

Anatomy of Religious Conflict in South and Southeast Asia



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Traders Hotel
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Welcoming Remarks by Barry Desker, Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore



Mr Barry Desker giving the welcoming remarks

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Barry Desker, Director of IDSS, observed that at the end of the Cold War, the large peace dividend expected by many scholars has failed to materialise. Instead, the new environment has produced new internal conflicts and aggravated old ones with intrastate conflicts erupting far more frequently than inter-state conflicts. Indicative of this trend is the fact that 90% of UN peacekeeping operations since 1989 have been deployed to disputes that have a significant internal conflict component. Consequently, civil conflicts have far reaching implications for international security. Policy makers are faced with the issue of dealing with such conflicts before they spiral into large-scale violence.

Recognising the importance of examining such conflicts, Mr Desker announced that IDSS has put in place a Civil and Internal Conflict Programme. The aim of the program is three-fold:

- 1) To conduct and facilitate first-rate conceptual, empirical, and policy-oriented research on the topic of civil conflict;
- 2) To serve as a knowledge and information dissemination institution on the latest

academic and policy trends in the field of civil conflict:

- 3) To work towards the objective of capacity building

Mr Desker went on to say that the Anatomy of Religious Conflict in South and Southeast Asia conference is the first workshop to be organised as part of this programme. The aim of the conference is to bring together theoreticians of the field of civil conflict as well as area studies experts who have conducted extensive research in the region.

To understand the phenomenon of religious conflict, there is a need to understand the nexus of religion, conflict and politics. As such, it is necessary to comprehend how religious texts are misinterpreted by terrorist organisations for their own benefit. In a similar vein, there is a need to understand the psychology of a person who chooses to use violence to achieve retribution for his grievances.

Recognition of the source allows an investigation of the structure of religious conflicts. Religious-inspired violence can take the form of sectarian violence, social riots or terrorism. Knowledge of the various manifestations of religious violence enhances our grasp of religious conflict.

States across South and Southeast Asia are now faced with the challenge of countering religious violence without inciting new ones. It is apparent by now that a purely military solution will not help quell religious conflicts. Responses need to be found by examining the role of the NGOs and peace processes with the relevant groups.

Mr Desker concluded with the hope that the conference will expand our understanding of religious conflicts and be able to provide deeper insights into how they can be managed and resolved.

Opening Remarks by Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore.



Dr Vivian Balakrishnan giving the opening address

Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan began by saying that religious conflicts have existed in this world from time immemorial. People of South and Southeast Asia are very familiar with such violence. Religion not only provides us a spiritual meaning in life, but also identity, loyalty and association. These elements, according to Dr. Balakrishnan, present the nexus between religion and politics. This has allowed many people to exploit this relationship and this myopic action has let loose forces that they can no longer control.

Singapore being a small, multi-religious society cannot be shielded from such outside events. Hence such issues are not taken for granted. Singapore is not bound by political correctness and therefore religion cannot be used for political ends and, in the same vein, politics cannot be used for religious ends. It is the division of religion and politics in the common spaces of Singapore that has helped preserve religious harmony in Singapore.

Common spaces in Singapore include schools, housing estates, national service and the

workplace. In all these areas, Singapore has strived to ensure there is no discrimination on racial or religious grounds. Dr. Balakrishnan further highlighted that after the September 11 attacks, the need for a constructive dialogue between religious groups is imperative. Singapore has recognised this and soon after the 9/11, it drafted a Declaration of Religious Harmony and set up inter-racial confidence circle at the grassroots level. Dr. Balakrishnan concluded by saying that Singapore's success as an open, globalised city depends on its ability to maintain a balance between religious freedom and harmony.

Panel 1 - Origins of Religious Conflict

Religious Resonances in Bush's 'War on Terrorism', Linell Cady, Professor, Arizona State University, U.S.A.



From left to right, Professor Linell Cady and Associate Professor Kumar Ramakrishna

Linell Cady presented a paper on the impact of religion in Bush's war on terrorism. She began by highlighting that religion has always played an important role in the American political sphere. U.S. Presidents are not hesitant to talk about religion and President Bush is no exception. Religion has been significant in Bush's personal life and he has used religious motifs in his political campaign and public addresses. About seventy percent of American public expect their President to have religious values and articulate them publicly. In short, every time President Bush uses religious terms, he is playing to his voting base.

After the September 11 attacks, religious currents have become more evident. President Bush began to use the word 'evil' in his speeches a lot more than his predecessors. This has given rise to the perception that God was

somehow involved. Speaking specifically on the war on terrorism, Cady stressed that religion has not played a leading role on the post-September 11 policies. For Cady, the foreign policy schema of the neo-conservatives was devised well before September 11. Religion has thence only served as a rationalisation exercise. Religious symbols have been used by the Bush administration to defend the American response to the September 11 attacks.

Cady concluded that the separation of the secular and religious spheres in the U.S. is deceptive. While religious themes have been present when dealing with domestic political issues, they paint a very different picture at the global level. Making reference to religion may seem benign to the American public but it has the potential to raise emotions when viewed from the outside. Hence we need to be more aware of the complex dynamics between religion and the secular when studying religious conflict.

Grievances, Religion and Mass Murder: Tracing the Social Psychological Dynamics of the Descent into Religious Violence, Kumar Ramakrishna, Associate Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.

The second speaker was Kumar Ramakrishna who spoke on the psychological aspect of religious conflict. He began by highlighting that existing structural explanations of economic, political and historic explanations were insufficient to explain religiously motivated violence. In order to better understand religious violence, Ramakrishna stressed that more attention needs to be paid to the "unholy trinity" of the *prejudiced* who have negative stereotypes of the out-group; the *bigots* who want legislation that discriminates against the antagonists and the *haters*, who want to obliterate the perceived enemy.

