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Legislative, Rehabilitative, and Educational Approaches in Counter-Terrorism: A Theoretical and Comparative Review

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Abstract

This paper examines the integrative potential of legislative, rehabilitative, and educational strategies in Malaysia's counter-terrorism policy, particularly within the framework of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). The main problem addressed is the fragmented implementation of these three pillars, which often operate in isolation despite their complementary roles. The objective of this study is to analyze how these strategies interact, and to assess the extent to which Malaysia's PCVE framework aligns with integrative models applied in other regions, such as South Asia and Latin America. Employing a qualitative literature-based method, the study draws from official policy documents, academic

research, and comparative analysis to explore institutional strengths, implementation gaps, and strategic opportunities. The findings show that while Malaysia has developed a comprehensive legal and institutional infrastructure, coordination among state actors and involvement of civil society remain limited. The comparison reveals that inclusive governance and cross-sector collaboration significantly enhance the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts. The paper concludes that Malaysia's PCVE strategy would benefit from a more interconnected approach that emphasizes transparency, participatory frameworks, and education-driven resilience. These insights offer valuable contributions to the refinement of Malaysia's national security strategy and provide broader implications for sustainable and rights-based counter-terrorism policies globally.

Keywords

Counter-terrorism, Legislative approach, Rehabilitative strategy, Educational intervention, Deradicalization

I. Introduction

The persistent and multidimensional threat of terrorism has prompted many countries to re-evaluate their counterterrorism strategies. Conventional responses that rely predominantly on security and militaristic force have often failed to address the underlying drivers of radicalization and violent extremism. This has led to a shift in contemporary scholarship towards more holistic approaches that combine legal, rehabilitative, and educational instruments to counter

terrorism at its roots¹. As terrorism continues to evolve especially in digital and ideological forms states are compelled to expand their methods beyond coercion and surveillance.

In Malaysia, these three pillars legislation, rehabilitation, and education are integral components of the evolving national strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). Legislative measures such as the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA) 2012 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015 represent significant institutional frameworks aimed at deterring terrorism through legal authority while providing scope for surveillance and detention under specific terms.² These legal tools serve to empower law enforcement while simultaneously raising concerns over human rights protections and the balance between national security and civil liberties.

Alongside legal measures, Malaysia has developed rehabilitative strategies to reintegrate individuals involved in extremist activities. These strategies include ideological re-education, spiritual counseling, vocational training, and community support implemented through coordinated efforts between state agencies, religious scholars, psychologists, and NGOs. Such initiatives aim to deradicalize individuals and minimize recidivism, reflecting a soft-

¹ Alexander Paul Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review* (The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague, 2013), 68.

² Raja Muhammad Khairul Akhtar Raja Mohd Naguib and Danial Mohd Yusof, "Malaysia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy: A Top-Down Policy Analysis of Legislative, Rehabilitative, and Educational Approaches," *Intellectual Discourse* 33, no. Special Issue (2025): 229-53.

approach complement to legal enforcement.³ However, questions remain regarding the consistency of implementation and long-term effectiveness of these programs across different communities.

The role of education in counterterrorism has also grown in significance. In the Malaysian context, educational interventions are deployed to build community resilience, promote critical thinking, and counter extremist ideologies, particularly among youth. However, studies reveal the vulnerability of educational institutions to ideological penetration, especially through encrypted messaging platforms and social media a trend that poses a new layer of complexity to counter-extremism efforts.⁴ This suggests a need for educational strategies that are not only reactive but also proactive in fostering civic values, inclusive identity, and resistance to polarizing narratives.

Despite the prominence of each of these components, previous academic works tend to examine them in isolation, thereby overlooking the potential synergies that could arise from their integration. For instance, Rahman et al. (2021) highlight the actors involved in PCVE implementation, but do not explore the interactions between legislative mechanisms and community-based rehabilitation programs. Similarly, Aslam⁵ proposed a structural model for deradicalization but paid minimal attention to the role of formal education in this framework. Consequently, there is limited theoretical and

³ Joseph Guay, "Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Counterterrorism: A Malaysian Case Study," *Journal of Deradicalization*, no. 17 (2018): 123-45.

⁴ Matthew Hart, "Radicalization in the Digital Age: Trends and Challenges in Southeast Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2018): 201-18.

