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**“CONSTRUCTING” THE JEMAAH  
ISLAMIAH TERRORIST:  
A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY**

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## ABSTRACT

Coming on the heels of the October 2002 Bali and August 2003 Jakarta Marriott bombings, the recent Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) attack on the Australian embassy in Jakarta demonstrates very clearly that the terror network, despite its numbers having been decimated by counter-terror action by regional governments, retains the capacity to mount significant terrorist atrocities. What is extremely significant is that while the embassy attack bore the imprint of senior JI bomb-maker Azahari Husin, he evidently had the assistance and support of new recruits. This suggests that the JI organization is regenerating itself. Ultimately, counter-terrorism success depends on the ability of regional governments to prevent terrorist organizations from regenerating. This paper seeks to unearth the dynamics driving the JI regeneration process. It attempts to interrogate the complex processes by which ordinary young Muslim men are transformed into indoctrinated JI militants. It shows that the intersection of four broad factors are especially important in the creation of new cohorts of indoctrinated JI: the radical Islamist ideology of Qaedism; the historical, political and socio-cultural backdrop of Southeast Asia and especially Indonesia; the individual make-up of JI terrorists; and the “ingroup space” within which individual terrorists are enmeshed. In doing so this paper sheds much-needed light on the burning question of why Western-educated, seemingly modern individuals like Azahari Husin can be transformed into extreme fundamentalist fanatics capable of committing mass murder in the name of religion.

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**“CONSTRUCTING” THE JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH TERRORIST:  
A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY<sup>1</sup>**

Recent events have shown that the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI or “Islamic community”) radical Islamist terrorist organization has emerged as the biggest threat to Southeast Asian security. JI, which has Indonesian origins, seeks to establish a *Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara*, or an archipelagic Islamic Southeast Asian state incorporating Indonesia, Malaysia, the southern Philippines, and inevitably, Brunei and Singapore.<sup>2</sup> What sets JI apart from other violent radical Islamic Southeast Asian groups, is its transnational aspirations: over and above establishing ties with regional entities such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), JI has also had contact with Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda.

It should not be forgotten that Al Qaeda and JI had planned to mount truck bomb attacks against American and other Western targets in Singapore in December 2001/January 2002 or April/May 2002.<sup>3</sup> The thwarting of these attacks prompted JI to switch to so-called “soft targets” such as shopping malls, hotels, bars and nightclubs. This targeting shift resulted ultimately in the carnage of 12 October 2002 when two exclusive Bali nightspots frequented by Australian and European clientele, Paddy’s Bar and the Sari Club were struck by JI bombings. The death toll was high: 202 civilians - mostly young Australian tourists.<sup>4</sup> The Bali attacks were followed up 10 months later by another attack on the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta. This killed 12 people but injured

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<sup>1</sup> This paper builds upon a chapter entitled “The Making of the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist”, in J. Forest (ed.), *Teaching Terror: Knowledge Transfer in the Terrorist World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming 2005).

<sup>2</sup> *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism* (Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, 7 January 2003), pp. 3-4. Hereafter Singapore WP.

<sup>3</sup> Singapore WP, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Moore, “Jakarta Fears JI Has Suicide Brigade”, *The Age* (Australia), 12 August 2003.

150.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, on 9 September 2004, two days away from the third anniversary of the September 11 Al Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., yet another JI bomb attack occurred in Jakarta, this time targeting the Australian embassy. Nine people were killed and more than 180 injured. Most of these were ordinary Indonesians. As in the Bali and Marriott attacks, it appears that the latest terrorist strike involved a suicide bomber. Initial speculation suggests that the attack on the embassy was planned by a senior Malaysian JI bombmaker Azahari Husin, at large in Indonesia, and executed by a squad involving a “new generation of JI cadres” from South Sumatra.<sup>6</sup>

The inescapable conclusion is that JI, despite its numbers having been decimated by counter-terror action by regional governments, retains the capacity to mount significant terrorist attacks. Following the Australian embassy attack Indonesian Police officials noted that, “JI still had a few hundred kilogrammes of explosives in its possession”.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, however, the fact that new recruits were involved clearly indicates that the organization is regenerating.<sup>8</sup>

Jerrold M. Post has argued that counter-terrorism success ultimately depends on the ability to prevent terrorist organizations from regenerating.<sup>9</sup> My paper accordingly seeks to unearth the dynamics driving the JI regeneration process. It will attempt to interrogate the complex processes by which ordinary young Muslim men are transformed into indoctrinated JI militants. It will show that the intersection of four broad factors are especially important in the creation of new cohorts of indoctrinated JI: the radical Islamist ideology of Qaedaism; the historical, political and socio-cultural backdrop of Southeast Asia and especially Indonesia, the world’s largest Islamic country; the

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<sup>5</sup> “Marriott Blast Suspects Named”, *CNN.com*, 19 August 2003  
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/08/19/indonesia.arrests.names/> (accessed 11 Sep. 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Derwin Pereira, “Jakarta Blast Kills 9, Injures 180”, *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 10 September 2004. See also idem, “Attack has Imprint of JI’s Azahari”, *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Pereira, “Attack has Imprint of JI’s Azahari”.

<sup>8</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan, “Is Southeast Asia a ‘Terrorist Haven?’”, in *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (Singapore: World Scientific/Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2003), pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Jerrold M. Post, “Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces”, in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. by Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), pp. 39-40.

individual make-up of JI terrorists; and what we may call the “ingroup space” within which individual terrorists are enmeshed. An old Chinese proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. My paper represents such a tentative but utterly necessary step along the long road towards a better understanding of the processes of JI terrorist formation. The journey must begin with an examination of the wider historical backdrop of Islam in Southeast Asia, and in particular, in Indonesia, where JI first emerged.

### **The Historical Milieu**

Beginning around the 14th century Islam came to Southeast Asia by way of West and Central Asian traders who took pains to ensure that religious considerations were not permitted to get in the way of commercial exchange. Over time, Islam, in especially the rural hinterlands of Southeast Asia, accommodated existing traditions deriving from other faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In this way, unique Southeast Asian varieties of Islam emerged, which Azyumardi Azra, a leading Indonesian Islamic scholar, considers to be “basically, tolerant, peaceful, and smiling”.<sup>10</sup> This is not to imply, however, that Southeast Asian Islam has been without its harder-line fundamentalist strains.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, much intellectual cross-fertilization took place between *Haramayn*-based clerics, Malay-Indonesian students and *ulama*, and one result of this interaction was the emergence, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, of the so-called Padri movement in West Sumatra in Indonesia. The Padris were a reform movement that emphasized a return to the “pure and pristine Islam as practised by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the *salaf*)”. Significantly, the Padris were quite willing to resort to forceful methods, including *jihad*, to compel fellow Muslims to return to the so-called fundamentals of Islam. This was a significant development in Southeast Asian

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<sup>10</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “The Megawati Presidency: Challenge of Political Islam”, paper delivered at the “Joint Public Forum on Indonesia: The First 100 Days of President Megawati”, organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore) and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Jakarta), 1 November 2001, Singapore.

Islam at the time. In fact it has been suggested that the Padri movement bore striking similarities to the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the most important reformist current emanated from Cairo: “modernist Islam” or “Islamic modernism”, which began appearing in Indonesia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The modernists thought in pan-Islamic terms, and ultimately sought to revitalize Islamic civilization in the face of global Western Christian ascendancy. Modernists like the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh “admired Europe” for its “strength”, “technology” and “ideals of freedom, justice and equality”, and sought to emulate these achievements by developing an authentically Islamic basis for “educational, legal, political and social reform” that would lead to a restoration of the Islamic world’s “past power and glory”.<sup>12</sup> To this end, within Southeast Asia, the modernists tried to “purify” Islam of the traditional beliefs, customs and Sufi-inspired practices that had been absorbed over the previous centuries.<sup>13</sup> Like their ideological counterparts in the Middle East, moreover, the Southeast Asian modernists sought an accommodation between Islamic revival and modern science and technology.<sup>14</sup>

Modernist Islam spawned Indonesian Muslim mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah in 1912 and Al-Irsyad a year later.<sup>15</sup> Muhammadiyah for instance “advocated the purification of Islam through the literal adoption of the lifestyle and teachings of the Prophet and the analytical application of the Koran and the Sunnah to contemporary problems”.<sup>16</sup> However, over the decades Muhammadiyah has been “domesticated” and today accommodates “local concerns, including the adoption of Sufi practices”.<sup>17</sup> This is not to say however that rigid, literalist elements do not persist within

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<sup>11</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam: Debunking the Myths”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford, 2002), pp. 78-79.

<sup>13</sup> Barry Desker, “Countering Terrorism: Why the ‘War on Terror’ is Unending”, unpublished paper, September 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Symonds, “The Political Origins and Outlook of Jemaah Islamiyah”, *World Socialist Website*, Part 2, 13 November 2003, available at [www.wsws.org/articles/2003/nov2003/ji2-n13\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/nov2003/ji2-n13_prn.shtml) (accessed 20 August 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Muhammadiyah ranks. This is why some observers have commented on the “schizophrenic” nature of Indonesia’s second-largest Muslim mass organization.<sup>18</sup> Other bodies, moreover, are much more explicit about their harder-edged interpretations of Islamic modernism: the Islamic Union (Persis) emerged in East Java in 1923 and has focused most of its energy and resources into propagating “correct” doctrine and practice. Persis has been described as by far the most “puritan” of Indonesian reform movements.<sup>19</sup>

After World War Two, Masjumi (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) emerged as the main Islamic modernist political party. Its key leaders such as Mohammad Natsir and A. Hassan were linked with Persis. In fact Persis formed the “backbone” of Masjumi throughout its existence.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the 1950s, Masjumi leaders locked horns politically with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and President Sukarno, a secular nationalist who opposed attempts to make Islamic or *shariah* law the basis of the Indonesian constitution. Sukarno banned Masjumi at the end of the 1950s, following the involvement of some of its leaders in a short-lived US-backed rebel government in Sumatra.<sup>21</sup> While Masjumi was dissolved and its leaders incarcerated for alleged political misdeeds in the early 1960s,<sup>22</sup> the Masjumi/Persis ethos did not disappear. It persisted in the form of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) and in the parallel Darul Islam (DI) movement. The DDII was set up in February 1967 by a Masjumi/Persis clique of activists led by Mohammad Natsir. Rather than seeking political power outright like Masjumi, DDII switched strategy: Natsir apparently declared in this regard: “Before we used politics as a way to preach, now we use preaching as a

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<sup>18</sup> Zachary Abuza, Muslims, Politics, and Violence in Indonesia: An Emerging Jihadist-Islamist Nexus? *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Sep. 2004), p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 43; Martin van Bruinessen, “‘Traditionalist’ and ‘Islamist’ pesantren in contemporary Indonesia”, paper presented at the ISIM workshop on “The Madrasa in Asia”, 23-24 May 2004.

<sup>20</sup> “Rais Wins More Support”, *Laksamana.Net*, 8 June 2004, available at [http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=2&news\\_id=7123](http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=2&news_id=7123) (accessed 12 Aug 2004)

<sup>21</sup> Symonds, “Political Origins”.

