

# Talab al-Nusrah and Non-Violent Political Change: Study of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia

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## Abstract

This paper examines the non-violent political strategy employed by Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM), with a focus on its interpretation and application of the concept of *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* within Malaysia's secular-democratic political environment. Rooted in the prophetic methodology (*Ṭarīqah Nabawiyyah*) articulated by the movement's founder, Taqīyuddīn an-Nabhānī, *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* is a strategic appeal to those in positions of power (*ahl al-quwwah*), seeking their support for the establishment of an Islamic state (*Khilāfah*). Through a qualitative analysis, drawing on semi-structured interviews with HTM leaders, this paper investigates how HTM adheres to this methodology and its implications for the organization's political behaviour, strategic planning, and organizational positioning. The paper explores HTM's three-phase strategy for political change, inspired by the Prophet Muhammad's model of state-building in Madinah: intellectual cultivation (*tathqīf*), public interaction (*tafā'ul*), and political power transfer (*istilām al-ḥukm*) via elite endorsement. Despite the secular nature of the Malaysian political system, HTM maintains a strict non-violent stance, rejecting both democratic participation and militant resistance. The strategic application of *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* is examined as a critical, non-confrontational means of securing elite support for Islamic governance, drawing on historical precedents from the Prophet's era. This study contributes to the broader discourse on non-violent Islamist movements by highlighting HTM's ideological and strategic framework, offering insights into the practical application of religiously framed political transformation. It addresses the challenges faced by HTM in Malaysia, such as legal exclusion, public suspicion, and societal perceptions of its goals. The paper concludes by reflecting on the resilience and ideological coherence of HTM's strategy, asserting that the pursuit of *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* offers a distinctive model for political Islam that remains relevant in the contemporary global landscape, particularly in secular, pluralistic contexts.

**Keywords:** *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah*, Political Transition, Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia, Prophetic Methodology, Islamic Politics



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## Introduction

The resurgence of Islamic movements in the 20th and 21st centuries has garnered renewed scholarly attention, especially regarding the strategies and methodologies employed by Islamist groups advocating for political transformation. Among these movements, Hizbut Tahrir (HT) distinguishes itself with its non-violent approach to re-establishing the Islamic Caliphate (Khilāfah), using what it calls the *Ṭarīqah Nabawiyyah* (Methodology of the Prophet) (Orofino, 2021). Central to this approach is the concept of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah*—seeking support from those in positions of political and military authority (*ahl al-quwwah*)—as a non-electoral and non-violent means of transferring power. This strategy is a departure from movements that pursue democratic politics or engage in armed resistance, both of which HT explicitly rejects. Instead, Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) follows a three-stage process inspired by the Prophet Muhammad's method of state-building in Madinah: intellectual cultivation (*tathqīf*), public interaction (*tafā'ul*), and taking control of political power (*istilām al-ḥukm*) through elite endorsement (Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia, 2011; Osman, 2009). The emphasis on *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as a crucial stage in this strategy highlights HTM's adherence to the theological and strategic teachings of its founder, Taqīyuddīn an-Nabhānī, particularly his seminal work, *Kitāb al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah* (Taqīyuddīn al-Nabhānī, 1998).

Although detailed studies on Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) remain limited, broader global analyses of HT offer a useful context for understanding *ṭalab al-nuṣrah*. HT is consistently portrayed as a pan-Islamic movement with a unified doctrinal framework. (Sadek Hamid, 2007) stresses that HT prioritizes the goal of establishing a global Khilāfah above all other concerns, rejecting both democracy and pluralism as incompatible with Islam. In this context, the pursuit of elite support is seen as a central, universal tactic of HT. Osman (2010) traces the movement's expansion from the Middle East to Asia and Europe, noting its transnational links, such as the influence of HT's chapters in Australia and the UK. The 2007 Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) conference in Jakarta, attended by leaders including members of HTM, showcased the movement's shared strategies across countries, reinforcing the idea that HTM follows the same core doctrine regarding *ṭalab al-nuṣrah*. Losi et al. (2021) also acknowledges HT as an avowedly non-violent group, despite its radical ideological stance, further supporting the view that HTM adheres to the multi-stage model (*tathqīf / tafā'ul / istilām*) and the non-violent persuasion of elites.

