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AETIOLOGIES OF TERRORISM IN AFRICA: THE BOKO HARAM EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA

Mustapha Mohamed and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid

ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a global phenomenon today. It cuts across all continents, ethnic groups and religions with deleterious consequences on the lives of the people and their properties. No one country is immune to the attacks and effects of terrorism. Nigeria as a nation-state has had its fair share of terrorist uprisings since its independence in 1960. These include the Maitatsine crisis of the 1980s in the north, the Yoruba-driven Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) in the southwest region in the 1990s, and as we move into the new millennium, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in the deep south, the Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeast, and most infamously the Boko Haram insurgency in the north. Depressing news of Boko Haram's evil deeds in Nigeria has become a daily occurrence since the terrorist group's emergence in the public glare in 2009. Its bombings, gunfire and kidnappings have devastated significant segments of Nigerian society, leaving behind huge ruinations of lives and properties. This chapter examines the drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency, which include high poverty rates, unemployment and bad governance. It also looks at the detrimental consequences of Boko Haram's activities in north-eastern Nigeria. This study recommends that employment opportunities be created for the youths and graduates across all Nigerian states. Construction and industrial projects should be labour intensive rather than capital intensive, as this will assist in mopping from the streets the roving unemployed youths. In addition, the military armoury should be continually beefed up with sophisticated weapons to confront the Boko Haram fighters.

Keywords:

terrorism, Islamism, insecurity, Boko Haram, Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a global phenomenon. Terrorist-driven wars, to which no nation state is immune, have inflicted incalculable pains on human populations and wrecked communities. Terrorism cuts across region, religion and races. Since time immemorial, man has been facing threats to social harmony and political stability emanating from radical groups whose extremist members react against adversarial opinions by launching physical attacks against the state or enemies from opposing camps. Terrorism, in contrast with other more sporadic types of political violence, is pre-meditated and organised. While political motivations similarly lie behind both kinds of appropriation of unlawful violence, terrorism intentionally aims to induce fear among targeted peoples towards accomplishing specific objectives, which can be political, religious or ideological (Ahmad Nazzan, 2018). Derived from the Latin word Terrere meaning 'to terrify,' the goal of terrorism is to coerce all opposing forces to espouse a group or sect's selfish agenda by means of intimidations and issuance of threats.

Terrorism is one fluid concept that does not enjoy a universally accepted definition from the perspectives of scholars, policy makers, politicians, public analysts and security experts. The definition depends on the standpoint of the party and personalities saddled with the assignment of defining the concept, and are therefore a matter of endless debates (Schmid, 2005). Differentiating terrorism from other acts of violence has never been easy either, for standards of such categorisation might differ from one relevant stakeholder to another. Researchers contend between positions articulating universally acceptable standards for recognising acts of terrorism, and standpoints which argue that such standards should be dependent on particular circumstances, locations, motivations, and laws of the land. In between the two opposing camps, a third approach argues that acts of terrorism become evident once we see, think and identify them as such (Weiss, 2002).

Although a unique definition of terrorism is difficult to come by, there is broad agreement on the grave threat that terrorism poses to global peace and security, so much so that many support the proscription of terrorism as an international crime under the statutes of the International Court of Justice (Lawless, 2007). Understanding terrorism is incomplete without due consideration for the harmful consequences it entails on the victims and societies concerned. One needs to comprehend the stimuli leading terrorists to heartlessly inflict pain on others and cause colossal damage and loss to the people and the environment. In truly taking cognisance of terrorism as a modern phenomenon, it is useful to gradually move from acknowledging its manifest implications to dissecting it in order to uncover latent motivations for perpetrating the heinously violent acts (Newman, 2006).

Lodge (1988) views terrorism as an unlawful way of daring to effect or seize the structure of governance whilst adopting indiscriminate violence as the means towards effecting political change. Lodge believes that all acts of terrorism are aimed at effecting a political change. Cook (1998) understands terrorism as aiming to achieve high-level political transition by creating an atmosphere of panic through bombardments, killings, abductions and seizure of aircrafts. Inducing a general state of fear is central to such a strategy. The centrality of political one-upmanship and changeover in driving terrorist brutalities is similarly emphasised by Lacqueur (1999), Roberts (2015) and Freilich, Chermak and Simone Jr (2009).

Many radical groups around the world eventually adopted violent extremism as their modus operandi, hence effectively turning themselves into terrorist organisations. Examples abound in Europe; there exist the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the United Kingdom, the Red Brigade in Italy, the Eustakadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) of Spain, and the Chechen separatists in Russia. On the American continent, we encounter the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) in Canada, the Movimieto de Liberation Nacional-Tupamaros (MLN-T) in Uruguay, the Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia (FARC) in

Colombia, and the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru. In Asia, there exist the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Al-Fattah in Palestine, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) aka Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) aka Daesh in Syria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Houthi rebels and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, and Communist Party (Maoist) or Naxals in India. In Africa, Al Shabbab in Somalia, Janjaweed of Darfur and Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) in Sudan; Africans are confronted with the likes of Al Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM) in Niger, Mali and Algeria; the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, the M23 revolutionary army Rebel in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Boko Haram in Nigeria (Crouch, 2010).

Deeming terrorists as essentially criminals, the United States of America (USA)'s Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) distinguishes domestic and international terrorism, and divides terrorist-related activities between terrorist incidents and terrorist preventions (FBI, 2005). Such classifications are undoubtedly arbitrary. Hence, while the USA does not see Israeli brutalities against Palestinian rebels as state-sponsored terrorism, it accuses Hezbollah in Lebanon and its Iranian backers of adopting terrorist methods of accomplishing their goals.

In Nigeria's experience, the post-2009 emergence of Boko Haram presents a new challenge in its deliberate tactic of causing panic by way of coordinated attacks to undermine the legitimacy of elected governments. In examining the terrorist contagion in Africa generally and Boko Haram in Nigeria specifically, it may be useful to locate our arguments within the context of the *Domino Theory* in foreign policy.

THEORETICAL ANCHORAGE

This chapter is anchored in the Domino Theory as propounded by former USA President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954. The theory was thought to be a way of containing the spread of communism during the cold war era, when smaller Third World nations were becoming vulnerable to military, economic, political and psychological pressures arising from the fall of their neighbours

to the communist bloc (Darity Jr, 2008). Championed by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), communism was viewed a contagious force that rapidly attracted the downtrodden masses and Western left-wing intellectuals through utopian promises of egalitarianism, thus highlighting the need for it to be curtailed (Bell & Gilbert, 2001). The Domino theory was a USA-orchestrated reaction to the challenge that the communist bloc posed to Western hegemony of the post-Second World War international order.

The downfall of communism in the early 1990s coincided with the rise of Islamism as a political ideology among Islamicate nations of the world. While mainstream Islamists fight for their Islamist ideals, namely the Islamic state and the installation of *sharia* (Islamic law) as the basis of legal and constitutional order covering all domains of the law, via political parties and civil society organisations, extremists resort to militant action in the belief that succumbing to existing political 'rules of the game' is ineffectual in the long term. The militant Islamists go on to form terrorist groups to take over power by force, prodded by the belief that Muslim governments have gone down the path of infidelity by their refusal to implement the sharia as the law of their lands. In holding on to their power, obtained democratically via periodic elections or by more autocratic methods, Muslim rulers and leaders have allegedly enthroned themselves as *taghut* or false idols, which is theologically deviant since it entails the usurpation of God's rights by humans, this amounting to shirk (polytheism) – an unpardonable sin in Islam. Within economically tumultuous conditions of post-Second World War post-colonial societies and rising yet unmet expectations of development, many Muslim youth fell for the politically extremist ideologies. Terrorist movements quickly gained following among the unemployed masses, many of whom had also been beneficiaries of modern scientific education (Gambetta & Hertog, 2016). Equipped with technical skills, their impact on the landscape of global terrorism has been trailblazing, engineering a paradigm shift from the ages of old terrorism to one of new terrorism in which attacks are large-scale, indiscriminate and powered by high technology. Under this new terrorism regime, terrorism possesses the tendency

to spread quickly across national boundaries as it exponentially increases its strength in terms of weaponry, membership and areas of influence (Schaffer, 2010).

The failure in containing the likes of Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Al-Shabab, Janjaweed, Taliban and other counterparts gave rise to Nigeria's dreaded Boko Haram in the northeastern region. In fact, the Boko Haram leaders originally saw themselves as an extension or branch of the Afghanistan Talibans (Schulze, 2009), which explains their imitating the latter's technique of wreaking violence on the general population in order to arouse fear. By this reasoning, it could be averred that the success of the 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9-11) attacks on USA targets inadvertently spread Islamist terrorism by loosening the organisational bond between Al-Qaeda as its major perpetrator and its world-wide associates (Ahmad Fauzi, 2017). In a comparable manner to communism during the Cold War era, Islamist terrorism spread like wild fire in Africa. This diffusion had in turn a ripple effect as neighbouring states struggled to contain the wave, giving rise to grassroots militancy among populations who themselves are threatened by home-grown terrorists among their fellow countrymen buoyed by visions of global Islamism as we find in Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TERRORISM IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Whilst the history of terrorism dates back to the Jewish Zealot rebel movement as far back as 1st century, modern terrorism traces its origins to the French revolution (Davies, 1965). Identified mainly with radical Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre's (1758-1794) 'Reign of Terror,' the term 'terrorists' gained currency at the hands of the revolutionary Jacobins (Goucher et al., 1998). Silencing their perceived antagonists by inflicting panic into their psyche and minds became the overriding aim of the terrorists. The American founding fathers John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, all of whom were contemporaries of the French Revolution, had all used the term 'terrorism' in

the context of violence committed by the state. Only later in the early twentieth century did 'terrorists' take on the meaning of anti-state elements perpetrating violence to further their political aims (Merriam-Webster n.d.).

Whether in desperation or as a strategic method of warfare, terrorists resorted to acts of terrorism as a recourse for afflicted peoples to solve political, social, economic and ethnic problems arising from unjust policies and measures done unto them. Terrorists often style themselves as 'freedom fighters' struggling to exact concessions and demands from subjugating powers. Yet, in view of the history of colonialism in Africa, it was the colonial administrators that began the wave of terror against African populations by systematically enslaving them in large numbers (Cilliers, 2003). In their selfish mercantilist drive, the colonialists aligned with local rulers in establish centres for the lucrative slave trade. It was by inflicting doses of terror on vanquished societies, carried out by force of arms that the colonialists sought to achieve the imperial goals of economic subjugation and religious proselytisation. Terrorism was part and parcel of the brutal colonising process, ensuring that native peoples kowtowed to the white colonialists (Ogundiya & Amzat, 2008).

In some African countries, local terrorist movements arose out of the need to expel colonial forces that were themselves terrorising the colonised peoples. Africa has witnessed a lot of terrorist attacks and it is still facing threats from domestic and international terrorists. In the early post-colonial days, many African governments imitated their colonial predecessors in employing violence to achieve their desired objectives. Resistance movements that emerged in opposition to sitting governments were unilaterally labelled as 'terrorist,' such were the case for example with Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress (ANC). Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, Kenya and Mali are among African countries that are vulnerable to terrorist activities arising from many symptoms of failed states present there. Nationalist groups' later metamorphosised into terrorist groups in reaction to the corruption, bad governance, mismanagement of scarce resources and abuse of offices

by political leaders (Campbell, 2010). Ironically, despite being categorised as terrorist organisations by both their national government and the international community, these para-military groups absolve themselves of the crimes of terrorism by alluding to the larger aims they claim to be fighting for, and blame the governments instead for sowing the terrorist culture in violently suppressing uprisings (Ogundiya & Amzat, 2008). Just like Mandela and the ANC's shift of fortunes, the terrorist outfits believe that they too will be ultimately vindicated.

THE NIGERIAN SCENARIO

As the country boasting the largest population in Africa, Nigeria comprises extremely diverse ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Ebira, Ijaw and Igala, with the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani making up the majority ethno-religious group that is dominant in the northeastern part of the country. Carrying the historical baggage of inter-ethnic and sectarian conflicts, Nigerian history is not uncommonly associated with periodic terrorist-like activities as the outgrowth of long-drawn ethno-religious crises, communal clashes and political violence that pit warring groups between one another and also between them and the state security apparatus. Terrorism in Nigeria has been a reflection of bitter socio-political, psychological, economic and cultural cleavages that divide society along ethnic, religious, sectarian and tribal lines (Crenshaw, 1981; Duru & Ogbonnaya, 2012; Ogundiya & Amzat, 2008). Some analysts identify discrepancies in distribution of socio-economic resources between majority and minority groups within the context of a centralised state structure as being at the heart of terrorist activism in the country (Crenshaw, 1981; Ogundiya & Amzat, 2008).

Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram as a national threat, Nigerian experiences of terrorism were typically dominated by clashes between diametrically opposite groups that exhibited stark differences in cultural backgrounds, creedal inclinations and natural resources endowed in the geographical regions they respectively controlled. The acts of terror

in the Niger Delta of the South-South region, for example petroleum pipeline vandalism and the abduction of expatriates, have deliberately aimed to pressure the government of Nigeria into addressing allegedly centre-orchestrated regional neglect and marginalisation. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in the deep south all clamour for more equitable control and distribution of oil resources. The south-western-based Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) and the south-eastern-based Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) fight for the rightful places of the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups respectively in national leadership. The OPC, formed by Chief Frederick Fasheun in 1995, split in 1999 when a militant wing led by Gani Adams sought to champion the Yoruba cause through violence, unleashed terror across the south-western states (Philips, 2010).

Boko Haram, by contrast, is built on an intra-Muslim religious cleavage between mainstream Muslims and xenophobic Muslims willing to resort to force to extirpate decadent Western influence in society and implement the sharia (Babatunde et al., 2014; Idowu, 2013). Nigeria's northern-based Muslims are highly factionalised into different doctrinal sects such as the Izalas, the Tijanniyyas and the Shiites. The Mohammed Marwa-led Maitatsine uprising of the 1980s, the Ibrahim el-Zakzaky-led Islamic Movement of Nigeria (Shi'ites) and the Mohammed Yusuf (1970-2009)- and later Abubakar Shekau (1974-2021)-led Boko Haram are some of the manifestations of Islamist discontent over the prevailing state of affairs in Nigeria. Random outbreaks of violence have taken place, prompting a large deployment of security apparatus personnel in troubled areas of the north, even if in many instances victims have complained that the government forces were not only slow but also embarrassingly outclassed and outnumbered by Boko Haram rebels (cf. Associated Press, 2016). So bad was the situation in February

2014 that former Borno state governor Kashim Shettima was reported to have conceded that given Boko Haram's better armed and better motivated fighters as compared with the government troops, 'it is absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram' (Aly Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

Nigeria's earliest experience of radical Islamism in the north predates her independence on 1st October 1960. The jihad campaign of 1804 led by Sheikh Uthman and Fodio (1754-1817) marked the first Islamist resistance against a constituted central authority when he fought both the British colonialists and the local monarchies. Dan Fodio's success and charisma accelerated and consolidated the hegemony of the Fulani ethnic group. He guided many military campaigns as the commander-in-chief of a centralised system of authority that was foundational to the emergent Sokoto caliphate. He unified the Hausa states under Fulani leadership, overseeing a caliphate that lasted until 1903 when it fell to British invasion. It was not until the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s, led by Mohammed Marwa aka Maitatsine, that we would encounter the next Islamist upsurge in Nigeria. The Yan Tatsine, as Maitatsine's followers were known, was decimated by a series of military operations spanning the period 1980-85 causing over four thousand deaths including that of Mohammed Marwa himself. Deriving inspiration from the memory of Uthman dan Fodio, Maitatsine was known to have been sternly opposed to Western education and other innovations – a sentiment that resonated among Nigeria's impoverished Muslim masses and which would later be echoed by Boko Haram, which literally conveys the meaning of non-Islamic especially Western education being haram or Islamically forbidden (Azumah, 2015).

BOKO HARAM AS A TERRORIST ORGANISATION

Terrorism strikes at the heart of the viability of nation-building in Nigeria by causing serious economic dislocation. People are kept in perpetual fear of realising their true economic potential, thus slowing down economic development and disrupting more equitable distribution of resources

across society. Protracted terrorist threats may encourage capital outflow and outward migration of skilled labour, putting more employment at risk, which compounds the terrorist problem by leaving the country with a steadily growing pool of idle unemployed youth. While no country in the world could claim to be immune from the international terrorist threat, the Nigerian situation becomes particularly acute due to the presence of long-standing challenges from domestic terrorism. Boko Haram's appearance in Nigeria, while always speculated to have transnational linkages with global jihadist outfits such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, capitalised on a terror-ridden culture that had enveloped Nigerians of many generations since its founding as an independent nation state. In other words, the existence of a socio-political eco-system that had for many years tolerated lurking threats from domestic insurrectionists facilitated the normalisation of the Boko Haram menace in society.

Founded in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria by Mohammed Yusuf, a Muslim cleric who subscribed to extremist militant Salafi-jihadist ideology, 'Boko Haram' is often rendered in its literal translation from Hausa to English as "Western Education is forbidden" (Pichette, 2015). The name 'Boko Haram' entered public domain via the media, which had no qualms about highlighting the group's appropriation of ruthless violence in furtherance of its aim of erecting an Islamic state in which the sharia reigns supreme as law of the land (Maiangwa et al., 2012). Boko Haram's adoption of violence was a radical response to the Nigerian security forces' manhandling of Mohammed Yusuf, ending in his death in detention in 2009. Boko Haram harbours its own vision and design of an Islamic state, as reflected in its formal designation of *Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda Awati wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). In truth, in a statement released in August 2009, Boko Haram expressed displeasure at the media's description of it as prohibiting Western education per se, insisting instead that "Western civilisation" would be a more accurate rendering of the object of its derision and renunciation (Onuoha, 2012).

In an interview with Nigeria's TELL Magazine (March 21, 2005), Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf explained the group's purpose and origin:

> "The mission of the sect was to establish an Islamic state where orthodox Islam is practiced. Orthodox Islam according to [Mohammed Yusuf] frowns at Western Education and working in the civil service because it is sinful. Hence, all institutions represented by Government including security agencies like the police, military, and other uniformed personnel should be crushed." (Quoted in Agbiboa, 2013, 5)".

Consistent with Lodge's (2019) definition of terrorism as an illegal way of trying to usurp power to effect political change with the reckless use of violence, Boko Haram has emerged as one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups in a matter of just a few years since adopting violence as a method; its brutalities often surpassing those of the more established militants in other parts of the world. Boko Haram gained worldwide notoriety for its merciless treatment of detractors, whether foreign interests or locals who refuse to abide by its dictates in the areas it controls. Until 2015, Boko Haram's seized territories once reached the size of Belgium, covering the northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Nigeria's porous northeastern borders have in the past seen Boko Haram militants moving in and out of Nigeria into the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon. In some regions, Boko Haram cells assimilate with the local population, making counter-terrorist 'hard power' operations against it extremely difficult. Such grassroots-entrenched militants are speculated to run into the thousands, surpassing even its total core fighters (Counter Extremism Project, 2019).

Infamous highlights of Boko Haram's grotesque violence include the indiscriminate killing of civilians and police officers; bombings of churches, markets, villages, military units, media premises and government offices including the United Nations building in Abuja (Uzodike & Maingwa, 2012).

