
Prospects for Peace and Indonesia's Survival

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When a Political Secretary at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta was asked recently how Indonesia might redefine national unity in the face of so much ethnic conflict, she responded, "If Indonesian leaders consider diversity as a positive factor, the country will survive and prosper, but if they consider it something negative that must be crushed, then it won't."

The Republic of Indonesia (ROI) is composed of approximately 17,000 islands and spans 5,000 kilometers. It is the world's largest Muslim state, and, with a population of around 214 million, is also the fourth most populous country in the world. The archipelago encompasses peoples of different cultures and ethnicities, and who speak different languages. On Indonesia's state crest are the old Sanskrit words *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*: "Unity in Diversity." Indonesia's single common denominator underwriting its leaders' claims of unity is the fact that all its people were colonized by the the Dutch and then occupied briefly and brutally by Japan. Indeed, Indonesian secondary school textbooks proudly identify the basis for nationhood as *Perasaan Senasib*, the "sentiment of common fate." During the period of decolonization (1945-1950) such a sentiment was both a force *for* and a result *of* a growing sense of unification among Indonesians.

All this changed in the post-colonial period. Suharto's New Order regime—which ruled Indonesia for more than 30 years—was a military-dominated authoritarian state. Military leaders were also civilian leaders. There was a sense in which the New Order was “eternal,” since Suharto had a firm grip on power and dissent was not tolerated. Generous World Bank loans and the Asian economic “miracle” allowed the country to prosper despite the rampant corruption of the Suharto family and his cronies. Islands of incredible wealth emerged in a vast sea of poverty. Farmlands belonging to the powerless peasants were razed with little or no compensation, in order to give way to luxury housing estates. Protests were met with military might. The Chinese community, comprising only 5 percent of the population, controlled 75 percent of the country's economic activity thanks to its links to the military. No business activity, big or small, was possible without the blessing of Suharto's family.

The New Order achieved political stability in Indonesia by using the military to maintain a complex mix of order and violence. The facade was one of order, but in a number of remote areas of the archipelago many were pushing for separation from the Republic.

Today, Indonesia's political landscape is entrenched in inequality and intolerance. There are numerous low-intensity conflicts around the archipelago, many of which are triggered suddenly by an event or series of events, only to disappear almost as quickly. However, several conflicts that exhibit signs of longevity have escalated since the fall of Suharto in 1998. The conflicts that have received most attention are those in Aceh, Irian Jaya (West Papua), the Maluku region, and to a lesser extent Kalimantan. There are some overriding similarities in these conflicts. Perhaps the most obvious is that they are united against a common enemy—the government in Jakarta. Clear patterns of the causes and consequences of conflict have emerged.

In a discussion of the causes of conflict in Indonesia, Geoffrey Robinson suggests that the New Order 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 A third crucial factor is the *transmigrasi* policy of Suharto, which was in part a result of economic strains in the densely populated island of Java. 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

Conflicts in Indonesia are not one dimensional, and must be understood within a complex framework. Conflict endures—and in some areas, intensifies—throughout the archipelago for a variety of reasons including: differences in

religion and ethnicity, often a legacy of Suharto's *transmigrasi* or "forced migration" policies; military and police brutality; anger that those accused of human rights abuses are not brought to trial; 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 is the rich natural resource base in areas of conflict. The central government relies on these outlying areas for revenue to subsidize areas that do not have similar natural wealth.

The Indonesian military's economic interest in conflict is a factor too often overlooked. In some areas, conflict is deliberately sustained by members of the Indonesian military (TNI) and the police who seek to protect their interests. These economic "interests" are in both the formal and informal economy, the latter including illegal activities. Tensions between Indonesian police and military officers occasionally erupt into violence within areas of conflict and civilians are often caught in the crossfire. Many of the clashes are triggered by disputes over control of illegal businesses.⁴

In these resource-rich, and often conflict-torn outlying areas, the presence of foreign commercial operations exacerbates existing tensions. In some cases—most notably Aceh and West Papua—they have caused conflict due to competition for profit. Here, companies are generally involved in extractive industries such as mining, oil and gas, and logging, and they "employ" local military and police to provide "protection" and for clearing land. The prevalence of conflict is used to justify troop deployment to these areas.

