

Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) Students' Perception on National Security Policy: The Case of Internal Security Act (ISA) of Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the perception of the Internal Security Act (ISA) of Malaysia, focusing on the perceptions of students of Universiti Utara Malaysia. This study tries to determine the student's perceptions first on the students' comprehension of Malaysia's national security policy in which constituted in the Malaysian Constitution and consequently understand its effect on the student's reaction or attitude. The study is conducted using a questionnaire survey, consisting of statements in which the students were required to rate their response on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire also consists of four main sections in which the demography of students, the evaluation of students perception on current national security threats in Malaysia, sets of statements in which testing the students' basic comprehension of the ISA of Malaysia and finally their reactions towards the ISA itself. The finding indicates that the students are prone to social issues in which they determine it could be the major threat to Malaysia. Yet, there is no connection between comprehensions of the ISA and the reactions on the enforcement of the policy. Nevertheless, findings reveal their reactions differ between programmes of study and more inclined towards supporting the ISA and they also agree that government should take into consideration critics by the non-governmental organizations as well as societal grievances.

BACKGROUND OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT OF MALAYSIA

The Malaysian government pursues its national security policy by taking into considerations of the Malaysian legal system from historical perspective (Salleh Buang, 1993, Ahmad Ibrahim, 1992, Abdul Monir Yaacob, 1989, Lee Mei Pheng, 2007, and Ramdas Tikamdas, 2003). Colonization of Malaysia (then Malaya) during the period of Portuguese to the era of the British shaped Malaysian legal system becomes a unique body. The era of international trade especially traders from Arab and China also had made a pinpoint of the legal historical sketch of Malaysia. All in all, it contributed to the development of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious of the people of Malaysia.

Civil liberty in Malaysia has been the utmost challenge under the Malaysian Constitutional Law. In the Federal Constitution [Article 10 (1)(b)] provided the right to assemble peacefully and without arms subject to restrictions imposed by laws which Parliament deems necessary or expedient in the interest of national security or public order (Legal Research Board, 2005, Ahmad Mohamed Ibrahim & Ahilemah Joned, 1985). A report by SUHAKAM stated that various laws in Malaysia providing the preservation of national security and public order. An example of restrictions on the right to assemble is the Police Act 1967, Act 344 (revised 1988) (Report by SUHAKAM, 2002).

It was alleged by some critics that the abuse of power under the Internal Security Act (ISA) had the effect of curtailing basic liberties and rights of the society according to international standard (Ramdas Tikamdas, 2003). It is also an issue of undermining the judiciary system in Malaysia whereby the Executive excesses of power intruding the court's decision. The idea to use of this Act for curbing the communist spread in Malaya is suspected to be no longer reliable to most of the people as the Emergence Act should be repealed. It is a serious condition when the proclamation of Emergency is not revoked by the government as it has the potential to

be a 'perpetual state of emergency' which allows them to use emergency regulations even though during peace periods (Report by SUHAKAM, 2000).

Malaysia was reported to be among the worst countries for press freedom. It is ranked number 131 out of 175 countries and it also is among the bottom three in the Southeast Asia region (Reporters Sans Frontieres, 2009). Recent case on the use of the ISA was Raja Petra Kamaruddin, a blogger of the Malaysia Today website. He was alleged to be "a threat to national security" by Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar (Minister of Home Affairs at that time).

As a new modern independence developing state, Malaysia has grown up and its economic achievements is among top three of the Gross Domestic Products per capita in ASEAN member states (ASEAN Economic Chartbook, 2009). Yet, when there are still domestic issues on poverty and unbalance economic of economy hitting in the air, the middle class in Malaysia emerged to be too large for the government to disregard (Crouch, H., 1984, p.33). Some of them are the former politicians who are actively participate in corporate sectors in which also known as the "rent-seekers" (Mohd Abdad Mohd Zain, 1989). The gap between "have" and "have-nots" exists to be getting bigger especially in society where the elites are acquiring the wealth and power (Chandra Muzaffar, 1992).

From the issue of the power of the Home Minister to order the detention without trial (Section 8(1)), the duration of the detention in which it could be extended to not more than two years and if there are in some reason, it may be renewed for not more than two years at a time (Section 8(7)), and the Minister could reject the proposals of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong regarding to the appeals of the detainees (Section (8) 12(2)). It is not only the Home Minister who has the authority to order the detention. It is under the Section 73 (1) of the ISA that any police officer could detain anyone who becomes the suspect of threatening the national

security and the process can be done without any warrant. These are the Acts in which had been highlighted by the people and also manipulated or used as argument by the oppositions towards the government. In conjunction to that, the 12th general election had become a benchmark for the Barisan Nasional to start rethinking upon the critics of the use of the ISA.

Series of street demonstration demanding on abolishing the Internal Security Act (ISA) happening in Malaysia appear to be the closest and recent issue of local violence and grievances of the society. This issue should not be viewed as solely under the government local security policy problems to overcome but it should become an important agenda for the people since it could bring a huge impact to the Malaysian particularly on the issue of civil liberties.

A PROBLEMATIQUE ACT?

Civil liberties have the potential to be the next big thing in Malaysia Constitution. Shortly after the 12th general election, the impulse of most Malaysians was to condemn legislation such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) as failing to comply with the basic human rights issues. Why the Act becomes problem to the society? There are three basic reasons in which the issue of the power of the Home Minister leads to order the detention without trial (Section 8(1)), the duration of the detention in which it could be extended to not more than two years and if there are in some reason, it may be renewed for not more than two years at a time (Section 8(7)), and the Minister could reject the proposals of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong regarding to the appeals of the detainees (Section (8) 12(2)). It is not only the Home Minister who has the authority to order the detention. It is under the Section 73 (1) of the ISA that any police officer could detain anyone who becomes the suspect of threatening the national security and the process can be done without any warrant.

Perception leads to reactions, attitude and human behavior. Perceptions, be it genuine, slight profound concern or extreme will sooner or later be demonstrated through human reactions. The turmoil on street demonstrations would obviously affect the societal perception, particularly students in higher institution in which are the determinants of our future leaders and country's development. The chaos also could derive our country to a new kind of danger in the shape of possibility of aggressive behavior, bad influence or public manipulation by aggressors which would ultimately threaten the multi racial relationship and internal security. The actual impact of this issue towards Malaysian attitude and response is still unclear in comparison to the non-governmental organizations. Based on this issue and problem, this study shall officially explore students' perception as well as their reaction towards the action taken by the government and future policy making.

This study is specifically designed to investigate and understand the students' perception on the major threat to national security. There are no significant research has been done to specifically measure the perception of government security policy particularly on the related issue of the ISA in which it could easily manipulated by the interests groups in Malaysia or making the also called 'oppressive government'. Although the series of demonstration occurred in major cities like Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Universiti Utara Malaysia which is far away in the North could not be disregarded from the heat of the people unrest.

