

SHIA BELIEF AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN MALAYSIA: THE SECURITISATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The world's politics was stunned by the actualisation of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overthrew the Pahlavi Dynasty under the rule of the Shah of Iran. The Revolution portrayed a positive impression of Shia, the official state religion of Iran, and gained support from many Islamic countries including Malaysia. However, after more than three decades, some countries have proposed that Shia teachings may contradict the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (Sunni teachings). Sunni-Shia struggle, as occurring in Syria and Iraq, portrayed the clash between the two sects of Islamic teachings. Malaysia, a country that practices Sunni Islamic teachings has decided to ban Shia through a decree issued by the National *Fatwa* Committee in 1996. The purpose of this study was to analyse how Shia teachings are linked to national security. This study was based on the securitisation approach as a tool of analysis through the speech acts and views of the securitisation actors. The study also gathered primary data from interviews and field observations conducted in Iran and Malaysia.

Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from reliable printed materials such as academic research books, local and international reviewed journals, newspaper clippings, government reports and authoritative webpages. The findings suggest that even though Shia teachings are not declared by the country as a national security threat, it has the potential to raise public safety issues such as creating disharmony among the followers of the Sunni Islamic community, drawing a wedge in the unity of the Muslim community and may also undermine the national sovereignty.

Keywords: Securitisation perspectives; Shia beliefs; Sunni Fatwa; National Security.

Khulasah

Politik dunia digemparkan dengan kejayaan Revolusi Iran pada tahun 1979. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini berjaya menjatuhkan pemerintahan Dinasti Pahlavi di bawah penguasaan Shah Iran. Revolusi tersebut telah memaparkan imej positif Syiah, iaitu fahaman rasmi Iran, serta mendapat sokongan dari pelbagai negara Islam termasuk Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, setelah lebih tiga dekad, sebahagian negara mendapati ajaran Syiah adalah berbeza dengan pegangan Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ajaran Sunni). Pergelutan antara Sunni-Syiah, seperti yang berlaku di Syria dan Iraq, memaparkan pertembungan antara kedua ajaran ini. Pada tahun 1996, Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara yang berpegang dengan ajaran Sunni, mengambil keputusan untuk mengharamkan fahaman Syiah menerusi keputusan Jawatankuasa Muzakarah Fatwa Kebangsaan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menganalisa bagaimana fahaman Syiah berkaitan dengan keselamatan negara. Kajian ini berdasarkan pendekatan sekuritisasi sebagai alat analisis menerusi lakuan ucapan dan pandangan aktor sekuritisasi. Kajian turut mengumpulkan data primer daripada temu bual, kajian lapangan yang telah di jalankan di Malaysia dan Iran. Sementara data sekunder

diperolehi menerusi buku-buku akademik, keratan akhbar, laporan kerajaan dan laman sesawang yang absah. Dapatan kajian mendapati, walaupun ajaran Syiah tidak diisytiharkan sebagai ancaman terhadap keselamatan negara, namun ia berpotensi mencetuskan isu terhadap ketenteraman awam Malaysia seperti menimbulkan suasana yang tegang dalam kalangan masyarakat Sunni Islam, mengganggu perpaduan umat Islam di Malaysia dan menggugat kedaulatan wilayah.

Kata kunci: Sunni; Fatwa; fahaman Syiah; keselamatan negara; pendekatan sekuritisasi.

Introduction

The polemic of the clashes between Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (hereafter known as Sunni) and Shia, remains one of the topics fervently discussed today.¹ This is due to the differences in understanding between Sunni and Shia beliefs, particularly in the discourse of *'aqidah*, *fiqh* and politics. The contention does not only earn its place among academics, but also among politicians, policy makers, as well as the public. At the international level, it can be argued that discussions on schools of thought or sectarian conflicts have gained a place among researchers after the United States (US) invasion of Iraq overthrew Saddam Hussein in 2003. Clashes between Sunni and Shia followers are often associated with the instability of the

¹ From the theological perspective, see for instance Mohd Aizam Mas'od & Mohd Fauzi Hamat, "Pemikiran Skeptikal Syiah Terhadap Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah dalam Karya-Karya Syiah Melayu: Satu Kritikan," *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam* 21(1) (2019), 1-52; Sayid Muhammad al-Musawi, *Mazhab Syiah Kajian Al-Quran & Sunah* (Bandung: Mutahhari Press, 2001). For the historical perspective, see Ali Muhammad Ash-Shallabi, *Khawarij & Syiah: Sejarah Ideologi & Penyimpangan Menurut Pandangan Ahlusunnah Wal Jemaah* (Jakarta: Ummul Qura, 2016). For a debate from the minority perspective, see Al-Makin, "Homogenizing Indonesian Islam: Persecution of the Shia Group in Yogyakarta," *Studia Islamika* 24(1) (2017), 1-32.

country, especially among the nations in the Middle Eastern region such as Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen.²

In Malaysia, issues and polemics on Shia can be said to begin after the banning of Shia through the decree of the Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Affairs held on 5th May 1996 which agreed that all Shia beliefs that exist in Malaysia are illegal.³ Religious and security enforcement authorities have also taken enforcement action of the ban by preventing any activities and programmes organised by the Shia community. These preventions are in line with the *fatwa*'s decree as the Shia movement tends to pose threats to the sanctity of the Islamic faith and national security. The question that arises is how do we analyse if the Shia teachings are linked to national security? Thus, in this study, the securitisation approach analysis was applied to examine how Shia teachings and beliefs pose threats to referent objects such as the harmony of Islam and the unity of the people in this country.

This study employed a qualitative approach based on analysis of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through interviews with religious agencies, namely the Wilayah Mufti Office and the State Islamic Religious Department; security agencies, namely the National Security Council and the Royal Malaysian Police; and researchers of this issue either from academia or the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered through reliable printed materials such as research books from within and outside

² Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Sectarianization of Geopolitics in the Middle East," in *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, ed. Nader Hashemi & Danny Postel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 37.

