

## **Terrorist Deradicalisation Programme in Malaysia: A Case Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Radicalisation leading to violence has become a growing fear among Malaysians, as terrorism emerged to be one of the main security threats to the stability of the country. Although Malaysia has suffered relatively fewer acts of violence, this fear has intensified and a deradicalisation strategy is needed in the Malaysian context. Hailed as one of the most successful deradicalisation programmes in the world, Malaysia claims some significant degree of success for its deradicalisation programme. As preventive measures, Malaysia adopted the deradicalisation strategy that requires strategic collaboration between the government and religious departments to inhibit extremist threat at home or abroad by individuals or group of individuals. In a qualitative case study methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with authorities, academicians, and former terrorists to explore solutions to radicalisation. This study proposes a deradicalisation model, known as Wasatiyyah Deradicalisation Model. Many elements seen in deradicalisation

programme in Malaysia including module, enforcement, financial, counselling and religious guidance. Policy recommendations and directions for future research are also discussed. With these results, this study hopes to add to the existing, yet limited, knowledge the field has in respect to these types of deradicalisation programmes, and comes at a time when the threats from ISIS affiliated terrorist groups appear to be on the rise.

**Keywords:** *Deradicalisation, militant, radicalisation, recidivism, violent extremism.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Deradicalisation is a strategic plan and it should not be considered as a soft practice [1]. Deradicalisation aims to prevent further escalation of violence. Furthermore, and this makes disengagement and deradicalisation different, deradicalisation creates the conditions conducive to dialogue. Deradicalisation is therefore an important strategic tool in the fight against terrorism. And not surprisingly, then, it is being embraced by many. In Europe, countries such as the Netherlands and the UK follow with great interest developments in Asia and North Africa where the first results of large-scale deradicalisation attempts are being published [2].

In order to accurately respond to these questions, a closer look at the extant research on terrorism research past and present must take place. Moreover, researchers need to critically examine the validity of the policy recommendations produced to better counter Al-Qaeda and ISIS related terrorism. Researchers have grappled with the question of what causes terrorism and who the terrorists truly are, and accordingly, the best ways to counter both.

In local context, the government's deradicalisation programme for terrorists has succeeded in part due to its emphasis on the welfare of the detainees and their families. In the deradicalisation post-release programme, assistance and support was provided to ensure that the released detainees could continue living without succumbing to extremism while the success rate of the deradicalisation programme was at around 97% [3].

Deradicalisation is an important element of Malaysia's counter terrorism and violent extremism strategy. Malaysia has initiated several deradicalisation programme to address the problem of radicalism due to religious misconceptions, with the specific purpose to rehabilitate and subsequently reintegrate the radicals into the society. This initiative is a collaborative and holistic effort between the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) and other relevant agencies, including the Department of Islamic of Development Malaysia, Malaysian Prison Department, Ministry of Education and higher education institutions. These deradicalisation programme are based on the 'Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah' approach, an Islamic jurisdiction to counter the extremist interpretations of Islam. While the detainees are put into small groups, they are also subjected to individual counselling sessions which are conducted at custodial locations away from the detention centres [3].

## **2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Multi-disciplinary threat assessment deradicalisation programmes should be implemented to identify individuals who may be exhibiting signs of radicalisation towards violent extremism and provide them with the necessary resources to help develop an alternative path to projecting extremist ideologies through acts of violence. This preventative measure, which has taken form in various countries around the world, is more necessary now than ever with the improvement of foreign terrorist organizations' use of social media platforms that recruit and radicalize individuals in what many experts have called online virtual training camps [4].

Interestingly, countries in different parts of the world employ different aims within their deradicalisation programmes. Scholars and former radicals who have attained notoriety for their knowledge in Islam are often employed to convince extremists that their personal interpretations of Islam do not fall in line with any form of acceptable Islamic jurisprudence [5]. While this approach may show success in the form of decreasing terrorist attacks within the originating country (as it emphasizes the stigma of attacking a government that is Islamic) it does not target the issue of

deradicalisation itself; thus, enabling these individuals to continue with their conquest against Western countries [6].

Distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful strategies of deradicalisation is not easy. Various countries have developed their own deradicalisation models according to their own circumstances. So far there has been no consensus on the effectiveness of any single deradicalisation programme, mainly because of diverse conceptual contexts.

