

CONFLICT, JIHAD, AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN MALUKU, EASTERN INDONESIA

Badrus Sholeh

*Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic
University Jakarta*

Abstract

The collapse of Suharto's New Order is a starting point of the quest of religious identity for Indonesian Muslims. A lot of radical groups are founded under the umbrella of liberty and democracy. However, many of them have destroyed the structure of democracy and multicultural society. Conflicts of Maluku (and Poso) (1999-2003) are the best local context of how religious groups (Muslims and Christians) fought severely in the name of God. The conflict is also a good case to understand the weakening of state and the involvements of military (para-military) forces in instigating the conflicts, which impacted to thousands people killed, and destroyed the ethnic and religious harmony in the region. This paper will analyse the conflicts of Maluku and compare it to other religious conflicts in Poso, Central Sulawesi and ethnic conflicts in West Kalimantan, Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines. I argue the growth of local nationalism and instability of States in Southeast Asian regions brings the rise of civil society and paramilitary forces, which challenges the entities of harmony, peace and multiculturalism in the region.

Keywords: religious identity, jihad, conflict, muslim-Christian relation, Maluku.

A. Islamic Forces after the New Order

The Muslim-Christian conflict in the Maluku islands in Indonesia, which began in 1999 has been a much under-reported civil war, despite the fact that over 10,000 people were killed and over half a million rendered homeless. This essay will examine how the conflict developed after the setting up of the Java-based radical Muslim paramilitaries of the *Laskar Jihad* (holy warriors) in the Malukus. The arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* was itself a response to developments in national politics and assertions by radical Muslims that Muslim-cleansing was taking place in Maluku.

This essay will argue that religious segregation became much more pronounced within a year of the start of the conflict, as mixed Muslim and Christian regions in Maluku were destroyed in the fighting. The conflict essentially forced the respective communities to take refuge in their own separate areas. The *Laskar Jihad* will be seen as a type of *premanism*, though it is in this case maintained by a religious creed. Lindsey's analysis of *premanism* is crucial to our understanding of the conflict. He shows how certain elites employed vigilante groups to inflate the conflict and how they gained economic privileges as a result.¹ Analyses by Aditjondro and Tomagola, in examining the relations between the central elite and the *preman-laskar*, confirm Lindsey's assessment that both state and privately-funded *premanism* existed.

According to Lindsey, *premanism* is:

derived from the Dutch for 'free man' and originally used to refer to irregular or demobilised soldiers ... the term [*preman*] came to mean bandit and then gangster or, more commonly stand-over man. At times the term has overlapped with the *jago* (literally, 'fighting cock'), the village 'tough' of ancient tradition who in an urban context became a gang boss; the *rampok* bandits; and the *laskar* (militia or irregular forces).²

¹ Tim Lindsey, "The Criminal State: *Premanisme* and the New Indonesia", in Grayson Lloyd and Shannon Smith (eds), *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001).

² *Ibid.*, p.284.

Prematism has been evident in recent years in Indonesia as part of a trend towards the establishment of Muslim paramilitaries, especially after the demise of the Suharto regime in 1998. Lindsey's concepts of 'state' and 'private' *premanism* underlie the analysis that follows. This *premanism* explains the genesis, development and sustenance of the conflict in the Malukus. Indeed, it was the Laskar Jihad militia group that played a prominent role in the conflict, and it is the contention of this essay that outsider forces were responsible in large part for the scale and sustenance of the violence in Maluku.

This essay will begin with an examination of the rise of the Jihad movement in Indonesia following the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, as well as the emergence and role of the radical Muslim paramilitary group, the *Laskar Jihad*, in the Maluku conflict. It will then examine the responses of various actors in the conflict, namely, the national security forces, the Muslims, the Christians, the NGOs and local government, and finally, the central government. The essay then ends with a discussion of the post 9/11 Jihad movement in Maluku, following the disbandment of the Laskar Jihad, and how this has left a legacy for local Ambonese in the form of more radicalised Muslim groups. It concludes with an analysis of the challenges that the central government and the local community faces.

B. Setting the Context: the Early Beginnings of Muslim-Christian Conflict

Islam had become established by the middle of the fifteenth century in Maluku through the influence of Muslim traders. The first Islamised regions were Leihitu and Hatuhaha in the kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore, where the local people had both economic and political reasons to cooperate.³ From the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth centuries, the Muslim kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore then spread Islam to the rest of the Ambonese islands.

³ Richard Z Leirissa, *Maluku dalam Perjuangan Nasional Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Lembaga Sejarah Fakultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia, 1975), p. 7.

Islamisation continued more gradually after the coming of the Portuguese and Dutch.⁴

Cooley has observed that the advent of Islam resulted in changes in the local culture. In the indigenous marriage system, for instance, the required dowry was a human head as a symbol of individual prowess. This was later altered to rings, jewelry and other items prescribed under Islamic law.⁵ Islamisation was challenged by the Christianisation of Malukan communities by the Portuguese when they held sway in the islands, from 1512 to 1605. The Portuguese first brought Catholicism to Northern Maluku, but encountered strong resistance from the Muslims there. They subsequently succeeded in Christianising elites in Central Maluku, where there was less resistance due to the fact that the region had not been fully Islamised.

When the Portuguese first arrived in Maluku, the Muslim sultans welcomed them and the trade they brought. However, armed clashes soon broke out between the Muslims on the one hand, and the Portuguese and, later their local Christian converts, on the other, over economic and religious issues.⁶

Lestaluhu has detailed the history of these clashes.⁷ The first was the Hitu War (1520-1605) between Malukan Muslims and Portuguese and Malukan Christians. The Muslim-Christian clashes continued until the coming of the Dutch in 1605. Soon after the Dutch arrival, some 16,000 Ambonese were baptised in the Leitimor and Lease islands in 1605.⁸ The Dutch were to stay on for more than three hundred years until 1942. The Dutch colonial government brought the Protestant religion, which made significant inroads into the central part of Maluku. This was aided by the fact that Dutch policy favored

⁴ F.L. Cooley, "Persentuhan Kebudayaan di Maluku Tengah 1475-1675", in Paramita R. Abdurrachman, R.Z. Leirissa and C.P.F. Luhulima (eds), *Bunga Rampai Sejarah Maluku (1)*, (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian Sejarah Maluku, 1973), p. 120.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶ Leirissa, *Maluku*.

⁷ Maryam R.L. Lestaluhu, *Sejarah Perlawanan Masyarakat Islam terhadap Imperialisme di Daerah Maluku*, (Bandung: PT Al Maarif, 1988).

