



Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

Osman, Sulastri (2010),
Jemaah Islamiyah: Of Kin and Kind, in:
Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 29, 2, 157-175.
ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:
<www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org>

Published by
GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and
Hamburg University Press.

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is an Open Access publication.
It may be read, copied and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.

To subscribe to the print edition: <ias@giga-hamburg.de>
For an e-mail alert please register at: <www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org>

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is part of the GIGA Journal Family which
includes: Africa Spectrum • Journal of Current Chinese Affairs • Journal of Current
Southeast Asian Affairs • Journal of Politics in Latin America •
<www.giga-journal-family.org>



Jemaah Islamiyah: Of Kin and Kind

Sulastri Osman

Abstract: Convicted terrorists from Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have attested to using the Internet in one way or another during their operations, from sending messages to one another to looking for extremist *fatwas* online to justify their actions. That said, however, one would be hard pressed to prove the primacy of the Internet in their transition to violence. More often than not, more traditional elements – blood relations and marriage ties – remain the key to individual religious radicalization and political violence in Southeast Asia. This paper revisits these kinship linkages as well as quasi-kinship ones that include teacher–disciple bonds and the wider fraternity of *ikbwan*-ship (brotherhood) with particular regard to JI. Keeping counter-terrorism efforts in context is important or else governments could run the risk of carelessly allocating vital resources to less immediate concerns.

Keywords: Indonesia, Jemaah Islamiyah, political violence

Sulastri Osman is a research analyst attached to the Centre of Excellence for National Security at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. She is also a graduate student at this school. Her research focuses on religious radicalization, Islamist militancy and political violence in Indonesia. E-mail: <ISSulastri@ntu.edu.sg>

Introduction: Prioritizing Concerns

Much media attention has been accorded to the rise of lone-wolf Islamist terrorists whose journeys towards religious radicalization and political violence were enabled and facilitated through their consumption of the extremist materials especially prevalent on the Internet. Youths and young adults alienated from mainstream society, as the argument largely goes, gravitate towards one another online and form virtual extremist communities whose ideology helps make sense of their personal grievances and whose cause resonates so much with them that they become willing to engage in violence.¹

The premise is open to debate, for it calls into question, among other things, notions of independent will and personal accountability when it comes to the individual's decision to turn violent as well as the exercise of rights (and limits) to freedom of expression in cyberspace. Also, deciding which websites and what kinds of content are "extremist" is a subjective affair, varying from country to country and from one individual to another. Further, devising ways of measuring increased levels of radicalization *and* of attributing that increase to exposure to extremist materials on the Internet is an entirely different issue altogether.

But this is not what this paper is about.² Regardless of whether the premise can be supported or refuted, and while convicted terrorists in this part of the world have attested to utilizing the Internet in some ways during their operations, one would be hard pressed to prove the primacy of the Internet in their transition to violence. More often than not, more traditional elements – blood relations and marriage ties – remain the key to individual religious radicalization and political violence in Southeast Asia. This paper revisits these kinship linkages as well as quasi-kinship ones that include teacher-disciple bonds and the wider fraternity of *ikhwan*-ship (brotherhood) with particular regard to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). It could be yet another write-up to add to the ever-expanding repertoire of literature on terrorism today, but hopefully this paper adds some value to the existing body of works because of its primary research component. Also, as part of its policy

1 For instance, see Bruce Hoffman's (2006) *The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists*, Gabriel Weimann's (2008) "Online Terrorists Prey on the Vulnerable" and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross's (2006) "The Problem of the Lone-Wolf Terrorist". The author has also jointly written a piece on Internet radicalization; see RSIS-ASPI joint report "Countering Internet Radicalization in Southeast Asia".

2 This article is a revised version of Working Paper No 194, published online by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, March 2010.

suggestions, this paper emphasizes the importance of keeping counter-terrorism efforts in context; otherwise governments could run the risk of carelessly allocating vital counter-terrorism resources to less immediate concerns.

But first off, it is important to recognize what JI really is as an organization. How did JI come about and how has it evolved into what it is today? And considering what it is today – a greatly fragmented, highly decentralized entity with very fluid membership – how relevant is it to regard JI as an organization at all? And if it is indeed irrelevant to do so, what does combating a “non-organization” then mean for counter-terrorism for this region?

Jemaah Islamiyah: In Context and As Is

JI is a clandestine Islamist group with roots deep in the Darul Islam movement of the fifties, an episode in history that has had crucial repercussions for Muslim politics in Indonesia many years down the road. It is therefore important to understand Darul Islam in order to understand JI.

Studying the Darul Islam movement has twin benefits for all students in the terrorism field who are even remotely interested in looking at Indonesia. For one, a look at Darul Islam’s history allows not just a proper understanding of how and why JI came about but also a glimpse of one highly probable future pathway of the group. Second, it helps situate JI within the larger context of identity politics in Indonesia, a Muslim-dominated country with a long history of having Islam appear in various shapes and forms in the public sphere.

