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Terrorism in Southeast Asia:

The Case of the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah

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Abstract:

This paper will provide an analysis of the Southeast Asian terror group Abu Sayyaf with a brief comparison to Jemaah Islamiyah. The Abu Sayyaf Group perpetrated a record high number of attacks in 2013 despite the Philippine Government's Internal Peace and Security Plan being implemented in 2011. The ASG has withstood many operations and has proven itself to be quite resilient. More dynamic approaches are required to suppress this group. The operational capabilities of Jemaah Islamiyah have considerably diminished with minimal attacks over the past lustrum and no recorded attacks in 2013. Some components of JI remain however, and the increasing influence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria complicates matters. The ASG and JI's similarities and differences will be assessed including their ideology, tactics, and modus operandi. Government responses and their effectiveness will also be evaluated in addition to an assessment of the fragility of Indonesia.

Terrorism in Southeast Asia

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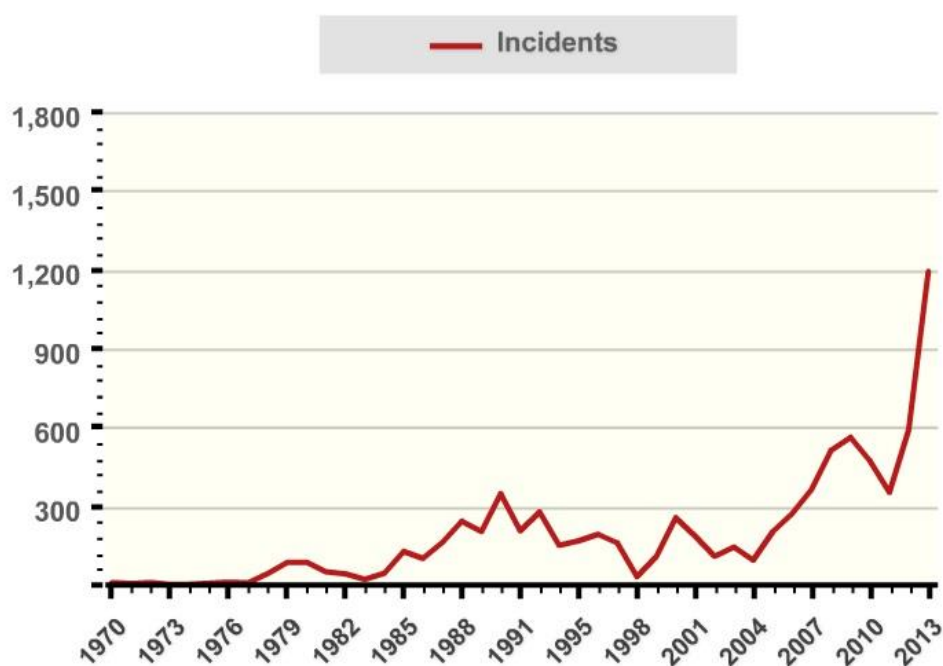
Southeast Asia

Several nations in Southeast Asia region were considered exemplar of democratization in the developing world in recent decades (Kurlantzick 2014); experts, analysts, scholars and even the Southeast Asian citizens themselves accepted this judgment. Kurlantzick (2014) explains that many nations were considered ‘free’ or ‘partly free’ by the monitoring organisation Freedom House and showed promising signs of further development. Unfortunately this optimistic vision was relatively ephemeral. Since the late 2000’s many nations’ progress has stalled, and in some instances pivotal economies have reversed. Although the Philippines and Indonesia have stayed on track, they are threatened by a number of democratic challenges. The free-market trade partnerships such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, are currently being negotiated with its last round of meetings occurring in July of 2014 (TPPA 2014). The agreement has yet to be signed as there are issues regarding citizens’ rights. If this agreement is signed and implemented, it would be the largest area of free trade in the world in terms of gross domestic product. The deterioration of democracy only threatens this cooperation.

Outside the economic and political challenges lays the threat of terrorism. According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD 2014) terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia fluctuated to varying degrees since 1970, see Figure 1 below. Since 2004 there has been an increase in the frequency of attacks, particularly from 2011 to 2013 where there is a dramatic increase to an all time high.

An analysis of two renowned terrorist organisations in the region, the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah, will conceptualise terrorism and its implications in the region. Both groups have several similarities and differences that reveal the heterogeneous nature of terrorist organisations. This report affirms what many scholars agree, that there is no universal counter-terrorism approach. This paper will highlight different characteristics of each group, and assess the successes and failures of government responses.

