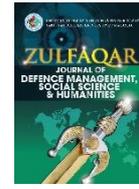




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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC STATE (IS) THREATS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: CASE STUDY OF TERRORISM NETWORK IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, MALAYSIA, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA: A FRAMEWORK FOR A FURTHER RESEARCH

Mohd Zaini Salleh^{a,*}, Azrul Azlan Abd Rahman^b, Ariffin Ismail^c, Rogis Baker^d, Joni Widjayanto^e, Nengah Putra^f, Pujo Widodo^g

^a Associate Professor, Department of Strategic Studies, Faculty of Management and Defence Studies, National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^b Lecturer, Department of Strategic Studies, Faculty of Management and Defence Studies, National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^c Associate Professor, Department of Defence Human Resource Management, Faculty of Management and Defence Studies, National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^d Senior Lecturer, Department of Defence Human Resource Management, Faculty of Management and Defence Studies, National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^e Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Defense Technology, Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia

^f Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Defense Technology, Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia

^g Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Defense Technology, Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia

*Corresponding author: zainisalleh@upnm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

The development of the Islamic State in the Southeast Asian region focused on the countries or sub-regions with a Muslim majority, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Philippines, and Southern Thailand. Specific impacts had shown their effective networking movement around the region. This study aims to provide a risk analysis and development of Southeast Asia's Islamic State (IS). This study uses qualitative and quantitative approaches with the Borda, TOPSIS and Risk Matrix methods. Preliminary findings of the qualitative method have shown that the respective area of research has a severe problem due to IS threats based on priority, namely, the southern Philippines, Indonesia, southern Thailand, and Malaysia respectively. Further research and findings based on a quantitative approach will indicate and confirm the threat's seriousness. A transparent organisation and management model at the regional level to curb and control IS, and other terrorism threats should be established. It is necessary to upgrade and enhance operational and intelligence efforts to defeat the IS in the region.

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Introduction

The development of the Islamic State (IS) movement in the Southeast Asian region could be traced back to September 11, 2001, when attacks on the US signified the beginning of post-modern terrorism globally. The leading actor, the Al-Qaeda organisation, had been strongly suspected. Some of their members had been detained throughout major-scaled and clandestine operations in the name of the War On Terror in Afghanistan, Middle-east, African countries, Southeast Asia region and other parts around the globe (Azrul

Azlan Abdul Rahman, Zuliskandar Ramli, Mohd Nasrin Mohd Nasir, 2020). Due to continuous operations conducted by the US led-NATO countries, Al-Qaeda has changed its modus operandi to various forms, tacit factions and strategies without reducing their movement and activities. One of the crucial significant factions is Afghan Alumni infiltrating and enhancing movement and ideology through hidden cells of Islamic fundamentalist and extremist activists. Veterans spread out worldwide and operate with dozens of militant organisations, each acting separately, along with the spiritual & operational guidelines of Al Qaeda in different identities.

In Southeast Asia, a faction movement known as Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and local terrorist groups pledge allegiance to Al-Qaeda (Zelin, 2014). The trigger triggers of action could be traced from a known contemporary doctrine context, the so-called Jihad Salafi (JS). JS is commonly perceived as synonymous with Islamic extremist movements such as Al-Qaeda and its operational networks in the Southeast Asian region, such as the JI (mainly stationed in Indonesia), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (Southern Philippines), and other extremist religious groups. The Sauk incident on July 2 2000, whereby an audacious raid on a Malaysian Army Reserve camp was conducted by Al-Maunah spiritual Islam-extremist group strongly believed had networked with JI (Mohd Zaini Salleh, Amirudin Sulaiman, Rusdi Omar, 2020). Apart from general information counted, many Afghan Veterans Alumni in Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand were mainly involved during the encroachment, intrusion and occupation of the Soviets in Afghanistan. Most Western countries associate these organisations with international terrorism activities, with JS as the central doctrine or ideology guiding them. Jenkins postulates that 32 jihadist terrorist plots have been uncovered since September 11, 2001. Out of these, only ten had what could be described as an operational plan. Six of these plots were put under close monitoring by intelligence agencies. According to the RAND report published in 2014, about 60 JS groups worldwide (Zelin, 2014).

All of them are from Islamic states or states with a Muslim majority concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa. Some groups come from other Muslim majority and mixed non-Muslim states in Africa and Southeast Asia. JS groups were noted to have grown after the 9/11 incident. This report has postulated a negative perception of Islam, Islamic states, the Muslim ummah and, as a whole, Islam as a religion.

Theoretical Framework

General Views

Terrorism within Southeast Asia is not a new phenomenon. In the 1990s, a transnational terrorist network called Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was formed across Southeast Asia. JI fighters were sent to train in Afghanistan only to return to renew insurgencies and plot major terrorist attacks across Indonesia. The group was responsible for several high-profile attacks, including the Bali Bombings 2002. Shortly after the September 11 attacks and the Bali bombings, Southeast Asia was labelled “the second front” in Washington’s Global War on Terror. While much research has been done on individual transnational threats like terrorism or piracy, far less has been done on moving those threats from one geographic area into another. In southern Thailand, the Afghan Veteran members re-united and established a new separatist group known as Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMIP). This faction then joins with the main sections of separatist groups, i.e. Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) in the respective Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla (four southern districts) provinces (Gershman, 2012).

Concept and Theory: Security Dilemma, Neo-Realism Theory, Social Constructivism Theory

The security dilemma describes a situation in which one state increases its means of defence to achieve a higher degree of security, which, however, is interpreted by another state as an act of aggression and thus countered with security measures on its side, thus possibly leading to an armament spiral. The dilemma consists of a choice between two options, both of which may lead to a lower degree of security: not to invest in defence and thus risk an attack, or to invest in defence and risk counter-measures by the other state, leading to potentially greater insecurity (Baylis and Smith, 2019). The concept to be applied in this research is to examine state responses toward particular threats mainly due to the terrorism movements in southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

A summary of neo-realism would be concluded that involves certain basic tenets which enable the systematic approach to studying shifts in state behaviour. Six fundamental neo-realist concepts are introduced; anarchy, structure, capability, power distribution, polarity, and national interest. It is closely

related to international relations and practices. This theory's most well-known scholars include Waltz, Herz, Buzan, Hanami, Jervis, Keohane, Mearsheimer, Oye, Snyder and Zakaria. There are various elements to consider in analysing threats toward the state, i.e. political ideologies, military capacity, economic, social and environmental. Dealing with the dangers of terrorism is a new phenomenon involving all the above forms. It grasps together either by states or terrorist groups, notably their modus operandi in international networking (Baylis and Smith, 2019).

