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## Black flag rising

ISIL in Southeast Asia and Australia

Peter Chalk

December 2015

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**Cover image:** Smoke rises behind an Islamic State flag after Iraqi security forces and Shiite fighters took control of Saadiya in Diyala province from Islamist State militants, 24 November 2014. © REUTERS / PICTURE MEDIA.

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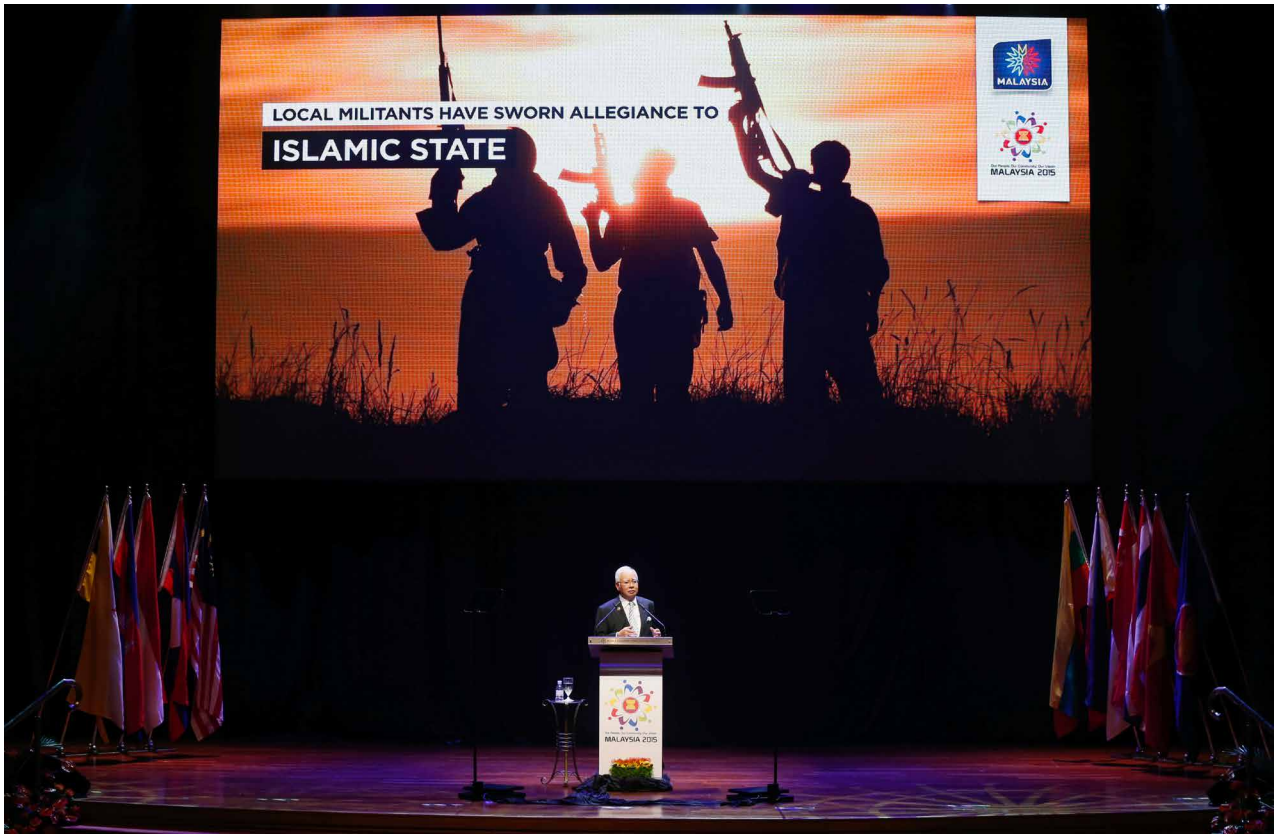


Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak delivers a speech at the opening of the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 2015. Razak called on world leaders to confront Islamic terrorism, saying its 'barbaric acts' do not represent any race or religion, as he opened a regional summit overshadowed by a spate of attacks around the globe. © Olivia Harris / REUTERS / PICTURE MEDIA.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although the prime focus of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has been on establishing a state—a caliphate—in the Middle East, it has also sought to gain a presence beyond that area. Southeast Asia is one region that's now receiving increased attention as a potential beachhead for the group. Most concern has focused on Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines and the Malay Muslim provinces of Thailand.

Estimates of the number of **Malaysians** who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to participate in the group's jihadist struggle range from 30 to 150. A number of them have already returned home and are now playing an active role in encouraging heightened domestic militancy. Since 2013, 122 people have been detained for having some type of connection to ISIL.

Estimates of the number of **Indonesians** who have travelled to fight with ISIL vary, although the total could be more than 500. Prisons have proven to be an especially effective conduit for ISIL recruitment, both for disseminating the group's propaganda and for fostering support for the militant missives that it espouses. Within the country, a number of Islamist entities have also openly campaigned for ISIL, organising mass gatherings at which more than 2,000 Indonesians have expressed support for the group.

ISIL's influence in the **Philippines** isn't thought to be as extensive as it is in either Malaysia or Indonesia. However, there are signs that the group has sought to extend its reach there, particularly in Mindanao, where at least two rebel groups have sworn allegiance to the organisation. Arguably more relevant in terms of ISIL's threat to the Philippines is the potential for the estimated 2.5 million expatriates who live and work in the Middle East to be co-opted as a vehicle for *jihadi* recruitment or targeted for direct attacks.

ISIL's influence in **Thailand** has been marginal. Although intelligence sources believe it has tried to establish links among the separatist groups fighting in the kingdom's so-called 'deep south', there's so far been no sign that those attempts have yielded results.

## Responding to ISIL

**Indonesia** officially banned ISIL in August 2014 and has since stepped up efforts to prevent nationals from going abroad to join the group. The government has also instituted organisational changes to boost the state's capability for responding rapidly to domestic attacks and has stressed 'soft' hearts-and-minds efforts to counter ISIL ideology.

These moves are a positive development, although problems remain. Jails continue to act as a hub for ISIL recruitment and propaganda; no moves have been made to outlaw support for the group's radical ideology; measures aimed at proscribing travel to areas in the Middle East under caliphate control have been halting; and more effective strategies to monitor and regulate the ISIL ideological propaganda machine have yet to be put in place.

**Malaysia** declared ISIL a terrorist organisation in August 2014 and just under a year later passed legislation that sanctions the arrest and confiscation of the travel documents of any person suspected of being linked to the group. The government's legal powers to combat ISIL were further strengthened on 1 September 2015, when the

far-reaching Prevention of Terrorism Act came into effect. Organisational changes have also been made in the Royal Malaysia Police, and an anti-ISIL messaging campaign has been instituted.

Malaysia has generally been credited with initiating an effective response to ISIL. However, three specific problems have been highlighted. First is the draconian nature of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which has already sparked protest from civil libertarians and members of the country's bar association. Second are the potential negative effects on national security that could result from the government's deliberate politicisation of Islam as it tries to underscore its own religious credentials. Third, the country's counter-narrative strategy has yet to offer its target demographic a viable, credible and resonant alternative message to ISIL propaganda.

## ISIL and Australia

Beyond Southeast Asia, ISIL is showing a growing influence in Australia. Around 100–250 nationals are believed to have joined ISIL and other Sunni militants in Iraq and Syria, most of them recruited from Sydney's radical al-Rasalah salafist centre. Several domestic attacks planned in ISIL's name have also been pre-empted and lone-wolf strikes inspired by the group have come to fruition.

In 2014, the Abbott government introduced a series of amendments to existing counterterrorist legislation that granted increased powers of arrest and surveillance to the police and intelligence services. New laws have also been passed that allow the authorities to strip Australian ISIL recruits of their citizenship, and stronger prohibitions on the incitement of violence have been ratified. Finally, steps have been taken to streamline the organisation of the country's counterterrorism policy as well as to augment border controls.

These measures have been generally well received by the public, reflecting its view that jihadist extremism is emerging as an increasing threat. However, a number of concerns have been raised about the pace and nature of Australia's emergent counterterrorist strategy and their implications for the nation's democratic character.

## Recommendations

Nationally, three priorities stand out. First, governments must strive to ensure that any measures they introduce are proportional, transparent and accountable. Second, moves to extend mitigation efforts to radical, but non-violent, Islamists should be carefully weighed against their potential to engender a perception of general repression among Muslims. Third, the counterterrorist mission should always remain within the overall ambit of the police because, at its root, sub-state extremism is a law enforcement issue.

Regionally, greater emphasis needs to be given to formalising genuine counterterrorist cooperation. This is an obvious area for collaboration that could give real meaning to ASEAN's Political-Security Community as it comes to fruition in 2016.

Australia is well placed to support these efforts, both on a bilateral basis and in multilateral forums such as the meetings of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus. However, the government will only be able to credibly advance the importance of balanced and limited counterterrorist strategies if its own policies are consistent with that aim.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Southeast Asian governments have become increasingly concerned about the spreading influence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the region. Not only are there indications that large numbers of their nationals have travelled to participate in the group's self-defined jihad in Iraq and Syria, but several planned attacks linked to returning volunteers have also been pre-empted. Some of these plots have involved individuals who have subsequently been connected to the official state apparatus. In addition, it has become apparent that ISIL's ideology is gaining increased traction among certain hardcore Islamist entities, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia.

ISIL is also showing a growing presence in Australia. Despite our multicultural character, relative affluence and distance from the Middle East, we have witnessed a disturbing trend of radicalisation among a small, but significant, section of our Muslim population. This has been manifested by Australian nationals volunteering to fight for ISIL in Iraq and Syria as well as the attempted or actual execution of home-grown attacks that have been orchestrated under the group's name.

This strategy paper examines the scope and dimensions of ISIL's penetration into Southeast Asia and Australia and assesses the effectiveness of some of the main policies that have been put into place to address the group's activities in this part of the world:

- Section 2 contextualises ISIL in a brief overview of its origins and objectives.
- Section 3 discusses the group's activities in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and southern Thailand.
- Section 4 gauges the efficacy of the countermeasures instituted by the two regional countries deemed to be most at risk from ISIL-inspired militancy, Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Section 5 extends the analysis to Australia, which has been increasingly targeted as a focus for the organisation's self-styled jihadist aggression.
- Section 6 makes some initial recommendations on how the Southeast Asian response to ISIL can be further improved, and the role that Canberra can play in supporting those efforts.

# CHAPTER 2

## ISIL: Overview

This section traces the historical development of ISIL and its ideology and the near- and long-term objectives that the group is fighting for.

### Origins

Although ISIL first gained international attention in 2014, the group appears to have had a longer lineage, much of which can be traced back to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. A leading militant who arose to resist the allied incursion was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who had set up Jama'at al-Tawhidw'al-Jihad in 2002. Despite initially pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and changing the name of his group to Al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Zarqawi soon became disenchanted with his mother movement. In particular, he objected to its lack of immediate focus on the Islamist insurgency in Iraq, its preoccupation with long-run theological pontification, and its emphasis on battle against the US (the so-called 'distant enemy) and Washington's Western and Arab allies. In response, al-Zarqawi launched a self-defined jihad that was specifically aimed at drawing American forces into a bloody sectarian war in the heart of the Middle East. His strategy was to viciously target Shias and their holy sites in the expectation that this onslaught would provoke retaliatory strikes against Sunnis. These actions drew heavy criticism from both Osama Bin Laden and his second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, both of whom denounced al-Zarqawi's unrestricted use of violence on account of the damage it was doing to the effort to build grass-roots support for the global Islamist cause (Laub & Masters 2015, Kfir 2015:240).

