

DE-ROOTING RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper deliberates the causes of radicalism and extremism. The causes are not limited to religious reasons only. Acts of terror are also linked to extreme and radicalised elements carried out under the pretext of ideology, Rulers, country, ethnic and linguistic purity, and even humanity. The internal as well as the external factors are put forth to explain the causes of radicalism and extremism. While de-rooting efforts must be buttressed by a strong legal framework, this paper also suggests a re-traditionalization of the educational institutions in the Muslim world by strengthening them with the traditional worldview agreed by authoritative scholars, and the need to ameliorate the current economic challenges to maintain and enhance socio-political unity and national stability and integrity.

Keywords: *De-rooting, radicalism, extremism, re-traditionalization, national stability and integrity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam as the last of the revealed religions, and Prophet Muhammad who best exemplified this religion was sent not only as “a mercy to believers” (*al-Tawbah: 61*) but “to all creatures”, (*al-Anbiyā’: 107*): -

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

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The *Qur'ān* contains ample teachings exhorting Muslims to be just, even towards those whom they hate. “Let not your hatred towards a group makes you commit injustice. Justice is ever demanded for it is closest to God-consciousness (*taqwā*)”, (*al-Mā'idah*: 8):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ
عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ اْعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

In the long history of Islam in various parts of the world, including Spain, many parts of Africa and the Middle East, the Balkans, Central and South Asia, and the Malay world, the principles of mercy and justice were largely upheld by countless political leaders, scholars and administrators from different political and educational background and legal institutions. Despite the various internal and external challenges that the religion has to face, it reflects the growth of a universal and an ethical civilization.

The arrival and spread of Islam in the Malay World began in the 7th century CE with the transformation of the worldview and the ethical, cultural and sociopolitical framework of the indigenous people (al-Attas, 1972; al-Attas, 2014). By the 12th and 13th century, this process was effectively intensified by generations of profound scholars and other individuals originally from Hadramaut, without any military assistance (al-Attas, 2014). Here, Islamic Civilization flourished for many centuries centering on several major cities such as Melaka and Aceh. It has survived despite long periods of subjugation and colonization of the different parts of the Malay Archipelago by the Buddhist Thais, Catholic Portuguese and Spaniards, Protestant Dutch, and Anglican British, as well as the Shintoist Japanese.

Malaysia, a multi-cultural and multi-religious country, is one of the longest running and uninterrupted democracies with majority of its population embracing Islam in the history of modern Muslim world. While the Muslims formed the majority with strong adherence to Islam, the religious, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic rights of citizens of other faiths are not only tolerated but celebrated (W. M. Nor, 2001). The long standing importance of the Malay language, the national language, does not prevent the support for national type vernacular schools like Tamil and Chinese schools, as well as national television programmes in vernacular languages aired during prime time (W. M. Nor, 2001). Since Independence, the wealth of the country has been shared by Malays and non-Malays alike. This unique tolerance, which is known as *Muhibbah*, from

the Arabic word *ḥubb* meaning love, poses certain challenges to the national integration aspiration, but the country is able to transcend its limitations (W. M. Nor, 2001). This manifests a realization of unity in diversity. Given this context, the people and the government realize the practical importance in rejecting all forms of extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. Hence, all citizens of Malaysia are able to conduct their daily activities without fearing danger to life caused by these elements of threat to the country and society.

2. THE CAUSES OF RADICALISATION

There are many inter-related factors that lead to extremism, radicalism, wars, and terrorism. In a globalized world, radicalism and extremism and their impact on international relations and security are not only limited to Muslims but also to those who profess other religions and secular ideologies (W. M. Nor, 2010). These have been justified often times wrongly, in the name of religion, ideology, Rulers, country, ethnic and linguistic purity, or even humanity.

For example, European colonization of Latin America, and parts of Africa and Asia was perpetrated in the name of God and country. Gold and glory were no doubt the more obvious and instrumental motivations to these invasions. The First and Second World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars can be attributed primarily to ideological causes. The Balkan Tragedy was essentially based on ethnic-religious ground. The mass genocide in the Christian majority state of Rwanda is largely motivated by tribalism. The Ugandan civil war was primarily due to Christian religious radicalism, while the mass killings of the Muslims in the Ivory Coast were ethnic-religious acts committed by Christians and indigenous groups. The decades old Sri Lankan civil war between the Hindu-Tamil minority separatist group - some of whose methods are quite similar to the Muslim terrorists - against Buddhist-Sinhalese majority was driven by ethnic and religious factors.