Ramakrishna put forward the theory of mimetic desire where people crave for things because other people have them. For Ramakrishna, frustration sets in when this desire is not satisfied. Perceived humiliation and envy are two ways how the dissatisfaction can become destructive. Religion then, serves as the medium through which the out-group is constructed. Ramakrishna gave an example where an attack on a mosque is seen as an assault on the collective self. Furthermore, radical preachers like Jemaah Islamiyyah leader Abu Bakar Bashir present to their followers a dichotomous worldview where reconciliation is impossible between 'true Muslims' and the out-group.

In the final part of his paper, Ramakrishna suggested that haters can turn into religiously-motivated killers because of four factors. First, cognitive restructuring of morality gives the haters the way to justify their violence against the adversary. They are able to sanction their behavior by morally disengaging themselves. Second, euphemistically labeling allows the hater to bestow an upright status on his reprehensible acts. The convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra for instance, did not see his acts as mass murder but *jihad* against West who were subjugating the Muslims. Using Osama bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* as an example, Ramakrishna highlighted displacement of responsibility as the third way haters could become killers. When a legitimate person or organisation accepts responsibilities for their actions, the dislocation of liability is a convenient way to sanction their deeds. Lastly, the dehumanisation process of the other allows the hater to remove human qualities from the enemy. Religious ideology helps to justify the dehumanisation process by sanctifying the killing.

Islamic Doctrine and Violence: The Malaysian Case, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Senior Lecturer, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia.

The penultimate speaker on the panel was Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid who spoke about the violence related to Islamic revival in Malaysia. He began by highlighting that Islamic resurgence in Malaysia has been relatively small compared to the Middle East. Islamic revival in Malaysia has usually taken the form of *dakwah*, or the peaceful dissemination of Islam. The Malaysian government's handling of the problem has been two-fold. First, instead of reprimanding these resurgent Muslims, they have been largely accommodated and the state has managed to maintain control. Second, the government has also embarked on a policy of advancing economic and cultural relations with the Islamic countries.

In 1981, the Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS) President, Haji Abdul Hadi Awang gave the infamous *Amanat Haji Hadi* speech where he called for *jihad* against the ruling United Malays' National Organization (UMNO) party. For Abdul Hamid, this led to the polarisation of Malay society. In response, the Malaysian government decided to implicate PAS members in the dissident acts of extremist Islamic groups. It culminated in the use of physical force against PAS members in Memali in November 1985. This was the first major incident of violence related to Islamic revival in Malaysia. Since then, there has been no attempt to build peace between both sides. Another significant incident was Al-Ma'unah affair in July 2000 when Islamic extremists attacked an army camp. The government responded by detaining Al-Ma'unah members under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Ahmad Fauzi stressed that reliable information on the incident has been scarce because of contradictory press reports.

Compared to the Laskar Jundullah in Indonesia and the Abu Sayaaf in the Philippines, the Malaysian Islamic revivalist groups are small and only the fringe units have resorted to violence. For Abdul Hamid, to group all of them as terrorists or Islamic extremists only helps the political elites secure mileage as it instills fear into the minds of the moderate Muslims. Further, he disagrees that particular interpretations of Islam will automatically lead to violence. As the Malaysian case exemplifies, the relation between Islam and violence is much more complicated.

***Countering New Age Terror:
Non-lessons of post 911
American Counter Terrorism
Strategies, Ong Teng Kwee,
Research Analyst, Institute of
Defence and Strategic Studies,
Singapore.***

The final paper presenter for this panel, Ong Teng Kwee, spoke about the flawed U.S. counter-terrorism strategy. He began by making a distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism. For Ong, the key attribute of the old terror paradigm is the “centrality of politics as a driving idea”. Terrorists of this pattern want to attain legitimacy while corroding that of the enemy state. Terrorism thence is a means towards a political end. In direct contrast, the main facet of new terrorism is the death of politics. The main motivation of such terrorist groups is the annihilation of the enemy. In this new paradigm, terrorism is no longer the means but becomes the end in itself.

For Ong, new terrorism has clouded many of the post September 11 counter-terrorism strategies. He opined that terrorists like Osama bin Laden still have a political goal. The new terror paradigm creates a world of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Terrorism is explained through a primordial lens and this gives rise to the fear of irrationality of today’s terrorists. Ong highlighted that President George Bush had

resorted to cultural accounts of the September 11 attacks. Radical Islamists have been portrayed as people who hate freedom and life. The narrow view of new terrorism also gives the impression that we cannot negotiate with terrorists. Indirectly, this means that coercive military force is the only apt response to defeat the enemy.

Elaborating further, Ong stressed that military force is insufficient to defeat the terrorists. The ‘shock and awe’ tactic will only seek to radicalise the people and swell the ranks of terrorist organisations. Instead, the U.S. government needs to realise that the struggle still remains a political contest for legitimacy. According to Ong, Osama bin Laden is an angry political activist and not a religious scholar. Hence more effort needs to be put to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim masses. Only then can the counter-terrorism strategies have any long-term success.

***Discussant: Syed Farid Alatas,
Associate Professor, National
University of Singapore,
Singapore.***



Associate Professor Syed Farid Alatas discussing the panel's papers

In discussing the papers, Syed Farid Alatas highlighted that origin, nature and function form the three dimensions of Muslim extremism and all four papers discussed these three facets. Much of the literature on the origins of Muslim extremism comes under the macro categories that stress the political, economic and sociological situations. Ramakrishna's paper on the other hand emphasises the psychological aspect of the problem. For Alatas, the theory of mimetic desire is good but raised the question of how the out-group is defined? For instance, to what extent are the Chinese in Indonesia the out-group?