By 2006, al-Zarqawi had openly fallen out with the central al-Qaeda leadership. Following his death in June that year, a conglomerate of several organisations was created under the banner of Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). They included Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq and Jund al-Sahhaba ('the Prophet's Command'). Of the three, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was clearly the most prominent, and the ideas of its former leader, al-Zarqawi, came to define the movement's ideology and tactics: direct action; unrestrained brutality as a recruitment tool, as well as a means of acquiring territory through the infusion of fear; and the adoption of a virulent, unrelenting anti-Shia agenda (Bentoman & Blake, n.d.).

ISI's first emir was Hamed Dawood Mohammed Khalil al-Zawi (also known as Abu Omar al-Baghdadi) and under his command the group quickly became a major factor in the Iraqi insurgency (Kfir 2015:240). It was gradually weakened, however, by a major surge in American ground forces who fought alongside Sunni Sahwa ('Awakening') councils composed of Sunni Arab tribesmen who rejected ISI's barbarity. By 2010, the umbrella movement appeared to be a spent force, suffering a further blow with the death of its leader in April that year.

Al-Zawi was replaced by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a former US detainee who had been imprisoned in Iraq. In 2011, he rebranded ISI as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), reflecting his intent to expand the group's influence across the Levant by exploiting opportunities created by the outbreak of the civil war in Syria. Two years later, this

broadened territorial agenda was formalised with the creation of ISIL. The move was a direct rebuff to al-Zawahiri's private ruling that al-Baghdadi's group should be restricted to Iraq so that the mantle of the struggle against the Assad regime would remain with the local al-Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra (Laub & Masters 2015).

During the first half of 2014, ISIL made lightning advances across much of north and east Syria and the Sunni heartland of Iraq, and by June had taken large swathes of territory in the two countries. That same month, ISIL announced the creation of a caliphate that straddled those areas, designating the town of Raqqa as the capital of the new 'state' and al-Baghdadi as its first emir.[1]

## Objectives

ISIL's stated goal is the creation and maintenance of a caliphate that merge parts of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon into one state entity. The group rejects non-Muslim territorial divisions, characterising the borders in the wider Levant as a Western-imposed relic of the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement that's specifically designed to disempower the regional Sunni community (Kfir 2015:241).[2] ISIL portrays its caliphate as the only truly legitimate Islamic state and has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader, al-Baghdadi,[3] and migrate to territory under its control as a religious obligation (Stern & Berger 2015).

In September 2014, the US National Counterterrorism Center estimated that ISIL commanded much of the Tigris-Euphrates basin—an area of about 210,000 square kilometres, roughly the size of the UK. Although ISIL suffered some territorial losses in 2015, it has managed to consolidate its grip over much of Anbar Province in Iraq (including Fallujah and Ramadi), as well as around 95,000 square kilometres in Syria, including the cities of Basra, Yarmouk (which is only 8 kilometres from Damascus), Raqqa and, most recently, Palmyra (Black 2015, al Rifai 2015).[4] At the time of writing, some 7–8 million people are thought to be living under ISIL's control and its strict code of sharia law.[5]

While ISIL's focus has been on establishing a state in the wider Levant, it has also sought to establish 'governorates' and 'provinces' beyond that area. To that end, the group has accepted oaths of allegiance from jihadist entities operating in the group's 'inner ring' (Algeria, Libya, Sinai, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Khorasan/Afghanistan–Pakistan) and 'near abroad' (lands stretching from Morocco in the east to Pakistan in the west). ISIL has also welcomed pledges of support from movements based in its so-called 'far abroad', which takes in the wider world, as it attempts to foment a broader Islamist war (the appendix to this paper lists groups that have tied their own struggle to the cause of al-Baghdadi).[6] Kumar Ramakkrisna (2015:8) has summarised ISIL's overall political goal in the following terms:

> The [objective] of the indirect ISIS strategy appears to be to consolidate and opportunistically expand its self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate. To this end ISIS wants to avoid military defeat in the Iraq/Syria region, whilst destabilising and ultimately collapsing the fragile 'near enemies' of the Shia-aligned regimes in Damascus and Baghdad—and simultaneously eroding the political will of the 'far enemies' of Western coalition countries to oppose it.

# CHAPTER 3

## ISIL in Southeast Asia

While most attention on ISIL's external influence has focused on the Middle East, North and sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, Asian governments have become increasingly worried about the group's potential reach into their territories. According to Global Pathfinder 2, a dedicated regional database of ISIL group, personality and attack profiles, at least 2,500 people from this part of the world have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight in al-Baghdadi's movement (Gunaratna 2015:9). Dozens of others have been arrested on suspicion of conspiring to launch attacks at home, exhorting donations, facilitating recruitment or otherwise supporting ISIL's jihadist cause (Hashim 2015:1).

There are many very active Islamist entities in South and Central Asia, so it's no surprise that those regions have been the focus of official fears about ISIL's spreading influence. But now governments are also focusing on Southeast Asia—which is home to around 15% of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims—as vulnerable to the group's militant penetration. A 2015 statement on ASEAN's website highlighted the growing concern of member states, which specifically denounced 'all acts of destruction, violence and terrorism in all its forms' (Sands 2014).

Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines (Mindanao and surrounding islands) and the Malay Muslim border provinces of Thailand (Pattani, Yala and Narithiwat) have all been singled out as potential beachheads for ISIL extremism in this part of the world. Although there are definite indications that ISIL has managed to establish a footprint in Indonesia and Malaysia, it's had a far less pronounced impact in the southern Philippines and has singularly failed to co-opt the festering insurgency in Thailand's so-called 'deep south'.

### Malaysia

Malaysia is generally regarded as the main focal point for ISIL support and influence in Southeast Asia. Estimates of the number of its citizens who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to participate in the group's jihadist struggle range from 30 to 150.[7] At the high end, this figure would place the country (population: 30 million) among the top per capita sources of foreign recruits in Asia (OSAC 2015). In May 2014, a former factory worker, Ahmad Tarmini Maliki, earned the dubious honour of being the first Malaysian linked to ISIL to die as a suicide bomber, after he drove a sports utility vehicle packed with explosives into the local headquarters of an Iraqi SWAT unit near Ramadi in Anbar Province (Brandon 2014, Shay 2014).[8] Since then, there's been at least one more 'martyr' attack, and the overall number of nationals from this particular Southeast Asian state killed while fighting for ISIL is now in the range of between 10 and 15.[9]

While most of those who left for Syria and Iraq are thought to still be fighting in the Middle East alongside Indonesian volunteers (see below), a few are known to have returned to Malaysia and are thought to be playing an increasingly active role in encouraging Islamist militancy in the country. According to informed commentators, at least 122 people have been arrested for having some sort of tie to ISIL since 2013.[10] The main zones of militancy appear to include the states of Kedah and Perak as well as the capital, Kuala Lumpur, where a nascent ISIL network under the

command of Murad Halimudin (aka Murad Sudin)—an ex-leader of the now defunct Kumpulan Militan Malaysia[11]—is believed to have taken root (Gunaratna 2015:17).

One highly publicised dragnet against Sudin's cell occurred in August 2014, when he and 19 other 'seasoned' jihadists were taken into custody for planning to bomb bars, discos and the prominent Carlsberg brewery in the federal administrative centre of Putrajaya (Shay 2014, Brandon 2014, Hashim 2015).[12] Although the alleged plot had apparently not proceeded beyond the discussion stage, law enforcement sources claimed that the people involved had bought aluminium powder (a potential explosives ingredient), had been inspired by ISIL and intended to travel to Syria and Iraq for further training (Brandon 2014, Shay 2014, IPAC 2014a).[13]

More recently, on 5 April 2015, authorities detained a further 17 people in Kedah and Kuala Lumpur for conspiring to kidnap the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Home Minister and other high-profile figures as leverage to force the release of all ISIL prisoners and suspects held under counterterrorist laws. Later that month, another dozen alleged jihadists were intercepted on Mount Nuang in Central Selangor state with 40 kilograms of explosive material that was apparently being prepared for attacks against undisclosed government buildings, police stations and other 'strategic' targets in and around the Malaysian capital (Gunaratna 2015:17). According to senior law enforcement officials, none of the 12 had a criminal record, possibly reflecting a new bias towards 'cleanskin' operatives who are able to move 'under the radar', unknown to intelligence and police agencies.[14]

Two of those held in the April 2015 arrests were later found to be members of the Royal Malaysian Air Force who were purportedly facilitating the travel of Malaysians to the Middle East. The earlier raid in August 2014 also resulted in the arrest of uniformed personnel—two commandos, who were charged with encouraging membership in al-Baghdadi's group.[15] These cases have generated considerable concern among security officials that ISIL's ideology is now resonating with some elements of the armed forces. Indeed, authorities in Kuala Lumpur concede that at least 71 soldiers are known to have some sort connection to the group, although what that involvement entails and whether it goes beyond passive sympathy remain unclear.[16]

## Indonesia

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim state, and because of the past activities of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) it's the one Southeast Asia country with the most extensive experience of dealing with transborder jihadist-inspired terrorism.[17] The nation has received considerable attention as a potential beachhead for regional ISIL extremism and, as in Malaysia, there are definite signs that the group is making decisive inroads into the polity.

Scores of Indonesians are believed to have travelled to the Middle East to wage jihad with various Sunni militias.[18] In August 2014, General Sutarman, the national police commander, told reporters that he had the names of at least 54 nationals who were in Syria, including four who had died as suicide bombers. In the same month, Ansyaad Mbai, the head of the Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT, National Anti-Terrorism Agency), said that at least 34 Indonesians had joined ISIL—a number derived from interrogation depositions gleaned from would-be jihadists detained over the previous year (IPAC 2014a, Shay 2014, Hariyadi 2014).[19] These figures were early approximations, and the true total is almost certainly far higher. Indeed, by 2015 the BNPT had already revised its estimates, citing numbers over 500 (Croft-Cusworth 2015, Jones 2015a). Of those, 43 are known to have died while fighting alongside ISIL (Gunaratna 2015:14).

Disturbingly, a leaked report from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in March 2015 profiled two Indonesian commercial airline pilots who had possibly joined ISIL in the Middle East. The first was named as Ridwan Agustin, who had flown for the Malaysian-based discount airline AirAsia and was now thought to be living in Raqqa. The second, identified as Tommy Hendratno, a former employee of the charter company Premiair as well as the national carrier Garuda, started posting extremist Islamist-related material on a Facebook account at the end of 2014. Although at the time of writing there's no firm evidence that either had been inducted into ISIL's ranks, that this may have occurred remains a matter of concern for intelligence and counterterrorism officials in several countries (Quiano et al. 2015). Certainly, the AFP is taking the issue seriously, warning authorities in the US, the UK, Singapore,

Indonesia, Malaysia, Switzerland, Germany and France that the men's access to and knowledge of aviation security and safety regimes could facilitate attacks similar to past global events involving aircraft (cited in Mitchell 2015).

