

A Few Poorly Organised Men Interreligious Violence in Poso, Indonesia

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

For nine years from 1998 to 2007, Poso district in Central Sulawesi province became the site of the most protracted inter-religious conflict in post-authoritarian Indonesia. What started as a brawl between two local youths escalated first to urban riots, then to widespread killings and war-like violence, before a long period of sporadic shootings and bombings. Along the way, a little known and sparsely-populated district in the outer islands of Indonesia with no recent history of violence came to global attention as one of the most important theatres of operations for the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist network. Overall, between 600 and 1000 people were killed out of a pre-conflict population of approximately 400,000 people, and tens of thousands more were displaced amid immense physical destruction. The extent of the destruction wrought during the conflict was captured in a wry local saying, ‘Win and you’re charcoal, lose and you’re ash.’

The onset of violence in Poso coincided with the democratic transition that followed President Suharto’s May 1998 resignation, ending more than 40 years of authoritarian rule in Indonesia. Poso was not the only site to experience large-scale communal fighting during this transition – four other provinces were also rocked by episodes of violence in which several hundred to several thousand people were killed. At a superficial level, this outbreak of violence was not a surprise. Indonesia’s own history and contemporary circumstances contributed to pessimism that unrest would accompany the end of authoritarian rule. Even as the transition began, three of Indonesia’s then 27 provinces were already gripped by long-running separatist insurgencies, each of which intensified as the central authoritarian regime fell. Moreover, the previous two instances of regime change, in 1945-9 and 1965-6, had been accompanied by periods of widespread social violence. In comparative terms, furthermore, countries in the midst of democratization are often observed to be particularly prone to communal violence (Snyder 2000; van Klinken 2007).

Equally, however, no one had predicted that the pattern of violence during the transition would be defined by large-scale outbreaks of communal fighting in Indonesia’s outer islands. Indeed it is barely possible that such a prediction could have been made, given the unfamiliarity to that point of both the forms and locations of large-scale violence. Communal fighting had been mostly absent under Suharto’s regime, with the two exceptions of anti-Chinese violence and, at the very end of authoritarian rule, an episode of ethnic violence in West Kalimantan province in 1997. Each eventual site of communal conflict had also been wholly anonymous in national affairs. Even within Indonesia and well after fighting in Poso had commenced, mention of my research site often elicited a puzzled stare.

Table 1: Sites of large-scale violent conflict during Indonesia’s democratic transition.

Communal		Separatist
Inter-religious	Inter-ethnic	
Central Sulawesi (Poso)	West Kalimantan	Papua
Maluku	Central Kalimantan	Aceh
North Maluku		East Timor*

* In 1999, East Timor province voted to secede from Indonesia, becoming present-day Timor-Leste

Moreover, the situation in Poso and these other sites of violence in fact stood in stark contrast to conditions in most of the rest of Indonesia. The eight provinces that experienced large-scale communal or separatist violence encompassed just 7 per cent of Indonesia's population (Aspinall 2008).¹ Numerous other locations experienced localised low-intensity conflicts, crime like social violence or short-lived riots.² Both Jakarta and Medan, two of Indonesia's four largest cities, experienced massive anti-Chinese riots just weeks before the end of authoritarian rule, for example. Nevertheless, for the majority of Indonesia's citizenry, rather than large-scale violence, the democratic transition heralded peaceful democratic participation, improved civil liberties, and a gradually recovering economy following the 1997 monetary crisis. Even within Central Sulawesi province itself, circumstances in Poso differed sharply from other locations. No other district experienced significant communal blood-letting. Indeed, at the very moment that war-like violence raged between Poso's Christian and Muslim communities, Christians and Muslims freely intermingled just 200 kilometres away in the provincial capital Palu.

How does an area such as Poso descend into religious warfare? How could violence in this conflict escalate to the intensity of a civil war, yet remain almost wholly contained within the boundaries of just one of Indonesia's 500-odd districts? How did the conflict continue for so long in an increasingly stable democratic state? Why did violence finally come to an end? This book, the product of a decade of research on the Poso conflict, will tackle these questions.

Understanding Communal Violence – Between Incidence and Dynamics

Increasingly, scholars draw analytical distinction between the incidence of violent conflict and the dynamics of violence once conflict begins. Two recent influential studies in the field of civil war by Kalyvas (2006) and Weinstein (2007) have lent particular prominence to this distinction. Each author observes recent scholarship on civil wars to have been dominated by studies that use large datasets to identify causal factors to explain why civil wars begin. This scholarship has little utility for the principal puzzle that each author wishes to investigate, namely variation in the level of violence against civilians during civil war. Indeed, Kalyvas (2006:389) contends, many such 'large-N' studies of civil war treat violence 'as an automatic outcome of war, unworthy of study in its own right'.

Although they agree on the importance of studying dynamics in their own right, Kalyvas and Weinstein adopt quite different tacks. Kalyvas articulates the need for such separate study in terms of the transformative power of the war situation, and in particular the effect of violence to transform the 'preferences, choices, behaviour and identities' of actors *during* the course of a war (2006:389). As a consequence of this transformative power, it cannot be assumed that any straightforward relationship exists between the reasons a war began and the violence observed during that war. Violence may, and often does, harden cleavages that existed prior to the war. Equally, however, Kalyvas contends, other cleavages may be the novel product of violence during the war. Violence may also take on a logic of its own once war begins, as

¹ Varshney, Tadjoeeddin and Panggabean (2008:385) express this point at district level, observing that 85.5 per cent of deaths from 1990-2003 occurred in fifteen districts and municipalities comprising just 6.5 per cent of Indonesia's population in 2000. (Their dataset excludes Papua and West Papua province.)

² Barron and Sharpe (2008) provide one initial survey of localised violence outside of areas of high intensity violence.

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actors respond anew to each development, and as the risks and opportunities of war radically alter the costs associated with particular courses of action.

Kalyvas draws upon these insights to propose a theory of violence against civilians that depends upon the levels of control that rebels and government forces are able to establish in each geographic area during a single war. If community allegiance is not determined by the apparent pre-war political affiliation of an area, it follows that both rebels and government forces may make strategic use of violence during a war to secure support from the civilian population by punishing non-collaboration. Territorial control matters, because civilians will only provide the information either actor requires to accurately identify defectors if they can be confident the actor will be able to protect them from rivals. Consequently, Kalyvas predicts, the areas of highest violence against civilians are those where one or the other actor has established near hegemonic but not total control. By contrast, the front-lines of the war remain free of violence against civilians, because neither side can offer protection to civilians to secure their collaboration.

For his part, Weinstein (2007) places far less emphasis on the explanatory power of changing incentives and motivations during war. Instead, he explains observed variance in levels of violence against civilians between different wars in terms of the initial constraints rebel leaders face in what kind of organization they are able to establish. In resource-rich contexts, leaders must mobilize rapidly before other contenders crowd them out. They consequently recruit opportunists into undisciplined rebel organizations that perpetrate high levels of violence against civilians. By contrast, resource scarcity forces leaders to forge ranks of committed followers, resulting in lower levels of abuse of civilians. Weinstein emphasizes that these constraints are independent of the causes of each war – his commonality with Kalyvas – but differs in seeing little scope for change during a particular war. Once a form of organization and its associated pattern of violence is established early in a war, it is likely to persist.

Such a distinction between onset and dynamics also lies at the heart of this study of the Poso conflict. I focus herein most particularly on the production of violence during the nine years of conflict in Poso rather than the onset of the conflict per se. This focus complements existing scholarship, which has developed a sophisticated explanation of the onset of violent communal conflict in the five particular locations where it occurred during Indonesia's democratic transition, Poso included. Three single-author monographs that each consider the transitional conflicts as a set have played the greatest role in explaining their incidence, by identifying a set of core enabling structural factors (Van Klinken 2007; Bertrand 2004; Sidel 2006). Most case studies of individual conflicts also describe these factors in some form, reflecting their status as a virtual scholarly consensus. In short, rapid democratizing and decentralization reforms created uncertainties over how rival ethnic and religious groups could access state resources, just at the moment that the repressive capacity of the Indonesian state was greatly weakened. These changes were experienced nationally, but scholars posit that the most vulnerable locations were those whose local economy displayed both a high rate of recent de-agrarianization and a disproportionate reliance in the urban sector on government contracts and civil service jobs (van Klinken 2007), and where there was a relatively even proportion of Muslims and Christians (Sidel 2006). These factors did not make violent conflict inevitable in any of these locations, nor did they cause violence – any causal explanation must include decisions based on human agency. Additionally, scholars also posit that fuller analysis of the enabling role of these factors should also consider non-violent cases (Aspinall 2008; Varshney 2008). Nevertheless, the five provinces that experienced large-scale

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communal fighting were the five most-highly ranked locations in terms of economic vulnerability that also displayed this demographic feature (Davidson 2009).

In comparison to their onset, the dynamics of violence within each of the five large-scale communal conflicts remain less well understood, the contributions of existing case studies notwithstanding. Much as the five sites of communal violence shared a common context beyond their local particularities, each conflict differed significantly in its intensity and duration, the forms of violence, and the actors responsible. Study of the factors that led to the onset of each conflict alone gives little clue as to why each conflagration panned out so differently. Two of the cases of violent conflict – in West Kalimantan (1997, 1999) and Central Kalimantan (2001) – were each inter-ethnic confrontations lasting no more than a few weeks. In each case, groups claiming indigenous status murdered hundreds of Madurese migrants and forcefully evicted many, many more (Davidson 2008; van Klinken 2007). Poso (1998-2007) and Maluku (1999-2005), by contrast, were Christian-Muslim religious conflicts that each lasted many years, albeit of a consistently different scale. At the peak of the fighting, the Maluku conflict was far more intense than Poso, causing thousands rather than hundreds of deaths. But the comparison was reversed during the long phase of sporadic violence in each location, during which roughly twice as many people were killed in Poso as in Maluku. The North Maluku conflict (1999-2000) was different again – the worst fighting was between Christians and Muslims, but the conflict also comprised episodes of inter-ethnic fighting and even clashes between different Muslim factions. Fighting in this province all but concluded within a year, but nevertheless resulted in as many deaths as did the conflict in Maluku (Wilson 2008).

Nor do we have a comprehensive understanding of the profound transformations over time in the dynamics of each of these conflicts. A thumbnail sketch of the Poso conflict well illustrates the extent of such shifts. In broad terms, the conflict divides into four distinct if overlapping phases of fighting, each comprising a different form of violence. The first phase consisted of two urban riots in December 1998 and April 2000, each with clear links to contestation between rival local political patronage networks. Property damage was extensive in each riot, but few people were killed. No one died in the first riot, and just seven people perished in April 2000, half of them shot dead by the police. Just a month after the second of these riots, however, violence escalated abruptly to a new phase of widespread killings. At least 246 people, mostly Muslims, were killed as a subsection of the Christian community launched repeated attacks on the district's Muslim population. The nature of this escalation took local Muslims by surprise, as a newly organized core of Christian combatants were able to deploy more lethal force than had been the case during the preceding urban riots. Such was the extent of the escalation that for two weeks law and order broke down almost completely in the district. Many police and local government officials abandoned their posts and a few security force personnel even took part in the violence directly. Nevertheless, when the provincial police and military commands belatedly sent reinforcements to directly confronted the organized core of Christian combatants, they ceded their command post without resistance, terminating this phase of violence.

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Table 2. Phases of violence in the Poso conflict, 1998-2007.

	Timing	Location	Leaders	Rank and File	Approximate Deaths
Urban Riots	December 1998, April 2000	Poso city (capital of Poso district)	Local political patronage networks	Youths from surrounding villages join co-religionists within the city to fight	7
Widespread Killing	May-June 2000	Three main fronts to the south, southeast and west of the city	Core group of combatants comprises men who suffered loss in urban riots, their families and associates as well as several Catholic migrants	Christian villagers gather at Tagolu staging point; ad hoc recruitment of community members at each site of attack	At least 246
Protracted Two-Sided Conflict	June 2000 – December 2001, August 2002	Many locations throughout Poso district	Alliance of mujahidin and local Islamic leaders; structure of Christian leadership relatively unknown	Youths throughout district stand guard at night; ad hoc recruitment / participation for each large attack	At least 100
Sporadic Violence	2002 – January 2007	Many locations throughout Poso district	Alliance of mujahidin and core local supporters	No mass participation	Approximately 150

Although the security force intervention dispersed Christian forces, a new phase of protracted two-sided violent conflict lasting for eighteen months followed immediately after the May-June 2000 killings. Throughout this phase, the death toll in Poso continued to mount, with around 100 people killed in the course of 2001. Poso residents of both major religions faced daily threats to their security from small-scale attacks during this phase, forcing villagers to establish nightly guard posts and leave many fields untended. The defining feature of this phase, however, was the entry into Poso of mujahidin groups from other parts of the country, who then forged an alliance with local Muslim youths. The military knowledge possessed by mujahidin and their access to arms enabled this alliance to transform the balance of power in the conflict, securing lasting military supremacy for Muslims. The transformation wrought by this alliance became clear first in June-July 2001, when Muslims mounted their first large-scale reprisal attacks for the previous year's killings, and then in November-December 2001, when Muslims destroyed a series of Christian strongholds almost at will.

Facing a rising death toll (and having received intelligence reports of a terrorist training facility in Poso), the central government intervened to terminate this phase in December 2001. The intervention comprised government-brokered peace talks, a massive deployment of security forces, and a large allocation of aid. Even an intervention of this scale did not halt large-scale attacks altogether – one final escalation took place in August 2002. Nor did the intervention prevent a final five-year phase of sporadic violence from 2002 until 2007, mostly comprising terrorist style shootings and bombings. Most combatants ceased fighting during

this phase, but a core of committed perpetrators ensured the district was never entirely secure. Approximately 150 people were killed (25 of them killed during security force operations). Some of these people were murdered by Christians, but the majority of sporadic attacks were directed at non-Muslims and were perpetrated by mujahidin and their core local Muslims allies.

A full explanation of why the Poso conflict could happen and persist for so long must be able to account for the occurrence and nature of each of these shifts. To this end, I briefly survey existing explanations below, before outlining my own approach.

Explaining the Dynamics of Violence

Existing works have adopted several approaches in seeking to explain the transformations in dynamics of communal violence such as were observed in Poso, ranging from structural explanations through to mapping of conflict processes. Applied to the Poso conflict, each approach illuminates aspects of the production of violence, while also leaving important questions unanswered.

Among existing works, Sidel (2006) perhaps adopts the most ambitious approach to explain shifts in the dynamics of violence in Poso. He does so by means of an explicitly structuralist argument, in which he posits that changes in the position of Islam within the Indonesian polity account not just for the dynamics of the Poso conflict but for all religious violence in Indonesia since the 1990s. He divides such religious violence into three temporal phases: a phase of urban riots from 1995-1998, mostly targeting Christian or Chinese-owned property; a phase of pogroms from 1998-2001, including Poso, typified by massive collective inter-religious violence; and, finally, a phase of paramilitary and terrorist activity, including sporadic attacks in Poso, which started in 2001 and had largely concluded by 2005. Of the two phases relevant to Poso, Sidel argues that pogroms occurred as the forces promoting Islamism gained access to the central government under Suharto's successor, President B.J. Habibie, but needed to project their power downwards and outwards into the regions, generating local political competition. Jihadist violence waged by armed paramilitaries replaced the pogroms as secular and Christian interests regained control of the central government, signaling the 'eclipse and evisceration of the Islamist project'. This change of fortunes was embodied first in the ascension of the moderate Abdurrahman Wahid to replace Habibie as president, then further confirmed in Wahid's ouster in favour of the secular nationalist Megawati Sukarnoputri.

The scope of Sidel's argument and the number of cases he seeks to cover doubtless made necessary his adoption of time periods spanning several years and categories of violence as broad as 'pogroms' and 'jihad'. Nevertheless, in subsuming all violence in Poso from 1998-2001 into a single category of 'religious pogroms', Sidel's approach is less able to meaningfully analyse the transformations in the production of violence that took place within this time period. A more serious limitation of Sidel's approach, however, is his over-reliance on national context to explain local dynamics. As I will set out in the body of this book, an important aspect of the particular dynamics of violence manifest in Poso was the ability of local agents to act contrary to national trends, due to the space created for them by Poso's peripheral place in national affairs. Moreover, Sidel's focus on the national at times leads him to misidentify the motivations of key actors in Poso. In this sense, his explanation of the motivations of mujahidin groups to mobilize to Poso is particularly questionable. Members of

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these groups had trained in Afghanistan and the Philippines in the 1980s and 1990s to prepare themselves for armed jihad. When violence against Muslims in Maluku and Poso presented an opportunity – even the obligation – to engage in jihad right on their doorstep, it is unlikely that national political developments were an important factor in their decision to become involved.³

Van Klinken (2007) similarly seeks to account for the dynamics of several conflicts in a single monograph, but differs from Sidel in adopting a social movements rather than a structuralist approach. He describes each of the violent communal conflicts during Indonesia's democratic transition to have been 'local politics by other means' and argues that violence resulted when politically-motivated individuals perceived an opportunity to win local power by mobilizing constituencies along ethnic and religious lines. Van Klinken accounts for the different and changing manifestations of violence in each location in terms of five common processes derived from the social movements text, *Dynamics of Contention* (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). The basic argument of *Dynamics of Contention* is that common causal processes producing different outcomes depending on context can be identified in a wide range of phenomena that would otherwise be studied as discrete classes of events (e.g. revolutions, ethnic and religious violence, democratization episodes). To demonstrate the utility of this overall approach, van Klinken analyses each conflict in terms of a distinct process: the formation of a bounded identity in a group (West Kalimantan), the escalation of a conflict to involve many more actors (Poso), the polarization of actors to opposed extremes (North Maluku), the mobilization of otherwise apathetic people (Maluku) and the constitution of a previously unorganized or apolitical group into a single political actor (Central Kalimantan).

Van Klinken's focus on process valuably elucidates basic commonalities in what might otherwise be assumed to be conflicts with disparate dynamics. In outlining processes by which identifiable groups produced violence, he also ably dispels what he identifies to be a dominant public discourse in Indonesia that regards the conflicts as the result of social anomie based in supposed cultural traits such as religious intolerance or predisposition to violence. In employing mechanisms derived from a broad set of events, however, his account at times leaves important questions regarding the dynamics of violence in Poso relatively unattended. One example is his use of the analytical device of the 'broker' to explain the participation of more and more people as violence in Poso escalated from urban riots to killings spanning much of the district in May-June 2000. Brokers, van Klinken (2007:76) explains, connect two previously disparate social sites by 'translat[ing] the problems experienced in one into a language that appeals to people in the other'. Van Klinken's identification of urban elites as key brokers provides a reasonable explanation both of the expansion in May-June 2000 of geographic scope of violence and of the number of actors, but does not address the sudden shift in form from rioting to killing. Whether most Poso residents were suddenly willing to kill or the murders were the work of just a particular few remains an open question in his account, for instance. Additionally, van Klinken's characterization of the violence as essentially politically-motivated fits unevenly with the different phases of violent conflict in Poso. To be sure, there were always people seeking political advantage out of unrest in Poso, but it was only in the initial phase of urban riots that such politically-interested actors unequivocally controlled the production of violence. Thereafter, the effect of the conflict situation as a new context for action both transformed the make-up of the group of individuals

³ See Aspinall (2008:569) for a broader critique of Sidel's approach to actor motivations.

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recognized as leaders, and in itself became an increasingly important motivation to perpetrate violence.

In addition to these comparative works, two book-length case studies of the West Kalimantan and North Maluku conflicts respectively provide additional alternative approaches that might be adapted to the study of Poso.⁴ Each author chooses to focus on a single case out of their shared belief that no one existing comparative argument adequately explains the variation in dynamics between the different communal conflicts in Indonesia. This conviction leads each to focus on micro-observation of variations in the dynamics of violence within their particular case, as a building block to explore the case's broader implications. In his study of anti-Madurese violence in West Kalimantan, Davidson (2008:203-4) cites distinct political and temporal processes to explain changes in the intensity and location of violence as well as the identity of the combatants. Indigenous empowerment advocacy spanning more than a decade contributed to the unprecedented scale of Dayak attacks on Madurese in 1997, Davidson argues; facing the need to stake their own claim to indigeneity to prosper in chauvinist post-authoritarian local politics, Malays were then inspired in 1999 to imitate the 1997 episode by attacking Madurese in the novel location of Sambas district. Davidson's focus on contemporary political context produces an illuminating study of the West Kalimantan violence, and I will myself seek to draw on the political context in Poso as appropriate in my own narrative. The relatively long temporal gap between each major episode in West Kalimantan appears as a peculiarity of that conflict that makes its shifts in dynamics particularly amenable to explanation in terms of contextual processes, however. By contrast, the sudden shift within a month from riots to widespread killings in Poso appears too rapid to have been influenced significantly by changes in external context.

Wilson's (2008) approach to the North Maluku conflict is to identify 'tipping points' at which new factors became central to the dynamics of violence. Thus conceptualized, he describes the conflict as comprising five distinct if inter-related episodes: an initiation phase of inter-ethnic clashes, escalation to inter-religious clashes in the provincial capital and surrounding areas, the dispersion of inter-religious violence to much of the province, political exploitation manifest in violent clashes between rival Muslim political factions, and a final phase of religious war involving the mobilization of militia under the banner of jihad to attack Christian areas of the province. Distinct combinations of 'structural factors, human agency, identity factors, rationality, elite interest and mass sentiment' account for the variation between each episode (2008:193); Wilson frames his analysis of each phase in terms of comparative works most appropriate to each combination of factors. In similar fashion to Wilson, as I set out in more detail below, I will also analyse each phase of the Poso conflict from a distinct theoretical standpoint that most closely reflects the defining dynamic of violence at that particular point. Wilson's approach is sufficiently open-ended, however, to accommodate quite different foci of analysis as appropriate to each conflict, and it is this sense more than in approach per se that my work is distinct.

In summary, a range of important questions remain regarding exactly how and why the shifts in dynamics of violence in Poso occurred. The rapidity and frequency of shifts are not sufficiently explained by approaches that rely on external contextual factors, be they national or local. Nor do general processes of escalation capture the exact nature of each shift or the

⁴ The political scientist Jacques Bertrand has produced a third comparative monograph that also considers the transitional conflicts as a set (Bertrand 2004). Bertrand himself explicitly states that his approach is not suited to analyse variations in the forms, intensity and scale of particular conflicts. Nor does Bertrand discuss the Poso conflict in any detail. As such, I do not survey his work here.

precise nature of participation in different forms of violence. To address these questions, my approach will be to focus in detail on the organization of violence in Poso.

A Division of Labour

It is my basic contention in this book that we can understand each shift in dynamics of the Poso conflict by studying the changing nature of the organizational underpinnings of violence. There are several advantages inherent to a focus on the organization of violence. Such a focus allows direct investigation of how changes in context and conflict situation are reflected in the actual waging of violent conflict, and hence in the forms and levels of violence observed (Weinstein 2007). Study of organization also provides a new angle on one of the central questions in the study of violent conflict – that of *why* ordinary community members participate⁵ – by first investigating precisely *how* they participate. Understanding the organizational underpinnings of violence also answers the question of whether a given conflict more closely resembles a war of ‘all against all’ or of a ‘few against many’, informing policy debates on appropriate interventions to prevent violence (Mueller 2000).

The central device of my argument regarding organization is an evolving ‘division of labour’ in perpetrating violence between leaders and core combatants on the one hand, and ordinary community members on the other. Other scholars have argued that a division of labour involving a multiplicity of roles is typical to riot production (Brass 2003) or that even very large-scale violent episodes such as mass killing and genocide involve diverse types and levels of participation (Valentino 2004; Straus 2006). I go beyond these works in arguing that each shift in the dynamics of violence reflected a change in the division of labour, with the general pattern being that this division became more pronounced as violence became more deadly. This division of labour facilitated the rapid escalation of violence, by obviating both the need for strong organization or for a widespread willingness to kill. Indeed, it may have taken as few as several dozen men at the core of the violence to initiate and sustain the escalation. Accordingly, core combatants did most of the killing, while the ad hoc mobilization of community members provided manpower for large attacks and space for core perpetrators to operate. In lowering these two barriers to violence, the division of labour helps to explain why such an intense conflict could occur so suddenly in a previously quiescent location.

The ad hoc mobilization and tacit support provided by ordinary community members also masked the vulnerability of the organized core to determined state intervention, another contributing factor the extent of the escalation and the long persistence of protracted conflict in Poso with only weak organization. Core combatants never assembled a fighting force able to repel a direct assault by police or the military, but a misidentification by security forces of the nature of combatant entities in Poso meant that core combatants were rarely directly challenged. During the phase of mass killings, for example, this misidentification contributed to the belatedness of decisive state intervention to halt the violence, as authorities were uncertain of what proportion of the community were participating. During the phase of sporadic violence, the state failed to identify that an intervention that directly targeted the determined core of perpetrators could be effective (c.f. Mueller 2000), which was one factor that contributed to the continuation of sporadic incidents for several years.

⁵ Scholars have identified this question, of why community members participate, both as a key puzzle in the study of violence in general (Fearon and Laitin 2000), and as a significant remaining gap in our understanding of the post-authoritarian conflicts in Indonesia (Aspinall 2008).

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How did this division of labour arise and evolve? The starting point in my approach is to examine the goals, motivations and actions of leaders. (I use the word 'leaders' rather than the more common term 'elites' to emphasize that the membership of this category shifted continually during the conflict.) This starting point, hardly unconventional in the study of violence, follows logically from the observed centrality of leaders to developments in Poso. It was leaders who made the decision to initiate the violence and to effect each change in dynamics, albeit in response to the actions of others and to changing circumstances. Each group of leaders in each successive phase also decided upon the nature of the combatant organization that they would attempt to assemble. Thereafter, they were constrained in producing violence both by their initial choices regarding organization (c.f. Weinstein 2007:45), and by the nature of support they were afforded and were able to mobilize from the broader community.

In advancing this argument, I do not imagine that leaders made their decisions irrespective of context, or enjoyed a completely free hand. Indeed, to reiterate an important point from the outset of this section, a focus on the decisions of leaders and patterns of organization is a way to investigate how context is reflected in the actual waging of violence. In this sense, two contextual factors recur in my analysis as particularly important constraints. The first is the conflict situation as a new context for action. In Poso, the broader community's experience of the conflict situation was a crucial determinant of the success (or failure) of leaders' mobilization strategies. More basically, the conflict situation strongly influenced precisely whom the community recognized as leaders, based on their desire to fight and the extent to which they felt under threat. As mentioned in review of political interpretations of the Poso violence, the conflict situation also exerted a more direct influence on the actions of leaders, re-ordering their priorities and becoming an additional motivation for action beyond their pre-existing interests. Indeed, Kalyvas (2006:83) cites such an influence as one of the reasons for the basic distinction between study of the onset of conflict and the dynamics of violence within conflict, arguing that actor responses to the dynamics of violence 'shape violence, the war, and the prospects for peace in a way that is often quite independent of the proximate causes of the conflict.'

The second recurring constraint on leaders' actions and the forms of organization is state intervention. The importance of this factor as a constraint is perhaps not surprising, given that one of the key puzzles of the Poso conflict is the question of how it could reach such intensity and persist for so long in an increasingly stable and democratic state. Moreover, at no point during the conflict did leaders assemble a combatant entity capable of withstanding (even briefly) the full determined use by the state of even a fraction of the force available to it. Under these circumstances, actual and anticipated state intervention were an ongoing constraint on the actions of leaders and the nature of support they received from community members. I will also argue, however, that patterns of organization and state intervention may have been mutually influencing. In particular, as proposed more generally by Mueller (2000), a misjudgment by the state of the pattern of organization underpinning the violence in the later years of the conflict may have led the state to defer action because of an over-estimation of the extent of intervention required.

Forms of Violent Conflict

This book presents the first comprehensive history of the years of violent conflict in Poso, researched in the main while the violence was ongoing. Writing such a history has been a task I have taken seriously in its own right, and it has been at once my privilege and a challenge in doing so to have the opportunity to interview many of those who participated directly in the events. Beyond the intrinsic significance of events in Poso, however, study of the conflict can also contribute to a scholarly understanding of the dynamics of violence during Indonesia's post-authoritarian transition and of the organization of violence more generally. To this end, although the focus remains on organization throughout, I frame my discussion of each of the four phases of violence during the conflict in terms of a distinct body of comparative literature.

Why situate analysis of each phase of violence within different bodies of comparative literature, rather than present one over-arching theoretical lens encompassing the whole conflict? This approach is necessary because, in its entirety, violent conflict in Poso was distinct in important ways from each commonly studied form of violent event. Take South Asian 'communal riots' for instance: the initial phase of violence in Poso closely resembled these disturbances, facilitating analytical comparison. Thereafter, however, the degree of organization that underpinned violence in Poso precludes analysis of the latter phases of the conflict as riots. Core combatants trained for weeks in preparation to undertake violence in these phases, in a pattern more akin to rudimentary warfare. The phase of protracted violence in Poso is another clear point of difference with communal riots, a class of event typified by short if intense bursts of violence lasting only for days or at most weeks (Brass 1997:10; Horowitz 2001:57; Tambiah 1996:215).

Nor can the conflict be termed a civil war, even if the number of fatalities suffered by each side in Poso would satisfy some definitions of war intensity. The most important factor distinguishing Poso from civil wars was the absence of the state as an active combatant party (Sambanis 2004:829; Weinstein 2007:16). Fighting in Poso took place between community-based combatant entities, the complicity of some agents of the state in the violence notwithstanding.

Nor was Poso a case of genocide, as it has been labelled in some partisan accounts of the conflict. Genocide is generally held to entail 'a planned ... attempt to eliminate an ethnic or ethno-religious group by violent means' (Cribb 2001:219). In common with genocidal attacks, in the worst violence in Poso assailants murdered members of a population solely on the basis of their religious identity. But there is no suggestion that any party to the conflict bore the intent or took serious steps to undertake the elimination in its entirety of either religious community in Poso. Indeed, even at the very peak of the violence, attempts to prevent adversaries from fleeing appear to have been more the exception than the rule.

Before discussing the dynamics of each phase of violence in Poso, however, I first introduce the reader to Poso district and to the enabling context for the onset of violent conflict. Accordingly, Chapter Two elaborates upon the scholarly consensus on the onset of the post-authoritarian communal conflicts in Indonesia, and outlines the specific manifestation of this context in Poso.

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The discussion of the dynamics of violence is then presented in chronological order, with one chapter for each phase. In Chapter Three I analyse the initial phase of urban riots in Poso as a case of political violence, drawing primarily on studies of communal riots in South Asia. In common with these studies, I find that these riots were clear examples of ‘politics by other means’, in which urban patronage networks produced riots for their own political gain. The first riot was linked to attempts to gain advantage in the impending district head electoral race; the second riot was a performative enterprise intended to assert the continuing relevance of a faction that had twice suffered political defeat. This political element does not explain the full range of actions of key actors during the riots, however. Even in these initial moments of violent conflict, we see an evident influence of violence in reordering actor’s priorities and broadening their motivations beyond their pre-existing political interests.

Chapter Four then refers to the literature on mass killings, civil war and genocide to understand the sudden escalation to a phase of widespread killing in Poso. Scholars of each of these forms of violence have argued that small groups of men may bear principle responsibility even for immense campaigns of killing, with only weak support or indifference required from non-participants. Applying this perspective to Poso, I find that a loosely organized core of Christian combatants, who trained and manufactured weapons prior to the violence, were responsible for the majority of the killing. Broad community support was nonetheless crucial to these core combatants, as the ad hoc mobilization of community members precipitated the breakdown of law and order that delayed state intervention and provided space for them to operate. The conflict situation contributed importantly to such support in the form of ‘surmountable fears’, in which community members felt under threat of attack but believed that they could prevail if they stood and fought.

Identifying the development of an alliance between mujahidin and local Muslims as the defining characteristic of the phase of protracted two-sided violence, I analyse this phase in Chapter Five as a case of religious violence. Mujahidin were by no means the first actors to frame violence in Poso in religious terms, but their efforts were distinct in their more systematic attempt to articulate the contents of their agenda to establish jihad as more than an empty mobilizing symbol. The literature on religious violence suggests such framing to be analytically important to the dynamics of violence if it produces observable differences in the behaviour of combatants. In Poso, the articulation of the jihadist agenda had a clear emboldening effect on local Muslim combatants, but this effect proved to be context dependent. Once the perceived cost of fighting increased, the threat of attacks by Christians reduced, and most Christian strongholds had been overrun, the majority of locals withdrew from active participation in fighting and chafed at the moral demands made by mujahidin. Only core supporters continued their alliance with mujahidin, displaying the unwillingness to negotiate and indifference to rising costs often attributed to religiously-committed combatants.

Finally, in Chapter Six I turn to the literature on state intervention to analyse the dynamics of violence during the phase of sporadic attacks. For instances such as Poso, in which the state was not a direct combatant party, this literature is dominated by work of Steven Wilkinson (2004, 2009), who identifies political will rather than state capacity as the most important factor determining whether the state will intervene effectively to prevent violence. In Poso, where violence was generally of only peripheral importance to national affairs, central government will to order stern intervention fluctuated, producing an uneven de-escalation of violence. Resultantly, throughout the phase of sporadic attacks, spikes of deadly violence alternated with relatively quiescent periods. Wilkinson identifies rationalist political

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calculation driven by electoral incentives to underpin state will; by contrast, in Poso the key factor driving government will was the sense of crisis generated by unusually severe or provocative attacks in Poso. Each resultant intervention would pursue suspects for the specific attack in question, but leave undiminished the overall capacity of jihadist networks to perpetrate violence. Under such circumstances, the main constraint on the intensity of violence was the guesswork of perpetrators in determining how much space remained to carry out attacks.

Before proceeding, a final note on terminology. The words Muslim and Christian are used to refer to the two sides in the Poso conflict throughout this book, unless I make reference to specific combatant group. (For instance, I often refer to Christian combatants in the May-June 2000 violence as the '*kelompok merah*' (red group), because this term was frequently used in contemporary accounts. Equally, I often make reference to specific jihadist groups.) The use of 'Muslim' and 'Christian' is an unavoidable shorthand and reflects the fact that this was the primary cleavage in the conflict, but should not be read to mean that all Muslims were fighting all Christians, or vice versa.

CHAPTER TWO A VULNERABLE DISTRICT?

Prior to the onset of communal violence in December 1998, Poso district had no immediate history of unrest. Throughout the 32 years of authoritarian rule under Suharto's New Order regime, the area had remained a sleepy rural district in an unremarkable outer island province. Only the middle-aged or more elderly among the district's then 420,000 residents would have remembered the predations of two regional rebellions in the 1950s, the hardships of Japanese occupation, or earlier battles against the Dutch (Schrauwers 2000). Yet as was to become abundantly clear, there were a number of characteristics of Poso's local economy and social structure that made the district unusually vulnerable to the occurrence of communal violence, albeit under specific circumstances. As scholars have subsequently identified, Poso shared these traits with the other four locations at which large-scale communal violence took place during Indonesia's democratic transition.

This chapter outlines this current scholarly consensus on the common enabling context of the post-authoritarian episodes of large-scale communal violence. As mentioned in the introduction, three single author works have contributed the most to identifying this context (Bertrand 2004; Sidel 2006; van Klinken 2007). In particular, I will set out how this shared context manifested in Poso district itself. The enabling context for violent conflict may appear a curious starting point for this book, given my overall focus on the dynamics of violence. But although the reasons for the onset of violence do not explain the nature of its subsequent specific manifestation, the enabling context nevertheless remains an important part of a comprehensive history of the conflict.

There are two levels to the enabling context for Indonesia's post-authoritarian conflicts: the overall national context on the one hand, and the particularities of the sites of violence on the other. The central feature of the national context was the democratic transition itself, in particular the climate of uncertainty that prevailed following Suharto's May 1998 resignation. Groups that had enjoyed privileged access to power and resources under Suharto worried at how they might maintain their advantage; others sought to advance their own position (Bertrand 2004; Sidel 2006; van Klinken 2007).

The uncertainty of transition was experienced everywhere, whereas large-scale communal violence took place in five specific sites. Evidently then, the second level of context – local particularities – also mattered. In general terms, these particularities were a local economy unusually reliant on state resources, in a location with a relatively even religious demographic. Sidel (2006) quantifies the religious dimension of such vulnerability, observing that each of the sites of religious violence fell within the range of a 30-85 per cent Muslim population. (According to the 2000 census, Indonesia's overall population was 88 per cent Muslim and 9 per cent Christian.) This admittedly broad range is significant because it indicates the presence of a significant religious minority. The economic features of this context, on the other hand, have been most specifically articulated by van Klinken (2007), who proposes a vulnerability index derived from provincial workforce statistics. His index multiplies the rate of recent deagrarianization by the percentage of the non-agricultural population employed as civil servants, with a higher figure for either thus suggesting greater vulnerability. The index attributes high vulnerability to each of the five sites where large-scale communal violence occurred, but also produces several false positives – highly-ranked provinces that did not experience violent conflict. None of these false positive provinces fall within the range of religious composition Sidel proposes, however. In combination, therefore,

the two factors correspond precisely to the five provinces where violence took place (Davidson 2009).

The national and local-level elements of this enabling context are outlined below.

An Uncertain National Transition

When President Suharto was forced to resign in May 1998 in the face of escalating popular protests, few of the dictator's closest associates went with him. In a televised address announcing his departure, Suharto handed power to his trusted protege, Vice President B.J. Habibie. Habibie was next in line for the presidency under the Indonesian constitution, but few protestors would have considered him to be markedly more democratic in outlook than Suharto. Nevertheless, his ascension to the presidency split the protest movement. Some remained implacably opposed to Habibie as a New Order holdover. With no obvious alternative candidate, however, many preferred to give the newly installed president a chance. With the authoritarian era parliament still in place and Habibie as president, Indonesia thus found itself in a situation in which leaders drawn from the authoritarian regime decided upon the design of the country's democratic reforms, with only limited participation from the protest movement (Malley 2009:137). In the longer term, this situation constrained the extent and substance of the reform program. But in the immediate aftermath of Suharto's resignation these circumstances counter-intuitively led the old guard to race to implement previously antithetical reforms. Only by doing so could they hope to pursue a degree of democratic legitimacy and thereby secure their own political survival (Crouch 2010).

The pace of reform during Habibie's presidency stood in stark contrast to the years of authoritarian rule under Suharto. Fifty laws were passed in just eighteen months under Habibie, almost half as many as were passed in the preceding three decades (Anwar 2010:103). In his first days as president alone, Habibie took steps to revoke some of the most visible pillars of authoritarianism (Crouch 2010:27). He freed two of the regime's most prominent political prisoners and foreshadowed the release of other dissidents; announced the impending relaxation of restrictions on a free press and the possibility for banned publications to return to print; anticipated amendment of the anti-subversion law, which was in fact eventually repealed; removed some of the most reviled members of Suharto's cabinet; and allowed for moves to commence towards the opening of political competition through genuinely democratic elections.

Amidst this rapid change, two areas of reform in particular are generally identified to have contributed to the local level uncertainties that became part of the enabling context for large-scale conflict. The first was the fundamental transformation of Indonesia's electoral system. When Habibie rose to the presidency, parliaments at national and local level throughout the country were constituted from just three regime-approved parties, sitting alongside military appointees. Opposition parties faced many restrictions, including the vetting of their candidates before they were allowed to stand, and hence most parliaments were dominated by the regime's own electoral vehicle, Golkar. To replace these parliaments, Habibie announced an accelerated timetable to bring forward fresh elections from 2002 to mid 1999, with a new presidential election to be held shortly thereafter. The new legal framework did not make as far-reaching changes to the form of the elections as might be anticipated, as the authoritarian-era parliament rejected a proposal to switch from a proportional to a plurality-based system of district representation (King 2000:101-3). Nevertheless, more than 40 newly constituted

parties were able to contest the polls, at the same time as the number of seats reserved for military appointees were halved. With so many new parties and the previously dominant Golkar tarred by its association with authoritarianism, many Golkar politicians chose to switch their allegiances (van Klinken 2005). Great uncertainty prevailed over how the polls would pan out.

The second key area of reform that turned out to bear implications for violent communal conflict was decentralization. Under Suharto the state had been highly centralized. Most revenues accrued to the central government, with local governments playing the primary role of implementing policy decisions taken in Jakarta. The central government also retained the final say in the selection of local heads of government. (Even so, the district head position was often rigorously contested at local level, as even earmarked funds created opportunities for patronage.) Far-reaching decentralization legislation passed in May 1999 significantly reconfigured these relations. Under these laws, just six core areas of government were reserved for the central level. Regions also gained a new share of revenue from their national resources, and local parliaments were granted the final say over who was to be elected as governor and district head. Much as these laws amounted to a 'radical' program of decentralization (Malley 2009:139), the laws themselves were not the main contributors to the uncertainty that became salient to violent communal conflict. After all, their passage through parliament took place months after the conflicts in Poso, Maluku and West Kalimantan had already commenced; moreover, the precise contents of the legislation was rarely at the forefront of public discourse on post-authoritarian reform (Smith 2008:217). Instead, it was the widespread expectation that there would be change at local level that created uncertainty, an expectation that arose even before the initial drafts of the decentralization laws had been written. As Malley (2009:141-143) outlines, local protest movements had started to pressure for reforms almost immediately after Suharto stepped down, even if these movements called their demands by other names. Such movements pressured for the removal of unpopular local leaders, lobbied to retain a greater share of their resource wealth, and campaigned for the right to form new districts and provinces.

Increasing the potential for such heightened uncertainty to become an enabling context for violent conflict, these developments took place during a period in which Indonesia's security forces were temporarily weakened (van Klinken 2007). Bouchier (1999) identifies three core reasons for their lapse in strength. First, the security forces were placed on the back foot by multiple blows to their public image. They attracted criticism for their failure to maintain order during the final weeks of Suharto's rule, when Jakarta and several other cities were struck by riots. The newly free press also carried extensive reportage regarding past atrocities under authoritarianism. Compounding the mood of antagonism against them, the security forces twice fired into crowds of protesting students in Jakarta in 1998, with the second incident coming six months after Suharto had stepped down. Consequently, the armed forces became a persistent focus of the continuing mobilization of protest movements. The pressure exerted as a result, Bouchier observes, was sufficiently concerted to motivate both the armed forces commander and President Habibie himself to apologize publicly for such past excesses. Second, the financial crisis brought about a sharp decrease in the security forces' purchasing power, affecting their military capacity and demoralizing local commands. Third, the unity of the security forces was much damaged by internal power struggles and the requirement for each local command to raise much of its own operational funds. So apparent was the effect of such disunity on the early performance of the security forces in Maluku that van Klinken (2001:8) questions 'whether the very term 'armed forces' was a fig leaf that covered a far less coherent reality'. Disunity was further aggravated when the police were established as a

separate force from the military in April 1999. Thereafter, the response to serious violence on occasion was slowed by bickering over lines of command and the procedures for police to request military assistance, with some military commanders seemingly motivated as much by a desire to see the police embarrassed as to intervene to prevent conflict.

Compounding these factors, the security forces' capacity to respond to each large-scale conflict was impaired by the simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises from Aceh to East Timor. Such was the shortage of available forces during this period, Kammen (2003) observes, that artillery, engineering and cavalry battalions were deployed to keep the peace in what would have normally been an infantry role. Indeed, Crouch (2010:249) contends that the Maluku conflict might have been contained long before it reached its peak had the security forces been able to put sufficient troops on the ground during its early stages.

Inter-Religious Competition

The first of the local-level elements of the enabling context was Poso's demographic composition. The administrative borders of Poso district changed twice during the conflict, but in each configuration its Muslim population fell within the 30-85 per cent range that Sidel (2006:190) observes to correlate with communal conflict incidence. The relative parity of Muslim and Christian communities in Poso reflected the twin influences of twentieth century proselytization and migration. This relative parity in turn led national level competition and suspicion between different religious communities to be mirrored in Poso. By no means was each religious community in Poso poised for violent conflict in 1998, but when riots broke out, this history of competition meant that violent confrontation along religious lines was more readily imaginable.

Religious Communities in Poso

Christianity was first introduced to Poso by a Dutch Reformed Church mission in the late nineteenth century. From the outset, the mission in Poso focused on the district's highland population, now termed the indigenous Pamona ethnic group. In part, this focus reflected the political circumstances of the time. The mission's establishment in 1892 preceded any Dutch administrative presence in the area by several years, and assisted the Dutch colonial government both to pre-empt the spread of Islam from coastal to highland populations and to ward off possible rival claims of other colonial powers (Schrauwers 2000:46). The focus on the indigenous highland population was also consistent with the theological currents of the mission's parent church. Their contemporary missionary strategy was to bring into being a series of 'ethnic churches', in which Christianity would become part of the cultural identity of a single people (James and Schrauwers 2003:62-3). The mission's founder, Albert C. Kruyt, thus sought to create a cadre of educated Pamona to form the core of the local church. Educated in mission schools, these Pamona were to staff local pastoral, teaching and civil service positions, displacing even other Christianized ethnic groups. From the very outset then, the Protestant mission and later the church became a path for indigenous Pamona to access state resources (Schrauwers 2000:77-82). As a result, Aragon (2001:52) observes, by the time the Japanese displaced the Dutch from Indonesia during World War II, 'most highlanders were more closely linked, both economically and socially, to the Protestant missions and to the Dutch colonial regime than they were to coastal Muslims and to urban independence movements.'

Throughout the colonial period, the Christian church in Poso remained under foreign missionary control. The internment of these missionaries by occupying Japanese forces during the Second World War saw an abrupt transition to indigenous control, however, eventually leading to the establishment of the modern day Central Sulawesi Christian Church (GKST) in 1947 (Coté 2006). Although the church now has a province-wide network of congregations, it retains its headquarters to the present day in the small Poso highland town of Tentena. The GKST continues to encompass the overwhelming majority of Christian believers in Poso, much as there are now many other Christian churches in Poso. Other congregations include a small Catholic population, followers of the Salvation Army, Pentecostals and various evangelical groups.

Whereas Christianity in Poso is predominantly associated with highland indigenous populations, Islam first spread among the district's lowland coastal peoples. Although population movements have blurred this division somewhat, a rough distinction between highland Christians and coastal Muslims remains to the present day. Islam's presence in Poso's narrow coastal strip predates the arrival of Dutch missionaries (Aragon 2007:47), with the religion having spread to the district through trade and educational networks, the arrival of Muslim migrants from other areas, and through the authority over these areas of Islamized regional kingdoms (Lumira 2001: 25-27; Mamar et al 2000: 35-36). No single organization analogous to the GKST can rightly lay claim to encompass the majority of Poso's present day Muslims, but the traditionalist Al-Khairaat organization is generally held to have the largest following. Established in 1930 and headquartered in Palu, Al-Khairaat maintains a network of schools throughout Central Sulawesi along with smaller networks in nine other provinces (Sangaji 2002; Aragon 2005). Various other Muslim organizations lay claim to smaller followings in Poso, including the modernist Muhammadiyah, which is Indonesia's second largest Islamic organization, and the South Sulawesi based Darud Dakwah wal-Irsyad.

Migration, Re-districting and Religious Balance

The relative proportion of Muslims and Christians in Poso has undergone several profound shifts, from relative parity (around the 1950s) to a clear Muslim majority (since at least the mid 1980s) and most recently a clear Christian majority (since 2004).¹ Migration and changes to the district's administrative boundaries have been the two main factors that have driven these shifts. The relative proportion of each religious community is salient to inter-religious competition, because it is one factor that affects local political control, and by extension the capture of state resources by patronage networks.

Table 3. Percentages of religious composition in Poso district.

	1989	1997	1999* (Morowali excised)	2005** (Tojo Una-Una excised)
Muslim	62	63	56	37
Christian	36	35	41	58

Notes: * Figures derived from 1997 data, removing sub-districts that became part of Morowali District
 ** Tojo Una-Una District was excised in 2004.

¹ Demographic figures are not available for the 1950s, but Sangaji (2004) estimates Poso's religious composition based on the pattern of voting for religious parties in the 1955 election.

Migration had a particularly marked effect on Poso's population in the 1970s and 1980s. New arrivals during this period significantly increased the extent of the Muslim majority in Poso, and might even have shifted the demographic balance from a Protestant majority to a Muslim majority. (The uncertainty arises from the unavailability of data for the 1970s). One important source of arrivals was the construction of the Trans Sulawesi highway, which spurred the entry of economic migrants into Poso. The central government's transmigration program was another major contributor, in which villagers from Java, Bali and Nusa Tenggara were resettled to more sparsely-populated outer islands. Most transmigrants in the eastern part of Central Sulawesi where Poso is located were Muslims or Hindus, although some Christians also participated (Aragon 2001). By the mid-1990s, transmigrants accounted for a remarkable 20 per cent (approximately) of Poso's overall population and as much as half of the population in some sub-districts (Sangaji 2002, Aragon 2007). Even so, transmigrants' numbers may have been matched by economic migrant arrivals in Poso in the 1980s and 1990s (Aragon 2007:50). Aragon suggests the majority of economic migrants originated from Muslim communities in South Sulawesi, notably the Bugis, Makasar and Mandar ethnic groups. Some Bugis Muslims settled in Christian-dominated upland areas, but most economic migrants settled in areas in which their co-religionists constituted a majority (Sangaji 2002).

As profound as the effects of migration have been, two changes to the district's administrative boundaries have had a more sudden and far-reaching impact on the overall demographic balance of Poso. Each of these boundary changes took place after the end of authoritarian rule, during the years of violent conflict in Poso. In each case, majority Muslim areas were excised from Poso to form new districts in their own right, under a process known as '*pemekaran*' (literally 'blossoming' of new administrative areas). Nation-wide, *pemekaran* divisions have seen the number of districts in Indonesia almost double since 1998 to a current total of around 500 (Fitriani et al 2005). The first division in late 1999 – to form Morowali district from Poso's southeastern territories – at a stroke reduced the proportion of Muslims in Poso from 63 per cent to 56 per cent, whereas the proportion of Christians rose from 35 per cent to 41 per cent. When Tojo Una-Una district was formed in 2004, excising coastal territory in the eastern part of Poso, the proportions of religious communities were effectively inverted. Christians thereafter constituted a 58 per cent majority, whereas Muslims made up 37 per cent of the population. This inversion has led at least one observer to describe these *pemekaran* boundary changes as gerrymandering by Christians to gain electoral control of Poso (Sidel 2008:55). The formation of these new districts more likely reflects the political ambitions of those hoping to govern each new area, however. The approval of the rump Poso district for each division, after all, was granted at a time when Muslims controlled both the district head position and the district parliament.

Such far-reaching demographic shifts, whether at the local level or in the district taken as a whole, have undoubtedly generated tensions in Poso. Aragon (2001, 2007), for instance, illustrates with particular clarity the anxiety experienced by indigenous populations over their place in Poso as the proportion of migrants increased and these new arrivals progressively expanded their economic and political status. Nevertheless, we should be cautious in assuming too direct a link between demographic change or associated tensions and subsequent violence. There is no close correlation between the timing of major population changes and the occurrence of violence, for example. Furthermore, the proportion of Muslims in Poso remained relatively constant for over a decade prior to the start of the conflict, after exceeding 60 per cent of the population by the mid 1980s. Nor did the sudden shift to a Christian majority population in 2004 result in an upsurge in violence, even though the shift swiftly saw Muslim incumbents lose their control of local politics. Within eighteen months of

this shift a Christian party gained the most seats in the local parliament and a Christian had been elected as Poso's district head.

Broader Religious Competition and Suspicion

Such demographic change in Poso, and the tensions these changes produced, took place within a broader national context of increasing mutual suspicion and competition between Muslim and Christian religious communities in Indonesia. A degree of this tension arose from matters directly related to religious practice, such as the construction of places of worship and attempts by each religion to expand its community of followers. But observers also highlight the effect on inter-religious competition of the politics of representation and access to the state (Hefner 1993; Bertrand 2004: 72-89; Sidel 2006: 45-68). The Christian minority initially enjoyed disproportionately privileged access to senior bureaucratic and military positions in the early decades of Suharto's regime, only for this position to be reversed in the 1990s. The increasing avenues of representation for Muslims in the last decade of Suharto's rule are generally held to have heightened religious tensions in Indonesia, and to have contributed to a series of urban riots from 1994-1997. Nevertheless, such tensions were not universal – Arifianto (2009) observes that scholarly accounts written before the full extent of post-Suharto violent conflict was known tended to emphasize the harmonious nature of Muslim-Christian relations.