Religion has at numerous junctures in Indonesia’s history – when fighting the Dutch, at independence and during subsequent phases of nation building – provided a significant, convenient and resounding rallying point around which to mobilize the masses. The politicization of Islam in Indonesia is as “normal” as identity politics gets, and it is not at all uncommon for religious identities in contemporary societies to be politicized considering the ever-increasing reach of the state in various aspects of modern day-to-day life. For Indonesia, however, violent religious groups operating on the fringes of society hog the world’s attention, effectively eclipsing the much larger dynamics at play.

The Darul Islam movement was not a particularly religious one to begin with (for backgrounders, see Bruinessen 2002 and ICG 2005). It came about largely because local militias which had helped the indigenous authority fight off the colonialists were unhappy over the way the new government went about administrating the then freshly minted independent state. Feel-

ing short-changed for having to disband without receiving what they felt was an appropriate share of the resources at the state's disposal, the leaders of the movement saw Islam as a common ground for mobilization. Beginning in 1948, with separate rebellions breaking out in different parts of the country, Darul Islam fought for an Islamic alternative to secular statehood. Over the years the movement gave rise to, among other things, a home-grown concept of jihadism and offshoots and splinter groups the likes of Komando Jihad and JI as well as numerous other non-violent ones that all revolved around the desire to establish an Islamic state.

Darul Islam, with its religious ideology seeped in militancy and its great tales of fearless warriors who would fight against all odds, has proven to be extremely enduring through the trials of time. Prominent members of the movement continue to be the stuff of legend and an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the jihadists of today.³ The movement has also demonstrated a tremendous ability to survive. It faced a brutal military crackdown during Suharto's New Order regime and it has experienced numerous intra-group rivalries, split factions, mergers and reconciliations over and above an assortment of splinter groups of different political configurations with different leaders at the helms. All in all it has demonstrated dexterity and the capacity not merely to adapt but also, more importantly, to remain appealing through different periods of Indonesian history.

But in being so fluid, the Darul Islam of today, with its many manifestations, is not like the Darul Islam of the past. From its nascent beginnings as a coherent organization of networks, Darul Islam has transformed into a network of individuals who forge alliances based on close and very personal ties. And in very similar fashion, this is what JI is today.

JI was formally founded in 1993 after friction within Darul Islam resulted in the late Abdullah Sungkar leaving to form a split faction. Conceived from the outset as a military outfit with its own charter, operational guidelines and strategic programmes – as evident from its so-called manifesto, entitled *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah* (General Guide for the Struggle of al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah, or better known by its Indonesian acronym, PUPJI) – JI started out as a highly centralized and well-structured organization (see Pavlova 2006). Management was very top-down with a clear hierarchical order; the group operated at the various

3 For example, individuals such as Musa Warman, whose "achievements" included organizing *fa'i* raids to obtain funds and weapons, could very well be controversial, but their stories live on; see ICG 2005.

markaziyah, *mantiqi* and *wakalah* levels that spanned the region, each with its own spheres of influence and responsibilities.⁴

But after the September 11 attacks, and particularly after the first Bali bombings, known and suspected members of JI were relentlessly pursued in massive crackdowns across Southeast Asia, leaving many observers to posit that the group has now been dismantled and reduced to nothing more than a mere shell of its former self.⁵ The formation of the elite Indonesian counter-terrorism force Detachment 88, fine police work and high-level regional cooperation have led to either the capture or death of the group's most notorious members, such as Riduan Isamuddin, a.k.a. Hambali; the Bali bombers and their accomplices; and bomb expert Azahari Husin.

Yet despite such heavy setbacks, JI continues to be credited with a string of high-profile terrorist attacks across Indonesia over the years subsequent to 9/11, including the (first) J.W. Marriott Hotel bombing of 2003, the Australian embassy bombing of 2004, and the (second) Bali bombings of 2005. Through attacks on what are regarded as symbols of encroachment and moral decadence on the part of the corrupt, capitalist West – luxury hotels and bars and pubs – JI seems set on its course to establish a pan-Islamic state by means of violence and fear.

But to speak of JI today as if it were an organizationally cohesive entity, something one could understandably expect any fringe group to be, is misinformed and demonstrates a lack of appreciation of the group's extremely amorphous nature. For one, the violent elements are truly the fringe of a fringe. The Bali bombings of 2002, for instance, caused major internal debates within the group, some of which played out publicly in the media. Even firebrand Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, widely tagged as one of the founders of JI, registered his lack of concurrence with the way the Bali trio had chosen to carry out their act of jihad (*imilab.com* 2009) and expressed sympathy for those who were killed in the suicide bombings (*Tempo Interaktif* 2002).

Further, an even closer examination of JI's violent sliver reveals that it hardly demonstrates ideological unity in terms of strategic means, even if its overall goal is one and the same; this will become evident later in the paper through the discussion of Ali Imron, who is currently in detention for his

4 Nasir Abas, in a radio interview in 2006, described the workings of the various operational levels. See transcript on Indonesia Matters website, online: <<http://www.indonesiamatters.com/104/nasir-abas-on-jamaah-islamiyah/>> (21 February 2010).

