Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI): The Links

By
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Abstract
Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) share similar aspiration of wanting to bring back pristine Islam into their community. Both also blame the West for the political discrimination and economic deprivation suffered by Muslims worldwide. Hence, they have jihadi obligations to end the sufferings and subsequently to set up a regional based Islamic state in Southeast Asia. It was also argued that KMM had created personal, spiritual, and organizational links with JI. Several KMM plans to attack personalities, foreign and Malaysian governments’ interests in the country were said to be closely associated with support it received from JI. This article analyses to what extent links had been established between the KMM and JI. In discussing those linkages, the article discusses the evolution of both movements by looking at conditions that led to the emergence of the two groups. The article also discusses the organizational structure in terms of the recruiting process, the indoctrination used, affiliation and the operationalization of the movements. Finally, the article examines how those structural factors determine the alleged links between KMM and JI. The article argues that there are no apparent structural links between both of them, yet leaders in both movements had developed personal linkages through their involvements in jihadi missions in Afghanistan and Mindanao.

Introduction
Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Al-Jama’ah Al-Islamiyyah or better known as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were several of regional radical Islamic movements that have caught the attention of international community. Of the two, JI appears to have regional reach with wider scope, yet, there are no differences between these two movements and other Muslim movements both regional and local. Both have jihadi objectives of bringing back the pristine notion of Islamic values and norms. Islamic syariah (law) is deemed to be the highest law on the land. They share some political

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1 The article is part of a research on Public Response to and Understanding of Terrorism in Southeast Asia, funded by the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta and the Japanese Government (Ref No.: SK-32-2008-GLAK)
2 There are various ways to spell the word. For consistency however, JI is spelled as Jemaah Islamiyah.
aspirations but differ in their objectives and targets. Furthermore, KMM and JI like other religiously oriented militant movements use violence accompanied by “strong claims of moral justification and an enduring absolutism, characterized by the intensity of the religious activists’ commitment and the transhistorical scope of their goals”.\(^3\) Both movements are impatient with the status quo and want to radically “change” the Muslim community and polity. The jihadi approaches, furthermore, deviated from normal Islamic practices and norms. Both use force and violence to achieve what they believe is morally upright and respectable for the Muslims. As a result they have been labeled as terrorist groups for the sheer magnitude of the threat not only to state and local society but also for the stability of regional politics.

JI was established by the Indonesian clergy evading prosecution in their country whereas the KMM was led by local members of Halaqah Pakindo, an association of Malaysian ex-Mujahidin who fought with other international Mujahidin in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation of the country. During the Afghan War in the 1970s, many Muslims from the Southeast Asian region particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Philippines, and southern Thailand went to the war-torn zone to help and to protect fellow Muslim-Afghans whom they believed were being slaughtered by the Soviet army. Some of them were students pursuing their studies in madrasah and universities in Pakistan. Several of them in fact were killed in the war. It was not surprising then that Abdullah Azzam, Abdul Qadir Abdul Aziz, Abu Muhammadal-Maqdisi, and Osama ben Laden were held in high esteem.

It is argued that KMM had created personal, spiritual, and organizational links with JI. Several KMM’s plans to attack on personalities, foreign and Malaysian government interests in the country were claimed to be closely associated with the support it received from JI. Furthermore, any discussion on terrorism and its threat to the Southeast region is incomplete without focusing on JI as an influential terrorist movement that has been responsible for series of bombings and planned attacks on strategic locations in the region. JI, for instance, was held responsible for the bombing

incidents in Bali (2002 and 2005), the J. W Marriot Hotel (2003), the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (2004) and scores of other incidents in Indonesia and the region. The group was also held responsible for its planned attacks on American and Israeli interests in Singapore. The JI-style bombing on the J W Marriot and Ritz Carlton Hotels in Jakarta on July 17, 2009 has again raised speculation that the movement continues to strike against Western interest in the region.

This article analyses to what extent links had been established between the KMM and JI. In discussing those linkages, the article provides some analyses on the evolution of both movements by looking at socio-political conditions that led to their emergence. The questions raised are why these movements believe in violence and whom they represent? Further, the article discusses the organizational structure in terms of the recruiting process, the indoctrination used, affiliation and the operationalization of the movements. Finally, the article analyses how those structural factors determine the alleged links between the KMM and JI.

It must be emphasized here that some though details regarding the two movements remain disputed. Attempts were made to assemble the information from reliable sources. Data for this article was derived from several sources, mainly interviews with desk officers from the Intelligence Department of the Royal Malaysian Police Force (RMPF), their official but restricted interrogation report, government’s White Paper, and published materials such as those from International Crisis Group (ICG), press reports (printed and internet editions), and other academic as well as non-academic materials published in English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bahasa Malaysia.

The Evolution and Command Structure of JI

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The clandestine character of JI has made it difficult to understand the real nature of the movement, but analyst concur that it has a loosely organized structure. Even the evolution of the movements has invited several versions. The first version centers on the argument that JI is an offshoot of Darul Islam or DI (House of Islam). DI envisaged the creation of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) or Indonesian Islamic state in the post independence Indonesia. But Soeharto’s policies on Islamic based political parties and movements made it difficult for the group to expand. The arrest and execution of Kartosuwiryo, DI central leader, led to the decentralization of DI’s command structure. Its Central Java division continued to evolve. DI Central Java command was initially headed by Djalaeni and later a Sundanese named Adnan Maszudi (Ajengan Masduki). Sundanese led leadership was unacceptable to several influential Javanese leaders in DI, particularly to Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir. The differences between the two personalities with Adnan Maszudi led to the formation of JI. The second explanation contends that JI “was nothing more than a ‘black operation” by the Soeharto Government” (orchestrated by Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara (BAKIN) or the State Intelligence Coordination Body and led by Ali Moertopo) that had gone haywire. This version contends that it was Soeharto regime’s plan to reactivate the former Darul Islam (DI) members who were inducted into the military to manage the spread of political Islam in the post Iranian revolution particularly during the 1977 elections.

