



Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid
Universiti Sains Malaysia

THE NEW CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

Long regarded as an embodiment of tolerant Islam peacefully co-existing with modernisation within a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, Malaysia unexpectedly aroused much attention as a potential breeding ground for Muslim radicals in the aftermath of a series of catalytic events which pitted the West against the Muslim world. Rising occurrences of Islamist-related terrorist violence have been cited as evidence of surging Southeast Asian Muslim radicalism, to which Malaysia, the rarity of its Islam-related commotions notwithstanding, is held not be immune. Both foreign analysts and the Malaysian government have been inclined to situate such an obtrusive phenomenon within the context of the rising penetration into the country of doctrinal rigidity espoused by the Wahhabi-Salafi school of thought predominant in contemporary Middle East. Traditionally acting as recipients rather than generators of intellectual developments within the *ummah*, Malaysian Muslims, as part of the non-Arab Muslim periphery, are said to be susceptible to Middle Eastern-originated radicalism, as exemplified in interlocking transnational contacts and agendas sowed between increasingly globalised Islamist networks adept in exploiting latest trappings of modernity. This paper, however, urges readers to look beyond such conventional analyses, and engage in deeper reflection of local dynamics of Malaysia's Islamisation process, in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of challenges posed by political Islamists in Malaysia. It is argued that, belying the regime's profession of a form of progressive Islam known as *Islam Hadhari*, Malaysia under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Premiership has witnessed an abrupt escalation of inter-religious tension which not only threatens to disrupt communal harmony and nation-building, but also poses a security risk. The origins of such instability could arguably be located to political Islamism within the regime, in particular to its home-nurtured Islamic bureaucracy, which has become Islamist.

INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship on political Islam in Southeast Asia has witnessed an influx of writings which overwhelmingly stress security dimensions in the wake of devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon, United States of America (USA) on 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11), the launching of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and USA's puzzling designation of Southeast Asia as the 'second front' in GWOT (Gershman 2002: 62-63). Obsession with the phenomenon of terrorism has led to a new discourse which departs significantly from past orthodoxy which posited Southeast Asian Islam as the quintessence of peaceful and tolerant Islam – an 'Islam with a smiling face'ⁱ which prioritised spiritualism over legalism (Wright-Neville 2004a: 27-29). The focus of policy-making circles and security experts has been on the perceptible rise of radical Islamistⁱⁱ factions such as the *Jemaah Islamiah* (JI: Islamic Congregation), which had extensive links within and beyond the region, and was prepared to resort to violence in order to achieve its pan-Islamist aim of establishing an Islamic state which encompassed the whole of Muslim Southeast Asia (Desker 2003a: 495-501). In locating the ideological origins of this terrorist threat, the so-called pundits have emphasised the increasing susceptibility of Southeast Asian Muslims to hardline Wahhabi-Salafiⁱⁱⁱ ideology (cf. Gunaratna 2005: 75-79, Ramakrishna 2005: 350-357).

The Malaysian connection in the developing rigmarole was emphasised by intelligence reports claiming that Islamist elements within Malaysia, unbeknownst to and initially denied by its government, had been facilitating the international Al Qaeda network-linked manoeuvres by providing a haven to meet, transfer illegal funds, procure necessary accoutrements and plan terrorist operations, including 9/11 (Abuza 2002: 443-445, Liow 2004b: 246). JI, moreover, had Malaysian antecedents, having been founded and led by Indonesian renegades Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Basyir, both of whom found a haven in Malaysia in 1985-98 from President Suharto-authorized repression. By the time they returned upon collapse of Suharto's regime, JI's tentacles were linking recruits from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, backed by financially sound front companies, many of which were Malaysian-based. JI adroitly exploited Southeast Asian countries' lax financial regulations, porous borders and weak security controls to transform the region into an economic-cum-operational conduit for its illegal activities, simultaneously sowing connections with Middle Eastern funders and Al Qaeda, with whom some JI members shared affinities as alumni of the military *jihad* (holy war) in Afghanistan in the 1980s (Abuza 2002: 450-459, Ramakrishna 2005: 348-357, Gunaratna 2005: 68-70, 75-79).

The Malaysian state responded to the spectre of latent terrorist cells lurking within its borders by asserting its anti-terrorist credentials. Under USA patronage, Malaysia agreed to host the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), established within a month

of the Bali bombings in October 2002 (Tan and Ramakrishna 2004: 95).^{iv} Bilateral rapprochement between the USA and Malaysia, despite the latter's carefully calibrated criticism of GWOT in order to appease the ruling elites' Malay-Muslim constituency, has seen Malaysia immensely benefiting from greater defence and security cooperation with the USA (Capie 2004: 230-233). In fact, among three potential Al Qaeda hubs identified by the USA, the two other being the Philippines and Indonesia, Malaysia has arguably been the "*biggest political winner in US-Southeast Asia relations since 9/11*" (Camroux and Okfen 2004: 170). Under the recent Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty (MLAT), the USA and Malaysian governments agreed to mutual cooperation in a host of anti-terror measures such as procuring evidence, serving documents, executing searches and seizures, locating and identifying suspects and crime sites, and freezing and forfeiting assets.^v

In the management of Malaysia's foreign policy with respect to Islam, domestic political priorities have often outweighed the significance of *ummatic*^{vi} considerations or even larger international concerns (Nair 1997: 5-11, 234, 270). The government's newly found legitimacy in terrorist-busting was manipulated to outwit local rivals vying for support from the large Malay-Muslim constituency. By the use of highly disputed sources such as conjectures and unverifiable contacts, the government seeks to associate domestic political foes with an international conspiracy bent on imposing an extremist form of Islam on Malaysia's multi-religious population. Analysts in turn uncritically pounce upon such 'evidence' to laboriously draw out linkages between mainstream opposition Islamists and clandestine Islamist cells (Wright-Neville 2004a: 34-35; 2004b: 5-6). Using the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS: *Parti Islam SeMalaysia*) members as a prime example, Wright-Neville (2004a) calls for a more useful deconstruction of Islamists by distinguishing between activists, militants and terrorists, without denying the potential of Islamists from moving from one variant to another. Jumping on the anti-terrorist bandwagon, the relationship between government intelligence agencies and terrorism analysts gradually becomes not only mutually beneficial but also self-sustaining. While the intelligence community derives legitimacy for their information-gathering forays from scholarly research which purports to establish the lurking presence of an Islamist threat, the scholars are elevated into the unassailable position of opinion shapers and experts, with wide access to the media and enviable opportunities to seek grants, fellowships, scholarships and resources for further research.

The present author believes that a more nuanced picture of political Islam in Malaysia, taking into account dynamic historical and socio-cultural factors, is needed to provide a more balanced interpretation of the Islamist phenomenon within the Malaysian milieu. Looking at Malaysia from purely security lenses betrays an inability or even unwillingness to delve into the country's variegated social features. As noted by Singer (2006: 420), the USA's incapacity to understand the dynamics of core-periphery interaction in the Muslim world has resulted in neglect

of the sophistication and vibrancy of discussions on the role of Islam in public policy as have taken place in Indonesia and Malaysia. In a recent contribution, the present author outlines what he reckons are the five phases of post-independence Islamism in Malaysia. These are, in chronological order, the formative phase (1971-81), the maturing phase (1981-91), the pragmatic phase (1991-98), the *Reformasi* phase (1998-2003) and the readjustment phase (2003-present day) (Ahmad Fauzi 2008: 216-224). Conceptualisations of these phases take into account the roles and experiences of Islamists themselves, as opposed to the outsider approach adopted by many earlier studies, some of which ended up being unduly regime-centric as a result of heavy reliance on sources at least indirectly countenanced by the powers that be in Malaysia. Various value-laden depictions of the Islamist phenomenon in Malaysia have emerged as a consequence, but one which has had perhaps the most enduring appeal is that which portrays Islamists as being caught in the web of Malaysia's ethnic-centred politics; thus they are said to further the Islamist cause within ethnically exclusive provisos rather than the universalist terms which Islam stands for (cf. Chandra Muzaffar 1979, 1987; Nagata 1984, Hussin Mutalib 1990).