All of these programmes, however, converge at least at one point; they are focused on changing the views of the detainees and other radicalised individuals. Furthermore, all these models are based on the assumption that radicalisation is a matter of ideology originating from a misinterpretation of religion and leading to deviant social and psychological behaviours. A closer look at how Malaysia is dealing with terrorism as it relates to those terrorists in custody is critical in light of the thousands of “foreign fighters”, from over 50 countries, now flocking to Iraq and Syria to join the so-called Islamic State including many Malaysians who joined in the “battle” there [7]. If this is not known, those that are not killed and coming back to their hometown may very well inspire others to join their cause or worse return fully indoctrinated and seething with hate.

Clearly, there is a need to examine alternative ways to mitigate the terrorist threat in conjunction with ongoing security approaches. Thus, this study will attempt to add to the existing knowledge regarding the Malaysia’s approach and the effect it has had on terrorism within it. To achieve this, the study will look empirically for differences in terror related incidents before and after programme implementation; and will also examine if differences exist in civilian and security forces casualties before and after deradicalisation implementation. Here, a closer look at the deradicalisation strategy, through primary sources of data, will be conducted, on sight, through interviews with senior policy-makers, counterterrorism specialists, and those involved in deradicalisation. A better descriptive understanding of why the programme was implemented; how it is delivered; what constitutes success and how it is determined are some of the questions that this study hopes to answer.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### *3.1 Exploratory Case Study*

For this research, the suitable methodology will be used is exploratory case study. Case study methodology are categorized into 7 parts:

Explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, multiple case study, acentric, instrumental and collective [8]. According to Yin [9], exploratory case study is used to explore a situation in which involvement of an issue being evaluated has no specific outcome. Since the terrorist threat and deradicalisation are recent and on-going issues, the authority must look for an approach to tackle the issues with effective security measurement. Thus, exploratory is the best method to be use in this research.

In this research, a series of in depth interview has been conducted to various personnel that are expert in counter-terrorism and deradicalisation. According to Chan, et al. [10] in depth interview may be conducted through various mediums such as internet, telephone, and face-to-face. For participants based in overseas, the interview may be conducted through phone or email. Views and opinion resulted from the interview will be used for discussion later in this research.

The process of conducting in depth interview is plan, develop instrument, collect, analyse, and disseminate the findings. In this research, list of participants was identified. The participant came from government sector, academican, and former terrorists where they are experts in counter-terrorism and deradicalisation programme.

#### *3.2 Participants*

Six (6) participants from different fields of expertise were chosen. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. Each participant was given few questions related to their field of expertise. A total of (6) participants were interviewed. The following paragraph gave some background to each participant;

- i) Former Terrorist A was a prominent member of Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM), a terrorist organisation based in northern

peninsular Malaysia and linked to Jamaah Islamiyah (JI). He was a university lecturer, who specialized in financing the KMM organization and its activities including Bali bombing in 2002. He was put in a list of terror financier whose assets were frozen under UN Security Council resolution no. 1967. In 2015, he was released from the ISA after the authorities concluded he no longer posed a threat to Malaysia and now actively involved with The Royal Malaysia Police to deradicalise terrorist detainees.

- ii) Former Terrorist B was an ISA detainee. He was a student of the Abu Bakar Islamic University and University of Islamic Studies in Karachi, Pakistan. Having been previously arrested by Pakistani security forces on suspicion of Islamic militancy, he was subsequently released in Pakistan and sent home to Malaysia where they were promptly detained under the ISA upon arrival on 10 November 2003 for suspected involvement in militant activities. Now he is actively involved in deradicalisation programme and sharing his experience with the authorities.
- iii) Prof Dr. Rohan Gunaratna is a Professor of Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technology University, and Head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore. A trainer for national security agencies, law enforcement authorities and military counter terrorism units, interviewed terrorists and insurgents in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia and other conflict zones. For advancing international security cooperation, he received the Major General Ralph H. Van Deman Award in June 2014.
- iv) Mr. Thomas K. Samuel is the Director of the Research and Publications division with the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), which is under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. He has a certificate in Terrorism Studies from St. Andrews University, Scotland (2007) and a Master's degree in Strategic and Defense Studies (2005)

from the University of Malaya, Malaysia. His main areas of research include the dynamics of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

- v) Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady, a lecturer in political science and Islamic studies at the Department of Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, has conducted extensive research on extremist ideology and terrorism in Malaysia. Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady has been an advisor to Royal Malaysia Police Deradicalisation Programme for terrorist detainees and has interviewed more than 50 detainees, some as young as 14-years-old.
- vi) Mr. Asrul Zakaria is a principal assistant secretary at The Security and Public Order Division and the Officer in Charge of Deradicalisation Unit under Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaysia.

