Democracy, Conflict and Islamic Leadership in Eastern Indonesia: A Village Election Case Study

Dr Jeremy Kingsley
ARC Federation Fellowship  
“Islam and Modernity:  
Syari’ah, Terrorism and Governance in South-East Asia”

Professor Tim Lindsey was appointed as an ARC Federation Fellow in 2006, a 5-year appointment funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC). Professor Lindsey will research “Islam and Modernity: Syari’ah, Terrorism and Governance in South-East Asia”. Terrorism in Southeast Asia responds to challenges that western-derived modernity poses for Islam, including market economies, democracy and nation states. Professor Lindsey will examine the different responses to these challenges through research in regional Muslim communities, institution building, mentoring young scholars and community engagement in the Southeast Asian region. The Fellowship also aims to help strengthen the University of Melbourne’s new Centre for Islamic Law and Society as a hub for research and public engagement on issues related to Islam and law in our region. He aims to achieve a better understanding in Australia of Islam in Southeast Asia and thereby strengthen Australia’s capacity to navigate our regional relationships.

Islam, Syari’ah and Governance Background Paper Series

The Islam, Syari’ah and Governance Background Paper Series seeks to provide a considered analysis of important issues relevant to Islam, syari’ah and governance in Southeast Asia.

The Background Paper Series is distributed widely amongst government, business, academic and community organisations. Please contact the Centre for Islamic Law and Society at cils-info@unimelb.edu.au if you would like to receive future editions of the Series. Copies of papers can also be downloaded from the ARC Federation Fellowship website at:

http://www.lindseyfederation.law.unimelb.edu.au

ISSN 1835-9116  
2011

All information included in the Islam, Syari’ah and Governance Background Papers is subject to copyright. Please obtain permission from the original author or the ARC Federation Fellowship (cils-info@unimelb.edu.au) before citing from the Background Papers. The Background Papers are provided for information purposes only. The ARC Federation Fellowship does not guarantee the accuracy of the information contained in these papers and does not endorse any views expressed or services offered therein.

Front Cover Image: Photograph taken by Antara/Muzakkir. This photograph was taken from Andi Hajramurni, ‘Unrest Colors Regional Elections in Tana Toraja’, Jakarta Post, 25 June 2010.
Democracy, Conflict and Islamic Leadership in Eastern Indonesia: A Village Election Case Study

Dr Jeremy Kingsley

Over the last decade, Indonesia’s process of democratisation and decentralisation has brought local political empowerment to many parts of Indonesia, including the island of Lombok. Located east of the islands of Java and Bali, Lombok and the island of Sumbawa together make up the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB). The seismic political changes that have occurred in Indonesia since the end of authoritarianism in 1998 and the governance reforms that followed have created much change on Lombok, and have led to intense competition between local political elites.

Tensions over the spoils of decentralisation have created potential for conflict in Indonesia, particularly during election periods. These elections have provided “lucrative

1 Jeremy Kingsley is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. This background paper was undertaken as part of his doctoral studies at the Asian Law Centre, Melbourne Law School, and is based on 15 months of fieldwork in Mataram, Lombok, during 2007-2008. This research was supported by an ARC Federation Fellowship Doctoral Scholarship and an Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong Fellowship.


opportunities” which have seen “new forces emerge and old ones resurrected.”

There have been incidents of violence and unrest reported during elections in Lombok in 1999 and 2003, and violence connected to local elections is now a practical ongoing concern for political leaders and law enforcement agencies across Indonesia. This is not surprising given the continual electoral cycle across Indonesia: there is an election almost daily somewhere in the archipelago at the local, provincial or national levels of government.

This paper seeks to explore these issues through a case study of social instability and demonstrations that affected the West Lombok village of Bok in July 2008. During this time, serious allegations against a village official led to demonstrations that threatened to explode into violence. By investigating this event in detail, it is hoped that the nuanced, localised and often volatile nature of post-Soeharto Indonesian electoral politics can be illuminated. The paper concludes with brief recommendations for donors and others involved in the law and governance sectors in Indonesia.

