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Working Paper

Ethnic entrepreneurs and collective violence: Assessing spatial variations in anti-Chinese rioting within Jakarta during the May 1998 riots

WIDER Working Paper, No. 2010/55

Provided in Cooperation with:

United Nations University (UNU), World Institute for Development
Economics Research (WIDER)

Suggested Citation: Weeraratne, Suranjan (2010) : Ethnic entrepreneurs and collective violence: Assessing spatial variations in anti-Chinese rioting within Jakarta during the May 1998 riots, WIDER Working Paper, No. 2010/55, ISBN 978-92-9230-292-4, The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), Helsinki

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/54158>

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Economics Research

Working Paper No. 2010/55

Ethnic Entrepreneurs and Collective Violence

Assessing Spatial Variations in Anti-
Chinese Rioting within Jakarta during
the May 1998 Riots

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May 2010

Abstract

The concept of scapegoating is frequently used to explain how opportunistic elites attempt to deflect blame onto vulnerable ethnic minorities, particularly during times of social turmoil. However, the notion of scapegoating is undertheorized in the conflict literature and the question of why elite scapegoating only sometimes leads to violence is seldom addressed. This paper seeks to redress the balance by interrogating spatial variations in violence against the economically dominant ethnic Chinese in Indonesia within the city of Jakarta in the late 1990s. By demonstrating different trajectories of violence within a ‘broadly violent city’, this study illustrates the importance of

Keywords: Ethnic entrepreneurs, collective violence, scapegoating, micro-foundations of violence, Indonesia

JEL classification: A10, C00, J10

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This study has been prepared within the UNU-WIDER project on Entrepreneurship and Development (Promoting Entrepreneurial Capacity), directed by Wim Naudé.

UNU-WIDER gratefully acknowledges the financial contributions to the project by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the financial contributions to the research programme by the governments of Denmark (Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Finland (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs), Norway (Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Sweden (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency—Sida) and the United Kingdom (Department for International Development).

ISSN 1798-7237

ISBN 978-92-9230-292-4

disaggregating the unit of analysis in conflict studies. The study argues that elite-orchestrated campaigns of scapegoating succeed only if specific attributes invoked in such campaigns resonate at the local level; violence is more likely when prevailing local conditions amplify the pointed nature of the elite rhetoric. This in turn magnifies the threat perceived by the local community, provides focal point/s for mobilization against the disliked “other” and in turn makes certain Chinese communities more “scapegoatable”. Typically, scapegoating of the Chinese entails invoking entrenched stereotypes of the group as non-Moslem, non-native, economically dominant outsiders. Local mechanisms which activate these stereotypes include higher visibility of non-Moslem sites of worship, heightened ethnic competition, and ostensible symbols of wealth associated with the Chinese.

Tables and figures appear at the end of the paper.

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Typescript prepared by Lisa Winkler at UNU-WIDER

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s). Publication does not imply endorsement by the Institute or the United Nations University, nor by the programme/project sponsors, of any of the views expressed.

1 Research Puzzle

The shooting of four students at the elite Trisakti University campus in Jakarta on 12 May 1998 set in motion a series of tumultuous events that was to rock the very foundation of the Indonesian polity. The shooting precipitated an orgy of rioting in Jakarta and several other cities of a seldom seen brutality and was primarily directed at the influential ethnic Chinese minority in the country.¹ The violence, which came to be known as the ‘May riots of 1998’, was the culmination of nearly two years of unrest as Indonesia reeled under the weight of simultaneous socio-economic and political crises.² Moreover, the impact of the violence was profound as it triggered the resignation of President Suharto, brought an abrupt end to his 32 year old New Order authoritarian regime³ and heralded the installation of a new political system in the country. The May Riots also marked the climax of a sustained wave of violence against the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia that had begun with riots in a few Javanese towns in late 1996 and early 1997 before becoming much more frequent and widespread in the early months of 1998.

As one of the most prominent visible minorities in Indonesia, the ethnic Chinese have long been considered a vulnerable community in the country. Frequently associated with trade and commerce, the Chinese have earned an enviable reputation for their business acumen and commercial dexterity (Bonacich 1973; Wertheim 1964; Zenner 1980). Such dominance in the economy has often seen the Chinese described as a privileged entrepreneurial ethnic minority (Reid 1997) and elicited much resentment from competing groups.⁴ The visibility of the Chinese is intensified further given that most group members are racially and religiously distinctive from the majority groups in Indonesia. Hence, Arief Budiman (1999) has coined the term ‘triple minority’ to describe Chinese Indonesians. The term is attributed to the group as they are: (1) perceived to wield economic influence far disproportionate to group size,⁵ (2) non-Moslems in a country where 88 percent of the population is Moslem, and (3) considered

¹ Estimates of the extent of destruction and death toll fluctuate widely, but it is believed that approximately 1,200 people lost their lives, many ethnic Chinese women raped (possibly around 100 to 150) and over 4,000 shops/houses/vehicles burnt or looted during four days of rioting in Jakarta from 12-15 May 1998. See Berfield and Loveard (1999), Purdey (2006), Sidel (2006), Siegel (1998), Thufail (2007) van Klinken (1999), and Zon (2004), for more detailed accounts of the riots.

² The violence occurred in the backdrop of widespread economic and political turbulence in the country. Indonesia was particularly hard hit by the Asian Financial Crisis as rising unemployment, skyrocketing cost of living and fears of chronic food shortages led to escalating social discontent. At the same time, the shackling of the main opposition candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri, the widely unpopular reelection of Suharto as president for a seventh term and a massive wave of well-organized demonstrations by university students clamoring for far ranging reforms led to increasingly volatile political dynamics in the country. Read Aspinall (2005), O’Rourke (2002), and Schwarz (2000) for more details of these events.

³ The New Order (*Orde Baru*) is the term widely used to describe Suharto’s regime from 1966–98.

⁴ The term “entrepreneurial ethnic minority” broadly refers to the presence of immigrant minorities instrumental in playing a critical role in the development of trade, money management, and capital accumulation in the host country (Reid 1997).

⁵ It is widely believed that the Chinese control over 70 percent of private, corporate, and domestic capital while comprising less than 4 percent of Indonesia’s total population (Harymurti 1999; Schwarz 2000). Chinese wealth is unevenly distributed (Ananta 2006; Setiawan 1999), however, entrenched stereotypes of Chinese wealth abound amongst most Indonesians.

non-*Pribumi* (non-native) in spite of having been present in Indonesia for generations.⁶ Thus, such attributes make the Chinese susceptible to aggression or likely to be scapegoated, particularly during times of socio-economic or political turmoil (Budiman 1999).

Indeed, much of the violence against the Chinese in Indonesia (and indeed other entrepreneurial ethnic minorities like the Jews in Europe and the Indians in East Africa) has been explained from the vantage point of scapegoating. Scapegoating is defined as the act of transferring blame to others (Allport 1954; Berkowitz 1959). It is frequently directed at groups with ‘disliked characteristics’ (Berkowitz and Green 1962; Berkowitz and Holmes 1959) and utilized as an objective strategy to ‘ensure survival in the face of censure’ and to maintain the status quo (Douglas 1995). Therefore, proponents of the scapegoat thesis say that it is often easy, during a national crisis, for opportunistic elites to pin the blame on economically privileged, politically marginalized, and racially/religiously distinct minority groups. This was certainly the case in the late 1990s as the Chinese were subjected to a well-orchestrated and particularly virulent campaign of scapegoating by a range of economic, political, and religious elites as Indonesia descended into chaos in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis.

Yet, explanations based on scapegoating do not hold up adequately to empirical scrutiny and offer at best an incomplete picture of the trajectory of violence against entrepreneurial ethnic minorities. Indeed, a quick glance at the pattern of anti-Chinese rioting in the late New Order Indonesia reveals that not all Chinese communities were targeted; in spite of the general ferocity of violence, its geographic distribution was highly skewed across the country. Indeed, spatial variations in violence existed amongst all the major islands of the archipelago as well as at province, district, subdistrict, and neighborhood levels. Moreover, even *within* violent locales, the extent and intensity of rioting differed substantially from place to place. Of particular interest is the variation in violence *within* the region of Jakarta. As noted earlier, the severity of violence in Jakarta was unparalleled in terms of loss of lives and destruction. However, even within Jakarta, the trajectory of violence was far from uniform; out of 265 neighborhoods in Jakarta, “only” 76 (29 percent of total neighborhoods) were caught up in the destruction of May 1998.

It is crucial to note that almost everywhere in Indonesia, the Chinese were considered to possess ostensibly “scapegoatable” qualities, in that they were perceived as rich, non-Moslem and non-*Pribumi* outsiders. The economic crisis and the accompanying political uncertainty also impacted the whole archipelago. Hence, the broad conditions for the exploitation (scapegoating) of the Chinese were more or less uniform across Indonesia in the late 1990s; yet, critically, such scapegoating resulted in violence only in some places. This empirical anomaly highlights the inconsistent impact of elite scapegoating and leads to the central research question motivating this study.

