

**MISUSE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION  
TECHNOLOGY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON  
TERRORISM IN THE ASEAN COOPERATION  
CONTEXT**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
(STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)**

**UNIVERSITI PERTAHANAN NASIONAL MALAYSIA**

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**MISUSE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND ITS  
INFLUENCE ON TERRORISM IN THE ASEAN COOPERATION CONTEXT**

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Thesis submitted to the Centre for Graduate Studies, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia,  
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## ABSTRACT

The leap from the traditional way of communication into the sophisticated Information Communication Technology (ICT) in this current digital era has become a phenomenal trend for any society and organisation. The global advancement of technology and the availability of the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure have made the Internet accessible by almost everyone, anywhere and anytime. Although this development has generally brought positive impacts in terms of communication and transmission of information, much has been discussed on its possible drawbacks when abused. The Internet factor has become one of the reasons for the rise of radicalisation activities in the last decade. Nonetheless, little if any, has been openly discussed on the specific use of IT infrastructure by certain groups of terrorists as a platform to propagate their ideology through their websites or blogs, recruit new members through social networking, and organise activities remotely via virtual setup. 9-11 and Bali bombing attacks are two incidents that wake the world. ASEAN nations have become an attraction for terrorists to execute their attacks, propagate their ideology and recruit new members. This research, thus, intends to critically analyse the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strategic role in addressing the issues and challenges on the phenomenon of combating terrorism. The trend of using the Internet to propel the terrorism agenda has been spotted by many researchers and 'watchdog' organisations. Technological challenges on the Internet require a new way of thinking about designing and constructing new ASEAN's policy. The ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism 2007 (ACCT) is the initiative taken by ASEAN to move forward in addressing the current issue and formulating future multilateral cooperation. This policy has stirred arguments on the objectives to prepare state security rather than human security. To justify the importance of addressing human security, this research focuses on the issues and challenges in constructing policies and regulations in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. The level of readiness and commitment to respond to any crisis of terrorism in the South East Asian Region are the critical measurements. This research hence attempts to review and analyse the current policies, multilateral security cooperation, policy implementation impact, and future direction of ASEAN. The research is conducted in empirical nature involving interviews from the selected population sample in ASEAN regions such as ASEAN secretariat officers, ASEANPOL, states police, Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commissions (MCMC), and Cyber Security of Malaysia. The findings of the survey may become a prelude in formulating a new human security policy, which could act as points of reference or new research for academic researchers and practitioners.

**Keywords:** Counter-terrorism, Human Security, State Security, ACCT 2007, ASEAN's Policy and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

## ABSTRAK

Lonjakan dari komunikasi tradisional ke ICT yang canggih di era digital kini telah menjadi trend yang luar biasa bagi masyarakat dan organisasi. Kemajuan teknologi global dan ketersediaan infrastruktur Teknologi Maklumat (IT) telah menjadikan Internet dapat diakses oleh hampir semua orang, di mana dan bila-bila masa sahaja. Walaupun perkembangan ini secara amnya membawa kesan yang positif dari segi komunikasi dan penghantaran maklumat, namun banyak pandangan yang telah dibincangkan mengenai kelemahannya yang berkemungkinan boleh disalahgunakan. Faktor Internet telah menjadi salah satu sebab kepada peningkatan aktiviti radikalisme dalam dekad ini. Walaupun begitu, hanya sedikit kajian telah dibincangkan secara terbuka mengenai penyalahgunaan infrastruktur IT oleh kumpulan pengganas tertentu sebagai platform untuk menyebarkan ideologi mereka melalui laman web atau blog mereka, merekrut anggota baru melalui rangkaian sosial dan mengatur aktiviti dari jauh secara maya. Insiden 9-11 dan serangan bom Bali adalah dua insiden yang mengejutkan dunia. Negara-negara ASEAN telah menjadi tarikan bagi serangan pengganas, menyebarkan ideologi mereka dan merekrut anggota baru. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara kritikal peranan strategik ASEAN dalam menangani isu dan cabaran fenomena baru ini dalam memerangi keganasan. Trend penyalahgunaan Internet untuk keganasan telah dikenalpasti oleh banyak penyelidik dan organisasi 'watch-dog'. Cabaran teknologi di Internet kini memerlukan cara baharu berfikir untuk menyediakan dan merangka dasar baharu ASEAN. Konvensyen Counter-Terrorism ASEAN 2007 (ACCT 2007) adalah satu inisiatif yang diambil oleh ASEAN untuk menangani isu semasa dan masa depan dalam merumuskan kerjasama multilateral dikalangan negara ASEAN. Dasar ini menjadi perdebatan terutama mengenai objektifnya yang hanya mementingkan keselamatan negara dan bukannya keselamatan manusiawi. Bagi menjustifikasikan kepentingan menangani keselamatan manusiawi, penyelidikan akan fokus kepada masalah dan cabaran dalam merangka dasar dan peraturan di Malaysia, Singapura dan Indonesia. Tahap kesediaan dan komitmen untuk menangani sebarang krisis keganasan di wilayah Asia Tenggara akan menjadi ukuran kritikal dalam penyelidikan ini. Oleh itu, ini akan mengkaji dan menilai dasar semasa, kerjasama keselamatan pelbagai hala, kesan pelaksanaan dasar dan halatuju ASEAN akan datang. Penyelidikan ini akan dijalankan secara empirikal yang melibatkan temuduga dari sampel populasi terpilih di rantau ASEAN seperti pegawai sekretariat ASEAN, ASEANPOL, agensi polis, Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (SKMM) dan agensi Keselamatan Siber Malaysia. Dapatan dari lapangan ini akan menjadi pendahuluan dalam merumuskan dasar keselamatan baharu untuk manusiawi, yang akan menjadi rujukan atau penyelidikan baru untuk penyelidik dan ahli akademik.