Social constructivism is an intellectual movement in mental health that directs a consensual social interpretation of reality. Social constructivism is often treated as a theory of international relations making substantive claims about the fundamentals. This theory's basic tenet focuses on one condition: human development is socially situated, and knowledge is constructed through interaction. Culture will also influence a person's cognitive development that they are involved in, such as the language, history and social context. This theory is appropriate for understanding and explaining the networking and social context of terrorism development and expanding social interaction and sharing experiences, including religious teaching (Baylis and Smith, 2019). Towards to extreme level, it caused the exchange of radicalism and terrorist ideologies. Religion provides a compelling example of how people socially construct their understanding of experience using social-linguistic traditions. This theory attempts to understand the networking of IS and their expansion development in the Southeast Asian region.

ISIS-Aligned Groups

A critical condition that could enable ISIS's new front within Southeast Asia centres on local support in the region via ISIS-aligned terrorist groups. Since the formation of the caliphate, some terrorist organisations in the area pledged allegiance to ISIS, while others rejected the organisation. For example, in Indonesia, JI became a leading voice opposed to ISIS in 2013. Regardless, support for ISIS among local terrorists can be seen in many countries (Bunzel, 2015). In Malaysia, Kumpulan Militan Mujahidin (KMM) pledged allegiance to ISIS. In the Philippines, ISIS-aligned groups include The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Ansarul Khilafah Philippines (AKP), the Maute Group (MG), Ansar Dawlah Fi Filibbin, the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RISM), and the Khilafa Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM). In Indonesia, groups like the Forum of Islamic Law Activists (FAKSI), Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) or the Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia, Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), Jamaah Tauhid wal Jihad, Ring Banten, and Gema Salam have all pledged allegiance to ISIS (Fealy, Greg, and John Funston, 2016). A higher concentration of ISIS-aligned terrorist groups within specific countries indicates more significant support for ISIS. Before this thesis examines the consistency and prevalence of aligned groups across the region, it is essential to establish the causal mechanisms that create alliances. The question arises—why have some groups formed partnerships with ISIS while others have not? One widely accepted explanation for alliance formation is centred on survival. Philipps (2014) writes;

“Mobilisation is vital for organisations, and terrorist organisations are no exception. These groups must seek ways to stay strong, relevant, and survive. One-way terrorist groups can attempt to achieve these goals is by forming cooperative relationships with other terrorist groups. Group relationships have not yet been examined in group longevity, but they will likely play an important role.”

This theory does not necessarily apply to groups pledging allegiance to ISIS for two reasons. A pledge of loyalty to ISIS likely invites unwanted attention from Counter Terrorist (CT) forces. Moreover, a promise of allegiance could invariably lead to a splintering of local alliances as some reject ISIS's ideology. On this notion in Indonesia, Watts (2014) writes;

“Many jihadist groups in Indonesia have rejected ISIS out of repugnance for their brutal tactics. But while many of the groups are primarily motivated by local grievances, those who have aligned themselves with ISIS are true believers who have been directly inspired by the global movement beyond any local considerations. These individuals are highly motivated to see an ISIS-linked Southeast Asian Islamic province realised.”

If allegiances are born out of the need to survive, one could argue that pledging allegiance to ISIS would likely lead to the opposite. Another explanation centres on increasing a group's capacity. Day (2016) claims;

“Small groups ally with larger groups to access new tactics which require skill-building and education, new weapons, and new cadres of recruits that perhaps they would not otherwise have access to. “

Unfortunately, this explanation is also hard to support in the case of ISIS, as local fighters in Southeast Asia have been known to travel to the Middle East to augment the conflict instead of the other way around. If ISIS fighters sourced from the Middle East crossed into Southeast Asia to increase local forces, the “capacity building” explanation might make more sense. Another form of capacity building could be based on individual Southeast Asians receiving tactical expertise in the Middle East and returning home. Similarly, this theory is not convincing as Southeast Asian jihadis would need to survive the conflict in the Middle East, evade international CT efforts, and return home. This process could take a great deal of time, and the benefits of such an alliance may not be realised for several years. Therefore, aligning with ISIS to increase a group’s capacity is hard to conceive. The most convincing explanation for why groups pledge allegiance to ISIS is centred on expanding the group’s legitimacy. As Day (2016) argues;

“The incentive for endorsing ISIS is less about material gain and instead is something socially imagined...Likewise, joining the caliphate from afar is a fundamentally creative act, inventing connections where they previously did not exist. Just as nationalism serves political goals for narrow-cleavages of elites, turning a domestic terrorist organisation towards the caliphate serves the political interests of certain elites within the organisation. “

Groups pledge allegiance to ISIS because it brings a global narrative that positions some local elites over others. Regardless of the reasons behind forming alliances, countries with a more significant presence of ISIS-aligned groups are more vulnerable to the ideology.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters

As ISIS-held territory in the Middle East is lost, fears of Southeast Asian FTFs returning to the region have mounted. For example, on October 17, 2016, Malaysia’s former defence minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, ordered the military to “keep an eye on [developments] in Iraq and Syria because we are worried that [ISIS FTFs] might come here and it will not be a small number” (Bhavan, 2017). On the potential threat these FTFs pose, Greer, Adam, and Zachary Watson (2016) argue, “I think this will be an imminent threat. When the fighters return to countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, they will build an alumni network, like the fighters from Afghanistan nearly two decades ago.” Furthermore, on the threat of returning FTFs, Liow (2016) concurs:

“Given how terrorism in Southeast Asia was previously catalysed by returnees from the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union, it should hardly be surprising that the scenario of hardened militants returning from Syria with ideology, operational knowledge, and frontline experience to mount attacks in the region exercises security planners. This is a potential threat that cannot be taken lightly.”

