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Salman

MUSLIM INSURGENCIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
INTRACTABILITY, THE SECURITY DILEMMA,
AND "ISLAMIC FACTOR"

Ahmad-Norma Permata

THE GUARDIAN OF THE INTEGRAL VISION
OF ISLAMIC PRACTICE: THE NAQSHBANDI SUFI ORDER
IN INDONESIA

Saiful Umam

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Ahmad-Norma Permata

Muslim Insurgencies in Southeast Asia: Intractability, the Security Dilemma, and “Islamic Factor”

Abstraksi: *Dewasa ini, konflik-konflik sosial-politik di Asia Tenggara kerap kali dipahami relatif terlepas dari faktor agama (Islam). Sikap ini terutama berkembang di lingkungan elit politik pemerintahan beberapa negara Asia Tenggara yang memiliki pengalaman konflik di wilayah masing-masing. Sikap ini didasarkan pada sejumlah alasan: pertama, faktor agama akan menjerat negara pada perdebatan isu-isu teologis dan ini cukup sensitif; kedua, faktor agama (Islam) akan menimbulkan sentimen global masyarakat Muslim di dunia.*

Artikel ini memberikan gambaran berbeda dari kalangan elit politik pemerintahan terhadap konflik yang terjadi di Asia Tenggara. Penulis melihat bahwa propaganda politis untuk menghindari simbol agama sebagai bagian dari konflik memiliki alasan penting. Faktor Islam tetap dominan dalam masalah konflik Asia Tenggara, di samping faktor-faktor lain yang bersifat politik dan ekonomi. Islam misalnya memberikan peluang cukup penting dalam konflik; Islam memperkuat ideologi politik keagamaan sebagai legitimasi pemberontakan, di samping juga menjadi bahasa yang efektif untuk mobilisasi masa sebagai bagian dari jihad. Dalam hal terakhir ini, Islam telah menjadi komunitas global dengan konsep ummat, sehingga terhubungkan secara transnational.

Konflik di Asia Tenggara berkaitan erat dengan konteks regional, sosial-budaya dan konstelasi politik kenegaraan. Di Philipina, konflik bermula berkaitan erat dengan persaingan misi agama (Islam dan Kristen) pasca abad ke-13. Diskriminasi negara terhadap kelompok minoritas Muslim menjadi lebih kentara ketika menyebut mereka sebagai Moro, artinya identik dengan kelompok Islam yang dulu menduduki Spanyol. Dari sanalah

konflik terus berkecamuk. Agama dan identitas etnik bahkan menempati bagian penting dari konflik itu. Pemberontakan oleh Muslim minoritas di Mindanao, Philipina Selatan, misalnya, lebih karena diperlakukan tidak adil dalam kehidupan ekonomi dan politik, walaupun ada unsur agama yang ikut berperan.

Berbeda dengan Moro di Philipina, pemberontakan Aceh di Indonesia hingga awal tahun 2004 lebih dipengaruhi faktor ekonomi dan politik. Rakyat Aceh secara ekonomi tidak mendapatkan bagian hasil alam yang seimbang karena dominasi kepentingan politik Jakarta. Permasalahan konflik di Aceh hampir tidak terkait dengan agama.

Serupa dengan Philipina, konflik di Thailand dan Myanmar menampilkan Islam sebagai bagian yang tidak bisa dipisahkan dari masalah konflik. Sebagai komunitas minoritas di Thailand selatan, kelompok Muslim merasa diperlakukan tidak adil, setelah terjadi pembagian wilayah teritorial pasca-penjajahan Inggris. Sementara di Myanmar, komunitas Arakan—mayoritas bergama Islam—menjadi kelompok minoritas yang diperlakukan secara diskriminatif oleh pemerintah. Karena itu, konflik dan pemberontakan dengan kekuatan militer sering muncul sebagai ekspresi ketidakpuasaan masyarakat.

Di samping persaingan agama dan politik, faktor global juga telah memberikan warna tersendiri terhadap konflik dan pemberontakan di Asia Tenggara. Ada empat hal dari peristiwa global yang mempengaruhi konflik: pertama bermula dari kolonialisme, kemudian perang dunia ke-II dan ketiga karena masa perang dingin antara Amerika dan Uni Soviet dan terakhir adalah kasus perang melawan terorisme.

Hal menarik dari pengaruh global terhadap pemberontakan adalah faktor terorisme. Ia tidak saja menjadi bagian dari pemberontakan di Asia Tenggara tetapi juga telah menjadi propaganda utama Barat dalam menghadapi kelompok Islam garis keras. Bahkan bagi para analis politik, Asia Tenggara telah menjadi arena perang bagi al-Qaeda dan Amerika. Faktor agama telah menjadi simbol penting menumbuhkan kesadaran kelompok Muslim tertentu dengan jargon jihad fi sabilillah (jihad di jalan Allah).

