



## **Counter-Productive Countering-Violent-Extremism Initiatives: The Case of Malaysia**

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### **[ Abstract ]**

This study seeks to examine how the West, particularly United States (US), influences the narratives about terrorism, radicalism, and combating violent extremism (CVE) in Muslim majority nations such as Malaysia. We contend that some local institutions and researchers in Malaysia may have assumed the Faustian bargain by agreeing with the Western narrative that Islam's teachings promote violence and extremism in order to meet the demands of survival, whether it be funding for everyday operations or meeting the demands of universities or research institutions to sustain themselves and meet their performance indicators. We conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) from 2001 to 2021 and used Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to understand the role of the US in purposefully supporting workshops and research activities of particular institutions with the intent to influence national discourse on securitization and prospective policy implications. More importantly, we wish to alert Malaysian policymakers to pay particular attention and scrutinize ongoing programs such as

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the "Building Community Resilience" as these may inadvertently foster Islamophobia.

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## I . Introduction

Since the 1970s, there has been debate on the role of foreign and state-financed institutions in defining and constructing the "scientific paradigm" (Useem 1976). A "scientific paradigm" is a set of assumptions broadly shared by members of a scientific field that specifies the discipline's state of knowledge, research methods, and priority areas for future theoretical and empirical investigation (Useem 1976). Useem (1976) says that federal funding affects (1) the content and methodology of social scientists' research; (2) how open social scientists are to government influence; and (3) is a by-product of federal investment in social research.

We argue that the demands of achieving the expectations of key performance indicators (KPIs) among Malaysian academicians can be overbearing and in meeting the capitalistic demands of attracting foreign funding, it has direct implications on research outputs with regard to terrorism, radicalism, and extremism heavily concentrated on the Muslim community and the "Jihadist opponent." Indicators from the West prove that Islamic terrorism has been misguided with myths and misinformation. Terrorism, for example, has been portrayed in the Netherlands as a problem originating from Islam that must be tackled by the "Muslim community," and that this community must clearly adhere to Western principles by distancing themselves from the "Jihadist enemy" (van Meeteren, & van Oostendorp 2019). Contradictorily, according to a study, post-9/11 terrorism has been dropping; frequently includes no deaths or injuries; and more commonly committed by domestic, far-right extremists of non-Arab heritage operating alone (Silva, et al. 2020).

Researchers on terrorism studies agree that "[t]here should be more study of ideological ecosystems that promote White

supremacist worldviews within Western government, law enforcement and military; ditto for Islamist, Buddhist, and Hindu extremist cases” (Schmid, Forest, & Lowe 2021: 157). With the number of monies being spent on researching and understanding Islamic terrorism and the media attention it receives, fear of jihadist-inspired extremism also adds to the perception of an overestimated international terrorism threat. According to Jackson (2007), the discourse surrounding jihadist-inspired terrorism is highly politicized, often leading to counterproductive security measures. This is especially relevant considering the findings that far-right extremism is damaging to nation states, at least in the case of the US (Silva, Duran, Freilich, & Chermak 2020). This supports the idea that terrorist activity has historically been characterized by "waves" of diverse typologies (Rapoport 2002). Nevertheless, the disparity in the rise of far-right terrorist incidences versus the decline in jihadist-inspired and far-left terrorist activities could be indicative of a new wave of terrorism that transcends religion and focuses on national identity.

This study attempts to do a systematic literature review of highly cited articles on terrorism and radicalisation in Malaysia. Then, we try to connect these data to the institutions that gave the money and the researchers who wrote the academic research papers. It seeks to contextualize the assumption that the research and frameworks established and financed by major worldwide financing agencies and have inevitably produced data and influenced subsequent studies that have somewhat synonymized Islam with radicalization and terrorism. This study also contextualizes research conducted on Malaysia and terrorism since the 9/11 attacks and the emergence of the Islamic State (IS), as well as the desire to relate Islam, radicalization, and extremism in the context of Malaysia. According to the authors, this is one of the few studies that attempted to examine terrorism, radicalization, and Islam in the framework of political economy, with an emphasis on Malaysia.

