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Looking for the Pattern: *Al Qaeda* in Southeast Asia— The Genealogy of a Terror Network

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The aim of this study is to analyze the process by which Al Qaeda has sought to co-opt essentially localized struggles in Southeast Asia into an evolving network of worldwide jihad. The article illustrates how, long before it was appropriate to speak of an entity called Al Qaeda, Islamists have been thinking transnationally since the 1980s. The argument attempts to piece together available evidence to reveal a plausible explanation of the origins, growth and direction of the main Islamist grouping in Southeast Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah, and its deepening relationship with Al Qaeda. The article suggests that the roots of a Southeast Asian terror network can be traced to two geographically separate ethno-religious struggles in the Philippines and Indonesia. The analysis demonstrates that these guerrilla groups orchestrating their distinct struggles were eventually combined through the auspices of Al Qaeda and the globalized franchising opportunities it exploited from the early 1990s.

The Bali nightclub bombings of October 2002, which killed 202 people, graphically demonstrated the existence of an Islamist terror network in Southeast Asia. Although, in the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.,¹ some Southeast Asian governments had detained a number of suspects in late 2001, official and academic opinion had, until Bali, either neglected or discountenanced the extent to which an Islamic terror network had taken root across the region. This neglect was the more

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surprising given the often intrusive intelligence structures in many Southeast Asian countries that had failed to discern the evolving threat.

The reasons for this oversight seem to reside in the fact that these intelligence services, in effect, imbibed the official regional view, purveyed by the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), which proclaimed regional harmony and stability among its membership. Consequently, the state intelligence agencies within the ASEAN grouping were overwhelmingly concerned with policing political stability within their own borders, with minimal attention paid to the growth of transnational threats.² This, in turn, influenced much academic and media commentary on the region that was often over-determined by official rhetoric that played down sources of internal instability within the states of the region.

As a result, there was little awareness of the threat posed by Islamism and regional intelligence cooperation prior to the 9/11 attacks, despite official rhetoric, was poor. In particular, there was a conspicuous ignorance of the growing links between the most pervasive militant Islamic group in Southeast Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and the globalizing jihadist pretensions of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda.³ The objective of this study, therefore, is to indicate the process by which Al Qaeda seeks to co-opt essentially localized struggles in Southeast Asia into the evolving network of worldwide jihad.

The broader point this article illustrates is how, long before it was appropriate to speak of an entity called Al Qaeda or the emergence of Osama bin Laden as its figure-head, Islamists have been thinking transnationally since the 1980s and, indeed, arguably long before that if their thinking is traced back to the work of ideologists like Sayyid⁴ and Osama's own original inspiration, the so-called Emir of Jihad, Abdullah Azzam, before he left to fight in the Afghan war.⁵ In fact the often neglected point is that long before the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which is often seen as the first intimation of an Islamist *internationale*,⁶ Islamist thought was thinking and planning over the long term and conceiving its resistance as a single, unified global struggle that transcends local, state, and regional concerns. As Richard Engel has argued, the story of Al Qaeda is essentially how "bin Laden has tried to align with local militant groups with country-specific grievances to increase his global reach and influence."⁷ Southeast Asia and the case of Jemaah Islamiyah provides a convincing test-bed to show how Al Qaeda evolves, expands, and mutates into an ever wider threat.

The Dual Sources of the Network

Piecing together the available source material reveals an interesting and plausible insight into the origins, growth, and direction of Southeast Asian groups like JI and their deepening relationship with Al Qaeda. The roots of the JI group can, in fact, be traced to the 1970s and two geographically separate ethno-religious struggles in the Philippines and Indonesia. As shall be demonstrated, guerrilla groups orchestrating these distinct struggles were eventually combined through the auspices of Al Qaeda and the globalized franchising opportunities it exploited from the early 1990s when the movement emerged as an entity of concern.⁸ The flowchart contained in Figure 1 illustrates the growing web of transnational connections in Southeast Asia that this study will now elucidate.

The Philippine Connection

The first branch of the network emerged in the Philippines from the separatist struggle of the Muslim Moro in Mindanao. Sustained Moro resistance dates from the 1950s but