GLOBAL AND LOCAL FACTORS IN THE TRAJECTORY OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

With the afore-mentioned caveats firmly placed in mind, a resurgence of political Islam in Southeast Asia in recent years in a direction away from 'moderation' has admittedly taken place, but the degree to which Islamists vacillate along the moderate-radical spectrum constantly shifts. The roles of globalisation and attendant transnational Islamist networks have been instrumental in steering this recent trend. In Malaysia, where Islamist violence has been the exception rather than the rule (Ahmad Fauzi 2007a), secretive cells of *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM: Mujahidin Group of Malaysia),^{vii} which was later implicated in the pan-Islamist vision and plots of JI, were uprooted by the authorities in 2001-02 (Government of Singapore 2003: 8-9). Through interlocking membership with JI's Malaysian chapter, KMM was alleged to have served as a conduit for Al Qaeda activity in Southeast Asia, for example via the setting up of front companies for the transfer of funds and logistical support for terrorist operations (Abuza 2002: 453-454, 2003: 140-143). KMM's purported leader was Nik Adli Nik Aziz, son of mainstream opposition PAS's *Murshid al-'Am* (General Guide)-cum-Chief Minister of Kelantan – a state on the north-eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia ruled by PAS since 1990, Nik Aziz Nik Mat. KMM was alleged to have launched attacks on a police station, on non-Muslim religious sites and assassinated Dr. Joe Fernandez, a state assemblyman of the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (BN: National Front) coalition in Kedah, who was notorious for his Christian evangelising activities among Malay-Muslim youths.^{viii} KMM leaders were invariably Malay-Muslim alumni of the Afghan war, during which they were

said to have established contacts with fellow warriors who later pioneered Al Qaeda (Abuza 2003: 136).^{ix} It was further alleged that in 1999, Nik Adli and a PAS official had together attended a JI-initiated meeting in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, which formed *Rabitatul Mujahidin* – a loose coalition of Southeast Asian militant groups (Government of Singapore 2003: 7, Ramakrishna 2003: 322, 2005: 359). Besides its regional pan-Islamist agenda, KMM was said to have harboured the objectives of maintaining and protecting PAS's struggle for an Islamic state (Kamarulnizam Abdullah 2005: 39-42).

The BN government tried to exploit the Nik Adli link to establish a connection between PAS and transnational militancy, and thus recover political initiative following the Malay-Muslim 1999 electoral rebellion against BN and Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who in September 1998 had unceremoniously dismissed and humiliated his popular deputy, Anwar Ibrahim. The Anwar saga also contributed to PAS's electoral victories in the neighbouring states of Kelantan and Terengganu, thereby raising PAS's international profile among Islamists worldwide. In October 2000, for example, upon invitations from Hasanuddin University and Indonesian NGOs, PAS Deputy President-cum-Terengganu Chief Minister Haji Hadi Awang attended an Islamic congress in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, to speak on the implementation of Islamic administration and laws in PAS-ruled states (PAS 2003). However, since participants at the congress had included prominent Indonesian militants such as JI mentor Abu Bakar Basyir and JI-affiliated *Laskar Jundullah* leader Agus Dwikarna, the state-controlled media made a furore out of the trip.^x Assuming PAS's leadership in 2003, Haji Hadi Awang was also invited as guest of honour to address the Jamaat-i-Islami party in Bangladesh (Farish 2004: 650). When the moderately Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP: *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*) first rose to power in Turkey in November 2002, a PAS delegation paid a courtesy-cum-learning visit to its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan.^{xi}

By the time 9/11 occurred, PAS had not only cemented transnational links with mainstream Islamist parties adhering to variants of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistani-based Jamaat-i-Islami Islamic state ideologies, but it also disavowed association with militant groups, both local and foreign. This does not deny that elements sympathetic to KMM may have existed in PAS without the PAS leadership's formal blessing or even knowledge, just as the purported KMM-JI connections were said to have been maintained by KMM's single-minded Selangor cell, based on independent liaisons between leaders on both sides (Kamarulnizam Abdullah 2005: 41). Apart from information forcibly gathered from arrests and subsequent detentions without trial of KMM and JI activists under the Internal Security Act (ISA), evidence adducing a militant stripe in PAS was spurious. However, following 9/11 and USA's incursion into Afghanistan, PAS-orchestrated anti-USA demonstrations and its decision to throw support behind

Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's Taliban government in its open rallies served the government's intentions of portraying PAS as harbouring a furtive fifth column agenda (Farish 2002: 165-170, 2004: 667-682). Such toying with causes widely regarded as 'extremist' alienated it from both non-partisan Malay-Muslims and non-Muslims who had previously supported PAS out of revulsion against abuses committed by the ruling government. The withdrawal of such support contributed to huge setbacks suffered by PAS in the 2004 elections, including losing Terengganu and just barely retaining Kelantan (Ahmad Fauzi 2006a). It was not until the eve of the 2008 elections, after which PAS had reinvented its moderate image, retracted open advocacy of an Islamic state, participated actively in more general civil society causes such as the movement for electoral reform and struck an alliance with the multi-racial *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR: People's Justice Party) and Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP), that it recovered political ground and went on to score stunning electoral victories.^{xiii} For the first time in Malaysian history, the opposition pact, which later assumed the name *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR: People's Pact), managed to deny the ruling coalition a two-thirds majority in Parliament. PAS itself now has twenty-three Members of Parliament (MPs), leads state governments of Kelantan and Kedah, and plays consequential roles in the state governments of Selangor and Perak, whose Chief Minister is from PAS.^{xiii}

The political ascendancy of PAS in mainstream Malaysian politics for the past ten years or so has been due to a combination of global and local factors. Rising inter-connectedness in the global economy rendered Malaysia vulnerable to sudden bouts of economic fluctuations, such as during the 1997-98 regional financial crisis, whose aftershocks included political upheaval, which in Malaysia was manifested in the realignment of forces between Islamists and liberal civil society. Such realignments, embodied in the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA: Alternative Front) and PR coalitions in 1999 and 2008 respectively, have made significant inroads in introducing discourses on a 'new politics' which transcends the divisive issues of race and religion (cf. Loh 2005). Even PAS's own discourse has arguably undergone transformations, without yet reaching equilibrium, with respect to the establishment of a juridical Islamic state. Protestations of PAS's commitment to democracy, at least at the official level, should not be treated as mere rhetoric even if doubts linger. At the same time, as individual panderings towards KMM signify, segments within PAS are not immune to less than democratic influences from global Islamism. Reflecting Iranian influence, PAS embraced an *ulama* (religious scholars) leadership, as embodied in the establishment of a *Majlis Shura Ulama* (*Ulama* Consultative Council) consisting of twelve religious scholars and headed by a *Murshid al-'Am*, in spite of the continual existence of the presidential office and the Central Executive Committee (CEC) (Stark 2004: 52-56). PAS leaders have been on record for issuing statements condoning suicide bombing in Palestine and street demonstrations as an election strategy.^{xiv} In July 2008, amidst brouhaha regarding attempts to realise UMNO^{xv}-PAS talks towards the possibility of

forming a new pact to safeguard Malay-Muslim unity, it was rumoured that PAS President Haji Hadi Awang left for London to seek advice from Muslim Brotherhood representatives there.^{xvi} At its most recent 54th General Assembly month later, PAS hosted Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood representative Dr. Amman Said as guest of honour.^{xvii} In general, PAS benefited from an overall environment, spurred by catalytic events such as 9/11 and American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, which seemingly put Islam at siege from hostile global forces.

