would not be betrayed, and that Tunisian people will collectively rule the country by consensus. Dictatorship and any attempt at monopolizing power in Tunisia, according to Ghannouchi, are not only against the aspiration of the Tunisian people who brought down Ben Ali's regime through the Jasmine Revolution, but also contradict with Islam.

He insisted that power-sharing and political plurality is the ideal model for modern Muslim states (al-Turki, 2011; Lynch, 2011; The Majalla, 2011; Momin, 2012). In justifying his position on political plurality, Ghannouchi said that it is in alignment with the spirit of the Medina Charter initiated by Prophet Muhammad when he first arrived in Medina to establish the first Islamic state in Muslim history which comprised not only Muslims and the people of Medina, but also non-Muslims and non-Medinan people (Al-Ghannouchi, 2012, p. 187). Political pluralism according to Ghannouchi will deter dictatorship and

monopoly of power that has led to underdevelopment and calamities in many Muslim countries in the modern world (Al-Ghannouchi, 2012, pp. 101-106).

By adopting such a position, Ghannouchi had managed to move himself, as well as his party, away from the conventional political Islam's cardinal principle which is a mere struggle to achieve an Islamic state and implement Islamic law. Akin to his ideologue, Malek Bennabi, Ghannouchi views democracy not only as a vehicle to achieve other means, but also as a goal in itself to ensure rights, justice and freedom are instilled in the lives of Muslims.

### **Departing from political Islam to democrat Muslim**

Ennahda was formed as an Islamic party in 1981 under the name *Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique* (MIT) (Religious Renewal Movement). It was established with the aim of defending Tunisia's Islamic identity against the secular policies of state founder Bourguiba and his successor Ben Ali. Under Ben Ali, Ennahda was banned, and most of its leaders had either been sent to prison or left the country, escaping the death sentence (Munson Jr, 1986, pp. 3-4). The ban continued until the outbreak of the Jasmine Revolution in 2011 that witnessed the collapse of Ben Ali's regime. It was then that Ennahda leaders were able to return to Tunisia and bring the party back into the folds of the country's political process.

Due to the long stay outside Tunisia, most of Ennahda leaders' thinking and mindset had evolved, especially that of its leader and founder, Ghannouchi (Cesari, 2014, p. 189). Consequently, Ennahda rose again in Tunisia, no longer as a conservative Islamic party, but as a new, more inclusive and semi-secular political party with an Islamic identity. In its attempt to be more inclusive by embracing all Tunisians, Ghannouchi emphasized at Ennahda's 10th Party Conference in 2016 that 'Tunisia is more important than Ennahda'; hence it is imperative for Tunisia to form a united front in the fight against terrorism and to rebuild its economy (al-Jazeera, 2016).

The call for the separation between religious outreach (*da'wa*) activities from its political activities started from 2014 by Ghannouchi himself, but was not seriously brought into the internal debates of the party, until 2015 when Ghannouchi's political advisor, the UK-educated

Loufi Zitoun, in his interview with the Tunisian French journal '*La Presse*', insisted the need for separation between religion and politics in Tunisia. The interview had drawn critiques from the party's grassroots and the conservative elements within it, who feared that such separation will dilute the party's Islamic identity. The debate on the topic continued until finally a consensus emerged 'which the party refers to as 'specialization'- not a splitting up of the movement, but more of a division of labor. With this new approach, members of the party were urged to participate in social, cultural or religious organizations in civil society that are independent of the party, since the party will concentrate solely on politics (Lubben, 2016).

In its new outlook, Ennahda departs from the concept of its conventional image of 'political Islam', which carries negative connotations in the modern world. Instead, the party defines itself as a 'democratic political party with an Islamic frame of reference and a national platform'. The party justifies its Islamic position by claiming that it is highly committed to a more comprehensive embracement of a broader Islamic concept on the basis of the so-called '*Maqāṣid*' (the higher objectives of Shari'ah law) which guides the party. The 2016 conference arrived at a draft resolution which stated the importance of civil society in playing its role as corrective politics. This decision is in accordance to the new Tunisian post-revolution constitution which grants civil society far-reaching opportunities in the political decision-making process. The constitution also disallows party functionaries to hold office in civil society organizations to avoid any conflict of interest and to maintain the society's empowerment; thus the separation of powers (Lubben, 2016).

Another important aspect of Ghannouchi's political thoughts, which was crystallized in the political decisions made by Ennahda, is 'political inclusion' and consensus democracy instead of majority democracy. Ghannouchi, through Ennahda, has been consistently adhering towards such an approach to ensure that post-revolution Tunisia would not be dominated by one single power, which could eventually lead to dictatorship; hence repeating the dark days of Bourgeba and Ben Ali. Political inclusion too is highly regarded by Ghannouchi and Ennahda leaders as a tool to reinforce democratic institutions; thus they relentlessly call for unity and inclusion (Ounissi, 2016, pp. 5-7).



## Critiques on Ghannouchi and Ennahda

However, Ghannouchi's thoughts and Ennahda's position are not always welcomed and celebrated by all. Different parties from both the secularist and Islamist spectra have been criticizing Ghannouchi's ideas from different angles and viewpoints. Some interpreted Ghannouchi's approach with suspicion and considered the so-called 'rethinking Islamism' of Ennahda as but another political maneuver in a more defensive strategy, as part of a long-term, gradual project to eventually turn Tunisia into an Islamic conservative state akin to other Islamist states.

This was mainly the response of Tunisian secularists and leftists who always looked at any Islamists in general with skepticism. The basis of their suspicion against Ennahda is actually derived from the beginnings of the party. Ennahda was viewed by the Tunisian secularists as an 'illiberal party, an imported franchise of Egypt's 'conservative' Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which aimed to quite literally 're-orient' Tunisia towards the conservative Arab world and away from its relative openness to Europe and regionally progressive stances on women's rights (Marks, 2015, p. 2).

