

# Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia

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*This article argues that countering radical Islamist ideology is central to any counter-terrorism strategy in Southeast Asia. It shows that while enhanced inter-state cooperation may contribute to the elimination of existing terror cells and individual terrorist leaders and rank and file, this will by no means be sufficient to neutralize the terror threat. This is because the relatively uncontested circulation of a dangerous apocalyptic global jihadi narrative only ensures that the threat persists. The article lays bare the content and danger of the global jihadi “Story” of a transnational Islamic community under attack by a nefarious “Jewish-Crusader axis” spearheaded by Israel and the United States. It essentially examines how, within the Southeast Asian milieu, the Story is empowered by several “macropolitical oxygen” and “micropolitical oxygen”, including localized political, cultural, and socio-economic grievances as well as resentment at the perceived bias of the United States against the Muslim world. In particular, the study explores how all these elements may have interacted to reinforce the Story empowering the regional radical Islamist terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah. The essay concludes by suggesting possible counter-strategies for delegitimizing the Story driving global jihadi terrorism in Southeast Asia.*

## Introduction

On 9 September 2004, two days away from the third anniversary of the September 11 al-Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington, DC, a terrorist bomb went off just outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. Nine people were killed and more than 180 injured. Most of these were ordinary Indonesians (Pereira 2004). Immediately after the attack, a statement, allegedly emanating from the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network, was issued, claiming responsibility and justifying why the strike had occurred. The statement clearly showed that the JI was motivated by what we may call a “global jihadi” ideology, characterized by a globally oriented, violently anti-Western animus:

We (in the Jama’ah al-Islamiah) have sent many messages to the Christian government in Australia regarding its participation in the war against our brothers in Iraq. However it didn’t respond positively to our request; therefore we have decided to punish it as we considered it the fiercest enemy of Allah and the Islamic religion. Thanks to Allah who supported us in punishing [the Australians] in Jakarta when a brother successfully carried out a martyrdom operation using an explosive-laden car in the Australian Embassy. Many were killed and injured besides the great damage to the embassy. This is only one response in a series of many coming responses, God willing. Therefore we advise all the Australians to leave Indonesia otherwise we will make it a grave for them. We also advise the Australian government to withdraw its troops from Iraq otherwise we are going to carry many painful attacks against them. Cars bombs will not stop and [our] list contains many who are ready to die as martyrs. The hands that attacked them in Bali are the same hands that carried out the attack in Jakarta. Our attacks and our jihad will not stop until we liberate all the lands of the Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

This essay proceeds from the premise that defeating radical jihadi terrorism in Southeast Asia requires action on two tracks. The first, the counter-*terrorist* track that seeks to render terrorist leaders, militants, and their funding and logistics networks “inoperative”, is of course essential to deal with the real-time threat (Raman 2003). However, in order to effectively neutralize the global jihadi threat in Southeast Asia over the medium-to-longer term, it would be necessary to move beyond short-term counter-terrorist measures and engage in longer-term counter-*terrorism* elements. In contrast to counter-terrorist elements that have a more identifiable end-result, namely, the elimination of real-time terrorist threats and their infrastructural support, the effectiveness of a counter-terrorism thrust is harder to evaluate as the end-result: a diminution of popular support for nihilistic

global jihadi ideology — and a commensurate rise in support for relatively more progressive forms of Islamism — is not readily measurable. Nevertheless, this essay fully embraces the old Clausewitzian dictum that what is not easily quantifiable does not make it less important. It posits that a theatre strategy for defeating global jihadi ideology in Southeast Asia must combine both counter-terrorist and the arguably more crucial counter-terrorism elements (Ramakrishna and Tan 2003, pp. 305–37). In particular, enduring success in the war on terror in the region will not be achieved until and unless the ideological basis of the likes of the JI is effectively undercut. In other words, only when the global jihadi capacity to regenerate by attracting recruits and sympathizers to its cause is severely weakened, and more crucially, its cause is regarded by Southeast Asian Muslim communities as discredited, can one begin to seriously talk about success. The pathway to the counter-*terrorism* goal of rendering global jihadi ideology irrelevant is in fact *indirect* in the sense that military and “hard” law enforcement measures cannot be the main tools of the counter-terrorism approach. Rather, as we shall see, the truly effective instruments in delegitimizing global jihadi ideology in Southeast Asia have to be “soft”: ideological, macropolitical, and micropolitical.

### **Historical and Local Pathways to Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia**

It seems fair to assert that at the time of writing, elements associated with the JI constitute the main repository of global jihadi ideology in Southeast Asia — and hence the key transnational terrorist threat in the region. Both the JI community, if you like, and the animating worldview of its constituents, however, are not mere alien imports from outside the region. The transnational terrorist threat in Southeast Asia is the product of both extra-regional and thoroughly local forces.<sup>2</sup> Beginning around the fourteenth century Islam came to Southeast Asia by way of West and Central Asian traders who took pains to ensure that religious considerations were not permitted to get in the way of commercial exchange. Over time, Islam, in especially the rural hinterlands of Southeast Asia, accommodated existing traditions deriving from other faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In this way unique Southeast Asian varieties of Islam emerged, which Azyumardi Azra, a leading Indonesian Islamic scholar, considers to be “basically, tolerant, peaceful, and smiling” (Azra 2001). This is not to imply, however, that Southeast Asian Islam has been without its harder-line fundamentalist

strains. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, much intellectual cross-fertilization took place between *Haramayn*-based clerics and Malay-Indonesian students and *ulama*, and one result of this interaction was the emergence, in the late eighteenth century, of the so-called Padri movement in West Sumatra in Indonesia. The Padris were a reform movement that emphasized a return to the “pure and pristine Islam as practised by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the *salaf*)”. Significantly, the Padris were quite willing to resort to forceful methods, including jihad, to compel fellow Muslims to return to the so-called fundamentals of Islam. This was a significant development in Southeast Asian Islam at the time. In fact it has been suggested that the Padri movement bore striking similarities to the Wahabis in Saudi Arabia (Azra 2003, pp. 46–47).