Dengan demikian, dari pembahasan artikel ini, pemberontakan-pemberontakan di Asia Tenggara memiliki berbagai dimensi, mulai dari permasalahan politik keamanan, kepentingan ekonomi sampai pada faktor Islam. Untuk itu, konflik-konflik politik di Asia Tenggara dewasa ini—berikut perkembangan-perkembangan politik secara umum—mensyaratkan secara mutlak pentingnya mempertimbangkan faktor agama. Termasuk dalam hal ini gejala revivalisme agama yang juga semakin kuat berkembang belakangan ini di negara-negara di Asia Tenggara.

Muslim Insurancies in Southeast Asia: Intractability, the Security Dilemma, and "Islamic Factor"

الخلاصة: كثيرا ما نفهم في الأوان الأخيرة من الصراعات الاجتماعية والسياسية التي وقعت في جنوب شرقي آسيا بأنها بعيدة نسبيا عن العوامل الدينية (الإسلام). وينمو هذا الموقف خاصة في داخل النخبة من السياسيين الحكوميين في بعض الدول لجنوب شرقي آسيا. ويبنى هذا الموقف على عدة مبررات منها يؤدي العامل الديني إلى وقوع الدولة في المجادلة في قضايا اعتقادية وهي قضية حساسية وخطيرة، ومنها يثير العامل الديني (الإسلام) عواطف المجتمع الإسلامي العالمي.

يعطى هذا البحث صورة مخالفة عن موقف النخبة من السياسيين الحكوميين من الصراع في جنوب شرقي آسيا. ويرى الباحث بأن هناك مبرر مهم للحملات السياسية لإبعاد رمز ديني عن أسباب الصراع. وما يزال العامل الإسلامي ظاهرا في الصراع بجنوب شرقي آسيا، بجانب العوامل الأخرى. بما فيها العامل السياسي والاقتصادي. ويتيح الإسلام فرصة خطيرة للصراع حيث أنه يعزز أيديولوجي السياسي الديني لتبرير المقاومة، بالإضافة إلى أنه يصبح لغة فعالة لتجنيد الناس على الجهاد. وفي هذا الأخير، يصبح للإسلام تجمع عالمي على أساس فكرة الأمة إلى أن يتحول إلى ترابط دولي.

يتعلق الصراع في جنوب شرقي آسيا بالعلاقة بين دول المنطقة، والعوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية والتجمع السياسي في الدولة. كان الصراع في الفلبين يرجع إلى التنافس بين الأرسالية النصرانية والدعوة الإسلامية بعد القرن الثالث عشر. وسياسية التفرقة التي تنتهجها الدول ضد الأقلية المسلمة فيها ظهرت أكثر وضوحا عند ما يطلق على المسلمين اسم "مورو" يعني تسمية للمسلمين الذين كان يحتلون أرض أسبانيا. من هنا يشتد الصراع فيها. ويلعب الدين والهوية القبلية دورا مهما في الصراع. وتعود المقاومة للأقلية المسلمة في "مينداناو" إلى أسباب المعاملة غير العادلة

ضدهم والتفرقة في المجالات الاقتصادية والسياسية ، وإلى جانب عناصر دينية فيها.

وتختلف المقاومة في الفلبين عن المقاومة الآشية حتى بداية عام ٢٠٠٤ التي تعود إلى العوامل الاقتصادية والسياسية. ولم يحصل الشعب الآشي من ناحية اقتصادية على التوزيع العادل في الثروات الطبيعية بسبب قوة النفوذ السياسية للحكومة المركزية (جاكرتا)، فقضية الصراع في آشي لم تربط بعناصر الدين.

إلا أن الصراع في "التايلاند" و"الميامار" لم يختلف عن الصراع في الفلبين ، لأن الإسلام يصبح جزء لا يتجزء من الصراع فيهما. قد تلقت الأقلية المسلمة في جنوب التايلاند المعاملة غير العادلة في تقسيم الولايات بعد رحيل الاستعمار الانجليزي منها. بينما نجد المجتمع "أراكان" — ذا الاغلبية المسلمة — في "الميامار" أصبح أقلية فيها وتعامل الدولة ضدهم معاملة التفرقة. لذلك أن وقوع الصراع والمقاومة المسلحة مع قوات هذه الدولة يعكس التعبير عن استياء المسلمين.

مع هذا التنافس الديني والسياسي، قد أعطى عامل عالمي لونا معيناً على الصراع والمقاومة في جنوب شرقي آسيا، هناك أربع الأحداث العالمية المؤثرة على الصراع في المنطقة هي الاستعمار، وحرب العالمية الثانية، والحرب الباردة بين الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والاتحاد السوفيتي، وقضية الحرب ضد الارهاب.

والأمر المهم في التأثير العالمي على المقاومة والصراع هو عامل الإرهاب، بل أصبح حملة غربية رئيسية في مواجهة الحركة الإسلامية المتشددة. وفي نظر المحللين السياسيين، تحولت المناطق في جنوب شرقي آسيا ساحة الحرب بين "القاعدة" والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وأصبح الدين رمزا مهما لاثارة شعور الجماعة الإسلامية المعينة على الجهاد في سبيل الله.

