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# Organized Violence and the State

## *Evolving Vigilantism in Indonesia*

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### Abstract

In this article I consider the rise of violent *ormas*—civil mass organizations—in Indonesian society. Using examples from Jakarta, East Kalimantan, and the Minahasa, I show that such groups deploy a discourse combining democracy, identity, and the willingness to use violence to mobilize local society against (real or perceived) threats to its well-being. I show that while popular support allows the *ormas* to become powerful in local settings, such support is inherently unstable and dependent on regular demonstrations of capacity and intent. Too much unrest or the ignoring of popular interests will cause an *ormas* to lose support. As with successful governments, maintaining the peace and providing societal assistance rather than public displays of violence are what keeps successful *ormas* going. I argue, therefore, that *ormas*, like governments, are subject to societal control.

### Keywords

violence – sovereignty – state – vigilantes – Indonesia

On Saturday 30 July 2011, the Forum Betawi Rempug (FBR, Betawi Brotherhood Forum), one of the most prominent vigilante groups of Jakarta and champion of the ethnic Betawi population indigenous to the Greater Jakarta area, celebrated its tenth anniversary at the Gelora Bung Karno Sports Stadium in Central Jakarta. My colleague Lee Wilson had arranged for us to be invited to the festivities for which we set off early, anticipating the Jakartan traffic jams.<sup>1</sup> Close

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on research conducted as part of the research project ‘State of Anxiety:

to Gelora, the traffic indeed got really bad. 'It's those FBR guys', our taxi driver grumbled. 'They are having some event or other and they are closing off the streets, controlling traffic on their own initiative and just standing around in the road. It is quite arrogant how they are disturbing other people's affairs.' The road leading up to Gelora was indeed crowded with men and women walking along the roadsides towards the entrance. The throng got thicker as we drew nearer, with still more alighting from buses and cars, which slowed down the rest of the traffic. Men clearly recognizable as FBR members by their badges, shirts, and black clothing were standing around in groups, with some attempting to organize the traffic, and others standing in its way. From time to time, the taxi driver explained, motor cavalcades of FBR men would sally forth to drive along the nearby main roads, waving their flags and honking their horns, and would thus pose an additional hindrance to the general traffic. Or dozens of members would suddenly ride out from Gelora to welcome a newly arriving convoy from one of the FBR's many branches, which would result in two groups of flag-waving motor riders happily meeting up in the middle of the cross roads before jointly continuing to Gelora. 'Police are doing nothing about this traffic mess', the taxi driver complained. 'They are just afraid of the FBR.' Arriving at Gelora, the numerous FBR security personnel allowed us to enter and escorted us to the speakers' platform where we were cordially welcomed by the head of the FBR, Kyai Lutfi Hakim, who introduced us to several senior FBR leaders, politicians, and other invited guests already seated there. Among the guests, in the front row next to Lutfi and animatedly talking with him, sat Fauzi Bowo, the governor of Jakarta. The pair posed for pictures smiling and shaking hands and Fauzi Bowo waved an FBR flag to the acclaim of the massed members. That relations were good between the vigilante organization and Jakarta's highest state official was pointedly exhibited.

The day's programme opened with speeches by Lutfi Hakim, other senior FBR personalities, and guests of honour. All emphasized the need for Betawi unity, religious obeisance, preparedness to help one's fellow citizens, and the important role of the FBR in facilitating the position of the Betawi in Jakartan society at large. A returning theme, first brought up by Fauzi Bowo, was the need for the Betawi and the FBR to present themselves as the gracious hosts of

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A Comparative Ethnography of Security Groups in Indonesia', run jointly by Lee Wilson of the University of Queensland and the author between 2009 and 2015. The author's participation was supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (grant number 463-08-003). The author likes to thank the guest editors Kari Telle and Jeremy Kingsley as well as two anonymous reviewers for their constructive input and enthusiasm. Any mistakes or shortcomings in this text are the sole responsibility of the author.

the upcoming SEA (Southeast Asian) Games, later that year.<sup>2</sup> Nearly all speakers made a point of using the FBR's yell at the beginning, often again at the end, and occasionally during their speeches. The ritual of the yell guaranteed an instant reply from the audience and ensured that, at least for the moment, the speaker had their attention:

Speaker:           Betawi!  
 Audience:        Yeah!  
 Speaker (louder): FBR!  
 Audience:        Yeah!  
 Speaker:         Those who do not respect us ... (*Yang kurang ajar ...*)  
 Audience:        We'll beat them up! (... *dihajar!*)

The speeches were followed by a parade of delegations representing dozens of the FBR's 350 local branches.<sup>3</sup> Yet where I had expected groups of intimidating-looking, muscled men in black FBR garb to grimly march past us, we were presented with a colourful and merry parade consisting of groups of young girls in colourful Betawi dress and boys demonstrating their butting *silat* skills. Other branches had opted to be represented by groups of impressively dressed, stately matrons and quite a few contingents performed singing and drumming routines. The men were there, but of all ages and in a variety of costumes, and they were pot-bellied as well as muscled. 'This is what the FBR is about', my neighbour told me. 'Here you see Betawi from all over Jakarta coming together on a festive day, we know how to throw a party.' I asked him about the FBR's fierce reputation and violent image and he replied that the FBR is there to protect and defend Betawi interests and, therefore, is indeed capable of responding violently to any threat, but that violence is not its main purpose. The violence, he maintained, is there on the outside to protect the FBR's inner values.

In Jakarta, the FBR is one of the largest and most prominent of several of such groups active in the Greater Jakarta area, which have come to the fore throughout Indonesia in the wake of the 1998 fall of the New Order regime. Such groups generally refer to themselves as *ormas* (*organisasi kemasyarakatan*, or societal organizations), a denominator that covers community, religious, ethnic, environmental, and welfare organizations associated with social activi-

2 Video reports of the celebrations by Berita Jakarta and Bali TV are available on YouTube; see 'FBR siap sukseskan pelaksanaan SEA Games', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV7G8nInomE> (accessed 24-3-2015) and 'FBR rayakan milad ke-10 suluh Indonesia—Bali TV', [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_Cl2e3biiA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_Cl2e3biiA) (accessed 24-3-2015) respectively.

