

ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN MALAYSIA (1981-2001): RESURGENCE AND ASSERTION

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2003



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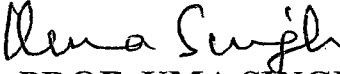
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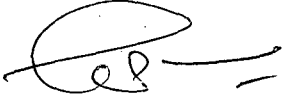
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PREFACE

The study aims to portray a critical analysis of the Islamic movement in Malaysia in five chapters. Building a general framework for Islamic resurgence, the study tries to analyze the Malaysian case in a wider framework. Alongside, it also traces the unique features of Malaysian Islamic movement in its past experiences and present situation. The effecting and effected units of resurgence and assertion in society have also been dealt with. The reassertion of Islam, the most important part of Malay identity, has pervaded all aspects of life. The state authorities are effectively engaged in the process of 'Islamization'.

How Mahathir has used the ideology of "Islamism" to make the state modern and developed is the central point of this study. The dividing line between fundamentalism and terrorism is very thin, and Malaysia has also got entangled in the same web. The study takes a cursory look of Islamic extremism and terrorism in Malaysia. It tries to find out the linkages of Malaysian extremism in Southeast Asian context in particular, and global in general.

This 'dissertation' would have been inconceivable without the scholarly guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Ganganath Jha. He has not only been an intellectual powerhouse, but a 'friend, philosopher, and guide'.

Dr. Manmohini Kaul has always extended the helping hand and her criticisms have been insightful and thought provoking.

My special thanks to Professor Uma Singh, the Chairperson of the Center for South, Central, Southeast Asian, and South West Asian Studies.

Last but not the least, my gratitude to the Library staff in the University Library, and to 'the greatest invention of the twentieth century - The Computer', and also to the numerous friends and my dear family members at this moment.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary world is ever changing. Emerging issues and problems tend to overwhelm us. So we try to generalize the phenomenon and put them under certain common designations and themes that make it easy to comprehend. But the possibility of differences of opinion never dies. And people often use same designation to define different phenomenon and at the same time one set of issues are identified by different terms. The recent developments in the Islamic world fall under same category of contested terms and definitions. On one hand, there lies an overly used or abused term "Islamic fundamentalism" and on the other hand we find a number of other stipulations ranging from revival to assertion to describe the similar type of issue. The more recent developments in Islam, its recent reassertion, has been given the rubric of "Islamic fundamentalism" by the west. However, the same phenomenon is seen as 'Islamism' in Muslim context. In western analysis of the rise of Islamism it is largely interpreted as a result of growing economic and social problems. In Muslim world, it emphasizes the use of Islam as an ideology.

John L. Esposito points out:

"I regard fundamentalism as too laden with Christian presuppositions and western stereotypes as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist; more fitting general terms are 'Islamic revivalism' or 'Islamic activism' which are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition."¹

However not going into the intricacies of this debate, here in this study uses the term 'movement', which is more of a sociological connotation.

¹ Esposito, L John (1992), *The Islamic Threat: Myth Or Reality*, Oxford University Press, New York, p.8.

"Movement" is a word of French origin. Oxford dictionary defines movement as ' the action or process of moving; change of place position or posture; passage from one place or situation to another activity'. Most of the other terms that are used are either of negative connotations (like 'fundamentalism') or have a cultural bias (like 'revivalism' or 'reassertion'). Islam is a religion, which is full of dynamism and the term 'movement', vindicates this eternal dynamism of Islam. Change is the rule of nature .As one philosopher says that we cannot bath in the same river twice. Change could be either evolutionary or revolutionary. So the movement can have different goals to produce change. Broadly these changes are in social set-up change in political structure and change in economic relationship. The Marxist view of change sees the economic relationship as the basis of society therefore changes in the economic relationship will obviously produce other changes. This change will be certainly revolutionary. On the other hand the religious view sees every relationship and structure dependent on religious ideas. One can say that at some point it coincides with the "change on the plane of ideas" espoused by Hegel. Any religious movement tries to engulf all aspects of life. And when we talk about Islam, which is "a way of life", (or socio-political religion), the Islamic movement becomes a word with very broader dimensions.

Three interrelated questions are very important; (1) what is Islamic movement? (2) Why is there an Islamic movement? (3) How can one understand this process and how can it be related to the dynamism of Islam itself?

Taking the last question, first to understand the process of Islamic movement under a broader framework of dynamism of Islam, I would like to make a cursory look to the active tradition of Islam.

Islam means 'submission to god'. A Muslim is someone who has submitted to God, recognizing Muhammad as a prophet."In the year 610 B.C. on a mountain outside the prosperous Arabian city of Mecca, a few simple words came into Muhammad's mind; this was the first of many messages that Muhammad interpreted as divine revelations. He dictated the messages to scribes and together the messages from the *quran*. Muhammad saw himself as one of numerous messengers, sent by God to every nation in every age; and in his lifetime he sought to convey the *quran* to the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. After his death his followers carried it beyond their tribal borders, forming a great empire and ultimately a global spiritual community"².

Islam has been from its genesis not an otherworldly but a this-worldly religion is commonly acknowledged. Islam has survived and prospered because of its symbiotic relationship with its adherents: Islam guides and sustains a variety of key institutions, especially the community and family that in turn nourish Islam.

Fazal ur Rahman points out that the tradition of "reform in Islam has not consisted of the formal acceptance or rejection of theological propositions. Islamic dogma is minimal; it has been said that in Islam one does not find orthodoxy but 'orthopraxy' (correct practice)"³.

² Weyer De Van Robert Ed. (2003), *366 Readings Of Islam*, Mumbai, Jaico Publishing House, p. IX.

³ Rahman, Fazlur (1994), " Roots Of Islamic Fundamentalism" In Stoddard, Cuthell and Sullivan (ed.), *Change And The Muslim World*, Syracuse University Press, New York p.32.

The intellectual tradition of reform mainly starts at the hands of al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) and Ibn taymiyah (1263-1328). al-Ghazzali and Ibn taymiyah symbolize respectively the intellectualist and activist trend within the Muslim community. Although Sufism and other allied factors in medieval centuries had altered this prospective by the "positivistic"⁴ shift in the later reform movement. Muslim's view became focused again on moral issues, and social ailments and their remedies are considered in the light of their conformity to god's law. Ibn khaldun (1332-1406) is a monumental example of the "Islamic positivism".

All these early movements led by these reformers, whether Arabian, the Indian, the Libyan, the Nigerian or the Sudanese, sought the reassertion of the original, unadulterated Islam. According to these early revivalists the sources of Islam were the *quran* and *Sunnah* (example) of the prophet alone. On this point, all these reformist movements emphasized the concept of *ijtihad*, a term taken from the classical legal thought of Islam which means to exert one's intellectual powers to find answers to problems. But the revivalist zeal of these reform movements oversimplified the education and consequently starved it intellectually. The inner contradictions of these reform movements gave way to the new thought which arose in the more forward lands of the Muslim world-- Turkey, Egypt, and the Indian subcontinent. This new phenomenon of Islamic modernism in the history of Islamic thought certainly was influenced by the western rationalist tradition. Unlike early fundamentalist (or scripturalists) "the modernist reopened the question of

⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

the relationship of faith and reason, and asked whether reason had limits or it could sit in judgment of faith"⁵.

Muslim modernists essentially were representatives of Islamic liberalism, their activity involved individual thought; unlike fundamentalism it did not take the form of a popular movement. Modernists were able to set up seats of modern learning, despite opposition from the conservatives in the initial stages, and today these new institutions are flourishing all over the Muslim world. On the question of the rights of Muslim women, the modernists contended that the *quran* had not only improved their status but had granted them virtually equal rights with men. On the economic side, the modernists of early nineteenth century advocated the acceptance of modern banking practices on grounds that the institutions of '*riba*' (interest) banned by the *quran*..

Modernists interpretation of the *quran* was selective, some modernists showed an alarming tendency towards being apologetic on crucial matters, particularly when interpreting Islamic history. The modernists arose suspicion even about his loyalty to Islam, and he was accused of being pale reflection of west and of sacrificing Islam at its altar. Disenchanted by the modernists thought by the mid-1930's there appeared a new generation of young men and women with a renewed interest in the Islam of the books. At the outset, we must differentiate this new movement from the older conservatism. While tradition conservatism arises within the Islamic tradition, the new-movement (creation or reactivism) is very much a response to foreign influence and pressures. New movements, may be defined as an "Islamic bid to rediscover the original meaning of the Islamic message without historic

⁵ Ibid, p.29.

deviations and distortions and without being encumbered by the intervening tradition, this bid being meant not only for the benefit of the world and to the west in particular"⁶. With this we now come to our first and second question. That is; what is Islamic movement?

If capitalism was influenced by the philosophy of Smith and Mill, Marxism by Marx, even Nazism was influenced by Hegel's philosophy in the same line we can trace the intellectual and conceptual roots of Islamic movement in the thoughts and works of two outstanding persons. Hasan al-Banna and Abdul-al Maududi. Hasan al- Banna (1906-49) founded the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt in early twentieth century. Abdul -al Mududi (1903-78) was the creator of the Jamaat-I-Islamic party in the Indian subcontinent. There are some other very important names in the recent revivalism, like Muhammad Iqbal, Abd 'ar- Rahaman al-Kaajakibi, Muhammad rasid, sayyid jamal al- din Afghani, Ayatollahs Khomeini and Muhammada-Baquir- Sadr and Hojat al-Isalm Musa Sadra. We can add the name of Sayyid Qutb and Shriati in this list.

The thought of these scholars and leaders provided an undercurrent in Muslim Society which was on the one hand the product of some original thinking in the intellectual tradition of Islam and on the other hand, a reaction of the existing societal set up and existing environment.

"The Islamic movement has developed over half a century, beginning more or less in 1940. Concepts have of course evolved historical circumstances have changed, and splits and differences have brought diversity. Nevertheless there are a conceptual matrix and a sociological

⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

base common to all the groups"⁷. As we have seen that there is a continuous change in the Muslim society. However, the recent reassertion has brought a noticeable increase in emphasis on religious identity and practice in individual and corporate life. Many Muslims describe Islam as a "total way of life" They believe that religion informs every action that a person takes. So it is inseparable from social and political life. Over time ideal blueprint (as mentioned in *quran* and other religious books) and perfect state had actually existed and should be returned to contemporary militant movements particularly look back to this idea as an example to be emulated today. So the question is not whether religion should inform life but when and how?

On conceptual plane the origin and development of any movement can be influenced by two types of forces namely inner forces that is that are such forces which show the intellectual dynamism of related institution or tradition and environment or contextual forces which affects it from outside and the movement comes as a reaction to these environmental forces and sustains itself in relation to those forces.

The intellectual traditions of Islam that we have dealt are such inner forces. The recent Islamic movement has come as a reaction to the ideas of modernism of late 19th and early 20th century. So the Islamic land was already fertile by these ideas and just needed some seeds from outside.

The colonization of the Muslim countries had a profound impact on the Islamic conscience," the political domination of the unbelievers became increasingly unacceptable as the civilization impact of the colonizers

⁷ Roy, Olivier (1994), *The Failure Of Political Islam*, I.B.Tauris Publishers, London, p.3 .

deepened. Islamic awakening was one of the twin forces, which powered the liberation movements and struggles in the Islamic world. The second force nationalism, can be seen as partly rooted in the Islamic past and the feeling of being different from colonizers"⁸. But the political liberation of these Muslim third world countries does not mean independence. Ethical, cultural intellectual arrogance of the west continued. "In the past, all ascendant civilization have had their moments of self righteousness, but probably no civilization that of the modern west has felt itself so universally and comprehensively valid that the mere questioning of some of its value can be tantamount to barbaric backwardness"⁹ but during the postcolonial period, as political independence was achieved by more and more newly formed Muslim polities, appeals to Islam were slow to garner attention. As Marxism was the dominant ideology of the third world countries, it also influenced Muslim countries. At this time Muslim nation got more disenchanted with the West with expulsion of Palestinian Arab from their homes. So, in Egypt there was an endeavor to copy soviet model. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey. Malaysia, Indonesia, Lebanon; there was a burgeoning of leftist groups at the end of the 1960s. At that time Marxist looked for revolution. But the increasing problems if these newly independent countries were beyond the Marxists reach. Soon, religion became a vehicle for the leaders of public life, since Islam projects a holistic world view that invokes religious norms as a corrective to political practices, it took control of mind, of body, of space as an explicit dimension of religion. " The aspiration for a better world changed register and passes from the secular domain to the religious. Sudden and

⁸ Hottingre, Arnold (1980) , " Islam in world politics: the disruptive role of fundamentalism" in *PSIS occasional papers*, (October), no.2.

⁹ Rahman, Fazlur (1981), "Roots Of Islamic Neo- Fundamentalism" in Stoddard h. Phillip (ed.), *Change In The Muslim World*, Syracuse University Press, New York,pp.23-36.

unexpected though this religious upsurge may have appeared on the surface, it was in fact the culmination of a hidden process,"¹⁰

According to John.L.Esposit the causes of resurgence are many and need to be appreciated with the specific contexts of individual countries and regions. However several phenomena may be identified:

1. An identity crisis precipitated by a sense of failure, loss of identity, and lack of self-esteem. Like the disastrous defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli six day war; in Malaysia, Chinese-Malaya riots in 1967 signaled the dominant Malaya community's perception of economic threat from its non-Muslim fellow citizen; the Pakistan -Bangladesh civil war in 1971 made a sham of Muslim nationalism as a source of Islamic unity; Lebanon witnessed a devastating civil war.
2. Disillusionment with the west; the failure of many Muslim rulers and their western inspired governments to respond adequately to the political and socioeconomic needs of their societies.
3. The newfound sense of pride and power that resulted from military and economic success in 1973-1978/79.
4. A quest for a more authentic identity rooted in an Islamic past.

The religious leaders asserted that Islam had not failed the Muslim. Muslims had failed Islam by relying on the west for their guidance and development. The negative impact of modernization on village and family values seemed to threaten the religious and moral fabric of society.

¹⁰ Gilles, kepel (1994), *The Revenge Of God: The Resurgence Of Islam, Chistianity And Judaism In The Modern World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp.13-33.

Added to this the process of modernization seemed to benefit a disproportionate few. So, there was a prevailing mood that talked about the religio-cultural revival (*tajdid*), reform (*islah*) and renaissance. Events in 1973 and 1979 provided a new source of pride and served a catalyst for Islamic revivalism. The ignominious Arab defeat of 1967 war reversed, in the eyes of many Muslims, by the October war of 1973. The Arab oil embargo of 1973 was a second major catalyst for the resurgence. The Iranian revolution 1978-79 seemed a watershed for the Sunni and the Shia Muslims alike. The initial euphoria of the post-revolutionary days sparked an enthusiasm and strong sense of pride among many Muslims in the world. The initial impact of the Iranian revolution went far beyond Iran. From Cairo to Kuala Lumpur, it became tangible corroboration for those who sought explanations for the apparent failure of their governments and believed that less dependence on the outside forces, greater self-reliance, and the reaffirmation of Islam offered an alternative. So, the heart of the contemporary revivalism is this idealization of Islam; Islam is interpreted as a total ideology that provide the basic framework for the meaning and direction for the political, social and cultural life. This belief is reflected in the tendency to speak of Islam as religion and state, as a system of belief and law that governs both the spiritual and the temporal affairs.

Modern Islamic social movements and organizations have been the driving force behind the dynamic spread of Islamic resurgence. They have also become a focal point or embodiment of the Islamic threat in the eyes of the Western governments as well as many governments in the Muslim world. For some, Islamic movement represents an authentic alternative to the corrupt, exhausted and ineffectual regimes. For many others, they are a destabilizing force- the tool of demagogues who will

employ any tactic to gain power. But the reality is far more complex and diverse than its popular image. Alongside violent radical rejectionists are in Islamic organizations that espouse political liberalization and democratization. So, Islamic politics must be viewed within specific country contexts, because far more from a monolithic reality, it manifests a rich diversity of leaders, organizations that strategies and tactics. And for our purpose this becomes far more important, because in the case of Malaysia the movement has certain very unique features, which sometimes redefine the role of state in the process of development.

CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES OF ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN GENERAL:

1)"Islamic movement in Islamic lands during the first phase of its manifestation, is characterized by the renewed interest in Islam as an endogenous ideology with redeeming powers."¹¹

2)The groups active at the different level in the movement have the most important objective of establishing the modern Islamic State.

3)The modern political, social and economic system and institutions and its materialistic achievements are sometimes accommodated sometimes frowned upon by the leaders of these movements.

4) On the conceptual plane, these movements are both modernists and the traditionalists. "They believe in a basket of the legal

¹¹ Ali, Rehnema,ed. (1994), *Pioneers Of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books Ltd , London, p.5.

sources which are both dynamic and static. They are firm believer in the primary sources of the *quran* and the *Sunna*, the secondary sources of consensus (*ijma*) and analogy (*qiyas*), or reason (*aql*) and finally *ijtihad*."¹²

5)"In many Muslim countries Islamic organizations had become energetic in social reform, establishing much needed schools, hospitals, clinics, legal societies, family assistance programmes, Islamic banks, and insurance companies, and publishing houses. These Islamically oriented groups offered social welfare services cheaply and constituted an implicit critique of the failure of the regimes in the countries."¹³

6) Gilles Kepel points out that the recent resurgence of Islam is not peculiar to it. " Certain movements within Christianity and Judaism showed striking similarities to the Islamic movements..... They all seemed to fit into the context of the world wide discrediting of modernism that was the hallmark of the 1970s."¹⁴ He also says that we should not try to fit these Islamic movements within the outmoded theoretical spectacles.

7) The modern concept of organization has played an important role in the development of new Islamist local, national and international organizations, which has mushroomed in virtually all parts of the

¹² Ibid, p. 7

¹³ Esposito, L. John (1994), *Political Islam: Beyond The Green Menace*, *Current History*, pp.19-24.

¹⁴ Gilles, Kepel (1994), *The Revenge Of God: The Resurgence Of Islam, Christianity and Judaism In The Modern World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp.13-23.

Muslim world [e.g., Pan Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) of Turabi and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)].

8) There are two ways of islamising the society, i) Top-bottom approach ii) Bottom-top approach. In the first case, State itself tries to champion the causes of Islam. It makes laws on Sharia, establishes Islamic banking system and other Islamic laws to run the State on the principles of *Sharia*. Largely in the Muslim countries the government enforces these laws either to gain the legitimacy or due to the pressure from the society. But here the State tries to regulate every sphere of personal life and as a consequence the difference between the civil society and the State thins down. In the second case, there are so many grass root and mass based organizations which works in different walks of the life to prepare the 'Islamic man' who will ultimately lead to the establishment of the Islamic State. So, theoretically, the first approach tries to create a Islamic State first and then through its institution it makes an endeavor to make the society Islamic. The second approach tries to make the society Islamic and the man a true Muslim, who will be the foundation of an Islamic State. So we can find *dakwah* (call) societies work in social services in economic projects, in education and in religious publishing and broadcasting. Their common programmes are aimed at the young and the old alike.

9)"A new generation of Islamically oriented leaders have appeared in Egypt, the Sudan, Tunisia, Jordan, Malaysia, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Islamic activists have become an accustomed part of the political process, participating in the national and local elections, scoring an impressive victory in Algeria's municipal elections, emerging as the chief opposition parties or groups in Egypt,

Tunisia and Jordan, and serving in Cabinet positions in Sudan, Jordan, Pakistan, Iran and Malaysia."¹⁵ Unlike the early revivalist movements, these leaders are not the scholars of Islamic philosophy or well versed in Islamic theology. Except in some cases most of the leaders have had the modern education and belong to different professions.