<sup>22</sup> “Rais Wins More Support”.

way to engage in politics”.<sup>23</sup> To this end DDII set up a network of mosques, preachers and publications. Natsir sought to target *pesantrens* and university campuses as well.<sup>24</sup>

A likely reason for the DDII’s bottom-up Islamization stance can be attributed to its leaders who had realized, following the failures of Muslim politicians to enshrine the so-called Jakarta Charter in the Indonesian constitutional debates of 1945 and 1959 that a top-down Islamization approach simply would not appeal to the vast masses of nominal Indonesian Muslim. They felt that a bottom-up *dakwah* was a better way of Islamizing society.<sup>25</sup> DDII was characterized especially by a fear of Christian missionary efforts amongst Indonesian Muslims. Over time it became increasingly drawn to Saudi-style Wahhabism.<sup>26</sup> In fact the DDII subsequently established close ties with the Saudi-based World Islamic League (Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami).<sup>27</sup>

DDII became the “main channel in Indonesia for distributing scholarships” from the Saudi-funded Rabitat for study in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> Through Natsir’s influence, the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) was set up in 1980. LIPIA was from the outset a branch of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh, and its faculty were Saudi scholars who taught a curriculum modelled on the parent university. LIPIA graduates became preachers on many Indonesian university campuses, ensuring that the particularly harder-edged Saudi Wahhabi interpretations of Islamic modernism permeated throughout society.<sup>29</sup>

Residual Masjumi/Persis sentiments survived in yet another ideological permutation: the oldest post-war radical Islamic movement, Darul Islam (DI). The DI

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<sup>23</sup> *Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don’t Mix* (Southeast Asia/Brussels: International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 83, 13 September 2004), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> The Jakarta Charter refers to a draft constitutional preamble that stipulates that Muslim Indonesians are obligated to abide by the strictures of the *shariah* law. Martin van Bruinessen, “Indonesia’s Ulama and Politics: Caught Between Legitimizing the Status Quo and Searching for Alternatives”, *Prisma – The Indonesian Indicator* (Jakarta), No. 49 (1990), pp. 52-69.

<sup>26</sup> “Rais Wins More Support”.

<sup>27</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Indonesia’s Ulama and Politics”.

<sup>28</sup> *Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don’t Mix*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

revolt commenced in 1947, led by a charismatic Masjumi Javanese activist called S.M. Kartosuwirjo.<sup>30</sup> Kartosuwirjo violently rejected the secular state vision and religiously neutral *Pancasila* ideology of secular nationalists Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta. Kartosuwirjo proclaimed instead an Islamic State in Indonesia (NII) based on *shariah* law in August 1949, and the DI/NII forces waged *jihad* against the Republican regime throughout the 1950s. By 1962 however, the DI revolt that had spread from its West Java epicentre to Aceh in the west and South Sulawesi in the east was crushed, while Kartosuwirjo was captured and executed. DI thereafter splintered into several factions and went underground.<sup>31</sup> While DI failed to attain its political goal of an Indonesian Islamic State, it nevertheless “inspired subsequent generations of radical Muslims with its commitment to a *shari’a*-based state and its heavy sacrifices in the cause of *jihad*”.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Political Backdrop**

As it turned out, cross-cutting historical influences such as the Islamic modernist strain that sought civilizational revitalization through a fusion between Salafi fundamentalism and the fruits of modernity; the related Persis, Masjumi and DDII movements and violent DI struggle, all formed the essential background of what came to be known as JI. The co-founders of JI, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir, were born in Java in the 1930s and educated in modernist schools, and by the 1950s were leaders in a Masjumi-linked student organization Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia (GPII). They were also strong DI sympathisers and admirers of Kartosuwirjo who were committed to keeping the vision of *Daulah Islamiyah* (Islamic State) in Indonesia alive.

Following the October 1965 coup that eventually led to the emergence of Suharto and the New Order regime in Indonesia, Sungkar, who had met and begun collaborating

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<sup>30</sup> Greg Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?”, *Southeast Asian Affairs 2004* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>31</sup> Bilveer Singh, “The Emergence of the Jemaah Islamiyah Threat in Southeast Asia: External Linkages and Influences”, paper presented at a workshop on “International Terrorism in Southeast Asia and Likely Implications for South Asia”, organized by the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India, 28-29 April 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 111.

with Bashir in 1963, became chairman of the DDII Central Java Branch. With the advent of the arch-secularist Suharto, he commenced campaigning with Bashir openly for an Islamic state in Indonesia.<sup>33</sup> Amongst other things, they set up a clandestine radio station, *Radio Dakwah Islamiyah Surakarta*, in Solo, Central Java in 1967. *Radio Dakwah* openly broadcast calls for *jihad* in Central Java and was eventually shut down in 1975. More significantly, Sungkar and Bashir also oversaw the establishment of the Pondok Pesantren Al-Mukmin Islamic boarding school in 1971 that moved to the village of Ngruki, east of Solo, two years later.<sup>34</sup> Al-Mukmin became a centre of symbolic resistance to the New Order regime. It refused to fly the Indonesian flag or display presidential icons, for example, and when in the 1980s Suharto decreed that *Pancasila* ideology must be the underlying foundational principle (*azaz tunggal*) for all social organizations including Muslim entities, Al-Mukmin's leadership publicly objected.<sup>35</sup>

Sungkar and Bashir engaged in more than symbolic resistance. As a DDII activist, Sungkar understood the rationale for *dakwah* and the necessity for Islamizing the individual Muslim as a prelude to Islamizing the wider society. However, he later decided that a more focused propagation of the Islamic faith through a vanguard *jemaah* (religious community or community) was needed rather than unstructured proselytizing. In this, Sungkar was inspired by the second Caliph Umar bin Khattab, who had apparently observed: "No Islam without *jamaah*, no *jamaah* without leadership and no leadership without compliance".<sup>36</sup> This imperative to place the *dakwah* process on a more organized, systematic basis was something Sungkar appears to have picked up from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group has pointed out the influence of Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna on Sungkar and Bashir in the 1970s. In the Brotherhood conception, the struggle toward the realization of an Islamic State depended on several steps: first moral self-improvement; second, becoming part of a family of like-

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<sup>33</sup> Symonds, "Political Origins".

<sup>34</sup> Bilveer Singh, "Emergence".

<sup>35</sup> Tim Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth: Public Teachings of Abu Bakara Ba'asyir", 19 February 2003, available at <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/abb-myth.htm> (accessed 30 April 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Blontank Poer, "Tracking the Roots of Jamaah Islamiyah", *The Jakarta Post*, 8 March 2003.

minded individuals (*usroh*) committed to “guide, help and control” one another and thus stay on the right path; third, coalescing the various *usroh* to form the wider *Jemaah Islamiyah*; and finally coalescing the various *Jemaah* into an Islamic State. In fact Sungkar and Bashir sought to organize the Al-Mukmin alumni into an *usroh* network. Martin van Bruinessen calls this collection of *usroh* a network of committed young Muslims, “some of them quietist, some of them militants, all of them opposed to the Suharto regime, organised in ‘families,’ that together were to constitute a true community of committed Muslims, a *Jama`ah Islamiyah*”.<sup>37</sup>

Being themselves sympathetic to the older and wider DI ideological diaspora, Sungkar and Bashir decided subsequently to affiliate the early JI network of ideological communes with the already existing DI. Consequently, JI officially became part of the Central Java DI in Solo, in 1976. Both Sungkar and Bashir swore an oath of allegiance to the DI Central Java leader Haji Ismail Pranoto, better known as Hispran.<sup>38</sup> Sungkar and Bashir introduced to the relatively unstructured DI, with its imprecise notions of what an actual Islamic State ought to be like, some of the ideas they themselves imbibed from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>39</sup>

The institutional affiliation with DI and contact with veterans of the DI revolt may have played a part in radicalizing Sungkar and Bashir - in the sense of enabling them to accept at some subliminal level the utility of violence in pursuit of the *Daulah Islamiyah*. Hence in February 1977, both men set up the *Jemaah Mujahidin Anshorullah* (JMA), which some analysts believe to be the precursor organization to today’s terrorist JI network.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, they became involved in the activities of a violent underground movement called *Komando Jihad*. Somewhat like JI today, this organization sought to set up an Islamic state in Indonesia and perpetrated the bombings of nightclubs, churches and cinemas. Incidentally, *Komando Jihad* was to a large extent a creation of Indonesian

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<sup>37</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “The Violent Fringes of Indonesia’s Radical Islam”, [http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/violent\\_fringe.htm](http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/violent_fringe.htm) (accessed 29 Jul 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Poer. “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>39</sup> van Bruinessen, “The Violent Fringes of Indonesia’s Radical Islam”.

<sup>40</sup> Bilveer Singh, “Emergence”.

intelligence and was set up to discredit political Islam in Indonesia and legitimize the New Order's subsequent crackdown on "less radical and non-violent Muslim politicians".<sup>41</sup>

In 1978 both Sungkar and Bashir were detained for nine years for their involvement in Komando Jihad. They were released in 1982, but following the Tanjung Priok incident two years later in which the security forces killed 100 Muslims, both were charged yet again for subversion. This prompted them and several of their followers to decamp to Malaysia in 1985.<sup>42</sup> According to one account they arrived illegally in Malaysia without proper documentation, settled in Kuala Pilah, about 250 kilometres southeast of Kuala Lumpur and stayed at the home of a Malaysian cleric for about a year. Whilst in Malaysia, Bashir adopted the pseudonym Abdus Samad and Sungkar took on the *nom de guerre* Abdul Halim.<sup>43</sup> Over the years, both men, through the financial support base generated by their effective preaching activities, were able to buy property of their own in other parts of the country. Wherever they went they set up Quran reading groups, and were invited to preach in small-group settings in both Malaysia and even in Singapore.

In 1992 Sungkar and Bashir set up the Luqmanul Hakiem *pesantren* in Ulu Tiram, in the southernmost Malaysian State of Johore. Luqmanul Hakiem was a clone of Al-Mukmin back in Solo. Bashir later told the Indonesian magazine *Tempo* that in Malaysia he set up "As-Sunnah, a community of Muslims".<sup>44</sup> In this way the original Sungkar/Bashir network of *usroh* communities spread outward from Indonesia, sinking roots in Malaysia and Singapore. It was also during the Malaysian exile that the mature JI ideology of what we may call Global Salafi Jihad evolved.

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<sup>41</sup> van Bruinessen, "The Violent Fringes of Indonesia's Radical Islam".

<sup>42</sup> Bilveer Singh, "Emergence".

<sup>43</sup> Abu Bakar Bashir: "The Malaysian Connection", *Tempo*, 9 November 2002.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Ideological Framework: Enter “Qaedism”

By the time Sungkar and Bashir arrived in Malaysia in 1985, it could be said that they had become committed “radical Islamists”. A brief exposition of terminology is called for. Islamic fundamentalism (or Salafi Islam) is no monolithic phenomenon. Salafi Muslims, who take the injunction to emulate the Companions of the Prophet very seriously, may express this piety simply in terms of *personal* adherence to implementing *shariah*-derived standards of worship, ritual, dress and overall behavioral standards. The majority of Salafi Muslims, in fact, may be considered as “neo-fundamentalists” who possess “neither a systematic ideology” nor “global political agenda”.<sup>45</sup> Islamism, on the other hand, “turns the traditional religion of Islam into a twentieth-century-style ideology”.<sup>46</sup> To put it another way, when Salafi Muslims see it as an *added* obligation to actively seek recourse to political power in order to impose their belief system on the society at large, then they become not simply Muslims but rather *Islamists*.

Daniel Pipes puts it aptly when he observes that Islamists seek to “build the just society by regimenting people according to a preconceived plan, only this time with an Islamic orientation”.<sup>47</sup> To be sure, some Salafis do not desire to be seen engaging in politics and rather strive to project a purist, apolitical veneer. However they often find it difficult if not impossible to avoid some form of involvement in political activity. In Indonesia, for example, Jafar Umar Thalib, leader of the officially disbanded Laskar Jihad militia, actually criticized Bashir for his commitment to an actual Islamic State, but this did not prevent the former from agitating for the full implementation of *shariah* law himself.<sup>48</sup> The International Crisis Group notes that it was “odd” for Jafar, being the leader of the self-declared apolitical and purist Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah network, to have paid such close attention to political developments in Indonesia,

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<sup>45</sup> Barbara D. Metcalf, “Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs”. Essay based on Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Annual Lecture, Leiden University, 23 November 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 115.

especially during Habibie's presidency.<sup>49</sup> In truth, therefore, Jafar and other politically sensitized if ostensibly apolitical Salafis may in fact be unconscious or even covert Islamists, or "proto-Islamists", if you like. In other words, once a Salafi Muslim evinces a "will to power", he stops being a neo-fundamentalist and embarks on the road toward Islamism.