The focus of this paper is on Islamic extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. These phenomena have victimized not only those who were directly targeted, but also Muslims worldwide and stoke the lingering ambers of Islamophobia. It is essential to examine both the internal and external factors to understand these phenomena.

2.1 The Internal Factors

Extremism (*ghulūw*) is a vice in the Islamic worldview and ethics, while

moderation (*wasatīyyah*), which has been universally practised throughout Muslim history, is a praiseworthy virtue (*faḍīlah*). The moderate Muslims most of whom belong to the majority Sunni School, have produced many major tracts detailing the various extremist, radical, and terroristic trends that had arisen from within the Muslim community from the earliest century of Islam (al-Attas, 1986; W. M. Nor, 2010). We can mention the works such as *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* by ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1037), *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, and *Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* by Ḥujjat al-Islām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), and *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) and many others.

Extremism exists even among the Sufis. Prominent Sufi thinkers have also documented various extremist trends from among those who claimed to be truly following the deepest Islamic spiritual and ethical teachings (al-Attas, 1986; al-Attas, 1988; M.Z. Uthman, 2011). We can see this in two of the Muslim popular works, i.e., *Risālah al-Qushayrīyah fī al-‘Ilm al-Taṣawwūf* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) and *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* of ‘Alī ‘Uthmān al-Hujwārī (d. 1072). In the Malay world, the works of one of the great scholars namely *Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq lī daf‘ al-Zindīq* and *Laṭā’if al-Asrār* by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1658) can be consulted.

These and other works on theology, law, ethics, and spirituality were taught at the different levels of traditional Muslim education and helped to shape the worldview and practice of the Muslims in dealing with various basic doctrinal, legal and political principles and controversies (al-Attas, 1986; al-Attas, 1988; al-Attas, 2011; W. M. Nor, 1998). Even the *Khawārij* and *Bāṭinī* Assassins - the *Hashāshiyūn*, who managed to create tremendous mischief for some time, were all finally intellectually defeated and made socially insignificant in history (al-Attas, 1986).

Presently, the terms “Muslim moderates, fundamentalists, extremists, and radicals” are interpreted mainly from the Western perspective. There is a tendency to regard Muslims who reject or challenge many fundamental principles and practices of Islam, and at the same time uncritically accept secular, Western and other non-Islamic moral standards as moderates and inclusive. Muslims who accept most of the traditional Islamic spiritual, moral, and legal principles and are appreciative but critical of some secular, Western, and other non-Islamic matters could be branded as fundamentalists and exclusive. In some instances, those who are more vocal are accused as extremists, radicals, and may even be suspected of harbouring hidden terroristic tendencies.

De-traditionalization and de-spiritualization of Islamic discourse and practice become more pronounced since the 19th century. The influence of a narrower and more legalistic vision of Islam has made political power the most central element in religious consciousness, discourse, and practice (al-Attas, 2001). Politics and law have been placed higher than their traditionally allocated positions. Even the study of the *al-Qur'ān tafsīrs* and *ḥadīths* are narrowly carried out from the legal and political perspective. The more wholesome and proper *kalām* (theological) and Sufi narratives were sidelined, which consequently deprived the Muslim mind from the rich and edifying intellectual, spiritual, and ethical resources (al-Attas, 1986; al-Attas, 2001).

Increasingly, we also notice that scholars, writers, and other individuals and groups who wrongly rebelled against established Muslim authorities, and consequently suffered were accorded a higher moral status than others, compared to the actual integrity of their moral life as well as the true worth of their intellectual and social contributions (al-Attas, 2001; W. M. Nor, 2010).

