



THE EVOLUTION OF MADANI

How Is 2.0 Different from 1.0?

Mohd Faizal Musa

TRENDS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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FOREWORD

The economic, political, strategic and cultural dynamism in Southeast Asia has gained added relevance in recent years with the spectacular rise of giant economies in East and South Asia. This has drawn greater attention to the region and to the enhanced role it now plays in international relations and global economics.

The sustained effort made by Southeast Asian nations since 1967 towards a peaceful and gradual integration of their economies has had indubitable success, and perhaps as a consequence of this, most of these countries are undergoing deep political and social changes domestically and are constructing innovative solutions to meet new international challenges. Big Power tensions continue to be played out in the neighbourhood despite the tradition of neutrality exercised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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The Evolution of Madani: How Is 2.0 Different from 1.0?

By Mohd Faizal Musa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 1995, then Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim introduced “Masyarakat Madani” as his proposed economic framework for Malaysia. The term was heavily debated among scholars and politicians across all parties and ideologies. It was often argued that Madani was an effort to limit the rise of political Islam.
- Following Anwar Ibrahim’s dismissal from government in 1998, Madani came to be more narrowly redefined as “civil society”. However, Anwar’s supporters, known as the “Anwarinas”, strove to keep the spirit of Madani alive and continued to promote its ideals of social justice, democratic values and inclusivity. They were encouraged further by the fall of Barisan Nasional from federal power in the 14th General Election in 2018.
- After Anwar Ibrahim became Malaysia’s tenth Prime Minister in 2022, he reintroduced Madani as a framework for the country, to be implemented in various sectors. Anwar Ibrahim likely received help from scholars such as Ziauddin Sardar, as reflected in his election manifesto, Script for a Better Malaysia. This time around, the core component of Madani is Maqasid Al-Shariah, or the higher objectives of sharia.
- In that sense, Madani is now arguably more an expression of what may be called post-Islamism. For it to succeed, however, it will have to counteract the growing power of the conservatives and Islamists. This may be an uphill battle, given that a key component party of the unity government—UMNO—is facing several allegations of corruption.

The Evolution of Madani: How Is 2.0 Different from 1.0?

By Mohd Faizal Musa¹

INTRODUCTION

The term “Madani” was introduced on 26 September 1995 by Anwar Ibrahim when he spoke of “Masyarakat Madani” (Madani Society) during the Istiqlal Festival, an Islamic cultural event held in Jakarta, Indonesia. In his speech entitled “Islam and the Establishment of Civil Society”, Anwar emphasized that Islam introduced humankind “to the ideals of social justice and the establishment of civil society that is a democratic civil society” (Anisma 2019, pp. 147–48).² This was the core principle around which Anwar conceptualized Masyarakat Madani.

¹ Mohd Faizal Musa is Visiting Fellow at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore and Research Fellow at the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization, National University of Malaysia (UKM). He also contributes to the Global Shi’a Diaspora, Project on Shi’ism and Global Affairs at Harvard Divinity School.

² There is a claim that Anwar first looked into Madani when he was a student at the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), an elite school for Malay boys. It was claimed that a sense of idealism about society had been instilled in students through school clubs like Badan Revolusi Ugama (BRU) and Kelab MaraMunJangan (Mara Ke Hadapan Mundur Jangan). Alongside Anwar, some notable figures involved in these clubs were the late Sanusi Junid, Fauzi Abdul Rahman and Yahya Ahmad. Later, this vision of society—although not yet termed “Madani”—was expanded through Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, ABIM) with the help of the late Parti Se-Islam Malaysia (PAS) President Fadzil Noor and ABIM leaders Ni’amat Yusoff and Razali Nawawi (Zairudin Hashim 2023).

One of the key elements of Masyarakat Madani was the importance of freedom of thought. Anwar believed that “freedom of thought should definitely be a prerequisite to successfully deal with the challenges of globalization” (Anwar Ibrahim 1997, p. 8). However, despite the emphasis on freedom of thought, and in the mould of his mentor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, he emphasized that “we do not need to be secular in order to succeed” (ibid., pp. 8–9).³ From his perspective, secularism—which focused on more worldly matters such as freedom of thought—should not overpower the spiritual aspect of life, which Madani would provide.

Another key element was Islam’s emphasis on social justice. Anwar emphasized that “Islam was the first to introduce the ideal of social justice and the development of Masyarakat Madani or a democratic civil society” (ibid., p. 9).⁴ However, he reminded the audience that despite the arrival of Islam, the Malay rulers and religious authorities continued to neglect and violate the rights of individuals. This was well documented by Abdullah Munshi in his writings and by *Sejarah Melayu* (ibid., p. 10). The purpose of Madani as a moral principle was, therefore, to ensure citizen rights and transparency, and prevent corruption, extremism, terrorism, poverty, injustice, intellectual depletion, social depravity, wealth inequality and authoritarianism. To achieve this, the *ummah* had to examine their own internal conscience before achieving outward justice (ibid., pp. 10–11).

Finally, Anwar stressed that moderation and pragmatism were important criteria for achieving Madani. Aided by modern democracy and *Fiqh Awlawiyyat*,⁵ these two criteria would inculcate in the *ummah*

³ Al-Attas played an influential role in shaping Anwar’s Islamization project in the 1980s and 1990s (Mohd Faizal Musa 2021).

⁴ However, this ignores the rich history of the Majapahit and Srivijaya empires which were not Muslim, but which nevertheless introduced important values to the archipelago.

⁵ This refers to the principle of having a proper understanding of priorities, or “placing every matter accordingly to its proper hierarchy with justice” (Mohammad Rizhan 2021).

the values of tolerance, multiculturalism, and reciprocity (ibid., p. 12). In summary, Anwar stated that the core values of Masyarakat Madani were morality, justice, equality and dialogue (ibid., p. 13).

This paper analyses Madani when it was first introduced by Anwar in 1995, and the reception it received from politicians, activists and academicians. While it served as a counterbalance to political Islam at the time, the term was eventually diluted and came to be more narrowly redefined as “civil society” after Anwar was dismissed from government in 1998. However, when the term was reintroduced after he became Prime Minister in 2022, its focus shifted to Maqasid Al-Shariah (Higher Objectives of Shariah), with an emphasis on inclusivity and the ideals of democracy.

MADANI 1.0: FROM POLITICAL ISLAM TO CIVIL SOCIETY (1995–98)

On 27 October 1995, Anwar, then Finance Minister, presented the budget to the Ninth Malaysian Parliament. This was the instance when he officially introduced Malaysians to Malaysia Madani.

At first mention, it was difficult to comprehend because of Anwar’s flair in speaking Malay. However, in essence, Anwar stated that Malaysia’s pursuit of economic growth and development should strike a balance between material targets on the one hand and human dignity, freedom and benevolence on the other. The aim was to create a true civil society that would earn Malaysia global respect (Anwar Ibrahim 1995, pp. 61–64).⁶

⁶ In the original Malay: “Demikianlah falsafah pembangunan negara, ia bukan berasaskan kebendaan atau maddiyah semata-mata. Tetapi aspek kebendaan ini sekalipun, tidak kita pandang enteng, kerana kalau negara mufis, rakyat masghul dan melarat, hutang keliling pinggang, pengurusan ekonomi caca merba, cita-cita menjadi khayalan. Tetapi kenyataan sebenar ialah pembangunan Malaysia merangkumi cita-cita murni, mengangkat martabat insan, mengisbatkan kebebasan, mencabut dan membasmi keonaran di tengah-tengah masyarakat, mencerminkan ketinggian akal budi. Inilah yang kita maksudkan dengan

This led to various responses from Parliament. For instance, Lim Kit Siang, then the Leader of Opposition, interpreted Masyarakat Madani as “civil society”, referring to it as Anwar’s pet subject. Kit Siang further explained that it was “a framework for a continuous battle against the abuse of power, corruption, and moral decay”. However, despite their seeming support for it, the Opposition criticized the concept as mere rhetoric from the government of the day, disabled by contradictions especially in terms of its stand on human rights, racism, corruption and distribution of wealth (Lim Kit Siang 1995, p. 43).

