

SPECIAL REPORT

A S P I

Jemaah Islamiyah An uncertain future



Peter Chalk

March 2019

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AUSTRALIAN
STRATEGIC
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Cover image: An Acehnese prays in the great mosque of Baiturrahman in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 5 October 2005. After waking early for pre-dawn meals and prayers, Muslims across Indonesia began the fasting month, with many pausing to reflect on the country's latest terrorist attacks blamed on Islamic militants. AP Photo/[Binsar Bakkara](#).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite suffering at the hands of a concerted Indonesian security clampdown, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) never completely disappeared. Indeed, in 2009 it made a dramatic reappearance with the twin bombings of the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels in Jakarta. Since then, the movement has been quietly rebuilding its base and spreading its network of links in the world's largest Islamic nation. JI's persistence gives rise to one central question: what direction will the group's future operational trajectory take? It's possible to delineate three possible scenarios.

Furthering the Islamic struggle in Indonesia through education and peaceful activities

Abu Rusdan, the former emir of JI who has acted as the group's public face for much of the past decade, has consistently stated that, while the group remains intact and wholly committed to the establishment of a Negara Islam (an Islamic state), that objective will now be pursued through *dakwah* (preaching and religious outreach) rather than violence. Some leading commentators following JI's current trajectory accept that this very well could be JI's intent, arguing that it should be considered in the context of other militant Islamist organisations that have made the shift to nonviolent tactics, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Returning to violence as the preferred means for establishing an Indonesian caliphate

An alternative possibility is that JI never really eschewed the path of violence but merely made a tactical decision to desist from armed attacks in order to recoup the losses that it had suffered at the hands of the Indonesian police force's elite Densus 88 unit. This line of reasoning reflects the jihadist concept of *i'dad* and its emphasis on rebuilding in times of weakness in order to prepare for future Islamist assaults. It can also be interpreted as a strategic reaction to the growing influence of Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL) extremism where JI made a decision to lie low, market a more indigenous face and better cultivate local support.

Resurrecting the original objective of creating a pan-regional Islamic polity in Southeast Asia

Irrespective of whether JI adopts a violent or nonviolent path, all indications at this point are that the movement's principal geographical area of interest is Indonesia. The transnational notion of a pan-regional caliphate appears to have been an accident of history and a by-product of the Afghan civil war in the 1980s. That said, there remains a possibility that JI will seek to reconsolidate the southern Philippines as a logistical rear base to support the primary Islamist campaign in Indonesia.

Wild card 1: Will JI be able to capitalise on ISIL's failures in Iraq, Syria and Marawi to reassert itself as the dominant and most credible Islamist movement in Southeast Asia?

By virtually every indicator, ISIL's effort to establish a caliphate in the Middle East has failed. As of the beginning of 2019, the group retained control of less than 1% of the Syrian and Iraqi territory it held in 2014. At the same time, its effort to push into Mindanao has stalled thanks to the Armed Forces of the Philippines' success in denying the group Marawi City as the crux for the emergence of a future Islamic province in East Asia. These setbacks have arguably cast doubt on the credibility of ISIL's formula for establishing jemaahs (Islamic communities), potentially opening the way for the JI model to once again assume centre stage in Indonesia.

Wild card 2: Will JI maintain an independent posture or seek to re-establish historical ties with al-Qaeda?

Over the past several years, al-Qaeda has actively underwritten regional militant proxies to counter ISIL influence in areas it considers to be integral to the global jihadist campaign against the US and its Western/secular allies. Working with JI to 'positively tilt' the world's largest Muslim nation would doubtless be viewed as consistent with this core mission. JI itself would presumably welcome such a partnership both as a way of boosting the credibility of its religious standing relative to other above-ground mass Islamic movements and as a means of stunting the expansion of ISIL-affiliated rebel groups in Mindanao.

Policy implications for Australia

The reappearance of JI has major relevance for Australia given that Indonesia is a large and important strategic partner; any threats to Jakarta's internal stability must therefore occupy a central place in Canberra's foreign, defence and security calculations. This is especially true at a time when Australia is seeking to court a closer relationship with Indonesia in response to Beijing's increased assertiveness in the region and its uncompromising stance on territorial disputes in the South China Sea. At the same time, Australia has been directly caught in the cross-hairs of JI's past violent activities, with the 2002 bombings in Bali remaining the largest loss of life to a terrorist attack in the nation's history.

Australia could do several things to help Indonesia in dealing with the re-emergent JI threat:

- First, the scope of support that Canberra is currently providing for Jakarta's evolving strategy of countering violent extremism could be further expanded, particularly by better leveraging civil society organisations in program design and implementation.
- Second, advice could be rendered on how best to ensure that kinetic counterterrorist responses don't boost the JI message that Jakarta's secular order is inherently biased against the country's Muslim interests.
- Third, assistance could be provided to support reform of the national penal system, which in many respects continues to act as an important incubator for terrorist indoctrination and recruitment.
- Fourth, best practices for restricting online vectors for disseminating extremist propaganda could be shared. Assisting with the development of the nascent Badan Siber dan Sandi Negara (National Cyber and Encryption Agency) would be useful in this regard.
- Finally, Australia could serve as an intermediary between Jakarta and Manila for determining whether there are any concrete indications that JI is seeking to reconsolidate its logistical presence in Mindanao. One potential mechanism that could be leveraged to promote this dialogue is the existing trilateral commission supporting Malaysia–Philippines–Indonesia (MALPHINDO) naval patrols in the Sulu and Celebes seas.

INTRODUCTION

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) is an Indonesia-based *jihadi* organisation that was established as a dedicated entity in January 1993 under the combined leadership of Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir. At its inception and during its formative operational years, the movement defined its objectives in both local and regional terms. The immediate goal was to institute a pure Islamic state in Indonesia governed by a strict interpretation of sharia law.¹ This ‘caliphate’ was then to be enshrined as a fundamental component of a broader ideological vision that sought the restoration of Islamic governance across Southeast Asia, taking in Brunei, Malaysia, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines.²

According to the movement’s founding manifesto, *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama’ah al-Islamiyyah* (PUPJI, or *The General Guidelines for the Struggle of Jemaah Islamiyah*), such an outcome was to be achieved via a two-step process: first, to develop a puritanical organisation whose members have a strong sense of social, political and religious identity; second, to use that group as a platform from which to launch armed attacks against infidels, apostates and atheists deemed to be working to prevent the genesis of a pure, theocratic, pan-regional Islamic order.³

To expedite this process, PUPJI affirms the need to establish a solid base by creating a cadre of followers who are steadfast in their obedience and totally committed to JI’s long-term objectives. It’s those individuals—possessing the personal strengths of *quwwatul aqidah* (faith), *quwwatul ukuwwah* (brotherhood) and *quwwatul musallaha* (fortitude)—who are intended to act as the ‘core executor, propagator and guardian of the jama’ah’s mission’.⁴

Organisationally, JI adopted a vertically integrated, networked structure that was composed of several layers. At the helm was an emir who assumed exclusive responsibility for the movement’s spiritual and ideological development.⁵ Beneath this overarching leader was a *majelis qiyadah* (regional advisory council) that was headed by a *qiyadah markaziyah* (central command). Next came three mid-level councils that were responsible for religious and disciplinary matters.⁶

At the operational level, JI was made up of four *mantiqis* (regional divisions) that were subdivided into *wakalaha* (brigades), *katibahs* (companies), *saroyahs* (battalions), *qirdas* (platoons), *fi’ahs* (squads) and *thoifahs* (cells). The *mantiqis* were defined along both geographical and functional lines as follows:

- Mantiqi I: Singapore, Malaysia (except Sabah) and southern Thailand—responsible for ensuring JI’s financial health
- Mantiqi II: Indonesia (except Sulawesi and Kalimantan)—responsible for leadership and recruitment
- Mantiqi III: Sabah, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and the southern Philippines—responsible for training and weapons procurement
- Mantiqi IV: Australia and Papua New Guinea—responsible for fundraising.⁷

At its height in 1999–2000, JI was thought to have a hardcore membership of around 2,000 activists supplemented by a wider support pool of 5,000 passive sympathisers.⁸ Between 2002 and 2005, this extensive personnel base was used to plan, prepare and execute some of the worst terrorist atrocities ever witnessed in Southeast Asia (Table 1).

