

COMBATING MODERN TERRORISM: EMPOWERING THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND CROSS BOUNDARY COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

Islamic State (IS) militancy has become the fastest growing threat to Malaysia. The link between foreign and local fighters via social media that led to higher recruitment and greater funding for terrorism activities has elevated the terror threat to new levels. Since the interception in 2013, a total of 123 persons with suspected connection to Islamic State militancy have been arrested. A number of Malaysians are known to have travelled to Syria and Iraq, and returned to spread militant ideologies in the country. More worrying, is any one of those arrested is capable of committing lone wolf attacks, and devastatingly, two Malaysian youths carried out suicide bombing at the conflict zones. The threat posed by the Islamic State and foreign terrorist fighters are 'very dangerous' and serious, hence the Government of Malaysia has tabled a White Paper on this in Parliament. This action demonstrates Malaysia's view that these threats are real and lethal. Malaysia responded quickly to the call of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178/2014 by enacting new preventive legislations to curb the threat of terrorism within and outside Malaysia. On the domestic front, the authority reached out to the civil society by empowering them voices in countering the terrorist propaganda as an effective initiative in combating such modern terrorism. At the same time, taking into recognition that no one country can fight the threat of foreign terrorist fighters alone in this borderless world, Malaysia cooperates and collaborates actively in both regional and international arenas.

Keywords: terrorism, Islamic State threat, foreign terrorist fighters, prevention, rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

In September 2014, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took a historic and decisive step with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2178 on the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters. This unusual initiative of the Council, led by United

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States, opened by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and addressed by 50 national leaders including Malaysia², called on all States to cooperate urgently on preventing the international flow of terrorist fighters to and from conflict zones, and its devastating effects to the international security and world peace. The Security Council expressed grave concern over the establishment of international terrorist networks and thus underscored the “particular and urgent need” to prevent the travel and support for foreign terrorist fighters associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Nusra Front (ANL) and other affiliates or splinter groups of Al-Qaeda (United Nations, accessed 20 July 2015).

In this context, the resolution 2178/2014 decided that all States shall ensure that their legal system provides for the prosecution, as serious criminal offences, of travel for terrorism or related training, as well as the financing or facilitation of such activities. The member States also reached an agreement to prevent entry or transit through their territories of any individual that the State had credible information of their terrorist-related intentions, without prejudice to transit necessary for the furtherance of judicial process. (United Nations, accessed 20 July 2015).

The imminent threats from terrorism and IS has seriously shaken most of the nations as thousands of civilians had been killed, maimed, sexually abused and displaced by terrorists in the conflict zones. Due to the advancement of social media, a borderless world and the nature of modern terrorism, no nation is absolutely free from these threats. Similar to the problem confronting many other nations, IS militancy is the fastest growing new threat to Malaysia. It is more worrying when IS no longer encouraged their Malaysian members to go Syria but they are instead pushed to attack their own country. Against these backdrops, this paper will highlight various measures taken by the Government of Malaysia especially through the Ministry of Home Affairs, and its collaborations with other agencies in combating terrorism under the new preventive legislatives and international cooperation since the adoption of resolution 2178/2014. At the domestic front, learning from the successful operation during the communist insurgency, reaching out to the civil society and private sector and empowering them voices as volunteers will collectively support and assist the authority to counter the spread of terrorism and fight the menace of terrorism.

THREAT OF ISLAMIC STATE AND FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

Islamic State has also been known as Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) through the evolvement of history of the group and its role in the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq (Geneva Academy, 2015). In this paper, the name Islamic State (IS) will be used.

² Malaysia was represented by Mr. Hussein Haniff, who said that Malaysia had grappled with terrorism on its own soil, and that it had dealt with the threat by winning the population's 'hearts and minds'. Malaysia called for a “Global Movement of Moderates” to “drown out” the voices of the extremists.

The phenomenon of ‘foreign fighters’ is hardly new. Throughout history, militants sympathetic to others’ causes have travelled to join forces fighting in foreign land. For example, the Spanish civil war, the war in Afghanistan following 1989 Soviet invasion, the Bosnian conflicts in the 1990s, and the violence in Chechnya and Dagestan had attracted significant numbers of foreign fighters (Malet, 2013). However, the term and the phenomenon became prominent after the 9/11 attacks against the United States, because of the presence of foreign fighters in the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Subsequently, foreign fighters came to be associated primarily with the international terrorist network, notably al-Qaeda.

