

Waiting for Resurgence: Al-Qaeda Core in Pakistan

Farhan Zahid

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Diverse and Enduring Terrorist Threat

This September marked the sixteenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US by Al-Qaeda. Since then, the global terrorist threat situation has gotten worse. Despite the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, forty percent of the former is under the Taliban control while until late last year, large swathes of territory in Iraq and neighbouring Syria were under the control of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group, which broke away from Al-Qaeda and established a so-called 'Caliphate' in 2014. The killing of Al-Qaeda's chief Osama Bin Laden in 2011 and IS emergence undermined Al-Qaeda's position as the leader of global jihad.

However, Al-Qaeda's threat is far from over despite its low profile in recent years. As IS is losing ground in the Middle East, its main jihadist rival Al-Qaeda is catching up. While the international community was fixated with fighting the IS threat, Al-Qaeda has silently regrouped, reorganised and rebuilt its ideological and operational ties with local militant groups in Africa and Asia. The transnational jihadist group is not only well-entrenched within these two regions, it also poses an enduring terrorist threat of a qualitatively different nature. It has shifted its focus from the "far-enemy" (attacking the US and its Western allies) to the "near-enemy" i.e. helping local and regional 'jihadist' and insurgent groups in local conflicts.

Reflecting these developments, **Farhan Zahid** discusses the emergence of a pro-Al-Qaeda militant group Jamat Ansar Al-Shariah in Pakistan. Al-Qaeda's policy of 'wait and see' appears to have paid off as the group re-strategise and escalate its activities in the ungoverned spaces of Pakistan and Afghanistan. US President Donald Trump's new Afghanistan-South Asia Policy that will prolong the war in Afghanistan provides Al-

Qaeda with a suitable propaganda narrative for new recruits.

Similarly, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is attempting to exploit the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar to mobilise fighters. On 3 September, AQAP leader Khalid bin Umar Batarfi issued a video message urging Muslims in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia to support the Rohingya and directed its sister organisation AQIS to launch attacks in Myanmar. The Rohingya crisis and jihadist groups' attempt to exploit the issue can have negative implications for Bangladesh's national security as discussed by **Iftekhharul Bashar**.

Alarmingly, the Rohingya crisis has resulted in a groundswell of support among Southeast Asian 'jihadists', specifically from Indonesia, with calls to relocate to Myanmar's Rakhine state to wage jihad. An Indonesian militant group Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) issued a call for 'jihadist' volunteers to defend the Rohingya, raising the dangers of Southeast Asian 'jihadists' making their way to Myanmar. The perceived lack of adequate response and initiative by neighbouring countries and the international community have turned the plight of stateless Rohingya into a festering wound that the 'jihadists' are now exploiting to their advantage.

This issue also takes a look at how the Indonesian police is fighting the twin threats posed by Al-Qaeda, IS, and other violent Islamist elements as well as separatist (ethno-nationalist) groups in the country. Police General **Muhammad Tito Karnavian** explains the different nature of the two threats, and provides a perspective of Indonesia's strategies, using both 'soft' and 'hard' approaches to deal with the two different sets of "insurgents". While counter-ideology efforts

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Diverse and Enduring Terrorist Threat

are critical in defeating the Islamists, economic development and raising living standards are key to dealing with the separatists. The article concludes with recommendations that includes community policing, preventative measures, rehabilitation efforts and stronger legislation.

Beyond Indonesia, **Marguerite Borelli** takes a critical look at the efforts of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to counter the persistent terrorist threat in the region. ASEAN has developed a substantive counter-terrorism arsenal since the September 11 attacks, and has served as a viable forum on counter-terrorism issues. However, while substantive, its arsenal still remains insufficient. She highlights the counter-terrorism insufficiencies created by structural factors and the lack of preventative counter-terrorism measures within the current framework. She argues that ASEAN's lack of responsiveness to contemporary developments and a general lack of political appetite for collective security and responsibility in the region have prevented it from acting as a driving force and an architect of regional counter-terrorism. There is however a strong impetus for regional cooperation and collaboration given the transnational nature of the terrorist threat and problems linked to returning IS fighters from the Middle East and Marawi City.

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Waiting for Resurgence: Al-Qaeda Core in Pakistan

Farhan Zahid

The decline of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group in the Middle East and the dilapidation of its Pakistan Chapter (Walayat-e-Khurasan) have provided Al-Qaeda Central (AQC) enough space to reassert itself in Pakistan. It appears that the AQC policy of 'wait and see' has worked and the group is now making calculated moves to stage a comeback. The AQC in Pakistan is launching new auxiliary organisations and capitalising on IS returnees from Iraq and Syria to revive.

Introduction

The rise of IS as the leader of global jihad in June 2014 eclipsed Al-Qaeda's preeminence within the jihadist fraternity. However, IS' recent battlefield defeats, including the loss of Mosul, and other territorial losses in the Middle East has significantly weakened the group's clout. These developments have once again made the competition for the leadership of global jihad a contested domain.

Against this backdrop, this article examines AQC's status in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the group's ties with the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban, other militant groups and its current strategy. The article argues that given the recent setbacks in the Middle East, IS will not be able to hold its ground much longer in the Af-Pak region against AQC and its affiliates.

Background

With significant territorial losses in 2016 and 2017, it is now evident that IS will not be able to hold territories in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria and Afghanistan. IS control of its territories in Syria is weakening, with its presence now confined to Raqqa. Similarly, in Nigeria the IS-affiliated Boko Haram is facing a three-pronged assault from Nigerian, Cameroonian and Chadian forces in the territory under its control. Likewise, IS has already lost Sirte, its stronghold in war-torn Libya. It is obvious that

the momentum IS established in 2014-2015 has been reversed in the affected countries.

In Pakistan, the situation is a little complicated compared to other countries as AQ is gradually regaining its lost momentum. The surfacing of a pro-AQ militant group, Jamaat ul Ansar al-Sharia, in the port city of Karachi in June 2017 signifies this. As claimed by law enforcement officials in Karachi, Ansar Al-Shariah comprises returnees from Syria and Libya. These war-returnees are well-trained and battle-hardened militants who are trying to resurrect AQ in Pakistan.¹

Al-Qaeda's Possible Revival in Pakistan

After proclaiming the self-styled caliphate in Mosul in June 2014, IS urged other jihadist groups to pledge their oath of allegiance to the so-called Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. Responding to IS' call, as many as 50 jihadist groups, some as large as Boko Haram of Nigeria and as small as Ansar al Bait al-Maqadis of Egypt, shifted their loyalty from AQ to IS. The widespread defections to IS dented AQ's standing as the leader of global jihad. Following these developments, the aspiring jihadists looked towards IS for direction, mentorship and inspiration. At that time, AQ appeared down and out as it lacked numbers, appeal and the power to fight back. However, it went into hibernation and managed to survive.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned defections, the AQ chief Ayman al-Zawahiri succeeded in keeping the major jihadi affiliates loyal to the group. For instance, the Somali militant group Al-Shabab, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Yemini affiliate Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), rejected IS' Caliphate proclamation. Moreover, the AQ based in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region has

¹ Discussions with a senior police officer of Karachi police, on 17 August 2017, who requested for anonymity.

largely remained immune from the clutches of IS-Khurasan (ISK), the regional affiliate of IS in Af-Pak.²

AQ's Post-IS Reorganisation in Pakistan

In September 2014, to curtail IS' influence in its backyard, AQ announced its chapter for South Asia, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS).³ Asim Umar, a former commander of a Kashmiri militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad Al-Islami (HUJI) was appointed as the chief of AQIS. Zawahiri, in his 55-minute video, described AQIS as:

“This entity [AQIS] was not established today, but it is the fruit of a blessed effort for more than two years to gather the mujahideen in the Indian subcontinent into a single entity to be with the main group, Qaedat al-Jihad, from the soldiers of the Islamic Emirate and its triumphant emir, Allah permitting, Emir of the Believers Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid.”⁴

The first target of AQIS was an intelligence officer of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Brigadier Zahoor Fazal Qadri. AQIS assailants gunned him down on September 6, 2014 in Punjab's Sarghoda district, while he was off duty and offering prayers at a Sufi shrine. The group's spokesperson Usama Mahmood claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, *“The Sargodha attack should be taken as a warning [to] the slaves of [the United States of] America in the Pakistani Armed Forces to leave the US-backed ‘war on terror’ or get ready to face the consequences.”⁵*

Following that, AQIS recruited serving Pakistan Navy officers and carried out a botched naval dockyard attack in Karachi.

