OSINT AS STANDALONE: CONSTRUCTING SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES (SNIE) SOLELY FROM OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE (OSINT)

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Abstract

This article attempts to provide Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE) through a holistic approach of open-source intelligence gathering. There are many ways to gather intelligence into producing and providing intelligence products, and open-source intelligence (OSINT) is a non-intrusive, public, legal, and overt approach of intelligence gathering. As an intelligence officer and analyst, various types of intelligence gatherings in espionage and warfare are often applied concurrently to produce a holistic intelligence product for the consumption of intelligence consumers. Nonetheless, this article suggests that OSINT is able to stand alone as a legitimate, reliable, and credible source of intelligence for intelligence products, particularly in producing a National Intelligence Estimates (NIE). This article aims to provide an elaborative guideline on creating an intelligence estimate through the most unconcealed intelligence source available. The OSINT-centric SNIE is eligible to be used as a risk assessment for national security, especially when it involves public perception, and management of public perception.

Keywords: Open-source intelligence, Special National Intelligence Estimate, Intelligence product, National hot issues, Public Perception, National security

1.0   Introduction

According to experts, good intelligence is a balanced and well thought combination of information and insight. Information is defined as unfiltered, unanalysed and raw, whereas insight is defined as the end product of an analysis of any information that can be utilised as intelligence. The end product could be in the form of an intelligence estimate, in which its main objective is to provide an all-encompassing and inclusive assessment of any major issue that can be considered as a threat to national security. Often times, intelligence estimates predict multiple plausible threats derived from strenuous issues that could jeopardise national security. Nevertheless, these predictions are derived from extensive intellectual analyses, methodological observations, and empirical research that are often capitalised as sound advice for the government. This practice can be seen in intelligence communities involving several sovereignties like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, North Korea, Iran and other hard power nations.

For many nations, intelligence capability and capacity lie in its extensive and highly equipped radars to gather as many information as possible [1]. There are at minimum, seven types of available intelligence gathering in service, such as Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), Imagery/Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT), Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT), Acoustic Intelligence (ACINT), Open-source Intelligence (OSINT), and Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT).

This article aims to suggest the national intelligence community to capitalise on OSINT in constructing a formal assessment of threatening issues that could jeopardise national security. Malaysia's intelligence capacity may not be as extensive as the hard power and hard superpower sovereigns such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, North Korea, and India, and therefore, our main concerns of security are mainly homeward. The most forthright way of maintaining internal national stability is by observing public perception and managing perception.

The combination of OSINT, and SOCMINT revealed that repetitive and overly portrayed national issues that are dubbed as hot topics and can jeopardise national stability if these issues remain to be replayed for public consumption without any effort of addressing those issues. Therefore, this can be observed, construed, and constructed as a national risk assessment in the form of Intelligence Estimate. Failure of addressing hot topics can be interpreted as intelligence failure, which can lead to failure in managing public perception. Management of public perception is crucial and if left unsupervised, it can lead to public disturbances. An obvious example was witnessed prior to the previous 14th General Election where countless public demonstrations were held and among these demonstrations were the notable BERSIH rallies which resulted from uncontrolled and unaddressed public perception. Public unrest and disturbance pose direct threats to national security. Public perception and issues manipulating public perception can be observed through open-source intelligence and social media intelligence, especially through real-life observations, news media reports and in social media platforms. Therefore, it is ideal to suggest that Intelligence Estimates could be constructed by relying solely on information derived from OSINT to manage public perception. Therefore, this article uses OSINT and SOCMINT (SOCMINT is categorised as part of OSINT throughout the article), as the primary and secondary sources of information for this article, which will be detailed further in the methodology, findings, and discussion.