By systematically studying the perception of students who are having basic understanding of what is happening in Malaysia local affairs and the governance matter, this knowledge could then be used to determine the reaction of students or community. Hopefully by identifying the students' perceptions, policy makers or administrators will be able to anticipate the reactions and implications that may occur arising out of the perceptions as well as becoming a basis for establishing proper strategy to attain any negative outcomes.

With this comprehension, it hopes to provide relevant input as well as awareness on the perception of national security policy by the students towards the government's policy and consequently, it is hoped that this knowledge could be utilized whether to react on developing proper strategy coherent with public harmony and civil liberties, whether to sustain the circumstances or perhaps to reshape the perception and behavior if necessary through changes in environment or systems.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The analysis focuses on the effects of trusts in national security policy and the sense of threat on support for civil liberties. In order to test for these effects, it is significant to take into consideration other theoretically important factors that may confound these relationships. Perhaps foremost among these is types of major threat to the society, because of the current tension between the people and government, and because of the historical struggle for civil rights, which would heighten the concern of the politics opponents for the protection of civil liberties.

'Perception' under the Oxford Dictionary simply refers to quality of understanding, insight or the way of seeing or understanding something. Perception under the study of organizational behavior refers to 'a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment' although what one perceives can be substantially different from objective reality (Robbins, 2003). According to Mohamood N. Mohamed (1992) perception is the sense registered and processed by man's mind which invariably has very little meaning if it exist alone. Each sense has to be organized and interpreted so that it will bring more meaning into people's life.

Perception is also related to one's attitude whereby Freedman, Seans & Cealsmith (1981) viewed that perception includes effective factors such as emotion, cognitive and individual's action. Therefore, by using perception as to measure students reaction or response upon the ISA is more reliable

to explain on such issues like the problems and its solutions. It is also justifiable by using scales as a measurement to prove the students' support or anti-ISA and does it relate to their comprehension of the ISA.

In conjunction to the use of 'perception', it could be used to measure the level of students' comprehension and reaction towards the national security policy, particularly the ISA. As to understand national security from Malaysian perspective, one has to know the concept of security in a democracy country. Generally, democracy promotes significant relations between the ruler and its people. Democracy itself is central to the national security of a state.

As regard to the term '**security**', it could be understand as a freedom from threat of the basic values either group or individual (Baylis, 2005 & Buzan, 1991). Interestingly, there are questions arose when discussing on the national security issues. For instance, what type of security does a state prioritize the most? The answer to this question will lead to a simple understanding of the term '**national security**'. Wolfers (1962:150) finds that national independence and territorial integrity as the most values to be defended. In the similar explanation by Treager and Simonie (1973: 38) express on the main objective of national security is to defend and assure the integrity of the most important values.

Meanwhile, according to Indorf (1985) national security is not totally an objective to achieve but it must be explained accordingly to the possible threat of the states. In the context of developing states, Alagappa (1987) stated that priority of national security should be given to defending the values or basic elements which are important like the survival of the citizens, territorial integrity and political independence.

As Arnold Wolfers (1952) established decades ago in his seminal essay, national security is an 'ambiguous symbol'. It is a concept that combines a powerful emotional and political appeal with an enormous possible range

of substantive meanings. This combination explains the tremendous political potency of the idea. It can be used to justify a large number of policies that might either be desired by governments for almost any reason, or simply reflect changes overtime in the way a state decides to deal with its problems.

Harold Brown (1983) said that different state has different national security. For instance, a national security policy for the 1980s and 1990s for United States must come to grips with the Soviet Union and the relations the United States has with the Soviet Union. Therefore, Malaysia also had its experience through the pre and post independence which contribute to different phases of national security and threats. The higher pressure of threats, made the government policies tighter.

The **Internal Security Act** in Malaysia was first established and passed for enforcement in the Parliament on 1st August 1960 to fight the Communist threats and subversive actions (Rais Yatim, 1995: 255). It is also known as the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950 is a United States federal law that required the registration of Communist organizations with the Attorney General in the US and established the Subversive Activities Control Board to investigate persons thought to be engaged in 'un-American' activities. This is similar to Malaysian context in which during its establishment, there are approximately 583 Communist members in the northern region (namely Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan) and the Malaysian government could not accept them as a citizen as for what they had done to the country. Members of these groups could not become citizens. Citizen-members could be denaturalized in five years. It was a key institution in the era of Cold War, tightening alien exclusion and deportation laws and allowing for the detention of dangerous, disloyal or subversive persons in times of war or 'internal security emergency'. At that time, it was in the Tun Abdul Razak era. He personally concerned on the security of the local people and guaranteed that he will not abuse the power of detention without trial (Hickling, R.H., 2000: 128).

Why did Tun Abdul Razak concerned on not abusing the power? He had a long discussion with the original drafter of the Act (R.H. Hickling) and Hickling worried that the 'detention without trial' will be manipulated by Tun Abdul Razak's successors. Hickling personally found that his worries became true as the ISA is used to lock up political opponents (Mohd. Azizuddin Mohd. Sani, 1999: 269). This is happening for real in Malaysia and it is destructive for the government of a democracy country.

Good governance founded on democratic principles is the best solution to fight national threats. The government has to produce policies which can curb all imminent threats as to protect the national peace and harmony. Weak national defence invites challenges from international adversaries but strong national defence implies an efficient military which might threaten people's liberty (Chimbala, 2008). This is a dilemma for the government as it will contribute to an instable and unease satisfaction of the liberty of the society.

Any state which is aiming for good governance must maintain its truce among the ruler and the people. To produce good governance, state must present competent, transparent and accountable government institutions. Therefore, government will only produce reasonable standard of justice and people will not feel their rights are being oppressed (USAID, 20005).

Interestingly, Slater (2003) argued that Malaysia during Mahathir era experienced a great top down control and successfully changed Malaysia into a system of 'pseudo-democracy'. Referring to the table above, he had mentioned on the transformation of an authoritarian regime like Malaysia since independence in which from what he called 'Machine' to 'Bossism'. Slater also further argued on Mahathir and the autocrats monopolize the despotic powers which are clear cut redundant with the infrastructural powers. Hence, it is under the Mahathir era when the ISA was highly utilized by the government.

In practical terms, the struggle of political power leads to some extremely difficult questions about the boundaries of national security as a concept. By definition, governments in weak states will have serious concerns about domestic threats to their own authority and it breeds too many dangerous forms such as the military coups, national liberations, belligerents and political factionalism (Azar & Moon, 1988).