³ Department of Planning and Research JAKIM, *Penjelasan Terhadap Fahaman Syiah* (Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2010).

the country, newspaper clippings, government reports and authoritative webpages.

Shia in Malaysia

The history of Shia's roots in Malaysia is not unanimously agreed upon by scholars. However, almost all scholars agree that the massive entrance of Shia began right after the success of the revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that managed to overthrow the Shah of Iran in the 1979 Iranian Revolution.⁴ As a result of the revolution's success, Iran invited community leaders especially government representatives to visit Iran.⁵ In addition, students from Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries were also offered to study Islamic theology in Qom, a holy city in Iran, with provisions of adequate scholarship and education facilities. In an interview, a Shia practitioner in Selangor explained that during that era, Iran was seen as the most suitable country to visit especially for the purpose of pursuing higher education as it succeeded in overthrowing the secular and unjust Shah's regime as well as creating an extraordinary wave of Islamic resurgence.⁶

According to Marcinkowski, between 1980s and 1990s, many Malaysians and Indonesians had taken the opportunity to further their studies in Islamic Theology in Qom. He personally witnessed this during his visit to Iran between 1984 to 1986.⁷ Additionally, during our field trip in Iran in 2017, we found that there were still many

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ Wan Zahidi bin Wan Teh & Syeikh Mahmood Sa'ad Nasih, *Mengenal Hakikat Syiah* (Kuala Lumpur: Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, 2013).

⁶ Interview with Head, Syiah Imamiyyah (Ja'fari) Malaysia Civil Society, Selangor, 24 October 2018.

⁷ Marcinkowski, Christoph, "Aspects of Shi'ism in Contemporary Southeast Asia," *Journal Compilation, Hartford Seminary* 1 (2018), 40.

students from Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia pursuing their studies in Persian theology and language, especially in Qom and Esfahan.⁸ Most were sponsored by the schools.

It is believed that studying theology is also one of Khomeini's strategies to spread Shia beliefs worldwide.⁹ The spread of Shia to Malaysia was well received by the Muslim Malay communities. According to some researchers, Shia came to the Malay Peninsula approximately in 789AD and the Sunni sect or the Asha'irah stream only came later at approximately 888AD. Among those who presented these views are A. Hasjmy and Mahayudin Yahya. They explained that Islam arrived in the Archipelago through efforts made by the Indian-Persian preachers, resulting in the establishment of the first Shia Islamic Kingdom in the mid-9th century in Perlak. Mahayudin Yahya explained that during Umayyad's era, al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the governor at the time, had used violence and pressure against the Shia community which resulted in their migration to the Archipelago. Thus, the Arabs in Sulu villages and the west coast of Sumatra were in fact the Shia community that fled from Umayyad's cruelty.¹⁰ This was supported by A. Hasjmy who stated that around 800M-817AD, a group of 100 Arabs, Persians and Indian preachers arrived at Perlak.

However, the views of A. Hasjmy and Mahayudin Yahya are debatable because they contradict the existing archaeological evidence and the existence of major reference books of the Islamic community at that time

⁸ Fieldwork to Qom, Iran on August 24, 2017 and Esfahan, Iran on August 28, 2017.

⁹ Interview with Officer, Buhuth Unit, Mufti of Federal Territory Office, Putrajaya, September 21, 2018.

¹⁰ Mahayudin Yahya, *Naskah Jawi Sejarah dan Teks* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1994), 1.

which adhered to Sunni stream. According to al-Attas, the advent of Islam in the Malay world was brought by the Arabs or the Arab Persian missionaries.¹¹ Mohd Haidhar et al. also added that Islam began to enter the Archipelago through Arab traders from Yemen, Hadramaut and Oman.¹² Even though the polemic of the beginning of Islam in the Archipelago will not end, it is clear that today, the Archipelago or the Southeast Asian region is the location of the Shia community.

Today, the Shia community is also a part of the minority beliefs that exist in Malaysia. According to sources shared by Shia Numbers, in terms of Shia population, Malaysia is ranked 43rd in the world. Constituting approximately 1-2% of the total Muslim population in Malaysia, the Shia population in the country is estimated to be between 250,000 to 300,000 people.¹³ However, this figure is denied by the security authorities and religious agencies such as JAKIM and JAIN who explained that the Shia community in Malaysia is estimated to be around 2,500 to 3,000 only.¹⁴ The existence of Shia in Malaysia can be divided into several groups. Among them are:

1. Dawood Bohra Group

The Dawood Bohra Shia group is one of the fragments of the Ismaili Shia group. The group split when the majority

¹¹ Al-Attas, S.M.N., *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969), 25.

¹² Mohd Haidhar Kamarzaman et. al., "Pengaruh Aliran Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah al-Asha'irah di Nusantara: Analisis Abad ke Tujuh Hingga Dua Puluh Masihi," *Jurnal Penyelidikan Islam* 28 (2016), 96.

¹³ Shianumber, "World Shia Population," retrieved May 12, 2018, <http://shianumbers.com/shia-muslims-population.html>.

¹⁴ Ahmad Suhael Adnan, "Dakwa ada 300,000 Pengikut Syiah di Malaysia Tidak Benar," *Berita Harian*, retrieved April 21, 2016, <https://www.bharian.com.my/node/146011>.

of them followed Isma‘il bin Ja‘far, the eldest son of Ja‘far al-Sadiq (the Seventh Imam in the list of Shia Imams). In the early stages, the Dawood Bohra Shia was on the same path as the Ismaili Agha Khan Shia until the 18th Imam when the Ismaili Agha Khan Shia followed Nizar al-Muntasir while the Dawood Bohra Shia followed Imam al-Musta‘li al-Muntasir. In the early stages, these two groups were split because of politics, but currently, it involves other aspects such as *tawhid* and the methodology of religious interpretation. Today, the Dawood Bohra group is estimated to comprise about one million people with the majority of them based in Mumbai, India.¹⁵