However, according to Marks (2015), her research on Ennahda had proven otherwise. Many of Ennahda leaders and activists view themselves ideologically and politically beyond and above the Egyptian MB, and rather look up to the Turkish AKP party as their model rather than the MB. Ghannouchi's consensus-based approach in dealing with political issues and in dealing with Ennahda's political rivals further ensures the consistency of Ennahda in its new position. Furthermore, Ennahda has compromised in many issues to maintain the unity of the people even at the expense of their power and position in the government, thus managing to prove their skeptics wrong, at least for the present.

On the other hand, Ounissi (2016) insisted that Ennahda's thoughts as adopted by Ghannouchi surpassed that of MB's, but still strongly adhered to the local context, which emphasized on '*Maqāsid al-Shari'ah*'. As for the issue of women's rights, Ennahda is known as the only party in Tunisia with the most women representatives in the parliament, including those who do not wear hijab. Furthermore, Ennahda's support for the idea of 'equality' between men and women in

the new constitution proves its commitment towards ensuring women's rights.

Unfortunately, to understand the position of Ghannouchism, one needs to understand the notion of 'ideological evolution'. A normal ideological evolution is usually derived when a new paradigm within a certain ideology shifts from its initial fundamental principles while maintaining its references and epistemological references with a degree of ideological coherence with the former. Ideologies are not fixed and they constantly interact with the context, either political or economic, or in many instances, the social environment within which they are produced and reproduced, suggesting that dogmatic and static adherence is often an exception, even in the supposedly dogmatic-based religious ideologies. Looking at Ghannouchi's political thoughts, exemplified by Ennahda's, the possibility and potential for ideological evolution has been forced to emerge when re-thinking Islamist politics and the ideology of Political Islam.

Based on the in-depth analysis of Ghannouchism, it is quite apparent that ideological debates which occurred between Ennahda's leaders and members have contributed to shape it, especially in the case of Ennahda's political decisions during the period of political crisis involving the party post-Jasmine Revolution. In sum, Ghannouchism could be perceived as the product of an important evolution that had taken place through the rethinking of religious categories and which is based on a solid and long tradition of Islamic scholarship of Maghreb which emphasizes greatly on the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*.

The emergence of Ghannouchism is not unexpected for those who have been observing the dynamism of contemporary Islamic movements and political Islam discourse in the last two decades. 'Moderate' and 'progressive' political Islam ideologues such as Ghannouchi himself, Hasan al-Turabi from Sudan, and Anwar Ibrahim from Malaysia, amongst others, were known for their adherence to a new paradigm of 'Islamism' as explained by el-Messiri by what he coined as the 'New Islamic Discourse' (*al-Khitab al-Islamiy al-Jadid*) (El-Messiri, 2003). However, this new discourse was initially not given substantial attention by many Islamic movements across the globe. Nevertheless, the emergence of AKP (*Adalet va Kalkinma Partisi*) of Turkey (or better known as Erdogan's party) as an unconventional and non-conservative

Muslim democrat party has given a boost to this new discourse. AKP is often quoted by many Islamic parties who try to emulate its non-conservative approach in politics by departing from their classical and sentimental calling for an Islamic State with Islamic laws of *hudud* (Osman, 2016, pp. 161-186). This discourse was later picked up by many Islamic movements, including the Islamic resistance HAMAS, in the occupied territory after the 2006 election which it won (Hroub, 2010, pp. 175-181).

Likewise in Malaysia, this new Islamic discourse was picked up by a few Islamists from different organisations. The failure of many Islamist parties with Islamist rhetoric has led some Islamists in Malaysia to reconsider their position and discourse. This new discourse and approach could be seen in specific amongst the moderates and progressives in the Islamic party PAS, who later left the party to establish a new moderate Islamic party called AMANAH; the Muslim youth organisation, ABIM; and the Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM), who in recent times would be happy to be known as Democrat Muslims rather than Islamists (Malik & Hasan, 2016). On the other hand, a secular-based party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) too has admired Ghannouchi's approach, although more for its political expediencies due to its relationship with the Islamic party (PAS), followed by its association with AMANAH, after PAS decided to sever its affiliation with DAP.

The ensuing section will critically examine the impact and influence of Ghannouchi's approach on these four organisations.

### **ABIM and Ghannouchism**

The very early efforts (in the early 70s) to bring in Islamism, or sometimes coined as 'political Islam', to Malaysia was carried out by a group of Muslim youths from an organization called '*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*' (ABIM). ABIM was founded in the year 1971 as a continuity to the famous campus-based Islamic student organization called Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia, or PKPIM (National Association of Muslim Students, Malaysia) (Abdul Malek, 2011). ABIM's formation was pivotal to Islamic revivalism in Malaysia, since it was ABIM which had introduced the general idea of change and *da'wah* (Islamic propagation), emphasizing the principle of *Syumuliyyah* (comprehensive understanding of Islam) which is the crux

of revivalism, to the Malaysian mainstream, although Islam has always been part of the Malaysian socio-political fabric prior to the founding of the organization (Abdullah, 1985; Anwar, 1987, p. 17).

