Cooperation or Competition: The Rhetoric of Rāshid al-Ghannūshī on Pluralism

Abstract

Though not a novel problem, the issue of pluralism in the current global scenario is engaging the Muslim scholarship profoundly. Since the very inception of Islam, Muslims confronted and responded to a large number of religio-ethnic and political varieties. Nonetheless, in the modern global era, experiencing current contexts and recent developments, the problem of pluralism has attained tremendous centrality, and so has its various dimensions (political, religious, ethnic, lingual, etc.). Keeping this in view, pluralism, therefore, is being continuously visited and revisited by the Muslim scholars, thinkers and movements alike. Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, the founder and primary ideologue of *al-Nahḍah*, like others, is heavily engaged in making his 'activist-intellectual' contribution to solve many questions related to pluralism. His own practical endeavors coupled with his various academic articles, especially *Participation of Islamists in a Non-Islamic Government*, will be carefully scrutinized to explore his reading on Pluralism.

The current paper, through analytical, objective, and historical perspectives (and in the context of post-Arab Spring atmosphere) mainly attempts to understand the approach of Rāshid al-Ghannūshī *vis-à-vis* Pluralism. The study also tries to find out that on what grounds and what sort of motivations and contestations made Ghannūshī to favour the theory of 'coexistence' and 'cooperation' among the various political identities. After a careful exploration of the subject, some of the important conclusions are drawn in the concluding section of the paper.

Keywords: Pluralism, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, Islam, Participation, Government, Arab Spring

Muhammed Dawood Sufi

PhD, Independent Researcher, Jammu and Kashmir, India

İşbirliği veya Rekabet:
Çoğulculuk Üzerine Raşid Gannuşi Retoriği

Özet

Yeni bir sorun olmasa da, mevcut küresel senaryoda çoğulculuk konusu Müslüman öğrenimini derinden etkilemektedir. İslam'ın kuruluşundan bu yana Müslümanlar çok sayıda dindar-etnik ve politik çeşitlilikle yüzleşmişler ve bunlara cevap vermişlerdir. Bununla birlikte modern küresel çağda, mevcut bağlamları ve son gelişmeleri tecrübe eden çoğulculuk sorunu muazzam bir merkezileşmeye ve dolayısıyla çeşitli boyutlara (siyasi, dini, etnik, dil vb.) ulaşmıştır. Bunu göz önünde bulundurmakla birlikte çoğulculuk, Müslüman alimler, düşünürler ve benzer hareketler tarafından sürekli olarak ele alınmaktadır. Diğerleri gibi El-Nahḍah'ın kurucusu ve önde gelen kuramcısı Raşid Gannuşi çoğulculukla ilgili birçok soruyu çözmek için büyük ölçüde 'eylemci-entelektüel' katkıda bulunmaktadır. Başta *İslami olmayan bir hükümete İslamcıların katılımı* (Participation of Islamists in a Non-Islamic Government) olmak üzere çeşitli akademik makaleleriyle birlikte kendi pratik çabaları, Çoğulculuk konusundaki okumalarını keşfetmek için dikkatlice incelenecektir. Mevcut makale temel olarak analitik, nesnel ve tarihsel perspektifler (ve Arap Baharı sonrası atmosfer bağlamında) aracılığıyla Çoğulculuk karşısında Raşid Gannuşi'nin yaklaşımını anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda hangi motivasyon ve çekişmelerin neye dayanarak Gannuşi'yi çeşitli siyasi kimlikler arasında 'birlikte yaşama' ve 'işbirliği' teorisini desteklemeye ittiğini bulmaya çalışmaktadır. Makalenin sonuç bölümünde dikkatli bir araştırmadan sonra gün yüzüne çıkan bazı önemli bulgular yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çoğulculuk, Raşid Gannuşi, İslam, Katılım, Hükümet, Arap Baharı

