



**THE NATIONAL APPROACH TO
DE-RADICALISATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE
STUDY OF DAESH**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science)**

**Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia**

SEPTEMBER 2017

ABSTRACT

This study looks at the factors of radicalisation of Malaysian citizens who have been influenced by *Daesh's* propaganda and ideology. Apart from that, this study also examines the manifestation of radicalisation by the people who have been radicalised and joined *Daesh*. Another part of this study is about the way Malaysian government responds to the threat of radicalisation especially among its citizens, particularly when it comes to the radical threat posed by *Daesh* militant groups and its affiliates. Sources taken for this study are both the interviews and literatures, as well as open sources. The findings indicate that there are four main factors of radicalisation which are external factors, internal factors, ideological factors and personal factors. Apart from that, the manifestation of radicalization is also identified as cognitive manifestation and behavioural manifestation. Other than that, the measures taken by the Malaysian government in response to this issue are implemented within four scopes which are the legislative approach, rehabilitative approach, counter-violence programme and international cooperation.

ملخص البحث

تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تنظر إلى أسباب التطرف لدى بعض الماليزيين الذين تأثروا بدعاية داعش ومعتقداتهم. وكذلك تحاول أن تعرف مظاهر التطرف لدى الذين تأثروا بالتطرف وانضموا إلى داعش. تتناول هذه الدراسة ماذا فعلت المملكة الماليزية لأجل خطر التطرف لا سيما بين الماليزيين، وخطر التطرف الذي جاء من داعش ومن على شاكلته. وتعتمد هذه الدراسة على مقابلة بعض الأشخاص، والمعلومات المكتبية، والمصادر المفتوحة. تظهر هذه الدراسة عدة أسباب للتطرف؛ ولكن هذه الأسباب تتركز على أربعة أشياء، وهي: سبب خارجي، وسبب داخلي، وسبب اعتقادي، وسبب شخصي. وكذلك مظاهر التطرف قد تنقسم إلى مظهرين مظهر معرفي ومظهر شخصي. أما ما تفعله المملكة الماليزية لدفع خطر التطرف فقد يتركز في أربعة مناهج، وهي: المنهج التشريعي، ومنهج إعادة التأهيل، وبرنامج مكافحة العنف، والتعاون الدولي.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Political Science).

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This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, it is my utmost pleasure to dedicate this work to my dear parents and my family, who granted me the gift of their unwavering belief in my ability to accomplish this goal: thank you for your support and patience.

I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to those who provided their time, effort and support for this project. To the members of my dissertation committee, thank you for sticking with me.

Finally, a special thanks to Dr. Muhamad Fuzi Omar, Dr. Khairil Izamin Ahmad, Mr. Ahmad el-Muhammady, Mr. Abdullah Jalil and other significant individuals that contributed to this writing for their continuous support, encouragement and leadership, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMLAFTA	Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting Summit
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism
DII	<i>Darul Islam Indonesia</i>
EMD	Electronic Monitoring Device
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IKSIM	Institute of Islamic Strategic Research Malaysia
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JAKIM	Malaysian Islamic Development Department
JI	<i>Jemaah Islamiyyah</i>
KMK	<i>Kumpulan Mujahidin Kedah</i>
KMM	<i>Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia</i>
KPIP	<i>Kumpulan Perjuangan Islam Perak</i>
KUIS	Selangor International Islamic University College
MiDAS	Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security
NSC	National Security Council
NYPD	New York Police Department
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PAS	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
POCA	Prevention of Crime Act
POTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
RMP	Royal Malaysia Police
SEARCCT	Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism
SMATA	Special Measures in Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act
SOSMA	Security Offences (Special Measures) Act
SPM	Malaysia Certificate of Education
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since early 2016, the Southeast Asian region has been receiving an increasing attention from security experts because of the region's potential to become a beachhead or regional hub for the highly organized militant group, *Daesh*, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). The four ASEAN countries namely Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippine and Thailand have been expressing their concerns regarding the rising number of potential followers of *Daesh* in their country. However, of these four countries, major attention has been directed towards the two Muslim-majority countries which are Malaysia and Indonesia (Krupenia, 2016). This particular attention is given because these two countries are Muslim-majority states and it is argued that the support from the common people towards this militant group should be higher than the other two countries. When it comes to issues of militancy and terrorism, one cannot neglect the issue of radicalism that basically is the main cause for all these activities.