⁵ Mohd Mizan Aslam, *Terrorism and Deradicalization: A Model for Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2018), 34.

empirical understanding of how these three approaches can be combined into a unified and adaptive strategy.

This study intends to fill that gap by exploring how legislative, rehabilitative, and educational approaches can function not as separate silos, but as interconnected strategies in the broader effort to counter terrorism. It will assess how Malaysia's PCVE policy integrates these elements and compare this with practices in other sociopolitical contexts where similar threats exist but are addressed through different policy emphases. A theoretical framework will be developed to analyze the interplay between state authority, community engagement, and ideological resilience.

Through qualitative analysis of official policy documents, prior studies, and comparative case insights, this research will seek to answer: to what extent do legal, rehabilitative, and educational frameworks interact within Malaysia's counterterrorism efforts? What are the institutional strengths and gaps in harmonizing these pillars? And how can lessons from comparative contexts inform more integrative and locally relevant strategies? By addressing these questions, the research offers both conceptual clarity and practical implications.

Ultimately, this study is significant because it moves beyond narrow conceptions of security to investigate the layered architecture of counterterrorism. By focusing on the convergence of law, rehabilitation, and education, it contributes to the growing academic discourse on holistic strategies in the prevention of violent extremism. The findings are expected to inform not only Malaysian policy refinement but also contribute to international best practices for sustainable and rights-based counterterrorism approaches.

II. Method

This study applies a qualitative-descriptive approach by conducting a literature-based review focused on the integration of legislative, rehabilitative, and educational strategies in counter-terrorism policies. The method involves a structured examination of academic works, legal documents, and official publications that relate to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). Literature review methods are appropriate for exploring topics of terrorism and radicalism, particularly when the research seeks to map institutional roles, policy effectiveness, and theoretical perspectives across various contexts.⁶

The data collection process in this study involves selecting academic sources based on their relevance to the research topic, particularly those published within the last decade. The purposive selection of materials considers the conceptual significance and direct connection to the themes under investigation. According to this approach allows researchers to analyze legal and policy frameworks without requiring empirical fieldwork. This is further supported by who emphasize that literature-based studies are essential for generating comprehensive insights, especially in the analysis of national security and terrorism prevention strategies.⁷

⁶ Peter Mahmud Marzuki, *Metode Penelitian Hukum* (Prenada Media, 2023), 43.

⁷ Ria F Tampubolon, "Pendekatan Empiris Dalam Hukum: Studi Kritis Terhadap Praktik Yudisial Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian Hukum* 19, no. 2 (2022): 112-29.

III. Result & Discussion

A. Integrative Frameworks of Counter-Terrorism: Legislative, Rehabilitative, and Educational Dimensions

Efforts to combat terrorism have evolved significantly from conventional military-centric doctrines to more integrative strategies involving legislative, rehabilitative, and educational approaches. Each of these domains contributes uniquely to national and international counter-terrorism policies, yet their combined potential remains underutilized. The shift toward integration reflects a broader recognition that addressing terrorism demands not only coercive tools but also cognitive, social, and institutional responses that prevent radicalization at its roots.

The legislative domain forms the juridical backbone of counter-terrorism frameworks. It establishes legal norms that define terrorism, authorize preventive measures, and delineate punishments. Countries such as Indonesia have enacted legal reforms aimed at expanding the state's capacity to apprehend and prosecute individuals involved in terrorism financing and participation. For instance, Law Number 5 of 2018 amended the previous anti-terrorism law to allow for preemptive detention and strengthened surveillance authority.⁸ While this

⁸ Muhammad Zulfikar Abdullah, "Analisis Yuridis Terhadap Undang-Undang Nomor 15 Tahun 2003 Jo Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 2018 Tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Terorisme Dalam Hubungan Dengan Hak Asasi Manusia," *Legalitas: Jurnal Hukum* 13, no. 1 (2021).

provides a more assertive legal framework, critical debates remain regarding potential infringements on civil liberties and human rights.⁹ Such concerns underscore the necessity for oversight mechanisms within legislative approaches.

