Intellectual Discourse

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The Tiger and the Terrorist:
How Malaysian NGOs deal with Terrorism

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Abstract: This paper investigates the efforts of four Malaysian NGOs; PERKIM, YADIM, ABIM, and JIM which are representative of Malaysian NGOs as a whole in defusing terrorism and promoting peace. Instead of taking the usual sociological approach, this article will apply a cultural-critical approach, drawing on the theories of relevant Western and Muslim intellectuals in order to gain greater insight into the peace-promoting efforts. In so doing, it examines the space open for NGOs to work in, as well as the importance of providing counter-narratives to terrorist rhetoric. The unique narrative of Islam in Malaysia, and how that helps NGOs in peace-building efforts is another aspect that is touched on. Finally, the paper discusses some of the challenges Malaysian NGOs face in their peace-building efforts. The article concludes that prevalent strategies in terrorism studies need to be re-examined and re-evaluated in order to make them more effective. It is hoped that this article will give a new perspective on counter-terrorism strategies and help policy makers in better understanding the ubiquitous threat terrorists pose.

Keywords: PERKIM, YADIM, ABIM, JIM, NGOs, terrorism, peace-building

Abstrak: Kertas kerja ini mengkaji usaha-usaha empat buah Organisasi Bukan Kerajaan (NGOs) di Malaysia: PERKIM, YADIM, ABIM, dan JIM

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yang mewakili kesemua NGOs di Malaysia, dalam meredakan keganasan dan menggalakkan keamanan. Selain daripada mengambil pendekatan secara sosiologi yang biasa di lakukan, artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan kritikal budaya, dengan mengumpulkan teori-teori barat yang releven dengan intelek-intelek Muslim untuk mendapatkan wawasan yang lebih baik dalam usaha mempromosikan keamanan. Bagi melaksanakannya, ia menilai ruang yang terbuka kepada NGOs untuk bekerjasama dengan mengambil kira kepentingannya untuk menyediakan kaunter-balas kepada retorik pengganas. Naratif unik terhadap Islam di Malaysia dan bagaimana ia dapat membantu NGOs dalam usaha-usaha pembentukan keamanan merupakan satu aspek yang dititikberatkan. Akhir sekali, kertas kerja ini membincangkan beberapa cabaran yang dihadapi oleh NGOs di Malaysia dalam usaha membentuk keamanan. Artikel ini membuat kesimpulannya bahawa strategi yang biasa digunakan dalam Kajian Keganasan perlu diperiksa semula dan dinilai semula demi untuk membuatkannya lebih efektif. Adalah diharapkan bahawa artikel ini dapat memberikan perspektif baharu dalam strategi-balas keganasan supaya ia dapat membantu pembuat keputusan dalam memahami ancaman pengganas yang sentiasa ada di merata-rata.

Kata kunci: PERKIM, YADIM, ABIM, JIM, NGO, keganasan, perdamaian

Introduction: The Approach Less Taken in Sociology

Since 1961 there has been a debate in Germany surrounding sociology. Theodore Adorno clashed with Karl Popper on the proper method of sociological investigation. Jürgen Habermas sparred with Hans Albert on the correct approach to sociological research. Currently sociology, in general, has followed Popper and Albert even though Adorno and Habermas dominated the Positivist Dispute in German sociology (Adorno et al., 1976).

Most sociological research is carried out in a scientific manner. The way the word "scientific" instantly lends authority to sociological research should warn us that we are dealing with a fetish. Modern man's reassurance on hearing the word "scientific" has antecedents in the prehistoric belief that words have mystical powers. This fetish has nothing to do with science, and everything to do with scientism.

It is assumed that sociological research can only be valuable if it uses the methods of science. By science it is meant the natural sciences. It is believed that extending the methods of the natural sciences to the *social* sciences is a way of protecting the social sciences from prejudice,

even though such an extension is *a priori* and grounded in Descartes' predilection for the clear and distinct.

Gathering data is at the core of the dominant trend in sociological research. This should not be equated with finding evidence. Many times the former excludes the latter while the latter rejects the former. Gathering data means conjuring up categories then filling them with samples. The categories constitute the samples; thus, empiricism regresses to rationalism (Habermas, 1971, p. 76-7).

The methods of the natural sciences are appropriate for the *natural* sciences. No one is disputing the effectiveness of enumeration when it comes to studying beetles. What works for beetles need not work for humans. While Malebranche was wrong to kick a pregnant dog, he was right to notice the difference between a dog and a human. A society of beetles and a society of humans are different, because beetles do not have revolutionary politics while humans dream of radical emancipation. If we were to apply the method of studying beetles to studying humans, we would be as unfeeling as Malebranche, even more so since we would be treating humans as he treated dogs.