The third explanation of the evolution of JI suggests that the movement was created in the context of jihad-minded Indonesians who were involved in the Afghanistan War during the Soviet occupation in the 1970s. The movement was established “with either the connivance or even the tacit support of the US, as it was regarded as a useful regional organization that would support Washington’s global cause…” This contention has been supported by Nasir Abas, a former deputy commander for JI’s Mantiqi II, who

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reveals that foreign jihadists in Afghanistan received logistical and financial support from the Pakistani Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) respectively.10

The final version is that the movement was indeed founded by Sungkar together with Ba’asyir in the early 1970s. Both were of Yemeni descent and started their Islamic activities in the Masyumi-affiliated Indonesian Muslim Youth. Prior to the formation of JI, they had worked together in 1967 when they founded the Radio Dakwah Islamiyah Surakarta (Islamic Proselytization Radio of Surakarta) in Solo and subsequently Pasentren al-Mukmin (better known as Pondok Ngruki) in 1971.11 According to this version, JI and DI merged in 1976 in Solo after the leaders of both movements felt a need to strengthen Islamic propagation through a jamaah (a consolidated and small Muslim group) institution. Furthermore, JI “did not intend to succeed” the DI movement, which aspire the same objective.12 Hence, JI became part of and subsumed under the DI movement, which was led by Ajengan Masduki together with Sungkar.

Whichever version one adopts to understand the evolution of JI, it can be safely argued that the genesis of JI is closely associated with DI. Both movements shared the same aspiration of creating a jamaah that would propel Indonesia into an Islamic state that subscribes to the basic Islamic tenets based on the Koran and Hadith (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad). Furthermore, JI history cannot be detached from the role played by its two influential figures, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir.

Sungkar and Ba’asyir were arrested by the Soeharto regime for their alleged involvement in Komando Jihad’s (Holy War Commando) subversive activities. Nonetheless, Komando Jihad was part of a lucid maneuver led by Ali Moertopo, head of Badan Koordinasi Intelijen Negara (BAKIN) or the State Intelligence Coordination Body to justify the Indonesian government’s strategy to discredit and to repress Islamic based movements that acted against the government.13 The two were put on trial in 1982 and sentenced to nine years in prison. On appeal, in late 1982, however, their sentence was

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reduced to three years and both of them were released from prison. But the post-prison life proved to be the turning point for Sungkar’s and Ba’asyir’s *jamaah* activities. The alleged involvement in radical activities became a reality when both of them pursued more hard-line approaches by encouraging their followers to set up cells in their villages through *usroh* (study circle/religious discourse) groups, to live communally and to avoid contact with non-Islamic organizations. The *usroh* group further trussed all cells and managed to attract university and college students. The *usroh* group was then the effective tool in recruiting members into JI and DI. The method was in fact pioneered by Hassan Al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.\(^{14}\)

Sungkar and Ba’asyir fled to Malaysia when the prosecutors launched an appeal to the Supreme Court on the reduced jail sentences received by the two. The flight was portrayed as a *hijrah* (migration) or flight from injustice from the enemies of Islam.\(^{15}\) Sungkar and Ba’asyir started their *hijrah* in a small village called Kampung Parit, situated in Kuala Pilah in the state of Negeri Sembilan. Their presence was further consolidated through *usroh* and religious classes under the DI banner. The gatherings were hosted by a local named Ustaz Hashim Ghani, who also played the role as a local guarantor for Sungkar and Ba’asyir. Ustaz Hashim Ghani was known to be attracted to the new religious paradigm and perspectives brought by both these leaders from DI. He was also the founder of Surau Ittibah As-Sunnah, the first and important channel for DI leaders to expand their political platform, ideas and convictions to the locals. The fact that *jamaah* of Surau Ittibah As-Sunnah already subscribed to Wahhabism, a type of salafism, made it easier for Sungkar and Ba’asyir to further infiltrate the thinking and perspectives of the villagers. Sungkar was called *abah* (father) by the local *jamaah*, and Ba’asyir was better known as Ustaz Abdus Somad.\(^{16}\)

It should be noted here that *ustaz* (religious teachers) from Indonesia have for years had a high standing among the local Malay-Muslim community based on their oratory skill and make-belief practices. Indonesia Muslim scholars such as Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrulla or better known as Hamka (1908-1981) and Aboebakar Atjeh

\(^{14}\) Ibid. p. 12.


(1900-1970) were regulars in Malaysia. It is therefore, not surprising that Sungkar and Ba’asyir were easily accepted into the Kampung Parit Malay-Muslim community.

Through support from locals, Sungkar and Ba’asyir were given a permanent resident status in Malaysia and allowed to deliver religious sermons by the Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Department. There is, however, conflicting information on the legality of their stay in Malaysia. Nasir Abas argues that the duo were in fact illegal immigrants since their coming to Malaysia was through an unlawful point of entry from southern Sumatera.\(^\text{17}\) How both of them attained permanent resident status in Malaysia is rather puzzling. It can be deduced that both of them got their permanent resident status through “unlawful” ways.\(^\text{18}\)

DI’s influence, through Sungkar and Ba’asyir expanded when the movement managed to set up a base in Surau Al-Huda, Sungai Manggis, Selangor in 1988. It later moved to Surau Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Selangor Water Company) under the supervision of Ali Bakry Mohamad Alias, who was an engineer with a water company. Religious classes and *usroh* based on *salafi* teachings were introduced to the locals.