## II . The Context of Terrorism Research in Malaysia

The greater question is whether free market principles can truly claim triumph against socialism when governments that supported capitalism and claimed it works are bailing out and nationalizing banks. The literature on the impact of research funding and its influence on the natural sciences are voluminous, and pharmaceutical firms and other funding organizations have been called out for creating results with vested interests. Contradictorily, literature on funding and its consequences for social sciences is quite deafeningly silent. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US has undoubtedly affected worldwide research and knowledge of radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism, particularly on global concerns such as the soft and harsh measures of the US in its War on Terror (Silva 2018).

According to the Frankfurt School's critical theory, there are three dimensions of power (Gill & Law 1988: 73 - 74): "open power" refers to active power publicly used to influence the attitude of another state comprehensively; "covert power," more passive but structured, vaguely used to further a strong side's objective by narrowing political lines and keeping particular matters off of an agenda; and "structural power," which defines attraction and restriction systems with physical and normative components that affect party relationships. Power according to the Weberian school of thought has a variety and variances, including:

Modernization was accompanied by an increasingly rationalized organizational environment that was dynamic (versus stable), legalized (versus traditional), deliberately constructed (versus emulated, inherited), differentiated (versus uniform), professional (versus amateur), complex (versus simple) and efficient (versus wasteful) (Pakulski 2012: 44).

Lenin (1999) attempted to explain in "Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism" that World War I broke out due to rivalry among monopoly capitals for colonial possession. Klein (2008) provides interesting insights, particularly concerning the privatization of military affairs, which he refers to as "disaster capitalism." The US's

strategic meddling in the Middle East stems from two sources: hegemonic interests in stable and secure oil markets, and an underlying ideological commitment to the Israeli state, which is supported by major domestic pressures (Kitchen 2012). In keeping with this, the US has used counterinsurgency tactics to interfere in the domestic affairs of sovereign governments, notably in the Muslim world. Counterinsurgency is a type of low-intensity warfare centred on a set of unconventional military tactics and procedures employed against armed non-state actors. The United Kingdom originally used low-level "hit and run" military tactics to oppress and socially control indigenous tribes struggling to liberate their motherland from imperialism and colonialism in colonial India around the mid-1800s. These measures would not only be extended to other British colonies such as Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland, but would also set the tone for contemporary counterinsurgency theory and practice. The premise for deploying extraordinary and highly militarized techniques of social control and discipline in the colonies was founded on an Orientalist rhetoric that portrayed the non-European world as inferior and prone to barbarism, and hence in need of "civilization" (Said 1978).

Following the terrorist events of 9/11, Islamic militancy rose to the top of the worldwide security agenda. Terrorism experts warned that, in the wake of the American global offensive against the al-Qaeda international terrorist network, Southeast Asia, with its porous borders and historical receptivity to foreign Islamic ideologies and movements, could well become international terrorism's "Second Front" and "Crucible of Terror," respectively (Gunaratna 2000). The discovery of a plot to detonate the American and other Western embassies in Singapore in December 2001, as well as the Bali bombings on October 12, 2002, and the J. W. Marriott attack on August 5, 2003, revealed that terrorism undertaken in the name of Islam has found fertile ground in the region (Liow 2004).

Malaysia was committed to the worldwide war on terror under Mahathir and subsequent prime ministers including Abdullah Badawi and Najib Tun Razah under the National Front (Barisan Nasional, BN) and Muhyiddin Yassin under Nasional Alliance

