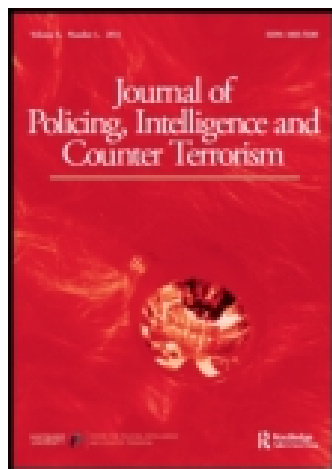


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## Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpic20>

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Published online: 03 Aug 2011.

To cite this article: Kamarulnizam Abdullah (2009) Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI): The Links, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 4:1, 29-46, DOI: [10.1080/18335300.2009.9686922](https://doi.org/10.1080/18335300.2009.9686922)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/18335300.2009.9686922>

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

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyses to what extent links have been established between the KMM and JI. Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) share the similar aspiration of wanting to bring a pristine form of Islam into their community. Both also blame the West for the political discrimination and economic deprivation suffered by Muslims worldwide. Hence, they share *jihadi* obligations to end the sufferings and subsequently to set up a regional Islamic state in Southeast Asia. Several KMM plans to attack personalities, as well as foreign and Malaysian governments' interests in the country, are closely associated with support it received from JI. In discussing those linkages, this article looks at the evolution of both movements by examining the conditions that have led to the emergence of the two groups. This 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 these structural factors determine the alleged links between KMM and JI. It is argued that while there are no apparent structural links, 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, better known as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) are both regional radical Islamic movements that have caught the attention of the international community. Of the two, JI appears to have the wider regional reach and scope. Both share the *jihadi* objective of bringing

\* This article is part of a research project on Public Response to, and Understanding of, Terrorism in Southeast Asia, funded by the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta and the Japanese Government. Data for this article was derived from several sources, mainly interviews with desk officers from the Intelligence Department of the Royal Malaysian Police Force, their official but restricted interrogation reports, Malaysian Government White Papers, and published materials, press reports, and other materials published in English, Bahasa Indonesian, and Bahasa Malaysian.

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 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” (Juergensmeyer, 2000, p. 215). Both movements are impatient with the status quo and want to radically change the Muslim community and polity. The *jihadi* approaches, however, deviate from Islamic practices and norms. Both use force and violence to achieve what they believe is morally right and respectable for Muslims. As a result they have been labeled as terrorist groups because of the sheer magnitude of the threat they pose, 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 Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, the southern Philippines, and southern Thailand, went to that 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 were killed in the war. It was not surprising then that Abdullah Azzam, Abdul Qadir Abdul Aziz, Abu Muhammadal-Maqdisi, and Osama bin Laden were held in high esteem.

KMM has created personal, spiritual, and organizational links with JI. Several of the KMM’s plans to attack on personalities as well as foreign and Malaysian government interests in the country were closely associated with the support it received from JI. Furthermore, any discussion on terrorism and its threat in Southeast Asian 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) (see, Muhammad & Sulityo, 2006), 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 (*Singapore Government White Paper*, 2003, pp. 11-13). 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 interests in the region.

## The evolution and command structure of JI

The clandestine character of JI has made it difficult to understand the real nature of the movement, but analysts concur that it has a loosely organized structure. Even the evolution of the movements has invited several interpretations. One version

centers on the argument that JI is an offshoot of Darul Islam (DI – “House of Islam”) (Singh, 2007, pp. 51-4; 2003, p. 16). DI envisaged the creation of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) or Indonesian Islamic state in the post independence Indonesia. But Soeharto’s policies on such Islamic-based political parties and movements made it difficult for the group to expand. The arrest and execution of Kartosuwiryo, DI’s central leader, led to the decentralization of DI’s command structure, but its Central Java division continued to evolve. DI’s central Java command was initially headed by Djalaeni and later a Sundanese named Adnan Maszudi (Ajengan Masduki). However Sudanese-led leadership was unacceptable to several influential Javanese leaders in DI, particularly to Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir. The differences between these two personalities and 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, which had gone haywire (Singh, 2007, p. 53). According to this interpretation, the Soeharto regime planned 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 by *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” (Singh, 2003, p. 17; see also Barton, 2005, pp. 47-9). This contention has been supported by Nasir Abas (2005, Chapter One), a former deputy commander for JI’s Mantiqi II, who revealed that foreign jihadists in Afghanistan received logistical and financial support from the Pakistani Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), respectively.