In attempting to achieve its aim of promoting Islam with comprehensive understanding and implementation in the life of Malaysian Muslims, ABIM formulated its mission under two main Islamic principles: *tajdid* (renewal) and *Islah* (reform) of the Muslim society by imparting *da'wah* (call to Islam) and *tarbiyah* (process of education). ABIM activists picked up these ideals through their interaction with MB (Muslim Brotherhood) leaders, activists, and through ABIM activists who were educated abroad and had some exposure to MB's educational system. It was through ABIM activists that MB and the Sub-Continent *Jamaat-i-Islami* literatures were introduced to Malaysian audience (Manuty, 1989, pp. 73-74).<sup>1</sup> MB books were used widely in ABIM's internal discussions or study circles known as *usrah* (family) (Anwar Ibrahim, personal communication, June 13, 2014). ABIM had also managed to introduce other Islamic thoughts from various non-MB figures such as Syed Naquib al-Attas, Ismail al-Faruqi, Ali Shariati, Malik Bennabi, Muhammad al-Ghazali, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Siddiq Fadzil, personal communication, June 1, 2013).

However, it should be noted that ABIM's acceptance of differing Islamic views from the Middle East and the Sub-Continent was not in totally blind fashion. ABIM had been emphasizing on the need for contextualizing the Islamic method of change, and not wholly imitating any Middle-Eastern model, namely the Ikhwanic model. ABIM thus, as early as the 80s, had been calling for the embracement of '*Manhaj Malizi*' (the Malaysian method of change) (Shahran, 2007). It was through '*Manhaj Malizi*' that ABIM built its own framework of political activities and social works. *Manhaj Malizi* was an effective strategy for ABIM in getting its Islamic message across to Malay Muslims in Malaysia without introducing something radically different and at the expense of local cultures and traditions (Siddiq Fadzil, 1989, p. 4; 1992, p. 4).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the adoption of the moderate approach, which stressed on the importance of accommodating the context and local elements, is essentially similar to Ghannouchi's (Zulkifli Hassan, 2016, p. vi).<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Ghannouchi's ideas could visibly be seen in the writings of ABIM leaders and ABIM alumnus in, another sister NGO of ABIM called Wadah Pencerdasan Ummah (WADAH). WADAH leaders who were also ABIM's ideologues such as Siddiq Fadzil, Mohd Nor Manuty, Mohammad Azzam and others often quoted Ghannouchi's ideas and thoughts in their writing, speeches and interviews, supporting their opinions on the moderate way of implementing Islam in a multi-racial, multi-religious nation/society (Hasan, 2016). ABIM, had twice published an edited book on Ghannouchi based on articles written by ABIM leaders and activists. Zulkifli Hassan (2016, pp. 1-7), one of the leading figures in ABIM and the editor of the books on Ghannouchi agreed that Ghannouchism is the most appealing discourse to ABIM due to its moderation, less complications, and detachment from extremism and radicalism. Most of ABIM leaders find the justification for their political involvement in Malaysian politics by looking up to Ghannouchism, which served as their guiding light.

According to the former president of ABIM, Siddiq Fadzil, the major lesson ABIM had learned from Ghannouchi was his 'wisdom' in carrying out change. Unlike the conventional Islamic movements and Islamist figures that are usually seen as those who dogmatically want to implant their version of Islam unto others, Ghannouchi, according to Fadzil, is a proponent of dialogue and he derived his position from the spirit of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) which is 'the triangular of three major elements: revelation, rationality and reality'. Fadzil insisted that this was the major theme of ABIM and its sister organizations, namely WADAH, of which he currently is the president, and PKPIM, the student wing of ABIM (Siddiq Fadzil, personal communication, June 1, 2013).

Anwar Ibrahim, the former president of ABIM, contented that what is being touted as Ghannouchi's ideas were actually the stand taken by ABIM, especially during the time he was holding office in United Malays National Organization (UMNO), specifically during his term as the Deputy Prime Minister under the administration of the then Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Although Anwar left ABIM due to his political involvement in UMNO, it was ABIM's aspiration and spiritual guidance, which inspired his entire Islamization project within the government then. He also engaged many ABIM activists to support his Islamic agenda in UMNO from 1982.

Furthermore, according to Anwar Ibrahim, the discourse on Ghannouchi's Islamic democracy, governance, co-existence and others have been discussed in many of his speeches, writings and statements.<sup>4</sup> However, Anwar claimed that his tone was more neutral and was not as 'Islamic' as Ghannouchi's (Anwar Ibrahim, personal communication, June 13, 2014). This fact was actually mentioned by the late Abdel Wahab el-Messiri in 2003 in his discussion about 'the new Islamists'. Anwar Ibrahim was one of the names quoted by el-Messiri as the epitome of those who represented the new generation of Islamists to change the old and reaction-based thoughts and discourse of the Islamists.<sup>5</sup>

### **IKRAM and Rashid Ghannouchi**

Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia, or simply known as IKRAM is a legacy of the Islamic revivalism phenomenon in Malaysia during the 1970s. It had its roots in the Malaysian Muslim students' movement in the UK known as the Islamic Representative Council (IRC) established towards the end of 1975; and a group of Muslim Brotherhood-oriented Malaysian students in Egypt known as the '*Misriyyun*' in the 70's and 80's (Maszlee Malik, 2012, 9). In 1988, the IRC and '*Misriyyun*' members realized that there was a need to rethink their position and roles to be able to effectively contribute to the *society* (Manan, 2009, p. 154). After a lengthy discussion with other Islamic organizations, mainly ABIM and PAS, the leadership arrived at a decision for the best of all involved – the formation of a new NGO. On 27 July 1990, the *Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) was registered. JIM claimed to be a moderate and professional body (Sungib, 1991, p. 20).

