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## **State Proxy or Security Dilemma?**

### Understanding Anti-Rebel Militias in Civil War

Militias are responsible for some of the most egregious abuses in intrastate conflicts. This said, they vary tremendously, and some may serve as a source of security against abusive rebel groups. What distinguishes predatory anti-rebel militias from those which are more or less popular? While previous studies focus on the relationship between militias and states, this paper demands equal attention to the militia / rebel relationship. While militias in East Timor were largely predatory, formed at the behest of state forces to attack rebel supporters, militias in Aceh were more diverse, and many formed spontaneously against rebel attacks on ethnic minorities. I propose that militias created where the state dominates are likely to be predatory, while those resisting powerful rebels are more likely to be defensive, popular organizations.

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Few persons take up arms in any given civil war. Despite their limited number, the decision to rebel, the quality of rebel recruits, and the nature of rebel organizations have been the subject of many rich studies—and for good reason. But in any conflict, there may be as many persons who take up arms against rebels. While rebels set their sights on the state, they also face resistance in their own backyard, leading to particularly bitter clashes. But anti-rebel mobilization and organization has not garnered the kind of attention afforded to rebel groups. Those who resist rebellion tend to be viewed as proxies fighting against more principled rebels. The very concept of a proxy suggests little or no agency, following the agendas set by state leaders.

This paper seeks to contribute towards a deeper understanding of anti-rebel militias. Just as rebel groups differ in terms of their human rights records, recruits, and organization, so too do their local enemies. Some anti-rebel militias are predatory, deserving of the epithet ‘death squads’. Such organizations serve as low-cost, unaccountable proxies for states wishing to maintain plausible deniability while attacking civilians. But militias may also emerge spontaneously, driven not by profit, but self-defense against predatory rebel groups in pockets of state failure. While most counter-rebellions are somewhere between these types, anti-rebel militias are nonetheless a diverse group, a fact which is underappreciated in the literature and the public sphere. What distinguishes anti-rebel militias which are more or less predatory from those which are more or less popular? Under what conditions are militias state proxies, and when are they responses to local security dilemmas?

Most studies emphasize the relationship between militias and the state. While I do not deny that the state / militia relationship is of great importance, equal attention must be paid to the relationship between rebel and militia organizations. The dominant emphasis on the state / militia relationship over-predicts opportunism and ignores rebel coercion. Appreciating rebel / militia dynamics is necessary to understand the varied nature of militias.

Balancing these two relationships, this paper proposes two indicators to help differentiate among militia organizations. The first concerns the formation of the militia. To what extent is an anti-rebel militia formed at the initiative of state forces, and to what extent is it a response to rebel assaults? Like rebel groups, militias which form in response to outside funding are more likely to feature opportunistic recruits.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, those which emerge more or less spontaneously tend to be responses to local political dynamics and rebel coercion, especially among ethnic minorities. The second indicator relates to strategic behaviour. To what extent is a militia defensive or offensive? If a militia possesses offensive capabilities, hunting rebels and civilian activists, it is more likely to commit abuses and rely on outside support. Militias may also remain defensive though, fortifying their homes against attacks. Such organizations possess fewer opportunities and fewer reasons to abuse local civilians. The common link between these two indicators is state control. Militias which form where the state is strong and the rebels are weak are likely to be predatory, while those operating in pockets of state failure against powerful rebels tend to be defensive.

This paper assesses these distinctions through a comparison of anti-insurgent militias in East Timor and Aceh. Militias in both cases tend to be seen as proxies created by Indonesian Special Forces to kill rebels and terrorize their supporters. But militias in East Timor and Aceh should not be seen in the same light. In East Timor, militias were essentially death squads created to terrorize pro-independence forces. However, on the other side of the archipelago, another secessionist conflict featured much more diverse anti-rebel movements. In Aceh, state forces tried to organize ethnic Acehnese militias early in the conflict, but their efforts largely failed. But as the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) grew in 1999, the rebels sought to cleanse the province of ethnic Javanese and ventured into the

mountainous non-Acehnese interior. GAM attacks prompted Javanese and indigenous communities to form militias, many of which remained defensive, rarely venturing beyond their villages. I also note, though, that the Indonesian army co-opted some rebel factions and minority militias, and local bosses in Aceh's interior also mobilized private armies. Anti-rebel militias in Aceh varied a great deal in terms of predation. This challenges previous accounts of the Aceh conflict and demonstrates that militias may indeed be popular forces.

This paper unfolds in four parts. After first defining some key terms, I note that studies of militias prioritize militia / state linkages, sometimes overlooking rebel groups entirely. Part Three presents my two case studies. My discussion of East Timor is based on secondary sources, while my discussion of Aceh is founded on ethnographic field research conducted between 2007 and 2009. This comparison leads to some concluding thoughts on the centrality of capacity and control in determining militia behaviour.

## Definitions

Defining the types of violent organizations I am interested in is no easy task. While by no means straightforward, identifying rebel groups presents fewer challenges, in part because rebel forces may be addressed in terms a single relationship: they are armed groups which oppose the state. Defining anti-rebel forces is more difficult, not only because political biases run high, but also because there are two key relationships involved: the state / militia relationship and the rebel / militia relationship. While the behaviour of rebel groups is largely conditioned by the behaviour of state forces,<sup>2</sup> anti-rebel groups will be influenced by the behaviour of states as well as rebels.

Studies typically focus on the relationship between states and militias, an emphasis which is reflected in terms such as 'loyalists', 'collaborators', 'partisans' or even 'proxy warriors'.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of cases in which militias are formed by off-duty officers, not due to weakness but to fog culpability, viewing militias as proxies is misleading, principally because the very weak states which rely on militias are those which are least capable of determining their agendas. Another common term is 'paramilitary groups', which while not formally part of the state, "mobilize and operate with the assistance of important allies, including factions within the state."<sup>4</sup> Others define paramilitaries as "armed civilians and civilian groups working for or in partnership with the military."<sup>5</sup> While useful, this does not describe the broader phenomenon of armed groups which resist rebel armies. The term is not necessarily inaccurate, but it is narrow. Militias do not always support the state. Many form because the state has failed to provide security or because government troops feature as additional sources of insecurity. Even if they receive support from the state, it cannot be assumed that militias in the far-flung corners of a given country necessarily toe the line.

Understanding militias requires discarding several over-specified attributes. Militias are often defined as clandestine in nature, but this is not necessarily true, as many use public acts of violence and their identities are well-known. Some authors define paramilitaries as "right-wing"<sup>6</sup> because they utilize violence to "protect the established order rather than overthrow it."<sup>7</sup> Others go so far as to view death squads as part of a "neoliberal agenda".<sup>8</sup> Militias may be all these things in some instances, but these facets do not define militias. I am interested in non-state armed groups which utilize violence against anti-state rebel forces.<sup>9</sup> Anti-rebel militias may include death squads, paramilitaries, village guards, or self-defense forces. Such groups typically blur public / private as well as military / civilian distinctions, undermine state efforts to monopolize violence, and are rarely accountable for their actions. Their ranks include groups created by the state, groups recognized by the state, and groups which may resist both state and rebel forces.

