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June 2013: Southeast Asia in Focus

Southeast Asia has long faced a complex set of challenges arising from terrorism. Before 9/11, the region was already a victim of conflicts between ethnicities and religions. The designation of Southeast Asia as a “second front” in the global war on terror since the 2002 Bali bombings helped raise awareness of the terrorist groups and networks operating in the region. The Bali bombings also prompted greater efforts among Southeast Asian countries to combat transnational terrorism. Initiatives at the bilateral and regional level reflected a change in attitude towards a more comprehensive and deeper approach towards counterterrorism.

More than a decade later, the success of these efforts is clear. Major transnational networks such as the Al Qaeda-supported Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have been effectively targeted and almost neutralized. The same is the case for groups such as Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. Al Qaeda’s operational linkages in the region have almost been severed with the neutralization and capture of key terrorist leaders such as Hambali. This improvement in capacity to combat and pre-empt threats has been due to the formation of new counterterrorism units and the creation of bilateral and regional frameworks for intelligence sharing in many Southeast Asian countries.

However, despite the neutralization and arrest of terrorists, militant jihadist groups continue to recruit and carry out attacks. The persistence of their propaganda efforts has meant that radicalization of individuals continues to undermine efforts to stem the flow of new terrorist recruits.

In Indonesia, this has particularly been the case despite the success of “hard” approaches. Gunaratna looks at this issue through the case of the foiled plot to attack the Myanmar embassy in

Jakarta. Muh Taufiqurrohman weighs the broader Indonesian counterterrorism strategy, arguing that more effort is needed to deepen the focus of “soft” approaches.

Although terrorism remains a significant source of threat across the region, all eyes are on Myanmar at present. Bashar examines the potential for a new front of jihad emerging in response to communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims in a country making a bold attempt at transition through political reform. Another focal point is the Philippines, where Avila looks at progress of the peace process between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

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A Face among the Crowd: Profiling the Man behind the Foiled Plot to Attack Myanmar's Embassy in Jakarta

Rohan Gunaratna

The foiled attempt to attack the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta highlights the continued deficiencies in Indonesia's counterterrorism strategies and reinforces the need for significant investments in countering radicalization and extremism.

Special Detachment 88, the counterterrorism unit of the Indonesian police, prevented an attack against the Embassy of Myanmar in Jakarta, Indonesia that was to have taken place on 3 May 2013. At 9pm on Thursday, 2 May 2013, Indonesian police arrested Sefariano (29), the bomb-maker of the cell behind the plot to attack the Myanmar embassy. Sefariano was traveling on a motorcycle with another member of the cell, Ovi, when he was arrested at Sudirman Street in Central Jakarta. The two men were on their way to meet the other members of the cell – Sigit and Tio – at Bundaran Hotel Indonesia in Central Jakarta.

At the time of their arrest, Sefariano and Ovi were carrying five pipe bombs in a black backpack that were to be used to attack the Myanmar embassy

the following day. The backpack was to be transferred to Sigit and Tio who were responsible for placing it at the embassy. The detonation of the bombs in the backpack was planned for around 1pm, which was after Friday prayers but prior to a demonstration scheduled to take place outside the embassy on that day.

Though the cell responsible for planning the attack on the Myanmar embassy had no name, Sefariano said in his debriefing by Special Detachment 88 that he had planned to name it *Toifah Al Mansyuroh* ("The Victorious Group"/"The Ones Who Gain Support"). However, the other members – Sigit, Ovi and Tio – were not aware of this. Sefariano also claimed that the cell had not yet appointed an *amir* (leader) because it was still relatively newly



A protest against Myanmar's Buddhist community outside the Embassy of Myanmar in Jakarta.

Photo credit: Reuters
<http://www.smh.com.au/world/bashir-threatens-jihad-on-myanmar-buddhists-20130503-2iyfw.html>

formed. The members of the cell all met in cyber space and had ties to multiple violent, radical and extremist organizations.

Radicalization of Sefariano

Born in Serang, a city located in western Java, Sefariano grew up with five adopted brothers and sisters. He is married with a one year old child. Sefariano was educated at Islamic schools from 1989 to 1997 and at a technical vocational school from 1997 to 2000. Subsequently, he worked as a mechanic and ran a mineral water refilling business from 2010 to 2013. He had no previous record of engaging in crime or terrorism.