The unprecedented influx of foreign fighters to the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq has been described as one of the biggest terrorist threats since 9/11. The battlefield in Syria and Iraq has become a magnet for aspiring jihadists from the world. The United Nations Security Council estimated the number of foreign fighters engaged in the region alongside local jihadist groups at 13,000. The breadth of their geographic origin is unprecedented (Taylor, 2014). Foreign fighters from at least 81 countries have been active in Syria during the conflict (Barret, 2014). The number of foreign fighters in the conflict zones today is at least as great, and possibly greater than the reported figure and will have a much greater impact on global jihad. The population size of these foreign fighters is alarming.

Nonetheless, in an effort to understand their identity, trajectory and motivation, there are attempts by some researchers in defining the term ‘foreign fighters’. For example, Malet (2013, p.9) defined ‘foreign fighters’ as ‘non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil war’. He distinguished them on two counts from mercenaries and from personnel of private military and security companies. The definition given by another researcher, Hegghammer (2010/11) is that ‘foreign fighters’ are individuals who join an insurgency abroad and primarily motivated by ideological or religious rather than financial reasons. Other works that focused on the terrorism threat posed by foreign fighters offered slightly different definitions. Throughout this text, the term foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) will be used.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2178/2014

Prompted by the evolving IS issue, on 24 September 2014, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2178 on policies and security measures to better track and deter terrorist travel activities. The resolution requires member countries to take certain steps to address the threat of foreign terrorist fighters (CSIS, accessed 27 July 2015). Specially, Resolution 2178 calls for among others as follows:

- Implementing of effective border controls and controls on issuance of identity papers and travel documents and thorough measures for preventing counterfeiting, forgery or fraudulent use of identity papers and travel documents.

- Use of evidence-based traveller risk assessment and screening procedures, including the collection and analysis of travel data.
- Intensification/acceleration of the exchange of operational information through bilateral or multilateral mechanisms.
- Disruption/prevention of financial support to FTFs and implementation of prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies for radicalised individuals.
- Requirement of airlines to provide advance passenger information to the appropriate national security authorities in order to detect FTF departure, attempted entry into, or transit through their territories, as well as sharing this information with the state of residence or nationality.
- Improved international cooperation through bilateral agreements, including increased sharing of information for the purpose of identifying FTFs, sharing and adoption of best practices, and improved understanding of the patterns of travel by FTFs.
- Assistance with criminal investigations or proceedings relating to the financing or support terrorist acts, including assistance in obtaining evidence necessary for the proceedings.
- Intensified efforts to employ INTERPOL resources including the use of INTERPOL databases to track stolen or forged identity papers and travel documents.

These are sensible security measures and policies used to detect, deter and prevent terrorist travel activities detrimental to the security and safety of a nation. Malaysia in fact has been enforcing most of these measures and also in the process of enhancing further the border security and border control, which is the common issue faced by most of the countries in the world. For example, to improve information and intelligence sharing particularly through the Advanced Passenger Information (API) system, Malaysia is in the process of acquiring the Advanced Passenger Screening System (APSS) which is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2015. This will go a long way towards providing early warning on the possible arrival of high risk travellers including potential FTFs. With regard to border control measures, Malaysia is currently developing a comprehensive National Immigration Control System (SKIN) for effective screening and filtering of entry and exit of travellers through air, sea and land checkpoints.

FASTEST GROWING TERROR THREATS

Foreign fighters are perceived as a major terrorist threat to their countries of origin, both their state of nationality and habitual residence. It is feared that trained foreign fighters, experienced in handling weapons and explosives, may plan and carry out terrorist acts on their return to their home countries, set up new terrorist cells, recruit new members, or provide funds for terrorist acts and movements. Such form of threat is commonly known as ‘blowback’ (Geneva Academy, accessed 25 July 2015). The recent arrest of ten IS members in a massive swoop by the Malaysian police force revealed that the suspects have been actively recruiting and securing funds for the terrorist group. They used various ways, including Facebook, to lure more members into joining their cell. It is believed that this particular cell had been getting orders directly from senior IS members in Syria. Their strategies changed from encouraging Malaysian IS members to travel to Syria to pushing them to attack their own country. They are even capable of carrying out lone wolf attacks (Farik, 2015).