Boko Haram acquired worldwide condemnation for its exploitation of child suicide bombers and the kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls in the town of Chibok in April 2014 (Zenn, 2014). The massive recruitment of female and child suicide bombers appears to be a conscious detection evasion strategy, such that statistically, Boko Haram accounted for almost half of the suicide attacks involving female attackers that happened globally in 2018. On the whole, since 2012, Boko Haram plus intertwined Fulani-based militancy have contributed to Nigeria being consistently among the top four countries impacted by terrorism across the world, as measured by the number of deaths (Global Terrorism Index, 2019, 16-18, 65).

If there is one word to summarise Boko Haram's extremist views and despicable deeds, it is simply 'hate' of everything and anything they deem objectionable in the name of Islam, interpreted rigidly in accordance with Salafi-jihadist principles that its foot soldiers do not however necessarily comprehend (Aly Sergie & Johnson, 2014). Premised on an anti-state ideology that putatively fails to see the concept of 'jihad' beyond its literal meaning of physical fighting and killing, Boko Haram urges and in some circumstances forces other Muslims to join the group and revert to life under the *sharia* as ideally interpreted. In such a utopian Islamic state, it is imagined that a Shangri-La-like state of affairs where corruption and bad governance are eliminated will ultimately prevail. But in achieving its objectives, it sanctions violence, which it considers legitimate as narrated in the history in the Islamic warfare, even if the horrific consequences befall fellow Muslims whom it unilaterally excommunicate for refusing to abide by its wishes. Such practice of takfir or apostising of Muslim co-religionists of different religious orientations became a hallmark of the Abubakar Shekau-led faction following its bitter internal Boko Haram split in August 2016 with another faction led by Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi (1994-2021). Al-Barnawi, the eldest surviving son of Boko Haram's original founder Mohammed Yusuf, was appointed by ISIS to replace Shekau following the latter's refusal to dispense with practice of using children suicide bombers. The fault line separating both factions lay in Shekau's hardline branding of his fellow Nigerian Muslims as

unbelievers worthy of being killed (Thurston, 2016). By contrast, al-Barnawi, whose faction is known as the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), has pledged to focus his attacks on the 'far enemy' i.e. foreign and non-Muslim interests in Nigeria, for example international relief workers and Christians (cf. Reuters, 2019a, 2019b). It is useful to bear in mind therefore that far from a being a monolithic entity, Boko Haram has been persistently beset by vicious domestic factional rivalries and in-fighting, with clashes among them sometimes being as gruesome as between them as a whole and their common enemy, namely the Nigerian state (Agbiboa, 2013; Counter Extremism Project, 2019). Where interests converge, however, different Boko Haram factions might come together and pool resources and manpower for shared operations, such as the April 2014 abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok (Zenn, 2014).

DRIVERS OF BOKO HARAM TERRORISM

In a nutshell, Boko Haram derives its strength from three main sources. First, its Islamist ideology as built upon Salafi-jihadi precepts that are pre-occupied with armed struggle as the sole legitimate meaning of jihad in a state of practically perpetual warfare between Islam and its 'far enemies.' An outgrowth of Salafi-jihadism is the doctrine of al-wala' wa al-bara' (loyalty and disavowal) which brooks no dissent and compromise in cultivating allegiance among fellow Muslims and fostering intense hatred of non-Muslims and renegade Muslims and their ways (Thurston, 2015). A related plank of this ideological framework is the principle of *takfirism*, which enables Boko Haram fighters train their guns on their Nigerian co-religionists deemed to have betrayed Islam by their acts of complicity with infidel forces and systems. As these Nigerian Muslim 'traitors' are regarded by Boko Haram to be no better than infidels themselves, the more hardline among Boko Haram factions consider it justified to kill such 'fake' Muslims.

Second, the tribal factor, which unites militants from the Kanuri tribal group stretching across the border regions of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, thus making international boundaries here extremely porous. The Boko Haram rebellion revives nostalgia for a long-lost Kanem-Bornu empire under which Islam would reign supreme (Zenn, 2014). This second factor automatically lends international colour to the Boko Haram uprising. It fuels the transnational character of Boko Haram in line with the contemporary global jihadist trends trodden by Al Qaeda and ISIS. Transnational collaboration, support and grooming of cadres acquired by Boko Haram play a consequential role in sustaining its operations under conditions of relentless pressure by multi-national forces such as the European Union (EU)-supported and Chad-based Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which organises troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin to restore stability in areas around the Lake Chad Basin (European Commission, 2019).

Driven by the three major planks of Islamism, ethno-tribalism and transnationalism, Boko Haram's capacity to withstand external challenges by myriad forces working at one time or another with the state security apparatus, is supported by a host of auxiliary factors. They are as follows:

Poverty and Regional Marginalisation

Defined as the acute shortage of basic needs, poverty acts as the main accelerator leading people to turn towards extremism and flock towards Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria. The northern region is known as the most underdeveloped region in the country, despite housing six big states and the availability of arable land fertile for farming. It suffers from serious deficit in basic necessities of life such as potable water, good roads, hospitals, primary health care facilities, schools and adequate shelter. There are too few industries to drive forward the economy, which is over-reliant on agriculture for growth. The local populace suffers from alienation and neglect; many of their youths are jobless, idle and angry. Ayegba (2015) has argued that unemployment and

destitution together add to people's vulnerabilities and raises their likelihood of joining Boko Haram as an antidote to their economic troubles. Robert Ted Gurr's theory of relative deprivation links the denial of people's needs and wants to discomfort, restlessness and increasing chances that they would resort to violence to vent their disappointments (Parida, 2007; Agbiboa, 2013).

The high level of poverty in certain north-eastern areas draws the people to Boko Haram upon its promises to assuage financial problems of affected family members. Thurston (2011) comments that it was hardly surprising 'that Muslim militancy has taken greatest hold in the area where poverty is most severe and state legitimacy is at its weakest.' As the poorest among Nigeria's six geo-political zones, the northeast's abject poverty does not reflect Nigeria's position as an oil-producing country. On the contrary, Nigeria continued to be mired in poverty as the country's finances fell victim to mismanagement by corrupt and incompetent politicians, military bosses and civilian elites. Nigeria constantly features as one of the top five countries in the world with the highest number of extremely poor people (Katayama & Wadhwa, 2019), although it is only the fifty-fifth poorest country in the world as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) as a reflection of purchasing power parity (PPP) (Ventura, 2019).

Corruption

The devastating impact of corruption largely contributed to heightening the deficit of trust between the state and the masses in Nigeria, as it had in many other parts of Africa. Corruption in Nigeria is a national problem; its exponential rise in post-colonial Nigeria is closely linked with the discovery of oil and gas and the rapid expansion of bureaucracy. Nigeria's democracy has deteriorated into a plutocracy dominated by a few rich men, and where there is concentration of wealth and power in very few hands. If effectively managed and distributed, Nigeria's vast resources could do a lot in taking care of the masses and improve the people's standard of living. Instead, ubiquitous and multi-faceted corruption in Nigeria has extended even into the security services

such as the police (Campbell & Harwood, 2012).

The federal government has established new institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) to fight corruption at all levels in Nigeria. Paradoxically, even these anti-corruption agencies have become embroiled with accusations of corruption themselves, serving as partisan tools of Presidents in their political game to crush rivals (Page 2018). Hence, in spite the existence of such mechanisms, it does not speak well of the government if the President himself gives the impression of vindicating some terrorist groups at the expense of others, as has happened in the past (Odunfa, 2010). Bad governance has become a bane of Nigeria's unstable politics, making terrorism just one of the many symptoms of state failure (Agbiboa, 2013; Idowu, 2013). Thus analyst Chris Ngwodo regards Boko Haram as '…. an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos' (Quoted in Aly Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

Ignorance and Religious Illiteracy

In Boko Haram's camp, one can hardly get a real and respectable scholar or even an elderly person, let alone a mufti who can rightly issue *fatawa* (religious verdicts) on religious matters. Most of them began their association with the group when they were below forty, most having severed links with the past generations of traditional scholars on charges that the latter had been too compromising in their views or too cowardly.

Deprived of truthful guidance, the Boko Haram congregation became a hotbed for religious zealotry that mimicked the aberrant teachings of the ancient *khawarij* extremists who indulged in the widespread practice of takfir. In fact, as Azumah (2015, 47) explains, 'the Boko Haram leadership regards nearly all the Muslim elite in Nigeria, both traditional and Western-educated, as infidels and

projects themselves as the true inheritors of the legacy of Uthman dan Fodio.' Although a trained Salafist, Mohammed Yusuf failed to mould his followers into an ideologically coherent organisation. His untimely death in police custody inevitably led to the splintering of Boko Haram into at least five factions, all of which exploited the religious vulnerabilities of the Nigerian youth to amass support for their extremist propaganda (Aly Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

Hence, despite early on being condemned by Nigeria's umbrella Islamic body *Jama'atul Nasr al-Islam* (JNI: Society for the Victory of Islam) (Schulze, 2009), Boko Haram's cries of injustice resonated more among the youth than the traditional scholars' monotonous calls for moderation and a halt to the senseless violence. The bulk of Boko Haram foot soldiers are believed to be made up of disaffected youth and former *Almajiris* – wandering street children theoretically in search of Islamic education but who often end up begging and doing menial jobs (Onuoha, 2012; Akinbode, 2019).

Fractured National Unity

Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world, with over 350 ethnic groups living together in one country but with a fractured unity. Different crises have bedevilled the country since her independence, becoming even more complicated with the unwelcome emergence of Boko Haram. Initially seen to be fighting non-Muslims and non-northerners, the terrorist group has all but crippled any remaining goodwill that existed hitherto between Muslims and Christians. Many non-Muslims who do not have the privilege of mingling with Muslims in their daily activities perceive Muslims as extremists and cut off all forms of interaction that might have brought them closer to understand Islam and Muslims. The terror experience in Nigeria has made the northeast a no-go area, with foreigners avoiding visiting the six states of the region. Fuelled by Boko Haram anti-Christian rhetoric, the Muslim-Christian ill feeling is made worse by the constant and rising attacks on churches and Christian institutions in what southerners see as a pre-meditated northern design to Islamise Nigeria

(Azumah, 2015). In such a polarised environment, national integration remains but a forlorn hope. What Nigeria desperately needs is a leadership of statesman like quality whose political appeal transcends ethno-religious boundaries.

THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN STATE IN COMBATING TERRORISM

As a global problem that increasingly manifest signs of growing uncontrollably into a pandemic in some regions of the world, terrorism calls for multi-faceted mechanisms and programmes, both short-term and long-term, to combat it. The approach adopted by national and regional authorities to counter terrorism cannot be the same across different societies and socio-religious environments, but must instead be mindful of local particularities and cultural idiosyncrasies at the popular level (Crelinsten, 2009).

Fighting terrorism entails defeating the threat of terrorism by uprooting its causes and creatively devising ways of obstructing and foiling terrorist plots. The United Nations (2006) proffers the 5Ds approach of dissuading, denying, deterring, developing and defending. The model aims at discouraging individuals from resorting to or supporting terrorism, denying the means available for terrorists to carry out attacks, deterring support for terrorism by disabling potential enablers of terrorism, developing the infrastructural capacity available to the state to fight terrorism and defending the human rights of people involved in the scourge of terrorism whether as victims or perpetrators (United Nations, 2006). It has been obvious in the Boko Haram saga, the military authorities have themselves been guilty of committing flagrant human rights abuses against terrorist suspects an sympathisers, so much so that exacting revenge forms a significant part of the Boko Haram fighters' intent in their crusade against the state (Blanchard and Husted, 2016; Thurston, 2016).

To the state, balancing the use of soft power and hard power is a key determinant of success in combating terrorism as a comprehensive menace and not just a matter of physical violence. Soft power entails engaging the people

through public awareness lectures, enlightenment and education, persuasive methods, economic reforms aimed at poverty reduction and job creation, good governance, advocacy initiatives and intelligence gathering, while hard power implies the use of the military and law enforcement measures including preventing logistical supplies from reaching the terrorists (Crelinsten, 2009).

While the use of both soft and hard powers has been valuable in the counter-terrorism strategy against Boko Haram in Nigeria, the state's over-reliance on hard power tactics has defeated the good purposes and achievements of its soft power measures. The military approach to counterterrorism has instead been the definitive face of Nigeria's counter-terrorism operations, as indicated by the wide deployment of military forces, reinforcement of army equipment, peacekeeping missions, and military aid to the civilian population.

During the early phases of the May 2013 declaration of a thrice-extended six-month emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, the military, police and state security operatives went about arresting and detaining suspected members of Boko Haram along with their wives, children and other relatives. Members of the group scampered for safety after the massive crackdown and those survived fled. While seemingly successful at the very beginning, the strategy of repression overlooked the sweeping nature of the security operations, such that innocent sections of the population also became victims of the army's uncompromising tactics. In the long term, brutalities perpetrated by agents of the state lent credence to Boko Haram's claims of their and Muslims' being victims of state tyranny. The state, furthermore, showed no remorse over the extra-judicial killings it had authorised on Boko Haram's captured insurgents. As violence begets violence, the situation deteriorated from bad to worse, with Boko Haram apparently unaffected in the long run. Its rebels regrouped and remoulded their movement into a lethal underground entity that thrived on guerrilla warfare, hit and run tactics and the strategy of hitting soft target. The scale of violence intensified rather than lessened.

At the federal level, the National Assembly passed the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011 and subsequently amended it in 2013 (Omolaye-Ajileye, 2015). The Nigerian government followed through by establishing the Counter Terrorism Centre (CTC) under the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) with the aim of developing a holistic framework for the nation's counter-terrorism engagement (Dasuki, 2013). Serving as presidential advisor under the supervision of the Interior Ministry, ONSA was entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating and synergising between the various state agencies involved in counter-terrorism efforts such as the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), the police, the military and the Department of State Service (DSS). All the initiatives came under the framework of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) which was launched in 2016 and based on five pillars, viz. Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare and Implement. Overall, however, the cardinal role in Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy is retained by the military (Mentone, 2018).

As a consequence of the new counter-terrorism paradigm, existing and contradictory legislations, such as laws on financial crimes and on money laundering that aim at addressing terrorism financing has been harmonised (Omolaye-Ajileye, 2015). The government reformed the Nigerian criminal justice system to address loopholes in terrorism investigations, prosecutions, trial delays, witness protection and protection of judges. The Nigeria government fortified the bilateral and multilateral engagements with friendly countries at the sub-regional, regional, continental and global levels (Dasuki, 2013). The good relationship between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours, namely Niger, Benin, Chad, and Cameroon, led to the establishment of the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU), with its headquarters in Abuja (Aderonke, 2015). This mechanism enables the sharing of information pertaining to tactical and operational needs among the intelligence services of these five countries.

Another step taken by Nigerian government to combat terrorism was the creation of an additional Nigerian Army Division (7th Division) with its headquarters in the former Boko Haram stronghold of Maiduguri (Dasuki, 2013). Consequently, significant contingents of the military and military equipment were moved into the theatre of operations in the northeast (Onapajo, 2017). Later the Military High Command itself was ordered by President Muhammadu Buhari to relocate to Maiduguri (Akinbi, 2015). A Counter-terrorism Unit (CTU) under the Chief of Defence Staff was formed. The government encouraged joint training exercises among its various security forces, besides establishing special intelligence cells to facilitate timely exchange and pooling of real-time information on tactical operations (Campbell, 2014). Intelligence collection and dissemination were synergised between the security and defense services (Dasuki, 2013; Akinbi, 2015). The government also swore in the Committee on Proliferation of Small and Light Weapons to mop up firearms from unauthorised hands (Aderonke, 2015). Understanding terrorism as a multi-dimensional problem, President Muhammadu Buhari set up the Presidential Committee on North East Initiative (PCNI) in order to oversee the reconstruction of the northeast, where economic development has been lagging for the past decade of Boko Haram-instigated troubles (Buhari, 2016).

THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BOKO HARAM

Understanding that a long-term solution requires more than military action, the Nigerian government takes a multi-sectoral approach to neutralise the Boko Haram threat, involving not only state apparatuses but also non-state actors like the immediate communities and traditional institutions. The functions of traditional institutions in the northeast remain fundamental amidst rapid economic growth which has stalled at a mere two per cent since 2015 (World Bank, 2019).

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The importance of the traditional institutions cannot be over-emphasised in the uprooted communities of the northeast. Being close to the people, traditional institutions wield significant social and cultural influence in the countryside. The relegation of the traditional institutions in decision-making structures since the onset of the Boko Haram tumult has been a key underlying factor behind the failure of official policies to penetrate the structures of grassroots communities left most vulnerable to attacks by the insurgents. The transfer of powers from traditional bodies to constitutionally mandated authorities in the name of emergency took away the conflict preventive capacities that have historically existed at the community level. Throughout interviews conducted during the authors' fieldwork in the Nigerian states of Adamawa and Borno from June 2019 to January 2020, traditional community leaders have confirmed such a prevailing atmosphere of disappointment. This, however, does not absolve the traditional leaders from mistakes arising from reactionary behaviour. Women and the youth have for example expressed dissatisfaction at being excluded from these institutions and their deliberations. Past instances of injustice committed by traditional rulers and chiefs have estranged some sections of the youth, laying them susceptible to Boko Haram offers of money and companionship in a situation of near-breakdown of rule of law. Cases of rural communities shielding Boko Haram terrorists were not unheard of during the early phases of the insurgency. Sandwiched between the terrorists on the one hand and the military on the other, villagers oftentimes ended up being victims of both.

There are also other dynamics that emerged in the communities as that is centrally important to the fight against terrorism. Family ties were often acknowledged in the Nigerian communities as being fundamental to the fight and reconciliation process with the terror group. At times, congregational prayers will be summoned as a way coming together in term of affliction to find a way out and develop a collective strength. Such a process would need to help shed light on those currently imprisoned or detained that are believed by communities to be innocent as well as a search for closure for community members whose whereabouts are unknown. The quest for truth would also involve potentially uncomfortable discussions around those accidentally or wrongfully killed by security forces.

Cultural exclusion of women and youngsters from participation in social activities had the unintended effect of widening the possibility of their being recruited by Boko Haram. Reviving traditional structures of authority has not been easy for rehabilitating agencies, for rebuilding displaced societies does not mean replicating in toto customary practices that are anti-democratic and overly patriarchal in spirit. Being one of the primary beneficiaries of the UN-mandated Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) to strengthen community resilience, Nigeria has sought to rejuvenate civil society in fulfilment of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/RES/70/291). Empowerment of women and reintegration of youthful Boko Haram defectors into mainstream society through the Operation Safe Corridor have been major planks of this ambitious programme (Mentone, 2018). Women across the northeast have congregated and networked in various associations to take advantage of new micro-financing opportunities and to assist each other financially. Financial independence would in turn enhance their bargaining capacity in the peace building process. To overcome religious and cultural barriers associated with body searches of women and girls, women are now employed from dawn to twilight to body search other females at security checkpoints leading to Maiduguri's markets, hospitals, schools and other public

sites vulnerable to Boko Haram attacks. The military has also recruited women, affectionately called the 'Gossipers of Boko Haram,' in intelligence-gathering activities on Boko Haram (Orji, 2019).