Alongside legislative tools, rehabilitation strategies aim to disengage and deradicalize individuals who have been involved in extremist networks. These strategies go beyond punitive incarceration by incorporating psychological counseling, religious re-education, and vocational empowerment.¹⁰ In Malaysia and Indonesia, this soft-approach model has been institutionalized through prison-based and community-level programs, often involving religious scholars and psychologists.¹¹ The philosophical basis for this approach is rooted in restorative justice, viewing radicalized individuals not solely as offenders but as subjects of ideological manipulation needing recovery. However, critics argue that without systemic monitoring and reintegration pathways, rehabilitation remains symbolic rather than structural.¹²

Education serves as a preventive dimension in counter-terrorism, targeting the ideological foundations of radicalization. Through formal and non-formal curricula, states attempt to instill critical thinking, pluralistic values, and resistance to violent narratives. Empirical studies show that

⁹ Indriyanto Seno Adji, "Terorisme Dan HAM," in *Terorisme: Tragedi Umat Manusia* (Jakarta: O.C. Kaligis & Associates, 2001).

¹⁰ Mohammad A S Hikam, *Deradikalisasi: Peran Masyarakat Sipil Indonesia Membendung Radikalisme* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2016).

¹¹ Irfan Idris, *Membumikan Deradikalisasi: Soft Approach Model Pembinaan Terorisme Dari Hulu Ke Hilir Secara Berkesinambungan* (Jakarta: Daulat Press, 2017), 28.

¹² Daniel Ginting Budiman, "Tinjauan Kriminologi Terhadap Pelaku Tindak Pidana Terorisme Di Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Teori Differential Association," *Jurnal Justisi Hukum* 3, no. 1 (2018).

ideologically charged environments, especially in online spaces, can undermine formal education and spread radical propaganda.¹³ As such, counter-narrative campaigns in schools and universities are becoming increasingly vital. Indonesia's Pancasila education and civic education modules are examples of state attempts to cultivate national identity and tolerance. Nevertheless, challenges remain in aligning these educational programs with the lived realities of students in conflict-prone or marginalized regions.¹⁴

Despite the strengths of each domain, siloed implementation has undermined their collective impact. Legislative policies may criminalize radical expression, but without rehabilitation, ex-offenders risk recidivism. Rehabilitation may successfully deradicalize individuals, but without educational reforms, the broader environment that nurtures extremism persists. Therefore, integrating these domains into a cohesive policy framework is essential. This integrative model involves harmonizing legislation with post-incarceration support and embedding counter-extremism education within formal schooling. Such synergy offers both punitive and preventive capacities, creating a multi-layered shield against violent extremism.

Comparative insights from the UK's Prevent strategy and Malaysia's MyPCVE reveal the strengths and limits of integration. In the UK, the Prevent initiative combines police

¹³ Winston T H Koh, "Terrorism and Its Impact on Economic Growth and Technological Innovation," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 74 (2007): 129-38.

¹⁴ Annisa Putri Maheswari Fajarini, I Made Mertanadi Widyantara, and I Nyoman Utama, "Peran Pusat Pelaporan Dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan (PPATK) Dalam Pencegahan Dan Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Pendanaan Terorisme," *Jurnal Konstruksi Hukum* 3, no. 1 (2022): 104-9.

surveillance with school-based early warning systems. However, it has been criticized for stigmatizing Muslim communities and undermining trust between state and citizens.¹⁵ Malaysia's MyPCVE incorporates religious authorities and educators into a broader national framework, yet faces institutional fragmentation and inconsistent resource allocation.¹⁶ These examples suggest that successful integration must balance enforcement with inclusion and must be sensitive to sociopolitical contexts.

The integration of legislative, rehabilitative, and educational approaches faces several normative and institutional challenges. Normatively, there is an enduring tension between security imperatives and human rights protections. Some legal instruments such as preventive detention laws are criticized for undermining habeas corpus principles and judicial oversight.¹⁷ Institutionally, coordination among agencies is often weak, leading to fragmented implementation. In Indonesia, overlapping mandates between BNPT, the Ministry of Education, and the judiciary complicate policy cohesion.¹⁸ Overcoming this fragmentation requires inter-agency frameworks with shared goals, data systems, and evaluation metrics.

¹⁵ Azhar Douai and Sharon Lauricella, "The 'Terrorism' Frame in 'Neo-Orientalism,'" *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 10, no. 1 (2014): 7-24.

¹⁶ Irma Chairani Agustin and Alex Situmeang, "Peran Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT) Dalam Menanggulangi Radikalisme Dan Terorisme Di Indonesia," *Fundamental: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 12, no. 2 (2023): 354-83.