The early years of the Suharto regime were a period of contrasting fortunes in different spheres for Indonesia's major religions. On the one hand, the regime encouraged religious adherence as a buffer against communism, meaning that each religion gained many additional followers as well as support for religious education. But each religion also faced increasing restrictions in the political sphere. Religious parties were allowed to contest the first Suharto-era elections in 1971, but were thereafter forced to amalgamate to form just two regime-approved political parties. In another controversial measure, social and political organizations were required in 1984 to adopt the state secular ideology of Pancasila as their sole 'basis', rather than religious principles (Hefner 1993:3-4, 8-12; Bertrand 2004:76). Such measures applied equally to each religion. But Christians enjoyed an informal advantage in the disproportionate number of Christians among senior military and cabinet appointments. Such positions were prized by each community for the potential for senior appointees to afford their communities privileged access to state resources, as well as a degree of protection from state repression (Bertrand 2004:81). Although religious identity was not always the determining factor in filling these posts, Bertrand suggests that pious Muslims were deliberately excluded during the early Suharto era. With communism crushed by the 1965-6 massacres, he notes, the regime saw Islam as the greatest potential challenge to its hold on power (Bertrand 2004:82).

Much as Islam was excluded from political representation in the 1970s and 1980s, its social influence continued to strengthen during this period. State development policies increased levels of education across the community, closing the gap in educational attainment between Muslims and Christians and giving rise to an expanding Muslim middle class. Forces seeking to increase the proportion of Muslims who were pious also benefited from state support for religious education and proselytization (Sidel 2006:50-56). The eventual result was an Islamic revival in Indonesia, which by the late 1980s brought about a reversal of state policy on the position of Islam within the Indonesian polity. Some manifestations of this reversal were symbolic, such as the 1991 hajj pilgrimage made by President Suharto, generally considered

to have been a nominal Muslim, and his adoption thereafter of 'Muhammad' as a prefix to his name (Steenbrink 1998:329). But this reversal was also importantly embodied in the December 1990 formation of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), as a new think-tank and patronage vehicle for modernist Muslims. Although the initiative to form ICMI came from non-government Muslims, they sought the involvement of the upper echelons of government from the outset, with the result that the organization was headed by Suharto protegee Habibie, at the time a cabinet minister. Through such rapprochement with the government, these Muslims gained new freedom to participate in public discourse and increase access for Muslims to the bureaucracy. At the same time, ICMI also served the regime's aims of at once establishing a new vehicle to control Islam while also seeking to increase the regime's electoral support among pious Muslims (Hefner 1993).² The influence of Habibie and ICMI, and its implications for political representation, was reflected in the composition of the penultimate cabinet of Suharto's regime (1993-1998). No Christians were retained in important positions, whereas a number of key ministries were to be headed by Muslims with ICMI connections (Bertrand 2004: 88; Arifianto 2009:84). Bertrand observes that this visible success for ICMI further enhanced the organizations's prestige: Muslim bureaucrats across the country newly swelled its ranks, while the circulation of its daily *Republika* newspaper and *Ummat* magazine rapidly increased.

This shift in the respective influence and representation of Islam and Christianity increased religious tensions during the final decade of Suharto's rule. Without access to the centre of power, some Christians became anxious at how the nation may change if the influence of Muslims were to increase further. Equally, certain exclusivist Muslims were emboldened by Islam's new successes to push more assertively for an Islamic political agenda (Bertrand 2004:89-90). Tensions associated with these twin dynamics are widely believed to have been a contributing factor in two sequences of riots in the final years of authoritarian rule. The first set of riots involved several disturbances in East Timor and the nearby island of Flores from 1994-1995. Each riot saw mostly Catholic indigenous populations attack Muslim migrants, many of whom were Bugis settlers from Sulawesi (Bertrand 2004:94-100; Steenbrink 1998). The second set of riots took place from 1996-1997, with the earlier incidents in a series of towns in Java, after which riots also took place in the outer island provincial capitals of Banjarmasin and Makassar (Sidel 2006:68-105; Bertrand 2004:100-102; Purdey 2006:38-76). Not all of these riots could be labelled unambiguously as episodes of conflict between religious communities. The political circumstances of East Timor were a complicating contextual factor in some of the first set of riots, whereas a number of the second set of riots were also animated by hostility to ethnic Chinese, and the Banjarmasin riot was also linked to the general election. But elements of the selection of targets during the riots, such as the burning of places of worship, indicated the salience of religious tensions. In some instances, such influence of religious tension was evident despite the precipitating incident having no direct connection to the targeted religion (Bertrand 2004:101).

No comparable violent incidents took place in Poso during the final years of Suharto's rule. Indeed, the district's peaceful reputation led to its main Christian town, Tentena, being chosen to host the 24th anniversary convention of the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) in January 1997 when other locations in Sulawesi had been considered too unsafe (Schrauwers 2000:226), a choice that now appears ironic to say the least. Nevertheless, Poso was by no

² Liddle (1996) in particular emphasizes the top-down nature of ICMI, arguing that 'ICMI should be seen primarily not as a mass political movement but rather as an instrument designed and used by President Suharto for his own purposes'.

means an exception to the increasing influence of ICMI. The incumbent district head in Poso throughout the 1990s, Arief Patanga, was chairperson of the local branch of ICMI, as was his newly elected replacement in 1999 (Sangaji 2004). Although no one provides specific details, various observers suggest that Patanga favoured other members of the organization in bureaucratic appointments and business relations (Harley 2004).

Communal Economic Competition

The final element of the enabling context was the nature of the local economy in the sites in which violence occurred. As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, van Klinken (2007) attempts the most specific articulation of this context, using two economic proxies for vulnerability: recent deagrarianization and a high percentage of the non-agricultural population employed as civil servants. It is not possible to analyse Poso's economy in these specific terms, as the provincial data that van Klinken employs is not available at the district level for Poso. But the broader point that van Klinken seeks to proxy is one of contestation for a pool of state resources that are disproportionately central to the local economy. Poso district exemplified this broader pattern. The district lacked the presence of major industry or a developed private sector that might have provided an alternative to government jobs and contracts for those not working on the land. In the context of Poso's demographic composition, state resources thus became the target of intense competition between rival patronage networks organized along communal lines. This urban competition mirrored tensions arising from inequalities in the agricultural sector. There, indigenous highlanders remained concentrated in subsistence agriculture, whereas migrants were more likely to be farming productive cash crops (Aragon 2001).

Numerous observers have outlined the prominent role of communal patronage networks in Poso's urban economy (Harley 2004, Aditjondro 2004, Sangaji 2004, Aragon 2007). In Sangaji's (2004) words, as the economy 'centred on the government, it was businessmen close to the government who prospered'. Such closeness could not simply be bought through illicit payments, although these were often necessary. Instead, Aragon (2007:39-44) characterizes Poso's system of rent-seeking as constituting 'non-market corruption', in which patronage operated according to communal alliances rather than being based solely upon simple material incentives. She observes that this system gave rise to 'unequal opportunity buying', in which everyone typically paid to capture resources, but where 'the same sums of money could not always buy the same slice'. In practice, such 'non-market corruption' doubtless worked through multiple webs of only partially overlapping alliances. The most powerful position within this overall system, however, was that of the district head. For the decade prior to the commencement of the conflict, the district head position was occupied by an indigenous Muslim, skewing the balance of power among local patronage networks accordingly. The same accusations of unequal buying had also surfaced when a Christian had occupied the district head post, however, as had been the case for much of the 1980s. When the conflict began, less than a year remained before rival urban patronage networks would effectively contest anew their relative ascendancy through the 1999 district head election.

As important as communal competition between rival urban patronage networks was to the initiation of violence (as I will outline in the next chapter), most people in Poso worked in the agricultural sector. Agriculture in fact consistently contributed roughly half of Poso's overall gross domestic product throughout the Suharto era (Sangaji 2002). In this sector, one of the main drivers of communal tensions in the years immediately prior to the onset of violent

conflict in Poso was cacao, the source of cocoa. Virtually unknown in Poso in the 1980s, the crop underwent a planting boom during the 1990s, growing from 600 hectares in 1990 to reach overall plantings of 10,500 hectares by 1998 (BPS Poso 1990, 1998; Sangaji 2002). As had been the case with other cash crops, migrants were generally swifter to adapt to cacao than were indigenous farmers (Aragon 2001). In particular, Bugis migrants are renowned to have driven the expansion of cacao plantings in Poso and elsewhere in Sulawesi. Prior to Sulawesi's cacao boom, many Bugis had worked on cacao plantations in Sabah in Malaysia, and remitted knowledge of the crop and capital back to Indonesia through ethnic networks (Akiyama and Nishio 1991:101-102). Cacao's profitability could give rise to tensions and jealousies even under normal circumstances. In the late 1990s, however, cacao's potential to magnify inequalities between different communities within the agricultural sector was greatly increased. The combination of higher global prices and the collapse of the rupiah's value in the 1997 Asian financial crisis caused cacao's rupiah price to skyrocket, making the crop a goldmine for those who had planted it in time. Poso was not the only district in Central Sulawesi to experience this phenomenon – other districts that did not experience large-scale communal violence also underwent the same cacao boom (Li 2002).³ Nevertheless, as in the urban sector, communal tensions in Poso's countryside appear to have been elevated just prior to the onset of violence.

Conclusion: On Causation

Much as the salience of the factors outlined in this chapter to the onset of violence in Poso constitutes a scholarly consensus, the explanatory power of this line of argument is not without limitations. In particular, it is important to reiterate that this context did not make violence inevitable in any of the sites where it occurred: the context enabled rather than caused the onset of conflict. Any causal explanation of the occurrence of violence must include the role of contingency and human agency, and with it the possibility to assign individual responsibility for acts perpetrated during the conflict. As van Klinken (2001:17) writes with reference to the Maluku conflict, 'No explanation that ignores agency can do justice to the victims of this war.'

The degree of geographic specificity of this argument – the provincial level – provides a further caution against attributing a causal role to this context. Most of Central Sulawesi did not experience large-scale violence – Poso district was an exception rather than the rule. Indeed, even within Poso much of the violence was concentrated within certain sub-districts. Davidson (2009:348) eloquently makes the same point for the conflicts in specific districts in West and Central Kalimantan provinces, each of which has a land area greater than that of Java: 'No one would consider satisfactory an analytical framework that pinpoints the island of Java as being susceptible to violent conflict. Standards should be no less for the regions.'

Scholars have also highlighted the absence or underemphasis on study of non-violent cases in the development of this argument. Aspinall (2008:569-570) calls for the study of the false positive locations indicated by van Klinken's and Sidel's approaches 'to understand overall patterns and develop general models'. This approach might also be extended to sub-provincial variation of the sort mentioned in the previous paragraph. Varshney (2008:347-8) makes a similar point, explicitly drawing on political science case study methodology, arguing that non-violent cases are required to test the role of this enabling context and investigate whether other unobserved factors might in fact differentiate peace from violence.

³ See also Acciaioli (2001) on Bugis migration in the Lindu area of Central Sulawesi.

A VULNERABLE DISTRICT?

Finally, as outlined in the introduction, the initial enabling context cannot explain the specific dynamics of a particular violent conflict. Interests that precede the onset of violence remain as one influence on dynamics during a protracted conflict, and I will refer back to this chapter as appropriate throughout this book. But the production of violence during the Poso conflict requires separate explanation, because it was also animated by factors, processes and actions bearing no straightforward relationship to this context. The next four chapters now turn to the task of explaining the dynamics of violence in Poso.

CHAPTER THREE POLITICAL VIOLENCE

In December 1998, Poso's reputation as a peaceful region was shattered. After several days of escalating skirmishes, the district's capital town experienced a large-scale riot on 28 December. Large rival crowds of Christians and Muslims clashed, before Christians were forced back, allowing arson attacks to proceed unrestrained. No one was killed, but at least 130 buildings were burned and 80 people were injured. Although the adversaries in this violence were divided by their religious identity, the riot's link to religion appeared ambiguous. No one attacked a place of worship in Poso, nor were local religious leaders to be seen among the members of the crowds.

Much as this violence was exceptional in the district's recent history up to that point, Poso was just one of several eastern Indonesian towns to experience riots in late 1998. On the island of Sumba, clashes in Waikabubak town on 5 November between rival clan groups left at least 26 people dead (Vel 2001). In two days of rioting in Kupang from 30 November - 1 December, crowds of Christians attacked Muslim neighbourhoods in the city, destroying ten mosques and numerous shops and buildings (Bertrand 2004). Worse was to follow early the next year in Ambon, the capital of Maluku province and in Sambas, a remote district in West Kalimantan. Urban rioting in Ambon on 19 January 1999 quickly escalated to widespread violent conflict during several weeks across numerous nearby islands, resulting in many deaths (HRW 1999). In Sambas, Malay and later Dayak attacks on Madurese migrants left hundreds dead and resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Madurese from the district (Davidson 2008).

The December 1998 riot in Poso then was not distinct in its magnitude – if anything it was comparatively small among contemporary disturbances in eastern Indonesia. But amongst these sites of violence, Poso would eventually stand out (along with Ambon) as a site where violence recurred persistently. In fact, as we now know, by the time attacks in Poso ceased in 2007, the district had become the site of the most persistent inter-religious violence in post-Suharto Indonesia. This chapter focuses on the beginnings of recurrent violence in Poso, covering the period from the first riot in Poso in December 1998 until a second, larger riot in April 2000. Clashes between crowds of Muslims and Christians again escalated over the course of several days in this April 2000 riot, in a pattern similar to the December violence. The unrest culminated in widespread arson and tit-for-tat murders. Seven people were killed, including three Muslim youths shot dead when police aimed their guns directly into a riotous crowd.

How can we explain the initiation of violence in Poso, and its initial recurrence in the April 2000 violence? Were there antecedents in this violence of the more severe disturbances that would follow these urban riots? These will be the central questions of this chapter. We have addressed part of the explanation of the initiation of violence in the previous chapter, by exploring the features of the district and of Indonesia's democratic transition that made Poso vulnerable to violence. In this chapter, I will shift focus to the violent events themselves, and in particular the importance to their escalation of the political benefits that local actors derived from these two riots.

A focus on political interests privileges the role of elite organization in the occurrence of these riots. Adopting this approach places me in agreement with most scholars of Poso, who

have also highlighted the actions of local political actors in instigating violence.¹ But in broader terms, to focus on elite instigation is to take a position in the debate on the role of organization in riot occurrence. Most scholars acknowledge that all riots involve at least some degree of organization. Where opinions differ regards what degree of organization is typical and the importance of this organization to the occurrence of a riot and the escalation of violence within it. Donald Horowitz (2001) is among the more influential scholars to interpret riots to be typically relatively spontaneous events, thereby affording organization a much less prominent role than I do in this chapter. In his work on the deadly ethnic riot, Horowitz emphasizes the primary importance of the depth of feeling underpinning a riotous event, arguing that ‘passion’ can readily substitute for deficiencies of organization. This model attributes particular significance to the precipitating event, such that Horowitz posits (2001:322) that ‘there seems to be a rough correlation between the significance of the precipitants and the magnitude of the ensuing violence’. Where organization is observed to be present, directing violence within a riot, Horowitz argues that this organization is more likely to be a product of the violence than vice versa. To wit, actors that perceive their interests to be served by the initial violence may then organize to attempt to replicate the violence for further gain.

Horowitz’s model does correspond to some features of the riots in Poso. Both the December 1998 and April 2000 riots began with trivial precipitants and involved what Horowitz, with his exclusive focus on deadly events, would classify as minor violence. Where Horowitz (2001:9) posits a common fatality count of a few dozen to a hundred people in an ethnic riot, just seven people were killed across the two riots considered in this chapter. Moreover, superficially consistent with Horowitz’s contention that organization typically will emerge in response to violence, the April 2000 riot appeared very much as an orchestrated repeat of the December disturbance intended to advance political interests. As I will set out below, the occurrence of the April riot was predicted publicly in advance, and its precipitating incident was contrived by means of proven subterfuge. But Horowitz’s emphasis on spontaneity and depth of feeling obscures the important and visible role that organized interests played in producing the escalation of violence within each of these riots. Neither would have escalated to full-blown riots without the role of these organized interests, necessitating a model that places greater emphasis on organization than does Horowitz.

The American political scientist Paul Brass provides such a model, developed out of his scholarship on Hindu-Muslim riots in Northern India. Brass’s model forms the core of a virtual consensus position on riot production in India (Chandra 2006; Berenschot 2009:415). Brass (1997:14) characterizes Hindu-Muslim riots as ‘partly organized, partly spontaneous forms of collective action designed to appear or made to appear afterwards as spontaneous expressions of popular feeling.’ Although part-spontaneous, it is organization that is key to the occurrence of the riots that Brass analyses. In particular, he identifies the operation of ‘institutionalized riot systems’, networks of individuals of diverse occupations who produce riots through a pronounced division of labour. At the core of such systems are local politicians, who seek to produce riots at moments when polarizing the electorate would be to their advantage (Brass 2003).² These systems prepare the ground for riots, through the role of ‘fire tenders’, who maintain the salience of a discourse of communal divide by promoting the interpretation of specific incidents as instances of Hindu-Muslim conflict. Their members

¹ See Aragon (2001:77; 2005:5); Lasahido et al (2003:55); van Klinken (2005:83-84); Lembaga Lintas Sara (2000:5).

² See also Tambiah (1996) and Wilkinson (2004) on the routinization of riots as a form of political competition in India.

then produce riots, as ‘conversion specialists’ seize on such incidents at moments of political opportunity to mobilize supporters to initiate a riot. Chief among their core supporters are ‘riot specialists’, namely criminals on the payroll or otherwise beholden to the riot system who perpetrate the initial acts of violence. The role of conversion specialists and riot specialists is a significant point of difference with Horowitz’s model – it is their agential action that makes the difference to riot occurrence rather than the nature of the precipitating event, which may be entirely trivial. Once a riot is initiated in this way, Brass argues, diverse interests are then drawn into the fray, comprising the spontaneous element of the riot. The final phase of riot production is then the struggle for control of the event’s interpretation, as those responsible for producing the violence seek to ensure that its audience derives the appropriate message from the event, and simultaneously strive to displace blame from themselves by depicting the riot as a spontaneous response to transgression by the target group.

I argue in this chapter that the December 1998 and April 2000 riots in Poso were each produced by means of a process greatly resembling the operation of riot systems set out by Brass. The riots are thus the first example from the conflict of the crucial contribution of small groups of men to the occurrence and escalation of violence. In anticipation of a coming election for the head of Poso’s local government, members of patronage networks connected to local candidates drove the escalation of violence in the December riot. The role of political actors was even more pronounced in the April 2000 riot, an event that almost certainly would not have occurred at all but for the need of members of a defeated local political faction to contrive a violent episode to demonstrate their power. In each riot, core organizers took actions to mobilize more and more actors to take part, both by utilizing their own network of supporters but also by propagating rumours of an act of aggression by religious others. Organizers of each riot also took visible steps to control its interpretation, most notably in announcing the political meaning of the April 2000 riot through the local press even before it had taken place.

A common criticism of Brass’s model, and of other instrumentalist models of violence, has been the implication that ordinary community members participate because they are duped by elites into believing that inter-religious issues are at stake. Brass addresses this possible implication by positing that crowd members join riots on account of diverse personal motivations. A similar point has been made by Kalyvas (2006) in the context of civil war, who proposes that local actors take part on account of diverse micro-cleavages, an explanation that might apply equally to ordinary community members in riots. Other scholars have proposed slightly different mechanisms to account for widespread riot participation. With specific reference to India, Berenschot (2009) argues that organizers are persuasive because of their ability to mediate everyday access to the state for community members, such that community members participate in riots to ‘maintain relations’ with these organizers. Aragon (2001) has made a similar argument specifically for Poso, highlighting the customary role of local leaders to secure external economic resources for their communities.

These two Poso riots do expose a different limitation of Brass’s model, however. His political model of riot production well predicts the identity of the key actors in these riots and explains the mechanics of the riots’ production. But as I will outline through examination of the role of specific key actors, the occurrence of violence also leads them to reorder their priorities and respond to the unpredictable actions of rival groups. As a result, pre-existing political interests, although important, do not capture the full range of these actors’ motivations and actions.

Local Political Competition – The Search for a New District Head

Competition for the post of Poso district head has been central to political explanations of the December 1998 riot. As the head of the local administration and the central government's representative at district level, the district head enjoyed control of local patronage networks. Across Indonesia, local competition to capture the position had often been intense, even under the centralized Suharto regime (Malley 1999). The position was to become even more prized in the immediate post-Suharto era, as decentralization legislation enacted in 1999 and implemented formally from January 2001 devolved greater authority and control of a larger share of revenue to the local level.

In Poso in 1998, the incumbent district head was Arief Patanga, a local Muslim man originally from the coastal Tojo sub-district in the eastern part of the district. Prior to becoming district head, he had been deputy chairperson of the Central Sulawesi provincial parliament. First elected to the post of district head in 1989, Patanga had reportedly greatly enriched himself in the intervening years by installing relatives in strategic posts in the local bureaucracy (Aragon 2007). By the end of the Suharto regime, Patanga was nearing the end of his second five-year term, and consequently could not contest the elections to be held for the post in 1999. Consequently, Patanga tendered his 'letter of resignation' in mid-December 1998, but this was merely a formal administrative requirement, and one that did not take immediate effect. His term in office did not end until June 1999, meaning the search for a successor was only in its very early stages when the December 1998 riot took place (Lasahido et al 2003:40).

Indonesia's electoral and local government laws were swiftly reformed after Suharto's resignation, but the timing of the 1999 Poso district head race meant that the election was conducted under a hybrid of the old and the new rules. Under Suharto, the district parliament first sent a list of potential candidates for the post to the provincial governor, who returned to them an approved list of three. The parliament then voted to establish two top-ranked candidates, among whom the Minister of Home Affairs chose the winner. Under this system, the local parliament ranked the candidates in order of preference, but the minister was not bound to accept this ranking and often overturned it. It was under this system that Patanga had won each of his two terms in 1989 and 1994. For the 1999 election, the district parliament would continue to submit a shortlist of candidates to the governor prior to the district parliament vote. The key difference in the hybrid system was that this district-level vote would now definitively establish the winner.³

This hybrid system clearly increased the importance to the outcome of local political struggles. But even the Suharto-era system, in which the central government minister made the final decision, nonetheless had afforded space for district-level political contestation. Malley (1999) observes that instances in which the local parliament 'deviated from the pre-determined script [and thereby refused to give most votes to Jakarta's preferred candidate] were much less rare than one might think', with the result that local factional competition

³ Since these hybrid arrangements, Indonesia has twice changed the system to elect the district head. Under 1999 decentralization legislation, local parties nominated slates of a district head and vice district head, and then selected the winner through a ballot of the district parliament. A new decentralization law in 2004 retained the role of parties in nominating candidates, but altered the election to a direct popular ballot. The first direct elections for district heads were held in mid-2005. In a subsequent modification resulting from a Constitutional Court decision, independent candidates can now also contest district head elections.

sometimes became publicly visible. In the 1994 Poso district head election, for example, the submission of the initial shortlist to the governor was delayed by a long-running dispute between political parties on which other names should accompany the incumbent Patanga on the list (DPRD Poso 1994).⁴ Outside the formal process, various efforts were also made to discredit each of the candidates. Patanga, for instance, faced accusations that he had bribed his way to victory for his first term in office from 1989-1994.⁵ Another attempt to discredit several of the candidates saw allegations surface that the candidates or their families had past associations with Communist-linked organizations.

In fact, the bigger change for the coming election potentially lay in how the parliament that chose the district head in 1999 would be constituted. The Suharto-era district parliament would draw up the shortlist of potential candidates to submit to the governor, but a new parliament elected in a June 1999 legislative election would elect the new district head. New electoral laws (and associated laws on political parties and the composition of parliaments) reduced the share of seats granted to military appointees from 20 per cent to 10 per cent and opened the election up to contestants other than the regime's Golkar party, the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) and the United Development Party (PPP). Under these new laws, 48 parties took part in the June 1999 legislative election.

Again the continuities with the late Suharto period are at least as important as the changes. Golkar's share of the vote declined significantly, but the party still won nineteen of the 36 seats up for election.⁶ Golkar's victory in Poso was typical of its performance in Sulawesi more generally, which remained a Golkar stronghold in the 1999 elections.⁷ The other two New Order parties, PDI-P and PPP, each won five seats.⁸ The remaining seven seats were spread between six different new parties.

The district parliament's official preselection of candidates for district head had not commenced in December 1998, when the riot took place. Nevertheless, most of the likely contenders for the post were already clearly known locally, as most of these men had also contested the most recent district head election in 1994. Among the hopefuls, district secretary Yahya Patiro was regarded as the early front-runner as the district's senior bureaucrat. Patiro was an indigenous Protestant, but both his supporters and opponents acknowledged that Patiro's support base extended beyond just Christians, with some Muslims east of the city also reported to favour him.⁹ Such support from both religious communities was crucial to Patiro's chances, because Christians constituted a demographic minority in Poso at the time. Until 1999, when the Morowali area was excised from Poso to become a separate district, Christians comprised only 35 per cent of the population of the district compared with 63 per cent Muslims; after the excision, Christians accounted for 41 per cent

⁴ See also 'Gubernur Suteng Coret Nama Pelima dan Malik', *Surya*, 15 April 1994.

⁵ 'Skenario Rusuh Merebut Kursi Bupati', *MAL*, Second Week, January 1999, p. 6.

⁶ The remaining four seats went to police and military appointees. In 1997, Golkar had won 27 seats of 31 up for election, with 8 seats reserved for appointees. See Sumono (nd.)

⁷ In the election for the national parliament, Golkar secured at least 43 per cent of the vote in all five provinces in Sulawesi, and more than 50 per cent of the vote in every province in Sulawesi apart from North Sulawesi. The party's national vote was 22.3 per cent. See Aris Ananta et al (2004:259, 265)

⁸ PDI-P (the extra P stands for "*Perjuangan*" [Struggle]) was one faction of the New Order PDI, led by Megawati Soekarnoputri, one of the daughters of Indonesia's first president. Megawati's faction had been unable to participate in the 1997 election, after Soeharto illegally arranged her removal as party chairperson in 1996.

⁹ Interviews with a prominent Muslim resident of Poso, and with former residents of Poso living in Tentena, July 2003.

(versus 56 per cent Muslims).¹⁰ There had also been fewer Christian parliament members than Muslims in every district parliament in Poso since 1977 (Haliadi, Syakir, Mahid and Jamaluddin 2004:117). Patiro (or any other Protestant candidate) could not win if the poll became starkly polarized along religious lines.

As it turned out, among the potential candidates for district head, it was Patiro's reputation that would suffer the most damage from the December 1998 violence. In the end, he did not make it onto the shortlist for the election.

A riot erupts

The December 1998 riot comprised an escalating sequence of small disturbances, which began on Christmas eve and peaked several days later on 28 December. Much of the violence to take place on the first two days may have been largely spontaneous or at most organized ad hoc. Thereafter, rival politically-connected patronage networks organized along religious lines took over, driving the further escalation of violence by mobilizing crowds and directing their actions. The potential for a polarized vote to change the outcome of the coming district head election provides a clear incentive for this violence. But the puzzling aspect of the riot, viewed through this prism, is the key role played by the Protestant figure Herman Parimo, an associate of district head front-runner Yahya Patiro. Parimo clearly mobilized supporters and directed them to take part in clashes, despite the only conceivable result of these actions being to harm the political interests of his patron.

The task of establishing a reliable account of the production of the December riot is greatly complicated by the plethora of claims and counter-claims made concerning the responsible parties, a feature typical to riots which Brass (2003) refers to as blame displacement. Nor are available sources equally informative regarding the identity and actions of Christian and Muslim organizers. Concerning Christian organizers, the 1999 trial judgment in the case of Herman Parimo has proved a crucial document. The document's utility arises from Parimo's apparently naive defence strategy, in which he admitted much of his role in the riot, but argued that his actions were justified. As a result, many of the basic details of the mobilization of crowds of Christians during the riot are preserved in the summaries of testimony in this document. Muslims also organized crowds during this riot, but unfortunately no comparable document exists to outline the mobilization and direction of Muslim crowds. Where possible, I have gleaned some details of the involvement of certain Muslim figures in the riot from their own testimony as recorded in the Parimo decision. But an unavoidable artefact of the available sources is that my discussion of the organization of this riot is skewed to the network underpinning Christian mobilization.

The complexity of interpreting the riot as a whole is encapsulated neatly in the many rival versions even of the precipitating incident, of which each bears different implications for the nature of the fight and the attribution of fault. The riot began with a night-time brawl between two youths – a Christian and a Muslim – in the vicinity of the Darussalam mosque in the city ward of Sayo (See Map 1). It is clear that the Muslim, Ahmad Ridwan, suffered a knife

¹⁰ Catholics, included in the Christian figures above, made up only 0.5 per cent of the population before Morowali was excised (BPS Poso 1999: 141).

wound to his arm at the hands of his assailant, Roy Runtu Bisalemba.¹¹ Beyond that basic fact, various accounts assert that Ridwan was attacked in the mosque itself, or on the verandah of the mosque, or that the fight took place near the mosque after which the wounded Ridwan ran inside, and that Ridwan had been unarmed and taken by surprise or that he had hidden a knife under the carpet of the mosque in expectation of a fight.¹²

In explaining the escalation of violence, of course, the precise details of the initial brawl are not significant. A well-known process in the escalation of riots is for an initial incident to be stripped of its specific context and to be interpreted instead as emblematic of a broader confrontation (Tambiah 1996:81). In this case, any fight between a Christian and a Muslim so close to a mosque (let alone inside one) would always be open to interpretation as a religiously motivated attack and could thus inflame inter-religious tensions. The specifics of the brawl mattered little to the rumours that spread throughout the district over the next few days, which in their most exaggerated form informed their audience that the imam of the Sayo mosque had been hacked to death inside the building.¹³ The timing of the brawl also compounded its sensitivity – it took place late in the night on Christmas eve, which by coincidence fell during the Islamic fasting month in 1998. Yet despite the potential inherent in the religious ‘baggage’ of this incident to inflame wider animosities, the immediate retaliation was in fact targeted at the specific perpetrator of the initial fight. This retaliation took the form of a small crowd of Muslims gathering to ransack several houses in Sayo before dawn on Christmas day, including that of the Christian youth Roy.¹⁴

There was one more coincidence in the timing of the brawl – Christmas day was a Friday in 1998, meaning many of Poso’s residents would, depending on religion, either attend a church service or perform the Islamic Friday prayer within hours of the brawl and the first retaliatory attacks. Even before these worship services took place, the district’s bureaucratic and security-sector leaders met and sought to head off any religious interpretation of the night’s event. They duly declared the causes of the brawl to have been ‘purely criminal’, which would have been readily recognizable to the local audience as the antithesis of religious tension in Suharto-era parlance. Local religious leaders were then asked to convey the criminal nature of the brawl during their worship services; meanwhile Roy (and several others who had been involved in the brawl) were swiftly arrested.¹⁵

Despite these efforts to contain the fall-out from the brawl, violence resumed in the afternoon following the Friday prayer.¹⁶ In public discussion of the brawl during these hours, the salient

¹¹ A photograph of the injured Ridwan appears at <http://www.fica.org/hr/poso/pictures1.html>, accessed 14 April 2007. Roy was the son of the recently deceased head of the Poso branch of PDI, but I have found no suggestion that this was relevant to his involvement in this fight.

¹² See, for example, FSIR (2000:2); Mangkoedila and Marbun (1999:2); ‘Poso Mencekam, Bupati Diungsikan’, *Jawa Pos*, 29 December 1998; interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

¹³ This and other rumours are detailed in a chronology of the riot written from a Muslim point of view. See *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998*. <http://tragediposo.blogspot.com/2006/06/kronologis.html>, accessed 14 April 2007.

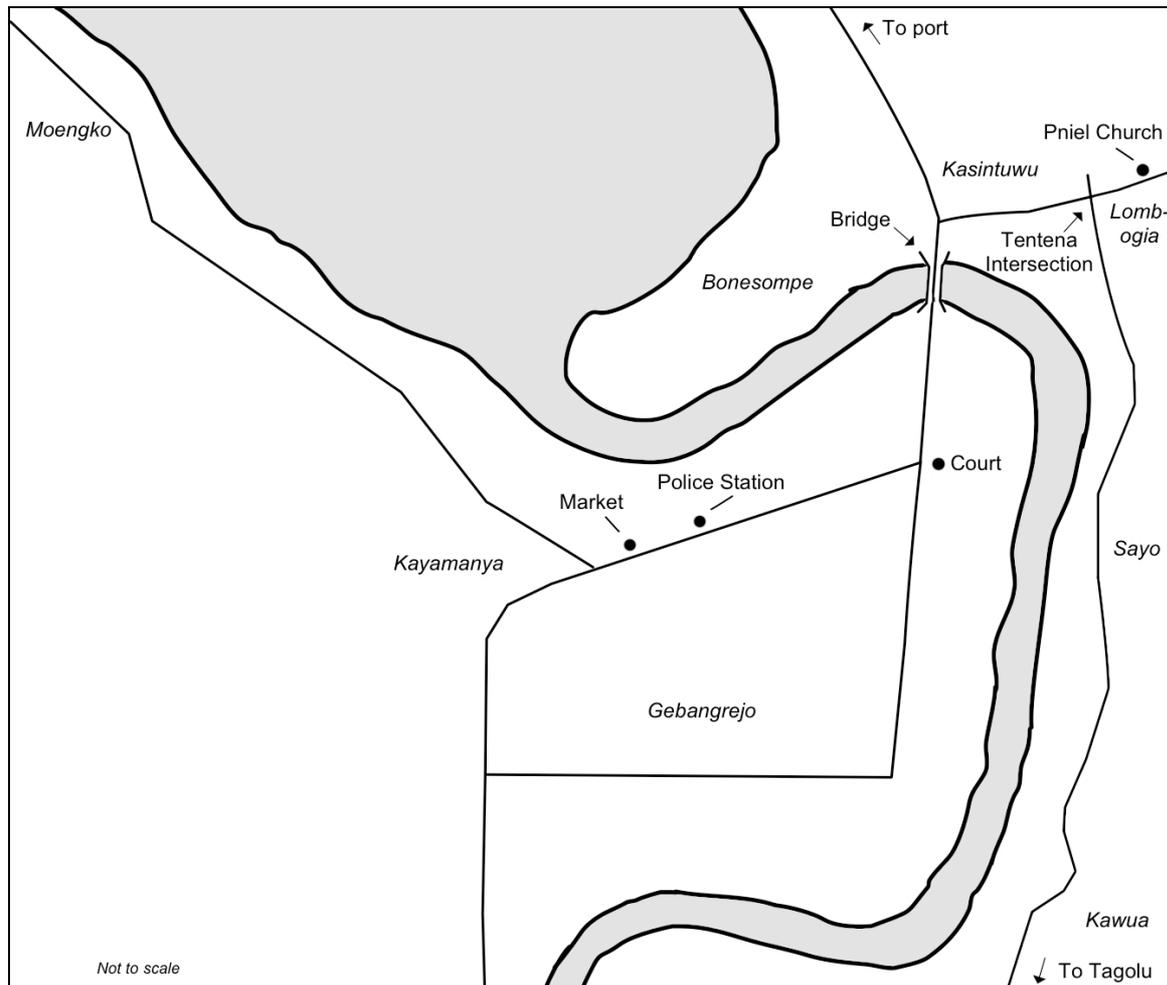
¹⁴ Interview with a Poso lawyer, February 2002, *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998*.

¹⁵ Interview with a Poso lawyer, February 2002. Interviews with former Poso residents living in Tentena, February 2002. Record of testimony of Leo Mandayo in Palu District Court Decision no. 412/Pid.B/1999/PN.PL in case of Herman Parimo (hereafter Parimo Decision), p. 11.

¹⁶ Several Christians who at the time lived in the city said that after the message of criminality was conveyed in the Christmas services, Christmas day essentially passed without serious incident. Two chronologies written from the Muslim point of view describe the incidents detailed above, however, leading me

detail of the incident was that the Christian youth Roy had been drinking at the Chinese-owned Toko Lima store before fighting with Ridwan. Crowds returned in the afternoon to ransack Roy's house again as well as several homes owned by his relatives, but they appear to have concentrated more on raiding each of the hotels and stores around town known to sell liquor. Toko Lima was one of the stores targeted, and one chronology lists thirteen different stores and hotels in several different city wards that were each damaged or even burned down on Christmas day. Many of these stores were in the city wards of Gebangrejo, Kayamanya and Moengko, which lay across the river from the part of Poso where the initial brawl had taken place and where Roy and his relatives lived. The stores in these three wards may have been targeted by Muslim youths who were unable to cross Poso's main river bridge, which was being guarded by the security forces (See Map 1).¹⁷

Map 1. Poso town (main streets only).



In response to these disturbances, the police then sent more personnel to Poso overnight to reinforce their relatively small permanent presence in the district. The provincial police chief, Colonel Soeroso, also himself made the four-hour journey to Poso from the provincial capital, Palu, to arrive just before noon on 26 December. Soeroso convened a public meeting at the district head's residence, where it was decreed that the sale of alcohol would be banned in Poso with immediate effect (Mangkoedila and Marbun 1999:10). A round-up of alcohol

to believe the Christians are mistaken in their recollection. For details of the Friday afternoon violence, see FSIR (2002:2-3), *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998*

¹⁷ *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998.*

quickly commenced, and thousands of bottles were destroyed using heavy machinery in a ceremony in front of the district parliament building that afternoon.¹⁸ Not all Christians objected to this round-up of liquor per se, but they were angered by the manner of its conduct: ‘We also supported the eradication of alcohol, but it was anarchic. Breaking things, and even starting to set things alight.’¹⁹ Regardless, Soeroso returned to Palu later that night.

Despite the police chief’s departure, Poso’s problems were far from over. Before charting the further escalation of violence, however, it is necessary to take stock of the developments thus far. The brawling, liquor round-up and arson had not been directed at overtly political targets. One could argue that the owners of the shops and hotels that had been raided may have been likely financiers for Christian candidates in the coming elections, although no one I interviewed volunteered or confirmed this interpretation. Nor had anyone hoping to provoke larger clashes along religious lines attacked a place of worship, despite the potency of even the rumours of such an attack in mobilizing crowds. We are left to question then whether the liquor round-up was itself deliberate and pre-conceived provocation. Certainly, rounding up alcohol had raised tensions between Christians and Muslims in Poso, and this may have been the intention. On the other hand, the round-up may not have been pre-planned: it is hardly surprising that local youths would be interested in rounding up liquor once given a pretext, and that the seizures were not orderly. Many of Poso’s youths were given to drinking, and those involved in the round-up openly admit that there was ample opportunity to spirit away a proportion of the seized goods for personal consumption.

If the significance of the liquor round-up and associated clashes are ambiguous, later on 26 December events begin to take on a clear political edge, as the role of some leaders in mobilizing crowds and encouraging violence started to come into view. Firstly, in the late afternoon, local Protestant figure Herman Parimo and three other senior local Protestants went to see the district head Patanga at his residence.²⁰ Each were former members of the Central Sulawesi Youth Movement (GPST – Gerakan Pemuda Sulawesi Tengah), a movement active in the late 1950s and 1960s which was formed to resist rebellions to Poso’s north and south.²¹ Parimo and his companions offered to help keep peace in the city by bringing in crowds (of Protestants) under the banner of the long defunct GPST. Needless to say, such a move could only have caused mayhem and Patanga declined the men’s offer. Despite Patanga’s refusal, Parimo set about gathering precisely such a crowd immediately thereafter. His method was to encourage the village chiefs of majority Christian villages to send one or several trucks of Christians to the southern fringe of the city. The record of his trial testimony contains the admission that he travelled to several villages south of the city on the night of 26 December for this purpose. Four village chiefs and a village secretary also testified at Parimo’s subsequent trial that he or an intermediary came to their village, and either gave them money

¹⁸ *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998*, FSIR (2002:3).

¹⁹ Interview with a former Poso resident living in Tentena, February 2002. By 2007, the common objection raised by Christians to this liquor round-up was that it should have been police who confiscated the alcohol.

²⁰ Record of testimony of Leo Mandayo, Tangkuka Sambaeto, Arief Patanga, Herman Parimo in *Parimo Decision*, pp. 11-13, 28-29, 54.

²¹ Numerous accounts also assert that Parimo was a current or former member of the Poso district parliament. These accounts appear to be incorrect, however, as Parimo’s name does not appear in lists of parliament members in either a history of the district parliament or a general history of Poso. See Haliadi, Mahid and Jamaluddin (2004: 99, 105, 106-107); Hasan et al (2004:263, 267-268).

directly or offered to reimburse them subsequently for the cost of sending youths to Poso.²² Underlining the important role of village chiefs in a mobilization that appears to have taken place in village groups, another witness said he had gone to Poso at the order of his village chief.²³ The result of these mobilizing efforts was that several hundred or more Christians gathered on 27 December in Tagolu village, several kilometres south of the city. Increasing tension in Tagolu, many of those arriving had heard rumours that churches in the city had been burned.²⁴

There has been particular suspicion that in taking these actions, Herman Parimo was trying to start a political riot to somehow help district secretary Yahya Patiro's electoral prospects, because it later emerged that Patiro had given Parimo Rp 5 million (approximately \$550) in cash around this time.²⁵ In court testimony, Patiro said the payment was a routine gift that he made to Parimo each Christmas; Parimo endorsed this explanation and said the money was also intended to cover his expenses from a recent illness.²⁶ The timing of the payment does inevitably make it suspicious, but the relatively meagre amount makes it more likely that the payment reveals a patronage connection between Patiro and Parimo rather than being a fee to start a riot.

Second, in another sign of emerging political interests on the night of 26 December, a rumour spread that district head Patanga's residence would be attacked. This rumour was the antecedent of the campaign that would begin immediately after the first period to depict the violence as a campaign of insurrection by local Christian officials, including the front-runner for the district head post Yahya Patiro. In response, some of the Muslim youths who had come to the city from surrounding villages chose to guard the house overnight.²⁷ Others gathered nearby around the market in Gebangrejo ward. Although we lack the equivalent details of how their arrival was organized that I have outlined for the Christian crowd, Muslims also appear to have arrived in village groups. It seems reasonable to assume that patronage connections to village chiefs or other village-level authority figures were similarly instrumental to their arrival as well.

Returning to the sequence of violence, even as efforts to gather these larger crowds got underway, clashes resumed within the city on the night of 26 December. Crowds burned tyres, a (Christian-owned) house and several motorbikes. The next morning, 27 December, rival crowds from different neighbourhoods threw rocks at each other, and several people were injured. In response to these clashes, a further peace meeting was convened at Poso's government offices on the morning of 27 December, bringing together local government, security, religious and community leaders.²⁸ Following this meeting, several efforts were

²² I find the details of Parimo's approach to them credible, because each witness accompanies these statements with more questionable self-exculpatory assertions that they did not organize a crowd and returned the money, or that a group of youths left from their village but that they played no role in organizing their departure. *Parimo decision*, pp. 14, 16, 32, 35.

²³ Record of Testimony of Salman Dosa Lemba in *Parimo Decision* (1999:51-52).

²⁴ One Christian city resident also suggested it was the influence of Roy's family and the affront his relatives felt at the damage to his house that motivated many Christians from other parts of Poso district to come to the city. Interview with a Poso resident living in Tentena, February 2002.

²⁵ '\$' refers to U.S. dollars unless otherwise specified. 'GPST dan Tragedi 28 Desember', *Palu Pos*, Edition XXXI, pp. 1, 7.

²⁶ *Parimo Decision*, pp. 23, 56

²⁷ I have determined the timing of these events based on an interview with one of the youths who guarded the house, considered in comparison with chronologies of the first period. Nevertheless, there is still some uncertainty regarding the timing of the guarding of the house. Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

²⁸ 'Kronologi Kerusuhan Poso', *Mercusuar*, no date.

made to encourage crowds to disperse. Delegates first went to the ‘Tentena’ intersection in Kasintuwu ward, one of the main sites of confrontation to that point.²⁹ Subsequently, the district’s top government and security officials went that night to encourage the sizeable crowd of Christians who had gathered south of the city in Tagolu to return to their villages (Mangkoedilaga and Marbun 1999:3-4). The delegation also asked Protestant figure Parimo, who had been instrumental in bringing Christians to Tagolu, to make a speech to urge the crowd to leave. By some accounts, Parimo dodged the request and instead left for the city. In his own court testimony Parimo instead asserted that he did address the crowd, but agreed with other witnesses that he left the meeting before its conclusion to enter the city.³⁰

The Tagolu peace meeting did not have the desired effect. Later that evening, two or more trucks full of Christians did in fact drive from Tagolu down into the city. Christians who were in Tagolu at the time typically say that the trucks ‘escaped’ (*lolos*), implying that those who entered the city on the night of 27 December were not under the control of recognized community leaders.³¹ These statements are intended most specifically as a rebuttal of reports that Herman Parimo led the crowd, even though Parimo had offered precisely this form of ‘security assistance’ to the district head the previous day. (These rebuttals notwithstanding, Parimo most likely did in fact lead the crowd.) The trucks displayed banners bearing the name GPST – the defunct youth movement Parimo had joined in the 1950s – and the passengers sang hymns while circling the city. Explaining the appeal to Poso’s younger generation of this symbol from the defunct 1950s movement, a youth who lived in the city in 1998 remarked, ‘[The symbol reminded us that] our parents had proven able [to fight back, so what about us]’.³² The premise for this move into the city was that it was a ‘Christmas parade’. It is true that one frequent celebration of certain religious holidays in Indonesia is for truckloads of youths to circle towns late at night making a commotion, but the plausibility of this particular convoy being a parade is well summed up by a Muslim youth who saw the trucks: ‘They said they were holding a Christmas parade but the funny thing was they were carrying all manner of things like machetes.’³³ One of the trucks reportedly headed for the city port, while the other headed for the market in the centre of the city.³⁴

By this point, a crowd had gathered around Poso’s central market with the idea of protecting it. As the truck approached the market along Poso’s main street, this crowd clashed with those on the truck, and along with the police forced the truck back to the end of the road and then out of the city.³⁵ (I have not found any account that provides details of the journey of the other truck to the port.) If there had been any chance that the crowds of either Muslims or Christians in and around the city to disperse, the entry of these trucks into the city made certain this would not happen.

As day dawned on 28 December, the December 1998 riot reached its peak. Christians again entered the city from Tagolu, another marshalling point appears to have been the sports hall in Kasintuwu ward. Some accusatory narratives claim this crowd numbered as many as 2000

²⁹ The junction is called the ‘Tentena’ intersection because it is the point at which the road to Tentena begins.

³⁰ *Parimo decision*, pp. 54-55.

³¹ Interviews with former Poso residents living in Tentena, February 2002, July 2003.

³² Interviews with former Poso residents living in Tentena, July 2003, July 2007.

³³ Interview with a Poso resident, Poso, July 2003.

³⁴ Interview with former Poso residents living in Tentena, July 2003.

³⁵ Interview with a former Poso resident living in Tentena, February 2002; *Kronologis Kejadian Kerusuhan Massa Di Kota Poso Pada Tanggal 25 Desember 1998*.

people, other eyewitnesses recall only a few more than one hundred people.³⁶ This crowd apparently came upon graffiti denigrating Jesus as they passed through one of Poso's main intersections. Some accounts attribute the Christian crowd's apparent attempt to attack Poso's marketplace to their anger upon seeing this graffiti (Mangkoedila and Marbun 1999:2), but it seems likely that violence would have resulted anyway once so many Christians had come into the city. The main point of confrontation with a rival Muslim crowd came to be the bridge separating the two halves of the city. As those in the Muslim crowd gained ascendancy and pushed Christians back from the bridge, they were then able to burn parts of the city wards of Lombogia, Kasintuwu and Sayo. More than 100 houses and other buildings were destroyed, and around 80 people were injured in the clashes, including one Protestant man who was doused with petrol and set alight.³⁷ Places of worship were not targeted in Poso, but a church was later burned in the provincial capital Palu on 30 December (Mangkoedila and Marbun 1999:6). The district head's residence also came under attack during the morning, with several witnesses at Parimo's subsequent court trial testifying that they heard Parimo instruct crowd members to do so.³⁸ Both district head Patanga and district secretary Patiro were evacuated from the city for their own safety until late in the afternoon.

The actions of Parimo in directing the crowd were one visible sign of organization at the peak of the riot. We have fewer details of the actions of precise individuals in organizing the rival crowd of Muslims, but testimony at Parimo's trial provides some clues. Several witnesses refer to the crowd as 'Muhammad Pahe's crowd': Pahe was a local construction contractor. Maro Tompo, a local Muslim businessman and political aspirant, also placed himself at the site of confrontation in his Parimo trial testimony, and mentioned that while there he saw Parimo and Pahe's crowds clash. A further sign of organization was the presence of individuals among the Muslim crowd providing direction on who or what the crowd should target. Even after the crowd of Christians had been driven back, not all Christian owned houses were burned. Instead one Muslim man present in the crowd on 28 December recalled directions to burn houses on the basis of the owner's social status.

If a [Christian] person was influential, an influential person, then maybe their house would be sought, then that house would be burned, but we didn't burn them all [that is, all houses in each ward] ... I didn't know what their names were at the time, someone would say, this is so-and-so's house, just burn it ... they were chosen one by one.³⁹

A former prominent Poso resident living in Tentena corroborated this selective pattern of arson, saying two of his family's houses had been burned while the neighbouring houses were left untouched.⁴⁰

In addition to those acts of violence that exhibited visible organization, the breakdown of law and order during the peak of the riot also presented an opportunity to loot. Despite the clashes taking place between Muslim and Christian crowds nearby, several riot participants recalled that Muslims and Christians looted alongside one another. For many people, they recalled, the opportunity to loot had been a primary motivation to join the riot. One participant also

³⁶ Interview with a Poso resident, July 2003. The number of trucks used to transport this crowd was a point of contention during the trial of Herman Parimo. A Muslim witnesses recalled seeing twenty trucks, Parimo and most Christian witnesses asserted that there were five. See *Parimo Decision*, pp. 39, 48.

³⁷ See 'Mereka Diperalat Herman Parimo', *MAL*, First week, January 1999, p. 8.

³⁸ See 'Suara Aneh di Telinga Nurjanah', *MAL*, Fourth Week, September 1999, p. 7; Record of testimony of Nurjannah in Parimo decision, p. 35.

³⁹ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴⁰ Interview with former Poso resident living in Tentena, July 2003.

highlighted the importance of village and ward groupings to explain this apparent anomaly – it was only ‘the [Christian] people who came down from Tentena and Christians from Lombogia [ward]’ who were the enemy, other groups were there to loot.⁴¹ Another interviewee also asserted that Muslim and Christian communities living in the vicinity of Poso’s central market had banded together to protect it from arson, spurred by a rumour that Christians from outside the city planned to attack the area.⁴²

Whatever the veracity of these specific recollections, they highlight an important point regarding the contribution of religious identity to this December 1998 violence. For a significant portion of the people on the streets during this riot, an individual’s identity as a Muslim or Christian had not become a sole and sufficient basis to attack them. It is true, when crowds clashed, Christians were on one side and Muslims the other, and many crowd members must have been motivated by a feeling that their religion, their places of worship or their religious community had been wronged. But a range of those present, both Christian and Muslim, indicated that away from the main sites of confrontation, people were not targeted just because they held one religion or another. One youth recalled the pattern of violence as follows:

There were a lot of [unfamiliar] people, possibly from Ampana, from Poso Pesisir, from Parigi.⁴³ But it was easy to work out which side was which, as Christians were gathered in majority Christian areas, and vice versa. Also, most people from the villages were wearing white headbands to show they were Muslims, while Christians wore white cloth on their wrists. But at the time, there were still a lot of cases where Christians might be at the market when it happened [the fighting] and Muslims saved them, there wasn’t mutual aggression, unless you happened to be part of the crowds throwing rocks at each other. Other people were left alone.⁴⁴

Other youths who took part in the fighting also recalled the December 1998 riot more as a fight between neighbourhoods than a community-wide confrontation across the religious divide.

