

The Influence of Middle East Islamic Movement on the Extremist Thought in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT: *Radicalism is not an entirely new issue in the history of the Islam. It has been an issue raised by the Khawarij group and now re-surfaced in the form of the neo-Khawarij. However, it is not quite appropriate to quickly jump to the conclusion that all Islamic movements are similar to Khawarij. Some of the concepts used by these movements, such as Hakimiyyah Lillah, have been discussed by earlier scholars before. However, many factors have emerged in recent years that have caused the interpretation to deviate from the truth. While, it is obvious that there are some similarities between PAS (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party) in Malaysia and the Ikhwan Muslimin in Egypt, in terms of their radical approach and inspiration, the latter is not directly involved in the militant movement such as the Takfir wa al-Hijrah and Al-Maunah. This paper tries to address this issue by first looking at the social and religious background leading to the rise of radical movements in Islam in the Middle East. It will also examine the main concern of these movements and in what way they have influenced the thinking of some Islamic movements in Malaysia.*

KEY WORDS: *Islamic movement, Middle East, extremist thought, Malaysia, modern society, and globalization.*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Islamic movement is a phenomenon that has been increasing importance as a result of revival of Islam in various parts of the world. The role of Islamic movement can be seen as a miniature form of an Islamic state (mini Islamic state) taking over the function of a legitimate Islamic nation. This view can be misleading considering the fact that there have been various forms of movements in the name of Islam, in particular in the Middle East, the influence of which can be felt not only in the region itself but also in other parts of the world, including in Malaysia. Among these

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are various movements in this part of the region that have been considered as extremist in their ideological stand and approach. This relates to the question as to what is actually the ideology of an Islamic movement that originates from the Middle East; and to what extent it has penetrated the local movement?

This paper tries to address this issue by first looking at the social and religious background leading to the rise of radical movements in Islam in the Middle East. It will also examine the main concern of these movements and in what way they have influenced the thinking of some Islamic movements in Malaysia.

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN BRIEF

In the Arabic language, "movement" is a translation from the word *harakah* which means "a group of people which move from one place to another". The word of *harakah* itself in its current usage is currently immediately associated with Islamic movement, while as a concept, *harakah Islamiyyah* connotes an Islamic movement which bears Islamic ideals, including Islamic way of life culminating in the formation of a just government whose task is to unite the believers and return to the position of the *khalifah* with a comprehensive strategic plan for the benefit of the Muslims (Abdul Wahab Zakaria, 1994:122-123).

The meaning of *harakah* in this context becomes a term much clearer when researchers on Islamic movement use it specifically to refer to the rise of Islam as a widespread global phenomenon in contemporary era. According to R. Hrair Dekmejian (1995:4-5), "Islamic movement" or *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah* is one of the many terms used to portray the rise of Islam as a new phenomenon. Some of these terms are *Al-Ba'th al-Islami* (Islamic resurrection), *Al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic awakening), *Ihya' al-Din* (religious revival), *Al-Usuliyyah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic fundamentalism), *Al-Tayyar al-Islami* (Islamic current), and *Al-Ittijah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic tendency).

In the history of Islam, the rise of the movement, or *firqah*, has been recorded not long after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. There were two groups which were involved. The first one, that put an emphasis on the *aqidah*, consist of various movements including Jabariyyah, Qadariyyah, Muktazilah, and al-Ashariyyah. The second group, which is more inclined towards politics, consists of Khawarij and Shiah. An interesting facet of the Khawarij is that they had called the *sahabat* (the Prophet's companions) as infidels. Not only that, they had also been responsible of the murder of Ali (the Prophet's companion and son-in-law) for the reason that he had

been accused of not following the true teachings of Islam. Nevertheless, and contrary to the Khawarij, another extremist group came into being, known as the Shiah, which devoted themselves to the worship of Ali (Mustafa Hilmi, 1986).

What the Khawarij claimed as their ideals can be seen as a result of their extreme pursuit based on one particular dogma, "*La Hukm Illa Allah*" (No decision but God's) – a call for the return to the fundamental teachings of the holy Qur'an and Sunnah. The Khawarij seemed to believe that a deviation had occurred in the true practice of Islam after the *Majlis Tahkim* had taken place between Ali and the Muawwiyah in which, as claimed by Khawarij, the dictates of Allah were set aside (Watt, 1968:54). As a result, the Khawarij is often considered as the precursor of the extremist movement. Hence, many of the present-day movements with radical and extremist tendencies are often called as the *Neo-Khrajite*.