The pressures of leadership

“I am tired. Very tired! I just want the demonstrations and threats to be over…”

Zaini made this comment as he slumped down on a couch next to me in July 2008 after over two weeks of rolling demonstrations in his village of Bok, West Lombok. The smiling face that usually greeted me remained, but it was strained. The protests were taking their toll, and he felt under siege. Zaini, a senior non-state community leader in Bok, was at the epicentre of the social tensions and demonstrations in the village, along with several other local leaders.

7 Jusuf Kalla, ‘Making Good Economic and Social Policy in a Democratic Indonesia: An Insider’s Perspective’ (Speech delivered at the Indonesia Study Group, Australian National University, Canberra, 10 June 2010).
8 ‘Bok’ is a village in West Lombok and has been de-identified in accordance with the requirements of the University of Melbourne Ethics Committee for this research. Accordingly, all names in the case study are pseudonyms.
10 The intensity generated by local disputes has recently been witnessed on the neighbouring island of Sumbawa where social instability led to the burning down of a village administrative office and the local police station. This incident also saw a police officer being temporarily held hostage – see ‘Polsek Dibakar, Kapolsek Disandera’, Lombok Post (Mataram, Lombok), 25 February 2011; ‘Kerusuhan di Bima Meluas – Kantor Desa dan Rumah Warga Juga Dibakar’, Lombok Post (Mataram, Lombok), 26 February 2011.
12 Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).
This paper investigates how Zaini and other members of Bok’s leadership put an end to several weeks of demonstrations and social conflict. It shows how state and non-state leaders combined to develop an intricate conflict management process. The events in Bok, I argue, exemplified broader dispute resolution patterns in Mataram and West Lombok, where *adat* (traditional rules and social processes) are integral to the eventual resolution of conflict.

The village of Bok is situated in West Lombok, just outside the island’s largest city, Mataram. The social troubles considered in this case study relate to attempts to remove one of Bok’s *Kepala Dusun* (head of a hamlet within Bok) and were connected to political manoeuvring within the village in the lead-up to the election for a new *Kepala Desa* (village head). The incumbent *Kepala Desa*, Eni, was not standing for re-election, so there was an open field for contenders. Politics became decidedly dirty, with potential candidates trying to discredit possible adversaries, one of whom was the *Kepala Dusun*. Several community leaders told me that the protests were attempts to manipulate popular emotions in Bok to obtain political advantage ahead of the village elections.

The paper is the result of interviews with four key local community leaders from Bok, who were central to the community’s response to the demonstrations: Eni, the *Kepala Desa*; Imran, the official village secretary (*Sekretaris*); Abdullah, one of the local state-appointed religious leaders (*Penghulu*); and Zaini. These leaders had an intimate knowledge of the events and the processes that led to the resolution of the social disturbances. I also had the opportunity to observe some of these events as they occurred.

The protests in Bok emerged without much warning in early July 2008 and lasted several weeks. In response, leading state and non-state community figures created a leadership group. It was an ad hoc arrangement but it formed the backbone of the conflict management processes that were used. This leadership group was made up of the *Kepala Camat*, the *Kepala Desa*, the local police liaison officer, the local military liaison officer, two key non-state community leaders (including Zaini), one of the village *Penghulu* (Abdullah), and several staff of the *Desa* office (including Imran). Local non-state religious leaders, both *Tuan Guru Lokal* and a *Tuan Guru Besar* who later became involved in calming tensions were not part of this leadership group. Rather the *Tuan Guru* were called upon to help out at strategic moments. They were relied upon to assist

---

13 See “Appendix: NTB government structure – 2008”.
14 Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).
15 Field Notes, 28 July 2008.
16 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008); Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008); Interview with Abdullah (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).
17 A *Kecamatan* is a sub-regency, headed by a *Kepala Camat*. In the Indonesian governance hierarchy it sits just below the *Kabupaten*, headed by the *Bupati*. To understand the local governance structures that were applicable during the disturbances in Bok, see “Appendix: NTB government structure – 2008” at the conclusion of this paper.
18 *Tuan Guru* are divided for the purposes of this paper into *Tuan Guru Lokal* (local *Tuan Guru*) and *Tuan Guru Besar* (important *Tuan Guru*). This taxonomy represents their spheres of influence and where their authority has effect. *Tuan Guru Lokal* have influence within a confined geographic area, for example a village. By contrast, *Tuan Guru Besar* attract support from across the island.
with soothing emotions and to ensure the participation of all parties in the conflict management process.\(^{19}\)