From the broader political legal perspective, it is a common scenario on how states starting to preserve the sovereignty and internal security. The praetorianism ideology in which they will build up the military as 'guard' and establishing security laws to curb the internal threats is seen to be the preference for national security strategy. For instance, the fear of communism ideology had pushed most states to acquire the internal security laws. United States in the era of Harry S. Truman passed the anti-communist McCarran-Wood Act in 1950 (which was later known as the Internal Security Act). Yet, it is opposed by the president who alleged the act was a "long step towards totalitarianism." (House of Representatives, 1950). Meanwhile, states in the South Asia could not resist but to build up their defence capabilities and strategies in spite of all the challenges of the economic development and culture diversities.

Domestic threats are to a considerable extent endemic to states in Southeast Asia with no clear machinery for political succession. But are such threats to be considered part of the national security problem? Are they really threats to the state or to the nation, or are they just threats to the narrower interest of the incumbent ruling group? This is the contentious issues in Malaysia in which it is alleged by some parties that the ruling government since the era of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad until today, the government is manipulating the system¹ and being unfair to the society especially the oppositions (Jim Nolan, 2002). Or it could be more precise to mention on the 'elites' who being manipulative towards the development of the state.

¹ Malaysia government is a Federalism state.

Elites in Malaysia should not be disregarded as one of the security policy factor as they perform contributive roles towards the national policy (Romaniuk, P., 2008 and Mark, J., 2004). There are two types of elites in Malaysia which are the political and business elites (Case, W., 2004). Elites in Malaysia should not be disregard as one of the dominant factor of elites in policy making process. Their roles in a state's development are very significant as it will impact the political and economic conditions of a state. Yet, some of the roles are not clearly seen as contributing impact. Therefore, the unseen roles are the so called 'x-factor' of the elites.

Benda H. J. (1965) argues that there are two types of elites in Southeast Asia in which emerged from the oligarchies are the 'intelligentsia elites' and the 'modernizing traditional elites'. As the elites are among the politicians, successful businessman and any royal families in which having the self-interest, therefore, they must directly or indirectly contribute to the ideas on state's policies including the national security policy. They could be ruling the big corporations, commanding the major hierarchies or organizations of modern society (Mills, C. W., 1956).

In the mean time, Kahn (1998) proposed on an understanding of the neomodernity of the Malaysian. This includes 'the processes of political, social and cultural differentiation'. He also mentioned about the 'new' classes that emerge in the ongoing process of societal change which is very sensitive to the Malaysian perspective and multidimensional character.

There are a few studies being done to study Malaysia concept of the national security policy. The independence, integrity and quality of the judiciary system in Malaysia have been a contentious issue by Rais Yatim (1995) in his doctoral dissertation entitled 'Freedom under Executive Power in Malaysia: A Study of Executive Supremacy'. He mentioned the importance of the national security legislation in the democracy system and also the question of the use of power by the executive.

Again, the issue of power by the executive was debated by Ramdas Tikamdas (2003). He also argued whether ISA is a shield against terrorist threat or it is in fact an instrument of oppression. Various questions may be raised on the proper linked of constitutionalism and national security. These also must not disregard the elite's factor in state's policy making process.

There is also a review of the ISA by SUHAKAM in which was established in 2003. There were two main proposals made in the review in which consists of the proposal to repeal of the ISA and replace it with a new national security law which comply to the human rights principles and also it proposes on the legal reforms of the ISA and detention regulations (SUHAKAM, 2003).

A research by Mohammed Badrul Alam (2003) on group of students in Japan regarding to their perspectives towards the terrorist threat and national security contends that 80% agree on the international terrorist threat is a major threat to international society. Yet, surprisingly one of the findings showed they also found that modernization is also a threat to the Japanese and government should take action to overcome it. The research objective is to analyze whether or not terrorist issue should effectively be catered by the government. Nevertheless, government also must disseminate all information needed in conjunction to educate the public.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

The "National security survey" data come from the Universiti Utara Malaysia students. There are 37 programmes offered by the University and the details will be listed in the questionnaire.

The population of this study consists of 23,112 undergraduate students who are currently enrolled in the three colleges of Universiti Utara Malaysia, namely the College of Business (COB), College of Art and

Sciences (CAS) and College of Law, Government and International Studies (COLGIS). The rationale for selecting these students was that they were believed to have at least the basic knowledge on internal affairs and issues of the local policies particularly the national security policy, the Internal Security Act (ISA). According to Uma Sekaran (1992), the appropriate number of sample for the population of 23,112 is at least 200 respondents. However in this study, 500 questionnaires had been distributed in early January 2010. The students were required to complete the questionnaires promptly in class or on spot when they were given the papers and a response of 473 usable questionnaires from 33 programmes from COB, CAS and COLGIS were identified which represent about 94.6% response rate. Another 27 questionnaires had to be abandoned due to its reliability and incomplete information.

A structured questionnaire was employed as an instrument for this study. The questionnaire was adapted from related study by Mohammed Badrul Alam (2003). However, some adaptation and changes are made to the items taken from the respective study due to the differences in objective and the sample of study. The questionnaire consists of four main sections, in which are Section A is to evaluate the perception on types of threat to national security, Section B is to measure the level of comprehension of respondents towards the fundamental facts of the ISA, and Section C is to evaluate the perception on the enforcement of the ISA and their reactions. Section D is the demographical part in which the researcher purposely organize it to be at rear as to avoid from loosing respondents dynamics on answering the most significant part, which are namely in Section A, B and C.

In particular, Section A was specifically designed to indirectly assess specific event or problem occurs in Malaysia rather than directly asking how serious an event or problem to exist as a threat to national security. In this section, the evaluation was categorized to five (5) aspects in which are politics, economy, social, environment, military or police, and finally

the governance. The respondents were required to rate these statements based on a 5-point Likert scale where respondent can alternatively choose from: (1) Strongly not critical, (2) Not critical, (3) Unsure, (4) Critical, (5) Strongly critical.

However in section B, five basic questions were designed to test respondents' comprehension on the ISA. The questions were based on general knowledge about the ISA. This is to test respondent's comprehension towards the issues of the ISA and later the analysis shows their reliability of the given hypothesis. Question 1 is to test on whether or not respondents know the exact establishment year of the ISA is.

Next, questions 2 is to test on respondents' sense of awareness on the place for the detainees of the ISA. As the ISA is a continuity law from the Constitution, question 3 is to test on respondents conversant on which Article of the Constitution holds the statement about the ISA is a law in which it is significant to refrain from any internal subversive or terrorism activities. Question 4 is to assess on respondents understanding on the rights of detainees, in particular, the number of detention days (duration) in which detainees are allowed to engage to a solicitor and meeting family members.