Providing Intelligence Estimates or appraisal of available intelligence relating to issues and dilemmas contributing to Malaysia's national security threats can assist in determining probable courses of action against any risk or potential risks. Thus, enabling a clearer perspective that may illuminate and influence the decisions made by policymakers. Intelligence Estimates determine issues that are projected to threaten national security are categorised into two types of processes which are the urgent request, and the lengthy process of Intelligence Estimates [2]. Relatively, National Intelligence Estimates are drafted and prepared according to the needs of national policymakers, and consumers of Intelligence Estimates. Therefore, through appraisals of several Intelligence Estimates released to the public by the United States' Intelligence Community, Intelligence Estimates can be classified into Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE), and National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) depending on the national-level of urgency, priority, significance, uniqueness of issues, duration of conflicts, timeliness in producing an Intelligence Estimate, and confidentiality [3]. Hence, this article suggests that dilemmas related to Malaysian national issues categorised as Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) are more urgent. The authorities should prioritise in addressing, mitigating, solving and managing these national security threats as these threats may pose immediate internal and external risks to Malaysian core values, which are (1) territorial sovereignty and integrity; (2) socio-political stability; (3) national unity; (4) good governance; (5) economic integrity; (6) social justice; (7) sustainable development; (8) people's security; and (9) international recognition [4].

This article recommends that SNIE issues and dilemmas are recognised as high-profile, important, urgent, severe, acute, and given priority. Issues under this classification are encouraged to be identified, evaluated, addressed, justified, and solved either overtly or covertly within five years. Open sources intelligence (OSINT) observed that national issues and dilemmas that are persistently repeated have seemingly affected the socio-political stability of the nation including economic integrity, security, national development, and governance. In this context, issues threatening socio-political stability are given priority to be addressed and managed where national security policy and principles are concerned. Issues threatening the wellbeing and security of the people are determined as a priority and urgent when it involves

managing public perception towards the government and its governance. However, issues jeopardising people's safety that hinders sustainable development such as natural disasters are recognised as severe and acute. This is due to the concern in maintaining sustainable development and survivability of the nation for future generation. In this circumstance, acute is defined as an unpleasant or unwelcomed situation or phenomenon that is severe and intense [5]. In addition to that, prolonged issues relating to economic distress that remained unsolved are also recognised as being a priority. On the other hand, the national economy and the livelihood of Malaysians are at stake if these issues are left prolongedly untreated.

In the quest of searching for issues that revolve on national security, primary and secondary open sources in the forms of public opinions, newspaper articles, academic journals and digital ethnography are explored. On top of that, the skills to identify intelligence from various sources of information are applied. Primary open-source intelligence (OSINT) is derived from the opinions of close friends and family members, statements from political figures, as well as intellectual opinions on social media such as Twitter and research-related infographics on Instagram. In relation to this, secondary OSINT are mostly from newspaper article headlines focusing on media sentiments towards covered issues that shapes public perception, and from several academic journals exploring issues on national security threats.

2.0   Literature Review

2.1   Explaining Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)

Open-source Intelligence, abbreviated OSINT, is one of five main types of intelligence collection, which are (1) Human Intelligence (HUMINT); (2) Signals Intelligence (SIGINT); (3) Imagery/Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT); (4) Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT); and finally (5) Open-source Intelligence (OSINT). Open-source Intelligence (OSINT) is the most public and overt process of collecting, filtering, and developing information into intelligence for the consumption of interested parties regarding any data of any individual, any company, any event, any idea or opinion that may be obtained lawfully from free, public and overt sources are categorised as OSINT. The term "open-source intelligence" is used to describe any publicly available data found in any open sources, either physical media like books, magazines, journals, newspapers, press releases, dialogs, chronicles, public broadcasts and documents or the non-physical media and sources such as the Internet, and social media platforms (also known as social media intelligence or SOCMINT), alternative news platforms, websites, and blogging sites. Adding to this are other legally obtained open sources such as government reports, company profiles, and other public records. Hence, it entails that information gleaned from various forms of media are considered a fundamental part of OSINT [6].

According to [6], OSINT, or open-source intelligence, is a form of information gathering in which raw data is collected from publicly available sources. Raw data is transformed into actionable intelligence knowledge, or an intelligence product, through additional processing and analysis. The final intelligence product, often referred to as intelligence information, is the epitome of complex quality intelligence conducted through timely classifying and distributing intelligence knowledge to its ultimate users, decision-making is simplified, and expedited benefiting not only for political decisions but also business decisions.