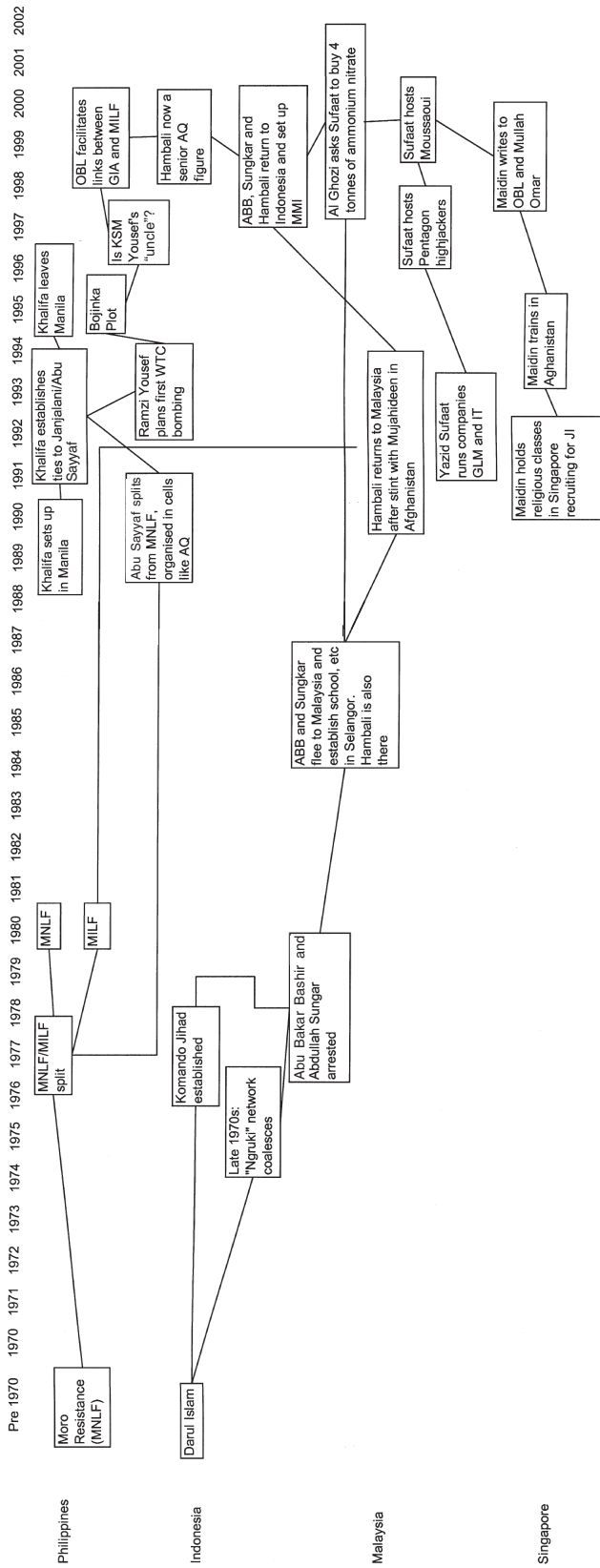


Figure 1. The evolving terror network in Southeast Asia.

became increasingly networked globally in the course of the 1970s with the emergence of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and later Abu Sayyaf, a violent splinter group, which it is often said broke away from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1991, although the precise circumstances surrounding its evolution are in fact shrouded in mystery.⁹

From the late 1980s, both MILF and Abu Sayyaf received support from Al Qaeda. As early as 1988, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, had set up a number of businesses that supplied financial and logistical support to Abu Sayyaf and MILF.¹⁰ Khalifa established front organizations including businesses like E.T., Dizon Travel—which was active in shipping goods between the Philippines, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Saudi Arabia—as well as Dizon and Dizon Realty, and nongovernmental organizations and charities to launder money like the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO).¹¹ Through these organizations Khalifa established further links with Libya and the Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA) (Armed Islamic Group) in Algeria. Khalifa's philanthropy also enabled Abu Sayyaf personnel to study at Islamic universities in Pakistan. Khalifa left Manila in 1995 and has not been seen since.

The revenues from such enterprises sustained training centers like Camp Abubakar in Mindanao in the Southern Philippines.¹² Until it was overrun by the Philippine army in 2001, the camp provided instruction in munitions handling and assassination skills and by the mid-1990s regularly brought in Mujahideen expertise from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Algeria to train local Islamists.¹³ For example, Philippine police documents from the Directorate for Intelligence state that in 1998 Osama bin Laden sent Sudanese colonel Ahmad al-Gamen to Mindanao to train MILF members in explosives and commando techniques.¹⁴ Indeed, Camp Abubakar maintained strong international linkages and was internally subdivided into Algerian, Palestinian, and other sections. According to the police file: "The MILF is known to be maintaining Camps Hodeibia and Palestine inside the Camp Abubakar complex for the training of mujahideen volunteers from other countries handled by Afghan veterans believed to be supported by bin Laden."¹⁵ Former counterterrorism task force head of the Philippine National Police, Senior Superintendent, Rodolfo Mendoza, corroborated this in an interview with CNN, observing that: "There were foreign nationals like French Algerians, Egyptians, and Pakistanis who were trained by Filipinos inside Camp Abubakar."¹⁶

By 1998 and 1999, while Camp Abubakar remained in operation, bin Laden himself facilitated links between the Algerian GIA and the MILF's leader Salamat Hashim.¹⁷ Thus the Philippine Directorate of Intelligence maintained that: "Sometime last mid-February 1999 Osama bin Laden reportedly contacted separately MILF chairman Salamat and the Algerian leader Hassan Hattab. Bin Laden reportedly sought the assistance of Salamat in establishing new camps in Mindanao and instructed Hattab to start operations in his areas respectively."¹⁸

Prior to this development, in 1991, Khalifa had also established close ties with Abdulrajak Janjalani, the founder of Abu Sayyaf, who in turn had links to Ramzi Yousef, a Baluchi, who had a coterie of Filipina girlfriends and liked to party.¹⁹ Yousef, like most Islamist international terrorists, possessed multiple identities and traveled on a variety of passports, including an Iraqi one. Yousef planned the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.²⁰ His putative uncle, also a Baluchi Sunni, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was number three in the Al Qaeda hierarchy and was to feature in later JI operations.²¹

Before his arrest in 1995, Yousef had planned to assassinate the Pope²² and was in the process of organizing "operation Bojinka" to blow up a dozen planes over the Pacific en route to Los Angeles.²³ It is even possible to speculate an Iraqi hand in these connections. According to Laurie Mylroie, Ramzi Yousef was an Iraqi agent, as may

have been Khalid himself.²⁴ This notwithstanding, by 1995 Osama bin Laden's own imprimatur on these Philippine extremist groups could be detected, not least in the fact that the loose, protoplasmic framework served as the model for Abu Sayyaf. The arrest and interrogation of Abdul Karim Murad in Pakistan in March 1995 who had operated under Ramzi Yousef's guidance further substantiated the bin Laden connection.²⁵

The Debate over Hizbollah in Southeast Asia

In addition to the evidence of the expanding Al Qaeda network, there is growing debate about the extent to which the Iranian backed Shiite Hizbollah is establishing linkages both with Al Qaeda and with Islamic groups in the Philippines and further afield in Southeast Asia and Australia. The question is: Despite religious differences with the Sunni dominated ranks of the Salafist Al Qaeda franchises, how far will Hizbollah be prepared to collaborate for strategic purposes? Again, Philippine police documents record a developing Hizbollah regional presence.²⁶ In 1999, for example, Philippine police arrested Pandu Yudhawinata (aka, Krisna Triwibawa) from Pontianak in Kalimantan. Pandu had trained in Iran and spent time with Hizbollah in Lebanon.²⁷ He had also developed extensive contacts in Malaysia and Singapore. In the mid-1980s, he allegedly organized bomb attacks on discoteques in Indonesia and subsequently planned a failed bomb attack on the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in March 1994.²⁸