Indonesia's experience provides a comparative example of *ṭalab al-nuṣrah* in practice. Scholarship shows that HTI actively sought elite support as part of its strategic framework. Ward (2009) explains that HTI's "third stage" *istilām al-ḥukm* is a direct appeal for power, modelled after the Prophet's strategy of seeking help from powerful tribes. Osman (2010) highlights HTI's cultivation of a "*nuṣrah* network" among high-ranking officials, particularly in provinces like Aceh and Sulawesi, describing it as one of HTI's most critical strategies. Hasanuddin & Edi Sabara Manik (2018) highlight key conditions for *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* to successfully lead to the establishment of the Islamic State. First, there must be widespread public support and awareness among Muslims, with a shared desire for Islamic governance by both the general population and the people in power (*ahl al-quwwah*). This includes understanding the concept of Khilafah, recognizing the efforts of non-Muslim nations to block

it, and the need for the ummah to free itself from non-Islamic governments. Second, the country must be capable of independently protecting the Islamic State's existence without external control. Finally, the people in power (*ahl al-quwwah*) must sincerely support the cause with deep conviction in Islam, free from external influence, ensuring the successful transfer of power and establishment of the Islamic State. Al Amin et al. (2025) document HTI's outreach to legislators and clerics, with efforts to secure support from influential political figures such as Deputy Speaker of Parliament Fadli Zon. This outreach, however, was not an attempt to immediately seize power but rather to protect and legitimize the movement politically. Although HTI's efforts ultimately did not lead to the establishment of a caliphate and HTI was banned in 2017, these efforts exemplify the practical application of *ṭalab al-nuṣrah* in the pursuit of political legitimacy.

In summary, past academic literature portrays *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as a key non-violent strategy in HT's revolutionary blueprint. Theoretical works situate it within the prophetic model of persuasion, with strict conditions, while strategic analyses depict it as the culmination of earlier stages of ideological formation and public engagement. The case of HTI, along with the limited available evidence from Malaysia, suggests that HT branches interpret *ṭalab al-nuṣrah* similarly as a means of cultivating elite support through ideological persuasion, rather than through force. This convergence supports the argument that HT's notion of *ṭalab al-nuṣrah* underpins its approach to non-violent political change, even as critics continue to debate its viability. This paper investigates how HTM applies *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* within Malaysia's secular-democratic political context. The study asks: How does HTM implement this strategy in practice? How does it position itself ideologically in relation to democratic activism and militant resistance? What implications does its model offer for understanding non-violent Islamist political movements in modern nation-states? Drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with HTM leaders, conducted between January and February 2025, this paper examines how HTM's adherence to *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* shapes its organizational behaviour, strategic planning, and political positioning. Respondent names have been anonymized in accordance with the University of Malaya Research Ethics Committee (UMREC) guidelines. The paper situates HTM's approach within broader discussions on Islamist non-violence, elite negotiation, and religiously framed political change, contributing to the scholarship on Islamic political thought by exploring an under-examined model of political transition that claims divine legitimacy while rejecting mainstream power acquisition strategies.

## Prophetic Methodology and *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah*

The ideological core of Hizbut Tahrir is grounded in the writings of its founder, Taqīyuddīn an-Nabhānī, particularly his articulation of the *Ṭarīqah Nabawiyyah* —the prophetic methodology—as a binding framework for political change. An-Nabhānī contends that the Prophet Muḥammad's approach to establishing the Islamic state in Madinah must be treated not merely as sacred history, but as a divinely ordained and replicable political model. This methodology, as codified in works such as *Kitāb al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah*, delineates three successive stages: *tathqīf* (ideological formation), *tafā'ul ma'a al-ummah* (interaction with the society), and culminating in *istilām al-ḥukm* (taking control of political power) (Taqīyuddīn al-

Nabhānī, 1998). Among these, *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* functions as the crucial hinge between the phase of grassroots ideological mobilization and the actualization of political authority. Derived from the Prophet's historical appeal to powerful tribal leaders—most notably the tribes of Aws and Khazraj—this concept involves direct engagement with the *ahl al-quwwah* (people in power), such as military or political elites, with the aim of securing protection (*ḥimāyah*) and a peaceful transition of power. This appeal culminated in the Second Bay'ah al-'Aqabah, which granted the Prophet the necessary support to migrate to Yathrib and establish the first Islamic State.