2.2   Justifying the use of OSINT to construct Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE)

Open-source intelligence (OSINT) is an effective type and tool of intelligence gathering, especially when concerning public perception. According to [7], OSINT is a powerful investigative and intelligence approach. Due to the rapidly evolving big data availability on open sources and

media, it can provide intelligence officers with abundant information at their disposal. According to [8][9], OSINT played a crucial and instrumental role in handling the tragedy of MH17 in 2014.

Social media intelligence (SOCMINT) is one of the most frequently observed type of OSINT. As social media users tend to feed information and unsolicited intelligence in real time, their opinions are also dispersed, enabling the observation of public opinion, and perception on open sources and media. Therefore, OSINT is a dependable instrument and tool in constructing and providing intelligence products like the National Intelligence Estimates (NIE). The NIE is the intelligence community's most definitive written assessments in informing policymakers and decisionmakers the plausible future course of events as well as highlighting plausible implications [10].

According to [11], the Internet has become one of the main providers and disseminators of news, issues and information through online news media platforms, and social media platforms. Subsequently, the interactive nature of the Internet and the digital world, especially on social media platforms, enables the intelligence community to observe media reality and public reality of a hot issue, and therefore gauge the digital public's perception of a highlighted national issue. If a national issue gains noticeable "buzz" or traction and reaction from the digital public and social media users, it can be suggested that the issue affects them in reality.

2.3 Calibrating cycle of Intelligence Gathering with Malaysia's National Security Policy 2021-2025

The government's National Security Policy (NSP) 2021-2025 is the primary guide and reference for Ministries and Agencies at all levels of government administration, federal, state, and district, in a comprehensive national security governance. The NSP 2021-2025 is a strategic approach to establish the direction of national security management particularly over the given timeframe.

In an attempt to determine the types of National Intelligence Estimates (NIE), this article suggests the use of Malaysia's National Security Policy (NSP) 2021-2025 as the main guideline in analysing which national hot topics or issues are estimated as threatening to national security by utilising the NSP's endorsed nine core values, which are (1) territorial sovereignty and integrity; (2) socio-political stability; (3) national unity; (4) good governance; (5) economic integrity; (6) social justice; (7) sustainable development; (8) people's security; and (9) international recognition [4].

This article's main objective is to describe the process of constructing National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) from its initial information gathering process, to intelligence gathering and filtering process, to match collected intelligence with the nine core values in order to determine which hot issue is credible enough by its frequency to be linked to the nine core values in order to be considered as a threat to national security.

3.0 Methodology

A qualitative method was used on OSINT to observe and gather information related to hot topics that could possibly threaten national security, open sources intelligence including social media, news outlets, hearsays, opinion pieces, research, and infographics are utilised to observe the patterns of national issues that are frequently spoken and discussed where information is gathered following these leads.

3.1 Digital ethnography as primary or first source of OSINT

According to [12], digital ethnography can be defined as a subject observation method of in its natural and real-world environment. This method is also known as immersion, in which a researcher, or observer observe the intended study group in its own environment. It is projected that by utilising digital ethnography, this article uses primary open-source information and intelligence from hearsays, personal opinions, and public opinions that are gathered passively and informally, as well as utilising social media platforms as part of primary data source.

Studying viral content in media epidemiography is a method commonly used in digital ethnography, which is a form of OSINT and SOCMINT. Viral content on social media represents the social movement of an individual who is a part of digital network community. Viral content demonstrates what is popular and frequently shared in a specific digital network community and in this instance refers to the Malaysian digital public. Malaysian digital public can be observed through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Using the Principle of Pareto of 20-80, this article considers that Malaysian social media users are makers and disseminators of opinions to the general public. This is a result of their capability in producing viral hot topics to the extent of gaining news media's attention. In this article, viral content is defined as repetitive and overly portrayed hot topics on social media that led to frequent coverage of those issues in various news platforms, exploring the possibility of those issues becoming issues that threatens national security.