Hundreds of militants have already been recruited from the Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia as ISIS began establishing its caliphate in 2014. On the emergence of ISIS’s recruitment in the region, Sidney Jones (2015) argues, “suddenly there was the potential for Indonesian extremists to go to Syria and get military training, combat experience, ideological indoctrination and international contacts. What had become a low-level threat became more serious again. “Alutiiq (2016) mirrors this fear. He writes,

“The key question worrying security analysts and policymakers in the region is what will happen once the Islamic State recruits return to Southeast Asia armed with battle-hardened experience, skills, and training.”

Two comprehensive studies have been done to understand the flow of FTFs. Firstly, the Soufan Group, a private intelligence think tank headquartered in New York City, published a comprehensive study of global FTF source countries in 2015. Secondly, in April 2016, Efraim Benmelech and Esteban F. Klor of the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, published working papers titled “What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS.” Their work is “the first systematic analysis of the link between economic, political, and social conditions and the global phenomenon of ISIS foreign fighters” (Efraim and Klor, 2016). As fears of returning FTFs continue, this thesis will incorporate both studies to establish where Southeast Asian FTFs were sourced. More significant numbers of FTFs from a particular country highlight a more considerable vulnerability for that country to become ISIS’s next front.

Another study examines individuals who became inspired to join ISIS in the Middle East and subsequently became disenfranchised and returned home. In this study, conducted by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, El-Said and Barrett argue that most FTFs return to their countries of origin due to psychological and physical hardships (Hamed and Barrett, 2017). If this theory is accurate and most FTFs who have fought with ISIS return to their countries of origin, countries that produce more FTFs will receive more returnees after the conflict. As fears of returning FTFs continue, this article will incorporate all three studies to establish where Southeast Asian FTFs were sourced and where they may return. More significant numbers of FTFs from a particular country highlight a more considerable vulnerability for that country to become ISIS's next front. Whether these FTFs return to their countries of origin or consolidate within one country, their presence will likely play a significant role in spreading ISIS's influence.

ISIS's Efforts

The third factor may indicate a potential location for establishing ISIS's following front centres on efforts made by ISIS-linked elements. These efforts are measured by examining the site, consistency, and severity of ISIS-linked activities. For this study, "activity" is an umbrella term for three subgroups: actions, attacks, and statements. IHS Markit's Terrorism and Insurgency Database definitions will be used for these terms. IHS Markit defines an action as "an incident in which militants or their supporters commit a non-violent political act (such as signing a ceasefire), or a non-political violent act (such as a bank robbery)." It defines an attack as "an incident in which a sub-state actor (either an individual or organisation) commits an illegal act of politically or ideologically motivated violence against persons or property, to coerce others to adopt or comply with its objectives, or to submit to their authority." Lastly, it defines a statement as "an incident in which militants or their supporters issue a notable written or verbal statement" (IHS Markit, 2016).

Whether strong or weak, ISIS's efforts show the group's intent to inspire followers and broaden support throughout the region. As terrorist groups continue to align with ISIS, criminal activities once every day among unrelated Southeast Asian terrorist organisations may now be orchestrated to provide support to ISIS. For example, in August 2016, known ISIS-linked operators from the Maute Groups (MG) attacked a jail in Marawi and freed eight prisoners. One may question whether this development supports or is related to ISIS. However, two months later, in November 2016, the MG, fighting under the banner of ISIS since 2015, seized the township of Butig, Mindanao and fought Philippine Security Forces for six days. Unrelated activities by ISIS-linked elements in the region support ISIS (United States Department of State, 2017.).

Since 2014, ISIS affiliates have conducted several special attacks within Southeast Asia. On May 23, 2017, hundreds of ISIS-linked fighters attacked and occupied the Philippine city of Marawi, resulting in 165 soldiers and 47 civilians dying. The conflict displaced hundreds of thousands of Marawi residents. On this development, international terrorism expert Gunaratna (2017) writes;

"The battle in Marawi has a significant impact on extremists in Southeast Asia and beyond. It indicates that the [ISIS] threat is growing in physical and virtual space."

In a January 2016 attack, ISIS-linked fighters bombed a police post in Jakarta, resulting in four dead and 23 injured. In June 2016, ISIS-linked attackers attempted to detonate a hand grenade in a bar in Puchong, Malaysia, resulting in eight injuries. As previously mentioned, it is hard to gauge the level of ISIS's involvement in the attacks. Like the 2016 Jakarta attack, some episodes are thought to be coordinated and directed by higher-echelon ISIS leaders. Like the attack in Malaysia, others may have been conducted by aspirational fighters with limited connections to ISIS. Regardless, any activity connected to ISIS should be evaluated. In 2016, ISIS announced that a prominent Filipino terrorist would become the amir, or ruler, of all Southeast Asian operations. The Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict (IPAC) (2016) writes;

"While it has not been formally declared as a province or wilayat, ISIS has endorsed an Abu Sayyaf leader, Isnilon Hapilon, as amir for Southeast Asia, and Southeast Asians in Syria have pledged their loyalty to him."

On this regional leadership decision, Habulan (2016), a terrorism analyst at International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, writes;

“Isnilon Hapilon is currently the face of terrorism in Southeast Asia in the same manner that the southern Philippines is the current nucleus of the “Islamic State”. An [ISIS] enclave in the Sulu Archipelago presents a security threat to the Philippines and Southeast Asia.”