### *3.3 Semi Structure Interview*

Semi structure interview was chosen for this research. Kajornboon [11] stated it's not bound to express compared to the structured interview while the interviewer not tied with the detailed interview rule. Semi-structured interviews also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. Semi-structure interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. For the purpose of the research, eight (8) questions were generated to meet the objectives of the research.

The participants will answer the question related to deradicalisation, counter-terrorism and extremism based on national security.

The eight (8) questions are as follows:

- i) What are the deradicalisation elements in Malaysia? (RO 1)
- ii) What factors may cause an individual to exit from an extremist group? (RO 1)
- iii) Can mentoring around violent extremism be distinguished from other forms of intervention such as gangs, drugs, or alcohol? (RO 1 & 2)
- iv) What are the strengths in the deradicalisation process in Malaysia? (RO 2 & 3)

- v) What are the weaknesses of deradicalisation process in Malaysia? (RO 2 & 3)
- vi) Should deradicalisation focus on changing behavior (social, economic, employment), religious guidance, or both? (RO 2 & 3)
- vii) How can the authorities improve the current deradicalisation practice in Malaysia? (RO 2&3)
- viii) What is the role of community towards deradicalisation process in Malaysia? (RO 3)

## **4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### *4.1 Elements of Deradicalisation Programme in Malaysia*

All participants were asked the elements of deradicalisation programme in Malaysia. All participants agreed that Malaysia is among the best countries in practicing deradicalisation towards militant detainees.

#### *4.1.1 Module of the Deradicalisation Programme*

All participants agree that the deradicalisation programme or module itself as an important element in deradicalisation programme in Malaysia.

Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017) stated this programme runs since early 2000s, following the arrest of many Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) members, Kumpulan Militan Islam (KMM) and Darul Islam groups.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) suggested the authorities must plan a more specific module to differ militant and criminal detainees. The deradicalisation module must differentiate between radicals' detainees and criminal prisoners. We need to provide a special module on the topics that will be presented primarily on the correct understanding of religion. The titles to be presented should counter the arguments used by the militant groups on the concept of Islamic State, *bai'ah*, the concept of jihad, the concept of *al-wala 'wal al-bara'* (loyalty and self-determination or the concept of friends and enemies). The suicide attacks, the prohibition of killing non-Muslims and the concept of *takfiri*.



Mr. Thomas K. Samuel stated,

“I think the research you are doing is very important. I think sometimes there is a danger when we said our deradicalisation programme is the best. Why? 95.7 % or sometimes 95%. Give this two percentage. Dangerous. Be careful when you are standing unless you fall, it is English proverb. I think we must be very circumstance when we compliment ourselves. You know before this, it’s always 100%. Because there is no communist whoever turning back, non, zero. Things changing. So nowhere I heard 90%, so I if we are not careful, left behind, we will be in trouble. We still be having module which is not actually meant for this people. I think the module should be improved. I think we should not stop improving. that syllabus constantly changes. For that to happen we need to have experts. People like ustaz Ahmad El-Muhammady, particularly religious experts, social media experts. This kind of experts really important. I think we have them, they are in university, they are here, they are there. We need to bring them together” (KT Samuel, interview, May 12, 2017).

#### *4.1.2 Enforcement*

All participants stated that the importance of law enforcement to deter former terrorist from recidivism. Prof Dr. Rohan Gunaratna said,

“But you also need the law enforcement telling to him, if you don’t reform, we will arrest you. there must be a deterrence and punishment because if there are not deterrence, that man and woman will not embrace rehabilitation. You need deterrence and enforcement. We will punish you if you don’t accept rehabilitation. Secondly, you must have a very effective rehabilitation program. So, rehabilitation and punishment always work together. If you don’t show that he will be punished then he will not undertake rehabilitation” (R Gunaratna, interview, May 9, 2017).

