

Recent concerns with terrorism have highlighted the point that, in a globalised world, one country's security depends on the security of others. Also, because of its proximity, Australian security will depend on the attainment of security in Indonesia. The dangers to Australia of Indonesia 'implosion' means the security outlook for the region is problematic.

Security therefore becomes a matter of mutuality. Building greater understanding and appreciation by the people in each country of the other country would be a good place to start in building greater security. Additionally, Australia is well placed to offer assistance (in an unconditional, non-patronising way) to Indonesia in meeting its economic, environmental and social challenges.

After all, this is what good neighbours do for each other.

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This pamphlet was produced by the collective efforts of a number of members of *Just Peace* based on their personal knowledge and experience, as well as reading and searching of literature and web sources. Their efforts are much appreciated.

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Revised and Re-issued: 28/04/2004



In the words of Major-General Peter Cosgrove, after leading the East Timor intervention in September 2000:

*'Good neighbours learn to speak each other's languages. Good neighbours learn to respect each other's religious and cultural beliefs. Good neighbours learn to allow for differences and to be inclusive. Good neighbours spend time with each other ...'*

Despite their close proximity, the relationship between Indonesia and Australia is one of guarded interest. A 2004 survey, reported in the foreign affairs magazine, *Australian Diplomat*, asked 180 leading Australian policy makers to give their top-twenty ranking of countries in order of importance to Australia. The results placed Indonesia third below the US and China in every category, and in the economic and cultural categories, Indonesia was ranked sixth and thirteenth respectively, behind mainly European countries including the Vatican City.

Australia views Indonesia as clearly important but displays little sense of cultural commonality. This is compounded by the fact that Australians as a rule remain largely ignorant of Indonesia – of its history, its culture and its social structure. What we do hear about our closest, and largest, northern neighbour comes to us via the filter of media reports about potential military expansionism, human rights abuses and, more recently, terrorist bombings. This pamphlet attempts to redress some of this ignorance.

### INDONESIA: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### Early history

Because of its geographic location on the trading routes between southern and eastern Asia, the cultural traditions of India and China have heavily influenced the Indonesian archipelago. Several Buddhist and Hindu



#### Peace Issues Pamphlet No. 2

This pamphlet has been published by *Just Peace* in the interests of general discussion and inquiry. Any views expressed do not necessarily represent those of individual members of *Just Peace*.

societies emerged during the thousand years prior to 1500BC and, towards the end of this period, traders from the Middle East and Africa introduced Islam.

During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese and then, more significantly, the Dutch brought Christianity (and additional language influences) to Indonesia. The archipelago therefore came to be a melting pot of cultures and religions. Generally, the different beliefs co-existed peacefully except for occasions when political conflict was expressed or symbolised in religious terms.

Altogether, the Indonesian archipelago contains more than 13 600 islands. Until the last century, its inland areas were more difficult to traverse than the sea routes between islands, so Indonesia has generally comprised many diverse and isolated communities. It is only in very recent times that the concept of a combined Indonesian identity has emerged.

In the sixteenth century, the Dutch East India Company established a base in Java, exploiting rivalries between local rulers to expand their territory and trading monopoly. By the mid-1800s, the Dutch empire extended over the area we now know as Indonesia. Dutch rule was overtly exploitative and created widespread poverty and social grievance.

### **Independence**

During the Dutch colonial period the development of a sustainable economy and politically aware middle class was actively inhibited. (Even today, less than 7 per cent of the Indonesian population could be described as middle class.) The Japanese occupied Indonesia during World War II and, after Japan's defeat in 1945, nationalist leaders moved to achieve independence prior to the return of the Dutch. On 17 August 1945, Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence. After several unsuccessful armed interventions, the Dutch finally recognised Indonesian independence in 1949.

Due to the political instability of power-sharing arrangements after independence, no fewer than five prime ministers supported Sukarno's presidency between 1950 and 1956. In 1956 Sukarno introduced what he termed 'Guided Democracy'. This involved greater powers for the president and a consensual approach to government, with each party being represented, along with members of the community, in a National Council.



production such as pedicabs, and the demolition of side-street food stalls and other informal economic activities.

It was hoped that with globalisation, such a problem would attract the attention and assistance of the international community; however, there is evidence that multi-national companies actually hinder progress in this area.

A huge number of poor people live on the fringes of big cities like Jakarta, without any security of tenure for their shanties. In 1994 *The Economist* stated that only 7 per cent of land on the Indonesian archipelago had a clear owner. Often these shantytowns are located on riverbanks and can be bulldozed and burnt without warning in what the authorities call 'river normalisation'.

