

## **Paths to Peace: Contending Discourses on Communal Violence and Conflict in the Post-New Order Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses actual discourses that have shaped the ways in which violent communal conflicts have been understood, and how different practices of interventions have been applied to address the conflicts in the post-New Order Indonesia. The discourses have their own perspectives, practical interventions, and agencies. Against the backdrop of the competing discourses, this paper argues for more attention being paid to local ways of resolving communal conflict despite the accompanying debates on their effectiveness and efficiency.*

**Keywords:** *Communal Violence, Conflict, Discourse, Perspective, Intervention*

A series of violent conflicts took place in many parts of Indonesia between late 1990s and early 2000s. Scholars characterise most of the conflicts — such as those took place in West Kalimantan (1997, 1999), Central Kalimantan (2001), Maluku (1999-2002), North Maluku (1999-2000) and Central Sulawesi (2000-2001) as having been communal in character (Triyono 2004).<sup>1</sup> These communal

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<sup>1</sup> These communal conflicts should be differentiated from other type of conflict which also taking place in Indonesia, known as separatist or successionist conflict. While communal conflicts are conflict taking place between different factions of the societies, separatist conflicts involve not only factions of societies but also the state. The latter refers to such conflict took place in East Timor, Aceh and Papua.

conflicts took place with strong elements of either ethnicity, religion or a combination of both as mobilising instruments. Strong ethnic elements can be seen in the case of West Kalimantan and Central Kalimantan, where the conflicts involved three different ethnicities: Dayak, Madurese and Malay. A combination of ethnic and religious elements is more obvious in the case of communal conflicts that took place in Maluku, North Maluku and Central Sulawesi. The conflicts have claimed more than 10,000 lives together. In addition to lost of lives, the conflicts also had deep and far-reaching impacts on inter-community interaction as well as economic-social ordering in the conflicting areas.

Needless to say, the conflicts took place with their own internal dynamics. However, it is the argument of this paper that unless we broaden the perspective through which these conflicts are seen, it is almost impossible to deal with the conflicts effectively. It is the purpose of this paper, therefore, to broaden our perspective in the understanding of those conflicts by situating them within the time and space of both national and global contexts. Against that backdrop, this paper will review perspectives at work that have shaped the way through which violent communal conflicts have been understood and practical recommendations of conflict resolution put forward by respective agencies working with conflicts, such as the state (national and local government), non-government organisations (NGOs), and local communities.

This paper has two immediate objectives: firstly, to offer a broader picture of the relation between actual discourses and perspectives and interventions that have been implied in the intervention practices. Any effort in resolving a violent conflict draws upon certain assumption and premises toward the conflict (Brigg 2008; Richmond, forthcoming). The NGO activist, the state representative, and local community member (victims or perpetrators) come to make sense of the event within a certain framework of meaning and practice; secondly, to provide the first task with the explanation that those perspectives held by its agency do not come from nowhere but have, in fact, their articulation within mainstream discourses in a specific period of time. Understanding the work of discourse helps us to make

sense of how certain perspectives become dominant, how attempts to halt violence become mainstream, and how what are believed to be the 'root causes' of the violence become resolved. In short, the two objectives will make it clear that the role of perspective goes beyond mere academic scholarship. It is manifested in the actual course of coping with the questions and answers toward communal violence in late 1990s and early 2000s.

We will start in the following part by looking at the national and global context concerning the rise of violence. The second part will briefly review three discourses within which scholars worked in addressing violent communal conflicts in the period. The third part will then review the three perspectives which are closely associated in specific ways with the actual discourses. The chapter's final part discusses the way in which the perspectives of the evolving discourses are reflected in the way in which agencies or actors deal with the violent communal conflicts.

### **The rise of violence: national and global contexts**

Violent conflicts in Indonesia between the end of the 1990s and start of the 2000s took place in the context of the rise of violence both at the national and international levels. In the national arena, they took place as part of the growing political challenge to the New Order authoritarian regime. The challenger, under the umbrella demanding *reformasi*, contested the legitimacy of the three decades' worth of two dominant discourses in the New Order's nation-building project: state-led nationalism and developmentalism. For the critics, state-led nationalism and developmentalism have failed to address social, economic and political problems facing Indonesia. These were held responsible for the failure of the state in coping with economic crisis (1997-1998) and the ensuing political instability.

It was within this context that 'democracy' entered the scene and became an important rallying discourse among reformation forces. Democracy became the keyword not only to articulate public past grievances but also to project the hope for the country's future. It is important to note that Islamism, or political Islam, was also

an important part in rallying for *reformasi*. It became one of the main forces along with other forces or movements during that period (Abuza, 2003). As we will see, the discourse of democracy helps us to understand the response to violent communal conflicts soon after the fall of the New Order regime.

Violence, as *narrative* and *event*, also has global context and repercussions. Civil wars and violent communal conflicts became global phenomena in the Cold War, sweeping across Africa, Southern Europe, Middle East and other parts of South Asia. Most of the civil wars and violent communal conflicts during this bloody decade took the form of ethnic-religious rivalry.

