MIDAS CONFERENCE 2015 REPORT

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Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security

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MiDAS CONFERENCE 2015 REPORT

22 September 2015 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Theme: EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY



MIDAS CONFERENCE 2015 REPORT

Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security

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The Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security (MiDAS) was established in April 2010 under the purview of the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia. It is poised to become a centre of excellence for the Ministry of Defence and Government of Malaysia in the defence and security field through comprehensive research and sharing of knowledge. In generating new ideas it shall include various activities such as forums, debates, seminars and publishing of journal on defence and security. MiDAS is premised at the Ministry of Defence in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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This report summarizes the proceeding of the conference as interpreted by the assigned rapporteurs and editor appointed by the Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security (MiDAS). Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

This conference adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, beyond the paper presenters cited, no other attributions have been included in this conference report.









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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Foreword



The Ministry of Defence Malaysia is entrusted to defend and secure our nation's interests, territory and sovereignty. In addition to the contemporary and pragmatic approaches, creative strategies are also required in order to achieve these objectives. One of the proven mechanisms to harness creativity is by knowledge sharing of information, ideas and research. The successful 3rd MiDAS Conference 2015 organised by MiDAS with the theme 'Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security' are among such efforts and actions in total help sustain and ensure Malaysia's security, peace and prosperity in the long term. As such the importance of this conference and its topics should help us reconsider some of our approaches in defence and security policies that are currently implemented. From the formation of Malaysia up to today, security policies and initiatives have been implemented to ensure that peace that we have enjoyed all these years will continue. MiDAS Conference is a platform where all the stakeholders are able to look at the traditional and non traditional sources of the security challenges that face the nation and region. Once again we have documented the proceedings of the Conference which is abundant with invaluable information, knowledge and research of the distinguished speakers in the report.

I am satisfied that based on the conference's three sessions of presentations and discussions have highlighted the issue of radicalism in Malaysia, the growing threat of ISIS, its impact on society as well as efforts governments may take to counter religious extremism. I sincerely hope that what have transpired during the MiDAS Conference 2015 can be considered diligently or at least become the first step that could lead to better solutions, within MINDEF and beyond. As Defence Minister and Chairman of MiDAS, I am pleased to present to you the MiDAS Conference Report 2015.

Thank you.

Dato' Seri Hishamuddin Tun Hussein, Chairman of MiDAS

Executive Summary



Group photograph with Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, Datuk Seri Abdul Rahim Radzi seated centre

The MiDAS Conference 2015 with the theme 'Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security' was successfully organised by the Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security (MiDAS) at the Royale Chulan Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on 22nd September 2015. It is an informal platform for policy makers, defence and security agencies and think tanks as well as academicians to meet, discuss and share knowledge to promote understanding and know how on national issues in the context of local environment. It also looks to provide a bridge on having beneficial information and perspectives to translate regional and international defence and security issues.

This is done through a keynote and opening address and three sessions that addressed current events related to the issue, its implications and future challenges to the national defence and security landscape regionally and globally.

This 3rd MiDAS Conference 2015 has helped to highlight the alarming rate in which radical ideologies were being spread globally and locally.

The objective was to provide an insight that Malaysia is against any acts of extremism and militancy. Clearly, the three sessions helped provide new perspectives, experiences and research that would be important as input to national policy makers, academicians, and defence and enforcement agencies that facing similar issues in the daily running of their ministries, departments and agencies.

MiDAS Conference 2015 was officiated by the Honourable Dato' Seri Hishamuddin Tun Hussein, the Minister of Defence. His keynote and opening address was delivered by the Secretary General, Ministry of Defence, Dato' Sri Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi. At the end of the conference, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi delivered the Closing Remarks. The Deputy Prime Minster had sincerely hoped that similar forum should be held continuously to spread the message that Malaysia is against any acts of extremism and militancy and cautioned the media and conference participants that if it is not addressed accordingly, may divide our community that is built based on diversity and trust.



Secretary General of Ministry of Defence Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi representing the Hon. Minister of Defence, Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein



Distinguished guests and conference participants

The three sessions addressed pertinent topics on 'Militant Ideologies and Radicalisation in Malaysia', 'Islamic State: A Growing Threat To National Security' and 'Countering Extremism and Radicalisation: Initiatives and Strategies'.

Session 1 of MiDAS Conference 2015 was entitled 'Militant Ideologies and Radicalisation in Malaysia'. Four speakers presented the subject, Mr. Hamzah Ishak from the National Security Council (NSC); Prof Datuk Abdul Halim Sidek, Secretary of the Politics, Security, and International Affairs Cluster of the National Council of Professors (MPN); Dr Amran Muhammad, Principal Fellow at the Malaysia Institute of Islamic Strategic Studies (IKSIM); and Lt Gen Dato' Sri Zaini Hj Mohd Said (R), former Field Commander, Army Headquarters Malaysia. It was moderated by Tan Sri Mohamad Jawhar Hassan, a Distinguished Fellow of MiDAS.

Session 1 discussed the history, background as well as the evolution of extremism and radicalism in Malaysia and abroad. The IS recruits from this region were just a small fraction of the whole IS foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq as compared to the fighters from Arab countries as well as Western Europe. There are needs for diplomatic push to resolve the underlying cause that ails the Middle East. Malaysia in particular, must formulate strategies to deal with militant returnees whom equipped with terrorism know-how.

Session 2 was entitled, *'Islamic State: A Growing Threat to National Security'*. Three speakers presented the subject, Prof Dr Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Professor from University Utara Malaysia; Prof Dr. Greg Barton, Deakin University, Australia; and Mr Asrul Daniel Ahmed, Chief Operating Officer of the Global Movement of Moderates Foundation (GMMF). The session was moderated by Tan Sri Dr Munir Abdul Majid, Chairman, Bank Muamalat and a Distinguished Fellow of MiDAS.

Session 2 discussed on the need to find out why and how some Malaysians get involved with the IS. Also deliberated on the reason why some Muslims are easily attracted to IS despite their known tendency for committing atrocities. The session concluded that the use of ICT, social media and socialisation process were cleverly used to radicalise people and recruit new members. Some suggested countermeasures include counter narration by using 'soft approach' to re-habilitate those subdued by the IS ideology and counter narrative through social media to learn, control, counter and deter such threats from evolving.

Session 3 of the MiDAS Conference 2015 was entitled, 'Countering Extremism and Radicalisation: Initiatives and Strategies'. Three speakers presented on the subject; Mohd Zaini Akhir, Superintendent of Police in the Counter Terrorism Division, Royal Malaysia Police; Prof Dato' Mohamad Abu Bakar, Senior Fellow and Former Head of the Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya; and Mr Ahmad El Muhammady, Lecturer at International Islamic University (IIUM). It was moderated by Prof Ruhanas Harun, Professor at National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM).

In Session 3, it discussed on the current available mechanisms of countering terrorism as well as de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programs that were carried out by the Royal Malaysian Police and other related government bodies as well as the NGOs. Despite of the many success stories that have been shared, speakers agreed that there are still much more could be done to improve the process. The society should be made aware of the importance of understanding of the 'real politics' in the Middle East to avoid from being lured by the terrorist's propaganda. In this plural society, Malaysia and its people should also be made as part of the 'counter narrative' measures and the government should provide appropriate avenues to effectively respond and counter the misguided ideologies.



Registration of participants to the MiDAS Conference 2015

In all, the conference had achieved its objectives and managed to gather interests of many top officials and more than 450 participants from the Malaysian Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, academia, think tanks, NGOs and other ministries and agencies that came to learn, share and get updated with the very essential topic on national defence and security issues related to extremism and militancy.

Lt Gen Datuk Azizan Md Delin Chief Executive of MiDAS









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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 1

Keynote and Opening Address Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security

THE HONOURABLE Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein Minister of Defence, Malaysia

Keynote and Opening Address 'Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security'

Keynote and Opening Address was delivered by Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, Dato' Seri Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi on behalf of the Minister of Defence



In his welcoming address at the 3rd conference of the Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security (MiDAS), the Secretary General, Ministry of Defence, Dato' Seri Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi, on behalf of The Honourable Defence Minister, YB Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein expressed his pleasure to address the conference and pleased with the growing stature since its first held in 2011. Moving on from the previous theme in 2013 of 'National Resilience towards a Developed Nation', Defence Minister remarked on the important issue that currently threatens our national security, and that is the threat from extremists and militants. The Minister proudly recalled the National and Malaysia day celebrations as we celebrated 58 years of independence and 52 years of us being a Malaysian Federation respectively this year. He regarded that the peace and security in which we have enjoyed all these years is a result of the many security policies and initiatives implemented since our formative years. Nevertheless he emphasised that no one country can guarantee it will enjoy prolonged peace and prosperity, and Malaysia is no exception. As such, he urged that it is vital for us to constantly identify and address security issues that threaten the stability of this nation. He clearly identified that the threats from religious extremism, radicalisation and militancy are indeed alarming now; more so with the speed and connectivity these perpetrators communicate and sow their misguided beliefs.

The Minister acknowledged that national security issues have always been at the forefront in his career where he served as Home Minister for 4 years, before moving to his current portfolio in 2013. During the period, he has seen the evolution of security threats - both externally and from within; which threaten to undermine the integrity and position of our nation. He praised the conference with the hope that sound suggestions and recommendations could be forwarded to assist his ministry in countering the threats post by extremists and militants.



Distinguished guests and participants at the Opening and Keynote Address session

National Security and the Changing Nature of Threats

The Minister stated that national security is a vital component to our stability as a nation state which in turn complements the environment for economic growth and prosperity. He reiterated that the policies implemented over time are able to preserve, maintain and ensure that our nation is ready to address security challenges, be it traditional or from non-traditional security sources. In hindsight, our national security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony. Without these elements, he said our nation would not be able to prevent a potential enemy from intruding and making us vulnerable. He echoed the sentiment of Prime Minister who spoke last month that Malaysia must have a coherent and comprehensive national security strategy in tandem with the present situation, and that there is no greater priority than to secure our national security. Furthermore, he pointed out that national security is often related to regional and international security.



Threats from conventional forces and nations are almost diminished and are taking different forms nowadays. He stated that the biggest threats to nation states today are not so much from each other but from non-statist especially transnational entities which come in many forms extending from religious extremists to cyber terrorists. At the same time,

Participants giving attention to the Opening and Keynote Address

he emphasized that knowledge, information and news of varying quality and in a multitude of methods have become important component in shaping our political, economic, cultural and security concerns whereby local and international events are inevitably linked in complex and unpredictable ways.

These new dynamics, especially threats by non-state actors, have posed a serious challenge as to how we integrate our security resources in addressing them. He prompted the present scenario requires security agencies and civil authorities to work closely with one another in dealing with issues and challenges hence it can no longer operate in silos for the sake of preserving our national security especially when dealing with extremists and militants who take up their cause all in the name of religion. He stressed that multiagency cooperation is appropriate and necessary as the borderless world we are in now has brought about threats which are more universal in nature. For example the spread of information communication technology has united the world and reaching out to each other quicker than ever before. On the contrary, he highlighted it also provided extremists, terrorists and criminals a new way to communicate, plan attacks and launder money, for example new communication platforms especially through social media networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and even WhatsApp have allowed extremists and terrorists plenty of avenues to spread their twisted message of hatred.



Participants listening to the Opening and Keynote Address

Extremism and Militancy

The Defence Minister stressed that 'History' will tell us that no one religion, culture or ideology has ever been completely free from the danger of extremism, radicalization and militancy. In fact, he said that we have seen with much dismay the threats posed by radical and cult groups all over the world who propagate violence in the name of religion. He elaborated that this should not detract from the fundamental challenge now that there are still people, and young people who are willing to engage in acts of violence out of what they think is devoutness or patriotism in the name of religion.

The more prominent threat of extremism and militancy to all of us now are the IS and its followers. He believed the overall threat of terrorism is greatly amplified by today's hyper-connected and interlinked world, where an incident in one corner of the globe can instantly spark a reaction thousands of miles away. He stated that what we have feared all this while has come to reality where the threat of terrorists is increasingly decentralized, difficult to track and difficult to prevent.

He highlighted that in February this year, a research conducted by the Nanyang Technological Institute of Singapore indicated that there are some 300 net sites in the region linked to terror groups. He stated that the widespread visual releases by these groups depicting bombings, mass executions and beheadings in multiple languages even more alarming. He expressed his concern about the fact that the reception towards these gruesome acts has been disturbingly encouraging whereby it was widely reported that supporters of these groups have set a foothold in many countries in the Asia Pacific region including Malaysia. He believed that the fight against terrorism will be a long and arduous one and, it will take a long time to defeat it, not simply with military might alone. Once again he stressed on the multilateral participation of many governments and agencies to eliminate or reduce the possibility of terrorist operations from establishing operating bases across the borders and within our soil.

In Retrospect

We have had our fair share in confronting terrorism, extremism and militancy which are somehow intertwined and linked to each other in the present security threat scenario we are facing. Evidently, Dato' Seri Hishamuddin said the Communist Insurgency during our formative years is a clear example of how we overcame a common foe with several measures involving a whole of government approach such as the *Security and Development (KESBAN)* and the *Hearts and Minds* Project. Hence with the current security threats affecting us now, particularly with the IS and cyber influence, he thought that 'winning the hearts and minds' could be one of the multi-faceted measures that we should adopt. He indicated that this strategy should not only be used on IS sympathisers and followers, but also in countering the negative perceptions on Islam held by some in the Western world.

The Minister recapitulated that after the defeat of the communist insurgents, there had been several distinct incidents such as the Memali and later on the Al-Maunah where extremism and militancy emerged from a peaceful Malaysian environment due to misguided beliefs and ideologies. He further highlighted that recently, the IS is actively recruiting men as well as women from our country to further fight in Syria where they come from all levels of society including professionals and even those from the security forces.