Despite regional variations, Islamists worldwide share the common belief that seeking political power so as to Islamize whole societies, is the only way Islam as a faith can revitalize itself - and recapture the former pre-eminent position it enjoyed vis-a-vis the West. Modern Islamist movements include the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Jama'at-I Islami in the Indian sub-continent as well as many of the Iranian ideologues of the 1979 Revolution that brought down the Shah. These Islamists sought to construct "ideological systems" and "models" for "distinctive polities that challenged what they saw to be the alternative systems: nationalism, capitalism and Marxism".<sup>50</sup> In short, while the average, neo-fundamentalist, Salafi Muslim emphasizes individual spiritual renewal as the key to Islamic civilizational renaissance, the Islamist, as Pipes suggests, seeks *power* as the superior restorationist pathway.<sup>51</sup> It is entirely possible moreover that in pursuing political objectives Islamists - like other political activists seeking to implement an ostensibly religious agenda - may lose touch with the ethical core of the very faith they are seeking to preserve and champion.<sup>52</sup> This process of ethical or moral disengagement facilitates terrorist acts, as we shall see shortly.

For years both Sungkar and Bashir had been Islamists in the sense that they ultimately sought to set up an Islamic State based on the *shariah* in Indonesia. But a latent ambiguity existed within their ideological systems over the role of violence for years. Both men had been aware of the potential of *dakwah* for gradually Islamizing Indonesian society from the bottom up; Sungkar had after all been the chairman of the DDII Central Java branch while Bashir had majored in *dakwah* at the Al-Irsyad Islamic

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<sup>49</sup> *Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic Activism".

<sup>51</sup> Pipes, *Militant Islam*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

university in Solo.<sup>53</sup> As noted, this belief in *dakwah* had also led them to set up Al-Mukmin in Solo in 1971. At the same time, however, they were not demonstrably opposed to the Kartosuwirjo argument that Islamizing the polity by force was the better approach. They even affiliated the nascent JI movement with Hispran's DI and were involved in the Komando Jihad. The period of incarceration from 1978 and subsequent targeting by the New Order regime may have been the "tipping point" in terms of providing them with the final insight that *dakwah* in the absence of *jihad* would be an exercise in futility. In other words, they became not merely Islamists but *radical* Islamists who believed in *jihad* as the means to actualize an Islamized Indonesia.

The Indonesian journalist Blontank Poer observes that the *jihadi* emphasis in the overall strategy of Sungkar and Bashir became more developed after the shift to Malaysia in 1985.<sup>54</sup> In this sense the Sungkar-Bashir radicalization experience brings to mind the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood activist Sayyid Qutb, who was "increasingly radicalized by Gamal Abdel Nasser's suppression of the Brotherhood". Cairo's repression prompted Qutb to transform "the ideology of [Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan] al-Banna and [Jama'at-I Islami founder Mawlana] Mawdudi into a rejectionist revolutionary call to arms".<sup>55</sup>

By the 1980s, Islamist ideas from the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent had been translated and were in circulation in Southeast Asia.<sup>56</sup> These mingled and fused with the individual experiential and ideational trajectories of Sungkar and Bashir. Thus the injunctions of al-Banna and Mawdudi to set up a "vanguard" community to serve as the "dynamic nucleus for true Islamic reformation within the broader society"<sup>57</sup> were long accepted by the Indonesian clerics. Furthermore, Sungkar and Bashir would have viscerally embraced Sayyid Qutb's absolutist, polarized view of the world:<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth".

<sup>54</sup> Poer, "Tracking the Roots".

<sup>55</sup> Esposito, *Unholy War*, p.56.

<sup>56</sup> Azra, "Bali and Southeast Asian Islam", in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Esposito, *Unholy War*, p. 53.

<sup>58</sup> Qutb Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 60.

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam), and it is that place where the Islamic state is established and the Shariah is the authority and God's limits are observed and where all Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (Dar-ul-Harb).

Thus it could be said that in the latter half of the 1980s and into the 1990s, the Indonesian JI émigré community in Malaysia believed in several core tenets. Some of these tenets would not have been unusual to mainstream Salafi Muslims:

- Islam possesses exclusive authenticity and authority;
- Committed Muslims must keep God at the center of every aspect of life;
- God loves but tests his truest disciples; he also reserves for them eternal rewards in the life to come;
- Science and technology must be harnessed but within an Islamic rather than a Western context;
- The profane world is an abomination to God; he only accepts the prayers and good works of Muslims who adhere strictly to the demands of the *shariah*, the Quran and the Sunnah.

Other Sungkar/Bashir precepts, however, clearly shaded into politically driven Islamist thinking:

- Deviation from the path of true Islam and emulation of Western models has resulted in worldwide Muslim weakness;
- *Shariah* provides the ideal blueprint for a modern, successful Islamic society capable of competing with the West and restoring Muslim identity, pride, power and wealth;
- Alternative systems such as democracy, socialism, *Pancasila*, capitalism, other religions and Islam as practiced by the majority of the Muslim community – are not acceptable to God and are destructive.

- True Muslims cannot with good conscience, accept a political system that is not based on the *shariah*.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, by the early 1990s the Sungkar-Bashir ideological framework represented a *radical* Islamist vision because it included the explicit willingness to resort to *jihad* in pursuit of the goal of an Islamized Indonesia. It should be noted that apart from the DI legacy as well as the more recent radicalizing effect of direct New Order repression, Sungkar, Bashir and others in the JI orbit were also likely exposed to the ideas of the Egyptian radical Mohammad al-Faraj, executed by Cairo in 1982 for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat.<sup>60</sup> Faraj, himself influenced by the works of al-Banna, Mawdudi and Qutb, brought their incipient absolutizing ideas to their ultimate extremist conclusion. Unequivocally rejecting the efficacy of *dakwah* as a means of Islamizing *jahili* (unIslamic or immoral) society,<sup>61</sup> Faraj argued that the decline of Muslim societies was due to the fact that Muslim leaders had hollowed out the vigorous concept of *jihad*, thereby robbing it of its “true meaning”.<sup>62</sup>

In his pamphlet the *Neglected Obligation*, Faraj asserted that the “Qu’ran and the Hadith were fundamentally about warfare”, and that the concept of *jihad*, in contrast to the conventional wisdom, was “meant to be taken literally, not allegorically”.<sup>63</sup> According to him, *jihad* represented in fact the “sixth pillar of Islam” and that *jihad* calls for “fighting, which meant confrontation and blood”.<sup>64</sup> Faraj held that not just infidels but even Muslims who deviated from the moral and social dictates of *shariah* were legitimate targets for *jihad*. He concluded that peaceful means for fighting apostasy in Muslim societies were bound to fail and ultimately the true soldier of Islam was justified in using “virtually any means available to achieve a just goal”.<sup>65</sup> Given their own recent experiences at the hands of the Suharto regime, Sungkar and Bashir would have

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<sup>59</sup> This section draws on Behrend, “Reading Past the Myth”, and Esposito, *Unholy War*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), p. 80.

<sup>61</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> Esposito, *Unholy War*, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, updated edn. with a new preface (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

endorsed, at some deeper level, the ideas of Faraj on the necessity for a literal understanding of *jihad*, as well as his wider argument that *jihad* represented the highest form of devotion to God.<sup>66</sup> This is precisely why, in 1984/85, when the Saudis sought volunteers for the *jihad* in Afghanistan against the invading Soviets, Sungkar and Bashir willingly raised groups of volunteers from amongst their following.<sup>67</sup>

The Afghan theater was seen as a useful training ground for a future *jihad* in Indonesia itself.<sup>68</sup> As it turned out, however, rather than Afghanistan being seen as a training ground for a *jihad* aimed at setting up an Indonesian Islamic state, that conflict became the source of ideas that transformed the original Indonesia-centric vision of Sungkar and Bashir. To be sure, prior to the 1990s, the radical Islamist ideology driving JI may be termed, following Marc Sageman, as “Salafi Jihad”.<sup>69</sup> The aim of the JI émigré community in Malaysia led by Sungkar and Bashir was ultimately to wage a *jihad* against the Suharto regime - in Faraj’s terms, the so-called “near enemy” - and set up a Salafi Islamic state in Indonesia. However, returning Indonesian and other Southeast Asian veterans of the Afghan *jihad* exposed Sungkar and Bashir to fresh thinking on this issue.

In Afghanistan, the Southeast Asian *jihadis* had been inspired to think in *global* terms by the teachings of the charismatic Palestinian *alim* (singular for *ulama*) Abdullah Azzam. Azzam, a key mentor of Osama bin Laden, had received a doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, had met the family of Sayyid Qutb and was friendly with Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman – better known as the “Blind Sheikh” - was the spiritual guide of two key Egyptian radical Islamist terrorist organizations, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG) – and would later be implicated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York. When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, Azzam, who had played a big part in recruiting non-Afghan foreign *mujahidin* worldwide, including

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<sup>66</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Violent Fringes of Indonesia’s Radical Islam”.

<sup>68</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>69</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 17.

Southeast Asia for the anti-Soviet *jihad* in the first place, began to set his sights further. He argued that the struggle to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan was in fact “the prelude to the liberation of Palestine and other “lost” territories. As he put it in his writings:

Jihad is now...incumbent on all Muslims and will remain [sic] so until the Muslims recapture every spot that was Islamic but later fell into the hands of the *kuffar* [infidels]. Jihad has been a *fard ‘ain* [individual obligation] since the fall of al-Andalus [Spain], and will remain so until all other lands that were Muslim are returned to us...Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, Southern Yemen, Tashkent and al-Andalus... The duty of jihad is one of the most important imposed on us by God... He has made it incumbent on us, just like prayer, fasting and alms [zakat].<sup>70</sup>

Unlike Faraj, however, Azzam did not sanction *jihad* against “apostate” Muslim governments in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. His understanding of *jihad* was a traditional one in the sense of evicting infidel occupiers from Muslim lands. He did not wish to see Muslim wage *jihad* against Muslim. But after his death in a car bomb explosion in Peshawar in November 1989, the Afghan Arab *mujahidin* community, and Osama bin Laden in particular, again accepted the Faraj argument that targeting Muslim governments seen as apostate was perfectly legitimate.<sup>71</sup> Subsequently, at the beginning of the 1990s, once American troops arrived in Saudi Arabia and in Somalia, both Muslim territories, “a more global analysis of Islam’s problems” occurred. As Sageman concisely explains:

Local *takfir* Muslim leaders were seen as pawns of a global power, which itself was now considered the main obstacle to establishing a transnational umma from Morocco to the Philippines. This in effect reversed Faraj’s strategy and now the priority was jihad against the “far enemy” over the “near enemy”.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Azzam cited in Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (London and New York: Granta, 2002), p. 203.

<sup>71</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Sageman observes that this gradual shift in strategic targeting philosophy within what by the early 1990s had become Al Qaeda, took place during Bin Laden's Sudanese exile during that decade. Similar doctrinal shifts occurred in parallel discussions within radical Islamist circles in New York leading to the 1993 New York World Trade Center attack, as well as in Algeria and France, just before the wave of bombings in those countries.<sup>73</sup>

These shifts in global radical Salafi ideology post-Afghanistan were not lost on Sungkar and Bashir. In addition to their discussions with returning Indonesian veterans of the Afghan war, both men also met with international *jihadi* groups in Malaysia. Consequently, by 1994, Sungkar and Bashir were no longer talking about establishing merely an Islamic state in Indonesia. Over and above this, they were now talking of establishing a “*khilafah* (world Islamic state)”.<sup>74</sup> In this construction, a “world caliphate uniting all Muslim nations under a single, righteous exemplar and ruler”, is the ultimate goal.<sup>75</sup> No coincidence then that at about that time Sungkar and Bashir reportedly made contact with Egyptian radicals associated with the Blind Sheikh.<sup>76</sup>

In the early 1990s, Sungkar and Bashir also disassociated themselves from the Central Java DI movement because of serious doctrinal differences with regional DI leader Ajengan Masduki, who had apparently embraced Sufi teachings on nonviolence and tolerance. Sungkar and Bashir, casting off the overarching DI appellation, resurrected the name Jemaah Islamiyah.<sup>77</sup> This is the JI, infused with the post-Afghanistan neo-Faraj ethos of Global Salafi Jihad that henceforth took it upon itself to wreak “vengeance against perceived Western brutality and exploitation of Muslim communities”.<sup>78</sup> This is the JI whose current spiritual leader, Bashir - Sungkar passed away in 1999 - declared publicly that he supported “Osama bin Laden's struggle because his is the true struggle to uphold Islam, not terror – the terrorists are America and

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>75</sup> Behrend, “Reading Past the Myth”.