على ذلك، يتضح من هذا البحث أن الصراع والمقاومة في جنوب شرقي آسيا لها أبعاد متعددة، ابتداء من قضية السياسة والأمن والمصالح الاقتصادية إلى العامل الإسلامي. إلا أنه لا بد من جعل العامل الإسلامي شرطاً أساسياً في التعامل مع المستجدات والتطورات للصراعات السياسية في جنوب شرقي آسيا، كذلك في التعامل مع ظاهرة اليقظة الإسلامية التي تنمو بقوة في دول جنوب شرقي آسيا.

In Southeast Asia Muslims account for more than 243 million of the region's total population of around 582 million people. Although geographically Muslim communities are concentrated in two countries — Indonesia and Malaysia — there are Muslim communities in every Southeast Asian country. Given their numbers in the region, the situation of the wider Muslim community in Southeast Asia will inevitably influence the political dynamics of the region.

Until quite recently, unfortunately, few Studies on Islam in Southeast Asia have been undertaken by either international Islamic scholars or Southeast Asian scholars. Robert Hefner, the well-known American anthropologist from Boston University, refers to this situation as double marginalization. Muslims in Southeast Asia were neglected both from international Islamic studies and Southeast Asian studies. For the former, it was because historically Southeast Asian was among the latest to join the caravan of the Islamic civilization. As a result scholars are predisposed to regard Middle Eastern Islam as the more original and thus more worthy of reference. As for the latter, social as well as political scientists of Southeast Asian studies have for some time sensed that Islamic culture was just an outer veneer of the real characteristics of Southeast Asian society (Hefner, 1997: 2-3).

Recent developments, nevertheless, have brought Southeast Asian Muslims into the spotlight of international media and scholarship. On the one hand, two successful elections in Indonesia, during which Muslims played a pivotal role, have led observers and analysts to refer to Indonesia as the finest example of a democratic Muslim country (Carter, 2004). On the other hand, several violent acts carried out by Muslim extremists have invited others to warn that Indonesia, and Southeast Asia in general, is a potential hotbed for global terrorism (Abuza, 2004).

In line with these recent developments, this article seeks to highlight the armed conflicts which have hit Muslim regions in Southeast Asia - Moro in the Philippines, Aceh in Indonesia, Patani in Thailand, and Rohingya in Myanmar. The reason for this is that it seems that this issue has not been given the international coverage that it deserves in seeking a resolution to such conflicts.

Three main points will be elaborated on in the following discussion. *Firstly*, I would like to explain the chronology of the conflicts and at the same time reveal their intractable nature. *Secondly*, I will analyze the cause of the conflict in terms of the security

dilemma: whether the conflicts were triggered by real or assumed causes? *Thirdly*, I will address the specific “Islamic” factor of the conflicts, which was denied by Southeast Asian governments as being among the features of the conflicts, and propose a more appropriate approach to it in order to reduce the intractability of the conflicts.

Table 1
SOUTHEAST ASIAN MUSLIM PUPOLATIONS 2006

| STATE | Σ POPULATION | MUSLIM % | Σ MUSLIM | SEA% |
|-------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Indonesia | 245,452,739 | 88.22 | 216,538,406 | 89.05539998 |
| Vietnam | 84,402,966 | 0.85 | 717,425 | 0.295054306 |
| Philippines | 89,468,677 | 5 | 4,473,434 | 1.839781901 |
| Thailand | 64,631,595 | 5 | 3,231,580 | 1.329046575 |
| Burma | 47,382,633 | 4 | 1,895,305 | 0.779479152 |
| Malaysia | 24,385,858 | 60.4 | 14,729,058 | 6.057595945 |
| Cambodia | 13,881,427 | 3.5 | 485,850 | 0.199814721 |
| Laos | 6,368,481 | 1 | 63,685 | 0.026191549 |
| Singapore | 4,492,150 | 16 | 718,744 | 0.295596682 |
| East Timor | 1,062,777 | 4 | 42,511 | 0.017483463 |
| Brunei | 379,444 | 67 | 254,227 | 0.104555724 |
| SEA | 581,908,747 | | 243,150,226 | 100 |

Characteristics of Intractable Conflicts:

A Chronological Account

To put it simply, an intractable or protracted conflict is any conflict which is very difficult to solve. Among other explanations, Bercovitch (2003) listed some of the main characteristics of an intractable conflict as follows:

1. *In terms of actors, intractable conflicts involve states or other actors with a long sense of historical grievance, and strong desire to redress or avenge these.*

This point is clearly applicable to the armed conflicts led by Muslim groups in Southeast Asia. Although these conflicts are commonly seen as problems of post-colonial Southeast Asian states,

the historical root of conflict dates back to the colonial or even pre-colonial times. Typically, all Muslim groups involved in armed conflicts were an independent religious-political community — in the form of kingdoms, or vassalage — which were torn up by Western colonialism and finally ended up as parts of secular states (Christie, 1996: 129-137).