Under what conditions do campaigns of elite scapegoating lead to violence against ethnic minorities?

⁶ The term *Pribumi* denotes original inhabitants of the land or “sons of the soil” and encompasses all the indigenous ethnic groups in the country. In contrast, non-*Pribumi* refers to individuals of foreign origin or descent, most notably the ethnic Chinese.

Conceptually, the study answers this question with reference to violence against entrepreneurial ethnic minorities—a widely scapegoated class of people. Empirically, the study uses spatial variations in violence against the Chinese in Jakarta in May 1998 to understand the erratic success of elite entrepreneurs in stirring communal violence.

In brief, the main argument advanced in this study is as follows: elite-induced campaigns of scapegoating are executed by drawing attention to three specific attributes associated with the Chinese: namely, economic dominance, religious difference, and racial distinctiveness; thus, scapegoating is done through an exaggerated problematization of the three elements in Budiman’s triple minority complex (Budiman 1999). The key to unraveling the puzzle of why scapegoating only sometimes leads to violence lies in understanding how these attributes resonate at the local level. I argue that elite portrayals of the Chinese as opportunistic, wealthy non-Moslem outsiders are more likely to produce violence in neighborhoods where prevailing local conditions amplify the credibility of that elite rhetoric. This magnifies the threat perceived by the local community and provides focal point/s for mobilization against the disliked/feared “other”. Later on, I articulate specific mechanisms through which these attributes assume local salience, make certain Chinese communities more scapegoatable and augment the likelihood of violence.

The rest of paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the rationale for case selection and describes in more detail the extent of spatial variations in Jakarta. Section 3 briefly surveys the literature and theorizes the concept of scapegoating. Section 4 pays attention to particular mechanisms through which elite orchestrated campaigns translate into violence at the local level. Section 5 summarizes the research methodology used in the paper and operationalizes relevant variables. Section 6 presents the main statistical findings at the neighborhood level in Jakarta. These findings are flushed out in detail through qualitative evidence in the discussion in Section 7. The significance of this research and its implications are discussed in section 8.

2 Case Selection

The fundamental concern of this study is to ascertain under what conditions campaigns of elite scapegoating lead to violence against entrepreneurial ethnic minorities. To that extent, an investigation of the patterns of anti-Chinese violence in Jakarta is ideal for two primary reasons. First, the extent of scapegoating was pervasive as multiple Jakarta-based elites sought repeatedly to castigate the Chinese for the country’s mounting economic and political woes.⁷ Such campaigns of scapegoating were also more or less uniformly distributed across the 265 neighborhoods in Jakarta.⁸

⁷ Much of the blame mongering was done by projecting the Chinese as opportunistic, rich, non-Moslem outsiders bent on furthering their own interests. Notable amongst the purveyors of anti-Chinese diatribes were military elites like Major General Prabowo Subianto, religious leaders such as Ahmad Sumarsono, and economic elites like Adi Sasono.

⁸ It could be argued that whether scapegoating results in violence or not at the local level depends on the extent of exposure or publicity given to such scapegoating. However, this argument is less plausible for neighborhoods in Jakarta. Given that the city under consideration is by far the most developed in Indonesia, it is unlikely that some neighborhoods received significantly greater coverage and exposure of the scapegoating than others. In any event, I tested for this possibility by comparing

Second, in spite of widespread efforts by elite entrepreneurs to stir up violence, their endeavors were successful only in some neighborhoods and not others. Figure 1 gives a detailed spatial breakdown of anti-Chinese violence in all neighborhoods across the five districts in Jakarta. It is clear that rioting cut across all five districts, but comparatively, Central Jakarta was the worst affected with over 40 percent of neighborhoods engulfed in violence. Several Chinese dominated pockets in West, East, and North Jakarta were also severely affected while South Jakarta, in relative terms, bore the least impact. Thus, as Figure 1 amply demonstrates, significant spatial variations in the patterns of rioting were observed. Indeed, in spite of its sheer intensity and rampant nature, the violence was confined to “only” 76 of the 265 neighborhoods across Jakarta (29 percent of all neighborhoods).

Figure 2 uses GIS technology⁹ to digitally map the above trends and it is clear that anti-Chinese violence at the neighborhood level in Jakarta was not entirely contingent on the size of the local Chinese population.¹⁰ Though violent neighborhoods boasted a larger Chinese presence on average,¹¹ there were several locales with substantial Chinese communities that were peaceful and many others that were violent in spite of the Chinese being a small fraction of the population.¹²

This case is particularly illuminating given that it examines neighborhood level variations in rioting within a broadly violent locale—under near uniform conditions of scapegoating—hence, it subjects the effectiveness of the scapegoat thesis to an especially stiff examination. Further, in most studies of collective violence, the unit of analysis is almost always the “violent episode” (whether at national or regional level) and exploration of spatial variations within that violent episode remains a seriously understudied dimension in the literature (Kalyvas 2003; King 2004; Petersen, 2001). Thus, this study contributes to the literature on collective violence by interrogating the violent episode.

3 Brief Survey of Literature

An array of theoretical perspectives has been put forward to explain anti-Chinese outbreaks in Indonesia. These include accounts based on the economic dominance of the Chinese (Chandra 2002; Somers 1974; Wertheim 1964), elite political

newspaper readership, television ownership, and telephone ownership at the neighborhood level (using data from the PODES 2000 survey) and found no significant differences between violent and peaceful neighborhoods).

⁹ GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems and such technology is often utilized to present and analyse attributes that are spatially referenced.

¹⁰ This map uses GIS to depict neighborhood level patterns of violence. The darker blocks (sections) represent violent neighborhoods and the lighter sections represent peaceful neighborhoods.

¹¹ The mean Chinese population for violent neighborhoods was 10.02 percent while the corresponding figure for peaceful neighborhoods was 4.95 percent.

¹² Notable examples include large and peaceful “Chinese neighborhoods” such as Jelambar Baru in Grogol (Chinese population 39.5 percent), Tangki in Tamansari (49.5 percent), Duri Utara in Tambora (41.5 percent) and Tanah Seral also in Tambora (37.3 percent). Yet, at the same time, several neighborhoods with marginal Chinese presence such as Pondok Labu in Cilandak (Chinese population 0.18 percent), Mampang Prapatan (0.2 percent), Jatinegara (0.11 percent) and Pasar Minggu (0.50 percent) experienced quite severe outbreaks of violence.

manoeuvring (Chua 2004; Shiraishi 1997), military competition (Berfield and Loveard 1999; Liong 2002), racialized state terrorism (Heryanto 1998), institutional change (Bertrand 2004), uncertainty over the role of Islam (Sidel 2006) and cultural legitimation of violence (Hüsken and Jonge 2002). Apart from these principally monocausal explanations, several scholars have proposed multidimensional arguments that have combined a number of economic, religious, and racial factors (Coppel 2001; Mackie 1976; Purdey 2006). Taken together, there is a rich, nuanced, and sophisticated wealth of material on anti-Sinicism in Indonesia and offers much theoretical and analytical pluralism to students of the subject.

A detailed discussion of this literature is outside of the scope of this study, but a few brief comments are in order here. First, much of the scholarship focuses on specific incidents of violence; thus, most theoretical arguments remain empirically undertested across a spectrum of cases. Second, most accounts revolve almost exclusively on the phenomenon of violence, apart from the odd cursory mention of a few notable peaceful cities during a particularly virulent period of rioting. Hence, a lack of focus on spatial variations in violence is a significant lacuna in anti-Chinese research. Third, most accounts implicitly or explicitly allude to the role of scapegoating and acknowledge its widespread prevalence. Yet, there is an almost complete absence of rigorous theorizing of the concept. Moreover, neither the question of why scapegoating only sometimes triggers violence nor specific mechanisms through which scapegoating leads to violent outbursts is addressed adequately in the literature (Gibson and Howard 2007).

3.1 Theorizing Scapegoating

Classical theories of scapegoating rely heavily on the principle of blame displacement. Using frustration–aggression theory, scapegoat theorists posit that in times of national crisis people instinctively seek groups upon whom they assign blame and displace aggression for their misfortunes (Berkowitz, 1959).¹³ Drawing on the “prior dislike hypothesis”, Berkowitz and Holmes (1959) assert that such displaced aggression is generalized to groups whose perceived characteristics result in their being disliked. In other words, the object serving as the target for aggression usually has certain “stimulus qualities” or negative attributes that attract resentment (Berkowitz and Green 1962). Therefore, the choice of a target for displaced anger is not random and explains why certain groups are scapegoated over others. Anti-Chinese scapegoating in Indonesia appears to fit this profile.¹⁴

However, as noted earlier, theories based on displacement of aggression provide limited explanatory potential in delineating spatial variations in violence. Indeed, I argue that much of the analytical “looseness” of conventional theories of scapegoating stems from

¹³ Frustration–aggression theory posits that aggression is essentially an outcome resulting from built-up frustration. The resulting aggression can be of two types—direct or displaced. Direct aggression implies that the source/thwarting agent of the frustration is directly attacked while in displaced aggression, frustration is taken out on outlets or substitutes in the absence of the direct source or the improbability of attacking the direct source as it may be deemed to be too powerful (Berkowitz and Green 1962).

