MUSLIM WORLD IN ENCOUNTERING THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak
Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef
Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri

ABSTRACT

Extremism and terrorism are not new phenomena that humanity has to deal with. They have been there in the history of mankind ever since the human population started to increase on this planet. In the past, there have been despotic leaders, individuals, and groups of people who used extremism and terrorism as a means to exterminate others in order to hold onto power and exert their dominance. The researchers of this small-scale qualitative study had critically analyzed what is happening to the Muslims and what needs to be done in encountering the challenges of global extremism and terrorism. The researchers took a non-partisan stand in analyzing objectively terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack that shocked the US and the world at large. The crux of the discussion in this research was centered around on the issues as to why western media take a double standard in reporting terror attacks around the globe, why the oppressed and displaced people of the world resort to terrorism, are terrorists born or made, what lessons can be learned by countries that are faced with terror attacks and racial tensions from role-model countries that are successful in maintaining peace and harmony within their diverse population. Besides discussing the main issues, the researchers have put forward their idealism for world peace and on how the world should stand united in combatting the alarming rate of extremism and terror attacks that happen all over the world today. Data pertinent to the research were collected from print and internet sources and later analyzed by using the textual-analysis method. The findings of this research have brought to light that extremism and terrorism cannot be eliminated by simply using brute force and bombing campaigns. Countries embroiled with terror attacks need to study objectively the underlying factors that trigger extremism and terrorism.

Keywords: Muslim World, Encountering, Challenges, Global, Extremism, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

In a world so divided on the issues on extremism and terrorism; there are voices heard in the West that solely blame the Muslim world for all the violence and tragedy experienced by humanity. Moreover, they believe that the Muslims are the ones who are calling for war and jihad while the rest of humanity cries for peace and harmony. Conversely, in the Muslim world we have many who believe that the West is responsible for all acts of violence and terror that one sees in the world; be it in the past or present. To them, colonization in the past and later foreign intervention and meddling in the internal affairs in the Muslim countries by Western super powers have been seen as the root causes. Muslims living in the conflict zones of the world believe that, if the Muslim lands are left alone, people in those countries would live peacefully without resorting to any arm conflict. Taking the middle ground, this research intends to explore objectively the issues on extremism and terrorism without siding the West or the Muslim World. With the conviction that extremism and terrorism have been there all throughout the human history, the researchers would like to explore some of the underlying factors that have contributed to global terror attacks in the last few decades or more. Central to its discussion, the paper will explore how the Muslim world should respond to the eradication of global extremism and terrorism, why the Muslim community is blamed by the western media when it comes to terror attacks; is there a reason for this, what happened in the aftermath of 9/11, are terrorists born or made, the condition in the Middle East and the new realities in the Muslim world, some of the success stories from role-model countries that can be emulated by countries that face terror attacks and racial tensions (Ahmed,2006;Hassan,2011). In the last part of the paper, the researcher would like to articulate their idealism for world peace and how the whole world should come together collectively in finding an amicable solution to extremism and terrorism. By doing so, they believe that the world would become a safe place for humanity to live in peace and harmony.

Extremism & Terrorism

Extremism is not a new phenomenon all together. It has been there in the history of mankind, from ancient to the present age of globalization. It is an age-old problem that repeats again and again. When criticized and condemned by the world, it disappears for a while and comes back again. The definition on extremism provided by an online dictionary refers to the following:

1. a tendency to go to extremes or an instance of going to extremes, especially in politics.
2. the condition or act of taking an extreme view.
3. the taking of extreme action.
4. any political theory favoring immoderate uncompromising policies (The Free Dictionary, 2017).

Extremism manifests in many ways and forms; in actions, words, religious belief, political ideology, mental attitude, etc. Human history has registered the existence of many individuals and regimes that practiced extremism, brutality, oppression and suppression on their subjects and others that oppose them. There are many reported cases of oppression on others attributed to none other than the feeling of hatred, racism, prejudice and ideological dogmatism. Terror attacks perpetrated by religious fanatics are also a form of extremism. Classic examples of extremist racism in the past can be seen clearly from what was done by Pharaoh

the King of Egypt to the Jews during the time of Moses, and in the last century by Hitler of Germany. Brutal suppression and persecution of forces not acquiescing to Leninists and Marxists ideologies during the hegemony of Soviet Union and its proxy communist states some other examples of ideological extremism of recent human history not to mention the current internment of camps for forced proselytization of minority Muslims towards atheistic ideology by communist regime of China. To some extent Muslims too like the Jews, have undergone persecution in many parts of the world. The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina were persecuted by the Serbs in the early 90's, Palestinian for the last 60 years, in recent times in Chechnya, Myanmar, etc. Analyzing from the psychological viewpoint, tyrant and extreme leaders always felt that they are powerful and strong. It seems those tyrants hold on to the philosophy "My way or no way", "Might is Right", etc. In the last one hundred years, the world had seen many extreme leaders that appeared and vanished in Europe, Asia and Africa (Ahmed, 2006). History categorized them as dictators or despotic leaders for the cruelty they have done to their subjects. Pol pot (1925-1998), Vladimir Lenin 1870-1924), Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), Joseph Stalin 1878-1953), Idi Amin Dade (1925-2003), Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976) and Slobodan Milosevic (1941-2006) to name a few. On the other hand, terrorism is more physical than anything else. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, terrorism can be referred to:

1. The use of violent acts to frighten the people in an area as a way of trying to achieve a political goal.
2. The unlawful use or threat of violence especially against the state or the public as a politically motivated means of attack or coercion.
3. Violent and intimidating gang activity (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Ibn Ubaayah defines terrorisms as a kind of destructive behavior which involves the use of violence to create havoc, kill the innocent and destroy physical structures for political reason (2015). Since extremism and terrorism carry negative connotations, a worst-case scenario will be for someone or a community to experience or live in an environment where the two are rampantly carried out.

