

DISORDER IN MEGAWATI'S 'NEW' INDONESIA

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INTRODUCTION

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The Republic of Indonesia (ROI) is composed of around 17,000 islands and is 5,000km from east to west. It is the world's largest Islamic state, and, with a population of around 214 million, is the fourth most populous country in the world. However, its political landscape is one of entrenched inequality and intolerance. There are numerous low-intensity conflicts around the archipelago, many of which arise due to a particular event or series of events and then disappear almost as quickly. There are, however, several which have escalated since the fall of President Suharto in 1998, and are exhibiting signs of longevity. The conflicts which have the most sustainable characteristics and have received the most attention both internally and internationally concern Aceh, Irian Jaya, the Maluku region, and to a lesser extent Kalimantan (see map).

On Indonesia's state crest are the old Sanskrit words *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*: 'Unity in Diversity'. Former President Suharto's regime which ruled Indonesia for more than 30 years, was known as the *Orde Baru* ('New Order'). During this time, Indonesia was a military-dominated authoritarian state. The Generals were leaders not only of the security forces, but also in civilian life. There was a sense in which the *Orde Baru* was 'eternal', Suharto had a firm grip on power and dissent was not tolerated. The *Orde Baru* achieved political stability in Indonesia by using the military to maintain a complex mix of order and violence: the latter employed to ensure the former. At least the façade was one of order, but in a number of the more remote areas of the archipelago many were agitating to break away from the Republic. The *Orde Baru* brought increasing chaos. It brought violence, social disorder, political disintegration and, finally economic chaos too. Aceh, Irian Jaya (hereafter West Papua)¹ and East Timor were particularly problematic. The common response to each of these trouble spots has been a military one. Hundreds of thousands have been killed in the violence. Today, in President Megawati Sukarnoputri's 'new Indonesia' it appears that unity remains the priority, while diversity is positively discouraged. The call of *Merdeka* ('freedom') can be heard from the far north west of the archipelago in Aceh to the far east in West Papua.

While many causes of the conflicts that rage around the archipelago are area-specific, there are several identifiable commonalities which should be of concern. These issues allow a profile of conflict in Indonesia to be constructed. This article will consider these underlying reasons for the violence, with a review of the conflicts followed by an analysis of implications for the domestic and international political arenas. Several of the trouble spots in Indonesia today are united against a common enemy – the government in Jakarta, and clear patterns of both cause and consequence of conflict have emerged from the superficially dissimilar conflicts around the archipelago.

REASONS FOR DISORDER

In a discussion of the causes of conflict in Indonesia, Robinson suggests that the *Orde Baru* can be held responsible in two key policy areas: "First, its approach to the exploitation of natural resources and the distribution of the benefits; and second, the doctrine and practice of its armed forces."² In addition, a third crucial factor is the *transmigrasi* policy of Suharto. Discussing the situation in Aceh, Robinson suggests that the problems in that region:

...were not the inevitable result of the region's cultural, religious, or other primordial differences with other parts of the country, nor of its often noted 'tradition' of resistance to outside authority. The New Order regime itself was largely responsible for the serious and protracted violence in Aceh.³

Such analysis may in fact be utilised more generally around the archipelago. The analogy of the traditional Indonesian puppet theatre (*Wayang*) is extremely pertinent. When watching a *Wayang* play one would have an extremely impoverished experience if one concentrated on the puppets. It is in fact in the shadows of the puppets that the real story is played out. So the conflicts in Indonesia are certainly not one-dimensional, and can only be understood within a more complex framework and often disguised logic.

Perhaps the most salient recurring theme in profiling the conflict in several areas of Indonesia is the rich natural resource base.

Reasons given for the continuing – and in some areas, intensifying – unrest include religion and ethnicity (often a legacy of the *transmigrasi* policies of the past); allegations of military and police brutality; anger that those accused of being responsible for abuses of human rights are not being brought to trial; a belief that local resources are being plundered by both indigenous and foreign companies; the presence of provocateurs; elite interests, and more recently the new regional autonomy laws. Perhaps the most salient recurring theme in profiling the conflict in several areas of Indonesia is the rich natural resource base. The central government relies on these outlying areas for revenue to subsidise those areas that do not have similar natural wealth.

Equally, it is impossible to understand the current conflicts without at least considering the historical context of Suharto's *transmigrasi* policy. This policy of 'forced migration' is at least in part to blame for the conflict-wracked state in which the Republic now finds itself. The policy of *transmigrasi* and its manipulation of religion has at least exacerbated, and may have even caused these conflicts which have claimed tens of thousands of lives, and resulted in around 1.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Indonesia in August 2001.

Economic Interests

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The Indonesian military's economic interest in conflict is a factor too often overlooked. In some areas it has been sustained quite deliberately by members of the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI – the Indonesian military) and the police who seek to protect their own interests. These economic 'interests' are often substantial and are located in both the formal and informal economy, and also include illegal activities. Tensions between Indonesian police and military officers occasionally erupt into violence in conflict areas. Civilians are often caught in the crossfire. Many of the clashes are triggered by disputes over the control of illegal businesses.⁴

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In these resource-rich, and often conflict-wracked outlying areas, the presence of foreign commercial operations has exacerbated existing tensions. In some cases, most notably Aceh and West Papua they have been the cause of such conflict due to competition for profit. These companies are generally involved in the extractive industries such as mining, oil and gas and logging, and they 'employ' local military and police to provide 'protection' and clear land. The prevalence of conflict justifies troop deployment to these areas.