Official U.S. government documents support the general contention of a putative Hizbollah regional presence. The U.S. State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism—2002* claims that Hizbollah cells are active in Asia.²⁹ Moreover, in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Jessica Stern convincingly contends that since it lost its Afghanistan base, Al Qaeda has formed a much closer relationship for operational purposes with Hizbollah, perhaps "the most sophisticated terrorist group in the world."³⁰ Thus, it might be argued that alongside and in conjunction with Al Qaeda, Hizbollah is also in the business of developing a network operating across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines.³¹ By 2000, it was rumored that Hizbollah had established cells in Australia and had planned to send an Indonesian team on Philippine passports to Sydney to conduct attacks on the Olympic games and Jewish targets in that year.³² Michael Levitt, a former counterterrorism analyst at the FBI and specialist on Hizbollah, maintains that the group "poses a threat to Australia" and maintains an active support base in the country.³³ Increasing reports of Hizbollah activities in Australia, together with its apparent threat in the wake of Australia's participation in the U.S. military intervention in Iraq in March–April 2003 to kill Australians, prompted the Australian government to introduce a bill in parliament on 29 May 2003 to outlaw Hizbollah.³⁴

The counter-argument, advanced by some regional commentators, is that evidence of Hizbollah cells in Southeast Asia remains inconclusive. Moreover, it is said, the group's agenda is aimed squarely at Israel, and in particular Israel's continuing occupation of parts of southern Lebanon. Although fund-raising undoubtedly does take place outside the Middle East, actual military activities have been rare.³⁵ Analysts point out that in deciding to ban Hizbollah the Australian Attorney-General, Daryl Williams, "did not produce any evidence of active terrorist cells in Australia."³⁶ Indeed, Hizbollah's official response to the Australian Government's move to ban it, declared the allegation that the group threatened Australian interests "baseless and untrue," reiterating that: "Hizbollah has never threatened any foreign community whether it was inside Lebanon or outside Lebanon. Hizbollah has always emphasized that its only concern is the resistance of [sic] the Israeli occupation of the Lebanon."³⁷ The party nevertheless observed, in a comminatory manner, that in "launching such allegations, the Australian Government is

proving that it has become totally subjugated to the U.S.–Zionist political agenda and has joined them in their continuous campaign against Hizbollah.”³⁸

In fact, it was the Canadian Government that initially raised the issue of the extent of Hizbollah’s global ambitions. In December 2002, Canada banned the group following remarks attributed to Hizbollah’s Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, who, allegedly, issued statements encouraging Palestinian suicide bombers to pursue their activities on a worldwide basis.³⁹ Hizbollah vehemently denied this act, too, maintaining that Hassan Nassrallah’s comments had been taken out of context.⁴⁰

The evidence surrounding the nature and intent of Hizbollah’s activities in the Philippines and elsewhere in Southeast Asia at this point in time remains somewhat unclear. It would therefore be wrong to claim a definitive position on the Hizbollah threat in the region. The only caveat that needs to be inserted as it relates to the argument pursued in this article is that it should be recalled how Al Qaeda itself seeks to expand its networks through cooperation and sponsorship of localized Islamic resistance. It is tempting for analysts to perceive particularistic struggles, such as Hizbollah’s, as restricted by a combination of their distinct understandings of their own insular struggles and their different interpretations of Islamic theology in their potential to collaborate with Al Qaeda. Such temptation, however, should be avoided. Crucially, this view overlooks Al Qaeda’s protean character and its developing capacity to insinuate itself into seemingly self-contained conflicts and develop what Jessica Stern has termed “friendships of convenience.”⁴¹ It also underestimates the extent to which local groupings are willing to receive Al Qaeda’s largesse and support to sustain resistance. As Gregory Copely of the Washington-based International Strategic Studies Association rightly cautions: “All of these [Islamist] groups have connections . . . we like to look at different labels for them, but they are so interrelated and overlapping. Even Shiite and the Sunni groups work with each other to achieve common objectives.”⁴²

So far as Osama bin Laden is concerned, it seems that he is more than willing to overlook his Sunni provenance to collaborate with Shiite Iran to further the global jihadist cause. In the 1990s, bin Laden had reportedly promised some \$60 million to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to train Egyptian fighters in Afghanistan who would then be transferred to theaters of Islamic resistance in places like Bosnia and Kosovo.⁴³ More recently, the two British Muslim suicide bombers responsible for an attack on a Tel Aviv bar on 30 April 2003 on behalf of Hizbollah or its affiliates, which killed eleven people,⁴⁴ were apparently recruited from the wider Al Qaeda–linked circuit.⁴⁵ Such developments intimate the possibility of connections between the two organizations.

Moreover, although Hizbollah focuses primarily on Israel, that fact does not preclude it from taking military action against Israeli targets beyond state confines, actions that Al Qaeda is, of course, always ready to endorse. In this respect, as the FBI’s Michael Levitt has noted, Hizbollah has already been active in Southeast Asia since the mid-1990s, with the attempted attack on the Israeli embassy in Bangkok on 17 March 1994 (the operation only failing because the bombers had a car accident and fled the scene leaving their C4 explosives intact). Hizbollah operatives were also allegedly involved in an apparent plot to bomb U.S. Navy ships off the Singapore coastline in 1997 and have otherwise been active in fundraising for the group across the Asia-Pacific, including the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.⁴⁶

It is possible that Hizbollah’s thus far limited involvement in actions beyond the Middle East do not herald any significant extension of its operational horizons. The group may be content to benefit from Al Qaeda’s munificence primarily to fuel its own narrowly focused struggle without ever wishing to participate in the wider global jihad.

However, this is *not* Al Qaeda's ideology. If it has forged a connection with a local grouping like Hizbollah and made in-roads into the financing and support of its struggle, then it has still spread its global influence, on which it can expand in the future. This is how Al Qaeda's network grows. No doubt, it was the growing awareness of the established pattern of Al Qaeda's decentralized tactics, its latent capacity to extend its potentially globalized Cybercaliphate,⁴⁷ combined with knowledge of Hizbollah's previous activities in Southeast Asia that afforded the Australian government sufficient grounds to follow the Canadian ban.

