

**SUM Report No. 9**

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**POLITICAL VIOLENCE:  
INDONESIA AND INDIA  
IN COMPARATIVE  
PERSPECTIVE**

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**Olle Törnquist (ed.)**

The Oslo Asia Workshop-hearing with

Paul R. Brass, Sven Cederroth, Robert W. Hefner,  
James C. Scott, Tamrin Amal Tomagola,  
and Olle Törnquist

Managing Editor: Tom Næss

**Centre for Development and the Environment**

*University of Oslo*

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Edited by: Olle Törnquist  
Managing Editor: Tom Næss  
Publications Manager: Alida Boye  
Cover / layout / illustrations: Daniel Fryer  
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## **Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM)**

University of Oslo  
P. O. Box 1116 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo  
Norway

[www.sum.uio.no](http://www.sum.uio.no)  
[publications@sum.uio.no](mailto:publications@sum.uio.no)  
Facsimile: +47 22 85 89 20

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# Preface

The Oslo Asia Workshop was initiated in 1999 by scholars at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo, and Asia analysts with the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. There were two major purposes: firstly to meet the demand for academically based but clear-cut and brief public analyses of problems of development and democratisation in the post-crisis Asia; secondly to initiate a forum for regular deliberation between academic, government-, and non-government analysts. The main activity of the workshop (led by Harald Bøckman and Olle Törnquist, assisted by Thale Berg Husby) has been a series of nine public hearings during 1999 and 2000.<sup>1</sup> There may be additional hearings on an occasional basis. Lack of knowledge and perspectives in face of the Asian crisis still testifies to the need for a public and regular deliberative forum for academicians and practitioners. But this particular hearing-programme is now concluded. It has been possible thanks to the voluntary work of several scholars, students and journalists, the back up of SUM, and a financial contribution from the Asia Desk of the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The ninth hearing on 'Political Violence in Asia: Indonesia and India in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective' was held on June 5, 2000, at Sundvollen Hotel outside Oslo within the framework of the first Norwegian Asia Studies Conference. The following report is an edited version of the draft papers, talks and discussions at the hearing. We are most thankful to all of those who contributed to the hearing and the report, in particular, of course, to the invited speakers, as well as to Tom Næss, its managing editor.

Oslo, September 2000

On behalf of the Asia Workshop,

*Olle Törnquist*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> (1) The Indonesian elections and the referendum in East Timor (Törnquist, Vikør)[For Törnquist's contribution, see *Jakarta Post*, July 2 and 3, 1999, or *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 26-July 2, 1999]; (2) The modernisation of corruption in China (Ding Xueliang); (3) New South East Asian Politics: Local racketeers, rioters and rebels? (John Sidel); (4) Students, Intellectuals and cultural workers in the struggle for truth, reconciliation and democracy in Indonesia (Goenawan Mohamad); (5) The political development of Indonesia and the issue of regionalisation (Fortuna Anwar); (6) The political economy of uneven development in China (Wang Shaoguang); (7) Norwegian aid-policies in the new Asian context (Lehne, Brandtzæg, Høgdal); (8) The role of the labour movement in the Asian struggle for democratic consolidation (Saptari, Hemasari, Beckman) [A separate report is available from the Asia workshop]; (9) Political violence in Indonesia and India in comparative and theoretical perspective (Brass, Tomagola, Cederroth, Hefner, Scott, Törnquist) [reported upon here]. A concluding tenth up-date workshop-hearing on the problems and options in the further struggle for human rights and democracy in Indonesia has been called off (due to the postponement of an official Norwegian delegation to Indonesia) but will hopefully be arranged separately later on [cf., for the time being, Törnquist's 'Dynamics of Indonesian Democratisation' in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.21:3, 2000.

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# Introduction

*Olle Törnquist*

Ph.D., University of Uppsala, Professor of Political Science and Development Research at the University of Oslo. His publications include 'Dilemmas of Third World Communism: the Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia' (Zed Books, 1984), 'What's Wrong with Marxism? The Cases of India and Indonesia, Vol. 1-2', (Manohar, 1989 and 1991), 'The Next Left? Democratisation and Attempts to Renew the Radical Political Development Project: the Case of Kerala' (NIAS, 1995), 'Politics and Development: A Critical Introduction' (Sage, 1999), 'Dynamics of Indonesian Democratisation' (*Third World Quarterly*, 2000) and (as co-editor) 'People's Rights: Social Movements and the State in the Third World' (Sage, 1988) and 'Democratisation in the Third World: Concrete Cases in Comparative and Theoretical perspective' (Macmillan, 1998).

The ninth Oslo Asia Workshop hearing is on political violence. Unfortunately it is a timely theme. The currently most severe cases are in Indonesia – but not just in East Timor and in the potential break away provinces of Aceh and West Papua; more importantly, it is a general problem, reminding us more of the Maluku islands.

What are the dynamics behind this? At present there are several workshops and conferences devoted to Indonesia's specific problems. But Indonesia is not unique. The idea of this hearing is rather to improve our knowledge by putting Indonesia in a broader comparative and theoretical perspective. Hence we shall start with the Hindu-Muslim violence in India.

Indonesia and India both relate to three of the general characteristics involved. Firstly, the undermining of centralised statist projects. In Indonesia during the aftermath of the Dutch colonial rule there were experiences similar to the present ones. And in the mid-60s, as the first nation-state project crumbled and Suharto enforced his "new order", another round of violence arose. (I shall return to the legacy of the 1965-66 massacres when later on introducing our Indonesian contributions.) Similarly in India – with the dismantling of the British Raj, the partition and later on the de-institutionalisation of Nehru's etatism as well as the Congress Party. In both cases a third major round is now on – with globalisation, structural adjustment programmes, the weakening of the nation-state, and the rise of, for instance, Hindu fundamentalism in India and the so-called religious clashes in Indonesia.

Secondly, there is a combination of many factors and local conflicts. We can not make sense of the violence without contextualised analyses. And this, of course, is not only related to ethnicity and religion but also to various local powers and interests such as conflicts over land, public office and resources.

Thirdly, political violence is often unfortunately also related to the spread of partial elements of democracy. This is when political liberalisation and electoral

competition over public office and resources are not combined with popular movements and parties that have firm roots in collective interests and ideologies. Hence the new space turns into a democratic vacuum, filled by the already powerful. In India there is a clear tendency, for instance, that more 'common people' participate in elections and that more local groups, even Dalits, are getting increasingly important – but that they are rarely able to organise themselves to take their own interests and ideas forward. Usually they are mobilised by elite politicians, bringing to mind the present situation in Indonesia. In each context, moreover, and especially in Indonesia, many basic issues and conflicts are kept outside the new democratic system. It is frequently argued (especially in Indonesia) that the elite itself has to solve these internal issues and conflicts – as democratic solutions would imply leaving the problems to uneducated people without appropriate institutions. But then it is also true, than when various groups – including those within the elite – have little chance of furthering their causes within the system, they prefer to take their cases to the streets and use violence. Hence the obvious need for more substantial democratisation by promoting peoples' actual capacity to make use of formal democratic rights and institutions.

These are the three major reasons for why we abstained from another workshop on the most severe case of 'Indonesia only' and decided instead to attempt to concentrate comparisons and broader experiences. As this is an even more difficult task, one should ideally bring together a 'dreamteam' of especially capable scholars, something I believe we succeeded in doing, although it has not by any means been easy.

The first contribution is by Professor Paul Brass, outstanding scholar on comparative political violence, about the lessons from the production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India. My own introduction to the Indonesian case (pointing to the legacy of the 1965-1966 massacre) is then followed by the analysis of Professor Tamrin Tomagola from Universitas Indonesia – and the Maluku islands. Professor Tomagola is the leading scholar on the conflicts in this part of Indonesia as well as being a member of the most impressive popularly based organisation against the political violence in the country, KONTRAS (The Independent Commission on Missing Persons and Victims of Violence). Next is a very clear-cut and revealing case study by eminent anthropologist Dr. Sven Cederroth from the University of Gothenburg of what actually happened in the tourist paradise of Lombok. And to help us widen our perspective again, Professor Robert Hefner from Boston University, an expert on religion and civil society in the region, analyses the risks of disintegration and the problems of democratisation. Finally, then, the most exciting commentator one could come to think of: Professor Jim Scott of Yale University, who has written extensively, in comparative perspective, on the often repressive 'modern' state but also on the popular resistance and the efforts at more human modern alternatives involved.

# The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India

*Paul R. Brass*

Ph.D., University of Chicago, professor emeritus in Political Science and the Jackson School of International Studies, is well known among specialists on comparative and South Asian politics, ethnic politics, and collective violence. He has published twelve books and numerous articles on these and other subjects. His most recent books are 'Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence' (Princeton) and 'Riots and Pogroms' (Macmillan and NYU Press). His other books include 'The Politics of India Since Independence' (Cambridge, 2nd ed.), 'The Indian National Congress and Indian Society, 1885-1985' (Chanakya), 'Caste, Faction, and Party in Indian Politics', 2 vols (Chanakya), 'Language, Religion, and Politics in North India' (Cambridge), 'Radical Politics in South Asia' (MIT), and 'Factional Politics in an Indian State' (Berkeley). He is also co-author of 'Science, Politics, and the Agricultural Revolution in Asia' (Westview). His work on the comparative theory of ethnicity has appeared in numerous articles and in his books 'Ethnicity and Nationalism' (Sage) and 'Ethnic Groups and the State' (Croom Helm). His current research concerns ethnicity, communalism, and collective violence in India. In 1987-88, he was Associate Director of Research, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris and the Lester Martin Fellow at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1994-95, he was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

What I am going to talk about today is a book that I have just completed, the title of which is *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. My focus in this book is on a very important town in northern India called Aligarh. I have already put my work in this town in a broader context in two books I published over the last couple of years: *Theft of an Idol* (Princeton), and *Riots and Pogroms* (Macmillan and NYU Press). Many of the ideas in those books actually come from this study, the fieldwork for which precedes the books which have since been published. I believe that what I am going to say today about the situation in Aligarh applies elsewhere in India and other parts of the world.

First, allow me to tell you about the new book. It has five parts. Part one is introductory and deals with the question of explanations, explaining communal violence in India, and other forms of violence. I argue that the kinds of causal analysis often used to attempt to explain communal violence are generally deficient, and that we need other forms of analysis to probe the dynamics of the production of communal violence, especially those that take the form of pogroms, riots, and massacres. There are other forms of analysis that we need to look at. I find that some forms of functional analysis serve my purposes better. Instead of asking what causes violence, it may be better to ask somewhat different kinds of questions. For example, what interests are served by the production of certain kinds of violence? Why is it that, in these societies where such violence is endemic, there are also few social, collective, and institutional groups that have any interest in preventing violence? Third, I look at the existence of discourses of violence that make a major contribution to the production of Hindu-Muslim violence in India. I argue that there is a discourse of communalism in India, which has corrupted history, penetrated memory, and contributed – and continues to contribute – to the production and persistence of communal violence in post-independence India.



**Figure 1** Map of India showing the state of Uttar Pradesh and the district of Aligarh

The second part of the book deals with Hindu-Muslim violence in India, and the place of Aligarh in relation to it. In the persistence of violence in that country, I look at the incidents of Hindu-Muslim riots and their consequences for the two communities in India as a whole and in Aligarh in particular. I focus on Aligarh for a number of reasons, but the one that should be most relevant for our purposes is the number of riots that have occurred there since independence in 1947. Aligarh could in some ways be classified as the number one center of riot production, proportionally speaking, in India. We hear about riots in Bombay in which many hundreds of people are killed, but Aligarh has produced a very large number of riots over the last 50 years and a very great riot, considering the size of the town, in December 1990-January 1991 in which ninety to a hundred people were killed. (You never know the exact figure

because the official figures cannot be trusted.) So, Aligarh is a major center for riot production in India. It is also the center of a living *lieu de memoir* – to use the term coined by Pierre Nora and used by a French group of historians – of opposed Hindu and Muslim interpretations of the causes of the partition of India, which in turn feeds contemporary communal violence in India as a whole. That institution is the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

The third part of the book discusses the demographic, economic, and social factors involved in the production of riots in India. I deal with the geography and demography of riots at the local level and the economics of riots, that is, the economic factors in riot production in Aligarh. But then, I take the position that most of the explanations that are offered are deficient, that there is in fact no single explanation, no single cause, no kind of causal analysis that can adequately comprehend what has been happening in Aligarh for the last 50 years. But if there is one set of explanations that takes us fairly far, it is a political one, namely, the implication of riots in the political process in Aligarh, and in India as a whole, especially in northern India, and to a lesser extent in the south. There is certainly an association between riots and elections, and particularly between interparty competitiveness, in which riots tend to precede elections and affect their outcomes. There is also a practice of communal politics, in Aligarh and in India. This is characterized by the politicization of communalism, by which riots become a continuation of communal politics by other means, and in which the instigation and justification of communal violence are critical aspects. There also exists what I call an institutionalized riot-system that has engaged in the perpetuation of an environment which is capable of producing riots, and in which riots are, from time to time, produced.

The next part of the book, from which I will draw some examples today, deals with the process of blame displacement, which I consider to be a universal form of explanation for social problems, including in particular problems associated with collective violence. I look at the process of blame displacement in several chapters, and show how various types of explanations, including those provided by social scientists in various forms of causal analysis – which themselves are implicated in the process of blame displacement – in no way constitute satisfactory explanations for the production of violence at sites such as those in Aligarh or in other parts of India, or in other parts of the world for that matter.

So, let me now provide some examples and some material taken from the book. I have been doing this research in Aligarh off and on for the past 38 years, and in the course of those 38 years of interviewing, from October 1961 until last year (1999), I have come across 5 or 6 distinct types of explanations for communal riots in responses to questions that I asked concerning how and why such events in general, as well as how particular riots, have occurred. Some of these explanations can be fit into broader discursive formations in the sense that they reflect fundamental understandings of human nature, of political society, of the relations between peoples, as much as they do particular understandings of the events discussed. There is for example a discourse

of profit that operates in Indian society, as elsewhere, that accounts for most human events in terms of economic or otherwise self-interested calculations of individual actors. It is present in Aligarh, as well as in other parts of the world, where several general and particular explanations of riots fit into this kind of context. I summarize and analyze those types of explanations in one of the chapters of the book, and I argue that they are deficient. What I want to do here today in the time that is remaining is to draw from a chapter, in which I consider the opportunities provided by riots for blame displacement, then discuss in particular one type of explanation, which comes from the communal discourse that exists in Indian society, the most important of the discourses that frame explanations for communal violence in contemporary India.

First let me make a brief comment on the general process of blame displacement, how it works and in particular how it works politically, in India and, I argue, in other parts of the world as well. In a nutshell, what happens in the process of blame displacement, engaged in by practitioners of violence as well as us social scientists, is that one explanation is distilled from among all the various factors that contribute to a riot or other forms of collective violence. All the other contributing factors can then be ignored. What is left from the process of distillation of factors into a satisfying and useful explanation is that all the other factors, including often even the one identified as central, continue to operate. Those that are neglected, those explanations that are ignored, continue to operate because they have not been brought more clearly into focus. Those that are identified as central often disperse blame so widely or so vaguely as to leave nothing concrete to be done.

In the case of collective violence in India, the type of explanation that is commonly distilled is the one that is most useful politically to the temporarily ascendant political party and political leader. Such explanations cover a very wide range, pointing fingers at local businessmen and politicians, the communal prejudices of the population, the Interservices Intelligence agency (ISI) in Pakistan or the American CIA, and on and on. One common type in India that has come to the forefront is political. Those parties and groups that call themselves secular say that it is the communal organizations, militant Hindu and Muslim, that are responsible for riots. “No,” say the leaders of militant Hindu organizations in India, the RSS, Jan Sangh and nowadays the BJP, when they talk about riots in India, “it is a lie that we are responsible for these riots. It is the Congress that is responsible. Moreover, whenever we have been in power, there have been no riots.” This process of blame displacement continues without end at the local and national levels.

One respondent in one of my in-depth interviews illustrated how the process worked in Aligarh in the immediate aftermath of riots that took place in 1978 at a meeting on the Aligarh University campus called by the district magistrate, the most important civilian authority of the district, in which this respondent claimed that university leaders and Hindu leaders from the town, including the professors of local colleges, which are deeply implicated in the perpetuation of communal violence in Aligarh, were all present. The speaker at that time was a student, president of the AMU

students union. He addressed this very issue of blame displacement at the meeting, and the consequences as he saw them, as follows.

“Everybody is alleging everybody [else] and another person is at fault. Either the allegations are correct – if the allegations are correct, therefore, every sinner is at this meeting. Or the allegations are baseless, if it is so, then it is immoral for us, at the time of crisis, [that] we are blaming each other. But really the dead bodies are there, wounded persons are there, and we can apply our humanity to solve this. My speech worked, and really the atmosphere cooled down.”

But then the solution adopted to cope with the dead bodies, this respondent himself acknowledged, is itself inhuman, as he later noted in an interchange between him and me, in which he spoke as follows.

“There are some things that are universal values and these are the human values. Now they are assessing the misery, now they counted Hindus 20, Muslims 30 have been killed. It is such an inhuman act really, even the dead bodies!”

And I said: “Yes, I know this business of counting dead bodies.”

