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**INDONESIA UPDATE:  
TRENDS TOWARD CONSOLIDATION, THREATS OF  
DISINTEGRATION  
(JANUARY-DECEMBER 1999)**

**By John T. Sidel**

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E-mail: [writenet@gn.apc.org](mailto:writenet@gn.apc.org)**

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
CP 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

E-mail: [cdr@unhcr.ch](mailto:cdr@unhcr.ch)  
Web Site: <http://www.unhcr.org>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 General Overview

The past year has witnessed considerable movement towards the consolidation of Indonesia's transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Elections held in early June 1999 were widely hailed as generally peaceful, free, and fair, with the results broadly reflective of popular sentiments and essentially respected by the incumbent transitional Habibie administration. Thus the supra-parliamentary *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (MPR or People's Consultative Assembly) convened in late October 1999 and, following the withdrawal of the then President B.J. Habibie's candidacy, elected Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB or National Awakening Party), to the presidency and Megawati Soekarnoputri, the head of the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* (PDI-P or Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), to the vice-presidency. Meanwhile, a referendum held under United Nations auspices in East Timor resulted in an overwhelming popular vote for independence, and, after a brief wave of violence by anti-independence groups armed, aided, and encouraged by the Indonesian military, Indonesia finally relinquished its control and its claims over the long-disputed territory, with the MPR voting to acknowledge East Timorese independence in late October 1999.

This series of events reflected the continuation of trends towards democratization in Indonesia, most importantly the ongoing diminution of the role and prerogatives of the Indonesian Armed Forces (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or TNI) in national political life. As noted in previous reports,<sup>1</sup> the process of popular mobilization and internal regime defection that led to the resignation of President Suharto in May 1998 was one led by civilians rather than military officers, and throughout 1999 the Indonesian military played a largely reactive role in the midst of continuing civilian pressures for political change. The military leadership made token efforts to apologize for, investigate, and/or prosecute various human rights abuses, and agreed to both the reduction of the number of TNI representatives in the national and regional legislatures and the separation of the police (Polri) from the armed forces. More importantly, perhaps, while scores of retired TNI officers joined various political parties and some serving military commanders were said to have personal preferences for one party or another, the military as an institution did not back Golkar (*Golongan Karya* - Functional Groups), the political machine of the incumbent administration, or any other party for that matter, and the one party closely identified with a cluster of retired generals, *Partai Keadilan dan Persatuan* (PKP or Justice and Unity Party) performed poorly in the elections and won only a handful of seats in the national legislature.

Thus civilian leaders continued to take the initiative in the early post-election period in the latter half of 1999. Despite considerable military recalcitrance and resistance, President B.J. Habibie refused to back down on plans for a referendum in East Timor, and by October of this year international press scrutiny and official pressures in the end facilitated grudging Indonesian acquiescence in the process of transition to independence for the territory. Growing disillusionment with President Habibie, moreover, led to mounting factionalism

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<sup>1</sup> The author's previous WRITENET reports on Indonesia are: *Economic, Social and Political Dimensions of the Current Crisis* (April 1998), *Crisis and Transition, Catastrophe and Progress* (July 1998), and *Transition and Its Discontents, July - November 1998* (December 1998)

within Golkar, the ruling party, and demolished hopes by some elements within the incumbent administration that a coalition between Golkar and the so-called “Axis Forces” (*Poros Tengah*), a cluster of allied Islamic parties, would allow for the extension of Habibie’s presidency and the perpetuation of entrenched civilian and military elites in power. October 1999 saw a process of negotiation and coalition-building between rival party leaders over the MPR vote for the presidency and vice-presidency, with the TNI’s diminished faction in the MPR by most accounts remaining a minor and largely passive player in the negotiations. This process culminated in the election of Abdurrahman Wahid (popularly known as “Gus Dur”) and Megawati Soekarnoputri as President and Vice-President, respectively, with little in the way of overt military intervention or influence shaping the outcome. Civilian leaders won office thanks entirely to their success in winning large blocs of votes in the June 1999 elections and assembling a multi-party coalition in the MPR behind their candidacies.

The enhanced position of the new national political leadership vis-à-vis the TNI was also reflected in the early aftermath of the MPR session and the election of Gus Dur and Megawati. The powerful military leader General Wiranto, who had formerly served concurrently as Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, was “promoted” to the traditionally less important position of Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs (Menkopolkam). For the first time in Indonesian history, a civilian figure, Juwono Sudarsono, held the position of Minister of Defence, and, in an unprecedented shift of intra-service authority from the dominant Indonesian Army (*Angkata Darat*), a Navy admiral was named as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The removal of two widely respected “reformist” officers, Lieutenant General Agum Gumelar and Lieutenant General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, from active duty and appointment as Communications Minister and Mining Minister, respectively, was likewise interpreted in some quarters as removing Wiranto allies from key positions in the TNI and/or installing them in Cabinet seats from which they could subsequently be elevated to replace their former commander. Given the mandatory retirement age of 55 for TNI officers, continuing rotations (*mutasi*) and turnover within the military establishment, and the establishment of competitive elections as the key mechanism for national political leadership, these appointments indicated the obstacles to effective “strongman” rule by Wiranto and the imperative of seeking civilian patronage for ambitious military officers seeking post-retirement political careers.<sup>2</sup>

In more substantive terms, moreover, the new civilian leadership has begun to assert its authority vis-à-vis the military and in the interest of further reform and democratization. In response to separatist protests in the northern Sumatran province of Aceh, for example, President Wahid has offered promises of special autonomy and even a referendum, and ordered the withdrawal of troops from a province which, somewhat like East Timor, has long been treated as a fiefdom of the Indonesian military establishment. Wahid has likewise rejected military demands for the declaration of martial law in Aceh, and the national parliament (the *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR or People’s Representative Assembly)) has summoned high-ranking retired and active TNI officers for questioning about the Army’s atrocious record of human rights abuses in the troubled province since the 1980s. Meanwhile, Wahid has also met with the East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmão, who led the armed struggle for independence against the TNI, and promised him as well as various international bodies that the Indonesian government will facilitate the return of East Timorese refugees

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<sup>2</sup> For an alternative view of these trends, see *Far Eastern Economic Review* [Hong Kong], John McBeth, “Wiranto’s Way”, 25 November 1999

who remain in Indonesia and otherwise desist from impeding the ongoing transition to independence in the territory. Finally, as 1999 draws to a close, an official investigation of TNI involvement in the post-referendum violence in East Timor has been gathering considerable evidence and questioning top military officers in tandem with the one conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>3</sup> These investigations have combined with calls for the reduction or elimination of the Army's territorial command structure throughout the country to signal unprecedented civilian initiatives to scale back the Indonesian military's authority and autonomy.

## 1.2 The Threat of "Disorder": From Riots to Rebellion and Religious Conflict

As noted in previous reports, the early months of 1998 had seen a series of riots in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago, targeting the business establishments, residences, and houses of worship of the country's ethnic-Chinese minority, and in May of that year violent riots in Jakarta and Solo led to more than one thousand deaths, dozens of rapes of ethnic-Chinese women, and the sudden flight of thousands of ethnic-Chinese Jakarta residents to safe havens elsewhere in Indonesia and overseas. Yet as predicted in the preceding reports, fears of continuing anti-Chinese rioting and violence and of a major refugee crisis proved unfounded. The latter half of 1998 saw virtually no anti-Chinese riots, and in 1999, despite widespread fears of campaign-related disturbances and violence, a peaceful election was held with little more than minor scuffles between the supporters of rival parties in the streets. The fear of riots and of anti-Chinese violence has receded into the background of Indonesian politics.