Perhaps the most important reformist current emanated from Cairo: “modernist Islam” or “Islamic modernism”, which began appearing in Indonesia in the early twentieth century. The modernists thought in pan-Islamic terms, and ultimately sought to revitalize Islamic civilization in the face of global Western Christian ascendancy. Modernists like the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh “admired Europe” for its “strength”, “technology”, and “ideals of freedom, justice and equality”, and sought to emulate these achievements by developing an authentically Islamic basis for “educational, legal, political and social reform” that would lead to a restoration of the Islamic world’s “past power and glory” (Esposito 2002, pp. 78–79). To this end, within Southeast Asia, the modernists tried to “purify” Islam of the traditional beliefs, customs, and Sufi-inspired practices that had been absorbed over the previous centuries (Desker 2004). Like their ideological counterparts in the Middle East, moreover, the Southeast Asian modernists sought an accommodation between Islamic revival and modern science and technology (Symonds 2003). Modernist Islam spawned Indonesian Muslim mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah in 1912 and Al-Irsyad a year later (Azra 2003, p. 43). Muhammadiyah, for instance, “advocated the purification of Islam through the literal adoption of the lifestyle and teachings of the Prophet and the analytical application of the Koran and the Sunnah to contemporary problems” (Desker 2004). However, over the decades Muhammadiyah has been “domesticated” and today accommodates “local concerns, including the adoption of Sufi practices” (Desker 2004). This is not to say, however, that rigid, literalist elements do not persist within Muhammadiyah ranks. This is why some observers have commented on the “schizophrenic” nature of Indonesia’s second-largest Muslim mass organization (Abuza 2004, p. 48). Other bodies, moreover, are much more explicit about their

harder-edged interpretations of Islamic modernism: the Islamic Union (Persis) emerged in East Java in 1923 and has focused most of its energy and resources into propagating “correct” doctrine and practice. Persis has been described as by far the most “puritan” of Indonesian reform movements (Azra 2003, p. 43; van Bruinessen 2004).

After World War II, Masjumi (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) emerged as the main Islamic modernist political party. Its key leaders such as Mohammad Natsir and A. Hassan were linked with Persis. In fact, Persis formed the “backbone” of Masjumi throughout its existence (*Laksamana.Net* 2004). Throughout the 1950s, Masjumi leaders locked horns politically with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and President Soekarno, a secular nationalist who opposed attempts to make Islamic or *shariah* law the basis of the Indonesian constitution. Soekarno banned Masjumi at the end of the 1950s, following the involvement of some of its leaders in a short-lived US-backed rebel government in Sumatra (Symonds 2003). While Masjumi was dissolved and its leaders incarcerated for alleged political misdeeds in the early 1960s (*ibid.*), the Masjumi/Persis ethos did not disappear. It persisted in the form of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) and in the parallel Darul Islam (DI) movement. The DDII was set up in February 1967 by a Masjumi/Persis clique of activists led by Mohammad Natsir. Rather than seeking political power outright like Masjumi, DDII switched strategy: Natsir apparently declared in this regard: “Before we used politics as a way to preach, now we use preaching as a way to engage in politics” (International Crisis Group 2004). To this end, DDII set up a network of mosques, preachers, and publications. Natsir sought to target *pesantren* and university campuses as well (*ibid.*, p. 7).

It has been suggested that the reason for the DDII’s bottom-up Islamization stance was because its leaders had realized, following the failures of Muslim politicians to enshrine the so-called Jakarta Charter in the Indonesian constitutional debates of 1945 and 1959, that a top-down Islamization approach simply would not appeal to the vast masses of nominal Indonesian Muslims and bottom-up *dakwah* was a better way of Islamizing society.<sup>3</sup> DDII was characterized especially by a fear of Christian missionary efforts amongst Indonesian Muslims. Over time it became increasingly drawn to Saudi-style Wahabism (*Laksamana.Net* 2004). In fact, the DDII subsequently established close ties with the Saudi-based World Islamic League (Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami) (van Bruinessen 1990, pp. 52–69). DDII became the “main channel in Indonesia for distributing scholarships” from the Saudi-funded Rabitat for study in the Middle East (International Crisis Group 2004, pp. 6–7). In addition, through Natsir’s influence, the Institute for the Study of

Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) was set up in 1980. LIPIA was from the outset a branch of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh, and its faculty were Saudi scholars who taught a curriculum modelled on the parent university. LIPIA graduates became preachers on many Indonesian university campuses, ensuring that the particularly harder-edged Saudi Wahabi interpretations of Islamic modernism permeated throughout society (*ibid.*, pp. 6–8).

Residual Masjumi/Persis sentiments survived in yet another ideological permutation: the oldest post-war radical Islamic movement, Darul Islam (DI). The DI revolt commenced in 1947, led by a charismatic Masjumi Javanese activist called S.M. Kartosuwirjo (Fealy 2004, p. 111). Kartosuwirjo violently rejected the secular state vision and religiously neutral Pancasila ideology of secular nationalists Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta. Kartosuwirjo proclaimed instead an Islamic state in Indonesia (NII) based on *shariah* law in August 1949, and the DI/NII forces waged jihad against the Republican regime throughout the 1950s. By 1962, however, the DI revolt that had spread from its West Java epicentre to Aceh in the west and South Sulawesi in the east was crushed and Kartosuwirjo captured and executed. The DI thereafter splintered into several factions and went underground (Singh 2004). While the DI failed to attain its political goal of an Indonesian Islamic state, it nevertheless “inspired subsequent generations of radical Muslims with its commitment to a *shari’*a-based state and its heavy sacrifices in the cause of jihad” (Fealy 2004, p. 111). Two of Kartosuwirjo’s acolytes were the late Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir — who went on to form the by-now-famous Al-Mukmin Islamic boarding school in Ngruki, Solo in Central Java in 1973. Several Al-Mukmin alumni went on to form what we know today as Jemaah Islamiyah.

As someone who had himself been a DDII activist, Sungkar fully understood the rationale for *dakwah* and the necessity for Islamizing the individual Muslim as a prelude to Islamizing the wider society. However, he later decided that rather than unstructured proselytizing, what was needed was a more focused propagation of the Islamic faith through a vanguard *jemaah* (religious community). In this regard, Sungkar was inspired by the second Caliph Umar bin Khattab, who had apparently observed: “No Islam without *jamaah*, no *jamaah* without leadership and no leadership without compliance” (Poer 2003). This imperative to place the *dakwah* process on a more organized, systematic basis was something Sungkar appears to have picked up from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement. In fact, Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna’s thought did have some impact on Sungkar and Bashir in the 1970s. In the Brotherhood conception, the struggle towards