Nowadays sociological research is fixated on facts, as if the distinction between facts and truth did not exist. Facts can be facades covering truth; thus, merely accepting facts without going beyond them is like accepting the notion that an oasis quenches thirst. Take for example Martin Amis who wrote *The Age of Horrorism* for the fifth anniversary of 9/11 in *The Observer*. In the essay Amis writes:

> All religions, unsurprisingly, have their terrorists, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, even Buddhist. But we are not hearing from those religions. We are hearing from Islam.

Three sentences. Factually correct of course. Undoubtedly so. Yet untrue. The first sentence characterises terrorism as religious even though everyone knows of secular terrorism. The second sentence conveys acquiescence to the authority of the media, as if the media does not manufacture consent (Chomsky& Herman, 1994). The third sentence assumes that Muslim terrorists represent Islam, an assumption that is also the conclusion of Amis's argument, showing the circularity of his thinking.

This article will deal with how Malaysian NGOs try to defuse terrorist violence. The article will not take the usual sociological approach, due to the weaknesses inherent in it. Instead a cultural-critical approach will be taken. The article seeks to understand the role of Malaysian NGOs in the context of the Malaysian culture, using critical reflection not statistical adumbration.

This cultural-critical approach aims to clarify the relationship between Malaysian NGOs, terrorism, and peace. This clarity will neither come from sharpening definitions, an act of reduction, nor from examining numbers, an act of reification. The clarity will come from situating the NGOs in the bigger picture ("totality") and seeing what significance their situation gives them ("mediation").

An example of the two approaches is in order. In *The International Handbook of War, Torture, and Terrorism* (2013), chapter nine tries to see how South and Southeast Asia understand terrorism. A sample of 756 people was used. 20% of the people came from Malaysia, while 3% came from Indonesia and Laos. As the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia gets little "air-time". 8% of the people came from Pakistan. The answers that Malaysians, Indonesians, and Pakistanis gave contributed to the South and Southeast Asian understanding of terrorism, as if all three countries have the same perspective on, and experience of, terrorism. The research found that people in South and Southeast Asia "viewed torture as involving both physical and psychological/mental methods to harm people" (p. 142). So does a dictionary. The clarity of the research approach contrasts with the opacity of the object of research.

Compare the above with the following. In 1984 Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), an NGO, translated and published a book by Yusuf Qaraḍāwī titled *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism*. This book, a cultural artefact, is very telling. From it we learn that Malaysia was aware of the dangers of religious terrorism before 9/11 and was already trying to prevent it before the "War on Terror". Thus any claim that Muslim countries (a generalisation that includes Malaysia) should take seriously the threat of terrorism betrays the claimant's historical illiteracy. Malaysia is culturally connected to the Middle East, actively not passively. Malaysia chose the influences it wanted; hence, ABIM is inclines more to Qaraḍāwī and less to Qutb.[3]

This uncovers the untruth in the claim that terrorism stems from Middle Eastern rhetoric. Yes, it does stem from that rhetoric but so does anti-terrorism.

The first approach, though empirically heavy, does not descend from the clouds of concepts. The second approach, though empirically light, clings to the roots of reality.

In considering the role Malaysian NGOs play in countering terrorism, this article will look into four Malaysian NGOs: Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM), Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM), ABIM, and Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM). These NGOs are representative of Malaysian NGOs as a whole, with regards to their efforts in defusing terrorism. The first section of this article, as seen above, provides a justification for the use of a cultural-critical approach. The second section considers the space open for NGOs to work in, and examines the importance of providing counter-narratives to terrorist rhetoric. The third section studies the unique narrative on Islam in Malaysia, and how that helps NGOs in peace-building efforts. The fourth section examines the social projects NGOs provide and how they target the roots of terrorism. The fifth section relates some of the challenges Malaysians NGOs face in their peace-building efforts.

It is hoped this article will shed new colours on how Malaysian NGOs function, and also help in broadening the discussion and debate on counter-terrorism, moving the discourse beyond the *Ouroboros* that limits it.

Providing Counter-Narratives on Islam and Terror

The graveyard houses both the divine and the damned, but though both camps inhabit it due to the mundane, it is only the terrorist entombed that gives a sense of the profane. Like a mountaineer struck with frostbite, a society struck with profanity must cut off its blackened finger. Unlike a frostbitten mountaineer though, a profanity-struck society finds the blackening worsens *after* amputation.

The idea that steel plus steel equals more steel is ancient; yet, we somehow forget this simple sum and imagine that more steel equals no steel. In Euripides's *Bacchae* Pentheus has to deal with Dionysus. Law defends Thebes from anarchy. Pentheus tries to smash Dionysus but becomes the victim of maternal filicide.