In the Philippines, Muslim preachers arrived in the archipelago as early as the 13th century. Because of the typical characteristic of the spreading of Islam in Southeast Asian, which was without violence and without state coercion behind it, Muslims were able to live in peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims for many centuries. Only after the arrival of the Europeans did Muslims launch massive campaigns to proselytize locals (George, 1980: 19-20).

Historians sometime speculate that if the Spanish has reached the archipelago a few years later than they actually did, the Philippines today would be a Muslim country like their neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia (*Ibid*: 21). The Spanish armada reached Cebu in 1565 and were involved in bloody fights with the Muslims for the next 350 years. They called Muslim people “Moros” in reference to Muslim Moors who had once occupied Spain for several centuries. In 1889 the Philippines was handed over to the US, and in 1906 a special Moro province was created. In 1940, the sultanate system was abolished; as a result the Moro territories were brought under the direct control of Manila. This situation continued after Philippines independence in 1946 (Islam, 2003, 96-200).

In Indonesia, the history of the Aceh Muslim kingdom is even older than the Philippines. The Kingdom of Perlak in the north tip of Sumatra Island was established in the 9th century. The greater kingdom, Samudra Pasai, was established in the 12th century and had already become a great kingdom when the Venetian (Italian) explorer Marco Polo visited Pasai in 1292. It was also the centre of Islamic civilization, witnessing the emergence of great Muslim intellectuals — theologians, mystics and poets — such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin Sumatrani, Abdurrauf Sinkel, amongst others, whose works continue to be read across the Muslim world to this very day.

Although European powers arrived in Malacca in the 16th century, it was not until 1873 that there was conflict with European colonizers in the form of the Dutch. The Aceh war officially ended in 1903, but the Acehnese continued to fight guerilla wars up to the Second World War when Indonesia was declared a secular

state when it obtained its independence in 1945 (Christie, 1996, 140-145).

Muslims have lived in Patani, now Southern Thailand, since the 15th century. Since the 18th century, however, Patani has been in conflict and was eventually conquered by the Siamese (Thai) kingdom. The Siamese established Patani as a protectorate and thus its cultural and religious identity was protected and guaranteed. This situation was sustained by the fact that state-borders were not so clearly defined in Southeast Asia in which Patani Muslims still had a close relationship with their fellow Muslims in neighbouring Malay kingdoms.

The turning point was in 1909 when the Siamese kingdom made a border adjustment in an agreement with the British colonial powers that ruled Malacca. The Siamese had to cede its Malay tributaries of Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis, while it retained the Patani and Satun provinces. Since that time, Malay Patani Muslims have been trapped on the wrong side of the border, separated from the other Malay-Muslim communities. The Muslim community in Patani thus became a minority group in the predominantly Buddhist state of Thailand (Christie, 1996: 173-177).

The Arakan people of Northwest Myanmar have had to share a similar experience as their brethren in Patani. Muslims from Bengal who had occupied Arakan Hill since the 10th century founded the Mrauk-U sultanate in the 15th century. In the 19th century British colonial powers separated the administration of Burma from India and included the Arakan area into the former. When the Islamic state of Pakistan was declared in 1946, Muslims in Arakan pushed for Arakan to be included as part of Pakistan, but to no avail (Christie, 1996: 167-168).

2. In terms of duration, intractable conflicts take place over a long period of time.

Current armed conflicts in Southeast Asia have a long history. The current armed movements in Moro, the Philippines, were started in 1968 when Muslims formed the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM) in response to the repressive policies of the Marcos administration. The government responded by co-opting elite Moro into high level government administration, which generated discontent among the younger generation who went on to

form the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari.

MNLF was in constant conflict with the Philippines authority until 1976 when - mediated by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) - the two parties signed the Tripoli agreement, in which the Marcos administration promised an independent area of Muslim Mindanao which included 13 provinces and nine cities in return for the MNLF dropping its demands for complete independence.

This agreement generated further disappointment among the younger and educated generation, who then formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), led by Hasyim Salamat, to continue pursuing Moro as independent region. Another break up from MNLF occurred in the early 1980s, when a faction under Abdul Razak Janjalani split and formed the infamous Abu Sayyaf group (Islam, 2003: 200-207).

In Aceh Indonesia, the armed movement against the Indonesian government was started in 1953 when the Acehnese people — under the leadership of Mohammad Daud Beureueh — joined the Darul Islam rebellion against the Indonesian Central Government which sought declaration of independent Islamic states in four provinces (Aceh, West Java, South Sulawesi and South Kalimantan).

The Darul Islam movement in Aceh ceased to exist when Daud Beureueh made an agreement with the local government which conceded special province status to Aceh under the Indonesian Republic. But the armed movement was started again in 1976 under the banner of Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM or the Aceh Independence Movement) led by Hassan di Tiro, who has lived in Sweden since 1979 (Christie, 1996: 156-158). In 2004 GAM signed a conclusive agreement with the Indonesian government following the tsunami disaster which claimed more than 130,000 Acehnese lives, and there has since been a peace agreement between GAM and the central government bringing the conflict to an end.