Figure 1. Terrorist Attacks in Southeast Asia



Source: GTD, 2014

The two major religions in the region are Islam and Buddhism, followed by Christianity; there is a plethora of ethnic groups and languages. Many terrorist groups that are currently active in the region have ties to Islamic extremist groups stemming from the Middle East. The data provided by the GTD indicates that 2013 was the year with the most number of attacks by a considerable margin. The 1001 attacks were categorised into 19 groups. Of these, at least 13 were connected

to radical Islam (GTD, 2014). The six remaining were either communist groups, separatist, individual, or unknown. The region has a historical connection to radical Islam via foreign fighters partaking in the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s (Chalk et al 2009). The roots lay a foundation for cooperative ties, including the sharing of weapons, tactics, methodology, supplies, training, dawa and overall general support

Regional Drivers of Terrorism: Greed, Grievance and Geography

While the causal factors that create terrorist groups are debated, there are several factors that are acknowledged to contribute to their existence. Greed and grievance are commonly understood as important factors in contributing to internal conflicts such as rebellions; and similar root causes can be seen in terrorist organisations. Of social, economic and political grievances, the economic variables are found to have the most explanatory power in addressing causes of internal armed conflict (Collier & Hoeffler 2004). Analysing the motivations and drivers of the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah will provide an insight to why JI has been downtrodden while ASG continues to exist. It is too simple to say either greed or grievance causes groups to be violent. Rather, a combination of these factors to varying degrees is more accurate. Additionally, literature on insurgencies reveals the survivability of a group is correlated to terrain. The archipelago geography of Southeast Asia will be explained as a contributing factor to the resilience of ASG.

Rational choice theory posits two main drivers for civil wars and internal conflicts; greed and grievance. The former understands violence as a means of competition for natural resources or

other material gain; the latter reflects the deprivation of marginalised groups. Murshed and Tadjoeddin (2009) believe neither is sufficient for the outbreak of civil war, as that requires the breakdown of the social contract. They suggest a synthesis of both greed and grievance may lead to the degradation of the social contract and the outbreak of violent internal conflict. This perspective will be applied to the JI and ASG not for their initial formation, but for their demise and continuation respectively. Outbreaks of violence must occur at a relatively large scale for a situation to be deemed a civil war (Sambanis 2004); a low intensity conflict better describes the operations of a terrorist organisation.

Geographically Southeast Asia is divided into two regions, Mainland Southeast Asia, otherwise known as Indochina; and Maritime Southeast Asia, otherwise known as the Malay Archipelago. Literature surrounding insurgencies and rebellions propose that landscape plays a role in the survivability of militant groups; and historical evidence suggests mountainous rural areas contribute to the longevity of an insurgency due to their superior knowledge of the terrain (Fearon & Laitin 2003). The archipelago geography of Southeast Asia is arguably no exception to this idea. This, in combination with the government inadequacies and struggling economies creates further foundations for terrorist groups to thrive.

The Threat of Terrorism

Examining terrorism and terrorist organisations is a difficult task. The fundamental reason for this is the definitional complexity of the concept of terrorism. The term ‘terrorism’ itself is contested and controversial, with no universally accepted definition in the international community. Whitbeck wrote that during the Global War on Terror, almost every state that faced an insurgency or domestic separatist group labelled them as ‘terrorists’ and utilised the momentum of the US-led campaign against terrorism. The extremely politicised label has led to the emergence of euphemisms taken up by violent political movements, calling themselves ‘freedom fighters’, ‘resistance movements’, or ‘national liberation movements’. These terms have a more positive connotation that attempts to circumvent the bloodshed often associated with their movements.

This paper will use the terrorism criteria put forth by the Global Terrorism Database will be used to accept what constitutes a ‘terrorist attack’. The GTD defines a terrorist attack as:

“...the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear coercion, or intimidation”

GTD 2013, pg 7

In practice, a terrorist attack must have all three of the following attributes. The incident must be intentional, it must entail some sort of violence or intention of violence, and the perpetrators must represent sub-national actors. In addition these three attributes, an additional two criteria must be met from a list of three. This first is that the act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal. The Codebook explains the pursuit of profit does not satisfy

this criterion; an economic goal is rather a more profound economic impact. The second criterion involves conveying a message to a larger audience. This may be via coercion or intimidation to the broader public, and not just the direct victims of an attack. The third and final criterion is the methods used in the attack must be outside the legitimate means of warfare as declared by international humanitarian law.