Table 1: High-profile attacks attributed to JI, 2002 to 2005

Attack	People killed	People injured
Bali bombings, 12 October 2002	202	209
Bombing of JW Marriott Hotel, Jakarta, 5 August 2003	12	150
Bombing of Philippine <i>SuperFerry 14</i> , 27 September 2004 ^a	116	16
Bombing of Australian Embassy, Jakarta, 9 September 2004	11	Over 200
Bali II bombings, 1 October 2005	25	129

a The bombing of *SuperFerry 14* was actually a joint operation that was financed by JI and executed by the Rajah Soliaman Revolutionary Movement on behalf of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Source: Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau, Leanne Piggott, *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2009, 99, [online](#).

The threat emanating from JI started to greatly diminish following the second Bali bombings. Two main factors accounted for this.

First were highly effective counterterrorist drives in Indonesia that eliminated some of the group's most prominent and proficient commanders (Table 2). Densus 88, an elite national police rapid response team set up with American assistance in 2003, was at the forefront of these neutralisations, which proved decisive in breaking and disrupting jihadist cells across the country.⁹

Table 2: High-profile JI neutralisations, 2001 to 2009

Name	Proficiency/position
Riduan Isamuiddin (aka Hambali)	Veteran of the anti-Soviet mujahidin campaign in Afghanistan and key link-man between JI and al-Qaeda
Mohammed Iqbal bin Abdurrham (aka Abu Jibril)	Alleged leader of JI's Malaysia cell and one of al-Qaeda's main trainers in Southeast Asia
Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi	Demolition expert and head of JI training in Mindanao
Muklos Yunos	Key link-man between JI and Islamist rebel movements in the southern Philippines
Mas Selamat Kastari	Head of JI's Singapore cell
Azari Husin	Former engineer and one of JI's top explosives experts
Yusron Mahmudi Zarkas (aka Zarkarsih)	JI's deputy spiritual emir
Abu Ajuana	JI's top operational commander in Central Poso
Mohammad Noordin Top	Former accountant and JI's top financier/recruiter for suicide bombings
Abdul Rohim	Leading ideologue and member of JI's governing council

Source: Chalk et al., *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, 94.

Second, many Indonesians were uncomfortable with the large number of Muslim casualties caused by JI's attacks—something that was particularly true of the Marriott (2003) and Australian Embassy (2004) explosions in Jakarta. Ensuing Islamic criticism not only deprived the movement of vital grassroots support, but also triggered an internal split between so-called 'bomb-now' hardliners and more traditionalist 'pro-*dakwah*' Islamists who viewed the use of such indiscriminate tactics as counterproductive.¹⁰

These various developments had a highly deleterious impact on JI's operational viability, and for many years the group was effectively silent in terms of militant activity. The group suffered a further major loss in 2008 when its founding emir, Bashir, defected and established Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid—an entirely separate organisation loyal to ISIL.¹¹ Despite those significant setbacks, JI was never completely destroyed and, indeed, in 2009 managed to make a dramatic reappearance with the twin bombings of the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels in Jakarta, which together left nine people dead and another 41 injured.¹² Since then, JI has been quietly rebuilding its base and spreading its network of jihadist links in Indonesia. Those efforts appear to have borne dividends, as by 2016 the group's central membership was estimated to be roughly the same number it was when the movement was at its zenith (2,000 cadres).¹³

Moreover, in a number of respects, the JI 'system' endures as a viable conveyor belt for fostering and promoting radicalism in Indonesia: the movement's *shura* (governing council) remains intact and meets on a regular basis; several former leaders who were imprisoned have been released and now openly preach at prominent mosques and religious boarding schools (*pesantrens*); JI's founding manifesto, PUPJI, continues to provide the ideological framework for guiding the group's actions; and the goal of establishing a full-fledged Islamic caliphate still resonates widely within the country's radical jihadist community. At the same time, the preoccupation of the region's security apparatus with countering the spread of ISIL has provided JI with the necessary space to resume and expand its activities.¹⁴

The continued persistence of JI raises one central question: what direction will the group's future operational trajectory take? One can envision three possible scenarios:

- furthering the Islamic struggle in Indonesia through education and peaceful activism
- returning to violence as the preferred means for establishing an Indonesian caliphate
- resurrecting the original JI objective of creating a pan-regional Islamic polity in Southeast Asia.

The remainder of this report explores the likelihood of each of these scenarios and assesses how two interrelated 'wild cards' might further affect JI's operational profile:

1. Will JI be able to capitalise on ISIL's failures in Iraq, Syria and Marawi to reassert itself as the dominant and most credible Islamist movement in Southeast Asia?
2. Assuming that a re-energised JI does eventuate, will the group maintain an independent posture or seek to re-establish historical ties with al-Qaeda?

The paper concludes by looking at policy implications for Australia and how Canberra might best assist Indonesia in countering the latent threat stemming from JI.

FURTHERING THE ISLAMIC STRUGGLE IN INDONESIA THROUGH EDUCATION AND PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES

Abu Rusdan, who was incarcerated in February 2004 and spent three and a half years in prison and who is now considered to be the current emir of JI, has consistently stated that, while the group remains intact and wholly committed to the establishment of a Negara Islam (an Islamic state), that objective will now be pursued through *dakwah* (preaching and religious outreach) rather than violence. The highly charismatic and widely respected ideologue makes weekly appearances on television preaching this singular message, insisting that sharia law in Indonesia will eventuate from the ballot box rather than the barrel of a gun. He vociferously rejects the idea that a so-called 'neo-JI' made up of a younger generation of militants exists, dismissing this as the work of 'fertile' minds aiming to negatively brand the redefined organisation.¹⁵

Certain Singaporean commentators who are following JI's current trajectory accept that a reorientation to peaceful radicalism very well could be JI's intent, arguing that it should be considered in the light of other militant Islamist organisations' shifts to nonviolent tactics, such as that by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. According to this interpretation, the overarching goal is to quietly consolidate JI's control across the main political, religious, social and economic sectors of the state and then to leverage that core presence as a means of eventually capturing and then transforming the Indonesian secular order from within.¹⁶ Evolution in this direction could, potentially, have a dramatic effect on the radical Islamic community in Indonesia, providing various militant groups with a new role model that demonstrates that political struggle, rather than violence, can be used to effect change.¹⁷

