Jemaah Islamiyah’s radical madrassah networks

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Using our Global Transnational Terrorism (GTT) database, we examine the importance of radical madrassahs for Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Southeast Asia, both for the overall JI network and for individual attack networks. We argue that madrassah networks serve multiple purposes – ideological indoctrination, focal point creation, and leadership training – and are an important policy issue that should not be ignored. We conclude that unraveling terrorist social networks is the key to a successful counterterrorism policy in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: terrorism; radical madrassah; networks; Jemaah Islamiyah

Senior administration officials from the White House, Defense Department, and State Department have repeatedly voiced concerns about the threat to US security posed by Islamic schools that allegedly breed terrorists. Ariel Cohen, a senior policy adviser for the Heritage Foundation, has similarly noted that madrassahs “provide much more than a religious education. They provide political ideology, and they also – in many cases – train for violence and war” (Bansal, 2005). A similar anti-madrassah drumbeat has characterized much of the media coverage since 9/11, particularly after major events such as the 2005 London underground bombing.

In 2005, in an op-ed for The New York Times on “The Madrassa Myth,” Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey argued that most madrassahs, or Islamic boarding schools, are moderate and not associated with terrorism. They surmised:

> While madrassahs are an important issue in education and development in the Muslim world, they are not and should not be considered a threat to the United States. The tens of millions of dollars spent every year by the United States through the State Department, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, and the Agency for International Development to improve education and literacy in the Middle East and South Asia should be applauded as the development aid it is and not as the counterterrorism effort it cannot be. (Bergen & Pandey, 2005)

In a recent extension of the argument in The Washington Quarterly, they concluded that we must eliminate the “assumption that madrassa[h]s produce terrorists capable of

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carrying out major attacks’’ in order to “shape more effective policies to ensure national
security” (Bergen & Pandey, 2006, p. 124).

Overall, Bergen and Pandey’s work has been important in correcting many of the
erroneous assumptions about madrassahs in the policy community. Similarly, Andrabi et al. have done an excellent job of demonstrating that most estimates of madrassah
enrollment and growth in Pakistan are overstated by media and academic sources (2006,
pp. 446–477). Nevertheless, empirical evidence strongly indicates that, at least for Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Southeast Asia, radical madrassahs are important for terrorist attacks.

We define terrorism by the United Nations definition as “any action . . . that is intended to
cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of
such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a
Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act”
(United Nations, 2004).

To be clear, there are two kinds of schools in Indonesia that provide explicit religious
education in Indonesia. The first is an “Islamic day school” administered by the state and
is called madrassah negeri. The second, dubbed pesantren, is privately funded and
administered and has no explicit ties to, and very little oversight by, the state. We define
“madrassah” as both Islamic day schools and pesantrens, and “radical madrassahs” as
pesantrens that advocate violence in any form, be it terrorism or violent jihad.

In a previous study (Magouirk, 2008), we found that the JI-linked radical madrassah
attendance rates of the Bali I, Marriott, and Australian Embassy bombers were 19 times
that of the general Indonesian population. By “JI-linked,” we mean explicit and implicit
linkages between the madrassah and the JI organization. These linkages run the gamut of
affiliation from direct (the leaders of JI-founded al-Mukmin and Lukman al-Hakiem) to
indirect (many radical madrassahs have known and vocal JI sympathizers on their staff
and implement the JI teaching curriculum). To put this in perspective, there are currently
over 14,000 madrassahs in Indonesia, of which 9,000 teach a Salafi curriculum. The
majority of these Salafi madrassahs do not teach violence. In fact, the strict Salafi schools
are generally the most virulent opponents of jihadism in Indonesia and elsewhere. Only
about 30 radical madrassahs have ties to JI and advocate violence (Sidney Jones, personal
communication, January 2008). Thus, only a very small percentage (about 0.002 percent)
of madrassahs are violence-linked.

We also found that attendance at a JI-linked radical madrassah is correlated with a
greater role in JI terrorist operations, decreasing the probability that a jihadi will take a
low-level role in a terrorist operation by over 19 percent and increasing the probability
that a jihadi will play a major role by 16 percent. Finally, we found that association
(serving as a board member, teacher, principal, or attending lectures or sermons) with
Lukman al-Hakiem, a radical JI madrassah in Malaysia, increased the probability that a
jihadi would play a major role by over 23 percent (Magouirk, 2008).

In another study, we found that the responses of students at al-Islam, a radical JI-
linked madrassah best known as the teaching residence of Bali bomber Ali Imron,
significantly differed from those of students at moderate madrassahs in Indonesia (Atran
et al., 2008). We analyzed data from structured interviews with over 100 students in four
Indonesian madrassahs. Two of the schools, Darussalam and al-Husainy, are associated
with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), or “Revival of Islamic Scholars,” a mass movement
associated with a moderate Indonesian form of Islam. One school, Ibnu Mas’ud, is funded
by the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), or “Council of Indonesian Holy Warriors,” an
Islamist coalition oriented toward converting Indonesia into a strict Sunni state ruled by
sharia law. The final school, Pesantren al-Islam, was established in 1992 by the father
(name unknown) of three of the main Bali bombing plotters (Ali Imron, Amrozi, and Mukhlas) and modeled on the famous al-Mukmin school in Ngruki created by the JI founders Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba’asyir.

Median age at NU schools was 16, and 18 at the other schools. Females comprised nearly half of the student body at the NU schools, 5 percent at al-Islam, and none at the MMI school. Questionnaires were distributed only to males. Interestingly, at al-Islam, 71 percent of respondents said they joined the school through pre-existing social networks of friends, whereas 70 percent of respondents at the other schools were sent there by their family.