Sefariano's radicalization began in 2006 when he regularly attended a series of public religious study sessions that motivated him to wage armed jihad in Palestine. In his debriefing he said that "In 2008, during a war in Palestine (the 2008 Gaza War), I had a strong desire to join with jihad *jamaah* (community) to go to Palestine as a member of *laskar* (paramilitary) to fight against Israel. Therefore, I registered to join the *laskar* with Front Pembela Islam (FPI) [in] Petamburan, Central Jakarta. However because at that time the *laskar* could not go, then I deepened my religious knowledge and looked for information on Palestine."

In 2008, Sefariano joined Forum Umat Islam (FUI: Islamic Community Forum) located in At Taqwa mosque, Tanah Abang, Central Jakarta. FUI is a coalition of both radical and mainstream Indonesian Muslim organizations. Sefariano's membership of this organization exposed him to an environment where the gradual radicalization of his views took place. He often participated in religious study sessions at the At Taqwa mosque held four times a week. These religious study sessions – hosted by Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) preachers – presented jihad as *fardhu 'ain* – an individual obligation of every able Muslim to wage war against their enemies. Jihad was to be conducted physically and spiritually to fight the

"infidels" (non-Muslims) and those committing *thoghut* (a great transgression or disobedience towards Islam and its values). Participants of the sessions were also referred to as *firqotun najiyah* (those who have remained true to Islam and will be saved by God). This concept was used to make participants feel part of an exclusive group designated by God to serve and protect Islam. *Firqotun najiyah* has been exploited by radicals and extremists to declare what they believe to be the "superior" extent of their piety.

Sefariano rose through the ranks of FUI, which is led by Muhammad Al Khathat. Serving under *Amir Askary* (leader of the military division) Ciway alias Ikhwan, a security officer in an office located in Kalideres in West Jakarta, Sefariano was appointed Vice Askary. To indoctrinate the members of the military division, lectures were delivered on the concept of *amar makruf nahi munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong). This Islamic concept was misinterpreted to show that jihad is one of the commands that is right and must be fulfilled to eliminate evil on earth.

As JAT shared the venue of At Taqwa mosque with FUI, the two organizations often conducted activities together. In 2010, Sefariano joined the Tanah Abang branch of JAT in Central Jakarta led by Ustaz Jamal. It was in a JAT-run study session that Sefariano attended where Ustaz Ainur Rofiq (head of the Jakarta branch of JAT) spoke of members of the *jamaah* forming *toifah* (small groups) aimed at conducting *amaliyah* (operations). Hence the formation of *toifah* would not involve the community but a select group of committed individuals.

After handpicking the most committed, an exclusive *taklim* (religious study session) was conducted where the focus would be on jihad as *fardhu 'ain*. Besides this, other physical activities were conducted for this small group. A morning run was held every Sunday from Monas (Central Jakarta) to Blok M (South Jakarta). Hiking and

outdoor camping trips were organized once in three months while self-defense sports were conducted once a week at the At Taqwa mosque.

In 2011, Sefariano came into contact with the leadership of JAT and its associated groups operating from within and outside prison. He attended several religious study sessions conducted by the JAT leader Ustaz Abu Bakar Baasyir throughout 2010. After Baasyir was arrested, Sefariano visited him at Police Central Headquarters by establishing contact with his secretary Hasyim. Baasyir gave Sefariano *tausiyah* (religious advice). In particular, he discussed the concept of *tauhid* (oneness of God) and told Sefariano that democracy is against *tauhid*, stressing the importance of upholding Shariah (Islamic law).

Sefariano also visited Ustaz Aman Abdulrahman at Salemba Penitentiary to receive *tausiyah*. Ustaz Aman is closely associated with the writings of Abu Mohamed al Maqdisi of Jordan. Al Maqdisi's disciples include Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the former leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Sefariano also visited other radical ideologues including Ustaz Abdullah Sonata, the founder of Mujahidin KOMPAK and Bintang Yuliardi in Cipinang Penitentiary.

