

PERTUBUHAN JAMAAH ISLAH MALAYSIA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE (1991-2012)

MASZLEE MALIK

Kuliyah of Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University of Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail : maszlee@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

'Good governance' agenda promoted by international institutions and other aid agencies as part of the globalisation phenomenon, proposes amongst others, the active role of a civil society as part of the process towards development. The effective functioning of a civil society is believed to facilitate the achievement of 'good' governance. Currently, the dynamism of global civil society movements has shifted to a new dimension to incorporate culture and faiths into the discourse on development, economy, politics and governance in a more progressive approach. Faith and religion, in tandem, have been identified empirically as another motivator for the civil society activism, hence, its distinctive role in development and good governance. Such phenomenon has been addressed in the many circles of academia. This paper will try to explore the role of faith in mobilizing civil society towards the achievement of what is known as 'good governance' in Malaysia by looking into Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM) as its case study.

Keywords: *Anwar Ibrahim, civil society, dakwah, Faith Based Organisation, good governance, Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia, reformasi*

Introduction

Good governance is made up of complex relationships between both the private and public sectors along with the civil society, with the equilibrium power amongst them to maintain the practise of sustainable democracy (Eigen, 1999; Hubbard, 1999: 39). Civil society organisations have long been recognized worldwide as the provider of relief and the promoter of human rights. Likewise, they have also been widely recognized as the essential 'third' sector actor and as critical contributors to economic growth and the civic and social infrastructure essential for a minimum quality of life for the people (Ikekeonwu, Randell & Touwen, 2007; Fukuyama, 2001; OECD, 1995). Currently, civil society movements are acting as important agents for promoting good governance such as transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability.

In recent decades, the contribution of domestic and global (international) civil society organizations, especially nongovernmental organizations (NGO), towards the process of development has expanded rampantly as a result of globalisation and the ICT revolution (Turner, 1998; Anheier, Glasius & Kaldor, 2001; Anheier & Cho, 2005; Ghaus-Pasha, 2005). With this growth comes new and larger expectations for the contributions these organizations might make to governance. Such global development inspired the participants of the 'Sixth Global Forum on reinventing Government', to reach the consensus about the significant role of the civil society in the new paradigm of governance (Eigen, 2005).

On the other hand, due to the global resurgence of religion and its encroachment into the public sphere, a new trend of incorporating cultures, faiths and traditions into the discourse of development, economy, politics and governance in a more progressive dimension has become an emerging fad. Appropriately, religious devotion has become a fundamental motive for many social movements across the globe. Religious actors and institutions in such situations act as agents of advocacy, funding, innovation, empowerment, social movements, and service delivery, which ultimately contribute towards the socio-economic development as well the political life of a nation (Malik, 2016). This recent trend has inspired the *Global Civil Society Report 2004/5* (2005: 45) to point out the essentials of incorporating transcendental dimension into any current analysis on socio-development.

Based on such a rationale, the experience of *Pertubuhan Jamaah Islam Malaysia* (JIM) as part of many other religion-based civil society organisations will be empirically studied. As a product of the 1970s global Islamic revivalism phenomenon, JIM initially emerged as an Islamic movement in Malaysia with certain idealism. However, it later turned into a civil society movement in responding to the local context and needs. All the way through nearly two decades since it was established, the organisation has been contributing to the process of what is known today as ‘good governance’ through its activities. Similarly, JIM’s dynamism has been subtly resulting towards the ideal of good governance by empowering citizens, building the third sector institutions, participating in the political process of accountability, and demanding for the rule of law as will be seen in this paper. *Ergo*, this paper will try to explain how religion can contribute towards good governance through the framework of a civil society. Furthermore, it will descriptively examine the role of JIM as an Islamic civil society organisation acting as a constructive element in nation-building and enhancing the goal of good governance.

Good Governance: A Definition

The concept is believed by many to be the modern way of ensuring development, harmony and a peaceful atmosphere amongst the world’s population in the future through reforming the administration of delivery and services. ‘Good Governance’, as an international agenda, is closely related to the major factor in governance, the government, in comparison with other notions of ‘governance’¹, as it combines ideas about political authority, the management of economic and social resources, and the capacity of governments to formulate sound policies and then perform their functions effectively, efficiently and equitably (Blunt, 1995), which imply a set of rules (*system*) governing the actions of *individuals* and organizations (*society*) and the negotiations of differences between them that could only be crystallized through proper *institutions* (Van Dok, 1999).