¹⁷ Martiman Prodjohamidjojo, *Memahami Dasar-Dasar Hukum Pidana Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT Pradya Paramita, 1994), 86.

¹⁸ Ekky and others, "Pengaturan Lembaga Negara Dalam Menangani Kasus Teroris Dalam Tindak Pidana Terorisme Di Indonesia," 2019.

Theoretical support for integration can be found in the systems theory approach to governance, which posits that policy subsystems must be interlinked to address complex social phenomena¹⁹. Terrorism, being multidimensional, necessitates multidomain policy coordination. Additionally, constructivist theories of radicalization emphasize the role of identity, socialization, and discourse variables that transcend legal definitions and call for educational and rehabilitative interventions.

To further support this integration, empirical literature has suggested various models of cross-sectoral coordination. One model is the “triangular intervention” framework, which synchronizes legal, psychological, and pedagogical inputs.²⁰ This model advocates for multidisciplinary task forces, shared operational protocols, and joint training modules across institutions. Though ambitious, such models can elevate national counter-terrorism strategies from reactive to proactive.

Another critical dimension to integration lies in the process of legislative reform informed by criminological insights. For example, theories such as differential association explaining deviance through peer influence can guide laws targeting recruitment dynamics in extremist networks.²¹ Thus, law-making must not only codify punishment but anticipate behavioral patterns driving radicalization. Unfortunately,

¹⁹ Soerjono Soekanto, *Penelitian Hukum Normatif* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2013), 48.

²⁰ Louise Mary Richardson, *What Terrorism Wants: Understanding the Terrorist Threat* (New York: Random House, n.d.), 110.

²¹ Rafael Ferreira, “Educational Campaigns as Counter-Narratives: Latin American Community Experiences,” *Journal of Peace and Education* 9, no. 2 (2023): 80-102.

Indonesia's legal texts still largely emphasize retribution over prevention, a gap that limits their deterrent capacity.

Incorporating criminological theory into the legislative process also enables a more grounded understanding of offender pathways. Data shows that many terrorism-related offenders are recruited in environments of social marginalization and economic vulnerability.²² Legislative frameworks must therefore adopt an inclusive security approach shifting from enemy-centric to citizen-protective orientations. This necessitates collaboration with civil society and academia to ensure laws respond not just to threats but to their root conditions.²³

Rehabilitative programs must also expand beyond prison walls. While in-prison interventions remain crucial, long-term reintegration requires sustained community-based monitoring and social acceptance. Studies have shown that stigma and exclusion post-release are significant predictors of recidivism.²⁴ Programs like those developed by PPATK and BNPT offer good initial steps, but their reach remains limited geographically and demographically. In this regard, local governments and NGOs play a strategic role as social reintegration actors.

Moreover, gender-sensitive rehabilitation remains underexplored. Female extremists and supporters experience radicalization differently often through ideological grooming

²² Potak Pantogi Nainggolan, *Terorisme Dan Tata Dunia Baru* (Jakarta: Pusat Pengkajian dan Pelayanan Informasi Sekretaris Jenderal DPR RI, 2006), 37.

²³ Maria Rodriguez and Hafiz Patel, "Effectiveness of School Curricula in Counter-Extremism: A Cross-National Approach," *Education & Security Journal* 7, no. 1 (2024): 50-70.

²⁴ Hikam, *Deradikalisasi: Peran Masyarakat Sipil Indonesia Membendung Radikalisme*.

or family networks.²⁵ Yet most rehabilitation models remain male-centric. Integrative frameworks should adopt gender-responsive modules, ensuring women are not overlooked in both surveillance and recovery programs. This can also improve child protection, as children are often collateral victims of both ideology and law enforcement.²⁶

In the educational domain, integration implies more than adding anti-terror content into syllabi. It entails systemic change in pedagogy, teacher training, and digital literacy. In the digital age, radical content proliferates via encrypted apps and unregulated platforms.²⁷ Teachers must be equipped not only to detect ideological cues but to foster inquiry-based learning that empowers students to challenge hate narratives. Cross-curricular integration where critical thinking and empathy are woven into all subjects is essential for building resilience.