Nonetheless, PAS's political fortunes could not have improved without the presence of long-term local factors, the most important of which is the rise of an increasingly vocal Malay-Muslim middle class, who had coloured the 'new politics' with struggles centring upon universal issues such as participatory democracy, justice and human rights (Saravanamuttu 2001: 113). The creation of this class within a generation owes its origins to state-led development in the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP), enunciated in 1971 to address poverty and economic imbalance among communal groups following ethnic riots in May 1969. The *entrée* of the growing Malay middle class into the upper echelons of PAS has been important to counterbalance the perennially negative image associated with Haji Hadi Awang's past radicalism.^{xviii} PAS was initially treated as the voice of legitimate dissent which could be translated in tangible terms at the polls, but a significant portion joined the party outright. As a result of the social base transformation which has affected especially the Youth and Women's sections of PAS, the past few general assemblies have seen criticisms and counter-criticisms pitting the so-called Young Turks, progressives, professionals and liberals with the Old Guard, conservatives or *ulama*.^{xix} As a result of penetration of middle class elements into PAS's leadership, for instance, in recent years PAS has shown more tolerance for the ideas of a female Vice President, PAS-approved entertainment concerts and outlets, limitations to powers of the *Majlis Shura Ulama* and future cooperation with non-Muslims, to the extent of possible acceptance of non-Muslim membership of the party.^{xx} The new breed of PAS leaders such as head of national unity bureau Mujahid Yusof Rawa and Deputy President Nasharuddin Mat Isa have demonstrated determination to establish a mainstream image for PAS (Yang Razali 2009).^{xxi}

The impact of the Malaysian government's persistent use of Islam as a political tool to outflank PAS on the latter's own Islamist grounds cannot be under-estimated. The UMNO-PAS Islamisation race gave rise to a spate of official Islamic institutions in the 1980s (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 134-139, 142-144; Ahmad Fauzi 2007b: 457-461). However, it also rendered the government's Islamic institutions receptive to Wahhabi-Salafi influences from the Middle East (Desker 2002: 386, 2003b: 420). Within the context of the Middle Eastern oil boom of the 1970s and the ensuing rise of the political clout of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Malaysia became a major recipient of oil-related aid distributed under the aegis of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) (Nair 1997: 62; Ahmad Fauzi 2000a: 13-20).

Among the primary financial beneficiaries have been government-sanctioned bodies such as the Islamic Welfare Association of Malaysia (PERKIM: *Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaysia*) and the Malaysian-initiated Regional Islamic *Dakwah* Council for Southeast Asia and Pacific (RISEAP) (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 93, Nair 1997: 105). The founding in 1983 of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), jointly sponsored by Muslim countries and using English and Arabic as official languages of instruction, was hailed as a hallmark achievement in the sphere of transnational Islamic education (Mokhtar 1991: 105-108). Islamic faculties at other universities were considerably strengthened. This spurred the production of new cohorts of *shariah* (Islamic law) lawyers, consultants, economists, judges and religious officials to fill posts in the expanding Islamic bureaucracy and widening network of state-encouraged Islamic financial institutions (Roff 1998: 221-224). These officials were instrumental in the gradual Islamisation of Malaysia's body politic in the 1990s, when BN-controlled states tightened Islamic regulations for Muslims in an apparent attempt to upstage PAS's vain efforts to introduce *hudud*^{xxii} laws in Kelantan (Martinez 2001: 482-483, Ahmad Fauzi 2009: 14-19). For example, Penang and Johore imposed stiffer penalties for Muslims convicted of Islamic criminal offences, Terengganu affirmed its commitment to an Islamic economic package including the formation of an Islamic-based securities company, Kedah started a programme to revive the role of the mosque as a social and educational centre, Perlis passed a law on apostasy for converts, and Selangor started charging Muslims deemed to have acted immorally by working in liquor-serving outlets and participating in beauty contests (Ahmad Fauzi 2009: 11).

It is clear that federal-sponsored piecemeal Islamisation measures had emboldened the various UMNO-controlled states' authorities into applying more *shariah*-based legislation. Many of the religious bureaucrats and practitioners, however, lacked the sophistication to interpret Islam beyond the legal context, such that for the Muslim populace, Islam has been widely perceived as no more than "*rules and laws and fines.... always telling us what to do*" (Martinez 2001: 485). Under government tutelage, Islam in Malaysia has been politicised in an increasingly conservative way, driven ideologically by a Wahhabi-Salafi bias minus the anti-establishment politics as found in the Middle East. With pronouncements made by such luminary figures as the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the chief judge on Malaysia's purported 'Islamic state' status,^{xxiii} the discourse among Malay-Muslim politicians of both UMNO and PAS have appeared to move beyond whether Malaysia should be an Islamic state, towards the best ways and means of absorbing Malaysia's non-Muslim minorities in a mutually acceptable *modus vivendi* which does apply Islamic principles in governance (Liw 2008: 30).

GRASSROOTS CHALLENGES IN THE DYNAMIC CONTOURS OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA: ANWAR IBRAHIM AND ASHAARI MUHAMMAD

A methodologically limited approach of perceiving political Islam in Malaysia has been the tendency to relegate the notion of being 'political', whether in the discursive area or in the movement-organisation purview, to contestations involving political parties and little else. Hence, in some accounts, political Islam in Malaysia has been narrowly dichotomised in terms of the perpetual conflict between the ruling United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO) and PAS (cf. Syed Ahmad Hussein 2002, Malhi 2003, Liow 2004a). It is the contention of the present author, however, that while overt political participation does hitherto serve as the most important vehicle to institute pro-Islamist political change, the dynamics of Islamism and Islamists can be understood only if one were to delve into the intricate workings of and dealings with grassroots movements which together form some kind of Islamist civil society in which dominant issues and actors constantly shift. Many political actors identified as Islamist, however arbitrary such a designation may be, began their careers as spokesmen for grassroots Islamism. The most obvious example would be Anwar Ibrahim, whose illustrious career saw his meteoric rise from being President of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM: *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*) to Deputy Prime Minister within a twenty-year span (1974-93). Following his fallout with Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, Anwar was sacked and jailed on charges of corruption and sexual misdemeanours, but freed in 2004 upon overturning of his convictions. Today he is chairman and *de facto* leader of the PKR, which effectively leads Malaysia's opposition PR coalition, whose ideology reflects a synthesis between the different versions of its component parties' democratising ideals. Besides promoting PKR's multi-racial platform, Anwar has been the definitive thread that holds together two apparently opposite poles within the PR, as represented by the DAP's secular democracy and PAS's Islamist democracy (Maznah Mohamad 2008a: 451-452). Whatever impression one has of him, the indelible mark left by Anwar in contemporary Malaysian politics should not be divorced from his Islamist political socialisation, albeit in nascent form within a periodically shifting milieu. The challenge presented by Anwar Ibrahim to the ruling establishment is a manifestation of political Islam successfully impacting on Malaysia's political scene, if only one particular expression of it.

