

**Between Revolution and Political Stability:
The Perceptions and Influences of the Arab Uprisings
among the Islamist Movements in Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the attitude of Malaysia's Islamist movements – (1) The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS); (2) The National Trust Party (AMANAH); (3) The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and (4) the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA) towards the 2011 Arab Uprisings events or popularly known as the 'Arab Spring' in the Middle East and North Africa. In particular, it explores the knowledge and perceptions of selected Islamist movement activists, politicians and members in Malaysia towards the Arab Uprisings as well as considering how the events impact their activism, political approach and attitudes towards the issues of regime change, civil disobedience, political revolution, democracy, Islamism and political stability. This thesis also identifies a number lessons learnt by the Malaysian Islamists from the development of post-Arab Uprisings in the MENA region.

The tendency of Malaysian Islamists to be influenced by the development in the Middle East and global political Islam are not seen as something new as evidently shown in the case of the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution. This popular event was known for its indirect impact on the political activism and approaches of PAS and ABIM in Malaysia back in the 1980-1990s, as well as inspiring many Malaysian Islamists to uphold the struggle of establishing an Islamic state in the country. Following the recent uprisings in several Arab states, which also witnesses the rise of Arab Islamist parties in securing a ruling power, these events have also been widely followed by the Malaysians in general and the Islamists in particular with great interest. Furthermore, the major involvement of Malaysian Islamists in a series of mass protests, popularly known in Malaysia as the "Bersih movement" (circa 2011-2016), against the ruling government, were perceived by numerous local and foreign journalists as an attempt to create a "Malaysian Spring" which inspired by the 'Arab Spring' phenomenon for the sake of toppling the current regime. However, there have been strong opinions voiced by the Malaysian authorities and various local scholars suggesting that there was no basis for presuming an Arab Uprisings impact in the context of the Malaysian experience. This raises the question of the relationship between the Arab Uprisings and Malaysian Islamists. Nevertheless, no matter how relevant the questions raised between Malaysia's Islamist movements and the 'Arab Spring', the central concern that needs to be highlighted is the extent to which Malaysian Islamists grasp the fundamental issues of the 2011 Arab Uprisings before jumping to any conclusion about the polemics of the "Malaysian Spring".

In so doing, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied through a questionnaire based-survey which was conducted in Malaysia involving 530 respondents, primarily among the registered and active representative of Malaysian Islamist between the ages of 18 and 45, as well as 15 in-depth interviews with selected Malaysian Islamist activists and leaders ranging from those in opposition political parties (PAS and AMANAH) to those in non-government Islamist organisations (ABIM and ISMA). The survey of Malaysian Islamists' attitudes towards the Arab Uprisings development covered a variety of dimensions, namely understanding the general issues about the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon, factors that lead to the Uprisings, the role of Islamist movements, the influences of the Uprisings on Malaysia's Islamist movements activism and finally lessons learnt from the Arab Uprisings. The data is statistically analysed with the assistance of the SPSS computer package, and by using a number of statistical procedures, such as frequencies and cross-tabulations.

The outcome of this research shows that the majority of respondents have an outstanding knowledge on the Arab Uprisings which was mostly obtained via new social media such as Facebook and Twitter, along with mixed perceptions toward the events. Furthermore, they also reached an understanding that the uncertainties in the Arab world would eventually lead to another wave of uprisings in the long term. Speaking of the global impact of the Arab Uprisings events, some elements of political repression, coupled with corruption and power abuses (which some claimed to be practised by the Malaysian regime), led to a number of Malaysian Islamists believing that they were inspired by the acts of mass street protests during the Arab Uprisings. This inspiration came when they witnessed the ousting of several long-serving autocratic Arab rulers in their respective states by the Arab protesters. However, the fear of insecurity and political instability which is currently evident in the post-Arab Uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Syria and the Yemen led to many respondents favouring political stability rather than regime change. Most of the respondents were quite sceptical about the polemics of the "Malaysian Spring" as most of them neither disagreed nor agreed that the series of political rallies by the Bersih movement were an indirect effort to topple the ruling government which was 'accused' by several pro-government media, politicians and authorities in Malaysia. Overall, this empirical research found that the majority of Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH are supportive of a free and democratic elections as a relevant medium for political change, rather than overthrowing the current regime via civil disobedience, street demonstration, or 'revolution'.

Political Map of Malaysia



Source: http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/malaysia_map.htm

Political Map of Northern Africa and the Middle East



Source: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/north-africa-map.htm>

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia)
ACT	Adjustment to Change Theory
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (In the year of our lord)
AMANAH	<i>Parti Amanah Negara</i> (Party of National Trust)
AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> (Party of Justice and Development)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BC	Before Christ
BCL	Basic Civil Liberties
BERSIH	<i>Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil</i> (The Coalition of Free and Fair Election)
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (Party of National Front)
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CIA	Central Intelligent Agency
CNCD	National Coordination for Change and Democracy
DAESH	<i>Ad-Dawla Al-Islamiyya fil Iraq Wa Al-Sham</i> (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham)
DAP	Democratic Action Front
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GNP	Gross National Product
GE	General Election
EU	European Union
EP	Effective Power to Govern
FIS	<i>Front Islamique du Salut</i> (Islamic Salvation Front)
FLN	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> (National Liberation Front)
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IKRAM	<i>Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia</i> (Malaysia Ikram Movement)

IS	Islamic State
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
ISMA	<i>Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia</i> (Malaysia Muslim Solidarity Front)
JIM	<i>Jemaah Islah Malaysia</i> (Malaysia Congregation Reform)
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NVIVO	Software for Qualitative Data Analysis
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Tanah Melayu</i> (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
PSC	Parliamentary Selection Committee on Electoral Reform
PJD	<i>Parti de la Justice et du Développement</i> (Party of Justice and Development)
PKR	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i> (People's Justice Party)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
RCE	Reasonably Competitive Election
RP	Refah Partisi (Party of National Salvation)
RM	<i>Ringgit Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Ringgit)
SAVAK	<i>Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar</i> (Organisation of National Security and Information of Iran)
SCAF	Supreme Council of Army Forces
SOSMA	Special Offences and Security Measures Act
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SMs	Social Movements
SMOs	Social Movement Organisations
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UKM	<i>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</i> (National University of Malaysia)
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US/USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
VIP	Very Important Person
WTO	World Trade Organisation
1MDB	One Malaysia Development Berhad

GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Ad-Din	Religion
Ad-da'wah al Islamiyyah	Islamic Propagation/ the call for Islam
Coup/ Coup d'état	Unexpected military takeover
Demos	Common people
Demokratia	Direct democracy
Din Wa Dawla	Religion and the state
Haj	The compulsory pilgrimage to Mecca
Harakah Islamiyyah	Islamist movement
Hejaz	The holy land of Islam
Hudud	Islamic Law for capital punishment
Islah	Reform
Khilafah Islamiyyah	Islamic Caliphate
Kratos	Power
Mazhab	Schools of Sunni Islamic law
Madrasah	School
Quran	Islamic sacred book
Rahmatan lil Alamin	Blessing for the whole world
Reformasi	Reformation
Shafi'i	Imam Shafi'i School of Law
Sharia	Islamic Law
Syura	Consultation
Tajdid	Renewal
Ummah	Muslim community
Umrah	The sacred visitation to Mecca
Usrah	Family/group gathering
Waqi'	Context

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and that where material is obtained from published or unpublished works, this has been fully acknowledged in the references.

An early version of Chapter One (Research Proposal) was presented by the author at the International Conference on a “Comparative Approach towards Political Transition in the Middle East / North Africa and Southeast Asia” in University of Le Havre, France, 19-20 November 2015.

Some material from Chapters One, Two, Three, Six and Seven was also presented on three different occasions; (1) “After the Uprisings: Political, Economic, and Social Transformations in the Middle East and North Africa” Conference in University of Edinburgh, UK, 31 May 2016; (2) International Congress on Political, Economic and Social Studies in the International University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19-20 May 2017; and (3) Annual Asia and The Middle East Conference in Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, 11-13 April 2018.

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I love you with all my heart, body and soul.

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This research involves the Islamist Movements in Malaysia so as to explore questions about the global impact of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon beyond the region of the Middle East and North Africa. In particular, it will examine the connection between the 2011 Arab Uprisings and the Islamist movements in Malaysia through the Malaysian Islamists' perceptions and considering how the phenomenon impacts and influences the movements' ideology and activism. The research will look back at the global Islamic resurgence (1970s-1980s) and the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979) to determine how these events played a decisive role in influencing the Islamist movements in Malaysia. The study will argue that the recent Arab Uprisings revolutions might contribute useful insights as regards the Malaysian experience. However there have been strong opinions voiced by the Malaysian authorities and various scholars suggesting that there was no basis for presuming an Arab Uprisings impact in the context of the Malaysian experience. The involvement of several Islamist movements in a series of mass protests, popularly known in Malaysia as "BERSIH" against the ruling government, along with a strong relationship with the Islamist parties in the countries involved in the Arab Uprisings might suggest a link with the Malaysian experience. Moreover, the Malaysian general public has been following the events of the Arab Uprisings since the beginning with deep concern. This raises the question whether the 'semi-democratic' state of Malaysia will follow the same path of regime change after witnessing the victories in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011 as regards toppling their respective autocratic rulers.

Furthermore, the rise of Islamist parties in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, are suggestive of the potential future of Malaysia's Islamist movements. The central concern that needs to be highlighted is the extent to which the Islamist movements in Malaysia grasp the Arab Uprisings or the 'Arab Spring' before jumping to any conclusion about the polemics and possible future of the "Malaysian Spring". This brings us to the

core questions of this research regarding the influence and impact of the Arab Uprisings through reactions of selected Islamist parties – (the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party & the National Trust Party) and civil society organisations – (the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia & the Malaysia Muslim Solidarity) in Malaysia.

1.2 Background and Context

During the 1970-1980s, several Islamist Movements in Malaysia, particularly the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) were greatly influenced by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Mohamed Osman & Saleem 2016: 2). This transnational influence on Islamism and Islamist politics in Malaysia took a further turn with the downfall after 58 years of Shah Pahlavi's monarchy in Iran (Liow 2009: 35). The impact of the revolution, although primarily indirect, has stimulated Islamic political ideas and ideology as well as leading to an increased emotional attraction for Islamist activists and Muslim communities in Malaysia with regard to assuming more activist Islamic political positions (Esposito & Piscatori 1990: 11-33; Bramsen 2012: 197; Mueller 2014: 55-56). Following this event- the 1979 Iran's Revolution, a number of other Islamist movements such as *Jemaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) were formed in Malaysia to embrace the success of Iranians in forming a so-called new 'Islamic Republic'. The efforts of the Iranian Islamic community to overthrow the Shah were also found to resonate, with the views of many Islamist activists in Malaysia propelled to struggle to achieve a stronger Islamic society (Von Der Mehden 1990: 249).

Nearly four decades after the popular Iranian Revolution was launched, and influenced the development of Islamist movements in Malaysia, the world has witnessed a new dramatic political scenario in the Middle East and North Africa with the fall of several long-serving autocratic rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen via massive revolutions known as the 'Arab Spring'. Like a domino effect, popular uprisings became widespread across the region, from one country to another until entire Arab nations were engulfed. The year 2011 undoubtedly marked as a turning point in the history of modern Middle East politics.

1.2.1 Malaysia and the Arab-Muslim World

In the meantime, being a moderate Muslim state in the region of Southeast Asia, Malaysia has significant economic, political and diplomatic ties, as well as social relationships with the Middle East and North African nations, given the shared sentiment of 'Islamic values' which indirectly unites these countries. Long and strong relationships that have been established between Malaysia and the Arab world are undeniable. Historically, the penetration of religious thought from the Middle East is part of a century-long legacy of relations between Muslims in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Von Der Mehden 1990: 235). Malaysia has developed and cultivated multi-dimensional relationships with the Arab world for more than 500 years that can be traced back to the establishment of the first Muslim state in the Malay-Archipelago in the thirteenth century. These 'bilateral' relationships subsequently led to published news and information regarding the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Algeria, Yemen and Syria flooding into Malaysia and being widely discussed among Malaysians via new social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. As pointed out by Osman Bakar (2012: 743), the Malaysian public in general, and political observers and academics in particular, have been following these unfolding of events in the Arab world with great interest, if not deep concern. Osman's statement is supported by Abdul Hadi Awang (PAS President) who admitted that even Malaysians with no season called 'spring', were passionately following the 'Arab Spring' development. There was great interest among Malaysians, because the phenomenon was unexpected and extraordinary. They felt that the Arabs deserved a real change for the better, especially in the political sphere. On the other hand, among the topics that were debated by civil groups and academics, as well as the majority of the Internet users at that time, was whether or not Malaysia would be the next victim of regime change and democratic transition after seeing the victories in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya toppling their respective autocratic governments.

For Abdul Malek, the Arab Uprisings, specifically the 2011 Egyptian uprising, was significant for Malaysians for two major reasons. The first was the fact that the majority of Muslims in Malaysia held Egypt in high regard as the sanctuary for Arabic and Islamic knowledge. Thousands of Malaysian school

leavers flocked to Egypt every year to enrol in numerous Egyptian higher institutions with Al-Azhar, Mansoura, Zaqaziq and Cairo University as their most popular destination. Secondly, the majority of Malaysian Muslims were concerned to see the role of Islam within the revolution, as they were very aware that the Muslim Brotherhood was a dominant force in the Egyptian opposition. Thus, they were interested to see if political Islam and the Egyptian Islamists would triumph over the autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak (Abdul Malek 2011: 75-76). The rise of Islamist parties, Tunisia's Ennahda and Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party shortly after the collapse of the incumbent regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, seemed to be a beacon of hope and provide an early direction for the future of Islamist movements in Malaysia. According to Peter Mandaville (2014: 369):

“The success of Islamists in the wake of the 2010-2011 Arab Uprisings seemed to confirm the dominance of political Islam as a socio-political force in the Middle East. Combined with the rise of Turkey's AKP and routinized participation of Islamist parties in electoral politics across Southeast Asia, there seems to be strong evidence that religiously-based parties have become a firm fixture in Muslim politics”.

The thinking of Rachid Ghannouchi (the leader of the Ennahda Movement) and Mohamed Morsi (Egypt's former president) drew inspiration and were passionately supported by the majority of the Islamist movements across Malaysia. Many academic discourses and student forums were held to discuss their political philosophy and strategy. Rachid Ghannouchi was well known in Malaysia among the Islamist movements. His thoughts, speeches and writings on the issues of political Islam, social justice and governance were widely viewed and read¹. According to Muhammad Najib, the concept of “Faraghat for ijtihad” is considered one of the popular thoughts from Ghannouchi that influenced the Malaysian Islamists². Many Muslim activists expressed support for Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution and the new Ennahda led-government merely because al-Ghannouchi was associated with them (Osman Bakar 2012: 745). The Pan-

¹ An example would be a recent book on Ghannouchi's thought, written and published in Malay language by several Islamist movement members in Malaysia. See also Hassan, Zulkifli ed. (2016). *Rashid Al-Ghannouchi: Intelektual – Reformis Politikal Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ABIM.

² Personal interview with the National Trust Party (AMANAH) Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016. What Ghannouchi meant by the concept of Faraghat is that in term of politics or question of governance, Islam left some space for humans to fill (in their own way) in accordance with the respective needs and exigencies of time and places. See Tamimi, A.S (2001). *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism*. New York: Oxford University Press. Page 187.

Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) delegation, headed by their president Hadi Awang, had gone to Tunisia in July 2012 and February 2015 to pay a visit to Rachid Ghannoushi and several members of the Ennahda Movement, while in August 2014, the daughter of Ghannoushi, Intissar Kherigi, and a number of representatives from Ennahda came to Kuala Lumpur to join the event “Survival of the Ennahda Party After Revolution in Tunisia” organized by the PAS Youth Wing and Asian Federation of Muslim Youth³. Speaking about the political relationship between Malaysia and the Arab world, particularly with Tunisia, Naoufel Eljammali⁴, a former Tunisian Minister of Employment and Vocational Training and member of the Ennahda Political Bureau further commented that:

“I think the Malaysian (political) experience is also near to us.. and I think the Muslim world in Asia is much better compared to the (development of) political parties in the Middle East for instance, which are still stuck in the old mindset and practice of the 50s and 60s of the last century. That is why we feel ourselves to be nearer to Malaysian politicians than for instance Egyptian ones. So, I think Tunisia in this way finds itself as a Muslim political party with a lot more affinity with the Asian Muslim ones than many other Arab Muslim political parties”.

1.3 Problem Statements

Throughout the post-2011 Arab Uprisings, there was a strong opinion held by the Malaysian authority that there was to be no basis for Arab Uprisings protests to be held in Malaysia⁵. However, a series of large-scale mass protests had taken place in the capital (Kuala Lumpur) prior to the 2013 General Election, during which the protesters and opposition parties (including PAS and several other Islamist movements and NGOs) had mainly demanded political and electoral reforms from the government. Nevertheless, the demonstrations were certainly a far cry from what had been seen in the Middle East and North Africa, with a countless number of violent incidents and intimidation and brutality, as a result of government action to suppress and undermine protesters. Quite a few Malaysian political observers interviewed by the Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) established that Malaysians would reject the possibility of

³ Personal interview with the Amanah Central Committee (Former PAS Chief Youth), Suhaizan Kayat. AMANAH Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 October 2016.

⁴ Personal interview with former Minister of Employment and Vocational Training of Tunisia and member of Ennahda Political Bureau, Naoufel Eljammali. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

⁵ See, for example The Star (2013). “Najib: No basis for Arab Spring after 55 years of peace, stability”. <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2013/07/03/najib-tun-razak-arab-spring-bbc>.

an Arab Uprisings style revolution, as there were no concrete justifications to imitate it, especially after seeing its terrible and appalling repercussions. As Kaisan Abdul Rahman (2013) emphasised, the reason for people's rejection of such an idea would be due to Malaysia's proven track record of democratic practice, whereby general elections had been held every five years without fail, which had ensured the nation's progress and well-being⁶. Another reason was that people could choose their government and the voice of the majority was always respected, clearly proven by the three states (Selangor, Penang and Kelantan) currently under opposition rule. Furthermore, Kaisan also believed the present National Front party (Barisan Nasional or BN)-led government to be transparent and constantly making efforts to enhance the welfare of its people through various programmes.

Similarly, Abdullah (2013) was of the opinion that the Arab Spring phenomenon would not spread to Malaysia as the government was constantly making changes for the better. Meanwhile, in an interview with the BBC in London, Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak (2013) believed that there was no reason to mount a protest like the Arab Uprisings in Malaysia, as he pointed out that the country had enjoyed 55 years of peace and stability and witnessed good economic progress. From these statements, it was clear that the Malaysian authority rejected the possibility of an Arab Uprisings phenomenon among its citizens (including any Islamist movements in the country). However, these debatable statements were only subjective views, either from the authority or from individuals. Contrary to these opinions, Larry Diamond, a leading contemporary scholar in the field of democracy studies claimed that the effect of the Arab Uprisings might spread to East Asian countries including Malaysia. According to Diamond:

“With the eruption of mass movements for regime change across the Arab nations, scholars and analysts of democratic prospects have focused attention on the Middle East and North Africa. But if a new regional wave of transitions to democracy unfolds in the next five to ten years, it is more likely to come from East Asia since this region has been

⁶Sinar Harian (2013). “Pemerhati Politik: Rakyat Malaysia Tolak Revolusi ala-Arab Spring” (Political Observer: Malaysians would reject an Arab Spring- style Revolution/Uprisings). <http://www.sinarharian.com.my/mobile/pemerhati-politik-rakyat-malaysia-tolak-revolusi-ala-arab-springs-1.120389>.

strangely neglected in recent thinking about the near-term prospect for expansion of democracy” (Diamond 2012: 5).

Diamond’s views are also in line with Welsh (2011) who points out that⁷,

“Largely driven by ordinary citizens, often connected through the social media, Southeast Asia is experiencing important and substantive political change. In this year of the Arab Spring, attention has centered on developments in the Middle East. With street protests and elections, amidst violence, there is no question that the region has experienced a profound political upheaval. Yet, 2011 has been extremely significant in Southeast Asia as well. The ripples of change are here. Largely driven by ordinary citizens, often connected through the social media, Southeast Asia is experiencing important and substantive political change, with the balance clearly in favour of greater empowerment of citizens, human dignity and promise”.

Shedding light on the recent performance of the ruling government under the leadership of Najib Razak, many issues concerning financial crises, corruption, power abuse, implementation of unnecessary taxes, as well as internal conflicts among the ruling party members, have manifested themselves. These issues have ultimately affected the legitimacy of the administration. According to Huntington (1990), Case (1993 & 2007), Means (1996), Abbot (2009 & 2011) and Diamond (2012), Malaysia is considered as a semi-democratic state or “quasi-democracy” and some sort of “soft, competitive and electoral authoritarian” regime remains, due to several issues relating to human rights, news and media censorship, and certain laws/acts which limit the freedom of political activity, as well as the movement of opposition parties. Levitsky and Way (2002: 52) explained the concept of competitive authoritarianism:

“In a competitive authoritarian regime, formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. However, incumbents violate those rules so often and to such extent, the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy”.

As Jiří Holík (2011: 4) demonstrates, the opposition in Malaysia is generally allowed to compete in elections and operate in the Parliament, but only under the condition that it accepts the rules of the game set by the

⁷ Bridget Welsh is Associate Professor at John Cabot University, a Senior Research Associate at NTU, a Senior Associate Fellow THC and a University Fellow of CDU. She analyses Southeast Asian politics, especially Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Indonesia. See also <http://bridgetwelsh.com/2011/12/democracy-is-shining-in-the-dark/> [23 July 2015].

Government and does not threaten the dominant position of the ruling coalition. This statement is also supported by Freedom House ratings for political rights and civil liberties, whereby Malaysia has assumed a relatively average position, or being 'partly free'⁸. The political and economic struggles facing Malaysians nowadays, albeit in a different scale, are almost the same factors which have contributed to the Arab uprisings. Economic crises which led to rising food prices, endemic poverty and chronic unemployment and also the systematic political repression and corruption at various levels were some of the reasons why the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan, Syrian and Yemeni revolutionaries were spurred to take to the streets (Achy 2011: 5; Driss 2011: 21-22; Bishara 2011: 5; Korotayev & Zinkina 2011: 167; Arieff 2012: 34; Gelvin 2012: 21-44).

Aspirations and desires for a more accountable and democratic government have permeated into the country and for years to come the region of the Southeast Asia will be a contested terrain of possibilities for regime change. Hence, with regard to the current political situation in Malaysia, it is plausible and not too much of an exaggeration to propose that 'revolution' and mass mobilization, coupled with the assistance of new social media, such as that which Arab nations had organized during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, could possibly occur if the government continuously fails to fulfil the people's demand for political, economic and social reform. Indeed, Musa Hassan (2013), a former Malaysian Inspector General of Police (IGP), advised that the 'Arab Spring' style protest can still happen in Malaysia if any losing parties in the general election (the 13th general election) are dissatisfied with the result⁹. He also lamented that several politicians are willing to gamble on the nation's dignity and religion in order to achieve their political ambitions.

Additionally, being a political party or a non-governmental organisation, the Islamist movements in Malaysia are undeniably capable of playing a significant role in mobilizing such uprisings against the ruling government, as was seen during the 1998 'Reformation Movement' (Reformasi) in response to

⁸ Freedom House (2017). Malaysia. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/malaysia>.

⁹ Astro Awani (2013). "Musa Hassan: 'Arab Spring' boleh berlaku di negara ini" (Musa Hassan: 'Arab Spring' could happen in this country). <http://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/musa-hassan-arab-spring-boleh-berlaku-di-negara-ini-6913>.

the demotion of Anwar Ibrahim from his Deputy Prime Minister's position¹⁰. Nonetheless, the most crucial issue that needs to be clarified is the extent to which the Islamist movements in Malaysia – both political parties and NGOs really understand the Arab Uprisings, before jumping to any conclusion about the possible future of the “Malaysian Spring”. This brings us to the core questions of this research regarding the influence and impact of the Arab Uprisings through reactions of Islamist politicians, Muslim organisations and activists in Malaysia.

1.3.1 Political Stability in Contemporary Malaysia

Despite all the challenges and difficulties, it is fair to describe Malaysia as being potentially able to maintain its political stability, although there has been strong and consistent pressure for a transparent and accountable government from the grass roots level. According to Joseph Liow, since the end of World War II, Malaysia's admirable record of social and political stability was to a great extent made possible by its economic growth, although the ‘economic graph’ has sometimes shown a series of fluctuations in terms of progress. With its stable conditions, developing economy and relative social and political stability, Malaysia is widely celebrated as the epitome of progressive, moderate Islam by the international media and major Western-European states (Liow 2009).

Writing in 1993, 2007 and 2013, William Case suggested that Malaysia's semi-democracy is stable at present although in a limited form and may persist unchanged for a considerable period. This ‘stable-tension’ situation, as described by Baharuddin (2009), has fabricated the landscape of Malaysia's politics since the May 13th, 1969 Ethnic Riot. An alternative view is that the emergence of numerous political parties and civil society groups from various backgrounds, including religious and Islamist backgrounds, have generally supported the democratisation process via the check and balance mechanism. Diamond (2012: 6) claims that there are now significant prospects for

¹⁰ In 1998, under the iron rule of Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar Ibrahim was sacked as a Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, after being charged with several misconducts including sodomy and corruption. Many international observers, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and opposition parties condemned the acts of Malaysian government, specifically to Mahathir as they strongly believed that all the accusations towards Anwar were made up to strengthen Mahathir's position. As a results, many protests were held in Kuala Lumpur against the ruling government and to show solidarity with Anwar Ibrahim.

democratic change in Malaysia, as it shows signs of entering a period of early democratic transition. Alarmed by the upheavals and regime change that began sweeping in from the Middle East and North Africa at the end of 2010, the Malaysian government has pledged to appoint a broad committee to review the state's electoral system and subsequently vowed to repeal the Internal Security Act so as to improve the future of national politics (Diamond 2012: 9).

1.3.2 Research Questions

Nevertheless, in Malaysia the following questions remain unclear and unanswered;

1. To what extent did the Malaysian Islamists really know about the Arab Uprisings?
2. What are the general perceptions and views of Islamists movements in Malaysia towards the Arab Uprisings?
3. To what extent the Malaysian Islamists view the importance of Tunisian case, particularly with regard to the Ennahda's development in the post-Jasmine Revolution? How have the Tunisian Islamists responded to Malaysian Islamists' views on the Arab Uprisings and the Tunisian case in particular?
4. Previously Malaysian Islamist movements were inspired by the Iran's Revolution of 1979, have the Arab Uprisings influenced Malaysian Islamist movements now in the same way?
5. To what extent have the 2011 Arab Uprisings' phenomenon and the post-Arab Uprisings development influenced and shaped the ideology, political activism and approach of Islamist movements in Malaysia?
6. How have the Islamist activists and politicians in Malaysia greeted and responded to the post-Arab Uprisings development? What lessons can Malaysian Islamists learn from this development ?

These core questions are the issues visited by this research in order to contribute some useful insights on the Arab Uprisings from Malaysia's experience. From the time when this research was originally conceived and up to the present day, there is a paucity of publications and specific studies which discuss in detail the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the Southeast Asian

context, particularly under the framework of Islamist movements in Malaysia. The review of the literature suggests that limited studies have explored the impact of the Arab Uprisings events on the political views of Islamist movements in Malaysia. Therefore, in order to fill a knowledge gap as mentioned above, this research aims to identify the perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon among the Islamist movements in Malaysia. The impact of the Arab Uprisings is assessed within the setting of the Islamist political party and civil society, focusing on several established Islamist movements in Malaysia. The selected case studies examine the truths and realities of the 2011 Arab Uprisings' influence from the Middle East and North Africa to the Southeast Asia context. This research also attempts to address the question of how and why the Islamist movements in Malaysia have dynamic approaches, policies and principles with regard to issues of civil disobedience, Arab world affairs and political Islam.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

To sum up, the main objectives of this study can be summarized as follows.

1. To identify the knowledge, perceptions and views of the different Islamist Movements in Malaysia – 1) the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS); 2) the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM); 3) the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA); and 4) the National Trust Party (Amanah) - towards the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the Middle East and North Africa.
2. To examine the extent of the influences and impacts of the 2011 Arab Uprisings' phenomenon and the post-Arab Uprisings development on political approach and activism of different Islamist movements in Malaysia.
3. To identify what lesson can be learned by the Malaysian Islamists, as well as to explain how and why the selected Islamist movements in Malaysia have dynamic views, approaches and principles with regard to issues of civil disobedience, Arab world affairs and political Islam.

1.5 Methodology

Research methodology, a subfield of epistemology (the science of knowing), might be called the science of inquiry about human social life (Babbie 2016: 6). This research involved two main approaches (mixed methods) which are quantitative and qualitative methods.. According to Bryman (1988: 131), researchers and social scientists are likely to build greater confidence in their results when they employ more than one method of investigation and therefore collect more than one type of data. Employing the qualitative method, as pointed out by Matveev (2002: 13) allows a researcher to collect the primary data in a flexible and non-structured way that allows emergence of new information on certain political issues. In addition, it also enables the researcher to interact with the research subjects in their own language and, in most of the cases, at their own work place. The qualitative method often used in 'non-numerical' field research, quantitative data, as suggested by Babbie (2016: 26), offers the advantages that "the numbers have over words as measures of some quality". In other words, the quantitative method allows the researcher to collect data from respondents in the numerical format in order to exercise objective judgment as well as to achieve a high level of reliability and accuracy.

Basically, the instruments that were used for both methods were surveys which involved questionnaire and interview. This research adopted the idea of "Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods" (by John Creswell) in which the researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyses the results from the questionnaires and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research - the interviews. It is considered sequential, because the initial quantitative phase of the research is followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell 2014: 15-16).

1.5.1 Aims and objectives of the survey

The main aim in carrying out this research in Malaysia is to explore the opinions of local Islamist movement members and Islamist politicians towards certain global issues (the Arab Uprisings) which relate to their Islamic world views and political values. Since the exact objective of this research is to identify the perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon among the

Islamist movements in Malaysia, a set of questionnaires was developed based on the highlighted research objectives, as has been indicated in the previous sections. This method is most appropriate for this research since the goal is to focus on understanding human perceptions regarding specific social and political matters. There was a non-probability (purposive) sampling as well as use of target respondents being employed. The latter was determined, according to the composition of selected Islamist movement organisations. Before starting the process of field work, the questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into Malay (See Appendix A).

1.5.2 Selection of samples

The sample covered in this research consists of members of several Islamist movements in Malaysia. There are four main established Islamist movements selected as units of analysis (for a number of reasons). The list of the organisations is as follows:

1. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party/*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS);
2. The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia/*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM);
3. The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front / *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia* (ISMA);
4. The National Trust Party/ *Parti Amanah Negara* (AMANAH).

1.5.3 Significance of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH as a sample

The case studies examined in this research represent four of the most well-known and often discussed Islamist movements operating in the Malaysian political landscape. For example, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), developed in the mould of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been around since the time of Malaysian independence from Britain in the mid-1950s and even served as part of a coalition government in the 1970s. Its current membership is estimated to be around 800,000, making it the biggest and strongest opposition party in Malaysia¹¹. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM),

¹¹ ¹¹ Personal interview with the Secretary General of the Kuala Lumpur PAS Youth Branch, Ubaid Hj. Abd Akla. Puchong, Malaysia. 3 September 2016.

played a key role in instigating the Islamisation trend at the grass roots level in the 1970s, during which the effect of the Iranian Revolution spread to the majority of the Muslim world (Mandaville 2014: 238-239). It has been estimated that ABIM has recruited approximately 50,000 members and it has more than 150 branches throughout the country, including overseas branches in the United Kingdom, United States, Egypt, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand (Monutty 1990: 88-97). As noted by Saodah Abd. Rahman and Abu Sadat Nurullah (2012), the PAS and ABIM are the prominent Islamic parties and movements, respectively, and can be regarded as the driving force behind the Islamic awakening in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA) is popularly involved with politics and Islamic propagation activities in Malaysia under the banner of “United Malay and Supreme Islam”. Although ISMA has declared that it is purely an NGO, the involvement of the leaders as electoral candidates in the previous general election (2013) showed its effort to strengthen the movement via political channels. Having more than 23 local branches as well as 9 international bases seems more than sufficient to indicate the strength and progress of this movement. The National Trust Party (AMANAH), on the other hand, is a newly-registered political party in Malaysia which claims to promote progressive and moderate political Islam. Most of its members were originally from PAS before the party’s internal conflicts occurred, which resulted in a split amongst its leadership. As the party currently has approximately more than 20,000 new members across the country, it is necessary for researchers who are dealing with Islamist movements in Malaysia to include this organization within the case studies¹². Overall, the case studies mentioned undoubtedly provided a variety of contexts and presented their own unique view to the presuppositions regarding the global impact of the Arab Uprisings. Thus, to summarise, PAS, ISMA, ABIM and AMANAH were included in the research sample due to their large number of supporters, as well as their presence in the current Malaysian political scenario and their concern with Arab world affairs.

¹² The decision to include AMANAH as one of the case studies was originally based on Sophie Lemièrè’s suggestion during the researcher’s presentation in a conference in Le Havre University, France back in 2015. Lemièrè is a French researcher who is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in Harvard University, specialising in the development of Malaysian politics comprising of local political parties, civil society, political Islam and the role of Muslim women democrats.

1.5.4 Sampling frame and process of data collection

Studies of organisations are often the simplest from a sampling standpoint, because organisations typically have membership lists which constitute an excellent sampling frame (Babbie 2016: 202). There are several methods for selecting samples that ensure representativeness. This research refers to the formula and table created and published by Krejcie and Morgan (1970: 607) in order to determine the sample size needed to be representative of a given population, in this case, the members of Islamist movements in Malaysia. According to Othman (2013: 151), the Krejcie and Morgan formula and table are appropriate with a 95% confidence level for researchers who are conducting a survey that involves a large population. Therefore, from Krejcie and Morgan's table, the sampling frame used in this research might be considered as an acceptable figure and a reasonable percentage to adequately reflect and represent data for the specific case study population. The following table illustrates the relationship between sample size and total population, as suggested by Krejcie and Morgan.

Table 1.1 Determining Sample Size from a Given Population

Estimated population	Sample size
1000	278
3000	341
5000	357
10,000	370
15,000	375
> 20,000	377

Source: Krejcie, V.R & Morgan, W.D (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 30: 607-610.

The process of data collection for this research was based on an intensive fieldwork, undertaken in Malaysia in the period from May 2016 to November 2016. The inclusion criteria for this survey are the respondents who currently involved in any selected Malaysia's Islamist movements – PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH as well as had a knowledge on the Arab Uprisings in general. In this research, during the fieldwork, a total of 1488 questionnaires were distributed via online, post and face to face methods to selected target respondents from different Islamist organisations (PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH). Of all the questionnaires sent to target respondents, 643 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 43.2 percent.

However, only 530 questionnaires were fully analysed in order to meet the research objectives. 113 were excluded due to incomplete information or answered by respondents whose never ‘heard’ about the Arab Uprisings. Since this research is the first ever study that involved a questionnaire-based survey among the Malaysian Islamists, the researcher believe that the low responses received from respondents was due to some concern or the feeling of ‘suspicious’ – whether their responses could be manipulated by the Malaysian government for the purpose of undermining the opposition blocs and the Islamists. Details of respondents number can be seen in the following table.

Table 1.2 Respondents with Estimated Population and Number of Questionnaires

Respondents	Estimated Population/Membership	Number of Expected Questionnaires	Number of Actual Responses Received
The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	>20,000	377	387
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	>20,000	377	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	>5000	357	80
The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	>20,000	377	95
Total		1488	643

Source: Field Research 2016

The main reason why the total number of 1488 questionnaires were initially chosen for the four case studies was due to an effort to obtain an adequate and reasonable number of responses from the total membership of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH throughout the country. So far in 2017, the total membership of these selected Islamist movements is estimated at around 900,000 in Malaysia¹³. In general, although the survey period was very interesting to the researcher, it might be useful to mention numbers of difficulties which faced the researcher during the field work. The issues of respondents’ refusal or reluctance to participate in the survey (because of the element of suspicious), coupled with time constraints and limited resources (such as finance, transport and research assistant support) inevitably were the

¹³ As in May 2017, PAS via its Secretary General, Takiuddin Hassan announced that the party currently has approximately 897,800 registered members throughout the country. Read more at Free Malaysia Today (2017). “PAS hilang 200,000 ahli sejak tahun lalu” (PAS lost 200,000 members since last year). <http://www.freemalysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/2016/06/03/pas-hilang-200000-ahli-sejak-tahun-lalu/>.

factors and challenges that prevented this research from acquiring the expected number of respondents.

1.5.5 Structure of the questionnaire

Before starting the process of field work, the draft questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into Malay, which is the native and widely spoken language of the majority of Malaysians. The questionnaire for this research comprises a list of open and closed-ended multiple choice questions as well as Likert-type scale questions. It is designed to cover a number of issues through which the attitudes and perceptions of the representative sample, 'the Islamists', toward the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon can be investigated.

The questionnaire is made up of seven sections (A, B, C, D, E, F and G). Section A (Questions 1 to 8) concerns the basic information on each respondent including age, sex, ethnicity, religion, marital status, level of education and working sector. Section B identifies the involvement of each respondent with Islamist movements in Malaysia (including party politics, civil society organisations and NGOs) along with their membership status. Section C indicates the knowledge of each respondent regarding the events of the Arab Uprisings uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Section D explores the sources of information obtained by each respondent on the Arab Uprisings events. Section E (Questions 1 to 19) examines the perceptions and views of the Islamist Movement members and activists toward the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. Section F (Questions 1 to 17) investigates the influences and impacts of the Arab Uprisings as regards Islamist movement activism and ideology. Overall, it was estimated that the time to complete the questionnaire would be between 10 and 15 minutes.

1.5.6 In-depth interviews

Whilst quantitative methods can provide a high level of measurement precision and statistical power, qualitative methods can supply a greater depth of information about the nature of a particular research setting (Matveev 2002). According to William Filstead;

“Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies such as participant observation, in-depth in qualitative interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated and field work which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. This method allows researchers to get close to the data thereby developing the analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself” (Filstead 1970: 6).

Apart from the survey, for the qualitative research, the method of in-depth interview was employed during the researcher’s field trip in Malaysia (June-November 2016) and Tunisia (December 2017-January 2018) with selected Islamist movement activists, politicians and top ranked members from PAS, ABIM, ISMA, AMANAH and Ennahda to further elaborate the data which collected and derived from the questionnaires. The nature of the interviews were mainly formal and semi-structured– the interviewees were asked a list of open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviewing, according to Bernard (1988), can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data and best used when a student or researcher will not get more than one chance to interview someone. Semi-structure interviews allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

The researcher developed and used a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the conversation, mostly in a particular order. The inclusion of open-ended questions provided the opportunity for the researcher in identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic at hand. The average duration for each of the interview sessions was approximately 30 minutes. The interview sessions were also recorded and transcribed by the researcher, depending on interviewees’ permission. In this research, the number of selected respondents (based on their expertise and position) can be summarised in the Table 1.3. However, given the nature of Islamist movements as a ‘backbone’ of political opposition in Malaysia, there were also several numbers of respondents (2 from PAS, 5 from AMANAH and 1 from ABIM) had requested for anonymity during the interview sessions. This was due to some personal reasons for instance the fear of being exposed to the ruling regime which may risk their current profesion, employment or business.

Table 1.3 Summary of the Qualitative Research - the In-depth Interview

No	Name	Political Affiliation	Position/Membership Status	Location	Time & Date
1.	Ahmad Uzair Mazlan	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	PhD student. Registered and active member of PAS. Former PAS' student representative – UK University branch.	Southampton, England	02/06/2016 10pm-11pm.
2.	Amar Yasier	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)	PhD student. Registered and active member of ISMA. Biro of International Relations for ISMA's UK branch.	London, England	10/06/2016 6.30pm-7.30pm.
3.	Mohamad Mazuki Ariffin	The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Retired civil servant/part-time lecturer. Registered and active member of ABIM since 1970s.	Exeter, England	01/08/2016 10am-11am.
4.	Zakiuddin Shariff	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Registered and active member of PAS.	Perlis, Malaysia	13/08/2016 10pm-10.30pm
5.	Abdul Muiz	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Registered member of PAS.	Perak, Malaysia	16/08/2016 10pm-10.30pm
6.	Ridzuan Mikin	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Self-employed. Registered member of AMANAH.	Cyberjaya, Malaysia	30/08/2016 10pm-10.30pm
7.	Asyraf Farique	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)	Fulltime activist. Registered and active member of ISMA.	Bangi, Malaysia	31/08/2016 11am-11.30 am
8.	Mohd Syafiq	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)	Fulltime activist. Registered and active member of ISMA.	Bangi, Malaysia	31/08/2016 11.30 am-12.00 am.
9.	Muhammad Najib	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Postgrad Student -IIUM. Registered and active member of Amanah, national level.	Segambut, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	02/09/2016 10.00 pm-10.30 pm.
10.	Ubaid Hj. Abd Akla	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Secretary general of PAS Youth – Kuala Lumpur (Federal) Branch	Puchong, Malaysia	03/09/2016 11.30 pm-12.30 am.
11.	Hafez Sabri	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Deputy Chief of PAS Youth – Perak State	Ipoh, Perak. Malaysia	07/10/2016 10.30 pm-11 pm.
12.	Najmuddin Mohd Faudzir	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)	Registered member of ISMA	UKM Bangi, Selangor	13/10/2016 11 am-11.30 am
13.	Suhaizan Kayat	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Former PAS Youth Chief. Current member of the Amanah Central Committee.	Amanah Headquarter, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	19/10/2016 3pm-4pm

14.	Maszlee Malik	Academic	Expert in Islamist movements in Malaysia, political Islam, Middle East and the Arab World affairs. Assistant Professor in International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM)	International Islamic University of Malaysia, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	20/10/2016 2pm-3pm
15.	Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)	President of the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA).	ISMA Headquarter, Bangi, Malaysia	26/10/2016 11 am- 12 am
16.	Rafek Abdessalem	Ennahda Movement/ Party	Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. Current advisor to the party president on International relations.	Abdessalem's office, Tunis, Tunisia	30/12/2017 12 am- 12.45 am
17.	Rached Ghannouchi	Ennahda Movement/ Party	Founder and current president of the Ennahda Movement/Party.	Ghannouchi's office at the Ennahda Headquarter, Tunis, Tunisia.	03/01/2018 4.45 pm- 5.15 pm
18.	Naoufel Eljammali	Ennahda Movement/ Party	Former Minister of Employment and Vocational Training. Current Chair of the Rights and Liberties Affairs Committee and a member of Ennahda Political Bureau.	The Parliament of Tunisia (Majless Nowab Eshaab - نواب مجلس - الشعب)	05/01/2018 1.00 pm- 1.30 pm
19.	Osama al Saghir	Ennahda Movement/ Party	Former Member of Parliament for the Tunisian National Constitutional Assembly 2011. Current MP for the Italy district of Tunisians abroad.	The Parliament of Tunisia (Majless Nowab Eshaab - نواب مجلس - الشعب)	06/01/2018 9.30am- 10.45am

Source: Field Research 2016-2018

Since many qualitative studies aim primarily at description and explanation (Babbie 2016: 90-91), the strength of data collection through interviews is that it focuses directly on the particular issues and case studies, which will provide a broad perspective about the research topic. Considering that interviewing is historically, politically and contextually bound, the data gathered through this method is commonly used as a tool to support or reject any argument. The outcome of the interviews will be largely presented in Chapter Six, Seven and Eight which closely focus on the research findings.

1.5.7 Data treatment and analysis

All data from the questionnaires were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The main statistical procedures are;

a) Frequencies: Simple counts of each value for a variable, e.g. numbers respectively of age group, male and female, type of Islamist movements, level of education, last place of education and etc.

b) Cross-tabulations: One of the simplest and most frequently used ways of identifying the presence or absence of a relationship between two variables. In cross-tabulation, at the simplest two-variable level, one variable forms the row of a table and another the columns. Each cell contains the cases which have the appropriate row and column values. An example would be a cross-tabulation of type of Islamist movement (row) against the variable of knowledge on the Arab Uprisings (column).

c) Chi-Square test: Sample data chi-squared can be used to test for the statistical significance of observed associations of variables. For example - respondents' level of education and attitudes towards the influence of Arab Uprisings social media activism. In all test of significance, if p-value is less than 0.05, then there is a statistically relationship between the two variables.

Data from the interview were coded and evaluated through the Software for Qualitative Data Analysis (NVIVO). The analysis phase pursued both descriptive and explanatory aims. There were several procedures being undertaken by the researcher to thematically analyse the interview data. First, the researcher transcribed all the recordings and translated them into English. Secondly, the researcher grouped the responses into specific questions in order to make sense of the data. Thirdly, the researcher develop a list of nodes (themes) to see the connections between the data and questions. Lastly, the researcher made comparisons between respondents, based on their specific type of Islamist movements.

Besides, document analyses from journals, academic books and articles, official reports and library research have been used to obtain extensive information on the Arab Uprisings, Iran's Revolution and the background of political development and Islamist Movements in Malaysia. The scope of these secondary sources and references were limited up to the point of the thesis submission in March 2018 – meaning that the recent political development in the MENA region and Malaysia, for instance the 14th Malaysian General

Election in May 2018 and any subsequent events after the election were not discussed and included in any part of the thesis. Overall, three kinds of data were used in this research: firstly, the empirical sources, that is the questionnaire survey research; secondly, the qualitative and interview sources; and thirdly, secondary material or published sources - mainly documents concerning the theoretical approach and case study background. As this study is an exploratory study, the abovementioned methods were used in an exploratory way, not to test hypotheses or theories, but to obtain reasonable and valuable information from the data in terms of patterns of responses from specific Islamist movements.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

It is worth mentioning some challenges that the researcher faced during the study, which have indirectly limited the progress of the research.

a) Financial support

Financial support is undoubtedly amongst the most important elements for any researcher in the social sciences when conducting fieldwork for a research project. The cost of transportation, logistical requirements and survey-related administration can be demanding on a researcher's budget, particularly if the study requires long periods of observation and a large sample of dispersed respondents. Hence, an external research grant is extremely important to ensure that the planned fieldwork agenda can be undertaken according to the intended schedule. Throughout the fieldwork in Malaysia, the researcher used only his own limited financial resources for travel purposes and to distribute and collect the questionnaires from respondents. Indeed, due to some unforeseeable financial difficulties, the researcher only managed to obtain 630 completed questionnaires from the 1,488 questionnaires originally distributed. If reasonable financial assistance or a supportive research grant had been made available the size of the sample would have been larger and would have included more respondents from amongst the Malaysian Islamists. More respondents would have meant more consistent data, since the respondents represent the attitudes of specific organisations (with thousands of members in this case the Islamist movements in Malaysia).

b) Time constraints

Since the researcher was bound by UK Home Office rules and regulations, the maximum period that he could be away from Exeter University was only 90 days or 3 months for each year of study. Failure to follow this rule could result in the termination of the researcher's student visa. Given the initial sample size (1,500) and the number of interviews (30) that the researcher planned to conduct during his fieldwork, a period of three months in the field is not sufficient. The researcher estimates that the fieldwork for this study should have taken more than 6 months, since the questionnaires were mainly distributed by the researcher working alone, without any assistance from enumerators. As such, it is unrealistic to obtain 1,488 hard copies of questionnaire-feedback and conduct 30 in-depth interviews within 90 days duration. More time would have meant a more flexible schedule for the researcher, so that he could complete more comprehensively the various fieldwork 'checklists' which indirectly contribute to the quality and quantity of data obtained.

c) Non-responses from target respondents

As previously mentioned in Chapter One, of the 1,488 questionnaires sent to target respondents, the researcher only received 530 completed questionnaires relevant to the study. Nearly half of the respondents did not return the questionnaire, despite being provided with a stamped addressed envelope. Some respondents returned the questionnaire with incomplete answers and some without even completing any questions on the form. Due to time constraints and financial limitations as previously mentioned, the researcher was unsuccessful in tracking and 'chasing' these missing questionnaires. Regarding the in-depth interviews, there were cases where the potential interviewees cancelled the agreed meeting with the researcher (often at short notice) or refused to take part in the interview for personal reasons having previously agreed to participate.

1.7 Significance of the Research

The study is intended to offer a significant and original contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of Islamist Movements in Malaysia, as well as modern Middle East Politics, with specific attention on the issue of the 2011 Arab

Uprisings and their wider impact on the global Muslim community. The findings of the study are also expected to reveal new information about the perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon amongst the Islamist movements in Malaysia, especially in the period following the post-2011 Arab Revolutions. Although there have been a number of studies and publications examining the relations between the Arab Uprisings and worldwide responses, as well as implications beyond Middle Eastern countries, there has been a lack of comprehensive study on the influence and impact on Southeast Asian countries, in particular as regards the Islamist movements in Malaysia. Therefore, the aim of this study is to fill this gap.

As well as contributing to the relevant body of knowledge, this research also appeared to indirectly benefit respondents – Malaysian Islamist members, activists and politicians from the PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamist movements. During the fieldwork, the feedback received from respondents showed that the majority of Malaysian Islamists believed that the Arab Uprisings was a significant issue about which people should be aware. Many positive comments were also received from respondents in terms of how they valued the general contribution of this research towards Malaysian society. Based on the NVIVO analysis, three 'nodes' or specific themes were established from the collection of respondents' opinions - namely the importance of core issues within the research, the significance of Arab Uprisings issues and the benefit derived from the questionnaire. Representative quotes taken from the respondents' written comments about the significance of the research are stated below.

1.7.1 Importance of Issues Being Addressed in the Research

Based on the survey findings, it seems that respondents from all four movements expressed a positive attitude and were satisfied with the general issues being covered by the study. These were: the Arab Uprisings; the environment of the post-Arab Uprisings; developments in current Malaysian politics; political Islam; and the activism of Islamist movements - BERSIH, Daesh etc. Respondents' specific feedback is as follows:

“..Good issues. Maybe there are a few people who have heard less about these issues” – AMANAH activist.

“..The chosen research topic is really good as it will provide knowledge for those who do not know about this issue...” - Salma Nadhira, PAS activist.

“..Very good research and can be presented to the society in Malaysia...” – ABIM activist.

“..I hope this research will be undertaken in more depth in order to understand whether the ‘Arab Spring’ has brought a negative or positive impact among Islamist movements...” - Taufiq Abdul, PAS activist.

“..I feel that this is an important issue which needs to be exposed among all Malaysian citizens, not only Islamist parties and NGOs..”- Aminuddin, ISMA Activist.

“..These issues (in the survey) are not being properly and accurately reported by our local media. Research should be done as in this survey. It should be prolonged in order to serve as an eye-opener to the whole world...” - Anjum Zainal Abidin, ISMA youth activist.

“...To organise an awareness campaign and exhibition regarding this issue especially in public places...” - Nur Atiqah, ISMA women’s activist.

“..Need to expose (this issue) to all by producing a short article that is freely accessible (easy access). Deep exposure and promotion via new social media (FB, Twitter etc.) also needs to be done. It will benefit those who might not be aware about this issue...” - ISMA activist.

“..The issues being highlighted are brilliant! Hope this issue will be exposed to general Malaysian society...” – ISMA activist.

1.7.2 Merit of Arab Uprisings Issues

In terms of the main issue – the ‘Arab Spring’ - many respondents admitted the importance of this issue and suggested that the Arab Uprisings ‘story’ should be spread to as many Malaysians as possible via several platforms, such as social media, popular writings, forum and dialogues. Selected respondents’ opinions are as follows:

“..My suggestion is to spread this knowledge or information about the ‘Arab Spring’ events through a wider social media platform...” – PAS activist.

“..The ‘Arab Spring’ events occurred quite a long time ago and there were a small number of available resources (in Malaysia). Part of the events are almost forgotten which raise concerns that they might be mistakenly confused with other events. Perhaps you could expose the

‘Arab Spring’ events via Islamic magazines, blogs, articles, etc...” – Khairulbariah, ISMA women’s activist.

“..To provide more information on the ‘Arab Spring’ events. It would be more interesting if a forum which discusses ‘the relevance of the Arab Spring in Malaysia’ is held”... – Zaim, PAS activist.

“..To provide more seminars or a series of dialogues regarding the ‘Arab Spring’ and discussions with (local) leaders...” – AMANAH activist.

“..All layers of society, especially university students should pay more attention to current issues, especially global current issues such as the Arab Uprisings, Daesh, etc. Efforts to spread information on local and international issues should be increased and promoted...” – ABIM activist.

“..I am keen to learn more about the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Please share this 'story' with me...” – Shuhada, PAS activist.

1.7.3 Questionnaire Benefits

By participating in the survey, some respondents acknowledged how the questions in the questionnaire helped them to more deeply and critically understand the events in the Arab Uprisings and their connection with Malaysian politics and Malaysia’s Islamist movements. Respondents’ reactions were gathered and are presented as follows:

“..The research questionnaire is interesting and acceptable. It seems beneficial to help the Malaysian society understand the Arab Uprisings in a more critical way...” – AMANAH activist.

“..I am of the opinion that this is great survey as it will make respondents think critically. It is absolutely a great piece of survey work since it highlighted issues, which from my point of view, not everyone knew about the Arab Uprisings...” – ABIM activist.

“..The questions being asked were great as the content came with knowledge that people may not have known...” - Muhamad Shahzuan Azwa, PAS activist.

“..Such a good survey that was full with questions. On the other hand, these issues seem to be silenced in Malaysia to suit the agenda of certain groups - Mohd Dzulkarnain, PAS activist.

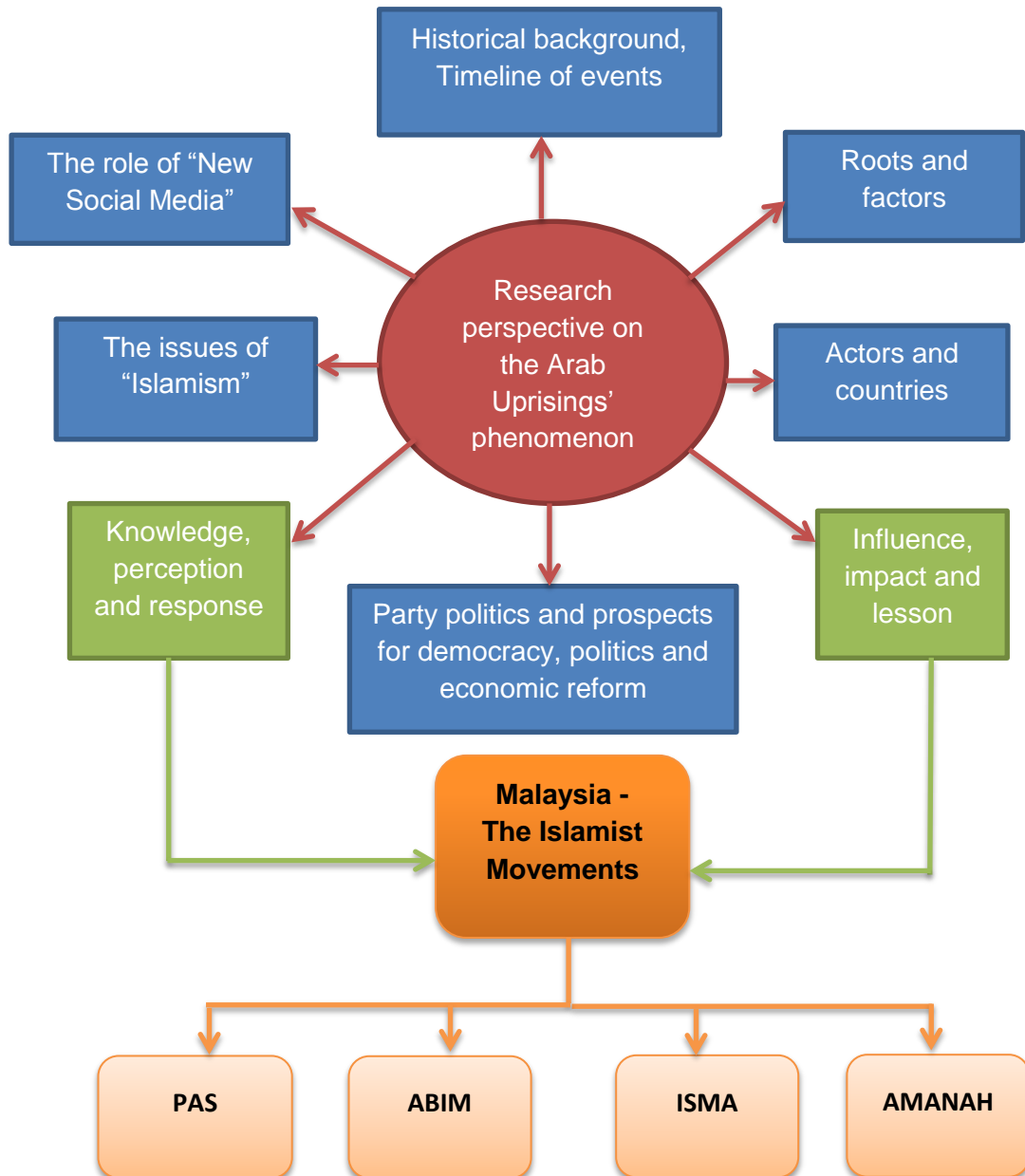
“..Indeed, this survey is very valuable as well as absolutely brilliant for the Malaysian people to gain better exposure to the Arab Uprisings and current Malaysian politics...” - Mohammad Yusof, PAS activist.

“..Interesting research! This is my first-time ever participating in this kind of survey. After filling in this form, I can imagine the possibility of low

awareness, attention or knowledge about other Muslim countries (MENA) amongst general Malaysians. My suggestion is to publish a newspaper and article regarding the post-Arab Uprisings and the current situation of Muslim nations all over the world. Overall, this questionnaire-survey research is brilliant and capable of raising awareness...” - Nazatul Shima, ISMA women’s activist.

Indeed, in light of the on-going tension post-Arab Uprisings events in the Middle East and North Africa, understanding the influence and impact of this phenomenon on other Muslim states such as Malaysia has grown in importance, as Islamist parties and movements have so far played a major role in the Malaysian political landscape. Despite some of their weaknesses, Islamist movements have become more critical actors than previously. Their presence and activism testifies to the dynamics of Malaysian civil society which they are capable of mobilising. Moreover, these organisations have been able to raise mass grievances in popular forums and social media, to which the government has sometimes been obliged to respond. Essentially, the following figure shows how this research will originally and distinctively contribute to the larger body of knowledge - the Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon and the Islamist Movements in Malaysia.

Figure 1.1 General Research Perspective on the Arab Uprisings



The research for the work also took place during a period of increasing concern about Malaysia’s political instability, as well as the uncertainty in the MENA region following the post-Arab Uprisings events – thus, it offers a genuine view from the selected Islamists movements on issues of regime change, mass protest, democracy, Islamism and influence of Arab Uprisings on political activism and ideology. Accordingly, a deeper understanding of the perceptions and influences of the ‘Arab Spring’ among Islamist activists and their movements will provide academics, researchers and policymakers alike with a better understanding of how best to work with these organisations and formulate state policy.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter which states the background and context of the research, problem statements, the aims of the study, methodology (data collection, survey process, structure of the questionnaire, the sample and data treatment) and significance of the research. Chapter two discusses the 'literature review' part of the research. It also highlights the significance of research gap that emerged from the past studies, both from English and Malay publications. Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework of the research from the classics and modern literature. The theories and concepts highlighted in this chapter are – the Adjustment to Change theory, Islamism and Social Movement theory, theory of Revolution, the concept of democracy, democratisation and civil society.

Chapter Four focuses on the review of revolution that occurred within the Muslim world - The Iranian Revolution and the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Chapter Five highlights the historical background of the four case studies of Islamist movements in Malaysia – the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the National Trust Party (AMANAH), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and the Malaysia Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA). In addition, there is also a snapshot of Malaysia's political background, as well as consideration of popular civil protests in Malaysia – the BERSIH and a brief description of contemporary Malaysian politics.

Chapter Six examines the perceptions and attitudes of the different Islamist movements in Malaysia towards the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. Chapter Seven explores the influence and impact of the Arab Uprisings on the Islamist movements in Malaysia through a number of key questions. Chapter Eight establishes lessons learnt from the post- Arab Uprisings development on the Malaysian Islamists. Finally, chapter Nine summarises the main findings of the research, along with final discussion and provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review can be defined as locating, gathering, highlighting and summarizing the previous studies that most strongly relate to the researcher's topic. It helps a researcher to determine whether the research topic or subject is worth studying and it also provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the scope to a required area or subject of inquiry (Creswell 2016: 25). This section will scrutinize earlier studies on the influence and impact of the Arab uprisings – beyond the affected states in the region of Middle East and North Africa – in this case specifically considering Malaysia and its Islamist movements. In addition, it will also emphasize the gap in the knowledge from past studies which has paved a way for this research to consider the topic of the 'Arab Spring' and its connection to Islamist movements in Malaysia.

Since the launch of the Arab uprisings in late 2010, it is not an exaggeration to say that thousands of peer-reviewed papers, conference proceedings, theses, books, abstracts and articles relating to the events have been produced and published all over the world. Journals such as *Contemporary Politics*, *Democracy*, *Democratization*, *Mediterranean Politics*, *Middle East Journal*, *North African Studies* and the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* are notable for their coverage on the Arab Uprisings since the launch of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution in December 2010. Many perspectives have been discussed and covered - ranging from common topics such as the roots of the events, factors contributed to the uprisings, states and actors involved, timelines and backgrounds to the events, prospects for political transition and economic reform and the "new waves of democratisation" – to newer subjects such as the role of new social media and technology during the protests, military issues, the rise of Islamist parties, the influence and impact of the events on other states beyond MENA and the debates on "democracy" – since the old narratives of Middle East politics were mainly dominated by the 'persistence of authoritarian' discourses. To narrow down these narratives, several major opinions collected from established sources have been referred

to in this research, as noted previously, in order to frame the problems which then indicated a significant ‘knowledge gap’. A summary of the key views are listed as follows:

Table 2.1 Selected Views of the Arab Uprisings within the Malaysian Context

Scholar / Observer (s)	Views on the Arab Spring Phenomenon relating to the Malaysia context
Osman Bakar (2012)	“The public, political observers and academics in Malaysia have been following the ‘Arab Spring’ since the beginning with great interest.”
Larry Diamond (2012)	“After the Arab Spring phenomenon in the Middle East and North Africa, the next wave of democracy might affect the region of East Asia.”
Kaisan Abdul Rahman (2013)	“Malaysians will reject the possibility of an ‘Arab Spring’ style revolution – no reasons to emulate it in Malaysia. ”
Reduan Tee Abdullah (2013)	“The Arab Spring would not extend to Malaysia – the ruling government is responsive to its citizens.”
Najib Razak (2013)	“The positive economic progress and political stability proved that there is no motive to launch an ‘Arab Spring’-style protest.”
Peter Mandaville (2014)	“The success of Islamists in the post-Arab Uprising might support the Islamic-oriented parties to become strong actors in Muslim politics.”

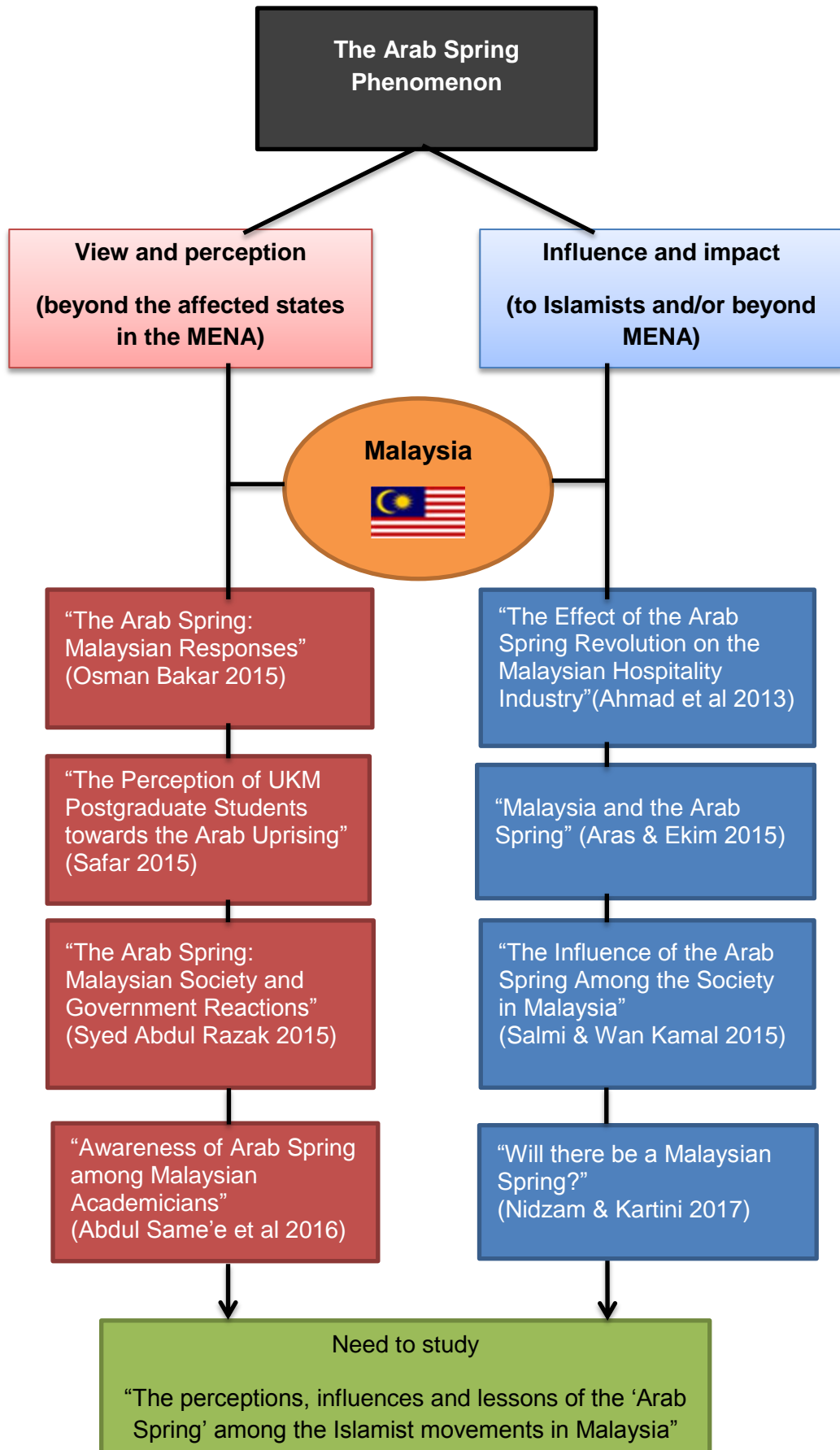
Source: prepared by the researcher

In order to position and contribute this research within the larger body of knowledge, a literature road map has been designed to compose scores of the previous studies on the topic of the Arab Uprisings, specifically regarding its influences and impact on other states and Islamists. Figure 2.1 below lists a number of publications from 2012 to 2016 which are considered highly relevant to the issue of influence and impact of the Arab Uprisings, as well as how the global community reacted to the events. Figure 2.2, on the other hand demonstrates how a ‘knowledge gap’ emerged from the literature which relates to the central theme of the study – the perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings among the Malaysian Islamists.

Figure 2.1 Literature Road Map (Selected Publication on the Arab Uprisings)



Figure 2.2 Literature Road Map and the Knowledge Gap



Overall, the first 'map' (figure 2.1) shows how the broad topic – the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon - was narrowed down into more specific issues by focusing on two aspects: 1) Views and perceptions of other states; and 2) Its influence and impact on other states and the Islamists. Within the same focus, the second 'map' (Figure 2.2) visualizes the position of the general case study – Malaysia - based on the previous related literature. This suggests that the views of Malaysia's Islamist movements toward the Arab Uprisings have not been explored, along with the impact of the phenomenon on their ideology and activism. The following sub-sections will thematically and contextually examine in further detail the selected previous studies which discuss the Arab Spring phenomenon – from the view point of its implication for Islamists and other states (including Malaysia) and also how the global community – from Europe, Russia, Central Asia, Pakistan, India, China and Southeast Asia - observed it.

2.2 The Arab Uprisings and Islamists

In general, the term 'Islamist' is derived from a wide concept of Islamism. According to Masaki (1996), the concept of Islamism is used to refer to political ideology which advocates the establishment of an Islamic political order, mostly via establishment of an Islamic state or Islamic community. Meanwhile, an Islamist is a person who adopts Islamism as his or her political ideology. Islamist groups and political parties, on the other hand, are social and political movements that justify their ideologies, goals, political values and principles based on their interpretation of Islam and certain past Islamic traditions (Ashour 2010: 4). Researchers such as Jillian Schwedler, Janine Clark and Stacey Philbrick- Yadav who have looked at this particular field of Islamism found that study on Islamist movements and democratic politics generally falls into two broad and overlapping areas. The first views at Islamism and political participation, with scholars largely examining, among other issues – Islamist political parties, their relations to the state, the conditions under which they enter elections, and the impact of political participation upon the parties. The second broad area of research looks more closely at Islamism and civil society, with scholars examining other types of Islamist organisations and activities, for instance their role in promoting political Islam and democratisation (Clark 2012: 120). It seems that both areas of study share common methodological debates

concerning what exactly one should view at when observing Islamist movements – for example the extent to which their ideology and activism progress.

Throughout the Muslim world today, one can find an abundance of Islamist movements – from the smallest moderate groups to the largest radical organisations. In this research, the selected case studies of Islamist movements– PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH in Malaysia - even today, might fall under the category of ‘moderate’, although the ways they practise the “middle-path” are diverse from one another. Since this section primarily deals with previous studies on the Arab Uprisings and the Islamists, details of these movements will be extensively addressed in Chapter Three which focuses exclusively on the historical backgrounds of the case studies. The current uprisings could trigger what would be the first region-wide democratisation dynamic in an overwhelmingly Muslim region, which raises many significant questions about Islam and democracy in general (Saikal & Acharya 2014: 2). Furthermore, one of the most remarkable aspects of the Arab Uprisings, as claimed Ahmad (2013: 124) and Clark (2012: 119) was the electoral victory of Islamist parties in the two countries that heralded the ‘Spring’ – Tunisia and Egypt. Thus, the rise of Islamist parties is one of the main features of the political landscape in the new Middle East and North Africa post 2011 uprisings (Al-Anani 2012: 466). The following paragraphs will discuss the question of whether the Arab Spring phenomenon has impacted the development of Islamists in the Middle East and North Africa.

The article written by Iona Matesan entitled *The Impact of the Arab Spring on Islamist Strategies* (2012) draws on the experience of certain Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa which are becoming more moderate after the victory of nonviolent protest in ousting several dictators in the region. Drawing on insight from Eva Bellin, as well as the case of *al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya* (“Islamic Congregation”) movement in Egypt, Matesan maintains that the political change in the post-Arab Spring has made nonviolent strategies more appealing to Islamist groups. The experience of political transition from the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution and Egyptian 25th January Revolution have sent powerful signals to the Arab world that nonviolent resistance can be more

meaningful for opposition groups, especially the Islamists, than the act of violent rebellion. Given the founding ideology of *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* and its violent past, the commitments of its leaders to respect the law and participate in politics through the formation of a political party became even more significant after the Revolution (Matesan 2012: 39). Yet, the author realizes that this statement may not be applicable to other regions beyond the Middle East and North Africa when she compares the development of the Indonesian *Jemaah Islamiyyah*, which still has difficulties in abandoning violent tactics. Matesan's work perhaps offers sufficient analysis of how and why some of the Islamist groups in the post-Arab Spring era accept nonviolent protest as one of the methods to practice that important element of democracy – freedom of expression. However, the study is largely based on 'ex-radical' groups with a limited time frame (since the launch of the Arab Uprisings until summer 2012). The overthrow of the Islamist coalition government in June 2013 by the Egyptian army may shift the present Islamist confidence in democracy – meaning that a new analysis should be developed with regard to Mateson's main findings, which could include the progress of Islamist movements in Malaysia.

In addition to Matesan's study, Tarek Chamki (2014) views the recent developments of Muslim politics in the post-Arab Spring as a "Neo-Islamism trend" since one of the most obvious outcomes of the 2011 Arab revolutions is the rise of Islamists and Islamic-oriented political parties. Nevertheless, his study focuses mainly on Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood branches across the Arab world and thus the scope seems to be limited, which indirectly leaves a question about the other parts of Muslim Brotherhood inspired movements like Malaysia's PAS, ABIM and ISMA. Indeed, there is no argument to claims about an upsurge of Islamism in the post-Arab Spring, as agreed by many scholars including Al-Anani (2012), Bradley (2012), Cavatorta (2012), Haynes (2013) and Schenker (2015). However, in many parts of the world, especially in Malaysia where the majority of Muslims are considered as one of the 'greatest sympathizers' to any global Muslim-related issues - for instance the Iranian Revolution (1979), Arab-Israeli disputes (from 1967 onward), Balkan War (1992-1995) and US invasion in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) - the 2010-2011 Arab Revolutions might lead to a feeling of sympathy and certain perception by Malaysian Muslims, particularly the Islamists that the events were

an 'Islamic revolution', which is apparently misleading if one refers to the origins of the Arab Uprisings¹⁴.

Matesan and Chamkhi's study indicated that the Arab Uprisings has affected the ideologies and activity of some Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa particularly in Egypt, giving them a new brand of 'progressive' Islamist identity. The question that arises here is: do Muslims support the Islamists now? Charles Kurzman and Didem Türkoğlu (2015) sought the answer through observations, as well as updated empirical data on Islamic political parties' performance in legislative elections towards the end of 2014 in 15 respective countries. Surprisingly, although the political environment in which these parties operate had changed dramatically, their study showed that Islamist parties had actually been less successful in parliamentary elections after the Arab uprisings. Kurzman and Türkoğlu (2015: 100) thus hypothesized that "the freer the election, the worse Islamist parties progressed". This hypothesis could be challenged if it included the latest developments of Islamist parties and political situations in other regions, for example Malaysia, where the ruling UMNO coalition is struggling hard to maintain the status quo since the emergence of new progressive Islamist party- the National Trust Party. Regarding the trend in Islamist parties' political platforms, the authors stated that Malaysia's PAS retained a stable position on 'liberal directions' (based on several issues coded in the study), for example – the implementation of Sharia, human rights, jihad and democracy. However, since 2015 this has no longer been the case, as PAS has officially proposed the implementation of Sharia Criminal Law in the state legislative hall of Kelantan.

On the whole, one can find commonalities in the studies by Matesan (2012), Chamki (2014) and Kurzman and Türkoğlu (2015) as regards the emergence of interconnectedness between the post-Arab Spring phenomenon and the development of Islamist movements across the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, the current presence of Islamists in a national political arena seems to be welcomed and can be considered as part of development of the

¹⁴ Olivier Roy (2012) consistently argues that Islamists did not play a prominent role during the Arab uprisings. Thus, to link the 'Arab Spring' events with so-called Islamic revolutions is totally out of context. As has been previously stated, the rise of Islamist parties only emerged after the former dictators of two major affected states – Tunisia and Egypt were ousted via massive mass protest.

larger Arab Muslim societies. However, in other places and outside the region, scholars such as Saikal and Acharya (2014) have suggested that impacts from the political upheavals in the Arab world could possibly be felt in other parts of the world, specifically in Asia. The following sub-section will highlight previous crucial work on the Arab Uprisings and its worldwide reactions and implications.

2.3 The Arab Uprisings and Worldwide Responses

In the few years that have passed since the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution was launched, the Middle East and North Africa has continued to experience momentous changes. Most notable of these, are the consequences of the Arab Uprisings which continue to have enormous impact across the region and the wider world (Fawcett 2016). Various scholars and researches have wrote the possible impact of the Arab Uprisings towards global community. For instance, in 2014, Amin Saikal and Amitav Acharya contribute an edited volume of their own entitled '*Democracy and Reform in the Middle East and Asia: Social Protest and Authoritarian Rule after the Arab Spring*', which addresses inter-regional implications of the Arab revolts in relation to Asia, particularly in terms of their ideological influence on opposition groups and the prospects for democratic transition in a variety of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. As pointed out by the authors, Asia is considered as the region that is most affected by the uprisings, due to issues of democracy and democratisation which remain blooming and striking as a key factor for the region's security. Furthermore, in many Asian states, one can find experiences of 'people's power' revolutions that toppled some long serving autocratic rulers - for example the case of the Philippines (1986 & 2001), Indonesia (1998), and Thailand (2006-08) – which suggest the Arab Uprisings might have a 'snowballing effect' in Asia (Saikal & Acharya 2014). This edited volume is unquestionably significant as regards the most recent implications of the Arab uprisings on Asia and provides extremely useful support for assertions about a potential "Malaysian Spring". However, the book does not consider perceptions among the youth, opposition parties, civil society groups and NGOs and thus loses its touch with Malaysian Islamist involvement almost entirely.