The Indonesian Connection

Over the same period that Al Qaeda made in-roads among the Philippine Moros, a second strand of Islamic militancy took shape, this time in Indonesia, in the form of radical groups like the paramilitary organization Komando Jihad. Although linked by some authors to the post-1966 New Order Indonesian government's attempt to destabilize moderate Islamic opposition,⁴⁸ Komando Jihad nevertheless drew on an earlier era of Islamist thinking of the Darul Islam movement dating from the 1950s. It was this movement's ideological pursuit of an Islamic Indonesian state that laid the foundations for later developments. A central figure in Komando Jihad was Sheikh Abu Bakar Bashir, who, together with Abdullah Sungkar, established the al-Mukmin boarding school at Pondok in Solo, Central Java.⁴⁹ This school became the basis for the "Ngruki Network" that spread the Darul Islam teaching throughout the region.⁵⁰

Arrested in 1978 for their links to Komando Jihad, Bashir and Sungkar eventually escaped to Malaysia in 1985 where, together with Abu Jibril, they established a school, hospital, and small Islamic community in Selangor. It was here that Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, another Javanese linked to Bashir, came in the early 1990s after fighting with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan.⁵¹ By 1999 Hambali had risen to become a key figure on Al Qaeda's Military Command Council.⁵²

It was in the course of the 1980s that Bashir and Hambali established the lineaments of the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM),⁵³ which constituted the basis of one of the four regional groupings or mantiqi of Jemaah Islamiyah.⁵⁴ In Malaysia there was also an evolving linkage between Al Qaeda and the KMM through Yazid Sufaat, a former Malaysian army officer who by the 1990s had business interests in companies in Kuala Lumpur such as Green Laboratories and Infocus Technologies.⁵⁵ In January 2000 Sufaat hosted the Pentagon highjackers Khalid Al-Midhar and Nawaq Alhamzi.⁵⁶ Later in October 2000 he met with Moussaoui, now on trial in the United States for his alleged role in the 11 September attacks, in the same condominium. At this meeting he provided Moussaoui with funds and papers for him to enter the United States as an Infocus Technologies "marketing consultant." Also in October 2000, Sufaat was instructed to purchase four tons of ammonium nitrate by another key Al Qaeda commander in Southeast Asia, Fathur Raman al Ghozi (in March 2003 Malaysian police found the explosive in a plantation near Muar).⁵⁷ Al Ghozi had been a pupil at Bashir's school in Solo, majoring in explosives. He also possessed ties to MILF and had made at least two training trips to Afghanistan to further his studies.⁵⁸

In the same period, the Malaysian connection extended its reach into Singapore via mosques across the causeway in Johore Baru. Mas Selamat Kastari oversaw the Singapore link whereas Ibrahim Maidin coordinated the JI cell in the city-state. Ibrahim Maidin had spent three weeks training in Afghanistan in 1993, and had in 1999 written to Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban in Afghanistan, seeking

spiritual and ideological guidance.⁵⁹ From the early 1990s he held religious classes in Singapore that doubled as a recruitment center for the JI cells he established there.⁶⁰

The collapse of Suharto's secular nationalist New Order regime in 1998 further facilitated the extension of regional and international connections. By the end of 1998 Bashir, Hambali, and Abu Jibril had returned from Malaysia to Solo and Jakarta where they established the *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) and reactivated JI.⁶¹ Through these organizations they encouraged linkages among Islamic radicals in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. Contacts with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who regularly visited the Philippines, together with Hambali's significant position on the Military Command Council of Al Qaeda advanced the integration of regional strategy and ideological guidance with a wider, transnational Islamist agenda. In December 2000, Hambali organized attacks on Christian churches across Java, the most widespread terror attacks in Indonesian history, which bore the Al Qaeda signature of multiple coordinated targeting.⁶² Involved in Hambali's Indonesian military operations were those like Mukhlas, who operated under the name of Ali Gufron, and other operatives, Imam Samudra and Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, all of whom were implicated in the bombing of a church in Batam in January 2000. They were later to be involved in the planning of the Bali bombing.⁶³

Countdown to Bali

Both JI's ambitions, and the al-Mukmin school's unorthodox curricula activities, were only exposed by the discovery of JI's video plan to attack Western embassies in Singapore. Somewhat fortuitously, an American soldier stumbled on the video in the rubble of Al Qaeda's headquarters in Kabul following the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan.⁶⁴ It also emerged that the Changi naval base and several other installations in Singapore, including the main civilian airport were also on JI's target list.⁶⁵ As a result of this lucky break, al Ghazi was arrested in Manila in January 2002.

In February 2003, Singapore's Internal Security Department revealed that it had found e-mails and letters linking Maidin, the leader of the Singapore JI operation, with Mullah Omar, Mohammed Atta, and Osama bin Laden in Kabul.⁶⁶ These contacts date from 1999. Informing the strategic thinking of the Singapore plot was a sophisticated attempt to damage the increasingly fraught bilateral relations with Malaysia with the aim of creating conflict between the two neighbors and thus destabilizing the region.⁶⁷

Mohammed Mansoor Jabarah, a 19-year-old Kuwaiti with Canadian citizenship who had met with bin Laden on at least four occasions provided the finances for the operation and its link to Al Qaeda.⁶⁸ Jabarah escaped to Malaysia in December 2001. Subsequently, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed sent Jabarah to organize new missions with Hambali. In January 2002 Jabarah met with Hambali, and Omar al Faruq, leader of the Indonesian branch of JI,⁶⁹ in Southern Thailand. Here they agreed to hit soft targets such as the Kuta Beach resort in Bali.⁷⁰ Jabarah made available US\$150,000 for the Bali operation. Hambali delegated the planning and execution of this mission to Mukhlas.⁷¹ This, it appears, represents the complex web of transnational interconnections that was to culminate in the devastating Bali attack that finally provided the proof of the danger posed by a Southeast Asian terror network.