Finally, in conjunction to the historical perspectives of the establishment of the ISA, question 5 is to test on respondents' comprehension of the Emergence Ordinance Regulations 1948. The evaluation of it is upon their marks in which if respondent answer all five or four or three questions correct, then, their knowledge of the ISA is high and will be ranked as 'knowledgeable'. In contrast, if they only perform with two questions, one or none question is correct, their level of understanding of the ISA is moderate or low and will be ranked as 'unknowledgeable'. In contrast, if they only answer one or none is correct, this will be a benchmark for measurement of their response towards the ISA, either they support or against it.

In Section C, is to measure the UUM students' perception of the enforcement of the ISA. It consists of 24 statements in four categories. Categories 1 and 2 are for statements which agree on the use of ISA as a mechanism for national security in which either with or without amendment, meanwhile categories 3 and 4 are for statements which disagree on the use of ISA in which it has to be repealed.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire as well as for the purpose of improving the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted in College of Law, Government and International Studies (COLGIS), where a total of 60 students were involved. The responses from the pilot study were then collected and analyzed and the test showed the level of reliability with cronbach alpha of Section A=0.845, B=0.450 and C=0.650.

For the actual study, there are some amendments made on Section B and C as to improve the questionnaire. Section B was totally changed to a set of 5 questions in which the marks of correct answers will represent respondents' level of comprehension. The final reliability with cronbach alpha for Section B=0.650 and Section C=0.790. Hence, the amended questionnaire responses showed a relatively high reliability and it is valid (Cronbach, L. J., 1990).

In order to answer the research questions, this study has three (3) hypotheses.

Research question 1: What are the levels of students' perceptions on the major types of threat to national security?

H_a Students' from various courses in UUM perception on major threat to national security is high on political aspect compared to social aspect.

Research question 2: What are the levels of students' comprehension on the ISA?

H_b Students' from various courses in UUM who acquire lower comprehension of the ISA will act against the use of the ISA and students' who have better understanding of the ISA will support the ISA as a mechanism.

Research question 3: What are the levels of students' perceptions towards the enforcement of the ISA?

H_c Students' from various courses in UUM are supporting the enforcement of the ISA in consideration with some amendments should be made.

FINDINGS

A few variables had been selected, in particular, gender, race, religion, year of study, age, background of study, program of study and level of family income, hometown and sources of the ISA, as to obtain better understanding of the respondents details in which would facilitate justification of their perceptions towards the study. The study analysis involved 473 respondents from various programmes offered in UUM. Out of that total, 283 students (60%) are females while the rest of 190 students (40%) are males. Overall, COLGIS represents the most respondents with are 225 (47.57%) followed by CAS, 172 (36.36%) respondents and COB, 76 (16.07%). In terms of respondents' race, most of them are Malays bearing a total of 338 (71.46%) respondents in number. The number of Chinese students is more than Indian students which consists of 68 (14.38%) to 40 (8.46%). From this, 358 (75.69%) respondents show that they are Muslim, Buddha and Hindu consist of 49 (10.36%) and 39 (8.25%) respondents each. Meanwhile, this study also has respondents from Sabah and Sarawak which represents of 16 (3.38%) and 10 (2.11%) respondents and it shows that they are all Christian. Finally, there is only 1 (0.21%) respondent from other race and religion.

More than half of the total respondents, in number of 286 (60.47%) are second year students, followed by 88 (18.60%) first year students, while approximately one sixth of the respondents are 74 (15.64%) students from

the third year and the rest are students from the fourth year study. Their education background varies in which students from STPM represents the highest that is, 355 (75.05%) respondents, follows by students from Matriculation and STAM with 59 (12.47%) and 34 (7.19%) respondents each, and finally there are also students from the Diploma education background in which consist of 17 (3.59%) respondents and other certificates represents of 8 (1.69%) respondents.

The range of respondents' age also varies from below 21 years old to more than 25 years old. Most of the respondents are still young at the age of 22 years old and they represents of 276 (58.35%) respondents. This is followed by students below 21 year old that comprise of 104 (21.99%) respondents. There are also 72 (15.22%) students from the age of 23 years old and 15 (3.17%) students who participated in this study. Finally, students from the age of above 25 years old represents the least in which there are only six (1.27%) respondents.

In respect of respondents' hometown or place of origin, the study shows that most of them are from Kedah (12.90%), Kelantan (12.68%), Pahang (12.05%) and Perak (11.42%). The study also displays that there are respondents from Selangor (9.51%), Johor (8.25%), Sabah (6.13%) and Terengganu (5.29%). This is followed by respondents from Sarawak (4.65%), and meanwhile respondents from Kuala Lumpur and Penang contributes the same percentage which is 4.23% each. The study also has representatives from Negeri Sembilan (3.81%), Perlis (2.54%) and Malacca (2.33%).

Level of family income is also a significant variable to be looked at in which it could assist on the hypothesis whether or not family income would effect respondents' perception on the ISA. There are five levels of income in which the highest respondents (192 students) come from family with an average income of RM1001-RM2000 and another 140 students are from family which acquire RM500-RM1000 per month.

There are only 33 respondents who come from the lowest level of family income less than RM500 per month. Finally, for the level of income of RM2000-RM3000 and over RM3000, it represents of 67 and 41 students each.

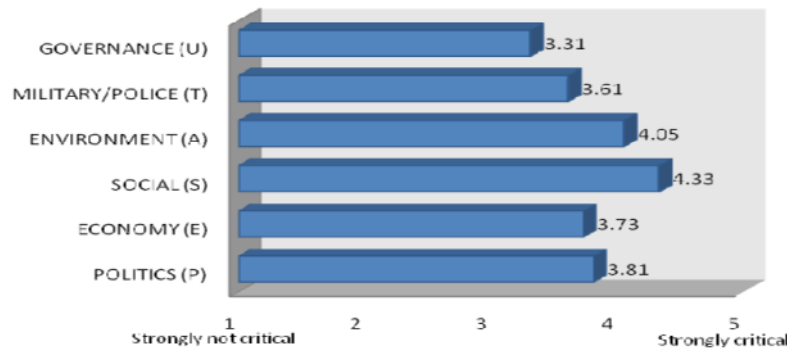
The final demographical variable of the study determines to evaluate students' comprehension towards the ISA. In conjunction to this, their sources of information such as from the newspaper, internet, friends, school or television are being surveyed. Most of the respondents acquire information of the ISA from the Internet (37.42%). This is followed by the newspaper (32.56%), friends (11.42%), television (10.57%) and school (8.03%).

Major Types of National Security Threat to Malaysia Post-Communal Era

This section is to determine respondents' perception on the types of threat to the national security, particularly after the Insurgents era in Malaysia. Reliability test for this section on all dimensions of threats shows it valid with the value of 0.845. Table 4.2.1 shows five categories of national threat which are political threats (P), economy threats (E), social threats (S), environmental threats (A), military or police threats (T), and finally the governance or government policies threat (U). At this level, Likert scale of measurement from strongly not critical (1) is to show that the issue is not a serious threat to national security, Likert scale strongly critical (5) is to portray the issue in which is contributing on huge impact to the nation, meanwhile Likert scale unsure (3) is in between of both perceptions mentioned above.

