

Democracy As Islamic Values: An Analysis of Rachid Ghannouchi's Thought and Its Implications for Democratic Education in Indonesia

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Received: 06/04/2026

Revised: 22/05/2026

Accepted: 12/06/2026

Abstract

Research on the relationship between Islam and democracy has been extensive, but it still largely focuses on the normative compatibility between Islamic principles and democracy, with limited attention to the pedagogical implications of political Islamic thought for the strengthening of democratic education in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia. To address this gap, this study examines how the concept of democracy as an Islamic value in Rachid Ghannouchi's thought can be reconstructed as a normative framework for democratic education in Indonesia. This study used a qualitative approach based on literature studies with conceptual-normative analysis methods of Ghannouchi's main works, especially related to the concepts of *syūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and *al-dawla al-madaniyyah*, and contextualized within Indonesia's democratic challenges. The results of the study show that Ghannouchi's thinking not only affirms the compatibility of Islam and democracy but also provides a normative-educational model that places democracy as a process of forming a citizenship ethics based on justice, benefit, deliberation, and power limitation. The findings indicate that Ghannouchi's concepts of the civil state and the *maqāṣidi* approach are highly relevant in responding to Indonesia's democratic challenges, including identity polarization, structural corruption, and the shrinking of civic space although their implementation requires institutional and pedagogical adaptation. This research contributes a novel pedagogical interpretation of Ghannouchi's thought, which has predominantly been examined within the normative Islamic political framework.

Abstrak

Penelitian mengenai hubungan Islam dan demokrasi telah berkembang luas, namun sebagian besar masih berfokus pada kompatibilitas normatif antara prinsip-prinsip Islam dan demokrasi, dengan perhatian yang terbatas terhadap implikasi pedagogis pemikiran Islam politik bagi penguatan pendidikan demokrasi di negara Muslim mayoritas seperti Indonesia. Berangkat dari kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana konsep demokrasi sebagai nilai Islam dalam pemikiran Rachid Ghannouchi dapat direkonstruksi sebagai kerangka normatif bagi pendidikan demokrasi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan metode analisis konseptual-normatif terhadap karya utama Ghannouchi, khususnya terkait konsep *syūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, dan *al-dawla al-madaniyyah*, serta dikontekstualisasikan dengan problem demokrasi Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran Ghannouchi tidak hanya menegaskan kompatibilitas Islam dan demokrasi, tetapi juga menyediakan model normatif-edukatif yang menempatkan demokrasi sebagai proses pembentukan etika kewargaan berbasis keadilan, kemaslahatan, deliberasi, dan pembatasan kekuasaan. Temuan utama penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konsep civil state dan pendekatan *maqāṣidi* Ghannouchi memiliki relevansi signifikan dalam merespons problem demokrasi Indonesia—seperti polarisasi identitas, korupsi struktural, dan melemahnya ruang



sipil—meskipun implementasinya memerlukan adaptasi institusional dan pedagogis. Penelitian ini menawarkan kebaruan berupa pembacaan pedagogis atas pemikiran Ghannouchi yang selama ini lebih dominan dikaji dalam kerangka politremainsif.

Keywords Islamic Values, Rachid Ghannouchi, Indonesian Democratic Education.

Introduction

The debate over the relationship between Islam and democracy remains an important field of discourse in contemporary Islamic political studies. On the one hand, there are fears that Islamic values will clash with the norms of modern democracy; on the other hand, theoretical efforts show that Islamic values, especially the concepts of *shura*, justice, and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, can provide a normative basis for inclusive and deliberative democratic practices.¹ In this context, the thinking of Rachid Ghannouchi, leader of the Ennahda movement in Tunisia, is a central reference because of his efforts to formulate a "civil state" (*al-dawla al-madaniyya*) that integrates Islamic principles with modern democratic political mechanisms; this transformation of ideas is relevant not only for Arab countries but also for other Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia.²

Rachid Ghannouchi offers a normative approach that asserts that democracy is not a foreign system to Islam, but can be understood as a contemporary manifestation of classical Islamic principles such as deliberation (*shura*), justice (*'adl*), and benefit (*maslahah*).³ Ghannouchi's thinking emphasized that sharia should direct the moral and ethical goals of the public (*maqāṣid*), while the democratic political institutions of parliament, free elections, and the rule of law become the operational arena for the realization of these goals.⁴ This approach places Ghannouchi in the tradition of "post-Islamism" or a form of political Islam that accepts democracy as a legitimate mechanism for the management of power, while rejecting the formalization of religion in the form of a theocratic state. This conception opens the possibility of a new reading of how Islamic actors in the public sphere can contribute to the consolidation of democracy rather than undermine it.

Meanwhile, the development of democracy in Indonesia is increasingly complex. Since the 1998 Reforms, Indonesia has experienced an expansion of political space and civil liberties, but various indicators and cutting-edge empirical studies indicate structural challenges that

¹ Nazrul Islam and Md Saidul Islam, 'Islam and Democracy: A Philosophical Debate', in *Islam and Democracy in South Asia: The Case of Bangladesh*, ed. Md Nazrul Islam and Md Saidul Islam (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 67–101, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42909-6_4.

² Rached Ghannouchi, 'From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy: The Ennahda Party and the Future of Tunisia', *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 5 (2016): 58–67.

³ R. Ghannouchi, 'The Participation of Islamists in a Non-Islamic Government', in *Democratization Theory and Middle East Practice*, ed. A. Stepan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 117–34.