² Only a handful of Jihadi groups joined hands with ISIS-Khurasan chapter and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

³ “Al-Qaeda chief Zawahiri launches al-Qaeda in South Asia”, *BBC News*, September 4, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29056668>

⁴ Bill Rogio, “US adds Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, leader to terrorism list”, *Long War Journal*, June 30, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/us-adds-al-qaeda-in-the-indian-subcontinent-leader-to-terrorism-list.php>

⁵ “Al-Qaeda claims slaying of ISI brigadier”, *News International*, September 20, 2014, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/526386-al-qaeda-claims-slaying-of-isi-brigadier>.

The plan was to hijack a frigate and target the US-Pakistan joint naval exercise in the Arabian Sea. However, the plan failed as Pakistan Navy commandos killed two of the six attackers and arrested the other four near Quetta while they were escaping to Afghanistan. AQIS chief Asim Umar claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack.⁶

Al-Qaeda's Affiliates in Pakistan

Most of the jihadist groups in Pakistan have remained loyal to AQ barring a few marginalised elements of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP-Shahidullah faction), Karachi-based Jundulah, and a lesser-known Tehrik-e-Khilafat Pakistan. No major jihadist group has pledged allegiance to IS. On the contrary, AQ, as mentioned above, made a move in reinvigorating its agenda with the creation of AQIS in September 2014.

Pakistan remains pivotal for AQ and its future survival. The group considers the Af-Pak region its home and birthplace. Veteran AQ leaders still allegedly maintain residence in tribal areas and other parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. AQ also maintains close relations with Pakistani Islamist militant groups such as: Harkat ul Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI), Harkat ul Mujahedeen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and to some extent Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).⁷ Although AQ lost the

⁶ Fahim Zaman and Nazihah Syed Ali, “Dockyard attacker planned to hijack Navy frigate”, *Dawn*, September 13, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1131654>; Shehzad Baluch, “Quetta Operation: Three Navy men held over dockyard attack”, *Express Tribune*, September 12, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/761240/quetta-operation-three-navy-men-held-over-dockyard-attack/>

⁷ All have worked with Al-Qaeda. HuJI's leader Qari Saifullah Akhter was close to Al-Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan during Taliban era (1996-2001) and HuJI's offshoot, the 313 Brigade led by Ilyas Kashmiri, later became part of Al-Qaeda Core in tribal areas of Pakistan; HuM Emir Fazal ur Rehman Khalil was co-signatory of Osama Bin Laden's Fatwa against the US in 1998, and he was also part of Bin Laden-led Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders; Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a sectarian jihadi group of Pakistan trained its rank and file at Al-Qaeda-run training camps in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan; Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba joined hands to perpetrate Indian Parliament attack in December 2001 to create a military standoff between Pakistan and India in order to provide breathing space to under sieged Al-Qaeda leadership at Pakistan-Afghanistan border. HuM and JeM along with Khalid Shaikh Mohammad

Central Asian militant group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that pledged allegiance to ISK, it possesses stable relations with the Afghan Taliban.

IS-AQ Competition

AQ will not concede ground to IS in the Af-Pak region given its longstanding ties with other Islamist militant groups, stakes in the Afghan conflict and the nature of terrain that provides it with enough ungoverned spaces to survive and expand. The IS' flirtation with AQ-linked Islamist terrorist groups has not yielded the desired results for ISK. The IS' apparent plan was to lure AQ-linked Islamist terrorist groups operating in Pakistan and gain as much as space possible in Pakistan's jihadist landscape.

Another reason for AQ to consider IS its *bête noire* was the IS-Afghan Taliban clash of interests in Afghanistan, in particular, and ideological issues, in general. The IS ingress in the Af-Pak can undermine Taliban's unrivaled monopoly, which will weaken AQ. This is why AQ has not only reaffirmed its support to successive leaders of the Afghan Taliban but it has further strengthened its operational ties with them as well.

AQ strategy for Pakistan

The AQ has adopted a long-term strategy of "wait and see" in Pakistan. The group has not conducted any major terrorist attack in Pakistan in the last two years,⁸ following the establishment of AQIS. More recently, the emergence of a pro-AQ group *Jamaat al-Ansar al-Sharia* in Pakistan is indicative of

kidnapped and assassinated Wall Street Journal's correspondent Daniel Pearl in Karachi in March 2002. Apart from these activities, scores of terrorist incidents against US and western interests and against Pakistani security forces were conducted by these organisations in collusion with Al-Qaeda. Most importantly, the TTP provides sanctuaries and safe havens to Al-Qaeda leaders in tribal areas, where TTP as the umbrella organization of more than 27 factions operates. Al-Qaeda planned and executed many of the high profile terrorist attack while comfortably staying in TTP-controlled areas.

⁸ AQ's *modus operandi* is based upon franchising local Islamist groups and developing their capacities and providing them logistics support. AQ-linked groups in Pakistan perpetrate acts of terror in connivance with AQ. For example, Daniel Pearl was abducted by AQ affiliates and later KSM visited their safe house and beheaded Pearl. Danish Embassy bombing in 2008 was planned and executed by Hammad Adil cell in Islamabad, an AQ-TTP linked cell operating from Islamabad.

the fact that AQ is about to make a rebound in Pakistan. As claimed by law enforcement officials in Karachi, the organisation comprises returnees from Syrian and Libya. While the exact numbers are not known, these well trained and battle-hardened militants are now eyeing the resurrection of AQ in Pakistan⁹.

Meanwhile the AQ-affiliated terrorist organisations have continued terrorist attacks in Pakistan. For instance, AQ-linked TTP is involved in masterminding and executing major terrorist attacks in Pakistani cities and tribal areas. It appears that AQ is maintaining a low profile amid Pakistani state's crackdown against IS in different parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Afghan and US forces' operations in neighboring Afghan provinces of Nangarhar and Paktika.

The IS has not been able to outsmart AQ, which is apparently waiting for the complete destruction of ISK by Pakistani, Afghan, US forces and the Afghan Taliban and to absorb the ISK remnants in the region once again. There are, indeed, guestimates indicating that AQ now comprises around 50-100¹⁰ leaders and rank and files; it has always been AQ's strategy to rely on local Islamist terrorist groups for attacks and work in tandem with these groups for logistics, safe havens and recruitment.

In fact, AQ has always been a small group of Islamist militants who collude with local Islamist groups and build their capacities, provide funds and logistics, work on their skill development and ideological indoctrination. Post 9/11, AQ transformed from a hierarchical organisation to a decentralised movement mentoring the next generation of jihadists and engaging in a war of ideas instead of operational fighting. It is also true that AQ suffered massively in Pakistan because of the US drone campaign against its top leaders. However, it seems that it is

⁹ Discussions with senior police officer of Karachi police, who requested for anonymity in July 2017.

¹⁰ Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, "Sending more troops to Afghanistan is a good start", *Long War Journal*, August 21, 2017, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/08/sending-more-troops-to-afghanistan-is-a-good-start.php?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LongWarJournalSiteWide+%28FDD%27s+Long+War+Journal+Update%29

now hoping for local militants for a lead role. Traditionally, Deobandi (a sub-sect of the Sunni-Hanafist school of thought) militant organisations have dominated Pakistan's jihadist landscape leaving very little room for the Takfiri-Salafist-jihadist outfits to operate. Given this, it is expected that ISK would have no choice but to rejoin AQ.

Conclusion

AQ, at least in Pakistan, is trying hard to preserve itself and hitherto has not allowed IS to consolidate its position in the diverse Jihadist landscape of Pakistan. IS has not been able to replace AQ in Pakistan as far as influence over other jihadi organisations is concerned, and ISK has not appealed to the Pakistani Islamist terrorist groups linked with AQ. For instance, the ISK developed a working relationship with violent sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and perpetrated terrorist attacks with its assistance but it could not convince several LeJ factions to change sides.

AQ's reemergence will pose new security challenges to regional peace and security. Fragmentation and reintegration of terrorist groups is as old as terrorism. A possible realignment and absorption of ISK within AQC cannot be ruled out. US President Donald Trump's announcement of stepping up the war effort in Afghanistan will give AQ the right political environment in the region to re-launch its jihadist activities. In this regard, the surfacing of Jamaat al-Ansar al-Sharia needs to be monitored closely. At the same time, pacification of the Afghan conflict to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders is equally important to defeat AQ, operationally and ideologically.

Farhan Zahid did his PhD in Counter Terrorism (Topic: Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist violent Non-State Actors in Pakistan and their relationship with Islamist Parties) at Vrije University Brussels, Belgium.