Malaysia has been experiencing radicalization for quite some time. It could be traced back to the 1980s when a number of Malaysians were involved in the armed struggle with the *Mujahedeen* (Muslim who are fighting in support of Islam) against the Soviet military in Afghanistan. Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, many of those Malaysians had returned home with their knowledge of armed fighting. Most importantly, many had already been infected with deviant Islamic ideology. The Royal Malaysian Police, assisted by several other institutions

and agencies, did manage to tackle them until the emergence of a new threat headed by *Daesh*.

The Malaysian police have detected a number of Malaysian citizens who had gone to Syria to fight with the ISIS forces since 2012. The number has been increasing since then and until March 2016, 175 Malaysian citizens have been arrested because of their involvement in *Daesh* activities. Apart from that, it has been estimated that 30 to 150 Malaysian citizens have travelled to Syria and Iraq to participate in the so-called *Jihadi* (this word has several meaning, however in this study it means the struggle in establishing the Islamic state) struggle and a number of them have returned and have played significant role in encouraging militant activity in the domestic realm (Samuel, 2016).

Fauzi (2016) cites a study conducted by Pew Research Center, which states that there is growing concern or appeal of extremism in Malaysia, especially by the Islamists. It is reported that only 8% of Malaysian Muslims express their worry about the existence of Muslim extremist groups while 27% of Malaysian Muslims agree that suicide bombing is acceptable and justifiable in Islam. These two statistics are worrying. Apart from that, the same research shows that 11% of Malaysian Muslims have favourable view towards the *Daesh*. In other words, they agree with the *Daesh* and their activities (Fauzi, 2016).

Malaysian citizens who travel to Syria and Iraq with the intention of joining *Jihadi* activities of the *Daesh* must have their own individual reasons for doing so. Therefore, this study tries to address the issue by looking at the manifestations of the radicalization phenomenon in Malaysia, and the factors leading to the involvement of Malaysians in the terrorist activities of *Daesh*. The government of Malaysia has responded to deal with this threat to its security. Therefore, this study also examines

the policies and actions taken by the Malaysian government to curb the radicalization of the Malaysian Muslims and the activities of *Daesh* in the country.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to examine the issues related to radicalism among Malaysian Muslims. It focuses on the development of radical thoughts and the reasons for the people to get involved in *Daesh* terrorist group. Apart from that, this study also aimed to analyse the actions taken by the Malaysian government to counter the extremist threat posed by *Daesh* in Malaysia. Not much research has been conducted pertaining to issues concerning radicalization in Malaysia, especially when it comes to *Daesh*. Apart from that, there are hardly any detailed studies examining the factors leading Malaysian Muslims to fight with the *Daesh*. Specific studies analysing the actions taken by the Malaysia's government in countering the activities of *Daesh* in Malaysia are also few in numbers. Therefore, this research aimed to fill up an existing gap in research on the radicalization of Muslims in Malaysia and also on the activities of *Daesh* in Malaysia.