However, after a decade of activism and involvement with society, JIM took a leapfrog shift. From 2003 onwards, there were series of discussions between JIM and other like-minded Islamic organizations to establish an umbrella body to lead the change and reform towards an Islamic agenda in Malaysia with the aim of consolidating all resources under one organization. According to its first president, Dr Mohd Parid Sheikh Ahmad, the transformation of JIM to IKRAM with other like-minded 'platforms' was part of its ideal in creating a mass-based da'wah movement (Mohd Parid Sheikh Ahmad, personal communication, January 31, 2013). Finally, IKRAM was registered on 22 October 2010. Similar to its predecessor JIM, IKRAM is proudly consistent of their approach towards the change process: a 'bottom-up' method which

starts with the transforming of individuals, family and society, followed by a reforming of the government. IKRAM also persistently emphasized on its non-violence, *da'wah* (calling people) and consensus approaches, among others, as its means for change. Within such a framework for change, IKRAM describes itself as an Islamic organization that embraces *syumuliyah* (comprehensive) and *mu'asiroh* (contemporary), which can be summarized by these traits (Zaid Kamaruddin, 2011, p. 34).

Where IKRAM is concerned, the embracement of Ghannouchi's idea of the Maqāsidic approach came a bit late despite the long-established communication and relation between IKRAM's leading figures and Ghannouchi during their IRC days in the UK (Shahrul Aman Mohd Saari & Dzulkefly Ahmad, personal communication, September 27, 2016). Ghannouchi was invited to many events organized by the IRC (which later, in 1989, changed its name to Majlis Shura Muslimun (MSM)). Furthermore, Ghannouchism was also introduced to IKRAM during the time they were known as JIM through another prominent Islamist figure from the UK, Azzam Tamimi, who did his PhD thesis on Ghannouchi (Tamimi, 2001) and had been frequently invited by JIM to Malaysia since 2000.

It was through Tamimi and his book that most JIM members started to slowly accept Ghannouchi's approach towards democracy. However, the discourse of *Maqāsid*, which is the crux of Ghannouchism, was not really explicitly mentioned by JIM then (Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh, personal communication, March 10, 2013). In spite of its professional outlook, appearance and its engagement with other secular and non-Muslim organizations, JIM's internal major discourse then was a rather conventional Islamism which aimed towards the implementation of Islamic Shari'ah rules (Malik, 2012, p. 17).

IKRAM's adoption of the new framework could be seen after the 1998 Reformasi in Malaysia. Compared to other Islamic organizations, IKRAM had been known for its active involvement with other non-Islamic, non-Muslim and secular civil society organizations - Gerakan Mansuhkan ISA (GMI), BERSIH, Gerakan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM), and other loose coalition of civil society organizations. IKRAM too had been given the leadership of the coalition due to its members' (many of whom are professionals) commitment and qualities. However, Ghannouchism had never been explicitly mentioned as its guidance or

inspiration. The substantive embracement of Ghanouchism by IKRAM's members was actually caused by the development of the Arab Spring. Ennahda's ability to keep the revolution and the country united had opened many eyes, including IKRAM's leaders and members.

IKRAM leaders then started to establish a much stronger communication with Ghannouchi and Ennahda and to adopt a more substantial Maqāshidic-based approach and thoughts. The culmination of this relationship was the *Maqāshid* event organized along with the assembly of IKRAM core members (Perhimpunan Ahli Teras IKRAM) in 2015, where Ghannouchi was invited to deliver a keynote speech. Due to the critical political situation, Ghannouchi was unable to attend but he appeared on Skype instead. A representative of Ennahda was sent on behalf of Ghannouchi to the event and other IKRAM events to share the Maqāshidic approach of Ennahda and Ghannouchism. The IKRAM president, a graduate of Zaytounah University in Tunisia, quoted Ghannouchi and Maqāshid many times in his speeches. This new approach of IKRAM could be seen in IKRAM's vision to establish '*Negara Rahmah*' (a Nation of Virtuous) in Malaysia.

The '*Negara Rahmah*' concept was formulated by IKRAM as part of its shift from its initial typical Islamism position to a more multi-racial, multi-religious society which embodied a friendlier version of Islamism (Zaid Kamaruddin, personal communication, March 26, 2015). In searching for a credible epistemological ground for its '*Negara Rahmah*' (a Nation of Virtuous), IKRAM discovered that Ghannouchism essentially fitted into its '*Negara Rahmah*' framework (Mohd Parid Sheikh Ahmad, personal communication, January 31, 2015). Given the general principles from the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions of spreading goodness, forbidding evil and upholding good moral values, IKRAM is dynamically playing its role towards crystalizing the goals of '*Negara Rahmah*'.

According to its president, Mohd Parid Sheikh Ahmad, *Negara Rahmah* which IKRAM aspires to achieve is:

1. "A country referred to in the Holy Quran as "that which prospers and receives the blessings of God";
2. A country based on the sovereignty of Allah the Exalted;



3. A country in which its leadership is just and God-conscious. The leaders uphold the Shari'ah at all times;
4. A country that honors the Will of Allah and His Messenger;
5. A country that implements the stipulations of Shari'ah;
6. A country which establishes *Maqāṣid Shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) as the foundation of governance and administration;
7. A country that oversees its citizens based on the principle of justice and equity amongst mankind;
8. A country which ensures the rights of its citizens from all walks of life regardless of religion and ethnicity, based on the grounds of Shari'ah and *Maqāṣid Shari'ah*;
9. A country that practices administration based on syura (consultation and negotiation) and unanimity and allows the citizens to voice out their views and choose the government in accordance to the principles of the Constitution;
10. A country which ensures the message and *da'wah* of Islam is upheld and places it as the main feature of the government's administration;
11. A country which ensures good governance and places the prosperity of its citizens as the main goal of its existence."

(Ahmad, 2014, pp. 18-19).