### From Statism to Micro-Foundations

For the most part, previous studies understand militias as tools utilized by state forces, not as distinct actors. Mazzei views militias “as a strategy used to counter reform efforts”, presumably wielded by state leaders.<sup>10</sup> Mason and Krane argue that states organize death squads because economic dependency produces weak states which are unable to accommodate societal forces, leading to rebellions which weak states cannot put down through conventional means. The cheapest, though ultimately self-defeating, course of action available to them is to recruit death squads.<sup>11</sup> Ariel Ahram asks why some states build conventional armed forces, while others rely on militias. He suggests that external threats necessitate conventional forces in some regions, while in others, the absence of external threats allows states to depend on militias.<sup>12</sup> Each of these impressive studies is essentially about the state, not the motivations of militia organizations. State-centrism also dominates human rights reports, which highlight state culpability.<sup>13</sup>

Writers often presume that militias are extensions of the state, without their own motivations. This is sometimes accurate, but is not always so. Mazzei’s comparative study leads her to discover that Colombian paramilitaries emerged partly in response to violent rebels, unlike militias in Chiapas and El Salvador, which were created by state security forces and had no defensive purposes.<sup>14</sup> In northern Peru, Orin Starn documents the emergence and decline of peasant rounds (*Rondas Campesinos*) in the context of growing insecurity.<sup>15</sup> Despite efforts by politicians to co-opt the *Rondas*, most remained independent, and at times challenged the state as much as they did criminals.<sup>16</sup> Starn differentiates *Rondas* in northern Peru from those in the south, which were co-opted in the war against the Shining Path.<sup>17</sup> Mario Fumerton challenges views of southern *Rondas* as “nothing more less than army-manipulated ‘death squads’...communal initiative and peasant ‘agency’ were, at certain stages, at least as important.”<sup>18</sup> Dirk Kruijt notes that many militias formed as the Shining Path became increasingly puritanical and threatened local indigenous communities.<sup>19</sup> While anti-Shining Path *Rondas* are typically viewed as army proxies, the reality is more complex. Rebel brutality towards indigenous communities provoked spontaneous resistance in some areas, while in others, *Rondas* were indeed created by the army with varying degrees of local support.

Not all forces opposing rebels necessarily serve the state. Even militias created or supported by the state may not necessarily serve as puppets. In Guatemala, militias created by state forces emerged as autonomous actors whose violence undermined the government, which proved unable to control them.<sup>20</sup> In Colombia, it is not clear whether anti-rebel militias serve their own interests, the state’s, or those of the drug cartels.<sup>21</sup> Even the most predatory, seemingly pro-state militias may have distinct agendas.

Understanding how militias may serve as popular responses to local security dilemmas requires an appreciation of local ethnic dynamics. In many cases, rebel forces fleeing to mountainous areas encounter indigenous communities, which sometimes resist rebel efforts to dominate them. In Vietnam and Laos, the most dedicated anti-communist militias tended to be found among hill tribes and religious minorities; in Indonesia, pro-Dutch forces tended to be found among non-Muslims; and in the Philippines, pro-American forces were weary of the Tagalog-dominated first republic.<sup>22</sup> The ethnic differences between loyalists and rebels suggest that “classifying as traitors those indigenous elements that do not support a self-styled national revolution can obscure important realities.”<sup>23</sup> Such ethnic dynamics are also present in Latin America. In Peru, Quechua communities suffered abuse at the hands of state forces, but also came to resent Shining Path repression, so that indigenous militias “emerged spontaneously” to resist both sides.<sup>24</sup> Ethnic differences

between militias and rebels are important factors in understanding militia organization and disposition. Many rebel groups espouse ethnic nationalism or come from urban areas and may arrive in rural communities with the goals of dominating ethnic minorities. In response, minority groups sometimes resist. There is no reason to assume that such communities are loyal to the state though, especially given historical legacies of assimilation, marginalization, and the failure of state forces to provide security. Being anti-rebel is not the same as being pro-state, an assumption which dominates the literature. Indeed, minority groups may view rebels and states as similar.

While the statist perspective is an important one, it obscures local ethno-regional dynamics, exaggerates the opportunistic nature of militia organizations, and paints different groups with the same brush. We know, though, that militias are not all the same. Mazzei initially seeks to differentiate between death squads and self-defense forces. She immediately rejects both terms as “rhetorical devices used by the organizations to insinuate virtuosity and legitimacy, and by opponents to indicate malevolence and illegitimacy.”<sup>25</sup> While partly true, it is not that ‘death squads’ is simply pejorative and ‘self-defense forces’ is romantic. Some groups are actually death squads, a term which is often used by militias such as El Salvador’s *Escuadrón de la Muerte* or Chile’s ‘Caravan of Death’. There are also such things as self-defense forces. One should not reject such terms, but instead seek to explain when each is appropriate. Anti-rebel militias vary considerably, and these differences have important effects for human rights, conflict resolution, and post-conflict development. How do we differentiate between different types of militias? What distinguishes anti-rebel militias which are more or less predatory from those which are more or less popular? Under what conditions do militias serve the state, and when are they responses to local security dilemmas?

Understanding militias requires balancing statist perspectives with research on the relationship between militias and rebel groups. Diverging from statist approaches, this paper frames anti-rebel militias as actors in their own right. We can distinguish predatory from more or less popular anti-rebel militias by focusing on two key factors. The first is the militia’s origins. Is a particular anti-rebel militia formed in response to state demands (exogenously) or rebel attacks (endogenously)? Part of the logic here is spelled out by Jeremy Weinstein’s research on the economic bases of rebel organizations. Weinstein argues that the distinction between predatory and popular rebel forces lies in resource availability. Rebels with access to state assistance or natural resources tend to attract opportunistic recruits and have trouble maintaining discipline, while those which lack financial resources, if they survive, tend to feature dedicated recruits.<sup>26</sup> Similar factors influence organization and recruitment among anti-rebel militias. Those created at the behest of state forces are likely to be organized and paid by the state. The goals of such groups are likely to be set by national leaders and may not represent the aspirations of local communities, which they may endanger. Meanwhile, militias which form in response to rebel attacks are more likely to feature dedicated recruits and receive support from their communities they seek to protect.

The origins of militia organizations are likely to influence, not determine, whether they are predatory or popular. Of course, militias evolve over time. Many groups which form spontaneously may come to depend on the state and become co-opted. In Peru, state officials were weary of *Rondas*, but needed their support against the Shining Path, so armed villagers and later recognized them as a division of the armed forces.<sup>27</sup> In Sierra Leone, the success of hunter militias against the Revolutionary United Front led the state to form similar groups as part of state counter-insurgency operations.<sup>28</sup> This necessitates a second indicator: is a given anti-rebel militia primarily offensive, searching for enemies across a given region, or is it primarily defensive, securing their communities from rebel attacks?