Despite its Islamic foundation, PAS (which was a party in the opposition) was strongly against the framework, and this was in line with their argument that the Barisan Nasional (BN) at the time had not only failed to implement an Islamic economy and continued to practise *riba*⁷ or usury by making a profit in trade and business through unjust and exploitative means. Abdul Hadi even declared Madani a failure because it adopted a “Western mould” (Ratna Roshida 2023). He emphasized that the first Madani society to exist was the one that existed during the time of Prophet Muhammad, and therefore was the only genuine form of Madani, unlike Anwar’s vision. Furthermore, it rejected usury as a source of income. In contrast, Malaysia’s economic system, inherited from the British, was oppressive in nature (Abdul Hadi 1995).⁷ He further claimed that Madani was based on materialism (or on *fikrah maddiyah*), was not in line with the sharia, and was corrupt and sinful (ibid).⁸

pembinaan masyarakat madani. Watak inilah yang memungkinkan Malaysia menjadi suara dhamir, hati nurani masyarakat terpinggir dan masyarakat tertindas di dunia”.

⁷ In the original Malay: “inilah masyarakat madani yang dibentuk melalui sistem ekonomi yang menghapuskan segala bentuk penindasan. Kita perlu menyedari betapa penjajah ekonomi melalui riba bukan sahaja menjadi penyakit di peringkat nasional, bahkan menjadi penyakit di peringkat internasional yang dilakukan oleh megara-negara kaya, negara-negara maju terhadap negeri-negara miskin”.

⁸ In the original Malay: “Fikrah maddiyah menyebabkan diputuskan hubungan ekonomi dengan Islam, timbulnya rasa bongkak sehingga tidak merasa ianya

However, PAS had changed its tone by the time Anwar again spoke about Madani; this was during his budget presentation in 1996. Ibrahim Mahmood, then Member of Parliament (MP) for Kuala Krai, admitted to PAS' acceptance of the framework, saying that they gave "full support" to it (1996, p. 54).⁹ The MP also recognized the Islamic aspect of Madani as explained by Anwar, saying that the concept is derived from Islam as *ad-din* or "a way of life".

In fact, any discussion on Madani cannot escape a discussion on Islam. For example, during the Konvensyen Masyarakat Madani (Masyarakat Madani Convention) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia, UKM) held on 19–21 September 1996, seventeen academic papers were presented, which discussed Islam as a core element moulding Anwar's vision of Madani. The renowned scholars who were invited—many of whom were affiliated with ABIM—included Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Siddiq Fadhil, Osman Bakar, Mohd Kamal Hassan, and Azizan Baharuddin.¹⁰

bergantung dengan perkara rezeki. Seterusnya boleh menyebabkan manusia ekonomi melakukan apa sahaja tanpa batas-batas syariah, mencari harta secara melakukan dosa besar, seperti riba', merasuah pihak yang berkenaan, menipu dan lain-lain. Melahirkan rasa bakhil untuk mengeluarkan zakat sabilillah, sedekah dan lain-lain, bahkan sumbangan itu kalau dilakukan masih lagi mempunyai tujuan maddiyah yang dijangka memberi pulangan kebendaan daripada iklan secara budi pekerti yang dilakukan kepada masyarakat melalui Akhbar dan lain-lain". Even until 2015, Abdul Hadi stood by his position on Madani, saying that Ibn Khaldun was the first person to lay out a genuine framework of Masyarakat Madani (Abdul Hadi Awang 2015, pp. 76–77).

⁹ In the original Malay: "konsep masyarakat majmuk madani sekali lagi diperkenalkan oleh Yang Amat Berhormat Menteri Kewangan, Ketika perbentangan Belanjawan Negara baru-baru ini. Di antara ciri-ciri masyarakat madani yang digariskan adalah masyarakat yang didorong oleh kebebasan, kekuatan moral dan sifat terpuji. Kami menyokong penuh gagasan masyarakat madani yang dikemukakan oleh Yang Amat Berhormat Menteri Kewangan...".

¹⁰ I would argue that Madani as a concept was derived from ABIM's vision to Islamize the country. This can be inferred from the keynote addresses delivered by ABIM leaders during their annual meetings from 1992 to 1997. In 1992,

Most of the scholars who were present at the convention mainly discussed Madani as explained by earlier Muslim scholars and philosophers such as Ibnu Farabi (Osman Bakar 1997, pp. 53–61), Ibnu Khaldun, Muhammad Abduh, and Fahmi Huwaiidi (Siddiq Fadhil 1997, pp. 41–51). They also sought to dissociate the concept from Western concepts of civil society.

In his keynote address during the convention, Anwar Ibrahim's mentor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas said that "the word Madani does not have the same meaning as the word civil" (Al-Attas 1997, p. 16). Looking at it from a philosophical angle, Al-Attas proposed that

ABIM made it clear that Malaysia needed to achieve '*umran duniyawi* or worldly materialism as achieved by past Muslim civilizations. However, according to ABIM, such a Muslim civilization (*hadarah al-Islamiyyah*) should be one in which Islam is not just preached about, but implemented in the organization of society (ABIM 2003b, pp. 64–91). In 1994, ABIM urged the government to equip Malaysia's industrial society with humane values that looked into poverty and the accumulation of wealth among the super-rich (ABIM 2003a, pp. 114–43). In 1996, they introduced the Rahmah Concept, stating that the family unit should be nurtured with *mawaddah* (affection), *rahmah* (mercy), and *sakinah* (tranquility), and that this should be guided by the ideal of social justice (2003d, pp. 174–96). They also referred to Ibnu Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* or Prolegomenon to Islamic History, in which he states that mankind seeks balanced and equal development (2003c, pp. 197–239). Another figure associated with ABIM who spoke about Madani was Mustaffa Kamil Ayub who argued that Madani was the most realistic framework for Malaysia. According to Mustafa, the concept as introduced by Anwar as an attempt to balance Western democracy and civil rights with Islamic values (Mustaffa 2004, p. 73). Mustaffa referred to Madani as an Islamic "theodemocracy" (as introduced by Maududi) and not a theocracy. He defined theodemocracy as giving sovereignty to people without having to compromise Islam as a way of life (ibid., p. 105). He also emphasized that those who were committed to Madani should consider *Fiqh Awlawiyyat* and *Maqasid Al-Shariah* (Higher Principles of Shariah). The objectives of many Islamic legislations consist of the deeper meanings and inner aspects of wisdom considered by the Lawgiver (Allah) in areas and circumstances of legislation. These also include the general characteristics of the sharia. With these two points, Mustaffa stressed that this was the reason why *hudud* law was not recommendable at this stage (ibid., p. 98).