(Perikatan Nasional, PN). Although the Mahathir government has unambiguously committed itself to the cause, some have criticized Malaysia's participation in the global war on terror, based on allegations that the government was taking action against low-level terrorists while harboring those allegedly engaged in high-level planning and execution of terrorist activity globally (Liow 2004). Another charge is that the Malaysian government is exploiting the dystopian world created by the rise of Islamic militant groups by establishing strong links between political opponents and terrorist organizations and mobilizing state instruments to detain and imprison "suspected terrorists" without charge or trial (Liow 2004). At the expense of Parti Se-Islam (Pan Islamic Party, PAS), BN could enhance its position as Malaysia's vanguard of Malay Muslims in the process. To capitalize on the new-middle-income liberal Malay and non-Muslim voters, BN branded PAS as an Islamic extreme party, to portray them as a threat. The US presence in Malaysia is not new, and its encroachment into Malaysian internal affairs is still debated, but red flags continue to surface. We do take note that in contemporary times the political landscape of Malaysia has changed since, with the Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan, PH), under Anwar Ibrahim alongside the Democratic Action Party (DAP), now branding PAS as a medieval right-wing extremist party (Fernandez 2022).

The president of the International Republican Institute (IRI), a think tank linked with the Republican Party in the United States, has claimed that his organization has been seeking to "strengthen" Malaysian opposition parties since 2002 (Malaysiakini 2018). It was created as one of four pro-democracy organizations supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which is supported by the US Congress. The IRI has been accused of training opposition and coup leaders in Honduras, Haiti, Cuba, Egypt, and Tunisia, among other nations, recently.

A significant amount of training through the active use of several ministerial agencies including the establishment of new ones like the Southeast Asian Center for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) thanks to US's soft diplomacy strategies in the region. These trainings have also been provided for journalists to influence

discursive formations and portrayals of incidents of violent extremism (Powell 2018). Considering the current development of populism and right-wing extremism in Europe and the US, we contend that there is an urgent need to reassess the concepts of "open" radical and "closed" extremist which have long been focused on Islam and Muslims. This is significant since the Western approach to creating social cohesion has failed. Instead, it has increased people's fear of Islam, inevitably fuelling right-wing extremism in certain parts of Europe and the US.

Prevent counter-terrorism measures (Combat) and the United States' Struggle Against Terrorism (SAVE) counterproductively endorsed Islamophobic notions. Some scholars have warned researchers and policymakers who use this lopsided ontological view in researching radicalism, by stating that "using such perspectives presents problems for those groups that are represented as dangerous, particularly cultural and ethnic minorities that are already subjected to myriad post-9/11 counter-terrorism practises of surveillance, (in) security, and risk" (Silva 2018: 38).

This endeavour is significant because it attempts to capture the implications of funding in influencing research orientation since 9/11, and the rise of the IS terrorist organization. We also contend that research on terrorism and Islam in Malaysia has generally echoed concepts put out by the Western world. Examples of such studies include the vulnerability of undergraduates in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to Islamic radicalism (Samuel 2018), youth vulnerability to violent extremism and "self-sacrificial tendencies" in those countries (Ainaa 2018), and Daesh's use of the internet for radicalization (Jawhar 2016). In the following section, we offer an overview of our methodological approach to data collection and analysis to provide nuance to our research.

### **III. Methodology**

As with all Marxist studies, the main goal of this research is to find out what capital essentially is, not just how it looks. This study tries

to understand the complementary and contradictory (dialectical) relationship between wage labor and capital in the context of studies of terrorism and radicalization that have mostly focused on Islam and left out other forms of extremism. According to classical Marxism, capitalism introduces a complimentary and contradictory (that is, dialectical) relationship between wage labor and capital. This relationship is established through linking the means of production, that is, labor and technology. This research is epistemologically informed by Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Broadly speaking, Foucault defines discourse as the history of knowledge and practice, as well as the process through which knowledge and activity become cemented and normalized (Stahl, 2008). From a Foucauldian perspective, CDA investigates the historical roots of beliefs and practices, as well as the structures and major actors that influenced the adoption and continuance of those beliefs and practises.

The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss both claimed that language and culture are governed by the same structural relationship between subject and object, which they called the subject-object connection (Khan 2018). According to this scientific understanding of language and culture, a "central" or underlying system is responsible for organizing and maintaining an entire framework of language and culture (Khan 2018). We define discourse analysis as the study of single phrases and sentences as standalone propositions, where we also observe linguistic effects—semantic, stylistic, syntactic—in sentence sequences and structure (Bullock & Stallybrass 1977: 175).