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) explained that Malaysia's current law and policy is good enough for deradicalisation programme.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel used the word police to refer enforcement,

“The concept is this, your violence behavior comes from radical thought. Academic say we need to change the thought then you change the behavior. The police, for example Philippine police, you can think what you think but don't do any crime. We don't deal with what you think. But, academics says, all those who do this violence because they have the violence thought. The question we need to ask ourselves is should deradicalisation process focus, on stop violence behavior, or stopping radical thought. I think we need to address this first” (KT Samuel, interview, May 12, 2017).

#### *4.1.3 Financial*

Participants stated financial or fund as an element of deradicalisation programme. Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady stated authorities need more funding in organizing effective deradicalisation programme.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) said sufficient budget allocation must be adhered by the government for deradicalisation programme to be effective.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) said,

“I think we can learn from others. Saudi have a very comprehensive deradicalisation programme. For example, they pioneering music. Very expensive deradicalisation programme. Saudi even find you a wife, to start a life. It's called Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef Center for Advice and Care. Their centre look like a five-star hotel”.

#### *4.1.4 Counselling*

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that Singapore's authorities provide ustaz and ustazah degree in counselling. Prior that, they will give counselling to terrorism detainees.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that counsellors or persons carrying out the process of deradicalisation, including religious officers and counselors involved, do not understand the ideology of the militants. The use of ‘one-way approach’ and ‘they only have to be right once’ extremely unhelpful militant deradicalisation process. The approach used by Special Branch E1 (M), be friendly with militant detainees should be implemented.

Former Terrorist B (interview, May 15, 2017) informed that the biggest factor for him exit from radicalisation is psychology. He said, “we have been exposed on how to think and they treat us is just like a normal person, as a friend, not as a terrorist.”

#### *4.1.5 Religious Guidance*

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated there are still many shortcomings, especially regarding the programme of religion classes and Islamic teachings to change the patterns of thinking and bring awareness to the terrorists who participated in the programme. Understanding the militant ideology is necessary to eradicate militant ideology.

Former Terrorist B (interview, May 15, 2017) stated that we must be a moderate person in our life, we cannot just focus on worshipping and we forget the life part, and forget to worship God while working. We need balance on our lives.

Prof Rohan Gunaratna (interview, May 9, 2017) said, “you must determine what are the concept that they have misunderstood, such as al-wala’ wal bara’, jihad, and all these concepts you have ustaz and ulama’ that they can speak to the detainees.

Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017) stated the next process would be to point out the deviation, contradictions with authentic Islamic teachings, and replacing it with the true teachings of Islam. To strengthen their knowledge on the true teachings of Islam, regular sessions are held for the detainees. In short, we can say that deradicalization in Malaysia is focusing solely on changing the mindset and behavior of the detainees.

#### *4.1.6 Educational or vocational program*

Former Terrorist B (interview, May 15, 2017) said, “the process I went through was giving a proper education in deradicalisation centre. I was busy with studying and took SPM examination during my detention. I learn how to turn back to the normal life, before this I was thinking only about the hereafter. Grateful, now I have very good career and hold bachelor and master degree from a university. I do not think I will achieve all these without help from the government during my detention.”

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated the aims of the deradicalisation process is to correct the views, attitudes and beliefs of militants so that their views, attitudes and beliefs that may endanger national security will be abandoned and they can get back into the community by bringing some positive values. So, education is an important element to bring back former militant to community.

Mr Thomas K. Samuel said,

“So, they don’t have the knowledge and I think if you want to have effective deradicalisation programme, we need to have knowledge on whom we are confronting. What we are doing on which can be improved is one thing. We have a manual. I don’t care either you are Sunni, Shiite, communist, I want to put you in my programme. This is my programme. This is deradicalisation programme. So, for deradicalisation programme to be effective, literally we need to have a tailor-made approach. Can u imagine, I want to give you a suit and this is the suit I’m going to give you. I don’t care whether you are female, male, tall or short I don’t differentiate. I think we need to be careful. Here, I think we need to get expertise. That expertise can be academics, can be a very good ustaz around” (KT Samuel, interview, May 12, 2017).

#### *4.1.7 Psychology*

According to Former Terrorist B (interview, May 15, 2017), “the police officers are very good and humble. They try to understand us and

befriend with us. What's more, we know we're wrong in terms of the law, but they do not make us enemies and like criminals, we feel like we got a new friend. That's give a very positive impression to us.”