Yet as 1999 draws to a close, Indonesia is once again haunted by the spectre of "disorder", this time manifested in the threat of "disintegration" due to regional "unrest" of various kinds. Indeed, the past year has witnessed a dramatic deterioration of government authority in Aceh, and the increasingly popular assertion of demands for independence for the province. The referendum now promised, however vaguely, to the Acehnese, some commentators suggest, might also work to encourage separatist elements in Irian Jaya, where a small armed movement called *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM or Free Papua Organization) has long been active. Other resource-rich peripheral islands with impoverished populations resentful of Jakarta's "internal colonialism", such as Riau and East Kalimantan, have already seen rising demands for decentralization, for a more federal structure of government in Indonesia, and for a redistribution of government revenues from the national to the provincial level.

Meanwhile, inter-community violence has claimed hundreds of victims in Ambon in the Moluccan islands. Beginning in January 1999, groups of Christians and Muslims in Ambon have engaged in periodic attacks on local communities in a cycle of inter-faith violence that has yet to subside. These clashes herald the prospect of religious and "primordial" conflict elsewhere in an archipelago where tensions between Muslims and Christians, and between established local communities and newcomer " transmigrants", have been on the rise since the early 1990s. Bloody clashes between Dayaks and Madurese in West Kalimantan left hundreds dead in 1996-1997<sup>4</sup> and again in early 1999,<sup>5</sup> for example, and with the recurring violence in

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<sup>3</sup> *Detik* [Jakarta], "KPP HAM Ungkap SGI: Wiranto Diperiksa Pekan Depan", 16 December 1999; *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Ketua DPR Desak Pemerintah: Usut Pelanggaran HAM di Timtim", 16 December 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "TNI Tidak Keberatan KPP HAM Memanggil Para Jenderal", 16 December 1999

<sup>4</sup> See: Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: Communal Violence in West Kalimantan* (New York, December 1997)

Ambon some commentators have warned of possible communal fratricide elsewhere in the ethnically and religiously diverse Indonesian archipelago.

Indeed, the past year has seen considerable violence and social dislocation in Aceh and in Ambon, with local refugee crises displacing thousands of poor and vulnerable Indonesians. There is little evidence, moreover, of any movement towards an enduring resolution of the conflicts between the Acehnese people and the central government, or between Christians and Muslims in Ambon. More worrying still is the prospect of a backlash by the military establishment against the curtailment of its powers in recent years and the attempted assertion of military authority in Aceh, which would certainly lead to further bloodshed, suffering, and dislocation among the province's beleaguered population.

Nonetheless, apocalyptic predictions of impending disintegration and widespread disorder in Indonesia are not only excessively alarmist but politically naive and potentially dangerous in themselves. Expectations of mounting anti-Chinese rioting and violence in early 1998, after all, were not only misguided but manipulated by the Suharto regime, and it has now been established that the violent riots of 13-14 May 1998 in Jakarta and several other Indonesian cities were, as argued in previous reports, instigated and in fact carried out by certain elements in the Indonesian military establishment.<sup>6</sup> International efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the violent conflicts in Aceh and Ambon and international assistance for internal refugees in and from these two troubled provinces could prove helpful, but repeated warnings of Indonesia's impending dissolution in a cataclysm of regional breakaways and communal violence run the danger of encouraging a reassertion of military power on the one hand, and acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy on the other.

The remainder of this report will concentrate on the trends visible in Aceh and Ambon in the course of 1999, with particular attention to the prospects for peaceful resolution of the conflicts or for escalation into further violence and social dislocation in these two provinces in the early months and years of the twenty-first century. The report also evaluates prospects for the violence in Aceh and Ambon to spread or to stimulate similar forms of mobilization elsewhere in the archipelago, and for military resistance and recalcitrance to escalate into a violent reassertion of the TNI's authority in the provinces and on the national political scene. The report argues that the conflicts in Aceh and Ambon will remain unresolved in the first few months of the new century, but that escalation into a full-blown crisis of security, national identity, and social order is unlikely, given the resilience of civilian authority and the availability of institutions for reducing, sublimating, and domesticating - if not resolving - various tensions and conflicts in Indonesia's troubled transition to democracy.

## **2. Aceh: The Next Domino?**

For many years, military officers and other defenders of centralized, authoritarian rule in Indonesia have warned that independence for East Timor would encourage or stimulate

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<sup>5</sup> *Detak* [Jakarta], "Giliran Sambas", 23-9 March 1999

<sup>6</sup> See the massive, and comprehensive, government fact-finding report, Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta, *Peristiwa Kerusuhan Tanggal 13-15 Mei: Jakarta, Solo, Palembang, Lampung, Surabaya, dan Medan* (Jakarta, October 1998)

separatist movements and sentiments elsewhere in the archipelago and threaten the Indonesian nation-state with disintegration. These warnings were articulated with increasing vehemence in the aftermath of the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and in the face of the referendum and the transition to independence in East Timor. Indeed, the TNI's encouragement of the pro-Indonesia armed militias' violence following the August 1999 referendum in East Timor must be understood in part as a signal of the military's resolve in the face of various demands for independence in Indonesia proper and its willingness to inflict considerable violence against other separatist movements, even in the face of intensive international scrutiny. The military establishment's response to the rising tide of demands for independence in Aceh and to President Wahid's apparent preference for negotiations and a referendum rather than martial law in the province has thus been one of intransigence and alarmism. Both active and retired military officers have been virtually unanimous in their opposition to a referendum in Aceh (and more generally to independence for the province), sceptical of proposals for broader local autonomy and federalism, unapologetic for the long history of military human rights abuses in Aceh, and vocal in their support for a military crackdown on the armed separatist group known as *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM or Free Aceh Movement).<sup>7</sup>

Yet the historical record shows that the TNI's repressive approach to separatist movements in Indonesia is based on very shaky foundations. Conventional wisdom to the contrary, the breakaway movements in Indonesia in the era of constitutional democracy (1950-1957) were very weak in terms of popular support in the regions and did not represent a serious threat to the national integrity of the fledgling Indonesian nation-state. The brief attempt to establish a *Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of South Maluku) in the early 1950s was led by officers of the defeated Dutch military, the KNIL (*Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* or Royal Netherlands-Indies Army), and only supported by a minority of the population in the Moluccas, and the more dramatic rebellions of the mid and late 1950s in Sumatra and Sulawesi were in fact led by regional military commanders who drew more on the backing of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency than on local support and who demanded changes in state structure and government policy rather than independence for the Outer Island provinces.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.1 Background to Rebellion

In fact, the most protracted and popular movements for independence from Indonesia have emerged in reaction to the centralizing, authoritarian, and abusive tendencies of the Suharto regime and in response to policies of military repression and economic extraction by Jakarta. In this regard, Aceh is a case in point.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *Republika* [Jakarta], "Wiranto: Bentuk Negara Kesatuan Sudah Final", 16 November 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Panglima TNI: Penerapan Darurat Militer Tunggu Keputusan Presiden", 23 November 1999, "Wiranto: Perlu Langkah-langkah Militer di Aceh", 25 November 1999 and "Kaster TNI Letjen Agus Wijaya: Negara Kesatuan Lebih Baik", 8 December 1999; *Kompas* [Jakarta], "TNI Siap Hadapi Segala Kemungkinan", 4 December 1999 and "Menhan Juwono Sudarsono: Negara Federal tidak Cocok", 8 December 1999