In 2001 the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) organised an international fact-finding mission on victimisation of the urban poor of Jakarta. This was after exhaustive attempts to stop state violence towards the poor at the local and national level. The UPC mission statement is '... freedom from poverty, freedom from fear, freedom from oppression, and freedom from violence. It is about a vision to comprehend and materialise the shared future.'

### **WHAT SECURITY NEEDS DO AUSTRALIA AND INDONESIA HAVE IN COMMON?**

It should be recognised that the security needs of Indonesians and Australians are basically the same. Both need:

- freedom from poverty
- protection of human rights
- active participation in community life
- protection of the environment, and
- the right to good governance.

People feel secure if their basic needs are met, for example, food, housing, health, and education. People feel secure if their basic decencies are protected, for example, freedom from persecution, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention, and execution. People feel secure if their participatory rights are granted, for example, the choice of political leadership, career, cultural orientation and lifestyle. People feel secure if the ecology can sustain them. Finally, people feel secure if they live under humane and accountable governance.

In dealing with these regions, the army's heavy-handed approach has contributed to increased sympathy for separatists. Consequently, when the East Timorese were given the opportunity to vote for independence in 1999, 80 per cent of them did so.

**Perception # 6 That Australia could become flooded with Indonesian refugees**

If the economy does not perform well, there is the possibility of environmental and political/economic refugees, but these are more likely to gravitate towards Malaysia.

In the worst-case scenario, if Indonesia cannot survive its multi-dimensional crises or fails to address the threat of national disintegration, this will produce millions of refugees, worse than during the Vietnam War or the collapse of Yugoslavia. Due to geographical proximity, little could be done by the Australian Navy to stop an influx of refugees from reaching the Australian mainland. If, say, five percent of Indonesian people seek refuge in Australia, this number would equal half the Australian population.

Indonesian economic, food, environmental and political security are therefore of prime importance to Australia.

**Perception # 7 That Indonesia is riddled with corruption**

Westerners often see corruption in developing countries as evidence of their own 'moral superiority'. In reality, corruption among elites is usually the sign of a lack of properly developed institutions that could otherwise ensure accountability – something we take for granted. In the lower levels of Indonesian society corruption became a survival strategy during Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy' of the 1960s.

As government attempts to control the economy increased, so too did corruption. The bureaucracy was not well enough equipped to operate control mechanisms, and this, together with rising living costs and very low civil-service salaries, helped to make bribery, the illegal disposal of government goods and other rackets an entrenched part of Indonesia's economy. During the Suharto period, Indonesia was described as having an 'ersatz capitalism', in which the economy more closely resembled a franchise state run by crony capital rather than a free-market system.

**Perception # 8 That Indonesians are indifferent to poverty**

There is widespread community concern among human rights groups in Indonesia about the treatment of the poor, which includes arrest and terror, forced eviction of whole communities, confiscation of means of

While this method reduced opposition in government, it did not promote unity across Indonesia's regions. In 1958 rebellions broke out in Sumatra and Sulawesi. Sukarno declared martial law and employed the army to put down the rebellions. After successfully completing this task, army leadership formed the view that its support was vital for Indonesia's viability. Thus began the active involvement of the Indonesian army in the political processes of the republic.

The period of Guided Democracy, between 1957 and 1965, was characterised by an active, anti-Western foreign policy, but less than effective attempts to deal with internal economic problems. At the same time as Sukarno was providing leadership for the 'non-aligned' bloc of nations, the economy was crumbling, with inflation running at 650 per cent in the mid-1960s.

**The killings of 1965**

In September 1965, Sukarno's rule came to a sudden end, followed by one of the worst mass killings of the twentieth century. A brief summary of these events is as follows:

- In the early morning hours of 1 October 1965, a small force of junior military officers abducted and killed six generals and seized several key points in the capital city of Jakarta.
- They then went on air to announce that their action was being taken to forestall a CIA-sponsored putsch to capture power from President Sukarno. By the end of the day, however, the rebel officers in Jakarta were crushed by the army under the direction of General Suharto.
- The coup attempt was blamed on the nation's communists and, in the seven months that followed, an estimated 600 000 to 1 million people were killed. Anti-communist organisations and individuals, particularly Muslims, were encouraged to join in the slaying of anyone suspected of being a communist sympathiser. Among the victims were also members of the Chinese minority (who were accused of supporting communist China), opponents of the new regime, trade unionists and intellectuals in general.

Prior to September 1965, the Indonesian communist party (PKI) had been the largest in the world outside the Soviet Union and China – a situation that significantly fuelled Cold War tensions. Generally supportive of Sukarno, the PKI was singled out and falsely accused of staging the coup (in fact, it is widely considered to have been instigated by Suharto and his

military faction). The PKI was then outlawed, an act supported by the United States.