In Malaysia, this group is based in Klang and has its own cemetery and mosque with estimated followers of between 200 to 400 people.¹⁶ In a recent development, another Dawood Bohra Shia mosque was identified to have been established and officiated by Dr. Syedna Mufaddal Saidudin himself, the *Da‘i al-Mutlaq* or 53rd spiritual leader from the Dawood Bohra ancestry in Kuala Lumpur on 20th July 2018. The mosque is named Shujai Mosque in honour of the 33rd spiritual leader of Dawood Bohra, Syedna Feer Khan Shujauddin.¹⁷

Although this group exists in small numbers, it is still actively carrying out programmes and activities among its

¹⁵ Fadzli Adam et al., "Syiah di Malaysia: Perbandingan antara Ithna ‘Asyariyyah dan Daudi Bohra," in *Proceedings of International Conference of Empowering Islamic Civilization. Research Institute for Islamic Product and Malay Civilization*, ed. Rahimah Embong et al., (Terengganu: Research Institute for Islamic Product and Malay Civilization (INSPIRE), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 2017), 32.

¹⁶ Interview with Research Officers, Special Branch, Royal Police Department, Kuala Lumpur, April 9, 2018.

¹⁷ The Dawoodi Bohras, "Syedna Inaugurates New Masjid in Malaysia," The Dawoodi Bohras (website), retrieved July 20, 2018, <https://www.thedawoodibohras.com/2018/07/20/syedna-inaugurates-new-masjid-in-malaysia/>.

members worldwide. In 2017, in a gathering with the Bohra community in Karachi, Pakistan, almost all of the Dawood Bohra believers from India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, including Malaysia attended the event with an estimated 40,000 participants.¹⁸ However, in Malaysia, this community is discreet as they segregate themselves from others and circulate among themselves only. The group is also said to run its own business such as the Bombay Store, which is based in Klang, Selangor.

2. Ismaili Agha Khan Group

The second Shia group that exists in Malaysia is the Ismaili Agha Khan Shia. This group is known to have existed in Malaysia even before the Iranian Revolution. The group is also known as the Peerbhai Shop and is said to be active in the vicinity of the Klang Valley. The total number of followers is unknown but is believed to be smaller than the Bohra group.¹⁹ This is a splinter group of the Ismaili Shia and is said to emerge in Iran in the early 19th century AD. The group is mostly spread out in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Congo, Belgium, India, Pakistan, Syria, and Pakistan.²⁰

3. Imamiyya or Ithna Ashariyya Group

The third Shia group that exists in Malaysia is the Imamiyya Shia group (also called the Ithna 'Ashariyyah Shia or the Twelve Imams). This group originated in Iran and its spread throughout the world began after the Iranian Revolution. This group is also known as the Ja'fari Sect

¹⁸ Shazia Hasan, "40,000 Bohras from All Over World Attending their Annual Congregation in Karachi," *Dawn Today's Paper*, retrieved September 26, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1359775>.

¹⁹ Mohd Aizam bin Mas'od, *Soal Jawab Isu Syiah di Malaysia* (Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), 2013), 2.

²⁰ Interview with Head, Syiah Research Unit, ISMA, Bangi, October 9, 2018.

for leaning its beliefs towards one of the Shia Twelve Imams, Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq.²¹ The Imamiyya Shia group is believed to have entered Malaysia openly after the success of the Iranian Revolution. Today, it is difficult to associate the existing Shia movement with any Shia followers other than the Ithna Ashariyyah's beliefs because anyone who holds the Shia beliefs has a similar understanding of 'Rafidah'; in other words, they reject the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), except for a few people.²² To date, the Imamiyya Shia is said to have the most followers in Malaysia.

4. Ansar Imam Al Mahdi Group

The fourth, Shia group in Malaysia is the Ansar Imam Al-Mahdi group or also known as the Al-Yamani Supporters. This group is attributed to Imam Ahmad al-Hassan al-Yamani, known as the first Mahdi, the executor and messenger of Imam al-Mahdi Muhammad bin al-Hassan who was promised and mentioned in the will of the Prophet SAW on the night before his death. However, this group is not only deemed astray by Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, but is also deemed astray by Imamiyyah Shia itself.²³

The four Shia groups are believed to have their own followers. Based on the existence of these four groups, several matters can be analysed. Firstly, it indicates that the Shia group as a minority is actually active even though small in number and is able to create new groups or streams from the Shia splinters. Secondly, the existence of these streams explains that Shia seems to be accepted among the Muslim Malay community. Thirdly, even

²¹ Interview with Research Officers, Special Branch, Royal Police Department, Kuala Lumpur, April 9, 2018.

²² Interview with Head, Syiah Research Unit, ISMA, Bangi, October 9, 2018.

²³ Interview with Head, Syiah Imamiyyah (Ja'fari) Malaysia Civil Society, Selangor, October 24, 2018.

though Shia has been decreed illegal by the Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee, the Shia community in Malaysia is still bold enough to carry out activities and programmes either openly or discreetly. Fourthly, as a result of the gazetted Shia ban throughout the country, various actions and operations have been mobilised by religious and security agencies. It seems to show that there are elements in the form of securitisation. Hence, in the next segment, the issue of Shia in Malaysia is analysed by applying the securitisation approach within the context of national security.

Securitisation Approach

Securitisation is an approach developed to prevent the continuous existence of 'threat'. Securitisation is an approach developed from the writings of several security scholars such as Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde and a few others.²⁴ This approach appears in the Copenhagen School of Thought (Copenhagen School-CS) which is located in the Conflict and Peace Research Institute (COPRI), Copenhagen. CS has taken the initiative to develop a coordinated security concept to rethink the 'security' question through two conceptualised words, namely 'securitisation' and 'non-securitisation'.²⁵ To date, CS has played a very important role especially in defining and providing a lot of debating opportunities in threat and safety discussions. For CS, if the threat exists and is sufficient to threaten the referent object, then it

²⁴ Waever, Ole "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46-86; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever & Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1998); Barry Buzan & Ole Waever, *Regions of Power: The Structure of International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁵ Emmers, Ralf, "Securitization," in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. Alan Collins, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 131.

should be taken seriously even though it is beyond the traditional security agenda that is the military.

