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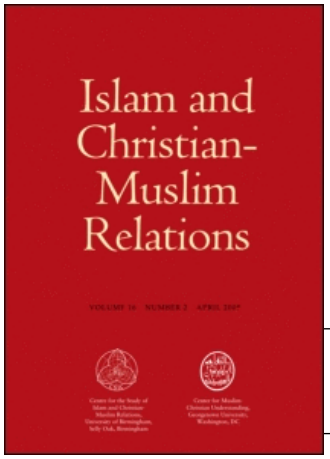

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Jesus versus Jihad: Economic Shocks and Religious Violence in the Indonesian Republic at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

JAMUS JEROME LIM

ABSTRACT *At the turn of the twenty-first century, Indonesia was at the forefront of international attention due to its multi-dimensional conflicts from Aceh in the west to Irian Jaya in the east, which threatened to tear the nation, already stricken by economic crisis, apart. This paper seeks to critically examine the various economic, social, and political aspects of Indonesia that have led to the sectarian conflict in various parts of the archipelago, which has threatened the very integrity of the Indonesian republic.*

Introduction

The Republic of Indonesia comprises an archipelago of 17,000 islands, straddling the equator and bordered by the Indian Ocean to its west and the Pacific Ocean to its east. In its almost two million square kilometers of land, it is populated by an estimated 216 million people (making it the fourth most populous nation on earth), speaking some 660 languages amongst at least 300 distinct ethnic groups. This diversity extends to the area of religion: although it is predominantly Muslim (88%), significant minority religions of Protestantism (5%), Catholicism (3%), Hinduism (2%), and Buddhism (1%) exist (statistics drawn from Indonesia, 1999; Kuipers, 1993).

In the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, Indonesia was at the forefront of international attention due to its multi-dimensional conflicts from Aceh in the west to Irian Jaya in the east. These conflicts threatened to tear the nation, already stricken by economic crisis, apart. While the republic eventually remained intact, the episode is deeply illustrative of the rapidity with which an unexpected, external economic shock—in this case a financial crisis—could lead to widespread unrest and broad social movements, some of which even escalated into full-blown sectarian and ethnic conflicts and mass killings. Moreover, the political backdrop in which the crisis occurred—involving a change of political regime and government, leadership conflicts, and power struggles—may have potentially exacerbated the situation, or at the very least led to a more prolonged crisis than necessary.

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This paper is an attempt to examine the economic, social, and political aspects that lead to ethno-religious conflict, using post-financial-crisis Indonesia as a case study. In particular, it considers the clashes that flared up in different parts of the republic, paying special attention to the time period between January 1999 and June 2000. This period marks the worst of the ethnic and religious strife that, at one point, appeared to seriously threaten the integrity and resilience of the Indonesian republic. The events following that window, while including occasional outbreaks of violence, were not as widespread, and by early 2001 the worst appeared to be over, and it seemed that the crisis had been successfully diffused.

A careful study of the determinants of ethno-religious conflict in a post-economic crisis environment is important for several reasons. First, understanding the relationship between different contributing factors allows us to understand how seemingly minor events may serve as a catalyst for conflict, given an appropriate environment. Second, a clearer accounting of the events of 1999–2000 clarifies the interactions between Christians and Muslims in the episode, and serves to humanize both sides of a bitter conflict. Third, the case study can offer lessons that may be relevant to dealing with economic-crisis-induced sectarian conflict elsewhere. Indonesia reminds us of the fragility of Christian–Muslim relations when the economic environment sours: lessons that are relevant to countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nigeria, and Sudan.

The paper is structured as follows: This introduction is followed by a background study that outlines the economic, social, and political environment of Indonesia, which is then followed by a chronological summary of the crisis, based on press reports as well as field research. The next section develops the framework for analysis by examining various theories proposed, drawing heavily from background material presented earlier. This section closes with a detailed critique of these theories. A final section concludes with some reflections on the crisis.

Background

Early History

The history of Indonesia is an intimate intertwining of geography (see Figures 1–3), religion, and politics, much like the batik cloth that the nation is famous for. In particular, religion has played an often understated role in the formally secular nation, influencing both the political environment and the everyday life of the people.

It is commonly accepted that the great majority of Indonesians came to the archipelago via immigration from Southeast Asia and South China. The main form of religion at this time was spirit worship, and this persisted until the third century A.D. (Feith, 1964, p. 184). The arrival of Indians brought with it Hinduism and Buddhism—along with the emergence of the first signs of political organization along the lines of centralized states and highly organized societies (Seekins, 1993, p. 8).

The rise and fall of the principal Indian empires also witnessed the ascendancy and ebb of Hinduism and Buddhism. The golden age of these Hindu–Buddhist kingdoms was in the late thirteenth and fourteenth century, when the empire of Majapahit was at its peak, encompassing much of the territory of modern Indonesia (Feith, 1964, pp. 184–186; Frederick & Worden, 1993, pp. 9–11). The fall of this empire in the early sixteenth century is largely attributed to the emergence of a new factor in the archipelago's politics: Islam.

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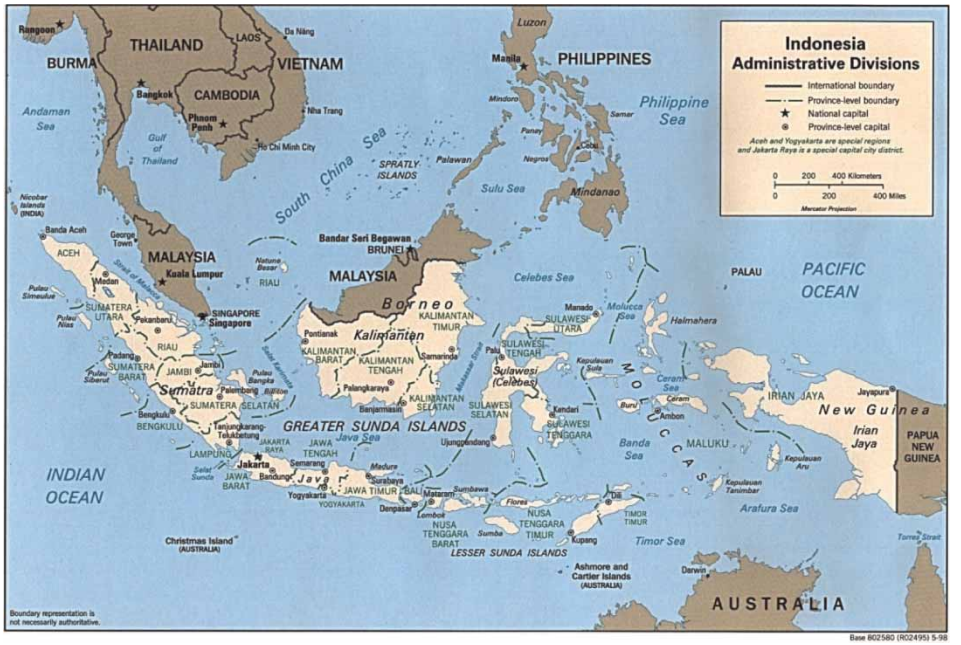

Figure 1. Indonesia, by administrative regions, 1998

The advent of Islam in Indonesia has been variously attributed to Egyptian Arabs (Abou Chodja, 1859, Introduction), Arabs of Gujerat and Lamabar in India (Pijnappel, 1872), and South Indian Muslims (Snouck Hurgronje, cited in Drewes, 1968, p. 434). Modern scholars tend to agree on the last, although the investigation is far from complete. Regardless of source, from its arrival in the mid-ninth century to its widespread adoption by the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, Islam had become, and would remain, the predominant religion in Indonesia (Drewes, 1968).

The early sixteenth century also saw the expansion of European colonialism in Indonesia; first by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch. The Portuguese rallied under the banner of 'gold, glory, gospel'—these aims being not necessarily always in agreement with one another. The impact of the Portuguese in Indonesia was minor at best, their most significant contributions to its history being in the colony of East Timor, in the southeastern part of Indonesia, and in the Moluccas (Maluku). Much of this influence, however, was merely Christianization, whereby the people became Roman Catholics due to military conquest (Santoso, 1996, p. 328).

The Dutch East India Company (VOC), however, had a more lasting influence on the archipelago. Motivated solely by profit, the VOC went to great lengths to establish and maintain a monopoly on the spice trade that Indonesia provided. From its base in Batavia (now Jakarta), on the island of Java, it became involved in Javanese politics until its eventual bankruptcy in 1799 (Seekins, 1993, pp. 16–20). This was followed by a short period of British occupation before Dutch authority was re-established in 1816. The Dutch were effectively in control of the entire East Indies, with the exception of Lombok and Bali, which possessed little economic significance (Hall, 1964, p. 315).

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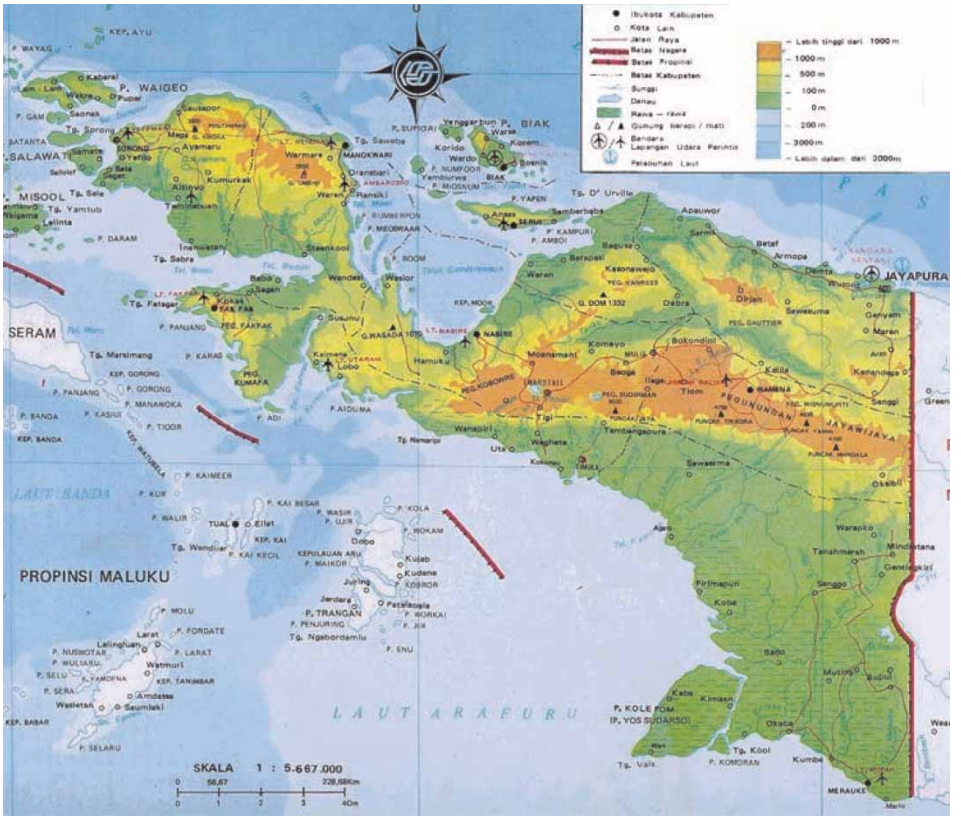

Figure 2. Irian Jaya/West Papua

The deepening colonial penetration in the nineteenth century ushered in the introduction of the 'Culture System', which was a 'systematic and intensive exploitation of the island's land and labor' (Feith, 1964, p. 189). This brought with it extensive economic change—an expansion of agriculture to encompass a large variety of cash crops such as coffee, tea, sugar, and tobacco, in addition to the traditional spices. However, due to strong criticism of the system from the Netherlands, and a series of depressions at the end of the nineteenth century, a new 'Ethical Policy' was introduced which paved the way for the introduction, by the government, of a variety of economic services, welfare programs, and schools (ibid., p. 191).