Similarly, IKRAM believes in the processes of *islah* (reform) and *taghyir* (change) which are based on the principles of Islamic faith of promoting justice, freedom and good governance as the highest purpose of *Shari'ah* (*Maqāṣid Shari'ah*) in societal and state-level reformation, and these have been the main motivations for '*Negara Rahmah*' (Wan Subki Wan Saleh, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

### **AMANAH and Ghannouchism**

Parti Amanah Negara (National Trust Party) or AMANAH was established on 16 September 2015. The party was a transformation of the existing Malaysia Workers' Party (Parti Pekerja Malaysia) founded

in January 1978 which was handed over on 31 August 2015 to a group of progressive Islamists known as Gerakan Harapan Baru (Kasnoon, 2015) mainly comprising outcast leaders of the Pan-Islamic Party Malaysia (PAS) and other members of like-minded Islamic organizations, mainly from IKRAM and ABIM. The party was launched on September 16 in conjunction with Malaysia Day after the Registrar of Societies approved its new name, with at least 35,000 members (Ging, 2015). AMANAH was established, according to its founders, to bring the ideals of Democrat Muslims in bringing a new future to Malaysian politics.

The founders of AMANAH were mostly known as the moderates and the progressive voice of PAS since the year 1998, and have been part of the backbone of Pakatan Rakyat (PR), the post-2008 General Election opposition coalition. However, the bond of the opposition parties or PR was tested when PAS leaders opposed the “Kajang move” initiated by PKR in the year 2014 to replace PKR’s Selangor Menteri Besar, Khalid Ibrahim. The decision made by the PAS president had also caused a split within the Islamic party itself because of differences in opinion amongst its leadership. The conservatives in PAS wanted to distance the party from PR while another faction wanted to strengthen the coalition (Samad, 2016, pp. 95-142).

The culmination of the skirmish and feud within PAS ranks happened during the 61<sup>st</sup> PAS Muktamar (general assembly) between 4-6 June 2015. The internal election of the party to choose its leadership witnessed the ugliest fights in the party history, where rampant backstabbing and character assassination of certain individuals took place.<sup>6</sup> As a result of dirty tactics and well-planned strategy employed by the supporters of the conservatives, they wiped out the progressive component of the Islamic party *en bloc* in the election.

The progressives felt that not only had they been defeated, but their reputation and dignity had also been tarnished given the accusations launched by the conservatives on them. They were left without any position in the party and saddled with all the negative labels which made it impossible for them to work together with the new leadership of the party who seemed to acknowledge the dirty politicking which happened prior to and during the Muktamar (Samad, 2016, pp. 119-130). Due to this, most of the PAS progressive leaders decided to venture into a new

vehicle to continue their struggle for political reform in the form of something that is more inclusive and encompassing.

That particular Muktamar also served as the avenue for the conservatives to call the party to cut its ties with the DAP, another Pakatan Rakyat component, due to many issues involving the PAS president and DAP. The rift between the PAS president with the DAP started with the president's personal decision to table a private bill in Parliament to amend Act 355 on Shari'ah Courts' (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965<sup>7</sup> without first consulting the rest of the PR coalition members. Prior to the Muktamar, a war of words had taken place between the PAS president and DAP leaders in the media. The feud peaked when the Muktamar passed a proposal by the Islamic party's *Dewan Ulama* (Scholars' Assembly) to cut ties with the DAP without any debate from the Muktamar representatives. This incidence brought about the end of PR with the declaration of the death of PR by DAP leaders just after the Muktamar ended (Malaysiakini, 2015).

According to AMANAH's vice president, Mujahid Yusof Rawa, Amanah's approach to politics is based on the ideals of inclusivity and its approach is to promote '*Islam yang ramah-tamah dan bukan yang marah-marah*' (Islam that is based on kindness and friendliness, and not anger and fury).<sup>8</sup> Dzulkefly Ahmad, the director of AMANAH's strategic centre asserts that AMANAH was born out of the need for change in Malaysia as desired by Malaysians due to the miserable economic and political situation in Malaysia (Ahmad, 2015). The intolerable corruption carried out by the ruling party, especially through the 1MDB scandal involving the Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, has made Malaysians wish for a replacement for the existing government. According to Dzulkefly, AMANAH, which stands on the core principles of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, needs to be part of the people's will for a real change towards a better Malaysia (Dzulkefly Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

AMANAH believes that the party's guiding principles are derived from a deep understanding of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic Law) which are aimed for attaining the well-being of citizens by upholding the principles of justice, rule of law, freedom and good governance (Ahmad, 2016, pp. 15-65). The party leaders also believe that Shari'ah teachings encompass clean governance,

corruption-free government, well-being, accountability, justice, and harmonious living among citizens. They boastfully claim that they are emulating Tunisian Ghannouchi's approach to politics which firmly adheres to the principles of freedom of politics, freedom of speech, freedom of thought and all the other values that constitute a civilized country (Muhammad Sabu, personal communication, October, 7, 2015; Dzulkefly Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2016; Mujahid Yusuf Rawa, personal communication, October 7, 2015; Salahudin Ayub, personal communication, March 18, 2016; Hasanudin Yunos, personal communication, May 18, 2016; Anuar Tahir, personal communication, September 5, 2015 and Ahmad Awang, personal communication, March 26, 2016).

In an interview, the party president, the well-known stalwart politician, Mohammad Sabu, insisted that the party is heading towards a more civilization-based Islam, and towards the 'leadership of the competent pious' (*Kepimpinan Muttaqin*) unlike his former party PAS which took a more legalistic approach to politics (Muhammad Sabu, personal communication, October 7, 2015). The *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah* framework brought by Ghannouchi which is currently adopted by AMANAH has given a moral boost to the party in gaining legitimacy to justify their departure from their former radical views on Islam and Islamism.

