INDONESIA: A VIOLENT CULTURE?

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The collapse of Suharto's 33-year old New Order regime in May 1998 was accompanied by a wave of violence in Indonesia's major cities directed against ethnic minorities, women, and others that left many asking why the country again experienced such bloody turmoil as it passed through a period of transition. Among those implicated in the violence was Lt. Gen. (ret.) Prabowo Subianto, who was commander of Kopassus (Special Forces Command) at the time. Though later forced to retire because of his involvement in the kidnapping, torture, and murder of democracy activists in early 1998, Prabowo was among those that people turned to in search of an explanation for the May violence. At a symposium in April 2001, Prabowo appeared on a panel on "Separatism in Indonesia," where he presented his views, claiming that

> Indonesian culture is very violent and the military is a mirror of society. An example of this mirroring can be seen in Maluku. . . . It is not really "politically correct" for me to say this, especially as an Indonesian speaking before so many foreigners, but, like it or not, politically correct or not, this whole culture in Indonesia is a culture of violence between tribes and ethnic groups. Indonesians can very quickly turn to violence. The word "amok" comes from the lingua franca of this archipelago. This is something that we are aware of, something we do not like, and something that we would like to address, to control, and to manage. But it is there: fighting between families, fighting between villages, fighting between tribes, fighting between ethnic groups, and finally fighting between religions.[1]

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1. Remarks of Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Prabowo Subianto, former Commander of Kostrad (Strategic Reserve Command) at the "Indonesia Next" Conference, sponsored by Van Zorge, Heffernan & Associates, Jakarta, April 21, 2001.

Does his assessment match the country's reality? Is Indonesia really a violent culture, or are arguments such as those made by Prabowo and other Indonesian elites advanced to suit other purposes? In this article, I suggest that the latter is the case. These arguments are useful to elites, who make them to mobilize people behind campaigns for a return to order and stability as a means of protecting their own interests against groups demanding land rights, higher wages, and political reform. The Suharto regime institutionalized state terror by labeling political opposition "communist," using military and paramilitary forces against protesters and separatists when necessary. In the post-Suharto era, the failure of leaders to address economic injustice, the continued resort to military suppression of protests, the deployment of paramilitary groups by elites, and the failure of security forces to enforce the law have led people to take the latter into their own hands and social unrest to take a violent turn. This combination of circumstances has created the appearance of a culture of violence.

The first section of this article points out that under the New Order, a façade of order and stability masked simmering economic and political conflicts. State-sponsored violence was endemic. The second part of the paper examines several outbreaks of violence in South Sumatra between 1998 and 2000 to more carefully identify the roots and nature of incidents described as "mob violence." In part three, I explore parallels between patterns of conflict in Indonesia today and conditions preceding the massacre of actual and alleged communists after the so-called September 30th Movement (Gestapu or G30S, Gerakan September Tigapuluh), the term used to describe the coup of 1965. I suggest that in Indonesia the greatest threat of violence arises from the existence of paramilitary youth groups linked to the military, political parties, and Islamic organizations that allow political and economic elites to utilize violence against opponents and avoid responsibility.

Violence in the New Order

The New Order portrayed itself as the defender of order and security against the forces of immorality and anarchy. A 1984 government documentary on the coup of 1965, *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The treason of the PKI September 30 movement), shown to all schoolchildren in Indonesia, makes this point. Foulcher comments that the film

> makes its bid for the sympathy of its audience not so much through appeals to the national interest as through repetitive affirmation of the sanctity of the family and of children, which is violated by the inhuman and un-Indonesian actions of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia) and its supporters. The detailed portrayal of each of the murdered generals as loving husband and father, the focus on the suffering of families, and especially on the death of the

five-year-old Ade Irma Nasution, represents the film's attempt to turn popular values to political advantage.[2]

Disturbingly, Goenawan Mohamad, senior editor and founder of the national weekly *Tempo*, has noted a survey reporting that more than 80% of respondents thought that the version of events portrayed in the film was essentially true.[3]

Throughout the New Order, the Indonesian nation was represented as a family with a benign father, Pak Harto, who acted on behalf of all. However, the regime was in fact punctuated by incidents of extraordinary mass violence: the anti-Japanese riots known as Malari (from *Malapetaka Januari*, "January Disaster") in 1974, the military suppression of a protest by Muslims in Tanjung Priok in 1984, a labor riot in Medan in 1994, and a riot in Jakarta following the attack on the headquarters of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI) in July 1996. Each of these incidents began with a protest against the policies of the New Order and ended with the use of military force to suppress the protest. In the case of Tanjung Priok and the attack on the PDI headquarters, violence was started by government forces or paramilitary groups associated with the government. Malari and the labor riot in Medan are discussed below.

One can identify the roots of violence in the New Order in four conditions. First is the failure of political institutions and the judicial system to provide channels for redress of wrongs or resolution of conflicts. Second are development policies that suppressed labor organizing and transferred control over land (and other natural resources) from small holders to the central government and elites closely connected to the New Order regime. Third is the tradition of paramilitary youth groups and the existence of a large pool of young men with little hope of finding jobs who can be recruited to paramilitary forces. And fourth is how those paramilitary forces are used: by the New Order to instigate violence and thereby justify the repression of protests and by elites within the military and government to unseat or discredit rivals. These factors are discussed below.

Institutional and Systemic Failures

The judicial and political institutions of the New Order did not provide channels for redress of grievances or to object to policies seen to be unjust. According to Lindsey, "By the late 1980s the [Indonesian] court was a national

2. Quoted in Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Monash Paper on Southeast Asia, no. 21 (Clayton, Vict., Australia: Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), p. 113.

