ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN THE FIELD OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MALAYSIA

Suzalie Mohamad Antang*

Abstract

This research is intended to explain the nature of political participation of two major Islamist movements namely the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and Parti Angkatan Islam (PAS). In essence, the finding of this research defends the idea that UMNO and PAS struggle for power fosters the maturity of Malaysian political discourse as it integrates dynamic Islamic political discourses within the ambit of heterogeneous nature of Malaysian society. The first part of this article explains the theoretical perspective of the nature of Islamist political movement in Malaysia. The second part of this article deliberates the nature of Islamist movements in Malaysia and the government's responses towards these movements. The last part reflects my expectation to the future of Islamist movement in Malaysia.

Introduction

The Islamist movement has been an essential force in the political development of Malaysian. It is an important force because Islamic political discourse has become the benchmark of many debates between the government and Islamists influencing the policy and decision

---

* The author is a Research Fellow at the Centre For Consultation and Training, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM).

making processes in the country. The political rivalry in the name of Islam between the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) and the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) presents the magnitude of Islam as the source of reference to the country. Besides political rivals, numerous Islamic based non-governmental organizations are also of significant factor in shaping the maturity of political discourse in the country.

Islamist movement (*al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah*) conjures up different images since the fall of the caliphate system. Islamist movements have been misunderstood as terrorist organizations seeking to materialize global Islamism. This trend has been manifested in the attack of Islamfacism[1] to the very nature of Islam as a political movement which eventually generates a derogative meaning to Islamist movement. In addition, this misconception began to appear in popular discussion following 9/11 incident in which their use and meaning have shifted tremendously.

The global trend of *Islah* and *Tajdid* (renewal and reform) has spread around the world as early as the fall of the caliphate system and decolonialisation period which greatly influenced global Islamist organizations to revive Islam from inside. Some of Muslim countries face serious blow from this trend and interchangeably trying to balance and adjust to the circumstances dominated by Islamists' agendas. For instance, Malaysia, as a Muslim majority country could not escape of such trend.

Islamist movements in Malaysia are much more preoccupied with domestic issues (domestic Islamic discourses) trying to adapt and balance the practices of Islamic teaching with the historical colonial baggage (legacies). This has made Islamist movement in Malaysia a unique case study because even though many Malaysian Islamists

---

1.   Several authors, among which Daniel Pipes and Michael Ledeen have prominently equated Islam to fascism and coined the word '*Islamofacism*'.

receive Islamic educational background from the Middle East[2] and Central Asia, the revolutionary and radical tendencies to renew and reform Muslim community did not take place through violence and bloodshed.

Since the first democratic election of post independence Malaysia, Islamic political discourse was oriented towards the identity building of Malaysian Muslims in identifying themselves with Islam and preparedness to place Islam as reference in all socio-economic and political affairs within their community. The interconnection between Islamic political discourses and Islamist political participation contributes to the political maturity in Malaysia. The Islamic discourses which cover wide range of domestic Islamic issues such as the status of Malaysia as an Islamic state, the role of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy, laws, economy, and education have become the central agenda not only to the Islamic ruling government but also to the Islamic opposition parties.

In this paper, attempts are made to discuss the nature of political participation of two Islamist political movements namely UMNO and PAS, and government policy towards the movement in Malaysia. The paper tries to prove that Islamist movement in Malaysia fosters the level of political maturity of Islamic-Islamist political discourse because it integrates the Islamic discourses and the nature of Malaysian society. The paper is divided into three important parts. The first part deals with the theoretical perspective and its definitional relationship with Islamist movement within Malaysian context. The second part deliberates the nature of Islamic movement in Malaysia and the government's responses towards this movement. The last part discusses my expectation to the future of Islamist movement in Malaysia.

---

2. See Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *Islam dan Masyarakat Melayu: Peranan dan Pengaruh Timur Tengah* (Islam and Malay Society: the Role and Influence of the Middle East), Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005; Egypt Religious and Intellectual Influence on Malay Society, *Katha*, Centre of Civilisational Dialogue, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005, pp. 26-54.

Theoretical Perspective

According to Qaradawi, Islamic movement is an organized and collective work that is undertaken by collective of people, to restore Islam to the leadership of society and to the helm of life. It is a work performed by the masses based mainly on self motivation and personal conviction. It is work performed out of faith and for nothing other than the sake of Allah, with the hope of being rewarded by Him and not by people.[3] In short, collective number of Muslims that work together for civil societal improvement through the effort preventing vices (*mungkar*) and promoting goodness (*ma'ruf*) can be considered an Islamist movement or group.

He further elaborates that the core of this motivation is the unrest and tension that a Muslim feels inside him when he becomes conscious of the Islamic awakening. He feels turmoil deep inside him resulting from the contradiction between his faith on the one hand and the reality of the state of his Ummah on the other.

By taking this perspective, the good intention of Islamist movement lies on their seriousness of bringing values into the society deems positive on the eyes of the public and God. Intention is something abstract and difficult to measure. Muslims are trained to begin or engage in everything with good intention with the purpose of getting blessing from God. Therefore, the solid connection between the Islamists' heart (*kalb*) and remembrance of God is a guiding principle to good-faith or good intention. This has to do with the level of *iman* (faith) one possesses, signifying good deeds and intentions. A faithful or pious Islammist will not engage intentionally deeds that contradict to the teachings of Islam (Shariah). In short, a good Muslim will always balance his or her present on the context of relationship between God and himself or herself (*hablul minallah*) and his or her relationship with

---

3.   Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, (Trans. S.M Hasan al-Banna), Awakening Publication, 2000, Pg. 25

other creations (*hablul minas*). This balance will always guide the bestial and the spiritual nature of living man.

In the holy Quran, Muslims are reminded to follow obediently the commands of God, His messenger and *Ulil 'Amr* (the ruler). This verse indicates the level or degree of trust to burden the task and responsibility in preventing *mungkar* and promoting *ma'ruf* in the society. On this pretext, who should be burdened with this task? Are group of Muslims or Islamists responsible for such task/burden or the *Ulil Amri* (the government)?

Since all Islamist movements struggle in good-faith to bring about improvement to the society, it is the role of legitimate government authority that should burden the task provided it has the capability and access to deliver the task efficiently. The Muslim community or Islamists must be in agreement to cooperate and collaborate with the elected ruling government in pursuing constructive activities and programmes that enhance the Islamic awakening and awareness.
At this point, one may ask a significant question on how about the case where Muslims live in non-Muslims majority country? Should they resist or revolt against the laws and rules imposed by the non-Muslim ruling government? The answer is that of Muslims should respect the laws and rule of that country as far as it does not hinder the Muslims from practicing their faith peacefully. At the same time, Muslims should continue their efforts in promoting Islamic-based societal improvement peacefully.

Within Malaysian context, an Islamic religious study is made compulsory taught subject to Muslim as soon as early childhood. Therefore, bsic understanding of Islam is properly taught to almost all levels of Muslim social fabric. At some cases, the spirit of or the urge of Islamic awakening among Muslims motivates them to undertake immediate personal efforts to improve society through *da'wah* and socials activities which encourage Islamic awareness among Muslims. Such scenarios are desirable and good for building an environment that is conducive to continuous Islamic awareness.