Dutch Islamic policy at this time was initially hampered by ignorance and misinformation of matters pertaining to Islam. The Dutch deemed it necessary to Christianize the majority of Indonesians, basing this partly on their belief in the superiority of Christianity to Islam and partly on the erroneous assumption that the syncretic nature of Indonesian Islam would render Indonesians more susceptible to conversion (Benda, 1958). This policy was eventually abandoned and a more moderate policy adopted, largely due to a better appraisal of the role of Islam in Indonesian society and an overcoming of the fear of Islamic fanaticism (ibid.).

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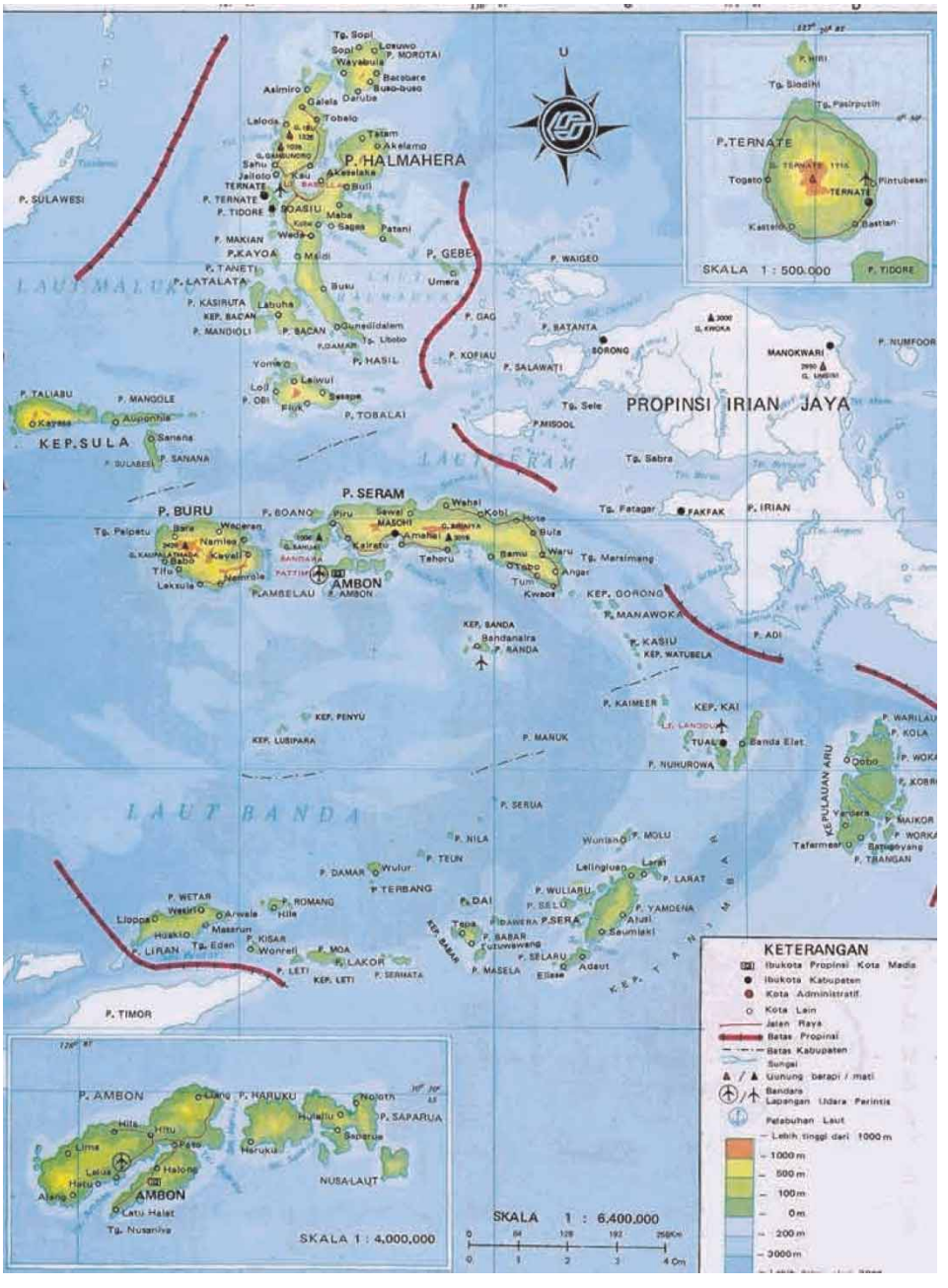

Figure 3. Maluku islands

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Modern History

The period between 1900 and the early 1940s was the beginning of a transition in Indonesian history. Ethnic and cultural diversity, always an integral part of Indonesian life, became more marked as the population swelled. The Western residents evolved from *trekkers* (expatriates who worked in the East Indies and would one day return home) to *blijvers* (sojourners who thought of the East Indies as their home). Indonesian Chinese could be divided into *totok* (first-generation, full-blooded immigrants) and *peranakan* (Indonesian-born Chinese with some Indonesian ancestry) (Seekins, 1993, pp. 30–31).

This diversity was, however, haunted by a striking paradox: As social groups became more tightly interlocked in an increasingly complex Indonesian economy, they tended to segregate themselves into their own compartments within the larger social context. Western-style urban areas with wide streets, and special, wealthy quarters of towns catering to Chinese communities were widespread (ibid., p. 30; Steinberg et al., 1971, p. 284).

Nonetheless, fueled by a dominant religion (Islam) and common language (Bahasa Melayu), there was a gradual growth of national consciousness, which flourished during the Japanese occupation in the early 1940s. The tide of rising nationalism manifested itself in the establishment of organizations that promoted the nationalistic cause. These can be classified into political organizations, such as Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association, PSII), Masjumi (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), and the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI); and Islamic social organizations such as the urban, reformist Muhammadiyah and its more rural, traditionalist rival Nahdatul Ulama (NU) (Feith, 1964, pp. 194–195). From then on, Islam and politics would continually renew their mutual relationship with one another.

On 17 August 1945, two days after the Japanese surrender in Indonesia, two political leaders, Sukarno and Hatta, proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia, a proposition that the Dutch were unwilling to accept. Thus began a five-year revolutionary period that eventually saw the Netherlands relinquish its sovereignty over Indonesia, the rise of two major parties, Masjumi and PNI, and the installation of Sukarno and Hatta as president and vice-president, respectively (ibid. pp. 199–204).

Thus began the period of 'Liberal Democracy', between 1950 and 1955.[1] This was characterized by strife between political parties, although political power was shared mainly between Masjumi and the PNI. A few events stand out as significant for the purposes of this exposition.

First, it should be noted that a debate arose over the wording of the Jakarta Charter in 1945: the more militant members demanded that the preamble should mention that the Republic of Indonesia should be 'based on belief in Almighty God, with the obligation to carry out the *Shari*^{c}*ah* for the adherents of Islam' (Lev, 1972, pp. 41–43). Eventually, the state ideology, *Pancasila*,[2] was adopted as the constitutional basis for the fledgling state, in line with the wishes of the majority. This major defeat for the Islamic parties meant that Indonesia would not be an Islamic republic (Tamara, 1986, p. 13).[3]

Second, in the elections in 1955, the four Islamic parties at the time—Masjumi, NU, Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia (PSII) and Perti—obtained only slightly more than 43% of the total vote. Thus, despite the majority of the country's population professing Islam as their faith, the nationalistic PNI was returned as the dominant party. To add insult to injury, the Communist Party (PKI) came fourth, after Masjumi and NU (Boland, 1982, pp. 45–54). Islam's struggle to assert itself in Indonesia had been largely overlooked in favor of a free Indonesia.

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The period of 'Guided Democracy', from 1959 to 1965, was distinguished by the role that the army played in the development of the nascent republic. The economy was transformed by the seizure of Dutch enterprises, which were subsequently nationalized. This led to the majority of modern establishments being run by the government, with army officers in key positions in these enterprises (Feith, 1964, p. 212). There had been sporadic fighting throughout Indonesia up till this time, led primarily by Muslim extremists who wanted to create an Islamic state in Indonesia.[4] These were crushed by the army, which was allied to the government, and Islam was forced to take a back seat: Masjumi was banned in 1960, and other Muslim political parties were marginalized (Tamara, 1986, p. 14). Even the army, though sympathetic to Islam, was fundamentally secular in nature (Federspiel, 1985), and Sukarno was viewed as favoring Christians to an extent out proportion to their numbers.

By 1965, Indonesia had become a dangerous melting pot of social and political antagonisms. It was not surprising that this exploded into an abortive coup d'état on 30 September 1965 which led to Sukarno's displacement from power and a bloody purge that claimed between 78,000 and two million lives (Seekins, 1993, pp. 54–57),[5] with PKI members and Chinese being the primary targets of mob violence. Indeed, the Chinese were often linked to both Communism and Christianity, although the factual basis for this is dubious. This heralded the beginning of the 'New Order' era under Suharto.