### **DAP and Ghannouchism**

The Democratic Action Party, or widely known as DAP, is a secular party that strives to establish a peaceful and prosperous social democracy which can unite disparate races and diverse religions and cultures based on social democratic ideals of the "Malaysian Malaysia" concept by forging the Malaysian race with universal moral values; offering equal access and opportunity; democratic governance and rule of law; creating wealth and distributing wealth equitably; and fighting against corruption.<sup>9</sup>

Established on 11 October 1965, DAP has been known for its forbearance in upholding its fight for a secular Malaysia with equality for all and free from corruption. Since its establishment, DAP was never been known for its interest in Islamism; in fact, the party has always been seen as the antithesis of Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS).

However, the party's serious engagement with the Islamists started only after the incident of Reformasi in the year 1998. The Barisan Alternatif (BA) was formed as a coalition uniting different opposition political parties with different ideologies and backgrounds, consisting of Parti Keadilan (KeADILan), PAS, DAP and Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia (PSRM). The BA coalition aimed to bring down the ruling BN government which had been labelled as corrupt and known for grievous misconduct. The BA coalition managed to create a great impact on Malay voters mainly in the 1999 General Election, which witnessed the falling of Terengganu to PAS, while Kelantan remained under PAS rule.<sup>10</sup> This opposition coalition did not last long due to the declaration of the 'Islamic State' agenda by PAS before the 2004 general election, which led to the dissolution of the first ever strongest opposition coalition in Malaysian political history.

Despite the coalition's short lifespan, DAP leaders and activists had learned and experienced something new, which was that they could work together with Islamists in both PAS and KeADILan. This led towards the emergence of a new breed of DAP leaders known as the 'Reformasi generation' which later on became the bridge between DAP and other Islamists (Liew Chin Tong, personal communication, January 4, 2016).

However, the result of the 2008 election had opened a new chapter of relationship between DAP and other opposition parties, especially PAS who was once considered a distrustful partner. The agreement among the opposition parties to fight the ruling BN on one-to-one basis in every constituency led to the loss of the two-third majority held by the ruling party for the very first time since 1969.<sup>11</sup> The success of denying BN a two-third majority was seen by the opposition coalition as a possible step for them to capture the federal government in the subsequent election. Such a belief pushed the opposition to establish an alliance known then as 'Pakatan Rakyat' (People's Coalition). This loose alliance was religiously legitimized by PAS as '*Tahalluf Siyasi*' (Political alliance) based on certain religious arguments presented by their Dewan Ulama (Clerics Council). This new chapter was a beginning for DAP to understand more about political Islam which had been the crux of their new alliance not only with PAS, but also with certain individuals in PKR.

The alliance opened the eyes of DAP leaders and activists to the reality that a substantial segment of the Malay Muslim population adhere to their religion not only as a ritual-spiritual belief, but also that they try to live up to their religion's values and rulings in the realms of politics and economy. In its attempt to understand the popular religiosity trends amongst Malaysian Muslims and the inclination towards Islamism, DAP moved a step forward by sending its delegates to meet Malaysian students studying Islamic studies in both Jordan and Egypt. As part of the mission, the delegates also initiated several meetings with MB leaders, as well as other Islamists and experts in Political Islam studies in both Jordan and Egypt in April 2015.

Subsequently, they also sent a delegation, consisting of those who had met the MB leaders earlier, to Tunisia to meet Ghannouchi in October the same year. Describing the visit as fruitful, DAP senior leader, Lim Kit Siang described the visits as having the objectives of learning from leaders in these countries their insights and vision on what constitutes a good society and the future; to seek inspiration from the values and principles of justice, freedom, equality and human dignity which founded Islam 1,400 years ago; and to give these values and principles fresh meaning in the new age instead of just recreating the structures, institutions, and laws and regulations suited for a particular context or situation in the seventh century.<sup>12</sup> Kit Siang also believed that those Islamic values and principles have in modern times been embedded in concepts of human rights; democratization; the rule of law; accountability, transparency and good governance. In his tweet on 13 October 2015, Kit Siang praised Ghannouchi as a visionary leader of Tunisia.<sup>13</sup>

Zairil Khir (2016) asserted that the visit to Tunisia was aimed at understanding Ennahda's and Ghannouchi's Islamic position and ground which had led them to achieve the power-sharing and extensive reconciliation with their secularist rivals.<sup>14</sup> As far as DAP is concerned, the party and its leaders are still puzzled with some of the arguments brought forward by PAS and other like-minded anti-DAP Islamists against the party's position. DAP hopes that a better understanding of Ennahda's position would help them in dealing with those who despise the party, mainly comprising Malay Muslims in Malaysia. This is important for DAP to be able to ensure the coexistence of multi-racial Malaysians since it had managed to get the trust of a huge percentage of

the non-Muslim population in Malaysia in the 13<sup>th</sup> general election. The continuous hatred towards it based on prejudice and misconceptions regarding certain religious arguments will only jeopardize the vision of harmonious coexistence of the Malaysian community in the future. This motivated the DAP to engage with Ghannouchi and Ennahda. They believe that Ghannouchi's Islamic discourse would be able to bring Malaysians together without the Islamists and Muslims compromising on their beliefs (Lim Kit Siang, personal communication, January 4, 2016).

However, Zairil argued that such a move does not imply that DAP wishes to adopt either Ghannouchism or Islam as part of its struggle since DAP is still a secular party. The party adheres strongly to its core ideals of social democracy and its struggle to uphold the secular nature of Malaysia and its legal system. What the party hoped from the engagement with Ghannouchism is that they could find a middle way to balance between the party adherence to the secular politics and their alliance with parties from an Islamic background in the opposition pact (previously the Pakatan Rakyat, and currently the Pakatan Harapan).