Proselytism is central to this strategy and is an area in which JI has been especially active. The movement spreads its ideas and dogma through mosques, pesantrens, tertiary educational institutes (including secular universities), public lectures (*taklim*) and above-ground Muslim outreach organisations such as the Majelis Dakwah Umat Islam.¹⁸ It runs an extensive array of publishing houses that produce newsletters, pamphlets and magazines that are distributed to members and potential recruits, maintains several media outlets and websites¹⁹ and regularly contributes to theological debates taking place in online discussion forums.²⁰ JI also supports various charities and humanitarian groups, including the salafist Hilal Ahmar Society Indonesia, which was set up in Bogor following the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake to aid victims of natural disasters and conflict.²¹

An interesting component of JI's proselytism appears to be directed at positively swaying professionals to join the movement. According to a 2017 report by the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), the group has maintained a dedicated educational division for at least four years, the broad purpose of which is to build a mass base that includes specialists from a variety of key vocational backgrounds.²² Table 3, which is derived from an old PowerPoint presentation that the Indonesian police obtained in 2013, details some early achievements in enlisting such individuals. Although dated, this document provides some contextual background for the types of persons that JI continues to pursue in its overall recruitment efforts today.²³

Table 3: Professions targeted for JI recruitment

Profession	Achieved 2013	Target for 2014
Doctor	9	15
Nurse	16	15
Midwife	5	10
Pharmacist	–	10
Information technology	13	15
Chemical technology	7	15
Machinist	13	15
Electrical technology	9	15
Metallurgy	5	10
Industrial technology	–	5
Nuclear technology	–	5
Civil engineering	2	10
Publishing	–	5
Communications	1	10
Journalism	–	5
Graduate lawyers	1	5
Practising lawyers	–	5
Paralegals	–	5
Agricultural graduates	5	10
Agricultural experts	–	5

Source: Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, report no. 36, IPAC, Jakarta, April 2017, 9, [online](#).

Rusdan and other leading ideologues who have now been released from prison, such as Nasir Abbas and Abu Jibril, all admit that winning over the Indonesian state purely through *dakwah* activities will be a long-term endeavour, setting a time frame of at least 25 years. However, they evidently believe that JI has the necessary resilience to see the task to its fruition. These figures have each argued that the movement's connectivity, history, structure and overall sense of purpose provide it with the required organisational 'spirit' to spearhead and eventually create a caliphate in Indonesia.²⁴

While JI has demonstrated a proven ability not only to weather concerted assaults but also to rebuild after them, what's less certain is whether the movement possesses the voluntary restraint to eschew violence. One aspect that casts doubt on this key question is the fact that PUPJI continues to guide JI's ideological and operational direction. As noted above, this manifesto reserves an explicit place for carrying out armed attacks against any morally corrupt elements that are seen to be working against the group's interests.

Another issue concerns the time frame of the supposed internal subversion approach. The mere fact that this will be a long-term endeavour means that the likes of Rusdan and his so-called 'old guard' might well not be in a position to prevent the emergence of the very neo-JI network that they so adamantly deny.

Just as significantly, the current leadership has continually qualified the pursuit of *dakwah*, saying that it's directly contingent on the actions of the Indonesian state and that JI would only remain peaceful as long as the government didn't take any moves to stifle the group's political agenda.²⁵ This would seem to indicate that, far from fully committing to the ballot box as the preferred means of realising its goals, the movement continues to view the bullet as a possible recourse should Jakarta move in a direction that's deemed to be contrary to JI's interests.

One final dimension that needs to be considered is sectarianism. JI is highly suspicious of the Shia, holding the view that this branch of Islam has a grand design to transform the world into a single anti-Sunni state and that Indonesia is part of that plan.²⁶ The rhetoric of foreign fighters (both al-Qaeda- and ISIL-affiliated) who have returned from the Middle East could dangerously amplify this notion, with potentially dire consequences for intercommunal relations.²⁷ Should these statements spark a wider intra-Muslim conflict in Indonesia, JI's aversion to violence would almost certainly evaporate overnight.²⁸

RETURNING TO VIOLENCE AS THE PREFERRED MEANS FOR ESTABLISHING AN INDONESIAN CALIPHATE

An alternative possibility is that JI never really eschewed the path of violence but merely made a tactical decision to lie low and desist from armed attacks in order to recoup the losses that it had suffered at the hands of the Indonesian security forces. As one prominent Filipino journalist who has been following JI for some time observed, ‘Sometimes rebels have to temporarily stop fighting so they can recover logistically and reconfigure strategically.’²⁹

This line of reasoning reflects the jihadist concept of *i'dad* and its emphasis on rebuilding in times of weakness in order to prepare for future Islamist assaults.³⁰ Certain commentators have also interpreted it as a strategic reaction to the growing influence of ISIL extremism in Southeast Asia. Drawing on the example of al-Qaeda’s tactical pivot in the Middle East between 2009 and 2010—a shift that was itself triggered by the brutality of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s onslaught against Iraqi Shia—a decision was made to lie low, market a more indigenous face and better cultivate local support. In both cases, the real intent isn’t to turn away from violence but merely to wait until conditions are more opportune for a return to jihadist war.³¹

There are certainly grounds to believe that JI remains a dormant militant group waiting to be reactivated when the time is right. In 2011, the group established an armed wing that’s not only largely based on a similar territorial structure to the one it employed at the height of its terrorist campaign between 2000 and 2005—the only real difference being that the division level is now nationally (*bithonah*) rather than regionally (*mantiqi*) based (Table 4)—but which also derives its operational direction from PUPJI. Each member is required to undergo physical training, gain some proficiency in martial arts, acquire the ability to assemble/disassemble an M-16 and develop the knowledge of how to shoot a rifle and wield a knife or sword. Weapons for the unit have been both purchased on the Indonesian black market (where they have been smuggled through the porous tri-border area of the Sulu and Celebes seas) and indigenously produced out of a makeshift machine shop located in Central Java. Funding is derived from members’ dues (cadres are expected to hand over 5% of their income to their local leader each month),³² donations, alms and profits derived from JI businesses and landholdings.³³

Table 4: JI military organisational structure: old and new

Divisions	Old structure	New structure
Central command	Shura	Shura
Overall commander	Emir	Emir
Division	Mantiqi	Bithonah
Brigade	Wakalah	Khodimah
Battalion	Saroyah	Tholiah
Company	Katibah	Isobah
Platoon	Qirdas	Rodfibah
Squad	Fi’ah	Qobhisoh
Cell	Thoifah	Ribabah

Source: Adapted from IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 5.

Rusdan has claimed that the armed wing is being retained for purely self-defence purposes and will be deployed only in the event that Indonesia aggressively turns on his movement. However, the fact that JI is known to have sent about a dozen of its members to fight alongside al-Qaeda affiliates Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) and Hyat Tahrir al-Sham in Syria—*specifically* to gain combat skills and experience—strongly suggests the unit is intended to be far more offensive than defensive.³⁴ As the 2017 report by IPAC observed:

It is unclear how many men had received training by early 2017 but JI's mission was clearly to send people for short, intensive training courses, not unlike the special courses offered by its training academy in Mindanao in 1999–2000, with the aim of building skills that could eventually be used back at home.³⁵

If it's indeed the case that JI continues to view violence as the preferred means for establishing an Indonesian caliphate, the growing preoccupation with ISIL throughout Southeast Asia has worked to the group's direct advantage. The overriding attention that ASEAN governments have given to stemming ISIL's regional expansion has effectively allowed JI to operate below the radar screen of observing police, military and intelligence services, providing it with the necessary 'invisibility' to build its base, resume its propaganda and fundraising drives, and establish a dedicated armed structure for eventual confrontation against the enemy (Jakarta).³⁶ No less importantly, as regional commentators in Singapore have observed, with every bombing and assault ISIL and its regional affiliates undertake in Southeast Asia (Table 5), JI is able to burnish its credentials as a 'good' *jihadi* outfit that in no way represents the type of militant danger stemming from Abur Bakar al-Baghdadi's organisation.³⁷

Table 5: Prominent attacks that ISIL-affiliated militants have carried out in Southeast Asia, 2017 and 2018

Attack	People killed	People injured
Marawi siege (May–October 2017)	1,232	1,400+
Lamitan City bombing (July 2018)	10	9
Sultan Kudurat bombing (28 August 2018)	3	36
Sultan Kudurat bombing (2 September 2018)	2	12
Cotabato City bombing (16 September 2018)	–	–
General Santos City bombing (16 September 2018)	–	7

Source: Derived from interviews in Manila, 19–20 November 2018.