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 (Barton, 2005, p. 49). According to this version, JI and DI merged in 1976 after the leaders of both movements felt a need to strengthen Islamic propagation through a *jamaah* (a consolidated and small Muslim group) institution. JI did not intend to succeed the DI movement, which aspired to the same objective (Poer, 2003). 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 (*ICG Report*, 2005, p. 6). The two were put on trial in 1982 and sentenced to nine years in prison. On appeal, in late 1982, their sentences were reduced to three years and both of them were released from prison. 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 (*ibid*, p. 12).

Sungkar and Ba'asyir fled to Malaysia when prosecutors launched an appeal to the Supreme Court on their reduced jail sentences. The flight was portrayed as a *hijrah* (migration) or flight from injustice from the enemies of Islam (Singh, 2007, p. 63). 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 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 (Abas, 2005).

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 (Abas, 2005). How both of them attained permanent resident status in Malaysia is puzzling, and it can be deduced that both of them got their permanent resident status through unlawful ways (Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009).

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-Afghan *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; first, to create a corps of young *mujahid* and to act as second feeder to the struggle of DI; second, to provide an alternative educational system to mostly unregistered children, whose parents were 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 wanting to deepen their religious knowledge. It began to send its students to further their study in Pakistan. These students were consequently expected to become the teaching staff of the school once they completed their study.

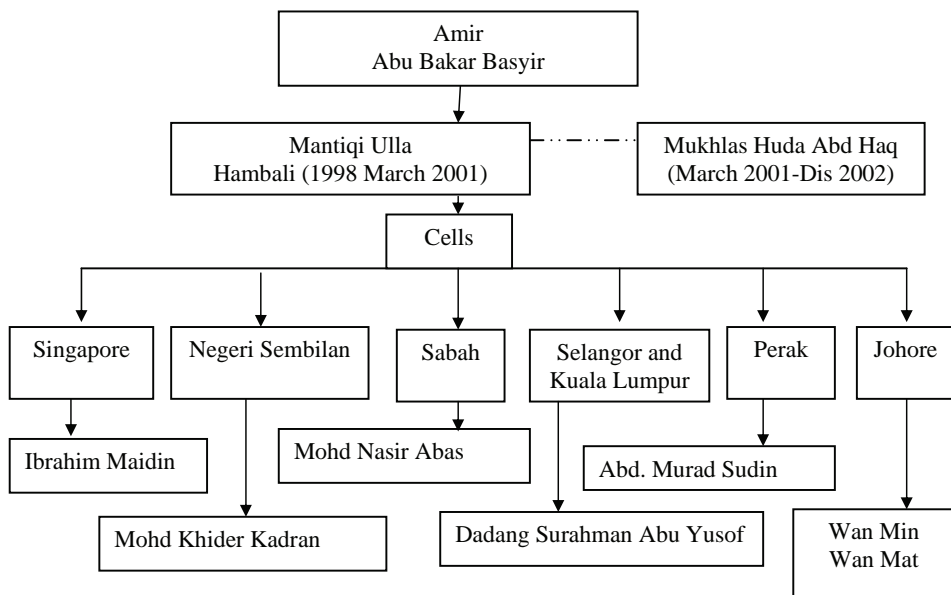
In 1993 leadership conflicts within DI between Abdullah Sungkar and Anjengan Masduki, led to a split between DI and JI. It was reported that the split was due to a DI Central Java decision not to pursue the hard-line approach adopted by Sungkar and Ba'asyir (Conboy, 2005). Nonetheless, during JI's first 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 the southern Philippines. Subsequently, a guide book called *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan Al-Jamaah Al-Islamiyah* was issued, which contained 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 (Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009). DI's focus of activities was in Sabah, especially in Tawau and Sandakan. DI Sabah was initially headed by 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 organization 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 links surfaced when two big bags containing ammunition and small weapons were found in a city mosque in Tawau. Based on the discovery, eleven DI members were arrested in 2006 (*Berita Harian Malaysia*, 2006).

After the split from DI, JI continued its hard-line approach. Like other radical Muslim movements worldwide, the immediate objective of JI was to establish *Daulah Islamiyah* (an 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 the southern Philippines. Singapore and Brunei would eventually follow. It shared Al-Qaeda’s anti-Western sentiment, and this 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 Singapore (*ICG Report*, 2003; 2002; *ICG Briefing*, 2002). 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 (see Table 1). JI leadership structure, however, has been crippled by a series of arrests of its leader, especially since the arrest of Ba’asyir under the Indonesia’s Anti Terrorism Law in 2006. Its administrative hierarchy, according to the International Crisis Group report “has been largely reduced to what once Mantiqi II, a division that



**Table 1 - The command structure of JI in Malaysia** (*Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, Undated, p. 12*)

covers Indonesia” (*Asia Briefing*, 2007). The situation 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, Abu Dujana, and later by Nuaim alias Abu Irsyad. It is not known what happened to the 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.