Friedrich Schiller (1979) makes Robber Moor say, "Oh, fool that I was, to suppose that I could make the world a fairer place through terror, and uphold the cause of justice through lawlessness" (p. 159). The lament of a Rebel shows the Law as rebel.

For this reason the Malaysian government has not reacted to terrorism by gambolling in the gore-laden fields of the macho. It has neither defended freedom by ditching freedom nor fought savagery with savagery. The "shredding of the bill of rights," to use Gore Vidal's phrase, is a Texan favourite.

The lack of governmental Malay muscle-men has opened up the space for NGOs to effectively help counter terrorism; thus, ensuring a more stable peace, as opposed to a truce in the trenches.

Malaysian NGOs counter terrorism through several non-violent means. And though these means may seem somewhat dull to John Wayne fans, they do work. *The Evolving Terrorist Threat to South Asia*, a report by RAND (2009), has specific chapters dealing with terrorism in Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia but not on Malaysia.

The success of these non-violent means is based on a correct understanding of terrorist violence. Comparing the size of your Glock to others may be a good ego-trip but it is a bad alternative to carefully scrutinizing a situation. As Jean Baudrillard (2003) put it, "You have to take your time…when [events] speed up this much, you have to move more slowly" (p. 4).

Terrorist violence is not the caricature that some people make it out to be. Terrorists are often portrayed as irrational people in the grip of unstoppable demons. This portrayal demeans the victims of terrorism. If terrorists are irrational and demon-possessed, they have no control over their actions. Since it is impossible for them to act peacefully, we cannot criticise them for not acting peacefully. It is only when we admit that terrorists are human that victims get closure.

Malaysian NGOs recognise that terrorist violence has a political, social, and psychological aspect. In its online encyclopaedia, YADIM (2016) says, "Investigation and research has found that terrorists see the act of violence as the only way to achieve their political objectives. In the eyes of terrorists, political conflicts can only be solved via violence".

In Albert Camus's *The Just* Kaliayev kills the Grand Duke for political reasons. He was not a deranged person. If we were to think of terrorism before the twenty-first century, everyone would know the multiple spouts at the terrorist's fount. Curiously, when dealing with terrorism in our time, some people deny that terrorist violence has any grounding apart from itself. Why? "Orientalism," Sophia Rose Arjana writes, "has been committed to political projects that require the dehumanization of Muslims" (2015, p. 9).

Terrorists usually refer to religion. Malaysian NGOs do not take this reference seriously. It is naive to accept terrorist claims at face value. When a racist claims his nation urged him to murder black people, a smart person would point out that his nation is made up of mostly non-racists, with racists being less than a minority. Idris Zakaria, writing in YADIM's *Umran: The Journal of Muslim Affairs,* says, "Peace and tolerance are the original characteristics of Islam. They are also the reason why Islam can easily be accepted by various races and nations since its early inception" (2015, p. 17).

There is a difference between a constative utterance and a performative one (Jacobson, 1971). As Paul de Man noted, both types of utterances can be "entirely incompatible" (1979, p. 10). It is this incompatibility which we witness in the religious utterances of terrorists. Their description of religion contradicts their performance of it.[4]

The language of religion is used by terrorists as a rationalization of their deeds. The word "rationalization" is used in the psychoanalytic sense of a person justifying his deeds while not entirely aware of the underlying motives driving him (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p. 375). Terrorists may sincerely believe they are acting from purely religious motives, but this sincerity is a species of self-ignorance.

One of the means, then, of countering terrorism is for NGOs to highlight the incompatibility inherent in terrorist religious utterances, and in expelling the self-ignorance that terrorists bathe in. Once terrorists are aware that they cannot use religion to authorise their actions, they will find it difficult to carry out terrorism in the name of religion. All violence, however gratuitous, needs a semblance of justification. If no justification is found, no violence can occur. It is impossible for a human being to be a *diabolic being*, as Kant reasoned (1998, p. 58).[5]

The NGOs provide counter-narratives on Islam to undercut the terrorists' pseudo-religious legitimacy. To use the proper technical term, the NGOs do *Da'wah* . In Islam, *Da'wah* is aimed firstly at one's family and secondly at the Muslim community (Qur'ān, 26:214-15). It is not exclusively aimed at non-Muslims. PERKIM, YADIM, ABIM, and JIM carry out *Da'wah* to Muslims via study sessions at mosques, workshops at universities, and presentations at public events. They distribute free materials that give a different picture of Islam than the one terrorists show.

These efforts are helped by the unique narrative on Islam found in Malaysia. The *Da'wah* of the NGOs reinforce this narrative, which allows people to reconnect themselves to the spiritual tradition of their nation. This reinforcement legitimises the counter-narrative of the NGOs, because without it, terrorist sympathisers may say the counter-narrative is nothing but an apology for pacifism. We now turn to this unique narrative.