By these understandings and tendencies, Malaysian Muslims are aware of the role played by the government as well as the Islamic non-governmental organization (Islamist movement) according to their respective task and limitations. The practices of tolerance and moderation are actually embedded in most Malaysian citizens irregardless of their race and belief. Therefore within this context, the interaction between Islamist movements which integrates the complex nature of Malaysian society and Islamic political discourse contribute to the political maturity of the country within the pretext of Islam.

Why Does Islamic Movement Happen?

Islam is *'ad-deen'* - a way of life. The meaning of *'ad-deen'* goes far beyond the understanding of the term 'religion'. Islam as *ad-deen* denotes dynamism, evolutionary and comprehensiveness which are adaptable to the continuous changes of time and condition.[4] As far as continuous change of daily life is concerned, Islam as a universal religion adapts to these changes. The adaptation of Islam into these changes manifests through the application of Islam (its understanding) in the form of its flexibility through interpretation and application.

The interpretation of Islam should be used to benefit the society at large with a main purpose to fulfill the *Maqasid Syariyyah* (the objectives of Islamic laws). The interpretation of the sources of Islamic law is not only limited to the matters of laws governing the life of the society (*haram-halal* discourse) but also include the thought of which influences the way one person acts and behaves. The misinterpretation of the sources of Islam and its application into the daily life or in response to the present problems is actually leading to the bad image of Islam. In this case Islam cannot be blamed as it is the fault of the interpreters who interpret Islam wrongly.

---

4. A comprehensive explanation of Islam as *al-Deen* is best referred to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978, Pg. 14-18.

Islamist movement faces this dilemma in the effort to define and apply Islam in response to the present reality until they forget the importance of prioritizing Islamic agendas, consequently leads to dissention and sectarian within Muslims Ummah. The cause of this estrangement is due to the disability to adapt correct and balanced interpretation of Islam into the reality of the present situation.

Islam as a way of life combines both spirituality and physical (material) aspects of human being. Islam is the source of reference which provides Muslims with evolving renewal (*islah*) and reform (*tadjid*) agendas within themselves and their surroundings for societal betterment and enhancement.

The evolving *Islah* and *Tadjid* agendas are strongly related to the interpretation of Islam, thus the government and Muslim leaders (*al-'Umara*) play a crucial role to standardize the interpretations of Islam in accordance to the needs of the present situation of the Ummah (*maslahat ummah*). The purpose is clear of that to prevent disunity, sectarian, dissention and conflict within the Ummah. This leads to a need for a just government, an authority which is legitimated by the Muslims community at large.

Islam as the foundational principle of all Islamist movements aim at correcting and improving the society, thus improvement of society is the main goal of all Islamist movement. The objective of improving the society that Islamist movement attempts, in good faith to reach, are as follows;

1. Building the Muslim Individual - to have a strong body; exemplary character; cultured thought; to be able to earn; to have deep faith and correct worship; to be conscious of time; to be able to benefit others; to be organized and striving.

2. Building the Muslim Family - to have righteous parents who educate their children to be brought up Islamically.

3. Building the Muslim Community - by building the individuals and the families, addressing the problems of the society.

4. Building the Muslim State - by instituting and electing Islamic social and political governance.

5. Building the Khilafah - by gathering and unifying the Islamic governments all around the world.

6. Witnessing to Mankind - becoming the leader of humanity taking it away from the clutches of Evils.

Analyzing these objectives, it becomes clear to us that a conducive environment is indeed required to prevent vices and social illness in the society. Conducive environment here refers not only to the rigidity of interpretation of Islam that Islam is just all about laws and order but rather a wider spectrum of the application of traditions (the fundamental teaching of Islam) into the contemporary situations (modernity). In short, it can be deduced in a metaphoric view that Islam is the soul and the state is the body. In order for soul to exist, it requires body to restrain it. Therefore, a conducive state and government play a crucial role in ensuring that its citizens benefit the progress brought about and development base on the spirit of Islam.

The Islamists' activities are strongly connected to bring closer the teachings of Islam into daily life in order to achieve a balanced worldly and spiritual life. The Islamists are critically responding to the weaknesses in the civil society and trying to correct them. Perhaps Islamists are facing the 'dilemma' to integrate Islam and changes because many of their activities are either in contradiction with the policy or the nature of the country and pressures from the modernity and 'civilized' society. However, this phenomenon should not be generalized to stereotype all Islamist movements are necessarily rebellious and militant.

The interaction of modernity and reformation in Islam attempts to preserve the fundamental teachings of Islam; however it is important to note that in Islam we are also encouraged to apply the fundamentals in reference to the needs of present situation so that hardships and hindrances in applying Islam could be minimized. This can be achieved through the right methodology in interpreting al-Quran, Sunnah and the *Ijma'* (consensus of opinions) and the application of this interpretation into problems that deserve solution.

Muslims at large are also in agreement to the fact that in Islam, differences of views and opinions are allowed and encouraged within the framework of values (*zanniyah*) but not the fundamentals (*qat'i*). This is an important maxim in Islam that many of Muslims affairs are dealt within the context of values and the very fact that a fundamental of Islam is a settled entity. In fact, the conceptualization of values in Islam is constraint to the world view of Islam that encompasses Tawhid, Khilafah and justice.

It is therefore necessary to understand the very basic agenda of Islamist movement in connection to modernity and reformation in Islam. Ideologically, any Islamist movement can be differentiated according to three groups namely traditionalist, modernists and reformist.[5] It must be noted that all Islamist movements are engaging in the process of reform (*Islah*) and renewal (*Tadjid*).

Three-Partied Dilemmas

Technically the three differentiations – i.e the Traditionalist, Modernist and Reformist, are complex due to the fact that Islam

---

5. Abdul Rahman Abdullah, *Pemikiran Islam Masa Kini: Sejarah dan Aliran*, (Contemporary Islamic Thought: History and Perspective) DBP: Kuala Lumpur, 1992, pp vi-vii. For further reading on the origin and thinking of Muslim reformists and their response towards secularism refer El-Fateh Abdel Salam, "Islam, Democracy and Secularism: The Question of Compatibility", *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, Vol. 1 No. 3 2004 and Abdel-Fatah M. Mady, *Islam and Democracy: Elite Political Attitudes & Democratization in the Arab Region*, unpublished Phd. thesis submitted to Claremont Graduate University, California, 2005, Chapter II.

does not dichotomize traditionalism, modernism and reformism. The three concepts are all interchangeably connected. For instance, a particular Islamist movement could be within their agenda of reformism constitutes the element of modernism but at the same apply traditionalism in bringing reforms or vise versa. On this regard, Professor Hisham Sharabi has clearly delineated that;

> *Traditionalism is to be viewed as the negative attitude toward all types of innovation and toward the West. It is a static position, fundamentally passive and hardly able to react to external stimuli. Modernism is to be understood as positive attitude toward innovation and change and toward western civilization generally. It represents a dynamic outlook, essentially pragmatic and adaptable. Reformation has often been referred to as Islamic modernism, but reformism was modernizing only in special sense and a limited degree. At heart, reformism was traditional-bound; its primary goal was to safeguard Islam and the institutional structures upholding it.* [6]

Traditionalism is inclined to the view that Islamic history is the source for inspiration and must be followed accordingly and defended. Traditionalist is skeptic attitude towards modernity, renewal and changes. Roger Garaudy (Ragaa), a French Muslim who drew public attention for his stance and writings as a Holocaust denier, is in view that the traditionalist believes that the present global malaise of the Muslim community is due to the defiance to the basic teachings and disengaging with the traditional precedents presided by the traditional generations (*tabii wa tabiun*), and following blindly the Western values.