<sup>8</sup> On these rebellions, see Richard Chauvel, *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists: The Ambonese Islands from Colonialism to Revolt, 1880-1950* (Leiden: KLT Press, 1990); Barbara Harvey, *Permesta: Half a Rebellion* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1977); Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: The New Press, 1995)

The territory on the northernmost coast of Sumatra known today as Aceh was the site of an independent sultanate for several centuries preceding Dutch colonial rule, and following the Anglo-Dutch agreements of the 1870s which affirmed Dutch claims to Sumatra, protracted armed resistance led by local religious teachers (*ulama*) and known as the Aceh War prevented the consolidation of colonial rule until the turn of the century. Following the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies during World War II, Acehnese independence fighters kept returning Dutch forces at bay and, notably, contributed significant financial and material resources to the Republican forces fighting for Indonesian independence elsewhere in the archipelago. Following the formation of an independent Indonesia in late 1949, Aceh became a part of the new nation-state, and although a rebellion broke out in Aceh in 1953 under the leadership of the popular modernist Muslim activist Daud Beureueh, it was waged under the banner of the *Darul Islam* struggle initiated in West Java in the late 1940s, and in support of the establishment of a federal and Islamic Indonesian state rather than an independent Aceh. In response to the rebellion, the then President Soekarno made Aceh a separate province and subsequently awarded it special regional status, with autonomy in the formation and implementation of religious and educational policies. By the end of the Soekarno era, the rebellion had subsided and Daud Beureueh and his followers had surrendered to the central government authorities.<sup>9</sup>

It was in response to the policies of the Suharto regime since the 1960s that pro-independence sentiment and the GAM armed movement began to resurface in the mid and late 1970s and then, after a period of quiescence, re-emerge again in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Throughout Indonesia, the authoritarian and centralizing tendencies of the Suharto regime led to the crystallization of a system of civilian administration based on appointment and rotation of local officials by the Ministry of Interior in Jakarta and a parallel structure of military rule, and despite its formal “special region” status, Aceh was no exception to this pattern. Control over government policy and state patronage was thus restricted to a narrow elite of military and civilian officials much more dependent on Jakarta and much less attentive to local pressures and demands than during the Soekarno era.

Meanwhile, the discovery of substantial natural gas reserves in Aceh in the early 1970s and the subsequent commencement of extraction and processing of liquefied natural gas in the province contributed significantly to the Indonesian “oil boom” during this period, but did little to bring prosperity to the impoverished province. Revenues from oil and gas production in Aceh have accrued almost entirely to the central state in Jakarta and to foreign companies like Mobil Oil, with an industrial enclave developing along the north-east coast of the province but providing little in the way of well-paid jobs for local residents.<sup>10</sup> In an overwhelmingly agricultural province experiencing rapid population growth and rising landlessness, this industrial zone has brought at least as many problems of social displacement and environmental degradation as it has opportunities for employment. Even conservative foreign and domestic commentators have described this pattern in terms of “rich

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<sup>9</sup> On the Aceh War and on the movement led by Daud Beureueh, see James T. Siegel, *The Rope of God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969)

<sup>10</sup> Tim Kell, *Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995), pp. 13-28

ghettos of migrants”<sup>11</sup> and “a high-income, capital-intensive, urban, non-Muslim, non-Acehnese enclave in a basically low-income, capital-intensive, rural, Muslim, Acehese province”.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 From *Reformasi* to Rebellion

Against this backdrop, the 1970s saw the growth of anti-Jakarta sentiment in Aceh and in 1976 the declaration of the formation of GAM, headed by Hasan di Tiro, who had been active in the *Darul Islam* rebellion of the 1950s. GAM engaged in very limited guerrilla activities in the late 1970s but did succeed in disseminating its pro-independence message in various towns in the province and, despite government repression and Hasan di Tiro’s flight into exile, GAM fighters, while few in number, remained active in certain parts of Aceh throughout the 1980s. By some accounts, local residents and even elements in the civilian administration and security forces provided a measure of protection and support to the guerrillas, and Acehese émigrés in nearby Malaysia were said to offer financial and material assistance as well.

In 1989, a central government crackdown on the arrangements of mutual accommodation between the GAM and local civilian authorities and security forces led to the resurgence of GAM’s propaganda activities and armed attacks on police and army posts as well as some civilian targets. The TNI leadership, suspecting that the movement in fact enjoyed considerable support within Acehese society, responded with a harsh counterinsurgency campaign centrally administered by Jakarta. In 1989 and early 1990, the 6,000 troops already stationed in Aceh were mobilized for counterinsurgency operations, and in July 1990 an additional 6,000 troops, including two battalions of the Army’s Special Forces Command (*Komando Pasukan Khusus* or *Kopassus*), were sent into the province, now designated as a special Area of Military Operations (*Daerah Operasi Militer*).<sup>13</sup> The military strategy involved “intensive surveillance, check points, dawn to dusk curfews, house raids, and arrests on a wide scale”.<sup>14</sup> Already in 1989 and 1990 these counterinsurgency activities led to the killing of civilians at check points, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and a broader pattern of “harassment and ill-treatment of civilians in suspected rebel base areas”.<sup>15</sup> Homes were raided and burned, women were taken hostage and raped, and arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, summary execution and “disappearances” were common well into the mid-1990s. The counterinsurgency campaign resulted in considerable social dislocation within Aceh, with

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<sup>11</sup> Juwono Sudarsono, cited in “Waging a Dirty War in Aceh”, *Newsweek* [New York], 12 April 1991, p. 33. This article and the quote therein is cited from Kell, p. 16

<sup>12</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, “Understanding the New Order: Bureaucratic Pluralism in Indonesia”, *Asian Survey*, Volume 21, Number 11 (November 1983), p. 1234. Cited from Kell, p. 17

<sup>13</sup> A Kostrad (Strategic Army Reserve) unit led by the then Colonel, Prabowo Subianto, the son-in-law of Suharto, was among the first outside forces to arrive in the province. On this point and on Jakarta’s crackdown on local peaceful co-existence arrangements in Aceh, see Geoffrey Robinson, “Rawan Is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh”, *Indonesia*, No. 66 (October 1998), pp. 140, 148-150

<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International, *Indonesia: “Shock Therapy”: Restoring Order in Aceh 1989-1993* (London, 1993), p. 11

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

thousands of residents displaced from their homes, and hundreds of Acehnese fleeing to nearby Malaysia.<sup>16</sup> Thus, while the few hundred armed fighters of the GAM were reduced to a much more defensive posture, the resentment against the Indonesian military and the government in Jakarta undoubtedly grew considerably in the course of the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

Against this backdrop, the emergence of the *Reformasi* movement in early 1998, the resignation of President Suharto in late May of that year, and the subsequent period of political liberalization and uncertainty under the transitional Habibie administration heralded the possibility of momentous change in Aceh. Human rights activists and assorted civilian groups grew more vocal in their demands for the prosecution of human rights abuses under the Suharto regime, and revelations of atrocities in Aceh were widely published and aired by the media both in Jakarta and in Aceh itself. In August 1998, the then Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief and Defence Minister General Wiranto announced the termination of Aceh's status as a *Daerah Operasi Militer* and promised to withdraw extra-territorial troops from the province. Yet following a riot in the city of Lhokseumawe on 31 August in which local residents stoned TNI troops, the process of demilitarization in Aceh slowed considerably, and progress towards the prosecution of human rights cases against military offenders ground to a virtual halt.