Causes of Extremism & Terrorism

There are many contributing factors towards the many reported cases of extremism and terrorism in the media. What follows below is a discussion on some of the common factors that trigger acts of extremism and terrorism:

Superior Feeling towards One's Race

There exists a possibility for one to behave in an extreme manner due to the overflowing love one has for his/her race. Such people always think that their race is somehow superior to others. Such a feeling can cause a certain race to behave in an arrogant and unjust manner towards others living in a particular country. History provides ample of evidence of how wars, acts of violence, terror imposed on other minorities living in a country (Sri Lanka as an example towards the end of 20th century).

Misinterpretation of Religious Texts

Religious zealots who failed to understand the true spirit of their religious texts can sometime act in a violent and unexpected manner. Reading without taking into consideration of the contextual meaning can lead to an erroneous interpretation. There are spiritual and religious teachers who misguide their followers to do wrong things like killing of others, planting a bomb in a public place that can cause the lives of the innocent civilians. Some even go to the extent of asking their followers to kill themselves as redemption of getting an eternal bliss in the hereafter. To single out any religion in particular will be unfair as misguided teachers are there in all religions (Al-Qaradawi, 1991).

Long Period of Oppression

The psychological and emotional pain experienced by people who undergo long period of persecution, oppression and subjugation can in a way cause the victims to act in a violent manner. A revenge of a same manner or a more severe one is most likely to happen if the victim is an innocent party who had been subjected to torture and inhumane treatment. In most cases, the revenge is carried out by the survivors, fellow countrymen, but in some by the children of the torture victims. Since revenge of this nature is repeated over and over again in the human history, they have a saying that goes "terror breeds terror". The Hindus and Buddhists call it the law of Karma. While in English, they say "what goes around, comes around" In many religious texts there are stories of revenge and triumph of the oppressed and downtrodden (Hassan, 2011).

Western Media's Double Standard'

When it comes to reporting acts of violence and terror, Western media takes a bias stand. Whenever a terror attack was committed by a Muslim, it implicates the Muslim action to his/her religion which is Islam. Furthermore, he or she is referred to as Muslim terrorist, fundamentalist and many other obscure names. As if the message of the Qur'an promotes acts of violence and the killing of innocent people. On the contrary, when it was done by other than a Muslim, the terrorist is labelled as a psychopath who needs medical attention and rehabilitation. A non-Muslim terrorist is not mentioned alongside with his/her religious affiliation. Western media never report a non-Muslim terrorist as Christian-terrorist, Hindu-terrorist, Jewish-terrorist, Buddhist-terrorist, etc. What is not well-known to the West and western media is that, Islam is not a religion that promotes violence, racism, prejudice and killing of the innocents. Quite contrary to the mainstream media reports in the West, Islam promotes a peaceful co-existence of the Muslims with others and nature. The teachings of the Qur'an call for the respect for human rights and dignity. There is no compulsion on non-Muslims to follow its religious teachings. The coming into Islam by non-Muslims should be a well-

contemplated personal choice. All human beings are equal in the sight of God; expect those who show high level of piety. Though Muslims are not encouraged to start a war, but they are permitted to defend themselves when war is imposed on them (Hassan, 2011). Below here are some references from the Qur'an to support the preceding idealism of Islam:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion; as truth stands out clearly from error..." Surah Al-Baqarah: [2:256]

"if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind…"Surah Al-Ma'idah [5:32]

You follow your religion and I follow mine. Surah Al-Kafirun [109:6]

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). Al-Hujurat [49:13]

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors. Al-Baqarah [2:190]

Western media has the tendency to paint an ugly picture of Islam and the Prophet of Islam when an act of terror was committed by a Muslim. But the truth of the matter is; we have extreme people in all religious groups of the world. As such, it will be unfair to just zoom in on Islam and the Muslims. It is important for Western media to take note that, a terrorist who belongs to the Muslim faith do not represent the true teachings of Islam mentioned in Qur'an and Sunnah. The vast majority of the Muslims who are peace loving people should be rightly called as the true representatives or ambassadors of Islam and not a small group of terrorists. Having made this point clear, the researchers call upon all people of the world regardless of their religious affiliation must join force to combat terrorism, extremism, racism, etc. By doing so we can preserve the human race from annihilation, and able to create a better world where peace and harmony will prevail (Ahmed, 2006; Hassan, 2011).