<sup>76</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 112.

Israel”.<sup>79</sup> By the turn of the century, the virulent ideological strain of Global Salafi Jihad infusing JI had matured and radical Islamist writers like Azzam, Qutb and Faraj featured “prominently on JI reading lists”.<sup>80</sup> The outlines of this virulent ideology, with its global, anti-Western focus were aptly encapsulated by the chilling statement apparently issued by JI immediately after the September 2004 bomb attack in Jakarta, which stated:

We (in the Jama’ah al-Islamiah) have sent many messages to the Christian government in Australia regarding its participation in the war against our brothers in Iraq. However it didn’t respond positively to our request; therefore we have decided to punish it as we considered it the fiercest enemy of Allah and the Islamic religion. Thanks to Allah who supported us in punishing [the Australians] in Jakarta when a brother successfully carried out a martyrdom operation using an explosive-laden car in the Australian embassy. Many were killed and injured besides the great damage to the embassy. This is only one response in a series of many coming responses, God willing. Therefore we advise all the Australians to leave Indonesia otherwise we will make it a grave for them. We also advise the Australian government to withdraw its troops from Iraq otherwise we are going to carry many painful attacks against them. Cars bombs will not stop and [our] list contains many who are ready to die as martyrs. The hands that attacked them in Bali are the same hands that carried out the attack in Jakarta. Our attacks and our Jihad will not stop until we liberate all the lands of the Muslims.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Importance of “Socio-Cultural Space”**

While the existence of an ideology is an important factor in the indoctrination of terrorists, it is not at all sufficient. After all, simple exposure to Global Salafi Jihad ideology – or in the shorthand of British journalist Jason Burke - Al Qaedaism – has not

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<sup>79</sup> Bilveer Singh, “Emergence”.

<sup>80</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 112.

<sup>81</sup> “Statement of the Jama’ah al-Islamia in East Asia on Jakarta blast”. Translated on 9 September 2004 by the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

resulted in the radicalization of all Muslims.<sup>82</sup> It would seem that three additional factors mediate the impact of Qaedism: socio-cultural space, individual factors and ingroup space. First, how does the socio-cultural space within which JI operates in Southeast Asia contribute to the terrorist formation process?

Drawing on anthropological research, Olufemi A. Lawal identifies a few dimensions of culture that can be used to analyze different societies, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance and individualism/collectivism.<sup>83</sup> Lawal notes that in high power distance societies, “peoples accept as natural the fact that power and rewards are inequitably distributed in society”.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, in collectivist societies, individuals are expected to be loyal to the ingroup and subordinate personal goals to those of the collective. In an age of globalization and the erosion of traditional social structures and processes, besides, certain societies may feel particularly “threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity”.<sup>85</sup> Following Lawal, it may be suggested that individuals in high power distance, ambiguity-intolerant and collectivist milieux would be “collectively” programmed for *potential* recruitment into terrorist organizations, especially religiously inspired ones. This is because such individuals, as Lawal suggests, would relatively readily accept that all authority and “power has been naturally concentrated in the hands of a leader”.<sup>86</sup> Being ambiguity-intolerant (see below), they would desire deeply, at some subconscious level to accept that leader’s clear and unambiguous interpretations of wider social and political developments. Finally, being cultural collectivists, they would tend to deem it their individual duty and proof of loyalty to the ingroup to execute the leader’s instructions.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Jason Burke in *Foreign Policy*, (May/June) 2004. We will henceforth refer to Global Salafi Jihad ideology as Qaedism for short

<sup>83</sup> Olufemi A. Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations in the Emergence and Growth of Terrorism”, in *The Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 4: Programs and Practices in Response and Prevention*, ed. by Chris E. Stout (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), pp. 26-27.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

Lawal notes in his essay that “non-Western and developing societies” tend to display high power distance and collectivist orientations.<sup>88</sup> Certainly elements of Lawal’s analysis appear to hold in the case of Southeast Asia. Barry Desker has pointed out the revered status of Hadrami Arab migrants in Southeast Asia, who were regarded as “descendants of the Prophet” and “whose command of Arabic was perceived as giving them an insight into the religious texts”.<sup>89</sup> These Hadrami Arab migrants helped to introduce Wahhabi elements into Southeast Asian Islam.<sup>90</sup> It should be noted in this respect that the families of both Sungkar and Bashir have Yemeni roots.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the most recent two decades or so of Islamic revival have resulted in the further Islamization of state and identity along Middle Eastern lines. Hence Patricia Martinez observes that amongst many ordinary Southeast Asian Muslims today, a “core-periphery dynamic” exists, resulting in the tendency to canonize the Middle Eastern-trained and/or Arabic-speaking local *alim*:

The core periphery dynamic, with the heartland of Islam as core and Southeast Asian Muslims as periphery, gives rise to an infantile religiosity among many ordinary Southeast Asian Muslims [who cannot] read the huge corpus of theology, philosophy, exegesis and jurisprudence that is the rich heritage of a Muslim [but] most of which is in Arabic.<sup>92</sup>

Martinez points out that as a result, many Southeast Asian Muslims “rely on the mediators of Islam – those who are *ulama* – to interpret and guide”. The result?

What transpires then is the abdication by many ordinary Muslims of the ability to decide and define how Islam will evolve in their particular milieu, *giving power to the guardians of tradition and the final arbiters of law and life – the ulama and those who claim to be authoritative* [emphasis mine], and whose fidelity is not only to literal and selective applications of text and tradition but also to how this coheres in the heartland, the Middle East.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>89</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “Militant Islam in Indonesia”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 2003.

<sup>92</sup> Patricia A. Martinez, “Deconstructing Jihad: Southeast Asian Contexts”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 73-74.

The power distance hypothesis is also relevant in the hierarchically ordered Javanese cultural context. Many traditional *pesantren*, which are found in rural Java and in some cities, are usually run as the “social and intellectual fiefdoms of charismatic *syekh*”, that is, “pilgrims who have returned to Java after an extended period of study in Mecca or Medinah”. Tim Behrend observes that such “*syekh*” enjoy high status in Indonesian society. Indeed, they play a critical personal role in “constructing the religious psyche” of *pesantren* students. Such *pesantren* alumni form extensive social networks long after graduation and even play significant roles in the polity and society later.<sup>93</sup> In fact, it could be asserted that Indonesian society can be conceived of structurally as a collection of overlapping Salafi, proto-Islamist and Islamist social networks built around influential religious figures.

The remote socio-cultural roots of JI can be traced back to the Islamist Persis/Masjumi/DDII/DI “network of networks”, whose ideological hub would comprise key Islamist figures in Indonesian history, such as Mohammad Natsir and Kartosuwirjo. Although after 1960 the Persis-dominated Masjumi was never reconstituted as a political party, “its constituency has remained a recognizable entity, held together by a dense network of relationships, friendship, intermarriage, education and all sorts of institutions”.<sup>94</sup> As an illustration of the socio-cultural embeddedness of today’s JI, convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra, as several of his followers from Serang, Java hail from families associated with Persis.<sup>95</sup>

Darul Islam ideas and attachments continue to circulate within communities in West Java and South Sulawesi. Greg Fealy points out that “former DI areas have proven a rich source of new members for the JI and are likely to remain so in the future”.<sup>96</sup> Of the ideological streams directly related to JI, since 1971, more than 3000 alumni have

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<sup>93</sup> Tim Behrend, “Meeting Abubakar Ba’asyir”, 23 December 2002, available at <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/meet-abb.htm> (accessed 2003).

<sup>94</sup> “Rais wins more support”.

<sup>95</sup> *Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don’t Mix*, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, pp. 111-112.

passed through the Al-Mukmin *pesantren* in Solo.<sup>97</sup> These, along with the alumni of spin-off JI “Ivy League” *pesantren* such as Al-Islam in East Java, Al-Muttaqien and Dar us-Syahadah in Central Java and the-now-closed Luqmanul Hakiem in Ulu Tiram, Malaysia, have formed linked networks of relatively like-minded if geographically dispersed *usroh* communities.<sup>98</sup> In fact a recent study has discovered that more than a hundred marriages involving JI leaders and members exist, integrating families in Malaysia, Indonesia and to some extent the southern Philippines.<sup>99</sup> It appears that a related network of Islamist pesantrens centred on Pesantren Hidayatullah in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, is also sympathetic to the JI cause.<sup>100</sup> The JI terrorist network in Southeast Asia has therefore emerged from a complex, historically enduring and interwoven socio-cultural fabric centred in Indonesia.

Within this milieu, however, there are real differences over the relative merits of *dakwah* and *jihad*, informed by a combination of doctrinal and individual experiential differences. Martin van Bruinessen had indicated that within the Al-Mukmin diaspora, some are “quietists” while others are “militants”. Greg Fealy similarly points out that “[n]ot all JI members are engaged in terrorism, and the network also has groups conducting peaceful religious education and welfare functions”.<sup>101</sup> The International Crisis Group takes pains to assert that to “have gone to a JI-linked pesantren does not make one a terrorist”.<sup>102</sup> The issue here though is not whether an Islamist community believes it can actualise its political vision by violence. The issue is whether that community is Islamist in the first place.

It has been said that Bashir does not himself publicly advocate violence against the Indonesian state. In this respect, through his Muslim Mujahidin Council (MMI),

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<sup>97</sup> Behrend, “Meeting Abubakar Ba’asyir”; Richard C. Paddock, “Terror Network’s Academic Outposts”, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 2003.

<sup>98</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 63, 26 August 2003), p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> Wong Chun Wai and Lourdes Charles, “More than 100 Marriages Involve Key JI Members”, *The Star Online* (Malaysia), 7 Sep. 2004, available at [http://thestar.com.my/news/archives/story.asp?ppath=%5C2004%5C9%](http://thestar.com.my/news/archives/story.asp?ppath=%5C2004%5C9%5C) (accessed 11 Sep. 2004).

<sup>100</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>101</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism” p. 113.

<sup>102</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, p. 26.

formed in August 2000, Bashir and other Islamists have sought to agitate for an Islamic State through ostensibly peaceful *dakwah*. Nevertheless, it is not the means that is at issue but the ultimate vision that is. Bashir's worldview is sharply polarised: Christians would have to accept the status of a minority *dhimmi* community with protected but restricted rights in an Indonesian Islamic State.<sup>103</sup> Muslims would tolerate but not embrace Christians, and would "not seek to mingle with them".<sup>104</sup> In addition, even as sympathetic an observer as Tim Behrend is compelled to concede that Bashir's message is "not simply anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli, but very deeply and personally anti-Jewish".<sup>105</sup>

Social psychologists explain that "ethnocentrism and stereotyping" are part of the normal way individuals process information emanating from the environment. "The human mind groups people, as well as objects, into categories" that enable individuals to "simplify the present and predict the future more effectively".<sup>106</sup> However, as Neil Kressel argues, it is "a small step from categorization" to "stereotyping and favoritism for one's group". In a nutshell, "taken to extremes", ethnocentrism and stereotyping can foster prejudice.<sup>107</sup> All individuals, unfortunately, are prejudiced to some extent toward various "outgroups". J. Harold Ellens laments that "prejudice is a devastating force in our political and social order", that emerges from "a very sick psychology at the center of our souls".<sup>108</sup> Willard Gaylin feels that the prejudiced individual is coolly dismissive of and indifferent to the sensibilities and sufferings of the outgroup.<sup>109</sup>

More disturbingly, within the larger pool of prejudiced individuals there is a smaller and more problematic number, whom Gaylin considers *bigots*. Bigots are those who are "strongly partial to one's own group, religion, race, or politics". Importantly,

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<sup>103</sup> For a discussion of "*dhimmitude*", see Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth".