Tracing the proceedings that led to the surfacing of ‘good governance’ as a substantive concept or reform agenda, we may possibly conclude that ‘development’ was the concern and the major aspiration of its early initiators. Additionally, good governance materialized on the World Bank’s agenda as one of the themes of the Bank’s 1991 Annual Development Economic Conference (World Bank, 1992b) (Is there a ‘b’ there). In its report, the Bank associates the attainment of development with good governance proviso (is this right?). Furthermore, the Bank conceptualizes ‘good governance’ to indicate the manner in which power and authority are exercised to prepare a conducive environment for development “in the management of a country’s economic and social resources” (World Bank, 1992a: 1).

This conception of ‘good governance’ became extensively discussed and debated after the above-mentioned report. Other international institutions such as UNDP, USAID and OECD (do you need to spell out the acronyms first) which deal with similar development issues,

¹ Such a notion has been clearly defined by the founder of the term in its modern usage -the World Bank- in its report which states that ‘governance’ refers to: “the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s fair” (World Bank, 1989: 60).

afterwards redefined the term according to their particular aim, aspiration, outline and policies. According to them, the realm of good governance is not only confined to the reform of the government that governs, but also includes other entities such as public policies, institutions, civil societies, system of economic relationships, or a role for the non-governmental sector in the business of the state. In sum, good governance, thus, expresses approval not only for a type of government (usually democracy) and it relates to political values (*i.e.* human rights) but also for certain kinds of additional components (Smith, 2007: 4).

Leftwich (1993) identifies three strands to good governance: systemic, political and administrative. The systemic use of governance implies that the process exceeds the normal understanding of 'government' which includes the "distribution of both internal and external political and economic power". The political use of governance means "a state enjoying both legitimacy and authority, derived from a democratic mandate", while the administrative use refers to "an efficient, open accountable and audited public service". Hence, based on these strands, the means to achieve 'good governance' are formulated. Similarly, the characteristics of good governance must be developed based on the objectives agreed by the stakeholders (Bovaird and Loffer, 2003:10).

The evolving nature of globalization and the practice of governance drove the World Bank to develop further concepts of good governance. In their study released in May 2005, the World Bank presented the latest update of its aggregate governance indicators for 2004 for 209 countries and territories, designed to measure the following six dimensions of 'good' governance: voice and accountability, political stability and non-violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2005). The WGI evaluates the governance performance of those countries from these six major dimensions or characteristics. Those countries with high scores in the afore-mentioned areas are considered good governed countries while those with poor scores are considered bad governed countries.

To conclude, 'good governance' is aiming to attain justice, avoiding dictatorship, ensuring the participation of people in policy making, eliminating corruption and administration misconducts, and upholding civil liberty. Its proponents consider good governance to be the major factor of economic growth, and thus development. Hence, with good governance, the aid given will be effectively utilized and fairly distributed for the benefit of the people (Nanda, 2006). Those elements by their nature are interrelated. The implementation of any single element with the absence of the others will never guarantee the efficiency of governance as believed by the promoters of the good governance approach.

The aforesaid elements or characteristics could be accumulated as the good governance *leitmotif* which aims to achieve the following principles (Van Dok, 1999: 13): (i) Conducive framework for the *private sector*; (ii) *Market economy* with stable, development-oriented economic and budgetary policies; (iii) *Rule of law and transparency* in all areas of the public sector and combating corruption; (iv) Competent, efficient and responsible government and administration committed to *accountability*; (v) Effective government and administration at regional and local levels through *empowerment*; (vi) *Democratic* political system and a pluralist society; (vii) Active *participation* of the people in political decision-making and development processes; (viii) Decisive role of *civil society*, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs); (ix) Efficient national *education and health care system*; (x) *Freedom of the press* and independence of the media; (xi) Protection of *human rights*.

Civil Society in Good Governance and Development

Civil society in its mundane definition can be understood as a sphere that is separate from the state and the market and formed by people who have common needs, interests and values (Ghaus Pasha, 2005). It can be defined too as a civic space that occupies the middle ground between the government and the private sectors. In essence, it is a

vacuum where people engage neither in government activities nor in commerce. Lehning coins that this ‘civic space’ makes people exist as public beings, hence “it shares with government a sense of the public sphere and a regard for the general good and the common wealth, but unlike the government, it makes no claims to exercise a monopoly on legitimate coercion. Rather, it is a voluntary realm devoted to public goods. It is constituted by freely associated individuals and groups and, unlike the private sector, it aims at finding a common ground along with integrative and collaborative modes of action.”