A promising case study is the civic education curriculum piloted in Aceh, which includes modules on religious tolerance, democratic values, and conflict resolution.²⁸ While early results show improved student attitudes, scalability remains a challenge. Teacher resistance, resource constraints, and political interference often hinder nationwide adoption. An integrative framework must, therefore, include policy

²⁵ Elizabeth Gardner, "Is There Method to the Madness?: Worldwide Press Coverage of Female Terrorists and Journalistic Attempts to Rationalize Their Involvement," *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 6 (2007): 909-29.

²⁶ Thomas Oliver, "Evaluating Synergies Between Legislation and Rehabilitation in UK CT Policy," *International Journal of Law and Security* 14, no. 3 (2022): 201-24.

²⁷ Dorothy Denning, "A View of Cyberterrorism Five Years Later," ed. K Himma, *Internet Security: Hacking, Counterhacking, and Society*, 2007, 63.

²⁸ Mutawalli and Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi, *Genealogi Radikal-Terrorisme Di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat* (Mataram: LP2M UIN Mataram, 2017), 45.

coherence between ministries and clear accountability for delivery outcomes.²⁹

Cross-national evidence also supports the integration model. For instance, in Germany, the Hayat program combines family counseling with police coordination to detect early signs of radicalization. In contrast, in the U.S., CVE programs have been critiqued for disproportionately targeting Muslim communities and lacking transparency.³⁰ These variations affirm that integration must be grounded in democratic principles, transparency, and non-discrimination to be effective and legitimate.

From a strategic standpoint, the integrative model strengthens institutional synergy. Legislative instruments set clear mandates; rehabilitation provides human-centered interventions; and education inoculates the population against extremist ideology. However, integration also risks bureaucratization if not driven by shared goals and metrics. A national counter-terrorism roadmap must therefore articulate how these domains intersect, which bodies are responsible, and what success looks like.

In terms of policy recommendations, three priorities emerge: First, legislative clarity and human rights alignment must be ensured through judicial review and public participation. Second, rehabilitation programs need long-term funding and multi-stakeholder governance to ensure effectiveness beyond incarceration. Third, education

²⁹ Linh Nguyen and Nurul Hasan, "Integrating Legal and Educational Tools to Curb Radicalization: Insights from South Asia," *Global Counter-Terrorism Review* 5, no. 1 (2023): 112-30.

³⁰ Shahira S Fahmy and Mohammed Al Emad, "Al-Jazeera vs Al-Jazeera: A Comparison of the Network's English and Arabic Online Coverage of the US/Al Qaeda Conflict," *International Communication Gazette* 73, no. 3 (2011): 216-32.

ministries must embed counter-extremism as a transversal theme, not just in civics but also in history, literature, and social studies.

Finally, it is vital to recognize that integration is not a final state but an evolving process. As terrorist tactics adapt becoming more decentralized and digitally driven so too must state responses. Integrative counter-terrorism must be adaptive, participatory, and resilient. The strength of the model lies in its flexibility to evolve with new challenges, grounded in the belief that terrorism cannot be eradicated by fear alone, but must be countered with law, understanding, and enlightenment.

B. Comparative Insights into Policy Implementation: Case Reflections and Strategic Synergies

Efforts to prevent and counter terrorism across different countries present a diverse spectrum of strategies, ranging from purely repressive legislative frameworks to more transformative rehabilitative and educational interventions. Malaysia, through its national policy MyPCVE (Malaysian Plan of Action for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism), offers a centralized, top-down model that combines legal, security, and ideological tools. However, a comparative reflection with countries from South Asia such as Pakistan and Bangladesh and Latin America such as Colombia and El Salvador reveals distinct nuances in policy architecture, implementation dynamics, and actor engagement that provide

critical insight into Malaysia's evolving counter-terrorism strategy.

Malaysia's MyPCVE adopts a vertically integrated structure where core responsibilities rest with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the Ministry of Defence, and the Royal Malaysian Police's Counter-Terrorism Division (E8). The strategy is implemented in three distinct phases pre-detention, detention, and post-detention each involving different stakeholders and guided by central state authority.³¹ In contrast, countries like Pakistan adopt a more militarized model, particularly in areas like the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where governance vacuums and ideological contestations drive both policy and resistance. The Pakistani case illustrates how violent extremism thrives in spaces where state legitimacy is questioned, and ideological dissonance is unresolved.³²

Bangladesh's approach, though also state-driven, increasingly involves community-based organizations and religious institutions in deradicalization efforts. This participatory mechanism enhances local legitimacy and strengthens grassroots resilience against extremist narratives. In contrast, Malaysia has yet to fully harness the potential of community actors, often limiting their involvement to auxiliary roles rather than co-implementers of policy. This limitation reflects an enduring reliance on state-centric governance, which, while administratively efficient, risks alienating civil society.