Using Malaysia as a case study, we will attempt to comprehend the significance of funding in shaping research and knowledge outputs, particularly those concerning domestic policies and securitization. We assert that to maintain narratives of Western hegemony and the invasion of the Middle East, the US, in collaboration with other Western states, constructed narratives that supported the discourse that Islam and Muslims inherited anti-democratic ideas and would not hesitate to use violence to disrupt order.



Hegemony is a structure of values and understandings about order that permeates a whole system of states and non-state entities. In a hegemonic order these values and understandings are relatively stable and unquestioned. They appear to most actors as the natural order. Such a structure of meanings is underpinned by a structure of power, in which most probably one state is dominant, but that state's dominance is not sufficient to create hegemony. (Gill 1993: 42)

We acknowledge the need to use a emancipatory method by way of CDA. The emancipation of those who are marginalized and oppressed is a significant value in critical inquiry (Myers & Klein 2011). We shall be conscious of the way we construct relationships between the entities under investigation. For the sake of this study, we locate three variables that may influence research outputs: (1) funding for studies on combating violent extremism (CVE); (2) narratives that backed the Global War on Terror and subsequently SAVE; and (3) CVE research outputs by Malaysian researchers.

#### **IV. Conceptual Framework**

The following are the fundamental components of the propaganda model, which consists of a series of news "filters": (1) ownership of the medium; (2) financing as the most important alternative source of revenue; (3) the media's reliance on information given by government, business, and "experts" supported by these major sources and agents of power; and (4) "flak" as a technique of disciplining the media.

The size and profit-seeking motivation of the leading media corporations produce bias. To say the least, US and European media outlets have extensive global domination in shaping narratives. The Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and Agence France-Presse (AFP) are newswires with global offices and the potential to shape global news narratives. Multinational news networks such as Cable News Network (CNN), Fox News, Bloomberg, and others are becoming more widely available across the world via satellite and internet television. Financing and manipulation of economic elitists to

influence narratives through these media sources have cast the West's foes in a negative light. This exercise focuses on the West and its capacity to co-opt local "experts" who occasionally get into the Faustian bargain of agreeing with the West that Islam is synonymous with extremism and terrorism.

## **V. Research Design**

We performed a detailed systematic assessment of all material on radicalism and Malaysia since the 1990s (the release of Clash of Civilisation) until 2019 (the fall of Islamic State). The following steps were taken as recommended by Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen & Antes (2003). We first extrapolated research articles by using the Publish or Perish tool. Based on the search results, we then sorted the data into tables according to the following recommendations.

In step two, which is to identify relevant work, we used terms such as "terrorism Malaysia," "violent extremism Malaysia," and "radicalization Malaysia" in title words and keywords to generate articles. All articles that achieved a minimum of ten citations were considered, using the criteria to evaluate the quality of studies as suggested in step 3 (Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen & Antes 2003). Step four which is data synthesis entailed tabulating study characteristics, quality, and effects, as well as employing statistical methods to investigate variations between studies and combining their impacts (meta-analysis). As part five suggests, it was necessary to investigate the possibility of publication bias and related biases. The investigation of heterogeneity should aid in determining whether the overall summary was reliable, and if not, the effects observed in high-quality research should be used to generate inferences in the absence of reliable data.

## VI. Findings

Table 1. Searches with Titles ‘Radicalism and Terrorism in Malaysia

Cites	Authors	Title	Year	Publisher	Cites Per Year	Author Count	Age
20	MZ Mubarak, AFA Hamid	The rise of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia	2018	journal.uinjkt.ac.id	5	2	4
13	K Yusof, I Herman, BM Nasir	Islamic radicalism in Malaysia: Gender perspective	2010	Elsevier	1.08	3	12
11	K Bustamam-Ahmad	From Islamic Revivalism to Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Jamā'ah Tabligh in Malaysia and Indonesia	2015	books.google.com	1.57	1	7
10	K Yusoff	Islamic Radicalism in Malaysia: overview	2010	Elsevier	0.83	1	12