Civil Society is a sphere situated between the state and the market which can serve as a promoter of democratic values, provide models of active citizenship and temper (is it tamper, not sure myself) the power of the state (Kuchukeeva & O’Loughlin, 2003: 557-58). This sphere, Neace argues, is made up of autonomous, freely chosen, intermediary organizations that bridge the gap between the state and the individual. Civil society also functions to make democracy work and provides opportunities for individuals to practice citizenship (Salmenniemi, 2005: 737). In addition, Taylor breaks down the democracy functions of civil society in facilitating civic engagement and participation into three aspects: first, civil society should teach citizens ‘norms and values’ synonymous with democracy; secondly, that ‘autonomous voluntary associations’ should act as a counterweight to the state and thereby hold it to account; and thirdly, ‘autonomous voluntary associations’ should be capable of working in a partnership arrangement, serving not only as a ‘watchdog to the state, but also as a resource’ in developing democracy (Taylor, 2006: 196).

It is this civil domain where traditional civic institutions such as foundations, schools, churches, public-interest organizations and other voluntary associations properly belong. UNDP identifies the civil society realm as a space defined by the activities such as attending church, mosque or synagogue, doing community service, contributing to a charity, or being a member of a sports club. Equally, it could also be defined as a

sphere of voluntary associations that serves as social spaces in which the members of the association reinforce their social webs and articulate their (moral) relationships. Even so, a renewed interest in civil society which emerged during the 90s, pushed the civil society connotation as a new emerging trend towards democracy. Stepan insists that democracy is only considered consolidated in a country if the development of a robust and critical civil society to help the check and balance of the state is constantly generating (Stepan, 2005: 37-57). This new phenomenon opens up a new space for civil society as a result of the need to fill in the increasing gaps in social services created by structural adjustment and other reforms in developing countries (Ghaus-Pasha, 2005: 2).

In sum, civil society is a term that refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil societies are mainly populated by organizations such as registered charities, the development of non-governmental organizations, community groups, women’s organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.”²

Within such notion and framework, civil society organizations were (or is it ‘are’) viewed as a potential factor to enhance the process of good governance by various methods. As pressure groups, they can play their role as policy analysis and advocacy; as watchdog groups, they can have a large role in monitoring state performance and the actions and behaviours of public officials; as social change agents, they can have a large portion in moulding the society by building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices; and as political agents, they can bring changes to the political atmosphere through the mobilization of certain

² http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm.

constituencies, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized sections of masses, to participate fully in politics and public affairs; and as third sector industries, they can participate in stimulating development effort by improving the well-being of community members (Ghaus-Pasha, 2005: 2). In the same way, Edwards and Foley outline three major roles of civil society in the process of governance: providing services, holding the government and market accountable by representing or advocating for citizens, and building the capacity of citizens to participate in the realm of governance (Edwards & Foley, 2001: 1-14).

Much has been written in describing the constructive relation between religion and faith within the comprehensive framework of the current notion of governance. Religious people and institutions as other actors of governance, as discussed earlier, would successfully play the role of agents of advocacy, funding, innovation, empowerment, social movements, and service delivery, hence contributing towards the development of the socio-economic as well the political life of a nation (Haynes, 2007). With regard to such an argument, Armstrong asserts that neglecting faith influence, which she coins as '*mitos*' in the modern human galaxy is indeed a great loss for their life (Armstrong, 2000). The failure of incorporating the *mitos* in the reality life will lead the community to go astray and to calamity. In such a way, religion, as part of culture, is worth to be considered in the studies of governance as another facet of globalization. Equally, the engagement of current global religious movements in the civil society realm enhances the participation of people towards development (Haynes, 2007).

Religion, Governance and Civil Society

Under the modernity project, religion has been perceived as a dogma that is against 'rational' or 'universal' (liberal) values that is not welcomed in the public sphere, or more precisely in the political-economical fields. Such precepts are to be understood from the historical perspective as mentioned in the previous chapter of

the failure of church-state domination over the people. Initially, since the decline of religious domination in Western soil, the constant struggle to eliminate religion from the public sphere became a norm in the major discourse of philosophers, scholars and most Western thinkers.

