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We are happy to publish Volume 6, Issue 10 (November 2014) of the Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis (CTTA) at www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/ctta. The articles in this issue detail the lives and personalities of five prominent terrorist leaders from some of the major theatres of violence in the world today and the nature of the deadly organisations they run. The individuals profiled include those from relatively obscure or modest backgrounds and those with claims of grand ancestry and high scholarship, demonstrating the diversity in their pathways to radicalisation and eventual accession to leadership positions of the respective groups. Common to these individuals however are their penchant for violence and persuasive oratory skills.

Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff examines the genealogy of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of the most feared terrorist organisation today, the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), especially in the context of the claim that he is a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad. While this claim and his scholarly credentials ostensibly sets Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi apart from the leadership of the group's previous incarnations, ISIS continues to be driven by the same radical ideology and brutal tactics as its predecessors.

Abdul Basit has profiled Asim Umar, the newly appointed head of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) - a trained theologian and a former TTP commander with connections to local militant organisations across the region. Asim Umar-led AQIS could attempt to prove its relevance by staging high-profile attacks especially in India and Pakistan. Basit also studies Fazlullah, the ski-lift operator who is now the leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) - the first one to hail from outside Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Basit estimates the Fazlullah-led TTP not only as a long-term threat to Pakistan but also to be detrimental to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations.

Emeka Okereke demonstrates how, under the leadership of Abubakar Mohammed Shekau, the Nigerian group Boko Haram could grab global headlines through its extreme acts of violence. Okereke underscores that despite uncertainty about Shekau's current status, the group continues to carry out attacks and abductions.

Finally, Robi Sugara in his article on Santoso, the leader of Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) or East Indonesian Mujahidin, demonstrates Santoso's uniqueness in terms of his rise from relative obscurity to become Indonesia's most wanted terrorist. Sugara assesses that with his expanding network, the terrorist threat posed by MIT can only increase - in scale and scope - in Indonesia.

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Editor	Arabinda Acharya, PhD
Associate Editor	Iromi Dharmawardhane
Assistant Editor	Anton Chan
Design and Layout	Okkie Tanupradja

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Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the Imposter

Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS, which is at centre stage of terrorist movements today, claims to be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. This is however deeply contested as the information on him is mostly from various online sources, the genealogy is unverifiable, and there are inconsistencies in publically shared information. A review of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's background and atrocities committed by the group under his leadership also show the contrast between ISIS ideology and the real teachings of Islam.

Identity

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), and the self-proclaimed Caliph of its recently declared 'Islamic State.' Under his leadership, the group poses a direct threat to Iraq and Syria, as well as causes instability across the region and threatens global security. Despite the prominence however, open-source information on Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi has been limited in scope, inconsistent, and mostly unverifiable. The most well-known and widespread writing on Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is the monograph titled "Extend Your Hands to Give Loyalty to Al-Baghdadi" by Abu Humam Bakr Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Athari. This monograph was dated 13 Ramadhan 1434, i.e. 21 July 2013. Abu Humam Bakr Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Athari is believed to be a pen name of a Bahraini ideologue named Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah (born 1984). He is known to have several monikers such as Tukri Al-Binali, Abu Sufyan Al-Silmi, Abu Sufyan Al-Sulami, Abu Dargham, Abu Humam Al-Athari, Abu Humam Bakr Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Athari, and Bakr Bin Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Al-Athari. Despite the various aliases, it is believed that these are all the same person - Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah.

Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah is believed to be a member of the Sharia Council of Minbar Al-Tawhid wal Jihad ('The Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad'), a leading Salafi-Jihadist website group that was founded by the Jordanian-Palestinian Jihadist writer Issam Bin Muhammad Bin Taher Al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, who was the religious mentor of Ahmed Fadil Nazal al Khalayleh, a.k.a. Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi - the founding leader of Jamaat Tawhid wal Jihad ('Monotheism and Jihad Group') in Iraq and Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's full name as claimed by different sources is Ibrahim Bin Awwad Bin Ibrahim Bin Ali Bin Muhammad – although Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah does not state this or propose a different name for Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in his writings (only refers to him as Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi). Different sources state that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's forefathers (also referred to as 'families' in the Arab context) over the generations were: Al-Sada, Al-Sharaf, Al-Badariyin, Al-Bu Badri, Al-Radawi, Al-Husseini, Al-Hashimi, Al-Qurashi, Al-Nizari, and Al-Adnani. These names may at times be singly or as a group attached to his name. It is to be noted that the names Al-Husseini, Al-Qurashi, Al-Hashimi, and Al-Adnani are attributed as a factor in his claim as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. In addition to these names, he has several pseudonyms: Al-Karar, Ali Al-Badri As-Samarrai, and Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, his nom de guerre. He is also formally known as Abu Dua within the group.

Background

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is believed to have been born in 1971 in Samarra, Iraq, 125 kilometres north of Baghdad, and comes from a family that is Salafist in its religious orientation. He earned a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies from Al Jamiah Al Islamiyyah or the Islamic University in Baghdad, Iraq, which is now known as the Iraqi University. He also possesses a master's degree in Quranic Studies. Some sources suggest that he has a doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence, while others claim that it is in Islamic Education.

He is known to be well-versed in the knowledge of Islamic history and ancestral studies, and because of this he is called 'al failusuf al jihadi' which means 'philosophical jihadist.' He is also claimed to have mastered the ten readings (different recitations) of the Quran in addition to studying it, as he adopts eloquent and strong

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language when delivering speeches or communicating messages to his followers - an attribute which has contributed significantly to his influence. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is believed to be quite a prominent figure and famous theorist in the Diyala Governorate and in the Samarra city in the Salah ad Din Governorate, north of Baghdad. He is also known to have good relations with the people of the two areas in addition to his family members.

Following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi came to be the leader of the militant group Jaish Ahl al Sunnah wal Jamaah ('Army of the People of Tradition and Unification'), which was active in the provinces of Diyala, Samarra, and Baghdad. He subsequently joined the Majlis Shurra al Mujahidin fi al Iraq ('Consultative Council of the Jihad Fighters in Iraq') or Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC) as it was established in January 2006, a conglomerate of jihadist groups led by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leaders Hamed Dawood Mohammed Khalil al Zawi, a.k.a. Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and Abd al Munim Izzidine Ali Ismail, a.k.a. Abu Ayyub Al-Masri, a.k.a. Sheikh Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi served in the Shura Council of the MSC, and subsequently in the Shura Council of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) formed in October 2006. Following the deaths of Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub Al-Masri, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was appointed the leader of ISI on 16 May 2010. Under Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, ISI grew rapidly with the recruitment of former Baathists and personnel from Iraqi military, law enforcement,

and intelligence agencies of the Saddam Hussein period.

Descendant of the Prophet?

When Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was appointed as the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), ISIS's predecessor, his lineage that ostensibly traces itself to the Prophet Muhammad was announced publicly and repeatedly by his group members, supporters, and followers. His relationship to the Prophet was meant to impress his credentials among the Muslim community. However, the names listed in the lineage raise several issues which cast doubt upon Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's ancestry as a descendant of Prophet Muhammad.

In his article, Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah gives the most detailed account of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's alleged lineage, and mentions a long list of his forefathers, claiming that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is the grandchild of the fourth Caliph of Islam and the nephew of the Prophet Muhammad who was: Urmush Bin Ali Bin 'Eid Bin Badri Bin Badruddin Bin Khalil Bin Husein Bin Abdullah Bin Ibrahim Al-Awwah Bin Asy-Syarif Yahya 'Izzuddin Bin Asy-Syarif Basyir Bin Majid Bin Athiyah Bin Ya'la Bin Duweid Bin Majid Bin Abdurrahman Bin Qasim Bin Asy-Syarif Idris Bin Ja'far Az-Zakiy Bin Ali al-Hadi Bin Muhammad Al-Jawwad Bin Ali Ar-Ridha Bin Musa Al-Kazhim Bin Ja'far Ash-Shodiq Bin Muhammad Al-Baqir Bin Ali Zainal Abidin Bin Husein Bin Ali Bin Abi Thalib Ali Bin Abi Thalib.