In Thailand, the Patani armed resistance against the central government was started in 1945 when Muslim leaders under the organization of GAMPAR (which stand for *Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya* or the Malay League of Greater Patani) wrote a petition, lead by Mahmud Mahyidin and Haji Sulong, to the British colonial ruler in Malaya to ask for help to be freed from Thai occupation, with no success. Despite a number of so-called 'high points' in the

late 1960s, mid-1970s and between 1979-1981, Muslim Patani has never really posed a serious threat to Bangkok (Christie, 1996: 186-189).

Recently, in the post-9/11 era, heated confrontations in Southern Thailand between Muslim Patani groups and the Thai military authorities have escalated. A number of terror attacks against the military as well as civil targets have raised suspicions that al-Qaeda is operating in the region. Heavy handed responses from the Thai government have attracted criticism, especially the October 2004 *Tak Bai* tragedy when 78 Patani Muslims were suffocated to death after being arrested and put in trucks by the Thai military.

Meanwhile armed resistance from Arakan Muslims started in 1948 when Muslims gained control militarily in Northern Arakan in a *jihad* movement while the central government was preoccupied with national consolidation. In 1954 the central government was able to put an end to this rebellion. Since, the political movement organized by Arakanese Muslims could better be described as dissidence rather than rebellion. Nonetheless, the military has tended to perceive all Muslims as potential threats and in its report on Myanmar, Amnesty International has alleged that the military regime is guilty of ethnic cleansing of the Muslim minority (Amnesty International, 2004).

3. *In terms of issues, intractable conflicts involve intangible issues such as identity, sovereignty, values and beliefs.*

Armed conflicts among Muslims in Southeast Asia were not only caused by economic or political interests. These conflicts were fiercely fought because these Muslim communities felt their religious and ethnic identities were threatened.

In the Philippines, not only did the central government exploit economically the wealth of the southern region (George, 1980: 107-128), but they promoted the mass migration of Catholics from the densely populated north region, which eventually made Muslims a minority in Mindanao (Islam, 2003: 201). This of course led to Muslims in Moro to feel that the Catholic state was seeking to exterminate their religious and ethnic identity. As a result, at the fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign ministers (ICFM), the Philippines Government was asked to do more to protect Muslim people's rights in the country (Islam, 2003: 204).

In Indonesia, the Acehese were among the fiercest to fight against Dutch colonialism and supported Indonesian independence. Even the first civil airplane owned by the Indonesian Government was bought through Acehese fundraising. Resentment mounted among the Acehese people because — although granted special status — Aceh was always under the direct control of Jakarta and never able to implement Islamic policies. The hatred towards Jakarta was even higher when under the New Order administration (1965-1998) Aceh political and military administration was dominated by Javanese administrators — many of whom were widely perceived as not being devout Muslims. It was, therefore, common among the Acehese to call Indonesia “Javanese-Indonesia”, which meant not only that Indonesia was in fact dominated by the Javanese, but also implied that the Acehese did not see themselves as part of Indonesia.

In Southern Thailand, the situation for Patani Muslims was not so different. In Thailand, Malay Muslims were often referred to as *khaek* or ‘foreigners’, which implies that Malay Muslims in Patani were not one and the same as the Thai people (Christie, 1996: 192). The feelings of being deliberately oppressed by the Buddhist Thai government was supported by the fact that the three dominant Muslim provinces economically lagged behind the other regions.

In Myanmar, the situation of Muslims is perhaps the worst of all cases. According to Myanmar Law 1982, the Rohingya (which are Muslim) are not among the recognized ethnic groups in Myanmar, and therefore the Rohingya people are ineligible for full citizenship. Their mobility is restricted. Rohingya people need to get permission from local authorities to be able to travel even to nearby villages. They have to pay \$50-100 to get permission to marry, which is too high an amount for most people to be able to pay, and can have no more than two children. They are also subjected to compulsory sentry duties at nights and duties during the days for the government, especially to build or maintain public infrastructure. And last but not least, Rohingya religious expressions and activities are also tightly restricted. (Amnesty International, 2004; Refugees International, 2006).

4. *In terms of geopolitics, intractable conflicts usually take place where buffer states exist between major power blocks or civilizations.*

The characteristics of the buffer region could be applied to Southeast Asian. The region has in fact been shaped by the influence of other major civilizations. The first major influence came from the Indian civilization. Hindu and Buddhist cultures influenced social, economic and political history in the region since the early centuries of the Christian calendar. The next major influence came from the Islamic civilization which swept the region after the 8th century, and dominated coastal areas. Thirdly, since the 15th century, European civilization and religions started to influence the region. Finally, although in a more limited scope, Chinese civilization has also exercised constant influence on Southeast Asian societies.