¹⁴ Scapegoating of the Chinese was carried out through pointed references to disliked characteristics, in other words, by drawing attention to the three elements in Budiman’s triple minority status (economic dominance, religious difference, and racial distinctiveness).

their overreliance on the principle of displacement. Moreover, the notion of displaced aggression sits uneasily with the choice of target groups based on disliked characteristics and a priori indicates a fundamental contradiction. As Horowitz (2001: 138) observes: "... if aggression is directed against a group with previously disliked characteristics, it may not be entirely displaced and may also involve elements of direct aggression". Further, pure displacement of aggression is difficult to prove and in actual practice, a great deal of ethnic aggression appears to be both direct and displaced with many cases where the source of the frustration and its outlet are linked (Horowitz 1973).

As the riots of the late New Order reveal, the lines between displaced and direct aggression against the Chinese were often quite blurred. Notions of pure displacement would suggest that the Chinese were not the root cause of societal discontent of the late 1990s, but were merely targeted as it was not possible to direct anger at the actual thwarting agent. However, such a portrayal is inaccurate for three reasons: first, the pointed nature of scapegoating hinted at an element of directness. This made it easier to link the Chinese to the origins of the unrest and in many violent locales the Chinese were viewed as being at least partially responsible for Indonesia's economic and social crises, hence deserving retribution; second, even assuming that the Chinese were not directly responsible for the crisis, their perceived close connections with multiple regime elites made the group guilty by association; and third, given that not all Chinese were attacked equally, grounds of displacement alone are inadequate in explaining violence.

Thus, it is likely that aggression against the Chinese involved a combination of direct and displaced elements; this provides a useful point of departure to understand the inconsistent impact of elite scapegoating. The principle of blame displacement was decidedly in evidence as self-interested elites sought to deflect attention from themselves by painting the Chinese as villains. Yet, the deliberate specificity with which blame was displaced—by amplifying the triple minority complex of the Chinese—also made it possible to envision group as bearing some direct responsibility for Indonesia's woes.

Following this, I argue that the key to unraveling the inconsistent impact of scapegoating lies in understanding how the three main attributes invoked in elite scapegoating were perceived across the neighborhoods in Jakarta. In other words, violence was more likely in neighborhoods where elite characterizations of the Chinese as rich non-Moslem outsiders mirrored the local conditions of the neighborhoods. For example, in certain neighborhoods, the perceived economic dominance of the Chinese could be more problematic due to the presence of Chinese-owned banks and supermarkets. In such places, elite rhetoric castigating the Chinese as self-interested economic mercenaries plotting the downfall of Suharto and the country was likely to have a more explosive impact. In other words, the Chinese are at their most vulnerable when local conditions "match" the elite rhetoric and make such rhetoric appear real and reasonable. In turn, this magnifies the threat/insecurity perceived by competing groups and provides focal point/s for mobilization against the Chinese (Petersen 2001). Thus, the framework being proposed here suggests that elite scapegoating will succeed and lead to violence against the ethnic Chinese if the three attributes invoked in campaigns of scapegoating resonate at the local level in a series of context-bound ways.

Next, I discuss specific mechanisms through which the economic, ethnic, and religious aspects of the triple minority complex magnify the scapegoatability of the Chinese and consequently augment the possibility of violence.

4 Scapegoatability at the Local Level

4.1 Activation of Economic Scapegoating

Anti-Chinese resentment is likely to be greater during economic crises and particularly in places where the Chinese are seen as controlling or owning major economic resources with a high degree of visibility.¹⁵ Thus, I argue that the Chinese are more vulnerable in neighborhoods where the extent of “visible wealth” of the group is greater. This is especially likely to be the case in poorer neighborhoods where the contrast between Chinese wealth and *Pribumi* impoverishment is starker.

4.1.1 Local Mechanism for Economic Scapegoatability: Visible Wealth of the Chinese

I define visible wealth as ostensible markers of prosperity associated with the Chinese. As the economy expanded in the 1980s and early 1990s and a strategy of export oriented industrialization took hold, Chinese enterprises emerged rapidly in cities and towns around the country. These were often propped up by collusive relationships with local military and civil officials (Siegel 2000); thus, Chinese wealth became increasingly ostentatious as bank outlets, department stores, shopping malls, and factories associated with Chinese wealth, mushroomed.

However, the fruits of economic development were unevenly distributed and many cities in particular were soon awash with a frustrated underclass: the urban poor (Firman 1999). As the economy tumbled into freefall, the cost of living skyrocketed, rates of urban unemployment shot up sharply, and the discontent of the urban poor magnified.

Hence, locales where visible markers of Chinese prosperity (such as shopping malls and department stores) and significant levels of societal poverty coexisted side by side were particularly volatile as they served to amplify entrenched perceptions of acute group level inequalities.

4.2 Activation of Ethnic Scapegoating

Several studies have shown that greater ethnic heterogeneity of society could increase the possibility of ethnic violence (Barron, Kaiser, and Pradhan 2004; Gurr, Woodward, and Marshall 2005; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005, Sambanis 2001). Olzak (1992) asserts that competition for economic and political resources between polarized ethnic groups can engender tensions. In an ethnically heterogeneous Indonesian context, the nature of that competition and resulting tension is likely to be two-pronged; between different *Pribumi* ethnic groups (who compose the bulk of the population) as well as between the Chinese (who wield economic influence) and the *Pribumis*. Thus, this

¹⁵ Similarly, Brustein and King’s (2004) comparative study of anti-Semitic violence in Bulgaria and Romania observes that the level of violence was much lower in Bulgaria as opposed to Romania. The disproportionately higher percent of Jews in the middle class and in economically influential positions in Romania emerged as a critical variable in explaining the cross-country variations in anti-Semitic violence.

double-faceted ethnic contestation is likely to be greater in ethnically more heterogeneous locales. The nature of this two-pronged contestation and how it increases the vulnerability of the Chinese is briefly explained below.

4.2.1 Local Mechanism for Ethnic Scapegoatability: Two-Pronged Ethnic Competition: Pribumi versus Pribumi and Pribumi versus Chinese

Much of the literature on intra-*Pribumi* ethnic tensions in the country during the New Order focuses on the Javanese versus non-Javanese dichotomy.¹⁶ Javanese dominance in the top civilian and military echelons became increasingly stronger after independence and acquired near hegemonic status during the New Order (Gregory 1980).¹⁷ This led to increasing resentment amongst the non-Javanese.¹⁸ In a regime known for its embedded neo-patrimonialism, ethnic tensions abounded as different groups sought to curry favor with the establishment (Webster 2007).

Apart from competing with each other, *Pribumi* groups are in constant competition with the Chinese, given the latter's economic superiority. Thus, in more ethnically divided cities, the likelihood of this two-pronged ethnic competition—*Pribumi-Pribumi* and *Pribumi-Chinese*—is higher. In other words, the more fragmented a locale is in terms of ethnic composition, the greater the probability of ethnically distinct *Pribumi* groups coming into contact with each other as well as with the economically dominant, non-*Pribumi* Chinese over limited resources. It is asserted that this augments the likelihood of violent anti-Chinese reactions as in a very polarized setting different *Pribumi* groups have to contend with the disproportionate economic clout wielded by the Chinese.¹⁹

4.3 Activation of Religious Scapegoating

The literature makes it abundantly clear that the Moslems in Indonesia are not a homogenous group and many different typologies of Indonesian Islam have been put forward (Geertz 1960; Riddell 2002; Woodward 2001). In addition, Abdurrahman Wahid, who became president of Indonesia in 1999, identified three main camps in Indonesian Islam, namely neo-modernists, exclusivists, and a floating majority in the middle for whose support the other two groups compete fiercely (Wahid 2001). Neo-modernists call for Islamic values and ethics and put emphasis on the essence of Islamic teaching. They are very inclusive and vehemently oppose efforts to use Islam as a

¹⁶ The Javanese are by some distance the largest ethnic group in the country. According to the 2000 Population census, they make up 41 percent of the total population in the country. They are followed by the Sundanese, Malay, Madurese, Batak, Minangkabau, Betawi, Buginese, Bantaneese, and the Banjareese as the top 10 groups in the country (Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta 2003)

¹⁷ A series of factional struggles and armed rebellions mainly in the outer islands led to the ousting of many non-Javanese officers and contributed to the decreasing heterogeneity of the Indonesian army.