Deliberating on Abdul Hamid's paper, Alatas mentioned this paper discusses the nature of Muslim revival. Two key features of the paper was the notion of *kafir* and *jihad*. Alatas also drew attention to problem of defining extremism. Today, it is defined from a secularist point of view. This does not take into account the notion of extremism within Islam itself, which according to Alatas, can take the form of jurisprudential, philosophical, theological or sufi views.

Moving on to Ong's paper, Alatas said that the paper discusses extremism in relation to terrorism. For Alatas, the distinction between old and new terror is reductionist because the two actually coexist. Both political grievances and hatred are present in the lives of Osama bin Laden, Sayyid Qutb and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. Alatas also highlighted that the distinction made in Ong's paper was useful in analysing the function of Muslim extremism.

Addressing Cady's paper, Alatas was skeptical that religion was only used by President Bush to legitimate post-September 11 policies. He queried on the extent to which religion guided President Bush in making his decisions. In a more general comment, Alatas said that the dehumanisation process goes on in all religions, not just Islam. Hence a more in-depth study is required to examine trans-religious extremism.

Discussion

Responding to Alatas' comments, Cady said that the dehumanisation process takes place even in nation-states. While terms like democracy and freedom are usually perceived as secular, they have some religious connotations. Ramakrishna opined that the out-group is defined as whoever does not share the same worldviews or interpretation of faith as the extremists. Abdul Hamid highlighted that there is a scarcity of sources when examining Islamic violence in Malaysia because of the use of the ISA. Ong stressed that the distinction between the old and new terror is necessary for theoretical clarity.

Bryan Turner observed that religion might actually play a causal role in generating conflict. For him, theology via the unavailability of the right interpretation of religious texts has led to violence. In response, Ramakrishna said that religion is only a necessary condition to conflict. Religion, nationalism and ideology all put forward a particular worldview. We can as neo-fundamentalists let other people have different views from us or as religious fundamentalists seek to impose our version of the truth on others. Alatas added that religion by itself does not generate violence. Especially in Islam, it is important to make a distinction of Islam as a faith and its socio-historical phenomenon. Only when religion is seen in the latter perspective, does it become a cause for conflict.

Riaz Hassan commented that extremism in itself is constructed. This is because the evidence used to study extremism comes from evidence that is collected by the state. For Hassan, there is very little critique of the data obtained from the state. The evidence itself may be problematic. Hence more attention needs to be paid to the role of the state in sustaining religious conflict.

Elena Pavlova queried on whether there were instances in the U.S. where religion was used

by the Bush government beyond rhetoric. In response, Cady said that religion sometimes played a central role in the formulation of policies. She gave examples of gay and women's reproductive rights in the U.S. where decisions by the Bush government have been clearly influenced by religion.

Panel 2 - Nature of Religious Conflict

Conceptions of Jihad and Conflict Resolution in Muslim Societies: An Exploration, Riaz Hassan, Professor, Flinders University, Australia.



Professor Riaz Hassan delivering his paper

The first speaker on this panel Riaz Hassan spoke about the changing ideas of *jihad* as represented in the *Quran*. He began by highlighting the considerable difference of opinion on the meaning of *jihad* and stressed that there is no single reading. In exploring the varied notions of *jihad* in Muslim societies, Hassan argued that ideas of *jihad* are formed because of social and economic environments. As the milieu changed, the conceptions of *jihad* were also altered.

Hassan examined the doctrine of *jihad* across five periods in history. During the first formative stage of Islam in the Seventh Century, the ideology of *jihad* was for its followers to institute an Islamic social order. It was used to construct an Islamic identity. The second empire phase from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries witnessed Muslim expansion. The doctrine of *jihad* now changed to spreading Islam. The

world was now divided into the Abode of Islam (*Darul-Islam*) and Abode of War (*Darul-Harb*). The third colonial period between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries saw much of the Muslim world colonised by the Europeans. Economic and social problems were widespread and the notion of *jihād* was again changed to one of resistance against the colonisers. The fourth post-colonial and Cold War stage saw many Muslim countries gain independence but the ‘national project’ did not succeed. The rise in Islamic radicalisation happened during this period and *jihād* was transformed into mobilisation against the state. The final post-Cold War period saw public institutions in the Muslim world collapse and the ideology of *jihād* was modified to one of reclaiming true Muslim identity. This period also saw the increasing privatisation of *jihadi* activities. For instance, other than imparting education, madrassas began to recruit men for *jihād*.

Hassan concluded by discussing whether there is support for the contemporary *jihadis*. By analysing Muslim attitudes towards suicide bombings and the role of war in conflict resolution, he suggested that low education levels in Muslim countries would be a contributing factor to generating support for *jihadi* actions. Much of the Muslim world today is undergoing a religious revival. While it is possible that there is some passive backing for *jihadi* organisations among Muslims, the perception that the ‘war on terrorism’ is a ‘war on Islam’ will only cause this support to increase.

The Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: Social Tensions and Search for Identity, Mariam Abou Zahab, Researcher, Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, France.



Dr Mariam Abou Zahab talking on sectarian conflict in Pakistan

The second presenter on the panel was Mariam Abou Zahab who spoke on the sectarian conflict between the Sunnis and Shias in the Jhang province of Pakistan. Emphasising the importance of regional and local contexts in studying sectarian violence, Abou Zahab contended that the conflict in Jhang is rather a tussle for power. The 1980s saw the radicalisation of the religious identities in Pakistan. There was an increase in the anti-Shia rhetoric, which helped the Sunnis to get foreign assistance.