⁸ Richard Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatist*, (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1990), p. 18.

Christians in gaining access to education and lower administrative positions in the colonial government. Chauvel described the discriminatory policy of the Dutch government toward Muslims as follows:

After some hesitation, and the request from the Christian village leaders from Leitimor in 1607, the VOC [*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Dutch East India Company] adopted the policy that Christianity was seen as a means to promote the loyalty of the population to the Christian rulers. The VOC also attempted, with limited success, to curb the process of Islamisation. Together with the destruction of the Ambonese Islamic 'states' and the elimination of the Moslem elite as independent political actors, this meant that the Moslem community was relegated to a subordinate position in colonial society compared with their Christian compatriots.⁹

However, they could not have foreseen the long-term consequences of this type of policy. It resulted in the division of the local community along religious lines and laid the basis for the conflict between Muslims and Christians that has continued to the present-day.

C. The Rise of the *Jihad* Movement in Indonesia

In a *tabligh akbar* (mass religious meeting) of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ, or Sunni Communication Forum) in Solo, Central Java, on 14 February 1999, about a month after the Ambon conflict broke out, its leader, Ja'far Umar Thalib, stated that:

Muslims must be alert to the threat from Muslims' foes and the separatists, who tend to tyrannise the Muslim religious minority. Muslims have an obligation to get behind an Islamic government, which is headed by a pious Muslim man. If the *kafir* (infidel) is to lead the government, based on the *fatwa* (guidance) of Syaikh bin Baz [Syaikh Abdulaziz Bin Baz], Muslims will have to battle against him/ her.¹⁰

Thalib's perspective here was clearly biased against the Christians, as he gave a one-sided elucidation of the teachings of the *Salafy* Arab

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 20.

¹⁰ "Apel Siaga Umat Islam", *Salafy*, No. 30, 1999 (44).

cleric, Syaikh Abdulaziz Bin Baz¹¹ (d. 13 May 1999), a Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Head of the Council of Ulama in Saudi Arabia. For Thalib, Syaikh Abdulaziz was one of the most outstanding figures, not only as a *Salafy* religious teacher, but also someone with the international political connections that would help further Thalib's own agenda in Indonesia. The *Salafy* (or Salafi) represent a reformed Islamic ideology in search of Islamic purification by returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The *Salafyst* (reformist) thinkers base their teaching on that of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (d. 1896), Abu al-Ala Maududi (1903-1949), and the leader of the Muslim Brothers, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1964).¹²

To understand the developments of the *Jihad* movement in Indonesia, it is important to examine Thalib's background and that of the FKAJW. Thalib was born on 29 December 1961 in an Arab family at Malang, East Java. Thalib's father was an advocate of the al-Irsyad movement, an organization of the *sayyid* community during the colonial period. After graduating from the Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA) Jakarta, a higher institute sponsored by the government of Saudi Arabia, Thalib went to the Maududi Islamic Institute in Pakistan, under the sponsorship of the DDII (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia), a missionary organization established by Muhammad Natsir (d. 1993) in 1967.

Whilst in Pakistan, Thalib was involved with the Afghan *mujahidin* in their *Jihad* or holy war against the Soviet Union, which had invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and spent the 1980s battling to control the country. As a volunteer fighter, Thalib was attached to one of the factions led by an Afghan assistant professor of theology who graduated from

¹¹ Syaikh (or Sheikh) Abdulaziz Bin Baz had been a leading figure in the Saudi Arabian government for about fifty years. He came to prominence as a judge of the Al-Kharj region in the 1950s and ultimately rose to the highest position among Muslim scholars in Arabia with influence over the Muslim world. He became the Grand Mufti, who was responsible for giving religious decrees on certain issues from family problems to politics until his death in 1999. See the website set up in appreciation of Bin Baz's *fatawa* (religious decrees) and his life: <http://www.ibnbaz.org.sa>, accessed 20 February 2003.

¹² Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trs.. Carol Volk, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 34.

Mecca. He was associated with Abdul Rabb Rassul Sayyaf's Saudi-supported organization, the *Ittihad-I Islami* (Islamic Union), Burhanuddin Rabbani's party, the *Jami'at-I Islami* (Islamic Association) and Gulbudin Hekmatyar's group, the *Hizb-I Islami* (Islamic Party) before becoming devoted to the *Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wa Ahl-i Hadith* (the Association of Propagation toward Qur'an and the Followers of Hadith), a *Salafy* faction led by Saudi cleric, Maulawi Jamilurrahman (d. 1991).¹³ From these experiences, Thalib formulated his own ideas as to how the principles of *Jihad* could be applied to the context of politics in Indonesia.¹⁴

Thalib returned to Jakarta in 1989 and taught at the al-Irsyad *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Salatiga, Central Java. However, Thalib continued to study Salafy doctrines in 1991 under an Yemeni cleric, Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'I, one of the spiritual teachers of today's conservative Islamist Islah party and the Salafi-Wahhabi movement in Yemen.¹⁵ Thalib also studied *Salafy* doctrine in Yemen under Salafi-Wahabi teachers during his *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca): each of them (Muhammad Nasr al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), Abdulaziz Abdullah bin Baz (1912-1999) and Rabi' ibn Hadi 'Umar al-Madkhali) were prominent figures giving *fatwa* (guidance) in support of the *tabligh akbar* and later the *Jihad* in Indonesia, covering an assortment of issues from politics to war against Christians.¹⁶

Returning from Yemen, Thalib established a *pesantren* and a Salafy community called the *Jama'ab Ihya al-Sunnah* (the Community to Establish the Prophet's Teachings) in Kaliurang, Yogyakarta in 1994. He recruited students from secular universities and based his teachings

¹³ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of the Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia", *Indonesia*, April 2002, 73 (145-169); Oliver Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*.

¹⁴ As a *Salafy* propagator, Thalib argued that Muslims should not get involved in politics. However, Thalib's *Jihad* and religious rallies were supported by elements in the Islamic political elite and impacted on national politics. Therefore, this thesis argues that Thalib's *Jihad* movement had non-electoral political motives. Because, under *Salafy* teaching and tradition, Thalib pressured his *Salafy* followers not to join political parties.

¹⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics", p. 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 154.

on canonical books written by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah and the disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Abu Bakr ibn Qayyim. Thalib's study in Yemen and Saudi Arabia gave him religious legitimacy and a link to financial sources, which were the principle means of support for Thalib's *Jihad* in Indonesia.