The period between 1965 and 1985 was one of surprising stability under the authoritarian regime of Suharto. This was largely due to the army's dual socio-political function whereby its personnel played a pivotal role in the government and civil service, and the authorization of only two political parties, the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), both of whom were considered to be close to the government (ibid., p. 59; Tamara, 1986, p. 16).[6] Although there were occasional protests by Muslim groups during this period,[7] on the whole the voice of Islam was suppressed[8] and there was increasing sentiment that the government was anti-Islam:

> [There is] a denial of the proper role of the religion of, statistically at least, 90 percent of the population. Muslims place the campaign in the context of other government policies that were deemed anti-Islam: the abortive 1973 marriage Bill, the struggle over the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the recognition of *kebatinan* (Javanese mysticism) as a religion, questions on the place of religious holidays in the academic calendar, etc., all part of a suspected official policy of secularization to deny a special place to Islam. To *santri* concerns about the political dominance of the syncretic Javanese are added more acute suspicions about Christian missionary designs on the faithful as well as insidious Chinese influence. (Weatherby, 1985, p. 189)

This in turn led to the rise of extremist Muslim groups,[9] who often used violence as a means to express what they felt was the predilection of the majority. However, religious groups were not the only ones who contributed to violent action; pro-independence groups and pro-Communist groups,[10] as well as ethnic-based violence (particularly against the minority Chinese), also played a part.

The economy was the chief beneficiary of this improved stability, and from the 1970s till 1997 it grew at an average of 7% per annum, making it one of the high-growth newly industrializing economies of Southeast Asia (Soesastro, 1999). The political scene was

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also surprisingly (perhaps suspiciously) stable: Golkar dominated elections from 1971 through to the 1990s.

However, the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998 brought an abrupt end to this march, and the collapse of Indonesia's economy was more acute than that of its neighbors (*Economist*, 2000, p. 3). Although the view commonly held was that the crisis was brought on by a combination of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (known to Indonesians as 'KKN') and the mythical jinn of 'contagion' (ibid., p. 4),[11] it is likely that weaknesses inherent to the Indonesian economy were responsible,[12] and these reasons were a convenient scapegoat used to appease a disgruntled population looking for something (or someone) to blame. The dream was over, and in its absence the underlying social and political weaknesses, untamed by affluence, were to manifest themselves once again.

In May 1998, Suharto was forced to resign as a result of widespread protests calling for reform. For a brief spell the country was run by B. J. Habibie, but in 1999 Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the National Awakening Party (PKB)—the political arm of NU—and Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of ex-president Sukarno, were installed as president and vice-president of Indonesia, respectively.

President Wahid was widely regarded as traditional and tolerant with respect to religion, whereas Megawati had a tendency to be secular in outlook. They were counterbalanced by Amien Rais, a vociferous and influential former chairman of the modernist, reformist Muhammadiyah, and current chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). Rais carried with him a history of anti-Christian, anti-Chinese, anti-Semitic, and anti-Western statements (Lee, 1999; Rubenstein, 1999, p. 19), but was often viewed as the power behind the new government (Tesoro, 1999). The new coalition signaled the beginning of a transition, but the task was far from easy; the government had to contend with a country that, since 1997, had been continually wracked by violence and conflict, corruption and scandal.

Since the tumultuous events of 1999 and 2000, Indonesia has emerged from a conflict window in which violence was widespread and seemed uncontrollable. It remains a stable, if potentially wary, member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While occasional outbreaks of violence did occur after that two-year window (notably in Aceh and Maluku), the people and government of Indonesia have successfully managed to navigate two new presidents, a terrorist bombing in Bali, and a terrible natural disaster in the form of a magnitude-9.0-quake-generated tsunami.

Indonesian Islam

Indonesian Islam is predominantly Sunni, although there are adherents of the smaller Shi^{c}a discipline. Although orthodox Islam is the dominant form on the larger islands of Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Sulawesi, on the most populous island of Java it is possible to divide believers into *santri* (orthodox Muslims) and *abangan* (Muslims who practice a syncretic faith that includes animist, Hindu–Buddhist, and Sufi Islamic beliefs). The two differ in emphasis (*abangan* being more interested in ritual detail whilst *santri* focus on doctrine) as well as social organization (the former center on the family and the latter on the community of believers, or *ummat*) (Geertz, 1985, pp. 271–277). The *santri* form the minority in Java, and are often of a higher social class.

It is possible to further subdivide the *santri* into traditionalists and modernists. Traditionalists, who form the bulk of the devout Muslims in Indonesia, are concerned mainly

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with pure religion; they tend to be conservative, and believe that education should be conducted in the traditional Islamic schools, such as the *madrasah* and the *pesantren*, although this pattern is changing (Lee, 1995, pp. 93–128). Most belong to the largest Muslim social organization,[13] Nahdatul Ulama, and are drawn from the lower, rural class.

The influential, urban modernists seek to absorb educational and organizational principles from the secular West, placing Islam within the framework of modernity and change. They tend to be members of the other major Muslim social organization, Muhammadiyah, and place education in the hands of secular state schools and universities modeled on the Western educational tradition (Tamara, 1986, pp. 2–3).

The lines between all these factions are blurring. The movement of many of the younger generation of *abangan* towards more orthodox Islam, the renaissance of Islamic ideas amongst the general population, the formation of new Muslim cadres who teach Islam within a modern context, and the increasing awareness of Islam in the political elite have contributed to a rapid rapprochement between *abangan* and *santri*, traditionalists and modernists (ibid., pp. 4–11; Shehata, 2000). This consolidation could mean that Islam will feature as a more prominent voice in Indonesian national life.

The Church in Indonesia

Christians in Indonesia were a minority. Only in the regions of East Nusa Tenggara, East Timor at the turn of the century, North Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya do they form a majority, with significant minorities existing in North Sumatra, West Kalimantan, and Maluku (Tahun Doa Nasional, 1991).[14] This pattern strongly reflects the way in which, historically, the two faiths entered the archipelago—Islam from the west and Christianity from the east.

The social geography, however, is changing. Through the government-sponsored Transmigration Program, outmigration from the predominantly Muslim Java has seen some 730,000 families relocated to Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, and Irian Jaya (Kuipers, 1993, pp. 85–86)—all areas with a large Christian population. There has been, consequently, an increasing intermingling of Indonesians who differ in both ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Although Christianity is a minority religion, the government, through *Pancasila* and the Constitution, guarantees the freedom of religion.[15] Church growth has been healthy, with Christians numbering almost 9% of the population by the end of the 1970s, almost 10% by the end of the 1980s, and possibly as much as 11% by the year 2000 of Christian activity common Muslims (Santoso, 1996, p. 335).

However, two government decrees (Decree 70 and 77) issued in 1978 served as powerful measures to curtail the evangelistic activity of the church; these were issued to address the concern that religious tension due to conversion of Muslims by Christians might contribute to instability (Liao, 1979). These concerns were not entirely unfounded: publications by Islamic research groups on the situation in Indonesia often reflect disappointment, animosity, and possibly even resentment of Christian activity among Muslims (Srisanto, 1974, p. 355).[16]

Christian–Muslim relations have experienced a few episodes where dissension arose; in addition to those already mentioned above, these include a series of Muslim apologetic and polemic publications, and isolated cases where Christians or churches have been openly criticized or attacked (Boland, 1982, pp. 224–242). Tolerance has, however, been the order of the day and generally persisted until the 1990s.

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The Crisis in the 1990s[17]

As discussed in the previous section, there were no systematic outbreaks of violent activity in Indonesia as a result of Christian–Muslim clashes until recently. The major incidents pertaining to the shift probably had their roots in the early 1990s.

A Brewing Storm

In November and December 1992, Muslims attacked several Christian churches and homes on the island of Java—apparently in response to a rise in Christian fundamentalist proselytizing (Mallet, 1993). In November 1995, Christian youths in East Timor destroyed properties belonging to Muslims in response to reports that an Indonesian official had insulted the Catholic faith. The official was subsequently arrested, but it was an ominous sign of growing religious tension (*Muslim News*, 1995).

Such events started becoming more widespread. In East Java, Muslims in Surabaya looted and destroyed ten churches in early June 1996 (*Compass Direct*, 1996). A similar event, on a larger scale, was repeated in the town of Situbondo when a Muslim mob went on a church-burning spree on 10 October 1996. The violence quickly fanned out to neighboring cities and by the end of 'Black Thursday' 25 buildings, mostly churches but also a monastery and an orphanage, had been destroyed and five casualties reported (Buchan, 1996). On 26 December 1996, mob violence occurred in West Java, originating in Tasikmalaya, and subsequently spreading to nearby towns. This 'Black Christmas' left in its wake scores of shops, banks, homes, churches, and schools ravaged and at least two deaths (Sim, 1996). Although official claims were that the violence was as much ethnic as religious (Savill, 1996), there were already suggestions that the riots could have been orchestrated.[18]

The Volcano Erupts[19]

In mid-May 1998, violent riots broke out in Indonesia, in Jakarta and in other cities. The pillaging mobs targeted Chinese shops, looting and burning, throwing the capital city into disarray and releasing a reign of hate and terror (Watts, 1998). Although the popular verdict was that this was a response to the economic downturn that the country was undergoing, the uprising had in fact included a deliberate, systematic campaign of rape, perpetuated against Chinese, often Christian, women and girls (Spillius, 1998a; 1998b). Accounts of these incidents suggest that a strong religious element was also present.[20]

In addition, major incidents began to occur in other parts of Indonesia. Up till then, violent activity had been largely confined to the most populous island, Java. However, at the end of May 1998, several demonstrations occurred in Irian Jaya, calling for investigations into alleged human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 1998). This was followed by the killing of three non-Irianese transmigrants in June and widespread demonstrations in July calling for independence (ibid.; Murphy, 2000). This inspired a military crackdown, in which reports claimed that blanks and rubber bullets injured up to fifteen demonstrators (Human Rights Watch, 1998).

The violence spread like wildfire. Before the end of the year, there were riots in West Kalimantan,[21] Central and South Sulawesi (BBC, 1998),[22] and West Timor (ibid.). Many had religious overtones, such as the attack on mosques in Kupang, West Timor and the

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torching of a Catholic church in Ujung Padang—the tit-for-tat violence slowly mounting as worshippers retaliated at news of previous attacks in other parts of the country.