Source: Publish or Perish

The most cited article incorporating radicalism and terrorism in Malaysia was published by the Center for Human Resources Development (PPSDM) Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta (Mubarak & Hamid 2018). The second most cited paper in Malaysia focused on gender perspectives of terrorism, specifically on women and radicalism (Yusof, Herman & Nasir 2010). Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad’s book, which included the terms, "Terrorism," "Radicalism," and "Malaysia" in the title, a 2015 study on Jema'ah Tabligh published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, was the third most cited work on Malaysia (Bustamam-Ahmad 2015). Except for the paper from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, all articles and books were published in periodicals supported by Western-led publishers.

Table 2. Searches with titles "Terrorism" and "Malaysia"

Cites	Authors	Title	Year	Publisher	Cites Per Year	Author Count	Age
56	TM Sittnick	State responsibility and maritime terrorism in the Strait of Malacca: Persuading Indonesia and Malaysia to take additional steps to secure the Strait	2005	HeinOnline	3.29	1	17
39	J Stark	Beyond 'Terrorism' and 'State Hegemony': Assessing the Islamist Mainstream in Egypt and Malaysia	2005	Taylor and Francis	2.29	1	17
32	K Ramakrishna	" The Southeast Asian Approach" to Counter-Terrorism:: Learning from Indonesia and Malaysia	2005	erudit.org	1.88	1	17
20	MZ Mubarok, AFA Hamid	The rise of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia	2018	journal.uinjkt.ac.id	5	2	4
16	G Dhillon, R Ahmad, A Rahman...	The viability of enforcement mechanisms under money laundering and anti terrorism in Malaysia: overview	2013	emerald.com	1.78	4	9
15	Z Yunos, R, Ahmad, NA Mohd Sabri	A qualitative analysis for evaluating a cyber terrorism framework in Malaysia	2015	Taylor and Francis	2.14	3	7
13	WC Pok, N Omar, M Sathye	An evaluation of the effectiveness of anti money laundering and anti terrorism financing legislation: perceptions of bank compliance officers in Malaysia	2014	Wiley Online Library	1.63	3	8
10	E Noor	Terrorism in Malaysia: Situation and response	2003		0.53	1	19

One of the most highly cited articles with the words “terrorism” and “Malaysia” in its title was published on security issues on the coast of Malaysia (Sittnick 2005). In 2004, there were reports of ship attacks in 325 countries, and 93 of these occurred off the coast of Southeast Asia; 37 occurred in the Malacca Strait. “Beyond 'Terrorism' and 'State Hegemony': assessing the Islamist mainstream in Egypt and Malaysia,” by Stark (2005) provides an analysis of grassroots movements and political parties for political mobilization purposes and its impact on radicalization and terrorism. Similar to the other search, all articles were published by Western-led journal publishers.

## VII. Discussion: Repression through Narratives of Islamic Extremism

One of the key considerations that prompted this analysis was the desire to discover the impact of Western-led conceptual frameworks on Malaysian research on terrorism and extremism in Malaysia. Scholars have in the past called out Washington by advocating a “bottom-up” Southeast Asian indirect strategy to battle Islamist terror within the area, in contrast to Washington's “top-down,” abstract, one-size-fits-all counter-terrorist policies (Ramakrishna 2005). The US National Plan for Counter-Terrorism’s direct, short-term, and operationally focused approach was accepted as effectively disrupting global terrorism operatives that subscribed to a “grand narrative” of establishing an Islamic based “new order.” It was more concerned with an indirect strategy where longer-term, ideologically, and politically sensitive counter-terrorism plays a more dominant role, and is more likely to achieve the most important aim of denying Islamist terror networks the capacity to regenerate (Ramakrishna 2005).