The Unique Narrative on Islam in Malaysia

It is commonly assumed that merchants brought Islam to Malaya. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (2011) has challenged this assumption and persuasively shown how Islam was brought to Malaya by the Sufis. By the 15th century, Sufism was well-established in Malay culture and society. The early Malay Sufis included the famed Hamza Fansuri, Shamsuddin Sumatrani, Abdul-Rauf Singkel, and Nuruddin Raniri. Sufism was one of the hallmarks of Malay society. Richard Winstedt (1981) wrote:

> [T]he skill which these Malays with a vocabulary lacking in abstract terms were able to grasp and introduce Sufi mysticism to their world is remarkable, and though their ideas were not original, in no other field has the Malay mind ever displayed such intellectual ability and subtlety (p. 40).

Sufism in Malaya was not a member of a class called Islam; rather, Sufism in Malaya was the class itself: it *was* Islam. This is what distinguishes Malay Sufism from Arab Sufism, a fact unnoticed by Winstedt. In theology, Sufism in Malaya stressed the unity in all things. It taught that reality was undifferentiated, and truth was when people realised there is no 'I' or 'You'. In ethics, Malay Sufism focused on

inner *tazkiyah*— "the greater jihad" as the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) called it—and on outer *akhlāq*.[6]

Fast forward to the present and we find that the concept of *wasaṭiyyah* is at the fore in the Malay narrative on Islam. Muhammad Hashim Kamali (2010& 2015) has written on the concept and so has Muhammad Kamal Hassan (2011& 2015). *wasaṭiyyah* means moderation. It is argued that *wasaṭiyyah* is the key characteristic of Islam that has to be highlighted in our current time. In modern times, the electromagnetic spectrum has the gamma rays of religious extremism and the radio waves of liberal colonialism. The concept of *wasaṭiyyah* places Islam in between both ends, in the visible light.

Al-Ghazālī is the link between Sufism and *wasaṭiyyah*. Both Hashim Kamali and Kamal Hassan refer to him and his ideas. The spiritual idea of unity in all things is translated, in *wasaṭiyyah*, to the social idea of global tolerance for Muslims and non-Muslims. At the base level, both Muslims and non-Muslims are the same; since they come from the same source (Qur'ān, 49:13). The mystical idea of an undifferentiated reality becomes the mobilising idea of removing artificial barriers that separate people, races, and classes. Inner *tazkiyah*—especially *ṣabr*—is a way of countering the terrorists' dystopian worldview, while outer *akhlāq* is a way of refuting Islamophobia. The shift from a Sufism that transcends the material to a Sufism that is immanent in the material shows not only the extraneous effects of modernisation, but also the adaptive potential inherent in Sufism. Hence, in Malaysia, Sufism *is* Islam.

No one will be surprised that Malaysian NGOs actively promote Sufism and *wasaṭiyyah*. PERKIM promotes Sufism in *Islamic Herald*, its magazine. ABIM "stresses" the foundational aspect of *wasaṭiyyah* (Hassan, 2004, p. 105). [7]

The counter-narrative these NGOs use against terrorist ideology is in harmony with the unique narrative of Islam in Malaysia. This harmony comes from the former being derived from the latter.

The importance of this harmony and derivation cannot be overstated. The counter-narrative the NGOs use is more than just a specific interpretation of Islam. It is an "access point" by which Malay people can reconnect to the spirit of their heritage, recollect the stories of their past, and recapture the symbols of their culture.

The Islamic identity that the counter-narrative fosters is characterised by a stable continuity; not a disruption or, worse, a total disconnection. This explains why the counter-narrative these NGOs use in Malaysia is more successful than similar counter-narratives used in other countries. In countries where Islam is *not* defined by Sufism, the introduction and aggressive promotion of Sufism as a means of "combating terrorism" faces difficulties not found in Malaysia. Terrorist sympathisers, in those countries, will view Sufism as deviations or *bida'* (a religious innovation)*,* an instrumental tool for controlling social unrest. The Islamic identity these counter-narratives promote are marked by a sense of disruption, because the identity is not aligned with the heritage of the homeland, the patterns of the past, and the culture of the country. In some cases, the Islamic identity will have a total disconnect from the people, especially when the counter-narratives are openly used to support modern imperialism.

