

# The break-up of Indonesia? Nationalisms after decolonisation and the limits of the nation-state in post-cold war Southeast Asia

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*ABSTRACT* One noteworthy feature of the political crisis in Indonesia, which followed the Asian financial crisis of 1997 was the speed with which the collapse of the Suharto government was subsumed by a wider crisis of the Indonesian nation-state. One aspect of this crisis is the strengthening of secessionist movements in several regions of Indonesia, calling into question the country's national boundaries, themselves a legacy of the Dutch colonial era. This article examines the tensions in the nation-building efforts of the Indonesian state by focusing on the three territories where secessionist movements have been strongest: East Timor, which has already successfully broken away from Indonesia, and Irian Jaya and Aceh, where long-standing secessionist movements experienced significant growth in the aftermath of the resignation of President Suharto on 21 May 1998. Our analysis emphasises that these secessionist movements arose in direct response to the ways in which the Indonesian state, especially during the Suharto period, went about the tasks of nation-building. In particular, each movement was to a large degree fuelled by brutal and indiscriminate state violence. At the same time, each has been greatly affected by global trends of decolonisation, the Cold War and its aftermath. The distinct timing and manner of each territory's incorporation into the Indonesian nation-state has had a profound influence on the character of, and appeals made by, each movement, as well as on their prospects for gaining support from the wider international system.

In its heyday President Suharto's New Order built a range of monuments and venues in an effort to promote its own image of the nation-state of Indonesia. One of these was *Taman Mini Indah Indonesia*, the 'Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park', which was initially located on the eastern edge of Jakarta, but has long since been surrounded by urban sprawl. The centrepiece of the park was a collection of 27 compounds (each based on a traditional house in which are displayed costumes, handicrafts, carvings and other cultural artefacts) celebrating 'the' culture of Indonesia's then 27 provinces. The park, as many observers have suggested, sought to present an image of the harmonious intermingling of the various cultural groups that inhabit the archipelago.<sup>1</sup> Within the grounds of the

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park there was no representation of discord between such groups, nor of the bloody conflicts that contributed to the construction of the Indonesian nation-state over the preceding half-century. The park was, moreover, used by the New Order to reinforce its claim that the Suharto regime's political forms and procedures had been distilled from the traditional cultural practices of its various peoples and were thus authentic expressions of Indonesia's 'national personality'.<sup>2</sup>

While the park embodied the national identity constructed by the New Order during its glory days, its fate after President Suharto's resignation on 21 May 1998 is symbolic of the wider crisis of the Indonesian national project. Since 1998 the park has faced declining attendance and general neglect.<sup>3</sup> To the extent that it has remained in the public eye, this has largely been because of its now rather disreputable associations with the former first family.<sup>4</sup> One of the most striking features of the contemporary crisis, of which the now tainted theme park is a ready symbol, was the speed with which the regime-level crisis of Suharto's New Order was transformed into a crisis of the nation-state itself. Even in the final months before President Suharto's resignation, very few political actors within Indonesia, or outside observers, seriously contemplated major revisions to centre-periphery relations in the archipelago. Aceh and Irian Jaya continued to be ruled by an iron fist.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the notion that East Timor would be effectively independent within two years seemed, to say the least, highly unlikely. Yet the unthinkable happened. By the end of 1999 East Timor had wrenched itself free from Jakarta, while the possibility that Aceh and Irian Jaya would follow suit was being seriously discussed, at least for a time. There were even calls for independence in provinces like Riau and Bali, where there had never previously been substantial support for independence. In response to this discontent, unprecedented devolution laws were passed by Jakarta and there was some debate about more fundamental restructuring of centre-periphery relations, such as the introduction of a federal system. Even if most outside observers still tended towards caution, some commentators began to discuss seriously the possibility of the break-up of Indonesia.<sup>6</sup>

This article examines the current crisis of the Indonesian nation-state by focusing on the three territories where secessionist tendencies have been strongest: East Timor, Irian Jaya and Aceh. We contend that secessionist and ethno-nationalist movements in these three regions appeared in direct response to the way in which the New Order state under Suharto attempted to realise the nation-building goals of Indonesian nationalism. The nationalist movements in these regions were all fuelled by brutal and indiscriminate state violence against them during the Suharto era and this violence goes a long way towards explaining high levels of support for independence in each territory. We argue that similarities in the appeals made by each nationalist movement are attributable largely to the shared experience of Indonesian rule.

We also emphasise that, although the three provinces were incorporated into the new nation-state of Indonesia at different times and in different ways, their particular trajectories have all been profoundly conditioned by the global post-1945 trends of decolonisation, the history of the Cold War and the post-cold war era. Aceh became part of the new nation-state of Indonesia during the 1945–49

struggle for independence against the Netherlands, at a time when an international consensus on decolonisation and national sovereignty was emerging. This defined the new nations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of the boundaries laid down during the colonial era. West New Guinea (later renamed Irian Jaya) was only incorporated into Indonesia in the 1960s after a long campaign led by President Sukarno, who emphasised that the territory's history as a Dutch colony made it a legal and natural part of Indonesia. Even so, international support for the absorption of West New Guinea by Indonesia in 1962 was driven largely by cold war imperatives, as was that for the annexation of East Timor in 1975. This wider international context had a significant impact on the emergence of distinct nationalist movements in each territory after the consolidation of Indonesia. The distinct histories of each territory's incorporation into Indonesia, meanwhile, continue to have a major influence on the levels of international support that have been forthcoming for each of the nationalist movements. An emphasis on the international context is not, however, to discount the continued centrality of the localised historical dynamics in facilitating the emergence and continuing prominence of nationalisms after decolonisation in the archipelago.

### **Constructing the nation: the invention of Indonesia and the building of the New Order**

The emergence of Indonesian nationalism flowed from the consolidation of the Dutch colonial empire in Southeast Asia at the end of the 19th century. In the first decade or so of the twentieth century ideas about progress and modernity took hold among many children of the local elites through whom the Dutch governed the archipelago, facilitating the emergence of what is generally considered to be the first modern 'native' organisation, *Budi Utomo* (Noble Endeavour) in 1908. In the years that followed, liberalism, nationalism, socialism and communism intermingled with Islamic and more traditional ideas, giving rise to varied political organisations and mass-based anti-colonial movements, most notably *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic League) which was founded in 1912, and the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Communist Party of Indonesia—PKI), the precursor to which was established in 1914. By the late 1920s nationalism was emerging as the dominant theme of the new political age. Sharing a common experience of colonial oppression, young intellectuals from different parts of the archipelago increasingly coalesced by the late 1920s around a number of explicitly nationalist vehicles such as the *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (Nationalist Party of Indonesia—PNI). In the modernising vision of this emergent nationalist movement, the nation-state was to be the vehicle for liberating the population of the archipelago from colonial oppression, poverty, backwardness and tradition. From the early 1930s the nationalist movement as a political organisation was effectively repressed by the Dutch colonial state, but Indonesian nationalism continued to thrive and spread as a broad cultural movement. The Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies (1942–45) fundamentally transformed the political landscape in the colony. The Japanese provided Indonesian nationalists with important opportunities to reach out to people across the archipelago. Imperial Japan also set up

auxiliary armies in Sumatra, Java and Bali, training native officers, providing the nationalists with a future source of military power. The Japanese encouraged the use of *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) as well as providing jobs in the bureaucracy for an increased number of locals. By 1945, with the looming defeat of Imperial Japan, Indonesian nationalists hastily laid the groundwork for an independent republic. On 17 August 1945, just after the Japanese surrender, the new government of independent Indonesia, with Sukarno as the first President and Hatta as Vice-President, was declared.<sup>7</sup>