Continuing 'disorder'

The events of May 1998 which saw the downfall of Suharto led to a process of democratisation in Indonesia, although progress to date has been somewhat slower than expected. The premise that violence is the route by which the

'masses' may be controlled remains pervasive in the mentality of many of the military and political elite and the "culture of terror"⁵ has become so much a part of life in Indonesia that it has become the 'invisible' tool of state repression. Suharto's successor Habibie (May 1998 – October 1999) made little attempt to purge society of this cultural 'norm'. In contrast, former President Abdurrahman Wahid (October 1999 – August 2001) did attempt to push forward with a process of increased democratisation and liberalism. It was his reform agenda, and the speed with which he attempted to pursue it, that led (at least in part) to his impeachment in August 2001 and his replacement by the daughter of Indonesia's first President Sukarno – Megawati Sukarnoputri.

A 'New' Indonesia?

The new president is engaged in a balancing act.

The new president is engaged in a balancing act, on the one hand she is engaging in 'reformist' rhetoric, on the other she continues to sanction a security approach to the troubles around the archipelago, driven in part, by a desire to carry through her father's wishes for a united Indonesia. It is no secret that President Megawati is close to hard-line military commanders who favour crushing separatist movements in West Papua and Aceh. Territorial Commander Widodo of the TNI has stated that the pro-independence movement in Aceh should be declared an enemy of the state and be "eliminated." Such inflammatory statements are not uncommon among the military and political elite. Prior to becoming President, Megawati actually supported the military's push to be allowed to mount an offensive in Aceh against the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

Although Megawati's party *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan* (PDI-P) won a majority of the votes in the election (34%), and therefore a larger than usual mandate from the people, her grip on power is only marginally less tenuous than that of her predecessor, President Wahid. It could be argued that she remains in power because she is close to the neo-new order, which continues to be influential. The neo-new order comprises many of Suharto's family and friends and several among the hard-line military and political elite and there is evidence of them in Megawati's cabinet. Many praised her choice of Ministers but several are army generals and ministers linked to Suharto. For example, there is suspicion in Jakarta surrounding the appointment of new Attorney General – M.A. Rachman, the choice of the still influential military.

Rachman was chief of the government's investigating team into the serious human rights abuses in East Timor, but failed to find "sufficient evidence" to prosecute generals named as suspects. He also limited the scope of the investigation to include only officers and soldiers on the ground, thus eliminating the chain of command as subjects of investigation. Human rights groups have expressed disappointment with Megawati's choice for this key position. It seems likely that Rachman will continue to protect senior officers in both the military and police. Should this scenario be played out, the calls for justice as a pre-requisite to peace which are ringing out around the Republic will only become louder, and the Attorney General himself may become an obstacle to peace.

CONFLICTS

West Papua

In West Papua, the western half of New Guinea island and Indonesia's eastern-most province, the fight for independence has been continuing with varying degrees of intensity ever since Indonesia occupied the former Dutch colony in the early 1960s. Recently the call to break away from the ROI has intensified. A broad-based independence movement has emerged in West Papua from a decades-old armed insurgency. Of the almost two million people, around half are indigenous Papuans, the remainder being from other islands. The area is rich

in natural resources, indeed, “*Papua is so rich it is scary*” says local human rights activist John Rumbiak.⁶

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Low-level resistance by a small rebel group, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) began shortly after the *Act of Free Choice* took place in 1969. Indonesia had taken over administration of Papua from the UN in 1963 and the Act was a ‘referendum’ of 1,025 Papuans held to reaffirm Indonesian sovereignty over the territory. It has been rejected by the independence movement as unrepresentative because it was not based on universal suffrage. Resistance has never been entirely stamped out, despite continuous repression by Indonesian security forces. Human rights groups and church officials estimate the total number of civilian deaths since 1970 at 100,000.

The conflict has escalated since 1999. Thousands have died, disappeared and been tortured. In November 2000 clashes between Indonesian security forces and the OPM intensified and hundreds of West Papuans, mainly women and children, fled across the border to Papua New Guinea, vowing not to return until West Papua is free and calling for *merdeka, merdeka penuh* (‘independence, full independence’).