Exploitation of the Rohingya Crisis by Jihadist Groups: Implications for Bangladesh's Internal Security

Iftekharul Bashar

The exploitation of the ongoing Rohingya crisis by jihadist groups can potentially undermine Bangladesh's hard-earned counter-terrorism achievements. Dhaka can neither ignore the Rohingya crisis nor can it host a large number of refugees on its soil. Therefore, a carefully thought response is needed to deal with this humanitarian crisis. Notwithstanding Bangladesh's humanitarian approach towards Myanmar's Rohingya refugees, it must guard itself against a possible resurgence of militancy.

Commentary

While Bangladesh continues to receive the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, it has legitimate security concerns if the ongoing crisis prolongs. Rohingya's continued persecution coupled with the attempts of various regional and transnational jihadist groups' to exploit the issue for recruitment and propaganda purposes can have negative implications for Bangladesh's internal security.

In July last year, the country faced a high-profile terrorist attack in its capital Dhaka by militants of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. The attackers, five local youth with no history of travel into any conflict zone, killed twenty civilians, who were mostly foreigners, in an upscale café in the capital's diplomatic enclave. Bangladeshi Special Forces killed all five attackers.

Following the Dhaka café attack, Bangladesh has neutralised the IS threat operationally, though it remains a work in progress. Bangladesh has busted several dozen IS cells across the country along with killing 100 IS militants and capturing another 1500 including its key leaders.

While Bangladesh is grappling with the residual threat of IS, the onset of the Rohingya crisis has complicated the country's threat spectrum. The terrorists who have been adapting to the evolving security environment in Bangladesh have been quick to seize the opportunity created by the Rohingya crisis. Being geographically contiguous to Myanmar's northern Rakhine state, Bangladesh's faces a unique IS-Al Qaeda hybrid threat of terrorism. As the crisis worsens in Myanmar's Rakhine state, the future of counter-terrorism in Bangladesh looks tenuous.

Persistence of threat

While counter-terrorism operations have brought a temporary lull in violence in Bangladesh, the terrorist threat has not fully receded. Despite continued operations, IS remains a potent threat, and Al-Qaeda's South Asian affiliate, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-continent (AQIS), is trying to re-emerge.

IS' persistence is reflected in its continued online activities and recruitment campaign. According to Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies, almost every month, two or three vulnerable youth go missing in various parts of the country and are suspected of joining IS-linked terrorist cells. This trend is alarming because in the past such disappearances were frequent prior to a terrorist attack, indicating the possibility of more potential attacks in future.

Several factors indicate that IS in Bangladesh still has access to funds and explosives. In this respect, the group's cross-border linkage in Indian border regions remains of particular concern to Dhaka.

According to the confessional statement of a high-value IS detainee in Bangladesh, the group has sent at least two of its operatives to India for advanced training in the manufacturing of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). The Dhaka café attack also revealed the group's reliance on Indian-made small arms and explosives.

Additionally, Bangladeshi citizens are reportedly being recruited in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia. For instance, in January 2017, Malaysian authorities arrested two Bangladeshis with links to an IS cell based in southern Philippines. This underlines the possibility of a linkage between IS in Bangladesh and IS operatives in Southeast Asia.

Enter the Rohingya Crisis

The recent outbreak of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state has created a new influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the rapidly evolving jihadist narrative around this issue has created a new security dimension for the Bangladeshi security forces in addition to dealing with the existing humanitarian crisis.

Myanmar's over-reactive counter-insurgency campaign to flush out the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), an armed ethno-nationalist group, has alienated the Rohingya community in Myanmar. The military is reportedly targeting civilians in its quest to cut the insurgents' access to food, funds, intelligence and recruitment, a doctrine locally known as "Pyat Lay Pyat [Four Cuts]."

Till date, more than 300,000 Rohingyas have taken refuge in Bangladesh. The sufferings of the Rohingyas have caught the attention of the militants not only in Bangladesh but also in various parts of Asia. Though jihadist exploitation of the plight of the Rohingyas is not totally new (it happened back in 2012 and 2015), the timing is significant. The crisis emerges at a time when IS seems to have lost much of its territories in the Middle East and is reportedly trying to expand in Southeast Asia and South Asia. The recent siege of Marawi in Southern Philippines by IS militants shows that IS penetration in the Rakhine state conflict cannot be ruled out.

The plight of the Rohingyas has been regularly highlighted in various IS online publications, particularly in *Dabiq*, which has also stated that the group will eventually focus on Myanmar. IS mentioned that it aims to develop a stronghold in Bangladesh and use it as a platform to launch attacks on Myanmar.

The Rohingya issue has a highly emotive effect on Muslims not only in Bangladesh but also in various parts of the world most significantly in South Asia (mostly Pakistan and India) and Southeast Asia (particularly Indonesia and Malaysia). Although the majority of Muslims still support a peaceful settlement with Rohingyas returning to their homeland, a smaller segment thinks that an armed jihad is the only solution left to end the plight of the Rohingya. While ARSA is waging a largely ethno-nationalist insurgency in the Rakhine state, IS penetration in the group will be concerning.

While most of the attention is given to IS, AQIS is equally dangerous. Though AQIS has not been able to carry out any major attacks beyond a dozen targeted killings of secular bloggers and social activists in Bangladesh in the past few years, in a recent statement it has mentioned Myanmar military as a target. It is noteworthy that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has urged AQIS leadership to physically support Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. On September 12, Al-Qaeda Central released a statement calling for revenge attacks to punish the government of Myanmar for the persecution of the Muslim-minority Rohingya population. The group urged Muslims around the world and especially those in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines to support Rohingyas in Myanmar financially and physically. This increases the possibility of Bangladeshi territory to be used by both local and foreign militant groups.

In addition, some of the Bangladeshi militant groups think it is their Islamic duty to protect Muslims who are in trouble in the region. The Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat ul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) are cases in point. The ongoing violence against the Rohingyas will therefore

bring in a new security challenge if the militants want to hit Myanmar and use south-eastern Bangladesh as a launch pad. The administration of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has a “Zero-tolerance” policy against extremism and terrorism. She has repeatedly asserted that Bangladesh would not allow its territory to be used to target any of its neighbours. But the question remains if the Rohingya crisis continues, will Bangladesh be able withstand it especially at a time when it has too many challenges to tackle?

Way forward

At present, Bangladesh has five key areas to focus on. First, to enhance the skill and capacity of its counter-terrorism units engaged in collecting and analysing intelligence pertaining to countering terrorism and radicalisation. Building safeguards against jihadist exploitation of the Rohingya issue should be given a special emphasis in this regard. Second, strengthen the capacity of operational units to respond quickly and decisively against possible terrorist threats. Third, the ‘cycle of terrorism’ needs to be broken particularly by rehabilitating terrorist detainees in prisons and reintegrating them back to the mainstream society. Fourth, Bangladesh has to scale up the level of social awareness against extremism and terrorism by engaging the community including the Rohingya refugees. Fifth, Bangladesh must work with relevant countries to resolve the Rohingya crisis before it presents a serious terrorist and insurgency problem to the country.

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The Role of the National Police in Countering Insurgencies in Indonesia

Muhammad Tito Karnavian

Indonesia is facing two types of terrorist or insurgent groups: radical Islamist and ethno-separatists. This article explains the security threats that the Indonesian government faces from these groups, counter strategies and the role of the Indonesian police.

Insurgency in Indonesia

Indonesia is facing two types of terrorist or insurgent groups: radical Islamist and ethno-separatists. This article explains the security threats that the Indonesian government faces from these groups, counter strategies and the role of the Indonesian police.

Radical Islamist groups have attacked the security forces, military combatants and civilian targets. They also have a clear political aim of taking power and changing the 'secular' or 'un-Islamic' Indonesian state into an Islamic state based on their version of Islamic law (*shari'a*). The radical Islamist networks use political resources such as establishing official organisations (aboveground), leaving the acts of violence with terrorist tactics to be undertaken by closed networks (*underground*) in order to achieve this goal.

These terrorist networks, if examined closely, have their origins in Indonesia's Darul Islam movement that waged an insurgency against the Indonesian government from 1949 to 1962.¹ After the movement was neutralised, new groups with similar goals emerged aiming to establish the Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia, NII). Today, these groups include NII, Jamaah Islamiyyah (JI), Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), Tawhid wal Jihad

(TJ) and a number of small groups with very flexible structures. These groups have a significant presence in most provinces with the exception of small cells in Jambi, Kepulauan Riau, Bangka Belitung, Kalimantan Barat, Kalimantan Selatan, Kalimantan Tengah, Maluku Utara, NTT and Papua.