Between the 1945 proclamation of independence and the rise of Suharto's New Order government in 1965 there was a series of bitter armed conflicts in Indonesia. However, those conflicts were mostly about the composition of the national government or the philosophical foundations of the nation-state, not about its national borders. Conflict first erupted during the 1945–49 struggle with the Dutch. Most notable was the 1948 conflict between communists and anti-communists centred on East Java, and the proclamation of the *Darul Islam* (House of Islam) movement in West Java in the same year. With the formal transfer of sovereignty in 1949 from the Netherlands to the Republic, a liberal constitutional arrangement was adopted, in part because no single element in the polity was sufficiently strong to impose its vision on the others.<sup>8</sup> Conflicts between fundamentally different visions of the nation-state continued to be expressed throughout the 1950s and the first part of the 1960s, with some conflicts having a regional basis. The potentially most far-reaching conflict was that between secular and Islamic nationalists manifested most dramatically by the *Darul Islam* rebellion which persisted until the early 1960s in West Java, not to mention nominally affiliated rebellions in North Sumatra (Aceh) and Southern Sulawesi.<sup>9</sup> By the late 1950s open rebellion had also broken out under the leadership of the *Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia—PRRI) in West Sumatra and *Piagam Perjuangan Semesta Alam* (Universal Struggle Charter-Permesta) in North Sulawesi. Although a multiplicity of factors underlay these conflicts, they were influenced in significant ways by the geopolitics of the Cold War (with the USA providing considerable covert support to PRRI/Permesta) and the local conflict between left and right in Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> For example, the PRRI/Permesta revolts were in part an early attempt to respond to the resurgence of the PKI, which was growing rapidly by the late 1950s and arguing that the national revolution needed to be 'completed' by severing Indonesia's ties with imperialism and purging the nation of comprador elements.<sup>11</sup> These conflicts, though often bloody, were primarily about reconfiguring the Indonesian nation-state rather than breaking it up. Throughout this period a strong commitment to national unity survived across the political spectrum. There was only one significant revolt by a group which rejected the new state outright: that was a short-lived movement in 1950 to establish the Republic of the South Moluccas, led primarily by troops from the old colonial army.<sup>12</sup>

The fate of these rebellions was sealed by the end of the 1950s. Within the framework of President Sukarno's essentially Bonapartist regime of 'Guided Democracy' (introduced on 5 July 1959 by a decree that dissolved the Constituent Assembly and reintroduced the presidential 1945 Constitution), the

armed forces grew steadily stronger via their exercise of emergency powers (promulgated in response to the regional unrest) and their management of recently nationalised, formerly foreign-owned, enterprises. The armed forces had emerged by the early 1960s as the core of a broad anti-communist coalition. A coup attempt by junior military officers on 30 September–1 October 1965 paved the way for a decisive army counter-move, headed by then Major-General Suharto, in coalition with anti-communist student groups, Muslim organisations and other bureaucratic and social forces. This led to the anti-communist massacres of 1965–66 and the removal from power of President Sukarno. In the following months and years, Suharto's 'New Order' regime set about transforming Indonesia. The core of Suharto's New Order was the military. It presided over the institutionalisation of nation-wide repression in the ensuing decades and sought to ground the New Order in the great act of bloodshed that accompanied its birth, by constantly reiterating the dangers of communist resurgence.<sup>13</sup> More broadly, the Suharto government appealed to essentialised notions of Indonesian 'personality' and 'tradition' to construct a national identity that meshed with the imperatives of the New Order. The New Order revised and deployed *Pancasila* ideology as part of a powerful and shifting synthesis of symbols and ideas drawn from the Javanese and wider Indonesian past, along with an eclectic mix of organicist and corporatist ideas derived from continental European legal and political philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

The New Order government also founded its claim to legitimacy on the pursuit of a national development project that greatly altered Indonesian society and delivered significant material improvement for key segments of the population. These changes also laid the groundwork for new forms of discontent. By the 1970s booming oil exports had fed dynamic growth in import-substitution industrialisation (ISI). From the mid-1980s there was a renewed burst of economic growth following a shift to export-orientated industrialisation (EOI). Real per capita GDP trebled between 1965 and 1990, transforming the country's economic and social landscape.<sup>15</sup> The percentage of the workforce employed in agriculture fell well below 50%.<sup>16</sup> By the early 1990s the manufacturing share of GDP was 21% compared with 8% in the mid-1960s.<sup>17</sup> The most obvious transformation was in, and around, Jakarta and the other major cities in Java. By the early 1990s these cities supported vibrant, upwardly mobile middle classes, and an even larger urban proletariat concentrated in huge industrial estates producing light manufactures for the world market. However, the developmental initiatives of the New Order transformed even the poorest and most remote parts of the archipelago. Resource extraction projects, agricultural development and infrastructure projects reached outwards from Jakarta to all the regions of Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> These dramatic economic changes were combined with an increasingly pervasive and intrusive civilian and military apparatus which oversaw the standardisation and centralisation of administration, education and other government services. For example, the New Order attempted to force the archipelago's various traditional types of local governance into a mould based on the Javanese model of *desa*, eroding or destroying widely varied forms of local government.<sup>19</sup> Ambitious social engineering projects, such as the transmigration programme that shifted hundreds of thousands of poor or displaced farmers from the densely

populated islands of Java, Bali and Madura to the 'outer islands', sought to integrate the nation.

Such changes generated considerable resentment. The enfeeblement of the political parties and closure of other avenues for political protest, however, meant that local communities had few resources with which to resist. Any expression of discontent on a regional basis was liable to be compared by the regime to the regionalism of the 1950s and to be suppressed. One of the military's claims to political power was that it was the only institution able to prevent a return to the fragmentation of the 1950s and early 1960s. It constantly reiterated that the conflicts of that period had endangered the unity and very survival of Indonesia, despite the fact that virtually none of the unrest in that period had been formally secessionist. Based on an organicist political philosophy that emphasised the subordination of individual and group interests to the greater interests of the society as a whole, safeguarding the 'unity and oneness of the state' (*persatuan dan kesatuan negara*) became a central slogan of the Suharto regime.<sup>20</sup> Throughout most of the New Order period repressive policies thus successfully prevented the open articulation of 'regional' political agendas. However, by dramatically raising the costs of opposition and conflating the New Order with the nation, the Suharto regime ensured that, where local discontent was greatest (such as in the provinces of Aceh, Irian Jaya and, after 1975, East Timor), this opposition was more likely to take a violent and secessionist form.

### **Deconstructing the nation: the dismantling of the New Order and the crisis of the Indonesian nation-state**

The political crisis that engulfed Indonesia in May 1998 and led to Suharto's resignation was a product of the contradiction between the political structures of the New Order, which had been formed out of the great struggle between Indonesian communism and its enemies in the 1960s, and the growing integration of the country into the global economy. Although it had presided over far-reaching economic and social changes by the mid-1990s, the Suharto regime's political infrastructure had remained relatively unchanged since the early 1970s. The army remained the key political institution and repression still lay at the foundation of the political system. The oligarchic and patrimonial elements of the regime were also becoming more pronounced, with Suharto ageing and increasingly erratic, although unwilling to contemplate retirement. At the same time, the government faced pressure from multiple sources, including rising middle- and working-class opposition, internal conflict related to the presidential succession, the unrestrained growth of cronyism and growing international pressure on human rights. In response, the New Order simply recycled its old methods of political control. The contradiction between the regime's political framework and the logic of the country's integration into global capital, finance and currency markets ensured that the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 affected Indonesia particularly seriously. With the president resisting IMF orders to dismantle the business empires of his family and cronies, rumours sweeping the country of Suharto's poor health or even death, and uncertainty about his plans for succession, the financial crisis became integrally bound up with the political

crisis gripping the country. The impact of the economic crisis, meanwhile, was felt most keenly in those sectors (finance, light manufacturing and construction) which were most exposed to the global market. These sectors tended to be concentrated in the big cities, especially in Java, but also in other islands, such as Medan in North Sumatra. The movement that toppled Suharto, which grew explosively between March and May 1998, was concentrated among the middle classes in these cities and was led particularly by university students.<sup>21</sup>

