

MARKING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2002 BALI BOMBINGS

Jemaah Islamiyah 20 Years After the Bali Bombings: Continuity and Change

Kumar Ramakrishna

Two Decades of Counterterrorism in Indonesia: Successful Developments and Future Challenges

Alif Satria

Jemaah Islamiyah After the 2002 Bali Bombings: Two Decades of Continuity and Transformation

V. Arianti

Change, Continuity and Trajectories: Assessing Southeast Asian Terrorists' Attack Tactics and Trends Post-Bali Bombings

Kenneth Yeo and Unaesah Rahmah

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Jemaah Islamiyah 20 Years After the Bali Bombings: Continuity and Change

Kumar Ramakrishna

Twenty years after the Bali bombings of October 2002, the Al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network remains a threat, albeit an evolving one. JI has shifted from a posture of armed jihad to a low-key strategy of building up support and spreading its ideology through clandestine penetration of political and social sectors of Indonesian society. Its focus may currently be on establishing an Islamic State in Indonesia, but it likely retains ambitions for a regional caliphate as well. IS may be the current “Tier 1” threat to many observers, but in the longer term, JI may well be the more enduring one.

The 12 October 2002 bombings of the Sari Club and Paddy’s Irish Bar on the Indonesian tourist island of Bali, an attack perpetrated by the Al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network that killed 202 civilians, was a pivotal moment for Southeast Asia’s militant landscape.

The attacks galvanised all Southeast Asian governments, resulting in intensified counter-terrorism (CT) capacity-building, transnational cooperation and intelligence sharing. The Bali bombings actually represented a “Plan B”. A previous joint Al-Qaeda-JI plan to attack Western diplomatic missions and commercial interests as well as local government targets in Singapore had been thwarted some 10 months earlier in December 2001. The arrests of JI militants in Singapore had sent shock waves across the city-state, as evidence was unearthed linking JI to the horrific Al-Qaeda attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., just a few months earlier on September 11, 2001.¹

JI, set up in January 1993 by Al-Qaeda-influenced followers of the older Darul Islam armed separatist movement in Indonesia after World War II, had established cells in neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore by the 1990s, in a quest to establish a modern Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara, or Southeast Asian caliphate, spanning southern Thailand to Australia, via armed jihad or holy war.² Southeast Asian JI fighters had fought or trained together with Muslim combatants from around the world during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s and 1990s, and subsequently returned to the region, indoctrinated in Al-Qaeda’s virulent global jihad ideology. By the early 2000s, they began mounting attacks in Indonesia and the Philippines with a view to actualising JI’s Southeast Asian caliphate vision. The so-called Singapore plot of December 2001, described above, was part of this effort. By the early 2010s, the transnational Southeast Asian JI network had been dismantled, while the arrests of senior Indonesian JI leaders such as Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Abu Dujana and Zarkasih had resulted in the virtual decimation of the network in that country.

Between the Bali bombings of October 2002 and October 2021, some 876 JI members were arrested.³ As Alif Satria recounts in this volume, numerous arrests by a rapidly improving Indonesian counter-terrorism apparatus post-Bali depleted JI’s ranks, especially between 2002 and 2009. As a result, the relative severity of JI’s attacks steadily declined. Hence, while the 2002 Bali attacks resulted in over 500 casualties, the subsequent 2004 Australian Embassy bombing produced 200 casualties, while the J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton attacks five years later generated 60 casualties. The massive security force pressure on and decimation of JI ranks, post-Bali, ultimately compelled the network’s leaders to reassess the value of violence. Certainly, following a significant 2007 security operation that crippled a key JI base in Poso, Central Sulawesi, JI leaders calculated that a strategy of violence could no longer be sustained. JI thus “chose to prioritise *dakwah*” – or Islamic proselytisation – instead.⁴

Certainly, JI’s strategic shift to a lower-key approach by the 2010s was accompanied by the emergence of other threat groups in that period. By mid-2014, Indonesian and regional government attention had been captured by the global rise of the Islamic State (IS), an even more

virulent offshoot of Al-Qaeda.⁵ That IS Central sees Southeast Asia's Muslim populations as a strategic resource apt for radicalisation and recruitment, was driven home forcefully by the five-month battle between the Philippine military and pro-IS Philippine Islamist threat groups between May and October 2017, and the continuing spate of suicide and other lone-actor or small-scale attacks by pro-IS Indonesian and Philippine threat groups since. In this volume, Kenneth Yeo and Unaesah Rahmah provide a good analysis of the typical attack modalities employed by pro-IS regional threat groups and lone actors since 2014.⁶ In Indonesia, for instance, by 2016, pro-IS networks such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), "building off of the structures of older groups" such as Darul Islam, relatively quickly became "Indonesia's largest terrorist network, conducting five terrorist attacks in the span of three years".⁷

The adroit use of social media platforms by IS and its affiliates in Southeast Asia for radicalisation and recruitment also attracted much policy attention.⁸ Given that, it is unsurprising that the 2022 Terrorism Threat Assessment Report by the Singaporean authorities asserted that "within Southeast Asia, ISIS affiliates are the primary driver of terrorism and pose the most immediate threat through their ability to mount ISIS-inspired attacks".⁹

The foregoing analysis does not, however, imply that 20 years after the Bali bombings, JI can be written off. It is worth noting that of the aforementioned 876 JI members arrested since the 2002 Bali bombings, 339 – almost 40 percent – were arrested in 2021 alone.¹⁰ Moreover, observers have noted that "JI has become stronger" as well as "far more sophisticated, adaptable, capable of good organisation and [of] exploiting issues". Indonesian officials have admitted that JI is currently not just "well structured", but its members are – ominously – "more militant than IS recruits", and had even been found to have set up "weapons warehouses".¹¹ In short, JI seems to be regenerating. The reason for this requires a better understanding of its ideology and strategic philosophy.

PUPJI, Para Wijayanto and *Strategi Tamkin*

From 2009 to 2019, led by a new, low-profile leader, Para Wijayanto, JI entered a quiet rebuilding phase in Indonesia, in which emphasis was placed on a gradual, methodical strengthening of the social, economic and political pre-conditions for an eventual armed jihad campaign to forcibly establish an Indonesian Islamic State. In a nutshell, since 2009, JI has gone back to basics, adhering to the guidelines first outlined in its strategic playbook, the *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyah* (PUPJI, or *The General Guidelines of the JI Struggle*). Formulated by JI's senior leadership and issued in May 1996, PUPJI articulated JI's entire ideological and strategic philosophy, covering topics ranging from religious interpretations, to strategic and operational discussions, to decision-making processes and combat tactics. In the decade under Wijayanto's leadership, JI refocused on an Indonesia-centric agenda in the medium term, and essentially halted the violence that only attracted severe security crackdowns.

To reiterate, PUPJI emphasises that *jihad musallah*, or armed jihad, can only be waged in Indonesia when JI is not just militarily ready but, importantly, has also garnered sufficient community support.¹² Wijayanto, seeking to realign the battered post-Bali JI network with PUPJI guidelines, thus enunciated *strategi tamkin*, a "methodical" strategy of "acquisition and consolidation of influence over territory and to build support".¹³ Certainly, by the time of Wijayanto's arrest in 2019, *strategi tamkin* was proving its worth. JI had by then established stronger grassroots support and an economic base – some members apparently owned palm oil plantations and clove and cacao fields around Indonesia,¹⁴ and also ran religious schools and charities, all of which generated funds for the network.¹⁵

Strategi Tamkin* Further Operationalised: *Tamkin Siyasi* and *Tandzim Sirri

In November 2021, Farid Ahmad Okbah, a preacher and chairman of the little-known Indonesian People's Dakwah Party (Partai Dakwah Rakyat Indonesia, or PDRI); Ahmad Zain An-Najah, a member of the *Fatwa* Commission of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), the nation's top Islamic clerical body; and Anung al-Hamat, a university lecturer, were arrested. It was revealed that while Ahmad Zain was

also a board member of a JI-linked charitable foundation, and Anung headed another foundation providing financial and legal aid to arrested JI members, Farid was not just the PDRI chairman, but also a member of JI's consultative council and a personal advisor to Para Wijayanto. These arrests suggested that JI's *strategi tamkin* was being further operationalised. JI seemed to be evolving into a truly hybrid model, adding an incipient political front to its active *dakwah* and currently latent armed *jihad* fronts. This incipient political route, an aspect of the wider *strategi tamkin*, is called *tamkin siyasi*. *Tamkin siyasi*, formalised in 2016 by Para Wijayanto, emphasises penetration of societal institutions so as to better promote *dakwah* and education, and capture the hearts and minds of Indonesian Muslims.

The *tamkin siyasi* emphasis on active engagement in the political arena represents a significant departure from earlier JI leadership attitudes, which tended to regard overt political involvement as un-Islamic. However, the strong role of hardline Islamist groups¹⁶ in the so-called 212 Movement rallies of 2016 that helped defeat the then incumbent Jakarta governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (also known as Ahok), in the gubernatorial election the following year, proved a game-changer of sorts.¹⁷ From around 2019 onwards, JI clerics actively urged Indonesians to vote for parliamentary candidates who could ensure that Muslim interests were accommodated in the public sphere. The latest, highly significant illustration of JI's *tamkin siyasi* approach in the political sector was its attempt to "establish, control or infiltrate a political party", exemplified by the aforementioned Farid Okbah's efforts in first establishing the Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) Party in November 2020¹⁸ and subsequently the PDRI in May 2021.¹⁹ Importantly, JI members who infiltrate political parties like PDRI exercise the *tandzim sirri* principle – that is, their actual JI links are concealed. Hence, non-JI PDRI members may not even be aware of JI's presence within their ranks.

Crucially, JI is not implementing *tamkin siyasi* and *tandzim sirri* in the political sector alone. An Indonesian counter-terrorism official admitted in November 2021 that it was very possible that JI has "also infiltrated other religious organisations, even sports organisations and bike clubs" and that, since 2010, more than 30 JI-linked civil servants, police officers and military officials had been detained – all of whom were "adept at concealing their true identity".²⁰ By some estimates, at least 19 civil servants, eight police officers and five military officials were arrested between 2010 and May 2022 for their JI links.²¹ Moreover, JI has expanded its recruitment activities within top Indonesian universities. Clearly, the aim is to influence the hearts and minds of graduates who would one day assume strategic leadership positions within key government agencies. Analysts contend that while the true extent of JI's penetration of Indonesian state, civil and political institutions is unknown because of the *tandzim sirri* principle, thus far, it is likely still relatively less extensive compared to that of the now-proscribed Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI).²²

In sum, JI's *strategi tamkin*, which as shown incorporates *tamkin siyasi* initiatives in the political and other spheres, is a decidedly "long-term strategy that aims to change the Indonesian democratic system into a Sharia-based one, and influence the policies of the respective government agencies".²³

Implications

The foregoing analysis may seem to inadvertently suggest that since JI is playing the long game in Indonesia, the threat to Indonesia and the wider region is somewhat over the horizon and hence not overly concerning. This, however, would be a mistaken assumption, for four key reasons.

First, while JI has been emphasising *tamkin siyasi* and *tandzim sirri*, actively spreading its ideology clandestinely within Indonesian state, political, civil and other institutions, this does not mean that it poses only a longer-term, subversive threat. It has also been discreetly laying the groundwork for future military operations, establishing weapons caches as mentioned, and assigning returning militarily skilled cadres from Syria to work in "several strategic government institutions that shape the country's decision-making, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Supreme Court".²⁴ Also, the JI movement today – as in the past – is hardly monolithic.²⁵ There exist hardline JI factions with military capabilities that may well wish to embark on a "jihad now" approach and conduct attacks, rather than stick with the mainstream JI's "jihad later" strategy.²⁶ In the continuing absence

of strong, strategic leadership of the calibre of Para Wijayanto, JI could factionalise, with impatient “jihad now” elements posing a threat to Indonesian society – as well as foreign assets and interests in the country – in the near term as well.²⁷

Second, it is worth remembering that JI has historically had regional aspirations, too. In 1999, JI formed the Rabitatul Mujahidin (RM), or Mujahidin Coalition, to bring together JI and regional violent Islamist groups from the southern Philippines, Aceh and Sulawesi in Indonesia, and Rohingya groups from Myanmar.²⁸ While RM was a loose network that was short-lived, it was a “potentially force-multiplying extension of JI” because of the shared notion of a regional “radical Islamist brotherhood”.²⁹ Significantly, Singaporean intelligence officials assessed in December 2021 that “JI likely retains its aspirations to establish a Daulah Islamiyah” in Southeast Asia and “could again set its sights on recruiting regional affiliates”.³⁰ Current Indonesian security assessments likewise indicate that, while JI is for the moment focused on establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia, the original JI vision of a pan-Southeast Asian caliphate remains on the books.³¹ Hence, regional P/CVE and CT cooperation should not just focus on dealing with the threat posed by pro-IS groups online and in the real world, but also maintain a watching brief for indicators of reactivation of regional JI activity – in particular, JI attempts to revive the old RM coalition in some form, in pursuit of its longer-term “ambitions of establishing a Daulah Islamiyah” in Southeast Asia “through armed jihad”.³²

Third, while as noted the extent of the penetration of the Indonesian political arena by JI elements is still relatively incipient – the JI-influenced PDRI appears to currently lack the financial resources and the countrywide infrastructure to mount a significant contest in the 2024 General Election – vigilance is required. As discussed, JI, under *strategi tamkin*, is focusing on a gradualist *tamkin siyasi* approach, quietly infiltrating a range of civil and political associations whilst strictly adhering to the *tandzim sirri* secrecy principle. This way, JI is “spreading its ideology in secret”.³³ This is surreptitiously strengthening wider radical trends in Indonesian Islam, potentially fostering a more exclusivist socio-political milieu for the JI-influenced political parties to gradually expand their influence. It is, after all, noticeable that elements within even those bastions of moderate Indonesian Islam, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, have had to struggle with internal elements that are relatively more hardline in orientation toward non-Muslim minorities.³⁴ For instance, Ustaz Abdul Somad Batubara, a religious cleric and social media personality with 6.5 million followers on Instagram, 2.7 million subscribers on YouTube and in excess of 700,000 followers on Facebook – and who was denied entry into Singapore in May 2022 for extremist comments he made about the city-state and non-Muslims – is linked with NU.³⁵ It thus behooves regional governments and civil society to monitor the dissemination, via the ubiquitous social media, of JI-like extremist tropes within body politics in the region, and engage in strategic and proactive counter-narrative efforts in response.

Finally, it is worth recognising that JI – influenced by the long-term vision of PUPJI to play the long game – is not in a tearing hurry either. In fact, the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021, 20 years after its ouster, if anything, affirms to JI leaders that the “strategic patience” built into the long-term *tamkin siyasi* strategy assures future success.³⁶ IS may hence be the current “Tier 1” threat to many observers, but in the longer term, JI may well be the more enduring one.³⁷

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²⁵ One former senior JI leader has pointed out that not everyone in JI agreed with the decision by Hambali, JI's *Mantiqi* I leader (covering Singapore and Malaysia) and liaison with Al-Qaeda, to execute Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's February 1998 *fatwa* (edict) to carry out attacks against Western interests anywhere in the world. Hence, the Bali attacks of 12 October 2002 were in effect executed by the most Al-Qaeda and global jihad-oriented faction of JI. ICPVTR Roundtable with former senior JI leader, August 15, 2022.