The Minister informed the audience that presently, almost every day we are hounded with news on the atrocities and the growing threats posed by the IS fighters and their supporters worldwide. He warned that this movement is not only spreading rapidly but clearly indicates that it is a disciplined force hence the threats posed by IS are not only a threat to the present but also the civilization legacy of the past. He pointed out that defeating IS will take a long time, not simply with military might alone, but also a multi-faceted approach that encompasses humanitarian aid, the strengthening of the societies through education and democratic practices within the countries affected.

Addressing Extremism and Militancy

According to the Minister, preventing the escalation of the IS conflict would require not only containing and destroying its infrastructure in the Middle East, but also stopping the spread of its ideologies and activities in other parts of the world including here in Malaysia. Therefore he suggested that care must be taken to ensure that the young and vulnerable do not fall prey to their ideologies and distorted beliefs. Thus winning the hearts and minds of such people requires us not only to address whatever political or socio-economic disparities they may be facing, but also doing something to increase their sense of dignity.

He talked about suggestions to bring the Internal Security Act (ISA) back into our legal framework as it was one of the effective means of containing violent extremism and militancy. He stated that the government have enacted the Prevention of Terrorism Act, POTA, which is an anti - terrorism law that was passed by the Malaysian Parliament on 7 April 2015. However, he indicated that even with the ISA in place, there were individuals and group aligned to militancy activities such as Noordin Mat Top and Mas Selamat Kastari from the Jemaah Islamiyah, and Mohd Amin Razali from the Al-Ma'unah deviants to name a few.



Distinguished guests, Chief Executive of MiDAS and participants during the Opening and Keynote Address The Minister further stressed that addressing the threats posed by extremists and militants would require multi-faceted and integrated measures which must also include addressing the roots of these evil. There are already measures in place in the *"de-radicalisation"* of extremists and militants undertaken by the police and religious authorities. He realised that it might be slow and painstaking but we must put all our resources together and defeat this common enemy which he claimed not having the immediate solutions in countering these threats. He also denied any illusion that there would be a quick-fix to these but suggested several areas which we can look into;

Firstly, the root of extremism and militancy is ignorance. He believed those who chose this path are often misguided and are looking for a belief and guidance from ideologies. The indoctrination of extremists and militants motivates them towards their goals which to the normal person may sound ridiculous but to them it is their only way of achieving greatness. It is for this fact that we need to educate Malaysians that extremism and militancy is not the proven path and this is not the work of the government alone, but to all fellow Malaysians which include religious clerics and organisations.

Secondly, universal threats such as extremism and militancy require approaches which are anchored by cooperative, comprehensive and collective measures. The fight against extremism and militancy does not merely entail the neutralisation of threats after they have struck. It also demands a "whole of government" approach involving not only a multitude of agencies but the multilateral participation of many governments to eliminate or reduce the possibility of terrorist organisations establishing operating bases across borders. Defence Minister suggested to re-visit the concept of HANRUH or Total Defence which is about our ability as a nation to garner support from every level of society in addressing a security threat.

Thirdly, it is also interesting to study the concept of *Moderation* which has been consistent in Malaysia's foreign policy orientations and now accepted as an ASEAN way during the 26th ASEAN Summit in April this year. Moderation has its roots through the concept of Islam *Hadhari* and *Wasatiyah* espoused by both our present and former Prime Ministers. Malaysia has stressed that it is possible to achieve *Peace and Security* through moderation, which was our theme in bidding for inclusion in the UN Security Council. As highlighted by The Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abd Razak, in his address to the UN General Assembly in September last year, the threat to global peace and security is not Islam but the twin forces of violent extremism and religious intolerance. As he said, the moderation agenda is inclusive to everyone and the fight against extremism is not about Christians versus Muslims or Muslims versus Jews but moderates versus extremists of all religions. He reminded that the rallying call is for us to join together and ensure that religion is the source of healing and blessing rather than conflict and destruction. He understood that the greatest challenge to National Security now is to ensure that youths do not only avoid radicalization but actively engaged with society. In the Malaysian context, he said that moderation is also about acceptance and here the key word is for us to accept our differences whilst finding common ground on the problems we face and move forward together.

In his last point, he emphasized that winning the cyber war is crucial because the strength of IS came from its mastery of the social media whereby there have also been marked increases in the number of extremist sites for the past few years. He highlighted that these websites have indeed penetrated even universities where the IS have been actively persuading students to join its cause. He urged that it is crucial for all government agencies to come together in a concerted effort in order to dispel and counter the propaganda posed by the IS. He suggested the creation of several websites and dedicated personnel who could play important roles to counter the IS influence on the younger generation including religious authorities who could correct misunderstandings immediately online and via other means. He further elaborated on the media's role to educate the public on the true meaning of Jihad or alleviate misconception rather than letting the public relying on public sermons or lectures through the conventional way.

Conclusion

The Defence Minister reminded us that it has been 58 years since we achieved our independence. He was proud to say that this great country

of ours has progressed as a nation despite the turbulent period in our formative years, as well as the many incidents in the past that threatened our national security. He said since then, the security challenges have certainly evolved and become more complex with the emergence of non-state actors with excellent connectivity which transcends all borders creating the threats that we have to face almost unprecedented and beyond prediction. He said that this is happening because they are not bound to regional or specified areas, but in many ways may affect all of us with the speed, lethality and uncertainty; this is particularly so with the extremists and militants, and their deft handling of the social media.

He added that addressing the threats posed by extremists and militants will need a multi-faceted approach by all. He added that winning the war against them will require not only the deft handling of the social media but the ability to educate Malaysians on the perils of extremism and militancy. He reminded that although we have numerous security and economic policies in place, we must remain vigilant against all threats in a most comprehensive manner. He recalled our recent experiences which have taught us that a security threat will come from the most unlikely source and in a non-traditional manner. Similarly, he quoted the uncertainties in the global economy which bound to have a spiralling effect on our economic well-being which in turn may be used by extremists and militants to fortify their causes.

The Minister of Defence congratulated MIDAS on the topic of discussion and believed that through the learned speakers and moderators as well as the discussions, we were able to bring and formulate new ideas to complement the current efforts undertaken by the government to enhance our national security. Finally on behalf of the Malaysian Minister of Defence, Dato' Seri Abdul Rahim Mohd Radzi officiated the opening of MIDAS Conference, on "Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security".









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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 2

Plenary Session 1 Militant Ideologies and Radicalism in Malaysia

MODERATOR

Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan Chairman, New Straits Times and Distinguished Fellow of MiDAS

SPEAKERS

Professor Datuk Abdul Halim Sidek Secretary of Politics, Security, and International Affairs Cluster of the National Council of Professors

Dr. Amran Muhammad Principle Fellow at Malaysian Institute of Islamic Strategic Studies

Mr. Hamzah Ishal Undersecretary, National Security Council Prime Minister's Departmen

Lt. Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini Hj Mohd Said (R) Former Army Commander, Army Headquarters

Plenary Session 1 'Militant Ideologies and Radicalism in Malaysia'



Plenary Session 1 moderated by Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan moderated the first session of MiDAS Conference 2015 with the theme 'Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security'. He explained that the first session would be an overview of the whole sessions of the day. The discussion will hone to the spread of extremists and radical ideologies from conflict areas particularly in the Middle East and countries like Africa to other parts of the world in particular to Malaysia and this region. He mentioned that there are two aspects to the issue. The first explains the appearance of this particular militant group across a vast extent of the globe. The second is how we should respond to this particular threat in Malaysia. He explained that for this purpose there is a diverse and literate panel of speakers on the subject that have agreed to approach the subject beginning with the theoretical overall picture and subsequently narrowing it down to Malaysia's perspective.



Prof Datuk Abdul Halim Sidek as the first speaker of Session 1

The first speaker was Prof Datuk Abdul Halim Sidek on the subject of 'Militant Ideologies and Radicalism in Malaysia'. He pointed out that Malaysia's location has always been historically and currently strategic to the Western world. He argued that due to that fact, there are times when the Westerners would come in and try to draw new geographic borders to gain their own advantage. As such, he explained that the location of Southeast Asia and it resource abundance makes the area a growing challenge to the security of ASEAN countries.

He drew attention to Malaysia that comprised the Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak. He argued that despite the two lands being separated by South China Sea and the distance between them, the element of nationality binds both lands together in spirit. Thus, he pointed out on the multiple threats that Malaysia faces. Threats from maritime and airspace security like piracy at the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca and shared borders with Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. Being in the position to be a conduit, he explained that Malaysia is constantly used as a transit base for non-legal goods and is also sometimes made a base for business transactions of illegal items. Such are the threats posed to the national security. With the vast space of Malaysia's land, air and marine mass the government is obliged to entrust the armed forces and customs and immigration officers with the task of maintaining law and order in the country. He added that it is not known to the public that at most times the law enforcement officers face very high risks in the line of duty and it is quite a pity that such gallantry goes unappreciated.

Prof Datuk Abdul Halim proceeded to explain threats in the form of militants. The word 'militant', he explained comes from the 15th century Latin word "militare" which means "to serve as a solider". Those involved may not receive proper training or are necessarily registered as a soldier but the contemporary reference is to anyone who subscribes to the idea of using vigorous, sometimes extreme, activity to achieve an objective, usually political. They can resort to physical violence like militant activist who are more confrontational and aggressive nevertheless it can also exclude physical violence / armed combat / terrorism etc if you look at the field of cyber terrorism.

He argued that the computer can prove to be more potent, vigorous and lethal than conservative arms thus emphasizing that cyber terrorism is a main threat. He also brought to light other forms of groups that he believes practices the militant ideology like racial and religious separatists as well as environmentalist. An example of militant environmentalists includes the Green Peace Corps, known to be very confrontational at times. He added that for most parts, religious extremists are most highlighted especially with the image of terrorists painted as someone tall with dark brown skin and is usually associated to be a Muslim. This is unfortunately the perception of the media that needs correction as terrorists do come in different forms of forms, religion and skin colour.

Prof Datuk Abdul Halim cited an example of such branding and twisted reporting and perception as in the media recent case had highlighted. He cited the recent case of a14 year old American boy in the U.S. by the name of Mohamad. His intention of impressing his teacher by building a digital clock for his class project was misconstrued by the authorities and Mohamad was instead arrested and detained overnight by the police in fear of terrorism tendencies. Although later Mohamed was released within 24 hours due to pressure from the social media, Prof Datuk Abdul Halim argued that should the young man not bear a Muslim name, he would have been encouraged for his efforts of inventing such a clock.

He goes on to elaborate that the terrorist profiling especially in the eyes of the media is limited and biased. A terrorist is always associated to

be Muslim or someone who possess dark skin, curly hair with the features of the subcontinent. To Prof Datuk Abdul Halim, this is an unwarranted judgment. He then brings to light that people who are matched to such profiling will then feel resentment and mistake the prejudice as more associated to the aspect of western imperialism. Then the victim will most likely equate the act as an act of imperialism which is equivalent to colonialism in that everything is taken away leaving nothing for the colonized.

He argued further that a century of previous resentments is thus cultivated once again when armed conflicts divide the mostly third world countries. On the other hand, he questioned the feeling of hatred brought about and associated to religion and terrorism. While in fact he argued that in reality no religion calls for terror but instead encourages common goodness amongst men. He added that the term militant is actually a euphemism for the term terrorists and is used interchangeably. When the journalists are nice, they use the term militants and if they want to be bold, they use the term terrorists he said.

Prof Datuk Abdul Halim said that sometimes people tend to forget that, "One man's terrorist is another man's liberator". Looking at the Geneva protocol convention, Protocol 1, Geneva Conventions 1977 amendment states that "armed conflicts in which peoples are fighting against colonial domination, alien (foreign) occupation or racist regimesinternational conflicts." This gives the lawful combatant status not terrorist as called by the western or foreign powers. In fact, these are people who are trying to liberate their countries. He cited an example of the same experience Malaysia faced post 1945 era when it had the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) working together with the Malaysian government before taking arms and going against the government after independence.

He then moved on to discuss radicalism, which he defined as holding or following principles advocating political, economy or social reforms. He mentioned that radicalism is the beginning of a behaviour that would lean towards extremism and terrorism. When one has a person listening to fierce, inflammatory speeches 'day in' and 'day out' along with ideologies that says the government is cohort or infidel and that one needs to topple it, that person would nurture those radical ideals and foster feelings that something must be done with regards to it. With that, Prof Datuk Abdul Halim said, one will have a sum of (militant ideology + radicalism = disastrous) and henceforth a terrorist is created.

He added that the question that should be brought about is, "Why does such reaction occur?" He questioned if the cause is driven by poverty, greed, deprivation, being marginalized or a feeling of being displaced in their country by their own government? Western imperialism is now happening in the global stage including Africa, America and now Southeast Asia. He highlighted that in Malaysia there is no single universally accepted definition of terrorism and that no single person agreed to a single definition of terrorism. Historically, he explained that terrorism incident that happened in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and Southeast Asia is indicated when a perpetrated group of aggrieved people see violence as the only mean of achieving their political goals / power. Some militant groups, however, carry out the acts of terror by attempting to legitimize their acts claiming them as acts of liberation or freedom fighters.

He stated that now there is the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Act 747) and the particular act called SOSMA when read together with the Penal Code would be a sanction. The definition of terrorist can be found in S.3 "Security Offences" with the offences provided in the First Schedule (Penal Code [Act 547]) as below in:

- i) Chapter VI, (SS.121-130A; Offences against the State)
- ii) Chapter VIA (SS.130B-140B; Offences Relating to Terrorism)
- iii) "Terrorist Act" means an act or threats of action within and beyond Malaysia falling under S.130B (3)(a)-(j)

Prof Datuk Abdul Halim further pointed out that if one looks at Malaysia, they will find that Malaysians have a series of our own history of militancy beginning with the communist insurgency until and after independence or 'Merdeka'. In the Malaysian backyard it had a series of terrorism acts happening from 1948 until 1960 as listed below:

 4th December 1977: Unknown assailants hijacked Malaysian Airlines System (MAS) Flight 653. The first fatal accident for MAS with all 93 passengers and 7 crew from 13 countries died when it crashed at Tanjung Kupang, Johor.