3 See L. Wilson (2015:198) for a more detailed discussion of the FBR's organizational structure.



FIGURE 1 FBR members at Gelora Bung Karno shouting FBR's yell  
PHOTO: L. BAKKER

ties and societal support. As a legal category *ormas* refers to a wide variety of organizations that includes aid foundations and health providers, Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, as well as such groups as the FBR; the term *ormas* is thus broad and not very specific. My focus in this article is on organizations such as the FBR. These groups are mostly regional; they apply discourses of democracy and civil society to claim rights and resources for specific local, ethnic, and religious groups, whom—they argue—the government fails sufficiently to take into account. What constitutes these interests is largely decided by these regional *ormas* themselves, although they require local societal support to exist and function. This need for support is crucial in understanding their position in society, particularly because many such regional *ormas* emphasize their capacity and willingness to deploy violence to further their agendas. Practising non-state, vigilante-like violence is a tricky affair in most situations. In doing so, the regional *ormas* discussed below must strike the right balance between societal and governmental toleration, awe, and approval while risking the antagonization of other groups as well as state authorities.<sup>4</sup>

4 The exact number of *ormas*, in the general meaning of the term, is hard to establish. Nugroho

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with the Komando Pertahanan Adat Dayak Kalimantan Timur (KPADKT, Dayak Customary Defence Command, Dayak and other indigenous Kalimantanese membership, active in East Kalimantan), with Brigade Manguni (Manguni Brigade, with an ethnic Minahasan membership, active in North Sulawesi and to a lesser extent in Central Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, and Jakarta)<sup>5</sup> and—to a lesser extent—with the Forum Betawi Rempug (FBR, Betawi Brotherhood Forum) in Jakarta, my aim in this article is to come to an understanding of the rise of the discourses of the regional *ormas* on security, protection, and rights, underpinned by (threats of) violence in Indonesia today.<sup>6</sup> I seek to explore the ‘performance’ of security and justice by these regionally oriented *ormas* in relation to the era of post-dictatorship democratization and civil-society development in which they have come to the fore. I ask whether their involvement furthers democratic governance, or whether we are looking at the appropriation of a fashionable jargon to safeguard established interests. I hence seek to come to an understanding of the relations between the actions and discourses of, and the societal attitudes towards, the regional *ormas*. Following Hansen and Stepputat (2005), I suggest that in the encounters between regional, security-providing *ormas* and government authority the popular legitimacy of both are inherently unstable, localized, and depending upon regular demonstrations of their will and capacity to rule. The attempts of the regional *ormas* to establish legitimacy, to set themselves apart from the government and, in various ways, to challenge its authority and compete with it, create an apparent rivalry. It is through this rivalry and the arguments they deploy to publicly sustain their claims that I analyse this subject.

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(2013:16) found a staggering 83,727 civil-society organizations registered with various ministries, but suspects that there is an overlap among those. Moreover, many of these groups will not be focused on security provision, nor will all security-providing groups have registered. Based on my own interviews with academics and government officials, estimates of (generally local or regional) ‘security-providing *ormas*’ in Indonesia range between 400 and 2,000 groups. These are spread throughout Indonesia, but are mostly active in urban areas.

5 A Manguni is a night owl, which has a strong role in Minahasan folklore and magic and is depicted in the coats of arms of the districts Minahasa, Minahasa Selatan, Minahasa Tenggara, Minahasa Utara and the municipalities of Bitung, Manado and Tomohon.

6 This article is based on fieldwork conducted between 2004 and 2015. The author came to know various Dayak organizations during field research for his PhD thesis in East Kalimantan between 2004 and 2007. Through them, he met Brigade Manguni in East Kalimantan and the Minahasa. Over the years, the author and various members have remained in contact and regularly meet when the author is in Indonesia. Contact with the FBR began in 2010 through Lee Wilson of the University of Queensland and Farry Malonda of Brigade Manguni.

I begin by briefly discussing security-providing regional *ormas* in the socially normative context of society and state perspectives, particularly regarding the agency of the population in defending the nation and their interests. I follow this with a paragraph describing the rise and ongoing existence of Brigade Manguni illustrating the discourse of civil security that is used by all three regional *ormas*. I proceed with discussing the position of *ormas* members vis-à-vis the elite, detailing the argument that the New Order regime had hijacked the image of the *preman* (the daring, occasionally criminal defender of the people, according to the discourse of *ormas*) and how they are reclaiming this role to aid the population. I illustrate this with a paragraph describing how the FBR seeks to balance political alliances, violence, and societal popularity in maintaining its power in Jakartan society. I continue by providing a discussion of the arguments of legitimacy and accountability before describing the difficulties they pose through a discussion of KPADKT land and election politics. This is followed by a paragraph considering the nature of the civil society that we may be looking at here. In conclusion I offer some thoughts on the consequences of this state of affairs for our perceptions of non-state violence and authority in contemporary Indonesia.

### Violent Ormas in Society

Indonesian law defines *ormas* as community organizations that are established voluntarily by a group of people sharing specific aspirations, desires, and interests and that aim to contribute to the development goals of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>7</sup> What this entails in practice is largely left open, but the 2013 revised Ormas Law (*Undang-Undang 17 tahun 2013 tentang Organisasi Kemasyarakatan*, Law on Community Organizations) contains clear prohibitions as to what *ormas* cannot do. Among others they are prohibited from engaging in activities that may destabilize society—such as committing violence, acting against ethnic groups or religions, or promulgating ideologies not in line with Pancasila. *Ormas* are prohibited from using flags, symbols, or vignettes that are also used by other organizations or by the Indonesian government, from using state symbols, and from taking tasks upon themselves that legislation defines as the domain of governmental authorities.<sup>8</sup> Recent

7 See Article 1 (1) of Law 17 of 2013, <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Indonesia/urmas.pdf> (accessed 25-03-2015).

8 See Article 59 of Law 17 of 2013, <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Indonesia/urmas.pdf> (accessed 25-03-2015).

complaints by the military about *ormas* wearing red berets similar to those of elite troops, providing security services, and maintaining order at mining sites may illustrate the kind of tasks the law refers to.<sup>9</sup> A two-star general complained that the usage of military-style camouflage clothing by *ormas* made it difficult for civilians to discern whom they were dealing with, resulting in the military being accused of abuses of its authority in activities that were in fact carried out by *ormas*. The general argued that *ormas* do not need camouflage anyway, for it is the military, and only the military, that is tasked with guarding the nation's sovereignty and—again—only the military that is trained to do so.<sup>10</sup>

The military's objections and the Ormas Law's prohibitions resound in the description of the FBR's activities with which this article started: a large group organized along semi-military lines, using its own uniforms, vignettes, and flags. The organization's yell warns us that those who disrespect FBR will be beaten up, and the readiness with which my neighbour on the platform confirmed the FBR's capacity for violence are at odds with the Weberian ideals of state-based order advocated by the military. Yet they do bring to mind Tilly's (1986) observation that the capacity to make war made the early state successful in establishing security and administration and, therefore, legitimacy. If the FBR and other *ormas* provide for societal needs that official authorities fail to address, their violence can become socially acceptable, possibly even norm-establishing. Benjamin (1986 [1978]:283–4) discerned a law-making authority in non-state violence that can create new laws in society and even force the government to concede its validity. Non-state violence can hence be a means to legitimize rules and practices as well as delegitimize others. It may be a source of repression as well as of change. Most national governments maintain a monopoly on violence through national law, but in multiple instances, and for a variety of reasons, that does not mean that citizens have no legal access to violence. The Indonesian army, for instance, has its roots in civilian groups who, as militias, fought Dutch colonial forces for independence. Today's military concept of *Pertahanan Keamanan Rakyat Semesta*, frequently translated as 'total people's defence and security', declares citizens to bear responsibility for the defence of the nation. The concept provides for a continued and legitimate role

9 Ramadhiam Fadilah, 2013, 'TNI resah ada ormas pakai baret merah bak Kopassus', *Merdeka.com*, <http://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/tni-resah-ada-ormas-pakai-baret-merah-bak-kopassus.html> (accessed 24-03-2015).