The roles taken by leaders within this group depended on their individual strengths and socially-accepted roles. For instance, religious leaders such as the Tuan Guru and Penghulu\(^{20}\) took on the task of calming the situation once events became more serious in the second and third week. Their role was to take the heat out of the issues for the main protagonists and their followers.\(^{21}\) Community leaders then worked to mediate a reconciliation between the parties, assisted by the religious leaders.\(^{22}\)

An important feature in the state and non-state partnership that developed was the influential involvement of a local military liaison officer (Babinsa) and local police liaison officer (Babinsapol). These two officers were stationed in the village and supported the leadership of Desa Bok during these tense times. They provided a bridge between state law enforcement and security institutions and the village leadership. These officers advised the local leadership group and communicated with police headquarters in Mataram. Their role became increasingly important as events intensified and local leaders needed protection from the aggressive crowds.\(^{23}\) The police liaison officer, in particular, played an influential and constructive role, contrary to widespread popular negative perceptions about state law enforcement agencies and their inadequate performance.\(^{24}\) This officer was closely engaged with the local leadership before these events and had in-depth knowledge of village affairs.\(^{25}\) It was this that provided him with both legitimacy and the ability to play an effective role in the leadership group.\(^{26}\)

This approach to community-engaged policing has acceptance at senior levels of the police, but it is not often implemented on the ground, at village level.\(^{27}\) Farouk Muhammad, the former NTB police chief (Kapolda), told me that police would only...

\(^{19}\) Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008).

\(^{20}\) Penghulu (state-appointed religious leaders) and Tuan Guru (local non-state religious leaders) are both Muslim religious leaders in Lombok, although Tuan Guru have higher social status. These positions are not mutually exclusive roles, as Tuan Guru are sometimes also Penghulu.

\(^{21}\) This role of social stabilisers was discussed during interviews with other community leaders in Mataram, see Interview with Mukhsin (Mataram, 14 July 2008); Interview with Andi (Mataram, 4 August 2008).

\(^{22}\) Field notes, 10 August 2008.

\(^{23}\) Field notes, 10 July 2008.

\(^{24}\) Concerns about the role and operation of police liaison officers in local villages in other parts of Indonesia have centred on them pressuring or bullying villagers on behalf of political or commercial interests. See Anthony Bebbington, Leni Dharmawan, Erwin Fahmi and Scott Guggenheim, ‘Local Capacity, Village Governance, and the Political Economy of Rural Development in Indonesia’ (2006) 34 World Development 1958, 1969.

\(^{25}\) The role of negotiation in social disputes, rather than the use of force, and close engagement between police and local community leaders has been considered a priority by many leading Indonesian police officers in relation to conflict avoidance and resolution, see Andi Masmiyat, Konflik SARA – Integrasi Nasional Terancami (2007) 29-36.

\(^{26}\) Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).

be effectual when they were fully engaged as part of their community’s life. He felt that they have not yet done this. This situation exemplifies the possibility of more effective approaches to policing than those currently used in many parts of Lombok.

Local political rivalries

Decentralisation and the devolution of power has meant that greater scope for conflict has emerged in recent times between leadership rivals at all levels of government, including local village politics. The social tensions that developed in Bok and the demonstrations that threatened to spiral out of control were connected to this localised political competition. Similar situations have occurred elsewhere in Lombok. For example, in early 2008 the village of Sukamulia, East Lombok, was affected by a dispute over village subsidies and transportation that led to violent protests. Around the same time, the village of Spakek in Central Lombok was the site of an intense local dispute about electoral procedures during local elections for Kepala Desa. Similarly, in June 2008, police were needed to intervene in the village of Kateng, Central Lombok, to stop demonstrations over alleged corruption and malefianse in this village’s administration.

Returning to Bok, the problems here stemmed from accusations against one of the Kepala Dusun who was alleged to have either inflated the price of government subsidised rice or failed to distribute the rice properly among poor villagers. The exact nature and detail of these initial allegations were sketchy. If true, however, the accusations were very serious. Rice is the basic staple for villagers and rice subsidies are one of the most important anti-poverty measures offered by national and provincial governments across Indonesia. As a consequence of the allegations, some local residents demanded the Kepala Dusun’s resignation. These accusations came to the attention of Bok’s leadership on the morning of the first day of demonstrations. By late afternoon two trucks of demonstrators had been mobilised and had begun rallying to the cause. The action took place outside the home of the Kepala Desa, Eni, with demonstrators keeping a large part of the village up all night with boisterous and vitriolic protests.