Furthermore, she proposes that the specific implications of this threat include increased jihadist numbers in the area, increased terrorist training camps and bomb-making facilities, and a flood of non-Filipino foreigners attracted to the site to fight under Hapilon. The establishment of Southeast Asia’s critical leadership highlights the uptick in ISIS-linked activity and represents ISIS’s growing interest in influencing the region.

Without the right tool, gathering data on ISIS’s direct efforts over the past four years can be difficult. This article uses data from Jane’s IHS Markit Terrorism & Insurgency Centre, a resource that “delivers in-depth information and contextual analysis on 250+ non-state armed groups and offers at-a-glance briefings on immediate concerns and international incidents. The IHS Markit database allows one to set various parameters to gather essential data. To focus the data solely on ISIS-related activity taking place in Southeast Asia since 2014, this author set the following parameters: (1) ISIS-linked activity must have taken place between June 29, 2014, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the caliphate, to August 23, 2017; (2) individual ISIS-linked activities must have taken place in the territorial boundaries of the three countries being evaluated; and (3) for an activity to be considered ISIS-linked, it must have been conducted by, with, and through any of the ISIS-aligned groups.

Before proceeding, it is essential to define a few key terms. For this article, “activity” is an umbrella term for three subgroups: actions, attacks, and statements. For these terms, IHS Markit’s definitions will be used. IHS Markit defines an effort as

“An incident in which militants or their supporters commit a non-violent political act (such as signing a ceasefire), or a non-political violent act (such as a bank robbery).” It defines an attack as “An incident in which a sub-state actor (either an individual or organisation) commits an illegal act of politically or ideologically motivated violence against persons or property, to coerce others to adopt or comply with its objectives, or to submit to their authority.” Lastly, it defines a statement as “An incident in which militants or their supporters issue a notable written or verbal statement.”

To clarify the nature of the data, this author must first establish two points. IHS Markit Terrorism & Insurgency Centre claims that their data is very accurate. They write, “Data is gathered from multiple sources, and double source verified, with each event ranked for significance, enabling analysts to work only with those data sets that are significant and reliable to support, validate, and declassify proprietary and classified sources.” (IHS Markit, 2016). A second point centres on the definition of “ISIS-linked.” For example, an attack against government forces in the Philippines may have been conducted by an ASG member with a few loose connections to ISIS (IHS Markit, 2016). However, the source may report that event as an attack conducted by ISIS or ISIS- affiliates. While the nature of internal relationships between ISIS-linked fighters and ISIS remains unknown, this event would still be considered ISIS-linked for this thesis.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, some terrorist organisations in Southeast Asia have long histories tied to crime, long before they pledged allegiance to ISIS. For example, MG and ASG have both been involved in various kidnapping-for-ransom (KFR) activities before making their pledges. This author will assume that with an oath of allegiance to ISIS comes support in multiple forms. As ISIS loses its remaining territory and revenue in the Middle East, nefarious activities conducted by Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and MG will support ISIS. The connections between individual events and ISIS vary. Whether these connections are slight or significant, all events reported as ISIS-linked within this author’s parameters will be incorporated.

State Weakness

Whether a state simply lacks essential funding and experience in countering terrorism, the state fails to prosecute and incarcerate terrorists, or the state inadvertently creates more extremism through weak de-radicalisation programs, state weakness in combatting ISIS could play a significant role in spreading the group’s influence into Southeast Asia. Tore Bjorgo, professor and researcher at the University of Oslo, argues that “weak state control of territory” is a force that accelerates international terrorism. (Bjorgo, 2005) Some countries within Southeast Asia are more effective at countering terrorism than others. Similarly, some organisations within a specific country are more effective than others. For example, an

Indonesian organisation, Detachment 88, has been vigilant in ensuring security within Indonesian borders. Fealy (2016), head of the Department of Political and Social Change at Australian National University, writes;

“In a police force notorious for corruption and incompetence, Detachment 88 stands out as one of the few units possessing high professionalism and an excellent track record of investigative success. Since 2002, it has arrested more than 1,000 suspected terrorists, successfully prosecuting more than 700. “

While Detachment 88 has been successful, other Indonesian police organisations remain less effective. Indonesia’s BNPT (National Agency for Combatting Terrorism), charged with “preventive measures against terrorists and counter-terrorism law enforcement operations,” has largely remained unsuccessful. A clear example was the BNPT’s 2015 attempt to shut down 19 jihadist websites because they mobilised support for ISIS. The organisation’s move to shut these websites down was misguided, as both pro- and anti-IS websites were blocked. Additionally, ISIS supporters could bypass blocked websites by “reopening the webpage at a new address.” A state’s ineffectiveness in conducting CT will directly impact ISIS’s ability to influence the local populous. In addition to a simple lack of security, a misguided CT strategy may magnify social grievances and inadvertently perpetuate the spread and acceptance of radical ideology. Silke (2005) argues;

“As a driver and facilitator of terrorist campaigns, state counter-measures can have a negative impact far greater than many of the issues traditionally seen as root causes of terror. Ultimately harsh, aggressive policies in response to terrorism fail so often in their stated aims because they so badly misunderstand and ignore the basic psychology of the enemy and observers. Strength and power alone are not enough to defeat terrorism.”

A clear example of a state’s more multifaceted approach to combatting terrorism can be found in Malaysia. In addition to intensifying police actions and pre-emptive arrests, Malaysia is currently using some non-traditional methods to stop ISIS’s influence. For example, on April 23, 2015, the Malaysian Parliament passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) which includes provisions that allow the detention of suspected terrorists for up to two years, requires tracking of detainees with electronic monitoring devices and requires the implementation of various de-radicalisation programs (Bilveer, 2015). On these Malaysian de-radicalisation programs, Samuel (2016) writes;

“According to Commissioner Datuk Seri Mohamad Fuzi from the Royal Malaysian Police, the de-radicalisation program in Malaysia has a 95% success rate as only a few hardcore militants have relapsed. Based on the 240 terrorists detained from various groups between 2001 and 2011, only 13 militants, or approximately 5%, had relapsed and returned to their ‘old ways.’”