- 2. 5th August 1975: AIA Building Hostage Crisis when the Japanese Red Army (JRA) took a hostage of 50 people including one American Consul and a Swedish diplomat. They demanded the release of fellow comrades from the Japanese prison. The JRA fled to Libya after their comrades were released.
- 3. July 2000: An Islamic Militant group, Al-Maunah, stole weapons from an army camp in an attempt to overthrow the Malaysian government. They were cornered in the village of Sauk, Perak and were faced with a standoff for five days against the Malaysian Army and Royal Malaysian Police forces. The coup ended with some killed and while others were tried, convicted and sentenced to death.

Prof Datuk Abdul Halim also brought to attention several famous local Malaysian terrorists like:

- AZHARI HUSIN: Nicknamed the "Demolition Man" with a PhD in geophysics from University of Reading, UK and the Associate Professor of Statistics and Valuation in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. A statistician and bomb maker, Azahari's signature car bombs and explosive backpacks were used in at least four suicide attacks in Bali and Jakarta leading to 245 deaths. He died in a police raid at Batu, Indonesia on November 2005.
- 2. NOORDIN MOHAMMED TOP: Nicknamed the "Money Man", he specialized in recruiting militants as suicide bombers and collecting funds for militant activities. He was a wanted criminal in Indonesia and Malaysia. Nordin was later put in the FBI's Most Wanted List in 2006. He studied in University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and obtained his BSc there. He later befriended his professor, Dr Azhari, and was regarded by the FBI as an explosives expert of the team. Noordin died in a police raid at Solo, Central Java in 2009.

Ending his presentation Prof Datuk Abdul Halim expressed his concern in relation to some random activities concerning kids collecting money at petrol kiosks across the country and wondered if they were collecting money unchecked for the terrorists as they are the kind of people not accounted for in the scheme of things.

Dr. Amran Muhammad as the second speaker for Session 1



Dr Amran Muhammad was the second speaker of the session. He gave a big picture of the situation by elaborating his presentation on 'Mapping Radicalism, Extremism and Militant Ideologies - The Confluence and Consequence'. Dr Amran expanded further what was said by the first speaker. He was sure that the participants in the conference know that the world is in a very precarious situation. The most troubling of these things would be terrorism, extremism and radicalism associated with Islam. As Muslims, Dr Amran urged his fellow Muslims to defend Islam. He questioned whether the world now betrays the true qualities of Islam and explaining this would be his main focus today. He pointed out that at this point betrayal is no longer superficial but real. In reality, one can try to undermine its importance but with the current threat of Islamic State (IS), one will not understand the subject unless one delves into the organisation and asks further questions. IS is a new highlighted group whereas prior to this, there were Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al-Sabbab and the Taliban.

He explained that in general, one has to look into the whole spectrum of production of the so-called terrorist or extremist group. The group's history or roots should be explored. He went further to explain that the most recent product of terrorism may be IS, but there will be a new group in the future. He suggested that the pattern remain the same but globalization makes communication better and cheaper which give an advantage for them to influence the young generation.

Dr. Amran explained that the gradual expansion of terrorism has a pattern that occurs in the Muslim world where the centre would be the Middle East. It spreads to the northern Europe and also to the rest of the globe and to this region, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. This ring of terror has spread very rapidly in the recent years and the same sort of expansion of terror is also happening in Europe, UK and the United States (US). He said this is the kind of image of Islam that people are now witnessing and is becoming global. He believed that this is something that occurred just after the 19th century when "The Transmutation of Islam" happened. It was a transformation from a more civilized Islam towards "The Confluence and Consequence" of Islam as a Religio-political ideologies.

He elucidated that if one looks into Islam pre 20th century, Islam considered as a civilization. The focus or salvation in relation to God emphasized on Rationality & Knowledge; Ethics & Spirituality; Science & Technology; Economy & Industry; and Cosmopolitanism & Dialogue development. However, Dr Amran argued that post 20th century, Islam goes through a kind of transmutation which focuses on Society Control (in relation to power & politics); Rhetoric & Emotion (shows an increase in appreciation); Activism & Movement; Totalitarianism (in Islam); and Legalistic: "Hudud" (as Islam increasingly becomes a legal oriented society).

Dr. Amran added that the names and the creation of Islamic state, Islamic Revivalism, Islamic Reformation, Political Islam, Islamism and Islamic Activism suddenly emerged in the 20th century from past experiences. He explained that the emerging ideas of Fundamentalism, Radicalism and Extremism originated and came from the Middle East and not from this region. This is something that Malaysians must be certain about. He detailed out the kind of Islam now, is very much from the Middle East with a different kind of Islamic impact on the people in the region. This builds an Islamic paradigm for the 20th century. Looking further into the issue, this transmutation has changed Islam from a 'civilcentred religion' towards a more 'political' one. He added that looking at the history of Islam in the last 1300 years, the ideals of knowledge, governance, spirituality, economy and architecture are more clearly manifested and depicting Islam as a 'civilizational religion'. This is quite a milestone including 571AD that marks the birth of the Prophet along with 800AD to 1200AD when Islam produced many scholars, great inventions and spreading spiritual message to the world.

Dr Amran then highlighted the political conditions in the 19th century in the Middle East, to which the following appears rampant; dictatorships; violence; oppression; hijacking; demonstrations; revolution; agitation; suicide bombings and civilian attacks. He pointed out that this phenomenon of radicalism has had a short span (from 1970s until now). He mentioned that if one wanted to solve the problem, one had to go to the root. Should the root be shallow, one could easily take the root out which is equivalent to taking the problem out. Should the root be long and deep, it would be difficult to uproot. So, he argued that radicalism has not had a long history in Islam but a short one. It has happened within 50 years or earlier than that.

The key incidences that made the transmutation of Islam to Religiopolitical ideology in the 20th century were:

- 1. The Abolishment of Caliphate in 1922-1924 (Turkey vs. Arab), which giving rise to the Ottoman Empire.
- 2. The Rise of Nation-State in 1916-1918 (Arab Revolt).

The question of the Arab Revolt is important to understand because one of the sources of radicalism in Islam can be traced to the reborn of Ottoman Empire, a big Islamic Empire.

3. The Emergence of Modernist Muslims & Movements in 1905 & 1928 of Egypt.

The people involved were Jamil Hamdan and the Muslim bases alike.

- 4. The Rejection of Traditional Knowledge and Practices in 1897, 1905, 1935 of the Middle East. The rejection of what is called 'traditional Islam' and the attempt to bring in New Islam, which is more politically driven.
- 5. The Discovery of Oil and Wealth in 1938 of Saudi & Gulf States.
 - He underlined that radicalism in Islam has a strong link with oil as it is very much a key in the rising of the extremism. He argued that if one looks into the Taliban, Al Qaeda and eventually now the IS. It

is oil that has sustained them. The richer terror groups in Iraq and also in part of Syria sit on top of oil sources which explain their continued survival.



Mr. Hamzah Ishak as the third speaker for Session 1

Mr Hamzah Ishak as the third speaker shared his points and ideas regarding the topic of 'Responding to the Threats of Radicalism and Militant Ideologies in Malaysia'. He initially stated that Malaysia was one of the earliest Southeast Asian countries to be concerned with the threat of radicalism and militancy to its national security. He elaborated that the meaning of national security is beyond boundaries, it is about how one country protects its' national values, unity, sovereignty, integrity and much more.

He explained that there are several forms of radical movements in Malaysia and it first began in 1948 with Secular Radicalism (Communists) as the first national threat to Malaysia. After 1967, various groups have cropped up bringing with them of religious radicalism emerged as a new form of threat in Malaysia. Certainly by 2015, the emergence of militant groups as Daulah Islamiah and recently Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) / IS or known as Islamic State due to the instability of Syria and Iran seemed to have had a direct impact on Malaysia's security.

Mr Hamzah emphasized that there have been many militant groups that has emerged since 1967, varied in their names, extreme methods or *modus operandi*. However, most of the radical militant groups shared the
same ideology which was to establish an Islamic state/government based on 'Islamic Law' through the use of force and violence. As such, opting against the usage of Constitutional Laws and democracy based on the Federal Constitution. He added that it is also due to a misconception of 'jihad' and 'syahid'; declaration of Imam Mahadi; the drive to seek an easy way to heaven; and the perceived view that the government is for the most part 'kuffar' and 'taghut' and that the government does not oblige Islamic law.

He elaborated that the source of the ideology may spread or be gained through the easy access of the revolutionary movement areas and through some of the foreign fighters returning from conflict areas. Like that in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. He added that in today's circumstance, the social media may be the leading instrument for the spread of militant and extreme ideology.

Mr Hamzah listed out that the threat of ISIS in Malaysia is though the Salafi-Jihadi ideology in which they believe that the only way to establish the Islamic State is through war; they reject government system that do not implement Shariah laws; they misinterpret the concept of 'jihad'; declare one as apostate Muslims to whom do not share the same views as theirs; instigate 'jihad' among related militant groups outside Syria; ready and willing to launch violent attacks around the world.

He then stated Malaysia's views and position on terrorism, which is comprised of these important elements listed below:

- a. Rejects any attempt to stereotype terrorism or associate it with any religion, race, nationality or ethnicity;
- b. Against any use of unilateral approach/force in the pretext of combating the threat. Efforts in combating terrorism should be in accordance to United Nations Charter and international laws;
- c. Measures against international terrorism should not infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nation;
- d. Implementation of measures against terrorism should always be consistent with the universally recognized principles governing international relations and laws;
- e. Address the root causes of terrorism; and
- f. Universally accepted and unbiased, comprehensive definition of terrorism.

Mr. Hamzah added that Malaysia has Counter Terrorism strategies that include:

a. Intelligence and International Cooperation

Intelligence sharing is critical and very important to win against the threat. As such cooperation with security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies bilaterally within ASEAN and UN Bodies (i.e Interpol) should be continued. Participation in International counterterrorism initiatives is crucial and can be enhanced through initiatives done such as US Container Security Initiatives and Proliferation Security Initiatives. Malaysia he added also, acceded to 9 UN Conventions dealing with terrorist and UNSC Resolution (2170 and 2178) – to curb the movement, financing and recruitment of terrorist

b. Legislation, Law Enforcement and Border Security

There various steps in enforcing the Domestic Legislation on Counter Terrorism. There are Penal Code, SOSMA 2012, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA) and Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act 2015 (SMATTA). The Law Enforcement Special Task Force on Counter Terrorism (SB) may help in terms of law enforcement and border security which may be activated through Land, Maritime and Aviation and also CBRNE detection at the CIQS, Airport and Sea Port.

- c. Protecting National Key Infrastructures. It is also important for Malaysia to protect its 'National Key Infrastructure - NKI' such as Communications, Emergency services, Financial services, Transportation systems, Food and water security and the government itself.
- d. Community outreach

It is important for the government to win the hearts and minds of the society. It can be done through Friday sermons in order to explain the true concept of jihad in Islam. Meanwhile JAKIM, RMP and NSC should play their role in explaining "Jihad and Its Concept" to the public. Various programs such as awareness program with civil servants (INTAN) De radicalization Programs generally will help the community in understanding the concept of radicalization and militancy. On the other hand, the 'National Fatwa Council', on April 2015 forbids Malaysians to join, support or assist Islamic State Caliphates since their form of jihad is against the teachings of Islam. Also public vigilance is helpful to look out for the incoming security threats.

e. Crisis management

In this situation, the crisis management, which consists of several government departments, uphold the law enforcement.

Mr Hamzah explained that the challenges of radicalism, militancy and terrorism are multi faceted and inherently complex and is beyond effort of any single agency. On the Social media mediums like FB, Twitter, YouTube, he added, have been used to spread propaganda, raising funds, recruiting new members for the IS, communicating with IS activists, virtual training camp etc. Thus he called for the public to also play their role and not solely depend on the government.

Mr Hamzah lastly pointed out that the extremist and militant threats remain real and relevant. And as such a, 'Whole of Government Approach in the implementation of Counter terrorism Strategy is very crucial. The challenges he said was from – Words of Mass Destruction (WMD) through the social media. It is very destructive tools if left unchecked. However he was positive that if the Government Agencies + Civil Society + Public = National Security worked hand in hand it would be the key factors to cordon this issue.

Lt. Gen Dato' Sri Zaini Haji Said (R) as the fourth speaker for Session 1



The fourth speaker for Session 1 was a respected and well recognized Army General. Lt Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini Haji Mohd Said (R) is known for his role in the surrender of Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali, the leader of the Al-Mau'nah group that staged the arms heist at Battalion 304, Rejimen Askar Wataniah and the subsequent siege of the group at Bukit Jenalik, Sauk in Perak on 5th July 2000.

Lt Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini began by concentrating on the 'Al Maunah' arms heist where he expressed his gratitude to the Royal Armed Forces service that allowed him the experience coming face to face with Al Maunah militant group. He explained that the profile of the Al-Maunah members were diverse and of varied backgrounds. Some were soldiers and expolicemen, some were academicians, employed, unemployed, and so forth – all seeking for "meaning" in their life. He added that the Al-Maunah member's motivation was to build better lives.