Prisons have proven to be an especially effective conduit for ISIL recruitment by both disseminating the group's propaganda and fostering support for it. A strong sense of jihadist solidarity and affinity has been allowed to develop among inmates, making the penal system a hub for terrorist indoctrination. Several factors have contributed to this dysfunctional state of affairs, including corruption, overcrowding, organised violence, protection rackets, the limited available intelligence on detainees and their activities, and poorly managed, trained and paid staff (Chalk et al. 2009: 163, ICG 2007). Even in maximum-security penitentiaries, prisoners have had a remarkable degree of latitude to not only access ISIL literature and translations but also to issue proclamations of allegiance that have found an audience among other detainees as well as the public.

A number of Indonesian Islamist entities have openly campaigned for ISIL. The largest and most vocal is the Forum of Islamic Law Activists (FAKSI)...

A number of Indonesian Islamist entities have openly campaigned for ISIL. The largest and most vocal is the Forum of Islamic Law Activists (FAKSI), which was set up in early 2013 under the combined leadership of Tuah Febriwansyah (aka Muhammad Fachry) and Bahrum Syah, with Aman Abdurrahman acting as the spiritual mentor.[20] The group's ostensible aim is to impress on the public the theological criticality of the current struggle in Syria, presenting it as the fulfilment of an ancient Islamic prophecy that the final battle at the end of the world will begin and end in the Levant.[21] FAKSI has also consistently emphasised that ISIL is more than a jihadist organisation and, indeed, has the trappings of a state, given the large tracts of territory it controls and administers. A variety of tools have been used to promote these messages, including a magazine (*Al Muhajirn*), social media networks, online discussion forums (known as Multaqad Da'wiy) and a dedicated *jihadi* website (Al-Mustaqbal) (IPAC 2014:7–9).

As part of its campaign to solicit popular backing for ISIL, FAKSI has organised mass ceremonies in which participants pledge support to the concept of an Islamic state. The zenith of these events came on 16 March 2014, when a major rally was staged at the traffic circle in the centre of Jakarta. At the gathering, Syah affirmed:

> We want everyone to understand that there is a far better option for the prosperity of all Muslims. This is not an empty offer but a genuine one that Allah is offering, a Muslim State. We have come to promote this state so that people will understand that the State already exists. At the same time we want to tell the State that we, the Muslims of Indonesia, are with you, and that if you ask us to pledge allegiance, we are ready to do so.[22]

The March ceremony was consolidated a month later when Abdurrahman made a formal online oath of allegiance to ISIL:

> … This is from your brothers and devoted followers, announcing our loyalty and pledge to our amir, Commander of the Faithful Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi, may Allah make him victorious, upon the law of Allah and the traditions of his Prophet, peace be upon him, in accordance with our capabilities, because we are far away from you and some of us are oppressed, incarcerated in the prison of the Indonesian idolaters (*thaghut*). And as we announce this *bai'at* of ours, we invite all those committed to the purity of the faith in Indonesia and all over the world to defend this State, in any manner possible, whether by sending personnel, contributing wealth, spreading true news about the State, its religious precepts and its achievements, as well as exposing the conspiracies to undermine it through denials and lies. We must also take care of the families of the people who are going to fight for the State and teach their children so they will grow up to be *mujahidin* like their fathers.[23]

Another entity that has been influential in generating grassroots support for ISIL is the Forum Pendukung Daulah Islamiyah (FPDI). Dr Amir Mahmud (a veteran of the Afghan *mujahideen*)[24] founded the group on 15 July 2014 and, like FAKSI, it has staged a series of public gatherings to promote al-Baghdadi and his cause. More than 500 men attended FPDI's inaugural meeting outside the Baitu Makmur Mosque in Solo, during which they openly backed the establishment of a dedicated Islamist caliphate in the Middle East (Gunaratna 2015:13).

Several prominent members of Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), which was established in 2008,[25] have also sworn allegiance to al-Baghdadi. Notably, they include Abu Bakar Bashir, the incarcerated founder of the movement, the former spiritual emir of JI, and a highly prominent figure among Indonesian Islamists.[26] Along with 24 other prisoners, he uploaded a letter on FAKSI's website pledging his *bai'at* (oath) to ISIL in July 2014, posting the written statement from the praying room of what was supposed to be the highly secured Pasir Putih penitentiary on Nusakambangan Island off Ciulacap, Central Java (State Department 2015:62, Shay 2014, Brandon 2014, Laia & Pitaloka 2014).

In their letter, Bashir and his fellow inmates announced that they considered themselves to be part of al-Baghdadi's army and stood ready to obey the orders of the caliphate that he led.[27] They also quoted a *hadith* that obliges Muslims to do all in their power to free co-religionist prisoners held in *kafir* hands: 'In closing, Excellent Shaikh, we the prisoners of Pasir Putih who support the caliphate, hope that Allah will facilitate you and the army of the caliphate to help release us who have been languishing in the prisons of the Indonesian idolaters, via war or ransom' (cited in IPAC 2014a:18).

Bashir followed up the letter with a proclamation that it was obligatory for all members of JAT to both respect and obey his *bai'at*, declaring that any who refused to do so would be thrown out of the group. Some did indeed rebuff allegiance to ISIL and were duly expelled. Among them was Bashir's own son, Abdurrahim, and in August 2014 he and other so-called 'detractors' moved to establish a new movement that they named Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah (Brandon 2014, IPAC 2014a:18, Gunaratna 2015:12).[28]

The country's most active terrorist group, Mujahideen Indonesia Timor (MIT), has also pledged allegiance to ISIL. Santoso (aka Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi al-Indonesi), a former field commander in JAT, leads the group. It acts as an umbrella movement for militants based in the simmering conflict zones of Poso, Palu and Bima and has been linked to numerous attacks on the police. Despite an intense crackdown on its activities, MIT continues to threaten domestic security and according to intelligence officials has a high potential to commit terrorist acts and accept fighters from the international Islamist network into its membership (Gunaratna 2015:15–16).[29] The group has also allegedly sought out individuals proficient in information technology who have reportedly been highly active in urging Indonesians to wage a domestic jihad via videos disseminated over the internet (see, for example, Zenn 2014).

Apart from FAKSI, FPDI, JAT and MIT, at least two organisations have been identified as local branches of ISIL in Indonesia. One is Anshar ul Khilafah, which was discovered in August 2014 and had apparently been operational for at least a month using a village mosque in Sempu, Malang, as its headquarters. The group's influence has reportedly spread to several areas of Central Java, particularly Solo, where local media sources say growing numbers of Muslims are using it as a vehicle for pledging loyalty to ISIL (Shay 2014, Laia & Pitaloka 2014). The other is the somewhat amorphously named Tasikmalaya Group. Ustaz Dani and Amin Mude are believed to be the chief coordinators of the cell, which is thought to have established a dedicated committee to oversee the selection, training and travel of Indonesians wishing to fight for ISIL in Iraq and Syria (Gunaratna 2015:16–17).

Overall, more than 2,000 Indonesians are thought to have declared support for ISIL. While many of these individuals will probably neither seek to go to Syria or Iraq nor propagate violence, the figure is indicative of the residual appeal that the idea of a caliphate can have in a devout public (IPAC 2014a:16). As with Malaysia, there are fears that at least some of these individuals will seek to carry out attacks in the group's name. Those concerns received a significant fillip in March 2015, when a homemade chlorine bomb consisting of several bottles and a timer was discovered at the ITC Depok shopping mall in Jakarta. Although no explosion occurred, the device involved was very similar to one used by ISIL against Kurdish forces in Iraq three months earlier, and the attack itself was the first time that

such a strike had been attempted in Indonesia (Ramakrishna 2015:6).[30] Another potential target that has received attention is the Borobudur Temple in Java, a major tourist attraction and the world's largest Buddhist monument. An ISIL-linked Facebook page in August 2014 called for the site to be demolished by Islamic caliphate *mujahideen*, in the same manner as Taliban fighters destroyed the statues at Bamiyan in Afghanistan in March 2001.[31]

Yet another cause for concern is the possible incitement of sectarian violence by *jihadis* who have returned from the Middle East.[32] As Hashim (2015:11–12) observes:

> The Sunni extremist movements are violently anti-Shia … this has been expressed in statement and in deeds in Syria and Iraq and their stance may gain traction in Indonesia with potentially dire consequences for inter-communal relations. Tensions between Sunni and Shia are a potential problem that Jakarta [may] not be able to duck for much longer.

Finally, there's a fear that veterans from ISIL's campaigns in Syria and Iraq will work to rekindle Southeast Asian terrorism by conducting cross-border strikes in the same manner as occurred with JI. It's known that Indonesians and Malaysians have worked together in the Middle East and in August 2014 came together under the ISIL banner to form Katibah Nusantara lid Daulah Islamiyah, a special Malay-speaking unit of roughly a hundred men.[33] An entity of this sort could be leveraged as the vanguard of a transnational fighting force that would reach not just into Indonesia but also more broadly across the region.[34] It's certainly instructive that at least some of the militants detained for the August 2014 plot to bomb targets in Putarajaya included experienced 'professionals' who allegedly had visions of working with counterparts in Indonesia to fast-track the creation of a so-called Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara—a hardline Islamic caliphate that was to extend across much of archipelagic Southeast Asia (Shay 2014:9).[35]

While ISIL's influence in the Philippines isn't thought to be as extensive as in Malaysia or Indonesia, there are definite indications that the group has sought to extend its reach to the country...

## The Philippines

While ISIL's influence in the Philippines isn't thought to be as extensive as in Malaysia or Indonesia, there are definite indications that the group has sought to extend its reach to the country, particularly the Muslim majority islands of the south. In July 2014, an Australian-born Christian convert to Islam and regular attendee of the al-Risalah *salafi* centre in Sydney (see below), Musa Ceratino, was arrested in Cebu City for inciting terrorism on the internet and urging Filipinos to join the jihad in Syria and Iraq (Joaquin 2015:15, Barton 2015:113).[36] More disturbing have been several reported incidents of ISIL elements seeking to recruit sympathisers and followers from schools and universities in Mindanao, purportedly promising to pay 7,000 Philippine pesos (A$209) as a joining bonus.