The rise of Islamic movements in modern Middle East began almost immediately after the fall of the Turkish Ottoman in 1924 with the establishment of *Ikhwan Muslimin* (Muslims Brotherhood) by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 in Ismailiah, Egypt. The movement, which was involved in the fight against the British and Israel, was most feared by the feudal government of Egypt and the West, so much so that Hassan al-Banna was reportedly murdered in 1959 by secret agent of King Faruk (Commins, 1995:125-149). It was so influential in Egypt and in the rest of the Middle East that it raised fear among its rival, the Arab Socialists, which led to the treachery resulting the passing of a death sentence in 1966 to Syed Qutb, the principal ideologist of the *Ikhwan Muslimin* movement. The sentencing of Syed Qutb marked the beginning of more radical movements in Egypt, typical of which was *Takfir wa al-Hijra* that has taken an extremist approach due to an overwhelming influence by the radical thoughts of the late Syed Qutb (Keppel, 1985).

According to R. Hrair Dekmejian (1995), there are exist about 175 Islamic movements in the Arab world between 1970 and 1990. They can be classified according to various criteria, including national origin, leadership pattern, membership, sectarian features, size of the group, their state of militancy, external network, and whether they are currently active or not. The *Ikhwan Muslimin* movement can be considered as a large and influential movement but with a moderate approach (Gerges, 2002:165). However, more than 50 movements, many of which originate from Egypt and Lebanon, which can be categorized as militant and which operate underground, are now under pressure from the regime of their respective countries. Typical of these movements are *Hizb Allah* or Party

of God, *Jamaat al-Ahram* or Pyramid Society, *Jamaat al-Fath* or Society of Conquest, *Jama'at al-Harakiyyah* or Society of Action, *Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* or the Islamic Society, *Hizb al-Tahrir* or Islamic Liberation Party, *Junud Allah* or Soldiers of God, *Tanzim al-Jihad* or Jihad Organization, *Afghan al-Arab* or Arab Afghan, *Harakah al-Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah* (HAMAS) or Islamic Resistance Movement, *Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah* or Islamic Resistance, *Jihad al-Islami* or Islamic Jihad, and *Jabhah al-Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah al-Lubaniyyah* or Lebanese Islamic Resistance Front (Dekmejian, 1995:223-247).

Many of these movements have diverse views regarding their interpretations of Islam. For instance, the Egyptian *Jama'at al-Harakiyyah* considers political leaders who have committed sins no longer members of the Islamic *ummah* or community, while *Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* (also of Egyptian origin) used to be involved in the killing of foreign tourists and Egyptian politicians. The extremist and often violent stand of these movements are also shared by several other Egyptian movements, including *Junud Allah*, *Tanzim al-Jihad*, and *Afghan al-Arab*. As for movements that oppose the occupation of Israel, the following could be considered as such: *Harakah al-Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah* (HAMAS), *Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah*, *Jihad al-Islami*, and *Jabhah al-Muqawwamah al-Islamiyyah al-Lubaniyyah*. All of them go to the extent of opposing Israeli regime in the Palestine by taking up arms (Ahmed, 1994:114-126).

THE MIDDLE EAST ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

Islamic movements, with extremist stand in the Middle East, are not the only kind. There are other movements which are more traditionalist, conservative, and modernist in nature. According to some interpretations, the word "extremist" is often associated with those who do things in the most extreme way or those whose thought are considered extreme. Being "extreme" is often considered similar to being "radical" in which its characteristic can be described as "*movement that puts a high expectation on being radical, comprehensive, and carry out their activities in a militant way*". Most of these movements consider that the present educational system is defective because "it promotes apostasy" instead of spiritual and moral upbringing. Among these movements, the dominant thinking is that only Islam, if properly implemented, can provide an alternative form of education that can bring about solution to all problems currently faced by mankind.