The leaders inciting the violence were the upwardly mobile Sunni urban middle class. The foot soldiers were students of madrassahs, where sectarian literature was already being taught. For Abou Zahab, the sectarian leaders needed to identify an enemy, identify a problem that needed to be resolved, suggest a solution and mobilise the people. The adversary in this

case was the Shias. In order to rally the rural people, the crisis was linked to a bigger global problem. Iran was portrayed as the country supporting the Shias. The rhetoric of the Sunnis was that if you follow Shiism or support the Shias, you are an infidel.

Abou Zahab also highlighted that the deriding of the Shias strengthened the Sunni identity. When leaders of the Sunni-based Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan party were assassinated, the Sunnis thought it right to wage *jihad* against the Shias. Mosque, trader and caste networks were mobilised to fight the Shias. Hence the sectarian violence in Pakistan is actually a power struggle and a vehicle for social change.

***'Hindu-Muslim Riots: An Attempt to Rank Cultural, Economic and Political Factors'*, Christophe Jaffrelot, Research Director, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, France.**



Professor Christophe Jaffrelot delivering his paper

Christophe Jaffrelot followed with his presentation on 'Hindu-Muslim Riots: An Attempt to Rank Cultural, Economic and Political Factors' that analysed the various triggers for Hindu-Muslim riots in India from the 1960s to the present. He observed that although cultural, economic and international

factors have had a role in fuelling these religious riots, the political dimension has played a greater role since the 1980s. According to Jaffrelot, riots from the 1980s onwards have tended to coincide with upcoming elections giving credence to the theory that religious riots have become incorporated into the electoral strategy of Hindu nationalist leaders.

According to Jaffrelot, a study of riots from the 1980s reveals how the political dimension inflames religious riots. Typically, these riots progress in the following fashion. Hindu nationalists are mobilised as a response to the supposed pan-Islamism of the Muslim minority and this is then followed by the organisation of pseudo-religious processions as a display of strength. These provocative processions help trigger riots with political and electoral connotations at a national level. Moreover, in addition to this process, India has experienced an injection of local factors into the riot trigger matrix. Recently, as seen in Bhagalpur, the criminalisation of local politics has exploited the foundation laid by Hindu nationalists at the national level to employ religious riots for their own local political ends.

Jaffrelot concluded that with the rise of Hindu nationalists to positions of power at a national and local level, a stronger correlation between the upsurge of religious riots and the election calendar is to be expected.

***Analysing Religious Conflicts as Wars of the Third Kind: The Case of Mindanao*, Renato Cruz de Castro, Chair, International Studies Department, De la Salle University, Manila, Philippines.**

The closing speaker for this panel Renato Cruz de Castro shared with the conference his paper on 'Analysing Religious Conflicts as Wars of the Third Kind: The Case of Mindanao'. He argued that although Islam plays an important role in the religious conflict experience in

Mindanao, the primary motivating force for conflict has surrounded the issue of creating a community among various Muslim groups in the Philippines - a situation de Cruz refers to as a 'war of the third kind'. As such, although religion has a role in the conflict, the conflict is more to do with the aspirations of the Muslim Filipino community who desire to crave a cultural space for themselves in an evolving Filipino nation that has generally excluded them.

By referring to the situation in Mindanao, de Castro illustrated how Islam has been utilised as a rallying call for an alienated community that perceives itself to be oppressed by the Filipino state since the 1970s. The effectiveness of Islam as a mobilising vehicle nonetheless has been tempered by the continued presence of tribalism and kinship as alternative identificational avenues for Mindanao Muslims. This is exemplified by the relative isolation of Abu Sayaff from the mainstream Muslim secessionist groups. Islam also faces a challenge by the Filipino state that has appeased Muslim anger somewhat by projecting itself as a sponsor rather than an enemy of Islam. In addition, the Filipino state has also been successful at driving a wedge between secessionist groups thus weakening their efficacy.

de Castro concluded by holding that the Mindanao example shows the sway and limitations of religion as a basis for an alienated people's struggle of an identity and a community. For de Castro, the current situation though is set to alter with the introduction of transnational Islamic groups into Mindanao. Besides offering logistics and training, these groups offer an identity that is transethnic and transpolitical. The ability of these groups to make inroads into the Muslim Filipino struggle nevertheless is dependent upon the Filipino state's capability to integrate Muslim Filipinos into the greater Filipino fold.

Discussant: Bryan Turner, Professor, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Bryan Turner as the discussant for Panel Two felt that two shared themes exhibited by the four papers was the role of the state in religious conflict as well as the manner in which religious symbols can be essentialised in order to express group identity.

For Turner, the papers of Abou Zahab, Jaffrelot and de Castro to a degree illustrate the dangers of mobilising a state along the lines of the majority - violence is then driven by macro structures of the political where the state either fails or supports violence for its own ends through its institutions such as the military or the police.

Furthermore, all four presenters captured how religion can become essentialised to support one particular form of identity. Abou Zahab illustrated this vis-à-vis the Sunni and Shiite struggle over resources in a failing state; Hassan gave a good account of how the theology of *jihad* has evolved in relation to its larger political environment; and Jaffrelot and de Castro both illustrated how symbols may be mobilised for political advantage.

Turner concluded by warning how the shift in political conflict from post World War Two - where political conflict was between states as well as between classes within states - to the current conflict - where conflict is between and within the state based on ethnic and religious grounds - is something most states are not equipped to battle. These local, low cost and low intensity conflicts draw upon issues at the local level while also appealing to a higher transnational level. Citing Michael Ignatieff, Turner predicts that these conflicts will carry on so long as majorities care less about deprivations of liberty that harm minorities than they do about their own security.