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Two Decades of Counterterrorism in Indonesia: Successful Developments and Future Challenges

Alif Satria

This article assesses developments in Indonesia's counterterrorism policies in the past two decades. Over the span of 20 years, the Indonesian state's capacity to counter terror threats has increased significantly, both in terms of conducting arrests, and designing and implementing P/CVE programmes. Unsurprisingly, this has curtailed various terrorist organisations' ability to launch lethal attacks. But the terrorist threat persists – Jemaah Islamiyah has made significant attempts to win the “battle of concepts” among some communities through dakwah and infiltrating religious institutions, while Jamaah Ansharut Daulah continues to maintain country-wide networks and connections to pro-Islamic State groups in the region. Going forward, in addition to implementing various proposed P/CVE initiatives, Indonesia should increase collaborations with other Southeast Asian states, such as through joint CT operations, intelligence sharing and P/CVE initiatives.

Introduction

Indonesia's counterterrorism (CT) capacity has transformed dramatically in the last two decades. From one of Southeast Asia's most underprepared countries in dealing with terrorist threats at the turn of the millennium, Indonesia today has one of the region's most robust CT capabilities. These range from a well-trained anti-terrorism unit, to expansive preventive detention mandates of terrorist suspects, and comprehensive action plans on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) at both the national and local levels.¹ Unsurprisingly, while domestic terrorist organisations remain a security threat, their ability to conduct lethal terrorist attacks on the scale of the 2002 Bali bombings, which resulted in over 500 casualties, has significantly diminished.²

This article begins by tracing the four phases of Indonesia's CT development, beginning with the pre-2002 phase, when politicians were sceptical of the terrorist threat. The subsequent 2002-2009 phase saw Indonesia focused on building its operational capacity. In the 2010-2017 phase, Indonesia began institutionalising P/CVE, while the 2018-2021 phase brought about the expansion and consolidation of state capacities on both fronts. This will be followed by an assessment of Indonesia's future CT challenges. While Indonesia has been successful in disrupting terrorist organisations through mass arrests, the country still needs to invest further in P/CVE programmes and regional CT cooperation to address the capacity of terrorist groups to rebuild and the reach of transnational networks.

Phases of Development

Pre-2002: Scepticism and Inaction

Prior to the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia's capacity to address terrorist threats was largely non-existent, owing to several reasons. First, Indonesian statesmen and politicians largely lacked the political will to respond firmly to terrorist threats.³ The then president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, was hesitant to act against the nefarious activities of Islamist militants partly out of a perceived need to retain the support of Islamist parties in her governing coalition, such as *Partai Amanat Nasional* and

Partai Persatuan Pembangunan.⁴ Additionally, strong state actions against Muslims were widely unpopular in the wake of former President Soeharto's regime's repression of Muslim political expression between the 1960s and 1980s.⁵ As a result, even to this day, many Muslim organisations and some human rights advocates fear that any increase in the state's capacity to restrict Islamic groups would be misused to oppress the wider society.⁶

A second factor was the lack of experience and resources given to Indonesia's leading CT unit at the time, the Gegana Regiment II of the National Police (Polri).⁷ This unit had not been involved in the clampdown on Darul Islam (DI) between the 1970s and 1990s, which was instead led by the military (TNI). Inter-agency rivalries between TNI and Polri also prevented the effective sharing of intelligence.⁸ As a consequence, the Gegana Regiment II simply did not have the institutional experience or support needed to effectively conduct CT operations such as intelligence analysis or scientifically-based crime investigations.⁹ This was exacerbated between 1999-2002, when Indonesia's main security concerns stemmed from separatist movements in Aceh and sectarian conflicts in Eastern Indonesia, which redirected state resources and focus away from CT issues.¹⁰

Consequently, before 2002, Indonesia did very little to address brewing terrorist threats, which largely sprung from the emerging Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) group. Whereas Singapore and Malaysia had begun identifying and arresting JI members in their respective countries by early 2002,¹¹ Indonesia continued to deny the group's existence altogether. For example, when JI members attacked a community of Christians in Poso, Central Sulawesi, following the 2001 Malino Peace Accord, then Coordinating Minister of People's Welfare Jusuf Kalla simply dismissed JI's action as "pure criminality".¹² Furthermore, when Indonesia's State Intelligence Agency (BIN) secretly took the initiative to capture Al-Qaeda member Omar al-Faruq and JI member Agus Dwikarna in Manila, the administration, instead of praising the feat, actively "discouraged further actions".¹³

2002-2009: Arrests and Intelligence Development

Indonesia's reluctance to develop its CT capacities dramatically changed with the 2002 Bali bombings. In the immediate wake of the attacks, Indonesia focused its efforts on developing intelligence and terrorist arrest capabilities in three key areas.¹⁴ First was the passing of Indonesia's Anti-Terrorism Law. Less than a week after the Bali bombings, the government issued Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu) No. 1/2002, which provided the legal framework to indict suspects on terrorism charges. This was soon followed by Perppu No. 2/2002, which allowed the former to be enacted retroactively. While its clauses were less substantive than Singapore and Malaysia's Internal Security Act (the latter has since repealed this law), the mandate it gave to the security apparatus was quite extensive – it allowed for the use of intrusive intelligence gathering practices (e.g. wiretapping) after sufficient evidence is provided as well as pre-trial detention for a maximum of six months.¹⁵

A second key development was the creation of a dedicated CT unit under Polri in 2003, namely the Special Detachment 88 (Densus 88), with training and financial assistance from the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.¹⁶ To increase its operational responsiveness, Densus 88 quickly expanded its unit size to 400-500 personnel, developed a strong network of human intelligence sources and established provincial-level teams, which since 2004 have carried out the bulk of Indonesia's CT operations against JI.¹⁷ Between 2002-2009, Densus 88 proved to be a highly proficient CT unit, arresting over 466 JI members and conducting multiple targeted killings of JI leaders, including Azahari Husin (JI's top bomb-maker) in 2005 and Noordin M. Top (leader of JI's most active bombing cell) in 2009.¹⁸

A third development that considerably enhanced Indonesia's CT capacity was the restructuring of inter-agency lines of coordination. Most significant was the strengthening of BIN's authority to direct, coordinate and oversee every national intelligence operation through Presidential Instruction No. 5/2002. This allowed BIN to sidestep any inefficiencies resulting from the rivalry between Polri and

TNI's own intelligence bodies, which before 2002 had prevented the swift exchange of intelligence.¹⁹ Another important change was the creation of the Desk for Coordination of Eradicating Terrorism (DKPT) and the Anti-Terrorism Task Force in 2004, which were, respectively, tasked to coordinate the implementation of CT policies between agencies, and CT operations between Polri's Densus 88 and TNI's special forces – ensuring that effective coordination occurred not only in terms of intelligence, but also policy and operations.²⁰

This revamped CT capacity enabled Indonesia to more effectively counter the threat of terrorism. Notably, as successful arrests continued to deplete JI's ranks between 2002-2009, it became harder for JI's bombing cells to recruit skilled personnel, resulting in a steady decrease in the severity of their attacks.²¹ Whereas the 2002 Bali bombings resulted in over 500 casualties, the subsequent 2004 Australian Embassy bombing resulted in 200 casualties, and the 2009 JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton bombings resulted in 60 casualties.²² Ultimately, the successful arrests of key operatives forced JI to reassess the value of violence.²³ Indeed, it was after a successful 2007 operation targeting one of JI's bases in Poso that the organisation decided the benefit of violence no longer outweighed the harm it brought to its ranks, and chose to prioritise *dakwah* instead.²⁴

2010-2017: Institutionalising P/CVE

Despite the decrease in the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks by 2009, Indonesia quickly realised that the threat from terrorist organisations could not be solved through arrests alone. It was observed that local terror groups were notably resilient and could easily regroup, move their areas of operation or change their recruitment tactics to overcome losses in their ranks. In early 2010, for example, JI member Dulmatin established the *Lintas Tanzim* in Aceh – a base of operations where militant members of groups such as JI, DI and even the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) could take refuge, recruit and plan attacks.²⁵ There were also groups like the Mujahideen of East Indonesia (MIT), the Mujahideen of West Indonesia (MIB) and the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), which, while not as large as JI, were still actively plotting attacks.²⁶

Understanding that arrests were insufficient to neuter the terrorist threat, Indonesia during this phase began investing in a more comprehensive CT infrastructure. This was marked by several developments. First was the creation of the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2010.²⁷ BNPT is a continuation of DKPT, but markedly more expansive in its scope of work, and has greater access to resources and authority. It is tasked with overseeing all aspects of Indonesia's CT strategies, ranging from P/CVE to CT operations. BNPT is also supported by over 300 personnel and an annual budget of Rp 700 billion,²⁸ and headed by a ministerial-level official (thus solving the previous problem of inter-agency coordination).²⁹ Additionally, BNPT also formally enables TNI to participate in CT, and more specifically in P/CVE, through the Directorate of Prevention, over which TNI has been given purview.³⁰

A second development was Indonesia's increased institutionalisation of P/CVE programmes. Indeed, Indonesian civil society organisations (CSOs) had crafted various P/CVE programmes long before 2010. The Wahid Foundation, for example, began implementing counter-radicalisation programmes aimed at students in South Sulawesi and East Java in 2008, while the University of Indonesia's Research Centre for Police Studies has run deradicalisation programmes for terrorist inmates since 2009.³¹ However, these initiatives had little to no coordination with the state. Police officers themselves had also experimented with cultural integration approaches toward terrorist inmates since the early 2000s. This involved displaying their Islamic faith and developing personal relationships to persuade inmates to abandon violence. Unfortunately, these programmes were largely ad hoc and off-budget.³²

It was only after 2010 that the state began systematically incorporating P/CVE into its national CT strategies. BNPT first attempted this in 2011 when its Directorate of Prevention issued a 2010-2014 strategic plan with targets such as reducing the spread of radical propaganda and persuading terrorist

convicts to disengage from violence.³³ This plan was further refined in 2013 with the issuance of the National Deradicalisation Blueprint, which outlined a four-step deradicalisation process prioritising the countering of narratives and terrorist ideologies through “dialogues”.³⁴ This blueprint was operationalised in 2014 with the National Terrorism Prevention Program, which included various state-led P/CVE initiatives such as the empowerment of mosques through “entrepreneurial assistance”, the development of terrorism prevention modules in cooperation with *madrassas*, and the holding of in-prison dialogues between terrorist inmates and Middle Eastern *ulamas*.³⁵

These programmes, however, failed to produce substantive results. Observers commonly criticised BNPT’s in-prison deradicalisation programmes as “infrequent and inconsistent”, which prevented buy-in from and trust-building with terrorist inmates.³⁶ Additionally, these programmes also suffered from a lack of pre-testing or evaluation mechanisms, which prevented objective assessments of their efficacy. This was worsened by the fact that many deradicalisation programmes took place in overcrowded and understaffed prisons – conditions that can increase the animosity of inmates and reduce the supervision capacity of staff.³⁷ Unfortunately, while some CSOs’ efforts were noted to be more successful, they were largely beset by coordination and sustainability problems. This resulted in multiple programme overlaps and short-lived gains.³⁸ When some 20 CSOs in 2016 banded together under an umbrella coalition called C-Save to coordinate efforts and share experiences, it was quickly plagued by internal disputes.³⁹

2018-2021: Expanding State Capacity

Amidst Indonesia’s attempts to systematise a P/CVE framework, another threat emerged in the form of the Islamic State (IS) in Syria in 2014. This quickly reinvigorated many Indonesian jihadists’ militancy, prompting some to travel to Syria and others to regroup locally under new organisations – the biggest being the pro-IS Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD).⁴⁰ Building off of the structures of older groups such as JAT and DI, JAD quickly became Indonesia’s largest terrorist network, conducting five terrorist attacks in the span of three years.⁴¹ However, it was not until the 2018 Surabaya bombings, which involved a coordinated triple suicide attack that caused 58 casualties and saw women and children participating as suicide bombers, that Indonesia acknowledged its CT infrastructure was still insufficient to address the evolving terrorist threat.⁴²

This resulted in two significant developments. First was the expansion of Densus 88’s preventive detention mandates through the issuance of Law No. 5/2018 on anti-terrorism. The new Anti-Terrorism Law enabled Densus 88 to more frequently conduct preventive detention of terrorist suspects, as it increased the pre-trial detention period of suspects from 120 days to 200 days before trial.⁴³ Additionally, the regulation extended the scope of activities prosecutable as terrorism-related offences. In the original regulation, Densus 88 was only authorised to arrest suspects who were directly involved in or supported the conduct of terrorist attacks.⁴⁴ In the amended regulation, Densus 88 can now criminalise individuals for being affiliated to a terrorist organisation or acting in non-violent operations such as spreading propaganda materials, even when these acts do not contribute to attacks.⁴⁵

The expansion of Densus 88’s preventive detention mandate exponentially increased the number of arrests of terrorist suspects. In 2018, Densus 88 arrested a total of 396 terrorist suspects – a 117% increase compared to the previous year.⁴⁶ Over the course of four years, up until December 2021, the number of arrested terrorist suspects increased to 1,247.⁴⁷ The expanded mandate also enabled Densus 88 to detain key individuals who, while not directly involved in planning or conducting attacks, were vital to their organisation’s survival. In 2018, Densus 88 arrested various senior JAD leaders – rendering the organisation’s central command defunct and forcing its cells to act independently with little to no coordination.⁴⁸ In 2019, Densus 88 also arrested JI leader Para Wijayanto and, in the following years, various senior JI members, including Zulkarnaen, Siswanto and Abu Rusydan – complicating the organisation’s ongoing rebuilding process.⁴⁹

A second important development was the creation of the National Action Plan Against Extremism (RAN PE) through Presidential Decree No. 7/2021. The RAN PE is a comprehensive P/CVE reform blueprint that aims to solve Indonesia's various P/CVE problems, such as the lack of local context in state deradicalisation programmes,⁵⁰ the lack of coordination between CSOs in designing counter-radicalisation initiatives,⁵¹ and the lack of standardised assessment and evaluation tools.⁵² This blueprint consists of 130 government action plans divided into three main pillars – prevention, law enforcement and cooperation – with varying goals ranging from strengthening P/CVE data governance, to increasing the efficacy of post-prison deradicalisation monitoring, to developing better witness and victim protection programmes.⁵³

Throughout 2021, the government reported that several programmes have been implemented as part of the RAN PE initiative. BNPT, for example, has created the I-KHub, a website aiming to document all P/CVE programmes done by government bodies and CSOs.⁵⁴ The Ministry of Law and Human Rights also collaborated with the *Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian* to devise a standardised mechanism for handling children of convicted terrorists.⁵⁵ However, many challenges remain. There is still a lack of impact assessment for the RAN PE programmes already implemented – I-KHub, for example, still has little to no data from CSO-led P/CVE programmes. Additionally, many provincial governments have not created derivative RAN PE regulations, which prevents them from implementing its programmes. While RAN PE is a timely and relevant document, more time is required to implement its various proposals in order to enhance the quality of Indonesian P/CVE.