While this group maintains that the tradition and teachings of Islam provide the fundamental way for social change, they are more innovative

and flexible in their approach compared to the traditionalist with regard to the interpretation of the Qur'an and the application of the *syariah*. Not only that, the radical group goes even further in rejecting Western ideas with regard to making Islam more "progressive". What happens after the Iranian revolution is an example of this approach, in which the state rejects almost anything that represents the West. For them, it is the West that is extreme (*taghut*) in their attempt to deny the existence of religion of Allah and in persecuting the Muslims all over the world. Because of this, the Muslims have to resort extremism and radicalism as an answer to Western oppression as mentioned by Syekh Yusof al-Qardhawi:

The pressure on the *dakwah* and on those who carry out the *dakwah* as well as the confinement of Islam to limited space, especially with regard to its practice, *Amal Jama'i*, is the most obvious reason for the birth of extremism, especially when other forms of philosophy and ideology seem to enjoy unlimited freedom and free from any form of oppression [...] extremism in religion is nothing more than a reaction towards similar extremism imposed by others in order to free the religion from being insulted, ridiculed, and denied. As such extremism is something that is logical according to the law of action and reaction (Yusof al-Qardhawi, 1984:171 and 194).

From the historical point of view, the origin of radical thought can be traced to Ibn Taymiyyah (died in 1328 AD) who proposes the concept of *hakimiyah* in his writing *Tauhid Uluhiyyah*, as part of the demands by the Islamic *Shahadah*. The idea finds its way into the tradition of the *Wahabbis*, the group that dominates Saudi Arabian politics, as well as being well accepted by leaders of various Islamic movements in other countries such as Abul A'la Maududi in Pakistan as well by those in Iran. Briefly, *hakimiyah* principles insist that Allah is the only God that must be revered; it is Allah, and only He, that creates the system and social order for mankind to follow. Any resistance to this idea is considered as a serious digression or *taghut*. The Qur'anic basis used by Ibn Taymiyyah can be traced to three verses, namely 44, 45, and 47 in Surah 5, al-Maidah, "[...] *If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah has revealed, they are (no better than) wrong-doers*".

Referring to these verses, Syed Qutb later on gave the dictate that a political leader who does not follow the Islamic law must be replaced by whatever means necessary even to the extent of using the gun. His idea is said to have a profound influence among the *Al-Fanniyyah al-Askariyyah*, *Takfir wa al-Hijrah*, and *Al-Jihad*. One of these movements claimed to have been responsible for the assassination of Egyptian President, Anwar Saddat, in 1981. Syed Qutb's idea also finds its way outside Egypt, particularly

among the *Jabhat al-Inqaz al-Islami/Hizb al-Nahdhah* in Tunisia; *Ikhwan Muslimin* in Sudan, Syria, and Jordan; and *HAMAS* and *Hizbullah* in Palestine. Not only that, his books, especially the more well-known such as *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, and *Al-'Adalah al-Ijtima'iyah fi al-Islam* have been translated into several languages, including English, Urdu, Persian, and Malay (Esposito ed., 2001:71-72).

The negative implications of Syed Qutb's interpretation of the verses can be summarized as follows: (1) He has already used the terms "infidels" on fellow Muslims during his time; (2) He clearly has a political interest in the name of Islamic movement; (3) He has somehow deviates from the original teaching of Hassan al-Banna; and (4) He has developed some sort of *bid'ah* in the *aqidah* (Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria, 1997:128).

According to an analysis by Hassan Sadiq, an Egyptian military officer, the book written by Syed Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, was full of arguments based on *Hakimiyyah Lillah* or Allah is the only ruler. The concept itself cannot be effective without its implementation through laws based on the *shariah* of Allah. Furthermore, according to Hassan Sadiq, Syed Qutb took the step to label the Muslims and their community as infidels for their failures to uphold the concept of *Hakimiyyah Lillah*. He called upon them to join his *jamaah*, *Ikhwan*, in order to topple down the ruling power using the slogan that called for a return to the *Hakimiyyah Lillah*. The teaching of Syed Qutb did pose a danger for the simple reason that anybody who lives under the regime at the time were considered *kafir Harbi* and these people should be seen as enemies even though they were members of their family and their kinsmen (cited by Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria, 1997:121-122).

Despite the comment by Hassan Sadiq above, there have been counter arguments against it, especially from the *Ikhwan* group, who came to the defense of Syed Qutb. As for the accusations targeted towards Syed Qutb for labeling others as infidels, they pointed out that there were differences between accusing fellow Muslims as infidels on one hand, and trying to explain the phenomena of being *kufur* which may occur among the *ummah* on the other.