The issue is not merely about roots. Other countries share the same Sufi roots as Malaysia, but their Islamic identity is dissimilar to Malaysia's. One reason for this is because Malaysian intellectuals developed Sufism so it could interact with the modern world. Instead of seeing Sufism as an antique vase, Malay intellectuals see it as an evolving organism. That is why *wasaṭiyyah* does not fall on either side of the traditional/modern divide.[8] Other countries with the same Sufi roots chose other routes to form their Islamic identities.[9]

It is apparent that Malaysian NGOs work in a matrix that contains the country's heritage, history, culture, and intellectuals. Without the NGOs, the masses would remain ignorant of the ideas developed by the intellectuals. Without the intellectuals, the NGOs would be left with a *tabula rasa* for informing the masses. It is this relationship between the NGOs and the intellectuals, both working within the country's heritage, history, and culture that makes the counter-narrative effective.

It is a common error to analyse NGOs by looking *solely* at their projects and achievements. That is like trying to understand a person without looking into his childhood and his society. When we widen our gaze, we see that NGOs are imbedded in complex connections, and many times it is these connections that make the difference between failure and fulfilment.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1963) noted:

> The peacefulness and non-militant characteristic of the [Sufi] Orders in Malaya have definitely influenced the outlook of the Malays with regard to their system of political and social thought. They have never been known to exhibit a religious militarism…[t]he Sūfī preaching…has made it possible, I strongly believe, for the plural societies that existed in Malaya to live side by side peaceably and with a spirit of tolerance that is evident even to this day (p. 99).

Protagoras's progeny tend to overlook facts. Benjamin Bowling (n.d.), in a report for the US State Department, labelled Malaysia a "religious extreme state" (p. 1). Bowling's report opens with hyperbole and ends with hearsay. He claims that Malaysia has "*all* the hallmarks" of a religious extreme state (emphasis added). He admits that some of his claims are "without an exact figure" yet justifies them by referring to what some residents and estate workers say (p. 20).

It is caricatures like this that hinder and not help in defusing terrorism because they do not clarify our circumstances; rather they satirise it. Phrases like "religious extremism" must be used carefully if it is to retain its significance. Bandying it around only increases the confusion in Terrorism Studies, an area already choked by medieval stereotypes and modern prejudices.

Social Projects and the Roots of Terrorism

A terrorist sympathiser walks down the street fantasising on mutilated houses, mangled bodies, and media coverage. His fantasy is escapism. A year later, he blows himself up in a nightclub. His suicide is protest. Between escapism and protest is a moment where empathy can enter into the sympathiser's life and save him from futility. This empathic intervention is what Malaysian NGOs do in the form of social projects.

This section will examine some of the social projects by JIM to see the role these projects play in spreading peace and stopping terrorism. Mohsin Hamid's novels will be the theatre in which we see the staged drama of Muslim societies. This theatre has two features making it special. The novels express the "spirit of the age" with uncanny depth and precision, as novels usually do. They are also written by an Asian Muslim who lived in both the West and the East; so, they stem from lived experience. Works by academic orientalists lack these features; hence they are less useful for understanding what is really going on.

Bernard Lewis, for instance, expresses the "spirit of Mars," or, in demythologised terms, the interests of the Military Industrial Complex. He has professional experience, not lived. That is how we get howlers such as his claim that the Muslim terrorist is fuelled by "the challenge to his mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children" (Sept, 1990). The ranks of ISIS are swelled by emancipated women from the West and rebellious children from the East?

Moth Smoke (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008), and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) have a common theme: the failure of the American Dream. Though American, the dream is dreamt of by the upper classes of Muslim societies and by the lower classes too. People who try to get filthy rich end up destitute, unable to rise above their social class. Individual freedom is a myth. Just as the Untouchables cannot join the Brahmins, the Poor cannot join the Rich even with hard work and sacrifice. The falsity of this dream, and the economic oppression underlying it, leads Darashikoh to shoot a child. One reason people become terrorists is due to the emptiness they feel from "materialism". This emptiness gnaws inside them so they fill it with violence.

There is no point in me sweetening my syllables. I would not be believed even if I did. So let us be honest and admit that the capitalist caste system exists in Malaysia, as it does in Pakistan, and as it does in America. Globalisation has allowed the free flow of both medical aid and monetary acid. Zaid Kamaruddin, the president of JIM, openly rejected capitalism. Capitalism should have no place in Malaysia (Malik & Mat, 2014, p. 111). To point out the vacuity of his fiery words is beside the point. No matter how bold your words are and how brazen your demeanour is, capitalism will not simply vanish. The Hindu caste system still exists despite passing its expiry date. JIM's stance on capitalism is not merely rhetorical though. It is a declaration of the failure of the American Dream and a call to dream anew. It is a recognition that the faults in society stem from economic mischief. While not exactly providing an economic solution, JIM's position allows the destitute and distraught to know that someone out there understands their problems,and empathises with them.

