

# Intellectual Discourse

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# *Intellectual Discourse*

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## ***Conference Reports***

### **The International Symposium on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Malaysia and Southeast Asia ( ICVE 2021)**

ICVE 2021 was a multi-disciplinary symposium that brought together scholars, researchers and practitioners from around the world to promote collaboration, present research findings and policy recommendations in the PCVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism) sector. The symposium focused on themes of VE (Violent Extremism) drivers and enablers, security and public safety, intervention, deradicalization and rehabilitation, narratives and counter-narratives, terrorism financing, women and family, and the history and politics of VE. Originally intended to be organized as ICVE 2020 in March of that year as a face to face symposium to enhance networking and collaboration, the symposium was instead postponed due to Malaysia's various MCOs (Movement Control Orders) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. ICVE 2021 was then reorganized as a virtual symposium spanning the period between January 12 and 27 with programmes conducted in 7 days as a challenge of the new normal.

ICVE 2021 was in fact the culmination of IIUM's (International Islamic University Malaysia) ongoing flagship project called 2LEAD4PEACE (Peacebuilding and Civilizational Development) and her collaborative research activities with START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism), University of Maryland (UMD), in the field of PCVE. In relation to this research collaboration, the research team has recently concluded a study on migration and VE in Sabah at the end of 2021. ICVE 2021 was co-organized by IIUM and START, UMD. In 2022, research, engagement and consultancy activities are planned throughout by the flagship, for example, the expected web portal launching for PCVE, co-developed with MPI (Malaysia Press Institute), USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) and SEARCCT (Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism); and finalizing the co-development of Malaysia's NAP (National Action

Plan) for PCVE as consultants for Malaysia's MOHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) and UiTM (Universiti Teknologi MARA).

The burgeoning scholarship on PCVE (Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism) today can perhaps be described as an industry in the context of the 20-year-old GWOT (Global War on Terror), changes since the post physical IS (Islamic State) or Digital *Dā'ish*, the rise of FRE (Far Right Extremism) and other forms of religious and ideological extremisms. Prior to the UN (United Nations) call for a Plan of Action for PCVE in 2016 to support national, regional and global efforts, there had been a significant lack of a quadruple helix stakeholder engagement model for collaborative initiatives and platforms to address the challenges of extremist discourse via national action plans on PCVE in Malaysia, the Southeast Asian region and the world at large means that there are potentially significant gaps of understanding the phenomenon. Since then, there have been a growing number of countries in the international community developing their national plan of action. In this region, Malaysia in 2021 has decided to follow the footsteps of Indonesia and the Phillipines in developing our own plan i.e. NAPPCVE (National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism). The plan is expected to be ready for the 2022-2025 period of collaborative implementation that emphasizes on desecuritization and resilience components in the four thrusts of nationbuilding; prevention; intervention and deradicalization; and rehabilitation and reintegration. It was in line with the anticipated expansion and requirement for PCVE capacity building following the soon to be realized Malaysia's plan of action that this symposium was conceived. This symposium also marks as a launchpad for IIUM to contribute to future PCVE development in Malaysia.

The objectives of ICVE 2021 are:

- a. To showcase activities of collaboration between IIUM and START on Profiles of Individual Radicalization in Malaysia (PRIM), Geospatial CVE (GIS based study of terror threats) and ICONS CVE simulation through the student scholar visitation programme;
- b. To present PCVE modules and programmes for the purposes of networking, training, public engagement and capacity building that can be organized by IIUM; and

- c. To share with homeland security policy-makers, researchers and practitioners with novel instruments and the necessity of data-driven research findings on the drivers and consequences of VE.

The ICVE 2021 IIUM and START committee received over 30 paper submissions from which the blind reviews accepted 12 for presentation during the symposium. 6 of the 12 accepted papers were also selected as top papers of the symposium. The total number of participants in the symposium totalled to more than 250 global participants from the 5 sessions inclusive of paper presentations, student scholar sharing experience and a networking session to close out the programme.

The symposium was officiated by the Rector of IIUM, Emeritus Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, and US Ambassador Kamara Shirin Lakhdir followed by the collaborative project overview by Associate Professor Dr. Danial Mohd Yusof of IIUM and Dr. Amy Pate, Executive and Research Director of START, UMD. A special panel was organized on the efforts of Malaysia and the US in CVE comprising of Deputy Commissioner Normah Ishak who is Principal Assistant Director of the RMP (Royal Malaysian Police) Counter-Terrorism Division (E8), Barbara Paoletti, CVE Advisor, Bureau of Countering Violent Extremism, and Dr. Ahmad El-Muhammady as CVE practitioner and CT (Counter Terrorism) expert. The special panel fielded questions ranging from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for CVE in Southeast Asia; the future of collaborative CVE efforts between the US, Malaysia and also Southeast Asia during and post-COVID19; the challenges, best practices and recommendations in relation to national security and public safety; the relationship between CVE and CT; and specific areas of CVE that Malaysia needs to focus on, including regional and international cooperation and collaboration.

In the subsequent sessions, presentations, sharing, and networking were made. As mentioned earlier, 6 papers were selected as the top papers in the symposium from 5 countries i.e. Malaysia, Australia, Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh. They ranged, for example, from topics on the *Validity of Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) Strategies in South East Asia: ASEAN's Centrality on Regional Peace-building and Security*; *Mechanisms of Policy Implementation of Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) in Malaysia*; *The Vicious Utopia: Indonesian*

*Government Gender Specific Policy for Ex-ISIS Women Returnees; to Understanding Women's Agency in (Counter) Violent Extremism in Post- Conflict Poso (Sulawesi).*

As mentioned earlier, the symposium was in line with the anticipated expansion and requirement for PCVE capacity building following the soon to be launched Malaysia's plan of action for 2022-2025. Throughout 2022, IIUM's 2LEAD4PEACE flagship will also continue its PCVE activities and engagement with Malaysia youth and youth leaders, and another programme on Malaysian women and family role in peacebuilding.

Associate Professor Dr. Danial Mohd Yusof  
Chair of ICVE 2021



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