Thalib transformed the *Ihya al-Sunnah* into the *Forum Komunikasi AhlulSunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ) in 1998, after the fall of the Suharto regime provided the democratic space for political Islam to emerge from the constraints imposed during the New Order period. He also shifted his focus from non-political Islamic missionary activities to political activism. The FKAWJ was a modern organization with an executive board, led by Ayib Safruddin, a graduate of the Psychology Faculty at the University of Muhammadiyah, Surakarta, Central Java, and by its secretary, Ma'ruf Bahrin, an engineering graduate from Haluoleo University, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. Thalib himself was the chief of the advisory board (supreme religious board), which had authority over the central executive board.

The advisory board was comprised of fifty-four Salafi-Wahhabi teachers, who had studied at Middle Eastern universities, such as the King Muhammad Ibn Saud and Medina Islamic Universities.¹⁷ The FKAWJ's members were mostly low-income earners, university students or Muslims who had been laid-off as a result of the financial and economic crises of 1997-8. The FKAWJ grew very rapidly in a very short time. It established twelve *pesantrens* throughout Indonesia, each with memberships of around forty thousand people. These later formed the core components of the militia organization, the *Laskar Jihad*.

Apart from deep alienation over the financial and economic crises, Thalib also benefited from the debates surrounding national politics, in the period between the formation of the FKAWJ at the *tabligh akbar* in Solo in February 1999 and the declaration of the *Laskar Jihad* at another *tabligh akbar* in January 2000 in Yogyakarta. During this period, the FKAWJ, along with other Muslim activists and organizations, not only had called for a *Jihad* to Ambon, but also professed that it was

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 158.

compulsory for Muslims vote for the only Muslim presidential candidate in the 1999 elections. They wanted Bachruddin Jusuf Habibie to continue as president after the 1999 elections, rather than Megawati Soekarnoputri or Abdurrahman Wahid, both of whom they claimed would be *haram* (forbidden) for Muslims to vote for. Megawati as a woman candidate was unacceptable and Wahid was regarded as a *kafir* (infidel) due to the liberal and eclectic form of Islam that he practiced. Wahid also supported ethnic and religious minority groups, rather than side with the majority modernist Muslims. Wahid was in fact opposed to some of the main Islamic political movements, such as the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), on the grounds that Islam and politics should not mix.

Thalib argued that:

Habibie was the only candidate who had Islamic views, in contrast with Wahid (PKB) ... and Megawati (PDI-P) who were secular party leaders, who competed to assure *salibis* (Crusaders), Zionists and Chinese conglomerates that they were able to devote themselves to the purpose of stopping the dangers of the Islamic sectarians.¹⁸

Thalib not only backed Habibie in his presidential candidature with the support of a religious *fatwa* from Wahhabi religious teachers from Arabia, but also argued that the Ambon conflict had also led to a general condemnation of the Indonesian military forces and of the government's performance due to their perceived failure to protect Muslims against alleged ethnic cleansing by Christians. After the formation of the Wahid government, Thalib claimed that it was the right time for Muslims to fight against not only the Christians in Maluku and also against Wahid's government.

On 30 January 2000, the FKAWJ had their second *tabligh akbar* in Kridosono, Yogyakarta and declared their *Jihad* in Maluku. According to Thalib, 'The *tabligh akbar's Jihad* declaration was a response to the arrogance of President Abdurrahman Wahid in disregarding the cry of Malukan Muslims who were hurting as a consequence of the horrible

¹⁸ *Salafiy*, no. 33, 1999, p. 5.

crusade.¹⁹ This was the official declaration of the formation of the militia organization, the *Laskar Jihad Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* (the Holy Warriors of the *Sunnah* Followers and the Prophet's Community), later called the *Laskar Jihad*. Following this declaration, the FKAWJ sent a delegation of seven members to Maluku on 12 February 2000 to gather evidence of the involvement of the Malukan Protestant Church (GPM) and the Catholic Church of Ambon in the alleged ethnic cleansing of Muslims.

The *Laskar Jihad* also invited Indonesian Muslims to join the *Jihad* to Maluku. They opened *Jihad* recruitment offices in the major cities in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi, and also sought financial support from individual Muslims in mosques, markets, restaurants, streets and, more significantly, from high profile national figures and conglomerates which used to be close to the discredited Suharto regime.²⁰ During their *Jihad* operation, the *Laskar Jihad* claimed to have received financial support from many ordinary people, including individual donations from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Europe, the USA and Australia,²¹ and, from Muslim political parties in Libya, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Pakistan.²² However, there was little transparency as to the identity of these donors, or how they were used to finance the activities of the *Laskar Jihad*.²³

¹⁹ Ja'far Umar Thalib, *Laskar Jihad Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah Mempelopori Perlawanan terhadap Kedurjanaan Hegemoni Salibis-Zionis Internasional di Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: DPP Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah, 2001), p. 14.

²⁰ Some speculative analyses conclude that financial support come from elites in the Indonesian military forces, under Commander-in-chief Wiranto, for example from Djaja Suparman and Sudrajat; and, from some parliamentary members and politicians during and after the Wahid government. However, it is still difficult to prove these allegations. An interview with Sidney Jones, Jakarta, end of August 2002 and Canberra, January 2003.

²¹ Interviews with a FKAWJ staff member, Yogyakarta, early September 2002.

²² Kirsten E. Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon", *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. IX, issue 1, 2002, p. 61.

²³ Interview with a FKAWJ staff member, Dogelan, Yogyakarta, early September 2002. Besides, the sources of the overseas donations were difficult to track down after the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001 attack, after which tight restrictions were put in place to prevent support for terrorism in South and Southeast Asia. An interview with a FKAWJ staff member, Dogelan, Yogyakarta, early September 2002.