Another important outcome of the official military-society anti-terrorist cooperation has been the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a militia set up to protect communities from Boko Haram, alongside local hunters and other vigilante groups. Women and youth form essential components of the CJTF. The CJTF was launched in early 2013 in Maiduguri, when Boko Haram was raising the tempo of attacks against Islamic scholars who contested its rigid interpretations of Islam. As Boko Haram began using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against 'soft' targets, local groups of young men armed with sticks (*yan gora in Hausa*) established vigilante groups to patrol and protect their communities in Borno State when the state failed to do so. The Nigerian military ultimately came to rely on the CJTF in some areas for intelligence gathering and help in manning checkpoints. The CJTF played a critical role in preventing the fall of Maiduguri to the insurgents. It also developed a complete administrative structure, including sectors and units covering local government administrations and wards. These civilian vigilantes use their knowledge of local inhabitants, geography, languages, and cultures to great effect. In Borno State alone, around twenty-five to twenty-seven thousand volunteers are estimated to have partaken in the CJTF via several organised militias (Mentone, 2018).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As an independent country, Nigeria has experienced different crises which challenge its integrity as a nation state. While such challenges are not altogether unexpected in the light of Nigeria's heterogeneous make-up, the civil war against Boko Haram, with the rebels occasionally in control of large swathes of territory, seriously threaten to split the country along sectarian lines. Boko Haram can neither accept Muslim governments who shun the *sharia* as the source of all laws in a modern Nigerian state, nor can it tolerate the idea of having Christians as part of the ruling government at federal and state levels.

As far as Boko Haram's *takfiri* ideological leaning is concerned, Nigeria's Muslim rulers are no better than the Christian politicians; one becoming non-Muslim by virtue of rejection of Islamic laws, the other being non-Muslim by birth. As Boko Haram sees it, both deserve extermination.

Boko Haram's despicable acts of terrorising both Muslims and Christians call for comprehensive solutions that are derived from both Muslim and Christian religious traditions. Bishop Onaiyekan (2012) blames the religious tension in Nigeria on both Muslim and Christian extremists who are increasingly defining the praxis of Islam and Christianity religions in Nigeria. The state, depending on military solutions all this while, has so far struggled to provide a counter-narrative to Boko Haram's propaganda. The army's complicity in human rights abuses committed against fellow Nigerians have all but destroyed the trust that the populace should put in state institutions.

The government's manifest inability to contain Boko Haram is deemed to be one of the factors that heavily contributed to incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan's defeat at the hands of Muhammadu Buhari in the general elections of March 2015. Hailing from a respectable Fulani pedigree and a former army major general who went on to become the head of state under a military government (1983-85) that was itself later overthrown, Muhammadu Buhari was elected President on the pledge of defeating Boko Haram – a promise he claims to have technically delivered by December 2015 (BBC, 2015). But well aware of the shortcomings of over-reliance on the military, President Buhari has skilfully expanded Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies to encompass measures of not only beating Boko Haram in the battlefields, negotiating the release of some of the Chibok schoolgirls, recovering territories and rehabilitating captured militants, but also sterilising Boko Haram's appeal on the economic front via comprehensive policies to rebuild the economy, improve health care and educational infrastructure and combat corruption. It is in the latter set of policies that we at last see meaningful, albeit still limited, examples of state-society cooperation in counter-terrorism. Testifying to President Buhari's success is his re-election to the Presidency in the February 2019 elections.

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A NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF RADICALISATION PROCESS TOWARDS VIOLENT EXTREMISM FROM THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Nurul Miza Mohd Rashid

ABSTRACT

The exact process of radicalisation and a framework that could provide a proper grasp of radicalisation process unique to the culture and societal values are still yet to be established especially an input from psychological perspectives. There is a lack of psychological understanding to the process that provides a comprehensive framework of radicalisation process based on Malaysian culture. This paper hopes to introduce a new framework with a focused understanding of radicalisation process for a unique country such as Malaysia. This is a commentary paper presenting a novel viewpoint on how radicalisation process should be understood from psychological perspective in the modern digital world and currently affecting a civilised society with majority Muslim community in Malaysia. Additionally, the paper proposes that the psychological process of radicalisation must be assessed via push and pull risk factors of radicalisation leading to a radical outcome which further varies from both violent and non-violent manifestation.

Keywords:

psychology of radicalisation, violent extremism, Malaysia, push and pull factors, risk factors

Radicalisation is an incremental process of adopting extreme ideologies
and beliefs about political, historical, social, and cultural contexts, and the
product is violent extremism (Borum, 2011a, 2011b, 2014, 2015). The risk factor
of radicalisation refers to identified information through scientific inquiry
describing either the characteristics, attributes, and traits of an individual, or the
situations, contexts, and environments the individual or groups of individuals
likely had encountered that could have a substantial influence on radicalisation
process and its outcome (Borum, 2015; Kazdin et al., 1997).

The studies of risk factors provided a progressive understanding of what are the
potential variables that could be related to the individual and the environment
the individual lives in drawing the individuals towards violent extremism end.
The results in turn assist in advancing preventative strategies to counter violent
extremism.

Violent extremism in Malaysia is omnipresent since its colonial era. During the
British colonisation up until post-independent, the country was threatened by
the communist insurgency, between 1948 to 1989 (Talib, 2005). The guerrilla war
began when the murders of three European planters in northern Perak and two
Chinese businessmen in Johor were linked to the Malayan Communist Party
(MCP) back in 1948. The group's main objective was initially to allow Malaysia
to be liberated from British colonisation and turn it into a communist ruling
government. The group was able to gain enough support from the trade union
organisation in several states in Malaysia which enabled them to organise
several protests causing social instability in Malaysia. During their lifetime, the
insurgency had a total of 365 life casualties involving both the members of the
movement and Malaysian security forces.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, Malaysia was threatened with another presence
of violent extremist groups, the Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) and Kumpulan Militan
Malaysian (KMM) (Bakashmar, 2008). The formation of the group and its
ideology was pre-dated in 1985. However, their existence was brought to national

attention in May 2001. The groups committed murder and attempted robbery at the Southern Bank Branch in the state of Selangor, Malaysia (Mohamad Aslam, 2009). From 1960-2001, Malaysia had recorded 13 militant-based extremist groups. Malaysia is commended for its success in the rehabilitation of convicted violent extremists (Khor, 2013). Around 2012 onwards, during the peak of the Syrian Civil War, there was a high number of supporters of Daesh ideology resulting in high arrests among Malaysians (Azmi & Yusa, 2018). Scholars in Malaysia have attempted to provide a grasp of their understanding and knowledge of the religious extremism phenomenon in the country (Mohamad Aslam, 2009; El-Muhammady, 2020). The exact process of radicalisation and a framework that could provide a proper grasp of the radicalisation process unique to the culture and societal values are still yet to be established especially input from psychological perspectives. At least to the author's knowledge, there is a lack of psychological explanation for the radicalisation process based on Malaysian samples. This paper presents how the radicalisation process should be understood from a psychological perspective in the modern digital world and currently affects a civilised society with a majority Muslim community in Malaysia.

THE PUSH AND PULL RISK FACTORS OF RADICALISATION FROM THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

My thesis research investigated factors that could contribute to the process of radicalisation. The factors are divided into two types, push, and pull risk factors of radicalisation. The push and pull risk factors were initially inspired by the work of Holmer (2013) and Vergani et al. (2020). From their work, I conceptualised that the push risk factors are factors internally embedded and personalised within the individuals or the structural conditions surrounding the individuals that are separated from the extremism yet push them to find significance in the extremist groups. Whereas the pull risk factors refer to factors that make the extremist ideology and their movement attractive or appealing. There is a lack of explanation on how the pull risk factors and how the push risk factors

push individuals towards extremism from their work alone. Therefore, I will outline the definition of the factors and their relative social and psychological elements. Lastly, I will present the outcome of the connection between the push and pull risk factors.

Pull Risk Factors of the Radicalisation Process

Pull risk factors of radicalisation refer to anything that exists outside the individuals themselves which include extremists' ideology, messages, or any attractive elements that the individual, or group of individuals, and their respective ideologies possess. The pull risk factors exist and cause the radicalisation process through an encounter with individuals who are vulnerable to the factor(s). The key element of the pull risk factors is the ability to attract or gain attention from a selected audience. The pull risk factors could be an encounter with members of extremist groups through meeting at the mosque or via social media platforms. The pull risk factors could be as exclusive as a one-to-one personalised encounter or via publicly available disseminated propaganda videos via social media or news platforms.

Future research that aims to investigate the pull risk factors are recommended to dissect the sample materials by looking at the following key elements: (1) the framing narrative; (2) the physical structure; (3) the method of deliverance.

- **Framing narrative**

   The framing narrative, alternatively referred to as the thematic content or the message, is deciphered from available materials formulated and disseminated by extremist groups or individuals. The element refers to the typology of content disseminated by focusing on the stories, the characters, the underlying morals, or messages that become the eventual key narratives of the groups' or individuals' extremist ideology. It is the essential element that provides value to the existence of the ideological movement. Without

it, the movement would not exist. It becomes the fundamental pillar from which all extreme violence and other related activities originate. Sympathisers to extremist groups would not be able to share and spread knowledge on the group without the narrative. Foreign fighters and suicide bombers may lose their motivation to fight or commit an attack as they perceive all actions lose significance without the narrative. The narrative provides reasons and values for their actions.

Past literature and my thesis research have found such applications used by extremist groups. For ISIS and Daesh, their main targets are Muslims or potential reverts into the religion to assist them to achieve their goals of spreading Islam all over the world and remove the opposers of Islam (Abdul Razak et al., 2018; Baele et al., 2019; Baugut & Neumann, 2020; Gulmohamad, 2014; Ingram, 2017; Nahdohdin, et al., 2019; Weirman & Alexander, 2020). To connect with their audiences, the group would heighten the sense or perception of "us" vs "them" by providing narratives that the "us" (Muslims) are under attack by "them" (the West or opposers of Islam) (Baele et al., 2019; Ingram, 2017; Weirman & Alexander, 2020). Moreover, the groups would further degrade those who were not "us", by referring to them as infidels or apostates (kufr) (Ingram, 2017).

It is worth noting the thematic content/framing narrative may differ according to ideology and group. For example, anti-Islamist and extremist Muslim's radicalisation have different targets for their violent actions and whom they blamed for their grievances. Regardless, there is a commonality across all types of extremist movements in how they construct the framing narrative. Firstly, it must address the "us" vs "them" narratives signifying the social identity perspective of intergroup conflict (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). It also signifies the target of violence without which the actions would have no meaning. Secondly, it must address the grievances because of deprivation signifying the relative

deprivation theory (Gurr, 2016). The two theories are deemed relevant and essential as they outline fundamental elements of what motivates humans

- **Physical structure**

  The physical structure refers to the mode and structures of the framing narrative presented. In the framing theory by Ghanem (1997), they outlined that a frame could be deciphered from its two essential attributes, cognitive and affective. The cognitive attributes could be associated with the narrative, or the thematic content as presented earlier. However, the affective attributes would refer to the intonation, use of images or any other physical structure that could further accentuate the message content but may not be the actual message itself.

  The effects of the framing narrative are inseparable from the physical structure. Each message exists in the physical realm for it to reach and eventually alter the cognitive or affective structure of an individual's mindset on selected issues or motivate individuals to behave in a particular manner.

- **Method of deliverance**

  This element would investigate "who" delivers the message and "where" the message is delivered. It is theorised that "who" created or delivered the message and through "where" the message is delivered could be influential to the message's credibility and acceptance as perceived by the receiver. In addition, "where" the message is delivered could also influence the number of outreaches; the message which reached a greater number of audiences could increase the chances of the messages being further spread and echo in various social communications both online and offline. This could further enhance the credibility of the message among the receivers.

The "who" would be the source or origin of the message, and the medium persons who ensure the successful transfer of the message from the deliverer to the target. The "who" could be family members, social peers, entrusted scholars, political leaders, or any individuals capable of either creating the message content, delivering the message or both. The "who" may not be specific to an individual, but it could also refer to established institutions or groups, such as a news broadcasting company or an international violent extremist group.

The element also investigates the "where" the message is transferred through. This would look at types of mediated technology that are used to ensure the deliverance of the message is successful. From my research, I found that the most used platform is WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook. However, it is noteworthy that there are other social media platforms that might be as influential.

Push Risk Factors of the Radicalisation Process

The push risk factors refer to any factors that place individuals vulnerable to the ideology or movement of violent extremism. The push risk factors would be identifiable in the presence of pull risk factors. I initially proposed that the push risk factors are direct predictors of the radical extremist mindset. This was tested in my research. However, it only received partial support in the results. Instead, what I found was that push risk factors could mediate the effect of pull risk factors causing radicalisation to occur. For example, in my research, I found that Muslims who are vulnerable to the message of Daesh online are among those who intend to seek repentance and lack religious knowledge. The push risk factors would be a lack of religious knowledge and feeling remorse or guilt as a Muslim. Meanwhile, the pull risk factors would be the Daesh messages which manipulated Islamic teachings and promised heaven for their followers as they proclaim to be the truest version of Islam. Therefore, as an improvement, in the new theory, the factors proposed have no direct correlation or influence

towards a radicalisation outcome. Substitutionally, the factors are presented as a mediator to the relationship between pull risk factors and outcome.

In its essence, the push risk factors exist, and they may loosely relate to violent extremist ideology and movement. For example, greater association with the religion of Islam may relate to Muslim religious extremism in the scope of practices. Another relevant case is the connection between Evangelical Christians and the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. However, it should not be an immediate expectation that individuals possessing or presenting these risk factors are radicalised. On the contrary, the push risk factors merely exist, allowing an understanding of what may make individuals vulnerable to radicalisation.

The push risk factors paint the complexity of the radicalisation process. There are innumerable factors that could fall under this category as its scope is wide ranging from personal individual factors to subjective living experiences, which further range from the political and economic structure of the globe to small regional societies.

The following are selected push risk factors that have received wide coverage in the literature of radicalisation and violent extremism and were also the focus of my study:

- **Personality**
  Traits reflective of human behaviours and temperament likely formed through combined genetic and environmental factors. Studies have found personality traits as a probable factor that increases vulnerabilities towards extremist narratives and willingness to accept deviant, violent ideologies (Corner et al., 2021; Horgan, 2014; Kalmoe, 2014; Post, 2007). My research found impulsive sensation-seeking as one key personality trait.

- **Youth**

  My study found that young adults who are ignorant of matters of religion are at risk. Past research also found similar patterns, where youths are vulnerable as they seek out meaning and opportunities to have a place where they feel belonged and are known (Harris, 2011; Harris et al., 2011).

- **Religiosity**

  In my research, the extremist convicts may lack truthful knowledge of Islam and are irreligious thus they seek out to extremist movements as means of repentance.

The Outcome of the Radicalisation Process

The radicalisation process eventually will create an outcome, an undesirable one. The connection between the push and pull risk factors leading to radicalisation outcome is illustrated in Figure 1. This theory proposes that once individuals are radicalised, they would show either one or more of the following measurable elements:

- **Support violence**

  Mindset, beliefs, and attitudes that violence is vital if it is committed for a reason or purpose that an individual or a group of individuals perceive as valuable or important

- **Willing to act**

  Mindset, beliefs, and attitudes that one is ready and willing to commit violence for a reason or purpose that an individual or a group of individuals perceive as valuable or important

- **Commit non-violent acts**

  Personally involved in non-violent activities because of the formed mindset

- **Commit violent acts**

  Personally involved in violent activities because of the formed mindset

The first two elements refer to the mindset of the individuals which is the immediate result of a successful radicalisation process. When individuals have gone through a radicalisation process, they may initially perceive that violence is important with the right purpose or reason. The perceived idea, or the perception, itself is at mere cognitive level and it does not necessarily indicate the person would eventually commit the violent action.
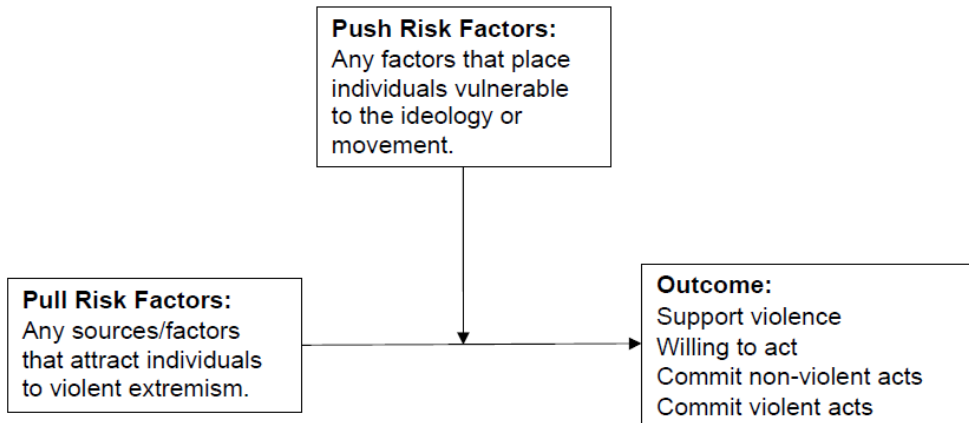
Push Risk Factors:
Any factors that place individuals vulnerable to the ideology or movement.

Pull Risk Factors:
Any sources/factors that attract individuals to violent extremism.

Outcome:
Support violence
Willing to act
Commit non-violent acts
Commit violent acts

Figure 1. Push and Pull Risk Factors of Radicalisation towards Violent Extremism

The other two elements are more behavioural and thus visible through their actions. The actions are divided into two types, violent and non-violent. The classification is critical to provide a clear distinction that individuals committing violent actions may indicate significantly different personal characteristics compared to non-violent actors. Thus, the push and pull risk factors of the radicalisation process may differ for violent and non-violent outcomes.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

In my research, the convicts that were discussed during the interview with authorities and the assessment of the recruited violent-extremist convicts were treated as a homogenous sample despite the variation in reasons of conviction. During the research, the samples were found to be convicted of various offences

under the legal provision act of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) Daesh (1) involvement in chat rooms connected to Daesh; (2) having planned an attack in Malaysia; (3) having travelled to Syria and became foreign fighters. These differences were not accounted for in the analysis due to the small number of samples, especially among those who had a history of militant activities in Syria and committed violent attacks in Malaysia.

The variation in the extremist conviction causes may have affected the results, especially, since there might be different risk factors for different convictions. The variation was illustrated in past research, for instance, Borum and Fein (2017) specified there are variations in what motivates foreign fighters themselves and the elements differ compared to individuals who simply indicated support for violent extremism ideologies. Dillon et al. (2020) found that foreign fighters are likely to post content on threats to in-group members, societal grievances, and pursuit for significance while the supporters of violent extremist group posts focus on religion and commitment issues.

To conclude, there may be variations in violent extremism-related behaviours due to individual personal motivations which could lead to variations in risk factors influencing the radicalisation outcome. Future research may need to use a case study design to build a full and complete profile of each sample extremist first. In the case study, all the elements in the theory must be explored using various data collection methods, including interviews, responses on validated tests and case file reports by various authorities and practitioners. The findings generated could be reviewed and further categorised into groups based on the radicalisation outcome process indicator. The data collection process should be longitudinal, and data must be frequently updated to provide the latest information on the push and pull risk factors of radicalisation. The new information may assist in determining how to improve the current theory or increase its reliability across time and settings.