10) One important aspect of these movements is related to its spread and its participants. In its early days it was somewhat restricted. But "in the nineties Islamic revivalism has ceased to be restricted to small, marginal organizations on the periphery of society and instead has become a part of mainstream Muslim society, producing a new class of modern-educated but Islamically oriented elites who work alongside, and at times in coalitions with their secular counterparts."¹⁶ So, today the masses who follow the Islamists are not 'traditional' or 'traditionalists' either: they live with the values of modern city and of consumerism with the frustration inherent in an unattainable consumerist world.

11) There is a basic problem in studying the Islamic movement. Most of the available literature takes the same western ideas and compares it with those of the Muslim countries. So, the problem is comparativism. Comparativism tends to take one of the elements of the comparison as the norm for the other, finding that there is either a resemblance or a lack of one, but never questioning the original configuration. The relationship between the power and law in Islamic political thought

¹⁵ Esposito, L. John (1992), *The Islamic threat: Myth Or Reality*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp.7-19.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 7-15

must be seen in its original meaning, not in relation to the western state. Islam was born as a sec and as a society, a political and religious community in which there existed neither institutions nor clergy nor specialized functions. So that was an egalitarian, undifferentiated society. Form this paradigm result a certain number of recurring themes in Islamic political thought. The non-separation of the religious, legal and political sphere is affirmed. The *sharia* should be the soul source of law as well as the norm for individual behavior. The definition of an autonomous political space is prohibited. The state is never considered in terms of territorialized nation state: the ideal is to have a power that would rule over the entirety of the *Umma*, the community of the faithful, while actual power is exercised over a segment of the *Umma* whose borders are contingent provisional and incomplete.

12) Ziauddin sardar,¹⁷ feels that there s an overall process of reduction that has become the norm in Muslim society. The reductive process itself is also not new, but has reached such an absurd state that the very ideas that are soused to take Muslim societies towards human values now actually take them in the opposite direction.

The process of reduction started with the very notion of *alim* (scholar) itself. Just who is an *alim*: what makes him an authority? In early Islam, an *alim* was anyone who acquired *ilm*, or knowledge which was itself described in as broad sense. But after the " gates of *ijtihad*" were closed

¹⁷ Sardar, Ziauddin (2002), "Thinking Islam", *Seminar*, no.509, (January).

during the Abbasid era, *ilm* was increasing reduced to religious knowledge and the *ulma* came to constitute only religious scholars.

Similarly, the idea of *ijma*, the central notion of communal life in Islam, has been reduced to the consensus of the people. The concept dates back to the consensus of select few *Ijma* literally means consensus of the people the concept dates back to the practice of prophet Mohammad himself as a leader of the original polity of Muslim. The democratic spirit was central to communal and political life in early Islam. But time the clerics and religious scholars have removed the people from the equation and reduced *ijma* to 'the consensus of the religious scholar'. Not surprisingly, authoritarianism, theocracy and despotism reigns supreme in the Muslim world. The political domain finds its model in what has become accepted practice and *métier* of the authoritatively 'religious' adepts, those who claim the monopoly of exposition of Islam. Obscurantist mullahs, in the guise of the *ulama*, dominate Muslim society and circumscribe them with fanaticism and absurdly reductive logic.

Numerous other concepts have gone through a similar process of reduction. The concept of *ummah*, the global spiritual community of Muslim, has been reduced to the ideals of nation-state: 'my country right or wrong, has been transposed to read 'my *ummah* right or wrong'.

Jihad has now been reduced to the single meaning of 'holy war'. This translation is perverse because the concepts spiritual, intellectual and social components have been stripped away, and reduced to war by any means including terrorism.

But the violence perpetrated on sacred Muslim concepts is insignificant compared to the reductive way the *quran* and sayings and examples of

prophet Muhammad are branded about. What the late Muslim scholars, Fazlur Rahman¹⁸ called the 'atomistic' treatment of *quran* is now the norm: almost anything and everything is justified by quoting individual bits of verses out of context.

13) The recent movement is not a monolithic one. It oscillates between political activism and what can be called 'neo-fundamentalism', that is between primacy accorded the political struggle and that given to the Islamization of the society ' but Islamist militants did not suddenly become neo-fundamentalists starting in 1984 or 1985. On the other hand, the shrinking prospects for political revolution, the growing influence of Saudi money the inability of islamist though to go beyond the bounding texts, the appearance of a new generation of militants less politically educated and more concerned with the *Sharia* and respecting rituals than with an Islamic revolution, all this set a different tone for the Islamist movement and a confused, without erasing, what differentiated it from traditional fundamentalism." ¹⁹

14) These movements are in a way linked to the improved educational standards. " Their members fight against what they may call neo-Jahiliyya the new ignorance which is actually worse than the ignorance that characterized pre Islamic Arabia. Islamists argue that the governmental school system are too one-sidedly focused on secular subjects, whereas sub Muslim are criticized for their trust in the spiritual power of their shaykhs and failure to learn classical

¹⁸ Rahman, Fazlur. (1980) *Major Themes Of The Quran*, Biblioteca Islamica, Chicago.

¹⁹ Roy Olivier (1994), *The Failure Of Political Islam*, I.B.Tauris publishers, London, p.25.

Arabic. Many Islamists and other students from non-Arab countries study in Arab countries. Such studies, as well as conferences and distribution of literature, improve the level of knowledge and often strengthen the Islamic orientation.²⁰

ISLAM AS AN IDEOLOGY OR IDEOLOGY ISLAM

In *politics and ideology* (1976) Martin Seliger defined an ideology as a set of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify the ends and means of organized social action, irrespective of whether or such actions aim to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.'(Page-14). The term ideology is a western concept and was coined during French revolution and first used by Destut de Tracy in 1797 to refer to a new, science of ideas'. David Robertson in dictionary of politics says about ideology "the simplest definition is probably given by a translation of the German word Weltanschauung, which is often used as though intertranslatable with 'ideology'. This translation would render 'ideology' as 'world view', the overall perception one has of what the world, especially the social world, consists of and how it works.... The point is that ideologies, which tell us what we should or do want and how to achieve these goals, are often held to be highly relative, even purely subjective".²¹

Islam is said to be mainly a 'this- worldly' religion, which provides a framework for the 'total-way' of life. The recent movements take the framework of 'total way' of life and project it 'outwards' as a world-view for the Muslims. Frustrated by other ideology these people seek refuge in

²⁰ Westurlund, David and Ingvar Svanberg Ed., (1999), *Islam Outside The Arab World*, Curzon Press, Richmond, pp.17-29.

²¹ Robertson, David (1985), *Dictionary of Politics*, Penguin Books Limited, Middlesex.

religion and make religion itself an ideology that is 'Islamism'. But certainly they try to adopt the tricks of Marxist in their own terminology. A more centralized structure of state and above all the concept of revolution added to that the concept of '*umma*'. Like Marxism, Qutb, al-mawdudi and khumayni articulated a new Islamic theory and established the contemporary discourse of a variety of Islamic political organization. To them, change had to be total comprehensive and revolutionary. They saw no possibility of coexistence between Islam and other political and social system. Gradual improvements and partial amendments of the status quo were considered inimical to the nature of a true Islamic approach. Society as a whole had to be remoulded in the image and spirit of Islam.

While there are distinctive differences of interpretation, there are certain common ideological frameworks that we can find in Malaysian case too, according to Esposito²² these are:

- 1) Islam is a total and comprehensive way of life. Religion is integral to politics.
- 2) They believe that the failure of Muslim societies is due to the departure from the straight path of Islam.
- 3) The renewal of society requires a return to Islam in real sense.
- 4) To restore God's rule and inaugurate a true Islamic social order Islamic law must replace the west inspired civil codes.
- 5) Although the westernization of society is condemned, modernization as such is not.

²² Esposito, L. John (1988), *Islam: The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, New York.

- 6) The process of islamization or more accurately re-islamization requires organizations or associations of dedicated and trained Muslims, who by their example and activities, call on others to be more observant and who are willing to struggle against corruption and social injustice.

Esposito says that the radical activists go beyond these precepts and operate on the following assumptions:

- 1) A crusader mentality.
- 2) Establishment of an Islamic system of governments not simply an alternative but an Islamic imperative.
- 3) Governments that do not follow *sharia* are illegitimate.
- 4) Jihad against unbelief and unbelievers is a religious duty.
- 5) They see every thing in black and white.

Before concluding our discussion on this matter, we must take in account of the views of another school of thought, which believes that "the resurgence of Islamic ideology is a historic reaction to the inadequacies and failures of the two powerful ideologies that have shaped the world during the last several decades, namely under the pax- Americana and its Soviet counterpart. But it is one thing to pose a reaction and quite another to become a new paradigm. [But if history is any guide], the precepts of Islam have nowhere created a social and economic structure that was radically new. It is doubtful that Islam will do better. Muslim spirituality may exert a beneficial (or for that

matter a harmful) influence on the style of practical politics adopted by certain leaders. It is dangerous to hope for more"²³

THE MALAYSIAN CASE OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

Most of the studies about Islam by early scholars were concentrated to the Middle East. The Islam outside the Arab world was largely seen within the context of nationalism or myth. Right from medieval age Islam was revitalized and reenergized in this region. South and South East Asia is the home of world's largest Muslim population. In Indonesia we have world's largest no of Muslims living in a single country. In the same region, we have another country called Malaysia, known for its unique ethnic mixture. Today, it claims to have developed an Islamic way of development. In last 20-30 years, it has crossed many hurdles and now standing in line with world's developed countries.

Scholars have emphasized the need to locate the emergence of political Islam in Malaysia in the context of global Islamic Resurgence. While post-war nationalism and anti-colonialism movements in Malaysia saw Islam disassociated from secular politics and practice. The failure of secular nationalism in preventing the subservience of Islamic society to western culture harkened a return to the *quran* to reestablish Islam as core if governance along with other Muslim countries, Malaysia too was caught up in this fundamentalist turn.

²³ Cyrus, Binda (1994), "Towards A new World Order" US Hegemony, Clientele States and Islamic Alternative" In Hussein Muttalib and Tajul Islam Hashmi (ed.) *Islam, Muslims And The Modern State*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London.



The Malaysian students who were studying outside in the Islamic universities brought home the ideas of Islamic revivalism. Here the modern concept of organization had played an important role in the development of student's Islamic movements in Malaysia. Its best example is ABIM. ABIM represents the bottom top approach of Islamising the society. In 1980 it was the most powerful force in Islamic resurgence of Malaysia. On the other hand we have groups like PAS, which represents the top bottom approach of islamization PAS wants to gain the political power to islamise the society. Certain organization representing the Islamic resurgence had become energetic in social reform, establishing schools, hospitals, publishing houses etc. Like the over all trend in Islamic societies the lulling elite of Malaysia too tries to legitimize its political authority through Islam. With growing influence of Islamic resurgence the Malay elite found its space synchronizing. The ruling elite now feeling threaten by the newly emerged force made an effort to fit itself in to the new frame. Thus, Mahathir claimed in 1990s that Malaysia is an Islamic state.

In microscopic analysis there are some very distinguishable trends in Malaysian Islamic resurgence. But in general the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia has similar causality as the Islamic resurgence worldwide. Even the general attributes of Islamic movement like objective of establishing of modern Islamic state, the traditional and modernist aspects of the movement, use of the concept of organization, a new generation of Islamically oriented leaders etc. are present in Malaysia too.

As in other countries, the *dakwah* organizations were the mainstay of initial process of islamization. These organizations enthused people

towards Islam. So like general trends in 1990s Islamic revivalism became a part of mainstream Muslim- Malay society producing a new class of modern- educated but islamically oriented elite. These elites later took the charge of islamization process. The best use of Islam as an ideology can be seen in economic sector. Here, Mahathir used Islam to create a work culture that can lead to a developed Malaysia.

The general themes, causes and characteristics of Islamic resurgence were certainly present in Malaysian case too. But it would be a folly on our part to study this phenomenon only in respect of external influences The particular aspects of Malay culture, political trends, societal setup, economic relations all these have a implication on the Islamic movement in Malaysia. In our study we will try to do a more microscopic analysis of the Islamic movement in Malaysia.

CHAPTER TWO

RESURGENCE OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

"Many of the reasons as to why Islam in Malaysia seems so different to Islam in Indonesia have to do with recent history, particularly the political development of the past few decades. There is also a sense in which the nature of the relationship between Islam and the state in Malaysia has origins that go back to the coming of Islam to the port city of Malacca in the fifteenth century. Compared with Java, the Malaysian peninsula has had a longer history of Islamisation and in certain respects the ways in which local rulers responded to Islam are also significantly different. More importantly though is the way in which the British beginning in the late nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century responded to the Malay sultanate system and used it for their own colonial purposes, reinforcing the position of the sultans as the official guardians of Islam."¹

Islam came to the Malay world in two stages, a stage of incubation and a stage of mass conversion. The process of incubation was a long and apparently unpremeditated one and was mainly performed in the early Muslim colonies scattered all over the islands. The process of mass conversion, on the other hand, was largely the result of conscious and deliberate effort and labour by missionaries, helped by an influx of Muslims following the terrors of the Mongols and the devastations of the crusaders. This process might also have been accelerated by a crisis,

¹ Barton, Greg (2002), "Islam, Society, Politics And Change In Malaysia," in Jason F. Issacson and Colin Rubenstine (ed.), *Islam in Asia*, Transaction publishers, London, U.K, pp.91-60.

which then existed in the area, probably caused by the downfall of the powerful empire of srivijay. The political disintegration resulting in social disequilibrium and the breakdown of religious authority apparently created a vacuum, which was filled by the Islamic faith.

There is enough evidence to show the influence of Indian, Chinese, and even Persian Islam on Malay Islam. From India went the Sufi missionaries, who played "a central role in introducing Islam to indigenous peoples of Malay Archipelago."² The persistence of pre-Islamic cultural mores in traditional Malay society is according to some scholars due to the effect of Sufism. We can easily find numerous rituals which have come from Hinduism and now are closely interwoven with Muslim ideas and practices, a process which has been attributed to the work of the Indian missionaries whose ancestors has been Hindus. The Hindu concept of 'king-god' has greatly influenced the concept of sultan as supreme religious authority. Even the Malay custom of bathing and visiting the beaches on religious days is probably an adaptation from Hindu river rituals.

The sultanate of Malacca played an important role in the Islamization of the Malay world. Before the coming of the Europeans, Islamic sovereignty spread rapidly all over the east. Portugal was the first European power to gain any Asian territory. Having conquered Goa on 25 Nov 1510 the Portuguese proceeded further east and conquered Malacca on 8 Aug. 1511 in spite of fierce resistance. There followed a Portuguese and Dutch rivalry for the monopoly of trade and sea-lanes. The Dutch

² Hamid, Ahmed Abdul Fauji (2001), "Sufi Undercurrents in Islamic Revivalism", *Islamic quarterly*, (43), third quarter, pp.177-198.

ousted the Portuguese from Malacca in 1641. Later the rivalry rose between the Netherlands and Britain over the domination of the area but the dispute ended in 1824, when Malacca was ceded to Great Britain while the Dutch were given a free hand in the far-flung Indonesian islands.

The British adopted the policy of keeping aloof from the matters of religion and custom guaranteed in the treaties they concluded in the nineteenth century with the sultans. This "appears to have isolated Islam from politics and did not make it, as happened in Indonesia and the Philippines and even in Malay itself under the Portuguese, a rallying point against the colonial power. This attitude may account for the tolerance of the European habits and for the ease with which the Europeans habits and ideals are accepted; and it seems to have created an idea of two separate and distinct domains, the spiritual and the profane."³ As the Malays under the British were encouraged to continue their traditional life, the Malay life remained uninfluenced by the outer developments. As a result Islam, remained in something of a backwater as far as modern Malayan colonial society was concerned.

But Islam in itself is a dynamic religion and this dynamism led to different kinds of development that coalesced with the scientific development gave a thrust to the gradual process of Islamization in Malay society. This process was the result of the combination of two somewhat distinct areas of Islamization within Malay society in the early four

³ Rauf, M.A (1964), *A brief history of Islam: with special reference to Malay*, Oxford University press, Kuala Lumpur, p. 94.

decades of the twentieth century. "One, centered on the alliance between the Malay ruling class and the traditional *ulama* embodied the state apparatus of institutional Islam. The other, the *kaum muda* or young group associated with the growing power of the print media and the new style *madarassas* and with strong links to the middle east, was more diverse in composition, more urban, and often perceived [though not strongly Malay in emphasis] as of foreign extraction - the *darah keturunan keeling* and *darah keturunan Arab* [Indian-and Arab descendent] in the terminology of the 1930s."⁴

The Japanese occupation of 1941-45 although was not directly responsible for Islamisation process. But it released the organizational and political energies of Malay nationalism in different varieties, which in turn played an important role in the context of other processes of 'Islamisation'. The long decade from the late 1940s to the early 1960s[during which *merdeka* [independence] was finally achieved in 1957] was important for the practice and perception of Islam in three principal respects, all of which may be seen as affecting-sometimes effecting-Islamisation.these years saw the determination of the place of Islam in the constitution of the new federation of Malay, the passage of anew set of state enactments providing for the continued institutionalization and bureaucratization of Islam ,and the emergence of the first active Islamic political party.

The left-leaned and Indonesia-associated Hizb-al-muslimin [1948],can be considered as first explicit Islamic grouping. Later in 1950-51 there were three *ulama* conferences held under the auspices of the centrist Malay

⁴ Roff R. William (1998), Patterns of islamization in Malaysia, 1890's-1990's: Exemplars, institutions and vectors, *Journal of Islamic studies* 9(2), pp.210-28.

political party, the United Malays National Organization [UMNO], which sought, among other things, unification of Islamic administration throughout Malay and establishment of a national *ulama* union. It was this proposed union, also referred to as an 'Islamic party', that in November 1951 came into existence as the Persataun Islam Se-Malay [all Malay Islamic union], subsequently best known as PAS.

There are some general patterns of Islamic movement, which are similar all over the world. But when we do a microanalysis we find a great variation in this general pattern, which we have analyzed in chapter one. In Malaysian case too there are some generalities and some variations. The characteristics of these variations can be found in the post independence societal development. We can trace its roots to colonial times and more to the way Islam spread in the Malay world. The ambiguities about the nature of Islam in state go back to sultanate period." At various points in time a common, a folk Islam, which emphasized a more magical or enchanted understanding of the world prevailed over a high, or scripturalist tradition focused on the and the *hadeeth* as authoritative sources."⁵ Therefore, a more complex domain of Islamic tradition evolved over time in Malay society .The long period of colonization did not touch or affect the rural Malay world in any real sense. However the British policies in general were driven by the western ideals of secularism, resulting in immense social stratification within and between resident Malayan communities .As the position the Malay - Muslim and of Islam became increasingly insecure, voices of dissent

⁵ Barton, Greg (2002), Islam, society, politics and change in Malaysia, in Jason F. Issacson and Colin Rubenstein (ed.) *Islam in Asia*, Transaction publishers, London, U.K. p. 98

began to emerge. The colonial policy also played a very important role in the formation of Malay Muslim identity. And the problems related to 'identity mixed with interest' were the important factors in the resurgence of Islam in 1970s.

As the British administration in Malay state was based on the system of indirect rule it did not have to deal with the religious issues. The colonial administration in its policies tried to introduce western education and there could be an argument that rather developing a Muslim identity the western education developed a critical outlook, which made people more western oriented and suspicious and doubtful about traditions. But rather bring antithesis these two arguments are linked together when the western educated people got a critical at last they end up questioning the colonial policies itself and here starts a search for their own identity which essentially resulted in Malay Muslim identity. But it never became a force to be reckoned with. "It is only since the immediate pre independence period that religion assumed any serious political significance in Malay. The factors that gave this significance are not difficult to understand. The Malay had two important preoccupations, both arising from their desire to safeguard their political pre eminence in the country. First, they formed the constitution to act as an instrument that would give Malaysia certain external features of Islamic state and second, they wanted to secure economic and political advantages that would help them improve their position. Islam being regarded chief component of Malay identity naturally became involved in the efforts to promote the final goal."⁶

⁶ Ratnam , J.K. (1969), "Religion and Politics in Malay", in Tilman O.R. (ed.) *Man State and Society in Contemporary South East Asia*, Praeger Publishers, New York, p. 351.