3. See "Remembering the Left" in *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History*, eds. Grayson Lloyd and Shannon Smith (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), p. 131.

scandal. It became utterly ridden with corruption, probably one of the most corrupt institutions in the whole of Indonesia. It is impossible now to get a case to court without being asked to pay a bribe. And it is also almost impossible to win without paying a bribe."[4]

Loss of respect for and trust in the criminal justice system also resulted from corruption of the police force. The reforms of the early 1980s intended to bring independent security forces under the control of the police led instead, as Barker describes, to "a far greater involvement of the police in local protection rackets than had previously been possible when such rackets were either under the control of gangs, heads of RT/RW [neighborhood security organizations], or the Army."[5] As a result, a complex criminal state took shape. According to Lindsey, state officials under the New Order "protected street-level *preman* [gangsters] through a system known as *dekking* or *bekking* (backing). Rival criminal 'gang' structures linked political and business elites through the military to *premen*. . . . In order to transform the power derived from its violence into wealth, the New Order consciously created a parallel 'secret' state to ensure elite access to illegal or extralegal rents." With the downfall of the New Order, the state lost control over organized crime, "resulting in violent battles over territory and attempts to find new sources of income" and also a backlash and growth in "anti-*preman* vigilantism."[6]

Perhaps the most appalling outbreaks of violence in Indonesia today involve incidents in which a mob takes the law into its own hands and attacks a person presumed guilty because he was caught in the commission of a criminal act. Since the fall of Suharto and the Indonesia's criminalized and ineffective police force was separated from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI), such attacks (*keroyokan*) have become quite frequent. For example, the morgue at Jakarta's Cipto Mangunkusomo Hospital reported 100 victims of mob beatings—more than one every two days—in the first six months of 2000. Most of these suspected criminals were beaten to death, but many were also covered in kerosene and set on fire.[7]

By the 1990s, the New Order's legitimacy had been deeply eroded and violent acts against local officials and groups perceived to have benefited from unjust government policies became common. For example, over 12

4. Timothy Lindsey, "Judiciary System Reform May Be Slow But It Is Coming," *Jakarta Post*, December 21, 2000.

5. Joshua Barker, "State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal Contagion in Suharto's New Order," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict Anderson (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 20–53.

6. Timothy Lindsey, "State Loses Control over 'Preman'," *Jakarta Post,* March 19, 2001.

7. Dini Djalal, "Crime and Punishment: The New Face of Indonesian Justice," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*), July 13, 2000.

months from July 1995 to the riot at the PDI headquarters in July 1996, the following incidents occurred. In Jember, East Java, warehouses, motorcycles, shops, and houses were torched by tobacco farmers protesting the decision to transfer ownership of 2,000 hectares of government land—until then tended by individual farmers—to a state-owned plantation (July 30–August 2, 1995). In Jambi, Central Sumatra, earthquake victims angry about inadequate relief measures and a wave of looting killed two plainclothes military officers (October 13). In Porsea, North Sumatra, protestors burned 100 houses, a radio station, and vehicles owned by paper maker Inti Indorayan Utama after rumors of a hazardous gas leak (November 3–4). In Pasaruan, East Java, farmers staged five days of protest against a Korean monosodium glutamate factory for polluting their shrimp ponds. Cars and houses were burned, causing $3 million in damage (November 15–20). In Tangerang, a suburb of Jakarta, protestors destroyed a carbon factory because it polluted the neighborhood (November 21). In Irian Jaya, villagers armed with rocks attacked Freeport Corporation because a car driven by a Dutch employee killed a local person. Locals were also angry about human rights violations in the Timika case on trial at the Jayapura Military Court (March 7–10). Abuse of power by security forces was another source of violence during the same period. In Medan, North Sumatra, soldiers in the Calvary Battalion, angry at the murder of a fellow soldier by a gang member, injured 12 people and damaged 20 houses and 23 cars (February 28, 1996). Finally, in Jayapura, Irian Jaya, a riot erupted when authorities refused to allow a memorial service for Thomas Wainggai, a political prisoner who had died in a Jakarta jail (March 18).[8]

Problems of Developmental Policy

Repression of labor protest also fueled simmering resentment against the government and owners of factories. In 1991 Indonesia's labor force numbered 74 million people. The average daily minimum wage of US$1.14 was one of the lowest in Southeast Asia, yet laborers were not allowed to establish independent labor unions or protest, except through government channels. In 1991, Saut Aritonang and human rights activist H. J. C. Princen founded an independent union known as Solidarity (Setiakawan). But Saut was abducted and Solidarity collapsed in 1992. That same year Muchtar Pakpahan founded the Indonesia Welfare Labor Union (SBSI, Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia) in Medan, North Sumatra. However, the government

8. See John McBeth, "Social Dynamite," ibid., February 15, 1996, pp. 20–22; "A Chronology of Hope and Despair," *Ampo*, no. 28 (October 1997), pp. 52–55; and "Riot in Medan, Commander of Northern Sumatra Regional Military Apologizes," *P. T. Indonesia Media*, March 3, 1996, <http://www.imn.co.id/today/9603/02/02MEDAN.ENG-E.HTML>.

refused to recognize the SBSI, and government officials with military assistance attempted to intimidate and terrorize organizers.

In 1994, the case of Marsinah, a 25-year-old worker-organizer who was tortured and left to bleed to death after she and co-workers had demanded higher wages, brought international attention to New Order suppression of labor organizing. The same year 31 labor protests took place in Medan because of nonpayment of the minimum wage, the firing of workers following a strike at a rubber factory, and the mysterious death of one striker. This wave of protest culminated in a mass rally in April because workers were not paid the customary bonus for the Islamic holiday of Idul Fitri. This demonstration turned into a riot in which Sino-Indonesian-owned stores were looted and one factory owner was beaten to death. The SBSI's Pakpahan explained that Indonesian Chinese were targeted because "[i]t's a fact that the Chinese are colluding with ABRI to protect their interests. If the workers demand Rps. 1 million, the [Chinese] businessmen would rather give one-and-a-half million to the military."[9] As a consequence of the riot, workers in Medan were paid the minimum wage and forced overtime was stopped, suggesting that violent protest paid off. However, plainclothes soldiers were stationed in factories and Pakpahan was charged with inciting the riot. He was sentenced to nine years in jail; however, he was released after nine months following an international campaign protesting his incarceration.

Against the background of the Pakpahan trial, government manipulation of PDI elections intended to oust Megawati Sukarnoputri as a potential opposition candidate, and a government ban of four popular news magazines that had engaged in critical reporting, a small group of student activists launched the People's Democratic Party (PRD, Partai Rakyat Demokratik) in 1994. PRD took a more militant and confrontational approach to labor organizing in order to make the violence of the regime evident. Their more aggressive (but nonviolent) tactics of large marches and demonstrations precipitated a crackdown on all labor organizers and attacks on demonstrators by security forces. The LBH (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, Legal Aid Institute) documented over 100 cases of military interference in labor disputes in 1995.[10]

Further conflicts were created under the New Order by a massive transfer of control over land from small holders to the central government and elites closely connected to the regime. The LBH, which had been founded by Adnan Buyung Nasution in 1971 as a legal service for the poor, took cases such as those at Simprug and Lubang Buaya. In the former case, slum dwellers were evicted from an area in South Jakarta to be developed with luxury hous-

9. Margot Cohen, "Days of Rage," *FEER*, April 28, 1994, pp. 14–15.

10. *Global Exchange Report on Human Rights in Indonesia*, November 1996, p. 10, <http://www.globalexchange.org/education/publications/indonesiaHR.html>.

ing, while in the latter land was taken from poor urban dwellers for Taman Mini, a project of Suharto's wife, Ibu Tien. However, resort to the courts was not effective. The most well known of the cases taken up by LBH was that involving the Kedungombo Dam. The incident attracted international attention because it involved the seizure of land from small holders to construct a dam that was financed by the World Bank. LBH lawyers worked with student activists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and religious leaders to support the rights of those displaced by the project. In 1994 the Indonesian Supreme Court awarded compensation to the people of Kedungombo, but under pressure from the government, a newly appointed judge annulled the decision.