the root word for Madani was *deen* or “religion”—in this case Islam—thus placing emphasis on truth, knowledge, ethics, happiness (*saadah*) and accountability. He also made links between *deen* and Madinah, the city in which people elected Prophet Muhammad as their leader in 622 A.D. (ibid., p. 15). Al-Attas further emphasized that the word “Madinah” referred to *tamadun* or civilization, and more specifically, Islamic civilization. He argued that citizens needed to be humanized and morally mature to achieve an Islamic civilization. This would then lead to *saadah*, which according to him, differs from the secular idea of happiness that places emphasis on individual happiness. Furthermore, for Al-Attas, the main difference between Madani and “civil society” was that the West views tolerance as crucial to achieving justice in society, while Madani places emphasis on *hubb* or love with a reminder that God or Allah should be not depreciated. Finally, he concluded that accountability was an important characteristic of Madani society, and that this differed from secular countries in that those in the latter were accountable to their countries, while those in the former were accountable to God and themselves in addition to their countries.¹¹

Differing in tone from Al-Attas’ address, Faisal Othman’s presentation rejected the former’s position that Madani was rooted in *deen* (1997, pp. 187–96). Faisal, a progressive scholar based in UKM referred to Ibnu al Manzur, an Arabic linguist who stated that Madani had no connection to *deen*. Instead, Faisal explained that Madani referred to the state of being urban. In other words, it was a society in which there was social,

¹¹ In the original Malay: “Akhir sekali ialah soal akauntabiliti, tanggungjawab. Kita sudah pun melihat bagaimana masyarakat madani berkait dengan din, dengan keadilan, dengan diri, dengan saadah, dengan perjanjian manusia dengan Allah dan lain-lain. Begitu juga dalam soal akauntabiliti dan tanggungjawab, orang-orang Islam mempunyai dua tanggungjawab sebagai orang yang beragama. Berbeza daripada golongan secular yang hanya bertanggungjawab kepada negaranya, orang yang beragama bertanggungjawab terhadap negara, Tuhannya dan pada dirinya sendiri—kepada apa yang akan jadi pada diri kita di hari kemudian kelak” (ibid., p. 28).

educational, economic, legal, and spiritual development, supported by necessary social institutions. Opposed to this was *Badawi* or *Qurawi*, which referred to the state of being rural. Faisal also reiterated that in a Madani society, industrialization, innovation and modern technology were crucial parts of a cityscape. While Faisal did not place utmost emphasis on the centrality of Islam, he did say that Madani called for a noble society based on morality and integrity. However, Faisal's ideas were not as well-received as those who spoke about Islam or *deen* as the core of Madani.

Over the years, Madani was welcomed with both open arms and nervous excitement. The only potent argument against Anwar's Madani came from his own colleague from his ABIM days, PAS President Fadzil Mohd Noor, who was the Leader of Opposition in 2001. However, by this time, Anwar was no longer in government, following his dismissal in 1998. Nevertheless, his vision was still intact, and PAS continued to use it as a reason to criticize Mahathir's administration for not being Islamic enough, and to assert their own agenda for the founding of an Islamic state and the common application of sharia law.

According to Fadzil Nor (2001), the one who coined the term Madani was Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a Qatari-based ulama. In his book *Infiqidaulafil Islam*,¹² he stated that an Islamic state was a *daulah madaniah* or civil state. In this *daulah madaniah*, governance should be based on Islam and the Constitution should be based on sharia. Furthermore, a Madani state should be a "*daawah* state" that peacefully invites people to Islam, rather than an oppressive state that makes people fear the religion through high taxes, for example. Fadzil also referred to another scholar by the name of Sheikh Said Abu Jib who said that a civil state should have five pillars, namely; (1) sharia law, as sovereignty was the right of God, the creator of mankind (*haakimiyah*); (2) justice (*adala*); (3) solidarity of the ummah (*al-wihdah*); (4) equality (*al-musaawa*) and (5) freedom (*al-hurriyyah*); and (5) democracy (*syuraa*) (Fadzil 2001, p. 22). Thus,

¹² This roughly translates to "jurisprudence of the state".

as the leader of PAS and a proponent of an Islamic state, Fadzil said that an Islamic state and therefore a Madani state should refer to Islam as the sole source of its constitution, or, in his words, *masdar rais* (ibid., pp. 28, 36). Fadzil even cited Saudi Arabia as the role model of an Islamic state in terms of exercising the sharia (ibid., p. 38), and mentioned *hudud* law as an obligation (ibid., p. 40). Malaysia, on the other hand, had not yet completely submitted itself to Islam or the idea of an Islamic state.

In 2004, Madani was eventually replaced with Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam), propagated by Abdullah Badawi who had become prime minister the year before (Abdullah 2004). Najib Razak, Abdullah's successor, then replaced Islam Hadhari with Islam Wasatiyyah (loosely translated as "Moderate Islam") (Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan 2015). In my view, Islam Hadhari, Islam Wasatiyyah and Malaysia Madani are attempts to counteract political Islam as propagated by PAS. Conceptually, they overlapped and could be seen as an extension of former Mahathir Mohamad's policy of "Dasar Penerapan Nilai-nilai Islam" (Inculcation of Islamic Values). However, careful study of these various rhetorical attempts, and how it has been applied as policies, may lead to other conclusions.

However, while these new frameworks may have replaced Madani, people still make reference to it, although without its Islamic tone. Over the years, NGOs such as the Women's Development Collective, Aliran, Joint Action Group for Gender Equality, and People's Service Organization adopted "Masyarakat Madani" as a framework for promoting and implementing human rights. Human rights activists even branded themselves *penggiat Masyarakat Madani* (activists for a civil society) who "no longer demand[ed] their own needs but above all, [were] pursuing and claiming their rights" (Women's Development Collective 2017, p. 17). While this may have been viewed by some as a positive development, it also meant that Madani could be adopted and adapted to champion other rights such as gender and sexual diversity, which would not have been agreeable to major segments within a Muslim society.

Nevertheless, the government also used Madani to explain human rights. This was not unexpected as Anwar had in its early days used it to uplift the condition of Orang Asli (indigenous peoples) by introducing development programmes such as Orang Asli Co-operatives (Rohani

1996, p. 4). He also used it to explain civil defence and civil protection (Shahidan 2016, p. 52).

Anwar's time in prison upon his sacking from the government in 1998 was a period for him to reflect on his ideas. During this period, his conceptualization of Madani evolved and moved away from being a product of political Islam.