The *Laskar Jihad* recruited many unemployed Muslims, mostly from Java, South Sulawesi, Sumatra and Kalimantan, a number of university students, a few university graduates from secular universities, some veterans of the Afghanistan war and a small number from Islamic universities. Recruitment took place as early as February 1999, after the declaration of *Jihad* by the FKAWJ and other Muslim organisations. The *Laskar Jihad* also held a mass rally at the Senayan Stadium on 6 April 2000, attended by about 50,000 Muslims, including a number of high profile political figures, such as: Amin Rais, the president of the *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN, National Mandate Party); Hamzah Haz, the president of the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP, the United Development Party) and later Vice-President of Indonesia; Yusril Ihza Mahendra, the president of *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB); Ahmad Sumargono, who led the radical organization, the *Komite Solidaritas Islam* (KISDI); prominent Malukan Muslims such as *Ustaz* Ali Fauzy; and the former commander-in-chief of the Pattimura military command, Brig. Gen. (ret.) Rustam Kastor.²⁴

Although the Wahid government opposed the rally, elements in the Indonesian security forces supported it. Jakarta police officer, Lt. Col. (Police) Said Agil, confirmed the involvement of security forces and argued that this rally was therefore better organized and orderly compared to other rallies.²⁵ Elements in the political elite, in particular those involved in the *Poros Tengah* (Central Axis) alliance of Muslim political parties, who were disappointed with Wahid government's policies and its lukewarm support for the implementation of Muslim law, also supported the rally.²⁶

The *Poros Tengah* caucus was initiated by Amin Rais of PAN, and other Islamic political parties, such as PPP, PBB, *Partai Keadilan* (PK) and *Partai Nahdlatul Ummat* (PNU), which collectively only received a small percentage of the vote in the 1999 elections. They wanted to unite in order to increase their political bargaining power against the

²⁴ ICG, *Indonesia: the Search for Peace in Maluku*. ICG Asia Report No. 31, 8 February 2002, p.6.

²⁵ *Republika*, 8 April 2000.

²⁶ "Menebar Virus Dari Silang Monas", *Xpos*, No. 02/ III, 9-27 January 2000 (5-6).

larger political parties, such as the PDI-P, Party of *Golongan Karya* (PGK) and PKB. The *Poros Tengah* successfully organized support from parliamentary members for Amburrahman Wahid's candidature as against Megawati Soekarnoputri for the reason that 'Islam' was against having a woman president. They claimed that Wahid was the only candidate able to accommodate the frictions among Indonesians.

However, they were soon to be disappointed. Wahid as president failed to accommodate the various Muslim factions. Differences soon led to the departure of the representatives of Muslim parties from his cabinet. Thus, the *tabligh akbar* in Jakarta represented various disaffected Muslim interests and was organized to challenge the Wahid government. The momentum of the *Jihad* movement, with the evident significant political support from Jakarta elites, resulted in an increase in the confidence of local Ambonese Muslims. This in turn led to the Christians responding by seeking national as well as international intervention in the conflict.

The following section examines the roles of the various actors in the conflict, namely the national security forces, the Muslims, the Christians, NGOs and local government, and finally, the central government.

D. The Response of the National Security Forces

During the first phase of the conflict, the Christians held the upper hand. During this phase, Muslims sought the support of their Muslim brethren in Java and other parts of Indonesia, holding numerous Muslim rallies to declare the importance of a holy war against the Christians. As a result of the support of the *Laskar Jihad*, the Muslims were able, during the later stages of the conflict, to reverse their fortunes and gain the upper hand, regaining the Muslim areas that the Christians had taken during the initial phase of the conflict.

This later phase began in May 2000, after the *Laskar Jihad* came to Ambon with its first group of 3,000 members, equipped with standard military weapons.²⁷ The *Laskar Jihad* shifted the pattern of

²⁷ Before the *Jihad* paramilitary deployment to Ambon, Ja'far Umar Thalib claimed that about 2000 of the *Jihad* core members obtained military training in Munjul village, Bogor, West Java under the support of elements in the TNI, Afghan veterans and

the conflict as a result of their access to small arms from Java. Not surprisingly, the *Laskar Jihad's* arrival had an immediate impact, with a rapid upsurge of violence as soon as they stepped ashore. On 16-17 May 2000 in the Batumerah-Mardika area, in front of the *Pos Kota* (city post office) in A.M. Sangaji Street, 13 people were killed and 50 people were injured. At the same time, from 16 to 18 May 2000, the conflict also spread to Ahuru and Karang Panjang, leaving 17 people dead. On 20 May 2000, 13 people were killed in Laha. Most of the victims were Christians.²⁸ By the end of May 2000, the Maranatha Church was desperate enough to seek international intervention by appealing to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to Maluku.²⁹

The violence continued throughout June 2000. In response, the Christians founded the *Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (FKM, Malukan Sovereign Front) on 15 June 2000 and actively promoted Malukan independence in the months that followed, as a panacea to the increasing sectarian violence.³⁰ By 27 June, President Wahid was moved to announce a Civil Emergency.³¹ The Pattimura commander-in-chief was shifted from Max Tamaela to I Made Yasa. In response to international criticism and pressure, the security forces then attempted to counter the Muslim domination of the conflict by deploying *Yon Gabungan* (special alliance forces), which consisted of special forces commandoes drawn from the military and the police. The special forces began duties on 22 September 2000, and proceeded to attack *Laskar Jihad* bases in Ambon, resulting in the deaths of a number of Muslims.³²

university student regiment members. See, ICG, *Indonesia: the Search for Peace in Maluku*, "Pelatihnya Menwa, Alumni Mujahidin, Moro & Kashmir, An interview with Ja'far Umar Thalib", *Xpos*. No. 13/ III, 17-23 April 2000, 4; Greg Fealy, "Inside the Laskar Jihad", *Inside Indonesia*, January – March 2001.

²⁸ Lambang Trijono, *Keluar dari Kemelut Maluku: Refleksi Pengalaman Praktis Bekerja untuk Perdamaian Maluku*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), p.61.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 63.

³⁰ M. Husni Putuhena, *Mengungkap Misteri Konflik di Maluku*, (Ambon: Pengurus Besar Front Pembela Islam Maluku, 2001), p. 82.

³¹ Lambang Trijono, *Keluar dari Kemelut Maluku*, p. 64.

³² Ayip Syafruddin and Eko Prasetyo, *Tragedi Kebun Cengkeh Fakta Pembantaian Paramedis, Pasien & Warga Sipil Ambon*, (Jakarta: Jihad Press, 2002).

The ascendancy of military forces after the civil emergency was declared reduced the conflict, though it continued on a smaller scale. Forced religious conversion began to be used by the Muslims. For instance, after an attack on the Christian community at Kesui Island in Eastern Seram in November 2000 in which 54 people were killed, some 655 Christians were forced to convert and become Muslims.³³ On 11 December 2001, eighty Christians died when a ferry vessel, the *California*, was bombed. Ambonese Christians responded to this incident by burning the provincial parliament building.

