

Euroseas 2021 panel proposal

Provisional title: When the War Was Over: Trajectories of former combatants in Southeast Asia.

Convener: Peter Keppy (NIOD institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam)

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Discussant: Henk Schulte Nordholt (KITLV, Leiden)

Single session: 3-4 presenters (90 min).

We invite scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds to focus on political and social trajectories of former combatants after regime change, particularly in the wake of wars of decolonization. This panel takes issue with some of the taken-for-granted concepts in the literature on Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) and that of so-called Security Sector Reform (SSR). The aftermaths of struggles for independence and civil wars have been notoriously neglected in the literature on DDR and SSR. In mainstream literature the idea of 'reintegration' or, in popular parlance, the 'return to society' of former combatants and freedom fighters, either from regular armies or militia and insurgents, is too often taken for granted. Through case studies from the ground up, rather than a state or policy-oriented research perspectives, this panel aims to challenge notions concerning the state, state-building, and citizenship and to examine what "reintegration" actually means.

In trying to challenge the limits of more policy-driven analyses, we hope to demonstrate that former combatants had agency, organized themselves and were able to eke out a living and, in some cases, developed a sense of belonging and community in the *absence* of official DDR-policies and official state-presences. In this sense, we hope to uncover obscured narratives of trajectories of actual people who are often reduced to 'spoilers', i.e. those who frustrate post-war transitions, or those who seem to be able to cope, i.e. 'adaptors'. Instead, this panel will focus on the liminal context of transition, beyond such diametric categories.

A panel bringing together these cases would be a valuable contribution to discussions on the impact of war on society more generally, and more specifically to studies on political violence in post-war situations in former colonized regions, war veterans and on the literature on DDR and SSR in non-western societies. A book from this particular historical-anthropological perspective has yet to be written.

Keywords: history, anthropology, regime change, decolonization, political violence, security, former combatants, freedom fighters, insurgents, demobilization, disarmament, reintegration, war veterans, Southeast Asia

Separately we propose to organize an evening program with fragments of Indonesian films from the early 1950s on the return to society of former freedom fighters and the problems of reintegration.