5 This is how JI has been widely described in the media and by various terrorism analysts since the arrest and prosecution of the Bali bombers. For one example among many, see Kurlantzick 2008.

involvement in the Bali terrorist attack. So while the individuals in this sliver shore up an Islamist ideology fixated on installing the laws of *syariah* (sharia) in the public domain largely by picking up arms, they believe in doing so by greatly divergent means. Different JI militants wage categorically different “jihad” – some wage a global one where the entire world is a justifiable battlefield, while others would only fight in localized conflicts where other Muslims are involved – and this has a significant impact on how they conceptualize what makes a legitimate fight and which operations they ultimately participate in (Osman, working MSc thesis, forthcoming).

Also, while some choose to keep their allegiance closed to open scrutiny, remaining underground and confining themselves to their small, exclusivist communities, others go public with their commitment to above-board assemblages such as Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), led by Abu Jibril and Ba’asyir respectively. Regardless of their associations, or lack of them, they have all nevertheless been linked back to JI.

The messiness of the configuration is further compounded by repeated denials by alleged group members that JI exists at all. Ba’asyir has time and again rebuffed the existence of such an organization, instead crediting its invention to the enemies of Islam – among others, the CIA – who seek to tarnish the good name of the religion and its followers in order to justify repressive actions against them (*Tempo Interaktif* 2002). Also, while Ali Imron has indeed claimed to be part of a “*jemaah Islamiya*”, he meant the term in its most generic application, regarding himself as being in *the* one congregation of Islam and altogether denying that it is an exclusive organization (*Tempo Interaktif* 2005). Coining an outfit synonymous with terrorism with an all-encompassing moniker that can literally be as expansive as to include the entire Islamic community renders the attempt to delineate an actual organization in Muslim-dominated Indonesia not merely a tedious task but also a politically thorny one. This further muddies the conceptualization of a JI organization.

The (Non-)Organization That Is Jemaah Islamiyah

What makes JI, or who is part of JI, are oft-posed questions. But perhaps what’s more important to ask is how relevant the concept of a JI organization is when its purported members seem to hardly recognize such an organization.

The existence of a clearly delineated group no doubt makes it easier for law enforcers and policymakers alike to set their sights and course of action

on a particular target, to identify irrefutable members, to calculate group strength, and to basically imagine the enemy. But when interviewed as part of the author's fieldwork in Indonesia last year, a number of convicted Islamist militants who have been charged with various terrorist activities by the Indonesian government hardly spoke of a JI organization. In fact, some claimed only to know of JI after reading about themselves or their compatriots in the news. Many were more content to speak of their roles in operations as individuals or, at most, their roles in relation to their immediate network of compatriots.

Sonhadi, for instance, the current leader of the Ba'asyir-led JAT in East Java who had served time for helping the late terrorist fugitive Noordin Top when the latter was on the run, kept reiterating that he had acted not in the name of an entity called JI but out of a personal duty to a fellow Muslim who had had a run-in with the law and was trying to evade authorities. Sonhadi, unaware of Top's true identity at the time, had only needed to know that the police were after Top for having done something the latter believed to be for the sake of Islam (Interview, 17 June 2009).

For Yusuf, a militant who once trained under Nasir Abas in Mindanao and was later arrested in Semarang for possession of illegal arms, what was real was not so much the group as the cause and the fellow militants he had fought alongside in the southern Philippines. He did not find himself in a *medan jihad* (jihad battlefield) because he had sworn an oath of allegiance to a group of elders – he had never done so – but rather because he was committed to helping Muslim brothers whom he believed were under prosecution. Further, Yusuf claimed that his loyalty to the cause and to his comrades was only applicable to the battlefield in Mindanao and nothing more, thus highlighting a lack of consistent positive self-identification with the group (Interview, 14 March 2009).

JI, it seems, cannot be sufficiently understood in terms of any standard organization because, as Sonhadi and Yusuf show, those who have been associated with JI do not necessarily view themselves as members of such a grouping. It is true that the elders did initially put in place a kind of group arrangement that can only be considered a networked organization with different cells operating at different levels, something which left members largely unaware of others beyond their own jurisdictions, but that was more the result of intentional, masterful planning than inadvertent internal fragmentation. Today JI arguably has neither easily identifiable members united in means and goals nor a structured system with a discernible hierarchical order.

Nevertheless, there is a sort of organizational arrangement among its known members and it is one largely based on kinship and quasi-kinship

linkages. Kinship ties include blood and marriage relations;⁶ quasi-kinship ties include bonds between extremist religious teachers and their students, which should not be underestimated because they are not unlike a familial bond wherein the latter's loyalty and obedience to the former is paramount. Additionally, relations also extend into the realm of fictive kinship where everyone is an *ikbwan*.⁷

The following sections examine the various kinship and quasi-kinship linkages evident among known JI terrorist militants.