By 2002 however, the conflict began to wane. The central government sponsored negotiations led by the Co-coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Jusuf Kalla, which led to the Malino II peace agreement in February 2002. The agreement stipulated an end to all violence as well as the banning and disarming of militias. The joint commissions created under the agreement would also monitor compliance and oversee economic recovery. The weariness on both sides of the intense and prolonged fighting explains the readiness to reach an agreement so speedily. Indeed, neither Muslims nor Christians responded emotionally when there were further incidents. For example, on 28 April 2002, the burning of the Soya village left twelve Christians dead.³⁴ On 27 July 2002 a bombing in the Mardika market left one Christian dead and fifty injured.³⁵ In September 2002, three young

³³ KPM, *Laporan Kerja Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia dan Mediasi di Maluku* 19 Januari 2000 - 18 December 2000, p. 28.

³⁴ The Soya is a mountainous region, about three hours walking distance from Ambon city. It was difficult for ordinary people to be involved in an attack on such a region. The victims, who survived this incident, came to the conclusion that members of the Special Armed Forces in cooperation with *Laskar Jihad* paramilitary groups were involved in the attack. They listened to the attackers' Javanese accents and observed their obvious military skills (An interview with Johanes, Ambon, 2 August 2002). Before the incident, the *Laskar Jihad* seemed to have been coordinating their own attack agenda in consultation with members of the Special Armed Forces and other security groups, without involving ordinary Ambonese Muslims (An interview with Abdulgani Fabanyo, Ambon, 18 August 2002).

³⁵ The bomb went off just a few hundred metres away from where I was standing when interviewing Christians near the Citra supermarket. Christians screamed 'Acang...Acang (Muslims...Muslims!...)'. Christians were alleging that Muslims had planted this bomb. I saw a group of Special Armed Forces personnel save a person

athletes died in the vicinity of the Mardika Court. In these incidents, both Muslims and Christians realised that there were outside actors involved in trying to prolong the conflict.

E. The Response of the Local Muslims

The arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* resulted in the division of local Muslims into two groups: local radical groups, which inherited the religious radicalism of the *Laskar Jihad*, and the dominant moderate Muslim group, which to some extent was opposed to the mission of the *Laskar Jihad* and was prepared to cooperate with the government in seeking a peaceful solution. These factions had an impact on the dynamics of inter-Muslim relationships and on inter-faith and inter-ethnic reconciliation.

The first impact of the coming of the *Laskar Jihad* was a growth in Islamic radicalism among local Ambonese Muslims. There were two main radical organisations in Ambon. One was the FPIM (*Front Pembela Islam Maluku*), chaired by Husni Putuhena. The second was the task force of the *Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar* (AMNM, Enjoining Right Forbidding Evil) under the leadership of Muhammad At-Tamimy, who is of Arab descent and who enjoyed widespread public support after Muslims became dominant in the middle of 2000. The FPIM gave intellectual support to radical Muslims through their role at Muslim rallies and in political activities against the local government and Christians.

The AMNM recruited local Muslims as paramilitary members, who then received paramilitary training from the *Laskar Jihad* and teaching in the doctrines of Islam. Local Muslims indicated that: 'the *Laskar Jihad* taught us (local Muslims) how to use an Islamic ethic in the conflict, in killing, burning and terrorising Christians'.³⁶ *Ustaz* Dzulqarnain, a leading teacher in the FKAWJ, stated that Muslims had a requirement before attacking and killing Christians: it was compulsory to teach Christians and persuade them to convert to Islam and it was

(alleged to be Muslim) by using an *Acang* (Muslim) public car. However, Christians then realised that this person was a police intelligence officer, who operated in the Mardika market area (Ambon, a fieldwork note, 28 July 2002).

³⁶ An interview with Irwan Patty, Ambon, 10 August 2002.

forbidden to kill women and children.³⁷ Such teaching concerning war changed the nature of the local Muslims' religiosity. They gained a confidence and belief that attacking and killing Christians was legal under Islamic law.³⁸

The moderate Muslims, on the other hand, opposed to the doctrines of the *Laskar Jihad*. A counter-movement began with the foundation of the BIMM (*Badan Imarat Muslim Maluku*) in 2001, chaired by Ali Fauzy, an Ambonese Muslim leader who had attended the Jakarta rally in April 2000 with Rustam Kastor to seek Muslim support in Java. The BIMM wanted to unite Muslim groups in Maluku to help stop the continuing violence and support reconciliation with Christians. Those involved in BIMM also represented those who are traditional *Sunni* adherents, different from the radical *Salafy* tradition of the *Laskar Jihad*. The *Laskar Jihad* predictably criticized the BIMM, describing it as 'a product of government design' in Maluku.³⁹

The surprising success of the Malino II peace agreement demonstrated that local Ambonese Muslims had supported the *Laskar Jihad* in order to secure their lives against the perceived threat of the Christians and the separatist RMS. However, the violent activities of the *Laskar Jihad* had also become an embarrassment to Indonesia. Hours before the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002, the *Laskar Jihad* was officially disbanded in Jakarta. According to its legal adviser, this was due to internal divisions over policy and ideology, in particular, Thalib's approach to waging *Jihad*. Its parent organization, the FKAJW, has continued to carry out its social and educational activities on Java.⁴⁰ In Maluku, the *Laskar Jihad* warriors thus returned to Java after the disbandment. Without this interference from the radical organization, local Ambonese Muslims were able to find release from their fears and

³⁷ *Salafy*, no. 36, 2001 (19).

³⁸ An interview with Irwan Patty, 10 August 2002.

³⁹ An interview with Ustaz Ali Fauzy, Ambon, 27 July 2002. Ustaz Ali Fauzy is one of Malukan origins attended National Muslim Meeting in Jakarta in January 2000, and spoke the importance for Jihad to Maluku to fight against Christians. Fauzy welcomed Laskar Jihad to Maluku in 2000, but later opposed *Salafy* teaching influence to local *Sunni* Muslims.

⁴⁰ Andrew T H Tan, *A Political and Economic Dictionary in Southeast Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.156.

burdens by working towards reconciliation with their Christian counterparts.

F. The Response of Christians

The response of the Christian community gathered pace from early 2000 onwards, especially after the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad* in Maluku. Early on, Muslims perceived the *Jihad* to be against Christians who had attacked Muslims. A few months after the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad*, however, the focus of the Jihad or holy war changed from one against Christians to one against the separatist RMS (Republic of South Maluku) movement. Muslims assumed that the separatist agenda had support in the wider Christian community. However, many Christians in fact did not support this, viewing the Maluku Sovereign Front (Front Kedaulatan Maluku or FKM) led by Alex Manuputty as being one of those responsible for inflaming sentiments between the Christian and Muslim communities.