Sefariano's Transition to Violence

In early 2012, Sefariano expressed his desire to conduct an *amaliyah* on the "jihad battlefield." Sefariano said that he "studied bomb making from the internet... I know the website from a Facebook friend named Siro Kosmos." After Sefariano learnt the art of making a bomb on the Internet, he started to gradually purchase the precursors from a chemical store. Sefariano then contacted friends in JAT and offered to share his knowledge of bomb-making. Three individuals – Nasir, Ahmad and Izul – responded to his offer and Sefariano conducted a "lesson" for them in a rented shop house.

In August 2012, Sefariano came to know an individual named Saeful, a member of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII: Islamic State of Indonesia) through Facebook. Saeful, who belonged to the NII Kebumen-Cilacap branch of Central Java, was in contact with other NII members via Facebook, among them Imam, Siro, Ovi, Tio and Sigit. NII is an outlawed movement seeking to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia under the rule of Shariah that splintered into various factions and networks. Sefariano met Saeful twice – once in December 2012 with Imam and the second time in January 2013 where he also was introduced to Ovi and Siro.

The meeting in January 2013 took place at Al Ikhwan mosque in Tanah Abang, where Sefariano, Saeful, Ovi and Siro discussed mounting an attack. Saeful was not in favor of conducting the attack under the NII banner and instead wanted to form a *toifah* for the purpose of carrying out an attack. The group agreed to receive bomb making training skills from Sefariano. Subsequently, Sigit arrived at Tanah Abang and joined the group. As Sigit's house in Pamulang was vacant, Sefariano conducted the training in bomb-making there. Pamulang is a sub-district in the city of South Tangerang which is part of the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area.

Planning and Preparing the Embassy Attack

In April 2013, the discussion of developments in Myanmar among radicals reached a new high on Facebook. Sigit posted news on the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar which encouraged like-minded friends of his to do the same.

Sefariano recalled that on Saturday, 13 April 2013 at around 11pm, the cell met at Sigit's rented house in Pamulang. At this meeting, Sigit called for an *amaliyah* on the Myanmar embassy to retaliate against what he claimed was the genocidal repression of Muslims committed by

Buddhists. Furthermore, Sigit suggested timing the attack with the FUI demonstration scheduled to take place outside the embassy.

On Wednesday, 1 May 2013, Sefariano met Sigit and Tio to prepare the ingredients for the bombs they would use in the attack they had planned against the Myanmar embassy. Prior to this meeting, Sigit and Tio had purchased ingredients to make bombs which were brought to Sefariano's rented house at Jalan Bangka 2F near the At Taqwa mosque. The next day, Sefariano purchased piping and prepared five linked bombs. He was unable to purchase an alarm clock to use as a timer and asked Sigit to purchase it instead.

At around 8pm, Sefariano and Ovi placed the five bombs into a black backpack. In his debriefing, Sefariano recounted that he "had set the five bombs into one and it was ready to explode, just needed to be connected with a timer, which was an alarm clock." Sefariano and Ovi then proceeded to Bundaran Hotel Indonesia by motorcycle. They passed the Central Police Headquarters, Al Azhar School and came up to the traffic light at Senayan in South Jakarta. As Sefariano turned right and continued towards the Semanggi underpass, police made their arrest near the BRI building.

Implications

Despite significant investments in operational counterterrorism, the need to devise appropriate strategies to counter radicalization remains. It is now well established that radicalization and extremism create the milieu from which militant jihadists can emerge. The Internet, in particular, continues to pose a dilemma since taking down radical websites is not a solution and in fact disrupts efforts to gather intelligence on individuals that may potentially become radicalized.

Furthermore, the morphing of the terrorist threat into new networks and cells such as the one that Sefariano formed highlights the enormity of the task at hand for counterterrorist intelligence agencies. Radicals and extremists not only have multiple organizational affiliations, but these affiliations are also constantly changing with the ease of communication facilitated by the Internet.

The continued misappropriation of Islamic concepts by radical clerics is still a formidable obstacle for counter-ideology efforts. The fact remains that extremists have a far greater capacity to spread their interpretation of Islam. This is further complicated by the complex interaction between radical and mainstream organizations which effectively highlights the need to remain beyond a binary classification of "us" and "them."

The critics of Special Detachment 88 who wish to disband it over allegations of human rights violations must open up to the vital role that the unit plays in prevention of attacks. The neutralization and arrest of terrorist suspects will continue to remain an important tactic in Indonesia's overall counterterrorism strategy. However, efforts must be made to highlight incidents such as the successful disruption of the attack on the Myanmar embassy to counter the campaign to disband Special Detachment 88.