The Pattern Is Important

In piecing together the evolving relationship between Al Qaeda and various Islamic groups in Southeast Asia, like JI, since 1989, it is particularly hard to understand or

explain why regional intelligence and police services exhibited such a marked degree of complacency about the nature and extent of the threat. Jabarah, for example, was detained in March 2002 and Faruq was arrested in August 2002. An FBI report derived from their interrogations was made available to Australian and regional intelligence agencies in August 2002.⁷² Yet, even after the Bali bombings, Australian police and intelligence still officially denied any connection between JI and Al Qaeda. In January 2003 Australian police sources maintained that, "there is nothing concrete to link Al Qaeda to the [Bali] bombings."⁷³ Eventually, in February, it was officially, but somewhat obscurely, admitted that "until the events of October 12" JI was "an unknown quantity."⁷⁴

In many ways, the scale of the intelligence failure across the region reflected a wider intergovernmental complacency toward the spread of Islamic extremism prior to the Bali bombing, which consistently underestimated the nature and extent of the threat. Thus, regional scholar bureaucrats like Jusuf Wanandi of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta maintained that: "Attention to such groups as Laskar Jihad has been overblown. They are rather noisy groups, but small and marginal."⁷⁵ Such views found their echo in Australian assessments where security analysts were claiming barely a week before the Bali attack that "the tendency is still to overplay [the terror] threat."⁷⁶

The neglect of the growth of the terror network in Southeast Asia is even more surprising given the availability of evidence on JI before the assault on Bali. Like intelligence failures of the past, the facts were available but analysts failed to piece them together. Given the protoplasmic character of Al Qaeda, with JI sleeper cells still in Australia, the threat remains pervasive. Al Qaeda's plans for regional control envisage Southeast Asia divided into four areas or *mantiqis* for operational purposes: *mantiqi* 1, covering Malaysia, Singapore, and Southern Thailand; *mantiqi* 2, most of Indonesia; *mantiqi* 3, Eastern Malaysia and Indonesia including Sulawesi, Borneo, Brunei, and the Southern Philippines (the *mantiqi* that can perhaps be seen to be the most active in its international links); and *mantiqi* 4, Irian Jaya and Australia.⁷⁷

Before the Bali attack ASEAN had set up a number of discussion forums to look into the issue of extremism in the region. The Association also held a number of ministerial meetings in 2002 on the state of the terrorist threat in Southeast Asia. However, these meetings were mainly notable for their rhetorical aspirations and at best only provided for low-level logistical support.⁷⁸ Moreover, the organization was often divided in outlook among its membership and significantly could not agree on an accepted definition of terrorism.⁷⁹

Since the Bali bombing, though, there are some signs of increased low-level intelligence cooperation between ASEAN nations. Most notably, the collaboration between Australian Federal Police (Australia not being in ASEAN, of course) and the Indonesian authorities in the investigation of the Bali attack was by all accounts exemplary, indicating what may be possible in the broader ASEAN context and the positive results that can be attained through concerted action.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the Association remains hamstrung in dealing with the Southeast Asian terror network as a result of its commitment to the principle of non-interference at both the ideological and ministerial level. As a consequence, some ASEAN states, along with regional commentary more generally, continue to exhibit a degree of ambivalence toward the global interconnectedness of radical Islam.⁸¹ For example, the Indonesian authorities, despite mounting evidence to the contrary, continue to discountenance any clear link between regional Islamism and Al Qaeda. Interestingly, the 35-page indictment of the alleged night club bomber, Amrozi, failed even to mention his membership in JI,⁸² whereas the indictment of Bashir in April

2003 for treason made no mention of his links with Al Qaeda.⁸³ Meanwhile, Thailand threatened to prosecute any foreign journalist who alleged that senior Al Qaeda operatives like Hambali had ever met in the Muslim populated south of the country to coordinate attacks across the region, despite well-informed reports that this was indeed the case.⁸⁴ It is to be hoped that Southeast Asian states will embark on a more serious path toward mutual cooperation over the evolving threat, but given the shortcomings evident in regional intelligence and analysis pre-Bali, and continuing official reluctance to acknowledge the scale of Al Qaeda penetration, the reader is entitled to suspend judgment about just how effective future cooperation will be.

What this brief genealogy demonstrates is both the long-term thinking and planning of Al Qaeda, and its protean and diffuse character, which enables it to connect Islamist movements as far afield as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, organizing them, financing them, and subordinating them to its strategic goals. Its capacity to draw disparate radical groups together and coordinate their ideology and practice through collaboration and exchange to broaden the reach of these groups from local to national to regional and beyond contrasts with the partial understandings of the threat by regional intelligence agencies and commentators limited by national horizons and bureaucratic or government-determined agendas. Sometimes, there still seems little systematic effort to comprehend the extent of the Islamist terror threat or defeat its capacity for long-term operational planning. By all means, we should take heart from the initial signs of increased collaboration between Southeast Asian states, but neither should we be too sanguine about the current capacity to dismantle the terror network in the region. In particular, scepticism needs to be shown toward the idea that what may appear to be localized Islamic resistance will somehow obey official edicts to keep within established sovereign state boundaries and remain confined to provincial frames of reference. It is necessary to look at the nature of Al Qaeda's ideological thinking and the longer term pattern that is generated showing how the movement broadens and develops. It is the pattern that is important.

Notes

1. See "Alien Arrests Bid to Flush Out 'Sleepers,'" *Bangkok Post*, 11 March 2002; Reme Ahmad, "KL Arrests 23 Islamic Militants in Swoop," *Straits Times*, 5 January 2002.

2. See David Martin Jones and Michael Smith, "The Perils of Hyper-Vigilance: The War on Terrorism and the Surveillance State in Southeast Asia," *Intelligence and National Security* 17(4) (Winter 2002), pp. 31–54.

3. For an indication of the somewhat uncertain comprehension of Al Qaeda's future threat potential, see Robert Fisk, "Anti-Soviet Warrior Puts His Army on the Road to Peace," *The Independent*, 6 December 1993. It was Fisk's opinion that the "Saudi businessman who recruited mujahideen now used them for large-scale building projects in Sudan."

4. See Sayyid Qutb, *Islam: The Religion of the Future* (Kuwait: International Islamic Federation of Students, 1971); and Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 94–100.