However he noticed that the group members were mesmerized with their group leader, Mohd Amin. Mohd Amin had claimed to have a deep understanding of Islam, martial arts, traditional medicine as well as mystical and supernatural abilities, which he was willing to share with his most loyal followers. He pointed out that many of the Al-Maunah members were dissatisfied with the Malaysian government and leadership – not being Islamic enough, corrupted, incompetent, and the Muslim society are lacking in progress for not adhering to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

Lt Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini added that the Al-Maunah wanted to "correct the situation" by executing a war or Jihad on the government. The Al Maunah believed in bringing down the secular government and replacing it with a more Islamic system through the use of force. The members also believed that through this kind of Jihad, they will end up as martyrs and have a home in paradise. He also explained that during the incident, the members displayed deep intolerance of other that was of a different faith. They had Lt Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini explained the willingness to commit extreme violence to others of a different faith (tortured and executed a Hindu police officer and Christian soldier).

He emphasized that through the profiles of the Al Maunah members, it is critical to plan policies and prevention measures in order to confront this sort of situation as he believed that it is not impossible for Malaysia to be faced with such a group again in the future. He also stated that, amazingly, the incident is somehow rather similar to the profile of other recent particular militant groups.

Dato' Sri Zaini highlighted that the Al-Maunah incident was under the responsibility of police. So based on the Al-Maunah experience, he foresaw that law enforcement agencies in similar situations must therefore quickly and rapidly contain any threats given the information. Still, the government had succeeded due to the cooperation it received from all agencies related to security. He pointed out that with the consensus of Tan Sri Norian Mai, the then IGP, such good coordination was made possible. Lt Gen. Dato' Sri Zaini reminded the participants that in such a situation things happened very fast and to deal with some difficulties in accordance with the police counterparts and the intelligence, steps need to be taken to ease things. He was grateful that during the Al-Maunah incident, he saw good collaboration and effort between military and the police.

Dato' Sri Zaini also mentioned that, this case may demonstrate the reality and the existence of radical ideas, anger, and dissatisfaction on numerous issues in society that still persist till today. It is interlocked with the world issues such as the injustices practiced and demonstrated in Palestine by Israel that is backed by the US. He added that the incident also revealed that the members of Al-Maunah continued to believe that they have not done anything wrong; have not broken any laws and had not deserved any punishment. He said that such conclusion on the issues by members of Al-Maunah indicates the low level of understanding among the society in terms of terrorism, militancy and extremism.

He added that at the time, the emergence of militant groups was scattered and the doctrine of Jihad; fighting for Islam and creating the Islamic nation was spreading in the region. Some innocent Muslims might be easily to be swayed into the arguments of jihadist and indirectly had set them up towards the ideologies from overseas particularly the Middle East.

Dato' Sri Zaini also added due to the several incidents such as the 9/11 tragedy, the US-led occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Israeli - US sentiment increased the degree of moral support lent towards these militant groups thus exacerbates radicalism and religious extremism.

However, to some extent, he admitted that there is not many Jihadist or Muslim fighters in Afghanistan or Iraq today, as the conflict is perceived as fighting a resistance war internally to liberate the country that is not necessarily intent to establish an Islamic State.

He listed that Malaysians are simply prompted to join radical groups due to several factors among others the belief that IS is not a war to liberate a country, but to establish an Islamic State; the struggle despite violence and brutality is inevitable; redemption and atonement of previous sins a "guarantee" of going to Paradise; IS succeeded in exploiting the social media; and IS forces capable to recruit many citizens of Iraq and Syria

Finally, Dato' Sri Zaini concluded that time is of the essence to all parties as immediate action is needed to prevent this militancy and extremism from spreading and recurring.



A participant inquiring for comments from the panel members of Session 1

Question and Answer Session

The moderator then moved on to the question and answer session. In the session, Major General Dato' Megat Mohd Yusof Megat Mahmud (R) wanted to know about Malaysia's vulnerabilities of not being a homogeneous society and whether a concerted conspiracy against Islam is true. Dr. Amran in his answer believed that conspiracy theories are highly imaginative speculations. He wanted however for everyone to understand that although external threats are important but internal ones are more dangerous as it is closer to home. So misinterpretations on Islam must be guarded against and should not spark internal disputes among the community.



The second question came from Mr. Adrian J.N. Raj who wanted to know how Wahabism and Salafism are considered extreme. In response, Dr Amran explained that when something is less flexible and has become more rigid, it becomes prone to extremism. Therefore, he recommended that anything more flexible would denote moderation instead of extremism. He also opined that the root of radicalism did not come from Asia but from the Middle East. Prof Datuk Abdul Halim added that Islam should not be labelled as a terrorist religion. Some of those involved as terrorist have real grievances in that they have suffered. Be it in Afghanistan, Africa, Chechnya, Iraq or Syria. He argued however that the wars in those areas are not even about religion but instead is on failed politics and a fight for land and resources. Mr Hamzah added that in the case of extremism, prevention is better than cure. He added that there are needs for public engagement and the involvement of everyone, all agencies and civil society. He also opined that the government should welcome new ideas on how to counter the problem. He stressed the importance of people awareness on the issue as well as the effectiveness of the awareness programs to the target group.



Session 1 participant asking questions and giving suggestions

Capt Martin A. Sebastian (R) from the Maritime Institute of Malaysia asked about the conundrum of manmade problems that looking for a God led solution in relation to extremism; and the practicality of introducing 'War–Gaming' to garner interagency cooperation for countering threats as well as the necessity of creating redundant laws over better enforcement. Dato' Sri Zaini responded that the joint war-game exercises among related agencies is welcomed to eradicate such a situation, especially when the government is dealing with terrorists, militants and extremists. This threat is different from other wars that had a clear enemy. Therefore, he suggested that government agencies must work on competency and efficiency in any event or for such eventuality in the future.

The fourth question was from Colonel Dr. A. Endry Nixon – Deputy Inspector General at Inspector General Office, Army HQ. He inquired on the new situation that involve the larger public which may not be solely associated to a single body, race or religion that challenge the government of the day which indirectly challenge the national security. Prof Abdul Halim suggested that in certain circumstances, law and order as well as lawful punishment need to be activated and done carefully, legal approach sometimes may be not the absolute answer but can be implemented.

Two participants shared their opinions on Session 1's subject. Lieutenant Colonel Abdurrahman Adam opined that in order to combat extremism and militancy the government must focus more on content rather than control. There must be better coordination; operation; timing; transparency; efficiency and thoroughness in all actions that government fore takes. Another participant, Rear Admiral Dato' Daniyal (R) wanted the government to reinstate *Maktab Turus Angkatan Tentera* (MTAT) course subject on KESBAN. MTAT should restudy the concept of KESBAN in addressing the current so-called militant/terrorist threat to the nation.



The panel in their final wrap up agreed on the suggestion to focus on content rather than control if they were to be successful. The panel also agreed that there is a need to restudy reports regarding past related issues/incidences that may prove helpful in guarding against repetition

Session 1 participant giving suggestion of attacks like in Lahad Datu. It also saw that PDRM's collaboration with other agencies could help to solve the problem. In maintaining 'law and order', lawful punishment need to be activated but must be done carefully and sparingly as the legal approach sometimes may be not the absolute answer.

Session 1 group photograph of moderator and speakers with the Chief Executive of MiDAS











MINISTRY OF DEFENC MALAYSIA

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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 3

Plenary Session 2 Islamic State: A Growing Threat to National Security

MODERATOR

Tan Sri Dr Munir Abdul Majid Chairman, Bank Muamalat Malaysia Distinguished Fellow of MiDAS

SPEAKERS Prof Dr Kamarulnizam Abdullah Jean, Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

> **Prof Dr Greg Barton** Professor, Deakin University Australia

Mr Asrul Daniel Ahmed Chief Operating Officer Global Movement of Moderates Foundation, Malaysia

Plenary Session 2 'Islamic State: A Growing Threat to National Security'



Plenary Session 2 was moderated by Tan Sri Dr Munir Abdul Majid The second session was kick started by Tan Sri Munir Abdul Majid as the moderator of Session 2 entitled "Islamic State: A Growing Threat to National Security". He began by giving an assessment on the confusion and mislabelling of Islam that had been twisted in the media these days to mean horror and terror instead of peace and love. Thus, he emphasised that this confusion about Islam should be corrected despite IS. He added that one of the key points about current scenario is using issues of race and religion and using that to further twist the beautiful religion. He elaborated that IS is deadly and violent. It also targets Muslims, rejects democracy and has killed and raped many innocents. He added that members of IS from Malaysia may have had their militant training provided by the IS in the Middle East. The returned members may bring with them influence and know-how to which he reminded everyone not to be easily fooled.



Prof Dr Kamarulnizam Abdullah as first speaker for Session 2

Prof Dr Kamarulnizam Abdullah, the first speaker for Session 2 started by giving the background of events and facts about the IS. He explained that the ISIS was formed by Abu Musa al-Zarqawi in 2002. It later formed an alliance with Al-Qaeda, subsequently becoming Al-Qaeda of Iraq (AQI). During the mid-2000, ISIS was weakened and rejected by local residents. However, it was Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi who revived ISIS, linking the organization with other extremist groups to form the Nusra Front. He explained further that IS in Iraq was weaker in 2005 due to bombardment by the US troops and was rejected in Iraq. Later, in 2013 it merged with Syria and was known as ISIS and was eventually rebranded as IS. He added that ISIS received funding from Middle Eastern movements that opposed President Bashar al-Assad's.

He said that in Malaysia, the ISIS was formed by former Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) fighters and Internal Security Act (ISA) detainees and they were known as 'Briged Malaysia'. It was self-funded and divided itself into several splinter cells. Prof Dr Kamarulnizam added that, initially the IS in Malaysia believed that they would be funded by central IS but as things developed, it become self-funded initiative which he quoted "Gua Musang event" as the result or manifestation. He added that the IS in Malaysia wanted to enforce Sharia law and misinterpreted the Al-Quran for their own sake.

He said that while the purpose of IS was to enforce the Sharia law. It also interprets the Al-Quran and Hadith literally, for instance 'Jihad' was seen only from the perspective of a physical warfare. This was why he argued that the IS has evolved to represent "militancy and terrorism". Among of the reasons were growing discontent in Muslims, corruption, authoritarianism, extreme poverty, global structural problems and economic deprivation which resulted from unequal distribution of wealth that became the few main reasons for IS to evolve into a dangerous organization. He also elaborated that IS does not believe in democracy and were prone to seek divine answers. He further added that the IS also prefers using force to ensure change.

Later, Prof Dr Kamarulnizam stated the IS's revolutionary approaches are based on various factors as listed below:

- 1. Seek divine answer, use of force to change social discontent and structural inequality
- 2. Associated with terrorism, appearance of more religious terrorist groups
- 3. Resources self –sufficient in financing themselves through charity, donation and other legal/illegal activities
- 4. Structure shifted from being top-down hierarchical and pyramidal to less hierarchical and loosely connected
- 5. Recruitments and tactics- through the modern technologies of internet to enrich their human resources
- 6. Motivations Islam as clear cut 'black and white', Anti-West?

7. Objectives – jihad, the caliphate system.

After stating the IS approaches, he went further to explain into detail about the security implications by precisely focusing on the IS warfare capabilities and experiences that include among others that they are former Taliban /AI-Qeeda veterans; professionals with military abilities; they have man portable air defence system (MPADS); and they also have US-made stinger (USD 38,000) and Russian made (USD 1500).

Prof Dr Kamarulnizam then ended the session stating a few points pertaining to global inter-religious relations that IS is equal with terrorism and always associated with Islam and Muslim community. IS has caused discrimination against Muslim worldwide and ignited religious hatred and misunderstanding in the western world particularly in Europe and the US. It also portrayed that Islam is equal to authoritarianism, poverty, political and economic discrimination.



Prof Dr Greg Barton as the second speaker for Session 2

The next speaker was Prof Dr Greg Barton. He began by explaining that the IS must be explained in a bigger picture and be looked at in context. He gave his scope of presentation that is the rise of IS, their messaging and the response that is necessary by us. He argued that a differential perspective could be seen if the time of examination was 12 months or 24 months ago. He explained that the IS has caught everyone by surprise. It is a game changer and has changed us in so many ways. He argued that many of us had underestimated the IS. Even President Barrack Obama went on 60 minutes last year and explained the insignificance of the ISIS, when he described it as only a 'JV team' or 'Junior Varsity Team'. President Obama admitted that he got involved in 'Group Think' which made him less aware of the danger that IS had brought. Now, he accepted IS to be 'Major League', they are much organised, very serious and did many unpredictable things. IS is essentially from Al Qaeda in Iraq.

Essentially, the charismatic and effective leadership of the thuggish, Musa Al Zarqawi from Jordan who was eliminated in 2006 had now been replaced by the unassuming academic Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi from Iraq who is arguably more effective. Prof Dr Greg Barton argued that Abu Bakar saw the expansion of operations in the war torn Syria after Iraq invasion in 2003 gave advantage to IS. The former Prime Minister Abbot had described it is as "Not only as non Islamic but also not a state".

He explained that IS is state in a legitimate sense. It has its own ministries. It has 12 wilayah's or governorships and nine councils. They are very professional. In fact he shared that behind the 'very religious facade'; he saw some workings of Iraq intelligence officers, former Baathis members from the Syrian side and Iraqi military officers who understandably were disgruntled for being sacked without pay and without pension. In fact, they and their families were persecuted under the Maliki's government and now under Abadi's government. They joint in an insurgency and they cleverly set up a police state structure. They made good the cleavages in between the Iraqi and Syrian society along ethnic lines. They are strongest where there is a Sunni majority along the two river valleys and they are holding that territory effectively.

Although there was brave adds on the air campaign but they lost some territories in the North of Syria and have gained from Central Syria. Of course you have heard that IS good at recruitment but is only partly understood. Just to recap, pundits should have seen it coming, the city of Aleppo Syria fell in April 2013 and then Anbar later in 2013. Raqqa which is the capital of IS was taken last year and in June 2014. Mosul and Raqqa in Iraq has since been held effectively and self financing. He added that IS declared a caliphate on 29 June 2014. Everyone initially thought IS was silly but until now they are still there and thus, he suggested that IS as a brand should be taken seriously.