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Counterterrorism in Indonesia: Quo Vadis?

Muh Taufiqurrohman

Despite both “hard” and “soft” approaches being in place, Indonesia continues to be in the grip of militancy fuelled by radical and extremist ideology.

“Hard” Approaches: Tempered Success

The Indonesian police have scored a number of counterterrorism successes in recent months – raids on terrorist safe houses and training camps, the arrest and neutralization of a number of wanted terrorists and the foiling of plots to attack high-value targets in the capital Jakarta. Special Detachment 88, the counterterrorism unit of the Indonesian police, has been at the forefront of these efforts and has been ably assisted by the military (TNI). The primary targets of counterterrorism operations include the loose formation of militant jihadist cells under the Al Qaeda in Indonesia banner, the Harakah Sunni Movement for Indonesian Society (HASMI), and

East Indonesia Mujahidin Commandos (KMIT) based in the Poso reGENCY of Central Sulawesi.

The efforts made by the police to arrest and neutralize terrorists have, however, encouraged them to increasingly target the police. This is an intensification of a trend since 2009 where terrorist groups in Indonesia that once focused on targeting Western interests shifted to domestic targets, particularly the police. The gradual shift from “far” to “near” enemies is not only a practical response to successful counterterrorism operations, but is also the result of divisions among the militant jihadist groups and decentralization of the terrorist threat. Terrorist groups and their supporters will continue to justify



Special Detachment 88 investigating a house belonging to a terror suspect in Solo on 26 September 2012.

Photo credit: Anwar Mustafa, AFP

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/no-need-to-disband-densus-88-says-minister/>



Members of Special Detachment 88 carry their gears in a raid on a terrorist hideout in Cigondewah village, Bandung, West Java.

Photo credit: AP

<http://>

[www.todayonline.com/
world/asia/indonesia-anti-
terror-squad-kills-7-
militants](http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/indonesia-anti-terror-squad-kills-7-militants)

the attacks on the police as retaliation for the death of their comrades.

Secondly, the series of successful arrests and the neutralizations of terrorists have also negatively influenced relations between society and the state. In response to police counterterrorism operations, elements in society that are supportive of the terrorists' actions have argued that counterterrorism operations are being used by the government to shift the public's attention away from political issues. For example, the police were accused of timing the arrests of members of Abu Roban's cell in early May 2013 to distract the public from the government's plan to raise fuel prices. Prior to the arrests, the government's announcement regarding the increase in fuel prices had sparked protests in major cities such as Yogyakarta, Makassar and Jakarta.

Special Detachment 88 has also been the target of a propaganda campaign that accuses it of torture and unlawful killings. In March 2013, Din Syamsuddin, the leader of Muhammadiyah – an Islamic mass organization – launched a campaign to disband Special Detachment 88 for the alleged human rights abuses it has committed. This demand was further reinforced after the surfacing of footage which depicts what

appear to be Special Detachment 88 officers interrogating a suspect after he had been shot in the chest and was forced to strip to his underwear during a raid in Poso in 2007.

The suspect in the video, Rahman Kalahe, was sentenced to 19 years' imprisonment for his role in the beheading of three Christian female students and the murder of a priest in Poso. Nevertheless, the footage prompted Islamic groups including Muhammadiyah, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), as well as some members of parliament from the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) to make calls to dissolve Special Detachment 88. The pressure exerted by these groups led the National Human Rights Commission to reopen its investigation into the 2007 raid.

Protests were also staged against Special Detachment 88 and the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT). For instance, on 22 March 2013, hundreds of individuals from JAT, the Union of the Islamic Society (GAMIS) and the Islamic Reformist Movement (GARIS) in East Java staged a demonstration demanding the disbanding of Special Detachment 88. In April 2013, a group of individuals from FPI, Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Muhammadiyah, the

Association of Islamic Students (HMI), the Board of Indonesian Mosques, *Alkhairaat* and the Muslim Lawyer Team similarly demonstrated in Palu, Central Sulawesi.

Counterterrorism in Indonesia has benefitted from the adoption of a “hard” approach involving the arrest and neutralization of terrorists. However, the intensity of the campaign against Special Detachment 88 could significantly affect how counterterrorism is conducted in Indonesia in the future. Furthermore, as terrorists seldom surrender and are often armed, the police appears to have little choice over the use of neutralization as a tactic.