The questionnaires explored attitudes to Islam and other religions and found no significant differences between the NU and MMI schools; however, al-Islam stood apart on a variety of measures. At al-Islam, 91 percent of the students (compared to 35 percent of students at the other madrassahs) believed that it was their duty as Muslims “to fight and kill non-Muslims such as Christians.” Similarly, 74 percent of the al-Islam students (compared to 7 percent of the students at other schools) believed that all people “were born evil but some learn to become good.” Across all schools, students who believed people are “born evil” were about 11 times more likely to believe it was their duty to kill non-Muslims.

We also asked students to imagine what would happen if child born of Jewish parents were adopted by a religious Muslim couple. While 83 percent of students from other schools thought that the child would grow up to be a Muslim, only 48 percent of students at al-Islam shared that belief. This belief that a child born of another religion could never fully become a Muslim was strongly related to support for violence. Students with this belief were about 10 times more likely than other students to believe that it was their duty to kill non-Muslims. Note that the difference between al-Islam and the other schools cannot be attributed to different levels of religiosity, or even different levels of agreement with political Islam. Fewer students at al-Islam (71 percent compared to 82 percent of students at the other schools) believed it was “very important . . . that a good government implement the laws of Sharia.”

These findings suggest that radical madrassahs in Indonesia and Malaysia may be significantly more important for understanding jihadist violence than Bergen and Pandey initially thought. The discussion that follows will utilize social network data and visualizations to explore this point in greater detail.

The formation of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)

In an Indian restaurant in downtown Jakarta, Mohammed Nasir bin Abas, the former leader of Jemaah Islamiyah for military training in the territories of Sulawesi and the Philippines, dabbed at his food, looked up, and shook his head:

I cannot say that [Abu Bakr] Ba’asyir [the alleged emir of Jemaah Islamiyah] ordered the Bali bombings. But he did nothing to stop Hambali [a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war and mastermind of the Bali bombing, now in US custody] from planning suicide attacks with others from Lukman Al-Hakiem [madrassah in Malaysia] and killing civilians, including innocent Muslims. That’s one of the reasons I quit JI. I consider myself a soldier in the defense of Islam. Soldiers fight soldiers, not tourists or other people just because they have a different religion. (Abas interview, 2005)

Abas, whose sister married JI’s operations chief, Mukhlas, trained the Bali bomb plotters Imam Samudra and Ali Imron. He received his religious instruction from the JI leaders Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba’asyir in Malaysia before being sent for three years to the Towrkhan military camp in Afghanistan. He became a top JI military trainer but also
gave religious instruction. In April 2001, Ba’asyir appointed Abas head of Mantiqi III, one of JI’s strategic area divisions, which covered the geographical region of the Philippines and Sulawesi, and was responsible for military training and arms supply. The other Mantiqi regions included Mantiqi I (Malaysia and Singapore), Mantiqi II (most of Indonesia), and Mantiqi IV (Australia). Abas eventually turned state’s evidence in Ba’asyir’s trial, outlining the structure of JI and Ba’asyir’s position as emir.

JI emerged in the early 1990s from a split within Indonesia’s Darul Islam, a post-independence group banned by the Suharto dictatorship that has operated semi-clandestinely in Indonesian society much as the Muslim Brotherhood has in the Middle East. Like Bin Laden, the JI founders, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba’asyir, were descendants of Arabs of the Hadramawt region of Yemen, seafarers who over the centuries established a wide network of personal and commercial relationships across southern and southeastern Asia (See Ho, 2006). Before Suharto compelled Sungkar and Ba’asyir to flee Java, they had established the famous al-Mukmin pesentren at Ngruki, a religious boarding school, or madrassah, which sponsored numbers of mujahedin to fight in the Soviet-Afghan war. After the war, the two clerics settled in Malaysia, where they underwrote the establishment of the Lukman al-Hakiem boarding school to teach the principles of Salafism and Jihad. They accused the rival Darul Islam leaders of “Sufism” and other forms of “deviance” that undermined the pure Salafi principles of Islam that supposedly had inspired victory over the Soviets. Sungkar and Ba’asyir took with them most of the “Afghan alumni” they had sponsored.

After JI was officially established in 1993, Lukman al-Hakiem became its nerve center (International Crisis Group, 2006). The principal plotters of the October 2002 Bali bombing, the century’s second deadliest terrorist attack, and of other JI attacks, either taught or studied there. Those associated with the school include the operational mastermind, Hambali; the radical ideologue, Imam Samudra; the former Lukman headmaster and Marriott, Australian Embassy, and Bali II bombing strategist, Noordin Top; Lukman’s founder, Mukhlas; and Mukhlas’ brothers, Amrozi and Ali Imron. In August 1998, Sungkar and Ba’asyir called upon Darul Islam leaders and others in the region to join with them in Bin Laden’s call for “the Muslim world’s global jihad” (jabhah Jihadiyah Alam Islamy) against “the Jews and Christians” (Atran, 2005).

Sungkar was the central figure and the source of vision, inspiration, and direction for JI until he died in 1999, shortly after he and Ba’asyir returned to Indonesia from exile in the wake of Suharto’s fall. Sungkar’s death was a turning point for JI. Sungkar’s long-time confidant, Ba’asyir, was expected to lead the organization after his death. Ba’asyir, though, provided “oracular” rather than hands-on leadership, leaving an operational void for the organization. Although a fiery preacher, Ba’asyir was too diffident in operational matters for JI activists, and the void was filled by an informal diffusion of power to midlevel leaders. Hambali (the driving force behind all of JI’s attacks through Bali I in 2002) was one of these leaders, along with Zulkarnaen (JI’s chief military trainer, and the first of the “Afghan alumni”) and Mukhlas (the leading religious scholar and spiritual guide apart from Ba’asyir).