⁴ R. Ghannouchi, *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State* (Beirut: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, 1998).

hinder the quality of democracy.⁵ Civil liberties reports and democracy indices repeatedly highlight issues such as systemic corruption, weakening checks and balances, politicization of the law (including the use of blasphemy/religion articles), and increasing identity polarization.⁶ This downward trend is not only quantitative, in index scores, but also qualitative, in the erosion of deliberative practices and the pressure on the space of civil society.⁷ This situation raises an important question regarding the extent to which the normative framework developed by thinkers such as Ghannouchi can serve as a conceptual and practical foundation for strengthening democratic consolidation in Indonesia.

In this context, democracy education is a strategic arena for consolidating democracy. Democracy education is not only the transmission of knowledge about the political system, but also a process of internalizing the values of participation, justice, tolerance, and civic responsibility. However, democracy education in Indonesia often faces normative limitations, especially in bridging democratic values with the ethical and religious framework that lives in a Muslim-majority society. It is at this point that Ghannouchi's thinking becomes relevant, as it offers a normative basis for Islam compatible with democracy and has the potential to be integrated into civic, political, and religious education.

Several studies have examined the relationship between Islam and democracy from different analytical perspectives. First, studies on Islamic democracy generally focus on the normative compatibility between Islamic principles and democratic governance, emphasizing concepts such as *shūrā*, justice, and public welfare as ethical foundations for democratic institutions. Scholars such as John L. Esposito and John Obert Voll argue that Islam possesses internal normative resources that can support democratic practices, while other studies remain focused on the tensions between religious authority and liberal democracy.⁸ Second, scholarship on Rachid Ghannouchi predominantly discusses his contribution to post-Islamism, the transformation of the Ennahda movement, and the conceptualization of the *civil state* (*al-dawla al-madaniyyah*) in the Tunisian political context.⁹ These studies largely emphasize institutional and political dimensions of Islamic democracy. Third, research on democracy education in Indonesia tends to concentrate on civic literacy, democratic participation, tolerance, and citizenship formation, particularly within formal educational settings.¹⁰

⁵ E. Aspinall and E. Warburton, 'Indonesia: The Dangers of Democratic Regression', *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2019): 104–18, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0009>.

⁶ M. Mietzner, 'Populist Anti-Pluralism: Islamic Mobilisation and the Erosion of Democracy in Indonesia', *Democratization* 27, no. 2 (2020): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1680893>.

⁷ M. Mietzner.

⁸ John L. Esposito and John Obert Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁹ Rachid Ghannouchi, 'From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy: The Ennahda Party and the Future of Tunisia', *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 5 (2016): 60.

¹⁰ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 24.

However, limited attention has been paid to how contemporary Islamic political thought can provide a normative and pedagogical framework for strengthening democratic education in Muslim-majority societies.

This gap is important because existing scholarship rarely connects Ghannouchi's democratic thought with the pedagogical dimension of democratic consolidation in Indonesia. Previous studies tend to analyze Ghannouchi either as a theorist of Islamic democracy or as a political actor in Tunisia, while democracy education literature in Indonesia generally lacks engagement with Islamic normative frameworks as sources of civic ethics. Therefore, this study positions itself at the intersection of Islamic political thought and democratic education by examining how Ghannouchi's concepts of *shūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* may strengthen democratic education in Indonesia. In this sense, the novelty of this article lies in its effort to move beyond normative debates on Islam and democracy toward a pedagogical reading of Ghannouchi's thought in the context of democratic consolidation.

Examining Ghannouchi's thoughts in the context of democracy education in Indonesia requires two main analytical steps. First, a conceptual clarification of how Ghannouchi interprets democracy as an Islamic value through *syūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and the civil state. Second, implicit analysis to assess the extent to which the normative framework can be transformed into democratic education as an instrument for the formation of an inclusive and deliberative political culture. This approach places democracy education as a bridge between normative ideas of Islam and the practice of substantive democracy in Indonesia.¹¹

Based on this gap, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does Rachid Ghannouchi conceptualize democracy as an Islamic value through the principles of *shūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and *al-dawla al-madaniyyah*? and (2) To what extent can this normative framework contribute to strengthening democratic education in Indonesia? This article argues that Ghannouchi's political thought provides not only a normative justification of the compatibility between Islam and democracy but also a pedagogical framework capable of strengthening democratic education by internalizing justice, deliberation, civic ethics, and pluralism. However, the applicability of this framework in Indonesia depends on contextual adaptation to local institutional and socio-political conditions.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative library research approach using conceptual and normative analysis.¹² Primary sources include Ghannouchi's major works on democracy, freedom, and the civil state, while secondary sources consist of contemporary scholarship on Islamic democracy, democratic regression, and civic education in Indonesia. Through this analytical framework, the study critically examines the relevance and limitations of Ghannouchi's thought for addressing Indonesia's democratic challenges, while offering a

¹¹ Rached Ghannouchi, 'From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, 19 August 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/tunisia/political-islam-muslim-democracy-ennahda>.

¹² Amir Hamzah, *Library research methods: philosophical, theoretical, application, process, and research results* (Malang: Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2020), Malang.

pedagogical perspective that has received limited attention in previous scholarship.

Discussion

Islam and Democracy in Contemporary Political Discourse

The debate over the relationship between Islam and democracy dominates contemporary Islamic political studies. It can be understood as a clash between two conceptual frameworks and as a space for productive dialogue.¹³ Some observers maintain a skeptical narrative: that Islamic theological traditions, especially classical sharia institutional formations and claims of religious legal authority, may clash with modern liberal democratic principles such as secularism, human rights pluralism, and the rule of law.¹⁴ This argument is often referenced in studies that look at the experiences of several Muslim countries where religiously oriented political movements have become a source of political tension or even institutional conflict. This kind of criticism is important because it reminds researchers that the concept of democracy does not exist in the void of history and that democratic institutions require a supportive socio-political foundation to function effectively.