Those involved in counterterrorism need training to sensitize them to issues of human rights and how their actions may be operationally logical but perceived negatively by the public. Such training can be conducted by leveraging on the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission and other related institutions. The police also need to set up a monitoring mechanism to make sure that Special Detachment 88 employs a more transparent evaluation process in any suspected extra-judicial killings.

The neutralization and arrests of terrorists by the police have also created distrust among Indonesian Islamists against the government, which has manifested in the spread of conspiracy theories. For example, Hizb ut-Tahrir alleged that terrorist incidents in Indonesia are actually masterminded by the US and its allies. They also suggested that Indonesians had been duped into committing terrorist acts by the Indonesian intelligence apparatus, which is cooperating with the US intelligence services to serve the agenda of Indonesian political elites and the US.

Furthermore, public distrust has also created a tense relationship that some claim has fuelled militancy and terrorism further. If the police can address internal challenges such as corruption and human rights abuse, its relations with society

will improve along with an increase in society's trust in the police. This will lead to fuller support among the public for counterterrorism efforts. Without the public's approval, terrorist groups will continue to exploit perceived grievances to sustain their agenda.

“Soft” Approaches: Need for Intensification and Coordination

In the midst of calls to dissolve Special Detachment 88 and BNPT, the government insisted that the two agencies have “great respect for human rights.” Presidential spokesman Julian Aldrin Pasha denied that Special Detachment 88 employed a shoot-to-kill approach, adding that Indonesia upholds and enforces the rule of law. However, such statements alone are not enough to counter the campaign against Special Detachment 88 and BNPT. In fact, there is a need for a greater emphasis on “soft” approaches.

Rehabilitation aimed at de-radicalizing terrorists has been a feature of the Indonesian counterterrorism strategy since 2003. There have been high-profile cases of terrorists renouncing violence, such as Ali Imron, the younger brother of the executed Bali bombers and Nasir Abbas, who trained the Bali bombers. However, as the police continue to make arrests and discover new terrorist cells, groups and networks, criticism of the apparent ineffectiveness of the de-radicalization program has grown. For example, Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian (YPP), a local NGO that has worked with terrorist detainees claimed the BNPT needed to invest more resources to create greater focus on de-radicalization initiatives.

Furthermore, extremist groups have responded to de-radicalization efforts by accusing BNPT of employing *divide et impera* tactics on Indonesian Muslims. The extremist groups have also labeled the Islamic organizations collaborating with the government as enemies of Islam, and criticized

the notion of de-radicalization as contrary to Islam. Concern has been voiced regarding the conditions in Indonesian prisons, which are believed to facilitate recruitment and planning of attacks by incarcerated extremists. The rate of recidivism is being used to illustrate the apparent limitations of current de-radicalization efforts.

The government is, however, hopeful that the newly formulated blueprint for a national de-radicalization program will improve coordination between agencies and civil society partners as well as enhance the reach of community engagement efforts. Plans are underway to include a mechanism for monitoring extremist media and radical organizations. The future success of counterterrorism efforts in Indonesia will depend on how well the government can coordinate the range of “hard” and “soft” measures being undertaken. This will ensure that the threat from terrorism is effectively managed without alienating communities and feeding into future recruitment.

Muh Taufiqurrohman is an Analyst with ICPVTR.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis is open for contributions from researchers and practitioners in the field of terrorism research, security, and other related fields.

Topical areas of interest are terrorism and political violence, organized crime, homeland security, religion and violence, internal conflicts and all other areas of security broadly defined.

Articles can be between 1,000 to 2,000 words. Submissions must be made before the 15th of every month for editing purposes and for inclusion in the next month's issue. Please refer to the [guidelines](#).

Electronic copies of the articles (MS Word format) may be submitted to ctta@ntu.edu.sg

GLOBAL PATHFINDER

Global Pathfinder is a one-stop repository for information on current and emerging terrorist threats focusing on terrorism and political violence in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, key terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as on terrorist training camps. It also contains specific details and analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles.

For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to the Global Pathfinder database, please email Elena Ho Wei Ling at the following email address: isewlho@ntu.edu.sg

Next Steps for the Philippines Peace Framework

Ava Patricia C. Avila

The ongoing Philippine peace process may have experience some setbacks and delays, but is moving forward.