5. Abdullah Azzam was a Jordanian-Palestinian scholar and a Muslim Brotherhood radical. He studied Islamic law at Cairo's Al-Azhar University. Inspired by the prospect of being able to put the principles of Islamic resistance into practice, he was one of the first Arabs to leave for Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation after 1979. In 1980 he founded Maktab al-Khidmat lil-Mujahideen al-Arab (MaK) (the general translation is the "College that Serves the Arab Warriors" but was also known in English as the Afghan Service Office), in Peshawar, Pakistan. MaK formed one of the umbrella groups of the foreign fighters of the Afghan Mujahideen and was part of the Muslim World League. It was here along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border that Osama bin

Laden, the Islamicized scion of a wealthy Saudi family, first encountered Azzam. Azzam became Osama's ideological guru. Osama bankrolled MaK and honored Azzam with the appellation the "Emir of Jihad." The recruitment of Arab fighters for the Afghan struggle meant that from early on MaK was heavily infiltrated by groups like the Egyptian al Gamma al Islamiya, the Palestinian Hamas, and the Algerian GIA. It was MaK that was to form the nucleus of later ideas about developing a transnational jihad and that was to evolve into the entity known as Al Qaeda (see note 8). It is claimed that Azzam and Osama fell out over the future direction of the MaK, though precisely over what seems to be a matter of debate. Some say Azzam had less commitment to global jihad; other accounts suggest both men got caught up in Afghan tribal politics with Azzam supporting Ahmed Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance whereas Osama supported the Taliban. Evidently, though, while in Afghanistan Osama developed far more sympathy for the views of the militant Egyptian surgeon Dr Ayman al-Zawahri (and later leader of the al Gamma al Islamiya) who proclaimed that "Afghanistan should be a platform for the liberation of the entire Muslim world." Azzam was assassinated in a car bomb in Peshawar, in September 1989, which, fortuitously or not, permitted the hard-line elements within the Maktab al-Khidmat like al-Zawahri and Osama himself to predominate. See Fiona Symons, "Analysis: The Roots of Jihad," BBC News, 16 February 2003, available at (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1603178.stm); Mohamad Bazi, "Bin Laden's 'Logistical Mastermind,'" *New York Newsday*, 21 September 2001; Pierre Conesa, "Al-Qaida, The Sect," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2002, available at (<http://mondediplo.com/2002/01/07sect>); and, "Al Qaeda (The Base)," Center for Defense Information (Washington, DC), 20 December 2002.

6. See Richard Engel, "Inside Al Qaeda: A Window into the World of Militant Islam and the Afghan Alumni," *Jane's International Security*, 28 September 200, available at (http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/misc/janes010928_1_shtml).

7. Ibid.

8. It is sometimes queried whether it is correct to say that Al Qaeda existed in the 1980s. It is not certain when the grouping actually came into being, though 1989 is often stated as the year of its formation. However, it also seems probable that what is called Al Qaeda is in fact simply the name given to the later evolution of the MaK. There is even evidence to suggest that "Al Qaeda" is not self-given, but was merely the name of a file found on Osama bin Laden's personal computer listing members and contacts within the MaK. Thus, the appellation Al Qaeda appears to have been coined by the U.S. authorities as a convenient short-hand to describe the loose, if rather complex, arrangements of a network based on MaK's membership. See "Al Qaeda's Origins and Links," BBC News, 16 May 2003, available at (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1670089.stm); "Al Qaida," Wikipedia, available at (http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Qaeda); and, "Blowback," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 26 July 2001. See also Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda's Origins, Threat and Its Likely Future," in David Martin Jones, ed., *Globalization and the New Terror* (London: Edward Elgar, forthcoming 2004).

9. The U.S. State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002* formally lists the Abu Sayyaf Group as having broken away from the MNLF in the early 1990s under Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html>), although this is questioned by other analysts who argue that it evolved somewhat more independently based on the Tausug ethnic group. See also Federation of American Scientists, available at (<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/asg.htm>). For a more concerted examination of the general development of Moro separatism see Peter Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1974) and W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of the Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapter 1.

10. *Manila Times*, 1 November 2002.

11. *The Guardian*, 23 September 2001.

12. Lira Dalangin, "MILF: Camp Abubakar Upland Military's Next Goal," *Newsbreak* (Philippines), 17 February 2003, available at (http://www.inq7.net/brk/2003/feb/17/brkpol_4-1.htm).

13. See C. C. Hidalgo, "Camp Abubakar: A Symbol of Muslim Pride," *Codewan.com* (Philippines), 17 May 2000, available at (http://www.codewan.com.ph/CyberDyaryo/features/f2000_0515_01.htm).

14. Republic of Philippines Directorate for Intelligence, "Reference Folder on International Terrorism," National Headquarters, Philippine National Police, Camp Crame, Quezon City (1999), p. 2. The document is marked D1, classified as secret. The document also refers to MILF's links with Al Qaeda and MaK, stating that: "A certain Zine el Abiddin Abou Zoubaida of Maktab al Khidmat has been in contact with 2 prominent personalities of the MLIF." Zoubaida was, of course, a Saudi national on the leadership council of Al Qaeda.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

16. Quoted in Maria Ressa, "Infiltrating the MILF," *Newsbreak*, 28 October 2002, available at (http://www.inq7.net/newsbrk/2002/oct/28/nbk_1-1.htm).

17. Philippines Directorate for Intelligence, "Reference Folder on International Terrorism," pp. 1–2.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 2. The Philippine police report concluded that "Bin Laden and Khalifa are channelling funds to support the MILF through its various Islamic NGOs. The MILF on the other hand provided training venues for other Islamic extremists in their stronghold areas."

19. "Dancing Girls and Romance on Road to Terrorist Attacks," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 2002. See also *Washington Times*, 18 October 2002.

20. Laurie Mylroie, "The World Trade Center Bomb: Who is Ramzi Yousef? And Why It Matters," *The National Interest* (Winter 1995–96). "The Baluch Connection: Is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed tied to Bagdad?" *Wall Street Journal*, 18 March 2003.

21. See "Top Al Qaeda Suspect Captured," BBC News, 1 March 2003, available at (http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2811473.stm).