العمل المشترك أو المنافسة: بلاغة راشد الغنوشي حول التعددية

الملخص

على الرغم من أنه ليس مشكلة جديدة، إلا أن موضوع التعددية يؤثر في التعليم الإسلامي بشكل عميق وكبير. فقدد واجه المسلمين منذ نشأة الإسلام وحتى الآن تعدديات مختلفة عرقية متدينة وسياسية وقدموا إجابات عليها. بالإضافة إلى أن التعددية وصلت إلى أبعاد مختلفة وإلى مركزية كبيرة جدا مع التطور الحالي في العالم في العصر الحديث (سياسي، ديني، عرقي، لغوي وغيره). وعند النظر من هذه الناجية فإن التعددية قد تم تناولها من قبل العلماء المسلمين والمفكرين والحركات المشابهة لها بشكل مستمر. بالإضافة إلى مؤسس ومنظر حركة النهضة التونسية راشد الغنوشي قد قدم مساهمات كبيرة فعلية وأدبية في محاولة لحل العديد من المشاكل المتعلقة بالتعددية. وستدرس العديد من المقالات وعلى رأسها مساهمة الإسلاميين في الحكومات الغير إسلامية ومحاولاته العملية وقراءاته في موضوع التعددية لمحاولة كشفها وفهمها. وسنعمل عبر هذه المقالة على نهج راشد الغنوشي حول التعددية عبر وجهات نظر تحليلية وتاريخية وموضوعية (في سياق الربيع العربي وما بعده). وسنحاول فهم الدوافع والصراعات التي دفعت راشد الغنوشي إلى دعم نظريات العيش المشترك والعمل المشترك. وفي نتيجة البحث نقدم بعض المعطيات المهمة التي تم الوصل إليها بعد دراسة دقيقة جدا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعددية، الإسلام، المساهمة، الحكومة، الربيع العربي.

Rāshid al-Ghannūshī: A Short Biography

Rāshid al-Ghannūshī (often spelled in English as Rachid Ghannoushi) was born in a hamlet not far from al-Hamma, in the province of Gabès in southeastern Tunisia on 22 June 1941 (28 *Jamād al-Awwal* 1360).[27] He received his elementary education, especially learning and memorizing of the *Qur'ān* from his father, Shaykh Muḥammad. Starting from infancy to childhood, Ghannūshī was brought up in a traditional society that was yet to be exposed to the radiance of modernity. His mother, who belonged to a cosmopolitan merchant family, frequently emphasized the worth and value of knowledge, the very prophesy that resulted in producing 'a professor, judge, and an Islamic scholar activist.'[28] Becoming part of a modern urban society and bidding good bye to the rural life, his family when they left for the Gabès in 1956 exposed him for the first time to Westernization, or what Ghannūshī calls the 'features of modernity'.[29] In the words of Tamimi, "This was the beginning of a new stage in young Ghannouchi's life."[30]

In 1959, Ghannūshī, while shifting from Gabès to Tunis, studied Islamic law and theology at Zaytūnah's *Ibn Khaldūn* Centre. In the last year of his study at the Centre, amid studying philosophy, he used to argue with the teachers about various theoretical issues. In Tunis, he witnessed a stern conflict between the religious atmosphere at Zaytūnah and the modern one in and around the city. For him there was a massive contrast between the two environs—inside a stagnant one and outside a westernized one. Such a dichotomy anguished him the most because his own development at the Zaytūnah pushed him towards traditional atmosphere and the encounter with the outside world pulled him towards modernity. This is the primary reason for him to call study at Zaytūnah as if it was to "go into a museum."[31]

Later on Ghannūshī moved to Damascus where he received the degree of philosophy at the University of Damascus. His stay in Syria helped him to rediscover a new kind and a new face of Islam—"an Islam that was alive".[32]

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[27] Azzam S. Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3; see also; Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, *Ḥuqūq al-Muwāṭanah: Ḥuqūq Ghayr al-Muslim fi al-Mujtama' al-Islāmī* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993).

[28] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 93. Rāshid al-Ghannūshī's two elder brothers became professor and judge respectively whereas he himself emerged as an influential Muslim thinker and an activist known worldwide.

[29] Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[30] *Ibid*.

[31] Esposito and Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 95.