<sup>105</sup> Behrend, "Meeting Abubakar Ba'asyir".

<sup>106</sup> Neil J. Kressel, *Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror*, rev. and updated (New York: Westview, 2002), p. 211.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> J. Harold Ellens, "The Dynamics of Prejudice", in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Vol. 2: Religion, Psychology and Violence*, ed. by J. Harold Ellens (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 96.

<sup>109</sup> Willard Gaylin, *Hatred: The Psychological Descent into Violence* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), p. 24.

rather than being passively indifferent, bigots are *actively* “intolerant of those who differ”.<sup>110</sup> The bigot, Gaylin informs us, would “support legislation and social conditions that deprive the minority” of not merely its “autonomy” but also its basic “right to be respected”.<sup>111</sup> In this regard, Jafar Umar Thalib’s April 2000 declaration that Muslims in Indonesia must fight to prevent an infidel Hindu from ruling the country assumes significance. He added dismissively that if Hindus were offended by his point of view, “that was their problem”.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, it is from the smaller socio-cultural pool of bigots that the *haters* emerge. While a “bigot may feel malevolence whenever he thinks of the despised group”, he “is not obsessively preoccupied with them”.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, hatred “requires both passion and a preoccupation with the hated group”.<sup>114</sup> In this vein Aristotle once pointed out that while the “angry man wants the object of his anger to suffer in return; hatred wishes its object not to exist”.<sup>115</sup> Gaylin notes that there could be “significant slippage” between the bigots and the haters.<sup>116</sup> Significantly, however Gaylin is forthright in condemning not just hatred but the other transition points to this end-state:

Prejudice and bigotry also facilitate the agendas of a hating population. They take advantage of the passivity of the larger community of bigots, a passivity that is essential for that minority who truly hate to carry out their malicious destruction.<sup>117</sup>

This short exposition on prejudice, bigotry and hatred is important. Bashir once told an Indonesian intelligence official that as a preacher he likened himself to a “craftsman” who sells “knives”, but is not responsible for what happens to them.<sup>118</sup> As

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> *Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, p. 15.

<sup>113</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 28.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Clark McCauley, “Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 3: Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives*, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>118</sup> Anthony Paul, “Enduring the Other’s Other”, *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 4 Dec. 2003.

the foregoing analysis suggests, however, Bashir's remarks are disingenuous, as rhetoric matters a very great deal. Gaylin illustrates this point with an acute observation:

As recently as the summer of 2002 the *New York Times* reported an interview in which a professor of Islamic law explained to a visiting reporter: "Well of course I hate you because you are Christian, but that doesn't mean I want to kill you." Well, the professor may not wish to kill the reporter, but the students he instills with his theological justifications of hatred may have different ideas about the proper expressions of hatred.<sup>119</sup>

In short it is with the "culture of hatred" that "monstrous evil can be unleashed".<sup>120</sup> When "everyday bias is supported and legitimated by religion", the "passions of ordinary malcontents will be intensified and focused".<sup>121</sup> Bashir and others like him, have thus shaped pockets of socio-cultural space within Southeast Asia that breed the prejudice, bigotry and ultimately hatred that in turn fosters JI extremism and violence. For example, Singaporean Malay/Muslim journalists who managed to visit Al-Mukmin in January 2004 noted how "anti-western and anti-American sentiment was woven into the daily teachings and routines of students, some as young as 15".<sup>122</sup> In particular students were taught to believe that some countries "feared Islam's progress and were openly destroying the faith".<sup>123</sup> In addition, students were programmed into believing that "Americans and Jews were 'infidels'", and so were "Muslims who did nothing".<sup>124</sup> Significantly, posters and signs proclaiming *jihad* were prominently displayed, spouting messages like "Jihad, Why Not?" and "No Prestige without Jihad" were "spotted on walls, lockers and walkways leading to classrooms".<sup>125</sup> Students moreover were spotted wearing T-shirts with images of Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and the Chechen militant leader Shamil Basayev.<sup>126</sup> A few months earlier, an *Asian Wall Street Journal* reporter had even observed 15-year-old students practicing

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<sup>119</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 244.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Zalman Mohamed Yusof and Mohammad Ishak, "Inside a JI School", *The New Paper on Sunday* (Singapore), 4 January 2004.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

preaching in a mixture of *Bahasa Indonesia* and Arabic, telling classmates about the “importance of upholding strict Islamic law and defending their faith from attacks by infidels”. Their classmates responded by pounding their wooden desks and exclaiming: “God is Great”, “Hang the Jews” and “America...terrorist!”<sup>127</sup> Al-Mukmin was clearly acting as a dissemination center of Global Salafi Jihad or Qaedaist ideology, shaping a burgeoning culture of hatred.

While not all JI supporters or sympathizers may be directly involved in the planning, support and/or execution of terror attacks, in truth they can all be strung out along Gaylin’s continuum: starting initially with prejudice, progressing to bigotry and then to hatred as an extreme. Under certain circumstances prejudiced Islamists may well transition toward bigotry and even hatred, embrace Qaedaist worldviews and become full-fledged, hate-filled terrorist operatives. The process by which elements of the amorphous mass of sympathizers/supporters become part of the actual JI organization compels us to begin tentative probes into the inner recesses of the JI inductee’s mind.

### **The Individual Personality**

According to Martha Crenshaw, “it is difficult to understand terrorism without psychological theory, because explaining terrorism must begin with analyzing the intentions of the terrorist actor”.<sup>128</sup> At the outset it must be iterated that there is no single overarching terrorist profile. Even when there is one, as Walter Reich advises, eschews meta-theory construction. Focuses study on a single terrorist organization such as JI,<sup>129</sup> still confronts the researcher with constantly shifting patterns of terrorist motivations. One of the key problems faced by counter-terrorism analysts everywhere is the lack of access to ready and openly available data on terrorists, as well as considerations of

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<sup>127</sup> Timothy Mapes, “Indonesian School Gives High Marks to Students Embracing Intolerance”, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 2 September 2003.

<sup>128</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “Questions to be Answered, Research to be Done, Knowledge to be Applied”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 247.

<sup>129</sup> Walter Reich, “Understanding Terrorist Behavior: The Limits and Opportunities of Psychological Enquiry”, in *Ibid.*, p. 276.

operational security even when such access exists. This study unfortunately suffers from both limitations. Nevertheless, the information presented here has, as far as possible, been documented and/or crosschecked against other sources.

We need to begin with the psychology of religious behavior. Why do people seek religion? Religion refers to a “system of beliefs in divine or superhuman power, and practices of worship or other rituals directed toward such a power”.<sup>130</sup> The major psychological explanation for the attractiveness of religious systems is that of “cognitive need”. People have a tendency to organize the environment according to simple cognitive structures. In fact humans, from childhood, seem to possess a need for “cognitive closure” – they desire a definite answer to a particular topic, “as opposed to confusion and ambiguity”.<sup>131</sup> There seems to be a universal human desire to reject existential meaninglessness, to find divine explanations for suffering and tragedy, and to seek the promise of a better afterlife; and religion “meets the need for a meaningful cosmos and meaningful human existence”.<sup>132</sup>

This natural human quest for cognitive closure, particularly but not exclusively in non-Western, communitarian societies, which form 70 percent of the world population, has been greatly intensified by the psychosocial dislocations caused by globalization. Globalization has been usefully characterized as “worldwide integration through an ongoing, dynamic process that involves the interplay of free enterprise, democratic principles and human rights, the high-tech exchange of information and movement of large numbers of people”.<sup>133</sup> While it is true that “the juggernaut of free enterprise, democracy, and technology offers the best chance of wealth creation,” the key to “improving the human condition”, globalization has had its downside as well.<sup>134</sup> By privileging “individualistic, impersonal, competitive, privatistic and mobile” values and attitudes, globalization processes have inadvertently undermined traditional social units

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<sup>130</sup> Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behavior, Belief and Experience* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 6.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Michael J. Stevens, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Globalization: Contextualizing Terrorism”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 3*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

such as the family, clan and voluntary association.<sup>135</sup> More precisely globalization, which is to many non-Western societies synonymous with Westernization, is destabilizing because it promotes the desacralization of society; encourages religious and moral relativism. It places the onus on the individual to determine his or her “values, career, life style and moral system”; and most disconcertingly, undermines traditional ideas about sexuality and the status of women.<sup>136</sup> Michael Stevens puts it well:

For communitarian societies, keyed to historical continuity, group coherence and security, personal rootedness and the affirmation of moral righteousness, empowering the individual is equated with rending society asunder.

Globalization may thus inadvertently precipitate socio-cultural dislocation at the aggregate, and psychosocial dysfunction at the unit level.<sup>137</sup> Charles Selengut elaborates further, explaining that to “follow the West is to become spiritually and psychologically homeless, without a transcendental anchor to provide security and safety during life’s journey”.<sup>138</sup>

Various individuals within any society may respond differently to the moral and spiritual complexities inherent within modernity. Personality theorists have postulated two basic “sensing” or “perceiving” types of individual: the abstract/intuitive and the concrete/objective. The abstract/intuitive individual tends to be creative in his problem solving; is willing to explore hunches and new ideas; is imaginative, likes change; is problem oriented and subjective. Concrete/objective people, on the other hand, tend to “prefer a concrete way of perceiving the world, are down-to-earth; perhaps simple and possibly simplistic” and strongly “solution-oriented”. Ronald Johnson puts it pithily when he suggests that while abstract people see “what could be”; concrete people see “what is”.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>136</sup> Selengut, *Sacred Fury*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>137</sup> Stevens, “Unanticipated Consequences”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 3, p. 40.

<sup>138</sup> Selengut, *Sacred Fury*, p. 158.

<sup>139</sup> Ronald Johnson, “Psychoreligious Roots of Violence: The Search for the Concrete in a World of Abstractions”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion*, Vol. 4: *Contemporary Views on Spirituality and Violence*, pp. 200-202.

Taken to extremes, concrete/objective individuals – concretists - in non-Western societies undergoing accelerated globalization and Westernization are more likely to experience psychosocial dysfunction. Quite simply, they are psychologically ill equipped to cope with what Jessica Stern calls “a surfeit of choice”. For concretists, too much choice, “especially regarding identity, can be overwhelming and even frightening”.<sup>140</sup> This is precisely why religious fundamentalism is so attractive to many. Charismatic fundamentalist leaders “offer their constituencies clear, objective, practical, and absolute directives for their lives and answers for their theological questions”.<sup>141</sup> From the perspective of the unsettled concretist, relinquishing “one’s autonomy in return for absolute ideological security is a powerful motive”.<sup>142</sup> In this respect, it is worth noting that many Singapore JI members turned to leaders like (Singapore JI spiritual leader Ibrahim Maidin) because – like true concretists - they wished to “free themselves from endless searching as they found it stressful to be critical, evaluative and rational”.<sup>143</sup> The fact that the “JI leaders had quoted from holy texts” appeared to have reassured them that “they could not go wrong”.<sup>144</sup>

Understanding why absolute ideological security can be so important to concretists requires a brief incursion into the burgeoning new field of psychobiology.<sup>145</sup> Neuroscientists tell us that the seat of human emotions and motivations lie in a primitive area of the brain called the limbic system, comprising *inter alia*, the hypothalamus and importantly, the amygdala. The grape-sized amygdala is linked to the human sensory systems and constantly scans the information flowing through them, looking for signs of “threat or pain, whether physical or mental”. Researchers have found that the amygdala plays a role in many emotions including hate, fear, joy and love, and “serves as an

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<sup>140</sup> Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 69.