On the first evening of the protests there was initially a dispute within the leadership group about how to respond to the protestor’s demands. Two alternative strategies were...
developed at the impromptu meeting held at Eni’s home. One group argued that there was a need for a quick resolution. Those advocating this position wanted to dismiss the Kepala Dusun and just ‘move on’. The remainder wished to allow temperatures to cool down before considering the demonstrators’ allegations and responding to them in a thoughtful manner.\textsuperscript{37}

The key advocate for quick resolution of the dispute was the Kepala Camat.\textsuperscript{38} He was new to the job and was concerned that if the situation escalated he could be seen as weak and unable to take effective action. He told the leadership group that an intensification of the demonstrations and an explosion of violence would reduce his capacity to resolve social tensions in the future.\textsuperscript{39}

Eni and Zaini were on the other side of the debate. They thought that things would probably calm down in the next two or three days and a solution would emerge. If there was any truth to the allegations about the misuse of subsidised rice these could then be carefully investigated.\textsuperscript{40} One further factor supporting their ‘wait and see’ strategy was legal in nature: the Kepala Dusun could only be sacked if serious malfeasance was shown according to Provincial regulations. At this stage, the allegations were still sketchy and did not provide legitimate grounds for the Kepala Desa to act. Several members of the leadership group also expressed the view that sacking the Kepala Dusun without proper investigation was simply unfair. After lengthy deliberation, the leadership group resolved to adopt Eni and Zaini’s recommendations: they would hold off deciding upon anything at this early stage to avoid making mistakes by acting too hastily.\textsuperscript{41}

During this period of instability, the leadership group met regularly at the Kepala Desa’s house to plan strategy and also to ensure that the protestors did not behave recklessly and attack Eni’s home. At this point, the military and police liaison officers played a critical role in ensuring community safety, as well as protecting Eni and her family. The liaison officers saw themselves as part of the local leadership, although they also reported to Mataram police headquarters. These links between village and police headquarters allowed requests for police assistance to be made quickly and police assistance became necessary as tensions escalated.\textsuperscript{42} This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

**The temperature continues to rise**

The problems did not stop after the initial demonstrations, and the protestors came back two days later. This time, the demonstrations were held outside the village office, rather than Kepala Desa’s home. Over two hundred people arrived on the back of trucks. Some of the leadership group began to wonder whether the crowds were being ‘rented’

\textsuperscript{37} Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{38} The Kepala Camat is immediately senior to the Kepala Desa in the Indonesian governance hierarchy. Despite this, the Kepala Camat is, in many ways, a less significant position because it is appointed rather than elected. See “Appendix: NTB government structure – 2008”.

\textsuperscript{39} Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{42} Field notes, 14 July 2008.
by provocateurs, as many protestors were unfamiliar faces.43

At this demonstration the protestors provided a letter to the Kepala Desa outlining their grievances and demanding the sacking of the Kepala Dusun for two reasons. First, the Kepala Dusun was alleged to have “stolen” subsidised rice from members of his community. Second, the embattled leader was supposedly “egotistical”, because he often revved his motorbike too loudly, particularly at nights.44 Allegations that the Kepala Dusun had stolen rice lacked detail, however, and while the leadership group was concerned, internal investigations found no problems with the rice allocation within Kepala Dusun’s hamlet. In fact, the rice subsidy for eligible families had risen from three kilograms per family per month at the start of his incumbency to over to nine kilograms by the time of the demonstrations. As to the second accusation that the Kepala Dusun was arrogant, this was, at worst, a dispute between neighbours, but not an issue that warranted his dismissal.