Malaysian constitution recognized Islam as an official religion, but nowhere it tries to make the federation of Malay a theocratic state. "As every religious has right to established and maintain its own institution"(Art.12). In the early years after independence the government never made any serious attempt or pursued any well-built plan to make the state 'Islamic'. However the Islamic tradition was deep rooted in the social set up. The current off the Islamic activism, which were present in society, came to the surface as the process of resurgence in 1970s complexed the several factors. "The 1970s witnessed an intense ideological battle over Malay identity between Islam as conceived of in the new wave of Islamic activism-nationalism and traditional conception of the Malay community tied with sultans and rooted in language and custom (*adat*). The Islamic resurgence during that decade was rooted in the race riots of 1969, which ignited the interest n Islam as an important distinguishing dimension of Malay identity in Malaysia's polyglot society. The relationship of patronage between the state and the Malay community reinforced Malay identity just as it distinguished between Malays and non-Malays."⁷

In 1970s there were rapid social changes that were creating new social cleavages and concretizing the old ones. Meantime the middle class was disappointed with its position and situation in modern society. The Chinese dominance in economy was detrimental for Malay- Muslim

⁷ Nasr V.R Seyyed (2001), *Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*, Oxford University Press, London, p.82.

⁸ Funston .N. John (1981)"The politics of Islamic Reassertion: Malaysia", in Mohammad Ayoob (ed.) *The politics of Islamic Reassertion*, Croom Helm, London, p.165.

interest. Socially, uprooted from their traditional villages, the city culture was a mirage to them. Finding their present bad and future worse the Malay middle class saw religion as the last resort. The great force of social unrest turned the wheels of Islamic resurgence or revivalism with both positive and negative features. Here the golden Islamic past was seen as only solution to current problems. So, the challenge was to revive the golden Islamic past. "The most significant feature of the Islamic revivalism in Malaysia was the emergence of the numerous '*dakwah*' organizations. It should be noted here that although '*dakwah*' (means- to call or invite) is loosely translated as missionary activities in the Malaysian context this refers to task of making Muslims better Muslims than converting the non-believers."⁸ So all *dakwah* activities in Malaysia had mainly two aims- to make Muslims more vigilant in the observance of their faith and to do social work. Although the *dakwah* activity emerged soon after independence to emphasize the importance of Islam in Malay life the Islamic resurgence added a new dimension to these activities. Moreover the *dakwah* organizations were now working with a new vigor and vitality. UMNO (United Malay national organisation) and the government had encouraged it as the means of spreading Islam in Borneo, especially through PERKIM, whose population was counted as *bumiputras* to bolster the number of the Malays vis-à-vis the Chinese and Indians. The number and the scope of the *dakwah* activity, however, expanded significantly in the 1970s and moreover, involved students."⁹

Greg Barton "identifies three categories of the Islamic movement in Malaysia, the first is called '*dakwah*' or missionary movement including group as Jamat-Tabligh and Darul-Arquam. The second category includes

⁹ Nasr.V.R.Seyyed (2001), *Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*, Oxford University press, London, p.82.

the activist organizations that reach into the university campuses and involves university graduates. The most prominent organisation here is ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia; the Malaysian Islamic youth movement). Finally there is category of political parties in which PAS, the Islamic party of Malaysia is the single most important example."¹⁰ These organizations are in a way, the epicenter of the Islamic movement in Malaysia. Some time they take the issues and derive their connection from the *ummah* (Islamic brother hood) and sometimes they become nationalistic but the degree of assertion varies from one organization to another. We will now take a look of some *dakwah* and other organization involved in the movement.

1.JAMAT TABLIGH: Jamat is the most apolitical organization in *dakwah* groups. It is not a native Malay organization. It was established in India in 1925 and Delhi still remains its headquarters. In the 1950s it was initially active among the Indian Muslim youth. So it was most strong in towns such as Penang and Kuala Lumpur, where there were significant number of Indian Muslims. With its loose organizational structure and mass focused approach, it later made deep inroads in Malays in general. "The aim of the movement is to revive the Islamic spirit, and it makes use of a large number of voluntary missionaries who work in completely idealistic and often far away from home. They visit people in their home and try to convince people to devote their lives to Islam."¹¹ Jamat Tabligh is basically a mosque-based organization like many other *dakhwah* groups around the world. "It has either established or taken over mosques across Malaysia and conducts its teaching

¹⁰ Barton, Greg (2002), "Islam, society, politics and change in Malaysia" in Isacson and Rubenstein (ed.) *Islam in Asia*, transaction publishers, London, pp.99-102..

¹¹ Cederroth Sven (1999), Indonesia and Malaysia" in David Westerlund and Ingvar Svanberg (ed.) *Islam Outside the Arab World*, Curzon Press, Great Britain, pp. 271-272.

programs out of its mosques. The message of Jamat in some respects is similar to that of other *dakwah* groups, Darul Arqam in particular. It is notably different however in its aversion to political criticism. Indeed Jamat has often been criticized for being too apolitical to the point that it actually supports the government. The message of Jamat Tabligh, which in some respect is the message of all *dakwah* groups, is one of appealing for a return to the purity and commitment of the early Muslim community. Consequently there is an emphasis on personal morality and piety but also an emphasis on what some might regard as the more superficial aspects of Islam. In as much as the organization has a picture view of social change, its position is simply that as Muslims in Malaysia become good Muslims, the various social ills and problems in current society will begin to disappear."¹² If we look its organizational structure, it has no formal hierarchy and no official leadership. Because, it maintains a low socio political profile, the traditional religious leaders and the government both did not feel any threat from Jamat.

2-DARUL-ARQAM: The name Darul-Arqam means the adobe of Arqam. Arqam was prophet's companion in Mecca, who supported the prophet in his flight or *hijra* to Medina. Darul Arqam was founded in 1968 by twelve (a religiously auspicious number as this is the number of Mohamed's companions) Muslim leaders under the overall leadership of Asari Mohamed. Asari Mohamed, a PAS activist and a forceful and popular orator has a very charismatic personality. "Ustaz Asari Mohamed demands absolute obedience towards Allah and his prophet, wants to strengthen the brotherhood of all Muslims, emphasizes the importance of Muslim education and finds it essential that the Muslims gain

¹² . Barton, Greg (2002), "Islam, Society, Politics and change in Malaysia" in Isaacson and Colin Rubenstein, (ed.) Islam in Asia, transaction publishers, London.

the economic independence. He has also shown tendencies towards a kind of Sufi mysticism, manifested for instance in *mahadi* expectations. It has even been maintained that ustaz Asari considers himself to be the *mahadi* and that he is trying to create for himself a position similar to that of Ayatollah ali khomeini in Iran."¹³

As these high ideas were difficult to practice in general life. In 1972 they setup a community on the out skirts of Kuala Lumpur in the village sungeipenchala. Later they have established a large number of such communes all over the Malaysia in which the members live and work. The noble laureate V.S.Naipaul¹⁴ has devoted a full chapter in his book "Among the Believers " to one of such communes. That chapter gives a vivid account of the men of the commune and their views. Later the writer travels to the commune called *araby* in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. He writes about the commune;

"The commune was on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, in a hilly wooden area. There was a board on the roadside some distance before I was not expecting a board. But though the commune has the reputation of being secretive there was no point in dressing like an Arab and hiding...other costumed figures (waiting for prayer time, like actors waiting for a stage call) where lounging about the verandah or porch of the shop at the corner, where- as parts of its independent Islamic way- the commune sold little things to passing motorists....."

In these communes, people try to live in true Islamic way. They not only renounce ordinary society but try to dress, eat and generally behave in the

¹³ Cederroth Sven (1999)"Indonesia and Malaysia", in David westurlund and Svanberg (ed.), *Islam outside The Arab world*, Curzon press, Great Britain, p.271.

¹⁴ Naipaul, S.V (1981),*Among the Believers*, Andre Deutsch limited, London.

way that it was envisaged that prophet and his companions had behaved. Here in the communes polygamy is a general practice. They have maintained a self-sufficient economy. Though Darul-Arqam is not an extremist organization from terrorist point of view but its views or ideals are very conservative. They denounce government schools medical facilities and other westernized public utilities. They try to create an alternative for these things.

The growing activities of the organization in 1980s & 1990s sent a ringing bell in governments corridors and finally the Malaysian government in 1994 officially and unambiguously banned Darul Arqam. The government placed Asari Mohamed under a kind of house arrest, and attempted to dissolve the communes. But the conservative ideals placed by the Arqam still holds ground into societal setup.

3. ABIM: The largest and most important, influential and best known *dakwah* organization is the Muslim youth movement of Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, or ABIM) scholars like, Greg Barton and Nasr finds a clear connection between the race riots of 1969 and the genesis of the organizations like ABIM. Barton points out " the racial clash of may 13; 1969 sent shock waves through Malaysian society. As the community struggled to come to terms with what had happened, communal anxiety gave rise to a series of odd phenomena. On the campus of university of Malaysia, the nation's only university of that time, students began increasingly to question the basis of their Malay identity and the basis of their Islamic belief. As Malaya students sought to understand what it was to be Muslim they came to feel that they knew less about their faith and they thought they really ought to know. This

was the beginning of revival of interest in Islam among Malay youth. The association of Muslim students at the university decided that it was the time to launch the Muslim youth organization .the new organization was launched and was named Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia or ABIM."¹⁵ ABIM formed in 1971 mainly based in university of Malay, and Anwar Ibrahim became one of its earlier recruits.

It soon became clear that he just like Asari Mohamed was an inspiring orator, with an ability to adapt his message to his listeners and easily attract their attention. Today there are ABIM groups in all the Malaysian states but he organization still has its strongest base in the universities and among urban middle class. ABIM attempts to convince the Malays that Islam is superior alternative to western materialism. A brief report on the organization prepared for ABIM's 8th general assembly in July 1987 points out the reasons for its establishment-

"Firstly to provide a platform for graduating students from the respective universities and colleges who had been active in *dawah* activities to continue their Islamic activities: secondly to fill the vacuum due to lack of organization to cater for the interests of Muslim youth at all levels in Malaysian society; and thirdly, to generate an Islamic movement as the path to Islamic revival Malaysia. "¹⁶

To spread its message ABIM publishes a number of journals. It has established a number of schools for alternative higher, which emphasizes especially on Islamic subjects; Islamic study groups are the main focus of

¹⁵ Cderroth Sven (1999), "Indonesia and Malaysia" in David Westerlund and Svanberg (ed.) *Islam outside the Arab World*, Curzon press, Great Britain, pp.271-73

¹⁶ Funston .J.N (1981), "The Politics of Islamic reassertion: Malaysia" in Mohammad Ayooob (ed.) *The Politics Of Islamic Reassertion*.p.165.

regular branch activities. ABIM has been associated with a number of economic co-operatives and has established charitable trusts. It also participates in or sometimes organizes on its own, numerous talks, forums and seminars, from local to the international level on Islamic affairs.

"ABIMs central message is importance of Islam as *deen*, a self sufficient way of life that holds the key to all of man's problems. The stress on Islam as *deen* makes ABIM the most directly political of all the *dakwah* groups. This is expressed particularly in call for the introduction of Islamic legal, educational and economic systems, and political reforms that would end corruption and misuse of power, and guarantee basic political freedoms."¹⁷

ABIM is opposed to western capitalism, and domination of foreign capitalists in Malaysia. It believes in Islamic brotherhood worldwide, asserting that the role of Islam in Malaysia can't be separated from the fate of Muslims throughout the world .In a way ABIMs ideology is committed to Muslim internationalism. ABIM has often criticized the government for its Unislamic acts and policies. However, when Dr.Mahathir Bin Mohammad became prime minister in 1981,he decided to try another tactics. Within a short time he succeeded in convincing Anwar Ibrahim to join UMNO (United Malay National Organization) and accepted a ministerial post in the government.

In theory ABIM talks against racism and religious fanaticism but many of the ABIM student groups, for instance are openly anti Chinese in their

¹⁷ Ibid , p.168

proclamation as well as their action. Regarding the establishment of true Islamic states, the policy and practice of ABIM is ambiguous, all through ABIM has been non political only in the sense of contesting for public office. In practice however, it exerted tremendous political influence and was able under the leadership of Anwar to place great pressure on the government and to some extent influence the shaping of public policies.

4) **PARTI ISLAM SE MALAYSIA:** PAS was established 1951 in Butterworth, Penang by religiously oriented UMNO members the founders of PAS give as their reason for founding anew party their disaffection with the overly secular nationalist leanings of UMNO .It went to win state government in Kelantan and Terengganu at the 1959 elections. Though it lost power through defections in Terengganu two years later, PAS had retained leadership of Kelantan and regained Terengganu in 1999. Earlier it was Persatuan Islam sa tanah Melayu ,in 1973, it was renamed Parti Islam se Malaysia(retaining the acronym PAS , based on Jawi script)."For PAS it was clear that the new state had to be an Islamic state in which Islam dominated every aspect of life not just the religious, but the economy and the government administration too. The founders of PAS couldn't accept an Indonesian style solution where a secular government led the state and Islam linked to the state was confined to one bureau or government department. In ways it mirrors Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), PAS had its foundations in the so called *Pondok* schools that in some respects were similar to NU's pesantern."¹⁸

In 1977-78 PAS went through a radical change in its view of nationalism. The party's new guard, in alliance with the older *ulama*

¹⁸ Barton Greg (2002), "Islam Society And Politics And Change In Malaysia" in Jason .F. Isaacson and Rubenstein (ed.) *Islam in Asia*, Transaction publishers, London,U.K.p.118.

figures, proceeded to abandon its Malay- nationalist position in pursuit of a more pristine interpretation of Islam. Driven in large part, by the charismatic religious leader Hadi Awang in Terrenggan , and in reaction to the Anwar's co-optation in 1982, PAS has begun to rebuild its Islamic agenda in opposition to UMNO. By the mid-1980's, PAS had established new support bases in Kedah and Perlis while extending into the urban centers and universities by the mid-1980's.

Since its inception PAS had advocated Islamic rule for Malaysia. Its vision of Islam was more strident and also more ethnically chauvinistic than that of ABIM. Although PAS accepted democracy, it favoured a direct role of *ulama* in governance, which hinted at theocracy. PAS also equate islamization with disenfranchisement of the "yellow culture" - Chinese influence over Malaysia. PAS had, in the first place left UMNO after independence in part because of the party's accommodation of the Chinese and Indian communities, which it equated with ambivalence towards Islam. PAS's view of Islam was in concert with religious sensibilities of small-town and rural voters that supported the party. It also reflected the thinking of *ulama* and religious leaders, who had been educated in the Middle East, at Al -azhar or in Mecca and Medina, as well as in south Asia at conservative institutions such as *Deoband*. For this reason, PAS had never been able to make an effective bid for urban and middle class Malay vote.

The rise of Mahathir in 1982, gave a new turn to the Islamic politics of Malaysia. Mahathir sought to out PAS from the Islamization process and UMNO taking to itself the islamnization process. So, there started a race called "Islamicity race" between UMNO and PAS. This we will elaborate in the later part of this chapter.

With the coming onto the scene of a new leadership for the party since its general assembly in April 1989, the party has become keener than ever before to Islamize the country in all its aspects. The Party's success in Kelantan, and the determination of its *ulama* leadership to transform Kelantan into an Islamic state, has again raised the questions about the future course of Islam in the country. However, PAS did not get much success in general elections but it is the most powerful opposition group till date.

UMNO AND THE "ISLAMIZATION RACE":

United Malay National Organization (UMNO) was established in 1946, to oppose the British imposition of the Malayan union. After independence it became the most dominant political party and in a way it has a monopoly over the political power in Malaysia. In an ethnically and religiously divided society where the political parties mainly represent the group interest, UMNO is basically a Malay political party. However, UMNO is not a communal party like PAS. But in response to PAS's communal political strategies, it too had shown some tendencies towards adopting group-oriented policies. Especially after 1982 there started a kind of "race" between UMNO and PAS to win over Malay-Muslims through their intense islamization policies and programs. In this process UMNO itself became an important player in the Islamic movement. Now it not only reacted to PAS' policies but also adopted a pro-active approach towards islamization. The "islamization race" is an important study to understand the Islamic movement, because the so-called race is both a cause and product of the movement.

Between 1977 and 1982 UMNO and PAS competed over ABIM's support. In 1982 UMNO came out victorious. In that year Prime Minister

Mahathir Mohammad persuaded Anwar to join UMNO. Anwar resigned from ABIM and along with many of its leaders, joined the ruling party and various state institutions. Now, both Mahathir and Anwar tried to transform the nature of the Malaysian state without transforming Malaysia into an Arabic Islamic state. But the process was not so simple and there were other important players in the game, which made the issue very complex. "Unfortunately however this led to a kind of "arms race" or "Islamicity race" between UMNO and its opponents with each trying to prove themselves more Islamic than the other. Ultimately, PAS was outflanked and could only retreat to a claim for itself the distinction of greater ideological purity and an unparalleled track record of supporting the interest of Islam".¹⁹

. PAS opposes the government policies criticizing it as un-Islamic. It finds nationalism and secularism of UMNO against the interest of Islam. It labels UMNO leaders, as infidels.

PAS leaders have been unyielding in their belief that the Islamic state is both a viable and necessary alternative to the UMNO-dominated secular state, and this is enshrined in their party manifesto. In a direct challenge to UMNO's script for Malay supremacy .PAS has criticized the new economic policy and constantly stressed Islam's recognition of equality among races.

In the face of this .PAS challenge, UMNO has realized that previous policies that "domesticated" Islam and did not intermingle in politics had to change. Under Mahathir, Islam was brought to the forefront of UMNO and Malaysian politics. UMNO has adopted a two pronged strategy to

¹⁹ Barton Greg (2002), *Islam, Society, Politics And Change In Malaysia* in Jason, Isaacson and Rubenstein (ed.), *Islam in Asia*, Transaction publishers, London U.K.p.119.

counter the PAS. One, portraying themselves as the progressive and moderate protectors of correct Islam, as opposed to the Islamic opposition who are conservative, radical and even deviationist proponents of wrong Islam. Second, UMNO has tried to champion the Islamic cause through the government policies and programs. In Malaysia the policies and programs of UMNO by and large get translated into government policies. And in Mahathir era this trend is more palpable. So, from another angle the state is getting actively involved in the islamization process. This aspect will be dealt with in fourth chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

ISLAMIC ASSERTION AND MALAYSIAN SOCIETY

From our discussion in our first two Chapters we can Summaries the causes or sources of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. Apart from some general causes (like: the inner dynamism of Islam: post –Colonial frustration of third world Islamic Countries, the western dominance, the role of Saudi Oil money; Iranian revolution etc), there exist some particular sources to the movement in Malaysian case. The unique characteristics of South East Asian Islam; the Colonial Secularism the initial lull after independence and then 1969 ethnic riots; the New economic policy and most important the spread of *dakwah* movement and the communal parties. Here, we will try to locate the Islamic movement in the context of Malaysian society. We will also be discussing the responses of important affected units of society.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation. Malaysia's population now stands at 23, 274, 690 at the Census of July 2000. According to the census, Muslim Malays comprised 65.1% Chinese 26.0% and Indians 7.7% of the total population. The tourism promotion campaign of Malaysia government depicts Malaysia a 'Truly Asia.' In a way Malaysia is 'Asia in microcosm' as it contains the three most important races and religion of Asia. One of the distinctive features of the Malaysian social system is the close link between Islam and Malaysian culture and politics. Ever since it was introduced some 700 years ago, the religion has served as core element of Malaysia culture. We can safely say that for all intent and purposes being Malays is being Muslim.