In reality, the contemporary return of religion goes beyond the 'transcendental' border and encroaches the area in which faiths were once totally banned. Religion from the consequential and functional perspectives will lead society to appreciate the innate precariousness of the *nomos* (meaningful order) (Tipton, 1984: 282-84). Equally, from a phenomenological perspective, religion gives the human race a 'sacred canopy' against the threat of the meaninglessness (*anomie*) of the world (Berger, 1967: 28). However, the modern positivistic approach to the discourse of development and governance which devalues religion and other normative elements to stress the quantifiable aspects of human experience rather than the meaning will never be an efficient tool for the functionalist view of religion. The only choice is to shift towards more interpretative and consequentialistic approaches, which seek to interpret human action and focus on understanding the meanings people give to their own actions and the consequence of those actions to the topic of study, which in this research is development and good governance. The emphasis hence is moved from mere observation and description (what is) to understanding (why and how) hence challenging the conventional value-free proposition of positivism (Thompson and Woodward, 2000: 52-3).

Regarding the 'why' and 'how' questions posed earlier, the philosophy of ethics represents a useful tool to understand the significant nature of religion. For instance, the philosophy of ethics raises the question of goodness. This question results in many ethical theories each of which leads to different conclusions or answers to the question 'What should one do?' or 'How should one live?' (*i.e.* Kantian ethics, Aristotelian ethics, Mill's utilitarianism, *etc.*). In the same line, it also examines moral claims which underpin a society's core values and social norms. Akin to other ethical and moral theories,

religion, as another source of ethics and established doctrines, provides substantial answers for those questions. By applying the typology of 'tradition' according to the definition by Alasdair MacIntyre (2007 [1981]), religion is to be understood as a conception of 'what good living is about', which is then expressed through social practices performed by believers. Within such concepts, we could conceptualise an early assumption of how religion (as a set of ethical propositions along with its theoretical structure) would fit into the discourse of development and governance.

Similar to the 'tradition' typology of religion, Lincoln (2003: 5-7) attributes four (what he calls polythetic and flexible) domains as the characteristics of religion: (i) It entails a transcendental discourse (from its claims to authority and truth); (ii) It imposes a set of practices with the goal of producing a proper world according to the religious discourses to which the practices are connected; (iii) It requires a community whose members construct their identity with reference to the religious discourse and its practices; (iv) It depends on institutions that regulate religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendental value. Lincoln also implicitly constructs religion with a beyond-transcendental and more comprehensive framework.

Furthermore, religion as a form of ethical doctrine could profoundly act as an agent to attain the internal good in development through its doctrines on social cohesion, mutual co-operation and a virtue-based community. Practically, the process of development is not an axiological neutral human activity, but like other activities, it is impregnated with values and ethics (Cortina, 2007). There are also other culturally traditional ethics and religious ethics that are worth incorporating into the discourse. It is from this premise that the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* is worth employing to explain how ethics and tradition could enhance society to cooperate in attaining the *telos* (the internal good) and the same goes for religion. By applying MacIntyre's Aristotelian insight into the role of tradition in human life, Cortina (2007: 5-6) concludes that traditional bonds

can motivate the work of development in motivating society to attain the 'internal good' within certain ethical and moral frameworks through the cultivation of virtues by different social agents according to certain models facilitated by political, economical, and citizens' institutions based on specific philosophical foundation. With such a framework, she claims that people are not means for other ends, but are valuable in themselves.

Following this line of argument, governance encompasses the discourse of politics, economics and public administration, thus is value-loaded at its most elementary level and shaped by individual values derived from individual worldviews, as part of individual social construct. Since factors affecting worldviews differ, different worldviews exist leading to different 'systems' for different peoples (Asutay, 2007). Religion and faith are amongst the major determining factors that fundamentally construct worldviews. The meaning (*nomos*) that religion brings through its ontological dimension leads to the construction of distinguishing narratives to development through the governance process. Accordingly, this distinctive religion-based framework represents the endogeneity of non-Western discourses on governance, hence creating narratives instead of the meta-narrative of the modernist projection of universal values to allow religion to have its role in the creation of alternative means in the realm of governance (Malik, 2013).