Modernist believes that Islam complies with the spirit of modernity. Islam as a universal and comprehensive religion entails dynamic and evolving form towards modernity. Muslims modernists

---

6. Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1857-1914*, John Hopkins Press for The Middle East Institute, 1970, pp.20-45.

reject modernity brought from the West which disregards the spirit of Islam. Modernity in the West entails secularism, nationalism and capitalism which contradict the world view of Islam. Therefore, modernism in Islam is a tendency and a movement to bring the thought and life of Muslims into harmony with the present age. Modernists affect not only the religion but the life and customs as well.[7]

Reformism is a positive value with a negative connotation. Reform means change that is made to a social system, or an organization etc. in order to improve or correct them.[8] It also politically understood as a widely-used term to describe improvements or the abolition of malpractices and deficiencies.[9] Reformist rejects *taqlid*[10] (blind imitation) and encourages *ijtihad* (free independent judgment) in finding solutions to contemporary issues and problems of the Ummah.[11]

---

7. Quoted from Samuel Graham Wilson, *Modern Movements among Moslems*, Scholarly Resources, 1976, pp. 17-29.

8. Quoted from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, New York: Oxford University Press, 5th Ed., 1995

9. Quoted from the *Blackwell Dictionary of Political Sciences*, Blackwell Publishers, 1999

10. To blindly follow a person whose following is not based on proof and does not rely upon knowledge and also used to refer to the acceptance of all sayings of a person without knowing the evidence for the fatwa (ruling).

11. See Mohd. Kamal Hassan, *Islamic identity Crisis in the Muslim Community in Contemporary Malaysia*, Pustaka Ilmu Raya, 1981; of the same author *The Issues of Modernization and its Impact on Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals: Nurcholish Majid's Attempt at a Theology of Development*, Association of Muslim Social Scientists, 1979; *Contemporary Muslim Religio-Political Thought in Indonesia: The Response to "New Order Modernization*, University Microfilms International, January 1, 1980; Ismail R. Al-Faruqi, *Islam* (3rd Ed.), Amana Publications, 1994.

Perhaps Islamists need to familiar themselves with 'know-how' tool about the process of *Islah* and *Tadjid* accordingly so that the main goal of improving the socio-economic and political condition of Muslims society could be achieved. This must be done accordingly by taking present social conditions of Muslim community and the best applicable framework that Islam has provided.

Islamist movements are always perceived negatively by the West as back-warded, outdated, extremist and violent propagator. This is due to the epistemological difference between the West and Islam. Such counter-productive perception is due to the lack of understanding to the very basic nature or essence of Islam as an evolving and dynamic religion. Islam emphasizes the *tawhidic* (holistic) *aspects* of life as the basis for good deeds and good results. Therefore the process of *Islah* and *Tadjid* is a prerequisite in every Islamist movement that cannot be undermined and should be viewed positively.

Such misunderstanding had lead to a negative preview of all Islamist movements around the world. On this pretext, many of Islamist movements are not allowed to participate justly in the government's decision making process which consequently leads them to find other alternatives to pursue their voices, at some extent resolve to radicalism and extreme options.[12] Islam denounces all forms of extremism and terrorism. Therefore, it must be noted that alternatives that contain violent, militancy, extremism cannot be considered as Islamic.

The discrimination on such flawed basis has isolated and radicalized the Islamists movement which is contradicts to the very basic ideal of democratic process. In many cases, Islamists are ready to have dialogue and want to be listened but were denied of such expectation. Thus, Islamist movements have to find other options to

---

12. Mohamad Kamil Abd. Majid, *Tadjid: Perspektif Sejarah dan Masa Kini* (Tadjid: Historical Perspective and Present Condition), Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2000, pp. 3-14

pursue their interest. Perhaps, many Islamist movements become the victim of structural violence that radicalize and terrorize them.

In the case of Islamist movement in Malaysia, the government of Malaysia adopts a positive approach to integrate the role of '*Ulama* (religious scholars) and *Umara* (leaders). This correlation has been a practice in Malaysia which aims to achieve a stable and prosperous country that combine universal values of religious practices which Islam as the principle benchmark to the social needs and practicality.

Islamist Movements in Malaysia: An Overview

Malaysia is an undeniable and unusual example of multicultural success. The Malay Muslims, who are of Malay origin, constitute 60 percent of the population. Some 25 percent are of Chinese origin and another 10 percent are of Indian origin. Christians constitute 7 percent of the population, and there are significant Hindu and Buddhist communities. Malaysia holds a rare place as an Islamic country viewed with high hope by many Muslims as well as many non-Muslims as a model of an Islamic state.

The constitutional basis of Islam in Malaysia[13] is enshrined in the Federal Constitution. Even though the constitution does not stipulate Malaysia as an Islamic State, however the content and status of Islam in the constitution provide foundation for the country to adopt Islam as the basis of reference and implement various Islamic activities for the Muslim majority. In spite of the idea that the Federal Constitution is the law of the land that trumps everything on the name

---

13. Malaysia is a federation of 13 states with 3 federal territories.

of national security and interest,[14] the constitution embraces the special content of religion of Islam as the official religion of the country.[15]

In another aspect, the Malay as the majority of the population is also allocated with a special reference in the constitution that indicates the identification of religion of Islam with race as an important constitutional element that legally defines the "Malay". The constitutional definition of the relationship between Malays and Islam has been allocated in Article 160 (2) of the Constitution that Malay is "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to the Malay Custom".[16]

---

14. The Constitution has recognized Islamic laws as the source of reference by allocating specific provisions on Islamic legal matters pertaining to Muslim in Clauses (1) and (1A) of Article 121 and List II of the Ninth Schedule which give a clear definition on the division of judicial power between the Civil and Syariah Court.

15. Article 3 (1) of the Constitution declares Islam as the official religion of the country. Meanwhile, Articles 3 (3) & (5) state that Ruler of State is declared as the Head of Religion of Islam by the State Constitutions; and in the absence of Muslim rulers – i.e King or Sultan (States of Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak) or in Federal Territories (Kuala Lumpur and Labuan) the Yang diPertuan Agong (Supreme Head of State) is declared as the Head of Religion of Islam. Refer Mohd Salleh Abas, "Traditional Elements of The Malaysian Constitution", in *The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments*, F.A Trindade & H.P Lee (eds), Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 4-8.

16. This was taken from the definition given by Section 2 of the Nationality Enactment of the Malay State passed in 1952 to supplement the citizenship provisions in the Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948. But prior to this, the definition of "Malay" can be found in various state enactments. For example in Section 2 of the Malay Reservation Enactment 1933 (F.M.S Cap 14) and in Section 55 (ii) of the Forest Enactment 1935 (F.M.S Cap.153), a Malay is defined as "a person belonging to any Malay race who habitually speaks the Malay language or any Malayan language and profess religion of Islam. See *Federal Constitution of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: International Law Book Services, 2000.