Beginning in 1997 or 1998, Zulkarnaen established a connection to al-Qaeda through its military leader Abu Hafs al-Masri (Mohammed Atef) in order to send JI operatives to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. By 1999, Abu Hafs was telling JI representatives that al-Qaeda would be prepared to finance and provide suicide bombers for missions against US and allied interests in Southeast Asia (Bafana, 2006).

When Hambali fled to al-Qaeda’s protection in Afghanistan to escape arrest for the 2000 Christmas Eve bombings in Indonesia, he began to establish a working relationship
with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM). (There is no evidence to support the widespread belief that Hambali was a member of al-Qaeda’s inner circle of advisers, or shura, or that he had any close or privileged relationship with KSM and al-Qaeda before 2000. KSM had met Sungkar, Ba’asyir and Mukhlas on a visit to Lukman al-Hakiem in 1996, but only joined al-Qaeda in late 1998 or early 1999.) Mukhlas was also in contact with KSM during this period. By 2001, these three leaders shared the strategic preference for attacking the “far enemy” with “martyrdom missions,” and were planning joint operations in earnest. In the end, Ba’asyir either implicitly or explicitly acceded to the al-Qaeda-style agenda of this group (Atran, 2005). As Ba’asyir recounted in an interview from his jail cell in Jakarta’s Cipinang Prison:

I call those who carried out these actions [the Bali, Marriott and Kuningan bombings] all mujahid [“holy warrior”]. They all had good intentions, that is, Jihad in Allah’s way; the aim of the jihad is to look for blessing from Allah. They are right that America is the proper target because America fights Islam. So in terms of their objectives, they are right, and the target of their attacks was right also. . . . If they made mistakes, they are only human beings who can be wrong. Moreover, their actions could be considered self-defense . . . they didn’t attack because they defended themselves. They shouldn’t be punished. . . . This [Nasir Abas] is a traitor, a betrayer. (Atran, 2005)

Bali and the other major JI attacks bear the fingerprints of Hambali (main operational leader), Mukhlas (spiritual leader), and perhaps Zulkarnaen (JI’s furtive top military trainer and earliest advocate of violence against non-Muslims in Indonesia and elsewhere). They were largely planned and executed by a faction of JI that operated together through a dense network of interlocking relationships of friendship (many established in training camps), kinship, and, above all, school ties.

**JI madrassah networks: theoretical foundations**

We argue that radical madrassahs include two mechanisms of radicalization: top-down indoctrination and bottom-up network development (which includes focal point creation and leadership training). Previous research has focused almost entirely on top-down ideological indoctrination. Although this is clearly a high-profile factor, the second factor is equally if not more important.

Figure 1 outlines our schematic view of how radical madrassahs are linked to extremist violence. Contrary to Bergen and Pandey (2005), who focus only on top-down indoctrination of students, we argue that radical madrassahs receive “inputs” from a larger pool of applicants – existing JI members who might someday become leaders, unaffiliated radicals, and unradicalized students. The role of the JI-linked radical madrassah will vary depending on the applicant type.

For unradicalized, young students who attend the radical madrassah, the standard top-down indoctrination mechanism is most important. Top-down indoctrination occurs both in the classroom and in external study groups, or halaqahs, which are small discussion groups of about 10 people that take place outside the classroom and curriculum (extracurricular). They are led by a teacher and a lead student. These small groups are one of the most defining aspects of the madrassah experience and serve as basic discussion forums for a wide range of issues.

In an interview with a friend and fellow student of one of JI’s suicide bombers (interviewee name and association withheld for his protection; hereafter called Ali), we found that the JI curriculum – which focuses on the “unity of faith,” “jihad,” and “state, ba’ait, and the nature of the jemaah” – is addressed only in halaqahs, not in the general
madrassah curriculum. According to Ali, this is true of all JI-linked madrassahs. These groups have aspects of both top-down indoctrination (teachers give their interpretation of the material) and small-group dynamics (student interaction and sometimes mutual radicalization outside the classroom).

These small groups are pivotal for (1) inspiring students to discover jihadist reading materials outside class, (2) developing strong bonds that continue after graduation, and (3) creating cross-age group dialogues on issues ranging from the appropriateness of suicide bombing to implementation of sharia. From a top-down recruitment perspective, JI monitors these forums to see who is bright, industrious, and interested, but also who has the “right ideological perspective.” Upon graduation, the best and the brightest from these halaqahs are not recruited immediately, but are sent on to jobs to be monitored by a JI member or contact. After one year they are approached. Ali himself was approached to take part in a suicide bombing in the mid-2000s, but declined as he disagreed with the use of suicide bombings in Indonesia. It is clear, then, that top-down indoctrination is aimed in particular at specific students who meet the intellectual, moral, and ideological prerequisites for intense teacher focus. This is one explanation of how some individuals at radical madrassahs go on to live normal lives, while others pursue violence.

For students who are already JI members and for students who arrive as unaffiliated radicals (Imam Samudra, the field commander for the Bali bombing is a good example of the latter group), the network development mechanism predominates. This includes two parts – leadership training and focal-point creation.