3.2 The Internet as secondary or supporting and evidentiary source

The Internet, namely social media platforms and news platforms are observable OSINT and can be used as evidentiary secondary sources in providing and constructing Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE). Therefore, by using the Internet, the article observes and identifies frequently engaged national issues among social media users.

3.3 Gathered OSINT to be determined as NIEs by using Malaysia's National Security Policy 2021-2025

Once the hot topics gathered through OSINT are determined, the hot topics should touch at least three out of nine core values as proposed in NSP 2021-2025 in order to be considered as being repeatedly portrayed on the Internet, discussed repetitively by social media users, and disseminated exhaustively to shape, reshape, and to an extent, manipulate public perception. Frequently engaged topics are considered hot topics or viral content where it could insinuate that these issues are severe especially if they jeopardise many core values as stated in the NSP 2021-2025. The nine core values are (1) territorial sovereignty and integrity; (2) socio-political stability; (3) national unity; (4) good governance; (5) economic integrity; (6) social justice; (7) sustainable development; (8) people's security; and (9) international recognition.

3.4 Constructing Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE)

There are two types of Intelligence Estimates which are Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE), and National Intelligence Estimates (NIE). This article focuses on constructing SNIE over NIE, as SNIE is considered to be a risk assessment of national interest where hot issues that are severely threatening than its milder counterpart NIE. Although NIE is also a risk assessment of national hot issues, SNIE is given priority due to the nature of issues that are high-profile, important, urgent, severe, and acute. Issues that fall under SNIE are advised to be addressed within a given period of time. Conceptually, the frequency of virality of an issue, whether portrayed on social media or on other media and information platforms, should be evaluated by using the nine core values as endorsed in NSP 2021-2025 according to the denominators for its urgency, severity,

priority, and acuteness of issues. Hypothetically, if an issue revolves on at least three core values out of nine, it is considered apt to be included as a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). Furthermore, if an issue touches more than three core values, it will be upgraded to a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) where the particular issue is precariously handled since it may cause disruption of public opinion and public perception.

Currently, there is no specific theory needed to construct the NIE, especially when applying open-source intelligence (OSINT) in determining hot issues. However, an intelligence officer using OSINT must be apt in sorting issues, avoiding noise during intelligence gathering and analysing, as well as identifying signals and indicators of intelligence in raw data and information. In order for the intelligence officer to construct an actionable, holistic, and dependable SNIE, projection and foresight knowledge, and the knowledge to provide alternative options and outcomes are essential. It entails that an intelligence officer should have the capability to identify, extract, evaluate, address, and analyse an indicator of intelligence, as well as providing advice in the SNIE to help illuminate policymakers' decisions and action plans.

Ultimately, a national hot issue will be categorized as SNIE when it involves socio-political stability, wellbeing of the people, security, and safety of the people, as well as long-withstanding issues or difficulties that have yet to be solved.

3.4   Workflow model of intelligence gathering

Using the model of U.S Joint Chiefs of Staff JP2-0, as attempt to describe the continuous progress of refinement of data, information, and intelligence in constructing Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE), the workflow model is as follows;
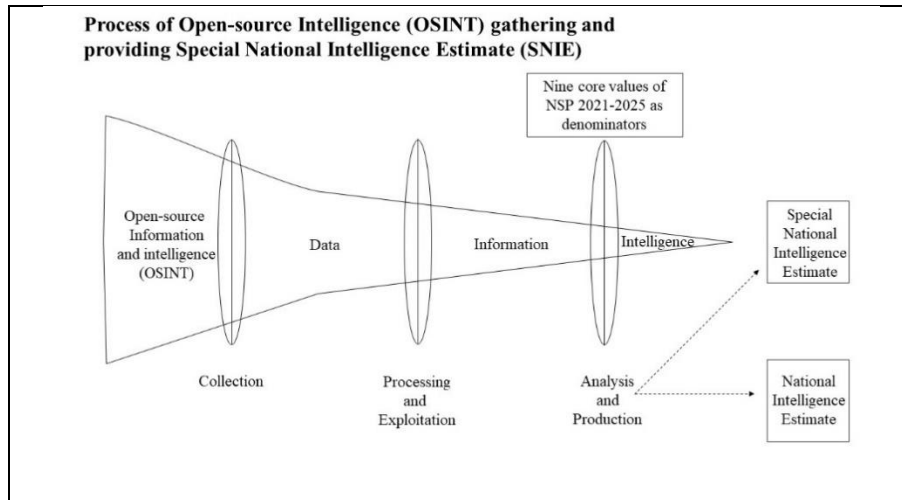