In the outer islands of Indonesia, the policy of granting extensive concessions of forestland to large corporations for logging, paper and pulp production, palm oil estates, and industrial shrimp farming set the stage for ethnic conflict between indigenous people and in-migrating groups. Under the New Order, the military, in partnership with corporations owned by Sino-Indonesians and such Suharto cronies as the timber baron Bob Hassan, took over vast forest concessions for timber extraction. Local protests in these areas were easily suppressed and received little attention in the press. In the mid-1990s, organizers at the national level began to bring leaders of the indigenous peoples of the outer islands together. The Consortium for Agrarian Reform (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria) was formed in 1995 and the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara) in 1999. However, these organizations have not been successful in pressuring the government on the question of land reform or the rights of indigenous peoples with undocumented claims to forestland.

Economic competition between indigenous peoples and migrants from other parts of Indonesia became another source of conflict. New Order policies encouraging the migration of Javanese and Madurese Muslims to areas in Eastern Indonesia that were predominantly Christian led to outbreaks of violence characterized as religious in nature because of the composition of these groups. In 1995 alone, riots targeting Muslim immigrants occurred in Baucau, East Timor (January); Flores (April); East Flores (June); Dili, East Timor (September); and Atambua, West Timor (November). In January 1998, attacks on Madurese (Muslim) immigrants by Dayaks and Malay Muslims in West Kalimantan showed that economic competition between indigenous peoples and immigrants who were perceived to be taking control of valuable economic resources and opportunities could also lead to riots divided along ethnic lines.

The rising tide of violence and protest against the government in rural and urban areas led in 1997 to calls in the media for the government to look at the underlying causes of social discontent. Analysts pointed to the growing gap

between rich and poor, competition between immigrants and local peoples in the outer islands, and anger that the government, police, and court system did not provide a venue for justice or the redress of grievances.[11] In an address to the Islamic Forum of Communication for Young Mosque Activists, Suharto appealed to Indonesians not to blow out of proportion the issue of wealth disparity in the country.[12]

Paramilitaries and Youth

The tradition of People's Militias during the Indonesian Revolution provided the basis for mobilization of people into paramilitary units by the Indonesian army. Such units were established in Kalimantan during the confrontation with Malaysia in the 1960s. Paramilitary groups also were recruited and trained by the army to combat separatist movements in East Timor and Aceh in the 1990s. The groups developed a culture of violence that encouraged the practice of certain activities that included the public display of dismembered corpses, beheading, rape, the mysterious night attacks by so-called ninjas, and the issuing of threats to family members of the victims of violence.[13]

The elite military units that trained these irregular forces likewise applied violence and terror throughout the New Order years to repress opposition to the regime and deal with social problems. The campaign of extra-judicial murders of criminal types—known as *petrus* (for *penembak misterius*, mysterious shootings)—in 1984 stands as one example of their activities, which Suharto later described in his autobiography as a kind of "shock treatment."[14] The culture of terror and violence developed by security forces and paramilitary groups sponsored by the regime including Pemuda Pancasila, the youth group of the New Order's ruling Golkar party,[15] has undermined concepts of civility and heightened fears that the killing and chaos of 1965 could happen again.

The role of security forces and paramilitary groups in provoking violence became evident to most Indonesians on July 27, 1996, when paramilitary thugs backed by soldiers moved against students supporting opposition candi-

11. For example, see John McBeth and Margot Cohen, "Tinderbox," *FEER*, January 9, 1997, pp. 14–15; and "Behind the Riots in Indonesia" (Editorial), *Straits Times*, December 30, 1996.

12. Susan Sim, "Exaggerating Income Gap Can Lead to More Unrest: Suharto," *Straits Times*, January 16, 1997, <http://www.asial.com.sg/straitstimes/pages/stseal.html>.

13. Geoffrey Robinson, "Rawan Is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, pp. 213–42.

14. See David Bouchier, "Crime, Law, and State Authority in Indonesia," in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia,* ed. Arief Budiman, Monash Papers in Southeast Asia, no. 22 (Clayton, Vict.: Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990); and James Siegel, *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-revolution Today.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

15. See Loren Ryter, "*Pemuda Pancasila*: The Last Loyalist Freemen of Suharto's Order?" in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, pp. 124–55.

date Megawati Sukarnoputri, who had occupied the headquarters of the PDI in Jakarta. The raid was brutal and bloody and lasted only a few hours, but it produced the largest and most violent anti-government riots of the New Order. People took to the streets shouting for democracy. They burned buses and cars, set banks and government buildings on fire, and barricaded the streets.

The riot marked a turning point in the democracy movement, for it demonstrated that widespread disaffection from the regime lay underneath the surface of New Order prosperity. In response, former cabinet minister Emil Salim called for a reappraisal of the New Order in order to cope with "new social classes and new aspirations."[16] He was echoed by Ignas Kleden, chairman of a private research institute called Society for Political and Economic Studies, who told a reporter from the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "This is evidence of the rigidity of the political system, and the unwillingness of the powers-that-be to take into account new developments." Speaking to the same reporter, Goenawan Mohamad, chairman of the Independent Election Monitoring Committee and former editor of the banned weekly *Tempo,* reflected, "We are entering uncharted waters. . . . Megawati has to be more open to a long-term strategy. Her faction has to change from an electoral machine to a much more broad-based movement and she has to develop a [reformist] platform acceptable to every one."[17]

While the attack on students occupying the PDI headquarters and the campaign against the PRD that followed temporarily put an end to demonstrations against the New Order, the riot of July 1996 appears to have raised the stakes for the Suharto government in the election scheduled for May 1997. Violent clashes involving security forces, Pemuda Pancasila, and youth groups associated with opposition parties were common. In Pekalongan, Central Java, protests by the youth organization of the opposition Partai Pembangunan Persatuan (PPP) over the organization of a concert by the government party Golkar resulted in 60 buildings (mostly owned by Sino-Indonesians) and one state-run bank being vandalized (March 24–26). In Surabaya, pro-Megawati PDI-P (Partai Demokratis Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesia Democracy Party-Struggle) activists were attacked by supporters of Soerjadi, leader of the government faction in PDI (April 28). In Yogyakarta, PPP offices were attacked by Pemuda Pancasila (April 30). In Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi, a PPP rally was attacked by Pemuda Pancasila (May 4). In Yogyakarta, security forces broke up a demonstration by PPP youths carrying coffins to symbolize the death of democracy and to protest

16. John McBeth, "Far From Over: Democrats and Leftists Remain under Political Cloud," *FEER,* August 22, 1996, pp. 17–20.