It is becoming obvious that terrorist organizations are targeting young people to carry out acts of violence in the name of God and various ideologies. The growing presence of young suicide bombers influenced by the leaders of mushrooming extremist groups is a serious indicator of a growing gap between the youths and the awareness of the need of non-violence in achieving their objectives. In 2014, Ahmad Tarmini Maliki (26 years old) and Ahamd Affendi Abdul Manaff (27 years old) were the first two Malaysian who died as suicide bombers fighting for IS militants in Iraq and Syria respectively (New Straits Times, 2014).

Since the interception in 2013, a total of 123 suspects (100 males and 23 females) related to IS activities had been arrested in Malaysia. Most of them are Malaysians. A total of 17 other nationalities (13 Indonesians, 2 Iraqis, 1 Saudi Arabian and 1 Moroccan) were also arrested by the Malaysian authority for suspected involvement in terrorist activities (see Table 1).

Table 1: Arrestees of Suspected Involvement in IS Activities

Breakdown	Number
Gender:	
Male	100
Female	23
Nationality:	
Malaysian	106
Foreigner	17
Total	123

Source: Counterterrorism Division, Royal Malaysia Police, as at 15 September 2015.

Among those arrested were also a number of civil servants and army personnel believed to be involved in the IS militant group in Syria, and recruiting new members and channelling funds to Malaysians participating in the group. The national security is put under threat because IS manipulates Islamic teachings to justify their goals to overthrow a democratic government by military force (Farik, 2014).

EFFORTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

There are two impactful efforts that are made at the national level; the enactment of preventive legislatives and empowering voices of civil society.

The Government of Malaysia is taking necessary preventive measures in the form of promulgating related legislations to effectively combat violent extremism and terrorism. However, this initiative should be further complemented with programmes as well as activities in reaching out to the civil society and private sector towards countering the terrorist propaganda.

The Royal Malaysia Police's successful crackdown on IS militants has prevented the terrorist group's use of Malaysia as a transit point for recruits heading to Syria to join its ranks. The Royal Malaysia Police will continue to hunt Malaysians who plan to join IS, and is on constant alert and keeping an eye out for IS recruits of other nationalities. The efforts are showing results in preventing militants from joining IS through Malaysia.

Enactment of Preventive Legislatives

Due to the nature of the fast spreading IS threat and the well-funded financial position of this terrorist group, it is no longer sufficient to rely on the existing criminal law provisions. The speed at which information travel across the globe can put the security of a nation at stake when abused by terrorists. Such threat makes it imperative for Malaysia to enact a separate law to deal specifically with terrorism. The Malaysian Government had taken steps to enhance the current mechanism by way of strengthening the legal framework. On November 26, 2014, the Government presented a White Paper³ on combating the threat posed by Islamic State to the Parliament. The paper gained majority support of the members of the House of Representatives (Parliament) to enact new and specific laws in order to combat terrorism activities in Malaysia. Recently, the Parliament of Malaysia has passed two new laws, namely, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA) and Special Measures Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act 2015 (SMATA).

³ White paper is a government report giving information proposal on an issue. It is intended to help the citizens of the country to understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision. White papers are used as a means of presenting government policy preferences prior to the introduction of a legislation.

i. Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA)

The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 provides for the prevention of the commission or support of terrorist acts involving listed terrorist organisations in a foreign country or any part of a foreign country and for the control of persons engaged in such acts.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act was tabled at the House of Representatives (Parliament)⁴ on 30 March 2015. The second reading of the Act was on 6 April 2015 and it was passed on 7 April 2015 at 2.26 am. This Act was debated for 14 hours 31 minutes at the House of Representatives (Parliament). At the House of Senate⁵ (*Dewan Negara*), this Act went for second reading on 22 April 2015 and was passed on 23 April 2015. The House of Senate debated on this Act for 9 hours and 9 minutes.