In order to explore the global reactions and implications of the Arab Uprisings, there needs to be close examination of numerous case studies of countries which have responded to or been affected by the phenomenon. Iran is a country famous in the Muslim world for its great mass protests (nearly three decades ago) dubbed the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution. Both Ali Parchami (2012) and Shahram Akbarzadeh (2014) have different opinions on the Arab Uprisings and its 'connection' with the Islamic republic of Iran. The former notes that Tehran has been one of the few countries in the world which has vocally supported the Arab protest movements (except for Syria) and celebrated the unrest as an 'Islamic awakening' against US-friendly states - which was seen as long overdue and now represents an unstoppable force in the Arab world. The Iranian leadership, headed by its supreme leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (2011) claimed that its popular revolution in 1979 finally inspired the Arab nations and became a role model to construct a new identity of Islamic states across the region. Paradoxically, Akbarzadeh claims that the post-Arab uprisings have indirectly weakened Iran's soft power and undermined Islamic Republic's popularity amongst the majority Muslim states, due to its supportive stance towards the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, as well as Shi'a protesters in Bahrain. However, Akbarzadeh favours Farideh's (2011) statement that the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt were seen by the Iranian reformists and Green Movement activists as catalysts of their activism, which indirectly serve as a real threat to the Iranian authorities. The Islamic regime is fully aware of the risk and has moved to contain the threat from within (Akbarzadeh 2014: 118). Whatever the level of Iranian 'connection' with the Arab Spring phenomenon, one thing that is certain is that the events have led to an official reaction by state bureaucrats and influenced state foreign policy, which proves the global impact of the Arab Uprisings in different parts of the world.

Contrary to Iran's case, India - where Muslims constitute the largest population after the Hindu majority - has been able to steer a careful path and avoid taking sides in the post-Arab Spring era (Ahmad 2013: 125). However, the powerful forces unleashed by the 2011 Arab uprisings, which toppled several autocrats, have led to the formation of strong alliances in contention with each other. All of these taken together are likely to challenge India's traditional policy of avoiding involvement in regional issues (MENA) especially

with regard to Gulf states – such as Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Qatar - who have strong economic and trade relationships with the country (Ahmad 2013). Meanwhile, Samina Yasmeen (2014) argues that the Arab uprisings have been understood and interpreted in different ways in Pakistan making a relatively unified mass uprising against the present corrupt and ineffective political system implausible. Instead, she postulates that the country may witness a condition where the various political elites manipulate the Arab Uprisings messages and symbolism to serve their own interests and retain the status quo. Moreover, from the removal of Ben Ali in Tunisia until the 2013 presidential election in Egypt, the Pakistani political elite as well as Islamist groups espoused a vague approach and less than categorical attitude towards the developments in the Middle East and North Africa that ranged between supporting non-intervention to the opposite (Yasmeen 2014: 144-152).

From the South Asian context, the discussion is now extended to another Asian subcontinent – Southeast Asia. As in many parts of the world, Trevor Wilson (2014: 188) points out that in Myanmar, where almost 90 percent of the population is 'affiliated' with Buddhism, there was a keen interests in the developments occurring in the 2010-2011 Arab uprisings. His study called the '*Democratization in Myanmar and the Arab Uprisings*' (2014) reveals the mixture of reactions among the Burmese, with many of them disturbed by the violent nature of events in certain parts of the Arab world during the uprisings, especially the tragedy of Gaddafi's assassination. He also considers how such aggressiveness has strengthened the will of the Burmese elite towards reaching immediate political transition and democratisation. While the majority of the ruling elite have rejected the suggestion of any Arab Uprisings style protest being held in Myanmar, the popular opposition figure, Aung San Suu Kyi contradictorily claimed that the public found the Arab upheavals 'electrifying' and acknowledged the overall inspiring power of the phenomenon as momentous. Regarding the Arab Uprisings and its impact on Myanmar the author concluded that - "the Burmese were generally encouraged by sensing that democratic forces were gaining influence in the Middle East and North Africa, yet they were uncomfortable with the violence that was often associated with the change process" (Wilson 2014: 200).

Unlike Myanmar, Greg Fealy (2014) argues that in Indonesia the response to the Arab Spring phenomenon was relatively low key with little enthusiasm shown by mainstream media coverage or ordinary citizens. Only Muslims with an Islamist orientation 'consumed' the 'extra' news about the unprecedented events in the Middle East. The reactions from the government were distant and it was reluctant to take sides with the protesters until the incumbent regimes were wavering. Rather than viewing the Arab uprisings as a development with lessons for Indonesia, most Indonesians felt that it was now their turn to serve as a model and inspiration to other Muslim nations, given the positive economic progress and political stability they have achieved in the post-Suharto New Order era. They also assumed that the reforming Arab nations would study Indonesia's example for insights into managing the democratic transition (Fealy 2014: 239).

Meanwhile in Singapore, Alan Chong (2014: 223-224) argues that there was almost zero intention among the Singaporeans to associate themselves with the Arab Spring phenomenon even as regards applying lessons from the events. His argument is based on the level of Arab Uprisings knowledge among the population along with a survey of most Singaporean opinion websites and mainstream media reports which suggested degrees of disconnection and a certain naivety about local reactions to the Arab Spring phenomenon. Thus, he stresses that the Singaporean reaction to the Arab uprisings could at best be summarised as a casual reaction to a series of events stretching from the Seattle WTO Protest (1999), running through the Red and Yellow Shirt Protest in Thailand (2008-09) and the 25th January Revolution in Egypt (2011), right up to the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York (2011).

In summary, these Southeast Asian countries – Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore – expressed a mixture of feelings about the Arab Spring phenomenon. However, the Central Asian region consisting of five Muslim republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - remained 'apathetic' on the political turmoil in MENA. As pointed out by Kirill Nourzhanov (2014: 121), the ruling elite and the population in general regarded the events of the Arab Uprisings as something distant, mildly disturbing, yet not immediately relevant to their daily lives.

The last Asian countries to be discussed under the theme of Arab Uprisings and global reactions is China utilising Baogang He's (2014) study which critically examines how the Chinese respond to the Arab uprisings, both the government and Chinese citizens. From Beijing's viewpoint, the uprisings were framed as social unrest which was caused by a combination of internal and external factors. Although the government claimed that they preferred a non-interventionist approach, China has played a prominent role within the United Nations - for example it supported UN Resolution 1970 as well as Security Council Resolution 1973 that imposed coercive measures on the Libyan government including the establishment of a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace. In 2011, the Chinese government once again utilized their strong position in the UN by vetoing a draft resolution on the situation in Syria, followed by a double veto alongside Russia in 2012 opposing a UNSC resolution urging Bashar al-Assad's immediate resignation in Syria. Concerning the potential of the 'spill-over' effect from the Arab Uprisings, the Chinese government introduced limited political reform and exercised strict political control in order to prevent any events that might lead to a Chinese version of the Arab uprisings (Baogang 2014: 167). Despite a tightening of authoritarian control, the Chinese citizens' response to the Arab Spring was remarkable. The political activists developed distinctive new strategies and tactics for political activism against the Communist regime by using new social media (internet activism), direct action (NGO activism), petitioning and law.

Europeans were seen as enthusiastically embracing the recent wave of popular protests and revolts in the Arab world (Asseburg 2013). According to Muriel Asseburg – a Euro-Mediterranean expert who was based in Berlin - European citizens interpreted the unprecedented events in the Middle East and North Africa as a welcome opportunity for the liberalisation of political and economic systems, which would lead to long-term stabilisation. The European officials and policy-makers viewed the events as a starting point for an establishment of strong bilateral relations between the EU and its Arab neighbours. However, due to the Eurozone's financial crisis, the European Union has lacked major influence in the post-Arab Spring era. The impact of European monetary problems has rapidly eroded the willingness of EU member states to contribute significantly to the agenda of Arab transformation via the

'3Ms' mechanism - that is, money, market access and mobility (Asseburg 2013: 47-48).

Within the same Caucasus region, it seems Russia too did not want to miss an opportunity to react to the developments of the Arab Uprisings. For Russia, it seems that being in a sceptical and pessimistic position is acceptable as a way to deal with the Arab Uprisings developments. As reported by Roland Dannruether, although they initially welcomed the popular demands for political reform throughout the MENA, Moscow finally rejected the US-Western idea of associating the Arab Uprisings with a positive process of political transition and democratisation. Instead, these dramatic events were negatively viewed as strengthening and consolidating Islamist extremism, which could undermine stability, not just in the Middle East, but also potentially within Russia itself. Likewise, the dominant narrative amongst Russian analysts was that the Arab Uprisings was much more a return to the traditional values of Middle Eastern societies, such as incorporating a more Islamic identity rather than a shift into Western-style democracy (Dannreuther 2015: 78-80). It was this fear that drove Putin's administration to implement an uncompromising stance towards the developments in Syria – an action that led Russia to become more influential and emerge as a powerful player in contemporary Middle East and North African affairs.

To sum up, from all the countries and regions examined, one can view a blend of responses to the Arab Spring phenomenon. There are states that are actively involved in the post-Arab Spring developments such as Russia, China and Iran, while parts of the European continent, China and Myanmar have shown great interest in the wave of uprisings and mass protests across Middle Eastern countries. For India, Pakistan, Singapore, Indonesia and Central Asia, it is evident that these countries were neither influenced nor much affected by the phenomenon – both from the government and citizen perspective. The next subsection will draw special attention to Malaysia and its connection with the Arab Uprisings via selected previous studies which most closely correlate with the broad aims of this thesis.

2.4 The Arab Uprisings and Malaysia

With regard to the 2011 Arab Uprising and its connection with Malaysia, there are several materials published in Malay and English that stand out, specifically by: Joseph Liow (2015) on Islamist activism in Southeast Asia (Malaysia and Indonesia) in the post-Arab Spring events; Osman Bakar (2015) on Malaysian responses to the Arab Uprising; Safar (2015) on the views of the National University of Malaysia's postgraduate students about Arab Spring events; Syed Abdul Razak (2015) on the reaction of Malaysia's government and its society toward the Arab Upheavals; Alan Chong (2014) and Nidzam and Kartini (2017) on the question of the "Malaysian Spring"; Wan Kamal and Salmi Edward (2015) on the influence of the Arab Uprisings in Malaysian society; Ahmad Al-Battat et al (2013) on the effect of the Arab Revolution on the Malaysian Hospitality Industry; and Kelley Currie (2012) on how the Arab Uprisings inspired the popular protest movement – the Bersih in Malaysia.

2.4.1 English Publications

Published in August 2015, Joseph Liow – who works on Muslim politics in Southeast Asia - provided up-to-date critical thought on the issue of Islamist activism in Southeast Asia and its connection with the Arab Uprisings. Given the recent increase in Islamist political activism in Malaysia and Indonesia, he agrees that there has been growing interest in observing how developments in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia in the post-Arab Spring era, have affected Islamists in Southeast Asia region. However, the author choose to be sceptical as he argues political mobilization and mass protest which involved Islamists had already taken place much earlier – in the late 1990s during the Asian Financial Crisis - and remains as a 'standard' political scenario compared to the Arab world. He has also cast doubt over the relations between Islamists in the Middle East and North Africa and their counterparts in Southeast Asia, as the links have remained unclear despite potential for deeper ties to be established. For Liow, Islamists in Southeast Asia – in this case Malaysia - have primarily avoided revolutionary approaches for a regime change, since the concept of moderation and accommodation have started to influence the movement's ideology along with its commitment to

prioritize the 'democratic' political process – such as by referendum and election. Indeed, participation in the political process has encouraged Islamists to uphold a broader and more inclusive political agenda (Liow 2015; Ashour 2010).

However, if we closely view the present situation in Malaysian politics, some of Liow's points seem arguable, although the paper does provide a profound insight on the latest ideological development of the Islamist movement in Malaysia, particularly regarding the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) in the post-Arab Spring. For example, the author failed to demonstrate whether the unpredictable changed in PAS ideology (e.g. the issues of Sharia law and Islamic state formation) and activities (e.g. the establishment of a transnational Islamism network) were due to the impact of the Arab Spring phenomenon. Moreover, his claim that the Arab Uprisings failed to trigger a deepening of relations between Islamist parties in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Malaysia) seems inconsistent if one looks at the several occasions in both Malaysia and Tunisia when there were gatherings of PAS and Ennahda top-ranked representatives (respectively). Obviously, a large part of the paper concentrates on a 'snapshot' of latest development – the character and content of Islamist parties in Indonesia and Malaysia - without addressing the central issue of the connection between these parties and the post-Arab Spring phenomenon - which is the ultimate aim of this current research.

Equally significant is "*The Arab Spring: Malaysian Responses*" by Osman Bakar (2012). He provided observations about the response of ordinary Malaysians to the unprecedented events in the Arab world. As the author points out, many Malaysians considered the eruption of people's protests as something unforeseen. Given the huge numbers of Malaysian students who were studying (tertiary education) in Arab countries like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria, the Malaysian public started to become aware and deeply concerned about the wave of anti-government protests across the Middle East and North Africa. This resulted in the Malaysian government taking immediate steps to airlift more than ten thousand of its students from Egypt and Yemen to Kuala Lumpur. Apart from that response, Osman believes that the Arab Uprisings had a meaningful effect on political awareness in Malaysia, predominantly among the large Muslim population – based on efforts by some

groups to 'indiginise' the issues that constituted the core concern of the Arab Uprisings.

Sadly, Osman did not specify which groups fall under the claim and the way he generalizes the political consciousness of the Muslim community without appropriate measurement and empirical data – such as survey or ethnography studies - could possibly suggest these points to be baseless. In addition Osman also claims that civil society groups and the opposition parties in Malaysia expressed their open support and solidarity with the protesters in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya for the sake of democracy and good governance. For PAS, involvement was also dictated by religious considerations as it hoped that the Muslim Brotherhood would be a key player in the post-Arab Spring politics of the Arab world. Indeed, some of the PAS members did organize a protest near the Egyptian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in response to the 2013 Egyptian coup d'état. However, this does not necessarily imply that all the opposition parties, especially the Chinese-majority political party - the Democratic Action Party (DAP) - had the same view on the Arab Uprisings. Again, lack of concrete evidence is apparent in the paper, therefore suggesting a definite exclusive view to his analysis.

“Will there be a Malaysian Spring?”- as the title suggests, it seems that this article attempts to predict whether the waves of mass uprisings and regime change in the Middle East and North Africa would claim a new 'victim' – the state of Malaysia. In the early part of the article Nidzam and Kartini (2017) pay attention to the historical aspect of revolutions and mass mobilizations that occurred around the world, including in several states of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. According to the authors, the region of Southeast Asia had already experienced an Arab Uprisings when mass mobilizations and protests succeeded in toppling several dictators – specifically Marcos of the Philippines (1986), Suharto of Indonesia (1998) and Thaksin of Thailand (2006). The Malaysian regime is a close neighbour that yet seemed 'immune' from the 'threat' of civil protest. There are several reasons which may have prevented the success of regime change via street protests such as those seen during the Arab Uprisings. These reasons are explained as follows.

1. *Social structure and ethnic issues* – Ethnic, religious and political ideology sentiments often disrupt unity amongst citizens. As a result, it is challenging for Malaysians to have a strong and solid mass protest against the ruling government.
2. *The nature of unemployment and poverty* – In Malaysia, the rate of poverty and youth unemployment are slightly less than in some Arab states. Most Malaysians are considerably well employed and committed to their jobs. Thus, to organize a continuous protest and civil disobedience, from week to week and month to month like the majority of ‘revolutionaries’ did in Tunis, Cairo, Benghazi and Sanaa would be almost impossible.
3. *State control* – With the advance of modern surveillance systems, the intelligence units under state police control (Royal Malaysia Police) are well prepared to interrupt any attempt to overthrow the ruling government.
4. *Media and Hegemony* – The mainstream media and the ‘government-controlled’ channels are extremely efficient, such that they ‘hegemonize’ a large section of the population, especially in the rural areas - thus the ruling government is portrayed as legitimate and responsive.
5. *External influence* – The majority of the Middle East and North African states have their own preferable ‘alliance’ with certain Western great powers – for instance, Mubarak of Egypt used to be a close ally of America, while Russia and China continuously back the Syrian regime of Bashar Al-Assad. The same situation applied to Ben Ali (former Tunisia’s president) and his close ties with France. Libya, on the other hand was seen as an ‘enemy’ of the West, manifested by the tense bilateral relationship with the United States under the Qaddafi leadership. As argued by the authors, the involvement of these superpowers with their own agendas and interests had the potential to escalate any crisis in the Arab world. As for Malaysia, this is not the case, since the country remains neutral to any ‘blocs’ - be it the US, Europe, Russia or China. In fact, Malaysia’s commitment in the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) demonstrated the ‘un-biased’ policy that had been practiced since 1970.

All the factors stated above provide reasons why Malaysia is unlikely to become the next Arab Uprisings ‘victim’ in Southeast Asia. In other words, the authors

believed that there was no such thing as a “Malaysian Spring”. Regrettably, these optimistic views from the authors appear too subjective and debatable. The current ruling government under the leadership of Najib Razak has suffered from a series of political scandals, mismanagement by government officials, power abuses, human right violations, implementation of unnecessary taxes, price hikes, inflation and racial tensions - and these cannot simply be overlooked. Indeed, Najib is not Mubarak, Ben Ali or Qaddafi and to merely neglect the numerous mass protests against his leadership held throughout the country indirectly gives this article a less balanced perspective.

The last of the four English publications on the Arab Uprisings from Malaysia’s perspective is Ahmad Al-Battat et al’s study on how the Arab revolution crisis affected the Malaysian hospitality industry – in particular the hotel and tourism sector. The statistical results from the study showed an increase in number (since 2011 to 2012) of international arrivals from Arab states – Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, UAE, Iraq, Yemen and Egypt - to Malaysia. This suggests that the uncertainties in MENA created positive opportunities for Malaysia to attract more Arab visitors to spend their holiday in the country. In this sense, Malaysia offered numerous attractions to satisfy tourist needs and expectations, along with a good reputation as a safe destination. This study has nothing to do with Islamists or politics, however these tourists, some from the Arab Uprisings countries, sought temporary ‘protection’ in Malaysia and this may have influenced the view of Malaysians regarding the importance of maintaining political stability. Besides, since Al-Battat and his team’s findings attest that the Arab Uprisings affected the tourism industry in Malaysia, the other sectors including the focus of this research – politics and the Islamist movement – could also have been impacted. This suggests that a proper investigation must be done so that a broad perspective on the Arab Uprisings impact in the context of Malaysia can be achieved.

2.4.2 Malay publications

Malay language sources offer a different scope to the researcher. To begin with, the study by Wan Kamal and Salmi Edward (2015) provided brief information on the Arab Uprisings, particularly how the term “Spring” evolved from the history

of political upheavals in Europe – popularly known as “ Spring of Nations”, “People’s Spring”, “Springtime of the People” or the “Year of Colour Revolution”. Eventually, the term was associated with the Arab nations’ upheaval to form new terminology in the Middle East political dictionary - the Arab Uprisings. Both authors agreed that the term “Arab Spring” emerged after it was created by Marc Lynch, a Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, on the 6th of January 2011. His article was popularized by mainstream media throughout the Western world. Regarding the influence of the Arab Uprising amongst Malaysian society, Wan Kamal and Salmi have divided their consideration into three main areas namely the tourism industry, health sector and university students. Based on their study, all these three areas were affected by the popular Arab Revolution. The first two areas – tourism and health - produced relatively positive outcomes with the former recording an increase in the number of tourists coming from the Middle East and North African countries between the years 2011 and 2012. The arrival of these Arab tourists supported the tourism industry in Malaysia as well as the health sector, since many of them ‘enjoy’ receiving medical treatment or surgery from well-established private hospitals in the country. The majority of these tourists preferred to visit Malaysia due to the nature of the ‘Muslim Friendly environment’ in the country (Salmi & Wan Kamal 2015: 100).

With regard to the influence of the Arab Uprisings among Malaysian university students, the authors failed to provide solid evidence of how the event affected students’ idealism. Referring to only a single case - the incident of two Malaysian students who were detained by the Lebanon authorities in Beirut after being accused of an involvement with a terrorist group (Al-Qaeda) - definitely cannot be used as the only argument to generalize the whole population of Malaysian university students. Moreover, the origin of the Arab Uprisings was initially far from the agenda of any Islamic terrorist group. The authors did agree with Currie (2012) – who has worked on issues related to democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the Asia-Pacific region - that the series of Bersih rallies (in 2011 and 2013) in Malaysia were influenced by civil protests during the Arab Uprisings, especially among the youth. Sadly, this statement did not emerge with concrete proof or proper investigation (such as survey - interview or questionnaire). Thus, part of Salmi and Wan Kamal’s

writing did not address the real question of how the Arab Uprisings influenced Malaysian society – and did not mention any clear connection with Islamist movements.

Safar Hashim in his work entitled *Arab Uprisings or Arab Nightmares: Between Truth and Perception of the Arab Uprising* (2015) has empirically exposed the attitudes of 575 postgraduate students (Malaysians, Arabs and non-Arab nationality) at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) toward the Arab Spring phenomenon through questionnaire-survey research. The research involved four major questions:- 1) Sources of information on the event; 2) How the respondent defines the Arab Uprisings; 3) Hopes resulting from the Uprisings; and 4) Changes that are expected to happen. Although the outcome from the research indicates a variety of answers, the majority of the respondents believed that the Arab Uprisings was a revolution, along with a hope that more democracy would take place in the affected countries. However, concerning the long term prospect, 60% of the respondents were sceptical about the political stability in the MENA region, as they believed more and more mass mobilizations, civil protests and demonstrations would occur before the final stage of democratic consolidation. Although this research does not assist the reader who wishes to know why UKM postgraduate students were selected and other aspects of their views on the Arab Uprisings, it is worth noting that Safar's study is the only empirical study on the Arab Spring phenomenon from Malaysia's perspective. As such it has provided stimulus for the researcher to explore the attitudes of Islamist movements in Malaysia via questionnaire-survey research.

A further publication concerning perceptions of the Arab Uprisings from a Malaysian context is written by Al-Sagoff (2015), a prominent political analyst in Malaysia, who has focused on the Malaysian government's reactions to the phenomenon. According to Al-Sagoff, following the uprising incidents that occurred in the Arab world during the Arab Uprisings, the Malaysian government, headed by its current Prime Minister- Najib Razak, announced planned reforms to several laws and acts in order to give more political freedom to citizens. –For example, the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, commonly known as the “detention without trial” act, was abolished and replaced with a

new law - the Special Offences and Security Measures Act (SOSMA) 2012, which completely removed the previous element of 'forced detention'. The Peaceful Assembly Act was also enacted to allow any group or movement to organize a peaceful rally in the country. His opinions seem in line with Diamond's (2012) claim that all the regulation-related adjustments were made as a 'soft response' to the Arab Uprisings. This suggests that the Malaysian government is alert and well aware of the potential of the Arab Uprisings threat and its influence among the people – and took accommodating action to maintain the status quo of the current regime. As Alan Chong (2014: 220) observes:

“These moves from the Malaysian government serve to accentuate the uncomfortable fit between the Arab Spring and the much speculated Malaysia Spring, even as activists were 'hopeful' that some uprisings of change might happen soon in tandem with winds blowing from the Middle East”.

Despite the author managing to highlight the reactions of the Malaysian government towards the Arab Uprisings influences, Al-Sagoff did not seem aware that for many years the opposition parties and NGOs in Malaysia, such as PAS and ABIM, had been fighting to abolish various 'draconian acts'- including the Internal Security Act, Sedition Act, Printing Act and University and College University Act. The Arab Uprisings events might have served as a spark or 'panic alarm' for the government to repeal the constitution, but it came relatively late in the local 'political game'. However, Al-Sagoff's study is undoubtedly useful as regards whether the Islamist movements in Malaysia were influenced by the Arab Uprisings, since he argued that the act of the ruling government to amend several laws was due to its reaction to the impact of the Arab Uprisings.

The last Malay publication on the Arab Uprising phenomenon is Muhamad Razak's study of the “*Lessons from the Arab Uprisings and the Way Forward*”. In this book chapter, one of the interesting statements is – “the Arab Uprisings has opened the space for the emergence of a systematic model of political Islam” (Muhamad Razak 2015: 144) - as he argued that the Arab Uprising phenomenon was driven and mobilized by *Nahdah Islam*, or the sense of Islamic revivalism among the Arab populations. By adopting Hegel's

philosophy of history, he claimed that the Arab Uprisings is a thesis of new hope for changes in modern Arab-Muslim civilization – which meant birth from its previous synthesis stage. It will then be followed by an anti-thesis movement, which suggests that more and more political uncertainties will occur before reaching a new cycle of synthesis – which he proposed as the Arab Uprisings 2.0. Muhamad’s study seems to have an element of bias towards Islamists and Islamism, as most of the arguments were drawn from his personal view as a member and former president of the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM).

Whilst not providing a critical analysis, the author also failed to consider the role of secularists, Arab nationalists and leftists in contributing to the success of Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution, as well the January 25th Egyptian Uprising. As argued by Michael Koplw (2011), the main challenge of the previous Tunisian regime – from Bourgiba to Ben Ali - came not from Islamist opposition but from secular intellectuals. The absence of a strong Islamist presence however was the result of an aggressive attempt by the old regimes to eliminate Islamic-oriented political parties from the political arena. It is worth saying that if it had been clear that Islamist opposition figures were playing a significant role in the protest, the Tunisian regime would likely have increased its repressive measures, an action which could have led to the failure of the ‘beginning of Arab political transition’. Therefore, the perception and views of Islamist groups in Malaysia towards the Arab Uprisings is crucial and needs to be explored in order to understand their personal understanding of the phenomenon.

2.5 Summary of the Literature Review

All in all, this particular section has summarised a number of studies on the Arab Spring phenomenon from different contexts and perspectives – mainly regarding its influence and impact on other nations beyond the key players in the Middle East and North African countries. It has also considered international reactions to the events – from government, society and Islamists. In order to recap and further summarise the relevant information, the following tables illustrate how the global community - extending across the European states, Russia, Iran, India, Pakistan, Central Asia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Singapore,

China and Malaysia - watched the 'Arab Spring drama'. From all of the reviewed studies, the template of the Arab Uprisings as a pro- democracy movement bringing down a corrupt regime appears to fit the Malaysian context, given the dynamic of reactions expressed by diverse segments within the country.

Table 2.2 Selected Responses - Countries & Regions Towards the Arab Uprisings

Country / Region	Responsive towards The Arab Uprisings' phenomenon?		
	Government/ Elite	Political Society	Islamist
Iran	Yes	Yes	No
India	Yes	No	No
Pakistan	Unclear	No	No
Myanmar	Yes	No	Not applicable
Singapore	No	No	No
Indonesia	Yes	No	Yes
China	Yes	Yes	Not applicable
Russia	Yes	No	Not applicable
Europe	Yes	No	Not applicable
Central Asia	No	No	No
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes:

Yes = Significantly or relatively reacted – whether in a positive or negative stance to the uprisings

No = Showed no particular interest in the phenomenon

Not applicable = There is no presence of Islamist or Islamist parties in the country

Unclear = There is limited information and sources to provide a firm answer on the issue/subject

Table 2.3 The Influence of the Arab Uprisings On Selected Countries & Regions

Country / Region	Influenced by the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon?		
	Government	Society	Islamist
Iran	Yes	Yes	No
India	No	No	No
Pakistan	No	No	No
Myanmar	No	Yes	Not applicable
Singapore	No	No	No
Indonesia	No	No	No
China	Yes	Yes	Not applicable
Russia	Yes	No	Not applicable
Europe	Yes	No	Not applicable
Central Asia	No	No	No
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	Unknown

Notes:

Yes = Significantly or relatively influenced by the Arab Uprisings – whether a government new policy and foreign relations approach or political parties, Islamists, NGOs' activism and ideology

No = Not significantly influenced by the Arab Uprisings

Not applicable = There is no significant presence of Islamist or Islamist parties in the country

Unknown = There is no information and sources that provide a firm answer on the issue/subject

In summing up all of the previous studies relating to the Arab Uprisings, none of them consider the Islamist movements in Malaysia – to be exact the PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH - within the context of the phenomenon. Whilst there are a number of related publications from leading experts and academics, these definitely have some clear limitations. Moreover, concerning the Malay-language works, although they are extremely beneficial, the most recent have tended to address the influence of the Arab Uprisings in general society, rather than focusing on a group which directly relates to the Malaysian political scenario – the Islamists. Thus, it is undoubtedly accurate to state that the topic of the Arab Uprisings and its relationship to the Islamist movements in Malaysia is relevant, practical and offers potential for study. Such a study would contribute to the larger body of knowledge on the issues of the 2011 Arab Revolutions. Perhaps, it would also stand as what Larbi Sadiki (2015) suggests - a ‘knowledge production’ in the age of the Arab Uprisings, yet from a different angle and context. The next chapter will underline theory and conceptual framework of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Discussion on social change and social perception tend to be more associated with the field of sociology (Sztompka 1998; Krznaric 2007; and Weinstein 2010) and psychology (de la Sablonnière, Bourgeois and Najih 2013) than with grounded political science. Although one of the main concerns of this research is the issue of social perception, it is not the intention of this study to merely employ either the sociological or psychological study approach, since the ultimate aim is to understand the attitudes and opinions of Islamist movements in Malaysia towards rapid and dramatic social and political change in the Arab world - the Arab Uprisings - and whether the events influence the movements' ideologies and activism. Sociological theories have been extremely useful for understanding social change as a global phenomenon (de la Sablonnière et al 2013: 255). However, it seems that the appropriate theoretical framework to use in this study is a mixed one involving politics and psychology: – (1) Adjustment to Change Theory (ACT) by Goodwin (2009); (2) Theory of Revolution by Brinton (1938), Davies (1962), Goodwin and Skocpol (1989) and Foran (1992); and (3) Islamism and Social Movement Theory by Asef Bayat (2007 & 2013). There is also the fundamental concept of democracy, legitimacy and democratisation – which is relevant in the context of contemporary political Islam in Malaysia. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how theoretical tools from the ACT, Revolutionary Theory and Islamist literature can contribute to the analysis of the attitudes of Malaysian Islamist movements to the Arab Uprisings as well as its impact to their political ideology and activism. The following sections will explain these theories and concepts in more detail and link with the case studies in this thesis (Chapter 7 and 8).

3.2 Theoretical Considerations: Adjustment to Change Theory (ACT)

In 2009, Robin Goodwin – a leading scholar in the field of psychology - proposed the 'Adjustment to Change' theory, which examines how individuals' characteristics affect their view and adjustment to any rapid dramatic social

change that occurs around the world. Drawing the theory from different case studies (including “the perception of the terrorism threat and its consequences in contemporary Britain” as well as “the impact of political tensions in Egypt on family relations”) has allowed Goodwin to assume that the personal characteristics of individuals, social support and the nature of events are predictors of individuals’ and groups’ evaluations of social change. As an illustration, Goodwin and his research team conducted two studies in 2005 at a time when unpredictable terrorist attacks were spreading to all corners of the globe. Results from these studies suggest that personal characteristics, for example openness, benevolence and hedonism, may play a role in the evaluation of social change - in this case the anxiety about an attack by terrorists. According to de la Sablonnière and her colleagues (2013: 253), from the perspective of political psychology, the ongoing post-Arab uprisings are considered as one of the most ‘rapid dramatic social changes’ in the world which affected millions of people every day, as obviously be seen in Syria, Yemen and Libya . Thus, ACT could possibly serve as one of the explanatory tools for how people observe and respond to the Arab Spring phenomenon. In order to establish the applicability of Goodwin’s theory within this current research, a table is detailed below comparing his case study with this research thesis.

Table 3.1 Adjustment to Change Theory- Comparison Aspects

Example of Dramatic Social Change Event	Level of analysis	Personal Characteristics	Evaluation of Social Change
The 2005 London Bombing Incident	Individual level - random participant from Central and Suburban London	Gender, age, and individual values such as openness, hedonism and benevolence	“ General perceived probability of attack ” – The values of openness to change and hedonism all predicted threat perception. Those who are more open to change will be less fearful of an attack than those who emphasize conservation values.
The 2011 Arab Uprisings	Individual and group level - The Islamists from local political parties and civil society groups in Malaysia	Their involvement in local Islamist movement, as well as the practice of “Islamism” and different Islamist movements’ ideologies	“The perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings”- The level of support for political pluralism and the ‘Muslim Democrat’s approach’ all determined the Islamist movements stand on the post- Arab Uprisings issues.

Notes: For more details, please refer to:

1. Goodwin, Robin & Stanley, J.G (2009). Terrorism perception and its consequences following the 7 July 2005 London Bombings. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 1(1): 50-65
2. de la Sablonnière et al. (2013). Dramatic Social Change: A Social Psychological Perspective. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1 (1): 253-273.
3. Research findings in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

Goodwin's study seems closely related to the psychological perspective yet this is not his main research concern. As has been stated in the previous chapter, the ultimate aim of this thesis is to explore how Malaysian Islamists perceive the Arab Spring phenomenon, which could provide a helpful answer to some of the speculation about a "Malaysian Spring". Therefore, with regard to this research, Goodwin's Adjustment to Change theory was used as a 'supportive theory', not to test the theory (theory testing) or generate something new (theory generating).

3.3 Theoretical Considerations: Theory of Revolution

This section will draw on the pre-existing literature, both classic and modern publications on the Theory of Revolution to understand the factors and phases that contribute to the emergence of revolutionary movements, as well as the characteristics and types of regime that support or prevent their occurrence. Drawing on the work of Brinton (1938), Davies (1962), Goodwin and Skocpol (1989) and Foran (1992), the researcher established some common elements amongst the publications about revolutions. In particular, the failure or disturbance of economic and wealth distribution and the practice of political repression are two powerful sources of grievance which can potentially ignite a revolution. The following sections briefly discuss the above-mentioned scholarly works.

3.3.1 Crane Brinton's "Anatomy of Revolution"

In his book the "Anatomy of Revolution", Brinton compares revolution to a 'fever' and he uses the American, French and Russian Revolutions as his examples. In this respect, a revolution for him is not a positive phenomenon - it is something to be avoided and cured (when it occurs). This is due to the fact that "nobody wants to have a fever". Brinton breaks down a revolution into three entities: the symptoms; the fever itself, which is the manipulation of revolution; and the break in the fever, when things more or less return to normal. Symptoms can take several different forms: economic problems and financial

failure within the country¹⁵; inefficiency of the government¹⁶; the rise of self-proclaimed revolutionaries¹⁷; and the overthrow of the old regime¹⁸, followed by the breakup of the revolutionaries' coalition. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the state and society which tend to encourage a revolutionary movement can be viewed as: the existence of an economically advancing society; the act of desertion of intellectuals by the regime; a ruling class that has lost self-confidence towards the ruling government; and the use of coercive force against revolutionaries.

3.3.2 James C. Davies' "Toward a Theory of Revolution"

In 1962, Davies stated that revolutions are most likely to occur when periods of prolonged improvement concerning economic and social development are supplanted by a period of sharp reversal. He used evidence from the Dorr's rebellion¹⁹, the 1917 Russian revolution²⁰ and the 1952 Egyptian revolution²¹ to support his argument. According to Davies, a sharp reversal in development creates an intolerable gap between what people want and what they get. After a reversal of fortunes, people will subjectively fear that what they have earned will

¹⁵ For example, Brinton sees the economic symptoms of the American Revolution as being economic grievances. There were economic problems since America refused to pay taxes to England. The 'taxation without representation' slogan of the 1700s was enough to incite Americans to revolutionary action.

¹⁶ The second symptom was the inefficiency of the British government.

¹⁷ The third symptom was the rise of revolutionaries, mostly the army and those who supported the Revolutionary War.

¹⁸ The British colonial regime was finally overthrown by the American Revolutionaries within the American colonies and a completely new government was set up.

¹⁹ The rapid industrial growth of the 19th century meant that the people of Rhode Island in the Northeastern United States moved in large numbers from farms to cities. From 1807–15 the textile industry saw a period of great prosperity, followed by a period of decline from 1835–40. This, in combination with the state's resistance to suffrage demands, saw Thomas W. Dorr lead a band of militia men mostly composed of Catholics into a rebellion. Dorr was firmly defeated by the establishment in 1842 (Davies 1962: 8-10).

²⁰ In 1861 Russia saw the emancipation of serfs and a process of urbanization began. Many became factory workers, thus earning larger salaries than they had as peasants. The period from 1861–1905 can be viewed as a period of rising expectations. Around 1905 began the general downturn; Russia lost the war with Japan, and censorship and confiscations soon followed. The country now saw a period of severe repression, followed by a short period of economic recovery. But then World War I broke out, inflation rose, and discontent spread throughout the country like a wildfire (Davies 1962: 10-13)

²¹ The rising expectations of Egyptians began in 1922 when the British granted them limited independence. The country saw some industrialization, improving the opportunities for many. But with the economic growth came also the rising costs of living. In 1948 exports went down, and many manual laborers became unemployed. This was followed by the Arab (including Egypt) invasion of Israel, where Egypt suffered a humiliating defeat against this newly independent state. In addition, Egyptians suffered a shortage of wheat and oil. A series of peasant uprisings and strikes began, which culminated in the riots in Cairo in 1952 (Davies 1962: 13-14).

be lost and thus their mood becomes revolutionary. Davies claims that political stability and instability are dependent on the mood of the society. In other words, poor people who are satisfied will not revolt and rich people who are dissatisfied may revolt. What is important is their state of mind rather than how many goods they possess (Davis 1962: 6).

A significant factor is the fear that ground gained over a time period will be quickly lost. Davies found evidence for this when studying three revolutions using John Stuart Mill's method of difference. When employing this method, the researcher collects cases of a particular phenomenon in an attempt to find common factors in cases that are otherwise quite different. He thus chose three different cases where revolts had occurred and found the common explanatory variable to be the presence of a sharp reversal of fortunes after a period of prolonged growth. The evidence from the Dorr Rebellion, the Russian Revolution and the Egyptian Revolution provided the cases from which Davies claimed the gap between what people expect to get and what they actually get was the main contributing factor towards revolutionary movements. As such, revolutions are likely to occur after a period of 'good times' followed by a sudden decline of fortunes.

3.3.3 Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol's "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World"

Goodwin and Skocpol (1989) sought to explain revolutions in Third World countries, mainly in Southeast Asian, African and Latin American nations. They relied on their observation that previous comparative research on revolutions tended to exclusively concentrate on major Western revolutions – the American, English, French and Russian Revolutions. According to Goodwin and Skocpol the role of professional revolutionaries backed by foreign influence and chronic poverty in a large part of the Global South were long perceived as the reasons why revolutions took place in some Asian, African and Latin American countries. However, these ideas were criticised as incapable of providing an explanation for why revolutions occurred in some poor Third World countries but not in others (Goodwin & Skocpol 1989: 490). Thus, both scholars attempted to offer some distinctive political conditions that 'generated' revolutionary movements, which then led to political change in Third World states. The authors found that

a closed and repressive type of authoritarian regime (in contrast to an inclusive authoritarian regime such as that in Malaysia) might ignite political grievances amongst the ruling regime's opponents, which later encouraged the potential oppositional role of armed revolutionaries, as well as facilitating the growth of revolutionary coalitions.

In addition, the authors added two specific types of exclusionary authoritarian regimes that are vulnerable to actual overthrow by revolutionaries - (1) Neo-patrimonial or Sultanistic dictatorship and (2) Direct colonial - type rule. Examples of successful revolutions against the first type of regime can be seen in the case of the 1911 Mexican Revolution (against the regime of Diaz), the 1959 Cuban Revolution (against the regime of Batista), the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution (against the regime of Somoza) and the 1979 Iranian Revolution (against the regime of Shah Reza Pahlavi). For the second regime type, examples of directly ruled colonies that generated revolutionary coalitions include the cases of the former French colonies of Vietnam and Algeria. However, the structures of states and the strength of armed forces will be the key to determining the success of revolutions in the Third World – since a militarily and organisationally strong regime may well be too powerful and ruthless to be overthrown by armed revolutionaries (Goodwin & Skocpol 1989: 497). The authors have also predicted that revolutionary movements will continue to emerge in the Global South – provided that the military, governmental and economic conditions of any exclusionary type of autocratic regime become weak and powerless.

3.3.4 John Foran's "A Theory of Third World Social Revolutions"

In his publication in 1992 Foran began with a simple question by asking the reader what specific combination of factors was most valuable as an explanation for cases of revolutions in the Third World? Based on extensive analysis of the cases of Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan and Iranian Revolutions, the author claimed that five interrelated causal factors must combine at a given conjuncture to produce a successful social revolution. These are detailed below.

3.3.4.1. Dependent Development

Derived from the works of Latin American scholars, Cardoso and Faletto, Foran defines dependent development as a process of imbalanced economic development between the measured output (GNP, foreign trade, industrial output) and consequences of social transformation (inflation, debt, growing inequality, price hikes). This complex process was described as “growth within limits” which created social and economic grievances among different layers of the population.

3.3.4.2 A Repressive, Exclusionary and Personalist Type of Regime

According to Foran, the systematic practice of repression (electoral manipulation, elements of dictatorship rule) towards lower-class citizens, as well as the exclusion of both the growing middle class and economic elite from political participation tends to fuel political grievances which lead to the creation of multi-class alliances and grassroots-type social movements against the state.

3.3.4.3 Powerful Political Cultures of Resistance

To ensure a successful revolution, Foran stresses that an opposition must work together to mobilise unified revolutionaries. In doing so, political cultures of resistance must be promoted which can be derived from formal group ideologies and societal traditions such as the feelings of nationalism (against control by outsiders), socialism (equality and social justice), democracy (demands for participation and an end to autocratic rule) and ‘religion’s call’ (such as resistance to evil and suffering).

3.3.4.4 Economic Downturn

Economic downturn (on the eve of revolutions) sharpens existing grievances towards the ruling regime. Foran agrees that this factor might encourage revolutionaries to take to the streets which can be seen in all successful cases of revolutionary movements.

3.3.4.5 World-Systemic Opening

World-systemic opening refers to indirect intervention or external control by major foreign powers, as a result of world economic depression and rivalries between various major powers.

The combination of all five factors mentioned above potentially makes a favourable climate in which social revolutions can flourish and succeed (Foran 1992: 229-230). However, Foran also admitted that in the case of political revolution (a revolutionary movement purposely mobilised to create a significant political change) as in China (1911), Bolivia (1952), Philippines (1986) and Haiti (1986), not all the above factors played a role in ousting the incumbent regime. In the Philippines for instance, the country at that time of revolution only possessed three of the five factors – a vulnerable state, economic downturn and a strong resistance culture, but lacked dependent development and foreign intervention. Nevertheless, all the four cases (China, Bolivia, The Philippines and Haiti) have suggested that those three factors were undoubtedly powerful deflectors of revolutionary movements (Foran 1992: 253-255).

3.4 Theoretical Considerations: Islamism

By the mid-1990s, scholars of political Islam claimed that major changes taking place 'beneath the surface' suggested that a transition was being made to a less arbitrary, exclusive and authoritarian rule across the Muslim world, which would herald a new era and new approach to issues of pluralism, political participation and social justice - all within a distinctly new Islamist democratic framework (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004; Liow 2009). Broadly speaking, the general idea of Islamism can be understood as a contemporary 'Islamic school of political thought' with regard to the Muslim nation-state or the *Ummah*. The term "Islamism", which can be considered a recent invention in the 'dictionary' of political Islam, is often associated with Asef Bayat – a Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Illinois – based on his numerous popular publications which discussed the broad spectrum of Islam and politics from the perspective of Western narratives (Cavatorta & Merone 2015: 29). According to Al-Anani (2012: 466), the 2011 Arab Spring drastically reshaped Islamist politics and at the same time triggered a long process of change and transition that will

put Islamist theories and practices to the test. To understand the evolution of these theories, the following sections will provide a brief background to Islamism, Post-Islamism and Neo-Islamism narratives in order to understand the evolution of modern trends of Islamism and political Islam.

3.5 Islamism, Post-Islamism and Neo-Islamism

Islamism or political Islamism is a wide and diverse phenomenon with many undercurrents and tendencies within Islamic societies across the Muslim world (Chamkhi 2014: 454). In a general sense, Islamism refers to “those ideologies and movements that strive to establish some kind of “Islamic order” – a religious state, sharia law, and moral codes in Muslim societies and communities” (Bayat 2013: 4). Thus, one can view Islamism as an ideology or to be precise a political ideology which proposes the establishment of an Islamic community and political order via a formation of ‘Islamic state’. For Islamists who adopt Islamism,

“...The state was seen as the most powerful and efficient institution for spreading “good” and eradicating “evil.” In turn, Islamists viewed citizens as dutiful subjects and placed an emphasis on their obligations to the righteous state, with little concern for their rights” (Bayat 2011).

Thus, Islamism is dominantly viewed as political aspirations, aiming to integrate religion – “Islam” into politics, economics, laws, state affairs and policies which clearly contradicts to the idea of secularism and secular state. Historically, the origin of the word ‘Islamism’ and ‘Islamist’ in the political sense, as claimed by Chamkhi (2014: 454) “were never used in Arab or Muslim societies until the early twentieth century, coinciding precisely with the fall of the Last Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire in 1924”. In the words of Nilüfer Göle (2002: 173), in speaking of Islamism, it is crucial to differentiate between Muslim, which expresses religious identity, and Islamist, which refers to a social movement through which Muslim identity is collectively reappropriated as a basis for an alternative social and political project. Thus, Islamism implies a critique and even a discontinuity with the given categories of Muslim identity; it is an endeavour to rename and reconstruct Muslim identity by freeing it from traditional interpretations and by challenging assimilative forces of modernism. As Liow (2009: 5-6) demonstrates, Islamism is at its heart can be understood as

“a social-political phenomenon that has a history traceable to Muslim anticolonial movements, but whose modern ‘version’ came about in reaction to the failure of Arab state leaders to empower their citizens”. Thus, the term Islamism can simply be defined as the ideological politicization of Islam, where it is as much a study of Muslim peoples, communities, and societies with political ideals and aspirations as it is of Islam as a religion.

3.5.1 The Waves of Islamism

The first wave of Islamism, starting at the end of the 1930s through the formation of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had reached its peak with the launch of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. This period was characterized by mass mobilizations, Islamic militancy, a quest for an Islamic collective identity and the implementation of a political and religious life (Göle 2002: 174; Al-Anani 2012: 467; Müller 2014: 8). Following this wave, in contrast, had ‘give birth’ to the second wave of Islamism which begun in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this phase, a shift from state-politically oriented ‘classical Islamism’ to a more individualized, culturally oriented and modern form of Islamist piety was witnessed (Müller 2014: 8). As Göle points out:

“ In the second wave of Islamism, actors of Islam blend into modern urban spaces, use global communication networks, engage in public debates, follow consumption patterns, learn market rules, enter into secular time, get acquainted with values of individuation, professionalism, and consumerism, and reflect upon their new practices. Hence, we observe a transformation of these movements from a radical political stance to a more social and cultural orientation” (Göle 2002: 174).

The third wave and perhaps the most important development in the evolution of Islamism is so-called the post-Islamism trend which coincidentally happen with the ongoing of Arab Spring phenomenon. Writing in 1996, Bayat claimed that this trend was well under way in Iran and expected to bring significant political changes in the country with vital implications to political Islam in the Muslim world. To quote his popular claims:

“...I saw post-Islamism not only as a condition but also as a project, a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectuals domains. It is neither anti-Islamic nor un-Islamic or secular but represents an endeavour to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom,

Islam and liberty. It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and future instead of the past..." (Bayat 2013: 8).

In the same vein, Noorhaidi claims that post-Islamism can be seen as an alternative that gains ground amid the failure of the project that attempts to position Islam as a political ideology and is thereby changing the political landscape of Muslim states. As an alternative to religious extremism and the urgency to establish an 'Islamic State', post-Islamism offers Muslims a way to actualize religious beliefs and values while still following the path of democracy, modernity and moderation (Noorhaidi 2013: 160).

3.5.2 The Post-Islamism Debate

According to Müller, post-Islamism is often described as a modern, media-savvy and consumption oriented approach to promoting a wider political Islam. He also stated that the main features of post-Islamism include the thought and action of abandoning the fundamental goal to create an Islamic State, which contrasts to the principle of Islamism of establishing a Muslim Society that lives in accordance with an all-encompassing divine legal order ranging across politics, economics and social issues. However, post-Islamism is not seen as an 'anti-thesis' of Islamism, rather it represents a 'secularisation of state and a prevalence of religious ethics in society. The collapse of Islamism as a political ideology is largely caused by the lack of a convincing 'blueprint for ruling and Sharia law' by the Islamists, along with the rise of new social media which undermines the young population's acceptance of the top-down nature of information and knowledge transmission (Roy 2012: 8-14; Müller 2014: 6-7).

According to Bayat (2007: 146), a gradual change in the nature of Islamism has taken place as it has moved from a political project challenging the ruling non-Islamic or 'secular' government, to one concerned with people's welfare, democratisation, women and minority rights, economic struggle and pluralism. Post-Islamism, as suggested by Müller (2014: 6-7) is less dogmatic in terms of Islamist amalgamation of religion and politics, but very systematic when it comes to the Islamic way of life at an individual level. It emerged as a frame within which religious politics could become more inclusive which led

Muslims confidently remain Muslim and at the same time having a democratic state (Bayat 2011). These are the signs observed as the transnational trend of post-Islamism which has begun in certain Muslim majority states, such as Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Turkey (Bayat 2007: 5; Müller 2014: 6; Muhammad Faiz Mukmin & Wan Fariza Alyati 2015: 53; Noorhaidi 2013: 171).

3.5.3 Neo-Islamism in the Post-Arab Uprisings

The regime changes in the Middle East and North Africa in late 2010 (starting with Tunisia and followed by Egypt) and the role performed by the Islamists in these countries added new urgency to developing fresh approaches to Muslim politics (Dagi 2013: 72). For Tarek Chamkhi, this trajectory represents a new modified path of Islamist political thought called “neo-Islamism”- which is considered more a tactical strategy than a new ideology. To emphasise his words:

“...[By] acknowledging that Islamism and Islamists did not completely fail [in the post-Arab Spring events]...we distinguish these post-Arab Spring Islamists from traditional Islamists by classifying them as neo-Islamists” (Chamkhi 2014: 460).

Neo-Islamism can be understood as a tendency that emerged within majority Islamist movements to use liberal sets of concepts - for tactical and strategic purposes - whilst pursuing and adjusting the original traditional aims. Six main trends were identified by Chamkhi as the characteristics of neo-Islamism. The trends are explained as follows:

1. *The renewal of religiosity* – Increased secularisation in private and social life, as well as day-to-day private and public religious practices among neo-Islamists.
2. *Gradualism of Islamisation* – Neo-Islamists believe that small changes towards Islamisation are better than rapid ones. These could be undertaken via an official or unofficial adoption of the Turkish AKP-style of ‘pretended secularism’. ‘Open-door policies’ for membership could be proposed for any citizen regardless of religious practice. The focus of political parties is more on the quantity rather than the quality of members’ religious devotion.

3. *Modernising Islam* – The concept of modernisation and tools of modernity are well accepted by Neo-Islamists as they argue that Islam is compatible with modern scientific inventions, technologies and the democratic and pluralist values that originated from the West.
4. *Nationalist Islamism* – Some neo-Islamists refuse to consider the Ummah being brought to a single Islamic transnational state. Their political and economic objectives are directed exclusively to the nation-state in which they reside.
5. *Pragmatic relations with the Western world* – In general, neo-Islamist leaders from Ennahda, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and AKP were seen as eager to have positive and ‘enjoyable’ relationships with the Western bloc, particularly the USA and the European Union states.
6. *Moderation* – Although to transform and practice the “middle-path’ is a long journey for the Islamist, within the Tunisian neo-Islamist context, they have partially succeeded in presenting their commitment to democracy, flexibility, pluralism, justice, balance and tolerance.

Following the development of several Islamist movements in the post-Arab uprisings, the idea of neo-Islamism based on Chamkhi’s definition reflects the most modern trends and features of Islamist political parties. From all the characteristics mentioned, moderation was perceived as a core element of neo-Islamism during the post-Arab Spring events. Undoubtedly, Islamism has had a significant evolution over the past decades throughout the Muslim world, stretching from the Middle East and North Africa to Indonesia and Malaysia in Southeast Asia. Although the timeline of these waves of Islamism differs from one scholar to another, the studies by Al-Anani, Bayat and Chamkhi seem sufficient to provide a clear distinction between these trends. The following table summarises the three theories and the trends in political Islam - Islamism, Post-Islamism and Neo-Islamism - in order to clearly view their distinctive qualities and provide examples.

Table 3.2 Summary of Islamism, Post-Islamism and Neo-Islamism

Theory/Thought	Ideas and Characteristics	Examples
Islamism (1930s-1980s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Top-down approach. 2. The need to establish an Islamic society and government via Sharia law, Islamic principles, ideologies and identity. 3. Islam as a form of ideology that should regulate social, political, cultural and economic domains through an Islamic state. 4. Fusion of religion and responsibility. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The formation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. 2. The formation of the Islamic state in Iran after the February 1979 Revolution. 3. The development of the National Salvation Party and Welfare Party (<i>Refah Partisi</i>) in Turkey.
Post-Islamism (1990s-2010s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bottom-up approach. 2. The idea of fusion between Islam and individual freedom, values of democracy and aspects of modernity. 3. The expression of rationalisation and rejection of religious knowledge monopoly by the Muslim clerics or <i>Ulama</i>. 4. The blend of toleration, moderation, participation, emancipation and inclusivism with Islamic morality. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The tremendous transformation in religious and political discourse in the modern Islamic Republic of Iran from the 1990s to 2004. 2. The <i>Kefaya</i> Movement in Egypt. 3. The development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) in Malaysia 1990s-2014. 4. The development of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia.
Neo-Islamism (2011-ongoing)	<p>Adopt pragmatic strategies which consist of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-traditional religiosity. 2. Gradualism of Islamisation. 3. Moderation and modernisation. 4. Redefining Nationalism - Nationalist Islamism. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. 2. The development of the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia post-Jasmine Revolution.

Notes: For more detail please refer to:

1. Bayat, Asef ed. (2013) *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islamism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Muhammad Faiz Mukmin Abdul Mutalib & Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria. (2015) Pasca Islamism Dalam PAS: Analisis Terhadap Kesan Tahaluf Siyasi. (Post-Islamism in PAS: Analysis of the Political Coalition's Effect) *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 8 (9): 52-60.
3. Chamkhi, Tarek. (2014) Neo-Islamism in the post-Arab Spring. *Contemporary Politics*, 20 (4): 453-468.
4. Cavatorta, Francesco & Merone, Fabio. (2015) Post-Islamism, Ideological Evolution and 'la tunisianité' of the Tunisian Islamist Party al-Nahda, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 20 (1): 27-42.

3.6 Conceptual Considerations: Political Islam and Democracy

According to Liow (2009: 5), most discussion and analysis of political Islam begins by focusing on the fact that Islam is inherently “political”. Proponents of this logic have noted that Islam is *ad-din*, a way of life that encompasses *din wa dawla*, or faith along with polity- religion and state. The essentially political character of Islam was categorically demonstrated, if not in doctrine, then certainly in the development of faith. The Prophet Muhammad established the first religiously governed polity in Medina; soon after his death in 632 A.D, internecine conflict emerged within the Muslim community over questions of succession and legitimacy. The rule of the first caliphs was a highly politicized epoch of Islamic history, defined by competition over power, authority,

legitimacy, authenticity and the driving seat of Islam vacated by the Prophet. Indeed, it is this fusion of religion and politics that has captured the imagination of generations of Muslim intellectuals, from the reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the upsurge of Islamism in the wake of the failure of Arab nationalism in the 1970s, then to the Iranian Revolution, and right up to the current post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon and beyond. By definition then, to an Islamist, a Muslim cannot be indifferent to politics (Liow 2009: 5). The rise of Islamist parties, as in the case of the Ennahda and PAS with a fundamentalist reform agenda, ushered in important changes to the political landscape of the Islamic world. The debate on the legitimacy of participation in a political system that unequivocally violates Islamic sharia is still at the heart of Muslim communities all over the world. As pointed out by Raghed Abdo (2012: 27), the early Muslim reformers such as Khayr al-din al-Tunisi (1810-1899), Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) agreed that absolute rule, the lack of popular participation in politics and the absence of good governance and accountability to the Ummah represented the primary causes of Muslim backwardness.

Furthermore, dictatorship and autocratic style leadership was not considered an inherent religious principle of political authority in Islam. Therefore, alternative models of political governance are required by Islamic states as a guideline to form a government. All Muslim reformers as mentioned above advocated adopting some 'Western element' of democratic institutions. Political parties, popular elections, parliamentary systems, constitutional rules were all among the institutions proposed in their reforms and were considered as modern institutions that would enable the Muslim *Ummah* to exercise its sovereignty (Raghed Abdo 2012: 27-32). Therefore, democracy is seen as the antithesis of authoritarianism and the Islamist must utilize every opportunity possible to reform the state and society. Rashid Ghannoushi, during his opening speech at the 10th National Party Conference of Ennahda has stated that "...we have demonstrated that democracy is possible in the Arab world, and that it is the solution to corruption, despotism, chaos and terrorism" (Ghannoushi 2016).

3.6.1 Definition and Indicators of Democracy

It has become almost impossible to talk about any political change nowadays without relating it to the concept of “democracy”. Democracy has been discussed on and off for about twenty-five hundred years and it seems that time is enough to provide a comfortable set of ideas about democracy on which everyone could agree (Dahl 2000: 2-3). Nevertheless, since the concept of democracy has to be regarded as currently contestable, this research understands the term ‘democracy’ to be a subjective definition that is open to debate and argument. As claimed by Sadiki (2002: 125), whatever the definitional requisites ascribed to the notion of democracy, it remains an essentially contested concept. However, Powel (2008: 26) emphasizes that the term democracy does allow the existence of common features and elements between definitions. This statement is supported by Dahl in which he points out that:

“The twenty-five centuries during which democracy has been discussed, debated, supported, attacked, ignored, established, practiced, destroyed, and then sometimes re-established, it seems, produced agreement on some of the fundamental questions about democracy” (Dahl 2000: 3).

Democracy can be understood as a system of government or organization in which the citizens or members choose leaders or make other important decisions by voting in an election. By tracing back the origins of the word ‘democracy’, as highlighted by Heywood (2013: 89), it was found to derive from the Greek word *demos* referring to the people and *kratos* meaning rule or power. Thus, the combination of these two words, ‘*demos kratos*’ or ‘*demokratia*’ means a rule by the people or citizens. Meanwhile, Ranney (1993: 100) and Beetham (1999: 5) have pointed out that democracy is a form of sovereignty, political equality and majority rule. It is also a popular control of a collective system of decision making. Abraham Lincoln used to address democracy as “*government of the people, by the people, and for the people*”. This statement highlights the significance of three major attributes of democracy. Firstly, the stress upon ‘the people’ implies political equality, an equal distribution of power and influence. Secondly, the government ‘by the people’ emphasizes the importance of mass participation. Thirdly, the government ‘for the people’

highlights the fact that democracy suggests rule in the public interest (Heywood 2000: 125).

According to Birch (2001: 72), the term 'democracy' in its modern sense came into use during the nineteenth century to describe a system of representative government in which representatives are chosen by free competitive elections. This reflects the idea of collective decisions, in contrast to individual decisions. For Joseph Schumpeter, as explained by Sørensen (1998: 9-10), democracy in its narrowest conception was simply a political method, which is a mechanism for selecting authority and political leadership. The citizens are given a choice among rival political leaders or parties who compete for their voices. Thus, the ability to elect and replace between leaders at election time is considered as democracy. Undoubtedly, democracy belongs to the sphere of collective decision-making. In other words, it entails the twin principles of popular control over the collective decision-making and equality of rights in the exercise of that control (Beetham & Boyle 1995: 1). The struggle to establish democracy has its roots in the belief that everyone deserves to live in conditions of dignity, tolerance and respect (Grugel 2002).

In addition, Storm has introduced three major elements of democracy in accordance with the underlying principles of definitions of democracy. The first is reasonably competitive elections (RCE). It means that the holding of reasonably free and fair elections devoid of massive fraud and with broad suffrage is significant for a state to achieve democratic status. The second is respect for the basic civil liberties (BCL). The guarantee of basic civil rights from the authority such as freedom of speech, assembly and association is equally important to ensure that everyone can express their political views without any intimidation and restrictions by the government. The third is the existence of effective power to govern (EP), meaning that the elected government must not be subordinate to any non-elected elite (Storm 2007: 7). Similarly, by looking at Heywood's (2013: 89) and Whitehead's (2002: 10-11) explanations, there is a list of five core principles of democracy which overlap with Storm's idea that can be seen as follows:

1. *A form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously* - Practically, all adults have the right to vote in the election

of officials. Popularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional power without being subjected to the over-riding opposition from unelected officials.

2. *A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit* - Citizens have the right to form relatively independent associations or organisations, including political parties and interest groups as well as right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on broadly defined political matters.
3. *A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule* – It promotes checks and balances between the rule of the majority and the right of the minority. The control of government decisions about the policy is constitutionally vested in public officials.
4. *A means of filling public offices through a competitive election* - Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
5. *A system of government that serves the interest of the citizens inclusively* – It encourages a system of welfare and equal distribution of wealth

The first principal seems in line with Schumpeter's idea as he saw democracy as a form of government and in particular as a mechanism for the election of leaders. He stressed that democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the term "people" and "rule". Democracy means only that people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them (Schumpeter 1976: 268-70, Grugel 2002: 18-19, Bernhagen 2009: 26). Dahl (2000: 37-38) identified two dimensions of democratic government: firstly, the citizens' participation in the political process, and secondly, the competition among political groups for office. He believes that at least five criteria fit the standard of the democratic process. The first is the effective participation, followed by voting equality, through the enlightened understanding of the citizens, with the ability to control the political agenda and finally an inclusion of adults. These criteria clearly go beyond the minimalist view of democracy as suggested by Schumpeter. Nevertheless, in order to apply the most appropriate term of democracy to that of Muslim states, particularly Malaysia, a set of broad standards must be achieved to ensure a genuine democratic rule would take place. As stated by Powel (2008: 29),

democracy is always context-dependent, a product of the environment in which it develops and expands.

Based on the definitions and conceptual explanations of democracy from various scholars as discussed above, this research is consistent with that of the relevance and significance of periodic and competitive elections, independent judiciary, legality of basic civil liberties and separation of powers to be considered as a standard for equal opportunity to democratic transition. This research agrees with Stoker (2006: 20) that to define democratic governance as a political system, a state should meet the following three important criteria:

1. Universal suffrage - that is, the right to vote in elections for all adults.
2. Government chosen via a regular, free and competitive election.
3. The presence of a set of political rights to free speech and freedom to organize in groups or associations.

Looking at democracy this way facilitates our understanding that it is a dynamic concept that has been given many different definitions and its meaning remains subject to debate. Accordingly, all the definitions should be regarded as minimal conditions for a state and government to be counted as democratic. It is clear that democracy means being ruled by the people and that it is a better form of government than all others. More democracy would mean more responsive governments, more socially representative politicians and policies for the many rather than the few, as decided by majority rule. Political authority is accountable to the people through competitive elections, where the power will be legitimized by the nations (Weale 2007). In the words of Grugel (2002: 36), we can conclude that democracies are political systems comprising of institutions that translate citizens' preferences into policy, having effective states that act to protect and deepen basic civil rights, and holding on a firm mass participation.

3.6.2 Legitimacy and Political Stability

Legitimacy, or in other word 'rightfulness' is one of the keys to achieving political stability. Regimes often seek legitimacy in order to survive and succeed. Legitimacy is viewed by political scientists as the citizens' willingness to comply

with any political systems or rule regardless of how the power is obtained (Heywood 2013: 80-81). Max Weber in his famous writing has categorized three different sources of political legitimacy, which are; 1) traditional authority; 2) charismatic authority and 3) legal-rational authority. The regional neighbour of Tunisia, the Saudi Arabian monarchy as well as Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE are the best examples to reflect the idea of traditional authority as a source of the ruling power, whereas charismatic authority can be applied in the case of Libya, in the era of Muammar Gaddafi. As Heywood (2013: 83) has written, there are two bases in which legitimacy can be achieved in any modern state. The first is by party politics, party systems and elections. The second relates to the existence of a state constitution. Democracy and legitimacy are the two concepts which have a strong relationship, as democracy contributes to the promotion of political legitimacy in several different ways such as participation in the political process, peaceful conflict resolution and effective political bargaining and negotiation (Heywood 2013: 86).

3.6.3 Democratisation

Questions regarding how and why societies become democratic, can be seen run through the perspectives and academic thinking relating to democratisation. Initial studies of democratisation in the 1970s and 1980s presumed that the meaning of democratisation was self-evident: it simply meant a transformation of the political system from a non-democratic, towards an accountable, responsive and representative government (Grugel 2002: 3). The general idea of democratisation can be understood as the replacement of an undemocratic political system with a democratic one. It might be viewed as the process of making a political system more democratic, regardless of whether or not that system should be classified as a democracy, an autocracy, or something in between (Bernhagen 2009: 24-25). According to Welzel (2009: 74-75), democratisation is a continuous process which is influenced and determined by many factors and conditions in order for authoritarian states to move towards liberal democracy. It can also be understood in three different ways. Firstly, democratisation is the introduction of democracy in a non-democratic regime. Secondly, it can be understood as the deepening of the democratic qualities of

given democracies and lastly democratization involves the question of the survival of democracy (Welzel 2009: 74-75).

The word 'democratization' specifically refers to the political changes that move in a democratic direction (Potter et al 1997: 5). In other words, democratization is a process of developing and establishing democracy in a non-democratic state. Huntington (1991: 15) has provided a clear definition; he defines democratization as "...a process of transition from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time..." He also adds that a democratic transition normally involves partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic (Huntington 1991: 15).

From the perspective of political studies, as claimed by Grugel (2002: 4-5), democratization has been understood along a continuum from a minimal to a maximalist position. On the one hand, the basic minimalist definition sees democratization as the regular holding of free and fair elections and the introduction of basic norms such as inclusive suffrage, an absence of intimidation and the existence of at least two political parties competing in elections. On the other hand, the maximalist definition is a slightly more inclusive definition, as it demands the introduction of basic civil liberties most notably of which are the freedom of media and press, freedom of speech and expression, freedom to stand for public office and freedom of religion (Grugel 2002: 4-5). The more sophisticated alternative as claimed by Whitehead has been to argue that democratisation is complete when all significant political actors accept that the electoral process has become the 'only game in town' for reallocating public office. Thus, democratisation is best understood as a long-term process of social construction, as well as a dynamic, and open-ended process. It consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics (Whitehead 2002: 27).

3.7 Conclusion and Summary

The importance of a theoretical and conceptual framework in academic research is unquestionable and is 'necessary' for a reputable political science study. This chapter had discussed three main theories: (1) the Adjustment to Change Theory; (2) Revolutionary Theory; and (3) Islamism. These are extremely useful for analysing the main findings of this research – perceptions of Malaysia's Islamist movement members towards the Arab Uprisings, as well as the influence of the events on the selected movements (PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH) in particular the impact on their ideology and activism.

The first theory (Adjustment to Change) assumed that certain characteristics of individuals might adjust human behaviour or views towards rapid and dramatic social change and seems applicable if one compares the original of Goodwin's theoretical case study with this current research. Theoretically, different Islamist movements might have different perceptions of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. This assumption will be discussed in further detail in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight which include the research findings. The second (Revolutionary) theory explained the factors which contributed to the emergence of revolutionary movements, as well as providing some consideration of the type of regime which is vulnerable to overthrow by revolutionaries. All the three theories developed by the different scholars have some shared elements concerning the reasons for the occurrence of revolution – these include economic downturn and political dictatorship.

The third theory (Islamism) which considers Islamism, Post-Islamism and Neo-Islamism has provided the researcher with explicit focus on the trends and characteristics of modern Islamists across the Muslim world (including in Malaysia). Moreover, the 'appearance' of Islamist movement discourses within the context of civil society has enhanced the relevance and dynamism of Social Movement Theory (which stresses citizen's collective action as an effective way to challenge a corrupt regime) in the field of social science research. This chapter has also considered the popular concepts of democracy, legitimacy, political stability and democratisation since these are strongly related to debates within the post-Arab Uprisings context and the present political scenario in Malaysia.

In general, the theories and concepts that have been discussed appear to be interconnected which indirectly leads to the establishment of a grounded framework for this research. The next chapter will highlight the historical background of crucial elements within the case studies – starting with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and then discussing the Arab Uprisings. The following chapter considers the emergence of Islamist Movements in Malaysia as well as issues in current Malaysian politics.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVOLUTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM WORLD: THE 1979 IRAN'S REVOLUTION AND THE 2011 ARAB UPRISINGS

"The awakening of the Islamic Egyptian people is an Islamic liberation movement and I, in the name of the Iranian government, salute the Egyptian people and the Tunisian people" - Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 2011²²

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine a brief historical background of two major revolutions in the contemporary Islamic world – the 1979 Iran's Revolution and the 2011 Arab Uprisings events. As previously mentioned in Chapter One, the former event had indirectly influenced the development of Malaysia's Islamist movements circa 1980s-1990s, particularly on the inspiration of establishing a new-Islamic state in Malaysia²³. Moreover, since the 1979 Islamic revolution was launched in Iran, political Islam or Islamism has been the focus of attention among scholars, policymakers, and the general public in the Muslim world. Much has been said about Islamism and Islamist movements as a new political platform and moral trend in the states of the Middle East and North Africa (Menashri: 1990; Mir-Hosseini & Tapper: 2006). However, little attention has been paid to its on-going development beyond the MENA region, especially among the Southeast Asian nations, particularly Malaysia²⁴.

Then, with the upheavals that took place in the Middle East that began in December 2010, this phenomenon was closely followed by Islamist parties in Southeast Asia (Liow 2015: 15). Among the major events that occurred in the Muslim world, the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the 2011 Arab Uprisings undoubtedly played a significant role in influencing and re-shaping the development of Islamist movements around the world (Khalil Al-Anani 2012: 467). Omar Ashour (2015) claims that Islamists and their impact on the Arab-

²² Aljazeera (2011). "Khamenei hails 'Islamic' uprisings". Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/201124101233510493.html> [22 November 2015]

²³ The Malaysian Islamists used the Iranian Revolution as a model for their own socio-political protest and reform movements back in 1980-1990s. See Chapter Five for more detail on the impact of Iran's Revolution on Malaysia's Islamist movements.

²⁴ See Chapter Two on the 'Research Gap' from the past literatures.

majority uprisings, democratisation and political violence in various forms has been one of the most debated issues of the Arab Uprisings. Yet, this is not the case with the majority of Islamist Movements in Southeast Asia, since only minor attention has been paid to their development, as well as the impact and influence of Arab Uprisings events on the region²⁵.

Therefore, since the goal of this research involves Islamist movements in Malaysia, particularly on the Islamists attitudes towards current Arab Uprisings' phenomenon, it is vitally important to view and highlight the details of those momentous events from a historical and chronological perspective, in order to gain a deep understanding about the Arab Uprisings in a global context. Although there were views that Islamism did not contribute much with regard to the causes of recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (Roy 2012; Kamrava 2014; Willis 2014), the post-Arab Uprisings have witnessed the rise of Islamist parties as in the case of Ennahda in Tunisia, Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, the Brotherhood-inspired Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco, as well as the continuous victory of *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) in Turkey (Al-Anani 2012; Bradley 2012; Cavatorta 2012; Haynes 2013; Ahmad 2013, and Schenker 2015). This suggests that there is a constant role of Islamism in Muslim politics across the globe. Hence, this chapter will describe 'snapshots' of the major revolutionary events in the Muslim world – the Iranian Revolution of 1979, as well as the development of Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the MENA region. The reason to include the background of Iranian case serves as a foundation for this study - to further investigate the potential impact of recent Arab Revolutions on Malaysia's Islamist movements. The following section will first engage with dramatic moments of 1979 Iranian revolution, particularly how the Iranian revolutionary leaders 'exported' the core elements of the revolution to other Muslim nations including Malaysia.

4.2 The Iranian Revolution of 1979

The Iranian Revolution of 1978–79, also dubbed the Islamic Revolution, was a popular uprising in Iran in 1978–79 that resulted in the toppling of the Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi's monarchy on April 1st 1979, and led to the

²⁵The issues of Arab Uprisings (possible) connections with Malaysia have been discussed in Chapter One.

establishment of an Islamic republic of Iran (Axworthy 2014). The revolution undoubtedly sent shock waves throughout the globe and marked a turning point in the Muslim world (Noor 2003: 204). The consequences of the Shah's wrong-headed policies and repressive leadership, which affected the majority of citizens, created a strong and solid opposition to the regime. Jahangir Amuzegar in his publication "The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution" explained that the Shah's human rights violations against the people for the sake of modernization and 'Westernization' policies inevitably created a deep hatred among the Iranians toward the regime and modernization itself (Amuzegar 1991: 37). Apart from the political repression of the regime, the popular uprising in Iran was also interpreted by many as a rejection of modernity since the majority of Iranians believed that modernization would bring harm to the existence of Iran's traditional and social culture. During the period of struggle against the Shah, the mass movement steadily increased and it was estimated that three million people came onto the streets in the biggest mass mobilisation in Iranian history. The revolution managed to attract widespread popular support from different layers of society encompassing the tradesmen, bazaar merchants, urban-middle classes, civil servants, lawyers, newly urbanized and 'proletarianized' working classes - all of them participated in the revolution to topple the autocratic regime of the Shah (Bayat 1987: 77).

4.2.1 Origins of the Revolution

The beginning of early protest in modern Iran took place on June 6th 1963 when Khomeini, the spiritual leader and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was arrested and put under house arrest as ordered by the Shah after being seen as a threat to the regime. This incident sparked protests and riots which resulting in over 400 deaths. On April 7th 1964 Khomeini was released for a temporary period and returned to Qom. However, in November 1964 Khomeini was re-arrested and forced to leave the country, which resulted in him living in exile in France for 14 years. In the meantime, throughout the 1960s, the Shah began to exercise increasing control over the government after dissolving parliament in 1961 (Axworthy 2014: 1-4). Programmes of agricultural and economic modernization were pursued, but the regime took charge of economic and social development, leaving very few benefits to reach the ordinary citizen.

The Shah made the grave mistake of 'promising too much and delivering too little'. The results of rapid industrialization and modernization without taking into account low productivity, shortage of port facilities and lack of skilled workers proved disastrous to his plans. In other words, the Shah's ambitious industrialization plans drained the state's wealth and treasury (Gürbüz 2003).

Despite growing prosperity, as the economic modernization was perceived as partly successful, opposition to the Shah was widespread, fanned mainly by conservative Shiite Muslims, who wanted the nation to be governed by Islamic law. While Iran underwent economic and social transformations, a parallel political transformation never took place. The authoritarian regime in Iran did not permit the exercise of the democratic process – there was prohibition of self-expression, as well as lack of political participation. In addition, the regime created a reign of terror for those who did not support the Shah²⁶. The Shah's policy of political repression, was the most important reason for the emergence of the Iranian Revolution (Axworthy 2014: 58-59). During early 1977 civil rights protests were held by a group of lawyers, journalists and writers to demand more freedom of press and expression. These protests escalated from month to month and year to year until the Shah became fed up with so-called "revolutionaries" and began to execute them.