It is also possible that some of the statements that downplayed the extent of the religious divide may have reflected the speaker’s anxiety that fighting against a group because of their religious identity may not be legitimate, or may not be perceived as legitimate by the broader community. Such an anxiety would be consistent with Horowitz’s (2001) observation of the importance for rioters of social approval and the knowledge that they will be able to rejoin communities after a short-lived episode of violence. This anxiety may account for one theme in the banners that appeared after the December fighting: ‘We have no quarrel with Christians, we are only fighting Herman Parimo and his followers’⁴⁵ This message would be reproduced almost verbatim on another banner in a later period of conflict in Poso except with the religion of the target and the implied aggressor reversed.

No one was killed in the fighting in Poso in December 1998, despite the widespread arson and other property damage. Part of the reason lies in the weaponry used: crowds mostly just threw

⁴¹ Interviews with Poso men, July 2003.

⁴² Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴³ Ampana is a coastal town east of Poso, Poso Pesisir is a coastal sub-district west of the city (now sub-divided into several sub-districts), whereas Parigi is the capital city of the neighbouring district to the west of Poso.

⁴⁴ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴⁵ Banner appears in picture in *Palu Pos*, Edition XVII, nd, p. 5. Similar banners appear in other photographs of post-riot Poso.

rocks at each other, and carried weapons no more sophisticated than machetes or at most *peluncur* (literally ‘launcher’, a weapon used to fire arrows).⁴⁶ The crudeness of the weaponry does not suffice to explain the lack of fatalities, though: it would become readily apparent approximately eighteen months after the December 1998 violence that such weapons were quite adequate for widespread killing if wielded by men and women intent on murder. Indeed, a different possible explanation for the absence of killings emphasizes the role of the same sort of leadership that directed crowd members to target specific houses. Without direction to kill or the example set by core group members to do so, the youths who fought in this riot may have largely acted out the repertoire of violence with which they were familiar from previous brawls in and around Poso, in which there was seldom anyone killed.

The peak of the December violence lasted only one day, with the arson attacks after Christians had fled from the city marking the end of the fighting. The next day – 29 December – the governor and provincial security leaders came to Poso and convened a peace meeting.⁴⁷ By this time, the struggle to control interpretation of the riot was taking place in plain sight. Having established physical control of the city, Muslim actors were in a position to dominate this struggle. Banners installed around the city blamed the violence on Parimo, Patirol and other Christian officials. The following is typical of the genre, ‘Arrest and Hang Yahya Patirol, Herman Parimo, CH Rongko and DA Lempadeli and their Cronies as Criminals, Insurrectionists, *GPK*...’⁴⁸ At the same time, the younger brother of the incumbent district head, Agfar Patanga, also distributed a handwritten leaflet accusing Christian officials of insurrection. Patirol and Parimo again featured prominently in the list of names, underlining the damage that Parimo had done to his patron’s political prospects. As a result of these accusations, Patirol in fact elected to remain in the provincial capital Palu following the riot, rather than return to Poso. Of the officials and businessmen named in the accusatory banners and leaflets, however, only Parimo would be put on trial over the December violence. Facing a primary charge of leading a rebellion against the district government, he was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment in November 1999, later reduced to fourteen years in his first appeal.⁴⁹ The precise length of the sentence proved to be immaterial, as Parimo fell ill in prison and died while being treated in Makassar in May the following year.⁵⁰ The youth Roy and another Christian participant in the initial brawl on Christmas Eve also served prison terms of twelve and five years respectively⁵¹. Agfar Patanga would much later serve a six-month sentence in prison over the leaflet, following a prolonged trial that commenced over a year after the riot.⁵²

⁴⁶ Interviews with Poso men, January-February 2002, July 2003, April-May 2004.

⁴⁷ ‘Kasus Poso’, *Pedoman Rakyat*, 30 December 1998, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Banner appears in picture in *Palu Pos*, Edition XVII, nd, p. 5. On the term ‘GPK’ (Gerombolan Pengacau Keamanan - Security Disturbing Gang), see McRae (2002:41-43).

⁴⁹ Decision of Central Sulawesi High Court (Pengadilan Tinggi) no. 36/PID/1999/PT.PALU in case of Herman Parimo, 15 November 1999.

⁵⁰ It is common for Christians to assert that the Supreme Court acquitted Parimo. In fact, the court simply ruled that the prosecutor could no longer continue its case against Parimo as he had died. According to the court decision, Parimo died on 7 May. Aragon and van Klinken each assert Parimo died in April, and while I have adopted the date from the Supreme Court decision, it may be incorrect. See Decision of Supreme Court (Mahkamah Agung RI) no. 211/TU/55K/Pid/2000 in case of Herman Parimo, 28 December 2004, pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ ‘Biang Kerusuhan Poso Divonis Penjara’, *Mercusuar*, 12 June 1999, pp. 1, 9.

⁵² ‘Vonis Bersayap buat Agfar’, *MAL*, Third Week November 2000, p. 8.

Local Politics Transformed

The December 1998 riot transformed local politics in Poso. Its most specific impact was to lead to the eventual exclusion from the district head poll of the early frontrunner, Protestant civil servant Yahya Patiro. But in a more general sense, the December 1998 riot was the first concrete step towards the use of violence as a tool in local political contestation. Subsequent to the riot, it became commonplace to attempt to influence political and judicial outcomes by marshalling crowds, as I will outline below. The culmination of this process was to come sixteen months later in April 2000, in the form of a second riot in Poso.

The first political contest subsequent to the December riot was the task for the Poso parliament to establish a shortlist of candidates for the district head election. The first step was for each of the parliament's four 'fractions' – namely the three Suharto-era parties and the parliament's military appointees – to nominate two candidates each. This process was timetabled for completion at the end of March 1999, after which the parliament's leadership would pare these eight hopefuls down to a shortlist of five. March 1999 was thus the deadline for any attempt at a political comeback on the part of Yahya Patiro, following his prominent mention in accusatory banners and leaflets after the December violence.

Despite his newfound notoriety, Patiro remained the favoured candidate of the small Christian-dominated PDI fraction in the parliament. In an apparent attempt to clear his name and secure the party's nomination, he decided to come back to Poso several days before these nominations were to be finalized. Staying at the government-owned Hotel Wisata in the majority-Muslim beachside ward of Lawanga, Patiro took the opportunity to meet a group of local Muslim youth activists shortly after his arrival. His presence soon came to the attention of his opponents, however, and a large crowd of Muslims gathered in front of the hotel on Patiro's first night there. As the crowd began to throw rocks at the building, Patiro escaped over the back fence before the crowd could enter the hotel, which it later ransacked.⁵³ With the help of a local resident he was taken to the nearby district military base (Kodim), after which he quietly returned to Palu with a police escort.⁵⁴ One week later PDI announced its two candidates, with Patiro not on the list, and the PDI fraction head complaining that he had received threatening phone calls and messages warning him of the consequences of putting forward Patiro's name.⁵⁵ Patiro was subsequently transferred to the provincial civil service in Palu as an aide to the governor, with his political ambitions in tatters.

The nomination process went more smoothly for a local official whom Christians considered to be among the villains of the December riot, namely the head of the district Development Planning Agency, Damsyik Ladjalani. Indeed, one observer implicates Ladjalani directly in Patiro's troubles, observing that he had been responsible for informing the district government of Patiro's arrival but omitted to do so (Sangaji 2004). Ladjalani secured one of the Islamic PPP fraction's two nominations, and was subsequently among the five names sent to the governor. Joining Ladjalani on the shortlist were provincial politician Muin Pusadan (nominated by Golkar), Protestant provincial civil servant Edy Bungkundapu (PDI), and the two military nominations, district parliament chairperson Colonel Mulyadi and civil servant Mashud Kasim.

⁵³ 'Yahya Patiro Dihadang di Kampung Sendiri', *Formasi* no 8, 2 April 1999, p. 12.; 'Poso Nyaris Rusuuh Kembali', *Mercusuar*, 23 March 1999, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Interview with Yahya Patiro, December 2004.

⁵⁵ 'Ketua FPDI Mengaku Diteror', *Mercusuar*, 30 March 1999.

The outcome of these nominations were thus another step in establishing violence as a useful political tool. For those to benefit from Patiro's sidelining, there must have appeared to be few risks in turning to violence. I have found no record of any arrests in direct connection with the ransacking of the Hotel Wisata, for example, although the case appears to have been a factor in the eventual investigation of Agfar Patanga for circulating the inflammatory leaflet after the December riot. The police themselves inadvertently may have encouraged the idea that a willingness to deploy violence could also influence judicial processes. After a large crowd had gathered at Poso's court and reportedly clashed with police at the May 1999 sentencing of the two Protestant youths arrested in connection with the initial scuffle of the December riot, police launched a round of community consultations. Specifically, they decided to meet with local Muslim, Christian and community figures on where to hold Herman Parimo's trial and whether to take Agfar Patanga into pretrial custody (M Situmorang 1999). In both cases, the police concern was that the wrong decision could cause violence. Yet by asking local figures whether violence was likely rather than just making the decision themselves, the police must have underlined to those they consulted that violence could influence law enforcement decisions.

Nevertheless, neither the June 1999 legislative election nor the October 1999 election for the new district head were marked by severe incidents. Indeed, the faction believed to be most closely associated with the violent sidelining of Patiro suffered defeat even before election day. The governor eliminated their preferred candidate, Damsyik Ladjalani, in reducing the parliament's initial shortlist from five to three names. In the end, the Muslim Golkar candidate Pusadan won the poll, collecting sixteen votes to Muslim civil servant Mashud Kasim's thirteen, whereas Protestant candidate Edy Bungkundapu received eleven votes (Lasahido et al 2003:44). The only disturbance on the day of the poll was the presence of a small crowd of protesters outside the parliament building, chanting Islamic slogans in support of Pusadan. The crowd was allowed into the parliament chamber to witness the counting of votes, where they maintained a raucous presence.⁵⁶

This respite from violent pressure on politics in Poso was to be short-lived. One of the first tasks for Pusadan was to appoint a new district secretary, the senior career bureaucrat in Poso. Under legislation at the time, the district secretary was appointed by the governor, but the district head compiled a shortlist of candidates. Pusadan's favourite candidate was Awad Al-Amri, a Muslim of Arab descent. After Damsyik Ladjalani's failure to become district head, however, a vocal faction centred on Islamic party PPP were keen for him to win the district secretary role. Newspapers periodically carried statements of support for Ladjalani, most prominently from Haelani Umar, a provincial MP as of the 1999 election, who had been head of the PPP fraction in the Poso parliament when it nominated Ladjalani for district head. In addition to his repeated approving statements in the press, Umar campaigned actively for Ladjalani behind the scenes, sending letters of support to both the governor and the Poso district head.⁵⁷

Before the decision on a district secretary was made, however, Ladjalani was transferred to the provincial civil service to become assistant head of the provincial Development Planning Board in Palu.⁵⁸ As Ladjalani's chances were thus perceived to have diminished, support for

⁵⁶ 'Akhirnya Muin Terpilih Jadi Bupati Poso', *Mercusuar*, 1 November 1999.

⁵⁷ See 'Haelani: Damsyik Layak Jabat Sekwilda Poso', *Mercusuar*, 28 February 2000; 'Berharap Damsyik Setelah Yahya Patiro', *MAL*, Fourth Week, February 2000.

⁵⁸ 'Poso Bakal Rusuh Kembali', *Mercusuar*, 15 April 2000.

him seemingly escalated into threats. One chronology, which overall adopted a Christian point of view, alleged a delegation from the Poso branch of the Indonesian National Youth Committee (KNPI) met the governor on 9 April and threatened that if Al-Amri and not Ladjalani was appointed there would be further riots in Poso (Cheq and Recheq Forum 2001:5). Whether or not this meeting took place as described, five days later Halaeni Umar repeated the same threat in implicit form to a journalist from the provincial paper *Mercusuar*. In what has become an infamous quote, Umar stated, ‘I predict there will be another riot in Poso. And it might be bigger than what has gone before.’ The riot would take place, Umar stated, because the government had blocked community aspirations by not appointing Ladjalani as Poso district secretary.⁵⁹ The night after Umar’s comment was published, fighting in Poso resumed and, as Umar predicted, escalated to a greater scale than the December 1998 period of violence.

Violence with an Audience

Much as the April 2000 riot was inextricably linked to the selection of a new district secretary, the lines of confrontation in the violence did not mirror those of the political struggle. The selection process pitted two Muslim factions against each other, with Muin Pusadan’s faction set to score a second victory over supporters of Damsyik Ladjalani. By contrast, the riot was a largely one-sided attack by Muslims against two Christian wards in the city, almost certainly instigated by members of the faction supporting Ladjalani. Under this interpretation, the riot was thus violence with an audience, as the riot provided a stage for the faction supporting Ladjalani to demonstrate its power. Christians were the physical targets of the violence, but Pusadan’s faction were its primary audience. The police and the courts may have been a secondary audience, as several Ladjalani supporters were under investigation for corruption and another was on trial for spreading slander. The Poso riot is not unique in this sense – Brass’s (2003) emphasis on the audience of riots highlights their performative aspects, a feature that is masterfully elucidated in the Indonesian case of West Kalimantan by Davidson (2008:137).

Much as Christians were primarily a means for Ladjalani’s supporters to demonstrate their power, they were not a random choice of physical target. The riot proceeded against Christians for two apparent reasons. The choice of Christians as a target was in part strategic – the Christian-Muslim cleavage made sense locally, given long-standing competition along religious lines to access state resources, and the recent occurrence of the December 1998 riot. But the choice also reflected the personal prejudices of the key players among Ladjalani’s supporters, many of whom were entangled in the elite level skirmish between Muslim and Christian actors manifest in the December riot. Believed to be among the most important of these supporters was Maro Tompo, a local businessman whom we have encountered already at the point of confrontation between crowds in the December 1998 riot, and who was the only individual to have a police case registered against him for marshalling crowds in the April riot. The skirmish between Christian and Muslim elite actors deriving from the December riot continued long afterwards, most persistently in the form of the trial of Agfar Patanga for circulating an inflammatory leaflet. Many of the defence witnesses who appeared to support Patanga, Tompo among them, were men believed to have been implicated in instigating each riot. Tompo took the stand in the Patanga trial just weeks before the April riot, and used the opportunity to launch anew a raft of accusations against Christian officials.

⁵⁹ ‘Poso Bakal Rusuh Kembali’, *Mercusuar*, 15 April 2000.

In widely reported testimony, he claimed to have uncovered evidence that they had conspired to produce the December riot for two years before its occurrence, and accused the former district secretary Yahya Patiro of himself authoring the leaflet that contributed to discrediting him.⁶⁰ Tompo's faction's current political adversaries may have been Pusadan and his supporters, but the confrontation with Poso's Christian elite was clearly far from forgotten.

In contrast to the December 1998 riot, in which the initial skirmish could conceivably have been spontaneous, the precipitating incident for the April 2000 riot was clearly contrived. Trouble began late on 15 April, a Saturday night, just hours after Umar's prediction of a riot had been published in the provincial press. A Muslim youth, Firman Said alias Dedi, approached two Christian youths buying cigarettes near the Tentena intersection in Poso and punched one of them.⁶¹ Around an hour later, Dedi returned to the intersection on a motorbike with two companions and dragged a samurai sword along the asphalt. The Christian youths, some of whom were waiting with knives, took exception to this and chased Dedi, who fell off the motorbike. Dedi then ran away on foot, leaving the motorbike behind, although not before he, his two companions and the Christian youths had paused to throw rocks at each other.

After fleeing, Dedi bandaged his arm to give the false impression that he had been knifed by the Christian youths, an act of subterfuge for which he would subsequently serve a prison term. He then returned to the scene with around 30 Muslims from the nearby wards of Lawanga and Kayamanya, armed with various crude weapons. The police were by then present, and temporarily averted more serious trouble by keeping the two groups separate and convincing people to return home.

Disturbances resumed the following morning, Sunday 16 April. First, in actions reminiscent of the early moments of the December 1998 riot, a group of youths from Lawanga engaged in an anti-liquor drive, albeit this time on a smaller scale. The youths poured some of the seized liquor out onto the road and destroyed other bottles in the car park of the district parliament building (Damanik et al 2000). Not long afterwards, around 25 Muslims came to Lombogia ward seeking Angky Tungkanan, one of the Christian youths rumoured to have attacked Dedi the previous night. Their arrival caused a panic: Christian worshippers were still in church at that hour but quickly returned to their homes. Nothing further ensued at this point, however (Lembaga Lintas SARA 2000:4, 8; Suratmo S 2000:4).

Later that night around 8:00pm, another crowd of several dozen Muslims returned to Lombogia carrying machetes and other crude weapons. The *lurah* (ward chief) went out to meet the crowd, along with Paulus Tungkanan, who was the father of the youth Angky whom the crowd had been seeking earlier in the day. The police brokered negotiations between the two sides, but even as they talked some members of the crowd set several Christian-owned houses alight, before a Muslim youth attacked Paulus Tungkanan with a machete, causing a large gash wound to his back.⁶² This attack drew an immediate response from the Christians present, and the two rival crowds began to pelt each other with rocks and to fire arrows at

⁶⁰ 'Disket "Poso Kelabu" Ditemukan di Rumah Yahya Patiro', Mercusuar, 25 March 2000, p. 7.

⁶¹ Substantially the same chronology of these events is reproduced in Lembaga Lintas SARA (2000: 7-11); FSIR (2002: 8-13); Lasahido et al (2003:47-51); Ecip and Waru (2001: 30-36). All of these reports in fact appear to have adopted the Crisis Center GKST chronology of the second period without attribution and with only minor modification. For the original GKST document, see Rinaldy Damanik et al (2000). Two drafts of the same police report also cover events in the riot, although there is some variance in detail between the drafts. Only one of the drafts is signed (Soeroso 2000) and its authenticity is surer than the other draft (Suratmo S. 2000).

⁶² (Lembaga Lintas SARA 2000:8), interview with Paulus Tungkanan, February 2002.

each other. As a result, at least seven more people and three police were wounded (Soeroso 2000:10-11). The police sent two platoons of riot police to the scene and by around 3:00am the clashes had tailed off for the night. Fearing further trouble, the Poso police chief also called for reinforcements from Palu, and as a result a paramilitary police or 'Mobile Brigade' (Brimob – Brigade Mobil) unit from Palu arrived in Poso early the next day. The police also requested back-up from the army at this point (Soeroso 2000:10-11).

In light of Dedi's subterfuge and Umar's correct public prediction of the riot, it appears obvious that at least some of the Muslim crowd members were up to this point acting out a pre-conceived plan. An interesting implication of Dedi's actions, however, is that an important part of this plan was to garner participation from beyond the planner's immediate group. From the recollections of participants, we know that exaggerated rumours again circulated in villages around Poso and drew participants to the city to fight.⁶³ Such efforts to mobilize additional supporters may reveal simply that organizers did not have enough manpower at their disposal to be sure of success. Brass's (2003) emphasis on the imperative to displace blame raises a second possibility, however. It may have been essential to the interests of organizers to draw in broad range of participants so that they could plausibly deny their involvement to investigators and describe the event as spontaneous.

In any event, the violence continued to escalate the following morning, 17 April. The district authorities were by now well aware that the situation was getting out of hand. District head Pusadan and the local law enforcement chiefs each came out to speak to the rival crowds in an attempt to calm the situation (Lembaga Lintas SARA 2000:9). The police mobile brigade (Brimob) unit sent to Poso as reinforcements were also deployed to the Tentena intersection, where they established a blockade. For a short period, the Brimob barricade kept the Muslim crowd out of Lombogia, and they burnt houses in neighbouring Kasintuwu ward instead. But within two hours Muslims breached the barricade and began to fight with the Christian youths gathered in Lombogia. The Christian youths were forced back, allowing the Muslim youths to burn the Pniel church, associated buildings and nearby shops. This was the first place of worship to be burned in Poso during the conflict; local Muslim leaders would justify the church's destruction in a peace meeting the next day on the grounds that Christians had been using the building as a fort (Soeroso 2000:8).

After the church was burned, the police increased their efforts to halt the violence. Reportedly after first firing warning shots into the air, the Brimob unit from Palu instead fired directly into the crowd of Muslims at around noon, killing three youths and wounding several others. Two of those killed – Yanto and Muhammad Rosal Mahmud – were still teenagers (Mahmud moreover was still in school) (Soeroso 2000:5; FSIR 2002:11).

Given the effect these shootings had on the escalation of violence and the prominent place they occupied in discussion of the riot after the fact, it is worth pausing briefly to consider what led the police to fire into the crowd. There appear to be two possible reasons. One is a genuine concern to try to stop the rioting – the Poso police chief was no friend of the faction supporting Ladjalani and this would be only the first of several occasions during the Poso conflict on which police adopted a 'shoot on sight' approach. But these killings may in fact have foreshadowed a second pattern that recurred during subsequent periods of conflict, in which the security forces retaliated with lethal force when one of their own was wounded or killed. One chronology of the April violence explains the shootings in precisely these terms,

⁶³ Interviews with Poso men, July 2003 and April 2004.

saying the police opened fire after one of their number was hit by an arrow (Lembaga Lintas SARA 2000:9).

Regardless of police motives, the killings further enraged the crowd of Muslims, and by 3:00pm the violence had resumed. Christian interviewees claimed that the police had by now withdrawn all personnel to their district headquarters, although I have not been able to verify whether this was the case.⁶⁴ The afternoon's violence differed from that in the morning in one respect: there were now two targets, Lombogia and the police. A procession taking the body of one of the dead youths back to Kayamanya paused to throw rocks and Molotov cocktails at the police headquarters before being moved on by warning shots. After the funerals, several police-owned buildings as well as the residences of a handful of officers were also set alight (Soeroso 2000:6-7). At the same time, the crowd now set about trying to destroy Lombogia ward. Most of the ward's residents had by then fled, although several dozen men reportedly continued to fight until the next day.⁶⁵ The arson attacks halted in the late afternoon only as heavy rain set in.⁶⁶ By afternoon's end, an estimated 130 houses, two churches and three schools had been burned, and thousands of people had fled to the outskirts of the city.⁶⁷

At this point, provincial authorities sought to intervene. The governor, provincial police chief and provincial military commander all flew to Poso early the next morning, 18 April, and convened a meeting in the function hall at the district head's residence. Many of the Muslim attendees at this meeting were precisely the individuals that Christians allege to have been the villains of the riot: Maro Tompo himself, local fish trader Nani Lamusu, local Bugis businessman Daeng Raja, construction contractor Mandor Pahe and local religious leader Adnan Arsal (Soeroso 2000:7-8). These men issued several demands: that the Brimob unit from Palu be withdrawn and the shootings investigated, that the governor clarify which local officials had been involved in the first period of violence in 1998, and that Poso police chief Dedy Woerjantono be replaced. Their opposition to Woerjantono did not derive solely or perhaps even primarily from the shootings – the police chief was also spearheading a corruption investigation against several of these men over the embezzlement of agricultural assistance funds. The men also apologized for the burning of the Pniel church, with the aforementioned proviso that they believed the building had been used as a fort. Reiterating the political context of the riot, the Muslim delegates also asked for Damsyik Ladjalani to be installed as district secretary and for the release of Agfar Patanga.⁶⁸ The provincial police chief agreed to the demand regarding Brimob on the spot and the unit was withdrawn to Palu several hours after a replacement unit arrived that night.⁶⁹ The provincial officials also took the opportunity to tour some of the sites of violence in Kasintuwu ward. Indicative of the extremely poor security situation, hundreds of youths initially blocked the governor from reaching Kasintuwu and thronged around him during his inspection. Several buildings were also set alight even as the provincial delegation was out on the streets inspecting the previous day's damage.⁷⁰ Before returning to Palu, the governor also visited Christian internally

⁶⁴ Interviews with former Poso residents living in Tentena, February 2002.

⁶⁵ Interview with a Tentena resident, Tentena, February 2002.

⁶⁶ 'Ditemukan Lagi 3 Korban Jiwa di Poso', *Tinombala*, 20 April 2000.

⁶⁷ Given the eventual figure for the April violence of 406 houses burned, it is quite possible that even more houses had already been burned. For figure of 406, see "'Aparat di Poso Disudutkan'", *Surya*, date not recorded.

⁶⁸ (Situmorang 2000:8); interview with a Poso man, February 2002; interview with a delegate to meeting, July 2003.

⁶⁹ 'Brimob Ditarik, Diganti 100 Perintis', *Tinombala*, 19 April 2000; (Soeroso 2000:12).

⁷⁰ See for example, 'Brimob Ditarik, Diganti 100 Perintis', *Tinombala*, 19 April 2000.

displaced persons (hereafter IDPs) in Tagolu later in the afternoon, urging them not to seek revenge.⁷¹

This meeting marked the point at which the political interests of those alleged to be seeking to produce a riot arguably had been served. They had made their point during the meeting to the governor regarding Damsyik Ladjalani, the violence had delayed the ongoing trial of Agfar Patanga, and the position of police chief Deddy Woerjantono was now shaky. Further violence was unlikely to produce any additional political gain. Yet any chance that the riot would cease with the gubernatorial visit and the withdrawal of the Brimob unit had evaporated by the next morning, 19 April. Lombogia's residents had by now abandoned the ward, but a Muslim youth was found murdered there. The young man, Ulan Lanusu, had been knifed in the neck and arm, earning him the unfortunate distinction of being the first person murdered during the conflict.⁷² Angered by news of this murder, another crowd of Muslims gathered and proceeded to burn two more churches and more Christian-owned houses (Damanik et al 2000: 4). The crowd also engaged in a 'sweeping' to look for Christians, who could be readily identified by means of an identity card all Indonesian citizens are required to carry. They duly found two Christians and murdered each of them, by one report setting the bodies alight after the men were dead (Suratmo S 2000:10). Another Christian man reportedly drowned later that night as he fled from Gebangrejo and attempted to swim across the river to the safety of Kawua, a majority Christian-populated ward.

The murder of Ulan and the apparent revenge killings of the two Christians on the basis of their identity cards provide an important clue that identities in Poso were becoming more thoroughly totalized, as different religious identity became a basis for killing. This shift took place during the April 2000 riot - for much of the riot violence was more narrowly targeted at Lombogia and its residents (where the Christian youths falsely rumoured to have wounded Dedi hailed from). Nevertheless, the murders of 19 April did not immediately lead to further killings, and in fact further provincial police reinforcements sent to Poso that night largely restored order in the city on 20 April. A series of peace meetings and visits by high-ranking officials were then convened.

Immediately after the riot, police established a provincial-level team of detectives to investigate the violence. Only the lowest-level perpetrators were prosecuted, however. Haelani Umar was questioned over his prediction of the riot, but said that the journalist had misquoted him. No charges were laid.⁷³ A case was also registered against Maro Tompo, whom police suspected of gathering crowds and instigating some of the arson attacks on Christian areas. They interviewed more than twenty witnesses in their investigation of him over the course of several months, but in the end he never faced trial (Kamil 2000:11). One man who did face court was the Muslim youth Dedi, who had falsely claimed to have been knifed in the early moments of the fighting. Along with his twin brother Fatman Said alias Didi, he was convicted of spreading falsehoods and spent several years in prison (Ecip and Waru 2001:121). In an attempt to defuse criticism of the fatal shooting of the three Muslim youths on 17 April, police also asked the military police to investigate the incident.⁷⁴

Although the key plotters evaded prosecution, as a demonstration of power the riot was only a partial success. As the alleged plotters had demanded, Poso police chief Deddy Woerjantono

⁷¹ 'Ribuan Warga Poso Mengungsi', *Surya*, nd (probably 19 April 2000).

⁷² Details of injuries from (Suratmo S 2000:10).

⁷³ (Kamil 2000:11); "Keterangan Andono di BAP Dibatalkan", *Mercusuar*, 2 May 2000.

⁷⁴ 'Polda Serahkan Pengusutan Aparat Pelaku Penembakan kepada Denpom', *Tinombala*, 28 April 2000.

was removed from his position around a month after the riot. They were less successful with their two other demands, however. After he had first served for a period as interim district secretary, Awad Al-Amri rather than Damsyik Ladjalani eventually assumed the position on a permanent basis. The trial of Agfar Patanga also continued to its conclusion, and he served a six month sentence. Nevertheless, the aftermath of the 2000 riot may well have been the highpoint of influence in Poso for most of this faction's members. By the time of the next elections in 2004, the district's boundaries had been withdrawn, establishing Christian voters as a decisive demographic majority. A Christian party gained the most seats in the 2004 parliament, and the new district head (by then directly elected) was also a Christian. Ladjalani did eventually enter politics, but in the newly separated Tojo Una-Una district rather than in Poso proper, where he won election as district head in 2004 and 2009.

Conclusion: The Limits of Political Violence

In important ways, the December 1998 and April 2000 riots were political violence. Politically-connected patronage networks were crucial to the mobilization of large crowds in the December riot, and directed crowds at the peak of the riot. Moreover, by establishing the event as a Christian insurrection, a local Muslim political faction were able to sideline their most formidable electoral opponent. Members of the same faction, which had been defeated both in its attempt to install its candidate as district head and then as district secretary, and with several of its members facing prosecution, almost certainly produced the April 2000 riot to demonstrate their continuing power. Nor were the riots isolated instances of the intertwining of politics and inter-religious violence during this period in Poso. In a number of smaller incidents between these riots, force or the threat thereof was deployed as a political tool. For this initial period of the conflict, violence stands out as 'politics by other means' (Brass 2003, van Klinken 2007), with small groups of politically-interested actors producing violence largely for their own gain.

Nevertheless, close examination of the violence reveals the actions of certain key actors not to be as predictable as Brass's political model of riot production may suggest. As flagged above, the actions of key Christian organizer Herman Parimo are puzzling, for instance, if viewed solely through the prism of political rationality. To recap, Parimo was linked by patronage ties to Protestant district head candidate Yahya Patiro, but greatly harmed his patron's electoral chances by mobilizing large crowds and then leading them into the city. These actions provided the kernel of truth for Patiro's Muslim opponents to sideline him from the district head election, and would likely have harmed his chances by polarising the vote even had he been able to participate. Seemingly, then, Parimo was not acting with the outcome of this election in mind.

Admittedly, an alternative political explanation would be to interpret Parimo's actions as a defensive show of force to establish Patiro as a credible political contender (van Klinken 2007:80). But this interpretation is inconsistent with Parimo's persistence during the riot in mobilizing supporters to fight. If his intent had been limited to a demonstration of force, having marshalled a sizeable crowd in Tagolu, it would have been sufficient (and prudent) for Parimo to accept the opportunity to back down when district authorities appealed to crowds to disperse immediately prior to the peak of the riot. If the riot had terminated at this point, before Parimo led crowds into the city, it would have been far more difficult for Patiro's opponents to plausibly frame the violence as Christian insurrection.

Instead, I argue that Parimo's actions show the power of violence to re-order actors' priorities during an episode. The effects of violence lead to a more contingent pattern of behaviour in riots, a corrective suggested by Hansen (2006:105) in arguing that political actors may on occasion lose sight of the 'larger, supra-local picture'. In this case, Parimo's likely anger at events earlier in the riot appear to have led him to disregard the broader political situation. Correcting the affront implied by the attacks on the youth Roy's house and other Christian shops and residences, or by the timing of the liquor round up on Christmas day, may have become more important to Parimo than his coolly considered political interests. The importance of these events to Parimo may have been further magnified by the anxieties felt by Christians over their place in Poso district, as outlined in the previous chapter.

The April 2000 riot also provides a further example of the insufficiency of political interests to account completely for the actions of key actors. The focus in this example is the Muslim faction who almost certainly instigated the violence to demonstrate their power. Two days before this riot concluded, these men arguably achieved their primary aim, as a peace meeting with the governor, provincial police chief and other senior officials provided a forum for them to voice their demands. Having stated their case directly to the governor at this meeting, further violence was unlikely to produce additional political gains for them. Yet violence resumed almost directly after this meeting and continued for another two days. How are we to explain this continuation? Admittedly, contingency may be part of the answer – maybe the violence would have stopped sooner if the Muslim youth Ulan had not been murdered on the morning of 19 April. Another alternative is to attribute violence after the meeting to ordinary community members, who we would then assume to be less interested or unaware of political outcomes and instead motivated more importantly by enmity for their opponents.

I believe there is some truth to each of these explanations. But equally, we may interpret the continuation of violence as consistent with the decision of this faction to instigate attacks against Christian communities in the first place. This decision stemmed at least in part from the enmity harboured by key faction members towards local Christians. Much as violence following the peace meeting would not further advance their political interests, the period did present a further opportunity to attack a disliked opponent, at a time when the police were unlikely to act to stop them.

Despite this limitation of the model in fully accounting for the actions of political actors, by the time of the April 2000 riot, violence had clearly been established as an available political tool in Poso. Perhaps surprisingly then, the association of violence with politics was not the key legacy from these two riots for the further escalation of violence in Poso. In fact, when a small group of Christian men drove an escalation of the violence to widespread killing in May 2000, there was little link to district politics. Instead, as I will set out in the next chapter, the lived experience of loss from these riots was an important motivation for these men to promote a large-scale campaign of violence. Nor would this campaign have been possible without the increased polarization of religious identity that resulted from these riots, or absent the clear demonstration that the state would not act effectively to prevent attacks.

CHAPTER FOUR

A DIVISION OF LABOUR IN KILLING

In the middle of the April 2000 riot in Poso, the governor of Central Sulawesi visited Christians who had fled the city and made the following request to them, 'I would ask you not to seek revenge. Let it be God who strikes back.'¹ When the riot ended several days later, few people in Poso shared the governor's optimism that God would be the next to strike. Instead, many of the district's residents appear to have expected a more immediate and worldly resumption of the violence. Villages began to make local preparations to face possible further clashes; a sub-section of Poso's Christian community went one step further, and began to prepare to perpetrate large-scale reprisals.

The result of these preparations was a sudden and dramatic escalation of violence in Poso in late May 2000. For two weeks, law and order in the district broke down almost completely. This campaign of violence was ostensibly targeted at the known Muslim 'provocateurs' of these two riots, but in fact did not harm any of these men. Instead, crowds of Christians commonly referred to as the '*kelompok merah*' (red group) attacked whichever Muslims stood against them, burning villages and public facilities, while some Christian combatants also killed overwhelmed adversaries and prisoners. In contrast to the preceding urban riots, the intensity of violence in this episode more closely resembled a largely one-sided war. When security forces finally moved decisively to halt the violence at the start of the second week of June, they found piles of bodies crudely buried in shallow mass graves, and others dumped in the river flowing from the highlands out to sea through the middle of the district capital. In all, at least 246 people, mostly Muslims, had been killed (*Laporan Gubernur* n.d.), while tens of thousands of others had fled the district by land and by sea.² The physical destruction wrought during this episode was also immense, as crowds had burned thousands of houses and other buildings in villages spread across at least six different sub-districts.

Interneccine violence of this magnitude, in this case mostly perpetrated with crude weapons, frequently conjures images of neighbour attacking neighbour. In his commentary on perpetrator accounts of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, for instance, Hatzfeld (2005:66) observes, 'The killers did not have to pick out their victims [as Tutsis]: they knew them personally. Everyone knows everything in a village.' In the context of civil war, Kalyvas (2006:330-363) notes that civil war violence across times and locations has been observed to be 'intimate', a fight of 'neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend'. He himself modifies this observation somewhat, arguing that most individuals are averse to themselves perpetrating homicidal violence, but nevertheless posits that civil war circumstances generate an abundance of malicious denunciations in which intimates and equals are given up to be killed.

A close look at the May-June 2000 violence in Poso reveals a different pattern. In general, neighbour did not kill neighbour. Instead, a stark division of labour was to be found at the heart of this violence, greatly facilitating its rapid escalation. A loosely organized core of Christian combatants, who trained and manufactured weapons prior to the violence, moved

¹ 'Ribuan Warga Poso Mengungsi', *Surya*, n.d. (probably 19 April 2000).

² Given the breakdown of law and order and the political uses to which a lower or higher figure for casualties could be turned, no accurate figure is ever likely to emerge for how many people were killed in May-June 2000. Official estimates of casualties in large-scale Indonesian riots, such as the governor's estimate quoted in the main text, have generally been held to be conservative. The same governor's report provides a figure of just under 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Much as this figure represents approximately one quarter of the district population, it may also be conservative.

throughout the district and were responsible for the majority of the killing. Admittedly, in perpetrating their campaign of violence, these core combatants' relied crucially upon the mobilization of crowds of ordinary community members as rank-and-file combatants. These crowds precipitated the breakdown of law and order which provided the space required by this core group to operate. Moreover, many of these rank-and-file were recruited ad hoc to attack neighbouring villages, thereby creating the space for killing to occur. But such clashes typically produced few deaths, meaning that few rank-and-file murdered an adversary. Instead, the majority of those killed were overpowered combatants or prisoners. This division of labour thereby aided the escalation, because most community members needed only to tacitly approve of deadly violence, rather than directly confront the moral dilemma of killing.

The existence and importance of such a division of labour has rarely been emphasized in the study of the large-scale post-Suharto communal conflicts. But observers of mass killing, genocide, and civil war have frequently highlighted the diversity of types and levels of participation within these large-scale violent episodes. Scholars of each form of violence have argued that small groups of men may bear principal responsibility for immense campaigns of killing, often times far beyond the scale of the Poso violence. Such campaigns typically require only a small percentage of the population to kill, and moreover may require only weak support from non-participants. For instance, in a comparative study of episodes of mass killings – the intentional killing of groups of at least 50,000 noncombatants in five or fewer years – Valentino (2004:31) stresses the determining influence wielded by small leadership groups or individual leaders. For these small groups to instigate and organize killings requires little more than what Valentino terms the 'negative support' of the broader public, 'the inability of victims to escape or defend themselves, the absence of organized domestic or international opposition to perpetrators, and the lack of public willingness to take personal risk on behalf of others' (2004:32). Leaders can organize mass killings with just indifference and complicity because the killing itself is also carried out by small groups of perpetrators, larger than the core group of leaders but still a small percentage of the overall population. Moreover, the perpetrator group is typically far less numerous than their victims. Valentino finds these core perpetrators to typically be drawn from military, paramilitary or police organizations, with self-selection of violent individuals and situational pressures more important to their willingness to kill than deeply held convictions.

In his study of the Rwanda genocide, Straus (2006) explicitly distinguishes his analysis from Valentino, arguing for a greater rate of active societal participation in the killing, including the participation of many ordinary civilians. His estimate of the perpetrator group in this genocide is between 175,000 to 210,000 Hutu males, around 17-18 per cent of the adult Hutu male population. Between them, these men were responsible for at least 500,000 civilian deaths. Nevertheless, Straus underlines the importance both of a small group of hardline leaders at national level in instigating the violence, and a division of labour among perpetrators at local level in perpetrating the killings. National-level hardliners gained control of state institutions after the assassination of the Rwandan president, enabling them to enact genocide against Tutsis as a de facto policy. Killing commenced in each locality when local leaders who favoured obedience to this policy took control. Such local leaders relied on a core group of local perpetrators whom Straus terms 'thugs': men with previous firearms training or younger farmers. These thugs impelled the participation of other Hutu males, generating the levels of participation indicated by Straus's figure of 17-18 per cent. Over 70 per cent of Straus' sample of perpetrators claimed not to have directly killed a single person during the genocide, however, contributing to an impression that thugs (and armed militia) may have been responsible for the majority of the killing (Straus 2006:112; Straus 2004:94-95).

In the case of civil war, his observations on intimacy notwithstanding, Kalyvas (2006:102) cites ‘an empirical regularity supported by considerable evidence [...] that only a small minority of people are actively involved in civil wars, either as fighters or active supporters.’ This proportion may be as small as 5 to 7 per cent, although some of the estimates Kalyvas cites are somewhat higher. Most other people exhibit only ‘a combination of weak preference and opportunism’ with regard to the violence, ‘both of which are subject to survival considerations’ (2006:103).

The implication of such analysis is that the activities of the core group of leaders and perpetrators are a crucial factor to be understood in the study of an overall episode of violence. Indeed, Valentino (2004:2-4) explicitly recommends such an analytical approach, suggesting a ‘strategic perspective’ that begins by understanding the goals and strategies of high leaders and investigates why they turn to mass killings to achieve them. The focus of this chapter thus is to identify who this group were, how they prepared for and produced the violence, and what they were aiming to achieve.

Another implication of the observed division of labour and minimal requirement for popular support or participation is to lower the threshold for the escalation to widespread killing. But to note a reduced requirement for support is not to explain why ordinary community members provided even the level of support that they did. After all, tacit support for or indifference to widespread murder does not present itself as a normal state of affairs. Moreover, intuitively, individuals ought to face a greater dilemma in deciding to support a campaign of killing than to take part in a riot in which few or no people are killed. A desire for revenge for preceding violence, amplified by pre-existing tensions, the pursuit of private interests and loyalty to patronage leaders would all have contributed to community participation in the May-June violence. But a comprehensive explanation of community support for the violence requires consideration of the contribution of the fear of real and anticipated violence to this support. Such fears hardened identities and placed pressures on community members either to take part or to flee.

A Core of Combatants

The comparative literature identifies two distinct groups at the heart of large-scale violence – the leaders of the violence, who may not take part directly, and the core of actual perpetrators of killings. In the localized context of Poso, this distinction blurs. There may have been some non-participant leaders, but many of the men I identify as leaders took part directly in attacks, and possibly also in killings.

The members of this organized core were not recognized local politicians, although some were civil servants, nor did they occupy positions of formal authority in the Central Sulawesi Protestant Church (GKST). Instead the key leaders were typically figures of some previous social standing, but who rose to particular prominence in May-June because they were motivated to fight on account of direct losses for themselves or their families during the December 1998 or April 2000 violence. These men also drew in their family members, whereas others who shared their experience of loss joined as core combatants. Chief among these core combatants were the youths displaced from Lombogia during the April 2000 riot.

Indeed, one Christian who fled the city during the April 2000 riot described the Lombogia IDPs as the ‘spearhead’ of Christian forces.³

By some accounts, of the men directly affected by the preceding violence the most senior in the *kelompok merah* hierarchy was the indigenous civil servant A.L. Lateka. Lateka’s brother-in-law, Herman Parimo, had been the key Christian organizer during the December 1998 riot. Lateka reportedly attended Parimo’s trial and, even before the trial began, wrote letters on his brother-in-law’s behalf. He appealed to the Supreme Court for the proceedings to be expedited, and wrote to the governor accusing certain Muslim figures of being the real culprits for the violence (M. Situmorang 2000; Aragon 2001:63). In the event, while serving his lengthy prison term, Parimo fell ill and died while receiving treatment in Makassar on 7 May 2000, just two weeks before the start of the May-June 2000 campaign of violence (*Parimo Supreme Court Decision* 2004:11-12). Immediately before he took part in this violence, in which he himself was killed, Lateka was living in the provincial capital Palu, where he was a mid-level manager at the Central Sulawesi Regional Investment Coordination Board. In addition to Lateka’s involvement, other Christians also named two of Lateka’s brothers, Bakte and Kade, as key combatants in May-June 2000.⁴

Another man directly affected by the preceding violence whom other Christians have identified as an important leader was Paulus Tungkanan, a retired police officer from the South Sulawesi Toraja ethnic group. Tungkanan lived in Lombogia prior to the conflict, where he was wounded during the April 2000 riot, when Muslim youths attacked him while he was negotiating with them alongside the ward chief. He then fled the city the next morning and made his way to Tentena, where he has lived since. After arriving in Tentena, Tungkanan acted as a, or, according to several Christian detainees in Palu prison, the key Christian leader in the May-June 2000 violence.⁵ In a similar pattern to Lateka and his relatives, two of Tungkanan’s adult sons, Angky and Berny (the latter killed in 2005), were also rumoured to have played important roles in the May-June 2000 violence.⁶

In addition to men directly affected by the preceding violence, a second distinct set of leaders and core combatants were a group of Catholic migrants from Flores island, who had settled in Central Sulawesi in neighbouring Morowali district. These men came to Poso under the leadership of one Fabianus Tibo, who had lived in Sulawesi for several decades. Tibo had previously served a six-year prison term in Poso in the early 1990s for his involvement in a dispute between transmigrants from Bali and Flores, in which four Balinese were killed. This conviction is the source of a widespread belief that Tibo was a thug paid to participate in the May-June attacks, although no specific details are known. During the May-June 2000

³ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004.

⁴ Lateka’s niece Bea is also mentioned in the interrogation deposition of Yenny Tadengga, a woman arrested after the first incident of the May-June violence. Interviews with a Tambaro resident, April 2004, May 2004; interview with Fabianus Tibo, 28 July 2003; *Tadengga Deposition* (2000: 2).

⁵ Interviews with Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus da Silva, Palu, July 2003; interview with a Poso man detained in Palu, date withheld.

⁶ Paulus Tungkanan himself has repeatedly denied allegations that he was involved in the May-June 2000 violence. In my first interview with him in 2002, however, Tungkanan complained that he had lost influence among Poso’s Christians once their security situation improved, at which point the community paid more heed to indigenous inhabitants. (Tungkanan is originally from Tana Toraja in South Sulawesi.) Although he declined to discuss what role he might have played in May-June, his complaint suggests his authority rose and fell with the community’s perceived need to perpetrate violence. In my view, his complaint thus partially corroborates the many statements by other interviewees that Tungkanan was one of the leaders of Christian forces. Interviews with Paulus Tungkanan, February 2002, February 2006, July 2007.

violence Tibo appears to have acted as an important field commander for the *kelompok merah*, although he was by no means the highest leader.⁷ Another of his associates, Dominggus Da Silva was also an important core combatant. Along with a third associate, Marinus Riwu, each were sentenced to death in 2001 and executed in 2006. Less is known about the precise role of the remainder of Tibo's group, who appear to have been involved in the violence to a lesser degree.

Some observers have also suggested that the Central Sulawesi Protestant Church played an important role in leading the May-June violence. Although members of the church were in contact with key Christian combatants at the height of the violence, the available evidence falls well short of proving that the church exercised authority over attacks. Indeed, the church as an institution twice declined to exercise its immense local authority to lead the violence when requested to do so by community members. It first rejected such a request at an audience with IDPs from Lombogia ward immediately after the April 2000 riot. Subsequently, church leaders again refused immediately prior to the commencement of the May-June 2000 violence, instead declaring anyone who chose to fight to be a 'security disturbing gang' (Damanik 2003: 35). As outlined below, however, individual church members provided important social approval to the actions of those waging violence.

Outside of these core leaders and combatants, others around the district were also making preparations in the expectation that further violence would follow the April 2000 riot. Although this riot had been confined within the city, its aftermath had affected the atmosphere throughout many parts of the district. A key mechanism in raising tensions was the displacement of large parts of the city's Christian population as a result of widespread arson attacks on Lombogia and Kasintuwu wards. In areas that received these IDP flows, such as Sepe village near the city and the district's main Christian town Tentena, their arrival spurred religious solidarity and added to anticipation of further unrest. In Sepe, for instance, villagers placed a chicane barrier on the road to control traffic through the village, and commenced a night-time patrol (*Tingginehe deposition* 2000). Around the same time, a youth from a majority Muslim village also recounted the rising mutual suspicions and expectation of large-scale violence:

So they [Christians] were making preparations, we also made preparations, but on a village by village basis [...] we made as many *dum-dum* [home-made 'bazooka'] as we could, as many *peluncur* ['launchers'] as we could, arrows, and we used the bombs that were [normally] used to bomb fish for our preparations.⁸

IDP flows are a widely cited mechanism for the diffusion of violence in large-scale episodes of unrest, and it is likely that these mutual suspicions and ad hoc preparations would have led eventually to at least localized clashes between villages in Poso. But, as it turned out, this mechanism did not account for the initiation of the violence. Instead, it was the preparations undertaken by the core group of Christian combatants that led to the occurrence of the May-June violence and produced the scale of the escalation.

⁷ For details, see McRae (2007: 87-93).

⁸ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003

Training to Attack

For several weeks prior to the commencement of the May-June 2000 violence, the core group of Christian combatants undertook rudimentary military-style training and manufactured home-made weapons. Given the evident mis-steps once the violence began, it is unlikely that the leaders of this group had by this stage planned meticulously the extent of the campaign of violence to come. But these preparations are a clear sign that they had in mind a more sustained campaign of violence than either of the preceding urban riots, a campaign that would require a much greater commitment from its core combatants than the ad hoc actions of rioters.

Preparations appear to have centred around Kelei village, southeast of Tentena, which was the home village of key *kelompok merah* leader A.L. Lateka. As these preparations were clandestine and most Christians deny that they took place, it is difficult to provide a detailed account. Muslim accounts are dominated by the court testimony of a Muslim youth, Anton, who claimed to have infiltrated the *kelompok merah* preparations. His testimony contained many inconsistencies, however, and appears to have been exaggerated and false.⁹ Anton described military-style training taking place for 42 days, involving 700 participants, and made the implausible claim that he had witnessed the delivery by air of 727 factory-standard weapons to the trainees. The only other direct accounts of the training in Kelei available to me come from the interrogation depositions of two travelling companions of the Catholic migrant Fabianus Tibo and another trainee from Sepe village. Each deposition forms part of the trial dossier of Fabianus Tibo. As I do not consider Anton's account to be credible, my account of the training is exclusively drawn from these three depositions.

Judging by comparison of these men's accounts, training in Kelei had started by the second week of May 2000, and ceased at least temporarily on 21 May, two days before the May-June violence began. We cannot estimate with any certainty how many people took part, but the subsequent importance of ad hoc recruitment prior to each attack during the May-June violence suggests the group numbered closer to 100 people than 700. The men's depositions provide few details of the precise form of training or the identity of the trainers. One man said that the training took place away from the village itself, with two sessions each day (*Tingginehe Deposition* 2000:4). Each man also mentions the Tibo-associate Marinus Riwu as an instructor in the use of arrows. Tibo himself is described in two of the depositions giving directions to trainees on what they would do in Poso. 'Anyone not wearing a black shirt and a *kongkoli* (forest grass) bracelet is an enemy and must be attacked. (Lewa Deposition 2000)' 'If [you meet] *kelompok putih* forces they must be killed. (Tingginehe Deposition 2000)' If this second statement can be taken at face value, it is a key indication that leaders had already made the decision to engage in widespread killing prior to the commencement of the May-June violence. In evaluating these comments, however, it is important to remember that the depositions in Indonesia are often not verbatim accounts of testimony, and that these documents were typed by investigators who were seeking to compile a case that Tibo had ordered others to murder during the May-June violence. None of the accounts mention A. L. Lateka appearing at the training, or in any capacity at all.

The three men also describe the manufacture of weapons in Kelei, including bows, arrows, *dum-dum* ('bazookas') and *peluncur* ('launchers'), According to one of the depositions, they

⁹ For details of the many inconsistencies in Anton's testimony see McRae (2007:99-100, 105-106).

also manufactured home-made firearms (*Sina Deposition* 2000). Although not mentioned in the depositions, Christians also appear to have manufactured contrived body armour for some of their combatants, either by making thick rubber vests or even seemingly solid metal vests (Al-Anshari and Suhardi 2006:75, 80).

During the period that Christians were training in Kelei, it appears that some of the participants took part in an attack on a nearby Muslim settlement.¹⁰ This attack was part of a series of disturbances in the southeast part of Poso district targeting Muslim settlements between 16-19 May 2000.¹¹ This violence did not escape the attention of residents of Poso town and may have raised tensions there. But because these attacks did not immediately precipitate retaliatory violence in the city or generate widespread hostilities along religious lines, they are more accurately understood as the immediate precursors to the May-June violence, rather than as a direct part of the campaign of violence itself.