The very counter of the 'stagnant,' 'dead,' and 'passive Islam' that he always hated while enrolled in Zaytūnah and the one he studied formally. During his stay at Damascus, he busied himself in comprehending the works of some of the prominent contemporary Islamic thinkers and activists. He read the writings of Iqbāl, especially his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, wherein he "discovered an Islam, informed by a unique synthesis of Islamic belief and Western philosophy that could argue with the West on its own grounds."[33]

After graduating from the University of Damascus, Ghannūshī in 1968 moved to France, to pursue his master's degree in philosophy at Sorbonne.[34] Studying there only for a year, because of some reasons he returned to Tunisia. This is the period that saw the emergence and establishment of a reformist movement in the country. In the following year, Ghannūshī took up myriad roles—the profession of teaching philosophy at a secondary school, Islamic preacher-activist, and the leadership of *al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyyah* (the Islamic Group)—a clandestine organization whose members were attracted from the *Tablīgh* group.[35] This signalled the beginning and formation of a strong and dedicated social reformer in Tunisia who in the end would emerge as one of the famous Muslim thinkers who would profusely engage the intellectual minds both in East and West.

After the formalization of *al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyyah* as *Ḥarkah al-Ittijah al-Islāmī* (The Movement of Islamic Tendency) currently known as *Ḥizb al-Nahḍah* (The Renaissance Party), Ghannūshī from 1981 onwards remained in and out of prison because of his political engagements. Finally, while embracing self-exile, he left Tunisia for London because of some unprecedented developments in Tunisia. During his stay in London, Ghannūshī embarked on the career of *da'wah*, thought, and academics; probably for which he found himself better suited and better accomplished. Thus he had an opportunity to further enrich his scholarship and to finish the unfinished tasks, especially the book titled *al- Ḥurriyyāt al-'Āmah fī al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah* (Civil Liberties in the Islamic State).[36]

He remained in London for about twenty two years and returned to his

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[33] *Ibid*.
[34] Munahid Ahmad, *Rashid al-Ghannushi: A Leader of Pure Islam*, Islamic Scholars World Wide, http://islamicscholarsbd.blogspot.in/2012/04/rashid-al-ghannushi-leader-of-pure.html
[35] Roy Jackson, *Fifty Key Figures in Islam*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 233; Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi*, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Esposito and Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[36] Azzam Tamimi, "Rashid al-Ghannushi," in John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 218.

homeland, Tunisia, after the ousting of Bin Ali in January 2011. Currently, he is leading one of the most dominant political parties, *Ḥizb al-Nahḍah*, in the country. Being a famous activist, thinker, reformer, and intellectually a highly productive writer, Ghannūshī has emerged in the recent years as the most famous and most influential leader in the Islamic world.

Pluralism: An Introduction

In the contemporary globalized world, the idea of a completely homogeneous or monolithic society is something that a modern mind does not believe in. This is because of the fact that different people with different religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and political backgrounds are jointly living in various parts of the globe. More important is the fact that in the wake of globalization nothing is isolated. Every individual whether living in any part of America, Africa, Asia, or Europe is part and parcel of the globalized village. The 'end of geography', a concept that some scholars put forward, therefore, represents the state of people being heavily interdependent on one another irrespective of their so-formulated boundaries and geographies.[37] In comparison to the earlier societies, in the current atmosphere one observes the mingling of people representing diverse identities. So, it has become imperative to respect and tolerate one another, including their views and affiliations despite disagreement.

On the other hand, this 'closeness' of the different denominations is, with the passage of time, giving birth to a plethora of grave problems. In a globalized world or for the matter to be more precise, in a particular pluralistic society questions ranging from its stability and vulnerability to conflict are vociferously visited and revisited.[38] Some scholars favor the concept that a pluralistic society is more stable and viable, say, for example, Humayun Kabir.[39] While as theorists such as Samuel Huntington, the author of the *Clash of Civilizations*, observes such developments finally leading to the conflict. Therefore, one cannot outright reject the views of both the camps. Because history stands testimony to the fact that the stable heterogeneous societies do exist. Likewise, on the other hand, in the context of a growing Islamophobic

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[37] G. R. Walker and Mark A. Fox, "Globalization: An Analytical Framework," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (1996), p. 337.