He then said (about the riots in Aligarh in 1978):

“Now you see the misery of the conditions, whether Hindu widow or Muslim widow. Really, this Aligarh communal riot has changed my whole life. When I saw the misery of the people, the tragedy, I cannot ignore that woman. Because it is horrifying memory for me that we were in town hall, the district authorities were there, the university authorities were there providing 20,000 rupees, check of 10,000 rupees, check to the widows and persons who have died. I cannot say to you that what was my emotional condition. And everybody’s emotional condition that one Hindu widow came with her father-in-law, a young lady came, how the tears of the Hindu father-in-law and the Hindu widow, that was a Hindu face. After that we called a Muslim lady, she came with her father, she was also young. I could not remember sharply, but both were having one child with them on their laps. Now, what I suggest is that the same misery, same agony and pain – and we provided checks to both of them – the feeling was the same and no power on earth can translate a cry of human being in... misery. You cannot translate it.”

In place of the impossibility of translation, the failure of language, the political process provides financial compensation and contextualization. The first itself requires no act of speech. Although I have never witnessed these financial transactions, I have two comments to make about them. One is that it is obvious that any act of speech, beyond that required for bureaucratic accounting purposes, to a bereaved person, from a government official handing over a check for the death of a brother, husband, son, who does not know the recipients in anything but his official capacity, would be

superfluous and meaningless. Another is that the whole process of counting the bodies, identifying them by religion, assigning rightful payments to the bereaved, and paying them, is clearly dehumanizing. But for the untranslatable cry of the bereaved we do not only have monetary compensation, but also contextualization: the removal of the cries of the bereaved from the reality of the tragedy of human lives lost, and the suffering of the bereaved, to the political realm of explanation, where not only language, but also rhetoric and symbols fly and flourish. The factors said to have caused the riots are enumerated and assessed, charges are made against individuals and groups, some administrators are transferred, one or two policemen who misbehaved are temporarily sent to the lines, while all sides ready themselves for the next event.

Now, I want to go into the most common form of explanation for riots in India. It is the communal discourse, by far the most common context into which explanations for riots are placed by local and extra-local observers, and has several variations. The most extreme form I encountered in my visits to Aligarh over the years came from a person in the rump Jan Sangh, the original militant Hindu communal party (later replaced by the BJP).<sup>1</sup> In the accounts from followers of the Jan Sangh and the BJP, all of whom have RSS backgrounds (this is the core organization for these political parties), several of these respondents characterized riots as a form of Muslim *jihad*. Such explanations included generalizations about the nature of Islam and the so-called semitic religions – in which by the way Christians are included – in general, in comparison with Hinduism, as well as specific statements concerning the organization of riots by Muslims in the local context of Aligarh and other places in India. I summarize here one example of the militant Hindu explanation, which may be described as a kind of essentialism applied to Muslims and Islam.

“Muslims are aggressive when they are dominant. Aggressiveness is built into semitic religions, in contrast to Vedic, which believe in co-existence. Communal violence came to India only with the Muslims. Jews are small in number. Christians have become civilized. But the Muslims remain backward and barbarous. Moreover, their aggressiveness is built into their beliefs, into the Koran itself. Contrast this with the passivity of Hindus who, despite provocations, such as the construction of mosques on top of Hindu places of worship in Mathura, Ayodhya and Varanasi, still the Hindus do not cause communal violence even though the RSS is equally dominant in these three places.<sup>2</sup> Muslims are so aggressive that they will even try to kill innocent Hindus who go to their localities for innocent purposes, such as a person who went to read an electricity meter, or government house inspectors. Hindus need to learn from Muslims, especially concerning how they treat their minorities in Islamic countries, where minorities must live according to the wishes of the Islamic state.”

A second example of this type of explanation comes from a respondent who applied it to the specific context of Aligarh. And he made rather stark essentialist comparisons between Hindus and Muslims (interview from 1983).

“Hindus in contrast to Muslims are meek and peaceloving, respect all religions, tribes, castes. Hindus retaliate only in extremity. However Hindus never agitate, commit murder or loot. Riots are invariably started by Muslims. Nowadays they are started to preserve the minority character of AMU (Aligarh Muslim University). Soon they will demand the division of India. Before independence they started riots in order to get Pakistan. Already there is a demand for reservation of places for Muslims, despite the fact that Muslims have all facilities.”

A third example of the communal discourse in explaining Hindu-Muslim riots in Aligarh comes from one of many interviews I have had with an important political figure in the communalization of politics in this town, and an instigator of communal violence, whom I will give the pseudonym of Hari Ram Kumar. When I asked him in 1993 what were the causes of riots in Aligarh, he responded that the cause was the Koran itself. He then proceeded to quote passages to demonstrate his argument. He had in front of him a huge folio-sized Koran in three languages: Hindi, Arabic and English. And he sat there, a Hindu businessman and commercial publisher, quoting the Koran. He cited the Koran to demonstrate his arguments:

“Muslims should not have non-Muslim friends.”

“According to the Koran, Muslims may also turn against Islam and become *kafirs* [apostates]. They may want to have friendship with both communities. Such people must be killed.”

He then went on to describe the situation in Aligarh:

“Situations are created by Muslims so that they can kill Hindus. For example, in September 1978, after an altercation of Hindus and Muslims after a wrestling match, Muslims went on successive days to kill Hindus. Two Hindus were killed. Hindus then had to retaliate.”

Having learned in the interviews that Mr. Kumar himself employed Muslims, I asked him if he felt that they might try to kill him given his interpretation of the Koran’s message to all good Muslims. He said he did not, because 90 % of Muslims do not know what is in the Koran. The problem, as he saw it, in Aligarh and in other towns where riots occurred was with the literate and educated people among the Muslims who give protection and financial help to *goondas* (thugs) and with the muftis who declare *jihad*, making it compulsory for Muslims to kill on pain of being declared *kafir*.

Mr. Kumar’s description of the behavior of Muslims, from their religious leaders to ordinary believers, smacks of nothing so much as the blood libel charges against Jews in European history. Here is another paraphrase from my 1983 interview with him that brings this up clearly. I said: “What do you think were the causes of the 1978 riots?” Mr. Kumar replied as follows.

“The Koran. The Koran says there are three stages, the first being Dar-ul-Harb, when most people and the king are non-Muslim so Muslims must capture power. The second, Dar-ul-Aman, when the Muslims capture power. The third, Dar-ul-Islam is when everyone is fully converted.”

“But,” I said, “Muslims read the Koran every day, there is not a riot everyday? Why do they have riots on certain days?”

Mr. Kumar replied: “They cannot kill each day. Situations are created where they can kill.”

I asked: “What are the situations?”

He said: “One case – On 13 September 1978 at a wrestling contest an altercation between Hindus and Muslims turned into a free-for-all. Then on 15 September a Hindu was murdered. On 17 September was Gyanchand’s attempted murder, and then on 3 October Bhura Pahalwan was murdered. On 5 October again two Hindus were murdered After this the Hindus had to retaliate. They have tried to implicate me on communal charges, but my Composing Foreman, Binding Foreman and Sales Manager are all Muslim. “

I said: “They read the Koran. How do you know that they won’t kill you?”

Mr. Kumar said again: “Ninety percent of Muslims don’t know what’s in the Koran.”

“So,” I said, “those doing the killing are actually the literate and educated, not the goondas?”

He replied: “These people give protection and financial help to goondas.”

In this bizarre exchange between me and Mr. Kumar – and I have had several of them over the years – we confront the logic of the mad. For every question designed to suggest the idiocy of the reasoning (which I am trying to do, with very innocent-sounding questions) the respondent has a clear, quick and logical answer. Moreover, the answers are irrefutable, they cannot be falsified for there is no evidence that can be provided to shake such false beliefs. We know that there are no such organizations of Muslims, that not all Muslims are primed to kill non-Muslims by their holy book and teaching, under the direction of their clerics. But how can we prove it? We doubt that Hindus only retaliate and never instigate. We doubt it especially in the case of Mr. Kumar himself, but Mr. Kumar is not mad, nor are his views uncommon. They are views contained within a discourse, a pathological discourse of nationalism, fear and resentment, in which many Hindus in northern India are implicated, and to which Muslims must also react.

For that matter, many of the views held by Mr. Kumar and Hindus in India are shared in the West, among Jews in Israel and Serbs in Bosnia. More broadly the

terms *jihad* and *kafir* have evoked anger and fear among many European Christians since “the rise of the Muslim power” in the European Middle Ages. Nor does that fear relent in the face of the minority position of Muslims in South Asia. It remains despite defeats by Israeli and Western powers in contemporary times, and the evident military weakness of all Muslim states in the world today.

Mr. Kumar is a central figure in the maintenance and perpetuation of Muslim-Hindu tensions and animosities in the town of Aligarh. His name inevitably appears in the news during every riot in Aligarh. It is kept on a list of troublemakers from the town that is passed on to every new district magistrate and senior superintendent of police posted there. There are many others, however, who make a distinct contribution. Virtually all are members of the RSS and/or the BJP.

Let me just quote from one last interview before I come to my conclusion. The militant Hindu party in India, the BJP, claims that they get the support of Muslims and have Muslim members, which they have sometimes had, but for particular reasons. I quote from one of them, a Muslim man who became a member of the BJP. He gave me a view of Hindu-Muslim relations in Aligarh, and also how he viewed his rather unusual role. He described Aligarh as a sick society in which the Muslims’ mentality, as he put it, was as much at fault as the Hindu. In the Muslim mind, he remarked, “every Hindu is a Jan Sanghi;” “the Jan Sanghi is the enemy of the Muslim;” “therefore, every Hindu is the enemy of the Muslim.” “In fact,” he went on, “though RSS people, like anyone, may get involved in the riots on sentimental grounds, actually it is false that the RSS actually engineers the riots.”

But what then, in his mind, are the causes of riots in Aligarh? It is evident that he believes in the spontaneous generation of riots, upon the combustible bed of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms, always festering beneath the surface, even when members of both sides are talking peace. He had told me previously that some RSS people may, like anyone else, join in the riot for what he called sentimental reasons. I pressed him further on the charges that riots are instigated by organizations such as the RSS and the Jan Sangh, and by other political parties. He responded with two rhetorical questions: “What purpose does it serve for them?” “And are the RSS people so morally corrupt that they would go for political gains at the cost of human lives?” He believed that riots served no useful purpose for the RSS, and that they were not so morally corrupt. It needs to be kept in mind that this is a Muslim member of the BJP speaking.

Most politically knowledgeable people in India however would give different answers to this man’s two questions. To the first, most would respond by saying that Hindu-Muslim riots serve the purpose of consolidating Hindu sentiment behind the RSS and the BJP, and providing votes to the latter in elections, since these two organizations are seen as the principle advocates of Hindu interests.

To the second question, concerning the moral character of the RSS, opinion would be divided. But most Hindus would certainly agree with the respondent. In fact, however, on the contrary, not only the RSS but many of the most famous leaders of the Indian nationalist and Muslim separatist movements before independence, as well

as countless local leaders before and after independence, have knowingly and wilfully sought political gains by bringing tense situations involving Hindus and Muslims to the brink of violent conflict, knowing full well what the consequences were likely to be. In short, what I am saying is that there is nothing extraordinary about the actions of politicians that promote riots, from which they then benefit politically. Once the political calculations are made in the game of politicization of communal identities, all politicians get caught up in it. And I could give countless quotations to demonstrate it. All politicians get caught up in it, either wilfully or simply because it is the only available context in which they can appeal for votes. Muslim politicians are no different from Hindus in this respect. All that differs is the rhetoric used to justify their entry into the electoral process, the means they use to garner votes, and the ways in which they seek to benefit from riots. There is also another big difference. That is the degree of communal organization amongst Hindus and Muslims in northern India. The degree of organization, and the extent to which militant Hindu organizations are implicated in the instigation of communal violence is many, many times greater than that of known Muslim organizations.

## **Final comments**

There are some obvious comparisons to be made between the kinds of violence perpetrated in India and Indonesia today in what are loosely called riots. In fact, although the forms have differed from time to time in both countries, there is a common link to all of them, namely, the ideology of the nation-state and the doctrine of national integration that has pervaded all the postcolonial countries. That ideology and doctrine have so dominated the thinking of all leaders of these countries since their achieving of independence in a world of states that any perceived threat to a country's so-called national unity and integrity has provided sufficient justification for both state-directed and state-supported violence as well as organized and preplanned intercommunal and interethnic violence. Since, in fact, hardly any of the new postcolonial states have been ethnically or culturally homogeneous and have rather been mostly extremely heterogeneous in language, religion, caste, and tribe, virtually all these countries have experienced either genuine secessionist movements or other kinds of ethnic demands that the dominant political or military elites consider threatening to the country's "integrity." Where, as in India or Sri Lanka, competitive political processes exist, such demands become part of interparty competition and spawn countermovements that espouse the theme of the nation in danger and promote militant majoritarian nationalism, as in the Indian case a nationalism based on a putative Hindu majority.

Since the putative majorities in the new states are themselves partly fabricated out of heterogeneous components, their very fragility intensifies the competitive struggle between upholders of the imagined united nation and movements for political autonomy or secessionism. It intensifies it because the struggle then must proceed on two fronts: first, to create internal unity that does not exist and then to fight against

threats that may or may not in fact be genuinely secessionist. Further, the perceived threats then themselves become a basis for proclaiming the need for unity against them, for demonizing the population considered a threat to the nation's unity, and for justifying state-directed as well as collective violence against its members.

This kind of cycle of demand for local political autonomy or cultural rights pitted against the doctrine of national integration also encourages a second component of the nation-state ideology, the demand for a strong state to deal with threats to the nation's integrity and unity. All the leaders of the postcolonial states were aware that the countries whose rule they inherited or fought for against the colonial powers were extremely heterogeneous. In some cases with sincerity, in other cases merely for the sake of holding on to their own power, political elites in these countries pointed to their heterogeneity and to the conflicts that had arisen between groups in the near and remote past to justify the need for a strong central authority. Often, if not usually, the strengthening of central authority was perceived by outlying, culturally distinct regional groups as threats to their autonomy and cultural persistence, especially when accompanied by in-migration of culturally different peoples from other parts of the country.

Sometimes, however, dispersed cultural groups classed as "minorities" turned in the other direction, that is, sought the protection of the centralizing state against perceived threats from the group classed as the "majority," for example, Muslims against Hindus in India, Christians and Chinese against Muslims in Indonesia or Malaysia. Insofar as the ruling elites or ruling parties adopt this protective role, they risk losing the support of the country's predominant cultural or religious grouping. Further, local political movements may arise against the ruling parties or cliques that seek to exploit or create antagonisms between Muslims and Hindus, Muslims and Christians, Malays or Indonesians against Chinese to challenge the power of the dominant party or the ruling elites. Collective violence such as "riots," pogroms, and massacres may then occur that serve a double purpose: undermining the authority of the parties or government that cannot in fact protect the lives and properties of the minorities and uniting the majority community against the minority group that then becomes a scapegoat for all the ills of society.

When a serious challenge is mounted to the dominant party or the state apparatus, such collective violence may occur in "waves" that appear spontaneous, though they are almost never completely so. During such waves of localized violence, all sorts of tangential or unrelated conflicts come into play. Neighbors have a chance to attack their enemies, businessmen to destroy the property of their rivals, criminals to make their living from loot, real estate developers to intimidate minorities to displace them and grab their properties or buy them at grossly low prices, gangs from different communities to gain control over valuable resources. It is in the interests of the political promoters of such violence to point to such acts as the real "causes" of the riots, thereby displacing blame from themselves while reaping the benefits of the violence that discredits their political opponents or the state apparatus. It is, however,

almost always the case that there are local groups and organizations that prepare for such violence, recruit people to kill and destroy property, mobilize crowds of students and party supporters, take out processions to provoke members of the minority community into throwing the first stone, and engage in all sorts of other subterranean and devious acts designed to give the impression that the violence has erupted from the spontaneous feelings of ordinary people who have suffered for too long at the hands of the minority group and the ruling party or government said to have protected it.

In such a context, it is not useful either to attribute the prevalence of collective violence to “the spread of democracy” or to seek to find answers and solutions to them in such shibboleths as strengthening or creating “civil society” or “civilizing” the state. It is the ordering of the present world into sacrosanct so-called nation-states and the all-pervading discourse of the nation-state that provides the justification for such violence, on the one hand, and the struggles among competing elites and counterelites for control over the state apparatus and the corrupt income that usually comes to those who do control it as well as local struggles for power, wealth, and safety, on the other hand, that are at the root of widespread collective violence that takes the form of riots, pogroms, massacres, and genocides in today’s world. These are struggles of social and political forces that have elite and popular dimensions in which state and society are intertwined and implicated. In these struggles, the use of violence is a routine aspect of the political process. There is no end in sight to such struggles. It will require new local, national, and international forces and movements to arise to present alternatives.

The proper function of scholars in these struggles is to expose their roots and their ugly consequences to full view. For international political activists, the broad goal should be to replace the dominant world ideology of the nation-state, to denationalize states, as my colleague, Pierre van den Berghe, has put it. We need to displace the sovereignty of state sovereignty in today’s world and replace it with the doctrine of human rights. We need to delegitimize the doctrine of state citizenship by ethnicity and universalize the doctrine of state citizenship as a right by birth. We need also to legitimize the right of peaceful secession of disaffected groups from existing states by procedures sanctioned by the United Nations. Perhaps in a denationalized world, collective violence will be reduced, democracy will flourish, and states will become more civilized, but it is idle to imagine that such a world will emerge either soon or without incessant struggle.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bharatiya Janata Party, also known as the Indian People’s Party or BJP.