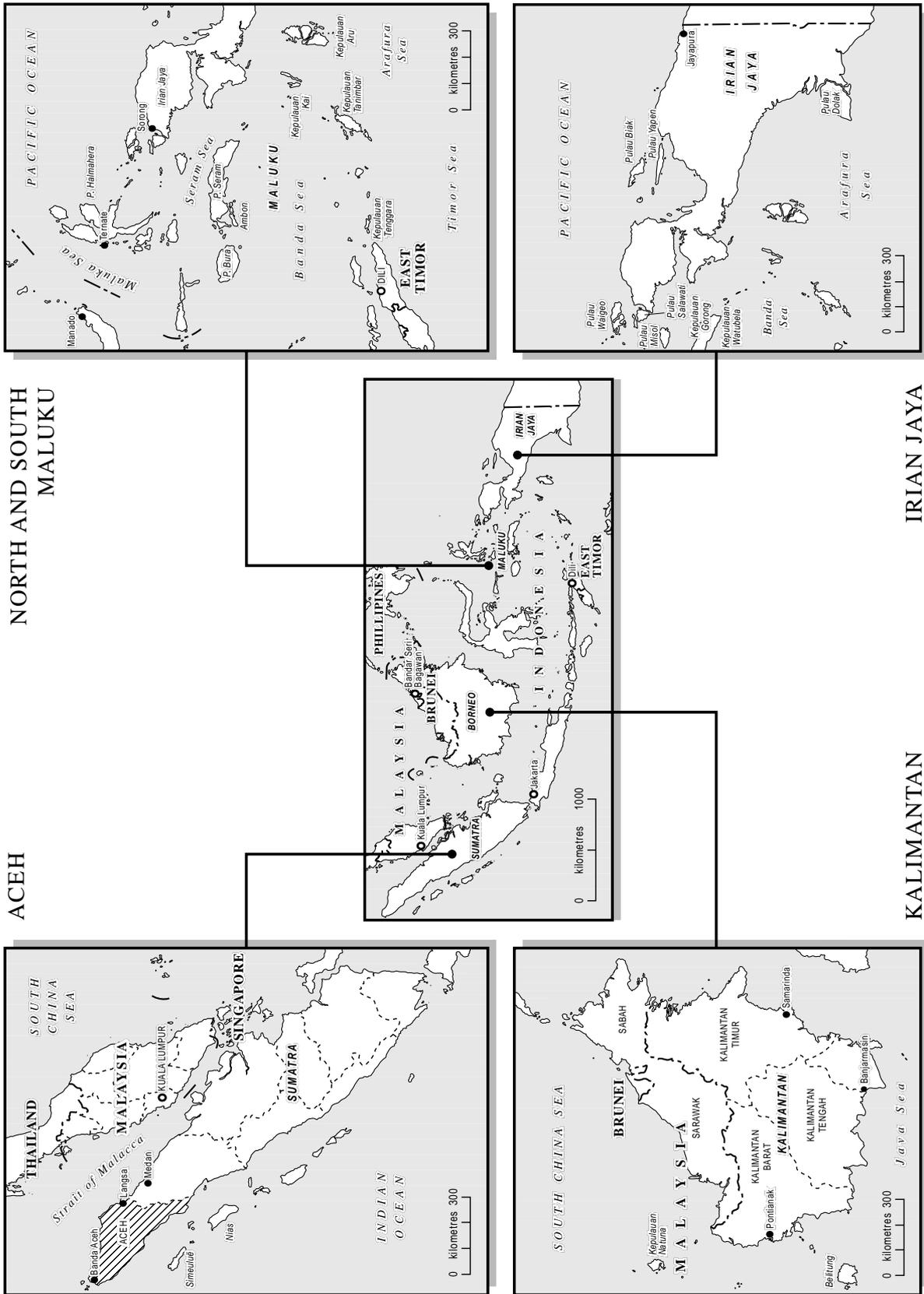
Several observers have blamed former President Wahid for fanning the quest for independence. In addition to lending his support to a change of name for the province, he permitted locals to raise the Morning Star flag in 1999 and said independence supporters would be guaranteed freedom of speech. Locally-based armed forces took violent exception to the Papuan flag and much of the conflict since has been centred on the flag raising issue.⁷ The Papuan Presidium Council (PDP) was created as a largely inclusive body with leaders from various branches of politics, religion, academia, and the community.⁸ The Council declared in early June 2000 that West Papua was an independent and sovereign nation. The result of this declaration was a vicious crackdown on the civilian population by the military.

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In addition to the PDI-P’s declaration of independence, a further point of significance in the West Papuan conflict was the recent formation of pro-Jakarta militia groups. Major General Mahidin Simbolon is the region’s new military commander and was allegedly involved in the military tactics – which involved the use of militias – in East Timor, locals fear a further escalation of violence is inevitable. However, in a conciliatory move the Trikora military area commander in West Papua has apologised “*wholeheartedly*” to civil society and the regional government for the actions of a number of his men who have caused harm to the people. Despite this, beatings, arrests and the burning of villages have caused thousands of people to flee from their homes in the far west of the province since mid-2001. The death on 11 September of Willem Onde, one of the leaders of the Papua Liberation Front Army (TPNP), the armed wing of the OPM only served to fuel the OPMs vow to “*never lay down arms until West Papua is free.*”⁹

In September 2001 the OPM held its first official talks with a representative of the Indonesian government to discuss the future of the province. The delegation refused the government’s request to sign the special autonomy offered on the grounds that the content of the proposal did not meet their approval. The meeting in itself was a positive sign, but there remains a gulf between what the government is prepared to offer and what the OPM is prepared to settle for.