There are many reasons to expect that anti-rebel militias which are offensive will be more likely to be predatory. Mobile bandits tend to be more abusive than stationary ones, with little interest in the prosperity of a given community.<sup>29</sup> Away from their home regions, militia members are less likely to have access to local support networks and, frustrated, may become abusive. Ethnicity is again an important factor, as mobile militia groups may move into alien ethnic communities, where they may be frustrated by different norms or face distinct political dynamics. Also, offensive operations typically require sustained coordination with state forces, as the equipment and organization required for offensives against rebel groups are considerable. In Colombia, anti-rebel groups maintained lists of enemies and searched for them with army transport.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, militias which are primarily defensive and stationary are more likely to be popular groups. They are more likely to find local supporters and gain access to information, are less likely to depend on state forces for logistical support, and possess incentives to treat locals well. Defensive militias can be identified by fortifications around their communities, their range of motion, their weaponry, and the degree of support they receive from their communities.

These indicators lead to the following typologies. Militias which are created by the state and carry out offensive attacks tend to be predatory groups, the sort often referred to as Death Squads. Other militias created by the state may remain defensive, such as village guards. Examples include Civilian Volunteer Organizations in the Philippines or the Village Defense Volunteers in Thailand. But militia organizations can also form in response to local initiatives. Some take on offensive roles, such as the private armies of local warlords or militias co-opted by state forces. Others are created locally and remain defensive. Popular self-defense forces are typically formed by ethnic minorities facing rebel violence in pockets of state failure. These four types of militias are illustrated below, in Table One.

**Table One: Four Types of Militia Organizations**

	<b>Offensive</b>	<b>Defensive</b>
<b>State Created</b>	Death Squads	Village Guards
<b>Locally Created</b>	Private Armies	Self-Defense

This section has provided a broad overview of the literature on anti-rebel militias. Studies tend to be state-centric, viewing militias as proxies instead of actors. Moving beyond statist views of militias requires considering the rebel / militia relationship alongside the state / militia relationship, accounting for the origins and the strategic behaviour of anti-rebel militias. Below, I assess these claims with contrasting case studies in East Timor and Aceh.

### **Indonesian Security Forces, Rebels, and their Militias**

East Timor and Aceh provide a useful comparison, holding constant state security forces, which utilized similar tactics and personnel in both cases, and the form of conflict, as each involved secessionist guerrillas. Militias in each case have been viewed in a similar light, often consciously paired with one another. However as I will detail, each conflict featured very different militia organizations.<sup>31</sup>

It is useful to place militias in East Timor and Aceh within a national context. Indonesian security forces emerged from militias of various religious and political leanings against Dutch colonial forces.<sup>32</sup> As the fledgling state sought to create a modern military, it never left its militia roots behind. Officers established a doctrine of a Total People's Defense (*Pertahanan Semesta*), in which ordinary people were expected to engage in guerrilla

resistance against various threats. In the 1950s, militias were utilized against the Darul Islam Rebellion (which had grown from Japanese-trained Islamic militias)<sup>33</sup> and various regional rebellions.<sup>34</sup> In 1965-66, armed civilians with army support led in the massacre of suspected leftists across the country. During Suharto's New Order, civilians across the country were provided with military training through *Ratih* (*Rakyat Terlatih*, Trained Masses) and all villages were home to *Hansip* (*Pertahanan Sipil*, Civilian Defense) units. Such units were created by the state, but remained primarily defensive, especially since most formed far from conflict areas. With the fall of Suharto, democracy activists were attacked by various paramilitary forces and there has been a rise of Islamic militias since this time.

While helpful, approaching militias through national institutions may obscure local variation and ignores the rebel groups being resisted. Facing a great range of armed conflicts since its independence, Indonesian security forces have employed militias against various rebel groups. But not all anti-rebel militias have behaved in similar ways.

### East Timor: Militia Terror and Predation

This section details the formation and behaviour of militias in East Timor, which was ruled as a province of Indonesia from 1976-1999. After a brief historical overview, I will provide an account of East Timorese militias, focusing on their relationships with state security forces as well as the rebel movement.

The island of Timor (*Malay*: East) lies at the southeastern edge of the Indonesian archipelago. The Portuguese arrived to capture the regional spice trade in the late fifteenth century. The arrival of Dutch forces limited the Portuguese to the eastern half of the island. During World War Two, Australia used East Timor as a forward base against Japan. East Timor was later returned to Portugal despite decolonization elsewhere, due largely to its relative isolation and Portuguese neutrality during World War Two. When Portugal's authoritarian leaders were overthrown in 1974, East Timor had independence thrust upon it. Various colonial administrators, plantation owners, and district chiefs organized to seek independence within a Portuguese commonwealth. A rival party was soon formed which was decidedly leftist and anti-colonial, what would later become known as Fretilin (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*, Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor). By focusing on rural areas and speaking the native language, Fretilin soon overcame conservatives in terms of mass appeal. Meanwhile, a third, smaller party was formed by Indonesian agents which demanded integration into neighbouring Indonesia. Fearful of Fretilin's continued growth, conservative forces staged a coup in August 1975, but Fretilin took control and proclaimed independence. Three weeks later, Indonesian security forces invaded East Timor.

While estimates of the number of persons killed vary,<sup>35</sup> the invasion was by all accounts extremely bloody. Indonesian troops faced sporadic Fretilin resistance and punished entire villages suspected of supporting the rebels. Much of the population was relocated to the malarial lowlands, and with their crops abandoned, faced widespread famine. Indonesia later brought some development to East Timor, but the occupation was characterized by military control and human rights abuses. In 1991, Indonesian forces killed two Timorese activists, and their funerals became an occasion for protest. In what came to be known as the Dili Massacre, Indonesian forces gunned down hundreds of civilians, an act caught on tape by foreign journalists. This led to global outrage and sympathy for Timorese activists. With the fall of Suharto in 1998, Indonesia was in chaos, and in East Timor, militias attacked local dissidents. When President Habibie announced that the people of East Timor would vote on their future, militia violence spiked. By June, the level of militia

violence declined with the arrival of United Nations observer teams. On 30 August 1999, 78.5% of Timorese opted for independence. Despite the UN presence, militias unleashed even greater violence, levelling much of Dili and setting the countryside ablaze. The violence continued until the arrival of a more substantial UN team in late September. East Timor achieved independence on 20 May 2002.

The conventional wisdom is that East Timor's militias were predatory organizations. The conventional wisdom is correct. East Timorese militias were created by state security forces and were offensive, targeting civilian activists.