Now, other segments of extremists such as the Al Muhajiroun in East London, Abu Bakar Bashir and others around the world has pledged their 'Baiah' to Caliph Abu Bakar or Caliph Ibrahim as he likes to call himself. That is tremendous in that IS has a strong drawing power. The drawing power is not limited to the Syria and Iraq region but more towards the international phenomenon of international foreign fighters being drawn in or recruited. He added that although this had been seen before in Afghanistan but IS draws people in much bigger in number and in much ways faster than before.

Prof Barton observed that like Afghanistan that bled into Bosnia and later into Somalia, but in relation to foreign fighters IS gets them in much faster and in bigger numbers. Now there are 25,000 fighters in Syria and at best he estimated them to be at around 1,000 coming from Southeast Asia. It is extremely frightening. It is of course very frightening. He added that three quarters are coming from the Arab heart lands and the Maghreb but surprisingly a large number is also coming in from the UK, Europe, Australia and now Southeast Asia.

IS, he explained are drawing people in ways that he does not understand. Academics cannot understand why there are recruitments in the UK and France whose Australian numbers match. In Australia the practise of multiculturalism and the economy has helped but it does not somehow dampen the pulling power of the IS. He placed the success of recruitment by the communities and the social networks that may be in play but nevertheless admits that the reason is not concretely known yet.

It is a formidable challenge and in Southeast Asia the challenge is becoming clearer. He added that we are seeing children and families being drawn into the IS central with the idea of building the Islamic State Caliphate, family by family. The prospect of children getting involved is terrifying and of children being born there and not being able to come back is terrible.

Prof Barton then looked at the question of profile of recruitment. He argued that there is no particular profile. No typical recruit. The recruit comes from all walks of life and in the US this year at least 250 people have gone and got recruited. Interestingly, most of these people are not

from Muslim background. They are mostly young men and some young women too with their age being under 30 but not exclusively so.

He later gave some examples of the variance of the people involved in Australia to which the examples were youths in love that inadvertently through their private social networks get them involved with extremism and sometimes crime. For young women that were influenced mostly of it involved following a new found love/lover while for the young men it involved the heroics of martyrdom in Syria. The question of injustice also draws the young, he argued and that sometimes these extremists' elements answer their political questions and questions in Islam. It was told that those that the lonely youths that had joined the Al Qaeda for instance, were even made to become suicide bombers in Iraq.

Prof Barton also highlighted that to some extent the use of social media may help recruit but also help to detect the changes in those involved on the social media. In that context, a bomb attempt was stopped by concerned friends that detected the changes and informed the authorities. He added that despite his example there is no real template for recruitment. But he noticed that another factor that differentiated the recruits is that once they have been lightly influenced by the extremist groups online, the recruiters would encourage the exclusion of the recruited from the local communities especially the local mosques. Any information or questions would then be supplied only by the selected group of recruiters to the recruited. Messages, gifts and the sort are then used to pull the targeted individuals to the recruiters circle. A very exclusive circle and many undergoing such methods will then be more willing to go to Syria.

So, he explained that in Australia the social networks are very important in that these existing and new networks be it in the north, east or west of Melbourne and Sydney have played a significant role in recruitment. The only thing was that none could really see how the recruitment is really been done. He added that in Southeast Asia the recruitment is also done through the known groups like the JI and JAT members that have gone over to support the caliphate. Admittedly, he told that there were a lot of things that were not understood.

He also said that it was difficult to take action against these groups because they are not really contravening in any laws like that of Indonesia, even though there are many concerns on internal security. Despite having explained what he saw, Prof Barton said that the recruits may come from various sections of the society. It could be civil servants such as police or even military personnel. It is a situation of the company that you keep and the friends that you make. So, he argued that a person might fall in with a group of friends that convince them that this is the right course of action for them. But most of the times the address off the social media messaging may be in Tel Aviv. They might not be in Tel Aviv but are swapping their location effectively.

He then highlighted that the long tale of 'jihad wannabes' or the 'keyboard warriors' are at best amateur compared to the product produced by Al Hayat and other centralised bodies of the Islamic State whom are extremely professional. He then showed some examples of DABIQ Magazine and INSPIRE magazine produced by AQAP which was a template for IS's DABIQ Magazine to which the quality is simply better. Comparatively he appreciated the DABIQ Magazine had little or no grammatical errors in the last 10 issues. In the first issue the 'Caliphate' was declared and that is a big statement.

So, Prof Barton added that IS brand is still holding territory and controlling it. The IS speaks about prophecy and prophetic judgements like in the days of Prophet Noah and the flood. IS speaks of the Malahim (apocalypse) or the great struggle at the end of time where the Crusaders will come and will lose. They have great confidence over this because of their experience in Afghanistan and Iraq. They know that the world's most well equipped and modern coalition can become fatigued and dissipate in their political will. He thought that is the same thing that IS wants to achieve in Iraq and Syria.

The IS represents themselves as the 'good guys' and a new era has come for the Muslims to which it has great appeal. The world is divided into two camps as we have heard from the group like Al- Qaeda (AQ) but there is the group concept of 'Darul Harb' and 'Darul Islam' is pushed to the limit. IS says that the whole world is 'Darul Harb' including Malaysia and Australia. It does not make sense or what sort of logic that they are using. This is of course a toxic sort of fundamentalism. IS he added says that everywhere in the world is guilty of *Shiriq* and is lost in *Jahiliyah* and that the world need a tough militant Islam to respond. He explained that IS even says in the pages of DABIQ that Islam is not the religion of peace, it is the religion of the sword. It gets through to the youth and it appeals as it gets one on with a very strong team. He added that the IS also seeks to discredit the Ulama and the leaders of the community. On the 7th Issue of DABIQ after the attack at 'Charlie Hebdo' the IS criticised the Ulama. The IS pitch with youths is that, they have to make *Hijrah*, leave the comforts of home and join them (IS) because they will be corrupted. It is argued that it does not matter how nice your dad, your uncle, the local *ustaz* are – they are lost in ignorance and *Jahiliyah*. IS says that, 'bad company destroys the heart'.

Prof Barton argued that ironically IS correct about it. It is about social capital and social networks and company. Therefore, a person must join the *Jemaah*, give allegiance and you have to support the caliphate. In contrast, he explained the AQ had proposed that a person is not a true Muslim unless you support the Jihad financially or directly.

This more developed what Prof Barton called as AQ 3.0. It wants the person to leave their comforts of home and family. Instead a person must come and join their Muslim brothers and sisters. Join the *Jemaah* and fight the 'Taghut' which is great in number. Assad is an example of the 'Taghut'. Join the land of the caliphate and join the land of Islam. He argued it was a very provocative message, to both young men and women. In the case of young women, IS tells them that they are half of the story and they have to build the families of the state. IS also praises the women in their understanding that follows the *Shariah*. The IS, he added paints this rosy picture, although strange but that since kids like to rebel against parents, it was working well enough.

As such, their act is considered as empowering to the young. Sadly, he explained that it is farther from the truth. IS wants the followers to follow the ways of Prophet Ibrahim a.s and that of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. IS suggests *Hijrah* and the *Hijrah* does not need you to take a camel but instead you can do it by plane to end up in Syria. Prof Barton elaborated that the 'narrative of redemption' is used as those who make *Hijrah* and find the community and are now cleared of all sins. You also find purpose of life. The recruit finds forgiveness and importantly, also those who follow in the IS footsteps have become 'A Zero to Hero'.

Prof Barton added that in order to fend the aggression like that of the 'lone wolf' attack, the government and community must respond as did those involved in the 'Charlie Hebdo' incident, 'Cafe Seige' in Melbourne and like so incidences. It was argued that was partly inspired by the IS. We need to get ahead of the problem by using what is called the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). The process tries to prevent and rehabilitate and try to work with community groups. He shared that Indonesia has recently opened up a rehabilitation centre that he thought was long overdue. While, Malaysia he added has been doing that much earlier opening rehabilitation centres that are involved in terrorism charges.

He however admitted that it is something that is tough to get right over. Based on research that was done he suggested that Malaysia to look at the good community work that had been done in the UK. There is also *wewillinspireyou.com* that has the message of the 'Stop Sisters and think, Don't Join ISIS' that has a powerful message that IS must be stopped through the use of young people for young people. It is provocative for the women in the UK and doing good work.

Prof Barton left the podium the words of Shiekh Ahmed Makhdom, the Prime Minister of U.A.E and the ruler of Dubai who said that he finds truth even after one year it being said. "We are dealing with a military threat that we have to defeat militarily. It is not just a military solution. We are dealing with a barbaric organisation that is most effective." He added that it was one of the most dangerous threats that the world is facing and he links it with other known extremists groups.

He quoted Sheik Ahmed Makhdom saying that, "There are three components. We must stop misguided youth. We have to re-orientate them. We need to emphasise the positive side of our Muslim faith, honours life, promotes human development and does good. We have to come back with a strong counter message. We have to pay attention on human development as the Middle East is a black hole of human development where 200 million young people who are in danger of being seduced".

Prof Dr Greg Barton saw it an honest observation and added that we must inspire it with hope. He suggested that we must send a strong positive message against the negative message. In conclusion, he explained that the IS must be defeated on the ground. He acknowledged

Mr Asrul Daniel as the third speaker for Session 2



that the invasion of Iraq was the one that had started all of this and it must be dealt with. He admitted that there should be better intelligence and again reemphasised that we need to work better with community groups and need to be better in our counter narrative message.

Mr Asrul Daniel Ahmed the third speaker in session 2 started his opening remarks by focusing the media press event on Jan 7, 2004 to which President Obama made a statement that critics have been using against him. The American President made an analogy about local militant group in Iraq, saying that if a Junior Varsity (JV) team were to wear the Laker's uniform, it did not mean that they will be just as good. The point most of his critics were trying to put out across is that there has been a gross underestimation of some of those militant groups, and one in the particular stood out.

He explained that while indeed ISIS started out small, an outfit led by Jordanian Abu Musa Zarqawi that pledged Ba'iah, or allegiance, to Al-Qaeda in 2004. It was then known as *Tanzim Qaedat al Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn*, or more popularly known as AQI. Now, while AQI was known less for its effectiveness and more for its brutality indeed, the collaboration between AQI and AQC was seen more as a marriage of convenience, as the leadership of the two organizations cannot see eye to eye on many matters. One thing that deeply troubled Osama bin Laden was the propensity of AQI to resort to sectarian violence, and their willingness to employ violence and brutality in Muslims lands and directed at Muslims themselves.

Back to the idea of the JV team, the speaker told that it was not difficult to see why these local militant groups might not be taken so seriously. Zarqawi himself died in 2006 from a joint US-Iraqi airstrike, and for a while AQI struggled for survival and relevance, and realizing that they cannot complete with other militant groups in their area of influence, decide to work with them to establish the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). The leader of the newly established ISI, Abu Omar Al Baghdadi, brought the new organization closer to the designs of AQC, and for a while did not indulge in sectarian violence. But when Omar Al-Baghdadi was killed in 2010, it seemed for a time that it might be the end for ISI. However, individual came out of nowhere and assumed leadership of ISI: Abu Bakar Baghdadi. Baghdadi had spent some time in the camp Bucca detention centre, and it was there that he made a number of allies and recruits to his cause, including some Ba'thist leaders.

Mr Asrul added that one of the strongest arguments about why the world is in such a mess right now is because of at least two things: a) The invasion of Iraq, which had removed the obstacles and created an attractive environment for militants and terrorists, and who flooded in; and b) The subsequent and catastrophic first major decision by the then head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq appointed by Bush, Paul Bremer, to disband the Iraqi military and fire all former members of Saddam Hussein's ruling Ba'ath party. This lead to an extremely unstable environment into which 100,000 Sunni Ba'athists from the civil service and the military, many of the latter well trained and well armed, were thrown in unemployed and extremely very angry. He said that coupled with Nuri al Maliki's administration, predominantly Shi'ite and which became arguably involuntarily but progressively inhospitable towards the Sunni population. Thus, the post-invasion Iraq landscape quickly became a breeding ground for insurgency and brutality.

He further argued that, Baghdadi, making full use of the years he had to spend in Camp Bucca, chose many of those who made the top ranks and senior leadership of ISI from Ba'athists contact, which, according to Richard Barret of the Soufan Group, brought with them strategic, military and organizational skills as well as a network of experienced bureaucrats that was formerly lacking in the organization. Baghdadi began building ISI into a formidable fighting force, and on April 8, 2013, they incurred the wrath of AQC by expanding into Syria, re-branding them as ISIS. They orchestrated mass prison breaks in Irag, full of militants and terrorists, absorbing them into their ranks to swell their numbers. They became the richest terrorist organization in the world, with some estimating their cash reserves are around USD 1 billion in November 2014, and generating an income of between 1 to 3 million USD per day. They now control vast swathes of territory carved from Iraq and Syria, and have proudly proclaimed themselves to be the one true legitimate Caliphate, demanding allegiance from Muslims from all over the world and promising the downfall of all government that do not follow their strict interpretation of the Shariah. Frustrated with their methods, AQC formally cut ties with them on February 2nd, 2014.

They also have the number estimated by the US intelligence community last February puts their numbers between 20,000 to 35,000, and reports of foreign fighters streaming into the zone of conflict to take up arms was around 25,000, with 3,400 of them from the United States. For Malaysia, current estimates are between 50 to 140. The numbers are comparable to Indonesia, but to put it in perspective, Indonesia's population is about eight times ours, so in effect, the ratio of those joining are roughly eight times more.