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that extremism depends on ideology and how we understand their psychology. Mr Thomas K. Samuel said, “last time we have the communist. I don't know this personally, but some people told me that it's easier to rehabilitate communist than religious base. Terrorist, communist, Marxist, they want something, like land and power. But religious extremist, they we want something that we can't give them. For example Jemaah Islamiah. Jemaah Islamiah want to create Malaysia, Singapore, Filipina and Thailand to make one whole ummah. That's not going to happen. That is the problem we face with them. There is difference with violent extremist and criminals.”

#### *4.1.8 Aftercare program*

According to Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017), Malaysian authorities added another component into rehabilitation system that is monitoring or aftercare program. Monitoring which is implemented by Restriction Order, or wearing electronic devices are designed as preventive measures to discourage individuals from getting into recidivism. Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady explained,

“Since 2013, a total of 294 peoples have been arrested in Malaysia for suspected involvement in terror network IS. Of that total, 257 are male and 37 are female. As part of efforts to reintegrate these detainees into society, Malaysian police organised a terrorist rehabilitation programme where suspects were “mentored” by counsellors for an extended period, even after their release from detention” (El-Muhammady, interview, May 11, 2017).

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated MOHA provide economic module such as self-management and social skills, so the former militant detainees know how to survived and start a new life after being released by POTA Board.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that moral support to accept the presence of ex-militants in the community after they go through the process of deradicalisation. Acceptance and positive response from community need to be improved so that they do not return to their previous group or involved with militant activities anymore. Community leaders, NGOs can play such role so that they are not viewed negatively by the public.

#### *4.2 Strengths and Weaknesses Of Deradicalisation Programme In Malaysia*

All participants were asked the strengths and weaknesses of the deradicalisation programme in Malaysia. All participants agreed that there are strengths and weaknesses to overcome in the deradicalisation programme to increase the effectiveness in rehabilitating the militant detainees.

##### *4.2.1 Soft Approach to Win Heart and Mind of Detainees*

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that in the effort to rehabilitate the militant detainees, usage of techniques that involve a drastic approach and force has been found to be ineffective. Therefore, a more prudent and diplomatic approach is more suitable for changing the ideology of the detainee.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) said, “this is deradicalisation programme. So, for deradicalisation programme to be effective, literally we need to have a tailor-made approach. Can you imagine, I want to give you a suit and this is the suit I’m going to give you. I do not care whether you are female, male, tall or short I don’t differentiate. I think we need to be careful. Here, I think we need to get expertise. That expertise can be academics, can be a very good ustaz around.”

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) agreed that using the soft approach to winning the ‘heart and mind’ of terrorists succeeded in changing their ideology. The police officer and counsellor must understand what are the need of the detainees and try to fulfill their demand if possible and according to the law.

#### *4.2.2 The Involvement of Family in The Deradicalisation Process*

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that the involvement of wives, parents and closest family in the deradicalisation process sponsored by MOHA has provide moral support to the detainees.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 207) said continuing family support is crucial to ensure the program is successfully implemented. Former Terrorist A continued, “he will always think about the fate of his family. What will happen to their family as long as they are in the detention centre. Furthermore, most militant detainees are fathers and husbands. So, family involvement is very important to ensure that the deradicalisation program is successful”.

#### *4.2.3 Former Militant Detainees as a Role Model*

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 207) said, “I am a former militant. I know what is in their mind. What they need and the best approach to deradicalise them. All terrorist organisation have the more or less the same ultimate goal and destination in their life. Now I am successfully graduates from the deradicalisation, so, I want them to be like me.”

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that The Special Branch of Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) has been requested to identify former ISA 1960 detainees who were militants that have been rehabilitated to become a role model and to have a sharing session on their experience before and after being rehabilitated.

#### *4.2.4 No specific place for terrorist detainees*

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that after the repel of ISA, the detention camp in Kamunting, Taiping is closed and no specific location or centre for deradicalisation. He agrees that Saudi Arabia model for deradicalisation is excellent where a specific place like a resort provided for terrorist detainees and Malaysia will adapt the Saudi model after a budget allocation for that purpose will be approved by the government soon.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) said, “no specific place for terrorist deradicalisation program except ISA Detention Camp which is already close after the ISA have been repelled in 2011”.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) in comparing with Saudi deradicalisation program, stated, “Saudi Arabia even find you a wife, they want you to start a life. It is called Mohammed bin Nayef Center for Advice, Counseling and Care. Their centre looks like a five-star hotel with swimming pool”.