Research question 1: What are the levels of students' perceptions on the major types of threat to national security?

Table 1 Categories of Major Threat to National Security



Generally, finding shows that social aspect is the most critical threat to national security with scale of 4.33. In particular, Table 4.2.2 shows that problems of sexual without marriage (4.48) and crimes (4.47) are ranked as the biggest problem to be highlighted. Respondents also viewed that illegal workers (4.38) and misuse of drugs (4.25) are major problems in which becoming threat to the nation. Issues of the waves of 'swine flu' or H1N1 are being more conscious towards the UUM students in which they found it critical (4.08).

Global warming and ozone layer depletion contributed to the second highest threat to the nations from environmental perspectives (4.05). This is followed by the political threats (3.81), in particular the spread of defamation statements (4.05) in internets had caused worrisome to respondents. The data in Table 4.2.3 from the respondents' sources of acquiring information of the ISA shows that the students are more captivated on the use of internet (37%).

Finally, respondents grasp on the aspects of economy (3.73) and military/police (3.61) to be nearly unsure whether it is a threat to national security. Hence, the analysis shows that respondents are unsure on the aspect of governance (3.31) to be a major threat to national security.

In conclusion, students from various courses in UUM discern that social aspect is the major threat to national security. This perception also had

been tested on other variables such as towards the comprehension of the ISA. Nevertheless, the test shows that $p=0.27$ ($\alpha =0.05$, confidence interval 95%) and it is not significant.

Table 2 Perceptions on Major Threat to National Security Post Communal Era

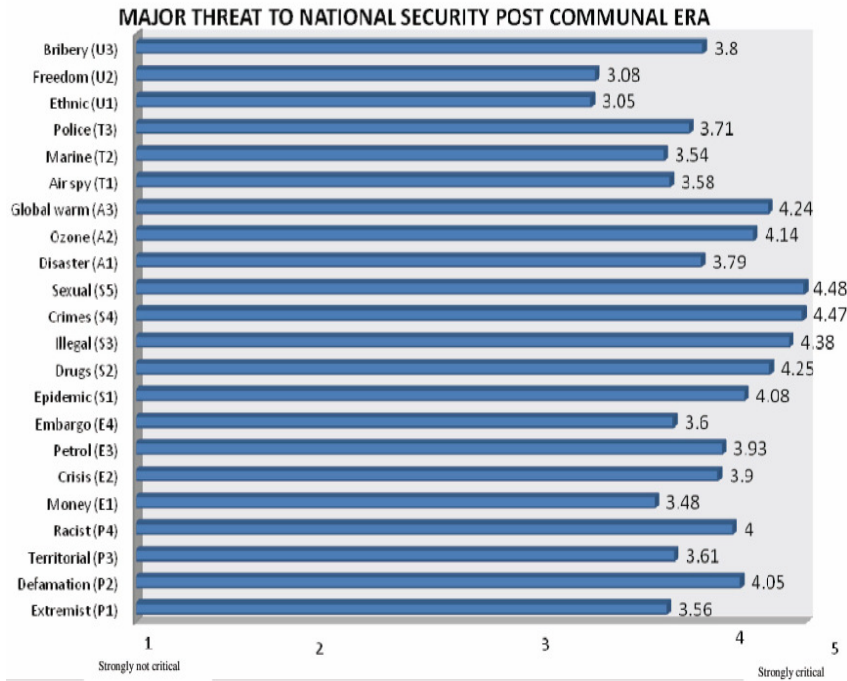
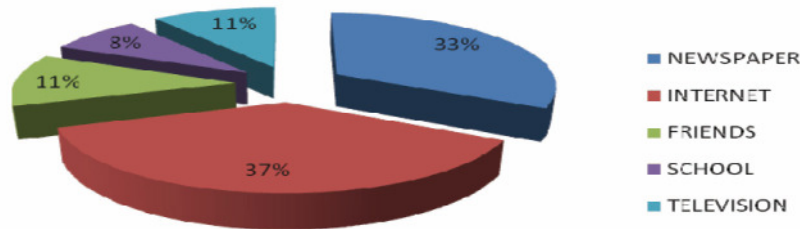


Chart 1 Sources of Acquiring Information of the ISA



Evaluation on Students' Comprehension of the ISA

Students' comprehension of the ISA was analyzed based on five fundamental questions asked and marks of the correct answers in Section B. The analysis will determine respondents' comprehension either 'knowledgeable' or 'unknowledgeable'.

Research question 2: What are the levels of students' comprehension on the ISA?

Table 3 Output analysis of respondents' comprehension of the ISA

COMPREHENSION	
Mean	2.5941
Std. Deviation	1.31972
Variance	1.742
N	473

According to Table 3, overall respondents are at the level of moderate for knowledge of the ISA with mean value=2.59 when most of them answer two or three questions correctly. In spite of that, the analysis on level of comprehension shows that the percentage for unknowledgeable (47.36%) is slightly lower than the knowledgeable (52.64%) respondents.

Respondents' level of comprehension is an important variable when to test on their stance on the ISA issue, whether or not they support the mechanism or to repeal it. In relation to this, the analysis reveals that only students' programme of study does has influence on their level of comprehension towards the ISA in which the p-value is 0.000 ($\alpha=0.05$, with confidence level 95%). Namely, programmes of study in which appeared to be at a lower level (less than 35%) of comprehension on the ISA are the;

- i. Bachelor of Media Technology with Honours (0%)
- ii. Bachelor of Development Management with Honours (28%)

- iii. Bachelor of Economics with Honours (30%)
- iv. Bachelor of Risk Management and Insurance with Honours (33.3%)

In contrast to this, there are five programmes that emerge as the highest level (more than 83%) of comprehension on the ISA as follows;

- i. Bachelor of Science Agribusiness with Honours (100%)
- ii. Bachelor of Education with Honours (91.7%)
- iii. Bachelor of Social Work Management with Honours (85.7%)
- iv. Bachelor of Public Management with Honours (83.3%)
- v. Bachelor of Finance with Honours (83.3%)

