

## **Asia and the Security Implications for the EU**

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Ladies and Gentleman, I am honored to be here today and given my limited time, I will keep my presentation as short as possible.

My topic of today was a result from a meeting with a very well-renowned Austrian academic who while discussing terrorism with me, entirely focusing on an EU-centric view of the world around him. However his views are not necessary shared by the world of the Jihadist.

Some policy makers, some academics and some circles of society continue to regards terrorism and political violence in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Thailand being on some distant galaxy. Asia role in the strategic security picture for the European Union should not be sidelined as both are close door neighbors in the global village.

My presentation today will focus on two aspects:

- First, very briefly covering the strategic framework of the EU and Asia; and
- Second, if terrorism in Asia is indeed a threat for the EU and what are the emerging Asian threats that might affect EU security?

I belief that both blocks, the EU and Asia have sufficient bilateral security frameworks in place. The European Union responded faster than Asia recognizing the terror threat following the Madrid and London bombings.

Although Asia has a much longer history of insurgency, instability and internal conflicts it was only *after* the emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah in 2000 did an Asian security framework slowly begin to materialize in earnest.

Today, no other multilateral issue unifies the Asian political leadership more than terrorism. For the first time since communism, terrorism represents a threat for both, secular and nationalist governments alike since the ideology of militant Islam of enjoys popular support from disenfranchised Muslim fringe groups across Asia.

The 9/11 attacks and the Bali bombings resulted in an formalization to tackle terrorism and ASEAN finally signed a series of agreements as shown on the slide; *The Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism (November 2001)*; *the Declaration on Terrorism (November 2002)*; *the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism between the*

*United States and ASEAN (August 2002); the Joint declaration with China on non-traditional security issues (November 2002); the Joint Declaration on Cooperation to Combat Terrorism between the ASEAN-EU in Brussels (January 2003). The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Trans-national Crime (AMMTC) brought together the respective home ministers and has constituted the core of ASEAN's counter-terrorism collaboration.*

In addition, the ASEAN leadership has sought various ways to improve the means to tackle terrorism. Following the tragic bombs in Bali, the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) opened its doors;

- the Australian Federal Police initiated a Multi-National Operational Support Team (MNOST) provided comprehensive tactical and operational support;
- the implementation of an electronic ASEANAPOL Database System (e-ADS) is the beginning of an Asian wide initiative to exchange intelligence;
- The regional cooperation with the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Thailand improved the bilateral operational capability to share intelligence, information leading to the arrests of suspected terrorists, airport security, detection of explosives or other transnational crimes.

Finally, In January 2006 the Asean Convention on Counterterrorism (ACCT) was signed in Cebu outlining a policy framework for countering terrorism.

Although lacking cohesive enforcement and being heavily criticized by many political pundits, the ACCT constituted a considerable shift within Asia. For the first time, the Asian political leadership acknowledged the need to deal with the threat of terrorism collectively.

And yet why do we still have an insurgency in Thailand and Pakistan, war in Afghanistan, terror in the Philippines and Indonesia and political instability in Malaysia? The answer is complex, but perhaps an explanation can be found in the lack of domestic political consistency to deal with political violence, terrorism and radicalism.

- Indonesian politicians often need to appease the moderate Muslim vote.
- For India, it is easier to blame Pakistan instead of dealing with domestic terrorism and vice versa.
- The Malaysian public image & political scene could not afford to publicly acknowledge the arrests of 90 or so jihadists (especially since some key actors of Jemaah Islamiyah are Malaysians).
- In Thailand, the political elite regard the Muslim minority as second class, thereby giving the radicals cause to take up armed resistance against the state. Decades of failed policies toward the Thai Muslim minority and the success of GAM to

achieve autonomous status for the province of Aceh in Indonesia also encourages and indirectly fuels the conflict in the South of Thailand.

Already, the leadership of the Thai insurgent group (Barisan Revolusi Nasional – Koordinasi) BRN-C stated a five-year strategy before being in a position to negotiate with the Thai government which immediately brings the conflict into the year 2012.

Only recently has there been a change of the official Thai rhetoric: a more balanced approach towards the Muslim minority has replaced the “kill ’em all” attitude often previously expressed by some Thai military and political leaders towards 2.9 million Thais. (e.g. 28% [89,000] of the population of the tourist resort of Phuket is Muslims).