The DI presence in the area was further consolidated when Dadang Surahman Zainuddin, Hambali, and Solihin Ahyamanullah decided to settle in the area in 1995. After years of preaching, Sungkar and Ba’asyir created a pool of staunch followers in Malaysia. Both of them directed Jaafar Anuwar and Mukhlas, Indonesian ex-Aghan *jihadi* fighters to find an alternative site where they could further expand their teachings. Through the help of local students, DI managed to set up a *salafi* based Islamic school called Madrasah At-Tarbiyah Al-Islamiyah Lukmanul Hakiem in Ulu Tiram, Johore. The land of the school was owned by Jaafar Anuwar. Mukhlas became the first *mudir* (headmaster) and the school offered religious education from the primary to secondary levels. The teaching staff was mostly Indonesian members of DI such as Ustaz Mukimuddin, Arif, Abdul Wahid and Walid.

The Lukmanul Hakiem school had two functions. Firstly, to create a corp of young *mujahid* and act as second feeder to the struggle of DI. Secondly, to provide an alternative educational system to mostly unregistered children, whom their parents were

\(^\text{17}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{18}\) SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview 10 July, 2009.
illegal Indonesian migrants in the country. Nonetheless, the subjects offered adhered to the official teaching curriculum of Johore. The school attracted not only Malaysians but also Singaporean Muslims to deepen their religious knowledge. It began to send its students to further their study in Pakistan in 1999. These students were consequently expected to become the teaching staff of the school once they completed their study.

Leadership conflicts in 1993 within DI between Abdullah Sungkar and Anjengan Masduki, led to a split between DI and JI. It was reported that the split was due to DI Central Java decision not to pursue the hard-line approach adopted by Sungkar and Ba’asyir. Nonetheless, during the JI’s first meeting at the Ba’asyir’s house in Kampung Serting Ulu Jempol Negeri Sembilan, the founding members of the movement affirmed that they would continue DI’s jihad struggle in Malaysia by strengthening their economic capabilities and income and at the same time support the mujahidin struggle in Afghanistan and southern Philippines. Subsequently, a guide book called *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyah* was issued, which among others contains the organizational structure of JI.

Although Sungkar and Ba’asyir decided to split from DI and form JI, both movements in Malaysia maintained their cooperation. DI’s focus of activities was in Sabah, especially in Tawau and Sandakan. DI Sabah was initially headed by Musab Othman Sani (Indonesian) and later by Aboud Ghaffar Shahril (Malaysian) and Pakana bin Selama (Indonesian), who was detained under the Malaysia’s Internal Security Act of 1960 (ISA) and was released in May 2009. The two cities, Tawau and Sandakan, were important transit points for DI and JI members to go to Mindanao. The seventy-strong DI member in Sabah, for instance provided logistical support for members of JI and other regional militant movements to smuggle ammunition, small arms and lights weapons (SALWs) and funds from Mindanao to Indonesia. The discovery of the link surfaced when two big bags containing ammunition and small weapons were found in a city

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mosque in Tawau. Based on the discovery, eleven DI members were arrested on Mac 2006.21

JI continued its hard-line approach after the split from DI. Like other radical Muslim movements worldwide, the immediate objective of JI was to establish Daulah Islamiyah (Islamic state) in the region by using force based on the concept of Solifus Salleh. Under this belief, members are obligated to stage jihad (interpreted as physical war) against the “enemy” of Muslim people. The Daulah Islamiyah would cover Malaysia, Indonesia, and southern Philippines. Singapore and Brunei would eventually follow. It shared Al-Qaeda’s anti-West sentiment, hence made it a willing proxy to attack western and United States interests in the region.

JI expanded and established cells mainly in Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Singapore22. JI’s regional command structure was divided into four. Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia were under Mantiqi I (Ulla), whereas the major parts of Indonesia was placed under Mantiqi II (Sani). Mantiqi III (Thalid) covered Mindanao, Sabah, Kalimantan and Sulawesi and Mantiqi IV (Rabiah) covered Australia and probably Papua. The Malaysia and Singapore JI was headed by Riduan Isamuddin @ Nurjaman or better known as Hambali (Please see Table 1 below). JI leadership structure, however, has been crippled by a series of arrests of its leader, especially since the arrest of Ba’asyir under the Indonesias’s Anti Terrorism Law in 2006. It administrative hierarchy, according to the International Crisis Group report “…has been largely reduced to what once Mantiqi II, a division that covers Indonesia”.23 The situation in effect forced Abu Rushdan (who was also later arrested and jailed) to take over the helm as acting Amir. Subsequently the Amir position was taken over by a little known personality named Abu Dujana and later by Nuaim alias Abu Irsyad. It was not known, what happened to the

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21 12 kena ISA dipercayai perantara militan (Twelve were detained under ISA believed to be militant middlemen), Berita Harian (Malaysia). 1 June 2006.
other command structures in Mantiqi I, III and IV. However, it is believed that all the command structures have been brought under one central command.

**Table 1: The Command Structure of JI in Malaysia**
(Mantiqi Ulla).\(^{24}\)

\[\text{Amir}
\text{Abu Bakar Basyir}\]

\[\text{Mantiqi Ulla}
\text{Hambali (1998 March 2001)}\]

\[\text{Mukhlas @Huda Abd Haq}
\text{(March 2001-Dis 2002)}\]

\[\text{Cells}\]

\[\text{Singapore}\]
\[\text{Negeri Sembilan}\]
\[\text{Sabah}\]
\[\text{Selangor and Kuala Lumpur}\]
\[\text{Perak}\]
\[\text{Johore}\]

\[\text{Ibrahim Maidin}\]
\[\text{Mohd Nasir Abas}\]
\[\text{Mohd Khider Kadran}\]
\[\text{Dadang Surahman Abu Yusof}\]
\[\text{Abd. Murad Sudin}\]
\[\text{Wan Min Wan Mat}\]

It is also interesting to note that Dujana, once the acting Amir after the arrest of Ba’asyir, shared Nordin Mat Top’s, Imam Samudera’s, and Azhari’s suicide bombing tactics to achieve JI’s vision of a regional based pan-Islamic state. Nonetheless, the suicide bombing approach has also split JI\(^{25}\). Even Nasir Abas, one of the important leaders in Mantiqi II, argues in his book, that some senior leaders were beginning to

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\(^{24}\) Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 12.

disapprove Imam Samudera’s and Nordin Mat Top’s suicide bombing tactics. Since the 2003 J. W Marriot bombing, Nordin Mat Top has gradually charted his own path. Although he still claims himself a member of JI, he appears to operate on his own without consulting the JI Central Committee. According to the Indonesian police, he is heading a working group called Tanzim Qoidatul Jihad, in close association with a new but small radical movement called the Palembang Group. The group is believed to be closely linked with the Al-Qaeda. This new militant jihadi group has provided logistical support for Mat Top to embark on his suicide bombing programs.

