

A Cross-country Report on Trends of Extremism in South and South-East Asia



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Executive Summary

Radicalism becomes a serious threat for diversity, peace, and democracy in Asia. Radicalist tend to have intolerant behaviour towards others who hold different views and perspectives. In the higher level, they are also very likely to join violent extremist groups. Radicalism becomes a serious problem as it had affected children, teens, adults, and even government officers. The issues of radical and violent extremism are grave concerns across Asia (especially in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand). The peaceful harmony in the region, intact for decades, is now in jeopardy. Minorities are being ruthlessly targeted. Some cases can be pointed out here:

First of all, Indonesia is currently facing a situation of escalating intolerance, radicalism, terrorism and violent extremism. The roots of Islamic radicalism have been present in Indonesia since the early years of independence. The Islamic State Indonesia movement (NII) was a very strong indication in that direction. Terrorist groups such as Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) to Jamaah Ansharu Daulah (JAD) are evolutions of the DI/NII fight to enforce Islamic state through violent means. More than that, the terrorist in Indonesia also develop their terror tactics and strategies based on the conflicts happening in Muslim countries such as Afghanistan and Syria. This situation is further aggravated by the expansion of the HTI as a trans-national organization. In addition, ISIS is using the Internet as a media to spread their ideology and terror at the same time. The current trend of terrorists is no longer dominated by adult males, but also by women and even children.

Second, Bangladesh is facing its own blend of violent extremism, influenced by two purist Islamic movements that originated in India. Sectarian violence, tacitly tolerated by a vertically organized society that often uses religious conflicts for its own ends, has disrupted peace and threatened the sustainability of religious pluralism. This is no accident. The current focus on silencing atheists and liberal intellectuals stems from conservative mindsets that seek to silence dissent. The lack of functional democracy and the prevalence of political clientelism has, in the past, empowered political Islamists to indoctrinate the youth through both madrassas and political offices. Now, the offshoots of ISIS, often backed by foreign funding, are exploiting these pre-existing cracks in the social structure to recruit Bangladeshi youth from various walks of life.

Third, while the malaise of violent and non-violent extremism has been ingrained in Pakistani society for decades, the efforts to counter it are only nascent. Besides undermining desirable sociocultural norms and values, violent extremism has also reduced the sense of security in almost all segments of society. The institutions of religious education, or madrassas, cannot be ignored in the debate on factors of extremism in Pakistan mainly sectarian-related. Similarly, over 200 religious organizations or groups of different types are also operating in the country including the main religious-political parties. In a way, these different streams have contributed in one way or another in the nurturing of an ideological environment vulnerable to violent and non-violent extremism. Socioeconomic factors and internal and external political developments have also factored in though with a varying degree in different parts of the country. Another key driver of extremism in recent years has been the growing alienation among certain quarters of society.

Fourth, radicalization and violent extremism are no new phenomena in Sri Lanka as throughout history episodes of violent acts have been perpetrated by groups in taking forward certain ideologies. Whilst some acts have targeted communities on ethnic and or religious lines, some have targeted the State, whilst yet another has had impacts at the intra community level. Whilst in some contexts the violence has been sporadic, in certain others violence has continued over a long period. The manifestations of violence has taken place in the physical form resulting in death and destruction of property, as well as in non-physical forms such as hate speech both online and offline, Yet another form of violence is that of a structural nature whereby the State adopts discriminatory laws and policies against certain communities or where the State does not take action against perpetrators of violence through its machinery thereby showing tacit support for such acts. Sinhala Buddhist ethno religious extremism is the most pressing form of extremism seen today, with violence led by sections of Sinhala Buddhist Monks supported by their followers against minorities, whilst enjoying impunity for such acts.

Fifth, Burma has also struggled to balance pluralism and national identity even prior to its independence. With the rise of the dictator Ne Win, who took power on 4th July 1962, pluralism was quickly replaced by supremacy and racial and religious hierarchy. Residual tensions from the colonial era, often in relation to federalism and autonomy in the ethnic regions, have been persistent and pronounced throughout the country, often manifesting in armed conflict between ethnic armed groups and the military. Civil war between ethnic Karen insurgents, a Buddhist minority themselves, and the Burmese began in 1949 and is technically ongoing. Similarly, the conflict between ethnic Kachin and the Burmese military which began in 1961 persists to this day. Burma underwent several political reforms beginning in 2010, and media restrictions were significantly reduced in September of 2011. With the outbreak of riots in Rakhine State in 2012, religious and ethnic unrest in Burma were covered widely as access for international media in Burma increased, but it led many to question what the true sources of this unrest are.

Last one, the wave of the armed conflict in Thailand between the Thai government and the insurgent groups who described themselves as the Patani Liberation Movement started on 4 January 2004 and continues to this day. Because of the extremely shadowy characteristics of those who were behind the continuous violent incident, this conflict was interpreted by some analysts as the result of transnational jihadism's expansion. However, the insurgent organisations in Patani are essentially Sunni Muslims whose ideology is ethno-religious nationalism. The local Salafists in the conflict area choose the co-operation with the state as their survival strategy instead of radicalising themselves following trans-national jihadism.

While some 58 countries have created or are in the process of creating action plans, there is little consensus among them regarding a unified direction on a regional level. The governments must think of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy combined with efforts to promote pluralism within a civilized and democratic framework. Separately, apart from promoting the culture of dialogue to resolve disputes, the government should also work towards reforming education and curricula, engaging with youth and media, securing cyberspaces and improving governance. In addition to all that, the governments must also resolve the root causes of terrorism, namely injustice, poverty, economic hardship, social disparity and change produce anxieties. But the persistent factors of violent and non-violent extremism in society remain largely unaddressed. There is a need to develop intellectual, ideological responses to annul extremists' religious-ideological dogmas and evolve a comprehensive rehabilitation or reintegration of militants.

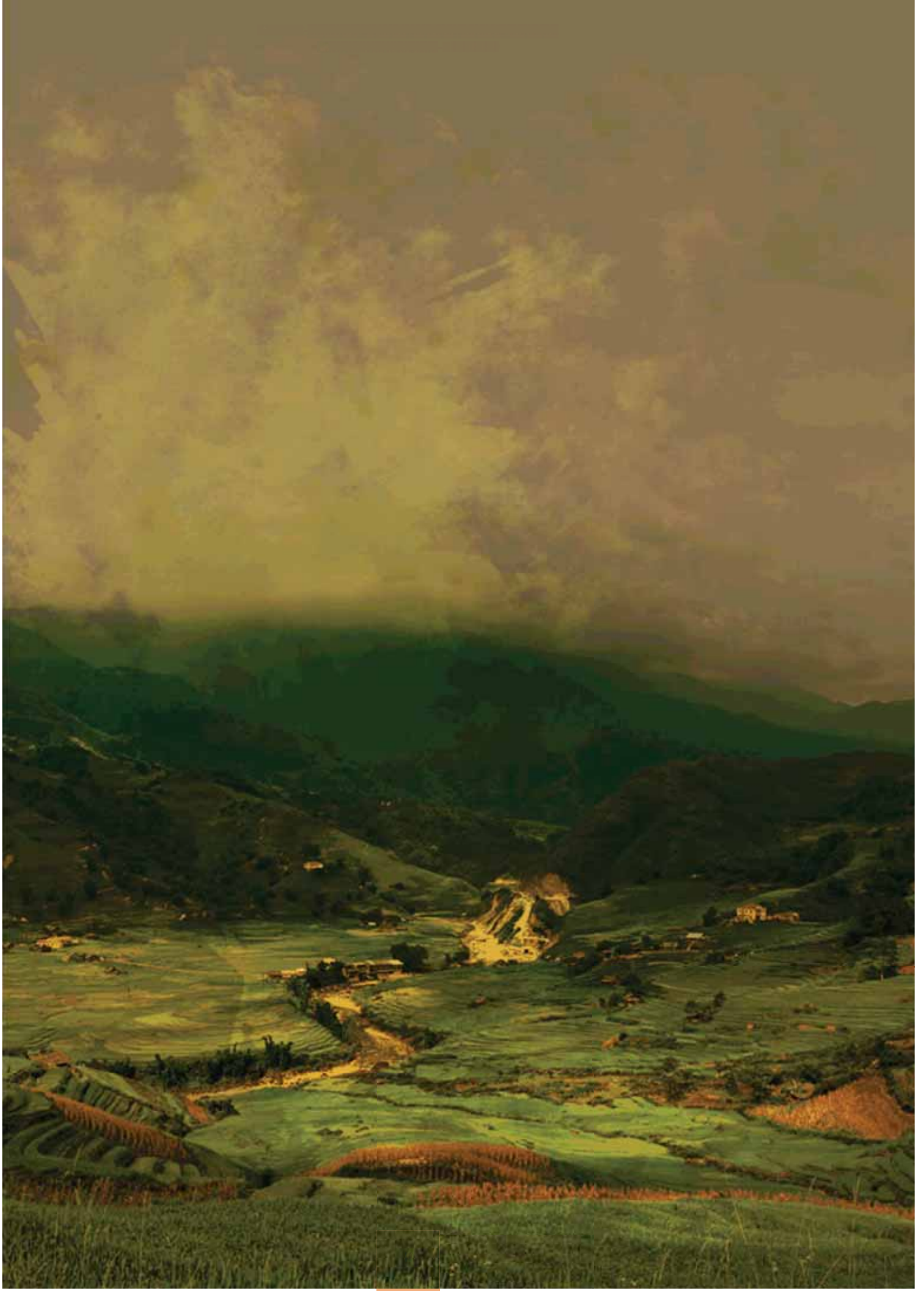
Contents



Executive Summary	iii
Trends of Extremism in South and South-East Asia	1
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	3
Writing Methodology	4
Introduction	5
Trends and Tendencies in Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Asia	11
Analysis on Extremism in Asia	16
Conclusion and Recommendation	19
Country Reports	21
INDONESIA (Part 1)	23
INDONESIA (Part 2)	47
BANGLADESH	85
PAKISTAN	125
SRI LANKA	157
THAILAND	197
BURMA	227
The Authors	255

Trends of Extremism in South and South-East Asia





List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

The Islamic State Indonesia movement	NII
Jamaah Ansharu Daulah	JAD
Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia	HTI
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	ISIS
Patani Liberation Movement	
Darul Islam	DI
Universal Struggle/Perjuangan Semesta	Permesta
Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia	PRRI
Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam)	FPI
Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia	MMI
the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts)	
Chittagong Hill Tracts	CHT
Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan	TTP
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	LeJ
Islamic State	IS
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam	LTTE
United National Party	UNP
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	SLFP
Non-State Armed Groups	NSAGs
Perizinan Terpadu dalam Satu Pintu/Integrated One Door Licensing	PTSP
Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme/National Agency for Combating Terrorism	BNPT
Red Brigade	RB
Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna	JVP
GEMPAR	
Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani/Patani National Liberation Front	BNPP
Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers	APJII
Counter of Violent and Extremism	CVE
Bodu Bala Sena	BBS
Rakhine Nationalities Development Party	RNDP

Writing Methodology

The methodology used in this working paper is synthesis to build an understanding. There are seven source articles about research on radicalism and violent extremism in Asia in six countries (Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand). The work began with annotate these articles and note the important topic, conflicted and shared ideas among them. It is important to scrutinize these articles and find or even abstract the trend, different perspective, common and shared ideas, and define the tendencies of radicalism and violent extremism in Asia from them. The next procedure is to analyse (decomposing) the explanation of the source articles to construct and describe general understanding of radicalism and violent extremism in Asia. When writing a synthesis paper, the background and historical information of the source articles are very significant to build pre-understanding of related and important topics to be synthesized. The last procedure is to make a conclusion and recommendation based on the source articles.

Introduction

International attention began to focus intensively on terrorism ever since the WTC bombing on September 11, 2001. The world was appalled by the incident that took the lives of 5.700 civilians. In this section, different cases of radicalism and violent extremism are going to be further explained in order to find their common ground. To begin with, the historical roots of radicalism in Indonesia can be traced to the post-independence era, where it was faced with local armed groups, united by their same living regions, ethnicities, or religions. Indonesia after independence had went through various armed groups insurgencies: Darul Islam, RMS (Republic South Maluku), Permesta (Universal Struggle/Perjuangan Semesta), and PRRI (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia). In Soeharto's era, the armed rebel groups were quickly shut down. Soeharto used his "iron fist" policy to destroy rebel movements. More than that, Soeharto also managed to restrain Islamic radical groups, which end up splitting them in two different names: the rightist radicals for Islamic groups who want to turn the country into Indonesian Islamic State, and the leftist radicals to address communist groups who want to turn the country into a communist state. After Soeharto fell out of power from the economic crisis, his iron-fisted regime hold a bad record in regards to human rights violations.

Indonesia entered the new era, which was the transition of an authoritarian regime to a free, democratic era. This new era of accessibility and openness is used by two Islamic hard-liners Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar to come home to Indonesia after their exile in Malaysia. This era is also marked by the emergence of many community groups with religious symbols. This response was in accordance to the situation at that time. As an example, an association was declared/founded in just two months after Soeharto's fall. The association was called Islamic Defenders Front (FPI: Front Pembela Islam). A Muslim congress/conference was also held in Yogyakarta on 5 – 7 August 2000 and founded an association named Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). MMI took advantage of the opportunities that came with the new open era by gathering/uniting Islamic activist using the term 'mujahidin' who concerned themselves with Islamic sharia enforcement in Indonesia. Indonesians who were enjoying their new sense of freedom also got a series of bloody conflicts and terrorist attacks. Bloody conflicts erupted in Ambon, Poso and Kalimantan. Terror attacks happened in 2000 which targeted churches in six major cities in Indonesia. And then there was the terror attack in 12 October 2002 in Bali. The conflicts in Ambon and Poso, along with series of terror attacks after 2000 left a harsh, pro-violence image of Islam.

Meanwhile in Bangladesh, almost 98% of the populations there are ethnic Bengalis, with the remaining 2% made up from Biharis and other ethnic tribes. In terms of religious segmentation, the Muslim community represent the majority (89.1%), followed by the Hindu community (10%) and Christians, Buddhists and other religions (0.9% collectively). The population size of the non-Muslims or religious minorities has steadily declined over time. The decrease in percentage of in non-Muslim population can be attributed to the explosive population growth among Muslim families in the 1980s. Other contributing factors include contested land rights and property issues of non-Muslim population and less favorable environment that celebrates religious diversity. Such incidents of targeted violence, persecution and harassment on minorities have forced many non-Muslims to emigrate out of Bangladesh.

There was also a prolonged conflict between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (also known as United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini, regarding the autonomy and the land rights of several indigenous tribes of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Discrimination often escalated into violence. This eventually triggered an armed conflict against the military rulers, and later, with the democratic GoB. Although the conflict ended in 1997 with a peace accord that recognized the land rights of the indigenous communities, the accord remains largely unimplemented. In fact, the existence of indigenous communities is still not acknowledged in the Constitution of Bangladesh. To this day, spates of killings occur as Bengalis covet the land occupied by the indigenous communities across CHT.

Separately, in the early 2000s, a reactionary wave of Muslim television content and channels were launched in Bangladesh. Notable amongst them was Peace TV, owned by televangelist Zakir Naik. Peace TV was banned in 2016 immediately following the Holey Artisan attack, after a video surfaced of one of the attackers claiming to be inspired by Naik's speeches. Naik denied any direct ties to the extremists, claiming that almost 50% of Bangladesh follows his teachings and thus it's not unusual for anyone to claim to be his fan. Social media is a common tool for spreading misinformation. At the moment, little is being done to counter the spread of fake news. The practice of opening fake profiles to slander individuals is common. Of the three crore Facebook users active in Bangladesh the government estimated that at least three per cent of these accounts were fake, possibly being used by militants to provoke extremist acts.

In the case of Pakistan, officially Islamic Republic of Pakistan, it is a diverse country of around 200 million people. The country's four provinces, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are named after their dominant ethnic groups. At present, there is no widespread ethnic movement in any province, except for the southern-half of Balochistan. Various separatist groups or Baloch insurgents have been carrying out attacks, albeit small-scale IEDs, since 2005. Meanwhile, the country's largest metropolitan, Karachi, in Sindh, has seen clashes among parties representing different ethnic groups, in particular Urdu-speaking community and Pashtuns. Although 95% of population is Muslim, there is multiplicity of faiths within. The 5% non-Muslims include Christians, who mostly reside in Punjab; Hindus, mostly in Sindh; and Ahmedis, among others.

Even though Pakistan has been home to a variety of militant outfits ever since war started in neighbouring Afghanistan in 1980s, it was mostly since 2001, that many such groups started targeting inside the country. One group, in particular, has attacked almost every segment of the society. Formed in 2007, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is today considered as the top-most anti-state group. Successive military operations were launched in the western tribal areas to dislodge them; the most recent one, conducted in 2014, was aimed at TTP's centre in North Waziristan. Most faith-based militancy is by the Deobandi-Sunni extremist groups against Muslim minorities and Christians. Sectarian hotspots often have sizeable Shia population, such as Karachi in Sindh, Quetta in Balochistan, Kurram district of KP, parts of South Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) is often single out for attacking Shias across the country. Some of its former militants, as well as of other groups like TTP, have sworn allegiance to incoming Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan-Afghanistan region, carrying out some of the deadliest attacks in the last two years.

Shifting to another country, Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with four major ethnic groups comprise; the majority Sinhalese at 74.9%, the Sri Lankan Tamils at 11.15% the largest minority, the Sri Lankan Moors at 9.3% and the Indianj Tamils at 4.12%. Major religions practiced are, Buddhism (70.1%), Hinduism (17.64%), Islam (7.11%) and Christianity (7.91%). Whilst having a significant concentration in the East, the Muslims are generally spread throughout the country mostly along the coastal belts due to trade practices and a significant number resides in the Central Hills and North Western province. A sizeable population of Muslim IDPs forcibly evicted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) from the Northern Province around the 1990s lives in the North Western Province.

Sri Lanka has been ruled by two major political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) who alternately secured majorities to form government. Incidentally, both these parties largely, excluded minorities from its party. The UNPs policies have encompassed comprehensive economic liberalization, the free market, encourage foreign investment and, is open and has friendly links with the West. Unlike the SLFP, UNP appeals less to Sinhala nationalist elements although it has been complicit with anti-Tamil sentiments during the ethnic conflict. By contrast the SLFP appeals to the rural Sinhala masses and has established and maintained close links with Buddhist clergy to carry its messages to the masses.

Sri Lanka is presently lead by a Coalition Government through an alliance of the two main political parties. President Sirisena came to power in January 2015, defeating authoritarian figure President Rajapakse who served two terms and is hailed as responsible for the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Rajapakse aided by his family members holding key positions of power in government set out on an ambitious development drive, building infrastructure, and beautification projects taking little to no effort at addressing the root causes of the conflict and the trust deficit between the communities. The Rajapakse era saw an emergence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist groups, led by Monks who targeted places of worship and businesses of minorities, as well as generally leading hate campaigns.

In the case of Burma, Buddhism is the dominant religion and Bama ethnicity is the dominant race. These two factors are interrelated as religion and nationalism are interwoven together in Burmese politics. Nationalism and religion are intimately linked and racism emerged within the discourse of nationalism. Dictator general Ne Win established a strategy, one-race-one-religion-one-language (Burmanisation), which has led to a distinctive definition of who belongs to the national territory, based on particular race and religion. The ideology of 'others and us' is done to create a position of inferiority and superiority, which leads to racism and religious extremism. This ideology is well fit to the purpose of the dictator to apply a divide and rule strategy. Times of uncertainty and of transition between autocracy to democracy caused an outbreak of internal violence as the studies have proven, which the violence probably arose from long-term persecution and discrimination on minorities.

The democratic revolution in Burma was driven by the public desire for greater freedom and external support, particularly to establish democratic and human rights values in the country. In contrast, the military has utilized religious nationalism to oppose the core democratic and human rights values which the NLD party is founded and based upon. People in Burma who once craved democracy and human rights and took part in movements that sacrificed thousands of lives for those values now act in opposition to them. A major process transpired between 2010 and 2015 which made this shift possible. However, this shift is based upon the anti-Muslim sentiment that has been placed by dictator general Ne Win since 1962. In Burma, the major cause for this shift was artificial fear, and in particular the fear of Islamisation. This fear pushed many towards hatred and ultimately violence. The violence was met with impunity, regardless of the heinous nature of crimes committed against minorities. Amid this violence, religious-based ultra-nationalist organisations emerged and ceased the situation, as if they aimed to prevent violence. These organisations introduced oppressive social norms at the grassroots level while simultaneously drafting and supporting oppressive laws and pressuring the government to implement them.

The media played a significant role in this same process through continuous misinformation delivered deliberately against the targeted minority group which changed the public perception of the minority group, which then compelled the public to undermine democratic and human rights values. Through social media, people were encouraged to use and understand racial slurs, dehumanizing language and to draw associations between racism and patriotism. These efforts contributed to the justification for violence against the minority group. This shift of public perception created great support for the military to commit genocide in Rakhine state against the Rohingya minority as well as to continue their military campaigns against other minorities across Burma.

Last one, after the armed conflict in Aceh and Mindanao is coming to end after the peace accords between the local non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the governments were agreed, the armed conflict in the southernmost provinces of Thailand which erupted at the beginning of 2004 and continues to this day, is the deadliest one in Southeast Asia. By the end of 2016, nearly twenty thousand violent incidents were reported in this region, which have claimed more than 6,500 lives, mostly civilians, and injured nearly thirty thousand people, with some of them left with serious disability. It also created a number of widows and orphans, and pushed local population (mainly Buddhists) out of the region. Despite the seriousness of the conflicts' impact on the local people's life, it has been systematically underreported by media, partly because of the Thai authorities' attitude to see the conflict as its internal problem in order to prevent international interventions. However, the significance of this relatively unknown conflict shouldn't be overlooked, given the fact that such a large number of deaths and injuries, added with the impacts on the local people's life, have been happening in a relatively small area of less than 15,000 square kilometer.

The 2017 Constitution, the 20th constitution of the country, introduced by the military government which staged the latest coup d'état on 22 May 2014 put the religion in the unprecedentedly prominent position as the state religion. The armed conflict in Patani or the southernmost part of the country spread in Patani, Yala, Narathiwat and a part of Songkhla Province, which also borders with Malaysia. Satun Province on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, bordering the northern states of Malaysia, on the other hand hasn't been involved in the current conflict because of the historical and political differences with the rest of the southern border provinces.

Trends and Tendencies in Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Asia

The roots of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia have been evident since the early years of independence. Not long after the Renville Agreement, Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo perceived the Indonesian government's failure to maintain its sovereignty. Thus in 1949, together with his followers, he proclaimed the *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* (DI/TII) or the Islamic Army of Indonesia in West Java. This movement spread to Central Java through Amir Fatah; Aceh with its central figure Tengku Daud Beureuh; South Kalimantan, led by Ibnu Hadjar; and South Sulawesi under the command of Kahar Muzakkar. All movements of the DI/TII were halted through military operations.

At first, there was Abdul Aziz alias Imam Samudra, one of the most vital actor in the 12 October 2002 Bali bombing claimed that the action was a revenge action towards the US and its allies who invaded Muslim countries like Afghanistan and Palestine. Next in 2011, six people were beaten by the mass in Cikeusik, Banten for following the Ahmadiyah faith, which people claimed as a heresy. Survey findings from Alvara Research Centre and Mata Air Foundation released in 2017 explained that 29,6% professionals agreed that an Islamic state should be fought for to enforce a 'whole' or 'kaffah' Islam in Indonesia, and 19,6% professionals agree with violent jihad. Two examples to explain this survey findings is the experience that the family of Triyono Utomo and Dwi Joko Wiwoho had. They went to Syria to join pro-violence group Islamic State (IS; also known as ISIS). Triyono Utomo was a government official working in the Ministry of Finance who went to Australia for his higher education. He brought along his wife and his toddler to join ISIS. Dwi Joko Wiwoho was the Director of PTSP (Perizinan Terpadu dalam Satu Pintu/Integrated One Door Licensing) of Batam Free Zone Authority (Badan Pengusahaan Batam) who brought his wife and children to Syria to join ISIS.

Following the radicalism trend that has been sowed for years, a number of intolerant groups in Cirebon became suicide bombers, as in the case of the incident in the *al-Dzikra* mosque. In fact, these two groups were headed by committee members of the Indonesian *Ulemas* Council and one university lecturer. This is due to the fact that terrorist movements, to borrow the term used by Gerlach, has become a SPIN organization, meaning it is *segmented* (scattered), *polycentric* (having many leaders) and is an integrated network. Since the establishment of ISIS, there has been major transformations in terms of the strategy and actors of terror. Among others, ISIS used the Internet to spread their propaganda and terror. This is proven by a confirmation from the BNPT in March 2015, that 541 Indonesian citizens joined ISIS.

However, with the weakening of ISIS following the destruction of Mosul and Raqqa, an ISIS terrorist network, including in Indonesia, they appear to have changed their strategy through the media and lone wolves. Terrorists are no longer dominated by men and adults, but women and even children became actors of terror.

The latest trend in terrorist acts in Indonesia is to exploit family relations. The bombings in three churches in Surabaya, on Sunday, May 13, 2018, were executed by one family. They consisted of six persons: the father, the mother, two sons (18 and 16 year respectively), and two daughters (12 and 9 years old). A research by Della Porta conducted in 1995 on the Red Brigade (RB) for example shows that as many as 298 out of 1.214 RB members were blood relatives or members of the same family, namely the parents, husband, wife, children, or other relatives. A research by the UN Commission on the WTC incident also confirmed the “terrorist family” phenomenon. Six out of the 19 hijackers in that incident were related.

When we examine the case of Bangladesh, the dividing line between the secular thinkers and conservative Muslims in that country has further deepened with the recent killings of the bloggers and publishers. It is a widely held belief that Islamist extremism has been rising in Bangladesh, historically perceived to be among the more tolerant Muslim nations. A series of extremist attacks marked 2016 as especially traumatic for Bangladesh and has put the country on the map of global hotspots of violent extremism. The year’s first attack took place in February through the killing of a Hindu priest. Thereafter, secular online activists, university teachers, gay rights activist, even a Hindu tailor was killed in the following months. In May 2016, a Sufi Muslim spiritual leader, a Buddhist monk and a village doctor were also killed, successively, on 8th, 14th and 20th May respectively. The infamous Holy Artisan attack during Ramadan, on July 1, claimed 29 lives, including 20 hostages (18 foreigners and 2 locals). A special commando team, consisting of Bangladesh Army servicemen, rescued 13 people before executing Operation Thunderbolt. The six gunmen were killed by security forces after a 12-hour siege, while a seventh suspected attacker was taken into police custody.

What can be termed as political Islamism has been a staple feature of Muslim nations since the advent of the religion in seventh century. Islam gained a solid foothold in Bangladesh by the seventeenth century, through both trade and preaching by Sufis and saints. Although Bangladesh was founded on the twin bedrocks of religious harmony and cultural diversity, in recent years this balance has come under attack from violent extremism. After gaining independence, Bangladesh turned into a secular state under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s leadership. The 1972 Constitution placed importance on secularism as a guiding principle, alongside other principles such as democracy, nationalism, and socialism.

The Mujib regime was, however, ended by a series of coups and counter-coups until General Ziaur Rahman emerged as the new ruler in 1976. Zia removed secularism and emphasized Islamic ideology by amending the constitution. However, Zia himself was also assassinated in an abortive coup in May 1981. The next major leader to emerge was General H. M. Ershad, who usurped rule through a bloodless coup in March 1982. Ershad incorporated Islam as the state religion in the constitution. The dominant political narratives, which still revolve around the 1971 war, continue to polarize the country. This brand of divisive politics, reflected starkly through society and culture, means that there is more than enough room for narratives of violent extremism to slip through the cracks.

Moving on to the next country, Pakistan's security landscape gives an idea of the challenge of violent extremism confronting the country. Although there has been a gradual decline in the number of terrorism incidents in past some years, both religiously motivated militants and nationalist insurgents are still operating in the country. While the former are mostly present in Pak-Afghan border areas, the latter have largely moved to southern and south-western parts of Balochistan mainly in and around Awaran and Keck districts. Meanwhile violent sectarian groups also launch sporadic attacks showing their presence in different parts of the country. Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) annual security report for 2017 noted that a gradual decrease in the number of terrorist attacks and consequent fatalities in Pakistan can be visibly seen since 2009.

Despite the decline in the terrorist attacks in recent years, many challenges still remain to be addressed on the front of countering extremism and terrorism. For one, despite a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks, terrorists including sectarian have been successful in managing some major attacks in recent months and years indicating their operational and support networks are still active, though weakened compared to pre-2014 scenario. At the same time, some new challenges are rearing their heads like the emergence of self-radicalized individuals and small terrorist cells, growing incidence of religious extremism including on educational campuses, persisting cross-border attacks by Pakistani militants relocated to Afghanistan, and increasing footprints of ISIS, or Daesh, in parts of the country and convergence of its fighters in Afghanistan near Pakistani border. These have made Pakistan's countering terrorism efforts even more challenging, which are also evolving in line with the changing regional scenario especially the pressure mounted by the US administration.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the country's history has been marred with violence due to actions of left-wing (the JVP) as well as right-wing (LTTE) groups the root causes of which are yet to be addressed. In addition to these communal violence targeting minorities have taken place targeting ethnic minorities since the late early 90s oftentimes backed by Buddhist clergy and amidst State complicity. The States inability to address the growing economic crisis led to the growth of Marxist movements around the 1960s, of particular significance the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) made up of educated, unemployed Sinhalese Buddhist youth and the rural poor. The movement turned militant around the 1970s with the aim of achieving a socialist revolution. The State reacted by violently suppressing the group. The JVP thereafter regrouped changing their focus from class to nationalism.

As part of their indoctrination program they introduced a class entitled "Indian Expansionism" which branded the up country Indian Tamils as an alien force who would be returned to India by their revolutionary government. They also refrained from engaging in political and organizational work in the Tamil areas. Through their second uprising they violently rejected the 13th Amendment (devolution package brokered with the involvement of India to provide a political solution to the Tamils) demanding the State to send back the Indian Peace keeping forces and targeting anyone who supported the devolution thereby demonstrating their violent opposition to an ethnically inclusive democracy. The Tamil struggle for equality and thereafter for a separate Homeland in Sri Lanka was based on ethno-linguistic lines. Ethnic riots involving the Tamils and the Sinhalese occurred sporadically in 1958, 1977, 1981 and in 1983 July considered to be the turning point of the ethnic conflict. Frustrated Tamil youth organized themselves into militant groups for the purposes of seeking independence from Sinhala domination. One such group was the LTTE. Sri Lanka was engulfed in conflict from 1983 to 2009 with intense fighting in some periods and quietened in others, with several ceasefires and failed attempts at peace leaving several thousands of casualties in both sides.

Burma's case also shares some common points. Following its independence from Britain, a period of uncertainty, assassination, and political coups followed, ultimately resulting in military dictatorship led by General Ne Win in 1962. Ne Win, a nationalist and military figure, was already known for his insecurity, anger, and ruthlessness and in ruling the country he employed strategies likely borrowed from both the British and the Japanese, dividing subjects against each other and inflicting harsh rule over the civilian population. The utilization of Muslims as a primary scapegoat was enhanced significantly under Ne Win's rule and although he promoted a socialist secular vision for Burma, ultimately Burmese Buddhist Nationalism became a de facto state policy. In a move that directly connected Muslims and foreignness, Ne Win's Government enacted the 1974 Emergency Immigration Act, which targeted immigration from China, India, and Bangladesh. This act was one of the first direct steps taken against the Muslim Rohingya population in the country by attempting to force them to carry Foreign Registration Cards.

Nationalist groups in Myanmar have become a subject of particular importance as they have been linked to much of the anti-Muslim violence throughout Burma over the past decade. The nationalists are collectives of monks and lay supporters who spread supremacist propaganda, give hate sermons in public and private gatherings, host rallies and marches supporting religious nationalism and advocate against real and perceived foreigners and foreign influence. The nationalists also openly advocate for policies which favor Buddhists over religious minorities, particularly Muslims. The most well known of the nationalists is the monk Ashin Wirathu, who has been affiliated with several organizations known for spreading hate speech or advocating for laws which are discriminatory towards religious minorities. One of the most famous groups associated with anti-Muslim nationalism in Myanmar is the 969 movement. The public face of the group, Ashin Wirathu, is notoriously hateful and actively spread an anti-Muslim message throughout Burma in locations which later saw violence erupt against Muslims.

Last one, the very significant characteristic of the Patani Liberation Movement since 1960s to this day is its fragmentation. In a leaflet called "The Liberation Movements in Patani", published in 1986 issued by the Information Bureau of Islamic Liberation Front of Patani, the author, Nasir Salahuddin, mentioned as many as seven groups which were active at that time. Because of its underground nature, the accurate number of the existent organisations at this moment is still unknown. However, the recent development after the inauguration of the Patani Peace Dialogue Proces has made these organisations far more accessible, especially to the media and academics, and information on them more available.

After GEMPAR was dissolved, the second most influential person in the organisation, Tengku Jalaludin Tengku Abdul Muttalib, a son of the last raja of Saiburi (one of the seven provinces in Patani) established the very first Patani insurgent organisation called Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP, the Patani Nasional Liberation Front) in 1959. This organisation had a strong military wing led by a commander called Pok Yeh (or Bapa Idris), and most military operations in the region during 1960s and early 1970s were conducted by them. One of the significant aspects which shouldn't be neglected is the existence of the sympathisers to these organisations whose number is even more unclear. Unlike the struggle during the previous century when remote forests and mountainous regions were the main battle fields, the current surge of violence since 2004 are mostly staged in towns or villages. Such an organised modus operandi would be impossible if the military operations conducted by the insurgents were not supported by the sympathisers.

Analysis on Extremism in Asia

Another condition that may raise cause for concern is that terrorists are very actively using internet-based digital media to spread propaganda content in a fast and massive manner. Aside from hate speeches attacking pro-democracy groups, terrorist propaganda also spread hoax content with the aim to generate public sympathy and support. Including to recruit new terrorists. The younger generation has become the target of terrorist propaganda in the digital world. This group are the largest users of the Internet. The Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers (APJII) has found that 75,5 percent of internet users in 2016 were aged between 10 to 24 years old. This shows that terrorists are targeting the younger generation in a massive way, and based on the survey done by the PPIM on radicalism among young people, this is truly a worrying phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the recent incidents of extremism in Bangladesh have made it clear that radical forces are taking cues from global Jihadi movement and attempting to resurrect local militancy in Bangladesh. These groups, conceivably financed by outsiders, use effective recruitment and training techniques. They utilize a warped, violent form of Islam that stray far from normative Islam. The extremist Islamic narrative not only justify acts of violence but also glorify and deify it. They have taken cues from Western media and marketing salesmanship, employing the use of explosive visuals and modern channels such as social media to grab the attention of target audience in effective ways.

Much of the debate on countering extremism in Pakistan, as we can see nowadays, revolves around countering terrorism or terrorists, leaving unaddressed the persistent factors of violent and non-violent extremism in society. That is why the state's counterterrorism actions don't have sustainable, long-term effect. The soft approaches to counter extremism are missing. A PIPS report based on consultations with 10 CVE expert groups early 2017 found that eliminating extremism – which is considered by many as a key prerequisite to counter terrorism – in Pakistan requires efforts at developing a holistic CVE strategy, covering multiple fronts. That strategy should not only focus on hard approaches, or fighting against the violent extremists, but also on developing intellectual, ideological responses to annul extremists' religious-ideological dogmas and evolving a comprehensive rehabilitation or reintegration of (repentant and ready-to-quit-violence) militants.

Also since 2012, there has been a surge in anti-Muslim violence drawing from global islamophobia as well as drawing on long standing stereotypes against the Sri Lankan Muslim community. These attacks have been carried out by militant Buddhist groups such as the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Ravana Balakaya, Mahason Balakaya, with the tacit support of the then ruling party. In 2011, a Muslim shrine in Anuradapura was destroyed by a group led by Monks, in April 2012 a mob of about 2000 Buddhists including monks surrounded a mosque in Dambulla, demanding its abolition alleging that the mosque stood on sacred grounds. Not only were the Muslims forced to abandon Friday prayers, an order was issued within days to relocate the mosque to another area. Video footage shows Buddhist monks engaging in unruly and violent behavior completely unbecoming of Buddhist monks with one monk disrobing and exposing himself to onlookers. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress in a submission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights documented 241 anti-Muslim attacks and at least 69 anti-Christian attacks in the year 2013 alone. The document provides that 51 of the anti-Muslim incidents and 15 attacks against Christians were violent, involving either physical violence against individuals or destruction of property. The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka documented has documented more than 270 incident of attacks against Christians post 2015 and more than 90 in 2017 alone, demonstrating that religiously motivated attacks still take place even during the present regime.

In the same year of 2012, several riots largely instigated by Nationalist figures, such as the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) and Wirathu himself, broke out in Rakhine State which resulted in hundreds of fatalities and around 140,000 Rohingya Muslims displaced from their homes. The following year anti-Muslim riots against Burmese Muslims occurred again in Meikhtila, Lashio and several other cities. Before the majority of these events, sermons were given by Wirtahu or other nationalist figures. The group had also established a network delivering DVDs of sermons throughout Myanmar and when riots broke out, often they were led by Monks themselves. Locals interviewed by Reuters (Szep) also said that the men involved in the Meiktila riots were not entirely locals, raising serious questions about who they were, why they were in the city and who organized them. In both the 2012 and 2013 riots police and military were recorded observing the violence but doing little to stop it. In Rakhine State, they were said to have even participated in the violence against Muslims. All of the riots were initiated by strange and sometimes unsubstantiated reports of communal disputes or arguments, always serving as a pretext to greater violence. Social studies experts suggest that the people near the violence were active, not passive. In this way, the 969 Movement was able to create a shift effectively in public perception towards extremism through violence against a targeted group, in which the nationalists have obtained a prominent role among Buddhist majority.

The lack of unity that is a chronic problem of the Patani insurgent organisations is not caused by fundamental differences in ideology, but it has been the problem related to the power struggle within and among the organisations. Internal power struggles could be fierce, which might lead to the split of an organisation or the assassination of political rivals inside the organisation. Despite such continuous internal conflict, the ideologies upheld by these organisations are remarkably similar. These ideological aspects are crucially important in order to understand their motives in the use of violence. As is mentioned before, there are three similarities between the insurgent organisations in Patani and transnational jihadist organisations, i.e. they are both Muslims, waging a jihad and using violence. However, a close scrutiny into the ideology of the Patani Liberation Movement reveals fundamental differences between them.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Prevention of intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism must be done through policies, programs and interventions that are aimed at preventing terrorists from achieving their objectives by using violence as well as to avoid a radicalization process through politics, culture, and religion. Building a contextual and local peace using an open approach is one of the methods applied, aside from legal punishment for actors of hate speech and terrorism. There is also needs to be an ongoing dialogue with all elements of society, whether religious leaders, local leaders, youth groups, women groups, executives as well as legislators, and law enforcers in efforts to resolve conflict and countering activities with intolerant potential. One reasonable and promising strategy is by establishing a society that is inclusive, pluralist and just, and based on full respect of human rights, and ensuring there is ample economic opportunity for all.

In the last few years, Bangladesh has undergone a rude awakening, finding once-believed dead threat of violent extremism alive and well in its midst. CVE operations by the security forces continue to be undertaken in droves each year. However, they only treat symptoms of the overall disease, which if left unchecked, can mutate like a cancer and spread through the minds of impressionable youths and at-risk communities. Using the building blocks of policy and measures already adopted by Western and South-East Asian countries alike, Bangladesh can forge a robust action plan that addresses the violent extremist threat in comprehensive fashion. It is unlikely that even the most ingenious plan executed with the utmost effectiveness will eradicate violent extremism from our society, as it breeds on traces of inequality and biases that are much harder to address. Nevertheless, the strategies outlined in this paper, if implemented correctly, can go a long way in stemming the tide of extremism and preventing people from falling prey to its clutches.

“Paigham-e-Pakistan” is the country’s first serious effort to develop an ideological counter-response to violent and militant ideologies, which should be upheld, promoted and transformed into a national narrative effectively. It should also be used to develop a culture of dialogue and consultation among religious scholars. The moderate religious scholars can do the job of developing counter-extremism response more effectively both in terms of reconstruction of political and religious views and contributing to a national dialogue. Efforts are also required for restructuring a non-discriminatory religious thought. Apart form religious/ideological dialogue, there is also need for establishing a national-level dialogue forum, or a platform for scholars, academics, political and religious leaders and policymakers to bring the key challenges on the discussion table and to understand various viewpoints. The government should take lead to establish such platforms, which should work independently.

In viewing radicalization in Burma it is best to do so with a view of the broader picture of the country and its history. Burma was overtly ruled by the Military for over 50 years and continued to be so even after the National League for Democracy took power. They have adapted to a changing world and blended into each situation like political chameleons in order to survive. In doing so through covert and overt actions, the Military has connected religion and nationalism in the minds of much of the civilian population. Through decades of propaganda and fostering of nationalists groups, the military and its proxy political parties have shifted the public perception and framed scapegoats of minorities, particularly Muslims. This shift and framing have not only changed the opinions of the people but often caused them to engage in violence, which they perceive as a defense of race and religion from an existential threat. As a result of the growing religious nationalism and extremism, there are about 23 locations across Burma where Muslim are not welcome.

CVE measures must undergo a fundamental change. Aside from taking advantage of sophisticated technology, the approach used must adopt the principles of justice and gender equality as well as rely on the experience of women. Women are effective weapons as counter-terrorism agents through creation of strategies and community-based programs. Women (wives) can also be seen as the important agents to strengthen the spirit of nationality through the values of tolerance.

The government must think of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy combined with efforts to promote pluralism within a civilized and democratic framework in a systematic way. At the same time, there is a need for concrete counter ideology measures through education in the widest sense of the word, including counter radicalism and terrorism efforts through moderate and family-based religious education. In addition to all that, the government must also resolve the root causes of terrorism, namely injustice, poverty, economic hardship, social disparity and change produce anxieties.

Finally, the government must also involve the civil society and work hand in hand to counter the threat of intolerance, radicalism and terrorism using a human rights framework. This is undergo in a comprehensive way (involving cultural and religious dialogue, education, policy, youth engagement, sophisticated technology, democratization, and gender equality perspective) and recognize local, national, regional, and even global context.

COUNTRY REPORTS



INDONESIA

Part 1

Robi Sugara





Background

Indonesia obviously is not the only country to have problems of radicalism and terrorism. The historical roots of radicalism in Indonesia can be traced to the post-independence era, where it was faced with local armed groups, united by their same living regions, ethnicities, or religions. At the time, they were known as rebels to the government. "Violent extremist" was not a familiar term yet to address these violent armed groups. Because at that same time, these armed groups (rebels) were also seen as warriors to their people, just like the saying: "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". In terrorist groups, suicide bombing acts are believed as a holy jihad action that comes from Islamic teachings.

There are at least four significant events in looking at the current and future of Indonesia. *The first* is Indonesian situation post-independence (1945-1966), *second* is the New Order (1966 – 1998), *third* the Reform (1998), and *fourth*, Post Bali Bombing in October 12 2002. Indonesia after independence had went through various armed groups insurgencies: Darul Islam, RMS (Republic South Maluku), Permesta (Universal Struggle/Perjuangan Semesta), and PRRI (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia). In foreign policy, Indonesia was facing a difficult situation in the middle of Cold War between the American-led western bloc and the communist bloc led by USSR. This era is also known as the Old Order, which was led by Soekarno. Old Order was succeeded by the New Order with Soeharto as the new leader.

In Soeharto's era, the armed rebel groups were quickly shut down. Soeharto used his "iron fist" policy to destroy rebel movements, including wiping out communism that became the great enemy of Western countries, especially The US. More than that, Soeharto also managed to restrain Islamic radical groups, which end up splitting them in two different names: the rightist radicals for Islamic groups who want to turn the country into Indonesian Islamic State, and the leftist radicals to address communist groups who want to turn the country into a communist state. After Soeharto fell out of power from the economic crisis, his iron-fisted regime hold a bad record in regards to human rights violations. However, human rights accusations could never bring Soeharto and his cronies behind bars.¹

¹ Kristian Erdianto, "Kontras Paparkan 10 Kasus Pelanggaran HAM yang Melibatkan Soeharto," (Kompas, 2016), accessed from <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2016/05/25/07220041/Kontras.Paparkan.10.Kasus.Pelanggaran.HAM.yang.Diduga.Melibatkan.Soeharto>, on 5 October 2018.

The New Order was succeeded by the Reform Order where Indonesia entered the new era, which was the transition of an authoritarian regime to a free, democratic era. This transition was a breath of fresh air to all component of Indonesian societies, including the rightist and leftist radical groups² who were shackled by Soeharto, and also the ethnic or regional rebel groups.³

This new era of accessibility and openness is used by two Islamic hard-liners Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar to come home to Indonesia after their exile in Malaysia. These two figures were subjected to pressure and jail sentence by the New Order administration for refusing Pancasila as national ideology. This refusal came as the two believed that Islam is the only ideology they're willing to keep. Ba'asyir called his escape to Malaysia as a hijrah journey from Indonesia's heathen government.⁴ This era is also marked by the emergence of many community groups with religious symbols. This response was in accordance to the situation at that time. As an example, an association was declared/founded in just two months after Soeharto's fall. The association was called Islamic Defenders Front (FPI: Front Pembela Islam). The group was founded in August 17 1998 at Pesantren Al-Um Ciputat Tangerang Selatan. Their presence was initially as a response to counter liberal and communist beliefs sponsored by the militia and police force.⁵

A Muslim congress/conference in was held in Yogyakarta on 5 – 7 August 2000 and founded an association named Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). This congress/conference agreed to entrust the leadership of this association to Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. MMI took advantage of the opportunities that came with the new open era by gathering/uniting Islamic activist using the term 'mujahidin' who concerned themselves with Islamic sharia enforcement in Indonesia.

² The Left Radical reemerged is believed by the publication of a book entitled I am Proud of Being a Child of PKI by Ribka Tjiptaning Proletariyati who is a member of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). This book is also always used as evidence of the rise of the PKI through the PDIP which is currently attacking President Jokowi when he is nominated and when his leadership.

³ The ethnic and regionally based rebel group is the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) which has now entered into a peace agreement and the Free Papua Organization (OPM) group.

⁴ Edi Sudrajat (editor), *Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Catatan Dari Penjara untuk Mengamalkan dan Menegakan Dinul Islam*, (Depok: Mushaf, 2006), p. xlvii

⁵ Andri Rosadi, *Hitam Putih FPI*, (Jakarta: Nun Publisher, 2008), p. 30

Ba'asyir's willingness to hold the position at MMI caused disputes within his newly led Jamaah Islamiyah (JI). Ba'asyir also see the Reform era as an opportunity to voice Islam openly. While the other half agreed that JI should still be an underground movement. The impact of Ba'asyir's movement split JI in two: the half joined MMI, and the other half stayed with JI. Khamami Zada described this situation as a new period for hardliner Islamic groups, as the new rising period was marked by the rampant formation of political parties with Islamic symbols in 1999 such as Muslims Party (PUI: Partai Umat Islam), People's Rise Party (PKU: Partai Kebangkitan Umat), New Masyumi Party, Islamic Syarikat Party, and Nahdlatul Ulama Party.⁶

After the New Order, other than facing the open rise of rightist radical groups, Indonesians who were enjoying their new sense of freedom also got a series of bloody conflicts and terrorist attacks. Bloody conflicts erupted in Ambon, Poso and Kalimantan. Terror attacks happened in 2000 which targeted churches in six major cities in Indonesia. And then there was the terror attack in 12 October 2002 in Bali. The conflicts in Ambon and Poso, along with series of terror attacks after 2000 left a harsh, pro-violence image of Islam. Not only in Indonesia, this harsh image of Islam also happened internationally, following the 11 September 2001 terror attack in The US by al-Qaeda.

⁶ Khamami Zada, *Islam Radikal: Pergulatan Ormas-Ormas Islam Garis Keras di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Teraju, 2002), p. 87.

Radicalism, Terrorism, or Violent-Extremism

Abdul Aziz alias Imam Samudra, one of the most vital actor in the 12 October 2002 Bali bombing claimed that the action was a revenge action towards the US and its allies who invaded Muslim countries like Afghanistan and Palestine. Samudra quoted a Quranic verse that said 'And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al- Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers' (Al-Baqarah: 191). The most casualties in the Bali bomb case came from Australia which Samudra called as the US's ally. Samudra also explained that the bombing was legal in war times and Samudra believed that Muslims are in war with the US.⁷ In 2011, six people were beaten by the mass (*dihakimi massa*) in Cikeusik, Banten for following the Ahmadiyah faith, which people claimed as a heresy.⁸ Thousands of Nusantara Dawn Movement (*Gafatar: Gerakan Fajar Nusantara*) members were also subjected to violence because people believed that they were heresy.⁹ In this, violence is used to punish those who were 'Islam's enemy' and those who were seen as performing heresy.

The term violence that was used is still debated in various places between 'radicalism', 'terrorism' and 'extremism'. These three words are often used interchangeably in addressing pro-violence groups. Radicalism, in the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) means (1) the faith or belief stream that is politically radical; (2) the faith or belief stream that want a change or renewal in social and politics with violent or drastic means; (3) an extreme behavior in political stream. BNPT has a program called deradicalisation program for the terrorists in or outside of jail.¹⁰

⁷ Imam Samudra, *Jika Masih ada yang mempertanyakan Jihadku*, (Surabaya: Kafilah Syuhada, 2009), p. 77

⁸ "Kronologi Penyerangan Jamaah Ahmadiyah di Cikeusik," (Tempo, 2011), accessed from <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/311441/kronologi-penyerangan-jamaah-ahmadiyah-di-cikeusik>, on 5 Oktober 2018.

⁹ Heyder Affan dan Christine Franciska, "Pengusiran 1,000 eks anggota Gafatar merupakan 'pelanggaran,'" (BBC Indonesia, 2016), accessed from https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/01/160120_indonesia_pengusiran_gafatar, on 5 October 2018.