Figure 1

Figure 1 above describes the workflow of gathering raw data and abundant information on open-source medias, materials, and information to process and filter them into valuable information and ultimately, intelligence. Figure 1 above also describes the relationship of data, information, and intelligence in providing an intelligence product.

3.5   OSINT gathering and SNIE constructing procedures

Steps	Descriptions
1.	First, identify and decide upon the type of intelligence gathering cycle and media to be utilized with aims to provide intelligence product. This article uses open-source intelligence (OSINT), with digital ethnography, physical sources and new media or sources from the Internet as the media of choice in constructing intelligence product (Special National Intelligence Estimates).
2.	Second, using OSINT and its components (digital ethnography, the Internet, and physical sources), overt, public, and non-intrusive raw data are observed.
3.	Third, from the abundant data, strategic information will be identified and processed by using intelligence officers' insights and innate analytical skills, to collect valuable and frequently portrayed information that have appeared on OSINT sources, especially social media platforms.
4.	Fourth, these frequently portrayed information will be classified as hot topics if they touched on national security issues. Then, these hot topics will undergo a more critical process of evaluation and analysis by pairing one national hot topic with denominators of national security risks, which are also known in this article as the nine core values of national security as endorsed in the National Security Policy 2021-2025.
5.	Fifth, once a national hot topic is matched and analysed to have touched on at least three or more core values of NSP, this means that the hot topic is potentially apt to jeopardise national security. From this, a hot topic will then be assessed as National Intelligence Estimates and will be classified into either "special attention" (Special National Intelligence Estimates), or "attention" (National Intelligence Estimates).
6.	Sixth, the construction of intelligence product in the form of Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE) begins by analysing and justifying the reason a hot topic is classified under SNIE with strategic and actionable discussion and recommendations for alternative solutions to assist consumers of intelligence product.

Table 1

3.6   Process of Matching and Analysing before Constructing SNIE

Frequent/viral issue	Denominators for national security risk via Malaysian core values (MCV) by National Security Policy 2021-2025								
	MCV 1	MCV 2	MCV 3	MCV 4	MCV 5	MCV 6	MCV 7	MCV 8	MCV 9
Price hike		√		√	√			√	
Minimum living wage		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Political interference		√	√	√			√		√

Table 2

Table 2 above attempts to explain the process of matching and analysing national hot topics with the nine core values endorsed in National Security Policy 2021-2025, labelled as Malaysian Core Value/MCV 1 (territorial sovereignty and integrity), MCV 2 (socio-political stability), MCV 3 (national unity), MCV 4 (good governance), MCV 5 (economic integrity), MCV 6 (social justice), MCV 7 (sustainable development), MCV 8 (people's security), and MCV 9 (international recognition). The Table 2 shows that the frequency of denominators a national hot topic touched will determine the severity of the issue. The

more it jeopardises the Malaysian core values, the more it should be assessed under Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE).

4.0   Findings and Discussion

After extensive observation and reading of primary and secondary open-sources intelligence and information, findings showed that dilemmas on economic integrity are the most frequently recurring SNIE issues on open sources materials. These issues also have affected other national core values especially on people's security and socio-political stability. Relatively, national issues that directly affected the core value on socio-political stability also acutely affected the value of good governance in Malaysia. It is estimated that issues that will be elaborated have affected many denominators or core values of the nation, therefore these issues must be urgently addressed and mitigated.