Information and communication technology has played a central role in disseminating inter-religious or inter-ethnic violence to other turbulent parts of the world. Recurrent violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the massacre of Muslims in the breakdown of Yugoslavia, for instance, have shaped political identification among local people. This has manifested itself not only in the way in which people have responded to what was happening in other parts of the world, but also in the way in which they have coped with their real conflicts at home. Violent conflicts in Maluku and North Maluku took place in the context of 'global village', a world where territorial sovereignty of nation-state competes with deterritorialising effects of identity politics and conflict.

The globalisation of violence narrative clearly affects the way in which the people understand their relations with others. It feeds the need for constructing identity in a time of political and economic uncertainty, which ultimately takes the form of binary opposition between 'us' and 'them.' However misleading the form of identification might have been, its availability has undoubtedly increased symbolic arsenal for mobilisation of sentiments and violent attitudes and acts. Though obviously understudied, religionisation of violence in Maluku and North Maluku clearly bears some truth that the conflicting parties employed symbols and narratives of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts in the sense that the Christians were associated to the Israelis while the Muslims were associated with the

Palestinian cause. This religionisation has also taken place with regard to 'jihadism' in later stages of violent conflicts in Maluku, North Maluku and Central Sulawesi (Lorraine, 2005; Bräuchler, 2003). It was part of the global experience that took place in the local reality. Much of what happened in the conflicts relates more to violence than to the underlying conflicts as responses to massacre and slaughtering.

### **Discourses on communal violence**

Departing from the basic premise that those dealing with conflicts work within a specific discourse, this part will elaborate on the three most dominant discourses concerning violent communal conflict in Indonesia. These can be characterised as: critical discourse on the New Order's developmentalism; discourse on 'regime change'; and discourse on national integration. The three discourses provide different ways in which violence among communal contenders is understood. More specifically, they refer to different root causes of the violence. Apart from their differences, they share a characterisation of violence simply as a symptom or a manifestation of underlying and more latent conflict in the society. Therefore, they provide a view into the way violent communal conflicts can be managed, resolved or transformed.

### ***Economic crisis, failure of developmentalism and ethnicisation of the economy***

The economic crisis that hit Indonesia in 1997-1998 has given the modernist view analytical muscle. For the proponents of this view, the bloody fightings among communal contenders throughout the country following economic crisis and political disorder are seen as reflecting the fundamental failure of state-led modernisation. Working through the magic word of 'developmentalism', the New Order regime adopted development programmes aimed mainly at achieving a high level of economic growth. As such, it paid little attention, if any, to economic and political equality, or justice (Sidel 2001; van Klinken 2006; Trijono 2007). The problem with economic and political inequality in Indonesia became more serious when it took place along different ethnic or religious group in society

(the 'ethnicisation' or 'religionisation' of economic activities and agencies).

The cases of disparity of economic wellbeing along ethnic or/and religious lines are not difficult to see in Indonesia. It takes place in different forms of manifestation. The most clear example has been the economic dominance of the Chinese. But the economic and wellbeing disparities between Chinese and native populations (or '*pribumi*') is not the only example. Similar disparities occurred also among different ethnic groups of the *pribumi* population. Migration in some cases through transmigration programme has also resulted in the unequal economic well-being between the migrants and the local populations, such as the case in Maluku, Kalimantan and Papua (Tirtosudarmo 1997). This has been a potential root cause for conflict, fuelling resentment due to the sense of economic misfortune, the feeling of being marginalised, and the loss of cultural identity. This resentment found the 'ripe moment' during the economic crisis as the 'marginalised' sought a scapegoat in the form of other ethnic group, also the dominant economic group, to the misfortune they had suffered.

For proponents of the modern view, what happened in Indonesia was parallel to what happened in other parts of the world. Africa has been often cited in empirical evidence in support this view. Bloody conflicts among rival groups across Africa in the 1990s were also caused by the failure of developmentalism adopted by authoritarian regimes. Under these policies, African tribes as cultural categories have been transformed into political category in the sense that 'tribe' has been constructed and instrumentalised by the regimes to perpetuate their power by maintaining the dominance of one tribe over other tribes (Mamdani 1996; 2009). The development of economic and welfare inequality along ethnic and religious lines in Indonesia works exactly as tribalisation of economic and welfare inequality in Africa. And, Economic crisis opened the Pandora box of potential conflicts as a result of the developmentalism of the New Order.

***Regime change, democratic transition and oligarchic consolidation*** 87

Alternative to the modernist view, and somewhat more popular among peace and conflict scholars as well as NGO activists, is what we characterise as the discourse of regime change. It departs from the basic premise in that communal violence instead relates closely to political dynamics and the conflicts of interest among national elites. Violence takes place as a result of these elite maneuvers during and in the aftermath of political reform, such as in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The ouster of Suharto from power is said to have resulted in fierce competition among national elites wishing to regain power. It was a struggle for power in the real sense of the word. The proponents of the discourse of regime change, therefore, are concerned with actors and institutions to explain the communal violence at the end of 1990s and early 2000s. However, two strands of argument emerge from this discourse, with significant consequence in their analysis of conflict.