Wan Hamidi, one of the Malay strategists in DAP also insisted that Ghannouchism resonates with what DAP is struggling for, since Ghannouchi himself had declared upon his return to Tunisia that Ennahda will never aim to establish an 'Islamic State' in Tunisia, and not impose Shari'ah law in Tunisia (Wan Hamidi, personal communication, May 11, 2012). On the other hand, Lim Kit Siang too, had been quoting Ghannouchi on the separation between religion and public administration since 2001, urging the Islamic party PAS, DAP's partner then, to adopt the idea.<sup>15</sup>

### **Comparison and contrast**

The euphoria towards Ghannouchism in Malaysia amongst the 'moderate' Islamist movements and certain political parties (AMANAH and DAP) was mostly caused by their position towards certain classical approaches of the conventional Islamist movements. Issues like the re-establishment of '*Dawlah Islamiyyah*' (Islamic State); *Hudud* (Islamic criminal punishment law); the relationship between Islamists and secularists and non-Muslims; and domination of power were amongst the issues of concern in the afore-mentioned groups.

As for ABIM, IKRAM and AMANAH (all of which consist mainly of former PAS members), these visions, which were their ‘cup of tea’ in the past, should be revisited and replaced with more realistic and substantive ones. In their soul-searching, they would realise that Ghannouchism possesses and offers all the alternatives, founded on a more convincing Islamic ground and framework, which they need.

The ideas of Islamic democracy, *hurriyah* (freedom), *al-Muwatanah* (equal citizenship for both Muslims and non-Muslims), power-sharing and continuous dialogues and engagements were the new discourse brought up by Ghannouchi as remedies for the conventional Islamists discourse which frightened away many from the Islamists. As for ABIM, its *Manhaj Malizi* is the closest Islamic approach to Ghannouchi’s. Moreover, this new discourse espoused by Ghannouchi, as he emphasized, was based on the higher objectives of Shari’ah (*Maqāṣid al-Shari’ah*), which had been the beacon of ABIM’s moderate approach since the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition, ABIM, IKRAM and AMANAH share similar epistemological sources and aspirations, thus making their inclination towards Ghannouchi’s easier and stronger. The culmination of the agreement of the three organizations in adopting and promoting Ghannouchism can be seen in the event organized by a pro-AMANAH NGO called Nunji on 15 August 2015. In its first seminar on ‘*Fiqh al-Muwatanah*’, not only were Ghannouchi’s ideas engaged and heavily discussed, Ennahda was also represented by Dr Syed Muhammad Ferjani, a Central Committee member of the party who represented Ghannouchi due to the latter’s inability to physically attend the seminar. Top leaders and veterans from AMANAH (represented by most of its leaders), ABIM (represented by its former president, Dr Siddiq Fadzil), and IKRAM (represented by its president, Dr Ahmad Parid Syeikh Ahmad) were together at the seminar, echoing many of Ghannouchi’s political ideals. All agreed in a consensus to build a more contextual political Islamic discourse based on the ideals of *Maqāṣid al-Shari’ah* according to the multi-racial, multi-ethnic Malaysian context (Harun, 2016).

However, that was not the case for DAP. Since DAP is a secular (and non-Muslim dominated) party, it would not make Ghannouchism appeal to the party policies. DAP’s main intention was only to understand the



other facet of Islamism for them to find some mutual ground that they could agree on, for their political future in Malaysia. DAP is very aware of both the strong impact of Malaysia's Islamization project in the 1990s which had led more Malay Muslims towards conservatism and also the fact that they (DAP) cannot ignore this reality.

However, in facing this, DAP needs partners and friends amongst the Islamists for a healthier engagement and co-existence. The party's experience with PAS after the 2008 election through PR had taught them that there are many other mutual interests which exist between DAP and PAS as an Islamist party. Hence, they want that common good to prevail as the major uniting discourse that can keep Malaysians from all walks of life together; and they found this in Ghannouchism. Their effort to understand more of Ghannouchism had pushed them to visit and meet Ghannouchi himself in Tunisia.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To conclude, Ghannouchi's ideas which had been translated into reality through Ennahda have managed to push certain Islamic organizations in Malaysia to depart from their initial 'classical' Political Islamic vision and discourse to move towards a more inclusive approach of Islamism. Likewise, Ghannouchi's thoughts were also echoed by some secular politicians in Malaysia, as a remedy to what they perceived as 'conservative' Islamic political views adopted by the Political Islamists in the 1990s and also currently.

Based on the case studies of two Islamic organizations (ABIM and IKRAM), and two political parties (AMANAH and DAP), it is clear that for ABIM, IKRAM and AMANAH (whose members mainly consist of former PAS members), issues like the re-establishment of '*Dawlah Islamiyyah*' (Islamic State), *Hudud* (Islamic criminal punishment law), relationship between Islamists and secularists as well as non-Muslims, and domination of power are among the issues (which used to be their 'cup of tea' in the past) that have been revisited and replaced with a more realistic and substantive approach derived from Ghannouchism. These include the ideas of Islamic democracy, *hurriyah* (freedom), *al-Muwatanah* (equal citizenship for both Muslims and non-Muslims), power-sharing and continuous dialogues and engagements.

As for the DAP, Ghannouchi's thoughts appeal to neither the party policies nor its vision, given its position as a secular (and non-Muslim dominated) party. However, DAP found Ghannouchism as the other facet of Islamism in which they could find some common grounds for the purpose of their political future in Malaysia. Acknowledging the strong reality of religiosity of the majority of Malay Muslims in Malaysia, DAP had discovered that Ghannouchism would be that common ground which can help the party to work with any Islamists and Muslims who subscribe to them; unlike in the case of the previous conventional version of Political Islamism which DAP might find difficult to agree with, based on the party's secular principles and position. However, this is not an indicator of change in DAP's position on its core tenet of secularism.