[38] Parvaze Ahmad Bhat, "Pluralism and Diversity in the Sirah Literature: A Study of the Contemporary Scholars on Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 2013, p. 2.

[39] Humayun Kabir, "Minorities in Democracy," in Charles Kurzman, (ed.), *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 145.

trend it is witnessed that cordial relations, tolerance, and mutual respect in such societies continue to deteriorate. In such a global fashioning, scholars from diverse backgrounds throughout the world are heavily engaged to discuss the issue of pluralism and the challenges that emerge thereof. As this paper is primarily an attempt to discuss the approach and opinion of Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, the primary ideologue of *Ḥizb al-Nahḍaḥ*, regarding the debate on pluralism or to be more specific the standpoint of Islam *vis-à-vis* participation in non-Islamic government. However, before discussing his views and opinions objectively, it is rather tempting to briefly elaborate the meaning and concept of pluralism with an aim to make things more comprehensible for the readers.

Pluralism: Meaning and Concept

Derived from 'plural', the word 'pluralism' etymologically refers to that "containing more than one; consisting of, involving, or designating two or more; concerning or being one among a plurality of persons or objects". According to the New Webster's Dictionary, the term 'pluralism' means "the quality of being plural; the nature of a society within which diverse ethnic, social and cultural interests exist and develop together" and the term 'plurality' means "the state of being plural; the greater number; a multitude".[40]

Similarly, The New Encyclopaedia Britannica defines 'pluralism' in the perspective of socio-political thought as "the autonomy enjoyed by disparate groups within the society—such groups as religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, or ethnic minorities."[41] Regarding the significance of pluralism, the Encyclopaedia mentions that the "term also refers to the doctrine that the existence of such groups is beneficial, a major element in the ideologies of both the liberal Western nations and the Communist nations."[42] Seeking to highlight that how this term developed in the West, especially in England, it argues that in the beginning of the 20th century, the vociferous emphasis on concept of pluralism was the effort by a group of writers (including F. Maitland, S.G. Hobson, Harold Laski, R.H. Tawney, and G.D.H. Cole) who reacted against what they alleged to be the alienation of the individual brought by the unrestrained capitalism. According to this group, the situati-

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[40] "Pluralism," *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, (Delair Publishing Company, 1971), p. 732.

[41] "Pluralism," *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 9, 15th ed., (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.: 1994), p. 528.

[42] *Ibid*.

on demanded that in order to give the individual a sense of community his integration in a social context was imperative. The group who advocated pluralism further asserted that some of the negative aspects of modern industrial society can be overcome by economic and administrative decentralization.[43]

These definitions and elaborations, therefore, suggest that it is a term with multifaceted connotations that takes into account the importance of the state of being two or more in a society in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, etc. It also establishes the fact that a pluralistic society dominated by the features of peace and cooperation is not only a necessity but also beneficial so as to promote and raise the status of the alienated individual and thereof the diverse groups in the society. Thus, in this way, pluralism recognizes autonomy of an alienated individual or group(s) in order to maintain his or their identity and interest.

As has been highlighted above, the term pluralism can be used in various contexts that explain various types and modes of pluralism. They may be broadly classified as: a) Political Pluralism; b) Religious Pluralism; c) Cultural Pluralism; d) Legal Pluralism; e) Ethnic Pluralism.

This paper mainly deals with the political or power-sharing dimension of pluralism, so for convenience only this type of pluralism is defined here. Political pluralism refers to the activeness of the various individuals and groups engaged in political activities. It can also be defined, in political terminology, as the system of power sharing among a number of political parties.[44] In case of political pluralism everyone is free to express his/her political thoughts and actions. In this regard, Adnan Aslan is of the opinion that political pluralism "nurtures plurality of political parties and associations, a free press, freedom of expression and a minimalist approach to censorship."[45] Soraj Hongladarom in his article opines that political pluralism represents such a system wherein "a wide degree of tolerance for different political opinions and persuasions" exist simultaneously.[46] Similar views are expressed by Deegan that pluralism actually means disagreement between diverse competitive groups over certain issues. No matter what the level of

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[43] *Ibid.*

[44] "Pluralism," *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 9th ed., (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), P. 1052.