For an-Nabhānī and Hizbut Tahrir, this model possesses prescriptive authority. It not only outlines a step-by-step path to re-establishing the Islamic State but also imposes a set of restrictions: participation in modern electoral politics or engagement in militant uprisings is seen as deviation from the prophetic path. This is rooted in the *ḥujjiyyah* (binding evidentiary status) attributed to the Prophet's actions in seeking *nuṣrah* (support), rather than forcefully seizing power or contesting tribal politics through public vote. This framework contrasts with prevailing models in political science, which categorize political transitions through democratic participation, revolutionary violence, or elite bargaining within constitutional boundaries. Hizbut Tahrir asserts an alternative: a non-violent, ideologically driven elite negotiation, grounded in sacred precedent rather than political contingency.

In the Malaysian context, this theoretical commitment is reflected in Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia's (HTM) deliberate disengagement from formal political processes such as elections, party registration, and street-based protest movements. Instead, HTM invests its efforts in ideological education, cultivating public consciousness, and quietly seeking alignment with actors perceived to wield structural power (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). The rejection of democracy is not merely strategic but principled, as is the refusal to engage in violence (Olsson, 2021). Both are seen as incompatible with the *Sunnah*-based framework HTM follows. The findings from interviews and textual analysis reveal a coherent, if uncompromising, HTM perspective on political change (Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia, 2011; HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025). Several core themes emerge: (1) HTM's ideological grounding in an-Nabhānī's three-phase *da'wah* model; (2) the specific role of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as the pivotal transition to power; (3) the group's principled commitment to non-violence and rejection of democracy; and (4) sharp contrasts with other Islamic movements operating in Malaysia.

According to interviewees, HTM's three-phase strategy is directly modelled on the *Sīrah* and formally structured into the following stages:

1. *Marḥalat al-Taḥqīf wa al-Taqwīn* (educational/cadre-building phase). This initial stage emphasizes *taḥqīq al-fikr*—the cultivation of deep Islamic understanding among members. HTM seeks to “build the ummah” by instilling an Islamic worldview and preparing disciplined cadres through small study circles (*ḥalaqāt*), led by trained supervisors (*mushrif*) and cantered on an-Nabhānī's texts. As HTM Former Leader (2025) explained, “The first stage—*taḥqīf*—is to build the ummah, give them understanding, teach them Islam's concepts... and prepare this community to join Hizbut Tahrir.”
2. *Marḥalat al-Taḥā'ul ma'a al-Ummah* (interaction with the community). In this phase, HTM engages the broader Muslim public to shift opinion (*ra'y al-ām*) in favor of the

Caliphate and Islamic political solutions. Crucially, this is also the phase in which *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* is initiated. HTM activists covertly approach political and military elites—the *ahl al-quwwah*—to request their support in enabling the implementation of *Sharī‘ah*. As HTM Former Leader (2025) noted, “At the same time we make contact... to meet those who hold power today, to call them to give *nuṣrah* to Hizbut Tahrir.” The aim is twofold: first, to secure *ḥimāyah* for the movement; second, to prepare the ground for the transfer of authority (*istilām al-ḥukm*).

3. *Marḥalat al-Iṣṭilām al-Ḥukm* (seizing power). Once *nuṣrah* is obtained, HTM expects to declare the Caliphate, appoint a Caliph through legitimate *bay‘ah*, and implement Islamic governance. As the HTM Spokesperson (2025) said, “If God’s will, the *Khilāfah* will be established, Hizbut Tahrir will declare it... and will request Muslims worldwide to give *bay‘ah* to the Caliph.”