The effort to explain the possibility of *kufur* has been the pre-occupation of many *ulama* for a long time, in particular by those who are involved in the implementation of Islamic laws. According to Adil Hamdalah, what has been expressed by Syed Qutb was devoid of any political overtone whatsoever, otherwise he would have accepted the appointment as minister of education in the revolutionary government. In his writing entitled *Hassan al-Banna wa Abqariyyah al-Bina*, Syed Qutb was a great admirer of Hassan al-Banna for he vowed that he would continue to defend the latter's

teaching until his death. The line of thinking proposed by the *Hakimiyyah* group was not actually a new phenomenon because it has been discussed by so many *ulama* of previous era, including Al-Tabari, Al-Zamakhayari, Fakhr al-Razi, and Ibnu Kathir, as well as being debated academically by contemporary *ulama* such as Mawdudi, Said Hawwa, Muhammad Salim Madkur, Ali Syariati, and Khomeini. According to *Ikhwan*, what really prompted the accusation towards Syed Qutb was a misinterpretation of Syed Qutb's ideas in terms of implementation (*tatbiq*). Umar Tilmisani was reportedly to have said the following with regard to this issue:

Syed Qutb was one of us, he lived with us, being imprisoned together with us, being tortured, and finally died a *syahid* death. We do not reject the ideas proposed by Syed Qutb, but we strongly denounce those who have half-understood the ideas of Syed Qutb through their misreading of his books, thereby creating the issues of *takfir* and *hijrah* (cited by Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria, 1997:90-152).

THE INFLUENCE OF EXTREMIST THOUGHT IN MALAYSIA

Extremist mode of thought or radicalism in Malaysia has been discussed by Abdul Rahman Abdullah in his book entitled *Pemikiran Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Aliran* (History and Trend of Islamic Thought in Malaysia). He notes that at the initial stage works by traditional *ulama* were responsible for the introduction of the thought. These works discuss about the limits and virtues of the faith (*iman*) and *kufur* in general without implicating any particular individual or group. The work entitled *Kifayat al-Mubtadi*, written by Sheikh Dawud bin Abdullah al-Fatani (died in 1847) was quite different from works on *tauhid* in those days when it came to the discussion on 10 factors that can destroy the *iman*. Apart from the work, the writing by Haji Ahmad bin Haji Abdul Rauf (1856-1928) with the title *Safinat al-Awwam* was also quite influential. Considered as the *Mufti* of Melaka during that period, Haji Ahmad bin Haji Abdul Rauf spoke, among other things, about 10 factors which may destroy the *iman*, including emulating the behaviour of the unbelievers as well as putting on attires similar to those donned by the *kafir* such as neck ties and berrets.

At the later stage, there emerged works with anti-colonial undertone which relates it to the justification for the jihad. Among these were *Hikayat Perang Sabil* by Teuku Cik Di Tiro, which draws its inspiration from writing by Sheikh Abdul Samad al-Falimbani with the title *Nasihah al-Muslimin wa Tazkirat al-Mukminin fi Fadhail al-Jihad fi Sabiliha wa Karamat al-Mujahidin fi Sabilillah*. This particular work was said to have a widespread influence among the Muslims of Aceh in their effort to fight the Dutch colonial government. In the state of Terengganu, anti-colonial consciousness was

fueled by the writing of Tok Ku Paloh, an *ulama* and member of the state legislative council during the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin III (1881-1918). His anti-British work, *Ma'arif al-Lahfan*, subsequently has a profound influence on the radical thought and actions of Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong and Haji Musa Minangkabau (Abdul Rahman Abdullah, 1998:342-345).

The *kafir* issue was eventually re-targetted at fellow Muslims in the 1950s. For instance, a divisional head of PAS (*Parti al-Islam se-Malaysia* or Pan Malaysian Islamic Party) in Mecca, namely Sheikh Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Mutalib al-Mandili, raised the issue of choosing leaders among those who are not Muslim. In his writing, *Islam: Agama dan Kedaulatan*, he emphasises that it is a *kafir* act to do so. This issue was further raised by Haji Omar Daud, another PAS member who insisted that it is forbidden to appoint leaders from among the unbelievers based on Qur'anic verse 28 of the Surah Al-Imran. The *Mufti* of Kelantan during that period also issued a *fatwa* based on the principle *Al-Ridha bi al-Kufri Kufrun* or to consent to a *kufur* leads to being *kufur*. On the other hand, the *Mufti* of Terengganu, Syed Yusuf Ali al-Zawawi, strongly forbid a person from calling others infidel because the question of *kafir* and *iman* depends on one's *i'tikad* or faith. However, the conflict involving counter labeling as *kafir* among the Muslims ceased for while when PAS joined the National Front government following the May 13 tragedy of 1969 (Abdul Rahman Abdullah, 1998:346-348).