Militias in East Timor were formed at the behest of the state, not to defend against rebel attacks. Fretilin was by no means a non-violent movement. Its armed wing attacked armed and unarmed opponents, especially near the West Timor border. But East Timor's militias did not form in response to rebel violence. While Indonesian leaders claimed that they were spontaneous, popular groups, there is no doubt that "the militias operated with the full acquiescence and support of the military, police, and civilian authorities."<sup>36</sup> Prior to the invasion, Indonesian intelligence forces trained militias in West Timor, a fact acknowledged by Western governments at the time.<sup>37</sup> Early militias were created by Indonesian Special Operations, headed by Ali Murtopo. By the 1980s, President Suharto's son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto, an Indonesian Special Forces (*Kopassus*) leader, had organized specialized militias to assassinate leaders, hunt activists, and trigger riots. After 1991, international criticism led the army to rely more heavily on militias. A pillar of this new approach was *Gada Paksi* (*Garda Pemuda Penegak Integrasi*, Youth Guard for Upholding Integration). Based on the belief that economic deprivation was the cause of rebel support, *Gada Paksi* was part employment agency, part militia. It was established with a state grant<sup>38</sup> and its training "began under the authority of a letter from the commander of Kopassus."<sup>39</sup> *Gada Paksi* later transformed into several death squads, such as *Aitarak* (thorn), led by Eurico Guterres. *Aitarak* was "a full-fledged institution of the government"; it was recognized in state documents, had a board of advisors which included army leaders and politicians, and in classic Indonesian bureaucratic style, had its own government letterhead and stamps.<sup>40</sup> Another militia, *Mahidi* (*Mati Hidup Demi Integrasi*, Live or Die for Integration), was created by a Timorese civil servant, its inauguration party attended by various state leaders.<sup>41</sup> Leading up to the referendum, UN officials witnessed the army arming, transporting, and training militias.<sup>42</sup> Anti-rebel militias formed at the behest of the state, not in response to rebel violence. Put simply, no military, no militias in East Timor.

The predatory nature of East Timorese anti-rebel militias is confirmed by their strategic behaviour. Their defensive role was minimal because Fretilin did not regularly attack civilian settlements, nor did they often attack military outposts. Fretilin was weak militarily—it sought only to survive as a symbol against Indonesian authority and to provoke military crackdowns. Militias were directed by the army to hunt down and exterminate dissidents. One group organized by Prabowo was the Black Squad, a team of former rebels tasked with assassinating Fretilin members.<sup>43</sup> Militias also attacked entire villages suspected to be supporting rebels, leading to several mass killings.<sup>44</sup> After the referendum, militias waged an all-out war on East Timorese society. They kept lists of activists and their families, and in late August, carried out execution orders. Militias in East Timor played no discernable defensive role—they were deeply offensive.

In suggesting that militias vary considerably, and that not all are predatory state proxies, this paper does not suggest that this perspective is not often accurate. In East Timor, anti-rebel militias were unaccountable state proxies formed to eliminate political opponents with plausible deniability. For students of Indonesian politics, this case was

formative, and experiences here have shaped views of the entire country, including another secessionist conflict at the other end of the archipelago.

### Aceh: Minorities under Attack

While East Timorese militias fit the standard view of predatory state proxies, militias in Aceh were much more diverse. Despite being viewed in the same light as Timorese groups—perhaps in their shadows—many of the militias which formed in Aceh were created by ethnic minorities in response to rebel coercion. Aceh's ethnic minorities were attacked at a time when the state was in retreat and the rebels controlled several districts. They mobilized more or less spontaneously in defense of their communities. And while the state came to support some militias over time, most remained defensive. After providing an overview of the conflict, this section discusses failed efforts to mobilize ethnic Acehnese militias, the process of ethnic minority mobilization, and some exceptions—militias which were neither spontaneous nor defensive. While my discussion of East Timor was based largely on secondary sources, much of the data on militias in Aceh is based on primary ethnographic data.<sup>45</sup>

Located at the northern tip of Sumatra, Aceh is notable for being Southeast Asia's first Sultanate. It was a maritime trading power, with a particularly centralized, at times despotic state. In search of soldiers for his tireless campaigns against Portuguese Malacca, Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636) organized slaving raids into Aceh's interior, leading many communities to flee further inland. In 1873, the Dutch invaded Aceh and faced decades of fierce resistance. Modernizing Islamic leaders emerged to resist the Dutch and eliminate collaborators. Aceh was later involved in the pan-Indonesian Darul Islam Rebellion, and was home to further violence in 1965, when Acehnese youths took part in the massacre of suspected leftists (and ethnic minorities).

In 1976, an Acehnese businessman named Hasan di Tiro, the grandson of a legendary anti-Dutch guerrilla, lost the bid for a service contract in the newly developed Arun liquid natural gas project. From the northern sub-district which bears his family's name, the heart of a long series of armed conflicts, di Tiro and his associates launched the Free Aceh Movement (GAM: *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*). The initial uprising was short-lived, with many rebels either killed or fleeing abroad. In 1989, the GAM returned in the context of criminal / military drug violence, re-emerging as a more formidable movement.<sup>46</sup> The Indonesian military responded with intense violence, seeking to terrorize the province into submission. With the fall of Suharto, Aceh was home to widespread mass mobilization, first led by civil society organizations, but with increasing violence against human rights defenders, GAM became the primary vehicle for Acehnese resistance. The conflict, which was previously confined to northern Aceh, expanded to Aceh's west coast and interior. Indonesian forces regrouped, and after a series of failed peace talks, the rebels were weakening. In late 2004, a new President and a devastating tsunami propelled talks which culminated in the August 2005 Helsinki Agreement. Since this time, Aceh has been home to provincial executive and national legislative elections, each resulting in an impressive showing for ex-GAM members, although rebel politicians fared poorly in ethnic minority regions.<sup>47</sup> Today, Aceh is largely peaceful, a welcomed shift after decades of armed conflict.

In previous studies, Aceh's militias have been misunderstood, in part because they have been viewed in the shadow of East Timor. John Martinkus suggests that the army mobilized sizable militias in Aceh and that "the same strategy had been used in East Timor."<sup>48</sup> Damien Kingsbury writes that "the use of militias in Aceh [was] similar to their use in East Timor."<sup>49</sup> GAM leaders encouraged this association by providing direct

comparisons with East Timor and offering inflated accounts of militia activity which made their way into scholarly research.<sup>50</sup> The influence of East Timor was most apparent in media accounts, which saw in Aceh “the same situation that happened in East Timor”<sup>51</sup>, and some went so far as to label Aceh a “Timor repeat.”<sup>52</sup> The buzzword came to be “East Timor-style militias”, a phrase found in dozens of accounts.<sup>53</sup> But this comparison is misleading.