According to Buzan et al., securitisation actors are "...actors who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened."²⁶ There are three main points in the above statement that should be noted, the first is 'securitization actors', the second is 'referent object' and the third is 'threat issues'. Securitisation actors refer to a group such as the government, political elite group, the military, civil society, pressure groups, bureaucrats, community leaders and so on.²⁷ Although securitisation actors may exist from various parties and groups, politicians and governments are the most powerful groups and have more advantages. This is due to the fact that in a democratic country, they are elected through elections and get votes and trust from the public.²⁸

Referent object refers to individuals or groups affected by the issue. These objects are countries, identities, races, and religions, including refugee groups, victims of human rights cases, civil society, and so on. The referent object can be from multiple dimensions as it relies on the security issues raised. Next, the issue of threats refers to general issues that can be traditional or non-traditional such as from the military, politics, social issues, environmental and economic sectors. Of the five categories, CS has classified threats into three forms:

- a) Actual threat - this threat exists and is capable of reducing security and peace scenarios of referent objects at any time;

²⁶ Buzan, Barry, Ole Waever & Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1998), 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁸ Collins, Alan, "Securitization, Frankenstein Monster and Malaysia Education," *Pacific Review* 18(4) (2005), 565-586.

- b) Potential threat - a situation where there is potential that a threat might happen and reduce the security scenario but is unable to become an actual threat because of certain obstacles;
- c) Fictitious threat - a situation where the threat is perceived as capable of threatening security, but it is not a condition that really exists.²⁹

In the interview with the National Security Council, the informants explained that there is a difference between security threats and security issues. Security threats signify that an issue or element has become a threat to national security such as threats of drugs. Security issues, however, are matters that are still under control and are in the monitoring stage of all agencies.³⁰ In this study, the issue of Shia was examined in relation to the extent to which it conforms to the discussion outlined in the securitisation approach. Despite the fact that Shia has never been declared a threat to the country, it was analysed through the securitization approach in order to study the extent to which it approached the securitisation element.

Analysis of Shia Beliefs and Securitisation Elements in Malaysia

Security Issues

Securitisation should start from security issues. In other words, an issue must have security values that lead to national security threats. The Shia issue gained widespread debate in Malaysia when it was decreed illegal by the Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee in 1984.

²⁹ Nassef M. Adiong, "Securitization Understanding its Process in the Field of International Relations," Seminar Paper, 2009, 6, https://papers.ssm.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1693208, accessed on 7 July 2018.

³⁰ Interview with Officer, National Security Council of Malaysia, Putrajaya, October 25, 2018.

However, at the time, only two Shia beliefs, namely Zaidiyyah and Ja'fari, were still given the flexibility to be practiced because some of their beliefs were almost similar to the faith of Sunni. Nevertheless, after the Muzakarah of the Fatwa Committee convened once again in 1996, it was decided that Muslims in Malaysia must only adhere to Islamic teachings based on Sunni in terms of morality, *'aqidah* and *shari'ah*. Additionally, the decision to allow the practices of Zaidiyyah and Ja'fari Shia streams was also revoked by the committee.

According to Mohd Fauzi Hamat, the revocation to allow the practice of the two beliefs was made by the Malaysian government based on one of the fiqh methods, namely *sadd al-dhara'i'* which means blocking any tendency to manipulate this *fatwa* for the purpose of spreading other extreme Shia sects, especially Ithna 'Ashariyyah Shia on the grounds that not all Shia should be rejected and only those that are extreme are to be rejected.³¹ As such, from 1996, the polemic on the ban of the Shia began to be widely discussed by securitisation actors, in particular within Government agencies.

Securitisation Actors

Securitisation actors refer to groups such as governments, political elite groups, the military, civil society, pressure groups, bureaucrats, community leaders and so on that give an issue value as a threat.³² In this study, the securitisation actors given due attention are the government agencies such as the Royal Malaysian Police and the National Security Council, and religious agencies such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia,

³¹ Mohd Fauzi Hamat, "Asha'irah Sebagai Rujukan dalam Fatwa Syiah di Malaysia," in *Regional Conference on Contribution of Asha'irah and Maturidiyyah Towards Strengthening Islamic Faith* (Brunei Darussalam: Research and Publication Centre, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, 2015), 116.

³² Buzan et. al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 40.

State Islamic Religious Department, Mufti Department, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), academicians and several others.

The political elite group is also one of the securitisation actors in the discussion of this approach. The political elite group is elected through the electoral process and has a huge voice and access to the country. This is because this group is able to bring an issue that is initially common to an extraordinary political issue. Such discussions will usually be debated in the parliamentary sessions to obtain views from other elected representatives. According to Nassef, securitisation actors will play the role of discussing an issue in terms of whether it is a real threat, a potential threat, or a fictitious threat. The securitisation actors explain the relevance of the issue that is being played together with its effect on the referent object.³³

Referent Object

Referent object refers to whether an individual or a group is affected by the issue. It can be a country, an identity, a race, a religion, refugee groups, victims of human rights cases, civil society and so on.³⁴ The tendency for various parties to be interpreted as the referent objects is because it depends on the security issues raised. In this matter, the referent object in focus is the Malaysian Muslim community that adheres to Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah,

³³ Nassef M. Adiong, "Securitization Understanding its Process in the Field of International Relations," Department of Political Science Seminar Paper, University of Philippines, March 25, 2009, 6, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1693208.