However the Malays is not a truly homogenous group. "The ethnic label Malaysia, covers a range of people from Middle-Eastern descent to Indonesian peoples such as Achene's, Boyanese, Bugis, Javanese, Minarg Kabau, Rawa and Mandailing, and Muslims who trace their roots to the Indian subcontinent. The Malaysian constitution defines a Malay as Muslims who follow Malay customs (*adat*) and speak the Malay language. Islam is the most important factor in the Malay identity as a source of solidarity among members of the community and a form of ethnic differentiation from non-Malay."¹

Islam right from the colonial period remains the potent force in every aspect of Malay life. After Independence, together with nationalism, Islam became a critical element in Malaysian cultural identity and a potent organizing force in the country. Thus when Islamic resurgence swept across most of the Muslim world in the 1960s, it was no small surprise to find Malaysia also participating in the process. In contrast to other Muslim countries, Islamic resurgence in Malaysia was an ethno-religious phenomenon, in the sense that it was largely the Malay who was actively engaged in raising and revitalizing the people's interest in Islam, its teachings, laws and values.

By 1980s there were clear signs of resurgence; even this was visible in people's daily life. The spread of *hejab* among Muslim women in the country's urban centers; the segregation of sexes; the tremendous proliferation of Islamic literature and cassette tapes; the renewed interest

¹ Gomes, Alberto (1999) "Peoples and Cultures" in Amarjit Kaur and Ian Metcalfe (ed.) *The shaping of Malaysia*, MacMillan press Ltd. London, p.81.

in the pure Islamic way according to the *Quran* and *Sunnah*; the ever-growing presence of religious organizations, the Islamic form of greetings and Quotations embellished speeches of leaders; etc. These were some clear and palpable signals in society about the reach of the resurgence.

Islamic Re –Assertion and Women in Malaysian Society

In Southeast Asian Societies, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, Muslim women have enjoyed far more freedoms and rights compared to their sisters in Middle East and South Asia. In Malaysia women constitute half the work force and half the students in universities and in even some of the faculties of science, law and medicine. In Malaysia Society, as in other South East Asian Societies cultural tradition (*adat*) affirm women's public contribution or participation in often positive, non-hierarchical ways. Although the political participation of women is not very enthusiastic; but the rights of women are duly recognized in Malaysia. These historical rights were codified after independence (and especially from 1960s to 1980s). This recognition of women's rights in Malaysia led to a remarkable program of codification of a uniform Islamic law in the late 1970s. So, there was a symbiosis of Islam with its local particularity to codify the rights of women in different aspects of life. In general day-to-day life women were as active as men; and the system of *purdah* was not much prevalent in urban society. The traditional Malaysia way of life was more prevalent than the fundamentalist Arab- Islamic way of life.

However, "since the early 1970's Muslim Societies in all parts of the world have been caught up in the throes of a resurgent Islam. All too

often in the turn to Islam as a way of life and the source for solutions to the ills and injustices that beset our societies, the place of women has become the first and easiest measure of a group or society's commitment to faith. It is as if those who have turned to Islam cannot cope with the monumental challenges posed by the fast changing world, so they focus on the most dis-empowered in society to prove their ability to dominate and bring about change in the name of Islam."²

The Malaysian case is not too different. The growing reassertion of conservative Islam undermines women's ability to take advantage of the rights granted under the law. Women being the hub of family life and culture, any change in society can only be reflected through women. And so, the fundamentalists want to impose a conservative Middle Eastern way of life, with *Purdah*; segregation of Sexes; minimal education for women, etc. They try to define women's role only as child bearers. To support their claims they often quote *Quran* out of context. As one verse sees men and women's relations:

"Men have authority over women because Allah has made one Superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen (parts) because Allah has guarded them. As for those whom you fear dis-obedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them." (4: 34; *Quran*).

"In fact as Malaysia is caught up in the throes of Islamic revivalism, the Islam traditionally practiced in the country has evolved to adopt more

² Anwar, Zainah (2001), "Sister in Islam and the struggle for women's rights." In Robert W. Hefner, *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, University of Hawai Press, Honolulu, p.230.

Arabic inflections to the religion that really reflect the culture of gender and family relations of a patriarchal and tribal Middle Eastern Society. Over the past several years, women in Malaysia are seeing a steady erosion of freedom and rights in the areas of law and access to the *shariah* legal system, as well as the rights of dress, family public participation, and socialization between the sexes. In public we are seeing increasing segregation of men and women.”³

V.S. Naipaul has very well put the thinking of revivalists. He quotes a foreign educated Islamic activist named Nasr:

“...The modernization of Malaysia, if it is not checked will affect the basis of the Social Structure. Free mixing and alcoholism are the great dangers. That goes with free mixing. Trust is the basis of family happiness. Allah created men and women so that they would get married in a proper procedure and to raise a family. That is the basis of the social structure. We must avoid having free mixing. Finally we intend here to have a separate School for the girls and the boys. We believe that unemployment today is due partly to this philosophy of female liberation.”⁴

To translate these in practice ABIM has opened a number of female religious Schools. The effects of the activities of this organization are now even visible of Kuala Lumpur’s streets. There are a growing number of women, who now veil themselves. The head to toe Islamic dressing is now more in fashion for females. The influence of the Islamic revivalist groups has grown by leaps and bounds in 1990s. From their separate

³ Ibid, p.234.

⁴ Naipul., V.S. (1982), *Among the Believers*, Andre Deutsch, Great Britain, p. 232.

schools for women and Arabic way of life in communes, now they are asserting themselves in the domain of law and general social practices. These reflect a trend toward repression of women's rights and the fundamental liberties of citizens living in a democratic country. Now, the government also embarked on a program of in collating Islamic values among government employees through regular religious classes and promoting rules on dress, male-female Socializing, Cultural and sports activities consistent with Islamic values.

The intentionally created or imposed sexual divide in society may not be perceived much alarming today. But in overall Islamic context this leads to create a cultural divide on the lines of women's freedom between Islamic world and the rest. As one writer puts it. "Huntington is mistaken is assuming that the core clash between the west and the Islam is over political values. At this point in history societies throughout the world see democracy as the best form of government. Instead, the real fault line between the west and Islam, concerns gender equality and sexual liberalization. As younger generation in the west have gradually become more liberal in these issues, Muslim nations have remained the most traditional Societies in the World."⁵

It's not right to think that there is no opposition to these revivalist moves of government or other organizations. There are several women's groups and NGOs that protest against the new revivalist laws and customs, one of the most prominent groups is "sisters in Islam". "Sisters in Islam" came together first, as the *sharia* Committee of the Association of women layer's to look into the problems with the implementation of the Islamic

⁵ Inglehart, Ronald and Norris Pipa (2003), "*The True Clash of Civilizations*", in Foreign Policy March/April 2003.

family laws. In Malaysia, Sisters in Islam has played a leading role in pushing the boundaries of women's right within Islam and within the framework of a country that is fast modernizing and relatively democratic, one another important group is women's candidacy Initiative (WCI). It is group of both Muslim and non-Muslim women; who aspires to participate in the politics of Malaysia. They contested the general elections of November 1999. "In more recent days Mahathir has attacked the Middle Eastern trained *ulama* for being antiquate and spreading the fundamentalist teachings"⁶ This confirms the views of sisters in Islam, which acknowledge the universality of Islam, but insists upon the Malaysian specificity.

ISLAMIC MOVEMENT AND RURAL –URBAN DIVIDE:

"Within the Malaysia Society there is a sharp dividing-line between the conservative rural population and the more radical urban masses. It is above all among the later that the *dakwah* movement has made deep inroads. The urban Malaysia, who are in most cases first-and in other cases not more than second-generation immigrants from the rural areas, have been exposed to radical changes in the form of a rapid industrialization and a penetrating western influence. Thereby, many people have lost the footing they had in their traditional religiosity."⁷

The urban town-dwellers feel confused and frustrated due to their ever growing wants and limited means. When they cannot get satisfaction in material life, they often turn to religion. And the newly found interest in

⁶ Abaza, Mona (1998), Images on gender and Islam: The Middle East and Malaysia affinities, borrowings and exchanges, *ORIENT*, 39(2), June, pp.271-84.

⁷ Cederroth, Sven (1999), "Indonesia and Malaysia" in David Westernlund and Ingvar Svanberg (ed.) *Islam outside the Arab world*, Curzon press, Great Britain, p. 273.

religion leads them towards the missionary organizations (*dakwah* groups). “ In the rural areas the changes have, so far at least, not been so through; the traditional *ulama*, had continued to give their political support to UMNO and PAS. In many Malaysia villages, exist a traditional syncretistic Islam with magical and mystical overtones.”⁸

Here we get a reflection that the rural areas are untouched by the Islamic movement. But “it would be wrong to argue that rural Malaysia is not experiencing the phenomenon. For a variety of reasons Islamic resurgence is also occurring in at least certain rural areas”.⁹

- i. In Malaysia, as in most other places, a continuous flow of tastes and ideas from urban to rural areas is occurring. This process is facilitated by an extensive communication network, which ensures that hardly any rural community is completely isolated from the impact of mainstream politics and culture.
- ii. Second, the government itself responding to resurgence has through its emphasis upon Islamic symbols and institutions, made the rural population quite conscious of the Islamic mood that is pervading the land. Television, with various Islamic programs, has played a big part in this.
- iii. The presence in rural areas of graduate teachers, government officials, rural extension workers and others, who in their college or university days might have been part of the resurgent movement, has also been a factor of some importance. These occupational groups often emerge as rural elites and are in a

⁸ Ibid, pp-272-73.

⁹ Muzaffar, Chandra (1985), “Islam in Malaysia: Resurgence and Response.” In A.A. Engineer (ed.), *Islam in South and South East Asia*, Ajanta Publishers, Delhi, pp-10-12.

position to influence rural people into upholding what they perceive as “an Islamic way of life.”

- iv. Even, if there were not these newly emerged rural elites the Social issues indirectly helped to fuel Islamic resurgence in rural Malaysia.
- v. The reach of PAS, in rural Malaysia has also been a factor in the Islamic resurgence in rural Malaysia. As Pas under the influence of ABIM and other groups came closer to the Islamic movement.
- vi. The evangelistic efforts of the recent urban based *dakwah* organizations have also played an important role to reawaken interest of their rural Malaysia in Islam.

ABIM, in recent times have opened religious Schools in these areas. ABIM provides the secular, academic and examination – oriented content, and the *ulama* the religious instruction. In 1990s many *ulama* and villagers were sympathetic to Darul Arquam’s ideals. But the rural Malays drowned upon its extreme views. “Of the three urban *dakwah* movements, Tabligh appears to be the most warmly received by the rural *ulama* and also most widely accepted by the rural population at large. One reason is Tabligh’s being apolitical. Further, Tabligh’s methods are widely believed to be closest to those of the ways and days of the prophet, being based on small, consensual group around a local mosque, spreading the message from community to community, as Muhammad did from tribe in Arabia. Finally, the ‘Indian’ element of Tabligh’s

membership, sometimes resented in urban areas as 'pre' Malaysia, seems absent in the village."¹⁰

Some Scholars feel that the Malaysia is undergoing a second religious revival. The first was related to the *Kaum Muda* (Young faction)/ *Kaum Tua* (old faction) Controversy in 1920s and 1930s. The current Islamic revival, in many respects repeats the themes of *Kaum Muda / Kaum Tua* confrontation. While debates concerning religious ideology and practice continue, it is the crisis over the legitimacy of religious authority, which appears the most salient today. The increasing reach of *dakwah* volunteers in villages in a way diminishes the legitimacy of rural religious elites. The increased aspirations to higher education and professional occupations has led to a shift in preference by rural parents for a more secular and academic education for their children. As a result, the Old *Pondok* system proper is giving way to what is known as *madrasah* or *sekolah rakyat* (people's school), a more comprehensive type of educational institutions. College and university graduate teachers often run these. So, the role of *ulama* is questioned in education. However, for *dakwah* groups it's not being a smooth sailing in rural areas. The rural adherents of traditional Style of Islam (and its authority base) are not the passive receivers to missionary Islam. "The arrival of many young *dakwah* missionaries to the villages as part of their lecture circuit create some antipathy among the rural population, partly on account of age. The youthful guru is generally regarded by rural standards as insufficiently trained in Islam. The Arabic dress, catering and other customs, often taken literally from *Quran* are seen as overdone, and even

¹⁰ Nagata, Judith (1985), "Islamic Revival and the problem of Legitimacy among Rural Religious Elites in Malaysia," in Bruce Gale (ed.) *Readings in Malaysian Politics*, Pelanduk Publication, Selangore. Malaysia, pp.129-130.

in appropriate for the Malaysian climate and society. The extreme segregation of the sexes is also regarded as unsuited to the exigencies of an agricultural village economy.”¹¹

In summary, we can say that there are demonstrable and continuing gap between many urban and rural Islamic practices in Malaysia, which we can find in Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua debate too. “This is balanced some what by the equally demonstrable fact that village *ulama* have shown a willingness to make accommodations in a number of ways, and that they are by no means as insulated from, or resistant to, new religious trends as they are sometimes depicted. It is the conflict of personal legitimacy and authority and between two styles of religious leadership which remains the principal issue, and which has resurfaced so visibly since the recent *dakwah* movement.”¹²

ISLAMIC ASSERTION IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY:

In Malaysia, religion is very closely identified with ethnic background. Some 98.8 per cent of Malays are Muslims, almost 100 percent of Chinese are adherents of the Chinese religions and about 99.0 percent of Indians are Hindus. “Islamic faith has always been identified as a Malay religion in that the two are quite synonymous with each other, although, doctrinally, race, still more racism, is anathema to Islam. Hence Islam have always been perceived as benefiting only one group of Malaysian society, namely Malaysia.”¹³

¹¹ Ibid. pp-125-128.

¹² Ibid. p.130.

¹³ Mutalib, Hussin (1994), “Islamisation in Malaysia: Between Ideals and Realities,” in Hussain Mutalib and Taj-ul-Islam Hashmi (ed.) *Islam, Muslim and the modern state*, St. Martin’s press, London.

In the initial period of resurgence, the effort of Islamists (like ABIM, PAS) was to bridge the ethnic divide through Islam, to restructure Malaysian Society. They projected Islam as an all encompassing and non-racial religion that provides solutions to all problems. The initial response of non-Muslims, non-Malays were also not hostile towards their activities. ABIM's talks were attended by non-Muslims. Even there was some participation of Chinese in PAS's *Ceramah* (talks). "Nevertheless, after some time, the non-Muslim Chinese and Indians who were originally responsive to the Islamist's call and who lent their ears to their exhortations, began to evince greater racial consciousness. Apparently, the logic used by the *dakwah* activists to explain the wisdom of embracing Islamic cause did not appeal to them."¹⁴

Basically they started feeling a kind of fear from their activities this fear was not without any ground. 'Islam first, Malay Second' has been ABIM's motto since its inception. However its leaders talked about Inter-Civilizational dialogue, but the Common Cadres was not so liberal and tolerant. In 1989, some states declared that *Khalawat* laws and morality issues in general are to Include-non-Muslims too. There were extremist's actions, such as the desecration of a Hindu temple in 1979, the attack on a police post in Batu Pahat in 1980, and an attempt by PAS government in Kelantan to implement *sharia* for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. These laws advocated cutting off the limbs of thieves, and the stoning of adulterers.

Sometimes the government's decisions and policies also created apprehension in the minds of non-Muslims. The government's

¹⁴ Abu Bakar, Mohammad (2001) "Islam, Civil Society and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia", in Nakamura, Siddique and Omar Farouk (ed.) *Islam and Civil Society in South East Asia*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, p.70.

Islamization Campaign not only limits the legal rights of 'deviant' Muslims, but it also encourages negative Social attitudes toward non-Muslims. Government's many initiatives. Such as the Islamic Bank, Islamic University, Islamic pownshop and Islamic economic foundations, imply that no-Malays, Chinese in particular need to double up and become more competitive. These are the parts of 'Malay first' policy of New Economic Policy (NEP), which puts Malaysia Muslim interest above all others. Since 1980s the Islamic assertion has even complicated the economic process.

Although, some strict conservatives in the Islamist party PAS have criticized 'Malay – first programme as un-Islamic, because it is based on racialism which is antithetical to Islam. But here we must remember that being Malay means being a Muslim. PAS's stand on this point seems contradictory. Because when it advocates the establishment of Islamic state it commits itself to the conservative notion of citizenship. According to this principle, the citizen's rights in a Muslim dominated state should be differentiated by religion. Among other things this means that as "protected minorities" (*dhimni*), non-Muslims must accept Muslim dominance or face persecution as enemies of Islam "However most of these theoretical notions have little direct appeal among the Malaysia public, deflection with UMNO and prime Minister Mahathir, not least of all after the sacking of the popular vice-premier Anwar Ibrahim in 1998, may continue to wind in PAS's sails, giving it a political influence disproportionate to its ideological resonance less society. The Recent

events have boosted the influence of ideologically conservative Islamic organizations.”¹⁵

With the growing clout of these Islamist forces their influence is now felt in every aspect of life. The debate about the vision of Islamic state is now taking place not only between political leaders and political parties; but in every day political discourse; it comes up in newspapers and magazines, people talk about it in forums and there is more discussion about it. The probability and possibility of actualizing this vision is felt inimical by the religious minorities. Malaysia, where we have a multiplicity of religions and ethnic groups, the growing assertiveness of one religious group is bound to have an immediate impact on other religious communities and when Malaysian Muslims demand an Islamic State, this leads to a corresponding increase in religiosity on part of the Christians and Hindus and Buddhists. In reaction to the perceived Islamic threat, “many of them entered the fray by activating their own organizations, mobilizing their members, or forming their own societies in order to champion the cause of their co-religionists in the face of the Islamist’s challenge. For some, it was time to regroup in order to propagate their various religious and cultural ideals.”¹⁶

In the Course of confrontation, they resort to forming bonds of solidarity to maintain their religious identity or revise their cultural heritage, or seeking a new spiritual embrace in their respective beliefs. Many Christian groups of various denominations, Buddhist organizations, and

¹⁵ Hefner, W. Robert (2001), *The Politics of Multiculturalism Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, University of Hawai press, Honolulu, p.52.

¹⁶ Abu Bakar, Mohamad (2001) “Islam, Civil Society and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia, in Nakamura, Siddique,” and amar Farouk (ed.), *Islam and Civil Society in South East Asia*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, pp-69-71.

Hindu associations that had remained dominant before, were revived and sprang into action. Adherents of these non-Islamic faiths Congregate in large numbers especially in cities and towns to organize their activities. Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists have invested much energy and money into expanding their organizations partly to meet perceived threats stemming from growing Islamic activism. In orchestrating their campaign against the government's drive at greater Islamization, several of them formed a united front- the Malaysian consultative council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism- in 1984 and had petitioned the authority for its "un Malaysian" tendency. The Council condemned the efforts to Islamize the existing laws.