However, first and foremost, the current descendants of those who lived in 7th century Arabia would be at least the 40th generation of descendants. Hence, those claiming to be of the 32nd generation, as with Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi whose immediate grandfather is listed as Urmush, would have to be of the previous generation, i.e. they would have lived at least one hundred years ago. This clearly casts doubts upon Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's ancestry to the Prophet, as at least eight generations are missing in this claim.

Second, there is a discrepancy in his lineage posed by his name, Ibrahim bin Awwad bin Ibrahim bin Ali bin Muhammad, if Urmush is to be understood as his immediate grandfather, as the earlier part of the name denotes that his immediate grandfather would have been known as Ibrahim (not Urmush). This would mean that Urmush was the son of Ali (Ibrahim's great-

“ ... the disparities and the discontinuity relating to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's real name suggest that something is being concealed. ”

grandfather) and grandson of Muhammad (Ibrahim's great-great-grandfather), and not the son of Ali and grandson of 'Eid (Urmush Bin Ali Bin 'Eid Bin Badri) as stated by Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah.

Third, the disparities and the discontinuity relating to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's real name suggest that something is being concealed. Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah did not mention that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's name is Ibrahim bin Awwad Bin Ibrahim Bin Ali Bin Muhammad in his article. He only listed Ibrahim's grandfathers, from Urmush until Ali Bin Abi Thalib without connecting Urmush to Ibrahim. Thus, the question of why there is the need to conceal the names of his immediate forefathers arises, in addition to why Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah did not declare his full name in his article. This is ironic, as one of the important criteria of a leader according to Islam that Turki Bin Mubarak Bin Abdullah himself mentions in his article is the need to have a clear lineage to the Prophet.

Thus, in the absence of more complete information on Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's forefathers, his claims of ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad are doubtful. If there was a clear lineage to the Prophet, it seems that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, ISIS, and its supporters would have already presented it to support Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's proclamation as Caliph.

Ideology and Strategy

Knowing Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's profile gives a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the current terrorist threat in Iraq and Syria. One vital factor to note is that Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is not disconnected from his socio-political and cultural context with regard to Iraq, as he has been involved in the conflict in Iraq for close to ten

years or perhaps even more.

Ironically, despite his scholarly credentials, he has endorsed the brutality perpetrated by his subordinates, albeit sometimes indirectly. This also proves that knowledge of Islam does not translate into a true understanding of Islam, as Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's decisions and actions are not infused with the morality and ethics as required by Islam. This has been proven by the thousands of civilians who have died due to attacks and massacres by his group, and the thousands more who have suffered the long list of atrocities committed by the group such as beheadings, public executions, slavery of women, and ethnic cleansing. Terrorist acts by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi-led ISIS have been condemned by many Islamic scholars.

Apparently, what Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is doing today is mostly a continuation of the strategies and practices followed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian jihadist and founder of Al Qaeda in Iraq. The same psychopathic and ruthless indoctrination can be seen in Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's ways. Even video-recording of beheadings is not new, and had been practiced by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, since he founded his group in Iraq in 2003.

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's narrative to establish an Islamic Caliphate was well-received by many Sunni Muslims in Iraq, and by some individuals in Syria. However, the same was not the case when it came to implementing the Sharia, which in respect of the group he leads – ISIS – has been extremely brutal. In fact, some fighters regret joining ISIS due to the extreme atrocities committed by the group, among other reasons.

Like Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was also able to exploit the widespread notions of Sunnis being dispossessed by the Shiite-dominated government in Iraq as well as the Alawite-dominated regime in Syria. He capitalises on the conditions of economic and political discrimination and the environment of instability and chaos to strengthen his terrorist movement. As such, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi has been able to sustain the alliance with Sunni Arab tribesmen as well as many former Baathist military officers from Saddam Hussein's regime. In fact, many former senior Iraqi military personnel joined the ISIS and became the group's top brass – some acting as Governors (*Wali*) in the ISIS Caliphate.

ISIS has gained prominence not just due to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi but due to its extensive propaganda efforts especially through social media. Furthermore, the so-called Caliphate is maintained by many Baathists and it is likely that they will continue to gain greater control within the group. Moreover, history has proven that the threat from insurgent or terrorist groups may not be vanquished by killing the head of the group. This alludes to the point that the killing of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi or Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub Al-Masri did not cause the group to be defeated, but led the terrorist threat in Iraq and Syria to evolve into the more notorious, ISIS. Especially with its present strength in terms of resources and personnel, ISIS will continue to grow with or without Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, until hopefully contained by the combined forces of national and regional powers.

Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff is a Senior Analyst with the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU.

Asim Umar - ‘New Kid on the Block’?

Abdul Basit

On 4 September 2014, Al Qaeda’s head Ayman Al-Zawahiri launched the terror group’s South Asian branch, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) or Jamaat Qaidat al Jihad fi Shibh al Qarrah al Hindiyah (Organisation of the Base of Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent). In the announcement of its formation which was widely distributed via social media, Ayman Al-Zawahiri stated the group will raise the flag of jihad in the Indian subcontinent. He appealed to the Muslim youth in these countries to “wage jihad for revival of Islamic rule.” Appointed to head the new Al Qaeda arm was a former commander of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or Movement of the Pakistani Taliban, Asim Umar.

The appointment of Asim Umar, a Pakistani, is significant for a number of reasons. Possibly, it shows that Al Qaeda is running out of Arab leaders and that the organisation is now relying on local jihadist leaders to run its operations in the region. In the last few years, a substantial number of Al Qaeda’s top leaders have been killed by US operations, including Osama Bin Laden in 2011. On the other hand, it also demonstrated the close Al Qaeda links to the Pakistani Taliban. However, by announcing its own South Asian branch, Al Qaeda has indicated that it wants to keep its identity and operations distinct from the local jihadist groups in South Asia, but at the same time maintain a close relationship with them. From Al Qaeda’s perspective, Asim Umar’s appointment does seem to be a wise choice, given his local knowledge and experience, as well as his extensive ties to various jihadist groups.

Who is Asim Umar?

Now in his mid-40s, the Urdu-speaking Asim Umar hails from Pakistan’s southern port city, Karachi. Trained as a theologian, he studied in Karachi’s Jamia Uloomul Islamia madrassa, known for producing jihadist commanders

and leaders. The head of Jamia Uloomul Islamia and Asim Umar’s mentor, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzi, also instructed other prominent Pakistani jihadist leaders Fazlu Rehman Khalil and Qari Saifullah Akhtar, founding members of Harkatul Jihad uIslami (HUJI) or the Islamic Jihad Movement, before he was killed in May 2004. HUJI, the oldest Pakistani jihadist group, is a Kashmir-focused anti-Indian outfit. Asim is known to have continued his studies at Maulana Sami ul-Haq’s Dar ul Uloom Haqqania in Pakistan’s north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. The Haqqania madrassa is another institution with links to the jihadist movement, and the alma mater of the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Umar. The principal of Haqqania, Maulana Sami ul-Haq, is a hard-line Deobandi cleric, and is considered the godfather of the Afghan Taliban due to the large numbers of Taliban leaders who studied at his seminary.

Before joining HUJI, Asim also taught at a madrassa in Karachi, and at the start of his jihadist career, he translated jihadist literature from Pashto (native language of the Pashtun people) to Urdu. During his time with HUJI, he is known to have headed a jihadist training centre in the Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Asim Umar as AQIS Chief?

Given Al Qaeda’s global outlook and agenda, Asim Umar’s appointment as head of AQIS could be strategically significant. His strengths are numerous: he has worked both with Al Qaeda as well as other jihadist organisations, he is relatively young and dynamic, and is a skilled orator and knowledgeable ideologue. These attributes, together with his wide connections throughout the jihadist community, even outside South Asia, make him an influential personality and an effective leader to head Al Qaeda’s new entity in South Asia.

He is highly respected both by local and foreign jihadists in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as he has a record of being a strong ideologue, and is well-recognised in the community. His two-year stint with Al Qaeda and years of working experience with different Pakistani jihadist organisations also add to his connections.

