

# GLOBALIZATION AND ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

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## Introduction

Usually the question of globalization is linked to issues relating to economic, instrumental-technical (the so-called information-communication technology or for short ICT) and culture and never to Islamic movements. However, the Post September 11, 2001 incident, there are writings in the West that try to relate globalization to Islamic movements'.<sup>1</sup> In this case, globalization is seen as facilitating Islamic movements to be more militant in their postures especially in relation to the United States as a great power. In actual fact, Islamic movements' responses to the United States are varied in the sense that not all Islamic movements show sign of drawing towards militancy. In general it can be argued that Islamic movements' rather critical and radical attitudes toward the United States is basically a reaction to the exploitative nature of Capitalism whereby its hegemonic power is maximized to the fullest, facilitated, mainly by forces of globalization. In this sense, globalization is synonymous with Americanization or its more cynical version, MacDonalddization.

## Globalization and Islam: Some Theoretical Perspectives

Too many works have been written, thus far, about globalization. However, for purposes of providing theoretical background for

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1. For further insight on the linkage between Islamic movement and globalisation, see Lubeck, P., 'Antinomies of Islamic Movements under Globalization', Centre for Global, International and Regional Studies, University of California: Santa Cruz, 2001

this paper, suffice for us to refer to a writing by Jan Aart Scholte.<sup>2</sup> This work by Scholte about globalization, even though the debates introduced are construed as critical it is still unable to solve some of the internal contradictions imbued in the globalization process itself. The author's rejection of the commonly associated terms with globalization such as internationalization, liberalization, universalism and westernization as something irrelevant is, in our view, probably unfair. Scholte chooses to see the processes of globalization as a form of deterritorialization or supraterritoriality. In this context, Scholte's reference is certainly to one of the traditional characteristics of state i.e. the existence of territory as a requisite for the legitimization of the state itself. The choice of the term by the author does not add anything new in the understanding and debates about globalization. It is still anchored to the initial understanding of globalization as propounded by Ohmae. As we are all too aware, for Ohmae globalization simply means 'a borderless world'.

The contradictions as put forward by Scholte can be detected at two levels. At the theoretical level, concept like supraterritoriality has influenced the establishment of one type of government termed post-sovereign. However, at the practical level, the existence of this form of government does not stop states to play a more important and dominant roles in the administration which is still basically bureaucratic. What should have happened is that, through globalization, there is the progressive corrosion of the foundation, roles and power of the state.

Globalization as seen through the perspective of supraterritoriality is linked to security, justice and democratic dimensions. Even within the purview of these three dimensions there contained internal contradictions. For example, in the security dimension. Globalization has widely effected the security dimension faced by the global community in issues relating to peace, ecology, jobs, identity, social integrity and knowledge. The evidences provided so far pointed to the fact that the results are one of 'mixed'. From one perspective, globalization has promoted human

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2. J.A. Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000

security in the sense that there is an increase in peace movements, humanitarian aids, jobs opportunities and cultural pluralisms. On the contrary, globalization has prolonged and even deepened the tendency towards wars, the destruction of the environment, poverty, unemployment, workers exploitation and social disintegration.

The internal contradiction could also be gauged from the social justice dimension. Social justice is usually associated with the distribution of life chances between classes, sex, race, rural and urban populations, and age groups. Once again the result is one of mixed. From the positive viewpoint, globalization in certain cases has increased the capacity of youth, poor states and women to enable them to realize their potential to the fullest. In contrast, from the negative viewpoint, globalization so far has maintained and increased arbitrary hierarchies in the present society. For example, opportunity gaps between classes have increased and in actual fact widened. Similar gaps exist between the North (or the so-called developed First World) and South (or what is commonly known as the less developed Third World). Structural inequalities have also increased that involved gender, race, rural-urban areas and generation.