One strand of argument within the discourse focuses on '*democratic transition*.' Its central argument is that regime change is a product of political tension that favors democratic forces. Drawing on Huntingtonian ideas that see democracy as an historical and, allegedly natural, outcome of immanent battle between liberty and servitude (Huntington 1996), it could be argued that the golden era of the New Order came to an end and was replaced by more democratic politics. For proponents of this line of argument the painful and conflictual character of the democratic transition would be attributable to the long and entrenched behavior of the political elites, and legacy of New Order authoritarianism. In the process of the transition to democracy, where the former authoritarian regime lost its grip on power, the state lost its control over its population. The situation tended to be ungovernable. As a result, many conflict potential 'hotspots' exploded without any capacity of the state to cope (van Klinken 2007; Nordholt 2004).

Referring to the notion of 'strong state' or 'weak state' (Migdal 1988), the many communal conflicts that swept across the country in the late 1990s are treated as symptomatic of a weak state incapable

88 of managing such political conflicts during a time of transition. For the proponents of this strand of regime change discourse, the key to coping with such a situation is in increasing the capacity of the state. In other words, it is necessary to empower government institutions, including military apparatuses, in order to make them more capable in coping during a time of ungovernability.

Conflicts of interest or acute competition among political actors are among the key challenges which require the putting into practice electoral systems, institutions, and the separation of military from political arena, as well as the implementation of civilian control over the military and the legitimate means of violence (Sisk and Risley 2005). In the view of this strand of argument, political democracy was the only way to overcome violent conflicts in Indonesia.

The second strand of argument focuses on what can be characterised as '*oligarchic consolidation.*' The proponents of this argument view regime change in a less optimistic way. They give more attention to the structures and dynamics in the relation between economic and political forces (Hadiz and Robinson 2004; Hadiz 2006). For them, neither a state-led economy nor that of a capitalist colonisation of national and local politics come to an end with the regime change. With strong ties to Marxian political economy, the proponents of oligarchic consolidation tell us how regime change revolves around issues of superstructure instead of fundamental shifts in the capital-political power nexus. During three decades of the New Order government, the nexus had installed or produced state patronism and local government patronage (Mundayat 2009). The state was the pool of economic resources and, consequently, political power. The linkage between national and local elites had been institutionalised either through executive or through legislative branches (Wilson, 2005). This was, in particular, done through the ruling political party Golkar.

What emerged in such a nexus was a patronage system, within which a patron (referring to politicians, senior government officials, retired or active military officers) constituted the institutionalisation of power holding. The logic is very clear. The ouster of Suharto did



not signify regime change in any fundamental way. Instead, it opened up greater space and gave momentum for diverse power-holders, at different sites and levels, to engage in an all-out struggle or positions and resources of the state (Aditjondro 2001). In other words, while the democratic-transition argument posits that the violent conflicts within the framework of regime change signals the triumph of a democratic path to politics, the argument of oligarchic consolidation sees them as simply parts of a circular process of a regime change that, ultimately, simply replaces the greedy actors or elites back into power in the aftermath of violent conflicts.

### ***National disintegration, failed state and fear of disintegration***

Though not directly linked to the issue of separatism, violent communal conflicts in Maluku and North Maluku have sparked deep-rooted fear of national disintegration. The granting of Timorese independence 1999, together with the increased resistance of the Free Aceh Movement (known as GAM) in Aceh and the Free Papua Movement (known as OPM) in Papua, provides background for how the national political scene in the late 1990s was overloaded with growing concern over the relation between the ‘state’ and the ‘nation’ (Wessel 2001). The core question is: ‘Where does the nation go when the state fails?’ Two opposite arguments in the literature exist for answering this question.

The first argument takes a progressive stance. It sees that the violent conflicts in both areas reflect the fundamental failure of the national state-building project –, the worst legacy of three decades of authoritarian rule and also a continuing legacy of late colonialism (Nordholt 2002). The ‘national question succumbed to the state’s developmentalism project. As a result, Indonesian society has been militarised. Almost all aspects of inter-community relations were securitised in favor of economic growth and of the supremacy of the state-led national integration project. Politics of SARA<sup>2</sup> as military-style control and regulation of multi ethnic-religious conducts and

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<sup>2</sup> SARA stands for *suku* (ethnic), *agama* (religion), *ras* (race) dan *antar golongan* (and social groupings).

relations were perceived as breeding grounds for ethnic and religious militancy and extremism. Instead of excluding religion and ethnicity from political affairs, communal violence in the aftermath of the '1998 regime change' revealed politicisation of ethnic and cultural identity as a means to articulate past grievances and future hopes. In short, the New Order's depoliticisation of cultural affairs through the securitisation of national questions has been replaced by politicisation of cultural identity as an exit for securing their political-economic existence in time of troubles.