Another manifestation of Islamists' success in challenging Malaysia's dominant political establishment has been the resilience of movements, in multi-faceted and changing forms, associated with the leadership of a self-styled sufi, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (b. 1937). Having had his Darul Arqam *dakwah* (missionary) movement banned in 1994 for allegedly professing and propagating heterodox spiritual teachings, Ashaari dexterously negotiated his way through the

intricacies of Malaysia's body politic to further the cause of his Islamist utopia via successor organisations, Ruffaqa' Corporation and Global Ikhwan, registered in 1997 and 2008 respectively. While these organisations officially operated as harmless business entities which capitalised on Darul Arqam's once formidable economic network, they simultaneously functioned as hubs which discursively preserve the sufi-millennarian ideals which once brought Ashaari into open conflict with the state, not so much on account of deviant Islamic doctrines, but rather on the spiritual doctrines' effective de-legitimisation of the prevailing political order, institutions and actors (Ahmad Fauzi 2000b, 2005). While technically bowing to conditions laid down by the state, Ruffaqa' and Global Ikhwan remain steadfast to the fundamentals of Islamic development as expounded in Ashaari's many treatises (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1990), whose underlying principles were at odds with the narrow nationalistic modernising hegemony propounded by Malay-Muslim ruling elites (Maznah Mohamad 2008b: 305-307).

However, in contrast with the insular and somewhat ethnocentric approach adopted by Darul Arqam (cf. Nagata 1984: 105, 112; Hussin Mutalib 1990: viii, 87-89), Ruffaqa' and Global Ikhwan demonstrated a willingness to participate in mainstream development schemes and multi-ethnic business partnerships within a more urban-friendly, more women-friendly and less racist socio-economic milieu. They represent an attempt to integrate the best of realistic conventional development ethos, albeit constrained within Islamically permitted boundaries, and idealistic precepts of Ashaari's timeless visionary society (Ahmad Fauzi 2003: 139-150). As organisational successors of the proscribed Darul Arqam, employees and affiliates of Ruffaqa' and Global Ikhwan benefit from three factors the present author has identified as having injected vitality and perseverance into Darul Arqam followers, viz. sufi-oriented revivalism, economic activism and messianism (Ahmad Fauzi 1999). The tight surveillance regime imposed on Ashaari following his 1994 ISA detention and partial accommodation to mainstream ethos have not prevented the former Darul Arqam community from being viewed as a security threat to the regime. In 2007, renewed messianic pretensions prompted the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Islamic affairs to sternly warn Ruffaqa' against resuscitating any movement resembling Darul Arqam in its quest to establish a scripturally anointed government.^{xxiv} As soon as states passed *fatwas* pronouncing Ruffaqa's heterodoxy, religious officials sporadically raided business premises of Ruffaqa', confiscated paraphernalia which allegedly proved ominous intentions to revive Darul Arqam, arrested alleged ring-leaders and charged them in the *shariah* court for subscribing to and propagating false Islamic doctrines.^{xxv}

The persistence of a neo-sufi Darul Arqam challenge to Malaysia's ruling establishment, despite all odds being stacked against them, foregrounds the pivotal role of transnational grassroots nexuses in sustaining an Islamist movement, albeit under different guises. Apart from being

registered as business establishments rather than religious bodies per se, Global Ikhwan and Rufaqa' hardly differ from Darul Arqam in their concerns, activities and relational networks. Their adeptness in applying transnational Islam to encompass the economic and socio-welfare domains rendered the national ban on Darul Arqam practically ineffectual. During the immediate post-banning period, material and morale backing from its overseas chapters, all of whom pledged loyalty to their Malaysian leadership, was instrumental in perpetuating Darul Arqam's nexuses and ideals in spite of the stringent surveillance on its members in Malaysia. In Southeast Asian countries where Darul Arqam had built its bases, its socio-welfare services and Malaysian-injected employment-creating economic investments had endeared it to local Muslim populations and even governments (Ahmad Fauzi 2006b). In their numerous visits, Darul Arqam missionaries tied cordial relations with not only sufi communities, but also scholarly circles, government figures, journalists, trade guilds and community associations. Darul Arqam's strategic use of transnational marriages between its Malaysian and non-Malaysian nationals, facilitated by the wide practice of polygamy among the Darul Arqam leadership (Nagata 2004: 108), left immigration authorities with no choice but to allow the strategic flow of former Darul Arqam members across international borders.

Exploiting connections inherited from Darul Arqam, from 1997 to 2005, Rufaqa' expanded unabated into a conglomerate boasting 500 to 700 outlets specialising in small and medium size industries (SMIs), covering operations in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, France and Germany (Asaari Mohamad 2005: 62, 68; Khadijah Aam 2006: 14, 126, 235). It was when Rufaqa' attempted to publicly resurrect transnational millenarianism ala Darul Arqam, as signified by the October 2006 auspicious launching in Phuket, Thailand, of Khadijah Aam's^{xxvi} controversial hagiography, *Abuya Ashaari Muhammad Pemimpin Paling Ajaib di Zamannya* (Abuya Ashaari Muhammad The Most Miraculous Leader of His Time),^{xxvii} that it was deemed to have overstepped political boundaries. Having interlocking directorships and shareholding interests with Rufaqa', Global Ikhwan, living up to the international connotation of its appellation, has intensified links with Middle Eastern entrepreneurial sufis. For example, in July 2008, two Sudani *sheikhs* (spiritual leaders) from the Tijaniyyah order visited Malaysia and pledged allegiance to Ashaari. Other sufi *sheikhs* who continue to send delegations of followers to pay courtesy visits to him are Sheikh Abdul Nasser Al-Husaini Al-Shadhili of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdussalam Harras of Morocco, Sheikh Abdul Khalid Al-Syammar of Jordan, Sheikh Abd al-Jabbar of Iraq, Sheikh Mahmud Effendi and Sheikh Haydar Bas, both of Turkey.^{xxviii} Transnational contacts built initially on spiritual contacts are not uncommonly concretised by the erection of transnational familial nexuses, as when Ashaari took Dr. Mahmood Marglani, strongman of Sheikh Abdul Nasser Al-Husaini Al-Shadhili, to be his son-in-law in 2006 (Khadijah Aam 2006: 148-149). Dr. Mahmood has been actively deciphering Shadhili sufi ideas for a Malay-Muslim audience and

maintains an Arabic-language website on the ‘science of *tasawwuf*’ (Marglani 2006: 52-87).^{xxix} Global Ikhwan’s credentials in modern transnational Islam are underscored by its global internet connectivity. In disseminating Ashaari’s thoughts, Global Ikhwan maintains websites and weblogs in Malay, Indonesian, English, Thai, Japanese and French languages.^{xxx}

BUREAUCRATIC ISLAMISM: A NEW KIND OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

In discussing the challenge of political Islam in Malaysia, conventional analyses have usually adopted a binary framework which pit non-state political Islamists against a Malaysian state which professes a moderate brand of Islam compatible with modernity and a multi-cultural, multi-religious polity. His authoritarianism notwithstanding, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad’s hallmark achievement in nation-building was the rudimentary sowing of a Malaysian nationalism, as distinct from a racially exclusive Malay nationalism, embodied most powerfully in his introduction of the *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) discourse in his seminal Vision 2020 lecture in 1991 (Mahathir Mohamad 1991: 2, 22; Ooi Kee Beng 2006a). Although it had to withstand enormous pressures arising from the East Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and consequent setbacks of the 1999 general elections, Mahathir’s broad nationalist constituency maintained general cohesiveness. In fact, some analysts attribute BN’s victory in 1999 to strong non-Malay support, after UMNO’s power base among grassroots and especially middle class Malays was gravely threatened by the Anwar Ibrahim debacle (Maznah Mohamad 2003). Mahathir’s undisputed credentials in multi-ethnic nation-building saw him sail through his various Islamisation initiatives since the early 1980s and post-9-11 repeated declarations of Malaysia’s *de facto* Islamic state status with his reputation relatively unscathed among non-Malays (Milne and Mauzy 1983, Ooi Kee Beng 2006b).