When the FKM was first founded, it did attract significant support from Christians, who saw it as a moral movement criticising the central government, which had failed to solve the conflict. After the arrival of the *Laskar Jihad*, the Christians felt compelled to seek international intervention to solve the ongoing conflict. In August 2000, therefore, Alex Manuputty campaigned against human rights violations in Maluku by appealing to the United States.⁴¹ After returning from the USA, however, Manuputty's approach became more political. He opposed the central government by asserting that Maluku ought to be separated from Indonesia, on the grounds that Maluku was illegally taken over by the Sukarno government in the 1950s.⁴²

With the failure of the central government in banning the activities of the *Laskar Jihad* in Maluku, and the rise in number of Christian victims during 2000, solidarity among Christians grew. As a consequence, Christian fundamentalism increased and made the

⁴¹ Radical Malukan Muslims criticized Tomagola's record as a representative during the campaign. They claimed that Tomagola did not know about what happened in Maluku (An interview with Irwan Patty, 10 August 2002).

⁴² An interview with Johaness, a Christian and human right activist, Ambon, July 2002.

conflict more severe in 2000 than it was in 1999. There were groups that played an important role in the growth of this fundamentalism, in particular, those who had played key roles in defending the Christians against Muslims in 2000. Agus Watimena, the leader of the Coker (*Cowok-Cowok Kristen*, Christian Boys),⁴³ a gang based in Kudamati claimed that: ‘this is a real religious war and we have to protect ourselves. Sometimes protection means attacking first. We have a plan, and when the time comes, we will wipe them out’.⁴⁴ The growth of such extremist groups however, merely exacerbated the conflict.

The Christian *Laskar Kristus* paramilitary group was formed during the early stages of the conflict, but this movement gained significant momentum after the destruction of the Silo church, the oldest church in Ambon, on December 1999. Agus Wattimena led the paramilitaries until his death on 22 March 2001, after which Emang Nikijuluw, Semmy Souissa and Melkianus Yusuf Tuhumury led the militia groups. The Christian groups consisted of 25 small divisions of 100-200 militant members in the city of Ambon and in the neighbouring islands. 60 per cent of members were estimated to be between 12 and 25 years old, with a few women members.⁴⁵ They used traditional arms such as knives, machetes, poisoned arrows, homemade guns and small numbers of automatic weapons obtained from corrupt police.⁴⁶

G. The Response of the NGOs and Local Government

There have been attempts at reconciliation since the early stages of the conflict in Ambon. They have some common features: both local and central governments have made on-going attempts to initiate reconciliation with the involvement of both civil leaders and military officers. There have been the grassroots-level involvements of local,

⁴³ The Coker was originally a gangster group called *Cowok-Cowok Keren* (Handsome Boys), but after the conflict they renamed it *Cowok-Cowok Kristen*. The change in name was important and was intended to foster Christian solidarity against Muslims during the conflict. A discussion with Christian youths in Ambon, July 2002.

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku*, (Jakarta/ Brussels: ICG Asia Report No. 10, 2000), p. 15.

⁴⁵ Kirsten E. Schulze, “Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon”, p. 63.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63-64.

national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as attempts by Ambonese themselves to resolve the situation in their local communities.

These features can be divided into two patterns: top-down and bottom-up initiatives - each with their strengths and weaknesses. This essay argues that in the case of reconciliation in Ambon, neither the government nor the NGOs on their own have been successful. Both are needed.

The first local government initiative toward reconciliation involved the formation of the 'Team Six' (*Tim Enam*). It was formed at the end of January 1999 and was given the task of investigating the January 1999 conflict and seeking ways to resolve the issues arising from it. It comprised both Muslim and Christian representatives: Thamrin Elly, Luthfy Sanaky, John Ruhulesin, M.G. Lailosa, Bruno Rummyaru, and Cond ratus Ufie.⁴⁷ With the escalation of conflict, it was found necessary to expand this group to make it more representative and include local bureaucrats, religious leaders, military leaders, *adat* chiefs and others in the local elite.

This new team was given the name *Pusat Rijuk Sosial* (PRS, the Social Reconciliation Centre). In its early stages, the team was able to successfully look after mosques, churches and other places where there was potential for violence. It set about analysing the roots of the conflict, formulating a reconciliation process, creating suburban security patrol posts, consolidating management of *negeri-negeri* (village areas) and ran seminars and workshops discussing the roots of conflict.⁴⁸

The PRS initiated a reconciliation treaty at the Merdeka Square, Ambon on 12 May 1999. Religious leaders, heads of the local communities, youth leaders and other grassroots Muslims and Christians, signed the agreement.⁴⁹ However, this agreement was a top-

⁴⁷ Lambang Trijono, *Keluar dari Kemelut Maluku*, p. 136.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁹ The pact was signed by R.R. Hasanusi (MUI chief), Pdt. S.P. Titaley (the chief of *Sinode GPM*, Protestant Church), Mgr. Joseph Tethol (*Uskup Diones Amboina*, Catholic Church), Hussein Tuasikal (*Remaja Masjid*, chief of Mosque Youth), Ferry Nahusona (*Angkatan Muda GPM*, GPM Youth), FR Simon P Matrutry (Catholic Youth), RE Latuconsina (*Latupati* (head) of sub-district (*kecamatan*) of Saparua islands), AL Loilosa

down agreement, which was not understood by the grassroots, who were largely concerned for their safety and that of their communities. The team ceased to exist after the second period of the conflict began in July 1999. It was seen by the grassroots as a government body, which was unable to effectively probe the roots of the conflict because of its top-down approach. The Muslim and Christian communities felt they could not rely on this approach.

The next government initiative was the 'Team Twenty-four', which was initially formed to ensure the protection of President Wahid and his Cabinet during their visit to Ambon in December 1999. It began by distributing some thirty thousand pamphlets to communities in both Muslim and Christian regions, dropping them by army helicopter on 7 December 1999. These pamphlets outlined the *Deklarasi Menahan Diri* (Restrain Oneself Declaration), which stated:

Towards the coming holy month of Ramadhan and Idul Fitri 1 Syawal 1420 H., Christmas (25 December 1999) and New Year 2000, people are expected to refrain from activities, which might instigate violence. Therefore, people are not to hold mass gatherings, nor to fabricate irresponsible rumours ... nor to shoot, bomb or other similar activities, which would stir up mass feelings ... and to immediately form security patrol posts (Indo. *Pos Keamanan Masyarakat*) in each neighbourhood [to calm the local population, give them a sense of security and a sense of their participation in ensuring their security].⁵⁰

The statement was intended to calm the emotions of both communities before the arrival of President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati on 12 December 1999. However, the temporary peace

(*Latupati* of sub-district Amahai), Corputy (*Latupati* of sub-district Kairatu), Pellu (the king of Hitu Lama), Abdul Aziz Abide (Association of South Sulawesi Families), La Hamsidi (Association of Southeast Sulawesi Family) and Ngurah Nyoman Wiandnyana (Bali Community). MUI, 2000: 173, Appendix 1; Kopim (Kelompok Pembela Islam Maluku, the Islamic Defenders of Maluku), 2000 *Himpunan Naskah Resmi Disampaikan Kepada: Presiden RI K.H. Abd. Rahman Wahid Pada Pertemuan Dengan Tokoh Muslim Maluku Tanggal 2 September 2000 di Istana Negara* (The Compilation of Official Papers Prepared for the Indonesian Republic President Abd. Rahman Wahid For His Meeting with Malukan Muslim Leaders on 2 September 2000 in the State Palace). Ambon, Kopim.