The relationship between globalization and democracy similarly shows internal contradictions. Here, the claim that the present social order has encouraged the growth of popular or civil power as opposed to the arguments that globalization in actual fact corrodes democracy. The development of global politics has promised a positive development for the increase of democratic practices for example through the use of telecommunication and information technology and the burgeoning of what is popularly known as civil society. However, when both sides of the arguments were justly weighed, the present evidences seem to favor the critics of globalization. So far there is no effective mechanism to ensure that post-sovereign governance is an administrative system that ensures and gives priority to aspects like participation, consultation, transparency and public accountability.

In order to solve this contradiction writer such as Scholte<sup>3</sup> has suggested that "bold intellectual and institutional innovations are needed to refashion democracy for a globalizing world". Scholte is also convinced that "Alternative, better approaches are available for the future."<sup>4</sup> This paper humbly takes up this challenge by introducing Islam as an alternative. By re-introducing the universalistic perspective, Islam can amicably solve the internal contradictions impregnated in globalization itself. In extension, party politics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which has Islam as their basis of struggle could also be seen, in the light of Scholte's analysis, as nonstate agencies and the connotation of the ummah itself befits the roles of nonterritorial communities that has heightened as a result of globalization.

### Islamic Movements and Globalization

The resistance of party politics such as PAS and especially its Youth Wing (or PAS Youth for short) and Islamic non-governmental organization like ABIM towards globalization is selective and not exhaustive. This has something to do with how the processes of globalization are perceived. If globalization is perceived like by those who sided with the hyperliberalism, then the economic dimension of globalization is usually given undue attention. This means that globalization strengthens capitalist hegemony and the accompanying cultural dimension that closely aligned itself with the notion of consumerism.

In this case, globalization has entrenched capitalism as "the apotheosis of a unified materialist order." The hegemonic power of capitalism is in opposition to Islamic economics which is based on moral foundation and the importance of the notion of distributive justice. The capitalist system that is hegemonic and at once materialistic has its spill over in the consumerist culture which is more bend on being hedonistic. The rise of the capitalist power means also the rise of secularist tendencies in

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3. J.A. Scholte, *Ibid.*, pg. 7

4. *Ibid.*

societies effected by capitalism.<sup>5</sup> Faced with the negative implications of globalization, the responses from PAS Youth and ABIM are seemingly different: what is different is the approach not the objective.

Basically, the differences in approach are influenced by the nature and spectrum of the so-called partisan-non-partisan perspectives as adopted by both PAS Youth and ABIM. The different approaches adopted by these two Islamic movements were very much influenced by historical and socio-political experiences as confronted by these two Islamic movements. This means that they are a part of a long process of continual change and the latest in the series of change that influenced their behavior is globalization itself. On this basis it can be summarized that Islamic movements such as PAS Youth and ABIM "embody the twin character of being both a moment of and resistant to globalization."

In general there are two forms of resistance afforded by Islamic movements towards globalization process. Firstly, a form of resistance known as war of position. This form of resistance views changes in cultural institutions as bridges for the transformation of society and state. This form of resistance born out of the failures of nationalist-secular policies formulated by the state especially those concerning the general welfare of the society. In this respect, efforts at broadening the basis for the existence of a civil society are in line with the demands of Islamic movements itself.

The second form of resistance is labeled as war of manoeuvre. In comparison to the first form of resistance, this form is more radical in orientation in the sense there is a direct and concerted efforts to overthrow a state and secular society. In this regard, the best example is the Iranian Revolution that took place in the late 1970s. Resistance in the form of war of manoeuvre took place when Islamic movements perceived the role of the state as more inclined towards authoritarianism, an offshoot of a

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5. Adam Smith who was be considered as the father of modern capitalism argued that what is fundamental to capitalism is the notion of self-interest . He was also of the opinion that from the moral viewpoint, capitalism is morally neutral. It is on this basis that capitalism has the limitless power to accumulate wealth. The usual expression to this effect is: ' The sky is the limit'!!

basically weak and dependant state. In line with this argument, and based on their experiences, the basic assumption of this paper is that Islamic movements in the form PAS Youth and ABIM in the Malaysian context subscribe more to the first form of resistance i.e. that of war of position.