A Family Affair: Kinship in Jemaah Islamiyah

Ji is made up of a complex web of familial relationships and marriage ties. An inherent sense of belonging, of being part of a family, forges bonds among its members that are stronger than those most other kinds of social organizations can foster. Further, keeping activities, especially illegal ones, within the family helps keep clandestine operations safe from infiltration because only the close, familiar and trusted find themselves invited to partake. Loyalty is therefore almost always assured because the individual's allegiance is not to just any collective; rather, turning against the collective necessarily means turning against the people one is closest to.

For the most part, families can be expected to provide the unconditional support and protection needed by terrorist militants when they are involved in high-risk endeavours. As the following examples show, there have been numerous instances where family members of terrorist militants have willingly put themselves at risk in order to keep their renegade kin safe, whether by providing refuge, withholding information from the authorities or simply banding together.

6 The examination of kinship ties within JI is not unprecedented; among the most notable works are investigative pieces by Noor Huda Ismail, Sidney Jones and the ICG, and Sally White.

7 In *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) Mark Sageman notes the significance of closed societies in facilitating the turning of a "bunch of guys" in the West to violence; and based on the research in a *New Yorker* piece by Raffi Khatchadourian, Sageman describes the emotional attachment of group members to one another, the perceived social benefits of remaining in the group, and "one-upmanship" as part of the radicalization process towards violence. Also, Scott Atran, on the basis of psychological studies, highlights the institutional factor behind the organizing of fictive kin to help explain suicide-terrorism behaviour in the Middle East and beyond. See Atran 2003.

Blood Relations

The October 2002 Bali bombings saw a family of brothers pooling strength. Ali Ghufron, a.k.a. Mukhlas, and Amrozi, both executed in November 2008 for the attack, were brothers. Ali Imron, brother number three, is currently serving a life sentence in a Jakarta detention centre for his role in the same operation. The significance of blood relations is especially telling in this particular case because Imron, by his own admission, had always felt that bombing Bali was the wrong way of going about the struggle for Islam, even if he did play a central role in planning the attack. He was the one who surveyed the sites and identified the bomb targets; he also drove the explosive-laden van into position nearer to the attack location because the suicide bomber did not know how to drive. Imron recalls having advised Mukhlas, the master planner and financier, on several occasions against carrying on with the operation; he nevertheless continued with his assigned duties because Mukhlas was, after all, his brother (Interview, 17 April 2009).

Also sticking together are Farihin Ahmad and his relations. Three generations of Islamist militants run in the family.⁸ Farihin claimed during an interview that his father and grandfather had waged armed jihad against the governing authorities of their times. His father, Ahmad Kandai, a member of Darul Islam, was in fact involved in the 1957 plot to assassinate then-president Sukarno, whereas his uncle, Nasir, worked closely with both Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in the 1980s and 1990s. Following in the family tradition, Farihin and his third brother, Mohammed Islam, had travelled to Poso to join in the violent clashes against the Christians there at the height of the communal violence in Central Sulawesi. Farihin was also involved in the bomb attack on the Philippine ambassador in Jakarta in 2000 together with his other brother, Abdul Jabar. His youngest brother, Solahudin, was involved in a series of bombings in Indonesia, including the bombing of the Atrium shopping mall in 2001. The fact that all of the brothers have served time in prison for their various actions has not deterred Farihin from preaching the necessity of armed jihad to his own children. Farihin hopes his children, including his daughters, will follow in his footsteps and continue to fight for the cause the way he and his family have (Interview, 15 March 2009).

Family ties among the perpetrators were similarly evident in last year's terrorist attack in Jakarta. Syaifudin Zuhri Djaelani, the recruiter of the

8 Many of those involved in JI today have relatives who were involved in the Darul Islam movement of yesteryear. To gain a further understanding of JI's history, see Fealy 2005.

suicide bombers who blew themselves up in the twin luxury hotel attacks in July 2009, had his brother, Mohamed Syahir, as his closest aide. Together they assumed various identities as they travelled to different Indonesian cities, recruiting new helpers into their fold, until they were shot to death during a police raid on their safe house in Tangerang in October. The man-hunt would perhaps have ended earlier if not for Fajar Firdaus, a psychology graduate from a local university who helped rent the safe house for them. He was their nephew.

Marriage Ties

Kinship within JI is further extended through marriage ties. The director of the Institute of International Peace Building in Jakarta, Noor Huda Ismail, who counts a good number of the terrorist militants as his friends, having gone to school with some of them, explained that JI elders would play matchmaker to the younger members by fixing them up with their sisters, daughters or other female relatives, or those of their peers (Noor Huda Ismail 2005). According to Noor Huda, “once inside these [extremist] groups, individuals cement their mutual bonds by marrying the sisters and daughters of other members. Therefore, it is difficult for an individual to move away from the groups without betraying their closest friends and family” (*The Jakarta Globe* 2009).