As in other places in the archipelago, the armed forces have favoured a security solution, and there is little political will to address the underlying causes of the conflict. Former President Abdurrahman Wahid’s attempt to give West Papuans



concessions was consistently opposed by the armed forces. There may be fewer visible signs of discontent in West Papua at the moment (Autumn 2001), such as the flag flying and the daily violence endured by Aceh, but this is not an indication that the civilian population are any more inclined than before to accept the situation. It simply reflects the fact that in West Papua, the state has the monopoly on the use of force.

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The Papuan people are calling for justice for the repression and discrimination that they claim to have suffered since the province's integration into Indonesia in 1963. The offer of special autonomy being pedalled by the government is viewed merely as a diversion from the real matter at hand. A local leader of the OPM said that the reason why the Papuan people have demanded separation from Indonesia is "*because of the central government's discriminative treatment against us, also human rights abuses and the wide disparity between indigenous locals and migrant people.*"¹⁰ This call for justice and the perception of inequality rings out in Indonesia from Papua in the east to Aceh in the far northwest.

The province of Papua is home to Freeport – the world's largest gold mine operation. Freeport, in addition to contributing funds to local groups, pays the military around US\$11m a year for 'protection'. The result is that the military's housing and equipment in this area is some of the best in Indonesia.¹¹ A prominent human rights and environmental campaigner Mama Yosepha Alomang, leader of the Amungme people has accused the company of throwing money around recklessly and trying to bribe the local people. She has said that "*the main beneficiaries are corrupt tribal leaders and the military*" and there is no doubt that the military's economic benefits are extensive around the Freeport operation.

The relationship between foreign operations and human rights abuses is set to escalate as BP is moving into Bibtuni Bay, in an area known as 'Bird's Head' where there is believed to be large reserves of natural gas. The presence of BP is causing concern among the local community, which feels that BP should postpone development until the special autonomy package which is still being negotiated, is agreed. It is already the case that violence has escalated in the Bird's Head area. The perpetrators are allegedly Brimob, the elite special police unit.

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John Rumbiak of the locally based Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy (ELSHAM) sees a troubling increase in human rights abuses since Megawati Sukornoputri became president.¹² He reports a worrying trend throughout the archipelago towards tactics of intimidation, imprisonment, torture and the killing of humanitarian and human rights workers. Human Rights Watch reports that growing human rights abuses by security forces, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and lethal force against peaceful demonstrators, are provoking an increasingly violent response from armed Papuan groups.

Maluku

The Maluku region is made up of two provinces: (South) Maluku and North Maluku. The total population is around two million, less than one percent of Indonesia's population.

It may be necessary to use the term plural 'wars' to describe what has happened in Maluku as there have been a number of violent incidents. They can be broadly grouped into Ambon-related fighting in the south from January 1999 onwards, and North Maluku fighting following the establishment of a new

province there in the second half of 1999. The change heightened tensions among these same elites for the spoils of office.¹³

This 'cocktail' of religion, ethnicity, and competition for resources and elite politics has exacted a human cost in lives lost and IDPs.

Several waves of communal violence have swept the region of North Maluku, with the first taking place in August 1999. Prior to this latter conflict in Halmahera (North Maluku) there was no peace in Maluku region as many assume. Indeed, there were suppressed latent communal conflicts which flared up occasionally and communities lived in a state of tension. The pattern of settlements in North Maluku is one of the main reasons for this communal violence since people tend to live segregated by their ethnicity and by their religion. Other factors, common to elsewhere in the Republic, are the expansion of religious territory and competition to gain a share of the gold mine and for the seat of governor. This 'cocktail' of religion, ethnicity, and competition for resources and elite politics has exacted a human cost in lives lost and IDPs. More than 10,000 have died and the number of those displaced due to the conflict has been estimated at between 123,000 and 370,000.¹⁴

The incident most commonly identified as the start of the problems in Ambon, South Maluku, was a fight over a bus fare in January 1999. The violence that followed is illustrative of the 'volatile peace' that existed. In the Ambon-related violence it is estimated that 8,000 have lost their lives in the past three years. While a 'tentative peace' has been present more recently in many parts of the Maluku, in Ambon the violent conflict continues. In Ambon the population balance moved in favour of Muslims during a period when Suharto was increasingly promoting Islam in Indonesia. When Habibie succeeded Suharto the situation rapidly deteriorated and violent Christian-Muslim clashes spread.

North Maluku province is made up of about 80% Muslim, but in some places there are large concentrations of Christians. Former President Suharto, in an attempt to win favour from Muslim groups, granted them positions in politics that had previously been the domain of the armed forces. Tamrin Tomagola suggests there is a power vacuum in Maluku, which is now being filled by Laskar Jihad and military deserters of which there are many.¹⁵ In Ambon there is much fighting as the city is split. The Muslims have successfully pushed the Christians to the east and are attempting to push them out. Many mosques and churches have been destroyed.

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An additional experience specific to the Maluku conflict is the numerous reports of 'forced religious conversion'. Most stories concentrate on the conversion of Christians to Islam, but Muslims have reported being forced to eat pork and denounce Allah. Failure to do so has reportedly resulted in death. Vice President Hamzah Haz has suggested forming a special body to solve the communal conflict in the Maluku islands.