Jakarta itself had the dubious distinction of being the cradle for the first ominous signs of the carnage to take place in Maluku. Riots that flared in the capital's Chinatown on 22 November were the result of internecine clashes between rival Muslim and Christian Ambonese gangs. At least thirteen people lost their lives and eleven churches were ransacked and burnt by a Muslim mob seeking revenge for the rumored burning of a mosque by Ambonese Christians (Sim & Pereira, 1998; Spencer, 1998).

These were but a foretaste of the destruction that was to continue, enveloping the vast nation and affecting the lives of millions of people all over Indonesia. The events will be reviewed by region, in chronological order, concentrating on the more significant events that have occurred. As outlined in the introduction, the analysis will be restricted to the critical window between January 1999 and June 2000.

Irian Jaya

In Irian Jaya there were no major continuous outbreaks of violence. Some isolated military shootings occurred in early May 2000 (Murphy, 2000). The fear was that the Indonesian military would use relatively small incidents to justify large crackdowns. The oppressed people, many of them Christians, continued to campaign and stage peaceful demonstrations, hoping to be heard by an international community that had largely ignored them (*New Internationalist*, 1999). Although the majority of the indigenous Papuans favor independence, it is unlikely that the province will follow East Timor down the road to independence in the near future, as the military's business interests and the government's financial stakes in this, the most resource-rich region in Indonesia, are far too valuable to relinquish.

Jakarta

In the capital, there were no major outbreaks of violence after the earlier riots in 1998. There was, however, widespread unrest as demonstrations calling for jihad continued to be held by Islamic groups in March 1999 (Reuters, 1999), January 2000 (Firdaus, 2000b), and April 2000 (*Times*, 2000). Rumors of attacks[23] threatening a massacre of Chinese did spread during the June 1999 election period, but failed to be borne out. Sporadic attacks, such as the attack on the Christian Doulos Foundation rehabilitation centre in December 1999 (Associated Press, 1999b) and a car bomb attack on the Philippine ambassador in response to moves in the Philippines to stamp out Islamic extremism (BBC, 2000f), marred an otherwise calm capital during this period.

Kalimantan

In March 1999, 64 villagers were killed as the indigenous Dayak and Malay communities clashed with transmigrants from the island of Madura, and in four days of fighting 800 buildings were destroyed in what was believed to have resulted from an ethnic clash (Spillius, 1999a). It should be noted, however, that West Kalimantan has a significant Christian minority, who tend to be indigenous peoples, as compared with the transmigrants, who are more than likely to be Muslims. Riots flared up again later in the year

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as security forces fired on rioters demanding the release of relatives jailed over the earlier incident, and by the end of the year hundreds had been killed during the months of violence and tens of thousands of migrants had been displaced (Associated Press, 1999a).

In Central Kalimantan, similar clashes between ethnic groups in Kumai were reported in July 2000. Four people were reported killed and scores of others were injured in the affair, and several houses were burnt as well (*Jakarta Post*, 2000l; 2000 m).

Maluku

Interestingly, the first signs of violence in Maluku were not between Christians and Muslims, but between rival Muslim gang members, in a four-day drunken brawl starting on 15 January 1999 (CNN, 1999a). A day after the end of that episode, on 19 January, a Christian bus driver, Jacob Leuhery (alias 'Yopy') had a dispute with two Muslim Bugis youths. The disagreement led to a confrontation between two Christian and Muslim groups, which sparked off clashes all over the city, with Christians attacking Muslims and vice versa (Human Rights Watch, 1999).[24] The violence was organized and brutal; casualties numbered more than 50 by the time there was a cessation of fighting, with more than a hundred seriously injured (*Straits Times*, 1999; BBC, 1999a; Pereira, 1999).

Even the arrival of troops only restored an uneasy calm for a short time, as sporadic violence continued to manifest in Ambon (CNN, 1999b). On 2 February, widespread fighting broke out once again in Ambon (BBC, 1999c), and quickly spread to Seram and Saparua (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Over the course of the next week, there was small-scale fighting or tense confrontation between Christians and Muslims in many villages. The depth of hostility and suspicion that the violence had produced by this time was exemplified by the fact that villagers started burying their belongings in order to protect them (ibid.).

From 13 February onwards, the armed forces lost their reluctance to shoot, and many deaths from then on were a result of the armed forces opening fire (ibid.). Death tolls started to mount, and thousands were forced to flee and seek refuge in other parts of Indonesia (BBC, 1999d). For the first time, reports of the partiality of security forces started to surface—claims often asserted that police forces had allied with Christians and army forces with Muslims (BBC, 1999e; Human Rights Watch, 1999).[25] The threat of a civil war in Maluku was real and growing. In early June 1999, the first wave of the Maluku riots ended, in anticipation of the upcoming Indonesian parliamentary elections.

Unfortunately, in late July, riots in Ambon set off the next wave of fighting.[26] Muslim sources during this time began to claim Israeli and Western involvement in the ongoing conflict in Maluku (Israel and West get involved, 2000), whereas Christian sources placed the blame on Islamist 'terrorist' groups.[27] On both sides, however, the call for the removal of the armed forces from Maluku was unanimous, as many believed that their presence had only fuelled greater unrest and more killing (Investigation Team, 1999; Crisis Centre of Indonesian Communion of Churches, 1999; Antara News Agency, 1999). In October 1999, the reshuffling of the cabinet put a temporary halt to the fighting and ended the second wave of Maluku riots.

In early November, two days of religious riots in Tidore, North Maluku, set in motion the third wave of Maluku riots, which was characterized by the escalation of the conflict to the extent that the number of casualties increased notably. Damage was being incurred in whole districts, and a significant political impact was mounting (Astill, 1999; Masariku

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Network, 2000a). Areas of unrest included North Halmahera, Buru, Ambon, Seram, and Haruku (ibid.; CNN, 1999c). Tens of thousands of refugees were forced to flee in the latest round of violence (Firdaus, 2000a), and by mid-January 2000 the official estimates of refugees numbered slightly over 76,000 (*Kompas*, 2000), with almost 8,000 buildings destroyed, among them 45 mosques, 47 churches, and 20 schools (Tempo, 2000). Eyewitness reports related a scene reminiscent of civil war (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2000b), not religious violence.

The situation continued to deteriorate. On 7 May 2000, Laskar Jihad, a force assembled by Islamic groups with the intention of liberating their suffering brothers in Maluku, sent 3,000 members to Maluku (*Jakarta Post*, 2000c). In spite of government objections (*Jakarta Post*, 2000e), more volunteers continued to be sent over the course of the month (*Jakarta Post*, 2000 h). Fresh clashes quickly erupted (*Jakarta Post*, 2000i), but the force refused to leave (*Jakarta Post*, 2000j), leading to appeals for UN intervention (McCall, 2000a). The repercussions of the presence of Laskar Jihad were most clearly seen in the press reports that continued to churn out stories of fighting and bloodshed. The death toll was now in the hundreds, but could possibly have been in the thousands, as the possibility of press restrictions preventing an objective assessment of the true state of affairs was very real.[28] It should be noted that media reports were also often subject to distortion.[29]

In late June, the Indonesian government imposed a state of civil emergency in Maluku (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2000), but the killings remained uncurbed (Mydans, 2000). There were also peripheral losses due to the violence. In July, a ferry, the *Cahaya Bahari*, sank with almost 500 refugees on board; only ten survivors were subsequently found (Spillius, 2000c; Spencer, 2000c). The Pattimura University—the most prestigious university in Maluku—was destroyed by fire (BBC, 2000a). In the meantime, arms continued to pour into the devastated region (BBC, 2000c), and television footage finally caused the Indonesian military to admit that the troops had taken sides in the conflict (England, 2000), something that field research had long since ascertained.[30] Meanwhile, militant forces from both sides determined to fight on (BBC, 2000b; 2000d).

Domestic and international pressure had begun to be applied—Muslims calling for jihad (Firdaus, 2000b; *Times*, 2000), while both parties started mounting extensive letter-writing campaigns.[31] Both religious (World Council of Churches, 2000) and secular (Human Rights International, 2000) institutions began to pressure the Indonesian government to end the religious violence. The government initially adamantly refused any form of foreign intervention in Maluku, stating that the issue was a domestic one (*Jakarta Post*, 2000p), but, with the situation spiraling out of control, President Wahid eventually admitted that some form of limited foreign assistance might be desirable in order to end the sectarian violence.[32] In late July, Laskar Jihad issued an ultimatum via loudspeaker that Ambonese Christians were to leave the city before 31 July or risk being exterminated.[33]

Accounts reveal atrocities committed against both Christians and Muslims to be frightening, shocking, and very frequently, downright gross. Victims were mutilated, often in a brutal manner, involving loss of limb, head, or other parts of the body, for declaring their allegiance to their faith (*Open Doors News*, 2000; *Impact International*, 2000a, p. 12). Looting and burning was widespread, with reported cases of entire villages, most of them Christian, being burnt down (Head, 1999), in addition to long lists of churches and mosques being destroyed.[34] Women, both Christian and Muslim, were being raped

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on the streets, often by gangs of men (*Republika*, 2000).[35] In some cases, after being killed, the victims were cut up, skewered, and grilled (Buchan, 1999), and a pregnant woman even had her belly sliced open and her unborn child speared.[36] Some women and children were abducted and forcibly converted (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2000a).[37] It was also rumored that the price for the head of a Christian lay minister was 50 million Indonesian rupiah (Barr, 2000).[38]

Yet in all these events there still existed some signs of encouragement and hope. There was support between villagers, with Muslims protecting Christians in their homes and vice versa (Fofid & Salampessy, 1999), often at the expense of their own lives—'traitors' to the faith were often punished. Women from both camps stood up for one another and publicly called for an end to the violence (Akkara, 2000). Miracles were reported, and whilst it is easy to be skeptical of claims of bullets that do not pierce skin and blades that are rendered impotent, there is comfort in knowing that the innocent were not always meaninglessly butchered (Kontak Sala Waku, 2000).[39]

Nussa Tengarra

A mass gathering of Muslims in the main city of Mataram in Lombok, West Nussa Tengarra, on 17 January 2000, intended to demonstrate their solidarity with Muslims fighting in Maluku, degenerated into a church-burning spree (MacDougall, 2000). The violence spread rapidly throughout the island and by 19 January the island had been evacuated of tourists, and many Christians had also fled, with between 6,000 and 10,000 forced to seek refuge (Spencer, 2000a). It was the appeal of Muslim clerics to their followers that finally brought peace to the embattled island the next day, as well as security forces who threatened to shoot on sight, although the resolve of the armed forces to quell the violence was questioned (Spencer, 2000b; Spillius, 2000a).