By forcing the president's resignation in May 1998, the anti-Suharto movement fundamentally altered the political balance in the country. His successor, former Vice-President Habibie, in short order agreed to a series of significant political concessions. These included liberalisation of the press, allowing the formation of political parties, and promising free elections. The military was forced on to the defensive and its history of widespread human rights abuses was exposed. Suharto's resignation was also the signal for a popular upsurge. In the months that followed, waves of popular protest reached virtually every region and across all social sectors. As part of this process regional aspirations were expressed rapidly and forcibly. Within a week of Suharto's resignation, human rights organisations in Aceh launched a publicity campaign to expose the abuses which had taken place in the province during the previous decade of military operations there. On 23 June 1998 a third of the population of Dili, the capital of East Timor, took to the streets demonstrating in favour of a referendum.<sup>22</sup> In July 1998 there were flag-raising and other actions in favour of independence in Irian Jaya. By early 1999 new non-violent movements calling for referenda on independent statehood were growing rapidly in both Aceh and Irian Jaya. The new secessionist movements (and the various communal conflicts) that emerged after May 1998 were all driven by tensions that had accumulated during the New Order, tensions that could never even begin to be addressed as long as Suharto had remained in power.<sup>23</sup>

Under Suharto's New Order, the official representation of national identity had become inextricably linked to authoritarianism. This ensured that the downfall of the Suharto regime could rapidly give way to a questioning of the national project as a whole, at least in many quarters. *Pancasila*, for example, had been transformed by the New Order from a doctrine aimed at the inclusion of diverse ideological, ethnic and religious groups in the national collective into a weapon to be used against dissenters of all kinds. At one point in 1980 Suharto famously stated that, before the New Order, other ideologies, including 'nationalism', had threatened to 'drown' *Pancasila*.<sup>24</sup> In the later years of the New Order, the fusion of regime and nation became even more explicit when senior government leaders took to describing critics of the Suharto government as 'national traitors'.<sup>25</sup> Thus a single set of symbols and techniques was used both to construct national identity *and* to legitimate an increasingly unpopular authoritarian regime. As a result opposition to the government in Jakarta was, after the fall of the New Order, readily formulated as a challenge to the nation. This was reflected in calls for an 'independent Sulawesi' or a federal 'state of East Indonesia', voiced by student protesters and others on the streets of the capital of South Sulawesi, Makassar, in October 1999 in the immediate aftermath of the failure by the province's favourite son, Habibie, to retain the presidency. Likewise, when

Abdurrahman Wahid's hold on the presidency was challenged in May 2001, some of his supporters threatened to declare independent states of East Java and Madura. In both cases these were not serious threats, but it is nevertheless telling that dissatisfaction with changes of the head of *government* should immediately give rise to threats to secede from the *nation-state*. Indeed, the rhetorical, even light-hearted, character of the threats, and the absence of serious attempts to justify them programmatically or historically, only serves to underline how the images of national unity and identity had lost their previously sacrosanct character. This underscores the extent to which New Order structuring of the political domain was productive of new forms of political conflict. In the aftermath of the crisis of the New Order the strongest challenges to the nation-state of Indonesia were direct products of the processes of state-building and nation-making pursued by the Suharto regime (even if the complex legacies of the colonial era continued also to play a role).<sup>26</sup> This is particularly clear when we examine the dynamics of nationalist politics in the territories of East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya.

### **East Timor: recolonisation and belated independence**

In many ways the belated independence of East Timor was confirmation of the continuing purchase of the post-1945 UN-centred consensus on decolonisation and national sovereignty. Independent nation-states emerging from colonialism after World War II usually adopted the territorial boundaries (or a close approximation of those boundaries) of their colonial predecessors. For the United Nations, established in 1944, there was a direct link between colonial boundaries, decolonisation and national sovereignty.<sup>27</sup> While East Timor's history as a Portuguese colony underpinned its claim to national sovereignty, that history also ensured that the inhabitants of the Portuguese enclave were peripheral to the concerns of the Indonesian nationalist movement in the 1930s and 1940s. Certainly, before Indonesian independence some nationalists occasionally spoke of uniting the entire Malay world or all of island Southeast Asia. During the first two and a half decades of Indonesian independence some government officials also occasionally expressed interest in the Portuguese colony. However, by the time of the transfer of sovereignty in December 1949 it was already broadly agreed that an independent Indonesia would be a successor state to the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 1970s East Timor remained a colonial backwater with a limited infrastructure, a predominantly rural population of around 650 000 and illiteracy levels in excess of 90%. There was negligible anti-colonial nationalist activity, in contrast with Portugal's African dominions, where fierce anti-colonial liberation wars were in progress. Even East Timor failed, however, to remain isolated from the global currents of national liberation, decolonisation and the Cold War. In April 1974 the Caetano regime in Lisbon was overthrown, largely thanks to the defection of the greater part of the Portuguese army, which had been deeply affected by the experience of fighting national liberation movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The new Portuguese government announced that it was going to dismantle its colonial empire.<sup>29</sup> With the crisis of colonial



power the East Timorese experienced rapid and wrenching politicisation. Several political parties were formed. The most important were the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), which favoured a gradual transition to independence in federation with Portugal, and the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin), which advocated mass mobilisation and rapid decolonisation. As the new government in Portugal moved clumsily toward disengagement, relations between the UDT and Fretilin deteriorated. This led to a brief civil war in August 1975, from which the more radical Fretilin emerged victorious. In this situation Jakarta justified Indonesia's eventual military invasion of the territory on 7 December 1975 by expressing concern that East Timor would become a destabilising, left-wing redoubt in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago. The Suharto government's anti-communist appraisal (in the context of the fall of Saigon in April 1975 and the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the same month) was accepted by the governments in Australia and the USA, not to mention Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Despite the expression of public concern that the will of the East Timorese people should be respected, Canberra and Washington (along with non-communist governments in the region) gave the Indonesian takeover at least their tacit approval.

As is now well known, the invasion of East Timor was conducted with great brutality. In the initial attack, major centres were rapidly occupied and there were numerous massacres of civilians. Many fled to the mountainous interior, most of which remained under Fretilin control for the next two years. The Indonesian army made little headway in the ensuing guerrilla war, until a series of systematic bombing and encirclement campaigns were launched in late 1977. Widespread famine resulted and by early 1979 large-scale armed resistance had been broken. In the following years, the military approach remained central to New Order policy for the successful 'integration' of the province. Throughout the 1990s East Timor remained a virtual fiefdom of the Indonesian military. All policy regarding the province required military approval, military personnel dominated all branches of local government, while a formidable intelligence structure closely monitored the population. At the same time, consistent with New Order developmentalism, government spokespeople routinely emphasised that the New Order was expending considerable sums on basic infrastructure, contrasting this with the record of colonial neglect under Portugal. Indonesian schooling aimed to reconstruct the new generation of East Timorese as exemplary Indonesians.<sup>30</sup> By the late 1980s the remaining guerrillas no longer represented a significant military threat, even if they played an important symbolic role in demonstrating the survival of East Timorese resistance. However, the attempt by Jakarta to convince the population of East Timor that they were citizens of the Indonesian nation was visibly failing. From the late 1980s a clandestine movement emerged in the towns of East Timor. This was based on students and youths raised under Indonesian rule, and had links to the guerrilla movement in the mountains and the exiled leadership of the resistance. They organised a series of violently repressed pro-independence demonstrations during visits by overseas dignitaries (the first was during a visit by Pope John Paul II on 12 October 1989). These culminated with a mass protest in the capital, Dili, on 12 November 1991, during which, it is estimated, over 200 people were killed by Indonesian troops.

Because of East Timor's distinct colonial history, the literature on East Timorese nationalism has generally taken an unproblematic view of East Timorese national identity. However, in the brief period between the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship and the Indonesian invasion, different versions of East Timorese nationalism emerged. That associated with the UDT envisaged 'the gradual acquisition of metropolitan culture by elites whose members would be recruited from the indigeneous system.'<sup>31</sup> Fretilin, by contrast, sought to build a nationalist movement grounded in 'traditional' cultural and social patterns in East Timor.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Fretilin was greatly influenced by Marxism and the radical tradition of national liberation in Asia and Africa. But, after 1975, these different visions of East Timorese nationalism were eventually subsumed by the more immediate struggle against the Indonesian occupation. This was symbolised by the ideological shift in the resistance in the late 1980s, overseen by its leader Xanana Gusmão who advocated the abandonment of the 'political infantilism of revolutionary Marxism' in favour of more inclusive national goals such as 'defense of the Motherland.'<sup>33</sup> As with early twentieth-century anti-colonial nationalisms, East Timorese national sentiment was expressed largely in terms of a shared experience of oppression by an outside power.<sup>34</sup> With the end of Indonesian rule and the shift to nation building in East Timor, however, the contradictions of East Timorese nationalism have again become more pronounced, reflected in recent debates in such areas as language policy and development strategy.