The de-traditionalization of Muslim education also creates a rejection of the established interpretation of Muslim political philosophy. Hence some self-educated writers and politically motivated Islamic organizations reject the legitimacy of existing Muslim governments and call for the establishment of an idealized Islamic theocracy with the final aim of forming a global Caliphate. Besides ignoring the generally conservative political position of the majority of traditional scholars, these individuals and groups also do not recognize the contemporary state appointed religious authorities whose duties and obligations are to look after the affairs and interests of the Muslims and non-Muslims.

Traditional Islamic education inculcates the importance of *Sharī'ah* as a gradual result of a proper and widespread understanding and application of Islam as a philosophical and ethical system. The interpretation and application of the *Sharī'ah* was organically imbued with its very spirit, *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*, which are the reflections of the major philosophical and ethical principles of Islam. It is also cognizance of the various relevant socio-historical contexts when the legal positions were taken, and the contemporary contexts for their creative, innovative, and adaptive application. In this sense *ijtihād* among qualified authorities has always been encouraged. Extremists and the radicals interpret the *Sharī'ah* rulings

almost literally without due recognition of their *maqāṣid*, and their historical contexts as well as the contemporary conditions.

There is however, another type of extremism and radicalism within the contemporary Muslim community. They comprise of a vocal group of Muslims who seek to transform and liberate Islam and the *Sharī'ah*, based on some extreme modern and secular philosophical worldview, and its conception of human rights and obligations, as well as its notion of progress, development, and happiness. While they are extremely critical of any attempts to rejuvenate Islamic consciousness and practices within the Muslim community, they are apparently less critical in adopting the extreme and secular ideas, concepts, and methods.

While they correctly stress the importance of looking at traditional Islamic interpretations and practices within their socio-historical contexts, they seem to abandon the philosophical, religious, and socio-historical contexts of the modern and mostly Western ideas and institutions. Although they argue and champion their causes in the name of liberalism and human rights, they often have not demonstrated a genuine liberal spirit towards the Muslim religious conservatives.

They appear to conveniently ignore the fact that traditional Islamic worldview and education, at the highest levels, have placed tremendous importance on knowledge and wisdom, regardless of origins. Islamic thought and civilization from the beginning has benefitted from a critical evaluation, adoption and assimilation of pre-Islamic indigenous, and contemporary foreign ideas and institutions (al-Attas, 2001; W. M. Nor, 1998; W. M. Nor, 2003). This critical and creative process is what some of the scholars call Islamization.

The illiberal liberals briefly described above, are not moderates as some media-people and analysts claimed. Just like the religious extremists, these extreme liberals do not represent the voice and consciousness of the vast majority in Malaysia and elsewhere. Dialogues between them with their non-Muslim and Western counterparts are thus not reaching the targeted audience. Instead, these dialogues have derailed their noble objectives, while alienating and radicalizing some Muslims.

The increasingly open democratic spaces and the influence of the social media in Muslim societies such as Malaysia can be misused by these two

general types of extremists, which can lead to terrorism and social-political disorder, and great sufferings to many. Malaysia is taking all possible measures to prevent such scenarios that may arise due to the internal factors discussed here.

2.2 The External Factors

The overwhelming majority of Muslims are not extremists - even if some of their traditional religious and ethical-moral outlook, and their social-legal practices are not acceptable to some modern secularists, or even when they have to resort to military means to defend their homeland and their basic human rights.

There are several external factors that have significantly contributed to the rise of Muslim extremism, radicalism, and terrorism worldwide. The external factors here refer to persistent attacks on Islam and the Muslims in various shapes and forms. Although these are certainly not new, their continuous occurrence in the age of Internet and easy global human movement would stir up deep resentment even among ordinary Muslims, and would motivate a small number of misguided ones to develop extremist and radical ideologies and actions.

In the current time, vicious attacks on the *al-Qur'ān* and the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), unjustified criticisms against any Muslim attempt to live according to the basic tenets of the *Shari'ah*, and discrimination against fellow Muslims occur almost daily. Muslim religious freedom in some liberal Western countries, which champion global human rights, multi-culturalism, and tolerance, appears to be increasingly restricted under various pretexts.

Alḥamdulillāh, the Balkan Tragedy was peacefully terminated after a great loss of human lives and untold atrocities. But the long-sufferings of the Palestinians people, the Rohingyas in Myanmar, the Thai-Malays in Southern Thailand, Bangsamoro in the Philippines, and other indigenous Muslims minorities in Central Asia have not been resolved. The crises in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria see the Muslims as the majority victims.