Field research suggests that there were even attacks on refugee camps by the rioters during this period, and that Muslim preachers deliberately broadcast messages inciting destruction over mosque loudspeakers. It might even have been possible that the names and addresses of targeted individuals were put on lists to have their homes destroyed.[40]

Sulawesi

On 21 April 1999, a church complex was petrol-bombed in Ujung Padang, the provincial capital of South Sulawesi, in response to television broadcasts about a bomb that exploded in a Jakarta mosque. In addition, the Muslim mob lobbed petrol bombs into a school and other buildings (Spillius, 1999b). Sectarian conflict also arose in another town in the province, Luwu, where locals and transmigrants fought in January 2000. At least four people were killed, and 100 houses burnt; not for the first time both Muslims and Christians accused the military and the police of siding with the opposite faction in the fighting (Cooney, 2000).

In Central Sulawesi, Poso experienced communal conflict, with 360 homes and four churches destroyed without retaliation in April 2000.[41] Later fighting between May and June involved casualties on both sides, as Christians retaliated against Muslim attacks.[42] Later searches uncovered mass graves holding a total of 211 people in three separate places (*Jakarta Post*, 2000n).

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Sumatra

On 6 January 2000, threats of violence were made against churches in Lampung, South Sumatra[43] with a demand for the problem in Ambon to be resolved by the next day or else the residents of Lampung could expect a similar event in their city.[44]

Although the threats were not carried out, other parts of Sumatra were less fortunate. In the North Sumatran city of Medan, a home-made explosive device detonated in a church of the Protestant Church of Indonesia (GKPI) in late July, injuring 47 members of the congregation. Two other bombs were subsequently discovered in churches in the city before they exploded, and were defused by police bomb squads (McCall, 2000b; *Jakarta Post*, 2000 k).

Timor

After 23 years of armed occupation and as many as 200,000 killings, the Indonesian government announced on 27 January 1999 that East Timor could have its freedom (Aglionby, 1999). Immediately, however, pro- and anti-independence groups clashed in the Kovalima district, leading to 4,000 people having to seek refuge at the church in Suai in order to escape the killings (*Catholic World News*, 1999a). Divisions quickly emerged, leading to fears of factional violence in the province, especially when news emerged that the Indonesian military was arming parts of the civilian population (*Catholic World News*, 1999b). The threat of an East Timor war became very real (Watts, 1999a).

Escalating violence in East Timor eventually led to claims of at least 25 people being shot or hacked to death by the Indonesian army, with other reports placing the number of victims as high as 45 (Jatmiko, 1999). In May, pro-independence militia went on a rampage in Dili's streets, claiming at least two lives as the province, seeking a referendum on its independence in August, spiraled toward chaos.

Even after the overwhelming result of the referendum was for independence, militiamen continued to rampage on the streets of Dili, killing Catholic priests and nuns and UN workers. Churches, monasteries, and church-run schools and hospitals were all attacked, and what would have been a politically motivated conflict degenerated into ethnic and religious violence (Watts, 1999b; *Religion Today*, 1999). The homes of Christians were destroyed, including that of Bishop Carlos Bello, the Nobel-Peace-Prize-winning bishop responsible for reconciliation efforts between the pro- and anti- independence groups (ibid.).

Eventually, UN peacekeepers were sent into East Timor to quell the violence, which an Indonesian army defector has revealed to have been a civil war plot, designed to purge the territory (Watts, 1999c). In November, international press reports revealed that murdered priests had been found in mass graves (Dutter, 1999), and a senior UN official revealed that women refugees from East Timor were being 'raped and abused in camps in Indonesian West Timor' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 1999).

At the end of January 2000, the UN International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor documented that there was 'systematic and widespread intimidation and terror, destruction of property, violence against women, forced displacement, and attempts to destroy evidence', concluding that the Indonesian army and police, as well as the militia armed by the security forces, were responsible (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

Cases of violence are still reported from East Timor, despite its independence. Gang clashes in Baucau and Dili in January 2000 indicated that the quest for peace in the

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territory remained far from settled (Paterson, 2000a; 2000b). The refugees also had their calamities; remained floods claimed the lives of 125, and a further 547 died in the squalid conditions of the camps (Spillius, 2000b; Associated Press, 2000). In these circumstances, the Indonesian government in August approved a plan to close the refugee camps (*Jakarta Post*, 2000s). Likewise, the tiny communities of Muslims left in the newly independent state live in ghetto-like conditions and are stoned by the Christian population, who accuse them of siding with the pro-Indonesia militia (*Impact International*, 2000b, p. 34).

Competing and Complementary Theories

Economic Rationales

Prior to the 1997–1998 economic and political crisis, the economy had powered along with an impressive 7% growth rate and an annual GDP in excess of US$600 billion (Indonesia, 1999, p. 6). The staggering effect of a 15% contraction during the crisis would obviously have an impact on the ordinary lives of the people. Average income per capita, already low before the recession, fell to between US$600 and US$700 per annum, the inflation rate of 77% bordered on hyperinflation, and the unemployment rate of 20% implied that as many as 17.5 million people were out of work.[45] The rupiah lost more than half its value as compared with pre-1997 figures; to an ordinary worker, this meant that he or she had taken an involuntary 50% pay cut.

In addition to macroeconomic worries, the economy also faced microeconomic troubles. Microeconomic reform was slow and inefficient, with the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency being able to collect less than 2% of its debts. Bank scandals rocked the economy,[46] and even the economics minister had no faith in his country's ability to attract foreign investment, as he publicly declared (*Economist*, 2000, p. 7).

Even in the aftermath, when the economy showed positive signs of recovery, the plight of the common people was often ignored, and the huge army of the unemployed provided a potential source of discontented individuals who, for lack of more productive activities, could be drawn into religious strife.

Political and Military Explanations

There are a few political factors that have been implicated in attempts to explain the crisis. Two stand out: the argument that the violence was a facade for secessionist tendencies; and the argument that the violence was perpetrated by provocateurs involved in a wider conspiracy to discredit the current, democratically elected government.

The independence hypothesis contends that the states of Maluku through the South Maluku Republican Movement (RMS), Irian Jaya through the Free Papua Movement (OPM), and East Timor through the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) were seeking to gain independence, since they are states with a large non-Muslim minority (or even majority). These pro-independence forces, it is argued, did not have the support of the majority of the people, but were using the banner of religious incompatibility as a front for securing independence (Madjiah, 2000).

The second conjecture, that provocateurs were involved in a power struggle, implicates three groups (*Jakarta Post*, 2000a). The first group was the status quo group—that of

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Suharto and his supporters. The second was made up of hard-line Muslims, while the third comprised certain Indonesian business conglomerates.

The first group was undoubtedly the most complex and includes both the powerful political players and their instruments. The powerful political elite who were named included B. J. Habibie, whose attempt to ferment unrest in the conflict areas would destabilize the political strongholds of Megawati Sukarnoputri; General Wiranto, who would enjoy greater military power in the conflict regions; and ex-president Suharto (Aditjondro, 2000b).

Groups that have been implicated as the instruments of this political elite include Laskar Jihad (Grant, 2000), although this has been vehemently denied by its leader, Ja'far Umar Tholib (*Jakarta Post*, 2000f), and various local gangs.[47] These groups often masqueraded under the pretext of religion but various sources have accused them of being the first to instigate the violence in both Lombok and Maluku;[48] in addition, they were also more inclined to be involved in the ongoing fray (Larmer, 2000). Interestingly, it is also alleged that they had ties to the Suharto regime (Human Rights Watch, 1999).[49]

The second group, the radical Islamic organizations, were motivated by the desire to establish an Islamic state based on the Shari^{c}a. These radical groups found nominal support from the reformist organizations, the main one being Muhammadiyah. As a matter of fact, on 12 July 2000, Muhammadiyah cast off *Pancasila* and readopted Islam as its key principle (*Jakarta Post*, 2000q). The Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), with Habibie as its chairman, galvanized university students to participate in a 'Long March' against poverty and ignorance, with the Muslim community as its spearhead (Makka 1996). Clearly, the political environment in Indonesia for the past decade has proven to be conducive to the development of orthodox Islam.[50]

In the jihad rallies in Jakarta, there was no attempt to hide the militant ambitions of the leadership. Rallies had activists brandishing weapons (*Times*, 2000), and training conducted in Bogor resembled that in military-style camps (*Jakarta Post*, 2000b). A document handed out to jihad volunteers included, amongst the inventory of personal items for each individual, face masks and swords (Ja'far Umar Thalib, 2000). The author of a publication entitled *Burn the Churches: Investigations of Religious Conflicts in Indonesia* took a clearly fundamentalist line throughout the book, and at one point made clear statements against President Wahid (Hussaini, 2000, pp. 136–137).

The third group were Indonesian business conglomerates who benefited from the religious troubles, since they then escaped from their obligations to pay trillions of rupiah in debts to Indonesian banks (Lekic, 2000a)—incurred during the days of corruption prior to the current economic crisis. These conglomerates, in general, had close links to the Suharto family (Aditjondro, 2000b, p. 3).

Linking all this was the general weakness of the President and his cabinet. This does not necessarily refer to Wahid's character, but rather to the regime that he was inducted into and the entire political environment that defines Indonesian politics. The leadership has often found it difficult to agree,[51] and religious war threatened to topple the country's first democratically elected leader (Sherwell, 2000).

Civil–military ties in Southeast Asia have historically been delicate, and they are particularly so in Indonesia. The military often employed a dual social and political function, known as *dwifungsi*, and the Indonesian military played important roles in bringing both Sukarno and Suharto to power (Sulistyo, 2000). The Indonesian military is used to force as a means to achieving ends, a methodology that has been thoroughly criticized.

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The position of the military in the religious conflicts in Indonesia was ambivalent. On the one hand, some reports claim that the presence of the military aggravated the conflict, mainly due to their less than impartial participation in the actual fighting (England, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 1998). On the other, the military has also been accused of standing idly by while the destruction was carried out (Masariku Network, 2000b). The military involvement is well documented for the case of Maluku; for other provinces, in particular East Timor, evidence has been less forthcoming.