22. "Al Qaeda Planned to Kill Pope: Report," *San Francisco Examiner*, 11 November 2002.

23. See Christopher Kremmer, "Then There Were Two: Al Qaeda Planner Caught," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 2003.

24. See Laurie Myroliie, "The Baluch Connection: Is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed Tied to Bagdad?" *Wall Street Journal*, 18 March 2003. Laurie Mylroie's articles cited consider the possibility of an identity switch providing Kuwaiti "legends" to Iraqi intelligence officers during Iraq's 1990 occupation of Kuwait.

25. Myroliie, "The Baluch Connection."

26. The documents referring to Hizbollah are based on two memoranda marked secret from the Philippine National Police Directorate for Intelligence, Camp Crame, Quezon City from Director for Intelligence to Chief of Philippine National Police and signed by Chief Superintendent Julius F. Yarcia. The two documents are dated 10 and 23 November 1999, respectively. The reference for the 10 November document is CPNP ActDoc 99 AO 12474.

27. According to the documents stated in note 26: "Yudhawinata was a subject of investigation since October 14, 1999 by DI and PRO 9. The subject was on a mission to buy passports. These passports were to be used by Lebanese based Hizbollah for an impending attack on an undertermined country in the Middle East." The documents go on to state that: "A fuller report dated March 13 2000 [after Yudhawinata had been interrogated] . . . reveals that he was an Indonesian and is affiliated with Hizbollah (aka Islamic Jihad, Revolutionary Justice Organisation etc) an umbrella organization of various radical Muslim Shiite groups supported by the Iranian Ministry for Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

28. Referring to Yudhawinata the Philippine police documents state that: "The subject's involvement can be traced back to 1981 when he went into hiding in Iran after expulsion from his University in Indonesia for his Islamic activism. Received ideological, military and language training in Iran before returning to Indonesia in 1983 forming a bomb squad with other members of the Indonesia cell of Hizbollah. The squad was involved in several attacks in 1985 and 1986. Failed bomb attack in 1987 saw subject return to Iran for 5 years. Again in region in 1994 to attempt bombing of Israeli embassy, March 1994 (using Philippine passport aka Abraham Buena-ventura)—mission conducted by a compact group of specialists from Lebanon with help from probable local Thai cell of Hizbollah."

29. "Hizballah (Party of God)," Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism—2002* (Washington, DC: Department of State), 30 April 2003.

30. Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Australian Financial Review*, 20 June 2003, p. 3. The original article appears in *Foreign Affairs* 83(2) (July/August 2003).

31. The Philippine police documents (note 26) relate that military actions are planned by Hizbollah cells in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines. The documents mention that Yudhawinata had met three Indonesians in 1993 whom he "intended to dispatch to Lebanon for training. After which they will be sent to Australia carrying Philippine passports to carry out terror acts."

32. "Terror Plot to Hit Sydney Olympics," BBC News, 3 December 2002, available at (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2537539.stm>).

33. Michael Levitt, "Hezbollah 'Popular' in Australia," *The Australian*, 9 June 2003.

34. "Australia to Ban Hezbollah," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 5(5) (May 2003).

35. There is no doubt that Hizbollah does maintain an international support network, particularly to finance its activities. See for example, "Drug Money for Hezbollah?" CBSNews.com, 2 September 2002, available at (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/01/attack/main520457.shtml>).

36. John Kerrin and Cameron Stewart, "We're in Reach of Mid-East Terrorists: A-G," News.Com.au, 28 May 2003, available at (<http://www.news.com.au/common/printpage/0,6093,6506061,00.html>).

37. Hizbollah statement in response to an announcement that by the Australian government that it seeks to ban Hizbollah, 29 May 2003, available at (http://www.hizbollah.org/English/frames.index_eg.htm).

38. *Ibid.*

39. On 4 December 2002, the *Washington Times* reported that Hassan Nasrallah had declared in a speech: "By Allah, if they touch Al-Aqsa we will act everywhere around the world." Nasrallah was also reported to have said: "I encourage Palestinians to take suicide bombings worldwide. Don't be shy about it." These statements were picked up in the Canadian press and led to a decision by the Canadian Solicitor-General, Wayne Easter, to add Hizbollah to the list of banned groups. Hizbollah issued a statement reported in the Beirut *Daily Star* (13 December 2002) warning the Canadian government that it "would bring hostile sentiments upon itself." See Ziad K. Abdelnour, "The Lebanese-Canadian Crisis," *Middle-East Intelligence Bulletin* 5(1) (January 2003).

40. Hizbollah officially denounced the Canadian government decision, arguing that the group "acts always in accordance with international laws and legislation." See "Hizbollah Statement Denouncing the Canadian Government's Decision for Adding the Party on its List of Terrorist Organisations," 12 December 2002. On Nasrallah's alleged incitement to Palestinians to embark on worldwide suicide missions, the Director of Hizbollah's Media Relations Department, Sheik Hassan Izzeddine, sought to clarify the remarks, stating that "Sayyed [sic] Nasrallah emphasized that resistance is the only way to liberate the Lebanese land and supported the choice of the Palestinian people in their resistance against Israeli occupation but he never spoke about attacks outside Palestine." See "Sheik Hassan Izzeddine, Commenting on the Statement made by the Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon Mr Michel Duval on Adding Hizbollah [sic] to Banned Groups," 14 December 2002. Both statements available at (http://www.hizbollah.org/English/frames.index_eg.htm). The *Daily Star* in Beirut in a report of 24 December 2002 claimed that the correct translation of Nasrallah's remarks of 29 November was: "Zionists and those behind them should understand that any harm caused to the Aksa Mosque will ignite the whole region." See Abdelnour, "The Lebanese Canadian Crisis,"

41. Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Australian Financial Review*, p. 3.

42. "Behind the Kenya Terrorist Attacks," Fox News, 2 December 2002 at (http://www.foxnewschannel.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,71954,00.html).

43. Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Al Qaeda Primed for Wider Struggle," *Asia Times Online*, 8 December 2001 at (<http://www.atimes.com/ciasia/CL08Ag01.html>).