Frustrated by the lack of substantive change on the ground in Aceh, and emboldened by the climate of political liberalization in Jakarta, the moves towards a referendum for East Timor, and the forthcoming national elections, Acehnese student activists who had mobilized in early 1998 behind the banner of *Reformasi* and in support of the removal of Suharto rechannelled their energies in new directions in early 1999. In late January 1999, for example, Acehnese student activists initiated a campaign for a referendum on Aceh's political status, which rapidly gained support throughout the troubled province. Meanwhile, the guerrilla forces of the GAM had stepped up their activities, and the authority of the central government in Aceh began to crumble, as suggested by the overwhelming success of the campaign to boycott the national elections in June.

The predictably inept and violent reaction of the TNI to these trends in Aceh further contributed to the deterioration of local support for the government and local faith in the prospects for reform within the framework of Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> On 3 May 1999 TNI troops killed more than 40 persons when they fired on pro-independence demonstrators, and on 23 July security forces massacred more than 50 Acehnese in an attack on a religious school in West Aceh.<sup>19</sup> The following month security officials announced plans for renewed counterinsurgency operations in Aceh, while in Jakarta military representatives in the national

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<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, pp. 53-6

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Jacqueline Aquino Siapno, "The Politics of Gender, Islam and Nation-State in Aceh, Indonesia: A Historical Analysis of Power, Co-optation and Resistance" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1998)

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Tragedi Lhokseumawe, dan Referendum", 25 January 1999

<sup>19</sup> On the result of an investigation by local authorities into this massacre, see *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Temuan TPF Beutong Ateuh: Pembantaian oleh Anggota TNI-AD", 31 October 1999

parliament initiated legislation that would allow for the declaration of a state of emergency and martial law powers in provinces suffering from severe security problems.<sup>20</sup>

In the context of these deteriorating conditions and ominous signs of further violence, the election of Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri to the presidency and vice-presidency, respectively, in late October 1999 provided the occasion for renewed mobilization in support of independence in Aceh. On 28 October, for example, tens of thousands of marchers and convoys of cars, trucks, mini-buses, and motorcycles converged on Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, and other locations in a massive demonstration demanding a referendum and independence for Aceh.<sup>21</sup> On 8 November, moreover, a pro-referendum and pro-independence rally in Aceh drew an estimated two million supporters and brought the province to a standstill.<sup>22</sup> In Aceh, the dramatic effect of this rally was immediately palpable, as indicated by reports that government functions in the province had virtually ceased and pronouncements by members of the local assembly in the province, the vice-governor, and even the provincial governor in favour of a referendum for Aceh.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile in Jakarta, tension over the central government's policy towards Aceh intensified in the course of November and December, with little sign of resolution of the problem as the end of 1999 drew near. On the one hand, President Wahid made repeated offers of a referendum for Aceh, and, while remaining characteristically vague and evasive with regard to the timing of the referendum and the options to be provided in it, initiated moves towards negotiations with various Acehnese groups, including the leadership of GAM.<sup>24</sup> While civilian figures like the DPR speaker and Golkar chief, Akbar Tanjung, and the MPR speaker and leader of *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN or National Mandate Party), Amien Rais, criticized Wahid for exceeding his brief and made equally vague statements with regard to the prospects for a referendum, they followed Wahid in calling for a peaceful resolution of the problems in Aceh and initiated a parliamentary investigation into human rights abuses in Aceh which led to hearings in which high-ranking active and retired TNI officers were summoned to provide testimony.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, various statements by ranking security officials and manoeuvres by forces on the ground indicated that the TNI had not abandoned their heavy-handed approach to separatist aspirations and activities in Aceh. TNI officers, both retired and active, have been quoted as opposing a referendum - or independence - for Aceh, and, more generally, the

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<sup>20</sup> On these trends, see Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: Why Aceh is Exploding* (New York, August 1999)

<sup>21</sup> *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Di Banda Aceh dan Lhokseumawe: Meriah, Pawai Referendum", 29 October 1999

<sup>22</sup> *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Dua Juta Umat Gelorakan Referendum", 9 November 1999

<sup>23</sup> *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Jika Itu Keinginan Rakyat, Gubernur Dukung Opsi Merdeka", 12 November 1999

<sup>24</sup> *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Presiden Tawarkan Dialog Soal Aceh", 11 November 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Gus Dur Bertemu 60 Tokoh Aceh di Ciganjur", 30 November 1999

<sup>25</sup> *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Persetujuan Referendum Bukan Hak Presiden", 10 November 1999, "Amien Rais soal HUT GAM: Jangan Ada Pertumpahan Darah", 4 December 1999, "Soal Referendum di Aceh: Ketua DPR Tolak Opsi Merdeka", 4 December 1999 and "Usulan Pansus Aceh: Adili Segera Pelanggar HAM di Aceh", 17 December 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Akbar Tanjung: Presiden Harus Segera ke Aceh", 24 November 1999

various proposals for greater local autonomy or federalism presented by various civilian political figures. Moreover, high-ranking security officials including the Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, General Wiranto, have called for a declaration of a state of emergency in Aceh and for a military crackdown in the province.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, in some areas of Aceh, TNI troops have responded to the increasingly openly hostile climate with wanton acts of violence against the local population.<sup>27</sup>

As 1999 draws to a close, no peaceful resolution of the conflict in Aceh appears to be on the horizon. Demands for a referendum have won enormous popular support in Aceh, leading to a highly effective campaign of civil disobedience and a virtual implosion of government authority in the province. By most accounts, only a referendum which included the option of independence would be acceptable to the Acehnese population in the current climate, and if such a referendum were held, an overwhelming vote in favour of independence would be most likely.<sup>28</sup> Adoption of the policy favoured by the TNI would entail a declaration of a state of emergency in Aceh and martial law in the province as a justification for a harsh crackdown on the streets and counterinsurgency operations in the hinterlands. If the past is any guide, such policies are likely to lead to considerable human rights abuses, large numbers of casualties, tremendous human suffering and social dislocation, as well as an even further hardening of local sentiments against the central government and in favour of independence for Aceh.