On the other hand, a number of scholars and practitioners of Islamic politics have formulated an alternative approach that affirms the existence of substantive compatibility between Islamic values and democratic principles. This argument departs from a rereading of classical texts and historical practices of Muslims that emphasize the elements of deliberation (*shura*), justice (*'adl*), and the defense of the common good (*maslahah*) concepts that, when rearticulated normatively, can provide an ethical basis for inclusive and deliberative democratic practices.¹⁵ This approach is not merely rhetorical: it demands theoretical work that reconstructs *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (sharia goals) as a framework of values that opens space for the recognition of political rights, religious pluralism, and mechanisms of governance accountability.¹⁶ In other words, democracy is understood not as a "Western import" that must be rejected, but as an institutional form that can be contextualized and justified through Islamic ethical sources.

Academic debates give birth to several important thought trajectories. First, the reformist-modernist tradition, represented by figures such as Fazlur Rahman, encouraged a rereading of the text to uncover universal principles that enabled reconciliation between Islam

¹³ Masykuri Abdullah, *Democracy at the Crossroads of Meaning: The Intellectual Response of Indonesian Muslims to the Concept of Democracy (1966-1993)* | (Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana Yogyakarta, 1999), [//opac.uin-antasari.ac.id/2Findex.php%3Fp%3Dshow_detail%26id%3D32216%26keywords%3D](http://opac.uin-antasari.ac.id/2Findex.php%3Fp%3Dshow_detail%26id%3D32216%26keywords%3D).

¹⁴ John L. Esposito and John Obert Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ M. Taufiq Rahman, *Religion and Identity Politics in the Social Framework* (S2 Study Program in Religious Studies UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020).

¹⁶ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2008).

and the demands of political modernity.¹⁷ Second, the *maqāṣid* discourse offers a teleological approach that places the moral goals of sharia (protection of life, religion, reason, honor, and property) as public policy benchmarks and ethical benchmarks for the formulation of law in a democratic state.¹⁸ Third, the emergence of the phenomenon of "post-Islamism," in which some Islamic thinkers and parties, after practical political experience, shift their priorities from state control to the application of religious law solely to form a pragmatic, plural, and good-governance-oriented political agenda. These patterns show that the Islamic-democratic discourse is not monolithic; rather, it consists of a spectrum of positions that offer a wide range of theoretical and practical possibilities.

The concept of *shūrā* is central to this dialectic because it presents a historical meeting point between Islamic political traditions and modern deliberative practices. In the classical Islamic tradition, *shūrā* refers to the principle of consultation that ideally places the leader as a facilitator of the public interest rather than as an absolute authority. This understanding is rooted in Qur'anic exegesis, particularly on Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]:159 and Q.S. al-Shūrā [42]:38, where classical exegetes interpret *shūrā* as a collective process of consultation in public affairs. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, explains that consultation (*mushāwarah*) serves to involve members of the community in decision-making and to prevent authoritarian leadership, while Ibn Kathīr interprets *shūrā* as an ethical obligation for rulers to seek public counsel in matters affecting communal welfare.¹⁹ Likewise, Al-Qurṭubī emphasizes that *shūrā* is an important principle of governance (*uṣūl al-siyāsah*) that ensures justice and collective participation in political affairs. These classical interpretations demonstrate that *shūrā* was not merely a moral recommendation but functioned as a normative political principle within Islamic governance.²⁰ Contemporary formulations subsequently reinterpret *shūrā* as a normative foundation for mechanisms of representation, public discourse, and accountability; thus, *shūrā* can serve as a conceptual bridge between the ethical wisdom of Islamic tradition and deliberative democratic practice. Nevertheless, the transposition of *shūrā* into the realm of modern politics requires institutional elaboration: *shūrā* must be linked to principles such as competitive elections, freedom of association, and institutional oversight to avoid being reduced to mere symbolic legitimacy.

In addition, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* makes an important contribution to the formulation of normative parameters. The *maqāṣidi* approach shifts the focus from literal textual formulation to the ethical goals that Islamic law seeks to achieve, thereby allowing interpretive flexibility in addressing contemporary issues. Within this framework, political actions that strengthen

¹⁷ Fazlur Raḥmān, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, 8. impr, Publications of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies 15 (Chicago London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁸ Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*.

¹⁹ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' Al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2001).

²⁰ Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 16 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006).

social justice, protect minority rights, and advance the general welfare can be seen as the realization of *maqāṣid*, thereby giving moral legitimacy to democratic practices that uphold human rights and plurality. The *maqāṣidi approach* has pragmatic appeal: it provides a framework for Muslim political actors to construct a legitimacy narrative relevant to religious constituencies while also being compatible with the norms of universal democracy.

However, this normative optimism is not without challenges. The implementation of *shura* and *maqāṣid* values in the modern state is prone to political instrumentalization; political elites can claim religious legitimacy without actually enforcing deliberative and inclusive principles. In addition, variations in religious traditions, political cultures, and the degree of institutionalization of civil society across Muslim countries result in a heterogeneity of practice that limits the applicability of a single universal model of Islamic–democratic reconciliation. Empirical cases show that successful integration depends on the configuration of institutional structures, the quality of legal compliance, and the strength of non-state actors—factors that are both local and contextual.