A similar program is currently being conducted for those Malaysians connected to ISIS. It should be noted that success rates provided by the Royal Malaysian Police are likely inflated. In addition to strong CT forces and state anti-terror laws, state-run de-radicalisation campaigns will be pivotal in keeping convicted terrorists from returning to terrorism.

Research Methodology

This research will use two main methods; qualitative and quantitative methods. The study will be conducted on qualitative methodology in a mixture method by combining phenomenological, action and content analysis approaches. Some of the documents, interviewed figures, observations, etc., are to be analysed correctly and regularly. The quantitative method will be conducted through a survey, data analysis, and threats classifications approach. Borda Count, Likert Score, and TOPSIS methods will be adopted to analyse information and data. Ratios would compose 70 % of weightage. Another 30% of research weightage will be conducted through a quantitative approach by working survey, data analysis and threats classifications, Borda Count, Likert Score, and TOPSIS methods. An identified concept to be used as an umbrella throughout the research is a new security dilemma supported by neo-realism and social constructivism theories. The lessons and findings from this research are to put in a proper framework for clarifying and classifying the development of Islamic State (IS) threats in the Southeast Asian region.

Quantitative Models: Borda Count

AHP is one of the most popular and powerful techniques for decision-making today and has been applied widely in various categories such as selection, evaluation, benefit-cost analysis, allocation, planning and development, priority and ranking, decision-making, forecasting, medicine and related fields. AHP's prominent uniqueness is its inherent capability of weighing many qualitative or quantitative factors to support decision-making, producing a formal and quantitative basis for the solution (Vaidya and Kumar, 2006).

In addition, instead of just saying which alternative is preferred, AHP also gives a magnitude of how much one option is selected over another. It uses a standard scale of numbers from 1, meaning no preference, up to 9, meaning that one alternative is highly preferred over another. The judgments are used in deriving ratio scale priorities for the decision criteria and options (Vaidya and Kumar, 2006).

With AHP-based evaluation, each expert ranks all alternatives in preference from the first choice to the last option. So the next task is to aggregate the individual decisions of each expert and create a so-called group decision. There are different ways to accomplish this, such as voting, finding a compromise, building a consensus, the arithmetic or geometric aggregation of priorities or judgments, etc. (Srdjevic, Lakicevic, and Srdjevic, 2013).

The proposed approach uses the Borda Count (BC) method in this study. BC is based on rank numbers of alternatives in the experts' preference rankings. Each rank is assigned a number, with the difference between two consecutive rank numbers being 1. In this regard, each respondent is given a point corresponding to the position in which the participant ranks it. The number of respondents being evaluated determines the number of points assigned to the respondent for each ranking. If there are n respondents, then a respondent will receive n points for a first preference, $n-1$ points for a second preference, $n-2$ for the third, and so on, with a respondent receiving 1 point for being ranked last. Once all selections have been counted, the respondent with the most points is the winner, and their issues will reflect their rank in the district. At the provincial level, a respondent from all sections was compiled, and the count method was again used to determine the final status of the respondent. The total point for each respondent determined its rank in the province (Claudio and Okudan, 2008).

Likert Score

A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly involved in research that employs questionnaires. It is the most widely used approach to scaling responses in survey research, such that the term (or, more accurately, the Likert-type scale) is often used interchangeably with a rating scale. However, there are other types of rating scales. The scale is named after its inventor, psychologist Rensis Likert. Likert distinguished between a scale proper, which emerges from collective responses to a set of items (usually eight or more), and the format in which responses are scored along with a range. Technically speaking, a Likert scale refers only to the former. The difference between these concepts involves the Likert distinction between the investigated phenomenon and the means of capturing variation that points to the underlying phenomenon. Respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements when responding to a Likert item. Thus, the range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given item.

A scale can be created as the simple sum or average of questionnaire responses over individual items (questions). In so doing, Likert scaling assumes that distances between each choice (answer option) are equal. Many researchers employ a set of highly correlated items (that show high internal consistency), which together will capture the entire domain under study (which requires less-than-perfect correlations). Others hold to a standard: "All items are assumed to be replications of each other, or in other words, items are considered parallel instruments". By contrast, modern test theory treats the difficulty of each item (the ICCs) as information to be incorporated into scaling objects (Carifio and Perla, 2007).

TOPSIS Method

In 1981 Hwang and Yoon they have developed the TOPSIS method. It is specially used when multiple criteria are available to take a decision. Two approaches are made in the TOPSIS method- 1) Positive ideal solution with the highest positive attribute values. 2) Negative ideal solution- one which has the highest negative attribute values. TOPSIS finds the nearest solution to the ideal position and farthest from the negative ideal solution. A table used to make a selection from a list of options is called a selection matrix. The following steps are executed to get the solution in the TOPSIS method:

Step 1- Standardising columns of the selection matrix: Standardising each column of the selection matrix is divided by the root of the sum of the square of the respective row. Step 2- Weight multiplication: A weighted standardised selection matrix is obtained by multiplying attribute weight to each. Step 3- Obtaining positive and negative ideal solutions: A set of minimum values for each criterion row is harmful solutions. A group of maximum values for each criterion or row is a positive solution. Step 4- Obtaining separation from positive ideal solution- Separation can be obtained by subtracting the maximum value row-wise and finding its square, then adding the maximum value column-wise and finding its square root. Step 5- Obtaining separation from negative ideal solution- Separation can be obtained by subtracting the minimum value row-wise and finding its square, then adding the minimum value column-wise and finding its square root. Step 6- Obtaining relative closeness to Negative ideal solution- Suppose x_1 is a separation set from the perfect positive solution in step 4, and x_2 is a break from the perfect negative answer in step 5. Now find (x_1+x_2) column-wise, then find $x_2/(x_1+x_2)$; it gives a break from a perfect negative solution. The column has a maximum value, is the solution because it is separated from a perfect negative solution and closest to a perfect positive solution (Wang and Duan, 2019). In Figure 1, a general approach to the TOPSIS method is visualised. Here $s_1, s_2...s_6$ are solutions. TOPSIS helps to find the distance between positive and negative ideal Units.