The downfall of Suharto led to a process of democratization in Indonesia. However, progress has been slower than expected. The view that violence should be used to control the masses still pervades the military and political elite; 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, B.J. Habibie, made little attempt to

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purge society of this cultural "norm." In contrast, President Abdurrahman Wahid (October 1999-August 2001) did attempt to push forward a process of increased democratization and liberalism. The speed with which he attempted to pursue his reform agenda, at least in part, led to his impeachment in August 2001 and the subsequent rise of Megawati Sukarnoputri, Sukarno's daughter. Many observers of President Abdurrahman's reform efforts suspect military

involvement in the rash of bombings that struck churches around Christmas 2000.

The new president is engaged in a balancing act. On the one hand she is engaging in "reformist" rhetoric, and on the other, she continues to take a security-oriented approach to the troubles around the archipelago, driven in part by a desire to carry through her father's vision of a united Indonesia. It is no secret that Megawati is close to hardliners in the military who favor crushing separatist movements in West Papua and Aceh. 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). TNI Territorial Commander Widodo 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.

Although Megawati's party (PDI-P) won a plurality of the votes in the election (34 percent)—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 members and friends, and several military and political elites, several of whom serve in Megawati's cabinet.

There is suspicion in Jakarta surrounding the appointment of new Attorney General—M.A. Rachman, a favorite of the military. Rachman was chief of the government's investigation team for 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 from the investigation. Human rights groups have expressed disappointment with Megawati's choice for this key position. Even the national human rights commission, Komnas-HAM, has been tainted. In the Human Rights Watch report "Indonesia, Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Aceh," Komnas-HAM's investigation of the Julok Massacre—a particularly brutal incident in August 2001, in which dozens of villagers disappeared or were killed, witnesses say, by the Indonesian military—is recognized as only the most glaring recent example of ineptitude and unwillingness on the part of the Indonesian judicial system to challenge the military with the rule of law. Sidney Jones, former Asia Director for Human Rights Watch said, "the Indonesian government in general and Komnas-HAM in particular have failed dismally to investigate serious human rights abuses in Aceh. And Komnas-HAM has gone from being the most credible institution in the country to being a real hindrance to human rights progress." Should this complicity in undermining the rule of law and entrenching the forces

of lawlessness continue, calls for justice as a prerequisite for peace—which ring out around the Republic—will only become louder.

West Papua

In West Papua, the western half of New Guinea island and Indonesia's easternmost province, the fight for independence has continued with varying intensity since Indonesia occupied the former Dutch colony in the early 1960s. 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. The independence movement and many human rights organizations consider the vote unrepresentative because it was not based on universal suffrage. Recently a number of peace and human rights advocacy organizations have called on Secretary General Kofi Annan to reexamine the "referendum" which the United Nations recognized as legitimate.⁶ 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 to be 100,000.

Since 1999, the conflict has escalated. Several observers have blamed former President Wahid for fanning the flames of separatism. 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 has since been centered 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.

In a conciliatory move, the *Trikora* military area commander in West Papua has apologized "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, since mid-2001 beatings, in a pattern of military behavior following high-level military apologies for past abuses—found in Aceh as well—beatings, arrests and the burning of villages by the Indonesian armed forces ensued, causing thousands of people to flee their homes in the far west of the province. The death on 11 September of Willem Onde, one of the leaders of the Papua Liberation Front Army (IPNP)—the armed wing of the OPM—only served to fuel the OPM vow to "never lay down arms until West Papua is

free.”⁹ The death of the chairman of the PDP, Theys H. Eluway, on 11 November 2001 had a similar affect. There has been much speculation that members of the Army Special Forces (*Kopassus*) were involved. The failure to bring anyone to trial for Theys’ death has served to further exacerbate tensions.

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 offer of special autonomy on the grounds that the content of the proposal did not meet their approval. While the meeting itself was a positive sign, there remains a gulf between what the government is prepared to offer and what the OPM is prepared to settle for. The armed forces have favored a security solution, and there is little political will to address the underlying causes of the conflict. Former President Abdurrahman Wahid’s attempt to grant concessions to West Papuans was consistently opposed by TNI.

The Papuan people call for justice for the repression and discrimination that they claim to have suffered since the province’s integration into Indonesia in 1963. The special autonomy being offered by the government is viewed merely as a diversion from the real matter at hand. A local leader of the OPM said 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 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 \$11 million 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 Prominent human rights and environmental activist 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 says, “The main beneficiaries are corrupt tribal leaders and the military” and that the military receives extensive economic benefits from the Freeport operation.

The relationship between foreign operations and human rights abuses is set to escalate as British Petroleum (BP) moves into an area of Bintuni Bay known as “Bird’s Head” in anticipation of large reserves of natural gas. The presence of BP is causing concern in the local community, which feels that BP should postpone development until the special autonomy package is negotiated. Violence has already escalated in the Bird’s Head area. The perpetrators are allegedly Brimob, the elite special police unit.

