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Editor's Note

Intellectual Discourse, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2020) is being published at a time when the world is facing an extraordinary challenge to humanity posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 9, 2020, the people infected with COVID-19 numbered 7,211,300 world-wide with nearly 409,009 people dead. However, about 3,550,922 people have recovered from COVID-19 world-wide. The COVID-19 pandemic has turned the world upside down by severely damaging the world economy and changing the way we live our lives, perhaps forever. Despite the difficulties, governments and scientists around the world are racing against the clock to come up with a vaccine against COVID-19. The current situation has created an atmosphere of immense mental pressure on all of us. I would like to thank the contributors to this volume who, despite the enormous difficulties they faced, have been successful in submitting their papers. Let us all seek Allah (SWT)'s blessings in the eradication of COVID-19.

This volume of *Intellectual Discourse* has a total of fourteen research articles and three book reviews. The first paper entitled “Pathways of Becoming Political Party Activists: The Experience of Malay-Muslim Grassroots Party Activists,” is contributed by Wan Rohila Ganti Bt. Wan Abdul Ghapar, and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. This study reflects a continued interest among scholars to study the nature of politics in Malaysia. The authors analyse the recent electoral successes of *Parti Islam seMalaysia* (PAS) and *Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu* (UMNO) in Terengganu in terms of the commitment of PAS and UMNO party members at the grassroots level.

The second article (“Mediation and Interreligious Discourse: Prospects and Challenges in Resolving Interreligious Skirmishes in Malaysia) is by Haslina Ibrahim and Ainul Jaria bt. Maidin. They analyse and promote mediation as a mechanism to deal with inter-religious disputes in Malaysia. They argue that inter-religious mediation is a positive mechanism of peacebuilding in a society. The article analyses the meaning of the concept of inter-religious mediation and provides

its historical background. The paper also examines the structure of mediation.

The next article (“Examining the Role of ‘Ulama in the Islamization Process of the Malay World”) is by Mohd Noh Abdul Jalil, and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor. The authors of this article analyses the roles of ‘ulamā’ in their active propagation of the message of Islam in the Malay world in the 17th century. The authors identify and discuss the following three significant roles of the ‘ulamā’ at that time: propagating knowledge to the local people, religious advisors to the rulers and engaging with the non-Muslims.

In the fourth article (“Role of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in Promoting Human Values in the Strife-Torn World”) the author Israr Ahmad Khan decries the absence of a proper role for religion in today's strife-torn world. He is of the opinion that had religions played their proper roles, there would not have been as much bloodshed as we are currently witnessing.

Najihah Akeb-urai, Nor Ba’ Yah Abdul Kadir, and Rohany Nasir, in the fifth paper (“Mathematics Anxiety and Performance among College Students: Effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization Treatment”), deals with the fear of Mathematics among college students in Malaysia. This study analyses the effectiveness of ‘systematic desensitization treatment’ on mathematics anxiety and performance among year one college students. The research discovers that ‘systematic desensitization treatment’ has significant positive effects on students’ mathematics anxieties and performance.

The sixth article (“Faith and Practice: Islamic Perspectives on Robert Browning”) by Rehnuma Bint Anis, and Md. Mahmudul Hasan assess Robert Browning’s notion of faith and its practice from Islamic perspectives. The study explores where the poet’s ideas converge with those of Islam and where they diverge.

The seventh article (“Sharī’ah Criminal Law Enforcement in Hisbah Framework: Practice In Malaysia”) is written by Alias Azhar, Muhammad Hafiz Badarulzaman, Fidlizan Muhammad, and

Siti Zamarina Mat Zaib. This study is based on the concept of Hisbah in Sharī’ah Law. They strongly argue that Hisbah needs to be institutionalised in a realistic and systematic manner.

In the next article (“Imperialism, Colonialism and their Contribution to the Formation of Malay and Chinese Ethnicity: An Historical Analysis”), Khauthar Ismail’s main aim is to provide a sociological review of the long-term effects of imperialism and colonialism on the formation and development of the two principal ethnic groups— Malays and Chinese – in Malaysia through selected major phases in Malaysia’s history.

The ninth article (“Removal of Despotic Political Regime: The Abū Dharr’s Legacy and Its Legitimacy”) is by Mohd. Shah Jani, and Raudlotul Firdaus binti Fatah Yasin. The authors attempt to highlight the controversies regarding the legitimacy of popular resistance, or revolutionary movements, to bring down Muslim political regimes that are depicted as despotic, unjust and even un-Islamic.

The tenth paper (“Nigeria’s Foreign Policy Goals in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa”) is contributed by Sani Safiyanu, Roy Anthony Rogers, and Wan Sharina Ramlah Wan Ahmad Amin Jaffri. As the title of the paper suggests, the authors in this paper assess the foreign policy goals of Nigeria in the participation of peacekeeping operations in Africa.

The eleventh article (“Ecological Modernization: in Malaysia: A Review of Pakatan Harapan’s Manifesto Manifesto During the 14th General Election Within the Context of Ecological Modernization Framework”), is written by Noor Asyhikin Binti Abd Razak, and Nor Azlin Binti Tajuddin. In this study they take the perspective of Ecological Modernization to assess Malaysia’s development plan, and aim to understand whether the essence of Ecological Modernization was embedded in *Pakatan Harapan*’s political manifesto during the 14th general election.

In the next article (“Education for the Production and Re-production of Docile Bodies: The Problems of Civic Education in Thailand”) Siwasri Sripokangkul analyzed a body of civic education and history textbooks and argues that the contents of these subjects are designed to transform students into ‘docile’ bodies. They have become “objects” that are ordered and imposed on by the state ideology, which produces and re-produces them to be ultra-royalists and ultra-nationalists.

The thirteenth paper (“Revisiting Southeast Asian Civil Islam: Moderate Muslims and Indonesia’s Democracy Paradox) by M. Khusna Amal investigates the conditions that have decreased, rather than increased, the role of moderate Islamic organizations in Indonesia in fighting for a democratic agenda during the period from 1980-1990.

The fourteenth and final article in this issue of *Intellectual Discourse* is “Conceptualizing Islamic Ethics for Contemporary Muslim Societies”, written by Fethi B. Jomaa Ahmed. This paper explains the meaning of Islamic ethics as stated in the Qur’an and analyses the views of prominent scholars on Islamic ethics. It then proceeds to analyse the major contemporary problems in Muslim-majority countries and their ethical roots to emphasize the significance of Islamic ethics as a remedy.

Ishtiaq Hossain
Editor

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