Indonesia's Future CT Challenges

While significant enhancements to Indonesia's CT infrastructure in recent years have successfully reduced terrorist organisations' capacity to mount lethal attacks, several challenges remain. First, jihadist organisations continue to display resilience and an ability to adapt their strategies to CT operations. This is most notable in the case of JI. Recognising in 2008 that Densus 88 could quickly arrest swathes of its members after an attack, JI changed its strategy to focus on winning the "battle of concepts" instead.⁵⁶ In doing so, JI has rebuilt its *dakwah* networks – investing heavily in its education division, developing a dedicated forum to manage its *madrassas*⁵⁷ and sending JI *ulamas* to off-Java provinces.⁵⁸ More recently, JI was found to have infiltrated political parties and the Indonesian Ulama Council – institutions that would give them a justifiable pretext to criticise the government and preach about the need for an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia.⁵⁹

To address this problem, it is vital that further resources are invested in implementing key components of the P/CVE framework proposed under the government's latest action plan. While continuing to arrest JI members who design, fund and implement *dakwah* programmes may disrupt their progress in winning the "battle of concepts", it is not a sustainable solution nor will it fully halt the appeal of JI's narrative.⁶⁰ Doing so would require a coordinated counter-radicalisation programme involving the state and CSOs, a context-sensitive early warning and off-ramping programme which Indonesia has yet to acquire,⁶¹ and measurable in-prison deradicalisation and out-prison reintegration programmes. While the RAN PE has outlined specific programmes to this effect,⁶² as noted above, its implementation has thus far fallen short. Serious monitoring and evaluation of RAN PE's implementation recommendations by all stakeholders are still needed.

The second challenge to Indonesian CT moving forward concerns jihadist organisations' transnational ties in the region and around the Middle East. While Indonesian jihadists today are not as well connected as JI was in the early 2000s,⁶³ they still maintain significant domestic and international links. JAD, for example, was speculated to have coordinated with pro-IS members in Malaysia in 2019, when two arrested Malaysian nationals were found to have participated in bomb-making training in Yogyakarta.⁶⁴ Ties between JAD and Philippine groups were also found in the 2019 Jolo Cathedral bombing, which involved two JAD members being guided by an Indonesian jihadist in Afghanistan to work under Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, an Abu Sayyaf Group commander.⁶⁵ Recently, Dwi Susanti, an

Indonesian still residing in Syria, was found to have facilitated money transfers from Indonesia used to smuggle teens from Syrian refugee camps to IS recruiters.⁶⁶

Such examples illustrate that neutering Indonesian terrorist organisations also requires effective cooperation between Southeast Asian states. Indeed, the region has developed several notable unilateral and multilateral initiatives – though their successes vary. The Trilateral Cooperative Agreement between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, for example, has been notably successful in reducing the number of transnational criminal incidents in the Sulu Sea in recent years.⁶⁷ The ASEAN Our Eyes Initiatives (OEI), however, has not shown progress due to issues around distrust and capacity discrepancies between regional countries, which in turn has prevented visible progress in facilitating vital intelligence sharing on CT issues.⁶⁸ It is also necessary for the region to expand cooperation on law enforcement operations and P/CVE initiatives – such as exchanging information on deradicalisation evaluation practices and collaborating on post-prison monitoring initiatives to prevent recidivism. This is particularly important in border areas such as Sabah, which has long been an interstate travel route for jihadists.⁶⁹

Conclusion

In the two decades following the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia's CT capacity has developed significantly. By 2021, Indonesia had instituted an expansive anti-terrorism regulation that has exponentially increased the number of arrested terrorist suspects. A comprehensive blueprint has also been crafted that, on paper, addresses various problems associated with Indonesia's past P/CVE initiatives. Indeed, these developments have greatly reduced Indonesia's terrorist organisations' ability to conduct lethal attacks. Still, Indonesian jihadists are notably resilient and maintain transnational networks that continue to pose a security threat to Indonesia, around the region and beyond. Moving forward, Indonesia needs to deliver on its pledges in the RAN PE by implementing its various P/CVE reform plans and work together with other Southeast Asian states to bolster regional cooperation in CT operations, intelligence and P/CVE.

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Jemaah Islamiyah After the 2002 Bali Bombings: Two Decades of Continuity and Transformation

V. Arianti

Two decades on from the 2002 Bali bombings, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has transformed into a full-fledged hybrid militant group that operates on three main fronts: social (i.e. school and dakwah, or religious outreach), military and political. Whilst JI's social and military fronts have continuously featured in the group's operations since 1993, its establishment of a political wing more recently – embracing democracy and participating in Indonesian political parties – signals the group is possibly learning from other militant outfits such as the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Hezbollah in Lebanon. In the near term, the decapitation of JI's military and political wings, due to a series of arrests in recent years, means its resilience and adaptability will mainly depend on its social front. Multiple factors, such as the presence of rogue elements within JI capable of conducting attacks amidst the group's present leadership vacuum, the policies of the next JI leader and the prospect of “black swan” events, will determine if JI will revive its aspirations for a military arm as mandated by its organisational guidelines.

Introduction

On 12 October 2002, JI operatives detonated three bombs in the tourist district of Kuta, Bali, an attack that resulted in 202 casualties.¹ It remains the worst terrorist attack recorded in Indonesia. JI is also the only militant group in Indonesia which has proven capable of successfully orchestrating a deadly attack on such a scale.² Subsequent to the Bali attacks, JI, established initially in 1993 in Malaysia by Abdullah Sungkar, continued to be involved in several suicide bombings in Indonesia. These included the 2003 Jakarta J.W. Marriott hotel bombing, the 2004 Jakarta Australian Embassy bombing, the 2005 Bali bombings, and the 2009 J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton bombings – the last JI attack on record.³ In Poso, Central Sulawesi, JI also bombed the Tentena Market in 2005 and conducted a series of other attacks in the regency.⁴

JI in Indonesia suffered its first wave of arrests following the 2002 Bali bombings, as police hunted down the perpetrators and the group's leadership.⁵ These clampdowns would destabilise the group and force JI to change leaders several times in the span of a few years. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir led JI from 1999 to 2002, after the death of JI's founder and first leader Abdullah Sungkar. Subsequent JI leaders included Abu Rusydan (2002-2003), Adung (2003-2004) and Zarkasih (2004-2007). JI's base in Poso, from which its central leadership had mobilised significant resources including manpower, was eventually shattered in a series of crackdowns in Tanah Runtuh, JI's stronghold in the area.⁶ In 2009, Para Wijayanto was appointed *amir* (leader), and he set about rebuilding and revitalising the organisation, which is currently estimated to have around 7,000 members.⁷ Para remains the longest-serving JI leader to date, having helmed the group until his arrest in mid-2019.⁸

Under Para Wijayanto's leadership, JI has refocused its agenda within Indonesia and halted the violence that brought it on the radar of anti-terror forces. In this respect, JI has returned to its *khittah* (guideline) as envisioned in its organisational handbook, *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyah* (PUPJI).⁹ The document states that *jihad musallah* (armed jihad) should be waged in Indonesia only when the group is militarily ready and has garnered sufficient community support. Although JI did not plan or conduct an attack in Indonesia during Para's tenure, it suffered a second

wave of arrests. This was partially attributed to a stronger counter-terrorism law enacted in 2018, which included a broadened definition of terrorist offences and increased powers of surveillance¹⁰ accorded to law enforcement agencies. A total of 876 JI members have been arrested since the 2002 Bali bombings,¹¹ 339 of whom were arrested in 2021 alone.¹²

At present, JI, whose ultimate goal is to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia by waging armed jihad,¹³ still poses a security threat. This article will assess the evolution of JI in terms of its continuity, transformation and possible trajectories, as it morphs into a hybrid political-militant organisation that stands on three pillars – its social, political and military fronts.¹⁴

Continuity: The Military Wing

Centralised Training

JI is the only militant group in Indonesia to consistently conduct *i'dad* (preparation to wage armed jihad) toward a long-term goal. Mirroring JI's centralised hierarchical structure, the group's founding fathers saw the importance of running a centralised training programme (*Diklat*) for its cadres, to the extent that PUPJI has a dedicated chapter on *Diklat* and its importance in the personal training of a JI cadre.¹⁵ JI has also invested significant resources into centralised training over the decades.¹⁶

The first centralised training camp was organised between 1996 and 2000 in Mindanao, Southern Philippines.¹⁷ In Indonesia, JI's centralised *i'dad* took place in Buru and Ceram in the Maluku Islands from 1999 to 2001,¹⁸ and in Poso, Central Sulawesi, from 2000 to 2008.¹⁹ JI revived its centralised training initiative during Para Wijayanto's leadership via a centralised training camp termed as *Sasana*.²⁰ From 2012 to 2018, 96 selected JI cadres underwent centralised training in *Sasana* for a period of six months to one year – there was a total of 12 training sites in Central Java over the years – prior to their deployment to Syria.²¹ This centralised training scheme was then moved to Syria, where members underwent military training with various rebel groups there. The longest such stint was with the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat al Nusra (The Nusra Front). These training collaborations typically lasted between one month and two years.²² During Para Wijayanto's term, this centralised training would complement the basic military training for members held locally by JI's Education and Cadre Recruitment Academy (ADIRA).²³ Adhering to PUPJI, JI's training module in *Sasana* also included leadership training.²⁴

Special Military Unit

For more than a decade, JI has remained committed to forming a special military unit comprised of its most militarily skilled members who underwent overseas military training. In 1998, JI formed a *Laskar/Tim Khos* (Special Team)²⁵ unit that was mandated to wage jihad in Indonesia if needed. *Laskar Khos* deployed members to and sourced logistics (including weaponry and explosives) for militants in Maluku from 1999 to 2002, when a bloody sectarian conflict occurred. The team also bought bulks of explosive materials in the form of potassium chlorate, which was subsequently used in the series of JI bombings during the 2000s.²⁶ In addition, another unit *Laskar Istimata* involved members who were specifically trained to carry out suicide attacks.²⁷

During Para Wijayanto's leadership, a special military unit called *Laskar Ightiyalat* (Secret Assassination Team) was also created. It comprised the alumni of the Syrian training camp and battlefield. It is estimated that 55 JI members underwent military training in Syria, some of whom have since been arrested.²⁸ Unlike the *Laskar Khos* and *Laskar Istimata* units, which were involved in mass casualty attacks, *Laskar Ightiyalat's* missions would be more targeted.²⁹ As of today, *Laskar Ightiyalat* has not conducted any attack, adhering to Para Wijayanto's instruction to refrain from carrying out an

attack in Indonesia for the time being. As the elite forces of JI, members of both *Laskar Khos* and *Laskar Ightiyalat* were also mandated to train other JI members.³⁰

The Splintering

In the face of repeated leadership losses, JI has suffered various splinterings over the years, with hardline elements within the group more inclined to violence. Under the specific helms of Abdullah Sungkar and Para Wijayanto, JI was relatively stable, as their leadership had strong command over the rank and file. Yet even under such strong leaders, evidence of splintering within the group was apparent. Before Abdullah Sungkar died at the end of 1999, for example, hardline JI elements were already preparing for armed jihad in Ambon city. They had organised military training in Maluku and sourced dozens of weapons and explosive materials for jihad in the area. *Laskar Khos* was also created in 1998 when Sungkar was still alive.³¹ After JI's leadership was transferred to Abu Bakar Ba'asyir – who was perceived as a weak leader – in 2000, *Laskar Khos*, under the instruction of Hambali as the head of JI's *Mantiqi* I (territorial command) I, conducted a series of bombings in Indonesia and also planned some attacks in Singapore.³² JI members belonging to *Mantiqi* I (such as Malaysians Noordin M. Top and Azahari Husin) continued to perpetrate suicide bombings in Jakarta and Bali after the 2002 Bali bombings by recruiting both members of JI and those of other militant groups, acts that were disapproved of by JI's leadership and administrators.³³

Under Para Wijayanto's leadership, the impetus for splinters in the group was provided in the first instance by Usman bin Sef, alias Fahim,³⁴ who had previously been arrested in 2004 for hiding Noordin and Azahari, and completed his prison sentence in 2009. Para allowed Fahim to partially circumvent JI's rigorous and lengthy recruitment process and create his own group called *Jamaah Iqomatuddin*. Nevertheless, in order to be formally acknowledged by JI, Fahim's group members still had to be qualified according to JI's standards³⁵ and participate in the last stage of JI's recruitment process to ensure their loyalty to JI. *Jamaah Iqomatuddin* also had a small military wing headed by the graduates of JI's training programme. Members of *Jamaah Iqomatuddin* were equipped with firearms to protect themselves and for preparation toward armed jihad. Despite the autonomy by Para, Fahim's group did not plan an attack.³⁶ When eventually Fahim and his group members were arrested in 2021, almost two years after Para's arrest, they had already made a bunker to store weapons and explosives, and prepared a route for escape in the event that they conducted a terror attack.³⁷

Another splinter faction operating during Para's leadership was the Banten faction led by Imarudin. In 2016, this faction had already created a sub-group due to dissatisfaction with the JI leadership. It also had close ties with Imam Samudra, a former member of *Mantiqi* I and the Bali bomber who worked under Hambali. After the arrest of Para Wijayanto in mid-2019, the group planned a series of attacks in Serang (Banten), Tasikmalaya (West Java) and Surabaya (East Java).³⁸

The main cause of splintering involving hardline factions within JI owes to their desire to plan attacks immediately, rather than adhere to the group's 'jihad later' strategy.³⁹ Whilst the pattern of splinterings in the past two decades has mainly been instigated by personnel of *Mantiqi* I and their close associates, the emergence of a splinter group from another military element (i.e. *Laskar Ightiyalat*) is a possibility going forward. In the absence of strong leadership, JI remains prone to splinterings of its hardline faction, a contingency that the JI founding fathers had not anticipated in the group's constitution, PUPJI.⁴⁰

Transformation: The Political Path

Over the past decade, JI has attempted to transform into a full hybrid militant organisation that comprises social, political and military wings. Whilst JI had incorporated both social (i.e. education and *dakwah*) and military wings since its establishment, it was only under Para's leadership that JI began showing interest in gaining political clout within society, as part of its long-term strategy to establish an Islamic state.⁴¹ In 2016, the group's *Tamkin Siyasi* (political consolidation) strategy was introduced as part of its bid to win the hearts and minds of Indonesian Muslims.⁴² This strategy mainly involves JI's attempts to infiltrate mainstream religious organisations, government institutions and national politics as a new tactic to achieve its ideological goals.⁴³

Dalliance with Democracy

In the past two decades, JI's stance toward participation in democracy has gradually evolved. Despite still regarding democratic elections as a manmade system in violation of Islam, under Para's leadership, JI personnel have participated in various political protests and campaigned for issues typically of concern to domestic and global Islamist interests. Members have also met with several parliamentary leaders.⁴⁴ The latter development is in line with the statement of JI's senior *Dewan Syuro* (Advisory Board) member Abu Rusydan, who said in 2015 that the *mujahidin* should forge connections with the national and regional parliaments, despite the latter being perceived as not adhering to *Sharia* (Islamic law).⁴⁵

Mass protests such as the "212 Movement" rallies⁴⁶ against the then Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was subsequently arrested and prosecuted, was also a game-changer for JI, given that it consolidated the growing political influence of the country's religious hardliners. In the lead-up to the 2019 General Election, JI began encouraging its members to vote in the election, with the aim that Indonesia would eventually be led by a new president and parliament members who would look after "Muslims' interests".⁴⁷ Previously, JI forbade its members to vote in general elections.⁴⁸

After the 2019 General Election, however, JI – similar to other Islamists in the country – was likely disappointed that the major opposition parties eventually joined the Jokowi administration, given that some perceive the current government as anti-Islamic. In addition, following the arrest of Para Wijayanto, Farid Ahmad Okbah (another member of JI's *Dewan Syuro* and a personal advisor to JI's *amir*), advised JI's caretaker leader Arif Siswanto to create a new association for JI members as a "solution for their security",⁴⁹ in a bid to prevent them from being arrested.