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 (*New Sunday Times*, 2006). Even Nasir Abas, one of the important leaders in Mantiqi II, argues in his book that some senior leaders were beginning to disapprove of Imam Samudera’s and Nordin Mat Top’s suicide bombing tactics (Abas, 2007). Since the 2003 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 (*Asia Briefing*, 2009). 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 a natural death. Yet a handful of JI members in Indonesia who have developed profitable publishing and printing industry, continue to disseminate *jihadi* message to its members and masses (*Asia Report*, 2008). The lack of enforcement in controlling the distribution of their *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 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 sabotages 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 the 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 policies to thwart the expansion of Islamic ideas and Muslim movements were seen as detrimental to his political struggle. The Malaysian government's plan, or example, to ban the use of the word "Islam" in local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties, 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 (*Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report*, Undated, p. 14). 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 had 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). The involvement of local ex-Mujahidin fighters was considered crucial and practical since first, they were already exposed to military training and weapon handlings; second, the group's *jihadi* spirit was already firmed by years in Afghanistan; third the group's military expertise would be used to train future 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 (*ibid*, p. 15).

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 to establish an Islamic state. This movement also envisaged an Islamic state in the region, which would combine Indonesia, Malaysia, the 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 1940's and 1950's, in that 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,

first 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. Second, 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 Terengganu by arresting PAS leaders in those states (ibid, pp. 12-13).

Nonetheless, KMM's threat is a politically sensitive issue 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 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 (Abdullah, 2009; 2003).

KMM's leadership structure was organized further under Nik Adli Nik Aziz. Several *lujnah* (committees) were established, including one focused on the economy which was headed by Zainuri Kamarudin (Table 2). 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 daily salary. The *Tarbiyyah* (training) committee was headed by Nik Adli. The committee was also engaged in persuading university students to join the movement. The committee used a "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 who 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, 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 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.