### PAS Youth and the Globalization Question

As an important constituent to a political party that simultaneously functions as an Islamic movement, PAS Youth largely if not wholly shares the objectives and aspirations of its parent body. In dealing with Malaysian politics in general, PAS Youth takes into consideration local realities (*waqi'*) and the universalistic dimension of Islam. What this simply means is that problems faced by Malaysian politics will be given an Islamic alternative as a form of solution. Combining local needs to universalistic orientation can be seen from the preamble of PAS constitution which states: " It is hereby declared that in order to fully manifest the piety to Allah and the service to mankind, created to uphold *al amru bil ma'ruf wan nahyu 'anil munkar* in state and societal dealings, therefore it is hereby declared the existence of an organization known as the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)." Of the eleven so-called ' concerted efforts' that PAS promised to carry it out in realizing its struggle, effort number 10 specifically refers to its international role which is to : "participate and co-operate with United Nations and other legitimate bodies in order to uphold peace and safeguard basic human rights and also to eliminate all forms of injustices, slavery, falsehood, and oppressions among men." Being the right arm (sayap kanan) of PAS and vowed to serve as a force of 'check and balance' from within PAS Youth seems to be more advanced, in some cases, than its parent body in voicing their standpoints in international affairs especially those that have direct relevance to the welfare and survival of the ummah.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Ustaz Misbahul Munir, the Secretary of PAS Youth who was also Head of PAS Youth for the state of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia share the view that PAS Youth should be playing a 'check and balance' role to its parent body. However, PAS Youth criticism of its parent body should be one of verbal, steeped in mannerism. On this, see his speech titled 'Pemuda Perkasa Jiwa Perdana' delivered on 5th May 2002.

Globalization certainly augurs well for PAS Youth activities. Reviewing their activities for the period of 1990-2002, gives us some idea of their commitment to international concerns. There are twenty-three activities in this regard which can be analyzed as falling under three broad categories: visits, dialogues and institution-buildings.

During the period under study, PAS Youth has initiated five visits. This is not simply visiting far-away places in the sense of holidaying, but it is more of working visits. There was, for instance, a working visit to South Africa on 14th October 2002. The visit was for the purpose of establishing contacts with Islamic bodies and institutions of South Africa such as Islamic Business Forum (IBF), South Africa Zakat Fund and Global Channel Radio. Similar visits were made to China on 20th-28th October 2002. A visit to Thailand on 20th-22nd November 2002 focused more on agricultural activities of Thailand. A humanitarian visit and for the purpose of establishing contacts with fellow Muslims was made to Vietnam on 1st July 2002. In sum, the nature of the visits is a wide-ranging one which certainly fulfills the holistic nature of Islam.

Under the category of activities termed dialogues (which also include participating and initiating international seminars) there were nine such activities during 1990-2002 period. On 21st-22nd October 1992 PAS Youth has organized a symposium re-evaluating the role of United Nations which attracted the participation of youth from Canada, Iran and Spain. Similarly, PAS Youth has initiated a seminar on Islamic regional youth on 13th-14th June 1993. Islamic youth from Indonesia and India participated in the seminar. At a more general and international level, PAS Youth has organized events such as International Youth Gathering on 28th-29th August 1993 held in Kuala Trengganu, Malaysia. A seminar aimed at pulling together the economic resources of the ummah was held on 8th September 1996. Again under this category, the focus is widespread, not specifically dealing with things political.

The last category is that of institution-building. This category reflects PAS Youth as having a certain measure of credibility in terms of political will and leadership. An event worth mentioning to this effect is the fact PAS Youth took the initiative of establishing Islamic Youth Forum

of Asia (IYFA) on 14th June 1993. Another remarkable achievement by PAS Youth is the initiative taken to establish ASEAN Muslim Youth Secretariat (AMSEC) which finally came to fruition on 7th May 2001. The three stated objectives of AMSEC are : to establish a regional cooperation between ASEAN youth organization; to generate Muslim youth strength through the unity of thought (*fikrah*) and deeds (*amal*) practically and efficiently and to establish a regional forum and to provide a platform for international dialogue. The newly formed AMSEC was quite active in discharging the duties where on 13th-14th November 2001, probably in response to the much publicized world event of 11th September 2001, held a special meeting on the issue of terrorism.

