

Second, while the physical geography, concept and definition of Southeast Asian states may remain unchanged (plus or, more likely, minus as in secession), the economics, political economy, and regional context of relations and interactions have changed and are still evolving.

This is witnessed by ASEAN itself in an additive process in terms of regional trade agreements with China, Japan, India, ASEAN Plus Three which has Korea, all still within Asia, as well as extra-regional pacts as with Australia and New Zealand in their Closer Economic Relations, the United States or the European Union at some future time. Finally, the role of multilateral institutions cannot be discounted, like the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Labour Organization, Asian Development Bank, even academic and tripartite ones like Pacific Economic Co-operation Committee, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation or nebulous and more controversial ones like the East Asian Economic Grouping or Asian Monetary Fund which have spawned more credible mutants.

All in all, libraries, institutions, and universities cannot miss such a set in their collection. The set would give first-timers as well as veteran Southeast Asian intellectual workers much to work on in their respective ways. It is a handy set of references and for such a diversified and complex region, it may be the most expeditious way to wade through specific and cross-cutting issues.

LINDA LOW

*Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore,
and Strategic Planning, Department of Economy,
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates*

Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia.
Edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.
Pp. 219.

Since the passage of regional autonomy laws in Indonesia, that country has moved headlong into

one of the most massive transfers of political power in recent history. But Indonesia choose not to grant autonomy to the provinces but to the almost 400 regencies across the archipelago. Jakarta has also made special deals with the two most troublesome and independence-minded provinces of Aceh and Papua, granting them exceptions with the devolution of power to the provincial level. *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia* is an exploration of this. It also grants considerable space to the problem of independence and communal-related conflicts.

A central theme that runs through this book is whether Indonesia will be able to continue in its current form — the book's title gives the first hint. A number of authors raise question marks over Indonesia's future. Kingsbury writes in the introduction: "Since 1997, Indonesia has been heading down a path towards what has very often seemed like disintegration." (p. 1). Ruth McVey ponders whether or not Indonesia has lost some cohesion in recent times (p. 11) and Ann Kumar leaves the question hanging: "Can the central government hold Indonesia together?" (p. 45). Rizal Sukma, Indonesian academic and political advisor, also mentions that Indonesia is in danger of breaking up into a collection of smaller units (p. 66). Certainly the spectre of Indonesia's coming collapse is a national obsession among the Indonesian political elite. The reader gets a slightly different reflection on this problem in Edward Aspinall's chapter, which, although largely on the problem of Aceh, indicates that Indonesia as an entity may have stronger bonds than the others suggest. Otherwise how can Indonesia's cohesion outside of Aceh and Papua be explained? Aspinall notes for example that anti-Jakarta sentiment in Riau and Banten failed to generate widespread independence movements in both cases because they lack the history of military repression, which is highly evident in Aceh and Papua (p. 145). The barriers to Indonesia's dissolution are still formidable, and range from the strength of Indonesian nationalism outside of Aceh and Papua, and the extreme reluctance of the international community to see Indonesia fail.

There are other differences between the chapters of this book. The book starts with three theoretical overview chapters on the nature of state in Indonesia and in developing societies in general. Paul James, in a very thought-provoking essay, has clearly had the advantage of seeing an advance version of Ruth McVey's paper, which he systematically critiques and criticizes — apparently McVey declined to enter into the fray. Missing from this theoretical discussion is a clear explanation to the reader of terms and conceptions surrounding federalism and autonomy. The fundamental difference between the two being that federalism, or the rights of states, are constitutionally embedded, while regional autonomy remains at the discretion of the national legislature. (Although in actual practice the distinction can become blurred.)

The chapters in the second half of this volume dwell largely on case studies. The contributions by Richard Chauvel (on Papua) and Aspinall (on Aceh) are particularly strong in conveying the complexities of these two provinces, while Rizal Sukma's essay on Aceh is equally useful in terms of bringing an insider's perspective to the issues surrounding the Aceh conflict — Sukma grew up in Aceh. Elizabeth Collins examines the rise of political conscientiousness in South Sumatra, while Ismet Fanany discusses the first year of autonomy in West Sumatra. Fanany's case study of West Sumatra demonstrates how autonomy has worked for both good and ill: While the province, previously a net recipient of government funds, has done better economically than many expected, Fanany sounds a note of caution over the re-emergence of divisions of class and identity in the struggle for land and resources. Several contributions note the adoption of beggar-thy-neighbour practices in some regencies as another downside to regional autonomy. David Ray and Gary Goodpaster, in a chapter that will interest economists seeking to understand the economic and financial implications of new arrangements, caution against this kind of practice on grounds of good economics, national cohesion, attracting investors and so on.

The book ends with Minako Sakai's fascinating chapter on the politics of forming a separate province based on the islands of Bangka and Belitung — known as Babel. In noting the formation of Banten and Gorontalo as separate provinces was based on a separate ethnic identity, Babel's political consciousness is based on geography with a population that is multi-ethnic and has different languages (which is appropriate for a province with the moniker "Babel"). Sakai notes the many factors that have led to demands for a separate political entity from South Sumatra, including an episode in 1999 when a deal between Jakarta and Palembang to dump toxic waste from Singapore at Bangka Island was strongly protested by the local residents. Those residents felt that Palembang was too distant to look out for its concerns. All of this illustrates John Stuart Mill's classic argument for self-government and devolution of power, which is that those affected by the results of governance are best placed to make judgements about its effectiveness. Yet, once again we are reminded that regional consciousness has its dark side: In 2000 residents of the same island attacked and destroyed the local power company headquarters (also a symbol of Palembang's rule) after a blackout during a much anticipated television show.

Although a fraction dated by the time lag in publication, this collection of chapters is, on the whole, a very useful window on regional governance and regional violence throughout Indonesia. Unfortunately it can hardly go unnoticed that the editors and the publishers have allowed a large number of typographical errors and inconsistencies to creep into this volume. But overall *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia* is a valuable means to understand the evolving relationship between Jakarta and its hinterlands.

ANTHONY L. SMITH
Asia-Pacific Center for Security
Studies, Hawai'i, USA.