**Kata Kunci:** Pembanterasan Keganasan, Keselamatan Manusiawi, ACCT 2007, Keselamatan Negara, Polisi ASEAN dan Teknologi Komunikasi Maklumat (ICT).

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Upon thoughtful considerations, I later registered my candidature under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr Abdul Razak Ahmad of Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM). He mooted the idea to research the misuse of ICT by terrorists and understanding ASEAN in combating this activity. Thank you, my friend, for helping me develop this dynamic research area for my thesis. I am particularly indebted to you.

It was not a smooth endeavour, nonetheless. I was posted to one government agency company as the Chief Executive Officer. I had very little time to focus on my research due to this new, challenging designation. My health condition also deteriorated, and I had to go for the ENT and angioplasty surgery operations. God tested me again, and at that point I decided that there was no turning back; I must brave all the obstacles, keep 'running' and reach the finish line at whatever cost. Assoc. Prof. Dato' Abdul Rahman Shaik came into the picture and provided me with invaluable support, ideas, and guidelines to keep on writing. I was motivated and 'alive' again under his supervision, after being almost disqualified for my PhD candidature. Here I am now, at 2.30 a.m., writing this part of my PhD, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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## APPROVAL

The Examination Committee has met on **4<sup>th</sup> October 2021** to conduct the final examination of **Bahrulmazi Edrak** on his degree thesis entitled '**Misuse of Information Communication Technology and its Influence on Terrorism in ASEAN Cooperation Context**'. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (Strategic and International Relations).

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Date of birth : 29<sup>th</sup> November 1971  
Title : Misuse of Information Communication Technology and its Influence  
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Academic session : 2012/2013

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCT	ASEAN Convention of Counter Terrorism
ACCF	ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund
ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting
ADSOM	ASEAN Defense Senior Officials Meeting
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
AML	Anti-Money Laundering
AMLA	Anti-Money Laundering Act
AMLAT	ASEAN Mutual Assistance Treaty
AMLATFA	Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act
AMLATFPUAA	Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act
AMM	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
AMMTC	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime
ALAWMM	ASEAN Law Ministers Meeting
APA	American Psychological Association
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APPS	Applications
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASC	ASEAN Standing Committee
APC	Asian Pacific Council
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
ASEANAPOL	ASEAN National Chief of Police
ASEAN SOM	Abu Sayyaf Group
ASG	ASEAN Senior Law Officer's Meeting
ASLOM	ASEAN Senior Law Officials Meeting
ASPAC	Asia Pacific Council
ATRC	ASEAN Telecommunication Regulators' Council
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter
BSA	Bank Secrecy Act
BNPT	Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme
BRN	Badan Revolusi Nasional
BRN-C	Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate
CD	Compact Disc
CTC	Counter Terrorism Committee
DI	Darul Islamiyah
DJACT	Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism
e-ADS	Electronic ASEAN Database System
EEC	Eurasian Economic Commission
EUROPOL	The E.U Police
EAEC	East Asian Economic Caucus
ESSCOM	Eastern Sabah Security Command
ESSZONE	Eastern Sabah Security Zone
GAM	Gerekan Aceh Merdeka