10 'Pangdam VI Mulawarman Minta Ormas Berseragam Loreng Ditertibkan', *Tribun Kaltim*, 16 April 2013. <http://kaltim.tribunnews.com/2013/04/16/pangdam-vi-mulawarman-minta-ormas-berseragam-loreng-ditertibkan>. (accessed 24-03-2015).



of citizens in the application of violence and sees the military training civilians and designating them active roles in the maintenance of local security. Referring to this principle, an East Kalimantan KPADKT leader called the complaints by the general mentioned above 'jealousy over competition' since, the KPADKT leader maintained, the general was also involved in the security business but saw the tariffs for his soldiers being undercut by the *ormas*. Indonesia's recent history, particularly the era of the fall of Soeharto and the beginning of *reformasi*, has seen multiple violent episodes in which local populations engaged in violence while the military and police remained (initially) uninvolved (see, for instance, Van Klinken 2007). Lack of protection by these state authorities thus provided a legitimizing reason for local populations to organize their own defence units. In several instances, such as the example of Brigade Manguni which follows below, this resulted in the establishment of regional *ormas* that are well-embedded in local history and society and that filled a societal need at the time of their founding.

### Brigade Manguni as Protectors of the Minahasa

In 2000, Brigade Manguni was founded in the Minahasa region, North Sulawesi, in reaction to fears of a possible invasion of the predominantly Christian region by Islamic Laskar Jihad (Holy War Militia) fighters as a result of an overspill of the religious fighting in the nearby Moluccas (see Henley, Schouten, and Ulaen 2007; Kosel 2010). As the regional army commander proved sympathetic to this fear, elements of Brigade Manguni were trained as military auxiliary troops (Pasukan Pengamanan Masyarakat Swakarsa, abbreviated *pam-swakarsah*), learning armed and unarmed combat techniques, territorial organization, and strategy. As events evolved, Laskar Jihad did not target North Sulawesi but crossed into Poso in Central Sulawesi, where the Muslim-Christian ratio was more evenly balanced and tensions were already on the rise. In reaction, Brigade Manguni sent part of its military-trained personnel to Poso in support of the local Christians. They were active in Poso for about half a year, operating under the name of *kelelawar hitam* (black bats), after their black clothing and magical ability to fly noiselessly through the air during the hours of darkness. They returned north when Poso's Christians and Muslims decided to attempt to settle their conflict without the disruptive presence of martial non-locals.

In Minahasa, Brigade Manguni is supported by a majority of the population, many of whom are members of its local chapters. Like the FBR, Brigade Manguni employs a military-like command and territorial structure and an excel-

lent communication network using Blackberry messenger, mobile phones, and numerous Facebook pages. The brigade is popularly seen as the major societal line of defence against the threat posed by surrounding Muslim militants and foreign countries. Besides Indonesian jihadis, Filipino Muslim guerrillas belonging to the Abu Sayyaf group from Mindanao and jihadis from Sulu are named as possible invaders. The nearby international border brings the fear of a repetition of such perceived 'land grabs' as Malaysia's appropriation of the Sipadan and Ligitan islands through a ruling of the International Court of Justice in 2002, and the ongoing international disputes concerning the Ambalat block and other resource-rich areas in the Celebes Sea. 'We are like *linmas*,<sup>11</sup> only bigger and looking out for more types of danger, so we can respond better', a Brigade Manguni leader explained to me. He suggested that whereas *linmas* is like a governmental first-aid group that takes action once disasters have taken place, Brigade Manguni's paramilitary nature and intelligence network enables it to be better prepared for threats, or even to remove threats before they become a problem.

The size of the organization, as well as its embeddedness in society and in political structures combined with its willingness and capacity to act, as proven in Poso, has generated close links to local governmental representatives. It is usual for Minahasan governors, mayors, parliamentary speakers, police officers, and military commanders to publicly join the Brigade Manguni leadership at the official functions and events of the *ormas*. In return, Brigade Manguni contingents join in official parades during national holidays.

As with the FBR, Brigade Manguni publicly supports democracy, reform, and transparent government, but there are some limitations to this within its own organization. All leaders are elected by a democratic vote of the membership, but whereas village and neighbourhood leaders are regularly replaced, the majority of the individuals who formed the board when the *ormas* was established continue to be re-elected. In their defence, the popularity of these leaders, the *tona'as*, among large groups of the population should be pointed out. Yet their continuing presence on the board sits at odds with the regulations of the *ormas*, which stipulate a maximum period for an individual's service in this capacity. However, as these *tona'as* have established reputations as fighters, *preman* (see below), successful businessmen, and dependable and fair patrons, this seems to exempt them from such maximum terms of office with the consent of the membership. An example of such a reputation is the following story that was frequently narrated to me regarding the *tona'as* for Tondano.

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11 *Linmas* is an acronym for Perlindungan Masyarakat, a government service responding to a wide variety of emergencies and calamities.



FIGURE 2 *Brigade Manguni members participating in an army parade in Manado*  
PHOTO: M. TOGAS

In autumn 2002, a bomb went off in front of the Philippines consulate in Manado. Nobody was killed, but the police could not find the perpetrators. Soon after an object resembling a bomb was spotted in a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in central Manado. People panicked, but a Brigade Manguni member from Tondano, who happened to be present, thought to telephone his *tona'as*, who had an office nearby. The *tona'as* immediately came over, ran into the restaurant, picked up the object, and threw it out into the empty street where, he reasoned, it would do a lot less damage if it exploded. The police anti-bomb squad arrived and secured the object (different versions exist as to whether it was or was not a bomb). Meanwhile other Brigade Manguni members who had arrived on the scene had been informed by bystanders that they had seen a man carrying the object earlier on, and that he was staying in a nearby hotel. The *tona'as* was notified and while he had his men surround the hotel, he informed the police. When an anti-terrorist squad arrested the man in his room, they found several guns in his luggage and he soon confessed to being a Muslim terrorist. Whether this heroism and the terrorist arrest really took place is difficult to ascertain, as I was not able to obtain any police reports confirming the event. But as local society maintains the veracity of the story

and ascribes this heroic status to the *tona'as*, the lack of police confirmation does little to affect the societal *fait accompli*. An important element in the story is that the *tona'as* had the building surrounded, but stopped his men from getting the suspect out themselves and informed the police instead. This is, according to my interlocutors, the true nature of Brigade Manguni. As the suspect could not get away, the *tona'as* felt that the proper authorities should make the arrest. Furthermore, if Brigade Manguni members would have apprehended the suspect, it was quite possible that the enraged people would have lynched him. Supporters of the *tona'as* pointed out that keeping the building surrounded served both to keep the suspect in and the angry masses out. One among them added that perhaps Brigade Manguni also saw little appeal in trying to overpower an individual who they suspected—correctly, as it turned out—to be heavily armed, without any weaponry of their own.