Writers have had a difficult time finding Timor-style militia brutality in Aceh. One NGO report characterizes early militias in Aceh as “civilian informants”, not as armed groups.<sup>54</sup> Comparing militias in East Timor and Aceh, Robinson asserts that Aceh’s militias were “similar” to those in East Timor.<sup>55</sup> But the primary militia activity he describes is a tactic known as the Fence of Legs (*Pagar Betis*), in which civilians are forced at gunpoint to comb through jungles to flush out the rebels. While a brutal tactic, this does not constitute militia activity, since civilians are unarmed and directly overseen by soldiers. Other militia activities described by Robinson include attending rallies and providing information.<sup>56</sup> Again, such acts do not constitute militia activity, even if they do involve mobilizing civilians.

Army leaders attempted to create East Timor-style militias in Aceh, but did so in a radically different context. Efforts to recruit militias met with limited success, as the training, funding, and weapons provided to militias typically came to strengthen the rebel movement.<sup>57</sup> One villager in Bireuen noted that when the army tried to mobilize a militia in 1990, several young men were eager to sign up; “many people wanted to go to the hills and join GAM, and if they showed up with training and a gun, this would impress GAM commanders.”<sup>58</sup> GAM was a more formidable fighting force than was Fretilin, and Acehnese society is known to be suspicious of outside political forces. The army was forced to settle for informants, and even here, GAM managed to kill off the army’s network by 1999. Later in the conflict, Indonesian security forces tried once more to create militias in northern Aceh, the rebels’ heartland. One report details the creation of eighteen “Anti-GAM” fronts between December 2003 and March 2004, supported by a local businessman.<sup>59</sup> But these groups remained unarmed, namely because the army did not trust recruits not to defect to GAM, so were again limited to providing intelligence. They did not become Death Squads, remaining weak militarily because “the political context in Aceh is very different than it was in Dili in 1999.”<sup>60</sup> Organizing militias requires a degree of capacity which the Indonesian military lacked in Aceh.

The failure to mobilize ethnic Acehnese civilians against the rebels is demonstrated in the Night Watch (*Jaga Malam*) program, which has also been cited as evidence of militia activity.<sup>61</sup> Throughout GAM strongholds, the army forced civilians to man guard posts in order to stop rebels and their supporters from moving in and out at night. Such examples may be candidates for the fourth category of militias noted in Table One, created by the state but remaining defensive. But the results were not what the army had hoped for. Describing the construction of one guard post, a villager explained that “we made it big and close to the paddy so that we could take our lunch there and relax.”<sup>62</sup> Speaking to Human Rights Watch, one villager described Night Watch in his sub-district: “They don’t say what we are supposed to be guarding—just *jaga malam!* They don’t say guard this or that.”<sup>63</sup> Instead of serving as guards, civilians transformed night watch posts into hangouts where young men would sip coffee and play chess. Some worked out agreements with the GAM, in which hanging their *Sarongs* from the roof of their post would symbolize that it was “open, but not active.”<sup>64</sup> Villagers would typically comply with army demands, but work with indifference, a classic ‘weapon of the weak.’<sup>65</sup> It was not just that the state was too weak to create militias among the Acehnese, but—reflexively—few civilians felt a need to resist the popular rebel group.

It was only after the fall of Suharto that militias became a notable force in Aceh. But they did not primarily mobilize in ethnic Acehnese areas, which were effectively under rebel control, nor were they state creations. Prior to 1998, the secessionist conflict had been limited to the northern coast, where GAM units defended ethnic Acehnese civilians against Indonesian assaults. By 1999, the conflict expanded into different ethnic communities with distinct social dynamics. Militias formed in the province's interior, where ethnic Acehnese form a minority among indigenous Gayo communities and the descendants of Javanese transmigrants. Gayo communities have a long, complex history with the Acehnese. 'Gayo' means "to flee" in Acehnese, as the communities arrived in the mountainous interior to evade Acehnese slave raiding and conscription.<sup>66</sup> Gayo later converted to Islam, although they adopted West Sumatran teachings. Under Dutch rule, the Gayo region was transformed into an agricultural heartland and featured a stable Dutch presence. In moments of Acehnese political violence, Gayo communities have shown a mixed reaction, supporting pan-Islamic sentiment but remaining weary of Acehnese nationalism.<sup>67</sup> Under the New Order, there was little anti-Indonesian sentiment in the highlands, which were a bastion of state power and development.<sup>68</sup> Further, GAM was very much an ethnic Acehnese movement, and Gayo communities responded by undergoing a local cultural revival.<sup>69</sup> The same ethnic nationalism which helped the rebels to grow in Acehnese areas limited its expansion among ethnic minorities. In addition to indigenous Gayo, the highlands were also subject to early transmigration from Java. Aceh's Javanese have featured as perennial scapegoats, targeted in 1947 and 1965.<sup>70</sup> From the beginning of the rebel movement, GAM leaders rallied against "Javanese colonialism".<sup>71</sup> In 2000, a GAM Commander demanded that "non-Acehnese residents" must "leave the country of our forebears as soon as possible."<sup>72</sup> GAM assaults displaced an estimated 178,000 Javanese.<sup>73</sup> For one IDP, "they expelled us because we are Javanese. GAM said Javanese are not allowed to live here."<sup>74</sup>

Instead of arriving in defense of locals, GAM units arrived in the highlands to tax farmers, mobilize ethnic Acehnese, and cleanse the region of ethnic Javanese. It was in this context that anti-rebel militias were formed among ethnic minorities. Instead of being created by state security forces, either forcefully or for profit, militias formed between 1999 and 2001 because communities were threatened directly by rebel assaults. The relationship between GAM and Gayo was tense due to GAM's ethnic nationalism and Acehnese views of Gayo being their 'little brothers' or "hicks".<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Aceh's Javanese were GAM's stated enemies, needing no encouragement to resist extermination. Previous accounts have struggled to explain ethnic minority mobilization as state machination. Matthew Davies suggests that militias formed in Central Aceh because it was "strategically flanking Aceh's concentrations of fossil fuel riches"—even though this is one of the few areas of the province without any petroleum resources.<sup>76</sup> Davies explains that the area's "subethnic Gayo population gave a useful cover" for "the non-indigenous militia" (i.e. resident Javanese).<sup>77</sup> Even Michelle Miller's insightful study seems conflicted here. On one hand, she refers to the militias as the army's "civilian militia proxies."<sup>78</sup> But she also notes that GAM targeted entire Javanese villages and that many militia recruits joined "to protect their (usually ethnic minority) communities."<sup>79</sup> Ethnic minorities formed militias in response to rebel attacks on their communities in areas where the state had failed to protect them. It is not clear how the resulting militias can be viewed as "proxies."<sup>80</sup> While anti-rebel militias in East Timor "had no legitimate defense reasons", militias in Aceh mobilized as a direct response to rebel attacks.<sup>81</sup>