<sup>141</sup> Johnson, “Psychoreligious Roots”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion, Vol. 4*, p. 207.

<sup>142</sup> Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, *Psychology of Religious Behavior*, p. 115.

<sup>143</sup> Singapore WP, p. 17.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Johnson, “Psychoreligious Roots of Violence”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion, Vol. 4*, p. 195; J. Harold Ellens, “Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy, and Violence”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion, Vol. 4*, p. 124.

emotional and behavioral trip wire, capable of automatically triggering a response before we consciously realize what is happening”.<sup>146</sup>

The amygdala is interconnected with another area of the brain associated with aggression and defence: the hypothalamus. This is a small, bean-sized organ that regulates many of the body’s automatic, stereotyped responses to external stimuli. When the amygdala senses danger, the hypothalamus activates the pituitary gland lying just below it; the pituitary releases an emergency hormone into the bloodstream that flows to the adrenal glands, prompting the latter to release stress hormones that galvanize the body for action – be it fight or flight.<sup>147</sup> The limbic system is very important in our analysis of the psychological – or psychobiological –make-up of the JI inductee. Rush W. Dozier, Jr. tells us why:

Our limbic system has evolved a powerful tendency to blindly interpret any *meaning system* (emphasis mine) that we deeply believe in as substantially enhancing our survival and reproduction. Someone who wholeheartedly converts to a particular religion or political ideology, for example, is likely to experience strong primal feelings of joy and well-being coupled with an exciting new sense of purpose. This is true even if the belief system has elements that are bizarre or self-destructive.<sup>148</sup>

Dozier rightly points out that this tendency of the primitive limbic system to identify particular meaning systems as congruent with personal well being and survival can result in individuals “decoupling” their behavior from “objective criteria of survival and reproduction”.<sup>149</sup> This insight sheds some light, for instance, on the inner motivations of the radical Islamist suicide terrorists who perpetrated the September 11 attacks.

Concretists are attracted to religious fundamentalism because of its dualistic, black-and-white certitudes. Enmeshed in a rapidly globalizing non-Western socio-

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<sup>146</sup> Rush W. Dozier, Jr., *Why We Hate: Understanding, Curbing and Eliminating Hate in Ourselves and Our World* (New York: Contemporary Books, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

cultural milieu, concretist personalities in search of cognitive closure in the midst of moral and spiritual uncertainty would to a large extent be “limbically” hard-wired to want certainty and closure. They *need* it. And as suggested above, once concretists think they have found the ideological security they seek in a particular fundamentalist religious system, they are likely to defend their new beliefs with “great emotional intensity”.<sup>150</sup> Any threat to their belief system may even provoke aggression.<sup>151</sup> In this respect scholars like J. Harold Ellens regard fundamentalism less as a system of beliefs than a highly problematic *state of mind*. He feels that fundamentalist mindsets can be found not just within religious systems, but even “political movements, ethical systems, scientific perspectives and every type of profession in which humans engage”.<sup>152</sup>

The notion that very well educated people cannot be religious fundamentalists - or ultimately terrorists must be considered with caution. Daniel Pipes notes that many Islamists have “advanced education” while a “disproportionate number of terrorists and suicide bombers” possess a “higher education, often in engineering and the sciences”.<sup>153</sup> Ramzi Yousef, the Al Qaeda operative who planned the 1993 New York World Trade Center attack, for instance, studied computer-aided electrical engineering in Swansea, Wales.<sup>154</sup> Some JI members are similarly well educated in technical fields. Indonesian Agus Dwikarna, who had leadership roles in MMI and DDII and associations with JI, is a civil engineer by training.<sup>155</sup> Malaysian JI operative Shamsul Bahri Hussein, for instance read applied mechanics at Dundee.<sup>156</sup> Yazid Sufaaf, who apparently tried to acquire anthrax and develop biological weapons for Al Qaeda, was a 1987 biochemistry graduate

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<sup>150</sup> Ted G. Goertzel, “Terrorist Beliefs and Terrorist Lives”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 1: A Public Understanding*, p. 98.

<sup>151</sup> Steve S. Olweean, “Psychological Concepts of the ‘Other’: Embracing the Compass of the Self”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 1*, p. 116.

<sup>152</sup> Ellens, “Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Violence”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion, Vol. 4*, p. 120.

<sup>153</sup> Pipes, *Militant Islam*, p. 56.

<sup>154</sup> Ruthven, *Fury for God*, p. 217.

<sup>155</sup> “Indonesian Linked to Manila, Jakarta Bombings”, *Laksamana.Net*, 6 July 2002, [http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=22&news\\_id=3127](http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=22&news_id=3127) (accessed 11 Sep. 2004).

<sup>156</sup> Michael Day and David Bamber, “Universities Spy for MI5 on Foreign Students”, *news.telegraph.co.uk*, 28 Aug. 2004, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/03/21/nspy21.xml&sSheet=/news/2004/03/21/ixnewstop.html> (accessed 11 Sep. 2004).

from California State University in Sacramento.<sup>157</sup> Another prominent example is Malaysian Dr Azahari Husin, the top JI bomb-maker who wrote the organization's bomb manual and was involved in the Bali, Jakarta Marriott and now Jakarta Australian embassy bombings. Husin studied in Adelaide for four years in the 1970s, secured an engineering degree in Malaysia and later received a PhD in statistical modeling from Reading University in the 1980s. He taught at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) before going underground in 2001.<sup>158</sup>

Well-educated individuals like Azahari Husin, who have lived and studied to the highest levels in the West go down the religious extremist path due to what Moojan Momen calls the overwhelming desire for "certainty". The concretist/fundamentalist individual tolerates "no ambiguities, no equivocations, no reservations and no criticism".<sup>159</sup> Ambiguity is "deeply unsatisfactory to the fundamentalist psyche."<sup>160</sup> Momen in fact suggests, perhaps counter-intuitively, that "when scientists (especially from the physical sciences) and engineers become religious, they often tend towards fundamentalist religion".<sup>161</sup> Psychological research, for example, has shown that natural or physical scientists in fact tend to be *more* religious than social scientists such as sociologists and psychologists. This is because of the so-called "scholarly distance" thesis:

The reason, in psychological terms, is that the natural sciences apply critical thinking to nature; the human sciences ask critical questions about culture, tradition and beliefs. The mere fact of choosing human society or behavior as the object of study reflects a curiosity about basic social beliefs and conventions and a readiness to reject them. Physical scientists, who are at a greater

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<sup>157</sup> Maria Ressa, "Al Qaeda Operative Sought Anthrax", 10 Oct. 2003, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/10/10alqaeda.anthrax> (accessed 21 Sep. 2004).

<sup>158</sup> "Azahari: Professor, Bomb-Maker and Fanatic", *Channelnewsasia.com* (Singapore), 10 Sep. 2004, available at [http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp\\_asiapacific/view/105933/1/.html](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/105933/1/.html) (accessed 10 Sep. 2004); Dan Murphy, "Leaderless, Terror Group Still Potent", *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 August 2003.

<sup>159</sup> Moojan Momen, "Fundamentalism and Liberalism: Towards an Understanding of the Dichotomy", *Bahai Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1992).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

scholarly distance, may be able to compartmentalize their science and religion more easily.<sup>162</sup>

It is possible that the scholarly distance thesis explains the high proportion of Islamist activists worldwide with backgrounds in the hard sciences and engineering. For example, on university campuses in Iran and Egypt, such activists constitute “25 percent of humanities students, but 60-80 percent of students in medicine, engineering and science”.<sup>163</sup> Islamic scholar Khalid Duran has commented on the “odd” fact that “Islamic fundamentalism” has always had “it’s strongest appeal among engineers”. He wryly observes that in Egypt “they always say the Muslim Brotherhood is really the Engineering Brotherhood”.<sup>164</sup> Duran offers his interpretation of this phenomenon:

Engineers don’t exercise their fantasy and imagination. Everything is precise and mathematical. They don’t study what we call ‘the humanities’. Consequently when it comes to issues that involve religion and personal emotion, they tend to see things in very stark terms.<sup>165</sup>

This leads the certainty-seeking Islamist scientist/engineer to engage in what Malise Ruthven calls “monodimensional or literalist readings of scripture”, as compared to their “counterparts in the arts and humanities whose training requires them to approach texts multidimensionally, exploring contradictions and ambiguities”.<sup>166</sup> Hence Duran, unconsciously echoing the logic of the scholarly distance hypothesis, believes “having an education in literature or politics or sociology seems to inoculate you against the appeals of fundamentalism”.<sup>167</sup> Ultimately, psychologists like J. Harold Ellens consider fundamentalism a form of “psychopathology”:

An essential component of this psychology is a rigid structuralist approach that has an obsessive-compulsive flavor to it. It is the mark of those who have a very limited ability to live with the

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<sup>162</sup> Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, *Psychology of Religious Behavior*, p. 181.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>164</sup> See Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), p. 172.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>166</sup> Ruthven, *Fury for God*, p. 103.

<sup>167</sup> Emerson, *American Jihad*, p. 173.

ambiguity inherent to healthy human life...Fundamentalism is a psychopathology that drives its proponents to the construction of orthodoxies...<sup>168</sup>

Critical theorist Stuart Sim, while similarly decrying the “fundamentalist mentality”, goes a step further to suggest that not only do fundamentalists seek the “desire for certainty”, they equally seek “the power to enforce that certainty over others”.<sup>169</sup> This is what makes the religious fundamentalist, for instance, ultimately a potentially troubling entity: he is not naturally inclined to live and let live in matters of faith. Sim rightly explains that “religious fundamentalism seems to be more to do with power than spiritual matters”, and “power is a political rather than a spiritual issue”. In essence, the fundamentalist mantra is about “control, control, control”.<sup>170</sup>

Political scientist R. Hrair Dekmejian captures aspects of Sim’s argument in his description of the “*mutaasib*, or Muslim fundamentalist fanatic”, for example, as characterized by “rigid beliefs, intolerance toward unbelievers, preoccupation with power”, and a “vision of an evil world”.<sup>171</sup> Because such a “close-minded, rigid-thinking dogmatist”, is “susceptible to a variety of rigid, and potentially destructive, ideologies”<sup>172</sup> such as Qaedaism, the *potential* for him to participate in violent activities against the hate-object – as the example of Azahari Husin attests - is very real.

### **The Key Role of “Ingroup Space”**

The upshot of the preceding discussion is that wider socio-cultural pockets of prejudice in Indonesia and the region – especially the particular *usroh* communities linked to Sungkar and Bashir – may throw up a number of individuals whose relatively rigid, dogmatic mindsets may render them vulnerable to Qaedaism. This may compel

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<sup>168</sup> Ellens, “Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy and Violence”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion*, Vol. 4, p. 120.

<sup>169</sup> Stuart Sim, *Fundamentalist World: The New Dark Age of Dogma* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2004), p. 29.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>171</sup> Cited in Kressel, *Mass Hate*, p. 199.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 211.

them to transit from bigots into “limbic”, obsessed haters of Westerners. This may in turn prompt some of them to seek entry into the actual JI organization. However, even within a small community of haters, there can be degrees of antipathy. Hence there “will be those who can torture and kill and those who can only passively approve of such actions”.<sup>173</sup> For instance, within the Singapore JI cell, not all members were willing to engage in suicide or “martyrdom” operations against US interests.<sup>174</sup> Hence a relatively hate-dominated affective state may help explain why an Islamist from the wider sea of Al-Mukmin alumni for instance may decide to join a terrorist outfit like JI; but it does not necessarily explain how that individual can be psychologically prepared to engage in activities designed to *physically obliterate* the hate-object. An additional set of psychic forces, operating within a small group framework, generates the psychological capacity to kill.