On September 8th 1978, the Shah gave an order for his military forces to shoot into the crowd in Tehran's Jaleh Square, killing thousands of the demonstrators. This event was known as Black Friday and is thought to have marked the point of no return for the revolution and led to the abolition of Iran's monarchy less than a year later. It is also believed that Black Friday played a crucial role in further radicalizing the protest movement, uniting the opposition to the Shah and mobilizing the masses. By the very next day, the strike against the regime had spread like wildfire to Tahriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Abadan as a response and so as to show solidarity with the Black Friday tragedy. According to Zayar, as the rhythm of the strike movement was intensified, every section of citizens from oil workers to public sector workers were all drawn into the

²⁶ It was estimated that tens of thousands of people were jailed and tortured by the 'secret police force'- the SAVAK - in order to protect the regime. These circumstances led Iran to gain a very poor reputation on human rights issues and deepened the people's resentment against the regime- resentment that turned into strong hatred and later ignited the revolution (Gürbüz 2003; Axworthy 2014).

struggle. Later, on December 2nd 1978, over two million people filled the streets of Tehran's Azadi Square to demand the immediate removal of the Shah and return of Khomeini. Without delay, on January 16th 1979 as the political situation deteriorated with continuous movement of the masses on a huge scale, the whole situation took a sharp turn when the helpless Shah's regime finally collapsed. The Shah and his family were forced into exile, and left the country forever. Finally, in February 1979, revolutionary forces under Khomeini seized power after his return to Iran and a referendum was approved in March for the establishment of an Islamic republic with Khomeini in control (Axworthy 2014: 119-130).

4.2.2 'Exports' of the Revolution to the Global Muslim Community

"It is highly doubtful that Khomeini ever thought his system would be exported to Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Malaysia, Pakistan or any of the large Sunni Islamic countries. But the notion of the rise of Islamic scholars to command their societies seemed to him, not only possible but an Islamic obligation" – Tarek Osman, 2017²⁷

Throughout the Muslim world, the socio-political impact of the Iranian revolution was profound. The revolution in Iran undoubtedly had explosive international consequences as there were persistent attempts to 'export' the revolution to neighbouring countries and across the Muslim world (Axworthy 2014: 164). Like many other great revolutionaries, Khomeini and his men had set their minds on carrying their creed and practice into other Muslim countries (Menashri 1990). The Iranian revolution and in particular Khomeini himself called for the promotion of revolution abroad - 'the export of revolution' as part of the consolidation of the revolution at home (Halliday 1999: 91). Khomeini was calling for confrontation with the Western powers or "Great Satan" and the liberation of occupied territories. In order to demonstrate the revolution as an Islamic one, rather than an Iranian one, he also engaged himself with the issues close to the hearts and minds of Arabs and Muslims, namely the question of Palestine and Pan-Islamism. To bring the message of the revolution to the people at home as well as to the outside world, the new Iranian administration

²⁷ Tarek Osman is a senior political counsellor for the Arab world at the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development. See also Osman, Tarek (2017). *Islamism: A History of Political Islam From the Fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Rise of ISIS*. New Heaven: Yale University Press. pp. 194.

used all available channels such as mass media, education, conferences and Friday sermons. Moreover, diplomats of Iranian embassies abroad were openly requested to proclaim their commitment to using embassy facilities and resources to support groups sympathetic to the Islamic revolution (Menashri 1990: 4; Halliday 1999: 126-127).

In terms of concrete export, four states in particular - Bahrain, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon²⁸ - were supported and provided with military assistance by the republic. Iran in the post-Khomeini period adhered to the declared policies of Islamic revolution, strengthened Iran's relations with the Third World and the former Soviet Union and began to reassert its role in the politics of the Middle East (Hafizullah Emadi 1995: 2). It is important to note that although the Iranian revolution did not lead in the establishment of Khilafah Islamiyah or Islamic Caliphate, it formed a new Islamic paradigm, which was increasingly radicalising dissatisfied Muslim communities who were desperate for change. By export of its revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran intended to make the world 'safe' for Islam; witness the cases of the Persian Gulf, Lebanon, Soviet Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (Ramazani 1990: 41).

The Iranian Revolution highlighted one of the principal religious and political developments - the revival of Islamic fundamentalism from Southeast Asia to North Africa and from Afghanistan to the Gaza Strip. The influence and impact of this revolution towards Muslim communities, particularly the Islamist movements in Malaysia, will be discussed in following sub-section.

4.2.3 Malaysian Islamists and Impacts of the 1979 Iranian Revolution

Dominik Müller (2014: 55) has stressed that during the 1970s and 80s, Iran and its popular revolution played a decisive role in the development of PAS. The trajectory of Iranians in forming their modern Islamic republic electrified idealistic Muslim youth in Malaysia who wanted to bring fundamental politics towards the 'government of Allah' (Farish Noor 2004: 331). There are obvious differences in doctrinal and theological aspects between PAS and Iran. For

²⁸ In the case of Lebanon, Iran sent several thousand Islamic guards, and considerable financial resources to support the Shiite forces, most notably the Hezbollah group against the Israel (Halliday 1999: 127).

example, Malaysian Muslims are almost entirely Sunni in practical orientation and follow the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence (mazhab), while the Iranian Revolution was viewed by many observers as a Shiite phenomenon (Durac & Cavatorta 2015: 144). However, such differences did not stop the revolution from serving as a source of inspiration for PAS leaders and members. One key actor in PAS during this period of global Islamic resurgence was Yusof Rawa, the former president of PAS and the Malaysian ambassador to Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan. Rawa's tour of duty in Iran in the mid-1970s - a period when popular protest against the Shah was building at an alarming pace - gave the Islamist party critical first-hand experience of the formation of an 'Islamic state' as well as the build-up towards an Islamic revolution (Liow 2009: 34).

Liow (2009: 34) and Müller (2014: 55) note that in the aftermath of the revolution, apart from celebrating and admiring the new Islamic state post-Shah regime, several PAS members accepted invitations issued by the Islamic republic and visited Tehran. This was for the purpose of learning and experiencing the revolution and many participated in educational programmes organised by the Iranian government. In addition, the youth wing of PAS, which stood at the forefront of party reform, sent students and study groups to Iran as a way to improve the 'bilateral' relationship with the new Iranian government and to study their model of rule (Liow 2009). Furthermore, as a result of the Iranian Revolution, PAS leadership re-emphasised the special role of ulama in the party's organisation. The ulama served as the spiritual leader of the party and PAS 'internal advisor' (Monutty 1990: 117; Noor 2013: 118).

Ahmad Uzair claims that there are some spiritual songs and prayers within PAS which stress the importance of Muslim unity and the struggle to achieve a greater Muslim ummah. These were composed by PAS members influenced by the Iranian Revolution 'soul'²⁹. In terms of mass mobilisation, PAS involvement in the 1998 'reformation' rally and the series of Bersih protests indicates that they tried to follow what was done in Iran in the 1970s and 80s, although not with the same objective (to aggressively overthrow the ruling government). The situation is discussed by Farish Noor (2013: 117) who states:

²⁹ Personal interview with PAS member, Ahmad Uzair Mazlan, Southampton, June 2016.

“Soon after the revolution (1979 Iranian Revolution), the younger generation of PAS leaders like Mohamad Sabu began using the Ayatollah’s revolutionary rhetoric in their (political) speeches...(which resulted in) the thought that thousands of Malay-Muslim students might take to the streets in violent demonstrations against the government”.

The claim above seems too controversial and would probably be denied by PAS. However, the experiences witnessed during the global Islamic resurgence might well have offered PAS members new ideas and strategies in order to remain relevant as a strong Islamist opposition in the Malaysian political game.

For ABIM and as a youth organisation that was established in the early 1970s at the height of global Islamic resurgence, the movement was very much an Islamist (Harakah Islamiyyah) product of its time. As with PAS in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, ABIM did not want to miss an opportunity to strengthen its international agenda by supporting the formation of a new Islamic republic in Iran. Farish Noor (2003: 204-205) claimed that the leadership of ABIM, in particular Anwar Ibrahim (the first secretary general and second President of ABIM from 1974-1982), praised the Iranian revolutionaries for their commitment to Islam.

Ahmad Azzam (ABIM former President) acknowledged that the movement was inspired by the Iranian Revolution and was viewed as a new symbol of the Muslim struggle against Western Hegemony following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1924. Many books and publications on Iran (post-1979 Revolution), particularly concerning the thoughts of Khomeini were imported for reference by ABIM members. At one time, the ABIM leadership was also encouraged to memorise the full name of Khomeini (“Ayatollah Sayyed Ruhollah Mostafavi Moosavi Khomeini”) as a way of showing the movement’s solidarity with him (Khomeini) as a new political and Islamic leader in Iran and the Muslim world³⁰.

According to Mohamad Mazuki (an active member of ABIM since the 1970s), in 1979 Anwar Ibrahim and other ABIM members decided to visit Tehran and they met Ayatollah Khomeini to celebrate the success of the Iranian

³⁰ Ahmad Azzam’s presentation on ‘Lessons from Global Islamist Movements’ during the “Seminar on the Future of Islamic Awakening”, in Conjunction with ABIM’s 45th Annual Meeting. Shah Alam, Malaysia. 29 October 2016.

people in forming a new Islamic republic. Upon his return from Iran, Anwar called for an “Iranian Liberation and Solidarity Day” to be held on 16 March 1979³¹. Nevertheless, although ABIM was a strong supporter of the Iranian Revolution, Funston argues that the movement did not endorse all Iranian developments, as ABIM leaders such as Anwar Ibrahim recognised that the situation in Malaysia was unique and thus they rejected the possibility of completely transplanting a foreign model (Funston 1985: 173).

The fact that Iran’s revolution was a source of inspiration and received a warm welcome and encouraging response from Islamist movements in Malaysia back in the 1970-1980s - the more recent Arab Uprisings have themselves contributed important new experiences and insights, along with valuable lessons for Malaysia in the future. Stephanie Wheatley who works in the Islamist moderation has stated that:

“The protest movements which swept through many Arab nations in the spring of 2011 demanding reform, if not regime change, present both a challenge and opportunity for Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world. Though many of these groups were once relegated to the opposition, they now have the opportunity to govern” (Wheatley 2011: 2).

Before examining the influence of the Arab Uprisings to Malaysian Islamists in great detail, it is vitally important for researcher to provide a brief discussion on the background of 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ phenomenon, particularly on how the mass protests erupted in each involved states in the MENA region as can be seen in the following sections. It will also highlights major causes of the Arab Uprisings, as well as some issues within the development of the post-2011 Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon.

³¹ Personal interview with Mohamad Mazuki Ariffin, London, December 2015.

4.3 The 2011 Arab Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa: Geneses and Spread of the Protest Movements

“Arab Spring which saw multiple uprisings that started in Tunisia and made its way to Egypt and other parts of the Arab world in 2011 was breathtaking. The promise of the Arab revolution was – and remains – a break with repressive authoritarian and totalitarian regimes to pave the way towards an era of freedom, dignity and prosperity” Marwan Bishara, Al-Jazeera political analyst³²

Over the last few years, political ‘tsunamis’ and mass uprisings have shaken the region of MENA more than one could ever imagine. It tragically surged in Tunisia on December 17th 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor set himself on fire in protest of the injustice and brutality he received from the government authority. His death led to massive demonstrations, as the Tunisians thought it was the state regime’s fault. This mass protest resulted in the overthrow of the 23-year dictatorship of Ben Ali on January 14th 2011. Like a domino effect, popular uprisings then became rampant across the Arab world, from one country to another until the entire region was immersed, leading to a new era in the history of the region known as the Arab Uprisings (Mansoor Moaddel 2012; Sadiki 2015).

In the same month, a vast number of Egyptians flocked to famous Tahrir Square to organize a rally to fight against the brutality of government forces, government corruption and economic depression, an action that led to the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. In February 2011 anti-government protests were organized in other Arab major cities including Manama, Algiers, Tripoli, Benghazi, Sana’a, Damascus and Aleppo. The Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh stepped down in response to the protests, while Muammar Qaddafi was captured and killed in a NATO-joined operation, after several months facing local armed rebellion and NATO intervention. These revolutions came in the form of a long-awaited civil uprising mainly of Arab youths in the Middle East, in an effort to give rise to a democratic wave in the region. The 2011 Arab Uprisings event is no doubt considered one of the most significant events in the 21st century.

³² Marwan Bishara (2013). “Year four: The seasons turn on the Arab Spring” Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/12/year-four-seasons-turn-arab-spring-2013121762345793639.html> (06 October 2017).

As Agathangelou and Nevzat Soguk (2014) demonstrate, the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon caught the global elites flat footed as they watched Arab peoples challenge the structure of repression and injustice in the Middle East and North Africa. These uprisings indirectly signalled to the rest of the world that the relations and institutions of political and economic control and domination were far from being permanent; they could be rattled to the core, pushed into a crisis, and be transformed in radical-democratic ways. In the words of Al Jazeera's senior political analyst, Marwan Bishara;

“Never in the history of the region have people been so hopeful, so ready and so adamant to change their lives for the better as they were in 2011. Never has the spread, speed and similarity of uprisings across continents been so breathtaking, and the contagion so instantaneous. Never have the young and the old, men and women, middle-class and working class worked so closely and so satisfyingly. Never have the religious and the secular, the liberal and the conservative marched so trustingly in the streets and public squares of the Arab world as they did at the outset of the Arab Spring” (Bishara 2013)

The following section will provide some background of the case of Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution, as well the events in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Morocco, Yemen and Bahrain - with specific attention on the genesis to the revolts, key aspects of events and causes of the uprisings.

4.3.1 The Uprising in Tunisia

The Jasmine Revolution was first reported on 17 December 2010, triggered by an individual act- the self-immolation of the young Mohamed Bouazizi-followed by a local reaction in the city of Sidi Bouzid, North East of Tunisia. This 26-year old street vendor set himself on fire to protest police interference and the lack of economic opportunities (Boubakri 2015: 65; Mullin 2015: 89; Volpi 2017: 75). He died in Tunis hospital on January 5, 2011 after suffering from 90 percent burns all over his body. Within days of Bouazizi's attempted suicide in front of the local government office, the majority of Tunisians including students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, trade unionists, and opposition politicians took to the streets in several cities, including Tunis, to condemn the government's economic policies, its repression off all critics, and a mafia-style corruption that had endowed power and money to members of Ben Ali's family (Alexander 2011; Zemni 2015: 81).

According to Arieff (2012: 90), in Tunisia, public demonstrations had previously been very rare since the state repression had traditionally been effective at curbing anti-government actions. Surprisingly, an anti-government protest was launched in mid-December 2010. The demonstrations initially seemed to have stemmed from the mass discontent related to high unemployment, but it quickly spiralled into an unprecedented popular challenge to Ben Ali regime. By late December, the protest had spread to the nearby cities of Kasserine and Thala, as well as other urban centres. Beginning in an underprivileged region, which had been neglected by the development efforts witnessed in other regions, the uprising subsequently spread to the rest of the country (Ahmed Driss 2012: 22). After nearly two weeks of protests, president Ben Ali had been broadcast on national television, promising actions on more job creation and economic stability, however, all these efforts had seemed too late for him to remain in power.

On January 12, riots erupted in the Capital of Tunis which brought the state into chaos and mass revolution (Arieff 2012: 9). Moreover, the situation became worse when the military was deployed to the streets and a national curfew was imposed. On the next several days, on January 13, Ben Ali once again had addressed his people on the state television in which he pledged to step down from his position after the ruling term finishes in 2014 and gave a promise that he would not be involve in the next presidential election. However, these promises did not placate the demonstrators, who continued to press for his immediate resignation and the dissolution of the ruling party (Zemni 2015: 84-85). Following the uncertainty across the country, authorities imposed a state of emergency on January 14, prohibiting gatherings of over three people and authorizing the use of force against 'brutal' protesters (Arieff 2012: 10). On the same day, Ben Ali, his wife Leila Trebelsi, their five year old son, one of his daughters and her fiancé fled to the airport, an action which finally validated his escape to Saudi Arabia. This action undoubtedly paved the way for a new era in Tunisia that could lead to a democratic political regime based on the will of the people, the rule of law and respect for human rights (Boubakri 2015: 74).

4.3.2 The Uprising in Egypt

The Egyptian Revolution or the “Day of Rage” had officially begun on January 25, 2011 when almost 10, 000 protesters gathered in Cairo and thousands more in another major city across Egypt³³. Three days later, on January 28, so-called the “Friday of Anger” the number of protesters had increased by ten times. An estimated 100, 000 Egyptians went to Tahrir Square forcing the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. Clash and heavy confrontations occurred between protesters and riot polices. The regime decided to shut down Internet access and disrupt communication line since social media was widely used to organize the mass mobilization and demonstrations. During this period, Egypt had totally gone into chaos when prisons were broken, which led prisoners to have escaped and some government buildings such as the Ministry of Interior and police station burned (Abdel Monem 2012: 23).

According to Sharp (2012: 53), on January 30, the military was deployed on the street which gradually brought on a curfew throughout the state. This action however, was unable to stop the march from all over Egypt when the scale of demonstration was unprecedented- a quarter of a million protestors turned out in Tahrir Square on February 1 in response to Mubarak’s speech in which he said he would not run for re-election and would pledge for a peaceful power transfer. In the next few days, violence escalated as Mubarak’s supporters took offence against revolutionaries in Tahrir Square. It was recognized as a “Battle of Camel” as pro-Mubarak men rode on horses and camels to break the square. After several days of chaos and violence, on Friday February 4, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians again filled Tahrir Square for a peaceful rally. During this time, the army had tightened its control by installing coils of razor wire, limiting media access and erecting checkpoints. As pointed out by Sharp, on February 8, protesters significantly expanded their revolt and gained momentum against the regime, sparked by the release of Wael Ghonim³⁴ which was seen as an earlier success to the revolution. At that

³³ Aljazeera (2011) Timeline: Egypt's revolution. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html> [20 September 2015]

³⁴ Wael Ghonim is a cyber-activist, blogger and Google executive who is the creator of the Facebook group namely ‘We are all Khalid Said’ to show the Egyptians’ solidarity with Khalid Said, a political blogger who has been murdered by police brutality in custody. Wael had been detained by authorities for 12 days following his cyber political activism and involvement in the

moment, the demand for Mubarak's resignation was unstoppable. This event might be seen as the beginning of the end of the Mubarak regime, coupled with international pressure on him to restore peace and normalcy in Egypt, something that was extremely far-reaching if he still remained in the office. Finally, after 18 days of peaceful protest, interspersed with chaos and bloodshed, Mubarak officially resigned on February 11 and left his power to the Egyptian Armed Forces. His resignation began a new era for the Egyptian revolution, for Egyptian politics and for the country at large (Abdel Monem 2011).

4.3.3 The Uprising in Yemen

Like their counterparts around the region, a younger generation and vast majority of Yemenis were inspired by events in Tunisia and Egypt to take to the streets in early 2011, an efforts to topple the long-serving autocratic regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh³⁵ (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 201). Anti-government protests appeared in the districts of North and South Yemen in mid-January 2011, after a coalition of opposition parties called the Join Meeting Party (JMP) began a series of demonstrations in Yemen's capital, Sana'a protesting the proposal adopted by parliament to eliminate presidential term limits as well as rumour that Saleh's plan to 'transfer' the presidential power to his son, Ali Ahmed Saleh (Gelvin 2012: 78-79).

The electrifying news of Mubarak's departure on February 11 seemed to transform the demonstrations into a large-scale rally calling for immediate Saleh's downfall (Durac 2012: 164). That night, students and activists gathered outside the Sana'a University and marched to the city's main square. As a result, almost over 20 000 people flooded the main roads in the city of Sana'a and while thousands of protesters marched in several other major cities such as Aden, Ta'iz and Ibb to protest against the ruling government. The protests did not end there as a month later, on 25 February, nearly 100,000 of Yemenis,

revolution. BBC (2011) Profile: Egypt's Wael Ghonim. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12400529> [21 September 2015].

³⁵ He became president of the Yemen in 1978 when the country was still separated into two independent states, the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen or formerly known as South Yemen (Gelvin 2012: 67). He ruled the YAR until the merger of the two states in 1990, at which time he was elected the first president of the new unified Republic of Yemen, a position he assumed for nearly 32 years, which ranked him as one of the longest ruling president in the Arab world (Durac 2012: 163).

with full of support of JMP took part in a demonstration in Ta'iz, with tens of thousands coming out in Sana'a and Aden. People's efforts to bring President Ali down continued when, on June 3rd, his office building was destroyed by explosions resulting in 11 death and several others injury including the President himself (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 204). The rocket attack which struck the mosque which is believed where the president was praying severely wounded Ali Abdullah Saleh which forced him to get treatment in Riyadh. Then, on 23 September 2011, President Saleh was forced to sign an agreement on the transfer of power. Finally, in November 2011 he step down from office and gave power to his successor (Durac 2012: 161).

4.3.4 The Uprising in Libya

Civil uprising in Libya began in the aftermath of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions when a coalition of groups called the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition, which later on became the National Transitional Council issued a call on social media for Libyans to participate the "Day of Rage" to pressure Gaddafi to step down (Gelvin 2012: 80-81; Buera 2015: 109-110). According to Dirk Vandewalle (2014: 437), of all the Arab Uprisings, Libya's rebellion against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi stands as one of the most distinctive and unexpected in the region of Middle East and North Africa as the outcome saw massive foreign interventions which led by NATO and the approval of UN³⁶. As stated by Gelvin (2012: 81), the date they chose was February 17, 2011 as it was the fifth anniversary of the 2006 'Italy's demonstration'³⁷. On that day, residents in Benghazi and other north-eastern towns like Derna and Tobruk took to the streets and gathered pace after the shocking news of Mubarak's departure in Egypt. Within days, the unstoppable uprising had spread to Libya's main capital, Tripoli where the revolutionaries set

³⁶ The Libya government was accused for "crime against humanity" which resulted the resolution 1973 being adopted to impose the 'No Fly Zone' over Libya airspace. For more on the resolution please refer, United Nation (2011) Security Council Approves 'No-Fly Zone' over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions. Available at <http://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

³⁷ In February 2006, protesters in Benghazi had attacked the Italian consulate after an Italian politicians had suggested that T-shirts should be made of Prophet Mohamed cartoons that had appeared in Danish newspapers. The demonstrations broadened into a general protest against the regime, when protesters began shouting anti-regime slogan and chanting which responded with a mix of force- police killed at least eleven people and conciliation (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 178)

fire to authorities buildings as well as engaged government forces in street clashes.

From the beginning, the regime faced the uprising with a dreadful level of viciousness. As Maya Bhardwaj points out, realising that the wave of the Arab Uprisings swept closer to Libya, Gaddafi condemned the protests, extending his 1973 rhetoric of dissenters as “stray dogs” to put the protesters in Benghazi as “rats” and “cockroaches” to be eliminated. It was reported by numerous global mainstream news such as Aljazeera, BBC and Reuters that security apparatus treated the Libyan revolutionaries as “enemy” in which the state forces deployed helicopter gunships to put down the mass uprising in Tripoli (Gelvin 2012: 82). Nevertheless, in August 2011 after six months of intense ‘civil war’ as well as with the involvement of NATO jets providing intensive air support to the rebels, Tripoli was seized by the anti-regime protesters which marked the end of the Libyan Spring. Two months later, on 20 October 2011, Gaddafi last bastion in his hometown, Sirte was stormed which resulted his tragic death. The 69-year-old Gaddafi is the first leader to be killed in the Arab Uprisings wave of popular uprisings that swept the Middle East, demanding the end of autocratic rulers and the establishment of greater democracy.

4.3.5 The Uprising in Algeria

Another North African states and close neighbours to Tunisia and Libya, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria or in the conventional short form- ‘Algeria’ was in no exception to experienced popular protests, which began in the first week of January 2011. Although the demonstrations seemed modest in size, especially if compared to the scale of mass uprisings in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, the protests managed to send ‘alarm’ to President Abdul Aziz Bouteflika about future of ‘democratic’ Algeria. According to James Gelvin (2012: 94), over the last 20 years that pave the way to the mass uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, it seemed the common cause that made other autocratic regimes in the Arab region vulnerable, without any doubt made the Algerian regime vulnerable as well. Not long after the protests had spilled over from Tunis into Algiers, efforts were made to set up a national protest movement (Storm 2014: 158). As Narrimane Benakcha (2012) demonstrates, during the “Algeria’s

Spring”, up to 3,000 Algerians marched in January and February 2011 in Algiers, led by the a fragile coalition gathering opposition parties and members of the civil society-the National Coordination for Change and Democracy (CNCD).

Demonstrations in Algeria is believed to be driven by the same social dissatisfactions afflicting neighbouring countries such as determination of recovering dignity through better life conditions and demanding more political and human rights (Volpi 2017: 42-44). The Algerians were also took to the streets throughout the country as a response to price hikes in commodities and other basic staples. Violence had already erupted regularly in the slums of Algiers and other big cities due to the government’s inability to meet the people’s need for decent housing and social services. In the month following the ill-fated February 12 rally, a strike wave spread throughout the country, as did sporadic rioting, which reflected continued dissatisfaction with the issues of unemployment, housing and high prices. Unemployment has reached 35 percent and the population struggles to make ends meet as prices-including food and convenience goods reached a peak (Benakcha 2012). Nevertheless, it was obvious that Algeria seemed to be the only ‘survivor’ of the Arab Uprisings, as Gelvin (2012: 98) argues, “ the Algerians did not have their Tahrir Square, and they did not have the pleasure of hearing a shocking announcement over the radio that their president had resigned, as had Egyptians.” Observer such as Lise Storm (2014: 159) believed that one of the crucial reasons of this exceptional undoubtedly was the memories of series of horrific civil war that still fresh in most people’s mind as majority of Algerians were fearful that political turmoil would lead to further chaos, killings and perhaps even trigger into another civil war.

4.3.6 The Uprising in Syria

The next victim of the wave of Arab Uprisings, and yet the complex and most complicated case to study is Syria, which is also known as Syrian Arab Republic. The beginning of the uprising in Syria bears a closer resemblance to the beginning of the uprising in Libya than to that in Egypt. Whereas protesters in Egypt made the capital city, Cairo, the symbolic centre of the uprising, in Syria, as in Libya, the uprising broke out in the provinces (Gelvin 2012: 2013).

On March 2011, the Syrians decided to protest peacefully against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad³⁸, which they believed the president and his wife, Asma Al-Assad have 'looted' the country's wealth for nearly decades. They were demanding reform in state's economy and politics after a long period of repression and hardship. Began with a small revolt in Southern province of Deraa³⁹, the protests have spread throughout the country encompassing Houla, Damascus⁴⁰, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Hama, Al-Raqqqa, Idlib and many more. The response from the regime personnel was upset.

On March 18, the security forces opened fire and killed several protesters which further enraged the anti-regime sentiment and escalating the uprising. Protests were met with a deadly response, therefore sparking even greater demonstrations which later turned into sectarian clashes/civil wars, and now further into another global crisis- the massive Syrian migrations in Europe. At first, focus of the protests' chants were ranging quickly around local issues, like the removal of an unpopular governor before escalated to national issues such as to call for an end to emergency law, brutality of the regime, corruptions, absence of democratic institutions and finally to demand the immediate overthrow of Assad (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 227-228). It seemed that the democratic aspirations of the Syrian revolutionaries who filled streets and public squares across Syria in early 2011 were among the conflict's first casualties (Heydemann 2013: 59).

4.3.7 The Uprising in Morocco

Morocco is one of the last of the so-called Maghreb countries of Northern Africa to take to the streets in the wake of the fall of Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in 2011. On February 2011, the first coordinated demonstrations, organised by the Mouvement du 20 Fevrier also known as Morocco's pro-democracy February 20

³⁸ Bashar Al-Assad came to power in 2000 after his father, Hafez Al-Assad (former Syrian president) death.

³⁹ The Deraa revolt began after a handful of local boys, some of more than ten years old, were arrested by police for daubing walls with graffiti that included what had become the powerful slogan of the Arab Spring: "The people want the fall of the regime". After failing to secure their release, hundreds of Deraa residents took to the streets to voice their anger at the children's brutal treatment. Deraa was seen as the torch that set light to uprisings in other provinces, as people across the country took to the streets in solidarity with those in the southern border town (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 227).

⁴⁰ One such demonstration, held in Damascus on March 15, was organized by a group called "Syrian Revolution 2011 against Bashar al-Assad" (Gelvin 2012: 102).

Movement took place across the country in cities such as Agadir, Casablanca, Fes, al-Hoceima, Laayoune, Marrakech, Rabat and Tangier. Thousands of protesters took to the streets in Morocco to demand full-fledge changes to the state's constitution as well as plea for political reform and limits on the powers of King Mohammed VI (Storm: 2014: 63). In Rabat, a crowd of up to 10,000 people marched through the streets chanting: "down with autocracy" and "the people want to change the constitution," as well as slogans against the government, corruption and state television (Champion 2011).

Nevertheless, in 2011, unlike Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Morocco did not experience any revolutionary or radical change as well as massive political upheaval in the context of the Arab Uprisings⁴¹. According to Storm (2014: 63), in comparison to the events in Cairo and Tunis, the Arab Uprisings protests in Rabat were not only much smaller, they were also much more peaceful. However, it would not be accurate to suggest that the Arab Uprisings had no political impact in Morocco although Storm has argued that this event and the activities of the 20th February Movement did not improve the prospect for democracy in Morocco (Storm 2014: 64). Despite the momentum of the protests in Morocco was slightly different to its Arab neighbours, in response to the unprecedented public protests in the country, King Mohammed VI had announced new political reforms in February 2011, including an early parliamentary election, a constitutional reform process to grant citizens new civil rights, and the abandoning of some of the King's administrative power (Haynes: 2013: 183).

4.3.8 The Uprising in Bahrain

In the aftermath of Ben Ali and Mubarak's departure in Tunisia and Egypt, the 2011 Pearl Roundabout uprising dubbed 'the Pearl Revolt' was seen as a defining moment in the political life of Bahrain which saw an exceptional challenge to the tiny island kingdom's ruling bargain (Wehrey 2013: 116; Ulrichsen 2015: 133). Prior to the uprisings, Bahrain's youths and activists were seen taking full advantage of the anonymity of new social media to call for their

⁴¹ According to Salih (2013: 184), majority of the Arab uprising protests have taken the form of sustained campaigns involving thousands of ordinary citizens using the same techniques of civil resistance: strikes, demonstrations, marches and rallies.

own Day of Rage protests in Manama (Gelvin 2012: 135-136). According to Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, the protesters chose 14 February, a date which held the significance of being a full decade since the National Action Charter was approved. Calling for peaceful protests, the '14 February' youth movement demanded constitutional reform, free elections, investigations into claims of high-level corruption, release of prisoner⁴² and an end to political naturalisation⁴³.

In Manama, at their peak, the demonstrations would have involved about a fifth of Bahrain's half a million people which drove organisers to make the Pearl Square roundabout as their 'camp'. However, in the early hours of 17 February, the kingdom's security apparatus, backed by the Gulf Cooperation Council⁴⁴ stormed the camp and cleared the site. Five people were reportedly killed and while hundreds and more were seriously injured. A few days later, authorities destroyed the roundabout in a failed attempt to suppress the uprising. Whatever the case, the uprising in Bahrain stands out from all the others for two causes. First after regime met the protesters' initial request for reform with fierceness, the uprising took a decidedly anti-monarchy turn. Second, the manner of its suppression marked a new strategy for mounting counterrevolution in the region (Gelvin 2012: 135).

4.4 Major Causes of the Arab Uprisings

While extensive debates and research have evolved around the nature and roots of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, there is a consensus among political analysts

⁴² There were allegations that activists who had been rounded up in recent years had been tortured in jail (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 152).

⁴³ Since majority of Bahrainis are predominantly Shia-Muslims, they demanded an end to the practice of naturalizing Sunni Arabs as citizens to raise the composition of Sunni-Muslims in the population and to expand the predominantly Sunni military and security forces (Gelvin 2012: 136). According to Wehrey, the royal family has eschewed its policies of gerrymandering electoral districts and "sectarianizing" parliament in order to neutralize Shia's power (Wehrey 2013: 117).

⁴⁴ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an organisation made up of six Gulf kingdoms; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain that was formed in 1981 to promote cooperation in cultural, economic and political affairs. Three years after its founding, the council took on a military dimension as well as with the formation of a joint military force known as Peninsula Shield to deter and respond to aggression against any member state (Gelvin 2012: 138).

regarding the combination⁴⁵ of major factors that, when combined created the social and political explosion known as the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. The general causes of the Arab Uprisings reside in decades such as frustration with long authoritarian rule, old political grievances, emerging demographic factors and economic difficulties (Durac 2013: 176-186; Jacqueline and Shereen 2013: 234). Based on previous literatures on the Arab Uprisings, the researcher also could not agree more that there were two crucial factors that caused the mass uprisings - namely economic downturn and political repression as evident in all eight cases of Arab states discussed earlier. Indeed, the repressive and violence nature of the Arab regimes and their suppression of individual rights against a backdrop of on-going corruption and deterioration of the economy have been the major factors leading to the Arab revolts (Salih 2013: 185-186; Saikal and Acharya 2014: 3). All these two factors, to a large extent contributed to the causes of these popular uprisings which led to the collapse of the previous regime in the respective countries. Discussion on the state of economic and political condition of Arab countries prior to the Uprisings can be seen in the following subsections. On the other note, the problems that the Arab citizens faced prior to the uprisings were also occur in Malaysia, although not in the same level as happened in major Arab countries (this matter will be discussed in the next chapter).

4.4.1 Economic Downturn and Unemployment Crisis

Arab economies prior to the 2011 Uprisings, as in the view of Malloch-Brown (2011: 8), are as varied as the region's politics- from poor Yemen to much richer Libya, to very wealthy gulf states and with countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and others being something of a median. Yet, the performances of these economies are as critical to the long term success of the Arab Uprisings as the region's laws. According to Salih (2013: 187), financial pressures and critical unemployment crisis were in the top of every list of catalysts and causes of the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

⁴⁵ As argued by Raymond Hinnebusch (2015: 22), a combination of neoliberal economics and neo-patrimonial regimes were relatively present across North Africa and seen as the underlying causes of the Arab uprising.

Prior to the revolution, the unemployment crisis⁴⁶ in several Middle East and North African states have claimed its victims for decades, mainly among youth and university graduates due to economic instability⁴⁷, high level of corruptions and the culture of cronyism and nepotism in wealth's distributions⁴⁸. During this period, Middle Eastern youth had become increasingly educated and yet remained underemployed or unemployed while national wealth and opportunities were squandered by leaders more interested in power and position (Kamrava 2014: 5). These statements is supported by Malloch-Brown (2011: 8) as he agreed that the causes of the Arab Uprisings lay, in large part, in the absence of jobs and unequal sharing in economic growth across the Arab world. Moreover, the gap between the rich and the poor was so great that it led to the problem of inequality and imbalanced development. For example in Egypt, the total number of the unemployed Egyptian on the eve of the uprising was about 2.5 million, mainly youth aged 20-24 who constituted the main striking force of the revolution (Korotayev & Zinkina 2011: 167). Therefore, the researcher concurs with John Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John Voll (2016: 251) claimed that economic grievances, with unemployment at the forefront, were undoubtedly the strong reason why people took to the streets and serve as the heart of the revolutions.

4.4.2 Political Repression and Autocracy

It is widely known that over the years, the region of Middle East and North Africa used to become home to one of the most repressive, corrupted and autocratic regime in the continent. The closure of political system, coupled with the practise of political repression and violent nature of the Arab regimes were

⁴⁶ According to Kuhn (2012: 661-662), the youth employment crisis posed the most widely publicized challenge to Arab states. It can be further explained by rising rates of university graduation, the result of earlier development progress and states subsidies to education as well as the shift toward longer lives and longer adolescence.

⁴⁷ In Tunisia for instance, the European recession in 2009 has affected the state's economy which led to a decrease in exports and lower expansion in services (Arieff 2012: 34). Furthermore, the Eurozone crisis continued to exacerbate in 2010 which further declined revenues in many North African states which forced the government to closed down both local and foreign businesses as the international credit interest continued.

⁴⁸ Since the mid-1980s, the majority of the Arab economies have been exposed to tremendous pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reform their economies based on the Structural Adjustment Program. Due to the adoption of that program, government subsidies of basic essential commodities were cancelled, government jobs were substantially reduced, and taxation on consumption was increased for citizens while local and foreign investors were granted custom and taxation exemption (Salih 2013: 187).

listed as major factors contributing to the 2011 Arab Uprisings (Durac 2013: 176). Most of the Arab regimes, with the exception of a few, are classified as highly authoritarian systems in which political openness was simply dead in which power is monopolized by the few rather than shared by the many (Salih 2013: 187). Take for instance in Tunisia, among the causes of mass grievances which led to the fall of Ben Ali regime was its brutal ruling nature -with all potential spaces for public expression such as the media, research centres and civil society organisations were controlled and some were closed down during his era (Ayebe 2011: 468). On top of that, the role of security apparatus such local enforcements, police and military forces was undoubtedly excellent in securing Ben Ali regime from any public resistance including from opposition parties (Bishara 2011: 5).

Meanwhile in Egypt, the political system with absolute power of president and centralised administration was believed to have insisted in paving route to hereditary rule when the constitution was amended few times specifically to suit the November 2011 presidential election. These actions were seen to favour and secure Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak in power thus eliminating any chance of free and fair election (Bakr 2012: 65-66). Apart from that, human rights abuses by security forces, plus the extreme corruption by no doubt brought a feeling of frustration, injustice and humiliation among fellow Egyptians. In Syria, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain and Yemen, the scenario of power abuses, corruption at various levels and the autocratic rule of the government were no different if compared to the case of Tunisia and Egypt even those which enjoy a certain degree of political stability. These regimes have confiscated fundamental individual liberties like freedom of the press, freedom of organisation and freedom of expression which had been a factor that provoked the popular Arab Uprisings (Salih 2013: 187-188).

4.5 Post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon: Lessons for Islamist Movements in Malaysia?

There are a number of lessons, both progressive and destructive, that can be learned from the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the Middle East and North Africa. In the words of Francesco Cavatorta (2015: 135), the post-Arab uprisings can simply be concluded as "no democratic change, and yet no

authoritarian continuity". As in the case of Tunisia, a real transition to democracy capable of consolidating has not yet occurred, while in Egypt, the intention to genuinely democratize was never present at the core of the new As-Sisi regime. Furthermore, in Morocco the new reformation of regional decentralisation and strategies of co-operation with 'potentially' rebellious public sector unions have permitted the Monarchy to reassert its pre-eminence on the political system (Ahmed Benchemsi 2012: 57-69 & Cavatorta 2015: 137). However, for most of the North African states, the absence of democratic change does not necessarily equate with the previous fundamental authoritarian nature of the system. The 2011 Tunisian Constituent Assembly Election was perceived as the first free and fair election by international observers, followed by the 2014 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (Carter Center 2011 & 2015). As in Syria, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and Algeria, not much seems to have changed after the Uprisings and this reflects that the 'Arab revolutions' may not have been the 'Middle East-transforming events' that they were initially deemed to be (Cavatorta 2015: 142).

Nonetheless, there are positive aspects to the Uprisings, from the global perspective. In the case of Malaysia the Arab Uprisings can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation to achieve democratic transition. On the other hand, they can also be seen as a crucial reason why political stability, despite having some limitations, is valued over regime change. To balance both arguments, a strong and sufficient body of data needs to be gathered through appropriate research in order to establish official and reliable facts with regard to the Arab Uprisings from the perspective of Islamist movements in Malaysia. Since the Arab Uprisings was considered one of the most significant events in the modern Arab-Muslim world, it is essential to study different views beyond the boundary of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

4.6 Beyond the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon

Undoubtedly, the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon have caused a lot of excitement and eagerness about the prospect of change as well as political transition in the Middle East and North Africa. In each of the states which involved in the popular Arab Uprisings, as previously discussed, the causes of social and political contestation were almost consistently the same such as the narrowing of

political space at the hands of the state and a parallel growth of economic and political grievances. However, it is important to note that the outcomes were different as it depends on how the government react and the state's capacity to use force and violence against those 'revolutionaries' (Kamrava 2014: 5). Although the final destination of the Arab Uprisings is, as of yet quite unclear, the outcome of this phenomenon also, as Paola Rivetti (2015) points out have generated a tremendous amount of scholarly reflections on how politics functions in the Middle East and North Africa, apart from the issues of prospects for democratisation and the new wave of Islamists 'awakening'.

4.6.1 The Changing Nature of Democracy and Political Stability

While far from any fix conclusion, the events of Arab Uprisings onward have relatively made it reasonable to have in faith for a new prospect for Arab world politics (Jacqueline & Shereen 2013: 238). To this extent, the 2011 Arab Uprisings represent a significant historical development in the MENA region as the events initially seemed to promise to usher the region into twenty-first century not via dictatorship but via democracy- the thing which many people thought would never occur (Isakhan, Mansouri and Akbarzadeh 2012: 153). Besides, a recent studies conducted by the researchers based in University of Aberdeen called the 'Arab Transformation Project' found significant percentage of respondents from selected countries which involved in the Arab Uprisings (Egypt, Libya and Morocco) – whereby the respondents were expressing a hope for a new democratic leadership which can reform their government, politics and eventually create economic stability in the post-Arab Uprisings environment⁴⁹.

In reality, the situation in the post-Arab Uprisings can be seen as very fluid and fluctuates between hope and despair which dragged the whole region into qualm and uncertainties. The hopes raised by the Arab Uprisings – for more inclusive politics and more responsive government, for more jobs and fewer presidential cronies carving up the economy – have somehow been dashed with more unexpected tragedy of civil wars, political instability and

⁴⁹ See, 'Arab Transformation Project: Project Structure and Outputs. Available online <http://www.arabtrans.eu/work-packages/project-structure/>

economic disorder as evident in Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Libya⁵⁰. Indeed, some Arab countries (e.g. Tunisia, Bahrain, Morocco) may be seen succeed in restoring peace and stability after the Arab Uprisings, but majority are still struggling to achieve, at least a 'cooling period' after the massive uprising which affecting the vast majority of the citizens. For instance, as pointed out by Lise Storm, there was real change took place in Tunisia, a country where the Arab Uprisings originated. The former dictator, President Ben Ali, who had been in office for decades, was overthrown and replaced with a new president from a political party that had been prohibited under the previous regime. A number of new political parties were established and legalised, and the 2011 and 2014 parliamentary elections were perceived as truly competitive legislative elections which saw nineteen new parties succeed in obtaining seats in parliament (Storm 2014: 182). As in the case of Egypt, post-Mubarak regime has seen a continued struggle. The path of post-Mubarak regime gave rise to power accommodation between Islamist forces and the military-security apparatus, leaving the young activists behind the mass protests of Arab Uprisings partly shut out (Jacqueline & Shereen 2013: 238).

4.6.2 The Rise of Islamist Parties (The 'Islamist Winter')

Although majority of the Arab world populations are predominantly Muslim, Islamism or Islamist actors as argued by Olivier Roy (2012) did not contribute much to the 2011 Arab Uprisings or in the words of Mehran Kamrava, Islam as a force of political mobilisation joined the mass uprisings relatively late in the 'political game'. In Tunisia and Egypt, as Alexis Arieff (2012: 22) points out, Islamists did not play a prominent role in toppling Ben Ali or Mubarak as the main challenge to the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes by the time the revolution began came from the secular intellectuals and worker unions. The absence of a strong Islamist, however is the result of an aggressive attempt by the regimes, dating back a half century, to eliminate Islamists from national politics. The history of political repressive towards Islamists in North Africa, particularly the Tunisia's Ennahda, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and Egypt's Muslim Brothers is crucial to understand why the revolutions were successful in ousting

⁵⁰ The Economist (2016). Politics in the Middle East: The Arab Winter. The Economist January 9th. pp 41-46

Mubarak and Ben Ali without the obvious involvement of the Islamists. If it had been clear that Islamist opposition figures were playing a massive role in the revolutions, most of the regimes would likely have doubled down on repressive measures, an action which could fail the protests (Koplow 2012: 55).

However, as the smoke settled in the aftermath of the revolutionary struggles across the Middle East and North Africa, the political settlement and the transition to democratic institutions featured more pronounced involvement of organised Islamist parties (Al-Arian 2014: 113). In other words, after the 2011 Arab Uprisings managed to oust several regimes, it seemed that Islamists took the great opportunity and 'hijacked' the revolts by securing a number of places and top positions in the newly elected government. This led the development of the post-Arab Uprisings put to the test on the question of whether Islamist movements, and by implication, Islamist parties are compatible with democratic principles (Zollner 2016). According to Stein and Volpi (2014),

“As the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda surged into prominence in Egypt and Tunisia respectively, the star of political Islam seemed to be on an unstoppable rise. The Islah Party, main vehicle of the Brothers in Yemen, moved to centre stage in the wake of president Saleh's departure. The Muslim Brotherhood's less than decisive electoral showing in Libya did not much detract from the overall impression that across the region a new era of Islamism was dawning. Islamism, it suddenly seemed, may not only be compatible with democratisation but could act as a potential catalyst for it in the Arab World”

As Schenker (2015) also points out, by 2013, Islamist governments had come to power in Morocco⁵¹, Egypt⁵² and Tunisia⁵³ whereas Islamist militias had taken hold in Libya which liberated from Muammar Qaddafi's rule, and the secular Syrian revolt had morphed into a rebellion led by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and al-Qaeda. Indeed, the political behaviour of

⁵¹ In Morocco, the November 2011 elections were fought by 30 parties which resulted 18 parties gained seats including the Islamist party; Justice and Development Party (PJD). The PJD won majority of the seats, 107 out of 395 which gave the Islamist largest parliamentary representation (Haynes 2013: 183).

⁵² The 2012 Parliamentary elections in Egypt produced an outcome that clearly favours the Islamists of not only Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, who won more than 40 per cent of the vote, but also the ultra-conservative Salafi party, al-Nour, which surprisingly won more than 20 per cent of the popular vote (Isakhan, Mansouri, and Akbarzadeh 2012: 156).

⁵³ In Tunisia, the Ennahda party experienced an impressive electoral victory at the 23 October 2011 elections for the constituent assembly. As the clear winner of the first free elections, it gained 43 per cent of the popular vote and eighty-nine of the 217 seat assembly (Isakhan, Mansouri, and Akbarzadeh 2012: 156).

Islamist parties is likely appear as a key element in the evolution of post-Arab Uprisings transitions in several Arab states. However, the season of “Islamist Winter”, as pointed by Lise Storm (2014: 189), is much more “in the sense of the freezing of hope, and in some cases even in the sense of a setback for democracy”. For Michael Totten (2012), the “winter” also seemed to come to an end when Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood electoral victory was reversed by a military coup in 2013 while in Tunisia, a democratically elected but widely unpopular Islamist-led coalition ceded power to a more secular government after the 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections. The “spring,” from the perspective of the Middle East, was starting to feel more like a long winter with little prospect for a positive outcome. While many Arabs gestured their clear opposition to collective Islamic-based government, political Islam was ascendant and, many believed, irreversible (Schenker 2015).

4.7 Conclusion and Summary

The objectives of this chapter were to highlight the historical background of two major revolutionary events in the Muslim world – the 1979 Iran’s Revolution and the 2011 Arab Uprisings. It is clear that these two momentous events were significant in the context of global political Islam as the nature and outcome of these events shared several common aspects for instance the elements of popular mass protest to topple an autocratic regime as well as the rise of Islamism or political Islam in the countries involved. This chapter also concluded that economic downturn, unemployment crisis, political repression, autocratic leadership and centralisation of power were the core reasons why the Iranian revolutionaries in 1979 and the Arab protesters in 2011 took to the streets and demanding politics and economic reform as well as an immediate resignation of their respective ruling regime.

Regarding the trajectory of post-Arab Uprisings development, Tunisia seems the only country that managed to ‘survive’ throughout the battle for political transition. In Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya, the situation seems unpredictable, let alone to determine the prospect for democratic transition after the Arab Uprisings. With the escalation of on-going tensions and conflicts involving the pro and anti-regime groups, the Islamists, local tribes and external

powers, the citizens in those few Arab countries mentioned above are very unlikely to experience any political change in the near future.

On the other hand, the positive side of Arab Uprisings can be seen when majority of the previously banned Islamist groups and politicians (e.g. Ennahda in Tunisia) were warmly welcomed to be part of change post-Ben Ali regime. The positive performance of Ennahda in two different elections in Tunisia could potentially serve as an 'eye-opener' for the Islamists in other part of the world (in this case, the Malaysian Islamists) in term of its strategy and effort to convince people on the relevance of political Islam and Islamist movements (this topic will be further discussed in Chapter 7 and 8).

The next chapter will discuss in further details the historical and political background of Malaysia, with specific attention to the emergence of political Islam and several Islamist movements (the case of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH). The connection of these Islamist movements with that of Middle Eastern affairs, specifically with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as well as the influence and impact of the 1979 Iran's Revolution will be explicitly revealed. The next chapter will also highlights the present phenomenon of Malaysia's politics including the background of various popular protests (Bersih) against the ruling regime which happened over the last decades.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN MALAYSIA: THE HISTORY OF PAS, ABIM, ISMA AND AMANAH

“The examination of key political actors and trends in Malaysia suggests that the existence of an oppositional challenge based on Islamism in a Muslim-majority state is likely to tie the government’s hands” – Meredith Weiss, 2004⁵⁴

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the background of Malaysian politics including ‘snapshots’ of the political protests in Malaysia (The Reformasi of 1998 and the series of Bersih protests), the development of political Islam and the emergence of Malaysia’s Islamist movements – the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA) and the National Trust Party (AMANAH). Before examining all the selected cases of Islamist movements in Malaysia, it is vitally important to understand the context and nature in which these movements operate. The following section provides an overview of the emergence of Islamist movements in Malaysia and Malaysia’s political background, starting from its independence in 1957 up to recent developments. The chapter will highlight the historical background, ideology, political approach and connection to global political Islam of selected Islamist movements in Malaysia – the PAS and AMANAH Islamist parties as well as ABIM and ISMA Islamist NGOs. It is essential to review these fundamental aspects of each Islamist movement before investigating and analysing their members’ attitudes towards the development of the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight).

5.2 The Emergence of Islamist Movements in Malaysia

According to Von Der Mehden (1986: 177), Islam in Malaysia has developed in a religious environment significantly different from those Middle Eastern states where it is the faith of the vast majority of the population. It is important to note

⁵⁴ Meredith Weiss is an American professor in comparative politics, focusing on Southeast Asia. She is currently based in State University of New York. See, Weiss, M.L. (2004). The Changing Shape of Islamic Politics in Malaysia. *Journal of East Asian Studies*. 4 (1): 139-173.

that even though Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-religious country, Islam is dominant politically and culturally amongst its adherents and the majority of citizens. Given the growing popularity of Islamic activism across the Muslim world, popular perspectives on the direction of Islam, as represented by alternative voices, caught the attention of Islamists and Islamic movements in Malaysia⁵⁵. In fact, the increasing visibility of Islam in Malaysian politics is driven by the established Islamist opposition party, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). In addition, alternative actors such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups (e.g. ABIM and ISMA) are also increasingly 'weighing in' due to the discursive nature of Islamisation and its politicisation in Malaysia today (Liow 2009: 4-10).

Although the government never acknowledges Malaysia as an 'Islamic state', Islam somehow constitutionally 'enjoys' the privileged status of the official religion of the Federation, while other religions may also be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation (Federal Constitution of Malaysia 2015: Article 3 [1]). According to Yuki Shiozaki (2007: 100), this has an impact on the legitimacy of the Malaysian state from an Islamic viewpoint and on debates about an Islamic state. In addition, recent trends in Malaysian Islamisation are quite striking and a number of political leaders have raised the question (repeated in public discourse) as to whether Malaysia is essentially a secular or Islamic country (Liow 2009). Moreover, along with the recent upheavals that took place in the Middle East and North Africa (which led to the growth of several Arab Islamist parties), these circumstances inevitably caught the attention of many Malaysians (especially Muslims and Islamists) - who considered how these Arab Islamist parties would work in the new spectrum of leadership as well as the prospect for democratic consolidation.

Undoubtedly, the upsurge in local Islamist movements and parties in Malaysia has been an essential force in creating the landscape of current Malay-Muslim politics⁵⁶. One of the reasons for this Islamisation trend, was the

⁵⁵ Since the Islamic revival that swept the Muslim world, including Malaysia, which took place in the 1979s and later in the 1980s, Muslim politics has demonstrated political rivalry between the ruling elite and the Islamists. As in the case of Malaysia - the obvious rivalry was between PAS and UMNO (Mohd Izani Mohd Zain 2014: 37).

⁵⁶ As previously discussed in Chapter Two, please note that the term "Islamist" covers those parties, movements, organisations and individuals who have a religious and clear-cut political

nature of Islamic political discourse which became the focus of many debates between the ruling government and the Islamists as regards influencing the state's policy and decision making process. Furthermore, Von Der Mehden (1986) pointed out that past decades have seen a worldwide resurgence of Islam, which has also not been ignored in Malaysia. Events in Iran and the Middle East have also kindled interest in the new ideas and approaches of the Islamist movement. As acknowledged by Jomo and Cheek (1992: 79):

“The beginning of an Islamic revival was in the early seventies among the young Malaysian Muslims, especially with the first oil shock in 1973. The apparent alliance between PAS, ABIM and Iran's Islamic Revolution in the late seventies drew renewed interest to the phenomenon (of Islamic revivalism) and its implications for the wider Muslim world”.

The apparent increased power of Muslim countries since the 1979 Iranian revolution has reinforced pride in religion (Islam) amongst the majority Malay-Muslims in Malaysia (Mutalib 2008: 27). Since then, the country has witnessed what has come to be known as the “revival” of Islam amongst the Islamists and the Muslim population. With the increased mobility of young Malaysian Muslims, the old-fashioned quality of Islam in Malaysia is being infused and filled with concepts from the outside, particularly from the Arab Muslim world (Von der Mehden 1986: 193). This trend has indirectly led to an Islamic awakening or revivalism in Malaysia which started to emerge through ethnic Malays⁵⁷ (as the majority Muslims in Malaysia) and Islamist political parties and organisations.

Historically, as identified by Suzalie Mohamad Antang (2007), there were two Islamist movements that have shaped Islamic political discourse in Malaysia. The first movement in the 1920s and 30s was The Young Faction which is also known in Malay as the ‘Kaum Muda’⁵⁸. The vast majority of its members received religious education in the Middle East and were instilled with

agenda (e.g. PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH), whereas the term “Islamic” refers to those with a religious interest but apolitical outlook (e.g. Jama'a at-Tabligh).

⁵⁷ Malays are constitutionally required to be Muslims. The constitutional definition of the relationship between Malays and Islam was allocated in Article 160 (2) of the Constitution stating that a Malay “professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to the Malay custom”. In other words, all Malays in Malaysia are Muslims by birth. For one to understand the relationship between Islam and the racial-political setting in Malaysia the Malay-Muslim community should be analysed according to the above pretext.

⁵⁸ For more on the history of the Young Faction, see Mohammad Redzuan Othman & Abu Hanifah Haris (2015) The Role of Egyptian Influences on the Religious Dynamics and the Idea of Progress of Malaya's Kaum Muda (Young Faction) Before the Second World War. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42 (4): 465-480.

the spirit of 'Pan-Islamism' advocated by prominent Muslim reformers such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1839-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935). Due to these transnational interactions, references to and translations of text written by these Muslim reformers were disseminated for the first time in the Malay world. This led to the influence of new streams of thought amongst the Islamists which further encouraged the local Malay nationalists and leftists to struggle against colonialism.

The second movement was composed of Muslim youths mainly from the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Society for Islamic Reform of Malaysia (JIM) and the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM). They received conventional education, both from local and overseas institutions, but with strong influences from the 1970s and 80s global Islamic resurgence. These groups were trying to influence local politics by promoting "Islam as the way of life" by calling for an all-encompassing Islamic macro and micro-order of state and society in Malaysia (Müller 2014: 16). For Müller, the emergence of a new generation of Muslim students during this period became a crucial agent of change within the Malaysian political landscape, as they introduced a previously unseen and intense emphasis on Islamist ideologies. Müller's claim was supported by Suzalie's accounts that since the first election in post-independence Malaysia, Islamic political discourse was oriented towards the identity of Malaysian Muslims who recognised themselves within Islam and were prepared to place religion as a reference point in all socio-economic and political affairs within their community⁵⁹. However, this orientation has gradually changed to cover a wide range of domestic as well as global Islamic issues, such as: the status of Malaysia as an Islamic state; the role of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy; debate on Sharia law; and consideration of external humanitarian conflicts such as the Middle East and Palestinian issues, Afghan War and the Balkans' civil conflict.

⁵⁹ According to Erica Miller (2006: 23), after PAS achieved only one parliamentary seat in the first federal elections in July 1955, PAS' leaders concentrated their attention on creating a more robust organisational structure, expanding the geographic reach of the party, increasing the number of members, exploiting new means of disseminating the party's message and better integrating ulama into the largely professional party.

Islamist movements in Malaysia nowadays have changed in line with the development of global Islamic resurgence⁶⁰. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the pattern of increased Islamist involvement in political life continued in Malaysia over the following years. However, the expansion of the Islamist movement is no longer reliant on PAS and ABIM developments - as a result of new movements and parties that were formed in the 1990s and 2000s. These include the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA), the IKRAM organisation (former Jemaah Islah Malaysia) and the new 'progressive' Muslim party - the National Trust Party (AMANAH). All of these are very politically committed in order to gain support within the Muslim population as well as from the non-Muslims in Malaysia. Although their movements might be diverse in terms of ideology, political approach and political activism, these new actors within the Islamist movement and Muslim organisations in Malaysia have made a great contribution to the dynamic of Islamic political discourse.

The next section will discuss in further detail the selected cases of Islamist movements in Malaysia – (1) the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS); (2) the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM); (3) the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA); and (4) the National Trust Party (AMANAH). There will be a focus upon their ideology and organisational structure and then consideration of the influence of the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution on the movements, as well as the nature of transnational relations with global Islamist movements, specifically regarding affiliation with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

5.2.1 Historical Background and Development of Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

5.2.1.1 Introduction

The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), also known in Malay as Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, is a particularly insightful example of the complexity, cultural creativity and diversification of contemporary Islamist movements in the 21st century Muslim world (Müller 2014: 5). For nearly six decades, the party has been

⁶⁰ For more details on the crucial events during the global Islamic resurgence, please see Durac, Vincent & Cavatorta, Francesco. (2015). *Politics and Governance in the Middle East*. London: Palgrave. pp. 136-153.

prominent in the Malaysian political arena. It was officially established prior to Malaysian independence on November 24th 1951. Since its establishment, the party has dominated the discourse on political Islam in the country (Wan Jan 2017: 1). Its current membership is unofficially estimated at around 800,000 making it among the largest and strongest opposition party in Malaysia. According to Mohd Izani Mohd Zain (2014: 39), PAS is the only opposition party that has remained in political rivalry in Malaysia since the first general election in 1955. Politically sophisticated, PAS has evolved to meet new challenges and excelled in playing the “democratic game”. It has done this not by winning overwhelming electoral victories, but by remaining a viable political force for over fifty-five years despite the challenges posed to opposition parties by Malaysia’s semi-democratic system (Miller 2006: 83).

5.2.1.2 Ideology

Broadly speaking, Islamist movements vary in terms of the different ways in which they achieve their objectives and strategic goals (Bayat 2013: 5). As an ideological party, PAS believes strongly in Islam or political Islam as its basis and doctrine and in this way the party differentiates itself from other non-Islamic oriented parties in Malaysia. PAS leaders have often stressed that Islam is not only about ritual, prayer and worshipping Allah – the religion should be perceived as a way of life (Mohamed 1990).

The writing by Nasharudin Mat Isa (2001) - a former Secretary General of PAS - further explained that within the party, any (political) action or decision must be justified against the doctrine of Islam. Any response to any political changes must also be viewed and studied from and within the Islamic perspective, guided by the strong and deep-rooted PAS Islamic Council of Ulama. PAS is of the view that the life of human beings, especially the Muslim Ummah themselves, will be valuable only if utilised for the ‘service’ of Allah, society and state in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. For PAS, Islam is not merely a system of beliefs and dogmas to which to strictly adhere, but also a programme for action with a definite purpose and an objective for all Muslims. Thus, since its formation, PAS has seen Islam as an embodiment of every principle of life - be it politics, economics or social matters (Mat Isa 2001: 8).

Apart from the political agenda, PAS also considers the party as 'Harakah Islamiyyah' (an Islamist movement which stresses Islamic preaching); the propagation of ad-Da'wah al Islamiyah or the call for Islam has become part and parcel of its main activities. In this respect and in accord with the aim of establishing an Islamic State, PAS also considers itself as an Islamist movement and party that represents the Muslim community in Malaysia. In this respect PAS also works hand in hand with other Islamist movements in the country for the sake of a common goal - to preach on the road towards Islam (Mat Isa 2001: 10).

5.2.1.3 Leadership and Organisational Structure

According to Mohammad Nor Monutty (1990: 114), the PAS leadership is mainly controlled by religiously oriented figures, as well as a significant number of Malay-Muslim intellectuals and professionals. However, the recent selection of the 2015 PAS Central Executive Committee (CEC) has seemed to alter the composition of PAS committees (the balance between religious and professional members). Primarily 'pious individuals' were selected by party members, leaving the 'progressive camp' otherwise known as the professional group (members whose professions and academic backgrounds were mainly based in fields of non-Arabic Islamic studies) deeply frustrated. Monutty further explained that since the presidency of Mohamad Asri Muda (de facto President from 1964-1969 and President from 1969-1983), PAS has witnessed the growing power of the Muslim cleric or ulama as the highest authority in party policies through the effective role of the Council of Syura⁶¹. Thus, it makes sense that Abdul Hadi (current President of PAS and Muslim cleric) has managed to successfully maintain his position since 2002 despite being hampered by scores of controversial issues and internal conflicts within the party.

In terms of party structure, there are three wings in the PAS organisational hierarchy: 1) the Religious Scholars' Wing; 2) the Youth Wing; and 3) the Women's Wing. A fourth wing, the PAS Non-Muslim Supporters'

⁶¹ The highest and most powerful institution within PAS is the Syura Council, a consultative guidance committee comprising the party's leading religious scholars. Its main function is to control the policies of PAS and to ensure that they are in line with the principal of Islam (Müller 2014: 49).

Wing, was launched in 2010, but does not receive the same status as the other wings. PAS is structured in four organisational layers: (1) national; (2) state; (3) district branch; and (4) sub-district branch. At each organisational layer, PAS maintains the Central Executive Committee which execute PAS policies. It is headed by PAS president and other committees run their specific portfolios under designated bureaus and departments (Müller 2014: 46).

5.2.1.4 PAS and the Connection with Global Islamist Movements

The relationship of PAS with other global Islamist Movements is, for example, reflected by the role of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in shaping and influencing the party's ideology and activism. Amongst PAS members, the Muslim Brotherhood is often regarded as one of the most important political organisations in the Arab Muslim world. In Wan Saiful Wan Jan's opinion (as reported by Aljazeera), PAS is also held up by the Muslim Brotherhood as a model of a successful Islamist party that can win elections and rule⁶². In fact, PAS is often invited by the Muslim Brotherhood to speak in foreign countries about its experiences. For instance in 2005, the current President of PAS, Abdul Hadi Awang, was invited by the Brotherhood members to speak alongside renowned Islamic scholars including Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (one of the world's most influential Muslim clerics and supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood).

PAS also maintains well-established contacts and an international agenda through links with other Muslim Brotherhood affiliations and Islamist parties such as: the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt; the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan; Hamas in Gaza; The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia; Jamaat e-Islami in Pakistan; the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria; the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco; and Ennahda in Tunisia. Several PAS official events, such as the General Assembly, have included members from these movements as overseas 'VIP' guests.

⁶² Chew, Amy (2013) The rising force in Malaysia's opposition: The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party is gaining the upper hand within the coalition headed by Anwar Ibrahim. Aljazeera. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/201321092433869462.html> [16 October 2015].

5.2.2 Historical Background and Development of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)

5.2.2.1 Introduction

The most prominent, influential, and widely studied Islamist civil society movement in Malaysia, after PAS, is Malaysia's Muslim Youth Movement or in Malay "Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia" (ABIM). This popular movement is possibly the largest and most organised NGO and civil society movement in Malaysia and was officially formed in August 1971. It was first established by youth organisations, in particular university students throughout the country⁶³. From its founding in 1971, ABIM steadily rose in the ranks of Malaysia's socio-political arena as a popular and influential youth movement for the Malaysian Muslim majority (Abdul Malek 2011).

According to Liow (2009: 115), the arrival of ABIM on the Malaysian political landscape was profoundly significant, as it signalled the beginning of a shift in the pattern of Malay-Muslim politics. Throughout the 1970's ABIM proved dominant amongst the educated Malay-Muslim population, which found itself caught up in the throes of a global Islamic revival. The movement grew rapidly with branches spreading across the nation (Bahari and Saat 2014: 14-17). As an Islamist civil society organisation, ABIM often acts as a 'check and balance' entity to the ruling government. The group often debated and challenged the state on key issues such as the character of an Islamic state and leadership, education and the Islamic way of life, as well as Malaysia's involvement in international politics as part of global Muslim solidarity (Saliha Hassan 2003: 105).

⁶³ According to Zulkifly Abdul Malek, in 1969, a group of graduating Malay Muslim students from the University of Malaya gathered to ponder post-university life. The group consisted of high ranking members of the National Association of Muslim Students Malaysia - commonly known in Malay as Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM) - and they were apprehensive about their future. As student activists, they were prominently identified as the prime mobilisers of an "Islamisation effort" on campus and beyond, with the goal of reviving Islam as a way of life. Graduation would effectively put an end to the momentum they had built, as they had no means by which to continue their activities as post-graduates. Yet they believed that their noble mission was far from over. A member and leader of the group, Anwar Ibrahim, eventually suggested that they form a new Islamic civil society movement for university graduates and the idea for the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) finally crystallised (Abdul Malek 2011).

5.2.2.2 ABIM's Ideology and the Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood

Since its establishment, ABIM via its former President (Ahmad Azzam), has considered the ideology, approach and activism of the movement to be in line with the principle of Harakah Islamiyyah, which distinguishes them from other apolitical Islamic movements in Malaysia for instance the Jama'a at-Tabligh Malaysia⁶⁴. Observers such as John Funston (1985) and Zulkifly Abdul Malek (2011) suggest that the ideology of ABIM is greatly influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. This statement was also supported by Monutty (1989) and Ahmad Azzam (2016) who stated that ABIM officials learned from and referred to literature written by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt as a source of their early Islamic activism. Moreover, ABIM's primary source of influence draws from the ideas and experience of Hasan Al-Banna, the famed Egyptian scholar who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 (Abdul Malek 2011; Mohd Rumaizuddin 2003). In addition, Funston also points out that ABIM takes seriously the bonds with the international Muslim Brotherhood, asserting that the role of Islam in Malaysia cannot be separated from the fate of Muslims throughout the world (Funston 1985: 172).

As a result of Muslim Brotherhood ideological influences, ABIM's philosophy in Malaysia appears to be distinct in a sense that it mixes socialism and capitalism, but this is done within a distinctively Islamic framework (Abdul Malik 2011: 37). The motto of ABIM is "striving towards building a society which is based on the principles of Islam" and presenting Islam as ad-din (a way of life). ABIM's constitution reveals the idealism of its leadership in reforming the mind and spirit of Muslim society through every possible means (Monutty 1989: 76-77). Some of its major objectives include the establishment and propagation of Islamic beliefs and principles (as enshrined in the Quran and Hadith) as well as the mobilisation of Muslim youth. Since its establishment, ABIM has received tremendous support from the majority of Muslim students in Malaysian universities. According to Rahman and Nurullah (2012: 106), ABIM has several core objectives which are derived from its main ideology:

⁶⁴ Fieldwork at the "Seminar on the Future of Islamic Awakening", in Conjunction with ABIM's 45th Annual Meeting. Shah Alam, Malaysia. 29 October 2016. The statements were originally recorded from Ahmad Azzam's presentation on the 'Lessons from Global Islamist Movements' Experiences' at the event.

- i. To increase the religious activity among people in Malaysia and its neighbourhood;
- ii. To struggle for the establishment of a Muslim society, which adopts a way of life based on the principles of Islam;
- iii. To form a faithful group of human beings who have a strong commitment to the Islamic struggle;
- iv. To bring about the consciousness of Islam in the society through publications, religious talks, forums, seminars, etc.;
- v. To nurture the Islamic mission within the organisation in the country and abroad.

As a long-term objective, ABIM is believed to be committed to the establishment of a democratic Muslim state in Malaysia which highlights the importance of integrity, is corruption free and has good governance. ABIM leaders also acknowledge the benefits of political power in speeding the agenda of Islamisation in the country⁶⁵.

5.2.2.3 Leadership and Organisational Structure

ABIM's organisational structure can be classified as formal since it is officially registered with the government's Registrar of Society. Within ABIM, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), led by the president, followed by deputy president, two vice presidents, secretary general, treasurer and several other chief representatives in specific bureaus constitutes the highest body in articulating and implementing the policies and activities of the movement. The CEC is itself responsible to the Council of Syura and the General Assembly. The Council of Syura is empowered to nominate ABIM's leadership including the CEC. The Council also has liberty to give opinions to ABIM leadership at all levels.

In terms of ABIM's general policies, the Council can determine the policies, strategies and activities of the movement and then evaluate them from time to time. It is also worth mentioning that the leading role in ABIM's early years was taken by Anwar Ibrahim, a former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1993 to 1998. Many observers have called him a popular and charismatic

⁶⁵ Personal interview with ABIM senior member, Mohamad Mazuki Ariffin, London, December 2015.

leader who boosted the image of ABIM as a truly Islamist civil society movement. The members of ABIM come from many different walks of life. University students (local and overseas), lecturers in higher education institutions, teachers in primary and secondary schools, civil servants and other professionals such as doctors and lawyers constitute the bulk of ABIM members. Over the last few decades, it has been estimated that ABIM has recruited approximately fifty thousand members and it has more than 150 branches, including overseas branches in the United Kingdom, United States, Egypt, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand (Monutty 1989: 88-97).

5.2.2.4 ABIM and Its Involvement in Malay-Muslim Politics

The resurgence of ABIM political activism extended to its increasingly vocal defence of Malay-Muslim primacy in the wake of activism by non-Muslim groups which sought to question the supremacy of Islam in Malaysia's legal and political constellations (Liow 2009: 117). Although initially ABIM specifically forbade its members from participating in political activities so as to remain a non-partisan movement, this changed when its former president joined UMNO in 1982, followed by a vast majority of its members who became PAS sympathisers (Weiss 200: 151). For John Funston, the stress on Islam as "the way of life" makes ABIM the most directly political of all Islamic civil society groups in Malaysia at that time. This politicisation is expressed particularly in calls for the introduction of Islamic legal, educational and economic systems and for economic reform that would end corruption and the misuse of power and guarantee basic political freedom. Indeed, the two major issues that were politically touched upon by ABIM were corruption and the lack of political freedom. ABIM leaders continued to allege that corruption amongst Malaysia's top political leaders remained one of the most profound problems facing society and one which undermined the economic and political stability of the country (Funston 1985: 172).

As pointed out by Liow, ABIM was for a time regarded as the youth wing of PAS and some of its members even openly campaigned for the party in the 1978 and 1999 elections. According to Ahmad Azzam (2003: 5), the severe political crisis between the former Malaysian Prime Minister (Mahathir Mohamad) and his Deputy Prime Minister (Anwar Ibrahim) led ABIM to launch

the 'Reformation Movement' on September 6 1998 as a response to Anwar Ibrahim's demotion. Consequently, three of ABIM's top ranked leaders (including their President) were detained by the regime authority and charged under the Internal Security Act (ISA). This incident marked a turning point in ABIM's history as it openly chose a confrontational political approach against the regime. As ABIM introduced modern reforms in political strategy, it managed to get support from Malaysian Muslims and introduced the 'Islamic economy' as an alternative to capitalism and socialism.

Several former leaders of ABIM are now prominent politicians in Malaysia, including former Deputy Prime Minister and current People's Justice Party (PKR) leader Anwar Ibrahim, as well as former PAS President, the late Fadzil Noor (1937-2002). Against the backdrop of a determinedly 'secular government' (led by UMNO and BN) and an increasingly Islamist opposition political party (PAS), ABIM sought to fill a gap by providing an avenue for the expression of Islamic ideals amongst Malaysian Muslims. Globally speaking, ABIM also managed to enhance its international recognition by maintaining excellent relations with Islamic countries all over the world - both Sunni and Shiite blocs. Domestically, ABIM became one of the most significant religious and political pressure groups – this indirectly meant that their members and leaders were seen as Islamists (Liow 2013).

5.2.3 Historical Background and Development of the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)

5.2.3.1 Introduction

The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front or Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA) is an Islamist non-governmental organisation (NGO). According to the CIA World Fact Book, ISMA is considered a political pressure group along with the Bersih movement. It was first established in 1997 under the banner of Malaysian Muslim Students Solidarity (Ikatan Siswazah Muslim Malaysia), which was changed to the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front in 2005. As with ABIM's activism, ISMA is also mainly involved in Islamic propagation activities - particularly focusing on the ethnic Malay and Muslim populations in Malaysia based on their slogan (in Malay), "Melayu Sepakat, Islam Berdaulat" which

literally means "Malay Consensus, Islam Sovereign". As the popularity of ISMA spread, aided by controversial issues and speeches made by its leader⁶⁶, the movement increased its membership. It has more than 23 branches nationwide and 9 international branches located in Egypt, Jordan, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, India, South Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States⁶⁷. Most of these global branches are organised and maintained by Malaysian university students studying overseas.

5.2.3.2 Ideology

In terms of stated objectives and ideology, ISMA does not differ much compared to ABIM, as its ultimate vision and goal is to make Islam the 'ultimate way of life' for the Muslim population in Malaysia. However, ISMA's views on issues involving non-Muslim affairs often led this movement to become trapped into radicalism, absolutism and extremism. ISMA is also perceived to hold an exclusivist view when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim politicians, believing that major policy decisions affecting Islam — be it at party or government levels — must be mainly, if not solely, in the hands of Muslims. The movement was also once labelled by the media and journalists as a new far-right Malay-Muslim group⁶⁸. ISMA has repeatedly courted controversy with statements critical of the country's non-Malay and non-Muslim communities, as part of its professed defence of Islam against a multitude of 'perceived threats'.

As reported by the Malay Mail, in July 2014, Abdullah Zaik, the ISMA President was charged under the Sedition Act for his remarks calling the Chinese community in Malaysia "intruders" and labelling their arrival in pre-Independence Malaysia - a "mistake" that must be rectified. Earlier in February 2014, ISMA vice-president Muhammad Fauzi Asmuni was also investigated under the Sedition Act after he was reported as calling on Muslims nationwide to be aggressive when defending Islam. The critical views of ISMA, as well as

⁶⁶ See, for example Murad, Dina. (2014). Abdullah Zaik: The Man Behind ISMA. The Stars. Available online at <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/05/22/abdullah-zaik-man-behind-isma/> [13 June 2015].

⁶⁷ Ikatan Muslim Malaysia (The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front) official website. Available online at <http://isma.org.my/v2/> [13 June 2015].

⁶⁸ See, for example: 1) Tan, Julian. (2014). A Malaysian Neo-Nazism? Available online at http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/julian-tan/a-malaysian-neonazism_b_5300721.html [11 January 2015] 2) Weng, Hew Wai. (2016). A rise in anti-Chinese rhetoric. Available online at <http://www.newmandala.org/rise-anti-chinese-politics-malaysia-indonesia/> [27 November 2016]

their anachronistically xenophobic and ethnocentric worldview on issues involving the interests of Malaysian and worldwide Muslims, have often placed this Islamist civil society movement in line with other far-right Malay-Muslim groups in the country (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd Razali 2016).

5.2.3.3 Leadership and Organisational Structure

Unlike PAS and ABIM, ISMA does not have any strong and influential Syura Council which serves as a 'supreme advisor' or 'spiritual leader' within the organisation. Although the Ulama body (Majlis Ulama ISMA) exists within the movement, its role can be regarded as rather less formal. Basically, ISMA is organised through a small executive body which runs the movement's activities and policies. Apart from the Islamic educated members, ISMA's membership consists largely of professionals including wealthy businessmen, academics, doctors, engineers and scientists along with a strong student cohort which makes up its largest support base⁶⁹.

5.2.3.4 ISMA and Its Connection with Global Islamist Movements

ISMA traces its foundation to guidance given by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) activists to Malay-Muslim student groups overseas. This took place directly in Egypt and indirectly in the United Kingdom via members of the MB British diaspora. Links cemented with MB are understood to have had an electrifying effect on Malay-Muslim students who were determined to translate their idealism into practice upon their eventual return to Malaysia (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd Razali 2016). While ISMA may appear to be just another Islamist movement inspired by the Brotherhood, it is radically different because it aggressively promotes its affiliation and loyalty to the Brotherhood in Egypt (Abdul Malek 2011: 72-73). For instance, in February 2010, ISMA organised a convention to discuss the thoughts of Hassan Al-Banna; this was perceived as the first official convention on Al-Banna ever organised in Malaysia. Moreover, Mohd Syafiq (an ISMA activist) acknowledges that:

“The ISMA office has various books related to Ikhwanul Muslimin (The Muslim Brotherhood). Although the relationship with Ikhwan is not clear on the surface, we do have a connection emotionally”.