In 2013, when tabling the Prevention of Crime Act (POCA) at the House of Representatives (Parliament) it went through a lengthy debate. Finished at 12.52 am on the following day, POCA was debated for 8 hours and 52 minutes. It was then said that the almost 9 hour debate time for POCA created history of being the longest sitting. However in 2015, the tabling of POTA which ended at 2.26 am the following day has created a new record. The lengthy debate process of POCA and POTA showed the intricacies and complexities of the issue and the far-reaching implications of terrorism on national security threats and the well being of the citizens. Table 2 provides a comparison of the tedious chronological events of the tabling of POCA in 2013 and POTA in 2015 respectively in Parliament.

⁴ House of Representatives or Parliament is known as *Dewan Rakyat* in Malaysia.

⁵ House of Senate is known as *Dewan Negara* in Malaysia.

Table 2: Chronological Events of the Tabling of POCA (2013) and POTA (2015) in Parliament and House of Senate

Proceeding at Parliament and House of Senate	Prevention of Crime Act (POCA) 2013	Prevention Of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015
Tabled By	Member Of Parliament Of Bagan Datoh, Minister Of Home Affairs [Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi]	Member Of Parliament Of Bagan Datoh, Minister Of Home Affairs [Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi] Member Of Parliament Of Santubong, Deputy Minister Of Home Affairs [Dato' Sri Dr. Haji Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar]
First Reading	25 September 2013	30 March 2015
Second Reading	1 October 2013	6 April 2015
Committee Level	2 October 2013	6 April 2015
Third Reading	3 October 2013	6 April 2015
Final Total Votes:	181 Members Of Parliament	139 Members Of Parliament
Agree:	115 Members Of Parliament	79 Members Of Parliament
Disagree:	66 Members Of Parliament	60 Members Of Parliament
Debate Ended At	12.52 am, 4 October 2013	2.26 am, 7 April 2015
Duration Of Debate	8 Hours 52 Minutes	14 Hours 31 Minutes
The Act Was Passed By Parliament	With Amendment	With Amendment
Date Passed By House Of Senate	4 October 2013	23 April 2015
Date Of Gazette	25 October 2013	1 September 2015
Date Of Enforcement	1 April 2014	1 September 2015

Source: Author, Portal Rasmi Parlimen Malaysia, 2015.

ii. **Special Measures Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act 2015 (SMATA)**

Besides POTA, another new legislative, namely, Special Measures Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act 2015 (SMATA) was enacted in the same year to curb FTF threat. SMATA is an act to provide for special measures to deal with persons who engage in the commission or support of terrorist acts involving listed terrorist organisations in a foreign country or any part of a foreign country.

This Act was tabled at the House of Representatives (Parliament) on 30 March 2015 and went for the Second Reading and passed on 7 April 2015. This Act was debated for 6 hours 15 minutes in the House of Representatives.

At the House of Senate, this Act went for second reading on 27 April 2015 and was passed on the same day. It went through a debate of 1 hour and 16 minutes at the Senate. It was gazetted on 1 September 2015.

Besides this, there are some amendments made to follow suit these new laws. The laws are as follows:

- a. Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA);
- b. Prevention of Crime Act 1959 or POCA;
- c. Prison Act 1995;
- d. Penal Code (Act 574) ; and
- e. Criminal Procedure Code (Act 593).

The new legislatives were enacted with the purpose to enhance the security of the nation. They also expand the provisions for the authority to trackdown individuals, groups and societies involved with terrorism activities even if conducted overseas. It is undeniable that Security Offences Special Measures Act (SOSMA) is already in existence for combating terrorism activities. However, the Government is of the opinion that there is a necessity for another option of law against the terrorist activities to be applied. The reason is that SOSMA is a procedural law for offences committed as provided in its First Schedule, Chapter VI and VIA of the Penal Code. Hence, both the POTA and SMATA were introduced and tabled in the Parliament.

The enactment of the new and specific preventive law of counter terrorism, i.e POTA 2015, is done in the spirit of the Political Transformation Programme (PTP) under the administration of the Honourable Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak,

the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The programme aims at achieving a balance of civil liberty and the rights and the importance of preserving and strengthening the national security. The power of making decision will be vested upon on an Independent Board appointed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia, and this Independent Board template has been applied in POCA. The same template will be applied in POTA too.