Figure 1. Model of radicalization in JI-linked madrassahs.
All of the key operational bombing leaders – Hambali, Mukhlas (JI director of the Bali I bombing), Imam Samudra (field commander of the Bali I bombing, who was not a JI member), Noordin Top, and Azhari Husin (JI’s chief bomb-maker and field commander for the Marriot, Australian Embassy, and Bali II bombings) – spent time at JI-linked radical madrassahs. Their experience ranged from working at the madrassah (Top was Mukhlas’ disciple and succeeded him as headmaster at Lukman al-Hakiem; Azhari was a board member) to attending lectures and using the madrassah as a social hub (Hambali and Imam Samudra). Other key JI leaders have similarly been associated with JI-linked radical madrassahs: for example, Abu Dujana (recently arrested by Indonesian special forces). For some individuals, then, radical madrassahs are a stepping stone to leadership, somewhat akin to a master’s degree in business administration from a Western university.

The second part of the network-development mechanism is the creation of a focal point that brings together radicals with similar ideological backgrounds who do not have the operational experience or the funding to carry out independent operations. Experience at a radical madrassah matches these radicals with operational leaders like Hambali (now at Guantánamo Bay) or Noordin Top, the leader of the Marriott, Australian Embassy, and Bali II bombings (whereabouts unknown). The focal point serves to facilitate leadership development, specialization, and communication and trust, which form the backbone of the overall jihadist network.

It is important to note that these networks are fluid – jihadists need not be JI members. The best example is Imam Samudra, the field commander for the 2002 Bali bombing. He lived next to Hambali and Ba’syir and attended lectures and sermons at Lukman al-Hakiem, but never formally joined JI. To join JI formally, a recruit must take an oath or pledge to the emir. By doing this he agrees to follow the directives of the emir unless the emir’s words or actions contradict the Quran or the words of the Prophet Mohammed. The exact criteria which JI uses to judge candidates is unknown; however, there is some evidence that JI has used family and school connections as criteria in the past (International Crisis Group, 2003).

We argue that these two mechanisms – ideological indoctrination and network development – potentially lead to extremist violence, including terrorism. Each mechanism can occur independently of the other, although they are probably most dangerous when mutually reinforcing. For instance, Lukman al-Hakiem was extremely important for all three mechanisms: indoctrination (many of the Bali I and Marriott bombers were students), focal point creation (a large percentage of the Bali I and Marriott bombers were only affiliated with Lukman al-Hakiem), and leadership training (much of the core JI leadership spent time teaching or working at Lukman al-Hakiem). There is no evidence that madrassahs “specialize” in one of the functions.

In the network figures and attack descriptions that follow we will not specifically test these theoretical mechanisms. For each attack, however, we will identify key individuals as associates (school staff or visitors probably involved in network development) or students (probably involved in top-down indoctrination) of the radical madrassahs. This differentiation is based on the idea that students are more likely to be indoctrinated and associates are more likely to benefit from network development. In practice, elements of both mechanisms will probably affect associates and students.

**JI madrassah networks: data**

Our network data are drawn from the Global Transnational Terrorism (GTT) database, a product of the GTT Project, which began in August of 2006 under the auspices of the Air
Force Office of Scientific Research. The database details approximately 300 jihadis, with over 1,600 lines of network relations. The GTT database rests on two foundations. The first is a detailed categorization of basic biographical and socioeconomic data. The second, and the one that we will utilize for this paper, represents the vast network of connections forming the glue that holds the diverse array of jihadis together. This work includes a comprehensive examination of interpersonal ties, including acquaintance, friendship, family, madrassah, and terrorist training (e.g., Afghanistan, southern Philippines). All ties in the database are meticulously sourced with a focus on primary documents. Ties are rigorously documented by a methodology created to discern differences in the strength of ties and the reliability of the ties from the available open-source information. All ties represented here have been rated as very reliable (see Magouirk et al., 2008 for a detailed description of methodology).

There are at approximately 30 madrassahs in Southeast Asia linked to JI (Sidney Jones, personal communication, 18 January 2008). However, three madrassahs have consistently produced active jihadis – al-Mukmin (Ngruki), Lukman al-Hakiem, and al-Islam. Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir founded Pesantren al-Mukmin (Ngruki) in 1971, and it has been a core foundation of their radical network ever since. Zulkarnaen, the military chief of JI, was one of the first Mukmin students in the 1970s. Mukhlas founded Pesantren Lukman al-Hakiem in Malaysia in 1990–91 at Sungkar and Ba’asyir’s request. Lukman al-Hakiem would become the central command center of JI during Sungkar and Ba’asyir’s Malaysian exile period (they fled Indonesia in 1985). Al-Islam was founded as a “sister madrassah” to the Ngruki school in 1992. Ali Imron, the Bali I bomber, taught at al-Islam and found al-Islam students to hide him after the bombing. Appendix 1 provides a list of al-Mukmin, Lukman al-Hakiem, and al-Islam associates and students who figure in one or more of the attacks to be described.

Figures 2–4 provide social network visualizations of the JI madrassah network for bombers linked with Lukman al-Hakiem, bombers linked with al-Mukmin, and bombers linked with both schools. Several things in the diagrams merit consideration. First, the sheer number of bombers linked to these two radical madrassahs is striking (Figures 2 and 3). Second, the degree of interconnection among those linked with each madrassah is striking (Figures 2 and 3). Third, there were nine jihadis linked with both schools (Figure 4); many attended one school and then went on to teach or meet at the other.

If we examine individual attacks, the importance of radical madrassah networks becomes even more obvious.