4.1   Economic Dilemmas are Most Threatening Special National Intelligence Estimate

The depreciating value of Ringgit against other international currencies is a worsening economic situation that are directly affecting economic integrity, socio-political stability, and national sustainable development [13][14][15][16][17]. The weakening value of Ringgit has found Malaysia in the international hot seat as foreign investments are seemingly reluctant in investing capitals and hopes for the current and future of Malaysian economy. Ringgit weakens against other currencies is a signal of possible fiscal decline in Malaysian economic landscape. The fall of Ringgit value can lead to other economic distresses that would disrupt the slow upward trajectory of Malaysian economy. This may also cause inflation where prices of imported commodities, products, and services such as electrical and electronic products, chemicals, petroleum products and machinery, which are crucial in manufacturing and other related industries. Relatively, this economic dilemma could lead or contribute to internalisation of inflation and price hike in Malaysia, if left untreated and unregulated. This situation is a threat to national socio-political and economic landscapes. The wellbeing of Malaysians in an economic perspective is also jeopardised if the economic situation in Malaysia remains gloomy. Relatively, this would also threaten national social stability and in the long run, would hinder further sustainable development in Malaysia. Ringgit depreciation must be mitigated within two or five years as this is considered as a SNIE issue. Overtly, policymakers are encouraged to counter the threats of inflation by strengthening the value of Ringgit. In this effort, more robust export activities should be adopted while maximising the value of Ringgit in boosting the tourism industry, specifically in shopping tourism, as the COVID-19 situation subsides.

Due to the depreciating value of Ringgit, another economic dilemma is the price hike. The price hike is a national security threat that needs urgent intervention and solution, as it poses severe cost-of-living challenges for the people amid economic inflation. Price hike directly affected economic integrity, people's security, sustainable development, and governance. Price hike in Malaysia is a recurring and unsolved economic crisis that threatens the national economy, lives livelihood, governance, and the nation's future physical and mental development. While the contributing factor of increased price in goods and services may be externally influenced, Malaysia as a nation must find a localised and internalised solution for the economic crisis. The government and policymakers are aware that this economic issue needs urgent solution and therefore should be prioritize. Therefore, flexible ceiling price is introduced as one of the many initiatives to address food inflation, as well as curbing price hike in Malaysia [18]. Flexible ceiling price is a win-win method allowing prices to be moderated without keeping them too low until it would cause a disadvantage and loss to the suppliers. Some economists lauded this decision as it would help relax the price control in food items, reduce dependence on food imports, increase supply and demand for localised agriculture industry, and is projected to lead to the normalisation of the market. However, economic experts also cautioned that this measure is a short-term solution and that the

results of supply normalisation and prices moderation should be seen within weeks for the flexible ceiling price initiative to be considered successful and beneficial to curb price hikes.

Flexible ceiling price is a measure that needs an extensive collaboration between the federal. and state governments especially in increasing the land size for agricultural use, and if succeeded, would positively impact the national agriculture industry, and economy. Open sources intelligence observed that calls for empowerment of the national agriculture economy have been intensified as a means to secure food production and supply on a national level. Food security and food inflation [19] are a national growing concern and are estimated to be a national security threat and is classifies as SNIE. If the issue is left unsolved within a period of time, may become an acute economic distress that jeopardises economic integrity, sustainable development, and people's security in the socio-economic perspective. Food security is a growing global concern due to political unrest between Ukraine and Russia. However, on a national level, Malaysia is dependent on certain food imports such as meat items, wheat, grains, and cooking oils but as the war continues, it caused a disruption of supplies for Malaysian food imports. Malaysian food export has also faced setbacks after the decision of limiting and banning chicken meat export had caused uncertainty in chicken supply in Singapore, leading the country to find alternatives for poultry supply in other neighbouring countries [20][21][22][23]. This is a concern as it may cause distrust in terms of Malaysian export reliability, and economic confidence if prolonged even after the nation's poultry supply stabilises. Therefore, empowering national agriculture is one of the ideal solutions in overcoming food security crisis and inflation of food prices [24][25][26]. Malaysia is initially an agriculture economy but there are only limited innovations made to empower the industry. Whilst the government's decision in expanding agriculture lands, and human capital are sound solutions, it is also advisable that technological innovations should be increased in this industry. In addition to this, education, and reformation of public mindset that agriculture is a lucrative and attractive industry have to be inculcated.