Discussion:

The Ambassador of Egypt to Singapore, Mohamed Elzorkany, agreed with Hassan that the use of violence by radical Islamic groups is a sign of their isolation and weakness rather than a sign of their success. However, he called to question the idea that a majority of Egyptians support terrorism. In addition, the Ambassador was keen to stress that *jihad* was not strongly supported by the majority of the Muslim world. Hassan replied that his paper had as its focus the evolution of *jihad* from an ideology of Muslim piety, to power, to resistance and now religious business. He was in agreement with the Ambassador that most Egyptians did not support terrorism and pointed out that the question in his survey was concerned with Egyptian attitudes towards the use of war when other means of resolving an issue has failed.

S P Harish questioned if there was a relationship between structural factors and the emergence of particular types of violence since religious violence can manifest in multiple ways. In response, Hassan was of the view riots tend to be unplanned and they tend to be employed as a response to issues that are not yet resolved whereas terrorism is more planned action. Jafferlot was of the view that, especially with regards to India, riots tend to be planned since there is a strong correlation between riots and the electoral calendar. In contrast, terrorism is a tool of the weak and Muslims who are an underclass in India generally utilise it.

Keith Fitzgerald asked if there was great utility in the idea of civil society acting as a bulwark against religious violence. He cited evidence of low levels of Hindu-Muslim violence in places where the communities had greater interaction as an illustration of this concept. Jafferlot maintained that he was not convinced by this civil society argument as violence has erupted in place such as Bombay where there is a high level of interaction.

Panel 3 - Responses to Religious Conflict

'Blessed are the Peacemakers': Lessons in Interfaith Dialogue and Reconciliation for Southeast Asia, Tan See Seng, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.



Assistant Professor Tan See Seng speaking on the role of interfaith dialogue in resolving religious conflict

The first speaker on this panel, Tan See Seng, spoke on the role of interfaith dialogue in solving religious conflict in Southeast Asia. He argued that despite the view that religions are unable to play an important role in peacemaking due to their exclusivist claims, a strong argument could be made for faith-based peacemaking. For Tan, the reasons why religions can play a greater role in peacemaking is three fold. Firstly, as the examples of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and Archbishop Desmond Tutu are illustrative of, there is already a precedence of religion playing a large role in peacemaking. Secondly, recent studies on religious peacemaking in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Northern Ireland and the Balkans have shown that religion is better placed at fostering peace rather than fuelling war. Thirdly, if the exaggerated causal relationship between religion and conflict were acknowledged, this would allow for a better understanding of the other reasons of conflict.

For religion to play the role of peacemaker, Tan opined that certain factors have to be in place for interfaith dialogue to be useful means to resolve conflict. These are: individual bias has to be left out of the dialogue process to ensure that mutual understanding can be generated; trust has to be built during the dialogue process; all the relevant religious parties have to be represented; an ethic of self-criticism has to be fostered; joint projects should be undertaken to promote mutual understanding; and all parties should endeavor to educate each other on their different religions.

Due to the numerous religious conflicts and tensions present in Southeast Asia, Tan stressed that interfaith dialogue is necessary now more than ever. Religion can reawaken communities to the view that the door should always be kept open to those who with whom one does not see eye-to-eye and inter-faith dialogue can facilitate different religious groups to walk hand-in-hand.

Facilitated Joint Brainstorming,
Keith Fitzgerald, Senior Fellow
and Head, Asian Programme on
Negotiation and Conflict
Management, Institute of
Defence and Strategic Studies,
Singapore.

The second speaker was Keith Fitzgerald who spoke on 'Facilitated Joint Brainstorming'. Fitzgerald was primarily concerned with the cognitive psychology behind perception formation and the phenomenon of partisan perception that can lead to conflict. According to Fitzgerald, humans are generally unable to develop a common understanding of events - that is, we tend to develop a partisan perception - due to the following factors. Firstly, perception is a subjective process as no two individuals can experience an event in the exact same way. Moreover, our different interests unwittingly lead us to focus on different things. The absorbed data then tends to be employed to

support rather than challenge our prior views and data that does not conform to our prior views is likely to be dismissed. Finally, memory also plays a key role in our experiential differences as we have a predisposition to selectively remember data. When these factors combine, conflict may result as individuals are prevented from understanding and adequately communicating with each other.

To resist the tendency to develop a perception gap, Fitzgerald proposed an exercise dubbed the 'Path to Reasoning'. The 'Path to Reasoning' encourages individuals to participate in true dialogue where the goal is to understand rather than to win a debate. In addition, the dialogue focuses on the origins of an individual's experience rather than the beliefs and assumptions generated through those experiences. According to Fitzgerald, another overlooked aspect of generating fruitful dialogue is the utilisation of active listening. Active listening requires individuals to engage with what is being discussed rather than doggedly putting our own points across.

Fitzgerald was keen to stress that the 'Path to Reasoning' is by no means a foolproof methodology for conflict resolution. He concluded the paper by highlighting the possible obstacles to clear dialogue. For Fitzgerald, individuals in a group may be pressured from participating fully in a dialogue if dialogue should be aware that understanding is not the identical to agreeing. It is possible to understand a person's point of view without being in agreement with him.

Towards Better Peace Processes: A Comparative Analysis of Attempts to Broker Peace with MNLF and GAM, S.P. Harish, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.



Mr S P Harish delivering his paper

The penultimate presenter S P Harish presented a paper entitled ‘Towards Better Peace Processes: A Comparative Analysis of Attempts to Broker Peace with MNLF and GAM’. According to Harish, a comparison between the attempts to broker peace with the MNLF and GAM by the Filipino and Indonesian governments respectively reveals important elements that may make peace processes more effective and sustainable.