Initially, the economic wing of the movement generated the long-term source of funds and income to finance JI activities and operations. Ten percent of JI-run business had to be contributed to the total earnings of the group. The fund known as Infaq Fisabilillah, was led and managed by Hambali. Hence, Hambali was not only one of the influential leaders of the Malaysia and Singapore JI but also the principle JI operation leader who controlled the collection and disbursement of the movement’s funds. The arrest of Hambali had made the economic wing of the movement succumb to its natural death. Yet handful of JI members in Indonesia who have developed profitable publishing and printing industry as part of efforts to continue to disseminate jihadi message to its members and masses. The lack of enforcement in controlling the distribution of jihadi message books could pose a continued threat not only for Indonesia but also to other regional countries to effectively manage the JI’s threats.

The Founding and Organizational Structure of KMM

The creation of the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia was mooted by Zainon Ismail, who was a member of the Youth State Committee of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) in Kedah between 1991 and 1996. He and his friends, Zulkefli Mohamad and

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29 For political purposes, the Malaysian government decided to refer KMM as Kumpulan Militant Malaysia (Malaysian Militant Group) that covers Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia as well as the JI (SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview, 10 July, 2009).
Solehan Abd Ghafar, fled to Pakistan and later to Afghanistan in June 1988 to avoid possible arrest by the Malaysian authorities for their involvement in several orchestrated sabotage of the government sponsored leader-people gatherings. In Afghanistan they fought along with the Mujahidin group against the Soviet invasion. Zainon Ismail returned to Malaysia at the end of 1988 whereas the other two friends remained in the country for another year.

Like Sungkar and Ba’asyir, Zainon Ismail’s struggle focused on setting up of an ideal Islamic society in Malaysia. But unlike the two influential Indonesian clergies, his belief was more politically inclined towards the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS). Hence, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO)-led Malaysian government moves or policies to thwart the expansion of Islamic ideas and Muslim movements were seen detrimental to his political struggle. When the Malaysian government’s plan, or example, to ban the use of the word “Islam” in local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties, the attempted move was viewed by Zainon Ismail and his friends as a personal attack by the government against its main political rival, PAS. For Zainon Ismail and his friends, PAS was the only Islamic based party that fought for the total implementation of syariah law in the country. Furthermore, the government policy was not the first action taken to suppress Islamic based movements and political parties in the country. Hence, it was viewed by Zainon Ismail and his friends that certain pre-emptive measures have to be taken.

An underground Muslim movement was then mooted by inviting local ex-Mujahidin and Halaqah Pakindo members (Persatuan Bekas Mahasiswa Pakistan, India and Indonesia or the Association of Malaysian of Graduates from Pakistan, India and Indonesia) to join in. The involvement of local ex-Mujahidin fighters was considered crucial and practical since firstly, they were already exposed to military training and weapon handlings; secondly, the group’s jihadi spirit was already firmed by years in Afghanistan; and thirdly the group’s military expertise would be used to train future

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30 Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 14
31 What is interesting about Halaqah Pakindo is that most of its members were either sympathizers or official members of PAS.
cadre; and finally, they were impatient with the local political scenario and were willing to make radical changes even they had to resort the use of force.\textsuperscript{32}

On October 1995, Zainon Ismail together with six other ex-Mujahidin members set up the steering committee of KMM, of which he became the head. The KMM’s main objectives like JI and DI, was to seek religious purity among Malay-Muslims and its long term agenda was to implement syariah laws in Malaysia and subsequently establish an Islamic state. This movement also envisaged an Islamic state in the region, which would combine Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Philippines and southern Thailand known as Daulah Islam Nusantara.

It was not until early 1996 that KMM was officially launched after the Annual General Meeting of Halaqah Pakindo. Zainon Ismail managed to persuade some members of Halaqah Pakindo to join KMM. The recruitment of KMM members was done under the Halaqah Pakindon banner to avoid possible detection from the authorities. The recruitment was similar to that of the communist movement in Malaysia in the 1940s and 1950s, where it was done in a secret manner. Membership of the first committee of KMM was also expanded to include representatives from various states.

In early 1999, Zainon Ismail decided to hand over KMM’s leadership to Nik Adli Nik Aziz, son of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS spiritual leader and Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of the PAS controlled state – Kelantan. The reasons for the handover were, firstly Zainon’s alleged involvement in sabotage against government leaders in the past would easily be detected by the authorities if he continued to lead the organization. Secondly, his close relations with several influential PAS leaders might create suspicion of PAS’s direct involvement in the organization. According to Nik Adli Nik Aziz, he agreed to accept KMM leadership and was prepared to launch a war against UMNO-led government if they decide to declare emergency in the states of Kelantan and Terrengganu by arresting PAS leaders in those states.\textsuperscript{33}

Nonetheless, KMM’s threat is politically sensitive issues in Malaysia since the majority of its members were also PAS members. PAS categorically denied having any knowledge or involvement in the establishment of the organization, but the involvement