While Anwar served his prison sentence, ABIM lost its prime, and Madani's popularity waned. However, the "Anwarinas"—a group of progressive PAS leaders whose orientation was more aligned with Anwar's—ignited the spirit of Madani within PAS and later in Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah), an offshoot of the party.¹³

Amanah is regarded by observers as a progressive, democratic and inclusive alternative to PAS. Claiming to champion a different version of Islam, they emphasize that they are guided by the approach of the Maqasid Al-Shariah, and that they espouse the values of social justice, good governance and multicultural coexistence. This is encapsulated in their slogan, *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* (Blessings to All), which is inspired by a verse from the Qur'an: "And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds" (QS Al-Anbiya: 107). Most exegetes interpret this verse as an encapsulation of the universal values of Islam including ethics and morality, forms and systems of government,

¹³ The "Anwarinas" are sometimes referred to as "Erdogan". Among those labelled as Anwarinas are former Religious Affairs Minister Dr Mujahid Yusuf Rawa, former Health Minister Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, former Federal Territories Minister Ir Khalid Samad, and former Hulu Kelang Assembly Person, Saari Sungib. When the Anwarina bloc was defeated during PAS' party elections, they left the party and founded Amanah on 16 September 2015. All these individuals are linked to the Malay organization IKRAM, formerly known as Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM). JIM had its roots in the Islamic Representative Council which was formed in April 1974 by Malaysian students studying in the West who wanted to facilitate their affairs and form a community for themselves. JIM was founded on 27 July 1990, and evolved into IKRAM on 22 October 2009. It is regarded as equivalent to Malaysia's branch of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (Lemiere 2009; Maszlee Malik 2014; Maszlee Malik, Safwan Safarudin, and Hamidah Mat 2018).

social politics and economy, deliberation, social justice, education and intellectualism, environment and many others. Consequently, their slogan avoids “jurisprudential Islam” which places emphasis on the enforcement of moral codes and the implementation of Islamic law. Thus, as the slogan itself makes clear, *Rahmatan lil ‘Alamin* presents Islam as a religion that brings grace and prosperity to the entire universe. This is crucial, for arguably having similarities with Anwar’s Madani, and might even have been developed by the same people.

MADANI 2.0 (2022 ONWARDS)

While the first iteration of Anwar’s Madani centred around an Islamic society, a civil society, human rights, and democracy, the second iteration is quite different. His Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition emerged from the 15th General Election (GE15) in November 2022 with 82 parliamentary seats, short of the 112 seats needed for a majority. Perikatan Nasional, led by former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin, together with PAS, won 73 seats, while Barisan Nasional, led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), won 30 seats. To address the hung parliament, PH and BN joined hands to form a unity government. Through this move, Anwar thus became the tenth Prime Minister of Malaysia on 24 November 2022.

Not long after entering office, Anwar launched the second iteration of Madani entitled “Membangun Negara Madani: Visi dan Kerangka Dasar Reformasi” (Anwar Ibrahim 2022b). Even before GE15, Anwar had already launched his dream policy framework entitled “Script for a Better Malaysia” (Script) (2022a), upon which I would argue that Madani 2.0 is based. The Script mainly focuses on wealth distribution, good governance and anti-corruption, with minimal references to Islam. One instance in which it does make reference to Islam is in the administering of zakat funds:

Based on the model of Tabung Haji, a critical reform comes by way of ensuring an effective and transparent Zakat fund in each state that provides emergency support for the poor and disadvantaged. Alongside this reform we must endorse further development of

more sophisticated Islamic finance and banking to create a model for national economic institutions. We acknowledge the enormous potential of Islamic finance by reorienting it towards fulfilling Maqasid Shariah—justice grounded in the empowerment of the poor and marginalized—instead of allowing it to replicate conventional, deeply flawed, systems. To ensure we appreciate Malaysia’s real economic situation we must recalibrate the markers of economic progress to focus more on the Gini coefficient than on GDP, develop a Malaysian definition of poverty, and transform the national economic lexicon to reduce financial divisions within society and seek solutions to financial hardship. Further assistance must be provided through the establishment of scholarships and grants for the study of innovative approaches to care and compassion, especially in the fields of business, medicine, and social services (Anwar Ibrahim 2022a, p. 54).

The above passage illustrates Anwar’s attempts to utilize Maqasid Al-Shariah for a more humane approach to economic development and policies. This is in contrast to the well-known New Economic Policy (NEP) which was designed to achieve national unity through the two-pronged objectives of eradicating poverty and distributing wealth among the Malays/bumiputera. Furthermore, in addressing the well-being of citizens, Anwar used the Arabic word *Al-falah*, which has spiritual connotations.

The Malay term for prosperity, *kesejahteraan*, has no English equivalent. *Sejahtera* is equivalent to well-being; or more appropriately complete holistic well-being. The Malay conception of prosperity also draws on the historical tradition carried through the Islamic concept of *falah*—success, happiness and well-being which comes from spiritual fulfilment and self-improvement by following the commands of God. In Malaysia, the pursuit of prosperity must involve sustainable attitudes, embody care and compassion as well as respect for all others, and material growth ought to be balanced with spiritual fulfilment while encouraging continued innovation (ibid., p. 95).

Anwar also believed that the realization of trust (*amanah*)—a responsibility of Muslims—was crucial in combating corruption.

The Malay word for trust, also a borrowed word from Arabic, *amanah* is a vow of earthly, divine, and spiritual moral responsibility—the backbone that has upheld order in numerous societies throughout history and maintained one of the earliest mega trade networks, the Silk Road. *Amanah* is also the basis for free will in Islamic tradition (ibid., p. 109).

Thus, while the Script was framed as “a wholistic vision and policy framework for a viable, dynamic, and inclusive Malaysian future”, it did make light references to Islam (Malhi 2022; Shanon 2022). A close reading of the Script also reveals that Anwar might have distanced himself from the ideas of his mentor, Syed Naquib Al-Attas, and instead made more reference to the late Syed Hussein Alatas, a famous Malaysian thinker and sociologist, and Syed Naquib’s brother. Some of his works which Anwar cited include *The Problem of Corruption* (1986), *Intellectuals in Developing Societies* (1977), *Corruption and the Destiny of Asia* (1999), and *The Sociology of Corruption* (1986). Given the history between Anwar and Al-Attas, this is an important development because Syed Hussein Alatas is rarely linked to Islamism.¹⁴

Another heavily cited scholar is Ziauddin Sardar, who also co-published the Script. Sardar is now a key figure in the Muslim Institute, London and was once “Anwar’s education adviser” (Malhi 2022). From Shanon Shah’s perspective,

What sets this framework apart from many similar-sounding approaches is the devotion that is then paid to analysing

¹⁴ Other individuals Script makes reference to are Anwar Fazal, Anne Munro-Kua, and Lim Kit Siang, Confucius, Virgil, and Bhim Rao Ambedkar (Shanon 2022).

possible futures (in the plural), picking apart potential areas of “complexity”, “contradictions”, “chaos”, “simultaneity” and “futures/change”. These headings draw upon the work of Ziauddin Sardar, the editor of *Critical Muslim* as well as Director of the Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures Studies which, along with Institut Darul Ehsan, co-published SCRIPT. These futures-oriented insights then feed into a methodology for “monitoring” and engaging with or creating enabling institutions (2022).

It therefore would not be surprising if Sardar, apart from co-publishing the Script, also had a role in crafting its content. The other organization that was influential in the Script’s content was the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which has its headquarters in the United States.¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that the IIIT has strong links to American Muslim scholars Taha Jabir Al-Alwani and Ismail Al-Faruqi who were close to Anwar during his ABIM days and while he was president of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Together with Ziauddin Sardar, both Al-Alwani and Al-Faruqi were heavily involved in promoting the Islamization of knowledge (Tasnim et al. 2015, pp. 28–31).¹⁶

While it has been about seven years since Al-Alwani’s passing, Anwar continues to promote his works. For example, when the Department

¹⁵ The International Institute of Islamic Thought is as “a center of excellence in educational research and Islamic thought whose main interest is on carrying out evidence-based research in advancing education in Muslim Societies and the dissemination of this research through publication and translation, teaching, policy recommendations, and strategic engagements”. Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, it was established as a non-profit and non-denominational organization in 1981.