Defining a peace process as a sustained dialogue with the intention of stopping violence as well as attaining resolution of disputed issues between contending parties, Harish through a comprehensive comparison of the two peace processes gleaned six important elements that may make a peace process more effective. Firstly, not only is an impartial mediator a utopian fantasy but also the lack of impartiality by a mediator does not necessarily have a bearing on the outcome of a peace process. Secondly, although the utility of a mediator lies in the leverage it has over the disputants, all

disputants have to sincerely seek peace. Thirdly, greater emphasis should be placed on re-integrating rebels into the political mainstream rather than on the disarmament and demobilisation of the insurgent army. Fourthly, peace zones create the foundation for a culture of peace especially if they involve the local population. The fifth important element that has to be taken into consideration during a peace process is that human rights abuses have to be addressed fully if peace is to be durable. Finally, symbols such as flags, language and negotiation venues have to be managed well as their emotive significance should not be underestimated.

Harish was keen to point out that the resolution of internal conflicts is a demanding task that is laboriously slow. For Harish, comparative analyses of peace processes offer deeper insight into how certain elements can be made more effective even though these elements in their totality should not be taken as a blueprint for success.

Problematising the Role of the State in the Dynamics of Religious Conflict in Indonesia: The Case Of Maluku, Aleksius Jemadu, Head of the Department of International Relations, Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia.



From left to right, Dr Ralf Emmers and Professor Aleksius Jemadu

Aleksius Jemadu presented the final paper for the conference on 'Problematising the Role of the State in the Dynamics of Religious Conflict in Indonesia: The Case Of Maluku'. Jemadu in his paper investigated the role of state intervention in ending religious conflict and argued that the Indonesian state under the stewardship of President Soeharto laid the groundwork for the intense communal conflict experienced in Maluku. The groundwork for conflict cannot be attributed squarely to the practise of clientelist politics but the role of state-making, state-breaking and state failure in Indonesia has also played a significant role.

Jemadu noted that during Soeharto's state-making project beginning in 1965, power was accumulated by the central government via the nurturing of Christian and moderate Muslims at the expense of marginalising and repressing less-moderate Islamic opposition groups. However, the end of the Cold War and threatened by demographic forces, Soeharto was forced to seek out support conservative Islamic forces he previously repressed as they were seen to be naturally opposed to greater democratisation. A consequence of this action was the division of the state along religious lines - that is, state-breaking. The consequences of this action was felt strongly in Maluku as previously favoured Moluccan Christians developed a strong enmity towards the increasing number of conservative Muslims entering all levels of the province's bureaucracy. This festering tension erupted into bloody conflict in the run up to elections in 1999. It was at this point that state failure was experienced as the government was split down religious lines and the army and police did not perform its responsibility to quell the violence fully.

Jemadu concluded on a mixed note by observing that the situation in Maluku has yet to be resolved as Indonesians presidents after Soeharto have had to work with the institutions corrupted by Soeharto's legacy. In spite of this, Jemadu was of the opinion that the

professionalisation of the Indonesian military and the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia holds open the prospect for a lasting peace to be produced.

Discussant: Syed Nazakat, Sahara Time, Kashmir.

Discussing the four papers, Syed Nazakat remarked that the presentations shared two common themes. All four highlighted the difficulty of resolving religious conflict while also demonstrating how a successful resolution of religious conflict begins from a sustained collective effort by as many levels of society as possible.

Syed picked up on Jemadu's point that the resolution of religious conflict is especially difficult when elements of the government have a vested interest in continued fighting and suggested that Tan's argument concerning the role of inter-religious dialogue offers one way out of such a quagmire. Syed however expressed his reservations on focussing purely on inter-faith dialogue as the panacea for religious conflict and pointed out that political institutions need to be part of the process as well. While noting that political institutions need to part of the process, Syed asked Jemadu about the ways in which a government can be drawn to the negotiating table.

Turning to Harish's paper, Syed was in agreement that the peace process should not be dependent on a complete implementation of a ceasefire - talks should continue regardless of the fighting. Nevertheless, Syed questioned the efficacy of analyses that focus on the mechanics/procedures of a peace process. In that regard, Syed pointed to the need for an account of the success of some processes and the failure of others even though all the necessary elements are present.

Moving away from the more analytical papers, Syed pointed out that Fitzgerald's paper on how the discussion process should be approached

and managed fills an important void in discussions on religious conflict. It is not enough to merely bring people to the table but there is a need to understand how the discussion can be orchestrated in order to achieve optimal results. Despite his general agreement with Fitzgerald, Syed queried Fitzgerald on who would fulfil the role of mediator in a peace process most successfully.

With approximately eighty conflicts around the globe, Syed in his conclusion drove home the importance of finding practical solutions and emphasised the vital role governments, NGOs, religious leaders and the common man have to play.

Discussion

In reply to Syed, Tan agreed that religious institutions cannot act alone in resolving a conflict. Instead, all the stake-holding factions need to participate. With regard to inducing governments to the negotiating table, Jemadu opined that a coalition of democratic forces is required to cashier the government of its responsibilities. Responding to Syed, Harish was of the view that lessons may be learnt from procedural analyses but was also aware that the substantive issues on the ground will differ from place to place and these substantive issues will have a bearing on the outcome of peace initiatives. Finally, Fitzgerald stressed that the best mediators are those that realise that peace is an ongoing never-ending process that requires consistent labour.