the realization of an Islamic state depended on several steps: first, moral self-improvement; second, becoming part of a family of like-minded individuals (*usroh*) committed to “guide, help and control” one another and thus stay on the right path; third, coalescing the various *usroh* to form the wider *Jemaah Islamiyah*; and finally coalescing the various *Jemaah* into an Islamic state. In fact, Sungkar and Bashir sought to organize the Al-Mukmin alumni into an *usroh* network. Martin van Bruinessen calls this collection of *usroh* a network of committed young Muslims, “some of them quietist, some of them militants, all of them opposed to the Soeharto regime, organized in ‘families,’ that together were to constitute a true community of committed Muslims, a *Jama’ah Islamiyah*” (van Bruinessen 2002). Sungkar and Bashir, moreover, being themselves sympathetic to the older and wider DI ideological diaspora, decided subsequently to affiliate the early JI network of ideological communes with the already existing DI. Consequently, JI officially became part of the Central Java DI in Solo, in 1976. Both Sungkar and Bashir swore an oath of allegiance to the DI Central Java leader Haji Ismail Pranoto, better known as Hispran (Poer 2003). Sungkar and Bashir introduced to the relatively unstructured DI, with its imprecise notions of what an actual Islamic state ought to be like, some of the ideas they themselves imbibed from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (van Bruinessen 2002).

This institutional affiliation with the DI and contact with veterans of the DI revolt may have played a part in radicalizing Sungkar and Bashir — in the sense of enabling them to accept at some subliminal level the utility of violence in pursuit of the *Daulah Islamiyah*. Hence in February 1977 both men set up the *Jemaah Mujahidin Anshorullah* (JMA), which some analysts believe to be the precursor organization to today’s terrorist JI network (Singh 2004). Furthermore, they became involved in the activities of a violent underground movement called *Komando Jihad*. Somewhat like JI today, this organization sought to set up an Islamic state in Indonesia and perpetrated the bombings of nightclubs, churches, and cinemas. Incidentally, *Komando Jihad* was to a large extent a creation of Indonesian intelligence and was set up to discredit political Islam in Indonesia and legitimize the New Order’s subsequent crackdown on “less radical and non-violent Muslim politicians” (van Bruinessen 2002). In 1978, both Sungkar and Bashir were detained for nine years for their involvement in *Komando Jihad*. They were released in 1982, but following the Tanjong Priok incident two years later in which the security forces killed 100 Muslims, both were charged yet again for subversion. This prompted them and several of their followers to decamp to Malaysia in 1985 (Singh 2004).

According to one account, Sungkar and Bashir arrived illegally in Malaysia without proper documentation, settled in Kuala Pilah, about 250 kilometres southeast of Kuala Lumpur, and stayed at the home of a Malaysian cleric for about a year. Whilst in Malaysia Bashir adopted the pseudonym Abdus Samad and Sungkar took on the *nom de guerre* Abdul Halim (*Tempo*, 2002). Over the years, both men, through the financial support base generated by their effective preaching activities, were able to buy property of their own in other parts of the country. Wherever they went they set up Quran reading groups, and were invited to preach in small-group settings in both Malaysia and even in Singapore. In 1992 they set up the Luqmanul Hakiem *pesantren* in Ulu Tiram, in the southernmost Malaysian state of Johore. Luqmanul Hakiem was a clone of Al-Mukmin back in Solo. Bashir later told the Indonesian magazine *Tempo* that in Malaysia he set up “As-Sunnah, a community of Muslims” (*ibid.*). In this way the original Sungkar/Bashir network of *usroh* communities spread outward from Indonesia, sinking roots in Malaysia and Singapore. It was also during the Malaysian exile that a mature JI ideology of what we may call Global Salafi Jihad evolved.

### **From National to Global Jihad**

By the time Sungkar and Bashir arrived in Malaysia in 1985, it could be said that they had become committed “radical Islamists”. A brief exposition of terminology is called for. Islamic fundamentalism (or Salafi Islam) is not at all monolithic. Salafi Muslims, who take the injunction to emulate the Companions of the Prophet very seriously, may express this piety simply in terms of *personal* adherence to implementing *shariah*-derived standards of worship, ritual, dress, and overall behavioural standards. The majority of Salafi Muslims, in fact, may be considered as “neo-fundamentalists” who possess “neither a systematic ideology” nor “global political agenda” (Metcalf). Islamism, on the other hand, “turns the traditional religion of Islam into a twentieth-century-style ideology” (Pipes 2003, p. 8). To put it another way, when Salafi Muslims see it as an *added* obligation to actively seek recourse to political power in order to impose their belief system on society at large, then they become not simply Muslims but rather *Islamists*. Daniel Pipes puts it aptly when he observes that Islamists seek to “build the just society by regimenting people according to a preconceived plan, only this time with an Islamic orientation” (2003). To be sure, some Salafis do not desire to be seen engaging in politics and rather strive to project a purist, apolitical veneer. However, they often find it difficult,



if not impossible, to avoid some form of involvement in political activity. In Indonesia, for example, Jafar Umar Thalib, leader of the officially disbanded Laskar Jihad militia, actually criticized Bashir for his commitment to an actual Islamic state, but this did not prevent the former from agitating for the full implementation of *shariah* law himself (Fealy 2004, p. 115). The International Crisis Group notes that it was “odd” for Jafar, being the leader of the self-declared apolitical and purist Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah network, to have paid such close attention to political developments in Indonesia, especially during Habibie’s presidency (International Crisis Group 2004, p. 15). In truth, therefore, Jafar and other politically sensitized, if ostensibly apolitical, Salafis may in fact be unconscious or even covert Islamists, or “proto-Islamists”, if you like. In other words, once a Salafi Muslim evinces a “will to power”, he stops being a neo-fundamentalist and embarks on the road towards Islamism.

Despite regional variations, Islamists worldwide share the belief that seeking political power so as to Islamize whole societies is the only way Islam as a faith can revitalize itself — and recapture the former pre-eminent position it enjoyed vis-à-vis the West. Modern Islamist movements include the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Jama’at-I Islami in the Indian sub-continent, as well as many of the Iranian ideologues of the 1979 revolution that brought down the Shah. These Islamists sought to construct “ideological systems” and “models” for “distinctive polities that challenged what they saw to be the alternative systems: nationalism, capitalism and Marxism” (Metcalf). In short, while the average, neo-fundamentalist, Salafi Muslim emphasizes individual spiritual renewal as the key to Islamic civilizational renaissance, the Islamist, as Pipes suggests, seeks *power* as the superior restorationist pathway (Pipes 2003, p. 8). It is entirely possible moreover that in pursuing political objectives Islamists — like other political activists seeking to implement an ostensibly religious agenda — may lose touch with the ethical core of the very faith they are seeking to preserve and champion (Pipes 2003, pp. 8–9).