For one to understand the relationship between Islam and racial-political setting in Malaysia, Malay-Muslims community should be analyzed according to the above pretext (i.e the identification of Islam and Malay in the constitutional content) because the Malay (Muslims) is the factor to the dynamic interaction of Islamic political discourse between the government and diverse views of the non-Muslims' rights. For instance, a particular domestic issue such as applying Islam into the political system inherited from the British colonial preoccupies Islamists activities in Malaysia since independence until today and this trend will continue in the future.

Even though many Malay-Muslim activists (in the past and today) receive their religious educational background in the Middle East and Central Asia like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, India and Pakistan, the revolutionary and radical ideas in that region do not radicalize the domestic political affairs.[17] In fact, the idea of *Islah* and *Tadjid* (reform and renewal) in Malaysia is a synthesis in the form of crystal prism that embeds Malay culture with Islam for a balanced worldview of Islam.

---

17. The idea of reformation and renewal of Islam such as in Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935), Muhammad Abdul Wahab, Jamaladdin al-Afghani (1838-1897), Sayyid Abul Ala al-Mawdudi (1903-1979), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and many others do not totally influenced the Islamist tendencies to radicalize the government in power rather collaborate positively through democratic channels that exit in the country. For further reference to the influence of global Muslim reformists in Malaysia and South East Asia refer Azyumardi Azra, *The Transformation of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of the Middle Easten and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth*, UMI Dissertation Service, A Bell & Howell Company: Columbia University, 1995, pp.346-567. For the influence of Syaikh Dawud Al-Fatani see Mohd Fakruddin Abdul, *The Development of Kalam in the Malay World: the Teaching of Shaykh Dawud al-Fatani on the Attributes of God*, unpublished Phd. thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2001.

Historically, there were two Islamist movements that have shaped the Islamic political discourse in Malaysia. The first movement was the 'Kaum Muda' (Muslims Youth) in 1920s an 30s who received religious education in the Middle East with the Pan-Islamism orientation advocated by Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Kaum Muda had successfully influenced the British educated Malays and work together in implementing the process of *Islah* and *Tadjid* within Malaysian political setting.[18]

The second movement composed of the Pemuda Melayu which received conventional education from overseas with strong influence of 1970s' and 80's global Islamic revivalism. These groups were trying to implement and influence the political scenarios by encouraging Islam as the way of life which is inclusive of worldly life and the Hereafter. They rejected practices within the Malays that are alien to the teachings of Islam as well as secularism.

Two Broad Categories of Partisan Islamists Movements: UMNO-PAS' Rivalry

For the purpose of delineating Islamist movements in Malaysia from legal perspectives, two categories will be adopted to distinguish the major characteristic of the movement namely (i.) partisan and (ii.) non-partisan Islamist movement. Firstly, all organizations in Malaysia, partisan and non-partisan in nature, are required to be registered, under the Malaysian Law of the Societies Acts of 1966.

Secondly, level of political participation is crucial to determine their involvement in Malaysian political system. For instance, the partisan Islamist movements incline towards accessing into political power. Meanwhile, the non-partisan Islamist movements incline towards *da'wah* (propagation) and *tarbiyah* (training) activities. This paper will not deal with the latter category (non-partisan) but rather deal with partisan Islamist movement in great detail.

---

18. See Mahmood Zuhdi Abdul Majid (ed.), *Dinamisme Pengajian Syariah* (Dynamism of Syariah Studies), Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., pp. 93-95

Partisan Islamist movement is an Islamic or Muslims political party that attempts to gain access to the political decision making processes within government through democratic process. Its foundation is centered to at least eight principles namely *Rabbaniyyah* (Godliness), *Jama'ah* (collectiveness), *Shumuliyyah* (Comprehensiveness), *Binaa'* (Constructiveness), *'Alamiyyah* (Universality), *Tadarruj* (Gradualness and Perseverance), *Tawaazun* (Balance), and *Waaqi'yyah* (Pragmatism)[19]. It participates in the political campaigning and election in order to secure power with the objective of realizing and implementing Islam through a democratic system. In contrast, non-partisan Islamic movement does not participate in political process however they compliment partisan Islamist movement by stimulating Islamic political discourses.

Within the context of partisan Islamist movement which adopts Islam as the main agenda of its struggle, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) is the only political party in the country that uses Islam as the official name of the party, claims that its party is a valid Islamist movement that emphasizes Islam as the main agenda of its existence.

PAS has also claimed that other Muslim majority political parties do not comply with the basic characteristic and agenda of an Islamic organization or movement. The party also claims that its existence is strongly connected to the chains of global Islamist movements such as

---

19. Basically, these principles lay foundation to a better civil society that adheres to the balance interaction between human beings to their God and neighbours. These principles are in accordance with number of verses in the holy Quran, for instances, the first principle *(Rabbaniyyah)* and respectively strives to rejuvenate everyone with the primordial purpose of creations to worship Allah, see al-Quran 4:65, 5:50, 10:24, 51:56 and 61:14; second, *(Ja'maah)* strives to avoid the tendency of the works of evils will always accompany those who insist on remaining singular see 61:4; third, *(Shumuliyyah)* strives to incorporate balance between spiritual and material matters; fourth, *(Binaa')* strives to bring positive works for overall benefits to humanity see 14:24 and 9:105; fifth, *('Alamiyyah)* strives to tackle wider Muslims affairs through universal strategy; sixth, *(Tadarruj)* strives to find mature solution to revive the glory of Islam see 2:124; seventh, *(Tawaazun)* strives to inculcate balance approach in all aspects of its strategy see 2:143, 5:90 and 25:67, and the last principle *(Waaqi'yyah)* strives to be practical in all actions it takes see 2:173.

Ikhwan Muslimin (the Muslims Brotherhood) in Egypt and Hamas in Palestine.[20]

PAS had collaborated with non-Islamic parties on the name of 'Alternative Front' to secure political power in the election. However this collaboration did not succeed due to disagreements over many issues on the status of Islam in Malaysia.

The only Malay-Muslims majority political party which does not bear the name of Islam as the party's name is the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). The party is the biggest Muslims ruling party that runs the present government with other 14 component parties under the banner of 'the National Front'.

As far as Islam is concern in UMNO's struggle, the constitution of UMNO stipulates clearly that the main foundation and role of the party existence is to uphold, safeguard and spread Islam. UMNO has adopted a clear stance in implementing the internal party's motions to revive Islam through government mechanisms as;

1. to emphasize its commitment in the struggle to uphold, protect and spread the teaching of Islam and to review these policies so that it becomes more transparent and detail and be made the main agenda in UMNO's struggle,

2. to defend the moderate approach without leading to religious extremism or deviating from the religion in the implementation of policies on Islam which is moderate and in line with the understanding and struggle on Islam in the country.[21]

---

20. Refer to the article by Deputy Vice President of PAS, Nasharudin Mat Isa entitled 'Perjuangan Dalam Jemaah Pas' (PAS' Struggle), 28 February 2006, which can be accessed electronically via http://www.parti-pas.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=58

21. See Article 3 Clause 3.3 of the Constitution of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) which can be accessed through http://www.umno-online.com

It is suffice to say that both UMNO and PAS refer Islam as their main struggle. PAS is much more aggressive perhad radical and fanatic compared to UMNO in their struggle to revive Islam into the play field of Malaysian politics. Such manifestation clearly prevails after PAS and UMNO failed to work together which led to the official separation to collaborate in 1978. The failure of political cooperation between the two did not end into extreme and violent manifestation. The former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad commented on this regard that we [UMNO and PAS] can differ politically but Muslims cannot afford to be divided. Political differences should not lead to religious extremism as this will cause suffering to the people.[22]

Prior to the separation, UMNO and PAS had collaborated in many ways to inculcate Islam into the political and socio-economic system.[23] The global Islamic resurgence in the 70's that resists secularism as a model for the ideal administration to the Muslim community became a prominent landmark for all Islamist movements. Secularism which emphasizes materialistic aspects and excludes the role of religion in life is being critically resisted by Islamists globally in many newly independent Muslim majority countries.