<sup>2</sup> This interview was held before the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992. The RSS family of organizations led by the VHP organized the assault on the mosque that led to its destruction on December 6, 1992, after which deadly Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in many cities and towns in India.

# On the Legacy of the 1965-1966 Massacre in Indonesia

*Olle Törnquist*

As we turn now to Indonesia, it is necessary to begin by recalling again that political violence is nothing new to the country. It has taken new proportions, however, since the mid-60s with one of the World's most devastating but still bottled up acts of human rights atrocities and falsifications of history. Allow me, therefore, to draw on my open letter to Indonesian reformists on these matters, first published in *Jakarta Post*, April 17, 2000. What we are talking of, of course, is the massacres of at least half a million Indonesian citizens of radical inclination, the imprisonment and (until today) institutionalised harassment of many more persons, including elderly and grandchildren; and the nothing but absurd accusation that they were all collectively responsible for a series of elitist and military manipulations and struggles over central power in late 1965. Even more remarkable, in a way, is that the first really influential person who realised, finally, that this could not continue to be swept under the carpet is not of the democratic West but the former leader of one of the Muslim organisations that also contributed to the mayhem – the blind but clear-sighted current president Abdurrahman Wahid, Gus Dur, who already has a tough job containing the military that carried out much of the killings and most of the repression. He may be criticised of much, Gus Dur, but this, I believe, is integrity. This is as brave and important as the students' struggle against the Suharto regime. And this, thus, calls for the support of every democrat.

Aside from the fact, however, that most self congratulatory Western (and Scandinavian) supporters of Indonesia's democratisation – who actively or passively contributed to the mayhem – still keep silent, even several Indonesian reformists do not agree. In addition to unfortunate statements (even from Amien Rais) about the need to prohibit atheism – as if religion in general and Islam in particular had to be forced upon people – there are also more respectable arguments about the need to leave the past behind, not cause more conflicts, and focus on the urgent social and economic problems.

Yet, I think, nothing could be more wrong. Just as in Germany after the holocaust (or the Soviet Union after Stalin, or Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge, or South Africa after apartheid) it is necessary to account for and come to grips with the past in order to go ahead. For what would otherwise be the basis for that reasonably equal citizenship and democracy in Indonesia that I trust Indonesian reformists and their international supporters also strive for, and which even the most instrumental investors (not to mention ordinary people) hold out as preconditions for stability and socio-economic progress?

This (and that is very important to stress) is not at first hand about the details of what happened in late September and early October in 1965 in terms of manipulations, provocations, coups and murders, or about how Suharto managed to get Sukarno to give up, or even about all the killings and suffering. Of course, that must also be examined, and there are ample experiences (including from the dark sides of European and South African history) of how to carry out (and how not to carry out) impartial research, promote truth and reconciliation, and come forward with compensation to the victims. *But what is really at stake is not what is dead and buried, but what continues to prevent human dignity, democracy and development.*

The massacres of 1965-66 turned violence into established state policy. And it is that practice which has to be totally uprooted. Because this is how it continued – including, of course, in East Timor and Aceh, but also through Suharto's 'shock therapy' in the early-80s in the form of 'mysterious' killings and displaying of criminals, real or imagined. For three decades the military, the various militias and the death brigades did the dirty job. But the civil establishment and the mob-fearing middle class also contributed to the conscious exacerbation of conflicts and antagonisms. Thus people became so afraid – both of the military and of each other (including those who had reason to take vengeance) – that the military almost managed to make itself indispensable, by virtue of its 'protection against instability'. So as far as I understand, the only way to put an end to this state-sponsored terror is to expose and deligitimise the roots of it, the massacres.

Further, that continuous political violence and stigmatisation – that element of fear, trauma, dependence of patronage and branding as non-touchable – continue to prevent large parts of the population from really participating as first class citizens in building the free and democratic society that (I trust) Indonesian reformists and their international supporters also subscribe to. Is not that a basic civil rights problem, which has to be tackled officially and publicly by the new democratic government, if it is not to negate its own basis of legitimacy? Not just for the sake of the victims but also to build the safe and stable democracy that frightened middle classes long for, no matter if Muslim or not.

The falsification of history is almost equally devastating. The educated middle class and the students, of course, are aware of some of what really happened. But democracy presupposes widespread free and qualified knowledge among the population at large. And the lack of that widespread knowledge was one of the major

arguments behind the Indonesian middle class' reluctance in the 50s to accept the massive popular mobilisation of the communists. So why prevent an equally massive and popular educational discussion about what really happened now that there is not even a single powerful communist in sight who could 'abuse' it?

I presume all serious reformists and their international supporters agree that democratisation requires a thorough and free historical discussion of previous progress and problems in Indonesia. This includes what really caused the decline of the parliamentary democracy in the late 50s; of what made the most modern and (yes!) in many ways most democratic political party, the reformist communist party, to rather (unfortunately) rally behind Sukarno's 'guided democracy'; or of what caused the rhetorically democratic middle-class, and its liberal democratic Western allies, to totally crush what remained then of the Indonesian democracy.

It is equally hard, of course, to question the established truths in Indonesia about the PKI (the communist party) and other leftists, as it was for former East German Stalinists to realise that their Berlin wall was not 'against fascism'. But is it not also indisputable, that whatever thoughts and studies are repressed tend to be attractive? So why not allow Marxism and Communism, as long as it can not be proved that they are a threat against democracy? Or was Nehru wrong in his reply to Nasser, that one should put communists in parliament rather than in jail?

At any rate (and as I already stated, in *Jakarta Post* 23/8/96, when the Suharto regime motivated its mid-1996 crackdown on the democracy movement with the need to fight communism), the basic rationale for old-time communism is no more! This is not just because the West won the cold war. This is also because no matter what we think of third world capitalism, it is no longer held back the way it was under colonialism in countries like Indonesia. So the basic rationale for the old communist argument (against social democrats) about the need for authoritarian shortcuts to progress simply is no more! It is way past and gone! So what remains for some 'to be afraid of' is rather social democratic oriented mass organisations, within and outside parliament, on the basis of popular interest in political and social equality. But that, of course, is not what Indonesian reformists and their international supporters (like Suharto) would try to get rid of by branding communism; is it?

In conclusion, it is difficult to characterise the opposition against accounting for and coming to grips with the massacres in 1965-66, and the continuous repression of radical Indonesians and their relatives and children, as anything but non-democratic. One may say that it is not yet the right time to handle this – the most serious human rights atrocities in post-colonial Indonesia. But I must insist, then, in asking what kind of development those who wish to wait would like to achieve first – and how long that would take, and what would even make it possible, before it is time for a human democratic order in Indonesia? To me it sounds exactly like the old modernisation rationale for authoritarian or at least elite-led 'enlightened' government.

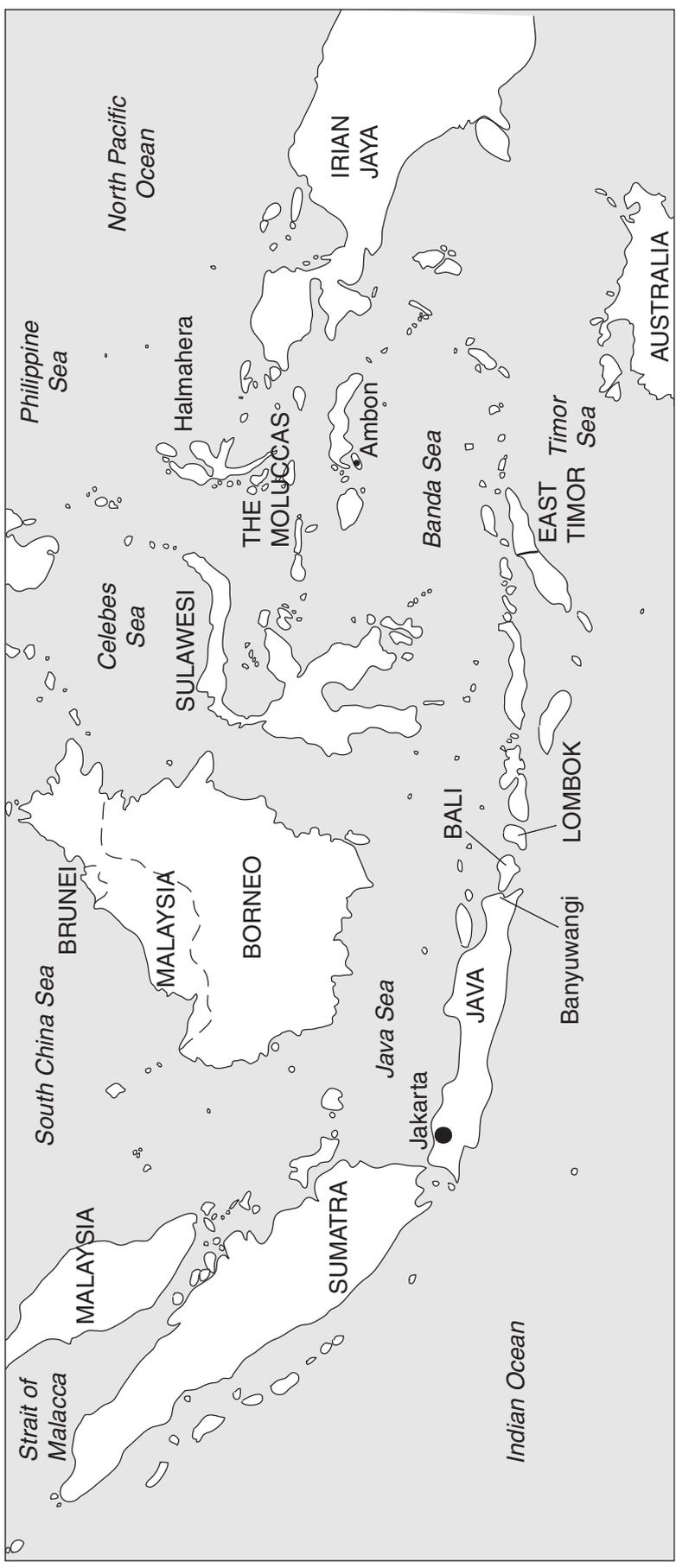
Also, one may add, a majority of the democratically elected parliamentarians are against the proposition of coming to grips with the 1965-66 catastrophe, implying

that the resistance is fully democratic. But as in the case of the democratically elected xenophobic neo-rightists in Austria, the very basis of even minimum democracy is not only about procedures and majority decisions. It also includes, and can not survive and develop without, the creation, upholding and improving of all citizens' equal rights and chances to participate in democratic mechanisms. So since resistance against accounting for and doing away with all the consequences of the 1965-66 catastrophe is a clear case of undermining those rights, it is really nothing but non-democratic.

In my understanding – but do correct me if I am wrong! – the only thing that is left to dispute among democrats, then, is that foreign intervention (as in the case of Austria) might be an even more serious threat against democracy. But this is not at stake in Indonesia. Here it is clearly something that rests with the integrity, consistency and strength of the Indonesian democracy movement itself. People like this author (who is one of those who have spent decades researching the background and the implications of the massacres) are just critical but concerned students. And though the hypocritical West must also come to terms with its contribution to the Indonesian catastrophe, it is rather unlikely, I am afraid, that it will ever come forward with enough substantial support to make up for it; or am I wrong? So again: the transition to a 'democratic human order' rests with the democracy movement itself!

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Even if the World at large only became aware of how political violence works in Indonesia when witnessing the tragedies in East Timor in relation to the referendum, the roots of the problem must, thus, be traced back to at least the massacre in the mid-60s. The military and the militias acted the same way in Timor as in the mid-60s. And so it continues, in various local contexts: Tamrin Tomagola will reveal the case of the Maluku islands, Sven Cederroth the case of Lombok, and Robert Hefner the more general problem of basic conflicts, religion, civil society and democratisation.



**Map of Indonesia**



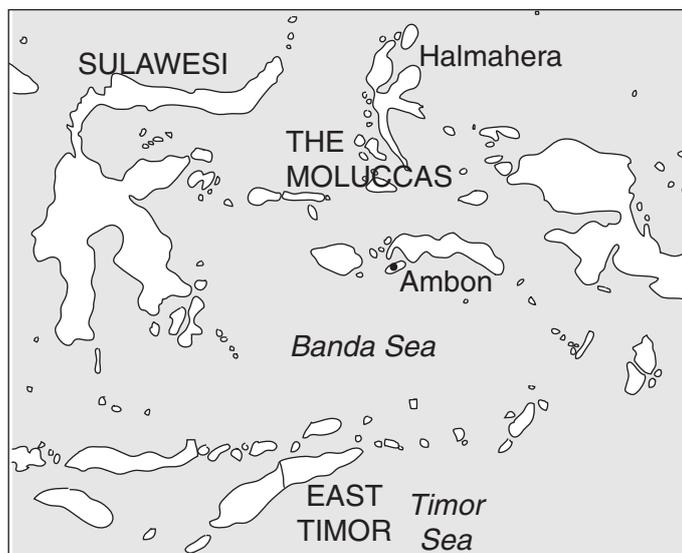
# The Bleeding Halmahera of North Moluccas

*Tamrin Amal Tomagola*

Ph.D, Sociology of Culture/Media, University in Essex, United Kingdom, M.A. Social Demography, Australian National University, Australia and Dr. Sociology, University of Indonesia. Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, the Open University, Jakarta. Tamrin Tomagola is a native of Galela, North Halmahera and probably the most knowledgeable scholar on the conflicts in the Moluccas. He has been involved as an independent expert in this regard for the current government (v. pres. Megawati). He has also for some time been involved in attempts to promote national reconciliation with regard to various ethnic and religious conflicts. Simultaneously, he is involved in KONTRAS (Komite untuk Orang Hilang Tindak Kekerasan), the most outstanding campaign organization with regard to missing and repressed persons, which does not only try to act in favor of the 'victims' but also, and primarily, to help them organize themselves and carry out their own actions, demos, investigations, etc.

*What can one say about such a tragedy?... I do not have words to express the sorrow, or the loss I felt. It left a hole in my heart that can never be filled.*

(Nelson Mandela in his *Long Walk to Freedom*, 1994:531).



**Figure 1** Map of the Moluccas

The tragedy that has plunged Halmahera<sup>1</sup> of North Moluccas<sup>2,3</sup> into deep barbaric communal wars since mid-August of 1999 could only be explained within the context of multi-dimensional changes that have been taking place at the national level during the 1990s. These changes released the then suppressed, latent local conflicts between communities. The roots of the problem should therefore be identified as the century-long division between various communities in the newly formed province of Northern Moluccas.

This paper relies on two trips made by the author before and during the conflict. Apart from that, several relief organizations' reports written by both the Moslem and Christian communities, coupled by a report submitted by a joint-team of UN agencies in Jakarta with the Indonesian central Government, are also consulted. And, last but not least, it should be acknowledged that this paper also has made use of personal observations and impressions accumulated by the author as a native who grew up in these seemingly harmonious, warm and friendly communities.

## **The Prolog**

Until mid-August 1999, life in the northern part of Moluccas was very peaceful even when the central and the south-eastern parts of the archipelago had been engulfed in communal wars since the 19th of January that year. In the latter regions, these wars had entered their second phase.<sup>4</sup> But peace did not last long. Just one day after the commemoration of national Independence Day, that peaceful life had been turned into unprecedented, fierce communal wars.

On that very day, the 18th of August 1999, the regency administration of North Moluccas was going to formally inaugurate the establishment of a new district (*kecamatan*) called Malifut<sup>5</sup> as it had been stipulated by the central Government Regulation No 42/99. According to this Regulation, the supposedly new district would consist of 16 Makianese<sup>6</sup> villages that are predominantly Moslem, five Kaonese villages and six Jailolonese villages. The latter groups of villages are predominantly Christian.<sup>7</sup> Both the Kaonese and the Jailolonese villagers refused to be included in the new district of Malifut since they would clearly be the minority on their own ancestor's land. On the other hand, the Makianese settlers insisted that the Regulation be implemented without further delay. The inauguration ceremony was then postponed indefinitely due to security reasons. Communal violence then started to take its own course.

Sporadic attacks launched by both sides continued to take place until the 21st of August 1999. By then, the police and the army had been deployed into the troubled area. Assisted by the charisma of the Sultan of Ternate,<sup>8</sup> the security forces managed to calm down the fighting. (The sultans do not, as sultans, have formal powers, but on the local level they have extensive real political and administrative powers. Editor's note) Refugees, mainly Moslem Makianese started to flee to the islands of Ternate and Tidore. The flow of these refugees, around 2000 people, mainly women and children, with all versions of their stories to the latter islands, proved to instigate the spread of sorrow and anger among the Moslem Community at large.

## **The Wave of Violence**

The wave of communal violence that so far has swept the region of North Moluccas, especially in North Halmahera, came in four successive surges. The first surge, as mentioned before, came between the 18th and the 20th of August 1999. There were

several human casualties on both sides, but the indigenous Christians lost more of their comrades than the Moslems, and several of their churches were burned to the ground.