Now for years both Sungkar and Bashir had been Islamists in the sense that ultimately, they sought the setting up of an Islamic state based on the *shariah* in Indonesia. But what did they feel about the use of force in pursuit of this objective? In truth a latent ambiguity within their ideological systems over the role of violence seems to have existed for years. Both men had been aware of the potential of *dakwah* for gradually Islamizing Indonesian society from the bottom up; Sungkar had after all been the chairman of the DDII Central Java branch while Bashir had majored in *dakwah* at the Al-Irsyad Islamic university in

Solo (Behrend 2003). As noted, this belief in *dakwah* had also led them to set up Al-Mukmin. At the same time, however, they were not demonstrably opposed to the Kartosuwirjo argument that Islamizing the polity by force was the better approach. They even affiliated the nascent JI movement with Hispran's DI and were involved in the Komando Jihad. It would seem that the period of incarceration from 1978 and subsequent targeting by the New Order regime may have been the "tipping point" in terms of bringing them to the final insight that *dakwah* in the absence of jihad would be an exercise in futility. In other words, they became not merely Islamists but *radical* Islamists who believed in jihad as the means to actualize an Islamized Indonesia. The Indonesian journalist Blontank Poer observes in this respect that the jihadi emphasis in the overall strategy of Sungkar and Bashir became more developed after the shift to Malaysia in 1985 (Poer 2003). In this sense the Sungkar-Bashir radicalization experience reminds one of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood activist Sayyid Qutb, who was "increasingly radicalized by Gamal Abdel Nasser's suppression of the Brotherhood". Cairo's repression prompted Qutb to transform "the ideology of [Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan] al-Banna and [Jama'at-I Islami founder Mawlana] Mawdudi into a rejectionist revolutionary call to arms" (Esposito 2002, p. 56).

By the 1980s, moreover, Islamist ideas from the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent had been translated and were in circulation in Southeast Asia (Azra 2003, p. 44). These mingled and fused with the individual experiential and ideational trajectories of Sungkar and Bashir. Thus the injunctions of al-Banna and Mawdudi to set up a "vanguard" community to serve as the "dynamic nucleus for true Islamic reformation within the broader society" (Esposito 2002, p. 53) were long accepted by the Indonesian clerics. Moreover, Sungkar and Bashir would have viscerally embraced Sayyid Qutb's absolutist, polarized view of the world:

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam), and it is that place where the Islamic state is established and the Shariah is the authority and God's limits are observed and where all Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (Dar-ul-Harb). (Qutb, cited in Esposito 2002, p. 60)

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

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

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

- Deviation from the path of true Islam and emulation of Western models has resulted in worldwide Muslim weakness;
- *Shariah* provides the ideal blueprint for a modern, successful Islamic society capable of competing with the West and restoring Muslim identity, pride, power, and wealth;
- Alternative systems such as democracy, socialism, Pancasila, capitalism, other religions and Islam as practised by the majority of the Muslim community — are not acceptable to God and are destructive.
- True Muslims cannot, with good conscience, accept a political system that is not based on the *shariah*.

(This section draws on Behrend 2003  
and Esposito 2002, pp. 52–53)

Finally, by the early 1990s the Sungkar-Bashir ideological framework represented a *radical* Islamist vision because it included the explicit willingness to resort to jihad in pursuit of the goal of an Islamized Indonesia. It should be noted that apart from the DI legacy as well as the more recent radicalizing effect of direct New Order repression, Sungkar, Bashir, and others in the JI orbit were also likely to be exposed to the ideas of the Egyptian radical Mohammad al-Faraj, who was executed by Cairo in 1982 for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat (Selengut 2003, p. 80). Faraj, himself influenced by the works of al-Banna, Mawdudi, and Qutb, brought their incipient absolutizing ideas to their ultimate extremist conclusion. Unequivocally rejecting the efficacy of *dakwah* as a means of Islamizing *jahili* (unIslamic or immoral) society (Sageman 2004, p. 16), Faraj argued that the decline of Muslim societies was due to the fact that Muslim leaders had hollowed out the vigorous concept of jihad, thereby robbing it of its “true meaning”

(Esposito 2002, p. 62). Faraj, in his pamphlet the *Neglected Obligation*, argued that the “Qu’ran and the Hadith were fundamentally about warfare”, and that the concept of jihad, in contrast to the conventional wisdom, was “meant to be taken literally, not allegorically” (Juergensmeyer 2000, p. 81). He argued that jihad represented in fact the “sixth pillar of Islam” and that jihad calls for “fighting, which meant confrontation and blood” (ibid.). Faraj held that not just infidels but even Muslims who deviated from the moral and social dictates of *shariah* were legitimate targets for jihad. Faraj concluded that peaceful means for fighting apostasy in Muslim societies were bound to fail and ultimately the true soldier of Islam was justified in using “virtually any means available to achieve a just goal” (ibid.).

In light of their own recent experiences at the hands of the Soeharto regime, Sungkar and Bashir would have endorsed, at some deeper level, the ideas of Faraj on the necessity for a literal understanding of jihad, as well as his wider argument that jihad represented the highest form of devotion to God (Sageman 2004, p. 16). This is precisely why, in 1984/85, when the Saudis sought volunteers for the jihad in Afghanistan against the invading Soviets, Sungkar and Bashir willingly raised groups of volunteers from amongst their following (van Bruinessen 2002). The Afghan theatre was seen as a useful training ground for a future jihad in Indonesia itself (Poer 2003).