In the meantime, the mounting violence and the climate of rising tension and, in some areas, intimidation and violence have already led to a local refugee crisis in Aceh. Sporadic clashes between GAM and the TNI, and violent retribution against the local population by TNI troops have led thousands of Acehnese, including women and children, to flee their homes and to take temporary refuge under conditions of considerable deprivation.<sup>29</sup> Government sources estimate that nearly 37,000 internal refugees are currently being housed in mosques, religious schools and other temporary domiciles, and many more residents, especially non-Acehnese, are said to have fled the province.<sup>30</sup>

In this context, the path forward suggested by President Wahid and other civilian leaders seems to lie in political compromise, stalling, and fudging by Jakarta. Any movement towards the prosecution of human rights cases, the granting of greater autonomy to the Acehnese government, and the holding of a referendum might well be too slow and insubstantial to satisfy the demands of the Acehnese or weaken their capacity for further mobilization, and yet too quick and threatening in the eyes of the military establishment. It is by no means clear that

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<sup>26</sup> *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Darurat Militer di Aceh Dipertimbangkan Kembali", 22 November 1999 and "TNI Minta Status Darurat Di Aceh", 23 November 1999

<sup>27</sup> *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Bireuen Berkecamuk", 2 November 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Komnas HAM Aceh: Aparat Polisi Lakukan Operasi Militer", 16 December 1999

<sup>28</sup> *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Pernyataan Gus Dur soal Referendum Tanpa Opsi Merdeka: Rakyat Aceh Tetap Menolak", 29 November 1999

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, *Serambi Indonesia* [Banda Aceh], "Pengungsi Dapat Bantuan Rp 3M", 29 October 1999, "Puluhan Bocah Pengungsi Terserang Busung Lapar", 30 October 1999 and "Ekses Insiden Batee Iliiek, Ribuan Warga Mengungsi", 14 December 1999

<sup>30</sup> *Kompas* Jakarta, "Menteri Pertahanan: Referendum di Aceh Bukan untuk Merdeka", 23 November 1999

a combination of inaction and piecemeal reforms will lead to the gradual subsiding and co-optation of the protest movement in Aceh, or that the TNI will permit the prosecution of human rights cases, the granting of greater local autonomy, and the holding of a referendum. In short, the prospects for further violence, suffering, and social dislocation in Aceh are considerable in the year ahead.

### **3. Ambon: Things Fall Apart?**

Meanwhile on the island of Ambon, in the eastern Indonesian region of Maluku (the Moluccas), sporadic violence between Christians and Muslims during 1999 has claimed hundreds of lives and fuelled considerable fears of further communal strife elsewhere in the ethnically and religiously diverse Indonesian archipelago. As with regional separatist movements such as GAM in Aceh, the putative strength of “primordial sentiments” and the possibility of ethnic conflict have often been cited as justification for authoritarian rule in Indonesia, and yet inter-faith or ethnic violence was not a problem in the era of constitutional democracy in the 1950s. Instead, as argued in previous reports, tensions between Christians and Muslims steadily increased during the long years of the Suharto era, due partly to state policies which promoted the sharpening of religious identities but also to broader trends in Indonesian society.

#### **3.1 Background to Communal Conflict**

Ambon, and Maluku in general, has long been home to both Muslims and Christians, and the occurrence of violent inter-faith conflict has until recently been extremely rare and restricted in scope. Islam was propagated under the auspices of the Ternate sultanate, whose influence extended through much of eastern Indonesia and as far afield as the Philippine archipelago in the years prior to European contact. Roman Catholicism was imported in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese, who established a network of forts and small settlements in the Moluccas during the heyday of the spice trade, and the Dutch East India Company, which replaced the Portuguese as the sole purchaser of Moluccan spices in the seventeenth century, brought Protestant missionaries in its wake. But a system of alliances between local settlements (*negeri*) in Ambon, known as *pela*, helped to sustain peaceful relations of reciprocity and co-operation between Muslim and Christian villages and neighbourhoods, with Muslims helping to build churches and Christians likewise assisting in the construction of mosques.<sup>31</sup>

Yet divisions between Ambonese Christians and Muslims markedly increased in the late nineteenth century, following the termination of the Dutch clove monopoly, the collapse of the spice trade, and the relegation of the Moluccas to the status of an economic backwater. The Dutch missionary schools which for many years had provided religious instruction to Ambonese Christians were reoriented towards more secular concerns, now providing much more in the way of a practical education for the purposes of preparing low-level civil servants for the colonial regime. As the Dutch colonial state extended its hold over the Netherlands

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<sup>31</sup> On the *pela* system, see Dieter Bartels, “Guarding the Invisible Mountain: Intervillage Alliances, Religious Syncretism and Ethnic Identity among Ambonese Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas” (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1977)

East Indies in the late nineteenth century and in the “Forward Movement” of the early twentieth century, and as the colonial bureaucracy expanded its functions and personnel under the “Ethical Policy” declared in 1902, so did the numbers of Ambonese Christian civil servants, teachers, missionaries, and soldiers leaving the Moluccas for other islands of the archipelago correspondingly increase.<sup>32</sup>

Ambonese Christians were thus disproportionately well represented among the ranks of civil servants, professionals, and missionaries throughout the Dutch East Indies, and in particular in the Dutch colonial army, the KNIL. The number of Ambonese Christian recruits to the KNIL grew rapidly in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and the pattern of recruitment, organization, and quartering of soldiers “served to create a degree of competitiveness and a strong identification with the ethnic group and the status accorded to it by the authorities”.<sup>33</sup> By the 1930s, an estimated 16 per cent of the Christian population of Ambon was living outside the Moluccas, and as clerks, professionals, and soldiers under the Dutch they and their families enjoyed a higher level of material welfare and a closer degree of identification with the colonial regime than the Muslim residents of the island.<sup>34</sup> It was thus a group of Ambonese Christians who had served in the KNIL who led successive local efforts to establish the *Negara Indonesia Timur* (State of East Indonesia), the *Republik Indonesia Timur* (Republic of East Indonesia), and finally the *Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of South Maluku) during the transition to Indonesian independence in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Meanwhile, a variety of trends have combined over the years to strengthen the Islamic identity of Ambonese Muslims. The termination of the clove monopoly in the 1860s and improved inter-island transportation in the late nineteenth century facilitated closer contact with Muslims elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies, and growing numbers of Ambonese Muslims left the island as sailors, traders, and pilgrims to Mecca. This pattern of increasing circulation and interaction with Muslims from elsewhere in the archipelago drew the distinction between Ambonese Muslims and Christians more sharply in the early twentieth century, as the former increasingly identified themselves in Islamic, and Indonesian, terms, while the latter tended to view their identities and interests as closely linked to the continuation of Dutch colonial rule. Moreover, with independence and the defeat of the Ambonese Christian-led *Republik Maluku Selatan* in the early 1950s, and with the termination of Ambonese Christians’ privileged position within the bureaucracy and the armed forces in particular, Muslims began to experience unprecedented upward social mobility, through education and employment opportunities within the Indonesian state.