¹⁰ Draft Blueprint Deradikalisasi, (Deputi I Bidang Pencegahan, Perlindungan dan Deradikalisasi Badan BNPT, 2015).

Radicalisation is also often used to describe the process in which an individual turn into a terrorist or a pro-violence radical. However this shows directly how radicalism and pro-violence extremism are closely related. Radicalism itself should not be described as a problem, even though in many ways radical ideas sometimes inspired violent actions.¹¹

Defining radicalism and terrorism is still a challenge in many countries. The fact is there is no internationally acclaimed definition for 'terrorism' or 'pro-violence extremism'. Some claimed that the two had the same meaning, with 'pro-violence extremism' as a replacement for 'terrorism' that was often politicised at the time. In July 2005, for example, the US government under President George W. Bush introduced 'violent extremism' as an alternative from 'war on terror' that was heavily criticised. Even so, 'pro-violence extremism' has both similarity and differences with terrorism. The similarity is that both terms described a political goal through violence. But in terms of ideas, the two can be different depending on whether the use of violence was aimed to spread fear and terror or not. It is believed that radicalism is not into spreading terror.

But it is also said that the term 'pro-violence extremism' can also refer to terror groups that use violence, in which it sounds less harsh than terrorism. In practice, violent extremist more often used to describe hard-liner Islamic group. Even further, violent extremist also refer to other violent groups such as far-right extremist or left-wing extremist, environmental activists, and others.¹² Because of its wider reach compared to terrorism, the term is more often used such as countering violent extremism (CVE) or preventing violent extremism (PVE).

The term CVE itself was first introduced in Europe after Madrid (2004) and London (2005) terrorist attacks. This became a response to violent extremism done by the Muslim perpetrators, which are growing rapidly in Europe. The British Government is seen as the exemplary body for the CVE program. From 2005 to 2011, around 80 millions were spent under the program for local projects to prevent radicalisation done by Islamic extremists. In its strategy for counter-terrorism, European Union in 2005 referred to four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue, and respond. 'Prevent' addresses the community's condition that caused individual radicalisation.

¹¹ Christian Nulist (editor), "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," (CSS ETH Zurich No 183), accessed from <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse183-EN.pdf>, on 5 October 2018

¹² Christian Nulist (editor), "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," ...

Other than that, the anti-terrorism approach from United Nations in 2006 also called for a holistic strategy that includes conducive condition for terrorism. Australia, Canada, and the US adopted the CVE as national strategies since 2011. France, Finland, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norwegia, Spain and Swiss also arranged their national strategies to fight terrorism with special focus on preventing extremist violence and also improving the people's resilience in countering terrorism. CVE/PVE also impacted international aid and relations, especially in the US's foreign policy.¹³

In 2015, CVE became globally known. It had replaced global war on terror and even replaced the word 'terrorism' itself. In February 2015, the United Nations held a three days event on CVE in the White House of America. The event was led by US President Barack Obama and attended by ministers from almost 70 countries. This was followed up at the end of September 2015 in high level meeting in between UN General Assembly with participants from 100 governments, 120 civil society and business representatives. UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon had announced "United Nation Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism", presented in the beginning of 2016.¹⁴

However, the term 'violent extremism' is not widely known in Indonesia. in the amendment of Terrorism Law passed on 25 May 2018, the term is not included in the law. Indonesia is still using the term 'terrorist' to refer Islamic extremist groups as perpretators. In handling the issue, Indonesia uses 'deradicalisation' which was already known in relations to handling terrorism. This paper is also narrowed to Islamic extremism to the extent of radicalism, terrorism, and violent extremism. Islamic extremism is an interesting topic as Islamic extremist in Indonesia had a strong ideological roots from Darul Islam and also has international network. This paper discusses the genealogy of radicalism in Indonesia seen from its origins, and also looking at radicalism as a response to varying conflicts happening in or onto many Muslim countries. This paper also talk about responses from government and civil society groups towards radicalism and extremism.

¹³ Christian Nulist (editor), "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," ...

¹⁴ Christian Nulist (editor), "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," ...

Roots, Actors, Network, and The Narration of Violence

Handling radicalism, terrorism, dan violent extremism need a long period of time. It needs a broad perspective to look at the problem and solution. It cannot be seen only on one aspect such as religion, economy psychology, political situation or others. And so, the roots of violence is not singular. And the way to tackle the issue is not solely using conventional approaches such as intelligence, police and military ways. The root of all roots for violent extremism should be addressed first, such as intolerance, government's failure, political, economical and social marginalization. UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon once said that "Missiles can kill terrorists. But I believe that good governance is the most effective tool to eliminate terrorism". From this, intelligence, police, and military based counter terrorism policies have now shifted closer to UN approach, which had long emphasized the importance of preventive actions and prefers the term PVE.¹⁵

Survey findings from Alvara Research Centre and Mata Air Foundation released in 2017 showed that radical ideas are enjoyed by the upper-middle class. The survey explained that 29,6% professionals agreed that an Islamic state should be fought for to enforce a 'whole' or 'kaffah' Islam in Indonesia, and 19,6% professionals agree with violent jihad.¹⁶ Two examples to explain this survey findings is the experience that the family of Triyono Utomo and Dwi Joko Wiwoho had. They went to Syria to join pro-violence group Islamic State (IS; also known as ISIS). Triyono Utomo was a government official working in the Ministry of Finance who went to Australia for his higher education. He brought along his wife and his toddler to join ISIS. Dwi Joko Wiwoho was the Director of PTSP (Perizinan Terpadu dalam Satu Pintu/Integrated One Door Licensing) of Batam Free Zone Authority (Badan Pengusahaan Batam) who brought his wife and children to Syria to join ISIS.¹⁷

¹⁵ Christian Nulist (editor), "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism," ...

¹⁶ "Survei: 23,4 Persen Mahasiswa dan Pelajar Terjangkit Paham Radikal," (Tribunnews, 2017) accessed from <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2017/10/31/survei-234-persen-mahasiswa-dan-pelajar-terjangkit-paham-radikal>, on 5 October 2018.

¹⁷ Robi Sugara, "How people become suicide bombers: the six steps to terrorism," (The Conversation, 2018), accessed from <https://theconversation.com/how-people-become-suicide-bombers-the-six-steps-to-terrorism-96944>, on 5 October 2018.

The experiences of Triyono and Dwi Joko showed that the upper-middle class is just as interested in radical ideas. An older example would be Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda's leader who was called an international terrorist by the US did not come from poverty. Yazid Sufaat from Malaysia pursued higher education. Sufaat graduated from California State University, Sacramento, US, in 1987 majoring in Chemistry.¹⁸ This shows that radicalism is also liked by the upper-middle class and the ones with good education. This paper further looks into two context, the first is DI as the ideological root for radicalism and extremism, the second is radicalism as a response towards conflicts in Muslim countries.

¹⁸ "Narrative Summaries Of Reasons For Listing," (UN), accessed from https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/individual/yazid-sufaat, on 5 October 2018.

From DI to JI to Islamic State

Bombers of the Bali attack on 12 October 2002, Imam Samudra and Mukhlas, were ex-activists of DI. Iwan Darmawan, who bombed the Australian Embassy in Jakarta on 9 September 2004 and received a life sentence, was also active in DI regional Banten. Iwan now supports Islamic State behind bars with Aman Abdurrahman, a man who originally came from Salafi movement and then transformed to terrorist groups and now end up supporting Islamic State. When there was a discord within DI which ended up in the formation of a new group Jamaah Islamiyah led by Abdullah Sungkar, Samudra and Mukhlas joined the new group. From JI, they then got connected to the international terrorist network led by al-Qaeda, and then migrated (again) to a more extreme group, which is Islamic State.

The main perpetrator of the Book Bombs case in 2011, Pepi Fernando, is an activist from DI who committed himself to commit violence. The newest case was the bombing in Kampung Melayu, East Jakarta in 24 May 2017. One of the perpetrators was named Asep Sofyan alias Asep Karpel alias Abu Daffa alias Abda. He was an ex-activist of DI who migrated to Jamaah Ansharu Daulah (JAD), a group affiliated to Islamic State.

It is important to note that between DI, JI and Islamic State, there is no structured line of command/relations. The migration of a member to another group happen when; *first*, pushed by dissenting views between them that caused a rift between the elites, which then affected the members below them. For example, JI was a new group led by Abdullah Sungkar formed after the rift within DI between Sungkar and Ajengan Masduki in 1993. DI members were forced to choose between staying with DI led by Ajengan Masduki or join the newly formed JI led by Sungkar. Samudra and Mukhlas joined JI.

Second, dissenting views happened again after the 1998 reformation when Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who succeeded Sungkar to led JI, also accepted the role as amir for Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia in the Muslim congress held in Yogyakarta in the 2000. Ba'asyir saw the reformation momentum as an ideal time to enforce Sharia law in Indonesia openly. However, half of the JI choose to move underground and didn't want to join MMI. After the 12 October 2002 terror attack, many JI members were stated as involved in the action. Ba'asyir was also captured by then for that same reason, but the court stated he was guilty for faking immigration documents when he ran to Malaysia instead.

Ba'asyir was imprisoned in 2005 and got released in 2006. After he was released, a conflict in MMI drove Ba'asyir to leave MMI and formed a new group called Jamaah Ansharu Tauhid (JAT) in 2008. In 2010, Ba'asyir went back to prison after being involved in military training in Aceh. In 2011, the Syrian conflict erupted and in 2014 Islamic State was formed with Abu Bakar al-Bagdadi as the leader, who then called for all Muslims in the world to take an oath of loyalty and to hijrah (move) to Syria and help his cause. Ba'asyir who was imprisoned with his organisation, JAT, took the oath. But some of his members, including his own son, Abdul Rachin Ba'asyir refused to do the same. Those who disagreed with Ba'asyir's decision made a new organisation instead called Jamaah Ansharu Syariah (JAS) in 2014. Practically, after Islamic State, terror acts in Indonesia is no longer affiliated or connected to JI network, but to the Islamic State supporters who formed the Jamaah Ansharu Daulah (JAD).

Even so, not everyone who has affiliation or connection to DI and/or JI ended up in radical groups or extreme violence. Some of them even left their violent ideas and actions.¹⁹ Sukanto is one of an ex-member of DI who left the group and lost commitment to do the radical acts. Nasir, Abbas, Ali Fauzi, and Ahmad Sajuli are JI members who chose to not use violence. In regards to the Islamic State case, a lot of those who were involved did not even have a radical background in their family and education, just like what happened in Triyono and Dwi Joko's cases who went to Syria to join Islamic State.

¹⁹ Holk H. Dengel, *Darul Islam – NII dan Kartosuwirjo: Angan-Angan yang Gagal* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 2011); Pusat Rehabilitasi Korban NII, *NII Vs NKRI: Telaah Singkat Penanganan Kasus NII KW9* (Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik DKI Jakarta, 2016) published with limited edition. DI is a group that is believed to be a combination of several Islamic groups, such as Laskar Hizbullah and Sabilillah, clerics and people who come from farmers' groups. They then proclaimed the Islamic State in Indonesia under the name Negara Islam Indonesia (NII). The country was founded on 7 August 1949 in the village of Cisampah, Cisayong, West Java. Since then, West Java has been the basis of the NII movement, even its traces are still strong today.

Response towards Conflicts in Muslim Countries

Conflicts happening in Muslim countries became one of the most vital catalyst in the growth and development of radicalism and extremism in Indonesia. Imam Samudra admitted that he was inspired by the jihad stories in Afghanistan, which was written by Abdullah Azzam titled *Ayatur Rahman Fii Jihadil Afghan*. After reading that, he intended to hijrah (move) and commit jihad in Afghanistan to fight Soviet communists. Samudra went to Afghanistan with the DI network coordinated by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir while in his exile in Malaysia. But before the Afghanistan conflict became a central issue, the Islamic movement led by DI appreciated Iran's Islamic Revolution against the US. They then separated Syiah from Islamic movement. They also do not accept Syiah as a part of Islam. Even so, some of them who were already amazed and inspired by Iranian revolution then moved to the Syiah ideology.²⁰

The conflict in Afghanistan became a path to Indonesian young men to meet other mujahidins from different countries. The Afghanistan conflict had birthed figures like Imam Samudra, Hambali, Mukhlas, and Umar Patek who then managed to create terror in 12 October 2002 in Bali. After that, similar terror acts using bombs and with suicide bombing methods keeps happening with the continuing conflicts in Muslim countries. From Afghanistan, the mujahidin from Southeast Asia moved to Mindanao, Philippines. Then they moved to Iraq, and since 2011 to Syrian conflict. The way they were symphatizing was more or less similar with how they were spelled/enamored to go fight in Afghanistan, which was the challenge as a muslim in one body, where a body part is hurt, the whole body is hurt too. This is how they were moved to help. They left to help Muslims who were hurt. These people who went to help are called mujahidin, and when/if they died, they will be receive the 'syahid' title.

For the Syrian conflict, Indonesian government noted about more than a thousand Indonesians who went to Syria to join the Islamic State. Some of them returned (returnees) and some are deported before they reached Syria to join the IS. Those who returned from Syria after joining IS stated their disappointment. Dwi Joko's family admitted that they were very disappointed in the IS.

²⁰ Solahudin, NII Sampai Ji: Salafy Jihadisme di Indonesia, (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, Mei 2011).

After almost 2 years in Syria, the family said that the IS behavior and actions aren't in accordance with the propaganda they spread through social media, which was that the life under IS would be guaranteed and protected. Meanwhile, the deportees who hadn't joined the IS still have immense will to go to Syria and join the group. Police data shows that 350 were captured in the family bombing in Surabaya, most were deportees and IS supporters. Other data also shows that actors involved in Indonesian terrorism after the formation of IS in 2014 came from IS supporters.

Conflicts in Muslim countries or those that involved Muslims always become a concern for Indonesian Muslims. Some responded by giving out calls for donations and jihad.²¹ The Syrian war, for example, did not only call for donations, but also narrated as the Muslims' jihad struggle by fighting against Bashar Assad's misguided Shia regime. Other conflict that was responded through jihad was the Rohingya Conflict with Myanmar government. The call for jihad in there was said to fight off infidels who made war with Muslims. The conflicts happening in Muslim countries are often seen as happening due to Islam's low influence in international politics, which was caused by the absence of khilafah or Islamic daulah or an Islamic state. In many ways, this narration is very attractive and interesting towards Indonesian Muslims. This is why the fight and struggle of pro-khilafah and Sharia enforcement activists always has a place in Indonesian Muslim's hearts.

²¹ "Ustadz Farid Okbah: Jihad Suriah Jadi Seruan Ulama Dunia, Bukan Hanya Arab Saudi," (Kiblat, 2015) accessed from <https://www.kiblat.net/2015/10/11/80141/>, on 9 October 2018.

Response from Indonesian Government

The fall of the authoritarian regime, the New Order, to Reformation in 1998, is a great news for Indonesians, especially for the pro-democracy activists. However, on the other side, a new problem rose, such as the security protection for the state. The fall of Soeharto's regime was followed by several laws that had previously castrated freedom of speech, one of which is the Subversive Law. And so, after the regime fell, Indonesia had no laws to protect itself in the midst of the hard and harsh impact of reformation, shown by the conflict in Ambon and Poso, Kalimantan, threat of disintegration by the Free Aceh Movement, Timor Leste, Free Papua and various terror acts that could not be avoided. Impact of the conflict in Ambon, Poso and Kalimantan nearly destroyed the national grand design made by our founding fathers, which was about diversity with commitment to live side by side even when there are religious, ethnic, and language differences under the flag of the Republic of Indonesia. Ambon and Poso conflicts are the ones involving Islam and Christianity, while the Kalimantan conflict was between Dayak and Madura ethnicities.

In December 2000, a series of bomb attacks happened in six major cities in Indonesia, mainly in Java island. The bombing actor who were an alumni of military camp/training in Afghanistan admitted that the bomb attack was to widen the conflict which previously only occurred in Ambon and Poso.²² But the conflict was succesfully prevented with calls from various cross religion figures in Java who condemned the bomb attack. The Poso and Ambon conflict subsided in 2002, but then a huge bomb exploded in Bali on 12 October 2002, killing 2002 people and hurt hundreds. After that, Bali's economy was in total breakdown and there was a brief tension between the Hindu community in Bali with the Muslims who mostly came from Java.

With this condition, the Indonesian government then stated war on terrorism by taking serious steps through passing the Interim Law No 1 of 2002 on the Eradication of the Crime of Terrorism, which then adopted into Law No 15 of 2003. The president also issued Presidential Instruction No 4 of 2002 on Crime of Terrorism, which was also strengthened with the issuing of national policy package on eradication of terrorism. The legal foundation also based the establishment of Letter of Decision Coordinating Ministry of Political, Legal and Security Affairs No: Kep-26/menko/Polkam/111 2002 on the Formation of Coordinating Desk to Fight Against Terrorism (DKPT).

²² Ali Imron, *Sang Pengebom*, (Jakarta: Republika, 2007), p. 64.

The duties of DKPT is to help the Coordinating Ministry in formulating policies to fight against crime of terrorism which covered countering, preventing, overcoming, stopping, and resolving and all kinds of legal action needed.²³ On the other hand, the legal foundation also bases the forming of Densus 88 as Indonesian Police Force's bomb team. This attempt gave results with the capture of all Bali bombing perpetrators in less than 30 days.

Indonesia imprisoned around 26 people for the 2002 Bali bombing and also unraveled the underground terrorist network *Jamaah Islamiyah*. 2017 data showed that there were around a thousand that had been processed into court in terror cases. Half of them had served their sentence while the other half went back to committing terrorism. In the work meeting of Commission I House of Representatives and *Menkopolhukam* on 21 August 2009, it was concluded to send recommendation to the government to form a legal body that carry out operational task. Based on the recommendation and the assessment on dynamics of terrorism, in 16 July 2010, Indonesian President issued the Presidential Law No 46 of 2010 on National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT). This body has the authority as the body to formulate policy, strategy, and national program in countering terrorism.

BNPT's main strategi in countering terrorism is through deradicalization. Those in prison will be subjected to the deradicalization program and those who were released will receive the program out of prison.²⁴

War on terror by Indonesian government doesn't stop on creating the series of regulations. In a harder stage, the terrorist groups also didn't simply end after the government killed, and imprisoned leaders along with the members. Because the ideology remained and spread without any border to hold it. In prisons, they would recruit other prisoners. Out of prison, they could freely spread the influence. With the more and more sophisticated information technology, there is even less border and there is no barrier from radical contents produced by these radicalists that could be seen by anyone through the phones we hold 24/7.

Despite all that, these sets of rules then became a polemic in resolving the conflicts in Ambon and Poso. Some Muslims involved in the conflict were subjected to Terrorism Law while the Christian weren't (only emergency laws). This phenomenon was seen as a discriminative act and the Terrorism law were made as if just to target Muslim groups. This is often narrated as to how Indonesian government dealt with groups or individuals that attacked police force or military force would then subjected to Terrorism Law, while groups such as OPM weren't subjected to Terrorism Law but only the Emergency Law. The deradicalization program by BNPT was also called as deislamization program, because the government was considered to erase jihad teaching from Islamic faith.

²³ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, (Jakarta: Daulat Press, 2017), p. 20-21.

²⁴ Muh. Khamdan, *Deradikalisasi Pelaku Tindak Pidana Terorisme di Indonesia*, (Tesis Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2015), p 101-165.

While on that, a new group emerged declaring itself as an Islamic State in 2014. This group is based in Iraq and Syria but with followers from all over the world, including Indonesia. A group that supported Islamic State in Indonesia called themselves JAD or Jamaah Ansharu Khilafah (JAK). This group had succeeded in committing terror acts in Indonesia. One of the most monumental act was the Sarinah bombing in Central Jakarta, 2016. The government who had long since wanted to revise the old law used the event to propose the revision to the parliament. After almost two years of discussion in parliament, even after another terror happened, the revision is still yet to be finished. After the suicide bombing involving a family in Surabaya in 2018, the revised law is finally passed.

However another pressing matter is the people or groups that support violence. They may not be willing to do it in short term, but their views and voice also help purporting the growth and development of radicalism and violent extremism. Other than that, the government is also facing the people that don't believe in the existence of terrorism. The people are more inclined to see the terror acts as a conspiracy to destroy Islamic movement.

The government response by issuing regulations and forming BNPT had not fully resolved the whole terrorism matters from the roots. For example, a radical group that acted alone in punishing certain groups by dismissing group activities they deemed as wrongful. They would disband discussions that they see as liberals and in some cases even committing criminal acts by murdering someone they judged as misguided (sesat) from Jamaah Ahmadiyah. Sadly, this kind of violent group is not included in the categories within the newest Terrorism Law. The government in this case only focuses on violent groups that are known with their relations to groups that do bomb attacks. When in reality, violent groups that threaten freedom is just as dangerous to the democracy in Indonesia. In handling this matter, Indonesian government had not yet reached the human security level where a group that is proven to kill other groups they perceive as evil and wrong is also a form of violent extremism.

Response of Civil Society

Dealing with radical and violent extremist groups need to involve the civil society. Two biggest religious organization such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah had affirmed their condemnation to radicalism groups in each of their muktamar results. This step is important for other religious bodies to also take in Indonesia.

NU, for example, through the 32nd Muktamar of 2010 stated that the struggle of radical groups is to replace NKRI with a religious country in their version. This matter to NU had happened in times of independence preparation and in national constitutional hearings. For the context of the Indonesian nation the debate became a hindrance, and so the solution was by using Pancasila as the national ideology. This is done as Indonesia is a plural country with many religious, ethnic, and class differences. This diversity is a national asset that could threaten social cohesion if not managed well. NU marked that radicalism could become a terrorism that is claimed as jihad. And in result, half of Indonesian Muslims sympathized and supported the perpetrators as religious fighters. To NU, Islam clearly prohibited and is against terrorism and the action would only harm Islam itself.²⁵

And then in the 33rd Tanfid Muktamar NU of 2015 mentioned four mapping of radical-terror groups: takfiri, jihadi, siyasi, and salafi. Takfiri are the most extreme ones that would easily call out kafir to other people who they deemed as 'wrong'. If these people are 'kafir' then their blood would be halal to spill. The takfiri ideology stems from wahabi teaching that is spread in Saudi Arabia. Jihadist sees the state system that don't enforce Islamic sharia as the governing system as kafir and thogut. This group doing jihad movements with physical force towards states that they see as their enemies. They would do terror by bombing public facilities and attacking police force. This group is affiliated with the radical movement in Middle East such as IS and al-Qaeda.²⁶

²⁵ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p. 73-76.

²⁶ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p. 73-76.

Siyasi is a group with transnational ideology that move through political ways. This group formed a political party with Islamic symbols. This siyasi also formed a societal community organization which aimed to establish Islamic Khilafah. Other than that, the group also targets high school and college students to be recruited. The last, is salafi that is connected to the Wahabi teaching that often easily accuse other groups as bidah, syirik and khurafats. This groups often monopolized office mosques to spread their ideology. They see religious events such as Maulid Nabi and Isra Mi'raj as bidah. They also accused people who visited cemeteries as grave worshippers. This group in spreading their ideology also use various media be it prints, social medias, radios, or even television.²⁷

Not much difference with Muhammadiyah in its 46th Muktamar decision of 2010 that stated religion should not and could not be used as a commodity for the political interests of a group. This is because commoditizing religion would harm the meaning and essence of Islam. Radicalists only think about themselves. They have high potential to cause religious and national disrupt such as mistakenly identifying Islam with Arab, rigid religiousness that see themselves and their group as the most correct one, and also exclusivism.²⁸

In Muhammadiyah 47th Muktamar, it was also discussed about the increase of radical and extreme religious behavior. The extreme and radical behavior had several characteristic. First, tend to easily call others 'kafir' including other muslims that are not part of their group. second, they feel that what they believe in is the most correct and absolute truth. They often judged, breed hate, and committing violence to others based on their accusations of being misguided (sesat), kafir, and liberal, including Pancasila and democracy which they see as kufur.

The tendency of takfiri group is contradicting with Islamic character which is fully emphasizing love, modesty, tawasuth (moderation), and tolerance. The takfiri behavior is caused by many factors such as narrow religious views, lack of knowledge, lack of religious interaction, exclusive religious education, politicized religions, and also as an impact of the religious and political conflict from abroad, especially the one happening in Middle East.²⁹

²⁷ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p. 73-76.

²⁸ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p. 73-76.

²⁹ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p. 73-76.

To counter this, NU gave alternatives by bordering/fortifying Indonesian Muslims with the term *Islam Nusantara*. While Muhammadiyah used the term progressive Islam.³⁰ Sometimes the two are combined to *Progressive Islam Nusantara*. However, the idea of Islam Nusantara received immense rejection by radicals, who stated that *Islam Nusantara* is something that harm the purity and holiness of Islam. So, naturally, in dealing with the existence of radical and extremist groups, NU and Muhammadiyah hold the same views. They are states as threats to Indonesian national intergration. Both of these organization fully condemned any violent acts under the name of Islam. Both also believe that Islam is a *rahmatan lil alamin* religion.

Saefudin Zuhri marked that these two had different approches in dealing with the matter. NU accepts the term used by government on radicalisation. While Muhamadiyah sees the word as biased and chose the term moderation instead. Muhammadiyah refused the claim that radical and extreme views is connected with the teaching of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab. Because the founder of Muhammadiyah, Achmad Dahlan himself built Muhammadiyah with a lot of influence from Abdul Wahab, especially in aqidah. Muhammadiyah also believed that ideology is not the only problem in radicalism and extremism. Inhumane actions by officials handling terrorism could also motivate them to have revenge and become terrorists. There is also the factors of injustice in law enforcement, economic inequality, and social marginalization.³¹

That is why the involvement of civil society groups in dealing with radicalism and violent extremism is a need. The government has provided the regulation in Presidential Decree No 46 of 2010 Article 36 line (1) that mandated BNPT to involve the people and society, NU and Muhammadiyah can be pushed to be government's partner in preventing and handling radicalism and terrorism. Moreover, the government should also concern about other civil societies, especially communities that had existed in each region and has a strong national platform in combating radicalism and extremism.

³⁰ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p.76-86.

³¹ Saefudin Zuhri, *Deradikalisasi Terorisme: Menimbang Perlawanan Muhammadiyah dan Loyalistas Nahdlatul Ulama*, ... p.76-86.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The issue of radicalism and violent extremism, first, is not always directly proportional to education levels or radical families. In the beginning, radicalism is tightly linked with ideologies of DI and JI. After the emergence of Islamic State, violent ideas are enjoyed by middle-upper class of Muslims instead. This proves that violent ideas had been ingrained in public narration and is justified as a fight for a cause. Violent ideas covered with religion made it seem permissible under the reason of fighting evil. The role of education and religious figures is very vital here. Because, the Triyono and Dwi Joko families had shown this clearly. Those who had high educations with high economic capacities turned out would entrust the world's future into the hands of radical and extreme group. this shows that education has a great role in teaching tolerance and nationalism as early as possible, while religious figures could give comprehensive understanding of religion. So the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education should work hand in hand to respond to the involvement of highly educated people in violent extremist groups.

The second problem is that radicalism and violent extremism could be invoked by conflicts happening in Muslim countries, or narrations of Muslims conditions all over the world such as the Syrian, Iraq, or Palestinian conflict, and also the Muslims in Myanmar. These series of events responded with saying that the sufferings of the Muslims in the world is due to the absence of an Islamic power like Khilafah. That is why Islamic State's presence in Syria became an answer to Muslim's worries. The support of some Indonesian Muslim towards groups that are trying to enforce sharia, Islamic state and Islamic Khilafah is not non-existent. At the end of the day, this naturally becomes a challenge to Indonesian government, in which this country were built on the diversity of ethnicities and religions inside it. In responding to conflicts in Muslim countries, it would need an intervention from other Muslim countries in the world, either personally or institutionally.

The Indonesian government had responded to this problem by issuing various laws and regulation, even though the regulations are still only specific towards persons or groups who are involved in violent extremism. While radicalized persons who became sponsors to the growth and development of violent extremism had no law or regulation over them yet. In this stage, the government actually had opened a space with the presence of BNPT to invite civil societies to get involved in countering terrorism. This was also regulated through a Presidential Decree. However, in practice, there seems to be a need for early detection of radicalism where government and civil society groups do not only stop at discussions, seminars, and socializations, and not only involving two religious organization such as NU and Muhammadiyah but also others. There is a need fro data and technology based system to detect radicalism as early as possible.

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INDONESIA

Part 2

Prof. Musdah Mulia





Background

International attention began to focus intensively on terrorism ever since the WTC bombing on September 11, 2001. The world was appalled by the incident that took the lives of 5.700 civilians. This tragedy enraged the US and culminated in the president George W. Bush, making a controversial statement that the mastermind behind the WTC tragedy was Osama Bin Laden with the Al-Qaeda Network based in Afghanistan. The US, in collaboration with its allies, launched air attacks against the military bases and weapons installation of the Taliban army suspected of protecting Osama Bin Laden. The US anti-terrorism movement began with attacks on October 7, 2001, where the world's focus shifted from the US to Afghanistan.³²

As a country that is open to the world, Indonesia has felt the impact of the global war against terrorism. Not long after the WTC tragedy, Indonesia suffered a terrorist attack by the *Jamaah Islamiyah* (JI). A series of terrorist incidents followed in Indonesia, such as the Bali Bombing 1, 2002, the Bali Bombing II in 2005, bombing of several embassies, foreign vital objects, the JW Marriot hotel in Jakarta, and other bombing incidents that took place sporadically in several locations within Indonesia

The Bali Bombing was not the first such incident in Indonesia. In 2000, on Christmas Eve to be exact, several bombing incidents took place in a number of churches in Jakarta.³³ Following those Christmas bombings, several radical acts by way of bombing happened. These incidents were linked to the radical views of Osama Bin Laden. When he saw how Israel was oppressing the Palestinian people in Gaza, he became determined to wage war against all the infidel allies of Israel. In his view, the West and all its allies were treating Muslims unjustly, particularly Muslims in the Palestine. This global injustice then became a crucial issue that kept on being reproduced and seemed convincing to some Muslims in the world. Anti-West then turned into Anti-America, a nation considered as a super-power state that was controlling the world.

³² Agus Subagyo. 2015. *Teroris(me): Aktor & Isu Global Abad XXI*, Bandung: Alfabeta, pp. 19-20.

³³ See <http://www.beritasatu.com/hukum/46781-detik-detik-sebelum-aksi-bom-natal-2000.html> (July 16, 2018). See also "Sejumlah Bom Meledak Serentak di Malam Natal" dalam <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/5550/sejumlah-bom-meledak-serentak-di-malam-natal> (July 16, 2018).

Osama Bin Laden was deadly serious. He apportioned all his property towards the jihad against the West and its allies. Aside from his property, he also issued two *fatwas*. The first one was issued in 1996 and it said: "All Muslims across the world must break off any relationship with infidel oppressors, and this includes abandoning any western-oriented life style. Muslims must return to the *sunnah* and leave all forms of *bid'ah* as well as any kind of deviation influenced by the West." The next fatwa was issued in 1998: All Muslims in the world have the obligation to fight for and uphold pure Islamic values and reiterate a global caliphate that will unite all Muslims around the world under one power and uphold the laws of Allah.³⁴

Not long after Osama issued those fatwas, Ba'asyir and Sungkar returned to Indonesia.³⁵ Two years later, Ba'asyir established the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) in 2000.³⁶ This event reiterated the connection between Ba'asyir and Osama's movement, demonstrated among others by the tone of the speech he gave on the opening of the first congress of the MMI. Ba'asyir openly urged for sermons and jihad. Ba'asyir also emphasized on the importance of owning *ruhul jihad* (endless love forr jihad and martyrdom) and knowledge about *fiqhul qital*, namely learning about war tactics and strategies and how to use weapons.³⁷ Ricklefs even goes so far as to say that the books provided in Ba'asyir's Islamic Boarding School, in Ngruki, included volumes on guerilla warfare and strategies, books written by Osama Bin Laden's mentor, Abdullah Azzam. It is important to note that August of 2000 marked the beginning of a series of suicide bombings in Indonesia.

However there are some who believe that during the early years of reforms, what began to develop was radicalism based on ethnicity. This can be seen from the various collective violence and social unrest that took place in Sampit, Poso, and Ambon. This type of radicalism then underwent a transformation into terrorist radicalism.³⁸

³⁴ Jamhari & Jajang Jahroni. 2004. *Gerakan Salafi Radikal di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada. p. 29. See also Rohmatul Izad, "Fatwa Mendiang Osama Bin Laden" in <https://geotimes.co.id/opini/fatwa-mendiang-osama-bin-laden/> (July 19, 2018). See also the fatwa of Osama bin Laden in <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm> (July 19, 2018).

³⁵ Ba'asyir and Sungkar back to Indonesia from Malaysia in 1998.

³⁶ Ba'asyir established MMI without Sungkar in 1999. The first congress of MMI held in Yogyakarta, August 5-7, 2000.

³⁷ Ba'asyir's speech on the congress of MMI in M. C. Ricklefs. 2013. *Mengislamkan Jawa; Sejarah Islamisasi di Jawa dan Penentangannya dari 1930 sampai Sekarang*. Jakarta: Serambi. pp. 654-656.

³⁸ Agus Subagyo. 2015. *Teroris(me): Aktor & Isu Global Abad XXI*, Bandung: Penerbit Alfabeta, p. 55.

Bombing incidents that happened in Indonesia during the period between 2000 and 2018 were frequently considered as terrorist activities. Terror and terrorism became two popular and seemingly inseparable words for the public, the mass media and government following the WTC incident in 2001. The term terrorism was furthermore used to describe every act using bombs or violence for political purposes.³⁹ So far, the definition of terrorism is an ongoing debate although experts have come up with a description of terrorism for legal purposes. Every nation defines terrorism based on their book of law to regulate, prevent and mitigate terrorism.⁴⁰

Many popular figures such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris blame religious ideology as the main cause of terrorism. In his book, *The God Delusion*, Dawkin views religion as a virus that manipulates people to sacrifice all the resources they own (including their lives) for the existence of that religion itself. Similarly, Sam Harris views the holy book as a source of intolerance and violence against those of different religions. However, violent and radical acts involve more complex factors than merely ideological (religious) narratives. The fact is that only a small number of people with *jihadist-salafist* ideology choose to carry out acts of terror in the name of religion.⁴¹ Since 2002 to now, terrorist acts have had different motives. Between 2000-2009 most terrorist acts have been based on an anti-West sentiment. Although in 2003 the suicide bombing at the Australian Embassy by Heri Gholun was grounded on a desire for revenge due to the sentence given to the Bali bombers, it is still categorized as an anti-West motive. And then from 2011-2016 and even until the last minute yesterday, the motive for terrorism shifted to anti-*thaghut* or in other words, declaring war on the enemies of Islam. The target of those terrorist acts is the state, in this case, the police force, considered as a representation of the state in obstructing the terrorists' movement. In time, the anti-*thagut* and anti-West motives culminated in one incident of suicide bombing by Afif, Dian and Ali on January 14, 2016 at Thamrin Street, Jakarta.

³⁹ Kamus *Oxford*, Inggris: Oxford University Press, 4th Edition, p. 459.

⁴⁰ Indriyanto Seno Adji. 2001. *Terorisme dan HAM dalam Terorisme: Tragedi Umat Manusia*. Jakarta: O.C Kaligis dan Associates. p. 17. See also <https://news.detik.com/berita/4031949/ini-definisi-terorisme-di-dunia-bagaimana-dengan-indonesia>

⁴¹ See: <https://theconversation.com/ideologi-dan-agama-hanya-sebagian-alasan-aksi-terorisme-pasca-11-september-91846> (July 5, 2018).

Aside from groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS, we have the transnational organization namely the Hizbut Tahrir or better known as HTI. The goal of this group is to establish a Caliphate of Islamic State that is not segregated by territories within a nation, for which the leader shall absolutely be a Caliphate. The Hizbut Tahrir's key figure is Taqiyuddin An-Nabhani, and in fact, the reference for HT's ulemas is the book "Nidzamul Islam" by Nabhani.⁴² One section of the book contains a radical viewpoint about the types of states. For Hizbut Tahrir, there are only two forms of states, namely an Islamic State and a Kaffir State.⁴³ This radical view has been the catalyst for HT's followers to wage a jihad to establish an Islamic State. For the purpose of establishing a caliphate, HT doesn't always use peaceful ways, but also employs violence, and even terror. This has happened in some countries like Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, where the Hizbut Tahrir have tried to infiltrate the government and carry out a coup d'etat against the rightful government.⁴⁴ These views and indications of going against the government has become the basis for the prohibition of the Hizbut Tahrir in some countries, including Indonesia.⁴⁵

⁴² See <http://www.gunromli.com/2018/03/membongkar-uud-negara-khilafah-hizbut-tahrir-indonesia-hti-bagian/> (July 26, 2018).

⁴³ Guntur Romli, "Membongkar UUD Negara Khilafah Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)", in <http://www.gunromli.com/2018/03/membongkar-uud-negara-khilafah-hizbut-tahrir-indonesia-hti-bagian/> (July 20, 2018). See also Ardi Yansyah, "Inilah Kenapa Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) wajib dilarang di Indonesia!" in <https://seword.com/politik/inilah-kenapa-hizbut-tahrir-indonesia-hti-wajib-di-larang-di-indonesia>.

⁴⁴ See <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/deretan-upaya-kudeta-oleh-hizbut-tahrir> (July 26, 2018).

⁴⁵ See "Deretan Upaya Kudeta oleh Hizbut Tahrir" in <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/deretan-upaya-kudeta-oleh-hizbut-tahrir> (July 26, 2018). See also <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/07/19/10180761/hti-resmi-dibubarkan-pemerintah> (July 26, 2018).

Trends of Domestic Extremism/ Intolerance Exploring

The roots of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia have been evident since the early years of independence. Not long after the Renville Agreement, Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo perceived the Indonesian government's failure to maintain its sovereignty. He found that because of that agreement, West Java became an area that was vacuum of power. Thus in 1949, together with his followers, he proclaimed the *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* (DI/TII) or the Islamic Army of Indonesia in West Java.⁴⁶ During the 1950s, this movement spread to Central Java through Amir Fatah (it remained stagnant due to lack of significant support); Aceh with its central figure Tengku Daud Beureuh; South Kalimantan, led by Ibnu Hadjar; and South Sulawesi under the command of Kahar Muzakkar.⁴⁷

All movements of the DI/TII were halted through military operations. The West Java wing of the DI/TII ceased as of June of 1962 and Kartosoewirjo was arrested. This was followed by Aceh in December 1962 where the movement ended peacefully. One year later, in 1963, Ibnu Hajar's troops were defeated. In February of 1965, Kahar Muzakar died in an armed ambush. However the insurgence of the South Sulawesi DI/TII was totally eradicated in July of 1965.⁴⁸ Records of the Indonesian Anti-Terrorist Agency show that some small groups remain to carry on the DI/TII movement, but they are more of an underground organization. According to Ricklefs, in around 1974, Sungkar and Ba'asyir were introduced to a secret group that was the remains of the *Darul Islam* movement. Our fight is in accordance with their principles, said Ba'asyir.⁴⁹ In the midst of this conspiracy, the *Jamaah Islamiyah* emerged as a clandestine terrorist organization.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Jurnal POLITEIA, Vol.6. No.1, January 2014.

⁴⁷ <https://kumparan.com/guntur-romli/bom-surabaya-dan-empat-generasi-teroris-di-indonesia> (July 17, 2018).

⁴⁸ <http://www.donisetyawan.com/penyumasan-ditii/> (July 17, 2018).

⁴⁹ See Ricklefs. 2013. *Mengislamkan Jawa; Sejarah Islamisasi di Jawa dan Penentangannya dari 1930 sampai Sekarang*. Jakarta: Serambi. p. 312.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.313

Subsequently, according to Ricklefs, in 1985, Sungkar and Ba'asyir fled to Malaysia through Medan.⁵¹ They remained hidden in Malaysia until the downfall of Soeharto's regime in 1998.⁵² When they were in Malaysia, Sungkar and Ba'asyir sent several of DI/TII cadres to Afghanistan. Initially, it was in support of the jihad of the Muslims there, but further progressed as a military training for the cadres. It was since then that the JI and Al-Qaeda network became closely linked.

According to Sidney Jones in some cases, intolerants (radical ones) can transform into terrorists. A number of intolerant groups in Cirebon became suicide bombers, as in the case of the incident in the *al-Dzikra* mosque. In fact, these two groups were headed by committee members of the Indonesian *Ulemas* Council and one university lecturer.⁵³ Naipospos and a team from the Setara Institute also noted the same thing regarding the transformation of radical groups into terrorist groups. This is due to the fact that terrorist movements, to borrow the term used by Gerlach, has become a SPIN organization, meaning it is *segmented* (scattered), *polycentric* (having many leaders) and is an integrated network. In such organizations, what frequently happens is an overlapping between organizations. One person can be a member of different organizations within one period of time⁵⁴

Fathali Moghaddam gives this illustration: A terrorist can go through **five internal psychological phases**. First of all, an individual seeks a solution for what he feels is unfair treatment. At the second level, this individual builds up his physical condition to divert the solution to his problem by way of an attack. The individual who actively seeks opportunities to launch his attacks then levels up to the next phase, which takes the form of attacking those he thinks are his enemies. The third phase is where this individual asserts his identity by adopting the moral values of his group. The most crucial phase is when he moves from the third level to the fourth where after a person joins a terrorist organization, with little or no possibility of leaving alive, this person, at the fifth phase, becomes prepared and motivated psychologically to carry out acts of terror.⁵⁵

⁵¹ For further information, see <http://fikrimahmud.tripod.com/artikel/id17.html>.

⁵² For the back ground, see Quinton Tembly. 2010. *Imagining an Islamic state in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jamaah Islamiyah*. Indonesia, No. 89, April, 2010.

⁵³ Sidney Jones. 2015. *Sisi Gelap Demokrasi: Kekerasan Masyarakat Madani di Indonesi*. Jakarta: PUSAD Paramadina. pp. 4-5. See also International Crisis Group. 2012. *Indonesia: From Vigilantism to Terrorism in Cirebon*. Asia Briefing No. 132, January 12.

⁵⁴ Ismail Hasani dan Bonar Tigor Naipospos (Ed). 2005. *Dari Radikalisme Menuju Terorisme*. Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara. p. 13.

⁵⁵ Fathali Moghaddam, in Ismail Hasani dan Bonar Tigor Naipospos (Ed). 2005. *Dari Radikalisme Menuju Terorisme*. Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara. pp. 13-14.

The illustration given by Moghaddam explains the condition of Sungkar and Ba'asyir very well.⁵⁶ The first stage was when they fled to Malaysia because they felt they were being treated unfairly in Indonesia. The second phase was when they sent a number of JI cadres to Afghanistan to prepare themselves physically (military training). When they felt they were ready, they then launched their attacks on those they considered their enemies and so on and so forth.

When we trace back incidents of terror that have taken place from time to time in Indonesia (since the return of Sungkar dan Ba'asyir), especially after the WTC tragedy, we can see that there has been a shift of targets. According to Sholahudin,⁵⁷ prior to 2010, terrorist groups in Indonesia always targeted Western symbols or *far enemies*. After that, they changed their target from *far enemy* to *near enemy*. Their main target was the government, particularly the police and the army based on an anti-*thagut* motive.⁵⁸ If they had permanent targets from year to year, it was the churches.⁵⁹

The death of Osama bin Laden in 2011 was a blow to Al-Qaeda. In the meantime, Ayman al-Zahwari who replaced him was considered a failure in regard to leading Al-Qaeda. As a consequence, the terrorist network in Indonesia had to cease operations because funding from that source stopped. In the process, followers of Osama split into different groups. Abu Bakar Al-Baghdhadi took advantage of this chaos in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq who were invaded by the US, and declared the establishment of ISIS. ISIS then became a source of reference for terrorist groups in Indonesia through the alumni network from the Middle East. The entry point was JAT, which in turn produced new cells such as the *Jamaah Ansharu Daulah* (JAD) led by Aman Abdurahman,⁶⁰ the *Jamaah Ansharu Syariah* (JAS) led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the *Khatibatul Iman* led by Abu Husna alias Abdur Rohim, the *Khatibah Nusantara* led by Bahrumisyah,⁶¹ who had a close relationship with Bahrunnaim, the *Mujahidin Indonesia Timur* (MIT) led by Santoso in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

⁵⁶ JI established in 1993 as an integral part of Al-Qaeda. Since September, 2008, JI transformed into *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT).

⁵⁷ <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2016/08/22/14591791/teroris.di.indonesia.dulu.dan.sekarang> (July 16, 2018).

⁵⁸ It began on April 15, 2011, when a bomb exploded at the Cirebon Resort Police Mosque during Friday Prayers. Terror with the Police as the main target has continued to this day.

⁵⁹ The latest is the bombing of three churches in Surabaya on May, 13-14, 2018.

⁶⁰ Aman Abdurrahman is an ex-convict for terrorist acts in Aceh in 2010, before that (2004) he was imprisoned for a bombing incident in Cimanggis. Aman is the head of the *Khatib Masyarakat* group, a splinter group of the *Khatib Nusantara* led by Bahrumisyah. Aman monopolized travel to Syria and forbade people from outside his group to move to Syria. In fact, before leaving for Syria they had to be trained by Aman's group. See Centre For Terrorism and Social Conflict Studies. *Ancaman ISIS di Indonesia*. Unpublished, p. 7- 8.

⁶¹ <http://www.tribunnews.com/internasional/2016/01/21/profil-tiga-wni-yang-jadi-pimpinan-teroris-isis-di-suriah?page=all> (July 16, 2018).

Santoso was an ISIS supporter and received aid to establish a caliphate in South East Asia. Specifically in the case of JAD and JAT, both are linked to the *Jamaah Anshoru Khilafah Daulah Nusantara* formed in 2015. All those organizations had the same vision as the DI.⁶²

Since the establishment of ISIS, there has been major transformations in terms of the strategy and actors of terror. Among others, ISIS used the Internet to spread their propaganda and terror. These efforts were not without success. This is proven by a confirmation from the BNPT in March 2015, that 541 Indonesian citizens joined ISIS. This shows an extraordinary increase in the number of ISIS followers from 56 persons in August 2014. However, with the weakening of ISIS following the destruction of Mosul and Raqqa, an ISIS terrorist network, including in Indonesia, they appear to have changed their strategy through the media and lone wolves.⁶³ Terrorists are no longer dominated by men and adults, but women and even children became actors of terror, whether those who went directly to Syria as well as those who stayed in the country.⁶⁴

⁶² <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20170711112546-121-227012/kehancuran-isis-bisa-jadi-bencana-bagi-indonesia> (July 17, 2018).

⁶³ Working Paper Pusat Kajian Keamanan Nasional, Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta. 2018. *Terorisme Global; Peta Terorisme dan Strategi Counter-Terrorism*. p. 16.

⁶⁴ <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2018/05/16/dita-pelaku-bom-di-gereja-surabaya-pernah-kuliah-di-unair-tetapi-di-do?page=all> (July 16, 2018).

Women's Involvement with Radical Islamic Groups

In many discussions on terrorism is currently focused on issues concerning law enforcement efforts, cooperation between defense institutions, analysis of legal policies, and definitions of terrorism. Women (especially wives) are excluded from the process of dialogue and response to terrorism. Apparently the most recent trend in terrorism is to turn women into perpetrators. If terrorist acts in the past had a masculine face and used a patriarchic approach, recent trends of terror use women (wives) as executors using a feminine approach. The main motivation for women involved with this radical Islamic groups is theological. Initially, they were exposed to a radical understanding of Islam, such as the obligation to kill all *kaffirs* (non-Muslims). They firmly believe the obligation to establish an Islamic state through *jihad*. Mostly of them are recruited through marriage. This means that they are purposely wedded to then instill radical ideas in their minds. Quite a number of them get married in jail. Others are wedded after they have received radical indoctrination.

This phenomena indicates that there is a strong indoctrination from the husband about the teachings of extremism and that the wife experiences a struggle to internalize the teaching. It is also very interesting to note that there are findings that show wives also negotiate with their husbands in carrying out the teachings of extremism. This can be taken to mean that the wife's figure experiences the process of constructivism and relational autonomy in the struggle process and its negotiations so far.

History shows that women have been involved in wars or other acts with elements of violence, fighting side by side with their male counterparts. Some of them even led violent acts, such as Joan of Arc (France), Golda Meier (Israel), or Cut Nyak Dhien (Indonesia). This is in contradiction to the strong perception that "women by nature tend to prefer peace, being moderate, willing to compromise, and taking a tolerant stance, or the strong conviction of those in various parts of the world that women should be prevented from involvement in any form of violence, including sending them to war. The facts show that those perceptions and general views are more a myth than a reality.

In the past few years, the reality shows that women's involvement in terrorist acts continue to escalate.⁶⁵ In countries such as Germany, Ireland and Italy in Europe, in Peru in Latin America, also in Gaza and the West Bank in Occupied Zones in Israel, Palestine up to Russia, Chechnya, Sri Lanka and India, Turkey and other regions, including the latest developments taking place in Iraq and Jordan, terrorist groups are relying more and more on women to carry out their acts. These women play a variety of roles as informants, spies, recruiters, acting as human shields, or just becoming objects to satisfy the sexual needs of male terrorists, which is something that cannot be neglected. In the past two decades, making the most of technology for the achievement of terrorist causes, women have participated in managing terrorist organization publications or websites on the Internet. Women's role in terrorist suicide acts, turning their bodies into lethal weapons, has intensified.⁶⁶

According to Bahrun Naim, leader of ISIS from Indonesia, the need to recruit women in acts of terror is because less and less men are willing to become terrorists. He further said: "If in Syria, women are not obligated to carry out amaliyah (terrorist) acts, in Indonesia, women are allowed to do so because men are more cowardly." This can be seen in a telegram conversation on June of 2016.

Another factor is that women are considered more easily influenced, especially those who have problematic marriages.⁶⁷ Women are also deemed very loyal to religious teachings and ideology, and thus more militant when carrying out assignments. This is especially true for women who have had traumatic experiences, been a victim of domestic violence or are facing problems within their families or divorce. When brainwashed with radical concepts, women can carry out their mission with a vengeance, becoming even more militant than men.