Several confiscated documents indicate that the JI network uses two main strategies to achieve an 'Islamic state': the gradual and the *military-foco*. In JI's main organisational document, the General Guidelines for the Struggle of Jamaah Islamiyyah (Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al Jamaah al Islamiyyah, PUPJI), seized by the police in 2003, it is evident that JI applies a gradual strategy. In this gradual strategy are three phases of its struggle (*Al Manhaj Al-Harakiy Li iqomatid-Dien*): preparation to establish an Islamic state, realisation of that state, and finally the establishment of a so-called transnational caliphate.²

In the first stage, the focus is on building an organisation, developing strength and utilising that strength. The effort to build an organisation (*toqwinul jamaah*) consists of determining the leadership, forming core groups, establishing a clandestine organisation (*tanzim siri*), applying the principle of doing good and avoiding evil (*amar maruf nahi munkar*) and establishing an institution for enforcing religious discipline (*hisbah*). The effort to develop strength (*toqwinul quwwah*) needs to be accomplished through education, religious outreach (*dakwah*) and moving to an area where Islamic law can be applied (*hijrah*). The struggle to develop strength also includes developing a doctrine of jihad as

¹ Hoik H. Dengel, *Darul Islam and Kartosuwiryo: Langkah Perwujudan Angan-Angan yang Gagal* [Darul Islam and Kartosuwiryo: The Attempts to Articulate the Abortive Dreams], (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1995)

² Elena Pavlova. 2006. "From Counter-Society to Counter-State: Jamaah Islamiyah According to PUPJI" Working Paper Vol. 117. Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.

battle (*qital*), developing military forces (*tajnid*), setting up a secure area (*qoidah aminah*), undertaking military training (*i'dad*), building a financial system (*tamwil*) and an intelligence network (*jasus*), and collaborating with like-minded groups (*tansiq bainal jamaat*). Then, in the phase of using force (*istikhdamul quwwah*), warnings will be given to the opposing side to submit and cease all impediments to establishing an Islamic state. If the enemy fails to heed the warning, a jihad (*jihad musallah*) will be launched. When the group reaches the stage of establishing an Islamic state, it will form a state authority, an armed force, issue regulations and continue the jihad for a so-called global caliphate.

Even though some JI leaders, such as Abu Bakar Baasyir, denied any association with PUPJI, interviews with several JI leaders such as Nasir Abas, Ali Imron, Abu Rusdan, Ahmad Roihan, and Hambali among others,³ confirmed that PUPJI laid out the strategy for the JI struggle.⁴ Thus, it is evident that JI adopted the strategy of gradual insurgency to achieve its political goals. In this regard, the JI organisation, both open and clandestine, developed a radical doctrine with recruiting and training underway (as in Aceh in 2010) and mastered the use of firearms and explosives. In addition, efforts to gain popular support were in progress. Limited attacks were necessary to undermine the authority of the government and the West.⁵

The second strategy used by the radical Islamist network was *military-foco*. The application of this strategy was marked by a number of actions by small groups without direct instruction from the organisation. Several cases using this model took place, among them the operations of Noordin M.

³ Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, *Catatan dari Penjara: Untuk Mengamalkan dan Menegakkan Darul Islam* [Notes from Prison: To practice and uphold Islamic Religion], (Depok: Mushaf, 2006)

⁴ Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, "Sistem Kaderisasi Mujahidin Dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Islam" [System of Nurturing Mujahedin Cadres in Creating Islamic Society], *Ansorullah*, June 27, 2007, http://ansorullah.multiply.com/journal/item/33/SISTEM_KADERISASLMUJAHIDIN_DALAM_MEWUJUDKAN_MASYARAKAT_ISLAM (accessed July 4, 2010)

⁵ Irfan Suryabardi Awwas, *Dakwah snf Jihad Abu Bakar Ba'asyir* [Proselytism and Jihad of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir] (Yogyakarta: Wihda Press, 2003)

Top and Dr. Azahari after the 2002 Bali bombing, which, according to JI insiders, were not authorised by the leadership. There are several other cases of *lone actor* attacks, including the 2006 bombing of an A&W restaurant in East Jakarta and the so-called bicycle bombing in 2010 of a traffic police post in Bekasi. These actions were driven by ideological reasons, such as the desire to undertake jihad that the perpetrators considered *fardu ain* or obligatory for all Muslims, rather than from a political desire to seize power. Their hope was that in undertaking these actions, their obligation to wage jihad would be fulfilled and would inspire others to do the same. Here, the snowball effect would cause *military-foco* actions to spread and be copied by others until a large movement had been generated to use violence against the government.⁶

A separatist insurgency is also underway in Papua, with insurgent groups striving to separate Papua from the Indonesian Republic (NKRI) and create an independent state. The separatist movement in Papua is extremely fragmented, unlike the Free Aceh Movement or Fretilin in East Timor that had a single network and command structure. Overall, this network of insurgents, due to the prevalence of various tribes in the area, has no single commander and every group has designated separate leaders.

There are two kinds of movements in Papua, with the first relying more on non-military means to achieve their goals. In Papua province, the best example is the West Papua National Committee (Komite Nasional Papua Barat, KNPB) based in Jayapura. The primary activity of this group is to spread propaganda in the local and international media and through its website. The group also mobilises mass demonstrations to raise the issue of independence, a referendum and human rights violations. International diplomatic activities are conducted by a KNPB contact, Benny Wenda, who tries to mobilise international support. The recent opening of a Free Papua Organisation (OPM) office in Oxford is one of his efforts.

Another prominent non-military group is the

⁶ Joshua Johnson, "From Cuba to Bolivia: Guevara's Foco Theory in Practice," *Innovations: a Journal of Politics* no. 6 (2006): 27

West Papua National Authority (WPNA) based in Manokwari. This group is smaller than KNPB and has cells in Biak, Serui and the city of Sorong. Its activities are also primarily mass mobilisation, demonstrations and using the media for propaganda. Violence is usually undertaken by an armed group called National Liberation Army-Free Papua Organisation (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional - Organisasi Papua Merdeka, TPN-OPM). Here three main networks are known and visible. *The first* is based in Mt. Tinggineri, Kabupaten Puncak Jaya and has cells throughout the regencies of Puncak Jaya, Puncak, Tolikara, Mimika, and Paniai. *The second* has its headquarters in the area of Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG) on the border with Indonesia and is known as Markas Victoria. Cells of this network are in the regencies of Kerrom, the Koya border, Puncak Jaya and Lanny Jaya. *The third* network is based in the jungle around Depapre, Jayapura regency. Its cells can be found in the city of Jayapura, Sarmi, Mamberamo Raya, Waropen, Yapen, Biak, Sorong and Raja Ampat.

These networks have memberships based on ethnicity and access to a limited weaponry. Their weapons come mainly from raids and thefts of firearms from the Indonesian police and military, but they are also purchased from gun dealers in PNG and the southern Philippines. The weapons come via the North Sulawesi Sea to Nabire route. They have minimum logistics support and financing, and lack a strong doctrine to build an armed movement. They rely more on the *military-foco* strategy, using small-scale guerrilla tactics to target members of the military and police. They also occasionally use terrorist tactics aimed at civilians, especially non-Papuan migrants.

Looking at the actions of the Papuan insurgent groups, the movement's efforts are still sporadic, it is divided and lacks a clear strategy. It is true that the KNPB has tried to unify all violent and non-violent factions to build a collective gradual strategy, albeit unsuccessfully, due to strong ethnic sentiments and a division between the coastal and highland communities, which do not like to be controlled by each other.

Strategies for Addressing Insurgencies in Indonesia

To counter the radical Islamist groups, the Indonesian police formed the Bomb Task Force (Satgas Bom) in 2002 and a special unit called Special Detachment 88 for Countering Terrorism in 2003. At a higher level, to improve inter-agency coordination, the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Security and Legal Affairs established a Special Desk for Handling Terrorism (Desk Khusus Penanggulangan Terorisme, DKPT). However, the authorities were aware that the law enforcement department and police could not solely solve the existence and operations of insurgent and terrorist groups. As such, the then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono set up the National Counter-Terrorism Agency in 2010 (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT) with the primary task of coordinating the efforts of law enforcement and intelligence, and implementing prevention and rehabilitation activities.