The history of Southeast Asia, in short, was heavily under the effect of the dynamics of global politics. With regard to the conflict in Muslim areas of Southeast Asia, the influence of global politics and the balance of power could not be neglected. At least four global events could be put forward: Colonialism, World War II, the Cold War and the War on Terror.

The arrival of European powers in Southeast Asia had a paramount impact on Muslim politics in Southeast Asia. Before the arrival of Europeans, Islamic communities generally dominated the coastal areas. Major Islamic kingdoms were coastal kingdoms, from Mrauk-U in the Bengal Gulf, to Patani and Malacca in Malay Peninsula, to Aceh in Sumatra Island, eastward to the Philippines Archipelago as well as southward to the Indonesian Archipelago. All Muslim palaces were located near the sea.

When the Portuguese took control of Malacca, a major Muslim port, the reactions of Muslim kingdoms in the region were immense. Even the Demak Sultanate on the north-coast of Central Java Indonesia sent his army to help Malacca against the Europeans. The conquering of formerly Muslim territories at the hands of the Europeans led to deep resentment among Muslims, leading to two important developments in Southeast Asian Islam. *Firstly*, the European military and technological might urged Muslim rulers to spread Islam deeper inland beyond coastal areas, in order to have more reserve forces and resources. *Secondly*, the introduction of new politics of Pan-Islamism brought by returned pilgrims

from Mecca, gave colonialism a new meaning presenting it as a global war between the Islamic world and the Western world.

World War II marked another important phase for Muslims in Southeast Asia. The end of colonialism and the rise of nationalist movements, the formation of independent nation-states, shaped Southeast Asian politics in new and permanent ways. Newly independent states trapped formerly independent Muslim communities, and locked them into their secular states. The inhabitants of Muslim kingdoms in Sulu in Jolo have now become minority communities in the Republic of the Philippines. Aceh became a province of secular Indonesia. Muslims in Patani became part of the predominantly Buddhist Thai kingdom. And Rohingya Muslims were forced to become part of Myanmar.

Lastly, the current American-led war on terror once again drags Southeast Asian Muslims into the stream of global politics. Many analysts agree that Southeast Asia has become a new arena of proxy war between America and al-Qaeda. The story began at the Cold War Era, when many Southeast Asian Muslims involved in a *jihad* against Soviet invasion in Afghanistan — which was fully backed up by the US technically and militarily. Subsequently, alumnus of the Afghan war maintained their networks not only with their Southeast Asian fellows, but also with *jihadis* across the world — from Sudan, to Chechnya, to Indonesia. When many Arab states seemed dictated by the US, particularly after the Saudi ruler invited the US military to set up base on Saudi soil and the holy land for all Muslims, resentment was triggered among *jihadis* who were ready for a new war. Post 9/11 international politics and the discourse of the global war on terror have added a new dimension to the conflicts in Muslim parts of Southeast Asia.

Real or Assumed Revolts:

The Intra-State Security Dilemma

At this stage it seems pertinent to have a closer look at the armed conflict among Muslims in Southeast Asia in terms of the security dilemma: whether the armed resistances of Muslims in Southeast Asia against their respective governments were caused by real or illusory threats. Terminologically, the term “security dilemma” originated in studies of international politics; it refers to a situation when conflict or military tensions occurred between two or more states where none of those involved desired such an outcome. The tension and conflict were caused by the nature of

inter-state relations, where states live in a self-help anarchy situation of international politics, trapped in arms-races and saw their own conduct as benign self defence while perceiving the actions of their foes as threatening. In other words, the security dilemma is a situation where conflicts result between two powers, both of which are desperately anxious to avoid a conflict of any sort (Collins, 2000: 4).

Although it was initially used to describe inter-state politics, scholars apply the concept of security dilemma also for intra-state conflicts. Intra-state conflicts might be caused by security dilemma when a party's non-expansionist or self-defensive actions (state or intra-state group) are perceived by others as threatening their security. The essence of the security dilemma is a tragedy that, unknown to either side, while appearing real, is actually illusory. This means — we need to bear in mind — that when the conflict was caused by deliberate action by any party to threaten or to harm others then this is not a security dilemma situation.

In the Philippines' case, the MNLF was formed as a reaction to the government's co-optation of Moro elites, by giving them high positions in the government. This co-optation, in turn, was intended to contain mounting resentments among Moros after the "Jabadihah Massacre," when the Philippines army trained a group of Muslims to be deployed in borderline-conflict with Malaysia but—for unknown reasons—these trainees were murdered.

Seen from the latter context, the Moro armed resistance against the Philippines Government was not a product of a security dilemma, because the government did indeed harm the Moro community. Seen from a different angle, however, the antagonism was possibly caused by a security dilemma, because the MNLF resentment was two-fold, i.e. toward the co-opting government as well as toward the co-opted elites. The Moro elites' acceptance of the government's offer was multi-interpretable. On the one hand, they could have just been being opportunistic, or on the other hand it could also have been part of a moderation policy in the Moro struggle. History repeated itself when MNLF signed an agreement with Manila, and triggered the formation of the more militant MILF and Abu Sayyaf groups.