Instead, the May-June violence commenced as a direct result of the departure from Kelei of two groups of Christians on 22 May. Each headed for the city, with one group under the leadership of Tibo, the other apparently led by A.L. Lateka. Before tracing the actions of these groups, I will first outline the aims of the *kelompok merah* leaders and key combatants during the May-June 2000 violence.

Eliminating Rioters and Provocateurs

The leaders of the May-June violence were not pursuing a specific political goal. Through their campaign of violence they sought to assert the position of the Christian and indigenous community in Poso, but the episode was not linked to contest for a specific political office in any meaningful sense. Instead, through violence leaders sought to correct the perceived effrontery of rioters and provocateurs from the preceding violence, and to take action against these foes when they believed that the state would not do so. This perception of the need for drastic action and the belief that they might get away it produced what Aragon (2001) has described as a logic of ‘multiplied revenge [...] the idea that an extra wallop or calculated punishment was required in the vindictive act’.

The clearest single statement by a *kelompok merah* leader of the rationale for the May-June violence is provided by ‘Lateka’s mandate’, a one page typewritten letter addressed to the National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas HAM). The letter has been attributed to A. L. Lateka, but first came to attention only when read out publicly several days after his death. By analysing each of the points of the letter, we can draw out the boundaries of *kelompok merah* in-group identity, Lateka’s formulation of their adversaries, and his rationale for the violence. The letter is reproduced here in full:¹²

¹⁰ Interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

¹¹ For various versions of these disturbances, see ‘Sandi Pembantaian di Frekuensi 425-225’, *MAL*, Fourth Week, June 2000, p. 11; FSIR (2000:14); Lasahido et al (2003:51); Ecip and Waru (2001:70); interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

¹² I have translated what purports to be a photocopy of the original letter. Substantially similar versions of the letter are reproduced in the prison memoir of the Christian minister who first read out the letter publicly, and a contemporary news item. See Damanik (2003:31-32); ‘Memperjuangkan Amanat Lateka’ *Formasi*, no. 48, July 2000, p. 7.

To: National Commission for Human Rights
Jl Latuharhari 4b
Central Jakarta

Demands of our Struggle

Aim

1. Struggle to restore the human rights of the Poso community, which have been systematically laid waste.
2. Free the Poso community of the oppression of rioters.

Target

1. Eliminate/arrest the rioters/provocateurs who have thus far been protected by the government

Demands

1. Free Poso of rioters/provocateurs whom the authorities have already identified.
2. The patience of Poso's people is at an end and the time has come to assert that Poso's people are the indigenous inhabitants who must live in freedom in their own birthplace.
3. Because Lombogia, Kasintuwu and churches have been razed/burned by the Muslim rioters/provocateurs it will be our struggle to raze all of the villages of the rioters/provocateurs (Moengko, Kayamanya, Bonesompe and Lawanga)
4. The security forces should stop taking sides as thus far in reality the security forces have always obstructed us, meaning crowds following the instructions of provocateurs have been free to burn Christian residents' houses and buildings.
5. Give us the opportunity and freedom to help the government to pursue the provocateurs/rioters and to take action against them as a guarantee of restoration of security as a component of national security.
6. It is a matter of deep regret that the security forces have not overcome the rioters' brutality, but instead have let them loot, burn people's houses and churches.
7. The support of the central government will be inseparable from the achievement of the aims and target of our struggle.

On behalf of the Pejuang Pemulihan Keamanan Poso (Champions of the Restoration of Security in Poso)
Ir. Adven L. Lateka¹³

Two key phrases in the letter indicate Lateka's conceptualisation of the boundaries of *kelompok merah* in-group identity: 'Poso's people are the indigenous inhabitants' and 'Christian residents'. These two identity markers – ethnic and religious – do not correspond exactly in Poso, but they are inter-related. For instance, a non-indigenous Christian core combatant who fought during the May-June violence started his narrative of the conflict by remarking, 'We feel that we are the indigenous residents here.'¹⁴

It is clear that both religious identity and indigenous grievance were important motivations for some combatants in the May-June violence. Anthropologists have highlighted 'insider-outsider friction over economic use of land' (Aragon 2001:57) as exerting a 'mutually reinforcing' effect upon religious divisions (Acciaioli 2001:85). Lateka's letter touches upon this issue of land and territory, saying 'Poso's people are the indigenous inhabitants who must

¹³ Ir. – *Insinyur* (an engineering degree).

¹⁴ Interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

live in freedom in their own birthplace.’ The relevance of both identity markers to the May-June violence are also neatly captured in three pieces of graffiti that were photographed by a Muslim chronicler: ‘Pamona Poso my birth land, indigenous people of Poso unite’, ‘Christians are free’, ‘Muslims must leave the land of Poso’ (Tim Pencari Bukti n.d.).

But observers who have taken the additional step of arguing that the conflict is best understood primarily in ethnic terms are mistaken. Aditjondro (2004) in particular argues that the description of Poso as a ‘religious conflict’ should be exchanged for ‘a paradigm of the displacement of Poso’s indigenous communities’, with the May-June 2000 violence understood as an enterprise to ‘reclaim their customary land from migrants who have defiled it.’ Two features of the violence make the primacy of religion clear, however. Ethnic ties did not lead certain individuals to fight against their co-religionists in Poso, in the way that Muslim and Christian Kao-ethnic people fought together against Muslim Makian-ethnic migrants in North Maluku (Wilson 2005:87-89), to give one example.¹⁵ Nor do *kelompok merah* members appear to have confined the target of their attacks to only particular ethnic groups among Poso’s Muslims.

For his part, Lateka mostly mentions neither religion nor ethnicity in identifying the *kelompok merah*’s adversaries, making mention of the word ‘Muslim’ only once in his letter. Instead, Lateka repeatedly refers to ‘rioters’ and ‘provocateurs’, with one or both of these groups mentioned eight times in the letter’s ten points. He states that the *kelompok merah* will eliminate/arrest, pursue/take actions against and raze the villages of these groups. Lateka himself did not name names, but the identity of the men Christians considered to be provocateurs was well known. Tibo, for example, named the Muslim men Adnan Aarsal, Daeng Raja, Maro Tompo, Agfar Patanga, Nani Lamusu and Mandor Pahe when interviewed by the press at the conclusion of the May-June 2000 violence.¹⁶ Other Christian combatants recounted similar lists of names during my interviews with them. These men – a mix of businessmen, contractors and civil servants – were part of the Muslim faction discussed in Chapter Three, members of which allegedly directed Muslim crowds in December 1998 and almost certainly instigated the April 2000 riot as a demonstration of their power..

Lateka’s elision of the word ‘Muslim’ is typical of other *kelompok merah* rhetoric surrounding the May-June 2000 violence. For instance, a core combatant recalled of the time, ‘[W]e had a banner on which we wrote in big letters, ‘We are not fighting against Muslims nor are we their enemies. It is rioters that we are looking for.’’¹⁷ How little this distinction could mean in practice was evident in the man’s clarification in the same interview that a ‘rioter’ was ‘whoever [stood and] faced us’. Indeed, even cursory examination of the May-June 2000 violence makes it clear that the *kelompok merah* were in fact fighting against Muslims, even if in such rhetoric combatants asserted that they were not fighting their adversaries because they were Muslims. Nevertheless, the rhetoric still had concrete manifestations, most notably the disproportionate care *kelompok merah* members usually took not to burn mosques in the villages that they attacked. A chronology of the Poso conflict

¹⁵ I have found only one reference to Muslims fighting for the *kelompok merah*, in a contemporary press interview with a *kelompok merah* combatant: ‘And you should remember that our group are not all Christians, there are several Muslims.’ Considering its uniqueness, it is possible the reference is spurious. See ‘Hanya Dendam Pada Penindas’, *Formasi*, June 2000, p. 6.

¹⁶ Similar transcripts of the interview, which most likely took place on 8 June, appear in Palu-based tabloids *MAL* and *Formasi*. In the *Formasi* version, two additional names appear in Tibo’s list: Andi Ridwan and Mat Laparigi. See ‘Kami Hanya Mencari Provokator’, *Formasi*, July 2000, p. 10; ‘Saya Ajak Masyarakat Muslim Berdamai’, *MAL*, Fourth Week, June 2000, p. 9.

¹⁷ Interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

compiled by a Muslim organization in Palu lists just six mosques and one prayer house (*mushollah*) burned during the May-June 2000 violence, along with as many as 3,492 houses (FSIR 2000: 40). Of course, the decision not to burn mosques may have been a tactical move to try to keep the scale of the conflict confined to within the district and to avoid involving Muslim populations elsewhere, a tactic observers have also identified in the West Kalimantan (Peluso 2006:111) and North Maluku conflicts (Wilson 2005:88). But it is also possible that the reluctance to burn mosques reflected an anxiety on the part of the perpetrators that attacking a group because of their religion may not have been legitimate, or may not have been perceived as legitimate by the broader community. After all, Muslims had installed a banner almost identical to the one described above after the December 1998 riot, when as the demographic majority in the province and the country they had little reason to fear widening the conflict to involve other Christian populations.

We can discern two reasons in Lateka's letter as to why he believed the December 1998 and April 2000 riots required such a drastic response. First, the letter displays indignant anger at the effrontery of the perpetrators of violence against Christian neighbourhoods during the two riots – 'the patience of Poso's people is at an end' – leading to a justification of the May-June violence as revenge or retaliation, expressed explicitly in Demand 3. Although Lateka does not mention the death-in-custody of his brother-in-law Parimo following the December 1998 riot, it is hard to imagine that this did not loom large in his thoughts. For a group that was much broader than just the leaders who expressed these sentiments, feelings of indignant anger at a perceived affront would have fed off lived experience, be it forced displacement, loss of property, or, for a few people, injury or even the death of a relative. Such feelings that they had been intolerably affronted as well as a desire for revenge were encapsulated in two common phrases that Christians use in description of the May-June violence: 'The third [episode, i.e. May-June] happened because of the first and the second,' referring to a periodisation of the conflict which dubs the December and April riots the first and second episodes respectively, and 'Having turned both cheeks we had no cheek left to turn.' This second statement is particularly rich in its potential interpretations. At one level it explains away the defeats of the first and second periods as the results of Christian stoicism, thus nullifying these previous riots as an accurate test of the relative strength of local Christian and Muslim populations. On another level, the saying also justifies May-June violence as reasonable by suggesting that Christians had entered a period that went far beyond the normal limits of stoicism.

But more than indignant anger at previous affronts, the letter displays a preoccupation with the failure of the government and security forces to take action in response to the December and April riots. His preoccupation is evident in the fact that four of the letter's ten points touch upon the government's or security forces' past performance in Poso. Such a preoccupation could have contributed to a drastic, violent response in three ways. First, under the rationale the letter typifies, this failure of the state to provide protection renders Muslim rioters and provocateurs as an ongoing and immediate threat. Epitomising this feeling of threat, several Christian combatants recalled that they were convinced that after the April 2000 violence, Tentena would have been the next location to be attacked if they had not themselves taken action. This idea of an impending threat led many Christians to describe the May-June violence as 'defense of their territory' or at best as a war (implying the fighting was two-sided), even though the violence wrought on Muslims and their villages far exceeded

anything that had previously occurred in the area.¹⁸ Second, the perceived failure of the security forces to act also provided a justification for Poso's Christians to take matters into their own hands, reflected in the two points of Lateka's letter that invite the government to join with him to take action against those responsible for the preceding violence. Third, the past inaction of the security forces may well have encouraged Christian core combatants to believe that they could get away with their campaign of violence. Such an effect would be consistent with the many analyses of diverse forms of inter-group violence that highlight the likelihood of impunity as an important enabling factor (Horowitz 2001, Brass 2003, Valentino 2004:40).

The following quotes are long, but encapsulate many of the themes identified above. The first quote is from a core combatant, the second is from a Christian community member.

First quote:

[During the December 1998 riot] we thought, 'Let's just surrender and make peace.' It was peaceful, but all the while they were consolidating. Another small blow-up developed into another large blow-up [ie, the April 2000 riot], but we were able to subdue things, because we, Christians, told people in church, 'Let's not be like this, let's not listen to them.' So we tried to just take it again, obediently, but in the end the third [period, that is the May-June 2000 violence] was triggered. Ah the third one, you could say there was no mercy in the third one. Because we had [endured it] twice, we weren't able to hold back. We struck back. We struck back right to the very last drop If we hadn't countered them, Tentena would have been razed. You could say [our attacks] were just defensive, defending our territory, because our religion had been trodden upon and insulted, our church had been burned, and they even said, 'The Lord Jesus is a Pig' and 'The Lord Jesus has Flea-Ridden Long Hair', various types of insults, but we took it all on the chin. But because we saw their plans were getting increasingly out of hand, we countered them.¹⁹

Second quote:

The most sensitive thing for the community here was that their churches had been burned – the Pentecostal church, the Pniel church, the Advent church – as long as it was a church, even a Catholic church, it had been burned. If their houses had been burned, their possessions looted, well ... they could still be stoic, but as soon as the churches were burned, and then there had been someone killed, and they saw at the time that the person killed, a Torajan, was killed in front of the security forces, who did nothing, they just held their weapons [interviewee motions as if holding a weapon by his side]. When the looting was happening, I saw it – the security forces were there but they just stood like this, with their weapon [at their side], so the community didn't believe in the security forces anymore, not all of the security forces, but the rogues who had been on duty. So without this belief, where else could they seek protection. That was the cause, back then there was also information that they were planning a third [riot], and in this third one it would be Christian religious figures and community figures who would be murdered. So as I see it, the third [period, that is the May-June violence] was revenge, before they attack us better to attack them ... If they had attacked, it was certain they would have attacked in this direction [towards Tentena], but instead we attacked in that direction [towards the city].²⁰

¹⁸ The idea of defence most often explicitly referred to territory, namely the assertion that Christians were not aggressively attacking Muslims' villages but instead were defending their own villages. One combatant though expressed the idea of defence in family terms, 'By chance I was given the task of leading sector 'X' [detail deleted by author from interview transcript], because my father had been wounded, so the time had come for his son to defend (him).' Interview with a Christian combatant, date and location withheld.

¹⁹ Interview with a former Christian combatant, February 2002.

²⁰ Interview with Christian community member, July 2003.

These two quotes exhibit an additional strand of motivation for Christians or a rationale for their violence, namely their feeling that the Christian religion had been insulted. While some combatants were extremely reluctant to state that they were fighting against Muslims on account of religion, others in fact explicitly depicted the third period violence as a religious enterprise. Indeed, even a single individual could be inconsistent within the one interview: the same man who described the *kelompok merah* banner's declaration that their enemies were not Muslims also referred to the *kelompok merah*'s rules of engagement as the 'ten laws', apparently an allusion to the Ten Commandments.²¹ Another non-combatant who sympathised with the violence described these rules of engagement in even more explicitly religious terms:

In Biblical terms not a single item could be looted, not even a single needle could be taken. There was a rape, so it was compulsory for the person who perpetrated the rape to be killed, and so it was done.²² There could not be any wrongdoing in this episode. A grand retaliation, with prayers, and greetings 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'²³

Some combatants also described God as an agent on their side:

When we deployed that night, we sang songs like 'Onward Christian Soldiers' all the way to the battlefield. We went until twelve at night, so we still had a chance to rest. When we arrived in the field, as light approached I prayed, I said 'God, with the rays of the sun, I hope you give your love to us. Now we are facing the enemy. Help us Lord, break their bones, you own their souls, but we are taking the devils that have possessed their lives. If you are on our side, who can resist us.' When there were only ten metres left between us and the enemy, they shot at us but not one of us was hit, not even one. Their bullets just went overhead, sometimes only air would come out of their weapons. I was surprised at the terrific power that was with us, we faced them numbering around 150 people, whereas there were a thousand of them, but imagine, although no other part of them was wounded, their necks broke, that's what surprised us. When we were able to kill them with machetes or bows, when we cut them, a pig ate them. Yes, a pig, a group of pigs, hundreds ate them, which made us think, maybe this is what they meant when they said 'The Lord Jesus is a pig'.²⁴

The man's reference to Jesus manifesting himself on the battlefield as a pig was only half joking, if it was at all.

The importance of religion to the violence necessitates a diversion from the discussion of aims to focus on the nature of the role played by the Central Sulawesi Protestant Church. As discussed above, the church as an institution does not appear to have exercised its authority to lead attacks, but some ministers of the church did confer social approval on the violence. Several ministers whom I interviewed clearly strongly approved of the May-June 2000 violence, and others were doubtless frustrated with the GKST's formal stance. Consistent with such approval, some combatants told anecdotes of local GKST ministers blessing combatants before they departed for clashes. The church's ostensibly humanitarian Crisis

²¹ Interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

²² This refers to the murder of Christian man Wens Tinegari, cited by several combatants in support of assertions that Christians would not tolerate rape or atrocities within their ranks.

²³ Interview with a Christian man, January 2002.

²⁴ Interview with a Tentena resident, February 2002.

Centre, under the leadership of influential minister Rinaldy Damanik, also issued a number of statements and reports on the May-June 2000 violence which at the least tacitly condoned it. Such blessings and statements would have bestowed social respectability on the decision to fight, a respectability that may have been strengthened because some important combatants were also members of their villages' local church committees.²⁵ Wilson (2008) highlights the importance of social respectability bestowed by religious figures in the context of the conflict in neighbouring North Maluku province, writing 'religious sanction for violence alienated any remorse that Christian men may have felt, increasing both their sense of purpose and their ability to carry out further atrocities without guilt.' Horowitz (2001:266) makes the same point but in a more general context: 'If it [that is, ethnic violence] did not have legitimacy and social support, otherwise respectable people would not participate, and perhaps more important, could not resume ordinary life, free of social sanction, after the fact.' Thus irrespective of whether the Crisis Centre or any ministers of the church actually played any role in physically supporting combat, through their public condoning of violence they may have encouraged ordinary Christians to take part.

Initiating a campaign of killing

Although the core group of Christian combatants had undertaken training and manufactured weapons, they did not attempt a large-scale attack to initiate the May-June 2000 violence. Instead, they commenced their campaign on 23 May through a small-scale foray into Muslim-dominated areas of the city. There was little in this foray that suggested what was to come: the assault killed three people but the assailants were quickly forced to flee. It was not until two days after this attack, on 25 May, that the *kelompok merah* established a strategically located command post south of the city in Tagolu that would underpin a more concerted large-scale campaign of violence. The slow initial escalation of violence over the first two days of this episode underlines the negligence of the government and the security forces. Decisive action during this period could have headed off the campaign of violence before the complete breakdown of law and order, which subsequently made the task of stopping attacks much more difficult.

Immediately before the 23 May initiation of violence, Poso's residents suspected that the situation was about to deteriorate. Members of each religious community began to leave the city, transporting their possessions to safer locations, or headed to the military compound on the southern outskirts of town.²⁶ Both Muslims and Christians have subsequently built accusatory narratives around these departures from the city, which preceded the actual violence. Several Muslim residents of the city later cited the departure of their Christian neighbours as alleged evidence of these neighbours' foreknowledge of the May-June attacks. Conversely, a Christian figure from Poso depicted the decision of any Muslim who chose not to flee the city as a sign of aggressive intent: 'Muslims indigenous to Poso who chose not to get involved [in the violence] fled from Poso. The only ones left in the city were Bugis or from Gorontalo.'²⁷

For their part, the government and the security forces vacillated. Rather than bring extra personnel to Poso or make other visible moves that may have headed off the violence or lessened its scope, the acting Poso police chief simply urged residents through the media to

²⁵ On the intertwined nature of church and societal authority in Poso, see Schrauwers (2003:138).

²⁶ 'Eksodus di Poso Masih Berlanjut Terus', *Mercusuar*, 17 May 2000, p. 6.

²⁷ Interviews, Poso, Palu, January-February 2002.

ignore the rumours of coming violence.²⁸ Moreover, the district head was absent from Poso in South Sulawesi the day that the fighting began. Government and security force efforts on the final night before violence began, 22 May, epitomise their response to the developing crisis. With rumours rampant of an imminent attack on the city by Poso's Christians, the district administration contacted sub-district authorities in the majority-Christian town Tentena to seek clarification. When Tentena-based officials assured their counterparts in the city that no preparations for an attack were evident, the district government sent out a truck and loud hailer to circle the city's streets to assure the community that there would be no attack and to appeal for calm.

By the time of this announcement, however, A.L. Lateka and Fabianus Tibo were already in the city with their respective groups of assailants. Just hours remained until they would initiate their campaign of violence. Tibo had taken his group to the Santa Theresia boarding school in Moengko Baru ward, ostensibly to remove the children there from a rumoured attack. The precise whereabouts of Lateka's group within the city are not known, but given that they entered the city from the southwest before dawn on 23 May, it is possible that they first holed up in a majority Christian village on the fringes of the city, such as Lembomawo.

Lateka's group were the first to move. Numbering approximately fifteen people, all clad in black and armed with machetes, they made a pre-dawn foray into the Muslim-majority wards of Kayamanya and Moengko. At least initially, they appear to have pursued the plan set out in 'Lateka's mandate' to take action against known provocateurs. The group unsuccessfully targeted two of these men. They either entered the house of fish-trader Nani Lamusu or killed a man guarding the house, and also threw rocks at a car owned by construction contractor Mandor Pahe.²⁹ Instead of apprehending these provocateurs, however, the group hacked and stabbed to death three men who they encountered on the streets, including a policeman, whose pistol they seized (*Tibo Decision* 2001:10-14). They then fled to the nearby Santa Theresia Catholic School complex in Moengko, pursued by local Muslim residents. News of the murders then quickly drew a large crowd of Muslims to the school.

The arrival of Lateka's group at the school marked the first point at which the Catholic migrant Tibo came to public attention in Poso. When the Muslims pursuing Lateka's black-clad group arrived at the school, they found Tibo standing outside, also clad in black and armed with a machete, just as the members of Lateka's group had been. The police arrived shortly afterwards and entered into negotiations with Tibo, asking him to surrender and convincing him to hand his machete to them. Tibo denied any association with Lateka's group, saying he was at the school only to rescue to the children, and had himself been woken by the morning's commotion.³⁰ But his account does not ring true, given the numerous coincidences of his presence at the school, his black clothing and his weaponry.

Despite the presence of the police and an increasingly large crowd, just two of Tibo's group were arrested at the scene.³¹ A female member of Lateka's group was also apprehended at another clash in Gebangrejo ward later in the day (Tengko 2000:2; *Tadenga Deposition* 2000). Tibo himself and most of his men somehow managed to flee into the forested hills behind the complex. They were joined there by Lateka, who had been wounded, by his black-

²⁸ 'Jangan Mudah Terpancing Dengan Isu', *Mercusuar*, 20 May 2000, p. 7.

²⁹ Interview with a former Poso resident living in Tentena, February 2002; 'Poso Rusuh Lagi', *Mercusuar*, 24 May 2000, p. 11; (*Sasongko Deposition* 2000: 1-2).

³⁰ Interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003.

³¹ 'Pimpinan Perusuh Eks Napi Beteleme', *Mercusuar*, 25 May 2000.

clad group, the school's students and its teachers.³² All of these various escapees headed south to majority-Christian areas of Poso, eventually reaching Tentena. Behind them in the city, the crowd torched the school complex, including its church, and several nearby houses. Several houses were also burned on each of the next few days in Moengko and Kayamanya (Tengko 2000:1).³³

The murders on 23 May immediately exacerbated already heightened tensions within the city. Crowds of Muslims gathered at several locations, including the market, in anticipation of further unrest. There were reportedly two clashes in the south of the city later in the day, although it is not clear whether these were part of the same plan as the Moengko foray or were an unplanned side-effect. In the more serious of the two incidents, around a dozen houses were burned and several people were wounded when rival crowds clashed in Sayo ward.³⁴ Each of the Christian residents I interviewed who were still in the city at this point said that they then left by day's end.

The 23 May attack on Kayamanya and Moengko was clearly born out of the preparations for violence that core Christian combatants had been undertaking since at least early-May. Nevertheless, this attack had not gone particularly well from a Christian point of view. Lateka's group had not apprehended or killed any of their suspected provocateurs, Lateka himself had been wounded in the attack, and one of Lateka's group and two of Tibo's men had been arrested. The *kelompok merah* leaders' next move was to convene a meeting on the following day in Kelei village, the site of the pre-violence training. Attendees at this meeting reportedly included Lateka and Tibo, the retired police officer Paulus Tungkanan and Protestant civil servant D. A. Lempadeli.³⁵ By Tibo's account of the meeting, Lateka gave the order to the gathering that Poso be razed.³⁶ Following this meeting, many of the participants travelled to Tagolu village (just south of the city), where they established a command post (*posko*). This *posko* was located in the house of A. L. Lateka's younger brother, Bakte.

Tagolu village was a strategic location for a command post and as a staging point for attacks, because it lay at the fork of the road south from Poso to Tentena and the road east to the Muslim coastal town of Ampana. Controlling Tagolu thus allowed Christians to launch attacks along either road, while also simultaneously blocking road access from Poso to Tentena and leaving open a secure route of retreat to the south should it be required. The establishment of the *posko* also meant the path to safety for Muslim communities south of Tagolu was blocked.

The *posko* appears to have served as a location for Christians to question prisoners, make phone calls to district and provincial authorities, and as a lodging place for some *kelompok merah* leaders, particularly Tibo. We do not have a precise picture of the leadership structure within the *posko*. In a deposition, Tibo himself named Erik Rombot and Paulus Tungkanan as the highest leaders, with himself, Yanis Simangunsong, Ladue and Unang as subordinates, but did not describe the role of each man in detail.³⁷ Others held captive at the *posko* added

³² Interview with Fabianus Tibo, 10 May 2004.

³³ 'Pimpinan Perusuh Eks Napi Beteleme', *Mercusuar*, 25 May 2000.

³⁴ 'Massa Konsentrasi di Tiga Lokasi', *Mercusuar*, 24 May 2000; 'Poso Rusuh Lagi', *Mercusuar*, 24 May 2000, Tengko (2000:1).

³⁵ Interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003; *Tibo Deposition* (2000a: 5).

³⁶ Interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003; *Tibo Deposition* (2000a: 5).

³⁷ As these names are sourced from a deposition, they should be treated as preliminary information only. In a prison interview, referring to the 'bos-bos' (bosses) at the *posko*, Tibo mentioned three names: Erik Rombot,

the names Dominggus da Silva and Marinus Riwu (both Tibo associates), Romi Parimo, Mama Wanti and Marthin to the list of alleged leaders there.³⁸ A. L. Lateka, although a senior *kelompok merah* leader, appears to have spent most of his time in other parts of Poso. The *posko* was not the only centre of *kelompok merah* activities in Tagolu. The Tagolu village hall appears to have been used to execute prisoners, as a wire noose was later found hanging from the building's rafters (Rohde 2000:110). Nineteen bodies were also found in several shallow mass graves around the village.³⁹ The Tagolu Forestry office may have been used to plan some attacks, as a chalk line map of Poso was reportedly found on a table there.⁴⁰ Lateka's brother Bakte, who asserted that the *posko* was established in his absence, also recalled that most houses in Tagolu at the time gave shelter to *kelompok merah* combatants.⁴¹

Alongside the organized core of Christian combatants, who had been preparing to perpetrate violence for several weeks, hundreds or even thousands of Christians gathered in Tagolu during the time the *posko* was operating.⁴² The presence of so many Christians rendered the village superficially inaccessible to security forces, allowing the *posko* to operate. Core Christian combatants who were in Tagolu at the time assert that the crowd gathered 'spontaneously', a characterisation intended to justify the violence that they committed as a defensive response lacking a central command.⁴³ To the extent that these claims of spontaneity mean that the *kelompok merah* was not an army in any formal sense, they contain a kernel of truth. The sheer number of people who gathered in Tagolu makes it very unlikely that more than a small proportion were affiliated with the *kelompok merah* by means of anything resembling organizational ties. Long-standing prior organization would not have been an absolute pre-requisite to gather a large crowd in Tagolu. After all, large numbers of Christians had gathered in the village in a matter of days during the December 1998 riot. Nevertheless, the presence of 'spontaneous' arrivals in the village should not mask the determining role of the organized core. It would have been core combatants and not any spontaneous arrivals who determined which villages the crowds gathered in Tagolu were to attack.

The first day that the *posko* appears to have operated – 25 May – was also the day that the May-June violence spread beyond the city limits. *Posko* members exerted an important influence on this geographic spread of violence through their presence in leadership roles at many specific attacks. As events unfolded, violent incidents in fact took place at many

Bakte [Lateka] and Fentje (presumably Fentje Angkouw). *Tibo Deposition* (2000b:7); interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003.

³⁸ Dominggus and Marinus were mentioned in the collective sense (i.e. the three defendants) by Mahfud Rosid Kusni in his testimony in the murder trial of Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus. Ros Kristina, a Christian woman held against her will at the *posko*, mentioned both Dominggus and Marinus, as well as the other three individuals, in her interrogation deposition in Tibo's dossier. Kristina would potentially have been a key witness as the murder trial, but the prosecution only read out her deposition rather than calling her in person, so there are reduced grounds to judge the validity of her information, and therefore these names should be treated only as preliminary.

³⁹ 'The Killing Field ala Poso', *Nuansa Pos*, date not recorded, p. 6.

⁴⁰ A picture of the chalk outlines appears in a collection of photos published in two different reports. See Tim Pencari Bukti n. d., Al-Anshari and Suhardi (2006:79).

⁴¹ Interview with Bakte Lateka, July 2007.

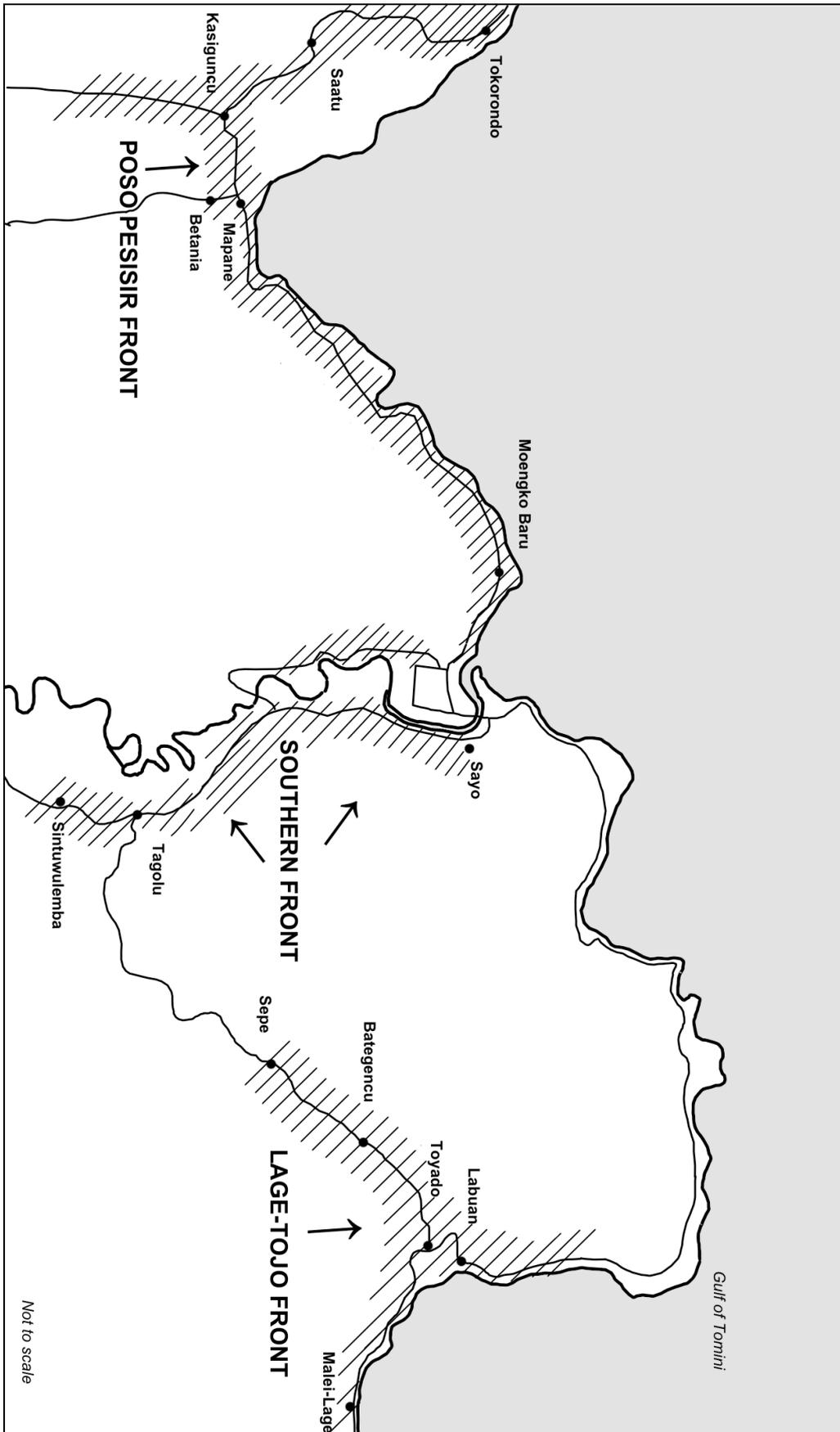
⁴² The interrogation deposition of the sectoral police chief stationed in Tagolu at the time, Fence Yohan Londa, states that a crowd had gathered in Tagolu as early as noon on 23. Londa though says they were able to transport many of these people back to Tentena by truck on 24 May, only for the crowd to reassemble later the same night. See *Londa Deposition* (2000:1-2).

⁴³ Interview with a Tentena resident, July 2003; interview with a former Tagolu resident, Tentena, July 2003.

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disparate locations around the district. Many of these incidents, though, were concentrated around three primary ‘fronts’. Two of the fronts were in the vicinity of the Tagolu *posko*. The first of these fronts lay to the *posko*’s east, located in a series of villages lying along the road from Tagolu to the majority-Muslim town of Ampana (which I call the Lage-Tojo front, after the subdistricts where this violence took place). The second front was located in the villages around the southern fringes of the city, primarily north but also south of Tagolu (which I call the southern front). The third front was in Poso Pesisir sub-district, west of the city. Owing to this front’s distance from Tagolu, the attacks in Poso Pesisir were most likely not coordinated directly from the *posko*. Clashes did not take place every day on each front, but there were at least two days during the May-June episode when every front experienced violence, namely 28 and 29 May.

Map 2. Three fronts of violence.



By the time the *posko* was established and fighting on these three fronts had commenced, the government and the security forces had missed an important chance to prevent the violence. A greater effort to make arrests at the Santa Theresia school could have denied the *kelompok merah* of several of its key leaders. A blockade of the road and show of force in Tagolu may have prevented crowds from gathering there. Once these crowds had gathered, the authorities' mobility around Poso was severely hampered.

The three fronts and the influence of core combatants on the fighting in these locations was the central dynamic of the May-June episode, but does not capture the full extent of the violence. Other local actors also took advantage of the breakdown of law and order to settle scores or otherwise pursue their own interests. One case we know about, because the victim was of high profile, was the abduction and murder in the city on 29 May of Protestant PDI-P legislator Gerald Polii, reportedly at the behest of Muslim political opponents.⁴⁴ But although most incidents are difficult to identify precisely, it is likely there were other murders in May-June in which local community members acted independently of core combatants. To maintain clarity of narrative, however, I focus on the central dynamics of the violence below, describing the violence on each front separately.

The Lage-Tojo Front – Clashes between Crowds

The Lage-Tojo front, which centred on a border area between majority Muslim and majority Christian villages to the east of the city, was the first location outside the city to experience large-scale fighting. Violence on this front began with a clash between rival Muslim and Christian crowds in Bategencu village on 25 May. Thereafter, the clashes on this front took place in two distinct waves: an initial set of clashes from 25 May until 29 May followed by a week-long lull, after which two further clashes took place on 5-6 June. Violence on this front consisted primarily of clashes between rival crowds. In a pattern characteristic of many of the large-scale clashes during the May-June episode, each confrontation would continue until one side was forced to retreat and their village was burned. Because the defeated side were able to retreat, few people were killed in each clash, seemingly limiting the overall death toll on this front. The core combatants at the Tagolu *posko* did not initiate the violence on the Lage-Tojo front – the area is distinct in that Muslims were the aggressors in the initial clash. Nevertheless, its members came to the aid of local Christians after the first day of fighting, and thereafter assumed leadership positions in the Christian crowds, helping to secure their 'victory'.

The first day of clashes on this front took place when several truckloads of Muslims left from the majority Muslim coastal town of Ampana to head west to the city, much as they had done during the December 1998 riot (Ecip and Waru 2001:74). There are two different accounts of their departure, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. By one account, they were drawn to the city by the news of Lateka's foray into the city on 23 May; by another they came in response to rumours that a Muslim had gone missing after their vehicle had been stopped at a roadblock in Sepe village (Damanik and Posende 2000:1; Tengko 2000:1).⁴⁵ When this convoy reached the Muslim-populated villages near Bategencu, police stationed in the vicinity reportedly abandoned their posts, and the convoy banded together with local Muslims

⁴⁴ 'Misteri Gerald di 'Arena' Kerusuhan', *MAL*, First Week August 2000.

⁴⁵ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

for an afternoon attack on the village.⁴⁶ Bategencu's residents were unable to repel the attack and fled to Sepe, the next majority-Christian village along the road, leaving their own village to the assailants to burn. After burning the village, Muslims retreated temporarily to the nearby Muslim-majority areas.

This attack at once convinced local Christian villagers of the need to fight and also drew some of the Christians gathered in Tagolu to come to the aid of their local co-religionists. The men to arrive included core combatants not from the immediate area, such as Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus da Silva, and one of Paulus Tungkunan's sons, Berny. In interrogation depositions Tibo also named Silanca resident Ladue as a leader in these clashes,⁴⁷ a man he also named as active at the Tagolu *posko*. Rumours of their prowess may have assisted core combatants to assert authority over local villagers unfamiliar with them. A Silanca resident, for example, recalled that Tibo and Dominggus were recognized as leaders rumoured to possess '*ilmu*' (magical powers, typically invulnerability).⁴⁸

The next day, 26 May, two crowds stood ready to attack each other at Bategencu. The crowd of Muslims was again a mix of local residents and the Ampana convoy, who in one local man's recollection were hoping to eventually 'raze Christian villages all the way into the city, some people even said all the way to Tentena.'⁴⁹ The crowd of Christians, however, consisting of the *posko* members and residents from several local Christian settlements, drove the Muslim crowd back from Bategencu and themselves advanced to burn down much of Toyado village. Two people were killed, and as many as 200 houses may have been burned in Toyado (*Djalaki Deposition* 2000; Damanik and Posende 2000:1; Tengko 2000:1). As was the case throughout much of the May-June violence, the village mosque was left untouched. The arson at Toyado marked the end of the day's hostilities, and the crowds of Christians withdrew.

A local Muslim villager attributed the *kelompok merah*'s success that day to better weaponry and better tactics. There had been more Muslims than Christians at the clash he said, but Muslims filed along the road as a column. As a result, 'Even if a blind person had taken a shot, someone would have been hit.'⁵⁰ Christians had fewer people on the road behind barricades he recalled, and fired on the Muslims from concealed positions.

From the second day onwards, Christians were the aggressors on this front. Three more days of clashes followed immediately after 26 May. The precise location of clashes on 27 May is unclear, but Tongko and Labuan villages were burned on 28 May, whereas Buyung Katedo and Lee villages were reportedly attacked on 29 May (Tengko 2000:2). Subsequently there were no large-scale clashes on this front for a week. Part of the reason for this lull may have been a peace deal struck between Malei-Lage village and Sepe. The essence of the deal was that Christians would not attack Malei-Lage if the Muslims living there vacated the village temporarily during the May-June disturbances.⁵¹ Despite the deal, Christians eventually burned Malei-Lage village on 5 June, and then attacked neighbouring Malei-Tojo village the following day. In this 6 June attack, the last to take place on this front, Christians exchanged

⁴⁶ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴⁷ I have corroborated this detail in other interviews. *Tibo Deposition*,(2000b: 7); *Tibo Deposition* (2000c:4); interviews with Poso men, July 2007.

⁴⁸ Interview with a Silanca resident, July 2003.

⁴⁹ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁵⁰ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁵¹ Interviews with Malei-Lage residents, July 2003.

fire with police stationed in the village to guard a commercial sawmill. One policeman was wounded, and a member of a military unit sent to relieve the police was killed.⁵²

I do not have sufficient information to reach a firm conclusion about whether the clashes on this Lage-Tojo front were part of a pre-conceived plan. On the one hand, the location of the *kelompok merah posko* in Tagolu suggests that Christians were at the very least aware that there was likely to be fighting along the road from Tagolu to Tongko. Moreover, although they were not the named provocateurs that Christians claimed to seek in the May-June violence, men from some of the majority-Muslim settlements in the area had participated in the December 1998 and April 2000 riots, which could have led the villages to be slated to be attacked. On the other hand, the fact that it was Muslims from Ampana who initiated the first clash on this front reminds us that the core combatants at the Tagolu *posko* were not in a position to control the entirety of the dynamics of the violence.

The Southern Front and the Walisongo Massacre

The southern front was the closest to the Tagolu *posko*, stretching from the outskirts of the city to Sintuwulemba village just south of Tagolu. There were clashes on at least six different days on this front, mostly targeting settlements at the southern fringe of the city. Most targeted the mixed-populated Sayo ward. But all other events on this front are overshadowed by the occurrence of the single worst massacre to take place during the entire Poso conflict, which will be my exclusive focus in this section. This massacre is commonly referred to as the ‘Walisongo massacre’, after the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) where the first killings took place. Starting on 28 May, around 100 Muslims were killed over the course of several days as Christian combatants first killed overpowered Muslim adversaries, and then hunted down others who escaped the initial confrontation.⁵³ When they caught up to and captured those who had fled, they tortured and killed the males and reportedly sexually assaulted some of the females before releasing them. Although there are other reports of the murder of captured prisoners during the May-June violence, none approach the scale of the Walisongo killings.⁵⁴ As details of this massacre came to light, it became a short-hand for violence by Christians against Muslims in Poso, and became a rallying point for Muslims around Indonesia to come to Poso. At the time of its occurrence, however, news of the massacre was slow to emerge, with media reports published as late as 31 May listing only twelve people killed in all clashes throughout Poso, despite the fact that several times that number had been killed by that time in the Walisongo incident alone.⁵⁵ There is little doubt that the delayed reporting of the full extent of the violence was one factor that slowed any sense of urgency to respond effectively.

⁵² Interview with a Poso man, July 2003, ‘Kelompok Merah Aktif Menyerang’, *Mercusuar*, 7 June 2000, pp. 1, 11.

⁵³ A reasonable upper limit for the death toll may be provided by the testimony of the Sintuwulemba village chief, Ngabidun Djaelani, in the murder trial of Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus., who testified that 191 residents of his village had been murdered. He obtained the figure by subtracting the number of registered IDPs from his village’s pre-conflict population. Djaelani himself was in Palu at the time of the massacre. See (*Tibo Decision* 2001:31; *Djaelani Deposition* 2000:2).

⁵⁴ For other accounts of the murder of prisoners, see ‘Jalan Keluar Masuk ‘Kristen’’, *Formasi*, August 2000, p. 14; ‘Saya Bersama Tubuh Manusia Dicurahkan ke Jurang’, *MAL*, Second Week, September 2000, p. 9; Kristina Deposition (2000a:2).

⁵⁵ See, for example, ‘Poso Diserang dari Empat Penjuru’, *Mercusuar*, 31 May 2000.

Established in 1987, the Walisongo boarding had around 150 students at the time of the massacre, both boarders and day students.⁵⁶ The school was located adjacent to the majority-Muslim Sintuwulemba village (population approximately 1000⁵⁷), which itself was established in the 1970s to resettle transmigrants from Poso Pesisir sub-district whose land west of the city was frequently inundated by floods. One Christians established a *posko* in Tagolu, Sintuwulemba effectively became a Muslim enclave in Christian-controlled territory. Situated nine kilometres along the Poso-Tentena road (and hence often referred to as ‘Kilo 9’), Muslims there could not escape to the city without passing the *posko*. Nor could they escape to the south without passing through Tentena and numerous Christian-populated villages.

Our record of the chain of events that led most directly to the massacre starts on 25 May – the day the Tagolu *posko* was established – when Christians in the area demanded that the school’s two-way radio antenna be removed.⁵⁸ It is not difficult to see how the antenna could become a point of contention. On the one hand, Christians were convinced that villagers in Sintuwulemba were using the two-way radio to communicate with Muslims in the city to plan a coordinated attack on Tagolu. On the other, the antenna was the main remaining link that Muslims in Sintuwulemba possessed with co-religionists located elsewhere in the district. It would be understandable if they were reluctant to take the antenna down. After brief negotiations, a deal was brokered whereby those at the school would take down the antenna in return for an assurance that the Christians would not attack them. According to one of the Muslim men who survived the subsequent violence, however, Christians started harassing the school only two hours after the antenna had been dismantled.⁵⁹

Negotiations continued the next day, 26 May, this time regarding the evacuation of some of the residents of Walisongo and Sintuwulemba. When these negotiations broke down, a police platoon commander, Mohamad Najib, and twelve of his men who had been ordered the previous night to go to the school attempted to evacuate around 100 people anyway (*Najib Deposition* 2000:2).⁶⁰ Their convoy of vehicles made it only as far as Tagolu, where the sub-district level police chief, a Christian, warned Najib not to attempt to pass through the village. Many Christians had gathered in the village, he said, and Najib would need to seek reinforcements (Londa Deposition 2000:2).⁶¹ When no additional personnel could be summoned, Najib took the convoy back to Walisongo, although at least one vehicle transporting women did escape before the massacre. After the convoy returned to Sintuwulemba, Tibo associate Dominggus da Silva commandeered the policemen’s truck to

⁵⁶ The details regarding the school and Sintuwulemba in this paragraph are drawn from ‘Pesantren Walisongo, Riwayatmu Dulu’, *Formasi*, 54, October 2000, p. 7, ‘Lembah Persatuan yang Porak-Poranda’, no details recorded, ‘Mereka Biadab, Mereka Lebih Rendah dari Binatang’, *MAL*, First week, July 2000, p. 13.

⁵⁷ In his deposition, Djaelani states a population of 1,703 people; Sangaji gives a 1997 population of 1,047, but with no indication of source. *Djaelani Deposition* 2000:2; Sangaji 2004:11.

⁵⁸ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁵⁹ Recording of Darwis Waru interview with ‘II’ made available to author. Waru requested that only the man’s initials be mentioned in this text.

⁶⁰ A Christian source said negotiations broke down because the people at Walisongo only wanted to evacuate women, children and elderly people, whereas the Christians at Tagolu wanted everybody to leave. ‘II’ acknowledges that the request was for ‘the children’ to leave, but says the negotiations failed because Sintuwulemba residents refused a Christian demand that they surrender all of their weapons to the Lage police chief. Interview with a Poso man, July 2003, Recording of Darwis Waru interview with ‘II’ made available to the author.

⁶¹ Fence Yohan Londa, the Lage sector police chief, claimed in this deposition that the *kelompok merah* had effectively taken over the Tagolu police station from 24 May until Londa’s departure from Tagolu on 28 May.

transport Christian villagers seeking refuge. The truck was returned later that night with the windscreen smashed and its police driver wounded (*Najib Deposition* 2000:2).⁶²

Rather than stay and make renewed efforts to help the people at Sintuwulemba, each of the state's remaining representatives abandoned the area over the next two days. Najib and his men left the following morning, 27 May. According to the policemen, the Tagolu police chief first phoned Tibo at the Tagolu *posko* on Najib's behalf to request safe passage, although Tibo denied this (*Tibo Decision* 2001:36-37; *Najib Deposition* 2000:2-3; *Londa Deposition* 2000:2). The Tagolu police chief himself and the Lage sub-district head, also based at Tagolu, then left at around noon the following day, 28 May. By the time they left, the first of the killings in the massacre may have already taken place. These two stated in interrogation depositions that they were unaware of the massacre when they departed, but that they saw large numbers of *kelompok merah* members in Sintuwulemba, and that the village was already ablaze (*Ida Deposition* 2000:3; *Londa Deposition* 2000:2).

Finally, on 28 May, Christians attacked the school. The day's violence developed in several stages. Firstly, at around 9:00am, the *kelompok merah* appear to have sent a small group of men from the Tagolu *posko* to the boarding school. Some Christians assert this first group intended to evacuate Christian residents of Sintuwulemba; Tibo asserted that they went to the village at the request of a police captain to assist with the evacuation of Muslims.⁶³ Whatever the veracity of these claims, this first group of Christians clashed with Muslims gathered at the school, and before long retreated to Tagolu.⁶⁴ Some of the Muslims at the school or in Sintuwulemba fled into the forest after this first clash, whereas others stayed at the school.

A larger group of Christians soon returned to the school, numbering anywhere between 40 and 300 people by various estimates. This group's arrival sparked a second clash with Muslims who were at Walisongo, in which the Muslims were swiftly overwhelmed. Those Muslims still at the boarding school then fled into nearby rice paddies, before around seventy men fled into the nearby Al-Hijrah mosque.⁶⁵ Having run out of *peluncur* darts, those inside the mosque decided to surrender, according to a Muslim survivor's account. When Christian assailants entered the mosque, the man recalled, they slashed the necks of many of those inside, and took others hostage (*Tibo Decision* 2001:29; *Sutarmin Deposition* 10 June 2000:2). In contrast, Christian combatants denied the claim that they had killed people who had already surrendered. Rejecting the label 'massacre', these combatants asserted that anyone killed on 28 May perished in a battle, and that the battle lasted less than an hour.⁶⁶

⁶² Interview with Domingus da Silva, July 2003.

⁶³ Interview with Tentena residents, July 2003. Interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003; *Tibo Deposition* (2000b: 4); Damanik and Posende 14 June 2000.

⁶⁴ Interview with Tentena residents, July 2003; interview with former Christian combatant, July 2003.

⁶⁵ 'Kami Dibantai Seperti Menebas Batang Pisang', *Suara Hidayatullah*, July 2000. The figure of 70 people is sourced from (*Sutarmin Deposition*, 10 June 2000: 2).

⁶⁶ Interview with Poso men, July 2003. A chronology released by the Central Sulawesi church's Crisis Centre two weeks after the massacre endorsed these claims, saying the men in the mosque were killed when they continued to fire on Christians despite having displayed a white cloth to indicate their surrender. Interviewed three years after the chronology was released, however, one of the document's authors admitted that he was doubtful of its accuracy. A variation on this assertion is that most of those killed died while trying to cross the Poso river to flee. This is unlikely to be true (there were no similar large-scale casualties when other groups of people crossed the river), but the assertion is interesting because it is effectively an admission from Christians that a lot of people were killed. See (Damanik and Posende 14 June 2000); interview with a former GKST Crisis Center member, July 2003.

In the course of these clashes, Christians razed the boarding school complex, apart from the mosque where the killing took place, and also burned around 200 houses in Sintuwulemba village. (The mosque was reportedly also burned subsequently.⁶⁷) There then appears to have been a lull in the violence, before more Christians returned at around 3:00pm to collect Muslim bodies and search for survivors. These bodies appear to have been dumped in a gorge, or buried in mass graves in the vicinity of Sintuwulemba (*Sutarmin Deposition* 10 June 2000:2-3). One man who was still alive in the mosque when the *kelompok merah* members returned, said that they killed anyone showing signs of life and then loaded the bodies into their truck. The man himself played dead and was able to escape because there were too many bodies for the truck to transport in one trip, he recalled (*Tibo Decision* 2001:28-29).⁶⁸

This initial massacre, in which many of the seventy men inside the mosque had been murdered, was not the end of the chain of events. The *kelompok merah* endeavoured to round up survivors and other Sintuwulemba residents over the course of the next four days. Some of those eventually captured had been sheltered by local families during the intervening days, who reportedly defied a threat that those caught harbouring escapees would themselves be abducted and killed.⁶⁹ A large group of around 50 men, women and children were found sheltering in fields near Tambaro village, not far from Sintuwulemba, and were taken captive by the *kelompok merah* on 31 May (*Djumadi Deposition* 10 June 2000:2; Mangkawa and Kuhe Decision 2001:7-8).

