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**THE THREAT OF TERRORISM: A CASE STUDY OF ISIS  
IDEOLOGY IN MALAYSIA (2014 – 2019)**



**MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
UNIVERSITY UTARA MALAYSIA**

**THE THREAT OF TERRORISM: A CASE STUDY OF ISIS  
IDEOLOGY IN MALAYSIA (2014-2019)**



**A thesis submitted to the  
Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government  
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in fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts in International Relations**



Kolej Undang-Undang, Kerajaan dan Pengajian Antarabangsa  
(College of Law, Government and International Studies)  
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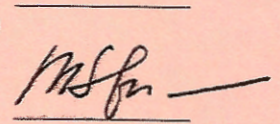
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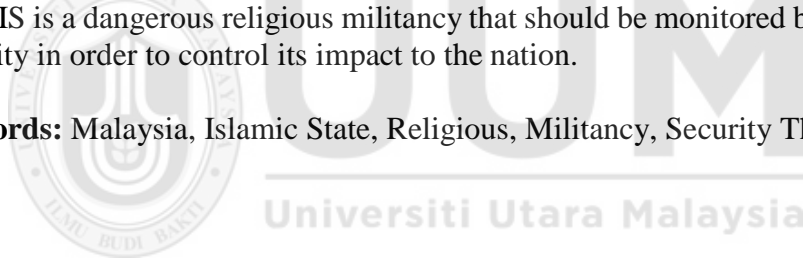


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## ABSTRACT

This research paper discusses the renowned radical Islamic group known as the Islamic State (IS) that is centered in Syria and Iraq, or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). They have now become a global terror network, and it has become stronger ever since the group managed to garner close ties among other members around the world, especially in the Southeast Asia region. Consequently, this has led to the perception that the region is now the center for terrorism and potentially poses a threat to the world. As ISIS goes globally, Malaysia is not spared from experiencing threat from the militant group. Till September 2019, at least 102 Malaysians are known to have left the country to live in ISIS territory. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors that may have contributed to the reasons of the rising involvement of the Malaysian in ISIS. The study's findings found that the vulnerable Malaysian tend to be attracted to the ISIS affiliated group due to its ideology, identity crisis problem, and several personal internal factors. The results indicated that despite the small number of Malaysians who were involved with the terrorist group, (and was actually fewer compared to the other Southeast Asian countries), the Malaysian level of commitment was high and the bond that they had inevitably forged was strong and difficult to break. This situation poses threat to the national security and the multi-cultural community in Malaysia. During the study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the field expertise. These data were then analyzed qualitatively. The study concluded that ISIS is a dangerous religious militancy that should be monitored by the Malaysian authority in order to control its impact to the nation.

**Keywords:** Malaysia, Islamic State, Religious, Militancy, Security Threat.



## ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini membincangkan tentang kumpulan Islam radikal terkenal yang dikenali sebagai Negara Islam atau Islamic State (IS) yang berpusat di Syria dan Iraq, atau Negara Islam di Iraq dan Syria (ISIS). Kini, kumpulan ini menjadi rangkaian penganas global, dan semakin kuat sejak kumpulan itu berjaya menjalinkan hubungan rapat antara ahli-ahli lain di seluruh dunia, terutama di rantau Asia Tenggara. Akibatnya, hal ini telah membawa kepada persepsi bahawa rantau ini kini menjadi pusat keganasan dan berpotensi menimbulkan ancaman kepada dunia. ISIS semakin berpengaruh di seluruh dunia, dan Malaysia tidak terlepas daripada ancaman mereka. Sehingga September 2019, kira-kira 102 rakyat Malaysia telah berhijrah ke negara ISIS. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik faktor-faktor yang mungkin menyumbang kepada sebab-sebab peningkatan keterlibatan golongan belia dengan ISIS. Penemuan kajian mendapati bahawa golongan belia yang lemah di Malaysia mudah cenderung kepada kumpulan gabungan ISIS disebabkan oleh ideologinya, krisis identiti mereka, dan beberapa faktor dalaman. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa walaupun hanya sebilangan kecil rakyat Malaysia yang terlibat dengan kumpulan penganas, (dan sebenarnya agak kurang berbanding dengan negara-negara Asia Tenggara yang lain), tahap komitmen rakyat Malaysia adalah tinggi, dan ikatan yang telah terjalin sesama mereka amat teguh dan sukar dipecahbelahkan. Keadaan ini menimbulkan ancaman kepada keselamatan negara dan masyarakat yang berbilang budaya di Malaysia. Kajian telah dibuat melalui temu bual mendalam separa struktur dengan ahli-ahli pakar bidang. Data ini kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif. Kajian menyimpulkan bahawa ISIS adalah militan agama yang berbahaya dan harus dipantau oleh pihak berkuasa Malaysia untuk mengawal impaknya kepada negara.

**Kata kunci:** Malaysia, Negara Islam, Keagamaan Militan, Ancaman Keselamatan.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
<b>KN</b>	Katibah Nusantara
<b>KMM</b>	Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia
<b>JI</b>	Jemaah Islamiah
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>AQI</b>	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
<b>PAS</b>	Pan Malaysian Islamic Party
<b>SOSMA</b>	The Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012
<b>POTA</b>	The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015
<b>POCA</b>	The Prevention of Crime Act 1959
<b>SMATA</b>	Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries 2015
<b>Prof</b>	Professor
<b>OPAC</b>	Online Public Access Catalog
<b>UUM</b>	University Utara Malaysia
<b>USM</b>	University Sains Malaysia
<b>PHD</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>ISIL</b>	Islamic State in Iran and the Levant
<b>ISI</b>	Islamic State of Iraq
<b>US</b>	United State of America
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Religious terrorism has been said to be one of the factors that supports political violence in this era of modernization. The current terrorists' environment has led to religion ideologist compared to past ideologies that have promoted class conflict, anticolonial liberation, and secular nationalism. Global community also has their focus on the religious extremism as it has increased its number, scale of cruelty and global reach (Martin, 2006, p. 10).

The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 on American soil has drawn concern among various stakeholders such as the decision makers, media, academia, and the public towards religious-based terrorism. These acts have made the public realize of the important in dealing with terrorism not only within their country, but worldwide. The September 11 attack has also made Southeast Asia countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia under close monitoring of United States due to radical Islamist and terrorist groups. It is being alleged that Southeast Asia has become a base for terrorist operation (Vaughn, 2009, p.8).

As a moderate Muslim country with multiethnic population, Malaysia to a great extend has managed to spare from any major terrorism incidence since the signing of the peace agreement with the Malayan Communist Party after World War II. However, the fact

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