A number of reasons have emerged as to women's involvement in violence. **Firstly**, compared to men, they usually have more freedom of movement and are not too prone to suspicion by security personnel, and this adds to their value of involvement compared to their male counterpart. This added value has increased mostly because suspicion of possible suicide acts have recently increased as well.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Knop, Katharina von. 2007. *The Female Jihad: Al-Qaidas Women. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, pp. 397-414. See also Mulia, Musdah. 2018. *Perempuan dalam Gerakan Terorisme di Indonesia*. Akademi Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, (https://www.aipi.or.id/admin/assets/pdf/pdf_file/14052018_Perempuan_Dalam_Gerakan_Terorisme_di_Indonesia_MusdahMulia.pdf)

⁶⁶ Alvanou, Maria. 2007. *Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture*. Working Papers Series No.3. Tel Aviv, Israel: Strategic Research and Policy Center, National Defense College, IDF.

⁶⁷ <https://www.tempo.co/read/fokus/2016/12/15/3402/pola-rekrutmen-teroris-jadikan-perempuan-sebagai-pengantin#W2jOXFtUBprbOfxe> (July 16, 2018)

⁶⁸ Bloom, Mia. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1-21.

Secondly, women's involvement as suicide bombers has its own attraction for the media, mostly because we are now a digital era, news of such happenings can be shared not only quickly but also in a more powerful manner. This is due to the dramatic effects of actions using women as a weapon, which in turn will strengthen and empathize the struggle of terrorism they are representing and increases sympathy for their cause.⁶⁹ **Thirdly**, these women's involvement in suicide attacks may encourage men to engage in the same activities. If women can do it, then men should be able to do so as well, although this amplifies the prevailing stereo-typing. And **fourthly**, involvement of women can also be considered as an indicator of women's increasing equality with men in society, regardless of whether those women are aware what bases their actions, because there is a lot of speculation that these woman (some of whom are still children) have been manipulated by their leaders who are mostly men.⁷⁰ In Indonesia, in 2015 and 2016, there have been more than 250 deportees among which half of them are women and children (they usually travel as families). Between January to March of 2017, the number of deportees has reached more than 140 persons, and 79% out of those people are women and children. They are held in centers provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs for interrogation.

Other studies state that even global terrorist groups are benefitting from involvement of women in their organization, not only as recruiters but also as free propaganda cells.⁷¹ In Indonesia, data from the Directorate General of Correctional Facilities states that up until October 2016, the number of terrorist convicts are 223 persons. Since the enactment of Law No. 15 of 2003 on Terrorism, already 9 women have been declared as being involved in and having a role as terrorist crimes. They are the wives of terrorists. Meanwhile, the Directorate of Deradicalization of the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT) states that 51 women who are wives of terrorists have been put into a deradicalization program.

⁶⁹ Nacos, Brigitte L. 2005. *Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism*. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. pp. 435-451.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Bhakti, M.A. 2016. *Perempuan dan Terorisme*. Jakarta: Pusat Kajian Radikalisme dan Deradikalisasi February, 2016, in <http://www.radicalismstudies.org/home/2015-04-19-13-02-08/special-reports-and-analysis/270-perempuan-dan-terorisme.html>.

Cases of women's roles as wives or prospective wives in the terrorist movement in Indonesia first emerged in the case of Dian Yulia Novi. Dian admitted that she underwent an indoctrination process called the *jihad qital* through the Internet by her own husband, Nur Solihin.⁷² Nur Solihin himself is a follower of Bahrudin Naim.⁷³ This case drew public attention because it was the first case where a wife in Indonesia is recruited as a suicide bomber, through means of marriage. Another case which was carried out by Santoso where the three wives of the leader of the group who were taken along and joined in the fight in the forest. Not only that, the facts that eventually emerged is that because of the sexual needs of the leaders of this group, namely Santoso, Ali Kalora and Basri, their wives were ordered to join in the fight. This was revealed when security forces found birth control pills at the time they raided the terrorists' hide out.⁷⁴

Prior to the involvement of terrorists' wives becoming known to the public, the Centre for Radicalism and Deradicalization Studies (PAKAR) recounted that 9 wives were involved in terrorist crimes up to 2015 based in a study that was released in early 2016.⁷⁵ Six among those women ended up being tried in criminal court while the others were released because there was no proof of their involvement. Those nine women are wives of terrorists, and they were victims of terrorist activities carried out by their husbands and the terrorist movement that aspired for the establishment of an Islamic state.

The study by PAKAR illustrated how wives were taken advantage of by their husbands, by providing help or caring for the needs of their husbands and the group. Not only that, the majority of those women weren't aware that what they did on the orders of their husbands was part of helping terrorist groups, and they were not even aware that their husbands were affiliated with a terrorist group. This study also explains that the wives of those terrorists were being victimized during in life since the time they were arrested till the time they were released from prison, causing them to be alienated from their families, isolated, vulnerable and economically incapacitated because they could not provide for their families due to isolation and because they bore the status of ex-convicts and even "widows of terrorist". Support and protection from the State for the wives of terrorists seem to be rather half-hearted.

⁷² Siroj, S.A. 2017. *Perempuan dan Terorisme*. in Kompas.com:

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/01/06/12565011/perempuan.dan.terorisme>

⁷³ Jordan, R. 2016. *Ini Wajah 2 Terduga Teroris yang Antar Bom ke Calon 'Pengantin' Dian*. detik.com: <http://news.detik.com/berita/d-3369122/ini-wajah-2-terduga-teroris-yang-antar-bom-ke-calon-pengantin-dian>

⁷⁴ Dariyanto, E. 2016. *Santoso Pernah Perintahkan Pengikutnya Cari Pil KB dan Pembalut Wanita*. detik.com: <http://news.detik.com/berita/3179840/santoso-pernah-perintahkan-pengikutnya-cari-pil-kb-dan-pembalut-wanita>

⁷⁵ Bhakti, M.A. 2016. *Perempuan dan Terorisme*. See also <http://www.radicalismstudies.org/home/2015-04-19-13-02-08/special-reports-and-analysis/270-perempuan-dan-terorisme.html>

On September 22, 2016, Indonesian security personnel at the Soekarna-Hatta Airport succeeded in preventing the departure of 7 Indonesian citizens who were going to fly to Syria to join ISIS, one among them was a woman strongly suspected as the funder for the project. The interest and appeal for women to join terrorist movement triggered an important question. What made it so appealing for women that they were willing to risk their lives? There are at least four triggering factors for this attraction.⁷⁶ **First**, religious factors. Elizabeth Pooley found many Muslims in England were drawn to join ISIS because they were convinced that Islam was under attack; a strong desire to establish a new society, free from *thagut* (*enemies of Allah*); religious obligation that women should defend Islam and the chance to become part of and finding a meaningful life goal in a “caliphate sisterhood”.⁷⁷ **Second**, an ideological factor.⁷⁸ These women are attracted to the ideology of terrorism, one that is militant and strongly resonates a fight to uphold justice. **Third**, a political factor. Poverty, social inequality, violation of Human Rights, and discrimination are the narratives developed in a terrorist movement and for women, these are the factors that trigger a sense of anguish that consequently sets off potential political violence against the State. Extreme radical methods narrated by terrorist group have persuaded many women to join in the fight against an oppressive government. In Indonesia’s context, a political defeat for hard-line religious groups has prompted an escalation of terrorist movement carried out by groups who feel marginalized. They use media framing to give the impression that the State is negligent towards those who belong to the majority group in this country. That is why the target of terrorist acts is State symbols and institutions.

Fourth, a personal factor. Based on the case of Shannon Conley, Anne Speckhard in her book *Bride of ISIS*,⁷⁹ says that ISIS motivates young Western women through the internet and persuades them to leave their countries and become the wives of jihadists or become domestic terrorists in their home country.

⁷⁶ Debbie Affianty, *Perempuan dalam Kelompok Jihadis dan Terorisme*, pp. 346-348.

⁷⁷ For further information, see Elizabeth Poole. 2002. *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims*, New York: I.B.Tauris Publisher.

⁷⁸ See *Jihad Jane' Colleen La Rose gets 10 years in prison* in <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-25630399>. See also, *Jihad Jane Colleen LaRose Became a Terrorist for Love* in <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/jihad-jane-colleen-larose-became-terrorist-love-n284636>.

⁷⁹ Anne Speckhard. 2015. *Bride of ISIS: One Young Woman's Path into Homegrown Terrorism*, New York: Advances Press.

Women become the target of religious fundamentalist groups because they still have religious legitimacy to do so. Religious legitimacy is even supported by values that are basically patriarchic in nature. It is not surprising that when a country or society experiences fundamentalism, domestication and the likes, women usually become the first political agenda. Why is that? The reason is because the socio-political cost of women's domestication is very low and easy in the sense that within a patriarchic society, domestication of women will be not face significant socio-political resistance.

Fundamentalist views are very derogatory to a woman's life. This is because those views generally reject the concept of gender equality and equity, birth control and all the elements thereof, such as the use of contraception. They also reject sex education and reproductive health so that women have no understanding of their sexual and reproductive rights. They reject HIV/AIDS patients and People Living with HIV/AIDS, considering them cursed; they reject LGBT groups, protection for rape victims; they reject protection for commercial sex workers, and no less dangerous is that they encourage child marriage and polygamy.

Muslims who preserve fundamentalism have a manipulative tendency and use Islamic teachings to legitimize patriarchic power and isolate women from the public sphere. General observation of women's civil and political rights under Islamic regimes in the world, clearly shows that fundamentalists constrain women in regard to their civil and political rights. Iran's Islamic Constitution of 1979, following the victory of the revolution, for example, although not explicitly emphasizing women's subordination as second-class citizens, has actually restricted the civil and political rights of women in the public sphere.¹⁷ Under the excuse of purifying religion and returning to the Al-Qur'an dan Hadith texts, Islamic fundamentalism underlines the difference between the rights of men and women. In their view, God has purposely made the two human beings different and that difference is not a discrimination but it is for the happiness of mankind. The conclusion is tht fundamentalism persuades us to return to religion. However, in the context of women, what they claim to be purification of religion is actually domestication of women. In short, fudamentalism promotes politics that is anti-democracy, anti feminism, anti-pluralism, and anti-humanism.

¹⁷ Ann Elizabeth Mayer. 1991. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Washington: West View Press. pp. 130-131.

There are at least three important roles women play in terrorist actions,⁸⁰ and they are: **First**, as followers and loyal companions. Mostly these women are still at the stage of domestication of women. This means that they are not the principal actors but only function as wives, loyal followers and mothers of prospective terrorists. **Second**, as propaganda experts and recruiting agent. Some women involved in terrorist movements such as ISIS are not allowed to go into battle, but their role, especially on social media, is as propaganda experts, religious lecturers, and recruiters for ISIS using a recruitment approach that relies on friendship and relationship.⁸¹ Talking about social media, it has two important roles for women. First, as a forum for women to learn more about terrorism, the ideology behind terrorism, and they are inter-connected through fellow supporters or recruiters. These women are able to recruit potential followers, spread propaganda, or mobilize supporters. *Second*, social media reveals various activities of women involved in terrorist networks and this information is appealing to many people. **Third**, as *fighters/bombers*. Terrorist groups often use women, especially fair-skinned ones as suicide bombers. This is because Westerns tend to stereo-type suicide bombers as coming from Muslim countries. In Indonesia, the first woman to be convicted as a suicide bomber was Dian Yulia Novi. She was planning to blow herself up at the State Place on Sunday, December 11, 2016.⁸² She admitted to having undergone an indoctrination process called *jihad qital* through the Internet by a terrorist propaganda cell and her prospective husband at the time, Nur Solihin.⁸³ Nur Solihin is a member of the network of Bahrun Naim.⁸⁴ This case drew public attention because it was the first time a wife in Indonesia was recruited as a suicide bomber and the recruitment was achieved through marriage.

⁸⁰ Debbie Affianty. 2017. *Perempuan dalam Kelompok Jihadis dan Terorisme*, in Muhammad Abdullah Darraz (Ed), *Reformulasi Ajaran Islam: Jihad, Khilafah, dan Terorisme*, Jakarta: Mizan Pustaka. pp 341-342.

⁸¹ Laura Huey and Eric Witner. 2016. *Exploring a New Role for Women in Terrorism* in *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 - January 2016. See also https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293191152_IS_Fangirl_Exploring_a_New_Role_for_Women_in_Terrorism.

⁸² <https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/951622-dian-yulia-wanita-indonesia-pertama-divonis-kasus-teroris>.

⁸³ Siroj, S.A. 2017. *Perempuan dan Terorisme*. Kompas.com: <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/01/06/12565011/perempuan.dan.terorisme>

⁸⁴ Jordan, R. 2016. *Ini Wajah 2 Terduga Teroris yang Antar Bom ke Calon 'Pengantin' Dian*. detik.com: <http://news.detik.com/berita/d-3369122/ini-wajah-2-terduga-teroris-yang-antar-bom-ke-calon-pengantin-dian>

The Trend of Terrorist Families

The latest trend in terrorist acts in Indonesia is to exploit family relations. The bombings in three churches in Surabaya, on Sunday, May 13, 2018, were executed by one family. They consisted of six persons: the father, the mother, two sons (18 and 16 year respectively), and two daughters (12 and 9 years old). A similar incident took place in Surabaya on Monday, May 14, 2018, where a whole family was involved in a suicide bombing.⁸⁵ In the past, radicalization needed a long and lengthy process. Apparently, recruiting families seem to be a short cut for a radicalization process.⁸⁶

In the history of terrorist movements, the “terrorist family” phenomenon is not something new. A research by Della Porta conducted in 1995 on the Red Brigade (RB) for example shows that as many as 298 out of 1.214 RB members were blood relatives or members of the same family, namely the parents, husband, wife, children, or other relatives. A research by the UN Commission on the WTC incident also confirmed the “terrorist family” phenomenon. Six out of the 19 hijackers in that incident were related. The 2012 Boston bombers were the Tsarnaev brothers. the Charlie Hebdo incident in France was perpetrated by the Kouachi brothers, and in the Paris attack, it was the Abdessalam brothers who were the actors. In Indonesia, three of the 2002 Bali bombers were brothers, namely Ali Ghufron, Amrozi, and Ali Imron.

How is this “terrorist family” network formed? Initially, in order to establish a network, recruitment through family relations and marriage was considered the easiest method. In simple words, terrorist group members would first try to influence their family members to join their movement. They would also try to marry their relatives or daughters to other members of the terrorist group. Examples of this are when Abdullah Azzam married his daughter to his follower, Abdullah Anas from Algeria, when Abu Muzab al-Zarqawi married a sister of his close friend, Khaled al-Aruri, when Osama bin Laden was married to Amal al-Sada, the daughter of a Yamanese tribal chief to make recruitment of new Al-Qaida members in that country much easier. In Indonesia, Ali Ghufron married Paridah Abas, the sister of Nasir Abas, a fellow alumni from Afghanistan. Baharuddin Latif, too, married his daughter Arina Rahma to Noordin M. Top and so on.

⁸⁵ <https://sains.kompas.com/read/2018/05/17/120500223/teror-bom-oleh-keluarga-kenapa-anak-anak-dilibatkan>.

⁸⁶ Mohammad M. Hafez. 2016. *The Ties that Bind: How Terrorists Exploit Family Bonds*, California, Naval: Postgraduate School Monterey.

Family relation and marriage are the most effective method in forming “terrorist families” because there is a psychological influence that binds one to the other and ensure mutual support. Through this method, not only do they become members of the same terrorist group, but also members of the same family. (a family bond). Mutual support has an affective and cognitive connotation. Affective because they have a close relationship (intimate) as a family. Cognitive is in the sense that that closeness can be used as an instrument of peer-pressure, guaranteeing loyalty of the members thus forming a very strong solidarity network. Also, due to tighter surveillance by security forces, terrorists are starting to use other recruitment methods within a closed group that does not easily give rise to suspicion, such as in family groups. Since there are binding elements within a family, such as love, trust and life-long commitment, it is easier for terrorists to recruit followers.

In terms of recruitment, involving and employing relatives, especially through marriage is much more effective because building trust is easier with family members than with acquaintances. Especially when surveillance by security forces is very tight, terrorists’ movements are constrained. So terrorists must take extra care when recruiting members. The least risky option is to capitalize on family relation or marriage. The implication of this option is that people with no record of terrorism can suddenly become terrorists because they were recruited by a relative or married to a member of a terrorist family. Dzakar Tsarnaev, the Boston bomber was only a spontaneous terrorist simply because he was asked by his brother, Tamerlan Tzarnaev.

In Indonesia’s context, Ali Imron could also be considered a spontaneous terrorist because he was induced by his brother, Ali Ghufron. This recruitment process is usually called a bloc recruitment, where recruiting a previously formed group is much easier because of social pressure, a fear of being left behind, and a desire to maintain relationships. Not only that, bloc recruitment can also minimize resistance and treachery. The closeness of a family bond and marriage is a more effective method used by terrorists to establish a network because there is psychological binding pressure that binds and mutual support. This close family bond also prevents differing view points between one another, thus strengthening even more the bond that has been established. When one becomes family, it becomes much easier to build trust rather than with other people. Also, the fact that terrorists are under close surveillance of security forces and that their movements are restricted makes it very imperative for caution when adding members.

The most appalling part of this terrorist family trend is the involve of children as terrorists. The mastermind behind the Paris bombing, Abdel Abaoud, for example, took along his brother, Younes Abaaoud, who was only 12 years old, to Syria to join ISIS. He also recruited his female cousin, Hasna, who was 14 years old, to guard his apartment in Saint Denis Paris, who later died in a subsequent police ambush. During 2013-2016, a large number of extremists from all over the world (including from Indonesia) left for Iraq and Syria to join ISIS, and they took their families along with them, including children and teenagers. These children and teenagers can certainly be considered as spontaneous extremists because of pressure from their parents. Although they were involved in the context of terrorists as a group, they are frequently considered part of a "terrorist family." The same thing happened with the bombers of three churches in Surabaya. Dita and his wife, Puji, went to Syria to join ISIS, taking along their four children. While in Syria, the children underwent a radicalization process (at a different level than the adults of course). That is why, when they returned to Indonesia, Dita could easily involve and exploit his wife and four children in the terrorist act they carried out.

It can be concluded that the terrorist family trend emerged because characteristically, terrorist groups need a high level of trust and solidarity. Therefore family bond and marriage are very important in their actions. Another factor is minimizing the potential for recruiting the wrong persons, meaning those who are less reliable and loyal which can pose a danger in terms of secrecy, and to the unity and existence of the terrorist group itself. To overcome this, prevention and deradicalization efforts must be viewed as a 'family' package and even as an 'extended family' package approach. When a father becomes a suspected terrorist, the target of mitigation should also include his wife and children and maybe his relatives suspected as having been exposed to radical and extremist ideologies. The contrary is also true, meaning that when an offspring child has been arrested for terrorist acts, the family should also be investigated, in this case the siblings, parents or other relatives, particularly those with the most potential to be asked to join a 'terrorist family'. In other words, mitigation of terrorists should focus not only on holistic methods, but also on humanitarian values in accordance with Human Rights principles.

National Policy

The government must have the ability to prevent strengthening of radical groups, and this can be achieved through three ways. *First*, the government should open a channel of democratic political participation for Islamic groups. *Second*, the government must carry out a systemic anti-violence strategy on radical Islamic groups that are prone to acts of violence and terrorism. *Third*, the government must implement an 'effective State' that guarantees safety and legal certainty on the one side, and education as well as social services on the other, to the majority of the population,

In order to counter radicalism and terrorism, the government has issued Government Regulation In Lieu of a Law (Perppu) No 2 of 2002 on Eradication of Terrorism. This is followed by Government Regulation In Lieu of a Law (Perppu) No. 2 of 2002 on utilization of Perppu No. 1 to conduct investigations on the Bali Bomb case. In addition, the government also declared the *Jamaah Islamiah* as the organization responsible for the Bali Bom terror. In further developments, Perppu No. 1 of 2002 was then enacted in Law No. 15 of 2003 on Eradication of Terrorist Crimes, and Perppu No. 2 of 2002 was enacted in Law No. 16 of 2003.⁸⁷ Aside from enacting laws, the government has also formed the *Densus 88* (Special Detachment) in 2002. In addition to establishing a unit assigned with the duty to deal with terrorists, the government also formed the National Counter Terrorisms Agency (BNPT) in 2010 with its main duty and function to counter terrorism.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ However Law No. 16 of 2003 on Implementation of Perrpu No. 2 of 2002 was revoked by the Constitutional Court based on a judicial review requested by Masykur Abdul Kadir, one of the Bali Bomb I actors. The Constitutional Court accepted the judicial review on Law No. 16 of 2003 because the validity of that law was in contradiction with the 1945 State Constitution, particularly article 28 I of 1945 State Constitution that stipulates that the right not to be retroactively prosecuted by a law constitutes a human right that cannot be compromised in any way whatsoever.
<http://www.hukumonline.com/berita/baca/lt5b0531a3c651d/sekelumit-kisah-perjalanan-uu-anti-terorisme> (July 17, 2018).

⁸⁸ For further information, see <https://www.bnpt.go.id/tentang-bnpt>

In other words, the Indonesian government chooses to eradicate terrorism through a law-enforcement model. This is evident from the government's enactment and implementation of laws. Almost all the terrorist have been arrested by the Densus 88 based on prevailing laws. According to Suhadi, head of the BNPT, Law No. 15 of 2003 on Countering Terrorism has become the most complete Law at the present time, because it contains three important aspects in countering terrorism, namely prevention, enforcement and protection for victims as well as compensation,⁸⁹

In addition, the government's measures to prevent terrorism and radicalism include involving the civil society, particularly for advocacy in several regions based on a Human Rights framework.⁹⁰ This framework has in fact been implemented long before the issue of terrorism became rampant. Some of the initiatives include establishment of the Coordinating Forum for the Prevention of Terrorism (FKPTP), as a forum for the prevention of terrorism in 32 provinces involving the regional government, academicians, the police and *ulemas*. In today's context, the role of local governments become increasingly significant with their involvement in all prevention measures, as the Police and the BNPT are doing.⁹¹

In face of an increasing trend in women as actors of terrorism and families as terrorists, the BNPT has engaged in a collaboration with a number of Islamic women's organizations, such as the *Fatayat NU*, *Muslimat NU* and the Muhammadiyah women's groups, namely *Aisyiah* dan *Nasyiatul 'Aisyiah* and other women's NGOs. Among the activities carried out are counter radicalism and terrorism through religious education that is moderate and family based. This collaboration is formed to shield families and the public so they are not so easily exposed to religious ideology based on radicalism and terrorism. This is important in view of the increasing trend of targeting women and children as agents of radicalism and terrorism.⁹²

⁸⁹ <https://news.okezone.com/read/2018/05/26/340/1903139/kepala-bnpt-undang-undang-terorisme-indonesia-terlengkap-di-dunia> (July 17, 2018).

⁹⁰ Zainal Abidin, dkk. *Peran Kabupaten/Kota dalam Mengatasi Intoleransi, Radikalisme dan Ekstremisme Dengan Kekerasan*. Naskah panduan Human Rights City-INFID. pp. 5-6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹² <https://www.bnpt.go.id/kepala-bnpt-bentengi-perempuan-dari-ancaman-terorisme.html>.

The prevention of terrorism and radicalism initiative is also done in collaboration with religious figures and organizations. In Indramayu, for example, the local government is working with NU to prevent radicalism and thus Indramayu has become a safe and conducive zone. The next region is in the District of Pohuwato, a region considered very vulnerable to entry of terrorism and radicalism ideology. The local government of Pohuwato works together with inter-faith figures in implementing various measures and policies to strengthen and empower communities. This includes efforts to strengthen the economy of the community and implement a dissemination program on the dangers of radicalism. This program also engages a number of relevant agencies, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Police.⁹³

A number of Districts and Municipalities have also succeeded in preventing intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism. Wonosobo, for example, uses a Human Rights framework to overcome issues of disharmony, and at the same time engaging the local community in local governance. Wonosobo has successfully protected all its citizens including the Ahmadiyah minority group. Wonosobo has the highest population of Ahmadiyah devotees, numbering around 6.000. One village in Wonosobo, Buntu Village, has been recognized as a Pluralist Tourist Village in Indonesia because its citizens embraces a tolerant culture and freedom of religion.⁹⁴ Aside from Wonosobo, the District of Bojonegoro is also considered as an open district. Bojonegoro has been deemed successful in implementing human rights principles.

In addition to the local governments, a number of universities have also declared their institutions as anti radicalism and terrorism.⁹⁵ The leadership of universities, including Islamic Religious Universities has also participated in monitoring their students to prevent them from being lured into radicalism. Among the measures taken are establishing a close relationship with the students. This closeness will make the students more open, communicative and free to express their opinions. The students need to be given ample opportunity to pursue their highest achievements, and each achievement should be given appreciation by the leadership of the University. In this way, there will be no room for under-achieving activities.

⁹³ Zainal Abidin, dkk. *Peran Kabupaten/Kota dalam Mengatasi Intoleransi, radikalisme dan Ekstremisme Dengan Kekerasan*. p. 21. See also <http://www.jabarprov.go.id/index.php/news/22309/2017/04/04/Pemda-dan-NU-Bersinergi-Cegah-Paham> (July 17, 2018).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ See East Java Universities Declaration of Anti Radicalism and Terrorism in <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/perguruan-tinggi-se-jawa-timur-deklarasi-anti-radikalisme-dan-terorisme/3931135.html> (July 17, 2018).

There needs to be clear guidelines and code of ethics to be implemented consistently in all student activities, so that all their activities in and out of the campus are monitored, controlled, credible and accountable. Requirements should be put in place for use of all facilities on campus, including use of the prayer room and mosque, in order to avoid misuse of those facilities. No less important is to evaluate implementation and content of class subjects and religious classes, whether intra-curricular as well as extra-curricular, so as to avoid infiltration of intolerant religious views. Lastly, students must be encouraged to take active part in religious activities that reflect the moderate views (*wasatiyyah*) of Islam.

Those various approaches are known as a conception of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVA) or later also known as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). In the context of Indonesia, this is a relatively new concept because the approach used so far are security measures with the enactment of the law on Terrorism. Non-security measures are used in a limited way, such as through a deradicalization program, and establishing the BNPT. The most important element of the CVE approach requires sufficient collaboration between all related parties, whether the government at the national as well as the regional level, other State agencies, in international cooperation and with civil society roles. In the framework of this approach, the role of Regional Governments and local civil society organizations becomes very important to ensure implementation of prevention of violent extremism at the local level.

In the past few years, CVE has become an important focus of some CSOs in Indonesia. They also provide assistance for families of terrorists, convicted terrorists, and terrorist family deportees. It is difficult to deny, however, that mitigating the issue of terrorists at a later stage does not have much of an influence in view of the increasing trend of intolerance. This intolerance trend has become a fertile field and easy target for terrorists to recruit new members and form new networks.

Analysis and Conclusion

Indonesia is facing a situation of increasing intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism. A number of studies have reiterated that since the reforms era, the main problem that was prevalent before the intensification of terrorism acts, was intolerance.⁹⁶ Sidney Jones in fact concluded that intolerant groups have transformed into terrorists.⁹⁷ The existence of these intolerant organizations has given rise to concern that they will contribute to the emergence of many more terrorist groups. The latest data shows a greater cause for concern for increasing intolerance, even at the High School student level.

A number of regions have shown a worrying trend in intolerance followed by rising political identity.⁹⁸ Young people who are exposed to religious information filled with suspicion and hatred tend to reject or oppose other detested groups having their citizenship rights fulfilled, and justify and support radical actions and movements.⁹⁹ During 2016, the Police have handled 170 terrorism cases, an increase by two folds the number compared to 2015 where there were 82 cases.¹⁰⁰ This situation is a threat to the people's life, to democracy and protection of human rights.

⁹⁶ According to data from Social Progress Imperative, the intolerance score in Indonesia from 2014 to 2017 continues to increase. In 2014 the intolerance score was 27,9 and in 2017 it was 35,47. This figure was taken from five components namely: tolerance towards immigrants, tolerance towards LGBT people, discrimination and violence against minorities, tolerance in religion, and the community security network. From those five sub-components, the lowest score was for religious tolerance at a score of 2,0. See, "Checking Data; Is It True That Religious Intolerance Increasing?" in <https://tirto.id/benarkah-intoleransi-antar-umat-beragama-meningkat-cEPz> (July 19, 2018). Long before that, violent intolerance was against the Ahmadiyah, Syiah and other groups happened in Indonesia. See further the Human Rights Index released by the Setara Institute since 2011-2016 in this page: <http://setara-institute.org/category/publikasi/indeks-ham/>

⁹⁷ Jones Sidney. 2015. *Sisi Gelap Demokrasi: Kekerasan Masyarakat Madani di Indonesia*. Jakarta: PUSAD Paramadina. pp. 4-5. See also Ismail Hasani and Naipospos, Bonar Tigor (Ed). 2005. *Dari Radikalisme Menuju Terorisme*. Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara. p. 13.

⁹⁸ Arga Sumantri, *Survey: Intoleransi di Jakarta Mengkhawatirkan*, *Metrotvnews*, March, 2017 <<http://pilkada.metrotvnews.com/news-pilkada/4bar90Zk-survei-intoleransi-di-jakarta-mengkhawatirkan>>

⁹⁹ Survey Wahid Foundation, '86 Aktivist Rohis Ingin Berjihad', *Berita Satu*, February, 2017 <<http://www.beritasatu.com/aktualitas/414934-survei-wahid-foundation-86-aktivis-rohis-ingin-berjihad-ke-suriyah.html>>

¹⁰⁰ Rappler, 'https://www.rappler.com/indonesia/data-dan-fakta/156900-daftar-aksi-rencana-teror-indonesia-2016

The fact that intolerance is gaining momentum is proven by results of some studies, like the research by PPIM that reveals 51,1 percent of high school/university students have intolerant views. Those who also stated they would be willing to carry out intolerant acts number 34.1 percent. The students also have a radical side which could be problematic in that the study shows 34,3 percent of the students have radical views and those who are willing to carry out radical acts are 7.0 percent.¹⁰¹

In addition, the Alvara Institute also reveals a high level of intolerance among professionals, whether they work for the government, in the private sector or for State-owned Enterprises. As much as 40,5 percent of Civil Servants agree to an Islamic State while the remaining 59.5 percent stated they didn't agree. In regards to employees of private companies, as much as 34,8 percent stated their agreement of an Islamic State and the rest said they did not agree. In State-owned Enterprises, the majority or 83.5 percent said they didn't agree to an Islamic State while the remaining 16,5 percent said they agreed.¹⁰² Other potential for radicalism comes from views on the type of the State. As much as 16 percent of professionals stated that a caliphate state would be the ideal form for Indonesia compared to its current status as a Unitarian State (NKRI). This potential for radicalism is even more reinforced by the agreement for a jihad to establish an Islamic State or caliphate by as many as 19,6 percent.¹⁰³

Another condition that may raise cause for concern is that terrorists are very actively using internet-based digital media to spread propaganda content in a fast and massive manner. Aside from hate speeches attacking pro-democracy groups, terrorist propaganda also spread hoax content with the aim to generate public sympathy and support. Including to recruit new terrorists. The younger generation has become the target of terrorist propaganda in the digital world. This group are the largest users of the Internet. The Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers (APJII) has found that 75,5 percent of internet users in 2016 were aged between 10 to 24 years old. This shows that terrorists are targeting the younger generation in a massive way, and based on the survey done by the PPIM on radicalism among young people, this is truly a worrying phenomenon.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ See the survey by the PPIM Research Center in 2017, *Api Dalam Sekam; Keberagamaan Muslim Gen-Z* (Burning Embers, Diversity of Gen-Z Muslims) p. 8.

¹⁰² Alvara Research Center. 2017. *Potensi Radikalisme dikalangan Profesional Indonesia*. p. 37

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 41 – 43.

¹⁰⁴ See PPIM Research Center. 2017. *Api Dalam Sekam; Keberagamaan Muslim Gen-Z*. p. 8

Radicalism is a process initiated from an idea and teaching that begins at the individual level. In this context, early detection by involving women can be very effective. This is based on the fact that women play a vital role in the family, particularly in shaping the character of the children. Women also offer different perspectives when trying to find a solution to problems.¹⁰⁵ They often employ a more gentle approach compared to men. This is despite a study on gender that says that feminist perspective is aimed more at justification on a patriarchic culture that emphasizes on men's physical strength and their limited capacity in terms of feelings (negative masculinity) as well as a recognition on women's limited physical power and the strength of their feelings (positive femininity).¹⁰⁶

Women are very effective weapons against terrorism when the strategy used is a community-based one. In addition, the wife can also be seen as an agent to strengthen the spirit of nationality through the values of tolerance. They need to be empowered as actors to improve security and for early detection through a community-based program relying on them to monitor the media and other campaign facilities. There are at least three things that need to be done in order that women can become agents of peace. **First**, reduce gender inequality and give women a larger role to participate in various social activities. Reducing support for radicalism is the ultimate effort to counter the threat of terrorism and its source, which is extremism ideology. Strengthening messages of non-violence and important measures to the community's strong resilience needs to be ensured. Further implementation should be in the form of policies to promote gender equality and elimination of discrimination which can create a conducive environment to reduce support for extremist ideology.¹⁰⁷

Secondly, strengthen multi-sectoral well being to prevent the emergence of radicalism. Well-being within the family is mostly a burden placed on women's shoulders. Involvement of women in these efforts can be applied in the multi-sectors of life such as strengthening the economy, family education, religion, and the law, and community-based information, as well as early detection. This is because the root cause of terrorism is personal alienation and inferiority complex such as poverty, so that developing the economy is a must. There is a positive link in the success of deradicalization through improved economy based on education and gender equality.

¹⁰⁵ Lisa R. Wulan. 2010. *Enhancing the Role of Women in Indonesia to Counter Terrorism*, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Paul, Amar. 2011. *Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of "Men in Crisis," Industries of Gender in Revolution*, Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 7.3. pp. 36-70.

¹⁰⁷ Rohan Gunaratna and Karunya Jayasena. 2011. *Global Support for al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden: an Increase or Decrease?*, UNISCI Discussion Papers 25, pp. 10-16.

Third, turning women into locomotives at the front line in moderate religious education, especially beginning from, but not limited to, the family environment. Morocco can be made as an example on counter-terrorism measures based on education to curb the spread of radicalism. The Moroccan government created a moderate religious group by training and educating women to develop an education model with a more moderate understanding of religion. The women who have been trained are then assigned to work in communities, mosques and religious classes in the City of Rabat and Casablanca.¹⁰⁸

Another factor to take into consideration is the new terrorism trend that is trans-national, global, and offensive by developing privatization of violence. The target is to build a psychological infrastructure on the public to force them to radically change their behavior. Eradication of trans-national terrorism gives a new dimension of which the process to resolve conflicts become more complex. To overcome the issue of trans-national terrorism, there needs to be a collaboration among several countries. First, decision makers must believe and be able to convince the public that the countering terrorism is not a battle against religion.

The government is very aware of those challenges and is determined to take joint measures to overcome the issue. President Joko Widodo stated that Indonesia is currently facing a challenge in the views and actions that pose a threat to our diversity, including the ideology that is in contradiction to Pancasila.¹⁰⁹ The Vice-President, Jusuf Kalla, has conveyed the same message. In his opinion, Indonesia is currently experiencing global radicalism symptoms.¹¹⁰ The president hopes that all parties actively promote synergy between democracy, religion and tolerance, and support stability and peace for the welfare of the people. The president emphasizes the importance of carrying out a 'collective action' to counter violent extremism brought about by global injustice of which the impact is terrorism in various parts of the world, aside from Indonesia.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Wulan, *Enhancing the Role of Women*. p.10.

¹⁰⁹ BBC Indonesia, *Jokowi: Ada Ideologi Tak Toleran yang Mengancam Indonesia*, BBC Indonesia (June 1, 2017 <<http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-40116505>>

¹¹⁰ Teguh Firmansyah, 'Wapres: Indonesia Alami Radikalisme Global', *Republika*, 23 Desember 2016 <<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/politik/16/12/23/oindqk377-wapres-indonesia-alami-gejala-radikalisme-global>>

¹¹¹ Arlina Arshad, Indonesian president Joko Widodo urges 'collective action' to fight violent extremism, *The Strait Times*, November 1, 2016 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia-south-east-asia/indonesian-president-joko-widodo-urges-collective-action-to-fight-violent-extremism>>. UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, December 24, 2015, A/70/67

Other countries are facing the same situation as Indonesia. The UN has declared that violent extremism groups have brought about a situation of insecurity and conflict in various parts of the world, thus undermining collective efforts to maintain peace and security, sustainable development, protection of human rights, and promotion of rule of law.¹¹² Violent extremism poses a threat to the fulfillment of human rights, such as the right to live, the right to freedom, the right to security, freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion.¹¹³

One of the characteristics of today's terrorism is the intensity of a religious dimension. This brings up two general arguments related to the root causes of the emergence of terrorism. The first argument that seems quite dominant explains that poverty, injustice, and social inequality are fundamental problems that result in a feeling of helplessness and prompt groups who feel marginalized to fight back, and in the process the issue of "religious element" is frequently used as a trigger for rebellion. The second argument, although seemingly less popular, is that misinterpretation of religious teachings is the factor that prompts a small number of groups to carry out acts of terror. Terrorism uses religion as a justification for rebellion and violent acts. This attitude is an impact of globalization, widespread interaction and interdependence. In the same way, the anti-modernity stance of radical groups is believed to have emerged from a cultural condition eroded by globalization, particularly in terms of freedom for women. Another factor is weakening traditional values that is seen as disadvantageous to the interest of established groups.

As a consequence, the Indonesian government must find the root causes of terrorism, including finding a way to manage internal conflicts that have never been resolved and political discontent that has been going on for a long time. Aside from being caused by internal and local factors, this new form of terrorism is also triggered by sentiments of anti-West, anti-modernity and anti-globalist, with the desire to restore a messianic teaching in this modern century. Some studies show, in many countries, radicalism and violent extremism are driven by many factors, among which are: social-economic injustice, so many cases of marginalization and discrimination cases, poor governance which is evident from the quality of public services, a high level of violation of human rights, weak law enforcement, and continuous conflicts that are never resolved.⁹ Experience in managing the threat of violent extremism requires a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond the use of military intelligence and law enforcement mechanisms.¹⁰

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

Prevention of intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism must be done through policies, programs and interventions that are aimed at preventing terrorists from achieving their objectives by using violence as well as to avoid a radicalization process through politics, culture, and religion. Building a contextual and local peace using an open approach is one of the methods applied, aside from legal punishment for actors of hate speech and terrorism. There is also needs to be an ongoing dialogue with all elements of society, whether religious leaders, local leaders, youth groups, women groups, executives as well as legislators, and law enforcers in efforts to resolve conflict and countering activities with intolerant potential. One reasonable and promising strategy is by establishing a society that is inclusive, pluralist and just, and based on full respect of human rights, and ensuring there is ample economic opportunity for all.

In addition to the government, the civil society should also take measures to counter terrorist acts. Among the civil society who are actively voicing their stance are the NU and Muhammadiyah. These two largest Muslim organizations have the opinion that countering terrorism will not have much success if only the terrorists are prosecuted. This is because intolerance and radicalism is still rife in society. There needs to be counter-ideology measures. These two largest Muslim organizations have long offered an understanding of Islam that is serene and peaceful, based on *rahmatan lil alamin*, which is in contrast with the views of jihadists a la Osama and his followers. In addition to those two organizations, a number of civil society organizations also play a role in advocacy, urging the people to adopt an open and tolerant stance.

Finally, we have to admit that during the transition period towards democracy, the stability of our nation has been tested by the numerous conflicts that have emerged. Based on experience of some countries that have gone through a transition period towards democracy after the fall of an authoritarian regime, becoming a democratic nation did not take place automatically. Instead of achieving democratization, what they faced was in fact a new kind of authoratarianism which was no less authorotarian than the previous regime. In fact, even in an established politcial structure, the transition period will give rise to a temporary legimacy crisis. If the transition process is not strengthened by consolidation, it is very possible that the legitimacy crisis will be never-ending. Rampant religion-based violent conflicts that have been going on since post-reforms to now, is a manifestation of past conflicts that have finally found room to flourish. Decision makers must believe and be able to convince the people that the war against terrorism is not a war against religion.

Therefore, the state must focus on implementing a comprehensive counter terrorism strategy and combine it with measures to manage pluralism within a human rights framework in a systematic manner as a solution to overcome radicalism and terrorism. Merely relying on ad-hoc responses that just prioritize a security aspect are clearly no longer sufficient. The State must be firm in enforcing the law when radicalism-based violence happens. The Pancasila and the Constitution should be the principal source of reference. The Constitution is the main reference. Law enforcers must dare to take a neutral and fair stance, although it may be in contradiction to the interest of the majority. Both stances can only be ascertained when the elite authorities and decision makers have a comprehensive understanding of religious teachings, and also have a strong commitment to national values and the local wisdom of Indonesia.

Policy Recommendations

1. Reassert the government's dignity (executive, judicative and legislative) by upholding values of Pancasila (the State Ideology), the Constitution, democracy and fulfillment of human rights.
2. Support economic actors, ensure social justice and welfare for all in the hope that those efforts can reduce poverty and prevent increasing social-economic inequality.
3. Strengthen the cooperation network between state and civil society organizations -including women's groups and youth- through dialogues for nation building, cultural dialogues and inter-faith dialogues.
4. More open discussions and dialogues with radical groups in order to gradually achieve a mutual understanding between diverse population.
5. More civics education programs based on principles of diversity, tolerance and pluralism. And more civics education efforts through moderate and family-based religious education.
6. Increase number of media that offer news in a peaceful way, are credible, pro women and vulnerable groups, uphold principles of equality, justice and peace.
7. Widespread dissemination on religious interpretation that is humanist, pluralist and compatible with universal values of humanity, and in alignment with the State Ideology and Constitution.
8. Empower the people so that they dare to speak up about injustice, intolerance and discrimination, and encourage them to actively promote a culture of peace. Women empowerment is also a key point in this effort, particularly the wives can also be seen as an agent for peace.
9. Encourage regional governments to reinforce democracy through concrete policies to minimize discrimination and intolerant practices. They must have zero tolerance for any kind of militancy and extremism.

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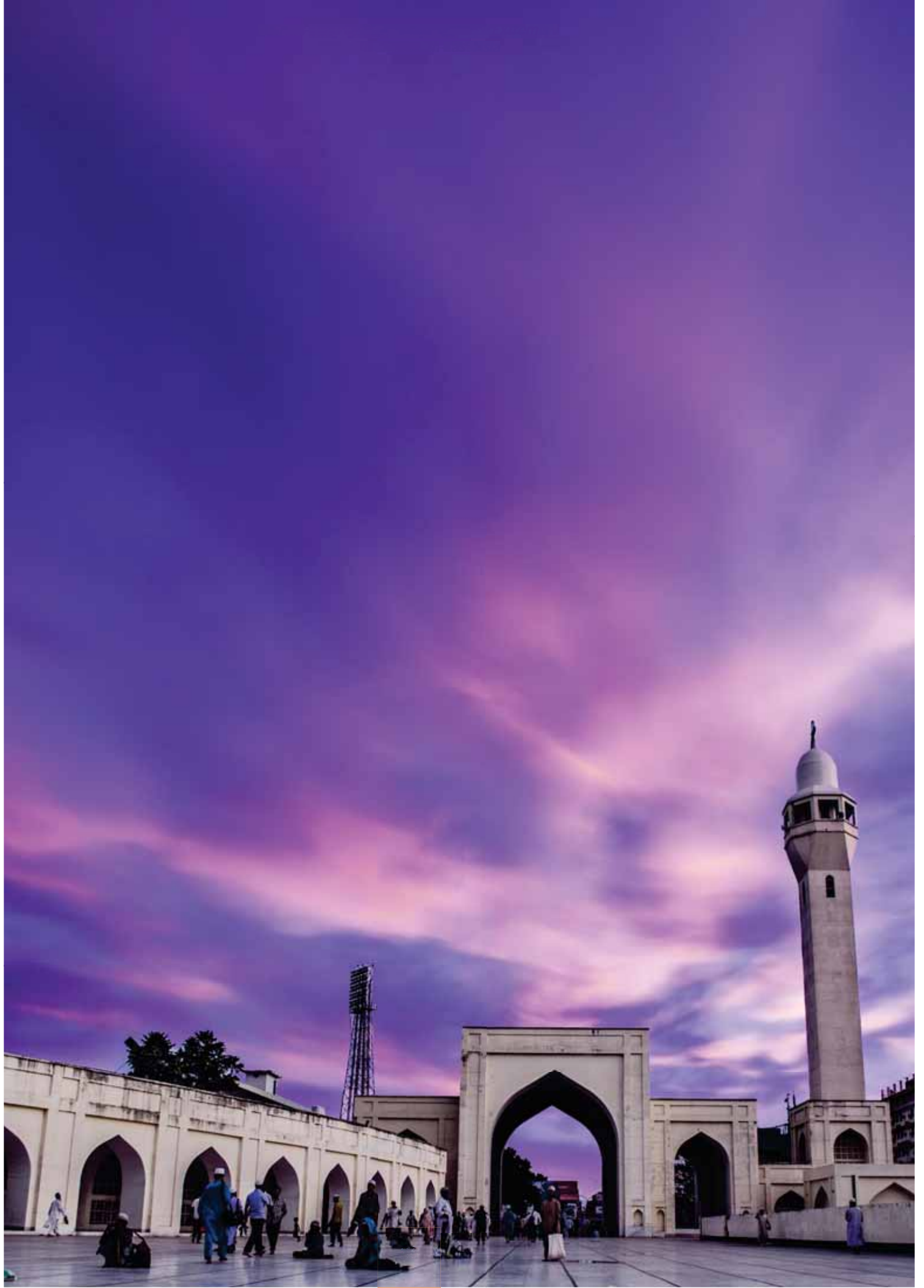
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BANGLADESH

Sajid Amit





Macroeconomic Overview

With a GDP growth of above 7% for the third consecutive year, Bangladesh is undergoing a transformation from low-income to middle-income economy¹¹⁴. The country has undergone a healthy spate of urbanization, with 35.8% of the population currently residing in urban areas. This urbanization is occurring at a 5-year rate (estimated over the 2015-2020 period) of 3.19%.¹¹⁵

Despite this impressive growth, an estimated 25% of Bangladeshis are still living below poverty line. The current poverty levels in Bangladesh are still higher when compared with other countries, except India, in the South Asian region.¹¹⁶ Access to health, education, employment opportunities and basic infrastructure for the masses still demand significant investment and attention from the government.

This has stimulated a debate on whether the impressive economic growth has been inclusive and if enough stable employment opportunities are being created for a large labor force. The current earnings gap between workers and owners is widening at an accelerating rate in Bangladesh's business sector. It is even worse for the female labor force, who constitute around 45% of the population.¹¹⁷ Due to non-inclusive growth, lack of employment opportunities and climate change issues, migration to urban areas has become inevitable for those escaping rural poverty. It also has forced thousands of men and women to seek employment in the Gulf and in South-east Asia.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/gdp-growth-in-bangladesh-economy-marches-towards-record-7.65-percent-in-2018-1557706>

¹¹⁵ Bangladesh - urbanization 2016 | Statistic. (n.d.). Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/455782/urbanization-in-bangladesh/>

¹¹⁶ <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/EDIG-Research-Paper-No.-1.pdf>

¹¹⁷ Yousufzai, Fahim Ahmad. "The Cry for Inclusive Economic Growth in Bangladesh." The Asia Foundation, 16 Nov. 2016, www.asiafoundation.org/2016/11/16/cry-inclusive-economic-growth-bangladesh/

Demographics

As of July 2018, Bangladesh has an estimated 2018 population of 166.37 million, up from the 2013 estimate of 156.5 million, ranking as the 9th most populous country in the world.¹¹⁸ Through the 1960s and 1970s, the birth rate ballooned, from 2.73% in 1960 to 3.10% in 1970. However, it steadily decreased from 1980s onward, from 2.70% in 1980, to 1.03% in 2018.¹¹⁹ Bangladesh has a young population having a median age of 26 years, with 60% of the population aged below 30 years. Males represent 50.41% and female represent (49.59%) of the population.¹²⁰

Almost 98% of the population are ethnic Bengalis, with the remaining 2% made up from Biharis and other ethnic tribes. In terms of religious segmentation, the Muslim community represent the majority (89.1%)- Sunni Muslims constitute 83.4% while Shia and Ahmadiyya Islam collectively constitute 5.6%, followed by the Hindu community (10%) and Christians, Buddhists and other religions (0.9% collectively).¹²¹

The population size of the non-Muslims or religious minorities has steadily declined over time. It has shrunk from 29% at the time of independence (1971), to 14% in the 1990s to 10% at the present.¹²² The decrease in percentage of in non-Muslim population can be attributed to the explosive population growth among Muslim families in the 1980s. Other contributing factors include contested land rights and property issues¹²³ of non-Muslim population and less favorable environment that celebrates religious diversity. While Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha are celebrated with great aplomb, the same opportunity is not always afforded to Hindu festivals. In 2014, for instance, at least 33 Hindu religious structures were vandalized before the Durga Puja.¹²⁴ Such incidents of targeted violence, persecution and harassment on minorities, including Hindu, Buddhist and indigenous communities, have forced many non-Muslims to emigrate out of Bangladesh.

¹¹⁸ Bangladesh Population 2018. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2018, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population/>

¹¹⁹ Bangladesh Population 2018. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2018, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population/>

¹²⁰ Worldometer. (n.d.). Bangladesh Population (LIVE). Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/>

¹²¹ "Official Census Results 2011 page xiii". Bangladesh Government. Retrieved 2015-04-17

¹²² "Bangladesh's Hindus number 1.7 crore, up by 1 p.c. in a year: report". The Hindu. 23 June 2016.

¹²³ Riaz, A. (2004). *God willing: The politics of Islamism in Bangladesh*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

¹²⁴ Ahmad, Tariq. *Bangladesh: Treatment of Religious Minorities*. The Law Library of Congress, 2016, Bangladesh: Treatment of Religious Minorities.