Stories such as these and a fear of an enemy that is shared by much of the population give Brigade Manguni considerable support among the Minahasan population. This support, combined with their declared dedication to Indonesian unity and the defence of the nation, make them an organization relevant to local politicians. Nevertheless, Brigade Manguni cannot merely be seen as a local security organization. It also contains a strong element of patronage that connects a mass of members—or voters—to the *tona'as* and these, using such capital, to politicians, businesses, and other sources of jobs and income required to maintain the support of their following. The connection between regional *ormas* leaders (as patrons), their rank and file (as clients), and the local political and business elites is therefore a clear point of concern within the discourses of the *ormas* with regard to legitimation.

### On Being a 'True' *Preman*

Organized, potentially violent civilian groups have been a more or less constant factor throughout Indonesia's colonial period (H. Schulte Nordholt 2002; Van Till 2006) and since independence (see Cribb 1991; N. Schulte Nordholt 2002). Such groups often ambiguously combined the roles of local security providers, strong-arm men for local patrons, and organized criminals. From the seventies onwards they were increasingly known as *preman*, 'gangsters' or 'hoodlums' associated with extortion, crime, and violence, rather than as protectors of society.<sup>12</sup> *Preman* (or free men, after the Dutch *vrij man*) oper-

12 The concept of *preman* has a broader pedigree, which is discussed in detail in Ryter 1998.

ate in a grey zone between the law, lawlessness, patronage and the ability to act upon their own initiative (Ryter 1998). H. Schulte Nordholt (2002) pointed out how collaborations between the government and local criminals using violence to inspire fear and subservience in the citizenry has continued from the colonial era onwards. During the New Order era, certain *preman* groups such as Pemuda Pancasila (Pancasila Youth) and Pemuda Pancamarga (Pancamarga Youth) were frequently aligned to regime patrons, for whom they would carry out violent and repressive tasks.<sup>13</sup> In exchange they received protection from legal repercussions and access to such criminal activities as extortion and blackmail. Such an entanglement of officials and *preman* in legal as well as illegal affairs allowed for a normalization of violence and criminality as a state practice (see Ryter 1998:48–53; Wilson 2006:266).

Today's regional *ormas*, however, frequently emphasize that under such conditions *preman* were dependent on, and controlled by, the regime, which decided what crime was allowed and who could carry it out. Members of Brigade Manguni in Manado and East Kalimantan maintained that the killings of numerous *preman* by 'mysterious shooters' (*penembak misterius*, or Petrus) in Jakarta in the eighties (Van der Kroef 1985) proved that the regime rigidly controlled *preman*. These Brigade Manguni members—seniors now, but juniors in Jakarta's Manadonese Sartana gang at the time—did not feel that the *preman* killed were innocent victims of state repression, but rather believed that those killed almost certainly were involved in crime or causing trouble for the regime. Johny Singkoh, a member of Sartana who was killed during the Petrus campaign in 1982, was, according to his surviving friends, openly engaged in violent crime as well as a vocal critic of a system that saw authorities collaborate with criminals like himself, at the expense of society. These seniors felt that the *preman* image had been co-opted by the New Order regime, thus depriving *preman* of independent agency and greatly subduing the free spirit of *premanisme*. Having made the *preman* a tool for the regime's dirty work, at the same time the regime depended on its protection. The *preman*, they felt, had lost their social responsibility and grown lazy on the regime's money. It was the fall of Soeharto that broke the hold of the regime and allowed the 'true' *preman* to reposition themselves as the local champions of society, able to protect it from elites who were trying to get hold of the local wealth.

The regional *ormas* on which this article focuses describe their function as doing just that—carrying out the tasks that the *preman* should fulfil for

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13 For a broader and more detailed discussion of the position and role of *preman* groups see Ryter 1998 and I. Wilson 2006.

society. They should be unafraid as well as independent, thereby ensuring that they cannot be re-appropriated by powerful regime leaders or single bosses, and willing to take on such threats as their members are faced with. They described their daily roles as maintaining order and providing security in neighbourhoods that ask them to do so. They set up guard posts in these areas from which they carry out regular patrols to show their presence and deter thieves and other criminals from entering the neighbourhood. They also provide assistance in case of disasters such as floods, earthquakes, or fires; organize sport matches, prayer meetings, and other community events; and engage in such other initiatives as society asks of them. Importantly, the FBR, the KPADKT, and Brigade Manguni each state that they ultimately work for the benefit of Indonesian society at large, but all define themselves along specific ethnic lines and put the interests and needs of these ethnic affiliations first.<sup>14</sup> The next paragraph illustrates the FBR's balancing of political friendships, social popularity, and the use of violence.

### Betawi Political Alliances

The celebration of the FBR's anniversary in July 2011, with which this article started, illustrates the mutual courting between regional *ormas* and politicians interested in combined votes and support. Fauzi Bowo, Jakarta's governor, presented the need for the FBR to support the Southeast Asian Games as the major subject of his talk, which he introduced with reference to his fondness of all things Betawi, the strength and efficiency of the FBR as an organization, and their potential to enthuse the Jakartan population for the Games. Yet Bowo was not there merely to promote the SEA Games. With gubernatorial elections due in July 2012, the celebration also provided an occasion for candidates to make a first bid for the FBR's electoral support.

Shortly after giving his speech, Fauzi Bowo took his leave of the FBR's leadership and left the festivities to return to his office. The microphone was then given to Nachrowi Ramli, a retired army general who had arrived after Bowo and was setting himself up as a candidate for the governorship as well. Ramli

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14 Aspinall (2011) finds that, on the whole, the mobilization of ethnicity in Indonesian politics has decreased, which, he feels, is part of a wider de-escalation of social movements following the uncertainty of democratic transition. I would like to suggest that placing too much emphasis on ethnic identity will limit the possibilities of *ormas* to enter into other, wider affiliations. For ambitious leaders this is a daunting prospect, as an incentive structure emphasizing ethnicity is dangerously centrifugal.

praised the FBR for their compassionate societal involvement and suggested that city government could study the practical ways in which the *ormas* provided assistance to the needy. The head of the FBR, Lutfi Hakim, thanked him for his kind words and, turning to the audience, stated that the FBR wholeheartedly supported democratic elections and that the audience should make up its own mind as to whom they should vote for, but that in Jakarta, with its millions of migrants, the strength of the FBR and the indigenous Betawi lay in them sticking together. By election time, Lutfi Hakim announced, the FBR's leadership would be happy to provide voting advice to its members.