Nevertheless, the Government realizes that the new preventive law i.e. POTA enacted under Article 149 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, is different from than any other procedural and evidence law. Therefore, some safeguard provisions were included. For example, an Advisory Board is to be established for the representation to be made, as provided under Article 151 of the Federal Constitution. This provision on Advisory Board is also included and implemented in POCA.

It is believed that, in accordance to the current development of global terrorist threat faced by Malaysia, this new Act will have the deterrent effect, not only to the terrorist groups from posing threat to Malaysia, but also to deter Malaysian citizens from being influenced by the terrorist ideology of “Jihadi Salafist”.

Provision for Special Rehabilitation Programmes is also included into POTA in accordance to the spirit of the enactment of preventive law that emphasizes prevention and rehabilitation. The principle underlying the Act is different from any punitive law which focuses on punishments and penalties for crimes committed. The enforcement date for both POTA and SMATA is on 1 September 2015.

Empowering Voices of Civil Society

Engaging the civil society and private sector in countering the terrorist propaganda as a preventive measure is not a new method adopted by the Government of Malaysia. Similar approach had proven to be successful during the insurgency period (1948 – 1960) in combating the Communism threat and ideology. During that period, Malaysia had established the People’s Volunteer Corps under the (Essential Powers) Emergency Act that mainly comprised of civilian volunteers to support and assist the authorities. Currently, their role and function has been expanded to include countering the spread of violent extremism in the country.

In a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society like Malaysia, the practice of moderation is of essence to counter the spread of violent extremism. The importance of this practice was highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Najib Tun Razak when he mooted the idea of Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) at

the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York in 2010. Prime Minister Najib emphasised that Malaysia must choose moderation over extremism and practise negotiation over confrontation.

Under his stewardship, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) was introduced in 2009. One of the GTP initiatives aims to establish strategic cooperation between the public and the Royal Malaysia Police in crime prevention, particularly for reducing snatch theft incidents. This strategic cooperation calls for the community to develop greater awareness of their surroundings and reporting suspicious activities to the authority.

Despite the fact that the main goal of this programme is for crime prevention, the same strategic partnership between the police with community, private sector and civil society is extendable to measures for countering and preventing the spread of violent extremism. Such collaborative efforts will benefit the private sector, Government and welfare of the public at large in addressing the growing threat of violent extremism more effectively.

In recognition of the urgent need to avert the spread of terrorism and extremism among the Malaysian community, domestic agencies are galvanising their efforts in taking preventive measures. As a form of education, awareness talks to the public on the threat of militant extremists and all forms of extremism were organized. In addition, the Malaysian Government has engaged Islamic religious councils and associations to educate and create public awareness particularly among the Muslims. In this regard, the National Fatwa Council has issued an edict in April 2015 that forbids Malaysians to join, support or assist the Islamic State caliphate and their form of Jihad is against the teachings of Islam.

The internet has proven to be a highly dynamic means of communication, reaching an ever growing audience worldwide. Despite the tremendous benefits of this powerful communication means, the same technology can be exploited to perpetuate terrorism. Malaysia continues to be vigilant in monitoring the social media, particularly through the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), to avoid the spread of the menace of extremism through internet. In 2014, the Commission received ten complaints concerning terrorism or extremism while only one complaint was received in 2015 (as of May 2015). All these cases were referred to the Royal Malaysia Police for further investigations. Online awareness campaigns on possible terrorist recruitments are also being implemented to educate the public.

Another important component to counter terrorist propaganda is the de-radicalisation aspect that could address grievances and misconception on religious faith among detainees. The approach and methodology adopted to challenge the misconstrued

ideology of these radicals via small group and individual counselling sessions had been successfully applied under the now repealed Internal Security Act 1960. Based on the success of this model, rehabilitation programme is imbued in the recently approved Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 so as to create a balance between prevention, rehabilitation and punitive punishments (Zahid Hamidi, 2015a).

In summary, reliance on stringent laws and stern actions by law enforcement agencies solely cannot produce the desired results to counter violent extremism including terrorism without the full support and participation of the community, civil society and the private sector.