The letter from the demonstrators proved problematic in other respects. For instance, questions surrounded the veracity of the 200 signatures. Many of the signatures attached to the letter looked to have been made by one person (the handwriting appeared the same).45 The most significant outstanding issue was, however, that the protest leaders still had not identified themselves and Eni wanted to know with whom she could negotiate.46 When the Kepala Desa spoke to the protestors she asked their leaders to come forward, but they did not. There was a feeling among the leadership group that they knew who was behind these actions, but this could not be confirmed. In many ways the phantom provocateurs of the demonstration gave credence to a belief among the leadership group that the protests were linked to the local elections rather than any legitimate allegations against a village official. Eni’s claims that the protests were just a ‘character assassination’ of the Kepala Dusun seemed to have weight.47

During the next wave of demonstrations over the following days, the behaviour of the protestors became increasingly threatening. One afternoon, the Kepala Camat and police vehicles were surrounded and not allowed to leave the Kepala Desa’s office. The situation became serious when demonstrators stopped the cars and started rocking them until the occupants were forced to jump out. These officials were threatened, but not hurt. The crowds only dispersed when the police liaison officer stood on the bonnet of his car and negotiated a compromise. He stated that if the demonstrators were able to find more signatures of support then the leadership group would pay further attention to their claims. This compromise took the heat out of the immediate situation, allowing the leaders to leave safely.48

The following day, Eni decided that she needed to make her intentions clear to the protestors. From the patio of her home she told demonstrators that she would not be

43 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008).
44 Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).
45 Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).
46 Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).
47 Ibid.
48 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008).
threatened and that she would refuse requests to remove the Kepala Dusun. From her perspective this was a matter of principle. She was not going to be forced by mobs who wanted to make her act outside her authority as specified in local regulations. Unless there were serious breaches of his duties, which she believed there were not, then she was not permitted to remove the Kepala Dusun. She told the crowd that Indonesia is a Negara Hukum (a state based on law) and she would not be politically blackmailed. By now, however, she was coming under serious political and emotional pressure from the demonstrators, which was affecting her health.

As the situation intensified, the local religious leadership was deployed. As the crowds dispersed once again, the Tuan Guru Lokal accompanied by two local Penghulu, including Abdullah, swung into action. They began to visit the homes of people believed to be connected with demonstrations and those supporting the Kepala Dusun, on behalf of the leadership group. Their aim was to reduce tension by reminding people of their religious obligations to refrain from violence or aggression. The leadership group thought that these local religious leaders would likely be able to settle emotions, but despite efforts over several nights things did not appear to be returning to normal.

The demonstrations continued over the next week and in many ways worsened. There were two further ‘letters of demand’ from the protestors and over 150 additional signatures were tendered. Interestingly, the allegation of corruption was removed in the second of these letters and all that remained was the accusation that the Kepala Dusun was ‘egotistical’. Zaini was not satisfied with the veracity of the signatures, as he recognised only a few names. The letters nevertheless created the impetus for a further round of rallies.

One positive factor to emerge was that the second of these new letters finally revealed the identity of the provocateurs. This allowed Eni and the leadership group to confirm with whom it was they needed to talk. The political angle of the protests also became clearer: the leaders of the demonstrations were potential rival candidates for the position of Kepala Desa at the upcoming local elections.

Despite identifying who was leading the campaign against the Kepala Dusun and its political motivations, the situation continued to escalate. As tension built and the demonstrations grew larger, a change in tactics clearly became necessary. It was at this point that, at the behest of the leadership group, Zaini visited a Tuan Guru Besar from Kediri, a nearby town. Zaini sought his advice and asked if he would intervene.

49 For discussion of the legal status and requirements of Desa administration, see Deddy Supriady Bratakusumah and Dadang Solihin, Otonomi Penyelenggaraan Pemerintahan Daerah (2004) 24-29.
50 Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).
51 Field notes, 28 July 2008.
52 Interview with Abdullah (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).
53 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008).
54 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok 28 July 2008). Eni also considered local political manoeuvring to be the rationale for the demonstrations, Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).
55 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok 28 July 2008).
seriousness of the situation was also highlighted by the fact that the police liaison officer in Bok, after consultation with police headquarters in Mataram, had twelve police officers deployed to guard the office and home of the Kepala Desa (the Kepala Dusun and his family had by now temporarily sought refuge outside the village). The rallies were now regularly attracting more than 350 aggressive protestors and there were fears at one point that the village office was going to be overrun.\textsuperscript{56} Because of this tense situation, the Tuan Guru Besar agreed to act with the support of local religious leaders. His assistance came in two parts. First, he gave a Friday sermon about the importance of ‘social harmony in the democratic era’. Second, he made private visits to all the key protagonists. One of the Penghulu, Abdullah, explained that the message presented at these private meetings was simply a reminder of the religious obligation of social harmony. He also made a personal request for them to find an amicable resolution at the mushawara, or community meeting, that Eni was attempting to organise.\textsuperscript{57}