As it turned out, however, rather than Afghanistan being seen as a training ground for a jihad aimed at setting up an Indonesian Islamic state, that conflict became the source of ideas that transformed the original Indonesia-centric vision of Sungkar and Bashir. To be sure, prior to the 1990s, the radical Islamist ideology driving JI may be termed, following Marc Sageman, as “Salafi Jihad” (Sageman 2004, p. 17). The aim of the JI émigré community in Malaysia led by Sungkar and Bashir was ultimately to wage a jihad against the Soeharto regime — in Faraj’s terms, the so-called “near enemy” — and set up a Salafi Islamic state in Indonesia. However, returning Indonesian and other Southeast Asian veterans of the Afghan jihad compelled Sungkar and Bashir to re-evaluate their goals. In Afghanistan, the Southeast Asian jihadis had been inspired to think in *global* terms by the teachings of the charismatic Palestinian *alim* (singular for *ulama*) Abdullah Azzam. Azzam, a key mentor of Osama bin Laden, had received a doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, had met the family of Sayyid Qutb, and was friendly with Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman — better known as the “Blind Sheikh” — was the spiritual guide of two key Egyptian radical Islamist terrorist organizations, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and the Egyptian

Islamic Group (EIG) — and would later be implicated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York. When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, Azzam, who had played a big part in recruiting non-Afghan foreign *mujahidin* worldwide, including Southeast Asia, for the anti-Soviet jihad in the first place, began to set his sights further. He argued that the struggle to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan was in fact “the prelude to the liberation of Palestine and other “lost” territories. As he put it in his writings:

Jihad is now ... incumbent on all Muslims and will remain [sic] so until the Muslims recapture every spot that was Islamic but later fell into the hands of the *kuffar* [infidels]. Jihad has been a *fard ‘ain* [individual obligation] since the fall of al-Andalus [Spain], and will remain so until all other lands that were Muslim are returned to us ... Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, Southern Yemen, Tashkent and al-Andalus ... The duty of jihad is one of the most important imposed on us by God ... He has made it incumbent on us, just like prayer, fasting and alms [*zakat*]. (Azzam, cited in Ruthven 2002, p. 203)

However, as Marc Sageman suggests, Azzam, unlike Faraj, did not sanction jihad against “apostate” Muslim governments in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. His understanding of jihad was a traditional one in the sense of evicting infidel occupiers from Muslim lands. He did not wish to see Muslims wage a jihad against other Muslims. However, after his death in a car bomb explosion in Peshawar in November 1989, the Afghan Arab *mujahidin* community, and Osama bin Laden in particular, again accepted the Faraj argument that targeting Muslim governments seen as apostate was perfectly legitimate (Sageman 2004, p. 18). Subsequently, at the beginning of the 1990s, once American troops arrived in Saudi Arabia and in Somalia, both being Muslim territories, “a more global analysis of Islam’s problems” occurred. As Sageman concisely explains:

Local *takfir* Muslim leaders were seen as pawns of a global power, which itself was now considered the main obstacle to establishing a transnational *umma* from Morocco to the Philippines. This in effect reversed Faraj’s strategy and now the priority was jihad against the “far enemy” over the “near enemy”. (Sageman 2004, p. 18)

Sageman observes that this gradual shift in strategic targeting philosophy within what by the early 1990s had become al-Qaeda, took place during Bin Laden’s Sudanese exile during that decade. Similar doctrinal shifts occurred in parallel discussions within radical Islamist circles in New York leading to the 1993 New York World Trade Center

attack, as well as in Algeria and France, just before the wave of bombings hit those countries (Sageman 2004, p. 18).

These shifts in global radical Salafi ideology post-Afghanistan were not lost on Sungkar and Bashir. In addition to their discussions with returning Indonesian veterans of the Afghan war, such as Hambali and Mukhlas (Neighbour 2004), both men met with international jihadi groups in Malaysia. Consequently, by 1994 Sungkar and Bashir were no longer talking about establishing merely an Islamic state in Indonesia. Over and above this, they were now talking of establishing a “*khilafah* (world Islamic state)” (Poer 2003). In this construction, a “world caliphate uniting all Muslim nations under a single, righteous exemplar and ruler” is the ultimate goal (Behrend 2003). No coincidence then that at about that time Sungkar and Bashir reportedly made contact with Egyptian radicals associated with the Blind Sheikh (Poer 2003). Moreover, in the early 1990s Sungkar and Bashir disassociated themselves from the Central Java DI movement because of serious doctrinal differences with the regional DI leader Ajengan Masduki, who had apparently embraced Sufi teachings on non-violence and tolerance. Sungkar and Bashir, casting off the overarching DI appellation, resurrected the name Jemaah Islamiyah (Poer 2003). This is the JI, infused with the post-Afghanistan neo-Faraj ethos of Global Salafi Jihad that henceforth took it upon itself to wreak “vengeance against perceived Western brutality and exploitation of Muslim communities” (Fealy 2004, p. 112). This is the JI whose current spiritual leader, Bashir — Sungkar passed away in 1999 — declared publicly that he supported “Osama bin Laden’s struggle because his is the true struggle to uphold Islam, not terror — the terrorists are America and Israel” (Singh 2004). By the turn of the century, the virulent ideological strain of Global Salafi Jihad infusing JI had matured and radical Islamist writers like Azzam, Qutb, and Faraj featured “prominently on JI reading lists” (Fealy 2004, p. 112). The outlines of this virulent ideology, with its global, nihilistic, anti-Western focus were aptly captured in convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra’s cold-blooded justification of the 12 October 2002 attack on the Sari Club and Paddy’s Bar that had claimed 202 lives:

To oppose the barbarity of the U.S. army of the Cross and its allies ... to take revenge for the pain of ... weak men, women and babies who died without sin when thousands of tonnes of bombs were dropped in Afghanistan in September 2001 [*sic*] ... during Ramadan ... To carry out a [*sic*] my responsibility to wage a global jihad against Jews and Christians throughout the world ... As a manifestation of Islamic solidarity between Moslems, not limited by geographic boundaries.

To carry out Allah's order in the Book of An-nisa, verses 74–76, which concerns the obligation to defend weak men, weak women, and innocent babies, who are always the targets of the barbarous actions of the American terrorists and their allies. ... So that the American terrorists and their allies understand that the blood of Moslems is expensive and valuable; and cannot be — is forbidden to be — toyed with and made a target of American terrorists and their allies. So that the [American and allied] terrorists understand how painful it is to lose a [*sic*] mothers, husbands, children, or other family members, which is what they have so arbitrarily inflicted on Moslems throughout the world. To prove to Allah — the Almighty and most deserving of praise — that we will do whatever we can to defend weak Moslems, and to wage war against the U.S. imperialists and their allies. (Cited in Ramakrishna and Tan 2003, pp. 26–27)

### **Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia: Developing a Counter-Terrorism Strategy with Ideological, Macropolitical, and Micropolitical Elements**