Trusted Al Qaeda Lieutenant

Before being appointed as AQIS Chief he was Al Qaeda’s internet propagandist and also head of

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Al Qaeda’s Sharia committee for Pakistan. He rose in Al Qaeda’s ranks after the killing of Al Qaeda leader Abu Yahya Al-Libi in a 2012 US drone strike. Abu Yahya Al-Libi was the face of Al Qaeda’s online propaganda campaign and ran the group’s media operations, and Asim Umar filled this position. Reportedly, Ayman Al-Zawahiri came to know about Asim Umar in 2011 when he was restructuring Al Qaeda, after the killing of Osama Bin Laden. While announcing the formation of AQIS, Ayman Al-Zawahiri mentions that the spadework to launch AQIS was initiated in 2012. He said: “This entity was not established today, but it is the fruit of a blessed effort for more than two years to gather the mujahidin in the Indian subcontinent into a single entity to be with the main group, Qaedat al Jihad.”

Before actually joining Al Qaeda, Asim Umar was already well-known to the organisation and a trusted Al Qaeda associate. He first developed relations with Al Qaeda during his time with HUJI, and won the trust of Al Qaeda leaders when he travelled to Afghanistan for militant-combat training in Al Qaeda-run training camps. It was during this time that he met Osama Bin Laden. Since then, Asim has enjoyed a good reputation with different Al Qaeda leaders, including Osama Bin Laden. According to some media reports, Asim helped Osama to move to his safe house and last abode in Abbottabad.

Asim’s ideology is also in line with classic Al Qaeda thinking. In most of his video statements and published works he remains fixated with America (‘the far enemy’). In a video statement in 2013, he appealed for global jihad to give a final push to the “collapsing edifice of America.”

A Fiery Orator, Jihadist Ideologue, Theologian, and Writer

Asim Umar’s multilingual skills enable him to target diverse audiences, locally and globally. Moreover, he is eloquent and articulate, and speaks Urdu, English, Arabic and Pashto fluently. Linguistically adept and persuasive with his background in various jihadist seminaries, Asim Umar has become a formidable force on the ideological front.

Asim has written four books (available online) in the Urdu language promoting jihad. His books have been translated into several languages including Pashto, Uzbek, and Arabic. Prone to religious fantasies, his favourite topics include: *Dajjal* (Anti-Christ), *Nabilssa* (the second coming of Jesus), *End Times Battle/ Armageddon* and *Blackwater*, the US private security firm. Titles of his books are, *Dajjal KaLashkar: Black Water* (*Army of the Anti-Christ: the Black Water*), *Teesri Jang-e-Azeem Aur Dajjal* (*World War III and Dajjal*), *Imam Mehdi ke Doostaur Dushman* (*Friends and Foes of the Messiah*), and *Bermuda Tikonaur Dajjal* (*Bermuda Triangle and Dajjal*). He has also written a number of articles in jihadist magazines like *Ahya-e-Khilafat* (*Revival of Caliphate*), the flagship magazine of Jamaat-ul-Aharar’s (JuA), a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban, Al Qaeda’s newly launched English magazine *Resurgence*, and TTP’s English language magazine *Azan*.

Asim has delivered jihadist sermons, lectures and propaganda speeches in a number of videos released by Al Qaeda’s media arm As-Sahab. Two of his most significant videos include the September 2012 video released on the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Asim’s appearance in this video shows his growing stature within Al Qaeda. The second one is a July 2013 video entitled: *Why is There No Storm in Your Ocean?* In this video, he asks Indian Muslim youth, “How can you remain in your slumber when the Muslims of the world are awakening?” This video was likely a prelude to the announcement of AQIS the following year.

Asim’s message resonates well with audiences in India. He has a good knowledge of Indian history, and he frequently makes nostalgic references to Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent (715-1857) and the urge to revive that through jihad. Such jihadist rhetoric focused on local issues and grievances but couched in global jihadist ideology, is the kind of approach

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Al Qaeda needs to make its mark beyond Pakistan, and revive its flagging fortunes against its rival terror group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), which is rapidly rising in Iraq and Syria.

Well-connected Network

Asim Umar’s biggest asset is his network among the jihadist organisations in South Asia. Reportedly, Asim has a good rapport with anti-India jihadist groups in India - the Indian Mujahidin, which is the new incarnation of the Student Islamic Movement of India (Simi) and Ansar-ut Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind (AuT) or ‘Supporters of Monotheism in the Land of India.’ He also has connections with Bangladesh’s terrorist group Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B). His past association with different HUJI factions in the region will enable him to use the old HUJI network to spread AQIS propaganda and terror operations. It is pertinent to mention that before its disintegration, HUJI used to run branches in India, Bangladesh, Kashmir, and Myanmar. In India, HUJI had support pockets in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), along with sleeper cells in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan. In Bangladesh it had pockets of influence in Cox Bazar in Dhaka, as well as in Chittagong.

Familiar with the ‘who’s who’ of the jihadist community in South Asia, Asim is also able to tap into the Afghan Taliban’s network in Afghanistan, use his connections within the Pakistani Taliban to operate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, and use his past links with Kashmiri jihadist organisations and anti-Shia sectarian outfits to operate in mainland Pakistan. His approach is to think global and act local, i.e. his ideology is global jihad but his focus and operational domain is South Asia. This will keep him in line with the thinking and plans of Al Qaeda core, while allowing him to capitalise on

his old network links.

Eastward Expansion of Terrorism

Al Qaeda has been involved in jihadist activities in South Asia for the last three decades. The emergence of AQIS and the appointment of a Pakistani jihadist leader with anti-India credentials indicates that Al Qaeda wants to cement its place in the region on a long-term basis. As the US minimises its footprint in Afghanistan at the end of 2014, a primary motivation for jihad in that region will disappear. Through the formation of AQIS, Al Qaeda has come up with a regional framework, i.e. ‘Ghazwa Al-Hind’ or the ‘Battle to Reunite India,’ which includes the core portions of Pakistan not bordering Afghanistan, along with all of India, Bangladesh, and parts of Myanmar. Theologically, Ghazwa Al-Hind has been mentioned in a Hadith ((sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). In the 55-minute video announcing the formation of AQIS released in September this year, Ayman Al-Zawahiri makes references to ‘Ghazwa Al-Hind’ and foretells Muslim conquest of all of India. In the video, Asim Umar said that “the caravan of jihad” will begin in Pakistan and will reach India, Bangladesh, and Burma.”

The infusion of the ‘Ghazwa Al-Hind’ narrative will keep Al Qaeda relevant to, and active in South Asia, ensuring the war/jihad in the region carries on well beyond 2014. This shift in Al Qaeda’s focus is transforming the jihadist militant landscape in South Asia, operationally and ideologically. It is expanding eastwards along the India-Pakistan axis, from its Afghanistan-Pakistan axis.

Terror Attacks Can Increase in South Asia

To make its mark AQIS is most likely to try to stage a 2008 Mumbai style or 2013 Westgate (Nairobi, Kenya) like ‘terror spectacular’ in the region. The potential targets range from military installations, state landmarks, public places, non-Muslim worship places, tourist spots, to big hotels.

An attempt at such an attack has already occurred on 6 September 2014, when AQIS made an abortive attempt to hijack a Pakistani Navy ship from the Karachi naval dockyard with the intention of launching missiles at US warships in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan Navy Commandoes quelled the attack killing all the attackers. Subsequently, AQIS spokesperson

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Osama Mahmoud released a nine-page press release in which he said that the target of the attacks were Indian and American Navies, and that it was carried out on the directive of Ayman Al-Zawahiri.

In its English language magazine *Resurgence*, launched in October 2014, AQIS unveiled future plans of attacking oil tankers passing through the Strait of Hormouz by identifying several weak points. It notes: “Critical sea lanes provide strategic opportunity for the militants to launch attacks on US naval ships and critical oil supplies on the West-bound oil shipments to create crisis and chaos in the international energy market.”

AQIS-ISIS Competition

The launch of AQIS also shows the start of a fierce competition and a turf battle between Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) group for recruits and influence over the jihadist organisations in South Asia. This competition could result in a break-up of existing jihadist groups and the emergence of new ones split along three jihadist approaches, namely Al Qaeda’s global jihad mode (‘think global but act local’), the ISIS caliphate model (‘think global and act global’), and the Afghan Taliban’s emirate model (‘think local and act local’).