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who succeeded Mahathir as Prime Minister on 31 October 2003, was not the master coalition builder and political tactician that his predecessor was. A long-time civil servant before joining politics, Abdullah had weak grassroots support, not only among Malaysia’s motley populace, but also within UMNO. In addition to his bureaucratic disposition making him a misfit in the rough and tumble of UMNO realpolitik, Abdullah’s long tenure in the Foreign Ministry (1991-99) had deprived him the time and opportunity of fostering grassroots support via the myriad nexuses available at the disposal of an UMNO power broker. Regardless of his personal charm and ‘nice guy’ reputation, Abdullah was widely perceived as lacking a power base within UMNO; a factor which was crucial in his selection as Deputy Prime Minister by Mahathir, who would have been paranoid at the prospect of another of his handpicked deputy challenging him (Yang Razali 2005: 224). In need for such a base upon his elevation to party and national leadership, Abdullah, falling back on his own background and pedigree as an Islamic

studies graduate hailing from a lineage of respectable *ulama*,^{xxxix} indulged Islamist elements that had penetrated UMNO and UMNO-controlled religious departments in response to Mahathir's pandering to this constituency since the 1980s. At both personal and policy-making levels, Abdullah openly appealed to Islam in hustings for the 2004 general elections, which BN won handsomely. He even opted to field well-known religious bureaucrats as UMNO candidates in constituencies where Islam was deemed to be a decisive voting factor (Ahmad Fauzi 2006a: 114-117). To all intents and purposes, Islam was officially crystallised as a bedrock of Abdullah's administration via his proclamation of ten fundamental principles of *Islam Hadhari* (civilisational Islam), viz. faith and piety in God, a just and trustworthy government, free and independent people, a vigorous mastery of knowledge, a balanced and comprehensive economic development, a good quality of life, protection of the rights of minority groups and women, cultural and moral integrity, conservation of the environment and strong defence capabilities.^{xxxix} *Islam Hadhari* was later mentioned twice as integral to Abdullah's professed National Mission to build a national civilisation based on sublime universal principles (Abdullah Ahmad Badawi 2006: 9, 31).

Theoretically, *Islam Hadhari* is promising in terms of ushering an era in which the compatibility of values and principles of a state with Islam is not gauged by the extent to which it successfully incorporates the Islamic legal framework, which is understood as being constantly prone to change and not fixed. Therefore, Abdullah related *Islam Hadhari* to the quest for contemporary *ijtihad*s (legal opinions) which would free Muslims from "excessive literalism and legalism."^{xxxix} However, at the practical level, the lofty ideals enunciated by *Islam Hadhari* were far removed from the realities of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. Rather than arresting the trend towards the zealous legalisation and bureaucratisation of Islam set in motion by Mahathir's arbitrary declarations of Malaysia as an Islamic state (Zainah Anwar 2005: 131), Abdullah's application of *Islam Hadhari* reared an ugly authoritarian face at grassroots levels of day-to-day interaction with a multi-religious society. Abdullah entrusted the implementation of *Islam Hadhari* to federal and state-level religious functionaries whose training was constricted to Islamic law understood in the conservative mould.^{xxxix} Emboldened by such supportive proclamations and patronage, there has been a definite push among state-affiliated Islamist legal practitioners to recognise Islam as "the core, central, overriding feature of the Constitution."^{xxxix} This was symbolised at the highest judicial level by the suggestion of an outgoing Chief Justice, Ahmad Fairuz Sheikh Abdul Halim, that Malaysia forego the use of English common law as the basis of Malaysia's legal system, to a loud chorus of disapproval from the non-Muslim-dominated Bar Council.^{xxxix} A year later, a proposal by another outgoing Chief Justice that a merger between *shariah* and common law courts be contemplated was welcomed by *shariah* legal practitioners but received with trepidation by non-Muslims.^{xxxix}

Rightly or wrongly, *Islam Hadhari* has become identified with wanton abuse of powers against not only non-Muslims but also Muslims suspected of subscribing to unorthodox beliefs. The government failed to pay attention to non-Muslims' concerns at continually being left in the dark as to the theoretical understanding and practical aspects of *Islam Hadhari*,^{xxxviii} with explosive repercussions. Malaysian Hindus, for example, became embroiled in high-profile legal disputes with the various states' Islamic authorities arising from break-ups of their families from forcible conversions and dispossessions of bodies of deceased loved ones deemed to have secretly embraced Islam during their lifetime (NECF Malaysia 2007: 3-5, 12-16). The straw that broke the camel's back seemed to have been insensitive demolition of temples which local authorities had declared as unregistered and therefore illegal.^{xxxix} Hindu discontent culminated in the 30,000-strong rally organised by the Hindu Action Rights Force (HINDRAF) on 25 November 2007 to send a memorandum to the British High Commission to seek redress from the British Crown for their prolonged suffering.^{xl} For non-Muslims who have been at the receiving end of the government's 'religious authoritarianism', Abdullah Badawi's assurances that *Islam Hadhari* was appropriate for all religious groups rang hollow.^{xli} Yet, the reality of Malaysia's multi-racial society beckons at least gradual cognisance on the part of non-Muslims of ramifications arising from any application of Islamic statecraft principles which affect their lives, even if indirectly (Ahmad Fauzi 2002b: 14). The problem which once beset PAS's unsuccessful attempts to impose *hudud* laws in states it ruled now surrounds *Islam Hadhari*.

Among Muslims who have encountered legal problems with Malaysia's Islamic officialdom's increasing tendency to apply its brand of orthodox puritanism which regulates their religious lives, sufi groups have borne the brunt of the state's punitive action. Through a series of prohibitive *fatwas*, which under the various states' *Shariah* Criminal Offences Enactments are legally binding rather than being merely advisory (Zainah Anwar 2005: 123), sufi orders have been consistently labelled *sesat lagi menyesatkan* (deviant and deviationist), eventually proscribed and its adherents tried and convicted in the *shariah* courts.^{xlii} Yet, the process of *fatwa*-making in Malaysia is blemished with weaknesses that erode the legitimacy of *fatwas* and threaten the credibility of *muftis*. Intellectual rigour is not given due importance in *fatwas*, whose authors have not been transparent on the research methodologies and scholarly references which guided their decisions (Zainah Anwar 2005: 124-125).^{xliii} Lax procedures have rendered the *fatwas* vulnerable to political manipulation and arbitrary judgement by *muftis* and *shariah* committees, whose deliberations expressly avoid considerations of views which seemingly diverge from those of Islamic orthodoxy as officially subscribed to in Malaysia (Ahmad Fauzi 2009: 25-26).

Religious bureaucrats in Malaysia are hardly politically neutral, as shown by the fact that successive Chief Directors of JAKIM have upon retirement contested for UMNO in general

elections, become Members of Parliament and even Ministers.^{xliv} In a raid against a Ruffaqa'-organised function suspected of reviving the banned Darul Arqam, religious officials rode roughshod over the alleged plotters, constantly and mercilessly violating not only their fundamental human liberties but also their Islamic rights to proper conditions of ritual worship (Detainee 2007). In moral policing operations, religious officials reportedly have been filming on videotape the physically unclothed conditions of disgraced unmarried Muslim couples, only to be rebuked over cyberspace upon revelations that some of the sexually compromising images were leaked to the tabloid press and circulated via the internet by none other than themselves.^{xlv} Considering *Islam Hadhari's* racial exclusivity, paternalistic approach, nebulousness, and great divergence between theory and practice, not to mention sheer hypocrisy on the part of its gatekeepers, the observation made that that even "UMNO and [Abdullah] Badawi's approach to governing has often been in conflict with the principles of Islam Hadhari" is hardly surprising (Gatsiounis 2006: 83).