These developments may explain the move by Farid to establish and gain a leadership position in a new Islamist political party – so JI could indirectly control and direct the path of the party. Farid was involved in the establishment of the Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) Party⁵⁰ in November 2020, and served in the party's Consultative Council.⁵¹ Nonetheless, he failed to secure a leadership position in the party.⁵²

He then established Indonesia's People Dakwah Party (Partai Dakwah Rakyat Indonesia, or PDRI) in May 2021 – along with several other Islamist figures who left Masyumi – and chaired the party.⁵³ Besides PDRI, another JI member was also an administrator of the newly inaugurated Partai Ummat (Ummah Party)'s⁵⁴ Bengkulu Provincial branch.⁵⁵ Farid was arrested by the Indonesian authorities in November 2021 on charges of raising funds for JI.⁵⁶

These attempts to exert influence over a political party by securing a leadership position (in relation to the Masyumi party) or establishing a party itself (PDRI), marked the beginning of JI's transformation into a hybrid militant-political force. Nonetheless, unlike the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and

Hezbollah, both of which have managed to gain a significant number of parliamentary seats and some level of authority in Egypt and Lebanon respectively,⁵⁷ JI's political arm remains in its infancy. In addition, whilst it is too early to assess if Farid's arrest marks a premature end to JI's attempt to establish a political party, PDRI itself will face a significant barrier to contest in the 2024 General Election, since election laws require a new party to establish branches in all 34 provinces and 75 percent of all districts and municipalities in the country.⁵⁸

Infiltration of State Institutions and Mainstream Religious Groups

Under Para's leadership, JI also began to embed itself within mainstream socio-religious groups and state institutions, following the path of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah and Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh,⁵⁹ although seemingly on a lesser scale. This is a long-term strategy that aims to change the Indonesian democratic system into a *Sharia*-based one, and to influence the policies of the respective government agencies.⁶⁰ JI has also been preparing for a potential future military operation, and has assigned returning militarily skilled cadres from Syria to work in several strategic government institutions that shape the country's decision-making, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Supreme Court.⁶¹

At least 19 civil servants, eight police officers and five military officials with links to JI were arrested between 2010 and May 2022.⁶² JI's plan or efforts to infiltrate state institutions could mean it has partially departed from its rigorous recruitment process, which bans an individual whose family has ties to the police or military from becoming a member.⁶³ Moreover, it indicates that JI has stepped up recruitment in top universities in the country,⁶⁴ whose graduates are expected to fill strategic positions within key government agencies. Yet, while the actual number of JI personnel who have infiltrated state institutions is unknown because of the principle of *tandzim sirri* (being secretive or hiding their identity) exercised by JI members, the extent of JI's penetration into some state institutions is likely still insignificant compared to the now-disbanded Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI).⁶⁵

Additionally, JI appears to have infiltrated the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesia Ulema Council, or MUI), a strategic and influential semi-state agency that issues *fatwa* (religious edict), halal certifications and other legislation related to Islamic affairs⁶⁶ at both the central and local levels. In this attempt, JI has targeted the most strategic position within the agency, the *Fatwa* Commission, which issues *fatwa* that will likely be followed by Indonesian Muslims. Ahmad Zain An-Najah, another member of JI's Advisory Board, has served as a member of the MUI *Fatwa* Commission,⁶⁷ while in Bengkulu's MUI chapter, JI member CA (initials) assumed the position as head of the MUI *Fatwa* Commission. His deputy in MUI Bengkulu, named RH (initials), is another JI member as well as a member of the Partai Ummat.⁶⁸

It has ostensibly been easier for JI – whose traditional source of recruitment is from its *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) – to infiltrate the government's religious institutions, rather than the non-religious ones. While still small in numbers, the arrest of three JI clerics – Ahmad Zain, Anung Al-Hamat and Farid, the latter of whom is also a politician – in November 2021 illustrates that JI has already made some headway in infiltrating mainstream Muslim groups in the country.

The Social Path

Moving forward, it will remain a challenge for the Indonesian government to dismantle JI's social front (i.e. education and *dakwah*), which has been the main contributing factor in JI's resiliency through the decades. JI's social wing remains functional despite the decapitation of JI's central leadership and

military wing. The group's main source of recruitment – its 68 affiliated *pesantren* – is presently thriving and expanding. Some of JI's *pesantren* today have better infrastructure and higher student intakes than when they were first established decades ago.⁶⁹ JI's educational platform also now offers childcare services, whereas in the past it mostly offered only secondary school-level education and higher.⁷⁰ Graduates of JI's *pesantren* who become preachers also enjoy high social standing in Indonesia.⁷¹

It should also be noted that the prospect of a future “activation” of JI's *pesantren* resources to buffer the group's military front will partly depend on multiple factors, such as the direction set by JI's new *amir* and a possible “black swan” event.⁷² Preparations for such a scenario in the last decade were evident when JI selected its best *pesantren* graduates to be sent to Syria for military training and combat. JI's *pesantrens* and *dakwah* activities have served the group's long-term goal of securing community support and sympathy for the JI cause. Nonetheless, shutting down a JI *pesantren*, in a similar vein to the Malaysian government's move in 2001 against JI's Lukmanul Hakiem Pesantren in Ulu Tiram, Johor Bahru,⁷³ is politically unviable in the current Indonesian context.⁷⁴

Trajectorial Questions

Over the last two decades, it was JI's military wing that has differentiated the group from other Islamist organisations in the country, and defined JI as a terrorist organisation capable of wreaking havoc in the region. In this regard, the role of the post-Para Wijayanto leadership and its impact on JI splinters are factors which will bear on the threat posed by JI in the near future.

A key question relates to whether the next JI leader will revive the group's military wing, given the importance of militant jihad in PUPJI. Related to this is whether hardline factions within JI could go “rogue” and resort to violence in Indonesia. Such concerns stem primarily from the vulnerability that has historically plagued the group in the absence of an *amir* (as is the case currently) or during the tenure of a less effective leader, a situation the group faced in 2002-2008. At present, it is unclear when the new JI *amir* will be selected. The series of arrests faced by the group in recent years has delayed the appointment of a new JI *amir* because *Lajnah Ihtiyari Lisnabil Amir* (LILA) – a JI committee comprising the group's senior figures that should have selected a new leader upon Para's arrest – has also been dismantled.⁷⁵

Similarly, it remains to be seen if the new *amir* will persist with JI's venture into national and regional politics or if the latter will be a short-lived. JI's experiment following Farid's arrest, is difficult to assess due to JI's practice of *tandzim sirri*. A potential scenario wherein the new JI *amir* decides to completely abandon its military project, especially in the absence of a black swan event, cannot be discounted at this stage. This means that JI would no longer be a group with a military front as envisioned in its PUPJI. If this is the case, JI may not constitute a direct security threat to Indonesia, although it will still pose social and political risks. Even without a military arm, JI's structured indoctrination and ideology of exclusivity, intolerance and hatred can gradually damage the fabric of Indonesian society.

Conclusion

Two decades on from the deadly Bali attacks, JI has not only survived, but to some extent also thrived in Indonesia. The group has managed to retain its military front by providing centralised training for members in Indonesia and abroad. It has also maintained a special military unit that could be operationally deployed if required. In the absence of strong leadership, the splintering of JI and the potential for some factions to adopt violence again in the future will be key security threats faced by the Indonesian authorities. This is especially given JI's status as the Islamist militant group with

arguably the greatest military capability in the country. If unchallenged, this latter strength may only be supplemented over the long term by JI's continued focus on *dakwah* and recent forays into national politics and Islamist organisations.

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⁴ The Poso operation was sanctioned by JI's central leadership. Attacks in Poso included the beheading of a village chief in 2004 and three Christian schoolgirls in 2005. See Muhammad Tito Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies: The Case of al-Jamaah al-Islamiyah and Radicalisation of the Poso Conflict 2000-2007* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2014).

⁵ JI in Singapore was neutered earlier in December 2001. JI in Malaysia, including its school Lukmanul Hakim in Johor, was also clamped down on in 2001. In the Philippines, JI's Hudaibiyah military training camp was dismantled in 2000. See "Some still Roam Free," *Tempo*, iv/6 (14-20 October 2003) [Bali Bombing: One Year On]; Ministry of Home Affairs Singapore, *The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and The Threat of Terrorism*.

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¹⁰ Sylvia Laksmi, "Revisiting Indonesian Counterterrorism Strategies: Success and Challenges," *Asialink*, November 5, 2021, <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/revisiting-indonesian-counterterrorism-strategies-success-and-challenges>.

¹¹ According to the police, this figure spans the period from the October 2002 Bali bombings to October 2021, and continues to grow. See Ronna Nirmala, "Indonesia: Jemaah Militants Now Infiltrating Political Parties," *Benar News*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/indonesia-says-jemaah-militants-now-infiltrating-political-parties-02182022133202.html>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ As stated in PUPJI, JI is a *jama'ah* (the word literally translates to congregation, but in this context, it means a group) that aims to establish a *daulah* (state) and eventually a caliphate. See *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiah (PUPJI)*, *Majlis Qiyadah Markaziyah Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiah* (Headquarter of Central Leadership of JI, May 30, 1996).

¹⁴ A hybrid terrorist organisation consists of three pillars – social, political and military wings. See Eitan Azani, "The Hybrid Terrorist Organization: Hezbollah as a Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 36, No. 11 (2013), pp. 899-916, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.832113>.

¹⁵ Around 197 JI personnel (at the time under the Darul Islam banner) underwent centralised ideological and military training in Camp Saddah along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border from 1985 to 1995. See PUPJI; Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies*.

¹⁶ For instance, between 2012-2018, JI allocated up to Rp 120-150 million (around USD 7,700-10,500) annually for members' centralised training prior to their deployment to Syria. Additionally, there was a cost to sending JI's cadres to Syria and bringing them back to Indonesia, which amounted to Rp 400 million (around USD 28,000). See Verdict of Sujadi Abdurrahman, East Jakarta District Court, 2020, No. 307/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt. Tim. Sujadi was the treasurer of JI.

¹⁷ JI's Afghanistan alumni then transferred their military skills to 111 JI members at JI's own camp, Camp Hudaibiyah, located in the larger Camp Abu Bakar that belonged to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The project was largely stalled when the Philippines army attacked Camp Abu Bakar in 2000. Even when JI in Indonesia suffered its first series of crackdowns from 2002 to 2005, JI's leadership continued to send JI cadres to Mindanao for training until 2007. Later, under Para Wijayanto's leadership, JI continued to send stipends to the remaining cadres still training in Mindanao. See Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies*; "Abu Dujana: Zarkasih Bukan Amir JI," *Kompas*, February 4, 2008, <https://money.kompas.com/read/2008/02/04/15435393/index.html>; Verdict of Para Wijayanto, East Jakarta District Court, 2020, No. 308/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt. Tim.

¹⁸ JI closed the training camp after the conflict subsided and the government restored security in the islands. There were bloody sectarian conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon, the capital city of the Maluku Islands at the end of the 1990s. It was estimated that around 200 people, comprising Maluku residents and Muslims from outside Maluku, were trained by JI's Afghanistan and Mindanao alumni. See Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies*.

¹⁹ Communal conflicts between Muslims and Christians also occurred in Poso from 1998 to 2002. JI conducted paramilitary training for the local Poso residents. JI's commitment to *i'dad* was reflected in the work of *Mantiqi* (JI's territorial command) III back then, which covered East Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Sabah and Mindanao, and was known as the "training" division. See Karnavian, *Explaining Islamist Insurgencies*; International Crisis Group, "Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous," *Asia Report* No. 63 (August 26, 2003), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/jemaah-islamiyah-south-east-asia-damaged-still-dangerous>.

²⁰ *Sasana* literally means a venue for the boxing sport.

²¹ V. Arianti and Nodirbek Soliev, "The Pro-Al Qaeda Indonesian Connection with HTS in Syria: Security Implications," *Middle East Institute*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/pro-al-qaeda-indonesian-connection-hts-syria-security-implications>; Verdict of Azi Maula Firdaus, East Jakarta District Court, 2020, No. 61/Pid/Sus/2020/PN Jkt. Tim. Azi Maula Firdaus is a JI member who received military training in Syria in 2013.

²² V. Arianti and Nodirbek Soliev, "The Pro-Al Qaeda Indonesian Connection."

²³ Institute for the Policy Analysis of Conflict, "The Impact of the Taliban Victory on Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah," *IPAC Report* No. 73 (2021), http://cdn.understandingconflict.org/file/2021/09/IPAC_Report_73_JI.pdf.

²⁴ PUPJI; Verdict of Para Wijayanto; Verdict of Joko Priyono alias Karso, East Jakarta District Court, 2020, No. 47/Pid.Sus/2020/PN Jkt. Tim. Joko Priyono, alias Karso, is a veteran JI administrator in charge of *Sasana*.

²⁵ Led by Zulkarnaen, the team surveilled several shopping malls in Jakarta in terms of their construction, security and escape routes, and also observed the malls' occupants and visitors.

²⁶ They were the Christmas Eve bombings, the Philippines Ambassador Residence bombing and the Atrium Mall bombing, and eventually the 2002 Bali bombings. See Verdict of Arif Sunarso alias Zulkarnaen, East Jakarta District Court, 2022, No. 759/Pid.Sus/2021/PN. Jkt. Tim.

²⁷ "The General of Suicide Bombers," *Tempo*, iv/6 (14-20 October 2003) [Bali Bombing: One Year On].

²⁸ Arianti and Soliev, "The Pro-Al Qaeda Indonesian Connection."

²⁹ These could include, for example, assassination plots targeting specific individuals. Such tactics, it was believed, would reduce the probability of mass casualties, as seen in some previous bomb attacks, which some JI administrators had criticised internally given they could erode community support for the group. See Verdict of Para Wijayanto.

³⁰ Verdict of Para Wijayanto; Verdict of Arif Sunarso alias Zulkarnaen.

³¹ Solahudin, *Nili Sampai JI: Salafy Jihadisme di Indonesia* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2011), pp. 246, 254.

³² Ministry of Home Affairs Singapore, "The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and The Threat of Terrorism."

