

have in a fruitful way". Choice is also the core theme of Philip Alott's penultimate chapter. He examines the myth of the concept of human nature, which requires us to believe in "a second self which is a universal self", or an instinctive self. Since we are constantly creating the past as we make the future, the latter need not be held prisoner to the myth of an unchanging human nature. "We are what we choose to be". In conclusion to this wide-ranging book, Ken Booth discusses three crucial aspects of global transformation — globalization, global governance, and global moral science. The last asks whether dominant ideas of the past are sufficient to answer questions for the future.

A minor critique of this work is the exclusion of India and Latin America, or one of its major constituents. Collectively and individually, these countries are having an impact on the international system, which is not negligible. While UNICEF's Geoffrey Hawthorne rightly points to the need for a more collaborative spirit in helping Africa to face many challenges, which cannot be ignored, its inclusion in a discussion of "powers and policies" is incongruous.

Overall, this work should be required reading for students and theorists of international relations. Its multi-disciplinary approach and the inclusion of the policy-maker's perspective into the overall analysis makes for a more holistic analysis of the increasing complexities of international relations. The attempt to incorporate the everyday lives of people into the broader picture of global events is an endearing quality of this book.

ROBIN RAMCHARAN
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

Indonesian Politics in Crisis: The Long Fall of Suharto, 1996-98. By **Stefan Eklöf**. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1999. 272pp.

When Soeharto abruptly resigned from the presidential office and passed the sceptre to B. J. Habibie on the morning of 21 May 1998, even Soeharto's harshest critics were a little stunned that the tenacious old man had finally given up. Stefan Eklöf explains what happened in the long run-up to that fateful morning. From intra-élite machinations in the military and the regime to angry but unco-ordinated students, to

hired thugs on the rampage, to self-important and self-appointed opposition leaders, the complex web Eklöf weaves suggests that the timing of Soeharto's fall could not have been predicted, yet was virtually inevitable. The fault lines that emerged by 1996 had become unbridgeable fractures by mid-May 1998. Once all the various players had cast their lot and declared their loyalties, Soeharto was left alone and beleaguered, with no real choice but to ensure his safe passage and concede defeat.

The text takes the form of an unravelling sequence of conspiracies and conspiracy theories. Throughout the book, the ever-present language of grand and minor conspiracies might test our credulity, except that, as Eklöf explains, these theories not only hold great sway, but were and are sometimes very real.

For much of the New Order period, a propitious mix of Javanese mythology, patronage, factionalism, Islam, legal structures, and repressive political rules allowed Soeharto to ensure the continued aggrandizement of his family, friends, and self. However, Soeharto's manipulations began to backfire with the conspiracy to depose Megawati Soekarnoputri as head of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in June 1996 since she posed at least a symbolic challenge to the presidency. When Megawati's supporters demonstrated in Jakarta in late June, "unidentified people in black" (p. 38) started throwing stones, provoking the security forces to attack the thousands of protesters. Then, on 27 July, as Megawati and her supporters occupied the PDI headquarters in Jakarta, again some provocateurs started throwing stones, sparking off what eventually became a riot. As Eklöf describes, the whole thing was supposed to look like a showdown between rival supporters of Megawati and her successor in the PDI, Suryadi. However, the all too obvious hand of senior government and military officials in the events tarnished the image of the regime and eroded its already shaky democratic credentials, while revealing the social and economic discontent brewing among the urban poor.

Then, there was the conspiracy against Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Muslim organization, headed by Abdurrahman Wahid. This effort took the form of attacks on churches and rioting in late 1996 and early 1997. While underlying ethnic and religious tensions were no doubt involved, the government placed the blame with the *ulama* — namely, the NU and Abdurrahman — for failing to control their communities. While various élites pointed fingers, Abdurrahman claimed that the riots were engineered by the rival Association for Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) as part of a "green dragon operation" to force him to resign. This operation was supposedly coordinated with the successful "red dragon operation" to oust Megawati

from the PDI. What made these seemingly far-fetched conspiracy theories more plausible was that once Abdurrahman met with Soeharto's daughter, Tutut, offering her an entrée into NU areas for the ruling party Golkar, "Perhaps by coincidence the religious riots in NU areas stopped" (p. 65). A recurrent conspiracy theory among the repertoire Eklöf cites for all the riots, too, was that the armed forces (then known as ABRI) had an interest in keeping up the public notion of latent and perennial threats to national security and stability, hence justifying its own strong role and repressive tactics.

Less convoluted was the regime's way of quelling opposition in the run-up to the 1997 general election and the 1998 presidential election. First, in the preceding year, over a dozen activists were given long prison terms on political charges. The 27 July 1996 riot at the PDI headquarters was then just a clean-up action against the rest of the pro-democracy activists, student leaders, and critical non-governmental organizations. These tactics effectively forced the opposition underground or inside university campuses. With the help of debilitating electoral rules, the engineered split in the PDI, some questionable discrepancies between provisional and final vote counts, likely vote-buying and similar shenanigans, and a dose of "gratuitous and exuberant violence" (p. 83), Golkar won handily. Here again, however, there was a sense of "overkill", given the visibility of manipulative tactics and the fact that the extent of Golkar's win was just a bit too implausible.