³⁴ Olaf Corry, "Securitization and Riskization: Two Grammars of Security," Working Paper: Standing Group on International Relations, 7th Pan-European International Relations Conference, Stockholm, 9th -11th September, 2010, <http://www.eisa-net.org/eisa-net.org/be-bruga/eisa/files/events/stockholm/Risk%20society%20and%20securitization%20theory%20SGIR%20paper.pdf>.

especially the Malays. In addition, Malaysia itself should be categorised as a referent object for it to be a benchmark of discussion on maintaining national harmony and peace. These referent objects will be linked in every speech act to give a signal that if the issue is not dealt with properly, it will affect the referent objects defended.

Speech Act

The securitisation approach could not be applied without any of the speech acts of the securitisation actors. This securitisation process will normally convert a 'normal' political issue to an 'emergency political issue'. For Buzan, the securitisation process requires the speech act to have "grammar of security".³⁵ The issue of Shia in Malaysia was once revealed by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, who was the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia. However, the view was quoted when he was the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia (1981-2003) via the webpage 'Chedet', a page that compiles his personal views as a statesman on current issues in Malaysia.

The following presents some of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed's views on the issues and clashes between the Sunni and Shia in Malaysia³⁶:

(3) Hostilities between Sunni and Shia have not taken place in Malaysia because for a long time all Muslims in the country are Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, i.e. Sunni followers of al-Shafi'i. They all adhere to the same Islamic teachings. Although Muslims in Malaysia are divided due to political differences, it does not lead to killing and war..." (4) Nowadays Shia teachings are being spread in Malaysia. If Shia is established, Malaysian Muslims will

³⁵ Buzan, *A New Framework for Analysis*, 36.

³⁶ Mahathir Mohamed, "Sunni dan Syiah," Chedet (blog), retrieved August 25, 2016, <http://chedet.cc/?p=1052>.

definitely split further. The barrier between those who receive Sunni and Shia teachings will be wider. Each of them will have a separate mosque and have various differences... (5) Sooner or later their feud will heighten until they riot, kill and fight just as in Iraq, Pakistan and Syria... (6) Resulting from this the country will be unstable and unsafe. Terrible calamity will befall the Muslims in this country. Those who are already weak will be weaker. Serious damage will occur as we can see in countries where Sunni and Shia are hostile.

The following speech is quoted from the Honourable Datuk Dr. Mujahid Yusof Rawa, a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religion), during the Dewan Rakyat sitting in the Parliament of Malaysia on 2nd November 2013 where he explained that:

"The decision of the National Council of Fatwa Committee is followed by *fatwa* on Shia ban in 13 states in Malaysia and is gazetted and can be used to take action against Shia followers. As such, the spread of anything other than Ahl al- Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah is forbidden."³⁷

In addition, the former 10th Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar (2012-2017) once revealed in 2013 that the spread of Shia beliefs in this country must be contained. He said:

"The Home Ministry's exposure on the spread of Shia in this country is aimed at raising public awareness that if the movement is not

³⁷ "Fahaman Syiah disekat," *Utusan*, retrieved December 13, 2013, <http://www.utusan.com.my/berita/parlimen/fahaman-syiah-disekat-1.779812>.

curbed it could lead to militancy... Look at what is happening in Syria, Iraq and worst still Pakistan. When Shia becomes big, it becomes a militant group resulting in clashes between Sunnis and Shias.”³⁸

In addition, the Selangor Islamic Religious Department included a reminder in most of the second sermon read out every Friday at all mosques and *surau* that held Friday prayers under its supervision regarding the texts and speeches which reads as follows:

“Hence, we sincerely beseech You, O Allah, strengthen our *iman* and creed according to that of Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah, accept our righteous deeds, cultivate our soul with good mannerisms, unite our hearts, bestow upon us *rizq* with blessings, enrich us with beneficial knowledge, protect us from disasters and save us from teachings that are outside the fold of Islam such as Qadiyani, deviant teachings such as Shia, and other teachings deemed as deviating from Islamic teachings or contradicting the creed of Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah.”³⁹

³⁸ “Ketua Polis Negara - Pendedahan Mengenai Syiah untuk Sedarkan Masyarakat.” *MStar*, December 13, 2013. <http://www.mstar.com.my/berita/berita-semasa/2013/12/13/pendedahan-mengenai-syiah-untuk-sedarkan-masyarakat--kpn/>

³⁹ Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor, “Khutbah Jumaat: Memperkasakan Wakaf Tunai,” JAIS-Portal E-Masjid, accessed November 14, 2018, [http://e-masjid.jais.gov.my/uploads/uploads/02.11.2018%20\(RUMI\)%20MEMPERKASAKAN%20WAKAF%20TUNAI.pdf](http://e-masjid.jais.gov.my/uploads/uploads/02.11.2018%20(RUMI)%20MEMPERKASAKAN%20WAKAF%20TUNAI.pdf); Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor, “Koleksi Khutbah Jumaat Edisi Rumi,” JAIS-Portal E-Masjid, accessed November 14, 2018, <http://e-masjid.jais.gov.my/index.php/ekhutbah/rumi>.

As is well known, the Department of Islamic Religious Development (JAKIM) is the agency responsible for ensuring the preservation of harmony of Islam and unity among the Muslim community in Malaysia. Regarding the issue of Shia, JAKIM in an explanation stated that all Shia teachings or beliefs in Malaysia deviate from the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah Islamic faith. JAKIM also refuted allegations that the Shia beliefs in Malaysia have similarities with Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah in the country. The Director-General of JAKIM, Tan Sri Othman Mustapha clarified that in Malaysia, the Imamiyyah Ithna 'Ashariyyah Shia or the Twelve Imams became active after the victory of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. His explanation in a statement during an interview by Bernama newspaper in Putrajaya is as follows:

"To date, the Shia teachings practiced by followers in Malaysia is the Twelve Imams stream which contradicts the teachings of Islam... Not only as deviant teachings, from the religious aspect, that if in the event of a violation of *fatwa* it would be subjected to action under the State Sharia Criminal Acts/Enactments, in addition, the security of the country is also taken into consideration by the Home Ministry as Shia movement cannot be active in this country because it is illegal."⁴⁰

Almost all the speech acts of the securitisation actors in this country leaned towards Shia's threats to the Muslim community, especially in terms of differences in *'aqidah* and *fiqh*. The securitisation actors in this country including the security agencies such as the Royal

⁴⁰ Bernama, "Semua Ajaran Syiah di Malaysia adalah Menyeleweng," *Astro Awani*, December 14, 2013, <http://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/semua-ajaran-syiah-di-malaysia-adalah-menyeleweng-jakim-26941>.