To summaries, "The most obvious political consequence of Islamic revivalism, and certainly the one given most prominence in the international press, is its implications for communal relations in Malaysia."¹⁷ The increased dangers of communalism always outweigh the positive role of *dakwah* organization. The activities and counter-activities by religious groups are widening the already existing fissures in society. The growing menace of Islamic terrorism world over shakes the confidence of minority religious grouping in Malaysia. Today, the need of the hour is to build confidence among different groups in society. The hollow talks of democracy and secularism may not be beneficial for a traditional Malaysian society. What is needed is a Malaysian solution for the Malaysian problems. Acknowledging the religious differences, the Social groups needs to come closer for a kind of "Civilizational dialogue", which was envisaged by Anwar Ibrahim. We must remember

¹⁷ Funston. N. John (1981) "The Politics of Islamic Reassertion: Malaysia", in Mohammed Ayob (ed.), *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*, Croom Helm, London, p.177.

that fear starts in the minds of the people and it must be countered at the outset. And the fight against communalism must be a combined effort. In this direction the efforts of Anwar Ibrahim must be acknowledged. "At the national level, Anwar promoted the concept of *masyarakat madania* (Muslim version of civil society). He argued that, not unlike the individual in the western civil notion, individuals have right in the eyes of Allah, as documented clearly in the *Quran*; these must be respected at all costs. Anwar also emphasized that the concept and practice of *masyarakat madani* are rooted in the notion of Social justice. Domestically and internationally, Anwar also encouraged what he Called 'inter civilization dialogue' as illustrated for example, in the Islam-Confucianism conference held in 1994. A Centre for civilizational dialogue was set up at the University of Malaysia in 1995 to serve, this intellectual interest with Prof. Chandra Muzaffar, a well known Social activist and the founder of ALIRAN as its chirpeson. Anwar published his speeches and writings on these ideas in his *Asia Renaissance*."¹⁸

ISLAMIC NATIONALISM AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

In several of the third world countries, we find a problem 'over developed state' (Hamza Alvi). The Institution of State is not a product of an evolutionary process rather an imposition by the colonial powers. The geographical boundaries were defined according to the preference and convenience of the colonial powers. In most of the countries the urge of living together was either minimal or missing. If this concept of living together was present; it was based on some traditional primordial feelings

¹⁸ Shamsul, A.B. (2001) "Transformation of Malaysian Pluralism" in Hefner, Robert (ed.) *The Politics of Multi culturalism: Pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, University of Hawai Press, Honolulu, p.221.

and not based on modern concepts. After getting independence the state tries to find out the strongest link that bounds it as a nation.

But we find there is often a lack of common identity for a whole country. In this process the majority identity becomes the national identity. In Malaysian case we find that Islam serves as a focus of identity and nationalist aspiration because of three contrasting approaches to the relationship between religion and policies. In secular terms there was the pre-colonial tradition of the Muslim community ruled by a Muslim King for 'Raja.' In modern terms there was the influence of Islamic modernist movement, which, from the early twentieth century, attempted to rationalize the assimilation of modern western knowledge and Islamic doctrine. Finally there was the more exclusive and formative view that Muslim should live in a Islamic state governed by Islamic custom and laws.

In a way Islam became the most important part of Malaysian identity. "Islam has been identified with Malaysia and with Malaysia culture to such an extent that when a non-Muslim converts, he or she also at the same time become a Malaysia (*masuk* Islam / *masuk* Melayu), irrespective of any earlier ethnic attachment. As a result of this close identification with the politically, although not economically, dominant ethnic group, Islam rather than other components such as language or custom-has been used as the primary instrument for creating a Malaysia identity."¹⁹

Viewing in this context the resurgence of Islam was not only a religious or spiritual phenomenon but later it was also an attempt to reassert a value system, ideology and philosophy of life. This value system is of identifying Islam as a constructive factor in nation-building process and

¹⁹ Cederroth, Sven (1999) "Indonesia and Malaysia" in David Westerlund and Ingvar Svanberg (ed.) *Islam outside the Arab world*, Curzon press, Great Britain, P-274.

the ideology is of Islamic nationalism. The scholarly advocated Islamization of knowledge symbolizes one of the expressions of this reassertion: The political response to the resurgence –was a frame amplification in the form of young Muslim leader Anwar Ibrahim’s adoption into UMNO. The cooptation of Anwar signified, as many observers have noticed that the government was ambitious to gain at least indirect control of a strong Islamic Social movement, the government could have tried to turn the movement down, of course, but the opportunity to retrieve a somewhat neglected feature of the concept of nation (neglected in favour of economic growth) was all the more attractive, because, it served the Malaysia religious and moral sentiments and the followed the fresh application of Islam in the Muslim world. Even in its latest attempts through Islamization process the government asserts that Malaysia is a ‘Islamic state.’ But the Islamist groups do not believe in the government’s claim. They feel that the fulfillment of Islamic nationalism is the establishment of a real Islamic state.

“Be it an Islamic *dakwah* movement, a sub group and more over an Islamic political party, the establishment of an Islamic state, clearly or subtly, would be its greatest accomplishment. The difference may only lie in the definition of the Islamic State and the methods towards its achievement.”²⁰

For Darul Arqam “an Islamic State” may mean an Islamic socio-economic and political administration evolving from within themselves to their own family society, state and eventually to a global level. In this sense IN this sense Islamic state does not come necessarily with a geographical entity. It evolves from below through the strengthening of

²⁰ Salleh, Syukri Muhammad, (1999) “Establishing an Islamic State: Ideals and Realities in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia.” In *South East Asian Studies*, Vol.37, No.2, September, p.235.

their inner spiritual selves and rises upward to family, society, state and global levels.

“On the other hand an Islamic political party such as the PAS, obviously sees an Islamic state as a geographical entity, with power and Islamic socio-economic and political administration prevailing in it. It must be achieved through electoral legal system as in the case of Pas or through the revolutionary process such as in Iran. Both, however, share similar beliefs that the establishment of an Islamic state necessitates a change of political power. Secondly, they also in accomplishing their mission, mobilize their people from below but start, to attempt the establishment of an Islamic state firstly only when the power is already in their hands and secondly, from above.”²¹

So, “PAS’s concept of ‘Islamic nation’ simply means a nation of Muslims and non-Muslims organized and administered using *Quranic* principles and Islamic laws. Perhaps the attempt to introduce and implement the strict Islamic *hudud* law in Kelantan recently is part of the strategy towards establishing a local prototype for the Islamic nation it wants to establish throughout Malaysia.”²² The PAS constitution, mentions its objective to strive for “a society and government on which Islamic values and precepts are implemented towards the attainment of the pleasure of Allah” (Pejabat Agung PAS Pusat 1990:2). With gaining power in the State of Kelantan, the first hurdle towards the establishment of an Islamic State has been overcome. “The political power is already in the hands of PAS for already quite a substantial period. What is still absent is a proper operational guideline from the party. But the PAS-led government itself

²¹ Ibid, p-236.

²² Shamsul, A.B. (1996), “Debating about Identity in Malaysia: A Discourse Analysis” in *South East Asian studies*, Vol.34, No.3, December, p.488.

seems not to have been very interested in formulating a specific operational blueprint. In such a case, the execution of Allah's laws in particular and endeavors in establishing an Islamic State in the State of Kelantan in general sometimes look quite fragmented and loose."²³ However we must not draw any hasty conclusion from these fragmented efforts. Because as long as PAS's remains Committed to its motto; the matter is not of ideals but of efforts and will. The motto is based on a verse of *al-Quran*, which says:

If the people of the town had but believed and feared Allah, we should indeed and feared Allah, we should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from Heaven and Earth. But they rejected (the truth), and we brought them to book for their misdeeds. (Al-Arab 7:96)

Due to its strong Islamist leadings and a Malaysia-Muslim identity, "PAS has not been able to convince the non-*bumipetra* that it is not a *bumiputera* party using Islam as an ideological plat form. Ironically, UMNO, in an effort, to show how tolerant its 'Islam' s, has joined the non-*bumiputera* to condemn PAS for abusing Islam."²⁴ But the fact of the matter is that Islam being a religion of not more than 65% of population still is in the centrality of the nationalism debate. The question is only about degrees of learning towards Islam. But the process of creation of shared meaning to make a national identity through Islam is not an easy task, when strong communalistic orientation prevails.

²³ Salleh, Syukri Muhammad (1999), "Establishing an Islamic state: Ideals and Realities in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia", in *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.37, No.2, September, p.244.

²⁴ Shamsul, A.B. (1996) "Debating about Identity in Malaysia: A Discourse Analysis" in *South East Asian Studies*, Vol-34, No.3, December, p. 2488.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF STATE IN "ISLAMIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT"

To get a system chronological overview of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia, we can usefully follow a chronology suggested by Jomo and Ahmed.¹ It has three phases:

- 1) In the early 1970s many Malay students educated in western secular tradition came under the influence of resurgence Islamic ideology. Due to the perceived threat perception to Islamic ethos and values, they joined together out of a sense of "self protection ". Subsequently, there were several organizations propelling the Islamic resurgence.
- 2) In the late 1970s the Malaysian Islamic youth movement (ABIM) had bonhomie with the main Islamic opposition party, the PAS. This tacit informal alliance provided the resurgence a political momentum.
- 3) In the 1980s in the third phase, the Malaysian government through its own Islamization programme countenanced Islamic resurgence. Here Mahathir Mohammed joined by Anwar Ibrahim added a new dimension to this resurgence. in a way this symbolized the period of assertion.
- 4)" To this scheme we would add a fourth phase to take in to account a development since the late 1980s, one in which the state has attempted

¹ Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Ahd Shabery Cheek(1988)," The Politics Of Malaysia's Islamic Resurgence", *Third World Quarterly*, 10:2, April, p. 843.

the channel the Islamic resurgence along a modernizing path linked to the secular objective of Malaysia becoming a fully industrialized country by the year 2020."²

In 1981 Mahathir Mohammed became the head of UMNO and prime minister of Malaysia. "Under Mahathir, the Malaysian state experience its most radical ideological readjustment since independence. Although the Muslim-Malay-centric nature of the UMNO government in many ways remains prominent, the latter's promotion of Bangsa Malaysia (the Malaysian nation) since the late 1980s make a fundamental departure from the political and ideological manipulation of ethnicity which were a hallmark of post independence politics. The UMNO dominant Malaysian leaders ideological framework was long characterized by "exclusivist" Bumiputeraism-the Muslim-Malaya-centric ideology."³

From the government's perspective, the Islamic resurgence was potentially destabilizing for it had very tangible political consequences: UMNO found it's self-increasing in competition with PAS. In order to reduce the electoral appeal of its opponents and also to maintain interethnic peace by controlling Islamic activities, the Mahathir government felt obliged to take initiative in an islamization process. However this doesn't mean that Mahathir government's actions in favour of Islam were not motivated by profound religious beliefs. After Mahathir took office as Prime Minister in July 1981, he tried to represent the UMNO as Malaysia's oldest and the world's third largest Islamic party.

² Camroux, David(1996), State Response To Islamic Resurgence In Malaysia:Accommodation, Co-Option,And Confrontation", *Asian Survey*, vol.xxxvi No.9.

³ Kikue Hamayotsu(2002), Islam And Nation Building In Southeast Asia: Malaysia And Indonesia In Comparative Perspective", *Pacific Affairs*,75(3),fall,p.357.

Now the UMNO leaders began working on upgrading the party's Islamic credentials. Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir told the press on several occasions that the UMNO's struggle was based on Islam, and that its three objectives were protecting Malay rights, Islam and the country.

"On March 29, 1982, the government pulled off a pre- election coup which raised its Islamic credentials: the UMNO recruited or co-opted (then) ABIM President Anwar Ibrahim."⁴ Later Ibrahim became the Deputy Minister in charge of the Islamic Religious Affairs Section of the Prime Minister's Department. In September 1982, he was elected as the President of the UMNO's five Vice Presidents; in June 1983, he was made a full minister."

"The nature of the concessions to Islam under the Mahathir administration has also changed, so many can no longer be considered as symbolic. Furthermore these projects are no longer widely perceived as concessions, but rather as part of a government-sponsored islamization process. Mahathir said in September 1982 that the government had three major projects- the Islamic Bank, the International Islamic University, and compulsory Islamic Civilization studies at the tertiary level."⁵ Other steps toward Islamisation have already been taken. These included the establishment of the Malaysian Islamic Development Foundation; approval for an Islamic Insurance Company and Islamic Pawn shops; a decision to upgrade the position of Kadish and Sharia courts; a ban on the importation of the non-halal beef (beef not slaughtered in the accordance with Islamic rituals); the establishment of the Islamic Teachers Training

⁴ Mauzy, K.Diane And Milne, S.R. (1986), "The Mahathir Administration: Discipline Through Islam " In Bruce, Gale (ed.) *Readings In Malaysian Politics*, Pelanduk Publications:Selangor, p.91.

⁵ Ibid, p.92.

College in Petaling Jaya; provision for the establishment of the International Islamic Youth Complex; increased instructions in the use of Jawi (Arabic script); closer ties with the Middle-Eastern countries; the suspension of the supplementary Meal programme in all national primary schools during the fasting month of Ramadan; a ban on smoking in all government offices; a return to the traditional method of moon-sighting for determining Hari-Raya; and Penal Code Amendments directly related to the religion. Some further measures have been suggested as well: a proposed ban on gambling; a proposal to deduct zakat contributions from income tax liabilities; and, most ominously, was a federal Minister's proposal to establish morality laws.

"Islamist ideology has included demands for an "Islamic economy" as a part of its promised utopian order. Because initially, state led Islamization was based on three initiatives; the establishment of the Islamic financial sector, an Islamic higher education system, and an Islamic bureaucracy. So, the financial sector was given top priority. An Islamic economy is to operate free of interest and would provide social justice, equity and harmony."⁶ At that time Malaysia was not the exceptional Muslim country to go for Islamic way for banking and financial transaction. Muslim States have found it easier to accommodate Islamism on economic issue than on political ones. Moreover, they have seen Islamic economics to be a useful means of gaining some Islamic legitimacy.

The Islamic Banking became operational in Malaysia in 1983. It was intended to provide an alternative financial system; working on the principles of the Islamic Laws. It had a parallel supervising council of the Ulemas to make it certain that the Bank's transactions work on the Islamic

⁶Nasr, Vali Reza Seyyed(2001),*Islamic Leviathan :Islam And The Making Of State Power*, Oxford University Press,London,p.122.

Laws. By 1995 Bank Islam had 63 branches across Malaysia. In 1993 another State controlled bank began to offer interest free banking. Interest free banking has increased the scope of state's economic ties with the peasants, who have by and large operated of the mainstream financial system and have been more closely tied to PAS or al-Arqam.

"The experience with Banking was replicated in insurance with the establishment of the Islamic Economic Development Fund in 1984 and Syarikat Takaful Malaysia (Malaysia insurance cooperative) in 1985. The Islamic insurance scheme too, avoids interest and operates as a trustee profit-sharing operation. In the 1990s along with Islamic pawnshops-Islamic brokerage scheme was introduced (1994)."⁷

"The late 1980s, also saw Islamic finance companies being set up and in 1990, International offshore Financial Center was planned for Labuan, which among others had the aim of creating an 'Islamic niche' and becoming a financial center for the reason. In 1993, other Commercial Banks set up 'Islamic windos.' Together with an increase in institutions dealing in interest free-finance, there was also an increase in the number of 'Islamic financial instruments' being created by the scholars and practitioners of the Islamic finance. Finally an Islamic debt market for Islamic bonds was established in the mid-1990s, so that for all practical purposes Malaysia was said to have a parallel Islamic financial system alongside the conventional one, representing Malaysia's model of a 'dual financial system'.

⁷ Ibid, pp.122-124.

What is more, graduates from IIUM and other institutions of higher learning were being absorbed into those institutions practicing Islamic economics and Finance."⁸ Moreover, " the final requirement for establishing a fully fledged Islamic banking system was achieved with the launching of the Islamic banking system was achieved with the launching of the Islamic inter-bank money market in January 1994. This was claimed to be among the first Islamic money markets in the world. It covers inter-bank trading in Islamic financial instruments, Islamic inter-bank investments, and an Islamic inter-bank cheque-clearing system."⁹ The Islamisation process also included collection of Islamic taxes and disbursement of the resultant revenue. The most important tax in this regard is zakat (alms tax), which is a 2.5% compulsory flat tax. In the late 1980s the state streamlined the collection and disbursement of zakat funds. Although the funds were still collected and disbursed locally, much more emphasis was placed on the collection of the tax as a mark of the Islamicity of the state.

The imperative has also been evident in the evolution of the Lembaga Urusan Dan Tabung Hajji[(Hajj) Pilgrims Management Fund Board (LUTH)]. LUTH was originally formed in 1957 as a government service for those who wished to perform the Hajj. Overtime LUTH has become an important financial institution with large financial holdings and assets invested in various state and private sector enterprises. LUTH's success provided impetus for further ventures, notably, Bank Islam, 10% of whose paid up capital came from LUTH. "The interest-free institutions,

⁸ Haneef, Mohammad (2001), "Islam And Economic Development In Malaysia-A Reappraisal" In *Journal Of Islamic Studies*, 12:3, Oxford Center For Islamic Studies, Oxford , pp.269-290.

⁹ Wilson, Rodney(1998) "Islam And Malaysia's Economic Development" In *Journal Of Islamic Studies* ,9:2, Oxford Center For Islamic Studies:Oxford, p.274.

and LUTH in particular, have been a means of mobilizing savings- particularly from amongst those who may not use the regular financial institutions- to support various economic projects. LUTH also gives the state the means to control the extent of Malay's contact with Islamist trend in the Middle East and South Asia, which was especially in the 1980s when Iran used the hajj as the forum for spreading its revolutionary ideology."¹⁰

" It is stated in the Rukunegara (the official ideology I the state) that Malaysia is dedicated ' to achieving a grater unity for her peoples; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably distributed to ensuring and liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions to building a progress society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology ", the way to achieve these goals is by following the five principles: "belief in god: loyalty to kind and country; upholding the constitution; rule of law; good behavior and morality". In accordance with these objective of national integration, building a science and technology-oriented society and redressing economic imbalance- particular between the Malays and the Chinese-education in Malaysia becomes a major instrument of socioeconomic and cultural change."¹¹

Viewing the importance of education in Malaysia's socio-economic change, the government took bold steps towards Islamization education since 1981. Primary and secondary educational curricula, along with

¹⁰ Nasr, Vali Reza Seyyed (2001), *Islamic Levithan: Islam And The Making Of State Power*, Oxford University Press, p. 124.

¹¹ Hassan Muhammad (1981) , "Education And Family Life In Modernizing Malaysia" In Stoddard, Cutchell And Margaret Sullivan(ed.), *Change And The Muslim World* , Syracuse University Press, New York.p. 66.

those of university education, were changed to include classes on Islamic civilization. An Islamic teachers training college was established in 1982 to train teachers for these tasks. The most important institutional development was the international Islamic university (IIU), which was established on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur in 1983. At times there were some reactions from Chinese community, since the government did not allow the establishment of the Chinese Merdeka University. Anwar Ibrahim, the greatest proponent of IIU served as the nominal chancellor of the university and appointed its principal directors. Anwar stated that the IIU should serve to accelerate the adoption of Islamic values in Malaysia. Anwar promised that the government would ensure that no group, including foreign donors uses the university for its own purpose "The IIU is the first university to implement the concept of integrating knowledge with morals - a concept that was adopted in 1967 at the international convention on Islamic education in Mecca. As Mahathir attended the convention when he was education minister and the idea of having such a university and putting the concept into practice has long been on his mind."¹²

"The university was based on Islamist notions of "Islamization of knowledge" which had been put forward by the Palestinian- American scholar Ismil al- Faruqi. Islamization of knowledge was an effort on the part of Islamist intellectuals to make various modern academic disciplines compatible with Islam, and thus lay the foundation for an educational system and intellectual tradition that would Islamize modernity."¹³ In

¹² Mauzy, K. Diane And Milne, R. (1986), "The Mahathir Administration: Discipline Through Islam" In Bruce Gale (ed.) *Readings In Malaysian Politics*, Pelanduk Publications, Sselangore, p. 94.

¹³ Fazlur, Rehman, (1988) "Islamization Of Knowledge: A Response", *American Journal Of Islam Social Sciences*, 5, 1, pp. 3-11.

many ways, IIU also served as think tank for the Mahathir administration on Islamic issues and was important in countering leftist criticism of its economic policies. In time, IIU also came to be viewed as a Malay university, one that trained Islamically conscious civil servants for the state. It latter also included engineering and medical faculties, and expanded in size and influence.