Next were all Soeharto's manoeuvres to get International Monetary Fund (IMF) aid without having to implement any real economic reforms, or at least none that would disadvantage the people close to him. Try as he might, Soeharto could not regain the confidence of the domestic or international business community, nor could he lessen the blow as unemployment, poverty, and hunger swelled. Deflecting attention from the government's handling of the crisis was news of a purported grand conspiracy to destabilize Soeharto, supposedly launched by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Democratic People's Party (PRD), and some student organizations, backed by the CIA, the Vatican, Israel's Mossad, overseas Chinese, and the IMF. With an opposition coalition in the works among Amien Rais, Abdurrahman and Megawati, and the rupiah plummeting after presentation of the government's budget, a bomb exploded in a Jakarta apartment on 18 January 1998, which was publicly blamed on individuals linked to the CSIS and its supposed cohorts. Thus began a scapegoating campaign against ethnic Chinese, especially those among the business élite. Apparently on the initiative of sections of the military, including senior officers, and with backing from radical

Muslim groups, the campaign relied upon a spate of rioting and looting in various cities, particularly in northern Java.

Indeed, rioting and violence factored heavily in the repertoire of conspiratorial tactics. Shortly before and after Soeharto's March 1998 re-election as President, student protests mounted on virtually every campus, while a number of activists were abducted and tortured by the military. By early May, the combination of a difficult social and economic situation and "conspiratorial politicking among the élites" (p. 175) resulted in a surge of violence across various cities. Riots were purportedly provoked by co-ordinated gangs of provocateurs who strove to get students on the streets and led the crowds to attack Chinese shops, while security forces remained more or less passive. While the government's fact-finding team on the May riots could not establish an iron-clad connection linking the military to the violence, they did find plentiful support for such a connection, which was seemingly planned to create enough chaos to justify a crackdown, to discredit particular rival élites in the government or military, or just to drive the Chinese away so that their assets could be redistributed. Ultimately, however, these actions left an image of a vulnerable president and manipulative regime, while doing little to address the economic crisis and heightening social, religious, and ethnic conflicts both among élites and in the society at large.

The whole process related by Eklöf sounds somewhat path-dependent and inevitable, but that is probably to be expected of a retrospective account of cataclysmic events. What Eklöf does explain is when the political and economic tides changed — *when* Soeharto was doomed. Moreover, Eklöf is careful to consider the dynamics between events, putting these conflicts in context and teasing out the institutional and personal issues at their root. Importantly, Eklöf manages to look at both the élite and mass levels, as well as factions within each, highlighting the complex, and perhaps less than voluntary, interactions across strata — contemplating, for instance, the critical question of whether the gung-ho, idealistic students "had been exploited as pawns in the political manoeuvring among the élites" (p. 218) — and assessing the relative contributions of different actors to events.

As these tales of plots and counter-plots suggest, information was the key to Indonesia's transformation. Indeed, what makes this text particularly valuable is Eklöf's use and evaluation of available data. He draws upon an impressive array of local and foreign media, reports of official and non-governmental fact-finding missions or investigations, and apparently a quite diverse stock of interviews, spanning regime figures to student activists. The footnotes provide a subtext well worth

reading, interrogating various sources to determine the most credible story and discussing the limits to what could possibly be verified, given all the back-room politicking and undercover operations. This approach allows Eklöf to cut through mere rumours or at least identify when a piece of information never progressed beyond the status of unvalidated rumour.

Certain factors do, however, seem conspicuously absent from the account. First, Eklöf's account is largely Java-centric, and makes Indonesia sound quite unitary. Perhaps he could have touched also on the separatist tensions so crucial in certain regions, although admittedly, doing so may have presented unwieldy tangents. More significantly, Eklöf remains noticeably hesitant to evaluate just how deep racial and religious tensions run. Sometimes ethnic violence is presented as just the work of provocateurs — at odds, for instance, with the festive, non-hostile mood in Solo — though presumably it was not just a few perfidious élites who resented and coveted the purported wealth of the ethnic Chinese. Surely from his interviews or investigations, Eklöf must have developed some idea of how well all the racist goading sat with the masses, and how the people who joined in the destruction of churches and Chinese-owned shops felt about ethnic and religious minorities. Eklöf does not shy away from documenting just how much of the violence and destruction was targeted against the ethnic Chinese and Christians, yet grassroots-level analysis of what this trend indicated is curiously obscured by just placing these actions within the context of élite conspiracies.

Moreover, the text would have benefited from better editing. The narrative becomes a little repetitive at points, if only because there is a lot of summing up, recapping after tangents, recounting of comparable incidents in different places, and so on. Some of this repetition is perhaps unavoidable, as with the refrains of the deepening economic crisis, that security forces did little to quell riots, or that protests continued to spread, but the rest could have been streamlined.

Overall, however, these flaws are relatively minor, and do little to detract from a compelling and highly informative account. While of particular interest to Indonesia or regional specialists, the book also sheds light on issues of regime change and the factors involved in toppling authoritarian structures more generally, and hence could inform more theoretical work in political science.

MEREDITH L. WEISS
Department of Political Science
Yale University, USA