The newly-independent Malaysia that was run by UMNO and its components could not rid itself from this resistance. The ruling government took moderate steps in harmonizing Islam into the system. During this period, the ruling government underwent critical adjustment in harmonizing Islam into the exiting and remaining

---

22. Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri, *Religious Tension and Tolerance in Malaysia: A Survey of Newspaper Reports on Religious Tension Incidents from 1997-2003*, paper presented at the 4th Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR), Santander, Spain on 8th-11th September 2004, organized EASR under the auspices of the Spanish Association for the Science of Religions (SECR), and in association with the Department of Historical Science at the University of Cantabria. The revised version of the paper is available in *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, Vol. 1 No.3 2004, Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), pg. 21-49

23. Look Judith Nagata, The *Reflowerings of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots*, Vancouver: the University of British Columbia Press, pp. 86-88

colonial system. The adjustment did not take drastic momentum and change but slowly Islamize the political system.

Thus, up to 1973 the ruling government re-assimilated PAS into the party's struggle and feature of Malaysian political games. However, Pas found that its principles could not be tolerated within the coalition government. Consequently, in 1978 PAS left the mainstream party and became the main Islamic opposition party now then. Therefore, the gaps in implementing and harmonizing Islam into the system on the part of the ruling government has been seen by PAS as an opportunity for their existence to rally for Muslims' support and criticize the ruling government's gradual adjustment and slowness in implementing Islam fully into the system.

PAS has condemned the Islamic content of the ruling government and advocated more stringent implementation of the Islamic laws whether to Muslims and non-Muslims. They seem to hold the belief that since the Malays form the majority and overwhelmingly Muslims, everything in the nation should follow and base on Islam, as the minority has to bend to the majority. This was however opposed by the ruling government who believe that there should be religious freedom for all and that it is enough to have Islam as the official recognized religion. Since the government is active in promoting Islam, its laws and teachings should not be forcefully imposed on others. Thus, the ruling government is moderate in practicing Islam and tolerates other religions.[24]

During the struggle for Malaysian independence, UMNO had successfully gathered Malay-Muslims folks and scholars to reject the British proposal for the Malayan Union instead of the Federation of Malaya. The unity of Malay-Muslims behind UMNO was a clear manifestation of Muslims unity and effort to bring Malay-Muslims

---

24. Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri, "Religious Tension and Tolerance in Malaysia: A Survey of Newspaper Reports on Religious Tension Incidents from 1997-2003", *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, Vol. 1 No.3 2004, Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), pg 42

politics into reality under the dictate of their own hand. Islam has become the main factor that unites Malay-Muslims into a massive force of cooperation between all Islamist movements in Malaysia against the colonial predetermination to set a Western model of administration to the country. On this aspect, all Islamist activists were united in bringing Islam close to the political setting of Malay-Muslims' survivals. As a result, Malaysia gained its independence peacefully with strong content of Islam in the newly form constitutional country.

Post independence Malaysia, has created another challenge for Islamist movement in facing remaining secular influences left by the colonials which were manipulated by the nationalistic aspiration of the non-Muslims (i.e the Chinese and Indian) and was added with the polarization pattern of ethnic-based led to the eruption of 13th May bloodshed tragedy.[25] This tragedy shacked the political stability and unity of multi racial society in the newly independent country and challenge the ability of newly formed ruling UMNO's capability to administer the country. However, the implementation of New Economic Policy (NEP) intended to eradicate poverty and share equitable economic distribution had saved Malay-Muslims from being marginalized in the country's political setting.[26]

---

25. The immigrants (i.e the Chinese from Mainland China and Indians from India were brought by the British to Malaya to work for its industry) enjoyed economic prosperity compared to the natives (i.e Malay and Aborigines of Sabah and Sarawak) which resulted to inequitable distribution of the country's economic wealth. In addition to this scenario, the immigrants insisted to pursue secular ideology as well as challenging the status quo of the Malay-Muslims. These two factors united Islamist activists in the country. The challenges put by the People Action Party (PAP) of Chinese dominant in Singapore as well as the Democratic Action Party (DAP) towards questioning the status of Malay rulers as well as the Malay privileges (Malay privileges is a binding social contract enshrined in the federal constitution under article 153) enshrined in the Federal Constitution through the slogan of 'Cultural Democracy – Cultural Pluralism' and 'Malaysian Malaysia' received serious political blow from the Malay-Muslims consequently led to the separation of Singapore from the federation.

26. Under this policy, Islam plays significant influence in shaping the policy and its implementation. See Barbara Watson Andaya & Leornard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2nd Edit.), London: Palgrave, 2001, pg. 330-331

The implementation of NEP which was intended to balance communal disintegration through equitable economic distribution and share had not been well received by PAS which linked the policy with the concept of *assabiyah jahilliyah* (the strong leniency towards the love of ethnic, races and country). PAS believed that the NEP emphasizes the spirit of modern nationalism rooted in the Western thought therefore claimed UMNO as a secular party that inclines towards the spirit of nationalism rather than Islam.[27] Since the spirit of modern nationalism related to the imperialism, colonialism, liberalism, individualism, fascism, communism and fanaticism; the modern nationalism that coloured UMNO's agenda contradicts the very basic teaching of Islam, thus UMNO must cease to be an Islamist movement because UMNO tents to assimilate modern nationalism and Islam.[28]

Policies towards Islamist Movement that Influence the Orientation of Islamic Political Discourse

The religious tolerance and maintaining peace and harmony are central to the national policy. The government seriously listens to the voices and rights of the non-Muslims which complements the very nature of heterogeneous society in Malaysia. On this regard, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has said that racial and religious extremist groups pose a great threat to society and if they are not opposed and stopped, they might incite racial and religious riots when they cannot get what they want. These

---

27. Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin, *Antara Asabiyyah dan Nasionalisme: Menurut Pandangan Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy* (Between Asabiyyah and Nationalism: The Views of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy) Kuala Lumpur: Kumpulan Pernerbitan Baiduri, 1997, pp. 2-37.

28. See Mohd Nasran Mohamad & Muhamad Faisal Ashaari, *Dasar Luar Malaysia Era Dr. Mahathir Mohamad Dalam Menangani Isu-isu Islam di Peringkat Antarabangsa* (Approach in Malaysian Foreign Policy towards Global Islamic Issues during Dr. Mahathir's Era), Selangor: OneTouch Creative Enterprise, 2003; Muhammad Abu Bakar, *Potret Masa: Persaingan Ideologi dan Pemulihan Tradisi,* (Jilid 1). Petaling Jaya: Gateway Publishing House Sdn Bhd, 1994.

factions are near-sighted and narrow minded. Hence, he insisted that all component parties within the ruling government to act more courageously and be united as one in fighting for the National Front's (Barisan Nasional) objectives of promoting a united, peace, safe, progressive and prosperous Malaysian society.