#### *The Ideological Element*

Delegitimizing the ideological basis of global jihadi terrorism in Southeast Asia will be a long and arduous but utterly necessary process. Failure to engage in this central plank of the counter-terrorism thrust mentioned earlier would permit not only JI global jihadi elements to regroup, but also allow fresh, previously unknown groups to emerge and network, thus ensuring a persisting threat to non-Muslim and progressive Muslim governments and societies — as well as Western interests — in Southeast Asia. The fact that senior JI bombmakers were able to tap new recruits for the September 2004 attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta is testament to the sheer mobilizational potential of global jihadi ideology (Pereira 2004). In this regard, it would seem that the first order of business would be to counter the global jihadi ideological construction of reality head-on. This, however, is easier said than done. At the risk of over-simplifying a complex reality, it may be suggested that global jihadi ideology really springs from what some scholars call neo-Salafism, which blends neo-fundamentalist Salafism with the notion of an Islam under siege from Christian, Zionist, and secular forces (Collins 2003). Saudi-funded and influenced neo-Salafiyah *pesantren* in Southeast Asia thus propagate, over and above the traditional Salafiyah call to return to a pristine unadulterated form of Islam, the injunction to distance oneself from Sufi Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Christians, and other non-Sunni Muslims. Neo-Salafiyah

*pesantren*, while by no means dominant amongst Indonesia's religious schools, have nevertheless, according to former Indonesian foreign minister Alwi Shihab, permitted "stricter interpretations of Islam to gain favour". Shihab adds that the rise of such a "rigid interpretation" of the Islamic faith has had "consequences" (Perlez 2003).

One utterly crucial consequence has been the propagation of an "inflexible, scripturalist", "'us versus them', 'good versus evil', 'right versus wrong', and 'permitted (*halal*) versus prohibited (*haram*)' view of life" (Rahim 2003, pp. 216–17). In Southeast Asia, Islamist political parties such as PAS in Malaysia as well as social organizations like the aforementioned DDII, Abu Bakar Bashir's Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), generally propagate such viewpoints. Of course, one cannot deny that such political parties and social movements appear willing to attain their Islamist agendas gradually by working peacefully within existing political systems. Nevertheless, the dividing line between non-violent if somewhat harsh neo-Salafism and violent radical global jihadism is also disturbingly porous: the intrinsic rejectionist neo-Salafiyah impulse animates the violent activities of disparate Southeast Asian global jihadi groups such as Laskar Mujahidin, Front Pembala Islam — and the JI. Thus while neo-Salafiyah ideology may not in and of itself promote violence directly, it certainly engenders an exclusionist mindset that may prove readily radicalizable in certain circumstances (Ramakrishna 2005).

Thus the small number of so-called Ivy League radical *pesantren* "that constitute the JI's educational circle" in Indonesia, which the International Crisis Group argues are incubating a new breed of "*salafi* jihadists", is not the only challenge (International Crisis Group 2003, pp. 26, 31). The circulation of neo-Salafiyah ideology in some Southeast Asian Muslim quarters, propagated especially by Saudi-funded *pesantren* and mosques, creates arguably a visceral openness to JI's pan-Southeast Asian Islamic state agenda, and by implication, political space, within which global jihadi elements can sustain themselves. The role of sympathizers who are not necessarily JI operatives themselves in arranging safe houses, acting as guides and arranging travel throughout Southeast Asia for JI militants shows how a neo-Salafiyah ideological milieu can be hospitable to the global jihadi agenda.<sup>4</sup> This affinity may also explain why key leaders of MMI, ostensibly a non-violent Islamist organization, have close links with the JI (Murphy 2003a). It is even more noteworthy that Nik Adli Nik Aziz, the son of PAS spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat, was detained by Kuala Lumpur in August 2001 for his alleged leadership



role in the militant KMM group, which seeks to set up an Islamic state in Malaysia by force. Moreover, both Nik Adli and an unnamed official from PAS attended the 1999 meeting in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia that set up the Rabitatul Mujahidin — a loose coalition of Southeast Asian jihadi groups cobbled together by the JI (Wong and Charles 2003). In short, global jihadi ideology may not be identical to, but it surely feeds upon, a rigidly puritanical neo-Salafiyah diet.

Neo-Salafiyah ideological currents also impart a degree of credibility to radical Islamist propaganda that Washington is working with Israel to attack fellow Muslims such as the Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghans. It must be noted that it is not merely militant Islamists that dislike and even abhor America. Even Southeast Asian Muslims who are quite willing to practise their faith within essentially secular political frameworks believe fervently that US foreign policy is biased against the realm of Islam. A July 2005 Pew survey found that 62 per cent of Indonesian Muslims, well known for their moderate Islam, had an unfavourable impression of the United States (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2005). This image of the United States as duplicitous explains why some Muslims in Southeast Asia believed that the CIA was behind both the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center attack as well as the Bali blasts of 12 October 2002.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, following the Marriott bombing of August 2003, a number of Indonesians believed that the CIA again perpetrated the attack, exploiting the supposedly fictitious JI organization to camouflage the real US aim of discrediting Islam, destabilizing Indonesia, and taking control of the country (Pereira 2003). Amongst Indonesian university students exposed to neo-Salafiyah ideological currents through, for instance, DDII *dakwah* activities on campus, there is “growing acceptance” of the notion that the Islamic world is under attack by Western forces such as the United States, and crucially, “must be defended — with violence if necessary” (Collins 2003).

To defeat global jihadi ideology in Southeast Asia therefore implies — ultimately — also wrenching out the deeper neo-Salafiyah taproot that nourishes it. To this end, one must begin with Indonesia, which is the ideological locus of global jihadi ideology in the region today. The United States should work with Southeast Asian governments and with mainstream Muslim authorities such as Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, to ensure that the teachings of progressive Muslim *ulama* and intellectuals are given greater airing in the print media, on television, radio, cyberspace, and in the mosques, universities, and *pesantren* of Southeast Asia. Of particular importance, a strong effort must be made to propagate amongst Indonesian and other Southeast Asian Islamic neo-fundamentalist communities, what the

well-known Tunisian scholar Rachid Ghannoushi calls a “realistic fundamentalism”. This approach involves not only reviving Islamic values in all aspects of life, but also taking full cognizance of current social, economic, and political realities, as well as acknowledging the value of religious pluralism (Esposito and Voll 2001, pp. 91–117). It is worth noting that the well-known if somewhat controversial Swiss-born scholar Tariq Ramadan similarly calls for the elimination of “binary vision” that sees “everything as either *halal* or *haram*”, as well as the “they (non-Muslims) don’t like us” adversarial attitude (Mafoot 2003). It is noteworthy in this regard that some US funding in 2003 was channelled to NU and Muhammadiyah to “promote tolerance among adherents of different faiths” as well as to “fight terrorism”. Apart from Islamic scholars from outside Southeast Asia, it must not be forgotten that Indonesia is an especially rich source of moderate, progressive, Arabic-speaking scholars who are well drilled in Islamic jurisprudence and thus able to engage in ideological combat with radicals (Raslan 2002). They, however, may need to be assisted in putting their message across in ways that ordinary Indonesians and other Southeast Asians understand (Ford 2001). Public relations specialists may thus have a role to play in rendering the progressive Islamist voice more attractive than that of the radicals (Ramakrishna 2003a). In addition, copying JI publicity methods might be salutary. Thus VCDs and videotapes should be mass-produced and distributed in rural areas especially, where JI tends to recruit its foot-soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Macropolitical Element*