CONCLUSION

The present paper proposed a new theory highlighting the radicalisation process in the Malaysian context. Using the risk factors identified, more studies could be conducted to enhance the reliability and validity of the current findings. In addition, the identified risk factors are useful for local prevention and intervention measures. Various civil society organisations and government agencies could train society for early detection of individuals who may be vulnerable to Muslim extremist ideologies, for example, identifying individuals who may have attained lower education, lived an irreligious lifestyle and sought repentance. Educating youngsters on how to detect and avoid believing in extremist ideologies may be the appropriate means to reduce the effect of news content that fosters extremist propaganda from influencing them to join extremist groups. It is recommended that from this training for public-level detection, there is also training for intervention without the need for arrest.

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ISLAMIC STATE AND THE USE OF NASHEED AS CONTINUOUS PROPAGANDA MESSAGING TOOL

Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria

ABSTRACT

Nasheed (Islamic hymns) is known in the Muslim community as one of the sources of Islamic entertainment because of its characteristics that invite people to remember Allah, praise the Prophet (peace be upon him), or render insight into the purpose of human life on earth. Nasheed is not identical with other music in terms of the use of sound instruments, even in the early stages it was performed a cappella. Apart from remembering Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), nasheed also conveys the importance of struggle and jihad, particularly when Muslims exposed with various threats from the enemies of Islam. During the 1950s to 1970s, nasheed has become popular among Ikhwan al-Muslimin members in conveying the message of combating oppression of the rulers, similarly as the Palestinians used nasheed to impart their casualties. The emergence of the Islamic State (IS) group in 2014 signified the use of video and audio nasheed with visuals and music mixes loaded with messages to raise spirits and invite Muslims to join their battle. However, the study on the role of nasheed in cultivating IS militant ideology is still lacking attention by Muslim scholars. This writing examines the use of nasheed in propagating continuity of IS ideology and movement. The audio and video recordings of these IS nasheeds were obtained through the Royal Malaysian Police sources.

Keywords:

Islamic state, nasheed, propaganda, messaging tool

INTRODUCTION

The term nasheed comes from the word anshada which means "singing from poetry." It is believed that when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) migrated from Mecca to Medina, he was greeted by the people of Medina with the nasheed *Ṭōlaca al-Badru cAlayna*. In the era of the 1970s-1980s, nasheed has become a vehicle for *da'wah* after the immersion of Islamic resurgence throughout the Muslim world. It also became a medium of expression for young people who had to go through various conflicts impinging the Muslim world such as the Soviet Union's war on Afghanistan in 1979; the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Lebanon war in 1982, then extending into the 1990s which witnessed the continuation of conflicts in Muslim countries such as Iraq's attack on Kuwait in 1990-1991, the ethnic cleansing problems in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1992, the war in Chechnya in 1994, and most importantly the ongoing war, killing, and destruction in Palestine.

Thus, the young generation of Muslims in the 1980s-1990s, especially those who follow the *da'wah* movement, have become accustomed to nasheed as part of their environment. Even preaching through nasheed that express messages of disappointment, hope and the spirit of struggle has become ingrained in the souls of the *da'wah* cadres of that era. However, the emergence of the IS group in 2014 saw the use of video and audio nasheed with visuals and musical mixes loaded with messages to inspire and invite Muslims to join their struggle has brought a new dimension to nasheed roles and significance to the jihadist movement. Haian Dukhan and Moutaz al-Kheder (2017) in their thematic analysis of nasheed by the IS, describes how the use of jihadist nasheed, also known as *anāshīd Jihādiya*, provides a window in understanding the jihadist's line of thinking as well as their mentality.

ISLAMIC STATE AND THE ROLE OF NASHEED

Before IS, nasheed was also used by several jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda. In an article published by Euronews, Thomas Seymat (2014) explained that: "Nasheeds were not always so significant in the jihadi culture, their rise has been only recent. 'There was an increase of songs after the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the diversification of the jihadi scene which was no longer represented by al-Qaeda alone'."

Meanwhile, in his study on jihadist nasheed, Behnam Said (2012) wrote an article entitled *Hymns (Nasheeds): A Contribution to the Study of the Jihadist Culture* to vindicate the important role of nasheed in shaping culture among the jihadists. He found that nasheeds have strongly inspired many modern jihadists such as Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed by the United States military in an airstrike in Yemen in September 2011, based on his statement in a pamphlet entitled '44 Ways to Support Jihad'":

> "In the time of Rasulullah (i.e., The Prophet Muhammad) he had poets who would use their poetry to inspire the Muslims and demoralize the disbelievers. Today Nasheed can play that role. A good Nasheed can spread so widely it can reach to an audience that you could not reach through a lecture or a book. Nasheeds are especially inspiring to the youth, who are the foundation of Jihad in every age and time. Nasheeds are an important element in creating a 'Jihad culture.' Nasheeds are abundant in Arabic but scarce in English. Hence it is important for talented poets and talented singers to take up this responsibility. The nasheeds can cover topics such as: Martyrdom, Jihad is our only solution, support of the present-day leaders of Jihad (to connect the youth to them), the situation of the Ummah (global Muslim community) the responsibility of the youth, the victory of Islam and defending the religion. The nasheeds should focus on Justice rather than peace and strength rather than weakness. The nasheeds should be strong and uplifting and not apologetic and feminine."

The role of music through nasheed has an impact in raising the motivation of the struggle such have been expressed by Tilman Seidensticker's study entitled *Jihad Hymns (Nasheeds) as a Means of Self-Motivation in the Hamburg Group* (2006) and Anthony and Robert Nill's work on *The Role and Impact of Music in Promoting (and Countering) Violent Extremism* (2011). In another study, Mikhail Pelevin and Matthias Weinreich in the article *The Songs of the Taliban: Continuity of Form and Thought in an Ever-Changing Environment* (2012) explained that there is continuity and certain dynamics in the form and thought produced through the nasheed of the Taliban group.

Henrik Gråtrud (2016) in an article entitled *Islamic State Nasheeds As Messaging Tools* states that in his study of 17 nasheeds published by IS between December 2013 and March 2015, shows that nasheed is an effective tool in delivering the jihadist's group messages because of its limited themes that appeal specific audiences, at the same time provide insights on the softer side of life in the Islamic state.

The nasheed titled "*Salīl al-Sawārim*" for example, has a soothing rhythm that causes the listener to feel inspired by its easy-to-follow lyrics. Van Ostaeyen (2015), an independent researcher on jihadi nasheed states: "They're so melodic and so intense that people immediately like the sound," and if heard repeatedly, "it gives you some kind of spiritual experience...But most people have absolutely no idea what they're listening to." Here is the translation of the nasheed:

> Clashing of the swords: a nasheed of the reluctant
> The path of fighting is the path of life
> So amidst an assault, tyranny is destroyed
> And concealment of the voice results in the beauty of the echo
>
> Clashing of the swords: a nasheed of the reluctant
> The path of fighting is the path of life
> So amidst an assault, tyranny is destroyed
> And concealment of the voice results in the beauty of the echo

By it my religion is glorified, and tyranny is laid low

So, oh my people, awake on the path of the brave

For either being alive delights leaders, or being dead vexes the enemy

So arise, brother, get up on the path of salvation

So we may march together, resist the aggressors

Raise our glory, and raise the foreheads

That have refused to bow before any besides God.

With righteousness arise

The banner has called us

To brighten the path of destiny

To wage war on the enemy

Whosoever among us dies, in sacrifice for defense

Will enjoy eternity in Paradise. Mourning will depart

For IS, nasheed is not mere entertainment but also becomes the background of all the videos released by the group, and it is played during military parades, preaching events, during the month of Ramadan for the purpose of recruiting more 'jihad' cadres, also during celebrating the official caliphate in its capital, Raqqa, Syria.

According to Patrick Cockburn (2015), an Irish journalist in his book *The Rise of Islamic State*, IS nasheeds have become an important identity for the group in branding IS struggle and attracting support from the Muslim community. The visual recording of everything that happened in the caliphate had a great political impact on IS in the early stages of its emergence. A researcher from the University of Maryland, Phillip Smyth (in Shirin Jaafari 2014), explained that the tune of IS nasheed is very suitable for their target, which is the young people. He said:

"Narratives that are cast by these groups are usually conveyed in their music first," he says. "Even before official announcements, you'll probably get a clearer picture of what they actually want to promote or what they're going to do through their songs." "If you are really trying to recruit and indoctrinate people, music is a fantastic way to do it".

Bryan Schatz in his article *Inside the World of ISIS Propaganda Music* (2015) agrees that nasheed became a propaganda tool as well as an effective message in the spread of IS ideology. Most of these IS nasheed are published by IS official media such as Ajnad Media Foundation, established by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2013, and also Al-Hayat Media. According to Schatz, listening to nasheed does not cause someone to continue being a member of IS and commit acts of violence, but it is part of the radicalisation process because music has the nimbus and power to bind people in a common bond and purpose. It is one of the propaganda tools that does not only happen in the context of IS, but also in other terrorist groups such as the white supremacists, also other groups that are bound in a certain musical trend.

Tracing the gap between the earlier years of IS rise whereby nasheed became so influential in propagating IS messages and propaganda, I found that more recently, during pandemic times, there was a report on October 6, 2020 by The Counter Extremism Project (CEP), an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in New York, London and Germany regarding the increase in the uploading of IS nasheeds. According to the report, almost 100 nasheeds have been uploaded since August 2020 for the purpose of recruiting new IS members around the world. The platform used is Spreaker's website which can be downloaded through Google Play. Later, in 14 December 2020, CEP researchers located numerous ISIS nasheeds on SoundCloud, including versions in Arabic, French, German, and English (https://www.counterextremism.com/press/extremist-content-online-isis-nasheeds-located-spreaker).

According to Modagman (2020) in Syria News Update on the Islamic State's change of policy, a few of major IS nasheed which were used heavily in videos was the one sung by **Maher Mish'al, Ya Dawlata al-Islam Nawarti al-Dunna, Sawfa Namdī** and **Ji'na Jundan Lil-lah.** Besides the death of Maher Mish'al in July 2015, he did have tons of followers and a large presence on social media (https://syrianewsupdate.wordpress.com/2020/12/04/what-we-have-learned-from-the-islamic-states-change-of-policy-2/). Jonathan Pieslak (2019) wrote a chapter on *The Sonic World of the Islamic State in The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies* that among popular nasheed produced by IS, *Sawfa Namdī* is the most popular, ranked at first in the order of popularity. It shows that IS nasheeds still play significant role in maintaining IS propaganda in popular medium. Table 1 below shows the nasheed rank based on Pieslak's analysis:

Table 1. IS Nasheed Rank in Popularity

English Title	Arabic Transliteration	Date Released
We will proceed to the excellencies	*Sawfa Namdi Lilwma'aliyy*	August 30, 2015
Our shari'a	*Shari'atuna*	June 29, 2015
How great is the encampment of heroes	*Lillahi Daru Mu'askaru Al-ibtaali*	2015
Attack them	*Ughzu Alayhim*	2015
We have intended	*Qad 'azamna*	November 14, 2014
Come on, Indulge	*Hayya Inghamis*	November 29, 2015
We drove towards them	*ilaihim Rakebna*	June 18, 2015

Source: Jonathan Pieslak 2019

Following Pieslak analysis, I tried to locate the current status of *Sawfa Namdī* in popular medium such as SoundCloud and found that the nasheed is still shared and downloaded by people from Muslim countries, for instance Indonesia as demonstrated as such:

Table 2. IS Nasheed Sharing in SoundCloud (Public Domain)

Nasheed Title and Singer	Posted by	Hits
Sawfa Namdi Lilma'aliyy	Muhammad Kahvy	46.1k
Adfaita by Mishary Rashid Al-Afasy	Band Yulianto	6,926
Rahman Ya Rahman by Mishary Rashid Al-Afasy	Fairmawlove	1.16m
La ilaha Illa Allah Mishary Rashid Al-Afasy	Alafasy	374k
Rahman Ya Rahman by Mishary Rashid Al-Afasy	Hesham Mahdy	9,098

Source: https://soundcloud.com/muhammad-kahvy/nasyid-terbaik-ini-menggentarkan-musuh2-islam-saufa-namdi-lil-maaali-by-rikhie-asbo:

In line with this, Carsten, a terrorism analyst wrote in May, 2020 in his twitter thread on rendition of the nasheed *Sawfa Namdī* by Rikhie Asbo, a popular Indonesian singer, questioned Asbo's support to IS based on some of Asbo's twitter messages (https://twitter.com/carsten2015b/status/1258258400997257218). This shows that the nasheed is even performed by some Muslim singers and spreaded in popular medium and downloaded freely by their audiences in quite huge hits (46.1k). This finding shows that despite the common views held that IS is decreasing in power but in reality, IS presence is still continue to persist in public domain, especially in the digital world beyond anyone's control.

In order to confirm on the influence of nasheed among IS related prisoners in Malaysia Prison, I interviewed (21st October 2022)1 one of the religious officer in prison, Ustaz Fahmi Reza Basri who agrees that there are a few numbers of the prisoners who, influenced by their love to music, composed nasheed during their spare times to motivate themselves, and resolute that nasheed is an effective tool in communicating messages.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

As part of pursuing the significance of nasheed as IS propaganda tool, this article examines 13 audios and 3 videos of IS nasheeds which were obtained from the Royal Malay Police of Malaysia (RMP) that typifies common IS propaganda messages. These audios and videos were some of the many exhibits confiscated by the E8 Counter-Terrorism officers from the IS related detainees. It is found that IS ideological message on the struggle for jihad and the caliphate remains the main essence in their nasheeds. These nasheeds have high sound quality, and recorded according to professional standards. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the nasheeds are capable of attracting targeted audiences not only because of its beautiful melodies and inspirational lyrics but also to the quality of professional music recording using popular and accessible musical platform. Some of the evident messages imparted through the nasheed are:

- Strengthening the hearts of IS members on the their chosen path
- Encouraging members of jihad to be patient over all hardships and difficulties
- Urging members of IS to haste to the battlefield with the image of the martyr's beautiful death as promised by Allah.
- Calling for upholding the obligation of jihad by quoting verses from the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him)
- Raising the spirit of solidarity among the IS members
- Stressing the glad tidings for those who perform jihad and the blessings of victory
- Strengthening the spirit of Islamic brotherhood during each casualty
- Depicting the beauty of life in a Shari'a ruling caliphate
- Reassuring God's promises of the houris (beautiful angels), only for the martyrs
- Remaining steadfast despite imprisonment of the IS members

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[1] This interview was done via phone on 21st October 2022. Ustaz Fahmi Reza Basri is Assistant Religious officer at Sungai Buloh Prison, Selangor

In specific, these nasheeds disclose some important propaganda messages as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of IS Nasheeds' Messages Acquire From RMP Source 2019[2]

	Nasheed Title	Content	Message
1.	*Nasmū Mutawahhidīn* (Wind of Unity)	A call for unity among fellow jihadists under the same banner of jihad.	Raising the spirit of solidarity among the IS members.
2.	*Ya Rāhilan* (O You Martyr)	A repetitive hymn memorializing those who died in the name of jihad as martyrs, and an affirmation that they will be remembered and inspired others to follow their footsteps.	Strengthening the hearts of IS members on their chosen path.
3.	*Taqaddam ilā al-Mawt* (March towards death)	A call to martyrdom. It also illustrates that life in this world is only temporary and has no value in the eyes of Allah except for those who strive in the path of Allah.	Urging members of IS to haste to the battlefield with the image of the martyr's beautiful death as promised by Allah.
4.	*Sawfa Namdhī* (We will proceed to the excellencies)	A demand for the IS members to remain steadfast in jihad without feeling humiliated, because its noble purpose is to eliminate misguidance, polytheism. Also to raise the spirit of IS members to uphold the noble Islamic state (the caliphate) with strong courage, as strong as the mountain. An Islamic state will be built under the ruins of the fighters, signifying their noble sacrifice for a truly invaluable purpose.	Encouraging members of jihad to be patient over all hardships and difficulties, and to be prepared for the higher attainment of jihad, which is martyrdom.

[2] RMP source: Deputy Superintendent Police Wan Ruzailan Wan Mat Rusoff. The accuracy of the nasheeds' translation has been checked by Dr. Abdull Rahman Mahmood from Research Centre for Theology and Philosophical Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM and who is also one of Deradicalisation Panels appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs during the preparation of this article (between July-August 2022)

	Nasheed Title	Content	Message
5.	*al-Hōur Tahfōu Lī* (Beautiful angels are calling me)	A description on the beautiful angel presented as a gift for the martyr who dies in the way of God.	Reassuring God's promises of the houris (beautiful angels), only for the martyrs.
6.	*Dawlatoul Islām* (Islamic State)	An affirmation to the existence of the Islamic state that will always alive, and the destruction of taghut.	Strengthening the hearts of IS members on their chosen path.
7.	*Ji'nā* (Here we come)	An invitation to the battlefield under the banner of jihad, affirming the IS members to fight for the love of God. The religion of Islam is to be practised, and the house of Islam will be erected under the destruction of the deviants.	Raising the spirit of jihad among the IS members, and urging them to haste to the battlefield.
8.	*Kun Ma͛ Allah* (Be with Allah)	A call in their jihad because it is the true jihad, there is no obstacle in this jihad but the hope of gaining God's pleasure with full determination and strong heart.	Calling for upholding the obligation of jihad, at the same time stressing the glad tidings for those who perform jihad and the blessings of victory.
9.	*Oghzōu ͛Alayhim* (Attack them)	A call to fight the infidels on the battlefield so that all disbeliefs will be wiped out and heal the heart of the believers because there is no more evil of the infidels. The glory of the past will not be achieved until the rise of the caliphate that would destroy infidelity, therefore continuous struggle in jihad is crucial.	Strengthening the hearts of IS members on their chosen path, and urging them to strive in continuous jihad to attain victory i.e. the realization of the caliphate.

	Nasheed Title	Content	Message
10.	*Raddidū Allahu Akbar* (Repeat the word Allahu Akbar)	A description of victory for those who believe in the caliphate or the promised Islamic state. This is good news for the believers because they will win and the banner of Islamic truth founded by IS caliphate will be advanced.	Depicting the beauty of life in a Shari'a ruling caliphate.
11.	*Naddhara Allah Wujūhan* (Allah illuminates the face)	Allah makes the faces of the people who fight and perform jihad illuminate because of their sincerity.	Emphasising the beauty of shaheed, i.e. death in the path of jihad.
12.	*Sharīcatu Rabbinā* (Our Lord's Sharica)	An analogy for the Islamic Shari'a, regarded as light, for it illuminates the darkness of falsehood. Therefore, the act of jihad to establish the caliphate is holy and noble.	Depicting the beauty of life in a Shari'a ruling caliphate, inspiring members of IS to strive in jihad.
13.	*Mu'assasah al-Ajnā'* (Building generation)	A call to build generations who love martyrdom, who neither loves the world, nor a slave to the world. Death on the path of jihad is the most noble gift from Allah, therefore members of IS must remain faithful to God's promises.There is no point in a good life without jihad.	Raising the spirit of jihad among the IS members and stressing the beauty of martyrdom.
14.	*Sabran ya Nafsī* (Dear Soul, be patient)	This video is a reminder for Muslim youths to be patient, and al-Quds calling for jihad, patience is the only way for victory, angels are calling for the martyrs.	Encouraging members of jihad to be patient over all hardships and difficulties.