The several terrorist organisations in the Southeast Asian region participate in a number of activities, both criminal and terrorist in nature. These include assassinations, armed assault, bombings, hijackings, hostage takings both barricades and kidnappings, and unarmed assault (GTD, 2014). Inadequate government capacity increases the vulnerability of critical infrastructure including transportation systems, air and sea ports, hotels, residential areas, national monuments and recreational parks (Falk & Lotan 2007), which have seen to be targets from various terrorist groups. Both JI and ASG have demonstrated the ability to conduct numerous types of attacks against various targets that have had human, economic and symbolic consequence. Arguably, the Bali Bombings in 2002 perpetrated by JI had consequences of all three factors. The nightclub had extremely high casualties with 202 fatalities. Suryani (et al 2008) explains there was a sharp but brief drop in tourism following the attack that had economic ramifications. Additionally, the bar that was targeted popular with westerners had a symbolic undertone of attacking the West.

Southeast Asia has both secular and Islamic governments which some have been described as quite progressive, yet they have also battled elongated Muslim separatist groups (Helfstein 2009). The region has been subject to many terrorist attacks over the past decade, and with the stalling economic progress and questionable state capacity, there is the risk of the terrorist organisations dealt with incompetently. Motivations for the several active groups are varied.

Some proclaim a desire to establish a regional if not a global caliphate, with other groups motivations can be characterised by grievances (Vaughn et al 2009). The ASG has several characteristics which suggest it is superficially Islamist and not truly committed to jihad nor the liberation of Muslims in the Philippines (Banlaoi 2010); they instead capitalise on the plight of marginalised Muslim minorities to bolster support from other Islamic communities from the region. Disregarding the legitimacy of their jihad, its utilisation still creates a wake throughout the region. This includes support on a number of levels from financial support to providing refuge for terrorist. Malaysia for example, has become a hub for terrorist organisations to hide from other government authorities.

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

The ASG can be described as a superficially Islamic organised crime syndicate seeking wealth that phases between the uses of terrorist tactics and banditry (O'Brien 2010, Banlaoi 2008). Vaughn (et al 2009) provides a history of the group explaining the ASG originally sought the liberation of the Moro Muslim minority under the Christian government in the Philippines and establish an independent Islamic state which upholds Sharia law. The original envisioned Islamic state would include the Muslim populations from areas of Southern Thailand, the island of Borneo, the Sulu Archipelago, and Mindanao. The Salafist-Wahabist characterisation is a product of the zealous Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani. The ASG was originally a splinter group of hardcore radicals from the Moro National Liberation Front who was entering negotiations with the Philippine government in 1991 (Banlaoi 2008).

During the initial years of the groups formation in the 1990's, Janjalani, a returned mujahideen fighter of the Soviet-Afghan war, propelled the groups Islamist ideology (Fellman 2011). Fellman (2011) continues to explain that he utilised his contacts in Afghanistan and established connections with al-Qaeda. Upon his death in 1998 during a fire fight with Filipino government forces, there was a brief power vacuum that ultimately led to the ascension of his younger brother Khadaffy Abubakar Janjalani in 1999. When external funding was cut off through government efforts, the group resorted to kidnappings for ransom and extortion tactics as its primary means of financing. The Islamic nationalist and separatist views are a legacy of Abdurajak Janjalani, though it is arguable the group still seeks these goals. The implications of upholding a Jihadist image is a way to generate support from the Muslim community via material gains, recruitment and refuge.

The Abu Sayyaf Group has noticeably gone through several cycles since its formation in 1991 until present day (O'brien 2012, Fellman 2011). The group was founded to achieve political objectives; there is however, a prominent underlying trend of kidnapping-for-ransom (KFR) activity which betrays the group's lust for wealth and material gain (O'brien 2012) and has since become a defining characteristic of the group. The kidnappings are primarily used for financial reasons rather than political motives such as applying pressure on the government for policy change or the release of terrorist members from prison (O'brien 2012). KFR can be understood as a profitable opportunity, an aspect of greed motivation previously discussed. Other sources of income include counterfeiting goods, illegal drug sales or serving as bodyguards for local politicians (Banlaoi 2010). Despite its banditry tendencies, there have been many attacks that are undoubtedly terrorism. Some notable post 9/11 attacks include the Davao International

Airport bombing in 2003 that killed 21 people, the Superferry 14 bombing that killed 116 people in 2004, and the Valentine's Day bombing that killed 20 in 2005 (Abuza 2005).