It isn't clear how successful these efforts have been. The dominant rebel group in the area, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), has vociferously denounced al-Baghdadi and his movement. In an editorial posted on its website (www.luwaran.com), the front's leadership categorically condemned the 'savagery and barbarism' of ISIL and asserted that the planned autonomous region that's to be the centrepiece of a peace agreement with Manila would act as a 'bulwark against the ideology of Islamic State' (Shay 2014:3).[37]

Despite MILF's firm rejection of al-Baghdadi, at least some Filipinos are thought to have left for the Middle East to fight for his cause. In August 2014, leaked government documents claimed that as many as 200 nationals had infiltrated Iraq to undergo military training with ISIL, warning that many of these individuals intended to return to the Philippines to wage jihad as hardened and experienced Islamists (Brandon 2014, de la Cruz 2014). However, the basis for this estimate wasn't clear, and the Foreign Ministry quickly put out a statement that the figure was entirely

hypothetical.[38] At the time of writing, the official military line is that there are no ISIL-linked militants operating in the country.[39]

Perhaps a somewhat more concrete indicator of ISIL's impact in the Philippines is pledges of support that have been made by at least two rebel entities: the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG, or 'Bearer of the Sword') and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

The ASG was established in 1991 under the command of Abdurajak Janjalini. Originally known as Al-Harakat-ul Al Islamiya, the group has stated its goals as the eradication of all Christian influence in the southern Philippines and the creation of an independent Islamic State of Mindanao.[40] These local imperatives have always been linked to the regional and global supremacy of Islam through armed struggle, mostly rhetorically but also on occasion in substance.[41]

Over the past decade, the ASG has suffered from the loss of several senior commanders, which has engendered growing disunity and criminalisation within its ranks. Today, the group is thought to number no more than 75–100 adherents, who are split among roving kidnap-for-ransom bands scattered across the small islands of Basilan and Jolo (Chalk 2014:8). In an effort to re-energise its jihadist status and credibility, the ASG has recently moved to identify more closely with the international Islamist cause, and it's in this context that its attachment to ISIL should be understood.

On 25 June 2014, Isnilon Hapilon, an elderly cleric representing one of the ASG's more prominent remaining factions, uploaded a video on YouTube in which he read out an Arabic statement that pledged 'loyalty and obedience in adversity and comfort' to the Islamic State and its founder, al-Baghdadi. He was filmed with more than a dozen men, who prayed with him in a forest clearing while shouting 'Allahu Akbbar' ('God is the Greatest) (Brandon 2014, Joaquin 2015:15, Shay 2014:5).

Hapilon's *bai'at* was arguably given expression two months later, when fighters loyal to Radullan Sahiron, another self-defined ASG emir, threatened to kill two German citizens whom they had abducted from a yacht in the South China Sea the previous April. The group demanded that Angela Merkel's ruling Christian Democratic Union immediately halt German support for the US-led bombing campaign against ISIL, as well as pay a ransom of US$5.6 million (Shay 2014:5, Sands 2014). On 17 October 2014, both hostages were released after Abu Rami, a spokesman for the kidnappers, told a commercial radio station in Zamboanga City that the 'release fee' had been received in full.[42]

BIFF is a splinter organisation of MILF that emerged in December 2010 under the leadership of Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato.[43] Among other things, he charged that the parent movement had departed from the original goals of the Bangsamoro struggle and sold out the Moro Islamic cause by entering into negotiations for Mindanao's autonomy rather than full independence. BIFF is thought to have 300 fighters, most of whom are based in two *barangays* (hamlets) in Maguindanao. The group is also believed to have access to a relatively large armoury of munitions that were reportedly siphoned from the 105th Command, MILF's largest and best equipped field division, which Kato led before he defected (Chalk 2013).

In common with the ASG, BIFF pledged support to ISIL in a YouTube video that was uploaded on 13 August 2014. A spokesman for the movement, Abu Misry Mama, confirmed the authenticity of the recording, specifically stating '[w]e have an alliance with the Islamic State and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi'. He went on to declare that, while BIFF hadn't sent any fighters to Iraq or Syria and didn't intend to impose al-Baghdadi's highly radical brand of Sunni Islam in the Philippines, it would provide assistance to ISIL if such a request were made (Sands 2014, Shay 2014:4).[44]

Despite these twin pledges of support, ISIL's overall influence in the Philippines isn't thought to be extensive. The ASG and BIFF have both suffered under a sustained military onslaught, and neither is a viable vehicle for furthering attacks in Mindanao (where they also confront the far larger and more powerful MILF), much less in the central and northern regions of the Visayas and Luzon. Moreover, most Muslims in the south lack the type of organised online presence that ISIL can usefully exploit and tap and, given their strong familial and cultural ties, would probably not be swayed by the group's missives in the first place (Joaquin 2015:15).

That said, ISIL does have very real relevance to the governing administration in Manila, as an estimated 2.5 million Filipino expatriates live and work in the Middle East.[45] This extensive diaspora constitutes a highly visible overseas community that could either be co-opted to act as a vehicle for *jihadi* recruitment or targeted for direct attacks. For many Filipinos, this is the real threat posed by ISIL, as it gives the group an opportunity to directly damage the country's national security interests without having to strike halfway across the world in Southeast Asia (Hashim 2015:11–12).

## Thailand

Of the four main countries of concern in Southeast Asia, Thailand is the one where ISIL's influence is the least prominent. Although intelligence sources believe the group has tried to establish links in the loosely organised milieu of separatist groups fighting in Yala, Pattani and Narithiwat,[46] at the time of writing there's no sign that these attempts have yielded any concrete results in either operational or logistical terms.[47] Indeed, the US State Department's *Country reports on terrorism 2014* specifically stated:

> There was no direct evidence of … linkages between ethno-nationalist Malay Muslim insurgent groups in southern Thailand and ISIL or other international terrorist networks … While Thai officials have long expressed concern that transnational terrorist groups could establish links with southern Thailand-based groups, there have been no indications that transnational terrorist groups were directly involved in the violence in the south, and there was no evidence of direct operational links between southern Thai insurgent groups and regional terrorist networks. (State Department 2015:80)

The failure of ISIL to hijack the southern Thai insurgency is perhaps best reflected in the fact that the conflict continues to be very much a localised affair. To date, there's been no migration of violence north to other parts of the country (much less to other areas of Southeast Asia), no directed attack on the nearby tourist resorts of Phuket and Krabi (both of which are just a 7-hour drive away and serviced by good roads) and no attempt to target overt symbols of Western cultural imperialism (such as Starbucks, McDonalds and Hard Rock Café franchises).

In many ways, the rebuff of ISIL is hardly surprising. The militant struggle in southern Thailand has always been highly nationalistic. While the conflict has taken on a somewhat more religious orientation in recent years, it's not apparent that this has altered the militants' underlying ethnocultural aims and objectives. In fact, there appears to have been a strategic decision specifically *not* to tie the Malay cause to wider pan-Islamic designs for fear that this would undermine the credibility of their own local commitment and thereby threaten their grassroots support.[48]

Equally, the overriding sense of self-identity that characterises the Malay border provinces strongly suggests that a built-in barrier to external penetration is firmly in place. Under such circumstances, it would be extremely difficult for a foreign-based entity such as ISIL to come to the region and introduce (much less entrench) its ideology, simply because the indigenous population would be likely to reject any proselytising that emphasises a 'better' or 'purer' form of Islam than the one already there. Just as importantly, the types of radical Sunni teachings that have been sourced to ISIL strongholds in Iraq and Syria are very much at odds with the socio-religious orientation of Thailand's Muslim minority. As Chalk et al. (2009:28) note, the country's Muslim creed is Shafi-based and predicated on restoring the past glory of the Patani Kingdom, not on ensuring the regional or international supremacy of puritanical Islam.

# CHAPTER 4

## Responding to ISIL

ISIL's spreading influence in Southeast Asia has led to the introduction of a suite of domestic countermeasures aimed at blunting the group's operational activities and limiting the space in which it can pursue its logistical and ideological objectives. These initiatives have been most marked in Indonesia and Malaysia, the two regional countries where ISIL's impact has been the greatest.

### Indonesia

Indonesia has reacted more forcefully to the appearance of ISIL than it has to any other militant entity in its history. Then President Susilio Bambang Yudhoyono officially banned the group in August 2014, making it a crime for any person to belong to it or directly support its operations (Perdani & Parlina 2014).[49] The current administration of Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo has stepped up efforts to prevent nationals going abroad to join ISIL and in January 2015, Tedjo Edhy Purdjanto, the Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, announced that he would seek to revoke the passport of anyone who had fought for the movement in the Middle East or had attempted to do so.[50] The government has complemented these moves by instituting closer and stricter surveillance of Indonesians already known to be in Syria, Iraq and Turkey, particularly those who may be seeking to return home (IPAC 2014a:21, Afrianty 2015:18).

Since the ban on ISIL was announced, scores of arrests have been made in Indonesia. Densus 88 (Detachment 88 or D-88), an elite national counterterrorism force set up with US assistance in June 2003, has been at the sharp end of many of these detentions. As with its past record against JI,[51] the unit has had some success in breaking up Islamist cells in areas known to be home to radical networks, such as Poso, Palu, Bima, Ambon and East and Central Java.[52]

Organisationally, moves have been made to boost the state's capability to respond rapidly to terrorism incidents when they occur. One notable change was the creation of Koopsugab, a new joint special operations command, within the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI—the armed forces) in June 2015. The squad, which is based in Sentul, West Java, has a complement of 81 highly trained and experienced personnel drawn from the army, the navy's Special Operations Unit and the air force's Bravo 90 Team. The force has been designed to be small and 'lean' to facilitate swift deployment and can be mobilised at short notice, either at the direct request of D-88 or by presidential order. According to the government, Koopsugab will significantly boost Indonesia's ability to counter the growing domestic ISIL threat and will work in tandem with the police, rather than in place of them (Parameswaran 2015).

Indonesia has also emphasised hearts-and-minds endeavours to counter ISIL. The government has consistently stressed that ISIL's agenda is contrary to the unitary state ideology of Pancasila, asserting that it represents a direct threat to the country's underlying cultural and religious diversity (Afrianty 2015:17, Berger 2014, Perdani 2014). Jakarta has also increasingly exhorted community leaders, Muslim elders and Islamic clerics to speak

out against the extremist missives of al-Baghdadi. Somewhat controversially, part of this effort has involved granting anti-ISIS radical groups and individuals greater freedom of action to denounce the movement, including those *jihadi* elements in JAT that vocally denounced Abu Bakar Bashir's 2014 pledge of allegiance. The assumed rationale behind this potentially risky tactic[53] is that because these organisations have religious 'credibility' their counter-arguments are likely to carry greater weight in the wider hardline Muslim community than those put forward by the government.[54]

Efforts have also been made to track Islamic websites and social media chat rooms and shut down those considered to contain radical material. On 30 March 2015, the BNPT drew up a list of 22 electronic media outlets that were deemed to be detrimental to national security and were subsequently blocked by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.[55]

While these moves are a positive development, problems remain. Jails are one area that urgently requires attention. As noted above, detention facilities are a hub for ISIL recruitment and propaganda. Prison officials need to do a far better job of monitoring the electronic communications of inmates and the reading materials that they are allowed to access and translate for outside consumption. Equally, there needs to be much closer control and surveillance of religious 'study' groups, including of who goes to the meetings, how regularly these congregations are held, what's discussed and whether there are 'side' sessions that only a few participants are allowed to attend.

On the legal front, although the Indonesian Government has banned ISIL and made membership in the movement a crime, there have been no moves to outlaw support for its radical ideology...

On the legal front, although the Indonesian Government has banned ISIL and made membership in the movement a crime, there have been no moves to outlaw support for its radical ideology (more than five ISIL-related public seminars have taken place since the group was proscribed in 2014). Even measures aimed at proscribing travel to areas in the Middle East under caliphate control have been halting.[56] These important gaps are a significant loophole in the state's efforts to counter both onshore and offshore recruitment.