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Islam being a comprehensive code of law, ethics, belief system and political rules, sanctions war by way of self-defense when the existence of the Muslim community and its ideology come under direct brutal attack of extermination by brute powers but within restrictively defined ethico-legal parameters which is totally different from what pathological mind commits in the name of Islam.

The Aftermath of 9/11

Ever since 9/11, the world has witnessed an increase in the number of terror attacks that happened around the world. Hours after the United States of America was attacked, the then Bush administration unequivocally claimed that the perpetrators were Muslims of Middle Eastern origin. Years after the attacks, there were movements within the US, better known as Reopen 9/11 that disputed the findings of the investigation as to who was really responsible for the terror attacks. According to the movement, the real people behind this terror attacks are not Muslims but people within the Bush administration. The debate on who really carried out the attacks is still an on-going thing. Till today, no one can exactly say who are the culprits involved in those attacks. It is an undeniable fact that the aftermath of the attacks, gave America an excuse to go on a rampage attacking those countries in the Muslim world that provided the safe haven for the so called Western conceptualized terrorists. Whether true or false, the Bush administration with its suspicious claim went on with its war campaign to countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. America's slogan for the war against the terrorists was 'war on terror'. Later America's allies in Europe also joined the rampage of war which not only targeted the terrorists but also some selected Arab leaders. The escalation of war in the Middle East also brought changes in their slogan, from 'war on terror' to 'regime change' and 'Arab Spring'.

Over in America and Europe, after the 9/11 incident, migrant Muslim population living there came under severe hate campaign directed against them for upholding their Muslim identity. The white supremacist group in the West took all opportunity to publicly hurl insult to the Muslims for their look, attire, culture and the religion they practice. Presently many mosques in western countries come under arson attack. Ever since 9/11, western countries started to look at every Muslim migrant and tourist who travelled to their countries as a 'potential terrorist'. Fear and suspicion drove the local authorities in those countries to treat Muslims in an unfair manner. The worst inhumane torture and interrogation experienced by the Muslim suspects was in the US. They were detained without trial at the Guantánamo Bay detention center. Over in this center, detainees were not only physically and psychological tortured, but deprived of their basic human rights. On the one hand, this ill treatment of some innocent Muslims in America and Europe angered the Muslim world. On the other hand, it created new wave of terror attacks in America and Europe (Hassan, 2011; Ahmed, 2006).

Terrorists Are Not Born

With regard to the creation of Man, Christians believe that he was created in the "image of God", while Muslims believe that Man was given the "primordial nature" *(Fitrah)* long before he was born into this world. An in-depth analysis of the two concepts boil down to one thing in common, that Man is good by his nature. Man only becomes bad and evil because of the environment, upbringing and orientation towards life. Based on the concept that Man is born good, we can comfortably say at this point that a "terrorist/extremist is not born but made". Indoctrination, torture, suppression, oppression, bullying and all other forms of mind

conditioning can change an individual who enjoys good mental health into a pervert, aggressor, psychopath, extremist, terrorist, etc. Besides that, people who have been robbed of their country, land or displaced from their homeland would perhaps try to take back by any means. There is a possibility that this sort of people too would resort to violence. The world would call them 'terrorists' but in their own understanding they assume themselves as 'freedom fighters'. Their own people will glorify them as a "National Heroes", while the occupying forces will label them as terrorists. It is very hard to say who is right and who is wrong. But one thing is for sure wrong, if the army or paramilitary instead of going after the suspects who are involved in the conflict, goes on a rampage terrorizing the lives of the innocents; the non-combatant ordinary civilians like children, women, the incapacitated and peace loving religious people who dedicate their lives to God and humanity. In Islam, when war is imposed on the Muslims, the army should not do any harm to these groups of people, the environment and natural resources. But in the West, such consideration is missing when there is a war situation. They unscrupulously drop the bombs on the civilians and justify the act as collateral damage. Humanity has to ponder that lives that are lost can never be brought back again. As such, in any conflict we should respect and protect the lives of the innocents (Al-Zandani, 2009). To reciprocate such a veiled murder of the non-combatants in the name of collateral damage by the powerful world war making nations, the insurgency against them also consider rampaging on civilian population and facilities as collaterals. Accordingly, contemporary wars where both sides claim legitimacy for their violence against vast majority who consist of non-combatants ultimately takes it high tolls on the innocent victims, which in turn can become one of the main root causes for extremism who are prone to commit acts of terrorism, thus sustaining the vicious cycle of violence to continue *ad infinitum* especially in the war-torn countries (Ahmed, 2006).

The Middle East

Long before the coming of Islam to this region, the superpowers of that time like Rome and Persia were not interested to rule Arabia because the people were uncivilized and unruly. To rule them would be a total liability. This negative image of the Arabs and Arabia changed with the coming of Islam and the Qur'anic revelation from God. The message of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet of Islam transformed the lives of the Arabs into one of the most civilized communities in the world at that time. Muslims created a great civilization and became pioneers in many disciplines of knowledge (El-Affendi, 2010). Muslim scholars became great authorities in the areas of medicine, philosophy, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, botany, physical and social sciences. The booming scientific research and exploration works that took place in the many centers in the Middle East even attracted Europeans to learn from the Muslims (Nasr, 1984).