**JI-linked attacks 2000–04**

**2000 Philippines ambassador residence bombing**

The Philippines ambassador residence (PAR) bombing was the first attempt by JI at a complex al-Qaeda-style car bombing. The bombing was envisioned by Hambali as revenge for the Philippines government’s decision to overrun the JI/Moro Islamic Liberation Front training camps – Camp Abu Bakar and Camp Hudaibiyah. The PAR bombing was approved by Ba’asyir and planned by Hambali and his Mantiqi I colleagues – Mukhlas, Faiz Bafana (treasurer of JI), and Zulkifli Marzuki (aide to Hambali). In what would become a standard operating procedure, Hambali, head of Mantiqi I, “borrowed” Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, a Mantiqi III member, to help direct the bombing.

Hambali chose two separate groups to implement the bombing. The first group, consisting of Farihin (a JI jihadist who would go on to focus on sectarian violence in Poso, Indonesia) and the future Bali bombers Amrozi, Ali Imron, Mubarok, DulMatin, and Sarjiyo, would construct and deliver the bomb and the car that would be used for the
bombing. The second group, consisting of Abdul Jabar, al-Ghozi, and Edi Setyono, would deliver and detonate the bomb. The PAR bombing shows from the beginning the importance of family and marriage ties for the overall attack network. For the PAR bombing, three of the core members – Mukhlas, Ali Imron, and Amrozi – were brothers. Amrozi and al-Ghozi were also in-laws. Farihin and Abdul Jabar were brothers and formed a key bond between the bombing/detonator group and the materials-sourcing group. The bombing occurred on 1 August 2000, injuring the ambassador and killing a security guard and an innocent bystander.

Nine of the 14 jihadis involved in the PAR bombing either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. More importantly, the key leaders in the bombing – Hambali, Faiz Bafana, and Mukhlas – were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Mukhlas was the principal at Lukman al-Hakiem in the 1990s and attended al-Mukmin. The key PAR bomb maker, DulMatin, was associated with and taught at Lukman al-Hakiem. The key PAR operational bomber, Fathur al Ghozi, attended al-Mukmin in the 1980s. Two of the other participants, Amrozi and Ali Imron, attended Lukman al-Hakiem, and one, Mubarok, attended al-Mukmin.

2000 Christmas Eve bombings

The Christmas Eve bombings involved perhaps JI’s most ambitious operational planning. Envisioned by Hambali and at least tacitly approved by Ba’asyir, the bombings were
planned by Hambali himself and his hand-picked team of jihadis: Imam Samudra, Mukhlas, Jabir, Edi Setyono, Faiz Bafana, and Zulkifli Marzuki. Mukhlas, in particular, provided spiritual guidance for Imam Samudra and Hambali’s teams.

Hambali, Jabir, Imam Samudra, Edi Setyono, and Yazid Sufaat were in charge of the bombing teams. The teams struck 38 churches in 11 cities in Indonesia – Batam, Bekasi, Bandung, Ciamis, Jakarta, Mataram, Medan, Mojokerto, Pekanbaru, Pematang, and Siantar – in an effort to foment conflict between Christians and Muslims throughout Indonesia. Many of the bombs were crude, killing the jihadis who tried to detonate them, including Hambali’s friend Jabir. Others malfunctioned and did not go off at all. However, JI still managed to kill 19 people and injure 120 others in an impressive feat of coordination across 11 cities.

Nineteen of the 44 jihadis involved in the Christmas Eve bombings either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. More importantly, the key leadership of the Christmas bombing (Hambali, Faiz Bafana, Mukhlas) and one of the two Christmas bomb-makers (DulMatin) were the same as for the PAR bombing and, as already noted, were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. The second key Christmas bomb-maker – Azhari – was a board member at Lukman al-Hakiem. The key subteam leaders were all associated with Lukman al-Hakiem: Ali Imron and Amrozi were students and Sufaat and Imam Samudra were frequent guests. Four participants who worked under Imam Samudra were from Singapore and Malaysia and were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Finally, Mubarok, Idris, Toni Togar, and Mohammed Rais (the latter three

Figure 3. Bombers linked with al-Mukmin.
would go on to take part in the Marriott bombing), as well as one individual who was not prosecuted (name withheld), all attended al-Mukmin.

2001 Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP)/Santa Ana bombing
The HKBP/Santa Ana church bombings were a continuation of Hambali’s strategy of bombing churches to foment conflict between Christians and Muslims. In this case, Imam Samudra directed a six-person cell that included Christmas Eve and PAR bomber Edi Setyono. Funding came through Faiz Bafana, the treasurer of Mantiqi I. The cell simultaneously hit the Santa Ana Catholic church and the HKBP Protestant church on 22 July. Five of the nine jihadis involved in the HKBP/Santa Ana bombings either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. The key leaders, Hambali, Imam Samudra, Faiz Bafana, and Ba’asyir, were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Solahudin, one of the bombers, attended al-Mukmin.

2001 Atrium Mall bombing
Like the HKBP/Santa Ana bombings, the Atrium Mall bombing was a continuation of Hambali’s strategy of fomenting conflict between Christians and Muslims. In this case, the target was a group of charismatic Christian worshippers that convened on the upper floor of the Atrium Mall. For this bombing, Imam Samudra directed a five-person cell. The cell was largely the same as in the HKBP/Santa Ana bombings. Funding again came through
Faiz Bafana, the treasurer of Mantiqi I. Five of the eight jihadis involved in the Atrium Mall bombings either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. The key leadership was associated with Lukman al-Hakiem – Hambali, Ba’asyir, Faiz Bafana, and Imam Samudra. Solahudin, one of the bombers, attended al-Mukmin.

2002 Bali bombing

The Bali I bombing of 2002 is the most lethal and infamous JI attack. In many ways, the Bali I bombing is the culmination of a series of events starting with Sungkar’s death, the oracular leadership of his successor, Ba’asyir, the establishment of Lukman al-Hakiem as the nerve center of JI radicalism in Malaysia, and the rise of radicalism within JI’s ranks.