Point of Significance

Conventional wisdom suggests the conflict is based on ethnic, economic and political rivalries. Initially, the fighting was very localised until mid-2000 when Muslim militias arrived on the scene. The intervention of the Java-based Laskar Jihad changed the dynamics of the conflict. The arrival of an unknown number of this group (certainly in the thousands) was facilitated by members of the state security apparatus. This radical Muslim organisation without doubt received arms, training and other resources from the military. The similarities to the military-backed militia in East Timor is of concern.

The Laskar Jihad was (it is commonly believed) motivated to go to Maluku by the massacre by Christians of about 500 Muslim villagers in December 1999.¹⁶ Some senior politicians backed their call for a holy war¹⁷ to save the Muslims of

Maluku. Amein Rais for example, Chairman of the *Mejelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (MPR – People’s Consultative Assembly – MPR) and leader of the National Mandate Party (PAN)¹⁸ supported initial calls for a ‘holy war’. The security forces also “*declared allegiance*.” Brimob sided with Christians but began to back down in the face of greater opposition when the Laskar Jihad arrived. Two former ministers of defence, Mahfud M.D. and also Juwono Sudarsono, have said that generals close to Suharto “*stirred up*” the violence.¹⁹

As the violence threatened to spiral out of control, President Wahid declared a state of civil emergency on 27 June 2000. TNI spokesman Vice Air Marshall Graitto Usodo admitted that many of the soldiers in Maluku were “*emotionally involved*” in the conflict and those “*contaminated*” soldiers were removed.²⁰

Whereas in January 1999 no one outside the police and armed forces had modern firearms by December both sides had acquired semi-automatic rifles from sources that remained largely mysterious, but were suspected to be from the military and police. Illegal workshops were moreover, producing sophisticated rifles that used military-style ammunition. Homemade bombs were in abundant supply. Again, local elites were directly implicated in the violence. The distinction between state and society became blurred as the security forces reproduced the factionalism within society. It has been said (of the North Maluku) that “*we can now identify religious hatred in North Maluku*.”²¹ The legacy is a society far more deeply segregated than it has ever been.

The military and police are also involved in economic activities in Maluku, predominantly linked to large industries such as fisheries and timber.

Aceh

On the northern tip of Sumatra lies the province of Aceh. It is here the fiercest resistance to Indonesian rule is being played out, in a conflict that has been raging – with varying degrees of intensity – since the mid-1970s. Aceh is often portrayed as a “*fiercely independent Islamic state*” which has led to a lack of ‘sympathy’ within the international community.

The reasons for the conflict in Aceh are variations on the theme of the armed struggles elsewhere. They are based around repression and violations of human rights by the military and police, perception of profound economic injustice, and the social changes that took place as part of the transmigrasi policy.

Megawati has recognised that, in effect, the success of her Presidency lies with how she deals with the country’s various trouble spots. Most pressing of these is Aceh. To this end in the first weeks of her Presidency, Megawati signed a new law on special autonomy (rejected as meaningless by the majority of Acehnese civil society), met with non-separatist leaders, sent a high-level government delegation to assess the situation, authorised the deployment of additional troops and the training of reinforcements, and has even visited the troubled province herself. She has offered a more conciliatory tone, but at the same time has declared she will not countenance the break-up of the republic.

None of these measures have addressed the underlying reasons for the conflict. Not only have they missed the point, but are even seen by some as an obstacle to peace. For example, in relation to the government’s attempt to appease separatists with the offer of special autonomy, Amran Zaimzami suggests that “*The audience for the special autonomy package is the international community, not the Acehnese*.”²² The reasons for the conflict in Aceh are variations on the theme of the armed struggles elsewhere. They are based around repression and violations of human rights by the military and police, perception of profound economic injustice, and the social changes that took place as part of the *transmigrasi* policy.

Megawati's more conciliatory tone is being drowned out by the hard-line rhetoric of many of the political and military elite. In mid-September 2001 the Chief of the Army's Strategic Reserves Command (Kostrad) Lt. Gen. Ryamizard Ryacudu, called on the government to declare GAM "*an enemy of the state.*" Such hard-line rhetoric typifies the approach of successive governments to the problems in Aceh with repressive measure.

More than 1,500 people have died as a result of the violence this year (2001) alone. The killings, tortures and disappearances have not abated since Megawati came to power, the situation has, in fact, become much worse. In the first two months of her Presidency around 200 people were killed. The Julok massacre in early August resulted in more than 30 plantation workers being killed and despite denials by the military, independent eyewitness accounts sent to this author confirm that the armed forces were indeed responsible. In addition to the confirmed deaths, an unknown number were taken for 'questioning'. Since the massacre three mass graves have been found, at least one of which is thought to contain some of those who were taken in the during the Julok incident. Also the burning of schools has continued – more than 60 since August 2001.

In addition the targeting of human rights workers and prominent figures has increased. In the week preceding Megawati's 8 September visit, there were three high-profile killings. Mohammed Yusuf Usman, a highly respected human rights advocate from the US-funded East Aceh Coalition for Human Rights was found dead, Zaini Sulaiman Ishaq, a member of the Aceh provincial legislature (DPRD), was shot dead by unknown 'visitors' to his home, and the highly respected rector of Aceh's Syiah Kuala University was assassinated on his way home only days before Megawati's visit.