The Philippine government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace panels have signed five documents since the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in October 2012. However, the peace panels are four months past the year-end deadline to finish the four annexes that would complete the comprehensive peace agreement. Three crucial annexes which have yet to be signed include those on power sharing, wealth distribution, and normalization.

The documents signed thus far include one annex on Transition Arrangements and Modalities; three Terms of References for the Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), the Independent Commission on Policing (ICP), and the Sajahatra Bangsamoro and a certificate extending the tours of duty of the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) up to March 2014 and the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) until 14 February 2014.

Furthermore, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III issued Executive Order 120 on 17 December 2013 creating the Transition Commission (TransCom) in accordance with the FAB. Headed by MILF chief peace negotiator Mohagher Iqbal, the 15-member TransCom (seven appointed by the President Aquino and eight selected by the MILF) will draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

A Breakthrough

In many ways, the framework agreement is a breakthrough in the attempt to end a four-decade conflict and build an autonomous region in

Mindanao. The FAB envisions a region that would raise its own revenues and have its own police and judiciary. Early in his term, President Aquino declared that his administration's formula for ending the violence in Southern Philippines was to find a political settlement and ensure that Mindanao's economy would prosper; economic growth would ensure that the people could escape the poverty that gave birth to the secessionist cause.

Peace talks with the MILF have been disrupted three times by serious fighting since they began in 1997. In 2000, former President Joseph Estrada suspended peace talks and declared an "all-out war" against the MILF. Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo did the same in 2003 following a series of bombings attributed to MILF. The 2008 decision by the Supreme Court declaring a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) unconstitutional led to the failure of peace negotiations for the third time, prompting MILF "rogue" leaders – Ameril Umbra Kato, Abdullah 'Bravo' Macapaar and Aleem Pangalian – to stage attacks on various civilian targets in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte.

International Cooperation

In support of the FAB, the World Bank and United Nation's launched a 3-year programme to provide an on-demand technical assistance group for the creation of a Bangsamoro region. This initiative was seen as a vote of confidence for the ongoing talks between the government and the MILF. Dubbed the Facility for Advisory Support to Transition Capacities (FASTRAC), it will provide

expertise and interventions to hasten the transition from the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to the FAB. Furthermore, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei also pledged to help the Philippine government in its peace-keeping initiatives. As a member of the IMT that oversees the implementation of a ceasefire between the government and the MILF, Brunei is actively involved in the Mindanao peace process.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Sabah Claim

For MNLF founding chair Nur Misuari, the framework agreement runs counter to all the peace agreements that have been signed – the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, the Jeddah Accord in 1987 and the final peace agreement in 1996. Misuari described the FAB as a political ploy orchestrated by Kuala Lumpur to prevent the full implementation of the Tripoli agreement as it would include Malaysia’s Sabah and Sarawak territory. He also said he would bring the issue before the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), where MNLF has observer status. In early May 2013, clashes erupted between MILF and MNLF when members of the former attempted to conduct an advocacy campaign for the framework agreement in the latter’s territory. Some 3,000 people evacuated the area and

police were immediately deployed to help prevent an escalation. Reports revealed that the absence of proper coordination among the authorities triggered the fighting.

MILF criticised Misuari for insinuating that Malaysia is using them to bolster its claim on resource-rich Sabah. Since 2003, the Malaysian government has been helping facilitate the Philippine government-MILF talks. Malaysia also leads the 60-member IMT. Both the Philippine government and MILF assured the public that the Sabah issue would not affect FAB negotiations.

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)

The CPP leadership called the signing of a framework agreement a surrender. The CPP claimed that the provisions on normalization “subjects the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) of the MILF to decommissioning while allowing the continuing presence of government troops in Bangsamoro lands.” In response, the Moro revolutionaries appealed to the CPP “to give the MILF the benefit of the doubt whether its decision to sign the framework agreement with the Manila government will redound to the benefits of our people, or it is a doomed exercise.” MILF believes that the current agreement is far different from the one forged by the MNLF in 1996.



Signing ceremony of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, October 2012.

Photo source: Official Gazette <http://www.gov.ph/official-visit-of-malaysian-prime-minister/>



Philippine President Benigno Aquino III (L) shakes hands with Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles, October 2012.