JIM has its own vision of what a non-capitalist Malaysia will look like. It has its own "Big Picture" (Malik& Mat, 2014, p. 111). It might

seem naïve for JIM to want a Shar'iah-compliant Malaysia by 2020; in fact a little unsophisticated too. The social function, however, of such visions is not their applicability but their symbolism. The "Big Picture" that JIM advocates is a symbol of hope. It rejects the cynicism of pragmatism and embraces the optimism of an emancipatory future. Without such symbols society will slide into a cynical stoicism that repeats the ills of an oppressive past. That is why we can easily imagine apologists for "Capitalist Realism" defending Uncle Ho.[10] Aurangzeb's monologue is logically sound such that it can defend any crime committed, even by terrorists.

Changez noticed that beside religious fundamentalism, there is market fundamentalism. While religious fundamentalists use old Kalashnikovs, market fundamentalists use the stock exchange. Changez leaves his job because he realises the world cannot be reduced to a conference room. Life needs to be looked at holistically. If not, people can experience existential crises that lead to violence. JIM runs private schools that follow a philosophy of education where all knowledge is unified. These schools nurture society on the idea of "Syumuliyyah" (Malik, Abdul-Rahman, &Hamidah, 2016).

Alienation is an ailment of individualism. The individual is less than an atom. Atoms form compounds. Buckyballs are made from carbon. Individuals in individualism cannot form compounds, because if they did, they would have committed socialism. In Hamid's three novels, the protagonists face alienation. Experts have recognised alienation as a major factor spurring terrorism. Michael J. Mazarr (2004) notes the importance of alienation to terrorist psychology.[11] JIM provides clubs for youths and adults so they can gain a sense of belonging in a world where Social Darwinism has become the Standard Credo.

Drugs fuelled Darashikoh's violence. The connection between terrorist attacks and drugs is usually left untouched by commentators and academics. Peter Hitchens (2017) writes:

> I doubt we'll ever know, since the authorities, obsessed with finding links to a bearded supremo in an eastern cave, are almost totally uninterested in the amazingly strong correlation between mind-altering drugs and crazed violence, and so don't find out. Why is this? Partly it's because dogmatic neo-

> conservatives and 'security' lobbyists make a good living out
> of exaggerating the genuine but limited Islamist threat.

JIM, like other NGOs, constantly warns people against drugs. This warning, coupled with the group cohesion and sense of belonging that the clubs provide, allows JIM to reduce the number of crazies roaming the cities ready to 'go Krakatoa'.

JIM's approach to reform is to provide empathic social services. These services falsify the dichotomy of "either materialism or terrorism". The *services* are not simply *services* but are symbols of the possibility of a dream, a dream far greater and more rewarding than what Henry Miller (1945) called the "air-conditioned nightmare".

Challenges Facing Malaysian NGOs

Though Malaysian NGOs have greatly helped in spreading peace and stopping terrorism, it is wrong to think that they work in a serene space like "Village Naturiste" in Cap d'Agde. There *are* challenges hampering the NGOs from helping more. Many of these challenges are well-known and need little elaboration. We all know that NGOs have little money, have few volunteers, and are under pressure to fix all the woes of society. This section will look into the lesser-known challenges. In keeping with a cultural-critical approach, this section will elaborate on cultural challenges and critically evaluate them.

The cultural challenges NGOs face come from both outside and within Malaysia. Imported trash culture and hawkish neo-con policies come from outside Malaysia. Rising frustration and the allurement of the *Khawārij* doctrine come from inside Malaysia.

Jack G. Shaheen has shown in great detail the racism in Hollywood portrayals of Arabs and Muslims (2008 & 2015). This racism can be seen in such films as *The Dictator* and *American Sniper*.

Fawzia Reza (2015) pointed to some Islamophobic aspects of *The Dictator* (p. 31). Her point is an understatement. A scene from the movie speaks for itself: General Aladeen is playing a Nintendo Wii. He is depicted as a bearded man who is happily beheading a White Man. Each stroke of the sword sounds like a tennis shot. The head comes off, and turns to face the screen with the words "Keep it up!" under it. The head flies off-screen and a blue bubble appears with the words "beheading

bonus" around it. "You've unlocked the suicide vest," a female voice says. Aladeen then plays in the Munich Olympics. A Jewish man opens a door and says, "Shalom". An automatic rifle riddles his head with bullets. A female voice says, "Bonus round: Mass grave". The scene ends with Aladeen waving the controller in a digging motion.

Let us reverse the roles in the scene: a Jew joyfully beheads an Arab; a Jew gleefully shoots Arabs in the face; a Jew happily digs an Arab mass grave. To this scene, the only response is disgust. The scene is undoubtedly anti-Semitic. This would never have premiered. Yet what is rightly abhorred for one race is instantly accepted for another.