⁶⁹ Personal interview with Amar Yasier, London, June 2016.

According to Amar Yasier, a registered and active member of ISMA since 2006, there was an indirect 'competition' amongst Islamist movements in Malaysia in terms of expressing their support for (and recognition of the influence from) the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood⁷⁰. During the 2010 Egyptian Parliamentary Election, ISMA released an official statement about the Muslim Brotherhood's involvement in the polls and how the whole electoral process was a fraud, which led the Brotherhood to boycott the second round of voting (Abdul Malek 2011). Interestingly, it was also testified that ISMA's President, Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman, even formally congratulated Dr. Muhammad Badie Abdul Majid Sami on his appointment as the eighth Supreme Guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Since ISMA's members were mostly educated in the field of religious studies (Arab and Islamic studies) in Egypt, particularly at Cairo and Al-Azhar Universities, admiration for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood seemed inevitable which led to the infusion of Al-Banna's and Sayid Qutb's thoughts into the movement. ISMA also justifies its political agenda by referring to the original thoughts of Hassan al-Banna, in particular his idea of integral nationalism (an Islamic version of nationalism which stresses the important position of Islam (religion) and Muslims (citizens) in the country). Al-Banna's 'Arab nationalism' idea was made the basis of ISMA's embrace of Malay nationalism, and applied on the grounds of their Islamic activism (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd Razali 2016). Speaking about the relationship with other Islamist movements, Abdullah Zaik, the President mentions that⁷¹:

"We have a good relationship and practise an open policy with all (legal) Islamist movements and parties, whether in the direction of Salafi, moderate and so on. For instance, ISMA may not be that close to the Ennahda in Tunisia, but I am personally close to Ghannouchi and I know him well, from the outcome of several series of meetings".

5.2.3.5 The Involvement of ISMA in Malaysia's Domestic Politics

In 2013, ISMA entered the Malaysian electoral skirmish by contesting seven parliamentary and two state seats in the thirteenth general election. However,

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Personal interview with the ISMA President, Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

ISMA declared that it was not a full political party and still an Islamist NGO while participating in the election. The involvement of its members as electoral candidates was based on the ticket of the newly rebranded Islamic Congregation Front of Malaysia Party or in Malay 'Parti Barisan Jemaah Islamiyyah se-Malaysia' (BERJASA). However, none of the candidates secured any parliamentary seats, although the movement claimed that people supporting their motives for joining the general election. ISMA claimed that its first ever participation in electoral politics was intended to reassert and strengthen Malay and Muslim political dominance in 'affected' areas where the position of Islam had somehow faded.

Although ISMA maintains its distinctiveness as an Islamist NGO within the spectrum of Malaysia's Islamism by adopting electoral politics, it continues to disavow pluralist politics which might not be appropriate for political success in the context of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Malaysia. This peculiar practice is somehow based upon its ethnocentric worldview which sees the supremacy of Islam and the interest of the Muslim community in Malaysia as the movement's highest priority in terms of its operational base and political activism (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd Razali 2016).

5.2.4 Historical Background and Development of the National Trust Party (AMANAH)

5.2.4.1 Introduction

The National Trust Party, commonly and officially known in Malay as Parti Amanah Negara or "AMANAH", is a newly-registered Islamist political party promoting the approach of moderate and progressive political Islam. The party was originally founded as the Malaysia Workers' Party before being handed over in August 2015 to a group of Islamists who were previously members of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). As reported by the party's official website (as well as by mainstream media in Malaysia), due to internal conflict within PAS and the split between the professional and conservative groups, along with the frustration of not being re-elected as the party's executive committee, the group led by former PAS Deputy President, Mohamad Sabu, finally decided to leave PAS - leaving the latter to be a party mainly dominated

by conservative Islamists. This group who claimed themselves as 'progressive and professional' Islamists then officially redefined the Malaysia Worker's Party as a newly Islamist democratic party on the 16th September 2015. This scenario was also confirmed by Damien Kingsbury (2017: 75), a prominent Australian professor of Southeast Asian politics who stated that:

“Following the removal of moderates from the party in 2015 in response to discontent over the party’s increasingly hardline position, thousands of moderates and progressive PAS members split from the party to form the National Trust Party (Parti Amanah Negara or AMANAH), which was previously the leftist National Workers’ Party”.

According to Wan Saiful Wan Jan (2017: 3), the main reason for the internal split within PAS was due to a long standing ideological battle between the progressive and conservative factions. He describes the situation as follows:

“Being the oldest and biggest political party that publicly champions the creation of an Islamic state in Malaysia, PAS is the natural home for activists and political actors interested in advocating political Islamism through a party platform. Consequently, PAS members consist of people from diverse backgrounds, worldviews and ideologies. These groups compete to bring their ideas to the fore in the party by forming factions internally. Most of the time, the internal rivalries occur silently and behind the scenes. Only sometimes do they surface publicly. In the latest crisis, PAS leaders failed to manage long-standing ideological differences, especially between the two main factions in the party — the conservatives and the progressives. This eventually led to the progressive faction leaving PAS to form AMANAH”.

The conservative faction in PAS has been commonly labelled the “ulama or religious scholars camp” – although there are also members who are not religiously educated. The Islamists within this camp generally adhere to a conservative interpretation of how Islam should be applied to public policy especially on the issues of implementing sharia – which often leads to the practise of exclusivity towards non-Muslims. The progressive faction on the other hand is widely known as the “professional camp” - implying that they come from professional and non-religious backgrounds (e.g. doctors, engineers, lawyers etc.). Leaders and members within this camp emphasise good governance, inclusivity towards non-Muslims and human rights, instead of being narrowly focused on the immediate implementation of sharia. They acknowledge that it is necessary to respect all views regardless of whether they

come from Muslims or non-Muslims and that all these ideas need to be negotiated within a liberal democratic framework (Wan Jan 2017: 4-5).

According to Muhammad Najib, the party currently has six elected Members of Parliament (previously PAS MPs) and receives support from approximately 20,000 members throughout the country. The involvement of other Islamist civil society organisations like IKRAM Malaysia (formerly known as Jemaah Islah Malaysia - JIM) is also known to provide massive support to this new brand of Malaysian Islamist party⁷².

5.2.4.2 Ideology

The party's main ideology, as stated by its President, Mohamad Sabu, reflects progressive and moderate political Islam, which emphasises the importance of openness, tolerance and inclusiveness in all layers of society and amongst the multi-religious citizens in Malaysia - as long as Islam is respected as the party's core value. The party acknowledges that it is necessary to respect all views regardless of religion and that there is a need to negotiate different political ideas and approaches within a liberal democratic framework (Wan Saiful Wan Jan 2017: 4-5).

Although the efforts to attract more non-Muslim supporters seems pragmatic, the party managed to differentiate itself from PAS in terms of reform and renewal (islah and tajdid), or at least by trying to adopt the idea of neo-Islamism, since the ultimate goal of the party is no longer focused on the issue of sharia law or the creation of an Islamic state⁷³. Leaders within AMANAH have stressed that defence of basic civil liberties and political rights in a multicultural and multi-religious country is the new party's top priority. As the party's strategy director, Dzulkefly Ahmad (2016) points out:

“AMANAH affirms our commitment to establish Islam as the basis of human well-being and good governance in a civil state instead of advocating Islamic Criminal Law (*Hudud*) and the other punitive aspects of Islam. Where narrow nationalism divides, Islam unites. Where religious bigotry excludes and decriminalises, Islam embraces and

⁷² Personal interview with the AMANAH National Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016.

⁷³ See Chapter Three for a discussion on Islamism, post-Islamism and neo-Islamism.

enriches. Where corruption wounds and destroys, Islam heals and redeems. Where tyranny represses, Islam liberates”.

According to the party’s official website, the purpose of its establishment as a new Islamist party in Malaysia can be summarised as follows:

- i. To uphold Islam as the basis for the party’s struggle;
- ii. To establish a state and civil society in line with the principal of “Islam is a blessing for all” (Islam Rahmatan Lil’ Alamin);
- iii. To implement a rule based on good governance in line with the principles of trust, fairness, impartiality, competence and transparency;
- iv. To support the approach of moderation, openness and democracy and to operate within the framework of democracy guided by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia;
- v. To mobilise all segments of citizens in an inclusive political struggle no matter what races, cultures and beliefs are throughout the Federation.

5.2.4.3 Leadership and Organisational Structure

Unlike the other Islamist movements being studied (PAS, ABIM and ISMA), AMANAH’s organisational structure is slightly different as the party (at the time this thesis was being written) does not have any official Syura or Ulama council to serve as an ‘absolute or supreme religious advisor’ to the party. However, the party decided to retain a position for a general advisor and this is now held by the former president of the Malaysian Ulama Society (1981 to 1999), Ahmad Awang. The party leadership consists of ten executive committees which run the party’s activities and programmes and are led by its President, Mohamad Sabu. As a new contender in the Malaysian ‘political game’, the National Trust Party appears to be a rival for PAS and UMNO and is gaining support from the Muslim population.

5.2.4.4 AMANAH and Its Connection with Global Islamist Movements

In terms of the connections between AMANAH and other Islamist movements in the Middle East and the Arab world, Muhammad Najib (an Amanah youth leader) claims that the party has recently established a progressive relationship with Ennahda in Tunisia and AKP in Turkey. PAS, ABIM and ISMA were infused

with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's ideas on Harakah Islamiyyah – however, as a new Islamist party, AMANAH seems to be trying not to emulate any foreign model of political Islamism – as it aims to establish its own model of modern political Islam in Malaysia. According to Najib⁷⁴:

“AMANAH builds relationships with all (overseas) Islamist movements, with Ennahda in Tunisia, AKP in Turkey and various others. But AMANAH does not reach the point of making their approaches the sole source of our guidance. During the founding of AMANAH, it is true that we tried to think of a model that we were going to use. We also tried to learn some lessons. We take all these great things about the Islamist movements and at the same time we try not to imitate their approach 100 percent. So, finally AMANAH decides to establish an Islamist party in Malaysia with our own mould”.

5.3 Malaysia as a Modern Nation State: An Overview

To begin with some of the fundamental facts about Malaysia - its formation as a modern nation-state can be traced back to 1957 when the Federation of Malaya gained its independence from the former British Empire after being colonised for nearly 134 years (1824-1957). Eight years later, in 1963, this newly independent state in Southeast Asia became the Federation of Malaysia⁷⁵ with the participation of Singapore and the Sabah and Sarawak states of Borneo. However, Singapore later separated and became an independent republic in 1965 due to political conflicts with the ruling government of Malaysia. Geographically located in South-eastern Asia, the peninsula part of Malaysia borders with Thailand and Singapore, while east Malaysia (comprising the northern one-third of the island of Borneo) borders with Indonesia, Brunei, the South China Sea and the south of Vietnam.

Malaysia is considered a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Political scholars and observers note that Malaysian societies are not a single monolithic mass of people (homogenous). They are, instead, complex societies consisting of different ideologies, lifestyles and identities – including different ethnic, religious and cultural identities – with competing interests and objectives. The

⁷⁴ Personal interview with the AMANAH National Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016.

⁷⁵ The Government of Malaysia refers to the Federal Government of 13 states operating within a constitutional monarchy under the Westminster parliamentary system. Source: The Economist (2015) Political Structure – The Economist Intelligence Unit. Available at [http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1931551577 &Country=Malaysia&topic](http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1931551577&Country=Malaysia&topic). [12 June 2015].

country's population is estimated at approximately 22 million people consisting of various ethnic groups such as the Malay (50.1%), Chinese (22.6%), local indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak - also referred to as Bumiputera, which means 'sons of the soil' (11.8%), Indian (6.7%) and other non-citizens (8.9%)⁷⁶. Meanwhile, the religious population of Malaysia is represented by Muslims (61.3%), Buddhists (19.8%), Christians (9.2%), Hindus (6.3%), along with those following Confucianism, Taoism and other traditional Chinese religions (1.3%) and other unspecified religions (2.2%).

Since independence, the country has undergone tremendous transformation; from once being a rural backwater change has taken place following several decades of urbanisation and industrialisation. Malaysia is now one of the ten largest economies in Asia and it has joined the ranks of the original "Asian tigers". Undoubtedly, its track record of development and steady economic growth has made the Malaysian economy one of the most vibrant in the Muslim world today (Liow 2009). Being one of the former British colonies means that Malaysia has a somewhat similar political system to the United Kingdom. The state of Malaysia has a federal parliamentary system featuring a bi-cameral legislature and a non-hereditary monarchy. With only single interruption since independence⁷⁷, Malaysia has held periodic national parliamentary and state assembly elections at least once every five years. There are currently 27 registered political parties in Malaysia including the ruling National Coalition Party – the National Front - commonly known in Malaysia as "Barisan Nasional" (BN), which is comprised of 14 separate political parties and has captured the majority of parliamentary seats in all the previous thirteen general parliamentary elections since independence. The most powerful component party within the BN is the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which has held the prime ministership and other crucial ministerial

⁷⁶ As explained by Ashley Jackson, the tin industry had developed rapidly since the 1870s, leading to significant Chinese immigration. The native Malay population, little involved in tin production, had taken advantage of the growth of the rubber industry since the 1890s and developed smallholdings, though it was largely Indian immigrants who worked on the large rubber plantations, as well as a further influx of Chinese. Thus, by the Second World War only about half of Malaya's population of 5,500,500 were indigenous. The remainder were Indians (70,000) and Chinese (2,400,000), the overwhelming majority of whom had not been born in Malaya and therefore maintained intimate ties with their homelands (Jackson 2006: 415).

⁷⁷ In May 1969, due to a severe ethnic riot in Kuala Lumpur in the aftermath of the 1969 General Election, parliamentary rule was dissolved, which resulted in the National Operations Council becoming the supreme decision-making body for the next 18 months.

posts since independence and has been viewed as PAS' primary rival for the Malay-Muslim vote in the country over the last few decades (Miller 2006: 19-20). In order to summarise the selected major political parties with their own ideologies and position in Malaysia, a table has been created as follows:

Table 5.1 Summary of Major Political Parties in Malaysia

Ruling coalition - National Front (BN)		Opposition coalition - People Alliance (PR)	
Party	Ideology & position	Party	Ideology & position
United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)	-Malay Nationalism -Social conservatism -Secularism -Right-wing	Democratic Action Party (DAP)	-Secularism -Chinese dominant -Centre-left
Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)	-Chinese Nationalism -Social conservatism -Right-wing	People's Justice Party (PKR)	-Social Liberalism -Centre
Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)	-Nationalism -Social conservatism -Right-wing	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	-Muslim Democrat -Moderate Islamist -Centre-left
Malaysian People's Movement Party	-Centrism -Liberalism -Centre	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	-Islamism -Centre-right

Source: prepared by the researcher

5.4 Political Development in Malaysia: The Nature of the 'Semi-Democratic' and Electoral Authoritarian Regime

In general, Malaysian politics is essentially divided along the ethnic and ideological borders displayed by several ethnic-based political parties coupled with a few Islamist and secularist parties (Milne & Mauzy 1999; Case 2001; Nair 2007). At the moment (until March 2018), the dominant party which rules the government is the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), a nationalist-Malay and right-wing party whose members secured the majority of seats in the state parliament. Through the practise of electoral authoritarianism which led to an uneven playing field for opposition parties including the PAS Islamists, the National Front (BN) coalition led by the UMNO has held power since Malaysian independence in 1957 and has won every general election that it has contested (Smeltzer & Paré 2015: 132; Case 2017: 638). Nevertheless, the last three years have witnessed the ruling party losing ground to an opposition coalition called the People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat), founded by Anwar Ibrahim in April 2008. At the parliamentary elections in May 2013, the three parties in the People's Alliance (PAS, DAP, PKR) won the popular vote for the first time, but

failed to secure enough seats to take control from the UMNO-BN⁷⁸. Although the UMNO and BN lost the nation-wide popular vote, through which they have governed Malaysia for nearly 60 years, they still held a slight majority of the parliamentary seats in the 'first past the post' electoral system (Nelson 2014: 105). The outcome of the 2013 General Election undoubtedly put BN in a state of unchallenged yet unstable circumstances.

In many respects, the post-2013 general election saw Malaysia continue to grapple with the socioeconomic and political challenges thrown up by scores of controversial issues, for instance: major corruption by government officials; power abuses and wrongdoings by the ruling regime; UMNO's internal conflicts⁷⁹; the Prime Minister's National Fund (1MDB) scandal⁸⁰; the sharp decline in Malaysia's currency; and price hikes in taxes and commodities, as well as the launch of the 4th and 5th Bersih rallies which demanded that Najib Razak immediately resign from office. Since then Malaysian politics has looked less stable and more 'shaky' than it has for decades.

As stated by Anneliese Mcauliffe (2015), public dissatisfaction among Malaysians has been fermenting in the country over past months as the economy has shown significant inconsistency and there has been an escalation in political scandals⁸¹. Amid all these unresolved issues, the current Malaysian regime has inevitably been challenged by the opposition politicians and political activists, including the Islamists. In 2017, foreign observers from Freedom House, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International issued a report regarding the condition of political freedom and civil rights in Malaysia. A

⁷⁸ The Economist (2015) "Malaysia in graphics: Economic Malaysia". Available at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/09/malaysia> [20 October 2015]

⁷⁹ The 2015 crisis for UMNO revolved around the 1MDB scandal and the debt owed by the government-sponsored fund of some US\$700 million. In late July 2015, the UMNO led regime sacked the deputy prime minister and other political figures who were critical in the handling of the 1MDB scandal. See also Johan Saravanamutu (2016: 252-255).

⁸⁰ Connected to this scandal was the allegation that billions of 'stolen money' found its way into the Prime Minister's (Najib Razak's) personal bank account through several international transfer funds. Allegations included that some of the money was wrongfully used in the political campaign for the 13th general election to 'bribe' the support of people towards UMNO electoral candidates. The scandal is perceived as the latest and most high-profile of many corruption allegations that have been levelled over many years. See also William Case (2017: 634- 636) and Damien Kingsbury (2017: 76).

⁸¹ Anneliese Mcauliffe (2015) "Malaysia's democracy is in worse shape than we thought: Malaysia's pro-democracy rally shows a country deeply divided along ethnic lines." AlJazeera. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/malaysia-democracy-worse-shape-thought-1508310659017.html> [20 October 2015]

summary of the report highlighted that Malaysia is still a 'partly free' country, with several elements of autocratic rule remaining in place. These are detailed as follows.

5.4.1 Powerful Security Apparatus

Autocrats in Malaysia have relied on the police and local enforcement bodies to curb any dissidence or resistance from opposition politicians and political activists. Amid the recent 1MDB scandal, the prime minister Najib Razak is seen as heavily dependent on the police force to maintain his status quo and autonomy (Case 2017: 648).

5.4.2 Restrictions on Speech, Press and Academic Freedoms

With respect to academic and communication freedoms, the regime (through the role of the police) has extensively used the Sedition Act⁸² to tighten control over the 'threat' posed by academics and political activists who speak out against Malaysian government wrongdoings (Amnesty International 2016). There have also been consistent violations of press freedom, including the shutdown and blockage of independent news portals and websites, for instance The Malaysian Insider and Sarawak Report which used to critically condemn the regime about corruption issues (Kingsbury 2017).

5.4.3 Media Control and Censorship

In addition to the use of coercion, the Najib government has suppressed peaceful political opposition by restricting the media and freedom of expression. Politicians from the opposition parties often face obstacles such as unequal access to mainstream media channels. All television and broadcasting programmes are heavily controlled by the state to minimise the risk of potential political change (Kingsbury 2017; Chinnasamy 2018).

⁸² For more information in the 1948 Sedition Act, see Cynthia Ng (2014). What is Sedition Act 1948? <http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/what-sedition-act-1948-43073> [30 January 2018]. See also appendix to read the act from the Malaysian constitution.

5.4.4 Electoral Manipulation

Although Malaysia holds regular elections, it has been ruled by the same political coalition since independence in 1957. The coalition has maintained power by manipulating electoral districts and parliamentary seats (for instance through gerrymandering in favour of the regime's electoral candidate and through fraudulent voting) such that opposition parties have been unable to secure sufficient votes to directly challenge the regime (Freedom House 2017; Kingsbury 2017).

5.4.5 Suppression of Political Dissidents

Criticism towards the ruling regime is normally suppressed through restrictive speech laws and politicised prosecutions of opposition leaders. In recent years, politicians and political activists, including several prominent members of the Malaysian Islamists have increasingly been charged with criminal offenses for criticising the government or organising demonstrations. For instance, in November 2016, a court prosecuted one of the key opposition politicians, Rafizi Ramli, stating that he was guilty of disclosing 'government secrets' after he made public the Auditor General's report on the issues surrounding the 1MDB scandal. Former deputy prime minister and opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, was also sentenced to five years in prison in 2014 due to the accusation that he "sodomised" a male personal assistant in 2008 - a charge seen as highly politically motivated by the regime to undermine the opposition bloc (Freedom House 2017; Kingsbury 2017).

5.5 Semi-democratic Malaysia: Between the Government and the Islamists

In the context of Malaysian semi-democratic political setting as previously discussed, PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH are generally allowed to involve in politics and participate in any local or national election in Malaysia. However, many of their members had been politically repressed by the UMNO-BN ruling regime over the past decades, mostly via the notorious Internal Security Act (ISA) – which put a number of Malaysian Islamists from those movements behind bars for several years without any chances to be trialled in court. Among

the 'popular' allegation claimed by the regime (to justify their actions) was the existence of connection between several Malaysian Islamist leaders with global terrorist networks. Using terrorism's 'card', the country have witnessed scores of members of PAS Youth were detained under the ISA and accused of being associated with Islamist militant groups, the Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda, between 1980-2000s. Without substantial evidence, the regime's desire in making allegations that PAS Islamists and terrorism are linked (by also implying that PAS's brand of Islam lent itself to some sort of extremist ideology) was perceived as part of the 'systematic' efforts by the regime to suppress and undermine support for the Islamist party among the Malay-Muslim majority. In the words of Joseph Liow (2009: 159),

“...Not surprisingly, the basis of government allegations against these (Islamist) groups has also been contested by a broad spectrum of critics including human rights groups, opposition parties, and many quarters in the academic community (both secular and Islamic). Chief among these criticism is the fact that the government has yet to provide sufficient evidence of the existence of connections to international terrorist networks. This in turn has fed suspicions that the charges were manufactured toward political ends”

Several ABIM leaders were also detained under the ISA for various reasons and periods, especially at the height of Reformasi protests against the regime in the late 1990s. These included then-president Ahmad Azzam Abdul Rahman, deputies Abdul Halim Ismail and Mukhtar Redhuan and secretary general, Shaharudin Badarudin (Liow 2009: 117). The occasional use of ISA by the regime, since 1960 undoubtedly had a devastating effect on the relationship between the Islamist opposition parties and NGOs, and the UMNO-BN ruling government. The active involvement of PAS, ABIM and AMANAH members in the past street protests (i.e. Bersih rallies) against the ruling regime clearly expressed the uncomfortable relationship between these two camps –the Islamist oppositions and the state. For some observers such as Weiss (2004) and Ufen (2009), the deployment of such policies against those Islamist opposition members unquestionably appears to be politically motivated in order for the regime to retain its status quo, power and position in Putrajaya – even though the Islamists posed no realistic threat to the government. Despite being continuously repressed, those Islamist parties and movements in Malaysia never once being clandestine and 'back off' from political arena. Inspired by the

agenda of global Islamism, they remain committed in taking over power from the government via ballot boxes, as shown in the past series of elections (though the results were already expected not to favour Islamists) – making them as the oldest and strongest opposition groups in the country.

5.6 The Arab Uprisings, Islamists and Popular Civil Protests in Malaysia

“To some, the (Bersih) rally may have been Malaysia’s own first mini-Arab Spring and it was not impossible that Prime Minister Najib Razak would clamp down on future protests with military or even police rule just like the Middle Eastern despots had done so, but little to avail – Malaysian activist, 2011⁸³

Within the Malaysian ‘semi-democratic’ setting, it is understandable why the opposition politicians, political activists and ordinary citizens who yearned for political change were inflamed by resentment which led them to ‘occupy’ the streets of Kuala Lumpur to express their frustration. This section will briefly highlight the development of popular political protest and mass mobilisation in Malaysia – The Reformasi and series of Bersih movements. According to William Case (2017), excessive corruption and the practise of political repression by autocratic leaders can be challenged by people resentments and this trajectory recently began to unfold in Malaysia via a series of civil resistance actions. For instance, Malaysia’s Bersih Movement 3.0 was established in 2013 under the spirit of ‘contentious politics’ - to fight for political injustice and free and fair elections, as well as to voice the campaign of anti-corruption. The movement reportedly managed to gather nearly 200,000 Malaysians in the capital - Kuala Lumpur - for the purpose of expressing their frustration towards the ruling regime.

The Bersih movement is also viewed as the most notable attempt to improve Malaysia’s democratic practise through the aggressive demand for electoral reform. This wave of protests in Malaysia which originally started in 2007 was dubbed Bersih 1.0, followed by Bersih 2.0, Bersih 3.0, Bersih 4.0 and the latest Bersih 5.0 which was held in November 2016. According to Saravanamutu (2016: 255), the Bersih movement is symbolic of the role of civil society in its constant resistance to the authoritarian regime and repressive

⁸³ Chong, Alan. (2014) Arab Uprising’s Contagion: Electronic Vicariousness and Democratic Empathy in Malaysia and Singapore in *Democracy and Reform in the Middle East and Asia: Social Protest and Authoritarian Rule after the Arab Spring*. London: I.B. Touris. pp. 216.

politics in the country. However, since the last rally, the government intensified its crackdown on the movement by raiding the offices of the organisers and arresting leaders and participants (Freedom House 2017).

Throughout 2011-2012, the Arab nations' struggle - dubbed the Arab Uprisings (see Chapter Four) - inspired others around the world and perhaps this included Malaysia, whether in a direct or indirect way (Currie 2012). In all the series of Bersih campaigns, members and supporters of the Islamist opposition parties and civil society organisations, such as PAS, AMANAH and ABIM, committedly joined these popular rallies - leaving a question as to whether they were somehow inspired by the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. In the words of John Bradley (2014: 161-162),

“The local and Western press were quick to described the (Bersih 2011) event as marking the beginning of the country's own version of the Arab Spring, and there were indeed striking parallels... the protesters were fed up with the decades-old domination of the ruling UMNO and the crony economy that had grown up around it...they had gathered under the banner of greater freedom and a more equitable distribution of profits from the country's burgeoning economy. Again, as in the Middle East, the state's reaction was as brutal as it was disproportionate. No fewer than 1600 of them were bundled off to jail”

Although this polemic was denied by the movement's leaders, the strong relation that has been established between Islamist Movements in Malaysia and the Middle East could possibly suggest a link or influence from the Arab Uprisings. The answer to this question will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, which focus solely on the findings most strongly related to the above issues. In the meantime, it is worth considering the background of the existence of civil protests and mass demonstrations in Malaysia.

Historically, mass mobilisation and political protests are not something new in the Malaysian political landscape (Hooi 2014: 86; Smeltzer & Paré 2015: 121). In 1998 there was Anwar Ibrahim's defamation crisis which led to several protests known as “Reformasi”, followed by the emergence of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections or the Bersih movement (in Malay, the word “Bersih” literally means clean). This was perceived as Malaysia's first mass movement on electoral reform. Such events have triggered a sentiment of ‘people power’ amongst Malaysians, as well as serving as a catalyst for reviving protest actions

in Malaysia. Since then, mass mobilisations and protests have become a defining aspect of Malaysian politics and, to an extent, instigated intense political reactions in some cases. According to Andreas Ufen (2009), mass mobilisation in Malaysia, such as the 1998 Reformasi protest and the series of Bersih rallies have the potential to be a catalyst of the democratisation process in the country. The increasing number of participants in protests and rallies has indirectly reflected Malaysian awareness of improvements in the quality of democracy and instigated increased political openness and democratic maturity. (These aspects will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight). The following section briefly reviews the series of protest events or mass mobilisations that have taken place in Malaysia over the past few years.

5.6.1 The 1998 Reformasi

Many observers and analysts of Malaysian politics agreed that the 1998 Reformation movement was a turning point towards a new era of Malaysian politics in terms of street demonstration and political protest. The 1998 protest was originally ignited by a concrete political event - the sacking of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, during the reign of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003). It was estimated that on 20 September 1998, more than thirty thousand people took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur to express their solidarity with Anwar Ibrahim. It was viewed as a 'movement from the street' - made up of participants from different class, backgrounds and ethnic groups including the influential Islamist party and groups such as PAS, ABIM and Jemaah Islah Malaysia (Nair 2007: 351). After the emergence of the movement, an element of 'pro-reform' commenced which eventually brought a significant change to Malaysian politics, for instance in the formation of a new opposition political bloc comprised of PAS, DAP, the Socialist Party (PRM) and the People's Justice Party (PKR) (Hooi 2014: 87). This extraordinary turn of events triggered an explosion of support for Anwar alongside anti-Mahathir and anti-UMNO sentiment that led to Malaysia's 'first organised large-scale protest movement', which came to be known as the reform movement or "reformasi" (Nair 2007: 339).

5.6.2 Coalition for Clean and Fair Election 2007 (Bersih 1.0)

The Bersih movement, dubbed the “Yellow Wave” is arguably an influential symbol of electoral and governance reform and is iconic as a pro-democracy movement in Malaysia. Yellow was chosen by the committee to signify democracy. It emerged as a coalition consisting of five opposition political parties (including PAS) and 26 other civil society groups campaigning for electoral reform. In particular, the movement can be seen as a “platform calling for genuinely free and fair elections, including an end to Malaysia’s notorious gerrymandering system and other forms of electoral corruption” (Kingsbury 2017: 75). Steered by its motivational banner “Save Malaysia: Restore Our Rights”, the rally which was held on 10 November 2007 managed to attract nearly forty thousand protesters, mainly members from opposition parties and activists (including those from PAS and ABIM). They poured into the streets of Kuala Lumpur and reached the final ‘battle camp’ - Independent Square (Dataran Merdeka). There are arguably many factors which triggered the emergence of Bersih 1.0. As testified by the Asia Report (2012: 7), when Anwar Ibrahim was released from prison in 2004, he still held momentous influence within the nation, especially from his loyal followers. Grievances against the ruling government quickly escalated, ranging from Islamisation issues to widespread power abuses and corruption cases. Hooi (2014: 90) also argues that it was within this context that civil society and opposition politicians began organising Bersih 1.0 with the goal of changing the ‘game’ in the upcoming 2008 General Election.

5.6.3 Coalition for Clean and Fair Election 2011 (Bersih 2.0)

The Bersih 2.0 event dubbed the ‘Walk for Democracy’ protest also aimed to construct an atmosphere of fairness in the elections. This rally was organised on 9 July 2011, with the primary aim of pressuring the ruling government to carry out electoral and political reforms before the next general election (Hooi 2014: 98). The first rally had received encouraging support from the majority of opposition parties and supporters, as well as a number of NGOs and civil society groups (including the Islamist parties and movements of PAS and ABIM). Bersih 2.0 managed to attract a larger crowd turn-out compared to the first rally and expanded its demands to eight specific points; (1) to clean up the electoral

roll; (2) to reform the postal ballot; (3) to use indelible ink; (4) to limit the campaign period to a minimum of 21 days; (5) to freely and fairly access media; (6) to strengthen public institutions; (7) to end all forms of corruption; and (8) to stop dirty politics⁸⁴.

5.6.4 Coalition for Clean and Fair Election 2012 (Bersih 3.0)

Following the Bersih 2.0 demonstration, the Bersih's committee decided to organise a third rally known as Bersih 3.0 to continuously pressurise the ruling government for electoral reform. This decision was made after the Parliamentary Selection Committee on Electoral Reform (PSC) failed to address fundamental electoral issues in their 22-point electoral reforms report (Hooi 2014: 99). As reported by the Malaysian Bar (2012) and Jonah Fisher (2012), it was estimated that more than 200,000 'yellow-shirt' people took to the streets on 28 April 2012 to call for substantial change to the voting system. PAS and ABIM requested their thousands of members across the country to mobilise for the purpose of attending the rally. Interestingly, to this day the Bersih 3.0 event is perceived as the largest mass mobilisation and political protest in Malaysian political history.

Despite the violent nature of the demonstration, with the authorities trying to enforce restrictions on entering Independent Square and with scores of protesters reportedly beaten and detained by the police, the protesters in Bersih 3.0 were nevertheless determined to voice their discontent against the ruling government. Aided by rumours about the next general election which was to be held in 2013, there was a sense of excitement amongst the protesters and the sentiment to topple the regime seemed 'convincing' as the protesters felt that reform was not only possible, but also inevitable (Hooi 2014). For many young Malaysians, participation in a mass protest of this magnitude was extraordinary. Bersih 3.0 took place amidst an upsurge of dissent within civil society in the Middle East – which led to comparisons to the 'Arab Spring' and re-introduces reproduced the 'Occupy theme' to the country. As demonstrated by Smeltzer & Paré 2015: 126),

⁸⁴ For more information about Bersih 2.0 please see the official website for Bersih 2.0- "About Bersih 2.0". Available at <http://www.bersih.org/about-bersih-2-0/> [10 October 2015]

“A key struggle for Bersih, and one that it shares with other social movements around the world (e.g., the Arab Spring and Occupy movements), is to transform public places like Dataran Merdeka into spaces where citizens can engage in diverse political activities, including those that challenge the established political order”.

Prime Minister Najib Razak accused the protesters of the Bersih 3.0 movement of trying to overthrow the government as in Egypt’s Tahrir Square protest in 2011⁸⁵. However, the opposition leaders in turn dismissed the accusation as an overreaction to the protests of the people (Yee 2012).

5.6.5 Coalition for a Clean and Fair Election 2015 (Bersih 4.0)

Bersih 4.0 is the fourth rally. It was held on 29-30 August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur and in several other major cities around the world to call for an immediate resignation of Prime Minister Najib Razak and institutional reforms to prevent prime ministerial corruption (Saravanumutu 2016: 255). As reported by The Straits Times, the rally came amidst allegations in the Wall Street Journal and Sarawak Report that US\$700 million in state funds was deposited into the Prime Minister’s personal bank accounts and that there was alleged mismanagement of debt-ridden state investor 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB)⁸⁶.

Other controversial events in Malaysia, for instance the removal of Abdul Gani Patail as Attorney-General, as well as the removal of ministers who had spoken out about the 1MDB scandal, also triggered the call for the rally (Saravanamutu 2016). A few influential Islamist movements and civil society groups such as AMANAH and ABIM played a significant role in mobilising their members to join the protest to aim for a ‘better future for Malaysia’⁸⁷. PAS, however, decided not to mobilise its members and supporters for Bersih 4.0 (due to post-internal conflict with former PAS members who left the party and

⁸⁵ Polemics regarding the Arab Uprisings influence on the Bersih movement protesters will be fully discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁸⁶ The Straits Time (2015) “What you need to know about Malaysia's Bersih movement”. Available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/what-you-need-to-know-about-malaysias-bersih-movement> [20 October 2015]

⁸⁷ ABIM (2015) “We want a better future for Malaysia”. Available at <http://www.abim.org.my/berita-program/abim-pusat/item/878-bersih-4-0-kami-mahukan-masa-depan-yang-lebih-baik-untuk-malaysia- presiden-abim.html> [20 October 2015]

formed AMANAH). The party instead sent unofficial representatives to show their support in the call for a clean and fair electoral system and did not bar its members from participating in the two-day protest event. During the demonstrations, the Malaysian regime deemed the rally to be illegal, but failed to prevent more than a hundred thousand Malaysians flooding into the area around Independent Square. Overall, there were five issues that were targeted by Bersih 4.0: (1) A free and fair election; (2) A transparent government; (3) The right to demonstrate; (4) Strengthening the parliamentary democratic system; and (5) Saving the national economy⁸⁸.

5.7 Summary of Civil Protest and Islamist Movements in Contemporary Malaysia

As pointed out by Von Der Mehden (1986: 184-186), events in contemporary Malaysia have exacerbated differences within Islamist parties and movements. Not only in Malaysia, Samer Shehata (2012: 4) claims that Islamist movements (in general) are indeed differ in many dimension for instance – their ideology, mobilisation tactics and strategies, attitudes towards proper political participation, the use of violence, and acceptance of the nation-state as the foundation for political community. Although Von Der Mehden’s opinion is from about 30 years ago it remains relevant, as the progress of Islamist movements in Malaysia nowadays presents further dynamics and diversity as regards ideology, organisational structure, political approach and ground activism. The values and policies promoted by Islamists in Malaysia may of course differ across parties and movements. However, there is a single set of values that seems to be core to any Islamist movement in Malaysia. This set of values relates to the significance of Islam (or religion) in political and social life. On politico-religious grounds, it is possible to divide Islamist movements in Malaysia into four categories:

- i. Politically Conservative: The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA). This Islamist movement is often labelled by alternative media in Malaysia as a far-right Malay-Muslim group since its views towards non-Muslims

⁸⁸ Astro Awani (2015) “Bersih 4: Four things you need to know”. Available at <http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/bersih-4-four-things-you-need-know-71003> [20 October 2015]

especially the minority Chinese and Christian groups seems 'strong' and sometimes racist and controversial. For instance, the group strongly rejected the use of "Allah" as a God for Christians in the Bible.

- ii. Politically Traditionalist: The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). This Islamist group seems consistently focused on Islamic roots and terminologies in line with championing the Islamic state agenda and the implementation of Sharia as a political ambition within the framework of democracy and election.
- iii. Politically Fundamentalist: The Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM). Its role as an 'Islah (reform) and Tajdid (renewal)' civil society movement has gone through significant changes which led the movement to become relatively more moderate in its new outlook and activism.
- iv. Politically Accommodationist: The National Trust Party (AMANAH). As a new self-proclaimed Islamist democratic party, it pragmatically recognises major elements of democracy and individual freedom within the Islamic perspective as the basis of party struggle. This can be seen by its political strategy that emphasises universal issues such as democracy, justice, good governance and multi-ethnic and religious interests without rhetorical expressions of Islam and Sharia.

PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH are unquestionably regarded as the main Islamist movements in Malaysia comprising dynamic ideologies, objectives, political approaches, organisational structures and connections with global Islamism. In their early stages, most of the Islamist movements in Malaysia were clearly influenced by ideas and forms of organisation that originated outside the region – most notably from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In addition, events like the Iranian Revolution of 1979 provided initial inspiration to many Malaysian Islamists – they became increasingly focused not just on the Islamisation of society, but on the political context in which they operated. The structure and historical process of Malaysian politics and Islamist movements have been sketched in this chapter and emphasise that Islam has become a firm fixture in today's Malaysian political landscape. A summary of the selected Malaysian Islamist movements is provided in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Summary of Selected Cases of Islamist Movements in Malaysia

Islamist Movement	Ideology, Position and Political Approach	Goals and Involvement in Politics	Involvement in Political Protest Against the Regime	Influenced by External Political Islamism
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Conservative Islamism. Harakah Islamiyyah – Islamist political party.	To establish an 'Islamic state' and the implementation of sharia law. Participated in all general elections as opposition party.	Reformasi 1998 Bersih 1.0 (2007) Bersih 2.0 (2011) Bersih 3.0 (2013)	Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The 1979 Iranian Revolution.
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	Moderate and Progressive Neo-Islamism. Islamist Democratic - political party.	To defend basic civil liberties and political pluralism via moderation and inclusiveness. Participated in two district elections in 2016. Join a new opposition coalition in 2017 for the next 2018 general election.	Bersih 4.0 (2015) Bersih 5.0 (2016)	AKP in Turkey. Ennahda in Tunisia.
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Fundamental Harakah Islamiyyah. Non-governmental organisation (NGO).	To improve the Islamisation agenda and da'wah in society. Future establishment of an 'ideal Muslim society'. Never participate in any election as a political party. However, several members of ABIM have participated in the previous general election as electoral candidates via the PAS and UMNO platforms.	Reformasi 1998 Bersih 1.0 (2007) Bersih 2.0 (2011) Bersih 3.0 (2013) Bersih 4.0 (2015) Bersih 5.0 (2016)	Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The 1979 Iranian Revolution. AKP in Turkey. Ennahda in Tunisia.
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	Conservative Islamism. Nationalist Islamism. Harakah Islamiyyah. Non-governmental organisation (NGO).	Contended in 2013 General Election under the name of the BERJASA party.	None	Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Source: prepared by the researcher

Notes: For more detail please refer to:

1. Abdul Hamid, A.F & Che Mohd Razali, C.H. (2016). Middle Eastern Influences on Islamist Organisations in Malaysia: The Cases of ISMA, IRF and HTM. Trends in Southeast Asia. ISEAS - Yusuf Ishak Institute.
2. Liow, J.C. (2009) Piety and Politics: Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Liow, J.C. (2011) Islamist Ambitions, Political Change, and the Price of Power: Recent Success and Challenges for the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS. Journal of Islamic Studies, 22 (3): 374-403.
4. Malik, Maszlee. (2017). From political Islam to democrat Muslim: A case study of Rashid Ghannouchi's influence on ABIM, IKRAM, AMANAH and DAP. Intellectual Discourse, 25(1): 21–53.
4. Mat Isa, Nasharudin. (2001) The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS): Ideology, Policy, Struggle and Vision Towards the New Millennium. Kuala Lumpur, PAS.
5. Noor, F.A. (2014) The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951-2013. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
6. Wan Jan, W.S. (2017). Parti Amanah Negara in Johor: Birth, Challenges and Prospects. Trends in Southeast Asia. ISEAS - Yusuf Ishak Institute.

Considering the nature of Malaysia's semi-democratic practises, all requests outlined in the series of Bersih protests are highly relevant and would potentially improve the quality of democracy should the regime prove responsive to the demands. It is also clear that members of Malaysia's Islamist parties and NGOs (e.g. PAS, ABIM and AMANAH) actively participated in the mass protests to voice citizens' frustration with the Malaysian ruling regime. Having thousands of activists and registered members, largely comprised of the majority Malay-Muslims in the country, shows that the role of Islamist movements in the Malaysian political game is undeniably significant. Table 5.2 below summarises the popular political protest events in Malaysia as previously discussed.

Table 5.3 Summary of Popular Civil Protests in Malaysia

Major Civil Protest Events	Motives	Involvement of Islamist Movements
Reformasi (1998)	Frustration against the regime of Mahathir Mohamad as a result of Anwar Ibrahim's ousting, arrest and detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Protesters demand the immediate resignation of Mahathir Mohamad from the government.	PAS and ABIM
Bersih 1.0 (2007)	Grievances against widespread corruption and power abuses. Demand for electoral reform before the 2008 General Election as well as free and fair access to the mass media for opposition parties.	PAS and ABIM
Bersih 2.0 (2011)	Pressure against the regime and Electoral Commission of Malaysia for electoral reform and academic freedom for university graduates.	PAS and ABIM
Bersih 3.0 (2012)	Calls for drastic electoral reform and substantial change to the voting system. Fairness and transparency in the upcoming election (the 13 th General Election in 2013).	PAS and ABIM
Bersih 4.0 (2015)	Urge the immediate resignation of Najib Razak due to allegations of corruption and mismanagement of national funds (1MDB). To pressure the government towards a reformed Malaysia through institutional changes and electoral reform ahead of the 14 th General Election in 2018.	AMANAH and ABIM

Source: prepared by the researcher

CHAPTER SIX

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN MALAYSIA TOWARDS THE ARAB UPRISINGS

“When the Tunisian Revolution happened, our leaders who lived in exile started to come back to Tunisia from everywhere outside the country... which was something really incredible. Many Tunisians and a lot of the media were talking about the coming back of President Ghannouchi like the return of Khomeini to Iran in 1979”– Osama- al Saghir, Ennahda Movement⁸⁹

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the awareness and perceptions of selected Islamist movements in Malaysia – the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA) and the National Trust Party (AMANAH) towards the Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon. It is based on the empirical findings of a questionnaire-based survey that was conducted in Malaysia, with 643 respondents primarily from among the members of the named movements⁹⁰. The survey involved a Likert-scale type of questionnaire which was composed of eighteen main questions/statements relating to the basic facts about the Arab Uprisings, Islamism and political Islamic issues and the role of Islamist movements. Respondents were provided with five selections for their answers: strongly agree; agree; neutral/neither disagree nor agree; disagree; and strongly disagree. The questions/statements were developed based on established typologies and scholars’ definitions of the Arab Uprisings, as well as on intensive reviews of the factors that contributed to the 2011 Arab Uprisings and the Islamist debates⁹¹.

The first section deals with the respondents’ basic demographical background. The second section deals with the respondents’ knowledge of the Arab Uprisings including their sources of information, as well as any reasons for

⁸⁹ Personal interview. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

⁹⁰ In the survey, details of the number of respondents based on their movement/political affiliation is as follows: PAS: (n=387); ABIM: (n=81); ISMA: (n=80); and AMANAH (n=95). Only respondents involved in the selected case studies of Islamist movements in Malaysia were chosen throughout the survey. (See Appendix A).

⁹¹ See Chapter Four for more details on the historical background of the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

not knowing about the events. The third section presents the research findings and data analysis from the survey. Eighteen questions are covered, which are divided into three main themes: 1) understanding the general issues of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon; 2) understanding the factors that led to the Arab Uprisings; and 3) attitudes towards Islamist movements within the Arab Uprisings context. In order to explain the trends and patterns in the statistical data that were obtained, the researcher uses additional information from a number of face-to-face interviews with selected respondents from each movement. Some findings were also supported with theories and concepts as previously discussed in Chapter Two. The final section concludes the findings and summarises the degree of understanding and perception of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamist activists towards the Arab Uprisings events.

6.2 The Initial Questions: Respondents' Background

In the early section of the questionnaire, there were several questions involving the background of the research sample - for example age, gender, level of education, last place of education, occupational sector and type of Islamist movement membership. All these aspects provide added value to analyse any differences in the trend of responses, as well as the patterns in the statistical data. Table 6.1 below shows the respondents' age ranges.

Table 6.1 Respondents' Age

Type of Islamist Movement	Age (Frequency)					Total
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	257	87	25	11	7	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	16	32	13	19	15	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	17	18	13	17	16	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	47	19	7	4	3	80
Total	337	156	58	51	41	643

Source: Field Research 2016

As can be seen from the above table, the majority of respondents (493) were aged between 16-25 and 26-35. This is due to current composition in each movements whereby youths represent at approximately one third of overall membership. Thus, it was no surprise for the researcher (during his field trip in

Malaysia) to see many attendees in the events (i.e. gathering, annual meeting, political speeches) organised by PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH came from youth members. These circumstances indirectly reflect the data presented in Table 6.1 of why majority of participants in the survey were aged between 16-35. Within these ages, respondents were normally considered as part of the relevant movement's Youth Wing or Division. For example, the PAS Youth Movement in 2016 operated at approximately 180 branches nationwide and primarily served towards the party's succession planning, as well as providing ground support for the party's political activism, especially during a pre-election period⁹². The reminder of the respondents (23.3 percent) were aged between 36 and 45 (58 respondents), 46 and 55 (51 respondents) and 56 and above (41 respondents).

Table 6.2 Respondents' Gender

Type of Islamist Movement	Gender (Frequency)		Total
	Male	Female	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	274	113	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	75	20	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	48	33	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	54	26	80
Total	451	192	643

Source: Field Research 2016

Table 6.2 above shows details of the gender distribution of the sample (i.e. male and female respondents) from each movement. Of the 643 respondents, 451 are male Islamist respondents which constitutes 70.1 percent of the total, while the number of females is 192 (30.9 percent). The researcher believes that the reason behind this visible gap between the number of male and female respondents reflects the current actual membership of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH at the national level, where the ratio between male members and female members has been around 70:30 since the 2000s⁹³.

Table 6.3 below provides details on the respondents' level of education. The majority of respondents have a Bachelors Degree (354), followed by those with a Diploma (147), Secondary School Education (84), a Masters Degree (52)

⁹² Personal interview with the Secretary General of the Kuala Lumpur PAS Youth Branch, Ubaid Hj. Abd Akla. Puchong, Malaysia. 3 September 2016. See also Müller, D.M. (2014) *Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The Pop-Islamist Reinvention of PAS*. Oxon: Routledge.

⁹³ Personal interview with a PAS activist (name withheld at interviewee's request), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 September 2016.

and a PhD (6). With regard to the last place of education, Table 6.4 highlights respondents' last place of study by specific country. 88.3 percent graduated from or finished their education at local institutions, while the remaining 11.7 percent are overseas educated respondents. There were a number of these overseas graduates who studied Arabic and Islamic studies in the Middle East and North Africa regions (particularly in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan). Other fields such as Medicine, Education, Engineering and Law were also reportedly studied by respondents in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Republic of Ireland, India and Indonesia.

Table 6.3. Respondents' Level of Education

Type of Islamist Movement	Level of Education (Frequency)					Total
	Secondary School	Diploma	Bachelor Degree	Master	PhD	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	42	98	227	17	3	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	8	20	48	19	0	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	31	23	15	10	2	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	3	6	64	6	1	80
Total	84	147	354	52	6	643

Source: Field Research 2016

Table 6.4 Respondents' Last Place of Education

Location (country)	Frequency	Percentage
Malaysia	588	88.3
Egypt	19	3.0
Morocco	9	1.4
Jordan	3	0.5
United Kingdom	10	1.6
United States of America	4	0.6
Rep. of Ireland	1	0.2
India	3	0.5
Indonesia	4	0.6
Other	16	2.5
Total	643	100.0

Source: Field Research 2016

The last aspect of the respondents' background to be revealed is their working sectors. The majority of respondents (248) were local university students⁹⁴,

⁹⁴ PAS was quite popular among Muslim student activists in Malaysia due to the role championed by The Coalition of Malaysian Muslim Students (GAMIS) which indirectly serves as a PAS unofficial recruitment body for local university students. For more information please refer to Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman (2014). *Muslim Student Activism in Malaysia: A Case*

followed by 169 respondents who were involved in the private sector. 93 respondents worked in the public sector, mostly as school teachers, university lecturers and government officers. There were also a number of respondents (84) who considered themselves to be self-employed. These respondents reportedly run small scale businesses such as grocery shops, or worked within sectors such as food or tourism services (including umrah and haj tour packages), as well as working in the education field (for example involved in the establishment of private religious schools and madrasah). For instance, an interview with the Secretary General of Kuala Lumpur PAS Youth revealed that the party's top leaders have encouraged their members to own a personal business, so that they can maximise their contribution and dedication towards the party in terms of time, energy and monetary remuneration⁹⁵. For other movements, the researcher has also been told that there are a few wealthy members who own a private company which indirectly benefits the movement via financial and material contribution⁹⁶. Only 41 respondents were not working at the time the survey was conducted. Table 6.5 below provides details of the respondents' working sector.

Table 6.5 Respondents' Occupational Sector

Type of Islamist Movement	Occupational Sector (Frequency)						Total
	Private	Public Sector	Self-employed	Not working/ Not yet working	Student (Higher Education)	Retired/ Pensioner	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	68	54	35	35	194	1	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	36	11	32	1	14	1	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	43	13	7	0	12	6	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	22	15	10	5	28	0	80
Total	169	93	84	41	248	8	643

Source: Field Research 2016

Study of GAMIS in Lemiere, Sophie. Ed. *Misplaced Democracy: Malaysian Politics and People*. SIRD: Petaling Jaya.

⁹⁵ Personal interview with Ubaid Hj. Abd Akla. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 3 September 2016.

⁹⁶ Personal interview with ISMA activist, Amar Yasier. London. May 2016.

To ensure that the selected respondents were relevant for the study, the researcher decided to ask a question about the type and status of their membership within PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH (See Appendix A). Table 5.6 below gives details of each movement's membership status.

Table 6.6 Type of Islamist Movement Membership

Type of Islamist Movement	Type of Membership (Frequency)				Total
	Registered & Active	Registered & Non-Active	Non-Registered & Active (Volunteer)	Non-Registered & Non-Active (Passive Supporter)	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	271	30	68	18	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	86	4	2	3	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	50	15	15	1	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	70	9	1	0	80
Total	477	58	86	22	643

Source: Field Research 2016

Overall, 477 respondents (74.3 percent) were registered and active members of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH, followed by 58 respondents (9 percent) who considered themselves as registered and non-active. Some of these active members reportedly hold within the party's organisational layers – for example the national, state (county), district branch and sub-district branch. There were also 86 respondents who were voluntarily involved in their movement's political activity without having official membership status, while 21 respondents believed that they were ordinary supporters of PAS (18), AMANAH (3) and ABIM (1) due to their infrequent participation in any of these movements' programmes, as well as not being registered within the party's official membership.

6.3 Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa

In order to identify the awareness of respondents towards Arab Uprisings events, the following question was asked in the questionnaire (see Appendix A): "Do you know anything about the people's upheaval in the Middle East and North African countries (the Arab Uprisings or the 'Arab Spring') that started in

the year 2011?” Of the 643 sample, 532 respondents (82.7 percent) answered ‘yes’ while 111 respondents (17.3 percent) believed that they had never heard of such uprisings occurring in the Arab world.

Table 6.7. Respondents’ Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings Events

Type of Islamist Movement	Knowledge of the 2011 Arab Uprisings Events in the Middle East and North Africa (Frequency)		Total
	Yes	No	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	289	98	387
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	93	2	95
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	81	0	81
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	69	11	80
Total	532	111	643

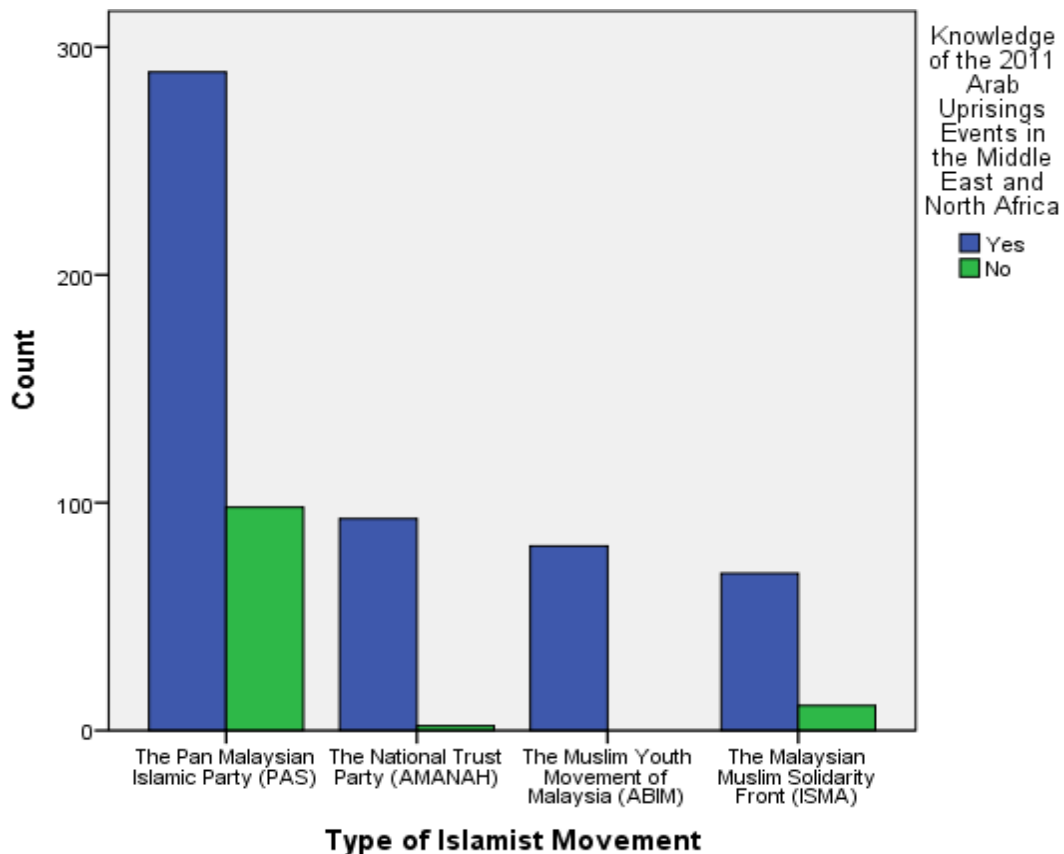
Source: Field Research 2016

Table 6.7 above presents the results of the respondent’s knowledge of the Arab Uprisings based on the different Islamist movements. Interestingly, there is no single respondent from ABIM who did not know or hear anything about the Arab Uprisings. This result somewhat reflects the movement’s tradition (since its establishment in the 1970s) as being consistently engaged with global political issues which relate to Muslim matters (Mohd Azhar Bahari & Ishak Saat 2014: 8-9). For ISMA and AMANAH, it seems that the large majority of its members were very aware about the Arab Uprisings. Only 2.1 percent of respondents from AMANAH and 13.8 percent from ISMA had never heard about the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East.

Compared to all three movements mentioned above, the responses received from PAS were quite different as the movement recorded 25.3 percent of respondents (98) who had no knowledge about the Arab Uprisings – although they were involved in one of the oldest and most influential Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region⁹⁷. Overall, Figure 5.1 below summarises the responses from selected PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH members regarding their knowledge about the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

⁹⁷ Imtiyaz Yusuf in his publication refers to PAS in Malaysia and PKS in Indonesia as the two prominent Islamist parties in Southeast Asia. For more details, see Yusuf, Imtiyaz. *The Middle East and Muslim Southeast Asia: Implications of the Arab Spring*. Available online via http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/focus/essay1009_southeast_asia.html [24 August 2016].

Figure 6.1. Respondents' Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings Events Based on Type of Islamist Movement



Regarding the respondent's level of education, this research found that the majority of respondents (99 percent) with a postgraduate qualification (Masters and PhD) acknowledged the existence of Arab Uprisings events in the Middle East and North Africa region. Out of 354 respondents who had a Bachelors degree, 84.7 percent were also aware about the events as well as respondents with a diploma (72.8 percent) and those educated at high school level (81 percent). Thus, this research finding, as indicated in the Table 6.8 and Figure 6.2 below shows that level of education might partially help determine the Malaysian Islamists' knowledge of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ In all tests of significance in SPSS, if $p < 0.05$, there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The p-value in chi-square outputs for respondent's level of education is 0.00. This means that the relationship between respondents' level of education and knowledge of the Arab Uprisings is significant.

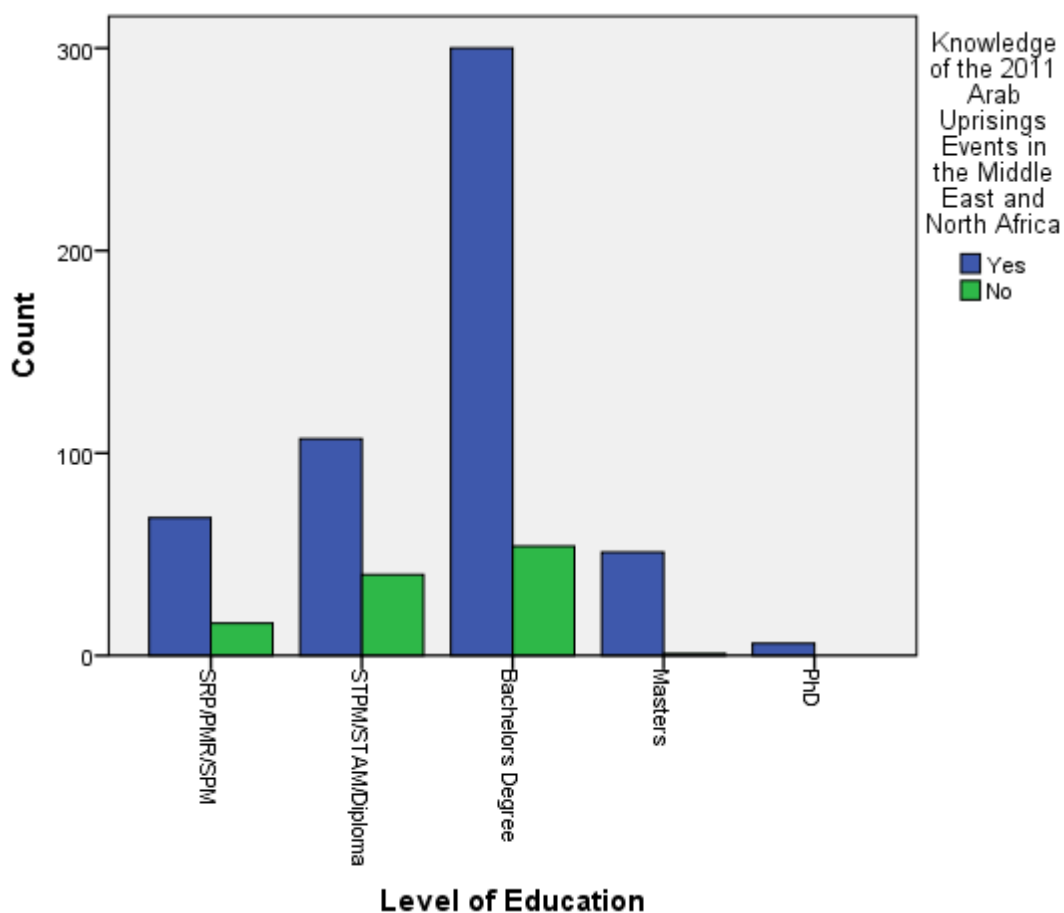
Table 6.8. Respondents' Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings Events Based on Level of Education

Level of Education	Knowledge of the 2011 Arab Uprisings Events in the Middle East and North Africa		Percentages (Yes/ No)
	Yes	No	
SRP/PMR/SPM (Malaysian High School)	68	16	81/19
STPM/STAM/Diploma	107	40	72.8/27.2
Bachelors Degree	300	54	84.7/15.3
Masters	51	1	98.1/1.9
PhD	6	0	100/0

Source: Field Research 2016

Pearson Chi Square Test (P Value): 0.00

Figure 6.2. Respondents' Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings Events Based on Level of Education



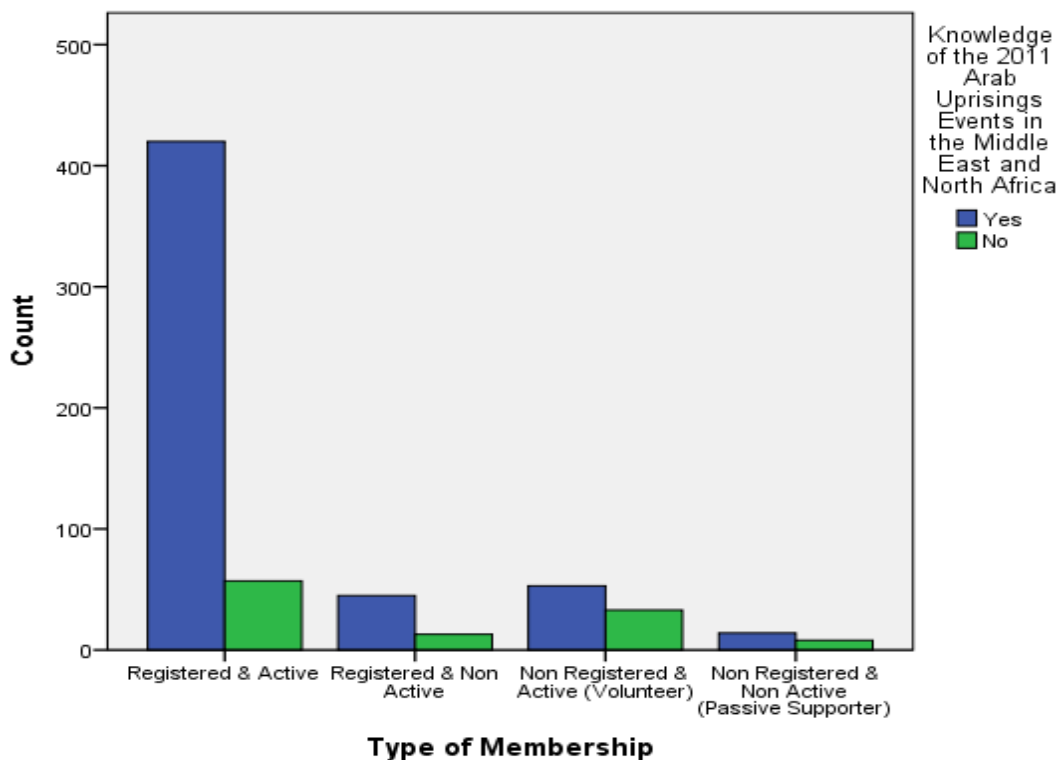
In terms of a gender perspective, there was no significant difference between male and female respondents as 86.5 percent of male respondents (390) and 74 percent of female respondents (142) knew about the Arab Uprisings (from the total 82.7 percent who said “yes”)⁹⁹. Out of 17.3 percent of respondents who

⁹⁹ The p-value in chi-square outputs for respondent's gender is 0.13. This means that the relationship between respondents' level of education and knowledge of the Arab Uprisings not significant since the P value is more than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$).

did not know about the events, 9.5 percent were male and 7.8 were female. Thus, the ratio between male and female respondents regarding their knowledge about the Arab Uprisings (either 'yes' or 'no') seems quite balanced which strongly suggests that gender has no impact on the Malaysian Islamists' responses to that specific question.

With regard to the respondents' membership status, the study found that those who were registered and actively participated in the programme organised by their respective movements were more likely to pay close attention to the Arab Uprisings events. Of the 532 respondents who observed the Arab Uprisings, 78.9 percent (420) came from the 'registered and active' category. Only 11.9 percent of respondents (57) from the same category did not know anything about the Arab Uprisings¹⁰⁰. Figure 5.3 below presents the outcome of cross tabulation analysis between respondents' membership status within the selected Islamist movements and their knowledge or awareness of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the MENA region.

Figure 6.3. Respondents' Knowledge of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon Based on Type of Membership



¹⁰⁰ The p-value in chi-square outputs for respondent's type of membership is 0.00. See Appendix C for more detail on the result of cross tabulation between knowledge of the Arab Uprisings and type of membership.

Hence, based on the previous discussion which involved some of the respondents' demographic aspects and their impact on knowledge about the Arab Uprisings, it is obvious that level of education and membership status somehow played a significant role. Although the number of respondents with a high school certificate, diploma and degree qualification who were not aware of such popular events was fairly low, it still leads to the question - Why did some people, especially those who were educated and actively involved in a movement or political party which has a history of transnational relations with the Arab world (in general), not know anything about the Arab Uprisings? Details of the respondents' answers will be discussed in the following section.

6.3.1 Reasons for Not Knowing About the Arab Uprisings

Those respondents who did not know about the Arab Uprisings were asked for reasons about why they had never heard or known about the events. As can be seen from Table 6.9 below, the main reasons 111 respondents did not know about the Arab Uprisings related to their lack of knowledge – as a result of seldom reading, hearing and watching global news, either through mainstream mass media (television, radio, newspaper) or through newer social media (internet). There were 50 respondents who mentioned that they did not have the opportunity or 'free time' to find any printed sources relating to the Arab Uprisings. 58 respondents also admitted that they have never been exposed to any of the Arab Uprisings facts over the past few years.

Table 6.9. Respondents' Reasons for Not Knowing About the Arab Uprisings

Reasons for Not Knowing about the Arab Uprisings	Type of Islamist Movement (Frequency)			Total
	The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	The National Trust Party (Amanah)	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	
Lack of/absence of information	59	1	9	69
Not finding relevant printed materials	42	1	7	50
Lack of time for reading local/international news	63	1	5	69
Lack of opportunity to watch local/international TV	44	1	4	49
Lack of opportunity to surf the internet/social media	37	0	3	40
Have never been exposed to the Arab Uprisings	47	0	11	58

Source: Field Research 2016

Notes: There are no responses from ABIM respondents since all of those involved in the survey had knowledge about the Arab Uprisings.

There were also a few written comments left by respondents in the questionnaire which might reveal more answers about why some Islamist activists had zero knowledge about the Arab Uprisings. Among the random comments received were:

“Been busy with the ‘*jemaah*’ (movement’s) works, thus I did not have enough time to know more about the Arab Uprisings”- PAS activist

“Did not notice about this issue and have never been told that there was an ‘Arab Spring’ in the Middle East” – PAS activist

“Too many unreliable and non-credible sources. In Malaysia, there is a lack of reliable news and reports from the media, especially in the Malay language regarding the Arab Uprisings events” - AMANAH activist

“Not interested in politics, chaos and instability” – AMANAH supporter

“Never attempted to find out any information on the Arab Uprisings” – PAS supporter

“Previously not interested to learn anything about current issues” – PAS supporter

From the above comments, it is clear that there was a respondent from AMANAH who simply was not interested in global politics and the Arab Uprisings events due to the state of political instability which occurred in some Arab countries post the Arab Uprisings. However, one of the respondents (a female AMANAH member) seems to not agree with all the excuses given stating:

“The reason people might not know about the ‘Arab Spring’ is because they are just not interested in paying attention to what happens around the world. Information does exist actually. From my observation, they (the Islamists) watch TV every day, read newspapers, surf the internet and yet they do not have any idea about the Arab Uprisings phenomenon¹⁰¹”.

Her opinion was supported by another AMANAH member, Ahmad Zubaimi who believes that:

“Ignorance is one of the reasons why some Malaysians were not aware of the ‘Arab Spring’ in the MENA region. It seems that the Malaysian people need coherent, reliable and accurate information in order to stay alert to local and international politics¹⁰²”.

¹⁰¹ Personal interview with a female AMANAH activist (name withheld at interviewee’s request), Kuala Lumpur, September 2016.

¹⁰² Respondent’s written opinion/comment on the questionnaire.

Some respondents from PAS seems to 'blame' themselves for their tight schedule and lack of effort to be more aware about the Arab uprisings in the Middle East. There was also an issue raised by one of the AMANAH activists about the abundance of unreliable sources on the Arab Uprisings¹⁰³ – which could explain why some people refused to engage with Arab Uprisings developments. Again, those excuses were condemned by a senior AMANAH member who argued that:

“There was no awareness and understanding of the real meaning of the ‘Arab Spring’ among (some of) the Islamists in Malaysia. They were too lazy to read, research and participate in any seminar or lecture. Some of them received information about the Arab Uprisings from untrustworthy sources. Only a few put some effort into understanding the ‘Arab Spring’¹⁰⁴”.

Nevertheless, the issues of ‘unreliable’ and inadequate sources seem not to impact the majority of respondents who gave a positive response regarding their knowledge of the Arab Uprisings. The researcher believes that this category of respondents might have referred to credible sources which enabled them to fully participate in the survey. Details of their sources of information regarding the Arab Uprisings are presented in the following section.

6.3.2 Sources of Information Regarding the Arab Uprisings Events

Table 6.10 Respondents’ Source of Information Regarding the Arab Uprisings Events

Source	Frequency
Television	376
Newspaper	301
Internet/Social Media	475
Radio	81
Book	140
Journal Article	113
Forum/Seminar/Talk/Lecture	354
Lecturer/Teacher/Friends/Family	297
Self-Experience	13

Source: Field Research 2016

¹⁰³ The PAS President, Abdul Hadi Awang in his statement also agreed that some media agencies published fake news about the Arab Uprisings by saying that “The media jumbled, and confused the information and understanding (about the ‘Arab Spring’) in the new borderless media, where they either spread truth or lies to the whole world”. See Appendix D for the full statement. Fake news and the spread of misinformation not only affected the news on the ‘Arab Spring’, but also worldwide. Examples of ‘fake news’ about the Arab Uprisings can be accessed from the Website called ‘Snopes’ which compiled all existing fake news written on the ‘Arab Spring’. See <http://www.snopes.com/?s=arab+spring> (05 October 2017).

¹⁰⁴ Personal interview with a senior AMANAH activist (name withheld at interviewee’s request), Kuala Lumpur, September 2016.

For those 532 respondents who knew about the Arab Uprisings, their sources of information were varied as can be viewed in Table 6.7 above. In particular, 475 respondents considered social media and the internet (for instance Facebook and Twitter) as the most resource-rich mediums to stream information on the Arab Uprisings. 376 respondents used to watch television, particularly certain world news channels to obtain information about the Arab Uprisings, while 81 respondents heard similar news on the radio. 354 respondents attended a seminar, forum or lecture (in various locations), mostly during their years as university students, to learn more about the uprisings, while 301 respondents simply read a newspaper for the same purpose. Academic books (140 respondents) and journal articles (113 respondents) were also treated as a foundation for knowledge of the Arab Uprisings, while 297 respondents noted the role of lecturers, teachers, friends (via *usrah* - commonly known among Malaysian Islamist activists as discourse gathering) and family in providing them with information on the Arab Uprisings. 14 respondents referred to their personal experience whilst staying in Egypt during the launch of the 25th January Revolution, including a series of announcements made by the Malaysian Embassy in Egypt.

These various sources made respondents more open to understanding the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon from different angles and perspectives. The next section will examine the opinions and attitudes of the different Islamist movements' respondents towards the Arab Uprisings, specifically how they understand the general facts about the events, including contributing factors, as well as the present phenomenon of neo-Islamism¹⁰⁵ specifically the role of Islamist movements during the anti-government protests, as well as the prospects for Islamist parties in the MENA region following the post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter Three for more details on neo-Islamism.

6.4 Understanding the General Issues about the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon

This section of the chapter presents the results of the study's first objective which was to explore the opinions and understanding of selected Malaysian Islamist movements (PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH) about the Arab Uprisings. It was based on selected fundamental issues that closely related to the 2011 Arab Uprisings – 1) the nature of anti-government protests; 2) the Arab Uprisings as a modern form of political revolution; and 3) the Arab Uprisings as an act of non-violent civil resistance. The respondents were asked whether these issues should be considered within the basic description of the Arab Uprisings. The following section will discuss in further detail the questions and respondents' responses.

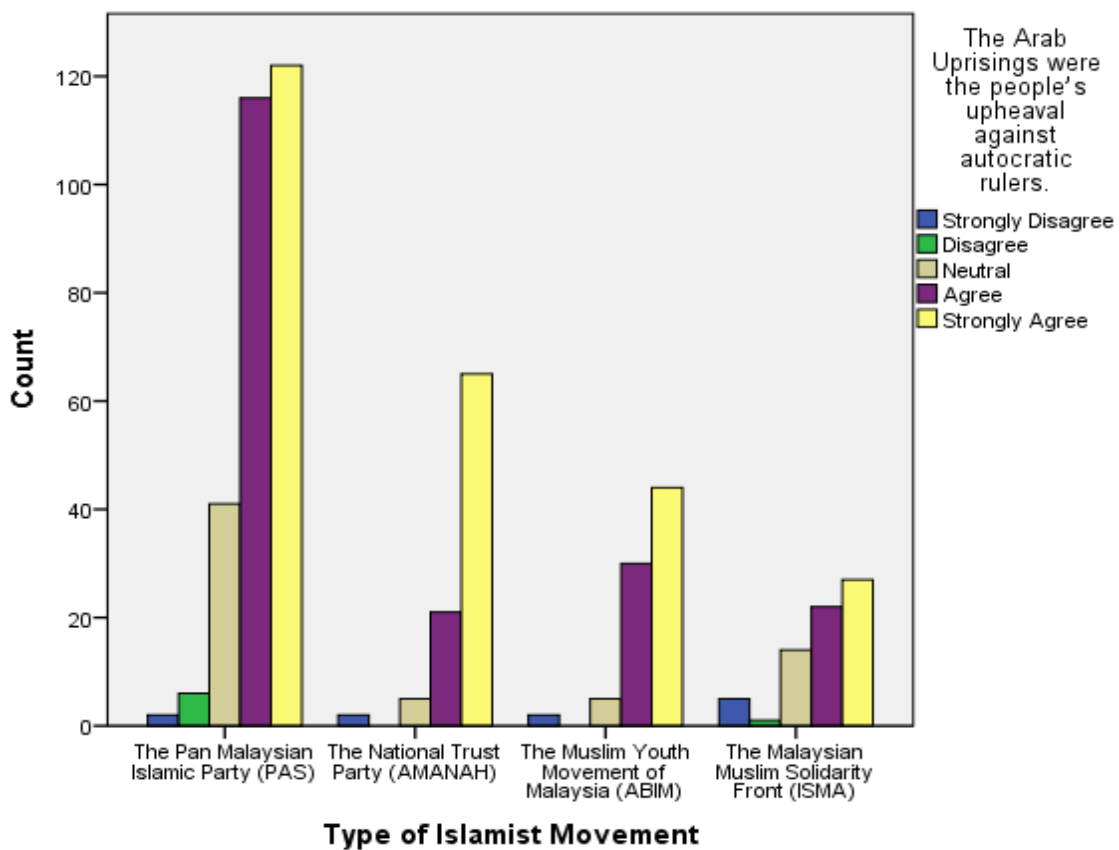
6.4.1 Anti-Government Protests

By general consent, the Arab Uprisings can be traced back to January 2011, when the so-called 'Tunisian Jasmine Revolution' led to the unexpected removal of Ben Ali's regime, triggering a region-wide protest effect that soon brought down Mubarak's regime in Egypt, Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen and Gaddafi in Libya, as well as destabilising the position of Assad in Syria which led to wider political repercussions across the MENA region (Whitehead 2014: 17). Prior to the launch of the Arab Uprisings, there was no doubt that most of the Arab states were ruled by long-standing autocratic rulers (Gelvin 2012 & Owen 2012). Authoritarian rule had been the reality for so long in the region that some considered it to be, if not the 'normal' form of ruling among Arab citizens, at least the expected political reality (Esposito et al 2016).