Photo credit: AP
<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/philippines-muslim-rebels-agree-on-peace-plan/article3974650.ece>

While the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF has shown some tangible results, the negotiations with the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), have stalled. In the case of the leftist rebellion, both sides are blaming each other for the collapse of the talks. Recently, the Philippine government rejected the demands and conditions set by the CPP that detained communist leaders who are facing criminal charges must be released before returning to the negotiating table.

The CPP also demanded that the Philippine government abolish its peace and development programmes, including the conditional cash transfer (CCT) for the poor and the military's Oplan Bayanihan. The Armed Forces of the Philippines adopted a new strategy in dealing with the NPA called the Internal Peace and Security Plan or Oplan Bayanihan, where rebels are encouraged to return to the rule of law by giving them financial assistance to start a new life.

Politics in Mindanao and Manila

The 2008 MOA-AD encountered strong opposition from politicians and their constituents. Critics insisted that there was little consultation

with communities that were to be included in the proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity. For the FAB, government negotiators made sure that they reached out to all the stakeholders, especially to local officials like former North Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Piñol and citizens in the areas that would be affected by the agreement. At the same time, the negotiators also held a series of meetings with some of the most strident critics of the MOA-AD at the national level. In addition, the peace panel also spoke to several retired Supreme Court Justices to ensure that the FAB does not run afoul of the Constitution.

The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro is not the final step of the peace process. Rather, it signals a new phase in which the Manila government and the MILF can now work as partners in the implementation of the agreement's provisions. Following the recently concluded mid-term elections, all eyes are now back to the negotiating table to finish the annexes on wealth distribution, power sharing and normalization.

Ava Patricia C. Avila is a PhD student at Cranfield University, UK.

Jihadists at the Gate? A Preliminary Enquiry into the Reaction of the Jihadist Movement to Communal Violence in Myanmar

Iftekharul Bashar

The spread of communal violence in Myanmar has already attracted the attention of elements of the global jihadist movement. Is it then likely that a new front of jihad will emerge with the jihadists rushing in to avenge the marginalization and victimization of the Muslims in general and the Rohingyas in particular?

On 23 April 2013, an article in the Voice of al Islam website included a statement by radical Indonesian ideologue Abu Bakar Ba'asyir renewing his call for armed jihad as the sole solution for ending what he noted as the "genocide" of the Rohingyas. The call for armed jihad against Myanmar echoes an earlier warning made by Ba'asyir in an open letter to President Thein Sein on 22 July 2012. This demonstration of growing sensitivity about the Rohingya issue within the wider Muslim community – particularly among radicals – was reinforced on May 2013 by a failed attempt to attack the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia and the demonstration in

Jakarta by the radical group Front Pembela Islam (FPI).

The violence against the Rohingyas in Myanmar which started in June 2012 has now taken a wider dimension by spilling over to non-Rohingya Muslims in the country and being transformed into a conflict based on religious identity. With violence in central and north east Myanmar in 2013, the conflict now threatens to affect the entire Muslim community in Myanmar which comprises about four percent of the total population. The spread of violence from western Myanmar to other areas indicates that Myanmar's



A police officer outside a mosque that was set on fire in the northern city of Lashio.

Photo credit: Soe Zeya Tun, Reuters
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/world/asia/religious-violence-myanmar.html?_r=0



A destroyed building near a mosque in Meiktila, central Myanmar, March 2013.

Photo credit: AFP

<http://>

www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews/345180/myanmar-jails-trio-over-unrest-in-meiktila

security threats are taking a more complex form. This is not only threatening the peace and stability of Myanmar, but also the region as a whole.

Jihadists at the Gate?

The plight of Muslims in Myanmar is being exploited by militant jihadist groups, their supporters and sympathizers both in the immediate neighborhood and globally. First, the violence has triggered a massive outflow of Rohingya refugees to countries in South and Southeast Asia. Most of these refugees now live in sub-optimal conditions which are feeding into their sense of marginalization and victimization not only against Myanmar but also against the international community as a whole. This is based on a perceived double standard on the part of the international community – especially the U.S. – in failing to persuade Myanmar's government to address the violence against the Muslims in the country. Continuation of the present situation could create a pool of potential recruits for militant and radical groups in the region.