Muslim ascendancy in Ambon continued apace in the Suharto era, with economic development, state expansion, and urbanization eroding the Christians’ hegemonic position, especially in the city of Ambon, the provincial capital. Over time, Christians faced rising competition from Muslims in schools and in the bureaucracy, and it was in urban Ambon that this competition “was most keenly felt and where the common bonds of *adat* (custom) and *pela* were weakest”.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Suharto-era state policies towards religion served to widen

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<sup>32</sup> Chauvel, pp. 25-35

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, p. 52

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, pp. 37-8

<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, p. 395

the divide between Ambonese Christians and Muslims, by prohibiting inter-faith marriages, expanding religious instruction in schools, and more generally, by promoting a pattern of recruitment into the bureaucracy through *jaringan* or networks based on religious affiliation. In the 1990s, moreover, Suharto's shift towards state promotion of Islamicization only accelerated these trends at the elite level, even as rising numbers of Buginese, Butonese, and Makassarese immigrants and the high birth rates among Ambonese Muslims began to tip the population balance in favour of Muslims in Ambon.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2 1998-1999: From Inter-faith Tensions to Communal Violence

Against this backdrop, the resignation of Suharto and inauguration of B.J. Habibie as President in May 1998 carried particular significance for Ambon. Habibie, after all, had served throughout the 1990s as the head of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI, the Association of Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals), and his rise to the presidency represented a triumph for a broad range of Islamic groups in the country. Moreover, as noted in previous reports, the fledgling Habibie administration forged a working alliance with a number of militantly anti-Christian Islamic groups like *Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam* (KISDI - Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with World Islam) and *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII - Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council), and civilian and military elements in the regime worked with some of these groups as well as local gangsters (*preman*) to recruit and mobilize pro-government auxiliary forces in the streets to counter student demonstrations in Jakarta in November 1998 during the special session of the MPR. By November 1998, the impact of this new pattern of mobilization and linkages between elements in the military, pro-Habibie Islamic groups, and Jakarta gangs and protection rackets spilled over into rivalries between Muslim and Christian Ambonese gangs operating in the national capital.

On the night of 22 November fighting broke out between members of rival Ambonese gangs outside a gambling casino in the area of Ketapang in central Jakarta, and rumours that a mosque had been burned to the ground spread rapidly through nearby Muslim neighbourhoods. The subsequent riot, reported variously as involving rival gangs, local residents, and members of various militant Islamic groups, resulted in several deaths and the burning of seven churches.<sup>37</sup> Rumours that the riot had been deliberately instigated as part of a larger conspiracy spread rapidly in Jakarta and back in Ambon, further heightening the tension and suspicion between Ambonese Muslims and Christians already exacerbated by the killings and church burnings in Ketapang.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> On these trends, see *Tempo* [Jakarta], Tamrin Amal Tomagola, "Ambon Terbakar", 1 February 1999, pp. 24-5; *Jakarta Post*, Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, "The Impact of Migration in Eastern Indonesia", 6 April 1999, p. 4

<sup>37</sup> For accounts of the violence in Ketapang, see *Detik* [Jakarta], "7 Gereja dan 11 Mobil Dibakar" and "Mayat-mayat Jadi 14 Orang", 23 November 1998; *Jawa Pos* [Surabaya], "Preman-Warga Bentrok, 6 Tewas", 23 November 1998; *Republika* [Jakarta], "Bentrokan di Ketapang, Jakbar, 7 Tewas", 23 November 1998; *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Kerusuhan di Jakarta Enam Orang Tewas", 23 November 1998

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, *SiaR* [Jakarta], "Preman and Residents Suggest Manipulation Behind Ketapang Riots", 24 November 1998, "Faksi Militer Habibie Aktor Intelektual Kerusuhan Ketapang?", 25 November 1998 and "Pernyataan Delapan Lembaga atas Kerusuhan Ketapang", 27 November 1998. See also *Tajuk* [Jakarta], "Jaringan Provokator Kerusuhan Ambon", 1 April 1999

The subsequent decision by Jakarta's Governor Sutiyoso to expel from the capital suspected gang members allegedly involved in the Ketapang riot led to as many as 200 Ambonese *preman* returning to the Moluccas before the new year, thus exporting the violent inter-gang rivalry and thirst for vengeance to Ambon itself. Indeed, on 19 January 1999, on the Muslim holiday of *Idul Fitri*, a dispute reportedly broke out between a minibus driver and a group of passengers - or, in some versions, *preman* demanding protection money at the bus terminal - which escalated into fighting between residents of two adjacent *kampung* (neighbourhoods) in the city of Ambon, one Christian, the other Muslim. News of the violence spread, and Christian-Muslim violence erupted elsewhere in Ambon,<sup>39</sup> continuing sporadically into February and leaving dozens killed, hundreds wounded, and thousands of homes, churches, shops, and other buildings burned or otherwise destroyed.<sup>40</sup> By early March, more than 100 casualties were reported, and as many as 70,000 refugees were said to have fled Ambon.<sup>41</sup>

Efforts to halt or contain the violence foundered in a climate of mounting mutual suspicion, fear, resentment, and vengefulness. In many neighbourhoods and villages in Ambon, Christian and Muslim *Posko* (*pos komunikasi/komando* - communications/command posts) sprung up, as did elaborate local security arrangements for advance warning and arming of residents, and launching of pre-emptive strikes against attacks by outsiders. This trend not only hardened the divisions between Christian and Muslim communities but further spurred the formation of local neighbourhood gangs armed with knives and other deadly weapons. By February 1999, moreover, security forces had finally begun to intervene in the conflict, occasionally firing on crowds during disturbances, and on several instances leaving casualties in their wake. Local Christian and Muslim leaders were soon trading accusations that various police and military units, whether based in Ambon or drawn from elsewhere in the archipelago, were guilty of bias and collusion in their handling of the conflict.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile back in Jakarta, militant Muslim activists rallied supporters in support of a *jihad* or holy war to protect their brethren in Ambon and spread accounts blaming the violence on the Ambonese Christian community, on the defunct movement for an independent *Republik Maluku Selatan*, and on a broader anti-Islamic conspiracy of national and international dimensions.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, Abdurrahman Wahid, the head of the Muslim traditionalist

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<sup>39</sup> For a systematic chronicle of the violence and destruction in various localities in Ambon, see Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: The Violence in Ambon* (New York, March 1999), pp. 9-16

<sup>40</sup> *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Getir Ambon di Idul Fitri", 1 February 1999 and "Habibie Gusar, Komnas Diteror", 15 February 1999; *Tajuk* [Jakarta], "Mencekal Provokator Kerusuhan", 4 February 1999; *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Eksodus dari Ambon dan Timtim dengan Kapal: Satukan Derita dan Cerita Pengungsi", 22 March 1999; *Jakarta Post*, "Ambonese Clashes Force Butonese 'Back Home'", 6 April 1999; *Republika* [Jakarta], "Aneka Masalah di Penampungan Pengungsi di Buton", 8 April 1999

<sup>41</sup> *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Ambon Mencari Juru Damai", 8 March 1999

<sup>42</sup> Even high-ranking security officials in Jakarta conceded the case. See *Detik* [Jakarta], "Batayon Terakhir Tiba di Ambon: Suaidi: Kami akan Tegak dan Netral" and "Tiga LSM Bertemu Jenderal Wiranto: Diakui Ada Aparat Tak Netral", 9 March 1999; *Republika* [Jakarta], "Pangab Akui Aparat di Ambon tak Adil", 10 March 1999

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, *Detik* [Jakarta], "Pemuda Islam Ancam Lakukan Jihad di Ambon", 2 March 1999 and "Jihad untuk Ambon di UI Salemba", 4 March 1999; *Obyektif* [Jakarta], "Intervensi RMS-Amerika", 18-24 March 1999; *D&R* [Jakarta], "Ambon: The Land of Jihad?" and "Di Mana Batas Jihad?", 22-7 March 1999

*Nahdlatul Ulama* and a prominent advocate of inter-faith co-operation, claimed that the violence was instigated by Islamic extremists and high-ranking military officers and other figures closely associated with the Suharto family and with the former President's son-in-law, the disgraced former Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto.<sup>44</sup>

Against this backdrop of hardening suspicion and resentment, various efforts to promote peaceful reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Ambon proved unsuccessful, and subsequent months saw sporadic episodes of violence in Maluku. Tensions and rumours helped to provoke violence in March and April in various parts of Maluku,<sup>45</sup> and in July and August 1999 Christian-Muslim clashes led to dozens of deaths and considerable damage on the fringes of the city of Ambon.<sup>46</sup> Renewed fighting in late November and early December left over 30 casualties in the city of Ambon and elsewhere in Maluku.<sup>47</sup>

Overall, government sources estimate that during 1999 more than 1,000 Ambonese were killed in the violence, and many more suffered wounds, other indignities, and considerable dislocation, deprivation, and hardship.<sup>48</sup> As 1999 draws to a close, there is still ample reason to fear recurring incidents of violence in Ambon, with continuing problems of social dislocation for residents in the capital city and elsewhere in Maluku, in the new year.