\textsuperscript{32} Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p.15
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. p. 12-13.
of Nik Adli Nik Aziz further strengthened the UMNO-led government’s accusation against PAS. In addition, KMM’s jihadi objectives revealed that the group was eager to ensure PAS’s political struggle was maintained and protected. Leaders of the movement were also willing to protect PAS leader in case the government arrested the leaders. KMM believed that PAS could achieve its Islamic agenda through normal political process and the movement would provide indirect support to the party.\textsuperscript{34}

KMM’s leadership structure was more organized under Nik Adli Nik Aziz.\textsuperscript{35} Several lujnah (committees) were established including economy which was headed by Zainuri Kamarudin (see Table 2 below). The Economic Committee was responsible for generating income through contributions and membership fees. Each member was required to contribute RM30 (AUD 9) to RM50 (AUD 17) a month or a contribution equal to their one day salary. The Tarbiyyah (training) committee was headed by Nik Adli himself aiming to increase membership. The committee was also engaged in persuading university students to join the movement. The committee used the talent-spotting approach where promising and talented student leaders were recruited through usroh activities. The Communication committee, headed by Solehan Abd Ghafar, was responsible in bringing back and managing returning students from Pakistan. They would be recruited into the KMM members.

In addition, there were two committees that were given a special task and allowed to take violent actions, if necessary. The Operational committee was headed by Zulkifli Abd Hir, also known as Marwan,\textsuperscript{36} who was given the responsibility to kill Muslims who denounced Islam or those who were accused of converting Muslims to other religions. It was under this committee that KMM embarked on its violent activities. KMM’s leadership implanted the belief that Islam condones violence for the sake and purity of


\textsuperscript{35}He was arrested under the Malaysia’s Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA). His arrest, as expected, was condemned by PAS leaders.

\textsuperscript{36}Zulkifli Abd Hir or Marwan is brother-in-law of Dani alias Taufik who was arrested for his connection with the 2001 Atrium Mall bombing in Jakarta. Please see “Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates”, The ICG Report No 43. 11 December 2002. Jakarta & Brussels: International Crisis Group.
religion. Members were also allowed to use force against non-Muslims and were told to be prepared to launch a crusade against the government if time warranted. Interestingly, the Committee also designed several bombing plots against religious places for the Indian-Hindus and the Malay-Muslims to create tension between the two communities.

Table 2: The Organizational Structure of KMM.\textsuperscript{37}

![Organizational Structure Diagram]

\textsuperscript{37} Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p.15.
Another committee is the *Mu’askar* (literally, the military) headed by Tajudin Abu Bakar. The *Mu’askar* is the supporting unit for the Operational Committee. The task was to acquire and to smuggle weapons to the country for operational purposes. The committee indeed bought and smuggled weapons such as revolver, M16s, AK-47, TNT explosive materials, hand-grenade, and man-made bombs from Pulau Batam, Indonesia and Southern Thailand. On October 2000, for instance, Zainuri Kamarudin and Zulkifli Abd Hir received ten detonators, two timers and TNT explosive material from Abu Omar (Imam Samudera) in Pulau Batam. The explosive materials were later used to bomb a Hindu Temple in Kuala Lumpur on 25 October 2000.

KMM also set up cells in the states of Perak, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Selangor and Johore. Each cell was headed by a leader without any committee members. Among the six cells, Selangor was the most active and militant. In April and May 2001, members of the Selangor cell robbed two banks. It was believed that the cell needed cash to buy more weapons. It appears that Selangor cell was the prime runner of KMM *jihadi* activities that contributed to the uneasiness among the non-Malay Muslims in Malaysia’s multiracial society. Its approach furthermore resembled JI’s use of force against non-Muslim places of worship and those who believed to be detrimental to Muslim survival.

The Selangor cell also sent two groups to Ambon. The first group led by Zainuri Kamarudin with nine others went to Maluku in Indonesia in April 2000 through Tawau (Sabah Malaysia) and Nunukan (Indonesian Borneo). They were initially given a month’s military training by the Indonesian Mujahidin in Pulau Moti Halmahera, North Muluku. Subsequently, they were sent to Pulau Ngele-ngele Maluku for advanced training. The second group headed by Zulkifli Abd Hir accompanied by six members went to Maluku in December 2000. Their journey was made possible with the assistance of DI and JI members in Sabah. Nasir Abas, who was deputy Mantiqi II of JI, even recalled how he helped and arranged Zulkifli Abd Hir’s journey to Catobatu in Mindanao through Sandakan and Tawau in Sabah.

Members of the Selangor cell were also found to be involved in the murder of Penang’s Lunas State Assemblyman, Dr Joe Fernandez, who was the main suspect.

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38 SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview 10 July, 2009
39 Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 17.
responsible, according to KMM, for persuading many young Malay-Muslim women factory workers in the Kulim Industrial area to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{41} Zainuri Kamarudin, Adnan Daud, Zulkifli Abd Hir and two other members (Faizul Anisman Abdullah and Zid Sharani Mohamed Esa) were given the task to carry out the murder on 4 November 2000. The incident shows that the movement did not hesitate to use violent approach in order to achieve its \textit{jihadi} objective.

In another incident, the Selangor cell also made an attempt to confiscate weapons by attacking a police station in Guar Chempedak, Kedah. Furthermore, they were also planning to attack American marines in two places in Kuala Lumpur and to assassinate a newspaper columnist who was known to be anti-PAS in his writings.\textsuperscript{42} The activities of KMM’s \textit{Mu’askar} and its Selangor cell were cleverly concealed until the police found the link between the group and the robberies of the two banks mentioned earlier.

\textbf{JI’s and KMM’s Attractions and Influences.}

It seems that both movements have comparable objectives. Questions remain however, how JI and KMM managed to attract followers although they know that the methods and approaches adopted by the two movements are clearly incongruent with the local norms, values, and religion. Why they did not realize the consequences of joining a radical movement? There are explanations to these questions.