Ideological measures of a broad-ranging Southeast Asian counter-terrorism strategy aimed at discrediting global jihadi ideology should be supplemented by *macropolitical* elements as well. By “macropolitical” it is meant measures aimed at addressing the international, extra-regional sources of Muslim discontent that global jihadis in Southeast Asia can weave into their radical Storylines.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, it must be understood that generalized Muslim antipathy towards America stems from one single issue in particular: the plight of the Palestinians and the status of Jerusalem. As the site of the Al Aqsa mosque, Jerusalem is, after Mecca and Medina, the third holiest place in Islam, while the suffering of the stateless Palestinians has served as a metaphor for the suffering of Muslims as a whole in the face of a supposed Zionist-Crusader conspiracy. As Ahmad Suhelmi, an Islamic scholar at the University of Indonesia, puts it, the “*ummah* is a unity that cannot be divided”, and like a human body, “if you hurt even one

little finger the whole body feels the pain” (cited in Elegant 2003). In this respect it is reassuring that President Bush himself has now committed his energies to seeking a settlement (*Straits Times*, 2003). However, it must be pointed out that Washington has not gone far enough in identifying and eliminating other sources of what might be called “political oxygen” which Southeast Asian global jihadis might exploit to recruit more followers. For example, the slowness of America and the West to intervene in Bosnia to prevent Serb ethnic cleansing of the Muslims only confirmed in the minds of Muslims in the region, as elsewhere, that the *ummah* could expect no favours from the United States. One former Malaysian army officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Abdul Manaf Kasmuri, who served with a Malaysian unit operating as part of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia between 1993 and 1994, was himself radicalized as a result of what he perceived as Western unwillingness to halt the atrocities committed against Bosnian Muslims. He established contact with al-Qaeda in Bosnia and later joined the JI (*Malay Mail*, 2003).

Significantly, US military operations have also tended to generate political oxygen. The US-Afghan air campaign of late 2001, while operationally successful in ousting the Taliban, nonetheless generated numerous civilian casualties, which again reinforced the perception, despite disclaimers to the contrary by President Bush that America was at war with Islam. Indeed, anger at the US attack on Afghanistan in October 2001 was one critical factor that prompted Imam Samudra, a key planner of the Bali attacks, to perpetrate the latter (Murphy 2003c). In fact, the suffering of Muslims anywhere, especially where the United States is directly involved — as in the instance of collateral civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan — can, as liberal Muslim scholar Akbar Ahmed points out, be “used by extremists” to “reinforce this feeling that all Muslims are under attack” (Perrin 2003). Global jihadi leaders are certainly skilled in exploiting every egregious instance of inadvertent US military strikes against Muslim civilians in order to reinforce the “Storyline” of an America bent on annihilating Muslims. For instance, JI leaders, like their al-Qaeda mentors, are Internet-savvy, technically proficient, and have been known to buttress their propaganda by producing videotapes and VCDs of purported violence against Muslims by Christians, as during the Maluku conflict that erupted in 1999. Such media are then used for recruitment purposes (International Crisis Group 2002). Worryingly, Jusuf Wanandi, a leading Indonesian analyst, points out that Indonesian Muslims were “influenced by vignettes shown on television about the miseries of the Iraqi people due to war” (Wanandi 2003). Given that satellite channels like Al Jazeera

tend to emphasize American mistakes and shortcomings in Afghanistan and Iraq, the JI might well exploit such footage to empower Storylines emphasizing that Islam is under siege everywhere and that a true Muslim would be willing to engage in global jihad to defend his oppressed brethren. US errors thus generate political oxygen that global jihadi elements can filter through their virulent ideological framework to build and sustain support (Ramakrishna 2003a).

To deplete the *macropolitical* oxygen that inadvertently fuels the virulent anti-Western, anti-US Storyline of the global jihadis, three steps are vital: first, Washington must ensure that its public diplomacy highlights in great detail how America has genuinely helped alleviate the plight of Muslims in Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and now Iraq. However, *care* should be taken in crafting messages. A recent US\$15-million public relations campaign, sponsored by the State Department and produced by the advertising firm McCann-Erickson, showcased the lives of Muslims in America but featured no Southeast Asian Muslims. Indonesian Muslims watching the advertisements were *upset* that the State Department appeared to believe that “Muslims only lived in Arab countries and only those Muslims migrated to the United States” (Perlez 2002). A better approach would be for material to be fed to sympathetic Southeast Asian print and broadcast media as well as NGOs, and allow *them* to create authentically local news websites, newspapers, television programmes, documentaries, videotapes, and VCDs about how America has tried to be a friend of Islam. These should be given the widest possible distribution throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Java, Sulawesi, and the southern Philippines (*BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 2003).

Second, America must not undercut its own public diplomacy by inadvertently generating political oxygen that can be exploited by global jihadis for propaganda purposes. Any air strike or military/law enforcement operation that accidentally kills, injures, or brutalizes Afghan or Iraqi civilians would only generate political oxygen that the likes of JI can exploit to fuel anti-Americanism. Importantly, Washington must in the short term take care to ensure that US forces avoid future Abu Ghraib-like scandals. Over the longer term, it is vital that Washington expends sufficient resources in both Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure that both states emerge as modern, progressive Muslim members of the international community (Zakaria 2003). If the United States does not stay the course in both Iraq and Afghanistan, this would further reinforce the global jihadi Storyline of a “Crusader” America at war with Islam, and in Southeast Asia, help sustain political space for the JI. The new Office of Global Communications, created by

Executive Order of the President in January 2003, might take the lead in ensuring that Washington's words and deeds project the same positive message to a sceptical Muslim world (Ramakrishna 2003a). Finally, the United States must ensure that it persists in seeking the creation of an independent, viable Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel, and that the status of Jerusalem is justly resolved (Wanandi 2003). By consciously and deliberately identifying and eliminating the sources of the macropolitical oxygen that feeds anti-American resentment amongst Muslims, Washington, over time, may gradually help deprive the neo-Salafiyah and ultimately, global jihadi perspectives of their emotive punch.