There was also a prolonged conflict between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (also known as United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini, regarding the autonomy and the land rights of several indigenous tribes of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The area is home to half a million of indigenous people, who have suffered ethnic cleansing since the 1960s and 1970s. Thousands of indigenous families were displaced from their lands to build reservoirs and hydroelectric dams. Discrimination often escalated into violence. This eventually triggered an armed conflict against the military rulers, and later, with the democratic GoB. Although the conflict ended in 1997 with a peace accord that recognized the land rights of the indigenous communities, the accord remains largely unimplemented. In fact, the existence of indigenous communities is still not acknowledged in the Constitution of Bangladesh. To this day, spates of killings occur as Bengalis covet the land occupied by the indigenous communities across CHT.¹²⁵

Culture and Media

Since the 1980s, Bangladesh has experienced a surge in imported popular culture, especially from India. Indian movies and television shows have dominated the popular consciousness as their Bangladeshi counterparts are inferior and cheaply produced in comparison. In the early 2000s, a reactionary wave of Muslim television content and channels were launched in Bangladesh. Notable amongst them was Peace TV, owned by televangelist Zakir Naik. Peace TV was banned in 2016 immediately following the Holey Artisan attack, after a video surfaced of one of the attackers claiming to be inspired by Naik's speeches.¹²⁶

Naik, who was banned earlier from entrance to the UK and Canada, denied any direct ties to the extremists, claiming that almost 50% of Bangladesh follows his teachings and thus it's not unusual for anyone to claim to be his fan.¹²⁷ However, India has also banned Peace TV on similar grounds, as the Government of India found Naik's talks and speeches to be highly objectionable.

¹²⁵ Thomson Reuters Foundation. "20 Years after Peace Accord, Indigenous Bangladeshis Still Attacked over Land." Dhaka Tribune, 18 Sept. 2017, www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/09/18/20-years-peace-accord-indigenous-bangladeshis-still-attacked-land/

¹²⁶ Habib, H. (2016, September 20). Bangladesh bans televangelist Zakir Naik's Peace TV. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Bangladesh-bans-televangelist-Zakir-Naik's-Peace-TV/article14481608.ece>

¹²⁷ "Bangladesh to Ban Islamic TV Channel, Peace TV." BBC News, BBC, 11 July 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36761486.

In Bangladesh, most of the youth get their news from social media. As of June 2018, there are 87.8 million internet subscribers in Bangladesh, accounting for over 53% of the population.¹²⁸ According to a survey by South Asia Centre for Media in Development, 92% secondary school students use mobile phones to gain their news, 55% use only Facebook for news and 46% visit online portals. However, only 6% could name three such portals.¹²⁹

Social media is a common tool for spreading misinformation. At the moment, little is being done to counter the spread of fake news. The practice of opening fake profiles to slander individuals is common: in 2017, 9 lakh fake Bangladeshi Facebook profiles were suspended after the government requested Facebook to investigate the matter. Of the three crore Facebook users active in Bangladesh the government estimated that at least three per cent of these accounts were fake, possibly being used by militants to provoke extremist acts.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ BTRC. "Internet Subscribers in Bangladesh June, 2018. | BTRC." Internet Subscribers in Bangladesh August, 2014 | BTRC, 1 July 2018, www.btrc.gov.bd/content/internet-subscribers-bangladesh-june-2018.

¹²⁹ Staff Correspondent. "Access to News: Most Students Use Mobile, Social Media." The Daily Star, The Daily Star, 16 July 2018, www.thedailystar.net/backpage/they-are-all-about-the-social-media-1606615.

¹³⁰ Khokon, S. H. (2017, April 17). Dhaka: 9 lakh fake Facebook accounts suspended in Bangladesh after government requests crackdown. Retrieved August 12, 2018, from <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/bangladesh-facebook-fake-accounts-971897-2017-04-17>

Domestic Violence Extremism in Bangladesh

Current Scenario

The divide between the secular thinkers and conservative Muslims in Bangladesh has further deepened with the recent killings of the bloggers and publishers. It is a widely held belief that Islamist extremism has been rising in Bangladesh, historically perceived to be among the more tolerant Muslim nations.

A series of extremist attacks marked 2016 as especially traumatic for Bangladesh and has put the country on the map of global hotspots of violent extremism. The year's first attack took place in February through the killing of a Hindu priest. Thereafter, secular online activists, university teachers, gay rights activist, even a Hindu tailor was killed in the following months.¹³¹ In May 2016, a Sufi Muslim spiritual leader, a Buddhist monk and a village doctor were also killed, successively, on 8th, 14th and 20th May respectively. A Christian grocer who occasionally worked for the church, a Hindu college teacher and a Hindu priest were killed on July 1st, June 5th, June 18th and July 1st respectively.

The infamous Holy Artisan attack during Ramadan, on July 1, claimed 29 lives, including 20 hostages (18 foreigners and 2 locals). A special commando team, consisting of Bangladesh Army servicemen, rescued 13 people before executing Operation Thunderbolt. The six gunmen were killed by security forces after a 12-hour siege, while a seventh suspected attacker was taken into police custody.¹³²

Three of the perpetrators have been identified as Nibras Islam, Mir Samih Mubashir and Rohan Imtiaz. Nibras Islam, recognized by his classmates, belonged to an upper-class family that own two houses in Dhaka. He previously returned from Malaysia, where he was enrolled in Australia-based Monash University.¹³³ A casual skimming of Nibras' social media activities reveal that he had a breakup in 2014 and at one point tweeted mournfully about a broken relationship.¹³⁴ Young adults are quite vulnerable at such ages, especially while recovering from heartbreaks.

¹³¹ Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS). (2017). *Local Drivers and Dynamics of Youth Radicalisation in Bangladesh* (Rep.). Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS).

¹³² BBC Staff Correspondent. (2016, July 02). Bangladesh siege: Twenty killed at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36692613>

¹³³ Kalra, A. (2016, July 05). Heartbreak, selfies and soccer: The life of a Bangladesh cafe killer. Retrieved July 12, 2018, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-attack-militants/heartbreak-selfies-and-soccer-the-life-of-a-bangladesh-cafe-killer-idUSKCN0ZK1LS>

¹³⁴ Kalra, A. (2016, July 05). Heartbreak, selfies and soccer: The life of a Bangladesh cafe killer. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-attack-militants/heartbreak-selfies-and-soccer-the-life-of-a-bangladesh-cafe-killer-idUSKCN0ZK1LS>

Tactics laid out in a popular Al Qaeda manual, "A Course in the Art of Recruiting" indicate how and why extremists target young, lonely people who are non-religious. Although Al Qaeda and ISIS are distinct and separate, ISIS recruiters have been observed to follow many of the basic guidelines, looking to manipulate those who are searching for meaning in their lives. These are often students, citing universities as "a place of isolation for a period of four, five, or six years and is full of youths (full of zeal, vigor, and anti-government sentiments)".¹³⁵

Andaleeb Ahmed was also present in Malaysia from 2012 to 2015, before moving to Istanbul, according to a source in the Malaysian Police. Rohan Imtiaz, meanwhile, was a local university student who disappeared eight months before the attack. He was the son of a prominent Awami League politician.¹³⁶ On the day of Eid-ul-Fitr on July 7, another militant group tried to launch an attack in Sholakia Eidgah, Kishoreganj district. Two police officers, a bystander woman and one suspected militant were killed, while at least 12 other people were injured.¹³⁷

In April 2014, 10 Hindu individuals were injured and thirty-two homes in Comilla districts were looted because a Muslim teacher, impersonating a Hindu teacher, created a fake Facebook account and posted derogatory comments about the Prophet Mohammad.¹³⁸ However, in the aftermath of the attack, the police arrested sixteen people, including the Muslim teacher. The Buddhist minority has also suffered numerous indignities in recent years. In September 2012, more than 20 Buddhist temples and 40 homes in Ramu sub-district were burned and looted by angry Muslim mob. The attack was instigated by a false image of a burnt Qur'an that was posted on social media.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Engel, P. (2015, July 02). Here's the manual that Al Qaeda and now ISIS use to brainwash people online. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-manual-al-qaeda-and-now-isis-use-to-brainwash-people-online-2015-7>

¹³⁶ Ap, T. (2016, July 10). Politician identifies son as Dhaka terrorist. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.cnn.com/2016/07/06/asia/dhaka-attacker-politicians-son/index.html>

¹³⁷ Bangladesh's Fight Against Militancy in 2016, The Daily Sun, 30 December, 2016, www.daily-sun.com/printversion/Ban-fight-against-militancy-in-2016

¹³⁸ Ahmad, Tariq. Bangladesh: Treatment of Religious Minorities. The Law Library of Congress, 2016, Bangladesh: Treatment of Religious Minorities.

¹³⁹ The Associated Press. (2012, October 01). Bangladeshi Buddhists attacked over photo of burned Qur'an | CBC News. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/bangladeshi-buddhists-attacked-over-photo-of-burned-qur-an-1.1223650>

How Did We Get Here?

What can be termed as political Islamism has been a staple feature of Muslim nations since the advent of the religion in seventh century. Islam gained a solid foothold in Bangladesh by the seventeenth century, through both trade and preaching by Sufis and saints. Although Bangladesh was founded on the twin bedrocks of religious harmony and cultural diversity, in recent years this balance has come under attack from violent extremism.

During the colonial period, three major historical events that had some tangible impact on the socio-political landscape in Bangladesh include the Fara'idi Movement led by Haji Shari'at Allah (1781–1840); the Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya movement led by Mir Nisar Ali alias Titu Mir (1782–1831); and the Khilafat movement led by Indian and Bengali ulamas (1918–1924).¹⁴⁰ Later in 1930s, Muslim religious nationalism flared once again rising in conjunction with the anti-colonial movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi. The 'Two Nation Theory, advocated by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and popularized by Muslim League, lead to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947.¹⁴¹

The partition was followed by the suppression of the Bengali's demand for incorporating Bengali as a national language of Pakistan and the culmination of the language movement in East Pakistan, which eventually triggered the Independence War in 1971.¹⁴² After gaining independence, Bangladesh turned into a secular state under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership, also the leader of the Awami League party. The 1972 Constitution placed importance on secularism as a guiding principle, alongside other principles such as democracy, nationalism, and socialism. The Mujib regime was, however, ended by a series of coups and counter-coups until General Ziaur Rahman emerged as the new ruler in 1976.¹⁴³

Zia removed secularism and emphasized Islamic ideology by amending the constitution. However, Zia himself was also assassinated in an abortive coup in May 1981. The next major leader to emerge was General H. M. Ershad, who usurped rule through a bloodless coup in March 1982. Ershad incorporated Islam as the state religion in the constitution.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Sobhan, F., Kabir, M. H., Sobhan, F., & Banik, A. (2016). *Towards Developing a Counter-Narrative to the Islamist Extremist Narrative in Bangladesh* (Rep.). Dhaka: Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

¹⁴¹ Barakat, A. (2005). "Economics of fundamentalism and the growth of political Islam in Bangladesh."

¹⁴² Nasim, F. (2013). *Religious Extremism and Terrorist Activities in Bangladesh: An Analysis* (Master's thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka). Dhaka: Dhaka University Institutional Repository.

¹⁴³ Ledbetter, L. (1981, May 31). *Ziaur Rahman Was Strict Leader Who Tried To Give Nation Direction*. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/31/obituaries/ziaur-rahman-was-strict-leader-who-tried-to-give-nation-direction.html>

¹⁴⁴ Colin Campbell and Special To the New York Times. (1982, March 29). *BANGLADESH PICTURE: NEW LEADER, SAME PROBLEMS*; News Analysis. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from

Since the fall of Ershad and the resurgence of democracy in the early 1990s, the country has been governed by two main parties — Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of General Zia, and Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Khaleda's regime (1991 to 1996, and 2001 to 2006) practiced a more lukewarm form of Zia's policies, frequently stressing Islamic symbolization. Since the 2005 mass bombing by Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), BNP also dealt with increased counter-terrorist threats throughout the rest of its reign.

Hasina's demonstrated a neutral attitude during the first regime (1996–2001) and took a consequential shift towards secularization during the second regime (2009–2014) by forming a coalition with the left. However, as the next parliamentary election draws near (due in December 2018), Awami League is trying to develop stronger ties with Islamist parties, with plans to form a polls-time alliance and bring like-minded Islamic clerics under one umbrella.¹⁴⁵

The dominant political narratives, which still revolve around the 1971 war, continue to polarize the country. This brand of divisive politics, reflected starkly through society and culture, means that there is more than enough room for narratives of violent extremism to slip through the cracks.

Globalization of the Jihad

The process of global radicalization has evolved over the years. Successive generations of extremism have contributed to the spread of radicalization, building upon its collective military might and experience, as well as the extending reach of its global network.

When Afghanistan, another largely Sunni country nearby, moved from Soviet influence to Soviet control, in 1979, Saudi Arabia decided to intercede as the global defender of Muslims. The USA soon engaged in an alliance with Saudi Arabia, seeing the nation's strategic and symbolic importance as a useful weapon against its Soviet rivals. Their joint funding and training eventually produced the al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Al-Qaeda affiliates spread across the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and South Asia. The successful anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan was now seen as divine confirmation that Jihad was necessary for Islam's global ascendance.¹⁴⁶

<https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/29/world/bangladesh-picture-new-leader-same-problems-news-analysis.html>

¹⁴⁵ Rahman, Fazlur Raju (2018, June 30), Awami League takes initiatives to tap into Islamist voter banks. Retrieved July 18, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/06/30/awami-league-takes-initiatives-to-tap-into-islamist-voter-banks>

¹⁴⁶ Mengli, A., Yusufzai, M., & Bruton, F. (2018, August 06). Taliban 2.0: Militants talk peace with U.S., but past can't be erased. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/taliban-2-0-militants-talk-peace-u-s-past-can-n897221>

By 1988, two men, Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, established what is now known as al-Qaeda. Al Qaeda's growth from 1993 to 2001 allowed them to increase the pace, complexity, and lethality of their plots.¹⁴⁷ This culminated, tragically, in 9/11 event. In the aftermath of 9/11, the world's governments raced to issue anti-terrorism laws and take other preventive measures. However, despite two-decade long wars, which was followed by the rise and decline of ISIS, Jihadism continues to survive, and periodically thrive.

Some analysts believe that the anti-West discourse of several Muslim-majority regimes also helped disseminate Jihadism. By portraying the West as a villainous power that has long wronged Muslims and supported Israel, these regimes have made its citizens susceptible to the dangerous allure of Jihadism.¹⁴⁸ Long-lasting insurgencies, such as those in Thailand and the recent Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, are usually characterized as independence movements, particularly in the case of insurgency in southern Philippines.¹⁴⁹ However, since 9/11, the War on Terror and most recently, the rise of ISIS, have acquired a more religious undercurrent. The roots of these insurgencies are different, yet similar in many countries.

In Indonesia, Saudi Arabia has invested directly in charities and institutions for proselytization purposes since the 1960s. In 2017 alone, 300 scholarships were offered to exemplary students in the Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM) 2017 examination.¹⁵⁰ These investments occur in the form of constructing mosques, funding preachers and subsidizing generous scholarships. Such investments have changed Islam in Indonesia, making its nature more conservative, fundamentalist and intolerant.

¹⁴⁷ Wander, A. (2008, July 12). A history of terror: Al-Qaeda 1988-2008. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>

¹⁴⁸ Bartlett, J. (2012, September 13). Conspiracy Theories Fuel Anti-Western Sentiment in the Middle East. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/09/12/does-mideast-democracy-complicate-diplomacy/conspiracy-theories-fuel-anti-western-sentiment-in-the-middle-east>

¹⁴⁹ Higginbottom, J. (2017, December 14). Radical Islam is becoming a growing problem in Southeast Asia. Here's how it happened. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/southeast-asias-growing-problem-with-radical-islam/82252>

¹⁵⁰ Varagur, K. (2017, March 28). Saudi Arabia Is Redefining Islam for the World's Largest Muslim Nation. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/saudi-arabia-salman-visit-indonesia/518310/>

On the other hand, Malaysian students who return abroad from studying in Saudi Arabia often bring back sectarian mindsets.¹⁵¹ Clerics, during Jumma prayers every Friday, denounce Shias, reading off government-sponsored scripts. This is the culmination of a significant minority of government officials studying in Saudi Arabia; or being otherwise influenced by fundamentalist Sunni teachings. This is an outgrowth of the divisive Islamism more widespread in the Middle East.

While the global face of terror that swept the West and the Middle East is somewhat Wahhabi influenced, it is important to make the distinction between Wahhabi and Deobandi inspired extremism, as the latter is more prevalent in South Asia. Deobandism, which began in 19th Century India as a nonviolent movement, also seeks to purify Islam, like Wahhabism. This purification entailed disrespecting other faiths and condemning alternative Islamic interpretations.¹⁵²

The chief Deobandi school is the Darul Uloom Deoband, which was founded in as founded in 1866 by the ulema Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi, Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi and Abid Husaiyn.¹⁵³

The Taliban are, in fact, followers of Deobandism, with 'Taliban being the plural form of the Arabic-Pashto word 'talib', which means students.¹⁵⁴ Deobandism had a stronghold in Pakistan- many Taliban were madrassa pupils in Pakistan, and received significant support from Pakistan for Afghanistan's takeover. This represented a marked departure from the nonviolent stance of Deobandism. The Indian Deobandis remained peaceful until the Second Afghan War of 2001, when they also became radicalized through contact with Afghan and Pakistani Deobandis.

The chief followers of Deobandism in Bangladesh are the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh. It should be noted that several prominent JEI leaders, such as Abdul Quader Molla, Motiur Rahman Nizami and Delwar Hossein Sayeedi, have been accused, tried and convicted of violating human rights and committing atrocities during the 1971 Independence War.

¹⁵¹ Malay Mail. (2018, April 04). Saudi Arabia offers scholarships to 300 Malaysian students | Malay Mail. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.malaymail.com/s/1614985/saudi-arabia-offers-scholarships-to-300-malaysian-students>

¹⁵² Schwartz, S., & Al-Alawi, I. (2013, March 11). Fatwa Fanatics – The Deobandi-Wahhabi Lust for Control Over Personal Life. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/2206/fatwa-fanatics-the-deobandi-wahhabi-lust-for>

¹⁵³ Darul Uloom India. (n.d.). A Brief Introduction. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.darululoom-deoband.com/english/>

¹⁵⁴ Schwartz, S., & Al-Alawi, I. (2013, March 11). Fatwa Fanatics – The Deobandi-Wahhabi Lust for Control Over Personal Life. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/2206/fatwa-fanatics-the-deobandi-wahhabi-lust-for>

Another major influence on violence extremism in Bangladesh is the Ahl-e Hadith movement. The movement, whose name means 'the people of hadith', also emerged in nineteenth century India. The Ahl-e Hadith movement follows the footsteps of a more ancient movement, the Ahl al-Hadith, which began somewhere around the ninth and tenth centuries. Ahl al-Hadith scholars considered the Quran and Shahih Hadith (authentic hadith) to be the only legitimate Islamic authority, forbidding the use of rational disputation even when it supports the truth.¹⁵⁵

Although the movement is often compared to Saudi Wahhabism, Ahl-e Hadith followers claim their movement to be distinct from Wahhabism, as it possesses some notable distinctions from the Arab-influenced Salafists.

Rise of the Local Extremist Groups

The recent incidents of extremism in Bangladesh have made it clear that radical forces are taking cues from global Jihadi movement and attempting to resurrect local militancy in Bangladesh. These groups, conceivably financed by outsiders, use effective recruitment and training techniques. They utilize a warped, violent form of Islam that stray far from normative Islam. The

extremist Islamic narrative not only justify acts of violence but also glorify and deify it. They have taken cues from Western media and marketing salesmanship, employing the use of explosive visuals and modern channels such as social media to grab the attention of target audience in effective ways.

The spread and evolution of extremism in Bangladesh can be divided into five generations, spread over the following periods: 1979-1992, 1993-1998, 2001-2006, 2007-2011, 2011-present.¹⁵⁶ According to a report by the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP), at least 393 people were killed during attacks by extremists in Bangladesh since 2005 to 2016.¹⁵⁷ Among these deaths, there were 360 civilians and 33 security forces personnel. In addition, 243 extremists themselves were killed.

¹⁵⁵ Roy, N. (2018, March 10). What is the Ahl-e Hadith Movement? Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/03/11/ahl-e-hadith-movement/>

¹⁵⁶ Upadhyay. Islamic terrorism in Bangladesh – A Threat to Regional Peace. Retrieved from on February 21, 2008 from <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers23/paper2242.html> U.S. Department of State. (2006)

¹⁵⁷ Alam, N., & Al Hasnat, M. (2016, November 06). DMP: SWAT team will root out militancy and terrorism. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/11/06/dmp-swat-root-militancy>

The first-generation extremists emerged after the Soviet- Afghan War, buoyed by the emergence of Al Qaeda. Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami or HuJI was formed in 1984, by Fazlur Rehman Khalil and Qari Saifullah Akhtar. The group was unique in that it was chiefly Pakistani-based; it soon splintered into several factions. Khalil later founded Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA), which was active in Kashmir, before reforming into Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), when HuA was banned by the United States in 1997. An offshoot of this generation eventually created Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islam (HUJI) in Bangladesh in 1992.

The second-generation appeared in 1996, with the appearance of 'Qital Fi-Sabilillah', which later morphed into 'Jamayat-ul-Mujahedin Bangladesh' (JMB) in 1998.

The third wave of Islamist radicalization, which started in 2001, began with Hizbut Tahrir. The fourth wave began in 2007 through Jama'tul Muslemin, which first became 'Ansarulah Bangla Team' before turning into 'Ansar Al-Islam'. This faction was influenced by ideologue Anwar Al Alwaki, a former Al Qaeda senior recruiter hailing from Syria.

The emergence of ISIS signaled the subsequent rise of the fifth-generation extremists. They follow the ideology of ISIS, and share some similarities with the first-generation extremists, as they both migrated to fight on a foreign land.

In 2015, the JMB split into broad two groups: the older JMB and a new separatist faction, neo-JMB, which later claimed to be the Bangladesh chapter of ISIS. In November 2015, it formally announced its presence in Bangladesh with an article titled "The Revival of Jihad in Bengal" in its Dabiq. In the accompanying interview, Sheikh Abu Al-Hanif, the head of ISIS Bangladesh, lauded Bangladesh's JMB terror group for its ability to resist "the effect of both European colonization and Hindu cultural invasion."

The following month, a British citizen was arrested in the capital city of Dhaka, one of multiple British-born individuals reportedly recruiting for ISIS in Bangladesh and in 2015, another nine individuals were arrested in Bangladesh, accused of planning the overthrow of the government in order to establish a caliphate.

Surprisingly, many members of this faction are urban youth, raised and educated both in Dhaka and abroad. This is a radical departure from homegrown soldiers, often raised in conservative, rural institutions. It defies the longstanding belief that poverty and lack of education are the main causes for militancy taking hold in South Asia.

However, it would be folly to ignore the state of the Qawmi and Aliya Madrasas. While Qawmi madrasas have a larger student base, the curriculum of Aliya madrasas is more modern, as it is developed under government supervision. In contrast, the Qawmi teachers develop their syllabus independent of government input. The Qawmi curriculum is focused solely on religious expertise, while in Aliya madrasas students are also taught vocational subjects such as ICT, science, social science and arts.¹⁵⁸

Education experts agree that the Qawmi system needs significant overhaul. While the Aliya system is comparatively better, it too could use some improvement. This insular form of education, which is often taught in Urdu in Qawmi madrasas instead of Bengali, further deepens the rift between Madrasa students and students of Bengali and English medium curriculums.

Who are the Local Actors?

Harkat-UI-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B)

HUJI-B is a branch of the Pakistani-based Harkat-UI-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI). Receiving financial patronage from Al-Qaeda in 1992, it began through starting recruitment from madrassas.¹⁵⁹ Even coastal residents and Rohingyas are targeted for recruitment. HUJI-B is also known for daring fundraising drives, such as arms trades and munitions sales on behalf of various Jihadi groups.¹⁶⁰ In Bangladesh, they coined a famous slogan, “Amra Shobai Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghan” (We are all Taliban, Bangladesh will be another Afghanistan).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Mamun, Shohel, and Asif Islam Shaon. “What Are Madrasa Students Actually Learning?” Dhaka Tribune, 19 Jan. 2018, www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/19/madrasa-students-actually-learning/.

¹⁵⁹ Munir, S. (2011). A National Counterterrorism Strategy for Bangladesh. Dhaka: BIPSS.

¹⁶⁰ Ali, S. A. M. M. (2006). Faces of terrorism in Bangladesh. First Edition. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

¹⁶¹ Ahmed, I. (2009). “Terrorism beyond reason: Possibilities and limits” in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.), Terrorism in the 21st century: Perspectives from Bangladesh. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)

JMB is believed to be a follower of the Ahle Hadith school of thought, originating from a Salafist ideology in eighteenth century Saudi Arabia. Founded in April 1998 by Abdur Rahman in Palampur, Dhaka, the group first gained national recognition in 2001 when bombs and incriminating documents were discovered in Parbatipur, Dinajpur.¹⁶²

JMB targets peoples, such as authors, bloggers and other intellectuals, and institutions, such as theaters, court houses and other government institutions. Over time, they have expanded their killing targets to also include Hindu and Buddhist worshippers, since they engage in shrine worship, and moderate Muslims and who practice Sufism.

JMB claimed responsibility for the most significant act of violent extremism in the mid 2000s: the simultaneous detonation of hundreds of small bombs in sixty-three districts across Bangladesh.¹⁶³ JMB consider the democratic GoB to be Taghoot (human-made governance); thus, it must be replaced by divine Sha'riah. JMB argues that Taghoot is one of the many manifestations of Jahliyyah. Neo-JMB now draws inspiration from the ideologies of the IS.¹⁶⁴

Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)/Ansar Al-Islam

ABT began its activities in Bangladesh in 2007, forming Jama'tul Muslemin with funding from various NGOs, which soon stopped NGO operations in the next year. The team's Bangladeshi leader, Jasimuddin Rahmani, was the Imam of Hatembagh Jame Masjid in Dhaka Bangladesh and was reportedly inspired by Anwar al-Awlaki. Rahmani was arrested in 2013, along with many ABT followers, for the murder of blogger Rajib Haider.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Sultan, T. (2016, August 06). Salafi ideology behind JMB's rise. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/115169/Salafi-ideology-behind-JMB's-rise>

¹⁶³ Riaz, A. (2004). *God willing: The politics of Islamism in Bangladesh*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

¹⁶⁴ Datta, S. (2007). "Islamic militancy in Bangladesh: The threat from within," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 30 (1), 145-170.

¹⁶⁵ Mallet, V. (2015, August 18). Briton arrested over blogger murders in Dhaka. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.ft.com/content/958da7e0-45b4-11e5-b3b2-1672f710807b>

There are four-stages to ABT/Ansar Al-Islam's operations, dubbed Imara: the first part, Dawah, which invites people to religion, inspiring them to armed jihad; Idad, planning and preparing Jihad; Ribat, carrying out guerrilla attacks on nonbelievers, enemies and government entities; and Kital, the total annihilation of all remaining enemies to establish Sha'riah in Bangladesh.¹⁶⁶ ABT mobilizes youth extensively through its online presence, spreading its jihadist ideology through training manuals. ABT tends to draw recruits from Bangladesh's middleclass, educated youths.¹⁶⁷ It was banned in May 2015.¹⁶⁸

Hizb-ut Tahrir Bangladesh (HT-B)

Though HT-B began its operation in Bangladesh in 2001, it was founded in 1953 in Jeruslaem.¹⁶⁹ Over the years, it spread across the world, advocating for re-establishment of the global Khilafah or Islamic Caliphate. All Muslim majority lands are considered under the jurisdiction of Khilafah. Such nations must forsake their national sovereignties and refuse to partake in elections.

HT-B was founded by Syed Golam Maula after he returned from London, where he was first introduced to Hizb-ut Tahrir.¹⁷⁰ HT-B publishes detailed, annual manifestos that are filled with Quranic verses, along with details of the organization and operations of the Khilafah superstate. These are further translated and circulated to be read by a wide audience. HT-B also portrays Bangladesh as a land embroiled in Jahliyyah. The Government are denounced as illegitimate oppressors who must be overthrown in favor of Sha'riah. In fact, HT-B reportedly spearheaded a failed military coup on December 20, 2011, led by former Major Syed Md Ziaul Haque, who now lives in exile in Pakistan.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Quamruzzaman, AMM. (2010). The militia movement in Bangladesh: Ideology, Motivation, Mobilization, Organization, and Ritual.

¹⁶⁷ BBC Staff Correspondent. (2015, May 25). Bangladesh bans Islamist group accused of blogger attacks. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32879662>

¹⁶⁸ Inani, R. (2015, May 26). Bangladesh Bans Radical Islamist Group Suspected of Blogger Attacks. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <http://time.com/3895853/bangladesh-atheist-blogger-ansarullah-bangla-team-banned/>

¹⁶⁹ Muktdhara.net. (2001). Hizbut Tahrir in Bangladesh. 9 May 2001 Nelson, M. J. (2009).

¹⁷⁰ Ali, A. (2008, September 18). Hizb ut-Tahrir leaders held over 'militancy'. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-55506>

¹⁷¹ Stratfor. (2012, January 30). Bangladesh: An Islamist Military Coup? Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bangladesh-islamist-military-coup>

Hefazat-e-Islam

Hefazat-e-Islam was founded in 2010 as a pressure group, comprised of several madrassa teachers from Chittagong, Bangladesh. Its founders are Ahmad Shafi,¹⁷² the director of Hathazari Madrassa and Mufti Izharul Islam¹⁷³, the chairman of the Islami Oikya Jyot party.

A coalition of Islamist hardliners, Hefazat-e-Islam follows the teachings of Dar-ul-Uloom, which are closely tied to the Wahabbis. Set up through the Deoband movement, The Dar-ul-Uloom system encouraged Muslims under British rule to adhere to Hannafi Fiqh.¹⁷⁴ Set up in 2007 by the Ulema associated with Qawmi maddassas, Hefazat-e-Islam explicitly opposed women-led government policies.¹⁷⁵ It then reemerged in 2013 to oppose the Shahbagh movement, one of the biggest mass demonstrations in Bangladesh demanding the death sentence of 1971 war criminals.

Hefazat released a 13-point demand to the government in March 2013.¹⁷⁶ This included demands such as:

- Reinstating the phrase “Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah” in the Constitution.
- Passing a law to keep a provision of capital punishment for maligning Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad and smear campaigns against Muslims.
- Punishing ‘atheist’ leaders of Shahbagh, bloggers and anti-Islamists who insult Prophet Muhammad.
- Making Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels, replacing the current education policy and other policies that favored women empowerment.
- Declare Qadyaanis (Ahmadiyyas) as non-Muslim.
- Ban all foreign culture, including intermingling of men and women, and stopping anti-Islam activities by NGOs.

¹⁷² Hussain, A. (2018, February 02). Home minister meets Hefazat chief Shafi. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2018/02/03/home-minister-meets-hefazat-chief-shafi>

¹⁷³ Hussein, A. (2017, November 22). 'Hefazat-e-Islam is not the property of an individual or a particular family'. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2017/11/22/hefazat-not-property-individual>

¹⁷⁴ Riaz, A. (2009). "Interactions of 'transnational' and 'local' Islam in Bangladesh" in Mandaville, P. et al. (eds.), *Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia: Movements, networks, and conflict*

¹⁷⁵ Riaz, A. (2013, March 31). Unpacking the Islamist Agenda. Retrieved July 12, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/unpacking-the-islamist-agenda>

¹⁷⁶ Habib, H. (2013, April 06). The 13-point demands. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/the-13point-demands/article4590494.ece>

The power of Hefazat-e-Islam is, in fact, palpable. Some leaders of Hefazat stated that they will declare “Jihad from Chittagong” if Islam was dropped as state religion. Thus, a Supreme Court bid to restore secularism to the Constitution backed down, reinstating Islam as the state religion.

Ahle Hadith

The Ahl-e Hadith movement was spread to Bangladesh by Muhammad Asadullah Al-Ghalib, a former Rajshahi University Arabic professor, in September 1994.¹⁷⁷ Although Ahle Hadith doesn't seek to overthrow the GoB, it is still an active participant in the purification of Islam by combating ‘Shirk’, the popular practice of visiting shrines) of saints and bowing before them or otherwise invoking their names in supplication. They also opposed ‘Bidat’ and focused on Tawhid (unity of God).

Bidat, or Bid’ah, involves innovation in religious matters. There are two types of Bid’ah: Bid’ah Say’iah,¹⁷⁸ which is an innovation that opposes the Quran, Sunnah and Sha’riah; and Bid’ah Hasana, which is an innovation that does not oppose the Sha’riah. Al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali al-Barbahari, a 10th Century Iraqi theologian, warned that the innovators are “like scorpions. They bury their heads and bodies in the sand and leave their tails out. When they get the chance, they sting; the same with the innovators who conceal themselves amongst the people, when they are able, they do what they desire.”¹⁷⁹

Notable extremist leaders, such as Siddiqui Islam aka Bangla Bhai of JMB, Dr, Asadullah al Ghalib of Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB) and Shykh Abdur Rahman of JMB all belong to the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought, having close connections with veterans of the Afghan Jihad.¹⁸⁰ Ahle Hadith thus indirectly contributes to the extremist narrative in Bangladesh, conducive to spread of radicalization and emergence of new radical groups.

¹⁷⁷ Roy, N. (2018, March 10). What is the Ahl-e Hadith Movement? Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/03/11/ahl-e-hadith-movement/>

¹⁷⁸ Titus, M. T. (2005). *Islam in India and Pakistan: A religious history of Islam in India and Pakistan*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

¹⁷⁹ Islam Kotob. (n.d.). *A Chapter on The Dispraise of Desire - Ibn Al-Qayyem*.

¹⁸⁰ Correspondent, S. (2016, August 14). Leader claims Ahle Hadith has no militancy connection. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/leader-claims-ahle-hadith-has-no-militancy-connection-1269889>

Who Funds Violent Extremism in Bangladesh?

Bangladesh has experienced record levels of remittance for the last decade. The remittance inflow for March 2018 alone was 1.30 billion USD.¹⁸¹ Remittance has increased steadily over the last three decades at a cumulative average growth rate (CAGR) of 11.21%, from 763.91 million USD in 1990-91 to 1.88 billion USD in 2000-01 and 14.98 billion USD in 2017-18.¹⁸²

A significant portion of such transactions originate from the Middle East and the UK. Such transactions, locally dubbed as hundi, cannot be traced easily by the authorities, and are often used to funnel funds towards violent extremist groups in Bangladesh.

The influence and funding of Saudi Arabia is another major factor. While the exact numbers aren't known, it is estimated that Saudi Arabia spent at least 100 billion USD on exporting fanatical Wahhabism to poorer Muslim nations worldwide since the 1980s.¹⁸³ In 2007, the annual expenditure on exporting Wahhabi Islam was 2 billion USD; by 2015, it had doubled to 4 billion USD.¹⁸⁴

After the Independence War in 1971, Bangladesh sought recognition from major Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, in order to revive its economy and gain access to overseas labor markets. Today, Saudi Arabia is home to two million Bangladeshi migrant workers.¹⁸⁵ In exchange for opening the labor market, Saudi Arabia has been allowed to export and promote its own brand of religious agenda in Bangladesh.

Since the late 1970s, Saudi Arabia funded the construction of thousands of radical mosques and madrasas. Today, Hefazat-e-Islam, an umbrella organization of radical Islamist groups, controls over 14,000 mosques and madrasas where up to 1.4 million students get an Islamic education without any state supervision.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ The Financial Express. "Remittance Inflow Rebounds in March." The Financial Express, 3 Apr. 2018, www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/remittance-inflow-rebounds-in-march-1522727266

¹⁸² Bangladesh Bank. (n.d.). Bangladesh Annual Remittance Flows, 1990-2018. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.bb.org.bd/econdata/wageremittance.php>

¹⁸³ Butt, Y. (2015, March 22). How Saudi Wahhabism Is the Fountainhead of Islamist Terrorism. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-yousaf-butt/saudi-wahhabism-islam-terrorism_b_6501916.html

¹⁸⁴ Liautaud, A. (2017, July 05). Saudi Arabia is the top sponsor of terrorism in U.K., report says. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/bjd3kd/saudi-arabia-is-the-top-sponsor-of-terrorism-in-u-k-report-says

¹⁸⁵ Roazario, R. R., & Rozario, S. U. (2017, December 27). How Saudi Arabia finances radical Islam in Bangladesh. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.ucanews.com/news/how-saudi-arabia-finances-radical-islam-in-bangladesh/79312>

¹⁸⁶ Roazario, R. R., & Rozario, S. U. (2017, December 27). How Saudi Arabia finances radical Islam in Bangladesh. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.ucanews.com/news/how-saudi-arabia-finances-radical-islam-in-bangladesh/79312>

Saudi Arabia has also patronized Islamist parties including Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh, which aims to establish Sha'ria law in Bangladesh. Rising Saudi influence may have also contributed to increasing number of Bangladeshi women wearing black burqas.

This has led to skepticism over the announcement that Saudi Arabia is investing 1.07 billion USD in Bangladesh for building 560 new mosques.¹⁸⁷ While the stated objective is to build 'model mosques' to counter radicalization, the move has sparked fears within intellectuals that these new mosques will be used to spread radicalism instead. While this funding was well-publicized, unregulated fund transfers to NGOs in Bangladesh is another important concern.

¹⁸⁷ AFP. (2018, April 06). B'desh Launches Billion-Dollar 'Model' Mosques with Saudi Funding to Counter Radicalisation. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.news18.com/news/india/bangladesh-launches-billion-dollar-model-mosques-with-saudi-funding-to-counter-radicalisation-1710363.html>

Policies at Global, Regional and National Levels to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism

On 12 February 2016, the General Assembly adopted a resolution that "welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General and takes note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism". Co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland and the United Nations, the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism – The Way Forward took place on 7 and 8 April 2016. Building upon the progress in February, the conference invited the international community to share experiences and good practices in addressing the drivers of violent extremism and to build support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

On 1 July 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus, resolution (A/RES/70/291) on the Fifth Review of Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy reinforcing global consensus in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. A joint statement by over 70-member states of the UN on "the issue of preventing violent extremism" was issued in October. It called for the UN "to show strategic leadership and commitment to action" and to implement five principles (understanding, integrating, mobilizing, communicating and coordinating) set out by these states to achieve the UN's Plan of Action more effectively.

However, there is a very real and urgent concern that these states are promoting a cycle of flawed and failed policies. States have adapted their own, often broad, definitions of 'violent extremism', which have allowed for the suppression of legitimate political dissent, criminalization of speech and thought and the development of a state sponsored Islam. David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, has warned that "some governments target journalists, bloggers, political dissidents, activists and human rights defenders as 'extremists' or 'terrorists', criminalizing and detaining them, using legal systems to counter broad and unclear offences".

There is also growing concern over Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives globally. For example, over 50 international NGOs warned in their joint submission to the UN Human Rights Council that "many Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) initiatives have a significant potential to threaten the human rights to equality and freedom from discrimination, the right to privacy, and the freedoms of expression, association, and religion or belief". In the US, human rights, civil liberties and community-based organizations have expressed "grave concern" about CVE programs, which "overwhelmingly target Muslim communities" and rest on "vague and unsupportable "indicators" of violent extremism". As the CVE industry expands, these concerns will only continue to materialize on a mass scale.

History of PVE and CVE Measures in Bangladesh

The current regime in Bangladesh has enacted three legislative acts since it came to power: The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 (later amended in 2013), Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012 and Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012.¹⁸⁸ The broad language of the Anti-Terrorism Act provides several mechanisms which the government can use to implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which requires nations to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat.

Furthermore, a National Counter Terrorism Strategy was formulated in 2011, which was followed up by the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012, the first legislation of its kind dealing directly with terrorism financing. Bangladesh Bank has also tasked its Financial Intelligence Unit to deal with the threat of terrorism financing.

The Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012, on the other hand, sets a legal foundation for inter-country cooperation in carrying out enquiries, prosecutions and trial of criminal activities. This law empowers the government of Bangladesh to freeze properties of criminals and terrorists and their equipment used in criminal activities in line with the request of a foreign country.

Since the Holey Artisan attack, the government has focused on delivering counter-narratives and securing the appropriate channels for such communications. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, for instance, has spoken repeatedly about a “zero tolerance” approach to extremism and terrorism.¹⁸⁹ The government has engaged religious communities, reaching a consensus with Imams about communicating peaceful counter-narratives. In that vein, over 100,000 Bangladeshi religious leaders signed a *fatwa* against extremism in 2016 alone.¹⁹⁰

Furthermore, security forces have undertaken more than 50 counter-terrorism operations in the last two years, arresting around 260 militants, with 61 casualties. Cases have been filed against 80 suspects on grounds of terrorism. At the moment, however, the government is yet to formulate a comprehensive action plan for Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism (PCRVE).¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Bangladesh: Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism (Rep.). (2016). Dhaka: Center for Research and Information.

¹⁸⁹ Star Report. (2018, July 14). Zero tolerance for terrorism. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/zero-tolerance-terrorism-1605580>

¹⁹⁰ Sobhan, F. (2018, July 10). The need for an action plan. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/2018/07/10/the-need-for-an-action-plan>

¹⁹¹ Sobhan, F. (2018, July 10). The need for an action plan. Retrieved July 22, 2018, from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/2018/07/10/the-need-for-an-action-plan>

Recommendations

To create an effective PCRVE action plan, the following focus areas should be covered: good governance, human rights, effective judicial structure, championing pluralism, respect of other faiths, and policies that promote inclusiveness and reduce socio-economic deficits. All concerned stakeholders have a vital role to play, including the media, educational institutes, religious scholars, psychologists, sociologists, academics and other relevant Civil Service Organizations (CSOs).

Build Counter Narratives

A competent and coherent counter-narrative can address number of elements in Islam, in order to address the foundational elements of religious violent extremism. Below are few verses drawn from the Quran as examples:

How Islam Respects Human Rights

There is little contradiction between human rights and Muslim philosophy. The spirit of human rights, embodied in the equality of all people irrespective of race, ethnicity and nationality, is invoked in both the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

“O Mankind, I have created you from a male and a female; I have set you up as nations and tribes. This I have done for you to recognize each other.”¹⁹² This verse implies that the human race is a massive extended family. The divisions exist for better identification purposes. Furthermore, no human has the right to take human life outside the law, even when the cause is justified.

“Do not kill a soul made sacred by Allah, except through the due process of law.”¹⁹³

“Whoever kills a human being without any reason, it is though he had killed mankind itself.”¹⁹⁴

This also indicates that suicide bombings are clear violations of Muslim’s non-violence creed.

¹⁹² Al Quran 49:13, Oxford World's Classics edition

¹⁹³ Al Quran 6:151, Oxford World's Classics edition

¹⁹⁴ Al Quran 5:32, Oxford World's Classics edition

How Islam Respects Democracy

“And those who have responded to their Lord, establishing the bond, their affairs are conducted by mutual consultation between themselves.”¹⁹⁵ This tenet agrees with a major component of democracy, which is respect of the majority consensus. To accommodate such consensus, space and freedom must be afforded for expression of both consent and dissent. Furthermore, accountability is reinforced by Islam’s prohibition of corruption.

“Do not devour your wealth through falsehood, or offer it as bribe to authorities, in order to consume the wealth of others with injustice.”¹⁹⁶

While all three Abrahamic religions have histories of stratified, authoritarian regimes that were incompatible with democracy, Christianity and Judaism underwent a distinct separation of church and state the Enlightenment period in 18th Century. That has yet to happen with Islam, as Islam invites itself to all spheres of society. The concept of Sha’riah itself is at odds with the separation of church and state, especially since Sha’riah is often touted as being superior, by virtue of its divine source, to other man-made laws.¹⁹⁷

The emergence of free-thinking youth exposed to globalism allows for the possibility of interpreting Islam in a more a secularized and modernized way. However, that is a lengthy process that depends on a complex, scattered network of Islamic scholars, that will undoubtedly face pushback from traditional Islamic schools. However, we can take faith and relief from the examples of Christianity and Judaism. While some short-term disruption might be in the cards, it is worth enduring for a more long-term stability.

How Islam Respects Tolerance and Coexistence

Islam recognizes all the sacred books of previous monotheistic religions, as well as their prophets’ teachings and traditions.

“There shall be no compulsion in the acceptance of religion...let him who will believe, let him who will reject faith.”¹⁹⁸ This reflects the perspective that religion is a personal choice. This live and let live mindset, however, is rejected by Islamist radicals. The Quran even clarifies that mercy can be extended to nonbelievers in the afterlife.

¹⁹⁵ Al Quran 42:38, Oxford World’s Classics edition

¹⁹⁶ Al Quran 2:189, Oxford World’s Classics edition

¹⁹⁷ Ben-Meir, A. (2013, September 07). Is Islam Compatible with Democracy? Retrieved August 13, 2018, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/alon-benmeir/is-islam-compatible-with_b_3562579.html

¹⁹⁸ Al Quran 18:29, Oxford World’s Classics edition

“Those who believe in the Quran, those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Sabians, and the Christians...any who believe in Allah and judgement day righteously with devotion shall have no fear. Nor shall they grieve.”¹⁹⁹

The targeted killings of atheists and secular bloggers can also be condemned on the grounds of such tolerance. Ali Rizvi, a prominent Muslim atheist, describes himself as a ‘cultural Muslim’ who respects many elements of Islam while disagreeing with the dogma. He mentions that there are “millions in the Muslim world who are atheist or agnostic, but must publicly identify as Muslim or they’d be disowned, ostracized, or even killed by their families and governments. They’re atheist in thought but Muslim by presentation... They retain the Muslim label because the governments and Islamist groups in their countries won’t let them shake it off.”²⁰⁰

“...Islam is neither a religion of war nor a religion of peace. It’s just a religion, like any other religion. Sure, the scriptures of these religions have inspired a lot of people to do good things, but they have also inspired a lot of people to do bad things as well.”

Clarification of Jihad, and its Non-Violent Means

“So, obey not the disbelievers, but strive against them by preaching with the utmost dedication.”²⁰¹

Here, strive is referred to in a positive sense: a noble persuasion of the preachers’ ceaseless task of spreading Islam’s teachings among potential converts. However, it does not include undue pressure or compulsion, let alone the use of violence to achieve such results.

It should be noted that when Jihad was first invoked, under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad, certain pre-existing circumstances set the stage for an armed struggle that involved warfare:

- Persistent refusal by Meccan leaders to permit peaceful propagation of Islam in the city.
- Continuous persecution of Muslims in Mecca, which lead to armed revolts against the leaders.
- The start of military campaigns by Meccan leaders to annihilate and rout the Muslim community in Mecca.
- The vulnerable positions of minority tribes, whose plight the Prophet could not ignore.

¹⁹⁹ Al Quran 6:59, Oxford World's Classics edition

²⁰⁰ Illing, S. (2017, November 07). An atheist Muslim on what the left and right get wrong about Islam. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/7/7/15886862/islam-trump-isis-terrorism-ali-rizvi-religion-sam-harris>

²⁰¹ Al Quran, 25:52

It can be said that a military Jihad can be waged only by the oppressed when they are denied the right to preach and practice their religion in peace. Thus, Jihad cannot be waged by powerful parties in favor of the oppressed without the consent of the oppressed. Jihad as it exists today is often a pre-emptive act, not a reaction as defined in the Quran.

Engaging CSOs to Disseminate Counter Narratives

The government and security forces, while possessing tremendous resources and leverages, cannot conduct this campaign against violent extremism by themselves. The government has increased media and communications monitoring in the last three years. In 13th Jun, 2018, the government approved a proposal to acquire 236 Crore BDT (27.93 million USD) worth of additional equipment to strengthen phone tapping and social media surveillance efforts.²⁰² After a 9-day long protest by students for better road safety, Mostafa Jabbar, the Post Minister, remarked on 11th August, 2018 that the Telecommunications Division had also undertaken a 100 Crore BDT (11.83 million USD) project to enhance the government's cyber-security capabilities.²⁰³

Nevertheless, despite possessing such tremendous resources, the government is not always the most effective messenger for communicating counter-narratives, as many do not trust the government and views its agents as oppressors. To that end, several stakeholders can be engaged to gain access to better channels for disseminating counter narratives.

CSOs, working in areas as diverse as education, poverty alleviation, civic rights and political activism, can be instrumental in challenging and delegitimizing the support for extremist groups. They can arrange inter-faith dialogues regularly and scale this from local to regional and even national levels, with panel discussions between eminent religious leaders. Such dialogues can be broadcasted and spread through television channels and radio stations, and also uploaded on social media channels such as Facebook and YouTube.

²⁰² Correspondent, S. (2018, June 12). Govt purchasing more tools for surveillance. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/govt-purchasing-more-tools-surveillance-1590292>

²⁰³ Siddique, S., & Mahmud, F. (2018, August 11). Tougher social media monitoring on cards | Independent. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/161812>

Furthermore, CSOs can work towards promoting and strengthening democratic practices in various institutions, as well as promoting youth leadership and ensuring minority rights. They can partner with key figures and opinion leaders in communities to practice community-oriented policing and counter-narrative dissemination.

Local representatives of the NGO Affairs Bureau, a government body, can also work with banks and law authorities to investigate questionable sources of funding. This goes hand in hand with the government's drive towards greater fiscal prudence and transparency in the banking industry. In addition to historically bad non-performing loans (NPL) ratios, the industry is still recovering from the recent Bangladesh Bank heist, where hackers stole 81 million USD from Bangladesh's account at Federal Reserve Bank of New York via the SWIFT network.²⁰⁴

However, in Bangladesh, CSOs are fragmented and heavily polarized across the political spectrum. CSO, including those active in the development sector, have also subscribed to the toxic clientelism prevalent in Bangladesh. Some have been accused of seeing the government as patrons, as other compromised institutions already do, while others have accused NGOs of becoming new patrons of the poor. In a society that's vertically constructed with restricted economic and social mobility, CSOs have sharpened political divides instead of building social capital for the disenfranchised.²⁰⁵

Clientelist cultures are mainstays of feudal societies, seen not only in Medieval Europe, but also Ancient China and Tokugawa Japan. Historically, Bengal's feudal agrarian society was hierarchical. The same rural elites who influenced the social and economic life of the peasants later became the urban political leaders and have served as an intermediate political class.²⁰⁶

In Western countries, feudalism died out with the discovery of the New World in the 15th Century, and subsequently, the birth of modern democracy in the 18th Century. In countries like Bangladesh, however, it didn't become obsolete. Rather, it adapted to urban environments, both during and post British Colonialism.