¹⁸ The Sundanese in particular were often displeased with Javanese preponderance at all levels of governance. Suharto's rule of Indonesia as a self-proclaimed Javanese king, the extolling of Javanese culture and the misuse of Javanese symbols and traditions to maintain hold on power also stirred dislike and apathy amongst the non-Javanese.

¹⁹ The question could be posed here why there is only violence against the Chinese and not between the different *Pribumi* groups that are also in competition for resources? Different *Pribumi* groups might be competing for the same resources, but in the absence of historically constructed and deeply embedded hostile relationships between them and the presence of an economically dominant Chinese community, violence between different *Pribumi* groups is unlikely.

political tool. Exclusivists on the other hand complain of discrimination against Moslems and the urgent need to redress inequalities. Steeped in Islamic ideology, exclusivists call for Islam to occupy a more pervasive and influential role in state and society. They are well-known for their withering criticism of the Chinese and the Christians for having enjoyed disproportionate economic clout and argue that these groups have been “depriving Moslems of the political dominance they feel they deserve” (Schwarz 2000: 331). Further, the exclusivists also harbor fears (at times bordering on paranoia) over the possible “Christianization” of Indonesia.

I borrow from Wahid’s typology and argue that violence against the Chinese is more likely in neighborhoods where exclusivist elements feel more threatened by the Chinese. This could happen in the following two ways.

4.3.1 Local Mechanisms for Religious Scapegoatability

— Greater Visibility of Symbols of non-Moslem Worship

Suharto’s wooing of Islam in the early 1990s saw Christians being gradually replaced from the core of the regime. Thus, growing politicization of Islam in the late New Order increased tensions between the two religions. Most Moslem groups saw Suharto’s about-turn as a golden opportunity to reverse past injustices and exclusion (Bertrand 2004). In this context, the proliferation and increasing visibility of non-Moslem places of worship (especially churches) has been put forward as a factor contributing to anti-Chinese violence in several places as the aforementioned “exclusivist” Moslems in particular worried about fears of “Christianization” in a rapidly changing Indonesia (Bertrand 2004; Sidel 2006; Siegel, 2000).²⁰

— Sites of Islamic Piety

Certain locales in Indonesia are informally referred to as *Kota Santri* (devout locale) and characterized by dense networks of Mosques and Islamic schools. Such places typically contain dense networks of Islamic associational activity and are often graced by charismatic Islamic leaders. Ethnic Chinese living in such localities are more vulnerable to be scapegoated as resentment at the repression of “predominantly pious Moslem communities” is likely to be greater (Sidel 2006: 102). Further, these networks also provide ample mobilizational opportunities to rally against the Chinese.

²⁰ This argument assumes some degree of conflation between the Chinese and the Christians. Yet, sometimes it is analytically difficult to separate anti-Chinese violence from anti-Christian violence. As Allievi (2003: 146) notes:

... it is possible that in the absence of alternative modes of association for a particular group, places of worship for that group may assume added significance and consequently make them more visible to opposing groups. During the New Order period, the Chinese were banned from any political activity and indeed forbidden from any form of associational activity. Further, as Confucianism was banned as an officially sanctioned religion, many Chinese converted to Christianity. In this context, it is plausible that the main pole of aggregation for the Chinese was the place of worship.

5 Methodological Notes

Having described the theoretical framework in explaining spatial variations in anti-Chinese violence in Jakarta, this section seeks to elucidate the methodological framework used in tracing such variations. The research primarily entails a mixed methods approach and uses quantitative data (in the form of a neighborhood level dataset in Jakarta) as well as qualitative data in the form of surveys, interviews, and secondary research sources.

5.1 Unit of Analysis: Neighborhood in Jakarta (*Kelurahan*)

Jakarta is divided into five urban districts, which in turn account for a total of 43 subdistricts (*Kecamatan*). Each subdistrict is further disaggregated into an even lower administrative division called *Kelurahan*. In total, DKI Jakarta constitutes 265 *Kelurahan*.

5.2 Main Data Sources: Quantitative

The primary data source was the Indonesian Statistics Bureau (BPS). In particular, most of the neighborhood level demographic data for Jakarta was obtained from BPS' Year 2000 Population Census for Jakarta. The Indonesia Village Potential Statistics (PODES) 2000 database was used for a large number of socio-economic and organizational variables and Rand Corporation's Indonesia Family Life Survey (1997) data provided useful information on horizontal inequalities.

5.3 Main Data Sources: Qualitative

Survey questionnaires were handed out to both *Pribumi* and Chinese segments of the populace and generated 36 responses from the Chinese and 22 from the *Pribumi*. The *Pribumi* respondents came from a non-random sample of post-graduate students at the State Islamic Universities in Jakarta.²¹ The Chinese respondents were chosen at random and included traders, students as well as professionals.²² Further, I conducted 17 open-ended interviews, which included academics specializing in Chinese-Indonesian studies, journalists, as well as several leading members of a prominent Chinese-Indonesian association.

5.4 Operationalization of Key Variables

5.4.1 Dependent Variable:

Presence or Absence of Violence: Violent neighborhoods were coded as 1 and peaceful neighborhoods coded as 0. The coding was based on several detailed reports on the

²¹ The researcher was attached as a visiting fellow at the State Islamic University in Jakarta from February to July in 2006 and spent a further month there in August 2007. The university catered exclusively to Moslems and the respondents were drawn from the Islamic Interdisciplinary Studies program.

²² The questions posed in the survey were more or less similar for both *Pribumi* and Chinese respondents, though not identical and posed pointed queries on relative wealth, perceptions towards the other group, and extent of intergroup interaction. Moreover, the Chinese were also asked to provide accounts of any institutionalized or public discrimination that they may have faced.

Jakarta riots. Given the absence of detailed data, it was not possible to ascertain the severity of violence in each violent neighborhood.

5.4.2 Key Independent Variables:

Visible Wealth of the Chinese: The extent of visible wealth associated with the Chinese was captured through an interaction between the number of banks and supermarkets, and the number of slums/poor settlements in each neighborhood.²³

Nature of ethnic competition: To capture the extent of ethnic contestation, I created two alternative measures. First, an ethnic fractionalization index based on the standard Herfindahl Concentration Formula (Alesina et al. 2003; Easterly and Levine 1997; Fearon, 2003) was created at the neighborhood level and this measures the extent to which two individuals taken at random in a given locale belong to different ethnic groups.²⁴ Second, I also measured ethnic competition by creating a variable called “competitive ethnic groups”. This included all groups with a minimum of 5 percent representation and was loosely based on Posner’s conceptualization of politically relevant groups (Posner 2004).

Visibility of non-Moslem worship: The visibility of places of religious worship associated with the Chinese was operationalized by measuring the density of churches (both catholic and protestant) and Buddhist temples in each neighborhood.²⁵ Two separate indicators were created to measure density of non-Moslem places of worship: density by population and density by area.

Kota Santri/places of Islamic piety: Kota Santri were operationalized by measuring the combined density of Islamic schools and mosques in each neighborhood. Two separate indicators were created to measure density of devout cities—by population and by area.

5.4.3 Control Variables

In addition to the variables described above, a range of other socio-economic indicators was also used as control variables, but also to measure competing explanations. These include variables on economic growth, measures of human development, population density, as well as measures of civic participation.

²³ The data on banks and supermarkets were obtained from the PODES 2000 dataset. This does not indicate how many of the banks and supermarkets in each locality are owned or controlled by the Chinese. However, based on the literature (Sidel 2006; Schwarz 2000; Shari 2000) and my own field research, it is reasonable to assume that many of these assets (especially the supermarkets/shopping complexes) are either owned by the Chinese or controlled by Chinese wealth. Further, it is believed that many of the over 200 banks and major corporations in the country are “run” by the Chinese (Shari 2000).

²⁴ In spite of being frequently used, fractionalization indices have been criticized by some (Esteban and Ray 1994; Reynal-Querol 2002; Posner 2004; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). They observe that summarizing the entire ethnic landscape of a country (or at a smaller spatial unit as relevant to this research) with a single number (as fractionalization indices do) is too simplistic and may at times obscure highly salient features of ethnic diversity; further, they provide no information on the depth of relations between different groups

²⁵ Hindu temples were not considered as the percentage of Chinese who are Hindu is likely to be negligible.

6 Statistical Findings from Jakarta

The main statistical findings in Jakarta are presented in this section. Three ordered logistic regression models (containing alternative independent variables) were run to measure the incidence of anti-Chinese rioting across the 265 neighborhoods in Jakarta. Table 1 presents the results of the various regression models (the main summary statistics are included in Table 2). A quick glance at the results in Table 1 reveals that the main predictors of local level anti-Chinese violence were multifaceted and comprised a combination of economic, religious, and ethnic factors.