Thus, a productive approach to the Islam–democracy problem must be both normative-critical and empirical-comparative: normative in formulating ethical foundations such as *shūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and justice that can support democratic governance; and empirical in assessing how these values are translated into concrete political practices across different socio-political settings. In this regard, figures such as Rached Ghannouchi become particularly relevant because they provide a framework that seeks to reconcile Islamic legitimacy with pluralism, participation, and democratic institutions while remaining open to contextual adaptation. However, the significance of this framework should not be confined solely to institutional politics. The sustainability of democracy also depends on the formation of democratic citizens through education. As democratic regression increasingly reflects not only institutional weaknesses but also the erosion of civic ethics and deliberative culture, democracy education becomes a crucial arena for internalizing democratic values in Muslim-majority societies. Therefore, the relevance of Ghannouchi's thought lies not merely in offering a normative justification for democracy, but in its potential contribution to democratic and civic education through the cultivation of participation, justice, tolerance, and public responsibility. It is within this pedagogical dimension that this study positions itself, examining how Islamic political thought can function not only as a discourse of governance but also as a framework for the formation of democratic citizenship in Indonesia.

The Conceptualization of Islamic Democracy in Rachid Ghannouchi's Thought

Rached Ghannouchi places himself in a tradition of contemporary Islamic political thought that seeks to bridge the ethical demands of Islam with the institutional norms of modern democracy. For Ghannouchi, democracy is not just a political technique or a Western product that is foreign to Muslims, but a means of public organization that can and must derive moral legitimacy from Islamic principles themselves, especially *shura* (consultation), justice

('adl), and the purposes of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*).²¹ This statement is evident in a series of writings and statements that affirm that Ennahda does not aspire to make the state a *theocracy*, but rather to establish a *civil state* that guarantees freedom, pluralism, and equality for citizens under the law.²²

First, Ghannouchi's idea of "democracy as an Islamic value" can be read as an attempt at hermeneutic reconstruction; he reinterprets Islam's normative heritage to serve as an ethical foundation for modern political practice. This approach refers not only to classical texts but also to historical practices and substantive values that are rearticulated for contemporary contexts, for example, affirming the *shura* not only as a ritual consultative procedure but also as a principle that demands mechanisms of representation, public participation, and accountability. Therefore, according to Ghannouchi, democracy is an institutional form of Islamic values that is recontextualized, not just the placement of democratic mechanisms in a rhetorical frame.²³

Second, Ghannouchi's concept of *shura* is articulated as a normative-institutional "modern *shura*". He sees *shura* as a principle of legitimacy that demands deliberative procedures and the separation of powers, enabling public aspirations to be articulated and accommodated. In practice, *modern shura* requires institutions such as free parliaments, competitive elections, and civil liberties guarantees that prevent religious claims from becoming state monopolies over moral authority.²⁴ Therefore, for Ghannouchi, *shura* is not a shortcut to the literal application of religious law, but rather a procedural framework that guarantees plurality and protects minority rights.

Third, Ghannouchi's position on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (sharia goals) is a key element in his argument. By placing *maqāṣid* at the center of a political ethic, Ghannouchi encourages a teleological reading of Islamic law, namely that sharia law must be evaluated and interpreted according to its moral purpose (the protection of religion, soul, intellect, offspring, and property). This *maqāṣidi* approach allows for legal flexibility and the prioritization of public policies that support public welfare (*maslahah*), so that what are commonly considered "conservative" in literal readings can be reformulated to conform to the principles of human rights and social justice within the framework of democracy. Ghannouchi's use of *maqāṣid* also serves as a tool for internal legitimacy, enabling the religious base to accept pluralistic political practices and modern governance.

Fourth, the term *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* (civil state) promoted by Ghannouchi confirms

²¹ Azzam Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat in the Discourse of Islamism* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Renaissance Front, 2021).

²² Ghannouchi, *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State*.

²³ Rached Ghannouchi, 'From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, 19 August 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/tunisia/political-islam-muslim-democracy-ennahda>.

²⁴ Rachid Ghannouchi, *Al-Hurriyah al-Ammah Fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah*, a (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat Al-Wahdah Al-Arabiah, 1993).

its distinction from the concepts of an extreme-secular state and a theocratic state. The civil state for Ghannouchi guarantees freedom of religion, equality of citizens before the law, and inclusive public spaces without negating the role of religion as a source of moral norms. Here, there is a balance: religion provides a map of ethical values, while democratic institutions govern the mechanisms of political contestation. Ennahda's transformation of its rhetoric from "political Islam" to "Muslim democracy" or "civil state" illustrates practical attempts to institutionalize that balance, including the strategic decision to form a coalition with secular actors for post-Arab Spring political stability.²⁵

However, Ghannouchi's theoretical construction faces several normative and empirical challenges that need to be acknowledged. Normatively, tensions arise between the religious legitimacy claimed by religion-based parties and the need for democracy to maintain a neutral, secular-institutional space; strong religious claims can suppress minority freedom in the absence of clear institutional boundaries. Empirically, Tunisia's experience also shows that the transition from rhetoric to political praxis requires lengthy institutional learning and strong civil society support, in contexts that vary across Muslim-majority countries. Critical studies suggest that transferring the Ghannouchi model to other contexts should take into account local political configurations, legal cultures, and institutional capacities.²⁶

In this regard, the author emphasizes that Rachid Ghannouchi's thinking, which integrates *shura* in the modern sense, the *approach of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and the concept of the civil state (*dawlah madaniyyah*), is more appropriately understood as a dynamic normative framework, not as a *blueprint*—the only technical information about the Islamic State. Ghannouchi explicitly rejects the formalization of sharia into a theocratic state and views it as a source of ethical orientation and public moral goals, while the form of political institutions is left to the historical and contextual *ijtihād* of Muslim society. This approach opens space for compatibility between Islamic values and the principles of modern democracy without sacrificing political plurality and citizenship.²⁷