Ethnic minority militias in Aceh's interior formed spontaneously, and most remained defensive throughout the conflict. For one, they were poorly armed and lacked the capacity to attack GAM forces; "we never attacked GAM, that would be suicide. All we could do was watch over our village."<sup>82</sup> GAM was far more powerful than Fretilin, so militias were limited to defensive positions. Nor is it clear that militias wanted to hunt down GAM units, as their primary rationale was to defend their homes. The defensive nature of these militias is shown by village layouts and widespread civilian support. In Southeast Aceh, where many Javanese displaced during the conflict remain in make-shift villages, one finds dense thickets, watchtowers, flood lights, and alarm drums. Even in 2009, locals take part in nightly patrols and villagers are encouraged to return home by dark.<sup>83</sup> Militias were also supported by local residents. For one villager, "the village was all part of self-defense. After the killings of 2000, we had to create guard posts and everyone took part."<sup>84</sup> According to one former militia member, "We knew when GAM attacks were coming because the people told us. The Acehnese see this as their land...so people want to resist."<sup>85</sup> Even for GAM Commanders, "the Javanese people supported militias voluntarily, and they did it often...they hate the Acehnese."<sup>86</sup> The continued defensive positions of militias and the civilian support they garnered suggest that many anti-rebel militias in Aceh remained popular organizations.

Aceh's militias varied a great deal in terms of their popular elements though. Many groups were more predatory, such as quasi-GAM units, the personal armies of Gayo bosses, and militias which were co-opted by local officials. Firstly, from 2002, reports began noting the presence of "fake GAM" units. Elizabeth Drexler details efforts by the rebels to present a "pure GAM that had the best interests of the people in mind" and to distance themselves from "the many strains of opportunist or engineered GAM."<sup>87</sup> Rogue GAM units were a complex mixture of mainstream GAM forces, which has always featured criminal elements, as well as factions within the rebel movement. Indonesian security forces took advantage of intra-GAM divisions to undermine the rebels. Splinter groups such as *Majelis Pemerintahan* (Governing Council) GAM, led by former GAM members Don Zulfahri and Daud Paneuk, were probably supported by Indonesian officials. While they had little presence on the ground in Aceh, they were able to mobilize small bands to undermine stability. But it is also true that the presence of such groups allowed GAM leaders to blame their criminal elements on fake GAM militias created by the Indonesian state. One fiercely debated activity was the burning of Indonesian schools in 2002-2003. Indonesian officials blamed GAM, which had long rallied against Indonesian efforts to indoctrinate Acehnese youths. Meanwhile, GAM blamed pro-government militias.<sup>88</sup> It appears that some schools were burned by the rebels, some by Indonesian soldiers, and some by nominal GAM forces in league with the Indonesian state. For one former rebel leader, "we gave no orders to burn the schools. This was carried out by groups calling themselves GAM, but we did not recognize them."<sup>89</sup> It seems that former, factional, and quasi-GAM units worked with Indonesian officials to burn schools, and can be seen as predatory, pro-state militias.

Other anti-rebel militias were formed by local Gayo bosses. While Aceh is home to a relatively egalitarian society after the 1947 Social Revolution against local landowners, the Gayo region was spared such social upheaval, and remained home to powerful bosses. Such figures tended to join Golkar, dominate the agricultural economy, and maintain private armies. Examples include prominent coffee exporter and Gayo ethno-nationalist figure Iwan Gayo, his brother and leading figure to create a new interior province Tagore Abubakar, and timber baron Armen Desky. Each of these figures maintained private armies, the sort typical to many Indonesian towns which control bus depots, ports, theatres, and parking lots. In the context of the armed conflict, these personal armies mobilized against

the rebels, and later, in support of creating a new province. Such militias were formed locally, but not necessary spontaneously, and took on offensive roles, such as searching for rebel units which had attacked the property of their bosses.

Private armies expanded considerably in 1999 by recruiting IDPs and co-opting popular militias. As early as 2000, several local militias received training and economic support from *Kopassus* as part of Operation *Cinta Meunasab* (Love the Community). By 2003, Iwan Gayo had co-opted a militia formed by a local coffee grower. Iwan Gayo’s expanded militia was likely responsible for the most high-profile militia incident in the Aceh conflict. In 2003, foreign monitors operating as part of a peace agreement were attacked by this militia, an attack framed as a spontaneous local protest. Many early militia volunteers came to join the personal armies of local politicians, especially ethnic Javanese displaced by GAM attacks, whose desperation was an opportunity for local politicians to expand their armies.<sup>90</sup> After creating a new district, Bener Meriah, Tagore Abubakar offered land and security to Javanese IDPs, whom he recruited to join his personal army. In late 2003 and early 2004, his militia was rebranded as *Front Pembela Tanah Air* (PETA, Defenders of the Homeland) and received state funding.<sup>91</sup> The militias formed by local politicians were by no means popular, spontaneous expressions, and were not defensive. Nor were they necessarily “loyal to the Indonesian military” though.<sup>92</sup> The loyalties of such militias were local, sometimes resisting the state through weapons trading, illegal logging, and the drug trade.<sup>93</sup>

It was not that militias in Aceh were all popular movements. Instead, my point is that they were a diverse group—far more so than in East Timor or has been discussed in the literature. Some were predatory groups created by the state and carried out offensive attacks, such as fake GAM units. Some were created by state forces for defensive purposes, such as ‘normal’ Indonesian *Hansip* and *Wanra* forces and early Night Watch groups. Others were created locally but carried out offensive attacks, such as private armies and groups co-opted by the state. While not necessarily popular forces, these were not Timor-style Death Squads, either. Most of the militias which formed among Aceh’s ethnic minorities between 1999 and 2005 were popular local self-defense forces. They formed spontaneously, not due to state funding but instead due to state failure and rebel attacks, and they remained defensive.

**Tabel Two: Militia Types in East Timor and Aceh**

	Offensive	Defensive
<b>State Created</b>	East Timor Militias Fake GAM Units	<i>Hansip, Wanra</i> Aceh Night Watch
<b>Locally Created</b>	Co-opted Javanese groups Private Armies	Javanese and Gayo militias

### Implications

This paper has shown that anti-rebel militias in East Timor were predatory organizations, while many anti-rebel militias in Aceh were more diverse, including some which were popular responses to guerrilla attacks. Timor’s militias can be understood largely in terms of their relationship with the state, while those in Aceh must be understood in relation to state and rebel forces.