In Indonesia, in the Independent Aceh movement (GAM) revolt against the Indonesian Government, the security dilemma situation is more apparent. When the revolt was declared in 1976, the main reason was Jakarta's systematic exploitation of Aceh's

huge supplies of natural resources, and undermining Acehese Islamic identity. Meanwhile from the government point of view, strict and centralistic political and military policies were intended to ascertain and maintain the authority of the central government and to prevent any subversive movement, due to the government and the military trauma of the Muslim insurgency. Similarly strict policies were also applied, at the time, to other regions which have a historical record of armed revolt against the central government. This was a perfect example of an intra-state security dilemma, when the Indonesian government wanted to make sure that their sovereignty and authority were in place by applying strict policies in provinces which had a historical record of armed resistance; the policy was perceived from the provinces' point of view as unjustified systematic exploitation and destruction of their resources and identity.

Furthermore, the Indonesian government's response to the revolt made a bad situation worse. To uproot the GAM movement — which was actually a semi-military militia group whose members lived among the people — the Indonesian military took heavy handed actions especially in 1980s when it applied martial law and treated the whole Aceh province as a region of military operation. This military measure only created more resentment among the Acehese people, with GAM accusing Jakarta of unjustifiably colonizing Aceh. Rather than reducing the resistance, the military operation indeed strengthened GAM's position and popularity among the Acehese.

In Southern Thailand, where the armed conflict is not as strong as that of the Philippines and Indonesian cases, the security dilemma also shadowed the conflict, especially with regard to the more recent phase of the conflict. After lying dormant for quite some time, armed conflict in Southern Thailand broke out again following the declaration of the war on terror by the US. The Tek Bhai incident in 2004, for instance, sparked another intra-state security dilemma. The Thai government, a good ally of the US in Southeast Asia, conducted security operations to track and crack-down on existing al-Qaeda networks or operatives in the country, focusing on predominantly Muslim provinces. This led to a three-partite conflict. On the one hand, there was a purposive security operation against al-Qaeda networks, and on the other hand there was also a side effect of escalation of anger among Patani Muslims in general, because of the way the Thai military carried out its oper-

ations. The indiscriminate nature of the security operation, in turn, was caused by its very objective, namely to unearth a shadowy and underground organization whose members were living among the wider Muslim community.

Lastly in Myanmar, the conflict between Rohingya Muslims and the Myanmar Government has seemingly involved no security dilemma. In fact, after a struggle for independence failed in the Arakan region, Rohingya Muslims have only pursued greater autonomy for their community. However the Myanmar military junta deliberately persecutes Rohingya people along with other minority groups. Because ethnically they are of Bengali stock, many Rohingya people have tried to cross the border as refugees to neighbouring Bangladesh.

Islam: the Denied Factor

In discussing armed conflict in Muslim dominated regions of Southeast Asia, it is interesting to note how the governments have tended to deny "Islam" as being a major factor in the conflicts. In the Philippines, in an effort to build dialogue between conflicting parties, the government referred to Muslim Moro only as a cultural group, not religious (George, 1980: 185-186). In Indonesia during the New Order Regime the Indonesian government called the Free Aceh Movement a Security Disturbance Movement (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*), which implies that the movement was no more than a band of criminals or gangsters and not a bit represented Muslim Aceh. In Thailand, the authorities have tended to see conflicts with the Patani Muslims as merely a security problem that could be solved with military might (International Crisis Groups, 2005). Even in Myanmar, in response to a report of human rights abuses, the government stated that it was not in conflict with any religious minority groups (Human Rights Watch, 1997).

While at first glance, the approach of rejecting the religious factor seems smart, namely because it would not trigger negative sentiments from the whole Muslim community, on closer observation, however, this strategy was ill-advised. *Firstly*, by setting aside the Islamic factor, the governments missed one of the very sources of energy, motivation, and inspiration for the insurgencies. Islam has played, at least, three simultaneous roles in these conflicts. *Firstly*, Islam gave a sense of historical, cultural as well as political identity. For these Muslim groups Islam is not only a set

of beliefs and rituals, but also a historical, socio-cultural and political framework by which they could refer to themselves as well as to differentiate themselves from other people. More importantly, Islam gave these people moral and spiritual legitimacy of what they are and what they have done. In short, Islam is the political ideology of these insurgencies.

Secondly, Islam also provided an effective means for mass mobilization. Indeed, although they share the sufferings and discontent of the whole ethnic community, the insurgence groups were always initiated by a small number of people tried to pursue a violent way to end the political oppression and discrimination the respective communities had to endure. Usually, they would justify their conduct using religious symbols such as *Jihad*. By making their struggle out to be a *jihad* or religious war, these insurgence groups tried to encapsulate their struggle not primarily as political movements but rather as moral and spiritual ones against not only a political power and institutions (i.e. the states), but rather against the enemy of God. The abstraction of political interests using religious language was effective in mobilizing wider support from the community. This was because religious language was more familiar for the ordinary people in the Muslim communities. Explaining the insurgencies in terms of *jihad* against secular and anti-Muslim states was simpler and easier for the people to understand than describing them in political, judicial or economic terms. Moreover, in expressing their struggle in religious terms, insurgence groups were able to attach a higher moral value to their causes and to what they were doing. In political and military terms, a struggle could have two possible ends: success or fail. Therefore, there are many people who would not support the insurgencies because they did not want to risk becoming losers. But in terms of *jihad* the two possible ends are a win-win situation: when you win you would be the victors, when you die you would ascend straight away to eternal paradise as a martyr.