#### *4.2.5 Limited counsellors*

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that one of the problem in current deradicalisation program is the officer or individual who conduct the counselling or religious guidance in detention centre. The wrong individual will only spoil or damage the deradicalisation process.

Prof Dr. Rohan Gunaratna (interview, May 9, 2017) also stated that some of the individuals in religious authorities who are conducting deradicalisation process are radical and the authorities must check their background.

Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017) suggested the deradicalisation counselors or panel should be multi-disciplinary, especially from education and psychology. The panel may not only from religious clerics.

#### *4.2.6 No structured training for counsellors*

Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017) said, “training for the staff and panel of deradicalisation is important to handle complicated detainees. In Singapore for example, religious rehabilitation team were trained as a counselor. They have diploma in counseling. I think it can be implemented in Malaysia as well.”

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel (interview, May 12, 2017) stated that one area we can improve is we can develop our expertise. He again expressed, “we at Malaysia have very poor reading, if you come out from Al-Azhar University, Egypt, your knowledge does not grow if you do not read, regardless of your qualifications, you have to keep up to date.”



#### *4.2.7 Lack of fund*

Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that the nature of the program was ad hoc in nature. Meaning no proper syllabus, especially in the beginning, lack of fund and training.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) repeated five times the words of fund and budget, expressed that the lack of fund will deter the deradicalisation programme to be successful. He said, “the small budget for deradicalisation program will only hinder the effectiveness of the deradicalisation programme.

#### *4.3 Propose Improvement in The Deradicalisation Programme in Malaysia*

All participants were asked to propose improvement in the current deradicalisation programme in Malaysia. All participants agreed that there are aspects to improve in order to decrease the recidivism rate among militant detainees.

##### *4.3.1 Religious Scholars in the Same School of Thought Used in Deradicalisation Program*

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) suggested that religious clerics or professors from ‘sunnah or so-called salafi’s school of thought are more preferred to be choose as counsellors for the terrorism convicted person. This will reduce the gap and easier in understanding the heart and mind of terrorists. Since most of the terrorists are using Ibnu Taimiyah or Muhammad Abdul Wahab’s books in supporting their ground of jihad, the salafis’ religious clerics will justify the real meaning and explanations of jihad in the books.

Former Terrorist B (interview, May 15, 2017) also agreed that religious clerics from salafi’s school of thought are preferred to teach them about religious and real meaning of jihad. He said, “We learn in Pakistan is salafi-jihadi, so, try to find ustaz from salafi too, but not salafi-jihadi. In the early stages of deradicalisation, it is so hard to accept them, because we have different school of thought, if we are same, the approach will be different and easier.”

### *4.3.2 Cooperation between agencies*

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that cooperation between government agencies must be strengthened so the deradicalisation programme will run smoothly. Furthermore, it is essential that we thoroughly understand manpower distribution to handle the task in the deradicalisation. The cooperation also must go beyond the global context, not only domestically, but internationally.

Former Terrorist A (interview, May 12, 2017) stated help from respected university lecturers are important to advice militant detainees to reform their ideology. On the other hand, community leader and NGOs can play their role to reduce negative perceptions among community towards former militant detainees.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel explained on cooperation between agencies in Singapore,

“Then of course you have Singapore deradicalisation strategy. Singapore is led by Internal Security Department (ISD), their Singapore Special Branch. And they also have the group called the RRG, Religious Rehabilitation Group. Please go to RRG Website. RRG is a non-government organisation, it is run by ustaz. When JI first came to Singapore, Singapore government arrest them and put them to jail and they realize there is a problem. In a sense that, they don’t know how to deal with this. So, they came to the realization that maybe the government not the best people to rehabilitated them. So, they called the ustaz. Two main ustaz, the most senior. One is Ustaz Dr Mohamed Ali. He is also a leader in Masjid Khadijah in Singapore, the other one Ustaz Suhaimi, and they call ustaz and ustazah. They form the group, RRG. They support the government. They are the one who do the rehabilitation. I think 2 weeks ago, we got one of the ustaz to come, Ustaz Muhammad Saiful, he is very young. He graduated from Al-Azhar University, and master in Australia, very clever, speak good English. You would not think he is ustaz. You

would think he is a rock star. They do the rehabilitation program in Singapore. RRG has a website. many of them also work for ICT area. Prof Rohan for example had many programme with RRG” (KT Samuel, interview, May 12, 2017)

#### *4.3.3 Role of family and community*

All participants agree that the role of community is important towards the successful of deradicalisation program in Malaysia.