It can be argued there are various yet different levels of individual development that can influence and sway a person’s behavior and perception. At individual level, parents play an important role in determining the character of their children. At the societal level, peer pressure and the role of religious teachers or \textit{ustaz} or \textit{kiyai} play a major factor, and at the national, regional and global levels, events flashed by the media and manipulation by interested parties can influence one’s judgment and perception in understanding the situation. The background such as the social environment and one’s upbringing can further influence one’s attitude, behavior, perception and opinion on a particular issue.

\textsuperscript{41} Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 17; SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview 10 July, 2009.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
According to Md Lotfi Ariffin, who was arrested under the ISA for his involvement in KMM, his parent played a great role.

My parents restricted my access to the outside world by sending me only to schools supported by the Islamic opposition party. I was also not allowed to socialize. All walls in my house were full of PAS posters and I was not allowed to watch television and listen to the radio. The school did not allow me to know about the outside world or about new developments on the contemporary political situation. I only knew about political situation – local and international through religious classes and gatherings organized by PAS or by reading Harakah (PAS’s official newspaper).\(^{43}\)

The experience was also shared by another Malaysian, Nasir Abas, who was once in JI. Family and peer support tended to strengthen his conviction to join the movement.\(^{44}\) Ahmad Tajudin Abu Bakar, a KMM member revealed that although his parents was government supporters, he was more attracted to PAS’s political ideology such as a need to have an Islamic state. Religious sermons and classes he attended always emphasized the need for jihad. At the same time, he was confused by PAS’s promises that those who supported the party’s political struggle would be guaranteed a place in paradise. Yet he accepted the argument out of respect for the religious leaders. Their situation was partly due to the feudal nature of Malay-Muslim society whereby leaders, especially those with religious background, are well respected and blindly followed.

The three examples illustrate how individual upbringing and social backgrounds influence the way they perceive and interpret their surrounding and environment. The three men did not interact much in society and only communicated with those who share similar political objectives and aspiration. The words of respected ustaz, ulama or kiyai became, for them, a fatwa that had to be followed and obliged. Hence it is difficult to

\(^{43}\) The information is based on police interrogation of the suspect, undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 18.

change their outlook since their character developments have been reinforced for years by parents, religious teachers and the organization they belong to.

Religious education has to some extend influenced the outlook of those involved in KMM and JI. Out of the twenty-six members of KMM, eighteen received their education from privately funded Sekolah Agama Rakyat (People’s Religious School) (SAR) or traditional pondok school system. The traditional pondok system does not offer formal religious education sanctioned by the government and there is no age barrier to enroll, whereas, the privately funded SARs is the modern version of the madrasah system. Some pondok and SARs, such as Pondok Lanai and now defunct Madrasah At-Tarbiyah Al-Islamiyah Lukmanul Hakiem were used to recruit possible cadre for KMM and JI to wage jihad against anybody discriminated against Muslim or parties that were obstructing the expansion of Islamic movements. Two KMM leaders, Ahmad Tajudin bin Abu Bakar was the alumnus of Pondok Lanai, Baling Kedah, whereas Nik Adli Nik Aziz was one of the teaching staff of Sekolah Agama Rakyat Darul Annuar Pulau Melaka, Kota Bahru Kelantan.45

Furthermore, JI members who were caught by the Indonesian security authorities or died in the suicide bombings were graduates of pasentran that espouse radical salafism particularly at the Pasentren al-Mukmin in Ngruki run by JI spiritual leader, Ba’asyir. Asmar Latin Sani, the 2003 Marriot suicide bomber and, Muhammed Rais who assisted the bombing, for instance, were graduates of the Pasentren al-Mukmin. According to Noor Huda Ismail,46 who is a 1991 graduate of Pasentren al-Mukmin, some of the young men who involved in the suicide bombing were indoctrinated at the pasentran. The pasentran environment provided an atmosphere of “unquestioning obedience and constant warnings of foreign and Christian plots to harm Islam”.47

Nonetheless, the Islamic school system or its curriculum alone cannot be blamed for the increasing number of narrow minded individuals.48 It can be argued that religious

46 He is head and researcher at the Institute for International Peace building, an Indonesian foundation that seeks to reintegrate Islamist fighters into mainstream society.
teachers, such as *kiyai*, *tuan guru* or *ustaz* play a dominant role in manipulating the hearts and minds of students. Kuppuswamy argues that

> [t]he role of the religious leaders or scholars is crucial in shaping the public opinion and behaviour of the different Muslim communities, keeping in mind the sensitivities of the other religions or sects as well as the government policy. Religious intolerance, misinterpretations of the religious injunctions and apprehensions of a threat to Islam from the western nations have become the main theme of their sermons.\(^49\)

Not infrequently the *kiyai* or *tuan guru* could also teach and preach beyond the contents of *kitab* (religious book) they use. It has been argued that the *halaqah* method of teaching in the *pondok* and *pasentran* system produces anomaly in the intellectual development of students. In the *halaqah* method, students sit cross-legged in a circle whereas the teacher’s spot in the circle is made prominent by a special small-sized carpet and a sitting pillow. There would be no question and answer session. The *kiyai* or *tuan guru* would give his sermon based on certain *kitab*. Students are not allowed to raise questions and to challenge *kiyai’s* or *tuan guru’s* teachings. Through this one way communication, students accept the knowledge as it is hence believe whatever taught as black and white in Islam. The implication of this teaching methodology is the blind acceptance of knowledge. Furthermore, some unscrupulous and politically inclined *kiyai* or *tuan guru* and his assistants could use this opportunity to brainwash and to influence their student for personal mileage. Students could become entrenched with the *kiyai* or *tuan guru* and his associates’ passion call for jihad in this “injustice world”.