Renato Cruz de Castro observed that the role of moderator by Libya in negotiations in the Philippines was not strictly neutral as it was in geopolitical competition with Egypt and Saudi Arabia who were supporting another rebel faction. In response, Harish maintained that states are rarely neutral moderators as the Libya case exemplifies but the dearth of one does not necessarily scuttle a peace process.

Norman Vasu noted that there is little disagreement that dialogue plays a key role in conflict resolution but asked if there was ever an optimal time for dialogue to be conducted in order to ensure success. Tan and Fitzgerald answered that dialogue at any stage was a better option than continued fighting. Moreover, Harish offered William Zartman's concept of a 'mutually hurting stalemate' between parties as the subjective moment in time for parties to choose dialogue over conflict. Jemadu added that an optimal time may not be the key issue but the discovery of the political will to start dialogue.

Joseph Liow commented that few states have acted as successful peace brokers and wondered if there was a possibility for states to take a greater role. Jemadu responded by stressing that there is a growing awareness within ASEAN countries that the conflict in one state affects another. As such, he called for ASEAN to abandon its policy of non-interference in order to permit its members to act as peace brokers in the conflicts of other member states.

Closing Remarks: Joseph Liow, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore

The conference concluded with the closing remarks made by conference coordinator Joseph Liow. Liow expressed his thanks to the members of the three panels as well as the attendees for their enthusiastic participation and the sophisticated discussion. In addition, he was eager to convey his gratitude to the administrative staff of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies for their first-rate work in ensuring that the conference ran smoothly.

Liow summarised the proceedings of the conference by categorising the various papers presented into four fundamental subdivisions. In the first category, the role played by both the state and the various elements of vested

interest that make up the state in the rise of religious violence was explored thoroughly by the papers presented by Renato Cruz de Castro, Christophe Jaffrelot and Aleksius Jemadu. In the second category, the role of civil society and other forms of social mobilisation was investigated via Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Mariam Abou Zahab and Tan See Seng's sterling analyses. Another important category that was intensely reflected upon was the role of religion in conflict. Papers that contributed significantly to the rumination of this important topic were the papers by Linell Cady, Kumar Ramakrishna, Ong Teng Kwee and Riaz Hassan. Finally, it was through the papers of Keith Fitzgerald and S P Harish that the mechanics and processes of religious violence were illuminated.

Liow articulated his desire to build on the quality of the papers and accompanying discussions. This would be achieved in three stages. Firstly, a conference report will be published in the immediate future. Following from this, a policy paper informed by the ideas discussed at the conference will be produced. Ultimately, the papers categorised in the four subdivisions above will be developed into a manuscript for publishing.



**Programme / Agenda
&
List of Participants**

Programme / Agenda

DAY 1 – Tuesday, 3 May 2005

- 0800 – 0900 Registration
- 0900 – 0910 Welcoming Remarks by **Barry Desker**, Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
- 0910 – 0920 Opening Remarks by **Dr Vivian Balakrishnan**, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore
- 0920 – 0940 Coffee / Tea Break
- 0940 – 1110 **Panel One Origins of Religious Conflict**
- Chair: **Joseph Liow**, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
- Presenters**
- Religious Resonances in Bush's War on Terrorism*
Linell Cady, Professor of Religious Studies and Director, Centre for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University, U.S.A
- Grievances, Religion and Mass Murder: Tracing the Social Psychological Dynamics of the Descent into Religious Violence*
Kumar Ramakrishna, Associate Professor & Head of Studies, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
- Islamic Doctrine and Violence: The Malaysian Case*
Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Senior Lecturer, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
- Countering New Age Terror: Non-Lessons of Post 911 American Counter Terrorism Strategies*
Ong Teng Kwee, Research Analyst, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
- 1110 – 1130 Coffee / Tea Break
- 1130 – 1150 **Discussant Syed Farid Alatas**, Associate Professor, National University of Singapore
- 1150 – 1250 Questions and General Discussion
- 1250 – 1350 Lunch (Venue: Ah Hoi's Kitchen @ Level 4)
- 1350 – 1520 **Panel Two Structures of Religious Conflicts**
- Chair: **Kumar Ramakrishna**, Associate Professor and Head of Studies, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
- Presenters**
- Conceptions of Jihad and Conflict Resolution in Muslim Societies: An Exploration*
Riaz Hassan, Professor, Flinders University, Australia
- The Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: Social Tensions and search for Identity*
Mariam Abou Zahab, Lecturer, INALCO, France
- Hindu-Muslim Riots: An attempt to Rank Cultural, Economic and Political Factors*
Christophe Jaffrelot, Research Director, CERI, France
- Analyzing Religious Conflicts as Wars of the Third Kind: The Case of Mindanao*
Renato Cruz de Castro, Chair, International Studies Department, De la Salle University, Manila, Philippines

1520 – 1540	Coffee / Tea Break
1540 – 1600	Discussant: Bryan Turner , Professor, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
1600 – 1700	Questions and General Discussion
1700	End of First Day
1900	Dinner (By invitation only)
	Venue: House of Peranakan @ 1020 East Coast Parkway

DAY 2 – Wednesday, 4 May 2005

0900 – 1030	Panel Three Responses to Religious Conflicts
	Chair: Ralf Emmers , Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
	Presenters <i>'Blessed Are the Peacemakers': Lessons in Interfaith Dialogue and Reconciliation for Southeast Asia</i> Tan See Seng , Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
	<i>Facilitated Joint Brainstorming</i> Keith Fitzgerald , Senior Fellow & Head, Asian Programme on Negotiation & Conflict Management, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
	<i>Towards better peace processes: A comparative analysis of attempts to broker peace with MRLF and GAM</i> S.P.Harish , Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
	<i>Problematizing the role of the state in the dynamics of religious conflict in Indonesia: The Case of Maluku</i> Alesius Jemadu , Head of Department of International Relations, Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia
1030 – 1050	Coffee / Tea Break
1050 – 1110	Discussant: Syed Nazakat , Sahara Time, Kashmir
1110 – 1210	Questions and General Discussion
1210 – 1240	Closing Remarks Joseph Liow , Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
1240 – 1400	Lunch (Venue: Café Biz @ Lobby Level) / End of Conference