Indeed, Osama bin Laden and his deputy Al-Zawahiri often treated AQI and subsequently ISIS with the contempt of cultured gentility looking at some boorish and unmannered upstart. And there are indications of the "youthfulness", if you can call it that, of ISIS, in the way that they handle themselves. For example, in May 2014, ISIS, through its spokesperson Abu Muhammad al Adnani, issued a sarcastic speech that targeted Zawahiri entitled "Sorry Emir of al Qaeda" in which he proceeded to apologize in a mocking fashion to the head of AQC for frankly telling him that they find

themselves unable to follow his weak leadership, and that many have been heard to describe him as senile. But the "youthfulness" also shows in the other matters, particularly in the adept, digital native manner in which they to take the social media and are able to speak to the vernacular of disaffected and impressionable youth that might be opened to their ideas. And through the use of sophisticatedly produced propaganda products to showcase their violence and brutality, they show an uncanny and disturbing ability of understanding primal urges and desires, and how a fantastic, Hollywood-quality commercial for recruitment can be infinitely more attractive to the youth rather than an hour long lecture on the virtues of taking up arms against the infidel, the latter being the model which AQC had still been sticking to even after ISIS seem to have surpassed them in their recruitment drives in every way.

Mr Asrul added that another "youthful" quality that ISIS and their supporters seem to have is enormous passion. One interesting thing if we look at how the discussions on ISIS is being shaped on social media is that the most influential social media actors have very little to do with the ISIS organization proper. Their official media spokes piece apparently is subjected to as much scrutiny as any other official media of any authority these days. People apparently have issues in believing any official pronouncements by ISIS. Rather, their greatest promoters and recruiters have been those doing it out of pure passion for their causes – the community calls them ISIS fan boys or fan girls, who are not directly related or have direct links to ISIS but believe in what they are fighting for and would like to contribute from the group's end.

He added that Abdel Rahman Malek from the Radical Middle Way, a UK based NGO dedicated to strengthen effort that speak out against violent extremism, calls the Asymmetry of Passion. That is, people on the side of ISIS, which have so been inspired by their narratives and propaganda, have an abundance of passion, which usually amounts to deluge of smallscale, creative individual and independent effort to promote the cause, something that ordinary, peace-loving people, including those in Muslim communities find difficult and almost impossible to match.

He admitted that the peace-loving masses have to contend to addressing the tedious but necessary activities of living life, those who support the ideology of violent extremism have that obsessive drive to do more in service to that cause. He said that those people that he worked with right now, for example, are thinking about how to come up with messages to give positive alternatives for those thinking about doing their bit for the humanitarian crisis surrounding the Syrian civil war. The injustices of which is one of the major reasons why people decided to join groups of foreign fighters there. He admitted that while it took them two to three weeks to come up with a video, and number of radio public service announcements. It took GMMF even longer on discussing on how we should, or even if we should, start distributing this, what kind of impact it will have, will get a detrimental response, etc. etc. He added that while his group were still deciding whether something should be put out and when, at the same time he said, a report on February this year, told that 90,000 messages a day on social media have gone out telling people about the benefits and righteousness of joining ISIS.

In examining the issue Mr Asrul asked some questions like who are IS supporters and who are those that are susceptible to the propaganda of ISIS. Who are the ones who might be willing to commit acts of violent extremism for one cause or another? GMMF used to think that it is young unemployed uneducated young males who have nothing to live for. Unfortunately, this no longer seems to be true. Even in Malaysia, scores of highly educated, highly skilled and highly motivated people, ranging from military officers to civil servants, to kindergarten teachers, appear to be answering the calls of ISIS. He also found that although the demographic trend is slanted towards the young, there have been older recruits in their 40s or 50s as well, and now not only women, but whole families are uprooting themselves in order to live by what they believe to be the true teachings of the Shariah rather than suffer another minute living under what they call as 'taghut' or un-Islamic government here.

He explained further the reasons why do people turn to violent extremism. He said that one of the popular explanations why people gravitate towards violent extremism is a theory called 'Group Polarization' where movement towards extremes seem to arise when like-minded types find themselves in groups (Suntein, 2009). In the absence of variety of information, members of the group are exposed to, pre-deliberate positions and opinions that reinforce each other. Extreme views act as reputation devices for competing members to enhance their position, while lower status members will discard unique views. Previously extreme positions are pushed even further, and group polarization in this manner can lead to tragic consequences. Another theory calls for looking at the relationship between extremism and uncertainty.

Mr Azrul also saw that the rapid change affected by the process of globalization has a de-centring effect for many communities, competing cognitive, epistemic and cultural systems creates friction and increases level uncertainty. He said and pointed out to the uncertainty-identity theory posts that group identification provides a kind of refuge as well as resources for some individuals to fend of uncertainty and can actually transform enduring and specific forms of uncertainty into extremism (Hogg, 2012). Simple, clear prescriptive group identity prototypes provide powerful normative frameworks that can lead to extreme behaviour that centres on promoting and protecting the group. In the end he admitted that in truth is it is very difficult to tell who might join and who might not, and the debate on the matter is still ongoing.

He believed raising awareness about the growing threat posed by ISIS must be part of a larger part of what needs to be done. He emphasised that Malaysia is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia that is taking the threat of groups like ISIS seriously. For example, the South East Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) has been doing a lot of good work across the region, helping to build the capacity of relevant actors so that they will be better equipped to face this challenge. He also believed that SEARCCT have also been active in going to public institutions to deliver talks and courses designed. He added that the SEARCCT Director of Research and Publications, Mr Thomas Samuel, describes as "mental firewall' that can help safeguard young minds from being too readily influenced by the appeal of violent extremism.

Meanwhile, he lauded the achievements of the law enforcement, particularly the Special Branch, and our Armed Forces have been doing an outstanding job in monitoring the situation and making sure that our country is safe from such threats. He saw that they have been successful up to the point that there was recently communication between ISIS members that were released, warning potential recruiters not to use Malaysia as a transit point as the risk of getting caught is very high. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wisma Putra, has been working hard to see that we are an integral part of a collective effort to address violent extremism and terrorism in the region as well as beyond. The recent adoption of the Langkawi Declaration by all the leader of the ASEAN member states earlier in April this year, which stressed on the need for more positive efforts and programmes on moderation to tackle the root causes of extremism and how education play a crucial role in creating a future free from violent extremism, is testament to their efforts. He believed that they are working hard to promote for these ideas during the East Asian Summit, which would be one of Malaysia's lasting contribution towards a more peaceful, secure and stable world.

The GMMF believes that it can play a part in providing platforms for partnership between public, private and civil society actors, and have sought to bring together some of the major relevant actors that can play active and substantial roles in addressing the threat posed by groups espousing violent extremism. Roundtable on Countering Militant Extremist Ideologies among Malaysians and Malaysian Student; Expressing Moderation: Senior Journalist/Editor's Roundtable. Content Creators Workshop, Non-traditional actor's grassroots leaders, and member of civil society can be leveraged to produce sophisticated and culturally-nuanced messaging; the private sector can provide expertise, technical know-how and training to maximize the reach and effectiveness of the messaging; Government can help to link up diverse actors and provide the necessary resources to initiate and sustain messaging efforts.

As such expert practitioners, facilitators and those with field experience related to violent extremism invited to speak; provide the background, set the tone and impress the urgency for effective counter and alternative narratives. Expert and Practitioners from the technology and media industry shared know-how on how to plan and come up with effective media product on social media platforms. Also, the use of analytics tools to better understand media consumption patterns of target populations and improve engagement strategies. Participant came from diverse range of content creator backgrounds, including social media celebrations, NGOs, community outreach groups, journalist, documentaries, animation houses, etc. Participants collaborated in hackathon session to devise theme centred messaging. Themes included: Debunking and challenging religious assertions of extremists, deflating the romanticism of martyrdom and thrill of video games-inspired armed conflict, and alternative means of addressing injustice. Participant came up with a number of creative, interesting, practical and culturally relevant ideas that can effectively inform messaging products and campaigns.

It was found from the feedback that the workshop was useful and informative, indicated interest in learning more about the issues and strategies. Immediate plan is a follow-up workshop that centres on turning the ideas into a reality, from story-board to actual counter and alternative messaging products. The longer-term plan, Mr Asrul said is the establishment of regional network of CVE practitioners that can exchange ideas and experiences, provide creative space, facilitate collaboration, and provide access to resources and expertise in the effort to come up with relevant, impactful and regionally-tailored counter and alternative messaging campaigns.



Session 2 participant asking questions and giving his opinion

Question and Answer Session

The moderator then moved on to the question and answer session. Most interesting was that the repeated question by Major General Dato' Megat Mohd Yusof Megat Mahmud (R) from session 1 of whether there was conspiracy by the Freemason, the Illuminati or Zionist against Islam. He suspected somehow the ISIS had to do with the "new world order" and linked that to the long episodes of conflict in the Middle East, such as Libya, Iraq, Yemen and the fall of Saddam Hussein. The panels responded that Malaysia must find out why and how some Malaysians get involved with the IS. Although the conspiracy theory is always behind the minds of some, the panel however think it is too farfetched to be taken without evidence but mere conjectures. However, it should not stop Malaysians from asking why Muslims are being pulled into IS despite their known tendency for atrocity. As such, the session concluded that the use of IT, social media and socialisation process to radicalise and recruit new members was undeniably effective. The panels suggested countermeasures that may be used such as counter narration and the use of 'soft means' to re-habilitate those subdued by the IS and the using of social media as means to learn from, control and deter such threats from evolving.

Session 2 group photograph of moderator and speakers with the Chief Executive of MiDAS











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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 4

Plenary Session 3 Countering Extremism and Radicalisation: Initiatives and Strategies

> **MODERATOR Prof Ruhanas Harun** Professor, Department of Strategic Studies National Defence University Malaysia

> > SPEAKERS ACP Mohd Zaini Mohd Akhir Bukit Aman, Royal Malaysian Police

Prof Dato' Mohamad Abu Bakar Professor, International and Strategic Studies, University Malaya Malaysia

Mr Ahmad El Muhammady Lecturer, Political Science and Islamic Studies Centre International Islamic University Malaysia

Plenary Session 3 'Countering Extremism and Radicalisation: Initiatives and Strategies'



Plenary Session 3 was moderated by Prof Ruhanas Harun Prof Ruhanas Harun played a role as the moderator for Session 3. The session started with ACP Mohd Zaini bin Mohd Akhir who discussed about how crucial it is to counter extremism and radicalism which have become an epidemic in our country. For many countries, especially Western and non-Islamic states, countering extremism and radicalisation are relatively new issues. The threats manifested by extremism and radicalisation were only given serious attention by most nations after the 9/11 attack on the United States of America (US). The same can be said about rehabilitation on detained and incarcerated militants.



ACP Mohd Zaini Mohd Akhir as the first speaker for session 3

As for Malaysia, the threats posed by extremism and radicalisation as well as the emphasis on rehabilitation programs are familiar issues. He elaborated that the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), the lead agency in countering militant threat, is entrusted with multiple tasks. These include conducting disruptive operations, arrest and rehabilitation programs, containing the spread of extreme and radical ideology, monitoring of former detainees and offering jobs after care services. It also includes reaching out to the community through engagements and lectures on the dangers of such ideologies.

ACP Mohd Zaini said that the RMP gained invaluable experience during the period when it encountered the communist threat from 1940 to 1989. This experience he added helped us tremendously in designing new strategies and initiatives to address threats posed by conventional extremist, radical and militant groups that had mushroomed in the 1980s and continued to evolve to this day. This includes the dangers being posed and promoted by the Islamic State (IS) since 2012.

He said that the RMP's experience echoes the views and findings of many terrorism analysts that the threats brought about by extremists, radicals and militants are best handled by enforcement agencies such as the police and not through military operation. One major reason why
Malaysia still fail to break the cycle of violence which creates fresh terrorist groups despite successful 'hard approach' military interventions is due to the absence of strategies and initiatives in countering extremism and radicalisation, catalyst for the birth of fresh terrorist organisations.

He explained that the RMP is an important component for rehabilitation programs organised by the Government of Malaysia involving collaborations between the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Prison Department and *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* (JAKIM).

The arrest under the Internal Security Act (ISA) involves two phases. The first phase provides the RMP with a sixty day of remand power to facilitate investigation. The RMP exploits this period not only to debrief arrestees and obtain tactical and operational information but also kick-start preliminary rehabilitation program to explain satisfactorily the grounds for the arrest under the ISA. The suspect needs to realise that his arrest under the ISA is never punitive in nature but more a healing process to discard his militant stand. This period is also utilised to win over the heart of the detainees and elicit full cooperation firstly with the RMP, if a Restriction/Release Order is issued, and then to the Prison Department, should a Detention Order be granted.

ACP Mohd Zaini explained that preventive operations like disabling the network, severing their financial network and other few hardcore approaches was done to contain this terrorism from spreading out across Malaysia. However, he believed that violent/aggressive approach is not the only solution to the problem. He believed that these convicts can be helped by using lenient approaches to lead them back to the right path. Usually the RMP will treat these law breakers as gentlemen and physical contact are only used if it were necessary.