³³ International Crisis Group, "Terrorism in Indonesia: Noordin's Network," *Asia Report* No. 114 (May 5, 2016), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/terrorism-indonesia-noordin-s-networks>.

³⁴ In 2009, after serving his sentence, Fahim met with Para Wijayanto. The latter asked Fahim to give sermons to JI members and to evaluate JI in order to save the group, as many of its members had been arrested. In 2012, Para assigned Fahim to head JI's Forum Komunikasi Pondok Pesantren (FKPP) division, which oversaw the group's *pesantrens*. Fahim was removed from this position in 2013 due to his "deviant" recruitment method, which was deemed "instant" according to JI's standards. It was only in 2017 that Para summoned Fahim and questioned the latter's method of recruitment. Fahim convinced Para that his recruitment method remained aligned with the JI way and assured that the quality and loyalty of the cadres he recruited were similar to other JI cadres inducted via the longer, traditional route. Para then gave what Fahim perceived as a "blanket" cheque to have his own *jamaah* and to receive pledges of allegiance. Members of *Jamaah Iqomatuddin* pledged allegiance to JI via Fahim. See Verdict of Usman bin Sef alias Fahim, West Jakarta District Court, 2021, No. 950/Pid.Sus/2021/PN. Jkt. Brt.

³⁵ A prospective JI member needs to undergo four stages of induction prior to formally being acknowledged as a member. The four stages are: participating in JI's *tabligh* (public sermons on general Islamic topics); *taklim* (closed-door religious study sessions during which JI's ideology is introduced); *tarbiyah* (more in-depth topics on JI ideology are covered, and prospective members' commitment is also assessed); and *tamhiz* (selection, including a background check and an assessment of a candidate's loyalty to JI, prior to becoming a member).

³⁶ Verdict of Usman bin Sef alias Fahim.

³⁷ "Densus 88: Kelompok Teroris JI Siapkan Serangan Baru," *Damailah Indonesiaku*, March 18, 2021, <https://damailahindonesiaku.com/densus-88-kelompok-teroris-ji-siapkan-rencana-serangan-baru.html>.

³⁸ V. Arianti and Ulta Levenia, "Jemaah Islamiyah on the Brink of Splintering?" *Indonesia at Melbourne*, November 2, 2020, <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/jemaah-islamiyah-on-the-brink-of-splintering/>.

³⁹ Ng Jun Sen, "The Big Read: Jemaah Islamiyah Emerges From the Shadow, Playing the Long Game," *Channel News Asia*, December 13, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/jemaah-islamiyah-terrorist-group-indonesia-isd-20th-anniversary-al-qaeda-2373556>.

⁴⁰ Pavlova, "From Counter-Society to Counter-State."

⁴¹ "In Tactical Shift, Jemaah Islamiyah Militants Infiltrate Mainstream Islamic Groups, Politics," *The Star*, November 22, 2021, <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/11/22/in-tactical-shift-jemaah-islamiyah-militants-infiltrate-mainstream-islamic-groups-politics>.

⁴² Arianti, "Jemaah Islamiyah's Hierarchical Structure."

⁴³ Another key component in *Tamkin Siyasi* is the *naqib* programme, which aims to court community leaders (especially Islamic group leaders) so they will sympathise with JI's cause. JI has a specific division that is in charge of this programme. See Verdict of Para Wijayanto.

- ⁴⁴ The meeting took place in 2015 to seek support for their “humanitarian” activities in Syria. See “Fadli Zon Buka Suara usai Dikaitkan dengan HASI Kelompok Teroris,” *CNN Indonesia*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20220316135612-32-772054/fadli-zon-buka-suara-usai-dikaitkan-dengan-hasi-kelompok-teroris>.
- ⁴⁵ V. Arianti and Unaesah Rahmah, “The Emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah’s Political Front,” *TODAY*, December 1, 2021, <https://www.todayonline.com/commentary/emergence-jemaah-islamiyahs-political-front>.
- ⁴⁶ The rallies brought about the defeat of the then incumbent Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known as Ahok – who was accused of blasphemy – in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election.
- ⁴⁷ Arianti and Rahmah, “The Emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah’s Political Front.”
- ⁴⁸ Institute for the Policy Analysis of Conflict, “The Re-Emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah,” *IPAC Report No. 36* (2017), http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2017/04/IPAC_Report_36.pdf.
- ⁴⁹ This is according to a police statement, which was rebutted by PDRI. Farid remains the chairman of PDRI, despite his status as a terrorist suspect, until his verdict is out. See Adhyasta Dirgantara, “Polri Sebut Farid Okbah Bentuk Partai Dakwah Sebagai Solusi Lindungi Ji,” *Detik News*, November 16, 2021, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5814058/polri-sebut-farid-okbah-bentuk-partai-dakwah-sebagai-solusi-lindungi-ji>; Budi Sam Law Malau, “PDRI Bantah Disusupi Ji, Akan Laporkan Pemfitnah Baik dari Kalangan Polisi dan Warga Sipil,” *Warta Kota*, November 22, 2021, <https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/2021/11/22/pdri-bantah-disusupi-ji-akan-laporkan-pemfitnah-baik-dari-kalangan-polisi-dan-warga-sipil?page=all>; Imam Hamdi, “Partai Dakwah Tetap Pertahankan Farid Okbah Sebagai Ketua Umum,” *Tempo*, December 3, 2021, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1535257/partai-dakwah-tetap-pertahankan-farid-okbah-sebagai-ketua-umum>.
- ⁵⁰ This new Masyumi Party (also known as Masyumi Reborn) claims itself as the successor of the Masyumi Party that managed to gain the second position in the 1955 General Election. The original Masyumi Party was banned by President Sukarno in 1959 and subsequently by President Suharto. Masyumi proposed *Sharia* as the foundation of the Indonesian state. See Alexander Raymond Arifianto, “Indonesia’s New Parties: Evolving Conservative Landscape?” *RSIS Commentary No. 198* (2020), <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/indonesias-new-parties-evolving-conservative-landscape/#.YpZGKi8RrQ0>.
- ⁵¹ Susunan Pengurus PPII Masyumi Terbentuk, Ustaz Farid Okbah Jadi Ketum,” *Suara Islam*, February 19, 2021, <https://suaraislam.id/susunan-pengurus-ppii-masyumi-terbentuk-ustaz-farid-okbah-jadi-ketum/>; “Ahmad Yani Terpilih Sebagai Ketua Umum Partai Masyumi,” *CNN Indonesia*, March 30, 2021, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210330070535-32-623654/ahmad-yani-terpilih-sebagai-ketua-umum-partai-masyumi>.
- ⁵² Petrik Matanasi, “Pemilu 1955: Saling Tuduh Curang Antara PNI dan Masyumi,” *Tirto.id*, September 29, 2018, <https://tirto.id/pemilu-1955-saling-tuduh-curang-antara-pni-dan-masyumi-c26j>; Muhammad Ibrahim, “Profil Ustadz Farid Okbah yang Ditangkap Densus 88 Sempat Nasihati Jokowi Soal 5 Hal,” *GalaJabar*, November 18, 2021, <https://galajabar.pikiran-rakyat.com/nasional/pr-1083041584/profil-ustadz-farid-okbah-yang-ditangkap-densus-88-sempat-nasihati-jokowi-soal-5-hal>.
- ⁵³ Friski Riana, “Densus 88 Tangkap Farid Okbah Ketua Umum Partai Dakwah Rakyat Indonesia,” *Tempo*, November 16, 2021, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1529101/densus-88-tangkap-farid-okbah-ketua-umum-partai-dakwah-rakyat-indonesia/>.
- ⁵⁴ Partai Ummat is a splinter of the National Mandate Party (PAN), a Muhammadiyah-based party. Founded in October 2020, Partai Ummat’s orientation is Islamist, compared to PAN which is more nationalist. Muhammadiyah is the second largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia. See Arifianto, “Indonesia’s New Parties: Evolving Conservative Landscape?”; Dita Angga Rusiana, “Partai Ummat dan PAN Bakal Berebut Suara Muhammadiyah,” *Sindo News*, August 29, 2021, <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/525212/12/partai-ummat-dan-pan-bakal-berebut-suara-muhammadiyah-1630195728>.
- ⁵⁵ “Kian Panjang Daftar Agen Jamaah Islamiyah yang Susupi Lembaga Publik,” *Detik News*, February 15, 2022, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5943090/kian-panjang-daftar-agen-jamaah-islamiyah-yang-susupi-lembaga-publik>.
- ⁵⁶ Ahmad Nuril Fahmi, “Polri: Farid Ahmad Okbah Dkk Diguna Danai Danai Teroris,” *Times Indonesia*, November 20, 2021, <https://www.timesindonesia.co.id/read/news/382757/polri-farid-ahmad-okbah-dkk-diduga-danai-teroris>.

- ⁵⁷ In 2012, a Muslim Brotherhood-led coalition secured 47% of Egypt's parliamentary seats. In the same year, Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi won the Egyptian presidential election, but was later overthrown in 2014. Meanwhile, a Hezbollah-led coalition formed a majority in the Lebanese parliament in 2018-2022. See, for instance, David D. Kirkpatrick, "Islamists Win 70% of Seats in the Egyptian Parliament," *The New York Times*, January 21, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/world/middleeast/muslim-brotherhood-wins-47-of-egypt-assembly-seats.html>; "Hezbollah and Its Allies Lose Their Majority in Lebanon's Parliament," *NPR*, May 17, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/17/1099451406/hezbollah-loses-majority-in-lebanon-parliament>.
- ⁵⁸ Arianti and Rahmah, "The Emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah's Political Front."
- ⁵⁹ Mounir Rabih, "How Hezbollah Infiltrated the Lebanese State – Part I of II," *L'Orient Today*, June 28, 2021, <https://today.lorientjour.com/article/1266603/how-hezbollah-infiltrated-the-lebanese-state.html>; "Egypt Passes Law Expanding Right to Sack Civil Servants with Suspected Links to Muslim Brotherhood," *Haaretz*, July 12, 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/egypt/2021-07-12/ty-article/egypt-passes-law-allowing-government-to-purify-itself-from-muslim-brotherhood/0000017f-dc44-d856-a37f-fdc4c6c30000>; Iftekharul Bashar, "The Challenge of Radicalisation: Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh," *RSIS Commentary* No. 23 (2012), https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/1685-the-challenge-of-radicalisation/#.Yp7h_i8RpmA.
- ⁶⁰ Verdict of Joko Priyono alias Karso; Detik News, "Kian Panjang Daftar Agen Jamaah Islamiyah yang Susupi Lembaga Publik."
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² The figures relate to the period between 2010 and November 2021. Another civil servant in Tangerang Regency, a suburb of Jakarta, was arrested in March 2022. See Nivell Rayda, "Jemaah Islamiyah Infiltrating Indonesian Religious, Civic Institutions: Senior Counterterror Official," *Channel News Asia*, November 23, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/jemaah-islamiyah-infiltrating-indonesian-institutions-terror-group-2332941>.
- ⁶³ Verdict of Sujadi Abdurrahman.
- ⁶⁴ Institute for the Policy Analysis of Conflict, "The Re-Emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah."
- ⁶⁵ Ihsanuddin, "Menpan-RB Akan Beri Sanksi PNS Anggota HTI," *Kompas*, July 24, 2017, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/07/24/14003071/menpan-rb-akan-beri-sanksi-pns-anggota-hti>; Fabian Januarius Kuwado, "Mendagri Minta PNS yang Kader HTI Mundur dari Jabatannya", *Kompas*, July 24, 2017, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/07/24/11415241/mendagri-minta-pns-yang-kader-hti-mundur-dari-jabatannya>.
- ⁶⁶ Alexander R. Arifianto, "Indonesia Ulema Council Edges Closer to the Centre of Power," *East Asia Forum*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/12/08/indonesian-ulema-council-edges-closer-to-the-centre-of-power/>.
- ⁶⁷ Bayu Nugraha, "5 Hal Seputar Ahmad Zain An Najah Anggota MUI yang Ditangkap Densus," *Viva News*, November 18, 2021, <https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/1424300-5-hal-seputar-ahmad-zain-an-najah-anggota-mui-yang-ditangkap-densus>.
- ⁶⁸ Detik News, "Kian Panjang Daftar Agen Jamaah Islamiyah yang Susupi Lembaga Publik."
- ⁶⁹ See, for instance, "Dituding Radikal oleh BNPT, Ponpes Darusy Syahadah Terus Berkembang dan Santrinya Ribuan Orang," *Panjimas*, February 5, 2016, <https://www.panjimas.com/news/2016/02/05/dituding-radikal-oleh-bnpt-ponpes-darusy-syahadah-terus-berkembang-dan-santrinya-ribuan-orangponpes-darusy-syahadah-sangat-diterima-masyarakat/>.
- ⁷⁰ Noor Huda Ismail. "Al Jamaah Al Islamiyah Dahulu, Kini dan Dimasa Mendatang," Diskusi Publik Daring, *Kajian Terorisme SKSG UI Official*, YouTube video, October 12, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NkqLHY04E>.
- ⁷¹ Noor Huda Ismail, "Navigating Pro-JI Pesantrens," *RSIS Commentary* No. 40 (2022), <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/navigating-pro-ji-pesantrens/#.Yp76eS8RpmA>.
- ⁷² Examples of past "black swan" events were the Ambon and Poso religious communal conflicts between Muslims and Christians in the late 1990s and early 2000s; the 212 rallies (domestic event); and the Syrian war (international event).
- ⁷³ International Crisis Group, "Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous."
- ⁷⁴ The National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) apologised to MUI for stating that there are 198 *pesantren* affiliated to terrorist networks (68 of which are affiliated to JI). Such a statement was perceived as Islamophobic and was deemed to have tarnished the reputation of *pesantren* – a respected educational institution that has been around for centuries since the early days of the spread of Islam in

Indonesia. The government could arrest the leader of a JI-linked *pesantren*, but dissolving a *pesantren* is another issue altogether. See Marselinus Gual, “BNPT Ungkap Ponpes dan Rumah Singgah yang Terafiliasi dengan Jaringan Teroris,” *Alinea.id*, January 25, 2022, <https://www.alinea.id/nasional/bnpt-ungkap-ponpes-dan-rumah-singgah-yang-terafiliasi-jaringan-teroris-b2fd29APy>; “BNPT Minta Maaf: MUI Singgung Kebijakan Terkesan Islamofobia,” *CNN Indonesia*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20220204102643-20-754935/bnpt-minta-maaf-mui-singgung-kebijakan-terkesan-islamofobia>; Noor Huda Ismail, “Navigating Pro-JI Pesantrens.”

⁷⁵ LILA was led by Arif Siswanto (arrested in 2020). Another member of LILA who was arrested was Abu Rusydan (arrested in 2021). See Rakhmad Hidayatulloh Permana, “Ditangkap Densus, Ini Jejak Terduga Teroris Abu Rusydan Dewan Syuro JI,” *Detik News*, September 12, 2021, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5720295/ditangkap-densus-ini-jejak-terduga-teroris-abu-rusydan-dewan-syuro-ji>; “Ini Peranan Pentolan Kelompok Teroris JI Abu Rusydan Mantan Napiter yang Sembunyikan Pelaku Bom Natal”, *Radar Tegal*, September 15, 2021, <https://radartegal.disway.id/read/553469/ini-peranan-pentolan-kelompok-teroris-ji-abu-rusydan-mantan-napiter-yang-sem-bunyikan-pelaku-bom-natal>.