Even though anti-rebel militias are rarely afforded the sort of romanticism provided to some rebels, it seems that the differences between them may not be as great as is commonly believed. Individuals may join rebels or militias for similar reasons, including coercion, greed, or security. Arjona and Kalyvas have found that rebel and militia recruits

differ very little from one another except that they came from different zones of combatant control.<sup>94</sup> My research supports their findings, although in Aceh, ethnic dynamics were prior variables which helped shaped zones of control and militia recruitment. Just as security threats from Indonesian soldiers drove rebel recruitment and civilian support in Acehnese areas, militia recruitment and support among ethnic minorities were driven by rebel attacks.<sup>95</sup> In East Timor, rebel and militia recruits came from the same ethnic group. This can be explained in terms of combatant control and capacity. In East Timor, Fretilin did not control territory, let alone administer it. East Timor was dominated by state forces which had the capacity to arm, protect, and reward militias. Security forces had similar goals in Aceh, but met with a stronger rebel group and a suspicious society. This suggests that where rebel groups are weak and state forces are strong, anti-rebel militias are more likely to be formed by the state, not in response to fear of rebel attacks, but to hunt down rebels and civilian supporters. Where state forces are weak and rebel groups are strong, anti-rebel militias are more likely to form spontaneously in defense of their communities. The difference between popular and predatory militias is the balance of power between state and rebel forces.

Anti-rebel militias are not always 'death squads' or mindless proxies. By understanding militias in terms of their relationships with state and rebel forces, we can see that some groups may be state proxies, but others mobilize in response to local security dilemmas.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- <sup>2</sup> Reed Wood, "Rebel Capacity and Strategic Violence against Civilians," *Journal of Peace Research* 47:5 (2010), 609-610.
- <sup>3</sup> Ariel I. Ahrām, *Proxy Warriors: The Rise and Fall of State-Sponsored Militias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
- <sup>4</sup> Julie Mazzei, *Death Squads of Defense Forces? How Paramilitary Groups Emerge and Challenge Democracy in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
- <sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Colombia's Killer Networks: The Military-Paramilitary Relationship Partnership and the United States* (Washington: 1996), 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Martha K. Huggins, "Introduction: Vigilantism and the State—A Look South and North," in *Vigilantism and the State in Modern Latin America: Essays on Extralegal Violence*, edited by Martha Huggins (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 4-5.
- <sup>7</sup> Mazzei, *Death Squads of Defense Forces?* 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Sluka, "Introduction: State Terror and Anthropology," in *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*, edited by Jeffrey Sluka (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2000), 30. See also Ruth Blakely, *State Terror and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- <sup>9</sup> Arjona and Kalyvas use the term 'counterinsurgent groups'. This term suggests a relationship with insurgents, but also state linkages, and perhaps as parts of broad counterinsurgency efforts. Ana Arjona and Stathis Kalyvas, "Rebelling Against Rebellion: Comparing Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Recruitment," *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security, and Ethnicity (CRISE)* (Oxford: 2009).
- <sup>10</sup> Mazzei, *Death Squads of Defense Forces?* 17.
- <sup>11</sup> T. David Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror," *International Studies Quarterly* 33:2 (June 1989); pp. 175-198.
- <sup>12</sup> Ahrām, *Proxy Warriors*.
- <sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch has produced several exceptional reports documenting abuses by Colombian paramilitaries. They speak to the Colombian state and Western governments, never militias, and rebel groups are noticeably absent. Human Rights Watch, *Colombia's Killer Networks*.
- <sup>14</sup> Mazzei, *Death Squads of Defense Forces?* 78-81.
- <sup>15</sup> Orin Starn, *Nightwatch: The Politics of Protest in the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 71.
- <sup>16</sup> John S. Gitlitz and Telmo Rojas, "Peasant Vigilante Committees in Northern Peru," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 15:1 (May 1983), 88-92.
- <sup>17</sup> Starn, *Nightwatch*, 142-144.
- <sup>18</sup> Mario Fumerton, "Rondas Campesinas in the Peruvian Civil War: Peasant Self-Defence Organizations in Ayacucho," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20:4 (2001), 493, 470.
- <sup>19</sup> Dirk Kruijtit, "Exercises in State Terrorism: The Counter-Insurgency Campaigns in Guatemala and Peru," in *Societies of Fear: the Legacy of Civil War, Violence, and Terror in Latin America*, edited by Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijtit (London: Zed Books, 1999), 35-43.
- <sup>20</sup> Huggins, "Introduction," 8.
- <sup>21</sup> Germán Alfonso Palacio Castañón, "Institutional Crisis, Parainstitutionality, and Regime Flexibility in Colombia: The Place of Narcotraffic and Counterinsurgency," in *Vigilantism and the State in Modern Latin Americas*, 114.
- <sup>22</sup> Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 113.
- <sup>23</sup> Joes, *Resisting Rebellion*, 143.
- <sup>24</sup> Kruijtit "Exercises in State Terrorism," 41.
- <sup>25</sup> Mazzei, *Death Squads of Defense Forces?* 4. Ariel Ahrām suggests that "What could be called a 'warlord army' could just as easily be dubbed a 'village protection force'." Ahrām, *Proxy Warriors*, 11.
- <sup>26</sup> Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.
- <sup>27</sup> Kruijtit "Exercises in State Terrorism."
- <sup>28</sup> Caspar Fithen and Paul Richards, "Militia Solidarities & Demobilization in Sierra Leone," in *No Peace, No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, edited by Paul Richards (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 127.