According to Prof Dr. Rohan Gunaratna (interview, May 9, 2017), when the former militant back to community, community must support so that they do not back to terrorist again. Otherwise, if they do not make them friend, do not give them job, they will be isolated, then the extremist will approach them again. The community must treat them as a good man.

According to Mr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (interview, May 11, 2017), community must be supportive towards the detainees, especially family members. Family members have to be part of the deradicalisation program. They need to be briefed on the matters related to their family members and they are expected to be cooperative and supportive.

Mr. Asrul Zakaria (interview, May 11, 2017) stated that under POTA, the involvement of wives, parents and closest family in deradicalisation process are crucial so the former militant will not be isolated when they are released from detention.

Mr. Thomas K. Samuel gives different view on Malaysian perspectives on terrorist, stated,

“The problem is this. The society in which community does not accept them. Singapore is a good example. So, if I’m become a Singaporean extremist, when you come back to Singapore, they don’t accept you. But if you speak to some researchers here, they would say the problem is opposite here. If you are commit fight from Syria, Iraq, if you are here, they will appreciate and admire you. It is more than

accepting and it is our problem. We don't have the problem with drug addict. If you are a drug addict, you go to society, society does not want them. We have to change the mindset of the society. If you go to jail, society doesn't want them. But here is the opposite problem. When you come out from there, you actually need police to monitor you. Let me give you an example. When Dr Azhari was killed, his body was brought back, there are thousands of people went in, my Special Branch friend said there were lots of people. This is dangerous. This is my opinion, could be wrong. Maybe in urban places, we might have a problem. Singapore have normal problem which is they don't get job but they don't have that many compared to us" (KT Samuel, interview, May 12, 2017).

## **5.0 WASATIYYAH DERADICALISATION MODEL**

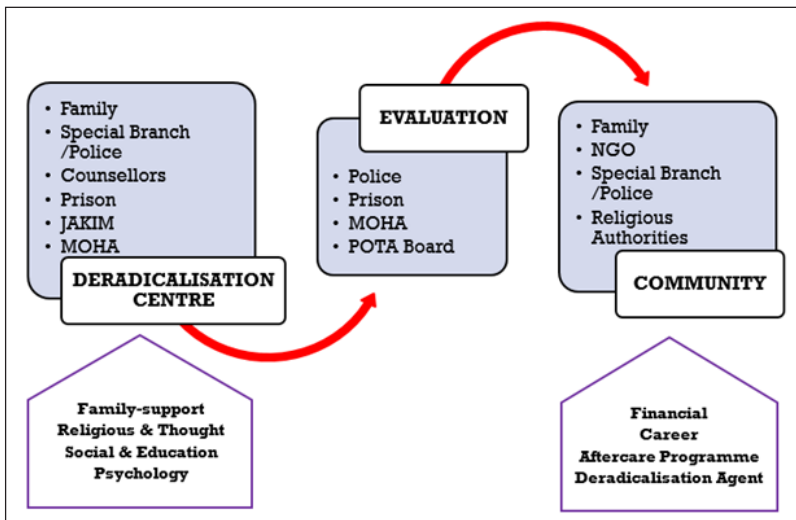
Using all significant results, findings, literature review and recommendation, this research proposes a deradicalisation model, known as Wasatiyyah Deradicalisation Model. The model is divided into two environments, deradicalisation centre and community. Inside the model, there are several stakeholders who will play a major role in preparing the former militant back to community.

Article 8 of the POTA bill provides for the establishment of a POTA Board, comprising a chairman, a deputy chairman, and from three to six other members, appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. If the POTA Board is satisfied that it is necessary in the interest of Malaysia's security, it has the authority to issue a detention order for a person to be placed in a detention for a two-year period. The POTA Board also given the authority to extend the detention order for a two-year period, to extend the restriction order for a five-year period, as well as to suspend the detention order.

Police, Prison, MOHA and religious authorities will work together to evaluate the detainees during the deradicalisation programme. While the involvement of family members in the deradicalisation process will

be provided for moral support to the detainees. All these 5 stakeholders, family, MOHA, Police, Prison and religious authorities will provide comprehensive elements such as family support, religious and thought, social and education and psychological aspect to the detainees.