Together, these phases form a structured revolutionary strategy that HTM insists is replicable across different national contexts—including secular democracies like Malaysia (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). HTM defines *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as the critical, secretive bridge between ideological *da‘wah* and actual state-building. Rather than popular mobilization or insurrection, the movement pursues elite endorsement modelled on the Prophet’s negotiations with the Aws and Khazraj. As HTM Spokesperson (2025) puts it, “Just as in the time of the Prophet there was *nuṣrah* from Aus and Khazraj... so too today we seek *nuṣrah* from the *ahl al-quwwah*... and then give that rule to Hizbut Tahrir”. This method parallels Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia’s own *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* efforts, which involved systematically approaching military, political, and religious elites as part of its second stage of *da‘wah* to secure the transfer of authority for the re-establishment of the caliphate (Muhtadi, 2009; Zulkifli, 2024).

## HTM’s Ideological Foundations and Strategic Vision

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) derives its ideological orientation entirely from the foundational texts authored by Taqīyuddīn an-Nabhānī, most prominently *Kitāb al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah*, which outlines the theological, legal, and historical framework of the Islamic State and the necessity of its re-establishment (HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025). These texts, known internally as *kutub al-mutabannāt* (adopted books), serve not only as doctrinal references but also as pedagogical tools in the organization’s structured educational process (*halaqāt*), in which all members are systematically trained (Rijal, 2011). HTM’s worldview is centered on three inseparable principles: the obligation to re-establish the *Khilāfah*, the binding nature of the prophetic methodology, and the rejection of modern political paradigms, particularly democracy and nationalism. These ideas are not mere slogans but are codified in the party’s internal structure, political messaging, and outreach strategies. Leaders of HTM consistently assert that Islam is a complete system of life, not limited to worship or personal morality, but encompassing governance, economics, social policy, and international relations (HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025). In this view, the Prophet’s political leadership in Madinah is not just historical precedent but a divinely mandated model. Within this ideological framework, HTM categorically rejects the legitimacy of the existing secular-democratic order in Malaysia. It argues that the current political system, in which

legislation is determined by elected representatives and subject to popular vote, violates the Islamic principle of *al-siyādah li al-sharī'ah* (sovereignty belongs to the *Sharī'ah*). In contrast, HTM envisions a state in which sovereignty belongs to divine law, and political authority is vested in a single *Khalīfah*, chosen by the *ummah* but bound entirely to the implementation of Islamic law. HTM's strategic vision aligns closely with its global parent organization, Hizbut Tahrir, but it operates with localized awareness. The organization recognizes Malaysia as part of *Bilād al-Muslimīn* (the Lands of the Muslims) rather than as an Islamic state (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). It argues that while the population is majority Muslim, the political system, constitution, and law enforcement are fundamentally secular, making Malaysia a territory in need of ideological reform and eventual integration into the re-established *Khilāfah*. Strategically, HTM's mission in Malaysia is not to capture local power or influence national elections, but rather to prepare the Muslim population—intellectually and emotionally—for the eventual rise of the *Khilāfah* (HTM Former Leader, 2025). This preparation involves instilling a sense of political consciousness that transcends national identity and orients Muslims toward global Islamic unity. HTM also claims to actively counter what it perceives as Western ideological encroachment, including liberalism, feminism, secularism, and pluralism, which it sees as threats to Islamic authenticity (HTM Former Leader, 2025). This ideological consistency reinforces HTM's identity as a movement that is uncompromising in principle, globally aligned yet locally embedded, and strategically positioned outside the bonds of conventional political engagement. In this context, *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* emerges as a logical and necessary instrument of transition, fitting squarely within its theological vision and practical constraints.