²⁰⁴ Al Jazeera. (2018, May 24). Hacked: The Bangladesh Bank Heist. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/101east/2018/05/hacked-bangladesh-bank-heist-180523070038069.html>

²⁰⁵ Tasnim, F. (2017). Politicized Civil Society in Bangladesh: Case Study Analyses (Rep.). Rajshahi: University of Rajshahi. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v9i1.5247>

²⁰⁶ Ahmed, S. (2011). The Civil Society of Bangladesh: Depoliticized in Working Agenda but Politicized in Power Relation. Inter Faculty, 2. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://journal.hass.tsukuba.ac.jp/interfaculty/article/view/16/64>.

After 2001, donor backing alone was not sufficient for NGOs. They entered a new phase of commercialization, whereas smaller NGOs placed greater focus on micro-credit and big NGOs exhibited profit-seeking behaviors through new ventures which are now branded as social enterprises. In fact, the world's largest NGO, BRAC, has opened various large-scale businesses, such as Aarong, BRAC Bank and BRAC University.²⁰⁷

In addition to the political influence, this focus on one single bottom line instead of the globalist triple bottom line (profit, people, planet) comprises the neutrality of CSOs and their natural tendency towards advocacy. Thus, it's difficult to ensure a consistent collaboration between a significant number of CSOs working on important issues across the nation.

Furthermore, CSOs are often more accountable to foreign donors than the local communities they are actively engaged with. Lack of funding and limited scope of projects also prevents many CSOs from interacting in ways that are meaningful in the long run. Furthermore, CSO employees and activists who have engaged in counter-radicalization programs are often harassed and receive death threats.

The training of Imams is also considered an important tool in the ongoing fight against extremist radicalization. However, this training needs to be localized, otherwise there is the risk of Imams unfamiliar with local communities not being able to connect with local residents.

Enhance South-South Cooperation

Bangladeshis, as a rule, do not have a positive attitude towards India. The Muslim majority often express their distrust towards Indians, stating they do not have positive intentions towards non-Indians, and especially Muslims in particulars

According to a Daily Star report, Hizbut Tahrir condemns both Awami League and BNP leaders for catering to the whims of the Indo-American-Israeli trifecta. Never mind the fact that alleging these wildly different geopolitical powers have bonded together to actively oppress Bangladesh is amateur speculative fiction: it is akin to implying that Julius Caesar, Pompey and Leonidas banded together to oppress the Persians because they were future Muslims. Unfortunately, many disenchanted Muslim youth do not have a keen sense of geopolitics and socio-economics norms, and thus easily fall for conspiracy theories.

²⁰⁷ BRAC. (n.d.). Our ventures. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.brac.net/enterprises?view=page>

At the moment, most of Bangladesh's CVE and PVE foundations are being built by taking cues from the UN, UK and US precedents. While these precedents and frameworks provide a good starting point, they do not preclude the deep knowledge of local, national, and regional contexts.

Taking cues from India with official agreements and partnerships can be deeply beneficial. For instance, Morocco has provided technical support and shared best practices with neighboring countries, training Imams in Mali, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Appoint Head Agency for CVE Efforts

A 600-man strong Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit was formed in Bangladesh in 2015, under the overview of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.²⁰⁸ Another body, dubbed the Police Bureau of Counter-Terrorism, has also been proposed for organizing, streamlining and overseeing the collective PVE and CVE effort in Bangladesh. However, there has been no real progress made on that front since it was first proposed in 2011. Other bureaus currently dealing with militancy are uneasy with the creation of a brand-new agency that will oversee their activities.

The government can bypass this inertia, for instance, by pursuing the creation of the agency through legislation. This may become a legal and operational imperative, as it's difficult to monitor the volume and efficiency of government funds and resources being used for CVE measures. The lead CVE agency can also create and mandate modus operandi for various agencies and its employees. Training should be provided to not only bureaucrats and strategists, but also to frontline officers, including both prosecutors and police, who engage with marginalized communities vulnerable to radicalization.

Tapping the Private Sector for Entrepreneurial Solutions

Private organizations around the world are already stepping up to do their part in PVE. To their credit, social media and technology companies have attempted to counter the terrorist propaganda by deleting content published by extremists and banning the accounts propagating such content.

²⁰⁸ Correspondent, S. (2015, December 30). Police form special counter-terror unit. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/police-form-special-counter-terror-unit-194623>

Terrorism severs supply chains, drains local labor pools, and shakes investor confidence. After the Holey Artisan attack, for example, Japanese firms such as Mitsubishi and Toyota withdrew essential staff and considered scaling back operations in Bangladesh. Businesses could also direct more of their corporate social responsibility budget and bandwidth to engage marginalized communities targeted by extremist recruiters. To this end, they can collaborate with the government and donor organizations in funding and implementing community-led programs that offer financial, cultural and vocational empowerment.

Engaging Women in CVE

Until recently, the narrative of violent extremism has been chiefly male in nature. However, women are key to counterterrorism efforts as well. They play crucial roles in not only families, but all aspects of the society. Mothers and wives can be integrated into awareness programs that train them to detect signs of extremist tendencies in their family members and inspire positive change among potential extremists. For instance, the UK has established a women's stakeholder group that advises the government on engaging women at the community and family level.

Government bodies should be careful to interact with small-scale women's organizations at grassroots level, instead of going straight to the top and working with large organizations and eminent community leaders only. A plan of action to achieve a list of common goals must be put forward for each specific engagement with such organizations.

Women must also be provided with platforms and safe spaces at all levels of the society, so that they can freely express their views and concerns without fear of repercussion. A common example of such empowerment is Malala and her role at the global stage as an ambassador for female rights and female education.

Engaging and Monitoring Communities and Educational Institutes at Local Levels

Educational Institutes, such as madrasas and universities, can train their faculties on engaging students on sensitive issues such as radicalization. In addition to vocational training, curriculum can also integrate courses and subject matter that emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking, emotional intelligence and a sound ethical compass.

Universities can also take a leaf out of their western counterparts' playbook and arrange for onsite counsellors for students. This can help students adjust with each other, dealing with repressed and undetected emotions such as anger and distrust.

For madrasas, the Ministry of Education can take further policy measures to oversee curriculum development and overall grooming of students. The Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bangladesh can also play a more active role in influencing Imam and staff selection in mosques, to combat external influences. In the future, if needed, a separate ministry can be founded to jointly manage the issue of overseeing madrasas and mosques.

Building and Promoting Research Infrastructure for CVE

Practitioners and policymakers working on CVE have emphasized the importance of a strong evidence-base for the proper development and execution of CVE policies and programs.

The existing literature on CVE also suggests that more research is needed to better drive policy and program design. In particular, research needs to be conducted on local radicalization processes. There needs to be a focus on not just quantity, but also quality.

Despite increasing coordination between think tanks and the government, a unified platform for researchers to interact with multiple stakeholders is keenly needed. Through such a platform, researchers can not only disperse their ideas and findings locally, but also reach out to researchers around the globe, finding synergy with their own findings.

Combatting Online Extremism

Over 50% of the population learns about religion these days through the Internet. The government can deploy counter-narratives on Facebook and Youtube, utilizing its digital learning platforms and centers to reach as widespread an audience as possible. To ensure maximum visibility and awareness, search engine optimization (SEO) and Facebook ads can be used to ensure top-level visibility in both Google search results and Facebook.

Develop and Execute Awareness Programs

In South-East Asian countries, freedom of speech is not well-understood in general. Furthermore, results of quantitative research show that many respondents are confused between secularism and atheism.

Such confusion can be alleviated through awareness programs, undertaken by stakeholders such as the government, CSOs, media and private firms. Representatives from the creative arts can also contribute through events such as exhibitions, workshops and stage-play to promote free thinking, free speech and counter-narratives against extremism.

Greater Transparency and Accountability of CVE Operations

In Bangladesh, counter-terrorism efforts are often shrouded in secrecy. In the past, certain special units, such as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) have been accused of several human rights violations. Since its inception in 2004, RAB has been deployed by both Khaleda and Hasina helmed regimes as an in-house death squad specializing in extrajudicial killings, locally referred to as crossfire. In addition, they have been linked to several disappearances, which are sometimes followed by arbitrary arrests as well.²⁰⁹

Over the years, abusive practices have spread from RAB to other security forces, such as Detective Branch (DB) of Police. DB is often linked to cases of alleged detentions and enforced disappearances.

Extrajudicial killings are also being carried out in an on-going campaign against drugs.²¹⁰ On 3rd May 2018, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared a war on drugs following a reported rise in methamphetamine sales and use. Since then, 10,000 people have been arrested, and over 120 people have been killed, most of them in RAB operations.²¹¹ The drive has been compared to the similar drug war waged by Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte since 2017.

²⁰⁹ Ganguly, M. (2017, January 19). After Narayanganj verdict, Bangladesh should disband RAB. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/19/after-narayanganj-verdict-bangladesh-should-disband-rab>

²¹⁰ International Correspondent. (2018, May 27). Death toll in Bangladesh anti-drug drive up to 77 in under 2 weeks. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/death-toll-in-bangladesh-anti-drug-drive-up-to-77-in-under-2-weeks/article24006614.ece>

²¹¹ Ganguly, M. (2018, June 13). A Violation of Rights in Bangladesh. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/12/violation-rights-bangladesh>

RAB has been protected by successive regimes. Some government spokespersons have gone as far as to justify their crimes. However, a landmark verdict on January 16th, 2017 sentenced 26 people, including 16 RAB personnel, for their role in a politically-motivated extrajudicial killing.²¹²

It is imperative to not only comprehensively condemn such practices, but to also open further investigations into past cases. Accountability and transparency must be made a core tenet of all present and future CVE efforts. They are important not only for greater support from and synchronicity with international CVE and PVE efforts, but also to prevent a surge in homegrown extremism. Recruiters often exaggerate the level of persecution and crackdowns by the government against minorities and fundamentalists. With such human rights offenses being carried out by the government in broad daylight, it's easier for them to spread more effective lies built on the foundation of this unfortunate truth.

²¹² Ganguly, M. (2017, January 19). After Narayanganj verdict, Bangladesh should disband RAB. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/19/after-narayanganj-verdict-bangladesh-should-disband-rab>

Moving Forward

In the last few years, Bangladesh has undergone a rude awakening, finding once-believed dead threat of violent extremism alive and well in its midst. CVE operations by the security forces continue to be undertaken in droves each year. However, they only treat symptoms of the overall disease, which if left unchecked, can mutate like a cancer and spread through the minds of impressionable youths and at-risk communities.

Using the building blocks of policy and measures already adopted by Western and South-East Asian countries alike, Bangladesh can forge a robust action plan that addresses the violent extremist threat in comprehensive fashion.

It is unlikely that even the most ingenious plan executed with the utmost effectiveness will eradicate violent extremism from our society, as it breeds on traces of inequality and biases that are much harder to address. Nevertheless, the strategies outlined in this paper, if implemented correctly, can go a long way in stemming the tide of extremism and preventing people from falling prey to its clutches.

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PAKISTAN

Muhammad Amir Rana





Introduction

Pakistan is facing a multifold challenge of religiously inspired extremism and militancy. While a multitude of factors has contributed to the growth of violent and non-violent extremism in the country over the past many decades, the countering efforts have only been swelled in recent years, mainly after the Army Public School Peshawar massacre in late 2014.²¹³

Still, while many gaps exist in realizing and strategizing the required Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE) actions, the ones being implemented also lack effectiveness apparently due to the lack of genuine threat perception, political will and institutional coordination and existence of capacity gaps in implementing institutions.

This paper is an attempt to explore the patterns of extremism in the society and evaluate the state responses to counter CVE and terrorism. Before moving on to the countering measures, the paper delves into the extent of insecurity in the country – a direct outcome of violent extremism – factors and trends of violent extremism in the country as well as militant landscape that creates an enabling environment for radicalism to thrive. To an extent it also touches upon the aspects of CVE and counterterrorism that have been counterproductive and suggests how these could be reformed. The paper also provides a structural analysis of the major actors of the violence.

On the whole, the analysis is meant to help understand causative and sustenance factors of CVE in the country as well as to identify the gaps in responses related to countering extremism and extracting the policy recommendations, which could be beneficial for the other countries, too, facing the similar challenges of violent extremism.

²¹³ On 16 December 2014, Taliban gunmen stormed the Army Public School in the northern city of Peshawar. More than 150 people were killed, 132 of them children. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-35103616/pakistan-remembers-peshawar-army-public-school-attack>)

Country profile

Pakistan, officially Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is a diverse country of around 200 million people.

The country's four provinces, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are named after their dominant ethnic groups. At present, there is no widespread ethnic movement in any province, except for the southern-half of Balochistan. Various separatist groups or Baloch insurgents have been carrying out attacks, albeit small-scale IEDs, since 2005. Meanwhile, the country's largest metropolitan, Karachi, in Sindh, has seen clashes among parties representing different ethnic groups, in particular Urdu-speaking community and Pashtuns.

Additionally, there are special administrative units Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, with their own legislative structures. One such unit, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, commonly known as the tribal areas, was merged in the adjacent KP province in 2018; the erstwhile FATA agencies are now KP districts.

Although 95% of population is Muslim, there is multiplicity of faiths within. About 80-90% of these are estimated to be Sunnis, and the rest 10-20% are estimated to be Shias. Sunnis, in turn, have different schools of thoughts, the most prominent of which are Deobandi, Barelvi, and Ahle Hadith.

The 5% non-Muslims include Christians, who mostly reside in Punjab; Hindus, mostly in Sindh; and Ahmedis, among others. Examples of communal harmony in different parts notwithstanding, ever since the surge of extremism, religious minorities have alleged discrimination and have come under attacks by community taking shape of mob and by extremist outfits.

Even though Pakistan has been home to a variety of militant outfits ever since war started in neighbouring Afghanistan in 1980s, it was mostly since 2001, that many such groups started targeting inside the country.

One group, in particular, has attacked almost every segment of the society, including prominent politicians, military officers, police personnel, doctors, lawyers, and activists. Formed in 2007, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is today considered as the top-most anti-state group. Other like-minded groups include Jamaatul Ahrar. Successive military operations were launched in the western tribal areas to dislodge them; the most recent one, conducted in 2014, was aimed at TTP's centre in North Waziristan.

Most faith-based militancy is by the Deobandi-Sunni extremist groups against Muslim minorities, in particular Shias, besides Christians. Even the term “sectarianism” often implies the involvement of Deobandi-Sunnis on one side of the equation, and Barelvis or Shias on the other side.

Sectarian hotspots often have sizeable Shia population, such as Karachi in Sindh, Quetta in Balochistan, Kurram district of KP, parts of South Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) is often single out for attacking Shias across the country, with or without collusion of other groups. Some of its former militants, as well as of other groups like TTP, have sworn allegiance to incoming Islamic State (IS) in Pakistan-Afghanistan region, carrying out some of the deadliest attacks in the last two years. Hazaras, a distinct Shia community, recognized by the Mongoloid features, have been decimated time and again by these groups.

Government has announced second National Internal Security Policy (NISP), detailing the action plan from 2018 to 2023. Earlier, in late 2014, National Action Plan (NAP) was released too, which includes twenty action points to counter terrorism. Since then, government’s performance is measured on NAP.

Security Landscape of the Country

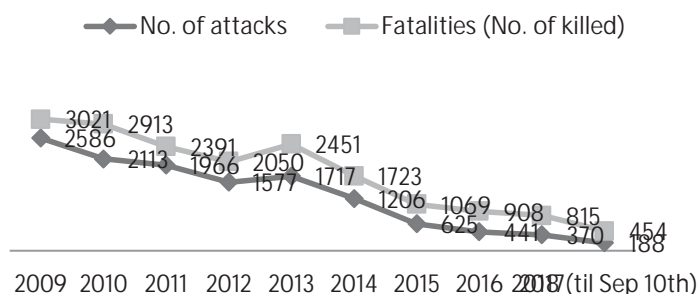
Pakistan's security landscape gives an idea of the challenge of violent extremism confronting the country. Although there has been a gradual decline in the number of terrorism incidents in past some years, both religiously motivated militants and nationalist insurgents are still operating in the country. While the former are mostly present in Pak-Afghan border areas – from where they launch attacks in mainland Pakistan through their sleeper cells – the latter, i.e. Baloch insurgents, have largely moved to southern and south-western parts of Balochistan mainly in and around Awaran and Keck districts. Meanwhile violent sectarian groups also launch sporadic attacks showing their presence in different parts of the country.

Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) annual security report for 2017²¹⁴ noted that with the only exception of the year 2013 – when the number of terrorist attacks took an upward turn mainly due to an increased incidence of sectarian-related attacks in the country as well as a significant surge in terror acts in Karachi – a gradual decrease in the number of terrorist attacks and consequent fatalities in Pakistan can be visibly seen since 2009. “The Rangers-led operation in Karachi (started 2013), military operations in erstwhile North Waziristan and Khyber agencies, and police's anti-militant actions across Pakistan including as part of the National Action Plan (NAP) and *Raddul Fasaad*, apparently helped sustain that declining trend 2013 onward, which continued in 2017 as well.”²¹⁵ A comparative and gradual decline in the frequency of terrorist attacks notwithstanding, mainly since 2014, militants however have been successful in carrying out some major attacks throughout these years, though less frequent than pre-2014 situation. Even in 2018, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), its splinter Hizbul Ahrar and ISIS carried out 6 major attacks, which claimed 239 lives. Worst of these were the two attacks perpetrated by ISIS affiliates in Quetta and Mastung districts of Balochistan, which alone killed over 180 people.

²¹⁴ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Pakistan Security Report 2017* (Islamabad: January 2018).

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Chart 1: Terrorist attacks and consequent fatalities in Pakistan since 2009²¹⁶



Despite the decline in the terrorist attacks in recent years, many challenges still remain to be addressed on the front of countering extremism and terrorism. For one, despite a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks, terrorists including sectarian have been successful in managing some major attacks in recent months and years indicating their operational and support networks are still active, though weakened compared to pre-2014 scenario. Similarly, as cited earlier, most Baloch insurgent groups though have been reportedly pushed to certain southern areas of the province, attacks by them – mostly of low intensity but some major ones also targeting the FC – are repeatedly reported from across Balochistan; attacks and targeted killings by violent sectarian groups as well as TTP and ISIS-supporters are also reported sporadically. At the same time, some new challenges are rearing their heads like the emergence of self-radicalized individuals and small terrorist cells, growing incidence of religious extremism including on educational campuses, persisting cross-border attacks by Pakistani militants relocated to Afghanistan, and increasing footprints of ISIS, or Daesh, in parts of the country and convergence of its fighters in Afghanistan near Pakistani border. These have made Pakistan’s countering terrorism efforts even more challenging, which are also evolving in line with the changing regional scenario especially the pressure mounted by the US administration.

²¹⁶ Statistics are drawn from PIPS’ digital database on conflict and insecurity: www.pakpips.com/app/database

Perceptual Differences in CVE Approaches

Despite Pakistan's complex security challenge and presence of multiple militant groups in the country, opinion is divided on the root causes of extremism ways to counter it: many analysts see this issue in historical perspective and link it with global developments; policy makers prefer contemporary context; and security institutions see it in strategic and geopolitical perspectives. These perceptions have developed a discourse of responses and nurtured following approaches on CVE.

The first deals with the historical perspective and links the emergence of militant groups with the religious discourse in the country and the influence of the Islamization movements across the world. Wahabi or Salafi influences are considered the transforming agents in this approach, which argues that militancy is a violent expression of this discourse and cannot be dealt with in the absence of reform of the entire discourse. This approach does not provide any comprehensive solutions and merely suggests long-term initiatives such as promotion of alternative narratives, counter-arguments, modern education and cultural fusion.²¹⁷

The second approach emphasizes the security and conflict perspective. It links the current state of militancy to lingering conflicts in the region, including Kashmir and Afghanistan, and considers those to be the core problems. This approach helps explain and understand the strategic positions of states, including notions such as 'strategic depth'.

It understandably favors the resolution of long-standing border and territorial conflicts but at the same time assumes that militants or non-state actors are under complete control of the state and the solutions lie in the hands of the state. This approach does not satisfy counter-terrorism practitioners and policy analysts who see the militants as an autonomous phenomenon that has developed a stake in the conflict economy, and developed cooperation and links with international terrorist groups and local crime syndicates.

The third approach perceives them as a lethal threat to internal and external security and something that needs to be dealt with an iron hand.

²¹⁷ Muhammad Amir Rana, *The Militant; Development of a Jihadist Character in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2015).

These approaches see militants from different viewpoints, varying from national security paradigms to strategic perspectives. For the US and European countries, the concern may be confined to the militants' international links and the potential threat they pose to regional security. For India and Afghanistan, they are an irritant that could trigger a wider conflict in the region. To Pakistan, they may represent a threat to internal security. Some analysts also favor a combination of the three approaches.

The problem with these perceptions is that they do not conceive the militants as independent actors and by and large perceive them as proxies or merely as an outcome of certain political developments. When militants are perceived as proxies it becomes difficult to treat them as rational actors that they are. That strengthens the notion that they only follow others' plans and do not enjoy the freedom to pursue their own objectives. The security apparatus in Pakistan may not apparently project this, but in complicated terrorist attacks they often take a rather simplistic view of the militants.

States have undoubtedly nurtured and supported militant movements as their strategic assets and used them as foreign policy tools. The most recent example is of Syria, where the US, western powers, and the Arab states have tried to topple the Bashar al-Assad regime. Though their actions have been proven counterproductive as they did in Libya, some of Syria's neighbors had believed that the militants would eventually topple the government. In a way, it is ironic that as a state's dependence on militants increases it starts believing that they would perpetually serve as its stooges or proxies.

At a certain point, the state's dependence on militants increases to such an extent that even when the latter are no more willing to serve as proxies, the former continue to treat them as such. The comparison between good versus bad militants or moderate/secular versus hardline extremists is also rooted in such perceptions. The Afghan Taliban have taken advantage of this impression and camouflaged themselves in Pakistan's doctrine of strategic depth, contributing to the country's policy responses becoming even more confused. That is why even as global policy circles are aware of the positions of stakeholders inside Afghanistan, they find it difficult to accurately identify the same for the Taliban.

States might share some strategic interests with non-state actors but can these be an alternative to the inter-state relations where the states have multiple diplomatic and political options available to deal with their differences and to manage crises? When the Afghan Taliban initiated negotiations with the US through their separate channels, they refused to accept direct Pakistani involvement in the peace process. Not only the Afghan Taliban led by Mullah Omar, but also the Haqqani Network that is depicted as being a strategic asset of Pakistan, have remained reluctant to use their influence over Pakistani militants to force them to stop terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Many experts think that the worst-case scenario for Islamabad would be the Afghan Taliban capturing Kabul. That would not only have security implications for Afghanistan, but Pakistan will also have less diplomatic influence over Kabul, and yet the international community would put the entire onus for Taliban's actions on Pakistan.

The militant groups can shift the analytical focus away from an enemy-centric to a condition-centric approach. This happened in the fight against the militants in Pakistan's tribal areas, where the state remained confused over the exact status of the enemy, and where it tried to pursue the 'talks-and-fight' approach, which did not prove effective. Such approaches have an impact on policymakers' assessments. On the other hand, militants' strategies continue to evolve, and their overall strategy combines both violent and political means.

Whether a change in viewing the militants as rational actors would have an impact on counterterrorism frameworks also needs to be looked at while treating militants mainly as independent actors and exploring the chemistry of the militant character.

The Religious Organizations and Groups in Pakistan

Whatever the strategic, political or historical factors are responsible for nurturing the extremist tendencies in the country, their link with the expansion of the institutions of religious education, also known as seminaries or madrassas, cannot be ignored. One may argue that the expansion of these religious institutions is linked with the state policies for both regional strategic purposes or crafting an internal cohesion by the power elites of the country, but these institutions acted as catalyst of deepening the sectarian divide in the society and nurturing religious extremist behaviors in the society.

Though accurate figures of the religious seminaries in the country are not available, however most of the assessments count them to be around 35,000.²¹⁸ At the same time, over 200 religious organizations or groups of different types are also operating in the country. The religious seminaries provide them the human resource, networking, platform for opinion making, financial strengths and sense of a political power. Seminaries are mainly recruitment places for sectarian organizations. On the other hand, while many seminaries and religious organizations could have an ideological resonance with local and international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, very few indeed could be operationally linked to them.

Apparently the goals and objectives of these religious organizations are diverse and range from transformation of society according to their ideologies, enforcement of shariah law, establishment of khilafah (caliphate) system, and fulfillment of their sectarian objectives to achievement of Pakistan's strategic and ideological objectives through militancy.

Although general trends are easy to identify, the categorization of religious parties is not quite as straightforward, mainly because most of the religious organisations are working for multiple agendas, either themselves or through affiliated groups and entities. A closer look suggests that even today most religious organisations in Pakistan move around, or at least at some point had links, with the main religious parties which were active in the country in the 1950s, including the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI), Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) and Jamiat-i-Ahle Hadith. These also included All Pakistan Shia Political Parties, which became Tehrik Nifaz-i-Fiqah-i-Jaffria in the late 1970s.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ "Report says over 35,000 madrassas operating in Pakistan," *Pakistan Today*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/07/31/report-says-over-35000-madrassas-operating-in-pakistan>.

²¹⁹ Muhammad Amir Rana, *The Militant: Development of the Jihadist Character in Pakistan*.

Almost all other religious outfits, whether working for missionary, sectarian or educational/charitable pursuits or engaged in militancy, are affiliated with or are breakaway factions of these five major parties. Most importantly, even the affiliates or splinters believe in the agendas of their parent organisations.

The major difference is that the parent organizations' focus is on Islamization and that of the splinters on religio-socialization. The parent parties which have a religious agenda and focus, are part of Pakistan's mainstream politics, believe in the constitution of Pakistan, participate in electoral politics, and are classified as religious political parties. In the last two decades, another form of religious organisation has emerged: agents of Islamization and religio-socialization but with the belief that change is impossible within the constitution of Pakistan and the current political dispensation. They deem democracy and the democratic process inadequate for the change they pursue and advocate.

Some of them — such as Jamaatud Dawa, the Khilafah Movement, Hizbut Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroon — deem democracy an idea contrary to Islamic principles of governance and want to replace it with their own version of Shariah. Some groups such as Tanzeemul Ikhwan and Tanzeem-i-Islami believe that Shariah cannot be introduced in its entirety through the democratic electoral process and consider the use of force or toppling of the government as alternatives. They have sectarian and militant tendencies but the dominant approach is renewalist, characterized by their quest for a complete change of system: contrary to the religious political parties' approach that focuses on gradual change within the system.

All those religious parties that have a specific sectarian focus, promote antagonism against other sects of Islam or engage in sectarian rhetoric or armed conflict are classified as sectarian outfits, notwithstanding their participation in electoral politics and in militant activities. Examples include Deobandi outfits Ahl-e-Sunnat-Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), and Barelvi groups Sunni Tehreek (ST) and Jamaat-i-Ahl-e-Sunnat.

The Folds of Extremism in Pakistan

The expansion of religious institutions has caused socio-cultural transformations in the country and increasing religiosity is breeding different tendencies of the extremism in the society. Apparently, extremism in the country is driven by multiple factors and occurs on three levels.²²⁰ Firstly, among lower income groups, mainly in poorly governed areas including the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and the nearby districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as parts of southern Punjab and interior Sindh, poverty, inequality and loose administrative structures spur extremism and terrorism. Madrassas and networks of militant and sectarian organizations in these areas act as catalysts, exploiting these factors to further their extremist agendas, leading to extremism and sectarian violence. It is not surprising that sectarian outfits, such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Tehrik-i-Jaafariya and small sectarian outfits of the Ahle Hadith and Barelvi sects have managed to establish and sustain strongholds in these areas. Militant organizations also recruit their foot soldiers from these areas and in many terrorist assaults in Punjab the attackers have been traced back to the southern parts of the province.

Secondly, the levels and trends of extremism are different in the middle-income group. The drivers of extremism in urban or semi-urban areas, including central and north Punjab, Karachi and Hyderabad in Sindh, the settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir are mainly political. These trends are influenced by both internal and external political developments and promotion of a radical narrative by radical groups as well as the media and manifest themselves in misplaced notions of jihad and acts of terrorism. Militant organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Hizb-e-Islami and Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist cells rely mainly on promotion of radical tendencies to find recruits. Extremism is not specific to a community in these parts, although madrasa students and the more religiously inclined communities are usually considered more receptive or vulnerable to absorbing violent tendencies. A closer look at the cadre of militant organizations involved in Kashmir and Afghanistan mainly finds youth educated at formal educational institutions. Student wings of religious political parties as well as sectarian, charity, radical and militant organizations remain active in colleges and universities. Other wings of such organizations seek to influence specific segments of society.

²²⁰ Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2012).

Almost every religious organization, whether its ambitions are political, sectarian or militant, maintains wings with a particular focus on women, traders, lawyers, doctors and teachers, among others. These wings have a key role in promoting extremism among middle-income groups and have an array of tools at their disposal to increase their influence. They consistently rely on radical literature and publications and disseminate the message not only through the printed word but also through CDs and DVDs as well as on social media. Militant organizations in Pakistan increasingly use the Internet to promote extremism and spur recruitment, with the youth from middle-income groups as their specific target. International terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda, have also benefited from this level of extremism, in the form of generating financial and human resources, as well as a favorable perception among the population in some parts of the country.

Thirdly, growing alienation from society is the major driver of extremism among the upper middle class and the so-called elite of the country. Radical groups such as Hizbut Tahrir and Al-Huda are active in indoctrinating this segment of the population. Both organizations brand themselves as agents of change although both focus on different target groups. Al-Huda mainly focuses on women, with the stated objective of “bringing them back to their religious roots”. Hizbut Tahrir has been striving to create a niche among the influential elite as part of its top-down approach to realize its objective of introduction of a caliphate in the country.²²¹

²²¹ Ibid.

Major Militant Streams in Pakistan

Varied forms of militant groups, with a range of ideological and political tendencies are operating in Pakistan. These groups have many similarities, but it is important to consider what makes them different and where their interests converge. Equally important is to probe how these groups influence each other and how they broaden their ideological paradigms. In many cases, militant groups combined their resources for achieving certain objectives. It is important to determine the strength and lifespan of such alliances. After analyzing the aspects cited earlier, probabilities for effective engagement with the militants can be drawn, and spaces identified to intervene in order to break the cycle of terrorism. Most importantly, the prospects for reintegration of militants can thus be explored as part of soft approaches of counterterrorism and CVE.

It is useful to understand the three streams of militancy in Pakistan that shape the prevalent militant landscape.

Conventional Groups

Though these groups are not involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan, their breakaway factions have been providing human resource to anti-Pakistan local and foreign militant groups such as Al-Qaeda, tribal militants of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its factions, and most recently, the ISIS. Some of them, in an effort to become part of far-right politics in Pakistan, are gradually detaching themselves from the swarm of anti-state militant groups.

The conventional groups were established in connection with the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s and later their operational scope was expanded to fight in Kashmir. The establishment of these groups was aimed at fighting proxy wars for the Pakistani state and to safeguard its strategic interests in the region. Their ideological foundation rested on religion and Pakistani nationalism, i.e., an identity and ideology of Pakistan based on the two-nation theory that was used to demand separation from Hindus. They believe that the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan would be the eventual culmination of the country's independence movement. Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) goes a step further and demands the merger of the princely states of Hyderabad and Junagadh too with Pakistan, arguing that both states had announced their annexation to Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947.

When, after 9/11, some conventional militant groups decided to fight alongside the Afghan Taliban against the international coalition forces in Afghanistan, Pakistan's security establishment realized for the first time that religion was an area where it could not be certain of its control over these groups. Pakistan banned many of these groups under international pressure on 13 January 2002, and some others on 16 November 2003. Facing internal crises and external pressure, leadership of such groups was either arrested or went underground, causing further rifts among the lower-rung cadres, who gradually started fleeing to the tribal areas and joined tribal Taliban and foreign terrorist groups based there.

Many of these groups subsequently resurfaced with different names and under the garb of charities. This ploy not only helped them gain social acceptance but also enabled them to expand their support base and ultimately add to their financial resources. In an attempt to diversify their assets, some militant groups set up commercial ventures such as English-medium schools, healthcare centres, transportation companies, residential projects and media groups; some also acquired farmland on a large scale.²²²

Independent Groups

Independent militant groups can be classified into three major sub-categories: tribal militant groups; violent sectarian groups; and new militant groups/cells.

- *Tribal militant groups*

The tribal militant groups are a post-9/11 phenomenon. Though the tribal militants were present among the Afghan and Pakistani militant groups during the Soviet-Afghan war and the Kashmir insurgency, they did not have their own independent groups.

²²² M. Amir Rana, "Choking financing for militants in Pakistan," in Moeed Yusuf, ed., *Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge* (Washington: Foundation Books, 2014).

In October 2001, the Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives moved into Pakistan's tribal areas. Initially concentrated in the South Waziristan tribal region, they expanded their existing support base which are rooted in the cross-border connections going back to the 1980s and ethnic linkages among the local tribes.²²³ There was a wave of sympathy for the Taliban among the local population as they were seen as having been ousted by an invading power. Using this support, between 2002 and 2004, these Afghan groups organized scattered militants, developed a nexus with local tribesmen, and waged extensive guerrilla operations against coalition forces in Afghanistan until Pakistani forces began concerted operations against them in February 2004.

However, very little suggested that a small local militant movement in the tribal areas would become a full-fledged insurgent movement until a peace deal, known as the Shakai agreement, was reached between a Pakistani militant leader Nek Muhammad and the Pakistan military on 27 March 2004 in South Waziristan. The deal empowered the local militants, who later declared themselves the Pakistani Taliban, to enforce their writ in the area. The government had agreed to pull its troops out of the tribal areas, and to release all the individuals arrested during security forces' operations. In return, it received the assurance that the tribes would not allow the use of their territory against any other country, mainly the NATO forces in Afghanistan.²²⁴ In his address on the occasion of the agreement, Nek Muhammad had declared that they did not want to challenge the writ of the state but would take up arms against it if they were persecuted.²²⁵

Until 2004, the main focus of the Pakistani Taliban was to protect foreign militants, recruiting and training them for the war in Afghanistan, and securing their position against security operations. What transformed them into a major player in erstwhile FATA agencies and currently tribal districts of KP province was a tactical change in their operations: they began kidnapping security and state officials from 2004. Although suicide attacks on security forces started in 2006-07, the kidnapping strategy elevated the Taliban to a position where they compelled the state to negotiate on their terms. Over time, this became one of the Taliban's most rewarding strategies. Independent sources estimate that the Taliban kidnapped more than 1,000 security forces, personnel, and state officials in 2007, with over 500 militants being released in exchange for their return.²²⁶

²²³ Daily *Mashriq* (Urdu), Peshawar, February 7, 2005.

²²⁴ M. Amir Rana, et. al., *Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA* (Islamabad: PIPS, 2010), pp. 86-95.

²²⁵ Ibid, p. 75.

²²⁶ Ibid, pp. 89-95.

The Shakai agreement was not honoured by either side, which resulted in another military operation in South Waziristan in April 2004. It was the first time that the militants waged a massive campaign against the army in South Waziristan and got local clerics to issue *fatwas* (religious decrees) declaring Pakistan to be *Darul Harb* (literally, a territory of war) — a land where Muslims could not live with personal security or religious freedom.²²⁷ Economic sanctions imposed on tribes by the authorities further fuelled anti-state sentiment and paved the way for the militants to develop parallel systems in the areas where they held sway.

The commanders of militants from the Wazir tribe led by Mullah Nazir reconciled with the situation and preferred to focus on Afghanistan. Lashkar-e-Islam in Khyber Agency of FATA was earlier a sectarian organization but it followed the Pakistani Taliban's modus operandi, which helped the group sustain its hold in the agency. Later, it became a support group for the TTP.²²⁸

Baitullah Mehsud had united various tribal militant groups under the banner of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2007. He was killed in a US drone strike in South Waziristan in August 2009. The TTP remained a critical Taliban force from 2007 to 2014 though with varying degree of influence. It established its chapters in different agencies of FATA, Balochistan and Karachi. At a time, in 2007, it had become such a formidable force that it had established a virtual state in parts of Swat with support from its Punjab-based and international terrorist groups. The Swat operation in 2009 and the Zarb-e-Azb operation in 2014 in North Waziristan significantly dented the group whose leadership is largely believed to be hiding in Afghanistan along with its splinter groups such as Jamaatul Ahrar and Mehsud Taliban, or Sajna Group.

- *Violent sectarian groups*

Violent sectarian groups in Pakistan have proven to be strategic assets for foreign and tribal militants. These groups have networks and extensive support bases inside Pakistan and provide human resources and operational support to these groups in launching terrorist attacks. These also serve as tools in the hands of the TTP, Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network in bargaining with Pakistani institutions.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 79.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Many of the banned sectarian organizations wear political hats and take part in electoral politics, even if they do so under different names or by having their candidates run as independents or by making alliances with the mainstream political parties. These groups gain political legitimacy through these practices.²²⁹

Once a breakaway faction of the sectarian Sunni group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), now known as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) has an extreme violent anti-Shia agenda. While claiming to be a separate entity, it continues furthering the cause of the SSP or ASWJ in one way or another. The group depends on the SSP for human resources and justifies the killing of Shias in Pakistan. A small and insignificant faction within the SSP is against sectarian violence.

The LeJ had its lost central command when the police launched an extensive operation against the group in the late 1990s and later with its proscription in August 2000. These steps caused fissures within the group and led to the emergence of many splinter groups. A recently revived faction calls itself Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami (LeJ-A) or LeJ-Global and has claimed responsibility for some major terrorist attacks in 2016-17.

After 9/11, LeJ terrorists had joined the disgruntled Kashmiri jihadists, who were upset with the sudden change Pakistani state's policy to abandon jihad in the region. The nexus was further strengthened when these small groups joined Al-Qaeda and the tribal Taliban. This emerging alliance was behind almost all the major terrorist attacks in Pakistan between 2001 and 2007. Such alliances ideologically transformed the sectarian groups, injecting in them global jihadist tendencies. This was the time when the LeJ had become a tag name for small terrorist cells. Qari Hussain, a notorious trainer of suicide bombers who was killed in a drone strike in 2010, had infused new life into the group by recruiting Punjab- and Karachi-based youth and re-initiating sectarian terrorist attacks. Tariq Afridi, head of the TTP's Darra Adam Khel chapter, was the second person who revitalized the violent sectarian agenda of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and launched deadly terrorist attacks in erstwhile FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

²²⁹ M. Amir Rana, "Structural violence," *Dawn*, January 14, 2012, <http://www.dawn.com/news/688190/structural-violence>.

However, on the organizational level the LeJ has remained splintered in recent years. The Balochistan chapter of LeJ, led by Usman Kurd,²³⁰ which targeted the Hazara Shia community in Quetta, had little interaction with factions in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Seven other LeJ groups are present in Karachi and Punjab, though much weakened now, including the Attaur Rehman alias Naeem Bukhari, Qasim Rasheed, Muhammad Babar, Ghaffar, Muaviya, Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq groups.²³¹ These groups have devised their local agendas as well and indulge in local turf wars.

Some Shia and Barelvi violent sectarian groups also operate in Pakistan, but they fall in the category of reactionary groups, and do not have extensive connections with global and regional terrorist groups.

- *The new militants*

This is a comparatively new stream, which includes multiple types of militant groups and small terrorist cells. It mainly comprises breakaway factions or individuals of the two streams discussed earlier as well as self-radicalized individuals including on cyberspace. The Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), brands of Punjabi Taliban, separate Jundullah groups in Sindh and Balochistan provinces, Ansarul Shariah in Karachi, and ISIS-inspired terrorist cells, etc., constitute this militant stream.

The term 'Punjabi Taliban' refers to militant and sectarian outfits — or their breakaway factions — which once were operating in Kashmir and Afghanistan or had been involved in sectarian violence in Pakistan. The Punjabi Taliban had emerged out of the militant and sectarian landscape of Pakistan and shared a similar worldview, ideology and political and sectarian ideas.

Yet, these groups demonstrated some distinguishing features. First, they detached themselves from their parent militant organizations over multiple strategic and tactical differences, mainly after describing the leaders of their parent organizations as puppets of state intelligence agencies. The Punjabi Taliban thus acquired complete freedom from official control and maintained that they were following the true path of 'jihad'. This was despite the fact that the conventional groups opposed terrorist activities inside Pakistan.

²³⁰ Usman Kurd was killed early 2015 in an operation conducted by security forces in Balochistan's provincial capital Quetta. (Source: Amir Meer, "Killing of Usman Kurd a major blow to LeJ," *The News*, February 17, 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/24495-killing-of-usman-kurd-a-major-blow-to-lej>)

²³¹ One of the founding members of the LeJ, Malik Ishaq was killed, along with his two sons and 11 others, in an alleged encounter between police and militants in Muzaffargarh, south Punjab, in July 2015.

Secondly, the Punjabi Taliban had borrowed their political narrative from Islamist political parties but had been following Al-Qaeda's *takfiri* ideology, despite the fact that they were not formally affiliated with transnational militant groups or Islamist political parties operating in the country. Overall, the Punjabi Taliban phenomenon ushered in a new approach in the name of religion in Pakistan.²³²

The phenomenon of Jundullah is important in the context of urban militancy. In the same manner as there are many Punjabi Taliban groups, many groups are also operating under the Jundullah nomenclature in Pakistan. While the Punjabi Taliban emerged from Deobandi and Salafi militant groups, the Jundullah groups are breakaway factions of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and its student and militant wings.

With the exception of Jundullah in the Iranian Baluchistan-Sistan region – which has largely nationalistic credentials and whose militants, Iran asserts, operate in Pakistani-Iranian border areas including in Pakistan's Balochistan province – the remaining entities under this label, active in Karachi and the Peshawar valley, are of a similar disposition. With their Islamist background, they are naturally inclined towards the Islamic State militant group and like a few commanders of the Hizb-e-Islami — a JI-affiliate in Afghanistan — apparently intend to announce their allegiance to ISIS.²³³

Militants in the making are a dangerous phenomenon of this stream. Self-radicalized individuals fall in this category. Though not formally affiliated with any local or international terrorist organization, they are in search of causes that resonate with their radicalized worldview. The numbers of potential militants in this category could be large. A failure to find and join a 'proper' terrorist group can encourage them to plan and launch terrorist attacks by defining the targets themselves.²³⁴ Many religious scholars and madrassa teachers consider this segment of potential militants quite crucial as they are an important source of recruitment for militant organizations.²³⁵

²³² M. Amir Rana, "Punjabi Taliban," *Dawn*, July 9, 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/news/546022/the-punjabi-taliban>.

²³³ M. Amir Rana, "New formations," *Dawn*, September 7, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1130346/new-formation>.

²³⁴ Author's non-structured interviews with police officers in Islamabad, including Farhan Zahid, Raza Shah and Asim Gulzar.

²³⁵ Author's non-structured interviews with prominent religious scholars Maulana Ragib Naeemi, Mufti Muhammad Zahid and Dr Rasheed Ahmed in Islamabad

This threat of these self-radicalized individuals is not new and can be understood by examining the emergence of the Punjabi Taliban during the Red Mosque operation in Islamabad when militants of conventional groups started leaving their groups to join the TTP and Al-Qaeda. Self-radicalized youths had also formed small terrorist cells at that time. Many of these groups or individuals did not succeed in joining any terrorist group but were found involved in planning terrorist attacks on their own. Such small groups were quite active in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore and carried out small-scale attacks on cultural sites, girls' schools and posh markets during 2008-2010.²³⁶

Al Qaeda, ISIS and Foreign Groups

The foreign militants – mainly Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and ISIS – played an important role in transforming Pakistani groups and their dynamics. Al-Qaeda, in particular, came up with an ideological and political agenda, which appealed to Islamist militants in countries all over the world.

The Pakistani Taliban's main strength had been their ideological bond with Al-Qaeda and their connection with the Islamization discourse in Pakistan. They gained political and moral legitimacy by associating with the Afghan Taliban. Their tribal and ethnic ties provided social space and acceptance among a segment of society.²³⁷

Similarly, the breakaway factions of conventional groups became invaluable assets for Al-Qaeda as their objectives converged. The Taliban absorbed both tendencies and became agents of change in their respective areas. They felt empowered in a system where tribesmen had been the victims of colonial-era laws, political agents and *maliks*.

An operational nexus between foreign and local militant groups made both more lethal. A review of some of the high-profile attacks carried out in Pakistan suggests that four major militant formations acted in different phases to carry out these attacks; Al-Qaeda planned and strategized, the TTP provided logistic support, IMU served as operational core, and one local militant group or another facilitated the attacks on the ground.²³⁸

²³⁶ Data is derived from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' digital database on conflict and security: <http://san-pips.com/app/database>.

²³⁷ M. Amir Rana, "Why Pakistani Taliban matters?" *Dawn*, June 30, 2012, <http://www.dawn.com/news/730812/why-pakistani-taliban-matter>.

²³⁸ Author's interviews with police officers in Islamabad.

ISIS inspires many militant groups in Pakistan, and law enforcement agencies are struggling to access the capabilities of the group as contradictory developments make the group a puzzle for them. ISIS traditional allies among sectarian militant groups distanced themselves from the ISIS, which gave an impression that the meltdown of ISIS has started in Pakistan. LeJ-A distanced itself from ISIS, and emergence of Ansarul Shariah in Karachi – which not only distanced itself from ISIS but categorically declared an affinity with Al-Qaeda – strengthened the doubts about reducing appeal of ISIS in Pakistan.²³⁹ Later it appeared that ISIS had changed its strategy and was bringing the cadre of its strategic allies in its fold, rather to develop partnerships with them. The change in the approach annoyed many groups as their members started joining the ISIS. The process mainly happened in Balochistan and northern Sindh where Jundullah and LeJ militants preferred to join the group. Apart from realignment with local partners, ISIS continued forming independent terrorist cells in Pakistan. Law enforcement agencies had identified and dismantled at least four ISIS cells in 2017.²⁴⁰ The ISIS fighters' returning back to Pakistan is posing another threat. After the group's defeat, many ISIS fighters are returning to their home countries. There is no exact figure for these returning militants, but analysts believe many of them could have ill intentions.²⁴¹

According to one estimate, between 2013 and 2015, over 20,000 foreign fighters had travelled to Syria and Iraq; these fighters hailed from more than 90 countries.²⁴² According to this estimate, at least 1,000 of foreign fighters came from east and south Asia (largely from China and Pakistan). Local estimates in Pakistan and Afghanistan however put this number at much higher, in several thousands indeed. Most of these fighters, i.e. from south and east Asia, were ideologically motivated and dedicated jihadists, and not merely adventurists or instantly-motivated. Hence they are, and will be, dangerous returners.

²³⁹ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Pakistan Security Report 2017* (Islamabad: January 2018)

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2016), p. 87.

Indeed Pakistani militants had started to go to Iraq and Syria even before the ISIS emerged as a force that rocked the world. The purpose was mainly to 'defend' and support the Sunni groups and populations. For instance, the Balochistan chapter of the violent Pakistani Sunni sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) has been part of the ISIS since the latter's inception: the LeJ militants who went to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad's forces joined the ISIS. Later, it was towards the end of 2014 that Pakistani Jundullah, Karachi-based hitherto less known Tehreek-e-Khilafat movement, and some Taliban commanders²⁴³ and groups splintering from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) either supported or announced the pledge to the Islamic State group, also known as Daesh. Jamaatul Ahrar (JA), a splinter group of the TTP, also announced its support to the Islamic State in 2014 but did not declare allegiance. Similarly, members of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a group that has been closely linked to TTP in Pakistan, announced in 2014 about joining hands with the Islamic State group.²⁴⁴

Nexus And Linkages

Collaborations and nexus play an important role in determining the operational strengths of a group. This is as essential as the assets and organizational structures of the groups. The foreign militants are often ignored in threat assessments in Pakistan. But these militants play a critical role in connecting the groups and evolving operational cooperation among the militants in the country. On the threat matrix, the TTP is considered a major actor with its capacities ranging from conceiving the plan of the attack to its implementation.

There is a perception that the TTP carries out major attacks through its sleeper cells in different cities. In Pakistan, Al Qaeda or the TTP have no need to form sleeper cells as they have extensive reach across the country through affiliates and like-minded groups of the militant streams.

²⁴³ Most of these and other Pakistani Taliban leaders pledging allegiance to the ISIS later left for Afghanistan due to military operations in erstwhile FATA, where at least three of them were reportedly killed (Shahidullah Shahid, Hafez Saeed and Gul Zaman) in drone strikes in eastern Nangarhar.

²⁴⁴ The group also moved to Afghanistan after the launch of North Waziristan operation in FATA and is currently operating in northern parts of Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda's competitive edge in terrorism expertise has influenced the Taliban and other terrorist groups in the region. Al Qaeda's support in the form of improved capabilities and techniques for striking their targets was a virtual lifeline for them. Typically, the influence has impacted smaller groups who had been struggling to survive or had material deficiencies and required external help to survive. Al Qaeda has been more than willing to help them out through both ideological and operational support. The major terrorist attacks are an opportunity for smaller groups to learn sophisticated terrorist techniques.

In this context, the outline of a major terrorist attack in Pakistan may read something like this: the TTP chooses the time and the place to launch the attack. It has key assistance from Al Qaeda, which can facilitate in both planning and training for the attack. The IMU and foreign militants provide the hit squads. Sectarian terrorist groups back up the fighters in the form of suicide bombers. The TTP and Al Qaeda affiliates such as Jundullah provide the logistics and intelligence.