The second phase of the rehabilitation of an ISA arrestee takes shape when a Detention Order is issued. The detainee is placed under the supervision of the Prison Department, which has its own comprehensive rehabilitation program involving:

- Discipline Development (0-3 months)
 - Social skills activities
 - Ethical values & moral seminars
 - Self motivation
 - Religious teaching

- Counselling
- Personality Enhancement Program (6-12 months)
 - Survival skills
 - Spiritual reinforcement
- Evaluation by Prison, JAKIM and PDRM

Special Rehabilitation Programme (SRP) conducted by Special Branch (SB):

• SRP is conducted by SB with assistance from the Religious Department and invited lecturers from local universities and religious institutions

- Specially tailored program by the RMP
- Conducted outside the Detention Centre
- Intensive program lasting between about 4 7 days and catered for about 5 to 10 detainees
- Focused on detainees who had shown positive response toward rehab program in the detention centre and had renounced their militant ideology
- Counselling sessions with RMP officers that have proper background
- Counselling sessions with Islamic Scholar that have proper knowledge
- Arrestment by Case Officers
- Conduct Polygraph Test / Digital Voices Stress Analyser (DVSA)
- Not all detainees who went through SRP are being 100% rehabilitated
- Out of 239, ISA detainees, only 7 relapses cases
- None of the 167 released detainees have gone back to their previous activities
- They have given RMP the necessary cooperation especially in supplying information of security interests

Thus, ACP Mohd Zaini added that the program emphasized on soft approach initiatives in countering extremism and twisted ideologies. Such methods are Special Rehab Programs (SRP) which allows the detainee to rehabilitate outside the detention centre especially, those of whom has shown positive response to renounce their militant ideology. Meanwhile in the rehabilitation program, the lecturers are experts in respective fields and capable in engaging knowledge-based debates with detainees. Subsequently he added, the former detainees sometime were also been invited to give lectures in the SRP regarding topics on Usul Fiqh, Istishadiah "Martyrdom Operation", Interpretation of Quranic Verses and Deviant "Takfiri" Ideology.

Moreover, the detainees will be counselled by qualified RMP teachers who could clarify to them the perils of terrorism. Besides, they have the opportunity to get counselling from Islamic scholars regarding terrorism in religious issues, for example, Prof Dr. Yusof Othman, Director of Islam Hadhari Institute and Mr Zamihan Hj Mat Zin, one of JAKIM officers who had contributed their knowledge with the detainees. The de-radicalization rehab programs also include art therapy. The counsellors even introduced collage during the counselling session, which it appeared more effective.

He added and explained that family visits were incorporated during the SRP. Apart of that, family-based rehab programs which detainees family members, spouse or close relatives come and visit them. Moral support, spiritual and counselling sessions is what they need to encourage them for repentance. Group sessions supervised by the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) or qualified CTD counsellors, conducted in group or individual counselling session according to preference of the detainees. Number of family members visiting the detainees and duration were unlimited. As a result of the engagement with parents of detainees, they in return advised the detainees to turnover a new live. But, ACP Mohd Zaini admitted that some hardcore detainees refuse to discard their militant ideologies. Arrangements were made to conduct a SRP for detainees held more than 7 years to cure their state of mind.

ACP Zaini further explained that apart from the Special Rehabilitation Program for militant elements, the RMP is also responsible in organising Special Re-Education Program (SReP) to address misguided interpretations and beliefs on Islamic teachings. The RMP had also taken the initiative to conduct SReP for the families of detainees and militant members who are still at large. These categories of people were invited for explanatory and dialogue sessions with the RMP where all grievances and doubts with regards to legal procedures, ideological aspects and welfare were discussed and addressed accordingly. During the SReP for the detainees' family members, many took the opportunity to express the hardship they were encountered and hope assistance rendered to them to ease their burden. CTD continued with the future plan of released detainees and offered help for them to undertake new business venture. In this case, financial assistance was given for clearing of land to cultivate chili crops in Perak. To date, similar programs have been conducted in Sabah, Johor, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Perak and Pahang. All programs conducted have met the intended objectives.

By the examples forwarded he believed the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs undertaken by the Prison Department, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), JAKIM and the RMP in particular, toward reforming militants detained under the ISA and removing their extreme, radical and militant ideologies have given positive impact to most of the detainees.

The first case involved was the arrest of 13 teenagers who joined an Al-Ghuraba Jemaah Islamiah (JI) cell operating in Karachi, Pakistan in 2003. All 13 persons were escorted back to Malaysia, where 5 were held under Detention Order, 4 issued Restriction Order and the remaining released unconditionally under the ISA. The 5 served with Detention Order were placed in a special location and underwent rehabilitation program organised by the RMP. All 5 eventually enrolled in universities. He added some have became lecturers, a few joined multinational companies and others emerged as successful businessmen.

He explained that since the repeal of the ISA in September 2012, the RMP adopted several new initiatives and strategies in countering extremism and radicalisation, particularly in the context of the Islamic State threat. It is evident that the IS threat is unique compared to other terror groups faced by the RMP in the past. Consideration was also taken with the introduction of new CT legislations, such as SOSMA, POCA and POTA.

He recounted that in RMP's past experience in countering the threat posed by militant groups, had never launched explanatory campaign as aggressive as today, except that which prevailed during the communist era. The RMP believed that if the campaign is not driven systematically, it would be almost impossible to contain the IS threat. This is because the IS has fully exploited the social media, either to disseminate ideology, recruit new members, finding for funds, plan attacks or issue specific instructions to fresh members recruited via Social Media to launch lone wolf-styled attacks. The following measures were undertaken by the RMP in countering the threat of extremism and radicalisation, especially as manifested by the IS:

- Rehabilitation program and monitoring under SOSMA, POCA and POTA. The CTD modified the ISA rehabilitation program and monitoring in tandem with the newly introduced SOSMA, POCA and POTA.
 - For suspect arrested under SOSMA but are not prosecuted due to insufficient evidence, we continue to engage, monitor and organise explanatory programs to ensure the suspect discards his extreme and militant ideology. This program is undertaken on a voluntary basis and without compulsion. For suspects sentenced to imprisonment, the RMP advises that they be segregated from normal inmates to avoid dissemination of ideology and recruitment among the prisoners. The MHA, Prison Department, JAKIM and the RMP will conduct special rehabilitation Programs for these militant and convict them according the ISA format.
 - For suspects issued with either Detention or Police Supervision Order under POCA and POTA, the MHA, Prison Department and the CTD will also arrange special rehabilitation programs similar to ISA module. The CTD will constantly monitor and evaluate suspects restricted under the Police Supervision Order.

• Open exhibitions create and help public awareness among the community who had heard very little about the threat of terrorism. The large turnout during such exhibition made us feel that our efforts in combating terrorism were appreciated. CTD engage with all media without any favouritism with hope of all races to be aware of the development of terrorism threat in Malaysia.

In conclusion, he summarized that the integrated approaches involving all parties are compulsory and should be practiced throughout the country. Disruptive operation by the CTD is a final action towards combating terrorism and radicalism. Relevant agencies & public must play their roles and the government should look into this matter aggressively as effective counter narratives is vital.



Prof Dato' Mohamad Abu Bakar as the second speaker for Session 3

Prof. Dato' Mohamad Abu Bakar was the second speaker for Session 3. He began by praising ACP Mohd Zaini Mohd Akhir for his valuable input before he started the topic at hand for the third session about countering extremism and terrorism in the country. He believed that the cause of the problem in the country is mainly caused by the overly successful propaganda by terrorist from outside the country. How the West confronts the society, people and countries in the Middle East also plays a part in the turmoil.

He added that the involvement of other countries confronting the Middle East issues, particularly by the West usually ended mostly in turmoil. To this he argued that the terrorism occurred because of such deficiency to contain this matter. He mentioned a saying from Tun Mahathir Mohamad the former Prime Minister of Malaysia who believed that in order a problem is to be resolved, one has to find the root of the problem.

He explained that the politics and interests of Western powers in the Middle East had put the Westerners in the middle of the Middle Eastern affairs and this later created Al-Qaeda (AQ), Islamic State (IS) and Islam extremist that even extended its influence to Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, Prof Dato' Mohamad Abu Bakar stressed the important point the society at large must be enlightened not only on the potential threat of the extremist but also to help them understand the existence of other similar threats coming from other countries related to the turmoil.

Prof. Dato' Mohamad believed it was linked to some kind of Communism. He explained in that after World War II and Cold War ended, the Western powers tried to find for themselves a 'new enemy' to replace the threat of Communism. As such he believed that is why the West saw it as an opportunity to get into Middle Eastern affairs. He argued that such actions can provide the Western forces with good training ground for military operations. It can also be seen as an opportunity to advance Western Special Forces into the Middle East in order to gain access to its potential, and at the same time put a challenge against the Muslim community.

The problems in the Middle East that associated with extremism and radicalism must be contextualized within its history, cultures and societies. A black-and-white conception of the world makes it easy for radicals to manipulate emotions and recruit members. According to Prof. Dato' Mohamad the history, society, tribalism and others are used against the Middle East to be taken advantage by them. Hence he argued propaganda is used to utilize their strategies. Prof. Dato' Mohamad opined that the oppression that happened in Middle East makes our Muslim community fell responsible and want to help them. This is the sense that a Muslim has for another Muslim and this left on its own without proper perspectives and guidance which may turn into hard Jihad in such attempt to save the so-called brotherhood.

He believed that those have fallen into such over simplified thinking were not at fault because the authorities must realize that some of these people are actually naive and problematic. Some of which were seeking retribution. Some believed in premonition that required immediate attention.

Prof. Dato' Mohamad believed that in order to overcome the problem in Malaysia, the authorities must try their best to enlighten the public and society about the real politics and the global configuration so as not to become the victims of misplaced passion. He emphasised that the society should be made more aware and understand the 'larger picture' as he had mentioned by road shows and seminars that is given out by relevant bodies and agencies. His words were supported by madam moderator that summed up by saying, it is important to educate the society in order to ensure they know about terrorism, extremism and radicalism.



Mr Ahmad El Muhammady was the third speaker for Session 3

The last speaker for Session 3 was Mr Ahmad El-Muhammady. He began by highlighting the current strategies used in Malaysia. He explained that the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) and other uniformed agencies are the main body of our country's security. He added that there are Legal approaches, government agencies or departments and civil societies that monitor the terrorism activities within the country.

He emphasised that each agency plays different roles and responsibilities in terms of prevention, awareness, punitive and rehabilitative activities. Although the agencies have had their responsibilities, there are still flaws:

- Firstly, there is no coordination or coordinating body to manage counter-terrorism efforts, which means all are individual driven efforts.
- Secondly, Malaysia did not benefit from the "Returning Foreign Fighters" to share their experiences in order to dissuade people from joining terrorism, especially ISIS. It is crucial to invite interagencies or inter-ministries cooperation to join forces in preventive operations as which are still individual-driven effort.

 The shortage of "cyber troopers" to engage with extremist messages posted online. Malaysia needs to have more Counter Violence Extremism (CVE) initiatives to block or containing method from reaching the communities. Despite of that, the funding for CVE projects were rather disappointing as there is no support to sustain it. He admitted that ISIS as brand of terrorism is much more famous compared to AL-Qaeda.

He explained that the ISIS threat to the world is more robust because it propagates its ideology faster using the new media. Online mass recruitment just by using social media like the Facebook (FB) compared to one-on-one recruitment in the 1990s. The philosophy provides clear vision for the future, whether in this future world or the after-world, if dies in the battle, they will get 'Shahid' or to die of God's blessings and a promised place in heaven. It is worrisome as it attracts wide spectrum of people in the society, including the government servants. He added that apart from ISIS and other religious extremist group, Malaysia faced domestic challenges, residual threats, social extremist movements, attempt to influence national discourse, promoting ideas contrary to the national agenda of unity, peaceful co-existence, and mutual respectability.

Mr Ahmad said that the ISIS used the "freedom of expression", "human rights" as pretext and condemning others who disagrees with their ideology. He added that there are new emerging threats which are not necessarily religious, but also secular in nature (liberal values contrary to Islam). It undermines the foundation of unity, national stability, peace and harmony that are needed by a nation. Malaysia's challenge, he argued is how to manage a plural society in the age of extreme in society as a whole. One, he emphasised needs to learn the art of negotiating differences in order to sustain national unity and peace. If Malaysia he argued, fail to address and manage these residual threats, it may escalate to open and physical conflict (racial and sectarian conflict, etc). In fact, Mr Ahmad foresaw that there is built-up and undercurrent tension in society vis-á-vis 'liberal' versus 'Islamist' values that potentially pose actual threats to Malaysia as a nation.

Future strategies and recommendations to achieve goals in containing threats from terrorism and radicalism are coordination at the national level to confront terrorism threats (ideology/physical). Malaysia

should capitalize on using "returning foreign fighters" or "the repented individuals" to share their experiences in the media and public through close cooperation by inter-governmental agencies. He also suggested that Malaysia may intensify the use of new media to promote the countering of violent extremism messages. More funding is needed to ensure the success of Counter Terrorism (CT) initiatives. The series of serious research institutes dedicated to study the trend of extremism and terrorism in Malaysia is also paramount. He ended by saying that, "true success in fighting terrorism or extremism is to prevent it before it threatens us".

Question and Answer Session

The moderator then proceeded to the question and answer session. A central query came from Mohd Azlan Shah Abd Razak who wanted to know whether IS members are really Muslims. He also wanted to know whether IS was funded by the super powers that wanted to use it as propaganda to tarnish the image of Islam. In reply, the panel members admitted that that they were not in the business to say someone as Muslim or not but instead highlighted that what the IS was doing was really a departure from what are fundamental teachings in Islam. The involvement of hidden hand, they saw that the IS question must be addressed by the means divulged in the session and hopefully the measures must also be done collectively.



Session 3 group photograph of moderator and speakers with the Chief Executive of MiDAS









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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 5

Closing Remarks MiDAS Conference 2015

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE Dato' Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia

Closing Remarks MiDAS Conference 2015

Dato' Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi is delivering the closing remarks of the conference



The Right Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi expressed his gratitude and congratulated MIDAS for organizing the conference into a higher standard. He said that in 2015 issues of extremism, militancy and radicalism is posing a new challenge to our national security and stability. He believed extremism and militancy posed a challenge to national security because it reflects our societal relationship and ability to react and rebound in the face of adverse situation. Thus, in recognition with the Malaysian strategy of achieving moderation, the Deputy Prime Minister praised this year's conference for managing to engage a variety of experts and academicians to address the threats and challenges posed by extremism and militancy.