In responding to the tragedy of 11th September 2001, PAS Youth has demonstrated a remarkable degree of openness. They have positively responded to invitations by United States Foreign Secretary to have several dialogues on the crucial issue of terrorism held at various places such as Hawaii, Chicago and Washington. These meetings took place from 1st to 9th September 2002. This is not to deny the fact that PAS Youth still perceives United States as a significant *mustakbirin* force that literally held the world at ransom. While perhaps PAS Youth may place themselves on the *mustad'afin* spectrum, there is no denying that it has the courage to have fruitful dialogues with the United States on issues of common concern to the survival of humanity in general.<sup>7</sup>

The globalizing tendency of PAS Youth, especially during the period under scrutiny, is certainly a direct response to increased globalization world-wide. It acts in tandem with the parent body, paving the way, as it was, as a force of resistance from below in winning for its parent body some scores in the so-called war of position.

At the national level when dealing with national politics, PAS Youth is more vocal than its parent body for instance by initiating

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7. The *Mustakbirin-Mustad'afin* continuum was first used by Haji Yusof Rawa, the third President of Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) in 1983. In a sense, the usage of the terms is certainly influenced by the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s where Iran regarded United States as the "Great Satan".



demonstrations. It held a demonstration at the American Embassy in the capital Kuala Lumpur against American invasion of Afghanistan. Sometimes PAS top leadership attended such demonstrations. In dealing with matters internal, and since even peaceful demonstrations were banned by the Malaysian authorities, PAS Youth usually, as an alternative, presented memorandums to Malaysian authorities on issues they regarded as injurious to Islam in general and to Muslims in Malaysia in particular.<sup>8</sup> Due to their agility and dynamism in fronting and confronting issues relevant to ummah in general, PAS Youth has the labeling of being or can be seen as quite autonomous in their actions. This does not mean that they are free from their partisan position as they are an important section of a political party.

### ABIM and the Globalization Question

ABIM is the acronym for *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* or the English rendering for The Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia was formed on 6th August 1971. Apart from being an Islamic youth movement it simultaneously functions as a non-governmental organization or what is popularly known as NGOs. On the understanding that it is a non-governmental organization, ABIM chooses to perform its task on a more neutral ground and at once subscribed and labeled its struggle as one of non-partisan.

Even though ABIM has labeled itself as an Islamic movement of a non-partisan variety, it cannot avoid itself from giving interpretations and adding color to the role and nature of Islam *vis-à-vis* the Malaysian state; notwithstanding its approach to the issue at hand as something different from an approach adopted by a political party like PAS or its Youth Section. On this understanding ABIM is similarly grouped together with PAS and the now defunct Al-Arqam group by a foreign researcher as Islamic movements with fundamentalist strain having their final goal of

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8 PAS Youth stance regarding demonstration against United States is that since America is a foreign power, the Malaysian authorities would give some leeway. Most demonstrations, however, usually end up with police interventions dispersing the demonstrators.

realizing to the maximum the true teachings of Islam (Nagata, 1984). Since its movement is circumscribed to a wider and more neutral sphere and at once its views are more open, ABIM thought that it is possible for it to establish contact with whoever, regardless of their ideological persuasions, they thought could significantly contribute to the uplifting of the status of Islam.<sup>9</sup> One result of this type of relationship is the establishment of a 'love-hate' relationship with the power- that- be and this fact could be seen from the history of the struggle as waged by ABIM.