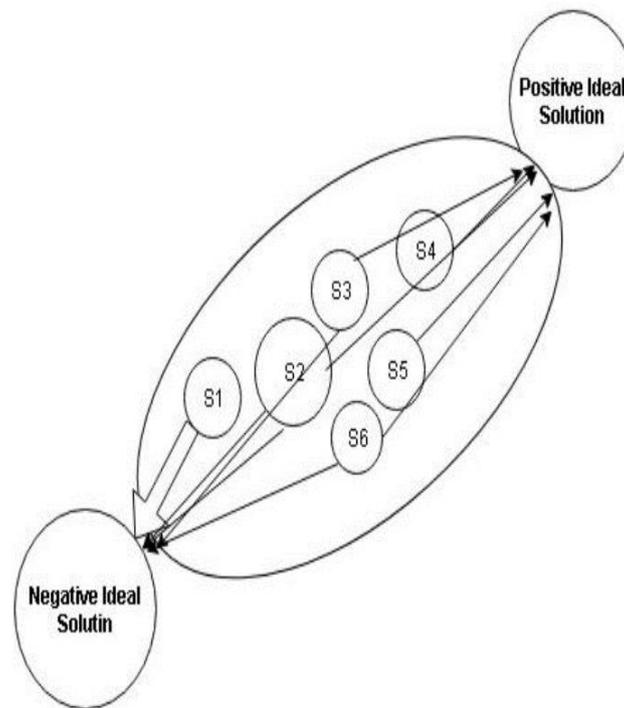


Fig.1 General approach of the TOPSIS method is visualised

Source: Wang and Duan, 2019

Preliminary Qualitative Findings of the Research

General Views

The Islamic State (IS) threat in Southeast Asia has loomed heavily over recent months. Security services believe that over 100 people from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the southern Philippine region have left to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Thousands have sworn oaths of allegiance to the IS in the area. Security officials say this phenomenon has disturbing implications for the region, especially when battle-hardened fighters return home from the Middle East. Admiral Samuel Locklear, who heads the U.S. Armed Forces Pacific Command, said that around 1,000 recruits from India to the Pacific may have joined the IS to fight in Syria or Iraq. However, he did not specify the countries or provide a time frame. "That number could get larger as we go forward," Locklear told reporters at the Pentagon (Samuel, 2016).

The IS group's power is focused on Iraq and Syria. Still, a look at IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi's declaration of an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria reveals that the group has much broader ambitions and

that there are groups far beyond those borders who have aligned themselves with the Islamic State. On June 29, 2014, the group announced the formation of the caliphate and stressed the following:

“We clarify to the Muslims that with this declaration of Khilafah, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance to the Khalifah Ibrahim and support him (may Allah preserve him). The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organisations becomes null by the expansion of the khilafat's authority and the arrival of its troops to their areas". Al-Baghdadi's speech is addressed to all Muslims and refers to his fighters as "your Mujahideen brothers"; the nowhere in the speech does he mention geographical locations or limits for the caliphate or jihad". (Nainggolan,2017)

The IS magazine includes remarks from al-Baghdadi, in which he broadly defines the group's ambitions and enemies. The world, he says, is now divided into two camps, "the camp of Muslims and the mujahideen everywhere, and the camp of the Jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions...all being led by America and Russia and mobilised by the Jews. The group's enemies include the leaders of Iran and Al-Qaeda, "the crusaders in Washington", and the "secularists" leading Turkey. Followers are found in Algeria, Sudan, Indonesia and the Philippines. The IS has started to move into the region to make Southeast Asia part of its caliphate (Nainggolan,2017).

Southern Thailand

In southern Thailand, the Afghan Veteran members re-united and established a new separatist group known as Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMIP). This faction then joins with the main sections of separatist groups, i.e. Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) in the respective Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla (four southern districts) provinces. In relations with the IS and other terrorist movements, it was suspected that in 2004 – 2005, the JI networking attempted to convince leaders of separatist groups operating in the southern region to join them in conducting mass attacks and sabotages over Thailand, particularly Bangkok city. Nevertheless, this proposal is refused by the separatist groups since their motives and spirit of struggle differ (Mohd Zaini Salleh, Amirudin Sulaiman, Rusdi Omar, 2020).

The latest development in the southern region has shown a weird scenario. New generations and suspected unknown person who comes into the south of the area from middle-east countries. Some said that it could be brought religious duty or *dakwah*. Apart from Malaysia being strongly suspected as a transit country for international terrorist groups, Thailand's southern region is also involved. (Mohd Zaini Salleh, Amirudin Sulaiman, Rusdi Omar, 2020) Further research should be conducted to justify the fact and statements.

Malaysia

Malaysian police revealed that at least 50 Malaysians are currently believed to be in Syria, fighting alongside IS forces. According to the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations in New York, fifteen Malaysians were allegedly killed in Syria after participating in terrorist and jihadist activities with the IS. Ahmad Tamimi Maliki had the dubious honour of being Malaysia's first suicide bomber linked to the Islamic State. He is credited with blowing up 25 elite Iraqi soldiers at Iraq's SWAT headquarters in al-Anbar Province on May 26, 2014. Reports state that Maliki, who received militant training in Port Dickson at the end of 2013, drove a military SUV filled with tons of explosives into the SWAT headquarters, blowing himself up. The bombing preceded an attack on the headquarters by IS terrorists. Maliki's exploits were published on the IS official Website titled "Mujahideen Malaysia Syahid Dalam Operasi Martyrdom" and his photograph. The area described Maliki as the first Malaysian suicide bomber in Iraq. From Facebook postings, it is learnt that he first went to Syria via Turkey before finally ending up in Iraq, where he became a suicide bomber. (Azrul Azlan Abdul Rahman, Zuliskandar Ramli, Mohd Nasrin Mohd Nasir, 2020)