For the majority of Malaysian Islamist members in this study (84.4 percent), the genesis of the Arab Uprisings protests was certainly deemed a high scale civil resistance with anti-government protests against previously oppressive leaders, specifically the former regime of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Gaddafi in Libya, Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen and Bashar al-Assad in Syria. The responses received from the specific movements show quite a similar pattern; respondents from PAS (82.9 percent), AMANAH (92.5

percent), ABIM (91.3 percent) and ISMA (71 percent) all agreed that the Arab Uprisings were the people’s upheaval against autocratic rulers. Meanwhile, 12.3 percent of respondents, with a higher percentage from ISMA and PAS, preferred to remain neutral in viewing the Arab Uprisings as the citizen’s disapproval of their so-called ‘undemocratic’ leaders. Only 3.4 percent of respondents disagreed with the question being asked¹⁰⁶. Figure 6.4 below illustrates the overall respondents’ feedback.

Figure 6.4. Respondents’ Perception that the Arab Uprisings were the People’s Upheaval against Autocratic Rulers



One of the respondents from PAS who disagreed with the question claimed that the Arab Uprisings issues in the Middle East should be viewed as the people’s manifestations towards state leaders who refused to implement sharia and thus failed to serve the interest of citizens¹⁰⁷. However, his single opinion did not reflect the majority of PAS members who largely viewed the Arab Uprisings as a clear sign of the rejection of dictatorship rule by Arab citizens. According to the

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix B for more detail on the respondents’ reactions.

¹⁰⁷ Personal interview with a PAS activist (name withheld at interviewee’s request), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 September 2016.

PAS President, the Arab Uprisings was unquestionably a situation whereby Arab citizens took to the streets to protest against Arab dictators for the sake of democracy and fair election as well as to promote anti-corruption efforts¹⁰⁸. His opinion seems in line with Abdullah Zaik, the President of ISMA who agreed that the Arab Uprisings was the inevitable result of 'political cruelty' which had been practised for several decades by some Arab leaders. Thus, for him, there was no conflict as regards accepting the common facts about the popular anti-government protests during the Arab Uprisings¹⁰⁹. Overall, respondents from all the four Malaysian Islamist movements generally agree that the Arab Uprisings or the 'Arab Spring' is the popular terminology to describe the anti-government protests that occurred throughout the Middle East and North Africa in 2011.

6.4.2 Political Revolution

In general, revolution in the political context can be defined as a change in the way a state is governed, usually a change to a different and better political system (Kimmel 1990). Political revolution often involves mass mobilisation and sometimes uses violence or war to achieve the means for political change. Several major revolutions have occurred throughout world history, for instance the famous American Revolution (1783), French Revolution (1789), Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and Iranian Revolution (1979). All these revolutions successfully transformed their national political landscapes into new governing systems. Regarding the 2011 Arab Uprisings, Abdul Hadi Awang (PAS President) believes that a similar revolution had occurred 100 years ago when the so-called 'great 1916 Arab-revolt' was launched by Arab nationalists to liberate the land of '*hejaz*' (a region in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia) from the Ottoman Empire. As a result (following several agreements made with colonial powers, for instance the Sykes-Picot Agreement), a few Arab nations (Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Gulf countries) were established with a different style of rules, including the monarchic system of government¹¹⁰.

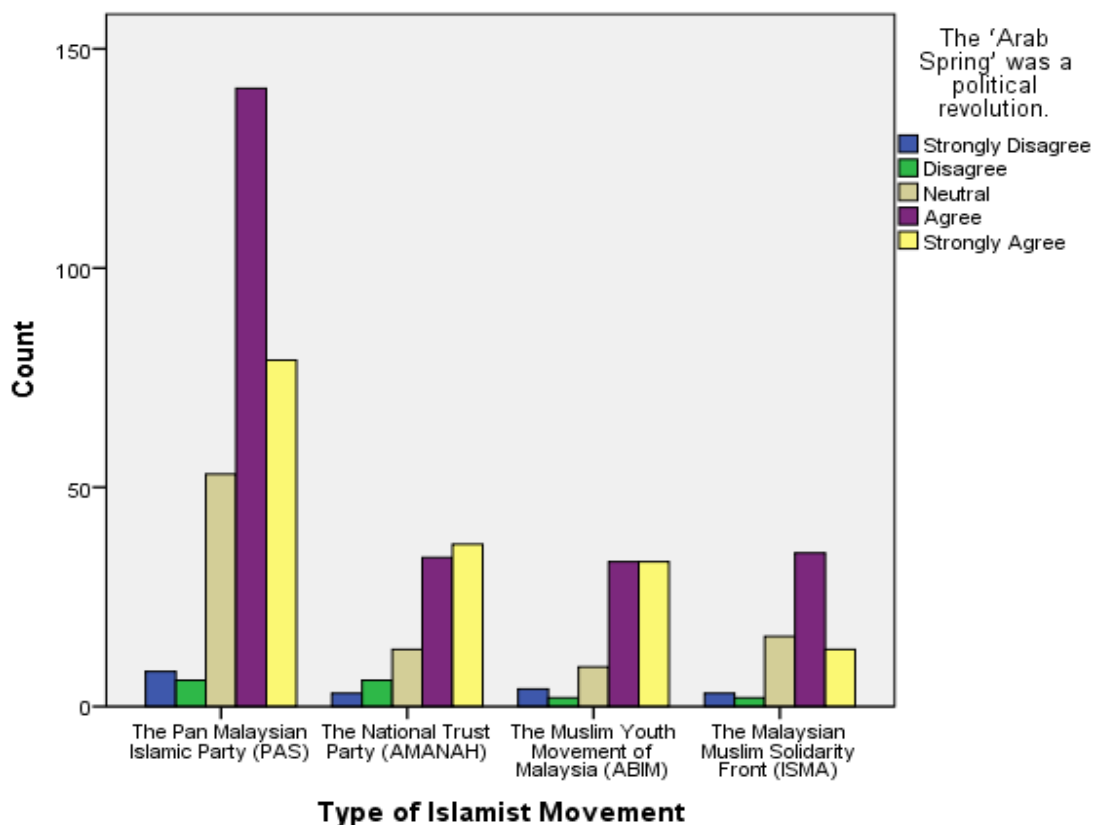
¹⁰⁸ Official statement from Abdul Hadi Awang, the 6th President of PAS regarding the Arab Spring and its lesson for Malaysia. See Appendix C for the full statement. The original statement is available online at <http://m.harakahdaily.net.my/index.php/presiden/42802-iktibar-arab-spring-politik-matang-dan-sejahtera> [12 November 2016]

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview with Abdullah Zaik bin Abdul Rahman, the current President of ISMA. Bangi, 5 November 2016.

¹¹⁰ Official statement from Abdul Hadi Awang, 12 November 2016. See Appendix D.

Although the outcome of the recent Arab Uprisings vary from one country to another, some scholars and observers describe the events as political revolutions or “The Arab Revolutions” - referring to the struggle of Arab nations against their former regimes and ruling systems via massive street protest. The label also accounts for the radical transformation in politics and values that the Arab world is undergoing (Pierre-Filiu 2011; Hanafi 2012; Noueihed & Warren 2012; Milton-Edwards 2012; Lawson 2015). For PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH, the majority of their members (76.4 percent) perceived the Arab Uprisings to be a national revolution in terms of its objectives to achieve social, economic and political reform. Only 6.4 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement believing that the Arab Uprisings was just a normal protest as had occurred in other countries in the world. 17.2 percent remained neutral in associating the Arab Uprisings with political revolution¹¹¹. Figure 6.5 below summarises the respondents’ feedback.

Figure 6.5 Respondents’ Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was a Political Revolution



¹¹¹ The full opinion of Malaysian Islamists on the Arab Uprisings from the perspective of political revolution can be viewed in Appendix C.

As the figure above shows, the number of respondents who viewed the Arab Uprisings as an event of political revolution (both agree and strongly agree answers) dominates the chart for each Islamist movement. This research also found that respondents' perceptions on this issue could be shaped by their sources of information. Among the nine types of sources (as previously stated), books recorded the highest percentage (82.2 percent) for respondents who agreed that the Arab Uprisings was a modern political revolution in the Arab world, followed by television (80.8 percent), newspaper (79.6 percent), forum or lecture (79.3 percent), internet (77.8 percent), journal article (77 percent), lecturer or friends (76.8 percent), radio (74 percent) and self-experience (53.9 percent). Thus, this finding indicates that the majority of Islamist movements in Malaysia understand the Arab Uprisings as political revolution based on their members' interpretation of books as well as other secondary information sources.

6.4.3 Non-Violent Resistance Movements

The concept of non-violent civil resistance was popularised by Mahatma Gandhi as a psychological method to counter the British occupation in India circa the 1940s (Horsburgh 1968). According to Nepstad (2011), nonviolent resistance movements are qualitatively different from violent revolutions, although they generally arise from the same factors - widespread grievances against the state regime. As a result, longstanding grievances are often transformed into moral outrage, which may make citizens willing to act and 'occupy' the streets. Regarding the case of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, the protests started with a peaceful demonstration where the protesters were seen utilising strategic non-violent tactics for example 'sit and protest', inspiring military defections¹¹², influencing support from political elites, creating structures of a parallel civil society and using new social media to coordinate and mobilise the protest (Batstone 2014). However, the protests turned violent when the regimes of Mubarak, Qaddafi and Assad deployed military force to crack down on protesters which later resulted in casualties. Do the Islamists from PAS, ABIM,

¹¹² As pointed out by Nepstad (2013: 337-347), the non-violent civil resistance research has portrayed defections as unequivocally positive. Forced defections can also heavily influence the outcome of non-violent uprisings against authoritarian regimes.

ISMA and AMANAH in Malaysia perceive the Arab Uprisings or the ‘Arab Spring’ as a violent protest?

Table 6.11. Respondents’ Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was a Non-Violent Resistance Movement

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was a Non-Violent Resistance Movement (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	25 (8.7%)	42 (14.6%)	77 (26.8%)	93 (32.4%)	50 (17.4%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	5 (5.4%)	6 (6.5%)	16 (17.2%)	31 (33.3%)	35 (37.6%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	4 (4.9%)	4 (4.9%)	19 (23.5%)	22 (27.2%)	32 (39.5%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	7 (10.1%)	21 (30.4%)	7 (10.1%)	23 (33.3%)	11 (15.9%)	69 (100%)
Total	41 (7.7%)	73 (13.8%)	119 (22.5%)	169 (31.9%)	128 (24.2%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

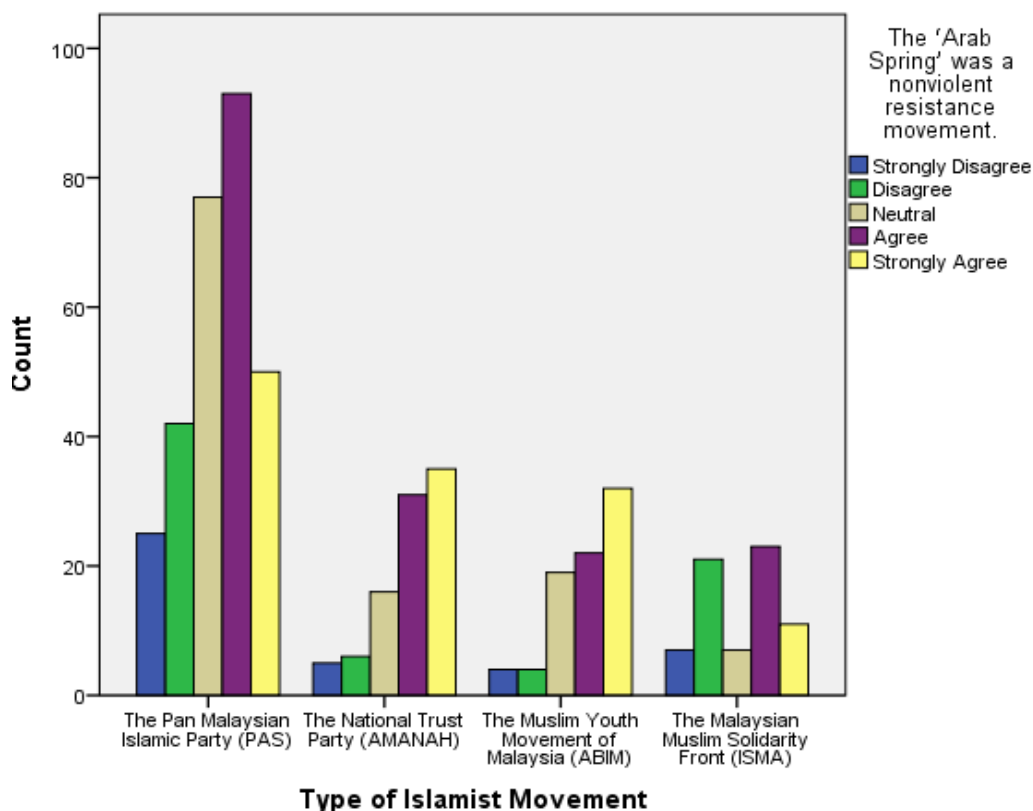
As shown in the Table 6.11, 128 respondents (24.2 percent) strongly agreed that the Arab Uprisings should be seen as a non-violent resistance movement. 169 respondents (32.9 percent) moderately supported the statement. Most of these respondents’ arguments relied on the fact that the Arab Uprisings protests were joined by all layers of society - the elderly, women, children, civil servants, students and general workers. All of them took to the streets unarmed and in a peaceful way without any intention to cause harm or chaos. Thus, for them it is definitely unfair to consider the demonstrations during the Arab Uprisings as violent acts. The question was relatively subjective and 22.5 percent of respondents seemed uncertain whether the Arab Uprisings were violent or non-violent protests, while the remaining 21.5 percent disagreed that the Arab Uprisings protests were peaceful events.

Among the four Islamist groups being studied, ISMA showed quite balanced responses compared to PAS, ABIM and AMANAH. As explained by the ISMA President, the Arab Uprisings undoubtedly had elements of violence, most notable in Egypt, Libya and Syria where the ‘revolutionaries’ threw stones and Molotov cocktails and set government buildings ablaze. Thus, for him as a leader of ISMA, the Arab Uprisings could not be classified as a non-violent resistance movement, although he agreed that the protesters showed resilience

and succeeded in toppling several key Arab leaders using non-violent means¹¹³.

Figure 6.6 below summarises the attitudes of respondents towards this issue.

Figure 6.6 Respondents' Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was a Non-Violent Resistance Movement



The next section will explore the attitudes of respondents towards several key factors that contributed to the Arab Uprisings in 2011.

6.5 Understanding the Factors that Led to the Arab Uprisings

The examination of respondents' understanding of fundamental facts concerning the Arab Uprisings were started by asking them whether Bouazizi's death ignited the anti-regime protests in Tunisia, which later spread and quickly evolved into political revolution throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As pointed out by several prominent academics, the recent trend of uprisings in the Arab world is broadly believed to have started in December 2010 in the wake of the self-immolation of the street vegetable seller (Bouazizi) in front of government municipals in Sidi Bouzid (Milton-Edwards 2012: 219; Alcinda 2013: 1; Storm 2014: 112; Esposito et al 2016: 2; Volpi 2017: 74). The day after the suicide, a large crowd of fellow Tunisians made up of youths, political

¹¹³ Personal interview with the ISMA President, November 2016.

activists, lawyers, workers and some opposition politicians began protesting against the Ben Ali regime (Gelvin 2012: 42). This action later sparked an upheaval in Sidi Bouzid and ignited a massive uprising in Tunisia that rapidly spread to the rest of the MENA region (Ghanem 2016: 63).

So, how did the Islamist movements in Malaysia react to this popular ‘story’? As can be seen in Table 6.12 below, more than half of the respondents (53.5 percent) agreed that the death of Bouazizi undoubtedly sparked the Arab Uprisings events. The PAS President, in his official statement also agreed with this statement and further added that Bouazizi’s desperate condition was due to decades of unresolved unemployment crises in Tunisia¹¹⁴. However, there was a considerable number of Malaysian Islamists who did not share this view. 174 respondents (32.8 percent), mainly from PAS (60.9 percent) and ISMA (18.4 percent), were not certain about the tragedy in Sidi Bouzid due to lack of knowledge and focus on Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution. The rest of the respondents (14.8 percent) disagreed with the statement being asked – unfortunately with no clear reason.

Table 6.12 Respondents’ Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was Sparked in Tunisia by Muhammad Bouazizi

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings was Sparked in Tunisia by Muhammad Bouazizi (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	10 (3.5%)	33 (11.5%)	106 (36.9%)	82 (28.6%)	56 (19.5%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	5 (3.2%)	6 (7.5%)	16 (28.0%)	31 (21.5%)	35 (39.8%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	4 (4.9%)	4 (2.5%)	19 (12.3%)	22 (34.6%)	32 (45.7%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	7 (4.3%)	21 (14.5%)	7 (46.4%)	23 (24.6%)	11 (10.1%)	69 (100%)
Total	41 (3.8%)	73 (9.8%)	119 (32.5%)	169 (27.7%)	128 (25.8%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

Apart from this point, the research also examines the attitudes of respondents towards the other underlying causes of the Arab Uprisings. As discussed above, it is generally known among a number of Malaysian Islamists that the tragedy of

¹¹⁴ Official statement from Abdul Hadi Awang, 12 November 2016. See Appendix C.

Bouazizi's death sparked the outraged protests in Tunisia which later spread to neighbouring countries starting with Egypt, Libya, the Yemen and Syria. However, it is worth mentioning that deep inside the nature of the uprisings, protesters were actually trying to tell their respective ruling regimes that people were fed up with the increasing unemployment crisis due to economic instability, as well as the practice of dictatorship amongst the authorities (Anderson 2011; Arieff 2012; Owen 2012). According to Gelvin (2012), the repressive nature of the Arab regimes and their suppression of citizen's rights, coupled with on-going corruption and the worsening economy were the major causes leading to the Arab revolutions. In addition to that, the advance of new social media (Facebook and Twitter) also played an important role in assisting Arab activists during the Arab Uprisings Revolutions (Howard and Hussain 2013). Thus, this research highlights three crucial factors that triggered the emergence of the people's revolts in a large part of the Arab world back in 2011 – 2012, namely: 1) economic downturn; 2) political dictatorship; and 3) media technology. The following section reveals the reactions of PAS, ABIM, AMANAH and ISMA members towards these three major factors.

6.5.1 Perception that Economic Downturn, Autocratic Leadership and the Role of Social Media Contributed to the Arab Uprisings

This section is based on the survey questions which asked respondents about the factors which caused the Arab Uprisings. Firstly, the findings show that almost 74.9 percent of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists generally agreed (combination of agree and strongly agree categories) that weak economic development, which gave birth to the chronic unemployment crisis among Arab youth, was the main reason for the uprisings. Their view seems in line with the survey conducted by the Arab Barometer in which 63 percent of Tunisian respondents believed that the weak economy was the major reason for the revolt against the Ben Ali regime¹¹⁵. Only 5.5 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, while 19.6 percent of the respondents preferred to remain neutral. In terms of feedback from specific movements, AMANAH showed the highest percentage of positive responses (93.4 percent), followed

¹¹⁵ Arab Barometer Survey, Wave III (2012-2014). <http://www.arabbarometer.org/content/arab-barometer-iii-0> [12 Jun 2015]

by ABIM (91.4 percent) and PAS (71.3 percent). ISMA, on the other hand, seemed quite sceptical that the economic problem was one of the contributing factors towards the Arab Uprisings. 40.6 percent of ISMA respondents had no idea about the statement (neutral response), whilst 8.6 percent totally disagreed. Details about the actual number of respondents' opinions can be seen in Table 6.13 below.

Table 6.13 Perceptions that Economic Downturn Contributed to the Arab Uprisings

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that Economic Downturn Contributed to the Arab Uprisings (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	7 (2.4%)	9 (3.1%)	67 (23.3%)	120 (41.8%)	84 (29.3%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	2 (2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	6 (6.5%)	34 (36.6%)	50 (56.8%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.9%)	3 (3.7%)	28 (34.6%)	46 (56.8%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	1 (1.4%)	5 (7.2%)	28 (40.6%)	24 (34.8%)	11 (15.9%)	69 (100%)
Total	10 (1.9%)	19 (3.6%)	104 (19.6%)	206 (38.9%)	191 (36.0%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

Secondly, regarding the issue of political repression, there were 177 respondents (33.4 percent) who strongly agreed that the Arab Uprisings were the result of several decades of dictatorship in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya and Yemen, followed by 202 respondents (38.1 percent) who moderately shared the same view. 106 respondents (20 percent) were not certain whether political dictatorship caused the launch of the Arab Uprisings protests, while 45 respondents (8.5 percent) simply rejected the claim of 'iron fist' leadership by Arab rulers and the absence of political freedom as a reason for the Arab Uprisings. Table 6.10 below presents the respondents' perceptions about the relationship between authoritarianism and the emergence of the Arab Uprisings protests.

Table 6.14 Perceptions that Autocratic Leadership Contributed to the Arab Uprisings

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that Autocratic Leadership Contributed to the Arab Uprisings (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	5 (1.7%)	23 (8.0%)	67 (23.3%)	111 (38.7%)	81 (28.2%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	3 (3.2%)	2 (2.2%)	12 (12.9%)	31 (33.3%)	45 (48.4%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	4 (4.9%)	8 (9.9%)	30 (37.0%)	39 (48.1%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	4 (5.8%)	4 (5.8%)	19 (27.5%)	30 (43.5%)	12 (17.4%)	69 (100%)
Total	12 (2.3%)	33 (6.2%)	106 (20.0%)	202 (38.1%)	177 (33.4%)	530 (100%)

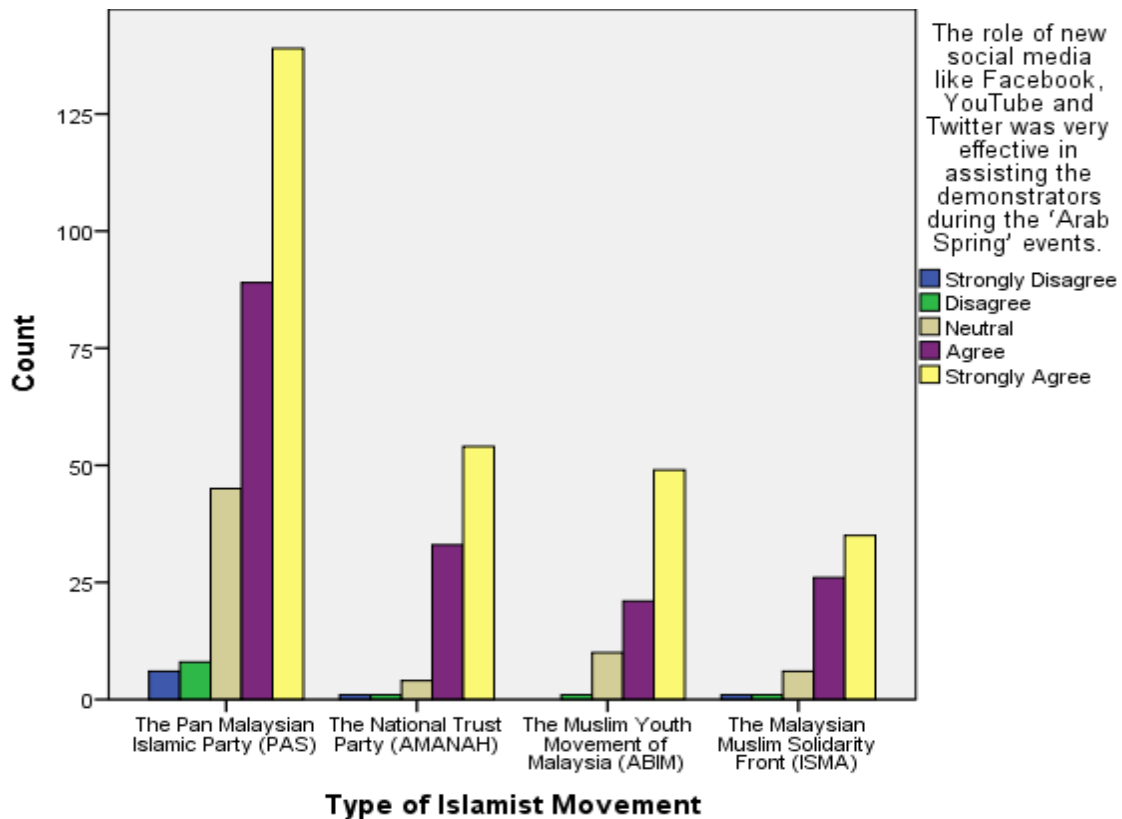
Source: Field Research 2016

Thirdly, concerning the role of social media, it is worth mentioning that online social media products (Facebook and Twitter) have rapidly grown over the last 10 years in the Middle East region, though their expansion certainly varies from state to state (Seib 2007). Throughout the series of Arab Uprisings street protests, social media platforms were instrumental in constructing an alternative news, mobilising citizens to take to the streets and most importantly they cascaded messages about political freedom, civil rights and positive hope from the uprisings. In other words, digital media had a causal role in the Arab Uprisings in the sense that it provided the very infrastructure that created deep communication ties and organisational capacity in groups of activists before the major protests took place and while street protests were being formalised (Howard and Hussein 2013: 120).

When respondents were asked about their opinion regarding the effectiveness of new social media during the Arab Uprisings events, 84.2 percent of them (446) agreed that the role of Facebook, Twitter, the Youtube Channel and web blogs, as well as foreign media's online portals, were extremely useful in helping the protesters to 'secure' the success of the revolutions. 12.3 percent of respondents (65) seemed uncertain whether the social media factor was associated with the success of the Arab Uprisings, while the remaining 3.6 percent (14) of respondents disagreed with the statement. Additionally, the Islamist movement which the respondents represented did not make any significant difference as the pattern of reaction

was similar for PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH. The summary of respondents' views from each movement can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 6.7 Respondents' Perceptions that the Role of New Social Media Was Very Effective in Assisting Demonstrators During the Arab Uprisings Protests



Based on the major findings in this section, it seems that PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH agreed that the three factors mentioned (economic downturn, political repression and the role of social media) were valid reasons why thousands of Arab citizens took to the streets against their former regimes. According to ISMA, activist Amar Yasier¹¹⁶:

“The Arab Spring was a process of revolution and political reformation in the Middle East. The worsening economic problems and widespread political mercilessness contributed to what was triggered as the ‘Arab Spring’. The people were no longer seen to be capable of facing various corrupted systems, even the garbage collection system in housing areas. The people felt as if they were taken advantage of by the authorities. Thus, the final method was to rise and fight by taking it to the streets”.

Nevertheless, the ISMA movement via its President and several members interviewed by the researcher believed that the Arab Uprising events were also triggered by another factor – the role of ‘invisible hands’ - which they specifically

¹¹⁶ Personal interview with The International Relations Bureau for ISMA’s UK branch, Amar Yasier. London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

referred to as external powers, for instance the USA and its western allies through 'confidential or secret plans'. The movement 'accused' these foreign powers of having personal political agendas and economic interests within the MENA region and thus supporting Arab revolutionaries to overthrow leaders of Muslim nations. Central to these claims, the ISMA President believes that¹¹⁷:

"It was true, the 'Arab Spring' was indeed an effort to fight against the cruelty of Arabic dictatorial regimes. The ruling of the Arab world prior to the Arab Spring had reached a hiatus, where there was no agenda that benefitted the people and there was a separation or a big gap between the people and the government. But the 'Arab Spring' was not only an effort to fight against the cruelty of the leaders; there were some back 'hands' that took advantage of what was called the 'Arab Spring' or people's uprising. The Arab Uprisings were also spurred by an external influence through campaigns to re-energize the civil society, or in other words, a movement from the outside coming to take advantage of the Arab Uprisings situation by using the civil society as a tool to overthrow the government. The external influence implied was from the West, where they were seen to use a new format to change the government through the role of the civil society. In Syria for instance, Mossad-Israel, CIA-America and FSB-Russia undoubtedly want the future of the country to be determined according to the respective country's interest. Thus, in talking about the 'Arab Spring', it is not something easy as we would normally understand it, which is a people's uprising to overthrow a regime. It is far from that.

An ISMA Activist, Mohd Syafiq seems to support his 'President' by saying that¹¹⁸:

"In general, we can see that the Arab Uprisings were a concerted effort by the people to unite and collaborate in rejecting any leaders that they felt did not benefit the people. So, they tried to change the leaders. But at the same time, if we were to look at it more deeply, actually there were efforts from outsiders, for example from the US, where they tried to take advantage of the chaos of the Arab Spring Revolution to destroy the administration in Arab countries".

Asyraf Farique, an independent researcher within ISMA further explains what the movement thinks about the 'relationship' between the West and the Arab Uprisings¹¹⁹:

¹¹⁷ Personal interview with the ISMA President, November 2016.

¹¹⁸ Personal interview with ISMA Activist, Mohd Syafiq. ISMA Head Office. Bangi, Malaysia. August 2016.

¹¹⁹ Personal interview with ISMA Activist, Asyraf Farique. ISMA Head Office. Bangi, Malaysia. August 2016.

“I think the Arab Spring is not something that happened out of the blue when the self-immolation of Bouazizi took place and there were uprisings amongst the people who rebelled against the rulers and so on. We (ISMA) see the ‘Arab Spring’ as a properly arranged plan by Western powers like America. If we look at several series of demonstrations in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, the agency called the National Endowment for Democracy has given a lot of funds to civil movements to oust their leaders. The same method was used in Europe as was once used in Ukraine. The external factors play a very important role, as well as the internal factors to the point that the people in Arab countries have successfully brought down the regimes in countries involved in the Arab Spring”.

These ‘prejudicial’ sentiments indirectly reflected the movement’s ideology and long practise of an ‘aggressive approach’ (previously discussed in Chapter Four) when it comes to issues of Muslim and Non-Muslim relations, be it at the local or global level.

Thus, for the researcher, it was not a surprise to note that all the interviewees from ISMA responded in a very similar voice by pointing out the role of foreign powers behind the backdrop of the Arab Uprisings¹²⁰. Although the actual involvement of foreign powers during the anti-government protests seems not legitimately proven, Michael Hudson, an American Political Scientist raised the same issue in his writing which appears in line with ISMA’s views:

“I never believed that the sudden explosions of massive popular protest (the Arab Spring) were just coincidental. This is not to say, obviously, that there was a foreign conspiracy behind them, as some people in the Arab world believe.” (Hudson 2015: 32)

In comparison, PAS, ABIM and AMANAH seem to share a common opinion regarding the factors that contributed to the Arab Uprisings. Whilst for ISMA, although the movement generally agreed with all the three factors mentioned, the survey results found that quite a number of its members remained sceptical about economic and political factors. The role of foreign powers was mentioned by several ISMA members, including its President, as another factor that should be considered. This scenario is best explained by the theory proposed by Robin Goodwin (previously discussed in Chapter Two) – the ‘Adjustment to Change’ theory - which examines how individual or group characteristics (in this case the political approach and ideology of ISMA) affect the views and responses of its

¹²⁰ Personal interviews with ISMA activists, Asyraf Farique and Mohd Syafiq. ISMA Head Office. Bangi, Malaysia. August 2016.

members towards rapid and dramatic social change (the Arab Uprisings events). Accordingly, apart from the demographical aspects and the type of sources of information, the role of an Islamist movement's ideology and political approach can also be considered as a predictor of group attitudes to the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon, as was shown by the feedback of ISMA Islamic activists.

6.6 Attitudes Towards Islamist Movements and the Arab Uprisings

The purpose of this section is to explore the Malaysian Islamists' attitudes towards Islamism, political Islam and Islamist movement issues, specifically the Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt within the context of the Arab Uprisings. As previously stated in Chapter Four, the strong connection between the Islamist movements in Malaysia (PAS, ABIM, ISMA, AMANAH) and transnational Islamist movements is undeniable. In general, the parties and movements' policies remain firm on supporting the idea of political Islam (though by different approaches) as well as the development of any Muslim Brotherhood inspired movements all over the world. Hence, it is quite reasonable for one to assume that these movements' strong ties with the global Islamist network will potentially lead to a biased view on any issues relating to Islamism and Islamist movements in MENA during the Arab Uprisings and post-Arab Uprisings events.

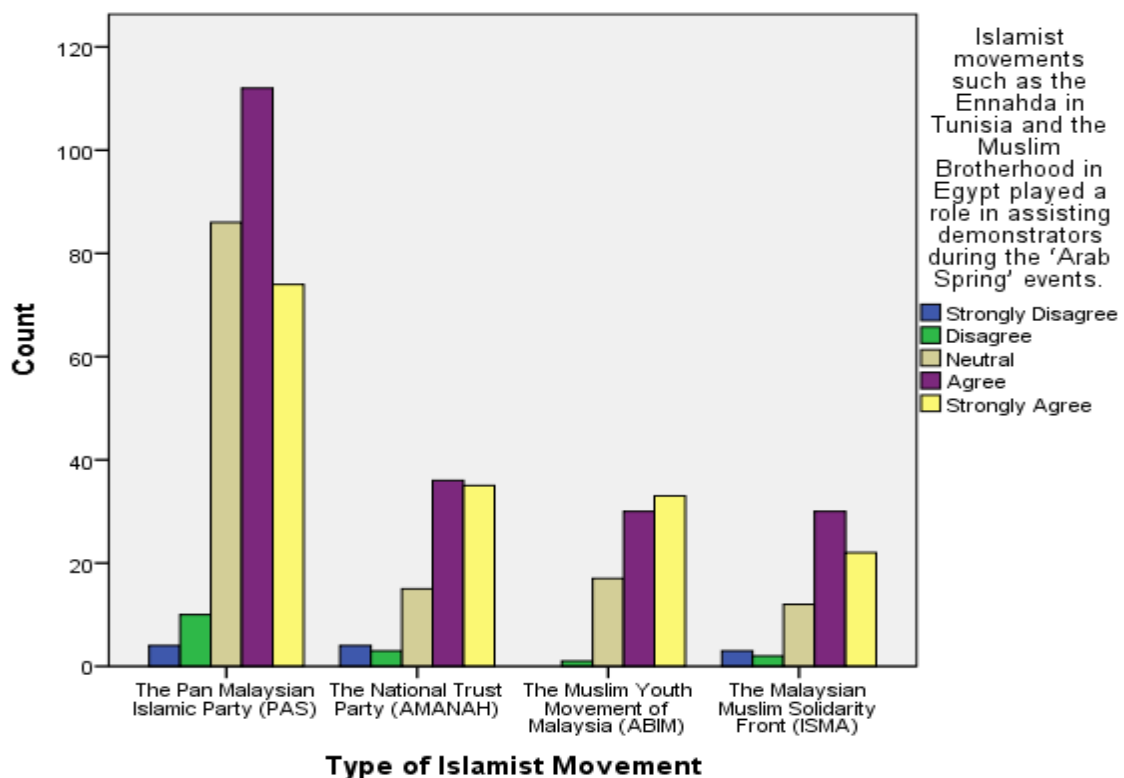
Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the events of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, as argued by Olivier Roy (2012), were not a kind of 'Islamic Revolution' and far from any direct involvement of Islamist movements during the 2011 anti-government protests. In Tunisia for instance, during the first few weeks of protest that led to the fall of the Ben Ali regime, there was a minimal amount of active participation on the part of the Tunisian Islamists as an organised group (Merone and Volpi 2014). Meanwhile in Egypt, prior to the uprising, the role and involvement of the Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, was uncertain as members were seen as hesitant to openly protest against the Mubarak regime and remained 'low profile' during the popular January 25th Revolution (Paciello 2011; Kerckhove 2012). In Syria, Yemen and Libya, there was also no concrete evidence to show any direct participation of Islamists when the uprisings broke out. From these established facts, it was clear that the Arab Uprisings was not on the agenda of the

Islamists in the first place. The question here is - are they (the Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH) on the 'same page' as those scholars in viewing the role of Islamist movements during the Arab Uprisings? The following section provides their responses.

6.6.1 The Role of Islamist Movements

As Islamism and the relationship with Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa are significant elements for all the four movements (PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH), the respondents were asked whether Islamist movements in the MENA region played a role in assisting protesters during the Arab Uprisings.

Figure 6.8 Respondents' Perceptions that Islamist Movements Played a Role in Assisting Protesters During the Arab Uprisings



As can be seen in the Figure 6.8, the results were statistically significant and also expected. It is not surprising to see that only a minority of respondents (5.1 percent) were in line with Olivier Roy's argument that Islamists and Islamist movements did not play a significant role in supporting the Tunisian and

Egyptian protesters to overthrow their former regimes (those of Ben Ali and Mubarak). As mentioned by Abdullah Zaik (ISMA President)¹²¹:

“The Arab Uprisings that happened (in the Middle East) were indeed something that was not on the agenda of the Islamist movements (in the first place) - even the Muslim Brothers in Egypt did not take part in the early phase of the revolution. They were hesitant to take part in the demonstrations, or in other words, they were not sure whether to take advantage of them or not”.

Instead, the majority of Malaysian Islamists (70.3 percent) believed that their ‘Islamist counterparts’ in Tunisia and Egypt had somehow assisted the protesters during the Arab Uprisings. Although their opinion seems contradictory to the mainstream notion about the Islamists’ contribution during the Arab Uprisings, there are scholars such as Masoud (2011: 24), Gelvin (2012: 58) and Ghabra (2015: 209) who argued that the members of the youth wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had ‘secretly’ participated (as individuals) in the protests and even played a visible role in defending the protesters against pro-Mubarak supporters during the ‘Battle of Camel’. These arguments could soundly justify why these respondents chose to agree with the question. The rest of the respondents (27.4 percent) remained neutral on this question¹²².

6.6.2 The ‘Islamist Winter’

In the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, several Islamist parties, most notably Tunisia’s Ennahda and Egypt’s Freedom and Justice Party gained attention due to their victory in the national elections following the overthrow of their former autocratic regimes (Esposito et al 2016). Being part of the Muslim Brotherhood’s global Islamist movements, such news was widely celebrated among Islamist activists all over Malaysia¹²³. When respondents were asked whether the Arab Uprisings was a phenomenon of Islamist uprising and the rise of political Islam in the Arab world, 69.6 percent of the respondents said “yes” and 9.4 percent disagreed. Table 6.10 below presents the PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists’ responses regarding the trend of ‘Islamist Winter’.

¹²¹ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

¹²² See Appendix B for the full details of the respondents’ reactions.

¹²³ As previously mentioned in Chapter One, a PAS delegation had visited the Ennahda Headquarters in Tunis in 2012 and 2015 to congratulate Ghannouchi and his party for their first ever opportunity to govern Tunisia.

Table 6.15 Respondents' Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings Was a Phenomenon of Islamist Uprising and the Rise of Political Islam in the Arab World

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that the Arab Uprisings Was a Phenomenon of Islamist Uprising (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	4 (1.4%)	16 (5.6%)	72 (25.1%)	127 (44.3%)	68 (23.7%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	4 (4.3%)	11 (11.8%)	15 (16.1%)	39 (41.9%)	24 (25.8%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	3 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (11.1%)	31 (38.3%)	38 (46.9%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	4 (5.8%)	8 (11.6%)	15 (21.7%)	25 (36.2%)	17 (24.6%)	69 (100%)
Total	15 (2.8%)	35 (6.6%)	111 (20.9%)	222 (41.9%)	147 (27.7%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

It is undeniable that political Islam gained popularity after Islamist parties successfully 'hijacked' the Middle East Revolts by winning the majority of seats in the parliament (Bradley 2012). This trend led to a naive and misleading perception among the 222 respondents who saw the Arab Uprisings or the 'Arab Spring' as a phenomenon of political Islam's awakening in the MENA region. 147 respondents even strongly perceived the Arab Uprisings as an Islamist uprising. 50 respondents however rationally rejected the statement by arguing that the Arab Uprisings should be viewed as a mass uprising without placing any exclusivity on Islamist groups, while 111 respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with both arguments. As acknowledged by Muhammad Najib (AMANAH Youth Leader)¹²⁴:

"The 'Arab Spring' was not the phenomenon of Islamist movements uprising. The Islamist movements in the Arab world only took advantage upon the political uncertainty (in the post-Arab Uprisings) to come to power, without any preparation and governing model. Hence, some of them failed to stay in power and govern. The development of AKP in Turkey, with a decade under Erdogan's leadership is the real phenomena of the Islamist uprisings, as the party seems successful in accommodating the country's secular values with political Islam which enables it to continuously gain support in every series of elections".

Speaking of AKP as a 'real' phenomenon of political Islam, Muhammad Najib's view was also supported by another AMANAH activist who commented¹²⁵:

¹²⁴ Personal interview with the AMANAH National Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016.

¹²⁵ Respondent's written comments on the questionnaire.

“Turkey has gradually expanded the value of Islam in public life until it is openly accepted by the majority of Turkish Muslims. I hope that there will be a party in Malaysia - I suggest AMANAH – which will apply the approach of the AKP in Turkey. Long Live Erdogan!”

6.6.3 Prospect for Islamist Parties

The 2011 Arab Uprisings undoubtedly has given rise to an unprecedented of political parties in the region, including the Islamists¹²⁶. In Egypt for instance, before the June 2013 coup, the January 25th Revolution opened the way for the creation of more than 80 new parties (Vannetzel 2017: 211). Given the strong performance of Ennahda in the 2011 Tunisia’s legislative elections and FJP in the 2012 Egyptian presidential election¹²⁷, respondents were asked whether they saw the Arab Uprisings as a great opportunity for Islamist parties to gain power. The findings show that 49.5 percent of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists are positive that the post-Arab Uprisings provided a great chance for Islamist parties to come to power for the first time ever. For these respondents, it became apparent that without the Arab Uprisings, the Islamist parties could only dream of achieving political power and ruling their states given the nature of the previous party systems in both Tunisia and Egypt – the hegemony and one party dominant systems¹²⁸. As Khalil Anani (2012: 466) points out:

“After decades of brutal repression and exclusion, the Arab Spring opened the doors of power for Islamists. From Morocco to Egypt, Islamist parties have fared well in elections held since the eruption of revolts in early 2011”.

However, the trend of the so-called ‘Islamist winter’ in the post-Arab Uprisings did not last long when Ennahda failed to capture the majority of seats in the 2014 legislative election, which saw it become an opposition party to the newly rebranded secular party government – the Nidaa Tounes. In Cairo, the June 2013 coup tragically ended the one and only term of Muslim Brotherhood’s rule under Mohamed Morsi throughout Egypt’s political history. 13.5 percent of

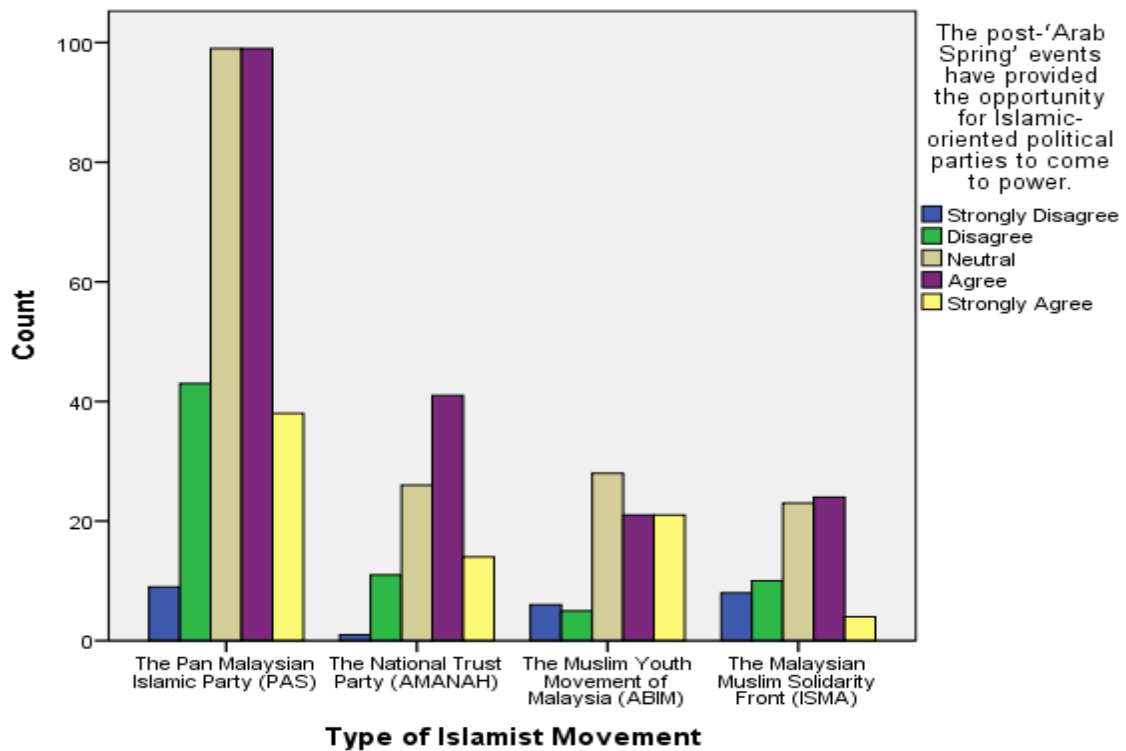
¹²⁶ For more details on parties and party system change in the MENA after the Arab Uprisings, see Storm (2017) in Szmolka, Inmaculada ed. Political Change in the Middle East and North Africa: After the Arab Spring. Page 63-88.

¹²⁷ By referring to the case of Ennahda and the Freedom and Justice Party, shortly after the departure of Mubarak in Cairo and Ben Ali in Tunis, the election results in both countries enabled these Islamist parties to form new governments.

¹²⁸ See Lise Storm for more details on the party system in Tunisia before the Jasmine Revolution. Storm, Lise (2014). Party Politics and Prospects for Democracy in North Africa. Colorado: Lynne Rienner. Page 85-106.

the respondents referred to these facts to justify why they disagreed that the Arab Uprisings was an opportunity for Islamist parties to come to power. The remaining 33.1 percent of the respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with the question being asked. Interestingly, the number of respondents who were not certain about the prospects for Islamist parties in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings were relatively high, especially for PAS, ISMA and ABIM which reflects the subjective nature of the question. Figure 6.9 below summarised the attitudes of respondents towards the question.

Figure 6.9 Respondents' Perceptions that the Post-Arab Uprisings Events Provided an Opportunity for the Islamist Parties to Come to Power



The second part of the question involved asking respondents whether the Arab Islamist parties were capable of governing the Arab countries. In general, about three and a half years for Ennahda and one year for the FJP were the lengths of experience that these Islamist parties had in governing their respective states in the post-Arab Uprisings era. Were they seen as capable of doing such a 'job'? 56.5 percent of the respondents believed that the mainstream Islamist parties¹²⁹ (in the Middle East) are capable of governing due to decades of experience being in the opposition camp to most of the Arab regimes. Furthermore, a number of respondents believe that Arab Islamist movements have increasingly

¹²⁹ Defined here as those who renounce violence and commit to the democratic process, as in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

adopted more moderate positions and policies, which suggested a readiness to assume the responsibilities of power. One of the respondents from PAS further stated that:

“The ability of Islamist parties in governing the Arab state are self-evident. As long as there is no act of sabotage from the military, external actors or powers and opposition parties, they (the Islamist parties) can perform their job very well. Nowadays, Islam and democracy have proven to be compatible – thus opportunity should democratically be given to Islamist parties without any prejudice, so that these parties can ‘demonstrate’ their abilities in ruling Arab countries”¹³⁰.

Paradoxically, there was a small number of respondents (12.2 percent) who doubted the ability of Islamist parties to govern Arab countries, while 31.3 percent of respondents were not entirely sure about the statement. One of the reasons raised by an AMANAH representative was:

“The Islamist parties (in MENA), especially Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, seem to lack a proper plan and governing model to rule their states in the post-Arab Uprisings. They (the Islamist parties) should know which one is a priority between the agenda of political Islam and the basic needs (economic aspects) among the people. If they can come out with a practical solution towards the issues of corruption, poverty and unemployment, then people will certainly have confidence in supporting the ability of any Islamist-oriented parties to govern”¹³¹.

If the issue of readiness to assume power, as demonstrated by the case of the FJP under the former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi was one the reasons (for some Malaysian Islamists who doubted the capability of Arab Islamist parties to govern), then it seems Marc Lynch (2016) had a better opinion to ‘harmonize’ those two different views within the Malaysian Islamists. According to him, Islamist parties were indeed poorly equipped to deal with any political openings after the Arab Uprisings in 2011, but many have adapted to the aftermath in diverse and pragmatic ways – for example the introduction of a ‘Muslim Democrat’ approach by the Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi, Furthermore, the rise and fall of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood was critically important across the region, but its experience was not typical compared to other regional Islamist parties. Moreover, Islamist parties have continued to

¹³⁰ Personal interview with a PAS activist (name withheld at interviewee’s request), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 September 2016.

¹³¹ Personal interview with the Amanah Central Committee (Former PAS Chief Youth), Suhaizan Kayat. AMANAH Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 October 2016.

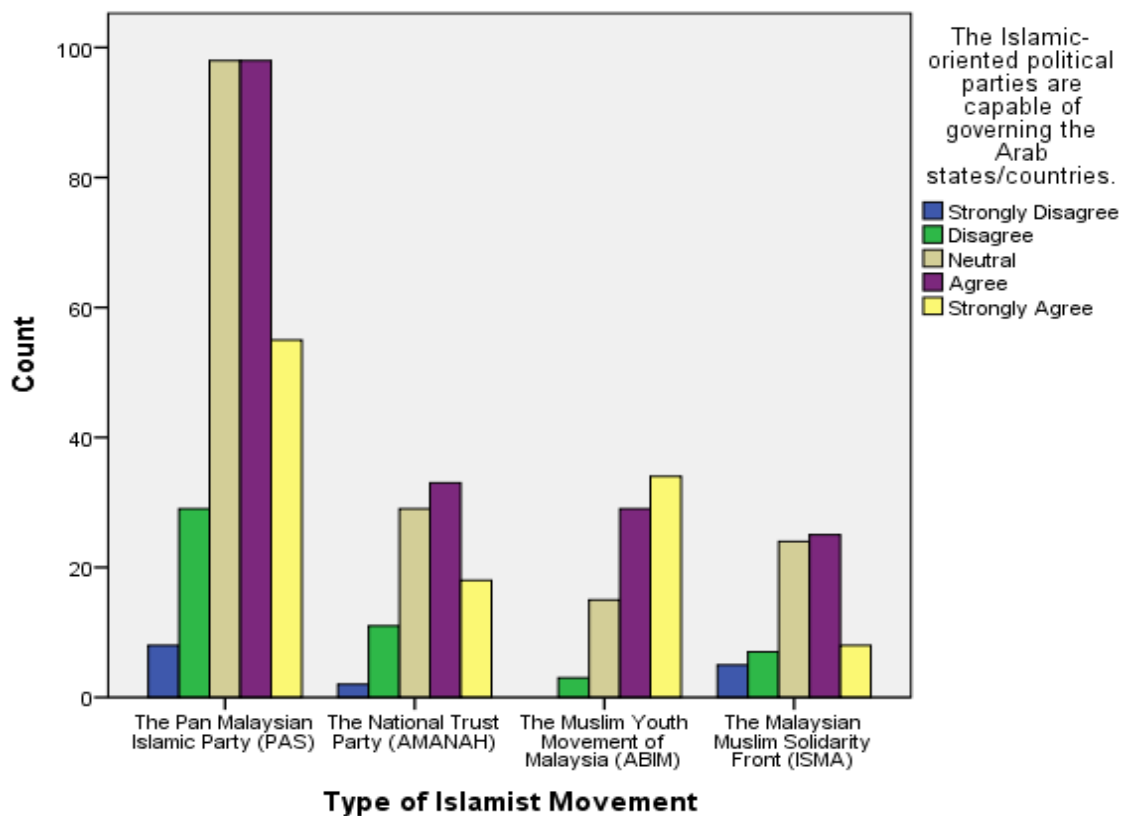
participate successfully in democratic elections despite domestic and regional pressures. Thus, Lynch (2016) believes that Islamist parties will continue to play an important role in the politics of most Arab states, despite the pressures they have faced in recent years. Overall, Table 6.16 and Figure 6.10 below indicate the attitudes of respondents towards the capability of Islamist parties in governing Arab countries.

Table 6.16 Respondents' Views that the Islamist Parties are Capable of Governing the Arab Countries

Type of Islamist Movement	Perceptions that the Islamist Parties are Capable of Governing the Arab Countries (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	8 (2.8%)	29 (10.1%)	98 (34.0%)	98 (34.0%)	55 (19.1%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	2 (2.2%)	11 (11.8%)	29 (31.2%)	33 (35.5%)	18 (19.4%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.7%)	15 (18.5%)	29 (35.8%)	34 (42.0%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	5 (7.2%)	7 (10.1%)	24 (34.8)	25 (36.2%)	8 (11.6%)	69 (100%)
Total	15 (2.8%)	50 (9.4%)	166 (31.3%)	185 (34.8%)	115 (21.7%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

Figure 6.10 Respondents' Views that the Islamist Parties are Capable of Governing the Arab Countries



As the Figure 5.9 demonstrates, the number of respondents from each movement who are not convinced of the capability of Islamist parties in the Arab world to govern are relatively balanced, except for ABIM – since more than half of the respondents (77.8 percent) give a positive response. There were approximately 46.1 percent of PAS, 45.2 percent of AMANAH and 52.1 percent of ISMA members who did not share the majority view (either by remaining neutral or disagreeing). The final section will continue with a discussion on the nature of Islamist movement as part of the society's agent of change, based on respondents' attitudes.

6.6.4 The Islamist Movement as an Agent of Societal Change

This section explores the respondents' views on whether post-Arab Uprisings events have highlighted the relevance of the Islamist Movement as a societal agent of change, within the context of Malaysia's experience. In 2004, Diane Singerman argued that the Islamic movement is not exceptional but rather has elements common to all social movements – purposeful and organised groups which strive towards a common goal via collective identity and behaviour, a range of strategies and so forth¹³². The Islamic movement is seen as quite similar to other social movements in the world, except for the political aim and political context within which it operates which leads to the distinctive character of the so-called 'Islamist movement'. Although the capacity of social movements to construct a new social order is sometimes limited, they are undoubtedly capable of creating social change as can be seen in the case of the Arab Uprisings. The Ennahda and Muslim Brothers are clear examples of Islamist movements acting as agents of change in their respective civil societies through their adoption of political power.

Throughout the period of Ennahda's rule in the post-2011 Jasmine Revolution, the movement contributed positively to the overall development of Tunisian politics and remains significant within the country's democratic consolidation process (Guazzone 2013: 30). Meanwhile in Egypt, apart from the political aspect, the Muslim Brotherhood's network of social services, in

¹³² See Diane Singerman (2004). *The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements in Wiktorowichz, Quintan ed. Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Page 143-161.

particular schools and medical facilities, served millions of Egyptians who relied on these services to meet their daily needs before the military regime's crackdown following the coup in June 2013 (Brooke 2015). Despite years of repression and political discrimination by the former regimes, the two examples mentioned above might reasonably illustrate the relevance of Islamist movements as agents of societal change in the era of the post-Arab Uprisings – as observed by the majority of Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH (68.9 percent) who were involved in the survey. Only 9.4 percent of respondents disagreed with the view, while 21.7 percent remained neutral. Table 6.17 below shows respondents' reactions to the statement.

Table 6.17 Respondents' Views that The Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Shown the Relevance of the Islamist Movement as an Agent of Societal Change

Type of Islamist Movement	The Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Shown the Relevance of the Islamist Movement as an Agent of Societal Change (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	9 (3.1%)	15 (5.2%)	69 (24.0%)	135 (46.9%)	60 (20.8%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	2 (2.2%)	8 (8.6%)	18 (19.4%)	47 (50.5%)	18 (19.4%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	2 (2.5%)	7 (8.6%)	9 (11.1%)	41 (50.6%)	22 (27.2%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	7 (10.1%)	19 (27.5%)	25 (36.2%)	18 (26.1%)	69 (100%)
Total	13 (2.4%)	37 (7.0%)	115 (21.7%)	248 (46.7%)	118 (22.2%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

6.7 Conclusion and Summary

The main aim of this chapter was to explore the perceptions of respondents representing the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA) and the National Trust Party (AMANAH) towards the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. This chapter began with general questions about the respondents' backgrounds including their membership status within the movements. Most of the respondents came from the age ranges 16-25 and 26-35, which represented 76.7 percent of the whole research sample. The majority of respondents' were male (70.7 percent) with a Bachelors Degree qualification from local institutions as well as holding official membership of the PAS, ABIM,

ISMA or AMANAH movements. These respondents also actively participated and engaged in their movements' political activism.

The chapter continued with an assessment of respondents' knowledge towards the existence of the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The results indicated that 82.7 percent of respondents (532) from all movements were highly aware of such events with the internet or new social media (Facebook and Twitter) as their main sources of information. Among the four movements, ABIM showed impressive feedback as all members involved in this study knew about the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. The research also found that level of education and membership status were potential factors determining respondents' general knowledge of the Arab Uprisings. Those who had a higher level of academic qualification and actively participated in their parties or movements' political activism presented significant knowledge about the Arab Uprisings. On the other hand, there were 111 respondents', mostly from PAS, who did not know about the Arab Uprisings due to lack of time to read or listen to information sources, or watch global news. As a result, these respondents had never been exposed to the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in recent years. For those respondents who knew about the Arab Uprisings, their knowledge was highly valuable for this research, as it helped the study to examine how the Malaysian Islamists perceive the phenomenon as well as determining whether it affected their attitudes towards certain contemporary issues. The exploration of awareness of the Arab Uprisings among the respondents in terms of their perceptions and attitudes about the chosen issues generated a number of interesting findings as summarised in the following paragraphs.

The respondents' perceptions towards the general issues concerning the Arab Uprisings were explored through questions which dealt with the issues of dictatorship rule, political revolution, non-violent resistance and the 'sacrifice' of Mohammed Bouazizi. The findings showed that a significant number of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists viewed the Arab Uprisings as the immediate result of Mohammed Bouazizi's tragedy which led to an Arab political revolution and the people's upheaval against dictatorship via non-violent resistance movements. In general, it appears that all four Islamist movements have genuine knowledge about the Arab Uprisings which reflects the

movements' 'tradition' to constantly maintain focus on Arab Middle Eastern affairs. As regards the factors that led to the Arab Uprisings, the vast majority of respondents agreed that the deteriorating state of economic performance (379) and the long-term practise of political repression (397) triggered the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya. They also agreed that new social media had been greatly advantageous as a medium to enhance the spread of the protests and later secured the revolutions (446).

In the meantime, ISMA also stressed that the role of foreign powers should be considered as one of the factors that caused popular anti-government protests throughout the Middle East and North Africa. To put it more succinctly, the movement believed that major powers from the West tried to gain advantage from the political uncertainties among the Arab Muslim nations following the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. The consistent view expressed by several ISMA members with regard to this question was due to the movement's ideology and political approaches (of political Islam) which shaped the way of thinking of its members. In other words, individual characteristics might affect the views of members towards any rapid dramatic social change, as in the case of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon– as proposed by Goldwin in his theory of 'Adjustment to Change'.

Next, the attitudes of the respondents towards Islamism and the Arab Uprisings were quite 'one-sided' as 70.3 percent of respondents thought that the Islamist movements played a significant role in assisting the protesters during the Arab Uprisings. This perception led to a deceptive assumption among 69.9 percent of the Malaysian Islamists in this study that the 2011 Arab Uprisings was a phenomenon of Islamist uprisings and the rise of political Islam in the MENA region. Those who came from a movement which strongly favoured Islamism and were very much oriented towards the 'struggle for political Islam' agenda also showed a strong degree of concern about Arab Islamist parties, as most of them personally believed that those parties were capable of governing the Arab states. There was also a small minority of respondents who did not agree or remained neutral about the above statements. Based on the researcher's observation, those respondents who believed that the Arab Islamists had contributed to the uprisings were quite 'passionate' in their view of the Muslim Brother's legacy in the Arab world. Another explanation

for such differences could also be the variety of sources used by these respondents concerning Islamist issues. For instance, the mainstream academic writings mostly concluded that Islamism and Islamist movements did not play a prominent role during the revolutions as can be seen in the work of Roy (2012), Bradley (2012), Willis (2014), Stein et al (2014), Merone and Volpi (2014). Thus, for respondents who admitted that they used books and journal articles, the information from these sources might have helped them to view the relation between Islamism and the Arab Uprisings in a constructive way, despite the positive relationship between PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH with the Islamist movements in the MENA region.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal one common view among the four named Malaysian Islamist groups; this is that the progressive development of such Arab Islamist parties in the post-Arab Uprisings might be an indicator of the relevance of the Islamist movement as a powerful agent of societal change. To summarise, one can see that there is not much difference in how the Islamist movements in Malaysia responded to the Arab Uprisings, except for ISMA whereby the responses to two questions were quite unique compared to the other three movements. Most of the respondents' feedback showed a consistent trend of reaction - the 'agree and strongly agree' categories were the most popular choice of answer for the majority of questions and statements in the survey.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS ON THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN MALAYSIA

“Tunisia, after the revolution has its own experience, its own mentality, its own way of dealing with political issues... that is why we are in the vanguard of a new experience of showing to the world that being a Muslim is not as antinomic as being a democratic person”- Naoufel Eljammali, Ennahda Movement¹³³

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the attitudes of respondents towards the post-Arab Uprisings issues, which are directly relevant to the landscape of Malaysian politics, as well as the development of political Islam in the country. This chapter will also examine the implications of the post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon on PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH members and activists; specifically how the events have impacted on their attitudes towards the issues of street protests, social media activism, political Islam and moderation, as well as influencing their interest in Middle Eastern political affairs.

Why these issues? Firstly, as previously explained in Chapter Five, there have been protests in Malaysia over the past few years which have pressured the current Malaysian Prime Minister and his one party dominant government (Barisan Nasional) to step down. There is a rumour that the next general election may be held around the mid of 2018 and the call for street demonstration is now being actively organised by political opposition parties¹³⁴. Their aim is to have a regime change by any means and transform the current practice of 'semi-democracy' in Malaysia into a more open and democratic system. However, these opposition parties will need significant support from their 'coalition' or alliance members in order to mobilise any protests. For instance, the passion and energetic character of PAS Islamists, especially amongst the youth members, make them a backbone of street protests and social movements in Malaysia - as can be seen from the Reformasi Protest (1998), Bersih 1.0 (2007), Bersih 2.0 (2011) and Bersih 3.0 (2012). The

¹³³ Personal interview with former Minister of Employment and Vocational Training of Tunisia and a member of Ennahda Political Bureau, Naoufel Eljammali. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

¹³⁴ Fieldwork at the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election (Bersih) roadshow, Shah Alam, Malaysia. 3 November 2016.

potential involvement of a large number of Islamist opposition activists in future political protests raises concern for the Malaysian ruling government. From the regime perspective, the act of street protest could possibly undermine the country's political stability and any attempt for political change should be funnelled through a proper and legitimate channel – the election. For them, the opposition politicians and the Islamists should never 'import' the elements of Arab Uprisings protest into Malaysia as this may encourage more political activists and Islamists to take to the streets for the sake of regime change (as occurred in previous protests)¹³⁵.

Secondly, in the wake of the apparently 'Islamist winter' in the post-Arab Uprisings, there have been efforts to improve the quality of political Islam amongst the Islamist groups in Malaysia – including PAS¹³⁶. Although Esposito and Voll in 'Islam and Democracy' (1996) argued that Islam and democratic governance were proven to be compatible in several Muslim nations including Malaysia, it seems that Malaysian Islamist movements (parties and NGOs), for instance PAS and ISMA, still hold rigid views on several issues such as Sharia and Islamic rule matters and political and social relations with non-Muslim citizens and non-Islamic oriented parties – which may explain the reason why the Malaysian Islamist parties have never come to power since 1957. Nevertheless, the success of Ennahda in the Tunisian Constituent Assembly Election (2011), PJD in Moroccan Parliamentary Election (2011) and FJP in the Egyptian Presidential Election (2012) in have seemed to revive the confidence of Malaysian Islamists in raising their Islamist agenda on the national political landscape. The moderate and 'Muslim Democrat' approach of the Ennahda founder, Ghannouchi, could also impact the ideology of Malaysia's Islamist movements given the established by-lateral relations between these two parties (Ennahda and the Islamist parties in Malaysia). All the issues mentioned above have recently led to the polemics about the impact of the Arab Uprisings amongst Malaysian Islamist opposition parties specifically PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH.

¹³⁵ "Malaysia's government accuses opposition of fomenting 'Arab Spring': Opposition leaders say new law banning street protests is more repressive than those in Burma and Zimbabwe". Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/30/malaysia-goverment-opposition-arab-spring> [09 May 2017]

¹³⁶ Discussion on 'Islamist Winter' can be seen in Chapter Four.

This Chapter has three main sections. The first focuses on respondents' attitudes towards several issues within the context of the post-Arab Uprisings. The second seeks to examine the impact of the post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon on the ideology and political activism of Islamist movements in Malaysia (represented by PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH). Both sections are based on 15 questions which deal with specific issues, namely questions 10, 11, 12,14,16, 18 and 19 in Section E of the questionnaire and questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 14, 15, 16 and 18 in Section F (see the full questionnaire in Appendix A). The final section is the chapter conclusion with a summary of the research findings.

7.2 Attitudes Towards the Post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon

7.2.1 On the Post-Arab Uprisings and its Political and Economic Implications

The respondents were first asked whether Post-Arab Uprisings developments had any impact on economic and political aspects in the affected Arab states. According to Hafez Ghanem (currently the Vice President of the World Bank for the Middle East and North Africa), one cannot expect the Arab Uprisings to have resulted in much improvement in terms of greater democracy and freedom, except in Tunisia. The four years following the Arab revolutions have also witnessed increasing fiscal imbalances in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Yemen. In Libya, Yemen and Syria for instance, civil wars brought uncertainty which affected their performance in developing the economy and maintaining financial stability (Ghanem 2016: 28-30). Thus, it is logical that 165 respondents agreed and 55 respondents strongly agreed that the Arab Uprisings actually had a short term negative impact on the politics and economy of the affected states. 114 respondents however argued that the Arab Uprisings events in general had some positive impact in terms of political reform - as occurred in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt during 2012-2013 and will continue to do so in the future. 196 respondents, mostly from PAS and AMANAH, were not certain of the exact answer, thus they preferred to neither disagree nor agree with the statement. Table 7.1 indicates the attitudes of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists on the impact of the Post-Arab Uprisings in the Middle East.

Table 7.1 Respondents' Perceptions that the Post-Arab Uprisings Have Had a Destructive Impact Based on the Political and Economic Context

Type of Islamist Movement	The Post-Arab Uprisings Have Had a Destructive Impact Based on the Political and Economic Context (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	9 (3.1%)	44 (15.3%)	108 (37.6%)	96 (33.4%)	30 (10.5%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	7 (7.5%)	13 (14.0%)	43 (46.2%)	23 (24.7%)	7 (7.5%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	11 (13.6%)	18 (22.2%)	21 (25.9%)	21 (25.9%)	10 (12.3%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	12 (17.4%)	24 (34.8%)	25 (36.2%)	8 (11.6%)	69 (100%)
Total	27 (5.1%)	87 (16.4%)	196 (37.0%)	165 (31.1%)	55 (10.4%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, it is obvious that some respondents from all four movements seem uncertain whether the outcome of the Arab Uprisings brought any benefit to Arab politics and economics.

When respondents were asked whether the Post-Arab Uprisings had supported the democratisation process in the countries involved, the responses showed quite a similar pattern with 'agree' and 'neither disagree nor agree' opinions remaining frequent choices for all four movements. Overall, 189 respondents (35.6 percent) chose to be neutral about whether the post-Arab Uprisings supported the democratisation agenda. 20.5 percent of respondents (109) were of the opinion that the process of democratisation had still not happened, while 43.9 percent of respondents (233) believed that the democratisation process has started in Tunisia and that it will later extend to neighbouring Arab states. Table 7.2 below gives details of the respondents' perceptions regarding the issue of democratisation in the post-Arab Uprisings.

Table 7.2 Respondents' Perceptions that the Post-Arab Uprisings Have Supported the Democratisation Process in the Countries Involved

Type of Islamist Movement	The Post-Arab Uprisings Have Supported the Democratisation Process in the Countries Involved (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	10 (3.5%)	48 (16.7%)	108 (27.5%)	96 (33.3%)	26 (9.0%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	7 (7.5%)	33 (35.5%)	40 (43.0%)	12 (12.9%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	8 (9.9%)	8 (9.9%)	22 (27.2%)	26 (32.1%)	17 (21.0%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	8 (11.6%)	19 (27.5%)	26 (37.7%)	12 (17.4%)	4 (5.8%)	69 (100%)
Total	27 (5.1%)	82 (15.4%)	189 (35.6%)	174 (32.8%)	59 (11.1%)	530 (100%)

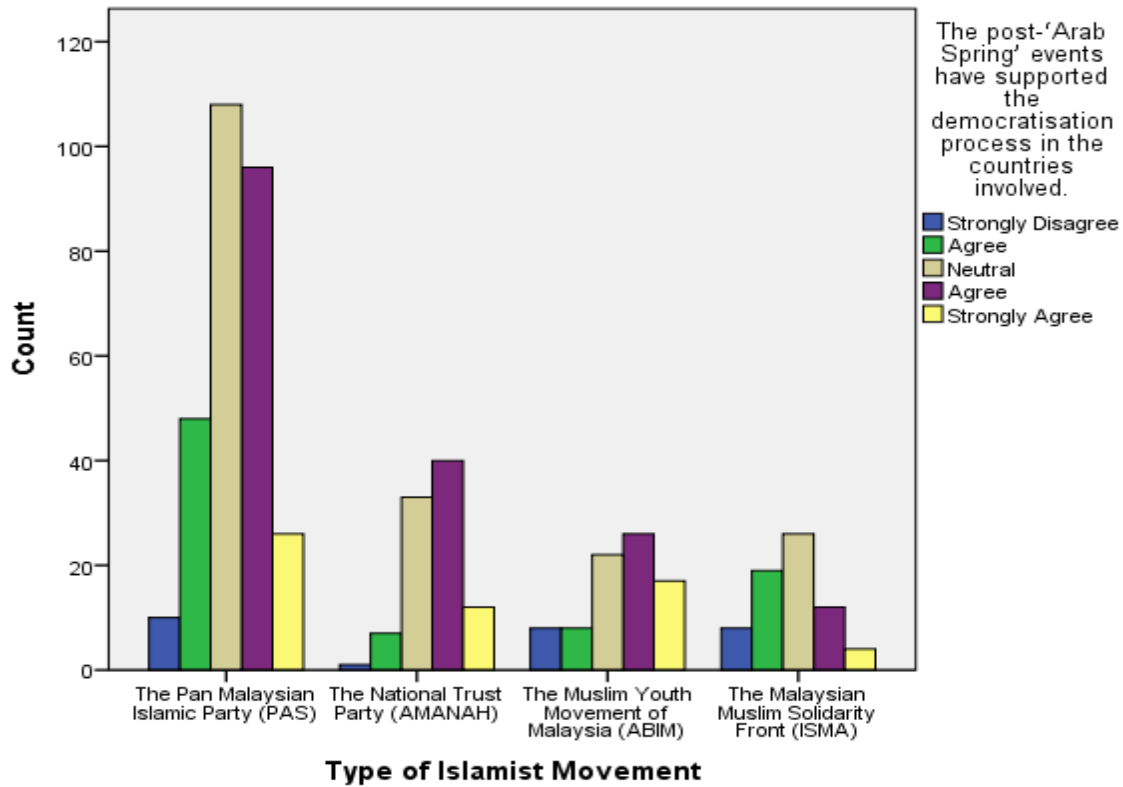
Source: Field Research 2016

When democratisation is discussed in its simplest form it can be defined as political changes that move in a democratic direction which regularly involve a process of developing, consolidating and establishing democracy in a non-democratic state¹³⁷. The Post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon, to some observers such as Barbara Zollner, gives a new drive to the discussion of democratisation in the Middle East and North Africa region after being 'exceptional' for decades¹³⁸. However, the attempts to bring democracy to each of the Arab Uprisings' affected states were somewhat unsuccessful, except for Tunisia which managed certain positive progress. In the Yemen, Libya and Syria, the civil wars, with intervention from foreign states, continue to undermine the countries and any democratic processes. Meanwhile in Egypt, the rule of Al-Sisi is perceived as the prolongation of Mubarak's dictatorship legacy. Thus, one has to admit that it is quite subjective to determine the status of democratisation in the Middle East in the period since the Arab Uprisings events. Figure 7.1 below summarises the respondents' feedback on the issue of post-Arab Uprisings events and democratisation.

¹³⁷ See Chapter Three for further discussion on democracy and democratisation.

¹³⁸ Fieldwork at the colloquium entitled "5 Years After the Arab Spring: The Implosion of Social Movements?", Birkbeck, University of London, UK. 10 June 2016. On the other note, Raymond Hinnebusch argued that the Middle East is not entirely 'exceptional' in respect to parties although their roles may be more marginal than in developed states. See Hinnebusch, R.A (2017) Why Political Parties in the Middle East Matter. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 44(2): 159-175.

Figure 7.1 Respondents' Perceptions that the Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Supported the Democratization Process



7.2.2 On the Post-Arab Uprisings and the Emergence of Daesh and the Issue of Syrian Refugees

According to Tarek Osman, the vacuums created by the Arab Uprisings have allowed the 'centuries-old phenomenon' of radical Islam or militant Islamist group, currently known as Daesh to re-emerge in the region of Arab Middle East and wreaked havoc in large part of the world (Osman 2017). Before proceeding to a discussion of the findings of the survey, it is useful to include some fundamental facts about Daesh in the Middle East. This information is based on selected academic publications, including an article published by Al-Jazeera¹³⁹. For Marc Lynch, the rise of Daesh stalemate undoubtedly posed a new set of strategic challenges to the MENA regional security in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings (Lynch 2016: 224). The birth of the Islamic State group, also known as IS/ISIS/ISIL or Daesh (*Ad-Dawla Al-Islamiyya fil Iraq Wa Al-Sham*) has precipitated a deterioration in the situation in the Middle East and North Africa region. Daesh reportedly emerged in Northern Syria in early 2014 when there

¹³⁹ To further consider the nature of Daesh, see Martin, Michael & Solomon, Hussein (2017). Understanding the Nature of the Beast and Its Funding. Contemporary Review of the Middle East. 4 (1): 18-49.

was an internal split within the Al-Qaeda branch in Iraq. Since then, Daesh has expanded its operation throughout northern Syria by fighting against Syrian rebel groups, most notably in the areas of Raqqa, Kobane and Aleppo. By mid-2014, the war in Syria had reach a stalemate and the armed opposition group was dominated by Daesh militants (Cockburn 2015: 84). Coincidentally, the emergence of Daesh happened in the middle of the Syrian refugee crisis which saw approximately 4.5 million Syrian citizens (based on a UNHCR report 2017) displaced from their own homes. Without doubt these two crises were not anticipated by most Syrians, including those who directly participated in the protests against Assad back in 2011. Unlike Tunisia, one can say that the outcome of the Arab Uprisings in Syria has been abject failure and misery, with a series of civil wars and destruction that has impacted approximately two-thirds of the whole country¹⁴⁰. Hence, can we say that the emergence of Daesh and the humanitarian crisis in Syria were due to a failure to achieve the fundamental objectives of the Arab Uprisings (replacing an old dictator with a new democratic leader)? Table 7.3 below records the respondents' answers.