The displacement of Muslims from their homeland in some cases, and the constant deprivation of certain basic rights, humiliation, and suffering as

citizens in their own homeland, would elicit deep-seated resentment and anger not only against the direct perpetrators, but also their allies. Muslim nations and the international community must work harder to overcome all residual obstacles to find workable and permanent solutions.

Extreme and radical ideologies are products of grossly misguided thinking combined with a serious sense of hopelessness and desperation. Such state of mind breeds reckless fearlessness, not courage which will show utter disregard not only for all international laws and conventions, but also for their own lives. Repeated incidences of Islamophobia and the double standards on Islam and Muslims will be used by Muslim extremists and militants to recruit new members worldwide.

3. THE DE-ROOTING

In the 60 years of Malaysia's modern national existence, the country has practically negligible incidences of religious or ethnic based extremism and radicalism, despite its highly multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic social fabric (US Agency for International Development (USAID, 2004). So far, Malaysia has no terrorist attacks.

The highly deplorable 1969 riots, the Memali incident (1985), and the Kg. Medan, Petaling Jaya incident (2001) are the three black dots on a huge expanse of the white canvas made of harmonious and peaceful coexistence. There might have been few other much smaller incidences. However, the country did not experience any major violent confrontations between Muslims and non-Muslims, or between different groups of Muslims that emerged from different interpretations of Islam whether *Sunnī vs Shī'ī*, *Wahhābī vs Non-Wahhābī*, and other form of divisions. *Alḥamdulillāh*. However, tensions and misunderstandings do exist and this would be unavoidable in any society of great diversity.

This does not imply the complacency of the government in tackling the problem. The government is fully aware that de-rooting extremism, radicalism, and terrorism among a small minority of Muslims involves a keen and correct understanding of the real internal and external causes of these elements, and the application of wise, bold, and consistent multi-dimensional corrective, punitive, and preventive approaches. To draw an analogy to the efforts in fighting radicalism and extremism, it is not enough to merely uproot a tree from the ground to de-root it. The remaining roots may yet be alive and will continue to grow and

spread. De-rooting a tree involves also other mechanisms so that all the hidden and widely spread remnants will be effectively eliminated.

In a similar but more complicated manner, Malaysia's efforts to de-root extremism, radicalism, and terrorism involve a three-pronged and mutually interconnected approach. The prongs are (i) legal framework and de-radicalization; (ii) education and re-traditionalization; and (iii) socio-political harmony.

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND DE-RADICALIZATION

The legal framework must be put in place to prevent and address extremism and radicalism. On the legal front, Malaysia has introduced two related legislations namely the *Prevention of Crime Act 2015 (POTA)* and the *Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act 2015 (SMATA)*.² Both legislations are consistent with the spirit and purpose of *UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178* particularly in monitoring and regulating Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) (Zahid Hamidi, 2015).

The effects from criminal and violent acts of extremism and radicalism are borderless. For the adopted legal framework to effectively combat these elements, co-operation at the regional and international levels is required. Malaysia continues to work closely with other countries and international organizations in improving border security to prevent movement of terrorists. On 2 October 2015, the country hosted the *Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on The Rise of Radicalism and Violent Extremism*. This meeting further strengthens the regional commitment and cooperation to de-root the menace of extremism and radicalism against global peace.

Subsequently, Malaysia hosted the International Conference on Deradicalisation and Countering Violent Extremism to produce the standard guidelines and SOP on de radicalization on 25-26 January 2016. The Conference drew participation from 17 countries including Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, France, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, People's Republic of China, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America and Vietnam (Zahid Hamidi, 2016).

² The Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015 and Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act (SMATA) 2015 were tabled by the Minister of Home Affairs in Parliament on 30 March 2015. These Acts were then debated on 6 April and passed by Parliament on 7 April 2015 at 2.26am.