The rise of Islam in the 1970s fueled further the development of radical ideas in Malaysia. The trend of thought was made popular among members of ABIM (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* or Malaysia Islamic Youth Generation) movement by Mohd Imaduddin Abdul Rahim, a leader of HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* or Muslim Students Association of Indonesia). The stand taken by this movement was the black-white dichotomy or the "totality of Islam" as the basis for their *dakwah* movement. Subsequently, the trend of thought was further strengthened by the influence and teaching of Syed Qutb through his books that were translated into Malay, including *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. Radical terms like *taghut* dan *jahiliyyah* gained wide currency along with the spirit of Iranian revolution of 1979 which echoed the terms like *mustakbirin* and *mustadh'afin*. Popular works directly related to the Iranian revolution and Imam Khomeini were also published by ABIM. The radical stand of ABIM, however, toned down when Anwar Ibrahim joined UMNO (United Malay National Organization) in 1982. Consequently, ABIM introduced various concepts that are more harmonious such as *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat* and *Tadarrujin* in line with their support for Anwar Ibrahim in the government (Abdul Rahman Abdullah, 1998:349-350; and Badlihisham Mohd Nasir, 1999:71-90).

Radical mode of thought similar to that of ABIM also began to influence Malaysian students studying overseas. Two groups emerged circa early 1970s in the United Kingdom known as *Suara Islam* (Voice of Islam) dan *Majlis Syura Muslimun* (Islamic Representative Council) which were strongly influenced by *Jamaat Islami* and *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*. These two groups appeared to be more radical than ABIM in the sense that they cannot come to term and accept the accommodative stand of Anwar Ibrahim when he joined the UMNO. In fact, *Majlis Syura Muslimun* was very critical of Anwar Ibrahim with it went to the extent of making a remark that the very act of Anwar Ibrahim trying to clear the name of UMNO was comparable to jumping into a drum of full of human excrement in order to clean it from the inside. Although *Suara Islam* began to lose popularity later on, *Majlis Syura Muslimun* continued to infiltrate various Islamic organizations in the hope of gaining control of them, in particular ABIM and PAS. When JIM was formed in the early 1990s, it was considered as a turning point for the *Majlis Syura Muslimun* for taking a more harmonious approach. Despite this, it is not that easy to remove earlier perception of *Majlis Syura Muslimun* that was noted for being very smooth in infiltrating various organizations (Abdul Rahman Abdullah, 1998:351-352; and Badlihisam Mohd Nasir, 2000:9-22).

When Asri was toppled down from top leadership of PAS in 1982, the blame was put on the radical wave that had swept the Islamic party at that moment. It was claimed that the young Turks have been responsible in introducing the radical thoughts ABIM style into PAS. Apart from that, the fall-out from the Islamic revolution in Iran brought in another radical idea that was very appealing to the top leadership of the party, *ulama*-style leadership. *Amanat* of Haji Abdul Hadi Awang, a series of speeches by one of the top brass of the party that outlines the cardinal commitments of PAS, was an example of the manifestation of this new approach of leadership by the *ulama*. Not only that, the *Amanat* itself in 1981 strongly accused UMNO and its members as being *kafir*, as well as the claim that people who fight in the defence of PAS died a *syahid* death as exemplified by the death of Ibrahim Libya during the Memali incident of 1985. The strong radicalist stand of PAS could be discerned in the following except of Haji Abdul Hadi Awang's *Amanat*:

Believe us! We are against UMNO not because its name is UMNO. We are against *Barisan Nasional* not because its name is *Barisan Nasional*. We are against them because they continue to follow the practice of the unbelievers, abiding by the practice of the *Jahilliyah*. That is the reason why we are against them. Believe us my

brothers, our fight is *jihad*, our speech is *jihad*, our donations are *jihad*, and because we fight shoulder to shoulder with this group of people, our death is *syahid* death, the death in real Islam. We don't have to become Jews, we don't have to become Christians, we don't have to become Buddhists. But we simply become *kafir* merely by saying that politics and religion are two separate things altogether.¹