To conclude, this new paradigm of how religion and governance can work together in theory and practice paves a different way to look at the alternative means to the good governance agenda. Akin to the aforementioned examples on the contribution religion could give to the good governance agenda as part of the new global *fad du jour* through faith-based organisations from all over the world, similar results could also be traced from the involvement of faith-based organisations in Malaysia. The following paragraphs give a critical and descriptive assessment of the *Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) which is both an Islamic movement (faith-based organisation) and civil society frontier contribution towards the practice of good governance since the early days

of its establishment. Besides its persuasion of attaining Islamic ideals its members are adherent to and which is the organisation's *raison d'être*, the means capitalised to achieve those goals contribute implicitly and explicitly towards the crystallisation of good governance. This can be clearly seen from the brief explanation of the movement's discourse and activities in the subsequent paragraphs.

Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM): A Genesis

Established on 27th July 1990, *Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) was the transformation of Muslim students' *dakwah* movements mainly from the UK Malaysian Muslims' Islamic Representative Council (also known as IRC), USA Malaysian Islamic Study Group (also known as MISG) and also local universities *dakwah* activists (Anwar, 1987: 29-43; Nair, 1997). As part of the 1970s global Islamic resurgence actors, the founders of the organisation mostly received their tertiary education abroad and were exposed to the ideology and vision of the two most influenced (or is it influential?) Islamic movements in the UK and the USA, the Egyptian based Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* or also known as *Ikhwan*) and the South Asian based *Jamaat Islami*. It was from these two movements that JIM's founders were inspired to initially articulate their *dakwah* (missionary) mission (Malik, 2012).

The organisation's initial vision since its establishment was an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood ideals of establishing an Islamic State implementing Islamic *Shari'ah*, but within the Malaysian context (Roald, 1994: 279; A. Hamid, 2008: 217). It saw that reform and change could only happen gradually through a bottom-up process. This ideal exemplifies the adherent of the organisation to the principle of *Islah* (reform) process, which is to be accomplished through a comprehensive *tarbiyyah* (educational) approach within the society (Roald, 1994: 279). This '*Islah*' method could be obviously seen throughout its pro-active organisation of educational-based activities since the very first day of operation (Sungib, 1996). With an emphasis to develop 'reformist individuals' (*musleh*), then turn to 'virtuous families' which later

evolve to 'communities of the pious', JIM believes that the flow will contribute significantly to the ultimatum change of the state system at a further level (Sungib, 1996; 1997). At this stage, JIM adopts the *homeostasis* approach in uplifting Islam in Malaysia *via* maintaining and strengthening Islamic commitment among the Malay-Muslim leaders of the period (Sungib, 1997; 1998).

Throughout the phase, JIM rigorously concentrated on the internal development of the organisation as well as the missionary and educational programs in outreaching the society mostly amongst the middle-class Muslim Malays. It was understood that at this period, Anwar Ibrahim who was then the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia had managed to convince JIM leaders to bring the organisation into the centre rather than isolating itself in the periphery. The aforementioned diplomatic approach successfully created for JIM a space for the enhancement of its reform works amongst its members as well as to the larger society. Nevertheless, at this level, the comprehensive human capital production within JIM's structure and activities, despite its missionary works, operates only in a semi-exclusive approach based on its motto "Community Building With Islam" (Literally translated from Bahasa Melayu: *Bersama Islam Membina Masyarakat*).

According to such discursive, the production of reformist individuals by JIM only works within the radius of its internal mechanism. Consequently, from the political economic perspective, JIM represents an Islamic experiment in accumulating (religious) social capital, which is recently acknowledged as an important actor in the good governance agenda for political and market efficiency at the micro level. In tandem, the major discourse that dominates the organisation during the period implies a tactical and gradual transition of paradigm from the altered (not sure of this word) emulation of traditional *ikhwani* political opposition approach towards a more contextual and state-friendly attitude in JIM's orientation. In the same token, JIM remains apolitical during these early years of establishment and maintains the *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah* (missionary and educational) image in

establishing its mission and vision. JIM's contribution to nation-building was seen through its relentless effort of education and promoting virtues amongst the people (Sungib, 1997).

Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM) and Good Governance

JIM also plays an effective role in providing social welfare for the society through its youth development programs (KRJ) and half-way houses (*Raudatus Sakinah* (a shelter cum rehabilitation house for problematic teens mostly with the unexpected early pregnancy cases), and *Hidayah* Centre (shelter house for new Muslims that have been abandoned by their families because of their conversion). Its youth development program has been a landmark and a compulsory niche for the empowered local branches to enhance JIM's contribution to the society in the field of youth works. It is these youth activities that have enabled the JIM branches to infiltrate the state-funded schools and to spread its ideal in building a better community through conscious individuals (Malik, 2012). While in child development, JIM's child development programs are implemented through its chain of nurseries and kindergartens owned and administered by either its women's wing (i.e. *rangkaian tadika Amal*) or the empowered local branches which continue to provide early education for the children of members as well as for the community (Malik, 2012).