The Right Honourable Dato' Seri Dr Zahid said that it was vital to remember the importance of not only strengthening our national security but maintaining the ability, and our effort to create and promote stability which Malaysians are currently enjoying. He was both pleased to acknowledge the presence of the distinguished moderators; and domestic and international speakers including a well-known Australian expert on the subject. He thanked the presence of several prominent civil servants that included professors and the other uniformed bodies which reflects solidarity at all levels of society who are concerned about extremism, militancy and radicalism.



Distinguished guests and participants during the Closing Remarks of MiDAS Conference 2015

He highlighted that since the turn of the century, our peace and stability are constantly brought down by terrorism. He said that this problem neither distinguish its victims nor does the target, but simply putting the effort to promote their beliefs through radical and extreme activities. According to him, these activities which are known as extremism and militancy are challenging the fabric of Malaysian society and if it were not addressed by the armed forces, the police and other enforcement agencies, it may blemish and divide our community that is built on diversity and trust. He believed the conference sessions were able to highlight the alarming rate of the spread of extremism and radical ideology. He warned that if it goes unchecked, it may destroy the very foundation of our nation state. He indicated that we are not short of examples of a failed society and state which were directly attributed by extremism and radicalization. He sincerely believed and hoped that this kind of forum should be held continuously to spread the right and proper message to the public. Malaysian, as well as other like minded countries is serious in putting together our effort to go against every form of extremism and militancy.

Dato' Seri Dr Zahid reminded everyone that at the moment, the Malaysian security mechanism is busy keeping its eyes on certain quarters that spread lies, instigating their followers to carry out attacks on key assets and public areas in Malaysia. He reiterated by saying that every militia, mouth piece and supporters of radicalism and extremism must be removed from our society. He emphasized that this generation owes this responsibility to the next and future generation. Adding that the government must also acknowledge and accept the fact that no one organization can combat and neutralise the threat posed by extremism and militancy alone. He again reminded everyone the dimension of the security landscape in the face of extremism, militancy and radicalization if not addressed well would cause havoc to a society and state.



The Deputy Prime Minister advised that in the face of this security threat against the diversity, resistance and tolerance in the Malaysian society, all Malaysians especially and citizens of this region should maintain and remain at the core of our values in order to maintain our harmony. He said that diversity should be further complemented with

Participants during the Closing Remarks of MiDAS Conference 2015 inclusiveness that would then result into harmonious life and achieve a common vision of national unity. Dato' Seri Dr Zahid reiterated his support for the concept of 1Malaysia as propagated by the Prime Minister as he emphasized Malaysians should strive for prosperity while at the same time have respect for their diversity.

He agreed with the distinguished speakers on the importance of resolution and realized that Malaysians should work together. He emphasized that Malaysians have to work together as a team and that they should do away with extremism, militancy, racism, extreme left or extreme right. He also called everyone to disregard their differences (whether they are in the military, police and other enforcement agencies) because all of them have one objective. He added that he would like to see the stability of this country to be enjoyed by all citizens as well as foreigners who visited our country.

Dato' Seri Dr Zahid opined that Malaysia should be respected as an Islamic country where the government and authorities are translating the concept of moderation (*wasatiyah*) which does not necessarily happen in some other Muslim countries. He suggested that the authorities have to translate the approach using positive engagement with the media. He wanted the use of soft approach in engaging the media because Malaysia has different cultural values. Malaysians have to respect different cultural linkages, background, roots and religious background and it is good that many organizations and NGOs have put the effort to discuss about radicalism, militancy and extremism. He nevertheless believed that the Malaysian government's moderation concept of *Wasatiyah* is the best approach. The effort by the government, led by the Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak is concern about creating a harmonious society not only among citizen but among the professionals and organizational leaders.

Dato' Seri Dr Zahid believed that whatever steps taken by the government through various efforts should be given credit. He added that Malaysians should cast aside their differences in political ideology. Malaysians should instead alleviate their political or individual interests beyond certain groups. He understood that there are many security issues being politicized especially issues pertaining to radicalism, militancy and extremism. He admitted that he is monitoring closely 'subversion efforts' by certain quarters to spark racial tension through social media. Thus, he warned those with such intention not to 'play with fire'. He however expressed his faith in the Malaysian main stream media for good journalism and reporting ethics. Nevertheless, he was worried with cyber warriors who are completely ignorant of their actions which could jeopardise the stability and harmony of this nation. He called for all Malaysians to walk 'hand-in-hand' with the government in its fight against militancy, extremism and radicalism, and support the efforts taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as cooperation by the Royal Malaysia Police and the Malaysian Armed Forces.

To date, he shared that there were 131 detainees being detained for directly involved in extremism, militancy and radicalism. These 131 detainees were taken to isolated detention centre in the name of preserving the stability of the nation. As it was greatly believed that their release would cause havoc and further compromise the national security. He added that there are several activists who brought their family members to Syria to fight for Islamic State (IS). Thus, he reiterated that Islam condemns such killings and murders, and bringing down lawful and civilized government.

Dato' Seri Dr Zahid stressed that in the context of cooperation there are more to be done to heighten national security and defence besides forums and dialogues. He pointed out that for example, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) achieved should not end up as 'Memorandum of Misunderstanding'. He said that MoU's should be understood by everyone and can be easily translated by the enforcement agencies into operations.

Finally, he expressed his gratitude and congratulated MiDAS for ensuring the tradition of organizing this biennial forum a success one. He hoped that MiDAS could work closely with Institute of Public Security of Malaysia (IPSOM) on defence and security field for the best interest of this nation. National security should be given top priority when dealing with any threats internally and externally, it must be consistent with the concept of HANRUH (Pertahanan Menyeluruh), which is not to be adopted by the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) only but by all governmental and non-governmental agencies in Malaysia. He expressed his sincere appreciation and thanks to Lt Gen Dato' Azizan Mat Delin, the new Chief Executive of MiDAS and the organising team for their efforts in convening this conference. He also thanked all speakers and participants for taking parts in this conference. The Deputy Prime Minister then pronounced the MiDAS Conference 2015 officially closed.

Group photograph with the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (centre with red tie) and Deputy Minister of Defence, Dato' Wira Mohd Johari Baharum, accompanied by the Ministry of Defence Malaysia senior officials











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MiDAS Resolution MiDAS Conference 2015

Ministry of Defence

MIDAS CONFERENCE 2015 RESOLUTIONS

The 3rd MiDAS Conference 2015 was held on 22 September 2015 at the Royale Chulan Hotel with the theme of *Extremism and Militancy: A Challenge to National Security.* This theme is significant in view of the current threats post by extremists and militancy in the overall security landscape of the nation. This theme is also in cognisance moving on from the previous theme of MiDAS Conference 2013 on *Strenghtening National Resilience*.

National Security without a doubt is a vital component to the stability of Malaysia as a nation state. This in turn complements the environment for economic growth and prosperity. It is therefore pertinent that all policies implemented over time are able to preserve, maintain and ensure that the nation is ready to address security challenges, be it the traditional or from non-traditional security sources. Malaysia's continued peace and security, a situation the country has enjoyed all these years is a result of the many security policies and initiatives implemented since her formative years. Nevertheless, no country can guarantee it will enjoy prolonged peace and Malaysia is no exception. As such, it is vital that the Malaysia's security planners constantly identify and address security issues that threaten the stability and security of the nation. Certainly the threats from religious extremism, radicalisation and militancy are indeed alarming now; more so with the speed and connectivity these perpetrators communicate and sow their misguided beliefs.

It is acknowledged that addressing the threats posed by extremists and militants will need a multi-faceted approach by all. Winning the war against them will require not only the deft handling of the social media but the ability to educate Malaysians on the perils of extremism and militancy. Although Malaysia has numerous security and economic policies in place, the nation must remain vigilant against all threats in a most comprehensive manner. Malaysia's recent experiences clearly indicated that a security threat will come from the most unlikely source and in a non-traditional manner now. Similarly, uncertainties in the global economy are bound to have a spiralling effect on the economic wellbeing which in turn may be used by extremists and militants to fortify their causes.

The MiDAS Conference 2015 officially opened with a keynote by Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, the Defence Minister which was read by Dato' Sri Abdul Rahim Mohammad Radzi, the Secretary General, Ministry of Defence. It was followed by three sessions which are *Militant Ideologies and Radicalism in Malaysia*; the *Threat by the Islamic State* and *Countering Extremism and Radicalisation*. Based on the discussions, the MiDAS Conference 2015 recommended the following:

- i. It was accepted that the root of extremism and militancy is ignorance and that those who chose this path are often misguided and were looking for a belief and guidance from ideologies. The indoctrination of extremists and militants motivates them towards their goals which to the normal person may sound ridiculous but to them it is their only way of achieving greatness. Education holds the key for Malaysians in understanding that extremism and militancy is not the proven path. This is not the work of the government alone, but to all Malaysians which include religious clerics and organisations.
- ii. Universal threats such as extremism and militancy require approaches which are anchored by cooperative, comprehensive and collective measures. The fight against extremism and militancy does not merely entail the neutralisation of threats after they have struck. It also demands a "whole of government" approach involving not only a multitude of agencies but the multilateral participation of many governments to eliminate or reduce the possibility of terrorist organisations establishing operating bases across borders. The nation must be able to garner support from every levels of society in addressing a security threat such as the Concept or HANRUH or Total Defence.
- iii. It is interesting to study the concept of *Moderation* which has been consistent in Malaysia's foreign policy orientations and now accepted as an ASEAN way during the 26th ASEAN Summit in April this year. Moderation has its roots through the concept of Islam *Hadhari* and *Wasatiyah* espoused by both our present and former

Prime Ministers. Malaysia has stressed that it is possible to achieve *Peace and Security through moderation,* which was the theme in bidding for inclusion in the UN Security Council. The rallying call is to join together and ensure that religion is the source of healing and blessing rather than conflict and destruction. The greatest challenge to National Security now is to ensure that youths not only avoid radicalization but are actively engaged with society. In the Malaysian context moderation is also about acceptance and here the key word is for us to accept our differences, find common ground on the problems we face and move forward together.

- iv. It is not surprising to note that the strength of IS came from its mastery of the social media and as such winning the cyber war is crucial. There have also been marked increases in the number of extremist sites the past few years. These websites have indeed penetrated even universities where the IS have been actively persuading students to join its cause. It is crucial that all government agencies come together in a concerted effort to dispel and counter the propaganda posed by the IS. The creation of several websites and dedicated personnel could play an important role to counter the IS influence on the younger generation. These may include religious authorities who could correct misunderstandings immediately online and via other means including the media to educate the public on the true meaning of Jihad, a hadith or even a misconception rather than relying on giving public sermons or lectures through the conventional way.
- v. In the light of the violent actions by extremists and militants in the name of religion, there has been negative portrayal associated with the Islamic religion particularly amongst the western media. These negative perceptions should be countered with a holistic view from all Muslims and that Islam is indeed a religion of peace. Efforts should be made in Malaysia amongst Muslim scholars, clerics and every levels of society to dispel this notion. As Malaysia is a plural society, the religious tolerance practiced in this country is a manifestation of the continued peace enjoyed by the country since its independence.

- vi. Intelligence gathering and cooperation must be further enhanced not only amongst the various security agencies in the country but in the region as well. Although there are existing mechanisms in place, every effort must be made to identify the root causes of extremism and militancy in the region including the recruiting process. In this context, there are also those militants who have returned from their 'failed journey' abroad and these returnees can be used in countering the propaganda espoused by the IS.
- vii. The legislation and law enforcement aspects in countering extremism and militancy in Malaysia must be carefully applied in dealing with terrorism activities. This is because not all extremists lead to terrorism but all terrorist acts are inspired by extremist narratives and ideologies that sow discord and hatred in justifying their acts of terror. It was highlighted that laws alone, irrespective of whether they are focussed on preventive of punitive actions, would not be enough to address the scourge of extremism and militancy. Nevertheless, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) which is an anti-terrorism law was passed by the Malaysian government on 7 April 2015 and this is only one of the punitive measures in addressing the threats post by extremists and militants.
- Viii It was noted in the conference that there are already measures in place in the *"de-radicalisation"* of extremists and militants undertaken by the police and religious authorities. Although it may be slow and painstaking, it is a worthy approach with many detainees returning to society. This process could be shared with our regional counterparts as the fight against terrorism and militants involves many facets and counter-measures. It was also pointed out that not all militants responded in the same manner with that of their counterpart in such measures. As such every effort must be taken to identify the background and character of each militant.
- ix. The rise of the IS militants and their ideologies have indeed taken the world by surprise. The manner in which their ideas and propaganda is being spread through the social media especially has even outpaced the ability of the security authorities to address

them effectively. The methods propagated by the IS especially through the social media must be immediately countered by a pool of dedicated people which could include community videos in urging the general public not to join the IS, using little but simple explanations as well as creating an environment where the general public is aware of the threats posed by militants.

- x. It was suggested that there could be a sole Coordinating body to manage counter terrorism activities in the Malaysian security hierarchy. This body could integrate the efforts by the Police, Military and other relevant agencies. In this aspect, foreign fighters who have returned to society could be used to dissuade potential sympathisers and IS followers on the perils of joining this outfit. In the meantime, research institutes could also assist the relevant authorities in understanding what makes the IS attractive that even scholars, professionals and security personnel have succumbed to their distorted beliefs and fallacy.
- xi. MiDAS to continue organising forums of such nature and engaging all relevant agencies and institutions in addressing and discussing contemporary national defence and security issues.

MiDAS Conference 2015 Secretariat is having a group photograph with the Chief Executive MiDAS, Lt Gen Datuk Azizan M Delin (fifth from right)











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EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY: A CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter 7

Photo Gallery MiDAS Conference 2015



A LHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY















