Ghannouchi's conception of *shura* also moves beyond narrow procedural understandings and intersects with contemporary deliberative democratic ideas. *Shura* is not positioned as a single mechanism but rather as an ethical principle of participation, dialogue, and power restraint, which demands an inclusive public space and a rational, accountable

²⁵ M. Zaidi A. Rahman, Makmor Tumin, and Azmil Zainal Abidin, 'Islamic Politics in the Post-Jasmine Revolution Context of Tunisia: Analyzing the Thoughts of Rashid Ghannouchi', *Afkar: Journal of Islamic Faith and Thought* 25, no. 2 (December 2023): 499–542, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol25no2.15>.

²⁶ Rached Ghannouchi, '1. Ennahda's Democratic Commitments And Capabilities: Major Evolutionary Moments and Choices', in *Democratic Transition in the Muslim World: A Global Perspective*, ed. Alfred Stepan (Columbia University Press, 2018), 15–28, <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.7312/step18430-004/html?srsid=AfmBOoq6aiJKPuRmIOma3jfkfUonOGDZGSV5caL7a9sJCZCbys6eGBG6y>.

²⁷ Ghannouchi, *Al-Hurriyah al-Ammah Fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah*.

decision-making process.²⁸ Within this framework, democracy is not reduced to elections alone, but requires sustained deliberative practices and respect for the rights of minorities as part of a substantial Islamic political ethics.

Meanwhile, Ghannouchi's *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach provides a normative foundation for democracy as a system oriented towards public benefit, justice, and the protection of human rights. *Maqāṣid* is understood dynamically as a value system that is contextual and adaptive to social change, thereby sustaining democratic governance principles such as transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.²⁹ Thus, the legitimacy of democracy from an Islamic perspective does not derive from symbolic conformity with religious law, but from its ability to realize ethical goals at the core of Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, the idea of the civil state in Ghannouchi's thought affirms the functional separation between political authority and religious authority without removing religion from the public sphere. This model rejects both radical secularism and theocracy and aligns with the principle of twin tolerances, i.e., mutual respect for the boundaries between religious institutions and the state in a democratic system. In the framework of post-Islamism, Ghannouchi's approach reflects the transformation of political Islam towards the acceptance of pluralism, equal political competition, and the limitation of religious groups' exclusive claims to the state.³⁰

However, the effectiveness of the normative framework depends heavily on the presence of strong democratic institutions and a supportive political culture. Democracy literature emphasizes that the consolidation of democracy requires mechanisms of checks and balances, the rule of law, and an autonomous civil society as a buffer against state power.³¹ Without the institutionalization of these values, the moral legitimacy of religion risks being reduced to a political symbol that ultimately weakens democracy itself.

Therefore, a critical study of Ghannouchi's thought is not only relevant as an intellectual study in the discourse of Islamic democracy, but also as a material for practical reflection for political actors and policymakers in Muslim countries, including Indonesia. Furthermore, Ghannouchi's normative approach demands a shift in Islamic political orientation from the struggle over symbols and identities to the strengthening of governance quality and the ethics of power. In the Indonesian context, where religious and political relations are often mediated by electoral populism and identity mobilization, Ghannouchi's framework reminds us that religious legitimacy cannot replace the need for accountable institutions, impartial laws, and effective mechanisms of restraint of power. As Hefner and

²⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Save Islam from Puritan Muslims* (Kemang: Serambi Publishers, 2006).

²⁹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective* (Islamic Texts Society, 2002).

³⁰ Asef Bayat, *Post-Islamism* (Yogyakarta: Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2011).

³¹ Larry Diamond, 'Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation', *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994): 4–17.

Menchik point out, religion can serve as a source of public ethics that strengthens democracy only when accompanied by a commitment to pluralism, power restraint, and consistent institutionalization of democracy.³² In this context, Ghannouchi's thinking offers a reflective paradigm for bridging religious traditions and the demands of modern democracy without being trapped in ideological formalism.

Indonesian Democracy Problems and Challenges of Democracy Education

Since the Reform era, Indonesia has experienced a significant expansion of democratic space, marked by competitive elections, greater political participation, and broader civil liberties.³³ Nevertheless, these institutional achievements have increasingly faced structural challenges that undermine the quality of substantive democracy. Empirical evidence suggests that Indonesia has experienced a tendency toward democratic stagnation and regression. According to the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (2024), Indonesia remains classified as a “flawed democracy,” with its democracy score declining from 6.97 in 2015 to 6.44 in 2023, indicating persistent weaknesses in political culture, institutional accountability, and civil liberties.³⁴ Similarly, the *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Report* identifies Indonesia as experiencing democratic backsliding, particularly through the concentration of executive power, the weakening of horizontal accountability, and the shrinking of civic space (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2024). Reports from *Freedom House* further indicate a decline in civil liberties, particularly concerning freedom of expression, the politicization of legal instruments such as blasphemy and defamation laws, and increasing pressure on civil society organizations (Freedom House, 2024).³⁵

Scholars have also interpreted these developments in terms of broader structural dynamics. Mietzner (2020) argues that Indonesia's democratic consolidation after the Reform era has been weakened by pragmatic alliances between political elites, economic oligarchs, and

³² Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jeremy Menchik, ‘Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia’, *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (July 2019): 415–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286>.

³³ Alexander Arifianto, ‘Religious Civil Society Organizations Responses toward Democratic Decline: A Comparison between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah’, *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2024): 1–22.