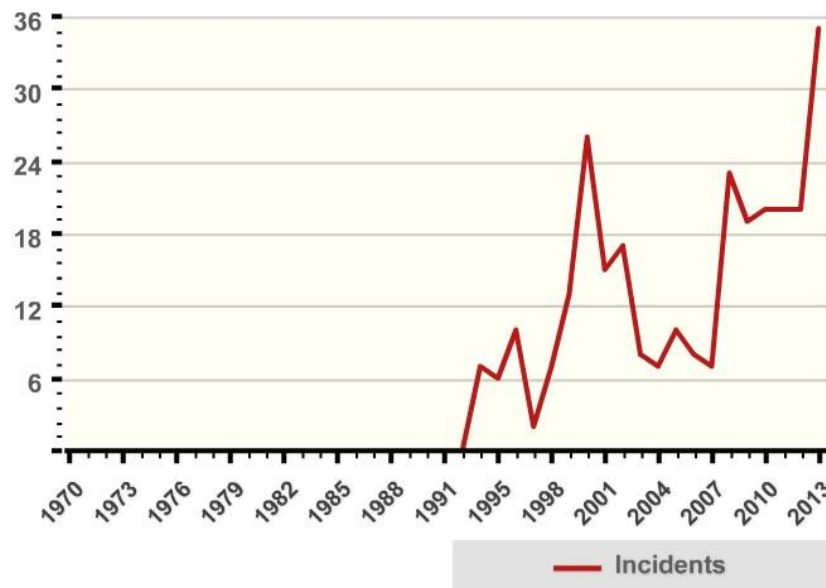
It is important to mention the criminological concept of the dark figure of crime; being the true number of criminal offenses is unknown due to unreported incidents (White & Perrone 2010). Kidnappings are no exception; some studies suggest only 10% of kidnappings worldwide are actually reported (Zuccarello 2011). There are a number of reasons for this phenomenon; some being that families of kidnapped victims are often coerced into not notifying the authorities who can sometimes complicate matters with dangerous rescue missions. Ransom payment is deemed to be the simplest solution.

The ASG has withstood years of counter terrorism operations from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, AFP, and has proven itself to be quite durable. This resilience can be attributed to the group's main recruitment tool being the attraction of wealth and power amongst the economically marginalised Muslim communities in the South (Banlaoi 2010). The Philippines has one of the strongest economies in the region, yet it has one of the widest gaps between the rich and poor with the Gini Coefficient being 43.00 in 2009 (WBG 2014). Banlaoi states that the ASG "is a product of complex tensions in the southern Philippines, where criminal, political and militant groups at times collaborate to achieve shared goals" (pg 17, 2010).

The ASG has links to several other terrorist organisations in the region including Jemaah Islamiyah, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and al-Qaeda. Such cooperation includes weapons, material, financial and logistical support, while also providing safe havens for one another (Abuza 2005). Links with AQ have said to have diminished in the post 9-11 counter terrorism crackdown (Vaughn et al 2009), which corresponds with their attack frequency, see Figure 2.

Perhaps recovering from the setback and the initial brunt of the Global War on Terror, they resumed frequent attacks around 2007. The 1990's saw the group favouring kidnappings, with terrorist tactics really only being seen in the early 2000s (Banlaoi 2008).

Figure 2 ASG's attack chart:

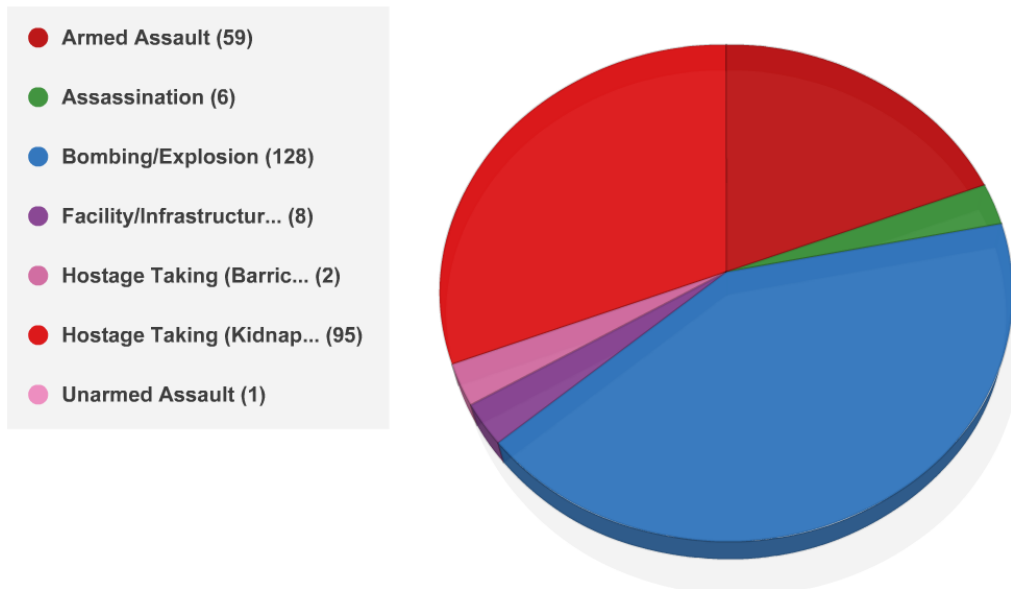


Source: GTD 2014

According to the Global Terrorism Database, ASG has perpetrated or is suspected of committing 280 terrorist attacks from the 18th of February in 1994, until the 31st of December in 2013 (GTD 2014). Hostage taking is the primary attack type in 2013, followed by armed assault and then bombings. The continued increase in operations is worrisome as the Philippine government has taken an aggressive stance towards the group, entering many fire fights with the group over the past few years. A report by Abuza (2010) claimed government forces were succeeding in reducing terrorist attacks, yet they still saw the group degenerate into kidnappings.

Abuza stated “The Philippine military does not appear to have the capacity nor the will to finish the job militarily” (pg 13, 2010).

Figure 3. ASG Attack Type



Source: GTD 2014

This pie graph represents the attack type of the ASG from its formation until December 31st, 2013. Their attacks have included assassinations, armed and unarmed assault, bombings, hostage taking situations including both barricades and kidnappings, and facility/infrastructure attacks. ASG tends to favour bombings which constitute 45.7% (128) of their attacks, kidnappings which are 33.9% (95), and armed assault, 21.1% (59).

According to Banlaoi (2010), money and wealth are the main incentives to attract Muslim youth. There are some instances where Muslim parents volunteer their sons to fight for the ASG for a monthly payment of rice and around \$200. A 2010 estimate places group membership at 445, 79% of whom are 30 years old or younger. The income the group makes from kidnappings

is enough to attract disaffected young males. Within the group, there remain several individuals who are committed to jihadist ideology, but these individuals lack any real following and desire to support jihad. The report concludes claiming the majority of ASG members are not motivated by jihad or the establishment of an Islamic state, but are instead allured by money and power. The main indicator that ASG members are motivated by greed is the attraction to material gain. As long as there is poverty and economic disparity in the Philippines, the ASG has a large recruiting pool. While some feelings of grievances may in fact be present within the groups, this does not appear to be a strong motivator.

Shifts in attack patterns are seen after each offensive operation by the government (O'brien 2010). Upon government pressure and when funds are devoted to combating the government, spikes in kidnappings can be observed. Understanding the ASG main recruitment tool is the offer of money, fame, and protection against other ethnic groups; one can conclude hardline counterterrorism measure will not be enough to out muscle the group. In addition to the operations, there must also be the effective governance in providing economic opportunities for Muslim communities and to quell ethnic rivalry. This is much easier said than done. However, if the Philippine economy grows stronger and the TPP goes ahead, they may have the means to do so.