The departments of Islamic higher learning were also opened in other universities. The university graduates coming out with a degree in Islamic learning were absorbed in newly born Islamic researchers provided policy-making guidelines to UMNO and state institution.

In the process of Islamization, the government established new institutions and revamped old one. The religious affairs department of the prime minister's office was expanded under Anwar's Supervision. Two nationwide committees were formed to guide Islamic policymaking: Badan Perundingan Islam (Islamic consultation board), to recommend Islamic policies; and Lembaga Bersama Penyelasan Kegiantan Islam Malaysia (joint committee on management and implementation of Islamic activities, Malaysia), to monitor the implementation of all decisions and programmes that the government had agreed to establish according to Islamic tenets. New national- level committees were formed to contended with various aspects of Islamization: Majlis Kemanjurn Hal Ehwal Agama Islam, Malaysia (national council for Islamic affairs); Jawantankush (Board for the promotion of Muslims welfare, Malaysia); Majlis Syura(consultative council); and Lembag Penyelarasan Pelejaran dan Pendidikan Angma Islam(advisory board for the Islamic education and curricula.).

"The judiciary in particular was never particularly radical or particularly liberal. Like many judiciaries throughout the English-speaking world the judiciary remained a conservative institution"¹⁴ so, the judiciary was not functioning on religious lines. The process of Islamization also penetrated the domains of justice, law and courts. The Sultans or the chief ministers freed Sharia courts from oversight, and the status of the judges was raised to be on par civil judiciary. After 1983, encouraged by the Islamization process various state introduced their own Islamic codes in various criminal and civil matters. In 1990 Article 121 of the constitution was amended to stipulate that the high court and subordinate courts have no say in matters that fall under Shariah court jurisdiction.

The government also created mechanisms to make sure that Malaysian laws do not contravene Islamic laws. It hope that, this would reduce demands for implementation of Islamic law and limit the discussion of the topic to one of bringing Malaysia law in to accordance with Islam rather than introducing the new legal code.

Finally " whereas the government had been able to limit the discussion implementation of Islamic law to one of insuring that Malaysian laws did not contravene Islamic law, it could not however, stave off the various codes that were added in Malay states- including the PAS's bill in Kelantan. Islamization therefore created an unexpected struggle for power between Malay states and the federal center."¹⁵

¹⁴ Barton, Greg (2002) "Islam, Society, Politics And Change In Malaysia" In Isaacson And Kubenstein (ed.) *Islam In Asia*, Changing Political Realities, Transaction Publishers, London, p.129.

¹⁵ Nasr, Vali Reza Seyyed (2001), *Islamic Leviathan Islam And The Making Of State Power*, Oxford University Press, London, p.127.

The institutional development went hand in hand with increase in the Islamic content of radio and television broadcasting ; introduction of requirement of religious knowledge in to civil service examination(19991); creation of an Islamic medical center(1983); plans for Islamic village in urban centers; regulation of sale of alcohol and relations between sexes; increase in censorship of films and publications (1992); imposition of taxes on cigarettes and alcohol to be used to implement an Islamic value system(1992); and an acceleration in mosque building- including grand sate mosques- and use of Islamic architectural concepts in show case projects.

MALAYSIAN WAY OF DEVELOPMENT

After independence, the third world countries had a choice to make. That was; what should be the development model for their country? There were two prominent ideologies and consequently, two paths of economic developments. Either they can choose a socialist path or the capitalist one. It was not an easy choice. Because, often these model of development were based on such premises, which did not take in to concedration the complex problems, related to the third world countries. Remaining on the periphery of the world's development march these countries had been marginalized from a long time.

There are so many thinkers belonging to different schools of thought, who had provided a framework for the modernization and development of society. Like, Hegel, Marx, Spencer, Durkheim, Tonnie, Weber, Lerner, Black, Rustow and a number of other thinkers. Here we can take the

example of developmental model of W. W. Rustow.¹⁶ Rustow identified five economic growths in which,

- 1) A traditional society through
- 2) Technological advances takes off an
- 3) Industrial expansion, which derives it towards
- 4) Maturity, where its output is more than its population increase, and as a result of which it reaches
- 5) The stage of high consumption characterized by durable consumer goods and services.

Rustow's model is concern with the level of production and presupposes the capitalistic transformation of the economy the non-western country. In later book Rustow added the 6th stage, 'the search for quality' to his analysis.¹⁷

In all these western models the modern stage comes when the society crosses the stage of traditionalism. So in modern stage the ' traditional' element of society have no role to play in the mainstream. In the process o development the traditional institutions loses its control over the society and either vanishes or becomes defunct. The change from the traditional to modern society is often equated with the " specific role, different spheres of religion and politics, effective neutrality, different spheres of religion and politics, achievement status,

¹⁶ Rustow, W.W.(1960), *The Stages Of Economic Growth: A Non Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,pp.4-11.

¹⁷ Rustow, W.W.(1971), *Politics And The Stages Of Growth*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.230-266.

universalistic values etc."¹⁸ These ideas are typically rooted in Western history. These ideals of the western world are the results of a long process of evolution. There are certain events, movements and phenomenon, which are responsible for the sanctification of these ideas. As for example, the idea of secularism or simply saying the idea of separating religion from politics is largely a product of the Church-King confrontation and the protestant ethics. The thoughts of modern western philosophers have also played an important role in shaping these ideas.

The colonized countries never experienced such a process. The political and economic developments of these countries were halted by the policies of the colonial powers. So, the natural process of the evolution of institutions got stumbled. Even after independence they faced the problem of time lag in development. There was the kind of stagnation in every aspect of life during colonial times. So, the ideals of society (to be pursued); remained 'traditional' and 'conservative' largely based on the belief systems.

As most of the Islamic countries were colonized by the foreign powers, the same process happened in these countries too. In the Malaysian case, the colonial powers never tried to interfere in the traditional way of living, practices and institutions. They ruled indirectly through the Sultans, who were not only the political head but at the same time has got religious legitimacy to rule. The society, at large remained more or less unaffected by the happenings of the outer world. The traditional practices of life continued; so the

¹⁸ Hussain, Asaf (1984), *Political Perspective On The Muslim World*, Macmillan Press Limited, London, p.XIV.

traditional institutions persisted. The life remained belief centered. The political-economic-religious spheres were not separated. As we have mentioned in our first chapter that the Islam is the 'this worldly religion'. So, it provides a detailed description about the general life to be pursued. A Muslim does not too look for ideal institutions outside its scriptures. So, the Malay society remained religion- centered throughout the colonial period. The ideals of the Islamic society remained very much important.

When the colonial powers left the country; there remained an institution of over developed state; which was not directly linked to the society. The religion or for that matter any traditional social institution was not as important as it could had been through a natural process in the political process. The society by and large was alienated from the state. But the religion was roaring to take the hold of the political process. And the lava of religious unrest erupted in the form of the Islamic revivalism. In Malaysia, Islam is the central point of life process. After resurgence it was used as an ideology against the government's 'secular' ideology. Now, it was a time to rethink about the whole structure and also about the developmental path. The 'secular' model of development was undermining the Islamic ethos and values. And more so it was not according the Quranic principles. The growing movement of Islamic revivalism was calling for adopting Islamic institutions described in religious scriptures. And the most important among them were the economic institutions; which can lead to a true Islamic way of development. The question is, what is the Islamic way of development? What are the economic institutions essential for this type of development? Whether it is more akin to Socialism or Capitalism? There are many views. But largely it

supports private economic activities. Let us see a definition of developed Islamic society.

"The politically developed Islamic society is a lawful society. Rulers and ruled alike are governed by the Sharia, as interpreted and applied by the learned scholars of Islam, the ulema, and the legists, the fuqaha. As a religion of worldly as well as divine concerns, Islam is preoccupied with the regulation man's conduct in accordance with the principles of justice and equality transmitted by the Prophet. Ideally, the political leader of the community is also the spiritual leader, the *Khalifa* (Caliph) or *imam*; and his legitimacy is conferred by the *baya* (confirmation oath) of the leading members of the community."¹⁹

But here we are mainly concerned with the economic aspect of development. The revivalists demanded certain changes in economic structure to make it fit for the Islamic way of development. " Islam, unlike other major religious, has given its followers a detailed prescription for an economic system. This is provided through the *Quran*, the *Sunnah* (the example of the Prophet Mohammed, i.e., his personal acts or sayings, or those of others approved by the Prophet), the *Ijma* (the consensus of the Muslim Mujtahids-religious scholars), and the *Qiyas* (personal opinions based on analogy on religious doctrines). Specifically, questions of taxation, government expenditure, inheritance, private ownership, social and economic welfare (distribution of income, property, etc), interest, land tenure,

¹⁹ Hudson c. Michael (1980) "Islam And Political Development", In Esposito (ed.), *Islam And Development*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, p.3.

natural resources, wage rules, as well as other factors, have received attention, are thus an integral component of Islam."²⁰

Some scholars believe that there is no essential incompatibility between Islamic economic doctrines and capitalism. Even Mahathir has emphasized this point. To appreciate Islamic doctrines on private ownership, which is an essential principle of capitalism, we can mention a brief summary of general Muslim economic principles:

- 1) God created the world with natural abundance for the people to enjoy and change;
- 2) They are, therefore, the owners of all such fruits in the world that results from their endeavors provided they commit no justice or wrong doing;
- 3) They must, however pay attention to the short and long run needs of society at large.

Rodinson has pointed out:" There are religions whose sacred texts discourage economic activity in general, counseling their followers to rely on the God to provide them with their daily bread, or, more particularly, looking askance at any striving for profit. This is certainly not the case with the Koran, which looks with favour upon commercial activity, confining itself to condemning fraudulent practices and requiring abstention from trade during certain religious festivals."²¹ He quotes the Koranic injunction to "forget not thy portion of this world"²² and stresses that the Koran is clear in emphasizing that Muslims should remain of this world.

²⁰ Cummings, Askari And Mustafa(1980), "Islam And Modern Economic Change", In Eoposito (ed.), *Islam And Development*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, p.26.

²¹ Rodinson(1975) *Islam And Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.14.

²² *Sura XXVIII, V.77.*

After leaving business aside for the noonday congregational prayers, Muslims are not enjoined by God to retire for further prayer or meditation, but to return to their secular affairs. We can find in Sunnah, which report the non-scriptural utterances of the Prophet Mohammed, show him praising merchants, certainly not in Islam a parasitic class. Rather, they are people who should enrich themselves so as to be able to help those least fortunate members of the community. However, while Islam may embrace the basic pursuits of capitalism (profit through business activity, financial returns on the investments involving risks, and basic rights for private property), there are critical and important differences between the Islamic teachings and the modern capitalist practice.

In Malaysia the similarities of capitalism and Islamic principles of economic life were used to create a new path of development. This is the path of the Islamic capitalist development. At the one hand after 1982, it actively pursued the capitalistic policies of development and on the other hand proclaimed itself the 'Islamic State'. So, the strategy was the accommodation of the Islamic principles in the modern frame of the capitalism (i.e., export led growth for Malaysia). The key figure in this strategy is, the longest ruling Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammed. Before going into the details of the strategy of corporate Islam, we will take a overview of Mahathir's personal thought about Islam and development in general and for Malaysia in particular. Because his thoughts have a great imprint on Malaysian policies.

The following views of Mahathir Mohammed is largely based on his two books²³ and his statements:

Mahathir starts with saying that: "One of the saddest ironies of recent times is that Islam, the faith that made its followers progressive and powerful, is being invoked to promote retrogression which will bring in its wake weakness and eventual collapse. A force for enlightenment; it is being turned into a rational for narrow-mindedness; an inspiration towards unity, it is being twisted into an instrument of division and destruction. Ignorance of what constitutes spirituality, and failure to see the distinction between materialism and the healthy environment in worldly concern, render some section of the Malay-Muslim community susceptible to the notion that Islam exhort believers to turn their back to the world."²⁴ So the real challenge for Malaysia according to Mahathir is the misinterpretation of Islam.

Writing on the importance of worldly activities and especially economic activities he points out that the prophet himself, paid due attention to worldly activities. The acquisition of wealth and property, the mastery of martial arts and the establishment of well orderd administration were among the important activities in which all Muslim involve them so as to be strong enough to defend spiritual values and Islamic religion. Mahathir said that Islam did not stop personal wealth seeking activities. Wealth is not disapproved of and certainly not forbidden. What Islam want is that is the reach help the poor voluntarily through alms and also though of payment of religious tithes, *Zakat* and *Fitrah*. Islam does not support

²³ Muhammad, Mahitir (1995), *The Challenge*, Selangore Darul Ehsan, Pelanduk Publications and (1994), *Malay Dilemma*, Times Book International, Kuala Lumpur.

²⁴ Muhammad Mahathir (1986), *The Challenge*, Pelanduk Publications , Selangore, Malaysia, p.intr

meanness. Being by reading the Quran on the roadside have no place in Islam, as is evident from following Quranic text:

" And belief in what I reveal (the Quran), which conform the revelation that is with you (the Taurat), and be not the first to reject the faith there in, not exchange (sell) My signs for a low price; and devote yourselves to Me alone."

- (Sarah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 41)

Viewed from this angle, Islam evidently does not hold poverty in high esteem or disapprove of wealth. On the contrary, it puts poorly on moderation in all things. Here Mahathir in way support the capitalism. But at the same time he condemns both socialism and capitalism for its alienation from spirituality and overemphasis on materialism. Finally, he tries to devise a path of capitalist development which do not dismisses the spiritual aspects of life. In a way it is moderation between spiritualism and materialism.

He says that the cruelty of the capitalist and their oppression of the worker should rightfully be condemned by a sane society. But unfortunately capitalist or not only wealthy but powerful as well their wealth can control power. However, the control of capitalism has become more difficult not only because capitalist can use their wealth to gain power but also because the system develop rapidly in non-Muslim societies, which did not emphasize spirituality to begin with. Spirituality had no place and no power to pull those societies back to the right path.

As spirituality was weak, greed for material things was used to try to control capitalism. The communist and socialist concepts, which were

created to fight capitalism, were totally uninfluenced by spirituality and religion: both believe that only the position of property and wealth can be effective in upholding justice and communism and socialism are the same. All three reject spirituality and worship materialism.

Mahathir severely criticized, socialism. He believes that the imbalance in property is no evidence that the problems of human society can be solved through implementation of socialist concept. According to him, equality brotherhood in Islam. Possession of property is not equality in a Muslim society and there is no demand that all Muslims should own property of the same value. Islam accepts the reality that in any society there will be rich and poor, king and commoner leader and follower.

In a staunchly Muslim, society equality and brotherhood do exist. The equality is not in material wealth but in religion. All Muslim, poor or rich, king or commoner, are equal. In worship and in the eyes of the God they are equal. The basis of the brotherhood is not status of property ownership but the spirituality that comes from faith in the teachings of Islam. So, Mahathir leads to the conclusion that Islam and socialism are not the same.

He finds that the western conception of class does not exist in Muslim society. Though there are poor and rich, they all belong to one family. Mahathir points out that today most of the Muslim nations have misunderstood the concept of materialism and spirituality. According to Mahathir, wealth does not mean materialism and poverty does not mean spiritual strength. Materialism can exist in poverty and spirituality can be strong in wealth. Since ownership of property does not mean loss of spirituality, the right attitude for those who uphold spiritual values can be decided. But a Muslim must not forget that worldly wealth is required

only for this world ultimate happiness depends on Ibadat (ritual of worship), adherence to religious teachings, and on how and for what purpose the wealth has been used.

At last Mahathir seems to advocate the capitalist path of development, but with an Islamic face. So he says that there is still hope that spirituality can be preserved even when Muslim seek and gain control of material wealth and modern knowledge. Indeed, only when Muslim are equipped with the tools and skills of the modern world can it be ensure that they continue to uphold the spiritual values which will bring them happiness in this and the next. Without wealth and efficiency, the Muslim will be apprised and finally spiritual values to will be lost.

Mahathir in a way provided a blue print of Islamic capitalist development. On this basis Malaysia has developed a kind of 'Islamic corporatism'. Now we will analyze the strategy adopted by the government to follow an Islamic capitalist model of development.

THE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. "Under the Mahathir premiership, the twin causes of islamization and modernization formed the backbone of the government's political, cultural and economic agenda, remodeled as a national vision intended to steer the whole nation to be a common destiny. The UMNO government's national vision- a combination of modern global elements on the one hand, and conspicuously, Islamic indigenous elements on the other - symbolized Mahathir self ordained mission: to make Malaysia a

developed country not only in economic but also in cultural terms."²⁵

For the purpose of implementing this vision, the first necessary step that Mahathir took was the centralization of political and economic authority under the prime ministers department. " Increasing authoritarianism from the late 1980s onward- couples with the declining independence of the bureaucracy, legislature, judiciary and monarchy- reinforced the predominance of UMNO with in the state as well as in society in large."²⁶

The dramatically enhanced personal authority of Mahathir along side the consolidation of the state power with in the hegemonic UMNO also raised the distributive capacity of the state through concentration of economic resource under the party's control. Moreover, the nations impressive recovery from its worst even recession in the mid-1980s and the subsequent " take off " of industrial development allowed a large number of big and highly visible, national projects to carried out through out the country, these in turn, acted as catalyzed in fostering stronger popular allegiance to the Mahathir's government. "Most importantly, the expanded state religious bureaucracy came to regulate activities or expression in society. These developments consequently equipped Mahathir with enormous political and economic capacity to translate his vision of the nation in to substantive public policy."²⁷

²⁵ Kikue, Hamayotsu(2002)," Islam And Nation Building In Southeast Asia: Malaysia And Indonesiam In Comparative Perspective" *Pacific Affairs*, 75(3).fall, p.359.

²⁶ Crouch, Harold(1992) " Authoritarian Trends, The UMNO Split And The Limits of State Power" In Joel.S.Kahn And Francis Loh Kok Wah(ed.), *Fragmented Vision : Culture And Politics In Contemporary Malaysia*, Allen And Unwin, pp.21-43.

²⁷ Kikue Hamayotsu (2002), "Islam And Nation Building In South East Asia Malaysia And Indonesia In Comparative Perspective", *Pacific Affairs*, 75(3), fall, pp.353-358.

Mahathir rose to the helm in Malaysia at a time of crisis for both the UMNO and the state. The problems churned by the NEP, the resurgent Islam, the lagging growth, straining relations between elite and masses; were the some problems. "Mahathir saw the solution to the crisis in rapid growth and development, which would increase the size of economic pie thus relieving tensions between ethnic communities as well as within the Malay community. This was a task that required greater state control of the economy."²⁸ So, in a way the concentration of the political and economic power was justified. As it was in line with the Mahathir's specified aim to erect strong Malay dominated capitalist state in Malaysia.

Economic development of a country requires a base of political stability and greater social cohesion. Islamic resurgence was not only challenging the state authority but also sometimes threatening the social set up. Mahathir understood the challenge. But at the same time he also saw that Islam, as an ideology can be the potential tool of empowerment of the state. "As a result, he sought to co-opt rather than crush the Islamist opposition; to harness its energies and appropriate its popular political and ideological tools, rather than assert the primacy of the secular state by force. Mahathir understood that Islamism had already created a powerful social base, enjoyed wide popular support, and had convinced many Malays of the importance of the state-albeit an Islamic state-to veritable development. If the Malaysian state was willing to compromise on secularism, it stood to benefit from the fruits of a decayed of Islamist

²⁸ Nasr, V.R.S(2001), *Islamic Leviathan Islam And The Making Of State Power*, Oxford University Press , London , P.106.

activism just as it would subdue it as an oppositional force. For Mahathir, therefore Islamisation was a means to pursue capitalist development."²⁹

To lead the country on the capitalist path of development, it was needed to introduce a greater sense of Malaya-Muslim nationalism in the economy. The lack of the work-culture was a major impediment for the development of the Malaya society. Here, the slogans like 'Look-East' and 'Malaysia Inc.' were raised to enthuse people towards creating a corporate culture. Mahathir through his 'Look East' policy tried to project Japan and Korea as an inspiration to be followed. As the western industrialization was without any spiritual appeal and cultural goal; it was difficult to project west as a model. The Japanese model of development, which was based on the cultural and traditional aspect of society, was well suited for Malaysia. Here culture and belief was not an impediment for modernization rather it was an important medium to create a work culture.