All three models in Table 1 demonstrate that economic scapegoating is more likely to manifest into violence in neighborhoods where visible wealth associated with Chinese entrepreneurs is prominently on display. Thus, the gap between the rich and the poor is likely to be more acute in neighborhoods with large urban slums; hence, in such neighborhoods, ostensible markers of Chinese prosperity are more likely to incite resentment. Figure 3 predicts the probability of violence as visible wealth is increased from its mean value to its 90th percentile while keeping all other variables in the model at their mean.²⁶ The likelihood of violence increases from around 23 percent to nearly 37 percent as the extent of visible wealth increases; similarly, the probability of peace drops down from 78 percent to 62 percent.

The theoretical framework outlined earlier hypothesized that ethnic grievances against the non-*Pribumi* Chinese were likely to be greater in locales where the degree of ethnic competition was greater. There is strong support for this notion at the neighborhood level and ethnic competition was positively and significantly correlated with violent anti-Sinicism in Models 1 and 2 of Table 1. These two models measured the extent of ethnic competition by the number of competitive ethnic groups in each neighborhood. Model 3 used the ethnic fractionalization index as an alternative measure to capture ethnic competition. This was positively associated with violence, but not significant. Thus, the number of competitive ethnic groups appears to be a better predictor of anti-Chinese ethnic tensions in Jakarta than a measure based on fractionalization which might on occasion be distorted by the inclusion of several very small groups.²⁷

Religious elements invoked in anti-Chinese scapegoating were likely to stir the passions of exclusivist Moslems and percolate into local level violence in areas where non-Moslem sites of worship were highly visible: churches and temples are often associated with the Chinese and also serve as visible markers of Chinese presence.²⁸ Figure 4 estimates the probability of violence across different densities of non-Moslem worship

²⁶ Figures 3 and 4 were created using Clarify (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003) and SPost commands (Long and Freese 2005). In each figure the first dotted vertical line depicts the mean value and the second line represents the value at the 90th percentile for the variable in question.

²⁷ As Posner (2004) and Fearon (2003) have noted, one of the weaknesses of the ethnic fractionalization index is that the Herfindhal Concentration Formula (based on which the index is computed) may be an inadequate technology to capture relevant dynamics of the ethnic diversity of a particular locale. Further, fractionalization scores might also be distorted by the inclusion of several small and politically irrelevant groups (Posner, 2004).

²⁸ As discussed earlier, Models 1 and 2 use different measures for density of non-Moslem worship: Model 1 calculates density by total population while Model 2 uses neighborhood landmass/area. Both measures are positively and significantly correlated with anti-Chinese violence.

and violence is almost 20 percent more likely when density is increased from the mean to its 90th percentile and the probability of peace declines by a similar percentage.²⁹ It has to be noted that dense Islamic networks (*Kota Santri*) were not significantly correlated with violence at the neighborhood level, as hypothesized earlier. The non-significance of dense Islamic networks with violence is not surprising given that the impact of traditional Islamic schools and charismatic religious leaders (the hallmarks of *Kota Santri*) is likely to be less in more urban settings.³⁰

The findings in Table 1 show that violence is also more likely in neighborhoods that contain densely populated Chinese communities or ‘Chinatowns’.³¹ Thus, as the riots cut across Jakarta, neighborhoods where the Chinese tended to be highly concentrated were more vulnerable to attack. While it could be argued that the spatial clustering of the Chinese is a critical variable in determining patterns of violence, this by itself is not able to delineate the various causal mechanisms through which violence manifested in some neighborhoods. Indeed, densely packed Chinese communities were especially vulnerable to the explosive impact of such mechanisms as visible wealth, presence of non-Moslem sites of worship and ethnic contestation. Table 1 also reveals that the availability of essential commodities was negatively and significantly associated with anti-Chinese violence. Given that accusations of Chinese shopkeepers hoarding food and other essential items were rife, neighborhoods where basic commodities were relatively more plentiful are likely to have been affected less by food shortages; thereby diluting the resentment felt against the economically dominant Chinese.³²

7 Discussion

This section aims to build on the above statistical findings through the use of field surveys, interviews, and other secondary material. Most respondents noted that it was difficult to isolate a single factor as having caused the riots. Economic jealousies, the ongoing political/economic crisis, infighting within the military and racial intolerance were frequently mentioned as contributory factors for the violence. The statistical analysis presented earlier identified a series of micro level causal mechanisms through which these attributes assumed local salience and enhanced the possibility of violence at the neighborhood level. These mechanisms are elucidated further in the next section.

²⁹ The predicted probability of violence shown in Figure 4 is based on density of non-Moslem worship (by total population). A simulation of predicted probabilities for density of non-Moslem worship (by area) showed very similar results.

³⁰ As a part of my PhD dissertation, I examined village level variations in anti-Chinese violence in the late New Order Indonesia, using the same theoretical framework discussed here. At the village level, dense Islamic networks were very strongly correlated with the likelihood of anti-Chinese violence. This is not particularly surprising as traditional Islamic boarding schools and their teachers typically exert a stronger influence in the rural areas (especially in Java but also in many other areas). Further, the percentage of the non-Moslem Chinese is significantly higher in the neighborhoods of Jakarta as opposed to many rural areas, thereby diluting the impact of sites of Islamic piety.

³¹ The extent of Chinese group concentration or the presence of a “Chinatown” was measured by dividing the total Chinese population in a neighborhood (*Kelurahan*) from the total Chinese population in the subdistrict (*Kecamatan*) to which the neighborhood belongs.

³² The variable “essential commodities” measured the availability of nine essential items: rice, sugar, cooking oil, kerosene, milk, eggs, meat, maize, and salt.

7.1 Economic Scapegoatability in Jakarta's Neighborhoods

Table 1 amply demonstrated that economic antipathies against the Chinese were more likely to flare up in poorer neighborhoods with ostensible markers of Chinese prosperity. As van Klinken observes, many of the rioters were the urban poor, those who lost out on the economic riches of the 1990s and felt alienated from a political system in which they had no representation. As the violence exploded, the urban poor unleashed their pent-up frustrations on banks, supermarkets, cars, and other symbols of affluence that were inaccessible to them (van Klinken 1998). An analyst with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences concurred: "In a riot you see anger, you see jealousy over economic inequality and economic disparity. Chinese in places like Central Jakarta are wealthy. To me it seems logical that people from lower classes target their focus on people like this".³³

In the neighborhood of Jembatan Lima in West Jakarta, where the Chinese made up one third of the population and where the percentage of poor households was almost 25 percent higher than the Jakarta average, a large crowd went on a rampage on 13 May and deliberately singled out Chinese property. Actively encouraged by several "rough looking men", the mob destroyed banks, many Chinese-owned houses, vehicles, and a food market (Berfield and Loveard 1999). The urban poor also figured prominently in widespread looting and burning in Tanah Abang, the garment distribution district of Jakarta. As Berfield and Tesoro (1999) note, many rioters were people like Adi Santoso, an unemployed university dropout whose only source of income was irregular piecemeal jobs. As he helped himself to a laptop computer, clothes, and other goods from a Chinese shop in Tanah Abang, Santoso mumbled, "I just want to take some of the fruits of development", and openly admitted that his main targets were Chinese businesses.

With a strong Chinese business community in a neighborhood littered with urban slums, the demographic profile of Angke in Tambora made it a prime target for violence.³⁴ Predictably, Angke was severely affected as Chinese property was systematically pillaged and plundered in a massive wave of rioting.³⁵ In the neighborhood of Pluit in North Jakarta, Pantai Indah Kapok, an upscale housing complex occupied mostly by Chinese residents was the target of rioters' fury on 14 May. As the mob swept through the complex, 64 houses were burnt and nearly 400 others looted. Eyewitness reports indicate that many of the looters were from the neighboring area, a part of the city crowded with slum dwellers (Siegel 1998).

Bank Central Asia (BCA) is one of the leading banks in Indonesia. Reputed as the "most widely used by Indonesian businesses," it is controlled by prominent Chinese entrepreneur Liem Sioe Liong and his Salim Group of Companies.³⁶ As the violence

³³ "Chinese in ordeal by fire", *Hong Kong Standard*, 15 May 1998.

³⁴ The Chinese in Angke comprise an estimated 25 percent of the total population. The number of poor households in Angke was almost 50 percent higher than the Jakarta average.

³⁵ Personal interview with Chinese shopkeeper in Jakarta, 24 May 1998.

