

JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY THE ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NUS  
AND THE CHR. MICHELSEN INSTITUTE (CMI), NORWAY

# **MILITIA, RELIGION AND THE LEGITIMATION OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA**

**14 -15 JUNE 2012**





## **Militia, Religion and the Legitimation of Violence in Southeast Asia (14 -15 June 2012)**

Co-organized by the Asia Research Institute, NUS and the Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway  
Held at the Asia Research Institute Seminar Room, Tower Block Level 10, NUS @ BTC

Militia and other forms of local non-state security arrangements across Southeast Asia typically emerge in response to state weakness and political instability. In such circumstances, it is not unusual for religious groups to implement their own law enforcement and security arrangements. Given that the state seldom encompasses the entire field of justice and security provision, it is important to examine the internal dynamics of non-state security groups and how they assert authority, resolve conflicts and re-establish order. In some cases, when responding to the social and political vacuum caused by state weakness, militias actually contribute to volatility and violence. However, security groups can also play an important role in local communities, and promote a sense of security that the police or other state instrumentalities are unable to offer. For instance, on the Indonesian island of Lombok many communities over the past decade felt they had no alternative with the collapse of the authoritarian government but to rely on local militia when faced with a perceived crime wave. The militia gave them some degree of comfort; however, these same groups elsewhere on the island were causing havoc (even attacking police stations). It is within this complex and often ambiguous law enforcement environment across the Southeast Asian region, within which the state has either vacated their responsibilities or provides limited support, to which this workshop will engage.

This workshop focuses on militia in Southeast Asia that are affiliated with religious groups or utilise religious iconography. An important consideration is how militia express their religiosity and what are the consequences for individual personal piety of participation in these groups. Interconnected with this is how do these groups use religion to recruit members, justify their behaviour and what kinds of religious practice and discipline underpin their activities. This workshop seeks papers that draw upon rich empirical and ethnographic research about these security groups that operate outside the boundaries of direct state control. A significant issue underpinning this workshop is an examination of the effect of these non-state security groups whether they be in the Philippines, Thailand or Indonesia. An essential part of this assessment is to review whether religious groups are, in fact, alternatives to formal state authority, and if they are, what are the consequences of this governance arrangement. This workshop intends to consider these issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

The key questions guiding the papers to be presented at this workshop are:

1. What is the rationale and political motivations for the development of militia? Are militias connected to religious educational institutions? If so, how does this relationship affect these educational institutions and their theology?
2. How do members of these groups experience their participation in militia and how does it influence their sense of religiosity? What kinds of religious practice, bodily discipline and training are practiced within these groups?
3. Militia in many parts of Southeast Asia have been accused of criminal behaviour and human rights violations, as a consequence, how has religiosity been used by militia to recruit or justify their actions? Are there other sources of legitimation of violence in the region? (such as nationalism, ethnicity, etc). Why is it that some militia are violent while others maintain a relatively peaceful role within the community? Is there any difference between "religious" militia and other types of militia in Southeast Asia?
4. How does the existence of non-state militia affect local community perceptions of state authority?

Organisers:

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## Thursday, 14 June 2012

09:15 – 09:30	REGISTRATION	
09:30 – 09:45	OPENING REMARKS	
	<b>Prasenjit DUARA</b> Director of the Asia Research Institute and the Director of Research, Humanities and Social Sciences, NUS	
09:45 – 10:00	INTRODUCTION	
	<b>Jeremy KINGSLEY</b> Asia Research Institute, NUS  <b>Kari TELLE</b> Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway	
10:00 – 11:15	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1	
Chairperson:	Jeremy KINGSLEY – Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore	
10:00	<b>Joshua BARKER</b> University of Toronto, Canada	From “Men of Prowess” To Muslim Militias: Informal Sovereignties in Southeast Asia
10:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
11:15 – 11:45	MORNING BREAK	
11:45 – 13:15	PANEL 1	
Chairperson:	Bernard ARPS - Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore	
11:45	<b>Kevin MCGAHAN</b> National University of Singapore	The Politics of Immigration Enforcement: Curious Case of Malaysia’s Migrant Militia
12:05	<b>SUMANTO AI Qurtuby</b> Boston University, USA	Religion and Militia: Ambonese Muslim Jihadists and Christian Fighters during the Maluku Wars, 1999-2002
12:25	<b>Joel Fajardo ARIATE Jr.</b> University of the Philippines-Diliman	Does the Appointed Son of God Need an Army? A Filipino Religious Entrepreneur’s Strategic Use of Violence and Intimations of Force
12:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
13:15 – 14:30	LUNCH	



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14:30 – 16:00			PANEL 2		
Chairperson:			Jamie DAVIDSON – Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore		
14:30			Hatib Abdul KADIR Brawijaya University, Indonesia		GPB (Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah) and <i>Amar Ma'ruf Nahyi Munkar</i> : From Street <i>Gangsterism</i> to Politics
14:50			Muhammad Khoirul MUQTABA Research Center for Society and Culture- Indonesian Institute of Sciences , Indonesia		Partnering or Challenging State Security? The Role of <i>Banser-Ansor</i> in the Reformation Era
15:10			Ahmad Najib BURHANI University of California – Santa Barbara, USA		Force and Discourse: Militia and Vigilante Groups behind the Persecution of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia
15:30			QUESTIONS & ANSWERS		
16:30 – 17:40					
PANEL 3					
Chairperson:			Philip FOUNTAIN – Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore		
16:30			Vedrana RISTIĆ Nanyang Technological University, Singapore		Deploying Nationalism: Fear and Ethno-nationalist Mobilization in Contemporary Malaysia
16:50			Jeremy KINGSLEY National University of Singapore		Phantom Militia in Lombok, Indonesia
17:10			QUESTIONS & ANSWERS		
17:40					
17:45					
BUS TRANSFER TO DINNER VENUE					
18:00 – 20:30					
20:30					
BUS TRANSFER TO BACK TO HOTEL					