A more effective strategy also needs to be put in place to monitor and regulate ISIL's electronic and written messaging. The March 2015 ban on radical Islamic webpages and social media chat rooms proved extremely difficult to enforce, as insufficient justification was given for closing the targeted forums, raising concerns about freedom of speech.[57] In addition, the blockage left many pro-caliphate sites untouched but affected several that had adopted an anti-ISIL stance, which worked against the government's broader strategy of appeasing radicals who could be leveraged to de-legitimise ISIL (Jones 2015b).

Arguably a more serious problem is how to control the proliferating Islamist publication industry in Indonesia, which churns out pamphlets, periodicals, newsletters, magazines and treatises (many translated from Arabic), often for as little as US$1 (Chalk et al. 2009:163–164). The prosleytising potential stemming from this extremist literature is considerable, and unless more is done to regulate it such works will continue to feed the hardline sentiments and attitudes that ISIL has been so effective in tapping into.

Finally, problems could well arise from the role of the newly created Koopsugab. The unit's exact mandate remains unclear—there have already been suggestions that its responsibilities will extend beyond counterterrorism[58]—and despite government assurances of inter-service coordination there are fears that the force will merely exacerbate pre-existing turf battles between the police and the army. More significantly, its establishment effectively militarises the counterterrorism function and could be an early sign that the TNI is once again seeking to expand its role in

Indonesian domestic security matters. Such a development would have direct ramifications for the country's democratisation process, not least by threatening the substantial gains that have been made in advancing civil–military relations during the post-Suharto era (Parameswaran 2015).

## Malaysia

As with Indonesia, Malaysia has clearly been concerned about ISIL's spreading influence and has introduced various measures to counter the group's activities. In August 2014, the government formally declared al-Baghdadi's movement a terrorist organisation. The following month, it co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2178, which obliges member states to enact appropriate measures for preventing foreign terrorist fighters travelling to the Middle East to join ISIL.[59] In June 2015, Malaysia passed the Special Measures Against Foreign Terrorism Act, which sanctions the arrest and confiscation of the passport or other travel documents of any person suspected of being linked to an overseas extremist militant entity.[60] The state's legal powers to combat ISIL were significantly strengthened on 7 April 2015, when the far-reaching Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was also passed. The law, which closely mirrors aspects of the former Internal Security Act repealed in 2012,[61] allows authorities to hold terror suspects for up to 59 days without trial. Detention can be extended for a further two years—renewable for an unlimited period—if that's deemed necessary. A dedicated Prevention of Terrorism Board, the members of which are personally appointed by the head of state, makes all decisions on the length of detention, and its rulings are exempt from external judicial review (Fuller 2015, Sivanandan et al. 2015).[62]

This enhanced legal framework has been accompanied by organisational changes. In January 2014, the Royal Malaysia Police's Special Task Force was restructured into a revamped Special Branch / Counterterrorism Unit, which now has the lead role in all efforts aimed at fighting violent domestic extremism (State Department 2015). The squad has proven highly successful in identifying people suspected of having links to ISIL or otherwise supporting its activities, for which more than 130 people were arrested between August 2014 and August 2015.[63]

The government has also moved to promote anti-ISIL messaging. In October 2014, the Malaysian Islamic Development Authority, which oversees most of the country's mosques and Muslim clerics, issued a fatwa against al-Baghdadi's self-styled caliphate, labelling it illegal under sharia law and denying the status of 'martyr' to those who die fighting for it. The authority has since sought to ensure that Friday sermons have dedicated sessions that educate Muslims on the peaceful meaning of jihad and explaining why those who seek to subvert it for their own deviant causes can't be trusted as 'true' representatives of the Islamic faith (State Department 2015, OSAC 2015).

Another organisation that's been highly active in the war of ideas is the Global Movement of Moderates, which was established as an initiative of Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib in April 2012. The group has spearheaded a number of events aimed at building a network of non-traditional civil–society stakeholders to hone and disseminate credible counter-narratives to ISIL's ideology, including roundtables, workshops, university and college outreach programs and at least one information technology conference (co-organised with Google in October 2014).[64]

Finally, to minimise the potential for Malaysia becoming a finance hub for ISIL (and other militant groups), the parliament passed an amendment to the country's 2001 Anti-Terrorist Financing Act, with effect from 1 September 2015. The modification significantly widens the government's investigation and enforcement authority to track and freeze monies that directly or indirectly support extremist militant activity, in line with standards specified by the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering. To give further credence to its commitment to cracking down on terrorist funding, Malaysia became a task force observer in October 2014 and has expressed an interest in becoming a full member in due course (State Department 2015).

Malaysia has generally been credited with initiating an effective kinetic response to ISIL, particularly through infiltrating active cells and pre-empting planned attacks before they eventuate. However, three specific problems have been highlighted.

First is the highly draconian nature of POTA. The Act has already sparked protests from civil libertarians and members of the country's bar association, who assert that it threatens basic individual freedoms and rights, is an unnecessary departure from due legal process and, in the absence of any external oversight, could be abused to silence bona fide critics of the government (Fuller 2015).[65] It remains to be seen how valid these concerns are. However, without adequate checks and balances, such blunt instruments can easily arouse suspicions that the state is seeking to exploit a crisis to augment its own political powers or, more seriously, give rise to a general perception of repression that will drive radical but non-violent Islamists to join the ranks of militant extremists.

Second, while Prime Minister Najib is clearly committed to countering ISIL, his government is also actively leaning into its Muslim credentials to demonstrate religious legitimacy over political opponents. This is a dangerous policy that could inadvertently result in a conservative Islamic domestic environment that's more conducive to extremist sentiments, or at least tolerant of them.[66] As the US State Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council observes:

> As effective as it may seem at the polls, attempts by officials to harness racial and religious sentiments for political purposes run the risk of creating an environment conducive to Islamic radicalization. Thus while the government of Malaysia may be fully committed to and capable of interdicting plots before the point of attack, their tolerance of a more fundamentalist brand of Islam may unintentionally facilitate their foundation. (OSAC 2015)

Third, despite the efforts of the Malaysian Islamic Development Authority and the Global Movement of Moderates, Malaysia's counter-narrative strategy remains underdeveloped. So far, most measures have been reactive and focused mainly on debunking ISIL messaging rather than offering an alternative that resonates credibly with a target demographic. Arguably, the best measure of this failure is the attitude of the Malaysian public to al-Baghdadi. In a Pew Research Center poll conducted in March 2015, only 20% of respondents said that they were actively opposed to his movement, suggesting that most of the country is either indifferent to or supportive of ISIL and its goals.[67]

# CHAPTER 5

## ISIL and Australia

ISIL's influence in Australia is growing. We have seen a disturbing trend of domestic radicalisation as a small but significant section of our Muslim population has gravitated towards the group both ideologically and operationally.

### ISIL's impact in Australia

The London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence estimates that between 100 and 250 Australians have joined ISIL and other Sunni militants in Iraq and Syria—a figure that roughly correlates with approximations from Canberra's intelligence community (150–250). If these numbers are true, it would make Australia's per capita rate of foreign fighter recruitment to terrorist groups in the Middle East at least comparable to those of France and the UK and proportionately greater than those of Germany and many other European nations (Barton 2015:107, McGuirk 2015, Mcauliffe 2015).[68]

Much of the radicalisation that has occurred in Australia can be traced to three salafist centres: al-Risalah in Sydney, al-Furqan in Melbourne and iQraa in Brisbane. All were originally part of the national al-Qaeda-inspired Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaa'ah network[69] but subsequently broke away to form dedicated Islamic 'learning' entities of their own.

Of the three, the most notorious and closely connected to the recruitment of foreign fighters for Iraq and Syria was al-Risalah, which was closed following a police raid that was part of Operation Appleby in September 2014 (see below). This community drop-in centre cum prayer group acted as the main hub for extremist teaching in Sydney and was a regular venue for local and visiting radical preachers (Barton 2015:112–113).

Until his death in October 2014, the most prominent Australian ISIL recruit connected to al-Risalah was Mohammad Ali Baryalei.[70] Of Afghan origin and a former nightclub bouncer who had led a hard-partying life of drugs, sex and alcohol, he found redemption in religion and travelled to the Middle East in April 2013 originally taking up arms with Jabhat al-Nusra, before switching sides to ISIL. Drawing on his experience, Barylei effectively used a 'zero–hero' message to personally recruit dozens of Australians to join him on the front lines in Syria and Iraq. Many of those who succumbed to this call had first met Baryalei through Street Dawah—a grassroots Muslim proselytising movement active in Sydney that was directly funded by al-Risalah (Karmon 2015, Barton 2015:114–115, Olding 2014).

Apart from calling on militants to fight with ISIL in the Middle East, Baryalei was also instrumental in 'crowdsourcing' ISIL sympathisers to slay randomly selected victims in Australia (see, for example, Hashim 2015:13, Perlez 2014). In one conversation recorded by the security services, he's heard telling Omarajan Azari, a colleague from iQraa: 'What you guys need to do is pick any random unbeliever. Backpacker, tourist, American, French, or British, even better' (cited in McGuirk 2015). The intercepted call triggered a series of large-scale police raids, codenamed 'Appleby', in the suburbs of Sydney and Brisbane during September 2014. Involving more than 800 officers, the operation (the

largest in Australian history) resulted in the apprehension of Azari and Agim Kruzei, both of whom were allegedly preparing to act on this exhortation by carrying out so-called 'demonstration executions' (Barton 2015:115).[71]

Two other Australians connected with the al-Risalah centre who have gained infamy as a result of their association with ISIL are Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar. The pair travelled to the Middle East in late 2013 and quickly gained international notoriety for posting highly graphic images of dead bodies that were specifically designed to galvanise youths into taking up arms for ISIL. One of the most shocking showed Sharrouf's 7-year-old son posing with the severed head of a Syrian soldier. The picture generated disgust around the world, prompting US Secretary of State John Kerry to describe it as 'one of the most disturbing, stomach-turning, grotesque photographs ever displayed' (cited in Karmon 2015).

ISIL's influence in Australia has also been manifested in domestic plots hatched in the group's name, some of which have come to fruition. In 2014, a few days after Azari's aforementioned planned beheadings were pre-empted, an 18-year-old named Numan Haider who had been the focus of an ongoing anti-terrorism taskforce was shot dead outside a police station in Melbourne after he stabbed two officers with a knife during an interview. Reportedly, his intention was to decapitate the men, cover their bodies with the ISIL flag and then take photographs to post on the internet (Karmon 2015).