The nationalist movement achieved its goal of an independent East Timor in significant measure because it belatedly won sufficient support from the UN-centred international system. Until the end of the 1980s the Suharto regime continued to be viewed as a bulwark against communism in Southeast Asia and Jakarta's 'illegal occupation' of East Timor was widely ignored. Although the 1975 annexation of East Timor was condemned by the General Assembly (and the Security Council) of the UN, after 1982 Washington assisted the Indonesian government in removing the issue from the General Assembly agenda.<sup>35</sup> However, with the end the Cold War, which coincided with the rise of the clandestine urban-based movement in the territory, more international pressure was exerted on Jakarta. The Portuguese government, which was still formally recognised by the UN as the 'administering authority' in East Timor, also began to take a more active role in the 1990s. East Timor's case was greatly assisted by the fact that Indonesian incorporation of the territory had never been formally recognised by the General Assembly of the UN. This, along with the accumulated foreign criticism of human rights abuses in East Timor and the continuing evidence of sustained resistance to Indonesian rule, convinced President Habibie in January 1999 to offer the East Timorese population a referendum on independence.<sup>36</sup> At this point the UN system swung into action. The UN sent some 1000 civilian and police officials to East Timor to oversee the process leading up to the poll on 30 August in which 78.5% of registered voters supported independence. Although the UN officials were completely incapable of preventing the violence carried out by the Indonesian military and their militias before, and especially after, the poll, the fact remains that independence for East Timor was made possible largely by international support. This, in turn, was linked to East

Timor's distinct history as a Portuguese colony. In the context of the post-1945 consensus on decolonisation and national sovereignty, East Timor was never formally designated as a legal part of Indonesia.<sup>37</sup>

### **Irian Jaya: decolonising without the colonised**

As with the annexation of East Timor in 1975, the Cold War provided much of the backdrop for the incorporation of West New Guinea into Indonesia in 1962–63. This incorporation also represented the realisation of a key demand of Indonesian nationalism during the 1945–49 independence struggle. The nationalist leadership presided over by Sukarno had been adamant that the transfer of sovereignty should include all the territories formerly administrated as part of the Netherlands East Indies. However, during the negotiations with the Indonesian Republic in 1949 the Dutch insisted that West New Guinea be exempted from the final settlement. Later talks over the issue broke down in acrimony.<sup>38</sup> In the subsequent decade and a half the 'liberation' of 'West Irian' became a central unifying trope in Indonesian nationalism. For Indonesian nationalists, from the PKI through to the army officer corps, continuing Dutch suzerainty over West Irian was an affront to their 1949 victory over Dutch colonialism. From the late 1950s President Sukarno attempted to mobilise popular support and to unite otherwise warring political forces behind him in a campaign to bring an end to Dutch rule in West New Guinea.

Dutch sovereignty over the western half of the island of New Guinea had been formally recognised in 1824, in the context of the resolution of Dutch territorial disputes with Great Britain after the Napoleonic wars; however, Dutch administrative control over West New Guinea was entirely nominal. At the same time, there were no major independent polities in the region, although some parts of the westernmost end of the island had for some time been formally subordinate to the sultan of Tidore, to whom the Dutch traced their claim to suzerainty. The population of West New Guinea (around a million people by the late-colonial period) comprised roughly 200 separate language groups and encompassed a wide variety of political and social arrangements. It was not until 1898 that the Dutch began official expenditure on the administration of the territory, but most of West New Guinea continued to be largely unaffected by colonial rule. At the time of the Japanese military takeover in 1942, there were only 15 colonial administrative posts in a territory of 400 000 square kilometres.<sup>39</sup> While there was some early pro-Indonesian sentiment by the 1930s, especially in coastal areas of West New Guinea, the most significant forms of resistance to Dutch rule were traditional and millenarian. The initial appearance of Papuan nationalism as such was primarily a product of the final decade of colonial rule, when the Dutch significantly expanded economic activity in the colony, increased expenditure on education and recruited more locals into the colonial bureaucracy. Significantly, the Dutch also began to hold out the offer of a process of self-determination leading to independence. This process involved widespread participation in elections for local community councils, the formation of political parties and, in 1961, the establishment of a 'New Guinea Council'. This Council adopted the name of West Papua for the territory and designed a flag, anthem and other

nationalist accoutrements.<sup>40</sup> Sukarno and other Indonesian nationalists rejected this process as a repetition of the tactics pursued during the independence struggle when the Dutch had attempted to establish a series of federal states in the archipelago.<sup>41</sup> From the late 1950s, Sukarno increased the pressure on the USA, by threatening war with the Dutch in the territory and turning to the USSR for the requisite economic and military aid. This led to US support for a resolution of the issue in Indonesia's favour in the early 1960s.

As in the case of East Timor in 1975, therefore, there was considerable international support (against the background of the Cold War) for the transfer of control of West New Guinea to Indonesia. In this case, however, integration was achieved not by military force alone but within a framework (the 'New York Agreement' of 1962) negotiated between the governments of Indonesia and the Netherlands under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General and eventually legitimated by an 'Act of Free Choice' formally monitored and approved by the UN in 1969. The Papuans themselves were not consulted in the negotiations setting up the transfer of sovereignty (a process Chauvel describes as 'decolonising without the colonised'<sup>42</sup>). The involvement of the UN masked a process that was, in many ways, as violent as that presided over by the UN in East Timor in 1999. The Indonesian military directed considerable violence against those Papuans who rebelled against the administrators who arrived from Jakarta in May 1963 to take control from the UN Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA). The 'Act of Free Choice', carried out six years later, was a sham. Those who took part in the 'consultative' meetings, which substituted for a plebiscite of the entire population, were selected, and then subjected to intense intimidation, by the Indonesian military. Although the few foreign journalists present noted almost universal opposition to the Indonesian takeover, the 'consultation' under the Act returned a unanimous vote in favour of incorporation.<sup>43</sup>

The official Indonesian approach to the province in subsequent years at least implicitly (and often explicitly) presented the various peoples of Irian Jaya as backward and primitive. The New Order government viewed its task as bringing economic development and the benefits of a more advanced civilisation to the benighted people of the province.<sup>44</sup> This was accompanied by large-scale transmigration to the territory, plus massive natural resource exploitation. The central highlands in Irian Jaya are the site of the largest mine in Indonesia (the Grasberg mine produces copper, gold and silver and is owned and operated by the US-based company Freeport-McMoran). Transmigration and mineral exploration and extraction only reconfirmed local perceptions of Papuan exploitation and marginalisation.

The *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (Free Papua Movement—OPM) was formed in 1964, drawing much of its leadership from traditional leaders as well as from urban intellectuals who had been educated by the Dutch. The OPM's primary base of support was among tribal/traditional communities, some of which were in outright rebellion against Indonesian rule from the outset. During successive decades various attempts were made to unify the Papuan resistance and some advances were made. However, the very factors which made it impossible for the Indonesian military to wipe out the OPM entirely—the territory's great geographical expanse, its sparsely distributed population, consequent communication

and logistical difficulties and its extreme ethno-linguistic diversity—meant that the organisation was never able to become a united or effective military force.

The period after the fall of Suharto has seen a new layer of independence leaders emerge. They are separate from the OPM, although maintaining links with the older organisation. In February 1999 100 Papuan leaders met then President Habibie and shocked him by stating that their ‘only demand’ was for independence. In subsequent months the mood of open defiance spread in the province, culminating in the organisation of a ‘Papuan People’s Congress’ in May–June 2000, attended by some 3000 representatives of different social sectors, and including delegates from the exiled leadership of the OPM. Many of the leaders who emerged through this process have claims to traditional rule but they were also part of the local elite that was nurtured by Indonesian rule. For example, Theys Eluay, who was elected head of the Papua Presidium Council, was a leader of the Sentani tribe and a long-standing Golkar member of the provincial legislature.<sup>45</sup> Other leaders were local bureaucrats, state-approved village chiefs, intellectuals and non-governmental organisation activists.