On the other hand, the radical line of thought associated with Ibrahim Libya became very clear in the following excerpt of his speech:

You are a Muslim, and when you are still a Muslim, don't you suddenly want to stop our struggle. What we are fighting for in the name of *Harakah* PAS is to put upright the *Kalimatullah*. Don't you dare to stop us, for if you do that we will go against you. If we die, we will die a *syahid* death, but if you die, your death is worth nothing [...]. I am appealing to all of you not to be afraid and fearful of the threats and pressure made by the government, because that is our destiny, that is what we have been looking for in this world. We are not going to continue living a living carcass. It is better for us to die and shrouded by the earth, as long as we die a *syahid* death (*Gema Syuhada*, n.d.:4 and 11).

The views above were counter attacked by the government through the publication of a booklet which tries to explain the issues of *kafir* labeling and counter-labeling among the Muslims, as well as the issue on *jihad* and *syahid* death (JAKIM, 1986). The arguments against PAS (*Parti al-Islam se-Malaysia* or Pan Malaysian Islamic Party) can be summarized as follows:

First, the Accusation of Labeling Other Muslims as *Kafir*. The arguments used in the book were based on the *nash* and interpretation the *ulama*, *Muktabar*. The interpretation of verses 44, 45, and 47 of *surah Al-Maidah* was often manipulated by the Khawarij in their move to call others *kafir*. This was answered in the following manner:

a) The verses mentioned were not to be interpreted in a literal manner because to judge others involves both the intention which has to do with heart and the physical action which has to do with an external manifestation of the intention. Nevertheless, what is meant by these verses is the intention of the heart itself, whether one "believes" or "does not believe" in the rules (*hukum*) of Allah. In short, a person becomes *kafir* if he does not believe in the dictates of Allah, but he does not turn into a *kafir* if he does not put into practice the dictates of Allah.

b) In the *Tafsir Ruhul Ma'ani*, it was explained by Ibnu Abbas that Allah has meant verses 44, 45, and 47 of *Al-Maidah* solely for the Jews (hence not meant for the *Mukmin* or the Muslims).

¹The *Amanat* was originally come from the speech of Haji Abdul Hadi Awang in Banggol Peradong, Kuala Terengganu, delivered in April 7, 1981. It was published and widely circulated by Jabatan Penerangan PAS Kelantan in September 1983. See magazine of *Tamadun*, Vol.80 (Kuala Lumpur: May 2001).

c) Accordingly in *Tafsir Ruhul Ma'ani*, it was mentioned that Abi Salleh was quoted as saying, "The three verses of *surah Al-Maidah* has nothing to do with the Muslims; these verses are intended for the unbelievers (JAKIM, 1986:13).

With regard to the claim by Haji Abdul Hadi Awang that people who go around saying that politics and religion are two different things altogether and therefore can be considered *kafir*, the booklet argues that while it is true that politics and religion cannot be separated, the idea was actually based on the methodology used by *Siasah Syar'iyah*, and not on any particular *nash* of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The booklet further argues that even if a person says that politics and religion are separable, he cannot be labeled as *kafir* because he does not deny the dictates (*hukum*) and *nash* which are *qat'ie*. As such, the claim by Haji Abdul Hadi Awang – that people who says that politics and religion are two different things and therefore deserved to be labeled as *kafir* – is a statement made in the interest of the political agenda of his party, not that of Islam and its *hukum* (JAKIM, 1986:23).

The booklet also re-printed the *fatwa* agreed upon by the Permanent Religious Committee of the Rulers Council which convened on 27 and 28 May, 1963 with regard to the above issues:

(i) [...] It is an act of *kufur* for a person to accuse others as *kufur*. The act is considered very serious in the religion of Islam. If the accused person does not have characteristics that qualify him to be a *murtad*, then the very person who makes the accusation is himself a *murtad*.

(ii) [...] Syarwani mentions in his book that Chapter 9, verse 88 of the Qur'an very clearly reminds the Muslims not to label others as *kufur* in a hasty manner, especially towards fellow Muslims. It is an act not recommended particularly when it involves a person calling his own relatives and kinsmen as *kufur*.