## The Application of *Ṭalab al-Nuṣrah* in The Malaysian Context

The application of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* by Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) represents a distinctive strategy that bridges ideological rigidity with pragmatic engagement in a secular-democratic society. According to HTM Spokesperson (2025), *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* refers to the process of approaching individuals or groups who hold real power (*ahl al-quwwah*)—whether in the military, royal institutions, or political elites—to seek their support in transferring authority to implement Islamic rule. This method, rooted in the Prophet Muḥammad's approach before the Hijrah, is interpreted by HTM as a divinely sanctioned means of political transition that must be replicated in all times and places.

This approach aligns with broader analyses of Hizb ut-Tahrir's transnational methodology, which emphasizes its reliance on engagement with the *ahl al-quwwah* rather than mass electoral participation as the primary means of achieving political change (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006). In practice, HTM maintains that its efforts to seek *nuṣrah* in Malaysia are covert and highly selective. Drawing from the example of the Prophet's secret approach to tribal leaders before the Second *Bay'ah al-'Aqabah*, HTM argues that the confidentiality of this phase is a strategic necessity (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). Nevertheless, the group does not conceal the concept itself; rather, it openly teaches *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as a doctrinal pillar in its public literature and educational programs. Interviewees emphasized that the method must remain faithful to its original purpose: securing a peaceful handover of power without engaging in

rebellion, electoral contestation, or political negotiation under secular terms (HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025).

HTM's Former Leader (2025), explained that *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* serves two functions. First, it is a request for *ḥimāyah* (protection), enabling HTM to continue its intellectual and social outreach without state interference. Second, it is a means to initiate *istilām al-ḥukm*—the final phase in which the *Khilāfah* is declared, a *Khalīfah* is appointed, and Islamic law is comprehensively implemented. This dual function positions *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* as both a safeguard for the movement's continuity and a mechanism for revolutionary transition—without violence. In the Malaysian context, the choice of potential *ahl al-quwwah* is shaped by political realities. HTM sources broadly define this category as senior military officials, influential political figures, and traditional rulers who command legitimacy and force within the national framework (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). Although no explicit targets are named, the organization affirms that its members are trained to identify and approach these figures with discretion.

The clandestine nature of this process also reflects the legal constraints HTM faces. The group remains unregistered and unrecognized by the Malaysian government, and it has been declared deviant by religious authorities in multiple states (Aswar, 2024). Operating under such scrutiny, HTM's application of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* must navigate legal sensitivities while preserving its ideological purity. The secrecy surrounding the practical execution of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* serves to avoid potential crackdowns, while public affirmation of the method serves to educate and prepare its members for eventual success. While critics may question the feasibility of securing elite support without political participation or military power, HTM defends its position by appealing to the precedent of the Prophet. As the HTM Spokesperson (2025) explained, "Rasulullah never took up arms or ran for office; he sought *nuṣrah*, and that's exactly what we do." In this way, HTM reframes its non-participation not as passivity, but as active alignment with prophetic legitimacy.

In sum, HTM's application of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* in Malaysia reflects a calculated blend of theological fidelity, organizational discipline, and strategic adaptability. It allows the group to claim engagement with the political sphere without compromising its core rejection of democracy and militancy. More importantly, it offers HTM a blueprint for political change that is both idealistic and executable—within its own framework.

## Non-Participation in Democracy and Rejection of Militancy

A defining feature of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia's (HTM) political orientation is its categorical rejection of both democratic participation and militant revolution as legitimate pathways to political change (HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025). This dual refusal sets HTM apart from many contemporary Islamic movements in Malaysia, including the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) and other groups that seek Islamic governance through elections, parliamentary participation, or armed insurgency. HTM's position is not merely strategic; it is rooted in a theological critique of both systems, which it views as fundamentally incompatible with Islamic principles. A similar stance can be observed in Indonesia, where HTI activists have historically refrained from participating in general elections on the grounds that such processes

do not represent Islamic ideals (Ali Maksum et al., 2022; Sabri et al., 2018). HTM's rejection of democracy is based on its understanding of *al-siyādah li al-sharī'ah*—that sovereignty belongs solely to divine law. In the democratic system, by contrast, legislative authority rests with the people or their representatives, who possess the power to create, amend, or repeal laws. For HTM, this constitutes an act of *shirk* (associating partners with God) in legislative sovereignty. As articulated by HTM spokespersons, democracy inverts the rightful order by replacing God's law with human will. This theological critique forms the basis of the group's refusal to participate in elections, register as a political party, or seek policy influence through state institutions.