³⁶ Liem Sioe Liong enjoyed a privileged relationship with the Suharto administration, was the embodiment of patronage and corruption associated with the New Order and was widely despised by *Pribumi* entrepreneurs for the stranglehold he exerted over many strategic sectors of the economy.

escalated in May 1998, BCA outlets were widely targeted and an estimated 122 branch offices and over 1,250 automatic teller machines in and around Jakarta were burnt or looted. Further, a palatial house belonging to Liem in an exclusive Central Jakarta neighborhood was ransacked by a group of looters who proceeded to torch five of his luxury automobiles.³⁷

Several other Chinese-owned banks also suffered in the rioting. 16 branches of Bank Lippo, owned by Mochtar Riady, another influential Chinese tycoon, were extensively damaged. Six department stores and a major shopping center belonging to the Riady conglomerate were also set ablaze.³⁸ Moreover, numerous outlets of other Chinese controlled banks such as Bank Bali, Bank Maspion, and Bank Danamon were similarly targeted for looting and destruction.³⁹

As the economy grew rapidly in the 1990s, the number of luxurious shopping malls in Jakarta increased exponentially to cater to an evergrowing middle class (Kenichiro 2001). These extravagant symbols of opulence were often owned by Chinese entrepreneurs, controlled by Chinese money, or at the very least contained numerous Chinese shops. As the riot unfolded, such objects of undisguised prosperity were obvious targets for impoverished rioters and ripe for plunder. Over the course of three days, 40 shopping malls in and around Jakarta were looted or burnt (Zon 2004). These included the Citraland shopping complex in Grogol owned by Chinese tycoon Ciputra, Roxy Mall, also in Grogol, owned by fellow Chinese entrepreneur Eka Cipta Wijaya and Mochtar Riady's Lippo Karawaci supermall on the outskirts of Jakarta. Many other shopping malls that were destroyed such as Jatinegara Plaza in the neighborhood of Bali Mester, Yogya Plaza in Klender, and Kelapa Gading Mall in Kelapa Gading contained numerous Chinese shops.⁴⁰ Moreover, in the mainly Chinese neighborhoods of Glodok and Pasar Baru, several shopping centers were plundered including Glodok Plaza, the largest electronic and computer center in Indonesia and Pasar Glodok, a large sprawling mall consisting of over 1,800 shops (Kusno 2003).

Chinese entrepreneurs also control some of the leading supermarket chains in Jakarta such as Hero, Ramayana and Matahari and these were frequent targets for mob frustration during the May riots of 1998. Hero, the largest supermarket chain in Indonesia, suffered the most with at least 30 of its 50 stores in Jakarta looted or burnt. "Retailers are highly visible, and in a riot it doesn't help to be highly visible", said the general manager of a Hero distribution outlet.⁴¹ The retail giant Matahari also suffered with 12 outlets burnt and 14 others vandalized which incurred estimated total losses in

³⁷ Bhimanto Suwastoyo, "IMF calls for stability in Indonesia amid run on largest private bank", *Agence France Presse*, 26 May 1998 and Keith Richburg, "Ethnic Chinese: Indonesia's Scapegoats", *Washington Post*, 23 December 1998.

³⁸ Ron Moreau and Maggie Ford, "The Damage is real", *World Affairs*, 6 July 1998.

³⁹ Personal correspondence with Ali Munhanif, 16 May 1998.

⁴⁰ Personal interview with an office bearer of the Indonesian Chinese Association (INTI), 8 May 2006.

⁴¹ Mark Landler, "Unrest in Indonesia: The Economy; A Country's Commerce is Paralyzed and a Food Shortage Looms in the Capita", *The New York Times*, 20 May 1998.

excess of 100 billion rupiah.⁴² Further, seven outlets of Ramayana were looted including the one in Jatinegara plaza which was completely demolished by rioters.⁴³

The above examples reveal that as the riot intensified over vast swathes of Jakarta, local level economic grievances against the Chinese were most likely to spillover into violence against the group in neighborhoods where signs of Chinese wealth and economic dominance were highly visible. Further, such symbols of wealth elicited particular resentment in poorer neighborhoods crowded with slum dwellers.

7.2 Ethnic Scapegoatability in Jakarta's Neighborhoods

The statistical analysis in Table 1 showed that scapegoating accentuating the ethnic differences of the non-*Pribumi* Chinese, was more likely to assume salience at the neighborhood level when the number of competitive ethnic groups was higher. Hence, the twofold ethnic competition theorized earlier was likely to be fiercer in more ethnically fragmented neighborhoods in Jakarta.

The extent of intra-*Pribumi* competition essentially boiled down to a tussle for economic and political resources between the favored Javanese and various non-Javanese ethnic groups who resented the privileges bestowed on the Javanese by the New Order regime. At the neighborhood level in Jakarta, the average percentage of Javanese was more or less the same across both violent and peaceful locales.⁴⁴ However, a closer look at the dataset reveals that violent neighborhoods on average contained a larger share of certain non-Javanese ethnic groups that had acquired a reputation for business and entrepreneurial skills. Such groups include the Sundanese, Minangkabau, Batak, and Bugis.⁴⁵ For instance, the percentage of Sundanese, on average, was almost 20 percent higher in violent neighborhoods. Hence, the degree of intra-*Pribumi* economic competition can be expected to be higher in locales where these groups are found in larger numbers.

Evidence of intra-*Pribumi* competition in Jakarta also emerged from survey responses and interviews. A *Pribumi* businessman of Betawi origin noted that there is fierce competition in the textiles industry in Tanah Abang between traders of Minangkabau, Betawi, and Javanese origins.⁴⁶ Similarly, Betawi and Minangkabau traders jostle to capture the market for Moslem apparels (such as sarongs, jilbabs) in the numerous shopping complexes in the Mangga Dua area. In the transport industry, private bus companies like Kopaja and Metro Mini for example tend to be tightly controlled by ethnic Batak networks, thus eliciting resentment from other ethnic groups who find it

⁴² "Riots ruining the retail sector", *Jakarta Post*, 29 November 1998.

⁴³ Ron Moreau and Maggie Ford, "The Damage is real", *World Affairs*, 6 July 1998.

⁴⁴ On average, the percentage of Javanese in the 76 violent neighborhoods was around 34 percent and the mean percentage of Javanese in the 189 peaceful neighborhoods was around 32 percent.

⁴⁵ Personal interview with an office bearer of the Indonesian Chinese Association (INTI), 8 May 2006.

⁴⁶ Survey response received 5 May 2006.

difficult to break into such firms.⁴⁷ Moreover, Siegel has noted how several taxi firms in Jakarta tend to be monopolized by certain ethnic groups (Siegel 1998).

Most survey respondents concurred that Chinese businessmen had a distinct advantage over their *Pribumi* counterparts as the former had more access to capital, obtained favorable terms from the government and benefited from well-entrenched Chinese business networks. Several *Pribumi* respondents lamented that it was extremely difficult to compete with Chinese firms, especially in the retail sector and complained that Chinese businesses recruited almost exclusively from within the Chinese community.

Adi Santoso, an unemployed high school drop-out who joined looters in Tanah Abang noted that he tried to set up his own auto-supply business, but soon had to give up as he found himself “frozen out of the network because it is controlled by Chinese” (Berfield and Tesoro 1998). Further, the proliferation of outlets of Chinese controlled supermarkets such as Hero, Ramayana and Matahari put numerous smallscale *Pribumi* shopkeepers in Jakarta out of business. More than a year before the riots (in March 1997), Sofyan Wanandi, chairman of the Gemala Group and prominent Chinese businessman had cautioned about the expansion of supermarkets. Wanandi observed, “We cannot put supermarkets next to them [traditional markets] because people like to go to one-stop shopping centers and the traditional traders cannot compete”.⁴⁸ Indeed, as the Matahari department store in Cengkareng was attacked, many of the looters included smalltime shopkeepers from neighboring slums whose businesses had suffered from the advent of such large retail giants.⁴⁹ These examples help to understand how scapegoating that paints Chinese entrepreneurs as money-hungry non-*Pribumi* outsiders might resonate powerfully in neighborhoods with high levels of ethnic competition.

7.3 Religious Scapegoatability in Jakarta’s Neighborhoods

The statistical analysis showed that scapegoating of a religious flavor was more likely to resonate and acquire local significance in neighborhoods where sites of non-Moslem places of worship were greater. Indeed, violent neighborhoods on average were twice as much likely to be populated with non-Moslem sites of worship (churches and Buddhist temples) than their peaceful counterparts.

However, it has to be noted that the extent of damage inflicted on religious symbols of the Chinese during the May riots was much less than the destruction wrought on economic markers associated with the group. According to most accounts, there were only two confirmed attacks of churches within the Jakarta city limits while three other churches were burnt in Tangerang in the Greater Jakarta area (Sulaiman 2002).⁵⁰ Further, at least three Chinese homes, which were widely suspected as used for

⁴⁷ Personal communication with Ali Munhanif, PhD Candidate in Political Science, McGill University, 14 July 2008.