In empowering the agriculture economy and industry, Malaysia could view South Korea as an ideal example. South Korea is known to have limited lands for farming and uncommon weather patterns. Therefore, in November 2011, the South Korean government had implemented an Act to support urban agriculture to make compatible with the development of its cities and rural areas. After its implementation, nature-friendly urban environment became an aspiration in South Korea. This is due to the establishment of farm-parks, indoor farming, elementary agriculture education, rooftop vegetable gardens, and individual box-typed vegetable pots for houses are promoted as part of the people's ideal lifestyle. The solution made by introducing a modern farming lifestyle, the South Korean government had hoped to solve the shrinking number of farmers and the weakening of Korean domestic farmer's market. Relatively, South Korea also promoted and researched on smart farming technology to empower innovation in its domestic agriculture industry. In addition to this, the country also has an agricultural protection policy where it promotes and improves the circulation conditions of agricultural products and agricultural machinery by issuing machinery subsidies to farmers, establishing agricultural products trading markets, building agricultural industrial areas, investing heavily in developing agriculture into secondary and tertiary industries, and investing in scientific farming. If Malaysia is able to imitate and successfully promote some of South Korea's simplistic farming initiatives into our localised agriculture industry, this may impact the nation positively in terms of economic integrity, sustainable development, and governance.

4.2   Special National Intelligence Estimate on Issues that Jeopardise Socio-economic Sustainability of Malaysians and Future Generations

Sustaining economic stability and integrity for future generation is another national security threat that falls under SNIE classification [27]. Poor financial freedom among youths is at tipping point of risking socio-political stability, economic integrity, people's security, social justice, national unity, and the nation's sustainability. There are many contributing factors to poor financial independency and economic survivability among youngsters, such as increased cost and standard of living, price hike, high unemployment rate, inability for assets or house ownership, low minimum wage, stagnant salary growth and benefits, poor financial management, limited opportunity, and knowledge in expanding financial wealth, and financial drain from external factors such as expensive goods, services, and amenities. These are the economic dilemmas faced by youths and are undeniably contributing to social distress in Malaysia. Their inability to be economically and financially competitive with their peers and ultimately with other nations may threaten the wellbeing of national core values in multifaceted angles, including socio-politics, racial harmony, economic progress, and livelihood of the people. If left unaddressed and unmitigated, it will compromise the nation's sustainability [28].

Related to the previous national security issue, inequal income distribution, stagnant income, and unsatisfactory minimum wage among Malaysians have become prolonged economic issues that threatens socio-political stability, economic integrity people's security, social justice, and national unity in Malaysia [29][30]. As this issue has been endured overtime and has yet to be solved or improved, SNIE is urgently needed for the issue to be classified as a priority. It is feared that with the additional and increasing distresses of price hike and food scarcity in the nation, the livelihood of those living below the national poverty line will face adverse challenges for survival. If the situation continues to deteriorate, Malaysia will be at risk of becoming a fallen economy nation like Latin American countries such as Venezuela, and Sri Lanka. This will result in the disruption of racial harmony, national and people's security due to the inequality of income distribution. This will further lead to socio-political instability, posing risks and vulnerabilities for foreign intervention not just economically, but also politically.

Malaysia needs to search for solutions that transpires beyond the financial conditions and livelihood dilemmas of the affected groups, which are the Bottom 40 (B40) groups and Middle 40 (M40) groups [31]. Financial aids and government subsidies, whilst temporarily relieving, are not permanent nor long-term solutions to this dilemma [32]. Policymakers should gain revolutionary and holistic insights from economists and experts from the local and international financial industry. Therefore, achievable, realistic and cost-and-capital effective action-plans, angled to benefit the people should be extrapolated. Solutions, action-plans, or policies must be constructed using the bottom-up approach in order to improve the economic distress of the people, especially those in the B40 and M40 income distribution groups. The wellbeing of the people should be priority where the lives and livelihood as well as the financial situation of the B40 and M40 groups in Malaysia will continue to be gloomy, which will impact the perception of national good governance in the eye of international observer [33][34][35][36].