Malaysian Police, religious agencies such as JAKIM, the State Islamic Religious Department, the Mufti Department and others, as well as politicians and academics are of the view that the Shia movement in this country has to be contained because it challenges the core values that have long existed in this country. The core values, in this case, are the adherence of the Malaysian Muslim community to the beliefs of the Sunni.

According to Mohd Aizam, many scholars believe that Sunni is the first stream that was held by the Archipelago's Muslim community including Malaysia. The Muslim community in Malaysia is quite closed; not only do they not recognise other streams such as Shia beliefs, any religious teachings or practices viewed as contrary to traditional practices are considered an offense even though it is followed by other Sunni sects.⁴¹

Law Enforcement

Every year, the issue of Shia pertaining to security operations either by the security agencies or the Religious Departments will appear in the country's newspapers and media. This enforcement is based on the empowerment of the *fatwa* that was decided at the national level, which was then gazetted by the states in their respective states. In Malaysia, *fatwas* have an important position in Islamic legislation.⁴² It is not only recognised in the Sharia courts but also in Civil Courts. In Malaysia, there are two institutions that govern the *fatwas*, namely the National Council of Fatwa Committee (JFMK) and the State Fatwa

⁴¹ Mohd Aizam Mas'ud, "Syiah, Isu dan Perkembangannya di Malaysia," in Paper, Seminar Antarabangsa Gerakan Syiah dan Kesannya Terhadap Dunia Islam, UKM Bangi, Dewan Canselor Tun Abdul Razak (Dectar), April 21, 2016, 1-32.

⁴² Hajar Opir et al., "Analisa Fatwa Berkaitan Akidah dalam Filem di Malaysia: Sorotan Kajian," *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam*, Special Issues 1 (2020), 143.

Committee (JFN).⁴³ This shows the role of *fatwas* as one of the mediums to safeguard the importance of referent objects, which is in this context the purity and harmony of Islam in Malaysia.

The National Council of Fatwa Committee of the National Council of Islamic Affairs was established in early 1970 as provided in Article 11 of the National Council of Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI) Rules. The committee is a national *fatwa* body on any matter referred to it by the Conference of Rulers. However, the Committee is only acting as a coordinator to align the *fatwas* that affect the public interest. The *fatwa* decided by JFMK will be discussed again by the JFN who will decide whether the *fatwa* can be adopted and subsequently gazetted through the legal process at the State Legislative Assembly. Meanwhile, JFN was established under the Islamic religious administration's act or enactment of each state. The Committee will decide the *fatwa* applicable to all Muslims in its respective state. However, only the *fatwa* gazetted by the State Assembly is applicable to and binds Muslims in the state.⁴⁴ The gazetted *fatwa* shall then be enforced by the enforcement body which in this case may be deemed to represent the securitisation actors who can either be the religious or security agencies.

After the JFMK issued the *fatwa* at the national level on the obligation of Muslims in Malaysia to follow Sunni and forbade other beliefs including Shia, the states across the country then began to take the same action and decision. This action demonstrates the existence of securitisation elements in issues involving Shia. Among the securitisation elements highlighted through the gazette

⁴³ Arif Fahmi Md Yusof & Izawati Wook, "Fatwa dan Kedudukannya di Mahkamah Sivil," *Jurnal Pengurusan dan Penyelidikan Fatwa* 9 (2017), 24.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

of the fatwa banning Shia throughout the country are as follows:

- Jemaah Ulama Kelantan agreed with the decision made by the Muzakarah of the National Fatwa on 26th August 1996 that the Muslim community in Kelantan must adhere to Sunni and that Shia is deviant.⁴⁵
- The Terengganu Fatwa Committee made the same decision on 2nd September 1997 where it was emphasised that Muslims in Terengganu should only follow Sunni.
- The Penang Fatwa Committee issued a *fatwa* gazetted on 16th January 1997 with *sighah*, namely that the Shia teachings contradict Sunni and could be a threat to the unity of the *ummah*, religious integrity, national unity, and peace of the country. Therefore, the movement must be prevented from being spread in Penang.
- The Malacca Fatwa Committee gazetted the Shia ban on 24th July 1997 by explaining that Shia is a belief which has fundamental difference with Sunni that is followed by Muslims in this country such as not recognising the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman and so on.
- The Negeri Sembilan Fatwa Committee gazetted the Shia ban on 27th February 1998 with the assertion that Muslims in Negeri Sembilan should follow Islamic law and teachings based on Sunni in terms of *'aqidah*, *shari'ah* and morality, and any propagation otherwise is therefore prohibited.
- The Kedah Fatwa Committee gazetted the ban on Shia on 18th February 1999;
- The Perak Fatwa Committee gazetted the ban on Shia on 1st March 2012 because it was found to add or reduce the pronouncement of the

⁴⁵ Mohd Fauzi, "Asha'irah Sebagai Rujukan dalam Fatwa Syiah," 119.

shahadah, obeying the Imams and assuming they are infallible, rejecting Hadiths narrated by the Prophet's companions and others.