However, to say that Ghannouchism was the influencing factor for the change in the position of the aforementioned Islamic organizations (ABIM and IKRAM) as well as AMANAH would not be an accurate assessment either. The adoption of Ghannouchi's concepts was only part of substantiating the existing discourse of these organizations which were already evolving due to the socio-political and socio-cultural context of Malaysia. ABIM, in this case, was far more advanced than Ghannouchi himself due to its embracement of *Manhaj Malizi*. This was mainly the result of the conceptualization process in ABIM itself, due to the presence of thinkers and social scientists within ABIM. Furthermore, the active involvement of ABIM's leaders and individuals in the government while Anwar Ibrahim was part of the ruling government had made ABIM more practical and responsive towards reality.

But, this was not the case with both IKRAM and AMANAH. Despite their unprecedented involvement and engagement with other non-Islamists and secularists partners, and their new ideas which went beyond classical and conventional Islamism, they failed to come forth with any substantial framework or conceptualization that is based on a coherent philosophical foundation. This clearly indicates that the leaders of both IKRAM and AMANAH are not capable of producing their own concepts, unlike ABIM. But even then, ABIM's formulation of *Manhaj Malizi* was not considered a ground-breaking phenomenon since it failed to convince others to embrace it. In fact, IKRAM and AMANAH were pushed to resort to Ghannouchi's thoughts to justify their epistemological shift, instead of embracing ABIM's.

Nonetheless, Ghannouchi's thoughts and Ennahda's position have indeed proven to be useful in generating the evolution process for contemporary Islamic political thoughts which is part of the natural process for the development of any political ideology. With regards to the Malaysian political arena specifically, it can be said that Ghannouchism has become a catalyst in positioning Islamic values to the front, thus creating a more inclusive and accessible framework which functions as a viable bridge between those who adhere to Islamic values and their secular as well as non-Muslim counterparts.

## Endnotes

1. Such as Syed Qutb's famous exegesis, *Fi Dhilal al-Quran* (Under the Shade of al-Quran) and Fathi Yakan's book '*Madha Ya'ni Intimail lil Islam*' (What's the Meaning of my Affiliation to Islam).
2. In explaining the importance of *Manhaj Malizi*, Siddiq Fadzil said: "Realizing that Malaysia is not Egypt, neither is it Pakistan or Iran or any other country in the world, as Malaysia is Malaysia with its unique characteristics, we are convinced that Malaysian problems should be solved through the experience of Malaysia." (Siddiq Fadzil, 1992: 4).
3. According to Ghazali (2016: 29), ABIM was the first organization to invite al-Ghannouchi to Malaysia in the year of 2002 to deliver a keynote address at ABIM's 32<sup>nd</sup> *Muktamar* (Annual General Assembly). Several events were organized by ABIM then to expose Malaysians to Ghannouchism, especially on his approach towards democracy and governance. Ghazali emphasized that ABIM's method of approach has always been closer to Ghannouchi even before Malaysians largely knew it.
4. See for example: Anwar Ibrahim (1996) & Anwar Ibrahim (2006).
5. El-Messiri, Abdelwahab (2003). "*Towards a New Islamic Discourse*", four series article published on July 17, 2003. Retrieved from <[http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article\\_C&cid=1153698300016&pagename=Zone-English-Discover\\_Islam%2FDIELayout](http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1153698300016&pagename=Zone-English-Discover_Islam%2FDIELayout)>. Access Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009.
6. The moderates i.e. progressives, or the pro-PR, were labeled as *Jebon* (mongoose), Parasites, Liberals, Secularists, Pluralists, *anti-Shari'ah* and *anti-Ulama* (religious scholars); while their pictures often became the subject of smear campaigns of the conservatives in the social media. (Khalid Samad, 2016: 113-116).
7. The act can be retrieved from this link: <http://www.agc.gov.my/Akta/Vol.%208/Act%20355.pdf>

8. Mujahid Yusuf Rawa's upon the declaration of the establishment of Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH), at Hotel Istana, Kuala Lumpur on the 31 August 2015.
9. See DAP's vision and mission at: <http://dapmalaysia.org/en/about-us/vision-mission/our-objectives/>.
10. BA managed to secure 45 seats out of the whole 193 parliamentary seats.
11. BN secured only 95 out of the 144 seats in the parliament, which constituted only 65.97% of the parliament in 1969, and in 2008, BN only managed to secure 140 from the total 222 seats in the parliament, which was equal to 63.06%.
12. Remarks by Lim Kit Siang at the Inaugural Lim Kit Siang lecture on "Democratisation of the Economy: A Muslim Democrat and Social Democrat response" at Parkroyal Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at 10 pm
13. See [http://gramlove.co/media.php?id=1094707049887590371\\_2198732712](http://gramlove.co/media.php?id=1094707049887590371_2198732712).
14. Opening Speech by Zairil Khir Johari, in Forum on: "Can Islamists be Liberals?", at Concorde Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, 23 January 2016 at 10:30 am.
15. He was quoted saying: "A prominent contemporary Islamic political thinker, Rashid Al-Ghannouchi however regards such Islamist views not only as an obstacle to democratisation, but to progress and development as a whole. He propounds the concept of *ad-dini* (the religious, the sacred or the absolute) and *as-siyasi* (the political, the profane or the relative) and the *Faraghat* theory - the idea that Islam includes faraghat (i.e.space) or areas left for humans to fill in accordance with the respective needs and exigencies of time and space." "Ghannouchi observes that no disputes ever erupted among the early Muslims in matters pertaining to the first category, *ad-dini*, that is, in matters of *'aqida* (faith), *'ibadah* (worship) or *akhlaq* (morality). But, they disagreed over matters pertaining to the second category, *as-siyasi*, that is on how to administer political affairs, on how to manage disputes and resolve problems pertaining to public office, and on the qualifications and powers of rulers." (Lim Kit Siang, 2001).

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