Students Reactions towards the ISA of Malaysia Today

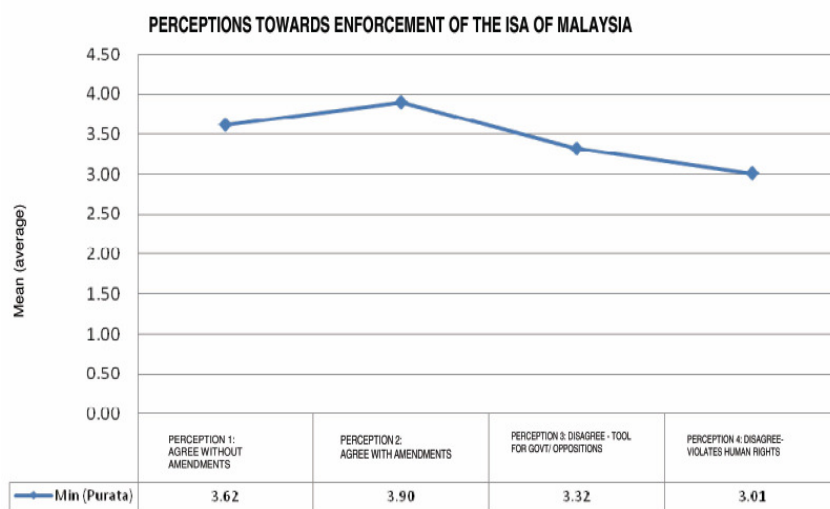
In this section, respondents were asked about their views using 5 Likert Scale using 24 statements in which had been categorized to four perceptions. Perception 1 is a set of statement that supports the use of the ISA as it had successfully curbed the internal unrest since the Post Communal. Perception 2 is a category of a set of statements that supports the ISA in condition there should be revision or amendments made on the policy. In spite of that, Perception 3 and Perception 4 do not supporting the ISA or totally against on the idea as it could be manipulated by either the government or the oppositions. The enforcement of the ISA also had been viewed as violating human rights and challenging civil liberties in Malaysia.

Research question 3: What are the levels of students' perceptions towards the enforcement of the ISA?

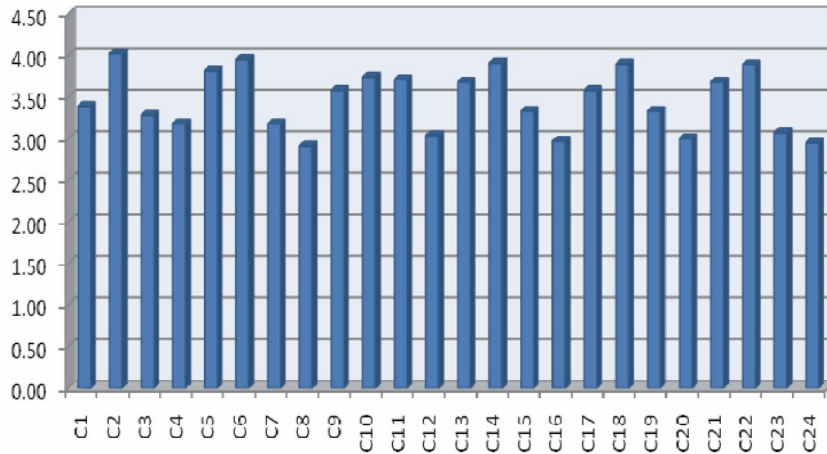
Finding on UUM students reactions reveals on the support towards the enforcement of the ISA of Malaysia in condition that there should

be some amendments with the highest mean of 3.90 (See Graph 1). This analysis could be supported by statement C2 (See Graph 2) of Perception 2 (Agree with amendments) whereby it contributes to the highest mean of 4.02 (78.72%). UUM students are supporting the idea of the ISA as a mechanism of state's security with the government should take into consideration on the public voices and grievances on the policy. In addition, analysis (C6) also shows respondents reactions on the non-governmental reports on the ISA should be utilized or reviewed as reference by the government as to make the policy less 'draconian' (with 76.8% supports).

Graph 1 Mean (Average Analysis) for Perceptions towards Enforcement of the ISA



Graph 2 Students Reactions towards the Enforcement of the ISA Today



Statements

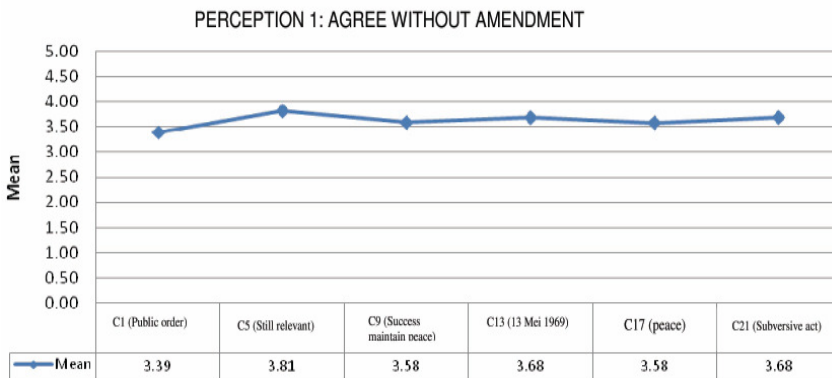
Perception 1: C1, C5, C9, C13, C17, C21

Perception 2: C2, C6, C10, C14, C18, C22

Perception 3: C3, C7, C11, C15, C19, C23

Perception 4: C4, C8, C12, C16, C20, C24

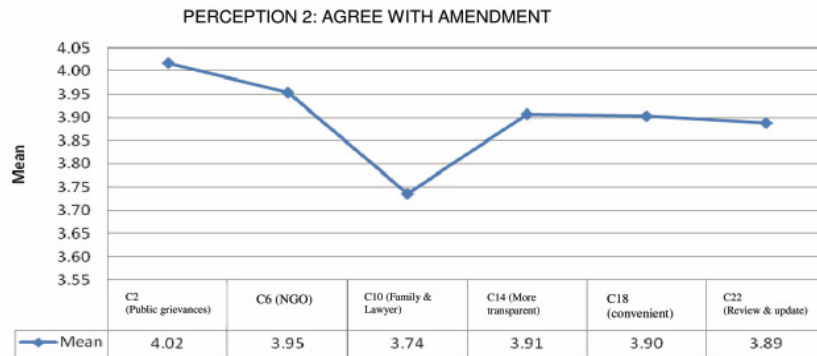
Graph 3 Agree to the ISA without any Amendment



Perception 1 receives an average mean of 3.62 and this indicates that respondents agree on the perception of the ISA should be carried on without any changes made. From this perspective, most respondents believe that the ISA is still relevant to maintain the national security

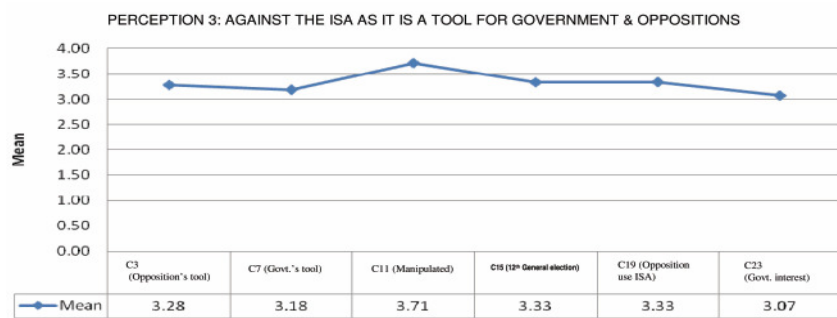
(3.81). Historical events for examples, the attack of the Communist in Malaya in 1941 and tragedy of 13 May 1969 most likely to be influencing respondents in which they believed that without the ISA, there probably would be a break of race conflicts and very hard to manage the imminent attack from any internal threat (3.68).