As in West Papua, the desire by the Indonesian government to provide security for foreign operations in this resource rich province is a contributing factor to the violent conflict. The pattern of increasing troop deployment has served only to exacerbate the situation. The undesirable side-effect of Aceh's wealth is violence, the appropriation of land and other resources. Aceh is often viewed as a 'cash cow' by military and police personnel. There is a saying among troops in the TNI: "*If one is sent to Aceh, one will return home either dead or very rich.*" For example, in Aceh the military and police are paid by Exxon Mobil to provide 'protection' and in addition, the armed forces are involved in the local drugs economy, arms trafficking, illegal logging and several other illegal activities.

Aceh Merdeka's declaration of rebellion in late 1976 and its first military action in 1977 coincided with the beginning of oil and gas exploration in the area. It is significant to note that the levels of violence are worst in the proximity of these operations run by the American oil giant Exxon Mobil. Responses to security threats to these foreign operations are given top priority by the cash-strapped Indonesian government. Following temporary suspension of Exxon Mobil operations in Aceh in March 2001 citing 'security concerns' the government issued presidential Decree 4/2001 which allowed for the current military operation. From the perspective of Exxon Mobil, the security response has been successful, the company resumed operations mid July. Aceh was peaceful prior to the presence of the oil company. The actions of the military were not a response to a mature rebellion but to a relatively peaceful province.

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Kalimantan

The situation in Sampit, Central Kalimantan, as in most of the other areas under discussion, has been one of simmering tension. Violence erupted in February 2001 with a series of incidents. Isolated pockets of violence between the local

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Dayaks and the migrant Madurese escalated and resulted in a 'massacre' of an estimated 500 Madurese by the Dayaks. By April, almost all the Madurese had fled the province, most escaping to Madura island off Java, where aid groups are helping local communities cope with the huge influx of displaced people.

What sparked the Sampit slaughter is unclear. As in most of the other areas of conflict in Indonesia, the reason why the atmosphere in Central Kalimantan was volatile, thus allowing such a flare-up can be traced in part to the *transmigrasi* policies of Suharto, and the perception by the indigenous population – in this case the Dayaks – that they do not receive a fair share of the benefits from natural resources.²³

Violence against the Madurese community in Pontianak, West Kalimantan also led to the evacuation of local residents whose temporary homes and kiosks were burned in July this year. In total the homes and livelihoods of 344 Madurese families were destroyed. The evacuation was motivated not just by the burning, but also by threats from local Dayak and Malay people of further bloodshed. Recent meetings between Malay, Dayak, and Madurese leaders, and local officials including the military and police chief have so far failed to resolve the conflict.

Similar problems have become apparent on the nearby island of Sulawesi, where there is also a divergent mix of ethnic and religious groups. Since July 2001 there have been many instances of both Christian and Muslim houses being burned. In Poso, Central Sulawesi in 2000, more than 300 people were killed in savage bloodletting, most of them Muslims. Sadly this conflict is not over and is escalating.

Oil-rich Riau in Sumatra is home to the country's largest oil field operated by Caltex. It is also the scene of recent unrest. The locals claim that over the years they have received less than 0.5% of revenues generated in the area from the national budget. The calls for independence in Riau are new but it is likely they will quieten as the share of revenue is increased under the new autonomy laws.

PROSPECTS

Suharto's Legacy

The Suharto regime failed to create a pluralistic society to reflect the ethnic diversity of the archipelago. Its corrupt and highly centralised economic system led to growing disparities in the distribution of land and wealth.

In attempting to understand these conflicts, Suharto's legacy cannot be overlooked. More than four million people were resettled to transmigration sites on the outer islands by 1990, mainly to Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Maluku and West Papua. Today, indigenous peoples who lost lands to transmigration are seeking reparation and demanding that their rights to land be restored. The full legacy of this countrywide institutionalised theft of indigenous lands is now being felt. The arrival of migrants from other parts of the archipelago has made Indonesia the constructed entity that it is today.

The Suharto regime failed to create a pluralistic society to reflect the ethnic diversity of the archipelago. Its corrupt and highly centralised economic system led to growing disparities in the distribution of land and wealth. In the power vacuum following the fall of Suharto in 1998, these problems resurfaced with vigorous intensity, leading to conflicts that – even when eventually resolved as in the case of East Timor – have created a climate of increasing uncertainty and political and regional instability. The legacy is one of "*psychological scars of oppression.*"²⁴

From the far east to the far west of the archipelago, the voices of the disaffected are growing stronger. At the core of the conflict, they say, is the steady erosion of control over resources, land, and culture, the result of both foreign and

indigenous companies and the greed of both local and national political and military elite to enrich themselves.

Domestic Responses

The problems facing the new government of Megawati centre on repression and human rights abuses by the TNI and Brimob. The social re-landscaping which is a result of the *transmigrasi* policy, and the uneven development experience (both economic and social) that the areas now in conflict feel they have endured has left Megawati's new government this legacy of unrest.