44. See Middle East Policy Council (Washington, DC), Resource Section: Deaths April 16–30, 2003 at (http://www.mepc.org/public_asp/resources_counts/03_04_2.asp).

45. Jean-Marc Mojon, "Israel Fears British Bombers Herald New Twist," *The Age*, 2 May 2003.

46. Levitt, "Hezbollah 'Popular' in Australia."
47. See David Martin Jones, "Out of Bali: Cybercaliphate Rising," *The National Interest*, (Spring 2003), pp. 75–83.
48. See Asia Watch, *Human Rights in Indonesia and East Timor* (New York: Asia Watch, 1989), pp. 76–85.
49. See "Hambali Plotted Terror Campaign," *The Star* (Malaysia) 1 January 2003.
50. International Crisis Group, "Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the 'Ngruki Network' in Indonesia," 8 August 2002, reissued 10 January 2003, available at (http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/asia/indonesia/reports/A400733_08082002.pdf).
51. "Hambali: SE Asia's Most Wanted," BBC News/Asia-Pacific, 21 October 2002, available at (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/asia-pacific/2346225.htm>).
52. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 April 2002, available at (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0430/p01s04-woap.htm>).
53. Federation of American Scientists, available at (<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/kmm.htm>).
54. See Greg Barton, "An Islamist North Australia: Al Qaeda's Vision," *The Age*, 30 October 2002.
55. See "Tentacles of Terror," *The Bulletin*, 13 February 2002, and David Martin Jones and Mike L. Smith, "The Strange Death of the ASEAN Way," *Australian Financial Review*, 12 April 2002.
56. See "Bush Backs Independent 9-11 Probe." CBSNews.com, 20 September 2002, available at (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/24/attack/printable523156.shtml>) and "The FBI's Hijacker List," CBSNews.com, 27 September 2001, available at (<http://www.cbsnews.com/archive/printable311329.shtml>).
57. Mark Fineman and Bob Drogin, "Indonesian Cleric Had Role in Skyjackings, Officials Say," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 2002.
58. *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 February 2002, available at (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0212/p06s02-wosc.html>).
59. *Straits Times*, 10 January 2003.
60. Farah Abdul Rahim, "White Paper Sheds Light on Singapore JI Indoctrination Process," ChannelNewsAsia.com, 9 January 2003, available at (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/29264/1/.html>).
61. See Office of Public Affairs (Washington, DC), "Statement by the Treasury Department Regarding Today's Designation of Two Leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah," 24 January 2003, KD-3796.
62. "The Bali Bomber's Network of Terror," BBC News/Asia-Pacific, 12 May 2003, available at (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/asia-pacific/2499193.stm>).
63. See Seth Mydans, "Suspect Going on Trial in Bali Blast," *International Herald Tribune*, 12 May 2003.
64. "Al Qaeda Plot to Bomb US Ships Foiled by MI6," *Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 2002.
65. "PM Reveals Plan to Crash Jet into Changi," *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 7 April 2002.
66. Rahim, "White Paper Sheds Light on Singapore JI Indoctrination Process."
67. See "Sweeping Asian Terror Alliance Uncovered," CNN.com/World, 19 September 2002, available at (<http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/09/19/singapore.arrests/>). See also "Opening Remarks by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Dialogue with Community Leaders on the Arrest of the Second Group of Jemaah Islamiyah Members," Singapore Government Press Release, Media Relations Division, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 14 October 2002.
68. See Mark Baker, "Evidence Points to Web of Extremists," *The Age*, 9 November 2002.
69. See "Confessions of an Al Qaeda Terrorist," *Time Magazine*, 15 September 2002.
70. "A Deadly Connection," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2002.
71. "Four Corners: The Bali Confessions—Chronology," available at (http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2003/20030210_baliconfessions_chronology.htm).
72. Marian Wilkinson, "We'll Hit You: Pre-Bali Alert," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 2002.

73. *The Australian*, 25–26 January 2003.

74. *The Australian*, 15–16 February 2003.

75. Jusuf Wanandi, “Indonesia: A Failed State?” *The Washington Quarterly* 25(3) (Summer 2002), p. 142. Again, it may be averred that Laskar Jihad, rather like Hizbollah, poses only a limited indigenous threat within Indonesia and has no wider pretensions. It should be cautioned, however, that the notion of confinement within sovereign borders is a fundamentally un-Islamic concept (only Allah is sovereign). Further, the very term “jihad” only has resonance as a universalized Islamic idea and does not have any meaning as a geographically constrained interpretation. This much is hinted at on Laskar Jihad’s own website which states that jihad is a “holy ibadah” [pious duty] for all Muslims. Moreover, the fact that the grouping has a global presence on the web indicates that it is part of the “Cybercaliphate.” See *Laskar Jihad Ahlus Sunnah wal Jammah*, available at (<http://www.laskarjihad.or.id>).

76. Alan Dupont, quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 October 2002.

77. “Twisted Ties to Terrorist Network,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 2002.

78. See Reme Ahmed, “Asean Adopts Plan to Fight Terrorism,” *Straits Times*, 21 May 2002.

79. Reme Ahmed, “Asean Ministers Acknowledge Defining Terrorism is Not Crucial, Fighting it is,” *Straits Times*, 21 May 2002.

80. See for example, “Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer,” transcript of ABC Radio AM on Bali Arrests, 22 November 2002, available at (http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/transcripts/2002/021122_fa_bali.html); and “Bali Bombing—Australian and Indonesian Police,” transcript of World Today Broadcast, ABC, 6 March 2003, available at (<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday.s800527.htm>).

81. See for example, Dini Djalal, “Asia’s Intelligence Gap,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2003).

82. See “Bali Opens Terror Trial in Blast Fatal to 200,” *International Herald Tribune*, 12 May 2002.

83. See Caroline Munro, “Bashir Goes on Trial,” *The Daily Telegraph* (Australia), 11 May 2002.

84. See Mark Baker, “Angry Thais Threaten Writers Over Hambali Plot Reports,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 November 2002. See also “Into the Heart of Darkness,” *The Age*, 16 November 2002.