Without doubt the domestic radicalization in Asia fits into the global agenda of radical Islam and it is therefore not surprising that many of the initial operational responses were not cohesive as terrorism as a subject was not understood by the political and the religious leadership.

Tim Lindsey, of the Asian Law Center of the University of Melbourne commented in 2002, “*most political organizations will treat radical Islam not as a religious question but as an internal security and peace and order issue*”. Until today the Islamic leadership in Indonesia has made no clear declaration on denouncing Jemaah Islamiyah in the religious context. Only in the current trials of Abu Dujana, Jemaah Islamiyah was declared being a “forbidden organization” by the court.

The inconsistent response of the political direction resulted in cooperation often through the mobile phone of who-knows-who operating principal. But oddly enough, this process in its own mysterious way does work, so far. So, on the institutional front I think we should not worry. The framework exists.

**Now let me cover the second portion of my presentation: If terrorism in Asia is a threat for the European Union, what are these threats?**

Taking a quick overview of terrorism today, it is a fact that a high concentration of terror groups can be found in Asia. India alone has 177 registered terrorist groups from the extreme left to the extreme right<sup>1</sup>. Most of active terror groups can be found in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The next slide shows you about the density of Pakistan based radical groups.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/index.html>;  
[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/About\\_175\\_terror\\_groups\\_active\\_in\\_India/articleshow/2948867.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/About_175_terror_groups_active_in_India/articleshow/2948867.cms)

Others, for instance, Jemaah Islamiyah, formed by militant Malaysians and exiled Indonesians in Malaysia emerged in Indonesia after the overthrow of the Suharto regime in 1999 created loose brotherhoods of fellow radicals across Asia.

Today, these networks with terrorism being the tail end of this process spanning over three or four decades of waiting, building and forming of radical networks to create the perfect utopia of an Islamic state-society. Although the Islamic state, the caliphate, has been partially abandoned with the exception of Hizbut Tahrir who continues to promote the concept, the struggle of the Asian *jihadi* is timeless. Make no mistake about it.

It has not been easy for the Asian political leadership to accept the existence of the Asian jihadist amongst their societies. Asia's political elite tended to display a nonchalant, even ignorant attitude towards the deep-rooted social discontent that exists amongst its Muslim minorities and fringe groups. This attitude has contributed to the rise of militant Islam in Asia.

Even after the 2002 Bali bombing, it needed the bombing of the Marriott hotel in Jakarta to convince the Indonesian cabinet that Jemaah Islamiyah aims not only to attack a hotel full of "foreigners", but also strikes against the Indonesian elite or individual deemed 'anti Islamic' or "*thaghut*"<sup>2</sup>. The bomb missed the Central Bank governor who was stuck in the notorious traffic jams of Jakarta and rattled the foundation of the homes of senior officers of the Jakarta garrison situated in walking distance from the hotel. Besides, the hotel was a favorite hang out for the first husband of then president Megawati.

Eventually the Asian leadership was forced to rethink its cordial framework and find a solution to deal with the rise of Islamic militants as:

- The bombing campaigns the Philippines continued;
- The emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia in 2000, starting with a well-orchestrated bombing campaign against Christian churches; initially thought being organized by fractions of the army.
- The escalation of the Thai insurgency since 2004;
- The uncovering of a Jemaah Islamiyah cell right under the nose of the Internal Security Department in Singapore;
- Or Lashkar-e-Taiba operating in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.
- The recent electoral victories by the fundamental Islamist party, PAS, in Malaysia; With the son of the party leader, Nik Adli Nik Abdul Aziz, having a Cambodian-born wife being arrested under the preventive detention ruling of the Malaysian Internal Security Act in 2001 for undergoing military training in Pakistan and Afghanistan (he was released on 19 October 2006);

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<sup>2</sup> Anti Islamic

This brings me to the Center of Gravity debate with the Clausewitzian concept enjoying a renaissance. In my view the Clausewitzian global jihadi Center of Gravity consists not of one Center Of Gravity, but multiple Centers of Gravity's.