⁴⁸ Susan Sim, “Slow-down order on new supermarkets”, *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, 2 March 1997.

⁴⁹ Personal interview with Chinese Indonesian journalist, 3 April 2006.

⁵⁰ Sidang Jemmat Allah Church in the Pengaringan neighborhood of North Jakarta was burnt on 13 May 1998 and a large crowd stoned the Kristus Tuhan Church in Tanah Abang on the same day.

unauthorized prayer services, were also burnt.⁵¹ Given the extent of virulent anti-Christian/anti-Chinese rhetoric as well as attacks on numerous Chinese dominated churches in many different locales in the lead up to the May riots, it is somewhat surprising that not more symbols of religious worship were attacked.

Nevertheless, the relative absence of attacks on churches or temples does not mean that religious sentiment was not a factor during the riots. Responses from field surveys and interviews clearly indicate that in several neighborhoods exclusivist Moslems were worried about the increasing visibility of Christian churches. One respondent whose family lived in the Tanah Tinggi neighborhood of Central Jakarta noted: “It is a very small area and there are at least five churches there. The Chinese are very active in at least two churches. Some Moslems in my village question the need for five churches and are concerned that they [the Chinese] are trying to convert people”.⁵² According to another respondent, “Some churches are very large. I don’t think the permits allow them to be so big. But, the Chinese bribe local officials and get away with it”.⁵³

Therefore, there was concern amongst more exclusivist Moslems about the unauthorized construction and expansion of Chinese dominated churches. As noted earlier, one of the Chinese houses in Pasar Baru that was allegedly converted into a place of religious worship (and subsequently burnt in the rioting) elicited much displeasure from the local Moslem community. One respondent commented, “Pasar Baru already has several churches. So when people hear that services are carried out secretly in a house, they get very suspicious”.⁵⁴

Moreover, the general dominance of the Christians and the Chinese was also resented. A *Pribumi* student who was living in West Jakarta at the time of the riots observed, “I know people who attended the buka puasa⁵⁵ that Prabowo arranged. I attended the rally at the Al-Azhar Mosque.⁵⁶ People think that Sumargono⁵⁷ is very hardcore. But, you have to realize that Sumargono has a point when he says we have to stop Christians and Chinese from jumping (sic) all over the Moslems”.⁵⁸ In fact, more than half of all *Pribumi* survey respondents complained of the privileged position accorded to Christians/Chinese. Further, as Backman notes fears of Christian/Chinese preeminence

⁵¹ Personal interview with Chinese Indonesian lawyer, 13 April 2006. The interviewee noted that at least two Chinese homes in the Pasar Baru area in Central Jakarta and one home in Jelambar in West Jakarta were suspected to be used for unauthorized congregations.

⁵² Survey response received 5 May 2006.

⁵³ Survey response received 19 April 2006.

⁵⁴ Personal interview with Chinese Indonesian lawyer, 13 April 2006.

⁵⁵ The respondent was referring to the much publicized breaking of the Ramadan fast hosted by the then Kopassus commander Major General Prabowo Subianto at Kopassus headquarters in Jakarta on 23 January 1998. Over 4,000 activists from several Key Islamic organizations participated in the event and booklets were distributed which condemned efforts of Christian Chinese to “keep the Moslems down” (Hefner 2000).

⁵⁶ The Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Islamic World (KISDI), a militant Islamic group, held a massive rally in front of the Al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta.

⁵⁷ Ahmad Sumargono was the Chairman of KISDI and he was reputed for his vicious attacks on Christian and Chinese communities (Abuza 2007).

⁵⁸ Personal interview with *Pribumi* student, 28 March 2006.

also stem from the fact that several Chinese owners of influential business enterprises are passionately and devoutly Christian and belong to fundamentalist non-denominational churches including the heads of the Ometraco, Maspion, Lippo, Ciputra, and Danamon groups (Backman 2002).

Thus, the problematization of the Chinese as non-Moslem conspirators keen to stop Moslems from acquiring their rightful position in society and as Christian proselytizers bent on luring impressionable Moslem youth was more likely to resonate strongly at the local level where symbols of non-Moslem worship were more conspicuous.

8 Implications and Conclusion

This study has contributed to the literature on collective violence in several ways. First, the study has highlighted the importance of disaggregating the unit of analysis in conflict studies. Most violent events are often clustered spatially and temporally. Existing research practice often tends to take the whole cluster as a single event (King 2004). However, by demonstrating the extent of spatial variations in violence within a single group, in the same city and at a single point in time, this study underscores the dangers of such homogenization and illustrates the importance of delving inside the “violent episode” (Kalyvas 1999; Petersen 2001; Beissinger 2002; Wood 2003; Kalyvas 2006). For instance, this research has shown that even in a city as brutally violent as Jakarta, where over 1,100 people lost their lives in three days, the violence was concentrated in less than 30 percent of all neighborhoods. Indeed, the existence of peaceful neighborhoods such as Jelambar Baru and Duri Utara (each containing Chinese populations in excess of 30 percent) reveal that significant pockets of peace do exist side by side even *within* locales experiencing horrific outbreaks of rioting. More so than the nature of violence per se, what is truly fascinating is how some neighborhoods—situated right in the middle of the riot locale—managed to escape completely unscathed while all around them descended into outright anarchy and lawlessness. Unless the unit of analysis under study is narrowed down to the smallest extent possible, the Duri Utaras and the Jelambar Barus of this world tend to go unnoticed amidst the overwhelming attention devoted to the riot itself. Moreover, disaggregation also has the added benefit of expanding the number of cases available for comparative large-N work and facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics that lead to violence in some places and not others (King 2004). By narrowing the analysis down to the neighborhood level, this study enables the comparison of 265 spatial units in the city of Jakarta and enables a large-N analysis at the subcity level.

Second, this research has highlighted the salience of local cleavages, pinpointed the drawbacks of focusing solely on broader structural factors and stressed the interaction between macro and micro-foundations of violence (Das 1990; Tambiah 1996; Kalyvas 2003). By emphasizing that violence is more likely when there is a greater congruence between elite rhetoric and relevant local mechanisms, the study has shown how broader structural factors (often invoked in elite campaigns of scapegoating) may either mitigate or exacerbate the probability of violence, depending on how the said factors correspond with local reality. Such an interactive explanation is needed to uncover complex patterns in the riot trajectory. Further, it has exposed the limitations of monocausal explanations and highlighted the need to develop a multifaceted explanation for a more complete depiction of the patterns of violence.

Third, the framework employed in this paper has attempted to theorize the concept of elite scapegoating. Most studies that focus on violence against entrepreneurial minorities implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the role of scapegoating. Yet, the concept is used too loosely and the question of why scapegoating only sometimes leads to violence is seldom addressed in the literature. This study has sought to redress that balance by delineating specific mechanisms through which self-interested ethnic entrepreneurs may succeed in inciting violence at the local level.

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Table 1: Ordered logit regression models – Neighborhoods in Jakarta

	Model 1	Model 2	Model3
Extent of visible wealth	0.38** (0.18)	0.44** (0.17)	0.42** (0.18)
Competitive ethnic groups	0.50* (0.28)	0.58** (0.28)	
Ethnic fractionalization			5.33 (3.53)
Density Kota Santri (area)		-1.01 (0.95)	-1.32 (0.99)
Density Kota Santri (population)	-0.12 (0.1)		
Density non-Moslem Worship (area)		4.45* (2.55)	5.38** (2.57)
Density non-Moslem Worship (population)	1.47*** (0.43)		
Chinese concentration (Chinatowns)	1.99* (1.16)	2.46** (1.12)	2.25** (1.13)
Availability of housing land	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of trading groups	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Social gathering	0.01 (0.27)	-0.03 (0.27)	-0.02 (0.27)
Essential commodities	-0.11** (0.06)	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.06)
Satisfaction with economic conditions	-0.29 (0.35)	-0.20 (0.36)	-0.13 (0.36)
Improvement in healthcare	0.08 (0.13)	0.09 (0.13)	0.11 (0.13)
Trends in high school attendance	-0.33* (0.18)	-0.24 (0.17)	-0.25 (0.17)
N	265	265	265
Pseudo R ²	0.14	0.11	0.10
Prob>Chi ²	0.000	0.000	0.001

Note: Cells contain coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* P >0.1, ** P >0.05, *** P >0.01.