The year 1971 when ABIM was first formed was also a year significantly characterized by the initial revival of student radicalism. In the 1970s when ABIM was under the leadership of Anwar Ibrahim, it adopted a more confrontational and vocal approach toward the government. When Anwar finally joined UMNO in 1982 as a result of the so-called co-option strategy devised by Tun Dr. Mahathir, Dr. Siddiq Fadhil was appointed Acting President of ABIM. He was later confirmed as the President of ABIM. ABIM in the 1980s under the leadership of Siddiq Fadhil was seen as 'an era of maturity' and ABIM relationship with the government was said to have shifted from the one characterized by confrontational means to one of managing and solving problems under girded by dakwah-based approach. It was also said that the dakwah-based approach was more proper since it is based on the principle of hikmah. The change in approach adopted by ABIM at this stage was very much a reflection of the fact that Anwar was in the government. Even though initially the majority of ABIM's Central Committee did not approve of Anwar's entry into UMNO and government, however, finally they have to come to term with the fact that Anwar was in the government and they can do nothing about it, so why not make full use of Anwar's presence in the government to further the objectives of ABIM. Concomitantly, the ensuing strategy as conceived by ABIM was to make full use of Anwar's presence in the government and worked together to raise the status of the so-called official Islam.

The decade of the 1990s saw ABIM still sticking to its corrective participation approach when it was under the leadership of Dr. Muhammad

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9. For example, immediately after the tragic incident of 9th September 2001, ABIM wrote to American President Bush expressing their condolence. The letter dated 21st September 2001.

Nur Manuty. During this period ABIM was significantly actively worked hand in hand with the government, the so-called pro-active approach as partners-in-progress in the development of the nation. The tragic removal of Anwar from the government and later party, by Tun Dr. Mahathir in 1998 also influenced ABIM's attitude towards the government. As a result of the tragic incident, some of the leadership of ABIM are actively involved in the newly-formed KeADILan Party headed by Anwar's wife, Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail. Some of them even contested in the 1999 general election against the government even though the majority of them lost. The active involvement of some of the leadership of ABIM in the election was seen as effort to give some measure of moral defense for the Anwar's case which they saw as a form of injustice inflicted upon Anwar.

Since September 1997, ABIM is under the leadership of Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman. Under his leadership, ABIM is striving to bring back the idealisms of its original struggle as 'the spokesman of the ummah' and this can be seen from its latest leadership theme: 'Emboldening Idealisms and Polishing the Dynamics of the Struggle'.

The 21st Century which is characterized by features of globalization has similarly influenced the character of ABIM's missions and visions. Central to ABIM's mission which is also fundamental to its organizational activities is the creation and leadership of the civilization of the Quranic injunction of 'the best of the ummah' (*khyra ummah*). This mission of ABIM seems to be the central and integral mission of ABIM and this is consistently adhered to by ABIM since its formation till the present day. In view of this mission it is understandable that ABIM is all for the Islamization of knowledge. The reference to the more subdued term like '*khyra ummah*' seems to be in opposition to the more '*harsh*' concept that seems to have been preferred by PAS Youth which is also from the Quranic injunction of 'enjoining what is good, and rejecting what is evil' (*ta'muru na bil makruf wa tan hauna anil mungkar*). It is to be realized at this stage that both of the concepts come from the same verse of the Quran.<sup>10</sup> This means that

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10. See Holy Quran, Ali-Imran, 3:110.

although the approach of ABIM seems to be different from PAS Youth, the difference is only in form rather than content. In extension, this also means that in terms of approach they are not mutually exclusive. This again is consistent with the fact that Islam is playing three main inseparable roles: as a religion, as a movement and as a civilization.<sup>11</sup>

Bringing back idealisms as the basis of its struggle, for ABIM, this also means that the Islamic movement is once again sensitive to the whole issue of political leadership. This is contained in ABIM's latest mission of becoming a comprehensive Islamic movement in realizing the fullest teachings of Islam. What is understood as comprehensive by ABIM can be construed as having the same objective with that of PAS Youth intention of realizing the Islamic teachings to the fullest or *syumul*. In this sense, indirectly ABIM is convinced that its mission and vision can only be achieved through political power or means and this is reflected in the latest ABIM mission and vision contained in the theme: *Authoritative Leadership Will Moved the Ummah*.