At the national level, the de-radicalization efforts in Malaysia require strategic collaboration between the government, civil societies as well as the private sector to prevent individuals or group of individuals from engaging in extremist and radical 'activities' at home or abroad. Malaysia has been quite successful in identifying and apprehending various extremists and radical trends. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) with the help of other agencies has made regular reports of these individuals and groups. Systematic and serious precautionary measures and continuous rehabilitation programmes have been regularly implemented. Effective engagement and counseling are carried out continuously to rehabilitate potential or prospective extremists and terrorists. These efforts are implemented with the full cooperation of various Ministries and departments including the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Ministry of Higher Education, and JAKIM, Prime Minister's Department.

In 2015, the Ministry of Home Affairs designed a comprehensive rehabilitation programme specifically for convicts involved in extremist, radical and Islamic State movements. The programme is documented in *The Integrated Deradicalisation Module for Terrorists* (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015). It is a 262-page document containing sub-modules dealing with the self and self-management, social skills, spiritual and moral values, thought and psychology, criminal behaviour, security, career and family, and nationhood. This de-radicalization programme involves three phases for a duration of two years. As initiatives for problem identification to complement the de-radicalization programme, Malaysia continues to monitor terrorist narratives through all channels and media aimed at denying extremist proponents from the means and opportunities to pursue extremists/terrorist activities and promote their ideologies. The module has been translated into three languages, namely Arabic, English and French besides the version in Malaysia language (Zahid Hamidi, 2016). The translation is part of the effort to facilitate sharing of the deradicalisation programme with other nations. Until to-date, Malaysia has shared it with more than 30 countries in the world.

5. EDUCATION AND RE-TRADITIONALIZATION

Security and legal based counter extremism measures are essential but not sufficient to deal with extremism and radicalism. A comprehensive approach must include both reactive and preventive measures. The existing legal and preventive measures in dealing with radicalism and extremism have enabled Malaysia to identify and detain 230 individuals involved³ in terrorist activities since February 2013, where 90 of them (74 males and 16 females) were involved in Daesh in Syria.

Education provides an important channel for the implementation of preventive measures to address the drivers of the problem. The current system of education in Malaysia from the lowest to the highest levels has been successful in producing educated, religious, ethical, skilled, united and multi-cultured citizens. While the positive features of the education system must be strengthened, continual review and correction of any shortcomings and weaknesses are necessary to incorporate new attributes that can deal with emergent and future challenges.

In the specific context of the present discourse, the country needs to re-traditionalize its education by strengthening the traditional worldview of Islam as agreed upon by the largest majority of authoritative traditional scholars in the various fields of Islamic thought and culture (al-Attas, 2001; W. M. Nor, 1998). This must be done by taking into consideration the relevant historical contexts and contemporary needs, as well as future possibilities. It should be stressed that the teaching and examination methods must be more analytical and comparative *vis-à-vis* other religious and cultural worldviews.

The inculcation of the right and proper ways of thinking and acting should not be limited to the formal educational setting. The educational and cultural tradition of the country to infuse this central element into every aspect of the personal and communal life of all citizens must be continued.

In Malaysia, all official programmes are generally multi-cultural and multi-religious. This is especially prominent during the annual festive occasions celebrated by all the major religions in the country through the tradition of "Open House". More serious inter-faith dialogues and interactions especially at the secondary and the tertiary education levels must be further promoted to uphold mutual understanding, compassion, and benevolence.

³ As reported by the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) dated November 2016.

Similarities must be emphasized, but any artificial unity amidst fundamental and real differences should not be forced because such action can lead to reactionary extremism and radicalism. Those who feel that the truly fundamental aspects of their religion, culture, and identity are consistently suppressed for the sake of conformity to the will of the powerful will develop deep-resentment, anger, and rebelliousness (Blanchard, 2007). When that power is perceived to be waning, or when the social climate is excited by certain combustible event, those feelings will be enflamed into unforeseen and uncontrollable disasters.

It would be in the best interest of national unity to recognize and acknowledge these differences and to place them accordingly in the education system and all other aspects of life in Malaysia. Reality, as aptly observed by one of the prominent contemporary Muslim scholars, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (2001), is characterized by difference, and knowledge of any existence is possible because of its distinguishing characteristic from the others. Justice and harmony is attained when we are able to recognize this reality and to ensure that all differences are put in their right and proper places. The writings and activities of authoritative scholars like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1988; 2001; 2011) in Malaysia and the region have significantly contributed to the better understanding and application of Islam as a religion and an ethical civilization. Oppression, barbaric acts, and injustices have been carried out against fellow humans because of the inability and unwillingness to justly treat the differences between us.