A further incident occurred in April 2015, when Victorian police arrested an alleged *jihadi* on charges of plotting to carry out an attack on the Anzac Day memorial march in Melbourne. The suspect, Sevdet Besim, had apparently been inspired by an unnamed 14-year British boy who had himself been directed by Abu Khaled al-Cambodi, a well-known ISIL recruiter and also from Australia. The youth (since imprisoned and thought to be the UK's youngest terrorist) had apparently sent 3,000 encrypted messages to Besim from a Twitter account, urging him to undertake a spectacular martyrdom operation that could be videotaped for propaganda purposes. The finalised multi-stage plan called for first running over a uniformed police officer, then filming while his throat was slit, before finally embarking on an indiscriminate shooting rampage to kill as many people as possible before the authorities could respond (Barton 2015:120).[72]

More recently, on 2 October 2015, special constables in Sydney shot and killed Farhad Khalili Mohammad Jabar, a 15-year-old who had just fatally wounded an unarmed civilian employee of the New South Wales police force, Curtis Cheng, outside the division's headquarters in Parramatta. The teenager was subsequently connected to four men who were regular attendees at the al-Risalah *salafi* centre and who had been under surveillance since 2014 on suspicion of planning attacks in Australia at the behest of Baryalei (Rubinsztein-Dunlop 2015, Ralston et al. 2015).

The most serious incident so far occurred on 15 December 2014, when a lone gunman entered the Lindt chocolate café in the centre of Sydney and took 18 people hostage. The perpetrator, later identified as an Iranian-born self-styled cleric known as Man Haron Monis, first hung a banner inside the premises that bore the Islamic declaration of faith and then demanded that he be brought an 'official' ISIL flag to be raised in its stead. The siege went on for 16 hours and ended only when a police commando unit assaulted the building and killed Monis, although not before he took the life of one of the captives; another hostage died from the ricochet of a police bullet (Karmon 2015, McGuirk 2015, Liow 2014).

In the sixth issue of its English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, ISIL lauded the incident:

> This month, an attack was carried out in Sydney by Man Haron Monis, a Muslim who resolved to join the mujahidin of the Islamic State in their war against the crusader coalition. He did not do so by undertaking the journey to the lands of the Khilāfah [caliphate] and fighting side-by-side with his brothers but rather, by acting alone and the striking the kuffār [non-believers] where it would hurt them most—in their own lands and on the very streets that they presumptively walk in safety. (Cited in Safi 2014)

The article went on to describe the efficacy of this type of lone-wolf strike, implying that it should be replicated by other Western supporters of ISIL:

> It didn't take much. He got hold of a gun and stormed a café taking everyone inside hostage. Yet in doing so, he prompted mass panic, brought terror to the entire nation, and triggered an evacuation of parts of Sydney's central business district. The blessings in his efforts were apparent from the very outset … There will be others who follow the examples of Man Haron Monis … and all the west will be able to do is to anxiously await the next round of slaughter and then issue the same, tired, cliché statements in condemnation of it when it occurs.[73]

Days before the siege, Monis had pledged allegiance to the 'caliph of the Muslims' and announced that he had ceased to be a 'rejectionist'. The statement was taken as a reference to his earlier conversion from Shia Islam to the Sunni doctrine of ISIL—a decision that *Dabiq* praised in the following terms: 'I used to be a Rafidi, but not anymore. Now I am a Muslim, almhamdulillah' (cited in Karmon 2015).

Given Australia's distance from the Middle East, our relative affluence and our multicultural character, it may seem counterintuitive that ISIL has managed to target the country so definitively.

Given Australia's distance from the Middle East, our relative affluence and our multicultural character, it may seem counterintuitive that ISIL has managed to target the country so definitively. However, a range of factors could help to explain why the group has managed to exert its influence to the extent that it has.

In terms of 'pull', a small but significant number of Australians have been drawn to the allure of al-Baghdadi's self-styled caliphate as a result of their low economic status and lack of social mobility, both of which have been a source of ongoing resentment. Equally, the brutal struggle against the Assad regime has strongly resonated with the country's community of 480,000 Muslims,[74] as many are of either Lebanese or Syrian descent.[75]

From a 'push' perspective, Canberra is arguably one of Washington's closest political and security allies. The government elected to play an active part in the invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein and the subsequent Iraqi civil war and has now endorsed the conduct of combat and support operations for the US-led air campaign against jihadist militias in Syria.[76] All of this makes Australia a logical magnet for ISIL aggression, particularly in the strategic context of the group's third ring of nations—the 'far abroad'.

## Australian measures against ISIL

The Australian Parliament has enacted several modifications to our penal code that are specifically designed to augment the government's statutory power to counter ISIL. In 2014, the Abbott government introduced a series of amendments to existing counterterrorist legislation that, among other things, granted the intelligence agencies greater powers to monitor citizens suspected of participating in or otherwise supporting jihadist violence and made it easier to prosecute people promoting extremist propaganda (Innis 2015, Barton 2015:113, Liow 2014). In parallel with this move, a new law was passed making it a crime to travel to a state or conflict zone that's deemed to be a 'no go' area for civilian purposes. That statute transfers the burden of proof to the accused, who must now show that they were in the designated nation for a legitimate reason (Pandey 2014).[77]

In the aftermath of the Lindt cafe siege in December 2014, parliament further strengthened the state's anti-terror laws by sanctioning the automatic right to strip dual nationals of their Australian citizenship if they were found to be fighting for militant organisations overseas or had been inspired by foreign-based extremists to engage in acts of terrorism at home (Innis 2015).[78] In June 2015, the government introduced an additional set of measures whereby the citizenship rights of first-generation Australians who participate in international conflicts connected with ISIL (and other proscribed groups) could be suspended—effectively condemning them to exile (Schliebs 2015).[79]

Following the October 2015 shooting outside the police headquarters in Parramatta, additional legal changes were passed, this time permitting control orders on people aged 14 and over (Anderson 2015).

In common with Indonesia and Malaysia, Australia has also sought to address domestic radicalisation. Stronger prohibitions on hate speech, intimidation and incitement of violence have been ratified, and Muslim community leaders have been encouraged to speak up against the militant indoctrination of young men and women.[80]

Drawing on the example of Singapore,[81] then Prime Minister Tony Abbott earmarked an initial sum of $40 million to fund religious rehabilitation groups, which in his words are aimed at 'detoxing people who have succumbed to the false lure of the death cult and earlier forms of Islamist extremism' (quoted in Schliebs 2015). The centres are part of a broader $630 million four-year package that's being instituted to tackle the threat of homegrown jihadist militancy in all its various manifestations (Schliebs 2015).[82]

Finally, steps have been taken to streamline the organisation of Australia's counterterrorism policy and to augment border controls. In February 2015, a new senior official was appointed to oversee the coordination of our surveillance and law enforcement authorities and ensure greater coherence in joint operations for preventing or responding to attacks (Innis 2015). Dedicated counterterrorism units have been set up at two major airports (Sydney and Melbourne), and similar teams will be deployed to all international terminals by the end of 2015. In addition, advanced biometric screening equipment is to be installed nationwide and increased numbers of border force officers are to be stationed to monitor the movements of people on no-fly and security watch lists.[83]

These measures have been generally well received by the public, reflecting its view that jihadist extremism is an increasingly salient threat. In a 2015 Lowy Institute poll, fewer than one in four (24%) of those surveyed said they felt 'very safe', and 69% ranked the emergence of ISIL as the highest threat confronting the country (Safi 2015, Brennan 2015). This backing notwithstanding, a number of concerns have been raised over the pace and nature of Australia's emergent counterterrorist strategy. Civil libertarians and human rights advocates have been especially vocal in arguing that changes to citizenship laws are a potentially dangerous precedent that could have a deleterious long-term impact on the nation's democratic character. Many of the same commentators have raised a related issue—that the more draconian aspects of the response to ISIL will be likely to fall disproportionately on Muslims, increasingly alienating the community or, worse, further emboldening those with fanatical inclinations (Mcauliffe 2015).

These misgivings suggest that there hasn't been a particularly vibrant or transparent political debate on Australian counterterrorism policy. That mightn't be a problem in the short term, while there's a strong demand for forceful national security responses. However, over the long term it could generate a 'credibility gap' that erodes confidence in the purpose, salience and effectiveness of government measures to mitigate the ISIL terrorist threat and manage its consequences (as has happened in the US with regard to aspects of the Patriot Act, which was passed as part of the struggle against al-Qaeda).[84]

# CHAPTER 6

## Conclusion

It's evident that ISIL has established a foothold in Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and, to a lesser extent, the southern Philippines. Not only are nationals from those four countries known to have travelled to fight with ISIL in the Middle East, but many prominent Islamist groups and leaders in the region have pledged their allegiance to the group. Numerous *jihadis* suspected of plotting bombings and other acts of violence have been arrested, some of whom have subsequently been connected to the official state apparatus.

The three countries most seriously affected by ISIL's influence—Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia—have all taken concerted steps to address the group's activities. While aspects of those measures are to be welcomed, a number of pressing concerns about their overall effectiveness remain:

- In Indonesia, problems of radicalisation and recruitment in prisons as well as the largely unchecked and unregulated proliferation of Islamist literature loom large, as does the potential remilitarisation of the domestic counterterrorist function.
- In Malaysia, there's been vigorous criticism of the POTA as a significant and unjustified departure from due legal process (which some have interpreted as a thinly veiled attempt to silence legitimate opponents of the government) and concern remains over the possible ramifications of the government's deliberate politicisation of Islam.
- In Australia, despite strong public backing for the government's mitigation measures—at least in the context of the current perceived threat environment—questions have been raised about changes in citizenship laws and the long-term impact that they might have if they alienate our Muslim community and undermine the country's democratic character.

Several recommendations can be made to further improve the response to ISIL in Southeast Asia and Australia.

At the national level, three priorities stand out:

- Governments must strive to give their counterterrorist measures a publicly acceptable and credible 'face' by ensuring that those measures are proportional to the threat, are fully explained in terms of necessity and are fully accountable to internal and external oversight mechanisms.
- Steps to extend mitigation efforts to radical but non-violent Islamists should be taken with the utmost caution, in case they give rise to a perception of general repression within the wider Muslim community.
- The counterterrorist mission should always remain within the overall ambit of the police—which includes divesting powers of arrest from intelligence agencies[85]—because at its root sub-state extremism is a law enforcement issue.

Regionally, greater emphasis needs to be given to formalising genuine counterterrorist cooperation within ASEAN. Despite the announcement of various 'action plans' and statements of intent, meaningful progress in

this area continues to be stymied by the continued normative preference among the bloc's member states for non-interference in internal affairs and unanimity in decision-making.[86] Instituting forceful but calibrated collective responses to militant extremism is an obvious area for collaboration that could give real meaning to ASEAN's Political-Security Community as it gradually comes to fruition in 2016.[87]

Australia is well placed to support these efforts. In the main, the government has used a counterterrorist response that's been limited, transparent and subject to a rigorous system of checks and balances. The mandate for addressing domestic political violence has also consistently remained with the AFP, while the domestic spy agency—the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation—has been largely divested of any executive authority to independently detain suspects at its own behest.[88] The government could usefully impress the importance of these fundamental principles on partner nations in Southeast Asia, both on a bilateral basis and in multilateral forums, such as the meetings of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus.[89]

However, if Australia is to credibly advance a counterterrorist narrative of this sort, it's essential that the government's own policies are consistent with that message. To that end, Canberra would be wise to ensure that those measures that have been brought to bear against ISIL are subjected to adequate control, irrespective of the latitude they may have received on account of current public support for them.