Since the fighting was successively stopped in a relatively short time, the local authorities took a relaxed stance and did not therefore anticipate the coming of a more violent surge of communal war.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the whole North Moluccas, especially bureaucrats of the then Regency Administration, were overwhelmed by the news that the region was going to be upgraded into a new province. Almost all North Moluccas officials were in Jakarta to make sure that their decade-long dream would eventually become true. Follow-up work to reconcile the two communities was neglected. This negligence proved to be very costly later on.

The second surge of violence came between the 24th of October and the 9th of November. The scales of damage to property in terms of public facilities and houses far exceeded the toll of the first surge. All the 16 villages of the Makianese settlers had been leveled to the ground. In terms of the loss of human lives and casualties, the Moslems suffered more than the Christians. No mosques were burned, but some copies of the Quran were torn apart on the streets of Malifut.

This time, the flow of the Makianese refugees was far bigger in number, around 16,000 from the 16 villages, and consisted not only of women and children but also men. These Makianese men who had been driven out arrived in Ternate<sup>10</sup> and Tidore and were deeply frustrated and filled with unspoken rage. They did not wait long. Upon their arrival they started to attack Christians both in Tidore (on the 3rd of November) and in Ternate (between the 6th and the 9th of November 1999). In Tidore, a Protestant priest was killed and several Christians were injured. In Ternate, several Churches were burned down as well as the homes of many Christians. In doing so, they created another flow of internally displaced persons. These latter refugees were Christians, mainly consisting of Chinese, Manadonese and Ambonese. At the beginning they took refuge at the local police post, the Army barracks and at the Palace of the Sultan of Ternate. Thereafter they used all means of transportation to flee to Manado and Bitung in North Celebes. Some of them went to Tobelo, the Christian headquarters in North Halmahera. The total number Christian refugees in North Celebes had reached the figure of 12,000 by the 10th of November, while the total number of Christians in Tobelo was around 7,000 people. More than 80 % of this latter group of refugees were men.

During this second round of violence, all of the three reigning Sultans in North Moluccas, namely the Sultan of Ternate, the Sultan of Tidore and the Sultan of Bacan took part actively in reducing the tension between the two warring communities. The Sultan of Ternate even took a controversial step in the form of re-establishing what he called a *Pasukan Adat*<sup>11</sup> (Customary/Traditional Troops). Since they wore a yellow uniform, this special force of the Sultan of Ternate was known as the *Pasukan Kuning* or the Yellow Troops. In the beginning, these Yellow Troops did help the police and the Army. But as time went by, they slowly began to take over the function of the regular police and the Army up to a point when they were the only security forces

in town. They began to harm anyone who dared to stand in their way. They also conducted frequent security sweeping against ordinary people in the street and on public transportation. They even started to kidnap several youth leaders who had the guts to challenge them. Two of the kidnapped youth leaders were tortured severely at the Army barracks by a group of ten people, six from the Army personnel and four from the Yellow Troops. This kidnapping operation eventually stopped after it was revealed by a national television channel.

Slowly, Moslems from South Ternate began to respond to the arbitrary treatment that they had received from the Yellow Troops of the Sultan of Ternate by forming their own troops. These were later known as the Pasukan Putih (The White Troops). These two antagonistic troops started to attack each other sporadically right in the city of Ternate. Here then, a peculiar, almost unbelievable scene was presented to the people of Ternate: Moslems attacking Moslems. The White Troops were believed to be under the control of the Regent of Central Halmahera, by the name of Bahar Andili, while the Yellow Troops were under the command of the Sultan of Ternate. Actually, both men had set their eyes upon the seat of the Governor of the newly created province of North Moluccas.

The third surge of this communal violence came just one day after Christmas 1999 and lasted until March 2000. The initial attacks were launched simultaneously by the Christians on several Moslem villages in two neighboring districts. The Moslem villages of Gamhoku, Toguliwa, Gurua, Kampung Baru, Gamsungi, Luari and Popilo in the district of Tobelo<sup>12</sup> and the village of Mamuya in the Galela district were caught by surprise in the attack. The human toll on the Moslem side, according to one report filed by a Moslem Relief Organization, approached a figure of 800 in two days and one night of the surge of the attack. An estimated 200 people, of all ages and from both sexes, were burnt alive in the mosque of Baiturrachman in the village of Popilo. Communal wars in these two districts continued until the 10th of January. After these barbaric killings, life in North Moluccas, especially that in Halmahera, would never be the same again. The whole peaceful structure of social networks that had been carefully nurtured for generations by both communities had been ripped away violently in just a two-week period.

The scale of damage that had been suffered by both communities was enormous. Apart from quite a significant number of Churches and Mosques and thousands of houses that had been burned down, the most devastating loss was in terms of human suffering. Thousands of refugees kept flowing from villages with pockets of Moslem settlements in North Halmahera to the city of Ternate. In Ternate these refugees have been accommodated in South Ternate.<sup>13</sup> The number of refugees in the city has exceeded a figure of 75,000.

The fourth surge of communal violence started recently, in the last week of May 2000. It is still going on now. This latest surge was ignited by the arrival of around 8,000 Lasykar Jihad<sup>14</sup> from Ambon, South Celebes and Java. This time, Moslems were on the offensive. Three Christian villages in the district of Galela, namely Duma,

Makete and Mamuya have been leveled to the ground. Around 700 Christians have so far been killed. On what could be gathered from an interview with the highest commander of Holy War Troops in the region, they were determined to wipe out the whole Christian community from the peninsula of North Halmahera. It looks very certain that the Moslems are trying to even the score since they claim that at least 800 Moslems were slaughtered during the third surge of communal violence in North Halmahera.

## **The Anatomy of the Problem**

As has already been stated at the beginning of this paper, the tragedy of Halmahera as well as the whole tragedy in the Moluccas can only be understood in view of the changes that have taken place on the national level since 1990 (see, for instance, Schulte Nordholt, 1999). But the root of the problem should be identified locally in the region, especially among corrupt bureaucrats (Van Klinken, 1999). The dynamic interplay between national factors and local factors is the locomotive of radical changes that have plummeted Halmahera (and in fact the entire Moluccas archipelago) into unprecedented, bloody communal violence.

## **The National Context**

At the national level, two developments in the 1990s, in two closely related camps, have significantly changed the political stage of Indonesia. The first development took place in the leadership of the Indonesian military. On the 12th of November 1991, a bloody incident occurred around the Santa-Cruz cemetery in Dilly, East Timor. This incident has since been referred to as the Santa Cruz Massacres. Before he left the country for a state visit abroad in January 1993, the then President Soeharto formed a special Dewan Kehormatan Perwira (The Council for Observing the Honor of Military Officers) to conduct a thorough investigation into the case.<sup>15</sup> General Faisal Tanjung was handpicked by Soeharto to head this investigation. This assignment later proved to be the starting point for Faisal Tanjung's rising in Indonesian military leadership. And the entrance of Faisal Tanjung into the power equation at that time was seen as the entrance of the Islamic influence among Indonesian military officers.<sup>16</sup>

The second development took place within the civilian Islamic camp. In 1990, a group of students from Brawijaya University in Malang, East Java, came up with an idea of forming a Moslem intellectual association. They lobbied several leading Moslem intellectuals such as Dawam Rahardjo and Nurcholis Madjid in Jakarta. Dawam Rahardjo then consulted B.J. Habibie, the then President Soeharto's golden boy. Habibie then took the idea to Soeharto personally. Habibie moved swiftly to form this new organization. Soeharto in Malang, East Java, later formally opened the inaugural ceremony (Vatikiotis, 1993:133). The formation of this civilian organization led by a powerful civilian was widely regarded among military circles as a violation of the Indonesian military's basic rule: never to allow a civilian to build any independent power base.

It could be concluded then, at the national level, that the urban-progressive Moslems had got the upper hand, and since then, have strengthened their political grip in all political corridors. The general election in 1993 produced for the first time a parliament that almost entirely consisted of green members (*ijo royo-royo*), i.e. with strong Islamic backgrounds. This phenomenon had been closely watched with dismay and frustration by at least four parties. The worried ones were, first, the nationalist military officers followed by, second, the contending minority of Christian intellectuals (and actually the whole Christian community in Indonesia). The third worried party was the rural-based Nahdhatul Ulama led by Abdurrachman Wahid, also the then chairperson of Forum Demokrasi (The Forum for the Advancement of Democracy). And last but not least was the Chinese business community which had been a long-standing rival of the urban-based Moslem entrepreneurs.

## **The Local Dynamics**

Moslem local elite everywhere in Indonesia, especially in the Moluccas, quickly seized the ever-enlarging political might of Modernist Moslems<sup>17</sup> to their own advantages. Membership cards of both Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam – HMI – (Islamic Students Association) and Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia – ICMI – (Indonesian Moslems Intellectuals Association) were mighty tickets for entering any circle and institution in Indonesia.

In North Moluccas, a group of young politicians who happened to be the alumni of HMI took control of the local chapter of Golkar, the government-sponsored political party. These young Islamic politicians did their best to prevent a strong leadership candidate with nationalist background from becoming the Chairperson of Golkar's chapter in North Moluccas. They then placed the Sultan of Ternate<sup>18</sup> at the helm of the leadership.<sup>19</sup> A strange political alliance was then formed consisting of Modernist Moslems and traditional followers of the Sultan of Ternate. The latter in turn came from two different camps. The first camp consisted of traditional followers of the Sultan and were statistical Moslems from North Ternate and the island of Hiri on the northern tip of Ternate. The second camp consisted of traditional followers of the Sultan and were actually Christians from North Halmahera. As stated before, it was objectively imperative for the Sultan to form an alliance with the Christians from North Halmahera since they had been his Sultanate's traditional allies for centuries.

The Moslems who had settled and controlled the rest of Halmahera in the Central and Southern parts of the main island were followers of Islamic political parties such as Partai Persatuan Pembangunan – PPP – (The United Party for Development). The same was also true of their comrades from South Ternate Island, Tidore Island, Obi Island, Bacan Island and Sanana Island. As has been widely acknowledged, the PPP was the only political challenger who dared at the time to confront Golkar in many parts of Indonesia, especially in the regions that traditionally belonged to the former Masyumi.<sup>20</sup>

By the mid-1990s, the local political scene in North Moluccas was dominated by these two competing camps. The Sultan of Ternate led the first group, while the second group was directed by the Regent of Central Halmahera, who in turn was informally supported by the Sultan of Tidore, the century-long rival of the Sultan of Ternate. The latter had made several attempts to dominate the local political arena. Sometimes he used terror and intimidation. A youth organization called Gemusba – Generasi Muda Sultan Babullah (The Sultan Babullah Youth Organization)– had frequently been used to deter his opponents.<sup>21</sup>

This was the political landscape of the confrontation between the two political camps, until the Sultan of Ternate, with his Yellow Troops, was defeated by the White Troops on the 29th of December 1999<sup>22</sup> during the Third Surge of communal violence in the region. The Fourth Surge of violence that is still going on, therefore, is the unavoidable spin-off of the first three. This latest round of communal violence is largely due to two reasons. The first one has something to do with the intention of the Moslems to get even, while the second is the arrival of Lasykar Jihad from outside.

With this background, there were at least two groups of factors that could be identified as the causes of communal conflict in Halmahera. The first one could be treated as the facilitating factor, namely the pattern of settlement in Halmahera.<sup>23</sup> People in Halmahera tend to settle segregatively according to their ethnicity and religion. This pattern of settlement is sometimes referred to as segregated pluralism.

The second group of factors consists of three main causes of communal violence in Halmahera, namely: (1) the competition for expanding religious territory, (2) the competition for gaining control over a Gold Mine, and (3) the competition for grasping the seat of Governor. These factors could be regarded as the real core of the problem.

## **The Competition for Religious Territory**

The competition between the two communities to expand their religious territory has been going on for more than a century. Since the Dutch Missionaries set their feet on Tobelo about 157 years ago, Tobelo has become the headquarters of Christianity in North Halmahera. Almost the entire northern peninsula of the island embraced Christianity except the district of Galela. But the Christians could hardly make their way southward. When the Regency Administration decided to resettle the Makianese in an area next to the bottleneck connecting North Halmahera and Central Halmahera, that move was read by the Christians as an effort to block the southward spread of Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

For more than 24 years the status of the new settlement had been left undecided. During that period, small and limited disputes have been taking place sporadically. The area has never had a true harmonious atmosphere. Both communities have tried several attempts to impose their will. On the one hand, the Makianese settlers have struggled to speed up the bureaucratic process for the formation of a new district, while on the other hand, with equally strong determination, the indigenous Christians

have tried to prevent<sup>25</sup> such a possibility from materializing. The Sultan of Ternate in his campaigning speeches in both the 1997 general election and 1999 General Election promised the Christians that he would do his best to make sure that the Makianese settlers would be driven back to where they belong. In other words, he guaranteed that the formation of a new district where the Christians would be the minority would never take place. This situation was in itself a volatile one for any triggering factor to ignite communal violence. The inaugural ceremony to implement Government Regulation no. 42/99 was the triggering factor that eventually did the job.

## **The Competition for the Gold Mine**

To make things worse, at the beginning of 1990s an Australian company discovered a gold mine in the very area of dispute. The two communities did their best to make sure they were the ones who benefited most from the operation of the mine.

In order to show his loyalty to his subjects, the Sultan of Ternate once again took sides with the Christians. Furthermore, he gave a solid legal claim to the Christians by declaring that the mining area was right in his kingdom's territory. Therefore he claimed that not only the Christians but also he himself should be the beneficiary of the mine, as he was their legitimate king. Heads of two adjacent districts later joined in the competition. They were heads of the districts of Kao and Jailolo, since the mine could enormously increase their pendapatan asli daerah (Self-Managed Regional Income).

## **Competition for the Seat of Governor**

The granting of a separate, new province for the North Moluccas archipelago was given by the Habibie Government. It was prompted by the desperate need of Habibie himself to be re-elected as the President of Indonesia. In order to achieve that goal, his political party, Golkar, had to win a significant portion of votes. Since the popularity of his party in Jawa was very low after the stepping aside of former President Soeharto, Golkar decided to concentrate efforts in the outer islands. Eastern Indonesia was likely to be his stronghold for the simple reason that he himself came from that part of Indonesia and most of his close aids also come from the same region.

One way of going about this in the case of the Moluccas archipelago was simply to approve the decade-long demand of the elite from North Moluccas to have their own province. As Chairperson of the North-Moluccan chapter of Golkar, the Sultan of Ternate had high hopes that he would be the one who naturally deserved the seat of Governor, just as the Sultan of Yogyakarta in Java deserved his. By rallying the support of his party supporters and his traditional subjects in North Halmahera, he thought he could easily get the seat with no trouble at all.

But oddly, history dictated its own course. Bahar Andily, a quite capable career bureaucrat who once held the positions of both Regional Secretary and Head of Regional Development Board did not hide his ambition for the seat. He also got his

traditional supporters from the southern part of North Moluccas whose numbers<sup>26</sup> far exceeded those of the Sultan of Ternate's. The confrontation then was inevitable. But sadly this worldly confrontation was then packaged and communicated cleverly by the elite to the masses as if it was an ethno-religious conflict. It was not!

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Halmahera is the main island (see Figure 1) in North Moluccas. The other islands are, in descending order based on their size: the island of Sanana, the island of Morotai, the island of Obi, the island of Bacan, the island of Makian, the island of Tidore and the island of Ternate.

<sup>2</sup> The Moluccas Archipelago, which has frequently been referred to as the province of a thousand islands, shares its borders with West Papua on the eastern side, with the island of Celebes (now Sulawesi) on the western side, with Australia on the southern side and with the Philippines on the northern side. Geographically and administratively, the Moluccas archipelago could be divided into three parts/regencies, namely: North Moluccas – with the city of Ternate as its capital; Central Moluccas – with the city of Masohi as its capital; and, Southeast Moluccas – with the city of Tual as its capital. The city of Ambon is situated in central Moluccas. It was the capital city of the province of Moluccas as a whole before this original province was divided into two provinces, namely the Province of Moluccas and the Province of North Moluccas on the 16th of September 1999. Ambon retains its status as the capital city of the original province of Moluccas, while Ternate was chosen – after a fierce struggle between several competing interest-groups – as a temporary capital of North Moluccas until the proposed new capital had been built in Sofifi, Central Halmahera

<sup>3</sup> I have decided to focus my analysis on Northern Moluccas, Halmahera in particular, since it has been the least analyzed and exposed in comparison with the case of Ambon in Central Moluccas. The latter has been analyzed comprehensively by several scholars such as Aditjondro (2000), Norholt-Schulte (1999) and van Klinken (1999, 2000 forthcoming). Moreover, sometimes the tragedy in the northern part of Moluccas has been lumped into and understood as simply the tragedy of Ambon as if Ambon were the only place in the archipelago of Moluccas.

<sup>4</sup> The period between January 19 to May 15, 1999 is known as the first phase of the Ambon tragedy, while the period between the 24th July to the 24th of December is registered as the second phase of the tragedy. The third phase took place between December 26, 1999 and the 1st of April 2000. For 20 days, Ambon was relatively calm and peaceful. But suddenly, after the 20th of April, communal violence ravaged the city again until the last days of May 2000.