### *The Micropolitical Element*

It is quite right to assert that "terrorism is a global problem with numerous local roots" (Devan 2003). Certainly, in some Southeast Asian countries, *localized* "root causes" such as real and perceived political and socio-economic marginalization are the key "micropolitical" drivers of local Muslim grievances — that are then exploited by the global jihadis for their own interests. For instance, Mindanao in southern Philippines is worth a mention as it is the Southeast Asian equivalent of Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s: a vast training area for would-be jihadis.<sup>8</sup> While the Mindanese Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had its original Camp Abu Bakar complex overrun by the Armed Forces of the Philippines in 2000, by September 2002 new MILF training areas had re-emerged in Mindanao. These were training both Filipinos for the MILF as well as Indonesians and Malaysians sent by the JI (*Straits Times Interactive*, 2003). In Mindanao, despite Manila's efforts to improve the lot of the people, "widespread Christian prejudice, corruption and mistreatment has not won many hearts or minds" (Hogue 2003). In late March 2003, MILF senior commander Murad claimed that the organization was getting too big and difficult to control as "there are so many who wanted to join" (*BusinessWorld*, 2003).

As another example, in Myanmar, the continuing political, religious, and socio-economic repression by Yangon of the Rohingya Muslims in the Arakan region contiguous to Bangladesh, has generated support for the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), which seeks to set up an Islamic Republic in the Arakan. The RSO insurgency has been regarded by Bangladeshi military intelligence as "an extremely militant model of Islamic revolution" (Chakrabarti and Mitra 2002). In this regard it should be recognized that some JI militants, through the Rohingya

conduit, have used Bangladesh to regroup (Yeo 2003). The Bangladeshi government has exacerbated matters by being slow to move decisively against the burgeoning number of militant Islamist terrorist groups on its soil (Lintner 2002). Finally, since January 2004 the escalating insurgency by Thai Muslim insurgents in the largely Muslim South of the country has also become a source of concern. By November 2004, 535 people had been killed in the South and the militants, according to Bangkok, had launched a thousand attacks (*Japan Times*, 2004). Some analysts have argued that the key micropolitical elements fuelling the insurgency include simmering resentment at Bangkok's long-term policy of marginalizing the Muslim identity of the area and the relative lack of economic development of the South compared with the rest of the country. More recently, a great deal of political oxygen has been generated by the Thai security forces' excessive use of force in putting down an attack on government facilities in April 2004 — and sheer operational tardiness in allowing 87 arrested Muslim demonstrators to suffocate to death in closely packed trucks six months later (*ibid.*).

The anger of many Filipino, Rohingya, and Thai Muslims at their respective governments only plays directly into the hands of the Southeast Asian global jihadis. Their resentments can be weaved by the radical ideologues into the extant Storyline of Southeast Asian “stooges” of the nefarious “Jewish-Crusader Alliance” and augment its mobilizational appeal. Any effective counter-terrorism strategy in Southeast Asia aiming to undercut the global jihadi vision must involve prodding regional governments to deal effectively with the localized micropolitical drivers of Muslim resentments that may be exploited by global jihadi elements to keep their enterprise a going concern. Some of this prodding may involve urging regional governments to adopt policies that enable Muslim communities to enjoy greater political and socio-cultural space — thereby enabling progressive Muslim community elements to undercut radical Storylines that Muslims are being treated as “second-class citizens” — and thus jihad against either the “near enemy” or the “far enemy” has become an individual obligation. In addition, another very practical micropolitical measure aimed at drying up the sources of Muslim grievances the global jihadis thrive on is promoting trade and investment aimed at creating jobs. After all, if thousands of Southeast Asian Muslim youth were gainfully employed, there would be less opportunities for them to be exposed to radical interpretations of Islam. For instance, one lamentable result of the post-Bali disbandment of Laskar Jihad and FPI was that “thousands of young, poorly educated and violence-hardened Muslim militants” had nothing else to do but to listen to militant preachers “preach suspicion

of and confrontation with followers of other religions” (Mapes 2002). The Bush administration’s Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative, inaugurated in October 2002, which seeks to promote the establishment of a “network of bilateral FTAs” in order to “increase trade and investment”, is in this regard an example of a micropolitical measure that may have positive medium-to-longer term effects in the counter-terrorism campaign to discredit global jihadi ideology.

### Conclusion: Taking Stock

In the final analysis, if we are to ensure that the hydra of radical Islamist terrorism is disembowelled, one simply has to neutralize the ideological vision that animates the beast. In Southeast Asia, the generalized global jihadi Storyline that targets, in Imam Samudra’s prose, “the American terrorists and their allies”, was born out of the fusion of historical, local, and international ideological strains. In addition, it feeds upon extra-regional macropolitical oxygen emanating from Western policy and military/law enforcement blunders committed towards the transnational Islamic community, as well as localized micropolitical oxygen generated by similar errors committed by regional governments operating solely in real-time oriented counter-terrorist mode. It requires policy practitioners within the region and in Washington and other Western capitals to move beyond a counter-terror paradigm that emphasizes military and hard law-enforcement instruments and start appreciating the potential of “soft”, indirect counter-terrorism approaches. Delegitimizing global jihadi ideology thus calls for a lot more strategic creativity than is certainly being evinced at present.

### NOTES

- 1 “Statement of the Jama’ah al-Islamia in East Asia on Jakarta blast”. Translated on 9 September 2004 by the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- 2 The following section on the historical evolution of radical Islam in Indonesia draws on the author’s “The Making of the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist” (2005).
- 3 The Jakarta Charter refers to a draft constitutional preamble that stipulates that Muslim Indonesians are obligated to abide by the strictures of the *shariah* law. See van Bruinessen (1990, pp. 52–69).
- 4 For a description of how JI’s informal support network of sympathizers and helpers expedites the network’s operational capability, see International Crisis Group (2003, pp. 18–22).

- 5 For instance, see the report on the views of Indonesian university students on the Bali blast investigations in Zabriskie (2003).
- 6 Dan Murphy provides an account of how Indonesian radical Islamist groups used films of Christian-Muslim conflict in Maluku to recruit members (Murphy 2003b).
- 7 Jessica Stern talks about the importance of the “Story” articulated by radical Islamists as well (Stern 2003).
- 8 JI training shifted from Afghanistan to Mindanao in 1996 (International Crisis Group 2003, pp. 9–10).

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