During the Golden Age of Islam (750-1258), Muslims were in the forefront in conquering knowledge through scientific research, exploration and expeditions. This scenario in the Muslim world changed with the fall of Baghdad 1258. This era is very important to remember in the Muslim annals as it marked the decline of Islamic civilization and intellectualism. The fall of Baghdad created a chain reaction, as it triggered the fall of the Islamic empires, one after another. This tragic condition left the Muslim in a pathetic condition, hardly able to regain the prestigious position they once held on the world stage. The era between the fall of Baghdad and the European colonization of Muslim lands in the 18th and 19th centuries kept the Muslim scholars occupied in their own polemic in the area of Islamic jurisprudence. In addition to this, they were also busy bickering and discrediting one another. The internal conflicts within the Ummah also to a certain extent prevented the Muslims from making any significant contribution towards scientific discovery and invention of new technology. The disagreement between Muslim scholars hindered them from moving forward in their political and social life (Abdul Razak, 2011, 2015).

Presently, in the midst of the ongoing debate as to whether the discovery of oil in the Middle East is a blessing or a curse, history has lucidly demonstrated that oil has invited the presence of the European colonial powers to the Arab world, which was once the most shunned region of the world. In the past, they colonized and usurped the wealth of the countries in the Middle East, but after giving independence they still went back to control the wealth that comes along with the oil and gas revenues. Ever since the discovery of oil, this region of the world has hardly seen any peace. Though oil brought prosperity to the lives of those who were once called the wanderers of the desert, but it has also brought many permanent problems for the Arabs to deal with. Many wars had taken place in the Arab world mainly due to territorial dispute and over the control of the oil wells. In these wars, leaders are either killed or eliminated in a pathetic manner, infrastructure of the countries have been destroyed, and innocent civilian lives are lost. People who fought for their independence and sovereignty of their countries are labelled by the foreign occupying forces as "terrorists". A reader into the history of Middle East will agree that unlawful killing and bombing of the civilians by foreign occupying forces have caused huge problems for the Arab Muslims. In a way, the indiscriminate killing of the innocent population has triggered the increase in terror activities in the Middle East. Some enraged people who have lost their family members and all that they owned have taken the battlefield to the countries of the occupying forces in the West by conducting terror activities there. Psychologically speaking, people who experienced the trauma of war and grief will most likely lose one's ability to think and act consciously and conscientiously. It can be clearly stated here that terrorists of this nature are people who do not think rationally anymore due to the overwhelming pain and suffering they go through after losing their near and dear ones (Hiro, 1989; Hosein, 2011).

The researchers believe that it is about time America and the West must understand the new realities of the day, that colonization or neocolonialism of the East is no longer possible. With the latest communication tools (Facebook, Smartphone, Twitter, etc.) in the hands of the masses, they are well informed of all the deceits and conspiracies of the foreign occupying forces. Furthermore, the researchers are of the conviction that the West should stop meddling in the internal affairs of the countries in the Middle East. Besides that, America and the West should take a different approach in dealing with the Middle East. Instead of going into war, occupying their land and stealing their oil, the West should have a friendly relationship with all countries in the Middle East. When trust and friendship are well established, the West can look forward in binding a bilateral relationship in the areas of education, science, technology, business and also on tourism. Though this idealism is easier said than done, the researchers believe that with the recent change in the political landscape all over the world, the days are not very far off (Hassan, 2011).

Same Evil with Many Names

Although from time to time the world has witnessed the emergence of many terrorist groups appearing all over the world, but the number has dramatically increased in the Post-Saddam Hussein (1937-2006) era. It has been a while already, a terror group known as JI (Al-Jamaah al-Islamiyyah) has been operating in the region of Southeast Asia, while in the Middle East we have ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), IS (Islamic State), ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) and DAESH (Al-Dawla al-Islamiyyah fil Iraq wa al-Sham). In West Africa we have Boko Haram (al-Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afrīqiyyah). Among the manifestos and reasons behind their terror activities are; to bring back the Islamic Caliphate, fight western dominance in their region, stop western secular education, culture and way of life, etc. (Irshaid, 2015).

In the midst of an ongoing debate as to who is really sponsoring their terror activities in the Middle East, these new terrorist organizations use the internet and social media to recruit new members from other parts of the world. Through the cyber world they hunt for new 'potential terrorists' to join them. They brainwash new recruits by saying that their work/act is a form of "Jihad" and a big reward awaits them in the hereafter. Some groups also make their followers believe that doomsday is close and they have to pave the way for the coming of 'Imam Mehdi'. Sad to say, in the name of religion they carry out the most heinous crimes like rape, manslaughter of civilians and reporters, bombing of infrastructure, suicide bombing, etc. (Ahmed, 2006)

Their ignorance and erroneous thinking have led these new terrorists to think they are doing a great service to Islam. What is not realized by the terrorists is that, their brutal killing of those who do not support their aspiration and ideology has done a grave damage to the good reputation of Islam as a religion that promotes peace and peaceful co-existence with others. Though they claim that they are Islamic in their struggle, their actions contradict the true spirit of Islam present in the Qur'an and in what preached by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). In the Qur'an, God said that He has not made the religion hard on the adherents of Islam and there is no compulsion in religion (Al-Haj: 78, Al-Baqarah: 256) (Choudhury, 1994).