	Nasheed Title	Content	Message
15.	*Farhah* (Rejoice)	This video shows IS victory in Khurasan Province with a row of tanks and IS flag flying as a sign of dominance and victory in the region. The nasheed depicts IS rejoice over their triumph.	Reassuring the beautiful taste of victory founded through jihad.
16.	*Mahma* (Regardless)	This video is to inspire the IS fighters to remain steadfast on the path of jihad for the struggle leads to eternal bliss in heaven. It also calls for patience despite imprisonment, IS fighters should not give up. The oppressors of *tāghut* are villains, they will not win. Al-Zarqawi is their role model on their road to martyrdom.	Urging members of IS to remain steadfast despite imprisonment of their brothers.

Returning to Henrik Gratrud (2016) analysis on IS nasheeds as messaging tools, it reveals that they focus on limited number of themes, and seldom provide detailed account for the assertion they make. Nevertheless, this does not limit their power to convey the message since they appeal to the listeners' emotions and are based on broad themes that concern the ummah. These selected themes contribute to make the nasheeds powerful messaging tools, especially by facilitating the communication of a narrative in a distinct and consistent way in order for it to be efficient. It is found that there are a number of overarching narratives that synthesise the *nasheeds* content messages, as shown by Table 4:

Table 4: IS Narratives in the Selected Nasheeds Studied By Henrik Gratrud (2016)

IS Narratives in the Selected Nasheeds
• Islam is in crisis. The *ummah* has come under the yoke of unbelief's oppression and this is causing suffering and humiliation for Muslims
• IS is restoring the glory of Islam by purging the *ummah* of unbelief and waging jihad against Islam's enemies
• IS has established the Islamic State and is the leader of Islam. Therefore, it is obligatory for every Muslim to swear allegiance to it
• Those who answer IS' call to jihad will be rewarded in the afterlife

The persistent messages that have been implied within these profound narratives contribute to mobilize support for the movement as well persuade people, especially Muslims. Clearly, the target of the message is existing IS members, as well other Muslims who might sympathizes their cause, or more importantly to persuade certain group of people to join their movement. According to Hayat Alvi in her comparative study entitled *Musical Criminology: A Comparative Analysis of Jihadist Nasheeds and Narco Corridos (2020)*, there are some common similarities in both, which are:

> …glorifying historical victories over enemies in wars and revolutions; using lyrics to warn their enemies about their invincibility and strength and bravery; calling out specific enemies as targets; and using their respective ideologies to justify their acts, behaviors, and beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Nasheed remains a powerful strategic tool for global jihadist movements such as IS. The advantage of nasheed in affecting the soul and spirit of thousands if not millions of fans and sympathizers of these groups has been studied by many scholars. These nasheed videos and audios have great influence in conveying the message of IS struggle as well as an effective tool in ideological indoctrination. The themes of the nasheed aim to strengthen the hearts of IS members on the path of jihad and to be patient over all hardships and difficulties, despite IS recent post-IS era since its defeat in 2017 and turned to guerilla forces today in regions such as Africa and Afghanistan. Although the war tactics have changed, the survival and continuation of IS struggle to establish the caliphate has never died out as long as its ideological base remained unchaste. Pieslak (2015) says it rightly, in The Conversation:

> "Yet beyond animating ideology with emotion, it is music's distinct ability to forge social bonds among members that makes it an indispensable part of a radical group's propaganda strategy, IS or otherwise. Any number of scholars working on terrorism and political violence have noted that ideological commitment can sometimes run second to a terrorist's sense of social bonding and their emotions. In other words, many members find immense value in the friendships they form, with shared musical experiences a way of cementing those bonds...A group could possess dynamic leadership, brilliant tactics, abundant funding, flawless training and ample armaments, but if they cannot convince people that it is in their best interest to risk their lives and kill another human being, then terrorism simply doesn't happen. And music is a fantastic way to stir the passions, so much so that the 14th-century Muslim theologian Ibn Taymiyya – a vital figure in the codification of the ultra-conservative Salafi theology that groups like IS and al-Qaida ascribe to – once wrote, "Music is the alcohol of the soul.""

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NIPPING HATE IN THE BUD:
EARLY INTERVENTION METHODS
TO ADDRESS HATE SPEECH

Murni Wan Mohd Nor

ABSTRACT

The pandemic which shook the world in 2020 not only highlighted issues of public health and economic inequalities, it also highlighted certain weaknesses such as racism and discrimination inherent in society. The online ecosystem, particularly social media served as the perfect platform to spread hate speech. Online vitriol influenced susceptible individuals to adopt hateful and extremist ideologies, and many extended their hatred based on racial, religious or nationalistic grounds into the physical world. This had an adverse effect on racial and religious relations of the global community. Instances of intolerance manifested in hate crime, some of which were of a violent nature. This article summarises Malaysia's struggles with issues of hate speech pre and post-pandemic, including the weaknesses in the current legal framework to address this problem. In addition, this paper discusses the nation's lack of concentrated effort to implement early intervention methods. It concludes by providing suggestions as to a softer approach in preventing hate speech before it occurs, as prevention is better than cure.

Keywords:

racism, hate speech, extremism, counter speech, early intervention

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many inequalities to light such as discrimination against races, religion and nationality. Hate speech has been widely used on social media to further marginalise different members of the community on these grounds. Due to the wide reach of social media, which is currently being used by approximately 4.65 billion users in the world (Statista Research Department, 2022), the effects have been devastating.

Pre-existing sentiments such as suspicion and intolerance has been further aggravated, and has led to commission of violence on a large scale. The mass shootings which have occurred at a synagogue in Halle (Germany), in Christchurch (New Zealand), El Paso (Texas), at the Poway Synagogue (San Diego) and others have many aspects in common. Among them is the insidious online environment which became an ideal platform to cultivate radical ideologies in susceptible persons. This is done in many ways, including the reading of hateful manifestos available online and gaining a sense of camaraderie from like-minded extremists (Ware, 2020). Some individuals attempt to imitate their "heroes of hate," and the digital ecosystem further enables this. In addition, the detailed and incessant media coverage of terror attacks facilitates imitative behaviour due to the perception of notoriety one may gain (Meindl & Ivy, 2017).

That is not to say hate speech is a new phenomenon, and when unchecked, may result in instances of radicalisation and extremism. The wide usage of the internet and social media in particular aggravates the problem, because social media allows a virtually limitless platform for hate speech to thrive. It's reaching powers stretch far beyond that of the print media. Online hate speech can influence more people towards hateful and extremist ideologies. For example, the anti-Muslim Facebook page by Pamela Geller, a far-right political activist from America, grew from 19,000 followers to 78,000 people in less than a year (Religion News Service, 2014).

Malaysia is one of the many countries which have grappled with incidences of racial and religious tension pre and post-Independence in 1957. Racial and religious tensions frequently make headline news, such as the Zakir Naik controversial remarks against Malaysian Chinese (Al Jazeera, 2019), public anger amongst certain segments of the community regarding the introduction of Jawi into the national school syllabus (Sukumaran, 2019), a deadly road rage case in Bangi with became racialised (Camoens, 2019) and the riot at the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple which was perceived to have been racially motivated (Bernama, 2018). These tensions have increased suspicion and animosity amongst people of different racial and religious backgrounds and may lead to more serious consequences. The media have reported on violent incidents such as church burning, desecration of religious symbols and damage to places of worship such as the Qur'an and mosques (BBC News, n.d.; The Telegraph, 2010; Meikeng, 2010).

This situation becomes more dangerous when Malaysia's multi-racial and multi-religious citizens are one of the highest users of the internet in the Southeast Asian region—with 30.25 million being active on social media (Kemp, 2022). A survey conducted by The Centre (2020) revealed, 91% of respondents observed hate speech to be found most commonly on social media platforms. This is also reflected in the volume of complaints received by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). The MCMC received 21,296 reports of hateful social media content on matters of race, religion, and royalty in a short span of six weeks in 2019 (MCMC, n.d.). Among the incidences which ignited public controversy was when a Facebook user uploaded a cartoon image depicting the Prophet Muhammad SAW with his wife Aisha RA in a derogatory fashion—attracting approximately 500 complaints to the MCMC (Pei Ying, 2019).

The internet and social media platforms are so effective in spreading hate speech that acts of violence can ensue. This has occurred via Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi's terrorist groups in Malaysia which had links with the

Islamic State. Discourse analysis of telegram conversations between members of these groups revealed elements of hate speech were used by the administrator, Wanndy, to instil suspicion and anger amongst the Telegram group participants against people perceived to be their "enemies." This contributed to the Telegram group participants' gross misunderstanding of jihad and the formation of their extreme mindset. Wanndy was so effective as their leader that the online conversations manifested into one of the worst acts of domestic terrorism in Malaysia by way of the bombing of a nightclub in Puchong (Wan Mohd Nor & El-Muhammady, 2021). This exemplifies how online platforms have been wrongly utilised for the dissemination of hateful and extremist content.

Hate speech has also been reported against politicians who apply the politics of fear to gain favour with certain racial or religious groups and increase their chances of success at the election polls. For example, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) Senior Vice-President Fadillah Yusof criticized Pakatan Harapan (PH) and Democratic Action Party (DAP) for bringing racial and religious incitement in Sarawak as part of their political strategy (Pei Pei, 2021). In a separate incident, Parti Bumiputera Perkasa Malaysia (PUTRA) Vice-President Mohd Khairul Azam Abdul Aziz was charged under the Penal Code for committing racial incitement due to his video posting on Facebook entitled, "Chinese and Indians are not in the Federal Constitution" (Yatim, 2020). In addition, opposition member Lim Guan Eng from DAP expressed dismay that no action had been taken against PAS president Tan Sri Abdul Hadi Awang for his alleged hate speech being made which insinuated that most instances of corruption are done by non-Muslims (Pillai, 2022). It is interesting to note that a few years before this incident, Jeff Ooi from the party DAP was investigated under S. 298 of the Penal Code for causing disharmony on the grounds of religion for his tweet regarding the death of Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)'s spiritual advisor which read, "Adios, Haron Din. Let there be peace" (Sekaran, 2016). It would seem that many members from different political parties have been accused or are accusing others of racial or religious incitement.

The Malaysian Government understands the weight of the problem at hand, which is why Barisan Nasional (BN) attempted to table the National Harmony and Reconciliation Bill of 2014. This legislative effort was met with much criticism and was later discontinued (Malhi, 2020). The subsequent Government, Pakatan Harapan (PH) started their own legislative initiative through the Anti-Discrimination Bill, the National Harmony and Reconciliation Commission Bill and the Racial and Religious Hate Crimes Bill (Murad, 2019). Unfortunately, these bills did not come to fruition due to several factors, including criticism that such laws will be misused and abused, as well as a lack of political will to push the legislation through. This was made more challenging with several changes in government in 2018, which inadvertently put a halt in legislative reforms. As such, there has not been any tangible legal change to manage hate speech.

This has resulted in the repeated usage of existing laws in an attempt to reduce the negative impact of hate speech on racial and religious relations in Malaysia. The current legal framework has certain weaknesses which allow for a vague interpretation of what amounts to "hate speech" (Wan Mohd Nor & Asraf, 2015). This can result in overly punitive measures being implemented on the people, and such restrictions may not always be reasonable and/or constitutional. In this regard, the relevant laws need to undergo a process of revision so that certain provisions may be made clearer.

This is why a specific law to legislate on the complex problem of hate speech is necessary. One of the main objectives of laws is to prevent the spread of dangerous ideologies and related behaviours (Banks, 2013). Matsuda is of the opinion that if the State does not address the issue of hate speech in particular, it may be implied that the problems affecting the community are not taken seriously (Matsuda, 1989). At present, Malaysia's legal framework does not distinguish hate speech and hate crimes based on the severity, context, or nature of the act committed. This situation may result in minor incidences of hate speech attracting the same punishment as the most extreme offences due to the lack of statutory guidelines provided.

Having a specific law on hate speech would allow for key terms to be properly defined—for terms such as offensive, seditious, hateful and the like are currently open to differing and often contentious interpretations. It would also better explain evidentiary rules in a clearer manner, such as the issue of intention, corroboration of witnesses, etc (Wan Mohd Nor & Ab Razak, 2017).

In addition, hate speech legislation would be able to address the complex issue in a comprehensive manner, such as listing the category of offences that require different types of intervention (mediation, fines, imprisonment, etc) according to the nature and severity of the crime. The punishments that are imposed upon convicted offenders must always consider the factors surrounding each individual case. For example, the age of the offender, whether is it a first or repeated offence, are there any mediating or aggravating factors etc. If hate speech is not addressed according to the level of seriousness, it can result in disproportionate punishment and ultimately injustice (Wan Mohd Nor, 2016).

Contrary to popular belief, a comprehensive law to tackle hate speech is not meant to be more restrictive on freedom of expression (Rumney, 2003). Rather, it is to ensure that legal intervention may only take place when certain acts meet a clearly defined standard and clearly breach the limit of the law. This is to protect freedom of speech from the intrusion of the State until and unless it is absolutely necessary. This is why many countries have reformed their previous laws to specifically combat this issue from different angles, such as Japan (Martin, 2018), Germany (Tworek, 2021) Scotland (Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021), and Canada (Bill C-261 House of Commons of Canada).

That said, the law does not intervene in a particular incident *before* it happens, and only comes into play *after* the act or crime has occurred. As such, early intervention methods are necessary to prevent hate speech and ensure its negative effects are significantly reduced within the community. At the international level, many organisations have taken preventive measures to tackle the problem. The United Nations has devised the Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (United Nations, 2020) and The Council of Europe

has adopted the Recommendation on Combating Hate Speech respectively (Council of Europe, 2022). In addition, there are many training modules and open educational resources that were designed to raise awareness of the dangers of hate speech, such as the ones published by UNESCO.

In the Malaysian context, there is a dire neglect of early intervention methods. While we can form our own counter speech initiatives based on Western pre-existing models and make use of resources designed by the UN and other organisations, the way in which the issue is represented does not reflect the specific problems within our local context and lack examples of situations faced by our own people. As such, it lacks relatability, and thus, the public may be less receptive to the message. This becomes a major obstacle in mitigating the harms of hate speech.

It is therefore imperative that we commit to alternative methods which emphasise a softer approach. The way in which initiatives are designed and presented to the public is of utmost importance, as community programmes to prevent hate speech and violent extremism may not be well received. On the offset, it brings out sentiments of defensiveness among the community that extremism is not a problem that afflicts them. Therefore, they do not need to be part of prevention of violent extremism (PVE) programmes which they perceive to be far removed from their actual situation.

It may be more suitable to "package" counter speech and PVE initiatives in a more friendly and unassuming way by emphasising on inculcating kindness, increasing cultural awareness and encouraging inter-racial and religious understanding. Communities are unlikely to reject programmes which aim to promote these universal and positive values. A similar shift in approach is seen in Australia via their multicultural programmes which are aimed at integrating immigrant communities into Australian society. Research indicates these

policies and programmes have encouraged integration, social cohesion and equity in a multicultural environment (Clyne & Jupp, 2011). Malaysia can learn from Australia's example. A slight change in our approach may be well worth the effort.

In addition, early intervention methods will not be successfully implemented without the collaboration and cooperation with multi-stakeholders. This is because the Government cannot work in silos, as initiatives that are executed in an isolated manner are unlikely to meet their objectives. It is time that a multi-stakeholder approach is adopted, whereby support is given to programmes at the all levels, including civil society organisations and grassroots. When the concerns of society are acknowledged and heard—only then can problems be properly addressed.

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REASONING THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO COUNTER-VIOLENT-EXTREMISM IN MALAYSIA IN THE POST IS PERIOD: INTERNET SOUL SEARCHING AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH

Kevin Fernandez

ABSTRACT

Since the creation of the Islamic State (IS) in 2014, both men and women have exploited social media and instant messaging platforms to encourage individuals all over the world, particularly young people, to become religious extremists. Given the possibility of massive surprise attacks targeting civilians, this was a troubling phenomenon that was constantly affecting the security outlooks of most nation-states. Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, an Islamic education professor at the University of Malaya, and Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi, a high school dropout and "Jihadi celebrity" from Alor Gajah, Malacca, were among the major foreign fighter recruiters in Malaysia. On the domestic front, we contend that the UMNO-PAS rivalry was also one of the enablers of the radicalisation of Muslims in Malaysia. This descriptive analysis research, informed by Habermas's public sphere, aims to give some answers for the surge in support for violent extremist organisations in Malaysia, particularly IS. This study argues that the contention to dominate the public sphere (civil society and institutions of Islam) by UMNO-PAS has enabled some civil society and institutions to inevitably harbour eco chambers of hate towards the "others" in Malaysia. We think that the Malaysian government should speed up the process of making a National Action Plan (NAP) and eventually push for an ASEAN action plan on CVE for selected countries, especially in strengthening arrangements like the Malaysia-Indonesia-Philippines Trilateral Maritime Patrol. We also urge governments to reduce the centralisation of their deradicalisation programmes on Islam and to place more emphasis on inclusivity and "social cohesiveness" programmes.

Keywords:

Identity politics, public sphere, collective action, violent-extremism

THE BLACK FLAG OF KHORASAN AS A SYMBOL OF GLOBAL RADICALISATION

The rising threat of terrorist organisations being able to identify, radicalise, and recruit youths has been a concern for nation states globally. New media, playing its part as a communicative means that is able to transcend boundaries, time, and space, has been widely used by terrorist groups to recruit, disseminate propaganda, and communicate fear to a global audience. These heinous mass killings, like as Brenton Tarrant's mosque attacks in Christchurch, are occasionally broadcast live for all to see. Terrorist groups with political and ideological purposes have been able to target people in a variety of ways all around the world by using modern media, particularly to recruit and form sleeper cells. No continent has been spared, including the Western and Eastern parts of the European continent, America, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, and notwithstanding historically peaceful countries like New Zealand. The recent rise of right-wing extremism, religious extremism, political extremism, left-wing extremism, environmental extremism, nationalist/separatist extremism, and single-issue extremism is invariably expressed uniquely in most parts of the world. According to START's (2018) research, religious extremism, particularly Islamic extremism and anti-Muslim extremism, are the primary causes of extremism in the United States (US), and we argue that their definition can be used to explain the various types of extremism in the world today.

The Islamic State (IS) has been one of the most successful, religiously-driven terrorist "franchisee" groups in the world. Its success has been linked to the effectiveness of its internet identification, radicalisation, and recruiting techniques. Between 2014 and 2016, IS's attempts at statehood seemed viable as they were able to expand across Syria and Iraq within a few months, seizing control over territory that, by some accounts, was larger than the United Kingdom (UK). Charlie Winter's (2015) analysis of IS online narratives was narrowed down to six macro narratives: mercy, belonging, brutality, victimhood, war, and utopia. Malaysia has not been spared from IS's recruitment strategies. In Malaysia, within a short span of 7 years, between 2013 and 2019, the police

nabbed 533 individuals, of whom 246 were charged and 58 were deported (Farik, 2019). IS was defeated when Falujah fell in 2016 and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi died in October 2019, but its ideology and threat in the region still exist for a number of reasons: (1) the periphery states are still not governed; (2) government officials are corrupt; and (3) there are still extremist groups in the region.