Planning for the Bali I bombing started when Hambali convened a meeting of his radical Mantiqi I colleagues – Mukhlas, Wan Min bin Wan Mat (JI treasurer after the arrest of Faiz Bafana), Azhari, Noordin Top, and Zulkifli Marzuki (Hambali aide) – in Thailand in early 2002 to discuss future bombings. It was at this meeting that Hambali changed the focus to entertainment-oriented soft targets, such as bars and nightclubs, and also handed out assignments. Top and Azhari would “apply” for funding through al-Qaeda, Mat would arrange the transfer of funds, and Mukhlas would handle the bombing (Neighbour, 2004).

Mukhlas chose Imam Samudra to head the bombing. Samudra was perhaps the most radical ideologue and violent member in the entire JI organization. He recruited an array of JI members, most of whom had taken part in previous bombings: Ali Imron, Amrozi, Mubarok, Sarjiyo, Abdul Ghoni, Idris, DulMatin, Umar Patek, and a few others. Samudra was also cultivating a small group of Darul Islam members as potential suicide bombers. In mid-August, Zulkarnaen, Mukhlas, and Imam Samudra convened a meeting at Hernianto’s house that was attended by the majority of the bombing participants, in which the plans for a bombing were announced and roles were handed out. From here, the mission planning was put into overdrive. Ali Imron, Umar Patek, Sarjiyo, Umar Patek, Abdul Ghoni, and DulMatin mixed and built the bomb under the guidance of Azhari. Idris handled all logistical issues and Imam Samudra directed the operation. On 12 October, the suicide bombers detonated the bombs at Paddy’s Bar and Sari Club, killing 202 people and injuring another 209.

Sixteen of the 27 core jihadis involved in the Bali I bombings either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. All of the key leaders were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem – Hambali, Zulkarnaen, Mukhlas, and Imam Samudra. Mukhlas was the principal of Lukman al-Hakiem in the 1990s. Ali Imron and Amrozi, the field coordinator and operations coordinator for the operation, attended Lukman al-Hakiem. The key bomb-makers were also associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Azhari was a board member and DulMatin was a frequent visitor and teacher. Noordin Top (who would go on to lead the Marriott, Australian Embassy, and Bali II bombings) and Wan Mat (who transferred money for the operation) were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Mukhlas, Zulkarnaen, Mubarok, Idris (operational director of the bombing) and three of the minor participants attended al-Mukmin. Additionally, after the Bali I operation, at least 11 al-Islam students and associates hid Ali Imron (see Appendix 1 for list). Most of these were his own students.

2003 Marriott bombing

The Marriott bombing was the first of three bombings led by the partnership of Noordin Top and Azhari. The planning started in earnest when an al-Mukmin alumnus, Toni
Togar, contacted Noordin Top about leftover explosives from the Christmas Eve bombing. Togar was nervous about hiding the explosives in view of the post-Bali police investigations. Top had Mohammad Rais and Toni Togar organize a group of JI members, including al-Mukmin alumni Sardono Siliwangi, Idris, and Malikul, as well as Solihin and Heru Setianto, to move the bombing materials. In April 2003, Sardono Siliwango opened a bank account to finance the operation, but withdrew shortly after, as he felt it was too much work. In May 2003, Toni Togar robbed a bank in Medan to help fund the bombing. A third source of money came from KSM, who funneled the money to the operation via Hambali’s brother Gun Gun (Gun Gun testimony, 2004).

After a wave of arrests in the summer of 2003, the final team comprised Noordin Top as the overall director of the bombing, Azhari as the field commander, Asmar Latin Sani as the suicide bomber, and Ismail and Tohir as team members. Abu Dujanah and Qotadah, both members of the JI central command, met with the core bombers before and after the bombing, although their exact role is unknown. The Marriott bombing occurred on 5 August 2003, killing 12 people and injuring 150.

Thirteen of the 18 core jihadis involved in the Marriott bombings either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or al-Mukmin. All of the key leaders had been previously involved in bomb attacks and were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem – Hambali, Noordin Top, and Azhari. Qotadah, another leading bomb-maker associated with the attack, attended al-Mukmin, as did the suicide bomber, Asmar Latin Sani, and the key initial coordinators – Mohammed Rais, Toni Togar, Sardono Siliwangi, and Idris. Finally, two of the minor participants attended al-Mukmin, and two of the main participants, Tohir and Ismail, attended Lukman al-Hakiem. Mohammed Rais and Abu Dujanah (role unknown) also taught at Lukman al-Hakiem.

2004 Australian Embassy bombing

The Australian Embassy attack was the first JI bombing led entirely by Noordin Top, without funding or direction from Hambali. It was also the first bombing since the Christmas Eve bombing to use an extensive network of jihadis that were not part of JI. This resulted directly from Top’s extensive network of contacts and his direct appeals to organizations outside the JI fold. The final bombing team included Noordin Top as the director of operations; Azhari as the chief bomb-maker and second in command; Rois as the field commander, and Heri Golun, Jabir, Heri Sigi Samboja, Apuy, and Achmad Hasan as team members. The Australian Embassy bombing occurred in Jakarta on 9 September, killing 11 and wounding approximately 140 people. Heri Golun, the suicide bomber, died in the operation.