4.3   Special National Intelligence Estimate on Political Interference as a Threat on Good Governance

The last SNIE issue that should be addressed and mitigated is on the matter of political interference in governance. Political interference is a long-withstanding challenge in the Malaysian government, and it jeopardises the socio-political stability, integrity, governance, and sustainable development, and international recognition [37][38][39][40][41]. Good governance is fundamental to economic growth, political stability, and security. These are key factors in safeguarding a

nation's stability and security, whether politically, economically, militarily, territorially, and autonomously. Good governance leads to improved economic and political benefits in a globalised world, and if jeopardised, may lead to increased pessimistic international perception towards the nation. Good governance portrays integrity in a government's administration or striving to achieve integrity in all levels of administration. However, political interference in Malaysia is on the verge of jeopardising the nation's good governance and democratic system. Compromised democratic system may put Malaysia under international scrutiny. Since post-14th General Election, political interference in the nation has worsened, and this also affects many plans on sustainable developments in the nation.

Too much political interference in Malaysia may become a blight to good governance in Malaysia, to the extent that interventions by the Royal institutions in political situations as according to the principles of Federal Constitutions (including the true Monarch's responsibility in decision-making in governance matters as per the Constitutions), without any political motivation, are needed to necessitate good governance. Royal interventions were at times necessary and well-meant during unresolved political crises for the good governance of Malaysia. Presently, the public concern, observation and opinions have become steadily growing check-and-balance entity in Malaysian governance and socio-political climate. However, ideally, the public should not have to worry of political uncertainties post-election especially fearing that the nation might be on the edge of socio-politics and economic instability. Therefore, in order to deter political interference, it is ideal to limit and separate the power of individuals who holds both political role and the executive role that includes financial administration or board of directorship in government-linked companies (GLCs) and statutory bodies [42]. The initiative of empowering the Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia roles in Malaysian Ministries, local authorities and statutory bodies would also serve as check-and-balance to government administration and governance. The prospect of placing the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) independently under the Parliament also should be considered in its probability, as MACC is known to have political appointments of its Chief Commissioners which may raise concerns that MACC cannot avoid political interference.

5.0   Recommendation

The authorities responsible of national security and safety, and national intelligence agencies working alongside the authorities, specifically the Chief Government Security Office (CGSO) [43], should prioritise addressing, mitigating, or solving the above-mentioned national security threats, as these threats may pose an immediate risk to Malaysia's core values. The findings above suggest that socio-political and economic stability is fundamental in safeguarding a nation's sovereignty and security. Any issue or dilemma that risks threatening national security would have to be detected, identified, evaluated of potential risks by gathering all available information and intelligence, addressed, observed, and mitigated. Intelligence gathering from all available open sources revealed that economic dilemmas in Malaysia are increasing, and through intelligence estimates, these economic dilemmas are feared to jeopardise Malaysia's national core values including socio-political stability, economic integrity, people's security, sustainable development, and governance. The issues above that have been evaluated and given intelligence estimates must be prioritised as these issues are interrelated to one another. All of which have common denominators of risking the wellbeing of the nation, government, economic landscape, and the people.

6.0   Conclusion

In conclusion, open-source intelligence (OSINT) is capable of providing intelligence estimates without covert, confidential, and sensitive intelligence instruments. OSINT is effective in mitigating short-term and sensational national issues. The process of OSINT gathering requires an intelligence officer's skills and insights in deciding which information is valuable among the overloaded information and data dumping. Once extraction of valuable information is done, the process of providing intelligence begins and ends with its capability in managing and solving risks. This can be calibrated in the form of intelligence products or National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIE). Of course, there are various strategic approaches in determining SNIE issues across intelligence sources, but for OSINT, this article attempts to provide a strategic guideline by using Malaysia's National Security Policy 2021-2025 as it provides precise denominators for national security through its nine core values. Ultimately, this SNIE guideline aspires to assist the development of numerous policies, strategies, and action plans across sectors to ensure the national security of Malaysia.

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