The Tuan Guru Besar’s intervention two weeks into the crisis proved to be decisive. It is believed that the only reason that the key protagonists attended the mushawara was that the Tuan Guru Besar had personally invited them.\textsuperscript{58} Additionally, the statements and assertions of the Tuan Guru Besar indicated to all involved in the dispute that they were expected not just to attend the mushawara, but also to find a resolution to the conflict. To refuse a direct instruction of this nature from a Tuan Guru Besar would be considered disrespectful and inappropriate behaviour. This provided the various leaders with izin (permission) to talk and compromise.\textsuperscript{59}

The Tuan Guru Besar influenced not only the protest leaders, but also supporters on both sides. They understood that their leaders were now obliged to be flexible and come to a solution.\textsuperscript{60} This active engagement of the Tuan Guru Besar reveals the strength that can be gained by blending local communal dispute resolution mechanisms with religious authority. This was further shown by the fact that the mushawara was held at the village mosque,\textsuperscript{61} exemplifying how cultural and religious “patterns of behaviour” and leadership combined to facilitate an atmosphere whereby resolution of the dispute in Bok was possible.\textsuperscript{62} The next section will review how the dispute resolution processes were undertaken.

**Powerful negotiations**

Direct negotiations between the protagonists were at the core of the conflict management

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{57} Interview with Abdullah (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{58} Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 28 July 2008).

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).

\textsuperscript{61} Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 28 July 2008).

\end{flushleft}
process applied in Bok. The mushawara, convened by Eni63 was the heart of the dispute resolution process. This meeting allowed the parties to air their grievances and to hear the other side's arguments.64 Mushawara have become part of Indonesian legal cultures and have even been received into formal legal structures. These community meetings have also been considered to be part of the “social contract” within communities across Indonesia65 and they play an important role in decision-making and dispute resolution in Bok.

The approach taken in Bok is consistent with a dispute resolution framework known as ‘principled negotiations’,66 where parties articulate their interests and then listen to the perspectives and arguments of the other side. By moving beyond merely seeing their own position to actively listening to their opponents, negotiations can lead to new avenues for resolving a conflict.67 Common to both principled negotiations and mushawara is the fact that all parties have the opportunity to express their views and emotions. This allows ‘the air to be cleared’ and validates all perspectives.68 The aim of principled negotiations is to achieve a resolution that provides “mutual gains”, with all sides to a dispute ‘walking away’ with something.69

As will be seen, the mushawara in Bok incorporated these two steps: the articulation of the opposing positions, and the parties to a conflict listening to each other in order to obtain an outcome that involves mutual gains.

The mushawara reinforces an important Islamic principle outlined by leading Indonesian Muslim scholar, Nurcholish Madjid, who wrote, “man has a duty to listen to other people’s ideas, and then to examine those ideas critically in order to determine which is the best to follow”.70 Like principled negotiation, listening and expressing a position is integral to resolving disputes, allowing all parties to resolve their differences.

The mushawara in Bok allowed the airing of grievances between the protagonists ensuring that they felt they had been listened too, while at the same time forcing them to listen to the other side of the argument. The forum thus gave people the

63 A Kepala Desa’s role includes being able to facilitate communication within a community. This is particularly important at times of social instability and crisis. See Made Wáhyu Suthedja and I Gusti Ketut Swalem, Management Pembangunan Desa (1981) 32-35.
67 Ibid 1011.
68 Ibid 1012.
69 Ibid 1012-1013.
space for negotiating solutions.\(^{71}\) Although, the *Tuan Guru Besar* was present, he did not say anything. His presence was an implicit reminder to those involved that a conclusion to these troubles was expected.\(^{72}\) Silence is a powerful form of communication within Sasak society. When issuing directives, Sasak of high social status do not necessarily need to make their instructions explicit. Silence often provides an understood non-verbal expression of expectations and meaning.\(^{73}\)