This political partnership was further demonstrated when, following the parade of the FBR's contingents, a troupe of some two dozen *ondel-ondel* (Betawi's traditional giant puppets, which are carried by performers inside the puppet) danced enthusiastically to traditional music. Each *ondel-ondel* was adorned with a sash reading 'Gerindra', the political party headed by retired New Order general Prabowo Subianto. The *ondel-ondel* performance had been offered to the FBR by Gerindra as a gift to wish the *ormas* well, my neighbour on the platform explained. He went on to tell me that the FBR and Prabowo maintained good relations. Prabowo had provided jobs in security firms for FBR personnel and had expressed his appreciation for the organization's dedication to Betawi interests. My neighbour on the seating platform, another FBR leader, appreciated the *ondel-ondel*, but played down the FBR's dedication to Prabowo, who would be a candidate in the 2014 presidential elections. The year 2014, he felt, was a long way off and other politicians might turn out to serve Betawi and Indonesian interests better.<sup>15</sup>

Links to powerful politicians are important, but insufficient if no support exists on the ground. The FBR is quite conscious of this necessity. The various loyalties and rallying issues that this entails are incorporated in the FBR's members' pledge. This pledge states that FBR members endeavour to be good Muslims; that they will support and protect fellow Betawi and fellow Muslims; that they will act unhesitatingly on the FBR leadership's orders; and that they will cooperate with other ethnic groups and the government, provided this cooperation does not go against Islam. In other words: the FBR stands for

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15 Nachrowi Ramli, who seemed to be the preferred candidate of the FBR's leadership that day, failed to gather substantial support and chose to become the running mate of Fauzi Bowo. Despite the FBR's support for the pair, they lost the gubernatorial elections to Joko Widodo, a rising star supported by the Jakartan masses, who had lost patience with the bureaucratic and infrastructural problems of the city that Fauzi Bowo's administration had been unable to solve. In the 2014 presidential elections Prabowo lost to Joko Widodo, the Indonesian president at the time of writing.

Betawi ethnicity, Islamic faith, and the Indonesian nation—with no hierarchical order indicated—represented by a rank and file dedicated to the leadership. As such, the FBR is an organization with thousands of members and a clear structure of command that can mobilize in an instant through mobile phones or Blackberry messages.<sup>16</sup> While this structure is an organizational strength, the swift mobilization and willingness to use violence have also attracted criticism from observers, who have pointed out that the lower echelons could easily deploy themselves to achieve their own interests and form gangs which could use the FBR's banner to justify their actions. Such allegations and actual practices endanger the societal standing of an *ormas*.

In August 2010, FBR members were involved in an open clash with another Betawi *ormas*, which had been angered by FBR convoys claiming the streets and causing traffic jams. In the fighting people were injured, motorcycles were burned, and the police made multiple arrests.<sup>17</sup> Although Lutfi Hakim immediately apologized to the population of Jakarta and promised to dismiss members found guilty by the police,<sup>18</sup> the FBR was severely criticized, notably by civil-society organizations and activists. More FBR gang fights followed and were reported in the media, among others in June 2012 (when an FBR leader was beaten to death by around 50 unidentified assailants),<sup>19</sup> May 2013 (when a dispute over payment between an FBR motor-taxi driver and a customer resulted in a clash between armed FBR members and neighbourhood *preman*, shutting down a busy public transport terminal in the process),<sup>20</sup> and June 2013 (when a turf war with Pemuda Pancasila left one FBR member dead).<sup>21</sup> These occasions attracted considerable negative attention and ample critique of the organization. Yet the FBR's Facebook page also counts 14,930 'likes'—as opposed to a mere 637 for a page calling for the FBR's dissolution.<sup>22</sup>

16 See L. Wilson 2015 for a discussion of the FBR's history and social position.

17 'FBR clashes with public in South Jakarta', *Jakarta Post*, 1-8-2010. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/08/01/fbr-clashes-with-public-south-jakarta.html> (accessed 24-03-2015). 'More detained in Rempoa Clash', *Jakarta Post*, 3-8-2010.

18 'FBR leader apologizes, promises to dismiss members involved in clash', *Jakarta Post*, 1-8-2010.

19 'FBR leader killed, police on the alert', *Jakarta Post*, 28-6-2012.

20 'FBR dan Preman bentrok di Terminal Pulogadung, 2 Luka Tusuk', *BID Humas Polda Metro Jaya*, 13-5-2013. <http://humaspoldametrojaya.blogspot.nl/2013/05/fbr-dan-preman-bentro-di-terminal.html>. (accessed 24-03-2015).

21 Alsadad Rudi 'Cabuti Umbul-Umbul PP, Anggota FBR Dibunuh di Barito', *Kompas*, 16-6-2013. <http://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2013/06/16/09265321/Cabuti.Umbulumbul.PP..Anggota.FBR.Dibunuh.di.Barito> (accessed 24-03-2015).

22 Both numbers as per December 2014. See Facebook, 'Forum Betawi Rempug (FBR) seja-



FBR supporters also voice their views in the media and explain incidents of violence on Facebook and other sites. Referring to the 2010 fighting, the East Jakartan police chief inspector stated that the FBR are not *preman*, but that rogue elements (*oknum*) within the organization damaged its reputation.<sup>23</sup> In 2012, a member of Jakarta's parliament stated that the FBR certainly were not *preman* and that the constitution allowed citizens to form *ormas*. It was up to the government, he felt, to ensure a close relationship with the *ormas* and to steer their development.<sup>24</sup> As such, the parliamentarian suggested that curbing *ormas* activity—as well as allowing it—was actually in the hands of the government. That the authorities do, however, generally prefer to stay clear of trouble with these groups was well illustrated when the police arrested three machete-wielding members of Pemuda Pancasila on suspicion of the above-mentioned murder of an FBR leader in 2012. The *Jakarta Post* quotes the responsible police chief as saying, 'I'm not arresting members of mass organizations. I'm merely watching out for people armed with sharp objects.'<sup>25</sup>

### Accountability and Legitimation

In publicly stating that their main *raison d'être* is to ensure the well-being and security of firstly, their members and supporters and secondly, society at large, the *ormas* discussed here maintain that they have made *premanisme* subservient to society. While during the New Order allegiance and accountability were to the patron, the spokespersons of the *ormas* maintain that they, as new, post-New Order organizations, use *preman* methods in the service of society. If power and crime are synonymous in the eyes of Indonesia's general population, as H. Schulte Nordholt (2002:40, 51–2) suggested, this could mean that their reference to the criminal methods of *preman* and enlistment of known criminals might actually increase their societal credibility (Bakker 2015).

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bodetabek', <https://www.facebook.com/KEREMPUGAN> (accessed 24-03-2015) and Facebook, '1.000.000 Facebookers say bubarkan ormas FBR Forum Betawi Rempug', <https://www.facebook.com/pages/1000000-Facebookers-Say-Bubarkan-Ormas-Fbr-Forum-Betawi-Rempug/146138998732177> (accessed 24-03-2015) respectively.