In *American Sniper*, Chris Kyle is Uncle Sam in flesh. The film depicts Kyle as a child-killer, positively, I should add. Shooting an Arab child in the head, in a country you are invading, is proof of your selflessness and sacrifice. The *American Sniper* movie and jihadist sniper videos have the same content but differ in form. The movie has the artificial feel of a multi-million dollar Hollywood production, while the videos have the gritty authenticity of in-the-moment recording, the difference between the two is similar to the difference between sanitised studio pornography and raw amateur porn. If you want your kids to watch an army flick, then the videos are preferable since no American ten-year olds get shot by invading Arabs. Kyle keeps referring to the Iraqis as "savages," evoking Shaw's reproach to the English to "blush for our complicated and pretentious savagery" (1996, p. 32).

Hawkish neo-con policies, of Anglo-American origin, exert pressure on policy makers around the globe, including those in Malaysia. These policies have become the very essence of counter-terrorism; thus, policy makers in Malaysia feel obliged to consider them no matter how discreditable they may be. These policies are backed by "terrorism experts," a euphemism for PR men of the security industry. When adopted even partially, these policies can jeopardise the efforts of NGOs in peace-building. Either the policies reduce the space in which NGOs function, or they overlap the space, thus problematizing the efforts of the NGOs.

Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler (2006) try to explain the rationality behind radical Islam. This is important to any counter-terrorism strategy; since, if you cannot understand terrorists, you cannot know how to tackle them. Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler give the Security Industry's

usual sale's pitch: terrorists believe they will go to paradise if they die. Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler downplay political, sociological, and psychological motivations for terrorism. Religion, they say, is the main motivation for many terrorists. This opinion has a one-dimensional view of what religion is. Religion is not only eschatology; it is also a culture, a history, a trauma, a language, a flight. What religion is varies from person to person and from group to group. A person can be a Muslim in trauma but not in history. (An example would be female converts to Islam who get attacked in Paris.) A group can be Muslim in culture but not in eschatology. (An example would be, political refugees from Iran.) Understanding terrorism is too important to be left to monomaniacs.

Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler use Al-Muhajiroun as a case study to prove their point. They do not tell us in great detail about the group; so, I will fill in what they have left out. Anjem Choudary is the leader of Al-Muhajiroun. Scotland Yard repeatedly tried to arrest Anjem but MI5 blocked it (Evans & Farmer, 2016). The head of a radical Islamist group had the protection of the British Secret Service. Anjem talks about replacing the British government with a Caliphate at Ten Downing Street. But even he knows he is not serious. After all the British government gave him £25,000 a year and furnished him with a £320,000 house (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013). Admittedly he did call the Queen "ugly," outdoing the Sex Pistol's song *God Save the Queen*.

At this juncture, two personal anecdotes come to mind. I remember watching the documentary *The Tottenham Ayatollah*. In the documentary, Omar Bakri caught a fish. He took a tin opener to gut it. He held the fish but dropped it from fright. One of his followers said, "How can you fight jihad?" I curled up in laughter, resembling a hedgehog on a sofa.

The other anecdote relates to a friend. Three years ago I spent Ramadan in London. My friend dropped by my home after *Tarawīḥ* prayers at the Regent's Park Mosque, known to British Muslims as *Masjid al-Kabīr*. He told me that after prayers, a man from Al-Muhajiroun stood in the mosque's courtyard and called on people to join ISIS. The people, fresh from prayer, punched him and threw him out of the masjid's gate.

Sutcliffe (2010) called Anjem a "pantomime villain" and I feel justified in calling Al-Muhajiroun a Panto Villain Squad. It is this Panto

Villain Squad that Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler use in their analysis of global terrorism.

Muslims are angered at the atrocities and war crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, etc. This anger becomes frustration when politics is impotent to stop atrocities. The rising frustration among Malays is fertiliser for terrorism to flourish. This frustration makes people feel helpless among all the injustices they see; thus, igniting in some the manic desire to reassert their own power and bring justice to the damned. When NGOs caution against rash action, people blinded by frustration can easily dismiss them as cowards and servants to the status-quo. The NGOs stress the Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) advice, "There will be tribulations where one who is sitting is better than one who is standing, and one who is standing is better than one who is walking, and one who is walking is better than one who is running" (al-Bukhārī, 61:3415). The frustration can make a sitting person run and a patient person explode. To forestall this, NGOs must explain to people the virtues of inaction. As Slavoj Žižek said, "Sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do" (2008, p. 217).