Such arranged marriages, like the strategic union between Mukhlas, the Afghan veteran from East Java who would later become the mastermind behind the Bali bombings, and Paridah Abas, the daughter of a family of jihadists based in Malaysia, help to expand the network in a most secure way. With this particular nuptial agreement, close associates of both Sungkar and Ba’asyir from Indonesia and from neighbouring Malaysia effectively became one familial unit. The Abas family, like Mukhlas’ own, has its own share of Islamist militants: Nasir Abas, Paridah’s brother, who is also an Afghan veteran, trained militants from a base camp in Mindanao, while brother Hashim Abas was reportedly involved in a bomb plot in Singapore (for a backgrounder on Hashim Abas, see Burton and Landingin 2002).

Another such marital pact highlights the JI tactic of matrimonial mergers for protection purposes. Ari Aryani, wife number three of Noordin Top, the now-dead terrorist fugitive suspected to be the mastermind behind the Jakarta twin hotel bombings, is the daughter of one of Top’s close associates, Bahrudin Latif. A police raid on Bahrudin’s house in light of the July bombings led to the discovery of explosives buried in the backyard. Bahrudin, who was arrested in December 2009, was the head of the Al-Muaddib *pesantren* in Cilacap and is suspected of helping hide Top from the authorities to the extent of providing him a completely new identity as his daughter’s

husband (*theOne* 2009). According to local press reports, it was apparent that Bahrudin did not disclose her future husband's real identity to his daughter when he arranged for them to be married; she had only known Top as a particular Abdul Halim (see for example Sumarwoto 2009). Top's previous two wives, one in Riau and one in Surabaya, were also reported to have been related to and have had their marriages arranged by the relatives of his previous accomplices (*The Jakarta Globe* 2009). That said, however, Top's wives are not necessarily mere victims of their fathers' or their other male relatives' jihadist cause, because, as Sally White (2009) points out, independent agency should never be overlooked. The reality on the ground is usually far more complex than the way in which the media chooses to portray such women.

Expanding the Concept: Quasi-kinship in Jemaah Islamiyah

Blood and marriage are not the only kinds of binding kin ties among JI members. While being genealogically related of course matters in kinship, notions of relatedness are just as significant in bringing together a group of people who think, feel and act alike. However, when speaking of a sense of perceived relatedness among a collective, there is a danger of clumsy categorizing because everyone can essentially relate to one another on many different levels and have social relationships with one another as, among other things, friends, neighbours, classmates or colleagues (see Holy 1996: 143-173, chap. 7: "Universality of Kinship and the Current Practice of Kinship Studies"). That said, relatedness when it comes to JI is rather closely associated with actual kinship in terms of name and function, something which helps further buttress the in-group understanding of an "us" versus a "them".⁹

Discipleship

A form of relationship evident in JI that is not so dissimilar from that based on an authoritative father figure is that involving charismatic religious elders.

9 In applying social psychologist Geert Hofstede's work on culture to his radical pathways framework, which helps explain why individuals turn to violence, Kumar Ramakrishna in his book *Radical Pathways* (2009) highlights a pattern of strong dependence on group elders in large, collectivist, and power-distant groups much like JI. He also showcases how teachers actively shape the intellectual futures of children in such groups.

These men include figures like the *guru ngaji* (Quran recital teacher) and traditional medicine men who might not have had a formal education but who, having usually committed the Quran and Hadith to memory, garner much respect. The great significance of these religious elders in many Muslim societies across Indonesia, though not a novel observation, has not been much appreciated as a form of kinship whose bonds are just as strong as any blood or marriage ties. Religious elders, who of their own accord take it as their *amanah* (trusteeship) to educate those in their charge about Islam and Islamic ways of living, are often entrusted with the religious education of the children, and with religion being an all-encompassing force in everyday life, they essentially have far-reaching influence over most aspects of day-to-day life.¹⁰ Thus in their roles as educators and healers, spiritual or otherwise, it is not uncommon that they in effect come to be regarded as extensions of the heads of household.

Even in a time of advanced communications technology and with the democratization of ways to attain religious knowledge through the mass print media and the Internet, the sway of such religious elders has not been significantly undermined. The centrality of religious figures – extremist ones in this particular case – in various militant and terrorist operations in Indonesia showcases the lasting influence of charismatic individuals over their disciples. Samudra, the Bali bomber whose real name was Abdul Aziz, deliberately chose to attach the title of *imam* to his name, no doubt to create the impression that his actions possessed legitimate religious authority. He is said to have used the dubious appellation of religious leader particularly after participating in a series of bomb attacks in Batam in 2000.¹¹ Similarly, Syai-fudin Zuhri, the patient recruiter of suicide bombers, was reported in the local press to have assumed the role of an *ustadz* as well as an *abli bekam* (traditional medicinal cupping practitioner) as he worked to get closer to his potential targets in the lead-up to the July 2009 twin hotel bombings in Jakarta (see *Tempo* 2009 and *Viva News* 2009). Both suicide bombers involved in the attacks had been his students.