The State Responses

There is historical evidence to suggest that the state's threat perception hardly touches upon fundamental factors of violent and non-violent extremism and ideological radicalism that eventually feed into the menace of terrorism. Apparently that is why the successive governments since the early 2000s have largely relied on hard approaches, or the use of force, and did little to employ soft approaches of countering extremism and terrorism. Partly, some sporadic, disjointed efforts were also made at times to talk with the tribal Taliban militants, which though resulted in few peace agreements but never succeeded in terms of ending extremism and terrorism. Indeed, the militants used those peace agreements to reestablish themselves and launch fresh waves of attacks, even brutal than the previous ones.

Analysts argue that those peace agreements with the Taliban militants were also made in a security framework and ignored the political, sociocultural, economic, ideological and geostrategic root causes of the problem. Nonetheless, as cited earlier, the successive governments have been largely relying on the use of force, which is again a security perspective, of countering the threat of extremism, which some refer to as fire fighting approach. But that does not mean it has not worked at all. For instance, the most recent military operation, Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan has accomplished many things. It has eliminated the militants' infrastructure to a greater extent or pushed it to other side of Pak-Afghan border, which has resulted in a decreased number of terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. Indeed a decline in the terrorist incidents inside the country had become visible since the launch of Swat operation in 2009.

The Need to Focus Soft Approaches

As cited earlier, much of the debate on countering extremism in Pakistan revolves around countering terrorism or terrorists, leaving unaddressed the persistent factors of violent and non-violent extremism in society. That is why the state's counterterrorism actions don't have sustainable, long-term effect. The soft approaches to counter extremism are missing. A PIPS report based on consultations with 10 CVE expert groups early 2017 found that eliminating extremism – which is considered by many as a key prerequisite to counter terrorism – in Pakistan requires efforts at developing a holistic CVE strategy, covering multiple fronts. That strategy should not only focus on hard approaches, or fighting against the violent extremists, but also on developing intellectual, ideological responses to annul extremists' religious-ideological dogmas and evolving a comprehensive rehabilitation or reintegration of (repentant and ready-to-quit-violence) militants.²⁴⁵

Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP) against terrorism, which the government announced early 2015, somewhat employed soft approaches of CVE and CT, as espoused in many of its clauses such as checking religious extremism and protecting minorities; curbing the formation of violent groups (armed militias) and acting against banned groups; acting against those spreading hate speech and propaganda including on mainstream and social media; checking sectarian violence; and reforming madrassas, etc. However, judged by the tool of NAP, too, Pakistan's performance against violent extremism and terrorism has not been impressive. According to several accounts, the government has been faltering on an effective implementation of NAP measures mainly due to bureaucratic, institutional rifts and capacity issues. A Pak Institute for Peace Studies' (PIPS) report on the NAP progress in the year 2016 observed that the implementation was far from satisfactory and even former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif himself had expressed dissatisfaction over it many times during the year.²⁴⁶ Other indicators of faltering NAP implementation include continuing activities of banned militant groups including public gatherings, persisting hate speech and faith-based violence on the ground and in cyberspace, continuing sectarian and terrorist violence, and growing insecurity among religious minorities.

²⁴⁵ Pak Institute for Peace Studies, "National Strategy of Inclusive Pakistan," 2017, <http://pakpips.com/downloads/inclusive-pakistan.pdf>.

²⁴⁶ Progress on all NAP points in 2016 can be seen in Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial, "State response: anti-militant operations and National Action Plan," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (January 2017): 77-100.

The need to focus soft approaches of reducing the appeal of militant/jihadist ideologies – or expanding and effectively implementing the NAP actions – is vindicated by the fact that religious extremists – who have a history of using mainstream and their personal print media to propagate their ideologies – have recently found new avenues in form of Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to propagate and justify their violent ideologies and actions and get recruits and financial support. Internet and social media have not only increased the outreach, appeal and impact of extremist, intolerant ideologies but also made individuals, mainly youths, more vulnerable and prone to extremism as they are well connected on various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and more.

The problem is compounded by the fact that not only militants but their sympathizers and apologists also work as disseminators of extremist, intolerant and pro-jihad messages on social media platforms. These non-jihadi disseminators also include clerics and Islamic scholars, whose messages carry more appeal and credibility for common Muslim users.²⁴⁷ A 2014 study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence found that propaganda pages on Facebook could play an important role in radicalizing Muslim youths.²⁴⁸ For instance, there are frequent posts of intolerance and hatred – posts that discount the presence of Christians, Jews and different Muslim sects. Many of the online content express, openly, sympathy for ‘jihad’ and Islamist militants. An investigative report by Pakistan’s leading English daily *Dawn* in 2017 noted that 41 of Pakistan’s 64 banned militant groups were actively present on Facebook in the form of hundreds of pages, groups and individual user profiles.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ J.M. Burger and J. Morgan, “The ISIS Twitter census: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter.” Brookings Analysis Paper No. 20, March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf.

²⁴⁸ J.A. Carter, S. Maher and P.R. Neumann, “#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks,” ICSR, 2014, <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ICSR-Report-Greenbirds-Measuring-Importance-and-Influence-in-Syrian-Foreign-Fighter-Networks.pdf>.

²⁴⁹ Jehanzaib Haque and Omer Bashir, “Banned outfits in Pakistan operate openly on Facebook,” *Dawn*, September 14, 2017.

Policy Recommendations²⁵⁰

Ideological counter-responses: “Paigham-e-Pakistan” is the country’s first serious effort to develop an ideological counter-response to violent and militant ideologies, which should be upheld, promoted and transformed into a national narrative effectively. It should also be used to develop a culture of dialogue and consultation among religious scholars. The moderate religious scholars can do the job of developing counter-extremism response more effectively both in terms of reconstruction of political and religious views and contributing to a national dialogue. Efforts are also required for restructuring a non-discriminatory religious thought.

Dialogue: Apart from religious/ideological dialogue, there is also need for establishing a national-level dialogue forum, or a platform for scholars, academics, political and religious leaders and policymakers to bring the key challenges on the discussion table and to understand various viewpoints. The government should take lead to establish such platforms, which should work independently.

Culture: The government should take practical steps to build the foundation of Pakistani culture on positive cultural expression that accepts and tolerates diverse cultural identities. At the same time, it should take political and legislative measures to discourage sick customs and traditions playing out in the garb of culture.

Education and curriculum: National educational curriculum should be based on the principles of social cohesion and larger acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity. The subjects of “citizenship” and “civic education” should be compulsorily added in primary-level institutions, especially public and private schools and madrassas; and the nurturing of a good citizen in light of constitution and law, should be given central place. Also, the Constitution be gradually made part of the education curriculum. At the same time, the government should engage madrassas in a constructive and concerted dialogue on how to make these institutions of religious education places of tolerance, moderation and innovation. In 2017, the federal government came up with varying responses but one of the important developments was the finalization of the madrasa registration form, which NACTA and Interior Ministry undertook in consultation of Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaaris Pakistan; it has been sent to provinces for implementation. However, this initiative would not be enough to deal with the complex madrasa challenge.

²⁵⁰ Most of these recommendations are taken from Pak Institute for Peace Studies’ (PIPS) policy reports including printed outcomes of dialogue and consultations over CVE and CT it held over the past 2-3 years with a wide range of experts and scholars.

The government has assigned the task of madrassa reforms to the federal interior ministry, even though after the 18th Amendment, education has become a provincial subject. Yet another challenge is that provinces have either not come up with relevant legislation pertaining to education or have ignored madrassas in such legislations. It is for the provinces to take up the responsibility such as by evolving strategies for maintaining a database on madrassas, mainstreaming them and introducing curriculum reforms.

Reintegration: The government should strive to develop a comprehensive Pakistan-specific model which should engage different violent and non-violent radical groups through tailor-made programs. In 2017, a group of security experts²⁵¹ suggested a such framework, and recommended that Parliament should constitute a high-powered national-level truth and reconciliation commission, to review the policies that produced militancy and to mainstream those willing to shun violence. The policy group also recommended an institutionalized CVE exercise and expansion of deradicalization centers in prisons across the country. Currently such centers are operating under the military in Swat and tribal district of KP province but policy group recommended that the key authority to look after the centers should be with civilian law-enforcement agencies, preferably police. Professionals and moderate scholars should be engaged in the rehabilitation centers. Prison Departments, Police and its Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) can jointly launch deradicalization programs for the terrorist detainees.²⁵²

Effective implementation on NAP: To make NAP functional and effective, a group of security experts in a consultative meeting organized by PIPS in 2017 underscored that NAP should be reviewed afresh, dividing into two broader components, Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter- Violent Extremism (CVE). The first component, CT, may deal with the hard approaches of countering militancy, having more immediate effect. These include reforming policing, coordination among security institutions, acting against armed groups, curbing hate speech, choking terror finance, protecting minorities, dismantling militants' communication networks, countering the cyber spaces, reforming criminal justice system, securing borders and most importantly reforming intelligence. The second component, CVE, should deal with the soft approaches of countering militancy, producing results in the long-term. This component should include reforming madrassas, banning glorifying militants, reconciling politically with different militants especially in Balochistan, rehabilitating and de-radicalizing of different brands of militants, reforming education, re-orientating culture, reshaping media strategy, countering sectarianism and reforming judiciary.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Pak Institute for Peace Studies, "PIPS CVE Policy Brief no 2: Reintegration of militants," April 2017, <http://www.pakpips.com/article/book/national-policy-brief-2-reintegration-of-militants>.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad, "PIPS CVE Policy Brief no 4: Implementing National Action Plan," April 2017. http://pakpips.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PB_CVE4_National_Action_Plan.pdf.

Youth engagement: An overarching purpose of youth engagement programs should be to identify and consolidate ways to make youth immune to extremist narratives and ideologies, such as: mobilizing and engaging youth with existing community circles to promote harmonious values in society; and enhanced interaction and dialogue among different shades of youth including students of mainstream and religious educational institutions.

Media including social: Sensitizing the media on critical issues is crucial as media is not only a medium to transfer narratives, but it also transforms certain tendencies in people's thinking and making opinions.

Securing cyber spaces: The government should take immediate steps to prevent youths from falling into extremists' trap by securing cyberspaces. Militant groups use cyberspaces for propagating their messages, recruiting new adherents, and generating funds, thereby making the virtual world a vulnerable place for the youth. This is the area, which indeed needs effective responses both by the state and society.

Baloch separatist insurgency: Baloch separatists shall not be conflated with Islamist militants. The cause of Baloch insurgency is purely economic and political in nature, and solutions should be political too, as also acknowledged by the National Action Plan, the country's counter-terror plan.

A proper governance system: Good governance can not only prevent people, mainly youth, from falling for violent radicalism and extremism but also strengthen the rule of law and [administrative and law enforcement] surveillance. The need for good governance is required in much of the country. Bad governance leaves little trust in the government to be serious about militancy.

Regional context: A holistic review of Pakistan's strategic priorities is must to lessen the chances of any fallout on the country's internal security. This review should propose policy measures that contribute in reducing the risk of violence in the country and improving relations with neighbours, mainly Afghanistan, India and Iran.

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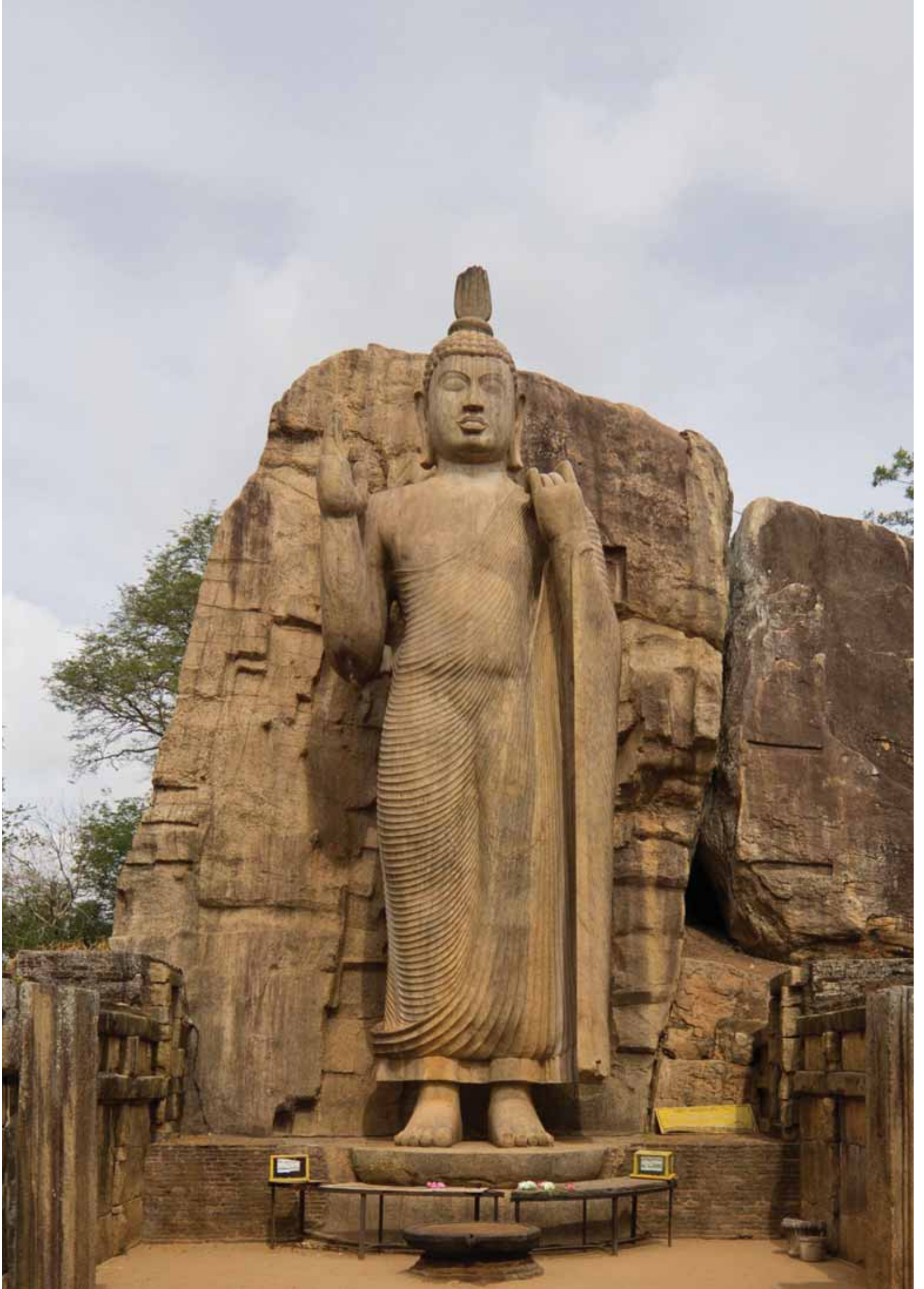
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SRI LANKA

Sabra Zahid & Aingkaran





Country Profile

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a population of 20,359,439. Its four major ethnic groups comprise; the majority Sinhalese at 74.9%, the Sri Lankan Tamils at 11.15% the largest minority, the Sri Lankan Moors at 9.3% and the Indian Tamils at 4.12%. Other groups include Sri Lankan Malays, Burghers, Indian Moors, and Veddahs. Major religions practiced are, Buddhism (70.1%), Hinduism (17.64%), Islam (7.11%) and Christianity (7.91%) (Ministry of Policy Planning and Economic Affairs, 2012). Most Sinhalese are Buddhists and Most Tamils are Hindu. However, a sizeable minority of Sinhalese and Tamils follow Christianity (Roman Catholics). Most Moors and Malays follow Islam. The Burgher population is mostly Roman Catholic or Presbyterian and Veddahs have animist and Buddhist practices.

Sri Lanka comprises of 9 provinces (the first level administrative division of the country); Northern, North Western, Western, North Central, Central, Sabaragamuwa, Eastern, Uva and Southern Provinces. The Sinhala Buddhists predominate all parts of the Island except the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The North is predominated by Sri Lankan Tamils, and the East is ethnically mixed with Tamils (slightly higher), Sinhalese and Muslims. Indian Tamils brought in by the British from Southern India around the 19th Century to work in the Plantations are concentrated around Uwa, Sabaragamuwa, and Central provinces. Whilst having a significant concentration in the East, the Muslims are generally spread throughout the country mostly along the coastal belts due to trade practices and a significant number resides in the Central Hills and North Western province. A sizeable population of Muslim IDPs forcibly evicted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) from the Northern Province around the 1990s lives in the North Western Province.

Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948 and since has been ruled by two major political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) who alternately secured majorities to form government. Incidentally, both these parties largely, excluded minorities from its party. The UNPs policies have encompassed comprehensive economic liberalization, the free market, encourage foreign investment and, is open and has friendly links with the West. Unlike the SLFP, UNP appeals less to Sinhala nationalist elements although it has been complicit with anti-Tamil sentiments during the ethnic conflict. By contrast the SLFP appeals to the rural Sinhala masses and has established and maintained close links with Buddhist clergy to carry its messages to the masses. The other parties include the Janatha Vimukthi Party (JVP), and parties such as Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK), Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), based on ethnic lines and individual group interests.

Sri Lanka is presently lead by a Coalition Government through an alliance of the two main political parties. President Sirisena came to power in January 2015, defeating authoritarian figure President Rajapakse who served two terms and is hailed as responsible for the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Rajapakse aided by his family members holding key positions of power in government set out on an ambitious development drive, building infrastructure, and beautification projects taking little to no effort at addressing the root causes of the conflict and the trust deficit between the communities (Buthpitiya, 2018). The Rajapakse era saw an emergence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist groups, led by Monks who targeted places of worship and businesses of minorities, as well as generally leading hate campaigns. Although these groups went underground after Rajapakse's defeat, recent years have seen a reemergence of these groups.

Theoretical Frameworks and Method

This study attempts to explore the following

1. Forms of radicalization and violent extremism in Sri Lanka.
2. Efforts taken by the State locally and internationally to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

In answering the two questions the report has benefited from scholarly literature on “radicalization” and “violent extremism” as well as literature on Sinhala nationalism, youth radicalization, identity, ethnic conflict, and religious violence in Sri Lanka. The report draws mainly on desk research, looking at scholarly literature, reports of the UN and other international and regional bodies, news reportage mostly covering violence against minorities. The report is also enriched with the views of few CSO actors engaged in local and grass-root initiatives, working with youth and marginalized communities who provided insight into community dynamics, underlying causes and some of the interventions taken by them. Few interviews were held with youth including some who have taken part in the government led rehabilitation program. No interviews or input were sought from leaders of violent groups or State officials, instead referring to readily available information in the public domain.

Finally, the paper concludes with a set of recommendations to the Government and Civil Society to counter extremism, particularly by working in close consultation with each other in CVE efforts recognizing that if these efforts are not well thought out, targets the wrong people and are purely repressive, it can become a grievance on its own rights creating a vicious cycle of violence.

Definitions

In this report the term violent extremism is adopted to refer to acts motivated by extremist groups – including politically and religiously inspired riots, hate speech, any kind of violence which has as its basis motivations that are deemed extremist.

Extremism on the other hand can mean multiple things, such as ideas that are fundamentally opposed to a given society's values, such as racial or religious superiority or ideologies that systematically denies basic human rights. It can also refer to ruthless methods by which political ideas are realized such as by “show[ing] disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others” (Scruton, 2007)

Radicalization is understood as the process whereby people turn to extremism. Individuals do not turn into extremists overnight nor does this occur due to a single influence, as a number of recurring factors come into inter-play, such as grievances, needs, ideas, social and political factors, and history of violence.

Counter terrorism refers to a range of efforts at thwarting terrorist plans and dismantling terrorist organisations through the arrest of suspected members, conscription, and disruption of possible attacks, travel, and logistics, countering terrorist finance, the protection of potential targets, and the pooling and exchange of data with foreign countries. These are referred to as hard approaches and the responsibility lies in with law enforcement. However, these methods may not be sufficient especially when violence is more entrenched and systematic as it fails to address processes of radicalization and leaves the root causes which maybe political, economic or social unaddressed. Countering violent extremism on the other hand counters processes of radicalization using soft approaches by seeking to mobilize and empower actors not traditionally associated with law enforcement such as community / religious leaders, social workers, teachers, civil society, etc. The aim is to create resilience among potentially vulnerable communities (prevention) and support individuals who are willing to turn away from extremism (de-radicalization). The approach is to engage all stakeholders and define the struggle against violent extremism as a collective task.

Sri Lanka is yet to define terms such as “radicalization”, “extremism”, and “violent extremism” As for “terrorism” the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) provides an overly broad definition which captures circumstances which are far beyond terrorism, including all forms of dissent and to target minorities and human rights defenders. Due to political as well as other reasons, the understanding and acceptance of these concepts differ and the terms are vaguely used in the local context to refer to past and current incidents, for instance when speaking of the JVP insurrection youth responsible are referred to as “radical” and in terms of the ethnic conflict members of the LTTE are referred to as radicalized youth turned terrorists. In the more recent past, Buddhist militant groups carrying out hate campaigns against minorities are regarded as violent extremist groups by a section of the population, civil society, and media however this is not all encompassing given that there are sympathizers of these factions who refuse to acknowledge these groups for what they are. The fact that there is no definition with qualifying criteria, has been problematic to acknowledge the prevalence of the issue and to address its multiple contributing factors.

Historical Realities

The country's history has been marred with violence due to actions of left-wing (the JVP) as well as right-wing (LTTE) groups the root causes of which are yet to be addressed. In addition to these communal violence targeting minorities have taken place targeting ethnic minorities since the late early 90s oftentimes backed by Buddhist clergy and amidst State complicity.

Marxist Leftist Radicalism: The JVP Youth Insurrection

The State's inability to address the growing economic crisis led to the growth of Marxist movements around the 1960s, of particular significance the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) made up of educated, unemployed Sinhalese Buddhist youth and the rural poor. The movement turned militant around the 1970s with the aim of achieving a socialist revolution. Attacks took place in 1971 and, 1987 - 1990 killing around 80,000 people. The State reacted by violently suppressing the group. The JVP thereafter regrouped changing their focus from class to nationalism. (Kearney and Jiggins, 1975) As part of their indoctrination program they introduced a class entitled "Indian Expansionism" which branded the up country Indian Tamils as an alien force who would be returned to India by their revolutionary government. They also refrained from engaging in political and organizational work in the Tamil areas. Through their second uprising they violently rejected the 13th Amendment (devolution package brokered with the involvement of India to provide a political solution to the Tamils) demanding the State to send back the Indian Peace keeping forces and targeting anyone who supported the devolution thereby demonstrating their violent opposition to an ethnically inclusive democracy.

The Tamil Struggle for Equality and Independence: Three Decades of Conflict

The Tamil struggle for equality and thereafter for a separate Homeland in Sri Lanka was based on ethno-linguistic lines. The root of the ethnic conflict can be traced to the post-independence era where the State implemented laws and policies to appease the Sinhala community who during the period of the British, felt marginalized from spheres of education and employment with English as the official language. The pressure to recognize Sinhala as the official language was realized in 1956 by law which was later entrenched into the 1972 Constitution, without equal recognition given to the Tamil language. The 1972 Constitution also gave Buddhism the foremost place, playing into ethno-religious divides.

Some of the other measures taken include, a new standardization policy introduced in 1971 to ensure that the number of students qualifying for university entrance in a particular language was proportionate to the number of students who sat for university entrance in that language, introduction of district quotas, colonization schemes, all of which resulted in the Tamils feeling marginalized as a minority. From the Tamils when continued negotiations by their political leaders proved to be futile this resulted in calls for greater political autonomy for the areas in which they dominate, and although a number of pacts were formulated defining the modalities of devolution of power, none of them were ever implemented due to various political pressures, leading to Tamil demands for separation instead of forms of federalism previously sought for. Ethnic riots involving the Tamils and the Sinhalese occurred sporadically in 1958, 1977, 1981 and in 1983 July considered to be the turning point of the ethnic conflict. Frustrated Tamil youth organized themselves into militant groups for the purposes of seeking independence from Sinhala domination. One such group was the LTTE. Sri Lanka was engulfed in conflict from 1983 to 2009 with intense fighting in some periods and quietened in others, with several ceasefires and failed attempts at peace leaving several thousands of casualties in both sides.

Although the end goal of the two movements were different there were some particular commonalities for instance both the movements emerged among youth, often from poor backgrounds, quite educated but dissatisfied or felt marginalized by the State. The Sinhala only act not only negatively impacted the Tamils, it further divided the rural and urban youth as non-English speaking and English speaking with the urban youth being able to access to jobs in the private as well as higher positions in the State sector. The youth who joined the JVP were mostly from monolingual educational backgrounds and therefore were largely unable to compete with the English speaking urban population. Thus, real or perceived socio-economic, and or political grievances prompted these groups to take up arms against the State which they felt were exclusionary, to realize their objectives.

Radicalization and Extremism- Current Realities

This section will; attempt to provide a picture of the post 2012 situation which saw the emergence of hate crimes targeting minorities by Sinhala Buddhist extremist elements, largely the Muslims but also against the Christians and Tamils; look at growing radicalization and extremism in the Muslim community; and look at the situation in the North and East, especially the fears of a LTTE reemergence and the emergence of extremist Hindu nationalist groups.

With the military defeat of the LTTE by Former President Mahinda Rajapakse, there was ample space to ensure democracy and the rule of law and to address the root causes of the ethnic conflict which spanned nearly three decades as well as trust building between communities. What instead happened was the manipulation of Sinhala Buddhist triumphalism by the Rajapakses to further an authoritarian regime. Sinhala Buddhist ethno-nationalism was deliberately used as a political strategy to consolidate the majority voter base. This resulted in further marginalizing the Tamil community and the emergence of a new enemy, the Muslim community (Ramachandran, 2018). This development is the most reason and damning situation plaguing the country, attacking and dividing communities, and actively thwarting any and all attempts taken in the name of co-existence and national reconciliation.

Anti-Minority Violence Led by Ultra Nationalist Buddhist Groups

Since 2012 there has been a surge in anti-Muslim violence drawing from global islamophobia as well as drawing on long standing stereotypes against the Sri Lankan Muslim community. These attacks have been carried out by militant Buddhist groups such as the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Ravana Balakaya, Mahason Balakaya, with the tacit support of the then ruling party (Hume, 2014). In 2011, a Muslim shrine in Anuradapura was destroyed by a group led by Monks, in April 2012 a mob of about 2000 Buddhists including monks surrounded a mosque in Dambulla, demanding its abolition alleging that the mosque stood on sacred grounds. Not only were the Muslims forced to abandon Friday prayers, an order was issued within days to relocate the mosque to another area. Video footage shows Buddhist monks engaging in unruly and violent behavior completely unbecoming of Buddhist monks with one monk disrobing and exposing himself to onlookers.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress in a submission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights documented 241 anti-Muslim attacks and at least 69 anti-Christian attacks in the year 2013 alone. The document provides that 51 of the anti-Muslim incidents and 15 attacks against Christians were violent, involving either physical violence against individuals or destruction of property (Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, 2011). The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka documented has documented more than 270 incident of attacks against Christians post 2015 and more than 90 in 2017 alone (United States Department of State, 2017), demonstrating that religiously motivated attacks still take place even during the present regime.

Anti-Muslim violence reached new heights in June 2014, with BBS lead attacks in Aluthgama, Dharga Town, Valipanna and Beruwela towns in southern Sri Lanka (BBC News Asia, 2014). The trigger event is said to be a traffic altercation between a Buddhist monk and three Muslim youths alleged to have assaulted the monk. The BBS held a large meeting in the immediate aftermath with its General Secretary Galabodaththe Gnanasara Thero in making a racist and inflammatory speech calling all Buddhists to act against the Muslims (Gurusinghe, 2014). Violence followed immediately after and continued for two days despite the imposition of curfew during which, three lives were lost, many were injured and Muslim houses, and businesses were looted, burnt, and destroyed. All the above attacks were carried out in the presence of the Police and other security personnel who watched without taking any action.

There was more violence in the Ampara district in March 2018 directed against Muslims alleging that a restaurant owner had mixed contraceptives in the food to its Non-Muslim Customers implying a Muslim controversy to diminish the birth rate of the Sinhalese and thereby convert them into a minority (Jayasuriya, 2018). The allegation though absurd, still managed to resonate with the local community who went on to commit acts of violence against the local Muslim community as a result of which, one mosque, three Muslim owned hotels, a grocery shop and eight vehicles were attacked. A week later violence followed in the Kandy District targeting the economic assets of the community, particularly Muslim homes, vehicles, businesses, and places of worship. It is reported that close to 300 Muslim owned businesses, shops, houses and vehicles were attacked and 25 mosques were attacked over a period of three days and nights. The trigger incident to the event in Kandy is said to be the death of a Sinhala truck driver at the hands of intoxicated Muslim youth. What is striking in all these attacks is how a trigger event caused between private individuals can escalate into large scale violence and the ability to mobilize in no time to carry out these attacks. What was common under both regimes is the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators despite the availability of incriminating evidence.

Hate Campaigns Against Muslims

Hate campaigns were carried out by the BBS around 2013, mobilizing crowds against the issuance of Halal Certificate for food and other items on the basis that it was a tool by Muslim extremist groups to divide the country (Bastians, 2013). The rhetoric spread referred to the Halal Certification as a symbol of islamification of the country. For instance, a monk is reported to have said at a press briefing “When the Muslims were just two per cent of the population, they were as quiet as kittens. Now that their population has increased, they are trying to impose their ritualistic food products upon this country. The next plan is to bring about Sharia law. Already there is Muslim banking system in the country.”

In the immediate aftermath of this campaign, the next target was the Abaya, the black garb worn by a section of Muslim women. Women who donned the dress were referred to as “Goni Billa” (frightening person in a sack) since the black outfit covered the entire body sometimes including the hands, face and eyes. On cue, women across the country were, threatened and harassed by groups including youth in broad daylight. More recently, in April of this year, a hardline Hindu nationalist group called the Ravana Senai, orchestrated a protest in Trincomalee against Muslim teachers wearing abaya in schools demonstrating that these extremist notions are held and can be mobilized across religious divides.

Another campaign that caught on fast was the Sinha le (Lions blood) campaign which in 2015 emerged as a sticker campaign displayed on private vehicles including three-wheelers, and buses. The sticker depicts the Lion brandishing a sword as in the Sri Lankan flag, with “Sinha” written in yellow and “le” in red, insinuating that one must “bleed” to protect this Sinhala-Buddhist nation. The term “Sinhale” was used during the early Colonial period to represent parts of the country that remained free of colonial rule, therefore what is envisaged is a Sri Lanka devoid of non-Sinhala Buddhists.

The campaign reached a new height when in early 2016 few Muslim houses were spray painted with the term “Sinha le” demonstrating that their main target was Muslims. Although initially there was confusion as to who was in fact behind the movement, whether it was a splinter group of the BBS, or some other movement, the leaders of the Sinha le movement held a Press Conference in early 2016 taking credit for the Campaign, and announcing the forming of their own political party “Sinhale Jathika Balamuluva (SJB) aimed at safeguarding the identity of the Sinhala people and to regenerate the supremacy and pride of the Sinhala people” (Siriwardana, 2016) A mob of priests representing SJB and their supporters stormed into a United Nations safe house to attack a group of 31 Rohingya refugees mainly women and children who had fled persecution in Myanmar who as a result had to be transferred to Boosa, a high security detention centre. The attack was even live streamed to Facebook by this group. Some counter campaigns were initiated by civil society actors in response to this such as “*ekama le*” campaign, ie same blood emphasizing the need to drown out such rhetoric and restore unity in the country but unfortunately did not have the desired effect.

Sinhala Buddhist Nationalist Groups

The instigators behind these attacks are mainly Sinhala Buddhist groups, such as the Bodu Bala Sena, Ravana Balakaya, Sinhala Ravaya, Mahason Balakaya, Sinha le etc, who more or less profess the same agenda. Whilst some groups are entirely comprised of Buddhist monks, some have lay membership. The BBS was founded in 2012 by Kirama Wimalajothi and Galagoda Atte Gnanasara, two monks originally part of a monk only political party the Jathika Hela Urumaya, who later became disillusioned with the party for not doing enough to protect Buddhism. The group received rapid prominence in the public sphere for its anti-Muslim and anti-minority stance, both online and offline. Among the BBS's objectives some include; a Buddhist society, a fearless monastic heritage, a regional Buddhist monastic headquarters, to do Buddhist work and establish the development of Buddhist temples even under difficult circumstances, Dharma publicity and building Sri Lanka's reputation, networking and cooperation for Buddhists, funding for Buddhists, protection and building of Buddhist businesses/entrepreneurships, to guard Buddhist archeological sites and to protect and face the challenges against Buddhism. Although they may not appear sinister on the face of it, given the background for instance the espousing of violence to further their cause, these objectives are truly damning.

Groups such as the Sinhala Ravaya, Mahason Balakaya are lay groups who have taken to social media to spread their anti-Muslim messages to the masses and thereby have built their support base, which can be easily mobilized. For instance, the Kandy-Digana riots were orchestrated by the Mahason Balakaya which used their social networks to organize and carry out attacks. At the time of writing it appears the Sinhala Ravaya website has been taken down. According to its Facebook page, its objectives are to act as a security force to protect the Sinhala race and Buddha Sasana, to work towards the progression of the Sinhala Buddhist race, to act towards protecting the Sinhala Buddhist identity, and to work on the international propagation of Buddhism. A number of such groups exist on social media although few have been taken down in the recent past with the intervention of Facebook, post Kandy riots. A closer inspection of these groups including their followers would demonstrate that many are also supporters of the former Rajapakse regime, especially Gotabaya Rajapakse who is seen as a true Buddhist leader and has Presidential aspirations.

Gotabaya Rajapakse, who initially denied any links to the group, finally openly showed support for the BBS by attending the opening ceremony of the its Leadership Academy as its chief guest in 2013 where he hailed their work as “nationally important” (Jeyaraj, 2013). As previously stated, many of the attacks were carried out within sight of law enforcement authorities who merely watched without taking any action against perpetrators either out of fear of confronting the clergy or due to orders from above. For instance, the violence in Kandy took place after a state of Emergency was declared and a curfew was imposed. The present regime too though promised to take on extremism, have failed to take hard measures against perpetrators given that the ideologies of these groups are shared by the majority, whose support is crucial if the Coalition is to remain in power.

Emergence of Hindu Nationalism

The emergence of groups based on Hindu nationalism is a recent phenomenon in Sri Lanka, given that the Tamil struggle for autonomy was based on ethnicity than religion to include Tamil speaking Christians also in the struggle and not limiting it to the Hindus resisting attempts by certain groups to do otherwise. In 2016, a group of Hindus launched Sri Lanka's first ever Hindu Right wing organization called "Siva Senai" (Lord) Shiva's Force), the aim of which is to "protect Hindus from threats from other religious groups". According to its leader Maravanpulavu Sachithanathan, the organization was launched after consultations with organizations in India, such as the Shiv Sena, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishva Hindu Parishad, and the Goa-based Hindu Jana Jagruthi Samithi. Sachithanathan is reported as having accused the state of supporting "Sinhala-Buddhist colonization" further stating that "conversion is becoming serious concern for us [Hindus]." According to him "Hindus alone have no support" whilst the island's Muslims were being funded by countries such as Iran and Iraq and Christians receive Western missionaries' support. This group's main bone of contention lies with the Muslims and their practices (Srinivasan, 2016). A recent protest was organized by this group in May 2018 against the slaughtering of Cattles, with the participation of Buddhist monks claiming that Sri Lanka belonged to nobody but Hindus and Buddhists. At the protest Sachithanathan made statements such as "If you conform to our traditions you can live. Otherwise, leave. Who are the owners of beef stalls? Are they sons of the soil? Do they belong here? No, they are people who came here yesterday or the day before." (Fernando, 2018). Given that both Buddhists and Hindus consider the cow to be a sacred animal, there is the possibility of the cause drawing more sympathizers which in turn could unite these groups against the Muslims who are considered the largest beef retailers and consumers of beef in Sri Lanka. However, as at present, support for the group is at a minimal, and the Tamil political leadership has criticized the group for its communally divisive rhetoric.

Fears of A LTTE Resurgence

In the recent past in the wake of certain incidents such as gang violence (Rubatheesan, 2018), discovery of arms and ammunition and LTTE material such as uniforms in the hands of former cadets have raised fears in the possibility of a LTTE resurgence in the Northern Province. Activists from the area commenting stated that they were unable to confirm these allegations yet, as these could be either attempts to justify and further consolidate the presence of the military in the North and East or attempts by certain Diaspora groups to cause instability in the area. On another note, as is visible in the South, in the North too, youth are frustrated with the political alliance, and their support to the moderate Tamil political party seems to be fading as the understanding is that the party is too compromising and are not doing enough to secure their rights. In light of this, youth are in fact aligning with groups whose politics are divisive and are promoting extreme solutions. The heavy military presence, the lack of justice and accountability for the human rights violations that they faced, and the slow socio economic development in these areas for themselves and their families, further exacerbate and adds to the growing frustration of the youth in these areas. Former combatants who took part in the government led rehabilitation program expressed that despite the training offered they are unable to find jobs as no one is willing to employ them, just as their communities are unwilling to accept them. They also spoke of uninformed visits by the Intelligence and the pressure to act as informants which adds to the mistrust they face from their communities.

Radicalization of The Muslim Community

Despite being recognized as one homogenous group, the Sri Lankan Muslim community comprises of multiple ethnic groups, sects, different madhabs (schools of thought), and is further splintered into different groups based on ideology. This plurality has resulted in divergent practices of Islam, according to different interpretations of Islamic sources particularly the Quran and the hadith. Groups from the middle east especially Saudi Arabian wahabism has greatly influenced the Sri Lankan community since 1950s, of particular significance is the Thawheed Jamat group which later splintered into sub groups such as Dharul Adhar, Dharus Salaf, National Thawheed Jamaat, The All Ceylon Thawheed Jamaat, Sri Lanka Thawheed Jamaat and so forth. There is intense competition among these groups, each attempting to outdo the other in terms of piety, branding their version of Islam as the correct version, which has resulted in conflicts at times (Faslan and Vanniasinkam, 2015).

The recent times has seen an apparent visibility of Muslims in all parts of Sri Lanka which gives rise to the fears among non-Muslims particularly, the Sinhalese of a sharp rise in the Muslim population. The allegation though unsubstantiated could be due to the sudden visibility of Muslims through religious identity markers such as the black abaya with the nikab (face veil), thobe/jubba (long flowing garment worn by Muslim men), long beard sported by men, all uncommon practices since in the past Muslims dressed in traditional Sri Lankan attire. This sudden adoption of attire from the Middle East is a recent phenomenon seen in the last decade or so. In addition to attire, madarasas (Muslim schools), elaborate mosques, Muslim financial institution and businesses adds to this visibility aspect. This change is not stand alone, it is accompanied by an ideology change, which rejects traditional Islam (as practiced in Sri Lanka) towards a more “pure” form of Islam opting to subscribe to a Global Islamic identity. The radicalization of the community can be gauged from religious sermons made by religious leaders during Friday prayers, where emotive language is used to speak of the persecution of Muslims locally and globally, discouraging Muslims from integrating with other communities, encourage the adoption of visible identity markers, the promotion of spiritual education (as opposed to secular education) in segregated spaces, restrict women from public life, and adopt a very rigid interpretation of Islam which in practice does not resonate well with local ways.

The radicalization is more pronounced by the tactics adopted by religious leaders in preventing women from entering politics and the efforts taken at preventing the reforming of Muslim family laws which are archaic and discriminatory towards women, and towards this it is apparent that the extremist views of the community has an impact towards their own community as extremist leaders have used religious platforms to target Muslim women activists engaged in law reform efforts as well as women contesting at local government elections (De Sayrah, Wickrematunge, 2018).

In October 2016 four men from Puttalam district were arrested for beating a 25 year old woman 100 times with a coconut frond as a punishment for having an affair with a man. The sentence was carried out at a local mosque. Although reported as an isolated incident, since it took place in the premises of the mosque, it is hard to say whether more incidents of this nature, does in fact take place in the peripheries by various groups in violation to the secular laws of the country as these happen in small closed communities. On another note, there exists demands by groups that the Muslim family laws be brought in line with Sharia, which is a troubling demand given that the call is by groups who hold extreme and rigid views based on narrow interpretations of Islamic law and who are against modernity, individual liberty and pluralism.

Existence of Jihadi Groups, ISIS Fighters

A study “Fracturing Community – Intra-group relations among the Muslims of Sri Lanka”, commissioned by the International Centre for Ethnic studies rejects the existence of jihadi groups in Sri Lanka. The study notes,

“On interviewing several Thablighi, Thawheed and Sufi representatives, it was found that while there is talk among discontented youth about espousing jihadi practices, these are just idle youth responding to the global trend in Islam, but with no motivation or the means to make this a reality. Local organisations such as mosque federations are also monitoring the community and nipping such ideas in the bud. The ACJU, Shoorā Council, and local Mosque Federations confirmed that there are no Islamic Jihadi groups in Sri Lanka.” (Faslan and Vanniasinkam, 2015)

The very fact that there exists discontented youth “espousing jihadi practices” should be a cause for concern. Rejecting the existence of jihadi groups merely because “the ACJU, Shoorā Council and local mosque federations” said so is a problematic position to take when individuals from these groups have held extremist views.

News reports emerged around July 2015 of a man, Mohamed Muhsin Sharhaz Nilam, who had left Sri Lanka to Syria around January of the year, was killed in an air strike on July 25. He was identified as being a member of the ISIS (Bureau of Counter Terrorism, 2017). The man prior to leaving Syria, used to be a Principal of a school, and also taught English and karate in schools which no doubt gave him access to youth. In January 2016, the Defense Secretary reported that approximately 36 Sri Lankans had traveled to Syria with some joining the ISIS (Bureau of Counter Terrorism, 2017). The then Justice Minister in 2016 similarly announced in Parliament that approximately 32 well educated Sri Lankan Muslims had joined ISIS in Syria. If this is so then there is obvious cause for Sri Lankan authorities to be concerned about. Similarly being geographically close to the Maldives known to be a recruiting paradise for jihadists, Sri Lanka should be a bit more vary of the ground situation.

Discussion on Underlying Causes

A discussion of “why” extremists do what they do is important towards understanding and designing strategies for countering and preventive measures on the long run. Conventionally two main categories of drivers have been identified; push factors, i.e., conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which they emerge; and pull factors, or the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. While these factors don’t work in isolation and not all those who are exposed to these elements are radicalized or resort to violent extremism, these variables either directly or indirectly play a role in leading individuals or groups to violent extremism. Lack of socioeconomic opportunities, marginalization and discrimination, poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law are considered push factors. The grievances of JVP youth, leaders and supporters of LTTE, ultra nationalist Sinhala Buddhist groups have as their basis real or perceived sense of deprivation arising out of socio economic and or political factors. Where discriminatory laws and policies disfavoring particular groups, scant regard of human rights of minorities, impunity for crimes committed against groups etc exists there is fertile ground for extremist groups to exploit communities who are looking for alternatives. ‘Pull Factors’, in contrast, nurture the appeal of violent extremism at the individual and psycho-social level.

For example: violent extremist groups may be a source of services and employment. Groups may attract new members by providing outlets for grievances, the promise of hope, justice, and a sense of purpose. This social network can be a significant pull factor for youth as extremist groups offer youth a sense of acceptance and validation (UNESCO, 2016). In the local context we have Sinhala Buddhist nationalist groups using religious beliefs, historical narratives, to turn communities against each other and to attract youth towards their ideology of a Sinhala Buddhist nation. Just as there are faith and community leaders who promote messages of peace, and tolerance, there exist leaders who use the platforms they have to spread messages that have the potential of dividing communities and causing strife based on distorted interpretations of religion. Stakeholders such as political leaders, community and religious leaders, media and other groups who have a crucial role in promoting tolerance most often for various reasons capitalize on the visible fault lines for their own vested interests.

This section will attempt to look at the underlying causes of these trends, which has allowed these narratives to develop and multiple and find popular support, and see particularly the role of the State, the level of State complicity which has created an enabling environment for these groups to operate.

Historical Legacies and Narratives of Victimization and Existential Threat

The ethno-religious identity forms the very essence of the Sinhala Buddhist identity and forms the core of the nationalist belief that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country. This belief is entrenched from a very tender age via the school curriculum with historical accounts of stories of kings and their contribution to Buddhism, battles between Sinhala Kings and Kings from South India, the Muslim trader, the independence struggle and the role of the minorities, all depicted in the form of, good vs. bad, us vs. them. This has evoked in the Sinhala Buddhist a sense of entitlement as the true hosts of the land and the minorities as the guest or the other (Gunatilleke, 2018). It is presumably due to this that although a majority does not espouse violence against minorities, they do not openly condemn it either.

The Mahavamsa, a historic chronicle written by a Buddhist monk, Mahanama around 6th century AD, sheds important light into how the Sinhalese view themselves in relation to this land. The Mahavamsa refers to Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhalese “Sinhala-deepa” and the land of Righteousness or Buddhism “Dhamma-deepa.” The Mahavamsa claims that the “Sinhala” (lion people) an Aryan clan from North India was the first to arrive in Sri Lanka and that Prince Vijaya’s arrival on the day the Lord Buddha died denotes Sri Lanka a sacred land predestined to be the repository for Buddhism. K M De Silva writes,

“This was to become in time the most powerful of the historical myths of the Sinhalese and the basis of their conception of themselves as the chosen guardians of Buddhism, and of Sri Lanka itself as ‘a place of special sanctity for the Buddhist religion’. This intimate connection between the land, the ‘race’ and the Buddhist faith foreshadowed the intermingling of religion and national identity which has always had the most profound influence on the Sinhalese.” (De Silva, 1981)

Similarly, the narration of a battle between King Dutugamunu and King Elara (a Tamil Chola King from South India) is significant in that the monks attempt to pacify King Dutugemunu for killing over 60 000 men in battle, by stating that since non Buddhists were “not more to be esteemed than beasts” he should not worry. In this light, many ultra nationalist Buddhists believe that the passages in the Mahavamsa permit war if it is committed in defense of the dharma (dharma yuddhaya) and has been used to justify violence in the name of Buddhism from the Colonial period till now. Throughout history religious and ethnic minorities have been targeted by these elements under purported guise of defending the Sinhala Buddhist hegemony.

Under the British rule, with the eroding of the heightened status given to Buddhism, and the perceived marginalization of Sinhala Buddhists due to the spreading of Christianity, and the status given to English language which in effect placed them in disadvantaged positions in the education and employment fields saw mobilization of these groups and a new call for the revival of Buddhism, a campaign spearheaded by Anagarika Dharmapala and other nationalist voices to “restore Buddhism to its rightful place”. Muslims too due to their dominance in the economy were resented by a section of the Sinhalese-Buddhists who considered them as outsiders. As per Dharmapala, Muslims were “alien invaders” who used “Shylockian methods [to become] prosperous like the Jews.” They had become prosperous at the expense of the “sons of the soil,” i.e. the Sinhalese, he said. All these narratives have culminated into a sense of victimhood, where the Sinhala majority feel that they have been oppressed from the time of the British era and now at present by various minority groups, resulting in what is known as the inferiority of the majority. So the language that is spoken or the acts that are perpetrated is not seen only as a form of vengeance for past wrongs but as a necessary defense by individuals who feel that they are fighting for their very survival, identity, land and so forth.

The Role of Buddhism and The Buddhist Clergy

The link between the State and Buddhism has existed since the rule of ancient Kings where the counsel of Buddhist monks were sought in official matters, and the Kingdom took an active role in promoting the spreading of Buddhism.

Saffron clad Buddhist monks have been in active politics since independence, therefore Buddhism in Sri Lanka is a heavily politicized religion. Similarly, politicians seek patronage of Buddhist clergy and Buddhist groups at elections, public events as well as for popular causes and it goes without saying that the Clergy plays a huge role in shaping public opinion. In light of this, these groups play a dominant role in spreading anti minority sentiments, and preventing reconciliation initiatives between communities. For instance, the constitutional reforms process which entertained ideas such as meaningful power sharing, removing the special status of Buddhism, were vehemently opposed by these elements as well as reconciliation efforts from the set up of the office on Missing persons to the other proposed mechanisms on Truth, Justice, and Reparations.

Interestingly although many of the attacks against the minorities in recent times have been waged in the name of Buddhism, on a closer inspection shows that where physical attacks are carried out most often Muslim businesses, shops and property is being targeted. The rhetoric that is spread is that Muslims are dominating the economy, and the high birth rate of the Muslims could mean that in the years to come Muslims will outnumber. This goes to show that in reality although Buddhism or religion is used as a cover for a struggle that is in fact driven by completion over territory, resources, and power and religion is merely the way in which grievances are expressed and used to mobilize masses.

Discriminatory Laws and Policies of The State

This relationship between Buddhism and the State was given constitutional protection when Buddhism was afforded the “foremost place” in both the 1972 Constitution and the 1978 Constitution. Article 9 of the present Constitution specifies

“ The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10²⁵⁴ and 14(1)(e)²⁵⁵. ”

In 2008 a circular was issued by the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious affairs requiring all places of worship to be registered under the Ministry, and even though the circular was revoked in 2012, the police until recently relied on this circular to shut down or relocate places of worship of minorities.

Sinhalization is referred to as the State sponsored settlement of Sinhalese communities in areas generally dominated by other ethnic groups with the aim of changing the demography in those areas. The Gal oya settlement programme in the 1950s prompted riots in 1956 between Sinhalese and the Tamil. In early 1970s the government started to bring Sinhala communities from the deep South to Puttalam, providing settlers with land under the Land Reform Act drastically changed the demography of the area – where Muslims used to be the majority. This steady Sinhalisation had caused severe deterioration in Sinhala-Muslims relation prompting riots in early 1976 following an altercation between a Muslim porter and a Sinhalese bus conductor resulted in moving of the bus stand from the Muslim area. This was followed by a shooting incident: firing at the Jumma mosque in which 18 Muslims were killed. Later the violence had spread to other areas in Puttalam. Hundreds of houses and shops belonging to Muslims were looted and destroyed; and Muslims living in villages around Puttalam had to flee their homes in fear of further attacks. This Sinhalization reached new heights post war with several families settled in the North, supported by local monks and spearheaded by the Military who are planting Bo saplings (has religious significance to the Buddhists), and building Buddhist temples in Tamil dominant areas including in areas where there are no Sinhalese.