Indonesian law enforcement officials acted in accordance with the law to ensure that the public supported the stance of the government and realised that terrorists were violating the law and were not freedom fighters. The drawback of this strategy was that action was sometimes delayed because of the need to obtain evidence beforehand. This was sometimes difficult as the terrorists understood the need to avoid being ensnared by the law. Gathering evidence to bring a suspect to court became a major challenge for law enforcement, which has to use due process. The law was too inadequate to address terrorist tactics and actions, which the perpetrators used to their advantage in their bid to advance their struggle. In many countries, because terrorism is considered an unconventional crime, terrorist tactics are neutralised by a *crime control model*.⁷ This model has both its supporters and critics because the crime control model has the potential to violate human rights and reduce civil liberties. However, given the great risks to national security, it is necessary to find a legal formula that can balance protection of civil

⁷ This model focuses predominantly on regulation of law enforcement and national security in priority.

liberty and national security.⁸

While countering insurgency in Papua, the government believes that the root of the problem lies more in economic well-being than within ideological factors. In this regard, Marc Sageman states that the three main motives for terrorists are ideology, emotion and material gain.⁹ If the government regards ideology ('Salafi Jihadism') as the major motive for radical Islamist groups, then it will look towards counter-ideological means as a solution. However, since the government sees the economy as a major driver, the solution is to increase economic development to improve the standard of living of Papuans.

In 2001, the government pushed for the creation of Law No. 21/2001 on Special Autonomy for Papua. The law gave multiple special rights to the Papuans in the political, economic and socio-cultural sphere. For example, it specified that the head of government must be an indigenous Papuan, created the Papuan People's Council to handle customary issues and provided special funding to speed up development. Since 2002, the division of the region along various fault-lines has been speedy. In 2001, there was only one province and presently Papua has two parts: Papua and West Papua.

In addition, there were only ten regencies initially. Now, there are 43 in the province. In 2013, the funds allocated for the provincial budget reached Rp. 61 trillion (US\$6 billion), excluding the Rp. 33 trillion (US\$3 billion) in special autonomy funds that are managed by the provincial governments and various ministries in Jakarta. Despite many critics who see special autonomy as a failure to bring prosperity to the people of Papua, many others, both in and out of Papua, believe that special autonomy has succeeded in developing Papua's economy.

As with radical Islamist movements, the law enforcement approach by the police has been used to confront insurgents in Papua.

⁸ Jocelyne M. Pollock, *Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007)

⁹ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Network* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

The police have taken legal steps to address mass mobilisation, demonstrations and violent acts by these groups. The military, whose numbers exceed those of the police in Papua, is assigned to help the police to ensure security in addition to guarding the border areas.

After applying hard and soft approaches simultaneously, the radical Islamist and Papuan separatist insurgencies can be managed, if not eliminated completely. The focus on public support, political legitimacy and counter-propaganda to counter insurgencies indicates that these principles can be upheld through the soft approach (de-radicalisation and economic improvement) with the law enforcement representing the hard approach.

Role of Police in the Framework for Addressing Insurgency in Indonesia

In the framework outlined above, the police has a major role, especially in law enforcement. The police is expected to engage in prevention, in addition to detecting, exposing and preparing prosecutions for violations of the law by insurgent groups. In addition, effective law enforcement has a deterrent effect that puts pressure on insurgents while securing legitimacy and support from the public. In order to fulfill this role, the police must have the capacity for good detection and scientific criminal investigation, as well as a strike force capable of operating in various geographical terrains.

These capacities have developed with the formation of Detachment 88. It has a detection unit that conducts analysis using the latest technology, a team for technical intelligence, several well-trained surveillance teams and a team for informant handling. The capacity for scientific investigation is well-developed, with an interrogation team that understands the culture of terrorist groups, and an investigation team with experience. In addition, Detachment 88 has technical support from the Forensic Laboratory Center, the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) team and the Indonesian Automatic Fingerprints Identification System (INAFIS) team that can help with identification of insurgents. Operational support is also provided by the Bomb Task

Force (Satgas Bom), which was created after the 2002 Bali bombings. The Task Force can operate flexibly because it does not fall within the permanent structure of the police. Its members can be recruited and released from different work units within police headquarters or regional commands without going through cumbersome bureaucratic procedures.

In terms of its tactical capacity as a strike force, Detachment 88 receives support from the Mobile Police Brigade (Brimob). Members of tactical units receive special training in modern weapons so that they can operate in urban environments. In addition to the uniformed members (high profile), there are also teams for clandestine actions that wear civilian clothes (low profile). Detachment 88 and the Bomb Task Force have been able to put pressure on terrorist groups in the country through this capacity. Since 2002, hundreds of perpetrators have been prosecuted and brought to justice in open trials.

Despite the success of these units, the threat of terrorism has not been entirely neutralised. The networks continue to develop and terrorist incidents continue to take place. But the reactive policies of foiling attacks and conducting arrests are not holistic solutions. Instead, prevention, rehabilitation and far-reaching law enforcement policies should also be the focus. Cronin argues that terrorism and insurgency can end in six different ways: strong pressure from the state; political negotiations; tactical changes in the struggle away from violence and towards the adoption of peaceful means; loss of leadership; loss of public support; and the achievement of terrorist or insurgent goals.¹⁰

Thus, state pressure alone cannot guarantee an end to terrorism or insurgency. Other measures are needed beyond the use of force by the state. For example, more can be done in the areas of prevention and deradicalisation. The laws need to be strengthened further to limit the terrorist groups' mobility to prevent them from developing further and increasing their operational capabilities.

¹⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009)

As for the insurgency in Papua, the national police assigned control to the regional police command (Polda) in Papua, with support from other units including the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim), Brimob and the Intelligence Security Agency (Baintelkam). Polda has implemented a parallel policy, following the central government's policy of emphasising an economic development approach to resolving the insurgency.

The soft approach is adopted through community policing (Binmas), and an intelligence approach toward the insurgent network and its supporters and an effort to build support of Papuans toward the state. Polda has undertaken several 'soft' operations such as *Sahabat Matoa* and *Aman Matoa* that give primacy to the functions of intelligence, community policing and public relations. Cultural and religious peace-building approaches have also been used, given the strength of the customary (*adat*) and church networks in Papua. Formal and informal approaches to the local Papuan bureaucracy have been made through these networks, as they are influential.

Law enforcement represents the hard approach in Papua. It is conducted in accordance with both *adat* and national law, although *adat* law is more effective and efficient in resolving problems in Papua. Detection capabilities were strengthened by the formation of a technical intelligence and analysis team with a special task force at the level of Polda and several local police commands (Polres) that have the capacity for surveillance and informant handling. Polda's intelligence unit has been active in supporting and strengthening the Regional Intelligence Community (Komunitas Intelijen Daerah, KOMINDA) in Papua and West Papua so that it can undertake detection and covert operations (*penggalangan*) activities. Scientific investigation capacity has been developed by giving training to investigators from Polda and regency- and sub district-level commands (Polres and Polsek), with support from the INAFIS team. In several cases, the Criminal Investigation Agency has also actively supported investigations, while Polda's Brimob unit has improved its strike force capacity with support from a unit from Brimob headquarters. Occasionally tactical operations in Papua are supported by the

military. Law enforcement has seen a degree of success and multiple cases of violence have been resolved although there is still room for improvement.

Conclusion

There are several measures police can take to increase its effectiveness in countering both radical Islamist and Papuan separatist insurgencies. These include intensifying the inclusion of intelligence and community policing functions to implement approaches, cooptation and detection in prevention and rehabilitation efforts aimed at radical Islamist insurgents. Laws on terrorism should be revised to better safeguard national security. The police need to develop the tactical capabilities of Brimob to be more effective in undertaking operations in jungles and mountainous areas, within the law enforcement regulations and framework. This capacity is also important for supporting effective operations in Papua. Polda Papua's intelligence, community policing and public relations must be strengthened with the support of the necessary personnel, financing and equipment to maximise the effectiveness of the soft approach. In addition, to improve law enforcement, the detection capabilities of Polda Papua should be strengthened with training, equipment and budgetary support for analysis, technical intelligence and surveillance teams.

Police General Dr. Muhammad Tito Karnavian (M.A., Ph.D.) serves as the Chief of Indonesian National Police and was the Chief of Jakarta Regional Police and Head of National Agency for Counter Terrorism (BNPT) previously.