GO ASEAN SPIRIT

Malaysia in its capacity as ASEAN chair 2015 had just concluded the 10th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime from 28 September 2015 to 1 October 2015, as well as the special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism on 2 October 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting had provided an important platform for ASEAN countries to share their experiences in countering the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism in the region and also to exchange views on concrete measure that could be taken to prevent the growth of the problem. These are among the initiatives taken by Ministry of Home Affairs of Malaysia to galvanise regional efforts to address this pertinent security issue.

Other regional efforts in countering terrorism include the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) held in Langkawi, Kedah in March 2015 that adopted a stand against the Islamic State (New Straits Times, 2015). A related regional initiative was the RSIS-GMMF Roundtable on the Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates attended by several ASEAN members (Syed, 2015). The Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), under the purview of Malaysian Foreign Affairs Ministry, collaborated with the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) to organise capacity building courses and public awareness programme, as well as to conduct research and produce publications throughout the year to engage the civil society, private sector and non-government organisations. These activities are facilitated by the ASEAN Secretariat.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

At the international level, Malaysia remains committed to implement all relevant councils aimed at combating terrorism and take stock of efforts towards that end. In less than a year after UNSC Resolution 2178 was passed, Malaysia attended the UNSC Ministerial Briefing on threats to international peace and security caused by

terrorist acts on 29 May 2015 at New York, where counterparts from Chad, New Zealand, Nigeria, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States of America were also present. Lithuania convened the said meeting of the Council which for the first time, involved ministers responsible for internal and homeland security aimed at among others, assessing the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2178 on the issue of FTFs.

Malaysia's efforts and achievements were presented in the presence of the UN Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Chairs of the Council's 1267 and 1373 Committees, as well as the Secretary General of INTERPOL, His Excellency Mr. Jorgen Stock (Zahid Hamidi, 2015b). The country took a strong stance in rejecting terrorism in all forms and manifestations, as well as all acts, methods and practices of terrorism. In lending its international support towards eliminating the scourge of terrorism, Malaysia has ratified nine of the 14 international conventions and protocols related to terrorism (Zahid Hamidi, 2014). The nine major legal instruments and additional amendments dealing with terrorism in which Malaysia is a state party are given in the Annex. In its commitment to counter terrorism through international collaborations, Malaysia will continue to undertake various measures to implement its international obligations, including taking the necessary legislative measures that would allow the country to accede to the remaining conventions and protocols.

CONCLUSION

Successful implementation of counter terrorism initiatives will require the authority to continue monitoring and observing all radical movements and the spread of extremist ideologies in the country. This is of paramount importance because if left unchecked, the country could compromise itself to become a safe haven for terrorism activities including the spread of violent militancy, extreme ideologies and all other forms of extremism.

At the national level, the efforts of the authority in tackling the FTF phenomenon has shed some light on their motivations as well as on the huge gap in terms of the response from the international community. Unless the root causes of terrorism are dealt with effectively, the "soft power" of violent extremism cannot be totally curtailed, particularly their efforts to enlist and entice new recruits, and indoctrinate the youths misleadingly, much of which is happening through social media.

Even if the so-called root causes of terrorism could be addressed, the scourge of violent extremism would not be resolved overnight. The efforts to do so, however, would go a long way towards removing the motive-factor so cleverly manipulated by the terrorists in gaining sympathy for their dubious cause and ends.

The country must remain fully seized and committed towards combating the twin scourges of terrorism and violent extremism, for a simple but important reason. Their primary target is our youths – the youths who hold infinite promise and potential for a brighter future, and the very group that needs our protection from being led down a path of destruction.

The international community needs to address the incentives and motivations that lead people to leave their homes and loved ones to fight in far-flung regions of the world. Among others, these may include prolonged and grievous injustice, unequal access to resources and opportunities, gross violations of human rights, foreign occupation, and systematic discrimination.

ANNEX: International Conventions

Below is a summary of the nine major legal instruments and additional amendments dealing with terrorism in which Malaysia is a state party to:

1. 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft (Aircraft Convention)
 - i. Applies to acts affecting in-flight safety;
 - ii. Authorizes the aircraft commander to impose reasonable measures, including restraint, on any person he or she has reason to believe has committed or is about to commit such an act, where necessary to protect the safety of the aircraft; and
 - iii. Requires contracting States to take custody of offenders and to return control of the aircraft to the lawful commander.