<sup>5</sup> This very word is a Makianese word and therefore not from one of the indigenous languages. The name has also been one of the contested issues between the Makianese settlers and the indigenous ethnic groups of Kaonese and Jailolonese.

<sup>6</sup> The Makianese used to live on the island of Makian next to the western side of South Halmahera. These people were resettled on the southeastern tip of the Bay of Kao, which was later to be known as Malifut. They were moved there in 1975 by the then regency administration of North Moluccas after an expert from Jakarta predicted a volcanic explosion similar to that of Karakatoa (1883). That predicted explosion did eventually come true, but surprisingly at an insignificant scale. Like migrants everywhere, these Makianese are well known for their determined, hard-working characters, just like the Padangnese and Bugisnese in the Indonesia context or the Chinese in the Southeast Asia context.

<sup>7</sup> The area of North Halmahera peninsula is socio-geographically known as the Christian area, except the district of Galela, which is predominantly Moslem. Christianity has been there in the peninsula for more than 127 years. In April 1946, a synod headquarters was established under the name of *Gereja Masehi Injili Halmahera* (The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera) in Tobelo where an institute for learning Christian Theology has its headquarters.

<sup>8</sup> The North Halmahera Christians are traditional allies of the Sultanate of Ternate. These Christians come from several ethnic groups such as the Kaonese, the Jailolonese, the Susupunese, the Tobelonene and (some villages of) the Galelanese. On the other hand, the Moslems from Central Halmahera, South Halmahera, Obi island, Bacan island, Sanana island and Tidore island are all traditional allies of the Sultanate of Tidore. The latter has been the close neighbor and long-standing rival of the Sultanate of Ternate.

<sup>9</sup> It was alleged later by the Moslem community that, in the mean time, the Christians had mobilized and concentrated their forces in the district of Kao. My source in the Synod of

Hamahera denied this allegation. But judging on the basis of the sheer force of attack launched by the Christians in the second surge of violence, this allegation might have contained some truth.

<sup>10</sup> In Ternate the Makianese refugees were not welcome by the Sultan of Ternate. He insisted that they should go back to the island where they came from, namely the island of Makian. Finally, he let them reside in Ternate, but only in the southern part of the city. The northern part of the city is the *adat* (traditional-customary domain) area of the Sultanate. This part of the city is homogenous and is mainly inhabited by the Ternate ethnic group. On the other hand, the southern part of the city is a heterogeneous settlement where trading, governmental and educational activities take place.

<sup>11</sup> These special armed forces of the Sultan were reminiscent of the old-day armed forces of the Sultanate, and they wore the same uniforms as the ones worn by their predecessors.

<sup>12</sup> As mentioned before, the district of Tobelo is predominantly Christian.

<sup>13</sup> Again the Sultan of Ternate refused to welcome these refugees to the territory of North Ternate.

<sup>14</sup> At about the same time, 2000 Lasykar Jihad also arrived in Ambon. So far, they have disappeared from the scene of communal fighting in Ambon. The Governor of Moluccas and leaders of these Jihad troops claimed that they were there for humanitarian reasons. This claim has yet to be consistently proven.

<sup>15</sup> As a result of that investigation which ended up in the trial of several military officers, Leiut. General Sintong Panjaitan – ret. General Benny Moerdani's protégé – the then regional military commander overseeing Bali, West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara was not only sacked but also released for good from military service. He was widely regarded as the first casualty in the fierce struggle between the ABRI Hijau (Green Military Officers) and ABRI Merah-Putih (the Red-and-White Military Officers). The former Chief of Armed Forces/Minister of Defence and later Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, General Wiranto was grouped in the latter. The colour of green is associated with Islam, while the colours of red and white are thought to represent Indonesian nationalism.

<sup>16</sup> Facing the challenge of some nationalist officers who began to doubt his leadership, it was imperative for the then President Soeharto to create an internal struggle within the rank and file of the military itself by introducing an ideological (Islamic) element into it. Soeharto even saw the need to play around with Islamic issues by giving his unequivocal support for the founding of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* – ICMI – Indonesian Moslem Intellectuals Association, led by the then State Minister for Research and Technology, B.J. Habibie.

<sup>17</sup> This is a shorthand identification for urban-based Moslem intellectuals.

<sup>18</sup> In the balloting process, which had to be repeated twice, the nationalist candidate actually won, by a close margin, the leadership contest. But eventually the Sultan of Ternate was installed as the new Chairperson due to strong pressure imposed by both the young Islamic politicians and a handful of the Sultan of Ternate's Palace Guards who kept stamping their spears outside the balloting room.

<sup>19</sup> Mudaffar Syah the Sultan of Ternate was a classmate of Freddy Latumahina when they were both students at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia. The former wrote his graduate thesis on John Stuart Mills' notion of liberty as exposed in his *On Liberty*. His supervisor was Prof. Frans Magnis Suseno.

<sup>20</sup> Masyumi stood for *Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* (the Indonesian Moslems' Council) founded just before Indonesia got its independence. This modernist political party was banned by the then President Soekarno.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, the forced occupation of North Moluccas Regency office in July 1998 and the continued terror launched against the then Regent of North Moluccas who happened to be a retired Army Colonel of Arabic descent.

<sup>22</sup> Since then, he has given up political activities and now lives peacefully with his Manadonese wife and children in Manado, North Celebes.

<sup>23</sup> This particular facilitating factor has also been observed in the case of Ambon.

<sup>24</sup> I interviewed one of the Vice-Chairpersons of the then Regency Parliament and asked whether the reading was correct. The answer was yes. This was understandable since Moslems dominated the Parliament either as Golkar's representative or as PPP's.

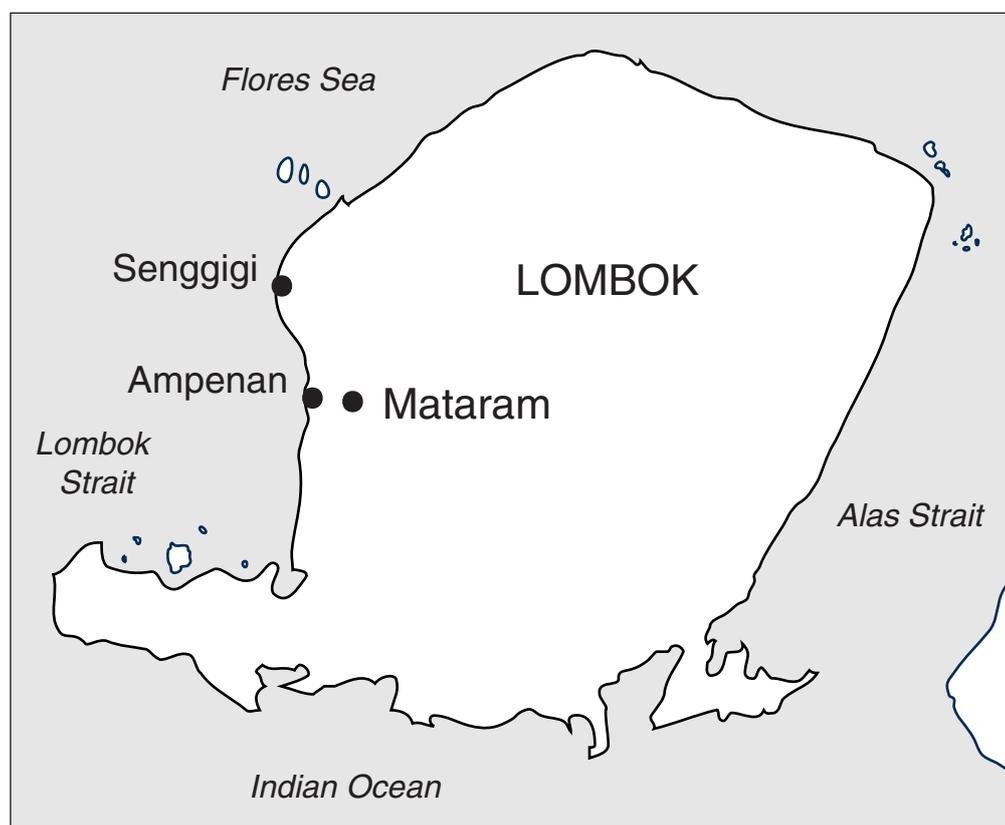
<sup>25</sup> The North Halmaheran Christians once invited an expert team from the Ambon-based University of Pattimura to conduct research on local soil just to prove that the soil was unfavorable for any cultivation.

<sup>26</sup> Moslems constitute 87 % while Christians contribute 13 % of the total population of North Moluccas.

# Patterns of Modern Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Lombok

*Sven Cederroth*

Ph.D., University of Gothenburg, for many years a research fellow with the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen, is currently head of the Department of Social Anthropology and senior fellow with the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Gothenburg. He has carried out anthropological field work in Indonesia, on the islands of Lombok and Java, and on the peninsula of Malaysia. His doctoral dissertation is entitled 'The Power of Mekkah and the Spell of the Ancestors: A Sasak Community on Lombok' and describes a syncretist Muslim community on Lombok. Among his more recent publications are 'Survival and Profit in Rural Java. The Case of an East Javanese Village', 'Development aid to Nepal: issues and options in energy, health, education, democracy and human rights' and 'Managing marital disputes in Malaysia: Islamic mediators and conflict resolution in the Syariah courts'. His current research project is entitled 'Patterns of Modern Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Malaysia and Indonesia'.



**Figure 1** Map of Lombok

The island of Lombok, the small, densely populated island just east of Bali, is inhabited by some two million Muslim Sasak plus around 80,000 Hindu Balinese. The latter who are descendants of 19th century Balinese raja's who had ruled Lombok for more than 200 years all live in the economically strong western part of the island. In addition there is a small group of Chinese, maybe 5-6000 who by and large control the economy of the island and all live in the urban centres of West Lombok.

During the week prior to what is now known as the 171 riots (*kerusuhan satu tujuh satu*) a leaflet protesting against the persecution and killing of Muslims in Ambon and other parts of the Moluccas was distributed almost island-wide and there was also much gossiping and rumouring. In the leaflet fellow Muslims were urged to protest against what happened in Ambon and they were demanded to show their anger in a more determined way. A few days before, word was spread around the island that a large demonstration of Sasak Muslims was going to take place in the Public Arena of downtown Mataram on January 17th. On Sunday, a day ahead of this, people, mainly young men who had been driven in by trucks from Central and Eastern Lombok, began assembling in the public areas of the city of Mataram.

By Monday morning a large gathering of Muslim youth convened from all over Lombok had assembled at the public arena in Central Mataram. Officially the meeting was a *tablig akbar*, called in support of the Muslim community in Ambon. A charismatic Islamic leader, Tuan Guru Sibawali, presided over the gathering and other Tuan Guru were also present. Although the speaker's words were inflammatory, they were obviously not the sole stimulus behind the following destruction of the Christian churches and economic centres in West Lombok. As we shall see, other factors were also at work here.

Within an hour after the meeting, five churches were in flames in downtown Mataram. Only an hour later three more churches in Ampenan were burning. Later during the day and the next day a few more churches and many private houses were attacked in a very systematic and decisive manner. The attackers knew exactly where they were going and which houses to attack. It is obvious that this was not aimless violence by an agitated mob inflamed by the speeches during the preceding meeting but, on the contrary, it was all quite well planned and organized. How could this happen and who was behind it? To answer this question we need to look into developments during the decade leading up to the three days of violence. The groups carrying out the violence had been organized long before the destruction in Mataram-Ampenan, but not with the purpose of burning churches and attacking NGOs, restaurants and industries. Their original aim was to engage in a war against crime, and specifically against criminals in Lombok.

During the last few years, crime-combating groups, known as *pamswakarsa*, have developed in many parts of Indonesia. The reason behind this development is a dramatic increase of break-ins and theft coupled with an apparent inability of the police to control the rapidly deteriorating situation. On the contrary, there have been many accusations, and also evidence, of police involvement with the criminals. The police have been known to assist in the hiding and spreading of stolen goods. Seeing this, of course, made all those who have been the victims of crime feel frustration and anger. Sometimes, as happened for instance in Central Lombok, the people expressed their frustration through direct violence against the police. A police station was burnt down and a few policemen killed when an attack was waged by a mob who suspected that the police were in collusion with the criminals.

In Lombok, there are, above all, two crime combating groups that have grown rapidly and become well known throughout the island. In Central Lombok there is a group known as Bujak (*Pemburu Jejak*: tracker) while in East Lombok there is Ampibi (as in amphibious; protect the people on land or sea). Of course, thievery is not a new phenomenon, in both Central Lombok and Eastern Lombok there are certain villages in which thievery has for long time been a regular occupation of many inhabitants. However, until the early 1990s such theft was usually confined to livestock and agricultural products. What has happened during the last decade, and especially after the economic crisis in 1997, is that many valuable goods, such as motorcycles and television sets, that are now more readily available have been increasingly sought out by the thieves. When not only cattle and agricultural products, but also valuable consumer goods were targeted by the thieves, the level of counter violence needed to secure them increased.

Because of the rise of violent crime in the early 1990s, the first anti-crime group was organized in a village in Central Lombok. This was Bujak, a youth group consisting in many cases of ex-criminals. Bujak guaranteed that their clients would be safe from crime, but if goods were nevertheless stolen, they promised to return them. For this protection, their clients had to pay a fee and in return Bujak placed stickers on the houses and promised to patrol the area to keep it free from crime. It happened many times that when a thief was caught he was severely beaten up, and sometimes even killed, before being turned over to the police. Although the proclaimed intention of Bujak was to work with the police, there were increasing accusations that the group itself engaged in intentional theft to get a share of the stolen goods. Because of such reports the police banned Bujak's activities in 1995 but, as a result, after this there was also a dramatic increase in criminal activity.

In late 1997 in particular, there was a dramatic increase in crime which can be attributed not only to the outbreak of the economic crisis but also to failed harvests. As already indicated, many of these crimes now also became more violent and there were increasing reports of rape and homicide accompanying ordinary thefts and robberies. This was especially the case in the most economically depressed regions of Central and East Lombok. In response to the alarming development, Bujak again started to patrol certain areas in Central Lombok.

Because the activities of Bujak were limited to Central Lombok, another crime combating group arose in East Lombok, Ampibi. The latter differs from Bujak in that there is a moral or religious leadership in the organization, namely Tuan Guru Haji Sibawali from the village of Jerowaru in East Lombok. After the death in 1997 of Tuan Guru Haji Abdul Majid, the founder and long-time leader of Nadhatul Watan, by far the largest Muslim organization in Lombok, and the subsequent squabbling among his heirs and the following split of the organization, new leaders such as Tuan Guru Haji Sibawali have emerged as independent religious leaders with mass followings. Under his leadership, Ampibi rapidly grew to become bigger and even more efficient than Bujak.

In contrast to Bujak, Ampibi members have agreed to protect the population for free, only an entrance fee is required to become one of those protected from thefts. In the same manner as Bujak, Ampibi members patrol the area they protect. They are divided in patrol groups of thirty persons, each of whom receives a walkie talkie by means of which they can easily keep in contact and, when necessary, call the others for help. In spite of its higher moral standards than Bujak, Ampibi has also gained a reputation as an often violent and dangerous organization. When a thief is caught and, instead of surrendering, tries to escape, he is often killed. In such cases, according to rumours, he is often beheaded, whereupon the head is carried to the organization's headquarters in Jerowaru. It is impossible to give any exact figures, but over the years hundreds of thieves and robbers have been killed by the two organizations during their patrolling activities. It has been reported that the reason Ampibi members dare to act so fearlessly is because after they become members they are provided with special orange jumpers. These are inscribed with special and mystically loaded Arabic characters meant to protect its bearer from all physical harm, rendering them virtually invulnerable.

After the general elections in June 1999, both Ampibi and Bujak memberships swelled rapidly, and according to some sources, by August 1999 the combined figures were already more than 100,000. After an armed conflict between the two groups, peace was made, they joined forces and grew to a membership which at the time of the 171 riots was reported to be more than 200,000. Although this figure is probably quite inflated, it is nevertheless true that together, the organizations have a strong membership and an overwhelming popular support, and, at least in the case of Ampibi, also a religious and moral support. This has turned them into forceful, and feared, tools whom even the police and local government have seen it necessary to comply with and support.

So, when the violence broke out on Monday, January 17th in downtown Mataram, the organized quality of the mob did not come as a surprise to many people in Lombok. Put simply, it was not a mob at all, it was a well-trained organization with years of experience in hunting criminals that was now put into action. After the *tablig akbar* on Monday 17/1 they divided into groups of between two and three hundred. Regional coordination allowed for group members to keep track of one another; while members from one area stuck together and attacked a church in Mataram, others were directed to the fancy house of a Chinese doctor in Ampenan and still others to the catholic hospital in Ampenan. Those who spontaneously joined the groups were led by a team already certain of their targets. During the first day of the riots, only targets in Mataram-Ampenan were attacked, churches and private houses owned by Christians were burnt, Chinese-owned shops were attacked and looted as was the office of a large Lombok-based NGO. The next day the violence spread throughout West Lombok, several restaurants and hotels in the tourist resort of Senggigi were destroyed and the tourists hastily evacuated. When I visited Lombok in April, I could follow the trail of destruction all the way to 'my village' in the northernmost part of West Lombok in

the form of looted and destroyed private houses and churches. Even in this far away village a couple of Christian homes and a small church had been attacked, burnt and completely ruined.