RESURRECTING THE ORIGINAL OBJECTIVE OF CREATING A PAN-REGIONAL ISLAMIC POLITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Irrespective of whether JI adopts a violent or nonviolent path, all indications at this point are that the movement's principal geographical area of interest is Indonesia. The transnational notion of a pan-regional caliphate appears to have been an accident of history and a by-product of the Afghan civil war in the 1980s, when jihadists fighting the Soviet Union championed the global supremacy of Islam through the institution of wider 'super-states' that would be inclusive of all Muslims.³⁸

Concentrating its activities in Indonesia makes good practical sense for at least three reasons. First, although Densus 88 has been highly successful in rounding up leading JI members, the unit is less proficient than its counterparts in Malaysia and Singapore—both areas where JI cells had been completely destroyed by 2003. Second, a focus on one state allows the movement to concentrate the totality of its resources on a single enemy and thereby avoid dangers of overstretch. Third, successfully transforming the world's largest Muslim nation would be likely to have knock-on effects elsewhere, certainly in Southeast Asia if not globally.

Besides these considerations, it's also salient that Indonesian jails remain an especially conducive conduit for militant recruitment by both disseminating fanatical Islamist propaganda and fostering support for it. A strong sense of jihadist affinity and solidarity has been allowed to develop among inmates, making the penal system an ideal hub for terrorist indoctrination. Several factors have contributed to this dysfunctional state of affairs, including corruption, the absence of qualified and motivated wardens, lack of physical infrastructure (militants are frequently housed in the same cells as common criminals, who are then targeted for enlistment) and a dearth of available intelligence on detainees and their activities. Even in maximum-security penitentiaries, prisoners have had a remarkable degree of latitude not only to access extremist literature and translations but also to issue proclamations of allegiance that have found a receptive audience among other detainees as well as the public.³⁹

Although JI does appear to have ditched its past regional ambitions, the movement may well look to re-establishing its presence in the southern Philippines to support the primary Islamist mission in Indonesia. While there are currently no visible signs that JI is moving in that direction,⁴⁰ a number of factors might make it an appealing and viable option in the future. Mindanao and its outlying islands have long acted as a proven jihadist training ground, recruitment hub and logistical rear base for Southeast Asian militant extremists. The Sulu archipelago, in particular, offers a highly permissive environment for the illicit trafficking of fighters, weapons and funds, as well as a largely unpoliced corridor that connects Filipino militants and their counterparts in Sabah (Malaysia) and Sulawesi (Indonesia).⁴¹ It's true that ISIL has managed to make concerted inroads into this valued geostrategic area, securing oaths of loyalty from several prominent local rebel organisations (Table 6). However, the failure to establish Marawi City as the centre of gravity for a future Daula Islamiya Wilayatul Mashriq (Islamic State Province in East Asia) in 2017 (see box) theoretically creates an opportunity for JI to showcase support for its campaign in Indonesia as a more effective alternative for attaining the eventual creation of a subregional Muslim caliphate.

Table 6: Main rebel groups in the southern Philippines affiliated with ISIL

Group	Area of operation	Leader	Size
Abu Sayyaf Group ^a	Basilan	Furuji Indama (successor to Islinon Hapilon) ^b	50–70
Abu Dar Group ^c	Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte	Humam Abdul Romato Najid (aka Abu Dar)	90
Jamaah Mujahideen Wal Ansar ^d	Maguindanao	Esmael Abdulmalik (aka Abu Turaipe)	60
Ansar Khalifa Philippines	Sarangani	Jeoffrey Nilon	Approx. 10

a A second Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) faction in Sulu under the command of Abdullah Sahiron is essentially a criminal enterprise engaged in kidnapping, extortion and piracy.

b Before his death during the Marawi City siege in 2017, Hapilon had been anointed as ISIL's regional representative in Southeast Asia.

c The Abu Dar Group is the remnant of the Maute Group, which together with the Basilan faction of the ASG planned and executed the Marawi City siege.

d Jamaah Mujahideen Wal Ansar is one of three factions of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, which is itself a splinter of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Ismael Abu Bakar (aka Commander Bungos) and Mohaiden Minimbang (aka Commander Karialan) lead the other two, and they're currently seeking to undermine a proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in preference for an Islamic state in Mindanao.⁴²

Source: Interviews, Manila, 20 November 2018. See also Rommel Banlaoi, 'One year after the liberation of Marawi, Islamic State PH still alive', *Vera Files*, 17 October 2018, [online](#).

The Marawi crisis

The Marawi crisis erupted on 23 May 2017, when a combined Philippines army and police team attempted to arrest Islinon Hapilon after receiving reports that he was in the city meeting with members of the Maute Group to support the creation of Daula Islamiya Wilayatul Mashriq. In response, fighters from the Basilan faction of the Abu Sayyaf Group opened fire on the security forces and, with backing from the Maute Group, quickly attacked and took control of several buildings, including the City Hall, Mindanao State University, a hospital and a penitentiary. They also occupied the main street, set fire to Saint Mary's Cathedral, Ninoy Aquino School and Dansalen College, and took a priest and several churchgoers hostage. The siege dragged on for five months before it was finally broken, by which time 980 militants (including Hapilon and Omar Maute), 165 military or law enforcement personnel and 87 civilians had been killed, over 1,400 injured and a further 350,000 displaced from their homes.

Besides these considerations, ISIL is known to be using the same social networks that were originally created by JI to spread its ideology.⁴³ Given that local rebel groups in Mindanao are highly fluid in their loyalty (essentially following the money when deciding which organisation they pledge allegiance to), should JI be able to use some of its revenue to outfund ISIL it wouldn't be particularly difficult for the movement to revive and reconsolidate its historical ties with southern Philippine militant entities in a relatively short time.⁴⁴

There's also a sizeable population of Indonesians living in the southern Philippines, many of whom have been there for generations. Particularly prominent are merchant traders based out of vibrant urban transshipment hubs such as Sultan Kurdurat and General Santos City. The existence of these communal pockets could work directly to the advantage of JI should it make the decision to reconsolidate in Mindanao and the surrounding islands, not least by allowing cadres to blend in and quickly establish local businesses (as fronts for logistically supporting jihadist activities in Indonesia) without attracting undue attention.⁴⁵

Finally, there's been some speculation in certain Philippine quarters that the current Moro peace process could inadvertently act as a magnet that draws JI back to Mindanao. Of particular concern is the possibility that the movement will attempt to co-opt hardliners in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and convince them to allow the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)⁴⁶ to be used for covert recruitment and training. As one army official observed to the author, while the MILF as an organisation has distanced itself

from external Islamist entities, it's by no means a homogeneous entity and there remain religious elements within the group who no doubt continue to harbour sympathies for the agenda of JI. As in the past, when the MILF was under the command of Hashim Salamat, it's these clerics who conceivably would be willing to open up BARMM to logistically support the creation of a caliphate in Indonesia.⁴⁷

Very much related to this are a number of indications that the Marawi crisis has significantly set back ISIL's cause in the southern Philippines. Of the more than 350,000 people who were displaced by the siege, most have yet to be resettled and continue to live in squalid, makeshift refugee camps. Tellingly, many of these civilians blame their current situation not on the government and the security forces but on the actions of ISIL and its local affiliates. At the same time, the group's electronic propaganda has become far less proficient and more opportunistic, with the number of ISIL-affiliated Facebook⁴⁸ accounts showing a rapid decline in the months following the liberation of Marawi.⁴⁹ This would seem to suggest that the credibility and pull of the group's online messaging have weakened, arguably creating an opening in Mindanao's virtual space that JI could move to exploit.