As in Aceh, the West Papuans believe that the staunchly nationalistic Megawati is 'bad news' for their independence cause. Local pro-independence leaders say they want to break away from Indonesia amid fears that Megawati's Presidency will lead to increase repression of separatist movements. There is no doubt that the government in Jakarta regards both West Papua and Aceh as the front line in its effort to defend Indonesia's territorial integrity in the wake of East Timor's independence. With the latter in mind however, Megawati has apologised for past abuses and pushed forward with the programme of decentralisation begun under both her predecessors. At the same time though, she has sanctioned a military solution in many areas.

The Search for Compromise

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Regional autonomy is one of the most significant reforms in the new post-Suharto Indonesia, and perhaps the new government's best hope for relative peace. It is based on two laws passed by the interim Habibie regime. *Local Government Act No.22/1999* gives the regions greater power and responsibilities over the use of national assets, while the *Revenues Allocation Act No.25/1999* details fiscal responsibilities. Together they set out the framework for transferring responsibilities and human and financial resources from central government to the regions.

The demand for regional autonomy was a reaction to decades of centralised, oppressive and corrupt control. The decision to grant it was a tacit acknowledgment that this was a prerequisite to the maintenance of the unity of the state. The package however, was not sufficient to appease separatist sentiments in Aceh and West Papua. These two provinces have been offered 'special autonomy.' In August Megawati signed into law the new special autonomy package for Aceh. The Acehnese have been granted (among other things) 70% of revenues from natural resources for eight years when further negotiations will take place. The West Papuans continue to negotiate the terms of their autonomy package.

But regional autonomy may not turn out to be a unifying factor. Ryaas Rasyid, former state minister of regional autonomy affairs, has criticised the poor and improper implementation of regional autonomy, saying it could jeopardise the nation.²⁵ Rasyid further suggests that Indonesia could collapse if regional autonomy fails. It is difficult to predict whether the new laws have gone far enough in quelling dissatisfaction in these two provinces. Megawati has explicitly stated that she hopes Papuan claims will be peacefully resolved, but since that statement the province has rejected recent offers of autonomy.

President Megawati's two top priorities are to hold onto power, and to maintain the unity of the state. She must, first and foremost, work to prevent the break-up of the Republic. The continued unity of the state was the condition, set by the political and military elite, that she agreed to in becoming president, and it is a position she now appears to wholeheartedly endorse. To this end, in Aceh she has all but given a free rein to the pursuit of a military rather than political

settlement. It is also increasingly evident that she has given the military a freer hand in crushing separatist movements in West Papua.

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The conflicts in the 'hot spots' around the archipelago were not 'inevitable' because of traditions as some have suggested. Most are due to the fact that successive governments have refused to acknowledge the rights of indigenous people. Government policies have been misguided, inequitable, discriminatory and repressive. They have plundered resources, forced transmigration, overseen abuses of human rights and witnessed the erosion of traditional values. Former Minister of Defence Juwono Sudarsono suggested in August 2000 that:

*...the most important thing the central government must do at present is to stop all forms of repression and discriminative treatment in the province, investigate all human rights abuses committed by security authorities and give the Acehnese and Papuan people rights to manage their own administration.*²⁶

International Responses

As the media is so fond of telling us these days – 'the world has changed' in the wake of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and as a result, the international reaction to Indonesia's internal unrest has also altered. In the wake of the September attacks President Bush has been courting support from the international community to launch an all-out offensive against the main suspect, Osama Bin Laden and his organisation. Indonesia, being the world's most populous Islamic nation is perceived by the US as an important ally in this coalition. During Megawati's September visit to Washington, President Bush offered a package of economic incentives, including pledges of US\$530m in aid and loan guarantees for Indonesia. The assistance should bolster Megawati's attempts to turn Indonesia's economy around, still ailing from Asia's 1997-98 financial crisis. US backing for a recently revived three-year, US\$5bn aid program from the International Monetary Fund is critical to restoring investor confidence in the country, and Indonesia needs Washington's help to restructure the country's huge foreign debt and open foreign markets for its exports.

President Bush has also indicated that he will lobby Congress to allow for military engagement with Indonesia to allow training and the provision of spare parts. The United States and Australia severed their military ties with Jakarta on accusations that Indonesian troops were implicated in the post-ballot human rights abuse in East Timor in 1999. Bush has promised among other things to lift the embargo on 'non-lethal' items to the military to secure US\$10m for police training and to reinstate 'modest contacts' with the military. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has also acknowledged that discussions on the possibility of restoring Indonesia-Australia military ties have taken place.

Muslim groups have suggested that Megawati has mortgaged the Indonesian nation by signing an agreement with the US government. Indeed, in the wake of the US led attacks on Kabul and other strategic sites, Megawati has declined to confirm her full support for the US. There is growing political tension within the government as the influential Commission 1 of the *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR – legislative assembly) issued a statement calling on the government to condemn the attacks on Afghanistan. Megawati is walking a tight-rope. US Ambassador Robert Gelbard has demanded that Megawati's government increase security to protect American interests in Indonesia and crack down on the militants. But political observers warn that Megawati risks triggering a backlash against her fledgling government if she cracks down. The deployment of additional troops to protect foreign operations will serve only to

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raise the climate of fear and distrust in areas of conflict, and to jeopardise those areas enjoying a fragile peace. Moreover, the issue of human rights so important to the US and others previously, appears to have been forgotten in the 'war against terrorism.'