Opposite to the progressive argument is a more conservative stance. It reflects on the ways in which the state sees communal violence, that is, it deals with homicide (killing and slaughtering) in terms of law enforcement. Military deployment to deescalate violence has been the main agenda in conflict intervention, either to prevent 'domino effects' of the violence or to soothe the ultra-nationalist concern about the breaking up of the nation. This conservative stance sought to separate violence from the underlying conflicts in order to confine them into the domain of law rather than into fundamental political issues at the time. Contrary to the progressive stance, in this conservative view, communal violence during the *reformasi* period was perceived as the result of ethnicisation and religionisation of conflicts which the New Order had succeeded in managing for three decades. Democracy, the leading discourse of *reformasi*, was to blame as it did not fit Indonesian multicultural society which, they believed, was prone to communal outbreak.

It is in this paradigmatic context that some scholars see the underlying logic adopted by ultra-nationalist military factions in their efforts to find ways and strategies to re-enter into post-Soeharto political affairs (Aditjondro 2001; Pontoh 2004; Suaedy 2000). As can very clearly be seen, the state tended to approach violence through 'peacekeeping' and 'peacemaking.' Post-violence 'peacebuilding' has simply been neglected at best. Research findings in post-conflict societies clearly support this suspicion. In dealing with conflict, the state's attention toward the 'root causes' of communal violence has been relatively absent except through the 'post-disaster' framework and through the increase of securitisation (Trijono 2009).

## Perspectives on conflicts and conflict intervention

The discourse on communal violence in the preceding part has its roots in different perspectives on conflict. These perspectives constitute the way we understand or, more appropriately, make sense of a conflict and, therefore, the preferred intervention that we adopt in dealing it. Three perspectives dominate current understandings of conflict: essentialist or primordialist; instrumentalist; and structuralist. They have been adopted by most who work on conflict. Outside the mainstream and with a tendency to be understudied is the perspective which, among the peace and conflict studies scholars and activists, is usually referred to as 'local' or 'traditional.' This perspective tended to be marginalised if not ignored in conflict intervention as practised by the government, international institutions, NGOs, and most of the peace and conflict scholars and peace activists. But, in fact, it has worked well and contributed significantly to the de-escalation of violence in many conflicts.

### *Essentialist or primordialist perspective: SARA conflates with Huntingtonian legacy*

This perspective is clearly the underlying logic of the state-led discourse of national integration. It departs from the very belief that cultural difference is a source of conflict. As formulated most explicitly by Huntington in particular and by orientalists in general, the proponents of this perspective argue that in time of political uprisings, ethnic and religious communities are prone to be conflict actors.

The Indonesian Government under the New Order regime subscribed entirely to this perspective and believed that the diverse nature of Indonesian culture was what made Indonesia prone to conflict. It gave special attention to the religion and ethnicity as a source of conflict and instability. This perspective has gained more significant influence since the New Order regime, especially with the rise of 'political Islam.' This development has pitted Muslims and Christians in exclusive opposition due to their extremely different views of God and society. These views are believed to be simply

nonnegotiable. Ethnic and religious groups are assumed to construct and reconstruct their own identities in this symbolic and meaningful way, resulting in their self perceptions as making them entirely in the possession of truth and as worthy of enjoying privileges in the face of the whole of society and of the state. This perspective is very common among many conflict analysts and practitioners working in the field of conflict and conflict resolution. But this is also a perspective through which the Indonesian Government has made sense of its own society.

An obvious manifestation of the essentialist perspective of the New Order was the interpretation of the state ideology Pancasila, which viewed cultural difference and its political articulation as core problems that haunt the nation-building project. It was within this framework through which the New Order regime introduced the notion of SARA. It was a policy aimed at providing guidance for political correctness. Under SARA, it was politically incorrect, to talk about topics related to the SARA elements. As such, SARA became the way in which the government tried to regulate or even control and impose repressive rules on how ethnic-religious groups should live 'peacefully,' by not talking about others. It was considered that SARA-related issues were latent threats to national integration and political stability.

The communal violence that took place in the early period of the post-*reformasi* government was clearly viewed in this perspective. This could be seen from the way in which the state sought to end the violence and to resolve what it perceived as its root causes, such as lack of tolerance or the absence of the military's hold on Indonesian multi-ethnic and religious society. We will discuss this further in the next section.

However, the essentialist or primordialist perspective cannot exclusively be subscribed by the government. Many peace practitioners and donor-supported NGOs also work within this perspective as manifested by their preoccupation with the notion of multiculturalism. They believe that communal violence among ethnic-religious groups is caused by the lack of spirit for tolerance

and respect for differences. Fascinated by the prevalent and excessive mobilisation of religious symbols and identities in the protracted conflicts, they give most of their attention and advocacy to the promotion of inter-religious dialogue in conflict areas. Quite different from the state's essentialist perspective, this movement exposes cultural diversity for common understanding, in order to create tolerance and peaceful co-existence. But, their treatment of culture is at best ambivalent. Local culture is associated with tradition and is characterised as static and subordinate to the liberal-western culture. The notion of local culture is crucial in the building of peace, even in liberal terms (Brigg, forthcoming; Sugiono and Jalong, forthcoming). Their ambivalence can be understood, among others, in terms of their dual function. They have to play to opposite roles. On the one hand, they have to work within the framework of liberal norms and, on the other hand, as interpreters of local culture (Cobb and Rifkin 1991).

