

The Indonesian Intelligence State Revisited

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This is the latest in an ongoing series of articles on the crisis in East Timor. This article is by Richard Tanter of Kyoto Seika University in Japan.

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Richard Tanter

1. The East Timor Operation

Most likely, until the world unexpectedly reacted to the great killings in East Timor, the Indonesian military had no intention of allowing any transfer of sovereignty, whatever the result of the UN ballot. The plan would have been to stall, bluff, badmouth the United Nations' conduct of the ballot, and hope that the world's attention would go away. Given the record of the great powers and most of the world's media since 1975, and the experience of Indonesian intelligence in black operations and terror, these were not entirely unreasonable assumptions.

Operasi Sapu Jagad [Operation Clean Sweep], headed by Major-General Zacky Anwar Makirim, began immediately after Habibie's shock announcement of a referendum. The plan's primary objective, to destroy CNRT by killing local leaders and prominent supporters, followed the experience of US black operations in South Vietnam (the Phoenix Programme) and Nicaragua. Anwar, who was at the time head of Badan Intelijen ABRI [BIA: Armed

Forces Intelligence Agency] had been commander of Army Intelligence at the time of the Santa Cruz massacre in 199X, and a close associate of former Lieutenant-General Prabowo, Suharto's son-in-law and main rival to Wiranto for control of the armed forces.²

Zacky Anwar's appointment by Habibie as liaison to UNAMET shocked many UN officials, who were already well aware of the weaknesses of the May 5th Agreement, but they were effectively powerless to deal with either threat. Although Anwar stepped down as head of BIA to take up the position, his role as the principal coordinator of the unfolding programme of terror was unchanged.

Details of the different strands of the militia and their alignments with each other and with different Indonesian military and civil factions are still emerging. It is clear that the intelligence plan, especially after the vote, had two dimensions within East Timor. The first was the organized killing of those capable of providing political and moral leadership suspected of favouring independence, including of course, key CNRT activists and Catholic religious and intellectuals. The naming of priests and nuns by their killers leaves little doubt of the level of organization involved. Of course there was a further element of relatively indiscriminate slaughter, flowing both from a desire to use terror to control the remainder of the population, and most likely a degree of loss of temporary tactical control by army officers over some of their militia clients. This, of course, was not viewed as a problem by Indonesian intelligence: far from it. In certain circumstances, after key people have been liquidated, the apparently random character of terror is helpful.

The second dimension of the post-vote operation has been the looting and plundering of anything moveable by the militias. Apart from personal enrichment of the looters themselves and their TNI and militia commanders, the motive seems to have been a will to destroy. If East Timor was to be left, it would be left with nothing. While no doubt operating with general TNI approval, it is possible that different militia gangs carrying out the pillage were under varying degrees of immediate TNI control.

The Indonesian military intelligence plan to destroy CNRT and the possibility of East Timorese has succeeded - and failed. While the killing in East Timor will continue until the UN peace keepers arrive, most of TNI's local objectives have been realized. Anwar's officers seem to have done their work with appalling effectiveness. Amongst the more than 200,000 East Timorese reportedly now in West Timor, killing and intimidation will continue for some time. The loss of so many people, in a small population that had already lost almost a quarter of its population to earlier waves of Indonesian aggression, will be very hard to overcome.

Yet, after enormous suffering and loss of life, and with devastating loss of precious human resources, East Timor will now become independent.

There will be foot-dragging and wild talk in the Indonesian parliament and media, but it is now impossible for the military who govern now or whoever takes power in November to not fulfill the provisions of the May 5th Agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN, according to which a majority vote for independence will lead to the required constitutional changes from the Indonesian president and legislature. This will not happen without sustained and concerted external pressure, but it will happen.

2. The long history of Indonesian military terror

Ten days of extreme terror in East Timor have destroyed the hopes of President Habibie of becoming an elected president. More importantly, they have almost certainly finished any hopes that General Wiranto had of becoming Vice-President to Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Megawati herself will be having very ambivalent responses. Her often-noted nationalism blinded her to any sympathy for the Timorese, and she has the support of many important serving and retired military officers. Undoubtedly, long before now, the lesson she drew from Habibie's failure to control the military is that an Indonesian president governs with the support of the military, or not at all.

Yet Megawati lived through an attempt by generals to assassinate her father, former President Sukarno, in her schoolyard. As a young woman she watched her father's allies on the left slaughtered in their hundreds of thousands by the Army and Islamic groups it manipulated and directed in the year after the coup and counter-coup in October 1965.

Megawati, like millions of other Indonesian citizens, has never spoken openly about her experiences or feelings about that holocaust. The CIA estimated that at least 800,000 people, mainly unarmed members of the then-legal Communist Party of Indonesia, plus a large of Indonesians of Chinese-descent, were killed. Until Suharto's fall, the topic of the great killings of 1965-66 was literally unspeakable. It was as if the Nazi holocaust could not have been discussed in Germany until the 1970s. The trauma has been repressed - and the terror rendered all the more powerful accordingly.