The Afghan Taliban will try to keep maximum manpower on their side to try to re-occupy Afghanistan after the US exit from Afghanistan. At the same time, Al Qaeda which has been challenged by ISIS needs new recruits and

leaders to remain relevant to the jihadist equation globally. Meanwhile, ISIS’s victories and strength have been increasing its appeal, though in the short-term for the would-be-jihadists in the region.

Conclusion

The emergence of a new generation of Pakistani Al Qaeda leaders and ideologues like Asim Umar is alarming for regional peace and security. Asim Umar’s immediate aim will be to keep Al Qaeda’s current strength intact, in the face of rising ISIS influence in the region, and then try to expand the AQIS network. This will depend a lot on the future of ISIS once the on-going US-led air strikes against the group is over, and how local jihadist groups in South Asia cooperate with him.

Recruitment will remain an issue for AQIS, and leaders like Asim Umar may persuade vulnerable youth in the region to carry out jihad to avenge perceived Muslim oppression in Myanmar, India, and Bangladesh. In Pakistan, AQIS is targeting Pakistan’s higher education institutions for recruiting young graduates. The rationale behind this is that other networks like the Taliban have a monopoly on recruiting from the lower ranks of society, and the educated population remains an available open option for AQIS. Additionally, the Al Qaeda brand may have a larger appeal to university students and their ilk who may hold extremist leanings, but do not wish to join more ‘tribal’ and locally oriented groups. There are two cases in point in this regard. In September 2013, Pakistani security forces discovered an Al Qaeda cell at Lahore’s premier public sector university, the University of Punjab. Another Al Qaeda network was detected in Karachi with multiple wings. The members of this cell ranged from highly educated individuals to IT professionals and technologists who had targeted bright students as potential members.

To make its mark, AQIS could carry out a terror spectacular like the 2008 Mumbai attack or Kenyan Westgate Mall attack in the region. So far, the group has claimed responsibility for carrying out two attacks inside Pakistan, the first killing a Pakistani army officer in Punjab’s Sargodha district and the second being the abortive attempt to hijack a Pakistan navy ship and hit a US naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. Beyond this, there is not much to write about on the group’s strength, other than loud rhetoric and propaganda. Asim Umar appears to have the capabilities to lead this new branch of Al Qaeda, but they remain to be demonstrated.

Abdul Basit is an Associate Research Fellow with the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU. He can be reached at isabasit@ntu.edu.sg.

Mullah Fazlullah: A Journey from 'FM Mullah' to Head of the Pakistan Taliban

Abdul Basit

From a foot soldier in Sufi Muhammad's Tehrik-e-Nifaze-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), Mullah Fazlullah rose to being the chief of the Taliban in Swat, and subsequently the head of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or Pakistan Taliban. Despite the disintegration of the group, the TTP under Fazlullah pose a long-term threat to Pakistan's internal security post-2014.

Born into a working class family in 1974, Fazl-e-Hayat, later known as Fazlullah, hails from north-western Pakistan's Swat District, located close to the Afghan-Pakistan border and a mountainous vacation resort which is described as the 'Switzerland of South Asia.' He worked as a ski-lift operator before he turned to militancy and terrorism. In the 1990s, Fazl-e-Hayat changed his name to Fazlullah to shun his image as a ski-lift operator (locals knew him as 'Fazl-e-Hayat, the ski-lift operator'), so as to boost his credentials as an Islamist leader. In 2001, he joined the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) or 'Movement for the Enforcement of Sharia Law,' a militant Islamist group led by radical cleric and jihadist ideologue Sufi Muhammad. Fazlullah subsequently married Sufi Muhammad's daughter. However, Fazl-e-Hayat functioned only as a foot soldier within the group, as Sufi Muhammad never thought Fazl-e-Hayat - initially a seminary student in his *madrassa* who had a love affair with his daughter and then eloped with her to get married - was ever good enough for his daughter or deserved his respect.

Rise of Fazlullah

2005 Earthquake and Revival of TNSM

In October 2001, Sufi Muhammad led a group of approximately 10,000 volunteer fighters to Afghanistan, including Fazlullah, to fight alongside the Afghan Taliban against the US forces in Afghanistan. However, soon after his return to Pakistan, Sufi Muhammad was arrested along with several of his supporters. Sufi Muhammad's arrest and the ban imposed on TNSM by the then military-led government of General Pervez Mushrraf rendered TNSM defunct and impotent. Fazlullah was also arrested soon and spent about 18 months in prison. After his release in 2003, and despite the ban, Fazlullah revived the TNSM with a more radical jihadist focus, and emerged as its undisputed leader.

The turning point in Fazlullah's rise as a militant commander was the October 2005 earthquake which devastated vast areas of Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province, the operational base of TNSM. It was through the post-earthquake relief and rehabilitation operations undertaken by TNSM members that Fazlullah managed to restore the group to its former position of influence and strength. Fazlullah also exploited narratives about the occurrence of the natural calamity in his communiqués to instil fear in the people in favour of his radical Islamist agenda, by claiming that the earthquake was a reminder from God to the people of Swat to stop violating His commandments and teachings. In this way, Fazlullah started proselytising the people of Swat with a self-styled radical version of Sharia, using TNSM as his platform.

'FM Mullah'

In 2005, Mullah Fazlullah also started using illegal (unlicensed) radio stations, especially frequency modulation (FM) networks, to spread his extremist ideas. The use of radio networks earned him the nicknames 'FM Mullah' and 'Radio Mullah,' locally and internationally. FM channels proved both easy to launch and cost-effective, as a 10 watt FM channel only cost about US \$200, but could be heard across a region. With the little technical skills required, Mullah Fazlullah only needed a transmitter, amplifier, and a car/motor bicycle battery, to send his message to each home in every village.

“ During Mullah Fazlullah's reign of terror in Swat, anyone who dared to resist the TTP was brutally killed and made an example of ... ”

Within the span of a few months, he excelled in the use of illegal radio stations. He used the adage, 'medium is the message' to his optimal benefit. Through his firebrand speeches, he became a household name, won local sympathies, and attracted recruits from Swat and other districts of KP. His sermons became popular among the local people to the extent that if someone missed a broadcast he or she felt the need to ask someone else what Mullah Fazlullah had said that particular day.

Alliance with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Fazlullah joined Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or the 'Movement of the Pakistani Taliban' upon its formation in December 2007, and was appointed as head of TTP's Swat chapter. He subsequently created a large seminary using public donations in Swat's Imamdheri village, his birthplace, and used it as the group's headquarters. Fazlullah's decision to join TTP earned him more fighters (including Punjabis and fighters from Uzbekistan) in addition to the support of approximately 2,000 to 3,000 fighters from TNSM, which further augmented his strength.

During his reign of terror in Swat, anyone who dared to resist the TTP was brutally killed and made an example of. His policies included the prohibition of education for females, polio vaccination, and watching of television. To reinforce his authority, he hanged those accused as 'sinners' and spies in Swat's Green Chowk, which came to be called 'Slaughter Chowk.' For instance, in December 2007, the TTP dumped 27 dead bodies in the square, and also warned the residents from removing them as a further warning to the locals not to violate the laws laid down by the TTP. Due to his brutal policies in Swat and ruthless dealings with his opponents,

Fazlullah quickly rose as a feared leader amongst the jihadist community in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Decline of Fazlullah's Reign of Terror in Swat

Fazlullah's brutal treatment meted out to the people of Swat, blatant violations of the laws of the state, and his advancement beyond Swat, prompted the Pakistan Army to launch two military operations against him in 2007 and 2009. The operation conducted in 2007 continued for a month. However, after winning the February 2008 general elections, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led coalition government opted for peace talks with the militants and released Sufi Muhammad so that he could act as an interlocutor between the government and Swat Taliban. However, after his release Sufi Muhammad started giving provocative anti-government and anti-democracy speeches, instead of helping the government. This peace package resulted in the withdrawal of the Army from Swat and the creation of Qazi (Islamic) Courts by the government and official implementation of Sharia in Swat. In return, Fazlullah and his followers were expected to respect the writ of the state, cease violence, and allow girls to continue their education. However, Fazlullah did not honour this second part of the agreement.