Although it is not all that clear why these groups, after having set the ten churches on fire, continued with such a coordinated form of further destruction aimed at ruining the economic sector of Ampenan, and the centre of tourism investment in Senggigi, it is clear that whoever was behind it chose the right groups to carry out the work. The development of the economic sector and of tourism has greatly favored West Lombok over the two other subdistricts of Central and East Lombok. Inhabitants of the latter areas are enraged that they are left behind and without access to jobs and money provided through the industrial development and the tourist industry. This anger and envy at the rapidly growing inequality between the western part of the island and the majority of the residents of the other parts, expresses itself in a way that goes beyond any logical resolution. They want to eliminate what they feel to be the unrightful enrichment of the residents in the urban parts of West Lombok, in and around Mataram/Ampenan, and the only way they can do that is by attacking and destroying the wealth of others. The death of fellow Muslims in the Moluccas only further aggravated their anger towards, above all, wealthy Chinese and Christian groups based in Ampenan and Mataram, who they perceived to be the privileged minority of West Lombok. The attacks were not only directed towards Christians and Chinese, however, rather, anybody with wealth and influence could be the target. So was, for instance, the office of a large Mataram-based NGO, the leader of which is a fellow Muslim from East Lombok, attacked and completely burnt out.

The use of Ampibi/Bujak groups in destroying not only churches but perhaps above all the wealth of Mataram and Ampenan economic centres, and parts of the tourism infrastructure development in nearby Senggigi, is part of a complex schedule with many facets displaying national, regional, religious as well as economic tensions. Even if developments on the national scene in Jakarta may be the ultimate source for the bursting out of existing local tensions, the expressions that these take, be it through peaceful means or sometimes, as on Lombok, extremely violent and destructive means, are to be found in the political, religious and economic tensions of the region. Such was the case of Lombok.



# **Disintegration or Democratization? Muslim-Christian Violence and the Future of Indonesia**

*Robert W. Hefner*

Professor of Anthropology and director of the programme in civic culture at the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University. He received his Ph.D. from Michigan in 1982 after fieldwork in Indonesia. His books include 'The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretative History', 'Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam', and 'ICMI dan Perjuangan Menuju Kelas Menengah Indonesia' (ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class); he has also edited 'Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Tradition', 'Islam in an Era of Nation-Building: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia', and the forthcoming 'Market Cultures: Entrepreneurial Precedents and Ethical Debates in East and Southeast Asia'. He has written many articles on the relationship between culture, religion, and the political economy of developing countries, especially Indonesia. His particular interest at present is the cultural and political aspects of democratisation in plural societies, which he explores in a volume he is editing entitled 'Democratic Civility: History, Culture and Comparison'. His major writing project, however, is the completion of his book 'Civil Islam: Democratization and Religious Reformation in Indonesia', which challenges Western historical prototypes about the relationship between religion and modernity. Along with his on-going research on Southeast Asia, Prof. Hefner writes and teaches on comparative religion, political economy, politics and political theory, and identity and moral development.

At the end of December 1999, Indonesia witnessed one of the most awful incidents of putatively 'religious' violence in the conflict-strewn history of the Indonesian republic. As Christians in the northern portion of the province of Maluku or the Maluccas in eastern Indonesia celebrated Christmas, a convoy of trucks followed by several thousand marchers set out ominously from local celebrations to neighboring Muslim villages in the area. Although in the greater Maluccas the population is split almost evenly between Christians and Muslims, in this remote area some 90% of the local population are Christian, the remaining 10% Muslim. In Indonesia as a whole, Muslims comprise some 88% of the population.

According to eyewitness reports, the convoy of villagers and their mysterious supervisors made their way quietly past Christian villages and homes. But when they came upon the small enclaves of Muslim settlements that dot this region, witnesses report seeing acts of awful violence: Muslim homes were doused with gasoline, and as residents fled, the men were shot or, more commonly, butchered by machete-wielding mobs. According to reports in the Muslim press back in Jakarta, Muslim women were 'raped in the streets...'

But the Maluku violence was not yet done. Several days after the first incident, on December 28, there was a similar but even more horrific attack: four Muslim villages were levelled and 250 people taking refuge in a mosque, mostly women and children, were sealed in the mosque and burned alive.

This latest round of violence had a galvanizing effect on the conservative wing of Indonesia's diverse Muslim community. Although democratic Muslims denied it, conservative Muslims were unanimous in identifying the killers as 'Christians' pure and simple. These conservative accounts said nothing about the fact that the killers had been organized by burly men bearing automatic weapons and driving trucks. Despite details like these that might suggest the possibility of outside provocation, the

Maluku violence quickly gave rise in conservative Muslim circles to calls for religious war or *jihad*. In Indonesia, I should point out, conservative, anti-pluralist Muslims are in the minority relative to their moderate and democratic Muslim counterparts. This was decisively demonstrated during the free and fair elections of June 1999, when hardline parties won less than 6% of the vote, versus more than 50% for parties of democratic reform. Notwithstanding their numerical insignificance, hardline, anti-pluralist Islamists are vocal, well-financed, and well-organized.

Conservative Muslims had made similar calls for *jihad* a year earlier, when the first incidents of violence broke out in the Maluccas in January 1999. Consistent with the pluralist tenor of the Muslim community, however, at that time these appeals had been quickly denounced by mainstream Muslim leaders, who insisted that there was no place for *jihad* against fellow citizens in a modern nation-state. At this time, critics of the conservative appeals suggested that the call for *jihad* was being made by people linked to the deposed President Soeharto, so as to distract attention from calls for investigation into the president's wealth and actions.

Now, however, against the background of the new and more awful Maluku violence, the call for religious warfare against Christians received a more sympathetic, if still minority hearing. In Medan, Jakarta, Surabaya, and my own Yogyakarta, offices funded by wealthy Muslim merchants and politicians were established to recruit local youths for the fight against Christians in Maluku.

Even by the standards of the final years of the Soeharto dictatorship, the Maluku killings represented brutality on an almost unthinkable scale. How are we to explain it? Is Indonesia on the verge of a cycle of ethnoreligious bloodshed like that which destroyed Yugoslavia?

My first focus today is to attempt to explain the violence by putting it in a larger context, to provide a discursive and political genealogy if you will, and discuss its implications for the future of Indonesia – the fourth largest country in the world, and the largest majority Muslim society in the world. The discussion has implications well beyond Indonesia, because Indonesia was once rightly regarded as a potential beacon for democracy and pluralist tolerance in the Muslim world.

My second, subsidiary concern today is more theoretical and comparative. It concerns how we imagine the conditions of the possibility of democracy and participatory citizenship in a multicultural world. To borrow terms from the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, then, my interest is the conditions that 'make democracy work.'

Let me provide just a little bit of background on this concern. Contrary to the best-made liberal plans, in the aftermath of the Cold War democratic institutions failed to take hold in many countries. Faced with a more multicultural citizenry, Western countries too encountered serious challenges to their democratic traditions in the 1980s and 1990s. These difficulties made it painfully clear that *formally democratic institutions are, by themselves, no guarantee of an effective and inclusive democratic*

*practice*. What do we know, then, about the conditions that facilitate democratic citizen interaction? Throughout the 1990s, the most commonly heard answer to this question invoked the concept of ‘civil society’. In its most common usage, civil society refers to the network of mediating citizen organizations between the state and the family in which, civil society proponents hope, citizens learn the democratic habits of participation, free expression, and tolerance.

I’ll suggest today that the Indonesian example shows clearly, that ‘civil society’ is indeed a key ingredient in the recipe for making democracy work. But I’ll also suggest that the Indonesia example shows just why it is important to remember that civil society itself comes to nothing *unless it is complemented by a state that is itself ‘civi-lized’*: i.e. a state that, rather than working against democratic initiatives in society, works with them, amplifying or scaling them up (Peter Evans’ phrase) into a constitutionally secured and organizationally credible balance of power between state and society, and between minorities and majorities in civil society.

## **Explaining the Violence**

Before turning to these theoretical issues, let me return to the Maluku violence and attempt to provide some background. Many in the ultraconservative Muslim press argued that the Maluku violence was the result of Christian treachery, pure and simple. The region, they pointed out, had until the 1970s had a clear Christian majority – and is one of only six provinces in Indonesia’s 26 without a clear Muslim majority. As a result of economic expansion and the heightened mobility of the New Order era, however, the 1970s had seen an influx of Muslim Indonesians to Maluku, particularly from the nearby island of Sulawesi, also here in eastern Indonesia. This internal migration had changed the ethnic balance in this multi-island region, and given rise to Christian resentment, not least of all because the Muslim newcomers proved to be more economically successful than their indigenous counterparts.

Although these social and demographic facts may have contributed to tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in the province, however, this claim that Christian resentment underlay the violence overlooks the fact that there had never been violence like that seen in 1999 in Maluku – systematically organized, well financed, and aggravated by the use of automatic weapons. More to the point, the explanation also overlooks the fact that Maluku was but the latest in a series of violent incidents shaking Indonesia, most of which had a genealogy more complex than simple religious tension.

A better understanding of the violence thus requires that we delve into recent Indonesian political history. That history suggests, I will argue, that the violence occurring in Maluku and elsewhere is actually related to intraelite struggles that began in the final years of the Soeharto era, as rival factions in the ruling elite vied to position themselves to seize control of the state when, as was widely expected, the aging president Soeharto stepped down. In a pattern that recalls the political violence

of the early 1960s (as captured, for example, in Geoffrey Robinson's *The Dark Side of Paradise*), this breakdown of political order among rival segments of the ruling class led some of that military and civilian elite to reach out into society and orchestrate incidents of ethnoreligious violence so as to improve their faction's chances for a hegemonic hold on the state in the post-Soeharto era. Rather than the eternal recurrence of 'primordial' passions, then, state factionalization and elite terror seem the more proximate cause of Indonesia's current plague of 'religious' violence.

## **Demise of the Prodemocracy Movement**

To explain how this pattern of escalating rivalry and violence came to be so horrific, let me go back a few years to the early 1990s. For a brief period in the early 1990s, when I began making annual visits to Indonesia to interview members of the political elite, it was widely believed that Suharto was lightening up, and Indonesia was about to experience a democratic spring. However, by the mid-1990s, the movement for democratic reform had 'stalled' as a result of a series of repressive measures undertaken by Soeharto's proxies. In late July 1996, the government staged an attack on the headquarters of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party, where the popular opposition figure, Megawati Soekarnoputri, had been leading prodemocracy protests.

In my research on Muslim and political elites in Jakarta at this time, I inadvertently stumbled onto documents indicating that the targeting of Megawati was all part of a regime master plan to divide and conquer the prodemocracy opposition. A secret study which I had been shown by Muslim friends in 1995 commissioned by a promilitary Islamist faction in the government's ruling party, Golkar, described Megawati as too liberal, too secularist, and a serious threat to Soeharto. The secret report also warned that Megawati was too close to the charismatic prodemocracy leader, and head of Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, Abdurrahman Wahid from NU. The report cautioned that, if Megawati and Wahid succeeded in forging an alliance between Muslims and secular democrats it would represent the biggest threat ever to Soeharto's rule.

The destruction of Megawati's Democratic Party in July 1996 was thus the first step in this effort to divide Megawati's Christian and secular Muslim forces from Wahid's Muslim NU. In the aftermath of the party's destruction, the government unleashed the second phase of its campaign to divide and conquer the opposition. The regime launched ferocious propaganda attacks against the prodemocracy movement, portraying it as Christian, secular, and therefore anti-Islamic. The 'Christian' Theme in these attacks was an entirely new element in New Order propaganda.

At the same time, the regime ratcheted up pressure on Muslim groups, demanding that they join with the government in condemning the prodemocracy movement. Under the leadership of the president's son-in-law, Major General Prabowo Subianto, the state also began to funnel resources to heretofore minor conservative Muslim groups, most notably KISDI and the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia.

Both groups launched fierce propaganda campaigns in the Muslim community against Wahid and other democratic Muslims. (It was around this time, too, in September 1995, that conservative Muslims began to attack Western and human rights reports on East Timor as Christian and Jewish attempts to discredit Muslim Indonesia.) However, this plan to destroy the opposition failed to silence the most important prodemocracy activist, the Muslim leader of NU, Abdurrahman Wahid. No one could accuse him, after all, of being Christian. Behind the scenes, then, government intelligence operatives decided that, with Megawati's nationalist Democratic Party out of the way, Abdurrahman Wahid was going to be the next target of state repression.

## **In For The Kill**

Against this backdrop, on October 10, 1996, fierce anti-Christian and anti-Chinese riots swept through Situbondo in East Java, a town long regarded as a bastion of Wahid's Nahdlatul Ulama. By the standards of later years, including 1999, this incident was small stuff indeed: 25 churches and a hundred or so Chinese stores and homes were destroyed; four people were killed. The ferocity of the riot stunned Wahid's advisors nonetheless. Details on the Situbondo riots provided to NU leaders by their intelligence contacts surprised them even more. Many of the Situbondo rioters, these reports indicated, were not local people but burly provocateurs trucked in from outside town. Neatly outfitted in black 'ninja' uniforms, these provocateurs had moved around town unimpeded for four hours, in a well-planned program of violence against churches and stores. The whole rampage was directed by whistle-blowing commanders. For Wahid's advisors, the violence was seen as sure proof that the dirty-tricks bureau responsible for ousting Megawati was now moving in for the kill on Wahid.

Not long after this, on the night of December 27, 1996, Indonesia was rocked by another riot. This one occurred in the West Java town of Tasikmalaya, another town long regarded as a stronghold of traditionalist Islam. Once again, Wahid intelligence sources reported that the riot had been orchestrated by anti-Wahid agents with ties to a secret bureau in Golkar, the government party. Wahid was losing control of the situation, his advisors worried, and he had to do something fast.

This, then, was the background to the political reconfiguration that, to the astonishment of most Indonesians, developed during the first months of 1997. The central event in this adjustment occurred when Abdurrahman Wahid temporarily withdrew his support from the ousted opposition leader, Megawati Soekarnoputri, and instead lent his voice to the campaign to re-elect President Soeharto. Wahid's actions were greeted in prodemocracy circles with a mix of resignation and angry disbelief. (Wahid's defenders insisted he had no choice; he had temporarily to put aside his democratic involvements to protect his NU base. Without that, it was argued, he had no political future. Those less generous in their criticisms insisted that Wahid's democratic credentials had always been weak, and the alliance with Soeharto only made Wahid's political opportunism more apparent.)

Events in the final months of 1997, however, demonstrated that the interpretation of Wahid as having defected from the prodemocracy camp was wrong. In August 1997 East Asia was swept by the first waves of its giant banking and monetary crisis. As the crisis in Indonesia deepened in September and October, Wahid moved quickly to position himself in the ranks of those demanding thorough political reform. In October he joined with Megawati and several Muslim leaders to demand far-reaching democratic reforms. It began to look as if Soeharto's days were numbered.

However, Soeharto and his supporters had other ideas. Rather than giving in to demands for reform, they resorted to an escalated campaign of violence. Around this time of prodemocracy revival, then, we began to receive reports from eastern Java, around where I had worked in the late 1970s and mid-1985, of a reappearance of the black-clad 'ninjas' seen a year earlier in nearby Situbondo. This time, the ninja moved around the countryside in convoys of two or three trucks and squads of thirty to fifty men. When they arrived at their destination, they tortured, executed, and dismembered their intended victims. The targets of the killings came from two social groups. Some were mystics and nominal Muslims who, it turned out, came from families who a generation earlier had had ties to the Communist Party. In Javanese identity politics, these are the type of people regarded as likely constituents for Megawati's secular nationalist Democratic Party. But the second group of victims consisted of Muslim scholars or *ulama* linked to Abdurrahman Wahid's Muslim organization, the NU. The dismembered bodies of both sets of victims were left in prominent locations like mosques or village squares. Equally provocative was the fact that the murders were accompanied by leaflets implying that the killings were motivated by the desire for communal revenge: of nominal Muslims and ex-communists for NU's participation in the 1965 killings, and of NU revenge against nominal Muslims for the killing of *ulama*. Clearly, an effort was being made to divide and conquer by inflaming passions between pious Muslims associated with Wahid's NU and nominal Muslims likely to support Megawati's democratic party.

## **Soeharto Plays the Chinese Card**

But the killings in E. Java were not the only ominous escalation in violence. In late 1997, hundreds of copies of a document entitled, *The Conspiracy to Overthrow Soeharto (Konspirasi Menggoyang Soeharto)* began to circulate in elite conservative Muslim circles in Jakarta, Bandung, Bogor, and other centers of strict-constructionist Muslim activism. The most startling fact about this 50 page document was what it had to say about the economic crisis shaking Indonesia. The crisis is not the result of Soeharto's mismanagement, crony capitalism, or corruption, the document said, but was the product of an international conspiracy uniting Jews, the American CIA, the Vatican [nb East Timor], and Chinese-Indonesians against Soeharto *because he is a Muslim and Indonesia is a majority Muslim country*. The prodemocracy movement was denounced in similar terms: as the product of a foreign conspiracy against the President, against Indonesia, against the military, and against Islam. The regime

machinery for dividing and conquering the democratic opposition seemed to be in full gear again. Just who it had in mind became clearer in January 1998. That month the regime unleashed a blistering propaganda campaign accusing a well-known conservative Chinese businessman (Sofyan Wanandi) of providing funds to a small leftwing group for a bombing campaign to bring Soeharto down. Such an alliance between a wealthy Chinese conglomerate owner and a small band of new-left idealists is so unlikely as to be laughable. But no Chinese and no one in the democratic opposition was laughing. The incident's message was shockingly apparent. The economic crisis shaking Indonesia is not the result of cronyism or corruption, it implied, but a campaign financed by hateful Chinese, Christian, and prodemocracy traitors.