Fraternity of *Ikhwan*

Members of JI subscribe to living by Islamic laws and principles in small groups of *usroh*, a term that literally means family but is meant in practice as

10 The importance of religious elders in Indonesian Muslim communities is very evident in numerous chapters throughout Fealy and White 2008.

11 See *Tempo* 2002. Also see a fan review of Imam Samudra's jailhouse memoir, *Aku Melawan Teroris* (Imam Samudra 2008).

the foundation for building an Islamic society.¹² In such an *usroh*, every man within the network is an *ikhwan* (“brother” in Arabic), highlighting the perceived kindred relations among members of the group. Indonesians in general do refer to one another using similarly familial references like *bapak* (father) and *ibu* (mother), so the fact that JI members call one another a brother equivalent is not remarkable in itself. That said, the adoption of an Arabic term to showcase a sense of camaraderie is nevertheless a deliberate attempt to show solidarity and set themselves well apart from the other Muslims in Indonesia. Further, this greatly limited brotherhood is reinforced by its members’ unique in-group language and appearance. The jihadists pepper their everyday communications with Arabic, possess their own group-speak, sport beards, and don “jihadist” garb that usually consists of a baggy top and a matching pair of pants that ends above the ankles and is calculated to create a very visible exclusivist identity.

This assumed fraternity often means fluid membership, despite personal differences in opinions or preferred leadership styles. Many of those who subscribe to the same jihadist ideology identify with one another, and some will cooperate in operations if called upon, regardless of whether they belong to different circles (as noted in ICG 2005).

Kinship and Quasi-kinship Ties and Their Significance for Counter-terrorism

The pointing out of kinship linkages within JI is not unprecedented; the significance of kinship for JI has been well documented. Familial relationships among the perpetrators of terrorist acts are, in fact, oftentimes rather quickly discernible with some probing. What this paper seeks to do is to emphasize the importance of understanding and appreciating these familial ties, regardless of whether they are real or imagined, amidst the anxious talk of “self-radicalization” and lone-wolf terrorists in Southeast Asia. There is no doubt some logic in connecting the dots between extremist ideology derived from reading extremist books or from downloading extremist materials from the Internet and violent terrorist acts, but actually proving the causal relationship is another matter altogether.

12 This is based on a concept developed by Hasan al-Banna of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, a group JI has drawn inspiration from. A translation of al-Banna’s writings (in Malay) published by Dewan Pustaka Fajar can be accessed at <http://www.muslimdiary.com/downloads/usrah_dan_dawah-Hasan%20al-Banna.pdf> (10 June 2010).

Traditional and direct real-time relationships seem to remain the foremost influencing factor when it comes to religious radicalization and extremist violence among JI members. Kinship and quasi-kinship networks tied together by blood, marriage, discipleship and fraternity seem to supersede the personal impulses of the individual lone wolf when it comes to carrying out a terrorist operation. Evidently, a reliable support network made up of familiar faces and trusted individuals is a prerequisite.

Of course, it is obvious that not every kinsperson, or quasi-kinsperson, belonging to the same familial unit as a known terrorist militant is also a violent extremist, or even a potential one. Despite this article's focus on kinship, this should not be understood to mean that all related individuals are necessarily guilty by association, or that they should be assumed to be so. Indeed, the authorities should steer clear of jumping the gun in this way as much as possible because excessive harassment from law enforcers, whether real or perceived, could result in defensive reactions and only serve to harden those who might already be hesitant to inform police about family members or turn away those who sympathize with the terrorist militant. Good police work is therefore crucial in such cases, as is sound intelligence.

And intelligence is definitely key when it comes to identifying suspected members of a terrorist network without creating much political ruckus, especially in multicultural, multi-religious societies like Singapore. The central issue that should accordingly feature at the forefront of efforts to identify suspected terrorists is the question of threat: what is more imminent, the extremist ideology or the violent extremist? The problem for the authorities always lies in recognizing whom to target, the person who espouses extremist views or specifically those who actually engage in violent acts. Is it not the former that is the precursor to the latter? But who can really say that a particular individual's extremist views will beyond doubt manifest in violence? And if that were the case – which it is not – would it mean that in addition to nabbing the violent individual, extremist literature in all its myriad forms and made available by all possible sources, including the Internet, would have to be eliminated too? Who decides what constitutes “extremist”? These are tricky questions.

Countering terrorists, at least for law enforcers, should have everything to do with stopping extremist acts of violence; this is well within the jurisdiction of the police and less about curbing extremist ideas, which is more a whole-of-society concern, especially of the wider Muslim community (though this is, however, an issue that can only be sufficiently addressed in an entirely separate paper). The point here is that it is important to keep counter-terrorism efforts in context; otherwise authorities run the risk of allocating vital resources to less pertinent endeavours. “Self-radicalization”

and lone-wolf terrorists, at least for now and at least for this region, remain less worrying than individuals with actual real-life connections to known violent extremists.