23 Kapolda: Ormas Bukan Preman yang Dipelihara *detikNews*, 1-8-2010. <http://news.detik.com/berita/1411261/kapolda-ormas-bukan-preman-yang-dipelihara>. *DetikNews* (accessed 24-03-2015).

24 'FBR itu santun', <http://www.suara-publik.com/berita-732-fbr-itu-santun.html>, Suara-Publik.com (accessed 24-03-2015).

25 'FBR leader killed, police on the alert', *Jakarta Post*, 28-6-2012.

The post-New Order rise of *preman* and *ormas* in regional and local settings has spurred the development of a considerable amount of literature that emphasizes local dissatisfaction over lack of political and economic influence, notably in regard to non-local entrepreneurs, businesses, and migrants.<sup>26</sup> Faced with popular resentment against 'non-locals' appropriating land, resources, jobs, and riches, many ethnic *ormas* have set themselves up as agents of local resistance, referring to indigenous rights to land and resources. At the same time, the need for a societal support base has increased the importance of the democracy dynamic in vigilante groups, which I. Wilson (2010) sees in those groups which engage in advocacy and representation using civil-society discourses in addition to *preman* techniques. The use of such discourses attracts non-*preman* individuals such as students, activists, the elderly, and housewives, who swell the ranks of the *ormas*, and assist in making the claims of ethnic *ormas* acceptable, and even attractive, to members of other ethnic groups as well. Civil-society discourses are used to legitimize *premanisme* towards a public that is increasingly critical of undemocratic, privatized violence (see also I. Wilson 2006:275) and that requires results in more progressive, civil issues to make up the balance. As a consequence one sees *ormas* violently defending reactionary and hegemonic interests while simultaneously proactively furthering the interests of marginalized groups (I. Wilson 2010:201). It follows that relations between more 'regular' civil-society organizations and regional *ormas* often are uneasy. Speaking to the head of the East Kalimantan branch of the KPADKT's legal support department in summer 2014, I was told by him:

[W]e do in fact work together with several indigenous peoples' rights NGOs and we also run a legal advisory department. The problem is that it is easy for the government and companies to ignore NGOs because they only ask for things to be done, and do not react if they are ignored. We react. We bring out the masses and ask officials to publicly explain their course of action. We do nothing illegal, but we apply pressure to let them feel that they cannot ignore the law and the rights of the people.<sup>27</sup>

When asked, however, leaders of the KPADKT and Brigade Manguni did not deny that some of their members were engaged in criminal practices. Both

26 See, for instance, Barker 2009 on Bandung; Kloos 2014 on Aceh; Bakker 2009 and C. Wilson 2013 on Kalimantan; Brown and Wilson 2007 and Wilson and Nugroho 2012 on Jakarta; and Telle 2010 and 2013, and Tyson 2013 on Lombok.

27 Interview with Yulianus Henock, head of the East Kalimantan's branch of the KPADKT's legal support department. 23 July 2014.

organizations pointed out that they had contributed to a decrease of crime in general by enlisting the more notorious street *preman* and so bringing them under the organizations' control. Hence, criminal acts carried out by these individuals were their responsibility and should not be blamed on the *ormas*. Also, as the same KPADKT leader stated:

[I]f we get protection money from businesses, some people call that extortion. Who? Well ... some NGOs. Yet they do not ask the shop holders who pay us, or the police, or the KPK. They do not like us because we are critical of them and more effective, so they spread the rumour that we are a criminal organization. We enlist criminals, yes, powerful and streetwise people who, it is true, we cannot always control. But we do not protect them from being arrested either.<sup>28</sup>

The KPADKT leadership is well versed in arguing in favour of the legitimacy and legality of its actions. It holds that its activities are based on national law, notably on the constitution's Article 1.2, which states that sovereignty is in the hands of the people, and Article 28, which delineates the rights and protection that each citizen is guaranteed by the state. It also cites the national state philosophy of Pancasila as providing legitimacy for their actions, as this philosophy holds that social justice is one of the five principles of the Indonesian nation, and such justice is what the KPADKT is also striving for. Nevertheless, even if the KPADKT deploys a discourse that emphasizes justice and legality, its actions tend to inspire fear to an extent that prevents the KPADKT from realizing its intended objectives, as the next section illustrates.

### The KPADKT's Claims to Indigenous Land in East Kalimantan

The Taman Nasional Kutai (Kutai National Park) is a forest preserve some 120 kilometres to the north of East Kalimantan's capital city of Samarinda. The park measures 2,000 square kilometres of lowland tropical forest. It is inhabited by various types of endangered animals, including orangutans and sun bears. Over the past twenty years the park has sustained serious damage in a series of forest fires, as well as due to illegal settlement by small-scale farmers occupying the land cleared by the fires. Indonesia's 2006 legislation

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28 Interview with Yulianus Henock, head of the East Kalimantan's branch of the KPADKT's legal support department. 23 July 2014.

on national park zonation made it possible for communities with a claim to park land that precedes its designation as a national park to make limited use of the area in specific zones.<sup>29</sup> The types of usage and the qualification criteria are, however, vaguely defined. In the Kutai National Park, CIFOR (2010:4) noted, the settlers are mostly migrants from Sulawesi who have been arriving since the 1920s. Furthermore, new people keep moving into the area, while the local government has recognized, legalized, and strengthened the presence of villages and communities in the park. The government, communities, and companies are all developing the forest land.

Following the economic and fiscal crisis that led to Soeharto's downfall in 1998, the number of ethnic Bugis migrants settling in East Kalimantan increased. The natural-resource industries offered employment opportunities to young workers, while land was in far greater availability than in crowded southern Sulawesi. Dayak ethnic organizations began to manifest themselves around the same time, demanding greater political influence and for a larger share of the natural-resource profits to benefit the indigenous population (see Bakker, 2009). In East Kalimantan, two main organizations came to the fore. In the 1990s the Persekutuhan Dayak Kalimantan (PDK, Kalimantan Dayak Association) was established, followed in 2001 by the Dewan Adat Dayak se-Kalimantan (DADK, All-Kalimantan Dayak Adat Council). While the PDK disposed of considerable political and establishment contacts, it were precisely those established connections that drove younger, activist Dayak supporters to join the DADK, as that organization had been formed after the fall of the New Order regime and emphasized its lack of links to the previous power holders. In 2004 the East Kalimantan branch of the DADK established the Komando Pertahanan Adat Dayak Kalimantan (KPADK, Kalimantan Dayak Adat Defence Command), a uniformed, paramilitary outfit designated to safeguard and regulate meetings, provide police and security services to the Dayak community, and discipline perpetrators of customary law. The East Kalimantan branch of the KPADK, the Komando Pertahanan Adat Dayak Kalimantan Timur, or KPADKT, flourished as the organization soon moved into enforcing customary-rights-based land claims and took on security projects for various companies.