17. John McBeth and Margot Cohen, "Streets of Fire," ibid., August 8, 1996, pp. 14–16.

attacks on PPP offices (May 5). On May 20, three clashes broke out in Jakarta when supporters of political parties clashed with security forces in East and South Jakarta while PPP supporters in Pekalongan, Central Java, attacked a Golkar office.

The violence culminated just before the election with a clash on May 23 between PPP and Golkar supporters in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, in which 130 people died in a fire at a shopping mall. According to government sources, the dead were looters; however, the Indonesian Human Rights commissions investigated the incident due to accusations by PPP supporters that the riot had been instigated by outside parties and that ABRI forces had opened fire needlessly during the clash and taken the bodies to the shopping center where a fire was then started to conceal the evidence.[18] After the election, protests against election fraud were mounted by PPP supporters, burning ballot boxes in Madura on May 29 and marching in Jember, East Java, on June 13, at which time they threw rocks at a shopping center and the Timor car showroom.

The Use of Paramilitaries

As Richard Robison has noted, "Many commentators have seen [the Malari riots] as primarily a political power struggle between the Commander of Kopkamtib, General Sumitro, and the existing hierarchy, dominated by Suharto and Moertopo, in which the students were manipulated by competing political forces."[19] Bresnan adds that the riots were instigated "to discredit the student radicals and perhaps in the process General Soemitro and other moderates." Further to this point, Bresnan notes that a student leader arrested after the Malari riots claimed that "he met young toughs in jail who claimed they had been working for Moertopo at the time, had started the burning, and had been picked up along with other rioters. A senior intelligence officer friendly to Soemitro said later that he believed this was indeed the case."[20]

In the last years of the New Order, the accusation that violence was being instigated by unnamed elites surfaced frequently, particularly when riots targeting Christians and Sino-Indonesians began in East Java in the months following the anti-government riot of July 1996. The first of these riots occurred on October 10 in Situbondo, East Java. A Muslim mob burned 25

18. "Criminal Label for Riot Victims Too Premature: Expert," *Jakarta Post*, May 26, 1997; and "Rights Body Says 77 People Missing in Banjarmasin," ibid., June 2, 1997. For an overview of rioting before the election, see "Official Human-Rights Commission Report," ibid., June 4, 1998.

19. See Richard Robison, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 164.

20. See John Bresnan, *Managing Indonesia: The Modern Political Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 145–46.

churches, five Catholic schools, a Christian orphanage, and a court. Five people died in the fire in one church. A subsequent investigation by the National Human Rights Commission concluded that the riot had been instigated by (unknown) provocateurs. Leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a traditionalist Islamic organization based in East Java, claimed that the riot had been designed to put NU in a bad light and incite hostility between Christian supporters of Megawati and Muslim supporters of Abdurrahman Wahid, who had joined together in opposition to the reelection of Suharto. Army Chief of Staff Hartono dismissed the idea that the aim of the provocateur was to discredit NU, but agreed that "some people have been coordinating a certain mission here to create instability."[21]

A series of riots targeting Sino-Indonesians in other parts of Java followed—in Purwakarta, West Java (October 31–November 2, 1997); Pekalongan, Central Java (November 24–26); and Jakarta (December 24); and Rengasdengklok, West Java (February 1, 1998)—saw its peak with a riot in Tasikmalaya, West Java, on December 26, 1997. There, Muslim youths set 13 churches and seven schools on fire. Twelve police posts were damaged and three burned down. Four people died. Popular anger seemed to be directed as much at local officials as Sino-Indonesians. Tasikmalaya residents said that enmity toward Sino-Indonesians had increased in 1995 when the market burned down and the government did not rebuild the market but gave the land to a Sino-Indonesian developer for a supermarket.[22]

Manipulation of popular anger at the government and resentment of wealthy Sino-Indonesians (who were perceived to have benefited from connections to the regime) could be seen clearly in an incident in Bandung that took place on January 31, 1997. Earlier that month, 10,000 textile factory workers rioted and company officials sent to impose new rules were stoned because the company did not pay the traditional bonus for Idul Fitri. On the 31st, unknown persons followed up on the disturbances by distributing leaflets calling on Muslims to attack Christian and Catholic targets.[23]

Finally, in the last days of the New Order, when student demonstrations threatened to bring down Suharto in the aftermath of the shooting of four student protestors at Trisakti University on May 13, 1998, Lt. General Subianto Prabowo, Suharto's son-in-law and commander of the Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus), appears to have resorted to the tactic of instigating a riot to create a demand for a return to law and order and possibly also to

21. Joe Leahy, "Muslim Leader Says Unrest Part of Plot to Oust Him," *South China Morning Post* (*SCMP*), January 16, 1997; and Susan Sim, "Exaggerating Income Gap Can Lead to More Unrest: Suharto," *Straits Times* (Singapore), January 16, 1997.

22. John McBeth, "Tinderbox," pp. 14–15.

23. Louise Williams, "Fresh Arrests as Workers Riot," *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 3, 1997.

discredit his rival, General Wiranto.[24] Widespread support among the middle class for the government's *petrus* campaign against criminal elements in 1984 may have contributed to the belief that people of that class would rally behind a call for the restoration of order and stability when riots broke out in cities throughout Indonesia.