# APPENDIX: GLOBAL AFFILIATES OF ISIL, JULY 2015

| Group | Country | Support / allegiance | Date given |
|---|---|---|---|
| al-I'tisam of the Koran and Sunnah | Sudan | Support | 1 August 2014 |
| Abu Sayyaf Group | Philippines | Support | 25 June 2014 |
| Ansar al-Tawhid | India | Allegiance | 4 October 2014 |
| Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters | Philippines | Support | 13 August 2014 |
| al-Huda Battalion in Maghreb of Islam | Algeria | Allegiance | 30 June 2014 |
| Heroes of Islam brigade in Khorasan | Afghanistan | Allegiance | 30 September 2014 |
| The Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria | Algeria | Allegiance | 30 September 2014 |
| Jundullah | Pakistan | Support | 17 November 2014 |
| Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan | Pakistan | Support | 25 September 2014 |
| Islamic Youth Shura Council | Libya | Support | 22 June 2014 |
| Jaish al-Sahabah in the Levant | Syria | Allegiance | 1 July 2014 |
| Faction of Katibat al-Imam Bukhari | Syria | Allegiance | 29 October 2014 |
| Jamaat Ansar Bait al-Maqdis | Egypt | Allegiance | 30 June 2014 |
| Jund al-Khilafah in Egypt | Egypt | Allegiance | 23 September 2014 |
| Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna in Baalbek | Lebanon | Allegiance | 30 June 2014 |
| Islamic State Libya (Darnah) | Libya | Allegiance | 9 November 2014 |
| Lions of Libya | Libya | Support | 24 September 2014 |
| Shura Council of Shabab al-Islam Darnah | Libya | Allegiance | 6 October 2014 |
| Mujahideen Indonesia Timor | Indonesia | Allegiance | 1 July 2014 |
| Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem | Egypt | Support | 1 October 2014 |
| Tehreek-e-Khilafat | Pakistan | Allegiance | 9 July 2014 |
| Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion | Tunisia | Support | 20 September 2014 |
| Mujahideen of Yemen | Yemen | Allegiance | 10 November 2014 |
| Supporters of the Islamic State in Yemen | Yemen | Allegiance | 4 September 2014 |
| al-Tawheed Brigade in Khorasan | Afghanistan | Allegiance | 23 September 2014 |
| Supporters of the Islamic State in the Land of Two Holy Mosques | Saudi Arabia | Support | 2 December 2014 |
| Ansar al-Islam | Iraq | Allegiance | 8 January 2015 |
| Leaders of the Mujahid in Khorasan | Pakistan | Allegiance | 10 January 2015 |
| Boko Haram | Nigeria | Allegiance | 7 March 2015 |
| Jund al-Khilafah in Tunisia | Tunisia | Allegiance | 31 March 2015 |
| Al-Murabitoun | Mali | Allegiance | 14 May 2015 |
| Mujahideen of Tunisia of Kairouan | Tunisia | Allegiance | 18 May 2015 |
| al-Shabaab | Somalia | Allegiance | 10 July 2015 |

Source: Based on a compilation from IntelCenter, Islamic State's global affiliates interactive world map, online.

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# NOTES

1 See, for example, Chasmar (2014), Weaver (2014), Pollar (2014).

2 The Sykes-Picot Agreement (sometimes referred to as the Asia Minor Accord) was a secret pact made during World War I between the UK and France, with the assent of Russia, for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. It led to the division of Turkish-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine into various British and French administrative areas. The agreement was named after its chief negotiators, Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot.

3 Al-Baghdadi was seriously wounded during an air raid in April 2015. At the time of writing, his ability to lead ISIL is in question and the day-to-day command of the group is thought to have fallen to Abu Alaa al-Afri . See Piggott (2015), Stanton (2015).

4 'US-led air strikes against ISIS: June 15 – July 5, 2015', *New York Times*, 9 July 2015.

5 'How many people are living under ISIS?' *Quora*, 11 March 2015, online. In those areas where ISIS has fully implemented sharia law, women are compelled to wear full-face veils, non-Muslims are forced to choose between converting, paying a special tax and being killed, and public beheadings for transgressions are common.

6 The three-ring construct for ISIL's geographical focus is most closely associated with Harleen Gambhir of the Institute for the Study of War. See Gambhir (2015) and Karmon (2015:6).

7 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

8 'ISIS and the first Malaysian suicide bomber', *The Star* (Malaysia), 14 June 2014. Details of the operation, which left 25 elite soldiers dead, were published on ISIL's website under the title 'Syahid Dalam Operasi Martyrdom'. According to Malaysian officials, Maliki had initially been indoctrinated and trained at a camp in Port Dickson during 2013, departing for the Middle East in April the following year. If it's accurate, it means that he had been in Iraq for only a month before carrying out the attack.

9 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

10 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

11 The Kumpulan Militan Malaysia was founded in 1999 as a radical militia that could be activated in the event of a government crackdown against the main opposition party, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia. It gradually extended its focus to take on a more explicit national and trans-regional terrorist agenda before it was decimated by the arrest of its most senior leadership.

12 'Malaysia "foiled" attack plots by ISIS-inspired militants', *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 20 August 2014; 'Malaysia says Putrajaya, brewery, discos, pubs on militants' target list', *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 16 August 2014.

13 'Malaysian militants bought bomb material in plot to attack Carlsberg brewery, say cops', *The Malay Mail* (Malaysia), 21 August 2014; 'Malaysian militants plotted ISIL-inspired attacks, say police', *The Star* (Malaysia), 20 August 2014; 'Malaysia "foiled" attack plots by ISIS-inspired militants', *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 20 August 2014.

14 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

15 'Malaysia vs ISIS: a timeline of recent arrests linked to the militant group', *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 16 September 2015.

16 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015. See also Ramakrishna (2015:6), Gertz (2015), Hashim (2015:9).

17 For a detailed overview of JI activities in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, see Chalk et al. (2009: Chapter 5).

18 In July 2014, ISIL published a video titled 'Join the ranks' that featured allegedly Indonesian members calling for volunteers to 'migrate to the Islamic State as an obligation decreed by Allah'. See 'ISIS recruitment video "Join the ranks" urges Indonesian Muslims to migrate to the Islamic State', *ABC News* (Australia), 29 July 2014.

19 According to General Mbai, some of these jihadists had already returned to Indonesia with the goal of creating an Islamic caliphate in the provinces of Jakarta and East Nusa Tenggara.

20 Fachry is an Indonesian activist with links to Al-Muhajiroun, which was founded by a militant Syrian cleric named Omar Bakri Muhammad and stressed the need to carve out a territory where Islam could be applied in its entirety. Syah had been a communications student at the Universitas Islam Negeri in southern Jakarta but left before graduation and transferred to Pamulang University, where he became an activist with a religious propaganda group known as Lembaga Dakwah Kampus. He runs Penegak Tauhid Press, which among other things published and translated the writings of Abdurrahman. Abdurrahman is a radical preacher who before his imprisonment in 2010 was a prominent leader of discussions about jihad at the Al-Munawaroh Mosque in Pamulang, outside Jakarta. See, generally, IPAC (2014a).

21 Along with many *jihadis* in the Middle East, Fachry, Syah and Abdurrahman believe that Syria will be the locus of the final struggle between the Imam Mahdi (the Messiah) and the Dajjal (Satan). For more on this line of thought, see IPAC (2014b).

22 http://kdiofficial.blogspot.com/2014/03/bayan-kepada-ikhwan-para-pendukung-dan.html.

23 Reproduced at http://prisonofjoy.blogspot.com/2014_04_01_archive.html.

24 Mahmud identifies himself as ISIL's chief spokesman in Indonesia.

25 JAT was designated as a terrorist organization by the US and the UN in 2012. For more information on the group, see ICG (2010), Rottenberg (2012).

26 Bashir was jailed for 15 years in June 2011 after he was linked to a JAT terrorist training camp in Aceh.

27 'Ba'iat Ikhwan Masjunin Di LP Pasir Putih Yang Menukung Khilafah Islamiyah', *Al-mustaqbal.net*, 11 July 2014.

28 'Son, top aides abandon Ba'ayshir over ISIL, form new jihadist group', *Jakarta Post*, 13 August 2014.

29 According to Gunaratna, MIT's most recent international recruits include Uighurs from Xinjiang in western China.

30 'Police: Syria returnees tied to Depok chlorine bomb', *Agence France Presse*, 25 March 2015.

31 'ISIS in Southeast Asia', *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 September 2014.

32 See, for example, Ulseas (n.d.).

33 Author telephone interview, 17 August 2015. See also Gunaratna (2015:11), Francisco & Grudgings (2014).

34 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015. See also IPAC (2014a:19), Ramakrishna (2015:6).

35 'Malaysia "foiled" attack plots by ISIS-inspired militants', *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), 20 August 2014.

36 Cerantonio has denied any link with jihadist groups but has been open in his admiration of the ISIL caliphate and the achievements of its emir, al-Baghdadi.

37 MILF was established in 1984 under the hardline leadership of Hashim Salamat with the aim of creating an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines. After 30 years of militant struggle, the group signed a peace agreement with Manila in March 2014. Among other things, the deal provides for the creation of the Bangsamoro Judicial Entity—an autonomous region for Moro Muslims that has enhanced powers of local governance but will remain within the constitutional ambit of the Philippines state. See Chalk (2014:8), Whaley (2014). For more on the background to the accord, see ICG (2012).

38 Author telephone interview, 17 August 2015. See also 'DFA cannot monitor Muslim Filipinos going to Iraq, Syria for supposed terror training', *interaksynon.com*, 27 August 2014, online.

39 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015. See also Joaquin (2015:14).

40 For a detailed overview of the ASG, see Chalk et al. (2009:48–56).

41 The ASG has been linked to several transnational terrorist plots. One of the most infamous was Oplan Bojinka, which was hatched in 1995 by Ramzi Yousef—a 'freelance' *jihadi* extremist and the convicted mastermind behind the first bombing of the World Trade Center in New York (1993). The multi-pronged campaign was to have included the assassinations of the Pope and President Clinton while they were visiting the Philippines in 1996, coordinated attacks against Washington's embassies in Manila and Bangkok, and the mid-air detonation of commercial aircraft flying trans-Pacific routes from the western American seaboard. The plot was foiled only after volatile explosives ignited a fire in an apartment Yousef was renting in Manila, forcing him to flee to Pakistan, where he was subsequently detained and extradited to the US.

42 'Philippine militants free German hostages: police official', *Reuters*, 17 October 2014.

43 Kato died of a stroke in April 2015 and was replaced by Ismael Abubakar (aka 'Bongos').

44 'BIFF, Abu Sayyaf pledge allegiance to Islamic State jihadists', *GMA News* (Philippines), 16 August 2014.

45 The Filipino diaspora in the Middle East is mainly concentrated in Saudi Arabia (1,550,572 people), the United Arab Emirates (679,859) and Qatar (342,442)—all nations where ISIL has a strong or relatively robust following.