John Rumbiak of the Papua-based Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy (ELSHAM) reports a worrying trend—since Megawati

Sukarnoputri became president—towards use of intimidation, imprisonment, torture and the killing of humanitarian and human rights workers.¹² 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.

Aceh

On the northern tip of Sumatra lies the province of Aceh. It is here the fiercest resistance to Indonesian rule is found; conflict that has been raging—with varying degrees of intensity—since the mid-1970s. Megawati recognizes that the success of her presidency depends on 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, authorized the deployment of additional troops and the training of reinforcements, and 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. Perhaps the most significant move that confirms the pursuit of a military solution to the problems in Aceh was the inauguration in February 2002 of Aceh's own military command (*Kodam*). This move—approved by Megawati—has been roundly condemned by most of the local population.

None of these measures has addressed the underlying causes of the conflict. Not only have they missed the point, but they are even seen by some as obstacles to peace. Amran Zaimzami, the head of the government-appointed commission set up to investigate human rights abuses in Aceh, says "The audience for the special autonomy package is the international community, not the Acehnese."¹³ The reasons for the conflict in Aceh are variations on the themes of the armed struggles elsewhere. They are based on repression and violations of human rights by the military and police, perception of profound economic injustice, and the social change that took place as part of the *transmigrasi* policy. Although the autonomy package promises a redistribution of revenues generated from natural resource exploitation in Aceh, a recent survey of village elders found a unanimous distrust of these promises. The elders question how such a law was drafted, pointing out that there have been no elections in Aceh and that the local and national members of parliament did not consult with the people of Aceh. They consider the package another ploy by Jakarta and the local Acehnese elite to retain control while Acehnese politicians and business elites loyal to Jakarta gain considerably.

Megawati's conciliatory tone is being drowned out by the hard-line rhetoric of many political and military elites. 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. In January this year, in an interview in Banda Aceh, Brig. Gen. Djali Yusuf said that GAM would be eliminated in less than a year. He further stated that there was no confidence among the political and military elite that anything other than a military solution would sufficiently address the problems in Aceh.¹⁴

In 2001 alone, more than 1,500 people have died as a result of the violence. The killings, tortures and disappearances have not abated since Megawati came to power. The situation has, in fact, become much worse. In the first ten weeks of 2002, more than 300 civilians died as a result of the conflict. Last spring a high-level official at the Indonesian Mission to the United Nations under President Wahid asked to explain the high civilian casualty rate, gave his assessment: "By day peasant, by night GAM." Such a statement reveals at once an acknowledgement of the widespread popular support for the insurgents and a tolerance of civilian casualties by the military.

Conditions for non-combatants in Aceh have worsened considerably since last spring. In the first two months of Megawati's presidency around 200 people were killed. The Julok massacre in early August resulted in more than 30

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plantation workers being killed and—despite denials by the military— independent eyewitness accounts sent to the authors, as well as findings of Human Rights Watch reported on 15 March 2002, 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 "questioned" during the Julok incident. The burning of schools has also continued—more than 60 since August 2001.

In addition, TNI is increasingly targeting human rights workers and prominent figures. 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 U.S.-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, security for foreign operations in this resource-rich province contributes to the violence. Increasing troop deployment has only exacerbated the situation. The undesirable side effect of Aceh's wealth is violence, as well as 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 ExxonMobil to provide "protection." In addition, the armed forces are involved in the local drug economy, arms trafficking, illegal logging, and other illegal activities.

Aceh Merdeka's "re-declaration of independence" in late 1976 and its first military action in 1977 coincided with the beginning of oil and gas exports. Levels of violence are worst in proximity to industrial operations run by ExxonMobil. Responding to security threats to foreign operations is given top priority by the cash-strapped Indonesian government, though the government and ExxonMobil have chosen to ignore significant evidence of military and police responsibility for several attacks on the gas operations near Lhokseumawe, North Aceh. Following temporary suspension of ExxonMobil operations in Aceh in March 2001 citing "security concerns," the government issued presidential Decree 4/2001, sanctioning the current military operation. From the perspective of ExxonMobil, the security response has been successful. The company resumed operations in mid-July. Aceh was peaceful for the decade prior to the arrival of the company. Indonesian troops continue to be deployed on ExxonMobil property.¹⁵

Suharto's Legacy

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 institutionalized theft of indigenous lands is now being felt.