In light of the above, this research was expected to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that contribute to the radicalization of Muslims that joined *Daesh* in Malaysia?
2. How do the radicals manifest their thoughts?
3. What are the measures taken by Malaysian government in order to deal with this issue?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has three objectives, which are:

1. To identify and investigate the contributing factors to radicalization.
2. To examine the manifestations of the process of radicalization among Muslim Malaysians leading to their participation in *Daesh* activities.
3. To analyse the response of the Malaysian government to tackle the growing threat of *Daesh* to the security of the state.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

As mentioned in the previous section, statistics regarding the consciousness towards *Daesh* indicate that it is not easy for Malaysians to identify the individuals that have been influenced by radical ideologies. Therefore, this study has attempted to provide explanation on the characteristics of individuals who are influenced by *Daesh* ideology through a discussion on the manifestation of radicalization. Hopefully this would help identify such radical persons and thus, makes it easier to deal with them. It has also been reported that some of the people influenced by the ideology of *Daesh* are police personnel (Nazlina, 2016). This shows that the process of identifying the ideology among police officers is still questionable. Therefore, through this study, the police as a unit will have a clear idea in clarifying the ideology and its characteristics so that none of its officers will be involved with *Daesh* in the future.

By understanding the factors of radicalization and its manifestation, the government will be able to be one step ahead in dealing with the group's threat since the process of identification could be done in a more straightforward manner. De-radicalization process would also be easier once the factors of radicalization have been clearly identified, and this could lead to more detailed studies in widening the

knowledge. By knowing the steps and methods taken by the government, one could be aware about new acts and laws, thus contribute in improving them. People could also cooperate with the authorities in dealing with this issue.

Previous studies about *Daesh* in Malaysia are still few in number as the issue is still new and ongoing. Therefore, there are gaps that could be filled. This study is an attempt to add more knowledge about the subject matter and provide new insights for future researchers to study this topic.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

The *Daesh* phenomenon and radical issues are still relatively new, especially in the case of Malaysia. However, a small number of studies have been carried out on this particular issue. Some of these will be reviewed under the three following headings: i) studies on *Daesh* in Malaysia, ii) studies on radicalization and iii) studies on Malaysia's response to tackle *Daesh* activities in Malaysia. Some of the studies, especially when it comes to the issue of *Daesh* in Malaysia, contain information related to response from the Malaysia's government in dealing with this issue. Therefore, one study might be presented under more than one heading.

1.5.1 *Daesh* in Malaysia

Iryna Krupenia (2016) carried out a study focusing on various dimensions and scope of the group's penetration into Southeast Asia. It examines the effectiveness of some of the main policies in Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia to deal with the activities of *Daesh*. The study estimates that the number of Malaysians travelling to Syria and Iraq with the intention to join *Jihadi* groups would be between 30 and 150.

Krupenia regards Malaysia as the point of *Daesh's* support base and influence in Southeast Asia (Krupenia, 2016, p. 66).

Krupenia (2016) notes that the first Malaysian linked to *Daesh*, Ahmad Tarmini died as a suicide bomber in May 2014. In Malaysia, militancy is active in the states of Kedah, Perak, and the city of Kuala Lumpur. It is believed that the *Daesh* network has taken roots in Kuala Lumpur and the members are technically under the alumni of Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM). The same study also discusses *Daesh's* plans in Malaysia, including the bombing of several key places as well as the plan to kidnap Prime Minister Mohd. Najib bin Tun Razak.

Apart from a study done by Krupenia, there is also another significant study related to the development of radical thoughts in Malaysia and its relation to the *Daesh* terrorist group. Ahmad Fauzi (2016) examines the emergence of the so-called *salafi* (this word refers to the first three generation of Muslim after the time of the Prophet, however nowadays it is often defined as an ideology that claiming to advocate a return to the early time of Islamic understanding of the Quran and the Sunnah) ideology in Malaysia. Some of the individuals who are attracted to this ideology are actively involved in the current political realm in Malaysia. It also explores the effects of *salafization* on the Malaysian educational syllabus and other aspects. Interestingly this study manages to link the relation between one of the prominent *salafi* figures in Malaysia with the current mufti of *Daesh*, namely Turki al Binali (Fauzi, 2016, p. 20).