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 revolvers,

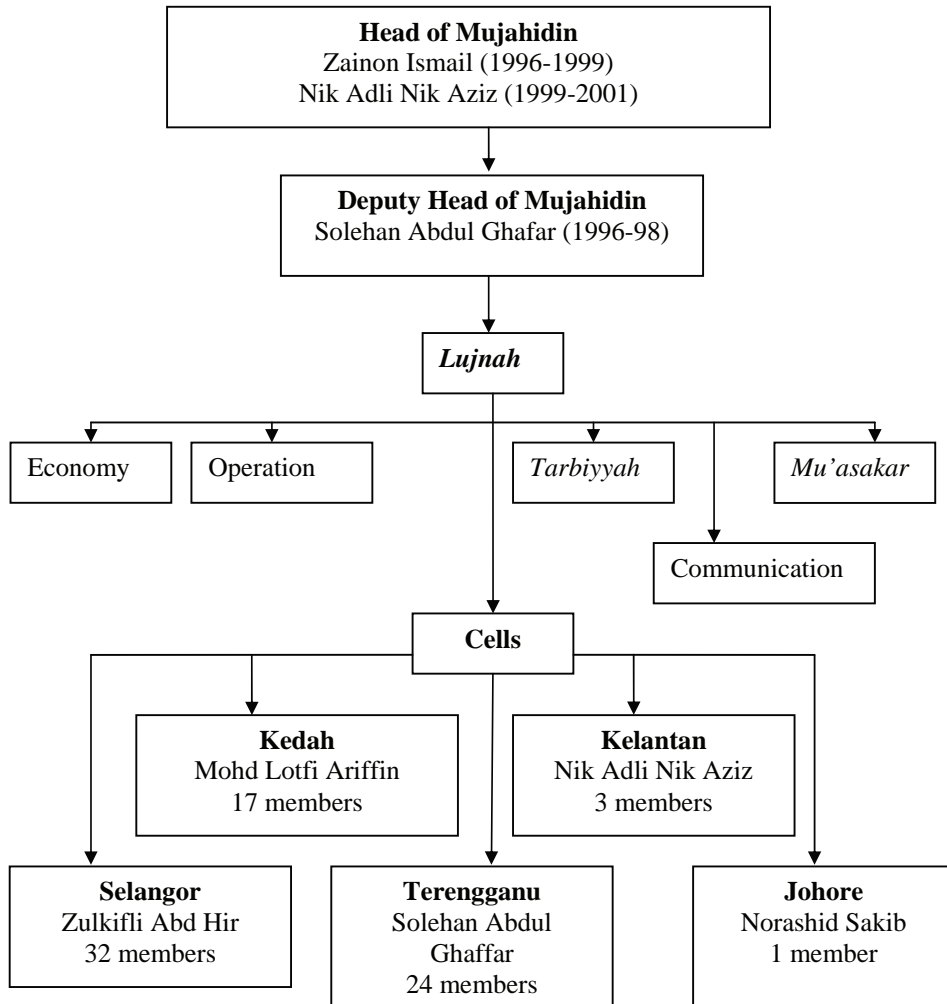


Table 2 - The organizational structure of KMM (*Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, Undated, p. 17*)

M16s, AK-47s, TNT explosive materials, hand-grenades, and man-made bombs from Pulau Batam, Indonesia and southern Thailand (Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009). 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 October 25, 2000 (*Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, Undated, p. 17*).

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 the 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 Maluku. 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 (Abas, 2005).

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 responsible, according to KMM, for persuading many young Malay-Muslim women factory workers in the Kulim Industrial area to convert to Christianity (*Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report*, Undated, p. 17; Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009). 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 November 4, 2000. The incident shows that the movement did not hesitate to use violent approach in order to achieve its *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. The activities of KMM's *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.

## JI's and KMM's attractions and influences

It seems that both movements have comparable objectives. Questions remain however, about how JI and KMM managed to attract followers even though the methods and approaches adopted by the two movements are clearly incongruent with local religious norms and values. Why did local people not realize the consequences of joining a radical movement?

Religious education has to some extent 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-Islamiah 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 were 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 (Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009).

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, were graduates of the Pasentren al-Mukmin. According to Noor Huda Ismail, 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" (McCawley, 2009).

Nonetheless, the Islamic school system or its curriculum alone cannot be blamed for the increasing number of radicalized individuals (Abdullah, 2009, pp. 79-106). Religious teachers, such as *kiyai*, *tuan guru* or *ustaz* also play a dominant role in manipulating the hearts and minds of students. Kuppuswamy (2005) argues that:

"The 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".

Also, most JI operatives caught in Malaysia were either former students or teaching staff at state-funded as well as privately owned Islamic schools such as SARs and *madrasah* (Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report, Undated, p. 18). It is interesting to note that the *ustaz* or *tuan guru* in these schools use a strategy similar to a transformational leadership style to influence their students' mind. According to the transformational leadership theory, people will follow a charismatic person (leader) who inspires them. (Bas, 1985; 1990, pp. 19-31; Burns, 1978). *Ustaz* or *kiyai* with ulterior motives would take advantage by linking the subjects they teach with contemporary issues pertaining to the plights of Muslims, both 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 the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan or an 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 network of cells.

## The connections: Spiritual, aspirational and structural

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<sup>th</sup> century. The influence exists in different forms - neo-*Salafi*, classical *Salafi*, 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* remains the basic foundation of *Salafi* movement. For neo-*Salafis*, 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 (Azra, 2004, pp. 96-9; Jahroni, 2004). Wahabbism is a sect within Salafism that is attributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Saudi Islamic scholar, Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab who emphasized on *Tauwhid* (the uniqueness of and unity of God). Following the aftermath of September 11 the most common prejudgment espoused by KMM's and JI's Wahabbism is that Islam condones violence.

JI further espouses its own version of Salafism called *Solifus Salleh (The Doctrine of ahl Al-Sunna Versus the Salafi Movement, 2009)*. The concept emphasizes on the pristine and purity of 7<sup>th</sup> 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) (*ICG Report, 2004*). 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 understandings of Islam, which are an infusion of religious teaching and local values and norms. Salafism accepts only the Koran and the *Hadith* as the main sources of Islamic practices.

The question can also be raised whether KMM and JI are connected through kinship. According to Sibony (2006), 70% of cells are forged around friendship with the rest based on kinship relationships. 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” (Chua, 2007). 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 (Ismail, 2006; *The ICG Report*, 2002). It is also not known to what extent the in-law relationship was translated into more official relations between KMM and JI.