¹⁶ When Anwar was dismissed from government, Al-Alwani wrote a strong condemnation against Mahathir’s administration, defending Anwar (ABIM 2015). Anwar himself was fond of Al-Alwani and said during a visit to his grave that he was influenced by the latter’s determination to fight against corruption and terrorism and to promote justice, peace, equality and love.

of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and ABIM published a translation of Al-Alwani's work, Anwar was the one who launched the publication. In front of 800 attendees—mostly civil servants from JAKIM—Anwar praised Al-Alwani for his efforts to bridge differing views (Adli Effendy 2023). In his preface of the book, Anwar made references to Al-Alwani and stated how the root of political conflict among Muslim nations was rooted in egoistic thoughts and in the belief that only one nation had the right to define and champion Islam (Anwar Ibrahim 2023b).

Here, it is crucial to note that as part of his Madani framework, Anwar has called on JAKIM and religious authorities in general to play a greater role in issues concerning Islam in the country (Nur Izzati 2023). Anwar also said that religious authorities, especially in Kelantan, would be given a larger allocation of the budget to assist them in managing religious affairs and initiatives (Bernama 2023). One of these initiatives is to promote the values of Madani during the Friday sermon. For example, in the sermon distributed to all mosques on 26 May 2023, congregants were encouraged to embrace the fact that all human beings came from the same man, Prophet Adam. They were also encouraged to trust and cooperate with the current administration and to defend unity and moral values (JAKIM 2023).

Anwar's overreliance on civil servants can potentially be damaging to his reputation if he does not tread carefully. Findings from the ground suggest "that Malaysia's civil service can be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it is effective in addressing radicalization or extremism and reprimand those involved, but on the other hand, it is neutral on non-violent extremism and conservatism (Mohd Faizal Musa 2023, p. 82). There are strong evidences that the government policies on Islam in the past including Dasar Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam (Inculcation of Islamic Values Policy, introduced in 1985 by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad); Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam, introduced in 2003 by former Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi); and Islam Wasatiyyah (Moderate Islam, introduced in 2016 by former Prime Minister Najib Razak), did not address the human rights situation of certain groups and minorities.

As evident from the launch of Al-Alwani's book, ABIM has also made a comeback. For example, the appointment of Fadhlina Sidek—the daughter of ABIM's strong man the late Siddiq Fadzil—in Anwar's cabinet as Education Minister is an indication that ABIM members are still part of his close circle (Muhammad Nazreen 2023). ABIM's Vice-President Ahmad Fahmi Mohd Samsudin was also given significant air time in the media, urging Anwar's administration to come up with a humane budget (Israr 2023).

Other than ABIM, the Anwarinas have also come together to counteract political Islam. Consisting of a few members from the original JIM, and calling themselves Akademi Nunji, they have published a notable series of books covering discourses on Islam and discussing Madani.¹⁷ Although the books are not easily accessible and deal with difficult topics such as Maqasid Al-Shariah, they are important references and they lay out the framework of Madani 2.0. For example, the well-received Menu Rahmah Programme which was introduced by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living together with strategic partners such as Food Shop Operators (Cooking) and the Association of Restaurant and Food Stall Operators was actually the brainchild of Akademi Nunji.¹⁸ The programme is part of the government's efforts to reduce the cost of living for Malaysians, especially those in the B40 category. Food shop and restaurant operators who participate in the Menu Rahmah Programme have agreed to provide daily meals (either lunch or dinner) at a rate not

¹⁷ Apart from Akademi Nunji, Maszlee Malik and his wife Hamidah Mat have also written about their understanding of Madani. Maszlee and Hamidah argue that the ideal Islamic state is indeed a Madani state which is civil. Both state that the people are the source of sovereignty, and that according to Islam, there is a separation between religion and state (2023, pp. 251–56). They also emphasize that the promotion of Madani in Malaysia should be done with the guidance of *fiqh taysir*. Part of Maqasid Al-Shariah, *fiqh taysir* is a method introduced by the late Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi to ease the process of defining jurisprudential laws (ibid., pp. 181–85).

¹⁸ The Menu Rahmah Programme was welcomed by many, to the extent that supporters of former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad claimed that it was their idea (Juani 2023). Such claims were laughed at (Kim 2023).

exceeding RM5 per meal (Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Kos Sara Hidup Malaysia 2023).¹⁹

In the preface to *Islam dan Malaysia Baharu (Islam and New Malaysia)*—one of the books published by Akademi Nunji—Mujahid Yusuf Rawa emphasizes the importance of Maqasid Al-Shariah and Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin. He explains that the philosophy behind these concepts is the value of *rahmah* (mercy), which is crucial in moulding a knowledgeable and patriotic citizen, and inculcating in them a political consciousness that eschews racism and ethnic divisions and inequalities (Mujahid 2020, p. vii). In the same book, Jasser Auda, the president of Maqasid Institute Global, wrote a chapter about how Maqasid Al-Shariah is a prerequisite for a Madani state (2020, pp. 3–32).

In another book, entitled *Islam dan Pemerintahan (Islam and Governance)*, the authors discuss how Maqasid Al-Shariah can be useful to the state in protecting the rights of minorities (Panel Penyelidikan Nunji 2020, pp. 33–59). In another book entitled *Maqasid al Shari’ah dan Fiqh Kota Raya (Maqasid Al-Shariah and Urban Jurisprudence)*, former vice president of Amanah, Hasan Bahrom, discusses the rights of citizens to own their residences (2020, pp. 1–32). Finally, the most prolific writer in Akademi Nunji is Saari Sungib, former Assembly Person for Hulu Kelang in Selangor, and a well-known supporter of Anwar. He has written numerous works discussing the importance of having Maqasid Al-Shariah as the foundation of Madani. One of his books, entitled *Menggerak Misi Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin (Mobilizing the Mission of Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin)*, proposes that *rahmah* and Maqasid Al-Shariah be used as the operative framework for the Selangor state government (2020). Thus, overall, Akademi Nunji’s publications serve as a blueprint for the implementation of Madani, with Maqasid Al-Shariah as its foundation.

In order to detach himself from political Islam and promote Madani, Anwar has surrounded himself with religious scholars and clerics who

¹⁹ The dishes served in the Menu Rahmah Programme contain one source of protein (either chicken or fish), together with a serving of vegetables.

are more inclined towards Sufism, popular Salafism, progressive Islam, and traditional Sunni teachings.²⁰ These clerics and scholars speak at *Majlis Ilmu Madani* (Gathering of Civilizational Knowledge), a series of lectures hosted by Anwar at Seri Perdana, his official residence in Putrajaya. Some of the familiar names who have been featured include Dr Ali Gomaa, the former grand mufti of Egypt, Habib Umar bin Hafiz, founder and dean of the Dar al-Mustafa seminary in Tarim, Yemen, Jamal Farouk Jibreel from Egypt, Mehmet Fadil Ceylani from Turkey, Muhammad Nuruddeen Lemu from Nigeria, Ismail Menk from Zimbabwe, Muhammad Salah from the US, Wael Ibrahim from Australia, Dr Ekrima Sabri, the imam of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, Ahmed Mohamed Saad from the United Kingdom, and Muhammad Haydara Al-Jilani from Gambia. The purpose of the lecture series and the presence of these scholars are to assist Malaysians in understanding Madani and recognizing the importance of being "civilized, skilled, and inclusive, based on core values that include, respect, care and compassion, as well as trust" (Alkaff and Muhammad Haziq 2023).²¹

²⁰ As one commentary puts it, "In his vision of Malaysia Madani, he is attempting to blend aspects of Islam from Egypt's traditional scholarship, Tunisia and Turkey's nationalist-Islamism, Yemen's Hadhrami tradition and historical network, sympathy for oppressed Muslims worldwide, the teachings of popular Salafi figures, and experiences of Muslim scholars from the West and even from Africa. The campaign so far appears to have been well-received by Muslims within and outside of Malaysia" (Alkaff and Muhammad Haziq 2023).