Table 7.3 Respondents' Perceptions that the Failure of the Post-Arab Uprisings in Syria Has Led to the Emergence of Daesh and the Humanitarian Crisis

Type of Islamist Movement	The Post-Arab Uprisings in Syria Has Led to the Emergence of Daesh and the Humanitarian Crisis (Frequency)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	32 (11.1%)	51 (17.8%)	101 (35.2%)	67 (23.3%)	36 (12.5%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	24 (26.1%)	17 (18.5%)	24 (26.1%)	14 (15.2)	13 (14.1%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	19 (23.5)	6 (7.4%)	21 (25.9%)	16 (19.8%)	19 (23.5%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	10 (14.5%)	15 (21.7%)	28 (40.6%)	11 (15.9%)	5 (7.2%)	69 (100%)
Total	85 (16.1)	89 (16.8%)	174 (32.9%)	108 (20.4%)	73 (13.8%)	530 (100%)

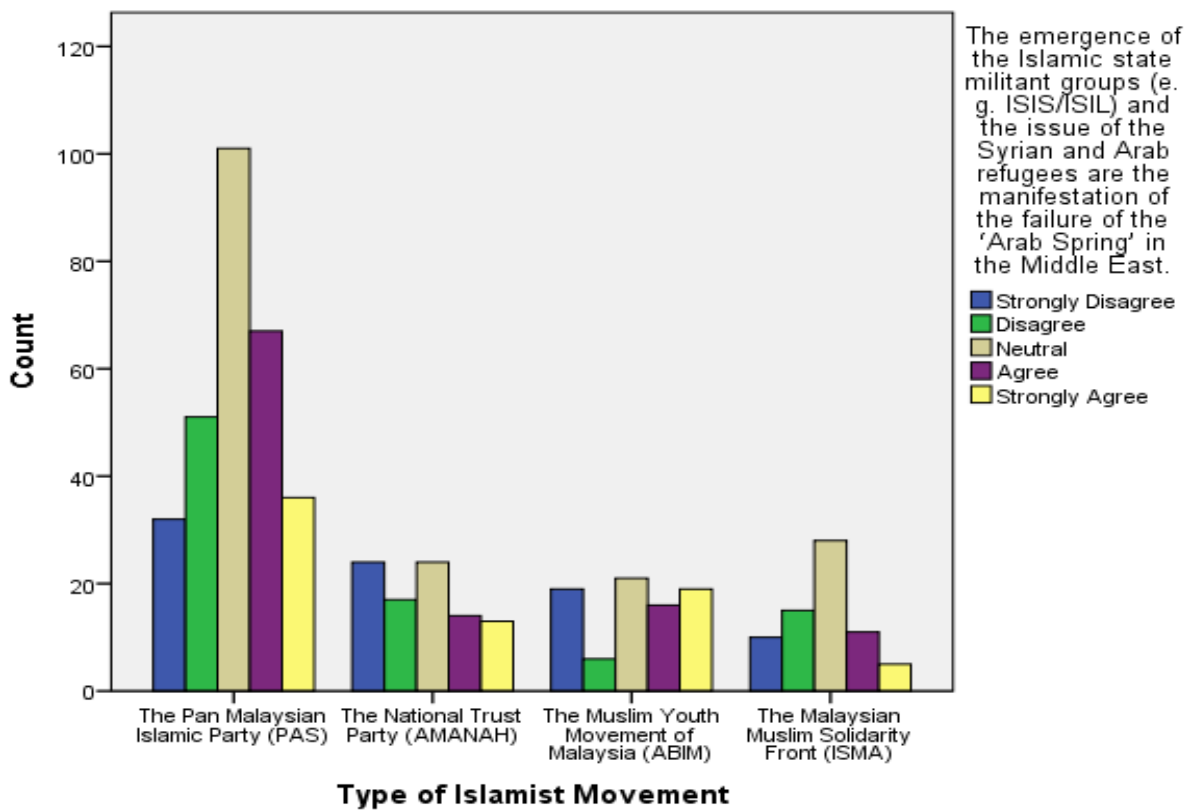
Source: Field Research 2016

From the perspective of Malaysian Islamists in the study it can be seen that 181 respondents generally agreed (including 73 respondents who strongly agreed) that if the Arab Uprisings had not been spread to Syria, the country would not have faced the issue of Daesh and the related refugee crisis. 89

¹⁴⁰ Asrar, Shakeeb (2017). Syrian Civil War Map: A map of the Syrian civil war that shows who controls what after five years of fighting. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html> [11 September 2017]

respondents disagreed with such an assumption and 85 strongly disagreed, while 174 respondents chose to be neutral. The responses to this question show that out of the four Islamist movements, ISMA presented the highest frequency of neutral and sceptical opinion, followed by PAS, AMANAH and ABIM. Meanwhile, AMANAH is the only movement which recorded a new trend, whereby the number of ‘strongly disagree and disagree’ opinions exceeded the other options. Figure 7.2 below illustrates the different pattern of responses for each movement.

Figure 7.2 Respondents’ Perceptions that the Failure of the Post-Arab Uprisings in Syria Has Led to the Emergence of Daesh and the Humanitarian Crisis



The former scenario somehow reflects the critical view of ISMA members, (including its President) who claimed that the role of ‘invisible hands’ by Western powers once again played a role in supporting Daesh based on a personal agenda, rather than being solely to blame for the failure of the Syrian revolution. According to Abdullah Zaik (ISMA President)¹⁴¹:

“ISIS, if we were to look at it in terms of the origin and so on, would cast doubts in terms of the motives of the group being set up. I have the opinion that the role of external parties (MOSSAD, CIA, IRAN) does exist

¹⁴¹ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

behind IS. The one who names this group as 'Islamic State' is also the West. It is seemingly seeking to offer the world community, especially the Islamic world, two models of administration which are ISLAM (a poor model) or Liberal (a good model). Surely people will not choose ISLAM if the IS model serves as the example and propaganda. This is a project that benefits the Western countries. It also impacts on ISMA in its effort to develop political Islam in Malaysia. Western propaganda also tries to refute any political Islam agenda to the point that Islamist movements become easily labelled as radical".

The PAS President also seems in-line with Abdullah's views by saying that¹⁴²:

"A lot of countries have been involved in creating violence (in Syria), whether in terms of giving access to weapons, or sending fighters and money to assassinate, at the expense of truth. Some did it openly, some were more discreet. The emergence of Daesh in the post-Arab Uprisings in Syria led the country to become a new battle ground in an arms race amongst major world powers such as Russia and the USA".

As a result, the majority of Syrian citizens had no choice but to flee the region for their own protection¹⁴³. One of the AMANAH interviewees commented that the powerful role of Israel in influencing US foreign policy (for the sake of Israel's long term security against any potential threat from Arab countries) should be considered as one of the causes of Arab world's destabilisation following the post-Arab Uprisings' in Syria¹⁴⁴. This may help explain why the majority of AMANAH members disagreed with the question. Abdul Hadi Awang, the PAS President, has blamed the involvement of Israel in the Syrian conflict commenting that:

"Even worse, there is the possibility from the information cited through photo recording that Israel is directly involved in giving supplies and treatment for a cause named 'jihad'. This is seen from the political angle. The states that attempt to oust Bashar Asad will also not let Islam emerge victorious. They who uphold the actual Islamic state return an Islamic state with sovereignty and fairness and which becomes a threat, especially to Zionist-Israel which dominates the politics of the larger states, especially America and its allies that have long aspired to become a single power. It is also a dream of Israel to become the centre of global power. All the potential leaders, as recently reported in the US, had vied to obtain the support of the Zionist in every General Election. The relationship between a government and its people with Zionist countries has also become the benchmark in terms of determining the fate of the Arab Spring and the degree of extremity. Any countries that acknowledge

¹⁴² Official statement from PAS President, Abdul Hadi Awang. November 2016. See Appendix C for the full statement.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Personal interview with an AMANAH activist (name withheld at interviewee's request), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 9 August 2016.

the forbidden land of Israel and establish all forms of relationship between the government and the people are the safest. The second degree is that the countries with secret affairs with Israel will also be safe. Countries that reject Israel, or in the case where the people reject Israel openly or do not adopt a peace treaty with the forbidden land, will surely expect the inevitable fall”.

7.2.3 Tunisia and the ‘Success Story’ of the Arab Uprisings

It has become evident that the Arab Uprisings failed to produce democracy except where they began, in Tunisia (Esposito et al 2016: 3). Following the two successful elections (in 2011 and 2014) Tunisia was praised by the Freedom House (2017) as the only democratic state in the Middle East and North Africa region¹⁴⁵. The former French colonial state has also been widely viewed as a successful product of the Arab Uprisings, which highlights the fruitful negotiations between the previously banned Islamist party, Ennahda, and other political parties. As pointed out by Esposito et al (2016: 200),

“Despite significant differences and fierce rivalries in Tunisian politics (in the post-Arab Spring phenomenon), Tunisians were able to move along the road to democratisation, avoiding its derailment because of its stronger civil society organisations, the military’s professionalism, and the responsiveness and significant concessions made by Ennahda.”

Since the period following the Post-Tunisian Jasmine Revolution in 2011, it seems that Tunisia has positively maneuvered its political transition (from one of the region’s most oppressive states) to democracy and has maintained the democratic process which has not unravelled into civil wars such as occurred in Syria, Yemen and Libya (Osman 2017). It has also not undergone a counter-revolution that returned the country to the autocratic rule of its pre-revolution days, as seen in Egypt (Culbertson 2016; Sadiki and Bouandel 2016).

Although Tunisia is perceived as an Arab Uprisings success story by many scholars¹⁴⁶, it is not seen as such by PAS and ISMA Islamists since the

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix L for the summary of Freedom House Report for Tunisia (2017).

¹⁴⁶ Speaking about the success of political transition in Tunisia after the Arab Uprisings, Rafek Abdessalem, former Minister of International Affairs in Tunisia further explains that Tunisians have survived the democratic process due to the neutrality of military forces and the homogeneity of Tunisians people (which help to prevent any potential sectarian and religious division within the society). The rationality of political actors, especially the role of Ennahda party have also made significant contribution towards the effort to consolidate the democratisation process (via the formation of the previous Troika government and current coalition) in the country. Personal interview with Abdessalem in Tunis, Tunisia. December 2017.

majority were not certain about these opinions and some even disagreed. Several of the respondents acknowledged that their lack of knowledge about the Arab Uprisings in general, and Tunisian politics in particular, led them to remain neutral on the statement. The other reason for disagreeing or being neutral to the statement is that amongst PAS youth members and ISMA activists, Tunisia is less popular as compared to Egypt in terms of Middle Eastern political news. It was only after Ennahda's rule (2011-2014) that Tunisia became a new 'topic' of interest, although not with the same excitement as that generated by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt¹⁴⁷. However, a number of respondents were in line with Culbertson and Sadiki (2015) in viewing Tunisia as demonstrating a positive outcome of the Arab Uprisings. Table 7.4 below shows the respondents' overall reactions.

Table 7.4 Respondents' Perceptions on Tunisia as the 'Success Story' of the Arab Uprisings

Type of Islamist Movement	Tunisia as the 'Success Story' of the Arab Uprisings (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	9 (3.1%)	29 (10.1%)	133 (46.2%)	86 (29.9%)	31 (10.8%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.3%)	28 (30.1%)	37 (39.8%)	23 (24.7%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.4%)	19 (23.5%)	29 (35.8%)	27 (33.3%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	3 (4.3%)	13 (18.8%)	37 (53.6%)	12 (17.4%)	4 (5.8%)	69 (100%)
Total	13 (2.4%)	52 (9.8%)	217 (40.9%)	164 (30.9%)	85 (16.0%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

Based on SPSS analysis, the summary of the above table can be read as follows;

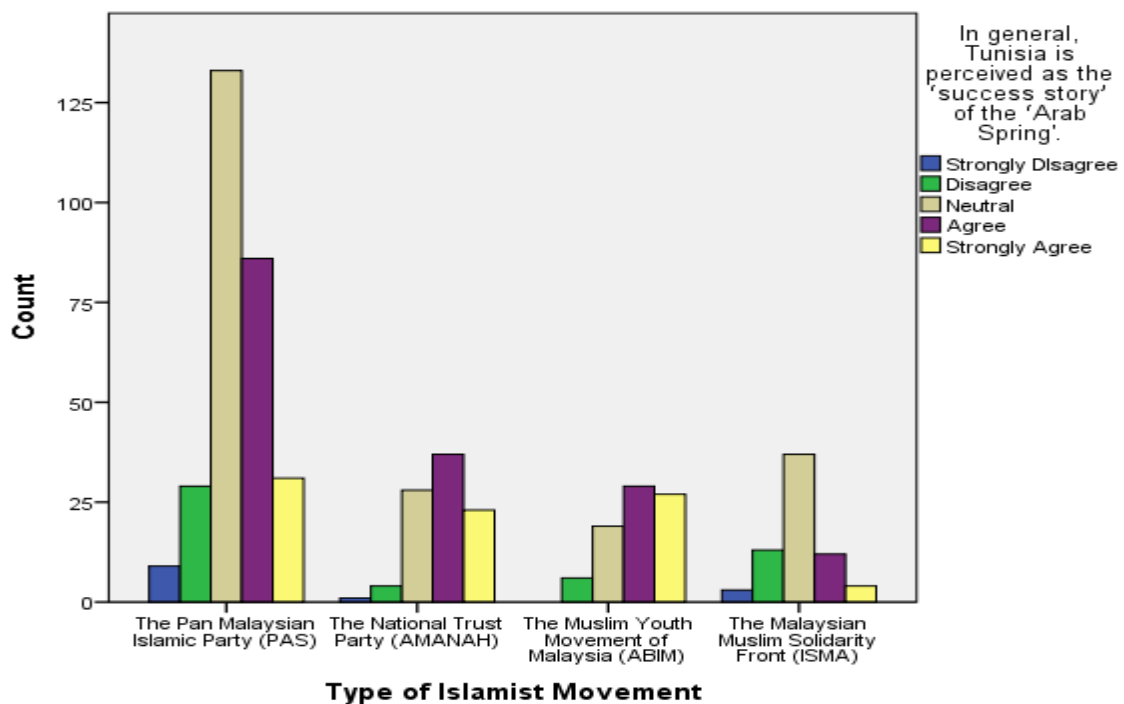
- i. For PAS respondents, 40.7 percent agreed (in general), followed by 46.2 percent who were neutral and 13.2 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 64.5 percent agreed (in general), followed by 30.1 percent who were neutral and 4.4 percent who disagreed (in general).

¹⁴⁷ Personal interviews with 1) The Deputy Chief of Perak PAS Youth, Mohd Hafez Sabri. Ipoh, Malaysia. 28 October 2016. 2) The International Relations Bureau for ISMA's UK branch, Amar Yasier. London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

- iii. For ABIM respondents, 69.1 percent agreed (in general), followed by 23.5 percent who were neutral and 7.4 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 23.2 percent agreed (in general), followed by 53.6 who were neutral and 23.1 who disagreed (in general) ¹⁴⁸.

Overall, these findings show the mixed attitudes of the Malaysian Islamist movements towards the general view of Tunisia as an Arab Uprisings success story. As previously explained by the interviewees themselves, different levels of exposure to and general knowledge about Tunisian politics are likely to serve as the main reason for the pattern of reactions to the question. Figure 7.3 below illustrates the overall responses to the question.

Figure 7.3 Respondents' Perceptions on Tunisia as the 'Success Story' of the Arab Uprisings



7.2.4 On the Post-Arab Uprisings and the State of Arab World Stability

Apart from the case of democratic consolidation evident in Tunisia, the Arab world seems worse off than before the Arab Uprisings in terms of violence, civil war and unrest. For instance, Egypt has returned to military rule, with pluralism and opposition parties - including the Muslim Brotherhood - facing the most

¹⁴⁸ 'In general' = Combination of total percentages of agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree based on each type of Islamist movement in the table.

repressive atmosphere for half a century. Syria has become one of the most desolate places on earth, with half of its population displaced and most cities destroyed. Much of the Syrian countryside has been reduced to a battleground between, on the one hand, the Assad regime and its foreign allies, and on the other, a band of enemies of the regime from all over Syria and indeed the world (Hicham Alaoui 2016). In the words of March Lynch,

“There will be no return to stability. The Arab uprisings of 2011 were only one episode in a generational challenge to failed political order. Protesters won some battles in 2011, and regimes won them in the following years” (Lynch 2016: 254).

Given such evidence, it is interesting to ask (in the case of Malaysian Islamists) whether the MENA region is more or less stable since the Arab Uprisings. Table 7.5 below presents the attitudes of respondents towards the question concerning Arab world stability before the Arab Uprisings events.

Table 7.5 Respondents’ Perceptions that the Arab World Was More Stable Before the Start of the Arab Uprisings

Type of Islamist Movement	The Arab World Was More Stable Before the Start of the Arab Uprisings (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	37 (12.8%)	77 (26.7%)	104 (36.1%)	54 (18.8%)	16 (5.6%)	287 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	14 (15.1%)	22 (23.7%)	35 (37.6%)	13 (14.0%)	9 (9.7%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	10 (12.3%)	22 (27.2%)	13 (16.0%)	22 (27.2%)	14 (17.3%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	8 (11.6%)	17 (24.6%)	27 (39.1%)	13 (18.8%)	4 (5.8%)	69 (100%)
Total	69 (13.0%)	138 (26.0%)	179 (33.7%)	102 (19.2%)	43 (8.1%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

The remarkable thing about this table is that it does show quite a high level of rejection by respondents (from both the strongly disagree and disagree categories) mainly from PAS and AMANAH. This implies that 207 respondents believed that the MENA region was already unsteady (in terms of politics, economics and society) before the start of the Arab Uprisings. Amongst the arguments provided there was reference to several major wars which occurred in the Middle East before the 2011 Arab Uprisings - for instance the United States-led coalition invasion of Iraq (2003) and the series of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. Thus, for these respondents, there was not much difference in terms

of regional stability between the periods pre-and-post the Arab Uprisings. As pointed out by Hicham Alaoui (2016), although the question is legitimate to ask, it is quite difficult and subjective to answer. 145 respondents however agreed that the Arab world was relatively more peaceful and stable before the Arab Uprisings took place, while 179 respondents preferred to remain neutral on the statement. One of the respondents from ISMA agreed that the Arab world was more stable before the Arab Uprisings, but noted that freedom of speech was restricted in most Arab countries (before the Arab Uprisings) which might cause political instability in the future¹⁴⁹. The PAS President seems to agree that the Arab Uprisings has brought drawbacks rather than benefits to many Arab citizens. As pointed out by Abdul Hadi Awang¹⁵⁰:

“For those Arab countries where the Arab Spring successfully contributed to the fall of their governments, it caused a lot more chaos than the brutality shown by the previous governments. They experienced political turmoil, a more severe state of security and life to the extent that they had to escape only to become much humiliated refugees, leaving behind their home countries that had a wealth of natural resources to become beggars in foreign lands - to the point that the Arab world does not welcome its own allies of the same faith and religion. For people who stay behind in the country, they are either fighting amongst themselves or waiting for death, starvation and outbreak to befall them”.

7.2.5 The Post-Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon: An ‘Eye-Opener’ for Rulers of the Arab States?

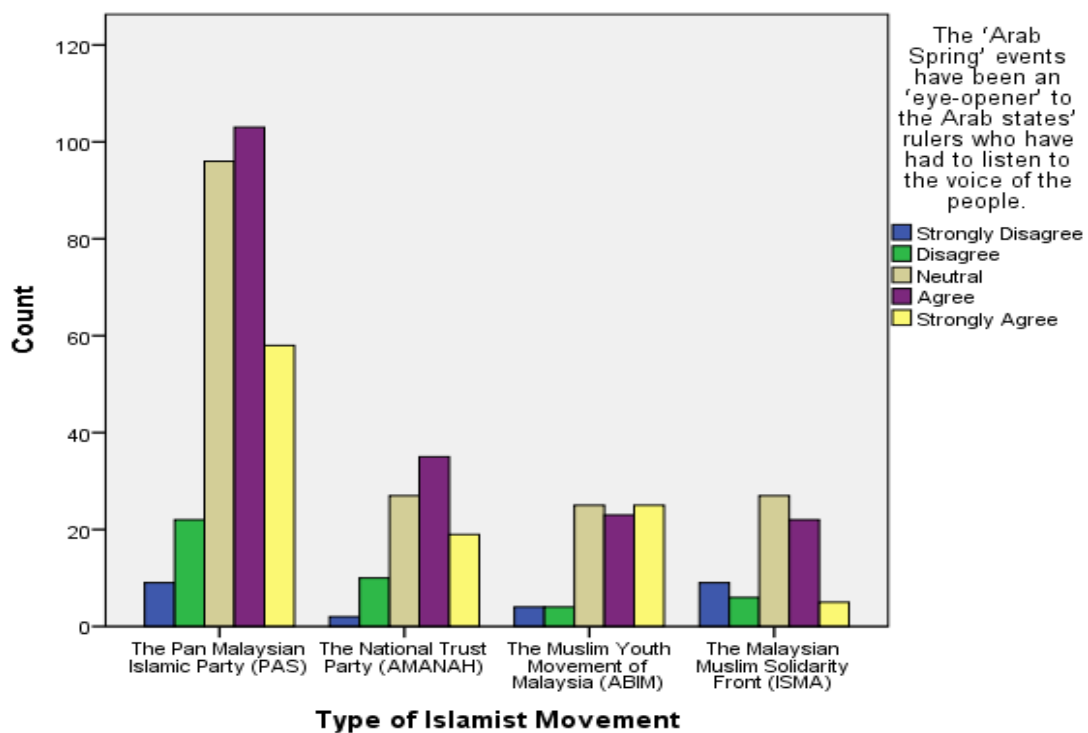
The Arab Uprisings events have undoubtedly unleashed unprecedented passion for revolution and drive for change within Arab nations. The Arab Uprisings also taught the majority of Arab citizens to take a new look at - and to openly voice their opposition against - corrupt and repressive regimes in a manner that was never before seen during the last two decades of their struggle for freedom and dignity. It seems that Arab dictators may have learned a lesson from the Arab Uprisings – the lesson being that the political power of dictators can be short-lived when they face a powerful, popular and collective grassroots movement. In addition, the Arab Uprisings, as well as other revolutions in

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview with an ISMA activist, Najmuddin Mohd Faudzir. Bangi, Malaysia. 13 October 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Official statement from Abdul Hadi Awang. November 2016. See Appendix C for the full statement.

modern history, show that removing a dictatorship is easier than replacing it with a democratic regime. This means that there is always a potential for political revolution to be launched, but the consequences remain unpredictable. For Malaysian Islamists, more than half of the respondents (54.7 percent) believed that the Arab Uprisings should have taught Arab rulers not to take for granted their citizens' voices expressed through street protest. Figure 7.4 below summarises respondents' feedback from the four Malaysian Islamist movements in the study.

Figure 7.4 Respondents' Perceptions that The Arab Uprisings Events Have Been An 'Eye-Opener' to the Arab States' Rulers Who Have Had To Listen to the Voice of the People



One of the respondents from ABIM, Mohamad Saifuddin, who is a graduate from a higher education institution in Morocco highlighted that:

“From my own observation (throughout the years as a student in Morocco), the Arab Spring events seemed to serve as an eye-opener to most of the Muslim nations around the world, including Malaysia. It proved that most of the (Muslim-majority) states are still practising corruption and power abuse in many ways (economic, political and social) which leads people to voice their disagreement and dissatisfaction towards their respective ruling regime¹⁵¹”.

¹⁵¹ Written opinion/comment left by ABIM respondent on the questionnaire form (name withheld at respondent's request).

Saifuddin's opinion is supported by another PAS activist who believed that the voice of citizens (in the Arab world) via street protest against any corrupted regime (post-Arab Uprisings) is really important to ensure that a mechanism of checks and balances is in place. However, the activist suggested that wise strategies are needed to ensure a positive outcome and to ensure that no bloodshed occurs during the process of removing a dictator¹⁵². Only a small number of respondents (12.4 percent) rejected the idea that the Arab Uprisings was as an 'eye-opener' to the leaders of Arab countries, while 33 percent remained neutral (mostly from ISMA).

As previously discussed in Chapter Six, most ISMA members rejected the idea of the Arab Uprisings as a bottom-up movement for political change and firmly believed there was a role played by Western powers which were behind the protests (a role designed to obtain gain for the West at the expense of the Arab states). Thus, it is not surprising to see that many respondents from ISMA were not certain whether the Arab Uprisings had been, or ought to have been, an 'eye-opener' to every Arab state leader.

7.2.6 Uncertainties in the Post-Arab Uprisings Environment: Will They Lead to Another Wave of Uprisings in the Future?

Will there be any second wave of Arab Spring-type uprisings in the future? According to an assessment by the United Nations Arab Development Report (November 2016), only five Arab countries were in a state of conflict (due to civil wars, interstate conflict and political violence) in 2002, whereas by 2016 eleven were in a state of conflict¹⁵³. This same report suggests that by 2020, 75% of the Arab world will be vulnerable to conflict. Lewis Tallon, a Geopolitical Intelligence Analyst who specialises in the Middle East and North Africa region, has highlighted that¹⁵⁴:

¹⁵² Written opinion/comment left by PAS respondent on the questionnaire form. (name withheld at respondent's request).

¹⁵³ UNDP (2016). Arab Human Development Report. Youth and Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality. pp 37-39. Available at http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/huma_development/arab-human-development-report-2016--youth-and-the-prospects-for-/ [15 September 2017].

¹⁵⁴ Tallon, Lewis (2017). Second Arab Spring. Available at <https://encyclopediageopolitica.com/2016/12/09/2017-second-arab-spring/> [15 September 2017].

“With social media having further developed the interconnectivity of the region’s youth since 2011, and many governments facing economic exhaustion and a subsequently degraded ability to respond financially to unrest, it is probable that a second-wave of the Arab Spring would spread more quickly, and more effectively than the first”.

Tallon’s views are supported by Marc Lynch¹⁵⁵, a Professor of Political Science at George Washington University, who has pointed out that:

“Many of the conflicts (after the Arab Uprisings of 2011), especially in Syria and Yemen, had no winners at all. There will be more rounds of upheaval, more state failures, more sudden regime collapses, more insurgencies, and more proxy wars”.

Furthermore, Tarek Osman confidently predicts that many of the Arab countries that today appear stable will witness new waves of mass protests and revolts against their ruling regimes – as a result of immense anger among the youth over the way their ‘Arab Spring revolutions’ have failed to achieve the goals they started out with (Osman 2017: 247). Given the currently vulnerable situation of certain nations (Syria, Libya and Yemen) in the Arab world, it seems that the majority of respondents (66.1 percent) also predict that another wave of democratic uprisings will take place in the future. As mentioned by one of the ISMA activists¹⁵⁶:

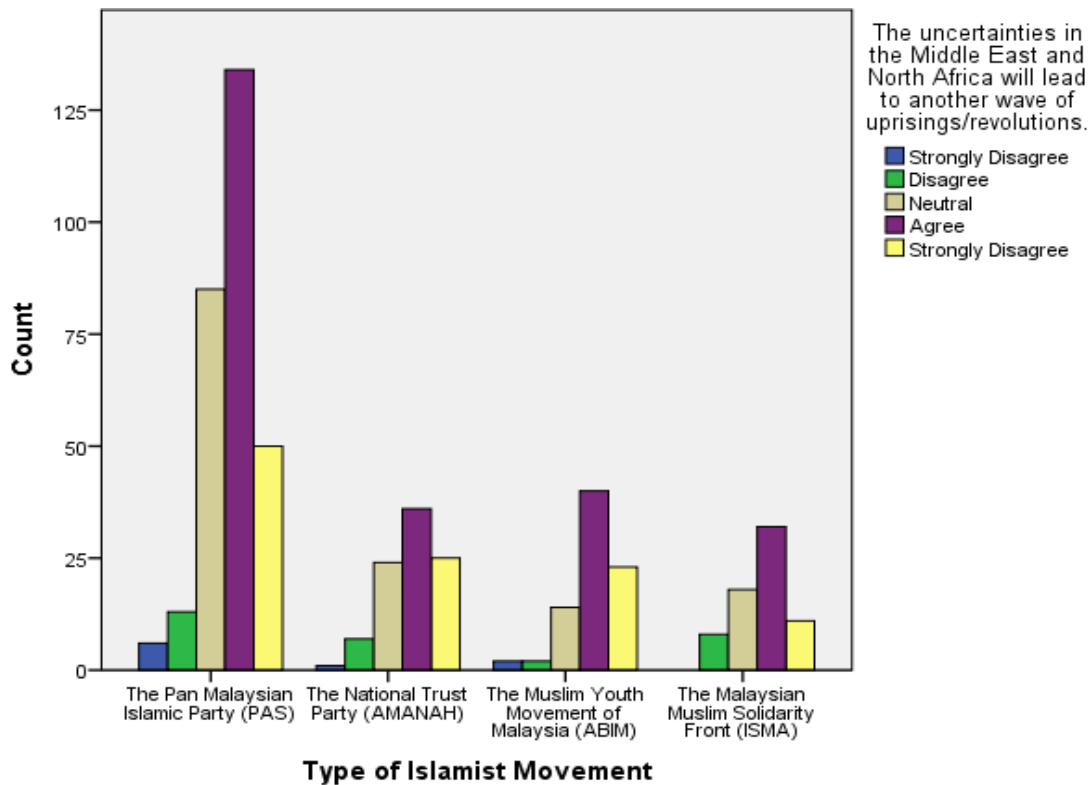
“I am quite certain that in ten years from now, the world will probably witness another wave of democratic uprisings in the MENA region due to the failure of the first attempt. With positive support from the international community, it seems that Arab citizens will not lose faith in democracy and good governance”.

141 respondents (29.5 percent) were not entirely sure about such a prediction. The remaining 39 respondents (7.3 percent) challenged the statement by arguing that Arab citizens should have learnt lessons from the Arab Uprisings and so not reignite the protests for the sake of maintaining peace and stability. Thus, they predict that there will be no second wave of Arab Uprisings protests in the future. Overall, the responses received from the four Islamist movements show quite a similar pattern with ‘agree’ as the most popular answer to the question. Figure 7.5 below summarises respondents’ feedback.

¹⁵⁵ See Lynch, Marc (2016). *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*. New York: Public Affairs. Pp 253-254.

¹⁵⁶ Personal interview with an ISMA activist, Najmuddin Mohd Faudzir. Bangi, Malaysia. 13 October 2016.

Figure 7.5 Respondents' Perceptions that the Uncertainties in the Middle East and North Africa Will Lead to Another Wave of Uprisings



7.3 Influences of the Arab Uprisings on the Islamist Movements in Malaysia

The polemics of the influences of the Arab Uprisings have been given considerable attention by the Malaysian regime, as well as local and foreign media (previously discussed in Section 5.4, Section 6.1 and Chapter One), within the context of Malaysian Islamist opposition parties and NGOs. This section will provide a comprehensive and empirical answer to the question - has the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon influenced the Islamist movements in Malaysia (in this case PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH)? Through in-depth examination of each response from the specific question in the survey, the section provides an analysis of the Arab Uprisings' impact on Malaysia's Islamist movements and the factors that have shaped it¹⁵⁷. The respondents' reactions to each question will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

¹⁵⁷ Regarding this section, the researcher asked seven major inter-linked questions in the questionnaire which covered civil disobedience, social media factors, development of Arab-Islamist parties and awareness of Middle Eastern politics in the post-Arab Spring. See Appendix A to view the actual questions.

7.3.1 The Arab Uprisings and the Act of Civil Disobedience: What Impact on PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Political Activism?

In general, political activism can be defined as an institutionalised participation within the context of existing order, which encourage a connection with formal politics at the national level (Stein & Volpi 2014). Meanwhile, the current general definition and popular narratives of 'Arab Uprisings studies' often defined the 2011 Uprisings (in its simplest form) as mass street protests and civil disobedience - managed to topple autocratic leaders in several Middle East and North African countries. According to John Rawls in his famous writing 'A Theory of Justice' (1971), the term civil disobedience can be defined as a politically-motivated, public, non-violent act and conscious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in laws or government policies. Zawiyah Mohd Zain et.al. (2017: 10) further summarised five significant features in civil disobedience acts based on the studies by Rawls (1971) and Quigley & Bahmueller (1991). Firstly, there is disobedience of the law. Secondly, there is disobedience carried out in public because of frustration with government actions or unjust laws or policies. Thirdly, they are non-violent acts. Fourthly, the acts must be undertaken with regard for conscience. Finally, people are willing to accept the consequences of their actions. Rawls' definition seems to reflect the nature of the Arab Uprisings protests in 2011; these highlight several important features of civil disobedience, as seen when the first mass rallies broke out in Tunisia and Egypt¹⁵⁸.

In non-democratic states (and also less, partial and quasi-democratic states - for example Malaysia), Arab Uprisings events might serve as a relevant example to show how the sentiments expressed in 'people power' via civil disobedience can overthrow corrupt regimes when ballot boxes are no longer effective due to regular regime manipulation (Saikal and Acharya, 2014). As pointed out by Gainous, Wagner, and Abbott (2013), there has been a growth in mass demonstrations and political marches in Malaysia. Most notably, The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) has organized five mass rallies in the past six years (2007, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016), culminating the largest and consistent series of demonstration in Malaysian political history. Do the

¹⁵⁸ See also Zawiyah Mohd Zain et al. (2017). Civil Disobedience and Cyber Democracy. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 8 (4): 9-16.

Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH feel that civil disobedience and street protests during the Arab Uprisings Revolutions have inspired them to participate in civil protests and political rallies in Malaysia? Out of 530 respondents who answered the question, 79 respondents (14.9 percent) strongly believed that they were inspired by protests in the Arab Uprisings and 186 respondents (35 percent) shared a similar (but less strong) attitude. 180 respondents (33.9 percent) gave a neutral response, while 66 respondents (12.4 percent) disagreed with the statement. Only 20 respondents (3.8 percent) totally rejected the idea of inspiration for civil disobedience arising from the Arab Uprisings. Table 7.6 below shows the respondents' reactions to the question.

Table 7.6 Respondents' Views on Whether Civil Disobedience during the Arab Uprisings Has Given Inspiration to Malaysia's Islamist Movements

Type of Islamist Movement	Whether Civil Disobedience during the Arab Uprisings has Given Inspiration to Malaysia's Islamist Movements (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	11 (3.8%)	38 (13.2%)	105 (36.5%)	102 (35.4%)	32 (11.1%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	2 (2.2%)	14 (15.1%)	31 (33.3%)	33 (35.5%)	13 (14.0)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	6 (7.4%)	2 (2.5%)	22 (27.2%)	27 (33.3%)	24 (29.6%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	1 (1.4%)	12 (17.4%)	22 (31.9%)	24 (34.8%)	10 (14.5%)	69 (100%)
Total	20 (3.8%)	66 (12.4%)	180 (33.9%)	186 (35.0%)	79 (14.9%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

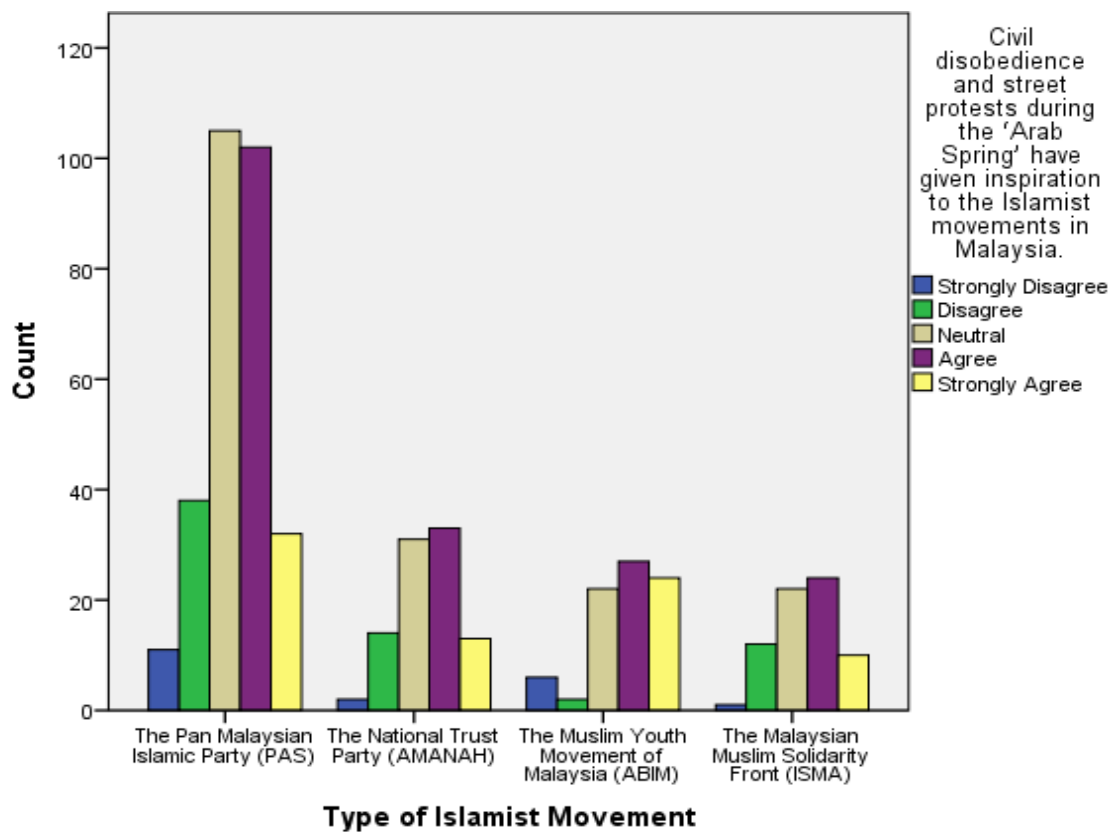
Based on SPSS cross tabulation results, the summary of the above table is as follows:

- i. For PAS respondents, 11.1 percent strongly agreed, followed by 35.4 who agreed, 36.5 percent who were neutral, 13.2 percent who disagreed and 3.8 who strongly disagreed.
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 14 percent strongly agreed, followed by 35.5 percent who agreed, 33.3 percent who were neutral, 15.1 percent who disagreed and 2.2 percent who strongly disagreed.
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 29.6 percent strongly agreed, followed by 33.3 percent who agreed, 27.2 percent who were neutral, 2.5 percent who disagreed and 7.4 percent who strongly disagreed.

- iv. For ISMA respondents, 15.5 percent strongly agreed, followed by 34.8 percent who agreed, 31.9 percent who were neutral, 17.4 percent who disagreed and 1.4 percent who strongly disagreed.

There were no substantial differences in the responses to this question from the four case study groups . Figure 7.6 below clearly displays the pattern of the findings.

Figure 7.6 Respondents' Views that the Act of Civil Disobedience during the Arab Uprisings Has Given Inspiration to the Islamist Movements in Malaysia



The responses from the PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamist movements demonstrate that the Arab Uprisings protests have influenced their political activism in terms of inspiring members to voice their dissatisfaction (via mass rally) against Malaysia’s ruling regime led by Najib Razak. As stated by Zakiuddin Shariff (PAS member)¹⁵⁹:

“The Arab Uprisings events gave inspiration to Islamist movements in Malaysia (PAS) to continue to struggle against the corrupted ruling regime of UMNO and Barisan Nasional (Party). The Bersih 3.0 protest was one example”.

¹⁵⁹ Personal interview with PAS activist, Zakiuddin Shariff. Perlis, Malaysia. 13 August 2016.

Another respondent, Abdul Muiz further added that the Arab Uprisings were beneficial in providing an awareness and lesson to the stubborn, greedy and intolerant ruling government in Malaysia - as they showed the potential capability of 'people power' in determining the fate of a corrupted regime¹⁶⁰. However, there was also a significant number of respondents who were not sure or even denied a connection between motivation from the so-called Arab Uprisings and civil resistance in Malaysia. These scenarios are best understood by one of the PAS youth leaders who confessed that:

"For us..(the PAS Youth Members) the Bersih 3.0 protest in 2012 was largely inspired by the 'Arab Spring' revolutions, especially when we witnessed that the Ennahda and Muslim Brothers secured executive power in their respective countries. However, since various cases of vandalism and violent incidents reportedly happened (during the Bersih), PAS decided not to join Bersih 4.0 (2015) and Bersih 5.0 (2016) for the sake of promoting our moderation and mature political approaches¹⁶¹".

According to PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang, any future Arab Uprisings-style protests in Malaysia (after the Bersih 3.0 event in 2012), for instance the series of upcoming Bersih rallies, should be avoided as they could end in bloodshed similar to the Arab Uprisings in 2011¹⁶². Meanwhile, Amanah President Mohamad Sabu has lashed out at those comparing the Bersih rallies to the Arab Uprisings. He pointed out that peaceful demonstrations have taken place in the country since before independence, involving various political parties, NGOs and student groups. As stated by Mohamad Sabu¹⁶³:

"Saying that the Bersih rally is like the Arab Spring (protest) is an act of stupidity and pretence. It is an excuse created by those who do not want to join the (coming) Bersih 5.0 (in 2016) rally. Comparing the two would be nonsensical as the first Bersih rally took place in 2007. Only four years later the uprisings and armed rebellions spread across the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring. The Coalition of Clean and Fair Election's first rally in 2007 (Bersih 1.0) proceeded peacefully, followed by Bersih 2.0, Bersih 3.0, and later Bersih 4.0. Demonstrations calling for

¹⁶⁰ Personal interview with PAS activist, Abdul Muiz. Perak, Malaysia, 16 August 2016.

¹⁶¹ Personal interview with PAS Youth Leader, Mohd Hafez Sabri. Ipoh, Malaysia. 28 October 2016.

¹⁶² Official statement from Abdul Hadi Awang. November 2016. See Appendix C for the full statement.

¹⁶³ Fieldwork at the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election (Bersih) Roadshow, Shah Alam, Malaysia. 3 November 2016. The statements were originally quoted from Mohamad Sabu's speeches at the event. See also Tong, Geraldine (2016), Stupid to Compare Bersih to Arab Spring, says Amanah President. [Online] Available: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/359055> (15 October 2016).

clean and fair elections have been going on for a long time. It has nothing to do with the Arab Uprisings. It's really stupid for anyone to say Bersih is a copy and continuation of the latter (the Arab Spring)".

Del Rosario and Dorsey (2016: 24), political scientist based at the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University raised the same opinion in their publication which seems in line with Mohamad Sabu's views:

"Well before the 'Arab Spring', a number of Southeast Asian countries experienced their own political upheavals. In all of them, grievances were channelled via or organised efforts of civil society. Some have succeeded to get their message across. In all of these countries (who have succeeded) thus far, political strife has not resulted in civil wars. This is perhaps the singular feature that distinguishes protest action in Southeast Asia from the Middle East"

While the AMANAH President strongly rejected attempts to relate the Bersih political protests in Malaysia with the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East, the empirical findings confirm that 49.5 percent of Amanah respondents were inspired by the acts of civil disobedience observed during the Arab Uprisings and that this later encouraged them to participate in a series of Bersih protests. Furthermore, the researcher found that respondents' age and occupational sector did make a significant difference to respondents' attitudes to the question. Out of 265 respondents who believed they were inspired by the Arab Uprisings, 70.9 percent came from the age range 16-35 years. In terms of working sector, most of these respondents were also university students or private sector workers.

Thus, it seems that the youth sample, which largely comprised university students and private sector workers, was the group of Malaysian Islamists (across all four movements) who had been most inspired by the civil disobedience element of the Arab Uprisings. As pointed out by John Postill (2014: 95), the Malaysian Bersih 2.0 protests of 2011 undoubtedly shared a common inspiration with the Tahrir Square Protest through commitment to non-violent civil disobedience (even in the face of police brutality). The research indicates that overall the mass protests witnessed during the Arab Uprisings did impact the political activism of Islamist movements in Malaysia – in particular, through encouragement to participate in local political demonstrations.

7.3.2 The Influence of Social Media Factors from the Arab Uprisings

The Arab Uprisings protests involved a factor which helped secure the success of the uprisings – the role of the internet and new social media (See Chapter Four). In Malaysia, the advances in internet and media technologies have benefitted citizens in many ways, including benefits within the political dimension (Mohd Sani & Zengeni 2010; Liow 2012; Melanie 2012; Weiss 2013; Zawiyah et al 2014). Based on the researcher's observations, many Facebook and Twitter political pages have been created in Malaysia, as well as in other Middle Eastern countries over recent years. These act as alternative sources of local political news since the majority of mainstream media and TV channels are strictly controlled by the governments, both in Malaysia and the Middle East¹⁶⁴.

Regarding the effectiveness of new social media during the Arab Uprisings - in terms of its capacity for swift exchange and dissemination of information to millions of people - the study found that it became a major influence on political activism for many Malaysian Islamists. 371 respondents (69.9 percent) believed that the platforms of new social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube videos (which were used by Arab activists during the Arab Uprisings events), in one way or another impacted political activism in terms of generating enhanced political awareness amongst the Malaysian public, as well as initiating political protest against the ruling regime. However, 39 respondents (7.4 percent) rejected the idea that the Arab Uprisings encouraged the use of social media amongst Malaysian Islamist movements, while 121 respondents (22.8 percent) preferred to remain neutral. Table 7.7 below shows the attitudes of respondents (based on type of Islamist movement) towards the role of new social media (used during the Arab Uprisings) and its impact on PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH political activism.

¹⁶⁴ For more discussion on the media restrictions and power of new media in the political context of Malaysia and Middle East, see Weiss, M.L (2013). Parsing the Power of New Media in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. 43 (4): 591-412 and Wagner, K.M & Gainous, Jason (2013) Digital Uprising: The Internet Revolution in the Middle East, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10 (3): 261-275.

Table 7.7 Respondents' Views that the Role of New Social Media (Facebook, Youtube, Twitter) During the Arab Uprisings Influenced the Activism of Malaysia's Islamist Movements

Type of Islamist Movement	The Role of New Social Media During the Arab Uprisings Influenced the Activism of Malaysia's Islamist Movements (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	2 (0.7%)	15 (5.2%)	73 (25.3%)	122 (42.4%)	76 (26.4%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	2 (2.2%)	7 (7.5%)	20 (21.5%)	37 (39.8%)	27 (29.0%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	6 (7.4%)	2 (2.5%)	15 (18.5%)	36 (44.4%)	22 (27.2%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	5 (7.2%)	13 (18.8%)	38 (55.1%)	13 (18.8%)	69 (100%)
Total	10 (1.9%)	29 (5.5%)	121 (22.8%)	233 (43.9%)	138 (26.0%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

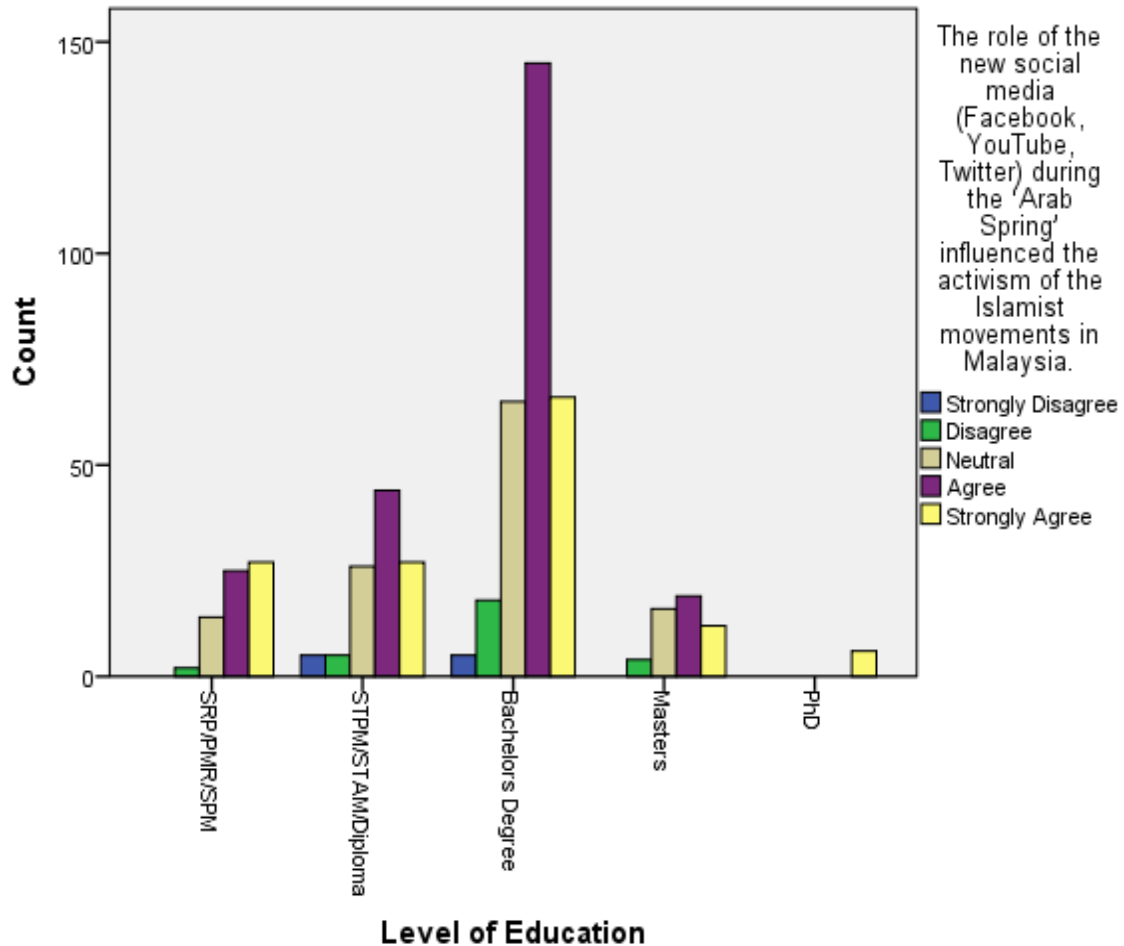
In terms of respondents' backgrounds (aside from the type of Islamist movement) the analysis of a Chi-Square test from SPSS indicates that only level of education and type of occupation showed significant differences as regards respondents' attitudes towards the connection between social media activism during the Arab Uprisings and political activism within Malaysia's Islamist movements¹⁶⁵. Those respondents with a PhD academic qualification expressed a very significant pattern of reaction - all of them (100 percent) believed that the role of new social media during the Arab Uprisings had influenced the political activism of Islamist movements in Malaysia. 60.8 percent of respondents with a Masters degree, followed by 70.6 percent of those with a Bachelors degree, 66.6 percent of those with a Diploma and 76.5 percent of those with a High School qualification all had a positive attitude towards the question.

According to the Malaysian Minister for Higher Education, Idris Jusoh, the latest educational developments in Malaysia suggest that exposure to internet and media technology amongst students is considered a vital part of the university curriculum (as can be seen in the curricula of numerous Malaysian higher education institutions). Thus, level of education (via exposure to the

¹⁶⁵ In all tests of significance, if $p < 0.05$, there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The p-value in chi-square outputs for respondent's level of education and type of occupation are 0.002. This means that the relationship between respondents' level of education and type of occupation and attitudes towards the influence of Arab Spring social media activism is significant.

internet) might be one of the important factors which determines respondents' attitudes on this issue. Figure 7.7 below indicates the respondents' feedback based on level of education, about whether the role of new social media during the Arab Uprisings influenced political activism amongst the selected Islamist Movements in Malaysia.

Figure 7.7 Respondents' Views that the Role of New Social Media during the Arab Uprisings Influenced the Activism of Islamist Movements in Malaysia (Based on Level of Education)



For type of occupation, the respondents with private sector backgrounds had the highest percentage of positive attitudes (75.9 percent), followed by those with public sector backgrounds (70.8 percent) and university students (65.3). The remaining sectors also recorded more than 60 percent positive attitudes, except for the retired and pensioner group (42.9 percent)¹⁶⁶. The explanation for such a finding might well relate to the working environment in each sector, which reflects increasing use of internet and media technology. Overall, the

¹⁶⁶ See Appendix for more detail on respondents' feedback.

advantages of the internet and new social media during the Arab Uprisings in 2011 was important in encouraging a number of Malaysian Islamic activists to utilise these platforms in order to disseminate political awareness and push for political reforms, as well as for organising political protests (as witnessed in the series of Bersih events).

7.4 The Rise of Islamist Parties after the Arab Uprisings: Does This Affect the Development of Islamist Movements in Malaysia?

The trend of the so-called 'Islamist Winter' saw a number of Islamist parties in the MENA region take up power and lead governments in countries including Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco circa 2011-2013. It is important to explore whether or not this phenomena has affected the development of activism amongst Islamist movements in Malaysia. This inquiry began by asking the respondents whether the trend of Islamist parties' 'awakening' in the post-Arab Uprisings have politically inspired them to achieve power, as well as influence their political activism in terms of their movement's ideology and political approaches. The second question asked respondents whether the above scenario had also impacted the state of their movement's transnational cooperation with other Arab Islamist parties.

7.4.1 Activism within the Islamist Movements in Malaysia and Inspiration from the 'Islamist Winter' Trend

This section presents the attitudes of respondents towards the scenario of Islamist parties' 'awakening' in the Post-Arab Uprisings – and whether it has inspired Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH to continue to struggle for power in the 'Malaysian political game'. As previously discussed in Chapter Five, given the established relationship between these movements and the Muslim Brothers' parties in the Middle East (for instance the Tunisian Ennahda, Egyptian FJP and Moroccan PJD) the results were close to the researcher's expectations; more than half of the respondents (62.3 percent - agree and strongly agree) saw the rise of Islamist parties as a motivation for them to achieve political power at the national level. 29.2 percent of the respondents expressed a neutral view towards the question, while 8.5 percent believed that the performance of Islamist parties in the post-Arab Uprisings

elections did not inspire them towards a power struggle in the context of Malaysia's politics. Table 7.8 below records the details of respondents' feedback on the question.

Table 7.8 Respondents' Views that the Rise of Islamist Parties in the Post-Arab Uprisings Has Given Political Inspiration to the Islamist Movements in Malaysia

Type of Islamist Movement	The Rise of Islamist Parties in the Post-Arab Uprisings Has Given Political Inspiration to the Islamist Movements in Malaysia (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	5 (1.7%)	16 (5.6%)	95 (33.1%)	127 (44.3%)	44 (15.3%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	6 (6.5%)	25 (29.9%)	35 (37.6%)	26 (28.0%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	2 (2.5%)	9 (11.1%)	16 (19.8%)	24 (29.6%)	30 (37.%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	6 (8.7%)	19 (27.5%)	36 (52.2%)	8 (11.6%)	69 (100%)
Total	8 (1.5%)	37 (7.0%)	155 (29.2%)	222 (41.9%)	108 (20.4%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, the specific responses from each movement are specified as follows:

- i. For PAS respondents, 59.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 33.1 percent who were neutral and 7.3 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 65.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 29.9 percent who were neutral and 7.6 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 66.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 29.9 percent who were neutral and 13.6 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 63.8 percent agreed (in general), followed by 27.5 percent who were neutral and 8.7 percent who disagreed (in general).

It seems that there are no significant differences between the four Islamist Movements studied as regards the question about inspiration from the 'Islamist Winter'. As previously stated, most of the respondents acknowledged that they were influenced by the trajectory of the Arab Islamist parties which rose to

power in their respective countries following the Arab Uprisings. As acknowledged by Amar Yasier (ISMA activist)¹⁶⁷:

“The Arab Uprisings more or less had inspired us (ISMA) to participate in the 2013 General Election in Malaysia. As an Islamist NGO, ISMA was motivated by the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (2011-2013) and the trend of Islamist parties awakening in the Middle East. We came to the conclusion that it was the right time for us to participate in the national election by forming our own Islamist Party (Berjasa) since our long term objective has always been to establish an Islamic state in Malaysia. At that time we were confident that our movement had stepped on the right path (to contest in the 2013 Malaysian general election). ISMA has indeed learned something from the Arab Spring especially in the context of involvement in the election”.

Abdul Hamid and Che Mohd Razali (2016: 9) also agree that ISMA’s decision to participate in GE13 as a separate electoral entity could be described as emulating the MB’s experience in the Middle East - with encouragement and motivation towards participation in electoral politics was given by MB activists¹⁶⁸. To some extent, an important reason for Malaysian Islamists to be inspired by the success of Arab Islamist parties in the post-Arab Uprisings environment is a very simple one, namely wiser Islamist strategies and leadership. The Islamist parties attracted a high percent of the public vote after making substantial compromises in terms of political approach and agenda - as can be seen in the case of Ennahda during the post-Ben Ali transition government. Speaking about the Arab Uprisings and its ability to inspire Islamist parties in the MENA region, a PAS activist - Syafiq Kamil¹⁶⁹- points out that the leadership factor should be highlighted, as he believes the way new Islamist leaders govern the Arab world will determine the support received from Malaysia’s own Islamist movement (PAS). Undoubtedly, understanding the inspiration created in the post-Arab Uprisings environment has generated several new findings relating to Malaysia’s Islamist movements. These will be discussed in the following sections.

¹⁶⁷ Personal interview with the International Relations Bureau for ISMA’s UK branch, Amar Yasier. London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

¹⁶⁸ In 2011, an ISMA delegation led by its President, Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman paid a courtesy visit to the Vice Mursyidul Am of MB, Mahmud Izzat. ISMA’s media representative also interviewed one of the MB activists, Dr Kamal el Helbawy with regard to FJP experience in the post Mubarak era. See also <http://www.ismaeropah.com/isma-lakukan-kunjungan-hormat-ke-atas-naib-mursyidul-am-ikhwan-muslimin/> [04 February 2018]

¹⁶⁹ Respondent’s written opinion/comment on the questionnaire.

7.4.2 The Post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon and Its Influence on the Political Approach of Malaysia's Islamist Movements

In order to explore the respondents' opinions regarding the impact of the Arab Uprisings on the political approach of Malaysia's Islamist movements, the researcher conducted a number of short and informal face-to-face interviews with more than thirty Malaysian Islamists, mostly youth members and party supporters. The interviews took place on several different occasions in Malaysia, for instance during the 2016 PAS annual meeting, during the 45th ABIM annual gathering (2016), at AMANAH political speeches and at several ISMA official events. The only question being asked was: does the respondent think that the post-Arab Uprisings developments have influenced their respective Islamist movement's ideology and political approach? Based on the researcher's analysis 'key words' frequently used by the interviewees were identified, specifically: 1) "moderation" and 2) "inclusion". Indeed, the issue of moderation is particularly substantial in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings as Islamist parties took power in a number of countries (Durac & Cavatorta 2015: 146-147). Half of the interviewees referred to the development of Ennahda in Tunisia and the event of Egypt's coup in 2013 as the real reasons why Malaysia's Islamist movement should be more moderate and inclusive in terms of ideology and political approach – a thought which could transform the long-standing approach of conservative 'Islamism' which has primarily composed the agenda of the Islamic state establishment, support for a number of Islamic privileges as well as the plan to implement sharia amongst the Muslim majority in Malaysia.

The outcome of the interviews might explain the reason why 293 respondents (55.1 percent) from the questionnaire-survey believed that the post-Arab Uprisings events had somehow influenced the ideological approach of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists in Malaysia. However, there were also 50 respondents (9.4 percent) who disagreed with the statement, along with a total rejection by 17 respondents (3.2 percent). The remaining 171 respondents (32.2 percent) could not decide whether the Arab Uprisings had any impact on the party's ideology. Table 7.9 below records the summary of respondents' attitudes towards the implications of the post-Arab Uprisings

environment, with specific reference to the experiences of Ennahda and FJP influencing the ideology of Malaysia's Islamist movements.

Table 7.9 Respondents' Views that Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Influenced the Ideology of Islamist Movements in Malaysia

Type of Islamist Movement	Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Influenced the Ideology of Islamist Movements in Malaysia (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	11 (3.8%)	25 (8.7%)	107 (37.2%)	111 (38.5%)	34 (11.8%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	10 (10.8%)	25 (26.9%)	44 (47.3%)	13 (14.0%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	2 (2.5%)	6 (11.1%)	24 (19.8%)	29 (29.6%)	20 (37.%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	3 (4.3%)	9 (13.0%)	15 (21.7%)	35 (50.7%)	7 (10.1%)	69 (100%)
Total	17 (3.2%)	50 (9.4%)	171 (32.2%)	219 (41.2%)	74 (13.9%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

In term of percentages, the specific responses for each movement are highlighted below:

- i. For PAS respondents, 50.3 percent agreed (in general), followed by 37.2 percent who were neutral and 12.5 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 61.3 percent agreed (in general), followed by 26.9 percent who were neutral and 11.9 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 66.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 19.8 percent who were neutral and 13.6 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 60.8 percent agreed (in general), followed by 21.7 percent who were neutral and 17.3 percent who disagreed (in general).

It does seem that the development of Islamist parties in the post-Arab Uprisings setting has affected the way of thinking of the majority of Malaysian Islamists

regarding their movement's political approach and ideology. As acknowledged by Muhammad Najib (AMANAH Youth Leader)¹⁷⁰,

“An inspiration from the trend of victory of the Islamic parties in the Middle East is of course, present (within AMANAH). In terms of the political approach, we have been influenced a great deal by AKP. In terms of thinking, we learn a lot from Ennahda, especially the thinking of Sheikh Ghannouchi. This is because he was the one who had a lot of new ideas related to the Islamic politics especially when the concept of al-Faraghat is introduced, which means a vacuum, in the Islamic political thinking. In relation to Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood), AMANAH does not really lean towards this movement”.

In terms of other relevant background variables, the chi square test analysis from SPSS found that age and level of education were significant in explaining a pattern within the feedback. The youth members within the movements, aged 16-25 years and 26-35 years expressed strong feelings regarding the influence of the post-Arab Uprisings environment. The majority of respondents with a PhD academic qualification (66.7 percent) and a Bachelors Degree (55.8 percent) believed that developments in the post-Arab Uprisings period had influenced the political approach of Islamist movements in Malaysia, while respondents with a Diploma (48.6 percent) showed slightly less agreement¹⁷¹. Overall, it is interesting that the respondents' age and type of education are again related to views which conform with the views of their respective movements. The next question will examine in detail the influence of the Arab Uprisings on 'moderation' and 'inclusion' as seen through the eyes of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH members.

7.4.3 Influential Aspects: Moderation and Inclusion

Islam proposes a set of fundamental guidelines for promoting peace, maintaining political stability and fostering mutual understanding in multi-faith and multi-cultural contexts (Hassan 2011). Among the values proposed by the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W is the concept of moderation in all aspects of life, ranging from religious understanding to the relationship of an individual with his or her surrounding community, along with the political aspects of a nation.

¹⁷⁰ Personal interview with the AMANAH National Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016.

¹⁷¹ The P-Values for both variables are less than 0.05 which clearly indicate a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

Although Sheline (2017: 47) has argued that there is no real agreement on the meaning of moderate Islam, the term moderation itself can be generally defined from the Islamic perspective as being constantly balanced towards the middle way in all matters, including politics. It is between the two extremes of radicalism and disregard and on a straight path following the Islamic methodology of living. It is the best approach in any political action to be taken in order to avoid any extreme or excessive event from happening (Hassan 2011).

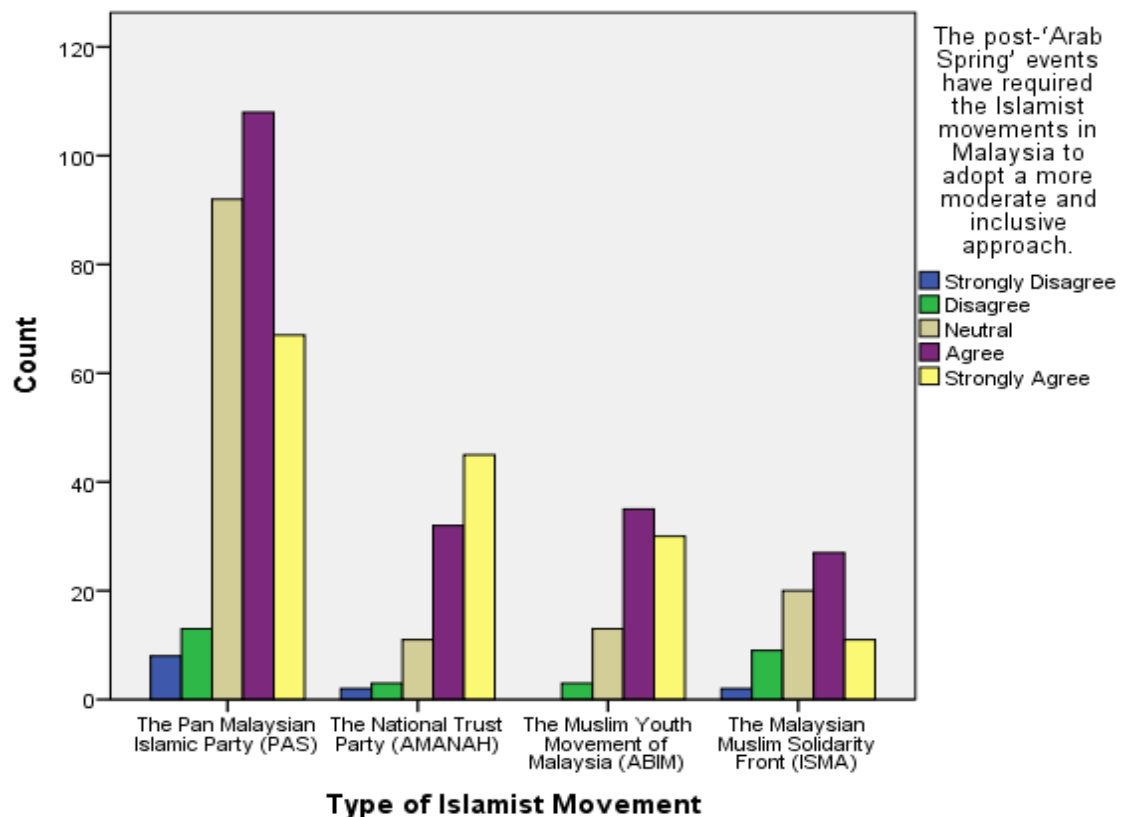
The political conflicts in the post-Arab Uprisings have brought daunting challenges for Islamist movements wanting to be seen as relevant and accepted by the world community in general and by their respective citizens in particular. The tragic events comprising Daesh's 'claimed-attacks' in several major world cities (for instance in Paris in 2015) have generated a surge in Islamophobia where many perceive Islamism, Islamists and Islamist movements as volatile, intolerant and extreme. According to Mark Lynch (2016: 250), the failure of the Arab Uprisings in Syria and the emergence of Daesh have revitalised a critique of Islamist movements which had previously fallen into disrepute. Having seen these 'crises', the Ennahda leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, came up with the idea of 'Muslim Democrats' in 2016 as a way to promote the idea of neo-Islamism (see Chapter Three). This term stresses the importance of pluralism and diversity and rejects party exclusion, division in society and disunity in relation to major national interests within Islamic oriented political parties. This identity also means the inclusion of the majority of political parties and civil society groups when determining major political choices and decisions¹⁷². According to Anne Wolf, a Cambridge based-researcher who specialises in the history of Ennahda:

"Ghannouchi insisted that he accepted Western-style multi-party politics as long as it did not marginalize or reject religion, a stance which set him apart from more conservative Islamic movements" (Wolf 2017: 97).

¹⁷² Speaking of this new identity, Ghannouchi further clarifies that Ennahda's commitment to consensual democracy, dialogue, negotiation and the search for common ground in the management of Tunisia's affairs and the prioritization of the national interest over partisan interests and ideological differences will be on the party's main agenda in the coming years. For more details, please see "Concluding Statement of Ennahda's Tenth Party Conference". Available at <https://www.facebook.com/Nahdha.International/posts/703054249797836> [12 June 2016].

Regarding the current political situation involving Islamist parties in Malaysia, the PAS decision to cut ties with its former secular coalition partner - the Democratic Action Party (DAP) - caused disagreement amongst its members and committees. This led to the internal break within the party in 2015 which gave birth to AMANAH (See Chapter Four). Some members believed the party should learn a lesson from the Arab Uprisings and the transformation of Ennahda in Tunisia, in terms of practising moderation and valuing inclusion¹⁷³. The result of the survey appears to support the claim, as 66.8 percent of respondents agreed that post-Arab Uprisings events have taught them to embrace a more moderate and inclusive approach when dealing with other non-Islamic oriented parties and NGOs. See Figure 7.8 below for a summary of the respondents' feedback based on the different Islamist movements.

Figure 7.8 Respondents' Attitudes Concerning Whether Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Required Malaysia's Islamist Movements to Adopt a More Moderate and Inclusive Approach



From the above bar chart, the exact responses for each movement in terms of frequency and percentages are as follows:

¹⁷³ Personal interview with a former PAS Youth Chief - Suhaizan Kayat - who is currently on the AMANAH Central Committee. Batu Caves, Malaysia. 27 August 2016.

- i. For PAS respondents, 23.3 percent strongly agreed (67), followed by 37.5 percent who agreed (108), 16.7 percent who were neutral (92), 4.5 percent who disagreed (13) and 8 percent who strongly disagreed (8).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 48.4 percent strongly agreed (45), followed by 34.4 percent who agreed (32), 11.8 percent who were neutral (11), 3.2 percent who disagreed (3) and 2.2 percent who strongly disagreed (2).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 37.0 percent strongly agreed (36), followed by 43.2 percent who agreed (35), 16.0 percent who were neutral (13) and 3 percent who disagreed (3).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 15.9 percent strongly agreed (11), followed by 39.1 percent who agreed (27), 29.0 percent who were neutral (20), 13.0 percent who disagreed (9) and 2.9 percent who strongly disagreed (2).

The findings indicated that moderation and inclusion are two main issues in the post-Arab Uprisings setting (with specific reference to Ennahda and FJP) which have affected and could potentially continue to influence the political approach and ideology of Islamist movements in Malaysia. According to PAS activist, Saifuddin¹⁷⁴:

“The Islamist movements in Malaysia should choose moderation and an inclusive approach as it will create an independent, mature and peaceful political culture in the country. Regarding post-Arab Uprisings developments, there are things that Islamist movements will agree and disagree about as long as it benefits the party and society”.

Another PAS activist, Yasin Yunos, stated that¹⁷⁵:

“Islamist movements all over the world have different approaches and strategies that vary according to local political circumstances, economic performance and social conditions in their respective countries. However, PAS in Malaysia prefers to adopt a moderate approach as well as participating in Malaysia's general election as a method of upholding the political Islam agenda. History and statistical data from past elections have shown that PAS never resorted to any violent methods to topple the ruling regime. A peaceful and stable political sphere in Malaysia has provided a great opportunity for PAS to continue its Islamic propagation objectives and activities as well as promoting political Islam. Despite Arab Spring street protests and violent incidents in the MENA region, it does not change the current moderate approach of PAS in Malaysia”.

¹⁷⁴ Written comments/thoughts from a PAS activist, Saifuddin in the questionnaire form.

¹⁷⁵ Written comments/thoughts from a PAS activist, Yasin Yunos in the questionnaire form.

These opinions from PAS activists seem in-line with Khalil al-Anani (2017: 4), an Associate Professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies who has emphasised that:

“Responses of Islamist movements to the fast-changing local, regional, and global environment after the Arab Spring have varied greatly. Some movements adapted and made significant changes in their discourse, organizational structure, and strategy as well as maintained internal coherence and unity to cope with the new environment”

The respondents, especially those from AMANAH and ABIM, have paid great attention, both ideologically and in practice to both moderation and inclusion. Moreover, these were a significant part of the values which the AMANAH leadership tried to promote amongst its members and to Malaysian citizens in general. Emphasising moderation and inclusion as core values within all four movements, although with different degrees of practice, reflects the readiness of Malaysia’s Islamist movements to attract political support from all layers of society. The next section will discuss the relationship between the Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Middle East during post-Arab Uprisings events, based on respondents’ attitudes and experiences.

7.4.4 Strengthening Cooperation: The Islamist Movements in Malaysia and the Middle East and North Africa

Table 7.10 Respondents’ Views that Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Strengthened Cooperation Between Islamist Movements in Malaysia and Islamist Movements in the Middle East and North Africa

Type of Islamist Movement	Post-Arab Uprisings Events Have Strengthened Cooperation Between Islamist Movements in Malaysia and Islamist Movements in the Middle East and North Africa (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	3 (1.0%)	25 (8.7%)	94 (32.6%)	114 (39.6%)	52 (18.1%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	7 (7.5%)	30 (32.3%)	35 (37.6%)	20 (21.5%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	4 (4.9%)	2 (2.5%)	17 (21.0%)	39 (48.1%)	19 (23.5%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	1 (1.4%)	12 (17.4%)	27 (39.1%)	24 (34.8%)	5 (7.2%)	69 (100%)
Total	17 (1.7%)	50 (8.7%)	171 (32.2%)	219 (31.6%)	74 (39.9%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

Table 7.10 above shows respondents' opinions about whether post-Arab Uprisings developments have strengthened cooperation between Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Middle East. It appears that the majority of respondents (71.5 percent) from the four Islamic movements support the idea that Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Middle East have enhanced their cooperation since the overthrow of former regimes in several Arab states (Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco). Historically, it is recognised that the relationship of PAS, ABIM and ISMA with global Islamist movements and parties is not new (See Chapter Four). PAS and ABIM have established a wider official Islamic connection since the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Furthermore, with Muslim Brotherhood movements as a fundamental model of political Islam, PAS and ABIM have maintained the 'Arab-Middle Eastern connection' as part of their vital international agenda. ISMA, via its President also admitted that Muslim Brotherhood movements in the Arab world have shaped the movement's political approach since its establishment in the 1990s¹⁷⁶.

In addition, during the post-Arab Uprisings period, PAS visited Tunisia's Ennahda and the leaders of the Muslim Brothers in the Middle East twice - in 2012 and 2015 respectively. The main objectives were to congratulate them (on the opportunity to govern their respective states) as well as to learn from their political experience in the new 'era' following the post-transitional governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco¹⁷⁷. For PAS members who responded to the question, 57.7 percent believed that post-Arab Uprisings events have definitely strengthened the party's cooperation with their Islamist counterparts in the Arab world. One of the respondents explained that it is PAS policy to encourage its members to support any legal Islamist movement in the world, especially when those movements have secured governing power.

Thus, it is not a surprise to see many Facebook users amongst PAS ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH members changed their Facebook profile pictures to feature the famous 'Four-Finger Salute' image as a symbol to express their solidarity with the former Egyptian President, Mohamed Morsi, who was overthrown during the June 2013 military takeover. Many peace rallies were

¹⁷⁶ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

¹⁷⁷ Personal interview with Mohd Hafez Sabri. 28 October 2016.