The New Realities in Muslim Countries

Democracy as a system of governance goes back to ancient Greece. Besides modern science and technology, democracy is also a contribution of the Western civilization. Though this system of governance is not without flaws, it has been adopted by many countries in Asia and Africa. Long before the democratic system was accepted as a way of settling leadership crisis, people in the West witnessed the shifting of paradigms, from feudalism to monarchism, communism to capitalism, etc. At the dawn of the twentieth century, European nations fought two World Wars. Roughly sixty million people died. European leaders learnt their bitter lessons and learnt to compromise and settled their disputes through negotiations. Europe started to respect human lives and the rights of its citizens to live in peace and harmony. In modern times, the fall of communism has made the democratic system of governance as a popular system in electing a government into power. In the West, politics and politicking only goes on seriously prior to the general election. Upon the announcement of the newly elected government, the defeated party will congratulate the winning party and the whole nation resumes back their normal activities towards nation building. In the industrialized countries the masses push themselves in the areas of science and technology in order to improve their quality of life. Conversely in Asia, Africa and particularly in the Muslim world it is a different scenario all together. In many parts of these regions, politics goes on all throughout the year. Because of this, one could witness street demonstration, riots, vandalism and violence. Countries faced with such situations are more likely to face political instability that will eventually culminate into an economic crisis. Moreover, the political situation in such crisis-laden countries can drive away investors and tourists from coming into their countries. This in turn can cause an economic crisis (Hassan, 2011; Abdul Razak et al., 2016).

During this era of Internet, Smartphone, Facebook and other technology mediated communications; politics has become the number one topic that dominates the minds of the masses in the third world and developing countries. Although these modern communication tools provide instant and efficient updates of what happens around the globe, they too have been utilized for spreading rumors, lies, racism, hate campaign, political propaganda, extremism, terrorism, etc. that can destabilize a peaceful country.

In the Muslim world, after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, politics occupied an important place in the many empires of Arabia. Ever since then till to the present time there are Muslims who think that the whole emphasis of the Qur'an is on politics. Quite contrary to their wishful thinking, the central themes of the Qur'an are pivoted on monotheism, righteousness, charity, sobriety and the philosophy of co-existence with fellow human beings and nature. Many Muslim countries are in shambles as a result of overindulgence in politicking. Looking into what has happened and going on in Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia should bring the awareness to the Muslim Ummah on the downside of over-politicking. The situation in the Middle East seems to be more serious than any other parts of the world, as it has been subjected to a constant political upheaval as a result of internal weakness and external interference. There also exist great disparities between the rich and poor Muslim countries. Now, the Ummah is bleeding as it has been torn apart by sectarian wars, and wars caused by external military intervention. The disunity among Muslim countries is more serious than ever before, and Muslims have been labelled by the Western media as terrorists, fundamentalists and a whole lot of other obscure names (Abdul Razak, 2015).

Being overzealous with their political views, leaders with vested interest in those countries have resorted to violent means of grabbing power by thinking 'might is right'. Rampant bomb blast at public and places of worship is too sad and tragic to read and listen to over the media, more so if the innocent victims are children and women who are the least involved in the politics of the day. War of any kind creates unpleasant situation. The late President John F. Kennedy had once highlighted the dangers of war

when he delivered his speech at the United Nations on September 25, 1961. He said: "Mankind must put an end to war - or war will put an end to mankind" (Kennedy, 2015).

It is pathetic to see peace loving citizens in many of the crisis-ridden countries in the Middle East are looking for every opportunity to flee from the danger of war and violence, seeking asylum in other parts of the world, especially in Europe. Pockets of migrant Muslim population who have left their countries of their origin in the Middle East to live in many European cities are constantly subjected to intimidation and ostracized for being alien to the prevalent culture in those countries. In recent times, the slogan for an overnight change in the Middle East promoted by people who were in favour of the 'Arab Spring' did not witness the purported transformation in that region. As a result of the political uprising, life in those countries has gone from bad to worse as the saying goes 'from the frying pan into the fire'. After the loss of many human lives and damage to the infrastructure it has dawned on many that they should have taken a more moderate and democratic means for a change. Some political analysts have highlighted the fact that the Arab Spring was actually an idea designed by external forces to turn the Middle East into a conflagration (war zone) that will serve their vested interest (Arab News,2018; Abdul Razak et al., 2016).

What seems to be the present trend in many Muslim countries is the preoccupation of political talks among laity in the cafeteria to the intellectuals and students in campuses which are mainly based on rumours, unauthorized information, racism, hate campaign, etc. It is more deplorable to see Muslim religious scholars getting too frenzied in politics at the expanse of neglecting their primary duty as the heirs of the prophets. In an ideal situation, as providers of religious and moral values, they should position themselves as the agent for spreading the universal message of peace enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In the ongoing misinterpretation of Islam by the West, those who are genuine Muslim scholars should position themselves as the 'bridge-makers' or 'peace-makers' who would explain the true teachings of Islam to the West and narrow the gap of misunderstanding between the two.