Furthermore, HTM critiques democracy as a Western colonial construct imposed upon Muslim societies after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate. The group views the electoral process as a mechanism for reinforcing national borders and sectarian identities, thereby fragmenting the *ummah* and preventing the restoration of the *Khilāfah*. From this perspective, even Islamic parties operating within democratic systems are seen as complicit in maintaining a secular world order that ultimately undermines Islam (Alvian, 2023). Equally important is HTM's repudiation of militancy as a method for political transformation. Unlike groups that pursue armed struggle or revolution, HTM upholds a commitment to non-violence, intellectual engagement, and peaceful activism. It explicitly condemns acts of terrorism and violent rebellion, arguing that these methods are not only strategically flawed but also violate the prophetic methodology. The Prophet Muḥammad, HTM argues, did not use violence to establish the Islamic state; instead, he relied on ideological propagation and the strategic securing of elite support through *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). Thus, any deviation from this model—whether through force or ballots—is considered a betrayal of the *Sunnah*.

This principled stance has shaped HTM's organizational behaviour in Malaysia. Despite being unregistered and labelled as deviant by religious authorities in several states, HTM continues to operate openly through seminars, public discussions, online publications, and intellectual outreach. The group distances itself from any association with extremism and frames accusations of radicalism as state-led attempts to suppress dissenting Islamic voices. Its leaders consistently emphasize that HTM's methods are “intellectual, political, and peaceful,” and that its goal—*isti'nāf al-ḥayāh al-Islāmiyyah* (the resumption of Islamic life) must be achieved through lawful and divinely guided means (HTM Former Leader, 2025; HTM Spokesperson, 2025). This rejection of both democratic activism and militancy renders HTM a politically anomalous actor within Malaysia's Islamic landscape. It neither seeks integration into the political mainstream nor engages in insurgency. Instead, it maintains a unique position: outside the system, yet still actively involved in shaping ideological discourse and public consciousness. This strategic posture enables HTM to uphold its ideological consistency while navigating the structural constraints of a secular, pluralistic, and legally restrictive environment.

## Challenges and Adaptations in a Secular-Religious Society

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) operates within a unique political environment that combines secular legal structures with Islamic cultural and religious identity. Malaysia's constitutional



framework is officially secular, grounded in parliamentary democracy and rule of law, yet Islam is recognized as the religion of the federation. This duality creates both opportunities and challenges for HTM, which seeks to advance a vision of Islamic governance that transcends the nation-state and rejects the democratic process. One of the primary challenges HTM faces is legal and institutional exclusion. Despite its decades-long presence in the country, HTM remains unregistered as a political or religious organization. Its repeated attempts to gain legal recognition have been rejected by the government without formal explanation (Habibi & Bin Yahya, 2023). Furthermore, HTM has been declared deviant by religious authorities in multiple Malaysian states, including Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Johor, on the grounds that its teachings deviate from the dominant understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. These rulings, while not constituting a federal ban, have significantly limited HTM's ability to organize public events, rent venues, or access mainstream religious platforms (HTM Spokesperson, 2025). A parallel can be seen in Indonesia, where the government formally dissolved Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in July 2017 under a controversial legal amendment. Critics argued that the dissolution reflected a paradox of democracy, as undemocratic measures were employed to constrain an anti-democratic movement. While the government justified the move on grounds of national stability, legal scholars highlighted that a proportional response should have been adopted, focusing on HTI's actions and strategies rather than its ideological stance (Taufik, 2018).