In 2011, the Philippine Government implemented the Internal Peace and Security Plan, IPSP, or Bayanihan (2010). This security plan was implemented to address the security, ideological insurgencies, and terrorist groups. The first stage of the plan was to be conducted from 2011 to 2013 where it aimed to address internal armed threat groups such as the ASG. Since the IPSP's implementation in 2011, there has been a shift in the attack types of the ASG. Bombings dropped from around 14 in 2011, to 8 in 2013 (GTD 2014). While kidnappings

increased from 3 to 17. This is indicative the ASG responds to government pressure. The overall number of attacks has increased and is at the highest number of attacks in the ASGs history since the IPSP was implemented. This is indicative of poor government capacity and if any real impact on the ASG is to be made, the Philippine government may require foreign help. The IPSP expected internal armed threats to diminished in a “sustained and continued manner” (Bayanihan 2010, pg 21), this holds true for bombings, but not for kidnappings however.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)

Jemaah Islamiyah is a terrorist organisation that is based in Indonesia that was formed in the early 1990’s with the Islamist goal of creating a caliphate reaching southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and the southern Philippines (Jones 2005). The group’s original fighters trained in Afghanistan and have ties with al-Qaeda. JI remained relatively underground until its attacks began in 1999. Their attacks have demonstrated a lethal sophistication against Western and local targets in Indonesia and the Philippines. Some notable attacks include the 2002 Bali Bombing that killed 202 people, a 2003 JW Marriott hotel car bombing that killed 12, a 2004 truck bombing that killed 11 at the Australian embassy, and a suicide bombing of three establishments in 2005 that killed 22 (Vaughn et al 2009).

Counter terrorism efforts against JI have been conducted by multiple governments including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (Joosse & Milward 2014). Since

2002, the JI network was considerably damaged by the arrest of more than 300 suspected members. In Thailand authorities detained JI's operational chief in 2003; Indonesian police killed JI's most experienced bomb maker in 2005, and arrested another two senior leaders in 2007. Malaysian authorities arrested another two senior leaders in 2008, and in April 2009 recaptured JI leader from Singapore Mas Selamat Kasteri. Noordin Mat Top, a notorious leader was killed by Indonesian Police in September of 2009. This multinational approach significantly destroyed JI's network, rendering its operational capability to an extreme low.

Other terror organisations have taken the spotlight away from JI since 2009. Joosse and Milwar (2014) explain there has been a decapitation of JI members and leaders; that has resulted in some radical splinter groups consisting of former members or operational affiliates, others have been released from prison and have resumed activity. Umar Partek, an Indonesian terrorist, was arrested in Abbotabad by Pakistani authorities in 2011, was convicted in 2012 for a role in the 2002 Bali Bombings. Senior JI leader Sanusi was killed by Philippine security forces in late 2012.

Unlike the ASG, JI is a 'pure' jihadi Islamist group. Banlaoi (2009) explains their ideology is based on Wahhabi or Salaf. Figure 4. JI's attack chart necessity and religious legitimacy of using pre-emptive violence when tactically and strategically opportune. It wishes to be seen as a champion of Islam and Muslim interests, and it seeks the support of allies in the broader Islamic community. For operational and ideological reasons, JI acknowledges it needs to master public



relations and win ‘hearts and minds’. Figure 4 shows JI’s attack chart since its activity began in 1999 until 2013. The group major activity was conducted in 1999 and 2000, and following hardline counter terrorism measures their attack frequency dramatically reduced. The past few years has seen the group has espoused little activity.

Comparative Analysis: Similarities

There are several similarities between terrorist groups throughout Southeast Asia, particularly ASG and JI. The first is these groups tend to develop in areas where weak states are most vulnerable; Korteweg refers to these areas as ‘terrorist black holes’ (2008). These black holes are created by lawlessness or instability in a particular location due to poor governance. Banlaoi (2009) describes the area of operations for the terrorist groups in focus. The ASG tends to operate in the Southern Philippines, particularly in the Basilan and Sulu provinces of the Sulu Archipelago. JI operated in the archipelago of Indonesia where it is geographically difficult to govern; including cells in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Korteweg (2008) mentions it is important to look at these regions as an ungoverned space, not as the territory of the government, as the terrorist organisations do not operate in the entirety of the nation itself.

The second similarity can be described by Abuza (2011). He explains that many of the Islamic movements in Southeast Asia have legitimate grievances as a result of centuries of conflict and oppression. Both JI and ASG can arguably make claim exaggerated grievances, though Collier and Hoeffler (2004) explain armed conflict can further perpetuate grievances.

Terrorism as a result of poverty is a complex issue, the regions where the ASG and JI originated from are socially and economically marginalised due to under governance as previously mentioned and discussed; and ASG's main recruitment pool is under privileged, marginalised youth. This contributes further to the debated poverty-terrorism hypothesis (Burdette 2014).