***Instrumentalist perspective: Political elites and war by proxy***

This perspective underlies the discourse of regime change which views communal violence as intentionally or deliberately crafted by national and local elites in their search for power in the local arena of politics and for control over natural economic resources (van Klinken 2007; Nordholt 2004; Aragon 2007; Collins, 2002). The keywords in this perspective are 'elites' and 'political interests'. The series of communal conflicts which occurred following the national political transition in 1998 offers the best illustration of this perspective.

Based on this perspective, it is assumed that the decentralisation policy inspired local elites to compete for district or provincial leadership. The elites employed the already conflictual relations between ethnic and religious groups by essentialising cultural differences among the groups and mobilising them for pursuit of their completely pragmatist interests. From their national base in Jakarta, the former national elites of the New Order promoted decentralised despotism by turning provinces and districts into the sites and means of defending their oligarchic regime (Robison and Hadiz 2004; van Klinken 2006). At the same time, the conflicts were

also understood as military exercises after the military lost most of its roles and resources following the institutional split between itself and the police.

This perspective is much favoured by political analysts who are inclined to put greater emphasis on the role of political elites and their mobilising capacity (Sihbudi et.al. 2001). As already mentioned, it sees the local and national elites as having significant influence in designing, executing, and prolonging violence. The military is part of this elite group. Many believe that the military sought to maintain violent conflict for its own benefits, notably for keeping control of security issues which helped to ultimately keep its role intact (Azca 2005). Formal political affairs at the national and local levels were, therefore, considered as the main sources and contexts of the conflict.

### ***Structuralist Perspective: Poverty and Political Authoritarianism***

This perspective begins with an assertion that communal violence was situated in an unjust economic structure as well as political discrimination (Triyono, 2007). The New Order's policy emphasising economic modernisation while at the same time excluding local elites from local politics was seen as central in creating a sense of injustice, exclusion, prejudice and hatred among local people. Such a policy set the ground for ethnic and religious groups to go into conflict with each other. In the Maluku case, for instance, protracted and large-scale violence was viewed mainly as the result of the state policy that favoured migrant-indigenous Muslims while confining the Christians into bureaucratic privileges (Betrand, 2002, 2004; Acciaioli, 2001; Adam, 2010).

A series of national and local workshops on "Development and Sustainable Peace in Maluku, North Maluku and Central Sulawesi" organised by the Centre of Security and Peace Studies (CSPS) of Gadjah Mada University in 2004-2005, for example, came to a solid conclusion that most local NGOs from conflict areas clearly shared this perspective. They identified the roots of the conflict within poverty and political affiliation/mobilisation along ethnic-religious lines. These were mostly influenced by state policy during

the New Order regime until the early period of the postNew Order government. They recommended, among other things, that more attention be given to capacity building, democratisation in local politics, and the acceleration of economic development. This is believed to be the best scenario for conflict transformation that can sustain peaceful coexistence among ethnic-religious groups in the community. In short, the main issues in this perspective are economic justice and political equality.

The structuralist perspective constitutes a substantial shift from the so-called Washington Consensus to the post-Washington Consensus (Fine 2003). It has become the underlying framework of some international donors and institutions, such as UNDP and the World Bank. Seen from this perspective, the Indonesian Government's development policy failed to promote economic and political equality as well as to make the free market, human rights, and investment work together harmoniously at sub-national levels. As such, the ideas of 'social capital' and 'good governance' were introduced into post communal violence areas and became more appealing in various peacebuilding advocacies, especially those pioneered by donor-driven national and local NGOs in early 2000s.

### ***Traditional or local perspective: People's understanding of violence***

The difference between the three dominant perspectives above does not necessarily mean that they are completely exclusive from each other. In fact, there are some points of intersection as they are developed into theories and practices of conflict resolution. There are similarities in the emphasis of the instrumentalist and essentialist perspectives. There are also close connection between structuralist and instrumentalist perspectives in the sense that the former owes the latter in order to explain the role of local-national political elites in transforming what is perceived as latent conflict.

What is ubiquitously absent from the three perspectives is the local people's view of the violent conflict in which they become part of, both as a perpetrator, a victim, or both at once. Villages are the sites where violent conflict takes its most brutal forms. It is the space

where the roots of violence develop and grow and where all the forces that make up the conflict operate in people’s minds and in their daily interactions. It is also the place where conflict resolution and violence prevention work in specific ways (Sugiono and Jalong, forthcoming; Brigg, forthcoming). But, this significance of space for conflict and, therefore, also for resolution has tended to be neglected or, at best, overlooked.

Through anthropology-ethnography oriented research, Helen Clarke and Arifah Rahmawati in their *Non Violence Resistance: People Stories from Indonesian Conflicts* (2006) tell of how local people make sense of the violence within which they are victims and victimisers at the same time, the actors, the main issues and their dynamics, the forms and technology of violence, the triggers, and the escalation. We try to reformulate Clarke and Rahmawati’s narrative of violence according to the category of actors (victim/victimiser), target of violence, roots of violence (or main conflict issues), dynamics of the issues, i.e. issues which infiltrate from the outside or which is constructed or developed in violent conflict period), the forms and the technology of violence, and the escalation of violence.