Socio-psychological and Religious Motivations

The sociological and psychological perspectives provide fertile ground for understanding the current situation, and the pre-eminence of religion as the source of the conflict.

Foremost is the need to understand the psyche of the Indonesian people. Violence comes from social or political conditioning and, in the case of Indonesia, it has been argued that the culture of violence that has characterized Indonesian society, it becomes much easier to arouse antagonistic tendencies and hence legitimize the use of force to attain ends and resolve differences. Mass violence can also have a self-perpetuating effect, especially for those who have been traumatized by the incidents (Anggraeni, 2000; Buchori, 2000).

In Maluku, the traditional system of *pela*—in which traditional inter-village relations ensured peaceful coexistence between people of different beliefs—has broken down as a result of several factors. The influx of non-Ambonese Muslims has altered the demographic distribution and diluted the sense of commitment to *pela*. In addition, the younger generation seldom feels the same sort of allegiance to a system they regard as ancient and outdated. Finally, with re-Islamization and re-Christianization, the traditional syncretic beliefs that allowed the two religions to rest more comfortably with one another have disappeared, as religious leaders have stressed the importance of orthodox belief, making the other religion far less acceptable (Bartels, 2000; van Engelen & Saimima, 2000).

Beyond the provincial level, the breakdown of the national ideology, *Pancasila*, might explain the clashes on a wider scale. In recent times, *Pancasila* has often been used as a sort of mantra that is not questioned because no dissent was permitted with regard to it. The concept has never been allowed to take root in the hearts and minds of the people (Horn, 2000). Now that the influence of a repressive government is gone, it is possible that the rote learning of the principle imposed previously is paying unwanted dividends in the religious clashes, which are in direct conflict with *Pancasila*.

Under a certain interpretation, the Muslim can directly justify his or her call to arms (Q 9.5). However, it is generally harder for the Christian to do so—at least, not unambiguously. Christian ministers are often in a dilemma as to what to preach: to leave vengeance to God (Deuteronomy 32.35; Romans 12.19; Matthew 38.42), or to retaliate in self-defense (I Samuel 17; Ezekiel 32.19–21; Luke 22.36). Nonetheless, a preacher who preaches forbearance is often not listened to, as congregations, frustrated with a gospel of peace when all around them is violence, react in kind.

Analysis and Critique

The weakness of the economy as a reason for the manifestation of innate differences is an argument that carries a great deal of weight. One might say that the poor performance of

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the economy is the bedrock for current tensions; conversely, an economy that brings prosperity and an improved standard of living to the people makes differences that much easier to tolerate. One must not forget that, in addition to the disgruntlement of the unemployed (and hence their greater willingness to lend themselves to the religious cause), the youths and students—often the first to be without work in a recession—have often been named in the press as the most active participants in the inter-religious strife (Larmer, 2000, p. 38).

Mix all that with little hope for an imminent improvement in their current economic conditions,[52] and the perfect recipe emerges for mobs looking for a fight. One could venture as far as to say that if economic conditions were not as they were, there would be a good chance that the conflicts would have been far less widespread, if they had happened at all. Consequently, the first step in any attempt to quell ethno-religious unrest of this type, it would seem, would be to get the economy back on track—something far easier said than done.

The independence hypothesis, at first glance, appears to hold water for three of the states that experienced sectarian conflict: Maluku, East Timor, and Irian Jaya. However, a more careful examination of the events and circumstances of the time would appear to contradict this worldview, at least in its naïve form.

It is highly improbable that the people of Maluku, prior to the crisis, would have wanted independence to an extent that would have led them to condone the violence that eventually occurred. Despite the historical presence of the RMS and of differences in religious proclivities, since the inception of the republic, the people of Maluku had lived in relative contentment. The RMS had been, and still remains, a small—if somewhat overemphasized—element.[53]

East Timor gained official independence following the UN-sponsored act of self-determination in 1999. The violence committed by the pre-independence militia after the referendum shows that religious fervor had a part to play in the ensuing conflict. Bishop Belo claimed that pro-Indonesian armed gangs were participating in a 'genocide that does not spare the Catholic Church' (Mann, 1999). The church was, after all, often perceived as pro-independence, and so by association Christians and church leaders would be a target for anti-independence militia and security forces. However, East Timor had always sought independence since annexation by the Indonesian military in 1975. One could make a case that the move toward independence was inevitable, and the sectarian violence was merely a sideshow, not the result of independence.

In Irian Jaya, where the desire for independence was similarly strong, conflicts typically occurred between security forces and the indigenous people. While these two groups might represent a clash between Muslims and Christians—primarily because members of the army are more likely to be Muslims and the indigenous Papuans Christians—to frame any clashes between the two as a religious conflict would probably be off the mark. One should not deny that there might be some religious overtones involved, but they would be extremely minor at most.

Therefore, the motivation behind the sectarian clashes in these provinces[54] might be explained by the independence hypothesis, but one would require a more nuanced approach than the straightforward case often portrayed in the media (BBC, 1999b).[55] In any case, it is difficult to rule out with any degree of certitude that sectarian violence could not have been due to alternative forces. One needs another, more fundamental, reason to explain the broader phenomena of the violence.

The conspiracy theory explanation is interesting, mainly because it encompasses so many elements and implicates so many players, and partly because it is a sad reflection

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of much of Southeast Asian politics in the twentieth century. Therefore, before dismissing the entire conspiracy theory out of hand, there is a need to remember that whilst conspiracy theories may seem farfetched in the Western context, they are more plausible in Southeast Asia, given its colonial history. The fact that many powerful government figures, the President included, have voiced concern over conspiratorial elements[56] lends further credence to the entire situation being a complex, shady web of political intrigue.

To recapitulate, the proposed political aims of the status quo group were, first, to destabilize the strongholds of Megawati Sukarnoputri so as to pave the way for Habibie to capture the presidency, and, second, to create unrest so that General Wiranto could then revive regional military commands (Aditjondro, 2000b). This explanation was much stronger when Megawati was the strongest presidential candidate opposing Habibie and when Wiranto was still the armed forces commander. The swing of the political seesaw after that time[57] was not, unfortunately, accompanied by a corresponding change in the situation in the conflict areas. It seems highly unlikely that any prolongation of the fighting would benefit either party, short of a military coup d'état. One has to surmise that the theory, while potentially credible for events prior to 1999, was rendered redundant by changes in circumstances. Events in 1999–2000 appeared to gain a momentum of their own.

It is no secret that the ultimate goal of most Islamist groups is to establish an Islamic state, as its proponents believe that Islam is a complete philosophical, social, and economic system, independent of secularism and Western capitalism. These groups would thus be more amenable to employing political means to attain that goal, as they do not distinguish between politics and Islam. They have been clear about their displeasure with Wahid's presidency, which they feel does not reflect the predominance of Muslims in Indonesia.

Islam in Indonesia has traditionally been tolerant, and, even though it is changing, it remains far from the strict forms practiced in Iran and Saudi Arabia which have a tendency to relegate non-Muslims to *dhimmī* (Q 9.29) status. So long as *Pancasila* remains the state ideology, religious discrimination will be difficult to enforce, even in practice, let alone in law. The President himself has called for tolerance (Junaidi & Sophiaan, 2000). The role of Laskar Jihad presents more of a conundrum. It has been acknowledged that their presence in Maluku has fuelled the continuing conflict (BBC, 2000e), but outbreaks of violence have occurred in other parts of Indonesia as well, in the absence of organized militia forces. In areas such as Kalimantan and Sulawesi, religious confrontations cannot be justified by the presence of these provocateurs. Thus, again, we arrive at the conclusion that, whilst religious provocation by political forces may indeed have been a large factor contributing to the violence, it cannot explain the situation in Indonesia completely.

To place the blame solely on rent-seeking behavior by Indonesian business conglomerates seeking to avoid their debt obligations by fostering social instability also appears to be a little farfetched. After all, unless the entire nation crumbles and all banks are forced to close, any benefit that is garnered from changes in debt obligations is only postponed, and not cancelled. Surely these firms would not be so myopic as to expect to escape from repayment forever. Likewise, if the nation fell apart, the conglomerates would lose their home base, something that they would surely wish to avoid. It seems like a catch-22 situation and any domestic instability could even have a detrimental effect on the continuation of their businesses.

As in all conspiracy theories, it is very difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. The tangle of the different players and the spectrum of their possible intentions make it difficult

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to address. Assuredly, political forces have exerted a very strong influence on what has happened in Indonesia, especially at the beginning of the crisis. But one has a nagging feeling that there is more involved than just a high-level conspiracy.

The weakness of Wahid and his government should be understood in the context of the greater picture: he had, in fact, an extremely difficult job, given the circumstances in which he arrived and the external forces that existed around him at the time. His disinclination towards using the full force of the military to resolve the situation was understandable, as it could simply have ushered in a military coup and the importance of support by the people of Indonesia for tough measures to end the cycle of violence would have been critical. Instead, there was talk of his impeachment; and the President faced a vote of no confidence in August 2000 (*Jakarta Post*, 2000 g; McCarthy, 2000). The continued fragmentation of the leadership gave ominous signs for peace in Indonesia.

Very often, the mere presence of a well-trained and well-armed military can contribute to increased bloodletting, especially when it has the kind of history of disregard for human rights which is associated with the Indonesian military. The failure of security forces to refrain from taking sides in religious conflict in Maluku was no coincidence, as earlier reports had already quoted security sources stating that they too had religious affiliations and it would be difficult to maintain objectivity (BBC, 1999e).

How does one approach this problem? To remove all troops would imply that the government was allowing the state to descend into anarchy. And yet, if the troops themselves are involved in the fighting, does not the situation worsen? A balance has to be achieved, and it was fortunate that the military, which remained subject to the government throughout the episode, did not take matters into its own hands.

The various psychological and sociological theories provide the best explanation for the scale of the conflict. Given the diversity of ethnic affiliations in Indonesia, religion is the lowest common denominator, and the battle cry to fight for God is usually the easiest to raise. Given the psychological and social factors that were already in place, playing the religion card became the easiest way to foster disharmony. The provocateurs may rally small groups of people, such as gangs of hooligans, but in order to draw in the larger population, the call to join a jihad or crusade army provides the final push necessary to draw in the rest, already affected by the various psychological and social aspects of discontent.