During Anwar tenureship in the government holding various posts such as Minister of Education and finally Deputy Prime Minister, some of ABIM leaders were assigned various important posts in the government. This development was seen as an interesting development and there were views which see this as a concerted effort on the part of ABIM to further 'Islamize' UMNO or to 'Abimize' UMNO. Those leaders of ABIM holding governmental positions, certainly with the blessings of Anwar, were in a quandary: they were heavily suspicious by the secular elements within UMNO and at the same time they were heavily criticized by PAS members liking them to those who sold Islam for worldly benefits. ABIM as an Islamic movement, through some of its leaders holding positions in the government, can be said as having involved in the so-called war of position. This war of position as experienced by ABIM was a war of position from within. This is in contrast to the struggle experienced by PAS Youth which can be interpreted as a war of position from without.

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11. Kalim Siddiqui, (ed.), *Issues in the Islamic Movement: 1981-1982*, London: The Open Press. 1983. pg. 2

This is understandable since PAS is an opposition party. In a sense, it can be argued that based on PAS Youth and ABIM experiences in this context, there developed of what is termed as polarization of positions. The position held by ABIM is one that is in line with the Islamization process as pursued by the government and hence still subscribed to the idea of nation-state. PAS Youth position was however, committed to total purification or *islah* programs and therefore having recourse to not the nation-state but the notion of Islamic state.<sup>12</sup>

Differences of approach and language espoused by PAS Youth and ABIM thus do not mean that they are mutually exclusive; in actual fact they are mutually inclusive in the sense that both of these Islamic movements have similar objective: to establish an Islamic state as alternative to the present secular-nationalist one. ABIM approach in realizing this objective is one of deductive in nature in the sense that the development of the civilization of the *ummah* based on the Quranic concept of *khyra ummah* is in fact a pre-requisite for the establishment of the Islamic state. In contrast, PAS Youth approach can be interpreted as one of inductive in the sense that establishing an Islamic state as a specific project is of utmost importance since Islamic order will automatically follow. Whatever is the case, the relationship between Islamic movements and Islamic states is a fundamental and natural relationship meaning that the one needs the other and thus inseparable.<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion: Globalization and the Future of Islamic Movements

From what have been argued thus far, it is understood that there is certainly a nexus between globalization and Islamic movements. Observers in the West see the globalization process facilitating Islamic movements world wide and this heightened the anti-American fervor

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12. Perhaps what can be understood by PAS Youth standpoint regarding *islah* as opposed to Islamization programs as pursued by the Malaysian Government is trying not to jumble up of what is *haq* with that of *bathil*. For example, PAS Youth would argue that there is no point in having mosques while at the same time issuing permits for gaming activities.

13. Kalim Siddiqui, (ed.), op. cit., pg 28

at the international level and finally ended up with terrorism. This is certainly a very biased view. PAS Youth and ABIM experience in the case of Malaysia certainly does not support this perspective. Their generalized responses to forces of globalization seen from their activities which can be termed as international do not support the idea that they are the radical variety of the Islamic movements.

The one-sided American view is rather adamant in seeing the connection between globalization and Islamic movements that have negative implications. This can be seen from the fact that there are a lot of international seminars organized by American universities to this effect. One such seminar was organized by the University of California Santa Cruz on 7-10 March 2002 entitled Globalization, State Capacity and Islamic Movements. Those responsible for holding this Seminar were very convinced that Islamic militant movements were holding international society at ransom and globalization certainly facilitated this new reality. It sounds more like a phobia than anything else!!

In the case of Malaysia, the future relevance of Islamic movements such as PAS Youth and ABIM will, in a sense, be determined by how far the power of hyper-liberal Capitalism which has broadened its hegemony to the maximum with the help of globalization – which is synonymous with Americanization or the more cynical version of it ‘Mac Donaldization’ – capable of ensuing justice especially to the peripheral or the sub-altern communities world-wide.

As long as the Capitalist system as sponsored by America continues to be exploitative in nature than there is always the possibility of Islamic movements rising up as forces of resistant from below or the periphery. In its internal manifestation, peripheral power or states that danced to the tune of the West will be forever suspected by the Islamic movements. In the case of Malaysia, this common stance is similarly shared by PAS Youth and ABIM even though their approach to the problem may be different; and the globalization process itself has helped to bridge whatever gaps that may exist between them.