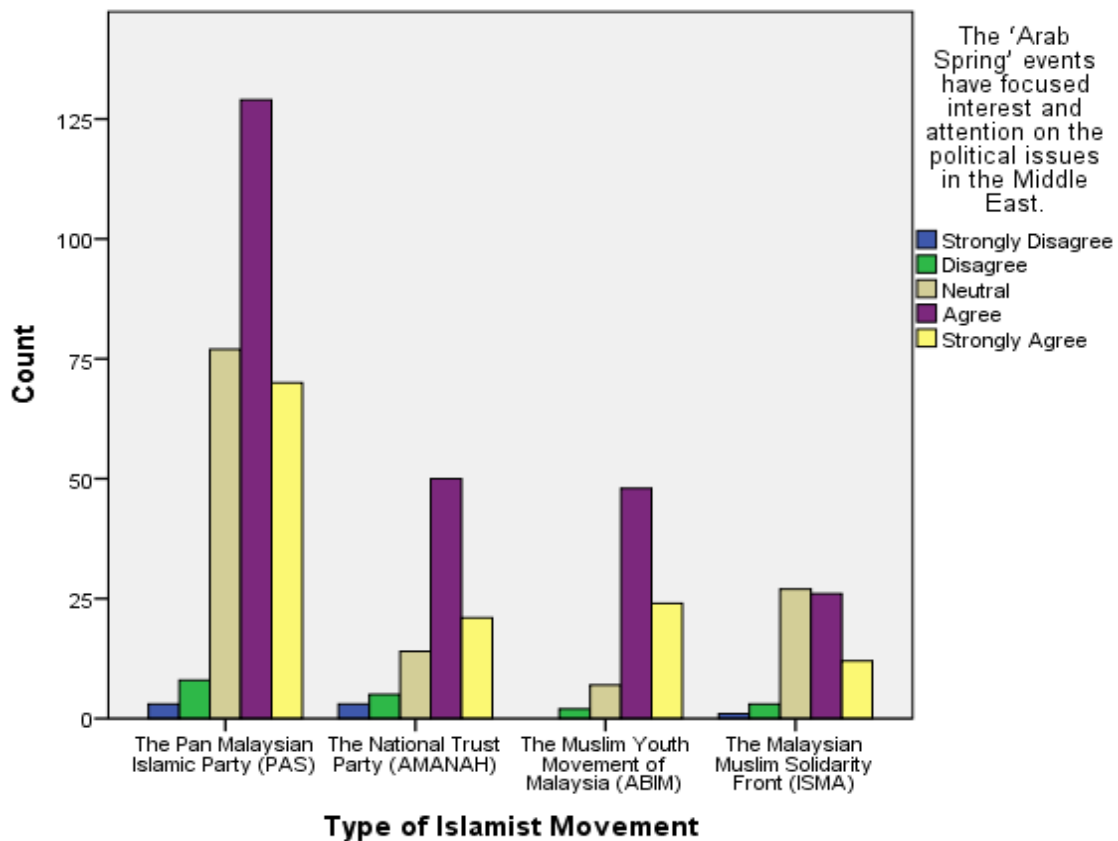
also conducted for the same purpose, including one near the Egyptian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Overall, these findings show a pattern of positive attitudes by Malaysian Islamists towards the development of transnational cooperation between Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Middle East during the post-Arab Uprisings period.

7.5 Awareness of Political Issues in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Arab Uprisings' Factor

The purpose of this section is to explore how Malaysian Islamists perceive Arab Uprisings events as raising their awareness of and interest in political matters in the MENA region. Based on the researcher's observations, for much of the past three decades the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the 2003 USA led-coalition invasion of Iraq and the development of AKP in Turkey were among the most popular issues that interested Malaysian Islamists as regards Arab and Middle Eastern political affairs. However, beginning in 2011, the dynamic and changing nature of the political landscape and the progress of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon have caught the attention of the world community in general and of the Islamist movements in Malaysia in particular.

For PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH members, activists and supporters who responded to the question, 69.4 percent (380) felt that the Arab Uprisings undoubtedly opened new dimensions in Arab world politics and will be the focus of discussion in the years to come because of its lasting implications, not only in the Middle East and North African countries, but worldwide. 26.8 percent of respondents (125) gave a neutral response, while the remaining 3.9 percent (25) disagreed with the statement. The respondents' responses can be viewed in Figure 7.9 below.

Figure 7.9 Respondents' Views that Arab Uprisings Events Have Focused Interest and Attention of Malaysian Islamists on Political Issues in the Middle East



The explanation for such statistical feedback might relate to the relationship between PAS, ABIM and ISMA with the Islamist movements in the MENA region, which is seen as the reason why Arab and Middle East politics always ‘come first’ by the Malaysian Islamists compared to politics in other regions (Europe, Latin America, East Asia, Oceania and etc). The research suggests that Arab Uprisings events have encouraged Malaysian Islamists to pay more attention to political issues across the Middle East and North Africa region. Amar Yasier (ISMA activist) ‘confessed’ that ¹⁷⁸:

“Before the ‘Arab Spring’ I seldom consistently followed any news or updates about Middle East politics (except some issues about the Israel-Palestine conflicts) since I personally thought there was nothing very exciting about the MENA region (in terms of local politics). I instead paid more attention to Malaysian politics as well as developments in the US and UK. But when the Arab Uprisings happened, I perceived these events as highly interesting to follow due to their dynamism and involving lots of actors (both local and foreign) including the Islamists”

¹⁷⁸ Personal interview with Amar Yasier, London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

7.6 Conclusion and Summary

The main objectives of this chapter were to examine the attitudes of Malaysian Islamists towards post-Arab Uprisings developments and to establish whether these developments influenced the political activism of the selected Islamist movements in Malaysia. The findings showed that many PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists believed the Arab Uprisings had both positive and negative short term implications, depending on the specific country involved. For instance, some respondents were quite positive about the recent political reform (21.5 percent) and democratisation processes (43.9 percent) in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt (during the FJP rule). However, other respondents (41.5 percent) did not see much improvement in terms of political and economic stability - referring to the examples of Syria, Yemen and Libya. Paradoxically, the findings also revealed that many respondents were not certain whether Tunisia should be viewed as an example of a 'successful product' of the Arab Uprisings, despite the positive reviews by academics and the international community. The reason for this is probably limited knowledge about the Maghreb region and political development in Tunisia, as the country is less popular than Egypt in terms of respondents' engagement with Middle East political news.

There are a number of respondents (34.2 percent) who assumed that the impact of the post-Arab Uprisings involved the unleashing of an unexpected event – the birth of Daesh in Northern Syria and the terrorism that followed in several different countries. However, not all respondents agreed with the statement about the connection between the Syrian Uprisings and the emergence of Daesh (32.9 percent) and some preferred to remain neutral (32.9 percent). Among the reasons for rejection of the statement were the claims by the ISMA President and an AMANAH activist that there were 'invisible hands' behind the backdrop of Daesh operations, which they believed were orchestrated by Western powers (including Israel) for personal (Western) gain. The series of terrorist activities carried out by Daesh has undeniably affected the stability of the MENA region. Accordingly, for some respondents (39 percent), the Arab world was seen as more peaceful before the Arab Uprisings (especially before the Syrian uprisings occurred). Indeed, the findings from this

part of the study are somewhat complex, but still interesting as they indicate a rather balanced view with no dominant response from respondents.

Apart from the adverse side of the post-Arab Uprisings developments discussed above, this study shows that the majority of Malaysian Islamists (54.7 percent) believe the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon have been an 'eye-opener' for Arab rulers who have been forced to listen to the voice of fellow citizens. Dictatorships within the Arab world have proven not to be 'immune' to grass root challenges. The vast majority of respondents who agreed with the statement also predicted that another wave of democratic uprisings would take place in the future – given the current political uncertainties in several Arab nations. Regarding the impact of the Arab Uprisings on the Islamist movements in Malaysia, the findings showed that the events have influenced various aspects of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH political activism.

Firstly, almost half of respondents (49.9 percent), largely comprising youths and university students, admitted that the act of street protests during the Arab Uprisings had inspired them to openly express their anger and disappointment at the systematic discrimination by the Malaysian regime of opposition parties, as well as the huge corruption scandals involving Prime Minister Najib Razak. Most of these respondents had participated in one of the biggest political protests in Malaysia - the 2013 Bersih 3.0 movement.

Secondly, it appears that the majority of Malaysian Islamists (69.9 percent) believe that the Arab Uprisings benefitted from new social media via the platforms of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube videos – and social media could serve as a great 'weapon' in future political activism. The respondents agreed that the use of the internet and new social media should be fully utilised by Malaysian Islamist activists in order to generate political awareness, as well as to initiate any civil disobedience against the ruling regime in the future. The result of the Chi-square test analysis also found that respondents' level of education and working sector were statistically significant in determining the Malaysian Islamists' attitudes on this issue.

Thirdly, the positive performance of several Islamist parties in their first 'democratic' elections in the post-Arab Uprisings era appears to have motivated a majority of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists (62.3 percent) to put

more effort into attracting local support in order to reach the ultimate agenda of political Islam in Malaysia. Respondents also learned from Islamist parties in the Middle East that the goal of political Islam can only be achieved by implementing well-considered strategies which include negotiation in terms of ideology and political approach.

Fourthly, without having had direct in-country experience, the post-Arab Uprisings' phenomenon (via the development of Islamist parties) nevertheless influenced the ideology and political approach of Islamist movements in Malaysia. There was emphasis on the practices of moderation and inclusivity in order to attract wider political support. These two aspects were crucially seen by respondents as a 'soft approach' when dealing with different layers of society and non-Islamic oriented parties and NGOs in Malaysia. Amongst the four Islamist movements being studied, AMANAH seemed to strongly embrace the idea of Ghannouchi's 'Muslim Democrat' or neo-Islamism for the movement's members. 83.1 percent of AMANAH Islamists showed a positive attitude towards the proposition that Malaysia's Islamist movements should adopt a more moderate and inclusive approach, as with the transformation of Ennahda in Tunisia. Related indirectly to this question, the research found that the practice of conservative Islamism (which highlighted the aim of establishing 'Daulah Islamiyah' and sharia in Malaysia) was less popular with Islamist parties and NGOs.

Fifthly, it seems that post-Arab Uprisings events have somehow strengthened the relationship between Malaysia's Islamist movements and Arab Islamist movements through several 'courtesy calls', such as the one undertaken by PAS with Ennahda representatives. Events that occurred during the post-Arab Uprisings, for instance the victory of Ennahda in the 2011 Tunisian Constituent Assembly Election and the tragedy of the 2013 military coup in Egypt, garnered tremendous support from Islamist politicians and activists in Malaysia.

Lastly, this study found that Arab Uprisings events have encouraged approximately 70 percent of respondents from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH to pay more attention to political issues in the Arab world. For them, the lasting impact of the Arab Uprisings makes the 'drama' of Middle East politics worth

watching. It is of course obvious that the degree of awareness depends on the regularity of engaging with Middle East political news. However, it is worth noting that the strengthening transnational relationship between Malaysia's Islamist movements and Arab Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings might embolden respondents to 'get closer' to Middle East political affairs.

To sum up, the overall findings of this study demonstrate that Islamist movements in Malaysia have been significantly influenced by political developments that have occurred within the Arab world, especially those during the post-Arab Uprisings era. Undeniably, the impacts of the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon were felt by the majority of Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH – depending on their knowledge and how they perceived the specific issues within the scope of the research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REVOLUTION OR POLITICAL STABILITY? MALAYSIA'S ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AND LESSONS FROM THE ARAB UPRISINGS

“The uprisings and wars have led to regime change in some countries, often after much bloodshed. In others, there has been no change, but terrible carnage. In Syria, initially peaceful protests against the government turned into one of the region’s ugliest conflicts in modern Arab history- UNDP 2016¹⁷⁹”.

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the attitudes of the sampled respondents (from specific dimensions) to lessons learned from the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon within the context of the Malaysian political landscape, as well as the development of Malaysia's Islamist movements. To begin with, every major historical event that occurs in the world undoubtedly produces some valuable lessons for humankind and it seems that the same principle also applies in the case of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Academically speaking, there are plenty of significant studies which highlight the lessons that can be drawn from the Arab Uprisings - for instance by Filiu (2011), As'ad Ghanem (2013), Larbi Sadiki (2015), Roberts et al (2016) and Hafez Ghanem (2016). However, none of these authors discuss the above matters from the perspective of countries beyond the Middle East and North Africa region; none adopt the perspective of other majority Muslim nations (e.g. Malaysia). Hence, after all these years of observation and discussion relating to the Arab Uprisings, this research will investigate whether the Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH have learned lessons from these momentous events.

8.2 The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: What Have Malaysian Islamists Learned from the Arab Uprisings?

In order to examine this question, the researcher has provided nine statements in the questionnaire which explore the attitudes of respondents towards several issues which fall under the theme of lessons from the Arab Uprisings - for instance concerning the state of political Islam and Islamism, the “Malaysian

¹⁷⁹United Nation Development Program (2016). Human Development Report 2016. Available at <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/humadevelopment/arab-human-development-report-2016--youth-and-the-prospects-for/>

Spring” polemics, the acceptance of electoral democracy and the significance of Malaysia’s current political stability. The researcher recognises that there are some differences between the actual situation in those Arab states where the Arab Uprisings or Arab Revolutions have demanded immediate ‘change of the ruling regime’ due to various reasons and the Malaysian case of the Bersih protests where Malaysians, particularly Islamists, still fight against corruption, political injustice and electoral reform (as well as the long term plan of implementing sharia). However, it is still possible to draw some lessons relevant for Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH. As pointed out by one of the respondents from PAS¹⁸⁰:

“The political situation in Malaysia is different from the other (Arab) states. The Islamist Movement (PAS) was created earlier along with the journey of Malaysia's independence. In other (Muslim) countries, the Islamist movements are always being threatened, repressed and banned. Apart from that, the approach of Islamist movements in Malaysia is unique as they have their own 'battlefield' which could only be shaped by themselves (the Malaysian Islamists), although there may be some influenced from outside. Thus, I would personally say that the ‘Arab Spring’ is more or less suitable to serve as a lesson for the development of Malaysian Islamist movements”.

Adnan, an ABIM activist, shared the same opinion by stating that¹⁸¹:

“Indeed, the ‘Arab Spring’ was one of the manifestations of Arab civilian voices against autocratic regimes. However, the condition and political scenario in Malaysia is slightly different from the Arab world. Thus, in my view, the ‘Arab Spring’ should not be followed by us in Malaysia, rather it should be seen as a lesson”.

The above opinions are only examples of what Islamists from PAS and ABIM thought about the lessons from the Arab Uprisings. The following sections will specifically highlight all the identified lessons from the Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon that are relevant to the development of Islamist movements in Malaysia, as based on respondents’ opinions.

¹⁸⁰ Personal interview with a PAS activist (name withheld at interviewee’s request), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 19 September 2016.

¹⁸¹ Personal interview with an ABIM activist, Adnan. Shah Alam, Malaysia. 29 October 2016.

8.2.1 The Importance of Political Strategy and Preparation to Govern

The Arab Uprisings of 2011 have clearly altered the political context of Islamist opposition and state interactions in the wider Arab world. Like many Islamist political parties in the Middle East, the Islamist movements in Malaysia also originally emerged as movements calling for the application of sharia and the establishment of an 'Islamic state'. Previously they had evolved as opposition and protest movements; however, in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings some of the Islamist parties in the MENA region tried to develop negotiation and compromise skills. This can be witnessed in the recent development of Ennahda as a way to ensure that the 'ideological rigidity' of Islamism (which was often seen as a source of anxiety for many citizens who do not share the vision of 'political Islam') can be effectively minimised¹⁸².

Throughout the post-Arab Uprisings, the newly progressive Islamists in the Middle East also appeared to legitimately attract support from a large part of society. Major Islamist movements/parties transformed their Islamist approach by discarding exclusive loyalty to the 'Islamic Ummah' and adopting progressive positions, for instance the introduction of 'Muslim Democrat' idea by Ghannouchi in 2016. According to the Ennahda president¹⁸³:

"Now that the party is separated from religion, what will your party be? (Actually) We are not separated from religion. Islam is our reference. It is a source of inspiration for us, but we do not ask people to elect us because we are more religious than others. We would like to attract people to our freedom regardless of their religion. All Tunisians are welcome to join our party, provided that they accept our party's programme. Our agenda is not based on religion; it is based on real services for people, real solutions to their daily problems, education, good health care and job creation".

These moves undoubtedly caused the citizens in MENA countries to shift their support from the old secular elites to the Islamist movements as in the case of

¹⁸² During an interview with Osama al-Saghir (Ennahda member and Tunisian MP), he explains that for many years before the revolution, most Tunisians and secular politicians could not differentiate between radical Islamist groups who adopted violence (e.g. Taliban, Al-Qaida etc) and moderate Muslim parties who supported democracy. Thus, after the revolution, with more freedom of speech and expression, Ennahda decided to be clarify its identity as a moderate, conservative and democratic Muslim party in Tunisia.

¹⁸³ Ghannouchi's statement (published in his official Facebook account) on the idea of 'Muslim Democrat' as a new identity of Ennahda during the party's 10th Congress in Tunis, May 2016. https://www.facebook.com/rached.ghannouchi/?ref=br_rs [19 October 2017].

Ennahda, the Egyptian FJP and the Moroccan PJD experiences during the first years after the Arab Uprisings. As Naoufel Eljammali demonstrates¹⁸⁴,

“The most interesting thing now in the Ennahda and this transformation is it will allow the party not to speak only with few persons who are and have a great, direct and strong relationship with the religion (Islam).. but to extend its public to other people. This effort will allow us to be very strong and have a resilient popular base in the country”.

However, the unexpected trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt illustrates that some Islamist parties have not completed their evolution from being rigid ideological parties - whose sole aim is to remake their societies in their own image - to pragmatic organisations willing to represent and give voice to their followers in a pluralistic political environment¹⁸⁵. According to Khaled Abou (2015), many Egyptians who voted for the Muslim Brotherhood in 2011 and 2012 saw the well-organised Islamist party as an indication of high moral standards and competence that would translate into an effective new Egyptian government. Yet, these hopes were dashed when the Brotherhood turned out to be ‘high on will and low on skill’ as Morsi was seen as too concentrated on putting effort into consolidating presidential control rather than dealing with Egypt’s dire economic and social problems (El-Fadl 2015: 256-258).

If the Muslim Brotherhood’s experience points to the need for political Islam to accommodate a pluralistic society, this seems more relevant in the context of the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural Malaysian society. Malaysia’s Islamist parties can either hold on to their rigid ideological base (if any) - trying to shape society to fit within their singular vision - or they can accept their role as an influential force in a democratic pluralistic regime, within which the rule of law must guarantee protection of rights for everyone

¹⁸⁴ Personal interview with member of Ennahda Political Bureau, Naoufel Eljammali. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

¹⁸⁵ After Morsi won the presidential election, despite reminders by the moderates to tread carefully, many of the leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood invoked a “historical imperative” to start an “Islamic Enlightenment” project. The seeds for the coup on July 3, 2013 against Mohamed Morsi and the subsequent ban on the Muslim Brotherhood were sown by their attempt to implement the Islamisation policy without dealing effectively with socio-economic problems. This allowed the intelligence and military under the old Mubarak regime to take advantage of the ensuing anti-Morsi and anti-Muslim Brotherhood sentiments to regain power in one fell swoop under the pretext of saving the revolution from the Islamists. For more details please see Khaled Abou El Fadl (2015) *Failure of a Revolution: The Military, Secular Intelligentsia and Religion in Egypt’s Pseudo-Secular State* in Sadiki, Larbi ed. *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring*. London: Routledge. pp 253-269.

regardless of their background. In light of the failure of Egyptian Islamist political elites to provide an alternative model for long term political change following the January 25th Revolution, the idea of ‘Muslim Democrat’, championed by the Tunisian Ennahda founder, emerged as an alternative model to the conservative forms of political Islam in many Arab states. As highlighted by Mohamad (an AMANAH Activist):

“Tunisia's Islamist movement (Ennahda) shows its support for inclusivity and progressiveness which fall under the framework of Muslim Democrat and democracy. Meanwhile in Egypt, the Islamists failed miserably¹⁸⁶”.

Likewise, it seems that within the Malaysian political context Islamist political elites, particularly PAS and AMANAH Islamist politicians, will have to reconsider their political approach if they want to formulate political platforms capable of restoring the confidence of those segments of the population leaning towards Islamism in peaceful political action. Islamist political parties and NGOs in Malaysia must fundamentally review the political approaches they have practised over the past several years to find solutions, if they hope to survive and remain prominent local political actors. In particular, they should focus on providing more effective mechanisms to communicate with the Malaysian grass roots (both inside and outside of the Islamist movements), distinguishing between political action and religious activities and finally formulating a comprehensive political project that reconsiders the relationship between the civil state and sharia.

According to Al-Anani, the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood when in power has highlighted the inability of orthodox Islamism to adapt to the political environment that developed from the Arab Uprisings. By orthodox Islamism, what al-Anani meant was the traditional Islamist movements that had emerged over the past century and are burdened by its stagnant structure, its sprawling organisation, and the dominance of a conservative, old-fashioned style of Islamist leadership (Al-Anani 2015: 237). In addition to what is mentioned above by Anani, wise strategies comprising of inclusion are seen as a crucial factor in altering Islamist ideology and mind-set, so as to become more moderate and progressive and contribute towards the success of political Islam in Malaysia.

¹⁸⁶ An AMANAH activist, Mohamad's written opinion/comment on the questionnaire.

Regarding the results of the survey, it appears that the findings have supported the above statement because as many as 76.8 percent of the respondents (407) accepted that the development of Islamist parties in the post-Arab Uprisings have taught them and their respective Islamist movements valuable lessons. Only 3.1 percent of the respondents (16) disagreed with the statement, while 20.2 percent (107) preferred to remain neutral. Table 8.1 below records details of respondents' feedback towards the question on lessons from the Arab Uprisings.

Table 8.1. Respondents' Views that the Development of Islamist Parties after the Arab Uprisings Have Taught Some Valuable Lessons to Islamist Movements in Malaysia

Type of Islamist Movement	The Development of Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings Have Taught Some Valuable Lessons to Islamist Movements in Malaysia (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	2 (0.7%)	7 (2.4%)	63 (22.0%)	135 (47.0%)	80 (27.9%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.3%)	19 (20.4%)	41 (44.1%)	28 (30.1%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)	13 (16.0%)	30 (37.0%)	37 (45.7%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.4%)	12 (17.4%)	28 (40.6%)	28 (40.6%)	69 (100%)
Total	3 (0.6%)	13 (2.5%)	107 (20.2%)	234 (44.2%)	173 (32.6%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, the specific reactions of respondents based on type of Islamist movement can be summarised as follows:

- i. For PAS respondents, 74.9 percent agreed (in general), followed by 22.0 percent who were neutral and 3.1 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 74.2 percent agreed (in general), followed by 20.4 percent who were neutral and 5.4 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 82.7 percent agreed (in general), followed by 16.0 percent who were neutral and 1.2 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 81.2 percent agreed (in general), followed by 17.4 percent who were neutral and 1.4 percent who disagreed (in general).

The above findings unquestionably show that the development of Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings have taught all the four case study Islamist movements some useful lessons relevant to Malaysia. According to Abdullah Zaik (ISMA president)¹⁸⁷:

“The Islamist movements in Malaysia must have their own strengths, views and approaches. We can learn how the Islamist movements operate in other countries. We try to learn from everyone, from what is good from Muslim Brothers, Ennahda and AKP. Not only ISMA, but Islamist movements all over the world must also learn from one another. They have to study the existing administration, before actions to take over power from the regime. In Libya *maqasid syariah* had at least been the main concern of Gaddafi before he was overthrown and assassinated”.

The following comments by respondents further clarify the specific lessons which they personally believe should not be overlooked by Islamist leaders and politicians in Malaysia. As pointed out by an AMANAH youth activist, Nik Abdul Razak, among the strategies that Islamists in Malaysia need to prepare should be an ‘economic model’ which may benefit the entire population in the country - if they were given an opportunity to rule Malaysia in the future. For Nik Abdul Razak¹⁸⁸:

“The ‘Arab Spring’ has taught the Islamist movements to prepare the idea and thought of a political economic framework, which is something they should offer to citizens. The failure of Islamists (for instance the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) to tackle the economic issues only means that they just keep using the old capitalist system which probably increases GDP but is not effectively helping the society”.

Apart from the economic and Islamic propagation aspects, there were also concerns from several AMANAH and ISMA respondents (including the ISMA President) about the need to have solid preparation before assuming power from a previous regime. For these respondents, the tragedy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had highlighted the weakness of the movement to prepare for uncertainty, let alone to govern the whole country. The following comments further explain the respondents’ opinions regarding lessons that could be learned from the Arab Uprisings in general and the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt specifically.

¹⁸⁷ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

¹⁸⁸ An AMANAH activist, Nik Abdul Razak’s written opinion/comment on the questionnaire.

“Most Islamist movements in the Middle East are seen to have failed in predicting the changes that can happen in the Arab world. They did not equip themselves regarding the changes that they wished to achieve. At the moment, Islamist movements are beginning to understand that with the collapse of a president or a leader, the existing government may fall, but the proxy of the old regime actually stays on. Thus, the stance of Islamist movements today is quite careful, where they are aware of their own current capabilities. Any changes that take place must be considered in terms of shortcomings, objectives and *siyasaah syariah* (political Islam). The objective must be clear” - Abdullah Zaik, ISMA President.

“In my opinion, the Arab Spring or the failure of the Arab Spring as is happening in Egypt is because of lack of preparation on the part of the Islamic movements. We see Ikhwan in Egypt which is not ready to rule due to lack of experience and other factors of army sabotage, the anti-Morsi movement and so on. Ennahda may be seen to have some preparation. Ikhwan is not seen as equipping itself for rule, especially after gaining access to power where its capability to generate the economy, preserve political stability and other issues are open to debate” – Muhammad Najib, ISMA Youth leader.

“The ‘Arab Spring’ was good and relevant. However, we (Islamists) failed when the Muslim Brothers, specifically the ones in Egypt took power and assumed office. Rapid changes were made. However, it seemed the weak progress of improving the political system ‘killed’ the Islamist movement’s reputation. The Muslim Brothers also seemed too rush to propose the Sharia Law bill, while a large part of the society was still lacking understanding of fundamental Islamic thought” – AMANAH activist.

“The ‘Arab Spring’ was good but the political practice of rushing (to get power) had caused the new Islamist government in Egypt to be ousted which led another worst regime to govern (the Al-Sisi regime)” - Raduan Mat Taib, ABIM senior member.

“We have to have proper planning before any change is implemented, which is in the context of changing the leaders and taking over power. Today, we see that countries involved in the Arab Spring do not have the capability to develop that well. There are even some countries like Libya that still do not have qualified leaders. This implies that the effort to oust the leaders is not by means of revolution or by mass rally. With the aim to oust the government in this condition there is no proper planning from revolutionary fighters. By taking as an example the experiences of Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt, the decision to place Morsi on the presidential seat has caused him to become unable to defend the FJP administration in Egypt. This stems from the absence of properly arranged plans. Here, clearly ISMA has been able to see the mistakes of Ikhwanul Muslimin” – Mohd Syafiq, ISMA Activist.

Interestingly, during an interview with Asyraf Farique (an independent researcher within ISMA), the interviewee voiced two crucial points regarding lessons that could be learned by Islamist movements in Malaysia and by ISMA in particular. The first one is the need for Islamist movements to follow fundamental phases (within the context of *Harakah Islamiyyah* or political Islam) as well as adopting readiness before acquiring political power. The second point is that Islamist movements or parties must think critically and stay alert regarding any potential external threats, especially those from Western powers like America or Israel. The following paragraphs present these original points from Asyraf.

“Firstly, as an Islamist movement, we cannot simply jump from one phase to another. The phase implied starts from the individual, family, society, country (*khilafah*) and international level. The Islamist movement needs to take into account the situation, strength and level of maturity in politics before making changes or having power. When transcending from one phase to another, the impact is so tremendous that it can stunt an organization as happened to Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt. This should be prevented from happening in Malaysia. In the Middle East the Islamist movements should not skip a phase or *marhalah* from one to another without considering the strength possessed.

Secondly, the ‘Arab Spring’ events teach ISMA to view the political scenarios that happen and not just look at local politics, as in Egypt where Ikhwanul Muslimin only looks at the dictatorship and plays in the space that supports the elimination of a dictator, but does not look at the potential of foreign intervention that lingers, as shown by countries like America and Israel. This has to be clear because if we are that naïve we will suffer the consequences” – Asyraf Farique, ISMA activist & independent researcher.

The first point seems relevant as it overlaps with the other respondents’ opinions regarding the significance for Islamists of political strategy and preparation to rule before assuming political power. However, as for the second point it is quite debatable, as the argument more or less lies on ‘anti-Western’ and anti-Israel sentiments. As previously explained in Chapter Five, ISMA is quite consistent in showing a ‘radical’ view when it comes to the matter of relations between Islam and the Western world. Thus, it is no surprise to hear such an opinion from an ISMA member, even with regard to the topic of lessons learnt from the Arab Uprisings. Nevertheless, the research findings highlight that the Arab Uprisings have provided lessons for Malaysian Islamists – these include the importance of political strategy and preparation to govern.

8.2.2 The Necessity of Cooperation between Islamists and Non-Islamists

In the context of the Malaysian political landscape, the formation of political alliances or coalitions among the diverse political parties (be it from the ruling government or opposition bloc), is not something new. However, the relationship typically fluctuates, especially when it comes to issues involving the interests of Islamists and secularists. Hence, when speaking about political strategy, should the Islamist movements in Malaysia cooperate with any non-Islamic-oriented political parties and organisations? In Malaysia, since the country's formation in 1957, there had been a number of tensions and disagreements between Islamists or Muslim conservatives and liberalists or secular intellectuals¹⁸⁹.

However, it appears that Islamists have on the whole gained the dominant voice within Malaysian Muslims, especially since the Islamic resurgence in the 1970s. In terms of political Islam, a number of these Islamist politicians and activists saw sharia as divinely inspired and unchangeable as well as valid for the on-going agenda of their movements. Sometimes, Malaysian Islamists especially those from PAS, view the bold measures taken to bolster the party's appeal to non-Muslims (particularly the softening of its stance on the Islamic state agenda), as having caused the Islamist movement to compromise too much. Some PAS members even asked their leadership why the Islamic state agenda had to be put on the 'back burner' when it was the fundamental purpose for the inception of the party. There were also cases whereby Islamists in Malaysia 'attacked' the few liberal voices seeking to reinterpret the Muslim sources in line with a modern context and human rights¹⁹⁰.

Nevertheless, it seems that the experiences of Ennahda and FJP in the period after the Arab Uprisings has indirectly taught the general Islamist movements in Malaysia that the act of rigidness might reduce support for them in the multi-cultural society of Malaysia. The Ennahda founder, Ghannouchi,

¹⁸⁹ The disagreement on political Islam (Sharia Law or Hudud) was considered as one of the reasons that caused a series of tensions between Malaysian Islamists (PAS and ISMA) and secularists (UMNO and DAP) which led PAS to break off ties at the national level with UMNO in 1977 and DAP in 2015.

¹⁹⁰ See for example the list of media statements on scores of issues by Malaysia's 'Liberal Islamic Group', the Sisters in Islam, against Malaysian Islamist parties and authority bodies. <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/news.php?cat.27>.

during his speech in a forum held in Washington in 2013 highlighted the importance of establishing a positive political relationship between the Islamists and secularists, for the sake of liberating Tunisia from dictatorship. The relevant excerpt from Ghannouchi's speech is detailed below¹⁹¹:

“The conflict between secularists and Islamists, which has continued for decades, has wasted many energies and helped dictatorships to control the fate of our countries, and on that basis, the secular and Islamic alliance is vital to a free society capable of managing its differences on the basis of dialogue”.

The experiences of Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East undoubtedly taught Malaysian Islamists the significance of cooperation between Islamist and non-Islamist politicians. As pointed out by an AMANAH (female) activist¹⁹²:

“The ‘Arab Spring’ has taught us that Islamist movements (in Malaysia) need to learn, adapt and make changes that suit Malaysia's current circumstances. They certainly cannot be rigid, simple-minded, short-sighted and practise the act of holier than-thou”.

Another AMANAH activist also supported the above comments by stating that¹⁹³:

“The Muslim Brotherhood was successful in gaining support from a large part of their citizens; however the new governments formed in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution seemed unprepared to govern and lacked cooperation with others and the practice of inclusivity. This situation led to the collapse (indefensible) of their rule in Egypt during the post-Mubarak regime. The ‘Arab Spring’ teaches a valuable lesson for Malaysian Islamists. We have to create our own way (in politics)”.

Meanwhile, Razali Salleh who is an ABIM activist feels that the Arab Uprisings have taught the Islamist movements in Malaysia that better engagement with non-Muslims and non-Islamists will be a starting point for implementing the agenda of political Islam.¹⁹⁴

“The struggle to uphold Islam must be made through soft *dakwah* (Islamic preaching) not through enforcement, labelling (infidels, *kafirs*, liberals etc) and badmouthing, which will not reflect the beauty of the

¹⁹¹See Ghannouchi's official Facebook timeline. <https://www.facebook.com/rached.ghannoushi/photos/a.176765715693374.28928.175565099146769/1657945594242038/?type=3&theater>

¹⁹²Written opinion/comment on the questionnaire by an AMANAH women activist.

¹⁹³Written opinion/comment on the questionnaire by an AMANAH activist.

¹⁹⁴Written opinion/comment on the questionnaire by Razali Saleh, an ABIM activist.

Islamic culture. We (Malaysian Muslims) have to approach as many Muslims and non-Muslims as we can, rather than creating a gap between groups that are not in-line with our ideology”.

Apart from the above opinions, the study found that some Malaysian Islamists from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH learned from the development of Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings that cooperation between Islamist movements and non-Islamic oriented political parties and organisations (for instance the Nationalists, Secularists, Leftist and human rights groups) might eventually contribute to political stability. Out of 530 respondents who answered the question, 89 respondents (16.8 percent) strongly believed that there must be a respectable cooperation between Islamist parties and non-Islamist parties for the sake of maintaining political stability in the country. 160 respondents (30.1 percent) shared a similar (but less strong) attitude. 156 respondents (29.4 percent) gave a neutral response, while 85 respondents (16.0 percent) disagreed with the statement. Only 41 respondents (7.7 percent) totally rejected the importance of political cooperation between Islamist and non-Islamist parties or groups in Malaysia. Table 8.2 summarises the responses.

Table 8.2 Respondents’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Political Cooperation between Islamist and Non-Islamist Parties or Groups in Malaysia

Type of Islamist Movement	Respondents’ Attitudes towards the Importance of Political Cooperation between Islamist and Non-Islamist Parties or Groups in Malaysia (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	25 (8.7%)	46 (16.0%)	102 (35.4%)	81 (28.1%)	34 (11.8%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	4 (4.3%)	5 (5.4%)	17 (18.3%)	37 (39.8%)	30 (32.3%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	1 (1.2%)	7 (8.6%)	19 (23.5%)	33 (40.7%)	21 (25.9%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	11 (15.9%)	27 (39.1%)	18 (26.1%)	9 (13.0%)	4 (5.8%)	69 (100%)
Total	41 (7.7%)	85 (16.0%)	156 (29.4%)	160 (30.1%)	89 (16.8%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

The two positive and negative categories of feedback were combined to produce a more generalised view for each movement, which is summarised as follows.

- i. For PAS respondents, 39.9 percent agreed (in general), followed by 35.4 percent who were neutral and 24.7 percent who disagreed (in general).

- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 72.1 percent agreed (in general), followed by 23.5 percent who were neutral and 9.7 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 66.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 29.9 percent who were neutral and 9.8 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 18.8 percent agreed (in general), followed by 26.1 percent who were neutral and 55 percent who disagreed (in general).

Examining the various types of Islamist movement might help highlight some differences amongst the responses. As can be seen from the above table and summary, ISMA presents an interesting pattern of reaction as more than half of its members rejected the statement even though its President generally 'realised' that there should not be any more conflict between Islamists and Nationalists in Malaysia in the future¹⁹⁵. Meanwhile, AMANAH shows the highest percentage of positive feedback when compared to ABIM and PAS. These findings undoubtedly reflect the variety of current political approaches and the ideologies of each movement as well as the degree of Islamism that has been adopted¹⁹⁶. Goodwin (2009) in his theory of 'the Adjustment to Change' (ACT), proposed that the personal characteristics of individuals and the nature of events are the predictors of individuals' evaluations of social change. However, based on the findings in this study, the researcher proposes a new criterion which might also determine the degree of acceptance or evaluation of individuals towards any social change events – this is the group's characteristics, for instance its ideology and political approach. In other words, different movements' ideologies and political approaches might produce different attitudes in respondents. Thus, it is not a surprise to learn that many AMANAH members who embrace the idea of progressive and moderate political Islam support the idea of cooperation between Islamists and non-Islamic oriented groups. On the other hand, ISMA, a movement which is perceived as quite 'radical' in terms of relations with secular parties, showed a more negative attitude towards the statement.

¹⁹⁵ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, November 2016.

¹⁹⁶ See Chapter Five for details of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamist ideologies and political approaches.

8.2.3 Political Stability or Regime Change? The Magnitude of Stability in Malaysia's Current Political Scenario

The third lesson that can be learned from the Arab Uprisings from the perspective of the sample of Malaysian Islamists is that the importance of maintaining political stability should always be prioritised, even when the country is facing economic crisis and political turmoil. Broadly speaking, the current political situation in Malaysia is relatively stable, although it is categorized as a semi-democratic state¹⁹⁷. To some Malaysians the act of mass street protest is believed to temporarily affect the country's peace and stability and the normal daily lives of its citizens, as for example the series of Bersih events when all major roads, public places and buildings were forced to close for several days. If one looks at the post-Arab Uprisings in Libya, Syria and the Yemen, the consequences are very serious with on-going conflicts and wars. These countries were in a relatively better condition before the launch of public protest, which later turned into the popular Arab Uprisings' phenomenon.

As a response to the question about whether political stability is valued above regime change via street protest, more than half of the respondents (55.4 percent) preferred to avoid any attempt at political change via street demonstrations for the sake of maintaining the current political stability in Malaysia. 28.6 percent of respondents gave a balanced reaction against 16 percent of 'hardcore' activists who were firmly against the statement. Overall, Table 8.3 below indicates that nearly half of the respondents from PAS, ABIM and ISMA favour maintaining political stability which may indirectly make them less interested in participating in any future street protest that could potentially harm the country's peace. In other words, the post-Arab Uprisings have taught some respondents that political stability is to be prioritized over a regime change through an Arab Uprisings style of street protest.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter One and Chapter Five for more details on the practice of semi-democracy in Malaysia.

Table 8.3 Respondents' Views that Political Stability is Valued Above a Regime Change via Street Protest

Type of Islamist Movement	Political Stability is Valued Above a Regime Change via Street Protest (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	8 (2.8%)	25 (8.7%)	87 (30.2%)	106 (36.8%)	62 (21.5%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	12 (12.9%)	19 (20.4%)	26 (28.0%)	24 (25.8%)	12 (12.9%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	11 (13.6%)	8 (9.9%)	21 (25.9%)	23 (28.4%)	18 (22.2%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.4%)	18 (26.1%)	27 (39.1%)	22 (31.9%)	69 (100%)
Total	32 (6.0%)	53 (10.0%)	152 (28.6%)	180 (33.9%)	114 (21.5%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, the feedback from respondents based on type of Islamist movement can be summarised as follows.

- i. For PAS respondents, 58.3 percent agreed (in general), followed by 30.2 percent who were neutral and 11.5 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 38.7 percent agreed (in general), followed by 28 percent who were neutral and 33.3 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 50.6 percent agreed (in general), followed by 25.9 percent who were neutral and 23.5 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 71 percent agreed (in general), followed by 26.1 percent who were neutral and 2.8 percent who disagreed (in general).

It is evident from the above data that both ISMA and AMANAH have shown a clear contradictory opinion regarding the issue of street protest (for the purpose of regime change) and the importance of political stability. ISMA seems highly supportive of avoiding political demonstrations for the sake of maintaining political stability in Malaysia, followed by PAS and ABIM. Less than half of AMANAH respondents agreed with the statement. Based on this finding, the researcher assumes that (within the context of lessons learnt from the Arab Uprisings) there is a relationship between the stand of Malaysian Islamist movements concerning the act of street protest and how they view its possible effects on political stability. For instance, after the Bersih 3.0 event in 2013, AMANAH is the only Islamist party in Malaysia which continuously participated

in a similar style of public protest (Bersih 4.0 and Bersih 5.0) against the ruling regime. Meanwhile, ISMA and PAS (via the voices of their Presidents) strongly rejected any street protest action against the government, based on their evaluation of the lessons learnt following the post-Arab Uprisings¹⁹⁸. As pointed out by Abdullah Zaik (ISMA President):

“I am always against the idea of Islamist movements taking part in BERSIH because they will not get the outcome they wish for. We should think about local politics in Malaysia in the right frame of mind. The current political stability is far better maintained than allowing the potential for chaos to happen. Due to the pluralistic society that we have in Malaysia, I have this concern that a bigger turmoil will take place if the practice of street demonstrations becomes a habit. At another level, without the strong support of Islamist movements in Malaysia, BERSIH (objectives) will not succeed”.

Written comments were also left on the questionnaire by respondents from PAS, AMANAH and ISMA to justify why they considered that the Arab Uprisings had taught them to value political stability more than to promote ‘revolution’. All the comments are detailed below.

“The current political situation in Malaysia definitely needs a holistic change. However, the change that is to be made should be done in a proper and organised way to ensure that no one will be affected or harmed as well as to prolong the current political stability” - PAS activist.

“Peace and serenity are something that should be maintained. If there would have been a political crisis or chaos in Malaysia, many irresponsible groups or parties would have taken advantage. The level of political maturity amongst Malaysians is also low. Hence their political considerations are always mixed up with emotions without any guidance from religion (Islamic teachings)” - Shaiful Maszri, an AMANAH activist.

“The ‘Arab Spring’ should be wholly exposed to all Malaysian citizens, especially those who are not involved in Islamist movements. This is because any misunderstanding of the ‘Arab Spring’ could lead to a negative perception towards the existing Islamist movements in Malaysia. It is crucial for Malaysians to realise the value of maintaining political stability in the country” - Muhammad Azlin, a PAS Activist.

“If the outcome of regime change (via revolution) leads to an uncertainty which will later allow 'foreign' agendas to penetrate the state's sovereignty, then the action for political change must be avoided. Malaysia is a country whereby Islam and the Malays make up its identity. This identity must be retained and respected by every layer of citizen, based on the previous social contract agreement. Malaysia will be able to

¹⁹⁸ See Appendix C for the full official statement of the PAS President.

maintain its stability if these matters are being seriously taken into consideration” - An ISMA youth activist.

Again, from all the comments and the pattern of responses received, the researcher found that group characteristics or approaches might help determine individual perception on certain issues which derived from dramatic social change (i.e. the Arab Uprisings).

8.2.4 Does Malaysia Actually Need Any Arab Uprisings-Style Revolution?

Despite Malaysia’s currently shaky political ground and economic situation as well as the inspiration (from the Arab Uprisings) that affected the political activism of Malaysia’s Islamist movements (See Chapter Seven), it seems that 277 Malaysian Islamists (52.3 percent) learned from the Arab Uprisings that the country does not need to emulate the Arab Uprisings-style of mass protest for the sake of maintaining peace and political stability. For these respondents, the politics and economic conditions in Malaysia are somehow different (and probably better) when compared to some other countries in the Arab world. Thus, in their eyes, to organise similar protests to those seen during the Arab Uprisings is pointless. Furthermore, one of the respondents highlighted the fact that Malaysia is currently recognised as a moderate Muslim nation amongst the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) members and regarded as such by the Western world. Therefore, any action which could damage this reputation should be avoided. Indeed, many of the angry Arab youths who have taken to the streets to peacefully demand an immediate transformation and regime change may not find many options through which to pursue their aim – except for public protest, or in other words, revolution.

Developments following the Arab Uprisings in Syria, Libya, Egypt and the Yemen have led these respondents to consider that dramatic regime change should include a proper plan in order to avoid any ‘anarchism’ and political and economic disruption in the future. In contrast, 123 respondents (23.2 percent) supported the act of street demonstrations (although not with the same momentum as in the Arab Uprisings) as long as the existing government of Najib Razak remained in power. The act of civil disobedience for them functions as a checks and balances mechanism to the ruling government in order to

improve the quality of democracy. The remaining 130 respondents (24.5 percent) were neutral to the statement. Table 8.4 summarises the respondents' reactions to the issue of Malaysia and an Arab Uprisings-style revolution.

Table 8.4 Respondents' Views that Malaysia Does Not Need Any Arab Uprisings-Style Revolution in the Future (Based on Lessons Learnt After the Arab Uprisings in MENA)

Type of Islamist Movement	Malaysia Does Not Need Any Arab Uprisings-Style Revolution in the Future (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	17 (5.9%)	28 (9.8%)	78 (27.2%)	88 (30.7%)	76 (26.5%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	20 (21.5%)	28 (30.1%)	22 (23.7%)	11 (11.8%)	12 (12.9%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	9 (11.1%)	11 (13.6%)	19 (23.5%)	22 (27.2%)	20 (24.7%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	1 (1.4%)	9 (13.0%)	11 (15.9%)	21 (30.4%)	27 (39.1%)	69 (100%)
Total	47 (8.9%)	76 (14.3%)	130 (24.5%)	142 (26.8%)	135 (25.5%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, the respondents' reactions regarding the polemics of the "Malaysian Spring" (based on type of Islamist movement) can be summarised as follows.

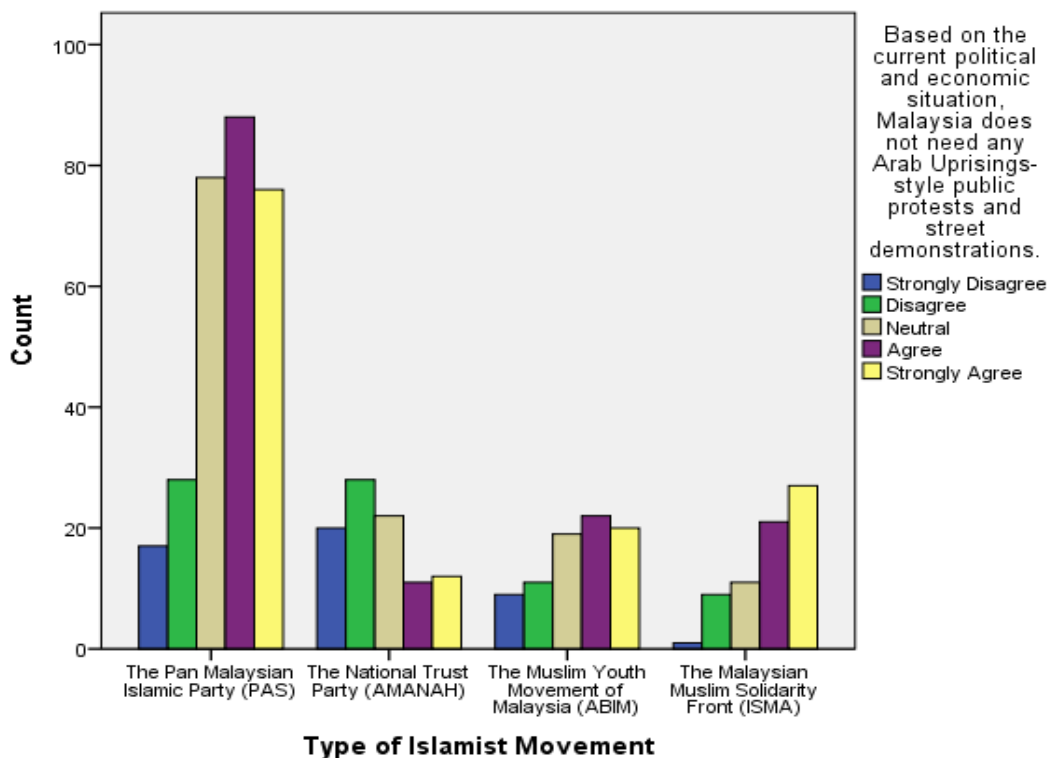
- i. For PAS respondents, 57.2 percent agreed (in general) that Malaysia does not need any Arab Uprisings-style revolution in the future, followed by 27.2 percent who were neutral and 15.7 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 24.7 percent agreed (in general) that Malaysia does not need any Arab Uprisings-style revolution in the future, followed by 23.7 percent who were neutral and 51.6 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 51.9 percent agreed (in general) that Malaysia does not need any Arab Uprisings-style revolution in the future, followed by 23.5 percent who were neutral and 24.7 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 69.5 percent agreed (in general) that Malaysia does not need any Arab Uprisings-style revolution in the future, followed by 15.9 percent who were neutral and 14.4 percent who disagreed (in general).

It seems that there are some differences between the four Islamist movements studied as regards the necessity of having an Arab Uprisings style revolution in the form of public protest or street demonstration in Malaysia. ISMA and AMANAH once again show noticeably opposite trends in their responses, as the former recorded higher percentages of rejection towards the question while the latter remain firm on supporting the act of civil resistance. As pointed out by Amar Yasier, an ISMA activist¹⁹⁹:

“Street demonstrations are not seen as a proper way to oust a leader. Malaysians should obey the law of the country. ISMA itself does not encourage any element of ousting rulers through street protests. This may explain why ISMA has never participated in any series of BERSIH”.

For PAS and ABIM, more than half of the respondents agreed that the post-Arab Uprisings events have taught them that there is no real urgency for Malaysians, or Islamists to imitate the same protest actions undertaken by Arab revolutionaries back in 2011-2012. Figure 8.1 below illustrates the overall respondents’ reactions.

Figure 8.1 Respondents’ Views that Malaysia Does Not Need Any Arab Uprisings-Style Public Protests and Street Demonstrations in the Future (Based on Lessons Learnt After the Arab Uprisings in MENA)



¹⁹⁹ Personal interview with The International Relations Bureau for ISMA’s UK branch, Amar Yasier. London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

Respondents were also asked whether an attempt at power transfer through the acts of civil disobedience and street protest could potentially produce a positive political change. The purpose of this question was to investigate if the uncertainty factor (from street protests) might serve as the reason why some respondents were sceptical about the polemics of the “Malaysian Spring”. The respondents’ responses can be seen in Table 8.5 below.

Table 8.5 Respondents’ Views on Whether Acts of Civil Disobedience and Street Protest Suggest a Positive Political Transition (Based on the Lessons Learnt After the Arab Uprisings in MENA)

Type of Islamist Movement	Whether Acts of Civil Disobedience and Street Protest Suggest a Positive Political Transition (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	88 (30.6%)	91 (31.6%)	85 (29.5%)	19 (6.6%)	5 (1.7%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	16 (17.2%)	23 (24.7%)	40 (43.0%)	10 (10.8%)	4 (4.3%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	24 (29.6%)	27 (33.3%)	18 (22.2%)	10 (12.3%)	2 (2.5%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	29 (42.0%)	28 (40.6%)	12 (17.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	69 (100%)
Total	157 (29.6%)	169 (31.8%)	155 (29.2%)	39 (7.3%)	11 (2.1%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, the respondents’ reactions regarding whether acts of civil disobedience and street protest in Malaysia suggest a positive political transition can be summarised as follows.

- i. For PAS respondents, 8.3 percent agreed (in general), followed by 29.5 percent who were neutral and 62.2 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 15.1 percent agreed (in general), followed by 43.0 percent who were neutral and 41.9 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 14.8 percent agreed (in general), followed by 22.2 percent who were neutral and 62.9 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 0.0 percent agreed (in general), followed by 17.4 percent who were neutral and 82.6 percent who disagreed (in general).

Interestingly, these findings show that the majority of ISMA, ABIM and PAS members are convinced that acts of Arab Uprisings style-street protest do not necessarily produce a positive outcome. For AMANAH, only approximately 42

percent of members were in line with this popular opinion while nearly half chose to be neutral about the statement. Hence, it seems that some respondents learned from the developments following the Arab Uprisings that power transfer through civil disobedience and street protest does not guarantee a positive political transition. According ISMA activist, Mohd Syafiq²⁰⁰:

“In Malaysia, we have a democratic system that chooses leaders through the election. Bringing down leaders through demonstration without proper planning will only invite foreign intervention – if the leaders step down. What worries me is that, if this happens, possibly Malaysia will have to repeat the unfortunate tragedy of the Middle East. Politically speaking, what we see (ISMA) in Malaysia is that the way to change our leaders is not by way of demonstration seeking to oust the leaders, but it is to be done through mature politics. An election is a relevant alternative for now where political parties can influence the people to support the ideas and approaches adopted”.

Abdul Hadi Awang, the PAS President, even issued a statement to clarify why PAS rejected any effort to create a Malaysian version of the Arab Uprisings and warned Malaysians about the risk of applying what had been done in the Middle East and North Africa. As analogically stated by Abdul Hadi:

“The fruit yielded from the ‘Arab Spring’ was more nauseous to the mind and intoxicating to one’s sanity, and further destroyed the self-integrity of an Ummah. In Malaysia there is no season named ‘spring’, there are only rainy and drought seasons. So, don’t create this non-existent season here. Wait and istiqamah with Islam, you will be safe and secure; without Islam, one is nothing but condemned”.

The findings also indicate that there is a relationship between group characteristics, in this case the political approach of different Islamist movements and the respondents attitudes towards the issue of a “Malaysian Spring”. As previously explained in Chapters Five and Seven, over the past few years, the majority of AMANAH members (including a few from ABIM) are still actively participating in a series of mass protests against the ruling regime as encouraged by their movement’s leaders. PAS also used to aggressively engage in street demonstration activities in Malaysia. However, since there was an internal split within the party which gave birth to AMANAH in 2015, the party changed its approach to mass demonstration activity and refused to join the series of Bersih mass protests in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively. This

²⁰⁰ Personal interview with ISMA Activist, Mohd Syafiq. ISMA Head Office. Bangi, Malaysia. August 2016.

decision made by the top leadership of PAS has indirectly influenced the way of thinking of the majority of PAS members regarding the polemics of a Malaysian Spring (as can be seen from previous findings).

ISMA, on the other hand, remains firm on its policy of rejecting the act of street protest against the ruling government. To counter the arguments from ISMA, the AMANAH President, Mohamad Sabu, emphasised that acts of street protest and demonstration should be seen as a relevant platform for Malaysians to voice their 'anger' towards corruption amongst civil servants, power abuses by politicians and the price hikes in foods and commodities. He has also planned to organise another mass demonstration prior to the upcoming 14th general election, the actual date of which is not yet announced²⁰¹.

8.2.5 The Importance of Improving the Quality of Democracy in Malaysia

As previously stated in Chapter Five, since independence in 1957 the Malaysian political leadership has been largely dominated by a coalition government (Barisan Nasional or BN), led by representatives of the country's majority Malay Muslim population – The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). None of the opposition parties, including the Islamists have ever won in the previous series of the 'first-past-the-post' elections in Malaysia, despite tremendous efforts to break up UMNO and BN domination in the parliament. Some observers such as Case (1993 & 2007), Means (1996) and Abbot (2009 & 2011) claim that the Malaysian regime has in some ways systematically manipulated the elections, along with instituting other political restrictions in order to remain in power. The current circumstances of political competition in Malaysia are regarded as "electoral authoritarianism" or semi-democracy²⁰². The regime is habitually seen to be giving a false impression that democratic elections are somehow taking place in Malaysia and that the country's politics is moving towards democratic consolidation (Tapsell 2013: 614).

²⁰¹ Nambiar, Predeep (2017). Mat Sabu: Mari Lepas Geram di Himpunan Rakyat Marah. (Mat Sabu: Let's Release Our Anger at the People's Anger Rally) Free Malaysia Today. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/2017/01/10/mat-sabu-mari-lepas-geram-di-himpunan-rakyat-marah/> [25 October 2017].

²⁰² See Chapter One for discussion on electoral authoritarianism and semi-democracy in Malaysia.

In reality Malaysia is still practising the old style of an 'electoral one party dominant' system which has been criticised by Malaysian academics - Wong, Chin and Othman (2010: 920) as an 'act of democracy that never produces democracy'. In other words, these academics stressed that although an election is regarded as an important mechanism for selecting leaders within the prism of democracy, it has never been the case for Malaysia. Malaysia's democratic status is always plagued by two major issues which are that: 1) the elections have never been free and fair; and 2) Malaysia has never experienced party alternation since 1957 (Wong, Chin and Othman 2010: 920).

Despite these political circumstances, Liow (2011: 375) argues that the past two decades have witnessed the proliferation of Islamist political parties in Malaysia which have committed themselves to engagement in the political process, including elections. It seems that most Malaysian Islamists (if not all) still value the purpose of an election in order to have political change and eventually acquire power to meet the goals of political Islam. Within the context of lessons learnt from the Arab Uprisings, the respondents were asked whether an election is considered as a relevant medium to determine the direction of Malaysian political leadership, given that street demonstrations inspired by the Arab Uprisings have recently gained momentum as an alternative process (to end the long dominance of UMNO and the BN regime).

Out of 530 Malaysian Islamist politicians, activists, and supporters from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH who responded to the question, 146 (27.5 percent) strongly supported the proposition that a democratic political system and associated elections are the best medium to determine the future of political change in Malaysia. 217 respondents (40.9 percent) shared a similar (but less strong) opinion. 124 respondents (23.4 percent) had a neutral feeling, while 38 respondents (7.2 percent) disagreed with the statement. Only 6 respondents (1.1 percent) completely rejected democracy and the electoral system as a vehicle for political transition in Malaysia. Table 8.6 below presents the specific pattern of reactions from different Islamist movements to the question.

Table 8.6 Respondents' Views on Whether Democracy and Elections Are the Best Medium for Political Change in Malaysia (Based on Lessons Learnt Following the Arab Uprisings in MENA)

Type of Islamist Movement	Whether Democracy and Elections Are the Best Medium for Political Change in Malaysia (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	5 (1.7%)	17 (5.9%)	82 (28.5%)	108 (37.5%)	76 (26.4%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	1 (1.1%)	6 (6.5%)	16 (17.2%)	37 (39.8%)	33 (35.3%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.5%)	12 (14.8%)	41 (50.6%)	26 (32.1%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	0 (0.0%)	13 (18.8%)	14 (20.3%)	31 (44.9%)	11 (15.9%)	69 (100%)
Total	6 (1.1%)	38 (7.2%)	124 (23.4%)	217 (40.9%)	146 (27.5%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

From the above table, it is clear that each Islamist movement recorded more than half its sample (ABIM = 82.7 percent; AMANAH = 75.1 percent; PAS = 63.9 percent; ISMA = 60.8 percent) as supporting a democratic political system and elections as a relevant option to 'topple' the current regime of Najib Razak in Malaysia. As explained by a few random respondents (via written comments on the questionnaire), there are several reasons why democracy and elections are still preferred, especially when the developments following the Arab Uprisings in the MENA region are taken into consideration. Among the reasons mentioned were:

"The changes that suit Malaysia's *waqi'* (political context) are through elections. The operation of Islamist movements should consider the *waqi'* of the specific country" – PAS Activist.

"The best way to 'topple' the BN & UMNO regime is through elections, not street rallies or demonstrations" - Wan Mohd Nurmisuari, Pas Activist.

"The 'Arab Spring' events were one manifestation of the failure of democratic principles (in involved states). Malaysia has to ensure its democratic principles are being respected and productive despite not going through the same type of mass movements as during the Arab Spring" – Ramdani, ABIM Activist.

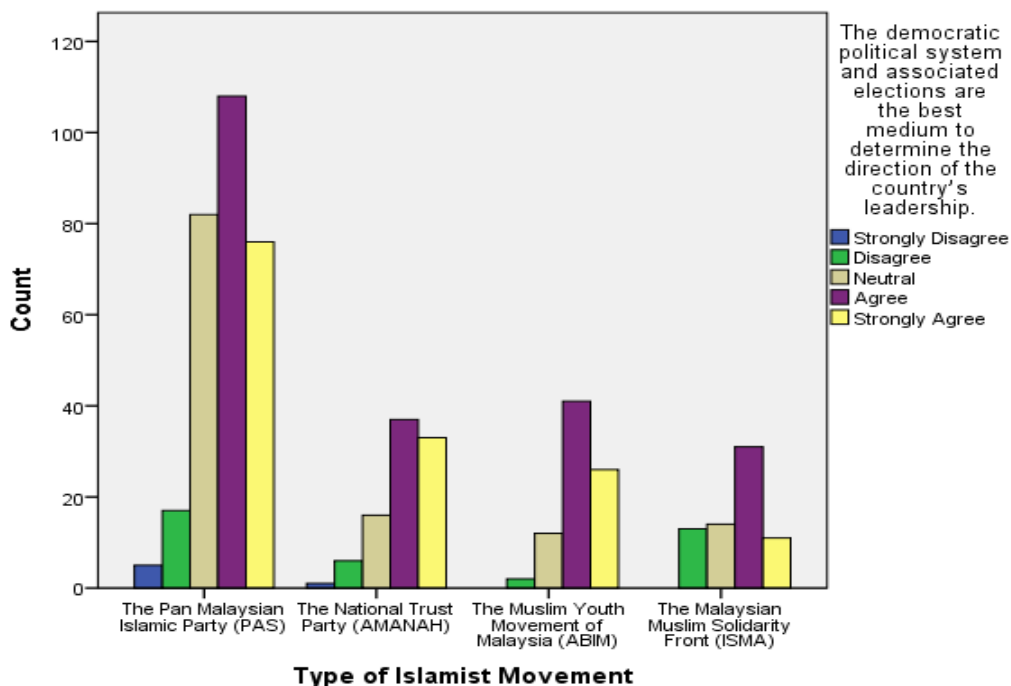
"The Islamist movements in Malaysia should be more serious in facing the question of democracy as part of change in wider Malaysian politics. Democracy needs to be seen as a tool (to obtain power) rather than a goal" - Nik Abdul Razak, AMANAH Youth Activist.

In addition, speaking about elections, the ISMA President, Abdullah Zaik, seems to support a voting mechanism provided that it is within the framework of political Islam. He is also optimistic that there will be a political change in Malaysia in the future, as he predicts the fall of the UMNO party (that currently leads the government) but not through mass uprisings. According to Abdullah Zaik²⁰³:

“In Malaysia, will UMNO decline? My answer will be that UMNO will come to its end one day. But will it take the way of the Arab Spring revolution? My answer will be, not at all. An election is a good alternative and is accepted in Islam because it gives opportunity and space to make changes harmoniously. But it must move within the political Islam framework. Whatever changes are done must be within a strategic framework where, in effect, it will not lead to collapse as we have seen happening in (some of) the Arab countries”.

Overall, given the context in the Middle East following the Arab Uprisings, support for electoral democracy is the most likely scenario for the future of political activism for Malaysia’s Islamist movements. The survey found that Malaysian Islamist activists and politicians opted for democracy and elections as their preferred means, rather than mass uprisings or street protests. Figure 8.2 below summarises the responses.

Figure 8.2 Respondents' Views on Whether Democracy and Elections Are the Best Medium for Political Change in Malaysia (Based on Lessons Learnt Following the Arab Uprisings in MENA)



²⁰³ Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

8.3 Making Sense of the “Malaysian Spring” Polemics: Reality or Fallacy?

Are the series of protest events organised by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election movement (Bersih) seen as an indirect effort to create a “Malaysian Spring” in Malaysia²⁰⁴ ? At the beginning of the thesis, the researcher highlighted some polemics about the potential for a “Malaysian Spring” to occur in the future, due to the series of civil resistance actions launched by the pro-democracy movement group – the Bersih between 2011 and November 2016. In 2013, prior to the 13th general election, there was also a campaign called the ‘Malaysian Spring’ initiated by local Malaysian activists as a symbol to spread the message of hope and to get people to participate in the process of political change. According to Barnes (2013), after the 2013 election in response to alleged government election fraud, a coalition of opposition parties in Malaysia has continued the Malaysian Spring campaign to pressure the ruling government. As a result a number of pro-government politicians and some local and foreign journalists accused these demonstrations and the campaign of being a type of indirect effort to topple the existing regime (which could also be considered a “Malaysian Spring” as per the ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings)²⁰⁵.

Aidila Razak, a Malaysian journalist who is currently based at the Malaysiakini online news portal stated that the term “Malaysian Spring” was used as a symbol of Malaysia’s “Awakening” - a campaign that had ‘a life’

²⁰⁴ Details on the series of Bersih movements in Malaysia are given in Chapter Five.

²⁰⁵ Amongst the selected foreign and local news reports that covered stories about the “Malaysian Spring” are the following:

i. Scarpello, Fabio (2011). Though Not a ‘Malaysian Spring,’ Bersih Shakes Up Local Politics. World Politics Review. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/9671/though-not-a-malaysian-spring-bersih-shakes-up-local-politics>. [17 October 2017].

ii. Boyle, Peter (2012). Malaysian Spring: Bersih 3.0 democracy movement plans mass sit-in. International Journal of Socialist Renewal. <http://links.org.au/node/2831> [17 October 2017].

iii. Fisher, Jonah (2012). Could street protests herald a Malaysian spring? BBC News. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-18058036> [17 October 2017]

iv. Crabtree, James (2012). Anwar in bid to lead ‘Malaysian spring’. Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/5df58246-3d3c-11e1-8129-00144feabdc0?mhq5j=e7> [17 October 2017]

v. Chu, M.M (2013). Malaysian Spring: Cops Say Malaysian Spring Is Arab Spring, Stop It. Says.com. <http://says.com/my/news/malaysian-spring-plants-flowers-to-inspire-hope-for-a-better-change-in-malaysia-pru13> [17 October 2017].

vi. Wong, C.H (2013). Fears grow for a Malaysian Spring. Asia Times. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/SEA-01-290513.html [17 October 2017].

during the 13th general election²⁰⁶. Such comments led Barnes (2013) to assume that the Malaysian regime feared that use of the 'Spring' term amongst protesters could potentially be linked to a conspiracy by opposition parties to overthrow the government through violent street demonstrations - although the Prime Minister, Najib Razak declared that the government was not afraid of any kind of "Malaysian Spring"²⁰⁷.

The findings from this research indicate that 154 respondents (some of whom admitted that they had participated in past Bersih demonstrations) were not certain whether the efforts by the Bersih movement should be viewed as an attempt to create a "Malaysian Spring". However, 211 respondents felt that the Bersih movement somehow tried to launch an Arab Uprisings-style protest in Malaysia, although there is no solid evidence to support this view - hence its rejection by 166 respondents. Table 8.7 below records responses regarding the polemics of the "Malaysian Spring".

Table 8.7 Respondents' Views Whether the Series of Protest Events Organised by the Bersih Were an Indirect Effort to Create a "Malaysian Spring"

Type of Islamist Movement	Whether the Series of Protest Events Organised by the Bersih Were an Indirect Effort to Create a "Malaysian Spring" (Frequency and Percentages)					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	28 (9.7%)	52 (18.1%)	103 (35.8%)	81 (28.1%)	24 (8.3%)	288 (100%)
The National Trust Party (Amanah)	19 (20.4%)	25 (26.9%)	17 (18.3%)	23 (24.7%)	9 (9.7%)	93 (100%)
The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	12 (14.8%)	15 (18.5%)	12 (14.8%)	23 (28.4%)	19 (23.5%)	81 (100%)
The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	4 (5.8%)	11 (15.9%)	22 (31.9%)	20 (29.0%)	12 (17.4%)	69 (100%)
Total	63 (11.9%)	103 (19.4%)	154 (29.0%)	147 (27.7%)	64 (12.1%)	530 (100%)

Source: Field Research 2016

²⁰⁶ Razak, Aidila (2013). Malaysian Spring frozen out of M'sia Day art show. Malaysiakini. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/238969#EflfVSe7V6qkFtr> [17 October 2017]

²⁰⁷ See also,

i. Barnes, Daniel (2013). The Prospects of a Malaysian Spring. <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/the-prospects-of-a-malaysian-spring/> [17 October 2017]

ii. Vinod, G. (2013). 'We are not afraid of Malaysian Spring' Free Malaysia Today. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2013/06/26/we-are-not-afraid-of-malaysian-spring/> [17 October 2017].

From the above table, the respondents' reactions regarding the polemics of the "Malaysian Spring" (based on type of Islamist movement) can be summarised as follows.

- i. For PAS respondents, 36.4 percent agreed (in general), followed by 35.8 percent who were neutral and 27.8 percent who disagreed (in general).
- ii. For AMANAH respondents, 34.4 percent agreed (in general), followed by 18.3 percent who were neutral and 47.3 percent who disagreed (in general).
- iii. For ABIM respondents, 51.9 percent agreed (in general), followed by 14.8 percent who were neutral and 33.3 who disagreed (in general).
- iv. For ISMA respondents, 46.4 percent agreed (in general), followed by 31.9 percent who were neutral and 21.7 percent who disagreed (in general).

As can be seen in Table 8.4, the number of respondents who supported the idea that the Bersih were a continuation of an 'Arab Uprisings-style protest version' in Malaysia were quite low. Only ABIM recorded more than 50 percent of respondents with a positive attitude to the question. When respondents were asked whether an 'Arab-Uprisings'-style of street protest or revolution would take place in Malaysia in the future (based on the current political and economic situation) most of them (184) were not certain, followed by the same number of respondents who disagreed. The remainder of the respondents (163) were positive that "Malaysian Spring" uprisings would take place in the country in the future, depending on political and economic conditions²⁰⁸. There were many reasons that the respondents mentioned to support their opinion on "Malaysian Spring" polemics²⁰⁹. As pointed out by Amran Shamsuddin (AMANAH Activist):

"The possibility of having an 'Arab Spring' style revolution in Malaysia is too small. This is due to the changing nature of current Malaysian generations - a number of youths and young people appear to be politically apathetic".

²⁰⁸ See Appendix C.5 for detail of respondents' feedback.

²⁰⁹ All comments were collected from respondents' written opinions in the questionnaire.

PAS activist, Shafiq, referred to one verse in the Quran to support his opinion that the polemics of the “Malaysian Spring” are very unlikely to take place in Malaysia in the future:

“.. *“And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.”* (Surah Al-Anfal 61)”. This is the verse from the Quran to support my argument that there will be no kind of 'Arab Spring' revolution in Malaysia. Malaysia still upholds a peaceful democratic system”.

Moreover, one of the respondents from ABIM suggested that any action or attempt for political change via revolution should consider all the potential negative consequences and Islamists should first seek guidance or advice from Muslim clerics (Ulama) before undertaking such actions:

“The ‘Arab Spring’ was a losing movement because many people died while attempting to overthrow the regime. Ulama (Muslim scholars) thought to protect our souls instead of involving us in war. These events (the ‘Arab Spring’ revolutions) brought more backfire than benefits. The ABIM movement moves forward by promoting a culture of learning and finding knowledge. Malaysian Muslims and Islamists should always refer to Muslim scholars (fatwa) before undertaking any political action that involves the fate of Ummah”.

Meanwhile, another ABIM activist, Abd Rahman, believed that the condition of any mass uprising is influenced by surrounding (internal) factors relevant to specific places or states. Thus, he felt that it would be difficult to create the exact situation of the Arab Uprisings in Malaysia even if for the same purpose (of toppling a corrupted regime). Abd Rahman’s views were supported by an Islamist counterpart from AMANAH who points out that:

“The situation in Malaysia is different with that of the Arab Middle East world. It can be seen from a variety of angles - economics, culture, demography, thought and international and geopolitical influence. Having said that, current movements (Islamist) are not necessarily bound to follow what happened in the Arab states in Malaysia”.

During an interview with the former PAS activist, Muhammad Najib who left the party to join AMANAH in 2015, he emphasised that revolution or a “Malaysian Spring” will never take place in Malaysia due to local values of peace and moderation which are embedded within the attitudes of the majority of Malaysians. He also confirmed that only during Bersih 3.0 in 2013 was there a moment when protesters were perhaps close to toppling the regime. However,

the outcome had not produced what most participants had expected – to have a holistic political change in Malaysia. As stated by Najib²¹⁰:

“Actually, when talking about street demonstrations in Malaysia, I have the view that revolution will not happen. If there is a revolution, it should have happened in 1998 during the *reformasi* protests because that was the best moment to bring down BN and for revolution to take place, but in the end it did not happen. This may be because of the eastern values to which Malaysian society has been so accustomed - the tendency towards peace and stability. Thus, it is quite impossible for the (political) revolution to happen. In addition is the fact that most demonstrators will normally come home after a hard day on the street and continue to live their normal lives the next day”.

Moreover, Najib also touched upon other factors that might ‘prevent’ ‘Arab Spring’ style protests being launched in Malaysia:

“For the Arab Uprisings style of street protest, I think that this would be hard to do in Malaysia. The Prime Minister Najib Razak will not be defeated from the streets. However, if I was asked if these mass protests (Bersih events) can get to the level of the ‘Arab Spring’, I feel that Bersih 3.0 is the last mass protest that almost affected the BN government. I also took part in Bersih 3.0. I admit that the Malaysian government is still at the level of semi-democracy. Nevertheless, no matter how bad the (Malaysian) government currently is, I personally feel that street protests in Malaysia will not be like the ‘Arab Spring’. Additionally, after the Peaceful Gathering Act was introduced, there are no more obstacles for people to demonstrate against. Finally, people’s mood to fight against the government has taken a dive. The political turmoil among the opposition parties also makes the people tired. The role of social media has given birth to a lot of keyboard warriors voicing their rights clearly, where they change the platform from street protests to the virtual world. The factors stated above may support the view that the ‘Arab Spring’ will not be happening in Malaysia”.

These points about cultural aspects were also echoed by Amar Yasier, an ISMA activist who stated that²¹¹:

“It may happen (the Malaysian Spring) but it will not work out. The culture of rebellion is not the culture of the general public in Malaysia. It is difficult to ask the majority of people to take part in the same protest. Organisers or demonstrators may be able to gather a lot of people, but I am of the opinion that they may find it hard or may not be successful in defeating the regime in this way”.

²¹⁰ Personal interview with the AMANAH National Youth Leader, Muhammad Najib. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. September 2016.

²¹¹ Personal interview with Amar Yasier of The International Relations Bureau for ISMA’s UK branch. London, United Kingdom. 10 June 2016.

What is perhaps most vital about the polemics of the “Malaysian Spring”, as critically voiced by the ISMA President is the different level of ‘suffering’ between Malaysians and Arab nations; this might explain why no Arab Uprisings style of revolution will take place in Malaysia. Interestingly, Abdullah Zaik based his argument on Machiavelli’s theory on revolution, as he felt that the situation in the Arab states appeared to match with the theory’s assumption. In the words of Abdullah Zaik (ISMA President)²¹²:

“Earlier on, ISMA saw the ‘Arab Spring’ or that particular term ‘Spring’ as inaccurate because it did not reflect a hopeful, promising season which is generally associated with a good ending. This does not happen in the post-‘Arab Spring’. The Arab Uprisings have taken place in Arab countries due to the fact that dictatorship rule reached a level where every individual in the community was threatened and suffering. This does not happen in Malaysia. In Malaysia even though we have cases of fraud and corruption and cruelty by the ruling power we have not reached the point where the authority breaks into individual homes, disturbing wives and children and killing them (as happened in Egypt and Syria). According to Machiavelli’s revolutionary theory, a revolution will take place if the situation becomes this severe. For example, in Indonesia, Iran and Egypt, the secret police at one time were very active and rampant. In Egypt, the relationship between the government and the people seems non-existent to the point that the police would kill a civilian without feeling guilty, as was reported to have happened to Khaled Said. When the police act to this extreme, it has become the pretext for a revolution”.

The ISMA President also used his past experience of visiting Egypt to further support his argument that Malaysia does not need to ‘import’ the elements of Arab Revolutions for the sake of political change. As mentioned by Abdullah:

“When I was in Egypt in 2006, I managed to ask the public about the current situation (social and political) in Cairo. The feedback I received was that the people there had expected that in five years there would be uproar among the people and an uprising would be impending. This is really happening. In Malaysia, from the perspective of Fiqh or political Islam, the (political) change that is to be done must be in a framework that is easy to control. This means that we are able to control anything bad that might happen. For instance, with the fall of the dictator or leader, what is the advantage that can be achieved? We should consider the graver consequences should a leader be overthrown (as compared to if he stays). Thus, ISMA does not see that importing the Arab Revolutions is something positive. In making any change, we have to refer to our own capabilities when it comes to deciding on any political action”.

²¹² Personal interview with the ISMA President. Bangi, Malaysia. 5 November 2016.