The third similarity is that terrorist groups tend to operate in borderlands between nations, where there is a melting pot of several cultures and religions where some degree of persecution is present (Abuza 2014). This attributes to the grievance driver of terrorism in the region. The Muslim community in the Sulu Archipelago have experienced some 400 years of conflict and rivalries with other ethnic groups. Some members of the ASG reportedly joined for the protection and power affiliated with the group because of tensions with other tribes (Banlaoi 2010). Banlaoi (2009) explains the exact origin of JI has not been precisely described though most literature connects it to a separatist rebel movement created in the 1940's known as Darul Islam which sought to undermine the control of the government over its citizens. This movement was formed in a post colonial Indonesia when oppression would have been experienced by citizens. The associate of JI and ASG with al-Qaeda provided these groups with a violent, global ideology shared with other extremist groups throughout the world.

Fourth, Abuza (2014) claims another similarity between terrorist organisations is the freedom of movement between provinces, regions, and states. Poorly drawn post-colonial borders which incorporate diverse ethnicities and divide alike ones throughout the region. This enables terrorists to have safe havens across borders with people who share the same religion, ethnicity, or culture. The inability to control territories and the movement of citizens has allowed radicals to establish sanctuaries in cross-border black holes. These are extremely problematic as it allows for groups to retreat, rearm, retrain and spread to new locations. There were seven

hidden JI jihadi camps the Indonesian government had not discovered until 2002-2003. This relates to the geographical impact terrain has on the survivability on rebellions discussed earlier. Captured members of JI in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines confirmed there was training camps in conjunction with the ASG in MILF controlled territories, indicating cooperation and havens between groups occurs.

Another driving force described by Abuza (2014) that allows for terrorist organisations to grow is the unwillingness and inability for intergovernmental cooperation. This is a product of historical disputes and anatomisation between different members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Lack of cooperation in policing, military, intelligence fields creates an inadvertent tolerance of safe havens cross borders for terrorist groups. Both ASG and JI have been known to operate in several countries outside their initial region of operation (Vaughn et al 2009).

Divergences

JI has revealed zealous devotion to jihad through radical teachings and dawa (Jones 2005). In contrast, the ASG portrays a jihadi image yet is interested in material gain betrayed by its KFR activities. Recruitment by ASG is arguably more appealing to youth particularly when in a dangerous, marginalised area which has contributed to its resilience. This is the most stringent difference between the two groups.

Counterterrorism efforts of leadership decapitation can overcome this by removing a vital part of the organisation. JI underwent several leadership losses as a result of operations undertaken by

governments and the original Mantiqi organisational structure dissolved (Banlaoi 2009). Comparatively, ASG no longer has the zealous and jihadi drive it once did after the death of Abdurajik Janjalani, and now instead relies on material benefit from its members to continue functioning. In this case, loss of leadership led JI to ultimately disperse and the ASG to banditry (Abuza 2010).

Governmental Responses

Both the Indonesian and Philippine governments adopted a hardline approach to eliminate these groups (Banlaoi 2009, Vaughn et al 2009). The US-led Global War on Terror saw Southeast Asia as the 'second front', after Afghanistan. Southeast Asia has experienced numerous counter terrorism measures since 9/11, including at the national, bilateral, regional and multilateral level (Banoli 2009); the assistance of major powers greatly contributed to the counter terrorism capabilities in the region. Banlaoi (2009) give details of the international counter terrorism efforts. ASEAN members received financial support which closed the budgetary gap, as well as learning from exemplary CT practices. Much of this support however were relatively short term fixes which are wearing out. The near decade and a half since 9/11 has shown purely counter terrorism measures will not be enough to overcome the more resilient groups in the region such as the ASG. Counter terrorism efforts can eliminate terrorist actors through arrests or killings; but this does little to overcome the ideology which perpetuates the group in the first place.

Indonesia's efforts appeared to be successful in greatly reducing JI's operational capability within its borders. There were no terrorist attacks attributed to JI by the GTD in 2013 (GTD

2014). This is a worthy achievement although there are still surviving elements of JI in Southeast Asia. One concern is the return of battle experienced foreign fighters from Syria which may provide JI with a revitalising shot in the arm. Recently, a statement released from JI pledged their allegiance to the recently self-declared caliphate the Islamic State (Roberts 2014). The Indonesian government should be cautious of any individuals returning from the Levant region. Recently, the president of Indonesia stated “IS is embarrassing to Muslims”, and calls on the world to tackle extremism (AFP 2014).