South Sumatra, 1994–2000

South Sumatra has not featured in news stories about student-led demonstrations against the New Order or outbreaks of ethnic and religious violence, yet in the final years of the New Order there was a pattern of escalating protest and outbreaks of so-called mob violence. If one examines these outbreaks, three kinds of violence can be distinguished: (1) violence by paramilitary groups and security forces to intimidate and harass protestors; (2) protests by rural villagers aimed at corporations given large concessions of forestland by the Suharto government; and (3) rioting and looting in urban areas targeting businesses owned by Suharto family members and cronies or Sino-Indonesians and banks. Characteristically, incidents of the first type involved attacks on persons, while incidents of the last two kinds involved attacks on property. However, over time conflicts between rural villagers and corporations were transformed into horizontal conflicts between protesting villagers and employees of the company (often local youths hired as security forces) in which violent clashes took place involving attacks on both property and persons. Examination of the emerging pattern of violence in South Sumatra between 1994 and 2000 allows one to identify when and why protests and conflicts became violent.

The policy of granting extensive concessions of forest land (*hak pengusahaan hutan*) to state-owned corporations or private companies controlled by the Suharto family or elites closely connected to Suharto, sometimes in partnership with foreign corporations, was implemented in South Sumatra in 1989. Suharto's daughter, Siti Hardijanti, and two Suharto cronies, Prajogo Pangestu and Syamsul Nursalim, were major beneficiaries. According to law, local government officials must certify as unproductive the status of land given out in concessions. However, villagers report that their rights to land they had been farming for years (and in many cases generations) were not recognized because local officials were paid for their cooperation in approving concessions. Protests by rural villagers against corporations given concessions of forestland began early in 1993.[25]

24. Susan Berfield and Dewi Loveard, "Ten Days That Shook Indonesia" *Asiaweek*, July 21, 1998.

25. The foregoing is based on reports regarding land conflicts compiled by LBH-Palembang volunteers and my interviews with villagers in South Sumatra, 1998–2000.

Initially villagers wrote letters appealing to government officials and corporate managers to recognize their rights. Typically, corporations used military forces to intimidate villagers, ignoring local protests. During a brief period in 1994 known as *keterbukaan* (openness), the New Order relaxed restraints on the press, and news of these protests began to reach the public. However, that July the government banned three national publications and cracked down. In Sumatra, village leaders involved in protests were replaced and people were warned that further demonstrations would not be tolerated. In 1997 fires set by corporations to clear land for forest estates and palm oil plantations got out of control, destroying rubber trees that many lowland villagers relied upon for income. The fires were particularly intense because of the El Niño drought. In addition, fires in logged-over areas are canopy fires, which burn intensely and spread rapidly. International concern over the fires and the blanket of smog that spread to other countries in Southeast Asia brought conflict over land out into the open in accusations and counter-accusations about who was responsible. With the fall of Suharto in 1998, frustration at the failure of the government to provide resolution of long-standing conflicts erupted. Throughout Indonesia, villagers began to resort to land occupation in corporate estates, government forests, and golf courses. Villagers in South Sumatra attempted to harvest crops on land in palm oil estates they claimed had been taken from them. They also tried to force corporations to return land or pay compensation by seizing corporate property (generally vehicles). Although government officials promised to act, nothing changed. In October 1999, one corporation involved in a long-standing conflict agreed to return land to villagers, probably because of threats by villagers who had seized company vehicles and burned down log piles and the changing political situation. However, corporate executives then postponed meetings and revoked promises made earlier.[26]

In February 2000, several hundred representatives of farmers' organizations from South and North Sumatra went to Jakarta to demand that the Ministry of Forestry take action on their claims. They were promised that within one month their cases would be settled. Finally, on April 27, 2000, Secretary-General of Ministry for Forestry and Plantations Suripto declared that 12,500 hectares of disputed land would be returned to the people of a subdistrict in South Sumatra, settling one case where the protesting villagers were well organized. Explained Suripto, "Up until now, corporations have

26. For a discussion of land conflict in South Sumatra, see Elizabeth Collins, "Multinational Capital, New Order 'Development,' and Democratization in South Sumatra," *Indonesia*, no. 71 (April 2001), pp 111–34; and Jamilah Nuh and Elizabeth Collins, "Land Conflict and Grassroots Democracy in South Sumatra: The Dynamics of Violence," *Antropologia Indonesia*, no. 25 (January–April 2001), pp. 41–55.

been facilitated in obtaining land; now it is time to give compensation."[27] While this decision validated the justice of the villagers' land claims, the long struggle leading up to resolution of the conflict seemed to prove that a resort to violence and threats of violence against company property was an effective tactic because government officials became involved. Corporations could then be forced to negotiate with protestors.

Mob violence in these cases involved attacks on property. Where company vehicles and other property were seized in order to force a corporation to engage in negotiation, the property was returned after resolution of the conflict. In a few cases, corporate officials were threatened and held hostage for several hours, but in only one case (that I know of) was a company representative physically attacked. This took place over the border in Lampung on the industrial shrimp farms of Dipasena. In March 2000, Nursalim, head of the Gadjah Tunggal Group (whose shrimp farms extend into South Sumatra), was attacked by angry shrimp farmers, who hacked two of his bodyguards to death. Nursalim had to be rescued by helicopter.[28]

In these conflicts, security forces employed by corporations have used violence to intimidate and harm protestors. For the year 1999–2000, LBH-Palembang listed 10 incidents in which it alleged unwarranted involvement of police or military units in conflicts between protesting villagers and corporations. Not infrequently, local newspapers report (without comment) that a villager has been killed. In April 2001, an activist from the Indonesian Environmental Forum (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia) was badly beaten by police when he attempted to photograph police violence in a "sweeping" operation.[29]

In August 2001, the governor of South Sumatra reported that 135 cases of land conflict were under consideration by his office. LBH-Palembang listed almost 200 cases. Progress in settling these cases has been extremely slow because there is no legal framework for making decisions and the governor has little leverage over large corporations with close connections to political elites. Some activists argue that violence is necessary in order to force the government and corporations to respond to villagers' land claims.

Other incidents of so-called mob violence in South Sumatra have involved the destruction of property and looting in the context of student-led demonstrations against the government. The first student-led demonstrations in

27. "12 Ribu Ha Lahan MHP Dikembalikan" [12,000 hectares of land returned by MHP] *Sriwijaya Pos*, April 28, 2000.

28. Dan Murphy, "Deeper into the Morass," *FEER,* June 1, 2000, pp. 58–59.

29. "Tentang Tindakan Kekerasan Yang Dilakukan Oleh Aparat Kepolisian Kota Besar (POLTABES) Palembang Terhadap Sdr. Syamsul Asinar" [With reference to the violent attack by the Palembang police on Sdr. Syamsul Asinar], *Surat Protes Terbuka* [Open protest letter], *WALHI Sumatera Selatan*, no. 13/KP-CE/V/2001, April 30, 2001.