Yet it is known that the relations between the two movements were commonly 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 a militarily trained membership base was essential for the group to launch attacks on the government. The members who had received military training during the Afghan War formed only a small fraction of the group. 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 the *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 the 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 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 occasionally invited Hambali and Ba’asyir to their *usroh* session to give talks. The Selangor cell was also the most active and sometimes pursued a 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. Mukhlas introduced the concept of *Tanzim Sir* pertaining to members’ solidarity in an organization (Figure 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 holy war. The core of *Tanzim Sir* is

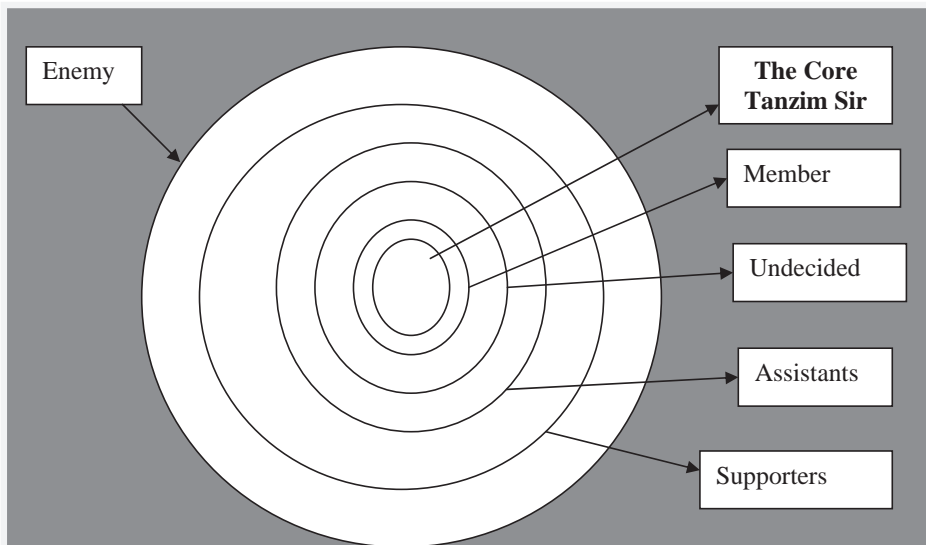


Figure 3 - The concept of *tanzim sir* (data drawn from *Royal Malaysian Police Intelligence Report*, Undated, p. 14; and Abas, 2005, pp. 19-68).

the *jihadi* who upholds the main struggle of the movement. The *jihadi*'s struggle, furthermore, has to be supported by members who provide important information and contribute financial assistance to the group. Both have to work together to attract support from society to enhance and solidify the cause.

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 *jihadi* activities in Ambon, Indonesia. KMM and the Malaysian JI, through Yazid Sufaat, were said to have "purchased four tones of ammonium nitrate, which KMM made available to Singapore JI for bombing targets in Singapore" (*Singapore Government White Paper*, 2003, p. 17). The report seems to suggest the existence of official links between JI and the central KMM leadership, whereas, the purported JI-KMM link was based more on personal contacts between Hambali, Mukhlas, Zulkifli Abd Hir and Nik Adli Nik Aziz, and not with the central leadership of KMM (interview with a Special Branch officer manning the JI case in Malaysia, Bukit Aman, December 2, 2004; follow up interview with Mohd Haniff Hanuddin, 10 July, 2009).

In addition, the two movements 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 *Rabitatul Mujahidin* (Mujahidin Coalition) (*Singapore Government White Paper*, 2003, p. 6). 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" (*Royal Malaysian*

*Police Report*, Undated, p. 14). Members of the alliance were reportedly included MILF, an unnamed self-exiled Rohingya group based in Bangladesh and unnamed *jihadi* group based in Southern Thailand and southern Philippines. But KMM decided to pull out for unknown reasons.

The KMM's main objective is to wage a holy war against the Malaysian government and set up *Daulah Islamiyah*. JI, however, has wider ambitions and operated at the regional and global level. It has a two-pronged objective; first, to free Muslims from political discrimination and deprivation and, second, 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. Although they did communicate, no structural link was established.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that KMM's link with JI centered on the goal of setting up a *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. At the same time, there was also frustration at the West's treatment of Muslims. 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 KMM; it is a regional trans-boundary movement with connections to the al-Qaeda. Through personal linkages, JI and KMM have managed to establish meaningful relations, albeit in a 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 does 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 a 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 decline due to preventive measures taken by the Malaysian authorities, it cannot be denied that some members may have joined the DI or JI (Mohd Haniff Hanuddin Interview, 2009). 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. 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 (Szego, 2006). The 2009 bombing of the Marriot and the Ritz Carlton hotel proves the case.

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