The allure of the *Khawārij* doctrine challenges the efforts of NGOs. The doctrine stands on two paws, one of *takfīr,* the other of *khurūj*. Political leaders are seen as disbelievers, because they are not implementing the *Sharī'ah*. Because the leaders are disbelievers, Muslims should rebel against them and replace them with a caliph. This is the doctrine held by ISIS. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "The *Khawārij* are the dogs of hellfire" (Ibn Mājah, 1:173). People get attracted to this doctrine due to the hyper-religiosity of its followers. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said, "There will emerge from this *Ummah* people whose prayer makes your prayer look pitiful. They will read the Qur'ān (constantly) but it will not go beyond their throats. They will exit Islam as an arrow exits an animal" (Muslim, 12:2455). The lesser the religiosity in society, the greater the allure of the *Khawārij*. It is vital for NGOs to be religiously-orientated; thus, not allowing the *Khawārij* to monopolise religion. But NGOs face an uphill struggle, especially when society reduces religiosity to *Duit Raya*.

There are many more challenges NGOs face. But the cultural challenges mentioned above prove a point: the impediments to peace-building are more complex than usually assumed. Any cursory glance at

the literature of terrorism studies will show the inadequacy of mainstream counter-terrorism strategies (Kundnani, 2015). A person who does not know how computers work will usually damage a computer more in his attempts to fix it. This is truer if parts of the computer were suicidal. Am I stretching the computer analogy too far? Are there such things as "cultural viruses" that cripple computers? I am no computer expert myself, but I can testify that when I surf the internet, I sometimes get redirected to Russian modelling sites.

Conclusion

The *Harimau Belang* is the symbol of Malaysia. Proton took the tiger's head as its logo, as did Maybank. The roar of the tiger, it is said, resounds across Malaysia from the jungle rivers to the city roads. The Malayan tiger is an endangered species and it is rare to see in the wild. Yet even without seeing it I know why it symbolises bravery and royalty. Malay folktales, surprisingly, do not depict the tiger as the victor; rather, the tiger is defeated by the *Sang Kancil*. The deer mouse, using its intelligence, outwits the tiger. The Malay folktales depict wisdom defeating strength. There is a lesson in this for countering terrorism. Terrorists thrive on violence inflicted on them. "The blood of martyrs," Tertullian said, "is the seed of the Church." This is the Terrorist's motto down the ages, with slight word variations for different cultures, of course. Strength is not the answer to terrorism; wisdom is.

In the land of the Malayan tiger, Malayan NGOs counter terrorism via several non-violent means. The NGOs do not use Islam as a piñata to be bashed senselessly whenever terrorists strike. Instead of allowing terrorists to take over Islam, the NGOs show that terrorists betray Islam. The opposite of radical Islam is not a RAND Islam. It is not, to be clear, an Islam pre-manufactured in a Western think-tank, and then imported into an Eastern environment. The opposite of radical Islam is an Islam that flourishes from the very earth that would-be terrorists walk. Some may see this as a contradiction, others as a paradox. It is neither. It is a valid option that has been used successfully.

The Wall Street Collapse of '08 showed the fragility of capitalism and the flimsiness of modernity. Apart from market fundamentalists, no one is willing to say that capitalism and modernism are untainted blessings. One of the taints of this blessing is the violence that it creates. This doesn't mean that communism and traditionalism are the only

alternatives. The development of Sufism by Malay intellectuals, and the usage of this development by Malay NGOs, has helped stifle the violence caused by the "Hôtel Abyss".

We do not need palmistry to know that terrorists will strike soon. Desperate times call for desperate measures, but not in the neo-con sense of the phrase. Instead of recycling Cold War theories, experts should dare to think differently. The very assumptions they work with must be analysed. If not, we can expect tomorrow to be like yesterday, and today to be like a year before. Let this trend continue and terrorism will be boring. What horror!

Endnotes

1. This is not to ignore the less savoury borrowings that occurred in Malaysia. It is a fact, however, that on the whole Malaysia has rejected, or at least severely diluted, extremist ideas that originated in the Middle East.

2 . For examples of this contradiction, see: Tahir (2017), Aslan (2011), Qamar ul-Huda (2010), and Zawati (2001).

3. Hitler is an evil being of gargantuan proportions; yet, strictly speaking, he is not a diabolic being. Even he had reasons for committing the Holocaust.

4. For the hadith on the greater jihad, see Al-Baghdadi, 1997, vol. 13, p. 498.

5. Jan Stark has labelled ABIM as "Wahhabi" (2005, p. 310), a charge which is indeed mystifying.

6. This "bridging" is also found in Islam Hadhari. See Al-Idrus (2009).

7. Indonesia is an example. See Muhammad Kamal Hassan (1982) and (2010).

8. For more on "Capitalist Realism" see Mark Fisher (2009).

9. Mazarr's article contains dubious assertions. For example, he asserts that alienation is due to traditionalists daunted by the new choices offered to them (p. 45). He is not aware that the 'broadening of human choice' is relative to social class.

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