The three factors that have been presented provide an understanding, at three different levels of abstraction, of the current crisis. And in them there is possibly the best solution pointing the way toward reconciliation. The vicious cycle established by the violence should be recognized and swiftly dealt with, and an attempt should be made to reacquaint Muslims and Christians in Maluku with the *pela* system—and perhaps to introduce a modified form of it in other areas. In the absence of a strong-arm government, the need is to recognize *Pancasila* as the genetic code of the nation, and not simply a piece of propaganda. The fact that these traditional values are the key to harmony has been echoed not only by religious leaders but by the President himself (Doogue, 2000), and, as the nation flounders on its first tentative steps towards full-fledged democracy, indoctrination should be replaced by education.

Demography also plays a subtle part. As a cosmopolitan centre, Ambon attracts a large migrant community from the islands all over Maluku. It is not unlikely that, through familial or friendship contacts, unrest in the provincial capital could spread to outlying areas. An analogous scenario could well have applied to Jakarta, with its status as the nation's capital, vis-à-vis the rest of the republic. The need to ensure that the Indonesian capital

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remains calm in turbulent times is paramount. There is a great vested interest in ensuring that Jakarta, as the seat of political power, does not dissolve into ethnic or religious violence. A religious riot in the nation's capital would reverberate throughout the entire republic, and threaten to tear it apart. Stability can be ensured, to a limited extent, by the presence of a large military and police force located there.

Conclusion

The events that took place in Indonesia between January 1999 and June 2000 are symptomatic not of fundamental problems that exist between Muslims and Christians, but of the kinds of atrocities that human beings can perpetrate against one another when the greater socioeconomic fabric of society breaks down. The rape, pillage, and murder committed in the name of God by both sides in the conflict are a reminder that religion can be used to justify unconscionable actions.

How easy it is, though, to assert the virtuous teaching that one should turn the other cheek. It is hard to fault retaliatory action when loved ones and friends are being subjected to unspeakable atrocities, or when all that a person has lived and worked for is destroyed before their very eyes. Indeed, when the rule of law appears to break down, it appears far easier to execute vigilante justice, especially when those in authority seem to be either powerless or abetting the violence themselves.

The vast majority of victims in the crisis of 1999–2000 are not reflected in the official statistics of those dead and wounded; they are the farmer who is forced to take refuge in the jungle because his home has been razed to the ground, the mother who has to raise seven children by herself, the five-year-old boy who sees his sister violated by strangers, the teenage girl who will never be able to close her eyes without seeing images of her mutilated friends. Is there hope? Perhaps, if Christians and Muslims can see beyond their own worldviews, and recognize their common humanity behind the veneer of religion, there can be hope that the violence at the turn of the century is but a historical aberration.

Notes

1. It should be noted that there is no general consensus with regard to the transition from the end of the 'Liberal Democracy' period to the next, the period of 'Guided Democracy'. However, most scholars agree that by 1959 the transition was complete.
2. *Pancasila* applies to five inseparably related principles: belief in God, a just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberations of representatives, and social justice for the people.
3. The most plausible explanation offered for the choice of *Pancasila* instead of the Shari^{c}a is that the Islamic parties failed to convince the people that their opinions were not in conflict with *Pancasila* ideals. The debate was exacerbated by Suharto in 1953 when he stated that 'the state that we want is a national state consisting of all Indonesia. If we establish a state based on Islam, many areas whose population is not Islamic, such as the Moluccas, Bali, Flores, Timor, the Kai Islands and Sulawesi, will secede. And West Irian, which has not yet become part of the territory of Indonesia, will not want to be part of the Republic' (quoted in Feith, 1962, p. 281). For an elaboration of the Jakarta Charter debate, see Anshari, 1979.
4. The most notable being the rebellions led by Kartosuwirjo and Darul Islam in Java and that led by Kahar Muzakkar in Sulawesi (Tamara, 1986, p. 14).
5. Modern scholarship suggests alternative explanations for the bloodbath, ranging from allegations that it was an 'internal army affair' with no PKI involvement to scenarios where the United States was significantly involved.

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6. The secular Golkar, up till 1999 the de facto ruling political player, was not considered a political party but rather a collection of functional groups.
7. Such as the objection to the Marriage Bill in 1973, which would have made religious law subordinate to civil law.
8. In fact, the re-channeling of Islamic emphasis towards more religious and cultural directions may have served to benefit the ethical and moral influence of the faith. See Samson, 1985, pp. 165–170.
9. An example being the Islamist militant group Holy War Command (Komando Jihad).
10. Such as the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) and the outlawed PKI, respectively.
11. Real GDP fell by 20% in eighteen months and at one point the rupiah lost over 85% of its value against the US dollar.
12. These can be grouped into three main themes: weaknesses of the financial system, problems in institutional arrangements, and a need for a long-term growth strategy (Soesastro, 1999).
13. NU disassociated itself from politics in 1985; PKB is the current political vehicle for NU.
14. The Muslim–Christian (Catholic and Protestant) ratios for the provinces are: North Sumatra (63%/33.5%), West Kalimantan (52%/30%), East Nusa Tenggara (8%/85%), Timor Timur (East Timor) (2%/84%), North Sulawesi (46%/53%), Maluku (57%/42%), and Irian Jaya (West Papua) (16%/83%).
15. 1945 Constitution, article 29: 'The government guarantees the freedom of every Indonesian inhabitant to adhere to his/her own religion and to worship and practice according to his/her religion and faith.' Note that this only applies to faiths recognized by the government.
16. See for example von Denffer, 1981. An example of Christian evangelistic efforts with respect to Muslims can be found in Bentley-Taylor, 1975.
17. As is often the case, press reports as well as field research only reveal a skewed understanding of the events. Since religion remains a sensitive, heartfelt issue, reports tend to be biased, favoring one party over another. This is exacerbated by the fact that for coverage of conflict and fighting, it is only feasible to interview one side, as it would be dangerous for reporters to cross over to the other. The following account seeks to be as objective as possible, using press releases from both sides of the conflict and basing all field reports on relatively reliable sources. In certain cases, only initials are used in order to protect the identity of individuals.
18. Amien Rais stated the day after the riots that 'the way it happened was so systematic, so organized—it was inspired and directed by a certain group of people' (Berita, 1996).
19. A chronological listing of the major events from mid-1998 onwards is provided in Appendix 1, and selected accompanying photographs are provided in Appendix 2.
20. V., personal communication, 21 June 1998.
21. Christian Nationals Southeast Asia, personal communication, 11 September 1998.
22. Indonesian Christian Communication Forum, personal communication, 5 January 1998.
23. W.L., personal communication, 27 May 2000.
24. This report is extremely detailed and is the best source of information for the period 19 January to 10 March 1999. The incidents related here are chiefly a summary of that document, with supplementary materials from the press and field research.
25. For example, Muslim sources admit that more real help is given by the army to Muslims, while Christian sources discuss their willingness to give up the protection offered by the police force and let the entire force be transferred. See, Adjie, 1999.
26. W.L., personal communication, 7 August 2000.
27. W.L., personal communication, 30 July 1999.
28. P.F., personal communication, 15 June 2000.
29. In one such case, a report written by a Catholic priest describing the destruction of churches was published with all references to the word 'church' replaced by the word 'mosque'. In another case, a clash between Muslim and animist tribes in Halmahera was misreported as one between Muslims and Christians. In yet another case, there was blatant misreporting in order to support a particular preconceived bias—the reason for the slaughter of Muslims in Maluku was explained by the 'fact' that they were a minority there. In truth, the Muslims are actually the majority. Finally, Christian sources tend to admit that both sides are party to the violence, whereas Muslim sources often picture themselves as victims only. Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2000a; W.L., personal communication, 14 June 2000; *Impact International*, 2000a, p. 12.
30. L., personal communication, 27 July 2000.

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31. An example of Christian pressure is the Jubilee Campaign for Urgent Action in Indonesia, and of Muslim pressure the open letter from the Indonesian Muslim Students Association of North America.
32. Specifically, technical and logistical aid. See Lekic, 2000b.
33. J.H., personal communication, 24 July 2000.
34. P.R., personal communication, 25 February 1999.
35. I.H., personal communication, 3 July 2000.
36. The victim, Rena Makewe, was a Christian, from Benteng Karang. The incident was never reported clearly, and wild distortions resulted over who the victim and perpetrator were, with Muslims and Christians both blaming the other side.
37. I.H., personal communication, 3 July 2000.
38. G.L., personal communication, 30 June 2000.
39. W.L., personal communication, 1 March 1999.
40. S.A., personal communication, 25 January 2000.
41. J.H., personal communication, 3 June 2000.
42. Ibid.
43. W.L., personal communication, 8 January 2000.
44. 'Bila masalah di Ambon tidak dapat diselesaikan besok, maka Lampung akan menjadi Ambon kedua!' Ibid.
45. Calculated from the 1997 labor force estimates of 87 million.
46. The most recent being the Bank Bali scandal, linking huge liabilities to the Habibie government; it remains unresolved (Kwik, 1999).
47. In Ambon, the main Christian youth gang, Christian Boys (Coker), are led by Milton Matuanakota and Ongky Pieters; their antagonist Ongen Sangaji leads the rival Muslim gang, Pancasila Youth. See Aditjondro, 2000a. In Lombok, two 'crime control' gangs, Bujak and Amfibi, combined in August 1999 to form a large paramilitary organization that involved themselves in organized violence. See MacDougall, 2000.
48. This point deserves elaboration. The destruction in Lombok was said to be very systematic and organized, possibly by these groups. Likewise, many reports claim the same for Maluku, and that there were many people in the mob who were not locals. See MacDougall, 2000; van Klinken, 1999.
49. W.L., personal communication, 4 October.
50. In his final years as president, Suharto became increasingly Muslim-friendly; he went on the Hajj, and he allowed the establishment of an Islamic bank and other Islamic institutions. The head of the MPR, Amien Rais, continues to be a channel for Islamist views in parliament. See *Impact International*, 2000a, p. 12; Rubenstein, 1999, p. 19.
51. To the extent that Rais and Wahid were called on to stop making controversial statements. *Jakarta Post*, 2000o.
52. This thought is echoed by Airlangga University lecturer Daniel Sparingga (1999).
53. How much this is recognized by the Muslims involved in the conflict is debatable. A Muslim mindset that misunderstands this might argue that the Christians are attempting to form an independent state and are therefore unpatriotic.
54. And, indeed, even for Aceh. However, since the confrontation there has been between Muslims from pro-independence forces and government security forces, it has not been considered in the scope of this paper.
55. For example, initial reports of RMS flags being sighted in Maluku are likely to have been due to confusion between RMS flags and those of the warring religious groups. See Fofid and Salampessy, 1999.
56. Among its adherents are Major Generals Suaidi Marasabessy and Amir Sembiring, President Abdurrahman Wahid, Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab, and Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono (Human Rights Watch, 1999; Jakarta Post, 2000d; 2000r; Aditjondro, 2000b).
57. Megawati then took over the vice-presidency and Wiranto was later removed from his post.