Socially, HTM also contends with widespread suspicion and misperception. Its rejection of elections and democracy has led to accusations of extremism or subversion, particularly in a context where political participation is seen as both normative and necessary. The association of *Khilāfah* discourse with transnational terrorism in global media further complicates HTM's public image. Although HTM consistently disavows violence and emphasizes its peaceful methodology, these denials are often overshadowed by public fear and official scrutiny. In addition, HTM must navigate the sensitivities of Malaysia's multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. Its calls for Islamic governance are often perceived as a threat to national unity or minority rights. To address this, HTM articulates a narrative that highlights Islam's historical protection of non-Muslims under *ahl al-dhimma* arrangements and insists that non-Muslims would be guaranteed religious freedom under the future *Khilāfah* (HTM Former Leader, 2025). Nevertheless, such arguments are met with skepticism by non-Muslim communities and viewed as politically unviable by many Muslims accustomed to Malaysia's pluralistic framework.

Despite these constraints, HTM has demonstrated a degree of tactical adaptation in its public outreach. While it continues to reject democratic participation, HTM has leveraged digital media, intellectual forums, and informal networks to expand its influence. The group disseminates its ideas through online platforms, including its official website, social media channels, and digital newsletters. These tools allow HTM to bypass state restrictions and engage directly with audiences, particularly educated Muslim youth seeking alternatives to mainstream political Islam. Moreover, HTM has refined its language and tone to avoid direct confrontation with the state, focusing instead on critique of ideas rather than personalities or institutions. It presents its message as a return to Islamic authenticity rather than a revolutionary agenda. Similar adaptive strategies have been documented in Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, which, under intense state repression, reframed its narratives, shifted mobilisation arenas, and built alliances with sympathetic elites while preserving its core methodology (Aswar, 2022). Internally, the

group maintains a high degree of discipline, ideological training, and member cohesion through structured *halaqāt* and leadership development programs. In balancing its ideological commitments with the realities of operating under state and societal constraints, HTM reveals the paradox of non-violent Islamist movements in secular-religious societies: while committed to peaceful change, their uncompromising vision and legal marginalization often place them at odds with both the state and the broader public. Nonetheless, HTM continues to function as a consistent, if controversial, voice within Malaysia's Islamic discourse—steadfast in its belief that real change can only come through the divinely sanctioned route of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* and the restoration of the *Khilāfah*.

## Conclusion

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) offers a compelling case study of how a transnational Islamist movement can localize and apply a rigid ideological framework—rooted in classical Islamic texts and prophetic precedent—within the context of a modern, pluralistic, and legally restrictive nation-state. Central to HTM's model of political transformation is the concept of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah*, which it understands as a sacred strategy drawn from the Prophet Muḥammad's efforts in Mecca to secure elite support for the establishment of the Islamic state in Madinah. This paper has demonstrated that HTM's interpretation of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* is not merely symbolic or historical, but operational. It functions as a core strategic pillar that justifies the group's rejection of both democratic participation and militant revolution. While other Islamist movements may adopt more pragmatic or hybrid approaches, engaging in electoral politics or revolutionary violence, HTM insists on strict adherence to what it considers a divinely sanctioned methodology. In the Malaysian context, this approach places HTM at odds with the prevailing political system, state institutions, and even broader Islamic activist trends. Yet, it is precisely this ideological consistency and strategic distinctiveness that defines HTM's identity. Its commitment to non-violent political change through elite persuasion, rather than electoral participation or public uprising, marks it as a unique actor within the global Islamist spectrum. Despite facing institutional repression, legal marginalization, and public scepticism, HTM continues to function through educational programs, online dissemination, and structured internal training. The group's ability to sustain its operations and ideological cohesion—despite not participating in any formal political process—illustrates the resilience of its strategy and the enduring appeal of its message among certain segments of the Muslim population. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of *Ṭalab Al-Nuṣrah* not just as a doctrinal point, but as a lens through which to understand HTM's broader political behaviour. It also contributes to the scholarship on non-violent Islamist movements by offering a nuanced understanding of how such groups pursue radical goals through non-violent means, outside the formal political system, and often in tension with both state and society. As secular governance continues to confront Islamic revivalist demands, models like HTM's warrant close analytical attention for what they reveal about the future of political Islam in the 21st century.

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