In fact, Fazlullah used the peace deal and the withdrawal of the military to expand his influence beyond Swat to the neighbouring Shangla and Buner districts, following which the Pakistan Army launched a major military operation code-named 'Rah-e-Haq' ('Path to Salvation') beginning on 11 May 2009. The operation lasted for four months and the Army succeeded in restoring the government's control over the whole of the Malakand Division. Fazlullah, along with thousands of his followers, took a tactical retreat into eastern Afghanistan's Kunar and Nuristan Provinces at this juncture. Sufi Muhammad was re-arrested in 2009, and he continues to be imprisoned in the Central Prison Peshawar in KP Province.

Revival of Swat Taliban in Afghanistan

Fazlullah was able to resurrect his network in Pakistan while in Afghanistan and retain pockets of influence in FATA's Bajaur Agency as well as in the Swat, Chitral, and Upper Dir districts of KP. Since mid-2009, Fazlullah and his group have been attacking Pakistani security forces and

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civilians through cross-border incursions, specifically in parts of Swat and other areas not under the control of the Pakistan Army. In 2010-2011, Fazlullah also created a very strong network in Karachi, Pakistan's commercial capital. This network is involved in money extortion, bank robberies, kidnapping for ransom, and targeted assassinations of Fazlullah's opponents.

In March 2012, supporters of Fazlullah's group assassinated Major General Sanaullah Niazi, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Pakistan Army in Swat, in a roadside bomb blast in Upper Dir district in KP. In June 2012, Fazlullah's men beheaded 17 Pakistani soldiers in Afghanistan, who were abducted during an attack on a Pakistani border check post in Upper Dir. Similarly in October of the same year, Fazlullah masterminded the attack on Malala Yousafzai, the teenage activist championing the cause for female education. Luckily Malala survived the attack, and she has since drawn world attention and been conferred with the Nobel Peace prize. As catalogued by the *Long War Journal*, “In 2012, the Swat Taliban conducted a wave of targeted assassinations against police officers, tribal leaders, and politicians...”

Fazlullah as the Head of TTP: Implications for Pakistan

After being ousted from Swat in 2009, Fazlullah got a new lease of life in November 2013 when he succeeded Hakimullah Meshud (who was killed by a US drone strike) as the new head of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or Pakistani Taliban. A 17-member TTP Shura council (consultative council) selected him upon the personal nomination of the Afghan Taliban's Supreme Leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar. It was for the first time that the leadership of TTP came from beyond the Pakistani tribal areas (Federally Administered Tribal Areas: FATA) since TTP's creation in 2007. The TTP's leadership has traditionally been the FATA-based faction of Mehsud Pashtuns who founded the group.

However, the FATA-based militant groups affiliated with TTP were not happy with Fazlullah's leadership as he is based in Afghanistan. His physical absence has damaged the group's day-to-day running and delayed urgent organisational matters. The internal struggles and widening chasms have left TTP divided into the three groups Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Punjabi Taliban, and Waliur Rehman Faction, while Fazlullah continues to lead them from Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, Fazlullah's appointment as the leader of the Pakistan Taliban could have serious and long-term implications for Pakistan's internal security and its relations with Afghanistan. His appointment demonstrates that the Pakistani Taliban is re-branding and re-cultivating TTP as a Pakistan-centric, rather than a FATA-centric organisation. Fazlullah will try to spread TTP's network beyond FATA to other parts of Pakistan, especially over the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province.

Fazlullah's rise as the head of the TTP can also complicate Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan because of his group's sanctuaries in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar and Nuristan provinces. In recent months, Fazlullah's group in Afghanistan has carried out several attacks on Pakistani border check posts. In retaliation, the Pakistani military fired mortars into Afghanistan in pursuit of the militants, sparking tensions between the two countries. Furthermore, these sanctuaries constitute the Pakistan Army's biggest *Achilles heel* in dealing with domestic terrorism, as they give TTP a safe fall-back position to continue militancy in Pakistan on a long-term basis. The sanctuaries also constitute a strong bargaining chip for Afghan intelligence agencies in dealing with the Pakistani security establishment with regard to the Afghan Taliban's sanctuaries in Pakistan. As Pakistan has not signed an extradition treaty with Afghanistan, Afghanistan is also not under any obligation to handover Fazlullah to Pakistan. Thus, tensions between the two countries are likely to aggravate after the US/ International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) withdrawal from Afghanistan in December 2014.

Thus, despite TTP's disintegration, the group poses a serious threat both to Pakistan and Afghanistan under Fazlullah's leadership. Fazlullah will continue to use his sanctuaries in Afghanistan to re-organise TTP and recapture lost territories in the Pakistani tribal areas, especially after the end of the military operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' ('Sword of the Prophet') in North Waziristan.

Abdul Basit is an Associate Research Fellow with the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU. He can be reached at isabasit@ntu.edu.sg.

From Obscurity to Global Visibility: Periscoping Abubakar Shekau

Emeka Okereke

As the leader of the Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad ('People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'), commonly known as Boko Haram, Abubakar Mohammed Shekau has transformed the organisation from a sporadically violent puritanical sect to an extremely violent organisation, even exporting terrorist acts beyond Nigeria. Under Shekau's leadership, the Boko Haram has emerged as a globally acknowledged terrorist organisation, despite speculations about his death.

Early Life and Education

Abubakar Shekau was born on 24 March 1973 in the village of Shekau in the Tarmuwa Local Government Area of Yobe State in northern Nigeria, to the family of Muhammad Shekau and Falmata Muhammad. He undertook his early Almajiri (Nigerian Islamic schooling) education near Maiduguri in Borno State of north-eastern Nigeria under a *mallam* or local Islamic teacher known as Baba Fanani. The Almajiri system of education exists across northern Nigeria in which children between the ages of four and fifteen are usually sent by their parents to learn the Quran and Hadith under local Islamic teachers (*mallami*). There is no study involving English or other languages, mathematics, social studies, or science within Almajiri schooling in northern Nigeria, and due to the extremely poor conditions, students go on the streets begging for alms and doing manual labour during the day-time and taking lessons from a *mallam* in the evening. Shekau relocated to Mafoni Ward in Maiduguri, northeast of Nigeria in 1991. Afterwards, he enrolled into the Borno College of Legal and Islamic Studies (BOCOLIS), and graduated in 2004.

Shekau was also known to have been a self-teacher who devoted much time to the study of Islam in an effort to make his own interpretations of Islamic principles.

Shekau's radical path solidified when he met Mohammed Yusuf, who founded the puritanical Yusuffiya sect in 2002. At its inception, the sect conducted its activities peacefully but with deep resentment for perceived social ills in the Maiduguri area. However, later Yusuffiya started committing violent acts against the community. It is widely believed that Shekau met Mohammed Yusuf, through a mutual friend named Mamman Nur, whom security agencies believe masterminded the 26 August 2011 bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja. The three claimed to be seeking deeper knowledge of the Quran and demanded societal rebirth based on the Sharia. Shekau's loyalty and strong character earned him the status as Yusuf's deputy, and subsequently the Amir of Boko Haram after Yusuf's death in July 2009.

Abubakar Shekau came to be a polyglot with some proficiency in the Kanuri, Hausa, Fulani, Arabic, and English languages which he learned mostly through social interactions in cosmopolitan Maiduguri. Kanuri, Hausa, and Fulani are three major languages of northern Nigeria: Hausa is the dominant language in northern Nigeria, Fulani is the language of the ruling feudal oligarchy in the region since Usman Dan Fodio's jihad in the 19th century, while Kanuri is the indigenous language of Borno and Yobe states. The Hausa and Fulani languages are spoken beyond Nigeria in parts of Cameroon, Chad, Mali, and the Niger Republics, and as such, Shekau has been able to recruit fighters from Chad, Mali, and the Central African Republic. Shekau's grasp of Arabic helped him to interpret the Quran while his fluency in the English enabled him to reach out to the wider world. Evidently, his fluency in these languages helped him to spread his message and maintain high levels of motivation among the diverse fighters.

Ideological Orientation

Abubakar Shekau emerged as the Amir of Boko Haram in July 2009, when he escaped the bloody confrontation with the Nigerian security forces in which the group's founding leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed. The circumstances surrounding Shekau's escape from the encounter has been unclear with

“ ... the essential doctrinal kernel of the Boko Haram as espoused by Shekau (and before him, Yusuf) include the rejection of Western education, especially the areas of science which they believe compete with the Quran. ”

speculations that some state officials helped him to escape. While in flight, Shekau started soliciting support from Al Qaeda affiliated groups in the Sahel such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to avenge the death of the members of his group and fight perceived infidels in Nigeria.