On the orientation of Islamist movements toward viable and harmonious Muslim and non-Muslims relation, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has informed the Islamists that there is a great need to be fair to the non-Muslims minority in Muslim majority country. Within this context, he asserts that the government policy of tolerance to the non-Muslim minority is what Islam as religion preaches, although many Muslims would like to think this as being secular.

Malaysian government believes that being just to the non-Muslims who are not against us simply reflects the true teaching of Islam. This policy is based on the belief that since Muslims does not like Muslim minorities in non-Muslim majority countries to be oppressed. Therefore the government must not oppress non-Muslims minorities.[29] The opposition may disagree on this policy, arguing that this was being secular. But the government will not argue with them because debating with or opposing them will not convince them that the government's policy is right; rather the government believes that the policy is in the service and in accord with Islam.[30]

Any mode of violence is not allowed in Malaysia. The government's rejection of violent feuds and killing of other Muslims in the name of Islam and Allah when in fact the objective is political cannot be considered as Islamic. This may look like Islam, but it is not and cannot be allowed in a society like Malaysia.[31] The current Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi has also supported

---

29. Muhamad Shukri, Ibid., pp. 21-49

30. Ibid., Pg. 30.

31. Ibid., pp. 31-33.

this stance when he calls for all Malaysians of all religions to ensure that religious extremism does not take root in the country. Extremism can lead to violence and riots. He emphasizes that in Malaysia, we [government and Malaysians] practice Islam which is moderate.

In a speech made in a regional conference themed 'Towards the 21st Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslim in the Region',[32] Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has made clear of the need for reform in the Muslims' mode of thought and the practice of tolerance and brotherhood in the face of disagreement among Muslims. According to him, after 1400 years of Islamic History, Muslim had been exposed to a variety of teachings ranging from narrow interpretations which reject the present world outright to one that alienates Islam and accepting secularism. The deviationists must return to the true path, it must be done through *musyawarah* (consensus) and not though pressure, oppression and injustice. If agreement cannot be reached, tolerance and brotherhood must be practiced. Attempts through the use of force that causes disunity and never-ending riots must be avoided.

In another speech at al-Azhar University, on the occasion of conferment of Honorary Doctor of Literature in recognition of his contributions to the development of the Ummah, he boldly warned Muslims that they should not seek revenge on their enemies or fight among themselves if they want to paint a correct picture of the Islam. Killing each other and killing others in order to emphasize the depth and strength of our commitment to our struggle may succeed in drawing attention to our grievances, but they will not lead to the success of our struggle.[33]

---

32. The conference was organized by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) on 23rd August 1997. For further detail of the content and proceedings of the seminar see www.ikim.gov.my

33. Mahathir Mohamad, "Muslims: In the Beginning was the Duty of Peace", *International Herald Tribune*, January 28, 2003. For further insight on collections of Tun Dr. Mahathir's speeches see www.ikim.gov.my/bm/pm4/index.htm and www.perdana.org.my

Few extremist activities that intended to topple the government were reported.[34] On this tendency, the government takes serious effort in clamping down any groups which intend to oppose 'the true teaching of Islam'. This effort is necessary because these groups are 'traitors' to the interest of the nation and Islam which destabilize the political stability and racial harmony in the country.[35] This effort will include necessary legal instruments that prevent extremists from breeding rampantly in the country.[36]

Since the unity and harmony of multi religiosity and culture in the country contributes to the economic growth, sustainable development and political stability in the country towards achieving Vision 2020, Malaysia could not afford to tolerate any extremist activities. By maintaining such harmony, the government could deliver its responsibility efficiently and seriously. This can be seen in the rapid economic and social cohesion in the country since independence.

Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi is a man of religious background. In his first speech as the Prime Minister to the 55th UNMO's General Assembly, he highlighted in length about Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam) as an approach to his government.[37] He asserts that Islam Hadhari is an approach that emphasizes development,

---

34. For brief reports on extremist incidents in Malaysia see http://www.hrwf.net/html/malaysia2001.html

35. Muhammad Shukri, Ibid., Pg. 37

36. For further details of legal instruments used in Malaysia to obstruct religious and racial extremists, see Suzalie Mohamad Antang, "Islam dan Terorisma: Pendekatan Malaysia dalam Menanganinya" (Islam and Terrorism: Malaysian Approach in Dealing with Terrorism), paper presented in Seminar on Tun Mahathir's Thought, organized by Malaysian Student Department in Cairo, Malaysian Embassy in Cairo and Department of Malaysian Studies in Cairo University on March 11th 2006, at the Malaysian Hall al-Abbasiyah, Cairo, Egypt.

37. Islam Hadhari approach was coined out by the Prime Minister out for the first time at the 55th Umno's General Assembly on 23rd September 2004, Putra World Trade Centre Kuala Lumpur. His speech can be accessed electronically at www.pmo.gov.my

consistent with the tenets of Islam and focused on enhancing the quality of life. It aims to achieve this via the mastery of knowledge and the development of the individual and the nation; the implementation of a dynamic economic, trading and financial system; an integrated and balanced development that creates a knowledgeable and pious people who hold to noble values and are honest, trustworthy, and prepared to take on global challengers.[38]

Islam Hadhari is not a new religion. It is not a new teaching nor is it a new mazhab (denomination). Islam Hadhari is an effort to bring the Ummah back to basics, back to the Fundamentals, as prescribed in the Quran and the Hadith that form the foundation of Islamic civilization. If Islam Hadhari is interpreted sincerely and understood clearly, it will not cause Muslims to deviate from the true path.[39]

As a government that is responsible for ensuring Muslims to be able to meet current challenges without deviating from their faith, the doors of ijtihad must remain open, so that interpretations are suited to the developmental needs of the prevailing time and conditions. Policies must be balanced and broad-based development that encompasses the infrastructure and the economy; human resource development via a comprehensive education programme; the inculcation of noble values through spiritual development and assimilation of Islamic values. Basically Islam Hadhari aims to achieve ten main principles as below:[40]

---

38. Excerpt from the explanation of Islam Hadhari from the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. See http://www.pmo.gov.my/website/webdb.nfs/is_frameset?openframest

39. Ibid.,

40. Ibid.,

1. Faith and piety in Allah

2. A just and trustworthy government

3. A free and independent People

4. Mastery of knowledge

5. Balanced and comprehensive economic development

6. A good quality of life

7. Protection of the rights of minority groups and women

8. Cultural and moral integrity

9. Safeguarding the environment

10. Strong defenses

This approach is well defined by Dr. Syed Ali, the Director General of the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), in his masterpiece book to mean 'understanding the present age in the framework of Islam'.[41] According to him, if one were to understand the approach and the present condition of Muslims correctly, one needs to understand it from the world view of Islam. In addition, according to the Religious Advisor to the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman, Islam Hadhari is a realistic approach to engage Muslims into re-glorifying Islamic civilization. He asserts that Islam is a comprehensive religion, the fundamental elements in Islam will never change but the *syariah* (its application) will always change to fit the present condition according to time and place. As far as Islam Hadhari is concerned, Muslims needs to understand the traditions (fundamental) as well as