Many foreign observers have made the point that a third objective of the militia killings in East Timor has been to warn Aceh of its fate if it continues to rebel. True enough, Aceh is one target of the terror. Yet the larger target is Indonesia as a whole. The sheer brazenness of the East Timor killing brings the great trauma of 1965-66 back to consciousness.

The terror in East Timor this time is not out of the ordinary in Indonesia. Three types of terror have in fact been crucial to establishing and maintaining military control of Indonesia since 1965.

* Firstly, the constitutive terror of 1965-66 was the foundation of the

New Order. Sukarno and the left was destroyed; Suharto and three generations of generals came to power; and they, together with their domestic and foreign commercial partners, became incredibly rich. Periodically reminding the population of the "events of 1965", or lamenting the "possibility of a repeat of 1965" has been an extremely effective military tactic, particularly in combination with the repression of the trauma.

* Secondly, after the worst of the constitutive terror edged back from daily consciousness by the late 1960s, intermittent targeted terror operations in the centre were important and effective tool of control by the military. After the complete liquidation of the left by 1968 the targets of terror shifted: at different times Islamic groups disenchanted with the earthly paradise produced by Islamic cooperation in 1965-66; radical students; criminal gang leaders out of favour with Army bosses; and, as industrialization progressed, labour activists organizing outside the stultifying framework of government controlled unions. While the destruction of particular immediate targets was always the primary goal, an important secondary function was the revivifying of the underlying sense of generalized terror. For example, when military intelligence decided, with President Suharto's explicit support, to break the growing power of uncooperative gang bosses in the cities of Java by simply using military special forces and police to assassinate several thousand alleged criminals in 197X, the bodies the bullet-ridden dead were laid out in public places, or near the homes and work-places of prominent opponents of the regime.

* Thirdly, the standard response to discontent with Jakarta's rule on the edges of the archipelago has been terror: peripheral terror. The terror this time in East Timor differs only in its intensity in a very short period, and in the attention given by the rest of the world from the terror of the preceding 24 years. In Aceh and Irian Jaya, militarized responses to local grievances for comparable periods have by and large gone unnoticed by the rest of the world. The fact that the Indonesia media was controlled by the military meant that these matters were unreportable in the Indonesian media. And yet the very vagueness of people's awareness of "troubles" in the peripheries contributed to the general sense of low-level terror that characterized the population as a whole through most of the Suharto period.

The great killings in East Timor are planned to serve as an attempt to once again remind Indonesians of the utter ruthlessness and brazen cruelty of which certain strands of the Indonesian military are capable, on the expectation that as before, these actions will be either ignored or even applauded by the foreign supporters.

The key institutional apparatus in all of this is the very large and well-funded network of military and nominally civilian intelligence organizations that make up the Indonesian intelligence state, which has been very little affected by the mild and limited democratizing moves of the past year. Major-General Zacky Anwar, as head of the Armed Forces

Intelligence Agency [BIA], controlled a network of surveillance that reaches down from the TNI headquarters in Jakarta, through every layer of military administration to every village and city neighbourhood in the country. Normally senescent in the face of ordinary life in non-crisis times, and, like any bureauacracy, probably never as efficient as it believes itself to be, the surveillance apparatus is geared to provide a fine-grained observation of the nation as a whole according to need.

Coupled to the surveillance capacities of BIA, every regional military command, and every layer beneath, has an intelligence section which not only coordinates surveillance requirements according to need, but has a capacity and a mandate to intervene by whatever means are deemed necessary. Special forces such as the Kopassus red berets have their own teams and networks, and can co-opt regional resourses. There are few effective legal restrants on domestic intelligence operations. The intelligence task forces that have terrorized East Timorese, whether from special forces or regular troops under the direction of the Bali headquarters of the Udayana IX regional command, have their parallels in every other area of Indonesia of concern to the military.

Beyond the military intelligence hierarchy under BIA control, nominally civilian organizations such as BAKIN [the State Intelligence Coordinating Agency] or the Intelligence Division of the Attorney-Generals department, or the intelligence division of the highy militarized National Police, all play a key part in the maintenance of the system of surveillance and repression. A legal system under military direction for three decades and a cowed and co-opted legislature provide the last elements of the picture.

The intelligence state under an elected president

The key questions now are firstly whether this domestic intelligence apparatus will survive a change of presidency; and secondly, if it does, are its capacities in any way diminished?

Should Megawati become president in November, it is extremely unlikely that she will move to dismantle the key institutions of the intelligence state. Legal reform is probable, and would be welcome. As in the past year, media freedom will allow a degree of scrutiny the operations of the military, and NGOs and religious groups will continually challenge arbitrary and extra-legal power with great courage. Some senior officers will be sacrificed for the East Timor killings, quite possibly Anwar and close colleagues. But the core military intelligence structure and its civilian counterparts will not be touched, unless Megawati can find some way of attenuating her dependence on the military.