[45] Adnan Aslan, "The Concept of Ahl al-Dhimmah and Religious Pluralism," *The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. xlvii, No. 1, (2003), p. 40.

[46] Soraj Hongladarom, "Basing Political Pluralism on Epistemology: The Case of Thailand's Southern Violence," in Göran Collste, (ed.), *Implications of Pluralism: Essays on Culture, Identity and Values*, (Bangi: Institute of Ethnic Studies University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2011), p. 32.

disagreement would be, yet the opposition neither undermines nor eliminates the structure of the state.[47]

So, in a culture dominated by political pluralism one group or a single political party cannot dictate the terms but rather representation of various competing groups that share the power form the basis of such a system. More importantly, as far as politics is concerned, the active participation of conflicting forces is what pluralism actually stands for. Therefore, it is a battle of idea or ideas (ideological pluralism) fought dogmatically and meant to make a particular agenda of various political groups more conspicuous and more appealing. That is why political pluralism is frequently referred to as an inevitable value or norm of democracy because of the reason that it gives due prominence to the various groups who can express their thoughts and views freely.

The Philosophy of Rāshid al-Ghannūshī on Pluralism

Though not a novel problem, (in the case of Islam) the issue of pluralism in the current global scenario is engaging Muslim scholarship profoundly. Since the very inception of Islam, Muslims confronted and responded to a large number of religio-ethnic and political varieties. As Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr maintains: "[I]t is important to mention that before modern times Islam was the only revealed religion that has had direct contact with nearly all the major religions of the world."[48] Nonetheless, in the modern global era, experiencing the current contexts, the problem of pluralism has attained centrality, and so has its various dimensions (political, religious, ethnic, lingual, etc.). Keeping this in view, pluralism, therefore, is being continuously visited and revisited by Muslim scholars, thinkers and movements. Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, like others, is heavily occupied in making his contribution to solve many questions related to pluralism. His article titled *Participation in a Non-Islamic Government*,[49] in this regard will serve the purpose of the current study to the maximum possible extent.

The article, amid highlighting the issue of political pluralism or in other words power-sharing theory, is actually an attempt on the part of Ghannūshī "to answer the question related to the position of Islam regarding the parti-

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[47] Heather Deegan, *The Middle East and Problems of Democracy*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), p. 23.
[48] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islamic Attitude Towards Other Religions in History," in Suhayl Umer, (ed.), *The Religious Other*, (Pakistan: Iqbal Academy, 2008), p. 121.
[49] Rachid Ghannouchi, "Participation in a Non-Islamic Government," in Charles Kurzman, (ed.), *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

cipation of its followers in establishing or administering a non-Islamic regime."[50] His inclusive approach, as in other matters as well, here also favours the theory of coexistence and cooperation. Believing pluralism as a value inherent in democracy, he says that Islamic civilization always emphasized the implementation of pluralism. For instance, the treatment received by Jews and Christians in Islamic lands and the *Qur'ānic* weltanschauung commanding that there be "no compulsion in religion" can be seen as powerful evidences supporting pluralism. Khalid Elgindy has rightly highlighted (and it is quite observable as well) that Ghannūshī endeavours to connect pluralism both with Islamic heritage (*Turāth*) and Islamic law (*Sharī'ah*).[51] Since, Ghannūshī strongly emphasizes that the "fundamental values inseparable from Islamic law, religious, cultural, political and ideological pluralism are emphatically sustained within Muslim societies."[52]

Further, while responding to the previously mentioned question, Ghannūshī says the concept of Islamic government exists, however, the prevailing circumstances are not suited for its establishment. Hence, in such situations, a Muslim is enjoined not only to make efforts but also to cooperate with non-Muslim denominations to fulfil Allah's command of establishing and administering justice on the earth.[53]