On the same weight, JIM, through its women's wing, also dynamically campaigns for issues concerning women, children and family at the national level (Siraj, 2005). Realizing that society needs the involvement of Muslim women in the Islamic movements, *Wanita* JIM focuses on being the spokesperson for issues relating to women through its voice and its writing, addressing and preventing social problems through establishing institutions that could lend a hand, and building secure networks with other organizations. *Wanita* JIM, in essence, also has several social responsibilities as it was established to serve as well as to educate society on good moral conduct and to uphold the *sharia'ah* law (Personal Communication, Harlina Haliza Siraj, 30 June 2013).

Thus, JIM's Women's Wing has organized many programmes and activities to establish a link with the society at large and to spread the Islamic culture among the community (Siraj, 2000: 105). In achieving such a mission, the women's wing consistently engages with the society at all levels through its activities and the media. Furthermore, JIM aims to place its women's wing in a prominent position with a vibrant role at both the national and international levels through networking, media engagement and social involvements. Likewise, JIM also aims to build a corps of women specialists in various fields such as health, law, *Shari'ah*, education and entrepreneurship (Mohamad, 2004: 142).

Similarly, JIM has always envisioned Malaysia to be a free country, where the members can rightfully move as an Islamic movement for the sake of exhibiting Islam's true beauty to the world. While maintaining its status as a non-partisan political actor, JIM adheres to its 'principle-centered' position working within the framework of 'citizen-politics' (*politik warga*). As a result of these principles, JIM has decided not to become a political party, or to act like one. JIM declares that its support is for whichever party or coalition that would benefit Islam, Muslims and the people. JIM believes that despite its limitation as a non-partisan NGO, it can still play its roles in shaping the direction of politics in the country, which the members believe to be part of the Islamic imperative of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*) (Personal Communication, Zaid Kamarudin, 24 December 2012).

Nevertheless, it was the *Reformasi* (reformation) wave in 1998 that awakened the organisation to move forward to further engagements (Hassan, 2002: 104; Kaneko, 2002: 196). *Reformasi* as a spontaneous reaction towards the sack of Anwar Ibrahim from his deputy premiership post by the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Muhammad had created a new phase for JIM's *dakwah* horizon. The mass dissatisfaction amongst people for the mistreatment of Anwar had pushed JIM members to the streets together with other political parties and civil movements demanding justice for Anwar after he was detained without trial, based on the

organisation's principle-centricity stance (Sungib, 1998). Additionally, the *reformasi* groups also demanded more rights and freedom for the people which were curtailed under the ruling regime. During the *reformasi*, UMNO, the dominating component in the ruling party coalition (BN), was allegedly associated with corruption, nepotism and cronyism by the people. Mahathir himself, as accused by Anwar Ibrahim, was responsible implicitly and explicitly for the practice of such a culture that later became the major *fad* of the party (Weiss, 2006).

The *reformasi* phenomenon had led to a strategic paradigm shift by JIM as a movement. The organisation metamorphosed from a non-partisan organisation dealing mostly with evangelical style activities to a proactive civil society involved directly with politics (Malik, 2012). This turning point, or what was famously uttered by its then president, Sungib as the 'leap' (*lonjakan*) by its members to be more inclusive by actively participating directly with politics, thus locating itself within the map of the Malaysian political life (Sungib, 1998).

Apart from their demands for Mahathir, the then Prime Minister, to step down from his post, the *reformasi* groups also called for 'good governance' reform in the government represented through their call for real effort in the eradication of corruption in the governance process, the abolishment of the detention without trial 'internal security act' (ISA) and the end of cronyism, nepotism and patronage culture in the state administration (Hassan, 2002: 104; Weiss, 2006: 162-91). At this stage, JIM believes that it must fully capitalise the democratic structure and space in the country to fully pursue its '*islah*' agenda in prescriptive and preventive ways along with its agenda for nation development (Sungib, 1998).