GIFCT	Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism
GMIP	Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INTERPOL	The International Police
IS	Islamic States
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISIL	Islamic States Iraq and Levant
IT	Information Technology
JASPOC	Joint ASEAN Senior Police Office Course
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JCLEC	Jakarta Centre of Law Enforcement Cooperation
KMM	Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia
KSIP	King Salman Centre for International Peace
KSM	Khalid Sheikh Mohamed
MACC	Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
MAPHILINDO	Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MMEA	Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
mIRC	Internet Relay Chat
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NSC	National Security Council
NSCA	National Security Council Act
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PANYOM	Patani National Youth Movement
PECC	Pacific Economic Co-operation Conference
PKM	Communist Party of Malaya
POCA	Prevention of Crime Act 1959
POLRI	The Republic of Indonesian Police Force
POTA	Prevention of Terrorist Act
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organisation
SEARCCT	Southeast Asia Research Centre for Counter Terrorism
SOMTC	Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
SMATA	Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act
SOSMA	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
The E.U	The European Union
The U.K	The United Kingdom
The U.S	The United States of America
TELMIN	ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting
TELSOM	ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Senior Officials Meeting
UPNM	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
U.S.S.R.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic



WTC  
ZOPFAN

World Trade Centre  
Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The global phenomenon of terrorism has become a vital point of discussion. Whenever there is a bomb incident, aeroplane hijacks and human attack, terrorism motive will become the primary topic to be discussed by the security enforcement or even the public. The development of terrorism from a global perspective has become more important to focus on a regional scope. For example, Southeast Asia countries have experienced tremendous radical activities orchestrated by many radical organisations in the region. The terrorist groups are able to create a network that is connected throughout the world. The structure of this network requires people and Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to conduct their radicalisation agenda.

This network between individuals or organisations has become an essential and useful tool in this digital era. The Internet has become the alternative medium for any individual or organisation to communicate within their networks, through which they can cascade their propagation of ideology to civilian populations. Digital security policy, on the other hand, has

been considered crucial in bringing peace value for the community of specific regions. In an attempt to establish the factors affecting security policy, an exploration of ASEAN's context (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in combating the threats of terrorism in Southeast Asia is required. As a multilateral cooperation of many countries in the Southeast Asia region, ASEAN has designed regulations and policies to address these emerging threats. A comprehensive security framework formulated by ASEAN has been exclaimed as an effective method through many success stories.

## **1.2 Phenomenon of Networked Terrorism in Southeast Asia**

In understanding the current phenomenon of terrorist activities in ICT infrastructure, it is crucial to identify several problems experienced by ASEAN. Initially, this study attempts to answer the historical roots of terrorism in Southeast Asia. Are ethno-religious conflicts in this region the main factor of escalating terrorist activities? Is there any political gain that promotes and encourages these groups of terrorists to conduct subversive activities categorised as terrorist acts? Is there any economic factor that derails them from any participation of agreement of peace and treaty? In Chapter 3, this study intends to identify the root of three main groups of terrorists, namely Jemaah Al Islamiyah (JI), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and south Thailand insurgent groups. These groups are mainly involved in Southeast Asia regional ethno-religious conflicts. This chapter also investigates the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Southeast Asia as it is important to establish any networking relationship between ISIS and Southeast Asia terrorist groups. The investigation starts by identifying their activities after the 9-11 incident. At this point of time, the terrorist activities have been escalating at high volumes in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia.