The rise of the new pro-independence movement in Irian Jaya in the post-Suharto era reflects the strong revulsion against the atrocities committed by the Indonesian military during the New Order.<sup>46</sup> Its emergence is also grounded in the widespread belief that the Indonesian state’s chief interest in the province has been the extraction of its wealth for the benefit of the elite in Java. Nationalists argue that Papuan independence would enable the vast profits of this natural wealth to be utilised by the local population. This is linked to an assertion of Papuan ethnic, sometimes racial, distinctiveness. A sense of Papua-wide ethnic identity, as already noted, is a recent phenomenon, being a product of Dutch policies in the late colonial period, but particularly a result of marginalisation and repression during Indonesian rule.<sup>47</sup> An appeal to a distinct Papuan history is also prominent. Nationalist leaders emphasise the ‘illegality’ and fraudulent nature of the ‘Act of Free Choice’ in 1969. Their demand for independence is represented primarily as being for the ‘restoration’ or ‘return’ of independence and sovereignty to Papua.<sup>48</sup> The Papuan People’s Congress, held in May–June 2000, avoided a ‘declaration of independence’, asserting instead that ‘Papua’ had been independent and sovereign since 1 December 1961 (a date viewed by Papuan nationalists as marking an earlier ‘declaration of independence’ from the Dutch).<sup>49</sup> Such challenges to the validity of Irian Jaya’s integration into Indonesia are in large part attempts to gain international, especially UN, support for a review of the territory’s status.<sup>50</sup>

### **Aceh: secessionism and the reassertion of historic sovereignty**

East Timor and Irian Jaya have colonial histories that set them apart from most territories in Indonesia. The former was not part of the Netherlands East Indies, while the latter was the least integrated region in the Dutch empire. Consequently, neither territory played a major role in the history of Indonesian nationalism. Indonesian nationalists can thus argue that East Timor was a ‘special case,’ the secession of which does not set a precedent for other parts of Indonesia. Conceivably, a similar argument could be made for Irian Jaya,

although no prominent Indonesian nationalists have been inclined to do so. It is, however, far more difficult to make a case of historical exception for Aceh. This province has been part of the Indonesian nation-state since independence. Its long war of resistance against the Dutch and the part it played in the independence struggle in the 1940s are widely celebrated in Indonesian nationalist histories. For this reason (and the fact that the Acehnese form part of the greater Malay ethnic group and share the Islamic religion with the majority of the population of the archipelago), Indonesian nationalists fear that secession in Aceh could have a significant knock-on effect and lead to the general disintegration of the nation-state.<sup>51</sup>

There were independent polities centred on the territory now known as Aceh for many centuries. Contemporary Acehnese look back especially to the early 17th-century rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda as a kind of golden age, when Aceh became a major military and trading power and a centre of Islamic religion and culture. Even at the beginning of the 19th century the Sultanate of Aceh remained a force in the region. In 1873, however, the Netherlands East Indies moved to conquer it, leading to one of the most bitter wars against colonial expansion in Southeast Asia. The back of Acehnese resistance to Dutch control was not broken until 1903, making it one of the last territories in the archipelago to be integrated into the Dutch colonial empire. Even so, sporadic violence and other forms of opposition continued right through to the end of the Dutch period. It is widely understood that, immediately before, during and after the Indonesian revolution, there was no significant support among the Acehnese leadership for a separate Acehnese state. The emerging anti-colonial leadership in Aceh in the final decades of Dutch rule concluded that they shared a common enemy with Indonesian nationalists, even though they had few organisational links with them. Indonesian unity was thus less a sacred ideal for the Acehnese Islamic leadership than a practical response to the realities of shared oppression. During the Indonesian revolution itself, with the central government barely surviving Dutch attacks and eventually losing control over most of the Javanese heartland, the Acehnese leadership was free to order Aceh's internal affairs as it saw fit. However, following independence Aceh's integration into the new nation-state was increasingly felt as an intrusive and disruptive force. This, plus disillusionment among Acehnese leaders caused by the secular nationalist leadership's rejection of Islam as the philosophical and legal basis of the Indonesian state, led to the spread of the *Darul Islam* revolt to Aceh in the 1950s.<sup>52</sup> However, this conflict reflected an Indonesia-wide battle between Islamic and secular nationalist forces and no important Acehnese leader expressed a desire for Aceh to break away from the Indonesian Republic in this period. In 1958 the central government ceded 'Special Territory' status to Aceh, with the authority to regulate its own affairs in the fields of customary law, education and religion, leading to the eventual peaceful resolution of the *Darul Islam* revolt.

In the longer term the defeat of the *Darul Islam* rebellion meant that Acehnese discontent turned inwards, laying the ground for the subsequent emergence of Acehnese nationalism.<sup>53</sup> An explicitly secessionist movement only appeared, however, as a result of the intensified modernising and centralising efforts of the New Order. The emergence of a separatist movement in Aceh in the 1970s was

directly related to the growth of the massive oil and natural gas zone around Lhokseumawe in North Aceh.<sup>54</sup> This created a widespread perception that Acehese natural wealth was being drained out of the province, a perception that was crucial to the early appeal of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement—GAM), which was officially proclaimed in 1976.<sup>55</sup> However, GAM remained a relatively isolated group in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Its present mass support is (and here there are obvious parallels with East Timor and Irian Jaya) a direct product of the brutal tactics employed by the military to repress the movement from the time of its birth. There was a particularly savage crackdown in the territory during the early 1990s, when it is commonly estimated that around 3000 were killed.<sup>56</sup> This repression is now deeply inscribed in Acehese popular memory and has swelled the ranks of the GAM insurgency and produced many other forms of resistance.<sup>57</sup>

As in East Timor and Irian Jaya, there was an explosion of political activity in Aceh immediately after the resignation of Suharto. At first the immediate focus was on uncovering human rights abuses committed by the military in the early 1990s and punishing their perpetrators. When the new Habibie administration stalled and military brutality continued, the focus of demands shifted towards a referendum on independent statehood. A new independence movement emerged based largely on students and youth (in many cases the children of the local bureaucratic and intellectual elite). Organisations like SIRA (Aceh Referendum Information Centre) campaigned vigorously on the referendum issue, organising massive public rallies and demonstrations to press their point. Members of the local ruling elite were partly swayed by such demands, although their primary objective remained negotiating a more generous autonomy deal with Jakarta. It is GAM which remains the central force in Acehese nationalism. This organisation has attracted many members of the urban intellectual elite, but its support base remains primarily rural. In the years after the fall of President Suharto it managed to assert *de facto* administrative control over much of Aceh's territory and to present a substantial military challenge to the Indonesian army.