During this time, the increasing number of Bugis settlers in the Kutai National Park was giving rise to tensions between the Bugis and the Dayak. The issue was not that the Bugis were settling in a national park, but that they had

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29 See *Peraturan Menteri Kehutanan Nomor P. 56 /Menhut-11/2006 Tentang Pedoman Zonasi Taman Nasional* (Minister of Forestry Regulation P. 56 /Menhut-11/2006 on Guidelines on National Park zonation).

appropriated land to which the Dayak claimed customary rights. From 2007 onwards, Dayak from the vicinity of the park started to move into the park itself. This was not, as a local Dayak leader stated in a 2007 interview with a news magazine, to destroy the forest, but to preserve it from destruction by 'others'.<sup>30</sup> The magazine article went on to relate how the local chief of police feared that violence would erupt between the groups, as the Dayak were forcing the Bugis engaged in commercial logging in the park to stop. The legal status of both parties was unclear. Strictly speaking logging and farming are illegal in a national park, but both parties argued that the 2006 Minister of Forestry Regulation on national park zonation permitted them to live in the park and use its resources. The local Dayak maintained that their customary rights preceded the presence of the Bugis, while the Bugis retorted that there had not been any Dayak present when their ancestors had arrived and that any preceding claim was therefore invalid.

The KPADKT became involved in summer 2007. Its commander, Yulianus Henock, a lawyer-cum-construction-entrepreneur from Samarinda, made it known that the KPADKT would support and protect the Dayak willing to settle in the park. What he intended to do, he explained to me in a 2008 interview, was to encapsulate the areas settled by the Bugis and so prevent them from further expansion. No attempts were made to remove them and no violence was deployed against them, as they were fellow citizens of Indonesia. According to Henock, the KPADKT took a physically passive stance throughout the conflict. When fighting took place, this was, according to Henock and other Dayak sources, because the Bugis had used violence against the incoming Dayak settlers. The KPADKT consequently brought in its members to restore calm, and announced that it would remove aggressive Bugis if further violence ensued. Henock made this last announcement publicly, informing local police, government, and the military, and receiving the full vocal support of one of the province's more influential human-rights foundations, which, however, at that time was also headed up by Henock.

The Dayak settlers shared in the profits as well as in the destruction of the park's natural resources, as logging was now carried out in collaboration with the Bugis. As this situation prevented further violence from either side, government authorities decided to let things be. For Henock, this added considerably to his societal prestige. In 2010, he ran for vice-mayor of Samarinda with a Javanese partner, Sutrisno, running for the position of mayor. This was a strategically smart move as the Javanese made up about 40% of Samarinda's

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30 'Korporasi Biang Keladi Perang Antar Suku di Sangatta', *Tempo*, 28-10-2007.



FIGURE 3 *Election poster for Sutrisno and Henock*

PHOTO: L. BAKKER

population, whereas the Dayak, other indigenous groups, and Christians (Henock's constituency) formed less than 10%. The pair expected that neither the Javanese, nor the Christians, nor the indigenous groups would want a Buginese mayor, the second largest ethnic group in the city, so hoped for the

votes of these groups. However, Sutrisno and Henock gained only 4% of the votes. When I met Henock again in 2013, he suggested that this was because his partner was born in Java whereas most Javanese in Samarinda were second- or third-generation migrants. These had thrown their support behind a locally born Javanese. While his KPADKT action at the Kutai National Park had gained him the support of virtually all of Samarinda's Dayak, it had frightened the city's Javanese population, who feared that he might want to oppose their claims to Kalimantan land as well. The elected mayor, who gained 47% of the votes, was also of Dayak descent and moreover married to a Javanese woman. He is a Muslim and culturally Javanese, thus combining in a less essentialist and more harmonious way the ethnic elements that Henock and Sutrisno similarly appealed to.

The popularity of the KPADKT, and that of Henock, increases and wanes as societal tensions rise and subside. Among the Dayak in and around Samarinda his popularity is high. From 2010 onwards, the KPADKT began to use the same technique it had deployed at the Kutai National Park on mining companies operating in the vicinity of Samarinda in order to obtain security jobs and other employment at the mines for their members. As this has proved successful, other indigenous *ormas* have begun to copy this approach, resulting in *ormas* being pitted against each other: the one providing the security at a mining site against the other, which has come to oppose the mining. Non-indigenous groups have entered the competition as well, and large memberships have come to be more important than ethnic descent. Consequentially, at the time of writing, Samarinda's KPADKT, as well as other local indigenous *ormas*, enlist non-indigenous members in their organizations in order to be able to field groups of sufficient size to maintain their leading positions in the area.

### *Ormas* as Civil Society?

While large memberships with diverse and divided interests can thus cause regional *ormas* to become unwieldy and limit their capacity for unified action, a growth in members also allows for sub-groups to pursue their own goals under the denominator of the *ormas* (Bakker, 2015). As such diversity in foci can increase societal legitimacy, *ormas* authority can come to the fore in highly varied matters and for diverse reasons. Lund (2006:686) observed that what he termed 'twilight institutions'—fluid institutions operating between state and society, and the public and the private domain, a description that covers the position of *ormas* as well—can appropriate 'stateness' through public author-

ity exercised by defending a community's shared interests. They may fluctuate in working with or against the government, step into its place if support is sufficiently large, or, as I will add here, simultaneously collaborate and oppose the government on different issues. Summer 2014, for instance, saw a Brigade Manguni leader in Manado prepare for close collaboration with anti-corruption agency Lembaga Anti-Korupsi Republik Indonesia (LAKRI, Anti-Corruption Institute of the Republic of Indonesia) in inventorying complaints from the city's population about the local bureaucracy, while a senior Brigade Manguni official in nearby Tomohon ran an illegal distillery and was rumoured to be involved in an extortion scandal. The Manado leader was not happy about these activities in Tomohon, but the official there had served prison sentences for violence and murder, and hence formed a valuable asset to the organization's credibility. Moreover, he enjoyed considerable local support in Tomohon, where his gin is highly prized.

Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken (2007) see 'changing continuities' coming out of Indonesia's simultaneous processes of decentralization, democratization, and the rise of civil society. There is little reason, they suggest, to assume that the weakening of the authoritarian central state would simply result in democratic rule at the regional level, even if government policies and societal drives move in that direction. Hadiz (2010:180) warns us that '[t]he evidence so far suggests that the appropriation of state power by its officials to further their predatory interests will continue to be the main theme of Indonesian political economy albeit in an environment that is more democratised and more localised'. Brigade Manguni and the LPADKT use very similar arguments to warn against putting too much trust in the fluent development of local democracy and the sincerity of politicians. Pointing out that corruption and patronage are still rife in politics, they put themselves to the fore as societal watchdogs. Both argue that, contrary to the *preman* organizations of the New Order who were dedicated to a patron, they are independent of established power holders and depend on the population for support. Therefore, they maintain, they are free to deploy such social and political initiatives as society requires (Bakker, 2015).