Eleven of the 27 jihadis involved in the Australian Embassy bombing either attended or were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem or with al-Mukmin. Nine attended or taught at the Mukmin school – Ali Zein, Heri Sigi Samboja, Ubeid, Son Hadi, Adung, Deni, Jabir, Qotadah, Abdul Hadi. The two leaders, Azhari and Top, were associated with Lukman al-Hakiem. Top was headmaster; Azhari was a board member.

Research and policy implications

Our social network figures and summary statistics clearly demonstrate the importance of JI-linked radical madrassahs in Malaysia and Indonesia for JI attack operations. We argue that JI-linked madrassahs are important for multiple reasons, including top-down indoctrination and network development. Given the evidence presented here, it is difficult
to maintain that radical madrassahs do not produce terrorists. At least in Indonesia and Malaysia, a few radical madrassahs have produced enough terrorists to warrant attention to these madrassahs. As noted earlier, we accept Andrabi et al.’s (2006) analysis that madrassah enrollment and madrassah growth estimates are generally overstated in Pakistan by media and academic sources (Andrabi et al., 2006). However, this does not negate the fact that certain radical madrassahs in Southeast Asia are consistently producing violent jihadists.

These radical madrassahs preach a jihadi version of Takfiri ideology, a “rejectionist” ideology that first developed in Egypt in the late 1970s. It viewed contemporary society as alienated from the Muslim community, or kafir, and considered the killing of other Muslims to be justified in order to destroy alien influences in the community. Forerunners of al-Qaeda, these Takfiris dreamed of accomplishing jihad as the hidden “sixth pillar” of Islam, which trumps four of the five traditional pillars that are incumbent upon all Muslims (prayer, alms, fasting during Ramadan, and the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca) and is on par exclusively with the first pillar, the profession of faith in God and his Prophet. Takfiri jihadis rejected standard Salafi teaching (from salaf as-salih, “righteous predecessors”), which is also “fundamentalist” but generally opposes killing of fellow Muslims and the overthrow of states ruled by Muslims, because this would produce division and discord (fitna) in the community. Within JI there has been a debate over whether attacks are legitimate on Indonesian soil and, if so, whether the killing of Muslims is allowed because they are thogut (violators of Islamic law and therefore of kafir). It is clear from the data that the role of radical madrassahs concerns only the “Takfiri” wing of JI, which allows both attacks on Indonesian soil and the killing of Muslims as well as foreigners for the sake of Jihad.

Radical madrassahs have provided operatives for every major JI attack outside the strictly local conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon and Poso. From a research perspective, the road forward is clear: more empirical work needs to be done to clarify the role of radical madrassahs. Our data are currently limited to attacks from 2000 (Philippines ambassador bombing) to 2004 (Australian Embassy bombing). Future studies should examine all of JI’s bombings through Bali II in 2005, as well as JI’s resurgent jihadi front in Poso, which has focused on killing Christians and rebelling against the Indonesian government (there were more attacks in Poso between 2003 and 2006 than in the rest of Indonesia combined, and none of the perpetrators there went to JI schools).

Careful attention needs to be paid to both local sectarian and international terrorist violence. Our hypothesis is that radical madrassahs will be important for the former, but less so for the latter, particularly in south Asia. Such a scenario does not negate the importance of radical madrassahs. JI itself focused on sectarian violence for two years before the Bali I attack in 2002. Here, as perhaps elsewhere, localized sectarian violence can be a stepping stone to international terrorism.

Survey work on radical madrassahs should also contribute to the existing literature. We are currently working on a series of comparative studies that explore how the belief systems of students in radical and moderate madrassahs change as the students progress through the educational cycle. This work is an extension of our existing work on al-Islam, cited earlier in the paper (Atran et al., 2008).

From a policy perspective, the way forward appears more difficult. An obvious place to start is by focusing intelligence gathering on the networks of JI-linked radical madrassahs, such as Lukman al-Hakiem (closed in the early 2000s), al-Mukmin, Dar us-Syahadah, al-Islam, al-Muttaqin, and the university-style madrassah an-Nur, that have produced JI terrorists for multiple operations. By focusing on these networks, counter-terrorist officials
can more efficiently target high-risk population members. Second, Indonesian government officials can take advantage of the fact that JI is currently split between moderates (who disagree with indiscriminate bombings) and radicals (who approve of indiscriminate bombings) by appealing to moderate JI members and moderate leaders at JI-linked radical madrassahs to turn over heretical radicals, such as Noordin Top, in exchange for amnesty or even increased political clout. The majority of JI members are significantly less radical than Hambali and Noordin Top and may be open to political engagement, particularly since Ba’asyir now focuses most of his energy on political dissent through organizations like Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI).

This work makes clear the importance of social networks. It order to understand terrorist groups, it is vital that researchers and policymakers understand how groups form, how individuals are radicalized and operationalized, how different groups join together, and how they change over time. A necessary condition for this progress is to understand the networks themselves. Although there is much to laud about databases detailing terrorist attacks, the future of terrorism research and counter-terrorism activity lies with understanding the networks behind these attacks, particularly as groups like al-Qaeda and JI evolve towards more disparate, leaderless resistance movements with ideological inspiration and operational detachment.

There has been surprisingly little empirical work on madrassahs that can support credible or effective decisions dealing with religious schools, including decisions taken or being considered at the highest levels of international policymaking. Bergen and Pandey’s (2005, 2006) general claim that madrassahs worldwide (the overwhelming majority of which are moderate) do not produce terrorists is likely to remain broadly true. Nevertheless, their general argument entirely misses the particular significance of radical madrassahs in Indonesia and Malaysia.