WILD CARD 1

Will JI be able to capitalise on ISIL's failures in Iraq, Syria and Marawi to reassert itself as the dominant and most credible Islamist movement in Southeast Asia?

By virtually every indicator, ISIL's effort to establish a caliphate in the Middle East and Southeast Asia has failed. As of the beginning of 2019, the group retained control of less than 1% of the Syrian and Iraqi territory it held in 2014.⁵⁰ At the same time, its effort to push into the southern Philippines has stalled as a result of the inability to establish Marawi City as the crucible for a new regional Daula Islamiya Wilayatul Mashriq. These setbacks have arguably cast doubt on the credibility of ISIL's formula for establishing jemaahs (Islamic communities), potentially opening the way for the JI model to once again assume centre stage in Indonesia.

In several respects, JI is well situated to take advantage of ISIL's growing operational disarray. The movement retains the capacity to articulate a compelling narrative to its support base; has a clear vision for how it will achieve its long-term objectives (in the guise of PUPJI, which reads more like an insurgent manifesto than a terrorism guide); enjoys a deep depth of members to draw on; and remains closely linked to local and national radical Islamist circles, working through an enduring network of social relationships that has yet to be decisively disrupted, much less destroyed. In addition, JI traces a historical lineage that goes back to the teachings of Darul Islam, a fundamentalist doctrine that continues to elicit widespread respect across a broad swathe of the conservative Indonesian Muslim community.⁵¹

It's true that the current focus on *dakwah* might not sit well with younger Islamists, who yearn for action and who are likely to chafe at the restrictions on violence that the current leadership is imposing.⁵² Indeed, this was precisely the cause of the internal split that originally divided JI into traditionalist and pro-bomber factions following the 2002 Bali bombings. However, as noted above, the reorientation to above-ground overt activities is probably more duplicitous than genuine, merely reflecting a tactical decision to lie low until operational conditions are more favourable for a resumption of militant activity. If Rusdan and his fellow ideologues are able to credibly present a case that such an approach has a greater chance of retaining grassroots support (by avoiding collateral Muslim casualties) and is more in line with the true concept of jihad (which doesn't condone random acts of disorganised violence), then JI may well be able to convince these 'neo' stalwarts that strategically adhering to the principles of *i'dad* is the best way of advancing the Islamist cause in Indonesia.

There's anecdotal evidence to support this thesis. JI's local membership has grown rapidly since 2010 and, as noted, is now back at or above the previous high of 2,000 cadres—a figure that at least matches if not supersedes the number of those who had gravitated to ISIL at the high point of its recruitment drive in 2016 (estimated at between 1,000 and 2,000).⁵³ Moreover, whereas in 2015 and 2016 the vast majority of returning Southeast Asian foreign fighters were gravitating to ISIL-linked groups in Indonesia networked through Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (which was established in 2014 under the leadership of Amman Abdulrahman), since 2017 a slowly growing but perceptible number have started to join the anti-ISIL Jammah Ansjarul Syariah (which came into being as a splinter of JI after

Bashir declared allegiance to al-Baghdadi).⁵⁴ While the two organisations don't maintain an organisational or operational alliance, they both reject the indiscriminate violence of ISIL and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah. In addition many current members of Jammah Ansjarul Syariah were formerly commanders in JI, suggesting that reverse flows between the two movements could well eventuate should Rusdan's movement credibly project itself as capable of spearheading the Islamist cause in Indonesia.

Such a development could also conceivably sway the allegiance of foreigners fighting in Mindanao. The army estimates that 48 foreign fighters⁵⁵ are currently operating in the southern Philippines, the bulk of whom are either Indonesians who have entered the region through Davao and Sarangani from North Sulawesi or Malaysians who have arrived via Tawi-Tawi from Sabah on Borneo.⁵⁶ While most of these militants continue to champion the rhetoric of ISIL, the credibility of that ideological missive has been undermined by the Marawi City defeat. This has opened up the local Islamic landscape in Mindanao, expanding the latitude for competing Islamist frameworks to gain traction. JI could leverage this altered environmental context to convince foreign fighters in the southern Philippines that supporting the campaign in Indonesia in a logistical rear-base capacity is the most viable means of advancing the overall jihadist struggle in Southeast Asia.⁵⁷

WILD CARD 2

Will JI maintain an independent posture or seek to re-establish historical ties with al-Qaeda?

Although JI was established as a dedicated Indonesian movement in its own right (albeit with a pan-regional focus), it always had a relatively close relationship with al-Qaeda. Links were first cultivated in Afghanistan, where the top JI leadership trained during the 1980s and 1990s and came into contact with Osama bin Laden and other senior al-Qaeda personalities, such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (the alleged mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks in the US). Over subsequent years, al-Qaeda provided funding, logistical assistance and technical expertise to Bashir's organisation, much of which was channelled through leading commanders who were tied to both movements, such as Risudan Isamuddin (aka Hambali), Joko Pitono (aka Dulmatin), Umar Patek, Abu Dujana and Omar Farouk. Of those individuals, arguably the most important was Hambali, who served as al-Qaeda's director of operations for East Asia and who, before his arrest in August 2003, played an integral role in the planning and execution of some of JI's most infamous attacks in the region. Notable in this regard were the 2002 Bali bombings, which, with more than 200 fatalities, remain the worst act of terrorism in Southeast Asia's history.⁵⁸

Assuming that a re-energised JI does eventuate—and, given this analysis, all indications are that this will indeed be the case—will the movement seek to consolidate its goals independently or, as in the past, in conjunction with al-Qaeda? This is an important question, as it speaks directly to the overall threat quotient that the movement poses to both Indonesia and the region more generally.

There are several reasons to believe that JI will turn outward to support the indigenous struggle in Indonesia rather than pursue this objective purely on the basis of its own capabilities.