Change, Continuity and Trajectories: Assessing Southeast Asian Terrorists' Attack Tactics and Trends Post-Bali Bombings

Kenneth Yeo and Unaesah Rahmah

Since the 2002 Bali bombings, Southeast Asian militants' tactics have experienced both transformation and continuity. Militant groups have used bombs to inflict heavy casualties and firearms to defend territory. At the same time, stabbings have also become more prevalent. In recent years, the increased diversification of terrorist tactics, illustrated by women and children's involvement in suicide bombings in the Philippines and Indonesia, has accrued to factors such as intensified counter-terrorism operations, the availability of weapons suppliers and tradecraft manuals online, and the influence of Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Islamic State (IS) Central. Going forward, terrorists will continuously adapt their modus operandi amidst evolving operational environments.

Introduction

The 2002 Bali bombings were one of Southeast Asia's earliest and most devastating terrorist attacks. Since the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)-linked suicide attacks, which killed around 202 people and injured 209 others, security authorities and various terrorist groups in Southeast Asia have evolved and upgraded their operational capabilities. This study revisits the evolution of Southeast Asian terrorist groups' modus operandi and the attendant counter-terrorism (CT) responses over the past two decades.¹

In the aftermath of the Bali bombings, JI continued to play a pivotal role in shaping the jihadist landscape in the region up until the late 2000s.² JI operatives leveraged networks formed during their stints as Afghan *mujahideens*³ to establish long-term ties with Al-Qaeda and regional militant groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).⁴ From the mid-2010s onwards, the rapid emergence of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in 2014 re-energised violent extremism in the region.

However, widespread clampdowns in recent years have led to the suppression or splintering of JI and other IS-linked organisations. This has resulted in changing trends and shifts in the attack tactics of jihadist groups in Southeast Asia.

Explosives and Bomb Plots

The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is most frequent in the Southeast Asian militant landscape. Before IS' emergence, IEDs were often deployed against Western targets. Consistent with AQ's narrative of the time, IED attacks aimed to evict "Western influence" from Muslim lands, including Indonesia. As shown in Table 1, IED attacks in the region have mostly been conducted at high-traffic tourist areas, or places with Western diplomatic representation.

Table 1: Terrorist Plots and Attacks Between 2000-2009

DATE	INCIDENT	COUNTRY	PRIMARY TARGET(S)	KILLED	WOUNDED
30 December 2000	Rizal Day bombing	Philippines	Diplomats, Tourists	22	~100
December 2001	Singapore Embassy plot	Singapore	Diplomats	Foiled	
12 August 2002	Bali bombing	Indonesia	Tourists	202	209
5 August 2003	Jakarta bombing	Indonesia	Tourists	12	150
27 February 2004	Super Ferry 14 bombing	Philippines	Tourists	116	Unknown
9 September 2004	Australian Embassy bombing	Indonesia	Diplomats	10	100
1 October 2005	Bali bombing	Indonesia	Tourists	26	102
17 July 2009	Jakarta bombing	Indonesia	Tourists	9	53

With the pivot from JI to IS in Southeast Asia since the early 2010s, attack targets and tactics have also evolved. For instance, bomb plots have become more frequent and indiscriminate, while also less sophisticated and lethal. Figure 1 plots the number of IED attacks and attempts from 2014 to 2021, based on the Southeast Asia Militant Atlas (SEAMA) database.⁵

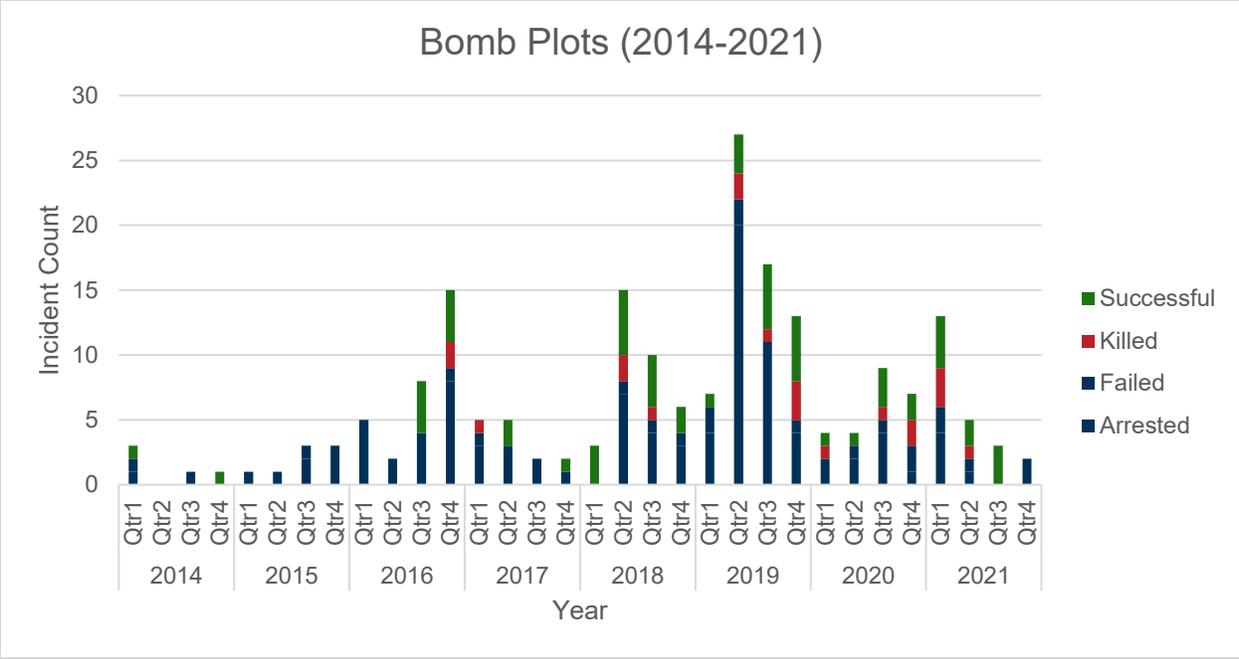


Figure 1: Bomb Plots in Southeast Asia (2014-2021)

According to Figure 1, since 2014, most of the bombings in Southeast Asia have been foiled by the authorities. Only 28.22 percent (57 incidents) of attempted bomb plots were successful between 2014 and 2021. Most bomb plots were foiled through the arrests (51.98 percent) and killings (9.90 percent) of would-be perpetrators. As many as 20 attacks (9.90 percent) are categorised as “Failed” attacks, as the only casualties were the perpetrators themselves. From the graph above, it can be observed that bombings spiked exponentially in the second quarter of 2019 with a total of 27 incidents, but only 3 successful attacks were recorded.

IEDs deployed by terrorists have mostly used ammonium nitrate as the primary charge.⁶ The 2018 Lamitan attack in the Philippines highlighted a potential innovation in ammonium nitrate bombs, as ASG used a 10-seater van to deploy the bomb and the vehicle’s fuel for its detonation. Among JI militants in Indonesia, TNT (trinitrotoluene) extracted from potassium chlorate or black powder was previously the primary choice of explosive.

However, following the 2003 J.W. Marriott hotel bombing, the authorities enhanced surveillance of the procurement of black powder. Triacetone triperoxide (TATP) then emerged as the substitute to TNT and gunpowder.⁷

TATP was first used in a terrorist attack in Southeast Asia on 28 October 2015 in Indonesia.⁸ The IS-inspired attacker detonated a bomb at the Alam Sutera Mall in Tangerang.⁹ Since then, numerous IS-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) members have been arrested for attempting to make TATP. TATP was also used in the 2016 Movida Nightclub bombing in Malaysia and the 2018 Surabaya Church bombings in Indonesia. Today, TATP is still widely used by IS-linked groups in Indonesia, but has yet to be deployed in the Philippines.

Gunfights and Territorial Control

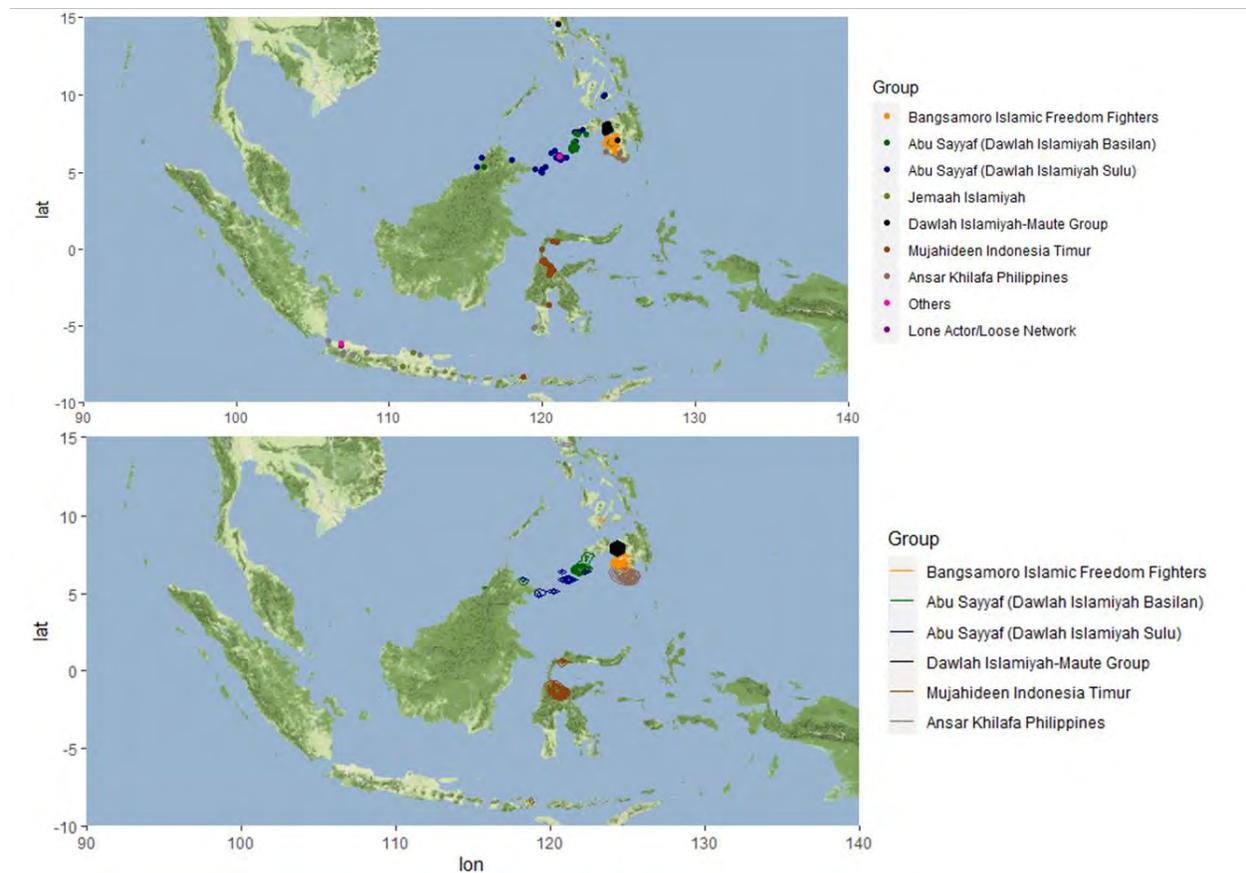
Guns appear to be militants’ preferred weapon for defending their territorial strongholds. This trend is consistent across time. From JI’s involvement in Poso (2003-2008), to the long-running Mindanao

insurgency (1969 to present), guns have been used to hold territory. There have also been instances of guns being used outside territorial strongholds.¹⁰

In some instances, access to firearms has boosted the morale of terrorist cells when motivation might have waned. This was the case for JI's Palembang group.¹¹ Based on a May 2009 report by the International Crisis Group, a JI cell in Palembang, South Sumatra, had been unmotivated to conduct attacks due to repeated failed attempts.¹² However, access to guns would prove to be an important factor in the group later mounting a series of attacks, including the killing of a Christian teacher.¹³ Another incident involving the use of guns was the January 2016 attack at the Sarinah Mall and a Starbucks coffee shop in Jakarta.¹⁴

Arguably, the defensive properties of firearms have compelled terrorists to use them to defend territory.¹⁵ Figure 2 (from the SEAMA database) shows that guns were used almost exclusively in territorial strongholds between 2014 and 2021.¹⁶ The hotspot analysis conducted by the authors aggregates the areas where gunfights occurred and highlights the territorial strongholds of each terrorist group. Essentially, it was found that terrorist groups with greater access to automatic firearms are more likely to hold their territory.

Use of Guns in Southeast Asia (2014-2021)



Country	Territory	Group
Philippines	Lanao, North Mindanao	Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group
Philippines	Maguindanao, Central Mindanao	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
Philippines	SocSarGen, South Mindanao	Ansar Khilafa Philippines
Philippines	Basilan, West Mindanao	Abu Sayyaf (Dawlah Islamiyah Basilan)
Philippines	Sulu, West Mindanao	Abu Sayyaf (Dawlah Islamiyah Sulu)
Indonesia	Poso, Central Sulawesi	Mujahideen Indonesia Timur

Figure 2: Guns in Southeast Asia (top), Hotspot Analysis (middle) and Territory-Terrorist Nexus (bottom)

Bladed Weapons

Stabbing and slashing attacks have been witnessed in Indonesia, and were mainly perpetrated by IS-linked networks. Between 2014 to 2021, 24 incidents in Indonesia involving the use of sharp weapons, such as machetes, swords and knives, were recorded. Comparatively, JI has only conducted five attacks using sharp weapons since its inception. The use of such weapons in attacks is coherent with IS' appeal for immediate jihad. In its propaganda, IS argues that anyone can conduct jihad with household objects.¹⁷ Besides conventional bladed weapons, IS-influenced perpetrators have used common household items like scissors to stab their victims.

Two incidents in recent years illustrate this trend. In 2018, two teenage sisters, Dita Siska Millenia and Siska Nur Azizah, were arrested for planning to stab police officers with scissors.¹⁸ However, the first successful attack involving the use of sharp objects was the stabbing of Indonesia's then Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Wiranto, in October 2019. The couple involved, Syahril Alamsyah and Fitri Andriana, stabbed the Minister with a pair of scissors and a kitchen knife after he had alighted from his vehicle en route to an event.¹⁹ Besides bladed ambushes, IS affiliates have also conducted beheadings. Notably, the Abu Sayyaf (Dawlah Islamiyah Sulu) in the Philippines and Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) in Indonesia have kidnapped and beheaded civilians when their ransom demands were not met.