Three Malaysian women, apparently sympathetic to the Islamic State, reportedly travelled to the Middle East to offer themselves sexually to militants. "These women are believed to have offered themselves sexual comfort roles to IS fighters," a Malaysian intelligence official said in an interview, adding, "This concept may seem controversial, but it has arisen as certain Muslim women here are showing sympathy for the IS". The concept of 'Jihad al nikah, in which extramarital sexual relations with multiple partners are permitted, is considered a legitimate form of holy war by fringe hardline Sunni Muslim Salafists. (Azrul Azlan Abdul Rahman, Zuliskandar Ramli, Mohd Nasrin Mohd Nasir, 2020) Between January and June 2014, Malaysian police arrested 19 people, including two women, for involvement in militant activities. According to a top counter-terrorism official, the Malaysian police foiled plans for a wave of

bombings drawn up by radical Islamic militants and inspired by the IS. The suspects were formulating plans to bomb pubs, discos and a Malaysian brewery, said Ayob Khan Mydin, Deputy Chief of the Malaysian police counter-terrorism division. The suspected militants envisioned establishing a hardline Southeast Asian Islamic caliphate spanning Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore and planned to travel to Syria to learn from the Islamic State. The suspects included professionals and two homemakers. They were only in the early stages of discussing their plans and did not have heavy weapons or bomb-making knowledge. Malaysians Ahmad Salman Abdul Rahim and Mohd Lotfi Ariffin are part of a group of Malaysians in Hama, Syria, who claim to be engaged in jihad, fighting against Bashar al-Assad. They have released numerous videos to give Malaysians a glimpse into their lives of jihad. The Malaysian mainstream media even interviewed them via Facebook. Two postings on the 'JIM-Jamaah IS Malaysia' Facebook page called for the beheading of Dayaks because they are non-Muslims. Dayaks are people located in Sarawak. (Azrul Azlan Abdul Rahman, Zuliskandar Ramli, Mohd Nasrin Mohd Nasir, 2020)

Southern Philippines

The Philippines is a primarily Christian country but has a significant Muslim minority in the southern islands. The region is the site of a long-drawn-out rebellion by local Muslims against Manila's rule. Several hardline Muslim guerrillas in Mindanao announced their allegiance to the Islamic State. Clips uploaded to YouTube show southern Philippines-based Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Abu Sayyaf rebels pledging support to the Islamic State (IS). However, moderate rebel groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which recently signed a peace deal with the Philippine government, have condemned the IS. The MILF portrayed its moderate leadership as vital to stopping the savage ideology of the IS from infecting the southern Muslim regions of the mainly Catholic Philippines. "The MILF condemns barbarism and savagery whether done by other groups including the ISIS or even by its (MILF's) own members," the MILF said in an editorial posted on its Web site (www.luwaran.com). The MILF also noted that a planned Muslim autonomous region that is the centrepiece of the peace deal would be a bulwark against the ideology of the Islamic State (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017).

"We have an alliance with the Islamic State and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," *Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters* (BIFF) spokesman, Abu Misery Mama, told AFP by telephone. Misry confirmed that a YouTube video showing a purported BIFF leader flanked by armed men and reading a statement of support for the IS had come from his group. Abu Misery said that his group had no plans to impose the radical IS brand of Islam in the Southeast Asian nation. He claimed that BIFF had not sent any fighters from the Philippines to help the IS, nor was it recruiting people to join the IS, adding, "but if they need our help, why not?". Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters split in 2008 from the Philippines' leading Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). BIFF, which is believed to have a few hundred fighters, rejected the peace agreement between MILF and the Philippine government and pursued the decades-old armed campaign to establish an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines, which was initiated by the MILF (Gunaratna, 2017).

The Abu Sayyaf group claims to fight for an independent Islamic state in the Philippines. Still, it has mainly served as a kidnap-for-ransom gang operating in the lawless interiors of southern Philippine islands. Abu Sayyaf emerged in 2000 after kidnapping 21 tourists and workers from a diving resort in nearby Malaysia. Abu Sayyaf is blamed for the worst militant attack in the Philippines, the sinking of a ferry in Manila Bay in 2004, in which 100 people were killed. The group has declined in recent years, with top leaders either killed or ageing out. Abu Sayyaf has suffered dwindling support and military setbacks over the past decade and is now believed to have only about 300 followers based on remote islands off the southern Philippines. A purported Abu Sayyaf video was uploaded to YouTube showing one of the group's most senior leaders, Isnilon Hapilon, as he read a statement that pledged allegiance to the IS. He was filmed linking arms with more than a dozen men, some with faces swathed in fabric, as they stood at a forest clearing to pray and listen to his statement. Speaking in Arabic, he read a statement swearing "loyalty and obedience in adversity and comfort" to the IS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, before prayer and shouts of 'Allahu Akbar' (God is [the] Greatest). The United States has placed a \$5 million reward on Hapilon's head and considers the Abu Sayyaf group a "foreign terrorist organisation" engaged in beheadings, bombings, and kidnappings. Abu Sayyaf threatened to kill one of the two Germans being held hostage by the group by October 10, 2014, according to messages posted on Twitter. Still, they later extended the injunction until October 17, 2014. The German man and woman, reportedly seized from a yacht in the South China Sea in April 2014, were thought to be held on southern Jolo Island by Abu Sayyaf fighters loyal to Radullan Sahiron. His group is also believed to have a Dutch and a Swiss hostage seized in May 2012 and a Japanese man. The group demanded that Germany halt its support for the U.S.-led bombing campaign launched against the IS and \$5.6 million in ransom. On October 17, 2014, Abu Sayyaf released

the German hostages. Abu Rami, the group's spokesman, told a commercial radio station based in Zamboanga city in the southern Philippines that the hostages had been freed after Abu Sayyaf received the ransom in full. According to German government sources, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier had sent a special envoy to the Philippines to negotiate a deal with the rebels (Domingo, 2018).