Graph 4 Agree to the ISA with Amendment



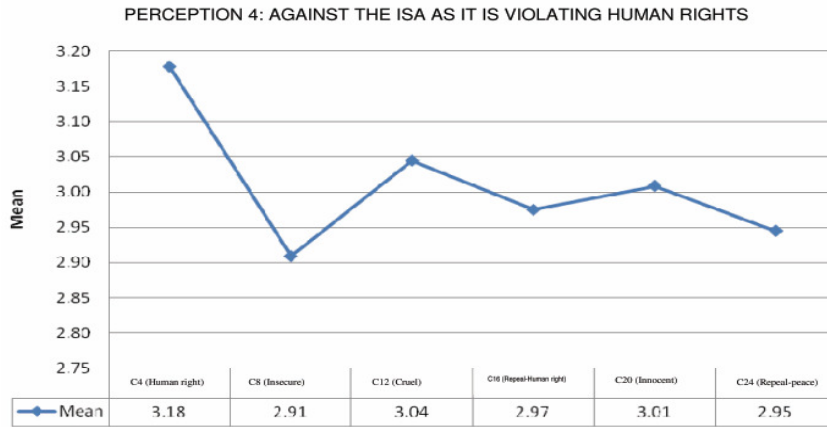
Perception 2 obtained the highest average mean with 3.90 and this signifies that most respondents agree that the government should construct an alterations on the ISA by taking into account of the reviews made from the non-governmental organizations. Government also should listen more to the public grumbles on the ISA issue especially any matter which is related to civil liberties.

Graph 5 Against the ISA as it becomes a 'Tool' for Government and Oppositions



Most respondents believe on the ISA issue that had been manipulated by the political parties as to achieve their interests with average mean of 3.71. Nevertheless, there is no significant change in comparison to other perceptions as it is only imparts average mean of 3.32.

Graph 6 Against the ISA as it is Violating the human rights



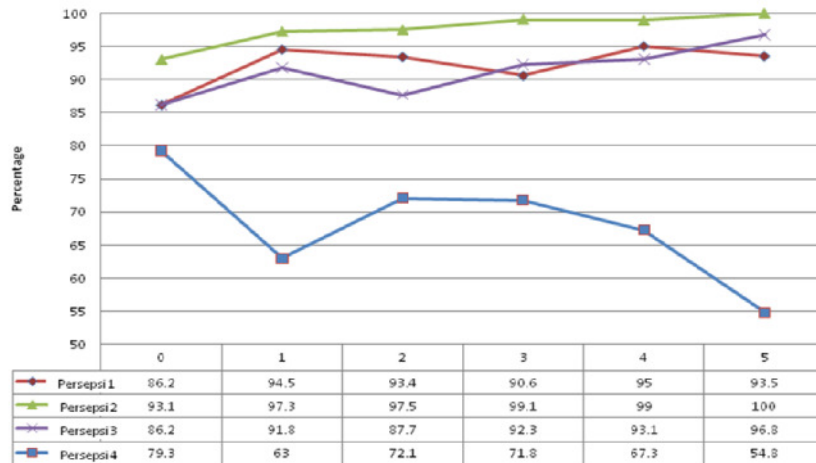
Only 68.92% of respondents against to the ISA in which it contravenes to human rights. With an average mean of 3.01, this perception is not an important perspective in comparison to perception 3. Nevertheless, from independent profile statement, perception 4 shows that most of respondents are against the ISA as it is abusing human rights.

This study begins with in search of the levels of students’ perceptions on the major types of threat to national security. It is assumed that the level of perceptions were influenced by certain factors namely, the influence of disease like H1N1 or ‘swine flu’ and also the influence of social problems for instance like snatch thieves, abandoning babies and juvenal crime. This is in conjunction to indecency of youths of the 21st century which are reported to be involved in immoral activities such as snatch thieves, riding motorbikes recklessly (mat rempit) or if they are not married but have got pregnant, they even have the guts to abandoning new born babies.

These could be influences by their status as students in which they spend most of the time browsing the internet to socialize and completing the assignments. While browsing, they might have the chance to read bloggers site in which some of it contains statements of provoking or personal agenda of self-interest. All these social problems had widely been reported in the media. This finding is not parallel with the hypothesis that students' from different courses in UUM acuity on major intimidation to national security is tremendous on political aspect compared to social aspect.

Subsequently, the study continues with an investigation of the levels of students' conception on the ISA. The levels of comprehension varies from different programmes. The purpose of testing respondents' comprehension is to seek for the truth of hypothesis that various respondents from different programmes in UUM who acquire lower comprehension of the ISA will act against the use of the ISA and students' who have better understanding of the ISA will support the ISA as a mechanism. As such, findings confirm that students' comprehension on the ISA is not related to their perception on the enforcement in which p-value for each perception is more than 0.05 (See Graph 7).

Graph 7 Percentage of Respondents' Comprehension towards the Perceptions



Indicator
 Persepsi = Perception

The reason for such finding could be because of basic awareness tested in which utilized five questions are not enough to assess their insights. Besides, this finding also could reflect on students' adopted value on the courses offered by the University. It is presumed that most students in University are "paper chased" in which they are more concern to get grade 'A' rather than adopting the value of knowledge acquired. It is interesting to note that this could also be signals to the policy implication that university students are not well aware on the grapple of human rights issue in Malaysia. It is either they choose to purposely abandon the issue as they cannot change anything or they simply apathy to the issue.

University students should have initiatives to know more or expose to civil issues during their study. Referring to the demographic factor, most respondents are at the average of 22 years old and they are the voters for next election. It is worrying as these youngsters with apathy attitude of civil issues are the important generation to replace our next leaders. In spite of the charity activities, University could implement other actions or

programmes like joining the non-governmental organizations in which will render students to more challenging and exciting civil issues.

The UUCA amendments in 1971 had prohibited the freedom of public speech in the Universities. Yet, the Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin approved the restoration of Speaker's Corner in November 2009 (The Star, January 27, 2010). This is a good platform for these adolescent to take part actively on testifying contentious civil issues. It could also develop students' interest and awareness on the real life environment before they completed their study.