The treatment of the men, women and children differed. The men were tied up and led by foot to the Ranononcu village hall, where they were tortured. One survivor indicated that they were also asked who among them had taken part in the attacks on Lombogia ward in April 2000 (*Sutarmin Deposition* 10 June 2000).⁷⁰ After this ill-treatment, the men were loaded onto a truck and taken back to Tagolu, stopping at a spot used to quarry gravel from the Poso River. Here the men were unloaded from the truck and most were killed. A survivor suggested that 28 men suffered this fate (although three escaped).⁷¹

The women and children were held for several days in the Tambaro village hall. On the night of 1 June 2000, according to the subsequent testimony of several of the women in court trials, they were sexually assaulted, as *kelompok merah* members searched the women's genitals to check for concealed magic amulets (*Tibo Decision* 2001:42-45). The women were then allowed to march to the military company headquarters in Kawua in the southern part of the city.

⁶⁷ A Muslim survivor account and the Crisis Centre statement say the mosque was not set alight, but a picture of the mosque published in July 2000 shows the building burned by that point. See 'Mereka Biadab, Mereka Lebih Rendah dari Binatang', *MAL*, First week, July 2000, p. 13. Also *Tibo Decision* 2001:31. Damanik and Posende, 14 June 2000.

⁶⁸ See also 'Kami Dibantai Seperti Menebas Batang Pisang', *Suara Hidayatullah*, July 2000

⁶⁹ 'Kami Dibantai Seperti Menebas Batang Pisang', *Suara Hidayatullah*, July 2000.

⁷⁰ This version is consistent with some material in a Tibo deposition, but another survivor's account makes no mention of this line of questioning. A comment attributed to Fabianus Tibo in his dossier reads: 'I said to the red crowds (Christians) around that location (Tagolu) that prisoners should be asked if they were involved in the burning of Christians' houses in Lombogia, and if not they should be taken to the Poso (military) company headquarters (in Kawua).' To the question of what he told people to do if someone admitted involvement in the Lombogia violence, the dossier records the somewhat implausible answer that Tibo instructed that such captives be handed over to the security forces; Tibo's deposition goes on to elaborate that four Javanese men admitted that they had burned houses, and so were taken to Kilo 4 and then left to make their own way into the city, presumably in the hope they would turn themselves in. See *Tibo Deposition* (2000b: 5-6). Recording of Darwis Waru interview with 'II' made available to the author.

⁷¹ Recording of Darwis Waru interview with 'II' made available to the author.

Despite the eventual prominence of the massacre, police never conducted a proper investigation.⁷² In the absence of such a comprehensive investigation, the best clues of the precise composition of the forces responsible for the killings come from the testimony of survivors and statements made in their defence by the men whom survivors accused. These survivors named a combination of *posko* members and residents of Christian-majority villages near Sintuwulemba. From the *posko*, Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus were each indicted for involvement in the murders, although each denied taking part.⁷³ In a prison interview, Tibo instead suggested it was Erik Rombot, Bakte Lateka and Fentje Angkouw who had gone to the school from the *posko*.⁷⁴ Regarding the later capture of escapees in the vicinity of Tambaro village, two Tambaro residents, Heri Mangkawa and Feri Nandus Kuhe were convicted of abduction occasioning death. A witness at their trial also testified regarding the involvement of two other men, Roy Yara and Agus Paelamara (*Mangkawa and Kuhe Defence Plea* 2001:5 *Mangkawa and Kuhe Decision* 2001:7-8). Another male captive, 'II', said in a media interview that four of the men at the Ranononcu hall had spoken using Poso and Mori language.⁷⁵ This is not sufficient information to identify who these four men may have been, but does suggest they were not Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus.

Given the lack of clarity over the precise individuals responsible, we are never likely to recover fully the reasons why so many people were killed in the Walisongo episode. The killings in the Al-Hijrah mosque on 28 May that started the Walisongo massacre could conceivably have been a specific pre-conceived plan, an action consistent with some broader policy of killing prisoners, or a 'battlefield' excess that arose when Muslim men found themselves trapped. If there was a pre-conceived plan or a policy of killing prisoners, it is unlikely that anyone involved would admit as much, given the near certainty of severe legal sanctions. Even if the initial killings were unplanned, it is my intuition that the killings would have required one or several leaders to order others or themselves to start perpetrating murder on such a large scale. Whereas the first murders on 28 May could have been a product of the circumstances immediately after a clash, the subsequent murder of captives could only have been planned. We are left to wonder though whether these later killings were intended to conceal the 28 May murders, or simply reflected the fact that some combatants had now become accustomed to killing.

The Poso Pesisir Front – The Role of Lateka

There were at least seven days of large-scale clashes on the Poso Pesisir front, starting around 28 May. The dynamics of the clashes on this front appear closely associated with the actions of the key *kelompok merah* leader, A.L. Lateka. Although villagers had made their own defensive preparations in anticipation of violence, the actual occurrence of large-scale attacks

⁷² In 2006, police quietly re-interviewed many of the Christian men whose names had been associated with the Walisongo massacre as well as others who were rumoured to be key *kelompok merah* leaders or combatants. More publicly, police also disinterred the remains of seven people believed to be victims of the Walisongo violence from a mass grave in Tambaro village in May 2006. I have not been able to access the records of these interviews, but police do not appear to have believed they had gathered sufficient evidence to charge anyone.

⁷³ For details of the evidence against these men and their own versions of the events at Walisongo, see McRae (2007:91, 94-95, 97).

⁷⁴ Interview with Fabianus Tibo, July 2003. In a subsequent interview, Bakte Lateka denied the allegation that he was involved.

⁷⁵ Recording of Darwis Waru interview with 'II' made available to the author.

coincided with the arrival of Lateka and his associates to marshal crowds.⁷⁶ The sequence of attacks then halted temporarily when Lateka himself was killed on the western outskirts of the city on 2 June. Violence resumed two days later, however, with attacks in Poso Pesisir concluding with two days of clashes from 4-5 June.

Violence on this front commenced in the vicinity of Mapane village, a majority-Muslim settlement that is the administrative centre of Poso Pesisir sub-district. Mapane is located near a T-junction that links a string of inland Christian villages to the main coastal road between Palu and Poso. An armed crowd of Christians had assembled in these villages, and in a meeting at Mapane sub-district authorities asked that all Poso Pesisir residents clear obstructions off the road so that this crowd could proceed unimpeded to the city. Mapane residents complied, hoping thereby to secure their own safety.⁷⁷

Lateka had played an important role in assembling this crowd, most of whom appear to have been ad hoc recruits. A local Christian recalled that Lateka and around five of his associates came to his village in late May to recruit a crowd to fight, with Lateka himself brandishing a pistol.

We here [in this village], we really didn't want to take part. But there was a leader who forced us ... he's dead now, Lateka, yes, Lateka came here. He said 'If you don't take part then you're not a Christian, and if there's anyone who can't be used [for the fighting], then we'd be better off just killing them so that they're good for something.' So we took part.⁷⁸

When the crowd of Christians reached the T-junction, they split into two groups. Half headed for the city and attacked Mapane and Bega villages, whereas the other half headed in the opposite direction towards Palu and over the next two days attacked Saatu and Tokorondo villages. In Tokorondo, in addition to fighting local residents, Lateka and his recruits crossed path with a convoy of Muslim men calling themselves Laskar Jihad Al-Khairaat who had come from Palu to assist their co-religionists in Poso. Their name referred to Central Sulawesi's largest Islamic organization, Al-Khairaat, although they did not appear to enjoy the organization's unequivocal endorsement. An Al-Khairaat cleric saw the men off from Palu, but a more senior member of the organization publicly expressed his disagreement with their actions.⁷⁹ The group numbered just a few dozen when they left Palu on 27 May, but reportedly their ranks had swelled to several hundred men by the time they reached Tokorondo.⁸⁰

The clash between Lateka's crowd and the Palu convoy is revealing, because it demonstrates how the nature of the violence had changed since the December 1998 and April 2000 riots in ways not anticipated by Muslims. Like the men from Ampana who approached Poso from the east four days earlier, this convoy from Palu were taken by surprise by the new preparedness of Christians. Weight of numbers had been sufficient to prevail in confrontations between crowds in December 1998 and April 2000, and an individual could participate in the clashes

⁷⁶ *Tibo Deposition* (2000a:7); interview with a former resident of Poso Pesisir, July 2007.

⁷⁷ Interview with a Mapane resident, July 2007. Corroborating these details, one Muslim-oriented fact-finding report on the violence chastises Mapane residents for their perceived naivety and self-interest in complying with this request (Tim Pencari Bukti no date).

⁷⁸ Interview with a villager in Poso Pesisir, February 2002.

⁷⁹ See 'Laskar Jihad Alkhairaat Kirim Pasukan ke Poso', *Surya*, 29 May 2000.

⁸⁰ Interview with Tokorondo resident, January 2002; interview with a Poso man, July 2003; 'Laskar Jihad Alkhairaat Kirim Pasukan ke Poso', *Surya*, 29 May 2000.

during those riots without significant risk of death. By the May 2000 violence, however, some combatants were using crude home-made firearms (*senjata rakitan*) that could fire factory-standard ammunition, and it is possible that the few military and police who joined the ranks of the fighters may have also used their guns. Although many of the men fighting on the Christian side were ad hoc recruits like their Muslim opponents, the better-armed core of organized combatants on the *kelompok merah* side helped to give them the advantage.

These changes manifested in the Tokorondo clash in the death of one of the members of the convoy, Abdul Jihad, who was fatally shot in the head. Several Tokorondo residents may also have been killed. Following Jihad's death, the men from Palu turned back, abandoning their plans to press on to the city. A Tokorondo resident summed up the clash as follows: 'Hundreds of people arrived from Palu, and the situation became more heated. But they came empty-handed, what did they expect to do. [Our foe] had long-range weapons [that is, firearms].'⁸¹

Following this Tokorondo clash, the next clear record of violence in Poso Pesisir refers to clashes three days later on 1 June. Crowds attacked Tambarana and Kalora villages near the western border of the district, and clashed with Brimob personnel in Toini village, located close to the city. Police reacted forcefully at Toini, making use of a newly issued shoot-on-sight order for rioters to shoot dead two men and wound two others.⁸² It was a clash the next day on 2 June, however, that marked a temporary halt to violence in Poso Pesisir and the beginning of a de-escalation of violence throughout Poso.⁸³

Typical of most individual incidents during the May-June 2000 violence, different accounts of Lateka's death contradict each other. Many Christian accounts suggest Lateka was tricked into coming to the city by the newly installed Poso police chief, Djasman Baso Opu, on the pretext of holding a parade.⁸⁴ Supporting this interpretation, one of the men who claimed to have taken part in Lateka's convoy that day said that Lateka had told his recruits not to worry about bringing along all of their gear.⁸⁵ In contrast, a Muslim man who was in Kayamanya at the time interpreted Lateka's convoy as an attack, and one that the ward's residents had been awaiting for several days.⁸⁶ Lateka had been beaten to death when attempting to come to the assistance of an aide, who was also killed in the clash, the man recalled. Christians disputed this version, claiming Brimob personnel had shot Lateka in the head.⁸⁷

There are several possible explanations for the decline in violence after Lateka's death, none of which are mutually exclusive. One option is to focus on the agency of the individual, namely the loss of impetus inherent in the death of one of the *kelompok merah*'s key leaders. The shoot-on-sight order for rioters in Poso instituted by police the day before Lateka's death

⁸¹ Interview with a Tokorondo resident, January 2002. Corroborated by interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁸² 'Kerusuhan Poso Pecah Lagi Jumat Pagi, Dua Tewas', *Suara Pembaruan*, 2 June 2000.

⁸³ Some accounts of the May-June violence list Lateka's death as occurring on 26 May or 5 June. The correct date is 2 June. See 'Kerusuhan Poso Pecah Lagi Jumat Pagi, Dua Tewas', *Suara Pembaruan*, 2 June 2000. News of Lateka's death could appear in *Suara Pembaruan* on the day he was killed because *Suara Pembaruan* is an evening newspaper.

⁸⁴ These accounts parallel one version of Herman Parimo's involvement in the December 1998 violence, in which one Christian interviewee maintained Parimo had been deceived into leading a crowd of Christians into the city at the request of then district head Arief Patanga.

⁸⁵ Interview with a Poso man, January 2002.

⁸⁶ Interview with a Kayamanya resident, January 2002.

⁸⁷ Interview with a Kayamanya resident, January 2002.

could be a second explanation. The increased risk of death for Christian combatants that this order created may have temporarily dissuaded all but the most committed from taking part in attacks. It is also possible that Christians may already have attacked most of the areas that they were able to reach by the time Lateka was killed. Vast numbers of people had by then fled the district and most Muslim-populated villages had been burned, while the police and military were defending some of the untouched areas in the city. Key Christian combatants may also have started to experience ‘battle’ fatigue after more than a week of fighting.

Security Forces Intervene

The security forces finally began to make a concerted push to halt the violence at the end of the first week of June. The police sent approximately 280 Brimob personnel from Jakarta to Poso in the early hours of 7 June, whereas the military sent a taskforce of around 800 personnel from Makassar in South Sulawesi. With scarcely a fight, these newly deployed security forces swiftly disbanded the Tagolu *posko* and seized thousands of weapons, and soon after turned their attention to making arrests and uncovering mass graves. The rapidity and ease with which this deployment of security forces halted the violence inevitably raises the question of why the state did not intervene sooner. Overall, the security forces’ response to the May-June 2000 violence was far too slow, and in some of the specific cases outlined above, negligent in the extreme.

The Brimob personnel were not the first reinforcements police and military had sent to Poso during the May-June violence. By the time these personnel from Jakarta went to Poso on 7 June, there were already six ‘company-level units’ (around six hundred personnel) of additional police and military in Poso.⁸⁸ But even senior security force officials publicly admitted that previous reinforcements had been insufficient, with provincial police chief Soeroso conceding just prior to the Brimob deployment, ‘To be honest, with the limited number of security personnel we have at the moment, we acknowledge that we cannot handle everything that is happening...’⁸⁹

The tardiness and negligence of the security forces has fuelled conspiracy theories centring on their perceived desire to profit economically from unrest in Poso, to establish a second regional military command in Sulawesi, or even to discredit the national-level civilian government.⁹⁰ Although it is clear that some security forces personnel did profit from the May-June violence and claims of other conspiracies must be investigated, there is no clear evidence that senior officers harboured sinister intentions. A degree of the tardiness may be attributable to the same failure to appreciate the full seriousness of the situation that was evident in the provincial press’s slow realisation of the full extent of the murder that had taken place in Poso. The urgency of the security forces’ response to the May-June 2000 violence was also hampered by the rivalry between the military and the police in the wake of the separation of the two forces in April 1999. The two forces bickered over the correct procedure for the police to request military assistance, slowing the response, and also quarrelled over the chain of command once police and military personnel were operating simultaneously in Poso.⁹¹

⁸⁸ ‘Danrem: Kelompok Merah Aktif Menyerang’, *Mercusuar*, 7 June 2000, p. 11.

⁸⁹ ‘Mabes Polri Turunkan Dua SSK Brimob’, *Mercusuar*, 7 June 2000, p. 7.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Aditjondro (2002:10).

⁹¹ See, for example, ‘Soal Operasi Cinta Damai, Tanyakan ke Danrem’, *MAL*, Fourth Week July 2000, p.

On the day after the Brimob personnel from Jakarta arrived in Poso, 8 June, the police finally disbanded the Tagolu *posko* and seized a cache of homemade weapons that they found there.⁹² Police were not yet intent on arresting perpetrators, however, choosing instead to invite *kelompok merah* representatives to peace meetings. One such police-sponsored meeting was held the same day in Malei-Lage village. At the meeting, Tibo shook hands with several Muslim men, witnessed by the deputy provincial police chief and the newly appointed Poso police chief. The next day, another peace meeting was held in Tentena, again attended by the two senior police officers and Tibo, as well as Tibo's associate Dominggus and a Christian minister from the GKST Crisis Centre, Rinaldy Damanik. At the meeting, Damanik read out 'Lateka's mandate', the letter attributed to the deceased *kelompok merah* leader reproduced earlier in this chapter.

By the time of the Tentena meeting on 9 June, both the police and military had established separate security operations in Poso. Each turned its attention to seizing weapons from the community, establishing a one-week grace period after the Tentena meeting for weapons to be handed in without penalty.⁹³ Within this first week each operation had seized hundreds (perhaps thousands) of weapons. Most weapons were crude and home-made, with home-made firearms numbering in the dozens rather than hundreds, but the security forces also seized factory-standard ammunition.⁹⁴

There is little information about how the *kelompok merah* demobilized following the 8 June disbandment of the Tagolu *posko*. Two important combatants said that they went into hiding for several months to avoid encountering the security forces. One hid in Toraja district in South Sulawesi; the other moved around different villages in the south of the district.⁹⁵ Other combatants interviewed said simply that after the early June peace meetings, those at the *posko* returned to their respective villages.⁹⁶ Another account, which focuses from Tibo and his associates, comes from two interrogation depositions provided by a Christian woman, Ros Kristina. Her account is problematic, however, because she did not appear as witness in the men's trial, meaning the depositions were not subjected to scrutiny in court. Nonetheless, Kristina's depositions state that Tibo ordered those at the *posko* to leave, but reassured them that the *posko*'s dissolution was not the end of their struggle, and they would attack Muslims again once the security forces had left. Kristina continued that Dominggus picked her up that night and took her to Kelei, stopping at each village along the road to tell each community to remain on guard (*Kristina Deposition* 2000a:6). She then describes Dominggus and Tibo returning to their home village, Beteleme, where she also met A. L. Lateka's brother, Bakte (*Kristina Deposition* 2000b:2).

As each operation continued, by late June 2000, the security forces were also finding mass graves. According to media reports, at least 83 bodies were found in at least five different villages; the governor's report on the violence lists 111 bodies found in mass graves, but without further details (*Laporan Gubernur* no date:7). Nineteen bodies were found in three

⁹² 'Kelompok Merah akan Turun Poso', *Mercusuar*, 10 June 2000.

⁹³ 'Keamanan Poso Berangsur Pulih', *Mercusuar*, 16 June 2000, "Pasukan Cinta Damai Taati Deadline", *Nuansa Pos*, date not recorded.

⁹⁴ For details of weapons seized, see 'Ratusan Senjata Tajam Disita di Poso', *Kompas*, 12 June 2000; 'TNI Sita Amunisi Buatan Luar Negeri', *Pedoman Rakyat*, 13 June 2000, pp. 1, 3; 'Tim Operasi Cinta Damai Sita 750 Butir Amunisi', *Pedoman Rakyat*, 17 June 2000, pp. 1, 11.

⁹⁵ Interviews with Poso men, July 2007.

⁹⁶ Interviews with Tentena residents, July 2003.

separate graves in Tagolu; 34 bodies were found in two separate locations in Pandiri, eleven bodies were found dumped in marshland near Sintuwulemba, nine bodies were found in a gorge below Kuku village, while eighteen bodies were found in Padang Marari village near the western shore of Lake Poso in Pamona Selatan sub-district.⁹⁷ Some reports said the Tagolu graves were very shallow, with three bodies lying only five centimetres below the surface. In the Pandiri sites, the bodies had been burned before being dumped into a gorge. Many other bodies had simply been dumped in the Poso river and left to float out to sea. Whatever preparations Christians had made for the May-June violence, a plan to properly conceal the extent of the killing does not appear to have been part of them.

After the initial conciliatory approach of the peace meetings in Malei and Tagolu, both the police and military began to make arrests. In all, more than 150 people were taken into custody over a period of several months. As Christians were at this point responsible for the majority of the worst of the violence in the conflict, many more Christians than Muslims were arrested. The arrests, however, were not completely one-sided. Muslims arrested included the twin brothers suspected of deliberately instigating violence in the earlier April 2000 riot, suspects for the 29 May murder of PDI-P politician Gerald Polii, as well as six men arrested in early August in Lawanga when found in possession of homemade guns, other weapons and several dozen bullets.⁹⁸ There is at present no complete data-set of who was arrested or of the result of those cases that were brought to trial. The arrests do not appear to have been based on any systematic attempt to understand the *kelompok merah* command structure, however, or to prioritize particular incidents of violence. The highest profile arrests were those of Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus da Silva and Marinus Riwu, with Tibo and Dominggus in particular having been repeatedly named in press coverage as key fugitives prior to being taken into custody. Each of the three men were sentenced to death in April 2001, and executed just over six years later.⁹⁹ The two Tambaro residents arrested in connection with the Walisongo massacre were sentenced to twelve and eight years respectively, while another Christian man, Sarlis, received a ten year sentence (Ecip and Waru 2001:120-121). Most of the men who appear to have been key *kelompok merah* members were either not arrested, arrested on only a minor charge, or in a few cases arrested and subsequently released without trial. This undermined the contribution criminal justice could have made to stemming the violence, both because key perpetrators remained at large and because the public were aware that these perpetrators enjoyed impunity, further fuelling a sense of injustice.

Religious solidarity cannot account for the overall inaction of the security forces, given that Muslims were at the time a majority population in Poso, Central Sulawesi and indeed Indonesia. The religious solidarities of individual law enforcement personnel may have undermined efforts to make arrests, however. For example, the combatant mentioned above who hid in Toraja district after the Tagolu *posko* was disbanded said he in fact encountered security forces intelligence officers there, but the men knew him personally and did not report him. Although left unstated, the implication was that these Christian intelligence officers would not turn in a fellow Christian. Another *kelompok merah* leader said he had been

⁹⁷ See 'Kuburan Massal Batal Digali', *Mercusuar*, 1 July 2000, p. 1; 'Ditemukan Kuburan Massal di Tagolu', *Mercusuar*, date not recorded, p. 1; 'Lagi, Ditemukan 19 Mayat Kasus Poso', *Mercusuar*, date not recorded; 'The Killing Field ala Poso', *Nuansa Pos*, date not recorded, p. 6.

⁹⁸ See *Laporan Tim Back-up*, 'Misteri Gerald, di 'Arena' Kerusuhan', *MAL*, First Week August 2000; *Soleman and Alamsyah Decision* 2001; 'Cinta Damai Bekuk Kelompok Putih', *Nuansa Pos*, date not recorded.

⁹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the three men's trial and their execution in the context of the criminal justice approach to Poso, see McRae (2007).

apprehended by security forces personnel at one point during the third period when returning from an attack but the men were Christians and let him go.¹⁰⁰

A few police and military also came under suspicion of direct involvement in the violence or of providing support to one side or the other. Twenty nine members of the Poso district military command were investigated in connection with the May-June violence, although media reports suggest as few as three of these men may have been formally established as suspects.¹⁰¹ Senior provincial police also indicated to the media that around fifteen members of the Poso Resort police were under suspicion, characterising the extent of these men's involvement as failing to be neutral because of feelings of (ethno-religious) solidarity.¹⁰² One of those reportedly under investigation was the Lage sectoral police chief, the man who left his post in Tagolu on the day that Walisongo massacre started nearby.

The provincial government also formed a reconciliation team for Poso after the May-June 2000 violence, under the leadership of vice-governor Kiesman Abdullah (FSIR 2000:44). The team made its first trip to Poso in mid-July, and thereafter set about organizing several elite-level peace initiatives.¹⁰³ The most prominent among these initiatives was a peace meeting attended by President Abdurrahman Wahid, several ministers, the national police and military chiefs and Governor Paliudju on 22 August.¹⁰⁴ Dubbed the Sintuwu Maroso Reconciliation, the ceremony took the form of a Pamona-ethnic customary (*adat*) rite, with fourteen customary representatives signing a broadly-worded statement agreeing to commit to peace and support law enforcement measures against those responsible for violence.¹⁰⁵ After so many people had been killed, seen their houses destroyed or otherwise been displaced, this meeting never had much chance of success as a stand-alone initiative. The ceremony's chances of success were further reduced because most of the customary figures appear to have had little direct connection with any of the preceding periods of violence. Onlookers jeered the ceremony even as it was taking place, and none of my interviewees attributed a significant influence to this ceremony in affecting the dynamics of the violence.¹⁰⁶

Despite the flurry of police and military activity following the disbandment of the Tagolu *posko*, sporadic violence continued. A small group of armed men stopped a bus on the southern outskirts of the city on 19 June and dragged a Muslim passenger from Kayamanya ward off the vehicle to beat him.¹⁰⁷ On 24 June, a group of around 30 people attacked Kawua village, killing a local resident and a TNI member.¹⁰⁸ Three days later, the police shot dead three men in the vicinity of Pinedapa-Saatu in response to a disturbance in which 30 houses were burned.¹⁰⁹ Another vehicle was stopped in Pinedapa village, and two Muslim passengers

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with Poso men, July 2007.

¹⁰¹ See 'Dua Anggota TNI akan Dimahmilkan', *Mercusuar*, date not recorded (but seemingly late June 2000), '28 Oknum Kodim Diperiksa', *Kompas*, 21 June 2000, 'Tersangka Oknum TNI Jadi Tiga Orang', *Mercusuar*, 6 July 2000.

¹⁰² See 'Ditemukan bekas-bekas Pembunuhan', *Formasi*, 48, July 2000, p. 5.

¹⁰³ 'Di Sini Rekonsiliasi, di Sana Tibo Beroperasi', *MAL*, Second week, July 2000, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ 'Adat Pakasi Wia Sambut Gus Dur', *Nuansa Pos*, date not recorded.

¹⁰⁵ "Rujuk, Huuuu....!'", *MAL*, Third Week, August 2000. For a discussion of the *adat* implications of the ceremony, see Ruagadi et al (2007:236-238).

¹⁰⁶ 'Rujuk, Huuuu....!'", *MAL*, Third Week, August 2000.

¹⁰⁷ Curiously, the men did not kill the passenger, but signalled the bus as it was driving off to return the passenger, who was then treated at Poso hospital. See 'Poso Kembali Mencekam', *Mercusuar*, date not recorded, "Lewat Poso, Penumpang Bus Trauma", *Mercusuar*, date not recorded

¹⁰⁸ 'Danrem: Mereka Geromblan Biadab', *Mercusuar*, date not recorded.

¹⁰⁹ 'TNI Kirim 1 SSK ke Poso', *Mercusuar*, 29 June 2000.

were shot, but survived to receive treatment.¹¹⁰ Muslim-owned houses located in majority-Christian areas, and vice-versa, were also burned sporadically. Around the same time, Muslims also began preparations in several locations in and around Poso to take revenge for the May-June 2000 violence.

The severity of the May-June 2000 violence and this continuing unrest led parts of the local media to dub Poso a potential ‘second Maluku’, referring to the even fiercer violence that had afflicted neighbouring Maluku province since 1999.¹¹¹ There was a degree of unintended prescience in such comparisons, as news of attacks on Muslim populations in Poso in May-June swiftly attracted members of Indonesia’s jihadist networks to the district. Many of these men, commonly termed mujahidin, were veterans of the Maluku conflict before they came to Poso. Working together with local Muslims, their presence would lead to a resumption of more concerted violence in late 2000 and more particularly during 2001.

Conclusion: A Division of Labour

An understanding of the May-June violence is crucial to overall analysis of the Poso conflict, as it was during this period that the intensity of the violence escalated to widespread killing and Poso became a site of protracted inter-religious conflict. It is such high-intensity, protracted violence that sets Poso and just a handful of other localities apart from the more numerous towns that experienced riots during Indonesia’s democratic transition. In the body of this chapter, I have outlined the central importance of a core of Christian leaders and combatants to this escalation of violence. To take part as a core combatant in the May-June violence required a new level of commitment compared to participants in the preceding urban riots. Whereas rioters may have fought for only a few hours or at most several days, some of these core combatants would have been intensively involved for over a month by the time they trained in Kelei in early May and then fought for the two weeks of violence from late May to early June. Most core combatants probably also needed to make the additional commitment of being prepared to kill. But the importance to the escalation of these newly committed combatants was matched by the crucial role of a division of labour within *kelompok merah* ranks. This division of labour, in which many community members were recruited ad hoc for short periods, allowed the escalation to take place so readily by greatly reducing the number of individuals who needed to commit intensely to the cause.

There were several facets to the immense influence that core *kelompok merah* combatants exerted on the May-June episode. They initiated the violence by attacking Kayamanya and Moengko wards on 23 May. They established the Tagolu *posko* two days later as a staging point for a prolonged campaign of violence. They strongly influenced the geographic spread of violence through their personal presence at clashes on each of the three fronts of violence. They also established from the very first attack, when they murdered three Muslim men whom they encountered, that the May-June episode would involve killings. In fact, core combatants appear to have been central to the escalation of violence in Poso to widespread killings. As much is evident from the fact that as many as half of those killed in the May-June violence may have been prisoners or over-powered combatants. I draw this conclusion for two

¹¹⁰ ‘Poso Kembali Bergolak’, *Mercusuar*, date not recorded. I was not able to establish on what date this particular incident took place.

¹¹¹ See, for example, ‘Tragedi Poso, Skenario Ambon II’, *Formasi*, August 2000, p. 8; ‘Rujuk Gagal, Poso Jadi Ambon II’, *Formasi*, September 2000, p. 9; ‘Sulawesi, Maluku Jilid II?’ *Suara Hidayatullah*, October 2000, pp. 43-45.

reasons. First, more than 100 people were found in a number of mass graves, suggesting that these people were killed in groups. Second, where records are available of the fatalities produced by clashes between crowds, the number of casualties are invariably only in single digits. I would argue that it was most likely core combatants, and not random community members, who were killing most of the prisoners.

The centrality of core combatants to the killing and their influence on the geographic spread of violence cast new light on the oft-assumed pattern of neighbour attacking neighbour. A common explanation of this assumed pattern is that totalisation of group identities overcomes previous personal familiarity – in the context of the May-June violence this would mean that neighbours rose up to kill each other because they newly perceived each other to be religious adversaries rather than as individuals. Some details of the Poso violence are consistent with this mechanism: it is clear, for example, that community members attributed responsibility to their neighbours for violence perpetrated by the neighbours' co-religionists elsewhere in Poso, and so began to perceive each other as a threat. Moreover, neighbouring villages did participate in attacks against each other. But a crucial difference with this model in Poso is that in most instances, neighbours appear only to have attacked each other – as opposed to harbouring mutual fears and suspicions – when co-religionists from elsewhere arrived. That is to say it was the movements of core combatant co-religionists that more importantly account for the observed spread of violence rather than neighbour versus neighbour animosity. Hence on the Lage-Tojo front, local residents first clashed in Bategencu village only after a convoy of Muslims from Ampana town arrived, and then continued the next day when core combatants from the Tagolu *posko* came to reinforce crowds of local Christian residents. Similarly, large-scale clashes commenced on the Poso Pesisir front after Lateka and his associates mobilized Christian villagers to fight as crowds. Such a spread of violence bears some resemblance to Straus's (2006:87-92) notion of 'local tipping points', in which violence in each locality commences only after hardline leaders establish local control. Additionally, the observed pattern of confrontations between crowds involving hundreds of people typically resulting in only a few deaths means that few community members would actually have killed a neighbour. Indeed, it is possible that most community members among these crowds did not perpetrate violence personally that was any more serious than was the norm in the December 1998 and April 2000 riots, despite the murder taking place around them.

The paradox of the central role of these core combatants in such a massive campaign of violence is that when acting alone the group at the core of the *kelompok merah* were weak. When a small group among these combatants attacked the city on 23 May, they were forced to beat a hasty and haphazard retreat. Indeed, this 23 May attack exposed the core group as not even particularly well armed, given that they used machetes and considered a policeman's pistol a valuable enough trophy for them to seize it. Nor could this group withstand the power of the state for even a brief period. The Tagolu *posko* dissolved without a shred of resistance when security forces finally made a concerted intervention. Further exposing their weakness in comparison to the state, the key *kelompok merah* leaders Lateka and Tibo each also expressed frustration that the security forces had blocked their actions. Tibo, for example, complained to the press at the conclusion of the May-June violence that the *kelompok merah* had been unable to capture provocateurs because the security forces had 'obstructed us and shot at us'.¹¹²

¹¹² 'Saya Ajak Masyarakat Muslim Berdamai', *MAL*, Fourth Week, June 2000, p. 9.

Why then was such a manifestly weak group of loosely organized individuals able to carry out their campaign of violence for an entire two weeks? One of the most crucial factors in their success was the mobilization of crowds. Without the participation of crowds – either drawn from the hundreds who came to Tagolu or recruited ad hoc at each site of violence – the core group may not have had the manpower even for one large-scale attack, let alone simultaneous attacks on multiple fronts. Had crowds not precipitated a general breakdown of law and order that left security forces unable or insufficiently determined to move around the district, the Tagolu *posko* could not have operated largely unimpeded. The difficulty of moving around the district also impeded the flow of information, creating a time lag in security force responses to even the worst of *kelompok merah* actions. The clearest example is the Walisongo massacre, which took place over the course of four days just a few kilometres from police and military personnel stationed in the city. If news of the initial killings on 28 May had surfaced more quickly, or it had been easier for the security forces to reach the areas where the massacre was taking place, it is plausible to imagine that the later killings could have been prevented.

Local Christians also assisted the success of core combatants at a more mundane level. Villagers in each locality would have played an important role as guides to *kelompok merah* combatants from other parts of Poso, who otherwise would not have been as familiar with the local lay of the land as the Muslim villagers they were attacking. Indeed, Muslim villagers in different parts of Poso were convinced the violence against their village could not have succeeded without their Christian neighbours pointing crowds towards the weak-points of their village's defences.

The fact that a division of labour meant that ordinary community members were not required to kill may have lowered the threshold for their participation, but it does not in itself explain why they participated in the May-June violence in the ways that they did. The previous chapter on political violence touched briefly on the question of non-elite participation, in noting that many participants may take part in riots in pursuit of their own interests (Kalyvas 2006) or because maintaining relations with leaders calling for violence is important to community members' day-to-day lives (Berenschot 2009; Aragon 2001). Many community members could also have been motivated by the same factors cited as accounting for core combatant participation in the May-June 2000 violence. That is, they may have been motivated by the lived experience of loss in the December and April riots, and the desire to correct the perceived effrontery inherent in these episodes, a perception sharpened for some by pre-existing inter-group tensions.

Nevertheless, two distinct features of the May-June violence necessitate renewed consideration of community member participation. First, given that the May-June violence involved widespread killings, we might assume the barriers to support and participation to be higher, even if most community members did not personally perpetrate murders. As I noted at the outset of the chapter, even tacit approval of widespread killings is disturbing, and demands explanation. Second, the anticipation that the May-June violence could spread beyond the city meant that many villagers outside the city found themselves to be potentially under direct threat for the first time. This new geographic distribution of violence beyond the city limits suggests the need to investigate the contribution of fear of real or anticipated violence to the decision of community members throughout Poso to fight. Investigating the contribution of fear also has the distinct analytical advantage of helping us to better account for the participation even of those community members who were not strong supporters of their co-religionists decision to attack.

The ‘security dilemma’ is one model commonly applied to explain the operation of fear in wars and other large-scale unrest.¹¹³ A ‘security dilemma’, introduced to the study of ethnic and religious violence from the field of international relations by Posen (1993), occurs when the actions one party takes to secure itself from a perceived threat posed by a second party end up making the first party less secure. The dilemma arises in particular, Posen explains, when parties cannot establish whether a potential rival’s military build-up is for offensive or defensive reasons, or when offensive action appears superior to defensive action to ensure survival. The concept performs poorly in explaining the May-June 2000 violence in Poso, however, in which *kelompok merah* core combatants prepared for and then initiated a campaign of violence. Their preparations were not triggered by any misconstrued defensive preparations made by Poso’s Muslims, as a security dilemma would predict. The concept may have limited applicability in the local-level suspicions that saw villages setting up guard posts and making preparations for violence. But even at this local level, a ‘security dilemma’ would involve violence being triggered by a pre-emptive reaction to a neighbouring village’s preparations. In Poso, by contrast, the arrival of core combatant co-religionists from elsewhere in the district appeared the more important ‘tipping point’ for the occurrence of violence in each locality.

Fearon and Laitin (2000) provide a more appropriate starting point to understand the contribution of fear in motivating ordinary community members to participate in the May-June violence. They propose a process by which leaders set loose thugs to attack an ethnic out-group, in the process initiating ‘violent tit for tat sequences’ that harden antagonistic group identities and endanger in-group members (Fearon and Laitin 2000:871). Once this sequence is initiated, even moderate members of the in-group have little choice, Fearon and Laitin assert, but to follow the path of the leaders who have endangered them, a tendency strengthened by in-group policing by the thugs. This model’s greater appropriateness to the May-June violence in Poso is evident in its emphasis on the strategic role of leaders in initiating violence that generates broader fears, as opposed to the security dilemma’s reliance on mistaken intentions to explain the spiralling of violence.

The applicability of the Fearon and Laitin model to the May-June violence in Poso is most readily apparent in the clashes on the Lage-Tojo front. To recap, the seven days of fighting on this front were initiated by the arrival of a convoy of Muslims from Ampana town, who had come to Poso in response to the murders perpetrated by Lateka’s group in the city on 23 May. The actions of *kelompok merah* core combatants in the city, undertaken without mass participation, thus endangered their fellow Christians on this Lage-Tojo front. The attack by Muslims on local Christians on this front thus effectively made local villagers a part of the core combatant’s struggle, and it was to these same core combatants whom the villagers turned for assistance in fighting back. Conversely, once the Muslim convoy and their local allies attacked Bategencu village, other local Muslims then faced the choice of joining subsequent clashes to attempt to repel retaliatory attacks on their villages, or else to flee.

This choice between staying to fight or fleeing in the face of the threat of attack is one aspect of fear not addressed by Fearon and Laitin. Horowitz’s (2001:384) proposition of the ‘risk averse’ rioter is instructive in this regard. Horowitz (2001:525-6) contends that even ‘[a]ngry or aroused people are not necessarily heedless of risk’ when participating in deadly riots, typically choosing to attack at a location and time where there is only a moderate risk to their

¹¹³ See, for example, Kaufman (1996), Lake and Rothchild (1996). For a critical application of the security dilemma concept to the dispersion of violence in the North Maluku conflict, see Wilson (2008)

own personal safety. This insight suggests that for fear to motivate people to stay and fight, or to engage in lengthy preparations to fight, they must generally perceive that their fears are surmountable. That is to say, if they are to fight, they will have a reasonable chance of prevailing. When the threat of violence – real or anticipated – appeared insurmountable, most people in Poso fled. Hence, in the May-June 2000 violence, Poso's Muslims – who had every reason to fear they would be attacked – mostly fled if they could when it became evident that they could not counter the violence that Christians were perpetrating. The same pattern was evident, but with the sides reversed, later in the conflict: most Christians also fled during clashes in 2001 and 2002 when it was clear that they could not effectively resist Muslim attacks, as I will explain in the next chapter. Indeed, I believe the decision of most combatants on the weaker side in each clash to flee rather than fight to the last is part of the reason why clashes between crowds in Poso often produced only a few fatalities.

To observe that fear of real or anticipated violence could contribute importantly to the decision to fight is not to afford situational pressures a determining role. In common with all large-scale violent episodes, we can observe instances in Poso of individuals who at some point in the episode in some way helped or refused to kill out-group members. One example is provided by the account of a Muslim man, Taiyeb Lamello, who was taken captive by Christians and held at the Tagolu *posko*. Lamello testified that *kelompok merah* members from his home village came to the *posko* to ask that he be allowed to return home to tend to his ailing wife (*Tibo Decision* 2001:44). An implication of a focus on core combatants and the processes set in train by them is that these core combatants assume primary responsibility for the occurrence of violence (Straus 2006:227). Nevertheless, ordinary community members must also account for their decisions to contribute in their own ways to the violence.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

After the two weeks of intense violence from late May to early June 2000, most Muslims in Poso harboured a strong desire for revenge. Hundreds of Muslims had lost immediate family members in this violence, many thousands had lost their homes. Almost all had been forced to flee their villages, with many sheltering in makeshift refugee camps for months. Recalling their feelings at the time, several local Muslim men explained that their only thoughts were of how to take revenge on Poso's Christians.¹ Muslim religious figures in Poso were vocal in their support of reprisals, one youth recounted: 'One hundred per cent of religious figures were indoctrinating us to fight a war, giving us a religious perspective, that we must strike back. It was a matter of religion [they said], a war.'² Sections of the Palu press echoed this sentiment, for instance in an article titled 'Ethics of War in Islam' published in June 2000 in the mainstream, if Muslim-biased, *Formasi* tabloid. The article included a rough translation of three Qu'ranic verses exhorting the faithful to fight, prefaced by the observation, 'Islam does not just regulate prayer rituals and science, it turns out Islam also regulates war.'³

In the midst of these circumstances, news of the May-June attacks on local Muslim populations spurred several of Indonesia's jihadist networks to send some of their members to Poso. The first members of these networks, typically called mujahidin, arrived in Poso within weeks of the May-June violence. Thereafter, they quickly set about recruiting local Muslim youths to receive military-style training and doctrinal instruction regarding Islam, including both jihad and moral precepts. In providing this training, many of the earliest mujahidin arrivals drew on their own experience in jihadist training camps in Afghanistan and the Southern Philippines, through their networks they also provided new access for Poso's Muslims to factory-standard firearms and explosives. Accordingly, the alliance forged between these mujahidin and local Muslim youths swiftly transformed the Poso conflict, securing lasting military supremacy over Poso's Christians. The transformation wrought by this alliance became clearly evident in two major periods of violence in 2001, although members of this alliance had commenced smaller-scale cooperative attacks by the end of 2000. In the first of these periods, in June-July 2001, Muslims successfully perpetrated their first large-scale reprisals against Christian settlements. In a second period several months later, over five days in late November and early December 2001, the alliance demonstrated its capability to destroy Christian strongholds almost at will. Christians continued to perpetrate attacks as this transformation took place, but the scale of their attacks diminished throughout 2001 as Muslims became stronger.

This chapter charts the development of the alliance between mujahidin groups and local Muslims. It covers the period from the arrival of mujahidin groups in mid-2000 until peace talks brokered by the government in late December 2001. The chapter will explain the organizational underpinnings of the alliance and the violence it produced, but the core focus will be on attempts by mujahidin groups to inculcate a religious agenda for violence. For these groups, Poso was a *jihad fisisabilillah*, a holy war in the path of God.⁴ Such religious framing of the imperative for violence was not in itself novel. Local leaders had described

¹ Interviews with Poso men, July 2003, April 2004.

² Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

³ 'Akhlak Perang Dalam Islam', *Formasi*, June 2000, p. 18. The article presents the verses Q. S. Albaqarah 190, 191 and 193, thereby skipping over Q.S. Albaqarah 192, which reads, 'But if they [those who fight you] cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.'

⁴ Translation from Fealy (2006).

violence in Poso as a jihad before mujahidin arrived; some Christian figures had framed the May-June 2000 violence as governed by Biblical rules of engagement, other efforts to avoid religious rhetoric notwithstanding. Religious identity had also determined which side an individual could join from the outset of the conflict, and over time increasingly became sole and sufficient reason to construe an individual to be a legitimate target to kill. But the religious framing undertaken by mujahidin was distinct in their more systematic efforts to articulate the content of their religious agenda, to establish religious identity as more than an empty mobilizing symbol.

Why choose to focus on the religious framing of violence? The analytical importance of religion in the study of violent conflict is by no means uncontested. Sceptics of the role of religion have noted that theories of religious violence often do not rely on any special characteristic of religion per se, or that religion may simply mask other political or economic motives. Moreover, sceptics observe, combatants claiming religious motivation are as likely to be drawn from the ranks of thugs as from the devout in a particular society. Additionally, when such actors claim to be motivated by religious conviction, they may be mistaken in their knowledge or interpretation of the contents of religious doctrine.

Other scholars, however, doubt the importance of such criticisms. Appleby (2000:68-69), for example, confronts the criticisms of mistaken beliefs and the participation of thugs. He argues that if individuals understand themselves to be acting out of religious conviction, then we cannot rightly deem their actions to be irreligious simply because more qualified authorities may consider their beliefs to be ‘misconstruals of the sacred’. Moreover, Appleby asserts, it is precisely the religious illiterate (such as thugs), possessing folk religious sensibility but not formal religious knowledge, who are most likely to be moved to become violent by the textual interpretations of extremists. Along similar lines, McTernan (2003:57) argues that non-practicing individuals may nevertheless be influenced by religion in their ‘world view and political judgements’, a phenomenon he terms ‘believing without belonging’.

On causes, most proponents of the importance of religion readily admit that religious conflicts share common causal factors with other violence, with economic, political and social struggles all likely to contribute (Seul 99:564; McTernan 2003:77; Appleby 2000; Cady and Simon 2007). Although they may assert in a general sense that religion could be a cause of conflict, in discussing particular cases these scholars more characteristically position religion as a variable that influences a specific conflict’s dynamics. Michael Horowitz (2009) is typical, arguing that irrespective of how its influence operates, religion ‘matters’ as a variable in the analysis of conflict if there are observable differences in the behaviour of combatants in conflicts in which violence is religiously legitimated.

How might religion ‘matter’ to conflict dynamics and combatant behaviour? Several observations recur throughout the literature, broadly covering conflict intensity, duration, the identity of combatants and the forms of violence. One common observation is that conflicts in which religion is salient are likely to be more intense than conflicts in which it is not (Toft 2007; Medeiros 2009). They may also be of longer duration, because of the effects of religion on actors’ determination to fight, or because religion triggers the involvement of new actors in the conflict. On the former point, religious conviction may motivate actors to continue to fight long after the material costs of doing so might otherwise cause conflict termination (Horowitz 2009), make actors averse to negotiated settlements (Toft 2007; Cady and Simon 2007), or see actors participate on account of satisfaction derived from the commitment to fighting a sacred war in addition to their pursuit of specific ends (Juergensmeyer 2007). On the

involvement of new actors, Davidson (2008:177-178) argues that in the Indonesian context religion is more likely than ethnicity to support a widening of local conflict situations to involve more and more groups, producing protracted stalemates. Toft (2007:104-105) asserts more generally that believers are more able than groups defined by secular identity to intervene in local conflicts without compromising the legitimacy of local elites. On forms, religion may motivate actors to perpetrate violence at times of religious significance to them or their targets (Hassner 2010), to attack symbolic targets such as places of worship, or to adhere to constraints on forms of violence mandated by religious doctrine.

Each of the above observations concern cases in which religion exacerbates or contributes to violent conflict. A final important recurring observation is the ambiguity of religious doctrine with respect to violence. Appleby (2000:10) establishes this ‘ambivalence’ as the central point of his book, observing that ‘religions have legitimated certain acts of violence, [but] they have also attempted to limit the frequency and scope of those acts’. The precise contribution of violence to a specific conflict will depend on which interpretation of religion prevails (Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000). Most scholars apportion the greatest role to leaders in establishing an authoritative interpretation of a particular situation, although Appleby (2000) suggests two important caveats. First, leaders’ interpretation must resonate to some extent with the lived experience of followers, lest leaders be deemed irrelevant (2000:35). Second, it is much easier for extremist interpretations to take hold under circumstances in which violence may plausibly be cast as a ‘defensive’, and hence legitimated response (2000:119)

What explanatory power do these observations bring to bear on the involvement of mujahidin groups in Poso and the violence that took place after their arrival? Certainly, the primacy of the religious cleavage contributed both to the arrival of mujahidin in Poso, and to the acceptance by locals of their presence. In the months after their arrival and efforts to inculcate a religious agenda, we can also observe a significant effect on combatant behaviour. As I outline below, there is evidence of this religious agenda influencing the timing and selection of targets for violence, emboldening local combatants and motivating them to alter their lifestyles. But context proved to be crucial to this initial impact. Mujahidin groups first arrived when the threat of further Christian attacks was real, support for violence was high and jihadist interpretations could be advanced uncontested, and the costs of joining with mujahidin were low. Once this context changed – through the demonstration of Muslims’ military superiority, an additional deployment of government troops, and the offer of a government-mediated peace deal – few actors displayed the reluctance to negotiate or the determination to continue fighting even in the face of escalating costs that might be predicted from the literature. Indeed, such behaviour was observable primarily among mujahidin and the core of their local Muslim support. By contrast, as costs increased and the threat reduced, most elites and community members refrained – over time – from perpetrating violence and reduced their commitment to the mujahidin agenda. Their actions lend weight to Appleby’s caveats: that the call to violence must resonate with the lived experience of followers, and that extremist violence will most readily prevail when it can be cast plausibly as defensive.

Mujahidin Groups

Two distinct sets of jihadist groups sent members to Poso. The first set were groups derived from the 1950s and 1960s Darul Islam rebellion, who sent their members to Poso starting in mid 2000. They were followed a year later by Laskar Jihad Ahlus Sunna Wal Jamaah (hereafter Laskar Jihad), which arrived in mid 2001. These various groups shared an interest in

establishing an alliance with local Muslims to strike back against local Christians. They also each sought to promote the observance in Poso of their distinct brands of Salafi Islam, a movement to return to Islam as ‘practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the two generations that followed him’ (ICG 2004b). Such similarities have at times led observers to conflate these groups, with even local Christians in Poso also misidentifying their foes (Aragon 2005). But the two sets of networks did not cooperate closely in Poso, due to differences in religious doctrine and pre-existing squabbles dating from their earlier involvement in the Maluku conflict.

Darul Islam-Derived Groups

The earlier arrivals in Poso were jihadist groups derived from the 1950s and 1960s Darul Islam (DI) rebellion. Fighting for the establishment of an Islamic state, the original Darul Islam movement was effectively put down after the execution of its leader Kartosoewirjo in 1962. But a social network inspired by the notion of this Islamic state has persisted, and saw the resuscitation of the movement in various forms during the Suharto era (Temby 2010). Most contemporary jihadist groups active in Indonesia include leaders with a background in Darul Islam, or otherwise derive support from its networks, and observers nominate Darul Islam as the most likely wellspring of future Indonesian radical Islamic movements (Temby 2010, ICG 2005a).

DI-derived groups active in the Poso conflict include Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Mujahidin Kompak and various factions of Darul Islam itself, each of which drew many of their activists from Java and Sumatra, as well as two Sulawesi-based militia, Laskah Jundullah and Wahdah Islamiyah (ICG 2003; ICG 2004a). Owing primarily to the reportage of the International Crisis Group and investigations by the Indonesian police, we know in most detail about the arrival of Jemaah Islamiyah and Mujahidin Kompak. Both of these groups had representatives on the ground in Poso within weeks of the May-June 2000 violence. Although each organization had access to alumni of military training in Afghanistan and the Philippines, neither elected to bring an entire ready-made fighting force to Poso. Instead, each organization sent small teams of men to meet with local leaders and to begin to recruit local youths.

Of these two organizations, Jemaah Islamiyah was of much longer standing. The group was established in Malaysia in 1993, when exiled senior Darul Islam leader Abdullah Sungkar and his followers left DI as a result of doctrinal and personal disagreements with overall DI commander Ajengan Masduki. Key among these disagreements, Temby (2010) argues, Sungkar considered DI’s overly centralized state-based organizational model to be an ineffective structure for the movement. Accordingly, over the years following the split, Jemaah Islamiyah established what Fealy (2005:26, 32) characterizes as a ‘disciplined and military capable organization’ willing to make ‘tactical use of violence’ in pursuit of its eventual goal of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia. Jemaah Islamiyah’s strategy to bring an Islamic state into being involved several stages: first, the establishment of small devout communities to act as ‘beach-heads’; next, the development of a true Islamic consciousness more broadly in Indonesia; preceding an eventual armed struggle, slated by some to commence as late as 2025 (Solahudin 2011:245-6; Fealy 2005:32).