In truth, the groundwork for this emerging trend of bureaucratic Islamism, which has reared its intolerant face in Abdullah Badawi's era, had been laid down by Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation policies. A major step was the Article 121 (1A) constitutional amendment in 1988, which raised the status of *shariah* courts and judges to be at par with their civil counterparts, hence effectively creating jurisdictional dualism in Malaysia's legal system. Article 121 (1A) has become a bone of contention dividing civil society into a Muslim 'pro-*shariah*' camp and a largely non-Muslim 'pro-freedom of worship' camp, which has persistently called for its review in the wake of the reluctance of civil courts to interfere in cases involving contesting claims pitting non-Muslim families against family members who secretly converted to Islam and in some cases against state Islamic authorities (Ahmad Fauzi 2009: 7-8). Simmering inter-religious tension was magnified by Abdullah's summary dismissal of non-Muslim pleas to re-examine Article 121 (1A) and his yielding to pro-*shariah* lobbyists' demands in unconditionally opposing the formation of an Interfaith Commission (IFC) to serve as a platform for inter-religious dialogue.^{xlvi} Apart from Article 121 (1A), rationalisation of the Islamic legal apparatus took the form of a reorganisation of the *shariah* court system into a three-tier hierarchy consisting of the *Shariah* Subordinate Court, the *Shariah* High Court and the *Shariah* Court of Appeal, and the establishment in 1998 of a Department of *Shariah* Judiciary (JKSM: *Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia*) under the Prime Minister's Office. Such administrative streamlining effectively concentrated Islamic judicial power in federal agencies, whose political loyalty to UMNO was rewarded with lavish benefits and incentives (Hamayotsu 2003: 61-66). Such sponsorship made the Islamic legal profession and accompanying careers in the Islamic bureaucracy lucrative.

More importantly, they served as testament to UMNO's unending commitment to substantive Islamisation of Malaysia's polity, as opposed to PAS's Islamist rhetoric, which rang

hollow at the practical level despite PAS's control of individual state governments. By the time Abdullah Badawi assumed the Premiership, bureaucratic Islamism had acquired a dynamic of its own. While Mahathir's authoritarian habits temporarily clipped the wings of emergent bureaucratic Islamists of his time, Abdullah's indulgence to them accelerated the penetration of an unduly legalistic and literalist form of Islamism into the discourse on Islam at both state and popular levels. Wahhabi-Salafism became the main strand of Islamic thought not only among non-state Islamist civil society actors, but also within the milieu of state-sanctioned Islam. In Abdullah Badawi's era, we thus observe a convergence of sorts between official Islam and independent Islam of the non-PAS variety. Political Islam of this stripe has, unfortunately, been wilfully interpreted by its proponents in a narrowly legalist-cum-racialist manner. Leaderships of ABIM and the Society for Islamic Reform (JIM: *Jamaah Islah Malaysia*), for example, have, in recent keynote addresses, stressed the defence of the *shariah* at all costs as their movements' top priority. Further, they closely link such an endeavour with demands to protect the constitutional rights of Malays, who are alleged to have been marginalised in their own country despite their majority position, in view of their inability to carry out their religious injunctions fully (Yusri Mohamad 2006: 20-30, 2007: 15-22; Zaid Kamaruddin 2006: 14-17, 2007: 3-11).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a force to be reckoned with in contemporary Malaysian politics, political Islam has been far from monolithic. Unless one specifies what one has in mind in speaking about 'political Islamists', the term may refer to independent Islamists seeking to Islamise Malaysia's polity through grassroots efforts of socio-economic mobilisation, or to members of political parties expressly seeking a replacement of the political status quo by an Islamist government. Within the category of those fighting for some form of Islamic political system, groups exist along the moderate – radical spectrum, differentiated by the extent to which they are prepared to resort to radical measures to achieve their Islamist ambitions. However, Islamist violence has not found fertile ground among the Malaysian Muslims, whose common designation as 'moderate' stems largely from their aversion to violence and relatively successful negotiation of their Islamicity with the prevailing cultural and religious diversity of Malaysian society.^{xlvii} The few Malaysians who indulge in terrorism and anti-non-Muslim violence have had to pursue their cause outside Malaysia. As a 2006 random survey of one-thousand Malay-Muslims across Peninsular Malaysia revealed, while Malay-Muslims of the 'post-Islamic resurgence' generation tellingly lay more importance to their Islamic rather than Malaysian identity, they express no discomfort in living alongside people of other faiths. In fact, a large majority of them advocate the practices of inter-faith dialogue and of Muslims learning about other Malaysian religions.^{xlviii}

During the formative phases of Islamic resurgence, political Islamists were widely perceived to be rivals against the ruling establishment for a definitive place in the country's political order. A handful of Islamists were arrested under internal security laws. The ruling elites consequently sought to neutralise them via cooptation, coercion and a hijacking of the Islamist agenda in the form of carefully measured Islamisation policies. While some Islamists chose to participate within the ruling establishment, others remained outside the government fold. If they truly adhered to their ideals, Islamists would maintain their grassroots bases, from where they launched their original missions to reform society, even as they climb up the social and political ladder. Uprooting such a challenge emanating from the grassroots is arduous, as the state has discovered in the cases of Anwar Ibrahim and Ashaari Muhammad. They differ, however, in that Anwar carries with him the burden of once being in complicity with the powers that be, whom Ashaari has continuously shunned and been shunned by the hegemonic state. Both leaders present a more serious challenge to the UMNO-dominated state than PAS, whose doctrinal rigidity and technical weaknesses in conventional political rules of the game renders it vulnerable to UMNO-orchestrated neutralisation in the long term. Nonetheless, PAS has lately attuned its ways to suit Malaysia's political realities within a modernising and globalising milieu, as starkly exhibited in its dropping its juridical Islamic state agenda in Malaysia's historic 2008 elections. It remains to be seen whether this moderate posture can be maintained.

Paradoxically, it is from within the ranks of the UMNO-controlled religious bureaucracy that a pernicious threat of political Islam has surfaced, with detrimental ramifications for nation-building within the context of ethnic and religious pluralism. While the basis for such a menace had been laid down during Dr. Mahathir's protracted helming of national affairs, it was submerged by Mahathir's authoritarian tendencies and liberal interpretations of Islam. The racialist character of such an Islamism, if coming from beyond the ruling establishment, would have been deemed a threat to national security, which in Malaysia often gets conflated with regime security and state security (Kamarulnizam Abdullah 1999: 275-278). The use of Islam as a political tool in Malaysia is pervasive indeed, transcending inter-Malay political barriers. Within Malay-Muslim society, bureaucratic Islamism expressly prohibits pluralism within Islam, whose utility to Malay society is seen more as a constitutional boundary marker of Malayness rather than as a universal religion of multiple cultures, ethnicities and nationalities. As a result of the arbitrary definition of Islamic faith to concur with politically dormant Sunni orthodoxy, sufis and Shiites have been persecuted on theological grounds, in spite of both schools of thought having existed for centuries in Islam, with definitive roles in the early history of Malaysian Islam (Burhanuddin 2005: 35, Marcinkowski 2008: 37-47). Bitter legal disputes have also arisen from somewhat misguided attempts to punish Muslim deviants and apostates (Faruqi 2005: 259-263). While Malaysia prides itself in being a

plural society *par excellence*, its current practice of homogenising Islam runs against the grain of historical truth, for Islamic history is replete with contestations between sects, schools of thought and factions.

NOTES

ⁱ A term attributed to Azyumardi Azra, Professor of History at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN: State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia. A leading scholar who strenuously argues that Southeast Asian Muslims have remained essentially pacifist and democratic in spite of the recent upsurge of radical Islamist violence, Azra had in fact picked up the term from several international media outlets. See Ramakrishna and Tan (2003: 31) and Azra (2003: 45).