It is difficult to police violent extremists and those suspected of being involved with them, especially in light of the potential for political fallout. A delicate carrot-and-stick balance between punishment and rehabilitation has to be struck when dealing with those captured. On the one hand, justice has to be perceived as being served in the eyes of those adversely affected by terrorism. On the other hand, the judgements passed against the terrorist militants have to be recognized by the latter's immediate families as "fair enough" for the crimes committed. This tacit acknowledgement on the part of the kin is crucial; families could otherwise continue to harbour deep-seated resentment towards the governing authorities for what they perceive to be unjust treatment of their "kind", a bitterness that could be passed from one generation to the next. Psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan, in a research piece on identity and collective trauma in Cyprus, has noted how groups that have been systematically discriminated against or victimized in wars or war-like conditions by the (usually larger) oppressive enemy group tend to feel a sense of shame and humiliation as well as guilt for surviving an ordeal others they knew died in; their lack of ability or opportunity to adequately come to terms with such sentiments results in the transgenerational transmission of trauma (Volkan 2008). Carrying the same emotional burden, the younger generations, to varying degrees, then attempt to continue their parents' efforts to reverse the humiliation and complete the mourning. Likewise, the current "war-like" situation between JI members and the governing authorities serves to reinforce perceptions of outright discrimination and victimization among jihadists and their families, a kind of humiliation the younger generations seek to rectify, with some seeing political violence as a way to contribute to the unfinished tasks of their predecessors. As the case of Farihin's family demonstrates, many of today's JI members in Indonesia have fathers, grandfathers and other relatives who were once part of the anti-government Darul Islam movement of the 1950s.

The Indonesian police, taking the lead from its elite counter-terrorism force Detachment 88, seem to have taken lessons from this. Accordingly, the families of captured or killed JI terrorist militants often receive assistance from the governing authorities, in part to help keep the affected families on their feet, especially if the person captured or killed was a breadwinner, and in part to show that they have not been ostracized or discriminated against for the actions of one member. The police recognize that kin have an impact on the overall success of their counter-terrorism efforts. By demonstrating to such families through aid, financial or otherwise, that it and its apparatus

are really not their enemy, the government helps reduce possible resentment of the authorities to a low level, ultimately stifling the flames that could fan a new generation of violent extremists.

Singapore has also established similar practices, thereby highlighting how integral garnering support from kin is to effectively stem extremism in future generations. The Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), made up of independent religious scholars and counsellors, was established in 2003 with the specific aim of countering the ideology of JI. Today it counsels and rehabilitates not only those detained for being involved with the group but also the wives and children of the detainees, in recognition of the tendency for extremist ideologies to play out in vicious cycles within the family. Among other things, the RRG counsellors visit the families at their homes, offer financial support and upgrading courses, and extend educational assistance to the children, all so that the family can better cope with the detention of one of its own, emotionally, socially and economically.¹³

Effective counter-terrorism means, among other things, being fully aware of the significance of kinship and quasi-kinship ties among JI members. Of course, not everyone who can possibly be linked to the group is necessarily a violent extremist. But the few who decide to partake in terrorist acts turn to their kin, real or imagined, for support, protection and refuge. Law enforcers should therefore similarly engage these kin in order to prevent this.

References

- Atran, Scott (2003), Genesis of Suicide Terrorism, in: *Science Review*, 7 March, 299, 5612, 1534-1539.
- Bruinessen, Martin Van (2002), Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia, in: *South East Asia Research*, 10, 2, 117-154.
- Burton, John and Roel Landingin (2002), Plot to Blow up Four Embassies Revealed on Afghan Video, in: *FT Special Report*, 19 February, online: <<http://specials.ft.com/attackonterrorism/FT30PCRPYXC.html>> (19 November 2009).

13 For further information on the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), see its official website at <<http://www.rrg.sg/>>. The counter-ideological work of the RRG has often been described as a success, but, as Kumar Ramakrishna puts it in a critique of the approach, the programme's full potential has yet to be realized; see *CITC Sentinel* 2009.