First, the current leadership still contains a core cadre of personalities who were present when JI first nurtured its ties with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Apart from the present emir, Rusdan, examples include Abdullah Anshori (aka Abu Fatih, who previously ran JI operations in Indonesia), Nasir Abbas (the past chief of Mantiqi III), Zarkasih (aka Abu Irsyad, JI's religious leader between 2004 and 2007), Abu Jibril (the ex-commander of JI's Malaysian cell) and Abu Dujana (the former secretary of Mantiqi II). The continued relevance of these ranking members in JI's spine arguably signifies that the movement's relationship with al-Qaeda is not only still very much alive but that those ties may well be on a far higher plane than previously assumed.⁵⁹

Second, as noted, JI's emphasis on *i'dad* occurred almost simultaneously with al-Qaeda's own recalibration towards *dakwah* and away from *amaliyah* (operations)—a shift that's also basically aimed at expanding and consolidating grassroots support to buttress the resumption of a future jihad.⁶⁰ As Charles Vallee observes, the coincidental timing of these tactical moves and the similarity in what they're trying to achieve strongly suggest that Ayman al-Zawahiri has had an influential hand in guiding Rusdan's actions:

Jl's strategic shift must not be considered in a vacuum, but rather in the context of al Qaeda's global strategy, as it may well be an unrecognized manifestation of AQC's [al-Qaeda Core's] long-term approach. AQC's global strategy is well reported on in other parts of the world, but policymakers, analysts, and military practitioners must consider its relevance in Southeast Asia. As al Qaeda proxies in Syria, Yemen, the Sahel, North Africa, and Somalia garner attention, we must not rule out the potential that Zawahiri views Jl as an equally important puzzle piece in AQC's global strategy.⁶¹

Third, al-Qaeda is an extremely opportunistic group that over the past several years has actively underwritten regional militant proxies to counter ISIL's influence in areas it considers to be integral to the global jihadist campaign against the US and its Western/secular allies.⁶² Working with its traditional Islamist ally in Indonesia to 'positively tilt' the world's largest Muslim nation would doubtless be viewed as consistent with this core mission—a partnership that Jl would presumably welcome both as a way of boosting the credibility of its religious standing relative to other above-ground mass Islamic movements⁶³ and as a means of stunting the growth of the ISIL-affiliated Jamaah Ansharut Daulah.⁶⁴

Finally, it's worth remembering that ties between Jl and al-Qaeda not only go back a long time but also have an established heritage of reciprocal, mutually beneficial cooperation. Resurrecting those relationships won't be difficult and, should a decision be made to do so, could be achieved in very short order. This is especially true given the orientation of Jl's current command structure—particularly Rusdan, who has been described by certain experts as a 'key pro-Al Qaeda leader' in Indonesia.⁶⁵ The existence of these figures underscores an enduring conduit between Jl and al-Qaeda, which many analysts agree has only grown stronger in light of the regional and global challenge posed by ISIL.⁶⁶

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

The re-emergence of JI has major relevance for Australia given that Indonesia is a large regional and strategically important partner. Any threats to Jakarta's internal sovereign stability must therefore occupy a central place in Canberra's foreign, defence and security calculations. This is especially true at a time when Australia is seeking to build a closer relationship with Indonesia in response to Beijing's increased assertiveness in the region and its uncompromising stance on territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

At the same time, Australia has been directly caught in the cross-hairs of JI's past militant activities, with the 88 fatalities (out of a total of 202) resulting from the 2002 Bali bombings remaining the single largest loss of life to a terrorist attack in the nation's history. Significantly, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation has concluded that elements within JI retain violent ambitions to harm the country's vital interests, and it's for that reason that Canberra continues to list the movement as a proscribed organisation despite its self-proclaimed reorientation to a peaceful agenda:

JI's recruitment and outreach activities are designed to establish a support base in Indonesia for an Islamist State under Islamic Law, and legitimise the use of violence against property and individuals to achieve their objectives. Past terrorist attacks attributed to JI continue to inspire a new generation of potential jihadists.

While JI [has] not undertaken a terrorist attack in recent years, it retains intent and willingness to use violence in support of its long term political and ideological objectives ...

On the basis of the above information and other classified information, the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation [sic] assesses that JI continues to be directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of terrorist acts or advocates the doing of terrorist acts, involving threats to human life and serious damage to property.⁶⁷

Australia could do several things to assist Indonesia in dealing with the re-emergent JI threat.

First, the scope of support that Canberra is currently providing for Jakarta's evolving strategy of countering violent extremism (CVE)⁶⁸—which is rendered under the auspices of the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice⁶⁹—could be further expanded. Although this joint effort has yielded some positive results—empowering youth, building communal resilience against intolerance, supporting the development of counter-narratives against militant messaging and facilitating the social reintegration of convicted terrorists who have completed their sentences—it has yet to imbue the government with a full appreciation of how civil-society organisations can be leveraged to promote such initiatives. This is unfortunate, as grassroots entities tend to have a detailed understanding of the localities they operate in and typically enjoy a far greater level of communal trust and credibility than official state-centric, security-oriented institutions could ever hope to achieve.⁷⁰ Canberra has worked extensively with civil-society organisations to dampen drivers of conflict in radical, violence-prone contexts (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Solomon Islands and the southern Philippines are all good examples) and could usefully draw on that experience to support a more comprehensive, bottom-up approach to overall Indonesian CVE programming.

Second, Australia could render advice on how best to ensure that kinetic counterterrorist responses don't unduly boost support for the JI missive that Jakarta's secular order is inherently biased against the country's Muslim interests. In a number of instances, arrested members of the *jihadi* movement have died under mysterious circumstances while in police custody, which has cast considerable doubt on the legitimacy and veracity of the state's security apparatus.⁷¹ Canberra has long emphasised a counterterrorist approach that's limited, transparent and subject to a rigorous system of both executive and external checks and balances. The government should impress on Indonesia that adhering to these fundamental principles is the most effective and expedient way to maximise the possibility that official action against militant extremism will receive popular backing. This core message could be transmitted both bilaterally and through high-level multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus.⁷²

Third, Australia's ongoing support for prison reform, which is also implemented through the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice, could be further refined to better assist with:⁷³

- monitoring the electronic communications of inmates
- controlling the reading materials detainees are allowed to access, translate and disseminate
- vetting the activities of religious 'study groups', especially in order to identify those who go to those gatherings, to ascertain what's discussed during the meetings, and to determine whether there are any side sessions that only a few participants are allowed to attend.⁷⁴

Fourth, Australia could interact more closely with Jakarta to better restrict JI's use of the internet as a medium for proselytism and otherwise promoting the movement's radical ideology. Helping with the development of the nascent Badan Siber dan Sandi Negara (National Cyber and Encryption Agency), which was set up in May 2017 to coordinate and drive improved cybersecurity in Indonesia, would be particularly useful in this regard.⁷⁵ Just as importantly, assistance could be rendered to more concertedly control the country's proliferating Islamist publication industry, which continues to churn out a wide array of pro-JI printed products, often for as little as A\$1.60 each.⁷⁶ Jakarta's past efforts in these areas have been blunt and have merely raised public concerns over censorship and unjustified, or at least unwarranted, restrictions on freedom of speech.⁷⁷ The most useful contribution Canberra could thus make would be to help develop guidelines for clearly explaining why regulatory measures are being introduced and how they'll contribute to—rather than detract from—the wider national interest.

Finally, the Australian intelligence community could move to cooperate more closely with its Indonesian and Philippine counterparts in assessing whether there are any concrete indications that JI is seeking to reconsolidate its logistical presence in Mindanao. Manila's current concern with ISIL and its local affiliates (see Table 6) makes this a somewhat pressing issue, not least because of the possibility that JI might seek to return to the region while the attention of local intelligence, military and police agencies is focused elsewhere. One potential mechanism for promoting this dialogue is the existing trilateral commission supporting MALPHINDO naval patrols in the Sulu and Celebes seas.⁷⁸ This regime of sub-regional maritime cooperation could yield some useful information that could help to determine whether outside elements are in fact working with indigenous organisations such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Abu Dar Group, Jamaah Mujahideen Wal Ansar and Ansar Khalifa Philippines for logistical or operational purposes.