ASEAN Counter-terrorism Weaknesses

Marguerite Borelli

Introduction

Since 2016, the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), or Daesh, has sustained a propaganda offensive directed at Southeast Asian Muslims as they recruit Indonesians, Malaysians and Filipinos to join the war effort in Iraq and Syria, or to wage armed *jihad* in their own region.¹ IS' approach to Southeast Asia is a part of its regional, transnational agenda. Similar to Filipino, Indonesian, and Malay fighters being regrouped in the Katibah Nusantara, a Malay-speaking regional battalion on the Syrian-Iraqi front, IS propaganda addressed to local sympathisers calls for Southeast Asian jihadists of all nationalities to come together in Mindanao, located in South Philippines, to train and fight.² Moreover, as IS is losing ground on the Middle East front, it is actively seeking to establish a global, decentralised network of *wilayahs* (governorates).³ IS' efforts to capture territory in Southeast Asia will not stop at Marawi City – a part of which it currently occupies — as the group has previously attempted to establish a foothold in Poso, Indonesia⁴ and Malaysia.⁵

¹ See Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani and Jasmynder Singh. "Daesh-isation" of Southeast Asia's Jihadists." *RSIS Commentaries*. N°080. April 11, 2016. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16080-daesh-isation-of-southeast-asias-jihadists/>

² United Nations Security Council Counter-terrorism Committee (CTC). *Global survey of the implementation by Member States of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001)*. (2016), 52 and 54.

³ See Rohan Gunaratna. "Global Threat Forecast 2017." *RSIS Commentary*. N°316. December 19, 2016. . <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16316-global-threat-forecast-2017/>

⁴ See Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani and Jasmynder Singh. "Daesh-isation" of Southeast Asia's Jihadists." *RSIS Commentaries*. N°080. April 11, 2016. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16080-daesh-isation-of-southeast-asias-jihadists/>

⁵ Parameswaran, Prashanth. "Malaysia Says New Terror Group Trying to Create Islamic State." *The Diplomat*. January 8, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/malaysia-says-new-terror-group-trying-to-create-islamic-state/>

Given that the contemporary threat of terrorism within ASEAN is a regional one, it cannot be eradicated by any single state; a regional counter-terrorism strategy is therefore necessary. ASEAN⁶ stands out as the obvious forum for the development of such a collective response, as paragraph 2.2. of the organisation's mission statement, written into its founding *Bangkok Declaration*, states that ASEAN shall "promote regional peace and stability"⁷. Additionally, the 2007 *ASEAN Charter* introduces the concept of "collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity" (Art. 2.2.b.).⁸

In line with this mission, ASEAN has developed a substantive counter-terrorism arsenal in the years since 9/11. The cornerstones of these measures are the 2007 legally binding *ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism* (ACCT) and the subsequent 2009 *ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism*. In particular, the Association serves as an efficient platform for member states to promote moderation,⁹ engage in continuous dialogue on counter-terrorism policies, exchange best practices, and promote research into innovative ways of countering violent extremism.

However, as argued in this article, ASEAN's counter-terrorism arsenal remains

⁶ ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia*, Laos, Malaysia*, Myanmar, the Philippines*, Singapore*, Thailand*, and Vietnam (*founding member).

⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). *The Asean Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) Bangkok, 8 August 1967*. (1967). <http://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/>

⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). *Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*. November 20, 2007.

⁹ ASEAN formally endorsed the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM). See Global Movement of Moderates Foundation. "Introduction on GMMF." [date unknown]. <http://www.gmomf.org/about-us/introduction-on-gmmf/>

insufficient. Jonah Blank of the RAND Corporation notably states, “there are few mechanisms in place for genuine cooperation by all — or even most — ASEAN nations on any issue”.¹⁰ In addition, the UN Security Council Counter-terrorism Committee (CTC) recommended in its 2016 report that ASEAN “[s]trengthen [the] use of sub-regional instruments and mechanisms, including the ASEAN *Convention for Counter-Terrorism* and Plan of Action and the ASEAN *Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance*.”¹¹ This article touches upon ASEAN’s current counter-terrorism measures in order to provide an overview of the organisation’s weaknesses in this policy area. The first part presents the counter-terrorism insufficiencies created by structural factors pertaining to the nature of ASEAN, and the second highlights the lack of preventative counter-terrorism measures within the current framework.

Structural obstacles to counter-terrorism

The nature of ASEAN as an intergovernmental organisation whose member states are attached to the ‘ASEAN Way’ of policy-making means that it is based on consensus, respect of national sovereignty and non-interference into domestic matters. Therefore, ASEAN’s counter-terrorism role within the region includes being a general agenda-setter and facilitator, rather than acting as a driving force for the implementation of new measures.¹² This limited role translates into four overarching weaknesses within ASEAN counter-terrorism efforts.

Slow process

First, ASEAN policy-making is slow in its production of legislation as well as its ratification process and implementation of measures.¹³ While the time lag may not be

as problematic in other policy areas, efficient counter-terrorism requires timeliness. The institution should aim to anticipate and evolve in accordance with transformations and current trends in terrorism.

ACCT exemplifies this well. When the ACCT was signed in 2007, long after the idea for a regional counter-terrorism treaty emerged, Southeast Asia was one of the last regions of the world to adopt such legislation.¹⁴ The treaty came into effect in 2011 when six out of ten member states ratified it. But complete ratification within ASEAN only came in 2013 - six years after the treaty’s signature. Similarly, the idea for a regional extradition treaty has been discussed since the Bali bombings, but has not yet materialised, leading to the CTC’s reiteration in 2016 that the region should adopt such an instrument.¹⁵ In part due to slow processes, ASEAN has failed to impose itself as the dominant forum for regional counter-terrorism policymaking as regional states tend to prefer using bilateral arrangements. According to a senior ASEAN official, “bilateral cooperation between members has always been the most effective way of managing security issues in the region. There are sensitivities when it comes to security agenda and member countries certainly prefer it to be done on a bilateral basis.”¹⁶ However, since the territorial advances of IS in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and its efforts to set up *wilayahs* by courting and co-opting militant groups in volatile areas of the world such as Afghanistan and Mindanao, there is a greater appreciation for the need for regional cooperation between leaders.

In practice, Southeast Asia’s counter-terrorism landscape is highly complex and asymmetrical in terms of member states’ respective counter-terrorist capabilities, efficiency and involvement in transnational cooperation. These gaps can be exploited by terrorists, notably for the smuggling of foreign fighters and weapons, made evident by the

¹⁰ Chandran, Nyshka. “Is fighting terrorism key to ASEAN unity and credibility?” *CNBC*. October 9, 2016. <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/09/10/is-fighting-terrorism-key-to-asean-unity-and-credibility.html>

¹¹ See note 2, 52.

¹² Tan See Seng and Hitoshi Nasu. “ASEAN and the development of counter-terrorism law and policy in Southeast Asia.” *UNSW Law Journal*, Vol. 39 No.3 (2016): 1219-1238.

¹³ Ahmad, Abdul Razak. “The ASEAN Convention on Counter-terrorism 2007.” *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and Law*, Vol.14 No.1-2, (2013):93-147.

¹⁴ The treaty was in the works prior to 2003. See Human Rights Watch. *In the Name of Counter-Terrorism: Human Rights Abuses Worldwide*. March 25, 2003, 8.

<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/un/chr59/counter-terrorism-bck.pdf>

¹⁵ See note 2, “Priority issues/recommendations.” p.53.

¹⁶ See note 13, p.97.

presence of Uyghurs and other non-Southeast Asian militants in Mindanao.¹⁷

Weak concrete impact

Second, ASEAN produces 'soft' laws, using vague language and imposing "many uncertain obligations [on states]."¹⁸ Its counter-terrorism efforts are "a process of 'norm internalisation', rather than imposition of legal obligation".¹⁹ As the language in ASEAN legislation allows for different national interpretations, member states display varying levels of commitment to their spirit and implementation.

As such, the ACCT was never given a specific timeframe for implementation, nor did it clearly provide an enforcement mechanism to monitor and review member states' compliance to the Convention.²⁰ Indeed, the CTC reported in 2016 that, "[the] ASEAN Convention and Plan of Action, adopted in 2007 and 2009, respectively, do not appear to be effectively utilised."²¹ As of July 2017, important ACCT provisions such as the creation of a common regional intelligence database to facilitate cooperation between national intelligence services, law enforcement agencies, militaries and judiciaries has yet to be implemented at the regional level. The establishment of such a database is routinely encouraged by experts in the current context.²² It would allow national counter-terrorism professionals to save time and benefit from the context-specific, cultural and linguistic expertise of other member states, while ensuring that research is readily available and not unnecessarily duplicated.

¹⁷ See Ho, Ben and Yee, Chen May. "Danger close: Mindanao, and the terrorists next door." *Today online*. June 9, 2017..

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/big-read-terrorists-next-door-and-danger-close-mindano>

¹⁸ See note 12, p. 1236.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1238.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ See note 2, p. 52.