Under Abubakar Shekau's leadership, the Boko Haram continued functioning within the Salafist ideological framework, which Mohammed Yusuf also propagated. Orthodox Salafism represents a back-to-the-roots movement that seeks to uphold a selective interpretation of the Islamic traditions of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the first Islamic community. It is within the Salafist ideological appeals that the Boko Haram situates its existence, while the essential doctrinal kernel of the Boko Haram as espoused by Shekau (and before him, Yusuf) include the rejection of Western education, especially the areas of science which they believe compete with the Quran. It was the rejection of Western education that the group came to be called 'Boko Haram' ('Western education is forbidden') by the residents of Maiduguri and others in northern Nigeria. Furthermore, in his capacity as Amir, Shekau delivered sermons to followers, condemning Nigeria's political leadership, democracy, and the secularity of the Nigerian state. Like Yusuf, Shekau overtly advocates the enthronement of the Sharia as the recipe for

genuine social change in the country.

Boko Haram under Shekau

The increasing violent disposition of the group coincided with the emergence of (former) Vice President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as President on 6 May 2010, after the death of the then President, Umar Musa Yar'Adua, a Hausa Fulani from the north. President Goodluck Jonathan is an indigenous member of the Niger Delta region in southern Nigeria, considered a minority ethnic group. Intense political tensions arose at the time of late Yar'Adua's infirmity as some northern political elites sought to circumvent the constitutional provisions on political succession, demanding a president of northern origin to complete former President Yar'Adua's supposed two terms. Though the swearing in of Dr. Jonathan as President of Nigeria appeared to have calmed the political tensions and polarisation, speculations arose that in an effort to frustrate and discredit President Jonathan's administration, a few disgruntled and determined elites from the north were responsible for the transformation of Shekau-led Boko Haram as a major national security threat since September 2010.

Shekau also managed to increase Boko Haram's resources from multiple sources. The group raises funds through extortion in the form of 'protection fees' and kidnap for ransom and other violent crimes. Nigerian security agencies believe that the group also received physical cash support from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). With an estimated US \$70 million in assets, Global Terror Watch ranked Boko Haram the seventh richest terrorist group in the world in August 2013.

Boko Haram's armoury also significantly expanded with the accumulation of arms and modern weapons like Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Automat Kalashnikov 47 (AK-47) rifles, and anti-aircraft weapons. According to Nigeria's former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt. Gen. Azubike Ihejirika, the nature of weapons used by Boko Haram and the ferocity, daring nature, and expertise exhibited by the group during operations demonstrate that the fighters have received specialised combat training. For example, since January 2014, Shekau's men have seized and demobilised some armoured personnel carriers and several fast-moving Toyota Hilux vans used by the Nigerian military and other security agencies in combat

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operations.

Boko Haram fighters are also trained in the use of arms and explosives. Though not exactly estimated, the group is believed to have experienced fighters from Chad, Sudan, Mali, and the Central African Republic, in addition to its Nigerian elements. Under Shekau, Boko Haram recruits and radicalises members using martyrdom messages distributed through leaflets and audio and video recordings. Much of the recruitment of members is also forced, following raids on villages and prisons. Persons reluctant to join the group are killed. Recruitment is also often through proselytism.

The structure of Boko Haram under Shekau could be likened to the hierarchy of an organisation comprising of a board, management, and staff. The board – the Shura Council, comprising of Shekau and local and foreign sponsors – is the highest decision-making body of the group. It is the source of strategic plans, choice of major targets, weapons and resources, and propaganda ideas for the group. It is also the source of the narratives which Shekau reads out in his video messages. According to assessments by the Nigerian security services, Shekau as the managing director and chief operating officer of the board, gives the strategic direction for the group and instructions to his commanders (management team) for daily operations. The commanders also act as advisors for Shekau. Some of Shekau's

commanders, identified by Nigeria's Joint Task Force (JTF) through its 'Operation Restore Order,' include Habibu Yusuf (a.k.a. Asalafi), Khalid al Barnawi, Momodo Bama, and Mohammed Zangina. The JTF placed a bounty of 25 million naira (approximately US \$156,000) on each of these Boko Haram commanders in November 2012. Shekau is not known to interact directly with the foot soldiers.

Spectrum of Attacks and Leadership Style

Abubakar Shekau is known to be ferocious and fearless as evident from the violent assaults he has personally led against the Nigerian state. It is these competencies that define the character and personality of Shekau within the ranks of the Boko Haram and propagate a following. Abubakar Shekau's penchant for violence in the pursuit of his objectives is not concealed. In January 2012, in one of his videos posted on *YouTube*, he declared that, "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chicken and rams." In another video released on *YouTube* in May 2014, Shekau threatened to soak Nigeria with the blood of Christians and that of Muslims contradicting Islam.

The Boko Haram under Shekau employs the element of surprise in its attacks against the Nigerian state. This comprises guerrilla attacks on targets through ambush, suicide bombings, drive-by shootings, targeted killings, blasting of bridges to frustrate military counter offensives, and carefully coordinated assaults against several towns and villages at once. These surprise attacks of course involve the use of intelligence and reconnaissance.

Boko Haram's disdain for Western (or non-Islamic) education has been demonstrated in the group's repeated attacks on schools in northern Nigeria. Some of the schools attacked by the Boko Haram include Bayero University Kano in Kano State in April 2012, Government Secondary School (GSS) Mamudo in Yobe State in July 2013, College of Agriculture Gujba in Yobe State in September 2013, Federal Government College Buni Yadi in Yobe State in February 2014, and Government Secondary School (GSS) in Damaturu in Yobe State in June 2014. These attacks caused the death of over 150 students and teachers.

Following the abduction of the 276 school girls from Government Girls Secondary School

“ Abubakar Shekau is known to be ferocious and fearless as evident from the violent assaults he has personally led against the Nigerian state. ”

Chibok in Borno State in northern Nigeria on 14 April 2014, Shekau declared that, "I abducted your girls; I will sell them in the market, by Allah. I will sell them off and marry them off." The plight of the Chibok girls and Boko Haram's repeated attacks on schools in northern Nigeria have generated and sustained fear in the region, which led to the closure of schools and also frustrated public and private investments in education. This prompted the Federal Government to introduce the Safe Schools Initiative in May 2014 to encourage children to attend schools in northern Nigeria.

The spectrum of Boko Haram attack targets under Shekau extends to media, cultural, and religious institutions. They also include Islamic clerics and moderate Muslims opposed to its doctrine. From July 2009 to 2014, over 10,000 deaths have been attributed to the Boko Haram. Over 2,000 more individuals have been killed by Boko Haram since January 2014. In addition, the Boko Haram insurgency has caused widespread internal displacement and refugee crises in the northeast. These challenges led the Federal Government to establish a Victims Support Fund in June 2014, a partnership with the private sector to empower and rehabilitate victims of terror, as well as the Presidential Initiative for the North East which focuses on improving infrastructure and economic growth in the region.

Shekau has also directed attacks on telecommunication infrastructure owned by the Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Globacom, Etisalat, and Airtel, due to his frustrations with the community's use of mobile phones for prompt reportage of the group's assaults, and due to the ease with which security agencies deploy tracking devices to identify and

arrest its members. In 2012, about 150 telecommunication base stations (costing about US \$250,000 each) in Bauchi, Gombe, Maiduguri, Kano, and Potiskum were damaged under Shekau's directive.

Links to Al Qaeda

As mentioned earlier, Shekau's quest for vengeance for the killing of the group's former leader and members and destruction of the group's property during the 2009 confrontation with security forces, led to the group's increasing ideological, logistical, and tactical alignment with Al Qaeda, especially Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Shabaab al Mujahideen in Somalia.

Shekau's intention to align with the Al Qaeda network in its assaults on the Nigerian state was made public in March 2010. In East Africa, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) documented evidence that Boko Haram fighters received training on suicide bombing, use of arms, and bomb-making from Al Shabaab in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia in June 2011. In June 2014, Shekau pledged support for the Caliphate proclaimed by Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in Mosul, Iraq, but fell short of declaring allegiance to ISIS. He subsequently also declared a caliphate in Gworza, Borno state in northern Nigeria, which however the group could not sustain.