²¹ From 20 to 25 May 2023, the Selangor government under Amirudin Shari organized a one-off festival with the same intellectual approach. However, the choices of topics and scholars were more accessible. For example, they discussed Imam Ghazali's *Ihya Ulumuddin*, which is popular among local Muslims. Other topics include *Sifat Nabi* (Prophet Muhammad's characteristics) with Baba Ismail Al-Fathoni from Southern Thailand and Dr KH Said Aqil Siradj, the former leader of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia, together with the muftis of Selangor and the Federal Territories, Dr Anhar Opir and Dr Luqman Abdullah, who are both known to be traditional Sunnis (*Selangorkini* 2023, p. 6).

Apart from the individuals listed above, Anwar also refers to his personal mentors such as Sheikh Ekrima Said Sabri, Sheikh Ahmad Mohamed Saad Maliki Al-Azhari Al-Hasani, and Sheikh Muhammad Haydara Al-Jilani as the ones who contributed to his understanding of Islam in accordance with Madani (Amree 2023).

Reflecting on PAS's gains during GE15, Anwar has expressed hope that Madani 2.0 will save Malaysia from religious bigotry (Dermawan 2023). However, Anwar's efforts have not picked up steam. For example, Majlis Ilmu Madani feels like an exclusive event for knowledge-gathering which does not reflect the interests of Malay-Muslims in rural areas. For one thing, the scholars invited to speak are hardly known among the Malays. Secondly, ordinary Muslim folk are satisfied with their basic knowledge of religion (Abdul Rashid and Saodah 2015, pp. 4–14). This means that they are comfortable with basic knowledge of jurisprudence and recitation of the Qur'an, and do not necessarily find importance in deeper discourse on issues such as Madani (Noraziahtulhidayu and Sazilah 2012).

Furthermore, such ideas and discourses have to compete with the more conservative discourses easily accessible via digital means. After decades of Islamization, Malays have become more exposed to revivalist ideas and are not open to pluralistic ideas within Islam (Norshahril and Alatas 2022). Malay youths' understanding of Islam is also strongly tied to their household incomes and level of education (Mashitah et al. 2018, pp. 383–86). Thus, initiatives such as Majlis Ilmu Madani may have little to no effect on the masses.

To complicate the matter further, Anwar has made questionable choices with regard to the preachers that he welcomes to Malaysia. For example, on 13 July 2023, he welcomed controversial Indonesian preacher Abdul Somad Batubara at his office in Putrajaya. Commonly referred to as Ustaz Abdul Somad, the preacher is controversial because of his extremist views espousing physical violence and animosity towards non-Muslims. He has been banned from a number of countries and was prevented from entering Singapore on 16 May 2022. Speaking about why authorities refused to let him in, Singapore Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law K. Shanmugam shared some of Abdul Somad's extremist views, including justifying suicide bombing, labelling

non-Muslims as infidels (a derogatory usage of *kafir*), and that Muslims should not agree to have non-Muslim leaders for fear that the latter would conspire to “slit their throats” and to oppress the Muslims (Lim 2022). The *ustaz* also believes that it is possible to establish an Islamic caliphate within a democratic system, and that *hudud* law should be enforced (A’an and Nur Syafiqah 2021, pp. 11 and 27). He also forbids Muslims from wishing Christians “Merry Christmas” and dismisses intra-faith dialogue as void (ibid., p. 27). Overall, his teachings are extremist and a threat to democracy (Singh 2022).²²

While some Muslims condemned Singapore’s actions as Islamophobic, Abdul Somad has also been barred from entering Hong Kong, Timor Leste, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for the same reasons. Yet, he was warmly welcomed to Malaysia. While it is unclear whether he was invited by Anwar, what is certain is that he was welcomed with open arms. Aside from his hour-long meeting with Anwar, Abdul Somad also made a courtesy call to Malacca Governor Mohd Ali Rustam, and even stayed on in the state to give a lecture to about 50,000 attendees (Ustadz Abdul Somad Official 2023a, 2023d; Amir Mamat 2023). On the second day of his trip, he gave a lecture at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor, where Tengku Permaisuri Hajah Norashikin, the queen consort of the Sultan of Selangor, was present (Selangor Royal Official 2023). He also visited a naval fleet in Perak, and later delivered a lecture in one of the mosques there. Finally, at the end of his trip, he gave an evening lecture at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur (Ustadz Abdul Somad Official 2023b, 2023c). It should be noted that preachers, whether foreign or local, must obtain a licence from a state’s Islamic Religious Council—which is headed by the Malay ruler—before they can preach in a given state. Thus, Abdul Somad’s presence was definitely sanctioned by top leadership.

²² It can even be argued that Abdul Somad is not a true scholar and is merely a popular preacher. See A’an and Nur Syafiqah (2021) on popular preachers in the Malaysian context.

In reflecting on his meeting with Abdul Somad, Anwar said that they “agreed on the importance of preaching about Islam in a manner that is based on moderation and wisdom” (Anwar Ibrahim 2023a). This is ironic, given Abdul Somad’s extremist views. It is unlikely that Anwar does not know about Abdul Somad’s controversial views. It is therefore puzzling that Anwar seemingly endorsed him since his views would be antithetical to Malaysia’s multi-religious society, and to Anwar’s hopes for Malaysia Madani which is meant to be more respectful and compassionate.

On the whole, Anwar once again faces challenges with Madani. While Madani 1.0 could not be fully realized because he was dismissed from the government, Madani 2.0 is hindered by the various challenges discussed above. Other major challenges include corruption, politicking, and religious bigotry. Endemic corruption in Malaysia is bound to be a challenge for Madani, and this would be an especially difficult challenge for Anwar, given that he is cooperating with UMNO—a party not unknown for corrupt practices—in government (Mohd Yusri and Aiman 2022, pp. 10–11). Nevertheless, it remains to be seen if Maqasid Al-Shariah will be the answer to the woes that Anwar and Malaysia face.

MAQASID AL-SHARIAH AND POST-ISLAMISM: THE DIFFERENTIATING FACTOR

When Anwar Ibrahim first introduced Madani in Jakarta in 1995, he explained that Madani was a civil society characterized by liberty, freedom of thought, justice, moderation and pragmatism. However, at the convention in 1997, Naquib Al-Attas, Anwar’s mentor at the time, said that Madani did not translate to “civil”. Instead, he said that it referred to *saadah* or happiness. Nevertheless, over the years, and due to the efforts of the Anwarinas, the IIIT and the Muslim Institute, Anwar’s original conceptualization of Madani was affirmed, with Maqasid Al-Shariah being its foundation, as emphasized by Mustaffa Kamil Ayub (2004, pp. 42–48, 98).