²² According to Professor R. Gunaratna "Governments must build common databases, exchange personnel (and) conduct joint training and operations to make the Asia-Pacific region hostile to ISIS and unfriendly to ISIS supporters." As quoted in Sim, Melissa. "Cooperation is key for Asean to fight terror" say experts." *The Straits Times*. June 29, 2015. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/cooperation-is-key-for-asean-to-fight-terror-say-experts>

Precedence of domestic issues

Third, very often domestic political considerations impede the development of regional counter-terrorism.²³ In fact, despite their strong rhetorical commitment to a regional strategy in ASEAN forums, member states treat counter-terrorism as a domestic issue. National counter-terrorism instruments within Southeast Asia differ widely. For instance, there are differences between the law enforcement in charge of counter-terrorism in Singapore and Malaysia and the military in Thailand and the Philippines.²⁴ Differing national counter-terrorism structures are not in themselves a counter-terrorism weakness of ASEAN but they do require regional policies to account for them, notably through international cross-institutional cooperation. For example, counter-terrorism cooperation between the Malaysian and Philippines police through ASEANAPOL, and between the militaries through ADMM (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting) is insufficient. Instead, Malaysian law enforcement and the Philippine military should also closely cooperate to obtain optimal results. ASEAN currently lacks a forum or procedure for such international cross-institutional cooperation.

Moreover, states also routinely "prioritise respect for state sovereignty...at the expense of their regional community interest."²⁵ According to Tan and Nasu, ASEAN counter-terrorism efforts should thus be appraised within the wider regional context where national counter-terrorism policies "are enmeshed with their own political agenda of national harmony and combating dissidents."²⁶ In the past, the precedence of domestic politics over regional counter-

²³ See note 13.

²⁴ Almuttaqi, Ibrahim. "Countering ISIS in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's Efforts at the Regional Level." Habibie Center, ASEAN Studies Program. February 18, 2016. [presentation slides] https://www.google.com.sg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUK_EwionozViaTVAhVGI5QKHWPPhAKEQFggkMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fadmin.thcasean.org%2Fassets%2Fuploads%2Ffile%2F2016%2F02%2FA_Ibrahim_Almuttaqi_Presentation_-_THC_-_31st_TA.pdf&usq=AFQjCNFs_YQsuc8T2ZYBE-QHzpBDDoYRVQ

²⁵ See note 12, p.1236.

²⁶ See note 12, p. 1238.

terrorism was visible in Indonesia's denial of Jemaah Islamiyah's presence, which allowed the group to flourish.²⁷ And history recently repeated itself, as the Philippines (under former president Aquino) denied the rise of IS on its territory to ease the finalisation of the Moro peace process. In both cases, governments turned a blind eye to terrorism within their borders, ultimately endangering the whole region by allowing the threat to consolidate further. Even as civil society experts warned regional governments of the developing threat,²⁸ other ASEAN members were prevented from taking direct action to protect the region as they adhered to the principle of non-interference. It can then be said that "rethinking the ASEAN principles and the 'ASEAN Way' is necessary if ASEAN is to deliver effective multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation."²⁹

Unresolved territorial claims translate into opportunity for terrorists

Finally, ASEAN counter-terrorism efforts are partially ineffective due to long-lasting administrative gaps within the region. It is no coincidence that the contemporary threat of Daesh in Southeast Asia is concentrated in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. This tri-border area, where the national borders of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines meet, has historically suffered from weak governance because of ongoing territorial disputes pertaining to islands and maritime borders.³⁰

²⁷ See the diplomatic incident between Singapore and Indonesia after Lee Kuan Yew (former PM) accused Indonesia of being soft on terrorists. See: "Lee Kuan Yew Interview Transcript." *CNN*. February 12, 2002.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/02/12/ta/ksia.lee.script/>; and "Jakarta: Singapore is too Authoritarian to Understand Us; Indonesia's Foreign Minister Gets in Jab at the Republic, Saying that in a Democratic System, Terrorism must be Dealt with Differently." *The Straits Times*. February 25, 2002.

²⁸ For the case of the Philippines, see Mangosing, Frances. "Marawi crisis was a lesson for us – Lorenzana." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. July 25, 2017. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/917448/marawi-crisis-was-a-lesson-for-us-lorenzana>; and Ylagan, Lea. "DND admits being unappreciative of intel reports on Maute-ISIS attacks in Mindanao." *UNTV*. July 27, 2017. <https://www.untvweb.com/news/dnd-admits-being-unappreciative-of-intel-reports-on-maute-isis-attacks-in-mindanao/>

²⁹ See note 13, p.119.

³⁰ Greer, Adam, and Watson, Zachary. "Countering radicalisation, extremism, and terrorism in Southeast Asia." Quilliam Foundation. August 10, 2016.

ASEAN should help resolve these disputes to ensure that state control over this area is re-established. The joint-maritime patrols implemented recently by the aforementioned countries are a clear sign that some member states are willing to move from cooperation to collaboration in order to face contemporary threats.³¹ However, as stated by the Singaporean Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen: "[The patrols were] a good start. But we recognize that there [is] a lot to be done, and that information sharing and intelligence [is] also a key area."³²

Lack of preventative counter-terrorism

Beyond counter-terrorism weaknesses endemic to ASEAN, the existing counter-terrorism framework is reaction-oriented and lacks a strong prevention and pre-crime chapter. Rose and Nestorovska assess that ASEAN "measures for prevention and intelligence cooperation are insubstantial. Their main strengths include providing procedures for mutual assistance in investigations and extradition arrangements."³³ Meanwhile, Ahmad also concludes that, "[t]here must be a shift in ASEAN's counter-terrorism paradigm from reactive measures to more robust preventive and protection strategies."³⁴

Preventing radicalisation, recruitment and recidivism

In light of the extensive use of modern communication technologies by terrorists, individuals vulnerable to extremist discourse

<https://www.quilliaminternational.com/countering-radicalisation-extremism-and-terrorism-in-southeast-asia/>

³¹ "ASEAN defence ministers sign joint declaration on combating terrorism." *Channel NewsAsia*. May 25, 2016. [author unknown] <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/asean-defence-ministers-sign-joint-declaration-on-combating-terr-8039886>

³² Chen Zixian. "Greater ASEAN-US cooperation in counter-terrorism, maritime security & disaster relief." *CyberPioneer*, Singaporean Ministry of Defence. October 2, 2016. https://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/resourcelibrary/cyberpioneer/topics/articles/news/2016/oct/02oct16_news.html

³³ See note 12, p. 1236.

³⁴ See note 13, p. 147.

tend to radicalise or self-radicalise online.³⁵ Any strategy aimed at disrupting radicalisation, recruitment and recidivism by former offenders must therefore include an online aspect. But states have so far experienced difficulty in dealing with online propaganda.³⁶ The Internet knows no boundaries and because IS has treated Southeast Asian Muslims as a homogenous target-demographic, ASEAN should occupy a substantial position in regional efforts to counter extremist ideology online. According to Greer and Watson, ASEAN should encourage, subsidise and implement, “local, data-driven restorative approaches to prevent and rehabilitate radicalisation.”³⁷

ASEAN has an advantage when it comes to countering extremism as its member states have considerable expertise especially with regards to rehabilitation and counter-propaganda. Some of ASEAN’s member states have been hailed globally for pioneering many of the most successful initiatives in the world especially with regard to rehabilitation and counter-propaganda. In particular, two examples of such innovative approaches should be mentioned. First, Singapore’s Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), which actively counters radicals’ misperceptions and instrumentalisation of Islam through a grassroots approach. This includes a counselling centre, a smartphone app, publications by religious scholars, conferences and community outreach events.³⁸

The second initiative is the RDC3, the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Centre recently launched by Malaysia. The centre counters IS propaganda and more specifically its misuse of the Muslim religion in cyberspace by disseminating content which was elaborated upon in collaboration with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM).³⁹

³⁵ See for instance Jasmine Jahwar. *Terrorists’ use of the Internet: The case of Daesh*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2016).

³⁶ See note 2, para 190-191.

³⁷ See note 30.

³⁸ See Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG). “About RRG.” [date unknown]. <https://www.rrg.sg/about-rrg/>

³⁹ Bernama. “Malaysia’s Counter-Messaging Centre combating terrorism, radical activities, says DPM.” *New Straits Times*. November 8, 2016.

These admirable national initiatives should be strongly supported, replicated and disseminated in various ASEAN member countries.

Critical infrastructure protection

Despite its high-pace economic growth and proportional reliance on critical systems, infrastructure and information technologies, ASEAN has also been slow in planning for the protection of its critical infrastructure (CIP).⁴⁰ Indeed, the ASEAN Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resilience Asia (CIP Asia) conference was only established in mid-2015, and is set to gather industry, governments and agencies every two years to exchange on CIP.