Herein lies a more strategic explanation for the role of concerned vigilantes that these *ormas* choose to take. In a well-known article, Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974:542) declared vigilantism to be 'simply establishment violence', summarized as consisting of 'acts or threats of coercion in violation of the formal boundaries of an established sociopolitical order which, however, are intended by the violators to defend that order from some form of subversion'. The regional *ormas* discussed here maintain that they act responsibly and—when possible—in accordance with the law, but explicitly state that



they do so to further specific societal interests rather than those of the existing establishment. In doing so, however, they set themselves up as the agents of a new establishment driven by local interests and support, which appears to be conducive to the leadership establishing prominent and influential positions in society for themselves. Such establishments also promote starkly different regional interests from those of the nation. Vigilantism offers an excellent position from which to further such aspirations, as it legitimizes the organization, planning, and voluntary involvement of private citizens who threaten to use force—and who thus engage in ‘autonomous citizenship’—in order to secure society from the transgressions of the established order (Johnston 1996:220). Furthermore, it can be used to critique the moral and ethical foundations of the law (Buur 2008:573) and as a means to legitimize the building up of a new force for security (and intimidation) in the face of established powers (see Anderson 2002). Worldwide, a rise of non-state actors in the provision of security can be discerned in which the formulation of alternative imagined communities of reciprocity is combined with de-legitimization, contestation, and appropriation of official authority (see Davis 2009; Baker 2010; Fisher and Timmer 2013).

The *ormas* discussed in this article balance popular support, support from the establishment, and the letter of the law to sustain their position. Their massive local support both shows the societal influence of the *ormas* and supplies their rank-and-file members. Such support is ensured by obtaining results that benefit popular needs. If the *ormas* is successful, societal opinion will condone the members and leadership obtaining a certain amount of illicit profit from these actions in ‘payment’ for their efforts, but a lack of success—or the leadership taking too large a share—will considerably diminish its popularity.

Connections, if not fealty, to the local establishment continue to form a valuable source of power. As the establishment generally consists of a number of rivalling factions, this allows for such connections to be dynamic and susceptible to diplomatic manoeuvring as well as outright power play. The KPADKT, for instance, made East Kalimantan’s governor an honorary member and invited him to its important public events. Depending on the state of relations between the government and the KPADKT, the governor tends to vary between attending in person; attending, but arriving hours late and staying briefly; sending a replacement; or sending an apology. Likewise, the leader of another East Kalimantan *ormas* wishing to enlist the support of a prominent local lawyer with a reputation for incorruptibility—who refused to join—made the lawyer an honorary member of his organization. He spread the word that the lawyer had joined the legal team of the *ormas* on conditions completely set by the

lawyer, and then invited the lawyer to set these conditions. This time, and given these circumstances, the lawyer accepted as his reputation could remain intact.

By thus presenting themselves as interlocutors between state and society, the activities of the *ormas* illustrate Mitchell's (1991:78) argument that the distinction between these two should be seen as an internal line within a network of institutional mechanisms providing social and political order, rather than as a fixed boundary. *Ormas* engage in a mixture of politics, activism, securitization, and crime—activities which are deployed to right proclaimed social wrongs when no other means are available. Local identity and ethnicity are also deployed as 'rallying calls' to mobilize an autonomous sphere of influence aimed at resisting the control of 'Jakarta' or migrants and non-local businesses. Ensuing activities may be illegal according to national law, but legitimized by local perceptions of rights and justice. The civil society so propagated sees the provision of security and order as well as the protection of liberty and property as included in the social contract between citizen and state, but claims the citizens' right, carried out by the *ormas*, to resort to violence whenever governmental enactments of the social contract are deemed to be insufficient or unjust, or to have failed.

### Concluding Remarks

In this article I have sought to come to an understanding of the rise of the discourses of regional *ormas* on security, protection, and rights, underpinned by (threats of) violence, in a period of post-dictatorship democratization and civil-society development. I have attempted to show how these discourses refer to a historical provision of security by non-state actors, who frequently straddled the line between local protection and criminal activities and were aligned to the New Order regime. Today's violent regional *ormas* continue to emphasize their capacity for violence but declare to use it in the service of societal needs and citizens' rights. New Order *preman* groups, they maintained, were corrupted by their dedication to establishment patrons. In contrast, the new *ormas* maintain that they have re-appropriated *premanisme* for the benefit of local society, which comes to the fore directly in societal securitization as well as in the creation of a greater share in the local economy for their supporters. The distance between regional *ormas* and the political elite seems to have increased, compared to New Order days. Such increased distance from, and critical attitude towards, government is, in fact, critical to the societal credibility of the regional *ormas*, if these organizations are to be seen as the repre-

sentatives of the population that they purport to be. At the level of discourse at least, *premanisme* and democratization do appear to have become bedfellows. Based on the cases discussed in this article, this leads me to four observations on the wider effects of this combination.

First, the emphasis of regional *ormas* on local society, ethnicity, and the region fits a space left open by the Indonesian political system. Political parties are required by law to be national in structure and orientation, thus making the existence of specifically local political parties by definition impossible. Local *ormas* appropriated this representative position towards the government, thereby translating their societal focus into a representation that resounds in local politics despite the national orientation of the party system. Second, and aligned to this, is the emphasis of the *ormas* on checking non-local influence which enters through (a lack of) government regulation and harms local interests. Even if national law allows for extensive migration or resource exploitation, regional *ormas* argue that such external interests must be curbed in favour of local needs and, therefore, subjected to local norms of order and justice. Defending local interests against exploitative national interests is, in their discourse, legitimate as well as just. The threat that must be secured against is the non-local one from outside the region. Third, the local that needs to be protected thus constitutes the community that provides the support base of the *ormas*, as such posing an alternative to—or a critique of—state norms of citizenship. Inclusivity of this community is, however, subject to political and societal dynamics and capable of going beyond the initial rallying point of the regional *ormas*, as is illustrated by the KPADKT's move towards a multi-ethnic make-up of what was essentially an organization established to represent the rights of the indigenous community in Kalimantan. Fourth, in enforcing the interests of these local communities, regional *ormas* have societal leeway in generating profit for themselves, provided they obtain successes for society at large and their profits stay within reason. It takes a close understanding of local circumstances to determine what the boundaries of 'reasonable profit' are.

The use of violence for the protection of local interests at risk of being harmed by outside desires is thus presented as a historic right that the New Order had illegitimately curbed. Its return, in this line of reasoning, is nothing but a return of agency to the Indonesian population vis-à-vis the government that seeks to control it. However, the application of violence does need societal support if comparisons to New Order thuggery are to be avoided. Minahasan support for Brigade Manguni's involvement in the fighting in Poso illustrates this, as fear of surrounding population groups is strong in Minahasan society. Furthermore, the examples of the FBR and the KPADKT illustrated how the

actual usage of violence is a complex affair that needs to be carefully managed through media, societal, and establishment support. Performing the potential for violence, displaying the capacity to back up a claim, rather than actual violent action, becomes the *modus operandi* for *ormas* in establishing themselves as representatives of local society.

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