The Suharto regime failed to create a pluralistic society to reflect the ethnic diversity of the archipelago. Its corrupt and highly centralized 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 instability. The legacy is one of “psychological scars of oppression.”¹⁶

The problems facing Megawati’s government center on repression and human rights abuses by the TNI and Brimob. Social re-landscaping as a result of the *transmigrasi* policy, along with the uneven economic development of the provinces has left Megawati’s government a legacy of unrest. All across the archipelago, the voices of the disaffected are growing stronger.

As in Aceh, the West Papuans believe that the staunchly nationalistic Megawati is “bad news” for their independence cause. Local separatist leaders say they want to break away from Indonesia amid fears that Megawati’s Presidency will lead to increased repression of separatist movements. Jakarta regards West Papua and Aceh as the front lines in its effort to defend Indonesia’s territorial integrity in the wake of East Timor’s independence. With this in mind, Megawati has apologized for past abuses and pushed forward with the program of decentralization begun under both her predecessors. At the same time though, she has sanctioned a military solution in many areas.

Regional autonomy is one of the most significant reforms in post-Suharto Indonesia and perhaps the new government’s greatest step towards addressing unrest. 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 Jakarta to the regions.

In August Megawati signed into law the new special autonomy package for Aceh. The Acehnese have been granted, among other things, 70 percent 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 criticized the poor and improper implementation of regional autonomy, saying it could jeopardize the nation.¹⁷ Rasyid further suggests that Indonesia could collapse if regional autonomy fails.

President Megawati’s two top priorities are to hold onto power and to maintain the unity of the state. The continued unity of the state was the condition—set by the political and military elite—that she agreed to in becoming president. It is a position she now appears to wholeheartedly endorse. Accordingly, 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 the separatist movement in West Papua.

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 Defense Juwono Sudarsono in August 2000 addressed the conflict in Aceh by suggesting, "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."¹⁸

In the wake of 11 September, the international reaction to Indonesia's internal unrest has also changed. The United States considers Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim country—an important ally in its anti-terrorism coalition. President Bush has indicated that he will lobby Congress to allow for military engagement with Indonesia to allow training and the provision of spare parts. The U.S. military ties with Jakarta were suspended on accusations that Indonesian troops were involved in post-ballot human rights abuses in East Timor in 1999. Bush has promised, among other things, to lift the embargo on "non-lethal" items to the military to secure \$10 million for police training and to reinstate "modest contacts" with the military.

Muslim groups have suggested that Megawati has mortgaged the Indonesian nation by signing an agreement with the U.S. government. Indeed, in the wake of the U.S.-led attacks on Afghanistan, Megawati has declined to confirm her full support for the United States. There is growing political tension within the government, as the influential Commission 1 of the legislative assembly (DPR) called for the government to condemn the attacks on Afghanistan. As a result, Megawati is walking a tightrope. Former U.S. Ambassador Robert Gelbard 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. Deployment of additional troops to protect foreign operations will only raise the climate of fear and distrust in areas of conflict, and will jeopardize areas enjoying fragile peace. Moreover, the issue of human rights so important to the United States previously appears to have been forgotten in the "war against terrorism." U.S. initiatives that threaten the status quo in Jakarta through support for democratization will be targets for jingoist groups and political factions. David M. Phillips in a 20 February 2002 commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* underlines the importance of involving "wise men"—including General Zinni and former Thai Foreign Minister Surin

Pitsuwan—in ongoing efforts to bring the two sides of the conflict in Aceh to commit themselves to confidence building measures and programs.

Indonesia's fragile and reversible progress towards democracy is being fully supported by both the United States and Europe. The fear that the country with the largest Muslim population harbors religious fundamentalists such as those thought to be responsible for 11 September has moved the West to act, even though no evidence has been found of al-Qaeda influence in Indonesia.¹⁹

The United States, Australia, the European Union, Japan, and several others have pledged their support for the maintenance of Indonesia's integrity. They have also encouraged peaceful negotiations to handle Aceh and West Papua, but at the same time appear to agree that the first priority is to prevent *disintegrasi*. But short-term tactical "successes" in counter-insurgency operations may result in long-term strategic failure, not only for powerful Indonesian military and political officials but also for U.S. strategic interests. The intervention of the United States government in support of processes to resolve conflicts throughout Indonesia should be conducted with sensitivity to the many uses of anti-Americanism by an elite threatened by change.