The outlook in the beginning of 2019 leading to 2020 and the subsequent lockdowns that followed have impacted Islamic terrorist groups in Malaysia and the region drastically. In 2019, the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) foiled an attack planned by a Malaysian terrorist who was trained by Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) in Indonesia with the help of members from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The attack was meant to hit soft targets like the Myanmar Embassy and a beer factory, among other places (Fernandez & Lopez, 2020). At the peak of the IS's activity, Malaysia had made 119 arrests in 2016, 106 in 2017, 85 in 2018, 72 in 2019, and 7 in 2020. In 2021, no arrests were made in the peninsula but 15 arrests were made in Sabah (Ramakrishna et al., 2022).

This declining trend exhibits that while terrorist activities are in a downward trend due to the continuous lockdowns and decrease in international travel, it is hard to gauge the decline or increase of manifestations of extremism in the minds and hearts of Muslims in the country or region. At least in the context of Malaysia, youth radicalisation remains an understudied area. Thomas Koruth Samuel's Radicalisation in Southeast Asia (2016) provides an interesting outlook on the radicalisation of youths from a structural perspective, relying on information gathered from interviews with police, researchers, and other researchers, but falls short of explaining "why" some Muslims in Malaysia are more vulnerable to radicalisation than others.

It was rather disconcerting to find out that twenty one percent of Malaysian universities felt that terrorism was an effective strategy to achieve an objective (Samuel, 2016). His baseline study made an important impression on the need for such databases to be made publicly available. There were several key

components for better analysis that were left out of his study, mainly due to structural impediments, particularly data sharing by the different ministries as experienced by most SEA countries. Data between the various ministries and departments, particularly Defense, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Education, is minimal at best. Constraints are compounded by laws such as the Officials Secrecy Act (OSA), and due to the fact that ministries are territorial and the boundaries overlap, these ministries lack transparency in sharing material to be made public. Even more disturbing numbers were presented by a research study on "Religious Extremism in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand" (Ananthi et al., 2018). According to the poll, sixty three percent of Malaysians and seventy seven percent of Thais felt betrayed by foreign governments and that Islam and Muslims were under siege. According to Samuel's (2018) research, fourty one percent of Thais and twenty one percent of Malaysians believe that terrorism is a way to attain a political goal.

We contest that a total write-off of religiously motivated terrorist attacks on Malaysian soil would deem unwise since COVID-19 and the downward trend of arrests as mentioned earlier. Wan Amirul Azlan Bin Jalaluddin, the leader of a small local pro-IS cell known as Anshorullah At Tauhid, was caught by the RMP for allegedly plotting to kill Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and other prominent politicians, including the Finance Minister, Attorney-General, and the Religious Affairs Minister (Hadi & Muzliza, 2021). More crucially, Malaysian counter-terrorism experts warned in 2021 that the country's most serious terrorist-related threat is religious and ethnically driven violent extremism, which might fuel ethno-nationalistic tensions that may escalate to bloodshed (Chew, 2021). One of the main factors was that young Malaysians, fueled by "outrage and hope" at old oligarchies and lives stifled by economic, social, and political inequality, were key factors in Bersih rallies held between 2011 and 2016, which were exacerbated and made vivid via social media platforms and a networked public, allowing street enthusiasm to connect with and drive the movement's online formation. As a result, the government responded by resorting to astroturfing (also known as "cybertrooping" in Malaysia) to shape

voter sentiments and suppress the momentum of Bersih and popular forms of online political dissent (Johns & Cheong, 2019 p.1; Fernandez & Pandian, 2016). We contend that the effects of this polarisation have exhibited more incidences of violence like the one experienced most recently in 2018, concerning the relocation of a temple, causing riots between the Malay majority and minority Indians, resulting in the death of at least one fireman (MK News, 2018). A failed theft attempt in Low Yat, Kuala Lumpur's digital mall, in 2015 (Suparmaniam, 2015), led to a fight between the Malay majorities and the Chinese minorities.

THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE IS RIFE WITH POLARISATION AND HATE SPEECH

Minority communities around the world are progressively being vilified and demonised, resulting in marginalisation and persecution, among other types of physical, psychological, structural, and cultural abuse. These may be motivated by race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or other demographic factors, resulting in a phenomenon known as "hate speech" or "hate crime" (Bukar, 2020). According to one research study, the growing sense of Islamophobia in the West is the result of historical events fueled by the economic and political goals of individuals and organisations, chiefly oligarchs (Bukar, 2020). Controversies that incite conflict along binary lines and tip the scales in favour of irreconcilability between Islam and the West give fodder for the media. In recent years, they have included the Salman Rushdie issue, the Danish cartoons, and the "clash of civilisations" debates, which were started by academics, literary writers, and the media, all of whom have been relentless in accusing and confronting.

In circumstances where Muslims are the majority, hate speech is created in the opposite direction. First, communication between religious communities is unequal, with Muslims dominating the conversation (Al-Zaman, 2020). Second, Islamic content is more prevalent in cyberspace than other religions' content. Third, Muslims create digital media-based disinformation in order to marginalise religious minorities both online and

offline. Manuel Castells explains in 2008 that "the public sphere is an essential part of socio-political organisation because it is the place where citizens come together and express their own views in order to change the political institutions of society" (p. 78). In the current media landscape, there are three fundamental themes that influence the communicative dynamics surrounding public debate. First, the bounds of the concept of the public sphere are shifting as communication has shifted from local and national contexts to transnational and even global frameworks (Castells, 2008). Second, as is widely known, the borders between "the public" and "the private" are continually shifting, altering the conditions of public debate in today's digital communication environment. Papacharissi (2010), a digital media expert, emphasises the interconnectedness of the public and private as places of civic participation. Third, as more social media platforms make the private realm of microblogging accessible to the public, the boundaries between public and private are being contested and renegotiated. These alterations, unavoidably, have an impact on the circumstances of and for public discourse.

As a result, various sorts of contentious content now circulate globally and reach a highly specific audience that does not necessarily engage with audiences with opposing viewpoints. So, segmentation has a big effect on today's digitally driven public debate, which is made worse by algorithmic personalization and "algorithmic gatekeeping" (Bozdag, 2013; van Dijck, 2013). When these elements mix with local dynamics, they form the basis for hate speech and hate crimes. In the case of Malaysia, analysing the rise of identification, recruiting, and terrorist goals must be done in conjunction with the state's structural dynamics. The next section offers a detailed examination of the structural factors that can occasionally flow into transnational extremist terrorist organisations such as the IS.

WHICH IS MORE ISLAMIC, UMNO OR PAS?

With the installation of Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister in 1981 and the subsequent co-optation of Anwar Ibrahim from ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia) as his protégé, UMNO (the United Malaysian National Organisation) gradually acquired symbolic ascendancy over PAS (Parti Se-Islam Malaysia). The development of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the Institute for Strategic Islamic Institute Malaysia (Institut Kajian Strategik Islam Malaysia, IKSIM) in defining and interpreting texts from the Arabic world for the consumption of Malay Muslims resulted from this rivalry. In terms of Malay Muslim socialisation, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jabatan Agama Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM) is essential in shaping the rewards and sanctions for Malay Muslims in Malaysia. In quest of the ongoing fight between religious righteousness, morality, and financial socialisation by a new generation of emerging middle-class Muslims, the Muslim agency is conflicted by traditional interpretations of the Islamic way of life and the rationalisation of their newly discovered money.

It was about 1998 when PAS, led by Yusof Rawa, was contesting UMNO's concepts of asabiyyah (communalism or ethnocentrism), sekularisme (secularism), and maddiyyah (materialistic culture) (Farish, 2014). PAS gradually transformed itself into a missionary party rather than a political party under Yusof Rawa's leadership, making it a genuine competitor to UMNO's hegemony. Furthermore, Anwar Ibrahim, who rose to become Mahathir's Deputy Prime Minister, was imprisoned in September 1998 on trumped-up charges.

The conviction of Anwar Ibrahim for sodomy and corruption inspired a network of activists, NGOs (non-governmental organisations), bloggers, and the media, particularly the online media. The organisation of two successful protests in 2007 would be the apex of these informal networks: Hindraf (Hindu Rights

Action Force) on November 25, 2007, and the first Bersih action on October 10, 2007. This prompted Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, to quit. Najib Tun Razak took over as Prime Minister in 2009.

Under Najib, BN faced further challenges since he was involved in the 1MDB crisis, which was loathed by Malays who were already hostile to *maddiyah* principles (materialistic culture). Rosmah Mansor was widely criticised on social media for her liking in sophisticated and expensive luxury things even after the 2018 general elections. Pakatan Harapan (PH, The Alliance of Hope), formerly made up of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, the People's Justice Party), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and PAS, posed a significant challenge to Najib. As the unifying factor, Anwar Ibrahim was able to bring together the more liberal and democratic DAP and PKR and the more conservative Islamic PAS. When Mahathir Mohamad, the former fourth Prime Minister, launched his own party in 2015 and then went on to head the opposing pack, he became one of the elements that contributed to the demise of BN and UMNO in 2018.

After the internal party elections in PAS, the Young Turks of PAS established Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, The National Trust Party) in 2015, helmed by Mohamad Sabu, Salahuddin Ayub, and Mujahid Rawa, all of whom had previously held key positions in PAS. Others who were members of Amanah included Hasanuddin Mohd Yunus and Hasan Baharom, who are both prominent participants in Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM), a reformist Muslim organisation, and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement) (Hew, 2016). Pakatan Nasional (The National Alliance), which at that time consisted of PAS, UMNO, and BN, and Bersatu (The Malaysian United Indigenous Party), formed a new government with the King's approval by 2020 and appointed Muhyiddin Yassin as Prime Minister, this disregards the PH's government's legitimate win in 2018.

In order to achieve political legitimacy over the majority of Muslim voters, the UMNO-PAS rivalry is working together under the ethnocentric premise of safeguarding the *ummah's* (community of Muslims) interests (or in this context,

the Malay Muslims). It is critical that we attempt to draw a nexus between the state, civil society and its influence on the social construct of Malay Muslims in contemporary times.

THE ISLAMISATION OF MAHATHIR'S REGIME

Animism, local *adat* (custom), and Hinduism are all present in the localised form of Islam in the context of Malaysia (Abdullah, 1999). As part of the national battle to establish a separation between Muslims and non-Muslims, Islam became a distinguishing trait. In order to recover from the riots of 1969, UMNO resolved to promote a progressive Islam that was tolerant of diversity. When it came to gaining electoral popularity in the 1980s, even progressive and secular Malay leaders were "forced" to speak in the political language of Islam. Additionally, *dakwah* (Islamic revivalism) groups such as the ABIM, Al-Arqam (the Abode of Arqam), and others gained prominence in the 1970s among Muslim communities (Abdullah, 1999). Locals refer to these organisations as the "*dakwah* phenomenon" or "Islamic revival" because of their proclamation and proselytisation operations in metropolitan areas and at local colleges (Hassan & Zaleha, 2006).

If the political Islam of UMNO in the 1940s was anti-British colonisers, the political Islam of the 1970s was directed toward the formation of a complete multicultural solution that would address ethnic concerns in the name of modernisation and progress. The shift in tactics by UMNO signalled the beginning of PAS's campaign for a more radicalised narrative of 'complete reformation (not progressive transition) from *hadharah asabiyyah* (barbaric pre-Islamic civilisation) to *hadharah Islamiyyah* (Islamic civilization)' (Abdullah, 1999 p.266). *Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Islam* (the inculcation of Muslim ideals) was instituted by the Mahathir government in the 1980s as a reaction to this. Mahathir recruited prominent personalities such as Anwar Ibrahim, Yusuf Noor, Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Universiti Kebangsaan (National) Malaysia, and Zainal Abidin Kadir, Director of Pusat Islam (the Islamic Centre),

to dilute these *dakwah* movement leaders and their association with PAS. Additionally, the Islamic Development Centre (JAKIM) was established as the epicentre of Islamic affairs. This was the second tactic (Abdullah, 1999). The government's efforts to promote and support the *dakwah* movements have sometimes backfired on them. One of them was Arqam in the 1980s, while another was Al-Ma'unah in the year 2000. We argue that these state-led reactions and narratives that emerged as a result of the conflict, which was largely fueled by the UMNO-PAS rivalry, could be used by extremist organisations such as IS.

IS RADICALISATION IS BOLSTERED BY UMNO-PAS RIVALRY

In Malaysia, it was Yusof Rawa, via his father's printing press, then known as Syarikat Percetakan al-Rawa, who was responsible for bringing Sayyid Qutb's beliefs to the country (Farish, 2014). He wrote on the beliefs of philosophers such as Ibn Tamiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Juzi in his biweekly journal, Al-Israh, which was published throughout the 1950s. Over the course of his tenure as president, PAS was ideologically opposed to *asabiyyah* (communalism or ethnocentrism), *sekularisme* (secularism), and *maddiyyah* (materialistic culture). With the founding of the PAS in 1951, the UMNO-PAS battle for hegemonic dominance over the Malaysian state began. The love-hate relationship reached a pinnacle in 1981, thanks in part to Hadi Awang's statement (Farish 2013; Ahmad, 2020).

> *Kafir-mengkafir*[1] was crystallised as a national issue by the controversial speech delivered in April 1981 by Haji Abdul Hadi Awang, then PAS State Commissioner for Terengganu and PAS President since September 2003, in Banggol Peradong, Terengganu. This speech, infamously called Amanat Haji Hadi, outlined three major principles which governed PAS's fight against UMNO. First, PAS opposed UMNO and BN not because their names were as such, but because they had retained the colonial or infidel constitution that

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[1] 'Kafir-mengkafir refers to the trading of accusations of one another's infidelity between different groups of Malay-Muslims, each holding adamantly to its own conception of the Islamic faith' (Ahmad, 2020 p.8)

they inherited. Second, since the struggle, speeches and financial contribution of PAS members were all jihad (holy war), their deaths in the course of fighting UMNO members were as honourable martyrs. Third, one need not officially convert to other religions to become a kafir, instead, one could be thrown into infidelity by simply separating between religion and politics (Ahmad, 2020 p.9).

Hadi Awang's speech, which divided Malay voters into UMNO and PAS camps, was especially effective in rural regions, notably in Kelantan and Terengganu. For example, Mohammad Sabu was imprisoned for stirring racial discord by delivering provocative speeches in which he claimed Christian missionaries were attempting to convert Muslims (Farish, 2014). Another case in point: in 1985, Ibrahim Mahmood, also known as Ibrahim Libya, was charged with insulting Islam and encouraging revolt against the state. Ibrahim Libya was designated a martyr (*syuhada*) by the then-President of PAS, Yusof Rawa, for his battle against a *kafir* regime headed by the *Mustakabirin* (oppressive) administration. These tales of encouragement to violence serve as a supplement to transnational extremist organisations such as the Islamic State.

COMPETITION FOR SYMBOLS OF ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL POWER IN EXTREME RIGHT POLITICS

Previous assumptions about economic exclusion as a significant driver of recruitment and radicalisation were erroneous, because financially affluent segments of society have also been efficiently recruited to carry out attacks. For example, the 2019 Sri Lankan attacks on luxury hotels and Catholic churches on that fateful Easter Sunday killed or injured over 750 people, highlighting three key points: (1) governments are less effective in taking action against their own people than international agencies for political reasons; (2) the IS has evolved over time in using social media to promote extremist ideologies, fund terrorist activities, and justify their act; and (3) ability to recruit wealthy and educated Muslims for terrorist acts (Animesh, 2021).

The new spate of assaults emphasises two major points: (1) there were parallels with Malaysia before to the worldwide COVID-19 shutdown; and (2) there were coordinated transnational linkages between operators of IS-linked terrorist groups to undertake attacks. For starters, Malaysia has raised concerns about local cells feeding on each other. As in Sri Lanka in 2018, two Malaysians were apprehended attempting to carry out bomb attacks on non-Muslim places of worship (Fernandez & Lopez, 2020). Similar to the Sri Lankan case, there are indications of transnational links, with one individual apprehended in 2019 admitting to being trained by JAD (Jamaah Ansharut Daulah)—an Indonesian terrorist cell that claimed links to the 2018 Surabaya bombing in Indonesia and the 2019 Jolo Cathedral bombings in the Philippines. According to intelligence reports, this transnational link is part of a bigger grouping called Katibah Nusantara (KN), a Southeast Asian unit under IS that includes Indonesians, members from the Southern Philippines, and Malaysians. KN expanded rapidly within a year of being established in 2014, from 100 foreign fighters to 450 Indonesians and Malaysians in Iraq and Syria in less than a year (Arianti & Singh, 2015). The arrests in 2018 indicate that these already established networks were still active.

IS has also trained its guns to target young and vulnerable individuals in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore through its media wing, Al-Hayat. The similarities between the Malay and Indonesia language and culture allowing crosscutting materials to be shared to both audiences. The 'virtual caliphate' developed localised sympathy and radicalisation efforts to target the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. Examples of these online materials include, Mohd Rafi Udin of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, who was part of a Jihadi video urging people of Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines to kill off non-believers, saying '[k]ill them wherever you meet them... If you have a car, hit them... Use your weapons and knives to stab them in the chest," (Aliza, 2016). In another video, Rafi whom has since perished in Syria, gave clear warnings to the police when he was quoted saying, 'those of you in Bukit Aman, you will no longer have peace' (Aliza, 2016).

Social media recruitment tools such as films, publications, and other materials have proven to be successful drivers for some, since not only did roughly 100 Malaysians leave for Syria and Iraq, but the police were also alleged to have foiled two lone wolf attackers in 2016. In June of the same year, Malaysia witnessed her first successful attack in the Klang Valley. How does the IS narrative of fighting against the *kafir* state connect to a vulnerable minority of Malays?

CHINESE "KAFIR," CHRISTIAN "BOGEYMAN," AND HINDU TEMPLES

Discourses have a significant role in shaping ideas. Scholars have posed the question, "Should Malaysia Expect an Islamist Backlash?" (Serina, 2018, p.1) According to Serina (2018), the Malays were more upset about rising living costs, the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the former Prime Minister's (Najib) 1MDB scandal. This anger helped the PH government win the General Elections, and it shouldn't be assumed that Malay voters voted along ethnic lines. Other factors that contributed to the Malays voting for the PH government include: 1) the inclusion of Parti Bersatu (PPBM) and Amanah and Tun Dr. Mahathir (Mahathir) as the vanguard of Malays; (2) elitist factionalism within the BN – particularly UMNO; (3) corruption skirting the top brass of the party (Najib Tun Razak's 1MDB scandal); and (4) and the advancement of technology that has influenced the "silent majority".

When the PH government took over from the BN by winning the 2018 elections and overcoming the obstacles that favoured the BN government, fears about the DAP were exacerbated. According to Serina (2018), after the PH government was elected, the Malays thought that it was "dominated by the Chinese" and that it was a "liberal" government that "gives too many possibilities" to non-Malays (p.1). Narratives as articulated by former Education Minister and current Member of Parliament (MP), Mazlee Malik, in an academic paper, using the term "Kafir Harbi" used by the Mufti of Pahang, saying that it was a "sin" to support DAP since it was opposed to the implementation of hudud in Malaysia, is, in essence, hate speech (Mazlee, 2017). "Unfortunately, given the

current deepening racial and religious antagonism in Malaysia and the rise of IS globally, this sort of practise does not bode well for a nation that is pursuing urgent and critical nation-building," Mazlee wrote (Malik, 2017 p.7). These narratives contribute to IS's vision of establishing a pure Islamic state free of infidel non-Muslims. Besides, the Chinese "kafir", the Christian bogeyman, was another narrative commonly used by the state to "other" the minorities partly contributed by the history and development of Islam and Christianity in the peninsular.