The ASG has displayed its durability under repeated government operations (Banlaoi 2010). Since the implementation of the IPSP, the Filipino government has reduced the number of bombings and shootings, but the ASG has shifted to more kidnappings and is at an all time high (GTD 2014). This survivability is difficult to overcome in a traditional law enforcement sense; instead the Philippine government should address social and economic policies that could offer potential recruits legitimate means to a higher living standard. This is easier said than done, particularly with the current stalling of democracy in the region. Reducing the ASG’s numbers via arrests and targeted killings, and then preventing further recruitment will ultimately cause the ASG’s numbers and operational capability to dwindle.

It is difficult to determine the reasons why ASG is more resilient than JI. One suggestion may be the strictness of ideology. JI was very radical with strong links to al-Qaeda (Vaughn e al 2009). Repeated counter terrorism operations and leadership decapitation reduced JI’s operational capabilities. ASG however, were zealous under Abdurajik Janjalani but the group failed to continue of the path of jihad, taking up banditry tactics. As discussed earlier, the attacks of the group reveal a greater interest in material gain rather than the establishment of an Islamic state.

Future Implications: Threat of Resurgence

Jones, a Southeast Asia terrorism expert, says the support for the Islamic State has been increasing among radical groups in Indonesia (Roberts 2014). This can have several implications for the region. Returning jihadi fighters from the Levant region will bring battle experience and the potential of further radicalisation. While JI is arguably no longer operational, there is the potential of it receiving a boost with the return of foreign fighters. The ASG is much more operational. Typical terrorist attacks such as shootings and bombings have dropped due to recent government efforts, but kidnapping is at an all time high. When the Janjalani brothers were killed the group lost its ideological guidance. Returning jihadists may unify and once again push the ASG towards a path of jihad. If this occurs, it is not likely the group will abandon its kidnapping tactics as it has been seen to be quite effective.

This is worrisome for the Philippine government as it appears to be already struggling with combating this group. While Western nations may be threatened by returning foreign fighters, they have a much greater state capacity in dealing with returning jihadists; one simple yet highly important mechanism is effective boarder control. Returning fighters to Southeast Asia however is much easier due to poorly governed borders. They can easily gather in black hole locations throughout the Southeast Asia Archipelago to disseminate ideology. Originally, many terrorist organisations in Southeast Asia are connected with foreign fighters returning from the Soviet-Afghanistan War in the 1980s. It is too early to tell if the resurgence of returning jihadis will bolster the terrorist groups in Southeast Asia, but it is a risk that needs to be addressed not only unilaterally but on multiple levels.

Conclusion

Southeast Asia is facing several challenges politically, economically, and security wise. The terrorist threat must be addressed from a global, regional, national and local level. Foreign powers should continue to enable governments to increase their counter terrorism capabilities without undermining the government itself. ASEAN nations must also cooperate to eliminate the terrorist black holes that are scattered throughout the archipelago. From a national perspective, the Philippines in particular, needs to address the issue of the attraction the ASG has on marginalised youth in the southern part of the state. Locally, the Philippine government should create local kidnapping prevention initiatives.

It is difficult to categorise the Abu Sayyaf Group as either purely a terrorist organisation or a bandit group; when discussing this group their duality should be noted. 2013 was the most active year for the ASG in number of attacks since its formation in the early 1990's. The IPSP is proving to be ineffective therefore additional counter terrorism measures should be implemented. When applying a greed and grievance theory to ASG, one can understand the group's motivation and need for financial viability. Measure addressing this issue should be taken against the ASG. Jemaah Islamiyah has been operationally inactive in recent years. There are still surviving elements of the group, and the risk of returning foreign fighters presents the threat of resurgence in the group.

Despite the fact both groups have had many leaders killed, executed, imprisoned, or de-radicalised, the global radical ideology remains and the younger generation will take their place. The ideology created by al-Qaeda that guides these groups acts as a foundation and can inspire

future generations to come. The primary recruitment tool for the ASG is the allure of wealth, but this does not mean they cannot use jihad as a means of recruitment. The ideology that al-Qaeda created is reinforced by the socio-economic conditions of poorly governed regions in Southeast Asia. Counter terrorism tactics provide a short term fix to the threat of terrorism, long term solutions would require non-military approaches.

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