ⁱⁱ 'Islamist' pertains to proponents of Islamism or political Islam, which in turn refers to organised political action designed to establish Islam as the supreme creed of a polity and social order. 'Islamic resurgence' and 'Islamic revival', which in Malaysia transpired in the 1970s and 1980s, appropriately refer to the embryonic stages within the movement whose ultimate aim almost always involves the erection of an Islamic state in one form or another. In other words, 'Islamic resurgence' and 'Islamic revival' essentially encompass formative periods of the broader category of 'Islamism'; see Ahmad Fauzi (2002a).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Wahhabi school of thought is well-known in contemporary Islamist lexicon for its doctrinal rigidity and uncompromising puritanism. It was founded by the reformer of Nejd in present-day Saudi Arabia, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), who struck a strategic alliance with a local warrior, Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765), in 1744, hence laying the basis for the first Saudi state. Under the guidance of Wahhabism, this religious state strove to cleanse the Islamic faith from *shirk* (idolatry) and *bid'ah* (innovations), blaming the undesirable influence of sufism – the mystical strand of Islam, for accepting alien accretions into the faith. Heretical Muslims were invariably excommunicated. Interrupted by the Sunni Ottomans in 1819 and 1891, the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance forcibly established the third Saudi state in 1926, when Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud and pro-Wahhabi warriors called the Ikhwan conquered the Hijaz. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was proclaimed in 1932. Salafism is the contemporary movement to reassert the ideals of the pious generations of the first 300 years following the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 633. Essentially a Saudi-derived reincarnation of Wahhabism, Salafism traces its roots to the reform movement initiated by the Egyptian modernist Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and his disciple Rashid Rida (d. 1935). Despite similarities between them, Salafis deplore the use of the term 'Wahhabi' to describe their movement of reform. Taken together, Wahhabi-Salafism is the strongest current in contemporary Islamist political thought and activism; see Husain (1995: 46-48, 100-102).

^{iv} A perusal of courses and seminars organised by SEARCCT reveals that most were conducted in collaboration with Western governments, and a handful directly with the USA State Department; see http://www.searcct.gov.my/index.php?option=com_training&task=archive&Itemid=335 and click on the relevant years (accessed 7 February 2009). Nonetheless, Malaysia has strenuously denied overt USA interference in the running of SEARCCT; see Ramakrishna and Tan (2003: 25).

^v 'Malaysia-US treaty takes effect', *The Star*, 23 January 2009.

^{vi} Pertaining to the *ummah* – the global Muslim community.

^{vii} In Malaysia's state-controlled mainstream media, the KMM is stigmatised as *Kumpulan Militan Malaysia* (Militant Group of Malaysia).

^{viii} 'Anak Nik Aziz ditangkap: Disyaki antara tokoh terpenting Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 5 August 2001.

^{ix} See also David Childs, 'In the Spotlight: Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM)', <http://www.cdi.org/program/issue/document.cfm?DocumentID=3109&IssueID=56&StartRow=1&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=DateLastUpdated&ProgramID=39&issueID=56>, published 12 August 2005 (accessed 7 February 2009).

^x 'Kehadiran Hadi di Makassar bukti Pas cenderung keganasan', *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 February 2003; 'Hadi boleh dikenakan tindakan undang-undang', *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 February 2003.

^{xi} Brendan Pereira, 'PAS Gets Tips From Turkey on How to Win Elections', *The Straits Times*, 5 December 2002.

^{xii} On PAS's revamped image and newly inclusive policies, see for example, 'Before Vote, PAS Drops "Islamic" Malaysia', http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1203515505407&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout, published 21 February 2008, and 'PAS New Look Won Malaysian Hearts', http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1203757851714&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout, published 9 March 2008 (both accessed 5 February 2009).

^{xiii} The PR state government of Perak, however, collapsed on 5 February 2009 upon defections of two PKR assemblymen amidst widespread allegations of their having been induced by large sums of money and an UMNO-orchestrated offer to close impending corruption prosecutions against them. For an account of underhand intrigues leading to the current imbroglio in Perak, see Raja Petra Kamarudin, 'Live by the Sword, Die by the Sword (With Mandarin Translation)', <https://mt.m2day.org/2008/content/view/17434/84/>, published 31 January 2009 (accessed 5 February 2009).

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- ^{xiv} Interview with Haji Hadi, 'Kepimpinan yang mempunyai ketokohan dalam pelbagai aspek: PAS akan wujud profesional ulama', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 September 2003; 'Pilihan raya dan Jalan Raya', *Siasah*, 9-15 May 2007.
- ^{xv} Acronym for the United Malays National Organisation, the Malay-Muslim and largest component of the ruling BN coalition.
- ^{xvi} Joceline Tan, 'Hadi and Nik Aziz at odds over whether to leave Pakatan', *The Star*, 16 July, 2008.
- ^{xvii} Aniz Nazri, 'Dr. Ammam Said suntik semangat kepada perwakilan ulama', http://muktamar54.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=1, published 14 August 2008 (accessed 5 February 2009).
- ^{xviii} This firebrand image has been lent credence by Abdul Hadi Awang's own adamant refusal to withdraw the *Amanat Haji Hadi* – a speech condemning UMNO and exhorting PAS members to wage *jihād* against UMNO members, widely blamed for the bloody showdown between security forces and PAS villagers in Memali, Kedah in November 1985; see Ahmad Fauzi (2007a: 11-16).
- ^{xix} Many of these epithets, given by the mainstream media, are opposed by PAS, which insists on the feasibility of 'professionalising' the *ulama* and educating the professionals with solid knowledge of the essentials of Islam. See the interviews with PAS *Murshid al-'Am* Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, 'Kita harap tuah Dr. Haron', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 May 2005; Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub, 'PAS mesti tahu membaca zaman', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 May 2005; and President Abdul Hadi Awang, 'Tidak semestinya dengan DAP', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 June 2005. Also, the statement by Vice President Husam Musa, in Razak Beghani, 'Tolak labelan mengenai pimpinan PAS', http://www.harakahdaily.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7798&Itemid=50, published 22 May 2007 (accessed 7 February 2009).
- ^{xx} Joceline Tan, 'Redefining role of PAS women', *The Sunday Star*, 10 August 2003; Abdul Razak Ahmad, 'PAS softening its stand on accepted popular culture', *New Straits Times*, 9 October 2004; 'PAS poised for woman veep', *New Straits Times*, 18 April 2005; 'Tidak semestinya dengan DAP', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 June 2005; 'PAS cadang terima bukan Islam', *Utusan Malaysia*, 22 May 2006; 'PAS redefines pop culture', *The Sunday Star*, 3 December 2006; Ian MacIntyre, 'PAS-style dance clubs', *The Sunday Star*, 17 December 2006; Joceline Tan, 'PAS eases up on having fun', *The Sunday Star*, 31 December 2006; 'PAS wants to work with DAP', *New Straits Times*, 8 March 2007.
- ^{xxi} See also, Joceline Tan, 'No antidote for election fever', *The Sunday Star*, 18 March 2007.
- ^{xxii} *Hudud* (sing. *hadd*, meaning 'limit') refers to criminal penalties instituted by the Quran and *Sunnah* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) after conviction in a court of law, such as amputation of the hand for thieves, flogging of eighty lashes for consuming intoxicating liquor, flogging for libel, stoning to death for adultery and flogging of one hundred lashes for fornication.
- ^{xxiii} 'Malaysia negara Islam – PM: Dr. Mahathir sahut cabaran Fadzil Noor', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 30 September 2001; 'Malaysia an Islamic state, and has never been secular: Najib', *The Straits Times*, 18 July 2007; 'Minister: Study proposal on switch to Syariah law thoroughly', *The Star*, 24 August 2007.
- ^{xxiv} 'Lupakan hasrat tubuh kerajaan Bani Tamim', *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 October 2007.
- ^{xxv} 'Banned Al-Arqam tries to get members, 100 arrested', *New Sunday Times*, 26 November 2006; 'JAIS tahan dua pemimpin Rifaqa', *Berita Harian*, 2 December 2006; 'JAIS tetap dakwa 16 pengikut Rifaqa', *Berita Harian*, 5 January 2007; 'JAIS serbu markas Rifaqa, tiga ditahan', *Berita Harian*, 2 March 2007; '51 pengikut cuba hidup semula al-Arqam ditahan', *Berita Harian*, 3 November 2007; 'Ashaari's wife in Syariah court', *The Star*, 6 November 2007; '43 pengikut al-Arqam dihadapi ke mahkamah', *Berita Harian*, 23 February 2008.
- ^{xxvi} Khadijah Aam (b. 1953) was Ashaari's second wife who together with her husband had been detained under ISA-related restrictive regulations from 1994 to 2004.
- ^{xxvii} For the English language version of the book, see <http://skygate.wordpress.com> (accessed 5 February 2009).
- ^{xxviii} See 'Kunjungan Syekh Thariqat Tijaniyah dari Sudan' and 'Kawan-kawan Abuya', <http://dijanjakan.wordpress.com> (accessed 5 February 2009).
- ^{xxix} See <http://sufiology.com> (accessed 5 February 2009).
- ^{xxx} See respectively, <http://ikhwantoday.com>, <http://ikhwan-daily.com>, <http://ikhwan-insight.com>, <http://islampattana.pantown.com>, <http://ikhwankenshiki.wordpress.com> and <http://aimedieu.wordpress.com> (all accessed 5 February 2009).
- ^{xxxi} Abdullah was the grandson and son of Haji Abdullah Fahim and Haji Ahmad Badawi respectively, two influential *ulama* from UMNO's religious section. The Mecca-born Haji Abdullah Fahim was a venerable scholar who has been credited for choosing Malaya's independence date of 31 August 1957, based on its equivalent date in the Islamic lunar calendar. Haji Ahmad Badawi represented UMNO continuously in Penang's state legislative assembly from 1959 until 1978, when Abdullah Badawi was offered the Kepala Batas parliamentary seat upon his father's death.
- ^{xxxii} As promulgated in his keynote address to the 55th UMNO General Assembly in September 2004; see Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, 'Menuju kecemerlangan', *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 September 2004. For a condensed version of