NOTES

- 1 This objective traces its lineage to Darul Islam, a jihadist movement that emerged in the 1940s to establish a full-fledged Islamic state in Indonesia. In pursuit of that goal, the movement launched a series of rebellions across Java, north Sumatra and south Sulawesi during the 1950s that, for a time, seriously threatened the ruling authority of the central administration in Jakarta. Concerted counterinsurgency sweeps, however, progressively weakened the group, and by 1962 its campaign of violence had been effectively quashed.
- 2 Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau, Leanne Piggott, *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2009, 90, [online](#).
- 3 *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*, JI handbook, c. mid-1990s, 37–44 and 51–52.
- 4 *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*, 28.
- 5 Sungkar initially acted as JI's emir. After he died in 1999, the mantle passed to Bashir.
- 6 Chalk et al., *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, 92.
- 7 Ministry of Home Affairs, *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism*, Singapore Government, January 2003, 10.
- 8 International Crisis Group (ICG), *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's current status*, Asia briefing no. 63, ICG, Jakarta/Brussels, May 2007, 13.
- 9 Chalk et al., *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, 154.
- 10 Bilveer Singh, *Jemaah Islamiyah: still a latent threat*, commentary no. 75, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, April 2017, [online](#).
- 11 Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, report no. 36, IPAC, Jakarta, April 2017, 3, [online](#).
- 12 Counter Extremism Project, *Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)*, Counter Extremism Project, 2017, [online](#).
- 13 Telephone interview, 14 November 2018. See also 'Jemaah Islamiah active again in Indonesia, recruiting and collecting funds', *Straits Times*, 15 February 2016. Gauging the size of JI is fraught with difficulty, as the group and the wider Islamist landscape in Indonesia are so fluid; individuals repeatedly switch allegiances and enter or exit movements as conditions in the country change.
- 14 Bilveer Singh, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: still Southeast Asia's greatest threat', *The Diplomat*, 7 October 2018.
- 15 Singh, *Jemaah Islamiyah: still a latent threat*.
- 16 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018.
- 17 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018. See also Gillian Oak, 'Jemaah Islamiyah's fifth phase: the many faces of a terrorist group', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 2010, 33:1005.
- 18 Majelis Dakwah Umat Islam was created in 2009 with the goal of appealing to a wider range of Muslims that spanned all levels of the religion's conservatism by impressing the importance of enforcing Islamic law (*iqamat ud-din*).
- 19 One key JI website is Ar-Rahmah.com.
- 20 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018. See also Oak, 'Jemaah Islamiyah's fifth phase: the many faces of a terrorist group', 998.
- 21 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 4; Charles Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?', *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy*, Spring 2018, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 65, [online](#). For more on the Hilal Ahmar Society Indonesia, see IPAC, *Indonesians and the Syrian conflict*, report no. 6, IPAC, Jakarta, January 2014, [online](#).
- 22 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 9.
- 23 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018.
- 24 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018.
- 25 Singh, *Jemaah Islamiyah: still a latent threat*, 3; Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?', 65.
- 26 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 11.
- 27 Interviews, Singapore, 14–15 November 2018.
- 28 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 11. See also Ahmed S Hashim, *The impact of the Islamic State in Asia*, policy report, RSIS, Singapore, February 2015, 11–12, [online](#).
- 29 Interview, Manila, 19 November 2018.
- 30 Singh, *Jemaah Islamiyah: still a latent threat*; Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?'; Bilveer Singh, *The jihadist threat in Southeast Asia: an Al Qaeda and IS-centric architecture?*, commentary no. 25, RSIS, Singapore, February 2017, 3, [online](#).
- 31 Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?', 65.

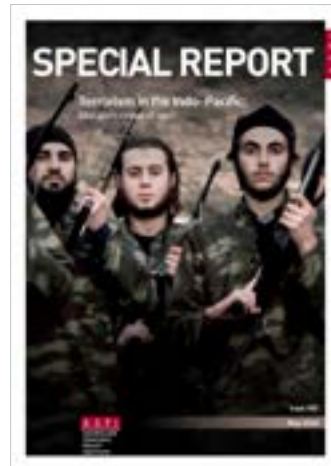
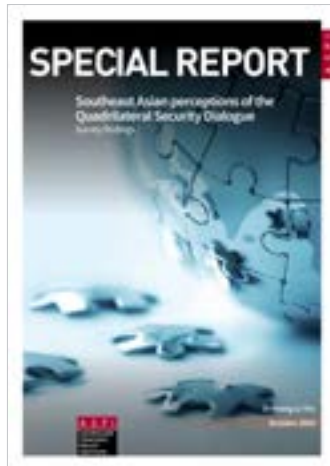
- 32 This generally amounts to around 60,000 rupiahs, so that a 2,000-strong force would raise 120 million rupiahs (approximately US\$9,000) per month in dues alone.
- 33 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 5–8.
- 34 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*.
- 35 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*.
- 36 Singh, *Jemaah Islamiyah: still a latent threat*.
- 37 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018.
- 38 Interviews, Singapore, 15 November 2018.
- 39 Interviews, Singapore, 14 November, 2018. See also Peter Chalk, *Black flag rising: ISIL in Southeast Asia and Australia*, ASPI, Canberra, December 2015, 12, [online](#); ICG, 'Deradicalisation' and Indonesian prisons, Asia briefing no. 142, ICG, Jakarta/Brussels, November 2007, [online](#).
- 40 Several informed commentators in Manila believe that, although there are no signs of a re-emerging JI presence in Mindanao, that doesn't necessarily mean it isn't happening. This is because accurately gauging what's taking place on the ground is extremely difficult due to the absence of credible intelligence—a problem that's grown more acute with the politicisation of both the police and the military under the Duterte administration. Interviews, Manila, 12–13 December 2018.
- 41 Interviews, Manila, 20 November 2018.
- 42 The creation of the BARMM is a central component of ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF. It will subsume the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and will be bestowed with significant powers of self-government, particularly in the area of taxation. A referendum on the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which will provide the legal basis for the BARMM, was held in January 2019 and returned an overwhelming 'yes' vote. Interviews, Manila, 20 November and 14 December 2018.
- 43 Interviews, Manila, 20 November 2018.
- 44 Interviews, Manila, 20 November and 12 December 2018. According to one intelligence officer who spoke to the author, rebel groups in Mindanao are no longer receiving the same amount of funding as they did before the Marawi siege. If true, this would indicate that ISIL's financial logistical capacity has declined, at least in Southeast Asia.
- 45 ICG, *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: damaged but still dangerous*, report no. 63, ICG, Jakarta/Brussels, 26 August 2003, 16–17, [online](#).
- 46 See note 42.
- 47 Interview, Manila, 14 December 2018. For more on past MILF–JI links in Mindanao under Salamat, see Zachary Abuza, 'The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: state of the revolution', paper prepared for NIC-State/INR/EAP Conference on Mindanao, Washington DC, 9 July 2004, [online](#).
- 48 Facebook is by far the most popular online media site in the Philippines, largely because mobile users can access the app for free even without a data subscription. For many, the platform is the internet, as reflected by the 50–60 million monthly active accounts in 2018. See Asia Foundation, Rappler, *Understanding violent extremism: messaging and recruitment strategies on social media in the Philippines*, December 2018, 14, [online](#).
- 49 Comments made during a CVE roundtable, Manila, 13 December 2018. A series of focus groups held in the immediate aftermath of the Marawi crisis showed that, of the 3,000 people interviewed, 1,735 held the opinion that the crisis was the direct result of the actions of rebel groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the Maute Group.
- 50 'After the caliphate, what next for IS?', *BBC News*, 28 November 2018, [online](#). At the time of publication, this marginal piece of ISIL-controlled territory had also been liberated.
- 51 Chalk et al., *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, 102; IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 11; Oak, 'Jemaah Islamiyah's fifth phase: the many faces of a terrorist group', 991.
- 52 IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 2.
- 53 Edward Delman, 'ISIS in the world's largest Muslim country', *The Atlantic*, 3 January 2016, [online](#).
- 54 Telephone interview, 14 November 2018.
- 55 Some Philippines security analysts have argued that this significantly underestimates the number of foreign fighters currently operating in Mindanao, placing the figure closer to 90.
- 56 Bong Sarmiento, 'Islamic State finds safe haven in the Philippines', *Asia Times*, 1 November 2018. Apart from Indonesians and Malaysians, foreign fighters from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, France, Iraq, Somalia, Egypt, Libya, Pakistan and China are also believed to be present in Mindanao.
- 57 Interviews, Manila, 20 November 2018.
- 58 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), *Jemaah Islamiyah (aka Jemaah Islamiah)*, CFR, Washington DC, 19 June 2009, [online](#); *Mapping militant organizations*, 'Al Qaeda', Stanford University, 18 August 2015, [online](#); 'Q&A: Ties between al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah', *New York Times*, 4 September 2018. For more on JI links to al-Qaeda, see Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: crucible of terror*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 2003.
- 59 Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?', 64–65.
- 60 For more on al-Qaeda's recalibration, see Bruce Hoffman, *Al Qaeda's resurrection*, CFR, Washington DC, 6 March 2018, [online](#).
- 61 Vallee, 'Jemaah Islamiyah: another manifestation of al Qaeda Core's global strategy?', 66.
- 62 Examples include Jabhat Fatah al-Sham / Jabhat al-Nusra and Hyat Tahrir al-Sham in Syria; Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen; Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa and the Sahel; Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt; al-Shabaab in Somalia; the Taliban in Afghanistan; and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent in South Asia. The last of those entities is al-Qaeda's newest branch. It was founded in September 2014 under the leadership of Asim Umar and covers an operational area that embraces Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Kashmir.