(iii) [...] Members of the Permanent Religious Committee of the Rulers Council advise fellow Muslims (*ikhwan Muslimin*) to abstain from using the term *kufur* indiscriminately whether during political campaign or during day-to-day conversations or in situation whatever (JAKIM, 1986:19-20).

Second, on the Jihad and Shahid Death. The booklet further explains that PAS does not give a convincing argument as to why those who meet their death when fighting with members of the UMNO or government servants who are carrying out their responsibilities should die a *shahid* death. The argument that they have is that members of the UMNO and the ruling government were *kafir* and they should be considered as enemies of Islam. Whereas in Islam, there is no such thing as *shahid* death (both *shahid* in the present world and the world after) except for death when fighting with a particular type of unbelievers known as *kafir harbi* in the course of

defending the religion or while fighting those who are *murtad*. Based on various *nash*, the booklet concludes that the term *jihad* is used only when referring to fighting the *kafir* who are bent on destroying Islam as well as against unbelievers who attack Muslims in an Islamic sovereignty as happened during the time of the prophet. As such, the struggle, speeches, and monetary contributions by members of PAS are used not for the sake of fighting the *kafir* but to fight the Muslims (members of the UMNO). Therefore, even if they died in the course of fighting members of the UMNO, their death is not *shahid* because they died not in the defence of Islam but in the interest of the party (JAKIM, 1986:26-29).

This view is further strengthened by the *fatwa* issued by the religious authority of Kedah regarding the Memali incident:

The death of Ibrahim bin Muhammad Libya and his followers in the bloody incident of Memali on 19 November 1985 was not *shahid Ma'arakah* as claimed. As such their bodies need to go through the normal process of ritual bathing and prayers before they were buried just like any other ordinary people (JAKIM, 1986:32).

The booklet concluded that the type of *jihad* that was called upon by Haji Abdul Hadi Awang in his *Amanat* was not in line with the true teaching of Islam because his *jihad* targeted at the Muslims themselves. Muslims who fight against fellow Muslims and died in the course of doing so do not die as *shahid* regardless of whatever arguments used to justify it. Accordingly, PAS has made a serious mistake when it claimed that Ibrahim Libya's death as *shahid* and responsible for taking care of the funeral arrangements (JAKIM, 1986:33-34).

The perspective of the authority was that the Memali incident was a tragedy resulting from the radical political approach of PAS based on the concept of *jihad* and *shahid*. Following this, a number of movements emerged whose aim was nothing more than toppling by force and through non-constitutional manner any government considered not Islamic. Among these are the *Al-Maunah* group which was responsible for the Sauk incident in 2002. The leader of the group, Mohd Amin Razali, was said to have been exposed to various speeches about Ibrahim Libya and PAS when he was a student at a *pondok* school in Lanai in the state of Kedah. For him, Ibrahim Muhamad Libya was a *shuhada* and a religious idol of whom he was very proud of and under whom he claimed he had studied at one time.

Apart from that, another group known as *Kumpulan Militan Malaysia* (KMM) has similar objective and idea about the setting up of an Islamic nation. However, KMM was said to be more aggressive in their approach

even to the extent of legalising any form of action as long as they achieve their goal. This includes the use of monetary and material resources belonging to the non-believers in order to topple the ruling government. The main objective of KMM is to establish a new government in the region, named *Daulah Islamiah Nusantara*, an Islamic nation covering Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Mindanao Islands with a base in Indonesia.

Another movement, called *Semangat Jihad*, was said to have been responsible in spreading radical ideas. The movement was formed on 5 September 1998 as a follow up to the expulsion of Anwar Ibrahim from the Malaysian cabinet on 2 September of the same year. With the support of a large number of people, Anwar Ibrahim was reportedly to have called for *jihad* at a mosque in Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur on 12 September 1998, claiming that he was fighting for justice and for the course of Islam. This group later on had caused considerable problems to the security of the country when they organise demonstrations involving violence (Abdul Rahman Ismail, 2003:8-9).

