

***Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*. Edited by Benedict R. O'G. Anderson.** New York: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2001. 247pp.

For those who view Soeharto's personalized authoritarian regime, heavily buttressed by the military, with nostalgia (in which amnesia seems to play its part) for "more stable times", *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia* is a good antidote. As the contributors weave their way through the extra-judicial killings of suspected criminals in the 1980s, the unrestrained violence against the Chinese community in May 1998, the Pemuda Pancasila (Youth of the Pancasila) gangs used for political thuggery, and the campaigns of terror waged in East Timor, Irian Jaya, and Aceh, one is reminded that the "stability" of the Soeharto era was purchased at a cost to human security. This edited volume draws together articles on those themes, although, as Benedict Anderson explains in the introduction, there are gaps: most obviously the 1965–66 killings of suspected communists and Leftists, and the violence in Maluku. (Oddly, Anderson also informs the reader that "[n]or does it devote more than passing reference to the *Petrus* ['Mysterious Killers'] campaign in 1983" [p. 18] when the first chapter, by Joshua Barker, deals primarily with this topic.) The contributors are a mixture of sociologists and political scientists — with the different methodologies and foci mostly evident — who draw on a lot of interesting primary source materials and field-work to supplement existing secondary sources.

Barker begins the substantive chapter with his contribution on police attempts in the 1980s to harness criminal gangs by co-opting their "reformable" elements (p. 29) into various types of security work, while eliminating those who refused to submit themselves to this kind of registration. The *Petrus* killings in Java, where a large number of criminals were assassinated by the security forces, is a difficult subject to research. However, Barker does include some interesting case studies and interviews. These killings were intended to be a lesson to others about the penalties for crime, encapsulated in the policy of the morgue in the city of Solo in operating an "open-door policy" to view the *Petrus* victims. Jun Honna's chapter examines military ideology under the Soeharto regime, which is revealed through a study of documents, as extremely conservative, with a degree of paranoia (as would be expected). The official military position identified communism with every movement that challenged Soeharto's New Order, including democracy and environmental groups, right into the late 1990s — a charge which could easily be seen as an attempt to unfairly tarnish the opposition, given the unlikelihood of the accusations. Paradoxically,

the military was also critical of market liberalism — which was criticized by using the language of dependency theory.

James T. Siegel's "Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998, in Jakarta" combines some heart-rending stories of the pillaging and sexual violence against the Chinese community with discourse analysis. On the whole, Siegel does an excellent job of dissecting the statements and stories. Media commentator Wimar Witoelar's remark that the organized rapes of Chinese women reflected "our lack of morals" (p. 109) reveals the soul-searching that went on (and to this reviewer also, perhaps, the only kind of remorse that could be shown as Witoelar and others knew that the offenders would never come to actual justice). In another section, Siegel analyses statements made by a well-to-do Trisakti University student, and part-time starlet, to a women's magazine. Siegel makes much about the student's remark that when the campus was hit by tear-gas "[F]ortunately, I had on *softlens*" (p. 94). He (over)interprets this symbolically:

But Alya is perfectly safe from them [the police]; she wears softlens. Nothing the police does harms her. What protects her is a cosmetic device which she presumably wears in the attractive photo which accompanies the article. ... Her contact lenses are an element in the construction of her appearance ... that assure her she is recognized for what she is: a member of the class the police usually protect (p. 95).

Or could it just be that contact lenses prevent tear-gas from making painful contact with the pupil of the eye?

The Pemuda Pancasila, outlined by Loren Rytter, have moved well beyond their role in the revolution of 1945–49 to a role of "loyalty to the (personalized) state itself" (p. 126). These Pemuda, boasting at their peak in 1983 some 50,000 members (p. 143), were little more than street thugs occasionally unleashed by the state security apparatus. Former intelligence supremo, Ali Moertopo, maintained a "zoo" of these characters (an array of underworld agents) (p. 150), in what represented a Faustian pact between the regime and the criminal class.