Moreover, ASEAN's involvement in formulating counter-terrorism policy and regulation has been ignited from those incidents, especially after the first Bali bombings in 2002. After the 9-11 incident, the research on terrorism has been rocketed in the same track with the terrorist activities on the aspect of scholarship. More researchers aim to find the exact issues and challenges by identifying the root cause. They also want to design the best solutions to combat terrorist activities. Nowadays, counter-terrorism has become a useful tool to combat the threats of terrorism as it is used by international agencies and bodies, including ASEAN. However, in the advancement of technology especially in the era of virtual networking, gadget and smartphones, it is difficult to identify the 'real' terrorists that use the ICT platforms to propagate their ideology, recruit new members and virtually operate their organisation worldwide. Second, the act of 'invisible hands' will also cause a constraint for the enforcement agency to identify the doer and the right evidence. Terrorists will be able to disguise by registering themselves as anonymous users. Hit-and-Run modus operandi will be part of their game. The strategy was to create more impactful attacks by turning a wolf-packed regiment to become a lone-wolf attacker. This strategy may turn a person into a radical person and commit attacks to the public with one violent course. A recent attack at Christchurch in New Zealand validated this phenomenon. It was also supported with the Oklahoma City bombing incidents in 1995, Fort Hood shooting in 2009 and Norway shooting in 2011.

On this note, one radicalised person orchestrated all of these attacks. Besides, terrorists will also be able to host their portals in foreign countries. Therefore, it will also be challenging to detect them, as there is no evidence of any act of terror. Third, as an organisation, ASEAN must be able to revisit their current policy and regulation in combating the threat of digital terrorism. The effectiveness and readiness are the key elements to protect civilians' safety and provide stability to the whole nation of Southeast Asia. Lastly, transnational cooperation needs

to be enhanced to execute useful measurements to combat any terrorist activities. Initiatives from developed nations are required to compile and analyse as such elements of culture, religion, and political landscape are among the few factors that need to be considered, contrasted and examined.

### **1.3 Statements of Thesis**

In this research, insights into ASEAN's history, development and initiatives of counter-terrorism, especially in the context of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia have driven into a better understanding of the real issues and challenges. In this digital era, the role of the Internet has been extended from disseminating information into establishing societal diaspora. For example, social media have had a phenomenal impact on the global society, creating various networking connections between the users to communicate with friends and for economic and promoting ideology purposes. Many jihadist and insurgent groups have used this platform to disseminate their agenda and ideologies through their official websites<sup>1</sup>; [www.rahmah.net](http://www.rahmah.net), [www.asharuttauhid.com](http://www.asharuttauhid.com) and [www.pulo.net](http://www.pulo.net) are among the few examples. When the Internet began to be used for commercial purposes back in the mid-1990s, no one could have predicted the effect it would have on us (Haig, 2001).

Since many of these conventional activities are now done via the Internet, it has become the more popular medium than other types of traditional media. Nowadays, people can easily access information and be exposed to or influenced by any wrongdoing activities. In the context of terrorism, it is argued that terrorists are more sophisticated by using the Internet to

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.rahmah.net](http://www.rahmah.net) and [www.pulo.net](http://www.pulo.net). Accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2013, 10:20 p.m.

communicate within the network, propagate the radical ideology, recruit new members, finance and operate their organisation remotely. People can easily get influenced by the idea of jihad and human rights by surfing the websites of 'unknown terrorists'. One prominent example of such websites is Al-Qaeda, a well-known terrorist organisation that disseminates its ideology using the Internet extensively to communicate with its supporters as well as, at an extent, organising an attack (Hellmich, 2011). In the early 2000s, Daesh has benefited the Internet advancement, especially in the social media platform, to broadcast their jihadist activities. The on-going threat of terrorism using ICT infrastructure is predicted to be one of ASEAN's biggest future challenges. This research thus aims to investigate how this foundation of network terrorism can become a threat to ASEAN's population and nations. Through the digital counter-terrorism act, ASEAN's future security agenda should be developed into a holistic approach based on human and state security.

Perception and expectation of civilians in protecting their safety and the state's role to provide security are vital in framing the future of ASEAN's security framework. These two aspects will become a foundation to argue and provide antecedents of digital security for ASEAN regulation and policy. It is unfair to categorise anyone as a terrorist until the act of terror is taking place. Villainy could lead to harming civilians, but does it belong in the category of terrorism? As mentioned by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his speech at the U.S.–ASEAN Business Council Dinner in the United States in 2002 (Mohamad, 2003)<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> A speech delivered at the U.S. ASEAN Business Council Dinner in Washington, D.C, United States, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2002

"...terrorists do not operate from within a country. They can be anywhere. They can be anybody. They can act in a concert or alone."