From the academic point of view, the extremist stand of PAS was caused by the use of religious issues as a means of achieving political ends without any regard for the true interpretation of Islam. Mohammed Yusof Hussain, in his study of religious extremism and politics, concludes that:

The result of documentary research and observation so far on current issues pertaining to Muslims in Malaysia, especially with regard to what has been claimed by PAS – in the political interest of the party – shows that it involves a serious erosion of the *aqidah*. PAS seemed to have been trying to introduce a new concept or doctrine that could be appropriately called “neo-Islam” that clearly deviates from the main stream of the *aqidah* of members of the *Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*, the belief held by the majority of the *ummah* of this region. The situation has given rise to various contemporary problems that in certain ways seemed to be very dangerous and can destabilise the Muslim community and the adherence to a true teaching of Islam in this country. These problems need to be seriously addressed by the authority so that the threat to religious stability of the Muslims in our country can be minimised (Mohammed Yusof Hussain, 2001:22-23).

Whereas the *Ikhwan Muslimin* group came to the defence of Syed Qutb, likewise PAS defended the actions taken by its members who are accused to be extremists. As an example, Haji Abdul Hadi Awang, in his interview with *Asiaweek*, insisted that it was UMNO in the first place that started the issue of labeling and counter labeling others as *kafir* in order to discredit PAS. He further insisted that while it is true that one cannot call others *kafir* as long as the person abides by the confession of faith (the *shahadah*) only God has the right to determine whether a person is *kafir* or not. But

it is the responsibility of for all of us to convey the dictates of God. It is important to remember that apart from uttering the confession of faith, there are other factors that nullify the statement of faith, such as having no confidence in Islam by stating that Islam is not suitable for the present situation and if the religion were to be implemented, it would cause many problems to the country. Haji Abdul Hadi Awang further said that when such opinion is expressed, it was proof enough that they have no faith in Islam and therefore the community should be informed of the problem (Haji Abdul Hadi Awang, 1984). In fact, PAS continued to have confidence with its radical approach in particular in exposing issues considered sensitive particularly in criticising statements by government leaders construed deemed to be anti-Islam.

For instance, PAS used to quote “extremist” statement made by one of the high ranking UMNO leaders as follows:

Who knows how the Prophet’s beard looks like? Who has ever seen the Prophet’s beard? Is there any image of it? We just don’t know. There are those who said that the length of the beard must reach down the level of the belly. There are those who are a little special like that! (laughter). Are we going to use the length of our beard as a marker of being a Muslim, meaning that just because we adorn beard then we are Muslim. Really, is this the *sunnah* of the Prophet? We don’t know! We just don’t know how the Prophet’s beard really looked like (controlling his laughter). At that time, was it that easy to shave one’s beard? They don’t have Gillette. So, it became a real problem to shave. Furthermore, he has to move here and there riding on camel’s back. Difficult to get water [...] especially in the desert (Dewan Pemuda PAS Pusat, 2002:8).

However, the attempt by PAS to come up with a document on Islamic nation shows that the party is trying hard to shed off its former radical image. The party was often accused by its political opponents of attempting to establish an Islamic state based solely on theocratic principles.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above shows that radicalism is not an entirely new issue in the history of the Islam. It has been an issue raised by the Khawarij group and now re-surfaced in the form of the neo-Khawarij. However, it is not quite appropriate to quickly jump to the conclusion that all Islamic movements are similar to Khawarij. Some of the concepts used by these movements, such as *Hakimiyyah Lillah*, have been discussed by earlier scholars before. However, many factors have emerged in recent years that have caused the interpretation to deviate from the truth.

Nevertheless, certain sectors in the United States suggested that the subject of Islam be reviewed so that it would be more harmonious with recent development in the modern world. While it is obvious that there are some similarities between PAS and the *Ikhwan Muslimin* in terms of their radical approach and inspiration, the latter is not directly involved in the militant movement such as the *Takfir wa al-Hijrah* and *Al-Maunah*.

Nevertheless, it must be cautioned that measures must be taken in order not to create a negative impression towards other movements that are more moderate in their approach. Otherwise more radical groups may emerge out of this confusion. What has been cautioned by G.H. Jansen regarding the seed of radicalism needs to be seriously considered. Following Iranian Islamic revolution, he commented that but militant Islam is certain of the truth of its beliefs, and it believes that it does really know the truth. Like its militant Protestant predecessors is not going to relax or to be particularly tolerant. And it will not cease from mental and spiritual and material strife till those beliefs govern the destinies of every Muslim country (Jansen, 1979:204).

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