Thirdly, Islam provided for the insurgences an effective means to internationalize their cases. In Islam there is a concept of supra-state universal Muslim brotherhood or *ummah*, in which Muslims from across the globe constitute a single religious community bounded by common faith and religious identity. Furthermore, it was said that the Muslim community should help each other; the Muslim community is like a single human body, when any single part of the body is hurt the whole body feels the pain. Politically,

these insurgence groups were able to appeal for help from international Muslim organizations or communities. Intervention from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), for example, was able to put pressure on the Philippines Government to sign an agreement with the MNLF. The conflict in Patani has also become a serious concern for the OIC, so much so that the Thai Government has sent their delegates to OIC headquarters in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) to explain the Thai government's programs in the Southern provinces as well as to build a better relationship with the OIC and its members. Continuous contact with other Muslim insurgence groups throughout the world provides Muslim insurgents in Southeast Asia with moral and psychological support and motivation to continue their struggle. Finally, borderless nature of Islam and the strong emphasis on brotherhood has enabled insurgent groups to obtain financial support from throughout the Muslim world, especially from rich countries in the Middle East.

Given the three above-mentioned considerations, it seems unwise for the governments to negate the Islam factor from efforts to solve the conflicts. This decision to reject Islam as a factor is a result of the governments' ignorance of Islam and Muslims. Typically, they have regarded Islam as a single entity, and tended to see Muslims as a unitary group. These governments were afraid, therefore, that by addressing the insurgencies as "Islamic" they would provoke a combined response from the entire global Muslim community.

This was only partially correct as Muslims and Islam are never monolithic or unitary entities; although founded upon common basic principles, in fact there are many schools and sects in Islam, resulting from differences in interpretation of the teachings of the religion. Consequently, there are always pluralities among Muslim communities. The armed struggle waged by insurgent groups was not necessarily representative of the desires of the whole global Muslim community. Many — if not the majority — of the Muslims do not support resorting to violence in order to solve problems. Furthermore, theoretically, relations between the religion and social dynamics are always twofold: on the one hand, religious doctrine might be *prescriptive*, in the sense that it dictates what the believers could or could not and should or should not do; on the other hand religious doctrine might also be *legitimative*, in the sense that it is used by the believers to legitimize what they have done (Permata, 2006).

As far as the insurgencies are concerned, the way that Islamic doctrines were utilized by the insurgents was to legitimize their causes. It does not mean, however, that this was illegitimate or unjustified acts. This is a very normal, hence legitimate, way of being religious: to legitimize what people are doing with their moral and spiritual values. Yet it does tell us that the religious interpretations of the insurgent groups — to solve the communal or religious problem through armed resistance — are not necessarily representative of the whole Muslim community. What the Southeast Asian government can do is to identify the main characteristic of the religious interpretations of insurgent groups which are likely *jihadist* or violent in character. The next step is to find another interpretation, and finally, they may promote moderate ways of interpreting and practising Islam.

Conclusion:

Addressing Muslim Insurgences

Muslim Insurgencies in Southeast Asia have their own specific characteristics. These revolts were a result of accumulative resentment towards governments and their policies with regard to their ethnic or communal groups. Because these discriminative policies influenced almost every single aspect of the people's communal life, they caused problems not purely related to interests only, but also pertaining to the groups' identities. When the conflicts started to involve intangible issues, such as values and identities, they became intractable conflicts. At this point, beyond the complexities of the protracted conflicts, the governments need to pay serious attention to the initial cause of the conflicts, namely the discriminative policies. The governments should improve the dismal conditions often faced by the Muslim communities as the starting point for solving the conflicts.

Muslim insurgencies, however, also have a specific "Islamic" nature. In this respect, religion has provided three simultaneous facilities to the insurgencies. It serves as religious-political ideology by which the conflicts are legitimized; it also provides effective language for mass-mobilization by identifying the conflicts not as political or economic but religious struggles or *jihad*; and lastly Islam enables the insurgents to internationalize their causes, to get political, moral and material support from international Muslim communities and organizations. For this point, Southeast Asian governments should identify violent religious interpretations of

the insurgence groups, find more moderate and non-violent interpretations among Muslim communities, and promote these moderate groups as being representative of Muslim communities. This is, of course, not as simple as we have presented it in this article, for sometimes Muslims are left with a complicated choice, between radical but clean groups and moderate but corrupt ones — as was the case in Palestine.

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