Shortly after this time, as if on cue, hardline ministers in the presidential cabinet, as well as police and bureaucrats in the provinces, began to make not-so-veiled threats against Chinese shop owners. In February and March 1998, as food prices escalated with the continuing economic crisis, spokespersons for the government claimed that the crisis was not the result of presidential cronyism or mismanagement, but of hoarding and speculation by Chinese shopkeepers. Promilitary conservatives in the Muslim community echoed this charge. A high-ranking official in the ultraconservative KISDI, for example, called openly for a campaign, not against Suharto, but against all 'rats' and 'traitors' to the nation. Soon his voice was echoed by others. The gauntlet for an assault on Chinese and Christian opponents of the regime was being thrown down.

In the end, we know, the gauntlet was indeed thrown down, and with stunning effect. On the night of May 14-15, 1998, in the aftermath of student protests provoked by the army sniper execution of four student demonstrators, urban riots broke out across Indonesia. About two thousand people died, tens of thousands of Chinese store fronts were destroyed, and portions of many big cities were burned out. Although at first it seemed as if the mayhem were the spontaneous product of protestors' outrage, we now know that the killings and the riots were engineered by hardline members of the military. Their plan was to create a political crisis so severe that Soeharto would declare a state of emergency, hand special powers over to the hardline military, and arrest and liquidate the democratic opposition.

Among the most heinous violence at this time took place in Jakarta. In addition to 1200 deaths, more than one hundred and sixty Chinese Indonesian women were hunted down and raped in offices and their homes by teams of well-organized thugs intent on terrorizing the Indonesian Chinese community.

For all of its wanton brutality, however, this effort to save the Soeharto regime backfired. Muslims and non-Muslims alike rejected these vile appeals to *ethnoreligious hatred*. Muslim leaders, in particular, mobilized all the more vigorously against Soeharto because they recognized he was to abuse their great religion for the purpose of maintaining power. The strength of the Muslim civil society was demonstrated against the antidemocratic extreme. On May 21, 1998, under pressure from the

prodemocracy movement, segments of the military, and most of Indonesia's national Muslim leadership, President Soeharto stepped down.

## Post-Soeharto Indonesia

Unfortunately, Indonesia's anguish did not end there with the triumph of this alliance of democratic Muslims and secular nationalists. A number of incidents indicated that, although Soeharto was gone, most of his regime was not. Throughout late 1998 and early 1999, hardline Muslims (linked to KISDI) continued to rally denouncing those calling for investigations of the May violence and the rapes of Chinese women, claiming that the NGOs and others investigating the violence were Christians and secularists intent on discrediting Muslims, the military, and Indonesia: a forceful configuration indeed. In November 1998, a young Sino-Indonesian woman rape counselor set to testify before the U.S. Congress about rapes was found raped and murdered in her Jakartan home. There were other incidents of violence throughout this time, the majority of which showed this distressing pattern of *ancien régime* and military manipulation of conservative Islamist sensibilities. Although the violence diminished prior to the elections of June 1999 and then again prior to the surprise election of Abdurrahman Wahid to the presidency in November 1999, it ignited again shortly after Wahid took office.

So now you see we've gone full circle. This then was the complex political environment in which the first wave of Maluku violence had exploded in 1999. As in the ninja killings in eastern Java a year earlier, the violence in Maluku in 1999 was clearly aimed at pitting different religious groups one against each other. Unlike in eastern Java, however, the violence in the Maluccas quickly escalated and sunk roots in the population as a whole. Each side was 'somehow' supplied with arms, and a well organised campaign of leafleting and other propaganda managed to convince some people on both sides of the religious divide that the violence was in fact being instigated by their rivals.

Earlier, in East Java, this effort at catalyzing mass violence so as to weaken the prodemocracy alliance had failed because of the quick efforts of the NU leadership under Abdurrahman Wahid. In the face of Church burnings and the Ninja killings, the Muslim leadership quickly mobilized anti-violence teams. It also provided local activists with cellular phones and instructions to report any instance of provocation immediately. East Java provided a moving illustration of Muslim civil society challenging and, ultimately, neutralizing state terror.

In Maluku, however, there was no NU, nor any other well-established non-state organization able to contain the violence or counteract the hateful propaganda. The absence of civic organizations made this plural society highly vulnerable to provocation. As President Wahid made clear to me in a conversation in November 1999, he believes that the violence in Maluku has an author: namely hardline elements of the *ancien régime* intent on exploiting tensions in society so as to create major

obstacles to democratic reform. The violence is also intended to demonstrate that only a firm non-civilian hand is capable of governing Indonesia. In the interest of wealth and power, holdovers from the Soeharto regime are pushing Indonesia to the brink of disintegration.

## **Conclusion: Imagining Democracy**

As this overview of events indicates, there is little in Indonesia of the uniform and deeply anti-democratic 'Islamic politics' of which observers like Samuel Huntington have recently spoken. Certainly twenty years of Islamic resurgence have not created a seamless consensus among Muslims on the political strategy they should adopt. And a small minority does indeed reject democracy and pluralist citizenship.

However, the most remarkable fact from this period is that the abuses of the Soeharto dictatorship convinced the majority of Muslim leaders that which they most need is a strong civil society and a democratic, law-abiding, and self-limiting state. From the perspective of the Muslim world, this is an extraordinary event. Indonesia now has the strongest Muslim-led democratic movement in the Islamic world.

Unfortunately, Indonesia is not yet the story of civil society or democratic Islam triumphant. The violence that has plagued Indonesia since Soeharto's downfall shows that civil society and a 'social capital' of pluralist tolerance are not enough, to use Robert Putnam's phrase again, to 'make democracy work'. Here in Indonesia as in Yugoslavia and Sierre Leone, anti-democratic elements in the military and state, collaborating with violent factions in society, have shown themselves capable of wreaking havoc far out of proportion with their numbers in society.

What makes this fact doubly tragic in the case of Indonesia is that the elections of June 1999 and other events indicate that Indonesia has seen *a great convergence toward a democratic and pluralist center*. Whereas, in the 1950s, the great majority of Muslims advocated the formation of an Islamic state, today the great majority have indicated that they see their great religion as thoroughly consistent with democracy and constitutionalism. Most reject, then, what the late, great Aswab Mahasin used to call the 'mythology of the Islamic state.' But it is precisely because of this lack of 'primordial' divisions that defenders of the *ancien régime* have had to work so hard to turn local and regional tensions into raging national battles.

Let me conclude with a few theoretical observations on democracy and its imaginations. Tocquevillian optimism aside, the history I've recounted shows just why Robert Putnam's and other civil-society accounts of what makes democracy work are, in the end, just too simple. Throughout the 1990s, there was among democratic activists in many parts of the world a sweet dream that, with just a little more of this mysterious thing called civil society, we could make an end run around the state and achieve democracy on the basis of citizen participation and associational conviviality. Indonesia and many other countries do indeed show that citizen initiative and self-organization are important for democracy, but contemporary Indonesia also shows

these things are not sufficient to guarantee an enduring and inclusive democracy.

In particular, recent events show that there is no way around the hard fact that the state must be brought back into our formulae. To survive and thrive over the long run civil society requires a *civilized* state. By a civilized state I mean a state that is powerful enough to support and defend the rights of citizens and minorities in society, while sufficiently balanced and self-limiting so as not to overstep its civic-mediating role.

My conclusion here converges with that of the California political sociologist Peter Evans in his review of the literature on 'social capital' and democratization. For the delicate balance of state power and societal autonomy essential for democracy to be achieved, civil society and social capital are not enough. Local cultures of tolerance and participation have to be 'scaled up' and embedded in the ideals and actions of the state. All this is to say, then, that democracy depends, not just on civil society, but on a synergy of state and society that deepens the democratic dispositions of each. This synergy takes hold if and only if the members of civil associations generalize or universalize the freedoms and self organization they enjoy to other citizens in society. Particularist privilege must become universal right.

In recognizing the complexity of this synergy, we are also reminded that there has long been an anarcho-libertarian strain running through writing on civil society, on both the left and the right. The strain is evident in the tendency of writers to see civil society in always positive terms, and the state in always negative, as if a gain in state power is always society's loss. But the Indonesian example shows clearly that civil society remains highly vulnerable to violence and provocation, as well as simple narrow self-interest, unless its best values are buttressed by a *state that is strong but self-limiting*.

It's the achievement of this delicately 'civilized' *state* that has proved so elusive in Indonesia. Over the past thirty years, Indonesian *society* and Muslim Indonesian politics have matured considerably more than the ruling elite that dominates both. In East Timor, in September 1999, the defenders of the *ancien régime* clearly miscalculated. They didn't understand that in an age of global media, the carnage they unleashed would be watched by the whole world. But in the remote terrains of eastern Indonesia and Java I have described here, the world knows less, and perhaps cares less. Some Western observers might be inclined to see the violence simply as proof of the essential incompatibility of democracy and Islam.

Despite its painful travails, however, Indonesia suggests a different answer to the question of Islam and democracy. With each courageous effort to stop the rapes and killing, we are reminded that the roots of democracy and pluralist decency have taken deep hold among Muslims and others here. Let me be clear about the point I am making. There is no end to history, no end to the debates over democracy and the proper forms of political life, contrary to what neo-liberals like Mr. Fukuyama opined several years ago. However, struggles like those here in Indonesia show that the aspiration for democratic participation and civility has indeed spread to many parts

of our world. These democratic ideals have proved contagious for circumstantial or situationist reasons, not genealogical ones. That is, they are compelling because their discursive principles resonate with moral and structural problems widespread in our world. As the Japanese political philosopher, Inoue Tatsuo, has recently reminded us in his essay in *The East Asia Challenge for Human Rights*, democratic ideals have taken hold in Asia, not because of their mythological origins in a Western vanguard, but because Asians like Westerners face similar problems of participation, inclusivity, and power in a late-modern world.

This more nuanced understanding of what is going on in calls for human rights and democratization is vital if we are to transcend once and for all Orientalist essentialisms. It is also imperative if we are to transcend the well-meaning but condescending deference of those who excuse rape, killing, and injustice because such is seen as another people's culture. In the structural and globalized conditions of late modernity, as Inoue notes, we can best show 'genuine respect and concern for "them" when we recognize that "their difficulties" are our own'. In these days of darkness in Indonesia, Inoue's modest prescription may yet brighten the chances for an end to the suffering and perhaps even a small democratic miracle here in this great majority Muslim nation.

What does all this mean for resolving the Indonesian crisis? The answer does not lie in bullying or marginalizing any particular grouping – least of all the many ordinary Muslims distraught by what they rightly see as awful violence against Muslims in Maluku. The road forward will be slow, but it requires a deep national introspection on the primary lesson of the Soeharto era: that Indonesian politics went awry not just because of one man, but because in his final years as president he found allies in state and society willing to help in the creation of a parapolitical machinery for vigilantism and ethnoreligious hatred. Parts of that machinery are still in place and still being used. Their subjugation requires the joint efforts of state and civil society groups, including the military and police, to end parapolitical violence by subjecting the hidden and conspiratorial to the public and transparent. The result of this process will not be an immediate national consensus on Aceh, the end of the prohibition on Marxism Leninism, or any number of other specific issues. But it will go a long way toward creating the state-society synergy on which democracy depends and without which the sweet dream of a multiethnic and multireligious Indonesia will die.



# James C. Scott Comments on the Talks Held by Brass, Tomagola, Cederroth and Hefner

*James C. Scott*

Professor of Political Science and Anthropology and Director of the Program in Agrarian Studies, has been a Guggenheim Fellow, a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), and a fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. He is a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences for the academic year 1998-99. He was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and served as the president of the Association of Asian Studies for 1997-98. Professor Scott is also a chair of the Council on Southeast Asia Studies at the Yale Centre for International and Area Studies - YCIAS. His latest book, 'Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed', was published in 1998. His other publications include 'Political Ideology in Malaysia: reality and the beliefs of an Elite', 'Comparative Political Corruption', 'The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Subsistence and Rebellion in Southeast Asia', 'Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance', and 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: The Hidden Transcript of Subordinate Groups'. He has contributed to numerous journals, including Asian Studies; Comparative Studies in Society and History; Comparative Politics; American Political Science Review; Theory and Society; and Politics and Society. His research interests include political economy, anarchism, ideology, peasant politics, revolution, Southeast Asia, and class relations.

I would like to raise a few questions and only one point. The questions are: How do discourses that can provoke ethnic, linguistic, racial violence, get created? How are they maintained and how are they extinguished? They are in fact, in some cases, extinguished over time. How does that process occur? And how do we get from a discourse of violence and hatred to the *practice* of violence and hatred? One of the things that we have learned from all of these talks is that the discourse does not itself produce violence, but only certain structures of mediation and translation make this possible. You can often have a discourse of violence without the practice of violence. And perhaps another question is which sectors of society are more or less resistant to such discourses and which structures promote such resistant people?

At the risk of falling into anarcho-liberalism, that Robert Hefner warned against, I suppose I would like to say something about state mediated violence, particularly, if there is no contradiction here, the kind of violence that is perpetuated by states that are in themselves factionalized and internally competitive. It may be that, living as most of you do, in a well ordered civilized state like Norway, one can imagine that violence occurs when there is a break-down of state restraints or of the institutionalized structure of orderly government. I come from a far less civilized state structure, and I think it is possible to say, for example, that if one were to talk just of civil disturbances occurring in connection with the break-down of the state, one would not understand that in terms of crimes of hatred, the Los Angeles Police Department, over the last 20 years, has been responsible for a lot more crimes of a racial kind than the riots in Watts where ever responsible for. So if we look only at these moments of public disturbance, of public violence, of burning and riots, we miss a tremendous number of hate-crimes, a tremendous amount of racial, ethnic and religious violence as perpetuated in many states by the agents of public order using and abusing the powers that they have.

Here I want only to make a point about the orchestration of violence that was made by most speakers. I am very much taken by what Zigmund Baumann said about modernity and the Holocaust. The argument he makes is that “spontaneous racial, ethnic and religious violence, although it occurs, and although it can be extremely important, is likely to burn itself out reasonably quickly. Sustained violence of a racial, ethnic or religious kind is likely to be organized by quasi-state structures in an orderly bureaucratic routine and in an institutionalized way.” That is to say the Kristallnacht in the early Nazi-period was organized by the SA, and it was *not* a popular German disturbance. The day after its establishment, the SAs were writing to one another and telephoning one another of their disappointment that German people did not participate in greater numbers in the Kristallnacht. The violence in Rwanda took the form of organized riots, orderly movements; the perpetrators helped by military and party trucks to perpetuate the violence in particular places. The same was true in Bosnia. The same was true in Indonesia. In that sense, I think a tremendous amount of the historical violence done by the state in Latin-America has been done by quasi-organized, para-military gangs, operating outside the normal legal limits of the state, but operating with state sanctions, often with state arms and following instructions that come from within the state. So in that sense, it seems to me that a tremendous amount of ethnic, religious, linguistic and racial violence that takes rather orderly forms, and it is very much a part of our role to pay attention to the process by which this order, this quasi-institutionalization is created and perpetuated.

# Discussion

*Harald Munthe-Kaas*

The Timor conflict was hardly mentioned, even though it has had quite an impact on Indonesia. I would like to have a comment on that.

*Professor Pamela Price, University of Oslo*

This is a question directed to Paul Brass. It picks up on your opening comments here. Scott talked about discourses and how do they start, how do they run, how do they get extinguished. I was wondering if you would say something about the relationship between this discourse, this rather rigid discourse you describe through talking about interviews you have had, and the political context, the competition, and the ways in which riots serve parties, the ways in which political leaders try to use riots. If you could link these two things together, I would appreciate it.

*Professor Stein Tønnesson, University of Oslo*

This comment ends up with a question to Tamrin Tomagola. It builds on what James Scott said that sustained violence over a long period of time is normally organised systematically by some sort of government apparatus. And to be really sustained, a group that does not enjoy support from powerful institutions in one's own country should be funded by another country in order to be able to continue for a long time. This is notably the case in Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge, which were able to do it for such an enormously long time because of very good funding from the US and China (PRC). What I wonder now is to what extent the political violence we have seen lately in Indonesia can go on? What I wonder is: does it have just ramifications? The Molukkas are not very far from two small islands that are disputed between Malaysia and Indonesia, and this dispute is coming up for the International Court of Justice with

a deadline on the 2nd of July 2000. We recently saw that a group of tourists were kidnapped right on that island. Is there any connection between the political violence in Mindanao and in the Molukkas, are there any connections between Muslim groups in the Philippines and army factions/groups in Indonesia?