This, however, did not divert JIM from its initial identity as a *da'wah* organization that thrives on the *islah* endeavor through its *da'wah* and *tarbiyyah* activities (Shaharom *et. al.*, 2000: 5). Equally, JIM also believes that *da'wah* and *islah* should be expanded beyond their conventional narrow understanding of merely preaching and propagating Islamic teachings, to the struggle for the sake of

humanity, freedom and the very path of the well-being and the betterment of the human society. Hence, political participation from JIM's point of view was part of the manifestation of the Islamic worldview reflection under the shade of 'enjoining the righteous and forbidding the evil' (Othman, 2003: iii-v).

Mobilizing with such a discourse, JIM has headed its engagements to include a wider circle of other parties holding the same vision as the non-Islamists and non-Muslim organizations (Sungib, 1999b). It started its official overture in political life with its affiliation to the coalition of civil society movements and opposition parties demanding for a more democratic Malaysia, in a loose coalition called GERAK on 27th September 1998 (Sungib, 1998). Since then, the organization discourse changed from mere focus on primordial issues related to Islam to the political discourse of freedom, human rights, rule of law, accountability, good governance and civil society, which its leader believes to be strongly rooted in the foundation of justice propagated by Islam (Ibrahim, 2007).

Consequently, the movement decided to remain non-partisan, while in the meantime, it continued to make its own impact in national politics. Some of its members did get involved actively in the coalition of opposition parties called 'Barisan Alternatif' (BA),³ which could be translated as 'the alternative front' (A. Hamid, 2008). A few JIM leaders and members who found their interest in this new territory decided to enter a new venture by joining political parties to start a new series of *islah* in their *da'wah* life. Sungib, the president himself, Fuziah Salleh, the Women Chapter's leader and Sahri Bahri, the former JIM's Secretary General decided to join *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (KeADILan) led by Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.⁴ A few other JIM leaders such as Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad

³ Barisan Alternatif consists of four major opposition parties: PAS, KeAdilan, Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM). It was formed before the 1999 election by the parties to impose a direct challenge to the ruling coalition government, Barisan Nasional (BN).

⁴ <http://www.jim.org.my/v1/index.php/kenali-jim/profail-jim?start=3>.

decided to join PAS for their new political endeavour (Personal Communication, Saari Sungib, 24 June 2014).

JIM members were also actively involved in MAFREL as a watchdog for the general election and bi-elections in Malaysia (Malik, 2014). In the same vein, JIM continued to promote political awareness among the public through its activities, participation in political lobby and campaign, press statements and the continuous educational process. As a political pressure group, JIM relentlessly participated in the Abolish Internal Security Act (ISA) movement (GMI), where its vice president, Syed Ibrahim al-Habshi had been the movement chairperson hitherto. *Gerakan Mansuhkan ISA* (GMI) was a coalition of more than 80 NGOs against the detention without trial through the Internal Security Act (ISA) formed on the 30th April 2001 to fight for the abolishment of the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the release of all ISA detainees from the Kamunting detention camp. Similarly, the movement managed to spread awareness amongst people on how the draconian act had become a tool for the executive power to curb people's freedom and its implication to the people's rights as a whole. The culmination of the GMI struggle was the abolishment of the act on September 2012 by the ruling government (Malik, 2014).

According to Zaid Kamaruddin, the president of JIM then, the involvement of the organization in MAFREL was mainly a manifestation of JIM's commitment to good governance (Kamarudin, 2008). At this phase, JIM works tremendously as a *civil society movement* in developing the *good governance* culture to prevail in the state administration through its holistic political and social participation. Its members believe that only through the participation of the organisation and its members in the political field can its quest for good governance as part of its *islah* passion be crystallised, hence the 'Public Opinion Leadership' (Kamaruddin, 2007: 17-18). With all its existing institutions and reform mechanisms, JIM has managed to realign them to achieve its new vision, which indirectly or implicitly will contribute towards the practice of good governance at the society and community level (Personal Communication, Zaid Kamarudin, 24 December 2012

At the Malaysian General Election in 2008, JIM made a general order for its members, encouraging them to participate in the election in their own capacities and abilities by allowing them to join any party to contest in the election as a way for them to maximize their contributions to the society through political means. It was based on this too that JIM participated with BERSIH, (which means 'clean' in Bahasa Melayu) in a rally organized by a coalition of civil society NGOs held in Kuala Lumpur on 10th November 2007 (Personal Communication, Zaid Kamarudin, 24 December 2012). The aim of *Bersih*, as espoused by the organizing committee, was to campaign for electoral reform due to the allegations of corruption and discrepancies in the Malaysian election system that heavily favoured the ruling political party (Barisan Nasional).⁵