Jemaah Islamiyah’s first involvement in an arena of inter-religious conflict in Indonesia came in Maluku province in 1999, after the outbreak of deadly Christian-Muslim clashes on Ambon

and other nearby islands. Prior to the outbreak of fighting in Maluku, Jemaah Islamiyah had already established a military wing, whose members were veterans of overseas training (Solahudin 2011:246). Nevertheless, the organization's mobilization to Maluku was slow and disjointed. Different factions within Jemaah Islamiyah disagreed on whether the organization should become involved in the conflict at all, with opponents arguing that JI should be wary of the apparent political dimensions of the violence (ICG 2004a). When supporters of intervention prevailed and JI made its delayed move into the province, the organization found that it also lacked the financial resources to sustain extensive operations in Maluku (Solahudin 2011:252-3).

Solahudin (2011:253-6) highlights Jemaah Islamiyah's need for funding to support its operations in Maluku as a contributing factor in the establishment of the related Mujahidin Kompak militia. He recounts that JI turned to the established Islamic charity Kompak to access funds for jihad, relying on pre-existing personal connections with members of the charity. JI established a particularly close relationship with the Solo branch of Kompak, itself headed by a JI member, and entered into an agreement with this branch that Kompak would manage funds for humanitarian work whereas JI would manage funds for jihad. This partnership eventually led to Kompak forming its own independent fighting force, however, called Mujahidin Kompak (Solahudin 2011:255). The militia became an umbrella organization accepting recruits from a broad array of other jihadist organizations (ICG 2005; Karnavian et al 2008), including JI members, and competed with JI for local recruits in both Maluku and Poso (Solahudin 2011:255).

Upon deciding to intervene in the Poso violence, Jemaah Islamiyah first sent a senior emissary to meet local Muslim leaders and then, soon after, sent a small team of trainers to the district. The organization centred its presence in Poso in the Tanah Runtuh area of Gebangrejo ward, home to local Muslim figure Adnan Aرسال (ICG 2004:8-9; 2007:3). Aرسال had become an increasingly prominent figure in Poso during the earlier periods of conflict, particularly the May-June 2000 violence, when he reputedly remained in the city at a time when many community leaders fled.⁵ By associating from Aرسال, the organization could therefore benefit from his local influence. Jemaah Islamiyah's arrival in Poso was essentially clandestine, as its members do not seem to have immediately revealed their affiliation to Aرسال or to the other Muslim figures with whom they met (ICG 2004a: 7-8). Even local men who subsequently trained with the Jemaah Islamiyah may not have been aware initially of the identity of the organization, instead referring to their trainers by the generic term mujahidin.⁶

Mujahidin Kompak was also in touch with Aرسال, but chose to establish its base in Kayamanya ward, which is adjacent to Gebangrejo.⁷ By August 2000, Mujahidin Kompak had sent two small assessment teams to Poso, mostly composed of veterans of the Maluku conflict; these teams brought with them a few of the guns the organization had garnered for use in Maluku (ICG 2005: 7). In establishing a presence in the district, Mujahidin Kompak relied in part on its association with the charity Kompak. The charity provided a legitimate

⁵ Interview with Adnan Aرسال, February 2002; interviews with Poso men, January 2002, July 2003, July 2007.

⁶ Interviews with Poso men, July 2003, April 2004. As late as 2007, local Muslim men who had trained extensively with JI members and cooperatively perpetrated violence claimed that they had only become aware that the outside mujahidin were JI members after being taken into police custody. Given the exculpatory effect of such statements, they must be treated with scepticism. See, for example, 'Mohammad Basri: 'Kami Ini Hanya Kerbau'', *Tempo*, 18 February 2007, p. 32.

⁷ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, April 2004; *Opo Deposition* (2006:4).

cover to conceal military activities, an opportunity also exploited by Sulawesi-based militia Laskar Jundullah, commanded by the head of Kompak's South Sulawesi branch, Agus Dwikarna (ICG 2004a:5) The humanitarian assistance Kompak sent to Central Sulawesi also gave Mujahidin Kompak members an avenue to approach Muslims from Poso who remained in IDP camps in other parts of Central Sulawesi, among whom mujahidin found some of their first local recruits.⁸

Involvement in Poso fulfilled mujahidin group members' perceived obligation to defend fellow Muslims, but also presented two strategic opportunities for Jemaah Islamiyah and like-minded groups. First, jihadist organizations were able to exploit anger at the violence against Muslims in Poso as a hook to recruit new members in other parts of Indonesia. The importance of recruitment is evident from the identity of those whom the DI-derived networks sent to Poso. Many Afghanistan and Philippines alumni did go to Poso, but the networks also sent men with no prior military experience.⁹ These new recruits were sent to Poso despite the fact that these networks probably could have conducted training and other combat operations in Poso solely by relying on the many Afghanistan and Philippines veterans that they had at their disposal.

Second, fighting in Poso could be viewed as a means to convert the district into a secure base, or at least to make the local Muslim population more devout through ongoing religious instruction (ICG 2004a:5). Indeed, Jemaah Islamiyah appears to have come to consider Poso to be a particularly promising area to establish as a secure base. The organization remained intensively involved in Poso for much longer than it did in Maluku, and devoted greater resources to establishing an ongoing presence there. Indicative of its commitment in the district, during the conflict Jemaah Islamiyah established a new sub-division (*wakalah*) of its organization in Poso (ICG 2007a:5).

Laskar Jihad

Laskar Jihad came to Poso in mid 2001, over a year after the first of the DI-derived groups arrived, and at a point when these groups had already helped to initiate large-scale reprisals against Poso's Christians. Violence escalated further in the months after Laskar Jihad established its presence, but this escalation more directly reflects the increased military capacity of the alliance of DI-derived groups and local Muslims. Laskar Jihad appears to have had less direct involvement in violence than these other jihadist groups, and did not cooperate closely with them.

Laskar Jihad was formed in April 2000 as the paramilitary wing of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah Communication Forum (FKASWJ), a loose network of Salafi schools aligned with the Yogyakarta-based preacher Ja'far Umar Thalib (ICG 2004b:12-16). Hasan (2006) has written the most comprehensive study of the group, from which the remaining details of this paragraph are drawn. Eschewing the clandestine approach of the DI-derived groups from the outset, the organization held a rally for thousands of supporters in the Senayan main stadium in Central Jakarta in early April 2000, prior to its mobilization to Maluku. On the day of the rally, Laskar Jihad representatives met with President Abdurrahman Wahid, who threw them out of his office, before establishing a ten day military training camp just south of Jakarta in

⁸ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, April 2004.

⁹ For example, see the narrative of the experiences in Maluku and Poso of Mujahidin Kompak combatant Asep Jaja in ICG (2005b:6-9).

Bogor. Despite opposition from the president, Laskar Jihad sent thousands of men to Maluku over the following months, reaching an estimated force strength of 3000 men in the province by July 2000. Hasan characterizes this mobilization as a ‘theatrical’ endeavour to stake out the position of salafists in the Indonesian political arena rather than an effort to win a decisive victory in Maluku. Accordingly, few Laskar Jihad members took part in combat in Maluku, with Hasan finding just two of the more than 100 Maluku veterans whom he interviewed to have taken part in actual battles.

The most direct precipitant for Laskar Jihad to expand their operations to Poso was a 3 July 2001 massacre of fourteen Muslims in Buyung Katedo village, near the southern outskirts of the city (described in detail below). Upon deciding to enter Central Sulawesi, Laskar Jihad first sent a two man investigative team to Central Sulawesi in mid-July 2001 to meet with local authorities and Muslim figures. Soon after, Laskar Jihad sent their first 31 personnel to the province, and by the end of July 2001, the group had announced that it was recruiting volunteers for Poso.¹⁰ Subsequently, Laskar Jihad established offices in both Palu and Poso, and also established posts in various villages in Poso. Its contingent in Central Sulawesi never approached the size of its deployment to Maluku. Various estimates of its personnel strength in Poso range from 100 to 700 men.¹¹ As in Maluku, the organization appears to have played a limited role in actual fighting, with even local combatants who were sympathetic to Laskar Jihad describing it to be less militant than the DI-derived groups.¹²

Laskar Jihad was distinct from the DI-derived groups in at least three other ways. First, the groups differed in their interpretations of Salafī Islam. ICG (2004b) sets out the differences and disputes between these two groups in great detail; one of the more significant practical disagreements concerned the permissibility of rebellion against a Muslim government (ICG 2004a:6-7; 2004b:25). Laskar Jihad believed rebellion against a Muslim ruler to be impermissible, with an Islamic state to be achieved cumulatively through the individual religious practice of community members (ICG 2004b:4). Their stance saw the group place a strong emphasis on anti-separatism in their rhetoric, particularly in Maluku, and may have contributed to support for Laskar Jihad among some senior members of the military. By contrast the DI-derived groups did not recognize the legitimacy of the Indonesian state, and retained the establishment of an Islamic state as their ultimate goal. The groups cooperated only briefly in Maluku, before relationships between them deteriorated (ICG 2004a). In Poso local supporters of the DI-derived groups suggested to Laskar Jihad’s initial assessment team that the group would be better served heading to neighbouring Morowali district.¹³ The groups also clashed directly over Laskar Jihad’s attempt to set up a post in a Mujahidin Kompak stronghold (ICG 2004a).

Second, as outlined above, Laskar Jihad was the least covert of the various jihadist groups. Whereas Jemaah Islamiyah, Mujahidin Kompak and their ilk publicized their activities discreetly among their own networks to the ends of fundraising and recruitment, Laskar Jihad aggressively pursued a public profile, setting up a website, print media and in Ambon a radio

¹⁰ ‘Laskar Jihad Datang, Kristen Resah’, *laskarjihad.or.id*, 5 August 2001; ‘Pendaftaran Laskar Jihad ke Poso Dibuka’, *laskarjihad.or.id*, 30 July 2001.

¹¹ ICG (2004a:14) estimates 100-150 men, Sangaji (2004:26) estimates 500, whereas Hasan (2006:205) estimates 700.

¹² A local combatant who joined Laskar Jihad cast this difference pejoratively, saying Mujahidin were more hard-line as their teachings encouraged simple hatred of all groups not of the same faith. Interview with a Poso man, July 2007.

¹³ ‘Laskar Jihad Datang, Kristen Resah’, *laskarjihad.or.id*, 5 August 2001.

station to broadcast news of the group's activities (Hasan 2006). In Poso, the group openly sold its national level tabloid, *Buletin Laskar Jihad*, and distributed a free almost daily Poso-specific bulletin called Bel@. (The title has a double meaning, constituting an acronym for Laskar Jihad News but also meaning 'defend' in Indonesian.)

Third, Laskar Jihad was distinct from other jihadist groups in its close ties to the military. The organization had the support of several high-level military figures, who allowed Laskar Jihad to travel to Maluku despite an order from President Abdurrahman Wahid that they be stopped (van Bruinessen 2002:118; Fealy 2005:40). Hasan (2006) recounts several instances of field-level support from the military for Laskar Jihad in Maluku, including the passage of some Laskar Jihad members to the province aboard military transport ships, the failure of the local military command to act against the group, and even Laskar Jihad's initial assessment team in Maluku being handed factory-standard weapons by military personnel upon arrival in the province. Although there was ad hoc contact between members of the DI-derived groups and members of the security forces, for instance to purchase arms and ammunition, overall Indonesia's security and intelligence forces seem to have been largely ignorant of the structure of the DI-derived jihadist networks in the period of their early mobilization to Poso.¹⁴

Building an alliance with local Muslims

Upon arrival in Poso, a priority for jihadist groups of all stripes was to recruit local Muslim youths to receive military-style training and religious instruction. Such recruitment aimed both to increase the capacity of local Muslims to fight, and also to make these youths more devout as Muslims. Measured against these objectives, the various training programs conducted had mixed results. On the one hand, military training was a core element of the development of the alliance with local Muslims which produced a lasting military advantage over Christians in Poso. Beyond a cadre of core adherents, however, the effects of religious instruction appear to have been more temporary, with little clear evidence of a longer term transformation of Islamic belief in Poso.

For their part, Poso's Muslim youths were a receptive audience to recruitment calls, intent as they were on perpetrating reprisals. Most of these youths had been forced to flee during the May-June 2000 violence, but some had swiftly returned of their own accord. These early returnees set up guard posts in their villages or else congregated in relatively safe areas such as Kayamanya ward, arming themselves as best they could. Some members of Poso's Muslim diaspora also returned to the district, spurred by news of the May-June 2000 attacks. But other Muslim youths sheltered outside Poso for months, staying in makeshift IDP camps or with relatives. Indeed, mujahidin recruited some of these youths directly from such camps, helping to convince them to return to Poso.

With such enthusiasm for reprisals, the DI-derived groups were able to conduct their first rounds of training for local recruits soon after their arrival in Poso. Both Jemaah Islamiyah and Mujahidin Kompak, for example, had completed their first rounds of training before the end of 2000. These training courses were longer than the training core Christian combatants undertook immediately prior to the May-June violence, but were much shorter than the three

¹⁴ See, for example, Conboy (2006) who characterizes as 'inaccurate or woefully outdated' most of the information in a September 2001 assessment of known extremists prepared by the Indonesian State Intelligence Agency (BIN).

years of instruction that some of the mujahidin group members had received in Afghanistan. ICG (2004:8-9) suggests Jemaah Islamiyah initially ran a three month program for 35 to 45 recruits, involving a month of religious instruction before military-style training commenced. The organization subsequently repeated the same program for several more rounds of recruits. By contrast, according to the same report, Mujahidin Kompak's initial programs ran for three weeks to a month, with a greater immediate emphasis on fighting skills. One Mujahidin Kompak trainer suggested the organizations first training program involved just fifteen recruits,¹⁵ an account partly corroborated by the deposition of a local trainee (*Budi Deposition* 2006:3). Subsequently, in addition to training sessions in Poso, Mujahidin Kompak also took some local men to train in Maluku in 2001 and 2004 (Emil Mardani Deposition 2004:3; ICG 2006:14).¹⁶

Over the following years, many other organizations also took advantage of Poso's sparsely populated rural and forested terrain to conduct training programs. There is no complete account of the training that took place, with different reports often contradictory in their details, but a variety of DI-derived groups appear to have run camps, on occasion joined by foreign jihadists. Laskar Jihad also ran at least some training for locals after arriving in Poso in 2001, although most sources suggest it to have been of a much more limited scale.¹⁷ The following account discusses only the training provided by the DI-derived groups, primarily Jemaah Islamiyah and Mujahidin Kompak.

Military Training

The degree of instruction provided to local trainees appears to have varied, even within the one training program. Some trainees clearly acquired relatively advanced skills – police accounts describe Jemaah Islamiyah providing early local trainees with instruction in the use, assembly and disassembly of firearms, basic bomb-making as well as tactics (Karnavian et al 2008:175). Moreover, in the later years of the conflict, two youths from Poso were sent to Java to learn more advanced bomb-making there (ICG 2007b:3) But other early training organized by mujahidin groups appears to have been much more rudimentary. A man who said he took part in three months of training near Tanah Runtuh in 2001 claimed that participants used wooden replicas of weapons, and not even their own homemade firearms.¹⁸ In his interrogation deposition, a participant in Mujahidin Kompak training in 2000 said trainees had only one World War II era bolt-action rifle between them to practise shooting (*Budi Deposition* 2006:3). Along similar lines, a Mujahidin Kompak member described much of the training he provided in Poso as essentially 'scouts training' (first-aid, navigation, map-

¹⁵ Interview with Mujahidin Kompak member, April 2004.

¹⁶ The Mardani deposition appears in the dossier of Sofyan Djumpai alias Pian. Many of the details in this dossier appear to have been fabricated, but the specific matter of the journey of Poso men to Maluku has been corroborated by other sources and is beyond doubt.

¹⁷ The militia's own newsletter describes just two rudimentary training sessions for local youths in October and November 2001, running for two and one days respectively. But one local recruit asserted that Laskar Jihad had conducted military training and formed a fourteen-member special forces unit from local trainees, although another local combatant recalled that the Laskar Jihad members in his village provided only religious instruction, not military training. See 'Laskar Jihad Gelar Latihan Gabungan Dengan Muslim Toliba', *Bel@*, 12 October 2001; 'Latihan Gabungan di Tokorondo', *Bel@*, 27 November 2001; interviews with Poso men, April 2004, July 2007.

¹⁸ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004.

reading) mixed with ‘the arts of war’ (that is, obstacle courses or, only for a more select group, weapons and explosives training).¹⁹

Certainly it is possible that in their accounts these men were concealing the full extent of the military training that took place. Nevertheless, their descriptions are broadly consistent with the portrayal of a training camp (reputedly in Southeast Sulawesi) on a VCD apparently made for fundraising purposes.²⁰ The VCD shows recruits training in physical agility and attacking a mocked-up village all while holding wooden replicas of guns, set to a background of chanting exhorting viewers to ‘wake from their long sleep’ and step forward bravely to ‘destroy Satan’s forces’. An instructor demonstrates the use of a pistol and is shown firing the weapon at one point, and one man is seen holding what appears to be a genuine long-barrelled firearm while participating in a drill, but none of the trainees are shown firing a gun.

Regardless of the precise military proficiency of trainees, such training programs were an effective mechanism for mujahidin to develop their alliance with local Muslims. The structure of the training entrenched mujahidin in leadership positions, and the recruits who took part provided mujahidin with an increasingly broad network of contacts in various villages around Poso. The provision of training also proved to be an effective first step for mujahidin to forge ongoing relations with local Muslim youths, some of whom continued to collaborate with mujahidin to perpetrate violence for years. For instance, one of the first men trained by Mujahidin Kompak in 2000 was still active in an associated group when he took part in an October 2003 shooting and arson attack on a village in neighbouring Morowali district, for which he was arrested and convicted.²¹ Another example is Lilik Purnomo alias Haris, a local man who played a key role in plotting the October 2005 beheading of three Christian schoolgirls in Poso.²² The attack was a cooperative effort with Jemaah Islamiyah: ICG (2007:4) dates Lilik’s association with the organization to his participation in its first round of training in Poso in late 2000.

Religious Instruction

Mujahidin groups used several avenues to provide religious instruction to locals. In addition to religious instruction provided during military training programs, several jihadist networks also brought preachers to Poso, and sent these individuals to visit or stay in various villages throughout the district. In these villages, preachers ran regular study sessions for local youths, covering jihadist doctrine and moral precepts.

I am not aware of any detailed accounts of exactly what material was presented to local Muslim youths in training programs or early religious study sessions. Clearly a large proportion of the material dealt specifically with the doctrine of jihad. Both trainers and locals recalled local youths were receptive to understanding violence in Poso to be a jihad, although each also doubted the extent to which these youths had acquired a genuine understanding of

¹⁹ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, April 2004.

²⁰ In the version of the VCD in my possession, which includes one hour of footage from Maluku, Poso, Aceh and probably also Kalimantan, the approximately twelve minutes of footage of the training come at the beginning of a section on Poso. The VCD is obviously spliced together from many different sources of footage. It is narrated in Arabic, although in some sections the original cameraman provides impromptu commentary in Indonesian while filming, and the chants referred to in the main text are in Indonesian.

²¹ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, May 2004.

²² Lilik admitted his involvement to police after his arrest and he was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment. Direct observation by author of trial of Lilik Purnomo and Irwanto Irano.

the term's content. One aspect of this material were practical rules to be followed when perpetrating violence, summarized by one youth as follows:

They taught that we could not kill children, women, or even people who had surrendered. They were very strict. You weren't allowed to take the enemy's possessions for yourselves, we'd take stuff and put it all together in one spot, then it would be sold by the leader, and then we'd use the money to buy ammunition. But you couldn't take the money yourself.²³

Beyond jihadist doctrine, mujahidin groups also provided moral instruction and religious education. On occasion, preachers linked such instruction to the conflict by describing the situation in Poso as a reprimand from God, a notion that also enjoyed some currency in the Christian community. Providing moral and religious instruction constituted what Fealy (2005:27) describes as the 'inescapable obligation' of Jemaah Islamiyah members. The ignorance of Islam and lifestyle of many local recruits in Poso may have provided extra resolve to mujahidin, and is consistent with Appleby's (2000:69) contention that the 'religious illiterate' may be most easily mobilized by religious extremists. ICG (2004a:8) suggests that many of the recruits for early rounds of training had a background as local gang members. Most local Muslim combatants interviewed also admitted to frequently drinking alcohol, with mixed reports on whether they stopped after attending training or study sessions.²⁴ Indeed, a Mujahidin Kompak member recalled that the youths he trained had not been particularly interested in moral lessons,²⁵ and the predilection of local youths to embrace vice was presumably the source of the following excerpt from a sermon given at the burial of the fourteen Muslim victims of the July 2001 Buyung Katedo incident (described in a later part of this chapter).

Forgive all of our sins ya Allah. Forgive the sins of the [local] mujahidin who have perished ya Allah. Some among them did not pray ya Allah, some among them still used amulets ya Allah, some among them still drank palm wine ya Allah, then they stepped forward to wage war to defend Your religion ya Allah. Please have mercy on them ya Allah ... Have mercy on those who have fallen and have mercy on the mujahidin who are still alive who are stepping forward to continue your struggle.²⁶

Local Muslim youths described their receptiveness to religious instruction in slightly different terms. Particularly in late 2000 and to some extent in 2001, men alone had returned to the villages near border areas with Christian settlements, and standing guard after dark was a nightly necessity. In such an atmosphere, some locals recalled, lectures on jihad had an important emboldening effect:

We heard a rumour that mujahidin had come to Poso, and we already knew it would be these sort of people who could help us, so we had to accept them, at the time everyone accepted them, no one objected. We needed them, and after they started giving us religious lessons, on jihad, it lifted our spirits. Where before we'd lacked courage, after listening to their lectures we wouldn't back down, we had no fear no matter what we faced Before the religious study sessions, none of us had the courage to attack, we'd

²³ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004.

²⁴ Interviews with Poso men, July 2003, April 2004, May 2004.

²⁵ Interview with Mujahidin Kompak member, May 2004.

²⁶ Sermon appears at the end of the VCD, *Panggilan Jihad Poso*. The reference to fallen mujahidin is presumably a reference to those killed in the May-June 2000 violence, as few local Muslims had been killed in the course of perpetrating reprisal attacks up until July 2001. Nevertheless, the orator's reference to drinking suggests that vice was still perceived as a problem in mid 2001.

just made weapons to attack, but we didn't have the courage to enter [Christian areas] and attack.²⁷

These local youths indicated that, to their mind, their perceived need for jihadist doctrine and physical training had also made them temporarily more receptive to moral instruction. Participation in study sessions and other religious activities was encouraged by peer pressure. One man recalled that he had rarely performed even the Friday prayer before the May-June 2000 violence, but when he came back to his village after fleeing for several months, he found that a mujahidin preacher was living in his village and all of his friends now regularly prayed.²⁸ Corroborating such a statement of increased religiosity, a religious leader associated with Tanah Runtuh expressed his pleasure when I interviewed him in early 2002 that Poso's Muslim population had become more visibly devout.²⁹ Some tenets of jihadist doctrine also helped to build peer pressure – most local combatants whom I interviewed recalled that they had been taught that it was *haram* (forbidden) to flee a battle. Locals who fled each time the security situation worsened were ostracised, branded as cowards and sometimes even driven away.

Establishing Military Ascendancy

The developing alliance between mujahidin and local Muslims steadily tipped the balance of power in Poso towards Muslims. The increasing military capacity of this alliance was most clearly manifest in two major periods of attacks in 2001. The first of these periods, in June-July 2001, saw the alliance's first large-scale reprisals against Christian villages, albeit during a period when both sides were responsible for different attacks. By the second of these periods, in November-December 2001, Muslims had developed sufficient strength to destroy seven Christian villages in five days, with Christians able to do little to resist.

Such large-scale reprisals were concentrated on two targets, each of which reflected a focus of local Muslims' desire for revenge. The first were Christian settlements that bordered on Muslim areas, or were enclaves in otherwise Muslim-controlled areas. Muslim villagers who lived in these border areas harboured a desire for revenge most strongly, although not exclusively, against their Christian neighbours. Without the help of these near neighbours, Christians from elsewhere in the district would not have possessed the local knowledge to breach their defences in May-June 2000, local Muslims judged. Attacking villages near border areas could also serve to simplify the 'religious geography' by removing settlements that lay between two villages inhabited by co-religionists. The practical importance of such simplifications was highlighted in a travelogue of a member of Laskar Jihad's initial assessment team, who visited Poso just after two Christian settlement in Poso Pesisir had been destroyed. The visitor recalled his host informing him that they would not have travelled to Poso by land if the two villages, which lay along the main road through Poso Pesisir sub-district, still stood intact.³⁰ A second target of reprisals were villages reputed to have been Christian strongholds during the May-June 2000 violence. Two of these Christian strongholds – Sepe village in Lage sub-district, and Tangkura in Poso Pesisir sub-district – were over-run during 2001. A third stronghold – Silanca, which neighbours Sepe – was subsequently over-run in 2002.

²⁷ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

²⁸ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004.

²⁹ Interview with Wahid Lamidji, Poso, January 2002.

³⁰ 'Laskar Jihad Datang, Kristen Resah', *laskarjihad.or.id*, 5 August 2001.

The organization of the large-scale reprisal attacks against Christian settlements during 2001 bore some similarity to attacks by Christian crowds in the May-June 2000 violence. At the centre of each attack there was an organized core of combatants, consisting of mujahidin and the local men whom they had trained. Mujahidin would have been only a small numerical minority in most attacks, given their limited numbers overall in Poso. Particularly during the period before Laskar Jihad arrived, there may have been dozens rather than hundreds of mujahidin in the district, mostly concentrated in wards of the city. Nevertheless, these mujahidin appear to have played a disproportionately prominent role when present. For example, a local man who fought in the attack on Sepe village in December 2001 indicated that mujahidin tended to be in the front line: 'Even the security forces were scared of them.'³¹ Another local combatant from Poso Pesisir put the same point slightly differently, 'Even when there were security forces, they [that is, mujahidin] stayed standing and kept going forward; they wouldn't lie down.'³²

Mujahidin and the local men they had trained also played a disproportionately significant role in large-scale attacks because of their access to factory-standard firearms. Such factory-standard weapons were particularly sought after because the homemade guns that most men owned were inaccurate and tended to jam after firing only a handful of bullets.³³ Mujahidin brought some of these guns to Poso from the Maluku conflict; others were sourced directly from the Southern Philippines (Sangaji 2005). Mujahidin appear to have largely controlled access to these weapons in 2000 and 2001, handing out guns immediately before an attack and collecting the weapons again afterwards.³⁴ A pre-attack ceremony from late 2001 depicted on a fund-raising VCD provides evidence of this pattern, showing a mujahid handing out around a dozen firearms to a room of approximately 50 people, before the men pray and set off to attack a village.³⁵ It was not until later in the conflict when operational funds ran short, a Mujahidin Kompak member claimed, that outsiders sacrificed this means of control and began to distribute weapons to local Muslims on a permanent basis.³⁶

Mujahidin and the trained core of fighters were far from the only participants in attacks, however. The same widespread desire to fight that helped mujahidin gain recruits also meant that each time a large-scale attack was to take place, Muslim ranks would quickly swell. Most local men had their own homemade firearms by 2001, and as a result virtually anyone could participate in an attack without close coordination with those nominally in command. For instance, one local combatant recalled that he might set off for an attack with what seemed like a few dozen people, only to find himself amongst a crowd of hundreds or even a thousand. Most of these ad hoc participants were probably from villages in the vicinity of the

³¹ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004.

³² Interview with a Poso man, July 2007.

³³ Despite the use of these weapons in attacks in 2000 and 2001, a somewhat surprising feature of this violence is that the average death toll from each clash did not increase in line with the increasing organization and weaponry. The reason is probably that Christians withdrew from clashes fairly swiftly when they realized that they could not defend their villages.

³⁴ Interview with Mujahidin Kompak member, May 2004.

³⁵ These firearms include rifles, at least two pistols and two weapons that appear to be automatic fire. In the footage of the attack that followed, only single gunshots are audible, however. ICG (2004a:12) identified the attack shown on this VCD as most likely the November 2001 attack on Tangkura, because the next clip on the video shows Muslims surveying the damage to Tangkura shortly after the village had been razed. The problem with this interpretation is that the attack on Tangkura took place during the day, whereas the video depicts a night-time attack.

³⁶ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, May 2004.

Christian settlement that was to be attacked. Even the local men who trained with mujahidin may have fought mainly in their own sub-district.

For the sake of clarity, I focus solely on large-scale attacks in the following account, to demonstrate the military ascendancy that Muslims succeeded in establishing in Poso in 2001. But these large-scale attacks were just one of the patterns of violence in Poso at the time. Threats to individual security on the basis of religious identity were an everyday concern in late 2000 and 2001. Villagers routinely harassed neighbouring settlements, for instance by firing weapons at night, and community guard posts were common throughout Poso. There were also frequent tit-for-tat sporadic incidents in between the major periods of violence. These attacks included smaller scale attacks on villages, IDP barracks and other public infrastructure; shooting and bombing attacks against public transport, with the latter reflecting the expertise in bomb-making that mujahidin introduced to Poso; and the murder of Muslims who entered territory nominally controlled by Christians and vice versa. Attacks on places of worship, generally avoided in previous periods of violence, also became common-place. Both Muslims and Christians were responsible for different attacks, many of which may have been entirely local in providence. But there were also clear signs of mujahidin involvement in this sporadic violence as early as December 2000, when a Mujahidin Kompak member was arrested on his way back from a harassing attack on Sepe village.³⁷

One feature of those sporadic incidents perpetrated by Muslims merits brief discussion, however, for the window it provides on the role of identity in the selection of targets. Sporadic violence presumably presented the best opportunity for Muslims to target the men they held most responsible as individuals for the May-June 2000 attacks. Poso's Muslims circulated several lists of Christians of whom it was alleged that they took part in the May-June 2000 violence, in similar fashion to the Christian-authored lists of provocateurs discussed in Chapter Four. One list to emerge almost immediately after the May-June 2000 violence was a five page document attributed to the 'Jihad Command Post' titled 'List: Names of the Intellectual Authors/Masterminds of the Riot and Massacre of Poso's Muslims in 2000'.³⁸ The list contained approximately 80 names, most of whom were members of the local Christian elite. A second list of Christian names emerged from a document submitted to the Palu district court by Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus, three Catholic men who stood trial for their role in the May-June 2000 attacks. The judges presiding over the trial included the list in the text of their April 2001 judgment, effectively making the names public. (Curiously, there was almost no correspondence between these two lists: only retired police officer Paulus Tungkanan appeared on both.) The 'sixteen names' became firmly ingrained in the public psyche, producing persistent Muslim demands for the men to be arrested.³⁹ Much as such lists could have shaped sporadic reprisal attacks, by producing targeted assassinations of named provocateurs, I have identified only one man on either of these lists who was subsequently attacked.⁴⁰ Mirroring the pattern of May-June 2000, when none of the men Christians named

³⁷ Interview with Farihin Ibnu Ahmad, date withheld.

³⁸ The copy of the list in my possession bears the stamp of the Forum Silaturahmi dan Perjuangan Ummat Islam Kabupaten Poso, a coalition of local Muslim figures and organizations that over time was increasingly controlled by Adnan Arsal and his allies. I cannot ascertain whether the stamp indicates that the document was copied from FSPUI's archives, or whether FSPUI played a part in compiling or issuing the list.

³⁹ The men are almost always referred to collectively as 'the sixteen names', and I suspect few people in Poso could have named all sixteen people on the list had they been asked during the conflict. Indeed, several different versions of the list circulated in the year before Tibo and his associates were executed.

⁴⁰ The unfortunate individual is Drs. J. Kogege, who was shot in the head while in his car on 3 September 2001. (He survived.)

as provocateurs were harmed, named individual targets of anger escaped violence while their co-religionists were attacked.

Each major period of violence in 2001 is discussed in turn below.

June-July 2001 attacks

The first large scale reprisals against Poso's Christians took place at the end of June 2001, triggering a period of escalated violence distinct from ongoing sporadic attacks. By the time the frequency of incidents decreased in early August, at least 34 people had been killed and by one estimate 22 settlements had been destroyed.⁴¹ Already in this period, Muslims exhibited a greater capacity to burn villages than their Christian adversaries. But Christians also perpetrated attacks, including a massacre of women and children at Buyung Katedo village that was the single deadliest incident in Poso from 2001 until 2004.⁴²

The reprisals that marked the start of the period were two attacks on Christian settlements in the vicinity of Malei-Lage village on 30 June and 1 July. Both were cooperative efforts between mujahidin and local Muslims, involving an organized core of combatants amongst a crowd of hundreds of Muslims. Locals typically brought along their own homemade firearms, but a local combatant from the vicinity said bullets were handed out freely before the first day's attack, and some participants also brought bombs. The crowd walked from the beach at Malei-Lage to the Christian part of the village on 30 June, the man recounted, where they found little resistance. One Christian was killed, and the crowd set about burning down the settlement, before a platoon of paramilitary police arrived and told them to go home. The next day, 1 July, in a neighbouring Christian settlement in Tongko village, a second attack proceeded along similar lines, and another Christian man was killed.⁴³

These two attacks were the first instance since the May-June 2000 violence in which a large part of a Christian village was burned, in itself marking them as a significant escalation from the preceding sporadic violence. Nevertheless, they were overshadowed almost immediately by more deadly violence in the same area of Poso. The worst of this violence was an attack on Buyung Katedo village, near Malei-Lage but closer to the Christian village Sepe, before dawn on 3 July. When Muslim residents returned to the village after fleeing from an attacking crowd that burned much of the village, they found fourteen Muslims brutally murdered. All but two of the victims were women and children, and most suffered several deep machete wounds to different parts of their bodies.⁴⁴ The fourteen victims were buried in a mass grave in Lawanga ward on the night of 3 June. The manner of the killing of these women and children lent the attack particular significance as a focus of Muslim anger, over and above the death toll itself. The aftermath of the attack and the burial were documented in a VCD

⁴¹ 'Muslim Poso: Sudah Dibantai Difitnah Pula', *Suara Hidayatullah*, September 2001. I do not have sufficient details of the fourth period to verify this damage figure. The same source, a local Muslim identity, gives what I believe to be a grossly inflated casualty figure, namely 56 Muslims and 600 Christians killed.

⁴² In 2005, the bombing of Tentena's central market killed 23 people, exceeding the death toll of fourteen at Buyung Katedo. In 2000, many more people were killed in the Walisongo massacre than died in the Buyung Katedo killings.

⁴³ Interviews with a Poso man, July 2003, April 2004.

⁴⁴ A Christian-authored chronology made the implausible claim that the victims had died when bombs concealed in the houses that were set alight exploded. The wounds on the victims do not resemble bomb wounds, there do not appear to be burn marks on the victims or their clothes, and one would expect Christians also to have been killed if this were the case. See Cheq and Recheq Forum (2001:26).

intended to generate further recruits to fight in Poso. The massacre also most directly spurred the entry of Laskar Jihad to Poso.

The Buyung Katedo attack was followed almost immediately by further attacks around the district, although none of these subsequent incidents approached the massacre's death toll. Some of the deadlier initial incidents included an ambush on 3 July in Sayo ward of four Christians riding motorbikes, all of whom were killed, and an incident near Toyado village on 5 July in which six Christians were killed, although it is unclear whether they were killed by police fire or died as the result of an attack by Muslims.⁴⁵ Around the same time, there were also several attacks in Poso Pesisir sub-district, to the west of the city, most notably an attack on the Christian village Saatu on 6 July in which one man was killed and more than 100 houses were burnt down. Thereafter, sporadic tit-for-tat lynchings and attacks on settlements continued until early August, with the sites of violence dispersed widely throughout the district.⁴⁶

How can we account for this renewed escalation, involving a shift from sporadic small-scale incidents to larger reprisal attacks? At one level, the escalation reflects the increased preparedness of Muslims to perpetrate reprisals, a goal for which they had been training for some time. Once larger scale reprisals were initiated, the experience of the preceding episodes of the violence meant that each side had the accumulated military capacity, desire for revenge and mutual contempt to respond in kind.

But contemporary media coverage and some observer accounts have also cited controversy over the appointment of the district secretary as an important contributing factor to the escalation. Shortly before this escalation, the district head Muin Pusadan appointed Muslim civil servant Awad Al-Amri to the post, which he had in any case occupied in an interim capacity since early 2000. Media coverage suggests that Christians opposed Al-Amri's appointment, instead wanting a Christian appointed to the post so that the district's senior elected official was a Muslim, and the senior bureaucrat was a Christian. The controversy was reportedly sufficient for the governor to counsel Pusadan to delay a decision on the post, advice which Pusadan ignored.⁴⁷ A likely political element to the violence is also evident from a failed plan by a delegation of Christians from Tentena to hold a protest at the district legislature in Poso on 2 July, which was to include a demand for the district head to resign (Cheq and Recheq Forum 2001: 26). Such a protest would be a bold and provocative move, given that as a result of the geographic segregation of Poso's religious communities at the time, Gebangrejo ward (where the legislature was located) was Muslim territory. A delegation of 30 Christians departed from Tentena on 2 July, but they were unable to enter the city proper, as police and a crowd of armed Muslim men stopped them on the southern outskirts of the city in Sayo ward (Crisis Center GKST 2001:2; Lasahido et al 2003:57).

Two specific links have been suggested between this failed protest and the escalation of violence. One chronology attributes the 30 June attack on Malei-Lage to a Muslim response

⁴⁵ See "Actual News! dari Medan Jihad Poso", *mubarizin.net*, www.mubarizin.net/Bahasan_Utama/Poso/Poso_Eds_13/poso_edes_13.html, accessed via www.waybackmachine.org; Cheq and Recheq Forum (2001:27); 'Lima Perusuh Poso Tewas Ditembak', *Kompas*, 6 July 2001; interview with a Poso man, February 2006.

⁴⁶ LPS-HAM (2001) provides a useful list of incidents.

⁴⁷ See 'Muin Pemicu Pertikaian di Poso?', *Mercusuar*, 4 July 2000. When Al-Amri was first appointed in 2000, authority to appoint a permanent district secretary rested with the governor; in 2001, new autonomy legislation transferred such authority to the district head.

to rumours that Christians were planning a large-scale protest. A crowd of Muslims tried to reach the city to block this protest, the chronology suggests, but encountered resistance in Malei-Lage, resulting in a clash (LPS-HAM 2001). It is possible this version accounts in part for the attack, although none of the local men I interviewed regarding the clash mentioned this context, instead explaining the violence as a jihadist reprisal. A second suggested link attributes the pre-dawn attack on Buyung Katedo to Christian anger at being blocked from protesting the previous day (Lasahido et al 2003:57). Muslims in Poso made this link at the time, as is clear from footage of the burial appearing on a contemporary VCD. On the video, a youth appears holding up a placard calling for the arrest of the leader of the Christian delegation and one of the delegation's members.⁴⁸

It is certainly possible that anger at the blockade of the planned demonstration and the appointment of Al-Amri brought pre-existing indignation at perceived affronts and injustices into sharp focus, and magnified some Christians' desire for revenge. Equally, Muslim anger at rumours of the protest could have contributed to their readiness to launch large-scale reprisals. But to acknowledge that politics may have contributed to the escalation of violence in this way is not to conclude that the June-July escalation necessarily was animated decisively by political aims. In particular, the outcome of local political struggles was unlikely to have been a key motivation for mujahidin, who by this point had assumed an influential role within Muslim ranks, although such outcomes may have been important to some of their local partners. On the Christian side, the attacks on Malei-Lage and Tongko plausibly could also have been at least as important as political outcomes to the violence that ensued.

November-December 2001

A further period of unrest in late 2001 established the total military ascendancy of Muslims over Poso's Christians. This unrest began in October 2001, when the security situation in Poso again became dire, with frequent attacks on buses, shooting attacks on villages, arson attacks, and clashes between armed groups around the fringes of the city.⁴⁹ It was the final five days of violence from 27 November – 1 December in particular that underlined the military capacity that Muslims had developed, however. During these five days, at least seven Christian populated villages were destroyed, including two settlements previously reputed to be Christian strongholds. The new scale and intensity of these attacks, at a time when the September 11 terrorist attacks meant that the central government was coming under pressure to curtail the activities of jihadist groups in Indonesia (van Klinken 2007), spurred government action to significantly increase troop deployments and bring the parties of the conflict to the negotiating table.

The peak of violence itself can be broken down into two separate, temporally and geographically distinct sets of incidents. The first and larger sequence of attacks took place on three consecutive days from 27-29 November in Poso Pesisir sub-district, during which Muslims destroyed each of five successive Christian villages along a road running inland from the Muslim populated settlement, Tabalu. The willingness to attack neighbouring villages on consecutive days was a sign of the increased military capacity of Muslim forces,

⁴⁸ These two men were J. Santo and P. Tonimba, respectively. Both men were subsequently signatories of the Malino peace accord in December 2001, as described later in this chapter.

⁴⁹ Different partisan accounts of this violence are provided in 'Kronologi Poso Membara', *laskarjihad.or.id*, 5 December 2001; Cheq and Recheq Forum (2002:34-40); Crisis Center GKST (no date:6-11).

who were newly confident that they could overwhelm the defences even of villages prompted to be on high alert by the previous day's violence.⁵⁰ In this sequence, Betalemba village was destroyed on 27 November, Patiwunga and the reputed Christian stronghold Tangkura were razed on 28 November, before attacks concluded on 29 November with the burning of Sanginora and Dewua villages. In all the attacks reportedly resulted in around ten fatalities, including an important mujahidin leader who was shot in the head on the first day.⁵¹

Having taken Sanginora and Dewua, the Muslim forces found themselves at the end of a twelve kilometre foot-track that led to Sulewana village, located just north of Tentena. Christians had used the track to help co-religionists in Poso Pesisir flee during the November attacks.⁵² If Muslims had wished to continue their advances in Poso Pesisir, they in theory could have tried to use the path to reach Tentena without passing through the numerous Christian settlements located along the main road south from Poso. They chose to go no further, and the focus of attacks shifted to a second set of incidents in Lage sub-district, southeast of the city.⁵³

The main attack in Lage was a late night assault on 1 December by a crowd of Muslims on Bategencu and neighbouring Sepe village, another reputed Christian stronghold.⁵⁴ Several dozen houses and two churches were burned, while five Sepe residents were wounded. Although some of the assailants used factory-standard weapons, the sole fatality in the attack was a military platoon commander killed when soldiers intervened to prevent the Muslim crowd from burning the entirety of Sepe.⁵⁵

The death of the platoon commander had fatal consequences for residents of the nearby Muslim village Toyado – a rival stronghold to Sepe – which served as a staging point for Muslim attacks in Lage sub-district. Early on 2 December, just hours after the Sepe attack, soldiers abducted eight men who were eating the pre-dawn fasting month meal at a guard post in Toyado, including the local commander of the village's Muslim forces. The soldiers reportedly then took the men to a Christian settlement just south of the city and handed them over to a crowd of Christians there. Two of the men managed to escape, but the other six were murdered, at least one of whom was beheaded.⁵⁶ The Toyado abductions were not the first instance of swift and illegal retaliation by the security forces; a month earlier, paramilitary police (Brimob) had shot one Muslim youth dead and seriously assaulted around twenty

⁵⁰ Interview with a Poso Pesisir resident, July 2003.

⁵¹ The mujahidin leader was Abdullah alias Muhamad Sanusi alias Jetli, a Mujahidin Kompak member from Riau province in Sumatra. ICG (2004a:12; 2005b:8) list Abdullah as killed in the attack on Tangkura, but he in fact died one day earlier. See 'Kronologi Poso Membara', Lembaga Pengembangan Studi Hukum dan Advokasi Hak Asasi Manusia (LPS-HAM) Sulteng, '1500 Massa Menyerang ke Desa Tabalu, Patiwunga dan Betalemba: Ratusan Rumah Warga hangus Terbakar, 5 Tewas', emailed report, 5 December 2001.

⁵² Interview with a Sulewana resident, January 2002; Damanik (2003:75).

⁵³ The Dewua-Sulewana footpath is marked on some maps of Poso, and some Christian sources speculated that the Muslim forces may have expected to find a more viable way to reach Tentena than the footpath provided. Such speculation was not confirmed by any Muslim interviewees.

⁵⁴ The Laskar Jihad chronology of the October-December 2001 period states that there was also a clash on the southern fringes of the city on 1 December. See "Kronologi Poso Membara", *laskarjihad.or.id*, 5 December 2001

⁵⁵ Interview with a Sepe resident, January 2002; LPS-HAM '1500 Massa Menyerang'.

⁵⁶ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004; 'Suaib Ditemukan Tewas Terpenggal', *Radar Sulteng*, date not recorded; 'Komnas HAM Dihadiahi Mayat Terpenggal', *Radar Sulteng*, date not recorded. It is possible that this attack on Toyado took place one day later, on 3 December, but most sources list 2 December as the date.

others in Mapane village in Poso Pesisir on 21 October as retaliation for the death of a Brimob constable during a Muslim attack on Betalemba village the day before.⁵⁷

What prompted this intense five-day sequence of attacks? Chronologies published by Kompas and Laskar Jihad each cited harassment and attacks on local Muslims as the trigger for the Poso Pesisir attacks. Such claims of harassment may well have been true, as it was common for both Muslim and Christian youths to gather in border areas and fire shots at neighbouring villages during the night. Given that harassment was commonplace, however, it is not in itself an explanation for the new intensity of the violence. The attacks might also be explained by a logic of clearing Christian settlements away from Muslim-controlled territory, although Christian populations returned to the villages soon after they were attacked. It is also possible that the attacks were part of a larger, unfulfilled plan to eventually raze all Christian settlements in Poso including Tentena (ICG 2005b:9). The existence of such a plan would be consistent with local combatant recollections that the order for some of these attacks had been issued from the city, with one Muslim man indicating he was tasked with maintaining communication with headquarters in the city by two-way radio during the attack on Sepe.⁵⁸

The Islamic fasting month, which in 2001 ran from mid November to mid December, appears to have been another important motivating factor. A treatise on jihad during Ramadan published in December 2001 in the Kompas-managed magazine *BUNYAN* observed that ‘The rewards [for jihad during Ramadan] are in fact many times greater than in the other months of the year.’⁵⁹ Laskar Jihad also included several items in its daily bulletin *Bel@* on the merits of jihad during Ramadan.⁶⁰ A local combatant also emphasized the importance of fighting during Ramadan, albeit with a different focus. Christians in 2001 thought that Muslims would be weak because they were not eating or drinking, he said, and so it was necessary to demonstrate that this was the ‘best’ month for Muslims.⁶¹

This belief in the merit of jihad during the fasting month resulted in a recurring annual pattern in Poso of a spike in violence during each Ramadan, particularly during the second half of the month. Attacks coincided with the end of the fasting month in 2002 and 2003, but the pattern was most strongly evident from 2004-2006. In 2004 a Christian village chief was beheaded and six Christians were killed in a public transport bombing, in 2005 three Christian schoolgirls were beheaded and in 2006 the acting head of the Central Sulawesi church was fatally shot in Palu. Only in 2007 was the pattern of violence during Ramadan broken, after two police raids and subsequent arrests led to greatly improved security.

A Turn to Negotiations

The central government intervened swiftly following the late November-December 2001 sequence of attacks, increasing troop deployments and seeking to broker negotiations. By

⁵⁷ ‘Tuntutan Pra Peradilan Dikabulkan, Tahanan Tragedi Mapane Dibebaskan’, *Bel@*, 12 December 2001.

⁵⁸ Interview with a Poso man, April 2004. The man also coordinated movements between different parts of the crowd, a feature of attacks in 2001 also captured on a contemporary jihadist fundraising VCD. The *BUNYAN* chronology also claims that Muslim combatants overheard Christians using two-way radio during the 27 November attack on Betalemba in Poso Pesisir to request ten factory-standard firearms from Tentena. See ‘Kronologi Direbutnya Kembali Desa-desa Muslim Poso’, *BUNYAN*, Edisi 09, January 2002, p.19.

⁵⁹ See ‘Napak Tilas Jihad di Bulan Suci’, *BUNYAN*, December 2001, pp. 11-16.

⁶⁰ See ‘Jihad di Bulan Ramadan’, *Bel@*, 11 November 2001; ‘Keutamaan Berpuasa dalam Jihad Fi Sabilillah’, *Bel@*, 28 November 2001.

⁶¹ Interview with a Poso man, July 2007.

early 2002, 2,500 police and 1,600 military personnel were deployed in Poso, stopping midstream any plan there may have been to raze Tentena. Indeed, there were just a handful of smaller security incidents in the remainder of 2001. The government also arranged for Muslim and Christian delegations from Poso to engage in peace talks on 19-20 December 2001. The talks produced a ten-point peace accord called the Malino Declaration for Poso, named after the South Sulawesi hill town where the talks took place. A recurring strand in the literature on religion and conflict is that religious conflicts will be less able to be resolved through negotiation, either because actors are more likely to view issues as absolutes or indivisibles, or because they may be willing to incur unusually severe costs for their cause (Toft 2007; McTernan 2003:42; Svensson 2007).⁶² The Malino talks fit only partially with this mode of analysis. The government was readily able to induce each community to provide delegates, including many religious figures who had made strident comments on the conflict to the local press. Moreover, once these delegates reached an agreement, many combatants were willing to commit to the settlement, even if they had been wary of the initial move to engage in talks. On the other hand, most mujahidin groups and their core local supporters dissented from the agreement. These groups resented a settlement at a time when they were ascendant, and resolved to continue to fight.

To bring about the Malino talks, the government first sent four ministers to meet separately with representatives of the Muslim and Christian communities in early December 2001, just days after the Sepe attack and Toyado abductions (Husain 2007:158-160). Among the ministers was Jusuf Kalla – the Minister for People’s Welfare – who thereafter took the greatest initiative to make the talks happen. Following these initial meetings in Poso, Kalla summoned representatives of each community to his native South Sulawesi province for further meetings on 14 December. At these meetings, Kalla outlined his concept for a round of peace talks, as set out in a short document entitled ‘Guide for Planned Efforts at Reconciliation in Poso Conflict’. This terms of reference called for Muslim and Christian delegations consisting of four religious figures and ten representatives of combatant groups.

It was clear that the government understood only dimly which groups were involved in the fighting. The list of Muslim combatant groups in the terms of reference omitted all Java and Sumatra-based jihadist groups apart from Laskar Jihad. The list of Christian groups used animal names drawn from press coverage such as ‘Bat’, ‘Tiger’ and ‘Butterfly’ forces, deeply offending some of Poso’s Christians. In practice, these lists did not constrain the selection of delegates, who were chosen by each community in a process largely independent of the government. Each side assembled much larger delegations than the government had anticipated – 25 Muslims and 23 Christians – but included only a few delegates with clear connections to combatant groups.

The man most obviously connected to the violence in the Muslim delegation was Adnan Aرسال, whose pesantren in Tanah Runtu was the entry point for Jemaah Islamiyah to Poso and over time became the most important centre of jihadist activity in the district. Indeed, one jihadist publication described Aرسال as ‘Commander of the Poso Mujahidin’, a description echoed by local combatants.⁶³ Another key figure was Agus Dwikarna, the leader of Makassar-based Laskar Jundullah and head of the South Sulawesi branch of Kompak, who had been involved in jihadist activities in both Maluku and Poso. Dwikarna did not participate

⁶² Although see Bercovitch and Derouen, JR. (2005), who find that ethnic civil wars fought over issues of religion may be more amenable to mediation than ethnic civil wars fought over secessionism and autonomy.

⁶³ See ‘Adnan Aرسال (Panglima Mujahidin Poso): ‘Mereka Mau Menang Sendiri’’, *BUNYAN*, January 2002, p. 22.

in the talks as a delegate, but reportedly played a prominent role in an internal meeting of Muslim delegates immediately prior to the talks (Lasahido et al 2003:74). With a few exceptions, most other Muslim delegates were Palu-based religious figures and academics, who often commented to the press on the Poso conflict but who had few obvious direct connections with combatant groups.