After several hours of in-depth discussion an agreement was reached. The *Kepala Dusun*, whose alleged wrongdoing had caused the protests, would step down before October (approximately two months after the *mushawara* and approximately two months before village elections). This outcome was seen as a ‘win–win’ result for all parties. The significance of this compromise cannot be underestimated as it ensured that the protagonists left the *mushawara* with their dignity intact, and calm returned to Bok.\(^{74}\) Both sides of the confrontation could claim victory. The *Kepala Dusun* did not resign immediately, but it was understood that he would step down soon. The result was not disadvantageous for the *Kepala Dusun*, as he had political ambitions to become the *Kepala Desa*. According to local regulations, if he wanted to run for the position of *Kepala Desa* it was necessary for him to resign prior to the village elections in any case.\(^{75}\)

This period of social instability in Bok was resolved through discussion relying on a Sasak cultural practice – the *mushawara*. Despite the tenuous nature of the situation, there was no need to resort to a forceful police intervention. *Tuan Guru Hajji* (TGH) Madani said that forceful police tactics were often counter-productive in Lombok. While using force may disperse a crowd, it doesn’t necessarily solve problems. In fact, an aggressive police response has the potential to make those involved even angrier. In tight-knit Sasak society, which has high levels of social solidarity, friends and fellow village members may enter the fray, resulting in an escalation of the situation. This could lead to a rise in tensions, rather than their reduction.\(^{76}\) The police liaison officer in Bok therefore implemented a ‘minimalist’ approach, limiting the police’s role to protecting the leadership group. The officer thus became part of the community’s response, rather than acting unilaterally as had occurred previously in the village of Penujak, West Lombok, for example, with bad consequences for all involved.\(^{77}\)

The conflict management processes utilised in Bok demonstrate the coalescing of state and non-state forces to resolve conflict. Integral to this dispute resolution process were the efforts of religious leaders and their ability to change the dynamics of the situation.

---

71 Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).

72 Interview with Abdullah (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).


75 Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 28 July 2008).

76 Interview with TGH Ahmad Madani (Mataram, 21 August 2008).

at a crucial moment. This was particularly important when the protagonists needed to be forced to the negotiating table. The religious leadership created an atmosphere where people felt obliged to participate in good-faith negotiations. The participants knew their actions were being watched by the Tuan Guru Besar and that they would be judged sternly if they did not participate with appropriate respect and effort. This is an example of the authoritative role of Tuan Guru, which has been acknowledged as being pivotal for conflict management processes in Mataram and West Lombok. Tuan Guru have been observed in other tense situations in Lombok as ensuring the participation of protagonists in social and legal processes connected to the avoidance and resolution of conflict.78

The religious leaders thus underwrote the conflict resolution process, ensuring that the protagonists attended the mushawara, came to an agreement and felt obliged to adhere to it. They did this through their social influence, rather than direct involvement in the mushawara. The Tuan Guru Besar increased the legitimacy of the process itself, as “… mediation, will build no more than superficial temporary truce unless the process is managed to allow the parties to discover a common bond deeper than the process alone”.79 That common bond here was the watchful eye of the Tuan Guru Besar, and the respect all parties involved had for the religious authority he represented.

Conclusion
Conflict management processes adopted at the grassroots level in the village of Bok emphasised the stress that these sorts of events can cause to those involved and the flexibility required to prevent or resolve violence of this nature. The leadership group was aware that despite the stressful nature of events they needed to respond without rigidity. If one approach, such as the initial intervention of religious leaders, was unsuccessful, then new tactics would be applied. These localised and fluid strategies are vital during Indonesia’s new democratic era when the influence of local authorities and political elites has increased, and when protest and public criticism are considered legitimate forms of political behaviour.

State legal responses (such as statutes, police action and even prosecution in court) are important for election management in post-Soeharto Lombok. Yet, the strategy used to control the tensions in Bok illustrated a method for maintaining social stability through partnerships between state and non-state actors who have high levels of social standing, such as local Muslim religious leaders, Tuan Guru, who proved essential for avoiding large-scale police intervention. Tensions in Bok were ultimately resolved without the need for police action, which usually causes an escalation in social disturbances in Indonesia.