³¹ Naguib and Yusof, "Malaysia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy: A Top-Down Policy Analysis of Legislative, Rehabilitative, and Educational Approaches."

³² Muhammad Yousufi and Muhammad Khan, "Conflict Resolution: Military Operation or Peace Deal," *Strategic Studies*, 2013.

Latin American models offer compelling alternatives. Colombia's counter-terrorism approach is characterized by a hybrid strategy that combines hard security interventions with peacebuilding and transitional justice. Following its peace agreement with FARC, the Colombian state has pursued reintegration and reconciliation mechanisms that treat former combatants not merely as security threats, but as social subjects in need of rehabilitation and reintegration.³³ Malaysia's approach, although it incorporates rehabilitation, still largely views radicalized individuals through a criminal-legal lens, with limited emphasis on restorative justice.

Conversely, El Salvador's "mano dura" (iron fist) strategy exemplifies the dangers of overly punitive responses. While initially popular, this model intensified human rights abuses and exacerbated the cycle of violence, ultimately proving counterproductive. Malaysia has consciously avoided replicating this model by maintaining legal safeguards and embedding rehabilitative components in its policy framework. However, critiques persist regarding the opacity of detention practices under laws such as SOSMA and POTA, particularly concerning the duration and conditions of preventive detention.³⁴

Malaysia's strength lies in its integrative ambition, blending security, legal, and educational domains. The rehabilitation centres in Kamunting, for instance, not only monitor inmates but also provide ideological re-education

³³ Budiman, "Tinjauan Kriminologi Terhadap Pelaku Tindak Pidana Terorisme Di Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Teori Differential Association."

³⁴ Abdullah, "Analisis Yuridis Terhadap Undang-Undang Nomor 15 Tahun 2003 Jo Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 2018 Tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Terorisme Dalam Hubungan Dengan Hak Asasi Manusia."

grounded in nationalism and moderate Islam. Yet, these initiatives remain state-managed and often exclude independent evaluation by civil society actors or academia, raising questions about their long-term efficacy and transparency.³⁵ Bangladesh's inclusive model, involving religious scholars and community educators, has demonstrated greater traction in public trust, particularly in rural areas.

One key difference observed in international comparisons is the degree of involvement of non-state actors.³⁶ In Pakistan, religious political parties and militant groups have long been part of the socio-political landscape, complicating state responses and often blurring the line between state and insurgency. In contrast, Colombia has strategically engaged former rebels and community leaders in peace dialogues, fostering a more inclusive policy environment. Malaysia, with its strong bureaucratic tradition, could benefit from structured partnerships with Islamic organizations such as Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia or educational bodies like JAKIM to amplify soft power approaches.³⁷

Policy fragmentation remains a critical challenge in South Asia. In Pakistan and India, competing jurisdictional claims between federal and state institutions often lead to duplicated efforts and inefficient resource allocation. Malaysia's centralised command structure mitigates this risk and ensures

³⁵ Agustin and Situmeang, "Peran Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT) Dalam Menanggulangi Radikalisme Dan Terorisme Di Indonesia."

³⁶ Sung-min Lee and Aisha Rahman, "Evaluating Legislative Updates in Southeast Asian Counter-Terrorism Frameworks," *Asian Journal of Security Studies* 8, no. 1 (2022): 23-45.

³⁷ Idris, *Membumikan Deradikalisasi: Soft Approach Model Pembinaan Terorisme Dari Hulu Ke Hilir Secara Berkesinambungan*.

vertical coherence. However, such coherence may come at the cost of horizontal collaboration, as line ministries and local governments are frequently subordinated to national directives, limiting innovation and adaptability on the ground.