Reverend Rinaldy Damanik stood out among Christian delegates, having emerged in the context of the conflict as the most prominent Christian figure in Poso, first as coordinator of the church Crisis Center and subsequently as head of the church synod. Underlining his prominence, one Muslim delegate to the talks had put a price of Rp 5 million (approximately \$550) on Damanik's head through the Palu press.⁶⁴ Damanik had released a number of statements that tacitly condoned Christian violence in May-June 2000, and publicly read out 'Lateka's Mandate' in June 2000, a letter that justified and set out the rationale for attacking Muslims during this period. Three other Christian delegates – D.A. Lempadeli, J. Santo and P. Tonimba – were perceived by Muslims to be associated either with the May-June 2000 attacks or the July 2001 Buyung Katedo massacre. But as with the Muslim delegation, the selection of many other Christian delegates was questionable from the point of view of the terms of reference. In particular, more than a third of the delegation were church representatives.

Nevertheless, there was significant enmity between the two groups, which mediators sought to work around by keeping the delegations separate apart from a plenary session on the second day. Prior to this plenary session, each group finalized lists of demands in meetings with government mediators. These demands did not centre on readily quantifiable issues – for example, control of a particular village, the right to form a new district or the release of certain prisoners – that could have been subject to genuine negotiations. Instead, each list of demands indicated the grievances of each group without providing a clear basis for concrete action to address these grievances. Christians asked that the security forces prevent lawless actions by outside groups in Poso (but stopped short of demanding explicitly that members of these groups be sent home), provide better overall security and take action to retrieve factory standard weapons. They also called for attention to displaced populations and to economic recovery, for 'balance' in the selection of senior district officials, a 'responsible' district head and an end to inflammatory sermons and statements from religious figures (Forum Komunikasi Masyarakat Tana Poso n.d.). The Muslim delegation's demands were very similar: an end to (perceived) foreign intervention (the equivalent of the Christian demand regarding outsider groups), an end to slander on the part of the GKST, better law enforcement, the return of Muslims' rights and an assertion that all Indonesians had the right to live in Poso. If these demands were not met, the delegation said, Muslims were prepared to wage a jihad (Lasahido et al 2003:75-76; Damanik 2003:82-83). The lack of quantifiable demands was not the result of insincerity – the form of each delegation's demands reflected the fact that there were no simple key issues underpinning the fighting.

Negotiations during the plenary session were insubstantial. Because each delegation made broadly similar demands – distinct primarily in that each side sought to position itself as the victim of injustice and poor law enforcement – a peace agreement could be drafted without addressing the differences between the two groups. Efforts to engender goodwill between the delegations through a process of reciprocal apologies were similarly problematic. Christians spoke first and asked for forgiveness, having sought prior assurances from government

⁶⁴ 'Kepala Damanik Dihargai Rp 5 Juta', *Radar Sulteng*, date not recorded (but in late 2001).

mediators that Muslims would reciprocate (Lashido et al 2003:77). They nevertheless undermined this apology by stating that they also forgave Muslims for their wrongdoings, a statement most likely intended to emphasize that Muslims had also perpetrated violence. The Muslim delegation also started with an apology, saying it was their religious obligation to do so when a transgressor requested forgiveness. Subsequently, several Muslim delegates described the violence that had taken place against their co-religionists, as well as the principles of jihad (Lasahido et al 2003: 77-78).

These problems notwithstanding, the meeting did succeed in producing a ten point peace agreement:

MALINO DECLARATION FOR POSO

(preamble and concluding remarks abridged)

With God's mercy, we, the representatives of the Muslim and Christian communities of Poso agree:

1. To stop all forms of conflict and dispute.
2. To obey all forms and efforts of law enforcement and to support legal sanction against any offenders.
3. To request that the state apparatus take firm and just action to maintain security.
4. To maintain the creation of a peaceful atmosphere, to reject the enforcement of a civil emergency, as well as to reject interference by foreign parties.
5. To dispense with all slander and dishonesty directed at any party and to uphold a stance of mutual respect and mutual forgiveness, for the sake of living together in harmony.
6. The Land of Poso (Tana Poso) is an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. As such, every citizen has the right to live, arrive and reside peacefully and respect local customs.
7. All rights and property must be returned to their rightful owners, in accordance with the situation before the conflict and disputes.
8. To return all IDPs to their original place of residence.
9. Together with the government, to comprehensively rehabilitate economic infrastructure
10. To implement the respective laws of each of our religions guided by the principle of mutual respect, and to obey all the regulations that have been agreed upon, be they legislation, government regulations or other stipulations.

We state our agreement on these matters sincerely and with genuine intention of implementing them.

Drafted in: Malino

Date: 20 December 2001

A timetable was also agreed for a raft of follow up measures, supported by an initial commitment of around Rp 45 billion (approximately \$5 million) of central government funds. These measures included socialization of the agreement, weapons collection and law enforcement, the voluntary departure of external combatants, as well as reconstruction and rehabilitation programs (Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare 2003).

Despite the failure to involve direct representatives of all combatants, and the lack of dialogue during the talks, the Malino agreement nevertheless contributed to some positive outcomes.

Security in Poso was much improved in the immediate term, with just one fatal incident in the first four months after the talks. Some roads that had been effectively closed to one or the other religious group could now be used by all. Non-government organizations also took advantage of the reduction in tension to commence peace-building efforts. The Malino process contributed to these improvements in several ways. The very fact that an agreement had been reached, regardless of the precise identity of the delegates, generated a degree of goodwill around Poso. Reinforcing this goodwill, some of the signatories, whose local prestige now depended significantly on the continuing relevance of the accord, spoke enthusiastically of what had been achieved in Malino. The fact of an agreement also gave combatants a formal avenue to cease violence: they could commit to the agreement rather than continue to fight. This opportunity may have been particularly attractive to Christian combatants, given that the Malino Declaration came at a point at which the military superiority of Muslim forces had been clearly established. But as I will outline in the next chapter, over time the opportunity also increasingly appealed to many Muslims, who preferred to re-establish their more routine lives if the threat of Christian attacks was removed.

The military imbalance bore different implications for the reaction of mujahidin groups to the agreement. As mentioned above, all of the DI-derived groups were excluded from the Malino talks, although their interests may have been represented indirectly through the presence of several local delegates, in particular Adnan Aرسال. The commentary of several jihadist publications made it clear that some members of these networks were disappointed with the settlement, or expected that violence would resume. For instance, the now defunct jihadist website *mubarizin.net* described the post-Malino period as ‘A new episode [for Poso’s Muslims] as a player who is forced into a draw, when he had previously almost won.’⁶⁵ The *Kompak* publication *BUNYAN* also cast doubt on the Malino Declaration, editorializing that Christians had on other occasions violated peace deals to slaughter Muslims, both in Poso and elsewhere. The edition also featured an interview with Adnan Aرسال, conducted immediately prior to the Malino talks. Aرسال reiterated that Poso’s Christians had often betrayed previous agreements, and asserted that it would be better if residential settlements were no longer mixed. His conclusion was by calling for continuing Muslim solidarity, lest there ‘be no Muslims left in Poso’, hardly giving the impression that he felt the conflict was drawing to an end.⁶⁶

Opposition to the Malino agreement may not have been uniform across all mujahidin groups, however. ICG (2004:14-15) suggests that Jemaah Islamiyah’s leaders were happy with the agreement, reasoning that more peaceful conditions in Poso may be more conducive to proselytizing. Such a stance would be consistent with a claim made by a senior JI figure in Poso at the time, Nasir Abas, that he had ordered a halt to military operations in Poso to prioritize exploitation of the area as an economic resource for Jemaah Islamiyah.⁶⁷ This apparent initial acquiescence with the agreement belies Jemaah Islamiyah’s eventual role as a key player in violence after the Malino Declaration, however.

⁶⁵ The item’s author then asserted that the lesson Poso’s Muslims could take from the conflict was that the best way to earn respect was through jihad. The research report of a Yogyakarta-based NGO quoted a local Muslim man expressing similar sentiments to those of the *Mubarizin* article: ‘Before we had won, they asked for peace.’ See *mubarizin.net* dated 13 January 2002, accessed via www.waybackmachine.org on 16 June 2007; La Ode Arham et al (2002:15).

⁶⁶ See ‘‘Adnan Aرسال (Panglima Mujahidin Poso): ‘Mereka Mau Menang Sendiri’’, *BUNYAN*, January 2002, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Interview with Nasir Abas, 12 January 2007. On this point, see also Karnavian et al (2009:152).

Indeed, mujahidin groups and their core supporters were to be responsible for five years of increasingly one-sided sporadic attacks in Poso following the Malino Declaration, resulting in total in around 150 deaths (although around 25 of these fatalities were caused by police and military operations). The annual death toll from these attacks never approached the casualty figures in 2000 and 2001, but was sufficient to ensure that the district was never completely secure and to establish Poso as the most persistent site of inter-religious violence in Indonesia.

Conclusion: A Time for Jihad

This chapter has outlined the profound effect on the Poso conflict brought about by the entry of mujahidin groups and their alliance with local Muslims. These groups entered Poso shortly after the losses suffered by local Muslims in the May-June 2000 violence, at a time when much of Poso's Muslim population was displaced. Within 18 months, Muslims were able to attack Christian strongholds almost at will, and although Christians were still fighting, they were overwhelmed. The chapter has presented a wide-ranging narrative of this transformation, including its organizational underpinnings, but I wish to return here to the chapter's central concern, namely the role of religion in this transformation.

Mujahidin groups arrived in Poso seeking to inculcate a particular religious agenda. To recap their agenda, these mujahidin encouraged local Muslim youths to identify as mujahidin themselves and they encouraged the idea that it was *haram* to flee from a fight. They also promoted the idea that martyrdom was virtuous, taught that fighting in a jihad required certain restrictions on targets and forms of violence, and in particular they insisted that local Muslims lead a devout life. These tenets were not unique to mujahidin outsiders – religious identity divided the warring parties in Poso from the outset of the conflict, and violence in the district had been described as a jihad even before these men arrived. Nevertheless, these mujahidin groups made newly concerted efforts to establish jihad as the central rationale for violence and to give the term content beyond that of an empty mobilizing symbol.

In the introduction to this chapter, I explained that the 'religious' aspect of violence is generally held to be analytically significant if there are discernible effects on the behaviour of combatants. There were several such effects of the mujahidin religious agenda on local Muslim youths in 2000 and 2001. Despite the contrast with their previous lifestyle, local Muslims did adopt at least some of the devotional standards required by mujahidin, as evident in the observation of a local combatant that he returned to his village to find his peers all now regularly prayed in the local mosque. The religious agenda was also evident in the forms of violence, most obviously in the timing of the November-December 2001 period of attacks during Ramadan, believed by mujahidin groups to be an auspicious month for jihad. Attacks on places of religious worship also became more commonplace after the arrival of mujahidin, having been relatively rare in the preceding violence. Moreover, local youths professed to have been emboldened by jihadist doctrine, leading them to feel particular pride if they themselves were called 'mujahidin'. ICG (2004a:21) makes the strongest statement of this emboldening effect of religious instruction, quoting without contradiction an unnamed local source saying that many local recruits of Mujahidin Kompak had been convinced that 'dying as a martyr was glorious' and that '[m]any [local recruits] would have been willing suicide bombers'. Happily, there is not unequivocal evidence that such apparent willingness was ever put to the test.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ ICG states that a Muslim youth killed in an accidental explosion in Poso in 2003 had been recruited as a suicide bomber. Another man who was born in Poso, Ashar Daeng Salam alias Aco, was killed while placing a

Indeed, such initial successes of mujahidin in inculcating their religious agenda proved to rely in important ways on the context in Poso at the time of their arrival. These mujahidin groups arrived in Poso at a time when the desire for revenge among local Muslims was at its strongest, and the threat of further Christian attacks was very real. The memory of the May-June 2000 violence was still immediate, and even by the time of the Malino agreement some reputed Christian strongholds remained yet to be successfully attacked. There was a strong perception among local Muslims of the need to fight, and strong peer approval of fighting. Under these circumstances, jihadist doctrine readily gelled with local Muslims' desire for revenge. Although such doctrine specifically proscribes revenge as a motive, the jihadist concept of "striking back in equal measure and form" is essentially indistinguishable in practice if not in principle. By adopting jihadist precepts, local Muslims could thereby obtain a loftier legitimation for their actions than anger over previous violence. Such legitimation may have been important to some local combatants, one of whom told me he began to withdraw from violence when he began to question whether he and his comrades were engaged in jihad or in revenge. That said, I found many of the combatants I interviewed were perfectly comfortable in explicitly describing their actions as revenge.

Moreover, the costs of adhering to this religious agenda were comparatively low for local Muslims in late 2000 and 2001, meaning their commitment to this agenda was not seriously put to the test during this period. Indeed, these were the 'good times' in Poso for the perpetrators of jihadist violence. Fatalities among Muslim ranks during attacks were rare – the greater danger was seemingly posed by being ambushed or when a person's own village was attacked. The risk of death from participating in an attack was high only if a member of the security forces was killed, in which case assailants on several occasions incurred deadly security force reprisals. When fatalities did occur among the ranks of attackers, a case could be made that members of mujahidin groups were over-represented among those killed – two were killed in late 2001 – and the risk for locals was consequently lower.⁶⁹ Moreover, there were few arrests after most attacks, and when people were arrested, crowds could sometimes pressure police to release the detainees without charge.⁷⁰

These circumstances began to change immediately after the peak of attacks against Christian settlements in November-December 2001. The extra deployment of troops in December 2001 were the first sign of the progressively higher cost that would come to be associated with a commitment to jihad during 2002. The very success of the alliance of mujahidin and local youths in overwhelming Christians, and the formal alternative to fighting provided by the Malino agreement, also began to undermine the unequivocal necessity to fight. Once the cost

bomb in a McDonalds restaurant as part of the 5 December 2002 Makassar bombings. It is not clear whether Aco was a suicide bomber or accidentally set off the bomb prematurely: the other explosion in the Makassar bombings was not a suicide attack. Outside of these examples, the willingness of Poso men to become suicide bombers was never tested: none of the major bombings in Poso were suicide attacks, and no local Muslims from Poso were recruited into the five terrorist suicide bombings in Java and Bali from 2002-2005 and 2009. On Ashar Daeng Salam, see 'Tersangka Bom Makassar Jadi 16 Orang', *Sriwijaya Post*, 15 December 2002; ICG (2003:16; 2004a:17)

⁶⁹ The two men were Huzaiifah, killed on 9 November in Lembomawo, and Abdullah, killed on 29 November near Tabalu. Both were shot in the head.

⁷⁰ For example, one Muslim-compiled chronology lists an instance in June 2001 when Muslims successfully protested in front of the Poso police station for the release of two men held on suspicion of stopping a car and attacking its passengers. See 'Actual News! dari Medan Jihad Poso', *mubarizin.net*, www.mubarizin.net/Bahasan_Utama/Poso/Poso_Eds_13/poso_eds_13.html, accessed via www.waybackmachine.org.

to them thereby increased, local youths were forced to consider more directly the extent to which their motivations and interests aligned with the agenda of mujahidin.

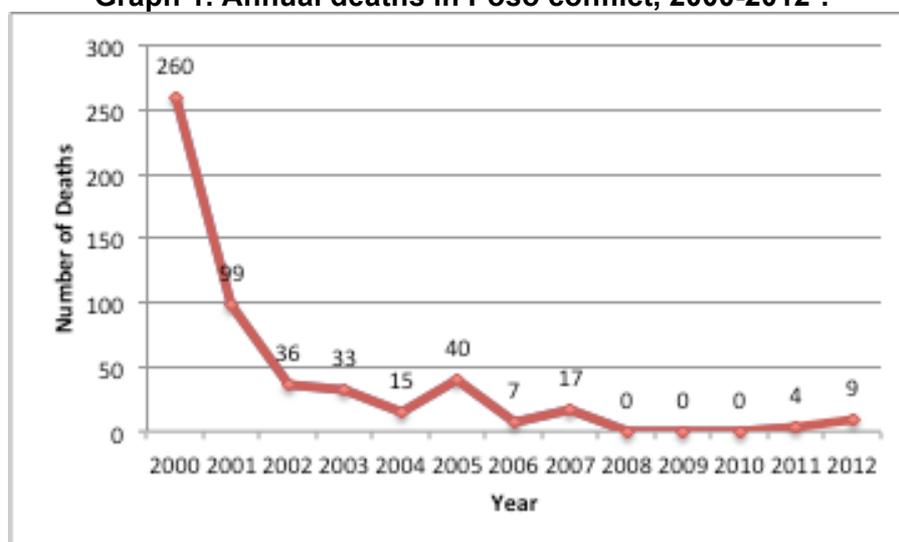
In broad terms, the literature on religion and violence suggests two outcomes for such deliberations on changing circumstances. The outcomes of these deliberations in Poso will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on state intervention, but are previewed here on account of their relevance to the role of religion. One alternative focuses most particularly on context, suggesting that extremist interpretations will most readily hold sway when conditions are such that they can be cast as defensive, and when these interpretations resonate with followers' lived experience (Appleby 2000). This interpretation seems to account well for the outcome of the deliberations of the majority of Muslim community members and elites in Poso. Over time, as the threat to them reduced, meaning that jihad was at best equivocally defensive, and the costs of fighting increased, these people refrained from fighting and reduced their support for mujahidin. But the second alternative, that religious conviction may motivate combatants to incur costs not justifiable in pure material terms (Horowitz 2009), is also important to understand the actions of outside mujahidin and their core local Muslim supporters. These men eschewed negotiations, continued to perpetrate violence in the face of an increasing risk of arrest, and indeed it seems would have continued to perpetrate violence indefinitely had the state not made a belatedly decisive intervention.

CHAPTER SIX STATE INTERVENTION

For a period in December 2001, Poso appeared to be the focus of national attention. As the central government launched a newly concerted attempt to terminate violence in Poso, this remote and sparsely populated district received a stream of visitors from the national cabinet and the most senior ranks of the security forces. Among these visitors, Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told journalists that he brought a personal mandate from President Megawati Sukarnoputri herself to resolve the situation in Poso. The result was the Malino peace talks for Poso, outlined in the previous chapter, a significant commitment of funds to support reconstruction and recovery, and a massive additional deployment of troops. Indeed, once the deployment to Poso exceeded 4000 police and military by January 2002, there was a remarkable ratio of one security force member to every 100 residents of Poso and neighbouring Morowali district, where some of the troops were placed.

On the one hand, this new attention to Poso undeniably marked the beginning of a pronounced de-escalation of violence in the district. The decline of violence was evident, among other indicators, in a sharp reduction in annual conflict fatalities. At least 350 people and probably many more had been killed in Poso in 2000 and 2001 alone, whereas 40 or fewer people were killed annually in each remaining year of the conflict. The de-escalation was also reflected in a ‘narrowing’ of the forms of violence.¹ Attacks perpetrated by large crowds had been one of the main forms of violence prior to the December 2001 intervention, but ceased almost immediately thereafter, with the last such incident taking place in August 2002. Absent this form of violence, only smaller-scale sporadic attacks such as shootings and bombings continued to occur.

Graph 1. Annual deaths in Poso conflict, 2000-2012².



¹ The term ‘narrowing’ is Sidel’s (2006), but numerous observers have noted the difference in the forms of violence.

² The numbers used in this graph are approximate. The figure for 2000 is based on a government report of casualties from the May-June 2000 violence, and the actual figure may be significantly higher. The figure for 2001 adopts a count made by Central Sulawesi NGO LPS-HAM. Figures for other years are more certain, and may differ only by several more or fewer deaths, depending on the casualty count for specific incidents. Such variation would not impact on the overall trend displayed in the graph.

To characterize the period following the renewed state response in December 2001 as a de-escalation, however, is to tell only half the story. Violence may have lessened overall, but over the next five years attacks remained sufficiently frequent and deadly to establish Poso as the most persistent site of inter-religious violence in Indonesia. Throughout this period, security force deployments to Poso were maintained at elevated levels, but the personnel stationed in the district proved unable to prevent or to investigate sporadic incidents of violence. Not until January 2007 did the state finally act conclusively to terminate this violence, when two police raids effectively dismantled the remaining jihadist networks in Poso.³ Approximately 150 people were killed in violence in Poso during the intervening five years (25 of whom were killed during security force operations). Some of these people were murdered by Christians, but the majority of sporadic attacks were directed at non-Muslims and were perpetrated by the alliance of mujahidin and local Muslims outlined in the preceding chapter.

Why did violence persist for so long in Poso, and more particularly, why did it take the Indonesian government so long to act decisively to put a stop to the conflict? Steven Wilkinson's (2004; 2009) study of the state response to communal riots in India provides a useful starting point to answer these questions. Wilkinson argues for a shift away from study of the 'push factors' that contribute to riots to instead focus on state response as the most important factor in riot occurrence. In the cases he examines, Wilkinson (2004:5) contends, 'whether violence is bloody or ends quickly depends not on the local factors that caused violence to break out but primarily on the will and capacity of the government that controls the forces of law and order.' In India, his approach means focusing on state (provincial) governments; in Indonesia by contrast it is the central government that ultimately controls the police and the military. Large-scale ethnic rioting will almost never take place when the police and the military deploy all means at their disposal to prevent violence, Wilkinson argues, as few potential rioters are willing to face down deadly force. His picture of the typical rioter thus mirrors Horowitz's (2001) notion of 'risk-averse' perpetrators.

As Wilkinson notes, this apparent centrality of state intervention to whether or not violence will occur raises the question of what factors determine the response of the state. Proposing that political will is more important than state capacity, Wilkinson (2004:6-7) advances a model based on electoral incentives. He argues that politicians will extend protection to threatened minorities when they or their coalition partners are likely to require the minority's electoral support now or in the future. Alternatively, politicians will withhold protection when they do not rely on such support, or when rioting will establish as most salient the ethnic cleavage most advantageous to their electoral fortunes.

Electoral incentives in themselves were not an important factor in accounting for the state response in Poso, however. As much is clear from the fact that the deadly attacks on the district's Muslims in May-June 2000 took place when the district, provincial and national governments were all controlled by Muslim politicians. But Wilkinson's approach of looking beyond state capacity to instead focus on the decision to use this capacity remains appropriate for the Poso case. At all times during the conflict, the central government retained the capacity to stop violence in Poso had it attributed sufficient priority to doing so. Indeed, both the timing and the scale of the Poso conflict made it consistently amenable to state

³ The first subsequent fatal incident linked to the Poso conflict was in May 2011, in which members of a jihadist group fatally shot two police guarding a bank branch in Palu. See 'Senjata Karatan Generasi Kedua', *Tempo*, 30 May 2011; (Aryanto Haluta indictment 2011). Police fatally shot two suspects, and nine people were also killed in a string of incidents in 2012, as covered in this chapter.

intervention. Regarding timing, the central Indonesian state's capacity to respond to local crises had been stretched in 1999 and 2000, when Crouch (2010) contends that insufficient troops were available for deployment to Maluku and Kammen (2003) observes that the military was forced to deploy non-infantry units to conflict areas. The peak of fighting in Poso took place during this period – in May-June 2000 – but only a comparatively meagre deployment of security force personnel was required to halt attacks, most of whom were drawn from the regional police and military commands responsible for Poso. By the time violence in Poso evolved into protracted conflict during 2001, the worst of Indonesia's multi-faceted security crisis had passed. Regarding scale, the Poso conflict was contained primarily within a single district, in contrast to the province-wide emergencies in Maluku and North Maluku. As a result, comparatively few reinforcements were required to restore order.

What factors then influenced central government will to intervene in Poso? I argue in this chapter that central government will to intervene fluctuated, in a crisis-driven pattern. Each time attacks in Poso crossed an invisible psychological line that triggered a sense of crisis the central government was spurred to order stern intervention. Once the sense of crisis passed – typically after suspects were arrested for the attack that triggered the crisis – central pressure relented. This pattern was possible because Poso district was generally of only peripheral importance to national affairs, meaning the costs to central authorities of ongoing violence in Poso were low. Absent central government pressure, the failings and illicit motives of locally deployed security forces meant that they tended to inaction, leaving space for determined perpetrators to continue their campaign of sporadic jihadist violence. The result was an uneven decline of violence, in which the main constraint on the intensity of violence was the guesswork of perpetrators in determining how much space remained for them to perpetrate attacks.

Security Measures after Malino

In addition to the dramatic escalation of violence in late 2001, two factors may have contributed to the newly determined December 2001 state intervention. First, the ineffective Abdurrahman Wahid had been impeached from the Indonesian presidency some months before this escalation. Second, the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the resultant global focus on radical Islam also generated new pressure to intervene. Resultantly, the government introduced several measures that might have weakened the military capacity of remaining combatant groups in Poso. As the crisis passed, however, the government did not devote the attention to detail or exert the sustained pressure that might have made these measures successful.

Indonesia's new president was Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's founding president Sukarno. Megawati had been widely expected to become president in 1999, as her secular-national PDI-P party had won the most votes in the legislative election, but she was outmanouvered by a coalition of Islamic parties supporting Wahid. When Wahid was impeached amid dubious allegations of corruption in July 2001, then vice-president Megawati was automatically installed as president. Most scholars concur on the importance of Megawati's rise to the presidency to more concerted intervention in conflict areas, but advance slightly different interpretations of the reasons for this effect. Van Klinken (2007:33, 141) interprets her presidency to signal the emergence of a new ruling coalition in Indonesia incorporating moderates from the previous authoritarian regime, thereby closing the opportunity space for violence. Crouch (2010:266), by contrast, emphasizes the departure of

Wahid as much as the arrival of Megawati. In his view, some military officers had been supporting communal unrest to undermine Wahid, but found they had less quarrel with the policies of the new president. Sidel (2006:212-213) highlights the decision of Islamic parties to reverse their previous opposition to Megawati, arguing that the co-optation of these parties gave Megawati a free hand to extend protection to non-Muslims in conflict areas.

Whatever resolve Megawati's government held to intervene appears to have been reinforced by international pressure to take action against Muslim militants following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. In a specific link between global jihadism and Poso, a Spanish judge in November 2001 named the district as the site of an al Qaeda training camp; shortly thereafter several senior U.S. government officials emphasized the importance of combating terrorism in Indonesia (van Klinken 2007:86; Sidel 2006:214). In response, the head of Indonesia's State Intelligence Agency (BIN), Hendropriyono, told the press on 12 December that Poso had become a site for 'international terrorists and domestic [Islamic] radical groups' to link up, and that 'a training camp used twice by al Qaeda members from Spain' had been found in Poso.⁴ As explicit as Hendropriyono's statements were, the effects of such external pressure were not unequivocal. As much is reflected in the scepticism expressed publicly by other members of the security forces and the government in response to Hendropriyono's comments. The Central Sulawesi provincial police chief, for instance, all but contradicted the intelligence chief, saying that he had found nothing despite turning the area upside down in search of the camps.⁵ Coordinating Minister Yudhoyono also immediately qualified the BIN chief's remarks, saying the government was still in the process of confirming this 'intelligence information'.⁶

Nevertheless, the government did announce two security measures in December 2001 that could have constituted a specific attempt to target mujahidin groups. Parties to the conflict were to be disarmed, and the government would also repatriate outside groups from Poso. Yudhoyono first announced these measures in mid-December, and they were subsequently incorporated into the work plan agreed upon by each community's delegation at the Malino peace talks.⁷

For disarmament to be meaningful, it was essential that security forces collect factory-standard weapons, and not just homemade firearms. Most youths in Poso owned a homemade gun, but these weapons were wildly inaccurate and prone to jam. Factory standard guns were more reliably lethal, but also more difficult to obtain. Indeed, the greater access of mujahidin to such weapons was one factor that enabled Muslims to establish military supremacy in Poso. The security forces collected several thousand weapons under the follow-up program to the Malino talks, and filled the papers with images of these guns being destroyed. Among them, however, only one factory-standard firearm was recovered. Even this gun reportedly was a weapon that had been seized from a policeman in Poso some months earlier,⁸ meaning that the entire cache of weapons brought by mujahidin to Poso from the Southern Philippines and from Ambon remained untouched. The first dent in this arsenal did not come until

⁴ See 'Kepala BIN Hendropriyono: Poso Jadi Ajang 'Link-Up' Teroris', *Kompas*, 13 December 2001; 'Sidang Kabinet: Sedang Diteliti, Keberadaan Jaringan Terorisme di Poso', *Kompas*, 14 December 2001.

⁵ 'Kapolda Sulteng Belum Temukan Keterlibatan Al Qaidah', *tempointeraktif.com*, 14 December 2001.

⁶ 'Sidang Kabinet: Sedang Diteliti, Keberadaan Jaringan Terorisme di Poso', *Kompas*, 14 December 2001.

⁷ 'Kepala BIN Hendropriyono: Poso Jadi Ajang 'Link-Up' Teroris', *Kompas*, 13 December 2001; 'Menko Polkam Ungkapkan Rencana Pelucutan Senjata di Poso', *kopitime.com*, 13 December 2001.

⁸ 'Pengeledahan Senjata di Poso Berjalan Lancar', *Sinar Harapan*, no date.

October 2003, when seven guns were recovered, and more significant seizures did not follow until the January 2007 police raids.

Measures to repatriate outside groups were no more successful. Under the Malino work plan, repatriation was initially to be achieved by a one month voluntary departure period, after which police threatened that those found in Poso without a ‘clear aim’ would be subject to Article 505 and 515 of the Criminal Code.⁹ Anyone who read the text of the two articles would have seen that the police statement was a particularly empty threat. Article 505 stipulates a few months imprisonment for vagrants who do not have a job; by contrast, mujahidin were able to live with local residents in Poso, and many of them also engaged in petty trades while in the district. Article 515 potentially was more readily applicable, threatening penalties against persons who had moved residence without informing authorities in either their place of origin or their destination. Mujahidin were unlikely to have attended to all of the bureaucratic requirements of moving to Poso, but the penalties under this article were extremely light: a maximum of six days imprisonment or a fine not exceeding Rp 750 (approximately ten cents), less than the cost of a single bullet.¹⁰

Moreover, in reality, Article 515 was completely unenforceable. Anyone could obtain a local identity card from corrupt or sympathetic local officials, who would readily issue a card in any name for a small fee. Many mujahidin in Poso in fact had several different identity cards. The ease of obtaining an identity card was widely known, and whoever formulated the Malino work plan could not have been ignorant of this practice. In addition, the main text of the Malino accord appeared to affirm the right of mujahidin to remain in Poso, with Point 6 stipulating ‘every citizen has the right to live, arrive and reside peacefully and respect local customs’. In light of the weak formulation of the repatriation provision, and the equivocal stance of the main text of the accord regarding the right of outsiders to remain in Poso, I believe it is unlikely that anyone genuinely expected that the provision to remove outsiders could be enforced.

With the failure of the weapons collection and repatriation programs, the main constraint on violence in early 2002 was the sheer number of security forces personnel deployed in Poso. The Sintuwu Maroso I security operation, which ran from 1 January – 31 July 2002, involved more than 4,000 police and soldiers, with many of these personnel placed in guard posts along the main road in each village in the district. These guard posts made it more difficult for crowds to gather and clash; the presence of so many security forces personnel may also have convinced those intent on perpetrating violence that it would be prudent to lie low in the short term while waiting for the deployment to be reduced.

Once sporadic individual shootings and bombings resumed, however, it quickly became evident that the guard posts were not well placed to prevent these incidents or to apprehend the perpetrators. The first fatality after Malino resulted from the shooting of a Christian man in Lage subdistrict in mid January; thereafter two more Christian men were murdered in Poso Pesisir sub-district in mid-May. These incidents were followed by the 5 June bombing of a bus plying the Palu-Tentena route, which killed four people, after which another man was

⁹ ‘Psikolog Periksa Aparat Keamanan di Poso’, *tempinteraktif.com*, 25 February 2002.

¹⁰ Most fines in the Indonesian Criminal Code have not been updated to account for inflation, and as such are comically small.

murdered in Kayamanya ward in the city four days later.¹¹ Police did not arrest suspects for any of these killings, although they did claim to have established the identity of some of the perpetrators.

How can we account for such ineffectual efforts to maintain security, so soon after Poso had grabbed the attention of the national government? Several reasons could account for these failures. The government may have feared that stern action against mujahidin would anger Muslims in Poso and undermine the apparent initial success of the Malino talks, a rationale Crouch (2010) cites for the government retreat from the use of decisive military force in the Maluku conflict. Equally, the government and the security forces may not have appreciated that mujahidin were continuing to work with local Muslims to prepare for violence even after Malino. Alternatively, it may simply have been that Poso district did not remain the focus of attention once the Malino Declaration was signed, particularly as the central government had commenced new efforts to broker peace in Maluku province by early 2002. For their part, more conspiratorially minded observers questioned whether the security forces had any interest in preventing these attacks, given the financial rewards units deployed in Poso could reap from illegal businesses and security payments.¹² Whatever the underlying reasons, the failure of the security forces to take action over these incidents could only have emboldened the perpetrators to attempt further violence. A renewed escalation of violence was soon to follow.

Resuming the Fight

In the absence of concerted government attempts to curtail their activities, mujahidin groups prepared to resume the fight. Although they perpetrated little violence in the first months of the heavy security force deployment, these groups continued to consolidate their support base and build the military capacity of local Muslims. As time passed and the end approached of the initial six-month phase of the security operation, resulting in the withdrawal of some troops, these groups and their local allies gradually increased the frequency of attacks. By July 2002, it was clear that security was again breaking down in Poso, with at least eleven shooting and bombing attacks in a single month. These developments culminated in another period of large-scale attacks in August 2002, in which the Christian stronghold Silanca was over-run. Although the security forces did little to prevent these attacks, the August peak of violence nonetheless proved to be the final occasion during the Poso conflict that large crowds mobilized to try to destroy entire villages.

Mujahidin groups took two main steps to consolidate the organizational underpinning of their alliance with local Muslims. First, both Laskar Jihad and the DI-derived mujahidin groups established separate anti-vice squads in Poso in early 2002. Laskar Jihad called its squad Satgas Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar (Embracing Virtue and Rejecting Vice Task Force), whereas Jemaah Islamiyah and Mujahidin Kompak formed a joint squad called Satgas Khoirul Umah.¹³ Most of the members of each squad were local men.¹⁴ The squads beat those

¹¹ An anonymous list titled 'Pelanggaran Terhadap Deklarasi Malino untuk Poso', the copy of which in my possession was faxed from a number in Tentena, indicates that one suspect was arrested for the murder in Kayamanya.

¹² On the financial opportunities in Poso for the police and military, see Sangaji (2007:276-279).

¹³ ICG (2007a:4), interview with former senior member of Satgas Khoirul Umah, July 2007.

¹⁴ One local combatant who fought with Laskar Jihad asserted that all locals recruited by Laskar Jihad became members of Satgas Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar rather than Laskar Jihad members per se, which would

whom they found drinking or gambling, and they were a crude instrument to ‘promote’ the moral standards outside mujahidin demanded. The beatings had an ironic side to them, however, given that many of the task-force members themselves had an all too recent background in petty thuggery and ‘vice’.

Second, both Jemaah Islamiyah and Mujahidin Kompak set up ‘special forces’ units in Poso from among their local trainees. Jemaah Islamiyah called its unit the ‘Team of Ten’, although this team reportedly was disbanded only a few months after its formation in early 2002.¹⁵ Mujahidin Kompak followed Jemaah Islamiyah’s lead, setting up its own local special forces team in August 2002 (ICG 2004a:18-19).

After several attacks in May and June, the determination of the alliance of mujahidin and local men to continue to fight became clearly evident in July 2002. During the first month of an attempted draw down of security force deployments to Poso, at least five people were killed in eleven separate shootings and bombings. ICG (2004a) attributes eight of these attacks to Mujahidin Kompak; the nature of the other incidents is highly suggestive that they were also perpetrated by mujahidin groups. This upsurge in violence, with police again doing little to identify or apprehend perpetrators, saw prominent Christian figures resign in protest from the working group tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Malino Declaration (Damanik 2003:152). The Central Sulawesi governor was also moved to concede that the six month target to restore security had been inappropriate. ‘We had hoped that after the [additional] troops were withdrawn, we could hand over responsibility for security to local forces. Unfortunately, this [strategy] has been less than successful.’¹⁶

If security had started to break down during July, in August 2002 unrest again escalated to levels approaching the violence of late 2001, as large-scale attacks resumed. During the first half of the month, four Christian villages and a mixed population settlement were attacked. The largest single attack was the assault on the Christian stronghold Silanca village on 12 August, one of the last specific targets for revenge from the May-June 2000 violence that Muslims had not by then reached. Five people were killed and approximately 500 houses were burned in this incident alone. Overall, at least thirteen people were killed either in these large-scale attacks or in associated sporadic incidents during the two weeks of violence. Each of the attacks that targeted villages during this period were perpetrated by Muslims. But Christians also murdered several individuals and ambushed buses as they passed through Christian-controlled territory.

After a Muslim man was found beheaded on 3 August, the first attack on a village in August 2002 came before dawn the following day. The target was Matakko village, located approximately 20 kilometres east of the city. The crowd of Muslim assailants burned two churches and dozens of houses, while seven villagers were injured.¹⁷ Contemporary press reports expressed surprise that Matakko had been attacked because its Christian and Muslim residents lived together in relative harmony. But a mujahid said that the village was attacked

imply that the task force has a broader set of activities than just moral policing. Unfortunately, I do not have sufficient comparative information to judge the validity of this account. Interview with a Poso man, July 2007.

¹⁵ Karnavian et al (2009) provides a list of the members of the Team of Ten.

¹⁶ ‘Amirul: Kelompok Itu Sembunyi di Ketiak Rakyat’, *Radar Sulteng*, 26 July 2002.

¹⁷ ‘Panglima TNI Heran Masih Ada Kelompok Pendatang di Poso’, *Kompas*, 30 August 2002; ‘Warna Sepia di Desa Matakko’, *Media Sangkompo*, December 2002, p. 18; ‘Serangan Fajar di Matakko’, LPSHAM Investigative Report, 4 August 2002. The *Media Sangkompo* account asserts that five villagers were killed, but this assertion is doubtful as it is not repeated in other accounts.

precisely because it was a symbol of peace (much as the Baku Bae market in Maluku, which served as a meeting point between Muslims and Christians, was burned down in renewed violence in the province in 2004 (Riri and Noorsalim 2005)):

The Muslim community was disappointed in Muslims [in Matakoko] themselves, because they had engaged in what in Ambon would be called *pela gandong*, brotherhood, brought together by the district head. There was a pilot project between Muslims and Christians, who had begun to establish one community together, whereas our friends with their uncontrolled idealism hated this arrangement, and so the village was attacked.¹⁸

Adding further weight to the interpretation that Matakoko was attacked in order to make a point about peace, the attack on the village took place the morning after Malino Declaration signatories had held a meeting with provincial and district authorities in Palu. Whether by coincidence or design, the largest attack of the August 2002 violence also coincided with another Malino evaluation session held in Palu a week later on 11 and 12 August 2002.

On 6 August, two days after the Matakoko incident, Malitu and Betania (neighbouring Christian-populated villages in Poso Pesisir sub-district) were attacked. In all, 21 houses were burned.¹⁹ Then on 8 August, Muslim combatants fired on a bus as it passed through Mayoa village in the south of the district, killing an Italian tourist and wounding four other passengers (ICG 2004a:13). In apparent tit-for-tat retaliation, Christians stopped and attacked two buses passing through Christian villages on the next two days.²⁰

The next set of tit-for-tat incidents provided the direct pretext for the attack on Silanca village. This sequence began with the killing of a Christian man a few kilometres from Silanca on 10 August, during a clash near the border of majority-Muslim and majority-Christian areas.²¹ Silanca villagers responded by ambushing a Muslim motorist who happened to pass through their village; they had done the same a month earlier following the shooting of a Silanca resident.²² The ill-fated motorists were a motorcycle taxi and his two passengers, one of whom was a Muslim member of the paramilitary police (Brimob). The driver escaped and reported the incident, but the policeman and the other passenger disappeared. Security forces tried to reach Silanca village on 12 August to look for the men (whom it was presumed had been murdered), but Christians blocked their path close to the southern fringes of the city in Ranononcu village.²³

That night, mujahidin and local Muslims launched a cooperative attack on Silanca village (neighbouring Sepe and Bategencu were also attacked as part of the same incident).²⁴ In

¹⁸ Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, May 2004. The interviewee actually mentioned Malitu as the village attacked for these reasons, but other details of the interview lead me to believe he confused Malitu and Matakoko. For instance, he asserted that Malitu was attacked before Matakoko (the reverse is true) and had elsewhere confused the names of villages.

¹⁹ 'Turis Italia Tewas Ditembak, Ada Upaya Kobarkan Lagi Konflik Poso', *Sinar Harapan*, 10 August 2002.

²⁰ See 'Kekerasan Setelah Malino', *Tempo*, 25 August 2002; 'Seorang Penumpang Bus Disandera Kristen Tamboro', laskarjihad.or.id, date not recorded; 'Polri dan TNI Tambah 5.000 Personel ke Poso', *tempointeraktif.com*, 11 August 2002.

²¹ 'Kekerasan Setelah Malino', *Tempo*, 25 August 2002, pp. 34-35; 'Teror Bom di Kayamanya', LPSHAM report, 13 August 2002.

²² 'Satu Lagi Korban Penembakan Misterius', *Radarsulteng*, 12 July 2002.

²³ 'Poso Tegang: Sepe, Silanca dan Bategencu Diserang', LPSHAM report, 13 August 2002.

²⁴ In between the abduction and the Silanca attack, two more murders took place in the city on 11 August and a bus was stopped and burned in Tentena on 12 August, although the passengers escaped. 'Kekerasan

common with large-scale attacks during earlier periods of violence in Poso, an organized core of fighters consisting of mujahidin and their local trainees were joined by a crowd of hundreds of other Muslim men. Five Christians were killed, 400 houses were burned in Silanca and 100 in Sepe and thousands of people were forced to flee. A local Muslim villager who took part in the attack on Silanca indicated that Brimob personnel were present as Muslims were about to commence their attack. Angered by the death of their comrade, they gave Muslims the green light to attack the village where the culprits lived, the man said, telling the attackers only that they should not burn the church.²⁵ In the aftermath of the attack, rather than admit wrongdoing for their failure to prevent the violence, senior police instead castigated Christians for refusing to let them enter Silanca. The Central Sulawesi police chief effectively claimed that this refusal to let the police investigate the Brimob disappearance had left security forces unable to stop the attack: ‘The security forces wanted to enter but they refused [...] and asked us to come today [13 August], but the assailants got there first and attacked and burned houses.’²⁶ The national and provincial police chiefs also implied that the security forces had been undermanned, pledging to increase forces if necessary.²⁷ Given that there were reportedly already over 3000 troops in Poso at the time, the failure to prevent violence lends weight to interpretations that attribute most importance to state will. As Rude (2005) observes regarding the violent outcomes of riot-prone situations, ‘it was not so much the numbers [of security personnel] in themselves that might prove decisive as the willingness or the ability to use them.’

The attack on Silanca (and indeed the previous attacks on Matakoto, Betania and Malitu) again underlined the military superiority that Muslims had established at this point of the conflict. Christians could do little to repel the attack, and for a time that night reportedly feared that Muslims would continue further along the road and also attack Tagolu village. Christians did retaliate for the attack on Silanca later in the night, however, by burning two mosques located in Christian-populated areas. On the same night, Muslims also burned a church in the city ward of Gebangrejo and reportedly also stopped traffic in the city to look for Christian passengers.²⁸

There were no further clashes in Poso immediately after these incidents, but Mayumba village in neighbouring Morowali district was attacked on 15 August. Three Christians were killed.²⁹ Unrest then temporarily tapered, although contemporary press reports suggest that both Muslim and Christian residents maintained guard posts and road blocks around Poso for several more weeks. There were no further attacks by large crowds against villages in the immediate term, however. Indeed, the Silanca and Mayumba attacks mark the point at which a narrowing of the forms of violence in Poso took place. The few subsequent attacks against villages during the conflict were perpetrated by smaller teams of men, and most sporadic

Setelah Malino’, *Tempo*, 25 August 2002, pp. 34-35; ‘Poso Tegang: Sepe, Silanca dan Bategencu Diserang’, LPSHAM report, 13 August 2002.

²⁵ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003. Brimob’s reported behaviour in Silanca in August 2002 appears similar to the actions of soldiers in the December 2001 Toyado abductions, who took revenge for the death of their platoon commander by handing over Muslims to local Christians to be murdered. The same pattern of behaviour was earlier evident in the October 2001 Mapane incident, when police fatally shot one local Muslim and tortured others as revenge for the death of one of their comrades (See Chapter Five for the 2001 incidents).

²⁶ ‘Lima Tewas Dalam Kasus Sepe-Silanca’, *Radar Sulteng*, 14 August 2002.

²⁷ See ‘Kapolri Akan Kerahkan Pasukan ke Poso’, *Pos Kupang*, 13 August 2002, ‘Lima Tewas Dalam Kasus Sepe-Silanca’, *Radar Sulteng*, 14 August 2002.

²⁸ ‘Poso Tegang: Sepe, Silanca dan Bategencu Diserang’, LPSHAM report, 13 August 2002.

²⁹ Some reports say there were four fatalities. See ‘Kerusuhan Poso Merembet ke Morowali’, *satunet.com*, 20 August 2002.

violence instead consisted of shootings, other murders and bombings. That is not to say that the ongoing violence was insignificant. In the remainder of 2002 alone, there were at least seven such sporadic fatal shootings, which between them caused eight fatalities, as well as several bombings in Poso and Palu in which no one was killed.

How do we account for this pattern of de-escalation in Poso – a narrowing of the forms of violence, but with the persistent occurrence of sporadic violent incidents. Two distinct dynamics contributed to this pattern, each of which constrained the scale of attacks in different ways. The first was an increasingly widespread perception that the costs of participating in violence were rising, triggered in part by the expectation that the state would soon intervene decisively in Poso. This dynamic most directly produced the narrowing of violence. The second dynamic arose from the state's failure to consistently meet these expectations. 'Concerted' state intervention typically followed each crisis in Poso, but lapsed soon afterwards, leaving perpetrators to guess what level of violence they could get away with. Each dynamic is explained in more detail below.

The Rising Costs of Violence

In the previous chapter, I described 2000-2001 as the 'good times' for perpetrators of jihadist violence in Poso. Fatalities among Muslim ranks when Muslims were the aggressors were rare, there were few arrests, there was a strong perception that fighting was necessary and strong peer pressure to participate in attacks. Over the months following the August 2002 attacks, however, increasing numbers of local Muslim combatants appear to have judged that the good times were coming to an end. This judgement derived in part from a perception that state intervention was becoming more concerted, consistent with Wilkinson's (2009:336) observation that groups and individuals will take account of the likely state response when deciding whether or when to engage in violence. This was not the only reason, however. The decision of Christians to cease large-scale attacks in the face of Muslim's military advantage meant that fighting was no longer viewed as the necessity that it had been during 2001. Once fighting appeared a choice rather than a necessity, some local Muslim combatants and their communities preferred to try to re-establish a more routine life.

Several developments in late 2002 and 2003 may have contributed to an impression that the risk of arrest had increased, even though in hindsight few perpetrators of violence were apprehended. The few high-profile arrests that police did make in Poso may have been one contributing factor. The first prominent individual to be arrested was the Christian community leader Reverend Rinaldy Damanik, whom many Muslims were convinced exercised direct authority over Christian combatants. Police found fourteen home-made guns in Damanik's vehicle while he was helping to evacuate Christian villagers in August 2002; he was arrested in Jakarta several weeks later (Damanik 2003). Next, police arrested Javanese Mujahidin Kompak member Farihin Ibnu Ahmad as he disembarked from a passenger ship at Pantoloan port in Palu in October 2002. Police found several thousand rounds of ammunition intended for use in Poso in Farihin's luggage (*Farihin Decision* 2003). A further set of high profile arrests saw Andi Ipong and Nanto Bojel taken into custody. Both were local Muslims who had trained and fought with mujahidin. Their arrests in April 2003 pertained to an armed

robbery in neighbouring Parigi-Moutung district.³⁰ Prosecutors secured convictions for all of these men, but each received comparatively light sentences of just two to three years.

Another contributing factor was the nation-wide manhunt spurred by the October 2002 terrorist bombings in Bali, which impacted directly on the networks responsible for jihadist violence in Central Sulawesi. Several Jemaah Islamiyah members were arrested in Palu in April 2003, with police finding another cache of ammunition and explosives intended for use in Poso. Two men who had led the Jemaah Islamiyah division responsible for Poso, Nasir Abas and Mustofa alias Pranata Yudha, were also arrested in Java in April and July 2003 respectively (ICG 2004a:17).³¹ Around the same time, the December 2002 bombing of a McDonalds restaurant and a car showroom in the South Sulawesi capital Makassar triggered another far-reaching police investigation. Several men who had fought or trained in Poso were duly arrested as a result.³²

Moreover, in June 2003, the Central Sulawesi police announced that they were pursuing 38 suspects in connection with violence in Poso since the Malino Declaration.³³ The police did not disclose the names of the 38 men, leaving locals to guess whether they might be being pursued.³⁴ One local combatant, who suspected he may have been on the list, acknowledged that these various developments had led him and his friends to try ‘not to be too active, [so that we can] evade [capture/detection]’. In an indication of the impact of the Bali bombing and Makassar manhunts on Poso, the man said that he thought that the police were looking for links between Mujahidin (his generic term for jihadist groups in Poso) and Jemaah Islamiyah. As such, he guessed the primary targets for arrest would be mujahidin from Java or men from Poso who had gone with mujahidin to train in Ambon.³⁵

The police response to two more serious violent incidents in October 2003 also may have served as a further warning against larger-scale attacks. In the first of these two incidents, a group of around 30 Muslim men attacked Beteleme village in Morowali district on 10 October, killing two people and burning 36 houses.³⁶ The men appear to have targeted Beteleme because a key Christian combatant, Fabianus Tibo, had lived in the village prior to his arrest in 2000. Two nights later, before dawn on 12 October, a separate group of Muslim men attacked several Christian-populated villages in Poso Pesisir sub-district, killing nine people.³⁷ The police took swift and severe action, particularly against the perpetrators of the Beteleme attack. A determined manhunt saw seven suspects for the two attacks shot dead and at least seventeen other suspects arrested by mid November. Those arrested were brought to trial under Indonesia’s anti-terrorism law, the first time the law had been applied to violence

³⁰ ‘Dua Pelaku Penembakan Divonis’, *Radar Sulteng*, 4 November 2003. Ipong was re-arrested in 2005 and received a nine year sentence for the 2001 murder of a Hindu journalist, Bojel is wanted in connection with the October 2005 beheading of three Christian schoolgirls.

³¹ ‘Kisah Tukang Krupuk’, *Tempo*, 28 April 2003.

³² On links between Poso and the Makassar bombings, see ICG (2004:17); ‘‘Sidang Kasus Peledakan Bom di Makassar: Saksi Sangkal Keterangan Dalam BAP’, *Kompas*, 22 Juli 2003; ‘Pelaku Peledakan Bom Makassar Ditangkap di Palu’, *Tempo interaktif*, 11 April 2003; ‘Kelompok Imam Diringkus’, *Pikiran Rakyat*, 10 December 2002; ‘Poso Antisipasi Kaburnya Napi Teroris dari Makassar’, *Kompas*, 11 January 2008.

³³ ‘Diburu, 38 Pelaku Kasus Poso’, *Radar Sulteng*, 28 June 2003.

³⁴ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

³⁵ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

³⁶ Details for Beteleme attack taken from *Aco G.M., Hamdan, Abdul Haer and Andang Bado Decision* (2004) and *Hendra, Suhardi and Mat Decision* (2004).

³⁷ ‘Setelah Beteleme, Giliran Poso Pesisir dan Poso Kota Diserang’, *rkp news*, 13 October 2003. Some reports of these incidents list eight people killed. See ‘Orang Bersenjata Serang Poso, Delapan Orang Tewas, Lainnya Luka Berat’, *Radar Sulteng*, 13 October 2003.

in a conflict area. It is not clear why police acted so uncharacteristically sternly. The high death toll and the manageable scale of the manhunt might each have contributed; greater attention to Poso after the Palu Jemaah Islamiyah arrests is another possible factor.