6. SOCIO-POLITICAL HARMONY

Any preventive or reactive measures to de-root radicalism and extremism will not work effectively if national peace and socio-political harmony is under threat. To consistently and successfully de-root extremism, radicalism, and terrorism in all shapes and forms, the country needs to not only maintain, but also enhance our socio-political unity, and national stability and integrity. The current economic challenges faced by all nations worldwide with undesirable impact on the country and affecting the well-being of its citizens must be systematically dealt with to avoid discontents that may undermine national unity and stability, as well as socio-political harmony. These conditions are integrally related to one another, and all of them hinge on the correct spiritual orientation and ethical and moral compass of our citizens especially the leadership at all levels.

Conscientious Muslims are always reminded of the profoundly true warning of the Holy Prophet to the effect that God does not sustain a government which

is not just, despite it being a Muslim government; and on the contrary He will support a just government even if it is not a Muslim government:

الْمُلْكُ يَبْقَى مَعَ الْكُفْرِ وَلَا يَبْقَى مَعَ الظُّلْمِ

We are also constantly being reminded of another hadith of the Prophet of the supplications of those who have been unjustly treated even if they are non-Muslims since God answers prayers of the victims of injustice regardless of their religious orientation:

اتَّقُوا دَعْوَةَ الْمَظْلُومِ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَافِرًا ، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ دُونَهَا حِجَابٌ

In the Malay world, these two hadiths are recorded in many influential traditional treatises dealing with governance, one of which is *Tāj al-Salāḥīn* of the 18th century by Bukhārī al-Jawharī.

The longevity of the system of government led by the coalition party, Barisan Nasional,⁴ since Independence on 31 August 1957 is because of its ability to maintain justice to all the segments of the country's multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The socio-political harmony achieved all these years has contributed in many ways to keep radicalism and extremism at its minimum. There are still much to be done. The journey is still long despite the achievements thus far. The efforts to de-root radicalism and extremism must forge ahead with the necessary caution to maintain peace and stability in the hope for a better future.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be stressed that extremism, radicalism, and terrorism are not only motivated by misguided religious orientation, but also by misplaced secular, tribal, and other human interests and affiliations. Extremism, radicalism, and especially terrorism have always been condemned in traditional Islamic teachings and practices. All segments of the society should shoulder the responsibility to de-root every element of these negative tendencies by addressing both the internal and external factors concurrently with full commitment.

⁴ Barisan Nasional is a coalition formed through the alliance of different political parties. It is the successor to the three-party Alliance coalition founded by United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Each of Malaysia's six Prime Ministers has been from UMNO, Malaysia's largest political party.

The innocent majority should not be made accountable for the misguided doctrines and horrendous actions of a very small minority. Such action not only is an injustice but would also imply a form of extremism, and in some cases even terrorism on the part of the majority. These will unintentionally become useful fodder for real extremists and terrorists to justify their mistrust in majority opinions, international laws and conventions, and to recruit new members worldwide.

Muslims must use all available resources and cooperate with all parties to prevent and contain any form of radicalism, extremism and terrorism. Malaysia will continue to be a central player in taking on this laudable task. Three years ago, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) and the Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (CASIS-UTM) held their *2nd Roundtable Discussion on Tolerance and Moderation in Contemporary Muslim Societies*. Such efforts to support the noble objectives of promoting tolerance and moderation must be supported and intensified.

Different groups living in a multicultural and multi-religious society must close their ranks, and minimize any differences that may occur between them. Attention should be focused on de-rooting the menace of extremism, radicalism, and terrorism through concerted efforts from all parties. Malaysia will not waver in its stand, nor would it compromise its struggle to combat the threatening and violent acts of extremists and terrorists. All parties must cooperate and should never be distracted from the noble mission. As Allah says in the Holy *Qur'ān* (*Ālī 'Imrān: 159*):

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

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