Favouring realism and flexibility instead of passivism, idealism, and isolationism, Ghannūshī argues that the purpose of Islam is to safeguard as well as fulfil the needs and interests of mankind. Therefore, what is needed is to bridge the gap between ideal and reality—Islam and the present reality of the Muslim society. The principles and values of Islam should be, rather must be employed to the changing realities of Muslim life. "What we need", declares Ghannūshī, "is a realistic fundamentalism (Usuliyah Waqiyah), or if you like, an authenticated realism (Waqiyah Muasalah)".[54] Supporting and establishing a *just* government is necessary and advisable, in case establishment of Islamic government is not possible, according to "the principle of balancing between the better and the worse and opting for that which seems to best serve the general interests of the people".[55] Ghannūshī further suggests that,

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[50] Ghannouchi, *Participation in a Non-Islamic Government*, *ibid.*, p. 89.
[51] Khaled Elgindy, "The Rhetoric of Rashid Ghannushi," *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (Spring, 1995), p. 112.
[52] Rachid Ghannouchi, "The Battle Against Islam," *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (Winter, 1993), p. 40.
[53] Ghannouchi, *Participation in Non-Islamic Government*, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.
[54] Rachid Ghannoushi, "What We Need Is a Realistic Fundamentalism," *Arabia*, October 1986; vide Esposito and Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[55] Ghannouchi, *Participation in Non-Islamic Government*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

for setting up of a pertinent social order, political pluralism or power-sharing in a Muslim (majority situation) or a non-Muslim (minority situation) atmosphere under extra ordinary situations is inevitable. In the exceptional situation when "the community of believers is unable to accomplish its goal of establishing an Islamic government directly" (even when it is in a majority situation), power-sharing becomes a necessity.[56]

Writing on the legitimacy of participating in non-Muslim regimes, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī points to a Muslim's duty to advance whatever Muslim goals are within his power or accomplish whatever can be accomplished. The promotion of values and ideals such as independence, development, compatriot solidarity, public and individual political freedoms, human rights, political pluralism, independence of the judicial system, freedom of the press, freedom for *Masājid* and for *Da'wah* activities obliges Muslims to participate in the establishment of a secular democratic regime, in case the establishment of a Muslim one is not possible.[57] What Ghannūshī actually aims to convey is that when the situation is not favourable, then according to the *Qur'ānic* principle that "No soul shall have a burden on it greater than it can bear" (*Al-Qur'ān: Al-Baqarah*, 233), the Muslims are obliged to do only that what they can afford and what they can achieve practically. Therefore, if the aforesaid values are promoted in such a government or system, no matter secular or pseudo-secular, the Muslims are then duty bound to participate in its establishment and thereof lay the foundation of a strong social order. This activity of the Muslims, although and essentially, may not be based on Islamic law yet it will give due consideration to *Shūrā* which one of the important principles of Islamic government. The main aim of the foundation of such a government, as highlighted by Ghannūshī, will be twofold: a) to end the rule of dictators, foreign domination and local anarchy; b) to promote humanistic values or in other words to pursue noble objectives.[58] This implies that without any doubt, Ghannūshī duly acknowledges the significance of an Islamic form of government, however, the current circumstances demand looking for the alternative and the best possible alternative, which he regards to be the secular democratic government.

Ghannūshī substantiates and justifies his practice of power-sharing or participation in non-Islamic and/or secular democratic system by citing events

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[56] Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi, op. cit.*, p. 153.
[57] Ghannouchi, *Participation in Non-Islamic Government, op. cit.*, p. 92. Moreover, Ghannūshī contends that as a religious duty it is incumbent upon the Muslims, as individuals and as communities, to contribute to the efforts to establish a secular democratic system in case an Islamic democratic system is not possible.
[58] *Ibid.*

and examples from the *Qur'ān*, the *Sunnah*, and Islamic history. From the *Qur'ān*, he puts forward the example of Prophet Yūsuf (may Allah's mercy be on him); from the *Sunnah*, he gives mention of two important events: (a) migration of *Aṣḥāb* to Abyssinia (b) signing of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*; and from Islamic history, he cites the example of 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz.[59] All these evidences which are embedded in *Sharī'ah*, argues Ghannūshī, go well with the concept of power-sharing or participation of Muslims in non-Islamic government but under exceptional circumstances. He concludes:

[All these examples show as well as endorse] that the community of believers may participate in an alliance aimed at preventing injustice and oppression, at serving the interests of mankind, at protecting human rights, at recognizing the authority of the people and at rotating power-holding through a system of elections. The faithful can pursue all these noble objectives even with those who do not share the same faith or ideology.[60]

Ghannūshī expresses that 'justice' and 'human welfare' are the basic objectives of an Islamic government because justice is regarded as "the law of Allah" and therefore, there is no harm to fully support even un-Islamic government that pioneers in the implementation of these noble values. In fact, this represents the central theme of his philosophy as far as the question of pluralism is concerned. He declares that it is wrong notion to say that the solution to every problem is specifically, clearly, and categorically mentioned in the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*. If that would have been the case, then many actions of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) could be considered wrong. So, in response to new developments and new circumstances, such measures which totally conform with the Islamic law, which prevent evil to spread, and which provide solutions to the various societal issues are advisable to pursue.[61] Ghannūshī strongly criticizes the scholars who oppose this view and who insist on not pursuing such measures. He blames that such attitudes of these scholars unnecessarily make the life of Muslims difficult and miserable. To quote:

With due respect, these scholars make life difficult for the Muslims unnecessarily. Their opinions impose restrictions on a policy which is definitely permissible and lawful, and which is intended to equip the Muslims with the ability to react positively in situations that can be very difficult indeed.[62]

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[59] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
[62] *Ibid.*

Besides this, Ghannūshī, whilst criticizing the views of those who reject the concept of power-sharing, draws attention towards two other important issues: (a) Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim countries (b) Islamic movements operating in Muslim countries. In the first case, Ghannūshī suggests that the best option for Muslim minorities is to enter into alliance with secular democratic groups and then endeavour for the establishment of a secular democratic government. Such an establishment, views Ghannūshī, will ensure essential requirements of mankind that Islam has come to fulfil and these include, among others, respect for human rights, ensuring security, freedom of expression, and freedom of belief.[63] Likewise, it is also best suited, in the opinion of Ghannūshī, for the Islamic groups in Muslim countries, under unfavourable circumstances, to cooperate, coordinate, and forge alliances with non-Islamic secular groups in order to establish 'pluralistic secular government' in which power will be held by the majority. This government will, among other things, topple the dictatorship, preclude aggression, deter external threats, lead to socio-economic development, respect humans, and guarantee their liberties.[64]

It is important to mention that Ghannūshī's ideology that evolved over so many years was particularly influenced and shaped by the various developments taking place in the Arab world, especially in Tunisia. Both during the rule of Bourguiba (the first president of independent Tunisia) and Bin Ali, Ghannūshī and other members of his party *Ḥizb al-Nahḍah* were the primary target of the Tunisian state. The state continuously barred them from any political participation until the ousting of Bin Ali in January 2011. Ghannūshī accordingly developed his philosophy that primarily targeted the Tunisian establishment in general and Bourguiba and Bin Ali in particular. He frequently used to call them and other Arab rulers in almost all his writings and speeches as dictators and despots, their rule as hegemonic and oppressive, and their policies as evils of despotism. This is how Ghannūshī developed his philosophy and how he dealt with the state oppression. More importantly, his complete loyalty towards pluralism and power sharing becomes more comprehensible when viewed in the context of the existential threat faced by *al-Nahḍah* in Tunisia. This dramatic display of ideas put forward by Ghannūshī represents actually a well framed policy to help *al-Nahḍah* and other Islamic movements operating across the Arab world to get state recognition as a legal political party and engage thereof in the various democratic processes. This becomes evident thus:

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[63] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

The real problem lies in convincing the "other," that is the ruling regimes, of the principle of "the people's sovereignty" and of the right of Islamists-just like other political groups-to form political parties, engage in political activities and compete for power or share in power through democratic means.[65]