Segments of Malay Muslims that engage in *dakwah* (preaching) often clash with the Evangelical Christians in areas concerning proselytisation of non-believers. Article 11 states that "every person has the right to profess and practice his religion", while the individual states have the rights to restrict the propagation of any religious doctrines among people professing Islam (Fernando, 2006). Both the Christian and Islamic groups have networks that are global in nature.

The mega-evangelical churches in[2] have similarly extensive networks. In the Weberian sense of charisma, the pastor runs his church in a highly authoritarian manner. His divine calling is to preach, pastor, and organise an army for the last days (Chong, 2015). The Assemblies of God (AOG) established the Bible College in Malaya in 1960, resulting in a rapid rise of AOG churches in the country and many younger Chinese Malaysians joining these megachurches. The DAP government have been continuously been accused of Christianising the state, but link between conspiracy has never been proven.

On the Islamic front, an example is the less political *tabligh*[3] movement that has far reaching networks which includes, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and its core base located in India. The 1960s also saw the formation of organic movements such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Darul Iqram, which, according to

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[2] Megachurches are Protestant churches with a weekly attendance of at least 2,000 parishioners.

[3] A missionary movement that aspires to bring the Muslims together and practice the faith in accordance with Prophet Muhammad's teachings.

Bustamam (2008), played a role in organising themselves, becoming involved in business, and making inroads with aspirations to influence the state by putting forth their members to stand for elections. The state jealousy responded by forming its own institutions and Islamic civil society organisations, with visions to teach "proper" Islamic philosophies, appropriation of demeanour and morals according to Islamic teachings, and proselytisation of atheists. JAKIM was founded in 1968, YADIM (The Malaysian Islamic Dakwah Foundation) in 1974, and PERKIM (Muslim Welfare Organisation of Malaysia) in 1975. These state-funded institutions will continue to expand and, at times, compete for a presence in both urban and rural areas. Similar patterns of development can be seen in Malaysian protestant churches. Competition for power and influence among Protestant pastors can also be seen when pastors seek endorsements from Western televangelists as validation of their theological understanding. This historic competition to convert non-believers in the past, does playout in the national political landscape in contemporary times.

In September 2019, the Deputy President of Parti-Se Islam Malaysia (PAS) claimed that former Deputy Youth and Sports Minister Steven Sim's speech at his church validated his party's efforts to Christianise the state (Syed, 2019). This claim was made by Dr Kamarul Zaman Yusoff of Universiti Utara Malaysia (Northern University of Malaysia), who was previously a fellow of the JAKIM-linked Institut Kajian Strategik Islam Malaysia (IKSIM, Islamic Strategic Studies of Malaysia), which was founded by Najib Tun Razak (former Prime Minister of Malaysia) to promote Islam's stature in the state. IKSIM has made numerous allegations in the past to discredit the then-Pakatan Harapan (PH) government in order to strengthen the BN's Islamic image. One such claim was that the term "Harapan" (Hope) was a covert Christian symbolism with evangelical underpinnings (Ahmad, Che, 2020). Aside from the state, powerful leaders have made claims, adding to the Christian bogeyman narrative. To cement these narratives, the state sometimes resorts to extreme measures, such as using law and enforcement.

The use of the term "Allah" for an example has been a contentious issue, and the state has yet to clarify whether non-Muslims are officially permitted to use the term since 2009. 300 bibles were confiscated in 2014 because they contained the word "Allah" (BBC, 2014). Bibles in the Indonesian language intended for Borneo have also been confiscated in the past because they contained the word "Allah." Some Muslim academics I interviewed claimed that Christians are discouraged from using the term "Allah" because Muslims do not believe in the concept of the Trinity, and the idea of "humanising" God by claiming he had a son is unacceptable. The "Christian Bogeyman" paranoia was at it heights when the Penang State Mufti, Wan Salim Wan Mohd Noor, intervened to request that local state officials fix their lights so that they do not reflect a cross (Danial, 2019). These symbolic suspicions extend beyond the use of words and architecture but influences the interfaith interactions between Muslims and Christians of Malaysia. In 2018, PAS Youth chief Muhammad Khalil Abdul Hadi warned Muslims not to celebrate Christmas because it violates Islamic teachings, adding that "Christmas has an element of *syirik* (idolatry)". The narrative that the "Christian Bogeyman" is constantly attempting to undermine Islam and proselytise Muslims has spread beyond the pages of newspapers, social media posts, and political speeches. It has at times pushed groups and individuals to assume upon themselves the call for action. In the year 2000, Dr Joe Fernandez, a medical practitioner cum politician (state assemblyman for Lunas, Kedah) owning a chain of hospitals was murdered by a local militant group called Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia (KMM) over an unsubstantiated claim and rumour that he aided and abetted the proselytisation of Muslims (Ramendran, 2019). There was also an instance when a university lecturer made a police complaint in 2017 that a DAP politician was attempting to proselytise Malays (Embun, 2017). It is also important to mention that the disappearance of Pastor Raymond Koh, activist Amri Che Mat, and former Muslim converts, Pastor Joshua Hilmy and his wife Ruth Sitepu, is still a mystery (Hidir, 2022). While the government appears to be less interested in investigating and fully exposing the "missing" puzzles of these individuals, it is also feeding into IS narratives of larger narratives of animosity towards the Christians.

The trends in Sri Lanka, Surabaya, Indonesia, and Jolo, the Philippines indicate that Christians, particularly churches, are increasingly becoming targets of Muslim terrorists in Southeast Asia. Surabaya's case is particularly disturbing because it involves a family of five, including the wife and their four children, who carried out three separate attacks on three different churches (Lamb, 2018). While these narratives play an important role in shaping minds, one of the main enablers remains the actual recruiters of youths to carry out acts of extremism for the larger terrorist organisation.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE IS RECRUITERS: THE SCHOOL DROPOUT 'JIHADIST' CELEBRITY AND UNIVERSITY LECTURER

IS recruiters have been inventive to varying degrees, radicalising and recruiting people from many walks of life. Their recruitment techniques include promoting propaganda and ideology via Dabiq, an online magazine. In an effort to soften its image, Dabiq frequently included pictures of kittens and honey bees (Dearden, 2016). Between 2014 and 2016, Dabiq published 15 issues, all of which were produced by the Al Hayat Media Centre. Rumiyah replaced Dabiq in September 2016, and it was published in English, French, German, Russian, Indonesian, and Uyghur. The main difference between Dabiq and Rumiyah was that the former focused more on encouraging Muslims to go to Iraq and Syria as foreign fighters, while the latter focused more on encouraging lone wolf attacks all over the world (Abumelhim & Radaideh, 2022).

Al-Hayat was also producing well-produced propaganda video that mainly catered to Western recruits and sympathisers that portrayed life 'in the IS as spiritually and existentially fulfilling, while simultaneously decrying the West as secular, immoral, and criminal' and those videos also tapped '[...]into the frustrations of Western Muslims, al-Hayat was shown to deliver a sophisticated and legitimate message that may play a role in the larger radicalisation process' (Macnair, & Frank, 2017 p.234). In the context of Malaysia, two individuals that have since perished were the main terrorist recruiters deserves closer scrutiny.

'Jihadist Celebrity' – Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi

Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed (nicknamed "Wandy") was born in Malacca's Alor Gajah district. Wandy's case is concerning because it was believed that he had inadequate understanding of Islam and that his neighbours thought he was a disturbed youngster (Jani, 2016). On June 28, 2016, he commanded the "Gagak Hitam" cell, which recruited and radicalised the assailants who carried out the Klang Valley's first and only successful IS assault. Wanndy claims that he was radicalised through Facebook (Jani, 2016). His constraints have not prevented him from acquiring individuals from a variety of professions, including bankers, engineers, and even a school guidance counsellor (The News Straits Times, 2016).

Mohamed Danny Mohamed Jedi, the brother of Mohamed Wanndy Mohamed Jedi, was able to earn at least RM8000 a month and amass RM100,000 in donations from his "cell" members and sympathisers (Gunaratna, 2017). His brother was arrested in 2017 on charges of terror financing and the misuse of those funds for his family's financial needs. In order to avoid capture by the police, the "Gagak Hitam" Wandy led was divided into smaller groups and used dead drops for both money drops and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Another group that relied on social media before Wanndy was "Generasi alGhuroba," which has been around since 2013 and has the maximum allowed number of friends on Facebook, of which there were two: "Malaysian Citizens for Islamic Revolution" (Generation of the Foreigners), with a total of 5000 members, and "Rakyat Malaysia Bersama Revolusi Islam" (Jani, 2016). On Facebook in 2015, Wanndy had become the most prominent influencer providing updates on the movements and lifestyles of extremist groups in Syria, which were primarily Arabic-speaking for a Malay audience. Wanndy was one of the most effective IS propagandists in Malaysia, enlisting and radicalising a new generation of operatives and supporters to raise funds and to carry out the country's first-ever IS terrorist attack.

Academic Recruiter to Emir of Southeast Asia

Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, a senior lecturer at the University of Malaya (UM), was revealed to be a wanted militant who allegedly used his position to entice students into militant activities (The Malaysian Insider, 2014). Intelligence officials said he was in charge of financing the Marawi control centre (Rozanna & Sipalan, 2017). He was teaching young Muslim students at a school when he began memorising the Quran in Batu Caves, Klang Valley (Rozanna & Sipalan, 2017). In the late 1990s, Mahmud attended Pakistan's Islamabad Islamic University and learned how to make IEDs at an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan (Rozanna & Sipalan, 2017). Dr. Mahmud left for the southern Philippines with UM's stationary shop owner, Mohd Najib Husen (killed in Basilan in 2015), and municipal council worker, Muhammad Joraimee Awang Raimee (killed in Marawi City in 2017). In a region with three active hotspots of armed conflict—the southern provinces of Thailand, Arakan in Myanmar, and Marawi in the Philippines—arrests of Malaysians conspiring with these three groups have been a recurring pattern. Dr. Mahmud is an example of someone who became radicalised and went on to play a crucial role in the Marawi terrorist incident.

CONCLUSIONS

There are a few conclusions that can be drawn from the Malaysian case. To begin, the Malaysian case demonstrates how local populist narratives spawned by four decades of rivalry between UMNO and PAS created cleavages for the exploitation of IS in order to establish a global caliphate offering a purist interpretation of Islam. As this descriptive analysis lays the case that the contention to capture and dominate the public sphere by UMNO and PAS have given birth to civil society organisations and institutions that have inevitably promoted echo chambers of exclusivity. Those who were susceptible to these narratives included a university lecturer and a school dropouts who acted as recruiters and eventually rose to prominence as IS leaders in Southeast Asia and Syria.

Second, Malaysia must improve its coordination of information between inter- and intra-state institutions such as the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), Immigration, the Home Ministry, the Defense Ministry, and the Ministry of Education. A good example was the rush to establish an online counter-messaging centre. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Centre (RDC3), the Royal Malaysian Police's Counter-Messaging Centre (CMC), and the Ministry of Defense's Malaysia Institute of Defense and Security (Midas), which took over from the now-defunct King Salman Centre for International Peace, are all examples of non-centralised measures. We advocate for the government that is soon going to be elected in 2022 to re-examine the need for the NAP. A clear demarcation of boundaries and scopes of responsibility would be highly welcomed.

Third, more coordination is required at the ASEAN level because Malaysia, for instance, has arrested Malaysian and foreign individuals here in Malaysia (Nadirah, 2017; Fernandez et al., 2019). These arrests highlight the importance of government-to-government information sharing units, which should be established through existing supranational frameworks such as ASEAN. The Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) is an example of such initiatives. When it comes to security issues related to counterterrorism, it is recommended that the state act with regard to the intelligence of sovereign states. Similar to Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (JI), Malaysia has allowed Zakir Naik to make statements that effectively adapt polemics of global "Muslimness" to the local context, stroking in and out group hate speech against non-Muslims.

Finally, we advocate for the establishment of an online ASEAN-way (ASEAN-Action Plan) project that examines extremism holistically. The platform should include all relevant ministries from all sovereign governments, establishing a safe public sphere to combat violent extremism. This and other projects to create a transnational virtual public sphere would be far more effective than individual governments combating violent extremism through their respective nation-states. Most importantly, it should be comprehensive

rather than focusing solely on Islamic terrorism, as this would eventually breed Islamophobia. Concurrently, information cooperation between governments will enable ASEAN countries to counter narratives targeting soft targets such as houses of worship in the future. Importantly, by analysing regional trends, the police and army can be better prepared for future soft targets.

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"THE RELIGION OF UNBELIEF IS ONE": UNDERSTANDING THE VIOLENT EXTREMIST DISCOURSE FROM A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Noor Aqsa Nabila Binti Mat Isa and Johann Wolfgang Unger

ABSTRACT

Past scholarly literature discussing violent extremist ideologies has been well-documented. Although these studies have managed to point out what the ideologies are, with discussions of the general strategies used (e.g. holy texts taken out of context, the binary 'good vs evil' narrative), not so much of attention has been on how these strategies are executed and why. Therefore, in this article we attempt to address this gap by using a linguistic approach, specifically the critical discourse analysis to discuss the multimodal elements (textual, auditory and visual features) used to construct certain ideologies. Understanding the historical, political or social contexts of the elements used may help to demystify the ideologies of the group under study (Daesh) and help to better understand the ways these contexts have been manipulated to appeal to the target audiences. To do this, Reisigl and Wodak's (2016) discourse-historical approach (DHA) to critical discourse studies is employed. Significant findings include Daesh's enemies being projected as aggressors and warmongers that provoke hostilities in the so-called Islamic State, as well as the negative representation of the wider Muslims which contradicts the typical "us vs. them" dichotomy. Ultimately, this research aims to further a detailed understanding of digitally mediated recruitment strategies from a linguistic perspective which may help to reduce the risk of radicalisation among vulnerable groups.

INTRODUCTION

Founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2013, the violent extremist group, Daesh (also referred to as IS, ISIS or ISIL) has been one of the most notorious terrorist groups that is globally known for their violent ideologies and actions. Despite these facts, their recruitment strategy has been a success, which has seen many individuals from various nations joining their ranks. Key to this is their slick method to engage more people with their extreme narratives on digital platforms. A lot of research has been done to look at such narratives, however it is apparent from the literature that not many studies have looked at these from the linguistic viewpoints. Specifically in the area of (critical) discourse studies that we specialize in, research to this point has explored social and political issues in various discourses (i.e. racist, immigrant, right wing discourses, etc.); however, little attention has been paid to works within the violent extremist (henceforth VE) discourse until Daesh was formed in 2014. Previous studies related to this discourse often look at the media representations or political debates and speeches about VE-related events (e.g. Boukala, 2016; Sarfo & Krampa, 2013; Setyoko, 2017).

Among the studies that employ discursive approaches to examine VE materials, KhosraviNik and Amer (2022) examine videos produced by Daesh' al-Hayat Media Center using the social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS) approach; Rasoulikolamaki and Kaur (2021) conduct micro-level analysis of actor and action representation in Daesh's Dabiq magazines; Baker and Vessey (2018) conduct a corpus driven discourse analysis on English and French extremist materials; and Wignell et al. (2018) examine the relations between images and text in Daesh's magazines from the discourse semantic perspective.

In this study, we employ an approach from the critical discourse studies (CDS) to examine the selected VE data. Existing overviews of CDS (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; van Leeuwen, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2016) suggest that this field seeks to transcend the linguistic elements of a discourse by incorporating social theories in order to explain how and why the discourse is produced. This approach attempts to demystify ideologies and power in discourse (Wodak, 2013).

Additionally, CDS works to uncover "manipulation in texts" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 19) and "social inequality" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.2) that are constructed in a way to serve the interest of the text producers or more powerful agents. Kress (1993) and van Leeuwen (1993) extend the notion of CDS to include non-linguistic elements. It allows for the investigation of the ways that text producers use various semiotic resources (apart from verbal texts) to communicate particular ideas or values and to realise their goals.

In this article, we address the above-mentioned gap by offering linguistic analyses to reveal the aspects of textual, auditory and visual features of the selected data that are constructed to appeal to Daesh's target audiences. We examine Daesh's use of multimodal strategies in putting together various elements to disseminate their messages, in terms of how they construct the identities of the different actors present in the data, as well as how they justify the claims they make from the critical discourse perspective.

DATA

One of Daesh's key narratives to attract recruits is the binary 'good vs. evil' narrative (El-Badawy et al., 2015). Therefore in this article, we focus on the case study of Daesh's recruitment video entitled 'The Religion of Unbelief is One', which primarily sees the group demonizing their enemies. Due to this small sample size, we will not claim our data to be representative. Having said that, although the generalisability of our findings is not guaranteed, we hope that the analyses of the selected data can provide insights into the different ways that Daesh use for recruitment purposes.

The multimodal content (the audio, visual and textual features) of the video was transcribed, translated and categorised into different groups, which in this case contain the general taxonomy of the video (i.e. see Figure 1 for semiotic categories and examples from the data) as well as the topics that are talked about in the video. We conducted further analyses on these elements using Reisigl and Wodak's (2016) discourse-historical approach (DHA) to CDS.