---

41. For in-depth, philosophical and intellectual understanding of this approach see Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas, *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: Revivalist of an Intellectual Tradition*, Pelanduk Publication: Kuala Lumpur, 2005.

the present reality in order to relate the practicality of the essence of Islamic teaching.[42]

Conclusions and Expectations

Global Islamist movements have always been perceived negatively for its tendency to resort to extremism and violence. This perception is not necessary truthful. Within Malaysian context, the degree of political participation of Islamist movement complements the political maturity of Islamic discourses. Throughout the discussion in this research, I have specified that Islamist movement in Malaysia, partisan and non-partisan, are given chances to participate in decision making policy. This step has greatly contributed to fewer tendencies of Islamist movements resorting to extreme alternatives in pursuing their ideas and goals. The ruling government has also initiated number of close-door dialogues and meetings with Islamists and other religious movements or NGOs for confident building measures relating to the role of Islam in society and government.

Islamic political discourses such as the status of Malaysia as an Islamic state, implementation of Islamic laws, Islamic economic and development, Islamic banking, religious freedom and others are critically debated by Islamist movements in Malaysia. The Islamist movements in Malaysia regularly convey memorandums and resolutions to the ruling government which are always available and updated for public consumption and participation. Thus, the government's steps in bringing Islamist movements closer and to be heard consequently leads to the feeling of being consulted and respected. This has reduced the tendency and number of cases where Islamic movements find other illegal or improper mechanisms to voice their demands and ideas through violence.

---

42. Personal interview with Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman at Malaysian Hall, Cairo on 10 April 2006 in conjunction with Maulidul Rasul (the Birth of Holy Prophet) pro-gramme and his programme to attend the First Annual International Gathering of Al-Azhar University's Alumni from 11-12 April 2006.

Islamist movement in Malaysia is under manageable and controllable condition. This is due to the well defined and planned policy and legal instruments that viable to prevent Islamists from resorting to a derogative manner and tendencies. This also indicates that the government, through its functional agencies and authorities able to be in charge of unnecessary extremist tendencies.

Less number of Islamist movements in Malaysia adopts radical and extreme ideology that is connected to extremist or militant movement overseas. It is clearly stated that the government imposes stringent measure to prevent extremism, militancy and terrorism. Even though there are certain cases reported where Malaysian citizens engaged in militant activities overseas, no connection can be linked with any sort of Islamist movement or group in Malaysia.

The country's political stability and government's serious effort in combating extremism and terrorism gains international reputation. Malaysian government actively engages in counter terrorism efforts locally and internationally. The recent establishment of South East Asean Regional Counter Terrorism Centre (SEARTC) was the manifestation of the confidence and recognition of the international community to Malaysian exertions in denouncing extremism and violence. This centre was established in response to the global struggle to counter terrorism. Malaysia's initiatives and willingness to react positively on such concerted effort is an indication that extremist, militancy and terrorism has no place in the country as well as in the region.

The ability of the government to secure stable and continuous transition of political power signifies the solid internal structure that exists in Malaysia. A solid structure is a necessary for a country to be able to manage its affairs. The political structure in Malaysia has enabled various issues of Islamic political discourses to be discussed with due respect and dignity. Thus, various issues pertaining Islam indicate the religion of Islam is synonym to the political affairs of Islamist movements in the country.

The extensive administrative structures at the federal level which are responsible to facilitate affairs of Muslim community such as the Fatwa Council (Council of Islamic Decrees), Conference of Ruler, Minister with special function to monitor the Islamic affairs, Religious advisor to the Prime Minister, and Department of Islamic Affairs in the Prime Minister Office, and many other Islam-related agencies and institutions enable the government to take charge efficiently and standardize conflict of opinions over Islamic matters.

In addition to this, various Islamic non-governmental organizations are allowed and encouraged to complement the structure, to name few such as the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Islamic Propagation Foundation (YADIM), The Muslim Welfare Organization Of Malaysia (PERKIM), The Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation (YAPEIM), Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Ikatan Siswazah Muslim Malaysia (ISMA), Jemaah Islam Malaysia (JIM), Muslim Professional Forum (MPF), *'Ulama* Association of Malaysia (PUM), Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) and many others. The flourished and diverse Islamic organization and movement have contributed to the modality of Islam in Malaysia covering all sectors of life through the existing structure that I have mentioned. The practices of Islam in Malaysia in all segments of life of Muslim and non-Muslims have created balance and progressive development in the country without jeopardizing the rights of other believers.

The misperception of Islamist movements being labeled as terrorist and militant should be corrected through example. Within this context, the Islamist movements in Malaysia have a bigger responsibility to portray the good image of Islam. Thus, Islamist movements in Malaysia should find positive ways in their initiatives to bring Islam to the main front. This requires Islamists to acknowledge the dynamic interaction between present realities and the application of Islam to solve current problems. The initiatives and solutions to the problems should be done accordingly with the best approach in the framework of *fiqh Awlawiyat* (Fiqh of Priorities) and *Muwazanat* (Fiqh of Balance).

The Islamists should indulge their struggle in issues of big nature rather than rigid and vague issues. Any issue that is open for *khilaf* (vague - *zanniy* - which is open for different of opinions) among Muslims should not be indulged with intensively. They should engage on issues which unite their struggle for the benefit of the Ummah. Issues of the main concern such as finding solution to how collaborative works among them on matters relating social improvement must be encouraged as well as the international issues on the rights Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries. This requires Islamists to be internationally heard and respected which can only be achieved through good examples in their own deeds.

Internationally, there should be an initiative to gather all Islamist movements and groups around the world to attend a regular centralized-specific forum and dialogue to discuss current issues confronting Muslims. The gathering must aim at reaching a common strategic and actions among Islamist movements that characterize their struggle and objective to solve many outstanding issues facing Muslims. This initiative is important in order to lay a foundation that Islamist movements is a serious effort to place Islam as a peaceful solution to the many problem facing the world today. Such gathering must be supported and funded by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

These are the challenges that all Islamist movements should answer and engage with, in which unite all of them. The small issues that are potentially disunite Islamists such as rejecting to cooperate with Muslims-majority government, literal debate of Islamic terminologies that create hatred, conflict of opinions that create disharmony and many others must be avoided for the sake of unity. They must move and progress towards a major objective to re-correct the good image of Muslims and Islam. Serious effort to de-link or disassociate Islam or religion with terrorism, militant and violence must also become the main struggle. Therefore Islamists or Muslim scholars must preach good words - word of peace - through actions, thinking and words. Such belief and hope grounds all Islamists in Malaysia with a major goal to improve the condition of Muslims at large and the image of

Islam according to the spirit of Islam that promotes peace and balance in approach.