*Characteristics of communal violence in North Maluku, Maluku, Central Sulawesi, and West/Central Kalimantan*

Actors	Kinship coupled with religious identity or brotherhood; adult men and teenagers; composition of the actors relatively equal in both conflicting parties.
Target of Violence	The human body is the most targeted; private properties; religious buildings, including churches and mosques; other symbols of ethnic-religious identity.
Main Issues	Conflict narrative, for example, past experience of interethnic-religious conflict, that sustain prejudice, discontent, and hatred.
Issues Dynamics	Political and economic competition at district level; control and access to natural resources and modern economic resources or market at district level.



Forms and Technology of Violence	<p>Terror, ambush, killing, massacre, and mutilation by traditional weapons (as a form of identity assertion); destructing and burning houses as well as religious buildings.</p> <p>When communal violence reaches its peak and the state fails to provide security, villagers become well-organised combatants and use small arms and other hand-made weapons.</p>
Escalation	<p>Violence escalates and spreads very quickly from one village to another. Rumours drive villagers into taking part in violence, for example, killing neighbours or driving them out of the village</p>

The people's perspective shows that the root causes of communal violence are located within and evolved in the context of inter-ethnic and interreligious relations on a daily basis. Conflict narratives emerge and are inseparable from this specific context. As such, history plays a very significant role as it is through people's experience with the past that discontent, prejudice, and hatred develop. In contrast to the three dominant perspectives, which have strong institutional and elitist elements, the people's perspective illustrates how local people on the ground perceive their violent acts, such as killing and slaughtering, as a result of an absence of inter-subjectivity underlying a common understanding for dealing with ethnic-religious differences. In other words, their conflict has much more to do with emotion than rational interests, the elites' deliberate act or strategy, or the failure of traditional norms and institutions (Brigg 2008). At the same time, the people's perspective also reveals the relative strength of local and traditional ways of resolving and preventing the spread of violence.

### **Halting violence and resolving conflict: The actors and the strategies**

In general use, conflict resolution means resolving the roots of conflict that have thrown communal contenders into protracted warfare. It also refers to attempts at terminating the vicious circle of violence conditioned by the conflict (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 2005; Cheldelin, Druckman and Fast 2003). This two-

fold definition of conflict resolution is applicable with the caveat that it differs from conflict management insofar as the latter deals with non-violent conflict, while conflict resolution focuses on violent conflict, or conflict that escalates into communal violence. Accordingly, as conflict is always there while violence is not, the resolution to violent conflict is by nature temporary. It sets the ground for more orchestrated efforts at conflict transformation in which local actors can play a greater role in the ongoing, interminable daily project of reconciliation, forgiveness, and development of social and economic solidarity beyond ethnic, territorial, and religious boundaries.

Different actors participated in the efforts to stop violence and to solve conflicts in Indonesia in the late 1990s to early 2000s, ranging from the state, NGOs, and ordinary local people. While aiming at the same goals, their work have clearly been based on different perspectives. Those actors may have worked collaboratively but, no doubt, they had different concerns and instruments depending on the perspective they had adopted. It is also important to note that they have also had different resources at their disposal and worked in different cultural and political contexts that, ultimately, determined whether they succeeded or failed.

### ***State: From military intervention to peace accords***

The state, is undoubtedly among the most important actor in relation to conflict resolution in Indonesia. The strategies for terminating violence and solving the conflicts and adopted by the state have been obvious. When communal violence occurred across the five provinces, the state, particularly the central government was expected to deal with it. The first response to the conflicts was military deployment and the declaration of 'state of civil emergency.' The aim was to create suitable conditions for law enforcement and political stability. As such, the state treated actors in the communal violence both victims and victimizers as citizens and addressed their violent actions as grave crimes as well as a serious threat to national integration. Equipped with powerful authority and the legitimate means of coercion, the state has proved relatively successful in terminating violence by separating ethnic-religious groups at war

and bringing them to agreement. The following table provides a clear picture of the conflict resolution efforts undertaken by the state.

*Key elements of conflict resolution initiated by the state*

<b>Location</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Key Elements of Resolution</b>
North Maluku	1999-2000	3,287	Security response, national government (2000).
Maluku	1999-2002	2,186	Security operations (2001-2002), Malino Accords (2002).
Central Sulawesi	2000-2001	517	Malino Accords (2001).
West Kalimantan	1997, 1999	1,515	Displacement of Madurese.
Central Kalimantan	2001	1,284	Displacement of Madurese.

Disarmament and demobilisation are two integrated programmes in which the government has played a dominant role. Muslim and Christian combatants were disarmed and demobilised, but little attention was paid to the reintegration programme. Reintegration means returning the circumstances to peaceful co-existence in the post-violence period. Relocation of internally-displaced people (IDPs) to new areas separated from the original places was thought to be a better option. This relates to its perspective on ethnic-religious differences as the central problem to peace. Instead of facilitating peaceful coexistence in diversity in the village, the state offered them (particularly IDPs and other sporadically scattered displaced people) the option to reside in new areas with relatively homogenous ethnic-religious groups. Of course, in early period of post-communal violence where security remained relatively uncertain, the local people (victims and victimisers alike) preferred to latter option, despite underlying difficulties and obstacles in adjusting themselves to the post-violence social and economic environment.