The above coupled with other laws and policies enforcing Sinhala Buddhist dominance has resulted in treating the minorities of this country as second class citizens by limiting their space in politics, and public life, opportunities for higher education and upward mobility and demonstrating that the human rights of these groups are secondary to that of the Sinhala Buddhist majority.

²⁵⁴ Every person is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

²⁵⁵ 14 every citizen is entitled to (e) the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching;

Other Factors

Although low socio-economic development of communities has traditionally been recognized as a driver in the Sri Lankan context it is not so much these conditions as relative deprivation and frustrated expectations have played especially in youth, who have been exposed to globalization, have educational qualifications although they may not be beneficial in the job market and or due to social or political discrimination are unable to realize their aspirations. This can result in anger and resentment among youth, and with a lot of free time on their hands, is ample space for radicalization. The JVP insurrection, Tamil separatist groups, and groups backing violent groups are dominated by youth who are frustrated, who have felt betrayed and are looking for vengeance or even adventure.

On another note given that extremist movements in Sri Lanka enjoy a degree of support by significant segments of the majority population, the present coalition government is finding it increasingly difficult to keep up its promise to end extremism. There is an increasingly need or paranoia by the government that it needs the support of nationalist elements or those who support the agenda of these groups there as a result of which there is less political will to fight extremism.

Networks: Local and International

Religious right-wing religious extremist groups spreading hate and violence in Sri Lanka are well networked and allied with similar organizations abroad sharing similar ideologies even though sometimes they may come from different religious backgrounds.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National General Secretary Ram Madhav, the then national spokesman of the RSS at the height of anti-muslim violence in Sri Lanka around 2013, noted in Samvada that “the issues raked up by the BBS are worthy of active and sympathetic consideration”. BBS General Secretary is reported to have admitted in 2014 ongoing discussions with the RSS on a Buddhist-Hindu ‘peace zone’ in the region to combat the “growing threat of radical Islam.” BBS CEO is reported to have confirmed that informal discussions were held with a couple of people in the RSS and spoke of the need to work closely with the BJP and RSS.

Moreover, the BBS has close links with the controversial 969 movement in Myanmar led by Ashin Wirathu (known as the Burmese Bin Laden) responsible for attacks against minority local Muslims (Sirilal and Aneez, 2014). The two forces got together in Sri Lanka in 2014, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the motive of creating a South Asia free of terrorism and religious fundamentalism. In light of this regional cooperation with these countries is critical to monitor, assess, and take steps to circumvent the threats these networks can pose.

Existing Legal Frameworks

The Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1977 was enacted in response to the ethnic conflict in the North, yet the State is reluctant to prosecute extremist speech by ultra nationalist Buddhist groups despite falling within its purview. On a cautionary note, the Act has been severely criticized due to its arbitrary nature and failure to comply with basic human rights standards by local and international rights groups. This however has not prevented arrests of Journalists, Human Rights Activists and opposing voices under the act.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act enacted in 2007 too has provisions²⁵⁶ which covers hate speech which has only been resorted to only very lately to, charge offenders, post to a Circular in 2017 from the Inspector General of the Police to the Police OICs.

Sri Lanka has sufficient laws in place to prosecute those responsible for inciting and carrying out violence but the problem is one of lack of enforcement as majority of offenders are able to act with impunity. One exception to this is the recent arrest of the BBS General Secretary Gnanasara in relation to a case where he threatened a prominent human rights defender and for contempt of Court. The initial sentence of 6 month Rigorous Imprisonment was extended to a period of 6 years on appeal, however a final appeal lies with the Supreme Court. Although the arrest was not due to incitement or leading communal violence against minorities of which there are several incidents and evidence publicly available, the sentence was hailed as a victory by the Muslim community as well as wider civil society. However, the monk is yet to start serving his sentence having admitted himself to the Hospital for surgery and in light of pressure from certain sections for a presidential pardon, only time will tell how this scenario will play out in the future.

Overall, the Government has significantly failed in taking at least what could be considered a minimum step by prosecuting offenders which could serve to demonstrate that it is serious in effort to create an enabling environment for its minorities to live in. Time and again the State has failed to retrospect on historical accounts of violent extremism and take wholehearted efforts at addressing root causes. Imposing bans on social networks (as in the aftermath of Kandy violence), steps to enact new laws victimizing entire communities based on the actions of a few as has been the case will only be counterproductive to CVE efforts.

²⁵⁶ Section 3: "No person shall propagate war or advocate national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence."

Policy and Program at The Local, National and International Level

This section will look at how Sri Lanka has attempted to address radicalization and violent extremism at the local as well as through engagement at the international level.

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism directs Member States to draft their own national plans of action stated as the key goal of the Action plan. However, Sri Lanka is yet to draw up a national action plan. The closest attempt at a domestic framework is the post war rehabilitation programme referred to as the 6+1 formula with components of education, vocational training, spiritual growth, recreational activities, psycho social counseling, and exposure to society, community and family as well as preparing the community to accept these groups in order to transition ex- combatants into civilian life. This framework is limited to address only LTTE radicalization and does not include youth who sport other radical ideologies.

On paper it paints a good picture, however, ground realities would indicate otherwise with the number of youth getting into gang violence, realigning with extremist groups and the high rate of suicide prevalent in the area. Despite its good intentions, rehabilitated individuals are still finding it difficult to return to their communities, find employment, and lead normal lives leaving space for the perpetuation of this cycle.

It is evident that the government's efforts have been limited and falls short of dealing with radicalization and extremism driven by other groups and ideologies especially with regards to taking on Sinhala Buddhist extremism which has had devastating consequences in the recent past.

Resolution 2178 encourages member states to "engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies" to counter violent extremism, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. UN Secretary-General's plan of action on preventing violent extremism emphasizes the need for member states to "develop joint and participatory strategies, including with civil society and local communities, to prevent the emergence of violent extremism." There is no Ministry focused on CVE efforts although ministries such as Ministry of National Integration, Reconciliation, and Official Language and Ministry of Justice, and others exist that could fall within the ambit of the issue.

The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation set up in 2015 conducts certain initiatives to build national unity and reconciliation and includes conflict transformation programmes bringing communities together for dialogue and discussion, “sahodara pasal initiative” bringing together schools from different provinces for sharing and learning, the promotion of tri lingual policy, peace education and other programmes to celebrate cultural diversity with cross collaboration with Civil Society. Similarly the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has taken certain measures demanding that perpetrators of anti-minority attacks be investigated and punished, and are taking more incisive roles in countering extremism. Some civil society efforts exist such as the appointment of District inter religious committees by the National Peace Council to work on improving religious and ethnic tensions and contributing to peace and reconciliation, training and exchange programmes by the Afriel Youth Network bringing together youth including Buddhist monks and former combatants for experience sharing, dialogue and collaboration on reconciliation and ethnic harmony, and other leadership programmes targeting grassroot youth providing them opportunities to take part in political life.

Sri Lanka is a member state of The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Thailand and the Member States have expressed their strong commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Countering Terrorism and Transnational Crimes remains one of their focus areas, and the body has appointed sub groups on i) Intelligence Sharing, ii) Human Trafficking and Illegal migration iii) Legal and Law Enforcement Issues iv) Combating Financing of Terrorism and v) Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substance and Precursor Chemicals and these groups are said to be meeting regularly to discuss frameworks of cooperation in their respective fields. This body could be beneficial given the Membership of Myanmar and Thailand, Buddhist countries where similar forms of ideological groups exist and could serve as an ideal platform to engage in CT and CVE efforts. Some other regional bodies include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) are some of the regional platforms Sri Lanka is party to that have objectives of countering terrorism and securing peace. These regional bodies will do well by expanding their focus to tackling extremism, adopting shared definitions and work together to identify drivers and develop best practices.

In addition to the United Nations, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), an informal multilateral counterterrorism platform comprising 30 members, including India and Pakistan, has identified the need to develop multidimensional responses that balance preventive and reactive actions and emphasize engagement with civil society actors to address the wide spectrum of threats posed by sympathizers, supporters, and active participants of violent extremism and terrorism. This would be a useful platform for Sri Lanka to enter into and engage with member countries strategically.

Given Sri Lanka's history of radicalization of youth of various communities and the resort to violence to achieve those means, it is high time for Sri Lanka to prioritize an agenda for CVE recognizing and acknowledging the seriousness of the issue as well as formulating legal and policy frameworks towards countering violent extremism in the long run. Towards this, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

To Government

- **National Action Plan:** Formulate a strong national action plan, defining aims and objectives, establishing priorities, allocate a leading Ministry to take the lead in implanting the action plan, set up linkages between other key ministries, institutions, and other stakeholders defining roles and responsibilities, work towards identifying drivers of radicalization and violent extremism, adopting holistic approaches to countering trends taking into account socio-economic and political considerations. Allocate sufficient funding to implement the action plan. Ensure that in the design of action plans, consultations are held with range of actors including civil society and be guided by international frameworks. The national action plan to be a fluid document so as to be able to cater to new and emerging trends.
- **Evaluations:** Periodically evaluate all programs set up to counter extremism. Conduct a through an independent evaluation of the rehabilitation programme for former Ltte carders.
- **Prosecution:** Prosecute those responsible for instigating and carrying out acts of violent extremism, including those from the clergy. Enforce existing legal frameworks specifically the ICCPR Act, to prosecute offenders. In the event new laws are being introduced, ensure that the provisions are not drafted too broadly, which could result in the abuse of these laws to prosecute human rights defenders, media, etc.
- **Prisons and detention centers:** Expedite cases of political prisoners who are held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Repeal the PTA. Ensure prisons and detention centers are safe, guards are well trained, and inmates are provided spiritual and psychological support.
- **Discrimination:** The treatment of all citizens across divides as equals through the amendment of, constitutional provisions, laws and policies that are discriminatory towards various groups. Law enforcement and other officials should be sensitized to enforce and implement such laws and policies without being victimized for doing so. Strict implementation of the language policy, especially in the areas where administrative language is Tamil.
- **Extremism abroad:** A mechanism to monitor violent extremist influences from abroad, both online and offline.

- Trust building initiatives: between different communities to encourage, and to foster ethnic and religious harmony. Programs targeting potentially vulnerable youth such awareness raising programs targeting, creation of safe environments for youth to air their grievances and to discuss and debate issues through democratic means.
- Religious leadership: Strengthen engagement with the religious leadership, and to ensure State approved training courses, and the sermons are pre-approved, human rights compliant, and do not spread divisive and communal rhetoric and in fact encourage pluralism and co-existence. Ensure separation of Clergy from politics and law making. Address impunity enjoyed by the clergy and direct law enforcement authorities to take action against the clergy.
- Education: Reform school syllabus ensuring same history texts are taught to students from all communities, incorporating incidents of the recent past devoid of biased and emotive language, as a simple narrative of events, allowing students to form own opinion. Promote critical thinking for school children to enable them to reject and counter radicalization and to become part of the solution.
- Administer compulsory secular education, closely monitor all other institutions providing alternative forms of education, and to ensure components of regular national curriculum are included. Prohibit segregation of schools along religious and language divides promoting interaction across ethnic religious and language divides. Train teachers to detect and respond to radicalization and establish procedures for dealing with potential cases swiftly and appropriately.

To Civil Society

- Work together with the government in CVE efforts, from designing and implementation of a national action plan reflecting local needs.
- Engage communities and youth across the divide in programs promoting co-existence and diversity. Engage mainstream religious leaders to reclaim the narrative, rejecting extremist acts, spreading messages of co-existence and peace and in identifying and engaging vulnerable groups.
- Pushback against extremist online content through counter and alternative messaging, engage with vulnerable groups online.

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THAILAND

Shintaro Hara





Introduction

This paper explains the ethno-religious nature of the armed conflict in the southernmost part of Thailand²⁵⁷ between the Thai government and the insurgent groups, describing themselves as the Patani Liberation Movement, in order to demonstrate that they are different from transnational jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda, ISIS or Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) whose purpose is to establish a global or trans-regional caliphate. There are ostensible similarities between the Patani Liberation Movement and these transnational jihadist groups, i.e. their being Muslims, forging a jihad and using violence. However, these similarities are only at the surface, and there are fundamental differences in each aspect. They are different in their ideologies, platform, objectives and network. In this paper, the author try to demonstrate that the conflict has no connection with Islamic extremism, and how the government policy and the peace process, or opening up the political space for dissidents are crucially important in order to prevent radicalisation and influence of extremis from the outside world. In the last part of this paper, certain possible scenarios are described for the introduction of extremism, both for Muslims and Buddhists of the country.

The discussion in this paper is supported by the literature of the conflict study in the southernmost part of Thailand, government documents, documents provided by members of the organisations in the Patani Liberation Movement, and a series of interview conducted by the author with a wide range of local actors as well as several members of the Patani Liberation Movement who live in Malaysia. Due to the very shadowy characteristic of these organisations, only some members of these organisations are available to be interviewed. Considering the security concerns, interviews of the active combatants from these organisations in the conflict area were not attempted.

²⁵⁷ The conflict area spread in the three provinces located in the southernmost part of the country including Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, and four districts inside the Songkhla Province. The region also is called as 'Patani' (with just one 't', while the name of province is spelt with two 't's), but this term is not officially recognised by the authority.

The Significance of The Conflict

After the armed conflict in Aceh and Mindanao is coming to end after the peace accords between the local non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the governments were agreed, the armed conflict in the southernmost provinces of Thailand which erupted at the beginning of 2004 and continues to this day, is the deadliest one in Southeast Asia. By the end of 2016, nearly twenty thousand violent incidents were reported in this region, which have claimed more than 6,500 lives, mostly civilians, and injured nearly thirty thousand people, with some of them left with serious disability²⁵⁸. It also created a number of widows and orphans, and pushed local population (mainly Buddhists) out of the region. Despite the seriousness of the conflicts' impact on the local people's life, it has been systematically underreported by media, partly because of the Thai authorities' attitude to see the conflict as its internal problem in order to prevent international interventions. Apart from this, the violent incidents are relatively sporadic and the numbers of casualties are probably not high enough to attract the attention from the international media²⁵⁹. However, the significance of this relatively unknown conflict shouldn't be overlooked, given the fact that such a large number of deaths and injuries, added with the impacts on the local people's life, have been happening in a relatively small area of less than 15,000 square kilometre (three province and a half compared to the rest of 73 and a half provinces of Thailand). This area is dwelt by less than two million people, and this means that, from 2004 until the end of 2016, roughly one out of every 300 local people is killed.

²⁵⁸ Deepsouth Watch. (2017), ความขัดแย้งชายแดนใต้ในรอบ 13 ปี: ความซับซ้อนของสนามความรุนแรงและพลังของบทสนทนาสันติภาพปาตานี (รายงานประจำปี 2559) p.3. Available at: https://deepsouthwatch.org/sites/default/files/blogs/attachment/deepsouthconflictin13years_th.pdf [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁵⁹ For the summaries of the violent incidents each month, see <https://deepsouthwatch.org/th/dsid>

Legal and Social Background

Thailand is a Buddhist country in its essence. The 2017 Constitution, the 20th constitution of the country²⁶⁰, introduced by the military government which staged the latest coup d'état on 22 May 2014 put the religion in the unprecedentedly prominent position as the state religion. Following Section 67 of the constitution, Theravada Buddhism should be supported and protected as 'the religion observed by the majority of Thai people for a long period of time'²⁶¹. However, the same section also demands that the state should 'support and protect Buddhism and other religions', and freedom of religion is guaranteed. The Section 31 says "A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles" although within the limitation that "it shall not be adverse to the duties of the Thai people, neither shall it endanger the safety of the State, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals". Although Theravada Buddhism is guaranteed its special status as the state religion, other sects of Buddhism also can be practiced as long as abiding to the aforementioned conditions.

Thailand also hosts a large population of Muslims which forms the biggest religious minority of the country with 12 per cent of the entire population, or 7.5 million people²⁶². Muslims can be found in most provinces, and out of 77 provinces, as many as 40 provinces have their own Provincial Islamic Council. This indicates that these provinces have a significant number of Muslims whose religious affairs must be dealt with the council. On top of these provincial committees, there is the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand that is led by a Sheikh al-Islam (Sheikhul Islam, or *Chularachamontree* in Thai) of Thailand as the advisor to the King on Islamic affairs²⁶³.

²⁶⁰ For a concise explanation on the history of Thai constitution, see Kittipong T. (2017). With 20 constitutions, Thailand joins a select league. *The Nation*, [online]. Available at: http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/big_read/30316132 [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁶¹ Constitutionalcourt.or.th, (2017). The Constitutional Court of the Kingdom of Thailand Official Website. Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Available at: http://www.constitutionalcourt.or.th/occ_en/download/article_20170410173022.pdf [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁶² [Thaiembassy.org/riyadh](http://www.thaiembassy.org/riyadh). (No date of publication). The Royal Embassy of Thailand, Riyadh, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Official Website. Muslim in Thailand. Available at: <http://www.thaiembassy.org/riyadh/th/organize/29025-Muslim-in-Thailand.html> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018] However, it must be noted that the percentage and number of Muslims in Thailand greatly differ from one source to another.

²⁶³ This position was first created by the Ayutthaya Kingdom and occupied by Shi'ite Muslims of Persian descendant. Later this position was restored after the Islamic Organ Administration Act B.E. 2540 (C.E. 1997) was legislated. Since then the position has been occupied by Sunni Muslims. For the history and role of Sheikh al-Islam of Thailand, see Yusuf, I. (No year of publication). *The Role of Chularajmontri/Shaikh al-Islam in Resolving Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand* - The

Among all parts of Thailand, the Southern Part of 14 provinces has the biggest Muslim populations, with the four southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun of the highest density of Muslim population. On average 80 per cent of the local populations in these provinces are Muslims.

The armed conflict in Patani or the southernmost part of the country spread in Patani, Yala, Narathiwat and a part of Songkhla Province, which also borders with Malaysia. Satun Province on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, bordering the northern states of Malaysia, on the other hand hasn't been involved in the current conflict because of the historical and political differences with the rest of the southern border provinces²⁶⁴.

In terms of the religious practices of Muslims, there is hardly any interference from the state. This is among the causes of the diversity in the forms of Muslims' faith in Thailand. There are several distinctive Muslim groups in Thailand, namely, eclectic and traditional Sunnis, Sufis, Salafists, Tablighs and Shias.

The overwhelming majority of Muslims in Patani are the eclectic and traditional version of Sunni school. They are forming layers of multiple networks of schools, mosques and religious leaders. *Pondok* schools, the traditional form of Islamic education, led by a headmaster called *baba*, can be found everywhere in the region. At present majority of these schools have been transformed into private Islamic schools or *madrasah* by adopting the academic subjects as have been required by the government, but these schools are still called as *pondok* by the local population. Most mosques in the region also have a religious school for primary schoolchildren called *tadika*²⁶⁵. These traditionalist Sunni Muslims in Patani are called 'old school' (or *kaum tua* in Malay and *khana kao* in Thai).

Human Security Dimension. Available at <http://humansecurityconf.polsci.chula.ac.th/Documents/Presentations/Imtiyaz.doc> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁶⁴ For the anomaly of Satun, see Conlon, K.T. 2012, *Ethnic Violence in Southern Thailand: The Anomaly of Satun*. M.A. thesis from Naval Postgraduate School, California. https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/7323/12Jun_Conlon.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁶⁵ A *tadika* in Thailand is not a kindergarten, as the term implies in Malaysia or Indonesia.

Another prominent group is the Salafists²⁶⁶ who are called as ‘new school’ (or *kaum muda* in Malay and *khana mai* in Thai). In practice the cutting line between the old school and the new school is not very clear. Although the majority of the local population in Patani identify themselves either the old or the new school, there are a number of Muslims who are in-between. The eclectic nature of the old school has been declining after the wave of global Islamisation, making the old school more resembling the new school than any time before. Nevertheless, we still can observe the factional division between these two groups in many aspects of the local peoples’ life, including politics, business, education and most noticeably, religious practices.

Although the number of Salafist Muslims in the region is far smaller than Sunnis, their active involvement in certain fields including business, education, media and so on, makes them easily noticeable. For instance, Fathoni University in Yala Province, the only private Islamic university that is registered under the government, is founded by Dr Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, one of the most significant leaders of the Salafists in the country who is described as the firebrand of Wahabism²⁶⁷ in 1998, first as Yala Islamic College²⁶⁸. College of Islamic Studies in Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, is described as the outpost of Lutfi’s university²⁶⁹. Such official status of higher educational institutions dominated by Salafists makes a clear contrast with the counterpart run by Sunni Muslims. Jamiah Islam Syekh Daud al-Fathoni (JISDA), also located in Yala Province, was founded five years earlier than Fathoni University. However, this tertiary educational institution established by Sunni Muslims hasn’t been acknowledged (and accordingly supported) by the Thai government to this day. When new buildings need be built, the institution had to organise a fund raising event at the end of April 2018, which accumulated more than THB 9 million²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁶ This group doesn’t have a distinctive name for themselves, but several different names are applied by the other groups, especially Sunnis, including reformists or Wahabi(sts). While Salafists and reformists are acceptable for them, the majority of them disagree with being called as Wahabi. They are also locally called as *ore Brao* (people of Brao), after a name of the village where the *pondok* school run by Islamil Lutfi is located. See Joll, C. (2011). *Muslim Merit Making in Thailand’s Far South*. Springer Science & Business Media. pp. 64-66.

²⁶⁷ McCargo, D. (2008) *Tearing Apart the land*. Cornell University Press. pp. 21-23

²⁶⁸ The history of Fathoni University from the university’s website (in Thai). Ft.u.ac.th. (2015). Fathoni University Official Website. ประวัติความเป็นมาสำนักงานสภา. Available at <http://www.ftu.ac.th/main/th/organization/academic/สำนักงานสภา.html> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁶⁹ McCargo, *ibid*.

²⁷⁰ Firdaus, R.M. (2018). Mengenal JISDA, Universitas Masyarakat Muslim Patani Thailand Selatan. Available at: <https://www.islampos.com/mengenal-jisda-universitas-masyarakat-muslim-patani-thailand-selatan-83118/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

The new school is far more accommodating to the state and Thai-ness than the old school which persistently sticks to Malay-ness. Almost all religious forums or lectures delivered by old school scholars who are called as *ustaz*, a loan word from Arabic in Malay which means 'teacher', are in Malay, while most of the similar events organised by the new schools are in Thai, and speakers (religious intellectuals) are called as *ajarn*, a Thai word which means a lecturer, a term which is hardly ever used by the old school for the same purpose. The posters of religious events by the old school often have Malay words either in the roman script or the jawi script, but most posters for the events of the old school are dominantly in Thai.

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that while the Salafists in Patani, the minority among the Muslim population, choose to collaborate with the state for their own survival, the Sunni traditionalists in Patani are trying to keep distance from the government in order to preserve their ethnic identities. Under the current circumstances, the Salafists are the least susceptible group to radicalisation, because they are the most benefited from the collaboration with and the supports from the state²⁷¹. For the state, this condition is partly beneficial for the national security because the radicalised Muslims are from Sunni, while the state can put Salafists whose religious ideology demonstrates more similarities with transnational jihadism under the state control.

Apart from these two prominent groups, the other groups also exist in Patani, but the number of the followers is much smaller than the two prominent groups.

²⁷¹ For Further discussion about the relation between Salafism and the local conflict in Patani, see Melvin. N.J. 2007 Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency. SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/39867/SIPRIIP20.pdf> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

Historical Background

Patani was a kingdom which kept a high degree of independence during the Ayutthaya period, and sent tributes to Ayutthaya every three years as the sign of the recognition of the Siamese kingdom's dominance. In 1785, after the newly established Chakri dynasty defeated Patani, the region began to be gradually integrated into the Siam (and later Thai) governance. However, the history of Patani under the Siamese and Thai rule is a history of rebellions. In 1808 Patani was divided into seven small administrative zones called *hua muang*, with each *hua muang* was governed by a local raja. The early attempts of fighting against Siam were led by these local aristocrats. After the Anglo-Siamese Treaty was concluded, Patani was entirely integrated into the Siamese rule, and the local small rajas were removed from their positions, replaced by the governors appointed by Bangkok. However, the resistance by Malay Muslims in Patani still continued.

The period after the absolute monarch in Thailand was abolished in 1932 was a crucial period to determine the struggle afterwards which continues to this day. Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddeen, a son of the last raja of Patani, Tengku Abd Kadir Kamaruddin, established an organization called GEMPAR (Gerakan Melayu Patani Raya, or the Great Patani Malay Movement) in Malaysia to lobby with the British so that Patani should be included in the British Malaya (and a part of the new independent state after the war). However the organization dissolved after Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddeen died on 19.. when he was 45 years old. The death of Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddeen can be seen as the end of the Patani aristocracies' role in the anti-Siamese colonization movement.

At about the same period in Patani, the very first mass movement for the rights to self-determination or a high degree of autonomy in Patani was led by a charismatic religious leader, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir. He submitted 7 demands for high autonomy in Patani, none of which was accepted by the government. Later he was arrested and imprisoned. After his release, in 1954 he was abducted by the police and enforcedly disappeared. His whereabouts is unknown to this day. This is the end of the mass movement in Patani. Since then, from 1960s onwards, the struggle of Patani people mainly took the form of the underground insurgency.

The Insurgent Organisations in Patani

The very significant characteristic of the Patani Liberation Movement since 1960s to this day is its fragmentation. In a leaflet called "The Liberation Movements in Patani", published in 1986 issued by the Information Bureau of Islamic Liberation Front of Patani (explanation about this organisation is given in the following part of this chapter), the author, Nasir Salahuddin, mentioned as many as seven groups which were active at that time. Because of its underground nature, the accurate number of the existent organisations at this moment is still unknown. However, the recent development after the inauguration of the Patani Peace Dialogue Proces has made these organisations far more accessible, especially to the media and academics, and information on them more available. Currently there are four main organisations, all of which are taking part in the peace process.

After GEMPAR was dissolved, the second most influential person in the organisation, Tengku Jalaludin Tengku Abdul Muttalib, a son of the last raja of Saiburi (one of the seven provinces in Patani) established the very first Patani insurgent organisation called Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP, the Patani Nasional Liberation Front) in 1959. This organisation had a strong military wing led by a commander called Pok Yeh (or Bapa Idris), and most military operations in the region during 1960s and early 1970s were conducted by them. In 1978, after the founder passed away, under the leadership of Ustaz Azudin Abdul Rahman the organisation discarded military operations to this day. The name of the organisation was also changed from Barisan Nasinal Pembebasan Patani to Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani (BIPP, Patani Islamic Liberation front). Many leading members of the organisation were educated in Middle East.

At about the same time with the establishment of BNPP, another organisation, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (BRN, the Patani Malay National Revolutionary Front) was founded on 13 March 1960. The main components of this organisation were local religious leaders, such as headmasters or teachers in traditional religious schools (*pondoks* and *madrasahs*), many of whom graduated from Indonesia. Among the famous founding fathers of this organisation were Ustaz Abdul Karim Haji Hassan (the alleged founding father of the organisation), Haji Harun (the founder of Thamwitthaya Mullanithi School, the biggest private Islamic school in the region located in Yala Province), Haji Amin Abdul Kadir (or Haji Amin Tohmeena, a son of Haji Sulong and the third president of the Patani Provincial Islamic Council), Ustaz Mat Bong (an Indonesian educated religious leader) and so on. This organisation has gone through splits and reunion which seems to continue to this day. BRN is also believed to be responsible for the most violent incidents in the latest surge of insurgency in Patani since the beginning of 2004.

Eight years after BRN was founded, on 22 January 1968 another organisation called Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) was formed in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. This organisation was established by Kabir Abdul Rahman (or locally known as Kubira Kotanila), joined mainly by Patani Malay diasporas in Middle East and south Asian countries like Pakistan. As an organisation founded outside Patani, the organisation has been the most active one in diplomacy. PULO established a relationship with such countries as Libya and Syria, where the organisation sent young members to study there. Most current leaders of the organisations graduated from these countries. The military operation started eight years after the establishment in 1976. According to a senior member the mass demonstration in Patani in 1975 held in the Pattani Central Mosque for 45 days was an important catalyst for the organisation to change its strategies in the struggle²⁷². This group was dominant in its military operations since 1980s until well into 1990s, but after two prominent leaders, Haji Ismail Thanam and Haji Daud Thanam were arrested in Malaysia and extradited to Thailand, the military operations drastically went down. Like BRN, PULO also experienced split, and until quite recently there were three PULOs, i.e. PULO-MKP (Majlis Kepimpinan Parti, the Party's Leading Council) led by Kasturi Mahkota, PULO-DSPP (Dewan Syura Pimpinan PULO, PULO's Consultative Leading Council), led by the late Abang Kamil (also known as Nur Abdul Rahman) and PULO P4 (Pertubuhan Persatuan Pembebasan Patani, the name of PULO in Malay) led by Samsudin Khan. After the leader of PULO-DSPP, Abang Kamil passed away in October 2017, the post was taken by Lukman Bin Lima. In May 2018, the two PULO factions, i.e. PULO-DSPP and PULO-MKP made a decision to unite together, by using the name of organisation as PULO without any additional letters behind.

After about two decades, on 1 January 1990 Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani (GMIP) was officially established by Chekumae Kuteh, a religious leader graduated from Indonesia. According to Chekumae, his organisation is the very first one which started urban guerrilla warfare which targeted the security forces (the army, the police and the volunteer defence corps called *or sor*), because having its own military force in jungles were too expensive. Currently the organisation has its office in Kuala Terengganu, the capital of the Trengganu state in Malaysia.

Apart from this, there is another organisation called Majlis Perwakilan Rakyat Melayu Patani (the Patani Malay People's Representative Council) which claims to be the Government in Exile of Malay Muslim Nation of Patani, led by Wahyuddin Mohammed. This is the remnant of the defunct umbrella organisation for the Patani Liberation Movement called BERSATU, established on 31 August 1989. It was joined by BIPP, BRN-Kongress (a military faction of BRN at that time, now defunct), Gerakan Mujahidin Patani (the Patani Mujahidin Movement, the forerunner of GMPI) and PULO.

²⁷² Interviewed in Kelantan, Malaysia in June 2018.

Although the name of the umbrella organisation means 'unite', it was beleaguered by internal disputes, and in the end all the member organisations left BERSATU. At first it only can be joined by organisations, but after it had lost its influence, it began to accept individuals as members and changed the name from BERSATU to MPRMP. The current president, Wahyuddin Mohammed, claimed that all other organisations should be under the command of this umbrella organisation. However, to what extent this organisation still retains its influence in the conflict area is unclear.

In interviews with members of the Patani insurgent organisations, no clear answer about the actual number of each organisation has ever been given to the author. As the result of the high degree of fragmentation, these numbers are unlikely to be very high. Apart from this, revealing the actual number which cannot be very high will not be conducive for their strategies too. The estimation also varies from one source to another. A BRN leader explained that each province should have one thousand trained fighters. It could be possible that at the initial stage of the conflict since 2004 they might have the military force close to this number, as the number of incidents during this period indicates. However, the current number must be much smaller due to the attrition after the elongated warfare and the difficulties faced by the organisation in recruiting and training new soldiers, and the decline in the number of violent incidents in the recent years is in accordance with this assumption.

One of the significant aspects which shouldn't be neglected is the existence of the sympathisers to these organisations whose number is even more unclear. Unlike the struggle during the previous century when remote forests and mountainous regions were the main battle fields, the current surge of violence since 2004 are mostly staged in towns or villages. Such an organised modus operandi would be impossible if the military operations conducted by the insurgents were not supported by the sympathisers.

The Ideology

The lack of unity that is a chronic problem of the Patani insurgent organisations is not caused by fundamental differences in ideology, but it has been the problem related to the power struggle within and among the organisations. Internal power struggles could be fierce, which might lead to the split of an organisation or the assassination of political rivals inside the organisation.

Despite such continuous internal conflict, the ideologies upheld by these organisations are remarkably similar. These ideological aspects are crucially important in order to understand their motives in the use of violence. As is mentioned before, there are three similarities between the insurgent organisations in Patani and transnational jihadist organisations, i.e. they are both Muslims, waging a jihad and using violence. However, a close scrutiny into the ideology of the Patani Liberation Movement reveals fundamental differences between them.

An ex-BRN member revealed that in his organisation the core of his organisation is summarised in the first three letters of Arabic alphabet, i.e. *alif*, *ba* and *ta*. Each letter corresponds to a Malay word. *Alif* is for *agama*, the religion, and in this context it means Islam. *Ba* is the first letter for *bangsa*, the nation (or ethnicity). Here, the term *bangsa* means *bangsa Melayu*, i.e. Malays. The third letter *ta* stands for *tanah air*, which means homeland, and in this context it refers to Patani²⁷³.

PULO, since its establishment in 1968, has the core concept called *Ubangtapekma* (or sometimes called *Ubangtapakma*). This is the abbreviation of four Malay words. The first three words are identical with the *alif-ba-ta* of BRN, i.e. *U* is for *ugama*²⁷⁴, *bang* for *bangsa* and *ta* for *tanah air*. The last part *pekma* stands for *perikemanusiaan*, humanity²⁷⁵, so that the struggle would win international recognition, and at the same time as the guideline of the struggle too. PULO, he said, is against the Siamese colonisation of Patani which they regard as cruelty. Therefore in their struggle they cannot follow the colonisers' suite. Such ethno-religious concept of the struggle is shared by all the existing insurgent organisations in Patani, including BIPP and GMIP.

²⁷³ Interview with an ex-BRN member, Narathiwat, December 2015.

²⁷⁴ The Malay word for religion has two different pronunciations, i.e. *agama* and *ugama*. However, if the term is written in the Jawi script, a form of script adopted from Arabic alphabet with 5 or 6 additional letters, the spelling is the same (اگم), as the first letter *alif* is used for two sounds, either /a/ or /u/.

²⁷⁵ Interview with a PULO-DSPP leader, Kuala Lumpur, March 2017.

Agama or *ugama* in this context is Islam. But the question is what kind of Islam is meant by these organisations. As is explained above, there are two prominent Islamic groups in Patani, i.e. the traditional eclectic Sunnis and the Salafists, whose dividing line is not necessarily very clear. All the insurgent organisations are Sunni in principle. A senior member of BIPP said, “We will never accept a Wahabi as a member”.

Another indicator of the insurgents’ being Sunni is the connection with local *pondok* schools which are the bastions of the traditional eclectic Muslims. People believe that BRN had been led by Sapaeing Baso, an ex-head master of Thamwitthaya Mulanithi School, the largest Islamic private school located in the Yala city. When he passed away in January 2017, a prayer for his soul was organised in the school, attended by nearly 3000 local Muslims.

Sukri Hari, one of the BRN members who join MARA Patani, the umbrella organisation for the Patani Liberation Movement which is currently engaged in the Peace Dialogue Process with the Thai government, also used to teach in this school.

The person who is generally believed to be the current leader (or at least one of the top leaders) of BRN is Dunlloh Waemano, or locally called as Pok Su Loh²⁷⁶. He was a headmaster of a *pondok* school called Pondok Jihad (or Rongrian Jihadwitthaya in Thai), located in Pattani Province whose land was seized by the authority after the allegation that the precinct of the school had been used by insurgents for their military training²⁷⁷.

In a newsletter called *Luahan* published by Patani Human Rights, which was shown to me by a senior PULO-DSPP member as their own publication, a headmaster of a *pondok* school called Haji Yakkob bin Abdullah (or known among the locals as Babo Kob) was introduced as ‘a *ulama* (religious intellectual) who joined the struggle of PULO’. According to the same newsletter, he closed his *pondok* in order to join PULO and lead a military force of the organisation called Sri Hikmah.

From the explanations above, it is clear that the version of Islam followed by the insurgent organisations is the traditional eclectic Sunni, with a strong connection with the local religious schools.

The term *bangsa* can mean ethnicity, folk, people, nation etc. In the context of the Patani Freedom Movement, this term means Malays (born) in Patani. The senior GMIP member mentioned that Malays in Patani all embraces Islam, so here the term is used in its ethno-religious way.

²⁷⁶ See “The New Face of Terror Emerges in South” by Abdulloh Benjakat and Wassana Nanuam, from Bangkok Post, published on 18 August 2017.
<https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1308087/new-face-of-terror-emerges-in-south>

²⁷⁷ Hara, S. a. (2016) An Extraordinary Event of Ordinary People: the Story of the Fund Raising Event for Pondok Jihad Part 1. Available at: <https://prachatai.com/english/node/6048> [Accessed 8 Sep 2018], Hara, S. b. (2016). An Extraordinary Event of Ordinary People: the Story of the Fund Raising Event for Pondok Jihad Part 2. Available at <https://prachatai.com/english/node/6134> [Accessed 8 Sep 2018]

This aspect of *bangsa* is among the most crucial point in their struggle because the Thai government doesn't acknowledge any other ethnicity than 'Thai'. Instead, they are all called as 'Thai Muslims'²⁷⁸. As the nationality, this is certainly true, but the problem is that in their identity card and all the governmental registration, if somebody fills the space for 'ethnicity' as 'Malay', the document will never be accepted or properly processed. In practice, therefore, the Malay ethnicity (like other ethnicities in the country) is officially denied by the government.

In some cases, the process of 'Thai-nisation' of ethnicity is almost automatic. When the author (married to a Patani Malay Muslim woman) applied for the birth certificate of the children who were born in Thailand, the ethnicity of them was already printed as 'Thai', like that of their mother. Under the current system, this automatized allocation of ethnicity is already very common. Anthropologically such a generic labelling of ethnicity is completely unacceptable. From the insurgents' (and those who have the same view with them) point of view this is the denial of their Malay ethnicity which they are very proud of.

There are Muslims of other ethnicity in Thailand, including in Patani. However, according to the senior GMIP member, they are not regarded as Malay, but called by their ethnicity such as Arabs 'Kabul' (the term locally used to refer to Muslims from South Asia), etc.

The notion of *bangsa* is not only connected with *agama* (Islam), but closely related to the third concept which is represented by the term *tanah air*, motherland. The basic concept of Patani is the area governed by the old kingdom of Patani in the past which, at present, is put under the Thai administration²⁷⁹. Chapter 7 of BRN's constitution is titled as 'Wilayah Perjuangan', which means 'the (geographical) area of the struggle'. It has only one article (Article 13) that says, "The area of struggle covers the entire region of Malays occupied by the Siamese colonisers."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Jory, P. (2006). From "Patani Melayu" to "Thai Muslim" in ISIM Review, Vol. 18, Autumn 2006. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/15604736.pdf> [Accessed 8 Sep 2018]

²⁷⁹ In its glorious era, the Patani kingdom is believed to expand its influence into at least a couple of states in Malaysia, i.e. Kelantan and Terengganu.

²⁸⁰ The original text in Malay (in the jawi script, transcribed into the roman script): Wilayah perjuangan meliputi seluruh wilayah Melayu yang ditakluki oleh Penjajah Siam.

One of the BRN members joining MARA Patani who was a combatant of from the military wing explained that the salute he was taught in his *tadika* school was like the military salute, with four fingers straight, except the thumb which is folded. According to him, the four fingers represents four southern border provinces (Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun), while the folded thumb is for a half of Songkhla Province which is regarded as a part of Patani. Although in his organisation there is no member from Satun Province, he thought the province was still ideologically included as a part of Patani because of the high percentage of Malay Muslim population there.²⁸¹

On the cover page of a leaflet called *Ringkasan Pengenalan Pertubuhan PULO* (A Short Introduction of PULO), issued by the Information Bureau of PULO (*Badan Pengenalan PULO*), a picture of Patani is printed which covers the four provinces mentioned above. In a conversation with a PULO-MKP leader, he explained that ideologically Satun is still included as a part of 'the area of struggle' of his organisation too, although he acknowledged that currently it no longer has active members from the province.

Therefore, Satun Province is not included as a part of Patani, at least in the context of the current surge of the armed conflict.

The districts in Songkhla Province which are regarded as a part of conflict area by the authority (therefore put under the enforcement of the Internal Security Act) are four, i.e. Thepa, Chana, Sabayoi and Nathawee. In a document submitted by BRN in the previous round of the peace dialogue process in order to explain their five preliminary demands for the negotiation, BRN explains that the part of Songkhla which is included in Patani is five. Apart from four districts mentioned above, it also includes Sadao District.

Therefore, the current area of struggle for the Patani Liberation Movement is consists of three provinces and some (four according to the Thai authority or five according to BRN) districts of Songkhla Province.

This geographical definition of Patani is tightly combined with the ethno-religious elements to shape the core of the Patani Liberation Movement's ideology to justify the *jihad* in Patani.

²⁸¹ Interview with an ex-BRN combatant, November 2016, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The *Jihad* in Patani

The root cause of the Patani Liberation Movement's struggle is the colonisation of Patani by Siamese/Thais. The Thai government, on the other hand, see the governance of this region as perfectly legitimate and justifiable. Therefore, when the former chief of BRN's dialogue panel, Ustaz Hasan Taib, called Thais as 'Siamese colonisers (*penjajah Siam*)' in the Youtube video clip posted on 26 April 2013 by a user called Muhammad Abdullah²⁸², it caused a great shock in the Thai society because they had never thought that a part of their country was regarded as a colonised or occupied area. For the insurgents, this is the war of liberation. The form of *jihad* in Patani is seen by the insurgent organisations (and their sympathisers) as a religious obligation (*fardhu 'ain*) for every Patani Malay.

However, the insurgents who firmly believe that they are engaged in the fight to liberate Patani from 'Siamese colonisation' had to face a big challenge to fight against the coloniser whose 'coloniser-ness' is far less noticeable than the colonisers of Southeast Asia in the past such as British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, American and Japanese.

The 'coloniser-ness' of Thais is far less prominent compared to them. They came to this region from the sea, but the 'colonisers' of Patani came from the adjacent land. A political leader of BRN once told the author that, "If Patani had been colonised by British or Japan, the struggle would have been much easier because they don't look like us. Our difficulty is that we have to fight against the coloniser who came to Patani by land. They look like us and their culture is similar to ours."

From the information above, compared to the pan-nationalistic cause of struggle in Malaysia or Indonesia before these countries achieve their independence after the World War II which could be joined by practically everyone who identified themselves as Malaysian or Indonesian, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, the nationalistic concept of the struggle for independence in Patani has been narrowed down by excluding the participation of non-Patani-Malay-Muslims.

This aspect of the ethno-religious struggle combined with the geographical limitation influence the membership of the insurgent organisations too. The explanations provided by the ex-BRN combatant are revealing.

²⁸² The first statement of BRN delegates on Youtube. Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melau Patani. (2013). Pengistiharan Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XzxHyvRu1U&t=144s&list=PLrM47BD0wmQbc58KuiOh93CXjqg-vHdmx&index=2> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

Although he had never seen any written regulation about the membership, he firmly believed that only Patani Malay Muslim can join the organisation. Being Malay in the context of Patani automatically means being a Muslim. However, just being a Muslim is not sufficient to gain the membership. Therefore Muslims from other region of Thailand such as the other provinces of the southern part, Chiang Mai or Bangkok are not qualified to join. Since he joined the organisation to this day, he had never met anyone who was from provinces outside Patani.

He was first recruited by his seniors in the *pondok* school he attended. In the school there were students from provinces outside Patani. Some of them were the descendants of the war prisoners from Patani when Patani was defeated by the Siamese army in the 18th century. They were ethnically Malay. One day he noticed that those who had been recruited were all from Patani. He had a close friend from Bangkok in the school who had been in Patani for many years, fluent in Patani Malay, and most importantly, shared very strong antipathy against the Thai government. He asked his senior why the boy wasn't recruited. The senior said, "He can't know. He's from Bangkok."

This principle of taking only those Malay Muslims who were born in Patani is shared by all the insurgent organisations. For this reason, even someone was born in Patani as a non-Muslim, and converted to Islam later in his life, he will not be accepted by the Patani Liberation Movement. The ex-combatant of BRN also explained, "We have to check the family background before we recruit someone. So someone from a Patani Malay Muslim family whose father is a police officer, for instance, will never be approached too."

Currently a number of the insurgent leaders live in other countries, especially in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Sweden, and they have their families there. The descendants of these exiled Patani societies are also not accepted too.

From the explanation above, it becomes clear that the *jihad* in Patani is basically a struggle to liberate Patani from the condition which the insurgents and their sympathisers regard as the Siamese colonisation. Thus the *jihadism* in Patani can be explained as a *jihad* of Patani (as a geographical entity), by (Malay Muslims in) Patani and for (the freedom of) Patani.

Such a highly *jihadised* version of the ideology for the struggle is one of the main reasons for the misunderstanding that the insurgents in Patani form a branch of the radicalised transnational jihadism. However, the geographical limitation is significantly important to differentiate the Patani Liberation Movement from the transnational jihadism²⁸³.

²⁸³ For the term 'transnational jihadism' to refer to the radicalised interpretation of Islam used by such terrorist networks like JI, Al Qaeda and ISIS, see the International Crisis Group. (2017). Jihadism in

As is explained above, the concept of *jihad* in Patani is basically nationalistic and ethno-religious which has no relation whatsoever with the establishment of a global caliphate as has been advocated by the transnational jihadism. A GMIP leader clearly explained that their struggle is to liberate Patani, and they will “never claim Bangkok. It’s theirs (belonging to Thais: author). We only demand what belongs to us” because “our jihad is in Patani, for Patani.”

Satun Province which is ideologically still included as a part of Patani, no violent incident has been reported in the province since the eruption of the unrest in the southernmost provinces since 2004. The insurgent leaders share the same view on the province. According to a BRN political leader and a senior leader of BIPP who were interviewed separately explained the status of Satun Province in a similar way. They explained that Satun is a de jure part of Patani, but in practice, there is no member from the province any more. No military operation is planned or conducted too. Therefore, the future of Satun Province depends on the aspiration of the people who live there. “If we achieve independence or autonomy in Patani, and Satun wants to join, we welcome them. But if they want to remain outside Patani as a part of Thailand, we also respect their aspiration.”²⁸⁴

Apart from this, the conflict in Patani is not regarded as a religious war by the insurgents. This is the point insisted by all the informants interviewed by the author. From statistics, it is clear that in the conflict both Muslims and Buddhists have been victims of the violence. The BRN senior member mentioned above explained that in Islam it is prohibited to deny and attack other religions.

Neither destroying Buddhism nor expelling Buddhists from Patani is their purpose.²⁸⁵ On the other hand, they are ready to accept the Buddhists born in Patani as the people of Patani as *kafir zilmi*, i.e. non-Muslims who acknowledge the governance of Muslims.

Southern Thailand: A Phantom Menace. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/291-jihadism-southern-thailand-phantom-menace> [Accessed 8 Sep 2018]

²⁸⁴ Interview with a senior BIPP leader in Kelantan, Malaysia, March 2017

²⁸⁵ Although ideologically this might be true, but as the consequence of the intensive use of violence, the number of Buddhist population in the conflict are has been dwindling. Interviews with Buddhists activists, Yala and Patani, July 2018.

Even though the conflict itself is nationalistic in nature, in principle it is not a resistance against another ethnicity. The BRN's political leader interviewed by the author acknowledged that not a small number of the members hated Siamese/Thais, especially after they themselves had gone through arbitrary detentions or had family members killed by the security forces, ideologically speaking the member of the organisation couldn't hate Siamese in order to pursue the struggle, "because if you fight against Siamese because of hatred, but you bump into good Siamese, your fighting spirit will wane. We don't fight against Siamese because they are Siamese or Buddhists. Only that in our place all the colonisers are ethnically Siamese and religiously Buddhists." For this reason, "as soon as they stop colonising us, we also have to stop fighting against them."²⁸⁶ Hating Siamese is, according to him, against the party's guideline.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Interview with a political leader of BRN in Terengganu, Malaysia, March 2017.

²⁸⁷ All the insurgent organisations regard their own organisation as a party, which is in essence political.

What Are They Fighting For?

All the insurgent organisations state that their ultimate purpose of the struggle is to achieve *kemerdekaan* of Patani. This term *kemerdekaan*, derived from the root word *merdeka*. Generally this term is translated as 'independence', but it also can mean freedom, liberty and liberation. In the context of the Patani Liberation Movement's struggle, the term is usually used to refer to the independence of Patani. However, its core meaning in the struggle is 'liberation from the Siamese colonisation'. According to a senior BRN leader, "If Siamese had accepted the seven demands from Haji Sulong, BRN would't have to exist." Therefore this liberation can also take a different form from independence, including a high level of regional autonomy.

After the commencement of the peace dialogue process, on 22 April 2013, a number of banners with the same message written in Malay in the roman script were hung in public places. The message goes, "Kedamaian takkan lahir selama hak pertuanan tidak diakui."²⁸⁸ The translation is "Peace will never come unless the sovereignty is not acknowledged." The term *hak pertuanan* in its minimal sense means ownership. But in this context apparently the insurgents meant the sovereignty of Patani Malay upon the land of Patani. In other words, *hak pertuanan* is meant as the right to self-determination. Because of the fact that these banners were set up in less than two months after the peace dialogue process in which BRN took part, the most likely perpetrators were BRN members or sympathisers. When interviewed by the author, a BRN ex-combatant acknowledged that.²⁸⁹ The explanation of the term *hak pertuanan* provided by the BRN's political leader explains their position in the struggle well.

They are like a group of gang who forcibly seized our house. We lived in the house since our ancestors' time, but now our ownership is denied. Not only that, but now we have to pay rent to them too. What we are doing is fight against these gangs. The purpose is so that they go away and return the house to us. This is independence. However, now that they have lived in the house for a long time too, we are also ready to allow them to use a part of it or share it, as long as they acknowledge that the house belongs to us, not to them.

²⁸⁸ ปกรณ์ พึ่งเนตร. (2013). นัยแห่งป้ายผ้า...ลึกกว่าค่านเจรจา แต่ถามหาการยอมรับ"ปัตตานี". Isra News Agency [online] Available at: <https://www.isranews.org/content-page/67-south-slide/20736-นัยแห่งป้ายผ้า-ลึกกว่าค่านเจรจา-แต่ถามหาการยอมรับ-ปัตตานี.htm>

²⁸⁹ Interview with an ex-combatant of BRN in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, December 2016

From the explanation above, it can be summarised that the struggle in Patani is a nationalistic struggle whose ideology is jihadised in order to make their ideology as justifiable and acceptable for the Malay Muslim society in Patani. Here lies the fundamental difference between the insurgent groups in Patani and the transnational jihadist groups such as ISIS, Al Qaeda and JI.