Indonesia

In July 2014, jailed Abu Bakar Bashir, the spiritual leader of the Indonesian terrorist network Jamaah Islamiyah, officially pledged allegiance, or *bait*, to the Islamic State. Bashir made his *bait* to the IS and 23 other prisoners in a praying room of what was supposed to be the highly secured Pasir Putih Penitentiary on Nusakambangan Island off Cilacap, Central Java. Abu Bakar Bashir called on his followers to support the Islamic State, which Indonesian police have since outlawed. On August 11, 2014, the Detachment 88 counter-terrorism squad arrested Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid's leader, Afif Abdul Majid, who was added to the U.S. global terrorist list in 2013. Majid recently returned from Syria and pledged support to the Islamic State and Abu Bakar Bashir. Groups supporting the IS held meetings in Jakarta, Solo in Central Java, and Bima in West Nusa Tenggara (Tia, 2015).

General Ansyad Mbai, the head of the counter-terrorism desk at the Ministry for Security, Legal and Foreign Affairs, warned that the IS was drawing scores of sympathisers from Indonesia who had already left the country to wage jihad with Sunni militias in Syria and Iraq to establish an Islamic caliphate in the Middle East. According to the General, those who returned home founded a similar group in Jakarta and East Nusa Tenggara (NTB) provinces. According to officials, at least 30 Indonesians have already left the country to join the IS, and 56 other people have applied for a visa for Syria. Indonesian and Malaysian militants have discussed forming a 100-strong Malay-speaking unit within the IS in Syria (Tia, 2015).

The Central Java government recently discovered that a local branch of the IS has been active in Sempu, Malang, for at least one month. Calling themselves Anshar ul Khilafah, the cell reportedly uses a village mosque as its headquarters. The militant group's influence has allegedly spread to several other areas of Central Java, particularly Solo. Several media portals have reported scores of Surakarta Muslims pledging their oath to the IS. Meanwhile, Habib Rizieq Shihab of the Muslim hardline Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) denied that his organisation had denounced the IS. "The FPI has yet decided whether it will support or refuse the establishment of IS [in Indonesia]," he was quoted as saying by Kompas.com, adding that FPI leaders would assess the rapidly growing Iraqi movement to decide whether it has deviated from Islamic teachings (Kibtiah, and Yustikaningrum, 2018).

The central government of Indonesia officially banned the IS and emphasised the importance of stopping the militant outfit's damaging influence. Djoko Suyanto, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, said that "the government will not allow development in Indonesia because it goes against the ideology of our Pancasila, which promotes pluralism. Every attempt to promote should be prevented. Indonesia should not be the place to spread [their ideology]." The announcement came after a limited cabinet meeting on the IS, led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The National Police and Counter-terrorism Agency (BNPT) were appointed to lead a joint law enforcement effort against IS activities across the country, according to Djoko (Kibtiah and Yustikaningrum, 2018).

Other Sub-Regional Spill-Over Impacts: Singapore

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Teo Chee Hean, told the Parliament that a handful of Singaporeans had gone to fight in Syria, adding: "The presence of former foreign fighters in our region - whether they originate from Southeast Asia or elsewhere - is a security threat to us". One Singaporean fighter was Haja Fakkurudeen Usman Ali, a naturalised citizen who left his wife and three children for Syria. Another is a Singaporean woman who joined her husband and two teenage children. Several others were stopped before leaving. Singapore has condemned the IS and called their actions "barbaric". The government is detaining those flying off to Syria.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on August 19, 2014, that the current turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa had impacted Singapore and its neighbours. Furthermore, as a result, the work of Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) continues to be important in helping to maintain harmony in society and keep Singapore safe. Prime Minister Lee said the organisation's work has been invaluable in fighting extremist ideology and maintaining religious and racial balance in Singapore. He added that the group's role is especially vital in the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq. He said the battle

feeds a terrorist narrative, drawing thousands of foreign fighters from all over the world, the effects of which are felt globally and closer to home. (Hashim, 2015) The Prime Minister said:

“Our neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia, are also concerned that many of their citizens have joined in the fight and even committed suicide attacks. A few Singaporeans have gone there too, and others (who were planning to go) have been intercepted. The danger is that they learn the techniques of terrorism; they are infected with this radical ideology and forge an international brotherhood of fighters and produce a new generation of terrorists.” (Channel Newsasia, 2014)

Conclusion

In June 2014, ISIS capitalised on its early military advances by declaring the creation of a new caliphate, or Islamic state, in the territory it controls in Syria and Iraq. To expand this base, it also has begun a serious program to recruit Muslims worldwide to join the effort. Its literature specifically calls on military officers, engineers and doctors to move to the caliphate and join the cause. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the IS and self-declared "leader of Muslims everywhere", fell out with Al-Qaeda in 2013 over his decision to expand into Syria. His followers carried out beheadings, crucifixions, and mass executions. For some militants, the Islamic State's creation of a jihadi bastion spanning western Iraq and eastern Syria, and its strong online presence, are more attractive when compared with Al-Qaeda's failure to carry out a significant attack in the West for almost a decade. For now, IS's ambitions far outweigh its limited military capabilities. However, it is still considered a substantial threat for the following reasons: First, the foreigners recruited by the IS recruiting can quickly return home as battle-hardened fighters to execute terrorist attacks. Second, other extremist groups can extend their operational capabilities beyond Iraq and Syria. Third, Al-Qaeda may soon feel compelled to mount operations to prove its relevance. Based on the early findings above, the countries of Southeast Asia must join forces hand-in-hand to protect the region and prevent the destructive influence and radical doctrine of the Islamic State. A transparent regional organisation and model of management to curb and control the IS and other terrorism threats should be established. It is necessary to upgrade and enhance operational and intelligence efforts to defeat the IS in the region. Based on the preliminary findings above, the level of seriousness due to terrorism threats could be assumed: first, the southern Philippines; second, Indonesia; third, southern Thailand; and last but not least, Malaysia. Further research and findings based on quantitative will give a clear indication of the threat's seriousness.

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