That said, and acknowledging the enormous damage that TNI intelligence has done to East Timor, does that mean that nothing has changed, that the power of the Indonesian intelligence state is undiminished? The answer to that is no.

Firstly, despite the considerable privatized and extra-budgetary financial resources available to the Indonesian military in general (including those controlled by Prabowo through his wife's corporate empire), the combination of economic regularization and the economic crisis of the last year have cut into the money needed for unaudited and unsupervised black operations. How much, and to what precise extent is unknowable, but without doubt the military is somewhat curbed. The amounts of money being mentioned as provided for black operations in East Timor this year are still relatively small. As the social effects of the economic crisis deepen, the demands will be greater and the resources even smaller.

Secondly, a key resource for terror is belief in the omnipresence and omniscience of the intelligence organizations. Powerful as they may be, this is not the case in Indonesia, and the scrutiny of the military in general that has come with the surge in press and civil freedoms in the past year somewhat diminish this sense. Indonesia is far from a democratic society, but it has moved well beyond the sense of repressiveness of the height of the New Order.

Thirdly, the military, and intelligence organizations in particular never acted alone in their political interventions. The allied or manipulated groups varied over time and according to need. For example, in the early New Order period anti-Sukarno student groups, and Chinese and Catholic groups, played a key role in breaking the power of Sukarno and the left, in addition to the huge Islamic organizations. These groups provided considerable resources - material, moral and political - to sustain and cloak black operations. None of these groupings is willing or able to provide such resources now. Indonesian society today, after more than thirty years of rapid capitalist transformation, is of course very different from 1965, but the slow decline of the New Order was characterized by a decline in the political resources available to President Suharto, and in a comparable though lesser fashion, for the intelligence organizations.

Finally, the military itself is not a monolithic organization with an unchanging organizational mission and political character. Most analyses of the last years of the Suharto period concentrated on perceived "nationalist" or pro-Suharto factions as against those of a more seriously Islamic persuasion, and the hardy perennial of Indonesian military analysis on vague assertions of differences amongst the generations of military academy classes.

We in fact know very little. Typical of the lack of reliable information about the Indonesian military in the public domain is the unanswered question of whether or not Wiranto in fact commands the military, or whether on East Timor he was ambushed by Zacky Anwar Makarim and others close to Prabowo and more clearly part of the combination of intelligence and specialist forces streams that have dominated the army and the armed forces as a whole since Benny Moerdani's time.

Yet two issues deriving from the military's stated mission may influence the issue, though in opposite ways.

Firstly, the Indonesian military, for all its five decades of domestic preoccupations, is also an outward looking military organization charged with the defence of the republic against external as well as internal threats. The strategic environment of East and Southeast Asia is becoming considerably more unstable than for many years. In particular, the continuing low-level/high stakes conflict over the Spratlys is of concern to the Indonesian military. This is especially the case given the regional escalation in sophisticated (and expensive) weapons platforms and C3I capacities over the past decade. The demand to meet potential external threats creates a degree of professional pressure for regularization of military organizational procedures. This is hardly a democratizing pressure in itself, and the professionalization of intelligence organizations under Moerdani did nothing to diminish their capacity for brutality.

Secondly, the political effects of the economic crisis in Indonesia have been remarkably muted. Despite a rapid rise in unemployment, a domestic financial and banking crisis, and a collapse in the patronage power of the state, there has been surprisingly little mobilization around economic issues. This may be a matter of waiting for Megawati, waiting for the other shoe to drop. In fact Megawati's economic policy commitments are at this stage unclear, and a great deal will depend on the bargaining within the legislature that accompanies the presidential and vice-presidential election. Yet the primary object of the intelligence apparatus's attention in recent years, East Timor and Aceh apart, has been what is seen as the destabilizing effects of labour organization. Sooner or later, despite the ameliorating effects of more than \$40 billion of foreign aid, the social effects of the economic and fiscal crisis will confront the new government of Indonesia. A Megawati presidency, hostage to the military, and labouring under the restraints of enormous debt and IMF-approved budgets, will almost certainly face growing social unrest. A civilian leadership does not by itself diminish the likelihood of militarized responses to domestic social and political crisis - and that has been the specialty of the Indonesian intelligence state.

1 For a brief background to the Indonesian intelligence state see Richard Tanter, "After Kopkamtib: Indonesia's intelligence and security apparatus", *Inside Indonesia*, April 1989, pp.4-6. For a more extended treatment see Richard Tanter, "The totalitarian ambition: the Indonesian intelligence and security apparatus", in Arief Budiman (ed.), *State and Soviet in Contemporary Indonesia*, (Clayton: Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991), pp.215-288.

2 Operasi Sapu Jagad is documented in "Indonesia's Dirty war in East Timor, *Tapol Bulletin*, 7 June 1999, <http://www.gn.apc.org/tapol>

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