When POTA Board decided to release a detainee, he or she be will set free and back to community. Six stakeholders, community, NGOs, family, MOHA, Police, and religious authorities play a vital role to prevent recidivism. They must provide financial, career and proper aftercare programme. The former detainees also can be recruited as deradicalisation agents for authorities in curbing terrorist activities.



*Figure 1: Wasatiyyah Deradicalisation Model*

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND RELIGIOUS CLERICS**

- i) Increase funding in the deradicalisation program, especially after detainees being freed from detention. While education is a provincial responsibility, detainee’s well-being is an important part of deradicalisation process. Therefore, the federal government should establish a funding program where authorities, NGOs,

and religious centres across Malaysia can apply directly. This fund should be used strictly in developing social and economic activities for the former terrorist and their family. These programs can include indoor or outdoor activities, employment programs, and training in vocational programs. As supported by the literature and participants, engagement remains one of the key factors in the successful of deradicalisation.

- ii) Collaboration between police, security agencies, and moderate religious clerics (in Malaysia is better known as imam or ustaz) is necessary. The expectation is that moderate religious clerics can engage in a dialogue with the terrorist detainees, provide religious guidance, correct misperceptions of religious teachings, or simply provide a safe space for them to express his or her opinions. This type of engagement can form a trust relationship, where religious clerics can play a major role in diminishing the process of radicalisation.
- iii) Using social media monitoring can also ensure that the social media is maintaining the integrity of a message. Lastly, social media monitoring and analysis can be used to measure the impact and perception of a message and evaluate the effectiveness of communications plans and campaigns.
- iv) There is an urgent need to construct counter-narrative to combat the narrative of ISIS over social media like Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Instagram and other online forums. The religious authorities including JAKIM can work on counter-narrative to combat the narrative of terror over various online mediums.
- v) All stakeholders, law-enforcement agencies, religious authorities and community will have to undertake a holistic approach to tackle this issue and such measures not only be online but also on the real ground. In countering the propaganda of ISIS, it is not about the content all the time but about dissemination of the subject as well.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Terrorist events all over the world have shown that traditional hard security measures alone are not effective in preventing terrorism. Deradicalisation programme may be a possible answer to combating terrorism. With the large numbers of detainees imprisoned for security violations and terrorism throughout the world, positive changes in their ideologies may alleviate future dangers. It is hard to evaluate recidivism rates in these various deradicalisation programme, as records are often not publicly disclosed. Some programmes are less comprehensive than others are. To address recidivism problems, states must dedicate a large number of resources to address detainee issues both within the prison system and after the detainee is released. Many developing countries do not have the resources to address the needs of the participant adequately.

Deradicalisation programme may be the answer to the question of what to do with the large numbers of radical extremists currently incarcerated throughout the world. Much of the success of the programme will be dependent on the methods used and the availability of adequate funding. If a deradicalisation programme proves successful over time, the methods can be incorporated into numerous other countries' programme and possibly alleviate the growing threat from Muslim extremists.

Finally, by identifying the necessary elements and relationships for an effective deradicalization program, a tailored deradicalisation program can be developed to not only meet the needs of the detainees, but also be implemented appropriately for the cultural context in which the program will operate. The efforts of this thesis have contributed to counterterrorism studies and deradicalisation research by examining some important elements and conceptual concerns that surround deradicalisation programme in Malaysia.

Malaysia hailed as one of the most successful deradicalisation programme in the world. Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia claims some significant degree of success for its deradicalisation programme. However, due to the innovation of deradicalisation programme, it is yet premature to assess recidivism rates and the holistic effectiveness

of these programme, particularly given the vast disparities in resource availability, and political, religious, and social contexts between various countries' programme.

In today's security environment, extremism and radical ideology are no longer issues that states can ignore and states will gain more interest in developing such programme which require money, time and sharing best practices, learning lessons from each other, and helping one another. Deradicalisation programme are a necessary tool to today's states' counterterrorism strategies. Certainly, the Malaysia government is enhancing its programme, ever seeking creative ways to improve the programme. It is time to assess the programme, publish recidivism rates, and allow for more transparency that can prompt constructive criticism and, ultimately, improvements. Though the Malaysia government regards the deradicalisation programme as its legacy, it is time to allow for a greater scrutiny of the programme for better results in the future.

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