Second, since June 2012, several radical groups operating across Asia (such as Tehreek-e-

Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU], and Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid [JAT]) are using the Rohingya issue to incite a section of the Muslim community to carry out armed jihad in the region. Ba'asyir's statements and the visual imagery spread on social media platforms depicting the plight of the Rohingyas have heightened the zeal of those who are intent on conducting armed jihad in Myanmar.

In the aftermath of the attack on Rohingya villages in June 2012, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) threatened to attack Myanmar to avenge crimes against the Muslim Rohingyas. The TTP is known for suicide terrorism and is believed to be the most lethal terrorist group not only in Pakistan, but throughout Asia. There is a sizable Rohingya community living in the Orangi Town of Karachi, the most populous city in Pakistan. In the past, some Pakistan-based Rohingyas were actively involved with the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), a militant group which ran a training camp in the Myanmar-Bangladesh border areas before 9/11. While there has been a re-emergence of Rohingya militant groups who are actively involved in publication and dissemination of radical materials in Arabic and Urdu urging

Muslims to join armed jihad in Myanmar, their networking and operational capability is still not known.

In addition, Abu Zar al-Burmi, a leader of IMU has called for an armed jihad against Myanmar as the solution to the “occupation” of Rakhine state. The IMU’s Jund Allah media network has been actively spreading radical materials in the internet. The video of al-Burmi’s speech, “The Lost Nation,” has been translated and posted on the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum in January 2013. The speech was significant not only for al-Burmi’s anti-Myanmar message, but also his contempt for China’s alleged role in backing the Myanmar government.

The Rohingya issue is therefore rapidly becoming a rallying point for dispersed radical elements and militants in the region. The calls for jihad in Myanmar by radical ideologues and groups have already sparked the flame of radicalization, as seen in the attempted attack against the Myanmar embassy and demonstrations in Indonesia. Malaysia has also witnessed a series of deadly clashes between its Buddhist and Muslim expatriate groups from Myanmar. Malaysian police have detained more than 900 Myanmar nationals in the process of quelling the clashes.

Looking Ahead

The spreading violence in Myanmar has complex implications for the region. Southeast Asia might not become a new jihadist front but the region may expect a significant resurgence in radical activities threatening its security. The Rohingya issue combined with its jihadist narrative has the potential for fuelling radicalization further, and could also revive groups that have not been active.

Myanmar’s opening up has been long-awaited and is being observed with keen interest and cautious optimism. As the country moves ahead

in its quest for political and economic reforms, the Muslim minority issue will need specific attention from the state.

Though communal and religious tensions in Myanmar are not a new phenomenon, they have long been causing marginalization of minorities, negative stereotyping of different communities, violent riots, and forced migration. While many of these issues are being addressed by the current government led by the reformist President Thein Sein, the deterioration of inter-communal relations poses a major challenge. In many ways the success of Myanmar’s ongoing reforms will depend on how communal relations are managed and how current tensions are diffused.

Iftekharul Bashir is an Associate Research Fellow with ICPVTR.

MODERATION STUDIES PROGRAM

In late 2012, ICPVTR introduced its newest initiative, the Moderation Studies Program. The program’s objective is to promote and cultivate moderation in society as a moral barrier against extremist ideas.

The program’s key activities include: conducting interdisciplinary and multi-perspective study on the concept of moderation, assessing best approaches to promoting moderation and socializing ideas of moderation. The Moderation Studies Program has also conducted research on representations of moderation in Islam, as well as defining Islamic moderation and its attributes.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH



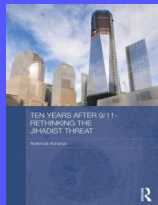
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The International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist center within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

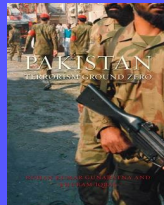
ICPVTR conducts research, training, and outreach programs aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system. The Center seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups.

The Center is staffed by academic specialists, religious scholars, and others. ICPVTR is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts as well as Muslim religious scholars from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

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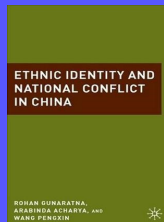
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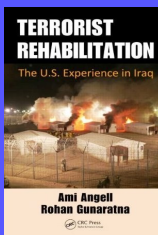
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