- The Johor Fatwa Committee gazetted the Shia ban on 16th February 2012 by stipulating that Muslims in Johor must follow Islamic law and teachings based on the Sunni in terms of *'aqidah* based on Asha'irah and Maturidiyyah, and *shari'ah* based on the Shafi'i sect. However, three venerable schools, namely Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali can be referred to in solving certain problems while in matters of morality, it should be in line with Islamic morals.
- The Selangor Fatwa Committee gazetted the Shia ban on 17th October 2013, asserting that Shia beliefs and teachings contradict the views of Sunni because of differences such as assuming the Imams are infallible, practicing the *taqiyyah* concept, believing that only Sayyidina 'Ali compiled the Qur'an perfectly, and many others.⁴⁶

From all the *fatwas* and *fatwa* gazetted at the state level, almost all came to the conclusion that Shia deviates in the context of *'Imamah'* which is linked to the pillar of religion other than to state that the Imam is infallible either from the major sin or the minor sin. In addition, Shia followers adhere to the practice of excessive condemnation of the Prophet's companions and lament over Sayyidina Husayn, the grandson of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), especially on 10 Muharram (Islamic calendar) each year. This is regarded as contrary to one of the existing core values of the country which is to adhere to the teachings of Islam based on Sunni of which the Sunni

⁴⁶ "Fatwa Mengenai Fahaman Syiah di Pulau Pinang, Malaysia," E-SMAF Islam.gov., accessed November 11, 2018, <http://e-smaf.islam.gov.my/e-smaf/fatwa/fatwa/find/pr/11270>.

highly regard all Companions of Rasulullah SAW and never degrade their status.⁴⁷

In terms of law enforcement, the Shia is often confronted by the Islamic Religious Department and security forces. This shows that although the Shia issue has never been declared a national security threat, it has elements of securitisation. Up until 2017, a total of 803 arrests were made involving Shia followers of which 759 were Malaysian citizens while the other 44 were foreigners mainly from Iraq, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, and other countries. All those detained were mostly held for spreading doctrines or practices contrary to state *fatwa*.⁴⁸

For example, the detention of 26 individuals by the Johor State Religious Department during a raid in Taman Daya, Johor Bahru in October 2016 was made under Section 4 which is the prohibition on spreading doctrines and practices contrary to state *fatwa*, Section 9 that is defying religious authority, and Section 12 which is propagating Islamic opinions contrary to the *fatwa*.⁴⁹ In Selangor, detention and investigation of Shia followers is chargeable under the Sharia Criminal Acts/Enactments of the States. For example, under the Syariah Criminal Offences (Selangor) Enactment 1995, Shia teachings can be prosecuted under Section 13 which is opinion contrary to the *fatwa*. Under this section, any person who gives, propagates or disseminates any opinion concerning any issue, Islamic teachings or Islamic law contrary to any

⁴⁷ Mohd Aizam Mas'od and Mohd Fauzi Hamat, "Analisis Definisi Sahabat dalam Beberapa Karya Syiah Melayu," *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 20(1) (2018), 3.

⁴⁸ Interview with Research Officers, Special Branch, Royal Police Department, Kuala Lumpur, April 9, 2018.

⁴⁹ Aedi Asri, "JAINJ akan Dakwa 26 Individu Hadir Majlis Syiah di Johor," *FMT News*, October 23, 2016. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/2016/10/23/jainj-akan-dakwa-26-individu-hadir-majlis-syiah-di-johor/>.

fatwa for the time being enforced in this State shall be guilty of an offense and shall be liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding three thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or both.⁵⁰

Using Shia as a name for an association is also an offense under the Societies Act as the Shia Society is not registered and it is illegal under Section 5 (1) of the Societies Act 1966 through the gazette of P.U. (A) 238/2013 on 24th July 2013. In one of the observations of one of the *Hauzah* in Selangor in October 2018, the association used the name "The Shia Civil Society of Malaysia (Jafari) addressed at No. 12C, SG SG 3/2, Taman Sri Gombak, Batu Caves, Malaysia". The informant explained that even though it was not a registered association, its existence was informed to the security authorities. Among the rationale presented by the Home Ministry for not approving it is that its existence would be seen to be in violation of the *fatwa* that has been decreed by the State Fatwa Committee and it was feared that it could trigger unease and anxiety among Muslims in the country.

The implication of the ban on the Shia Association of Malaysia also led to the following actions:

- No person may reuse Shia Association of Malaysia's name to be registered as an association pursuant to the provisions of Section 7 (3) (b) of the Societies Act 1996.
- All accounts, assets and properties of the Shia Association of Malaysia will be submitted to the Malaysian Department of Insolvency.
- No person shall hold office, carry out work as a member, permit a meeting in the building, incite, induce fee or assistance, publish, and act on behalf of or as a representative of the Shia Association of

⁵⁰ Mohd Aizam, "Syiah, Isu dan Perkembangannya," 1-32.

Malaysia. Those responsible for carrying out any activities of the Shia Association of Malaysia will be investigated and charged in Court for committing an offense under the Societies Act 1966.

This matter shows that there is an element preventing further spread of Shia in Malaysia through associations as well as communal activities. One of the securitisation elements defined by Buzan includes any effort and actions found to be able to affect and influence the referent object, which in this context is the Muslim community in Malaysia. Apart from that, in the securitisation approach, if any issue is perceived to disturb a referent object within the country, the government will begin to take extraordinary actions across the existing political system. At such a time or in such a situation, the government would take extraordinary action beyond the norms of the custom.⁵¹ In relation to the issue of the Shia in Malaysia, extraordinary action has been taken by the government. The arrest of six Shia followers under the Internal Security Act (ISA) received coverage by the local and international media.

According to Marcinkowski, the news of the arrest of six Malay Shias under the ISA received media coverage internally and overseas such as by Shianews.com. The news source stated that the six arrested were Norman Basha, a worker in the construction sector who was arrested on 13th October 2000 at his home where several religious books were seized. Zainal bin Talib, a businessman was also arrested on the same day. Mahadi Asab, a self-employed was detained by authorities between 13th and 20th October 2000. Syed Hassan Al-Attas, also a self-employed, was arrested in early January 2001 and Mustafa bin Safar, a businessman was arrested

⁵¹ Emmers, "Securitization", 131-144.

on 31st October 2000 and Syed Mokhtar Al-Haddad was detained at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on 5th November 2000. All those arrested had undergone varying phases of detention that is either being released early, given house arrest, or being held for almost two years. However, all these detainees were convicted of the same offense, namely Shia beliefs.⁵² While there is the argument that the detention was made in a political capacity, the study believes that if there was no element of threat to national security, the security agency would not act as such since it could involve legal issues.