While there are, of course, important local inflections, the overall character of the rising nationalist movement in Aceh bears some significant similarities to that in Irian Jaya. First, both movements (along with that in East Timor) are a response to, and place considerable emphasis on, the brutal character of Indonesian rule, emphasising that liberation from fear will flow from national independence. Second, in Aceh, as in Irian Jaya, there is a focus on natural resources (Aceh is rich in oil, timber, minerals and, especially, natural gas), their exploitation by a venal centre and the new age of prosperity that will be inaugurated when Aceh is finally able to utilise these resources for its own benefit (the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei is the model most commonly invoked). Third, both movements (like all nationalist movements, of course) use history to legitimate their struggles. In Aceh there is a rich repository of historical resources to call upon, running from the Acehese Sultanate through to the war against Dutch colonial expansion. Acehese nationalists attempt to construct a distinct Acehese national identity by pointing to an ancient and immutable Acehese nation and by awakening present generations to their historical traditions and duties. As GAM leader Hasan di Tiro puts it: 'The way to our national salvation is

the recreation of Acehnese historic consciousness as a people, a culture, a religion'.<sup>58</sup> The attempt to create a specifically ethnic basis for Acehnese nationalism is apparent in the characterisation of the Javanese as the oppressors and the portrayal of the 'Java-Indonesia' project as a repetition of much earlier attempts by Java-based states, like Majapahit, to assert archipelagic hegemony. As in the Papuan case, another key aim of the Acehnese nationalists is to use history to undermine the links between Aceh and Indonesia. GAM texts directly contrast Aceh's long pedigree as an independent state with what they represent as the recent inauthentic history of Indonesia. The central logic of the argument is that Aceh was constituted as an independent nation-state from time immemorial, and that it was never defeated by, and never surrendered to, the Dutch. For GAM, Aceh's incorporation into the Republic of Indonesia was a continuation of colonial rule in a new form, a replacement of Dutch by Javanese overlordship.<sup>59</sup> Thus, GAM leaders often evoke the 'successor state' principle, claiming that an independent Aceh is a direct continuation of the old Sultanate and that Aceh does not seek 'secession' but is simply reasserting its historic sovereignty.<sup>60</sup>

### **Indonesia: nationalisms after decolonisation and the limits of the nation-state**

In all three cases there are important similarities in the way that independence claims have been made with reference to colonial history and the postwar nation-state system. The nationalist movement in East Timor always centred its claim to self-determination on the illegality of Indonesian annexation and the territory's unresolved status within the UN. Meanwhile, despite their very different histories, Acehnese and Papuan nationalists claim that their territories were sovereign and independent nation-states in the past, that their incorporation into Indonesia lacks legal validity and that they are only seeking to 'reclaim' independence. By presenting their claims in this way, nationalist leaders are attempting, in part, to construct national histories based on dispossession and stolen birthright. Equally, they are fashioning their claims in the language of self-determination central to the UN-system. Like the East Timorese before them, both Papuan and Acehnese nationalists have devoted much energy to gaining international support, especially UN recognition. After the UN-supervised referendum in East Timor, they made increasingly vociferous and creative appeals for UN involvement in their own conflicts.<sup>61</sup>

The claim for national sovereignty and international recognition is itself inherent in the nationalist agenda. National identity and sovereignty are not just generated with reference to nationalist histories and ethnic identities, but in relation to how the particular nation-state fits into, and gains the support of, the broader UN-centred international system. Hopes for significant international support for attempts at secession from Indonesia would appear to be in vain at the present juncture. Apart from some Libyan support in the 1980s, there have been no statements of support for independence for Aceh from any states, and the Papuan nationalists have only gained support for independence from some Pacific states (notably Nauru and Vanuatu). In the aftermath of East Timor's separation from Indonesia, the major international players continue to be



obsessively concerned with maintaining Indonesia's territorial integrity. The US, and other governments, have promoted dialogue between the Indonesian government and nationalist leaders in Irian Jaya and Aceh, and have urged the resolution of outstanding human rights violations in those provinces. However, they have repeatedly insisted that these territories should remain part of Indonesia.<sup>62</sup> Indonesian governments, especially that of Abdurrahman Wahid, have made much of this fact in responding to secessionist claims.<sup>63</sup> If Indonesia represents a major test of whether the post-1945 cold-war consensus on decolonisation and national sovereignty will survive the battering it received during the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, it appears that the consensus remains in place for now.<sup>64</sup>

In the final analysis, however, prospects for the secession of Irian Jaya and Aceh are not driven primarily by the international context, but by the political dynamics of the nation-state of Indonesia. This was so even in the most 'internationalised' case of East Timor, where the crucial catalyst for the change in political status was President Habibie's fateful January 1999 decision to offer a popular vote on autonomy or independence.<sup>65</sup> In the wake of East Timor's secession it appears that attitudes in the Indonesian ruling elite have hardened against nationalist sentiments in Irian Jaya and Aceh. This was reflected, for example, in the national legislature, where in August 2000 even representatives of the most 'reformist' political blocs condemned President Wahid for suggesting that Irian Jaya be renamed Papua. To be sure, some elements in the legislature and executive branches of the central government still promote compromise, but only in the form of 'special autonomy' laws for Aceh and Irian Jaya. More importantly, there has been a return to repressive methods in both Irian Jaya, where key leaders of the post-*reformasi* nationalist movement were arrested from late 2000, and Aceh, where 'limited military operations' were launched against GAM in early 2001. While the maintenance of Indonesia in its present territorial form is equated with order and stability and its disintegration is equated with disorder and instability, it needs to be remembered that it was Indonesian nationalism (more precisely the authoritarian version espoused by the New Order and validated for decades by the UN-centred international system), that was the midwife of nationalisms after decolonisation in Indonesia.<sup>66</sup> Throughout the Cold War and into the post-cold war era elites in Indonesia, as well as in Southeast Asia and beyond, have conjured with threats to stability to justify the maintenance of national political systems that are seriously implicated in the very instability they are seeking to prevent. In the short term, the pursuit of unity via centralised repressive and military means may be effective, but in the long term, if the past 30 years have been any guide, such an approach will only strengthen secessionist sentiment and deepen the crisis of the Indonesian nation-state.

### **Conclusion: the break-up of Indonesia?**

The emergence and strength of nationalisms after decolonisation clearly highlight the contradictions and crisis of the nation-state in Indonesia (and beyond). At the same time the ability of national independence to deliver liberation and freedom in East Timor is (or in Aceh and Irian Jaya, if national independence is achieved,

will be) constrained by the serious limitations of the nation-state and the UN-centred nation-state system. The crisis of colonialism, the Cold War and the universalisation of the nation-state system after 1945 provided the context for the emergence of a range of nation-building projects around the world. However, following the founding and consolidation of a growing number of nation-states after World War II (and the elaboration of various versions of state-mediated national development), sovereignty continued to lie with the states, with serious implications for the well-being and welfare of the citizenry of the new (and not-so-new) nations. The contradictions of the national development project in Indonesia were clearly evident under Sukarno (1945–65), and in the brutal and authoritarian reorientation and reconfiguration of state-guided national development under Suharto (1966–98). These contradictions flow from the complex history of colonialism, decolonisation, national liberation and the history of the Cold War. The serious limits of the Indonesian nation-state as it was consolidated in the Cold War era, had been exacerbated by new and revised forms of external pressure by the 1980s; these have increased in the post-cold war era. At the same time, the historical shortcomings and contemporary limitations of the nation-state as a vehicle for progress mean that the successful secession from Indonesia by East Timor, or the possible secession in the future by Aceh and Irian Jaya, have even less chance of living up to the promise of national liberation than did the new nation-states of an earlier era.

## Notes

Our thanks to Greg Fealy for his careful reading of an earlier draft. Any errors are the sole responsibility of the authors.

- <sup>1</sup> MT Berger, '(De)constructing the New Order: capitalism and the cultural contours of the patrimonial state in Indonesia', in S Yao (ed), *House of Glass: Culture, Modernity and the State in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001, pp 202–204; J Pemberton, 'Recollections from "Beautiful Indonesia"', (somewhere beyond the postmodern)', *Public Culture: Bulletin of the Project for Transnational Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 1994, pp 241–262; Pemberton, *On the Subject of 'Java'*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp 148–235; and JT Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp 3–6.
- <sup>2</sup> D Bouchier, 'Totalitarianism and the "national personality": recent controversy about the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state', in J Schiller & B Martin-Schiller (eds), *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics and Political Culture*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997, pp 157–185; G Acciaoli, 'Culture as art: from practice to spectacle in Indonesia', *Canberra Anthropology*, 8(1–2), 1985, p 161; and K Foulcher, 'The construction of an Indonesian national culture: patterns of hegemony and resistance', in A Budiman (ed), *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, Melbourne: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990, p 302.
- <sup>3</sup> Bahari & M Ramli, 'Melongok Taman Mini Indonesia Indah setelah Soeharto Lengser (2) Untuk Kenangan, Anjungan Timtim Dipertahankan', *Jawa Pos*, 2 September 2000.
- <sup>4</sup> Of the few public sightings of the former president before his arraignment on corruption charges and incapacitation through ill health, a number came as he was at prayer at the mosque on the site. In January 2001, after a spate of bombings in the capital, a small-time restaurateur was arrested by police and accused of planning to bomb another entertainment park and several public buildings. In her statement to police, she claimed to have been given her bombs by the former president's youngest son, Hutomo 'Tommy' Mandala Putra (himself a fugitive from justice) in the parking lot of *Taman Mini*. 'A woman held for possessing bombs', *Jakarta Post*, 20 January 2001.
- <sup>5</sup> Few territories have been known by as many different names over the past 50 years as the western end of the island of New Guinea. In the colonial era the region was known as West New Guinea (sometimes Dutch New Guinea). In the 1950s and early 1960s Sukarno and other Indonesian nationalists