⁵⁰ Crisis Centre Keuskupan Amboina, 2002: 9; translation mine.

prevailed until 19 December 1999 when conflict again broke out in *Kampung* Java, Ambon. Four people were killed and eight were seriously injured.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both at a local and national level, played a pivotal role in reconciliation attempts. The growth in the number of NGOs was enormous, from under fifty before the conflict to more than four hundred during the conflict.⁵¹ This growth can be seen as a consequence of a growth in civil society activity in Ambon during the conflict. The NGOs saw reconciliation as a long-term process. Two examples of successful NGO outcomes were the Wayame regional self-protection units and the TIRUS (*Tim Relawan Untuk Kemanusiaan*, The Voluntary Teams for Humanity) initiated by 12 NGOs. However, the NGOs were not able to make contact with the radical Muslim and Christian groups, which were involved in mobilising the communities for battle.

The religious and social leaders of the village of Wayame took the initiative in forming the 'Team Twenty of Wayame'. It was founded in February 1999 to protect the region of Wayame from attack and from influences stemming from conflict in other regions. The team successfully protected their community (Muslims and Christians) from outside influence. The Wayame team conducted intensive dialogue, prayers for peace and encouraged respect for each other, assisted both the Muslim and Christian communities. From this experience, it can in fact be concluded that the Ambon conflict was not purely a religious conflict, but was instigated by outsiders.⁵² However, the team continued to function only until May 2000 when outsiders mounted a full attack on Wayame.⁵³

The *Yayasan Baileo* (Baileo Foundation) also founded TIRUS in conjunction with 12 NGOs on 2 February 1999. It attempted to coordinate local NGOs with the support of national and international funding organisations. It aimed to strengthen local organisations and

⁵¹ An interview with Jefferson Tasik, Ambon, August 2002. Tasik is a director of Baileo Foundation, one of the oldest NGOs in Maluku.

⁵² An interview with Tony Pariela, Ambon, 31 July 2002. Pariela is a senior lecturer at Pattimura University, Ambon.

⁵³ Lambang Trijono, *Keluar dari Kemelut Maluku*, p. 144.

communities in moving towards reconciliation, in rebuilding social ties and helping to support the victims of the conflict. The Baileo Foundation founded volunteer networks in both Muslim and Christian communities. It attempted to help people recover psychologically from what had happened, providing counselling for women, children and disabled victims of the conflict in both Muslim and Christian regions in Ambon, Central Maluku and Southeast Maluku.

After the failure of local government to bring about reconciliation in 1999, local government officials tried again in 2000, establishing a team called *Tim Fasilitator Pemda* (The Regional Government Facilitator team). On 14 January 2000, Governor Saleh Latuconsina released a statement announcing the formation of reconciliation teams among villages all over the Ambonese islands. These teams had the job of implementing a program of reconciliation, which was to function at the village level.⁵⁴ These local government approaches, however, were ineffective because of a dispute between the civil government and the security and police forces as to who was really in charge during the civil emergency after June 2000.

H. Response of the Central Government

In addition, the central government also undertook a number of initiatives. President Wahid gave to Vice-President Megawati the task of coordinating the efforts of the Coordinating Ministers from the Ministry of Politics and Security, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Ministry for Social Welfare and Poverty Eradication in initiating a long-term program for reconciliation from January 2000. However, this central government initiative, though ambitious, ran into problems because of the difficulty in getting the executive members to work with each other. This was the result of friction between the Vice-President and President and between other leading figures in the central government.

Under President Megawati's leadership, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Jusuf Kalla, played a mediating role at a meeting between opposing Christian and Muslim factions in Malino, South

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138-9.

Sulawesi, on 11-12 February 2002. They reached an agreement called Maluku agreement of Malino II (Tomagola, 2002). At this meeting, thirty-five Muslim and thirty-five Christian government officers, political leaders, heads of villages, and Muslim and Christian community leaders agreed to sign an 11-point joint declaration.

Amongst its key provisions were: (1) To end all conflict and violence (2) to abide by the due process of law which is to be enforced fairly (3) to reject and oppose all kinds of separatist movements, including aspirations for a Republic of South Maluku (RMS) (4) the people of Maluku would have the right to stay and work legally anywhere in the Republic of Indonesia, so long as they respected the local culture, and observed law and order, (5) to ban and disarm illegal armed organizations, groups, or militias, in accordance with the existing law; outsider parties that disturb the peace in Maluku will be expelled from Maluku, (6) to establish a national independent investigation team to investigate, for example, the tragic incident on 19 January 1999, and the involvement of Maluku Sovereign Front (*Front Kedaualatan Maluku-FKM*), Republic of South Maluku (*Republik Maluku Selatan-RMS*), Christian Republic of South Maluku (*Kristen Republik Maluku Selatan-Kristen RMS*), Jihad warriors (*Laskar Jihad*) and Christ Warriors (*Laskar Kristus*).⁵⁵

Radical Muslim groups argued that the Malino II declaration was one-sided, as it did not involve them in the process of reconciliation. They argued that Muslims at the meeting were not representative of Malukan Muslims and that there were some Christians in the meeting, whom they claim were involved in separatist activities and the mass killing of Malukan Muslims during the early stages of the conflict.⁵⁶

According to Pariela, the head of Christian delegation at Malino II, the radical Muslim groups had in fact been invited, but these groups had said that they would only join the meeting if all *kapitan* (leaders)

⁵⁵ Tamrin Amal Tomagola, *Seminar on the Moluccan Communal Conflict*, a working paper for Indonesia Study Group, Canberra, the Australian National University, 12 July 2002.