Other countries in the region fear a ripple effect if trouble in Indonesia spills over to neighboring countries. The problems in West Papua have had a direct bearing on Papua New Guinea, for example. Its army is in disarray and is unable to patrol the border; 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. This 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 floods of refugees, increases in destabilizing arms and drug trafficking, and damage to foreign investor confidence.

Conclusion

Is there still hope for Indonesia to survive? To answer this question, we must return to the beginning of this analysis. Are the leaders of Indonesia willing to accept diversity as a positive aspect of nation building or are they still committed to defending the collapsing NKRI? A recent news article describes Aceh in much the same language used in Human Rights Watch reports dating back to the early 1990s: "Red Cross worker Muslim Tandjung's job is retrieving corpses...He is called wherever bodies are found: floating in rivers, hanging from trees, decomposing in shallow graves. 'No one will touch them. It is up to us to take them to their final resting place,' he says."²⁰ Bodies float in rivers, and hang from trees; the murders of civilians, the vast majority committed by the Indonesian armed forces, are being committed at a rate above that committed

during the so-called DOM period of martial law. The recent imposition by the Indonesian government of a *Kodam* in Aceh—despite the protests of many civil society organizations in Aceh, Jakarta, and abroad—signals a turn for the worst in Aceh and perhaps in all other “hot spots.” Last week, 2000 more troops were deployed in Aceh, each soldier seen as an added tax on the local economy and a new threat to Acehnese non-combatants.²¹ The Indonesian government and military, taking advantage of increasing concern with the threat of Islamic fundamentalism worldwide, have increased their attempts to have the insurgency and even the culture of the Acehnese identified as fundamentalist. Along with the declaration of a *Kodam* in Aceh by the military, the police have declared that they will begin enforcing Islamic dress codes, despite the Acehnese religious authorities’ consistent refusal to adopt *Syariah* law.

Ironically, for Indonesia to redefine its national unity in the face of so much ethnic conflict is to accept its ethnic diversity and to start again from its original credo of nationhood. The problems in Aceh, West Papua, the Maluku, Kalimantan and elsewhere were not the inevitable result of the cultural, religious, or other primordial differences, or of a tradition of resistance to outside authority. If the true causes of the conflict continue to be ignored, the vicious cycle of conflict in Indonesia is set to continue. ❧

Notes

1. This article is indebted to work of Lesley McCulloch from whose articles it has taken extensive passages. Lesley McCulloch is a Lecturer in Asian Studies at the University of Tasmania, Australia.

2. Geoffrey Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh,” in *Indonesia* (1998) No. 66 October: 128.

3. *Ibid.*

4. For further reading on the economic interests of the Indonesian military and police see Lesley McCulloch “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. J. Pemberton, *On The Subject of “Java,”* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1994): 8.

6. CamPeace has petitioned Secretary General Kofi Annan in order for the behavior of the United Nations in overseeing this “referendum” be reviewed. CamPeace wrote to the Secretary General on 19 November 2000 with this petition.

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. L. McCulloch, “Trifungsi: The role of the Indonesian military in business,” www.bicc.de, (2000).

12. B. Burton, “Activists say military abuses in Indonesia on the rise,” in *Inter Press Service*, 25 September 2000.

13. 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.

14. "Power before peace in Aceh" by Lesley McCulloch, *Asia Times* 2 March 2002.

15. The report, "The Conflict in Aceh and U.S. Interests in Promoting a Free Market, Stability and Human Rights in South East Asia—An Examination of the Context and Impacts of ExxonMobil's Security Arrangements with the Indonesian Armed Forces," is available on the website of the Harvard University Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Studies Program at <http://preventconflict.org/portal/main/research/jereski.htm> (dated June 2001). An updated version can be provided by contacting the author at mutualaid@earthlink.net.

16. Van Klinken, 2001.

17. *The Jakarta Post*, 31 July 2001.

18. Interview with Juwono Sudarsono, Jakarta, August 2000.

19. See "Qaida in Indonesia? The Evidence Doesn't Support Worries," Comment by Harold Crouch, analyst for the ICG, in the *International Herald Tribune*, 23 October 2001.

20. "Fighting In Aceh Not Helping SE Asia's Efforts Vs Terror" 24 February, Associated Press. The article continues: "They shot everyone they saw and burned everything," said Juned Jalil, a 61-year-old rice farmer whose house was torched in the attack. "People trying to save their children's clothes from burning houses were shot." Compare with Human Rights Watch, Vol. 3, No. 16 – June 1991.

21. This article was sent to the publisher 15 April 2002. "Last week" refers to early April.