However, due to the lack of study in the technological implementation of digital security elements in counter-terrorism, it is crucial to examine the ASEAN digital security policy in the perspective of policy and legal framework. This is a contributively part generated from this research. It is quite surprising that ASEAN, a multinational political organisation amongst developing countries, has played a pivotal role in addressing terrorism besides other developed nations. However, due to the new development of terrorist activities especially on how they propagate their ideology, recruit new members and operate their radical activities, there is a need to revisit the current and future ASEAN's norms and values, in formulating their policy and regulation agendas. In ICT platform, terrorists can become anonymous users, establish a social network to 'sell' their ideology, recruit more members and operate their activities either through conventional methods such as bombing and plane hijacking or virtual approach such as hacktivism<sup>3</sup> activities (Sageman, 2012). Hellmich (2011), in her book, mentions that Al-Qaeda Training Manual by 'Al-Qaeda' was available in the Internet bookseller Amazon.com for US\$14.95. However, based on the search and observation on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012, no such title was available in the Amazon.com's bookshelf<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, in her book (Hellmich, 2011), Al-Qaeda's English-Language online journal, Inspire, detailed guidance on how to kill Americans in any of the U.S. territories is provided. Based on these facts, the need

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<sup>3</sup> See presentation slides by Marc Sageman, 'Understanding Global Salafi Terror Network' <http://pptlook.com/ppt/> Accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Al+Qaeda+training+manual+by+al+qaeda&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3AAl+Qaeda+training+manual+by+al+qaeda](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Al+Qaeda+training+manual+by+al+qaeda&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3AAl+Qaeda+training+manual+by+al+qaeda). Accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012

to investigate how terrorists use the Internet platform to propel their agenda has become more crucial, requiring an urgent address.

This research extends the scope of analysing the current phenomenon in Southeast Asia and the world and comparing the policies and regulations practised in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in implementing legislative counter-terrorism methods to combat the threat of terrorism in this digital network. It is an excellent approach to emphasise on all these three countries as they are among the first countries in ASEAN constructing their legal jurisdiction in complying with the phenomenon.

In brief, Chapter 1 of this research covers the objectives and the rationale of conducting this study. In this chapter, the research design and methodology of the study are advocated. Originality of conducting this study provides the justification in finding new knowledge about online radicalisation. The research outcomes provide new knowledge in the perspective of the intensity on how ICT is being used by the terrorist groups in Southeast Asia region in propagating their ideology, new recruitment for their organisation and executing their radical activities. Subsequently, a comprehensive working schedule in completing this research is designed based on the planned steps.

Chapter 2 discusses philosophical research context and the underlying theory apply in this research. Epistemology perspective will be highlighted with the supported theory from the philosophers. The phenomenon of the misuse of ICT by terrorists will provide a platform for the author to provide a context of knowing a knowledge on how these terrorists group propagate their ideology, recruiting new members and execute their radical activities. In this chapter the author will support using the argument of relativism to support this qualitative



research. Further the author will identify the underlying theory to justify the philosophical framework of the research.

Chapter 3 discusses the phenomenon of misusing ICT platforms by the Southeast Asia terrorist groups to showcase their propaganda, recruit new members, and operate their terrorist acts. In this context, the websites and social media have been used as platforms by the terrorist groups for their radical agenda. This chapter is to address Research Questions 1.

Chapter 4 highlights the global phenomenon of ICT misuse by the terrorist groups to showcase their propaganda, recruit new members, and operate their terrorist acts, particularly in Europe, Iraq and Syria. The chapter is to address Research Question 2.

In Chapter 5, findings are analysed to address Research Question 3. Thematic analysis software and translation method are used to analyse the data and address the research questions. Also, in Chapter 5, a comparative analysis of policies and regulations on digital policy and legal framework are presented concerning ASEAN countries' international initiatives, i.e., in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. This chapter identifies the efficiency and effectiveness of the current digital regulations and policies towards counter measurement of terrorist activities in the Southeast Asia region. These new findings will generate some conclusions that may later be used as a potential policy guideline, a basis for further analysis and even a spin-off for a new research study.

In Chapter 6, issues and challenges in the ASEAN context are particularly discussed to address Research Question 4.