⁵⁶ An interview with Ustaz Muhammad At-Tamimy, Ambon, August 2002. At-Tamimy becomes a rector of State Islamic University few years after conflict, and has facilitated religious dialogues through his university.

of the Muslim security patrol posts (about a hundred people) were involved in the meeting and if they were able to screen members of the Christian delegation to exclude RMS activists. Pariela's view was that this was an irrational approach to take as part of a process of working towards reconciliation.⁵⁷

The Malino II agreement became the key to further reconciliation steps in Ambon covering the broader issues. The agreement sparked a process not just in terms of dialogue but also in the search for political and economic solutions acceptable to both communities. NGOs came to have a prominent role in this reconciliation process, helping not just as a bridge between the Muslim and Christian communities but also acting as a bridge between the government and the local community.

The NGOs were able to reach a broad cross-section of people, from ordinary citizens to those who had actually participated in the violence. In the Muslim regions, the Maluku branch of the Lakpesdam NU (*Lembaga Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Nahdlatul Ulama*, the NU Institute for Human Resources Development), an NGO under the biggest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, played a significant role in accommodating the views of grassroots Muslims in reaching a peaceful solution. The Lakpesdam NU made available psychological treatment for young local Muslims, who had been directly involved in the war against Christians, and facilitated dialogue between them and their Christian counterparts.

I. Jihad After 9/11 and Future Challenges

As described above, *Laskar Jihad* forces returned to Java and disbanded shortly after the Bali bombing in October 2002. After that, a general stability descended upon Maluku, although systematic violence has continued, with a number of unexplained killings.

This has been attributed to the Laskar Mujahidin, a radical Muslim network that is the product of the radicalisation of local Muslims as a result of the activities of radical activists from outside Maluku. The network comprises of Mujahidin Kompak (consisting of those discontented with the Malino II accord), former members of the Darul

⁵⁷ An interview with Tony Pariela, Ambon, 31 July 2002.

Islam (supporters of the idea of an Indonesian Islamic State) and the Al Qaeda-linked Jama'ah Islamiah group active in Maluku and Poso.⁵⁸ The group has attacked government forces, such as the operation against the police camp in Loki on 16 May 2005, which killed five police, a Loki Christian, and also led to the deaths of two Laskar Mujahidin members. More than fifteen Mujahidin members were later jailed for the attacks.⁵⁹ The association with the Jema'ah Islamiah and such violent activities against the state indicate that the network is linked to the problem of wider regional terrorism.

Laskar Mujahidin was founded soon after the early Muslim-Christian clash in Maluku in 1999. The Muslim organization in Java, the Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia, had mobilised groups to support Muslims from the threat of the Christians. This group then became the KOMPAK Foundation, which initially undertook humanitarian operation in Maluku and Poso beginning in 1999. This evolved into the Laskar Mujahidin, which, like the Laskar Jihad, took part in combat operations in Maluku. Unlike the latter, however, Laskar Mujahidin prefers to move and attack in small groups, comprising about 10-15 people. According to Ambonese Muslims, Mujahidin forces were more strategically placed and had a greater impact compared to Laskar Jihad forces⁶⁰

The Laskar Mujahidin network in Maluku has operations at the district level. Each district level post is chaired by a local commander,

⁵⁸ Fieldwork notes in Ambon, 28 September 2005, and in Poso, 19 May 2005. Cahyono, a Police officer of Polda Maluku confirmed this picture. Cahyono is a Police investigator of Loki case and its connection with previous attacks by Mujahidin forces. An interview with Cahyono, Ambon, 30 September 2005.

⁵⁹ The Loki attackers (and planners) were Asep Jaja (Ciamis, West Java), Ongen Pattimura (Luhu, West Ceram), Fathur (a Javanese married an Ambonese), Abdullah Umamity (Buru, Ambon), Ikhlas (a Javanese, killed), Ismail Fahmi Yamlehu (an Ambonese Police, deserter), Zainuddin Nasir (Batusangkar, West Sumatra, a commander of Mujahidin STAIN), Abu Zar (a Buginese of Poso), Jodi (a Buginese of Poso), Mukhlis and Ustaz Arsyad Azad (a Javanese); An interview with local leaders in Ketapang and Loki on 28 September 2005, and with some Police investigators in Ambon, 28 and 30 September 2005.

⁶⁰ Interview with Abdul Ghani Fabanyo in Kebon Cengkeh, 25 September 2005.

except in Air Kuning where Ustaz Arsyad, a Javanese graduated from Al-Mukmin Ngruki in 2001, became a commander in Maluku in 2004-2005. The group has a systematic mode of operation, with planners, financial supporters and executors.

The continued presence of such radicalized groups and individuals, coupled with the bitterness generated by the conflict, indicate the potential for the Maluku conflict to emerge again at some point in the future.

Government, civil society and security forces have continued their attempts at peace building in Maluku under the financial support of national and international agencies. Coser has optimistically argued that the contending parties of the conflict will reduce their activities after reaching a collective accord of peace and development.⁶¹ In Maluku, each ethno-religious group is aware of the need for unity in ensuring Malukan development.

However, there remain serious challenges, such as the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the threat of *Laskar Mujahidin* forces. In 2005, several thousands of IDPs were still staying in emergency barracks, as emergency funds were siphoned off by a few corrupt government officers. The situation is mirrored in the plight of the IDPs in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

More seriously, *Laskar Mujahidin* members have continued to carry out Jihad in Maluku. From 2004 to-date, they have carried out a series of terror attacks against Christians and the security forces. From August 2004 to April 2005, for instance, they killed a Christian priest in Burru islands, bombed Christian regions in Ambon and planned an abortive attack on Malukan Christians around the anniversary of the RMS on 25 April 2005. However, Indonesian army and police have since successfully secured the region.⁶² However, the *Laskar Mujahidin* attack in Loki in May 2005 indicates that the *Laskar Mujahidin* group remains a serious security challenge for the Indonesian security forces. Given its regional links, meeting this challenge will require stronger

⁶¹ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1972), p. 112.

⁶² An interview with Drs Leonidas Braksan, MBA, a Head of Police in Ambon and Lease islands, Ambon, 28 September 2005.

security cooperation not only in Indonesia but also internationally through the ASEAN and Asia Pacific security networks.

This essay has argued that the impact of the *Laskar Jihad* militia group has been prominent, and that outside forces were responsible in large part for the scale and sustenance of the violence in Maluku. The local community, both Muslim and Christian, largely prefer to negotiate their differences in a peaceful manner, but the *Laskar Jihad* has unfortunately left a legacy of local radicalized groups that will continue to pose a serious security challenge for some time to come.

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