In addition, since 2010, religious and security authorities have been consistent in ensuring that this movement does not spread by carrying out integrated prevention operations. However, the number of arrests of Shia followers has not been consistent. For example, in 2011, the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) detained four Shia followers in Taman Sri Gombak who were organising the Fatimah al-Zahra's Birthday Celebration at Dataran Padang Rakyat, Taman Sri Gombak. Meanwhile, around December of 2010, JAIS arrested nearly 128 people believed to be Shia followers in Selangor.⁵³ This indicates inconsistent arrest rates; however, arrests are still being made in each operation.

Additionally, the Melaka Islamic Religious Department (JAIM) in an operation in August 2011 seized 35,000 books and leaflets related to Shia which were packaged and ready to be posted to all mosques and Government Departments. All the books and leaflets are listed as banned materials by the Ministry of Home Affairs. In the operation, six of the detained were

⁵² Marcinkowski, "Aspects of Shi'ism," 45.

⁵³ Jimadie Shah Othman, "Empat Anggota Syiah di Tahan JAIS," *Malaysiakini*, May 24, 2011, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/164969>.

identified as teenagers.⁵⁴ In 2013, the Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIP) detained two individuals, including a woman, for being involved with Shia beliefs and teachings. In the raid, JAIP seized books, compact discs, and posters. All were detained under Section 16 of the Perak Crimes (Syariah) Enactment 1992, for defying the mufti's fatwa by possessing books and documents relating to Shia.⁵⁵

In 2014, JAIP once again rocked the country when 114 suspected Shia followers including eight foreigners were detained in a raid in the Bintang Hijau Forest Reserve near the Gerik border. In the raid, 54 men, 28 women, 12 boys and 20 girls were arrested during a Shia related function. The eight foreigners detained included three from Thailand, two from Myanmar, two from Pakistan and one from Indonesia.⁵⁶ In 2016, after receiving complaints from the public, 32 Pakistani nationals were detained at Batu Caves, Selangor for organising an event which has religious elements similar to Shia beliefs.⁵⁷ In 2018, the Kelantan Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JAHEIK) raided and detained about 50 individuals believed to be Shia followers at a premise at Jalan Sri Cemerlang, Kota Bahru, Kelantan. The

⁵⁴ "Melaka Siasat Dalang Sebar Fahaman Syiah," *Malaysiakini*, August 27, 2011, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/174300>.

⁵⁵ "Doktor Wanita Terlibat Syiah Ditahan di Taiping," *Perak Today*, August 6, 2013, <https://peraktoday.com.my/2013/08/doktor-wanita-terlibat-syiah-ditahan-di-taiping/>.

⁵⁶ "114 Pengikut Syiah Ditahan," *Malaysia Today*, March 10, 2014. <https://www.malaysia-today.net/2014/03/10/114-pengikut-syiah-ditahan/>.

⁵⁷ "Syiah: 32 Warga Pakistan ditangkap JAIS Semasa Sambutan Hari Asyura," *Berita Benar*, October 12, 2016, <https://www.benarnews.org/malay/berita/my-pakistan-syiah-161012-10122016175351.html>.

operation was carried out together with the security authorities, namely PDRM.⁵⁸

All of these operations indicate that the law enforcement process has taken effect on Shia followers and movement in this country. It describes one of the efforts undertaken by the authorities as the securitisation actor to contain and curb this movement from continuing to spread and expand within the country. Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, former Inspector-General of Police explained that even though the issue of Shia is not a problem of the RMP, based on an understanding with the Islamic Religious Department regarding offenses involving the Sharia Act, RMP would always assist as it concerns maintaining national harmony and peace. In fact, Tan Sri Khalid had instructed his team to assist the religious authorities in enforcing the *fatwa* against the Shia believers and all related activities. Tan Sri Khalid even explained that it was in line with the government's policy of preventing any spread of Shia in the country.⁵⁹

Summary

Based on the discussion, it is clear that Shia teachings and beliefs which began to take root among Malaysians after the 1979 Iranian Revolution have become a polemic and have continuously been discussed to this day. However, what makes Malaysia different from other Muslim countries, especially in the Southeast Asian Region is that it has implemented extensive preventive elements including the decision of the Muzakarah of Fatwa Committee on the Shia ban in 1996 which was later gazetted by the State Fatwa Committee. Although the

⁵⁸ "JAHEIK Serbu Pengikut Syiah," *Sinar Harian*, October 15, 2018, <http://www.sinarharian.com.my/edisi/kelantan/jahaeik-serbu-pengikut-syiah-1.874492>.

⁵⁹ Anabelle Lee, "Bekas IGP Khalid Arah Polis Bantu Kuatkuasakan Fatwa Syiah," *Malaysiakini*, August 28, 2018. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/440715>.

country has not declared Shia as a threat to national security, based on the analysis through the elements of the securitisation approach, the issue of Shia has been shown to have the potential to pose a threat if it is not properly managed.

As previously stated, Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country that adheres to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* beliefs. The spread of Shiite ideology in the country, which contrasts the identity and norms of the Sunni Muslim community, may affect Malaysia's Muslim unity. The majority of the Muslims in Malaysia are unable to accept other Islamic teachings such as Shiites that are contradictory to Sunni teachings.

Although there has been no physical violence reported between Sunni and Shiite fractions thus far, security authorities such as the PDRM, are cautious that it may grow into physical violence which may affect the national security of Malaysia. Thus, the actions taken by the securitisation actors such as the political elite groups, the government including security and religious agencies, the civil society, and so on, are efforts to maintain the sanctity of Islam and the unity of the Muslim community in this country, even though the country has never declared formally the Shia as a threat to the national security.

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