Under Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram began exporting terrorist acts to neighbouring Cameroon, making the country a theatre for kidnappings for ransom of hostages from France, Canada, Italy, and China. On July 2014, Madame Françoise Agnes Moukouri, wife of Ahmadu Ali, Cameroon's Deputy Prime Minister, was kidnapped by the group but later released along with the 26 other hostages in October 2014. Other cross-border assaults beyond Nigeria include attacks on Gorsi Tourou and Mayo Tsanaga in northern Cameroon. Issa Tchiroma Bakari, Cameroon's Communication Minister, observed that Boko Haram's cross-border attacks and abductions have heightened fear and insecurity in the border regions, leading to the suspension of many development projects in Cameroon's far north. Similarly, Chadian delegates to the meeting of Defence Ministers,

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Chiefs of Defence Staff and Heads of Security and Intelligence Services of the Lake Chad Basin Commission countries held in Niamey, Republic of Niger on 6 October 2014, acknowledged that due to the cross-border-activities of Boko Haram, nine islands on Lake Chad have been deserted and are presently being occupied by the group's fighters. In response to Boko Haram's cross-border terrorism, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger, and Nigeria, which constitute the members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, have embarked on efforts to develop a sub-regional strategy for the joint fight against terrorism.

Manhunt for Shekau

The manhunt to apprehend and prosecute Abubakar Shekau has both been domestic and international. In September 2011, Nigeria's Department of State Services (DSS) placed a reward of 25 million naira (about US\$156,000) for information leading to Shekau's capture. Shekau retaliated by placing a reward of 50 million naira (about US \$312,000) for the capture of Marilyn Ogar, the spokesperson of the DSS. In 2012, the now defunct Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Nigerian military also placed an N 50 million reward for information leading to the capture of Shekau.

In June 2012, the United States Department of State declared Boko Haram's Shekau, Khalid al Barnawi (a commander), and Abubakar Adam Kamar (an active member) as 'Specially

Designated Global Terrorists' (Kambar was also killed by the JTF in 2012). The United States further offered a reward up to US \$7 million for information about Shekau's location. In June 2014, the United Nations Security Council's Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee approved the inclusion of Abubakar Mohammed Shekau to its list of individuals and entities targeted for financial sanctions under UNSC Resolution 2161. This listing prohibits the provision of financial support to Shekau and his subjects by any individual or entity.

At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa, former spokesperson for JTF, announced in August 2013 that Abubakar Shekau may have died following the gunshot injuries he sustained in combat on 30 June that year in the Sambisa forest. Shekau's body was however not found, and the JTF alleged that one of the members of the group sneaked Shekau's body into Amitchide, a border community in Cameroon, and buried him there. Nonetheless, the claims on Shekau's death have been shaken by Shekau's repeated appearance in at least seven videos released on YouTube since his alleged death in 2013. In September 2014, the Nigerian military reportedly killed a Shekau impostor named Bashir Mohammed, who was known by different aliases including Bashir Konduga, Abacha Abdullahi Geidam, and Isa Damasack. Yet, the 'real' Shekau resurfaced again on a YouTube video, dismissing claims of his death and rejecting the publicised truce between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government, presumably brokered in Ndjamena in October 2014. Yet again, indigenous hunters that constitute the Ibn Fadlallah vigilante group in Adamawa State in north-eastern Nigeria, assisting security forces in fighting the group, claimed to have killed Shekau in Mubi, Adamawa in mid-November 2014.

At the same time, Boko Haram's sustained lethal guerrilla attacks against the Nigerian state and in neighbouring countries continue to stimulate doubts about the death of Shekau. Nevertheless, whether dead or alive, Abubakar Mohammed Shekau remains a threat to the national security of Nigeria and Cameroon, as his followers continue to unleash violent assaults in parts of northern Nigeria and Cameroon. His videos and audio recordings are still used to radicalise and mobilise fighters to take up arms against the state. This phenomenon is the hallmark of Abubakar Shekau's leadership of the Boko Haram.

Consequently, despite the much trumpeted killing of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram remains a dangerous terrorist organisation due to its capabilities to launch and sustain audacious attacks within and beyond Nigeria, which the group continues to demonstrate. So far, no new leader appears to represent the group, as the group disowned the self-proclaimed Secretary General Mallam Danladi Ahmadu who claimed to represent Boko Haram in the botched ceasefire agreement with the Nigerian government in October 2014. This has also eclipsed any optimism that the alleged death of Shekau could bring a cessation to the group's violence.

Emeka Okereke is a Researcher at the Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, Nigeria.

Santoso: The Terrorist Leader from Nowhere

Robi Sugara

Santoso, the leader of Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), or East Indonesian Mujahidin, which operates in Poso, Central Sulawesi, is Indonesia's most wanted terrorist today. Santoso's background is a unique one, as he does not fit the typical profile of a prominent Indonesian terrorist. Santoso did not play a significant role during the Christian-Muslim conflict in Poso in the late 90s, and has neither family nor kinship ties to known terrorists. Without a typical Indonesian terrorist upbringing, Santoso's rise to becoming Indonesia's most wanted terrorist leader is worthy of analysis.

Not a Typical Terrorist Upbringing

Santoso is also known as Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi Al-Indunesi, Abu Wardah, Abu Yahyaor, and simply, San. His alias Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi Al-Indunesi, is an interesting one, and it is very likely that Santoso draws inspiration from as well as sees similarities between himself the Jordanian jihadist and leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Ahmed Fadil Nazal Al- Khalayleh, a.k.a. Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was killed in a US airstrike in 2006. It is believed that Santoso read about Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in a book written by Al Qaeda member Saiful Adl that was translated into Bahasa Indonesia and given the title *Pengalamanku Bersama Abu Mush'ab az-Zarqawi (My Experience with Al-Zarqawi)*. Similar to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Santoso had military training in Afghanistan, although Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi had already come to the forefront in the jihadist arena by then, having run a terrorist training camp in Herat from 1999 to 2001 in Al Qaeda's 'Al Matar' training complex and having been appointed 'Emir of the Levant' by Osama Bin Laden. Additionally, Abu

Musab Al-Zarqawi, like Santoso, was a man who did not have a strong religious background or education from his family. He only began his religious education when he was in prison and met Isam Mohammad Tahir Al-Barqawi, a.k.a. Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, a Jordanian-Palestinian jihadist cleric, who incidentally has also influenced many extremists in Indonesia. Thus, it seems that Santoso identifies with and idolizes Abu Musuab Al-Zarqawi for his jihadist career that grew from strength to strength from the time he established his first jihadist group in Jordan in the 1990s to when he formally created Al Qaeda in Iraq in collaboration with Al Qaeda Core in 2004.

Santoso was born and raised in Tambrana Trans village (nowadays known as Bakti Agung village), Poso in central Sulawesi. Sixty kilometres away from the city, most of the village's inhabitants are immigrants from outside Poso, and mainly work as fishermen or in coffee plantations. Santoso's own father was an immigrant from Java to Poso who moved during the transmigration program initiated by Indonesian President Soeharto. Little is known about Santoso's own childhood. According to some reports, Santoso only completed junior high school (8th Grade). Abas Abdul Manan, a childhood friend, said that while in school, Santoso was a student who often played truant and was reluctant to participate in the weekly Indonesian flag ceremony. During their three years in junior high together, Manan did not see Santoso as a student who focused on religious thoughts or beliefs, and there is no indication that he had any inclination towards violent jihad in his youth.

Poso saw a Christian-Muslim conflict from 1998 to 2001, and Santoso was likely involved, but had a low profile. Ali Fauzi, the youngest brother of Bali bombers Ali Imron, Mukhlas, and Amrozi, said that during his own involvement in the Poso conflict, he had never heard of Santoso. He said that if Santoso participated at all in the conflict, his role was probably a very small one as he was unknown in the main jihadist circles. However, according to an International Crisis Group (ICG) report, Santoso participated in military training conducted by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members who served as volunteers of KOMPAK (Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis/Committee of Act Management for Crisis) in Poso. The ICG report also said that he first came to police attention when he robbed a truck carrying Indonesian cigarettes in 2004, while being part of

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the local Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) affiliate in Poso, a group based in Tanah Runtuh.