#### **4. OTHER THREATS OF DISORDER? IRIAN JAYA, RIAU, AND BEYOND**

Warnings of the impending break-up of the Indonesian nation-state have grown more frequent and more vehement through 1999, in the context of recent events in Aceh and signs of separatist mobilization elsewhere in the archipelago. In predominantly non-Muslim Irian Jaya, for example, several thousand protesters have demonstrated in support of independence for *Papua Barat* (West Papua) on various occasions in 1998 and 1999, and, as in Aceh, students, religious leaders and other local civic figures have formed new organizations which favour renegotiation of the province's relations with Jakarta, most notably *Forum Rekonsiliasi Rakyat Irian Jaya* (FORERI or the Forum for the Reconciliation of the Irian

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<sup>44</sup> *D&R* [Jakarta], "Gus Dur: 'Provokatornya...Mayjen K dari Hankam'", 8-13 March 1999; *Detik* [Jakarta], "PKB Menang, Menteri Orba Diganti", 9 March 1999; *Jawa Pos* [Surabaya], "Kivlan Zein Minta Klarifikasi Gus Dur", 9 March 1999; *Republika* [Jakarta], "Mayjen Kivlan Zein: Mungkin Maksud Gus Dur Mayjen Kirakira", 9 March 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Mayjen Kivlan Zein: 'Abdurrahman Wahid Harus Diperiksa'", 29 March 1999

<sup>45</sup> *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Upaya Damai di Ambon Dirusak Aksi Pembantaian", 2 March 1999; *Forum Keadilan* [Jakarta], "Letupan Kerusuhan Bejana Berhubungan", 5 April 1999, pp. 12-13; *D&R* [Jakarta], "Kabar Bohong Berbuah Rusuh", 5-10 April 1999

<sup>46</sup> *Aliansi Keadilan* [Jakarta], "Ambon Berdarah-Darah Lagi!", 28 July 1999; *Republika* [Jakarta], "Keadaan di Ambon Masih Mencekam", 13 August 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], "Kerusuhan Ambon Masih Menyala", 2-8 August, 1999

<sup>47</sup> *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Sembilan Aparat Tertembak di Ambon", 29 November 1999 and "31 Tewas Dalam Kerusuhan di Seram Barat", 4 December 1999

<sup>48</sup> *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Pertikaian Maluku Terus Berlanjut", 6 December 1999

Jayan People).<sup>49</sup> Irian Jaya, after all, remained a Dutch territory until 1962, and was only incorporated into Indonesia after a brief United Nations interregnum and a fraud-ridden UN-supervised plebiscite in 1969. Ambivalence about this pattern of absorption into Indonesia has combined with resentment against “internal colonialism” by Jakarta, most notably in the case of the huge Freeport mining concession in Irian, which has caused considerable environmental degradation and social dislocation at the expense of local residents, while remitting enormous profits to its primary shareholders in far-off Jakarta and the United States.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the small armed group of the OPM has fought for independence for years, and as in Aceh, the TNI’ response has entailed the designation of Irian Jaya as a *Daerah Operasi Militer* and harsh treatment of the local population by Kopassus units and other troops drawn from outside the province.<sup>51</sup>

Elsewhere in the Outer Islands, the central government in Jakarta has faced numerous other local challenges to its authority. Regional assemblies and other local groupings in various provinces like East Kalimantan and Riau have articulated demands for special autonomy, redistribution of revenues from local ventures like mining companies, logging concessions and special industrial zones, federalism, and even independence.<sup>52</sup> More generally, local authorities have begun to assert their prerogative vis-à-vis Jakarta in the context of new legislation for regional autonomy and have begun to impose local taxes and regulations on foreign companies engaged in local mineral extraction, petroleum exploration, or industrial production.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the pattern of recurring violence in Ambon has sparked fears that inter-faith and communal strife could spread to other parts of the ethnically and religiously diverse Indonesian archipelago. In March 1999, for example, clashes between groups of (Muslim) Madurese immigrants and the indigenous (Christian and animist) Dayaks in West Kalimantan left hundreds of casualties and led to a refugee crisis as entire communities fled the province. Commentators who linked the violence to growing economic competition and tensions between the local population and the newcomers thus suggested a root cause in the government’s *transmigrasi* program, which has brought settlers from Java and Madura to many other Outer Island provinces as well.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> On these trends, see Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: Human Rights and Pro-Independence Actions in Irian Jaya* (New York, December 1998); Danilyn Rutherford, “Waiting for the End in Biak: Violence, Order, and a Flag Raising”, *Indonesia*, No. 67 (April 1999), pp. 39-59; *Tapol Bulletin* [London], “West Papua: Splitting the People into Three”, No. 154/155 (November 1999), pp. 32-3; *Tempo* [Jakarta], “Demonstrasi Papua Merdeka di DPR”, 29 November 1999 and “Masalah Irian Serius”, 30 November 1999; *Kompas* [Jakarta], “Pimpinan Papua Barat Dipanggil Polres Jayapura”, 4 December 1999

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, *Tempo* [Jakarta], “Investigasi: Freeport: Berkah dan Kutukan”, 25 January 1999

<sup>51</sup> Robin Osborne, *Indonesia’s Secret War: The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985)

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, *Kompas* [Jakarta], “DPRD Kaltim Desak Pembentukan Negara Federal”, 11 November 1999; *Tempo* [Jakarta], “F-PDI I Riau Tolak Tuntutan Federal dan Merdeka”, 8 December 1999

<sup>53</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review* [Hong Kong], John McBeth, “Bleak Prospects”, 16 December 1999, pp. 46-8

<sup>54</sup> *D&R* [Jakarta], “Warga Madura Kian Terjepit di Sambas”, 22-7 March 1999 and “Setelah Saling Bantai Itu: Ditolak di Mana-Mana”, 29 March - 3 April 1999; *Detak* [Jakarta], “Giliran Sambas” and “Perang Etnis Orang-Orang Pinggiran”, 23-9 March 1999

## 5. CONCLUSION: FEARS OF DISINTEGRATION, FORCES OF STABILIZATION

More generally, the outlook for the year 2000 in Indonesia is considerably coloured by rising fears of disintegration, whether in the form of separatist mobilization and breakaway efforts in various Outer Islands, or in the form of inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife in different parts of the archipelago. Indeed, the preceding analysis has emphasized that the movement for independence in Aceh has gained considerable legitimacy and momentum during 1999, and that there is little evidence that a peaceful negotiated settlement via a referendum is in the offing. Moreover, the pages above have highlighted the intensity of Christian-Muslim conflict in Ambon as well as the obstacles to reconciliation and restoration of inter-faith harmony in Maluku. Yet the fear that these trends in Aceh and Ambon will have spillover consequences or inspire copycat mobilization elsewhere in the archipelago may well be exaggerated.<sup>55</sup> If Indonesian history is any indication, moreover, such fears could be manipulated to legitimize a backlash against civilian authorities keen on limiting the influence of the TNI, with disastrous consequences for Aceh, Ambon, and Indonesia in general.