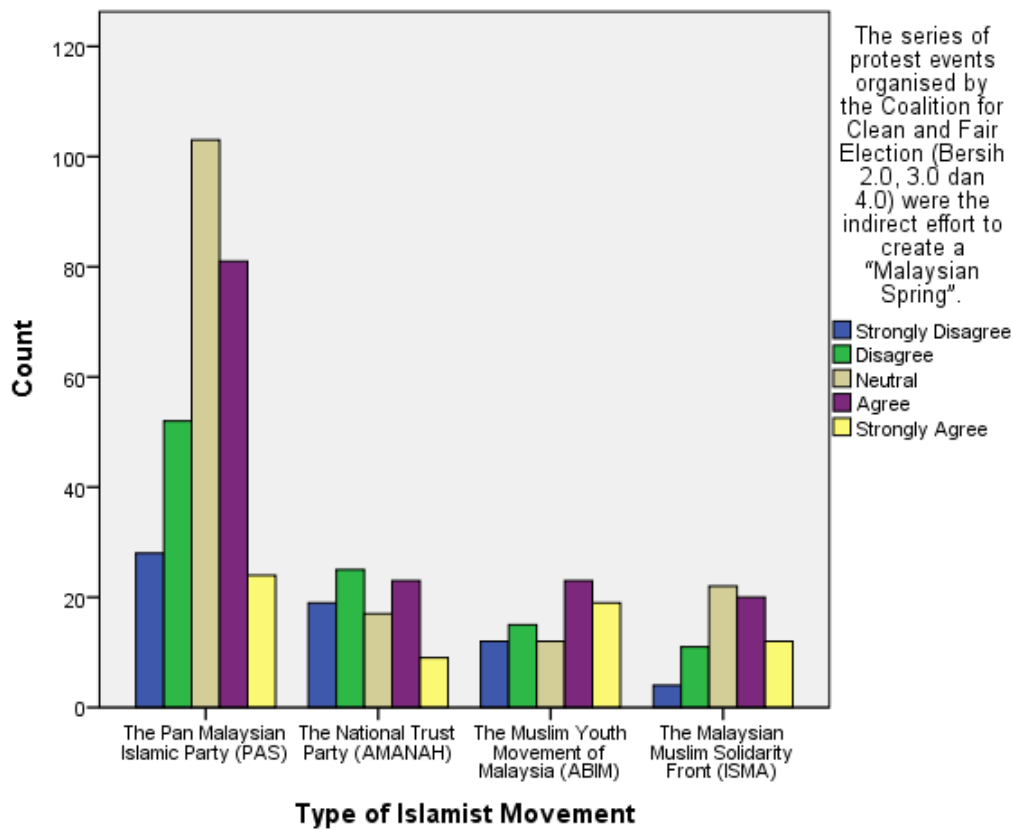
From the comments voiced by respondents, it is clear that many Islamist movement members, activists, politicians and supporters in Malaysia are quite sceptical or neutral about the polemics of the “Malaysian Spring”. Most of them simply disagreed (or neither disagreed nor agreed) that the series of Bersih demonstrations were an indirect effort to topple the ruling government (in a similar way to the Arab Uprisings) as had been suggested by several pro-government media, politicians and authorities in Malaysia. Moreover, the arguments put forward by some respondents that a revolution similar to the Arab Uprisings would be very unlikely in Malaysia seem sensible – particularly if one refers to a number of notions or assumptions in the Theory of Revolution, specifically as regards revolutionary movements and their prospects for success²¹³. In 1989, Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol insisted that the nature of quasi-democracy in Malaysia has not facilitated the growth of revolutionary coalitions in the country. They further explained why some “inclusionary” authoritarian regimes – such as Malaysia immune from revolutionary movements which can be seen in the following quotes;

“Although these regimes lack of civil rights, they either sponsor mass political mobilization or regulate the official representation of, and bargaining among, various social groups, including working class and other lower strata groups. They impose controlled forms of political participation on key social groups, co-opting leaders and handing out certain benefits in the process; this tends to undercut possibilities for political action independent of the existing regime” (Goodwin & Skocpol 1989: 495-496).

At present, Malaysia does not seem to fit the type of regime which is vulnerable to the emergence of revolutionary movements and revolutionary coalitions, let alone ready to be overthrown by revolutionaries. Furthermore, Malaysia’s Islamist movements also appear to lack the characteristics of successful revolutionary movements such as those which emerged in Iran, Nicaragua and Philippine back in the 1970s to 1990s. Those characteristics for success, as suggested by Foran (1992: 255) and (Lane (2009: 113) involved a united and organised opposition with an alternative ideology and political policy – which the BERSIH movement in Malaysia is currently lacking of. Figure 8.3 below illustrates the overall feedback from respondents.

²¹³ See Chapter Three for more detail on the Theory of Revolution.

Figure 8.3 Respondents' Views Whether the Series of Protest Events Organised by the Bersih Were an Indirect Effort to Create a "Malaysian Spring"



8.4 Ennahda's Perspectives on the Research Findings

During the Winter of 2018, the researcher managed to conduct face-to-face interviews with four key figures of the Ennahda movement in Tunisia (details in Chapter One) regarding several outcomes of the study, particularly concerning the impact of the Arab Uprisings on political activism and the approaches of Islamist movements in Malaysia, the issues of 'Malaysian Spring' polemics and the Arab Spring's lessons (see findings in Chapters Seven and Eight). The responses received from those interviewees stressed that the Tunisian revolutionaries and the government formed after the uprisings never once intended to 'export' the so called 'Jasmine Revolution' or 'Arab Spring' to other countries (which contrasts with the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution). Regarding the question about the impact of the Arab Uprisings, particularly as concerns Ennahda's recent experiences with other Islamist movements and political parties²¹⁴, Ghannouchi responded as follows:

²¹⁴ Personal interview with Rached Ghannouchi. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

“Our (Jasmine Revolution) experience was a local experience. We do not have any ambition to export our experiences (to any other countries). Every Muslim country has a full right and even a duty to make and discover the local solution between Islam and realities, between Islam and the milieu and the problems currently in place. Despite the fact that Muslims generally believe in the same Islam, the religion has been (mistakenly) interpreted in many ways which has led to the current realities where Islam and Islamism appear (to the Muslim rulers) to have many sorts of ideologies and policies. Since the problems and situations are different between Malaysia, Egypt and Tunisia for instance... all Muslims (particularly Muslim politicians) in their countries need to rethink and understand their own situation. They need to read the Quran and think deeply about their realities and try to make a sort of ‘marriage’ (solution) between Islam and the local realities for the benefit of the people”.

From Ghannouchi’s perspective, it is clear that there is emphasis on local circumstances and the correct interpretation of Islam that first must be properly addressed by Muslims (including those in Malaysia) before being influenced and infused by the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ phenomenon. His opinion is in line with several respondents from PAS and ABIM who noted the different political and economic situations in Malaysia and the Middle East (e.g. Tunisia), which led the Malaysian Islamists to view the phenomenon of 2011 Arab Uprisings in the local context as lessons rather than a ‘direction’.

Naoufel Eljammali²¹⁵ further clarifies the reason why Tunisia (and Ennahda in particular) is reluctant to export its post-‘Arab Spring’ experiences to other countries such as Malaysia (with its Islamist movements). As explained by Eljammali:

“Because we are a very small state... we are not very enthusiastic to export any political experience (of the post-Jasmine Revolution) outside the country as it will cause us harm and lots of problem. But we are telling the world that we are here and standing for democracy, good governance and economic reform. Of course, we are willing to share some ideas, some principles and thoughts with Malaysian Islamists, but without any intention to export anything from Tunisia. You cannot dissociate the idea of the Jasmine Revolution from the Ennahda party. We were one of the main political parties which was standing before the revolution and standing for democracy. And (for) other countries maybe they cannot understand and dissociate our experience from the idea of revolution itself. That is why we are very careful with this kind of

²¹⁵ Personal interview with Naoufel Eljammali in the Tunisian Parliament, Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018. He was a former Tunisian Minister of Employment and Vocational Training and is a current member of the Ennahda Political Bureau.

tendency which can push us to give the (false) impression that we are showing lessons to the world and exporting a kind of revolutionary idea. We must confess that what we are doing within the Ennahda party (as a Muslim political party) is ‘revolutionary’. And as I mentioned earlier it will be very good to share with other political parties (which are near to us in terms of identity, ideas, thoughts and principles) the best way to deal with political reform and so on”.

Although Eljammali personally argues that Tunisia should not and will not be externally exporting its ‘revolutionary’ experience, it is undoubtedly clear that the indirect impact of the Jasmine Revolution has already caused a great snowballing effect amongst neighbouring countries, such that the region erupted into the so-called ‘Arab Spring’. Despite Ennahda’s willingness to share ideas and thoughts which might benefit other political parties and groups outside Tunisia, it seems that PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH (as prominent Islamist movements in Malaysia) have already observed and learnt several significant lessons from the Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon and the political ‘journey’ of Ennahda itself (see findings in Chapter Eight). Regarding those lessons, Rafek Abdessalem²¹⁶ (former Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs) has emphasised that Malaysian Islamist parties must cooperate with other non-Islamic oriented political parties (e.g. secular, nationalist) and not ‘work in silo’ for the benefit of the heterogeneous population in Malaysia. According to Abdessalem:

“One of the main lessons from our experience is the need to work with other political forces. Because a major threat for political stability and democratic process is ideological or ethnic or religious polarisation. When you have a diversified society or population like in Malaysia, there is a need for Muslims and non-Muslims to work together... there is a need for moderates, Islamists and secularists to work together. This is very essential for any modern society, because there are no political forces that have the ability to manage any political situation by themselves. Take for example in Tunisia, we have a long legacy of political failure, economic crisis and external intervention in our political affairs. So, there is a strong need for different ideological political forces to have a united front in favour of economic and political reform – as can be seen in our current coalition government”.

Osama al-Saghir, an Ennahda member of parliament further commented on the significance of political strategy and preparation to govern – which was perceived as one of the lessons learnt by Malaysian Islamists. He seems

²¹⁶ Personal interview with the current advisor to the Ennahda Party President on International Relations, Rafek Abdessalem. Tunis, Tunisia. December 2017.

antipathetic to those conservative Islamists who were using and manipulating religion for personal political mileage. Instead, he insists that Islamists, be it from moderate, conservative or nationalist parties and organisations should put tremendous effort and determination into offering real political and socio-economic reform which will eventually benefit citizens. According to Al-Saghir²¹⁷:

“Us, as Islamist or Muslim politicians, sometimes we are too theoretical, playing with the image of Islam and less its practise... sometimes the Islamists go to the streets and make mistakes in the name of Islam. For instance, someone who says: “you have to vote for me, because I am trying to implement the words of Allah (via sharia law)”. This is wrong. People should not vote for an Islamist because he chooses Islam. Instead, they should view the capacity of the Islamist in delivering a noble agenda for the benefit of the people. And this may seem the hard way. Sometimes an Islamist chooses to go the easy way by saying “vote for me because I am a Muslim and representing the Islamic agenda”. The truth is, you are not going to represent the Islamic agenda by words... it has to be by facts, real projects and real efforts”.

Concerning the lessons derived from the 2013 Egyptian coup and FJP’s experiences, Eljammali agrees that Malaysian Islamists should avoid any attempt to concentrate power in their party’s own hands and implement aggressive change or reform in politics, economics and society (if ever given opportunity to govern a state). Another issue discussed during the researcher’s fieldwork in Tunisia was how the post-Arab Uprisings’ developments have strengthened the cooperation between Malaysian Islamist movements and Arab Islamist parties (e.g. Ennahda). 71.5 percent of respondents (see Chapter Seven) agreed that the relationship between Islamist movements in Malaysia and those in the Middle East had been enhanced since the 2011 political transition. Abdessalem²¹⁸ acknowledged this finding by saying:

“Since we are now a legal political entity in Tunisia, and part of the Tunisian coalition government, we are very keen to consolidate the already established relationship with our ‘friends’ and ‘brothers’ in Malaysia based on a national political agenda. We have recently sent our delegation (including myself and Ghannouchi) to Malaysia to meet with Abdul Hadi Awang, the PAS President for the purpose of exchanging ideas and experiences. We are also in favour of having constructive cooperation with other political forces such as with the ruling party

²¹⁷ Personal interview. Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

²¹⁸ Personal interview in Tunis, Tunisia. January 2018.

(UMNO) and opposition parties in Malaysia. We have to be open to other political forces (apart from Islamists), either in the Middle East or Asia”.

Although aware of the polemics of the ‘Malaysian Spring’ (along with the fact that 49.9 percent of respondents were inspired by the act of mass street protest during the Arab Uprisings), Abdessalem disagrees with the idea of Malaysian political activists and opposition politicians emulating the 2011 revolution (as previously expressed through Bersih demonstrations). Whilst he admits that Malaysia is not an ideal example of democracy since the country is ruled by a ‘dictatorship’ (or at least a competitive autocratic regime), he points out that there is no real urgency for Malaysians to launch a revolution against the current ruling regime since political parties and civil society in Malaysia are still given a reasonable space to operate and participate in politics and elections – which is better than in Arab states before the 2011 revolution.

In respect of the issues concerning Daesh (as previously discussed in Section 7.2.2 Chapter Seven), Abdessalem (as a representative of Ennahda) explicitly highlights that, the party refuses to acknowledge any conspiracy theories (concerning the role of the USA, Israel or Iran and Daesh) as were previously claimed by the PAS and ISMA Presidents as well as by some respondents. Instead, Ennahda sees the emergence of Daesh as by-product of the political mess, political crisis and sectarian division in the Arab region, especially following the civil war in Iraq.

In short, despite being somehow influenced by the Arab Uprisings as well as inspired by the wave of Islamism and the success of Ennahda since Ben Ali’s departure in 2011, the Malaysian Islamist movements appear to hold some different views from the Tunisian Islamist party. In this sense, it shows that Islamist movements and parties, from one country to another are diverse in practise – primarily due to differences in local context. Nevertheless, Ennahda has accepted what the PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists learnt from their experiences and the Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon in a positive way which indirectly consolidated the relationship between Islamist politics in Malaysia and Tunisia (and possibly elsewhere in the Arab world).

8.5 Conclusion and Summary

The main goal of this chapter was to investigate the lessons learned by respondents from the four main Islamist movements in Malaysia about developments following the Arab Uprisings in the MENA region. Through his fieldwork the researcher established five main lessons from the Arab Uprisings within the context of the development of Malaysia's Islamist movements. The lessons from the Arab Uprisings (derived mainly from the experiences of Islamist parties in the Arab world) were analysed based on respondents' feedback to several diverse questions, as well as a number of in-depth interviews with movement leaders and activists. Indeed, the survey found that more than 70 percent of respondents from each of the Malaysian Islamist movements being studied had a positive attitude that the development of Arab Islamist parties and recent political circumstances in the Middle East (after the Arab Uprisings) had taught them some valuable lessons. A summary of the five main lessons are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

The first lesson is that Islamist parties in Malaysia need to improve their political strategy in order to survive in the Malaysian political game. As mentioned by the ISMA President, in terms of political operations, the Islamist movements in Malaysia (as well as in other parts of the world) need to learn from each other's experiences before attempting to hold political power. Among the specific strategies suggested by respondents are: 1) The Islamist parties and movements in Malaysia should develop a 'manifesto' that proposes a comprehensive economic model that seeks to benefit all citizens. Respondents suggest that failure to do so will reflect upon the competency of Islamists to govern the state in the long run; 2) The Islamist parties and movements in Malaysia need to have undertaken solid preparation and have proper plans in place before (and after) assuming power from the incumbent government. Any agenda for political change must be fully considered in terms of the short and long term consequences. Most importantly, Islamists must develop their own strengths and approaches when facing pressures from citizens, as well as foreign parties. This lesson, as explained by respondents, derived primarily from the tragic case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the June 2013 military takeover.

The second lesson is that in order to attract strong support from the different layers of society, the Islamist movements in Malaysia must not 'work alone'. Instead, they should have thoughtful cooperation with other non-Islamic oriented groups and parties that exist in Malaysia. The study found that 46.9 percent of Malaysian Islamist respondents from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH learned from the development of Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings (especially the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Tunisian Ennahda) that collaboration between Islamist movements/parties with non-Islamic oriented political parties and organisations (for instance the Nationalists and Secularists) might contribute to stability in the current political situation in Malaysia. In terms of responses from specific movements, 72.1 percent of respondents from AMANAH showed tremendous support for the proposition of establishing a positive relationship with non-Islamists in Malaysia, compared to 66.6 percent of ABIM and 39.9 percent of PAS respondents. Meanwhile, only 18.8 percent of ISMA members considered cooperation with non-Islamists as something positive. For the researcher this variation in feedback undoubtedly reflects the role of group characteristics, with a movement's political approach and ideology influencing individual perceptions about certain political issues. In other words, Islamist movements, such as AMANAH and ABIM that express a progressive and moderate political approach are more likely to cooperate with non-Islamic oriented parties in Malaysia, compared to ISMA and PAS which strongly uphold the agenda of political Islam.

The third lesson from the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon is that political stability should always be prioritised and maintained above any unplanned actions for regime change via revolution or street protest. The study found that 55.4 percent of respondents, mainly from ISMA and PAS, preferred to avoid any attempt to overthrow the regime through revolution - for the sake of maintaining the current political stability. Almost half of ABIM respondents also agreed with the above statement, while less than 40 percent of AMANAH respondents responded in a similar way. For some respondents, the 'failures' following the Arab Uprisings in Syria, Libya, Egypt and Yemen had taught them to value political stability more than to promote revolution. Interestingly, it does seem that the stand of Malaysia's Islamist movements on the act of street

demonstration has been indirectly inculcated into respondents' attitudes, although there were some who did not conform with the party position.

The fourth lesson is that in order to promote a peaceful and effective political transition Malaysians in general and Islamists in particular do not necessarily need to apply the Arab Uprisings style of revolution as a method for 'toppling' the current ruling regime. More than half of respondents from ISMA, PAS and ABIM supported the statement that acts of civil disobedience and street protests do not suggest a positive political change, whilst approximately the same percentage of AMANAH respondents rejected the proposition. The reason for this difference (as previously explained) lies in the movement's stand on participation in street demonstrations. ISMA and PAS clearly rejected the act of street protest as a method for overthrowing a ruling regime, as based on statements from their leaders. AMANAH, on the other hand, remains consistent in encouraging its members to take to the streets for the sake of ending the long 'semi-democratic' rule of the UMNO and BN in Malaysia.

The fifth lesson from the Arab Uprisings is that improving the quality of democracy in Malaysia should be highly valued given that the old fashioned political system – commonly known amongst academics as 'semi-democracy' or 'electoral authoritarianism' – is still currently in place. Although the act of street protest has recently gained impetus in pressuring the ruling regime, it is evident that the majority (68.4 percent) of respondents prefer an election as the practical medium for political change in Malaysia. There were a number of reasons given by respondents to support this argument. One of them was that an election is seen as a constructive alternative for political change that is suitable to Malaysia's political environment, as well as in-line with the principle of Islamic teaching which emphasises the element of citizens' freedom to elect their leader. No significant conflict emerged between the four Islamist movements in the research since the majority (more than 60 percent) showed tremendous support for democracy and elections.

Finally, there are the issues of the "Malaysian Spring" campaign and its connection with the series of mass demonstrations popularly known as BERSIH which journalists and government authorities suggested were an attempt to topple the regime via 'Arab Spring' style uprisings. These polemics seem to

unfold when significant numbers of Malaysian Islamist activists and politicians (who also participated in such mass protests) remained neutral or disagreed with such claims. Only 39.8 percent of respondents believed that the act of civil disobedience organised through the BERSIH was a reflection of indirect efforts to create a “Malaysian Spring”. Some respondents also predicted that there would be no Arab Uprisings style revolution taking place in Malaysia in the future. They suggested this was due to the different political, economic and social circumstances in Malaysia as compared to Middle East and North African countries. Moreover, an analysis from the perspective of the Theory of Revolutions suggested to the researcher that Malaysia’s Islamist movements lacked the attributes of a successful revolutionary movement (such as that which existed in Iran during the 1979 Iranian revolution). Hence, the polemics of a “Malaysian Spring” are determined to be fallacy rather than reality.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PERSPECTIVES

“The Arab Uprisings of 2011 radically reshaped the environment within which Islamist movements had evolved over the preceding decades, causing rapid, disorienting changes in their strategies, ideologies and organisations” - Marc Lynch, 2014²¹⁹

9.1 Summary of the Thesis

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the relationship between the phenomenon of the 2011 Arab Uprisings in the MENA region and the Islamist movements in Malaysia. For this reason, the researcher chose a questionnaire-based survey, as well as in-depth interviews, to examine the knowledge, perceptions and influences of the Arab Uprisings on the experiences of four selected Malaysian Islamist movements. Intensive fieldwork was carried out by the researcher in the Autumn and Winter of 2016 amongst 530 Malaysian Islamist members from the four movements – PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH - across West Malaysia, particularly in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Perak, Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis. The researcher also managed to identify five lessons learnt by members of the Malaysian Islamist movements from the experiences following the Arab Uprisings.

In many recent studies the impact of the 2011 Arab Uprisings, within and beyond the regions of the Middle East and North Africa, is normally discussed through various case studies of countries which have either been drivers of, or been affected by, the phenomenon. However, little attention has been paid to its implications for Malaysian political development, particularly from the perspective of political activism amongst Malaysia’s Islamist movements. Although there are a few studies discussing the connection between the Arab Uprisings and Malaysia - such as Bakar (2015), Safar (2015), Syed Abdul Razak (2015) and Nidzam and Kartini (2017) - none of these works considered the attitude and reaction of Malaysian Islamists towards the phenomenon (see the literature review in Chapter Two). This thesis reflects on how the development of Arab Uprisings in the last six years – for example, the nature of

²¹⁹ Lynch, Marc. (2014). Islam in a Changing Middle East: Rethinking Islamist Politics. Project on Middle East Political Science Paper 6.

revolutionary movements, the act of civil disobedience, the role of Islamists and the wave of political Islam - are affecting the activism and ways of thinking of the most influential Islamist groups in Malaysia. It also looks at how the journey of Arab Islamist parties coming to power after the 2011 Uprisings has impacted the political approach of selected Malaysian Islamist parties.

The decision to study the relationship between the Islamist movements in Malaysia and the recent 'Arab Revolutions' was driven by two main reasons. Firstly, the tendency of Malaysian Islamists to be inspired, influenced and affected by developments in the Middle East and Islamic world is self-evident – as shown in the case of the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution. Most of the Malaysian Islamist movements were also originally established based on resources and 'guidelines' provided by the legacy of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The respectable relationship established between the Malaysian Islamist movements and prominent Arab Islamist leaders such as Ghannouchi (Ennahda) and Muhammad Badi' Abdul Majid (Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) seems to support the proposition that the period following the Arab Uprisings might possibly have impacted the attitude and insight of Malaysian Islamists (either directly or indirectly) – in terms of Islamic political activism and approach. The fact that the post-Arab Uprisings appeared to lead to a dramatic ascendancy of the Islamists' popularity in several Middle East and North African states (although this ascendancy did not last long) seemed sufficient to re-energise the momentum of Malaysian Islamists to remain consistent regarding their ultimate aim of establishing an 'Islamic state', along with an Islamisation agenda, in the country.

Secondly, due to Malaysian Islamists' long history of frustration and struggle against the ruling regime (see Chapter Five) – most notably by open expression and past participation in a series of mass protests widely known as Bersih in Malaysia - it is the researcher's argument that their political activism could also have been inspired by the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon. In addition, there was the "Malaysian Spring" (see Chapter Eight), when a number of pro-government politicians (including Prime Minister Najib Razak) and some local and foreign journalists came up with polemics that the Bersih events were some kind of indirect effort to overthrow the current Malaysian ruling regime through street protest (in a similar way to the 'Arab Spring' revolutions). These polemics

suggest that the study of Arab Uprisings within the context of Malaysian contemporary politics, specifically from the viewpoint of Islamists is highly interesting, valuable and worthy of research as it will eventually contribute to the body of knowledge on Malaysian Islamist movements, as well as the global reactions towards the development of post-Arab Uprisings. The research findings have been discussed in-depth in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, based on specific themes and questions in the survey. The findings successfully answered all the main research questions and objectives as discussed and summarised below.

9.2 Discussion and Summary of Research Findings

9.2.1 Objectives Revisited

The research questions and objectives of this study (as mentioned in Chapter One) are revisited and summarised along with the findings in the following paragraphs.

The first objective was to identify the knowledge, perceptions and views of different Islamist Movements in Malaysia (PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH) towards the Arab Uprisings' phenomenon in the Middle East and North Africa (Chapter Six). The investigation began with the question - to what extent did the Malaysian Islamists really know and understand the Arab Uprisings? The study found that 82.7 percent of respondents from PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH were well-informed about the Arab Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The finding seems consistent with the general claims by Abdul Malek (2011), Osman Bakar (2012) and Abdul Hadi Awang (2016) that some of the Malaysian public had excitedly paid attention to the developments associated with the 2011 Arab Uprisings. Only 17.3 percent of respondents did not know about the Uprisings (see Chapter Six for their reasons). Overall, it was clear that the interaction between Malaysia and the Arab-Muslim world was (in one way or another) generated by the positive awareness and attention of Malaysian citizens (particularly the Islamists) who were concerned about contemporary issues in the MENA region.

The next question was – what are the perceptions of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH Islamists towards the Arab Uprisings? More than 70 percent of respondents viewed the Arab Uprisings as a symbol of political revolution and non-violent resistance against former Arab dictators due to the long-term practice of political repression as well as the deteriorating state of economic performance. A similar percentage of respondents also believed that Islamism and the role of Arab Islamist movements played a tremendous part in mobilising protesters during the 2011 Uprisings. The former perception is in-line with other studies concerning general issues relating to the Arab Uprisings. The latter finding, however, appears misleading since many Islamists were ‘absent’ during the protests in order to avoid any misinformation that the Arab Uprisings were some kind of ‘Islamic revolution’. Moreover, Arab Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, never publicly declared that they participated in the revolutions in the name ‘Islam’ or as part of the struggle for political Islam – although they supported efforts to overthrow the incumbent Arab regimes which had long been tyrannically suppressing the Islamists (e.g. in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria).

The second objective was to examine the extent of the influence of the 2011 Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon and the impact of post-Arab Uprisings developments (in several states) on the political approach and activism of different Islamist movements in Malaysia (Chapter Seven). This was achieved by asking the question - to what extent have the 2011 Arab Uprisings’ phenomenon and post-Arab Uprisings developments influenced and shaped the ideology, political activism and approach of PAS, ABIM, ISMA and AMANAH in Malaysia? It became clear that, during the first several years of the Arab Uprisings, almost half of the respondents (49.9 percent) were somehow influenced or inspired by the success of civil disobedience and street protest acts in toppling several former Arab regimes. This trend was evidenced in a series of Bersih protests (2013 and 2015) whereby the respondents admitted that they were motivated to ‘occupy’ the streets of Kuala Lumpur and Independent Square to press for the immediate resignation of Najib Razak from Putrajaya - due to alleged corruption, monetary scandals, several incidents of political injustice towards opposition leaders (e.g. the detention of former opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim in 2015), price hikes in food, gas and

commodities, as well as the claim of previous electoral manipulation by the regime (see Chapter Five). Almost 70 percent of respondents also acknowledged the role played by new social media in assisting their political activism (e.g. initiating civil disobedience acts, mobilising protesters and generating political awareness) after witnessing the effectiveness of technology (online social media) in securing the Arab revolts in 2011.

Relating to the development of Islamist parties after the Arab Uprisings, 62.3 percent of Malaysian Islamists were motivated by the so-called 'Islamist Winter' trend (the unexpected and dramatic wins by Ennahda in Tunisia, PJD in Morocco and FJP in Egypt in the first elections following the political transition after Arab Uprisings) to put more effort into realising their parties/ movements objectives' regarding the future establishment of an 'Islamic country' in Malaysia through election and political power. The respondents also admitted that this objective can only be achieved via proper strategies – for instance by embracing values of moderation, as well as being politically inclusive in order to gain strong political support from different layers of society. This particular finding seems coherent with a study by Maszlee Malik (2017) that the transformation of Ennahda's identity in 2016 (from an Islamic fundamentalist party to an Islamic democratic party) managed to put 'pressure' on certain Islamist movements in Malaysia (the author used ABIM, AMANAH and IKRAM for his case studies) to adopt a neo-Islamism approach (see Chapter Three), instead of supporting the long conservative approach of Islamism which concentrated on the establishment of an Islamic state and sharia.

The third and last objective of this study was to identify the lessons learned by the Malaysian Islamists from the events following the Arab Uprisings as well as to explain the dynamic views and approaches of selected Islamist movements in Malaysia with regards to issues of civil disobedience, Arab world affairs and political Islam (Chapter Eight). The former findings (lessons from the Arab Uprisings) are predominantly on the importance of: 1) improving political strategy (in order to survive in the political game and 'uncertain' environment); 2) maintaining political stability (by avoiding the potential for political disorder and regime change via violent revolution); 3) being inclusive (by cooperating with any non-Islamic oriented political parties and movements); 4) promoting peaceful political transition in the country (by supporting free and fair elections

as the alternative and practical medium for political change); and 5) 'upgrading' the current practise of democracy by the regime and future government in Malaysia (by implementing reasonably competitive elections as well as guaranteeing basic civil rights). The latter findings focus on the role of group characteristics (e.g. the political approaches and ideologies of different parties/movements) and their standpoints on the political Islam agenda and participation in political protests – which constituted the reasons for different responses about certain issues being tackled in the survey.

9.2.3 Implications of the Findings to the Discourse on Political Islam

In the words of Samer Shehata (2012), political Islam has been one of the most dynamic and contentious political forces in the Middle East for over three decades and this has led to broad consensus about its significance. However, he argues that less agreement has been achieved regarding the character and category of Islamist politics. Indeed, the wave of political Islam coming from the Middle East will always remain a key peripheral element in the development of Islamist movements in Malaysia. The understanding, approach and practise of political Islam in the context of Malaysian Islamist parties and movements, as presented by the research findings, have implications for how one should consider the different paradigm of Islamist politics.

Undeniably, the Islamist parties and movements in Malaysia are ideologically and practically diverse. PAS, ABIM and ISMA are inspired by the old legacy of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, while AMANAH is largely motivated by the AKP's success and committed to Ennahda's new Islamic Democratic principles. PAS is committed to election as a practical means for political change while AMANAH and ABIM champion mass street protest (along with electoral participation). PAS is consistent with the 'Islamic state' agenda, while AMANAH concentrates on the 'welfare state' and good governance projects. ABIM prefers soft dakwah and tolerance while implementing the agenda of Islamisation. ISMA, in contrast, often voices out 'extreme words' for the same purpose. AMANAH and ABIM are open to any political cooperation with non-Islamists while PAS and ISMA seem to share the opposite approach. Some Malaysian Islamists are sceptical of American and Western involvement in Middle East conflicts, whilst others are open to assistance from external

democracies. Despite all these differences, political Islam in Malaysia shows a positive trend - as this research found that moderation, along with the practise of inclusivity, has been widely accepted as the relevant approach for Islamist movements in Malaysia.

9.3 Tentative Perspectives: What is Likely to Happen in Malaysia with the Islamist Movements?

The post-1979 Iranian Revolution and the 2011 Arab Uprisings have indirectly posed a challenge for Malaysia's Islamist movements to remain relevant and significant in the eyes of the general population. This is especially a concern for the non-Muslim community, since global political Islam and Islamist movements have usually been perceived negatively due to their tendency to resort to extremism and violence. According to Durac and Cavatorta (2012: 140):

“Islamists were typically, although not always, seen as anti-modern and anti-Western, and analyses of Islamism frequently focused on the issue of violence. However, this fails to do justice to the complexity and variety of Islamic movements and actors across the MENA region and in the broader Muslim world”.

Despite these formidable challenges, this research established that the Islamist parties and civil society groups in Malaysia remain determined and committed to their political struggle through electoral or voting channels – albeit with different political approaches. Indirectly, it also seems that the practise of semi-democracy will be continued by the current regime – unless there is a ‘historic’ political change in the up-coming general election. The fact that more than 60 percent of respondents support democracy and elections as the best medium for political change reflects that the majority of Malaysian Islamists are refusing to adopt violent and extreme methods to legitimise future goals. The researcher believes that this finding is crucial to foreseeing (in some way) the future direction of PAS, AMANAH, ABIM and ISMA as popular Islamist parties and movements in Malaysia within the context of democratic promotion and improvement. With the next (14th) general election predicted to be held sometime in 2018, there is already huge excitement building regarding the ‘ideological’ battle between PAS and AMANAH which will compete for certain parliamentary seats.

With the establishment of several Islamist parties and civil society movements, coupled with other factors - for instance the advancement of new social media, the post-Arab Uprisings, the development of moderate Arab Islamist parties – the researcher believes that it is very likely that the trend of increased Islamist involvement in political life will continue to take place for the next few years. Without any doubt, PAS and AMANAH will remain prominent Islamist political parties in the country – either in opposition or within the government block. The researcher is also quite certain that the trend for political protest via street demonstration will reoccur in the future. However, based on the findings, it seems that one can expect less participants or protesters from the Islamist groups, particularly from PAS due to ‘lessons’ learnt from the post-Arab Uprisings. Only AMANAH remains consistent in participating in street protest whilst the current regime, led by Prime Minister Najib Razak, remains in Putrajaya.

9.4 Suggestions for Future Research

From the major findings of this study, some questions arise which necessitate further research. These questions relate to several different issues, as follows:

- a) The reactions from non-Islamists and non-Muslims in Malaysia to the Arab Uprisings.
- b) The attitudes towards Daesh and the spread of extremism among the Muslim youth in Malaysia (especially amongst students in Islamic religious schools) and probably elsewhere in the world.
- c) The attitudes of Malaysians and the populations in other Muslim nations towards specific issues following the Arab Uprisings (e.g. the Yemeni conflict, the Libyan and Syrian civil wars - from the perspective of the involvement of global powers).

The researcher suggests that the above-mentioned issues are of crucial importance and require investigation through further research.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

TITLE: THE PERCEPTIONS AND INFLUENCES OF THE ARAB SPRING AMONG THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN MALAYSIA

PROJECT CODE: GUP-2013-050

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Kindly answer all questions in the questionnaire.
2. Kindly read the instructions carefully.
3. All information is **CONFIDENTIAL** and it will only be used for research purposes.
4. This questionnaire contains 7 sections (A, B, C, D, E, F & G)

Guideline for answers

<p>Example A</p> <p>INSTRUCTIONS: KINDLY TICK <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN THE BOX CORRESPONDING TO YOUR ANSWER</p>	<p>Section A: Respondent's Background</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>1. Male <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. Female <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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SECTION A: RESPONDENT'S BACKGROUND

Kindly tick in the boxes corresponding to your answers

Personal Details

1. Age:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 16-25 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. 26-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. 36-45 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. 46-55 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. 56-65 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. 66 and above | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Gender

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1. Male | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Race

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Malay | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputera | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Other:.....(please provide detail in space provided) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Religion

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Non-Muslim/Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Marital Status

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Single | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Married | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Divorced/Separated | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Widow/Widower | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Highest Level of Education

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. No schooling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. SRP/PMR/SPM | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 3. STPM/STAM/Certificate/Diploma
- 4. Bachelors Degree
- 5. Masters Degree
- 6. Doctorate (PhD, DPhil)

7. Last Place of Education

- 1. In Malaysia
- 2. Abroad (kindly state country).....

8. Occupational Sector

- 1. Private
- 2. Public
- 3. Self-employed
- 4. Not working/Not yet working
- 5. Student (Higher Learning Institute)
- 5. Retired/Pensioner

SECTION B: INVOLVEMENT IN ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS (POLITICAL PARTY, CIVIL SOCIETY GROUP/ NGO) IN MALAYSIA

Are you involved in any Islamist movement (political party, civil society group, non-governmental organisation/NGO) in Malaysia?

- Yes
- No

If the answer is **Yes**, kindly proceed with the following question and then move on to **Section C**.

If the answer is **No**, you can choose to continue or end this questionnaire at this point.

Please state the Islamist movement in which you are involved.

- 1. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)
- 2. The National Trust Party (PAN)
- 3. The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)
- 4. The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA)
- 5. Other.....(please state movement name)

Type of membership

- 1. Registered & active
- 2. Registered & not active
- 3. Unregistered & active (voluntary)
- 4. Unregistered & not active

SECTION C: KNOWLEDGE ON THE ‘ARAB SPRING’ IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA.

Do you know anything about the people’s upheaval in the Arab states (the ‘Arab Spring’) that started in the year 2011?

Yes
No

If the answer is **Yes** kindly proceed to the following sections (**D, E and F**)
If the answer is **No** kindly go to **Section G**

SECTION D: SOURCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING THE ARAB SPRING EVENTS

Kindly tick in the boxes provided. You can tick more than one answer.

My information on the Arab Spring events was obtained from the following source(s):

- 1. Television
- 2. Newspaper
- 3. Internet/Social Media
- 4. Radio
- 5. Book
- 6. Magazine
- 7. Pamphlet/Brochure/Leaflet
- 8. Forum/Seminar/Talk/Lecture
- 10. Lecturer/Teacher/Friends/Family
- 11. Other:

(Kindly state information source)

SECTION E: PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARAB SPRING EVENTS

Instruction: Kindly tick once in each row (items 1-17) based on the scale below.

Strongly Disagree
Agree

Strongly

1 ←—————→ 5

No.	Understanding of the Arab Spring Events	1	2	3	4	5
1	The 'Arab Spring' was the people's upheaval against autocratic rulers.					
2	The 'Arab Spring' was a political revolution.					
3	The 'Arab Spring' was a nonviolent resistance movement.					
4	The 'Arab Spring' events were sparked in Tunisia by Muhammad Bouazizi who set himself on fire in protest of the injustice he received from the government authority.					
5	The economic instability, unemployment crisis and the increase in prices of goods contributed to the 'Arab Spring'.					
6	The absence of a democratic system which upheld the principle of a political freedom contributed to the emergence of the 'Arab Spring'.					
7	The role of new social media like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter was very effective in assisting the demonstrators during the 'Arab Spring' events.					
8	Islamist movements such as the Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt played a role in assisting demonstrators during the 'Arab Spring' events.					
9	The 'Arab Spring' was a phenomenon of Islamist uprising and the rise of political Islam in the Arab world.					
10	From a political and economic context, the post-'Arab Spring' events have had a positive impact on the countries involved.					
11	From a political and economic context, the post-'Arab Spring' events have had a negative impact on the countries involved.					

12	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have supported the democratisation process in the countries involved.					
13	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have provided the opportunity for Islamic-oriented political parties to come to power.					
14	In general, Tunisia is perceived as the ‘ <i>success story</i> ’ of the ‘Arab Spring’.					
15	The Islamic-oriented political parties are capable of governing the Arab states/countries.					
16	The emergence of the Islamic state militant groups (e.g. ISIS/ISIL) and the issue of the Syrian and Arab refugees are the manifestation of the failure of the ‘Arab Spring’ in the Middle East.					
17	The Arab world was more stable before the start of the ‘Arab Spring’.					
18	The ‘Arab Spring’ events have been an ‘eye-opener’ to the Arab states’ rulers who have had to listen to the voice of the people.					
19	The uncertainties in the Middle East and North Africa will lead to another wave of uprisings/revolutions.					

SECTION F: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ‘ARAB SPRING’ AMONG THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN MALAYSIA

Instruction: Kindly tick once in each row (items 1-16) based on the scale below.

Strongly disagree
agree

Strongly

1 ←—————→ 5

No	The Influence and Impact of the ‘Arab Spring’ on the Islamist Movements in Malaysia	1	2	3	4	5
1	Civil disobedience and street protests during the ‘Arab Spring’ have given inspiration to the Islamist movements in Malaysia.					
2	The role of the new social media (<i>Facebook, YouTube, Twitter</i>) during the ‘Arab Spring’ influenced the activism of the Islamist movements in Malaysia.					

3	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have strengthened the cooperation between the Islamist movements in Malaysia and the Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa. (For instance: The Ennahda in Tunisia and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt).					
4	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have taught some valuable lessons to the Islamist movements in Malaysia.					
5	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have required the Islamist movements in Malaysia to adopt a more moderate and inclusive approach.					
6	The power transfer through civil disobedience and street protests does not suggest a positive political transition.					
7	Based on the current political and economic situation, Malaysia does not need any ‘Arab Spring’-style public protests and street demonstrations.					
8	Based on the current political and economic situation, possibly ‘Arab-Spring’-style civil disobedience and street protests will take place (“Malaysian Spring”).					
9	Broadly speaking, the political situation in Malaysia is stable although it is categorised as a semi-democratic state.					
10	Political stability is valued above a regime change via street protest.					
11	Cooperation between the Islamist movements in Malaysia with the non-Islamic-oriented political parties and organisations (e.g. Nationalists, Secularists, Leftists, Human Rights groups) contributes to a political stability.					
12	The series of protest events organised by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Election (<i>Bersih</i> 2.0, 3.0 dan 4.0) were the indirect effort to create a “Malaysian Spring”.					
13	The democratic political system and associated elections are the best medium to determine the direction of the country’s leadership.					
14	The ‘Arab Spring’ events have focused interest and attention on the political issues in the Middle East.					
15	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have influenced the ideology of the Islamist movement in Malaysia.					
16	The post-‘Arab Spring’ events have shown the relevance of the Islamist movement as the society’s agent of change.					

APPENDIX B

Details of Crosstab Data

B1. Type of Membership * Knowledge of the 2011 Arab Uprisings' Events in the Middle East and North Africa

Crosstab

			Knowledge of the 2011 Arab Uprisings Events in the Middle East and North Africa		Total
			Yes	No	
Type of Membership	Registered & Active	Count	420	57	477
		% within Type of Membership	88.1%	11.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	65.3%	8.9%	74.2%
	Registered & Non Active	Count	45	13	58
		% within Type of Membership	77.6%	22.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	7.0%	2.0%	9.0%
	Non Registered & Active (Volunteer)	Count	53	33	86
		% within Type of Membership	61.6%	38.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	8.2%	5.1%	13.4%
	Non Registered & Non Active (Passive Supporter)	Count	14	8	22
		% within Type of Membership	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.2%	1.2%	3.4%
Total	Count	532	111	643	
	% within Type of Membership	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%	
	% of Total	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.956 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	37.417	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	40.608	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	643		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.80.

B2. Type of Islamist Movement * The Arab Uprisings were the people's upheaval against autocratic rulers.

Crosstab

			The Arab Uprisings were the people's upheaval against autocratic rulers.					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Type of Islamist Movement	The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Count	2	6	41	116	122	287
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	0.7%	2.1%	14.3%	40.4%	42.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.4%	1.1%	7.7%	21.9%	23.0%	54.2%
	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Count	2	0	5	21	65	93
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	2.2%	0.0%	5.4%	22.6%	69.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%	4.0%	12.3%	17.5%
	The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Count	2	0	5	30	44	81
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	2.5%	0.0%	6.2%	37.0%	54.3%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%	5.7%	8.3%	15.3%
	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	Count	5	1	14	22	27	69
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	7.2%	1.4%	20.3%	31.9%	39.1%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.9%	0.2%	2.6%	4.2%	5.1%	13.0%
Total	Count	11	7	65	189	258	530	
	% within Type of Islamist Movement	2.1%	1.3%	12.3%	35.7%	48.7%	100.0%	
	% of Total	2.1%	1.3%	12.3%	35.7%	48.7%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.070 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	45.186	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.754	1	.385
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 7 cells (35.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .91.

B3. Type of Islamist Movement * The Arab Uprisings were a political revolution.

Crosstab

			The Arab Uprisings were a political revolution.					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Type of Islamist Movement	The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Count	8	6	53	141	79	287
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	2.8%	2.1%	18.5%	49.1%	27.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	1.5%	1.1%	10.0%	26.6%	14.9%	54.2%
	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Count	3	6	13	34	37	93
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	3.2%	6.5%	14.0%	36.6%	39.8%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.6%	1.1%	2.5%	6.4%	7.0%	17.5%
	The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Count	4	2	9	33	33	81
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.9%	2.5%	11.1%	40.7%	40.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.8%	0.4%	1.7%	6.2%	6.2%	15.3%
	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	Count	3	2	16	35	13	69
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.3%	2.9%	23.2%	50.7%	18.8%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.6%	0.4%	3.0%	6.6%	2.5%	13.0%
Total	Count	18	16	91	243	162	530	
	% within Type of Islamist Movement	3.4%	3.0%	17.2%	45.8%	30.6%	100.0%	
	% of Total	3.4%	3.0%	17.2%	45.8%	30.6%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.170 ^a	12	.036
Likelihood Ratio	21.604	12	.042
Linear-by-Linear Association	.441	1	.507
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 6 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.08.

B4. Type of Islamist Movement * Islamist movements such as Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt played a role in assisting demonstrators during the Arab Uprisings' Events.

Crosstab

			Islamist movements such as the Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt played a role in assisting demonstrators during the Arab Uprisings events.					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Type of Islamist Movement	The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Count	4	10	86	112	74	286
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	1.4%	3.5%	30.1%	39.2%	25.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.8%	1.9%	16.3%	21.2%	14.0%	54.1%
	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Count	4	3	15	36	35	93
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.3%	3.2%	16.1%	38.7%	37.6%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.8%	0.6%	2.8%	6.8%	6.6%	17.6%
	The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Count	0	1	17	30	33	81
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	0.0%	1.2%	21.0%	37.0%	40.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.2%	3.2%	5.7%	6.2%	15.3%
	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	Count	3	2	12	30	22	69
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.3%	2.9%	17.4%	43.5%	31.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.6%	0.4%	2.3%	5.7%	4.2%	13.0%
Total	Count	11	16	130	208	164	529	
	% within Type of Islamist Movement	2.1%	3.0%	24.6%	39.3%	31.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	2.1%	3.0%	24.6%	39.3%	31.0%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.070 ^a	12	.037
Likelihood Ratio	23.297	12	.025
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.225	1	.040
N of Valid Cases	529		

a. 6 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.43.

B5. Type of Islamist Movement * Based on the current political and economic situation, possibly Arab Uprisings -style civil disobedience and street protests will take place (“Malaysian Spring”).

Crosstab

			Based on the current political and economic situation, possibly Arab Uprisings -style civil disobedience and street protests will take place (“Malaysian Spring”).					
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Type of Islamist Movement	The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)	Count	37	64	115	54	18	288
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	12.8%	22.2%	39.9%	18.8%	6.3%	100.0%
		% of Total	7.0%	12.1%	21.7%	10.2%	3.4%	54.2%
	The National Trust Party (AMANAH)	Count	11	21	32	15	14	93
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	11.8%	22.6%	34.4%	16.1%	15.1%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.1%	4.0%	6.0%	2.8%	2.6%	17.5%
	The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Count	4	24	12	22	19	81
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.9%	29.6%	14.8%	27.2%	23.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.8%	4.5%	2.3%	4.1%	3.6%	15.3%
	The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity Front (ISMA)	Count	3	20	25	20	1	69
		% within Type of Islamist Movement	4.3%	29.0%	36.2%	29.0%	1.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.6%	3.8%	4.7%	3.8%	0.2%	13.0%
Total	Count	55	129	184	111	52	531	
	% within Type of Islamist Movement	10.4%	24.3%	34.7%	20.9%	9.8%	100.0%	
	% of Total	10.4%	24.3%	34.7%	20.9%	9.8%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	52.375 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	54.154	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.260	1	.022
N of Valid Cases	531		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.76.

APPENDIX C

OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM PAS PRESIDENT, ABDUL HADI AWANG REGARDING THE 'ARAB SPRING' AND ITS LESSON FOR MALAYSIA (TRANSLATED BY AUTHOR)

THE THINGS WE LEARNT FROM THE ARAB SPRING: MATURE AND PROSPEROUS POLITICS

“The world, even Malaysians with no season called ‘spring’, is following with interest. The season comparable to the political development of the Arab world, hoped to bear fresh, delicious fruits that are suddenly becoming plagued with worms and poisonous, to the point that they become harmful to the victims even worse than the common epidemics that consistently and limitlessly cost the lives of the people. There has been a lot of blood, casualties, refugees escaping and people who wait for their turns for the fate that awaits. Events as such, had happened in the early centuries, known under the name of the Arabs’ Grand Revolution in 1916. It has been a hundred years ago. What do we learn from it? The first Arab Spring Revolution took place when Syarif Husain, the King of the Hijaz Territory (Mecca, Medina, Ta’if, Jeddah and the surrounding areas) under the ruling of the Caliph of Uthmaniyyah released the first shooting in Mecca before Subh on 9 Syaaban 1334H or 2 June 1916, to declare upon the Thaurah ‘Arabiyyah Kubra (the Grand Revolution of the Arab People) towards the merciless Turki Uthmaniyyah government, following its frail state in the participation in the First World War and which was incarnated by Europe and Russia.

The revolution was ignited in full spirit, together with the support from the enemy of the state led by British, who firmly advocated that Arabs were rescued from Turkey and converting the Muslim Caliph to an Arab, and the candidate was Syarif Husain from Mecca (deemed to be an interesting choice for both the Muslims and Arabs). Arab nationalists and politically-blind Muslims gave their full support, equipped with weapons from war-torn countries against Turki Uthmaniyyah in Europe; next advisors like Lawrence and others were assigned.

Finally this movement managed to dethrone Khilafah Turki Uthmaniyyah. Immediately, Raja Abdul Aziz Ibnu Saud and the Wahabi (Salafi) movement managed to be crowned as the king of the new country named Saudi Arabia after the successful ousting of Ibnu Rasyid, a ruler of Riyadh protected under Khilafah Uthmaniyyah who was not of Wahabi sect. Next, Syarif Husain and his children were expelled by Ibnu Saud from the abolished Hijaz, as British for whom they harboured hopes, had ceased to assist them to go against Ibnu Saud although he challenged that he would withdraw from the candidacy of the Caliph, with a promise of undivided support. Thus, the princes of Syarif Husain were hailed as Kings. Prince Faisal was named the King of Syria and Prince Abdullah the King of Iraq. When this was rejected by France which was entitled to get Syria and Lubnan in Sykes-Picot Agreement, Faisal became the King of Iraq, and a new country named Jordan was established and Abdullah bin Syarif Husin crowned as the King with the entitlement of half of Syria and the West Bank. Israel had to be created according to the Balfour Treaty, and it is to be separated from Arab. Other leaders who also showed opposition to Uthmaniyyah obtained their respective territory. The syiah of Iran was strengthened to become the Syahan Syah of Iran, Yaman continued to be led by an Imam (king) from among the Syiah Zaidiyyah. The agenda is to have a country that unifies various qabilah states, sects and ideologies that become the ticking bomb that gives life to the divide and rule system.

The recent Arab Spring began at the end of 2010, when a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia set himself on fire for being unemployed. Finally, it sparked and led to the rise of the Arab world to rebel against their respective dictator under the cause of democracy and clean election, opposing against fraud and bribery and others, with full support given by other great countries. Arab Spring ended with the fall of the President of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, subsequently the fire that broke out in Syria and the riots that led to the chaos in most of the Arab countries.

A wise, transparent and fair evaluation must be deliberated, as to why the wave could recur with such a catastrophic consequence and which could bury the victims deep down in history. The most heated example would be Syria that became the most bloody battlefield among the great powers, one which needs to be understood. Are the western countries set to oust Basyar Asad

really honest in much the same way as the Muslims who were set to declare jihad in Syria?

The same goes with countries that offered assistance, also Yemen- is it because of the Sunni and Syiah or the democracy and fairness? The states that attempt to oust Basyar Asad also will not let Islam emerge in victory, they who can uphold the actual Islamic state, return an Islamic state with its sovereignty and fairness, and which become a threat to them, especially the Zionist-Israel who dominated the politics of the larger states, especially America and its allies that have long aspired to become a single power. It is also a dream of Israel to become the center of global power. All the potential leaders, as recently reported in the US had vied to obtain the support of the Zionist in every General Election.

Thus, for these Arab countries which Arab Spring had successfully contributed to the fall of their own government, they had caused a lot more chaos than the brutality shown by the previous government and experienced political turmoil, a more severe state of security and life to the extent that they have to escape only to become much humiliated refugees, to leave behind their home countries that already have a wealth of natural resources, only to become beggars in foreign lands, to the point that the Arab world does not welcome their own allies of the same faith and religion. For people who stay behind in the country, they are either fighting among themselves or waiting for death, starvation and outbreak to befall them.

The relationship between the government and its people with Zionist countries has also become the benchmark in terms of receiving the fate from the Arab Spring and their degree of extremity. Any countries that acknowledge the forbidden land of Israel and establish all forms of relationship between the government and the people are the safest. The second degree is that the countries with secret affairs with Israel will also be safe. Countries that reject Israel or in the case where the people reject Israel openly, or not receiving peace treaty with the forbidden land will surely expect the inevitable fall.

Iran, the non-Arab neighbouring country under Syahan Syah also received the impact when regarded as a very close friend of a Muslim country following its very close relationship with Israel and the West, had been able to

send the largest number of people to perform Hajj. As it is today, Iran currently called the Republic of Islam after the Islamic revolution was regarded as a deviant enemy, even called Majusi after it cut its ties with Israel, and it made necessary preparation to face Israel's attacks after Iran declared Israel a forbidden country, although it also asked other Arab and Muslim countries to fight against Israel together. The people of Iran were forbidden to perform Hajj in Mecca, and they were only qualified to enter the Quran-recital musabaqah and become the member of OIC only.

The fruit yielded from the Arab Spring was more nauseous to the mind and intoxicating one's sanity, and further destructed the self-integrity of an Ummah. A lot of countries have been involved in creating violence, whether in terms of giving access to weapons, sending fighters, and money to assassinate, at the expense of truth. Some did it openly, some were more discreet. The media jumbled, and confused the information and understanding in the new borderless media, where they either spread truth or lies to the whole world. Even worse, there is a possibility from the information cited through photo recording that there is Israel's direct involvement in giving supplies and treatment for a cause named jihad. This is seen from the political angle.

From the most heated side of religion, a fatwa was issued from the scholars in their respective countries, where the argument is that the Sunni Sect is made compulsory to fight against Syiah, and vice versa. Some had raised the issue of takfiri (placing one as infidel) due to the existence of khurafat related to aqidah or towards ignorant people whose secular ideology rejected the laws of Allah. There are ummah who have long been drowned in ignorance despite following their own sects, or religion-blind since the colonial era, although they all still performed prayer and fulfill basic Islamic obligations, yet they still do a lot of acts of khurafat which are non-existent in all sects.

All these groups are among the Sunni and Syiah, and they have become the target of punishing weaponry. There, they have the officially endorsed scholars or mock scholars who rise to hear the war drums of the Sunni and Syiah beaten by the leaders of their respective countries that have no such sects. The religion of the leaders is only evident during official celebrations or in the crowds of their people. When with the devils in or outside the country, the

religion will take the backseat. All tend to become this fuel that is being ignited. The difference between the Sunni and Syiah in the past had brought them together with Khulafa' Rasyidin and the condemnation upon Umar's assassin (Umar was Rasulullah S.A.W.'s father in law), Uthman (Rasulullah S.A.W's son in law), Ali (closest family and son in law), Hasan and Husain (both were Rasulullah S.A.W) Radhiyallahu 'Anhum's grandsons.

The religious scholars of both parties in the early times formed solidarity and unity. Noble fighters or *syuhada* were those who started it all and together fought against ruthless rulers in their respective era of Umayyah and Abbasiyyah. Together, the Sunni and Syiah scholars had mourned and condemned the assassination of Husain, the beloved grandson of Rasulullah S.A.W. known as the Head of the Youth in Heaven who were killed and syahid in Karbala. Imam Abu Hanifah was imprisoned because he was with Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq. Imam Syafie was also punished with Imam Zaid due to his opposition towards the Caliph in his era, showing how the Sunni and Syiah can unite under one Al-Quran and one Prophetic Sunnah with one direction heading towards Kaabah in all affairs. Possibly, the world today has changed, the qiblat of the prayers is different and that of the politics and economy is also different. Earlier on, despite the confusion of thoughts and those who ruined them, they remain to be an internal problem to Muslims and it does not stop Islamic teaching to be disseminated to the rest of the world. Together fighting against the enemies, forgetting about the difference of race and sects, even with states that have various sects, however deviant or wrong, they do not allow the intervention of outside parties, let alone to invite them.

The first Arab Spring (1916 Arab Revolution) that opposed to the brutality of the Turks, who had invited their enemies as guests who appeared to have been honest about fighting against cruelty, supported the change of Caliph to the point that they received bands of army and built a base. Finally, it overshadowed the Khilafah and destroyed the entire Arab world although it sank in the wealth and luxury under the shadow of Kaabah- it means that it is now reaching its 100th year this year (2016). Will this second Arab Spring that fought cruelty among the Arabs create anything great to the Muslim world after the failed catastrophe of the previous Arab Spring? In Malaysia there is no season named 'spring', there are only rainy and draught seasons. So, don't

create this non-existent season *here*. Wait and istiqamah with Islam, you will be safe and secure; without Islam, one is nothing but condemned.

“This is our solution”

PAS PRESIDENT, ABDUL HADI AWANG

11 Muharam 1438H / 12 October 2016M

OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM PAS PRESIDENT, ABDUL HADI AWANG REGARDING THE 'ARAB SPRING' AND ITS LESSON FOR MALAYSIA (ORIGINAL TEXT IN MALAY LANGUAGE)

IKTIBAR ARAB SPRING: POLITIK MATANG DAN SEJAHTERA

Seluruh dunia termasuk rakyat Malaysia yang tidak ada musim bernama 'spring' juga berminat dengannya. Musim yang dibandingkan dengan perkembangan politik dunia Arab yang diharapkan berbuah yang lazat dan menyegarkan, tiba-tiba buahnya berulat dan beracun, membunuh mangsanya lebih dahsyat daripada wabak penyakit biasa yang meragut mangsanya tanpa batas. Banyak darah yang mengalir, korban yang gugur, menjadi pelarian melarikan diri dan yang menunggu giliran. Sebenarnya peristiwa seperti ini pernah berlaku di awal abad yang lalu, mereka namakan Revolusi Agung Bangsa Arab pada tahun 1916. Kini telah berlalu seratus tahun peristiwanya. Apakah iktibarnya? Revolusi Arab Spring yang pertama berlaku apabila Syarif Husain, Raja Wilayah Hijaz (Mekah, Madinah, Ta'if, Jeddah dan sekitarnya) dibawah Khilafah Uthmaniyyah memulakan tembakan pertama di Mekah sebelum subuh pada tanggal 9 Syaaban 1334H bersamaan 2 Jun 1916, mengisytiharkan Thaurah 'Arabiyyah Kubra (Revolusi Agung Bangsa Arab) terhadap kerajaan Turki Uthmaniyyah yang berlaku zalim kerana mengalami kelemahan di era keuzurannya menyertai Perang Dunia Pertama dan dikepung oleh Eropah dan Rusia.

Revolusi dicetuskan dengan penuh semangat bersama dokongan negara musuh yang diketuai British menyokong supaya Arab diselamatkan daripada Turki dan menukar Khalifah Islam kepada bangsa Arab, dan calonnya ialah Syarif Husain yang berpusat di Mekah (dikira pilihan yang dapat menarik Islam dan Arab). Golongan Nasionalis Arab dan kumpulan Islam yang buta politik menyokong dengan penuh semangat bersama senjata yang dibekalkan daripada negara yang sedang berperang menentang Turki Uthmaniyyah di Eropah, seterusnya dihantar penasihat mereka seperti Lawrence dan lain-lain.

Akhinya gerakan ini berjaya menjatuhkan Khilafah Turki Uthmaniyyah. Tiba-tiba, Raja Abdul Aziz Ibnu Saud bersama gerakan Wahabinya (Salafi) akhirnya sekadar menjadi raja negara baru yang dinamakan Arab Saudi setelah

berjaya menggulingkan Ibnu Rasyid, pemerintah Riyadh yang bernaung dibawah Khilafah Uthmaniyyah yang tidak bermazhab Wahabi. Seterusnya, Syarif Husain dan anak-anaknya dihalau oleh Ibnu Saud daripada negara Hijaz yang dihapuskan, kerana pihak British yang diharapkannya tidak membantunya lagi bagi menentang Ibnu Saud walaupun dia mencabar menarik diri daripada menjadi calon Khalifah yang dijanjikan sokongannya. Lalu putera-putera Syarif Husain di dokong menjadi raja-raja. Putera Faisal dilantik menjadi Raja Syria dan Putera Abdullah menjadi Raja Iraq. Apabila pihak Perancis yang mendapat bahagian Syria dan Lubnan dalam Perjanjian Sykes-Picot menolaknya, maka Faisal dipindah menjadi Raja Iraq, lalu dibentuk negara baru bernama Jordan bagi dilantik Abdullah bin Syarif Husin menjadi rajanya dengan mengambil sebahagian daripada Syria dan Tebing Barat. Adapun Israel wajib diwujudkan mengikut Perjanjian Balfour yang berasingan daripada Arab. Pemimpin-pemimpin lain yang bersama menentang Uthmaniyyah mendapat bahagian masing-masing. Syiah Iran diperkasakan Syahnya menjadi Syahan Syah negara Iran, Yaman diteruskan Imam (raja) daripada kalangan Syiah Zaidiyyah. Agendanya ialah negara yang bersatu kepada berbagai negara qabilah, mazhab dan ideologi yang menjadi bom jangka meneruskan pecah dan perintah.

Adapun Arab Spring mutakhir terkini bermula di akhir tahun 2010, apabila pemuda bernama Mohamed Bouazizi di Tunisia membakar diri kerana menganggur. Akhirnya mencetuskan kebangkitan Arab menentang diktator di negara masing-masing di atas nama demokrasi dan pilihanraya bersih, menentang penyelewengan rasuah dan lain-lain, dengan sokongan daripada negara-negara besar yang mendokongnya. Arab Spring berakhir dengan kejatuhan Presiden Tunisia, Mesir, Libya dan Yaman, seterusnya terbakar di Syria dan huru-hara di kebanyakan negara Arab.

Muhasabah yang bijak, ikhlas dan adil hendaklah difikirkan, mengapa gelombang boleh berlaku seperti berulang dengan natijah yang memusnahkan dan boleh menenggelamkan mangsanya ke dalam bumi sejarah. Contoh masih paling panas ialah Syria yang menjadi medan perlumbaan paling sengit dikalangan kuasa besar perlu difahami. Adakah negara Barat yang mahu menjatuhkan Basyar Asad itu sangat ikhlas bersama kumpulan Islam yang

sedang bersemangat mengisytiharkan jihad di bumi Syria sangat ikhlas membantu jihadnya?

Begitu juga negara yang membantu sengitnya peperangan, ditambah pula dengan Yaman, adakah kerana kerana Sunni dan Syiahnya atau demokrasi dan adiknya? Sebenarnya negara yang berusaha menjatuhkan Basyar Asad juga tidak akan memberi kemenangan kepada Islam yang dikira dapat menegakkan negara Islam yang sebenar, mengembalikan negara Islam yang berdaulat dan adil serta menjadi ancaman kepada mereka, khususnya Zionis-Israel yang menguasai politik negara kuasa besar, lebih khususnya Amerika dan sekutunya yang bernafsu menjadi kuasa besar tunggal. Israel juga bercita-cita menjadi pusat kuasa besar dunia selepasnya. Semua calon ketua negara tersebut, terkini di US berlumba untuk mendapat sokongan Zionis dalam setiap Pilihanraya Umum.

Maka negara Arab yang gelombang Arab Springnya berjaya menjatuhkan kerajaan masing-masing, menjadikannya lebih huru-hara daripada kezaliman kerajaan sebelumnya serta mengalami kesukaran huru-hara politik, keselamatan dan seluruh kehidupan yang lebih parah sehingga memaksa yang dapat berlari terpaksa melarikan diri menjadi pelarian yang hina, meninggalkan negara yang kaya hasil buminya, menjadi peminta sedekah di negara lain, sehingga negara Arab sendiri tidak menerima sahabat seagama dan sebangsa dengan mereka. Atau yang berada di dalam tanah airnya pula berperang sesama sendiri atau menunggu kematian, kelaparan dan wabak.

Hubungan kerajaan dan rakyatnya dengan negara Zionis juga menjadi ukuran menerima nasib daripada Arab Spring dan suhu kepanasannya. Mana-mana negara yang mengiktiraf negara haram Israel serta mengadakan segala hubungan di antara kerajaan dan rakyat adalah paling selamat. Taraf keduanya ialah negara yang mengadakan hubungan asmara atau hubungan secara rahsia dengan Israel juga selamat. Adapun negara yang menolak Israel atau gelombang rakyatnya menolak Israel secara terbuka, atau tidak menerima hubungan dan perjanjian damai dengan negara haram itu pasti menerima nasibnya ditumbangkan.

Iran negara jiran bukan Arab dibawah Syahan Syahnya dahulu juga menerima tempasnya, ketika dianggap negara Islam sahabat yang akrab kerana hubungan yang semangat akrab dengan negara Israel dan Barat, maka aman tanpa gangguan dapat menunaikan haji paling ramai jumlahnya. Ada pun Iran kini, yang dinamakan Republik Islam selepas Revolusi Islamnya dianggap musuh yang sesat bahkan ada yang menamakannya Majusi selepas memutuskan hubungan dengan Israel, serta membuat persediaan menghadapi serangan Israel kerana mengisytiharkannya (Israel) negara haram, walaupun mengajak negara Arab dan Islam bersama menentang Israel itu. Rakyat Iran diharamkan hajinya ke Makkah, hanya layak menyertai musabaqah bacaan Al-Quran dan anggota OIC sahaja.

Kini buah yang dihasilkan daripada Arab Spring lebih meloyakan akal dan mungkin memabukkan fikiran yang waras, seterusnya boleh mematikan jati diri Ummah. Banyak negara yang terlibat mencetuskan keganasan sama ada memberi kemudahan senjata, menghantar pejuang dan duit yang dibelanjakan kerana membunuh di atas nama menegakkan kebenaran. Ada yang melakukan secara terbuka, ada yang membaling batu sembunyi tangan. Pihak media pula mencelarukan maklumat dan kefahaman dalam media baru tanpa sempadan, sama ada menyebarkan kebenaran atau pembohongan ke seluruh ufuk dunia. Lebih parah lagi, sekiranya benar maklumat yang dipetik secara rakaman bergambar adanya penglibatan Israel secara langsung memberi kemudahan bekalan dan rawatan kepada perjuangan yang dinamakan jihad. Inilah kalau dilihat daripada sudut politik.

Ada pun sudut agama paling hangat, dikeluarkan fatwa daripada kalangan ulama di negara masing-masing, hujahnya ialah Mazhab Sunni yang wajib melawan Syiah dan di pihak Syiah pula wajib melawan Sunni. Ada juga yang membawa isu takfiri (mengkafirkan) kerana adanya perkara khurafat yang dikaitkan dengan aqidah atau terhadap yang tidak peduli agama pula kerana sekular ideologinya menolak Syariat Allah. Ada pun ummah yang sudah lama tenggelam di dalam kejahilannya walaupun beramal dengan agama mengikut mazhab masing-masing atau buta agama sejak zaman penjajah, walaupun semuanya masih bersembahyang dan mengerjakan rukun Islam yang asasi, tetapi masih banyak melakukan perkara kurafat yang tidak ada dalam semua mazhab.

Semua kumpulan ini berada dalam kalangan Sunni dan Syiah, kini menjadi sasaran senjata hukum menghukum. Di sana pula ada kalangan ulama' rasmi atau ulama' jadian yang bangkit mendengar gendang perang Sunni dan Syiah yang dipalu oleh pemimpin kerajaan di negara masing-masing yang tidak ada mazhabnya Sunni dan Syiah. Para pemimpin itu agamanya di musim perayaan rasmi atau apabila bersama rakyat. Apabila bersama-sama syaitannya di dalam negara atau luar negara agamanya di belakang. Semuanya menjadi bahan bakar yang sedang dinyalakan. Perbezaan Sunni dan Syiah di zaman dahulu menjadikan semuanya bersatu bersama Khulafa' Rasyidin dan mengutuk pembunuh Umar (mertua Rasulullah S.A.W.), Uthman (menantu Rasulullah S.A.W), Ali (keluarga terdekat dan menantunya pula), Hasan dan Husain (kedua-duanya cucu Rasulullah S.A.W) Radhiyallahu 'Anhum.

Para ulama' kedua belah pihak di zaman awal selepasnya bersaudara dan bersama. Memulakan semuanya adalah para syuhada yang mulia dan bersama menentang pemerintah zalim di zaman masing-masing di era Umayyah dan Abbasiyyah. Menjadi sepakat Ulama' Sunni dan Syiah bersedih dan mengutuk pembunuhan Husain, cucu kesayangan Rasulullah S.A.W. yang disebut Penghulu Pemuda di Syurga yang dibunuh syahid di Karbala. Imam Abu Hanifah di penjara kerana bersama Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq. Imam Syafie diheret bersama Imam Zaid kerana menentang kezaliman khalifah zamannya, menunjukkan betapa Sunni dan Syiah boleh bersatu dengan satu Al-Quran dan satu Sunnah Rasul serta satu kiblatnya ke arah Kaabah dalam semua urusan. Barangkali, zaman terkini sudah berubah, kiblat sembahyangnya lain dan kiblat politik dan ekonominya lain pula. Di zaman awal, walaupun adanya kecelaruan pemikiran dan ada yang merosakkan selepasnya, namun tetap hanya menjadi masalah dalaman umat Islam yang tidak menghalang dakwah Islam ke seluruh pelosok dunia. Bersatu menentang musuh bersama, melupakan perbezaan kaum dan mazhab, bahkan ada negeri yang bergilir mazhabnya, walaupun salah dan sesat, namun mereka tidak mengizinkan campur tangan pihak luar, jauh sekali menjemputnya.

Arab Spring Pertama (Revolusi Arab 1916) yang menentang kezaliman Turki, menjemput musuh menjadi tetamu yang dikatakan ikhlas menentang kezaliman, menyokong pertukaran Khalifah sehingga menerima bala tentera

dan membina pangkalan. Akhirnya, melenyapkan Khilafah dan menjadikan dunia Arab berkecai walaupun tenggelam dalam kekayaan dan kemewahan di bawah bayangan Kaabah, bermakna kini genap seratus tahun pada tahun ini (2016). Apakah Arab Spring kali kedua ini yang menentang kezaliman sesama Arab akan menimbulkan apa-apa yang besar kepada dunia Islam setelah ditimpa bencana Arab Spring yang tidak menjadi dahulu? Di Malaysia tiada musim bernama 'spring', yang ada hanya musim hujan dan kemarau. Maka jangan ciptakan musim yang tidak ada di sini. Tunggu dan beristiqamah bersama Islam, nescaya selamat, adapun tanpa Islamnya menjadi laknat.

“Inilah Penyelesaian Kita”

PAS PRESIDENT, ABDUL HADI AWANG

11 Muharam 1438H / 12 Oktober 2016M

APPENDIX D

Print Screen of Media Coverage on the 'Malaysian Spring' Polemics



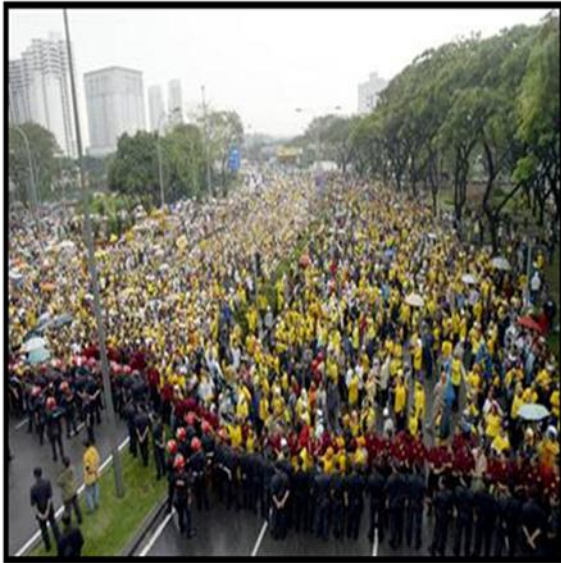
- (1) The Guardian (British daily newspaper) coverage on Bersih 2.0 in 2011. (July 2011)
Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/08/malaysia-democracy-street-protests>
(2) Story of the Malaysian Spring polemics by The Guardian. (November 2011)
Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/08/malaysia-democracy-street-protests>



- (3) The Malay Mail (Malaysian Daily Newspaper) coverage on Bersih 4.0 in 2015. (September 2015)
Source: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/clamp-down-on-rallies-would-lead-to-arab-spring-in-malaysia-group-warns>
(4) The same coverage by TodayOnline.Com. (September 2015)
Source: <http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/restricting-speech-will-bring-arab-spring-malaysia-amnesty-international>

APPENDIX E

Selected Pictures of Bersih Protests in Malaysia



(1) Bersih 3.0 Protest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (April 2012)

(2) PAS President, Abdul Hadi Awang with former PAS Secretary General, Nasharudin Mat Isa during Bersih 3.0 Protest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (April 2012)

Source: Field research 2016



(3) Protesters during the Bersih 4.0 Protest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (August 2015)

(4) Some protesters with Malaysian flag during the Bersih 4.0 in 2015.

Source: Field research 2016



(5) Protesters during the Bersih 4.0 Protest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (August 2015)
Source: Field research 2016



(5) AMANAH General Advisor and former president of the Malaysian Ulama Society, Ahmad Awang with Bersih 5.0 Protesters. (August 2015)
Source: Field research 2016

APPENDIX F

Selected Media Coverage on Bersih, 'Arab Spring' and Government and Islamist Reaction



(1) Najib Razak (Malaysian PM) responds on Bersih and 'Malaysian Spring' polemics. (November 2016).
Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/363137>

(2) Mohamad Sabu (Amanah President) denies any connection between Bersih and the Arab Uprisings. (October 2016). Source: <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/2003612>



APPENDIX G

Selected Pictures of PAS Delegation's Visit to Ennahda Headquarters in Tunisia in February 2015



(1) PAS President, Abdul Hadi Awang (in the middle) as an invited speaker at a special event with Ennahda MPs during the visit. (February 2015)

(2) PAS delegation with Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi at Ennahda headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia.
Source: Field research 2016



(3) Discussion between Rached Ghannouchi and Abdul Hadi Awang during the visit to Tunisia, Tunisia. (February 2015)

(4) Abdul Hadi Awang handing a gift to Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi.
Source: Field research 2016

APPENDIX H

Selected Pictures of Ennahda Delegation's Visit to PAS Headquarters in Malaysia in July 2017



(1) Casual moment between Rached Ghannouchi and Abdul Hadi Awang during Ennahda's visit to PAS headquarter in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (July 2017)
(2) Abdul Hadi Awang receiving a gift from Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi.
Source: Field research 2016



APPENDIX I

Selected Pictures of Pro-Morsi Protest by ISMA in Kuala Lumpur in July 2013



- (1) ISMA activists gathered on the main streets of Kuala Lumpur to express solidarity with former Egyptian president, Mohammed Morsi who was overthrown by a military coup. (July 2013)
- (2) Speech by Ibrahim Hassan, ISMA youth leader during the demonstration. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (July 2013)

Source: Field research 2016.



APPENDIX J

Selected Pictures of ABIM and AMANAH Meetings with Ghannouchi



(1) Former ABIM President, Ahmad Azzam Abdul Rahman (two from left) and the ABIM delegation (Dr Mohammad Nor Monutty, three from right; Dr Siddiq Fadzil, two from right) with Ghannouchi and Ennahda members (year and location unknown).

(2) Strategic director of AMANAH, Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad (in the middle), along with a delegation of Malaysian opposition MPs, Dr Syed Azman (left), Nurul Izzah Anwar (right) and Kamaruddin Jaafar (two from right) with Rached Ghannouchi during Ennahda's 10th Party Congress in Tunis, Tunisia. (May 2016)
Source: Field research 2016



APPENDIX K

Selected Pictures of the Researcher's Fieldwork in Tunisia



(1) Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi and the researcher at the Ennahda headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia. (January 2018)

(2) The researcher in front of the Ennahda headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia. (January 2018)
Source: Field research 2018





(3) Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis, Tunisia. During the Jasmine Revolution, millions of Tunisians gathered here to demand the immediate resignation of Ben Ali. (January 2018)

(4) The Tunisian Parliament in Le Bardo, Tunisia. (January 2018)

Source: Field research 2018

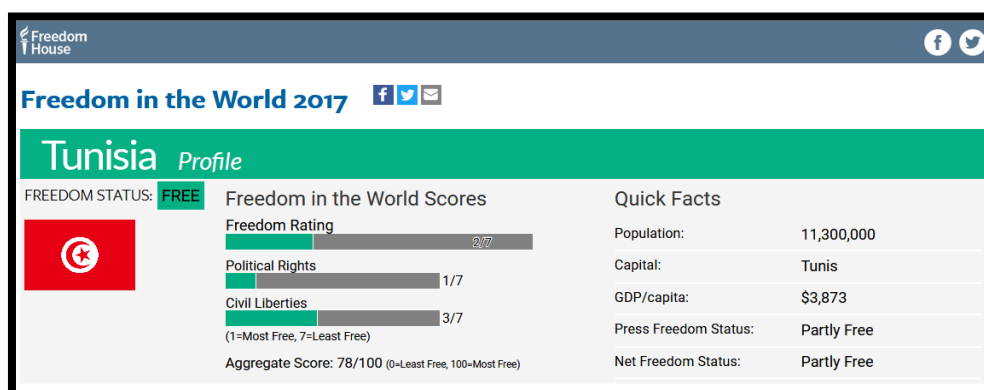


APPENDIX L

Summary of Freedom House Report (2017) for Malaysia and Tunisia



(1) 'Freedom in Malaysia' in 2017- Summary of report by Freedom House.
 Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/malaysia>



(2) 'Freedom in Tunisia' in 2017- Summary of report by Freedom House.
 Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/tunisia>