In the same vein, Mahathir tried to use Islam as a vital force, which leads towards an economically developed society. "The dominant Malaya accent on corporate culture seeks to locate an Islamic dimension parallel to the commercial culture of the most economically advanced countries while not reflexively imitating them. It seeks to operate not against the G-7, the core group of hi-tech, industrialized countries, but within that alternative group of nation states, clustered as the G-15, that is South to South countries that have experience rapid growth in recent years and Are now pledged to support one another in trade, commerce and industry even while recognizing there individual common sub-oriented the G-7."³⁰

²⁹ Ibid, pp .106-109..

³⁰ Bruce, D. Lawrence (1998), *Shattering The Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*, Princeton University Press , Princeton , New Jersey,p.159.

Since the late 1980s, "Malaysia has steadily gained recognition as a success story of economic development in the Islamic world, being held as one of the 'Asian Miracle' economies by the World Bank in its 1993 reports. It was also in the 1980s that Malaysia introduced its own Islamic reform agenda."³¹ Subsequently Dr. Mahathir's "Wawasan 2020' (vision 2020) offered a long term comprehensive plan to realize a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient, by the year 2020."³²

In fact, Mahathir was not interested in Islamic revival, a fact that distinguishes him from Gen. Zia Ul-Haq in Pakistan. Mahathir was more in common with secular modernizers such as the Shah in Iran than with the Islamically oriented political leaders in the Middle East and South Asia. This is evident in his vision 2020 document. Here, the drive to empower and enrich the country through development and close alliance with the West, and the belief in the necessity of a top-down social and cultural revolution was accommodated with more sensitive approach to the importance of Islam in Islam and politics. Mahathir was more willing to compromise on secularism to achieve a viable balance between religion and modernization.

³¹Haneef, Mohammad (2001), Islam And The Economic Development In Malaysia- A Reappraisal, In *Journal Of Islamic Studies*, 1:3, Oxford Center For Islamic Studies, Oxford, P.270.

³² Mohammad, Mahathir (1993), "Malaysia: the way forward" in ahmed sarjiamid(ed.) *Malaysia's vision 2020: Under Standing The Concept, Implications And Challenges*, Petaling Jaya, Pelanduk Publications, p.404

"The twin quest of Islamisation -cum- modernization engineered by the Mahathir government thus proposed the new compact between the state and a wider spectrum of the Malaysian populace. Its "authoritarian" mode of modernization indeed intensified socio-economic as well as ideological cleavages and alienated the less privileged Muslim Malays. The sacking and subsequent ill treatment of Anwar in September 1998 further aggravated the anti-government sentiment among both rural and urban Muslim Malays, and called into question the entire credibility of the UMNO government"³³. However, given the difficulty of reconciliation and the pressure exerted by the radical Islamic forces with the task of nation building and economic development, Mahathir's personal contribution toward the development of Malaysia should not be overlooked.

³³ Kikue, Hamayotsu(2002), "Islam And Nation Building In Southeast Asia: Malaysia And Indonesia In comparative Perspective", *Pacific Affairs*, 75(3), fall, p.365.

CHAPTER FIVE

RADICAL ISLAM AND TERRORISM IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia the advocates of moderate liberal Islam and those preaching a conservative Islam joined the battle for the Soul of Islam called 'Resurgence' which started in 1970s. The preachers of conservative Islam talk about strict Islamic code for Muslims everywhere. In the mean time the Mahathir government took the opportunity to show its Islamic credentials. But when the government failed up to live up to the expectations of Islamic ideology; it was very easy for religious resurgence to become radicalized and hijacked by the political extremists.

The problem is that when any religion movement or any government uses religion as a discourse of legitimization; it can take dangerous turns. The problem with Islam in particular is that Islam does not have a clergy, and it is the absence of the clergy which makes it a more democratic religion, but at the same time it also mean that any crackpot can come out from the wood-work and claim that he represents Islam, and Osama Bin Laden is a classic example of that. Now in Malaysia, there are dangers of potential Osamas.

The *dakwah* movement was an important facet of religious resurgence. While movements like ABIM, for a time, Darul Arqam proved politically acceptable, others outside "the mainstream" whose influence has been identified as pervasive, were spreading extremism. "A government survey concluded the presence of approximately 40 such *dakwah* movements in Malaysia with an estimated membership of

30,000. One of the more popular movements, the *Ahmadiyah*, centered in Pakistan, was proscribed by the Malaysian authorities and since 1982, its members stripped of their status in Malaysia. Others within the category of *dakwah songsang* were several Sufi tarekats (brotherhoods) and groups such as the Qadaiis and the *Muhammadiyah Tariquah* which due to their *modus operandi* have been more difficult to trace but have also been proscribed." ¹

In the mainstream political arena there is PAS, which can be distinguished as a 'Fundamentalist' party. Before dealing with the trends and linkages of terrorism and fundamentalism in Malaysia; we pause here to take a conceptual view of these two. Often, fundamentalism, extremism, revival, resurgence, assertion, etc. are used synonymously. But here for our study, fundamentalism is only a facet of the overall Islamic resurgence, which started in 1970s.

Following Bruce B. Lawrence Islamic Fundamentalism, comparatively a new phenomenon, can be defined as, "a kind of ideology formation, affirming the modern world not only by opposing it but also by using its means against its purposes." ²

In the words of Salman Rushdie, "Fundamentalism seeks to bring down a great deal more than buildings. Such people are against, to offer just a brief list, freedom of speech, a multi-party political system, universal adult suffrage, accountable governments, Jews homosexuals, women's

¹ Nair, Shanty (1997), *Islam In Malay Politics*, New York, Routledge, p. 150.

² Bruce B. Lawrence (1987) "Muslim Fundamentalist Movements: Reflections Towards A New Approach" In Barbara Freyer Stowasser(ed.) *The Islamic Impulse*, London, Croom Helm, p. 36.

rights, pluralism secularism, short skirts, domicing, beardlessness, evolution theory, sex."³

Religious Fundamentalism is not a theological system offering a comprehensive, self-consistent integral view of the world and the absolute, scripture, law on so forth. To the extent this is true, Fundamentalists are not exponents of theology but only of ideology- a handmaid of power. It is for this reason that the fundamentalists are mainly upwardly mobile urban transplants from rural settings, with a keen sense of social/cultural/religious disjuncture. Their mobilization requires a strong leadership, particularly of charismatic kind. Now, for us the question is why Islamic fundamentalism is stronger than any other religious fundamentalism? Why the Islamic fundamentalists easily turn to violence and become terrorists?

At least three major explanations could be offered to the first question. First, Islam requires the greatest degree of conformity, regimentation and rigorous observances of rituals on day-to-day basis etc. than other religions. It is collectively oriented religion organized in the church like manner. That Islam is not an individualistic religion may have something do with its amenability to mass "mobilization" in the name of 'jihad' and other religious notions. Second, with or without competition from nationalism, socialism and communism and even capitalism, the fundamentalist ideologies project Islam as the only legitimate force of political and social cohesion, strength, equity and justice. Third, the Islam revivalism and fundamentalism can also be understood as a reaction to a crisis in the modern state.

³ " *Islamic World Must Control Its Ladens: Rushdie*" The Times Of India, New Delhi, 7 october 2001.

Fundamentalism and terrorism are closely related to phenomenon in Islamic Resurgence. If fundamentalism is cognitive ideological phenomenon, terrorism can be considered as the manifest form of fundamentalism, that is "ideology in action". To be more precise, terrorism can be defined as "the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain political or religious ideological goals through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear."⁴

To understand the relation of terrorism and Islam; we first see the views of a highly contested writer scholar; Samuel P. Huntington.⁵ Searching the causes of the violence in and violence by the Islam he puts some arguments:

First, Islam is basically a religion of the sword. It glorifies violence. Here we can cite verse from the Quran.

"Allah loves those who fight for his cause in ranks as if they were a solid cemented edifice." (61:5)

"Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the Hereafter, fight for the cause of Allah; whoever fight for the cause of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, we shall richly reward him." (4:71)

Islam originated among "warring Bedouin nomadic tribes" and this violent origin is stamped in the foundation of Islam. Muhammad himself

⁴ Noam, Chomsky (2001), " The New War Against Terror" *Encounter*, VOL.4, NO. 5, P. 161.

⁵ Huntington, P. Samuel(1996) , *The Clash Of Civilizations And The Remaking Of World Order*, Penguin Books, London.

is remembered as a hard fighter and a skillful military commander. The doctrines of Islam, it is argued, dictate war against unbelievers. The Quran and other statements of Muslim beliefs contain few prohibitions on violence, and a concept of non-violence is absent from Muslim doctrine and practice.

Second, from its origin in Arabia, the spread of Islam across northern Africa and much of the Middle East and later to Central Asia, the Subcontinent, and the Balkans brought Muslims into direct contact with many different peoples, who were conquered and converted, and the legacy of this process remains.

Third, Muslims see world in black and white. For them there are only *Dar-al-Islam* and *Dar-al-Harb*. So, they do not accept others and this breeds violence.

Fourth, a kind of militarism is quite prevalent in Muslim societies. Huntington gives three additional causes in which the most important is, the demographic explosion in Muslim societies and the availability of large numbers of often unemployed males between the ages of fifteen and thirty is a natural source of instability and violence.

However, this is only one side of the coin, the other side being represented by the scholars; who believe that terrorism is not specific to Islam and the other religions also represent terrorism. Here in the Malaysian context, it will be useful to see the views of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad on this aspect.

On January 4, 2002, Mahathir in his speech at Asia society, New York spoke on the topic, 'Islam, Terrorism and Malaysia's Response'. He starts with countering the view, which associates terrorism with Islam. He says that Islam is the religion of peace. But when the Muslims are oppressed, they react violently.

Mahathir asks; why is that the late act of terror seems to be more frequently committed by the Muslims? He says; one, only Muslim terrorists are linked to their religion by the media. There are so many others who do terrorist activities (like Northern Ireland, Tamils, etc.) but they do not get linked to their respective religions. Two, many Muslims are involved in acts of terror simply because presently Muslims and the Islamic countries are being oppressed the most. In fact, terrorism by Muslims is their reaction to what is to them acts of terror against them. Third, if Muslims commit acts of terror, it is because their countries are weak and incapable of fighting back, of waging formal wars on their enemies. Mahathir asserts that the Christian and the Jews have committed more violence than the Muslims and they were being the more intolerant.

However, he is not justifying violence. He finds that the acts of violence are due to deviations from true Islamic teachings. Islam is the religion of peace. For this he cites the example of Malaysia about which he says; we have different groups but we are sensitive towards each other's sensitivities. And if there are some deviationists and extremists we have dealt with them sternly.

TRENDS AND LINKAGES

Having dealt with the patterns of extremism and terrorism; we must now ask how widespread is the threat of extremism and terrorism in Malaysia in particular and South East Asia in general.

According to a survey,⁶ contrary to some perceptions, South East Asia is not a major center of the terrorist activities and terrorist activities has in fact declined over the years. From the period 1984 to 1996, for instance, South East Asia had a total of 186 international terrorist incidents compared to 2,073 attacks in Western Europe, 1,621 in Latin America, 1,292 in West Asia and 362 in Africa.

But one must not overlook the growing signals of the Islamic extremism, which time to time to time to time leads towards violent activities.

"In Malaysia groups that can be called terrorist of the al-Maunah group and the Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM). The formers group leader, Mohammad Amin, was recently convicted and sentenced to death by the Malaysian High Court for cold bloodedly killing the two policemen and waging war against the King. Some of the KMM leaders were arrested under the preventive detention law and police are still investigating its link with al-Qaida."⁷ Although the terrorist activities in Malaysia are not in high proportion, but in recent times it's being alarming. "Malaysia experienced to the incidences of international terrorism in 2000, both perpetrated by the Philippine-based Abu-Syyad

⁶ Wan Ahmed Farid Bin Saleh (2002) " Terrorism In Southwest Asia: How Real Is The Threat?, *The Indonesian Quarterly*, vol. XXX No. 1, pp. 38-43. ⁶ Ibid, pp. 39

⁷ Ibid, pp. 39.

group (ASG). The ASG abducted 21 persons including the 10 foreign tourists, from the Sipadan diving resort in Eastern Malaysia. A suspected ASG faction also kidnapped three Malaysians from a resort on Pardanan Island, in Eastern Malaysia on 10 September. The group released most of the hostages from both the incidences but continued to hold one. The group al-Maunah targeted domestic security forces for the first time in July. Member of the group raided two military armouries in Perak state, about 175 north of Kuala Lumpur, and took four local hostages." ⁸

THE KMM AND THE TERRORIST LINKAGES

The main Malaysian opposition party, Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS), denies that it has any links to terrorist organizations, and there is no evidence that there is an institutional or official relationship to Al Qaeda, or any other international terrorist organization. The late PAS president, Fadzil Mohd Noor, admitted that the PAS had established ties with the Islamic regimes in the Middle East, including Sudan, Iran and Iraq "in the name of Islamic brotherhood". However, PAS has covert linkages through underground and extremist faction that has been linked to Kumpulan Mujaheddin Malaysia (KMM). The KMM advocates jihad and it has passed edicts that American soldiers must be killed because they had repeatedly oppressed Islamic countries.

Zainon Ismail founded the KMM on 12 October 1995. This militant cell has clear links to the Al Qaeda. By the end of 2001, twenty-three KMM members had been detained under Malaysia's Internal Security Act (ISA). Several are senior parties functionaries or provincial religious leaders of

⁸ Sunil Sondhi (2001), *Global Terror*, Sanjay Prakashan, Delhi, p. 127.

PAS. In early 2002, two additional KMM members were detained, bringing the total to twenty-five. The KMM's goals are not limited to just turning Malaysia into an Islamic state. The KMM has the pan-Islamic agenda for Southeast Asia, and it has talked about reviving the notion of a single Islamic state comprising Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, the southern Philippines, and southern Thailand.

"Major linkages exist among activist Muslims in the contemporary world. The movements and organizations of political Islam maintain a variety of connections that have an important impact on their development."⁹ Terrorist organizations and the people too are linked throughout the world. And this linkage is becoming clear day by day. When we say terrorism in Malaysia, it certainly does not confine to its border alone. In case of world over and Southeast Asia in particular the regional aspect of terrorism is very important. Due to the comparatively porous borders, for example, there is a concern that Southeast Asia may serve as the transit point or even a safe heaven for international terrorists. The recent events seem to vindicate this proposition.

Here we will focus on Malaysia and its linkage to its region in the terrorist arena. Probably, the most important terrorist attack after September 11 is the Bali Bomb blast. Imam Samudra, mastermind of the Bali bombing and that of the Christmas Eve church bombings in Indonesia, has his roots in Malaysia. He has Malaysia's permanent resident status and had studied and later taught at a religious school. Al-Tabliyyah Al Islamiyyah Luqmanul Hakiem Madrasah in Ulu Tiram, Johore and later married a Malaysian woman. Questions have been raised,

⁹ Wan Ahmed Farid Bin Wan Saleh (2001), "Terrorism In Southeast Asia: How Real Is The Threat? *The Indonesian Quarterly*, vol. XXX no. 1 , pp.41.

that why the two most notable terrorists of recent times; arrested recently, Imam Samudra and al Nashiri, were en-routed to Malaysia when they were apprehended as reported by the international media.

In another incidence, there were arrests of the members of the Jemmah Islamiyah (JI) in Kuala Lumpur. This arrest became possible only because of the lucky discovery of a video application for funding, sent to Al Qaeda, which was found in Kabul rubble.

One of the dangerous terrorists of the Southeast Asia is Sheikh Abu Bakar Baasyir. He spent four years in the Indonesian jail from 1978 to 1982 for his role in fundamentalist group Komando Jihad. He moved to Malaysia in the mid-1980s before returning to Indonesia after the fall of Suharto in 1998. During Bakar and Hambali's (Nurjuman Riduan) time in Malaysia, Al Qaeda provided finance and training for the militant groups they formed like the JI and the KMM.

Small domestic factions often support the group's operating on a regional basis. The terrorists often look for safe havens and cross the porous borders for their safety. This creates an inextricable link of terrorists' organizations and people in Southeast Asia. They operate on a plane which is already have been made fertile by domestic Islamic groups. In case of Malaysia the organizations like PAS, which has a strong base in Malaysian society (at least in two states) often get linked to the terrorists activities. " on august4 , 2001 police in Kuala Lumpur announced the arrest of ten members of the Malaysian Mujahidden group. The alleged ringleader was Nik Adi Nik Aziz. Son of NIK Aziz nik mat, the soft-spoken spiritual leader of PAS. Seven of ten arrested were also members of PAS. The group reportedly aims to topple the Malaysian government

and establish an Islamic state. Police who reported finding stockpile, assault rifles and grenades contained that the group carried several crimes; a botched bank robbery earlier this year; the assassination of a state assembly man and several bombings in churches and temples."¹⁰

Today, the Islamic party PAS still has much explaining to do if it is to convince the people that its more fervent members would not cross the line between the belief and the extremism.

"In the 20th century, two distinct Muslim political variants emerged. The first is the strict fundamentalist Islam, which disseminates a utopian vision of a global Muslim community (*ummah*). The second is the moderate Islam, which acknowledges the diversity of the *ummah*. In the first, religion triumphs over real politick. In the second, real politick accommodates religion."¹¹ For the vision of *ummah*, the mankind is simply divided into the Muslim and the non-Muslim (*kafir*). This powerful dualism is extended from the society to the territory. The world's geographical landscape is divided into the territory of Islam (*Dar al Islam*) and non-Muslim territory (*Dar al Harb*, literary the territory of war).

In Southeast Asia, the regional extremists group into a Southeast Asian Islamic state unifying Muslims in Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and the southern Philippines has translated this concept of Dar al Islam. For this purpose they call for a jihad. In a post-colonial society when the process of nation building was still not complete, this possessed the major

¹⁰ Elegant, Simon (2001), "Getting Radical" *Time*. Com, sep.10, vol.158, no.10.,kota: baru..

¹¹ Siddique, Sharon(2002), " Religion And Realpolitik In Muslim Southeast Asia", *The Indonesian Quarterly*, vol.XXX, no. 2, p.100.

challenge to the governments of Southeast Asia. Moreover, such visions are not compatible with the ASEAN cooperative arrangements to encourage intra-regional communications, tourism and trade. This incompatibility raises questions about ASEAN's cohesion and the state remains fragile and open to challenge in an era of political instability, economic stagnation and social disruption.

The '*ummah*' of the extremist groups have a territorial dimension. But on the other hand there exists a '*ummah*' which is a global community of the Muslim. This is rather a feeling of 'oneness'; they live in separate countries. "In tandem with the global Islamic revival, care and concern for the plight of Muslim minorities around the world has increasingly drawn the attention of the Muslim governments and movements. For all Malaysian administrations, these issues have constituted significant foreign policy concerns. Unlike its predecessors however, the Mahathir administration has within the context of an expanding Muslim diasporas, had to address the issue more tangibly."¹²

But supporting the Muslim minorities, in other countries, can lead to problems in relations with the other countries. Malaysia's relationship with two of the ASEAN neighbours, Thailand and Philippines- which have significant Muslim minorities that have also posed irredentist problems to their respective central governments- best exemplifies the dilemma and the pressures of registering a religious identity in foreign policy. Nevertheless, the Mahathir administration has made some attempt at squaring domestic public opinion with the regional regime requirements and international Islamic opinion.