The last three chapters cover the three worst afflicted regions in terms of formal military violence — East Timor, Irian Jaya, and Aceh. Douglas Kammen makes good use of his extensive knowledge of the Indonesian military and a wide compilation of material to analyse the East Timor conflict in the run-up to, and the immediate aftermath of, the popular consultation in August 1999. He demonstrates that attempts to normalize Indonesian rule by some officers were sidelined with the emergence of Colonel (later General) Prabowo Subianto and his Special Forces in the early 1990s — troops trained in "counter-terrorism" by their American and Australian counterparts. Kammen makes the

convincing argument that the Indonesian military attempted to portray the East Timor situation as an “internal” conflict, thereby needing military intervention. Clearly, this is a pattern repeated over and over again around the archipelago. (There are some small errors in this chapter: Goa was invaded in 1961, not 1960 [p. 157]; Portugal joined the European Community in 1986, not the European Union as it was later to be known [p. 160]; and foreign policy co-ordination in the EC/EU has remained elusive, despite the inference that Portugal’s membership made recognition of Indonesia’s rule over East Timor impossible [p. 160] — although the EU did finally agree to a common position on this particular issue, member states could have just as easily taken independent stances as they have on other issues.)

Danilyn Rutherford’s chapter gives some background to the problem of Irian Jaya (or Papua), before looking more closely at the situation on the island of Biak where an unknown number of demonstrators were killed on 6 July 1998 for raising a Papuan flag. This security force reaction continues to the present. Although Indonesia is now a democracy of sorts, this reveals that the republic still has quite some way to go in terms of liberal freedoms. Raising the Papuan flag caused General Wiranto, then head of the military, to term this a “betrayal of the nation” and to promise “firm action” against it (p. 192). Once again, the reader will see the theme of the Indonesian military attempting to create divisions within Papuan society — like successful marketing people, they have tried to create a demand for their services. An aspect of the Papuan situation that Rutherford brings out very well is the religious/spiritual overtones inherent in political discourse in Irian Jaya — including a very strong strand of millenarianism.

Geoffrey Robinson closes the book with an insightful account of the conflict in Aceh. Rejecting that the conflict is not a logical extension of primordial sentiment, or a struggle for an Islamic state, Robinson tracks the various oscillations of the Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh) movement. Robinson makes a compelling case that the military have, from around 1990, severely aggravated what was, hitherto, a manageable situation. Although sentiments about Aceh’s independent history and its economic exploitation were initial reasons for the resentment against the Indonesian state, more widespread opposition has come after the military engaged in a campaign of terror. How else could it be explained that Aceh has gone through periods of being “calm and orderly” and in fact “super-loyal” to Indonesia since 1945? (p. 219). Since the early 1990s, when raids, arbitrary arrests, torture, assassination, and rape, have been regular tools of the military in Aceh, opposition to Indonesian rule has spread far and wide. Moreover, many high-ranking

officials are on record as justifying extra-judicial killings in the province and elsewhere, including Soeharto himself (as Robinson reveals from Soeharto's own writings). Robinson was, at the time of writing, hopeful that Indonesia's democratized environment would make a positive change. However, abuses have carried on to this day.

Anderson, as editor, is to be commended for bringing together a series of excellent chapters that expose the violent side of Soeharto's regime. Something which is not mentioned by the editor is that these chapters are mostly drawn from the Cornell University-based journal *Indonesia*. It is probably good practice to acknowledge prior publication. Other small points are that the term "Holland" (a province) should not be mistaken for "the Netherlands", and Xanana's surname is Gusmão — not Gusmaõ. That said, this compilation of exposés on the use of violence is well written and researched, and very salient. It is a timely addition to discussions on Indonesia's political future. The overall impression that one gets from this book is that the stability of the Soeharto years was achieved through some very short-sighted policies and measures which alienated large sections of the population. Unfortunately, Indonesia is attempting to make a difficult democratic transition, whilst reaping the long-term problems that Soeharto sowed. As for Indonesia's future, Robinson says it best: "The evidence also suggests that national disintegration will not be the automatic result of an end to authoritarian rule in Indonesia. In fact, I think it can be argued that, far from jeopardizing the political future of the country, a shift toward a less authoritarian system — and one which is less wedded to the use of terror — may provide the best possible guarantee of its continued unity and viability" (p. 241).

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***Burma: Political Economy Under Military Rule.* Edited by Robert H. Taylor.** London: Hurst & Co., 2001. 168pp.

In July 1988, one month before Burma descended into anarchy, a group of specialists convened a seminar in Bonn to assess the country's future. One decade later, in a sequel attended by many of the same participants, they asked why the hopes of 1988 had not been realized. From the outset, then, the group *anticipated* and *wished* for certain results, so