called the territory West Irian. It was renamed Irian Jaya when it was incorporated into Indonesia. However, from at least the late colonial period, politically conscious members of the local population tended to label themselves 'Papuan' and to refer to the region as West Papua, or Papua. In an effort to appease secessionist sentiment, on 1 January 2000 President Wahid proposed changing the name of the province from Irian Jaya to Papua. There was considerable political opposition in Jakarta to such a change, although it remains possible that the name change will be formally approved as part of an autonomy package being negotiated through Indonesia's national parliament as this article is completed. Our default position is to refer to the territory by its official Indonesian name, Irian Jaya, although we will use other terms where context demands. We will, however, refer to the population of the territory and its nationalist movement as 'Papuan'.

- <sup>6</sup> B Estrade, 'Fragmenting Indonesia: a nation's survival in doubt', *World Policy Journal*, 15(3), 1998, pp 78–85; R Cribb, 'Not the next Yugoslavia: prospects for the fisintegration of Indonesia', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 53(2), 1999, pp 169–178; DK Emmerson, 'Will Indonesia survive?', *Foreign Affairs*, 79(3), 2000, pp 95–106; S Tiwon, 'From East Timor to Aceh: the disintegration of Indonesia?', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 32(1–2), 2000, pp 97–104.
- <sup>7</sup> MT Berger, 'Post-cold war Indonesia and the revenge of history: the colonial legacy, nationalist visions, and global capitalism', in MT Berger & DA Borer (eds), *The Rise of East Asia: Critical Visions of the Pacific Century*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp 171–173.
- <sup>8</sup> H Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962.
- <sup>9</sup> C van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: the Darul Islam in Indonesia*, The Hague: Martinus.Nijhoff, 1981.
- <sup>10</sup> AR Kahin & G McT Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*, New York: New Press, 1995.
- <sup>11</sup> R Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics 1959–1965*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- <sup>12</sup> R Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 1990.
- <sup>13</sup> A Heryanto, 'Indonesian middle class opposition in the 1990s' in G Rodan (ed), *Political Opposition in Industrialising Asia*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp 242, 259–260.
- <sup>14</sup> D Bouchier, 'Lineages of organicist political thought in Indonesia', unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 1996. See also MT Berger, 'Old state and new empire in Indonesia: debating the rise and decline of Suharto's New Order', *Third World Quarterly*, 18(2), 1997, pp 341–344.
- <sup>15</sup> H Hill, 'The economy', in Hill (ed), *Indonesia's New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Transformation*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994, p 56.
- <sup>16</sup> In 1971 the figure was 64%, in 1995 it was 44%. Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), 1975, p 246; 1996, p 330.
- <sup>17</sup> H Hill, *The Indonesian Economy Since 1966: Southeast Asia's Emerging Giant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p 5.
- <sup>18</sup> H Hill & A Weidemann, 'Regional development in Indonesia: patterns and issues' in H Hill (ed), *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia since 1970*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp 3–54.
- <sup>19</sup> The key piece of legislation was 'Law No 5 of 1979 on Village Government'. On the law's impact on the *nagari* structure in West Sumatra, see A Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999, pp 257–261. For a more general overview of the place of the regions in the New Order, see M Malley, 'Regions: centralization and resistance', in DK Emmerson (ed), *Indonesia beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*, Armonk, New York: ME Sharpe, 1999, pp 71–105.
- <sup>20</sup> D Bouchier, 'The 1950s in New Order ideology and politics' in D Bouchier & J Legge (eds), *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s*, Melbourne: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994.
- <sup>21</sup> E Aspinall, 'The Indonesian student uprising of 1998' in A Budiman, B Hatley & D Kingsbury (eds), *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1999, pp 212–237.
- <sup>22</sup> D Bouchier, 'Habibie's interregnum: Reformasi, elections, regionalism and the struggle for power' in C Manning & P van Diermen (eds), *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000, p 25.
- <sup>23</sup> See, for example, the account of the long history of conflict in West Kalimantan in 'Laporan dari Kalbar: Antara Nasionalisme dan Angkutan Kota', *Kompas*, 17 November 2000; or the account of the origins of the conflict in Maluku in 'Setelah Subuh Berdarah Menyalakan Kemarahan Umat', *Tempo*, 15 March 1999.
- <sup>24</sup> Suharto, 'Pidato Tanpa Teks Pada Rapim ABRI Pakanbaru', in PB Siswoyo (ed), *Sekitar Petisi 50, 61, 360*, Solo: CV Mayasari, p 12.
- <sup>25</sup> For example, during the July 1996 'democracy forums' held at the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*

- national headquarters after the government-directed ouster of Megawati Soekarnoputri as party chair, the then Armed Forces Commander in Chief warned that the protests at the office were 'tending toward treason' (*mengarah ke makar*). Explaining himself, he said: 'the words on the banners [there] are not polite ... That is not Indonesian anymore' (*Itu bukan bangsa Indonesia lagi*). Pangab: Mimbar Bebas PDI Mengarah ke Makar', *Kompas*, 23 July 1996. These and similar comments were the prelude to the bloody military assault on those headquarters on 27 July 1996.
- <sup>26</sup> Appadurai notes that much recent anthropological literature on ethnic violence reflects 'a consensus that the ethnic labels and categories involved in contemporary ethnic violence are frequently products of recent state policies and techniques, such as censuses, partitions, and constitutions'. A Appadurai, 'Dead certainty: ethnic violence in the era of globalization', *Development and Change*, 29, 1998, p 906.
- <sup>27</sup> V Bartkus, *The Dynamic of Secession*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p 111.
- <sup>28</sup> JG Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*, London: Zed Books, 1991, pp 20–21.
- <sup>29</sup> N MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire*, London: Longman, 1997.
- <sup>30</sup> A Arenas, 'Education and nationalism in East Timor', *Social Justice*, 25(2), 1998, pp 131–148.
- <sup>31</sup> JG Taylor, 'The emergence of a nationalist movement in East Timor', in P Carey & GC Bentley (eds), *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995, p 33.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> S Niner, 'A long journey of resistance: the origins and struggle of the CNRT', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 32(1–2), 2000, p 14.
- <sup>34</sup> Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War*; and B Anderson, 'Imagining East Timor', *Arena Magazine*, 4, 1993.
- <sup>35</sup> R Falk, 'The East Timor ordeal: international law and its limits', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 32(1–2), 2000, pp 49–50.
- <sup>36</sup> Habibie presented this as an opportunity to rid Indonesia of 'a source of conflict with international opinion which has absorbed our attention, energy and thoughts for more than two decades'. BJ Habibie, *Pidato Pertanggungjawaban Presiden/Mandataris Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Republik Indonesia Di Depan Sidang Umum Majelis Permusyawaratan Republik*, 14 October 1999.
- <sup>37</sup> G van Klinken, 'Big states and little independence movements', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 32(1–2), 2000, p 93.
- <sup>38</sup> H Grimal, *Decolonization: The British, French, Dutch and Belgian Empires, 1919–1963*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978, pp 212–213.
- <sup>39</sup> R Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerilla Struggle in Irian Jaya*, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985, pp 6–10; D K Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p 201; and Grimal, *Decolonization*, pp 212–213.
- <sup>40</sup> J Pouwer, 'The colonisation, decolonisation and recolonisation of West New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History*, 34(2), 1999, p 168.
- <sup>41</sup> See for example, 'Saya tolak apa yang dinamakan self determination pemerintah Belanda', Statement Presiden Republik Indonesia Kepada Pers Jepang Di Tokyo, 20 September 1961, in *Bebaskan Irian Barat: Kumpulan Pidato Presiden Soekarno Tentang Pembebasan Irian Barat*, Ragam Media, Yogyakarta, 2000, pp 3–8.
- <sup>42</sup> R Chauvel, 'Deconionising without the colonised: the liberation of Irian Jaya', in D Elizalde (ed), *Las Relaciones Internacionales en el Pacifico (Siglos XVII–XX): Colonizacion, Descolonizacion Y Encuentro Cultural*, 1997, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas.
- <sup>43</sup> R Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerilla Struggle in Irian Jaya*, North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985, pp 40–48; and J Saltford, 'United Nations involvement with the Act of Self-Determination in West Irian (Indonesian West New Guinea) 1968 to 1969', *Indonesia*, 69, 2000.
- <sup>44</sup> For one example, see the report of the 'discovery' of the Korowai people 'Korowai, Suku Baru', *Tempo*, 16 February 1991, pp 17–18.
- <sup>45</sup> V England, 'Hush as Great Leader arrives', *South China Morning Post*, 23 October 2000.
- <sup>46</sup> As Chauvel argues, 'the politics of violence and cultural exclusion have served to sustain and nurture Papuan identity and national aspirations'. R Chauvel, 'Violence and alienation in West Papua', in C Coppel (ed), *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia*, Richmond: Curzon Press, forthcoming.
- <sup>47</sup> At the same time Papuan nationalist leaders frequently attempt to present a civic nationalist image by stating that an independent Papua would be open to all those who currently reside in it, including migrants from other parts of Indonesia. However, Papuan nationalism is frequently interpreted at the grassroots level in ethno-racial terms, with occasional bloody attacks on migrants. Racial and cultural affinities with other Melanesian peoples of the Western Pacific are also emphasised by Papuan nationalists. This trend has been strengthened by the experience of exile in Papua New Guinea and