Two of these centers being located in Asia as shown in the slide. The reoccurring theme connecting the Centers of Gravity is travel, university and schools, most dominantly marriage, social networks, relationships and the Internet.

What should be of concern to the security of the EU is the fact the majority of foiled attacks since 9/11 originated in Asia, had Asian roots or had social networks linking Europe with Asian radicals. Although Asian terror groups by and large are regionally centric, the regional and global interaction of today Jihadists should not be underestimated as the patterns are beginning to shift.

For example,

- Yemeni Al Qaeda operative Syafullah entered Indonesia on a forged U.S. passport two days before the Bali 2002 bombings and departed on the night of the attack. His presence was never clearly explained.
- The Istanbul bombing were carried out by two individuals trained in Afghanistan in the late 1990's;
- In 2006 Indians traveling on false Philippine passports were arrested in the Manila airport trying to enter the Philippines. Indian based radical groups tried to join the various ASG/JI training camps in Mindanao. [INSERT TRAINING CAMP]
- And as recent as January 2008 Malaysian authorities arrested Agus Purwantoro and Abu Husna two Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah leaders trying to link up with Syrian based extremist groups.

These examples should give us enough reason for concern to see the roots of Asian radicals expanding their area of operations despite some Asian authorities are comfortable of some of the "old" terror groups being dismantled. With the fragmentation of the core groups, the outreach for cooperation will be a logical choice and unpredictable splinter cells could emerge in the not so near future.

Today, the global Al Qaeda movement can be described in three levels. Al Qaeda central, its affiliates, such as Jemaah Islamiyah, LeT or groups in the Middle East and home grown jihadists. The later group gains increasingly dominance and need little stimuli to act on its own.

In my view, the individual self radicalized home-grown Jihadi presents a real threat for the European Union. A clear example of a self-radicalized cell can be seen with the arrest of Abdul Basheer s/o Abdul Kader and four others in Singapore in February 2007. Aged 28, a National University of Singapore graduate and a polytechnic lecturer, Abdul Basheer was motivated by jihadi websites and attempted to join the Lashkar e-Tayyiba in Pakistan. It provides us an insight of the motion of the movement across the geographical divide begins at home.

With some policy maker lack the comprehension what is the jihadist cause all about and continuously following old law enforcement paradigms; the poor social integration of Diasporas allowing *segregation instead* of integration to take hold, the silo thinking of the state provides the jihadist the freedom of movement they needs.

The state is generally distrusted; the ideological response cumbersome and lacks the sincerity of the messenger. Whereas security services continue to apply traditional methods, the jihadists can be found on Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, Yahoo and Google.com communicating and submerging in the digital depths of the internet.

Militants has gone *www.jihad.com* and ideology can be found having a cool tune in line with Islamic values preferable with the latest Youtube having some Crusader in Iraq, Afghanistan or Thailand being blown to bits showing our collective incompetence as a society.

The simple, but effective Al Qaeda message continuously blasted over the internet of “us versus them” serves as the effective catalyst to recruit and radicalize Muslims alienated from the mainstream. Sadly, I have not so far found any good websites countering the jihadist ideology.

We cannot ignore or dismiss the links between various jihadist groups around the world. The mutual commitments to wage jihad, the experiences of their struggle, the intense personal relationships and kinship and commitment to the cause have deepened over decades. This slide shows some examples of the jihadists’ complex social relationships starting from 1987 in Berlin and which still exist today in a global form. As the case of Mohammad Mansour Jabarah shows a direct relationship is seldom needed.

With Mohammad Mansour Jabarah being one the first global jet setting jihadi his travels spanned from Asia to the Middle East. The internet circumvents the need for personal interaction. The cause is mutual. Bali, Mumbai, London, Madrid, or Casablanca provided the fascination with a glorious death. The enemy is common and the jihad is an individual responsibility.

So our response must be unconventional in dealing with these complex challenges. Although security forces at the operational/tactical level have gained some considerable ground recently, the ideological battle has still to be fought effectively. Hence a goal for counter terror efforts is to collectively dismantle the jihadists' fascination with death. Both the political and religious leadership must engage the majority of the moderate Muslims residing in Europe to isolate and expose the radical minority.