Another significant work done by Ahmad Fauzi (2016) has emphasized the opinions of Joseph Liow and James Chin that Islam in Malaysia has been politicized by Malaysian politicians and the outcome is that Muslims in Malaysia have accepted Islamic extremists into mainstream public discourse on Islam. In other words, Islam in

Malaysia has been politicized in such a way that it has allowed the acceptance by Muslims of radical ideas. For example, the author maintains that the idea of “Ketuanan Melayu” or “Malay Supremacy” is one of the factors of radicalization among Malaysian Muslims and this has influenced and provided support in justifying the ideology and actions of the *Daesh* group in Malaysia (Fauzi, 2016, p. 2).

In a monograph, the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) identifies the origin, or the background of *Daesh* members in Malaysia. It traces them back to the alumni of the Afghan conflict consisting of several Malaysian fighters who continued to spread the radical ideology after they had returned to Malaysia. Another significant point mentioned by this publication is related to the development of the ideology of “*Salafi Jihadiyyah*” (an ideology that claims to advocate a return to the actual teachings of the Prophet and often manifest their ideas through radical manners). The same study also identifies seven groups, which were affiliated with *Daesh* in Malaysia between 2013 and 2015 (Samuel, 2016).

1.5.2 Issues in Radicalism

There are numerous studies dealing with the definition of “radical”, its characteristics, factors and even frameworks that are used in order to understand each and every case of radicalization. Therefore, here a number of studies on radicalization of Malaysian Muslims will be reviewed.

A number of studies have been published on radicalism and radicalization. For example, Margarita Bizina and David H. Gray (2014) point out that the old stereotype -- the perception that members of terrorist groups are merely foreigners from disadvantaged and marginalized societies -- is now slowly fading as there is significant increase in the number of fighters or members from the United States,

Britain and Canada. Apart from that they also emphasize that *Salafi* ideology is the main cause of radicalism among the Muslims. The study mentions that there are significant differences between the integration concepts practised by Britain and France, which lead to different outcome in the existence of radicals from among the immigrants in both countries. As a continuation from the previous point, they also claim that the attitude of Europeans who do not really allow outsiders to be in their societal circles also contributes to radicalization especially among the youth. Apart from factors of radicalization mentioned earlier, they also explain the radicalization process that occurs in the aforementioned countries. It started with teenagers looking for their identities, followed by the presence of charismatic persons who influence these teenagers and plant radical thoughts in their minds. Lack of knowledge is also another reason for teenagers to be easily influenced by the *Salafi* ideology (Bizina, & Gray, 2014).

In another study, Dirk Tomsa (2016) discusses the people who have returned to their homelands from overseas after their active participation in *Jihadi* groups. Some of them leave behind their radical days and radical ideology and are, in fact, willing to re-integrate with the society and live peacefully. Tomsa suggests that police should use these people as targets in the de-radicalization programme since they are willing to share their personal experiences and opinions with others (Tomsa, 2016, p. 5).

Julia Berczyk (2015) assesses the radicalization of people involved in *Jihadi* groups in Germany. She points out different reasons for people to get involved in *Jihadi* activities. She is of the opinion that any one in Germany is prone to radical thoughts. Berczyk identifies the following three categories of Jihadist returnees:

endangerer, the traumatized and the disillusioned. She clearly states that only the first category, i.e., the endangerer, has the potential to recruit others (Berczyk, 2015, p. 14).

Edit Schallaffer and Ulrich Berczyk (2015) explore the role of the mother in combating terror. They believe that the mother is a key factor in countering violent extremism, and mothers have the capacity to pre-empt and respond to radical influences. A study conducted by Women without Borders/Sisters against Violent Extremism (SAVE) examines the mothers' perception of the threat of violent extremism and their understanding of their potential role in both the radicalization as well as de-radicalization processes (Schallaffer, Edit; Kropiunigg & Ulrich, 2015). The roles of family members are crucial for the improvement of de-radicalization process and Malaysian government has implemented similar approach, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Another study focuses on women and their relations with radicalism. Anita Peresin (2015) points out that one of the reasons for women to join the *Daesh* is that they see a chance to take part in the state-building process and creation of a new society that is different from the society that they describe as a Western society, which they believe to be morally corrupted and decadent which has no respect for women. They expect to contribute in the creation of a new, ideologically pure state, where the *shariah* (Islamic legal law) law is applied and they could live there honourably, apart from their own personal and political reasons for them to get involved (Peresin, 2015, p. 32).