In realizing today's realities in the Muslim world, leaders and intellectuals should take all opportunities to inspire the young minds to get serious in their pursuit of knowledge, science and technology. By doing so, Muslim countries can minimize their dependency on others in their need for technology and expertise. Students should be motivated to learn ideas shared to the world by Muslim scholars of the Golden Age of Islam (750-1258), like Al-Khwarizmi (780-850), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Al-Biruni (973-1048), Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040) and others. Besides this, contemplation, creative and critical thinking as the culture of the Muslims of the past should be brought back into the teaching and learning environment (Nasr, 1994; Ould Bah, 1998).Young Muslims should be taught to think for themselves and assess fairly on the unfolding of events in their countries and elsewhere in the world. Just to read information on the social media without analyzing would be detrimental as many of the information needs authentication and confirmation from the relevant authorities. The following is a candid quote on how the social media should be used:

> Internet and social media provide information and good communication tools. But our lives should not be enslaved to them. At times we have to pause and see the world through our own eyes and not through a borrowed vision. Seeing things as they are promising the birth of wisdom (Abdul Razak, 2017).

Follow the Role-Model Countries

Countries that are embroiled in ethnic and religious clashes can follow nations which are classified as role-models. A good example to state here is Malaysia which is situated in the hub of the Malay world. Malaysia received its independence from the British on the 31st of August 1957. During its independence, the three major ethnic groups that were living in Malaysia were the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The Malays who were the majority in number were better known at that time as it is till today as the '*Bumiputeras*' (sons of the soil), were willing to share the land with their partners in gaining independence from the British. Mainly they shared the land and wealth with the other two races that came from India and China. Prior to the independence, the British had kept these three groups separately in line with its 'divide and rule' policy. The British had done this not only in Malaya at that time (now known as Malaysia), but everywhere it established its rule. Due to the fact the other races were there in unison during the struggle for independence, the Malays had to maintain a good relationship with them. Till today, this policy has been maintained by the Malaysian government (Abraham, 1997).

In addition to the three major ethnic groups, there were and still present, are small groups of aborigines living in peninsula Malaysia as well as in Sabah and Sarawak. Prior to its independence, outsiders predicted that Malaysia as a newly independent country would face chaos; racial clashes and power strive among the various groups of people living in Malaysia. Contrary to the negative prediction, the scenario turned out to be one that was diametrically opposite. Malaysians of different backgrounds learned to accept one another in the spirit of universal brotherhood. Learnt to stay united and uphold "unity within diversity". They realized how precious the price of peace and harmony and chose to value their national identity and the spirit of being a free country far from any foreign intervention in their national agendas. At the moment, though not absolutely free from domestic problems, Malaysia has shined through over half-a-century as one of the best in the Islamic world and a rising star among the developing countries. Started as an agrarian based economy, Malaysia has transformed itself in other sectors of its economy, mainly in the areas of science, technology and industrialization. Good governance, strategic planning and a well-managed economy by the leaders of the country have made it possible for Malaysians of all walks of life to enjoy the economic prosperity (Abdul Razak, 2013).

The 'Open-House' held during festive seasons in Malaysia can be of great value to be shared with people living in other parts of the world. During the various festivals celebrated in the country, people regardless of race or religion, poor or rich congregate to wish those celebrating the festival and to enjoy food together with others. In order to bring people together, the government and dignitaries, organize 'Open-House' during all major festivals celebrated in the country. Being a Muslim country Malaysia has been in the forefront in raising charity for the oppressed and downtrodden Muslims and others in the world. The 'Open-House' concept practiced in Malaysia brings people of different race and religion together. In a way, this prevents racial polarization. Within the

country, imbued in the spirit of caring, sharing and loving, Malaysians of all races chip in during the time of need and adversity to help one another besides what has been done by the government (Yousif, 1998). Determined in its forward march towards achieving the status of a developed nation by 2020, Malaysia has made many transformational plans to maintain the social fabric of the nation as to stay focused in its pursuit to be among the developed nations soon. The economic pie has been divided according to the race proportion in the country. Under the new economic transformational plan, this small nation of 30 million people is prepared to cater for the immediate needs of each ethnic group, regardless of the size of its population. It is an indisputable fact, that peace and harmony enjoyed by its different ethnic groups over the decades has caught the attention of many researchers from South Africa, Australia and the United States of America to study the Malaysian secret recipe for peace and harmony. Besides Malaysia, Brunei a Malay Sultanate and Singapore are relatively peaceful in the Southeast Asian region. Malaysia's success story can be a good formula to be emulated by countries that more often see racial clashes and sectarian violence (Abdul Razak, 2013).

Despite all the peace and prosperity enjoyed within the country, globalization and misuse of freedom of speech that uses the social media can be seen as a threat to unity that was maintained for many decades after the independence. The present generation of young people who are not well aware of the philosophical foundation on which Malaysia was established by the founding fathers, act irrationally attacking and mocking one another in the cyber world. In realizing this situation, the government on its part utilizes the print media, television, radio, as well as the internet to correct the erroneous news report circulated in the cyber world with regards to Malaysia's local and foreign policies. This sort of media war is not only happening in Malaysia alone but elsewhere in the world.