¹² Nair, Shanty (1997), *Islam In Malay Olitics*, New York, Routledge, p. 171.

The relationship between the Malaysia and the Thailand Muslim populations centers on a shared identity defined by inextricable link between religion and ethnicity. While the Muslim constitute only 3% of the Thai population, the vast majority is concentrated in the four southern provinces of Satun, Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. Historically the basis for identity for these populations has revolved around their sense of belonging to the former kingdom of Pattani, the Malay "race" and Islam. "While the idiom of Islam and the Islamic revivalism have been significant channels for the expression of the grievances of this community, this should not discount the potential of the religious revivalism as end in itself. The secessionist alternative is, in part strengthened by the proximity of the Thai Muslims to Malaysia, the inherent ties between the two communities and the increasingly supportive policies of the federal Malaysian government towards its own Malay Muslim society that had have a demonstrable effect on the Thai Muslims."¹³

Although the issue of co-religionist minority rights has similarly affected Malaysian-Filipino relations, they are additionally complicated territorial claims. Relations between the two countries in Malaysia's early stage of the independence were marked by such disputes, particularly that over Sabah. For the Mahathir administration, the politicization of the ethnic discontent and the cause for the separatism continued to supply the adjunct problem of Filipino Muslim refugees fleeing into the Sabah.

¹³ Ibid, p. 173.

As in the case of Thailand, the Mahathir administration's policies agenda towards the Muslim community in the Philippines has focused increasingly on the longer terms goals, primarily through economic aid and co-operation as means for obtaining their security. The concept of the East ASEAN Growth Area which include the southern Philippines, the states of East Malaysia, Kalimantan and Sulawesi in Indonesia and Brunei has sought to build towards long term economic development and is perceived as a means by which Malaysia can make active contributions- such as through its expertise and experience in fields such as the Islamic Banking.

In spite of its efforts at distinguishing between forms of aid to the neighbouring Muslim minorities, the Mahathir administration has nevertheless run into difficulties. The problem is that even such indirect attempts at helping to improve their welfare continue inevitably to be perceived as assisting these minorities towards a sense of Islamic separateness and independence. Indeed the development of Islam as a factor in Malaysia's domestic politics has increasingly strained its neighbour's perceptions of its capacity to stem the spillover of such "change" to their respective people. Malaysia self-proclaimed role as an Islamic nation and its prioritization of relations with co-religionists has thus placed the administration in a more delicate position in relation to its Southeast Asian neighbours.

AL QAEDA'S MALAYSIAN NETWORKS

"The terrorist attack of 11 September, 2001 on the United States shocked the world and resulted in a global campaign against the terrorist groups. Southeast Asian states, long considered the "Islamic periphery", owing to

their moderate Islamic stance, pluralism and secularism, were suddenly forced to confront a small but portent terrorist threat in their midst. Culminating in the 12 October 2002 attack on a Balinese resort. Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda had entered the region beginning in the mid-1990s, establishing independent cells and assisting and liaising with indigenous Islamic insurgencies that hitherto were believed to have solely domestic agendas."¹⁴

In the recent time Malaysia is also seen to come under the Al Qaeda's network. The Ramzi Yousef case was always portrayed as a Philippines problem, but this is a naive proposition. The cell leaders made extensive use of the wider Southeast Asian region and, in particular, Malaysia. Malaysia was an alternative base of operations, a transit point, and an important point to establish front companies. Yousef and Wali Khan both fled to Malaysia from Philippines for a reason: they hoped to rely on the existing Al Qaeda network to protect them and facilitate their further travel. In January 2002, the FBI said- though later it retracted- that Malaysia was the key spring board state for Al Qaeda operations, including the 11 September attacks on the United States.

Although, the Malaysian government denies the presence of Al Qaeda in Malaysia, but the number of arrests by the Malaysian authorities during 2002 of the local affiliates of Al Qaeda makes us believe of their presence. In 1998-99, top aides to two of the senior Algerian terrorists, Antar Zouabri and Hassan Hattab, moved to Malaysia. "By virtue of being a predominantly Muslim country, it is relatively easy for Muslim radicals to fit into Malaysian society. As an Islamic banking and financial

¹⁴ Abuza, Zachary (2002), "Tentacles Of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol.24, no.3,(December), p. 427.

center, not to mention having been one of the world's hottest economies during the 1980s and 1990s, Malaysia was a natural place to establish front companies from the Middle East. There are also significant movements of people between the Middle East and Malaysia."¹⁵

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM

For many years, Malaysian authorities publicly downplayed the threat posed by radical Islamists. Much of the reason for this is that the Malaysian government has always portrayed Malaysia as a progressive, modern and tolerant Muslim state. Therefore, the government saw any talk of Islamic radicalism and/or terrorism emanating from the country as an attempt to brand Malaysia (and all Muslims) as extremists- a way argued by the government. In recent times back home, government is cracking on the terrorists and the extremist. Mahathir points out that the Malaysian response to the latest manifestation of terrorism is not only to act against our potential terrorists, but also to define terrorism and terrorists so there is no ambiguity and everyone will be able to fight them. But he warns the United States and its allies about their wrong approach towards Islamic radicalism.

However, the recent arrests of terrorists and extremists have made it very clear that the government is bound to fight terrorism. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmed Badawi has warned about the terrorists in Malaysia. Prime minister Mahathir feels that the Malaysians, who

¹⁵ Bruce C. Lawrence (1998), *Shattering The Myth: Islam Beyond Political Violence*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey. Pp. 157- 185..

brought in Pakistan and then trained in Afghanistan, pose the threat of terrorism in Malaysia.

Malaysia's open support for war against terrorism gained it the appreciation and renewed goodwill of the US administration and congress. Relations between the two countries got strained since the 1998, Anwar incidence. The shared concern about terror thawed the relations and the president bush in Washington received the PM Mahathir last May. They agreed about the need to address the root cause of terrorism.

Malaysia's strong stand against terrorism gained popular support combined with the opposition to US support for Israeli suppression of Palestinians and condemnation of us bombings of Afghanistan and Iraq. The arrest of some PAS activists put the PAS on defensive. However, opposition parties charged that the government was using the pretext of terrorists to get rid of political opponents. By this attitude the government is not getting the support of all parties and all sections of society. So, the government should take parliament, all political parties including opposition, the civil society and all Malaysians in confidence by giving a clear and unvarnished account of the terrorist threat in Malaysia.

TACKLING THE THREAT

'While admittedly in Malaysia, there is a political party that purportedly aspires to establish a so-called Islamic state within the present constitutional framework, generally speaking the demands for moderation

always prevails. The political Islam ala Taliban has no place in the Malaysian political landscape.¹⁶

But the west does not agree with this view, and bush calls Southeast Asia a 'second front'. But some analysts feel that Americans do not truly understand the situation in Southeast Asia. More alarming is the fact that Washington's War appears to have blurred the lines between mainstream and radical politics, in the world of Islam and with it squandered most of the empathy shown by Muslim world after September 11. The war alienated most important moderate political as opposed to radicals. A new realignment is crystallizing in the Muslim world, bringing together a broad spectrum of political forces against the west. Today even in Malaysia, Muslim clerics have urged Muslims to join in jihad to resist the western onslaught against their fellow Muslims. Now one can say that Bin Laden's one of the strategic goals of portraying the struggle with America in religious terms - one between the camps of belief versus the camp of unbelief - and to mobilize the *ummah*, the worldwide Muslim community to his call for jihad is now happening today. And these tendencies have penetrated the Southeast Asian region too.

Today 'the need of the hour is to win the hearts of the Muslim world, that would eventually marginalize the Islamic terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, KMM, or Abu Sayyaf. At the same time other root causes of terrorism in the region must also be addressed. There must be a continuing search for political solutions in areas that involve movement. At last, "how real is the threat of terrorism in Southeast Asia? The short

¹⁶ Soesadro, Hadi(2002), " Southeast Asia And Global Terrorism: Implications On Sstate Security And Human Security", *The Indonesian Quarterly*, VOL. XXX, NO. 1, PP. 32-37

answer to that is at the moment moderation still prevails. Whether this would continue to be so depends on how the region addresses the inherent problems. The threat is capable of being real should the problem be neglected".¹⁷

¹⁷ Wan Ahmed Farid Bin Saleh (2002), " Terrorism In Southeast Asia: How Real Is The Threat?, *The Indonesian Quarterly*, vol. XXX , no. 1, pp. 40-43.

CONCLUSION

What are the ramifications of the Islamic movement in Malaysia? How can it be judged? Has the movement weakened or collapsed? These are some questions that come up in the final analysis. But one cannot see these questions in black and white.

Religion knows no objectivity and any religious movement is both pervasive and multi-dimensional which means that it cannot be measured by any scientific analysis. What are the goals of the Islamic movement in Malaysia? One possible answer could be 'change'! But the meaning of change is vague. There has always been a duel between change and status quo. We cannot contextualize revival in the framework of modern societal change. The notion of change is often accommodated to make the revival more suited to society in general. The Islamic Revivalists wanted to revive the golden age of Islam in Malaysia but what kind of Islam was it? The custom, dresses, food, way of life that the revivalists wanted to impose was not in accordance with Malay traditions. It seems that the Middle Eastern 'centre' of Islam was trying to assert itself on the different 'cultural peripheries of Islam'. The Malay-Muslim culture is not a follow-up of the Middle Eastern Islam. It has its own tradition, roots, myths, beliefs, practices, customs, and modes, which are not in total conformity with the Middle Eastern way. The revivalist movement started in the 1970s, and this was the time when a greater upsurge was going on in the Islamic world. So, the Malaysian populace too became receptive to the revivalist ideas. The perceived threat of modernization and westernization makes them more and more vulnerable to radical Islam. In this process of Islamic resurgence, the Malay-Muslim culture sometimes gets subsided.

The idea of worldwide Islamic brotherhood (*ummah*) seems to have taken firm roots in Malaysian society.

"The Islamization period in Malaysia lasted some two decades beginning in 1979-81 and stretching through 1997. During that time it became entwined with the state leader's project of powers, policymaking and reach into society. Islamization redefined state - society relations and changed the balance of power between the two."¹ With the growing influence and reach of the Islamic movement, the state elite found it easy to depict Islamism as an ideology. "Islamization was not so much a reinvention of the state, but a tool to allow the post colonial state to rise above the limitations before it. The cultural directives of Islamization were real, but its impact on state institutions, law and policymaking did not amount to creating the state *de-novo*. To the contrary, the state during the Islamization period was very much same as before, only now it was masquerading behind an Islamic veneer".²

In a way " Islam has constituted a powerful weapon in the struggle for political supremacy. In the face of intensive intra Malay rivalry, Islam has been used by the Mahathir administration as a continuing source of political legitimacy. The fear of emasculation of Malay power to political divisions within the community in part explains the special concerns of Malaysian leaders over the theme of unity. While each administration since that of the first PM has found the emphasis of this whole imperative, the themes of Malay and of Islamic unity have become fused,

¹ Nasr, Vali Reza Seyyed (2001), *Islamic Leviathan; Islam and the making of state power*, Oxford University Press, p.158.

² *ibid*, pp. 158-160.

in particular (largely as a result of Islamic resurgence under Mahathir administration)."³

The process of Islamization was not limited to the domestic arena. The Mahathir administration in Malaysia from 1981 to the close of the 1990s has promoted an Islamic image of the country over and beyond its predecessors. This has been partly explained by the significantly different context in which the Malaysian state found itself almost after 40 years since its independence. "Beyond the domestic initiatives the Malaysian leadership has sought to cope with resurgence by moving the debate in the arena of foreign relations. The tacit has the advantage of limiting the tensions engendering domestically among non-Malays by the Islamization process, while allowing a Malaysian government to reinforce its credentials. While Malaysia has been an active member of the organization of Islamic conference (OIC) since independence, under Mahathir administration involvement with other Islamic countries was strengthened. In the earlier years of his Prime Minister ship Mahathir was willing to use anti-Zionism as a mobilizing theme. Mahathir has reacted sharply over Islamic concerns. However active in the Islamic movement, the Mahathir government remained cautious toward the more radical Muslim regimes; Libya, Syria, and above all the Islamic republic of Iran"⁴

Malaysia has experienced a more active record in terms of political Islam and has been subject to the growth of overtly radical elements for the last

³ Nair, Shanti (1997), *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, New York, Routledge, p.270.

⁴ Cameroux, David (1996), "State responses to Islamic resurgence in Malaysia: Accomodation, Co-option, and Confrontation", *Asian Survey*, Volumie XXXVI, No. 9, (September), pp. 864-867.

two decades. In the wake of the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis and the trial of former deputy PM Anwar Ibrahim, the major challenge today to the ruling UMNO is the radical agenda of the opposition party PAS. PAS has a radical platform, the basis of which is the creation of an Islamic state and since the Anwar trial it has been able to attract thousands of UNMO members. The mainstay of Islamic movements was the *dakwah* activities, which came into prominence in the 1970s. One consequence of the *dakwah* movement, Islam came to be highlighted as a pillar of Malay Muslim identity. Today the effects of *dakwah* activities can be seen easily in Malaysian society. The two most affected groups are women and students. In Islamic societies women are always seen as the first symbol of the Islamic way of life. Being a passive receiver of the Islamic revivalist ideas women become a showpiece of Islamic reassertion. On the other hand, students are the most active group of people in the process of Islamic movement. The role of students and student organizations in the movement in Malaysia has once again vindicated the proposition that in south East Asia students are very active component in societal change. The activities of student organizations such as ABIM for sometime in 1980s had overpowered even the political parties. There is a range of other organizations involved in the process of Islamic assertion. Some are moderates and some are extremists. The government has tried to curb down extremist activities (As it banned *darul arquam*). But these organizations have already made deep inroads in the society and they have a good number of followers. The problem is that there exists a very thin dividing line between extremists and jihadis and at grassroots level they have started causing disturbances. One such group is *al-maunah* (brotherhood of inner power). It wants to establish an Islamic state. "In June 2001, nine members of another small group were arrested under suspicion of planning to wage holy war to bring fundamentalist Islam to

Malaysia - several members admitted to having fought in Afghanistan and on Indonesia's Ambon Island in the name of jihad. Having watched Islamic extremism spiral in neighbouring Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysian authorities have been particularly afraid of groups that have had contacts with religious extremism in the Middle East."⁵ Taking these facts into account, Malaysian authorities have dealt very strongly with the Islamic extremists.

Malaysia in a way shows that it is possible to be both Muslim and modern; to be pro development and outward looking. Malaysia also shows how a society that is significantly Islamic can accommodate other beliefs and ideas. It reminds us that the basic tenets of Islam when stripped of Arab tribalism and politic included peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect. In last twenty years, Mahathir has been the pivot around which all issues in Malaysia revolves. He has tried to use the forces generated by the resurgence for the development of the Malaysian state. It could be pointed out that the Islamization under Mahathir has meant the defense of the *ummah*. The Muslim community has been modified in such a way as to make it more acceptable to all Malaysians. In this process he has not only built up the government potentials but strengthened his own stature too. Now when Mahathir has announced his retirement the big question is what next? How will the politico-socio-economic situation react in the absence of the pivot? But analysts feel that the leader-in-waiting Abdullah Badawi is confident, experienced, assertive, and above all ready to take the big challenge.

⁵ Barton Greg (2002), "Islam, Society, Politics, and change in Malaysia" in Isaacson and Rubenstein (eds.) *Islam in Asia*, Transaction Publishers, London, p.159.

Badawi has in a recent interview said; " the extremist clearly represent a threat to our way of life- 'the Malaysian way of life'. We will put it to the Malaysian people to decide what way of life they want to choose. I am confident the majority pf Malaysians will continue to choose a political leadership that upholds the virtues of tolerance, pluralist, modernity, and moderation."⁶

Badawi in a way seems confident to tackle the problem of Islamic extremism and terrorism. But it's not going to be a cakewalk for him. There are fears about Abdullah's strength and resolve in the face of daunting problems. And especially the huge shoes he needs to fill after Mahathir' s departure is a great challenge for him. There are fears of comparison with Anwar too. Whether the long bureaucratic and political experience of Abdullah will be a useful tool for him to face these challenges is a matter in the womb of the future.

From political to social to economic almost every aspect of life in Malaysia has to be pervasive effects of Islamic movement. But it would be rather harsh to say that the resurgence has overpowered the unique Malay way of life.

In religious field too, there have been changes. Some new actors have come to the field and some new institutions have evolved. On the other hand though the' older ones have persisted but not without a diminishing reach and influence. In the rural areas the effects of assertion may seem rather weak but it would be wrong to deny its penetration. But it's the economic field where the concept of Islamic ideology has been widely used. The government has developed a unique way of Islamic capitalist

⁶ *Far East Economic Review*, September 5,2002, Review Publishing Committee Ltd., Hong-kong.

development model. Interestingly today, this model is not only widely accepted in Malaysia, but also seen as a future model for other modern Muslim nations.

Whether Malaysia can maintain its unique way of development and its native Muslim Malay culture against the onslaught of both the western and Middle Eastern influences is the most important question. If certain negative trends are not checked, for example, allowing *ulama* to gain power, if Malaysia becomes more exposed ideas of countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, if it creates a more and more conservative society, a more de-politicized society then the prospects for having a working healthy democracy will diminish naturally. And this will go against the Muslim Malay ethos. So Malaysia should take care that the Malay Muslim culture should not get submerged in the Muslim civilization by the fallouts of resurgence and assertion; and it must maintain its autonomous identity. That is, a Malaysia in which in even a non-Muslim, non-Malay can say that yes! ' We are fortunate to live in Malaysia'.

GLOSSARY

adat	tradition or custom
Allah	the Arabic name for god used by all Muslims
ayatollah	(Persian), literally reflection of symbol of god: used specifically to refer to Iranian religious leader
bangsa	race or nation
bumiputera	“sons of the earth”: official term referring to ethnic Malay and other indigenous peoples
ceramah	talk usually delivered by religious leaders, used in Malaysia in contemporary context to include informal lecture by non-religious persons
dakwah	refers to the Muslim missionary activity, which in the Malaysian sense also serves as a generic term for Muslim youth and missionary organizations
dar al-harb	the non Muslim world, lands in which Muslim institutions do not prevail literally “house of war”
dar al-islam	the Muslim world, lands under Muslim rule or lands in which Muslim institutions are maintained; literally “house of Islam”
datuk	highest honorific title given by the ruler or sultan of a state in Malaysia
fatwa	religious ruling or legal opinion, usually the expertise of the ulama, and considered legally binding on the Muslims
hadith	tradition or record of action or sayings of the prophet. One of the four roots of Islamic law
halal	that which is (religiously) permissible
haram	that which is forbidden
ijithad	individual reasoning or judgment to establish a legal ruling by creative interpretation of the existing body of law
ijma	consensus (of the ulama): the collective opinion of those learned in the law; a major source of Islamic law

kafir	infidel or unbeliever
kaum muda	younger generation: refers in Malaysian political history to reformist ulama
kaum tua	older generation; traditional ulama
kaum	ethnic community
madarasah	seminary or academy for Muslim learning
masyarkat	community or society
mesyuarat	discussion or consultation
muhammad	the prophet or messenger of god who received god's word as contained in the quran
quran	the book of "recitations" of the word of god as revealed to the prophet Muhammad
rakyat	citizens or "the people"
shariah life	divinely ordained law of islam which governs all aspects of Muslim's life
shi'ia	those who uphold the rights of Ali and his descendents to leadership of the umma
shura	consultation or consensus
sufi	follower of Sufism , the Islamic mystical path
sunnah	custom sanctioned by tradition particularly of the prophet enshrined in hadith
sunni	those who uphold customs based on the practice and the authority of the prophet and his companions as distinct from the shi'ites
tarekat	Sufi brotherhood
ulama	learned religious authority
umma	the religious political community of islam
ustaz	a religious teacher
zakat	alms giving; one of the five pillars of islam

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