As soon as the violence changed, economic reconstruction became a priority. This was for the quite an understandable reason that the conflicts had wrecked a devast on to the local economics. Constructing houses and providing land for the relocated people

was a major programme of governments both, locally and nationally. However, the problem of social and cultural reintegration remained insufficiently addressed. Focusing on economic reconstruction without giving attention to social and cultural reintegration has undoubtedly perpetuated conflictual relationships between ethnic-religious groups. Living in separate communities made the conflicting parties unable to develop genuine dialogue in their daily life through economic and social activities in their localities. As can be seen, ethnic-religious cleavages have re-emerged in the post-violence areas. In addition, the decentralisation policy, upon which establishment of new districts have been justified, has proven to worsen the situation. This segregation strengthened ethnic and religious sentiment as manifested in various demands by groups for formal and administrative separation from a district where the majority belongs to the ‘enemy’.

The matrix below summarises how the state’s perspective of conflict is translated into policies dealing with resolution of communal violence.

Principle/ Assumption/ Values	Conflicting parties are citizens; law enforcement is universally applicable to all violent conflict; focusing on state-society relationship; punitive-retributive justice; separating the parties in terms of space and interaction (one or both parties are relocated to new areas of residence)
Goals	Political stability and security (ingredients of order), state-oriented citizenship, and obedience to state’s law.
Actors Involved	National and local government (including military and police); representatives of ethnic-religious communities; state-sponsored and international donor sponsored NGOs, including international communities in cooperation with the state.
P o l i c y / Mechanism/ Instruments	Formal mediation; facilitation, law enforcement (police investigation, court process, etc.); disarmament and demobilisation; reintegration (through relocation); economic reconstruction; and promoting the establishment of new districts.

***NGOs: From violence prevention to conflict transformation***

NGOs are other important actors in resolving conflicts in Indonesia. They have addressed violence and conflict in different ways but not rarely also worked together on shared issues and programmes. Other areas of concern for many NGOs are human rights violation, IDP's, gender, children's education and trauma healing, inter-religious tolerance, local politics or democracy, and advocacy of customary conflict resolution. Most of these NGOs have strong networking with the national and international community. The network is not only related to financial resources, but also to ideology (Antlov, Ibrahim and van Tuijl 2006). Within the network, local NGOs have played the role as translator, staying in the middle between local people, state and donor institutions. Quite a large number of these NGOs are state-sponsored whose main task is to assist the government implementing its policies.

All those organisations working on conflict seem to apparently share a common understanding on the roots of violence. As suggested in the previous part, various NGOs understand that the roots of violence lie in the problems of economic development, security, and democratisation in local politics. For them, we have to give more attention to the policy-making process in order to be able to address and resolve the root causes of violence. The best way to address the problem, therefore, is through empowerment that is strengthening local people's capacity to participate and exert their influence in policy making. For decades during the New Order period, this power of the people was simply ignored or suppressed. Policy making has, therefore, been the privilege of government officials and local elites (Sisk and Risley 2005).

The most important key concept for conflict resolution along this line has been the promotion of 'good governance' One important part of this notion is people's participation in the policy-making process. In the post-violence period, a growing number of NGO's has been working in partnership with the government in dealing with the problems of IDP's and economic and social reconstruction. What has remained absent in their work is the attention to the

characteristics of the communal violence as seen and experienced by the local people. Only a few NGOs went beyond these framework.

One of those few NGOs is Gerakan Baku Bae (Baku Bae Movement) in Maluku, pioneered by Institut Titian Perdamaian (Malik, Pattinaja, Putuhena, Yakob et.al. 2003). This movement began as part of the conflict resolution effort in 2000 when the Ambon town and villages throughout the Maluku region were battlefields of life-and-death struggles among communal contenders. The movement shifted its focus from de-escalation of violence into conflict transformation in a peacebuilding framework. It organised a series of informal, community-based meetings for intensive dialogue between conflicting parties, including national and local governments. Involved were leaders of combatant groups, such as ethnic leaders like *raja of negeri* (traditional village chiefs whose roles in conflict were extremely influential in the Ambon region), and also religious leaders from both Muslim and Christian communities, and local-national government officials.

Within the movement's framework, local people were given rare opportunities to share their views on the roots of the violence and found mutually acceptable ways to terminate the vicious circle of violence in 2000-2002 and jointly resolve its causes in 2003 and beyond. Since 2007, this movement through its extended partnership with various local-national NGOs and universities, has started to focus on conflict transformation aiming at preventing recurrence of violence and conflict management by facilitating all local stakeholders to frame common issues, to promote networks between ethnic-religious communities and to empower local ways of resolving dispute (Malik 2007).