2. 1970 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (Unlawful Seizure Convention)
 - i. Makes it an offence for any person on board an aircraft in flight to “unlawfully, by force or threat thereof, or any other form of intimidation, [to] seize or exercise control of that aircraft” or to attempt to do so;
 - ii. Requires parties to the convention to make hijackings punishable by “severe penalties”
 - iii. Requires parties that have custody of offenders to either extradite the offender or submit the case for prosecution; and

- iv. Requires parties to assist each other in connection with criminal proceedings brought under the Convention.

2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft

- i. Supplements the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft by expanding its scope to cover different forms of aircraft hijackings, including through modern technological means;
 - ii. Incorporates the provisions of Beijing Convention relating to a threat or conspiracy to commit an offence.
3. 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (Civil Aviation Convention)
 - i. Makes it an offence for any person unlawfully and intentionally to perform an act of violence against a person on board an aircraft in flight, if that act is likely to endanger the safety of the aircraft; to place an explosive device on an aircraft; to attempt such acts; or to be an accomplice of a person who performs or attempts to perform such acts;
 - ii. Requires parties to the Convention to make offences punishable by “severe penalties”; and
 - iii. Requires parties that have custody of offenders to either extradite the offender or submit the case for prosecution.
 4. 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons (Diplomatic Agents Convention)
 - i. Defines an “internationally protected person” as a Head of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, representative or official of a State or international organization who is entitled to special protection in a foreign State, and his/her family; and
 - ii. Requires parties to criminalize and make punishable “by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature” the intentional murder, kidnapping or other attack upon the person or liberty of an internationally protected person, a violent attack upon the official premises, the private accommodations, or the means of transport of such person; a threat or attempt to commit such an attack; and an act “constituting participation as an accomplice”.

5. 1979 International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (Hostages Convention)
 - i. Provides that “any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure, or to continue to detain another person in order to compel a third party, namely, a State, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostage within the meaning of this Convention”.

6. 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation, supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (Extends and supplements the Montreal Convention on Air Safety) (Airport Protocol)
 - i. Extends the provisions of the Montreal Convention (see No. 3 above) to encompass terrorist acts at airports serving international civil aviation.

7. 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection (Plastic Explosives Convention)
 - i. Designed to control and limit the use of unmarked and undetectable plastic explosives (negotiated in the aftermath of the 1988 Pan Am flight 103 bombing);
 - ii. Parties are obligated in their respective territories to ensure effective control over “unmarked” plastic explosive, i.e., those that do not contain one of the detection agents described in the Technical Annex to the treaty;
 - iii. Generally speaking, each party must, inter alia, take necessary and effective measures to prohibit and prevent the manufacture of unmarked plastic explosives; prevent the movement of unmarked plastic explosives into or out of its territory; exercise strict and effective control over possession and transfer of unmarked explosives made or imported prior to the entry into force of the Convention; ensure that all stocks of unmarked explosives not held by the military or police are destroyed, consumed, marked, or rendered permanently ineffective within three years; take necessary measures to ensure that unmarked plastic explosives held by the military or police are destroyed, consumed, marked or rendered permanently ineffective within fifteen years; and, ensure the destruction, as soon as possible, of any unmarked explosives manufactured after the date of entry into force of the Convention for that State.

8. 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (Terrorist Bombing Convention)
 - i. Creates a regime of universal jurisdiction over the unlawful and intentional use of explosives and other lethal devices in, into, or against various defined public places with intent to kill or cause serious bodily injury, or with intent to cause extensive destruction of the public place.
9. 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (Terrorist Financing Convention)
 - i. Requires parties to take steps to prevent and counteract the financing of terrorists, whether direct or indirect, through groups claiming to have charitable, social or cultural goals or which also engage in illicit activities such as drug trafficking or gun running;
 - ii. Commits States to hold those who finance terrorism criminally, civilly or administratively liable for such acts; and
 - iii. Provides for the identification, freezing and seizure of funds allocated for terrorist activities, as well as for the sharing of the forfeited funds with other States on a case-by-case basis. Bank secrecy is no longer adequate justification for refusing to cooperate.

(Note: for full text of the Convention, see United Nations Treaty Collection, Convention on Terrorism, <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/instruments.shtml>. Accessed on 21st August 2015.)

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