the speech, see ‘Ucapan YAB Perdana Menteri Di Pusat Perdagangan Dunia Kuala Lumpur’, <http://www.islam.gov.my/islamhadhari/index.php?page=utama2> (accessed 6 February 2009).

^{xxxiii} Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, ‘Muslim world needs a meeting of minds’, speech delivered at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, United Kingdom, on 1st October 2004, *New Straits Times*, 5 October 2004.

^{xxxiv} See for example the official list of speakers entrusted by the Department for Islamic Development (JAKIM: *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*), the central arm of Malaysia’s Islamic officialdom, with the propagation of *Islam Hadhari*, ‘Senarai Nama Penceramah Pendekatan Islam Hadhari’, <http://www.islam.gov.my/islamhadhari/penceramah.pdf> (accessed 6 February 2009).

^{xxxv} Shad Saleem Faruqi, ‘Bedrock of our nation’, *The Star*, 22 August 2007.

^{xxxvi} ‘Call to replace common law ‘baseless’, *The Star*, 23 August 2007.

^{xxxvii} ‘Syariah judge: Fears among non-Muslim unwarranted’, *The Star*, 19 November 2008.

^{xxxviii} Cf. Sarjit Singh Gill, ‘Pemantapan wacana Islam Hadhari: Penerangan kepada bukan Melayu mengenai 10 prinsip perlu jelas, telus’, *Berita Harian*, 16 December 2006.

^{xxxix} P. Ramasamy, ‘The HINDRAF Movement in Malaysia: Indians’ discontent has been boiling for a while’, *ISEAS Viewpoints*, 31 December 2007, <http://www.iseas.edu.sg/viewpoint/pr31dec07.pdf> (accessed 7 February 2009). For a list of 79 Hindu temples demolished between 22 February 2006 and 13 June 2007, see ‘List of Hindu temples demolished in Malaysia in 16 months’, 24 January 2008, <http://malayindians.blogspot.com/2008/01/list-of-hindu-temples-demolished-in.html> (accessed 7 February 2009).

^{xl} Cf. ‘Malaysia’s Racial Policies draw International Scrutiny’, 28 November 2007; http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=906&Itemid=178; ‘It’s apartheid, says poet who fled Malaysia’, 28 November 2007, <http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?newsid=1135947> (both accessed 7 February 2009).

^{xli} ‘Konsep Islam Hadhari sesuai semua kaum’, *Mingguan Malaysia*, 2 December 2007.

^{xliixiii} See the list of *fatwas* passed by the National *Fatwa* Council (NFC) under the *aqidah* (theological faith) category at <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my/jakim/keputusan-kategori.asp>. Further, browse through *fatwas* passed by the *fatwa* councils of the various Malaysian states at <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my/mufti/default.asp> (both accessed 7 February 2009).

^{xliii} Such concerns were passionately expressed in the light of the recent national *fatwa* banning yoga in Malaysia; see Hariati Azizan, ‘In a twist over fatwa ruling’, *The Sunday Star*, 30 November 2008.

^{xliv} They are, Dr. Mohd. Yusof Nor – former Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, former Minister of Primary Industries and currently chairman of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA); Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, former Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department and presently religious advisor to the Prime Minister; Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, former one-term state assemblyman for the Melor constituency in Kelantan (1995-99) and then Malaysian ambassador to Egypt; and Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin, former Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department and now Member of Parliament for Parit Buntar-cum-chairman of the Council of Trust for Indigenous Peoples (MARA: *Majlis Amanah Rakyat*).

^{xlv} See ‘Hentikan rakaman pasangan berkhalwat’, http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/berita/komen_undang-undang/hentikan_rakaman_pasangan_berkhalwat.html, published 27 March 2007 (accessed 14 January 2009) for reports of the public outcry against such an operation in Penang in March 2007, and the erroneous justification given by Faizal Ibrahim, head of the operations unit of Penang’s Department of Islamic Religious Affairs (JAIPP: *Jabatan Agama Islam Pulau Pinang*).

^{xlvi} ‘121 (1A) kekal - PM: Perbuatan 9 menteri bukan Islam serah memorandum luar biasa’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 21 January 2006; ‘Jangan pertikai Perkara 121(A)’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 July 2006; ‘Hentikan perbincangan isu agama – Abdullah’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 26 July 2006, and ‘Kerajaan tiada hasrat benarkan penubuhan IFC’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 November 2006; ‘Perkara 121 Perlembagaan Persekutuan kekal’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 July 2007.

^{xlvii} Cf. Michael Backman, ‘A moderate voice for Islam: Malaysia’s Mahathir’, *International Herald Tribune*, 6 December 2002; Justin Raimondo, ‘Christmas in Malaysia: It’s not what you imagine’, published 23 December 2005, <http://antiwar.com/justin/?articleid=8300> (accessed 7 February 2009).

^{xlviii} Patricia Martinez, ‘Opinion: Thumbs up to living in Malaysian diversity’, *New Straits Times*, 10 August 2006. See also, ‘Malaysia: Increasing religiosity in Malaysia causes a stir’, published 22 September 2006, <http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd%5B157%5D=x-157-542912> (accessed 7 February 2009).

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