- 63 Examples include the Forum Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front), the Forum Umat Islam (Islamic Community Forum), the Forum Aktivist Syariat Islam (Forum of Islamic Law Activists) and the Forum Pendukung Daulah (Support Forum for Daulah Islamiyah).
- 64 Interviews, Singapore, 14–15 November 2018.
- 65 Singh, 'The jihadist threat in Southeast Asia: an Al Qaeda and IS-centric architecture'.
- 66 Interviews, Singapore, 14–15 November 2018, and Manila, 19–20 November 2018.
- 67 Australian Government, *Australian National Security*, 'Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)', no date, [online](#).
- 68 The lead body for overseeing Indonesian CVE efforts is the Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terrorism (National Counterterrorism Agency).
- 69 For more on the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice, see Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice—II*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2018, [online](#).
- 70 See Cameron Sumpter, 'Countering violent extremism in Indonesia: priorities, practice and the role of civil society', *Journal for Deradicalization*, Summer 2017, 11, [online](#).
- 71 One notable case concerned Siyono—a confidant of Ustadz Batar, a widely respected JI 'blue-blood' regional division commander; he was arrested on 8 March 2016 but died two days later in circumstances that have yet to be adequately explained. Siyono's demise sparked widespread public outrage and served as a trigger for both Islamists and human rights groups to demand greater accountability of Indonesia's law enforcement community. For further details, see IPAC, *The re-emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah*, 10.
- 72 The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus directly informs the deliberations of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (the highest decision-making body within ASEAN). One of its six working groups is specifically dedicated to counterterrorism. Meetings include all 10 ASEAN member states in addition to eight dialogue partners (Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States).
- 73 Principal activities involving Indonesian penal reform that Australia is currently supporting include scoping policy to reduce the size of the overall prison population; promoting an integrated 'life cycle' approach to criminal justice; implementing improved procedures for enhancing staff capacity; and ensuring compliance of the corrections system with minimum rules for the humane treatment of inmates. See DFAT, *Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice—II*, 21–22.
- 74 Chalk, *Black flag rising: ISIL in Southeast Asia and Australia*, 18.
- 75 The Badan Siber dan Sandi Negara combines the former national encryption agency, the ID-SIRTII (Security Incident Response Team on Internet Infrastructure) and some resources from the Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika (Ministry of Communications and Informatics). For more on this body, see Bart Hogeveen, 'Is Indonesia catching up in cyberspace?', *The Strategist*, 14 February 2018, [online](#).
- 76 Chalk et al., *The evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia: a net assessment*, 163–164.
- 77 See, for instance, 'Radical Islamic sites blocked in Indonesia; Tech Minister takes flack from all sides', *Tech Asia*, 6 April 2015, [online](#).
- 78 The commission was launched in 2016 in response to a surge of hijackings that hit the tri-border area of the Sulu and Celebes seas. For further details, see Peter Chalk, 'Combating piracy and militancy in the Sulu and Celebes seas', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 2018.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CVE	countering violent extremism
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict
ISIL	Islamic State of Syria and the Levant
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
MALPHINDO	Malaysia–Philippines–Indonesia
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
PUPJI	<i>Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah (The General Guidelines for the Struggle of Jemaah Islamiyah)</i>

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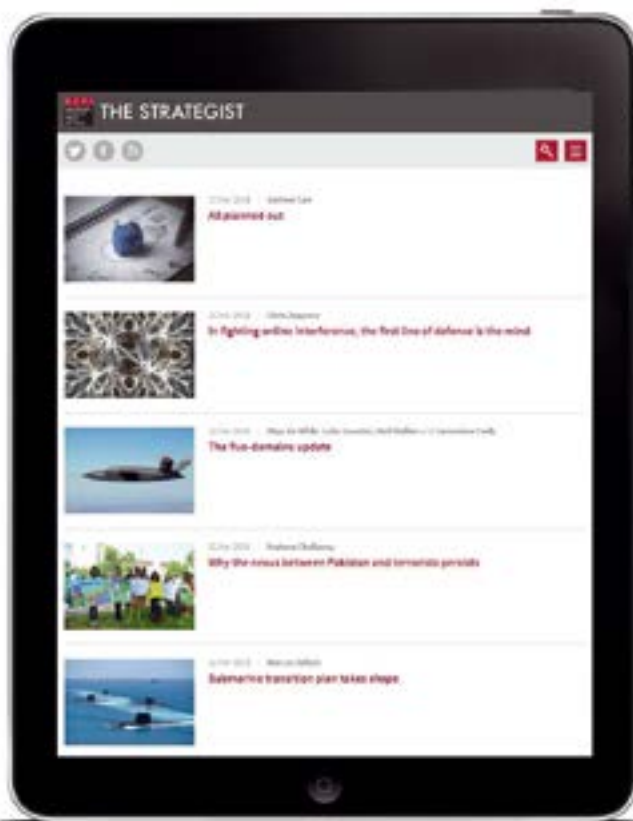


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Jemaah Islamiyah

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