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Appendix 1. Chronology of events

Date	Event	Location
15 May 1998	Widespread looting, burning, and rape	Jakarta
25 May 1998	Religious leaders present report on human rights violations by military	Irian Jaya
28 May 1998	Demonstrations calling for human rights investigations	Irian Jaya
17 June 1998	Three non-Irianese transmigrants shot by pro-independence movement	Irian Jaya
23 June 1998	Press reports systematic rape of Chinese women during May riots	Jakarta
1–6 July 1998	Widespread demonstrations in Jayapura calling for independence	Irian Jaya
6 July 1998	Military crackdown on demonstrators in Biak	Irian Jaya
11 September 1998	Rioting and looting of storehouses in Pontianak	West Kalimantan
22 November 1998	Religious riots leave 14 dead and churches burnt	Jakarta
27 November 1998	Christians attack mosque in Kupang in retaliation for Jakarta riots	West Timor
4 December 1998	Muslims burn church in Ujung Padang in retaliation for Kupang attack	South Sulawesi
24–29 December 1998	Looting and burning of Christian homes in Poso	Central Sulawesi
30 December 1998	Burning of church in Palu	Central Sulawesi
15–18 January 1999	Rioting in Aru between rival Muslim youth gang members	Maluku
19 January 1999	Clashes in Ambon begin first wave of Maluku riots	Maluku
20 January 1999	Intensification of religious violence in Ambon	Maluku
24 January 1999	Military ends violence in Ambon	Maluku
25 January 1999	Sporadic violence continues in Ambon	Maluku
27 January 1999	Indonesia raises possibility of East Timor independence	East Timor
29 January 1999	Separatists and pro-Indonesian groups clash	East Timor
2 February 1999	Religious clashes renew in Ambon	Maluku
3 February 1999	Growing threat of civil war	East Timor
3–5 February 1999	Fighting in Ambon spreads to Seram and Saparua	Maluku
14 February 1999	Security forces in begin utilizing live ammunition	Maluku

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Appendix 1. Continued

Date	Event	Location
22 February 1999	5,000 Muslims flee violence	Maluku
23 February 1999	Security forces accused of partiality in Ambon violence	Maluku
7 March 1999	100,000 Muslims call for jihad	Jakarta
10 March 1999	Growing threat of civil war	Maluku
17–20 March 1999	Indigenous Dayaks and Malays clash with Madurese immigrants	West Kalimantan
7 April 1999	Claims of massacre of at least 25	East Timor
	Rioting in Singkawang kills 12	West Kalimantan
20 April 1999	Bombing of mosque	Jakarta
21 April 1999	Revenge bombing of church in Ujung Padang	South Sulawesi
11 May 1999	Pro-Indonesian militias go on rampage in Dili streets	East Timor
12 May 1999	End of first wave of riots	Maluku
7 June 1999	Indonesian parliamentary elections	Jakarta
23 July 1999	Riots in Ambon begin second wave of riots	Maluku
15 August 1999	Muslim accusations of Western and Israeli involvement in Ambon	Maluku
4 September 1999	Increasing violence in Dili	East Timor
	UN-sponsored referendum overwhelmingly supports independence	East Timor
10 Sepember 1999	Militias target Christians	East Timor
17 Sepember 1999	Civil war plot revealed by military defector	East Timor
20 September 1999	UN peacekeepers arrive	East Timor
8 October 1999	Demonstrations calling for removal of armed forces from Ambon	Maluku
20 October 1999	Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential installation	Jakarta
21 October 1999	End of second wave of riots	Maluku
3–4 November 1999	Religious clashes in Tidore begin third wave of riots	Maluku
6–11 November 1999	Clashes in Tidore spread to Ternate	Maluku
7 November 1999	East Timor refugees raped in camps	West Timor
16 November 1999	Mob attacks Christian rehabilitation centre	Jakarta
27 November 1999	Bodies of murdered priests discovered in mass grave	East Timor
2–4 December 1999	Muslim masses attack Christian villages and churches in Seram	Maluku
22 December 1999	Disagreement between Muslim and Christian employees sparks off riots in Buru	Maluku

(*Continued*)

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Appendix 1. Continued

Date	Event	Location
26 December 1999	Incident between Christian driver and Muslim youth renews riots in Ambon	Maluku
27 December 1999	Muslims attack churches and Christians in Ternate	Maluku
28 December 1999	Christians destroy Muslim village in Halmahera	Maluku
30 December 1999	Revenge attack by Christians on Muslim village in Haruku	Maluku
5 January 2000	10,000 refugees flee Maluku violence	Maluku
6 January 2000	Threat of violence against Lampung churches	South Sumatra
7 January 2000	100,000 Muslims renew call for jihad	Jakarta
10 January 2000	Sectarian clashes in Luwu leave four dead and 100 houses burnt	South Sulawesi
11 January 2000	Gang violence in Bacau	East Timor
16 January 2000	Official estimates of refugees number 76,234	Maluku
17 January 2000	Official estimates of buildings destroyed number 7,915	Maluku
	Muslim mobs ransack Christian homes, businesses, and churches in Lombok	West Nussa Tengarra
19 January 2000	Border clashes	East Timor
21 January 2000	Inquiry over role of military in Lombok violence	West Nussa Tengarra
24 January 2000	Megawati visits Maluku	Maluku
25 January 2000	Rioting in Dili	East Timor
31 January 2000	UN Commission reports systematic violence by Indonesian security forces	East Timor
	Muslim protesters stone churches	Yogyakarta
6 April 2000	10,000 Muslims demand Muslim army be sent to Maluku	Jakarta
	Training begins for Laskar Jihad	West Java
17 April 2000	Christian churches and homes burnt in Poso	Central Sulawesi
5 May 2000	Military shootings in Irian Jaya	Irian Jaya
7 May 2000	3,000 Laskar Jihad members arrive in Ambon	Maluku
9 May 2000	Further 200 Laskar Jihad members arrive	Maluku
12 May 2000	Students call for Suharto to be put on trial	Jakarta
15–20 May 2000	38 killed and 100 injured in fresh violence in Ambon	Maluku
16 May 2000	Additional 600 Laskar Jihad members enter Ambon	Maluku

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Appendix 1. Continued

Date	Event	Location
19 May 2000	Appeal to UN for intervention	Maluku
	Flooding claims 125 refugees' lives	West Timor
20 May 2000	Security forces implement shoot-on-sight orders	Maluku
23 May to 4 June 2000	Sectarian violence in Poso claims 211 lives	Central Sulawesi
25 May 2000	Laskar Jihad rejects calls to leave Maluku	Maluku
26 May 2000	Students clash with security forces over Suharto trial	Jakarta
29 May 2000	Bombs found in three churches in Medan, one explodes	North Sumatra
31 May 2000	Sectarian clash in Poso	Central Sulawesi
	50 killed and 100 wounded in Halmahera	Maluku
12 June 2000	Pope condemns attacks by Muslims on Christians	Maluku
20 June 2000	Official reports of refugees due to religious violence number 705,482	Various
21 June 2000	152 Christians killed and 160 wounded in Halmahera	Maluku
22 June 2000	200 killed in fighting in Ambon	Maluku
23 June 2000	Two houses burnt in Poso	Central Sulawesi
27 June 2000	Civil emergency declared	Maluku
	Christian Max Tamaela replaced by Hindu I Made Yasa as commander	Maluku
30 June 2000	3,000 additional Laskar Jihad members arrive in Ambon	Maluku
	Cahaya Bahari disappears with 500 refugees on board	Maluku
1 July 2000	Muslims forced into ghetto and attacked	East Timor
3 July 2000	Ten survivors rescued from sunken *Cahaya Bahari*	Maluku
4 July 2000	Pattimura University in Ambon destroyed	Maluku
	Three Christian villages in Ambon destroyed	Maluku
6 July 2000	Renewed clashes between Dayaks and Madurese in Kumai	Central Kalimantan
	Christian village in Ambon destroyed	Maluku
7 July 2000	Defense Minister blames Laskar Jihad for ongoing conflict	Maluku
8 July 2000	Foreign Affairs Minister warns international community not to interfere	Maluku

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Appendix 1. Continued

Date	Event	Location
10 July 2000	124, including 29 security personnel, arrested over Poso violence	Central Sulawesi
	Limited isolation imposed	Maluku
11 July 2000	Muhammadiyah calls for national unity	Jakarta
13 July 2000	Arms sweep intensified	Maluku
17 July 2000	President admits need for limited international aid	Maluku
	Laskar Jihad declares futility of civil emergency	Maluku
18 July 2000	Military admits some troops involved in continuing violence	Maluku
19 July 2000	547 refugees die in camps	West Timor
20 July 2000	One killed and shops burnt in Poso	Central Sulawesi
24 July 2000	UN peacekeeper killed in border clash	East Timor
26 July 2000	UN urges crackdown on militias operating from refugee camps	East Timor
30 July 2000	Muslim villagers attack Christian village in Ambon	Maluku
31 July 2000	Ultimatum issued to Ambonese Christians to leave or be killed	Maluku
	Irian Jaya and North Sulawesi refuse entry to refugees	Maluku
1 August 2000	Indonesia approves plans to close refugee camps	East Timor
	Car bomb attack	Jakarta
	Irian Jaya allows refugees to land	Maluku
	Christians killed in Muslim attack on village in Ambon	Maluku
3 August 2000	Riots in Ambon leave 11 wounded	Maluku
4 Aug 2000	2,000 refugees from Christian village in Ambon evacuated	Maluku

Appendix 2. Photographs of the Unrest

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Figure A2.1. Destroyed area of Gambus market, Ambon, Maluku

Figure A2.2. Burnt church in Ambon, Maluku

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Figure A2.3. Burning of the business center in AJ Patty Street, Ambon, Maluku

Figure A2.4. A destroyed village in East Timor

Figure A2.5. A rioter in Lombok