Finally, let us look at the threat. The jihadists have repeatedly sent a very loud and clear message to the EU. This threat is not immediate but strategic of nature. Al Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah, LeT and others operate on ten to thirty year strategic outlook.

Refusing to deal with the terror threat because your country is not part of a coalition is a naïve assumption. The former Australian Prime Minister John Howard has said: "Terrorism will not be defeated by nuancing our foreign policy, nor will Terrorism be defeated by rolling ourselves into a small ball and going into a corner and imagining that somehow or other we will escape notice."

Hence, the traditional concepts of counter terrorism need updating. In addition, innovation and unconventional thinking is required to bring the security services into the domain of the radicals in the backyards of Asia.

- There must greater comprehension of the social Diaspora from Dubai and Qatar that Asian extremists use as a gateway to Europe.
- Some Asian Jihadis have completed their prison sentences. Their movement must become a priority for security services in the future.
- The educational system of the jihadist and his belief system centering on the purity of the Islamic concept must be understood and studied in greater detail.
- The transformation and recruitment begins at an early stage, as early as in playgroups. The educational system and liberal values of our societies exploited by radical Islamic movements and their ideology must be revisited without becoming a police state. With the jihadi time frame being strategic of nature so must be our response.
- Security services require streetwise operators understanding the culture, religious aspects and social networks of the jihadists. This represents a different breed of security service and law enforcement officer.
- And, since cyberspace provides terrorists with opportunities beyond geographical limitations, the counter terror efforts of today must continue to adapt and evolve accordingly. The internet provides a threat however from a counter terror perspective provides even great opportunity to counter radical Islam.
- Government must prepare civil society. The act of violence or attack is the end state of the process. The capability and effectiveness of the policymakers to

respond to the crisis determines the viability of civil society and our civil liberties we enjoy. The threat for the EU in the near future is a mix between the ‘true professional’ terrorist and the homegrown extremist. Beware of the amateur.

- The potential for mass casualty attacks against the public transportation system and the hospitality industry remains a high probability. Militant Jihadists always stick to attacks that work hence providing some; I repeat only some, predictability on their modus operandi. Their love with a repeat of the Bali bombings 2002, Madrid or London is deeply engrained in their operational doctrine.
- The threat of unconventional attacks in EU countries on a grand scale is a plausible scenario as long as the global jihadist leadership continues to remain at large.
- Society must, repeat must, integrate it moderate Muslim community. Integration and social acceptance will provide protection. Hate against the Islamic community must be replaced with cultural diversity. However, integration should not be mistaken with submission. Proper integration of Islamic minorities into a society will expose radical elements and deny to very much needing space for concealment.
- The threats are complex. It requires a mix of application for the counter terrorist policy maker. This mix must consist of human intelligence and technology. It must be include the academia, anthropologist, law enforcement, police and the military. I can only warn of the overdependence on technological solutions. In the majority of recent Counter Terror successes the good old human informer played a major role. Technology is in essence a human support tool. Human intelligence is costly and complex but many governments who failed to understand the militant environment had to learn the hard way, that technology can not replace the educated inside informer.
- Abstract level technologies such Horizon Scanning are in the forefront of complex policy support tools available but any application of such complex technologies will require a serious change in policy and mindset of the government.
- And finally, consider the economical cost of any incident that occurs must be part of the counter terror policy. Besides the actual cost, for example, in the J.W Marriott case, 6 million USD for repairs and annual 50,000 USD for medical bills per serious injured are jut the top visible cost to bear. But the impact is deeper than the actual costs. The expenditure for post-incidents actions outrank any, I repeat any actual need for public safety which is an emotional reaction, hence increasing security expenditure and trigger societal change. A more prudent approach I needed.

- Some of these steps are needed in the ‘neighbor’s front yard’ of Europe, Asia. And your strategic depth of counter terror policy must be increased as we are part of the global village.

And on a parting note, even if plots are discovered and lives are saved, the jihadists will still achieve their main objective of paralyzing the system if we remember the foiled airline plot halting effectively an entire industry.

Instead of following Mao’s “kill one, scare thousands”, motto, the jihadist of today adapted the motto: “threaten to kill hundreds, scare millions.”

Thank you very much for your time.