List of Participants

PAPER PRESENTERS

1. **Mariam Abou Zahabb**, Lecturer, INALCO, France
2. **Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid**, Senior Lecturer, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
3. **Linell Cady**, Professor of Religious Studies and Director, Centre for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University
4. **Renato Cruz de Castro**, Chair, International Studies Department, De la Salle University, Manila, Philippines
5. **Keith Fitzgerald**, Senior Fellow & Head, Asian Programme on Negotiation & Conflict Management, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
6. **Riaz Hassan**, Professor, Flinders University, Australia
7. **Christophe Jaffrelot**, Research Director, CERI, France
8. **Alesius Jemadu**, Head of Department of International Relations, Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia
9. **Ong Teng Kwee**, Research Analyst, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
10. **Kumar Ramakrishna**, Associate Professor & Head of Studies, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
11. **S.P. Harish**, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
12. **Tan See Seng**, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore

DISCUSSANTS / CHAIRPERSONS

13. **Syed Farid Alatas**, National University of Singapore, Singapore
14. **Ralf Emmers**, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
15. **Joseph Liow**, Assistant Professor, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
16. **Syed Nazakat**, Sahara Time, Kashmir
17. **Bryan Turner**, Professor, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

AMBASSADORS / HIGH COMMISSIONERS

18. **H. E. Pengiran Dato Paduak Haji Yusof bin Pengiran Kula**, High Commissioner, High Commission of Brunei Darussalam
19. **H. E. Angel Flisfisch**, Ambassador, Embassy of Chile
20. **H.E. Mohamed Elzorkany**, Ambassador, Embassy of the Arab of Egypt
21. **H. E. Itzhak Shoham**, Ambassador, Embassy of Israel
22. **H. E. Ryu Kwang-Sok**, Ambassador, Embassy of The Republic of Korea
23. **H.E Mrs Belen A. Fule-Anota**, Ambassador, Philippines Embassy
24. **H. E. Dr Mohamad Amin Kurdi**, Ambassador, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
25. **H. E. Chalermpol Thanchitt**, Ambassador, Royal Thai Embassy

DIPLOMATIC CROPS / DEFENCE ATTACHE

26. **Mark Carroll**, First Secretary (Political), The Australian High Commission
27. **Yvonne Grawert**, Research Officer, The Australian High Commission
28. **Charmaine Quade**, Counsellor (Police Liaison), The Australian High Commission
29. **Affonso Santos**, Minister of Counsellor, Embassy of Brazil
30. **Carole Johnson**, Director of Political Affairs, British High Commission
31. **Philip Malone**, Director-General Political & Communications, British High Commission

32. **Annie Legault**, Counsellor, Canadian High Commission
33. **Ludek Zahradnicek**, Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of the Czech Republic
34. **Anita Csiszar**, Personal Assistant, The Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
35. **Sanjiv Kumar**, First Secretary, High Commission of India
36. **Nasri Gustaman**, Minister Counsellor, Indonesia Embassy
37. **Irwan Heryudanto**, Indonesia Embassy
38. **Widya Rahmanto**, Head of Information, Press & Culture (Second Secretary), Indonesia Embassy
39. **Zulkifli Mansor**, Defence Adviser, Malaysian High Commission
40. **Azhar Tahir**, Assistant Defence Advise, Malaysian High Commission
41. **Wibe Ploeg**, First Secretary, Royal Netherlands Embassy
42. **Cotu Sever**, Charge D'affaires, Embassy of Romania
43. **Bafedile Margeret Ramarlape**, First Secretary, High Commission of the Republic of South Africa
44. **Patrick Kupelwieser**, Swiss Embassy
45. **Pavin Chachavalpongpun**, Second Secretary, Royal Thai Embassy
46. **Kesanee Palanuwongse**, Counsellor, Royal Thai Embassy
47. **Qiana Bradford**, Economic Officer, US Embassy
48. **Jacob P Merciez**, Assistant Navel Attache, US Embassy

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50. **Lim Ai Teng**, AD (Research), JCTC, PMO

MFA

51. **Kevin Cheok**, Deputy Director, Southeast Asia Directorate, MFA

MHA

52. **Kasthuri**, Officer,
53. **Lim Hock Chuan**, Deputy Secretary
54. **Lin Chung Ying**, Director (Security Education)
55. **Jeannie Tan**, Officer
56. **Serene Toh**, Officer

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57. **Chio Su-Mei**, Officer, MINDEF
58. **Chua Yee Sian**, Officer, MINDEF
59. **Phyllis Goh Yi Yuen**, Officer, MINDEF
60. **Irene Lim Sye Cheng**, Officer, MINDEF
61. **Tan Kim Ann**, MINDEF
62. **Tan Gwee Khiang**, Deputy Director, MINDEF
63. **Paul Tan Wei Chean**, Officer, MINDEF
64. **Adeline Yeo En Hui**, Office, MINDEF

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65. **Kenneth Chong**, Staff Officer, PSG, MINDEF
66. **Simon Sim**, Staff Officer, PSG, MINDEF

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67. Rozlan Giri, Deputy Director (SD), Singapore Police Force

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69. **Mette Ekeroth**, Researcher, Singapore Institute of International Affairs

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