South Sumatra, which occurred in 1994 in response to an increase in tuition at Sriwijaya University, were non-violent. Many faculty members quietly supported these demonstrations because they believed that the tuition increase was due to corruption in tenders for a new campus being built with World Bank funding. There at the time, I saw that the rector of the university restrained the military from responding to the protests with attempts to disperse the students or arrests.

However, in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis of 1997, student-organized protests against economic hardship turned into riots. One such incident took place on February 14, 1998, in the market town of Pagaralam in the highlands of South Sumatra. Inspired by pro-democracy university students who had returned home during the Islamic holidays, a group of high school students planned a demonstration against the high price of basic foods. They requested permission for their demonstration from the mayor, but this was denied. The students decided to proceed anyway. Their symbolic demonstration in the market place turned into a riot in which shops owned by Sino-Indonesians were ransacked. Witnesses I spoke with that October blamed young men (immigrants from Lampung), who regularly gathered in Pagaralam market in search of work.

One factor provoking this violence may have been statements by Lt. Gen. Subianto Prabowo and leaders of the militant Islamic group, the Indonesian Committee for World Muslim Solidarity (KISDI, Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam), reported on television and in newspaper reports shortly before the riot. At a rally on February 8 organized by KISDI at the Al Azhar Mosque in Jakarta, KH Abdul Qadir Djaelani called upon the government to confiscate the wealth that non-*pribumi* (i.e., non-indigenous, meaning ethnic Chinese in this case) conglomerates had transferred abroad. Ahmad Sumargono, the leader of KISDI, charged the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a New Order-era think-tank directed by Jusuf Wanandi, brother of a prominent Sino-Indonesian businessman, with political engineering that harmed Muslims. The chairman of the KISDI youth group called for the formation of a "command post" that would "join to face traitors of the nation like Sofjan Wanandi [brother of Jusuf Wanandi] or whoever stands behind" and concluded his speech with the appeal, "Live honorably or die a martyr's death! God is Great!"[30]

The most extensive attacks on Sino-Indonesian businesses took place during three days of rioting and looting in Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra. These riots began on May 14, when riots also erupted in Jakarta and

30. "Moslems Called to Face Traitors of the Nation," *Kompas Online*, February 9, 1998, <http://www.kompas.com>. Also see Margot Cohen, "'Us' and 'Them': Muslim Activists Say It's Time to Seize Economic Power," *FEER,* February 12, 1998, pp. 16–17; and "Sofjan Back Home," *Jakarta Post,* February 9, 1998.

Solo (Surakarta) following the shooting of four students at Trisakti University. The Jakarta riots claimed the lives of over 800 people, most of whom were (Javanese) looters trapped in high-rise malls that had been set on fire. While property damage was extensive in Palembang, there were no attacks on people or deaths.

Even before evidence surfaced linking elements in the Indonesian military with the riot in Jakarta, people in South Sumatra suggested that the Palembang riot had been instigated by "unknown" agents. According to local reporters, outsiders resembling members of security forces (military or paramilitary) were seen dismounting from trucks in the morning. They started throwing rocks at car showrooms and set tires on fire to attract a crowd. Reporters said that they also heard of rumors promising that no one would be prosecuted for looting.[31]

Like the mob violence in land conflict cases, the anti-Chinese riots in South Sumatra involved attacks on property rather than persons. Palembang rioters also attacked businesses associated with the Suharto family, including the showroom for the Timor car (produced by a company partly owned by Tommy Suharto). These riots could be said to be politically instigated in that attacks by elite political figures on Sino-Indonesians blaming them for the economic crisis appeared to justify looting of shops and businesses owned by non-*pribumi* Indonesians.

The Pagaralam riot in February and the Palembang riot in May left people in South Sumatra stunned at the rapid breakdown of law and order. These riots have also generated a fear of disorder among the urban middle class, which tends to view protests against corporations involving an attack on property as evidence of a threat to their own security. The middle class believes that the government must protect corporate property so that investors will feel secure and the Indonesian economy can begin to grow again. Ongoing protests since the fall of Suharto are typically greeted with cynicism. In 2001 one frequently heard comments to the effect that people were demonstrating only to get whatever they wanted. It would not be difficult for political elites competing for power under new local autonomy legislation to tap middle-class anxiety, promoting a return to order and stability and cracking down on protestors to bring foreign investment back.

The Sociology of Mass Violence, 1965–1966

The taboo on public discussion of the massacre of half a million or more real and alleged communists in 1965–66 has left Indonesian society haunted by

31. Author interviews with local residents and *Sriwijaya Post* reporters, Palembang, Indonesia, October 1998.

the return of the repressed. After the fall of Suharto, groups that suggested unearthing evidence of the killings were threatened with violence.[32] Even the free press that has emerged since May 1998 has been wary about taking up the issue. Unspoken fear that the chaos and killing in the aftermath of the 1965 coup could happen again is perhaps the strongest argument in support of the view that Indonesia is a violent culture. However, what is known about the massacres of 1965–66 indicates that the Indonesian military played a key role in authorizing and supporting the killing of communists.

It remains uncertain as to who was behind the Untung coup attempt of September 30, 1965. The New Order and the Indonesian military maintain that the coup was plotted and carried out by the Communist Party, while Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth McVey, for example, argued that the coup was primarily the result of internal army divisions.[33] The extent of the killing in its aftermath also remains unknown, although the estimate of 500,000 people is widely taken to be reasonable. But the studies done of the massacre—Robert Cribb's path-breaking editing of accounts of the violence, Robert Hefner's research on the violence in one area of East Java, Geoffrey Robinson's study of Bali, and unpublished disserations by Iwan Sudjatmiko and Hermawan Sulistyo[34]—agree in concluding that in those places where the death toll was highest (East Java, Bali, and North Sumatra) the killing was instigated or organized and supported by the Indonesian military. As Cribb argued, "In most cases, the killings did not begin until elite military units had arrived in a locality and had sanctioned violence by instruction or example."[35] Arguing along similar lines, Hefner concluded, "In the end, then, the violence in highland Pasuruan was not in any simple sense a product of local class or religious cleavages. It was thoroughly regulated by agents of

32. Vaudine England, "Coffins Broken into as Multi-Faith Service for People Killed in Anti-Communist Crackdown Prevented," *SCMP*, March 27, 2001.

33. See *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971). Adam Schwartz concludes, "Although not without its flaws—in particular its view that the Communist Party was not involved at all in the coup—on balance the Cornell Paper seems to offer a more credible interpretation of events than the army's contention that the communists were solely responsible." See *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), p. 20.

34. Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings*; Robert Hefner, *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretive History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Iwan Sudjatmiko, "The Destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI): A Comparative Analysis of East Java and Bali" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992); and Hermawan Sulistyo, "The Forgotten Years: The Missing History of Indonesia's Mass Slaughter (Jombang-Kediri 1965–1966)" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1997).

35. Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings*; and "Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia," in *The Indonesian Killings, 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton, Australia: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), p. 21.

the state and included in its ranks representatives of a variety of NGOs, especially Nahdatul Ulama."[36] And as Robinson observed, "[V]irtually all evidence indicates that military forces, both local and Java-based, together with political party authorities, orchestrated and incited the violence in Bali, as they did in Java."[37]

According to all sources, paramilitary youth groups were incited to kill particular people and given moral and logistical support by the Army, particularly the Army's Special Forces (RPKAD, later renamed Kopassus). In East Java, the NU-affiliated Ansor was the major accomplice of the Army, while in Medan it was Pemuda Pancasila and in Bali the Ansor youth groups and anti-PKI vigilante gangs backed by the Indonesian National Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia).[38]

There are striking and worrisome parallels between the political and economic problems Indonesia faced in 1965 and conditions today. Damien Kingsbury describes the dire economic situation that Indonesia faced in 1965:

> [T]he government under Sukarno had almost completely lost control of the economy. . . the general rate of inflation had reached 500%, and the price of rice, which was in short supply, had risen by 900%. The budget deficit had risen to 300% of government revenues, and if foreign debt repayments for 1966 were to be made on schedule, they would have amounted to almost the total of the nation's export income.[39]

Indonesia today stands at the edge of bankruptcy, owing to the economic crisis of 1997. As domestic investors transferred wealth out of the country, a crumbling currency and diminishing sources of revenue created a financing gap of over $3.5 billion for the year beginning April 1, 2001.[40] The crisis pushed 40% of Indonesia's population below the poverty line. Many companies were forced to downsize and restructure their workforce, resulting in a massive loss of jobs. In 1998 the minimum wage, already low even by Asian standards, was increased by 15% compared to an inflation rate of 78%.[41] And yet amid this, according to the Urban Poor Consortium, the budget for maintenance of the residences for the governor and deputy governor and "official entertainment" for the legislature in Jakarta is over $10 million, while less than $150,000 is budgeted for Jakarta's street children. The "official en-

36. Hefner, *The Political Economy*, p. 212.

37. Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise*, p. 295.

38. For example, Robinson, p. 281; and Cribb, Problems in the Historiography," p. 33.

39. Kingsbury, *The Politics of Indonesia*, p. 56.

40. Michael Vatikiotis, "Indonesia's Budget Blues," *FEER*, May 17, 2001, pp. 52–53.

41. "Labor Relations in Indonesia," *Van Zorge Report* (Jakarta), June 5, 2000, p. 5.

tertainment" budget is five times greater than the budget to improve nutrition for the poor in the city.[42]

Concomitant with this are the parallels between the social conditions that motivated people to participate in the killing in the aftermath of the coup and conditions today. In 1962 Herbert Feith noted that conditions for a turn to authoritarian rule had been created by "hamstrung government, buffeted about by recurring explosions of political unrest."[43] As Robert Hefner later pointed out, "In [1945 and 1965] factionalism in the state led rival elites to exacerbate ethnoreligious antagonisms in society, creating segmentary alliances that exploited communal tension for their own narrow ends."[44] This factionalism and political instability led to a strengthening of collective identities, which were mobilized in the killing.[45] The killing of Christians in Nusa Tenggara, Javanese transmigrants in Lampung, and long-time Sino-Indonesian residents in Kalimantan in the 1965–66 massacres was one consequence of this, justified by allegations that they were communists. Echoes of these factors may be seen today, as already explored above.

Conflict over land was also a cause of violence as today. Cribb, Hefner, Robinson, Sudjatmiko, and Sulistyo agree that the national land-reform legislation of 1960, passed after the nationalization of foreign holdings, and the PKI's December 1963 decision to sponsor a land occupation campaign (*aksi sepihak*) deepened and radicalized divisions in local societies, facilitating the recruitment of local groups to implement the attacks on communists.[46] As Rex Mortimer further notes:

> The relationship between the earlier pattern of *aksi* clashes and the massacres is, in the absence of more intensive studies at the village level, highly persuasive. Over and over again, in reports of the areas where killings were particularly severe, we meet up with places where Communist and anti-Communist strength during the *aksi* period had been most evenly matched and the tensions aroused by the land reform campaign most acute.[47]

The legal system, too, provided no check on the abuses of elites or the regime in 1965 or in more recent times. Sukarno sought to erode the system's independence, "start[ing] a deliberate and all-out attack on the judici-

42. Dini Djalal, "Inspiring the Poor to Protest," *FEER*, May 3, 2001, pp. 24–26.

43. Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1962), p. 601.

44. Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 212.

45. Cribb, "Problems in the Historiography," pp. 22, 24, 25, and note 41.

46. Ibid., pp. 21–22, 24, 26; and Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise,* pp. 265, 272.

47. Rex Mortimer, *The Indonesian Communist Party and Land Reform 1959–1965*, Monash Paper on Southeast Asia, no. 1 (Clayton, Vict., Australia: Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1972), p. 66.

ary. He systematically alienated all the good judges and good lawyers, and undermined the court throughout his rule. . . . He set about removing lawyers from the court and replacing them with military officers with no university education."[48] Without effective and impartial judicial institutions, people take justice into their own hands. In 1963–65, both the PKI and landowners resorted to violence to establish their claims to land. Suharto likewise attacked the independence of the judiciary; as a consequence, distrust of the courts and police is pervasive today, and people resort to violence to force government officials to become involved in land and wage conflicts.

As violent confrontations over land and protests against the regime became common in the early 1960s, society became increasingly polarized along ideological lines between the Communist left and landholders and the military on the right. National elites responded by becoming "active supporters of moves toward a more coercive and restrictive form of government, seeing such government as the only possible means by which the newly sharpened divisions in the polity could be held in check."[49]

Particularly important in providing a context for the massacres of 1965–66 was the polarization between the Indonesian Army and the PKI that eliminated the middle ground of negotiation and compromise. Robinson notes that after the coup, "A campaign was launched under Kopkamtib [Operational Command for the Restoration of Order and Security, or Komando Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, a unit created by Suharto in 1965] auspices to make it impossible for ordinary people to remain politically neutral—a technique of psychological warfare later employed by Indonesian forces in Aceh and East Timor."[50] Hefner further points to the use of paramilitary groups recruited to organize the attacks on targeted groups in 1965–66. "A key element in the military's arsenal of violence was to be civilian vigilantes, some of whom were recruited from the ranks of Indonesia's growing population of urban gangsters."[51]

Reflections

Today, as in 1965, economic factors—including increases in the cost of basic necessities and an extremely high rate of unemployment—threaten the livelihood of the poor and the economic security of the middle class. Furthermore, only three years after the fall of Suharto, there is widespread cynicism about the prospects for political and legal reform that would lead to more democratic governance, economic accountability, and a more just division of

48. Lindsey, "Judiciary System Reform."

49. Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, p. 601.

50. Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise*, p. 293; and also Cribb, "Problems in the Historiography," p. 36.

51. Hefner, *The Political Economy*, p. 66.

wealth. Political leaders are proving ineffective in resolving the economic problems that Indonesia faces and conflicts cannot be resolved through the courts because one legacy of the New Order has been subversion of legal institutions.

Mobilization by political parties in preparation for elections in 2004 and the emergence of independent labor unions set the stage for polarizing conflicts along ideological lines. As Hadiz observes,

> [a] turbulent process of political transition will almost certainly involve attempts by contending elites to mobilize sections of society, including workers, presently excluded from the officially delineated realm of politics. Under such a situation, it would be more likely . . . for political parties and other organizations, representing particular sections of the elite, to attempt to enhance their position in the post-Suharto political configuration by seeking a working-class constituency.[52]

Initially, the transition government of B. J. Habibie tried to respond to protests by workers. For example, in February 1999, when 20,000 workers from four major electronic companies demonstrated demanding higher wages and larger allowances for food and daily transportation, the government organized negotiations between the strikers and factory management, resulting in an increase in the transportation and food allowances. However, since the early months of 1999, the government has swung back and forth between responsiveness and repression.

Conflict over land is emerging everywhere, especially in the outer islands where it is considered to be a threat to foreign investment that most Indonesians accept as necessary to recover from the economic crisis that began in 1997. For example, an article reporting negotiations between Kaltim Prima Coal and villagers in East Kalimantan notes that "land dispute has recently become the number one problem in provinces and regencies outside Jakarta following the introduction of [a] new democratic environment in the country. This has created jitters among investors."[53] Even if the national government were able to outline a clear economic strategy and a consistent policy on land issues, implementation would be complicated by new local autonomy legislation. Conflicts over land are likely to continue and produce attacks on corporate property. Without effective political or legal institutions for redress of grievances or resolution of such conflicts, regional elites are likely to resort to the use of security forces to maintain law and order, perpetuating a second legacy of the New Order: the normalization of state-sponsored violence against protestors.

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52. Vedi Hadiz, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia* (Perth, Western Australia: Routledge, 1997), p. 188.

53. "KPC Agrees to Pay Land Compensation to End Dispute with Villagers," *Van Zorge Report*, February 12, 2001.

Ethnic and religious tensions growing out of economic competition between local peoples and transmigrants are also likely to lead to further outbreaks of violence. In a recent incident reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation in March 2001, local residents in Riau burned down a settlement of transmigrants.[54] The violence in Maluku in Eastern Indonesia, Poso in Suluwesi, and Sampit in Kalimantan provide vivid examples of how such "ethnic" and "religious" conflicts between indigenous peoples and migrant groups can become deeply entrenched. Such conflicts can also prove useful to the military by proving the need for protection of society by security forces and by providing opportunities for economic exploitation of refugees.

There are, however, significant differences between the early 1960s and the post-Suharto period. First, today there is no national organization equivalent to the PKI that could organize local protests into a mass campaign. Second, the end of the Cold War means that foreign governments are less likely to lend support to a campaign by the government or military elites against "leftists." Third, a military coup is unlikely in the immediate future because the Indonesian military has been so tainted by past and present abuse of human rights. And fourth, an international civil society, as manifest in Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, has emerged over the past 40 years. These organizations have been increasingly effective in pressuring Western governments to protest against systematic state violence and human rights abuse. These factors make it unlikely that the massacres of 1965–66 could be repeated.

In Indonesia the greatest threat of violence arises from the existence of paramilitary youth groups linked to the military, political parties, and Islamic organizations. One possible scenario for the future in Indonesia is suggested by events in Thailand in 1976 where paramilitary groups like the Red Gaur and the Village Scouts in league with a corrupt police force and rightwing political elites joined to crush "leftist" students and a new-born democracy under the banner of nationalism.[55] With respect to Indonesia, as I argued above, the youth groups there have been infected with the culture of violence developed by paramilitary groups associated with the Indonesian military. For example, PDI-P, the ruling party of President Megawati Sukarnoputri, which has three paramilitary youth affiliates, has selected Enrico Gutteres—accused of gross human rights abuses as leader of one of the most vicious

54. "Violence Erupts in Riau, Transmigrants' Homes Burned," British Broadcasting Corporation, March 28, 2001.

55. See Benedict Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms," *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World,* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 139–73; and idem., "Murder and Progress in Modern Siam," ibid., pp. 174–91.

paramilitary units in action in East Timor[56]—to head one of its paramilitary organizations. The actions of paramilitary groups, which often include criminal gangs, are usually reported in the news as having been perpetrated by "unknown" individuals. For example, on March 30, 2001, the *Jakarta Post* reported that "hundreds of workers of car upholstery producer PT Kadera AR Indonesia in Pulogadung industrial estate were attacked while on strike in the early hours of Thursday, leaving one dead and 11 injured."[57] Paramilitary youth groups sponsored by political elites allow their sponsors to avoid responsibility by pointing to an Indonesian "culture of violence." The use of paramilitary groups also threatens the security of ordinary citizens, who become fearful of political engagement.

That there is widespread violence in Indonesia today is undeniable. This violence has emerged for multiple reasons, including the failure of political and legal institutions to provide a means of resolving conflicts and dealing with grievances, the consolidation of communal identities where group are competing for access to or control over economic resources, and the use of state-sanctioned violence to instigate and repress conflict. In this context, the claim that Indonesia is a violent culture is a political claim that can be used to justify a return to authoritarian rule and further state violence.

56. See Seth Mydans, "East Timor's Scourge Serves Time on His Patio," *New York Times,* May 16, 2001; and "Enrico Guterres, Terror of Timor, Is Back," *Asiaweek,* June 22, 2001, p. 9.

57. "Surprise Attack on Striking Workers Leaves One Dead," *Jakarta Post*, March 30, 2001.