However, in the post-Revolution Tunisian atmosphere, the public statements of Ghannūshī and those of other *al-Nahḍah* members have been consistent with pluralism politics. Compatibility in theory and action, in case of pluralism, dominates the politics of Ghannūshī and *al-Nahḍah*. Many public statements of *al-Nahḍah* like the Party "is open to negotiations with all willing partners"[66] and "the importance of reconciliation even if [*al-Nahḍah*] did not win a plurality"[67] followed by its practical cooperation and coordination with secular parties in government formation and constitution making, marks a crucial step toward the institutionalization of pluralism and democracy in the country.[68] "We believe" addressed Ghannūshī "in reconciliation, collaboration, partnership, and sharing of things with the other parties. Notwithstanding an environment surrounded by hostility and animosity, we tended toward consensus building. We are, therefore, learning how to reconcile differences and diversity of opinions in our country."[69] These statements—that were realized practically as well—in short, as apparent indicators unfold the overly theoretico-practical support of *al-Nahḍah* and its leadership for power-sharing and pluralism.

Conclusions

A society where various dissimilar groups representing a wide variety of identities live together peacefully and amicably forms an example of a stable pluralistic society. By this characteristic feature, these distinct varieties, because of their positive coexistence, tend to be interdependent politically and economically. However, talking about Muslims, whether living in Muslim majority

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[66] Melanie Cammett, "The Limits of Anti-Islamism in Tunisia," in Marc Lynch, (ed.), *Islamists in a Changing Middle East*, (Foreign Policy Group, 2012), p. 41.
[67] Aaron Y. Zelin, "Ennahda's Tight Rope Act on Religion," in Marc Lynch, *ibid.*, p. 43.
[68] Many other similar statements further strengthened the pluralism or power-sharing theory. For instance, Ghannūshī voiced emphatically that: "We will congratulate the winner and will collaborate with them just as other parties should do the same if we end up winning; Tunisia is in need of everyone. The keyword is reconciliation; our foremost concern is reconciliation in composing the upcoming government without regard to ideological differences." *Ibid.*
[69] Speech delivered by Rāshid al-Ghannūshī at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh on 8 April, 2015. In this event, the author was present there and has recorded the statement himself.

or Muslim minority regions, Islam has provided a broader guideline regarding how to live and interact with the various socio-political and ethnic diversities.

Muslim thinkers, whose treatment of the issues related to various forms and shades of pluralism varies considerably, have tried to explain, elaborate, and guide the Muslims about their duties and obligations in a pluralistic society. In this regard, as far as Ghannūshī is concerned, his discussion and understanding on (political) pluralism leads to certain conclusions. Ghannūshī, theoretically, believes in the concept of Islamic government and its existence and calls the Muslims to establish it wherever attainable. However, he practically endorses and supports pluralism, power-sharing, and multi-party politics. Acknowledging pluralism as a subject of both acceptance and rejection, Ghannūshī, however, aligns himself with that group of Muslim intelligentsia who stand for the acceptance of pluralism in Islam.[70] His idea of forging into alliance with the secular forces for the establishment of pluralistic secular government denotes, in other words, that after Islamic government secular government is the best option to opt for. Moreover, justifying the idea of secular government based on 'realization of essential requirements of mankind that Islam has come to fulfil' would imply that, secular system in principle is based upon Islamic ideals and values.

Although Ghannūshī believes that justice and welfare of the society should be the fundamental target of a government, he remains silent about what if the same objectives are promoted in a Muslim state ruled, for instance, by a monarch or a dictator. Further, pluralism and democracy loaded writings and speeches of Ghannūshī should be studied in the context of what was happening socio-politically in the Arab world, particularly in Tunisia, since 1960s. As the political space in Tunisia and other parts of the Arab world was severely minimized, it can be said that Ghannūshī tried to champion the trend of democratization and pluralism. In doing so, his main aim was to gain the support of those calling themselves as democrats, to create the political space for various Islamic or other groups, and to show that Islamic activists were always ready to operate within the pluralist democracy. In short, the philosophy of Ghannūshī demonstrates that he always prefers the policy of reconciliation to the policy of confrontation and such an attitude, which can be termed as "inclusive", defines the mood of his explanation and reasoning.

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[70] As cited in Esposito and Voll, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

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