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## FRIDAY, 15 JUNE 2012

09:00 – 09:30	REGISTRATION	
09:30 – 10:50	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2	
Chairperson:	Kari TELLE, Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway	
9:30	Janet HOSKINS Asia Research Institute, NUS and University of Southern California, USA	From Séance to Battlefield: Victor Hugo and the Caodai Militia
10:15	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
10:45 – 11:20	MORNING BREAK	
11:20 – 12:30	PANEL 4	
Chairperson:	Robin BUSH, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore	
11:20	Lee WILSON University of Cambridge, UK	A Tale of Two Cities: Citizen Militia Groups in Jakarta and Bali
11:40	Kari TELLE Chr Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway	Charisma and Routinization: Hindu Balinese Security Groups in Lombok
12:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH	
13:30 – 14:40	PANEL 5	
Chairperson:	LIM Chee Han, Department of Sociology, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	
13:30	Gabriel FACAL Aix- Marseille Université, France	Religious groups and Influence networks in Decentralised Indonesia: The Satkar Ulama Organization of Banten
13:50	James SCAMBARY Australian National University	Ritual, Magic, Conflict and Organised Crime: East Timor's Gangs and Martial Arts Groups
14:10	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
14:40 – 15:10	TEA BREAK	
15:10 – 16:40	PANEL 6	
Chairperson:	Thongchai WINICHAKUL - Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore	
15:10	Anders ENGVALL Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden	Trust and Conflict in Southern Thailand
15:30	Muhammad Habibi SIREGAR North Sumatra State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN-SU), Indonesia	Militia-Based Religion Role in Indonesia: Between Violence and Marginal
15:50	Laurens BAKKER Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands	Hard-Fisted Piety: Christian Militias in the Minahasa
16:10	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	
16:40 – 17:10	REFLECTIONS	
	Joshua BARKER University of Toronto, Canada Janet HOSKINS Asia Research Institute, NUS and University of Southern California, USA	
17:10 – 17:40	CLOSE DOOR DISCUSSIONS	
17:40	END OF DAY	
17:45	BUS TRANSFER TO BACK TO HOTEL	



## **MILITIA-BASED RELIGION ROLE IN INDONESIA: BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND MARGINAL**

**Muhammad Habibi SIREGAR**

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The growth of religiously affiliated militias in Indonesia can be attributed to the discontent of some groups who sensed that their belief is under threat due to Indonesia's rapid development. The emergence of the group *Forum Umat Islam* (FUI) (Forum for Muslim Communities) is an excellent illustration of how these groups combined forces to contest the destruction of the Al-Ikhlas mosque in Medan, North Sumatra. This case started from the mutual trading (*ruislagh*) of land plots owned by the Bukit Barisan KODAM (Komando Daerah Militer - Military Territorial Command), on which the Al-Ikhlas mosque was located, with some plots of land in the outskirts of Medan owned by Medan Chinese businesspeople. Several riots ensued, caused mainly by the agitation of FUI, armed with anti-Chinese slogans, who claimed that the trade of land plots was an effort by the Chinese to suppress Islam. Institutionally, the major Muslim organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, counseled for peace and the obedience of existing legal regulations by recommending that FUI take up the issue in court. However, FUI lost in court to KODAM and the Chinese. They could not accept the decision and accused every parties involved including the government to collaborate with the Chinese to suppress Islam. FUI remained firm with their stance of rebuilding the mosque in the now ruined plot of land, and continued to perform prayers, especially Friday prayers there. They based their decision on the religious legal opinion (*fatwa*) of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI – *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) of 1984 which stated that any land on which a mosque is built is impermissible to be bought, sold, or traded. This religious issue has turned racial as there are indications that some members of FUI who wishes to revive the anti Chinese sentiment of the major 1998 riots.

As the Secretary of *Nahdatul Ulama* Islamic Communication wing (LDNU), **Muhammad Habibi SIREGAR** is directly involved in the current conflict concerning mosque destructions in Medan, Indonesia, playing the role of negotiator and managing to prevent several riots from occurring. As an academic, he teaches at the Faculty of *Dakwah* (Islamic Communication) of the North Sumatra State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN-SU). In 2010, he was entrusted to assist the Rector of IAIN-SU, such as representing him in socialization of state budget allocations meeting and writing his commencement speech. He often writes for local and regional newspapers such as *Waspada* and *Republika* on socio-religious behavior. In his current pursuit of a Ph.D at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Institute for Islamic Studies in Jakarta, he managed to complete the proposal stage in the first semester, a very rare feat in the institution, earning him commendations from prominent figures such as Azyumardi Azra.

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