The Baku Bae Movement has clearly showed the dynamics and variety of efforts in relation to conflict resolution in Indonesia. The movement has shifted from one perspective to another during and after the communal violence took place. Few other NGOs have also contributed to conflict resolution in Indonesia regardless of their different, sometimes overlapping, perspectives. But, many others have faced serious problems as actors in the conflict resolution effort.

Many local NGOs, for example, have a big problem when it comes to the need to be impartial and to be accountable to the people they claim to represent. This difficulty comes from their association with international donors as well as from their deep involvement in local politics. Being too deeply immersed in local politics has led many NGOs to play the role more as the voice of government interests rather than that of the people. Worse of all, many NGOs activists have ended up becoming local elites with one-sided political interests in the context of district separations or new district establishments.

### ***The people: Ending violence and restoring co-existence***

De-escalation of communal violence at the village level is closely related to the practice of peace norms and rites for reconciliation (Clarke and Rahmawati 2006; Sugiono and Jalong, forthcoming). Despite increased criticism (Aditjondro 2007), *Pela-Gandong* across five islands of Ambon-Lease, for instance, has contributed to violence termination and restored relations between Muslims and Christians from *negeri* (villages) that have binding narrative of *Pela* and *Gandong* relationships (Toisuta 2007). This also applies to the local model in Poso District where peace norms of the *Pekasiwa* and the colossal reconciliation rite of *Motambu Tana* in August 2000 proved successful in restoring the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the area.

Local people's conflict resolution mechanisms comprise of norms and rites beyond ethnic and religious cleavages. These norms and rites have been developed since the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Its genealogy and development revision and modification are located in the interactions of cultural diversity in which both indigenous and migrant peoples interact and develop rules for peaceful co-existence, specific mechanisms to prevent and terminate communal violence, and reconcile conflicting parties. Quite different from the primordialist perspective, which has a strong tie to orientalism, the advocates of the people's perspective are very enthusiastic with various local practices and argue that they remain the principal and the most active mechanisms at their disposal of people when they seek to end vicious circles of violence (Brigg and Bleiker, forthcoming).

However, advocates of this perspective are also concerned that the hegemonic perspectives evolving within the actual discourses have detached a vast number of conflict analysts and conflict resolution practitioners from concrete practices on the ground.

The substantive difference between local and the first two conflict resolution mechanisms is too obvious to be neglected. As indicated in the practices of *Motambu Tana* and *Pela-Gandong* during and after communal violence, the practices do not impinge upon the primacy of 'reason' but rather affection or sentiments of togetherness and relatedness. It is feeling, trust, and solidarity rather than rational calculation which leads the villager to resolving the conflict. Norms and rites are employed unnoticeably for they take place in time and places that liberal protagonists of conflict resolution hardly recognise and address in the first place. The advocates of the people's perspective see that local cultures are cultures of living symbols and affectionate narratives inherited by villagers through generation to generation. They also criticise the state and NGOs whose perspectives and interventions have resulted in a variety of local mechanisms being insufficiently addressed, documented, or reported to the broader public at the national and international level of conflict resolution.

The people's perspective of understanding violence goes together with its specific mechanism of resolution. Their specificity can be found in or through their peace practices, particularly through reconciliation rites. Restoration of relationships is the ultimate goal by which practices of restorative justice predominate over punitive-retributive justice. The cosmological dimension of the act of restoring also reactivates ritual practices of purifying the weapons and places where violence takes place.

The following matrix summarises people perspective on conflict as translated into conflict resolution practices.



Principle/ Assumption/ Values	Cultural difference; mutual trust; collectivity; affect inter-subjective reason; populist participatory, restorative justice; and consensus.
Goals	Reconciliation;, social integration; restoration of interethnic/religious relationships; and termination of the vicious circle of violence.
Actors Involved	Combatants and, family; lineages; clans; ethnic-religious leaders (community leaders); other ethnic/religious groups affiliated during conflict escalation, residing in conflict area or coming from outside, even from neighbor islands they are dragged by sense of ethnic bond or religious brotherhood, and the government (as party to the conflict)
Mechanisms/ Instruments	Informal norms; rules and reconciliation rites.
Specific Emphasis	Rites and dialogue are held in the area of conflict; not measured by time schedule, but by heightened intensity and frequency of interaction; location of violence is purified; focus on conflict transformation to peaceful co-existence; and process oriented.

### Concluding remarks

This paper tries to understand different ways in which conflict and violence have been understood and, consequently, how these problems have been addressed. Our findings suggests that most of those working on conflict and violence in Indonesia between late 1990s and early 2000s worked within the framework of one or a combination of the three dominant discourses. The dominance of these discourses is quite clearly demontsrated in the ways in which they intervned in the the conflicts, for better or worse. However, local ways of ending violence and resolving its causes have also taken place, but mostly unnoticed and, consequently, less documented and reported to the broader community of conflict resolution and policy making. Ironically, it is the latter which actually had significant contribution to the end of violence. The review, therefore, suggests that it is the time now for those working on conflict resolution to give more attention to the perspective underlying people's understanding of conflict and violence.

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