More importantly, Maqasid Al-Shariah is what differentiates Madani 1.0 from Madani 2.0. It can be further argued that the reason Madani 2.0 places so much emphasis on Maqasid Al-Shariah is because of

Anwar's turn towards post-Islamism. As discussed by Asef Bayat in the context of Egypt and Iran, post-Islamism arose as a result of the Islamists' realization that they could not achieve their utopian goals, in particular their idea of an Islamic state. The failure to achieve these goals was caused by various socio-economic changes such as a rise in literacy levels, economic growth, urbanization and globalization, all of which contributed to a growing middle class and a young generation who were more educated, politically conscious, and therefore more critical of the status quo (Bayat 2011, p. 180).

Being seen as a consequence of the failure of political Islam, post-Islamism is viewed by some as the submission of Islamist movements to the West. For example, Abdar Rahman Koya, the Chief Editor of *Malaysia Now* and a staunch critic of the unity government, attempts to make strong links between Anwar and the West. He refers to Anwar as someone who was “groomed both in Washington and by Western journalists as a voice of moderate Islam”, an “agent of change as far as the West permits”, and “the man whom Washington apparently favours to lead this Southeast Asian Muslim country”. It is claimed that Anwar, as a result of Western influence, became receptive to a surge of “‘liberal’ demands” in Malaysia, including allowing Muslim NGOs and even PAS to receive funding from Western think-tanks such as the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. Koya also argues that PAS has chosen to align itself more with Anwar, and that such submission “risks turning the only Islamic movement in the country into a Turkish-type ‘Islamist’ political party that exists mostly in the ballot-box and for little else” (2005).²³ It should be made clear that PAS then was very much influenced by the so-called Anwarinas. A different PAS emerged after the death of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, its spiritual advisor, and after the PAS General Assembly in 2015, one in which the hard-line views of Abdul Hadi Awang prevailed.

However, at least in the case of Anwar, it is not fair to judge the post-Islamists as Western agents or a product of Western influence, especially since Maqasid Al-Shariah—derived from deep knowledge of Islamic

²³ It is worth stating that Koya is not a graduate of sharia studies.

jurisprudence—is a core feature of the orientation.²⁴ Furthermore, as Bayat explains, the rise of post-Islamism is simply a political phenomenon and not a Western-made ideology.

Nader Hashemi has described Anwar as a post-Islamist, and in describing Anwar’s Script and his leadership as a post-Islamist, he explains:

In keeping with his deeply religious but modern Muslim identity, Ibrahim reinterprets Quranic verses to justify a moral commitment to environmental sustainability and fighting corruption. He universalizes the Islamic concepts of inclusion, care and compassion. He argues we should broaden our understanding of community beyond the narrow confines of one’s own religious community to include other communities. In this way, he is clearly advancing moral arguments for the equal treatment of Chinese, Indian and other Malaysian minorities who have been discriminated against by the longstanding government policies of Malay Muslim legal supremacy (2022).

Maqasid Al-Shariah is thus an important tool for Muslim reformists or post-Islamists to revisit traditional jurisprudence and analyse it within the context of the contemporary world. As Adis Duderija put it:

An increasing number of contemporary Muslim scholars have become acutely aware of these lacunae in the premodern theories with regard to the hermeneutical employment of the *maqāṣid* cum *maṣlaḥa* approaches to Islamic law that presents an important avenue for their various reformist projects (2014, pp. 5–6).

²⁴ It is important to note here that this Maqasid approach is also gaining momentum in contemporary Shi’i jurisprudence, although the base and foundation of Shi’i jurisprudence is not the same as the Sunni creed. For the Shi’as, their Imam from the Prophet’s household is central and focal in all aspects of their life, including jurisprudence. See Liyakat Takim (2014).

In Script, reference is clearly made to Basma Abdelgafar, a scholar whose work has been published by IIIT, and who has written extensively on Maqasid Al-Shariah.

Maqasid scholarship has distinguished itself from other Islamic approaches, and in particular traditional jurisprudence, through an emphasis on purposefulness, value premises and priorities, as well as openness to multi-disciplinarity and multi-methods. The approach's revival by a number of renowned contemporary scholars represents a six-fold attempt to (1) distance the Shari'ah from positions that neglect its core principles of mercy, justice, equity, and welfare; (2) rebut contemporary and largely secular but also Muslim assertions that Islam is an archaic, unjust and violent system of belief; (3) search for explanations as to why, on a general level, the affairs of Muslim communities do not reflect the Divine injunction of human dignity; (4) provide an alternative to the narrow juristic lens that has dominated traditional discourse in order to revive Islam both in the Muslim world and universally; (5) present scholars in other disciplines with the key to incorporate Islamic studies in their respective domains; and (6) propose criteria for unifying a multi-civilizational and multi-cultural global Muslim community as well as bridging understandings with others (Abdelgafar 2018, p. 2).

However, despite the revival of the approach, it should be noted that it is not an easy one to study, and most Malaysians do not have any exposure to it. Maqasid Al-Shariah is the peak in the discipline of Islamic jurisprudence, and it is learnt by the top tier of students of Islamic studies. A religious teacher who goes through foundational and traditional training which focuses on Qur'anic exegesis, *hadith*, and Islamic creed, will not be able to grasp the approach immediately. As a "religious-legal approach to public policy in Islam" (ibid., p. 3), the formulaic maxims and dictums in the discipline help religious scholars issue fatwa on contemporary issues. As a result of the complexities of studying Maqasid Al-Shariah, schisms may arise. For example, within PAS, there is tension between those with traditional training, and those who are English-speaking and

who attained their PhD degrees from centres of Islamic studies in the West, and who are exposed to the discipline (Nazmi 2022).

Furthermore, despite its benefits, it has been given insufficient attention. Phar Kim Beng argued that Maqasid Al-Shariah could be a game changer in the competition between the Islamists and reformists or post-Islamists (2009). Phar noted that PAS's document on Islamic state indeed "states that PAS will implement Shariah to achieve the five imperatives of the Maqasid Al-Shariah (major goals/objectives of Shariah): beliefs, life, intellect, dignity, and property" (ibid., p.15). However, they failed to keep to this vow, and this was largely a result of their obsession with political Islam and its products such as Hudud law, as well as a "superficial understanding of Maqasid Al-Shariah" (ibid., pp. 16–17). Consequently, within the context of Malaysia, it would be unrealistic to expect the renewal of *fiqh* and *ijtihad* without a change of direction in the content and style of modern legislation or in Islamic scholars' appreciation of Maqasid Al-Shariah (ibid., p. 45).

When Mujahid Yusuf Rawa was Religious Affairs Minister during the short-lived PH administration (2018–20), he realized the underappreciation of Maqasid Al-Shariah and worked hard to make it known to the public. His efforts can be read and traced back in his book, *Membumikan Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin: 22 Bulan Pentadbiran Islam di Putrajaya (Grounding Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin: 22 Months of Islamic Administration in Putrajaya)* (Mujahid 2021).