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- <sup>29</sup> Mancur Olson, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," *American Political Science Review* 87:3 (September 1993); pp. 567-576.
- <sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Colombia's Killer Networks*, 1-2.
- <sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, "People's War: Militias in East Timor and Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 9:3 (2001); pp. 271-318.
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-49* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).
- <sup>33</sup> Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-45* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1958).
- <sup>34</sup> Jamie Davidson, *From Rebellion to Riots: Collective Violence on Indonesian Borneo* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).
- <sup>35</sup> John Taylor supports claims that 80% of men in Dili were killed during the invasion. John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor* (London: Zed Books, 1991), 68.
- <sup>36</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, *If You Leave Us Here, We Will Die: How Genocide Was Stopped in East Timor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9.
- <sup>37</sup> Hamish MacDonald, "Masters of Terror: The Indonesian Findings," in *Masters of Terror: Indonesia's Military and Violence in East Timor*, edited by Richard Tanter, Geert Arend van Klinken, and Desmond Ball (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers); pp. 13-20.
- <sup>38</sup> Robinson, "People's War," 311.
- <sup>39</sup> Samuel Moore, "The Indonesia Military's Last Years in East Timor: An Analysis of Its Secret Documents," *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001), 29.
- <sup>40</sup> Moore, "The Indonesia Military's Last Years in East Timor," 32-33.
- <sup>41</sup> Moore, "The Indonesia Military's Last Years in East Timor," 31.
- <sup>42</sup> Robinson, *If You Leave Us Here, We Will Die*, 92-138.
- <sup>43</sup> Robinson, "People's War," 308.
- <sup>44</sup> Moore, "The Indonesia Military's Last Years in East Timor," 32.
- <sup>45</sup> In 2003, I conducted interviews with displaced Javanese communities in North Sumatra while working for a regional human rights organization. Between 2007 and 2009, I carried out several months of village interviews, divided into five zones of combatant control.
- <sup>46</sup> According to one GAM leader, "Whoever was brave, even if he had a criminal background, we let them join; we needed people who were brave." Cited in Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 165.
- <sup>47</sup> Shane Joshua Barter, "The Free Aceh Elections? The 2009 Legislative Contests in Aceh," *Indonesia* 91 (2011); pp. 1-18.
- <sup>48</sup> John Martinkus, *Indonesia's Secret War in Aceh* (Sydney: Random House, 2004), 62. The book's index lists approximately sixty references to East Timor, including an entire chapter. Similarly, in Matthew Davies' account of Aceh, the term "East Timor" appears 82 times, almost as many appearances as 'Aceh.' Matthew Davies, *Indonesia's War Over Aceh: Last Stand on Mecca's Porch* (London: Routledge 2006).
- <sup>49</sup> Damien Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh: A Personal Account of the Helsinki Process* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006), 11-12.
- <sup>50</sup> Kingsbury echoes GAM estimates that there were nine militias with some 165,000 recruits operating in Aceh. Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh*, 12. Miller is more cautious in citing GAM estimates that there were "5,000-6,000 active militias in Aceh by 2001." Michelle Ann Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia: Jakarta's Security and Autonomy Policies in Aceh* (London: Routledge, 2008), 110.
- <sup>51</sup> *British Broadcasting Corporation*, "Indonesia Training Aceh 'Militias' (7 May 2003).
- <sup>52</sup> Matthew Moore, "Timor Repeat Feared as Militia Threat Surfaces," *Sydney Morning Herald* (18 November 2003).
- <sup>53</sup> Matthew Moore, "Anti-Separatist Militias form in Aceh," *Sydney Morning Herald* (18 November 2003); Lindsay Murdoch, "Jakarta Arms Militias as Toll Soars," *Sydney Morning Herald* (26 July 2001).
- <sup>54</sup> Eye on Aceh, "Fear in the Shadows: Militia in Aceh" (July 2004), 3.
- <sup>55</sup> Robinson, "People's War," 302-303.
- <sup>56</sup> Robinson, "People's War," 302-303.
- <sup>57</sup> Interview with Nurdin Abdul Rahman, *Bupati* of Bireuen and former GAM negotiator (05 November 2007). On the Indonesian side, one local government official recalled that in 1991, "men trained as *Wanra*

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- disappeared into the jungle just before they finished training.” Interview with Ardiansyah, *Lurah* of Kuta Alam, Banda Aceh (24 January 2008).
- <sup>58</sup> Interview with Zainal Abidin, Sekdes of Jeumpa, Bireuen (04 February 2008).
- <sup>59</sup> International Crisis Group, “Aceh: A New Chance for Peace,” *Asia Briefing* 40 (15 August 2005), 13.
- <sup>60</sup> International Crisis Group, “Aceh: A New Chance for Peace,” 14.
- <sup>61</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does: the Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh,” *Indonesia* 66 (1998), 143-144.
- <sup>62</sup> Discussion in coffee shop, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
- <sup>63</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Aceh under Martial Law: Inside the Secret War*, 41.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview with M. Hashim Usman, *Keucik* of Lembah Seulawah, Aceh Besar (30 January 2008).
- <sup>65</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
- <sup>66</sup> John R. Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics: Gayo History, 1900-1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 25.
- <sup>67</sup> Groups such as Daud Beureueh’s PUSA were seen as which are seen as “an ethnic Acehnese affair, and thus not in their own interest.” Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 99.
- <sup>68</sup> Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 20, 169.
- <sup>69</sup> Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 124.
- <sup>70</sup> James Siegel, *Shadow and Sound: The Historical Thought of a Sumatran People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 272.
- <sup>71</sup> Anthony Reid, *Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 136.
- <sup>72</sup> *Amnesty International*, “Briefing on the Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Aceh” (June 2001).
- <sup>73</sup> Mathias Czaika and Krisztina Kis-Katos, “Civil Conflict and Displacement: Village-Level Determinants of Forced Migration in Aceh,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46:3 (2009), 402.
- <sup>74</sup> Debbie. A. Lubis, “Javanese Transmigrants Refuse to Leave Aceh,” *The Jakarta Post* (02 January 2003).
- <sup>75</sup> Bowen, *Sumatran Politics and Poetics*, 124.
- <sup>76</sup> Davies, *Indonesia’s War Over Aceh*, 180.
- <sup>77</sup> Davies, *Indonesia’s War Over Aceh*, 180. NGO reports acknowledge the presence of several ethnic Gayo militias fighting alongside Javanese groups. Eye on Aceh, “Fear in the Shadows,” 10-12.
- <sup>78</sup> Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia*, 159.
- <sup>79</sup> Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia*, 39, 110.
- <sup>80</sup> One report suggests that “proxy armies” in Aceh come from “small and relatively localized beginnings”, mobilizing “in the interests of the broader community in which they live.” Eye on Aceh, “Fear in the Shadows”, 2-4.
- <sup>81</sup> Kristen Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Honolulu: East-West Center Policy Studies 2, 2004), 43.
- <sup>82</sup> Interview with militia members, Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (07 April 2009).
- <sup>83</sup> Visit to Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009). I found similar defensive fortifications in the large Javanese camps in North Sumatra as well, where locals developed their camp in a ring, with gardens in the middle of the settlement. Visit to Bakti Suci, North Sumatra (October 2003).
- <sup>84</sup> Discussion in coffee shop, Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
- <sup>85</sup> Anonymous interview with former militia member, Jangar, Aceh Tenggara (08 April 2009).
- <sup>86</sup> Interview with Ismuda, *Panglima* GAM North Aceh (03 February 2008).
- <sup>87</sup> Elizabeth Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia: Securing the Insecure State* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 190.
- <sup>88</sup> Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia*, 79.
- <sup>89</sup> Interview with Kowboi, *Panglima* GAM Bireuen (04 February 2008).
- <sup>90</sup> Interview with Kowboi, *Panglima* GAM Bireuen (04 February 2008).
- <sup>91</sup> World Bank, “Conflict Monitoring Update” (May-June 2008).
- <sup>92</sup> Oakley Brooks, “Breakaway Bids test Aceh’s Post-Tsunami Peace Deal,” *Christian Science Monitor* (13 March 2008).
- <sup>93</sup> Since the 2005 peace agreement, PETA has been riven by internal divisions and rivalries among local politicians. Forbes Damai, “Aceh Pilkada Dynamics Update” (November 2006).
- <sup>94</sup> Arjona and Kalyvas, “Rebelling Against Rebellion.”

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<sup>95</sup> Aspinall notes that local toughs, those found in every Acehnese town, joined the rebels in rebel strongholds and joined militias in state strongholds. Aspinall, *Islam and Nation*, 165.