We urgently need greater empirical study of radical madrassahs in Pakistan. Their role in sustaining the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan may be significantly underrated. Even more important, the summer 2007 “Red Mosque” riots in Islamabad and their aftermath suggest that radical madrassahs may help to generate deeply destabilizing acts of terror in Pakistan and elsewhere, with potentially far greater consequences for world peace.

Evidence-based research and empirically driven policy could better help to avoid attacks in the future, diminish misunderstanding of any attacks that do occur, and lessen the prospects for overreaction that tends to undermine relations between peoples, between governments, and between peoples and governments.

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References

Appendix 1 – Known Radical Madrassah Associates

Lukman al-Hakiem group

- Sungkar – founder, 1991–9 (emir of JI)
- Ba’asyir – founder, 1991–9 (emir of JI)
- Mukhlas – principal, 1991–2002 (JI central command member, multiple bombings)
- Mustaqim – teacher, 1996–7 (JI central command member)
- Tohir – teacher, 1998, 2000 (Marriott bombing core team)
- Abu Dujana – teacher, 1990s (JI central command member)
- DulMatin – teacher, late 1990s (multiple bombings)
- Ismail – student/teacher, 1991–8 (Marriott bombing core team)
- Mohammed Rais – student, 1996–9; teacher, 2001–02 (multiple bombings)
- Amrozi – student, 1995–8 (multiple bombings)
- Hambali – frequent visitor, 1995–2002 (chief operational leader, multiple bombings)
- Imam Samudra – frequent visitor, 1995–2002 (multiple bombings)
- Win Wan Mat – frequent visitor, 1995–2002 (JI treasurer, multiple bombings)
- Zulkarnaen – frequent visitor, 1995–2002 (central command chief of military affairs)
- Adung – frequent visitor, 1990s (JI central command member)
- Faiz Bafana – frequent visitor, 1990s (JI treasurer, multiple bombings)
- Hashim bin Abas (Abbas) – frequent visitor, 1990s (multiple bombings)
- Ibrahim Maiden – frequent visitor, 1990s (Singapore bombing plots)
- Ja’afar bin Mistooki – frequent visitor, 1990s (multiple bombings)
- Mas Selamat bin Kastari – frequent visitor, 1990s (Singapore bombing plots)
- Name withheld – frequent visitor, 1990s (Christmas Eve bombing team)
- Yazid Sufaat – frequent visitor, 1990s (multiple bombings)

al-Mukmin group

- Sungkar – founder, 1970s–1999 (emir of JI)
- Ba’asyir – founder, 1970s–2007 (emir of JI)
- Abu Fatih – teacher, dates unknown (JI central command member)
Achmad Roichan – teacher, dates unknown (Bali I support, not shown in figures)
Zulkarnaen – student, 1975–80 (central command chief of military affairs)
Mukhlas – student, early 1980s (central command member, multiple bombings)
Mubarok – student, 1983–9 (multiple bombings)
Al Ghozi – student, 1983–9 (multiple bombings)
Adung – student, mid-1980s (central command member)
Muhamed Musyafak – student, mid-1980s (Bali I support, not shown in figures)
Toni Togar – student/teacher, 1987–90 (multiple bombings)
Son Hadi – student, 1988–91 (Australian Embassy support network)
Ali Imron – student, two months in late 1980s (multiple bombings)
Abdul Rahman Ayub – student, 1980s (Mantiqi IV leader, not shown in figures)
Idris – student, 1989–93 (multiple bombings)
Tohir – student, 1990–4 (Marriott bombing core team)
Ahmad Faisal Sarijan (Zukifli) – student, 1991–4 (not shown in figures)
Asmar Latin Sani – student, 1991–5 (Marriott bombing suicide bomber)
Mohammed Rais – student, 1991–5 (multiple bombings)
Andri Octavia – student, 1992–5 (Bali I gold robbery)
Deni – student, 1992–5 (Australian Embassy bombing support)
Ubeid – student, 1992–5 (Australian Embassy bombing support)
Abdul Rauf bin Jahruddin – student, 1992–7 (Bali I gold robbery)
Jabir – student, 1993–6 (multiple bombings)
Sardona Siliwangi – student, 1993–7 (multiple bombings)
Hernianto – student, 1994–5 (Bali I support)
Ahmad Budi Wibowo – student, 1990s (Bali I support, not shown in figures)
Malikul Zurkoni – student, 1990s (Marriott bombing support)
Heri Sigi Samboja – student, 2002–03 (Australian Embassy bombing core team)
Abdul Hadi – student, dates unknown (Australian Embassy bombing support)
Ali Zein – student, dates unknown (Noordin Top’s chief assistant)
Basyir (Qotadah) – student, dates unknown (JI central command member)
Joni Ahmad Fauzan – student, dates unknown (Bali I support, not shown in figures)
Datuk Rajo Ameh – student, dates unknown (Christmas Eve bombing team)
Solahudin – student, dates unknown (Atrium Mall bombing core team)
Name withheld – frequent visitor, 1990s (Christmas Eve bombing team)

Al-Islam group

Ali Imron – teacher (multiple attacks)
Ashari Dipo Kusomo – student (Bali I support network)
Eko Hadi Prasetyo – student (Bali I support network)
Firmansyah – student (Bali I support network)
Ilham bin Abdul Muthalib – student (Bali I support network)
Imam Susanto – student (Bali I support network)
Muhammad Rusi bin Salim – student (Bali I support network)
Sirojul Munir – parent of al-Islam student (Bali I support network)
Sofyan Hadi bin Niti – student (Bali I support network)
Sukastopo – Met Imron at al-Islam (Bali I support network)
Sumaro – student (Bali I support network)
Syamsul Arifin – student (Bali I support network)
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