According to the CIP Asia website, ASEAN has established disaster management teams under its *Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response* (AADMER), but “none is geared towards the protection of critical infrastructure.”⁴¹ Moreover, the 2008 CTC report “identifies that vulnerabilities still exist in some areas such as border control...whilst there are shortfalls in the implementation of international standards of aviation, maritime and cargo security.”⁴² As the integration of the Economic Community progresses, notably through the launch of cross-national projects such as the Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline and the ASEAN Power Grid, ASEAN should encourage and participate in efforts to harden new and existing targets to protect

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/11/186976/malaysias-counter-messaging-centre-combating-terrorism-radical-activities-says>

⁴⁰ ASEAN defines critical infrastructure as the “primary physical structures, technical facilities and systems which are socially, economically or operationally essential to the functioning of a society or community, both in routine circumstances and in the extreme circumstances of an emergency.” See Amul, Gianna Gayle. “ASEAN’s Critical Infrastructure and Pandemic Preparedness.” RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) blog. January 22, 2013. <https://ntsblog.wordpress.com/2013/01/22/aseans-critical-infrastructure-and-pandemic-preparedness/>

⁴¹ Critical Infrastructure Protection & Resilience Asia. [no title]. [date unknown] <http://cip-asia.com/>

⁴² Hafidz, Tatik S. “A Long Row to Hoe: A Critical Assessment of ASEAN Cooperation on Counter-Terrorism.” *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, Vol.11 (December 2009). <https://kyotoreview.org/issue-11/a-long-row-to-hoe-a-critical-assessment-of-asean-cooperation-on-counter-terrorism/>

critical infrastructure in the region. In addition, ASEAN should increase preparedness in the event of terrorist attacks as, “a terrorist attack against critical infrastructure is likely to have implications beyond national borders.”⁴³ Critical infrastructure in the form of water and energy supplies, transport systems and information infrastructure is a valuable target for terrorists and attacks against such systems are globally on the rise.⁴⁴

In particular, ASEAN lacks actionable research on regional vulnerabilities.⁴⁵ In the future, the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF) could be assigned the task of raising awareness and promoting CIP knowledge transfers following the example of the Catastrophe and Risk Management in ASEAN (CARMA). CARMA is an online portal where interested parties can research regional risk management systems to reinforce natural disaster preparedness, resilience and mitigation.⁴⁶

As stated by Feakin, “research is urgently needed to get a better grasp on the threat environment, especially as the region is expected to see rapid expansion in infrastructure delivery [expected to reach a US\$20 billion worth by 2020]”.⁴⁷ Along similar lines, ASEAN should also strongly push for member states to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2341 (2017) on the protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks.

⁴³ United Nations Security Council Counter-terrorism Committee (CTC) Executive Directorate. “Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure Against Terrorist Attacks.” *CTED Trends Report*. (2016):12.

⁴⁴ Zahri Yunus. “Cybersecurity Initiatives in Securing ASEAN Cyberspace.” CyberSecurity Malaysia. May 11, 2016. [presentation slides] <http://www.connect2sea.eu/news-and-events/news/details/Towards-new-avenues-in-EU-ASEAN-ICT-collaboration-Highlights-and-presentations.html?file=files/connect2sea/files/Worksops/Final%20conference/Session%203/11%20-%20CyberSecurity%20Initiatives%20-%20Dr%20Zahri%20Yunos.pdf>

⁴⁵ Tobias Feakin. “Building critical infrastructure resilience in the Asia-Pacific.” Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), *The Strategist*. August 5, 2015. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/building-critical-infrastructure-resilience-in-the-asia%20AD-pacific/>

⁴⁶ See Catastrophe and Risk Management in ASEAN (CARMA). “About us.” [date unknown] <http://www.carma-asean.com/index.php>

⁴⁷ See note 45.

Finally, the urgent need for CIP within ASEAN does not only apply to the physical realm, but also to cyberspace because modern critical infrastructure is increasingly reliant on the Internet. Multiple reports conclude that ASEAN states are highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks because of their rapidly expanding economies, online presence and parallel digitisation of various critical systems. But ASEAN has, again, been too slow in reacting to the growing threat of cyber-terrorism. Indeed, in 2014, Heintz estimated that “national and regional efforts to adopt comprehensive cybersecurity strategies have been slow and fragmented. Similarly, the efforts of the ten ASEAN member states to adopt both national and comprehensive regional frameworks for cybersecurity have so far been piecemeal.”⁴⁸ Two years later in 2016, the situation had not evolved, as summarised by Stacia Lee:

“[o]fficial cyber security and information and communication technology (ICT) policies primarily function as mechanisms to either aid ASEAN’s growing economy or limit crimes that hinder the further development of legal business channels (...) illustrat[ing] ASEAN’s historic function as a regional trade group rather than a cohesive political and legal body. Strong cybersecurity policy in and of itself has never been adequately prioritised, leaving member states vulnerable to cybercrime through a lack of compliance mechanisms, institutional disconnect, and uneven national legal capabilities.”⁴⁹

In 2015, the discovery of the virus APT30 by Fire Eyes, a cyber-security firm, illustrated the inadequacy of ASEAN cyber-protection. Indeed, the virus, which had gone undetected for 10 years, had infiltrated ASEAN member states’ critical information networks to collect government and military

⁴⁸ Caitríona H. Heintz. “Regional Cybersecurity: Moving Toward a Resilient ASEAN Cybersecurity Region.” *Asia Policy*. Vol. 18 (July 2014).

⁴⁹ Stacia Lee. “ASEAN Cybersecurity Profile: Finding a Path to a Resilient Regime.” *The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington*. April 4, 2016. <https://jsis.washington.edu/news/asean-cybersecurity-profile-finding-path-resilient-regime/>

sensitive information, “particularly around the time of official ASEAN meetings.”⁵⁰ While this virus is believed to have been launched by Chinese-affiliated hackers,⁵¹ it does highlight vulnerabilities in ASEAN’s cyber-infrastructure that can be manipulated by terrorists. For instance, IS is known to target individuals with the know-how for sophisticated cyber-attacks for recruitment.⁵² Furthermore, ASEAN’s vulnerability in cyberspace is increased by a general underestimation of the threat among leaders in the private and public sectors, as observed by FireEye APAC CTO Bryce Boland. He stated that, “organizations in Asia feel they are not likely to be a target of advanced cyber threat.”⁵³

Conclusion

ASEAN has so far been a successful discussion forum bringing Southeast Asian states together around the topic of counter-terrorism. However, its lack of responsiveness to contemporary developments and a general lack of political appetite for collective security and responsibility in the region have prevented it from acting as a driving force and an architect of regional counter-terrorism.

However, the intrinsic transnational nature of the current threat of IS in Southeast Asia provides a strong impetus for regional cooperation and collaboration, and even more so as regional member states will in the coming months be faced with similar problems linked to the return of IS fighters from the Middle East and Marawi City.

This pressing need for a regional counter-terror strategy is publicly recognised by the ASEAN member states that face the highest threat levels, as exemplified by the tri-lateral sea patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. However, it will take time for this instance of

collaboration to lead to an increase in multilateral counter-terrorism activities under the scope of ASEAN.

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⁵⁰ Fire Eye Labs/Fire Eye Threat Intelligence. *Special Report: APT30 and the mechanics of a long-running cyber espionage operation*. April 2015:19. <https://www2.fireeye.com/rs/fireeye/images/rpt-apt30.pdf>

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See note 44.

⁵³ Boland, Bryce. “APT30 and Lessons for ASEAN.” *Fire Eye*. April 12, 2015. https://www.fireeye.com/blog/executive-perspective/2015/04/apt30_and_lessonsfo.html

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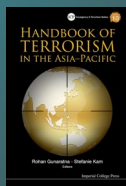
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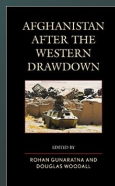


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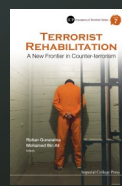
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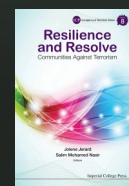
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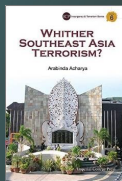
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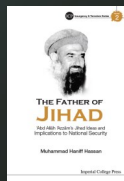
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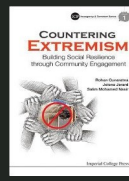
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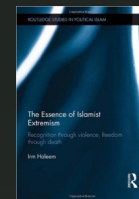
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