46 Ethno-religious unrest has been a persistent feature in southern Thailand since the late 1960s. However, unlike in earlier phases of violence, there doesn't appear to be a single organisational nucleus of defined groups behind the current bout of militant and terrorist activity, in which well over 5,000 people have been killed since 2004. According to most commentators, attacks are the work of an amalgam of extremists drawn from the decimated ranks of so-called 'old guard' separatist groups, such as the Patani United Liberation Organization and Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani; emergent and ad hoc Islamist entities operating under the assumed banner of the Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Koordinasi; and a random collection of disaffected youths, co-opted criminals and unemployed farmers and labourers.

47 Author telephone interview, August 2015.

48 Author interviews, Siem Reap, July 2015, and Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

49 'Indonesia implements ban on ISIS support as jihadist group continues atrocities in Iraq', *The Christian Examiner*, 12 August 2014.

50 'Govt to revoke passports of ISIS supporters', *The Jakarta Post* (Indonesia), 15 January 2015.

51 For more on Indonesian law enforcement agencies' efforts against Jemaah Islamiyah and other domestic *jihadi* groups since 2002, see Chalk et al. (2009: Chapter 8).

52 'Fighting ISIS on the home front—the Jakarta Post', *The Malaysian Insider*, 29 March 2015, online.

53 The main risk in appeasement is that it could lend undue credibility to groups that pose a risk to national security despite their anti-ISIL leanings.

54 See, for instance, 'How Southeast Asia is responding to ISIS', *The Interpreter*, 5 March 2015.

55 ''Radical Islamic sites blocked in Indonesia: Tech Minister takes flak from all sides', *Tech Asia*, 6 April 2015, online; 'Indon Govt to block radical sites', *Sky News* (Australia), 31 March 2015, online. Among the sites targeted were *arrahmah.com, voa-islam.com, dakwatuna.com, kafilahmujahid.com, an-najah.net, muslimdaily.net, hidayatullah.com and salamonline.com.*

56 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015. See also Gunaratna (2015:17), Schonhardt (2015), IPAC (2014a).

57 See, for example, 'Radical Islamic sites blocked in Indonesia: Tech Minister takes flak from all sides', *Tech Asia*, 6 April 2015, online; and Halim & Jong (2015).

58 Indonesia's Minister for Political, Legal and Human Rights, Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno, has indicated that Koopsugab may also be employed to protect government officials, escort foreign diplomats and other VIPs and oversee transfers of death-row inmates.

59 Under the resolution, all member states are obliged to have laws that permit the prosecution of their nationals and others departing their territories who travel or attempt to travel for terrorism purposes; the deliberate provision or collection of funds by their nationals or in their territories with the intent or knowledge that they will be used to finance the travel of foreign terrorist fighters; and the wilful organisation or facilitation by their nationals or in their territories of such travel. See US Mission (2015).

60 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

61 The Internal Security Act was revoked as part of a pledge on the part of Prime Minister Najib to introduce greater guarantees for personal freedoms after he took office in 2009.

62 At the time of writing, POTA has yet to be used, as its legal gazettal only occurred on 1 September. All detentions and prosecutions of militants that have so far taken place in the country have been carried out under the existing Malaysia Security Offences (Special Measures) Act, which has no preventive detention provisions and relies on procedural evidence to secure convictions.

63 See, for example, 'ISIS-inspired Malaysian detainees plotted terrorist attacks', *Associated Federated Press*, 7 April 2015; and Kaplan (2015).

64 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

65 'Prevention of terrorism: relevance of POTA in Malaysia', *The Establishment Post*, 23 April 2015.

66 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

67 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

68 In April 2015, a Lowy Institute study based on open-source data put the number of Australians fighting in Iraq and Syria at just 54.

69 The Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaa'ah network owes its existence to Sheikh Mohammed Omran (aka Abu Ayman). Generally recognised as the pioneering figure behind Australian salafism, he was close to senior al-Qaeda leaders such as Abu Qatada. He's currently based in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, where he runs a mosque.

70 Baryalei was killed during fighting in Kobane, northern Syria. Neil Prakash, a 23-year-old Muslim convert of Fijian-Indian and Cambodian descent, is thought to have replaced him as the chief recruiter of Australians for ISIL.

71 'Anti-terror operation in Sydney and Brisbane "thwarted" beheading plot', *ABC News*, 17 September 2014, online.

72 'Anzac Day terror plot was days from success, court hears', *The Guardian* (UK), 1 October 2015.

73 Cited in 'Islamic state praises Sydney siege attack in monthly Dabiq magazine', *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), 30 December 2014

74 The 480,000-figure was recorded in the country's last national census, which was held in 2011. Just over a third of this population (36%) are first-generation Australians with parents mostly from the greater Middle East. Around 10% were born in Lebanon, 8% in Turkey, 3.5% in Afghanistan, a similar number in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a little fewer in Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran and Fiji. See Barton (2015:107).

75 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015. See also McGuirk (2015), Hashim (2015:13).

76 'Migrant crisis: Australia ups refugee intake and plans Syria strikes', *BBC News*, 9 September 2015, online.

77 'Australia plans tougher travel laws over terrorism fears', *BBC News*, 5 August 2014, online. The law does not apply to journalists or those visiting family members.

78 'Australian militants risk losing citizenship', *BBC News*, 26 May 2015, online.

79 In announcing the proposed measure, Prime Minister Abbott justified it in the following terms: 'Fighting for a terrorist group at war with Australia is the modern form of treason … those who have left our country to fight against us may require a modern form of banishment' (quoted in Mcauliffe 2015).

80 At the time of writing, Australia is also considering introducing a set of measures governing the capture and retention of computer data as part of its overall counter-radicalisation efforts.

81 Singapore's main religious rehabilitation centre is at the Khadijah Mosque, where more than 60 youths have been deradicalised since 2003.

82 'Australia puts counter-terrorism units in airports', *BBC News*, 27 August 2014, online.

83 'Australia puts counter-terrorism units in airports', *BBC News*, 27 August 2014. The focus on border security became an especially high priority after Elomar and Sharrouf were discovered to be in Syria. Both had served prison sentences for planning foiled terrorist attacks, including one against the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor outside Sydney, and had been banned from leaving the country.

84 There's been growing public pressure in the US to repeal significant aspects of the Patriot Act, particularly those giving more intrusive surveillance powers to the intelligence agencies.

85 Denying executive (arrest) authority to the intelligence services is important because it precludes the potential development of a secret police force that's empowered to both monitor and detain legitimate critics of the state.

86 Author interviews, Kuala Lumpur, September 2015.

87 The Political-Security Community is one of three pillars of the proposed ASEAN Community. Launched in 2015, this institutional initiative is primarily aimed at transforming ASEAN into a more consolidated regional bloc that can take decisive, unified action to address various state and non-state challenges likely to affect Southeast Asia in coming years. For further details, see Chalk (2015).

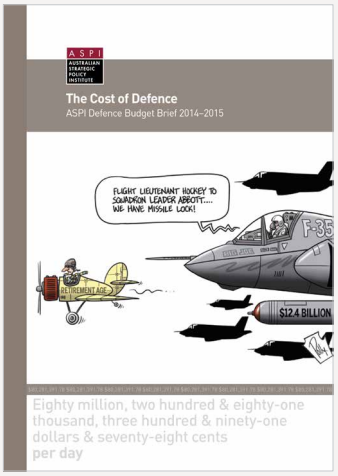
88 In 2003, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation was granted special powers to question people for up to 24 hours and, in certain instances, to detain them for a maximum of seven days. Those powers could be used against a person if they were deemed to possess information that could help an ongoing terrorist investigation, even if they weren't a suspect. However, the power to arrest remained with the AFP. The questioning and detention had to be specifically authorised by a warrant from the Attorney-General (which could be in force only for a maximum of 28 days) and its exercise was subject to an elaborate supervisory framework consisting of government, parliamentary and judicial oversight. For further details, see Burton & Williams (2012).

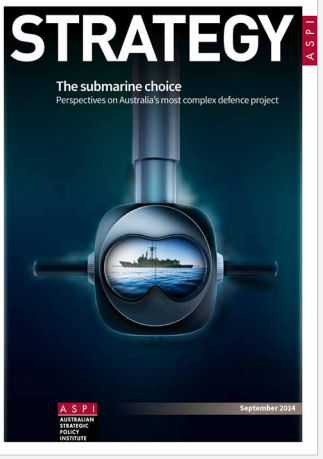
89 The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADDM+) directly informs the deliberations of the ADMM, the highest decision-making body within ASEAN, and has one of six working groups specifically dedicated to counterterrorism (the others cover humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, de-mining, peacekeeping operations, maritime security and military medicine). Meetings include all 10 of ASEAN's member states in addition to eight dialogue partners (Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the US).

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AFP | Australian Federal Police |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| ASG | Abu Sayyaf Group |
| BIFF | Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (Philippines) |
| BNPT | Badan Nasional Penaggulanga Terorisme (Indonesia: National Anti-Terrorism Agency) |
| D-88 | Densus 88 (Indonesia) |
| FAKSI | Forum of Islamic Law Activists (Indonesia) |
| FPDI | Forum Pendukung Daulah Islamiyah (Indonesia) |
| ISI | Islamic State in Iraq |
| ISIL | Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant |
| JI | Jemaah Islamiyah (Indonesia) |
| JAT | Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (Indonesia) |
| MILF | Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines) |
| MIT | Mujahideen Indonesia Timor (Indonesia) |
| POTA | Prevention of Terrorism Act (Malaysia) |
| TNI | Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Defence Force) |

## Some previous ASPI publications





# Black flag rising

## ISIL in Southeast Asia and Australia

Although the prime focus of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has been on establishing a state—a caliphate—in the Middle East, it has also sought to gain a presence beyond that area. Southeast Asia is one region that's now receiving increased attention as a potential beachhead for the group. Most concern has focused on Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines and the Malay Muslim provinces of Thailand. This paper considers how these nations are responding to the threat.

Beyond Southeast Asia, ISIL is showing a growing influence in Australia. Around 100–250 nationals are believed to have joined ISIL and other Sunni militants in Iraq and Syria, most of them recruited from Sydney's radical al-Rasalah salafist centre. Several domestic attacks planned in ISIL's name have also been pre-empted and lone-wolf strikes inspired by the group have come to fruition. The measures the Australian Government are taking have been generally well received by the public. However, a number of concerns have been raised about the pace and nature of Australia's emergent counterterrorist strategy and their implications for the nation's democratic character.

Nationally, three priorities stand out. First, governments must strive to ensure that any measures they introduce are proportional, transparent and accountable. Second, moves to extend mitigation efforts to radical, but non-violent, Islamists should be carefully weighed against their potential to engender a perception of general repression among Muslims. Third, the counterterrorist mission should always remain within the overall ambit of the police because, at its root, sub-state extremism is a law enforcement issue.

Regionally, greater emphasis needs to be given to formalising genuine counterterrorist cooperation. This is an obvious area for collaboration that could give real meaning to ASEAN's Political-Security Community as it comes to fruition in 2016.

Australia is well placed to support these efforts, both on a bilateral basis and in multilateral forums such as the meetings of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus. However, the government will only be able to credibly advance the importance of balanced and limited counterterrorist strategies if its own policies are consistent with that aim.

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