The results of the 2008 GE (12th GE for Malaysia) was overwhelming. The ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional, was denied its two-third majority in Parliament and lost five states to the opposition. The richest states in Malaysia, namely Selangor, Pulau Pinang and Perak were amongst the five. The result of GE 12 had opened the eyes of many, and managed to break the ever so long myth that BN, who had been ruling Malaysia since 1957, could never be defeated. As for the opposition, the new reality had pushed them to form a more substantive coalition amongst the three major opposition parties, the KeAdilan party, PAS and DAP. Despite their ideological differences, the parties managed to form a coalition which later became known as the 'Pakatan Rakyat' (People's Pact/ People's Alliance) on 1st April 2008 (*The Malaysian Insider*; 2009). GE 2008 too witnessed how some JIM members who participated in the election through different opposition parties (mainly KeAdilan and PAS) managed to win parliamentary and state assembly seats. Due

⁵ BERSIH rally participants walked from different gathering points marching towards the palace of *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* (King) to hand a memorandum demanding the government to: 1) Use indelible ink (which was initially agreed by the Electoral Commission but later cancelled); 2) Clean up registered voters roll; 3) Abolish the postal votes; and 4) Give oppositions access to the government-controlled print and broadcast media. ("Special Report: BERSIH Nov 10 mass rally," *malaysiakini.com*, November 10, 2007 (See: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/74652>).

to JIM's non-partisan position, the members who became members of parliaments and state assembly representatives (ADUN) had to relinquish their administrative position from JIM, and to give their priority and loyalty to the party they were representing, and to the people of their constituencies. Nonetheless, this did not stop them from retaining their membership in JIM, thus they continued their plight??(could it be 'fight'??) in JIM as normal (or is it ordinary?) members and participated in JIM's activities in their capacities as members. JIM also benefitted from those parliamentarians and ADUN through their organization of *da'wah* programmes in their constituencies (Personal Communication, Zaid Kamarudin, 24 December 2012).

Other than that, JIM adheres to its agenda of reform through the means of supporting the idea of check and balance by advocating the idea of a strong opposition coalition towards the future ideal of a two-party system in Malaysia. JIM believes that a two-party system in Malaysia would create a healthier political competition for Malaysia and could empower good governance. JIM's position towards politics lasted until the organization was duly closed down, to allow members to join a new platform called *Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia*, or IKRAM.

Conclusion

Much has been written akin to this paper in describing the constructive relation between religion and faith within the comprehensive framework of the current notion of governance. Religious people and institutions as other actors of governance, as discussed earlier, would successfully play the role of agents of advocacy, funding, innovation, empowerment, social movements, and service delivery, hence contributing towards the development of socio-economic, as well the political life of a nation. In such a way, religion as part of culture is worth to be considered in the studies of governance as another facet of globalisation.

Equally, JIM has been contributing to the check and balance process of the countries they operate in, especially through the accountability mechanism and its constant fight against bad

governance practice by the regimes. The full participation of JIM has brought more opportunity cost for the state, decreased the rent-seeking cost and cultivated the third sector to minimise the size of the state for efficiency. Apart from its contribution to the check and balance process, especially through the accountability mechanism and their involvement in Reformasi, Mafrel, GMI and Bersih, the full participation of the movement in the democratic life of their countries has contributed towards efforts to move towards good governance.

The aforementioned JIM's dynamic role in the governance sphere could be a successful example on how a civil society oriented Islamic movement could contribute towards the development of good governance and the democratic culture in a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. Its encompassing involvement in the political, social, education and economic life has enabled the society members, or at least within its circle of influence, to be the active actors of governance in ensuring the well-being of the citizens. This result, in a way, proves that faith in the age of globalization, and within the framework of a civil society, could continue to be relevant in the public sphere by having its significant roles through the process of governance.

In sum, JIM, as a pro-active faith-based civil society organization, has proven that religion can be a useful tool to assist the process of governance, hence, development. On the other hand, a thorough and deep contemplation on the impact of JIM's activities towards the enhancement of the good governance agenda results in an obvious implication that those activities have articulated mostly all the roles that civil society can effectively play within the new governance framework. Governance wise, JIM has contributed proportionately in enhancing the good governance practice in the country as well as in developing varying means towards development through the cultivation of the culture of accountability, empowering the civil society, ensuring the rule of law and the calling for the protection and promotion of human rights.

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