The key analytical concept is discursive strategies. In general, the five discursive strategies intend to explain how elements in texts are positioned and labelled either negatively or positively (via nomination and predication strategies), how the treatment of the elements (often the 'others') are justified (via argumentation strategies), how they are viewed or in other words, from which point of view they are expressed (via perspectivation strategies), and lastly in what manner they are represented (via intensification and mitigation strategies). For this article, we chose to focus particularly on strategies that appear as the most salient in the data: the nomination, predication and argumentation strategies, both in verbal and visual forms as illustrated in Figure 2.
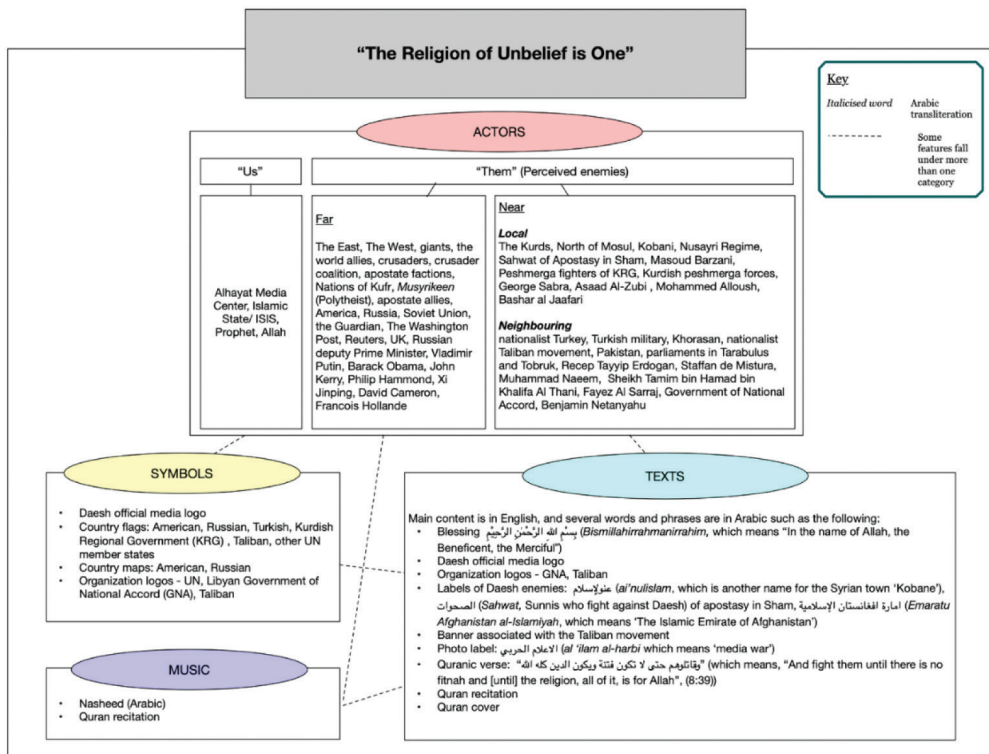
Figure 1. The Semiotic Categories of 'The religion of Unbelief is One' and Their Specific Realizations
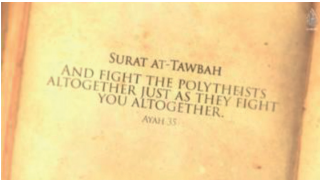
Discursive strategy	Verbal	Visual
Nomination strategy: How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions related to the discourse in question named and referred to linguistically?	• apostate factions • nations of "Kufr" *(unbelievers)*	
Prediction strategy: What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/ events and processes?	Enemies depicted as warmongers e.g. "U.S. established Libyan outposts with eye toward offensive against Islamic State"	
Argumrntation strategy: What arguments are employed in the discourse?	Topos of authority using the "voice" of Allah (through Quranic verses) to express obligation as Muslims: "The Islmic State's approach in dealing with the apostate factions and all nations of Kufr in general is based upon a firm foundation of which is the statement of Allah"	

Figure 2. Discursive Strategies in Verbal and Visual Forms
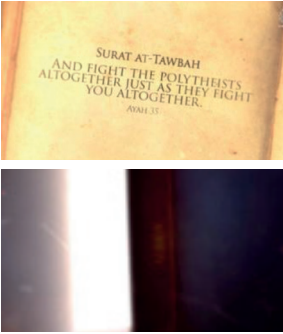
Apart from these strategies, the DHA also examines intertextuality and interdiscursivity in which it looks at the "relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p.27). The use of intertextuality is highly frequent in Daesh materials and therefore became one of the primary focuses in our analysis; it is a method that connects a text to another through referencing as a way for producers to influence their audience's interpretation of the text. They can be recontextualised or de-contextualised depending on the text purposes. Reisigl and Wodak describe the former as "transferring given elements to new contexts" (p.28) and the latter as "[elements]… taken out of a specific context" (p.28). After identifying instances of intertextuality, we examine the ways that Daesh recontexualise or decontextualise them for their own agenda.

APOSTASY AND NATIONALISM

According to Reisigl and Wodak (2016), the representation of actors in a text can be observed from the ways they are framed. In the selected video, Daesh often seem to label their enemies as apostates (e.g. 'Sahwat' (Sunnis against Daesh) of apostasy, apostate parliament, apostate factions) and nationalists (e.g. nationalist Turkey, nationalist Taliban movement, a united nationalist government). Apostasy is highly controversial among Muslims as it "conveys the sense of turning away from Islam and faith after...having accepted them in accordance with what God (Allah) has commanded" (Alalwani, 2011, p. 7). Turning one's back on Islam insinuates a sense of disloyal and betrayal to Allah, and according to Alalwani and Mcnamara (2016) this has often been associated with death penalty. Having studied the Quran in detail, Alalwani states that committing apostasy is often linked to punishment by death although it is clearly stated in the holy text that "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith," (2:256) and that there is clearly no indication of such punishment in the text. Alalwani further explains that in reference to the historical events involving Prophet Muhammad and his followers as stated in the Quran where there were

"the killing of apostates, these were instances in which apostasy was coupled with numerous other crimes" (p.11) such as "war crimes of murder [and] not due to their apostacy" (p.9). In other words, it was a war in which the prophet and his tribes responded to the fight against them by the apostates. Taking the Quranic verses and explaining this event out of its historical context, Daesh is attempting to create resemblance to the past to illustrate that there is a need to fight against these "apostates" who are now fighting against them. According to Schmid (2015), this is the evidence of "time- and context-specific [taken] out of context and taken literally and applied ad hoc and at will to fit new situations" (p. 6). He asserts that a Quranic verse is meant to refer only to the time when it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in order to address any issue that arose at that particular point of time.

Additionally, this debasing label is given in relation to the actors' actions that are depicted negatively through predicational strategies. In Extract 1, the perceived enemies are described as *fighting* against Daesh – that they are warmongers. The use of the verb "fight" in this context suggests the use of physical force associated with war and violence to defeat Daesh. Images of the enemies' military vehicles are also used to demonstrate the destructive nature of the enemies (see Figure 3). In retaliation, Daesh position themselves as the victims of war that have to fight back against these enemies to protect themselves and to achieve their "ultimate goal of *jihad*" which is highlighted at the end of the video. By referring to a Quranic verse, Daesh attempts to legitimise their action as one that is commanded by Allah through this verse. More on the use of Quranic verses as a source for justification is discussed in the subsequent section.

Screenshot	Visual description	Audio/ Spoken text
	Quran appears, shining Its opens with blinding light from inside	(Daesh's approach in dealing with all of their enemies) is based upon firm foundation of which is the statement of Allah.
	In the Quran it says, SURAT [Chapter] AT-TAWBAH AND FIGHT THE POLYTHEISTS ALTOGETHER JUST AS THEY FIGHT YOU ALTOGETHER. AYAH [Verse] 35 Then, the binding light flashes again and the Quran closes	And fight the *Musyrikeen* [Polytheists] altogether, just as they **fight** you altogether

Extract 1
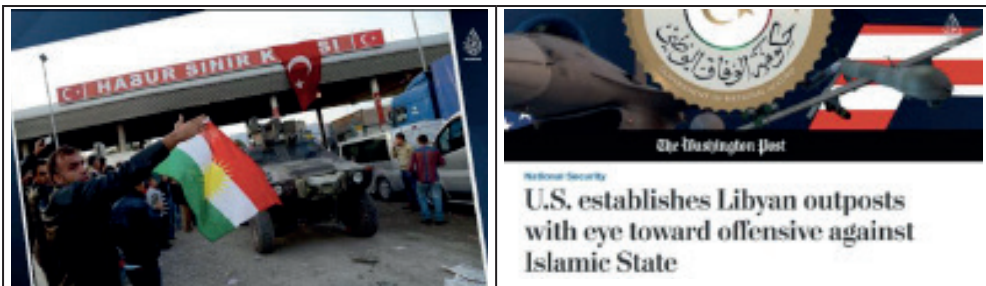
Figure 3. Images of Enemies' Military Vehicles

Interestingly, the images that co-occur with the label 'apostate' always depict the association between the Muslim-majority nations whom they call the "apostates" with the UN (see Figure 4). For instance, country or movement leaders in Muslim countries are shown to be shaking hands with the UN representatives – a gesture to demonstrate agreement or cooperation (see Figure 5). Specifically, the visual in Figure 4 shows that the UN logo is backgrounded and labelled "NATIONS OF *KUFR*" (unbelievers), and the images of six (former) non-muslim political leaders (e.g. Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, Benjamin Netanyahu, David Cameron, Francois Hollande) are foregrounded. Interestingly, in the "hands" of Obama are the flags of Muslim-majority countries, which means that Muslims can also be labelled as *kufr* by Daesh (as also reflected in the title of the video "unbelief") – this includes those who fight against them and do not side with their world views. According to Baker and Vessey (2018), this label is one of the many derogatory terms referring to the non-Muslims and one of the most frequently used terms relating to the concept of disbelief in English VE magazines (e.g. Daesh' Dabiq and Al-Qaeda's Inspire). The inclusion of both the political leaders and the flags in a single visual suggests a link between the two, which is then followed by them being set on fire. The use of flame signifies hell in the Islamic context; according to Rustomji (2012), fire is mentioned in various Quranic verses to refer to "a gruesome place of punishment"(p. 117). Therefore, by depicting the actors as being "on fire", it symbolises them being burned in hell.

Figure 4. Daesh's Perceived Enemies Labelled As 'Nations of Kufr'

Figure 5. Images of Different Country Leaders Shaking Hands

The analyses also reveal the association of Daesh's perceived enemies with nationalism. One of the highly salient symbols in the materials used to talk about this is the symbol 'flag'. According to Elgenius (2011), national flags represent "historic territory, independence and nationhood... (that) *authenticate boundaries* between those who belong and those who do not" (p. 2-3). Daesh also assign this meaning to their enemies (i.e. Turkey and the Taliban) through the symbol of these enemies' flags – they see it as a negative term which symbolizes incooperation to establish an Islamic State despite them coming from Muslim-majority countries. Examples from the data are the use of the label 'nationalist', accompanied by the flags representing their enemies that emphasise their refusal to join Daesh.

Taking the Taliban movement as an example, their agenda seems to be connected mainly to Afghanistan in that they aim to free the country of foreign forces (Ayman, 2013). This contradicts Daesh's aim to create one (borderless) Islamic state encompassing all Muslim countries. The conflict between the two began when Daesh announced its expansion into Khorasan, Afghanistan early 2015. The refusal of the Taliban to cooperate with Daesh and their determination to protect only their country leads to Daesh labelling them, as well as Turkey (see Extract 2), as nationalists. This is evident in the video when Daesh crosses out the word 'Islamic' (in Arabic) from Taliban's other name 'The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' and replaces it with 'Nationalist' (see Extract 3 and Figure 6). By using the word 'Nationalist', Daesh may be suggesting that the Taliban has deviated from its "Islamic" pursuance that is supposed to align with theirs; that is to establish an Islamic State.

Screenshot	Visual description	Audio/ Spoken test
	The moon and the star on the Turkish flag appears - then the star changes colour from red to yellow and has more points that resembles the star on the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG) flag,.	And who would've thought that
	Then appears the image of the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shaking hands with Iraqi Kurdish regional President Masoud Barzani (left) at the Presidential Palace in Ankara Turkey on 23 August 2016.	**nationalist** Turkey would abandon its principles
	The Kurds (Kobane's Kurdish defenders) in Turkey are shown celebrating the arrival of heavily armed Peshmerga fighters of KRG by waving the KRG's flag at Turkish-Iraqi border on October 29, 2014. The joined militias defend the Syrian border town of Kobane from Daesh (Akegin, 2014)	throwing them aside as they ally with those who pose the most dangerous threat to its national security - the Kurds.

Extract 2

Screenshot	Visual description	Audio/ Spoken test
	On the banner at the top: [RIGHT]صوت الجهاد *Soutul Jihad*, which means "the voice of jihad") is crossed out [CENTER]Taliban logo and the label "امارة افغانستان الإسلامية" (*Emaratu Afghanistan al Islamiyah*, which translate to "The Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan") with the Arabic "Islamic" being crossed out and replaced with the word "Nationalist" in English. On top of it in the yellow Arabic font is a Quranic verse (8:39) which means "And fight them untill there is no *fitnah* and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah". [LEFT] Taliban flag flying	and in Khorasan where the **nationalist** Taliban movement has professed time and again that it would never negotiate with the crusader agent - Afghan government

Extract 3

Figure 6. The Taliban Labelled as 'Nationalist"

The Taliban is also described as being inconsistent and weak in their principles to "never negotiate" with the Afghan government despite having "professed time and again" that they would not do so. Following the overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001, the then-government that took over was struggling to oust Taliban forces that were still powerful in certain provinces (Weigand, 2017) and to do this, they received military aid from the US. When Daesh took over Khorasan, they were subject to multiple offensives from the Taliban and the US-backed Afghan government (Comerford, 2017), which they perceive as a coalition against them. To prove the existence of this coalition, Daesh include an image as the evidence of the Taliban intending to open a political office in Qatar (see Figure 7), that may demonstrate their willingness to have a peaceful resolution with the Afghan government and foreign forces. However, this legitimisation strategy by the Taliban has been recontextualised by Daesh as an aggressive action or as a sign that the Taliban is cooperating with their enemies such as the West and the Afghan government who are "directing their weapons" towards them.

Figure 7. The Taliban Representative, Muhammad Naeem During A Press Conference At The Official Opening of Their Office (Bureau) In Doha, Qatar in 2013

JUSTIFICATION OF CLAIM AND ACTION

In the instances shown earlier, there is evidence of Daesh's use of intertexts to justify their claims, as well as their past and future actions. The first noticeable references are made to political contexts that briefly mention the disputes between the enemies, that eventually turn into coalitions against Daesh. Examples are the cold war between Russian and the US that involves "threats of nuclear war" as described by Daesh, the dispute between Turkey and the Kurds following World War 1 due to the Kurds' refusal to unify with Turkey in forming a single national identity, and the five-year long civil war between Nusayri (Assad) regime and the Syrian "Sahwat" (Sunnis against Daesh) following clashes between Sunni and Shia muslim. All this verbal information is then coupled with visual references to online news articles (e.g. The Guardian articles entitled "Russia and US 'planning military coordination against Isis in Syria'" and "Turkey to allow Kurdish pershmerga across its territory to fight in Kobani", see Figure 8) as well as images of leaders shaking hands (see Figure 5) not only to prove and confirm the alliances but also to project themselves as the weaker agent that is under attack by these coalitions.
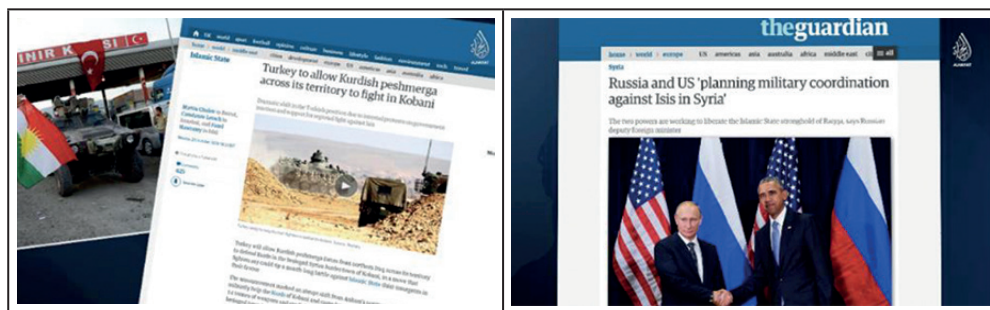

Figure 8. Online News Articles As Intertextual References

Further analysis of the Guardian article concerning the US and Russia reveals that the image used has been altered; the original image was of "Syrian army soldiers [firing] a rocket at Isis positions in Raqqa, Syria" (Wintour, 2016) (see Figure 9). Daesh replace this image with an image of Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin shaking hands in front of their country flags at the UN General

Assembly in 2015. This altered image is used to enhance the title, which is to show the cooperation (signified by the handshake) between the US and Russia to fight against Daesh. In brief, the intertextual references to the articles indicate Daesh's attempt to justify their claims (that they are under coalition attacks) by demonstrating that most messages conveyed are "truthful" in general terms and not only from their perspective.

▲ Syrian army soldiers fire a rocket at Isis positions in Raqqa, Syria. Photograph: Alexander Kots/AP

Figure 9. Original Image In The Guardian Article

Furthermore, Daesh also use a considerable number of Quranic verses throughout their recruitment materials to justify their actions. According to Frissen et al. (2018), most cited chapters and verses from the Quran have been carefully selected and the group's "ideology may be based on a cut-and-paste version of Islam" (p. 499). In the case of the selected video, Daesh use Chapter At-Tawbah: verse 36 (which they mistakenly describe as verse 35),

that is "based upon a firm foundation of which is the statement of Allah" (i.e. the Quran) to inspire the Muslim audience to attack their enemies. This verse is translated from Arabic to English, and is depicted both visually, and audibly (i.e. recitation of the verse). As is the case with other Quranic verses quoted by Daesh in their materials, this specific verse has also been misused and explained out of its historical context to fit the group's agenda. Frissen et al. (2018) finds that the chapter called Surat At-Tawbah has been cited the most in Daesh's Dabiq magazines – it specifically talks about "(1) the conduct of war, (2) the relationship with opponents during peacetime, and (3) the fight against 'idolatrous Arabs' and the 'People of the Book'" (p. 496). The cited verse refers to the aggression towards the Muslims by the Meccans who had broken treaties with them, hence giving these Muslims the right of defence. However, Daesh use it to declare a war not only on the foreign coalition attacks against them, but also on all 'the others' whom they perceive as not following their version of Islam.

Additionally, by using the "voice" of Allah, Daesh attempt to express their obligation as Muslims as commanded by Allah in the Quran (Baker & Vessey, 2018). This citation is a form of argumentative strategy whereby a reference to authority (Allah) is made as a way of providing evidence for one's claim. Reisigl and Wodak term this type of argumentation as a topos of authority in which, "X is right or X has to be done or X has to be omitted because A (= an authority) says that it is right or that is has to be done or that it has to be omitted". In this context, Daesh claims that fighting against the unbelievers has to be done because Allah said that it was right and had to be done.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Various actors included in the data are mainly Daesh's adversaries; therefore, it is not surprising that they have been labelled and described negatively (via nomination and predication strategies). What may be unexpected is the depiction of the Muslims who one may assume that Daesh would consider as being part of them (in-group, i.e. part of the "same religion", Islam) and thus

being portrayed positively, but the analyses show that such is not the case. Daesh categorise the Muslims who do not subscribe to their ideologies in the same group as the known enemies, the non-Muslims by labelling all of them as "apostate factions" and "Nations of *Kufr*", in which the terms apostate and *kufr* 'disbeliever' in the Quran only apply to the non-Muslims in the Islamic historical battles who were in a war against the Muslims. In addition to this, the neighbouring Muslim-majority countries have been described as nationalists who, instead of joining Daesh to establish an Islamic State, form alliances to fight against the group.

The narrative concerning foreign coalitions against Daesh implies that they have been targets and victims of war, therefore they ought to do something in order not to be further victimized. One of the methods of persuasion to garner support against the coalitions is through the use of theological argument supported by Quranic verse whereby using such text may show that the idea of retaliation does not come from them alone, but rather from the "statements of Allah" which therefore need to be carried out. Here, the evident use of intertextual references such as the holy texts and images or articles taken from other non-Daesh sources have enabled Daesh to deliver their ideologies while also showing support to their claims from others' quoted perspectives, i.e. through these (manipulated) intertexts.

In conclusion, the understanding of why all these multimodal elements are used and depicted in various ways may not be achieved if a critical analysis of the context surrounding these elements is not applied. In other words, these elements are better understood and explained if one knows why they are likely to have been included and at whom a particular message is targeted. In the case of the selected video, it is apparent that the content may appeal to potential recruits who may feel the need to fight alongside Daesh against the coalitions in order to protect the Muslims in conflict zones. We hope to reveal how the wider societies can be or have been manipulated, and eventually distance themselves from violent ideologies.

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