The element of *frustration* provides the impetus for actual participation in terrorist acts resulting in loss of life. Gaylin explains how frustration represents the basic and irreducible link between objective societal conditions and subjective states of mind:

Feeling deprived bears no relationship to the actual amount of comfort or goods that a person may possess. One can be surrounded with all the indulgences of the affluent society and still feel deprived. Contrary to this, we can observe people existing in great poverty, where each expenditure must be measured and considered, every nutrient stored and rationed, who still do not feel deprived.<sup>175</sup>

Gaylin argues that “a sense of deprivation thrives on differentials: when others have what we do not”. In other words, it is a “relative feeling, more closely associated with entitlement than want”.<sup>176</sup> Similarly Kressel stresses that “the *perception* of injustice is not the same as *actual* injustice”.<sup>177</sup> Focusing on “relative deprivation”, he notes that

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<sup>173</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>174</sup> Singapore WP, p. 16.

<sup>175</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 46.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>177</sup> Kressel, *Mass Hate*, p. 209.

individuals are “especially likely to feel frustrated” if they have or receive less than what other people similar to themselves receive.<sup>178</sup>

Relative deprivation can be explained systematically with reference to what the French scholar Rene Girard calls *mimetic desire*. Girard suggests that human beings “desire things because others have them”.<sup>179</sup> In his view, humans have both the innate capacity to learn their desires from others and the concomitant drive to possess what those others possess. This socially learned desire and the drive to possess the object of that desire together constitute mimetic desire. In short, humans desire “objects” – which may be material, like wealth, or metaphysical, like social status or power - because “their possession by others gives them value in our eyes”.<sup>180</sup> The point is that when circumstances arise where socially desired objects are for some reason out of reach of certain individuals or constituencies, mimetic desire may precipitate *frustrations* that may ultimately give rise to conflict.<sup>181</sup>

Mimetic desire presupposes the existence of strong ingroup identity and bias. When one scans the backgrounds of members of the actual JI terrorist organization, one is immediately struck by the fact that many of them had backgrounds in which religion played the dominating role in *identity formation*. This is significant, as psychological research shows that religiosity tends to generate ethnocentric, prejudiced, discriminatory attitudes.<sup>182</sup> In other words, religiosity tends to privilege the ingroup at the expense of the outgroup. Mukhlas, a key operational JI leader, for instance, grew up in Tenggulun village, in Lamongan East Java, a “very religious region of Indonesia”,<sup>183</sup> and was deeply immersed in an Islamic medium of education throughout. He studied at Al-Mukmin and Universitas Islam Surakarta, and trained as a religious teacher at Payaman in Solokuru in

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Mack C. Stirling, “Violent Religion: Rene Girard’s Theory of Culture”, in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion, Vol.2*, p. 12.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>182</sup> Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, *Psychology of Religious Behavior*, p.243.

<sup>183</sup> John Dawson, “The Bali Bombers: What Motivates Death Worship?”, *Capitalism Magazine*, 19 October 2003, available at <http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=3000> (accessed 1 September 2004).

East Java.<sup>184</sup> For his part, the fiery Bali bomb field co-ordinator Imam Samudra, as noted, came from a family with long-term Persis connections, and attended a “religiously conservative high school” in Serang in Banten province in West Java. Like Mukhlas, he was deeply immersed in an Islamic medium of education and spent time in Quran reading sessions under DDII auspices, gradually imbibing a deeply anti-Christian worldview.<sup>185</sup> Serang is another “very religious region of Indonesia”, where DI had been active.<sup>186</sup>

Afghanistan appears to have played important roles in further narrowing the perspectives of both men. Samudra was in Afghanistan from 1991 to 1993, and received training in the handling of assault rifles and bomb construction in Al Qaeda camps,<sup>187</sup> while Mukhlas was there from 1986 to 1989 and claimed to have met Osama bin Laden during the Soviet assault on Joji in 1987. He recalled that he had fought together with the *mujahidin* “from all over the world” against the vociferous Soviet attack.<sup>188</sup> In short the sum total of the experiences of Mukhlas and Samudra endowed them with a religiously legitimated ethnocentric bigotry that was to have horrifying consequences ultimately. Hence while Mukhlas had “harboured a virulent hatred of non-believers in general, and Westerners in particular since childhood”,<sup>189</sup> Samudra, according to a senior Bali police official, “simply hates Americans”.<sup>190</sup> Strongly underlying the hatred of both men was *mimetic frustration*.

In essence, Qaedaists in Southeast Asia and beyond are merely the most extreme manifestation of the long-running Islamic modernist desire to recapture the power and status that the West has enjoyed for several centuries. It is the “huge contrast between medieval success” and the “more recent tribulations”<sup>191</sup> of Islamic civilization that is the source of frustration for modernists and the corollary sentiment of rage amongst Qaedaists. In the final analysis JI’s leaders and members want above all else to enhance

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<sup>184</sup> Mukhlas Interrogation Report, 13 Dec. 2002.

<sup>185</sup> Dan Murphy, “How Al Qaeda Lit the Bali Fuse: Part Three”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 June 2003.

<sup>186</sup> Dawson, “Bali Bombers”.

<sup>187</sup> Murphy, “How Al Qaeda Lit the Bali Fuse: Part 3”.

<sup>188</sup> Mukhlas Interrogation Report.

<sup>189</sup> Dawson, “Bali Bombers”.

<sup>190</sup> Murphy, “How Al Qaeda Lit the Bali Fuse: Part 3”.

<sup>191</sup> Pipes, *Militant Islam*, p. 5.

the *dignity* of their ingroup writ large, i.e. Islamic civilization. Unlike mainstream Islamic modernists, however, JI will pay any price and bear any burden to achieve this - and the ends justify the means.

There are sound social psychological reasons for this posture. Individuals define themselves partly by their group membership. Membership of a high-prestige group meets basic psychological needs such as “belongingness, distinctiveness” and “respect”.<sup>192</sup> Jerrold Post suggests that many terrorists have deep “affiliative needs” and an “as-yet incomplete sense of individual identity” that generates an intense need to belong. As we noted earlier, many concretist individuals struggling with the radical choices imposed by modernity would fit into this category. This causes them to defensively “submerge their own identities into the group”, so that a kind of “group mind” emerges.<sup>193</sup> What happens is that during inter-group contestation and conflict, group identity becomes more salient than individual identity; concern with ingroup welfare replaces individual concerns; there is a heightened sense of shared grievances; and importantly, ingroups tend to become aggressive behaviorally and engage in outgroup stereotyping.<sup>194</sup> That is, “an attack or affront is personal when directed not only against one’s physical self”, but the wider ingroup, or one’s “collective self”.<sup>195</sup> The salience of the “collective” or “group” self, and by extension what Marilynn Brewer terms “ingroup love”, comes out clearly in the case of the Singapore JI members, many of whom suffered from assorted esteem problems and required assimilation into a wider group mind to ameliorate their intra-psychic tensions. Consequently those inducted into the Singapore JI:

...enjoyed a sense of exclusivity and commitment in being in the in-group of a clandestine organization. Secrecy, including secrecy over the true knowledge of jihad, helped create a sense of sharing and empowerment vis-à-vis outsiders. Esoteric JI language or “JI-

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<sup>192</sup> Stevens, “Unanticipated Consequences”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 3*, p. 44.

<sup>193</sup> Post, “Terrorist Psycho-Logic”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 33.

<sup>194</sup> Stevens, “Unanticipated Consequences”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 3*, p. 45.

<sup>195</sup> Jonathan T. Drummond, “From the Northwest Imperative to Global Jihad: Social Psychological Aspects of the Construction of the Enemy, Political Violence and Terror”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, pp. 60, 75.

speak” was used as part of the indoctrination process. Code names for instance resulted in a strong sense of “ingroup” superiority especially since JI members were said to be closer to Allah as they believed in the truth (JI doctrine); even Muslims who did not subscribe to militant jihad were seen as infidels.<sup>196</sup>

The key question, however, is how “ingroup love” becomes “outgroup hate”.<sup>197</sup> Precisely because the collective self is so important to the psychic well being of its members, any serious threat to the former – whether physical or metaphysical involving power/honour - is likely to generate a “limbic”, primal, reaction, comprising “hasty generalizations, stereotyping, us-them distinctions, and raw emotions – particularly anger and hate”.<sup>198</sup> Hence if ingroup members, despite their assumed innate moral superiority, perceive that it is the outgroup that enjoys greater power and status resources, and worse, is “holding back” ingroup progress through nefarious means, mimetic frustration culminating in outgroup hatred, possibly murderous hatred, could result. In the specific case of JI, which is heavily shaped cognitively by Qaedaist fantasy war constructs, “ingroup members’ perceptions of outgroups and relevant external events” are “distorted, causing them to view the outgroup as an enemy”.<sup>199</sup> The intersection between Qaedaist cognitive structures and limbic outgroup hatred can have deadly outcomes. This is illustrated in Imam Samudra’s emotionally charged justification for the Bali terrorist atrocity:

To oppose the barbarity of the US army of the Cross and its allies...to take revenge for the pain of ...weak men, women and babies who died without sin when thousands of tonnes of bombs were dropped in Afghanistan in September 2001 [sic]...during Ramadan...To carry out a [sic] my responsibility to wage a global jihad against Jews and Christians throughout the world... As a manifestation of Islamic solidarity between Moslems, not limited by geographic boundaries. To carry out Allah’s order in the Book of An-nisa, verses 74-76, which concerns the obligation to defend weak men, weak women, and innocent babies, who are always the targets of the barbarous actions of the American terrorists and their

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<sup>196</sup> Singapore WP, p. 15.

<sup>197</sup> Marilyn B. Brewer, “The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?”, *Journal of Social Issues* (Fall 1999), available online at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0341/is\\_3\\_55/ai\\_58549254](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0341/is_3_55/ai_58549254) (accessed 7 Sep. 2004).

<sup>198</sup> Dozier, *Why We Hate*, p. 45.

<sup>199</sup> Stevens, “Unanticipated Consequences”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 3, p. 45.

allies...So that the American terrorists and their allies understand that the blood of Moslems is expensive and valuable; and cannot be – is forbidden to be – toyed with and made a target of American terrorists and their allies. So that the [American and allied] terrorists understand how painful it is to lose a [sic] mothers, husbands, children, or other family members, which is what they have so arbitrarily inflicted on Moslems throughout the world. To prove to Allah – the Almighty and most deserving of praise – that we will do whatever we can to defend weak Moslems, and to wage war against the US imperialists and their allies.<sup>200</sup>

According to Olufemi Lawal, a full-blown terrorist “attitude” that expedites the physical destruction of the hate-object, over and above the necessary cognitive structures and affective states, must include the requisite *behavior* involving direct killing.<sup>201</sup> Behavior here would include activity directly related to the actual terrorist operation. This would involve direct physical participation in a terrorist attack, such as shooting, bomb placement and detonation, and of course a suicide attack. *Deliberate ingroup isolation*, in this connection, is very important in helping to shape such behavior. Jonathan Drummond argues that deliberately self-isolating communities place huge reliance on “alternative news sources”, “home schooling” and “closed religious/ritual systems”. These may “pull one away from competing social networks and constructions of reality”.<sup>202</sup> In this regard, it is worth noting that in January 2004 Al-Mukmin students for instance were warned not to talk to strangers and were punished if they did.<sup>203</sup> In addition, following the August 2003 J.W. Marriott attack in Jakarta, a radical pamphlet entitled “Marriott Conspiracy Theory”, that blamed “Israeli and US intelligence agents” for the incident, were readily accessible to Al-Mukmin students.<sup>204</sup> The Singapore White Paper notes that JI as an organization deliberately policed its boundaries:

After their induction into JI, JI members stayed away from mainstream religious activities and kept to themselves. Keeping together as a closely-knit group reinforced the ideological purity of

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<sup>200</sup> Cited in Ramakrishna and Tan, “Is Southeast Asia a ‘Terrorist Haven?’”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>201</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 4*, p. 24.

<sup>202</sup> Drummond, “From the Northwest Imperative to Global Jihad”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 1*, p. 76.

<sup>203</sup> Yusof and Ishak, “Inside a JI School”.