Finally, this study engaged to evaluate the levels of students' perceptions towards the enforcement of the ISA. Demographical analysis was made on students' reactions towards the ISA. There are nine factors namely the gender, race, religion, year of study, age, education background, programmes of study, family level of income and hometown. The study found that students' reactions toward the four perceptions are not significant to gender, race, year of study, age, level of income and hometown. Yet, from the chi-square analysis, it reveals that religion, background of education and programmes of study do influence their perception on supporting the ISA without amendment (Perception 1). Buddhist students are the least who supporting Perception 1. As such, students from STAM are also among the least of supporting Perception 1. Interesting to highlight that, this finding does reflects one another in which Buddhist students and students of or STAM certificate holders are from the same category of religion. This is because STAM in Malaysia are mostly offered by the state council and it teaches from the Islamic basis. Therefore, Buddhist and Islam students are against the enforcement of the ISA without any amendment.

Generally, when comparing programme of study, it shows significant factor on the analysis in which students from the Bachelor of Risk Management and Insurance with Honours is the least to support the

enforcement of the ISA with amendment. Nevertheless, when combining the three Colleges (CAS, COB, and COLGIS), there is no significant as it does not influence their perceptions. Respondents from COLGIS shows 100% support on this perception as it is assumed that they are well exposed on the public policy and governance issues (when refer to the courses offered in COLGIS). Most respondents agree on the perception of supporting the ISA with amendments made by the government.

According to analysis, there are no significant factors in comparing students' reaction towards the objection towards the ISA as it is a 'political tool'. This finding is rare for researcher in which most scholars and NGOs (Rais Yatim, Ramdas Tikamdas, ALIRAN, GMI, SUARAM). This could either link with their low comprehension or apathy attitude which had been discussed earlier.

There are two significant factors contributed to perception that the ISA need to be repealed as it is violating human rights. Other types of education background presents the least support to perception 4. They are probably students from the A-level programmes, polytechnics, or private institutions. This could presume that there is least a few or none information of the ISA at the stages of their education background. Hence, private institutions should take into consideration on subjects or courses offered to students in a way that they are well inflict on civil issues.

Perception 4 also receives least support from respondents of Bachelor of Banking with Honours and Bachelor of Education in comparison with respondents from Bachelor of Business Mathematics, Bachelor of Accounting (Information System) with Honours, Bachelor of Risk Management and Insurance with Honours and Bachelor of International Business Management with Honours. Programme of study has found a significant point on the influence of respondents' types of study on their stance of the ISA is violating human rights.

There is no significant difference of comprehension among the three colleges, namely the COB, CAS and COLGIS. Nonetheless, analysis output reveals that COLGIS represents the most 'knowledgeable' respondents of the ISA. This could probably reflect on the types of study programmes offers by COLGIS in which interrelated to the internal issues. In conclusion, level of comprehension on the ISA does not reflects UUM students' stance on the ISA, in particular, students from the Bachelor of Media Technology with Honours, in which 100% 'unknowledgeable' are supporting the use of the ISA in Malaysia.

Hypothesis has found that students' from various courses in UUM are supporting the enforcement of the ISA in consideration with some amendments should be made. Study shows that most respondents (98.10%) agree on the enforcement of the ISA with amendments. A web poll made by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the ISA reveals on the mass support to repeal the ISA as it is a 'draconian law' (Fikrah, 10-13 August, 2010). Yet, this statistics is questionable as it is only limited to internet users and unanimous background.

CONCLUSION

This study is an exploratory research and uses descriptive analysis. Although this study provided a general picture on the perception of UUM students on the ISA of Malaysia, there are still some limitations. First, the main respondent in this study is the undergraduate students in UUM whose knowledge on state's security policy is limited to only what they obtained from the mass media and lectures.

Second, due to the relatively small sample size, a caution must be exercised when interpreting results. Third, a further study of experts' opinion pertaining the matter would be beneficial for future research. Results from the experts' opinion would be more valuable compared with the results from this study. Nevertheless, the findings of this research at least can be used to establish the understanding and the awareness of the

students' comprehension on the issues of the enforcement of the ISA by government as well as their reactions, in which may arise out of their perceptions.

Since this research is just an exploratory study, there is much more room for further research in this issue. Respondents for this study are students from various study programmes in the UUM. Therefore, future research could also comprise of students who are from other universities that have high impact of the political influence such as the University of Malaya, the National University of Malaysia, the Universiti of Science Malaysia or any other private institutions, with the intention that a comparison can be made between both groups. There is also some ambiguity in terms of their comprehensions despite their perceptions. Thus, the reason why they possess this kind of attitude might require further study. Moreover, this study only focuses on the students' perception

Brockner, Chen, Manix, Leung and Skarlicki (2000) found that people who see themselves as connected to others are likely to be relatively more concerned with others interests relative to their own self-individualism. Similar to this view, future study for students' perception of the ISA could be constructed through actual or precise statements accordingly to scenarios happened in the state. This could reflect exactly on the students' reactions towards the government's security policy like the ISA. Moreover, questionnaire on demographic section could be improved by changing the place of origin or hometown from open ended to a few options given whether respondents live in a village, town or parks. These types of places of origin could reflect their stance on the ISA issue by testing their contributions or activities involvement at the place of origin.

As the world seems to have become much a smaller place in the globalization era, it becomes increasingly important to understand the perceptions and reactions on the ISA issues behind the people's behavior, particularly students in the higher education institutions. Although not

every individual in any single culture will respond similarly, we can use the research tools, concepts and theories presented here to make general predictions about national views or assumptions on the ISA.

It is a concern whether students from the Universiti Utara Malaysia acquire or process general knowledge on issues affecting the states around the world, especially those affecting Malaysian neighboring countries. It is also a concern that these students manage to have their own opinion on the issues without much influence from certain parties or in other words totally dependent on class lectures per se. This is pertinent as they will one day, be expected to lead the country. Without enough knowledge or clear understanding on certain issue, it is easier for any individual to be manipulated or influenced by other parties according to their interest.

This research provides a general picture on the perception of the enforcement of the ISA in Malaysia, from the viewpoint of students currently enrolled in various programmes in the UUM. After reviewing the results found in the study, it can be concluded that the students slightly disagree that major threat of national security after 1945 is political aspect. However, the students' awareness or comprehension on the fundamental knowledge regarding to the ISA issue is low and even in some programmes are none. Students' reactions that probably arise out of their perceptions are generally supportive in terms of their own reactions but would rather adopt a safer approach of the implementation of the ISA. This could be a positive as the Minister of Home Affairs had agreed to review on the ISA bill with six other laws (The Star, 20 March 2010).

The demand on amendment of the ISA and some request on repealing it, are spreading every single day. It is getting worst when the interest parties are manipulating the issue. It is likely the heat of these grievances has somehow affect the UUM students, though not all. These findings could be a benchmark for the government as guidance in determining the issues that should be tackled by the administrator in managing the students' reaction and for better national security policy in future.

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