³⁴ Mietzner, ‘Populist Anti-Pluralism: Islamic Mobilisation and the Erosion of Democracy in Indonesia’ 47.

³⁵ Edward Aspinall and Eve Warburton, ‘Indonesia: The Dangers of Democratic Regression’, paper presented at Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPPS 2017), *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPPS 2017)*, 2018, 30, <https://doi.org/10.2991/icspps-17.2018.1>.

segments of religious actors, reducing the effectiveness of democratic checks and balances.³⁶ Likewise, Aspinall and Warburton (2019) identify a pattern of democratic regression characterized by executive aggrandizement, declining opposition capacity, and the narrowing of public contestation.³⁷ These findings suggest that Indonesia's democratic challenges stem not only from institutional weaknesses but also from the insufficient internalization of democratic values in civic awareness and political practice. Consequently, strengthening democracy in Indonesia requires not only institutional reform but also democratic education that cultivates civic ethics, participation, tolerance, and public responsibility.

Democracy education in this study is understood not merely as formal civic instruction concerning constitutional systems and electoral procedures, but as a broader pedagogical process aimed at cultivating democratic dispositions, civic ethics, and participatory citizenship. In practice, democracy education includes the internalization of values such as deliberation, tolerance, accountability, respect for pluralism, critical reasoning, and public responsibility through both formal institutions—such as civic education (*Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*), religious education, and higher education—and informal spaces, including civil society organizations, religious communities, digital literacy, and public discourse. Therefore, democratic education should not be reduced to procedural political knowledge; rather, it functions as a formative process that shapes citizens' democratic consciousness and political behavior.

In the Indonesian context, however, democracy education often remains procedural and normative, emphasizing institutional knowledge while paying insufficient attention to democratic habits and ethical-political formation. Several empirical studies indicate that civic learning tends to prioritize memorization of constitutional principles over participatory engagement, deliberative dialogue, and critical citizenship. This condition contributes to democratic vulnerabilities, as citizens may formally support democracy while lacking the democratic capacities necessary to resist corruption, identity polarization, political clientelism, and authoritarian tendencies. In this sense, democratic stagnation in Indonesia cannot be understood solely as an institutional problem but also as a reflection of insufficient democratic socialization and civic learning. The following discussion, therefore, situates contemporary democratic problems in Indonesia within the broader challenge of strengthening democracy education.

First, corruption remains a systemic problem that undermines the legitimacy of public

³⁶ Marcus Mietzner, 'Populist Anti-Pluralism: Islamic Mobilisation and the Erosion of Democracy in Indonesia', *Democratization* 27, no. 2 (2020): 263, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1681375>.

³⁷ Aspinall and Warburton, 'Indonesia: The Dangers of Democratic Regression'.

institutions and reduces the effectiveness of state services.³⁸ Various international indices show that Indonesia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2024 will be 37 on a scale of 0–100, placing Indonesia at 99 out of 180 countries in the *Corruption Perceptions Index* report by Transparency International. This score reflects perceptions of corruption risks in the public sector, based on expert and global survey respondent assessments (score: 37/100, rank: 99/180).³⁹ From the perspective of democratic education, the problem of corruption, as reflected in GPA scores, is not only a challenge for law enforcement but also related to the formation of public ethics, integrity, and civic responsibility in the formal and informal political education process. In other words, the quality of democratic education that instills these values is an important part of efforts to strengthen a culture of accountability and civic participation in the life of the state.

Second, the polarization of identity, reinforced by social media, is shaping a fragmented information ecosystem in which political groups tend to be trapped in *echo chambers*.⁴⁰ As a result, the space of public discourse becomes increasingly confrontational, and deliberative capacity weakens; rational argumentation shifts to identity-based affective mobilization. This phenomenon not only hinders political consensus but also erodes the values of tolerance and dialogue that should underpin democratic education. Empirical research shows that political polarization in Indonesia affects the fragmentation of citizens' perceptions of democracy.

Third, political commercialization through the practice of money politics and capital penetration in political recruitment reduces the quality of democratic representation. Elected candidates tend to rely on patronage networks and financial support rather than on programmatic legitimacy and policy vision. This practice of transactional politics not only obscures the principle of accountability to voters but also fosters a permissive political culture that resists clientelism. From the perspective of democracy education, this phenomenon reflects a failure to instill the values of rational, critical, and public-interest-based political participation.⁴¹

Fourth, the weakening of the checks-and-balances mechanism is a serious challenge to

³⁸ Rita Kalalinggi, 'The Weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK): One of the Deaths of Democracy', *Journal of Government and Politics (JGOP)* 3, no. 2 (December 2021): 107–18, <https://doi.org/10.31764/jgop.v3i2.6106>.

³⁹ 'Corruption Perception Index 2024: "Corruption, Democracy, and Environmental Crisis"', *Transparency International Indonesia*, 11 February 2025, <https://ti.or.id/indeks-persepsi-korupsi-2024-korupsi-demokrasi-dan-krisis-lingkungan-2/>.

⁴⁰ Aris Munandar, Fakhri Fadilah Muttaqin, and Endang Susanti, 'Social Media Between Hegemony and Emancipation: A Critical Review of the Role of Educators in Digital Democracy', *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Education* 2, no. 1 (May 2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.62951/prosemnasipi.v2i1.129>.

⁴¹ Awhan Ibaad El-Adzkiyaa, Labib Muttaqin, and Adrian Adrian, 'Brandish Red Report Card: Eliminating Corruption in Indonesia', *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1, no. 7 (April 2022): 816–27, <https://doi.org/10.55324/iss.v1i7.164>.