The Patani Liberation Movement and Transnational Jihadism

When asked about whether or not the ideology of the struggle for Patani had been influenced by the ideologies of transnational jihadism, the reactions from the insurgent leaders interviewed were same: they expressed dissatisfaction for being seen in that way.

A senior member of BIPP described that the set of ideologies of his organisation established in 1960 were created “in order to respond the aspirations of Patani Malays, and have been adjusted accordingly.” Therefore he firmly believes that this is the best set of ideologies in the struggle. “Why do we have to borrow ideologies from outsiders like ISIS which was created just a few years ago? Their ideologies are not similar to ours, and we have no need whatsoever to be influenced by them.”²⁹⁰

The similar view is shared by BRN, which declined at least one attempt of JI to approach the organisation. A senior leader of BRN was in Indonesia in 2016. He was approached by three JI young members. They requested to go to Patani to join the struggle, and invited him to see JI leader Abu Bakar Bashir in the following day, both of which were declined.²⁹¹ The Patani Liberation Movement and transnational jihadism are ideologically incompatible.

²⁹⁰ Interview with a senior BIPP member in Kelantan, Malaysia, March 2017

²⁹¹ International Crisis Group, *Ibid.*

Peace Process as The Key for The Prevention of Radicalism

Given that the ideology of the insurgents is nationalistic in essence, their organisations are originally political, and their demands for the right to self-determination are obvious, the solution of the armed conflict must be political in nature. A peace process in the form of a political negotiation will surely be able to settle the dispute, as long as the authority of Thailand is ready to grant a high degree of autonomy or decentralisation.

As is explained by Sascha Helbardt in his book *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence: Organization and Insurgent Practices of BRN-Coordinate*, the insurgents have been using violence for communication purposes in order to deliver their political messages. However, once an official channel to communicate with their opponent is open, they no longer have to rely only on violence for the communication purposes. Accordingly, the number of violent incidents reduced after the commencement of the peace dialogue process. Apart from this, along with the peace process, in the conflict area the political space for the public was opened up, especially by the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) led by then secretary general Pol. Col. Thawee Sodsong who was a member of the peace dialogue panel of the Thai side. Before this happened, it had been politically suicidal to express the aspirations for rights to self-determination, because those who had such an idea would immediately be regarded as a member or at least a sympathiser of an insurgent group. Public forums on the conflict and peace were frequently organised, and attended by a number of local people.

However, the peace process became stagnant after the Thai government at that time led by Yingluck Shinawatra faced a great confusion caused by a political mob organised by the PDRC (People's Democratic Reform Committee), a group of ultra-royalists or known as the whistle mob. They organised a prolonged demonstration and finally the military staged a coup d'état on 22 May 2014. Since then the open atmosphere created by the public space had gone.

Although the junta led by a body called the NCPO (the National Council for Peace and Order) resumed the peace process after the Prime Minister, Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha visited Najib Razak, then prime minister of Malaysia in December 2014, the essence of the process had been already changed. The previous round of the talk between the Yingluck government and BRN was called as *krabuankarn puutkhui santiphap*, i.e. the peace dialogue process. However, after it was restarted, the junta has changed the last term from *santiphap* to *santhisuk*. Both terms mean peace with slight differences of the nuance.

The first term, *santhiphap* is meant as peace after a war or a conflict. While the latter, *santisuk* is peace after an internal dispute is settled, like a family dispute. Notice the term *santisuk* contains the term *suk* which is a loan word from Sanskrit which appears in Indonesian or Malay as 'suka'. Therefore the term indicates happiness after a dispute is over. Since the junta illegally seized power by revoking the constitution, one of the propaganda slogans was 'returning happiness to the people'. Allegedly Thailand had been suffering from endless political dispute between at least two groups, respectively wearing shirts of different colours, yellow and red. The junta, according to their propaganda, stepped into the national politics in order to 'restore the peace and order' as was indicated by the name of the governing body. The same principle was applied in the peace process. From then onwards, the peace dialogue process is not for any political change, but the conflict in the southernmost provinces should be dealt with as an internal problem.

A Thai political researcher interviewed by the author saw the differences between the former process under the Yingluck government and the current one under the junta as follows. The civilian government led by Yingluck was ready to be engaged in a political negotiation which might entail certain structural changes in the region. However, the talk had never been smooth because of the resistances from within the government, especially the military. The second round of the process which was named as the *Santisuk* process (which can facetiously be translated as a happy dialogue process) has not such intention whatsoever. No change in political or administration system can be expected, including decentralisation, and let alone autonomy²⁹². The current government is just seeking the solution of the conflict in Patani with the reduction of violent incident, combined with a half-baked amnesty program called Bring People Home Project and development – a suit which was successful when the Thai government was dealing with the communist in the past.

Apart from this, the junta promised an early election after they seized power, but it has been continuously postponed again and again. They have been in power for four years now. During the period, the local people in the conflict area, added with the closed public space, have had no chance to channel their aspirations in a political way.

The current peace dialogue process is between the Thai military government and MARA Patani, but the main body of BRN has not joined the umbrella organisation. It is also highly unlikely for the mainstream BRN to join the process under the current circumstances where no political change can be expected.

²⁹² Interviewed in July 2018, Pattani, Thailand.

Risks of Radicalisation

Under such circumstances, there might be some risk factors that could radicalise the insurgents, i.e. desperation among the armed forces in the struggle, the infiltration of transnational jihadism, and the tint of religious war caused by radicalisation of the Buddhists.

The first factor might lead to the radicalisation of their *modus operandi*, i.e. increasing the intensity in their military operations. There could be more damages among civilians. But it is still very different from the radicalisation in their ideology from the nationalistic struggle into a transnationally jihadist struggle. Among the most important indicators are the ways of attacks they might use. So far, the insurgents in Patani are refraining from certain *modi operandi*, such as suicide bombing and indiscriminate mass shooting. When one of these things happens in Patani, it must be taken as a lot of caution.

The second risk factor, the attempt of infiltration by the transnational jihadist organisations is also unlikely to be successful under the current circumstances. Even though ISIS has published a newsletter in Indonesian called *Al-Fatihin*, it wasn't circulated among the local Malay Muslims in Patani. This is partly because in a conflict area, just being seen as a sympathiser of the insurgents by the authority might cause you an arbitrary detention under the special laws enforced in this region (including Martial Law and Emergency Decree), being seen as an ISIS supporter is suicidal. Second and more important is that the language used in *Al-Fatihin*, the standard Indonesian, is very different from the version of Malay used in Patani. On top of that, as was explained above, the Patani Liberation Movement organisations are always trying to avoid any contact from the transnational jihadist organisations.

Most of the political leaders of the movement are in Malaysia, and being in touch with such organisations as ISIS, Al Qaeda or JI will never be beneficial for their own struggle, because once they have done so, the Malaysian authority might arrest or deport them immediately. One PULO-DSP senior leader was detained for a few days by the Malaysian authority, suspected for being in touch with ISIS.

In the local level, this is also an unlikely scenario because first the militants joined the struggle which they regard as a jihad, and the essence of the jihad was as is explained above. The organisations (especially BRN) indoctrinate the military forces according to this line. Therefore, even though the peace process is stagnant, the level of frustration among the insurgents, especially the armed forces are still very far from the level which might cause such a radical change in their ideology.

The last factor is the radicalisation of Buddhists in Thailand. A monk was disrobed after he had suggested that a mosque should be burnt down if a Buddhist was killed²⁹³. A group of people in the north demonstrated against halal industries in the region²⁹⁴. In Nan Province in the Northern Part of the country protested against the plan to build a mosque, saying that they were afraid that their region would become like the southernmost provinces. Clearly these emotional reactions among the Buddhists are still limited and the authority is still careful so that this kind of extremism among the Buddhists will not wide spread. However, there are always issued which could entice radial reactions from the Buddhists. For instance, a government primary school built in the piece of land owned by a temple become the centre of a controversy after a group of students began to wear a hijab. This school have had Muslim students, and the president of the Patani Provincial Islamic Council was one of the members of the school administration board. However, so far there had never been a Muslim student who had worn a hijab in the school. At first this was done by just a single family, and now there are more than ten families who wear hijabs to their children. The reaction from the school, the head master and the abbot of the temple clearly show dissatisfaction, and a large group of some 400 Buddhists held a meeting, led by radical monks, to protest against wearing hijab inside the school. So far the problem hasn't been solved.

Such radicalisation of Buddhists, if let uncontrolled, might inflict negative impacts, especially in the south. All the insurgent leaders didn't regard the conflict as a religious war. This is a fight for the liberation of Patani from the Siamese colonisers, according to their understanding. Only that the colonisers happen to be Buddhists. However, if antipathy between Buddhists and Muslims grows, the conflict might take the tint of a religious war. This is something which the authority must be very careful and needs to take certain measures so as not to let such radicalism would be widespread.

²⁹³ Wongcha-um, P. (2016). Prominent Buddhist monk fans anti-Muslim sentiment in Thailand. Channel News Asia [online]. Available at: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/prominent-buddhist-monk-fans-anti-muslim-sentiment-in-thailand-8170856> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

²⁹⁴ Yongcharoenchai, C. (2016). Bigotry on the boil over halal project. Bangkok Post [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/special-reports/895308/bigotry-on-the-boil-over-halal-project> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2018]

Conclusion

The radicalisation may happen both among Muslims and Buddhists in the country. The state should be careful and take necessary measures to prevent unnecessary radicalisation of Buddhists, which might cause a serious religious tension in the south. On the other hand, the authority should reflect upon their policies in dealing with the armed conflict in Patani. The tight military measures preferred by the army, especially the ISOC (the Internal Security Operation Command) Region 4 which is directly responsible for the region, might reduce violent incidents temporarily, but unless the root cause of the conflict is addressed, it will never stop. A prolonged conflict not only causes damages to the lives and properties of the people, but also might change the nature of itself into a more radicalised form. What happened in Marawi, Mindanao, the Philippines is not totally impossible to happen in other places in the Southeast Asia, including Patani. Both the Thai authority and the insurgents don't want to see the emergence of transnational jihadism in the conflict area of Patani. There is no reason not to include possible co-operations between these two conflicting parties to prevent the infringement of transnational jihadism in their peace dialogue.

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BURMA

Kyaw Win





Introduction

Burma has struggled to balance pluralism and national identity even prior to its independence. With the rise of the dictator Ne Win, who took power on 4th July 1962, pluralism was quickly replaced by supremacy and racial and religious hierarchy. Residual tensions from the colonial era, often in relation to federalism and autonomy in the ethnic regions, have been persistent and pronounced throughout the country, often manifesting in armed conflict between ethnic armed groups and the military. Civil war between ethnic Karen insurgents, a Buddhist minority themselves, and the Burmese began in 1949 and is technically ongoing. Similarly, the conflict between ethnic Kachin and the Burmese military which began in 1961 persists to this day, with ethnic and religious implications surrounding the armed conflict which is largely based on Kachin pursuits for federalism and control over various precious gem mines and the timber industry. These conflicts were often overlooked internationally as Burma remained repressive of its own media and isolated from the world and thus inaccessible to international audiences. Burma underwent several political reforms beginning in 2010, and media restrictions were significantly reduced in September of 2011 (Buncombe, 2011). With the outbreak of riots in Rakhine State in 2012, religious and ethnic unrest in Burma were covered widely as access for international media in Burma increased, but it led many to question what the true sources of this unrest are. While a vocal and powerful portion of Burma's Buddhist population has been radicalized and organized, it has been an issue of debate about what led to this radicalization and why Muslims, in particular, are targeted.

This paper examines the most prominent elements behind the radicalization and militarization of Buddhist nationalism inside of Burma. In particular, it will examine how radicalization of Buddhist nationalism in Burma is intertwined with overt and covert actions by the Military between 1961 and today. While some organic elements, such as communal disagreements or transitional unrest have helped radicalization spread, the objective of this paper is to show how those elements were used for the benefit of the government and military institutions, the political backbone of which is anti-Muslim Sentiment, in creating intolerance and violent persecution against minority groups.

Theoretical Framework

This paper discusses radicalisation and extremism in Burma based on deep historical facts, while structured semi-chronologically in order to allow for easier comprehension of the contemporary political context. Before the puzzle of the present political context can be discussed, it is vital to explain the historical facts regarding how radicalisation and extremism in Burma today is an outcome of institutional persecution which has built up over previous decades.

Myanmar – officially called the Republic of the Union of Myanmar - is located in South-eastern Asia and shares borders with Thailand, Laos, China, India and Bangladesh. It is formed along the coasts of the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Its population is composed of 135 official ethnic majority groups, with 68% of it being ethnic Bama. The Buddhist population accounts for 87.9% of the population with almost all follow Theravada Buddhism, while 4% are Christian, 4% Muslim, 1% Animist and 2% are other (World Factbook, 2014). However, Muslim leaders argue that the Muslim population is closer to 6-10 percent (Klinken, 2015).

In Burma, Buddhism is the dominant religion and Bama ethnicity is the dominant race. These two factors are interrelated as religion and nationalism are interwoven together in Burmese politics. In the western view, nationalism is often viewed as more secular, where the Burmese context is the contrary. Nationalism and religion are intimately linked and (Kinnvall, 2004) racism emerged within the discourse of nationalism (Balibar, 1994). Dictator general Ne Win established a strategy, one-race-one-religion-one-language (Burmanisation), which has led to a distinctive definition of who belongs to the national territory, based on particular race and religion, ultimately granting this to ethnic Bama Buddhists. The ideology of 'others and us' is done to create a position of inferiority and superiority, which leads to racism and religious extremism (Biver, 2014). This ideology is well fit to the purpose of the dictator to apply a divide and rule strategy. Religious nationalism makes a powerful identity signifier in times of ontological insecurity and existential anxiety and it is the most powerful rally point in times of uncertainty (Kinnvall, 2004). Times of uncertainty and of transition between autocracy to democracy caused an outbreak of internal violence as the studies have proven (Marshall and Gurr, 2003), which the violence probably arose from long-term persecution and discrimination on minorities (Klinkan, 2015). This paper will discuss and describe how violence against Muslims in Burma manifests, wherein there are predictable effects of anxiety and uncertainty during political transition, but also significant causes of bigotry and violence which are manufactured by state actors and their proxies.

The democratic revolution in Burma was driven by the public desire for greater freedom and external support, particularly to establish democratic and human rights values in the country. This public desire has been key to the success of the NLD and their victory can be attributed to it. In contrast, the military has utilized religious nationalism to oppose the core democratic and human rights values which the NLD party is founded and based upon.

People in Burma who once craved democracy and human rights and took part in movements that sacrificed thousands of lives for those values now act in opposition to them. A major process transpired between 2010 and 2015 which made this shift possible. However, this shift is based upon the anti-Muslim sentiment that has been placed by dictator general Ne Win since 1962. The process of othering the minorities whereas creating religious nationalism which is a very much foundation for today radicalisation and extremism in Burma. The process involved demonizing a minority group and portraying them as a threat to the majority's race and religion, a practice famously carried out in the propaganda of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. The fear and anxiety are particularly related to being taken over by a minority. In Burma, the major cause for this shift was artificial fear, and in particular the fear of Islamisation. This fear pushed many towards hatred and ultimately violence. The violence was met with impunity, regardless of the heinous nature of crimes committed against minorities. Amid this violence, religious-based ultra-nationalist organisations emerged and ceased the situation, as if they aimed to prevent violence. Organisations operating in this manner can accomplish things which individuals could not do (Klinkan, 2015). These organisations introduced oppressive social norms at the grassroots level while simultaneously drafting and supporting oppressive laws and pressuring the government to implement them. However, the reality was that the group targeted was intended as a scapegoat for political purposes.

The media played a significant role in this same process through continuous misinformation delivered deliberately against the targeted minority group which changed the public perception of the minority group, which then compelled the public to undermine democratic and human rights values. Through social media, people were encouraged to use and understand racial slurs, dehumanizing language and to draw associations between racism and patriotism. Several cases have occurred within the past six years, where nationalists used Facebook or other social media to spread misinformation which triggered violence and unrest or demonised Muslims as a whole, while lending support to Military aligned figures and parties. These efforts contributed to the justification for violence against the minority group. This shift of public perception created great support for the military to commit genocide in Rakhine state against the Rohingya minority as well as to continue their military campaigns against other minorities across Burma.

Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative method to identify and analyse past events which religious nationalism has emerged and proliferated in Burma. This paper relates and compares this analysis to the contemporary political situation, specifically, radicalisation and extremism in Burma today. The paper then identifies specific actors and their claims, goals and actual activities which played the most significant roles in establishing Bama Buddhist nationalism. This paper also analyses the formation of ad hoc and decentralised nationalist organisations which later became a vehicle to establish not only institutionalised nationalist organisation but also become a major actor to impose strict social norms against the targeted minorities. Finally, the analysis compares the outcome to the findings of contemporary academic papers and articles which have conducted extensive research and investigation on the issue.

Colonial Era Resentments

The British colonial era in Burma that lasted from 1824 to 1948 is considered by many Burmese to be a period of subservience and humiliation. Many aspects of Burma's current political climate can be traced to this time, and lingering resentments about it. During that time, Burma was already considered as an important region in Asia, as it was regarded as the Rice Bowl of Asia, but the inhabitants were largely deprived of autonomy or control of their resources or affairs. Furthermore, Burma's border as a sovereign kingdom was the least concern to the British Colonial power, which on the contrary treated it as a province of the great British Indian empire. In that regard, many labourers from other parts of the empire were brought to Burma to work on the rice fields and other resources.

The flow of labor, traders and various professions into the country generally came from India, as well as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and other nearby areas controlled by the British. The ethnic and religious difference between migrant workers and locals incited tensions and it worsened due to favoritism by the British towards the foreign workers.

On May 10th, 1930 Indian dock workers went on strike and were replaced by 2000 Burmese workers who were paid less. On May 26th tensions between the two groups escalated into riots that resulted in 200 Indian workers massacred (Collis, 1938). Resentment by the Burmese towards South Asians was demonstrated explicitly by the president of the Burma Free State League, U Ba Si, in a letter to the British Secretary of State for India in 1933 when he wrote, "Since the annexation of Burma by Britain, thousands and thousands of destitute Indians have come over to our shores to exploit our labour and lands" (Kent, 2017).

The nationalistic view morphed into anti-Muslim sentiment early on. Immigrants from neighboring countries were viewed with anxiety for several reasons, but animosity towards non-Buddhist became overt. In July and August of 1938 anti-Muslim riots which began in Rangoon swept across several major cities following a general strike which had brought the country to an economic halt. The riots resulted in the deaths of 204 people (Renaud, 2009). It also resulted in the destruction of 113 Mosques. Similarly, the Buddhist nationalist teachings were found to have helped motivate the rioters to direct their animosity towards Muslims (Yegar, 1972).

At the same time, interreligious marriage was becoming more common and was easily used as a talking point by Nationalists as a talking point connected to anti-British sentiments. Moshe Yegar wrote, "This was cause for anxiety to many Burmese and was also exploited for anti-Muslim propaganda by the nationalist movement" (Yegar, 1972). This trend of Buddhist nationalism using Muslims as a scapegoat should be viewed as an important aspect of the country's flawed foundation that carried on to successive rulers of the country and manifested throughout the society in the form of radicalization.

Ne Win Era

Following Burma's independence from Britain, a period of uncertainty, assassination, and political coups followed, ultimately resulting in military dictatorship led by General Ne Win in 1962. Ne Win, a nationalist and military figure, was already known for his insecurity, anger, and ruthlessness and in ruling the country he employed strategies likely borrowed from both the British and the Japanese, dividing subjects against each other and inflicting harsh rule over the civilian population. The utilization of Muslims as a primary scapegoat was enhanced significantly under Ne Win's rule and although he promoted a socialist secular vision for Burma, ultimately Burmese Buddhist Nationalism became a de facto state policy.

After taking power Ne Win removed Muslims from the Government and Military and the Muslim population, facing a wave of nationalism across Burma, found themselves isolated and ostracized (Human Rights Watch, 2002) (Priestly, 2006). With resentment against Muslims, who were irrationally associated with foreigners and colonialism, already high, Ne Win set a precedent that Muslims were to be unwanted and excluded from the society.

These sentiments worsened after Ne Win's government nationalized all businesses in the country resulting in much of the Indian population having to leave. Between 1962 and 1964, there were 320,000 Indians living in Burma forced out of the country (Ember, Ember Skoggard, 2004). These measures again affirmed an irrational xenophobia and nationalism to the public which singled out Indians and Muslims who were already being conflated in the country.

Efforts by Ne Win early on indicated a fear of Federalism and a need to utilize the scapegoat to undermine these efforts. Throughout his reign, he would frequently use Muslims, Indians, Chinese and other minorities as scapegoats while also dividing ethnic minorities and political factions against each other as a means to ensure his and the military's rule over the country. This need to maintain control and prevent federalism through the othering of minorities (Williams, Sakhong, 2005) and division of ethnic areas against themselves would become standard operating procedure in Burma and it continues to be used today.

Shortly after Ne Win took power in 1962 implemented a ban on printing in non-Burmese languages (Khur, 2017) (Jia, 2017), ostensibly to promote unity but ultimately marginalizing minorities. The attempt was to create a more homogenous society and was viewed as an early attempt of “Burmanisation” (Schreiner, 2017) in which ethnic Bamar culture and language were forced upon the rest of the country’s various ethnic and religious groups.

In a move that directly connected Muslims and foreignness, Ne Win’s Government enacted the 1974 Emergency Immigration Act, which targeted immigration from China, India, and Bangladesh. This act was one of the first direct steps taken against the Muslim Rohingya population in the country by attempting to force them to carry Foreign Registration Cards, which many refused wanting to be recognized as indigenous and given National Registration Certificates (Human Rights Watch, 1996). This was one of the most overt early instances of Muslims being singled out through formal policy with the intention of dispossession, disenfranchisement, and reduction of rights.

Ne Win’s policies would directly target Muslims again in 1978 when the King Dragon military operation was conducted against the Rohingya Muslims living in Rakhine State with the purpose of expelling them from the country to ensure they would not be included in the census (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Efforts began prior to the 1978 military operation, involving small-scale operations which had been conducted since 1966. The Rohingya, who claim indigenous roots in Rakhine State, had been deemed as foreigners by Ne Win’s Government and were accused of being from Bangladesh. This event demonstrated how nationalism and rejection of colonialism manifested in violence against Muslims, effectively in one of the earliest attempts to cleanse the country of their presence under false pretenses. The campaign’s purpose was to ensure a more homogenous Burma (Williams, Sakhong, 2005) and was waged under the pretext of responding to a military threat which ultimately stemmed from British Occupation of Arakan (Yegar, 1972), particularly during World War 2 . This again further conflated Islam and foreignness in Burma and spread the idea among the public that Muslims were a threat to the nation by their very existence in the country and that they ought to be removed. As many as 250,000 Rohingya fled from Burma due to the operation, and Burma claimed this as evidence that they were indeed foreign, a talking point they would use repeatedly in the subsequent military operations against the Rohingya in the following decades.

On October 15th, 1982 Ne Win's Government introduced the Burma Citizenship Law²⁹⁵, which effectively dispossessed over a million Rohingya living in Burma by excluding them from recognized races in the country and requiring proof of family roots prior to the beginning of British Colonial rule of Burma in 1823. Many of Burma's Rohingya had already lost all of their belongings fleeing in 1978, and the documents required were from a period so long in the past few families anywhere would still have possession of them. Moreover, the 1982 citizenship law excluded all Muslim minorities from ethnicity except for one, ethnic Kaman who have a considerably small population. The policy overtly targeted a Muslim minority and was met with little or no resistance by the general population.

Ne Win would be forced to resign following mass protests in 1988. The Military retained control of the country through a crackdown on protesters, and Ne Win's influence is believed to have continued behind the scenes. His legacy was felt through a continuation of nationalist policies, brutal oppression of civilians, a culture of paranoia, espionage, surveillance and desperate efforts by the Military to maintain control of the country. One of his most successful legacies was being able to establish institutionalised persecution against Muslims and other minorities in Burma through religious nationalism (Buddhist Bama). In being able to do so, anti Muslim sentiment has remained deeply rooted among the military institution, governmental and other institutions. This is verily the foundation for contemporary religious extremism in Burma that nationalists groups emerged from.

²⁹⁵ International Labor Organization: Full text of Burma Citizenship Law
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/87413/99608/.../MMR87413.pdf>

The Nationalist Groups

Nationalist groups in Myanmar have become a subject of particular importance as they have been linked to much of the anti-Muslim violence throughout Burma over the past decade. The nationalists are collectives of monks and lay supporters who spread supremacist propaganda, give hate sermons in public and private gatherings, host rallies and marches supporting religious nationalism and advocate against real and perceived foreigners and foreign influence. The nationalists also openly advocate for policies which favor Buddhists over religious minorities, particularly Muslims. The most well known of the nationalists is the monk Ashin Wirathu, who has been affiliated with several organizations known for spreading hate speech or advocating for laws which are discriminatory towards religious minorities.

Nationalist groups have carried disproportionate political influence and effectively lobbied for anti-Muslim laws and ordinances on national and local levels. Both the Government and the nationalist groups deny direct involvement in the anti-Muslim riots the country has experienced since 2012, but evidence suggests both played active roles in creating violence as well as participating in it. These groups emerged at a time when Burma began to make its public transition towards a quasi-civilian government, and have had the effect of spreading fear and hate, dividing the public, undermining democracy and creating a longing for law and order which a military government could provide. It is likely and even evident that these effects are intentional and by design in some capacity.

Emergence of 969

One of the most famous groups associated with anti-Muslim nationalism in Myanmar is the 969 movement. The public face of the group, Ashin Wirathu, is notoriously hateful and actively spread an anti-Muslim message throughout Burma in locations which later saw violence erupt against Muslims. Wirathu was jailed in 2003 for provoking anti-Muslim riots in Mandalay (Walton, 2014) but was released in 2012 as part of a large release of political prisoners in the country.

A connection between the 969 Movement and the Government has long been speculated. While many struggle to establish this, it is partially hidden in plain sight. The leaders of 969 credited Kyaw Lwin, a deceased Ex-monk and government official with its creation (Marshall, 2013). Kyaw Lwin's rise to prominence came following the 1988 uprising, where government officials sought to use Buddhism to help restore order after religious figures stood against them (Marshall, 2013). In 1991, the military government created a department for the promotion and propagation of the Sasana as part of the Religion Ministry with Kyaw Lwin as its head (Marshall, 2013). One of Kyaw Lwin's students at the time was Wirathu (Marshall, 2013) who now continues his legacy. Interestingly, 969 has played an apparently similar role in restoring a connection between the Government and Buddhism after the 2007 Saffron Revolution, where monks were attacked by government forces. According to his son, Kyaw Lwin stayed in touch with Wirathu after they met in 1991. Kyaw Lwin died in 2001, the same year which Wirathu began to preach anti-Muslim hate speech and violence began to rise considerably (Marshall, 2013).

Wirathu has compared Muslims to African carp which eat each other, mad dogs who can't be trusted, and emphasized that if Buddhists aren't vigilant, Burma will become a Muslim state. His message is clear, and its impact is obvious. Where he preaches that Muslims are a threat, people react with violence against Muslims.

Framing against Muslim

969 manages to maintain a central message and image while behaving in a decentralized way. While the group is most associated with Wirathu, it is also effectively leaderless (Walton, 2014). This easily lends to deniability when people close to the group or those who attend sermons become involved in violence. This method of suggestion and distance has been mimicked by Burmese politicians and nationalists often in concert with each other. This is the result of the effective framing of the targeted group, suggesting that Muslims in Burma are a threat to the race and the religion. However, this kind of framing is not simply changing people's mind like most propaganda does, but it provokes people to do something and feel that inaction could risk the security of their race and religion (Klinkan, 2015). As Klinkan (2015) suggests, the framing involves three steps – firstly, exaggerating the situation as problematic such as Muslim rape Buddhist women, secondly, they propose a solution such as expelling the Muslim from Burma and thirdly, calling for action which could be violence or imposing strict social norms.

Decentralised movement based on centralised message

The 969 Movement was widely covered in the media in 2013, and as a result, it was well known. The reporting on the group often only repeated surface details of the group as hate preachers provoking unrest and violence seemingly acting on fear and hatred alone. In part, this is true, as 969 acted as a decentralized 'movement' which enabled followers to freely act on their own without orders, but this enabling was based upon provocation and centralized messaging, typically framing Muslims as enemy invaders, promoting the military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party's (USDP) policies, and creating a sense of urgency of fabricated threats. Figures within 969 admit their sermons might provoke violence (Marshall, 2013) but insist it is because their followers are uneducated. In this regard, they continued utilizing rhetoric from the top of the organization which they knew would provoke violence but relied on the decentralized nature of their following to excuse it. This mechanism also reflects the nationalists' relationship with the Military and its proxy political parties, wherein the Military can maintain relationships with 969 and other nationalist movements, provide rhetoric, legislation to support and threats to oppose while distancing themselves from the actions of the groups by claiming to only inspire them, but not control their behavior (Marshall, 2013). Deniability is established through the utilization of grassroots, though the intent is clear in those espousing rhetoric knowing what consequences will come from it.

Violence: The result of framing and messaging

Several riots largely instigated by Nationalist figures, such as the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) and Wirathu himself (Hodal, 2013), broke out in Rakhine State, in 2012, which resulted in hundreds of fatalities and around 140,000 Rohingya Muslims displaced from their homes. The following year anti-Muslim riots against Burmese Muslims occurred again in Meikhtila, Lashio and several other cities. Before the majority of these events, sermons were given by Wirathu or other nationalist figures (SBS Australia, 2013). The group had also established a network delivering DVDs of sermons throughout Myanmar and when riots broke out, often they were led by Monks themselves (Szep, 2013). Locals interviewed by Reuters (Szep) also said that the men involved in the Meikhtila riots were not entirely locals, raising serious questions about who they were, why they were in the city and who organized them. In both the 2012 and 2013 riots police and military were recorded observing the violence but doing little to stop it. In Rakhine State, they were said to have even participated in the violence against Muslims (BBC, 2012). All of the riots were initiated by strange and sometimes unsubstantiated reports of communal disputes or arguments, always serving as a pretext to greater violence.

Social studies experts suggest that the people near the violence were active, not passive (Klinkan, 2015). In this way, the 969 Movement was able to create a shift effectively in public perception towards extremism through violence against a targeted group, in which the nationalists have obtained a prominent role among Buddhist majority.

Anti Muslim violence and the role of media

A key feature of the violence in 2013 was the use of social media to help incite rioters. In this regard 969 had a new tool to quickly and easily spread rumors which would cause maximum damage with minimal effort and responsibility. This was done again in July of 2014 when 969, including Wirathu, used rumors spread on social media of a Buddhist woman being raped by a Muslim man to inflame tensions in Mandalay, causing riots that resulted in the deaths of two Muslim men (Cheeseman, 2017). Wirathu's use of Facebook began in 2012 and continued until his account was kicked off the service on 27 February 2018 (Barron, 2018). A similar event sparked riots in Rakhine State in 2012, but reactions depended on word of mouth and networking on the ground, where Nationalism more recently had a mechanism to create destruction and violence with the literal click of a button.

The emergence of Ma Ba Tha

As the violence became international news scrutiny on Wirathu and 969 increased, creating pressure on the Burmese Government to do something about the nationalists and the effects of hate speech in the country. In what would become a pattern, the nationalists adapted, not by improving their behavior, but by rebranding under a new name and new organization. The Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, or Ma BaTha, emerged as 969 faded away after the 969 Symbol was banned on 14th August 2013 (Lwin, 2013). Again, Wirathu was a central figure of the group but it was led by the older and more experienced Tilawka Bhiwuntha. The change effectively took some of the pressure off of Wirathu and the nationalists as they caused confusion about who was in responsible for what. In this regard, the framing of the Rohingya (Klinkan 2015) was able to shift again, reaffirming commonly held beliefs against the Rohingya into the action of political support for nationalist policies and later military campaigns against the Rohingya.

Ma Ba Tha also significantly changed tactics, becoming aggressively vocal on politics and garnering influence over policy. Where 969 functions as a decentralized movement inciting hatred, Ma Ba Tha was a more well-oiled machine that could operate publicly through influencing policy, and privately in a fashion similar to 969 (Walton, 2014). The relationship between Ma Ba Tha and the government became more overt, as nationalist and discriminatory policies pushed by Ma Ba Tha were legislated by the Military affiliated Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by then-President U Thein Sein, a retired General. By operating this way, the Military and the Nationalist could work in concert in a way which seemed organic and legitimate, even if the relationship was by design and their intentions were more nefarious (Marshall 2013). This transition aided in the promotion and prominence of religious nationalism through the deepening association between social, political and religious life (Biver, 2014) and aided in the proliferation of the more ubiquitous anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya sentiments widely held in Burma today. As extremist groups reassemble in new iterations, they tend to emerge in more extreme forms each time, as the gravity of their situation is realised. Those gaining power, thrive on it, and those losing power lash out in desperation. Likewise, this has been the case with Buddhist Nationalists in Burma as their power waxes and wanes.

In the lead up to national elections and proposed anti-Muslim legislation, Ma Ba Tha let their political preferences be known to the public through fiery rhetoric and fear mongering. Arguing for nationalism, Ma Ba Tha's Sayadaw Ashin Daywaindar Bhiwuntha said, "All political parties should give priority to nationalism, which is the interest of the majority, in their political activities. General Aung San carried out political activities with a nationalist spirit. Nationalism means the interest of national ethnic groups and citizens. We must protect these interests" (Min, 2014). Wirathu himself promoted the ideas that there was a Muslim conspiracy to dominate or conquer Myanmar through economic exploitation and interfaith marriage (Walton, 2014).

The four controversial law

One of the greatest victories in Ma Ba Tha's efforts was the establishment of the "Four Race and Religion Protection Laws" which were campaigned for by Ma Ba Tha in 2014 and signed into law by Thein Sein in 2015 (Zaw, 2015). They prevented interfaith marriages or polygamy, required high standards for religious conversions, and applied population control on births in certain areas. All of these laws were specifically targeted towards non-Buddhists, and particularly against Muslims. The irrational nationalist fear that Muslims would conquer Burma through marriage, childbirth and conversion had not only been addressed by the State Government but directly legislated against.

The group began to attract international scrutiny again, as it promoted hatred through sermons and social media. At the same time, scrutiny on Myanmar's persecution of the Rohingya was growing and the international community became intensely focused on the problem. The role of the nationalists, again doing the dirty work of the government, was to slam the international community and paint them as outsiders meddling in Burma's internal affairs. Wirathu, pushing the envelope even further, called the UN's Special Rapporteur a "whore" in a sermon posted online in January of 2015 (Hume, 2015), which attacked her for her stance on the Rohingya crisis. Wirathu drew the attention and anger of the international community, while the objective of sowing distrust and even hatred towards the international community was successful and to the benefit of hardliners and the military.

NLD Era

Elections in November of 2015 saw what many believed to be a drastic change for Burma when the National League for Democracy won a major victory, ostensibly removing the military from power (though they maintained veto power, control over several policies and a guaranteed number of seats in Parliament). This created a challenge for both the Military and nationalist groups, which they again worked in concert to address. The decision by Suu Kyi to not allow Muslim NLD member to stand for election as candidates highlights the effective outcome of pressure from the nationalist groups. On the other hand, the NLD also showed they had failed their first major challenge, where the party betrayed its founding principle of equality. The nationalist groups continued to work to spread fear about Muslims among the population and the Military and USDP presented themselves as a solution to those anxieties.

When an armed Rohingya group launched attacks against the Burmese Military in October of 2016, Ma Ba Tha became even more vocal, arguing that their warnings were manifesting. The poorly armed Rohingya militia was quickly beaten back by Burmese security forces, and the military followed through with brutal attacks against civilians which were soon after described as Ethnic Cleansing by several politicians and rights groups. While the international community grew vocal against the Burmese Military, the Burmese population rallied increasingly behind their campaign against the Rohingya. Years of fear-mongering and hate speech by nationalists were bearing fruit and to the benefit of the Military in particular.

As pressure against Ma Ba Tha mounted, calls grew for the group to be addressed. On May 24th, 2017 Burma's State Sangha Committee, the highest religious authority in the country, called for Ma Ba Tha to disband (Thu, 2017). The group was given until July of 2017 to comply. While initially seen as a victory, the pattern of Burma's nationalists transforming with the political climate was already in motion. And yet, the four controversial law, which is known as 'protection of race and religion law,' remains valid and a legacy of the group's heavy lobbying and Thein Sein's government's cooperation in its implementation.

In preparation and in response to international and domestic pressure, Ma Ba Tha had seeded itself into the community through 230 offices across the country and through several Buddhist schools not directly affiliated with the group. These schools and offices are hubs for anti-Muslim teachings and propaganda and serve the purpose of spreading hatred throughout the country and indoctrinating youth. There are nearly 10,000 summer schools running across Burma for primary school children and Ma Ba Tha monks have infiltrated or control these schools in order to pass anti-Muslim hate speech to children. Ma Ba Tha operates three high schools, known as Mahawthahta Schools (Linn, 2018).

On June 2nd, 2017, Ma Ba Tha formally announced they were changing their name to the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation. While some called out the rebranding as a change in name only, it was otherwise effective in allowing the group to continue with less scrutiny, morphing again to continue to spread hatred with a nearly nonexistent legal impediment.

The reshuffling of actors under new organizations and new names has followed the same pattern witnessed before. The nationalists now have several groups, maintaining the old efforts they were disbanded for and expanding into new territory, including party politics. Where nationalism previously served to radicalize small portions of the population and trigger violence, it now overtly influences state policy and takes an active role in politics while much of the population has become sympathetic to nationalist causes as a reaction to years of indoctrination coupled with local media coverage of events in Rakhine State which portray an Islamic invasion threatening the general population and even the future of the country.

The relationship between the Military and Nationalists

For many who previously explored this topic, there was always a suspicion that radical Buddhist Nationalists were connected to the Military, but it was difficult to prove a direct link. However, over time some within the Buddhist community (Potter, 2014) have spoken out about the connection and the US treasury department has even introduced new sanctions due to evidence of these links between Military figures and radicals who worked to trigger anti-Muslim violence.

Perhaps the clearest evidence in the public realm that nationalist groups are directly linked to the Burmese Military came when on October 31st, 2014 the United States Treasury sanctioned Aung Thaung, a political figure connected to the Burmese Military and Intelligence Police. "By intentionally undermining the positive political and economic transition in Burma, Aung Thaung is perpetuating violence, oppression, and corruption," said Adam J. Szubin, the Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (US Department of Treasury)²⁹⁶.

Aung Thaung had a long career in the Burmese Military and developed close ties to Than Shwe, the Junta leader. He served on the lower house of Parliament and remained close to the Military until his death in 2015. In his life, he had been associated with violence targeting democratic movements and minorities.

Military and Buddhist monks

Ashin Gambira, an exiled protest leader and disrobed Monk, said that while he was in prison in Burma at the same time as Wirathu the two spoke through letters. The two met later. Gambira said he asked why Wirathu spread hate and violence in Myanmar and that Wirathu confided he was pressured by the Government to do so, and by Aung Thaung in particular (Potter, 2014). Other monks have repeated similar stories off the record, many saying that the nationalist monks have large sums of money they use to recruit from the Buddhist Monasteries. The common belief is that the money is coming from intelligence for the purpose of spreading hatred against minority communities to undermine democratic and peace-seeking movements, which then, in turn, allows to Military to retain power, prevents federalism and ultimately allows Military figures and their business cronies to further enrich themselves and maintain their monopolies in the country.

²⁹⁶ United States Department of Treasury: Announcement of Treasury Sanctions Against Aung Thaung (10/31/2014) <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/JL2680.aspx>

Military and Karen Buddhist extremists

The Government has tried to avoid appearing to give direct orders to nationalist groups, but has often been seen with them and frequently speaks about them in high regards. Figures 1-3, 5 and 6 in the Appendix showcases of meetings and relationships between the Military and military aligned politicians and major figures within Buddhist Nationalism. In figure 4, Wirathu is seen with the Democratic Karen Benevolent (Buddhist) Army (DKBA-5), an ethnic insurgent group in Kayin State, which is a breakaway group of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, who themselves are a breakaway of the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO). The DKBA was used by the Burmese Military as a proxy militia and border guard. The spiritual leader of DKBA, the monk U Thuzana, is a well known anti-Muslim extremist monk who has consistently oppressed Muslims and Christians in Karen State by giving orders to DKBA members to demolish mosques and churches (Mizzima, 2016).

Military and Rakhine Buddhist extremists

A far more overt collection of Government actors that worked directly with the Nationalists were the Rakhine National Development Party (RNDP) who were later reformed and renamed as the Arakan National Party (ANP). In the lead up to the 2012 anti-Muslim riots in Rakhine State the RNDP and 969 worked in concert with each other spreading nationalist messages and hate which ultimately triggered the riots (Szep, Marshall, 2012). The propaganda efforts used by both, especially spreading images of Ma Thida Htwe, a Rakhine woman authorities said was raped and murdered by Muslims. Where Wirathu rallied the religious Aye Maung, the chairman of the RNDP rallied the lay people and ordinary Rakhine. Their efforts complemented each other and gave religious and government permission to the hatred which inevitably would become violent (Klinken, 2015). Where anger may have been organic and helped cause communal violence in Rakhine State, it was through mobilization of resources and amplification by the RNDP and 969 (working in concert) that violence was able to be actualized (Klinken, 2015).

The mobilization of resources was another pattern which was witnessed in all major anti-Muslim incidents inside of Myanmar since 2012. Usually, 969, Ma ba Tha, or other nationalist groups were presented as the face of these events, but the resources and people required for the violence to be actualized is beyond what simple monks can afford. In instances like Meikhtila where witnesses described outsiders provoking and taking part in the violence, it can be reasonable to suspect mass mobilization of individuals specifically brought in for the purpose of spreading violence and unrest, all of which the Military and Police allowed to happen by refusing to step in. These pieces fit together far too neatly to be simple coincidence, and evidence of connections between these parties suggest their cooperation in creating hostilities and participating in violence.

State Involvement in Religious Violence

In nearly every incident of anti-Muslim violence, the Burmese authorities have been present and either refused to stop the violence or actually participated in it. There is no greater indication of coordination between radical groups and the military than the passive permission of authorities allowing violence to continue, or those incidents where the military and police take part in the violence themselves.

In the case of the Rohingya, the Government campaign against them has been ongoing for decades and without pause, though the methods change every few years. Initially the Military combatted the Rohingya through direct attacks and military campaigns coupled with discriminatory laws, and for the most part, the world was quiet on the issue. As Burma became more open to the world they also became more vulnerable to scrutiny. This required tactics to change, and as they are wont to do, Burma was able to turn ethnic groups against each other in order to achieve this end. While there have been tensions between the Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine since World War 2 (Yegar, 1972), the two groups coexisted with minimal incidents, where Rakhine largely viewed the Burmese as their main enemy. However, Rakhine nationalism is a direct threat to Burmese nationalism and furthers the agenda of federalism. In this way, conflict is widely believed by key figures in Rakhine State to be to the benefit of the Burmese military (Potter, 2015).

The Rohingya, and Muslims in general, are a convenient scapegoat and distraction. In the build-up to the violence, both Government and Nationalist figures laid the groundwork to remove hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from their villages while creating a new enemy for the people to focus on to distract them from any federalist aspirations. What makes this cooperating especially apparent is that witness accounts consistently state that security forces themselves participated in the violence against the Rohingya, rather than trying to stop the two ethnic groups from attacking each other.

Despite the worldwide attention on the events in Rakhine State, this pattern was repeated in Meikhtilar and several parts of Burma during the Anti-Muslim pogroms in 2013 and 2014, where security forces did not intervene to stop the violence or act in any way to protect the victims (BBC, 2013). There is an intention in the inaction, and that was very clearly to allow harm to be done to Muslims, to remove them from their homes and finally make them feel unwelcome and unprotected in their own country. The unrest now undermined democratic transitions and reinforced the need for 'strong leaders' which the military attempted to personify.

As time went on, and with the emergence of a Rohingya insurgent group, the Military saw an opening through which they could act more overtly both as protectors and overt actors in the crisis using insurgency as a pretext. While nationalists spread support for operations against the Rohingya, the military was able ultimately to expel over 700,000 Rohingya from the country (BBC, 2018). The operations drew harsh condemnations from all of the world, but within Myanmar they had successfully played the role of protectors through the lens of disinformation and propaganda spread by the nationalists, undermining democratic institutions, human rights and making Burma's future extremely precarious.

Conclusion

In viewing radicalization in Burma it is best to do so with a view of the broader picture of the country and its history. Burma was overtly ruled by the Military for over 50 years and continued to be so even after the National League for Democracy took power. They have adapted to a changing world and blended into each situation like political chameleons in order to survive. In doing so through covert and overt actions, the Military has connected religion and nationalism in the minds of much of the civilian population. Through decades of propaganda and fostering of nationalists groups, the military and its proxy political parties have shifted the public perception and framed scapegoats of minorities, particularly Muslims. This shift and framing have not only changed the opinions of the people but often caused them to engage in violence, which they perceive as a defense of race and religion from an existential threat. As a result of the growing religious nationalism and extremism, there are about 23 locations across Burma where Muslim are not welcome (Wade, 2017).

While there are undoubtedly several organic elements behind the emergence of Radical Buddhist Nationalist groups, the majority causes are contrived and conceived by powers capable of sustaining them, funding them and directing them. Where Ne Win first promoted the need for unity through Bamanisation, later Buddhism itself became a unifying symbol to unite the country against imagined threats of Muslim invasions. The popularity of Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD demonstrated that people could rally behind causes dear to them, and the military and nationalists are showing that it may be easier to unify the masses through fear that it is to do so with hope. While democratic transitions and social anxieties can be considered a partial cause of unrest, there is a powerful entity, the Burmese Military, which ultimately served as its designer and only beneficiary.

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Sabra Zahid is an Attorney-at-lawyer with a L.L.B Degree from the University of London. She is the Advocacy Manager at the AFRIEL Youth Network, a grassroots organisation, working towards mobilizing and empowering the youth of Sri Lanka in the areas of human rights and good governance. Towards promoting reconciliation and building resilient communities the organization brings together diverse youth groups from across the districts for exchange programs, truth telling camps, networking initiatives and create youth leaders to assist their communities to access legal mechanisms in a post conflict environment and act as community level mediators. She is part of a lobby group "Muslim Personal Law Reform Action Group" advocating for equal access to legal rights, justice and redress for Muslim women on matters of marriage and divorce through the reforms to the Muslim Personal Laws and the Constitution of Sri Lanka as well as other informal networks advocating for various rights issues.

Aingkaran


Aingkaran obtained his Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Colombo and a Master of Arts Degree in International Law and Human Rights from the United Nations-mandated University of Peace in Costa Rica having been selected an Asia Leaders Fellow. Aingkaran was called to the bar in 2009 and has nearly two years' of experience working for the Attorney General's Department of Sri Lanka in the capacity of a State Counsel. He currently works for Search for Common Ground – Sri Lanka on a project which aims to empower women leaders in the districts by strengthening their capacity to play a watchdog role to ensure an inclusive and sustainable transitional justice process in Sri Lanka, which gives him the opportunity to interact with different segments of the society across dividing lines.

Hara Shintaro

Hara Shintaro is an independent researcher, interpreter, translator. Shintaro graduated from Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University in 1997 for B.A and obtained M.A. in Malay Studies from University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Having lived in Pattani Province since 1999 to this day, he worked as a lecturer of Malay in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand since 2006 until 2015. When the peace process in Patani inaugurated in 2013, he translated several video clips and documents released in Malay by the non-government armed groups into Thai. His proficiency in varieties of Malay (Malaysian, Indonesian and Patani Malay) enables him not only to conduct direct communication with the insurgent members in their mother tongue but also to study on the documents produced by these organisations. The other expertise of him includes sociolinguistics (language policy and bilingualism) and conflict studies.

Kyaw Win

Kyaw Win is a human rights activist, born and brought up in Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar). Kyaw Win graduated with a BA (Hons) in Business Management with an Accounting pathway from the University of Westminster in London. He lives in the United Kingdom with his family. Kyaw Win has spent several years raising awareness within the international community regarding religious intolerance and persecution of minorities in Myanmar. He is a well-reputed activist in UK and become a chairman of an organisation called Justice for the Rohingya Minority (JFRM). He has given several public talks and spoken at various conferences to raise awareness of the plight of the Rohingya and other Burmese Muslims. He has given public talk at LSE University London, Oxford University, UK Parliament and EU Parliament. He has also given interviews to various mainstream media outlets such as Al Jazeera, ABC News, Sky New, BBC World, and TRT World and participated in debates on Burma politics and religious persecution in Burma. Kyaw Win is the author of several articles on these issues, including pieces features in The Asia Times, Huffington Post, EU Observer and New Mandela, which examined the spread of religious persecution in Myanmar and its root causes.



Radicalism becomes a serious threat for diversity, peace, and democracy in Asia. Radicalist tend to have intolerant behaviour towards others who hold different views and perspectives. In the higher level, they are also very likely to join violent extremist groups. Radicalism becomes a serious problem as it had affected children, teens, adults, and even government officers. The issues of radical and violent extremism are grave concerns across Asia (especially in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand). The peaceful harmony in the region, intact for decades, is now in jeopardy. Minorities are being ruthlessly targeted.

While some 58 countries have created or are in the process of creating action plans, there is little consensus among them regarding a unified direction on a regional level. The governments must think of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy combined with efforts to promote pluralism within a civilized and democratic framework. Separately, apart from promoting the culture of dialogue to resolve disputes, the government should also work towards reforming education and curricula, engaging with youth and media, securing cyberspaces and improving governance. In addition to all that, the governments must also resolve the root causes of terrorism, namely injustice, poverty, economic hardship, social disparity and change produce anxieties. But the persistent factors of violent and non-violent extremism in society remain largely unaddressed. There is a need to develop intellectual, ideological responses to annul extremists' religious-ideological dogmas and evolve a comprehensive rehabilitation or reintegration of militants.