But the *halaqah* method alone cannot be blamed. Most JI operatives, caught in Malaysia, for instance, were either former students or teaching staff at state-funded as well as privately owned Islamic schools such as SARs and *madrasah*.\(^50\) It is interesting to note that the *ustaz* or *tuan guru* in these schools, and to some extent in the Indonesian

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50 Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 18.
pasentran use a strategy similar to transformational leadership style to influence their students’ mind. According to the transformational leadership theory, people will follow a charismatic person (leader) who inspires them. Transformational leadership starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers. This vision may be developed by the leader, by the senior team or may emerge from a broad series of discussions. The next step, which in fact never stops, is to constantly sell the vision. This takes energy and commitment, as few people will immediately buy into a radical vision, and some will join the show much more slowly than others. The transformational leader thus takes every opportunity and will use whatever works to convince others to climb on board the bandwagon.\(^{51}\) Ustaz or kiyai with ulterior motives would take advantage by linking the subjects they teach with contemporary issues pertaining to the plights of Muslims plights local and abroad. At the same time, these ustaz who are also active in the extra curriculum activities would use the opportunity to give “sermons” about injustices suffered by Muslims and the government’s inability to counter this. Most of them use their experience overseas either as Mujahidin fighters against Soviet invasion in Afghanistan or education from pro al-Qaeda madrasah or pondok/pasentran system to motivate students and raise unnecessary hatred towards western governments.

Once these religious teachers are able to influence selected students, they would be invited to join these radical Islamic movements without the students’ knowing that they had in fact become part of JI’s or KMM’s cell of network.

### The Connections – Spiritual, Aspiration and Structure

It can be argued that both movements are spiritually connected through the philosophy of radical Salafism. The philosophy of Salafism has, to some extent, influenced the thinking and Islamic understanding in Malaysia and Indonesia since the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. The influence exists in different forms – neo-Salafi, classical Salafi,

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radical Salafi or peaceful Salafi movement – to describe the degree adherence to the salafi philosophy. The neo-Salafi variety is more home-grown and adaptable to the local political environment although the idea to create Daulah Islamiyah is the basic foundation of Salafi movement. To neo-Salafi, their objective can be achieved through participation in the mainstream political process like elections, whereas, radical salafi is closely associated with the political philosophy of Wahabbism, which has made its appeal to the KMM, JI, Lasykar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Jamaah Ikhwah al-Muslimin Indonesia and Hizb al-Tahrir of Indonesia. Wahabbism is a sect within Salafism that is attributed to the 18th century Saudi Islamic scholar, Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab who emphasized on Tauhid (the uniqueness of and unity of God). KMM’s and JI’s Wahabbism of black and white Islam has inevitably created prejudices about the religion and its followers, especially in the aftermath of the September 11 incident. Consequently, the most common prejudgment, created by KMM’s and JI’s Wahabbism is that Islam condones violence.

JI further espouses its own version of Salafism called Solifus Salleh. The concept emphasizes on the pristine and purity of 7th century Islam as it was subscribed by the prophet and his followers (the salafs). One of the major creeds in this concept is its rejection of ijma’ (scholarly consensus) and qiyas (analogy) and also its rejection of the sources and methodological foundations of ijtihad (deriving qualified judgment) and taqlid (following qualified judgment). Its departure from the mainstream Salafism became distinct when it started condemning and declaring the umma (Muslim Community) as unbelievers for their practice of taqlid (to follow someone or to imitate)

The concept of Solifus Salleh allows the declaration of jihad (by emphasizing the physical war side of the concept) against not only the Western powers but also Muslims who reject the Salafi philosophy. Furthermore, the concept also rejects traditional understanding of Islamic teaching, which is an infusion of religious teaching with local

values and norms. The concept accepts only Koran and Hadith as the main sources of Islamic practices.

A question is also raised whether both KMM and JI are connected based on kinship relationship. According to Sibony, 70% of cells are forged around friendship with the additional based on kinship relationship.\(^{55}\) It was reported that Zulkifli Abd Hir received support from his brother Rahmat Abd Hir, a US permanent resident, who was accused of several terrorist-related accounts. He was accused of using “…false identities and aliases to send Zulkifli money to buy weapons to help the Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels to wage a guerilla war in southern Philippines”.\(^{56}\) It is not clear to which organization Rahmat Abd Hir belongs to. Furthermore, Taufik Abdul Halim alias Dani, the JI Malaysian, who lost part of his leg in the Atrium bombing, is the brother-in-law of Zulkifli Abd Hir.\(^{57}\) It is also, however, not known to what extent the in-law relationship was translated into more official relations between KMM and JI.

Yet the relations between the two movements were basically forged through personal friendship. Those relations were established in various ways. One way was by providing logistical support. One of the major problems faced by KMM was the number of members with military training. Having military training and background were essential for the group to launch attacks on the government. They were indeed, as mentioned earlier, members who had received military training during the Afghan War, but the number was small. Furthermore, KMM’s new cadres were not exposed to weapons handling and did not have personal experience in military warfare. As part of the remedy, some members, such as Ahmad Nazri Romli, who was arrested in 2001 under the ISA, and Zainuri Kamarudin, joined askar wataniah (reserved army) to acquaint them with military techniques. At the same time, Nik Adli Nik Abd Aziz secured a link with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), through assistance from JI


leaders to provide proposed KMM military training at Abu Bakar Camp in Mindanao. Nik Adli Nik Abd Aziz, together with Zulkifli Abd Hir went to Mindanao in late 1999 to negotiate with Selamat Hashim and Haji Murad Ibrahim about the plan. The meeting was arranged by Hambali, a spiritual KMM as well as JI influential leader. Nonetheless, the negotiation collapsed since KMM could not afford to pay RM220 per person per session demanded by MILF.