In legislative terms, Malaysia's legal architecture is among the most robust in Southeast Asia. The enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), and the Special Measures Against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act (SMATA) provides wide-ranging authority to security agencies. Nonetheless, the emphasis on preemptive detention without trial has generated concerns over proportionality and due process. In comparison, Latin American states, particularly Argentina and Brazil, have gradually moved toward judicial oversight and transparency, emphasizing democratic resilience in counter-terrorism law.³⁸

Education as a preventive tool is another domain where Malaysia exhibits potential but faces operational constraints. While MyPCVE identifies the role of educational institutions in shaping civic values and countering extremist ideologies, implementation often lacks curriculum-level integration. In contrast, Indonesia's Muhammadiyah movement, through local schools and universities, systematically integrates multicultural values and critical thinking skills into its pedagogical framework, contributing significantly to ideological moderation.³⁹

³⁸ Douai and Lauricella, "The 'Terrorism' Frame in 'Neo-Orientalism.'"

³⁹ Carlos Martinez and Priya Singh, "Rehabilitation Programs in Latin America: A Comparative Study with Malaysia," *Journal of Deradicalization Practice* 10, no. 2 (2023): 75-98.

Digital space presents a new frontier. The diffusion of extremist narratives through social media requires adaptive counter-narratives and robust digital literacy. Malaysia's efforts, while present in policy discourse, are still in the nascent phase. Comparative analysis with India and the Philippines reveals that governments which fail to embed counter-narratives within popular digital platforms remain vulnerable to transnational radicalisation campaigns. Effective responses must go beyond censorship and surveillance to involve youth-led digital activism and peer education.

A major weakness observed across all regions is the limited integration of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within counter-terrorism policy. Malaysia is no exception.⁴⁰ Absence of transparent, independent assessment frameworks inhibits learning and policy refinement. Latin American countries such as Colombia have introduced third-party oversight through university-led impact evaluations and civil society watchdogs, ensuring that rehabilitation and reintegration programs are accountable and adaptive.

Malaysia's information management strategy also deserves scrutiny. Media narratives around terrorism are predominantly shaped by state actors, leading to a lack of source diversity. Research on global media patterns shows that countries with more balanced media sourcing i.e., including voices of victims, academics, and NGOs generate greater public trust in counter-terrorism policies. Malaysia's media policy could benefit from such pluralism, thereby fostering a more informed and empathetic public discourse.

⁴⁰ Wei Zhang, *Educational Interventions in Counter-Extremism: Global Lessons* (London: Routledge, 2024).

Ultimately, cross-national comparisons suggest that successful counter-terrorism implementation is not solely determined by legislative strength or policing efficiency. Rather, it hinges on the synergy between government institutions, civil society, educational actors, and affected communities. Malaysia has built a commendable legal and institutional foundation, but moving forward, it must emphasize inclusivity, transparency, and innovation. Only through this multidimensional synergy can it effectively counter not only the symptoms but also the root causes of violent extremism.

In conclusion, comparative insights reveal that while Malaysia's PCVE strategy is commendably structured and internally coherent, its full potential will be realized only when it evolves into a more collaborative, accountable, and locally resonant model. Learning from Colombia's reintegration model, Bangladesh's community engagement, and Indonesia's educational moderation offers strategic direction. With political will and policy refinement, Malaysia can emerge as a regional leader not just in counter-terrorism enforcement, but in building long-term peace through societal resilience and inclusive governance.

IV. Conclusion

This study has examined the intersection and integration of legislative, rehabilitative, and educational strategies within Malaysia's counter-terrorism framework, specifically assessing how these elements function in synergy or fragmentation. It found that while Malaysia possesses a robust legal

infrastructure and has initiated commendable rehabilitative and educational programs, their implementation remains largely compartmentalized. The comparison with other regions such as South Asia and Latin America highlights the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration, community engagement, and policy adaptability. Therefore, the research confirms that a fully integrative PCVE model one that harmonizes law enforcement with restorative and preventive mechanisms is essential for effectively countering radicalization and violent extremism.

To enhance policy outcomes, Malaysia should institutionalize mechanisms that foster inter-agency coordination, embed counter-extremism education within mainstream curricula, and ensure that post-rehabilitation reintegration programs are community-driven and sustainable. Legal reforms must also incorporate safeguards for civil liberties to maintain public trust and democratic accountability. These findings can inform policymakers, educators, and security agencies on how to reorient national strategies toward a more holistic, inclusive, and resilient model of counter-terrorism one that is not only reactive to threats but also proactive in strengthening societal resistance against extremist ideologies.

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