*Researcher Kathinka Frøystad, Peace Research Institute and the Department of Anthropology, University of Oslo*

This question goes to all of you in the panel. There is a question that strikes me. As soon as we start talking about inter-religious violence, one starts talking Hindus and Muslims in India, and Christians and Muslims in the case of Indonesia, as if one is adopting the essentialist discourse of the communal discourses itself. Could one get closer to the question Scott raised about distinguishing between the practice of violence and the discourses of violence if one breaks down the essentialist categories and reintroduce, for example, distinctions of class and cast or whatever distinctions there may be within each of these religious communities?

*Student of Social Anthropology Hari P. Bhattarai, University of Bergen*

My question is: Why does political violence usually emerge after the establishment of multiparty democracy? I think it is the best model of political system ever found. Is the political violence based on political ideology, Communism, Marxism, Maoism, socialism versus other democratic forces? For example, in Nepal, we are facing such violence right after the restoration of multiparty democracy. Would you comment on that?

*Lea Loncar Morseth, University of Trondheim*

I am not sure if the role of media was mentioned here, and how the conflicts actually develop with help of the media. I come from Croatia, and the similarity between the Eastern Asian conflicts are very, very similar to those which happened in the former Yugoslavia. The role of the media was essential there, so I wonder if there is any comparison on that level also?

## **Answers to the questions**

*Professor Paul Brass*

James Scott asked three questions. How are discourses created, maintained, extinguished? I can only give very abstract answers to these questions, but discourses are organic. One has to talk about specific cases. In the Indian case, just to be brief, the production of the communal discourse was something that was a collaborative enterprise of upper class Hindus and the British rulers that took a couple of hundred years to create, so it grew and grew. How is it maintained? It grows, it spreads, it is taught, it is socialised into the minds of generations. How is it extinguished? As an

organizational process it decays. Its death can be hastened through exposure of the faults that lie within it through scholarship, education in general, and the rise of new social forces that reject existing hegemonic discourses.

How do we get from discourse to practice? Pamela Price's question. That is the whole subject of my book. There are specific practices connected to different hegemonic discourses. Specifically, regarding the rigid discourse of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, that is connected to political competition. The way in which this discourse-to-practice works, first, is that this hegemonic discourse of communal animosity provides a context which legitimizes violence. It creates a false history of internal antagonism between two sets of people, defined in this particular context as Hindus and Muslims. It defines that relationship in terms of antagonism and animosity, historic atrocities committed by one side against the other, which have to be rectified, which then in turn legitimizes acts of violence which are always taken as acts of retaliation for previous acts. It then permits the organization of parties along communal lines. The continuation of the organization of parties along communal lines then in turn requires the sustaining of an atmosphere of communal antagonism, which in turn requires riots before elections, which then produce the sympathy and the support that one needs to win elections. This is a very abstract statement. The way it works will vary from context to context where demographic and many other factors also obviously matter.

Which sectors are more or less resistant to such discourses? There are of course geographic, regional differences. The South of India has for example been more resistant to the discourses of communalism than the North; social classes and lower castes can be resistant; and victims of the hegemonic discourses are resistant.

With regard to ourselves essentializing these categories – Christian, Muslim, Hindu – it is the case that it is often difficult to avoid falling into the trap ourselves, such is the power of hegemonic discourses.

To Kathinka Frøystad's question: Hegemonic discourses seek to override all subordinate categories. To introduce class or caste as substitutes may work against prevailing categorizations of groups in society, but it also involves the imposition of sometimes equally distorting categories.

The media plays a very important role, especially concerning the cases I am talking about. In the great riot in 1990-91 in Aligarh, and incidents of similar type in other places in India, a very distinct, a very mischievous, rotten, raw role was played by the media especially. Obvious and fantastic lies are printed and distributed and then used to organise the revenge for the lie concerning some atrocity committed by the other side that was supposed to have taken place. In this particular case, the newspapers were talking about the slaughter of Hindus at the Aligarh Muslim University Medical College Hospital.

Finally I just want to dissociate myself from any idea that there is a distinction between something called the state and something called civil society. I think this

is a great obfuscation that we, the disciplines, suffer from nowadays. State/nation, and the two merged: two- or one-dominant hegemonic discourses in our time to which the communal and ethnic discourses are subordinate. And the communal and ethnic discourses arise only within this grand hegemonic discourse of the state and the nation.

Hegel said somewhere that every society gets the constitution it deserves, and I think that it is more or less true, every society gets the state it deserves because there is no fundamental distinction between state and society. What is the state aside from society? There is no such thing. There are only agencies of the state – what we call it for the sake of convenience – the institutions of the state, the aggregated institutions that are used for governing, for using force on society (for convenience we call that a state, but it should be for that purpose only). There may be certain agencies of the state that are controlled by particular social forces, or ethnic groups within society, but that does not make that agency separate from society in any way. The Los Angeles Police Department, which has been mentioned before – in a different sense, but I will use it for another sense – is no different from society, no different from Los Angeles or the rest of America. It is not a separate thing from American society or Los Angeles society. The police are recruited from society. They receive professional training that is supposed to overcome their prejudices and the prejudices that prevail in the religious and ethnic groups and classes from which they come. But such training is never fully effective and is often much less than fully effective. The police, the predominant agency for enforcement of the laws of the state, the very arm of the state, is at one and the same time the arm of society.<sup>1</sup>

### *Professor Tamrin Tomagola*

With regard to the comments by James Scott, I think that during the New Order regime, the communal ties and these communal sentiments had been preserved by the New Order to its own advantage. I think the people of Indonesia were then a horizontal group according to the division of ethnicity and religion. Each community, whether Muslim or Christian, whether Bataknese or Abudnese, were tied together and had certain communal networks. But then they were segregated horizontally, and cleverly tied to the elite. This was then preserved by the New Order. In contemporary Indonesia, there is thus a need for realignment of the mass on its side, and the elite on its side. Whether those elites based on communal networks could be trusted is still an open question. Whether they can take care of the people is an important question. It is a crucial moment that we are entering. If people still use the communal network, then the democratization of Indonesia will be maintained far into the future. But if these kinds of communal ties could be broken by the entrance of capitalism, then I think it will do the job to break down these communal ties. Communal ties could only be broken by the entrance of individual interest, and by an individual being empowered by his or her individual economic resources. Then I think we will see independent actors who could make their own decisions based on objective information. But

as long as these communal ties and communal sentiments are quite strong in the Northern Molukkas, then I still think the leaders will manipulate the press, and democratization is far from reality in Indonesia. Democratisation and capitalism will go hand in hand in breaking down these communal ties.

To the question about East Timor: The case of East Timor has left a very deep wound on two camps: the military and the Islamic community. This is society because the project of East Timor was the project of the military, in order to take the upper hand in the politics. And the Islamic community was very thankful to the military because East Timor was predominantly Catholic. When Indonesia took East Timor, and Indonesia is of course predominantly Muslim, then it is a chance to transmigrate Muslims there in order to break down the stronghold of Catholicism. The Muslim community will regard the independence of East Timor as a loss for the Muslim community. There was a very big exodus from East Timor when the Muslims were wiped out from East Timor. So, I think the Muslim community regrets the Independence of East Timor.

To the question from Stein Tønnesson about the international connection: I do not think something could be read from the communal context that there is an international conspiracy, or international connection. I have heard that some Middle-Eastern countries regretted what is going on now in Indonesia. Maybe one rich man from an Arabic country sent funds to Indonesia, but I do not think there was a conspiracy between Muslims in the Middle East and Muslims in Indonesia. That also goes for the Protestants. There has been a theory (speculation, actually) that the remnants of the Republic of the South Molukkas in the Netherlands have played a role in the conflict in the Molukkas. I do not think so. A thorough study by a scholar from Australia concludes that the Republic of South Molukkas is already finished, both in the Molukkas and in the Netherlands.

With regard to possible connections between Filipino guerillas and the Indonesian military: The moral is very strange because the Moro has sold arms to the Christians in the North Moluccas. Moro is very close to the Philippines border. We have a lot of evidence that Moro, in the South of the Philippines, are selling guns to Christians. Why are Filipino Muslims helping Christians in Indonesia? The answer may be related to the fact that the Indonesian army has been involved in attempts at solving the Moro problem. Certain elements in the Indonesian military may have built contacts with the Moros. The whole tragedy in the Molukkas is part of a military manoeuvre in making things worse and worse. The military wants to come in as the hero solving the problem again, but causes problems instead.

To the comments from Kathinka Frøystad: When communal violence occurred together with the blooming of political parties after the stepping aside of Suharto, this was not due to political rationality in the sense that the parties had real constituencies. The political parties after Suharto were only a declaration by some leaders in Jakarta. In one day they could declare about two or three political parties. That is why we see these kind of things. Hefner said that state/society has played a very important

role, but I think the state only played that role because the problem was already there. The state was only a triggering factor. The real problem was there in the structure of the society.

To the question about the media: In comparison with what has happened in the former Yugoslavia, I am a rather proud that the Indonesian media has not played that kind of role; playing with partisan news or provoking full conflict. After saying that, it should be acknowledged that certain parts of the Indonesian press play that partisan role, but rather insignificantly. By now, however, it is becoming more and more partisan because of the killings in the North Molukkas. It is very hard for any reporter in Indonesia to report something which does *not* have a partisan flavour. It looks like reporters are taking sides with certain communities.

*Professor Robert Hefner*

A question seems to be recurring in our discussion today as to the degree of state as opposed to societal involvement in instances of mass violence. I think that we have to be very careful in discussions like these not to pose the state in seamless opposition to society, as if the two entities were always and everywhere distinct. What I suggest in the small theoretical conclusion to my paper is, in effect, there is no such thing as “society” in the romantically pristine and “civil-democratic” sense suggested in some too-idealized models of civil society a few years ago. Modern societies are always complex and differentiated, and so too are their associated civil societies. Civil society, then, is anything but unitary in its organizations and normative aspirations. Often it can develop factions quite hostile to and showing a lack of solidarity towards other groupings in society: an “uncivil” civil society, if you will. Those who assume that civil society is by its very nature liberal or social democratic in its culture, then, have perhaps confused a normative ideal, one with which I agree, with an empirical reality that is typically more complex in its dynamics.

Civil society refers to all those organizations, “self-organised,” independent and volunteer, that lie in that vast social territory beyond the family yet outside the state. What those organizations actually “do” with their self-organization, the political ideals to which they orient themselves, are typically varied. Some are democratic, some are not. To put the matter in a more clumsily theoretical vocabulary, we can say that the simple structural reality of “self-organization” does not itself guarantee that the public culture these organizations promote is always democratic. Some structurally “civil” organizations may be inclusive and civic, others may be narrowly self-serving or sectarian. Take the American Ku Klux Klan as an example of the latter: self-organizing, but anything but “civil” in political-cultural terms. A “civil” society that is genuinely “civil,” then, in the sense that it promotes freedom and equality for all citizens, requires more than these much-celebrated qualities of self-organization. Somehow, structural autonomy must be linked to cultural and political efforts to promote a democratic public sphere.

With regards to the state I think we have to engage in a similarly careful deconstruction or reconstruction of this often reified category. We can agree fully with James Scott's warning to us on the dangers of a too-ambitious modernist state. But we also have to recognize that the quality of state organization varies dramatically from place to place and time to time. Its impact on political society reflects, not only some universal self-aggrandizing instinct inherent to all states, but also the changing nature of its relationship to society. Sometimes the state is so penetrated by ruthless factions in society (and vice versa) that it no longer makes sense to speak of a unitary state dominating a pliant society. On the other hand, to look at Jim Scott's point from a different perspective, we can see that, just as factions in the state are often behind some of the most promiscuous instances of violence, the state in some times and places helps to create the conditions for a society that is participatory, civil, and free of ethno-religious violence.

I am putting all my cards on the table here, sounding a bit like a revisionist modernist by comparison with Jim, with his more deep-seated and wise scepticism toward the state. However, it strikes me that in a modern society, with all its differentiation by class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, we are never going to achieve an effectively "civil" society unless we can develop a state that reflects, incorporates, and defends the best values of freedom and equality in "civil" society. If our vision is that of democratization and multi-religious or multi-ethnic peace, in other words, we must struggle not just to develop independent self-organizations and a democratic public sphere, but a state committed to and protective of the same values.

Now going beyond this to the comparison with India, which Paul Brass and Hari P. Bhattarai brought up with the question on multiparty elections. Why are multiparty elections so frequently accompanied by ethno-religious violence? Well, I am going to be so blunt as to be perhaps a bit simple. Let me say simply that India and Indonesia in this regard have a different history. Indonesia has managed to conduct free elections in 1955 and 1999 with surprisingly low levels of violence. As Herb Feith has observed, the 1955 elections were notable for, first, the intensity of ideological debate, and, second, and despite the heated argument, the low incidence of violence! There were some ethnic parties in 1955, but they fared poorly in the elections. Parties that were organised in 1955 on confessional terms alone did only slightly better. And none of these groups used the elections to provoke ethno-religious violence. The 1999 elections were not all that different on this point: ethnic parties fared poorly. Although Indonesia has had its share of ethnoreligious violence in recent years, the elections did not amplify it; indeed, in some parts of the country they seemed to have dampened it.

The real culprit in Indonesia's recent rash of violence has not been the electoral process, but *ancien régime* factions who want to reject the outcome of the elections and block reform by reaching out into society and provoking "religious" violence. Suharto and his supporters have been the main culprit here. Suharto began to mobilize the small, hardline Islamist minority in 1994-1995 – mobilizing them to support his policies in East Timor, and then mobilizing them again to divide and

conquer the prodemocracy movement, which Suharto supporters also attempted to portray as “anti-Islamic.” There is evidence to suggest that much of the recent violence Indonesia has endured has a similar origin. In 1994-1995, I watched the negotiations between conservative Muslims and Suharto. There were some decent conservatives who could not believe that they saw their leader compromise in this way with Suharto. After years of theologically conservative, but still strict opposition to Suharto, the leader of one of the most important conservative Islamist groups, led by the late Anwar Harijono – a man who had been a member of the Petition of 50, a very rigorous opposition group to Suharto – changed camp. The shift had all been negotiated by Sumargono and Prabowo. The allegations of this alliance is not some fantasy concocted by prodemocracy people.

As the old regime attempted to hold on to power, its military allies surveyed the countryside to figure out where they should launch their divisive “probes.” As I have explained today, there were deliberate and systematic efforts to provoke communal violence between NU *Santri* (pious Muslims) and Megawati-inclined *abangan* (Javanist or “nominal” Muslims) in the Banyuwangi region of eastern Java during 1998-1999. But it failed even in Banyuwangi – which really was the ‘right’ place to pick if one wanted to repeat the worst violence of 1965-66. It failed because of the quick efforts of NU and PDI-P democrats. They recognized the provocation and they told their membership that somebody up there is trying to provoke us so as to attack Megawati, and we know what that is for.

Last comment, about East Timor, a very good question, a very brief response. Suharto’s son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto, has been blamed for many things, including the violence in Jakarta during May 1998. We do not know yet exactly the degree of his involvement in May 1998, although the evidence still suggests that he was heavily involved. The more general story about Prabowo, however, is that he was trained from the beginning to be a master of the para-political. He began his career by learning how to carry out mass-killings and rape in East Timor. After that he was transferred, interestingly, to Aceh where he once again demonstrated his machismo credentials by stepping above the heads of local commanding officers and using rape, beheading, and public execution.

Regarding the issue of East Timor as a Christian area, it was not really majority Christian when the Indonesians occupied it, it was about 40% Catholic. During the course of Indonesian occupation the numbers jumped to 90-95%. Ironically, the Indonesian occupation spurred Catholic conversion. The effort on the part of the Suharto regime to portray East Timor as an issue that had been raised by international human rights groups because Indonesia was a Muslim country was a line developed by the government only after the rapprochement with hardline Muslims in 1994-1995. We do not hear that line at all in government statements by military officials before then. And I have talked to many military officials who were upset and outraged when they heard that this line of argument was being pursued by official spokespersons for the Indonesian government.

Final comment, what about Wiranto? What has his role been in the violence. During the events of May 1998, Wiranto is often portrayed as if he were somebody who had contained Prabowo so that the violence in Jakarta was reduced. In fact, I do not think we can say that whatever Wiranto was up to his primary aim was to limit the violence or oppose the “green” [Islamist] generals. Remember that in early 1999 Wiranto began to reappoint some of Prabowo’s most trusted “Islamist” allies, now in an effort to promote his [Wiranto’s] program in East Timor and increase his own chances for the presidency. By this time, Wiranto believed that the country’s political crisis was so great that he indeed had a chance to step in and make a run for the presidency. In an effort to boost himself as a dark horse candidate, he began a consolidation of his ties with officials previously linked to Prabowo. Some of these officials appear to have been linked to the worst violence in East Timor during September 1999.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My comments in the last paragraph angered James Scott, who thought I was justifying the actions of the Nicaraguan state, for example, in killing its peasants. It is not my meaning. Of course, innocent persons, bystanders, those who are simply trying to make a living and feed themselves and their families often become victims of violence committed by state agencies or become involuntarily recruited by armed gangs from society, and so forth. My point here is rather that a society that is dominated by certain social forces is likely to have state institutions similarly dominated, a society in which power is more widely distributed is likely to recruit from diverse sources, a society in which racial prejudice and stereotyping are widespread is likely to have a police force with similar prejudices, a hierarchical caste society is likely to have its hierarchies mirrored in the state apparatus.