Aslam, Othman and Rosili (2016) identify a four-stage process of radicalization, taken from the findings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the four levels of radicalization by Silber and Bhatt. According to the FBI the following is the four-stage process of radicalization: pre-radicalization, self-

identification, indoctrination and finally, action. While the four level of radicalization by Silber and Bhatt are the pre-radicalization phase, self-identification phase, indoctrination phase and finally, phase of “*Jihadization*” (Silber, 2007). These two inputs are very beneficial in developing a framework when it comes to the specific study of radicalization in different countries, organizations and the like (Mohammad Aslam, Othman, & Rosili, 2016).

Thomas Koruth Samuel (2012) of SEARCCT discusses several issues related to the radicalization of the youth such as the factors that lead them towards radical thought, levels or stages of radicalism faced by the youth, main and counter narratives, alternative to counter the issue and several other significant inputs as the younger generation of a society are the obvious targets in the radicalization agenda (Samuel, 2012).

Ahmad Fauzi (2016) assesses the role of *Salafism* in radicalization of Malaysian youths and also makes a distinction between *Salafism* and *Wahhabism* (a movement started by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab that is closely related to the *Salafism* in thoughts and practices). He is of the opinion that the biggest Islamic opposition party in Malaysia, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) broadly adheres to a *Salafi* orientation that is basically formed through the *usrah*-based (study circle) indoctrination. This is more powerful and more frequent in terms of its expansion compared to the formal religious lessons. This ideology or orientation has led to the essentialized Islam called Islamism. As a result, radical ideas were manifested through the events that happened in the 1980s such as the anti-government *takfiri* (accusing other Muslim as non-believer) climate, the phenomenon caused by “Amanat Hadi” that had led to the tragedy of Memali and so on (Fauzi, 2016).

Badlihisam Nasir (2011) provides a historical background of the radical phenomenon in Malaysia. He argues that Islamic radicalism nowadays is strongly related to the radical thought of Ibnu Taymiyyah and Sayyid Qutb. He also cites Abdul Rahman Abdullah who opines that apart from radical Islamism brought by the two individuals, the traditionalists have also extended the radical thought among the Malays in Malaysia. Among the traditional Malay *ulama*, or scholars that are responsible for these thoughts are the following: Sheikh Daud Fathani, whose ideas are to be found in *Kifayatul Mubtadi*; Haji Ahmad bin Haji Abdul Rauf, whose traditional interpretations are contained in *Safinatul Awwam* and others (Nasir, 2011). However, it could be argued from Abdul Rahman's statement that the radical aspects mentioned by these traditionalists only cover the discussion on faith and the invalidators of Islam. The matter on the subject of *riddah*, or the invalidator of one's faith has been discussed since the time of the real *salaf*, i.e. those who lived during the first three centuries of *hijrah*. Most of these traditional scholars were following the stream of *Asharites* and *Maturidites* and until now, we could see that the followers of these two schools have never been involved in any act of terrorism. Therefore, it could be further argued whether the traditionalists, especially within the Malaysian context, have ever been involved in the radical thoughts or not.

Badlihisam (2011) further argues that most of the radical cases involving Muslims in Malaysia are actually the outcome of the Islamist thought. He discusses the issue of *takfir* by PAS between the 1950s and the 1980s. In 1970, the radical terms such as "*Taghut*", or "*Jahiliyyah*" began to be used mainly because of the influence of Syed Qutb's writings. Another important point brought up by Badlihisam is the interpretations of Qur'anic verses, which often lead to radical thought. Some of the often used Qur'anic verses that are often misinterpreted by these radicals are from