Table 2: Summary statistics – Neighborhoods in Jakarta

	Observation s	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Extent of visible wealth	265	.78	.86	0	2
Competitive ethnic groups	265	3.75	.62	2	5
Ethnic fractionalization	265	.72	.06	.29	.81
Density Kota Santri (area)	265	.22	.23	.008	1.8
Density Kota Santri (population)	265	3.21	1.58	.41	10.73
Density non-Moslem Worship (area)	265	.03	.06	0	.49
Density non-Moslem Worship (population)	265	.32	.34	0	1.77
Chinese cConcentration (Chinatowns)	265	.16	.13	0	.73
Availability of housing land	265	149.64	122.6	2	695.5
Percentage of trading groups	265	22.33	5.33	9.2	36.8
Social gathering	265	1.07	.58	0	2
Essential commodities	265	25.8	2.7	12	27
Satisfaction with economic conditions	265	2.05	.45	0	4
Improvement in healthcare	265	-.72	1.17	-2	2
Trends in high school attendance	265	-.11	.87	-2	2

Figure 1: Patterns of Anti-Chinese Violence at the Neighborhood Level in Jakarta

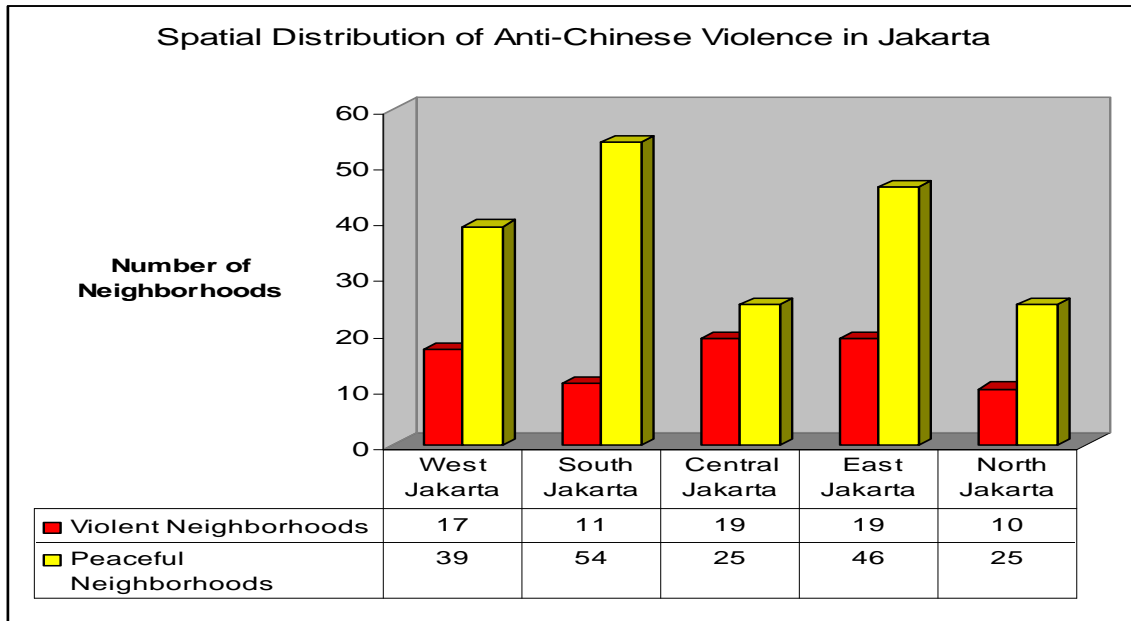
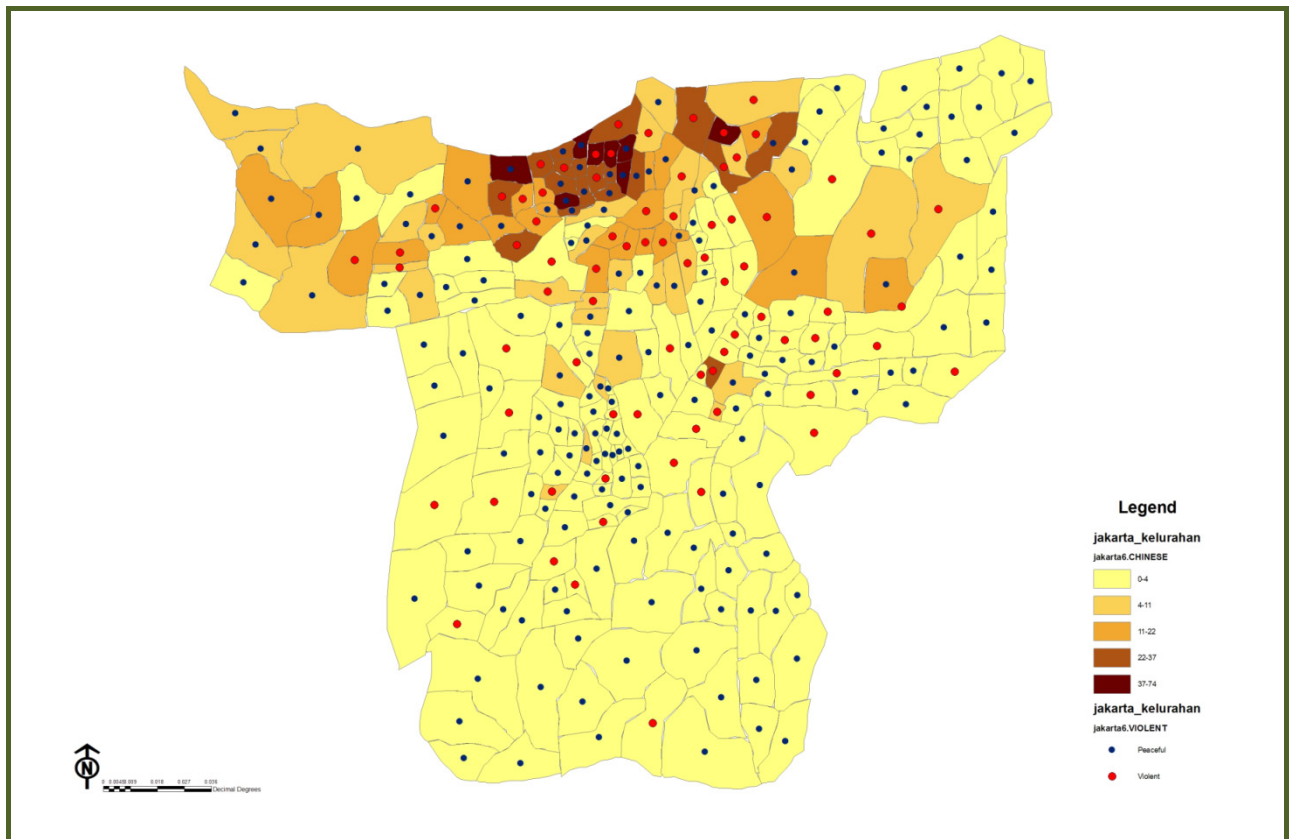


Figure 2: Anti-Chinese Violence in Jakarta by Chinese Population



Source: Map generated by author using GIS technology and based on expert views, media reports and other documents of the riot.

Figure 3: The influence of visible wealth on probability of violence

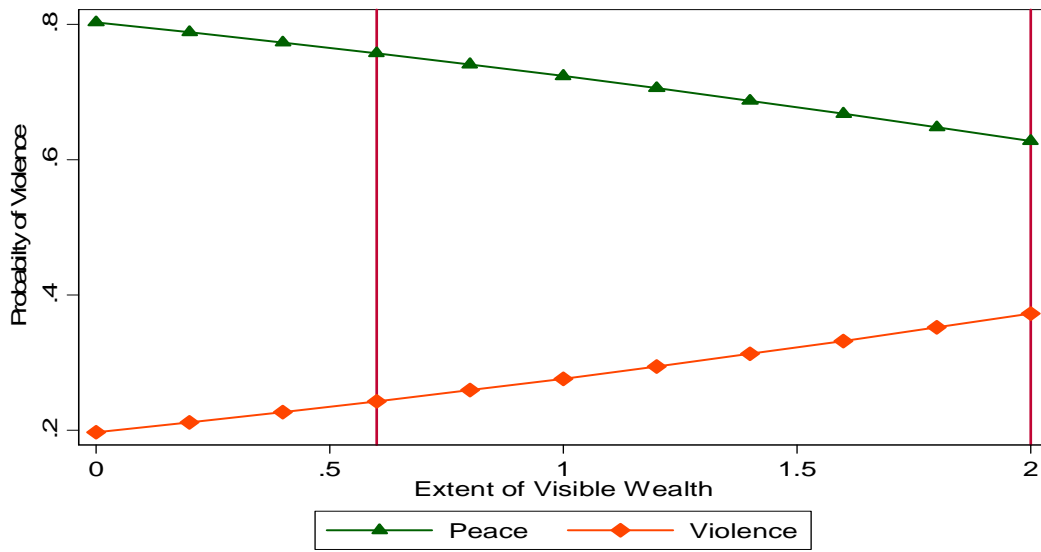


Figure 4: The influence of density of non-Moslem worship on probability of violence