Finally, the real dangers lay within the Muslims community itself not from the external threat. When we look at the homogenous society where Islam plays dominant influence in their culture and traditions like in the Arab countries, Indian subcontinent countries and Indonesia, reversibly we observe that instability, disunity, and conflict color the image of these countries. This happens due to the very fact that Muslims have forgotten that Allah (S.W.T) has made a clear distinction between evils (*al-mungkar*) and goodness (*al-ma'ruf*) in their heart (*al-kalb*). The distinction can only be appreciated if they adhere to the very basic teachings of Islam. Due to lack of this comprehension (unwillingly to sacrifice for Allah for a greater benefit, i.e *jihad fi sabillilah*), they fall into the trap of their enemies who want them to be disunited and disintegrated so that the tactic of 'divide and rule' can be easily imposed on them. Unfortunately, this happens in many Muslim majority countries and a serious research should be carried out on why and how to correct this problem.

Unlike heterogeneous nature of Malaysian society which comprises less then 60 percent of Muslims, the Muslims must be integrated and united to face various pressures, challenges and demands from the non-Muslims. At the same time the Muslims must struggle to reflect best practices in integrating non-Muslims to accept Islam as an alternative to solve various problems. Thus, in the context of Malaysia, all Islamists must understand that the greatest threats to Islam lay within them. The prophetic tradition has reminded us that the greatest *jihad* (struggle) is *jihad al-nafs* (struggle to subdue evilness in one's heart) against evils deception and tribulation within oneself. If Islamists succumb to this internal enemy (*al-'aduu dakhil al-nafs*), they will be easily disunited, disintegrated and deviated from the teachings of Islam, thus become an easy prey for their external enemy.

Bibliography

1. Abas, Mohd Salleh, 'Traditional Elements of The Malaysian Constitution', in *The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments*, F.A Trindade & H.P Lee (eds), Oxford University Press, 1986.

2. Abd. Majid, Mohamad Kamil, *Tadjid: Perspektif Sejarah dan Masa Kini (Tadjid: Historical Perspective and Present Condition)*, Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2000.

3. Abdul Mukti, Mohd Fakruddin, *The Development of Kalam in the Malay World: the Teaching of Shaykh Dawud al-Fatani on the Attributes of God*, unpublished Phd. thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2001.

4. Abdullah, Abdul Rahman, *Pemikiran Islam Masa Kini: Sejarah dan Aliran, (Contemporary Islamic Thought: History and Perspective)*,DBP: Kuala Lumpur, 1992.

5. Abu Bakar, Muhammad, *Potret Masa: Persaingan Ideologi dan Pemulihan Tradisi*, (Jilid 1), Petaling Jaya: Gateway Publishing House Sdn Bhd, 1994.

6. Al-Attas, Syed Ali Tawfik, *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: Revivalist of an Intellectual Tradition*, Pelanduk Publication: Kuala Lumpur, 2005.

7. Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978.

8. Al-Faruqi, Ismail R., *Islam* (3rd Ed.), Amana Publications, 1994.

9. Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, (Trans. S.M Hasan al-Banna), Awakening Publication, 2000.

    _____, *Wawasan Islam Antara Keaslian dan Kemodenan*, (Trans.), Thinker's Library Sdn. Bhd., 1996

10. Azra, Azyumardi, *The Transformation of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of the Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth*, UMI Dissertation Service, A Bell & Howell Company: Columbia University, 1995.

11. Barbara Watson Andaya & Leornard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (2nd Edit.), London: Palgrave, 2001.

12. Blackwell Dictionary of Political Sciences, Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

13. Choudhury, G.W., *Islam and the Contemporary World*, Library of Islam, 1991.

14. Hamdan Hassan (ed.), *Islam dan Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (Islam and National Culture)*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications and Distributors, 1979.

15. Hassan, Mohd. Kamal, *The Issues of Modernization and its Impact on Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals: Nurcholish Majid's Attempt at a Theology of Development*, Association of Muslim Social Scientists, 1979

_____, *Contemporary Muslim Religio-Political Thought in Indonesia: The Response to "New Order Modernization"*, University Microfilms International, 1980.

_____, *Islamic Identity Crisis in the Muslim Community in Contemporary Malaysia*, Pustaka Ilmu Raya, 1981.

16. Ibnu Hasyim, *Konflik UMNO-PAS Satu Penyelesaian Menurut Islam (Solution to UMNO-PAS' Conflict from Islamic Perspective)*, Kuala Lumpur: GG Edar, 1993.

17. Ibrahim Ahmad, *Konflik UMNO-PAS Dalam Isu Islamisasi (UMNO-PAS's Conflcit on Islamization Issues)*, Petaling Jaya: IBS Buku Sdn. Bhd., 1989

18. Jerichow, A. & Straonsen J.B., *Islam in a Changing World: Scope and the Middle East*, Curzon Press, 1999.

19. Judith Nagata, *The Reflowerings of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots*, Vancouver: the university of British Columbia Press.

20. Mohamad Antang, Suzalie, *Islam dan Terorisma: Pendekatan Malaysia dalam Menanganinya (Islam and Terrorism: Malaysian Approach in Dealing with Terrorism)*, paper presented in Seminar on Tun Mahathir's Thought, organized by Malaysian Student Department in Cairo, Malaysian Embassy in Cairo and Department of Malaysian Studies in Cairo University on March 11th 2006, at the Malaysian Hall al-Abbasiyah, Cairo, Egypt.

21. Mohamad, Mahathir, "Muslims: In the Beginning was the Duty of Peace", *International Herald Tribune*, January 28, 2003.

22. Mohd Amin, Wan Mohd Azam, *Antara Asabiyyah dan Nasionalisme: Menurut Pandangan Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (Between Asabiyyah and Nationalism: The Views of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy)*, Kuala Lumpur: Kumpulan Pernerbitan Baiduri, 1997.

23. Mohd Nasran Mohamad & Muhamad Faisal Ashaari, *Dasar Luar Malaysia Era Dr. Mahathir Mohamad Dalam Menangani Isu-isu Islam di Peringkat Antarabangsa (Approach in Malaysian Foreign Policy towards Global Islamic Issues during Dr. Mahathir's Era)*, Selangor: OneTouch Creative Enterprise, 2003.

24. Muhamad Shukri, Abdul Salam, Religious Tension and Tolerance in Malaysia: A Survey of Newspaper Reports on Religious Tension Incidents from 1997-2003, <u>IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs</u>, Vol. 1 No.3 2004.

25. Munavvarov, I. Zahidulla & Krumm, Reinhard J., (Eds), *State and Religion with a Muslim Population*, The Scientific and Educational Centre of al-Imam al-Bukhari, 2004.

26. N.J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (ASIA) Ltd., 1980.

27. Nasr, Syed Hossein, *Ideal & Realities of Islam*, Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988.

28. Othman, Mohammad Redzuan, *Islam dan Masyarakat Melayu. Peranan dan Pengaruh Timur Tengah (Islam and Malay Society: The Role and Influence of the Middle East)*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005.

     _____, Mohammad Redzuan Othman, "Egypt Religious and Intellectual Influence on Malay Society", <u>Katha</u>, Centre of Civilisational Dialogue, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005.

29. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, New York: Oxford University Press, 5th Ed., 1995.

30. R.S Milne, *Politik dan Kerajaan di Malaysia (Politics and government in Malaysia)*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992.

31. Sharabi, Hisham, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1857-1914*, John Hopkins Press for The Middle East Institute, 1970

32. Wilson, Samuel Graham, *Modern Movements among Moslems*, Scholarly Resources, 1976.