Santoso also lacked the radical family background and direct links to known terrorist groups of the day such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or Darul Islam (DI). According to research by Sulastri Osman of S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore and others, this background appears to have been almost necessary for top Indonesian jihadists before Santoso. Numerous examples show that many prominent Indonesian Jihadists were heavily influenced by familial and kinship ties, which either shaped their individual religious (mostly radical) orientation or world view. Ahmad Kandai and his family are one such example of kinship ties. Ahmad Kandai himself was a DI member and was involved in the 1957 plot to assassinate President Soekarno, and his three sons all became involved in terrorist activities. The eldest, Farihin, was a supplier of bomb-making materials during the Poso conflict, a second son Abdul Jabbar was involved in a bomb attack against the Philippine ambassador in Jakarta in 2000, and the third, Solahudin, was involved in a bomb attack at a shopping mall in Jakarta in 2001. Another prominent example is Ali Imron, who was involved in the Bali bombings in 2002 together with his two older brothers. Now serving a life sentence, Ali Imron had noted that he did not fully support the attacks, but went along because of the influence of his brothers. Santoso's own upbringing does not appear to be one that would set him on the extremist path, as he does not appear to come from an extremist family, nor is he known to have married into one.

Path to Prominence

Santoso's rise to prominence as a terrorist can be traced to the establishment of a local branch (jamaah) of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), a

radical group founded by Abu Bakar Bashir in Poso in late 2009. Santoso had a role as a commander of the Laskar (paramilitary unit) in it, and began military training for Muslims that was absent during the Poso conflict in the late 1990s. Such training is considered part of *i'dad* for jihadist groups - the military skills and physical preparation required before jihad, which is obligatory for every Muslim. The year 2009 thus marked the early stages of Santoso's formal affiliation with jihadist networks, albeit in a relatively minor leadership position.

In 2010, the JAT-led training camp in Aceh was discovered and a number of key leaders and members linked to the camp were either killed or arrested. Those who escaped, however, fled to other regions and then began to influence other jihadists and recruit new members to form small groups such as the West Mujahidin Indonesia (MIB), the Cirebon group or Ashabul Kahfi, and Santoso's group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT)/ East Indonesian Mujahidin in Poso. The fall of the Aceh camp accelerated Santoso's rise, increasing his profile in the jihadist community, as there were plans to use Poso as the replacement site for Aceh. It was at this time that Santoso came to the notice of Indonesian authorities.

In the aftermath of the dismantling of the Aceh training camp, Santoso began associating with senior Indonesian terrorists and went to Solo, Central Java in March 2010 to discuss the continuation of JAT's Jamaah program in Poso. In Solo, he met Sibghotullah, a KOMPAK veteran who was involved in the Poso conflict and had escaped from the authorities after his involvement with the Aceh camp. Sibghotullah was an important figure and close to Dulmatin, the head of military training in the Aceh camp who was killed in a police operation on 9 March 2010. After Santoso left Solo, Sibghotullah followed him back to Poso two weeks later. Even as he commiserated with influential Indonesian jihadis, Santoso continued to lead a normal life on the surface, working on a project for the Ministry of Public Works. Additionally, former chairman of Detachment 88 Tito Karnavian noted that Santoso even received cash assistance for creating a small business as part of a deradicalisation program by the Poso Regional Government.

Santoso, however, continued to expand his contacts with extremist networks. Joko

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Purwanto, another fugitive from the Aceh training camp, said that he was accompanied by Santoso on his second trip to Poso in April 2010. . While in Poso, Joko surveyed locations that could serve as a new military training ground to replace Aceh. Joko returned to Jakarta and was arrested on 8 May 2010 with a shopping list for weapons and ammunitions from Santoso. However, Santoso's training camp in Poso continued to expand, bolstered by an influx of personnel and support from outside of Poso such as JAT elements from Bima in West Nusa, and some extremist groups (JAT, Hisbah group, and Abu Umar group) in Java who turned to Poso after the Aceh camp was dismantled.

By 2012, Santoso and his men had already committed a number of attacks against the Indonesian police, and in December that year Santoso declared that his group, the East Mujahidin Indonesia (MIT), was operating as an independent organisation. Santoso's media presence, the so-called MIT Press expanded from statements to appearing on videos uploaded to *Youtube* in 2013 and 2014. In these videos, he frequently voiced hatred for the Detachment 88, Indonesia's anti-terrorist squad. Initially, he challenged Detachment 88 to open war and exhorted on a video with English subtitles: "...poison them [Detachment 88] if you are not able to kill them by a sword but if you have a weapon and then you are better kill the Detachment by a weapon (sic)."

In one of his videos posted on Youtube, Santoso also claimed that his group was responsible for a suicide bombing on Poso police headquarters on 3 June 2013 though there were no casualties besides the bomber himself. On that video, in Arabic but with Bahasa Indonesia subtitles, he

said, “Having been successful with the permission of Allah, one of the Knights of the Syhadah [martyr] committed a suicide bomb attack by targeting Poso police office on Monday morning, 3 June 2013. The suicide bombing was implemented with God’s law and by His Messenger. We will perform a suicide bombing at least once a year. This was the first martyrdom bombing in Poso.”

Another video published on 1 July 2014, from an account using the name ‘Al-ilam al jihadi,’ featured Santoso’s pledge of allegiance to the Islamic caliphate declared by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS). Santoso said, “This is from Abu Wardah Santoso As Syarqi Al-Indunesi to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi as *Emir* [leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria]...We who are from eastern Indonesia are your soldiers and are waiting for your order and also need your hand to help our jihad in Poso which is still weak and needs weapons. MIT is a part of ISIS because Muslims are like one body...” The videos published by Santoso on Youtube usually have English subtitles, and one of them posted in Arabic seems to indicate Santoso’s desire to gain wider attention from outside Indonesia, in particular from terrorist groups in Arab countries or the Middle East. Another goal could be to acquire funding from these sources. More recently, on 19 September 2014, Santoso was believed to have been responsible for killing a man suspected to be an informant for Detachment 88. The man was brutally killed by having his neck slit - a method that was possibly inspired by the book on Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi by Saiful Adl, or by other jihadist killings such as those by ISIS.

Conclusion

Santoso’s case is an example of the evolution of an ordinary man who eventually became a most wanted terrorist. He is likely the first individual in Indonesia to become a known terrorist and leader from nowhere, as in respect of almost all previous cases, terrorists had conspicuous family or other links. The book on Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi was another likely inspiration that formed Santoso’s beliefs, and it is likely that he has replicated the terror tactics he learned about from Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in Iraq. The process of Santoso’s rise also highlights the importance of contacts with people who are ideologically indoctrinated by extremist jihadist thinking. In Santoso’s case it was his contact with jihadist networks such as the Aceh military training group, JI, KOMPAK, and JAT, especially in Poso.

After connecting with some of the key figures in the jihadist networks and slowly rising in importance, Santoso became more deeply involved in their networks until he finally formed his own group - the MIT. With this group, Santoso not only acquired the authority as its leader to conduct terrorist attacks, but also has received more attention and respect from other jihadist figures and groups. Santoso’s case thus demonstrates how an ordinary man without either an extremist family background or radical educational background, nor involvement in any major jihadist movements or groups, could become a terrorist leader through his own efforts and the right contacts with jihadist networks, especially jihadists from Java and beyond.

Robi Sugara is currently pursuing an M.Sc. in Strategic Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU. He previously served as editor-in-chief of the Indonesian political magazines *Barometer* and *Nusa*.

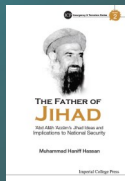
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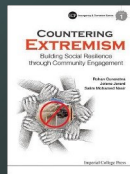
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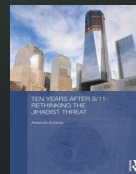
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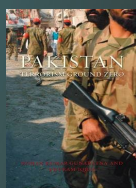
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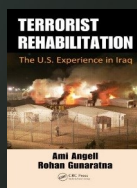
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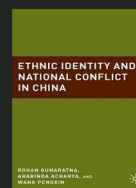
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