It is noteworthy to state at this juncture, that the researchers have found out that the Islamic Republic of Iran has some similarities with Malaysia. In Iran, besides the Muslims, they have representatives from the Armenian Christian, Zoroastrian and Jewish communities in the parliament. Like in Malaysia, non-Muslims in Iran enjoy the freedom to practice their own religion and to conduct activities at their own places of worship (Anja Pistor-Hatam, 2017).

In the wake of ethnic cleansing, racism, sectarian violence, terror attack, etc. seen by the world population over the last few decades, it is hoped that the above stated moderate Muslim countries can be a good example for the rest of other Muslim and developing countries to follow in the areas of religious tolerance, good governance, freedom of speech, etc.

An Idealism for World Peace

1. Although it is good to see that after the two World Wars, most western countries have stopped going into war among themselves, but at the same time, it will be also good for them not to take war into other regions of the world, especially to Muslim countries. The West should adopt a new policy of "Live and Let Others Live Too". All human lives are equally precious, regardless in the East or West.

2. The very purpose of the establishment of the United Nations after World War Two which was for the end of war in the world did not happen. Till today, war has not ended. Either large or small scales of wars are still being fought in many parts of the world. The UN has to play a greater role in bringing an end to all ongoing wars in this so-called civilized and modern world in which we live.

3. There should be a call for a world free from all deadly chemical weapons and nuclear missiles. It will be hypocrisy on the part of western countries to call for a ban on others, particularly Muslims, while they have a large stockpile of such armaments at their own backyard. Since these deadly weapons are a threat to world peace and human lives, countries that have them should abolish them.

4. In WW2 and all other major wars that took place after 1945, America was either actively involved or took the role as the "warmonger". As a result of these wars, millions of people died. Looking into the horrors of war, it is about time, America should stop going into war and take a leading role as a 'messenger of peace'. Former President, Barak Obama during his election campaign promised the Americans that he is going to bring back the troops from the Middle East, but he did not fulfill that promise. And now, the newly elected President Donald Trump also mentioned as to why America has to waste trillions of dollars by going into war in the Middle East. Let us wait and see as to whether he will be able to fulfill his promise.

5. OIC as a Muslim organization should work close with all Muslim countries without favouring any particular group. It should be proactive in settling dispute among its member countries.

6. Peace talks in the Middle East should be inclusive of all Muslims countries, particularly those in that region. The Islamic Republic of Iran should be included at all levels of discussion about peace, security and stability in that region.

7. If all arm conflicts in the Arab world could be resolved with the intervention of OIC, then there will be no refugees seeking help in the West. If Muslims fail to resolve their difference on their own, then we have failed to understand the concept of brotherhood and other idealism present in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

8. No Muslim country should support or sponsor terrorism. The co-called terrorists in Muslim countries should go back to the true teachings of Islam found in the Qur'an and Sunnah and be in the forefront in promoting world peace, tolerance and peaceful co-existence with others and nature.

9. All sectarian (Mazahib) conflicts, disputes, violence and wars in the Muslim world should stop. The warring parties should come to their senses as they are one Ummah (nation), worship to the same Allah, face towards a common direction (Mecca) during Solah, they follow the same prophet (Muhammad SAW), follow the same Qur'an, etc. Let the warring parties look into the similarities and not on what divides them. Leave the judgment of who is a better Muslim to Allah in the hereafter and not enter into the domain of Allah to pass verdict and kill others who do belong to the same denomination (Mazhab).

10. The nuclear race in the Indian Subcontinent should stop. Both India and Pakistan should work on a peace deal that can benefit people living in these countries. These two nations should put away their difference and look into the

commonalities they have; in terms of food, culture, ethnicity, language, past history, etc. The two countries should spend much of their national budget on development and to improve the living conditions of the people, and not on stockpiling their nuclear arsenal. Learn from Malaysia and Singapore on co-existence, mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of the other. Although Singapore was part of Malaysia before separation.

11. Provocation and confrontation between the two Koreas should stop. The two countries should work on a unification plan. If long ago the unification of West and East Germany was possible, then the two Koreas too can come together as one nation. The benefit of the outcome of this possible unification will be enjoyed by the civilian population, especially families separated and living on both sides.

12. The state of Israel should learn to co-exist with Palestinians as its neighbors. The Israeli government should recognize the right of the Palestinians for a homeland of their own. Unless and until Israel stops terrorizing the Palestinians, the resistance from the oppressed Palestinians will continue to go on, and this will make Israel to live in constant fear of retaliation from the displaced people. On the humanitarian ground, Israel should give back the illegally occupied lands that belong to the Palestinians. If justice could be done to the Palestinians, there is no need for Israel to have walls all around her protecting an imminent attack from the oppressed people. Countries like Israel, Myanmar and the like should emulate the good example shown by countries that treat their minority population well.

The researchers would like to end this section of the paper with two of their favourite quotes:

Clash of civilizations brings disharmony. Co-existence of civilizations inspires us to see beauty and acceptance of one another (Abdul Razak, 2017).