In terms of separatist movements, Aceh's history is arguably unique in terms of its fertility for aspirations to separate nation-statehood, and it is far from clear that anti-Jakarta sentiment reflects a genuine and enduring popular commitment to an independent Aceh rather than deep resentment towards the TNI and disappointment at the central government civilian leadership's failure to curb and punish its abuses of the local population. Beyond Aceh, moreover, few other provinces have demonstrated a capacity for sustained popular mobilization against Jakarta. Even in Irian Jaya, where the OPM has long enjoyed a measure of sympathy and support from the local population, pro-independence demonstrations have mobilized only a few thousand protesters in the capital city of Jayapura, and the province's population appears too small, rural, and dispersed to wage an effective civil disobedience campaign against the central government.

Meanwhile, the grievances and aspirations voiced by local figures in provinces like East Kalimantan and Riau appear to represent demands for a greater provincial share of government revenues, and the main protagonists seem to be local assemblymen and other figures with long-standing links to Jakarta and little in the way of a local mass base to mobilize in the streets. In short, the struggle for an independent Aceh is unlikely to be successfully imitated or replicated elsewhere in the archipelago, and the break-up of the Indonesian nation-state represents a highly implausible scenario in a country which has become ever more closely and centrally integrated in terms of language, administration, and economy over the several decades since independence.

As for the violence witnessed in Ambon during 1999, there is little reason to believe that it will spread into a more generalized crisis of inter-religious, inter-ethnic communal strife throughout the archipelago. Tensions between Christians and Muslims, and between communities of transmigrants and indigenous populations have increased in the 1990s by many accounts, but grievances and conflicts have been local in origin and scope.

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<sup>55</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review* [Hong Kong], John McBeth, Nate Thayer, and Bertil Lintner, "Worse to Come", 29 July 1999, pp. 16-19

Political parties promoting Islamic militancy performed badly in the June 1999 elections, and with the demise of the Habibie administration groups like KISDI and *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* have lost government patronage and protection. The two parties which won the largest blocs of votes in the election - PDI-*Perjuangan* and Golkar - represent broadly nationalist and secular forces and incorporate into their political machineries Indonesians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. The new President, Abdurrahman Wahid, moreover, has a well-earned and long-standing international reputation for promoting inter-faith tolerance and multi-ethnic harmony, in sharp contrast to the policies of the Suharto regime and the Islamicist pretensions of elements in the brief Habibie administration. If, as many analysts have suggested, a combination of identity-hardening policies and internal regime tensions and intrigues helped to spark the violence in Ambon and West Kalimantan, then the inauguration of a regime committed to the promotion of multiculturalism, democracy, and demilitarization carries considerable promise for ameliorating religious communal resentments and conflicts.

That said, the threat of continuing or escalating unrest will continue to haunt Indonesia in the months ahead, and in this regard, the dangers are twofold. On the one hand, growing mobilization for independence in Aceh and recurring Christian-Muslim conflict in Ambon - and similar disturbances elsewhere in Indonesia - are likely to result in more casualties, damage to life and property, and social dislocation for large numbers of people. In both Aceh and Ambon, 1999 has witnessed the growth of local refugee crises, with tens of thousands of local residents forced to flee their homes due to destruction, violence, and intimidation, and to take up temporary abode in schools, government buildings, mosques, and churches, and other locations, or to flee to safety elsewhere in Indonesia. If the grievances and tensions plaguing Aceh and Ambon are not redressed or resolved in 2000, it is thus unfortunately quite likely that problems of social displacement and considerable hardship and deprivation for refugees will continue to haunt these two provinces in the months and years to come. Under these circumstances, it is only to be hoped - and urged - that local, national, and international bodies will do their utmost to ease the hardships faced by these refugees.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, rising alarmism about the possibility of impending anarchy, national disintegration, and/or inter-communal warfare could combine with growing resentment of civilian authority in some quarters of the TNI to provoke a violent backlash and reassertion of strength by the military establishment. Indeed, recent weeks have seen a flurry of public statements by various high-ranking military officers which suggest deep cleavages within the TNI. On the one hand, avowedly reformist officers have made statements indicating their acquiescence in ongoing human rights investigations, respect for civilian authority, and support for the reduction of the Army's role in national politics and its territorial presence in the provinces. On the other hand, more hard-line officers, including the commander of the Strategic Army Reserve (Kostrad), the largest garrison in Jakarta, have issued rather menacing statements in recent weeks threatening Army retribution if civilians persist in pursuing human rights investigations, summoning top generals to the Parliament, and interfering in security policies (e.g. in Aceh).<sup>56</sup> Growing tension between these two

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<sup>56</sup> See, for example, *Far Eastern Economic Review* [Hong Kong], Margot Cohen, "Generals under Fire", 9 December 1999; *Kompas* [Jakarta], "Mayjen Agus Wirahadikusumah: Tidak Perlu Pemekaran Kodam", 14 December 1999, "Kodam Cukup Enam Saja", 15 December 1999, "Komando Teritorial Jadi Wacana Internal", 16 December 1999, and "Loyalitas Prajurit TNI Bukan pada Jenderal", 17 December 1999

factions within the TNI, and growing resentment among hard-liners towards President Wahid, the DPR, and civilian authority more generally, could lead to various forms of intrigue and insubordination, including unauthorized operations in Aceh and instigation of riots or other disturbances elsewhere in the archipelago.

Indeed, contrary to official government policy, the military establishment and its client militias in East Timor forcibly expelled thousands of people from the territory following the referendum in August 1999, and even today camps in West Timor controlled by the military and the militias hold as many as 150,000 refugees under conditions of severe deprivation and intimidation.<sup>57</sup>

In this context, fears of disorder and disintegration could be used to legitimate a reassertion of military prerogatives in provinces like Aceh or in Jakarta itself, and indeed many commentators have seen the hidden hand of the Army behind the violence in Ambon, or the demonstrations in Jayapura, for example.

Under these circumstances, excessive alarmism will play into hard-line military hands. It is thus to be hoped that local, national, and international agencies concerned about the suffering and social dislocation caused by violence in provinces like Aceh and Ambon will keep in mind the origins of the disturbances in these “hotspots”. Whether in Aceh or Ambon, the violence of 1999 reflects local grievances and resentments fuelled and ignited by many years of authoritarian rule and state violence, whether centrally administered by Kopassus troops or subcontracted out to local gangsters (*preman*). The historical record is clear: a reassertion of military power will only exacerbate Indonesia’s considerable problems, and only further democratization will consolidate the gains achieved since 1998 and allow for peaceful reconciliation in troubled areas of the country.

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<sup>57</sup> See Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia/East Timor: Forced Expulsions to West Timor and the Refugee Crisis* (New York, December 1999).

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