Policy implications
The findings described in this paper have two main practical implications for donors involved in the law enforcement and governance sectors in Indonesia.

78 See, for example, Lalu Said Ruhpina, Menuju Demokrasi Pemerintahan (2005) 231-233.
First, donor programs need to consider non-state players and organisations when engaging in preparations for elections, as well as conflict management and/or dispute resolution projects. In Lombok, this could involve engaging with Tuan Guru and their religious organisations. These leaders are highly regarded and their followers have networks of social influence that can be incorporated into processes to support state activities, such as elections.

Secondly, police need to be embedded closely in the life of the communities where they work in order to increase their operational effectiveness. When considering donor programming in the law enforcement sector, support for the police should therefore emphasise community policing. This is a long-term project requiring structural reforms to police operations, and in many cases, transformation of institutional culture.

The importance of conflict avoidance and effective resolution of disputes during election periods in Indonesia when access to power, influence and wealth is being contested should not be underestimated. Combining state and non-state actors and institutions in fluid, flexible and socially-appropriate ways congruent with local circumstances is essential if conflicts are to be avoided or resolved. Therefore, when donors active in Indonesia consider judicial and law enforcement strategies they should look beyond relying merely on state institutions.
Appendix: NTB government structure – 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Province (Provinsi): NTB – Head: Governor (EO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td><strong>City (Kota)</strong> – Head: Mayor (Walikota) (EO).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mataram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Regency (Kabupaten)</strong> – Head:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bupati (EO).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. West Lombok;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Central Lombok;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. East Lombok;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. West Sumbawa;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Sumbawa;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Dompu;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Bima;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th><strong>Kecamatan</strong> – Head: Camat (AO, by Walikota)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Ampenan;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mataram;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Cakranegera;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Sekorbela (established in 2007);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Sandubya (established in 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Kecamatan</strong> – Head: Camat (AO, by Bupati)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are 16 Kecamatan in West Lombok.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th><strong>Kelurahan</strong> – Head: Lurah (AO, by Walikota).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Desa</strong> – Head: Kepala Desa (EO).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Lombok has approximately 125 Desa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th><strong>Lingkungan</strong> – Head: Kepala Lingkungan (Kaling) (AO, by Walikota)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dusun</strong> – Head: Kepala Dusun (EO).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desa Bok has six dusun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 6</th>
<th><strong>RW – Rukun Warga</strong> – Head: Kepala RW (approximately 300-700 people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RW – Rukun Warga</strong> – Head: Kepala RW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 7</th>
<th><strong>RT – Rukun Tetangga</strong> – Head: Kepala RT (approximately 100-300 people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RT – Rukun Tetangga</strong> – Head: Kepala RT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations:** ‘EO’ means ‘Elected Official’; ‘AO’ means ‘Appointed Official’.
References


Kalla, Jusuf, ‘Making Good Economic and Social Policy in a Democratic Indonesia: An Insider’s Perspective’ (Speech delivered at the Indonesia Study Group, Australian National University, Canberra, 10 June 2010).


Nasution, Adnan Buyung, ‘Towards Constitutional Democracy In Indonesia’ (Speech delivered at the Melbourne Law School, Melbourne, 20 October 2010).


Newspaper articles


**Interviews**

Interview with Farouk Muhammad (Mataram, 3 November 2007).

Interview with Mukhsin (Mataram, 14 July 2008).

Interview with Zaini (Bok, West Lombok, 16 July 2008).

Interview with Andi (Mataram, 4 August 2008).

Interview with Eni (Bok, West Lombok, 16 August 2008).

Interview with TGH Ahmad Madani (Mataram, 21 August 2008).

Interview with Abdullah (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

Interview with Imran (Bok, West Lombok, 26 August 2008).

**Field notes**

Field notes, 10 July 2008.

Field notes, 14 July 2008.

Field notes, 28 July 2008.

Field notes, 10 August 2008.
ARC Federation Fellowship
“Islam and Modernity: Syari’ah, Terrorism and Governance in South-East Asia”

ARC Federation Fellowship
C/- Centre for Islamic Law and Society
Melbourne Law School
The University of Melbourne
Tel: +61 3 8344 6847
Fax: +61 3 8344 4546

cils-info@unimelb.edu.au
http://www.lindseyfederation.law.unimelb.edu.au