Hambali was also responsible in connecting KMM with other Islamic movements in the region. In fact, the alleged KMM connection with the Al-Qaeda was through Hambali. Hambali and Zulkifli Abd Hir were known to have developed friendship since their *jihadi* sojourn in Afghanistan. It was also through Hambali’s connection that KMM established links with JI. It is not surprising that the Selangor cell of KMM led by Zulkifli Abd Hir with thirty two members occasionally invited Hambali and Ba’asyir to their *usroh* session to give talks. The Selangor cell was also the most active and sometimes pursued different course of action against the wishes of the central leadership.

Personal contacts also exist between Nik Adli Nik Abd Aziz with another JI leader, Mukhlas. When the armed heist at the Gua Chempedak police station failed, Nik Adli worried that the authorities might be able to trace KMM existence and activities, and organized a secret meeting at the official residence of the Kelantan Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) on March 2001 to discuss future actions and strategy of the movement. Mukhlas was invited to advice the KMM leadership.58 Mukhlas introduced the concept of *Tanzim Sir* pertaining to members’ solidarity in an organization (please refer to Table 3). He argued that every member should carry the spirit of *Tanzim Sir*, in which pure jihad is embarked upon. The spirit, according to him, is equivalent to three hundred and seventeen prophets fighting in Badr holy war. The core of *Tanzim Sir* is the *jihadist* who upholds the main struggle of the movement. The *jihadist*’s struggle, furthermore, has to be supported by members who provide important information and contribute financial assistant to the group. Both have to work together to attract supports from the society to enhance and solidify the cause.

58 Those attended the meeting were members of KMM’s central committee including Nik Adli Nik Aziz, Solehan Abd Bakar, Md Lofti Ariffin, Ahmad Tajudin Abu Bakar, and Affawani Abdullah (SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview 10 July, 2009).
Based on the above discussion, it can be deduced that there is no apparent structural link between JI and KMM. This finding is in contrary to the report made by the Singapore Government’s White Paper that argues otherwise. The White Paper also claimed that the Singapore JI assisted the KMM in buying a boat to support its jihad activities in Ambon, Indonesia. KMM and the Malaysian JI through Yazid Sufaat was said to have “purchased four tones of ammonium nitrate, which KMM made available to Singapore JI for bombing targets in Singapore”. The report seems to suggest the existence of official link between JI and the central KMM leadership, whereas, the purported JI-KMM link was based more on personal contacts between Hambali,

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60 Hambali was also named in the Singapore Government White Paper as the mastermind involved in the KMM crime activities such as the murder of Kedah politician Joe Fernandez in November 2000.
61 Singapore Government White Paper, op cit.17
Mukhlas, Zulkifli Abd Hir and Nik Adli Nik Aziz, and not with the central leadership of KMM.\textsuperscript{62}

In addition, the two movements also do not have any coordinated plan to pursue their struggle jointly since they have different targets. Initially, there were attempts led by JI to combine all Muslim movements in the region into one force through the \textit{Rabitatul Mujahidin} (Mujahidin Coalition).\textsuperscript{63} The appointed supreme leader of the coalition, Ba’asyir hoped that all Southeast Asian Islamic movements in the alliance “could cooperate and share resources for training, procurement of arms, financial assistance…”.\textsuperscript{64} Members of the alliance were reportedly included MILF, an unnamed self-exiled Rohingya group based in Bangladesh and unnamed \textit{jihadi} group based in Southern Thailand and southern Philippines. But KMM decided to pull out for unknown reasons.

KMM’s main objective is to wage a holy war against the Malaysian government and set \textit{up Daulah Islamiyah} in the country. JI, however, has wider ambitions and operated at regional and global level. It has a two-pronged objective. Firstly, to free Muslims from political discrimination and deprivation and secondly to wage war against the infidels, particularly the United States and its allies. Both movements clearly share the same aspiration of bringing back the pristine notion of Islam, and they use force to attain the objectives. They did communicate, yet no structural link was ever established.

\textbf{Conclusion}

It can be concluded that KMM’s link with JI centered on the goal of setting up a \textit{Daulah Islamiyah} in the region. Both movements became disillusioned with the failure of regional governments to uphold strict Islamic teachings as the bases for their administration. The failure then was the justification for the two movements to take up arms and to “eliminate” the targeted governments. At the same time, there was also frustration at the alleged Western approach in depriving Muslims of their political rights.

\textsuperscript{62} Interview with a Special Branch Officer manning the JI case in Malaysia, Bukit Aman, 2 December, 2004; Follow up interview with SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, 10 July, 2009.
\textsuperscript{63} The Singaporean Government Paper, \textit{op. cit}. p.6.
\textsuperscript{64} Undated Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, p. 14.
and discriminating against their economic well-being. Hence, it is a religious obligation for the movements to cooperate to correct the imbalances.

JI has wider *jihadi* objectives and more followers compared to that of KMM; a regional trans-boundary movement with connections to the al-Qaeda. Through personal linkages, JI and KMM have managed, as argued in the article, to establish meaningful relations, albeit in a very minor way. This friendship and *ummah* (Muslim brotherhood) relations have been the major stumbling block for governments in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore to totally wipe out the network of militant Islamic movements in Southeast Asia. Those linkages need not be structured one nor did it call for some kind of formal communication. The involvement of one or two operatives in each movement communicating with each other was enough to establish cell like relation between the movements. This then was the model adopted by both the KMM and JI. It is, however, not a unique model as it has been employed by other *jihadi* movements worldwide.

Although KMM has been in oblivion due to preventive measures taken by the Malaysian authorities, it cannot be denied that some members may have joined the DI or JI.65 JI may not pose an imminent threat to regional stability, but the splinter group within JI led by Nordin Mat Top is of great concern as this group proves to be the major peril that needs to be confronted. The group may appear dormant or inactive for the time being but regional authorities believe that it is regrouping and re-strategizing its next move.66 The 2009 bombing of the J.W. Marriot and the Ritz Carlton hotel proves the case.

65 SAC II Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, Interview 10 July 2009
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