Mujahid and his team at Nunji have also been translating into Malay short pieces written by international clerics about Maqasid Al-Shariah so as to popularize the discourse. For instance, in "Negara Madani dan Shari'ah Ilahi" ("The Madani State and God's Laws"), a chapter in *Politik Rahmah: Asas-Asas Politik Islam Kontemporari (Merciful Politics: Foundations of Contemporary Islamic Politics)*, Nunji states that freedom is essential in a Madani state since it is a pillar of sharia, while jurisprudence is the guide (Panel Penyelidik Siasah Rahmah 2018, pp. 77–79). The book also offers an explanation from Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi (ibid., pp. 113–19) that in order to implement sharia law, people should first learn about it. Without understanding the objectives of the sharia (i.e., Maqasid Al-Shariah), there would be no justification to implement it as state law. He also emphasizes that a true Muslim society

is not necessarily achieved with the implementation of *hudud* law (ibid., p. 119). Furthermore, a harmonious society is an objective of Madani and Maqasid Al-Shariah, and therefore should be understood together with *fiqh mutaghyyirat* (jurisprudence of transformation depending on situation) and *fiqh ta'ayush* (jurisprudence on harmony) in order to achieve peace and stability in a country (Al-Qaradghi 2018, pp. 125–27; Fauwwaz 2018, pp. 143–44).

Another notable figure that Anwar has heavily referenced in his conceptualization of Script and/or Madani 2.0 is Jasser Auda who explains that justice and fairness are important values in achieving Maqasid Al-Shariah, and not necessarily equality as understood in the secular context (2018, p. 11).²⁵ Auda, the President of the Maqasid Institute Global, has been a regular face in Anwar's intellectual circle even before GE15.²⁶

One of Auda's core ideas is the promotion of reform within Muslim society with the support of culture, education, and a moral standard—elements which are crucial for the alleviation of poverty and ignorance, and therefore important for reformation. It is therefore critical that

²⁵ His most notable work on Maqasid Al-Shariah is “Maqasid Al-Shari’ah: A Beginner’s Guide” (2008).

²⁶ Professor Auda visited Kuala Lumpur numerous times at the invitation of ABIM and the Selangor state government. He spoke about the importance of Madani and Maqasid Al-Shariah at all his appearances in Malaysia (IDE 2017a, 2017b; Media Rakyat 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d; ABIM 2017). At an event organized by ABIM on 6 February 2017, Auda gave a lecture entitled “On the Misconception of Dawlah Madaniyyah”, in which he defines Madani as civil society, thus disagreeing with Syed Naquib Al-Attas’ argument that Madani cannot be defined as civil. It is also to note here that Syed Naquib Al-Attas could no longer be regarded as Anwar’s mentor from 1997 onwards. The following is the description of Auda’s lecture, from the recording of the event: “Professor Dr Jasser Auda, Head of the Dawah Committee at the International Union of Muslim Scholars, as one of the key signatories of the initiative. The World Forum for Muslim Democrats is organizing a launching event for the following call: ‘Muslim Democrats of the World, Unite!’. This message resonates with renowned scholars worldwide; including Ghaleb Bencheikh, President of the World Conference for Religions for Peace, Anwar Ibrahim, former deputy Prime

Muslim nations are willing to improve their understanding of social and political issues so as to achieve a pluralist (*ta'addudiyah*) and civil-Madani state (*daulah madaniyyah*).

What he means by a civil-Madani state is a Muslim country that applies Maqasid Al-Shariah (*daulah madaniyyah zat marji'iyah maqasidiyyah*) as its governing philosophy. The operational mission of the Maqasid Al-Shariah would then be to remove pro-crony policies and dictatorial elements in administration. This would ensure diversity and a political pluralism that embraces all political entities and civil movements. Upon establishing this diversity, a civil-Madani state would prioritize structural change to achieve social justice. It is this civil-Madani state that is the embodiment of an Islamic state which places emphasis on justice and equity which are to be achieved through ethical reform (*takafu' al-furas*). This is a big leap from the earlier ideas of an Islamic state which places emphasis on *juz'iyat* or the micro aspect that benefits only Muslims, and worse still, benefits only the religious-clerical class. A civil-Madani state would encourage dialogue (*hiwar*) with the goal of promoting inclusivity.

Minister of Malaysia, former head of the national opposition and chairman of the World Forum for Muslim Democrats, Felix Marquardt, founder of the Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi Foundation and of the Khlass (Enough with the Silence! Movement and Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Islamic Studies, Oxford University. The threat of religious extremism and fundamentalists has posed huge challenges to Muslim and non-Muslim societies, particularly in maintaining religious freedom, moderation and tolerance which forms the basis of a harmonious and peace-loving society. It is only through these bases that a society would be able to fully embody the concepts of good governance, removal of corruption and injustices, and establish a just and equitable economic system. Properly implemented, such a society would become a beacon to the world, a true reflection of humanity based upon universally accepted humanitarian values. The principles of moderation, justice, tolerance and good governance, espoused by Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim have underlined the ideals carried by the Muslim Democrats. These should be further developed, refined and propagated in a systematic manner. The Muslim Democrat initiative is the culmination of the lifelong journey of Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim starting from his activism in early Islamic movements during his student years and was designed to establish a point of reference for Muslims worldwide that is firmly grounded in the 21st century”.

In elaborating on the link between Madani and Maqasid Al-Shariah, Auda explains that Maqasid Al-Shariah is the main structure, philosophy and epistemological root of “a civil thus madani” state. He also emphasizes that it should not only benefit Muslims, but also non-Muslims (ibid., p. 20).²⁷

Overall, to give a Malaysian flavour to Madani and Maqasid Al-Shariah and to make it more accessible to the masses, Anwar adopted an Iban term, “Segulai Sejalai” as a national motto that promotes togetherness and unity for achieving a better future (Jayum Jawan 2023; *Dayak Daily* 2023).²⁸ If it is indeed true that Madani 2.0 is based on Maqasid Al-Shariah, it should be welcomed by all segments of society, given that “the Maqasid approach” is a “public policy in Islam” which places human rights at the centre (Abdelgafar 2018, p. 18).

CONCLUSION

While the blueprint of Madani 2.0 does not make reference to Islamist ideas as did Madani 1.0, the tone in which the latter was written is still fresh in the minds of Malaysians above the age of 40. Although Anwar was careful not to associate Madani 2.0 with Islam during its launch, he did say that he hopes for JAKIM to help his administration with the elaboration of the framework. This, in effect, brings Madani full circle, since the main administrator of Islam in the country is now involved. Nevertheless, Anwar is determined to make Madani relevant to Malaysians and relies on a variety of people to help him, be they his fellow ABIM leaders, or foreign scholars.

Based on the discussion above, it is not unlikely that Maqasid Al-Shariah will be the foundation of Madani 2.0. Since the shift towards

²⁷ Auda also explains that there are aspects of daily life which should be free from state intervention, and which should not necessarily be subjected to criminal law. He emphasizes that there are three aspects in which religious and civil life overlap (2017, pp. 69–73).

²⁸ Iban is the language spoken by the Iban people, an ethnic group mostly concentrated in Sarawak.

Maqasid Al-Shariah can be viewed as a manifestation of a turn towards post-Islamism and reformism, the success of Madani is much awaited by onlookers, be they scholars, political and religious leaders, and even non-Muslim investors from the West. With Maqasid Al-Shariah as its foundation, Madani 2.0 will be a sophisticated and formidable challenge to political Islam. In fact, Islamists such as PAS may not be able to ignore Madani 2.0, as its emphasis on Maqasid Al-Shariah could cause them to rethink their approach towards Islamic jurisprudence. Ultimately, the key challenge is for Anwar to translate Maqasid Al-Shariah into public policy.

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