Indonesia's fragile but reversible progress towards democracy is being fully supported by both the US and Europe. The fear that this, the largest Islamic state, harbours religious fundamentalist such as those thought to be responsible for the US attacks has moved the West to act. The belief that instability in the world's fourth most populous nation would threaten not only Indonesia's immediate neighbours, but also the strategic and regional objectives of major powers may well have worked in Indonesia's favour. The United States, Australia, the European Union, Japan and several others have pledged their support for the maintenance of Indonesia's integrity, including the troubled provinces of Aceh and West Papua. They have also encouraged peaceful negotiations to handle these separatist movements, but at the same time appear to be in full agreement with the ROI government – that the first priority is to prevent *disintegrasi*.

The region is nervous as they fear a ripple effect if trouble in Indonesia escalates at this already uncertain time.

The region is nervous as they fear a ripple effect if trouble in Indonesia escalates at this already uncertain time. The problems in West Papua have had a direct bearing on Papua New Guinea for example. Its army is in disarray and unable the patrol the border and there are fears that the conflict may spill over into its territory if Indonesian troops engage in hot pursuit or move against OPM camps inside Papua New Guinea. It is a fear shared by Australia with its obligations as Papua New Guinea's former colonial administrator and major aid donor. There is also a fear within the region that the internal unrest in Indonesia may lead to a flood of refugees.

CONCLUSION

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It is imperative to stress that the problems in Aceh, West Papua, the Maluku, Kalimantan and elsewhere were not the inevitable result of the region's cultural, religious, or other primordial differences with other parts of the country, nor of its often noted 'tradition' of resistance to outside authority. If we view these areas as simply a hotbed of Islamic militancy and resistance this obscures the real reasons for the conflict, and, at this time of international tension, that would be a dangerous distraction from the real cause of the unrest. Both the Indonesian government and the international community must look to their own policies for the answers to these problems. If the underlying causes of the conflict continue to be ignored, the vicious cycle of conflict in Indonesia is set to continue.

¹ Former President Wahid, at the request of the pro-independence movement, gave his blessing for Irian Jaya to be renamed West Papua. The name change was however, never formally accepted. Indeed, it was rejected by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in August 2000.

² Robinson, G. (1998) 'Rawan is as Rawan does: The origins of disorder in new Order Aceh', in *Indonesia* No. 66 (October): 128.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For further reading on the economic interests of the Indonesian military and police see McCulloch, L.(2000) 'Trifungsi: The Role of the Indonesian Military in Business', paper presented at the conference 'Soldiers as Economic Actors', Jakarta, October 2000, www.bicc.de.

- 5 Pemberton, J. (1994) *On The Subject of "Java"*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 8.
- 6 Quoted in Van Klinken, G., (2001), 'The Maluku Wars: Bringing Society Back', *Indonesia*, Cornell, No.71: 5.
- 7 For Papuans, the Morning Star has a quasi-religious significance. It was first raised on 1 December 1961, as the Dutch prepared to leave their colony.
- 8 The OPM, guerilla operatives fighting for Papuan independence since the early 1960s, was ultimately excluded.
- 9 Confidential interview with West Papuan pro-independence activist, Jakarta, September 2001.
- 10 Interview with local OPM Commander, Jakarta, August 2001.
- 11 McCulloch, L. (2000) 'Trifungsi: The role of the Indonesian military in business', www.bicc.de.
- 12 Burton, B. (2000) 'Activists say military abuses in Indonesia on the rise', in *Inter Press Service*, 25 September.
- 13 Van Klinken, G.2001: 5.
- 14 Government of the Republic of Indonesia and International Agencies, The Maluku Crisis: Report of the joint session commission, Jakarta: GOI, 6 February 2000: 8,17.
- 15 Interview with Tamrin Tomagola, Jakarta, September 2001.
- 16 'Indonesia island buried hundreds of killing victims', in *Reuters*, 10 January 2000.
- 17 Many commentators mistakenly use the term 'jihad' to describe the activities of the Laskar Jihad in Maluku. In fact the term 'jihad' is simply an internal pledge to do better about a particular issue, for example fasting is a 'jihad'. The term 'jihad' and 'holy war' may not be used interchangeably.
- 18 PAN is a largely Muslim party that came 5th in the Indonesian elections.
- 19 'Army elements behind violence' in *The Straits Times*, 5 October 2000 and 'Juwono Speaks on Maluku Tragedy, in *The Jakarta Post*, 15 July 2000.
- 20 'Indonesia to replace troops in ravaged Ambon', in *Reuters* 27 June 2000.
- 21 Interview with Smith Alhabar, September 2001, Jakarta.
- 22 Interview, Jakarta, September 2001. Amram was head of the government appointed commission set up to investigate human rights abuses in Aceh during the period the province was a military zone (1989-98). The commission recorded 7,000 cases of violations, only five were brought to trial.
- 23 Many of the logging concessions were awarded to Suharto's family and cronies, and to the military and political elite.
- 24 Van Klinken, 2001.
- 25 *The Jakarta Post*, 31 July 2001.
- 26 Interview with Juwono Sudarsono, Jakarta, August 2000.