Familial Terrorism

Families have played an important role in facilitating terrorism in the Southeast Asian context. Traditionally, terrorism has been perceived as a masculine endeavour, and women have played nurturing roles in threat groups. Female jihadists from JI had, for example, served as couriers during the Maluku and Poso conflicts from 1998 to 2002.²⁰ But JI's Women Wing also participated in *dakwah* (Islamic preaching),²¹ showing that women also played a strategic role in education and recruitment. Moreover, women hold an important position in maintaining a movement's secrecy. Many wives of JI members have taken steps to hide their husbands, other operatives and weapons from law enforcement.²²

Yet, since IS began to dominate the Southeast Asian threat landscape from the mid-2010s onwards, more militant jihadist women have transcended their traditional roles. Today, female IS supporters are more actively engaged as enablers of terrorism via recruitment and fund-raising activities. Ika Puspitasari is an example of a female recruiter, financier and (would-be) perpetrator. She recruited her husband, Zaenal Akbar, to coordinate an attack in Indonesia,²³ and contributed Rp 8 million (US\$ 600) to fund it. After being deported from Hong Kong, where she had been employed, she also planned

to carry out a suicide bombing in Bali in 2016.²⁴ Other examples include Rafiq Hanum, the wife of Bahrun Naim, who recruited two Indonesian males to migrate to Syria;²⁵ and Tutin Sugiharti, a fundraiser who collected money to support the wives and children of pro-IS inmates in Indonesia.²⁶

Moreover, IS female militant jihadists have also engaged in operational roles such as suicide bombers and knife attackers.²⁷ This includes the wives of MIT militants, who participated in combat training, such as shooting practice and physical conditioning, in the Poso jungle in preparation for active combat.²⁸ Women have also featured as attack planners. In 2016, Dian Yuli Novi plotted a suicide attack at the Indonesian Presidential Palace in Jakarta.²⁹ The Wiranto stabbing in 2019 also featured a female assailant, the then 21-year-old Fitri Andriana.

An additional concern has been the mobilisation of entire families for terrorist attacks. Some Southeast Asian militants who made *hijrah* (migration) to Iraq and Syria brought their families, including their children, along with them. Some of these children were later deployed as child suicide bombers on the Syrian battlefield at the instruction of their parents.³⁰ These included the sons of current and former JI members, Imam Samudra and Syaiful Anam, respectively.³¹

Chemical, Biological and Radiological Weapons

There have been some attempts at tactical innovation by regional terrorists, including developing Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) capabilities. Malaysian national and founding member of JI, Yazid Sufaat, attempted to cultivate anthrax³² for AQ in 2001.³³ While it is unclear if Yazid planned to release anthrax in Southeast Asia, his biochemistry background meant he was able to leverage his networks and resources to acquire ammonium nitrate for Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi, JI's expert bomb-maker.³⁴

While pro-IS groups have yet to develop operational CBR weapons, they have expressed interest in exploring alternative weaponry. This is evinced by a 2015 plot by Indonesian returnees from Syria who attempted to detonate a chlorine bomb;³⁵ the possession of a radiological dispersal device with Uranium-233 by a JAD cell in Bandung in 2017;³⁶ and a JAD-linked suicide plot in 2019 involving the use of a bomb containing abrin poison.³⁷

Overall, unlike JI, pro-IS militants in Southeast Asia seem to prefer ad hoc, impromptu attacks over large-scale operations with detailed drawer plans. These militants also appear to be less adept in their tactical prowess (multi-phase attack planning, bomb-making, CBR capabilities etc.), and more interested in overwhelming the authorities with frequent but ill-planned attacks.

Vehicle Ramming and Drones

Vehicle-ramming and drone attacks are another tactic of concern. While Southeast Asian states have yet to encounter a vehicle-ramming incident involving civilians, there have been cases of car and motorcycle bomb plots. A potential explanation for the absence of vehicle-ramming incidents may be the traffic congestion that bedevils many high-density cities in Southeast Asia, which may render such attacks harder to pull off or result in failed plots being disguised as traffic accidents.

However, terrorists in the region have attempted to use drones on two occasions. The first case involved a Malaysian factory worker, Mohammad Firdaus Abdullah. In 2016, he suggested flying an IED-laden drone over the Malaysian Police Headquarters in Bukit Aman and a Freemason Lodge in Bukit Jalil.³⁸ Drones were also used for surveillance. During the 2017 Marawi Siege, IS militants had piloted a commercial quadcopter to survey the battlefield.³⁹ Despite the infrequent use of drones thus far, it is likely that militants will pounce on the technology whenever the opportunity arises.

Future Trajectories

Overall, terrorist activities have largely declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the SEAMA database as reflected in Figure 3, the frequency of violent terrorist activities increased consistently from 2014 to 2019, but there was a steep drop in the first quarter of 2020. This trend was followed by high rates of arrests of and surrenders by militants in both Indonesia and the Philippines.⁴⁰ The authorities' ability to conduct effective counter-terrorism has arguably improved during the global pandemic.

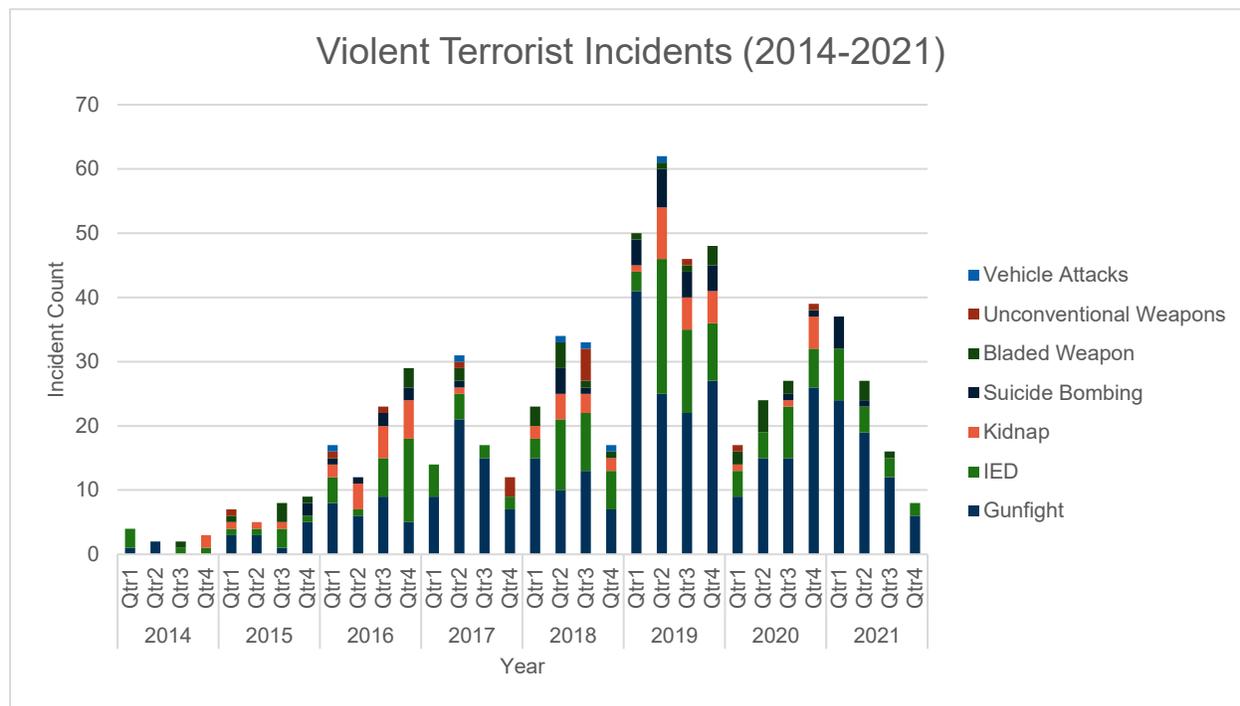


Figure 3: Violent Terrorist Incidents in Southeast Asia (2014-2021)

However, as the region normalises with the lifting of tight border controls and improvements in the economy, the CT gains made by the authorities need to be bulwarked with security and policy responses to the following developments in the regional radical landscape.

Modus Operandi – Variety and Preference

IEDs will remain the preferred bombing tactic employed by jihadist groups in the region for two reasons: a) access to explosive materials and b) bomb-making manuals. Explosive compounds can be distilled from common household items, or conveniently procured in certain industries. For example, ammonium nitrate can be distilled from fertilisers, while TATP can be concocted using chemicals readily available in hardware stores.

Moreover, chemical substitutes of explosives have been identified on open markets.⁴¹ Militants have also purchased explosive materials online to avoid suspicion from brick-and-mortar sellers. Furthermore, militants have avoided bank transfers when making payments to evade detection – instead, bomb-makers have leveraged the various money transfer services available in convenience stores to make online payments.⁴²

Manuals on how to make bombs are also widely available on the internet, allowing people to potentially become autodidactic bomb-makers. Abu Hamzah, a JAD member from Sibolga who made 300 kilograms of explosive materials with his wife, reportedly learned how to make a bomb from the internet.⁴³ Maswandi, another JAD member from Batang, Central Java, also succeeded in creating a mobile detonator for his bomb by learning from video tutorials on Bahrun Naim's website.⁴⁴ The ease of access to explosive materials and manuals arguably makes bombings the preferred tactic for jihadists in the region, particularly in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the role of the bomb supplier is essential for those who are unable to make their own explosives. One individual known as KDW (initials), alias Abu Aliyah al-Indunisi, sourced and supplied bombs to at least four different groups from 2016 to 2021. One of them was the JAD couple who conducted a suicide bombing at a Makassar church in 2021.⁴⁵ Semi-automatic guns have also been used frequently by terrorists in the region. While guns are mostly used to hold territory, particularly in Mindanao and Poso, they have also been used in urban areas, like during the 2016 Sarinah Mall attacks.

There has also been an increase in the use of bladed weapons in recent years, involving knives, machetes and scissors. Bladed weapons have also been used alongside other weapons. Ivan Armadi Hasugian and Suliono, for example, had carried IEDs while conducting mass stabbings in 2016 and 2018, respectively.⁴⁶

Despite the significant increase in the use of bladed weapons, they still constitute a minority of the attacks perpetrated by terrorists in the region. For security agencies in Indonesia and the Philippines, it can be challenging to regulate bladed weapons, given that machetes, for example, are common tools found in many households and are essential to the locals' daily lives.⁴⁷ At any rate, CT agencies must train themselves to be situationally aware of an edged weapon attack.

At present, guns and explosives are still overwhelmingly favoured by terrorists in this region. To stem their ability to procure firearms, authorities should enhance border controls over routes known to be used by weapons smugglers, such as in North Sulawesi and East Kalimantan, and shut down illegal weapons assembly factories.⁴⁸ In terms of explosive materials, although much has already been done to minimise the unlawful acquisition of black powder, authorities should also consider monitoring the supply of TATP ingredients like acetone and hydrogen peroxide, which are currently readily available at hardware stores.⁴⁹

Strategy – Jihad Now or Jihad Later

The will to enact terror persists. Groups such as JI are currently committed to the "jihad later" strategy. Its adoption of this strategy does not, however, mean that JI has abandoned the violent path. Rather, the group has focused on building its capabilities in *dakwah* (religious outreach), *i'dad* (physical training), *pengajian* (religious education) and fund-raising, until it has gained sufficient operational capacity. Despite being leaderless for two years, JI militants remain committed to posing a long-term security threat to Indonesia, and potentially the wider region. JI could plan for a more lethal attack, as the group possesses superior military capability, political strategy and economic resources, compared to pro-IS groups.⁵⁰

Though JI has a more developed strategy, pro-IS groups remain a threat to the region given the "jihad now" mentality of its followers. In recent years, ASG has continued its attempts to disrupt civilian lives with IED attacks.⁵¹ The leader of the Philippines' Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group, Abu Zacariah, also continues to operate in Lanao province.⁵² In early 2021, Anshar Daulah Gorontalo, a small pro-IS group, planned to attack police headquarters in Gorontalo, Sulawesi.⁵³ In June 2022, Indonesian law enforcement also discovered that JAD's Bima cell in West Nusa Tenggara have continued their

physical and weapons training.⁵⁴ Ultimately, these recent developments indicate that the appeal of pro-IS groups persists in the region.

Indonesian security agencies have taken comprehensive steps to curtail JI's long-term and non-violent threat. In 2021 alone, Densus 88 arrested 339 suspected JI members and sympathisers, including high-profile figures and preachers such as Abu Rusydan, among others. Despite proactive enforcement efforts, however, the authorities still face significant challenges against the backdrop of the more exclusivist religious milieu which has emerged in Indonesia in recent years. For its part, JI remains focused on its *Tamkin Siyasi* (political consolidation) strategy to secure support for its cause from the wider Muslim community in Indonesia, as a complement to its current "jihad later" strategy.

To address the threat posed by JI as well as pro-IS networks, authorities in Indonesia and around the region should strengthen their operational clampdowns as well as the various deradicalisation and counter-narrative initiatives, which address both exclusivist and extremist ideologies, and the socioeconomic drivers that often fuel terrorist recruitment. They will also need to monitor the mainstreaming of radical ideas in their respective societies, such as in collaborations between political parties and radical groups.

This will require, in part, the fostering of a regional ecosystem which rejects radical ideas and consistently upholds an inclusive and moderate Islamic narrative in initiatives by both grassroots movements and governments. To this end, amidst competing pressures on national budgets due to the pandemic and other global security concerns, some countries will need to demonstrate their political support of and commit economic resources toward CT-related programmes.

Families and Women as Perpetrators

In addition to buttressing other CT measures, it is necessary to develop more programmes regionally to increase engagement with women in their multiple roles as wives of terrorists and radicals, mothers of at-risk youth, and active agents of radicalism. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe argues that the engagement of women is "essential to address the conditions conducive to terrorism and effectively prevent terrorism".⁵⁵ Just as terrorists have exploited women to nurture or enable future terrorists, or conduct violence themselves, policymakers can combat radicalisation with more women-centred programmes. The latter can delve into how women can be positive parental or spousal influences, or explore how to redirect the underlying motivations for females who adopt a violent jihadist orientation toward more beneficial causes.

Conclusion

Overall, the broad tactical and strategic trends of Islamist terrorism in Southeast Asia have evolved in the aftermath of the Bali bombings, notwithstanding the differences between key regional terrorist groups aligned to AQ or IS. These current tactics and strategies continue to represent a threat to the security of countries in the region, and will require effective and holistic responses from both security agencies and civil society organisations. Guns and bombs are still the weapons of choice for terrorist groups, with guns favoured for territorial defence. While there has been a significant increase in the use of bladed weapons following the rise of pro-IS groups in Southeast Asia beginning in the mid-2010s, they still constitute the minority of attacks and plots. Moreover, pockets of individuals remain keen to experiment with CBR weaponry, although interest in engaging in such tactics remains minimal. The involvement of families and women in regional radicalism is likely to remain an operational option, especially for IS-affiliated groups.

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Terrorism Financing in Southeast Asia: Transformations, Continuities and Challenges

Sylvia Laksmi

Over the past two decades, there have been transformations and continuities in relation to the fund-raising, fund-moving and fund-using tactics used by terrorist groups in Southeast Asia. Whilst significant progress has been made in the region's counter-terrorist financing regime, violent extremists remain adept at exploiting a spectrum of channels, including charities, close associates and digital platforms, to finance their future activities.