<sup>204</sup> Mapes, “Indonesian School Gives High Marks to Students Embracing Intolerance”.

the group and kept them loyal to the teachings of their foreign teachers.<sup>205</sup>

Similarly, JI training facilities in Mindanao in the southern Philippines, first Camp Hudaibiyah within the MILF's Abubakar complex, and since 2001, Camp Jabal Quba on Mount Kararao, have been extremely remote localities. These have not only facilitated extensive training courses in weapons and explosives, more importantly, they have facilitated ideological programming of new batches of young Indonesians and other Southeast Asians designed to deepen their motivation for *jihad*.<sup>206</sup> The "ingroup", it should be added, does not refer solely to a physical agglomeration of individuals in a particular geographical locality alone. "Virtual relations can monopolize one's attentions and give rise to cohesive, socially isolated groups populated by geographically dispersed individuals".<sup>207</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer has termed such a virtual communities "e-mail ethnicities", where "transnational networks of people are tied together culturally", through the Internet, "despite the diversity of their places of residence and the limitations of national borders".<sup>208</sup> The basic point is that precisely because of its deliberate isolation – virtual and/or physical - from mainstream society, JI is "free to follow abstract and apocalyptic notions of a global war between good and evil".<sup>209</sup>

Ideological induction aside, deliberate ingroup isolation also expedites the *amplification and focusing* of the mimetic frustrations and humiliation of selected ingroup members at the vast power and status imbalance vis-à-vis the hated outgroup. "Humiliation and envy", Diane Perlman informs us, "go together", and are "exceedingly destructive emotions".<sup>210</sup> She explains:

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<sup>205</sup> Singapore WP, p. 22.

<sup>206</sup> See *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process* (Singapore/Brussels: International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 80, 13 July 2004), pp. 13-17.

<sup>207</sup> Drummond, "From the Northwest Imperative to Global Jihad", in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, p. 76.

<sup>208</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 194.

<sup>209</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 151.

<sup>210</sup> Diane Perlman, "Intersubjective Dimensions of Terrorism and its Transcendence", in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, p. 28.

Being humiliated is like being filled with poison that has to be expelled in order to regain composure. Humiliation carries a narcissistic wound that contains an implicit demand for rectification, often by taking down the humiliator.<sup>211</sup>

Juergensmeyer adds that what is crucial is the “intimacy with which the humiliation is experienced”.<sup>212</sup> Following Perlman, we may argue that the “intolerable affects” of individuals humiliated by the outgroup are evacuated or “projected” onto the outgroup itself - “the powerful, the envied, the humiliators, the privileged ones”.<sup>213</sup> In a very real sense, therefore, when “there seems to be no way out, terrorism is a way of transforming victimhood to mastery”.<sup>214</sup> Juergensmeyer calls this dynamic “symbolic empowerment”. As Samudra’s impassioned justification for the Bali attack suggests, terrorists want to *force* the outgroup to taste – however momentarily - their powerlessness, their despair, their dark “habitus”. Terrorists will not permit the powerful outgroup to ignore them.<sup>215</sup> In this regard, psychoanalyst W.R.D. Fairbairn observed that “people would rather be bad than weak”.<sup>216</sup>

This is not to say, however, that killing comes automatically, even when people feel the overwhelming urge to be bad rather than weak. Social psychologist Albert Bandura has argued that humans in all societies are socialized into accepting socially mandated “self sanctions” that regulate their behavior. Bandura points out that “to slaughter in cold blood innocent women and children in buses, department stores and in airports”, requires “intensive psychological training” in the “moral disengagement” of these self-sanctions. This is the only way to “create the capacity to kill innocent human beings”.<sup>217</sup>

According to Bandura, one powerful way to relax self-sanctions is by “cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing , so that the killing can be done free from self-

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 195.

<sup>213</sup> Perlman, “Intersubjective Dimensions”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>215</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 211, 214.

<sup>216</sup> Perlman, “Intersubjective Dimensions”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, p. 32.

<sup>217</sup> Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 163.

censuring restraints”.<sup>218</sup> JI leaders, as we have seen, cognitively reconstrue their attacks on Western targets as part of a fully justified and legitimate defensive *jihad*. Some Singapore JI members, for example, who took part in Muslim-Christian fighting in Ambon in the Maluku archipelago in eastern Indonesia, regarded their activities as justified, as they saw themselves as defenders of fellow Ambonese Muslims from being killed by Christians. The recent attack on the Australian embassy in Jakarta, as we have seen, furthermore, was presented as an attempt to compel the Australian “crusaders” to leave Iraq.

A second mechanism for disengaging the inner restraints against killing is what Bandura calls “euphemistic labelling”, which “provides a convenient device for masking reprehensible activities or even conferring a respectable status on them”.<sup>219</sup> We have seen how JI, like violent Islamist groups elsewhere, has exploited the term “*jihad*”, which has a very respectable pedigree in Islamic history, to justify bomb attacks on civilians. In addition, Sungkar justified criminal activity on the part of his followers by recasting them as *fa’i*, that is the “robbing the infidels or enemies of Islam to secure funds for defending the faith”.<sup>220</sup>

Third, Bandura argues that “people behave in injurious ways they normally repudiate if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the consequences of their conduct”.<sup>221</sup> In this respect, several Malaysian and Singaporean JI terrorists have mentioned Osama bin Laden’s February 1998 fatwa declaring *jihad* on the Jewish-Crusader alliance as justification for their own terror activities, while it is clear from interrogation reports that JI terrorists took special care to seek spiritual sanction for key operations from JI *amir* Bashir. Finally, Bandura observes that self-sanctions against “cruel conduct can be disengaged or blunted by divesting people of human qualities”. In a very important passage, he notes:

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 169-170.

<sup>220</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, p. 24.

<sup>221</sup> Bandura, “Mechanisms”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 173.

Once dehumanized, the potential victims are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns but as subhuman objects. They are portrayed as mindless ‘savages’, ‘gooks’...and the like. Subhumans are regarded as insensitive to maltreatment and capable of being influenced only by harsh methods.<sup>222</sup>

In this respect Amrozi, brother of Mukhlas and another convicted Bali bomber, evinced his utter lack of empathy for the humanity of his victims when he shrugged off the suggestion that they had killed Australians instead of Americans by quipping: “Australians, Americans, whatever – they are all white people”.<sup>223</sup> If it was bad enough that Amrozi could not see beyond the vacuous abstraction of “white people”, Mukhlas himself declared that all Westerners were “dirty animals and insects that need to be wiped out”.<sup>224</sup>

The final element that marks the transition of the JI hater into the JI killer is that the existing hate obsession of the JI terrorist must be amplified several fold to ensure that he is in a *limbic state*. This is why JI leaders have relied heavily on atrocity propaganda in the form of home-made VCDs. The Maluku conflict of 1999-2000 in particular provided much raw material for JI leaders, who made VCDs and distributed them across Southeast Asia, from Indonesia to the southern Philippines. These were shown during informal teaching sessions by JI clerics, and the “eager young men in attendance, duly incensed by what they had witnessed, were then briefed on how they could join the jihad”.<sup>225</sup> Of particular importance, JI leaders made sure that just before an actual terrorist operation, selected operatives were given the proper “limbic conditioning”. One Singaporean JI operative for instance decided to carry out the December 2000 bombing of a Batam church after then-JI operational leader Hambali showed his group a video of Christians killing Muslims in Ambon. Singapore JI leaders routinely employed fiery speeches to elicit an emotional, limbic response from members before requiring them to fill out surveys indicating what kinds of terrorist activities they wished to be involved in.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., pp. 180-181.

<sup>223</sup> Dawson, “The Bali Bombers”.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Dan Murphy, “How Al Qaeda Lit the Bali Fuse: Part 2”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 2003.

“Having signed their names on the survey, members were not able to alter their decisions later on”.<sup>226</sup>

It seems that intense ingroup processes of cognitive restructuring and limbic conditioning are also pertinent in the case of suicide bombers. In addition, in the special case of the self-proclaimed *shahid*, an additional element of “entrancement” is probably necessary. According to Don J. Feeney, Jr., entrancement is akin to an altered state of consciousness. In this state the subject, who would normally be an extreme example of an “impressionable” personality seeking absolute ideological security in some leader or ingroup, suspends his critical faculties, loses touch with reality somewhat and cedes volitional control to some idealized authority figure.<sup>227</sup> According to one source for instance, Asmar Lanti Sani, the Marriott suicide bomber, was convinced to become a *shahid* (martyr) through his close interactions with JI leader Azahari Husin.<sup>228</sup>

## **Taking Stock**

In this study we have attempted to lay bare the complex processes by which ordinary young Muslims in Southeast Asia become indoctrinated JI terrorists, capable of killing in cold blood. We have noted that while the ideology of Qaedism is important, it is by no means the only factor influencing the transformation process. Socio-cultural pockets of prejudice shaped by history and politics, individual psychologies and intense ingroup cognitive restructuring and limbic conditioning processes all play their part as well. As the latest JI terrorist outrage in Jakarta illustrates, the threat from this organization has yet to abate despite counter-terrorist successes. Significantly the evidence indicates that losses are being replenished by fresh recruitment. This is important because this means that the JI network is self-regenerating and therefore enduring.

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<sup>226</sup> Singapore WP, p. 16.

<sup>227</sup> Don J. Feeney, Jr., “Entrancement in Islamic Fundamentalism”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 3, pp. 192-201.

<sup>228</sup> Communication with Rohan Gunaratna, 30 September 2004.

This paper has shown that the true root of the JI phenomenon is not poverty but rather the very old one of the mimetic frustrations of the Islamic modernists. Some ideological permutations of Islamic modernism in Southeast Asia have been, like Muhammadiyah today, largely constructive. Others, like Darul Islam and today's JI, have not. Clearly, while improving law enforcement, military, intelligence and judicial measures domestically and internationally are important for dealing with the real-time threat of JI, they are powerless to prevent JI from gradually becoming a self-regenerating, existential threat.

What is needed is fresh thinking on a whole range of issues that are not amenable to "hard", military/law enforcement solutions. While programmes designed to improve regional state capacities to deal with the real-time threat of terrorism and ameliorate poverty and unemployment should continue to be pursued by regional governments with the assistance of the international community, this paper suggests that other problems are in need of closer analysis and engagement.

First and foremost, one cannot ignore the cross-cutting, historically enduring communities of prejudice from which JI terrorists ultimately emerge. Second, ostensibly non-violent leaders who nonetheless preach polarized, absolutist ideologies that nudge concretist and impressionable individuals along the continuum toward hate obsession and potential terrorist recruitment, are clearly a cause for concern. It would be folly for such entrepreneurs of hate to be given free rein.

Third, certain educational environments that deliberately limit contact with the outside world and appear to propagate alternate constructions of reality should be spotlighted and their managements urged, to expose their student populations to wider informational and intellectual vistas. Fourth, a wider systemic lack of formal education in critical, creative, multi-dimensional thinking is a challenge all regional governments need to address. Finally, the continuing inability of either liberal Muslims or Islamic modernists to devise and propagate modern interpretations of the faith that trump the

simplistic, us-versus-them radical storylines in the estimation of the Muslim ground is a problem that urgently needs redressing.

What is especially important is more systematic control group studies of the Al Mukmin and associated alumni, based perhaps on the model of the West German government study of the Red Army Faction in the late 1970s, to determine why some alumni proceeded down the JI path.<sup>229</sup> Finally it is not yet fully appreciated that in an era of globalisation, what the US does or does not do in the wider Muslim world, can be selectively filtered through Qaedaist ideology to both strengthen JI and justify the most heinous of terrorist atrocities against civilians.<sup>230</sup> It would appear therefore that the all-important war on the *roots* of terror in Southeast Asia has barely begun.

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<sup>229</sup> Konrad Kellen, "Ideology and Rebellion", in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>230</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna, "US Strategy in Southeast Asia: Counter-Terrorist or Counter-Terrorism?", in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 328-329.

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