Indonesian democracy. Supervisory and law enforcement institutions are often under political pressure, including through legislative changes that affect the institutional design of anti-corruption institutions and the independence of the judiciary. When the control mechanism is weakened, democracy risks being reduced to a procedural form without substantive oversight. This condition shows that democracy education has not fully succeeded in building a collective awareness of the importance of limiting power and the rule of law as a basic value of democracy.

Fifth, the narrowing of civil society space and freedom of opinion adds to the layer of democratic vulnerability. Cases of criminalization of criticism, the use of defamation and blasphemy articles, and repressive measures against public expression demonstrate the ongoing pressure on civil liberties. These restrictions reduce the ability of civil society to exercise control and advocacy functions, while also narrowing the space for democratic learning outside formal institutions. In this context, democracy education faces a major challenge, fostering civic courage and awareness of citizens' rights.

In light of these problems, questions arise about the relevance of the Islamic democratic framework formulated by Rachid Ghannouchi for strengthening democratic education in Indonesia. Normatively, Ghannouchi's emphasis on *shura* as a consultative and deliberative principle can strengthen a culture of participation and dialogue when it is translated into civic education. However, *shura* does not automatically address polarization without the support of institutional design and democratic pedagogy that guarantees inclusivity, transparency, and equal access to information.

The *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach, which places justice, the protection of basic rights, and the common good as public policy goals, also provides an ethical foundation for democratic education. Through the framework of *maqāṣidi*, corrupt and exclusive political practices can be normatively criticized as contrary to the moral goals of Islam. However, without the institutionalization of these values in the curriculum, educational practices, and the culture of schools and society, *maqāṣid* risks ceasing to be an ethical discourse with transformative power.

Similarly, the concept of *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* (civil state) offers an important perspective for democratic education in pluralistic Indonesia. By balancing religion as a source of public ethics without reducing it to a tool of state coercion, this concept emphasizes the importance of separating the moral and coercive functions of power. In the context of democracy education, the idea of the civil state encourages learning about tolerance, pluralism, and respect for differences as civic values.

Thus, it can be concluded that the problems of Indonesian democracy cannot be understood solely as institutional failures, but also as challenges to democracy education. Ghannouchi's thought provides relevant normative resources: *shura* as an ethics of deliberation, *maqāṣid* as an orientation of justice, and the civil state as a framework of pluralism, but its effectiveness depends on the ability of education systems and civil society to transform

these values into citizens' political consciousness and practice.⁴² In the current Indonesian context, Ghannouchi's thinking is most relevant as a normative inspiration for strengthening democratic education oriented towards the formation of an ethical, participatory, and civilized political culture.

The Implications of Ghannouchi's Thinking on Democracy Education in Indonesia

Rached Ghannouchi's thoughts, which emphasize *shura*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (the purposes of Islamic law), and the concept of *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* (the civil state), offer important theoretical contributions to the development of democratic education in Indonesia. Conceptually, Ghannouchi proposes a framework for reconstructing norms by shifting the focus of discourse from purely textual debate to procedural legitimacy and ethical goals. This shift is relevant to democracy education because it views democracy not only as a political system but also as a moral value that should be instilled through civic learning.⁴³ The framework provides a normative basis for Islamic values-based democratic education that can bridge religious demands with modern democratic principles, such as participation, accountability, and respect for citizens' rights.

From a practical standpoint, Ghannouchi's idea of a civilian state serves as an important reference for democratic education in Muslim-majority societies. The concept of *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* affirms the role of religion as a source of public ethics without making it a tool of state law enforcement. From a practical standpoint, Rached Ghannouchi's idea of a civil state offers an important framework for strengthening democratic education in Muslim-majority societies. The concept of *al-dawla al-madaniyyah* affirms the role of religion as a source of public ethics without reducing it to a tool of state law enforcement, thereby opening space for democratic learning that respects pluralism and the equality of citizenship. In the context of Indonesia, which has a tradition of religious pluralism rooted in Islamic boarding schools and community organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the concept of a civil state has significant pedagogical relevance. Islamic boarding schools and educational institutions managed by Islamic organizations not only serve as spaces for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as arenas for the formation of social ethics, tolerant attitudes, and civic awareness. Therefore, democracy education can be substantively integrated through curriculum, learning practices, and institutional culture that emphasizes dialogue, deliberation (*shura*), respect for differences, and social responsibility. This pedagogical approach allows democratic values to be instilled not just as normative knowledge, but also as learning

⁴² Rached Ghannouchi and Andrew F. March, 'The Implications and Requirements of a Post-Revolutionary Constitution', in *On Muslim Democracy*, 1st edn, by Rached Ghannouchi and Andrew F. March (Oxford University Press New York, 2023), 130–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197666876.003.0010>.

⁴³ Ghannouchi, *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State*.

experiences that form democratic habitus.⁴⁴ However, the effectiveness of such integration is highly dependent on the capacity of educational institutions, educators' competence, an inclusive curriculum, and a learning environment that encourages critical thinking and student reflective participation.⁴⁵ Democracy education can draw on the framework of the civil state to instill the values of tolerance, equal citizenship, and respect for differences, while recognizing the role of religion in shaping social ethics. However, the effectiveness of this approach depends on strong educational institutions, an inclusive curriculum, and a learning environment that encourages dialogue and critical thinking.