- CTC Sentinel* (2009), A Holistic Critique of Singapore's Counter-Ideological Program, 2, 1, January.
- Fealy, Greg (2005), Half a Century of Violent Jihad in Indonesia: a Historical and Ideological Comparison of Darul Islam and Jemaah Islamiyah, in: Marika Viczianny and David Wright-Neville (eds.), *Islamic Terrorism in Indonesia: Myths and Realities*, Monash Asia Institute, Series: Annual Indonesia Lecture, no. 26, 15-31.
- Fealy, Greg and Sally White (eds.) (2008), *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed (2006), The Problem of the Lone-Wolf Terrorist, in: *Daily Standard*, 16 March, online: <<http://daveedgr.com/publications/the-problem-of-the-lone-wolf-terrorism/>> (10 June 2010).
- Hoffman, Bruce (2006), *The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists*, Testimony presented to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, on 4 May 2006, online: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND_CT262-1.pdf> (15 June 2010).
- Holy, Ladislav (1996), *Anthropological Perspectives on Kinship*, London: Pluto Press.
- ICG see International Crisis Group
- Imam Samudra (2008), *Aku Melawan Teroris* (I Fight the Terrorists), fan review from 4 November, online: <<http://prisonerofjoy.blogspot.com/2008/11/imam-samudera-not-even-drop-of-muslim.html>> (19 November 2009).
- inilah.com* (2009), Teror dan Persepsi AbuBakar Ba'asyir (Terrorism and the Perception of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir), 23 July, online: <<http://www.inilah.com/news/read/politik/2009/07/23/132177/teror-dan-persepsi-abubakar-baasyir/>> (23 February 2010).
- International Crisis Group (2005), *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, 22 February, = International Crisis Group Asia Report no. 92.
- Kumar Ramakrishna (2009), *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.
- Kurlantzick, Joshua (2008), A Radical Solution: Using Former Terrorists to Turn around Militants in the Making Is Showing Remarkable Success, in: *Los Angeles Times*, 6 January, online: <<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jan/06/opinion/op-kurlantzick6>> (21 February 2010).
- Noor Huda Ismail (2005), *Familial Kinship Among Islamists*; personal collection, online: <<http://noorhudaismail.blogspot.com/2005/11/familial-kinship-among-islamists.html>> (10 November 2009).
- Osman, Sulastri (forthcoming), working MSc thesis.

- Pavlova, Elena (2006), *From Counter-Society to Counter-State: Jemaah Islamiyah According to PUPJI*, IDSS Working Paper No. 117, 14 November.
- Sageman, Marc (2004), *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sumarwoto (2009), *Warga Sekampung Babrudin Latif Diliputi Keresahan* (Uneasiness Hangs over the Village of Bahrudin Latif), in: *Finroll News*, 21 July, online: <http://news.id.finroll.com/articles/105908-____warga-sekampung-bahrudin-latif-diliputi-keresahan-oleh-sumarwoto____.html> (13 November 2009).
- Tempo* (2009), *Membidik Saefuddin M. Top* (Focus on Saefuddin M. Top), 14 August, online: <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/flashgrafis/2009/08/14/grf,20090814-202,id.html>> (19 November 2009).
- Tempo* (2002), *Selain Kasus Bali, Imam Samudra Hanya Mengakui Terlibat Bom Batam* (2005) (Besides Bali, Imam Samudra Admits to Involvement in Batam Bombing), 11 December, online: <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nasional/2002/12/11/brk,20021211-18,id.html>> (19 November 2009).
- Tempo Interaktif* (2005), *Ali Imron: Ba'asyir Tidak Terkait Bom Bali* (Ali Imron: Ba'asyir Not Involved in Bali Bombing), 20 January, online: <<http://www.tempo.co.id/hg/nasional/2005/01/20/brk,20050120-20,id.html>> (23 February 2010).
- Tempo Interaktif* (2002), *Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Bersimpatik pada Korban Bom Bali* (Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Sympathises with Victims of Bali Bombing), 13 December, online: <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nasional/2002/12/13/brk,20021213-16,id.html>> (23 February 2010).
- The Jakarta Globe* (2009), *The Many Wives of Jakarta Bomb Suspect Noordin M Top*, 31 July, online: <<http://thejakartaglobe.com/home/the-many-wives-of-jakarta-bomb-suspect-noordin-m-top/321319>> (11 November 2009).
- tvOne* (2009), *Baridin ditangkap, Warga Pasuruhan Cilacap Lega* (Baridin Arrested, Inhabitants of Pasuruhan Cilacap Relieved), 24 December, online: <http://hukum.tvone.co.id/berita/view/30537/2009/12/24/baridin_ditangkap_warga_pasuruhan_cilacap_lega/> (23 February 2010).
- Viva News* (2009), *Densus Evakuasi Warga Dengan Pengeras Suara* (Detachment Evacuates Inhabitants Using Loudspeakers), 9 October, online: <http://nasional.vivanews.com/news/read/95871-densus_evakuasi_warga_dengan_pengeras_suara> (19 November 2009).
- Volkan, Vamik D. (2008), *Trauma, Identity and Search for a Solution in Cyprus*, in: *Insight Turkey*, 10, 4, online: <<http://www.vamikvolkan.com/History-of-Cyprus.php>> (2 March 2010).

- Weimann, Gabriel (2008), Online Terrorists Prey on the Vulnerable, in: *YaleGlobal online*, March 5, online: <<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/online-terrorists-prey-vulnerable>> (10 June 2010).
- White, Sally (2009), The Wives of Noordin Top, in: *Inside Indonesia*, Oct-Dec, online: <<http://insideindonesia.org/content/view/1254/47/>> (25 November 2009).