Background

Next month (October) marks two decades since the 2002 Bali bombings, the largest terrorist attack recorded in Southeast Asia to date.¹ Since the bomb blasts, Islamist-linked terrorism has become a major regional security concern. Indonesia, in particular, is today both a source and a target of transnational terrorism. The Bali attacks, and several other Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)-linked bombings in subsequent years, have revealed close links between JI and the international terror group, Al-Qaeda (AQ), ranging from finances and leadership to operational support.

For terrorist groups around the region, terrorism financing (TF) remains a lifeblood, enabling them to fund their networks and operations. There are typically three stages of TF: raising, moving and using funds. Funds can be gleaned from criminal activities, but also through legitimate means such as members' salaries, entrepreneurial ventures and donations raised through charities.²

From preparation to execution, JI relied on both legitimate and criminal activities, including robberies, to finance the Bali bombings. In terms of licit sources, the main funding came from AQ via their network of regional facilitators and money couriers. Intelligence officials and terrorism experts estimated in 2002 that Hambali, the then operational head of JI, had amassed as much as US\$500,000 for the group's operations.³

A previous in-depth study conducted by the author on the Bali bombings plot revealed that JI had also conducted a series of robberies to finance the Bali attacks, as well as the 2003 J.W. Marriott hotel bombing and operations in Poso.⁴ In one instance, Imam Samudra, one of the Bali suicide bombers, led a cell of JI operatives to rob a jewellery store named Elita Indah in Serang, Java, two months prior. The loot was then sold and the money used to purchase chemical substances and other materials for the bombs.⁵

The funds were mainly dispersed by cash – a preferred tactic of terrorists given it is less detectable by the authorities – to the group's networks. Wan Min bin Wan Mat, the then JI treasurer based in Malaysia, and his colleague Azmi, took up the role of money couriers and transferred US\$35,000 (funds which were provided by AQ) from overseas to Muklas and Imam Samudra, the key perpetrators of the Bali attacks. Domestically, the heist group also distributed their bounty by cash to Imam Samudra. All the funds accumulated were used to finance the bomb-making process, transportation, accommodation and firearms, and also to provide safehouses after the attacks.⁶

Since then, particularly with the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in 2014,⁷ most cases of terrorism in Indonesia and the wider region have been attributable to the pro-IS camp, rather than JI. The latter has not waged militant jihad for several years, and is currently in the stages of *dakwah* (religious outreach for recruitment) and *i'dad* (preparation for jihad). Both groups, however, continue to raise, move and use funds for both operational and organisational activities.

In response to the TF threat, the Indonesian government, along with its regional counterparts such as Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia, has over the years developed a comprehensive counter-terrorism (CT) strategy, which includes the passing of various laws⁸ to disrupt terrorists' money flows. The more stringent Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regime implemented around the region, coupled with various regional and international collaborations with banks and other financial institutions, has meant the authorities are now better equipped to deal with TF as compared to 20 years ago.

Yet the threat continues to evolve, and terrorists have adopted new ways to finance their operations and organisational needs. This article examines the extent to which various Indonesian-based terrorists, including those with linkages to other Southeast Asian networks, have been modifying their tactics of raising, moving and using funds in the two decades since the 2002 Bali bombings. It will then assess the responses of governments in the region, as well as highlight the ongoing challenges to mitigating the risks posed by TF.

Targeting Terrorist Financing and Resourcing

International efforts to establish legally binding standards and to criminalise TF can be traced back to the establishment of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism by the United Nations in 1999. Articles 1⁹ and 2¹⁰ of the Convention provide the definitions of funds used to finance terrorist activities and persons or organisations involved in TF activities, respectively.¹¹

In addition, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), as the international regulator, sets standards and promotes effective implementation among member countries of legal, regulatory and operational measures to combat money laundering, TF and other activities deemed harmful to the international financial system. Various countries, including those in the region, have adopted the FATF standards into national legislation, according to their particular circumstances.¹²

In the regional context, the implementation of more stringent controls over the international financial system to combat TF and money laundering, has partly contributed to the reduced scale of the terrorist threat in recent years, with few major terrorist incidents recorded since the 2002 Bali attacks. However, money flows linked to terrorist groups remain significant, with groups turning to other funding sources and methods to circumvent the increased scrutiny of states.

Previous research published by this author in January 2022 illustrates that,¹³ in general, terrorists continue to modify their fund-raising techniques through both legal and illegal means. Illegal activities include drug businesses, robberies and cybercrime. In one instance, Fadli Sadama, a prominent terrorist believed to have ties with JI as well as Malaysian jihadists and the Patani United Liberation Organisation in Thailand, had since 2003 organised illegal drug dealers into distributor networks and sold drugs, likely *shabu-shabu* (the local street name for crystal meth) and *ganja* (a kind of cannabis).

The proceeds from these ventures were likely utilised to buy firearms from Thailand and Aceh, Indonesia, to support the JI network led by Imam Samudra.¹⁴ In 2016, investigations also revealed that a terrorist network managed by Bahraini Agam and Rio Priyatna Wibawa, who were affiliated with the IS-aligned Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) network, had set up a drug business to produce and market methamphetamine-type drugs. The drug proceeds were earmarked to finance bomb attacks in 120 offices of the Regional People's Representative Council around the country.¹⁵

The nexus between TF and criminal activity has also persisted in the form of heists. In various incidents between 2003 and 2019, terrorists targeted banks like Lippo Bank and CIMB Niaga in Medan,¹⁶ phone stores in Poso¹⁷ and jewellery stores in Java.¹⁸ The largest robberies were executed by a cell led by Abu Roban, who had links with the prominent JI leader, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, and the latter's network, the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). Investigations also revealed

that the crime proceeds from the heists were channelled to the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) group in Poso.¹⁹

Over the past decade, more tech-savvy terrorists have also tapped on various digital channels to engage in cybercrime, including hacking, to fund their operations. In 2011, Cahya Fitrianta and Rizki Gunawan worked with an extremist hacker to raise funds for the MIT Poso group. The trio hacked a multi-level marketing currency trading website by penetrating members' accounts and selling the members' "currency".²⁰ Rizki Gunawan would subsequently admit to having raised up to Rp 4,000,000,000 (US\$267,219.75) through these activities.²¹

At the height of IS' so-called caliphate in 2016, a prominent Indonesian jihadist, Bahrun Naim, who had forged close links with IS Central from his base in Syria, wrote manuals on his websites providing basic training for cybercrimes such as hacking and carding. The manuals also included advice on fund-moving techniques involving various new digital payment methods, such as PayPal, Western Union and cryptocurrencies.²² Yet, while Naim encouraged his followers to develop technical skills and harness new technologies to fund their violent activities, the scale of usage of these channels has been limited to tech-savvy militants.

Three other legal methods of fund-raising utilised by terrorist groups in Indonesia include: a) charities and donations from sympathisers; b) legitimate businesses; and c) self-funding via member donations. Charities have become the most popular fund-raising technique used by terrorist groups, including JI, IS and other affiliated networks.²³ A JI-affiliated group in Palembang, for example, had since 2006 collected voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations via methods ranging from cash collected through donation boxes in mosques, to financial proposals from companies and organisations purporting to support religious activities as a cover.²⁴ The use of charity boxes persisted until last year, when the Indonesian police seized more than 20,000 charity boxes linked to JI networks at convenience stores, restaurants, mosques and other public places.²⁵

Besides sporadic charity activities, terrorist groups have also institutionalised donation programmes through various other organisations. The latter were intentionally established to accommodate fund-raising activities for humanitarian and religious causes, including natural disasters and preaching, and used as a cover to escape the government's oversight and monitoring. For example, terrorist groups generally affiliated with JAD have set up religious foundations and Islamic microfinance institutions called Baitul Maal to collect voluntary contributions from members, supporters and the wider public, with the intention of supporting terrorist activities.²⁶

Additionally, terrorists have developed legitimate businesses as another channel of fund-raising. Travel agencies, electronic stores and herbal medicine sales are among the types of businesses run by terrorist groups. One example is a substantial palm oil plantation business owned by Para Wijayanto, who was JI's leader for a decade until his arrest in June 2019.²⁷

Among Indonesian nationals who joined IS or other international groups as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), self-funding is a significant source of funds. These include the proceeds from selling personal assets, savings, salaries and withdrawing funds from insurance policies.²⁸ In 2020, Ade Ale Sapari, a young man who had pledged his allegiance to IS, obtained money from five online moneylending companies in Indonesia and utilised the funds to purchase airsoft guns and ammunition through an online e-commerce platform.²⁹

In terms of fund-using, the money collected is primarily used for the operational and organisational purposes of the group. Operational activities can include funding for accommodation, bomb-making materials, transportation, weapons and smuggling. Organisational expenses range from money spent on military training, recruitment, propaganda and radicalisation efforts, to the provision of salaries for members and social services for their families as part of sustaining terrorist generations and organisations. Lastly, social service support encompasses health and welfare incentives and business loans obtained through Baitul Maal.³⁰

Countering Terrorist Financing: Challenges and Vulnerabilities

In order to better detect and address TF, countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, have developed more robust CFT policies to investigate and prosecute terrorist financing offences since the 2002 Bali bombings.³¹ More stringent CFT regimes, such as the Indonesian Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU),³² were established to improve financial regulations for customer identification and monitoring procedures; strengthen the implementation of cross-border cash courier mechanisms; conduct patrols along porous borders; and increase regional and international cooperation.

In order to comply with FATF recommendations, Indonesia, for example, has also applied the 'assets freezing without delay' policy as spelled out in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373, by issuing a list of Suspected Terrorists and Terrorist Organisations. The policy mandates that financial service providers be able to identify names of individual terrorists and organisations, and work together with law enforcement in seizing and confiscating their assets.³³

Countries in the region have also recognised the importance of enhancing financial intelligence capabilities in tackling terrorism. Domestic and international collaborations are important in this regard, predominantly in the area of intelligence information exchanges. Examples at the regional level include the establishment of a regional task force on financial intelligence sharing and analysis of terrorist financing – known as the Financial Intelligence Consultative Group (FICG) – which serves as a multilateral forum for Asia Pacific countries to share information regionally. Through the timely sharing of intelligence, the forum offers an early alert mechanism to detect extremist networks and disrupt potential attack plots.

However, there are several challenges that governments continue to face in countering TF. The first relates to the inherent difficulties in identifying and clamping down on the evolving fund-raising, moving and using tactics employed by regional terror networks. A major challenge has been the shift in fund-moving tactics employed by terrorist groups, from international to domestic networks. Compared to the period prior to the Bali attacks, cross-border cash movements have become less identifiable given the absence of transaction records, while domestic peer-to-peer networks have been increasingly relied upon by regional terrorists for moving funds.

Among Indonesian terrorist networks, a notable trend in recent years has been the increasing use of third-party accounts, including those of relatives, friends, employees and neighbours to send and receive terrorist funds via bank transfers. Previous research also demonstrates the increasing number of women involved in TF, including terrorists' wives or widows.³⁴ Besides initiating fund-raising activities among group members, terrorist networks also generate charity programmes that are predominantly promoted on online platforms.

These platforms publicise various humanitarian assistance and religious events, and encourage the public to pledge their support by donating money to the individual bank accounts featured prominently on online posters. In many instances, these are suspected to be the accounts of treasurers who manage the finances of terrorist organisations and use non-profit organisations as a front.³⁵ Furthermore, financial regulators have also identified that terrorist groups misuse money remittance services as fund-moving channels, particularly in accommodating international incoming and outgoing transfers.³⁶

A second challenge pertains to the potential misuse by terrorists of emerging digital payment systems and platforms. To address this, the existing regional cooperation framework, established under the Southeast Asia Working Group that was initiated in 2018, has been conducting programmes that focus on the documentation of IS-affiliated networks in the Asia Pacific region, as well as carrying out regional risk assessments of red flag indicators in relation to terrorist financing risks. In addition, the framework sets out the scope for establishing a secure information-

sharing platform prototype, a regional course for financial intelligence analysts and an intelligence analyst exchange programme.

However, greater focus should be given to tackling emerging risks in new digital payment systems. In October 2018, the Abu Ahmed Foundation, an Indonesia-based extremist charity which supports the AQ-linked rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Syria, conducted fund-raising using cryptocurrency.³⁷ Limitations in financial regulations and procedures, law enforcement and international cooperation are vulnerabilities in relation to digital payment systems,³⁸ and could be increasingly exploited by terrorists as alternative fund-moving systems to avoid detection. Insufficient regulations in most jurisdictions over cryptocurrencies pose a significant risk with regard to TF.³⁹

A third challenge concerns the continued exploitation of charities by pro-AQ and pro-IS elements due to the unregulated charity landscape, particularly in Indonesia. As mentioned previously, terrorist groups are adept at creating narratives to elicit public donations, using humanitarian or religious causes as a cover. Given such causes have found resonance among sections of the Indonesian population, the increasing spread of these narratives could impede the implementation of CFT policies, particularly in addressing the abuse of charities for terrorism purposes.

Therefore, it is important to leverage public-private partnership frameworks, while also working closely with communities, in identifying and countering TF narratives, particularly when it comes to humanitarian and religious activities. Such partnerships can, to some extent, bridge the existing gap in prevention and law enforcement strategies. They can potentially complement the government's 'top-down' approach by, for example, generating creative alternatives through public campaigns that target vulnerable groups and grassroots communities, including migrant workers, women and the diaspora.

Fourthly, the growing trend of lone-wolf terrorism and self-radicalisation has led to a surge in self-funded TF activities using small amounts of money, which can easily evade existing financial controls. While the Bali bombings have generated early warning mechanisms and regulatory capacity-building which focus on large fund transfers for potential TF purposes, it has become challenging to ferret out small fund transfers used for terrorist activities by lone individuals or unlinked radical cells. To address this additional TF complexity, law enforcement agencies will need to increase their investigative resources in order to list potential solo terrorists.

Conclusion

Despite the absence of major lethal terrorist attacks in the region since the 2002 Bali bombings, there remains significant scope to improve existing CFT frameworks. As TF networks are dynamic, and terrorists are continuously responding to developments in legislation, policy and procedures, technology and social trends, it is vital to leverage financial regulations and procedures, law enforcement, regional and international collaborations, and community partners. Policy transformations are also necessary to resolve unaddressed issues, including the growing exploitation of close female associates and charities for TF purposes, and the inadequate safeguards over emerging technologies such as cryptocurrencies and other digital transactions.

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⁹ Article 1 of the 1999 UN Convention refers to funds as assets of every kind, whether tangible or intangible, movable or immovable; and legal documents or instruments evidencing title to or interest in assets such as bank cheques, money orders, letters of credit, shares, bonds etc.

¹⁰ Article 2 of the 1999 UN Convention describes as criminalisable any person who directly or indirectly provides or collects funds with the intention or in the knowledge that they will be used, in full or in part, to carry out an act which constitutes an offence, or an act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, for the purpose of intimidating a population, or compelling a government to do or to abstain from doing any act.

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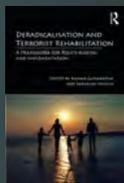
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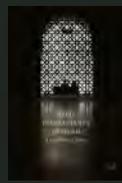
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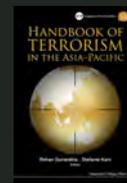
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