In Malaysian Islamic revivalism, the *dakwah* (the “call to Islam”) of the 1970s is sometimes referred to as the “backbone” of the movement. *Dakwah* emerged from Malaysian universities as an attempt by the young urbanized middle class to gain access to the state's political and economic domains. It was fuelled by an

ummah-wide reassertion of Islamic lifestyles and an attempt to return to the Islamic "roots," free of the alleged deviations of localized folk Islam inspired by the Hindu-Buddhist tradition (*adat*) (Stark 2015). Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) has made significant success in recent decades in efforts to gain greater currency among young voters and the urbanized voters. The former's previous stance on an "Islamic state" and the unchallenged control of the Islamic clergy over the party has been questioned in the past by the Muslim middle class, whose growing influence has dramatically transformed the membership of parties such as PAS (Stark 2015).

Several foreign policy considerations may contribute to the radicalization of Malaysian Muslims. First is the capacity of Islamic international organizations, particularly those from the Middle East, to create cordial connections with Islamic groups in Southeast Asian nations (Yusoff 2010b). This was further exacerbated by Malaysia's educational policy of sending scholars to Islamic states such as the Middle East and Pakistan for higher education purposes. PAS, a political party comprising of many graduates from the Middle East and Pakistan, tend to preserve and benefit from this relationship. This was used against them by BN under Mahathir to acquire credibility among the rising middle class Malays, non-Muslims, and most significantly, Malaysians residing in the more industrialized West Coast of West Malaysia.

Second is growth in the number of students, particularly postgraduate students and tourists from the Middle East to Malaysia (Yusoff 2010b). These swiftly rose from the ranks to become *imams* (prayer leaders in mosques) and religious instructors. In 2019, the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) detained nine alleged foreign extremists (8 from Egypt and 1 from Tunisia) staying in Malaysia as students and religious teachers in Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak. Most Egyptian detainees belonged to the *Ikhwān al Muslimīn* (Muslim Brotherhood).

The third is obtaining foreign direct investment (FDI) at the expense of state democratization in accordance with Western frameworks of the liberal state. According to some scholars, CVE initiatives are a multibillion-dollar industry with many connections

to some of the world's most powerful countries, which might make it hard to demand that they be decolonized (Ilyas 2022).

### **VIII. Misplaced Secularization and the Fallacy of Hegemonies and Academic Colonization**

The digital era magnifies the opportunities and vulnerability of people to become radicalized over the internet. In the digital age, infrastructural imperialism refers to social networks that employ default settings to support the user or customer behavior intended to be reinforced, thus expanding influence and worldview (Olmstead, & Atkinson 2015; Akil 2022). Malaysian CVE analysts argue that because individuals, particularly the youth, spend an inordinate amount of time online, they are more vulnerable to radicalization (Akil 2022). There was observed an increase of social media hate speech targeting foreign workers and refugees like the Rohingyas during the early days of the lockdown in Malaysia in 2020 (Akil 2022).

Concomitantly, the threat of Afghanistan being a new recruitment ground is another narrative that the West propagates and that which is being echoed by academicians in Malaysia. For instance, a scholar claimed that PAS's public backing of the Taliban could draw undesired attention from Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) (Mohd 2022). In truth, PAS emulates a government endorsed by the US, following the signing of a "contract for bringing peace" to Afghanistan by the US and Taliban in February 2020. Most troubling is the assertion of Mizan (2022) that Malaysia may soon become terrorism finance base for the Taliban in Afghanistan, citing such occurrences between 2001 and 2002. He also states that "according to intelligence sources, several Malaysians have served as ISKP commanders and combatants; they were part of the coterie of FTFs tracked from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan, having travelled through Iran to join ISKP following IS' demise in Syria in 2019', but there has been no evidence that Malaysians have served as ISKP commanders to date (p.24). Such posturing can raise red flags when it comes to proving that a minority of jihadi Malaysian Muslim

sympathizers are vulnerable to recruitment. There is no basis for this.