What makes the rainbow beautiful and interesting are the different shades of colours. What makes humanity interesting is the variation of our race, colour, language, culture, etc. So, why fight and kill one another (Abdul Razak, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This research has brought to light that the elimination of extremism and terrorism is only possible by finding the root cause of why such inhumane crimes happen around the globe and not by merely carrying out bombing campaigns at a colossal scale. Innocent lives of the civilians killed during such campaigns most likely bound to create a feeling of revenge that can lead to a vicious cycle that will prolong violence in the conflict zones without finding a breakthrough in dealing with extremism and terrorism. The researchers believe that regardless in the East or West there are good people who, have the quality of loving, caring and sharing. The same cannot be said of the policymakers in the countries that are in conflict. Leaders that have their own vested interest would like to prolong conflicts and confrontations so that they can reap the economic benefit or boost their popularity. As such, all good citizens of the world should stand up in unison against extremism and terrorism. All countries in the world should get their records on human rights straight. The rich and affluent countries in the world should end all dominance and subjugations over the poor and developing countries. In doing so, the underprivileged countries can enjoy freedom, sovereignty and a right for self-rule. All nations in the East and the West should learn to co-exist, and work together for global peace; eradication of war, poverty, injustice, racism, prejudice, etc. When this is achieved, the world would enjoy the much-needed peace and harmony.

REFERENCES

Arab News. (2018). Was the Arab Spring a failure? By Maria Dubovikova, January 19, 2018 18:50, Retrieved from: http://www.arabnews.com/node/1229066/columns, 23rd January 2019.

Abdul Razak, Mohd Abbas. (2011). Globalization and the Muslim world. *Journal for Islam in Asia* (3). pp. 275-295.

Abdul Razak, Mohd Abbas. (2013). Malaysia's success in maintaining peace and racial harmony within its diverse ethnicity. *Alwaha: Arab-English online newspaper*. January (Issue:10). pp. 1 &23.

Abdul Razak, Mohd Abbas. (2015). Reclaiming fame and glory of the Muslim world. Kuala Lumpur: *New Straits Times*, Saturday, 1st August, p.17.

Abdul Razak, Mohd Abbas. Rahath, Yousef. Abdul Razak, Abdul Latif. (2016). *Less politicking and more thinking is needed to revive the Islamic civilization* (unpublished). A paper presented at the 2nd Kuala Lumpur International Islamic Studies &

Civilizations Conference, 8-9th Oct.,2016, Hotel Putra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Abdul Razak, Mohd Abbas. (2017). In https://www.slideshare.net/maarji/edit_my_uploads?page=3, My Quotes, Retrieved: 19th May 2017.

Abraham, Collin. (2004). *The naked social order (the roots of racial polarization in Malaysia)*, Selangor: Pelanduk Publications.

Ahmed, Nafeez Mosaddeq. (2006). *The London bombings: an independent inquiry*. Selangor: Thinker's Library Sdn Bhd.

Anja Pistor-Hatam. (2017). Non-understanding and Minority Formation in Iran, *Iran*, 55:1, 87-98, DOI: 10.1080/05786967.2016.1277097. Retrieved on 23rd January 2019.

Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. (1991). *Islamic awakening between rejection and extremism*. Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House.

Al-Zandani, Ahmed A. Wahid. (2009). *The consequences of compromising politics: the united states and the Arab countries of the Middle East*. Selangor: IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Choudhury, Golam W. (1994). *Islam and the modern Muslim world*. Kuala Lumpur: WHS Publishers Sdn Bhd.

El-Affendi, Abdelwahab ed. (2010). *About Muhammad: the other western perspective on the prophet of Islam*. Surrey: Legacy Publishing.

Hassan, M.Kamal. (2011). *Voice of Islamic moderation from the malay world*. Perak: Emerging Markets Innovative Research.

Hiro, Dilip. (1989). *Paladin movements and ideas: Islamic fundamentalism*. London: Paladin Grafton Books.

Hosein, Imran N. (2011). *Jerusalem in the Qur'an.* San Fernando: Masjid Jami'ah, City of San Fernando.

Ibn Ubayyah, Abd Allah.(2015). *Al-Ihab al-tashkhis wa al-hulul.* At http://www.aman-dostor.org/7337(Retrieved on the 12th January 2019).

Irshaid, Faisal. Isis, Isil, IS or Daesh? One group, many names. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27994277, 2nd December, 2015, Retrieved on 23rd. May,2017.

Kennedy, John F. (2015). (http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/118124-mankind-must-put-an-end-to-war- --or- war), Retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015.

Merriam Webster. (2017). https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/terrorism, meaning to terrorism. Retrieved: 18th May,2017.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. (1984). *Science and civilization in Islam.* Shah Alam: Dewan Pustaka Fajar.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. (1994). *A Young Muslim's guide to the modern world*. Petaling Jaya: Mekar Publishers.

Ould Bah, Mohamed El-Mokhtar. (1998). Islamic Education between tradition and modernity, Publications of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-ISESCO.

The Free Dictionary. (2017) http://www.thefreedictionary.com/extremism, meaning to extremism. Retrieved: 18th May,2017.

Yousif, Ahmad F. (1998). *Religious freedom, minorities and Islam*. Selangor: Thinker's Library Sdn. Bhd.