At the same time that intermittent stern action by the security forces began to make the risks of perpetrating violence appear higher, the pattern of violence in Poso in late-2001 and particularly 2002 may have made violence seem less necessary. Christians in Poso were no longer perpetrating large-scale attacks, whether because they lacked the capacity to do so in the face of the military advantage Poso's Muslims had established, feared possible reprisals or were otherwise disinclined. Most often, violence perpetrated by Christians after Malino took the form of reprisal murders or arson attacks shortly after attacks on their co-religionists. Without much of a threat that they would themselves be attacked, and having already struck back against most local Christian strongholds, some local Muslims began to question what they would gain out of continuing to fight. One popular saying captured this mood, 'Win and you're charcoal, lose and you're ash.' After four years of conflict, communities needed to begin to rebuild livelihoods, and some villagers began to see mujahidin as an impediment to efforts to generate income:

I said if they [mujahidin] are always wanting to make things chaotic [through attacks], when are we going to go to our gardens, to our cacao plants. If things are chaotic, with attacks, it's clear that they [Christians] will think that if they can't face up to us along a front [of battle], then they will wait in our gardens, and when we go to pick cacao beans, knife us from behind. Who wants that!³⁸

Such disillusionment with the continuing sporadic violence in Poso was compounded when local combatants saw that other people were profiting from the unrest. In particular, local officials from the provincial right down to the village level were widely suspected to have enriched themselves by embezzling assistance funds intended for displaced communities.³⁹ Another popular saying summed up the difference in fortunes between local communities and government officials: 'We get *supermie* [instant noodles, commonly provided as emergency food aid], they get *superkijang* [sports utility vehicles].'

An awareness of the irritation some local Muslims expressed at the insecurity generated by protracted low intensity violence balances accounts that adopt an instrumental interpretation of this unrest. As an example of the instrumental perspective, ICG (2004a:16) has observed that sporadic attacks on Christian populations in Poso may have suited Jemaah Islamiyah's leadership, because these attacks could serve as a tool 'to keep the jihad spirit strong'. Certainly, the opportunity to perpetrate sporadic violence did help to retain some local recruits and attracted new youths to the cause. But as this insecurity lasted longer and longer, the sporadic attacks also appear to have driven a wedge between some local Muslims and mujahidin. The irritation of some local Muslims at these attacks highlights the importance of the times in between violent incidents to the decision of combatants as to whether to keep fighting. Even a 'victorious' combatant left untouched by the state in a protracted conflict may look at what he experiences in between the violence – the state of his day to day life – and decide that the incentives to continue to perpetrate violence are outweighed by the personal costs of doing so.

³⁸ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

³⁹ On suspicions of profiteering from assistance funds see, for instance, 'Ada Madu di Dana Pengungsi', *Media Sangkompo*, October 2002, pp. 11-12; Aragon (2004).

Once the threat from Christians lessened, the puritanical lifestyle that mujahidin demanded of local communities also became an additional source of friction. Many local youths had accepted the moral and religious teachings of mujahidin at the peak of the fighting, as part of their overall instruction on jihad. Nevertheless, the standard of behaviour that mujahidin required – no drinking, regular prayer, regular religious study sessions – was antithetical to the pre-conflict lifestyle of many local Muslim youths. Once the situation became more secure, several of these youths indicated that they began to return to their old habits:

We told them to go home, we didn't want to be annoyed [anymore], they came with a million rules, whereas in the village we had never had all those rules, and they [mujahidin] made the situation unstable.⁴⁰

Some local financial donors also appear to have been less willing to support further jihadist activities once the threat posed by Poso's Christians decreased significantly. These donors had been interested in protecting Poso's Muslims while the conflict was at its peak, but were less committed to longer-term proselytisation or the ambitions of some jihadist organizations to make Poso a 'beach-head' in a struggle to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia.⁴¹ One mujahid recalled the rebukes of previous donors as security improved, 'What for now [more donations]? The riot in Poso is already over!'⁴²

What was the extent of the split between mujahidin and local Muslims, and what were the implications of this split? I cannot quantify precisely how many people decided to stop fighting: one estimate provided to the press in late 2003 by a local combatant was that more than 75 per cent of Muslim combatants had 'repented' (that is, stopped fighting).⁴³ Because of their objections to continued instability and the moral standards demanded by mujahidin, some local men said their communities eventually asked mujahidin to leave their villages. Other men simply noted that the mujahidin had left by mid-2003, although one man said that some mujahidin still periodically came to his village to proselytize.⁴⁴ These trends refer in particular to the DI-derived mujahidin groups; for its part, Laskar Jihad disbanded at the beginning of October 2002. Its dissolution resulted after internal divisions led some of the organization's members to seek a *fatwa* (non-binding religious ruling) from a Saudi scholar which recommended that the militia should disband (Hasan 2006:212). Most Laskar Jihad members who were still in Poso then left the district later that month.⁴⁵

But in general, the unwillingness of the majority of local Muslim combatants to participate directly in violence did not equate to active opposition to those who continued to do so. Many Muslims in Poso appear to have continued to support violence against Christians tacitly, primarily because of anger at the scale of violence perpetrated by Christians in 2000-2001. Other Muslims who did oppose the violence may not have known the identity of the perpetrators of sporadic attacks, or otherwise may not have been in a position to try to stop these attacks from continuing. Alternatively, even opponents of the violence may have been reluctant to assist police with their enquiries, because of anger at past inaction on the part of the security forces, wrongful arrests or the common practice of beating suspects. Without

⁴⁰ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴¹ On these ambitions, see Fealy (2005a:32); ICG (2005b:3).

⁴² Interview with a Mujahidin Kompak member, April 2004.

⁴³ 'Ikhwandun: Dendam Mereka Tak Habis-Habis', *Tempo*, 2 November 2003, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Interview with a Poso man, July 2003.

⁴⁵ 'Muslim Poso Kecewa dengan Pembubaran Laskar Jihad', *Republika*, date not recorded.

widespread active community opposition to their activities, the core of perpetrators intent on continuing violent attacks remained able to do so.

An Uneven Decline

Although the increasing threat of arrests and the state response to the Beteleme attacks may have signalled to some combatants that the state was poised to intervene decisively in Poso, no systematic intervention ensued. Instead, the government ordered concerted action in Poso only when driven by a sense of crisis. Although sometimes triggered by events outside Poso such as the Bali and Makassar bombings, most frequently a sense of crisis arose when attacks in Poso crossed an invisible psychological line. Each crisis-driven intervention typically produced a few arrests, without meaningfully impairing the capacity of those combatant groups who remained determined to perpetrate violence. Violence thus de-escalated by a process in which perpetrators were left to judge what space remained available to them to undertake attacks without attracting a state response. The result was an uneven decline of violence spanning five years. The overall number of incidents decreased each year, but periods of relative calm alternated with spikes of deadly violence. These attacks ensured that Poso was never entirely secure until police finally launched thorough-going raids in January 2007 to halt jihadist violence.

Attacks in the final years of the conflict were increasingly one-sided, targeting non-Muslims and perpetrated by mujahidin groups and their local allies. There were three main centres where jihadist activity continued long after 2002. Two of these centres were in the city, in Kayamanya and Tanah Runtuh, whereas the third was in the south of Poso district near Pendolo (ICG 2005b:11, 13-14). Each of these three centres were run by mujahidin from Darul Islam-derived networks and their local Muslims recruits; Laskar Jihad and the local Muslims who were once affiliated with them played little or no role in violence after 2002. Of the three areas, it was in Tanah Runtuh that jihadist groups remained most active for the longest. In fact, precisely at the moment that the conflict began to wane in late 2002, Jemaah Islamiyah was consolidating its core support base in Tanah Runtuh and preparing to perpetrate further violence. The catalyst for this consolidation was the October 2002 arrival of a Javanese JI member, Hasanuddin alias Slamet Rahardjo, to lead the organization's operations in Poso. Hasanuddin settled in Tanah Runtuh and soon married the daughter of Adnan Arsal, whose pesantren JI used as a cover for its activities in Poso (ICG 2007a:5). Under Hasanuddin's leadership, local from Tanah Runtuh and their JI trainers alone were responsible for the majority of violence in Poso from late-2004 onwards (Karnavian et al 2009:292-307).⁴⁶

Hasanuddin's presence in Poso was no secret to police, or at least it ought not to have been. Prominent Jemaah Islamiyah member Nasir Abas named Hasanuddin as the head of JI's subdivision in Poso in a May 2003 interrogation deposition produced by Central Sulawesi detectives (*Abas Deposition* 2003); a detail that was repeated in a 2004 International Crisis Group report (ICG 2004a). Nonetheless, no serious efforts were made for years to investigate the activities of Jemaah Islamiyah and its Tanah Runtuh allies. Both local detectives and

⁴⁶ Karnavian et al (2009:292) claim that a police task force active from late 2005 solved 37 prominent cases as well as many smaller incidents, most of which police attribute to specific members of the Tanah Runtuh-based group. The members of this group arrested by police have confessed their involvement in many of these incidents, but most of these men were tried in court only for a small selection of the attacks to which they confessed.

investigative teams sent by police headquarters typically left the groups all but untouched. When initial investigations did suggest the possible involvement of men from Tanah Runtu, further enquiries were often effectively abandoned in the face of pressure from associated public figures and advocates (Karnavian et al 2009). In other instances, police did round up numerous suspects for major attacks, and even sometimes brought these suspects to trial, but turned out to have incorrectly identified the culprits.

Tito Karnavian, the head of a police investigative task force established in Poso in late 2005, and several of his colleagues have written at length regarding the numerous perceived reasons for such failures on their part of their predecessors. They focus on the police, who had primary responsibility for security in Poso (albeit with assistance from the military) and sole responsibility for investigations. Karnavian et al cite as a factor the smaller number of detectives in Central Sulawesi, typically also of lower competence, when compared with more prominent police commands. Indeed, they maintain, Central Sulawesi was a dumping ground for personnel with black marks on their record. Compounding the problem, fewer operational funds tended to be available to Central Sulawesi police than to commands in centres of commerce; police also lacked a procedure to allocate additional funds to support investigation of more complex terror cases. Karnavian et al also highlight the lack of institutional incentives for officers to solve terror cases in Poso, or even to spend time in an isolated and dull conflict region. Moreover, they perceive personnel attached to the local police command to have feared reprisals against them if they took stern action against mujahidin groups. Such police timidity was exacerbated by the fatal shooting of a policeman and several police informants in 2005. Timidity was also a problem for external personnel posted temporarily to Poso, who were more oriented to safely seeing out their posting than on achieving results, a trend also lamented by a senior police figure in Central Sulawesi in 2006.⁴⁷ Karnavian et al also cite the deleterious effect on institutional memory of the rotation through the province of external personnel on successive security operations. Under such unpromising circumstances, it took national pressure to motivate investigations. Even then, detectives were inclined simply to go through the motions until pressure relented, preferring to risk a dressing down from their superior officer than reprisals from the targets of investigations (Karnavian et al 2009:431-443).

To Karnavian et al's long list might be added illicit motivations for security force behaviour, whether for profit, to seek revenge or to indulge religious solidarities. Indeed, despite the many factors motivating inaction, security forces were quite capable of taking severe measures against suspected perpetrators of violence if the victim was a security forces member. Two illegal reprisals against Muslims in 2001 were outlined in the previous chapter; in this chapter we saw the reverse situation of a police unit giving the green light for an attack on Silanca village as revenge for the death of their comrade there. Suspicions that security forces tended to inaction to derive profit from their posting to a conflict area were also persistent. The 'contamination' of security forces by religious solidarity is better documented for the Maluku conflict, in which specific units within the police became associated with each religious community (Azca 2003; Crouch 2010), but such solidarities could also be presumed to have lessened effectiveness in Poso.

The one factor that overarches all of the various reasons for security force ineffectiveness, however, is the absence of consistent pressure for action from the central government. All of the problems hampering determined action against jihadist groups could have been overcome

⁴⁷ Interview with Central Sulawesi police chief, February 2006.

if the central government had attributed sufficient priority to ending violence in Poso. The complexity and severity of violence in Poso may have overwhelmed local security forces, but the Indonesian state clearly had the appropriate resources available to it to deploy to Poso if it chose to do so. After all, police capacity to undertake complicated investigations and apprehend the fugitives from clandestine attacks was clearly demonstrated by the successful investigations of each of the national level terror attacks from 2002-2005. (Such a comparison was often drawn unfavourably by NGO activists in Central Sulawesi.) But instead of maintaining close attention to Poso, the authorities stuck with the ineffective and costly strategy of simply maintaining high levels of troop deployments to the district.

Indeed, the central government ordered a more concerted response only when attacks in Poso gained national profile. Such attacks were sufficiently rare that pressure for results typically lapsed between times. After the firm response to the October 2003 attacks, for example, just two out of nine fatal incidents unequivocally grabbed national attention in 2004. These were the assassination of Palu-based prosecutor Ferry Silalahi in May 2004, and the bombing of a public transport minivan outside Poso's central market in November the same year, which killed six people. Police arrested suspects for each of these incidents, but in each instance turned out to have apprehended the wrong men. For the Silalahi murder, a number of local men associated with Mujahidin Kompak were brought to trial. All were acquitted, however, as the case against them rested on fabricated interrogation depositions. For the central market bombing, police made three arrests, including a Christian woman they believed to have foreknowledge of the attack, but released each of these suspects without charge.⁴⁸ Years later, it emerged that both incidents were perpetrated by members of the groups based in Tanah Runtuh.

The next event to grab national attention was the detonation of two bombs around the Tentena marketplace on 28 May 2005, killing 23 people. The bombing, which remains the deadliest anywhere in Indonesia since the October 2002 Bali bombings, marked the fifth anniversary of the Walisongo massacre, in which around 100 Muslims had been killed. Again the central government were spurred to order swift and forceful action. Jusuf Kalla, who by that point had become vice-president, set police a seven day deadline to apprehend the perpetrators.⁴⁹ Kalla's deadline soon generated more than a dozen arrests, but none of those in custody were the perpetrators of the attack, and government pressure relented amid criticism over the wrongful arrests (ICG 2005b). Again, police subsequently discovered that mujahidin and locals from Tanah Runtuh were responsible for the attack.

Over and above the impact of each of these incidents, two attacks on schoolgirls in October and November 2005 generated the greatest sense of crisis. First, on 29 October three Christian schoolgirls were beheaded on a secluded forest path on the fringes of Poso city and their heads dumped in public places; a fourth girl escaped by leaping into a gully after being struck in the face with a machete. Just over a week later, a Christian and a Muslim schoolgirl were each shot in the head in the city (both girls survived). The widespread condemnation of these two attacks spurred senior police to become personally involved in Poso and resulted in the establishment of two ad hoc security bodies. The government first established a Poso Task Force in the aftermath of the schoolgirl attacks; this body was incorporated into a Central Sulawesi Security Command following the bombing of a pork market in Palu on 31 December 2005, which killed nine people. Along with a lower profile police headquarters

⁴⁸ 'Kapan Penebar Teror Ditangkap', *detik.com*, 23 December 2004; 'Polisi Identifikasi Pelaku Bom Poso', *Kompas Cyber Media*, 19 November 2004.

⁴⁹ 'Saya Sangat Marah dan Sedih', *Kompas*, 30 May 2005, p. 1.

investigative task force established in Poso at the time, these agencies were responsible for a more concerted intervention than the response to previous high profile attacks. Police announced their intention to more systematically investigate twelve priority cases, including some of the more prominent incidents of violence perpetrated by both Muslims and Christians. They matched such statements with some concrete achievements, rounding up suspects for some of the many unsolved cases that had occurred during the preceding two years. Chief among the arrests was the identification and capture of three of the perpetrators of the beheadings in May 2006. Each of the three men produced a video-taped confession, which police sought to exploit as a powerful propaganda tool to convince the public of the role of mujahidin groups in Poso. Interrogation of the three men arrested also furnished police with a detailed picture of which individuals were responsible for most incidents of sporadic violence since at least late 2004 (ICG 2007a). Nevertheless, even after the beheadings, the government's resolve to act appeared to fade once the initial crisis had passed. Both ad hoc security bodies were disbanded in mid-2006, leaving only the police investigative task force continuing to operate. It took a further crisis in late 2006, outlined in the next section, to spur police finally to act decisively to bring sporadic violence in Poso to an end.

Why did jihadist groups continue to perpetrate provocative violent attacks that were likely to attract a response from the state? After all, if their goals had been solely to establish Poso as a beach-head in a longer term struggle to establish an Islamic state, then lower intensity sporadic violence would arguably have been as effective. Instead, these prominent provocative attacks appear to indicate that such violence was also driven by motivations specific to the Poso conflict itself. In court testimony, both mujahidin and local Muslims justified provocative attacks as a deterrent against violence by Christians or as a measure to 'square the ledger' of violence suffered by each community. Such testimony is consistent with anecdotal information that some Muslim combatants hoped that provocative attacks might trigger renewed large scale violence, providing them with the opportunity to 'even up' conflict fatalities. Equally, the continuation of prominent attacks may have been a sign of the religious conviction of the perpetrators, or reflected the fact that some youths had become accustomed to fighting and found it hard to stop when the conflict waned. As ICG (2005b) observes, for some of these men 'the combination of military training and active combat may have been the most meaningful experience of their lives'. It was not only locals for whom participation in violence may have become an end in itself: some mujahidin criticized violence late in the conflict in Poso as reflecting a desire for revenge or as having strayed from the strategic aims of their organization. (These criticisms were typically expressed only after the mujahidin in question had been arrested, raising the possibility that they were intended to distance themselves from specific acts of violence to avoid legal sanction.)⁵⁰

Karnavian's police investigative team were also exercised by the question of why mujahidin groups refused to lay low even after the prominent investigation began into the October 2005 beheadings. The first months of this investigation saw several high profile attacks occur, including: the November 2005 schoolgirl shootings; another shooting targeting a Christian lecturer in Palu the same month; the New Year's Eve pork market bombing, also in Palu; and a failed attempt to assassinate the Poso police chief in January 2006. Karnavian's team speculated that such attacks could variously reflect that perpetrators were accustomed to ineffective police investigative teams, could have been an attempt to distract the team's investigation of the beheadings, or could have been a challenge to the team to stop them

⁵⁰ See, for example, 'Abu Dujana: Saya Marah Kepada Noor Din', *Tempo*, 24 June 2007, p. 39.

(Karnavian et al 2009:103-104). Whatever the motive, continuing prominent attacks played a key role in spurring the state to act, finally, to terminate violence in Poso.

Terminating Violence

In January 2007, police launched two raids against Tanah Runtuh – the main remaining centre of jihadist activity in Poso – thereby ending violence in the district. These raids drew on information gathered from the May 2006 beheadings arrests, and so arguably could have been launched months earlier. But instead of moving swiftly and decisively against jihadist groups once they had solid information linking their members to specific acts of violence, police opted first to adopt a ‘persuasive approach’. Under this approach, drawn from the broader counter-terrorism strategy of the Indonesian police, suspects were offered inducements to surrender rather than be arrested forcefully. Although this strategy failed to secure the surrender of any important fugitives, police argue that the persuasive approach minimized the negative side-effects when they finally did turn to raids. Whatever the merits of this argument, pursuing the persuasive approach was not without its own costs either. Central government attention appeared to lapse a final time during the initial months of this approach. The months of a ‘soft power’ approach to law enforcement also provided the space for a final security crisis to develop in Poso in late 2006.

Police explicitly shifted to the persuasive approach following a failed attempt to arrest important local Muslim suspect Taufik Bulaga in May 2006, shortly after they had arrested the first three perpetrators of the beheadings. Two officers had briefly apprehended Bulaga, reputedly a skilled bomb maker, in the majority Muslim city ward of Lawanga, but they were forced to retreat after being attacked by a hostile crowd. Such a response to an arrest was not atypical in the final years of the conflict, at which time relations between police and communities were extremely poor (ICG 2005b). Underlining the hostility to police, when the Poso police chief came to Lawanga the following morning to meet with a crowd that had gathered to protest the attempted arrest, he was forced to flee when his car was pelted with rocks (Poso Center 2006).

Under the persuasive approach then instituted, the police refrained from attempts to forcefully make arrests. They instead attempted to secure the surrender of wanted men by promising good treatment and sought to ward off community opposition by setting out the case against the men to Muslim figures. Indeed, even before the failed Bulaga arrest, police had used this strategy in late 2005 to successfully induce the surrender of two local men wanted for jihadist crimes (McRae 2009). As more and more resources were committed to this approach, it expanded to include funding family members of arrested suspects to visit the men in Jakarta and to attend certain sessions of their trial, and paying for some local figures from Poso to make the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. But in its early stages the strategy was more low key, and consequently was open to the interpretation that its adoption indicated that the government was again decreasing attention to Poso after making a few important arrests. Such an impression was strengthened by the dissolution in mid 2006 of the two ad hoc security bodies established after the beheadings.

Ironically, when a new crisis emerged in Poso during the months of the persuasive approach, it was triggered by a central government decision to take stern law enforcement action. To wit, the government decided to execute Tibo, Dominggus and Marinus, the three Catholic

men sentenced to death in 2001 for their role in the May-June 2000 violence.⁵¹ The timing of the executions was in part determined by the men's own decision to lodge their final plea for clemency in mid-2005, forcing the government to decide on their case within seven months. Nonetheless, it is clear that some government officials also perceived executing three high-profile Christian perpetrators to be an opportunity to apply a band-aid solution to address Muslim complaints of injustice in Poso. But executing the three men also ran the risk of aggravating old enmities, a risk of which provincial police were keenly aware. Resultant disagreements between different state agencies over the prudence of the executions led the government to twice waver even after announcing deadlines for the executions to take place, thereby maximizing the tensions generated. By the time the men were brought before a firing squad on 22 September 2006 – just one day before the commencement of the Islamic fasting month – the case had become a focal point for large religiously polarized protests (McRae 2007).

The crisis triggered by these executions was as serious as any experienced in Poso for years. In the immediate aftermath of the executions, Christian youths killed two Muslim fish traders who happened to pass through their village near Taripa, southeast of Tentena. Just over a week later, the greatly heightened inter-religious tensions in Poso were reflected in the response to the detonation of a rocket propelled grenade in front of a church in the majority-Christian ward of Kawua. The explosion brought angry crowds onto the streets, reversing a trend of preceding years where mobilization in response to even the most provocative attacks had become rare. Clashes between rival crowds, which would have been the first in Poso since August 2002, were only narrowly averted. Tensions became further elevated when a Jemaah Islamiyah member shot dead the acting head of the Central Sulawesi Christian church in Palu in mid-October. Finally, a police operation near Tanah Runtuh on the final night of the fasting month brought the crisis to a head. This operation quickly escalated into clashes between police and local Muslims, in which police shot dead a local youth. Such a clash at a sensitive religious moment was in itself inflammatory; the effect was further compounded the following day when police opened fire when attacked by part of the youth's funeral procession, wounding a mourner and a four-year old child (ICG 2007a).

To the extent that government will to take firm action in Poso had lapsed, it was galvanized anew by this crisis. Vice President Kalla made a widely publicized visit to Palu to meet with community figures, and gave strong public support to security forces in the face of calls for their withdrawal from Poso. The Central Sulawesi governor followed up on Kalla's visit by convening a reconciliation meeting between representatives of the two communities soon after (Karnavian et al 2009). Such meetings may have been important to lessen tensions in Poso, but police action against those responsible for attacks lay at the crux of efforts to prevent further violence. To this end, a contingent of some of the country's most senior police were also sent to Poso to meet with community members and to directly oversee operations. Police also bolstered their investigative task force in Poso by installing an officer of equal rank to the provincial police chief as its new head (Karnavian et al 2009; ICG 2007a). To tackle the public relations disaster of the October clashes, police also convened a press conference on 31 October to identify the groups responsible for violence in Poso and to outline their strategy to stop them. At the conference, the assistant head of police headquarters' PR division reminded the public of fifteen arrests police had made related to the Poso conflict during the preceding year. He also announced 29 new priority targets for arrest,

⁵¹ For a full account of the men's case, the executions and their aftermath, see McRae (2007).

most of whom were local Muslims along with a few mujahidin.⁵² These men were to be apprehended by an intensification of the persuasive approach, police hoped. By January 2007, only five peripheral figures had turned themselves in, however.

Police then announced on 9 January 2007 that they would be taking the remaining suspects by force, apparently after key Muslim leader Adnan Arsal had informed them that no further fugitives were willing to surrender (Karnavian et al 2009:264). Two days later, police launched their first raid on the Tanah Runtuh area, targeting a house where several men on their wanted list were thought to be hiding. This shift to forceful action produced mixed initial results. On the one hand, three men from the wanted list were arrested and another man taken into custody turned out also to be responsible for the pork market bombing and GKST head shooting attacks in Palu.⁵³ Police also killed two men whom they claimed had resisted them: one was on the wanted list and another was an important mujahidin figure. The raid also resulted in the seizure of six factory standard firearms, the most significant haul since late 2003 (Karnavian et al 2009). The threat of forceful action and its manifestation in this raid also convinced several mujahidin and at least four local men on the priority target list to flee to Java (*Dr Agus Deposition* 2008). On the other hand, after the long build up to this raid, the adoption of fatal force also generated renewed opposition to police. Youths affiliated with Tanah Runtuh and other sympathizers elsewhere in the district gathered in Tanah Runtuh after the raid and established numerous barricades to keep out police out of the area. Tensions were further exacerbated as police clashed with these youths several times over the following days, most particularly following an abortive attempt to dismantle the barricades of 15 January. Gunshots and bomb explosions became nightly occurrences during this period (Lengkong 2008). A contemporary headline captured the mood in the city, proclaiming ‘*POSO AT WAR!*’.⁵⁴

Police made their final decisive push to end this situation on 22 January, describing their approach as ‘urban warfare’ to take control of Tanah Runtuh as opposed to a one-off raid (Lengkong 2008). Seeking to avoid previous mis-steps in which clashes had coincided with religious holidays and to ensure the operation was completed within daylight hours, police launched this final raid early on a Monday morning. Police encountered stern resistance, but chose to respond with fatal force, and were able to overwhelm those who stood and fought against them within a day. Fourteen Muslims and one policeman were killed; numerous others suffered gunshot wounds. Questions over whether police used excessive force aside, the raid again emphasized the emphatic imbalance of power between security forces and combatant entities in Poso. Jihadist groups had amassed a surprisingly extensive arsenal within Tanah Runtuh – among the discoveries after the raid was a military-style bunker built underneath a vacant house.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, like the *kelompok merah* before them in May-June 2000, they could not offer meaningful resistance once the state chose to direct even a fraction of the force available to it against them.

These January raids brought about a stark and immediate improvement in security in Poso, repeating a pattern observed in Maluku province in 2005 when a round of arrests halted a year

⁵² ‘Polisi Buru 29 Pelaku Kekerasan di Poso’, *Radar Sulteng*, 1 November 2007.

⁵³ This new suspect was Abdul Muis, a Palu-based JI member whom police had arrested along with the beheading suspects in May 2006 but released without charge. By that point, he had perpetrated the December 2005 Palu pork market bombings, subsequent to his release he was responsible for the October 2006 shooting of the acting head of the Central Sulawesi Christian Church.

⁵⁴ ‘*POSO PERANG!*’, *Radar Sulteng*, 16 January 2007.

⁵⁵ ‘Polri Duga Banyak Bunker Tempat Persembunyian DPO’, *Suara Karya*, 1 March 2007.

long sequence of jihadist violence. Although few priority targets were arrested on day of the 22 January raid itself, by occupying the area around Tanah Runtuh, the security forces demonstrated their ability to henceforth take unfettered law enforcement action. A number of key fugitives surrendered or were arrested forcefully in the aftermath of the raid, and police continued to find more and more factory-standard weapons and various munitions during searches for days afterwards. Fearing that jihadist groups nevertheless may reconstitute following these raids, police and the government instituted various 'soft power' initiatives such as combatant reintegration and investments in religious education for over a year thereafter (ICG 2008; McRae 2009; McRae 2010). Such fears were not immediately borne out. There were only four additional conflict fatalities related to the Poso conflict in the first five years after the raid, namely two police who were killed in a single shooting incident in Palu in May 2011, and two suspects for the shootings fatally shot by police during the subsequent manhunt.⁵⁶ This shooting was the product of efforts to reconstitute jihadi groups in Poso though, efforts that also saw several training sessions held in Poso from 2011 (ICG 2012b). These efforts also appeared to be behind a string of incidents in 2012 which left nine people dead, including six police and two suspected militants killed in police raids. At the time of writing, police had made a number of arrests, and operations to round up the suspects for the violence were ongoing. Police also fatally shot seven militants elsewhere in Indonesia in January 2013, reportedly linked to the networks operating in Poso, shortly after the death of four police in Poso in December 2012.⁵⁷

Conclusion: State Intervention

This chapter has sought to analyse the influence of state response on the Poso conflict, focusing on the years following the December 2001 Malino Declaration. Consistent with Wilkinson's (2004; 2009) analysis of state response to communal riots, the Poso case suggests government will to intervene to be the crucial factor determining effectiveness. The particularities of the Indonesian context do suggest an important difference with Wilkinson's model, however. The will of central authorities to intervene in Poso derived most importantly from a sense of crisis at the intensity or forms of violence in the district, in contrast to Wilkinson's focus on rational calculation and electoral incentives. Although this apparent role of a sense of crisis is derived solely from Poso, Crouch (2010) independently comes to a similar conclusion regarding the state response to the Maluku conflict, suggesting that this pattern may help explain the dynamics and termination of at least some of the other post-authoritarian conflicts in Indonesia.

As a final aside, when the state did terminate violence in Poso, the decisive step involved raids that targeted only the most centrally involved perpetrators of jihadist violence. In particular, apart from arresting or killing the men who stood against them during the raids, the police made no effort to bring criminal cases against the majority of the youths who had been involved in attacks. On one level, the success of this strategy allows us to derive insight regarding the organization of sporadic violence. That is, the termination of violence by targeting only the core of perpetrators is further proof of the central role played throughout

⁵⁶ 'Central Sulawesi safe, despite Palu attack: interim governor', *The Jakarta Post*, 17 June 2011.

⁵⁷ Jones (2013); 'Four suspected terrorists arrested in Poso, more to come: Police', *Jakartapost.com*, 3 November 2012; 'Polri: Terduga Teroris Poso Jaringan Santoso', *kompas.com*, 3 November 2012; Mohd. Adhe Bhakti, *Tindak Kekerasan Poso*, unpublished list of incidents, 10 October 2012.

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the conflict by more committed small groups of perpetrators, as first touched upon in Chapter Four. Once these men were no longer present to animate the violence, other followers did not take the initiative to themselves organize attacks.

At another level, the success obtained by relative systematic targeting of a small set of the most important perpetrators exposes the negligence of the Indonesian state in allowing violence to continue for so long in Poso. The rounds of crisis-driven arrests of suspects for each provocative attack were not sufficient to meaningfully impair the capacity of jihadist groups to perpetrate violence, but the requisite response was not particularly more onerous. In the context of ethnic civil wars, Mueller (2000) asserts that preventable violence may nevertheless occur because states misjudge the character of the violence and fail to appreciate the potential efficacy of targeting core perpetrators. The irony of such misidentification, in Mueller's view, is that the centrality of core perpetrators to the occurrence of violence means that it may be possible to prevent violence with a much smaller deployment of troops than states may imagine. A similar point may be made for Poso. Had the state acted sooner to identify the networks behind sporadic violence in Poso, then taken determined police action against them, violence in the district might have been terminated years sooner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This book has worked from the basic premise that violent conflicts with common beginnings may develop along very different lines. It follows that an understanding of the factors that enable a set of violent conflicts to begin will be insufficient to understand their individual dynamics. And yet, any full explanation of a violent conflict must be able to account for its changing intensity and forms. The Poso conflict began amidst the same combination of national uncertainties and local vulnerabilities that typified the other sites of post-authoritarian communal conflict in Indonesia. Over the course of nine years of fighting, however, Poso stood out as the most persistent and yet also the most localized of these conflagrations. The forms of violence in Poso also underwent three profound shifts during the course of the conflict: first from urban riots to widespread killings, then from these largely one-sided killings to a protracted phase of two-sided conflict, before violence finally de-escalated unevenly during a long phase of sporadic shootings, bombings and other murders.

In presenting the first comprehensive history of the Poso conflict, this book has consequently focused primarily on the dynamics of violence, seeking to account for the production of violence during the nine years of unrest. Each chapter considered a distinct phase of the conflict in terms of the literature most appropriate to the dominant form of violence, with a focus on organizational underpinnings running through the text as the common thread of analysis. In conclusion below, I will first articulate in full my overall argument regarding the changing dynamics of the Poso conflict. I then set out how central device of the argument regarding dynamics – an evolving division of labour between core combatants and community members – is also central to answering four more fundamental puzzles regarding why the conflict occurred. Finally, I turn to the future, considering the implications of the analysis of this book for further developments in Poso.

Explaining Dynamics

How might we explain the distinct evolution of the Poso conflict? The preceding chapters have placed the organizational underpinnings of violence at the centre of the explanation. To recap my core argument, each shift in the dynamics of violence reflected a change in a division of labour between core combatants and ordinary community members. This division became more pronounced as violence became more deadly, with core combatants responsible for the majority of the killing. The division of labour is so central to explaining the dynamics of violence for two reasons. First, the division's evolution reflected the changing choices of leaders on the form of combatant organization they would attempt to assemble, which in turn shaped their ability to produce violence. Such a focus thus captures the centrality of leaders to developments in Poso, as the set of actors who initiated violence and chose to effect each change in dynamics. Second, the division of labour helps us to understand how the most important contextual constraints on dynamics – the influence of the conflict situation and the limitations upon action imposed by state intervention – were reflected in the actual perpetration of violent conflict in Poso. As a new context for action, the conflict situation was a crucial determinant of the success of leaders' mobilization strategies, and hence of the possible modes of organization. At a more fundamental level, the experience of the conflict also influenced the very goals that leaders pursued, as well as who community members would acknowledge as leaders. As the state at all times maintained a decisive advantage of

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force, actual and anticipated state intervention shaped the limits of what violent acts leaders and community members judged to be possible or prudent.

In setting out the operation of this argument below, I first outline how the evolving division of labour shaped each phase of violence in Poso, before elaborating further upon how the influences of the conflict situation and state intervention were themselves embodied in this division.

The division of labour was least pronounced during the initial phase of urban riots (1998-2000), in which the organized core of actors were drawn from rival urban-centred patronage networks. Admittedly, the production of these riots relied on a diversity of roles and specializations of individuals, modeled by Brass (1997, 2003) in the Indian case as an 'institutionalized riot system'. Nevertheless, the levels of commitment required of core actors and ad hoc participants drawn from the broader community differed little. The short duration of these riots meant that even the figures most central to the violence were involved for just a few days; moreover, no lengthy prior preparations were required of core actors for these largely ad hoc events. Nor was there a marked difference in the actual violence perpetrated by the majority of members of each group. With only three people killed by fellow civilians during this phase of violence, very few people undertook violence more serious than that perpetrated by the average crowd member. This phase also importantly demonstrates that it was not inevitable that the pattern of organization would change after each violent episode. Both the December 1998 and April 2000 riots were underpinned by a very similar division of labour; it was not until after the second of these riots that a group of individuals took the initiative to form a more organized combatant entity.

Accordingly, when violence escalated to a phase of widespread killing (May-June 2000), this abrupt shift reflected a much starker division of labour. Having decided to undertake sustained reprisals, a subset of the Christian community transformed the pattern of organization of violence by assembling a more organized core of combatants. The commitment of the members of this core was newly intense: they trained prior to the initiation of violence, mobilized for up to a month, and were willing to kill their adversaries. The actions of these core combatants were central to the escalation of violence, but their importance was matched by a division of labour that allowed most community members to perpetrate violence no more serious than what had been typical during the phase of urban riots. The short-term ad hoc recruitment of such community members was sufficient to provide the manpower that allowed the core to operate, meaning that the division of labour greatly reduced the number of individuals who needed to commit exhaustively to the cause.

This rapid increase in the degree of organization of Christian combatants is striking, and clearly surprised many local Muslims. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such a campaign of violence should not lead us to overstate the coherence or strength of Christian organization. In fact, core combatants exhibited conspicuous weaknesses. The men at the core of this phase of violence were community members rather than combat specialists, even if a few were veterans of the police or military forces. As just mentioned, they developed only loose ties with the broader community, relying on ad hoc mobilization throughout. Their actions displayed a distinct lack of forward planning, as they seemingly lacked any plan to act in a clandestine manner or to anticipate possible reprisals. Although they wrought horrendous destruction, their military advantage consequently was fleeting. By the end of the subsequent phase of protracted two-sided conflict, Muslims were able to over-run Christian strongholds almost at will.

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The shift to protracted two-sided violence (2000-2001) reflected a move by Muslims to develop their own organized core of combatants to rival that of Christians. As had been the case in the preceding phase of widespread killings, large-scale attacks mounted by each side during this phase were initiated by an organized core supported by broad ad hoc participation, spurred by widespread antipathy and a perceived necessity to fight. The division of labour was also reflected in persistent sporadic attacks throughout this phase. Core combatants were most likely responsible for most of the deadlier incidents, on account of their greater access to explosives and factory-standard weaponry, whereas other day-to-day violence appears to have essentially amounted to ad hoc harassing with no central coordination. The eventual military supremacy that Muslims established over the course of this phase reflects the greater resources available to their organized core, primarily as the result of the arrival of mujahidin in Poso. The resources brought by these mujahidin included their military experience in Afghanistan and the southern Philippines, their access to factory-standard weapons, and, arguably, their systematically articulated ideology of jihad.

The division of labour became most pronounced during the final shift to the long phase of sporadic attacks (2002-2007), which reflected a narrowing of the range of participants in violence. Only core Muslim combatants continued to perpetrate violence, albeit minus some of the core's former members who chose to withdraw. The broader community provided only tacit support, apart from the occasional mobilization of crowds to oppose law enforcement efforts. The absence of community participation shaped the dynamics of violence because this absence made it impractical for core combatants to mount large-scale attacks. When core combatants did attempt such larger-scale attacks without mass participation to mask their precise role, the perpetrators proved to be an easy target for the subsequent manhunt. As a result, Muslim core combatants produced a level of violence well below what their military capacity would have allowed, confining themselves to clandestine terrorism-style violence.

Among the most important influences on the evolution of the organizational underpinnings of violence was the lived experience of the conflict situation itself. The changing nature of this experience was a crucial determinant of the varying willingness of community members to participate in violent attacks. At different times, the conflict situation variously spurred or inhibited participation. When the fear of being attacked seemed real but community members could themselves participate in attacks without incurring excessive risks, the context of conflict became an important motivation to fight. Such widespread motivation to take part supported the division of labour observed during phases of widespread killing and two-sided conflict, typified by ad hoc recruitment or participation of crowd members for large-scale attacks. Conversely, community members generally refrained from taking part when they judged that attacks would likely bring defeat or incur intervention against them by the security forces. In light of this pattern, I drew on Horowitz (2001) to propose participation in Poso to be 'risk averse' in response to 'surmountable fears'. The importance to participation of the fear of being attacked became clear in its absence during the phase of sporadic violence. Once the threat of attack dissipated following the Malino peace talks and the increased deployment of security forces, many community members also appeared to judge the costs of ongoing conflict to their everyday life to be too high.

Community members' experience of the conflict situation also contributed significantly to the evident shifts during the conflict in the membership of the leadership group of combatants. Although established authority structures played some role in determining who was acknowledged as a leader, the resonance of a potential leader's proposed course of action with

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the experience of community members was also important. Hence the Christian youths intent on reprisals in May-June 2000 supported the public servant Lateka's call to action while spurning the condemnation of more established church authority figures. After the resultant phase of widespread killings, Muslim youths accepted the authority of mujahidin when they felt a need for their martial prowess but later chafed at their moral strictures once the security situation improved. It should not be imagined that this phenomenon was the only mechanism determining authority, however. In particular, Fearon and Laitin's (2000) model of endangerment by elites proved illuminating to demonstrate how leaders could also 'forcefully' induce community members to support them by initiating violence. Once thus imperiled by attacks perpetrated in their name, not all community members fled. Many in fact chose to stay and join ad hoc the ranks of combatants if they felt they could prevail in clashes with the religious other.

Nor did the conflict situation affect only ordinary community members. The lived experience of violence also transformed the goals and motivations of leaders, and hence their choices to assemble particular organizations and to produce violence. As Kalyvas (2006) highlights in the case of civil war, as a consequence of such transformation we can assume no straightforward relationship with the interests salient to the onset of a conflict. Hence much as political competition was central to the interests of leaders in the phase of urban riots, an appreciation of how violence reordered key leaders' priorities was required to account for their full range of actions. Similarly the widespread killings of May-June 2000 cannot accurately be conceptualized as a thought-out, strategic use of violence to answer Christian and indigenous anxieties about their status within Poso district. Instead, a comprehensive explanation of the actions of *kelompok merah* members must include the desire to seek reprisal for direct loss and perceived effrontery during the urban riots. Subsequently, much as mujahidin brought their own agenda of working towards an Islamic state in Indonesia, some of their number eventually criticized the intervention in Poso as reflecting their own desire for reprisal as much as longer term goals.

Equally, this book has also highlighted the mutually influencing relationship of state intervention with the pattern of combatant organization, and hence its importance to the dynamics of violence. On the one hand, previous failures of law enforcement simultaneously contributed to motivations to perpetrate violence and signalled to potential perpetrators, whether core combatants or ordinary community members, that they might enjoy impunity in doing so. Conversely, whenever combatants mounted attacks of sufficient severity to induce a sense of crisis on the part of authorities, they risked the premature termination of their plans. The state response to such attacks exposed the failure of all leaders throughout the conflict to assemble an organization that could withstand, even briefly, the determined and focused use of force by the state. Accordingly, the *kelompok merah* folded abruptly in June 2000 when authorities belatedly sent significant reinforcements to capture its headquarters and seize its weaponry. Similarly, the long phase of sporadic violence ended suddenly when police mounted raids against the main centre of jihadist activity in January 2007. Even in instances in which state intervention stopped short of targeting the core of combatants, the anticipation of a determined response alone could exert a significant influence on the division of labour, and by extension the dynamics of violence. Most particularly, a widespread perception that the risk of arrest had increased contributed importantly to halting mass participation in attacks in 2002, leading to the emergence of sporadic clandestine attacks as the dominant form of violence.

Four Fundamental Puzzles

The ambitions of this book go beyond explaining the dynamics of violence in the Poso conflict, however. At the outset, I posed four puzzles fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of the conflict. To restate, how does an area such as Poso descend into religious warfare? How could violence in this conflict escalate to the intensity of a civil war, yet remain almost wholly contained within the boundaries of just one of Indonesia's 500-odd districts? How did the conflict continue for so long in an increasingly stable, democratic state? Why did violence finally come to an end? I am now in a position to set out the centrality of the division of labour that typified the organization of violence in Poso to unravel each of these puzzles.

First, in revealing that neither long-standing organization nor deep-seated inter-religious enmity were necessary conditions for violence to start and to escalate, this division of labour helped explain why intense violent conflict could take place so suddenly in a previously quiescent locality. Because core actors could undertake ad hoc mobilization of community members to swell the ranks of crowds, few organizational resources were required to initiate the urban riots in Poso. Ubiquitous communal patronage networks were sufficient. A loosely organized, rapidly assembled core of combatants similarly sufficed to drive the sudden escalation to widespread killing, because this core could rely on ad hoc recruitment of co-religionists to play lesser roles in the violence. The division of labour also facilitated the escalation of violence to the civil war intensity evident in the phase of mass killing without the need for profound antipathy between Muslims and Christians prior to the onset of violent conflict. The division of labour meant that just a small sub-section of the community bore primary responsibility for initiating large-scale attacks and for much of the killing. Such actions on the part of core combatants then spurred the fear of attack and anger that intensified polarization in the community at large. To advance this argument is not to disavow the presence of religious tension in Poso before the conflict began: the local history of political and economic competition helped to make violent conflict more imaginable, as I set out in the background chapter. But intense violence appeared to intensify widespread polarization rather than simply result directly from it. Hence I find common ground with scholars such as Straus (2006:225) and Kalyvas (2006:77-82) who position polarization both as a product of violent conflict as well as a contributing factor to violence.

Second, in demonstrating that the spread and escalation of violence reflected the movements and actions of small groups of core combatants, the division of labour also helps to explain how the civil-war intensity violence of 2000 and 2001 remained so localized. To recount this pattern, even as Christians and Muslims clashed in Poso, their co-religionists elsewhere in the province continued to intermingle. Within Poso, community members typically mobilized at each new site of violence after core combatant co-religionists arrived; the precise scope of the geographic spread of violence thus was limited by the physical movements of a relatively small set of identifiable actors. That is not to say core combatants never travelled outside Poso district to perpetrate violence: combatant organizations active in Poso were responsible for a number of attacks in surrounding districts as well as the in the provincial capital. None of these other locations became the sites of autonomous outbreaks of violence unconnected to Poso-based actors, however. By contrast, had community members instead mobilized to kill more autonomously through a contagion-like mechanism on account of solidarity or fear, we might consequently have observed a pattern of rapid and unpredictable diffusion less constrained by distance or administrative boundaries.

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Third, in masking the centrality of just a small group of determined actors to the occurrence of violence, the division of labour also contributed to the long persistence of the Poso conflict in an increasingly stable, democratic state. Without an understanding of the division of labour underpinning the violence, the state appeared to fail to appreciate the potential effectiveness of an intervention to target specifically the members of this core. Such a mechanism, whereby the state may be deterred from intervening decisively by its own over-estimation of the costs of halting violence (Mueller 2000), is not the entirety of the explanation for the long persistence of violence in Poso, however. Poso's typically peripheral significance to national affairs also detracted from the central authorities' determination to intervene effectively to close off the space for violence. As much as national leaders may have considered an end to violence desirable, their failure to end a localized conflict in a distant district gave rise to no obvious direct effect on their political fortunes or the national economy.

Similarly, the division of labour also resolves the final puzzle, of why violence ended abruptly when the state did forcefully intervene, however belatedly, against the core of combatants. Recall that the division of labour became most pronounced during the final years of the conflict: a small core of Muslims combatants were solely responsible for almost all violent attacks. By contrast, most community members had ceased active involvement in violence, at most mobilizing periodically to protest against law enforcement efforts. In the context of such a pattern of organization of violence, the January 2007 police raids halted violence for two reasons. First, the raids significantly disrupted the remaining core of combatants, as many perpetrators were arrested, killed or forced into hiding. Second, with the state thereby having emphatically signalled its resolve, peripheral supporters of violence proved unwilling to increase their involvement to take on more central roles. Thus Poso has remained relatively peaceful since these raids, even as a numerical majority of the men to have taken part in violence – both Christians and Muslims – continue to live freely in the district.

An uncertain future?

In the first five years after the January 2007 police raids, there was only one fatal attack directly linked to the Poso conflict. Over this period, daily life in Poso reverted to normality, notwithstanding the irreversible and enduring impacts of the conflict on the local community. Interaction between the local Christian and Muslim communities increased, albeit from an extremely low base. The district government's focus also returned squarely to 'normal' economic growth and development, as central government and donor-funded programs for post-conflict recovery concluded.

2012 saw a more concerted effort to perpetrate violence in Poso, apparently the fruits of efforts to reconstitute jihadi networks in Poso over the preceding years (ICG 2012b; Jones 2013). Nine people were killed, including six police and two militants killed in police raids, and there were a number of other non-fatal violent incidents.¹

¹ Police also killed seven militants elsewhere in Indonesia in January 2013, reportedly linked to the networks operating in Poso, immediately after the death of four police in Poso in December 2013. See Jones (2013); 'Four suspected terrorists arrested in Poso, more to come: Police', *Jakartapost.com*, 3 November 2012; 'Polri: Terduga Teroris Poso Jaringan Santoso', *kompas.com*, 3 November 2012; Mohd. Adhe Bhakti, *Tindak Kekerasan Poso*, unpublished list of incidents, 10 October 2012.

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The incidents highlighted the failure of police to adequately monitor and prevent the re-entry of jihadi groups to Poso. That said, the violence did not approach the level of violence at the peak of the conflict, and police intervened swiftly after two police stationed in Poso were killed in October 2012.

Maluku too has been a partial exception to a general pattern of quiescence in the other sites of post-authoritarian communal violence. In September 2011, a large-scale riot took place in Maluku's provincial capital Ambon. In a string of incidents over five days, at least eight people were killed, over two dozen were seriously injured and more than 150 houses were burned (ICG 2011:4). Further smaller incidents ensued in the following months (ICG 2012a). Adjacent villages in Maluku have also periodically engaged in deadly clashes, sometimes involving external jihadist actors. Even the worst of these inter-village incidents have resulted in just a few deaths, however. As with the 2011 and 2012 incidents in Poso, they have been of an altogether different order of severity to that of the peak of the conflagration

What then do five years of virtual quiescence, followed by the string of incidents in 2012, mean for Poso's future? Will there be a repeat of the unrest that marred the district's first decade of post-authoritarian rule? The comparative literature on comparable forms of violent conflict is one point of reference to answer this question. Certainly, the literature on communal riots suggests that the possibility of recurrence should at least be the subject of serious attention. Varshney (2002:103), for example, finds almost half of urban riot deaths in India during the period 1950-1995 to have occurred in eight cities encompassing just 18 per cent of India's urban population, indicating a highly concentrated pattern of recurrence. Such findings are consistent with the observations of other scholars that each deadly riot may lower the threshold for future recurrence in the same location (Horowitz 2001), or that riots may become a routinized element of political contestation in certain locations (Tambiah 1996, Brass 2003). Similarly, studies of multiple civil wars reveal a significant minority of conflicts that restart after their initial termination. Walter (2004) finds that roughly a quarter of civil wars from 1945 to 1996 recurred; in a further 12 per cent of cases, the same country experienced a different subsequent civil war.

Some strands of analysis in this book may also give rise to pessimism for the future in Poso. In particular, the meagre organizational resources required to bring about the abrupt transition from normality to intense violence may raise fears of a renewed breakdown of law and order. After all, if a division of labour so lowered the organizational barriers to violence that small networks of men could initiate and sustain a campaign of violence despite conspicuous weaknesses, might not a similar pattern of organization recur in the future? The state's failure to prevent the onset of violence, albeit during a time of transition, may be another source of pessimism, as might its ineffectual response to ongoing violent conflict even after democratic rule had consolidated. Might not Indonesian authorities again fail to contain a future outbreak of violence?

But Poso has changed, as too has Indonesia. The enabling context for the initiation of violent conflict was a special set of circumstances that are unlikely to recur in the foreseeable future. Indonesia is now a consolidated democracy, whatever flaws its political system may embody. Having twice changed rule through free and fair elections, and with no serious challenges to democratic order from outside the system, the country has clearly exited the category of democratizing states that Snyder (2000:27) identifies as particularly prone to communal violence. As part of this consolidation, the security forces have also changed in important

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ways. Although locally-stationed police remain ineffectual throughout the country in preventing low-intensity clashes, central authorities in recent years have in most cases mobilized external resources more swiftly to head off the possibility of larger, more sustained episodes of violence. Police have also developed a detailed knowledge of the networks they face, including in Poso, meaning that they do not start with a blank page when incidents of violence occur or initial suspects are arrested. The resumption of jihadi training in Poso, seemingly undetected, and the events of 2012 in particular demonstrate that this improved capacity is no guarantee against sporadic violence. But much as the police need to do more to remain vigilant against efforts to regenerate the networks behind the violence, there is nevertheless cause for greater confidence that security forces would respond more effectively than in the past to new threats against security in Poso.

Moreover, the years of violent conflict have transformed the community in Poso too, with clear implications for the likely outcome of any efforts to mobilize crowds for a new round of large-scale violence. Long before the security forces finally put an end to violence in Poso in 2007, most community members were profoundly fatigued, unconvinced that they would gain anything by continuing to fight and hence unwilling to participate in attacks. It may have taken as few as several dozen men at the core of violence to initiate and sustain a violent episode that elevated a remote rural Indonesian district to global prominence as a centre of jihadist violence. But if denied support and participation from the outset by a community for whom the experience of the Poso conflict remains a clear memory, any future group of potential core perpetrators would likely remain just a few poorly organized men.

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