Malaysia must also pay attention to the radicalization of the other ethnic minorities. A 16-year-old was recently detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) reportedly inspired by the terror incidents in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019 and in France in 2020 (Hedges 2021). He is Singapore's first detained far-right Christian extremist. The planned attack on a mosque and a Christian's self-radicalization is not altogether unexpected. In media portrayals even in Malaysia, Muslims are frequently and unthinkingly represented as individuals implicated in terrorism. In reality, many innocent Muslims have been targeted by both militant *jihadis* and far-right violent extremist groups from other religious communities, whether Buddhists (as seen in Myanmar and Sri Lanka), Hindus (as seen in India), or Christians (as seen in Europe, the United States, and New Zealand).

Through funding and other avenues, the West has been able to sustain counter-terrorism programs in ASEAN member states. In October 2015, Malaysia hosted a special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism. Building on the meeting was another event, "International Conference on Deradicalisation and Countering Violent Extremism," organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) Malaysia and attended by 17 ministers and 500 representatives and participants from different countries (Hamidi 2016).

These initiations by Malaysia was not happening as coincidence. With the assistance of the US the Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Center (RDC3) similar to the one established in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sawab, in July 2014, while the Royal Malaysian Police had its own Counter-Messaging Center (CMC) to counter IS's social media's strength and sophistication and to present a more positive alternative to the vision the group has outlined (Prashanth 2015; Prashanth 2018). Initially, there were disagreements about exactly where the US funded facility would be located and which government agencies would be involved,



including the Home Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, and the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT), which was established in 2003 during the administration of George W. Bush, though there were disagreements about the extent of United States participation (Prashanth 2015).

Additionally, institutions like the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) received funding for Islamic counter-terrorism studies worth USD 500,000 from the University of Maryland (Erdemandi 2018). SEARCCT continues to be a recipient of funding for counter-messaging programs shared through social media and radio as well as onsite workshops targeting youth, in view of “Building Community Resilience” at local universities and schools throughout Malaysia (Riviniu 2019). IMAN Research is a local think tank that works on protecting security, peacebuilding, and sustainable development; its various projects are funded by the Canadian Embassy and Microsoft among others (ICAN 2020).

Through the resources channelled by the West, these institutions can support research and programs that reinforce the narrative that terrorists and Islam are inextricably linked, further isolating most peaceful Muslims, who also negatively affected by extremist minorities, both in terms of security threats and through international media coverage.

According to Ganeson Sivagurunathan, Director-General of the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT):

The Technology and Innovation in Building and Enhancing Resilience workshop engaged students from local higher education institutions to produce counter-narratives on Digital Resilience and disseminate videos on platforms such as TikTok, indicating that there newer PVE programs that are targeting youths at higher education universities, mainly targeting Muslims. The building and enhancing resilience workshops like #senjatasaya (my weapon), Hebat Youth Positive Expressions (HYPE) organized by SEARCCT have neutral themes but are addressing Islamic violent extremism at its core under the overarching SAVE initiative.

## IX. Conclusion

The study's purpose was founded on the notion that social scientists' efforts to reach their yearly university and organizational funding targets have an influence on existing knowledge, particularly outputs related to terrorism and radicalization. Using the Foucauldian viewpoint, CDA, this study could develop an analysis of the historical foundations or the structures that impact institutions of higher education and CVE monitoring centres like SEARCCT. A review of highly referenced scholarly publications with title keywords like "Terrorism" and "Malaysia," "Radicalism" and "Malaysia," and "Radicalism" and "Malaysia" revealed that they were all about Islam. More importantly, it was discovered that the United States, through various institutions such as the Department of State, the University of Washington, and others, had collaborated with institutions within key ministries in Malaysia to create, disseminate, and propagate narratives in support of the GWOT. By bringing this issue to light, we encourage Malaysia's government to reconsider its "Building Community Resilience" initiatives, which should be centred on addressing extremism and radicalism in a more comprehensive manner. We also acknowledge that this study has limitations and that a more thorough assessment of the materials and discourses employed would be tremendously valuable. A closer examination on the programs and their consequences on Malay Muslims' sense of alienation from non-Muslims because of the promotion of Islamophobia will give greater context and corrective strategies.

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