An important question, however, concerns why democratic education requires a renewed normative framework if civic education, character education, and religious instruction already exist in Indonesia. The challenge does not primarily lie in the absence of democracy education, but rather in its fragmented and insufficiently transformative character. In many formal educational settings, democratic education remains largely procedural, emphasizing constitutional knowledge, electoral mechanisms, and citizenship obligations, while failing to adequately cultivate deliberative capacity, ethical reasoning, and democratic dispositions in everyday political life. Similarly, religious education and pesantren traditions often emphasize morality, obedience, and communal ethics. Yet, these values are not always explicitly connected to democratic citizenship, public accountability, anti-corruption ethics, or pluralistic engagement. As a result, democratic values may be understood normatively but fail to shape political behavior in practice.

This gap helps explain why democratic vulnerabilities persist even in a society with strong traditions of religious and moral education. The existence of corruption among educated elites, including some individuals with religious educational backgrounds, demonstrates that moral instruction alone is insufficient without a pedagogical framework that links ethical values to civic responsibility and public accountability. Likewise, while many pesantren traditions cultivate deliberation, collective decision-making, and communal solidarity, these democratic elements are often embedded in internal institutional culture rather than systematically translated into broader democratic literacy concerning citizenship, state accountability, and public participation. Therefore, the contribution of Ghannouchi's thought lies not in replacing existing democratic or religious education but in offering a normative-pedagogical bridge through which Islamic ethical values, particularly *shūrā*, justice, and the public good (*maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*), can be transformed into democratic habits, civic ethics, and reflective political participation.

⁴⁴ H. A. R. Tilaar, *Social change and education: an introduction to transformative pedagogic for Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia in collaboration with the Center for Education and Community Development Studies, 2002), 57.

⁴⁵ Abdullah M. Al-Ansi and Rinikso Kartono, 'The Role of Islamic Organizations "Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama" in Forming National Politics in Indonesia', *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics* 3, no. 2 (May 2023): 87–98, <https://doi.org/10.33258/polit.v3i2.895>.

However, there are serious limitations in the direct application of the Ghannouchi framework in the context of Indonesian democratic education. First, institutional conditions and national political dynamics such as structural corruption, legal politicization, and political commercialization affect the political education and citizenship ecosystem. As transactional and pragmatic political practices dominate the public space, democracy education faces the challenge of translating normative values into meaningful learning. This shows that democratic education based on Islamic values cannot stand alone without the support of broader institutional reforms.

Second, socio-cultural factors, such as identity polarization and the narrowing of civil society space, also affect the effectiveness of democracy education. In a context where public discourse is dominated by identity mobilization and affective rhetoric, the *principle of shura*, as rational deliberation, faces serious obstacles. Democracy education needs to be designed to build citizens' deliberative capacity, including media literacy, critical thinking, and ethical public dialogue. Without strengthening this pedagogical dimension, *shura* risks being reduced to a normative concept powerless to confront polarized political realities.

Third, the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach offers normative opportunities for democracy education in instilling the values of social justice, anti-corruption, and the protection of minority rights. By making the public good the main orientation, democracy education can frame political participation as a moral responsibility of citizens. However, as in the realm of policy, *maqāṣid* in education risk becoming mere moral rhetoric if they are not operationalized through curriculum, learning methods, and concrete evaluation. Therefore, integrating *maqāṣid* into democratic education requires the formulation of clear, accountable pedagogical indicators.⁴⁶

Overall, the implications of Ghannouchi's thinking for democracy education in Indonesia lie in its ability to provide a normative bridge between religious traditions and modern democratic values. Democracy education is a strategic means of transforming the values of *shura*, *maqāṣid*, and the civil state into civic awareness and practice. However, the success of this transformation depends heavily on the quality of educational institutions, a supportive political culture, and synergy between the state and civil society. In the Indonesian context, Ghannouchi's main contribution is not to offer a ready-to-use educational model, but rather a reflective framework that encourages the formulation of democratic education rooted in moderate, critical, and substantive Islamic values, with a view to strengthening substantive democracy.

Conclusion

This study argues that Rachid Ghannouchi's political thought provides a significant normative framework for understanding democracy as an Islamic value while simultaneously offering a pedagogical basis for strengthening democratic education in Indonesia. Through the interconnected principles of *shūrā*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and *al-dawla al-madaniyyah*, Ghannouchi

⁴⁶ Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*.

repositions democracy not as an external political model imposed upon Muslim societies, but as an ethical and institutional mechanism compatible with Islamic values of justice, public participation, pluralism, and civic responsibility. In the Indonesian context, these principles provide an important normative resource for responding to democratic challenges, particularly the erosion of civic ethics, identity polarization, and the weakening of deliberative political culture.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic democracy by extending the discussion beyond questions of normative compatibility to the pedagogical dimension of democratic consolidation. Rather than treating democracy solely as a constitutional or institutional arrangement, this article emphasizes the importance of democratic education as a medium for internalizing Islamic ethical values into civic behavior and political culture. In this respect, Ghannouchi's thought offers a productive framework for bridging Islamic moral traditions and democratic citizenship in Muslim-majority societies.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, it relies primarily on conceptual and normative analysis based on library research, without empirical investigation into the implementation of democracy education informed by Islamic values in Indonesia. Second, the transferability of Ghannouchi's framework from Tunisia to Indonesia requires careful contextual adaptation, given the differences in political institutions, socio-religious configurations, and democratic trajectories between the two countries.

Future research may expand this inquiry through empirical studies on the integration of Islamic democratic values within civic and religious education institutions, particularly in Islamic boarding schools, universities, and civil society organizations. Comparative studies between Ghannouchi's thought and other contemporary Muslim democratic thinkers may also provide a broader understanding of how Islamic political ethics can contribute to democratic resilience in Muslim-majority societies.

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