- other Pacific nations by many OPM and other Papuan leaders. B Bohane, 'Freedom forces find strength in new unity of purpose', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 2001.
- <sup>48</sup> R Chauvel, 'Correcting the course of West Papuan History': the prospects for independence or autonomy in Gus Dur's Indonesia,' in D Kingsbury & A Budiman (eds), *Indonesia: the Uncertain Transition*, Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2001, p 208.
- <sup>49</sup> The careful wording of the declaration by Papuan nationalists was overridden by many journalists reporting on the event. See, for example, 'Kongres Rakyat Papua Sepakati Keluar dari NKRI', *Kompas*, 4 June 2000; and N Tebay, 'W Papuans declare independence from Indonesia', *Jakarta Post*, 5 June 2000. It is important also to note that no actual declaration of independence had taken place on 1 December 1961. Instead there had been a flag-raising ceremony at which 'the Dutch had agreed to let a Papuan Morning Star flag fly alongside its Dutch counterpart, to signify the Dutch intention to begin a decade-long transition to independence.' G van Klinken, 'The Battle for History After Suharto. Beyond Sacred Dates, Great Men, and Legal Milestones', *Critical Asian Studies*, 33(3), 2001, p 340.
- <sup>50</sup> The Papuan People's Congress declared that the 'Act of Free Choice' process had been legally invalid, and called on the UN to cancel Resolution 2054 which effectively recognised the results of the Act. 'Kongres Rakyat Papua Sepakati Keluar dari NKRI', *Kompas*, 4 June 2000.
- <sup>51</sup> As Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly, Amien Rais, puts it, Indonesia losing Aceh would be like the country losing its head: 'Ketua MPR-RI Amien Rais: Aceh Merupakan Kepala bagi RI', *Serambi Indonesia*, 16 November 2000.
- <sup>52</sup> On the *Darul Islam* revolt in Aceh, see EE Morris, 'Islam and politics in Aceh: a study of center-periphery relations in Indonesia', PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1983; Van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam*; D Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp 135-146; and CJ Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996, pp 140-159.
- <sup>53</sup> As Morris puts it, the 'Special Territory' compromise meant that the Acehese leaders essentially agreed to 'regionalise' their demands. Morris, 'Islam and politics in Aceh', p 229.
- <sup>54</sup> T Kell argues that the oil and gas zone was primarily an enclave development. There was rapid population growth in the surrounding regencies of North and East Aceh, but most of those employed were from outside the province or from other parts of Aceh. Other negative impacts include land appropriation and pollution. At the same time, the Acehese economy as a whole did not experience 'the rapid structural changes that have occurred elsewhere in Indonesia' and 70% of population was employed in farming at the start of 1990s. T Kell, *The Roots of the Acehese Rebellion 1989-1992*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995, pp 16 ff, 22.
- <sup>55</sup> The official name of this organisation is the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF). Within the territory, however, the organisation is more widely known by its Indonesian language acronym, and this usage will be adopted in this article.
- <sup>56</sup> G Robinson, 'Rawan is as Rawan does: the origins of disorder in New Order Aceh', *Indonesia*, 66, 1998, pp 127-156.
- <sup>57</sup> For example, contemporary reports suggest that many of GAM's new recruits are young men and women whose parents were killed during military operations in the early 1990s. For a discussion of the varied and complex forms of popular resistance in late New Order Aceh, see JA Siapno, 'The politics of Islam, gender and nation-state in Aceh, Indonesia: a historical analysis of power, co-optation and resistance', PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1997.
- <sup>58</sup> HM di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom (The Unfinished Diary)*, Norsborg: Information Department, National Liberation Front Aceh Sumatra, 1981, p 18.
- <sup>59</sup> See the 'Redeclaration of Independence of Aceh, Sumatra' on 4 December 1976 (reprinted in Tiro, *The Price of Freedom*, pp 24-27).
- <sup>60</sup> Interviews with GAM leaders, January and February 2001.
- <sup>61</sup> For example, in the lead-up to Indonesian independence day on 17 August 2000, Acehese activists called on inhabitants of the province to raise the UN flag instead of the Indonesian flag, prompting a ban on such acts by the regional chief of police. 'Bendera PBB tak boleh berkibar', *Serambi Indonesia* (Banda Aceh), 16 August 2000.
- <sup>62</sup> See, for example: 'AS Prihatinkan Aceh: Desak RI Usut Dugaan Pelanggaran HAM, *Waspada*, 7 August 1999'; and 'AS Yakin Penyelesaian Masalah Aceh Hanya Bisa Lewat Dialog', *Kompas*, 6 April 2001.
- <sup>63</sup> See for example comments by President Abdurrahman Wahid's foreign minister, Alwi Shihab, in 'AS Ingin Aceh Tetap Bagian dari RI', *Media Indonesia*, 16 November 1999 and 'Tak Satu pun Negara Dukung Kongres Papua', *Kompas*, 9 June 2000. At other times members of the political elite have attempted to mobilise public opinion against (usually unnamed) foreign powers which seek to bring about Indonesia's disintegration.
- <sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, 'Indonesian studies' has complemented and continues to complement this process, although some academics have begun to challenge the way in which the study of Indonesia has

worked to naturalise Indonesia. S Philpott, *Rethinking Indonesia: Postcolonial Theory, Authoritarianism and Identity*, London: Macmillan, 2000.

- <sup>65</sup> Despite the illegality of the Indonesian occupation, no major international actor was willing to force Indonesia's hand right to the last: even the entry of the International Force East Timor (INTERFET) force into the territory after the military's initiation of its scorched earth policy there in September 1999 had to await an invitation from President Habibie. This invitation was made after intense pressure from the UN and, especially the USA, which held the threat of a suspension of IMF financing over the head of the Habibie government. J Cotton, 'The emergence of an independent East Timor: national and regional challenges', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 20(1), 2000, pp 1–22.
- <sup>66</sup> This is reflected in the way that these nationalisms depict 'Indonesia'. Many Acehnese nationalists mock the very concept of Indonesian national identity as inherently absurd and unstable, a mask for Javanese colonialism, while Papuans depict 'Indonesia' as inherently alien and oppressive.