(Twenty-five years later, American diplomats disclosed that they had systematically compiled comprehensive lists of 'communist' operatives and turned over as many as 5000 names to the Indonesian army, which hunted those persons down and killed them. The Americans would then check off the names of those who had been killed or captured. Robert Martens, a former member of the US Embassy in Jakarta, stated in 1990: 'It really was a big help to the army. They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all bad. There's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment.')

In Indonesia, the reasons for the 1965 massacres have never been openly and publicly discussed and a sense of shame still surrounds the relatives of those killed. They also remain a source of anti-Western feeling.

#### **The New Order**

Suharto became the new ruler of Indonesia, although he did not formally replace Sukarno as president until 1968. He introduced a new version of democracy called 'New Order' government. In foreign affairs the New Order adopted a strongly pro-Western stance and economically there was greater emphasis on growth, largely through encouraging foreign investment. Politically, any forces that could potentially threaten the unity of the Indonesian state, particularly separatist movements, were very harshly dealt with.

On the surface at least, the biggest success of the Suharto years was economic, although the bulk of the population received little of the nation's wealth. Through controlling wages, banning industrial activity and encouraging foreign investment, Indonesia's average economic growth between 1965 and 1990 was 4.5 per cent, the highest rate in South-east Asia. It is ironic, therefore, that it was economic issues that led to the end of the New Order government.

When the Asian economic crisis hit in 1997, Indonesia was severely affected due to the high level of corruption and low level of labour productivity. After three decades of authoritarian rule, government and community organisations were not flexible enough to adapt. After student demonstrations and general rioting in Jakarta in May 1998, Suharto resigned.



#### **Perception # 4 That Indonesia's Transmigration Policy is a sign of expansionist ambitions**

Indonesia's huge population is concentrated on two islands, Java and Sumatra. These islands are also the source of much of the nation's food. In a program partly funded and overwhelmingly supported by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, millions of people – in some cases entire villages – were moved from densely populated areas in Java and Sumatra to other islands. It was hoped that food production could increase if they had access to arable land.

The World Bank withdrew its support in the late 1980s and the program slowed considerably. While some parts of the program were a dismal failure as land was poor, tidal, or access to water was insufficient, many made a great success of the program and integrated into local communities. The others returned to their homes.

While the main public reasons for the program were economic, it was also geared to social and political control of sensitive areas within Indonesian national boundaries and has caused local grievances.

#### **Perception # 5 That Indonesia's separatist movements are symptomatic of its brutality**

Since independence, there have been many separatist movements in Indonesia fostered mainly by geographic isolation. Separatism is also fuelled by economic grievances, as many provinces perceive that they are exploited to provide wealth for the ruling elite in Jakarta and their transnational partners.

The major areas of conflict are listed below:

- Aceh, in the north-west of Sumatra, had been an independent sultanate with its own ports, system of trade and foreign policy. It has a long, separate history from the rest of Indonesia and a strong commitment to Islam. Despite periods of violent repression, Aceh remains unreconciled with Jakarta.
- East Timor had been a Portuguese colony and was forcibly incorporated into Indonesia in 1975. After a long and violent Indonesian occupation, the small nation finally achieved full independence in 2002.
- Irian Jaya (or West Papua) is geographically remote from Jakarta and its mostly Melanesian inhabitants are more ethnically aligned to the peoples of Papua New Guinea. Through a fraudulent referendum (Act of Free Choice, 1969), West Papua was incorporated into Indonesia against the will of the majority of Papuans.

### **Perception # 2 That Indonesians are Muslim fundamentalists**

Indonesians are some of the most religiously tolerant people in the world. It should be noted that the usual Sunni-Shia theological divide does not define Islam in Indonesia, as it does in the Middle East. However, in practice Indonesian Muslims fall roughly into two groups:

- *Abangan* – who identify themselves as Muslims, go to the Mosque or pray fairly regularly but, in general, are as devout as most Australian Christians.
- *Santris* – who are the extremely devout.

As pointed out in the earlier historical account, Indonesia also has Hindu and Buddhist roots.

Generally, Indonesians are contemptuous of fanatical Muslims. However, such fanatics that exist have been used by the military, most notably in 1965 when Muslim groups were encouraged to kill communists. A recent example is the *Laksa Jihadis*, who were openly funded by the army to stir up trouble in Moluku. Even killings attributed to Muslim fanatics are suspect. For example, many died from headshots – a sign of Kopassus snipers, not Islamic fanaticism. Until very recently it was illegal to own a gun in Indonesia, the exception being air guns. So shootings are more likely to be linked with military or police intervention.

### **Perception # 3 That Indonesia is controlled by the army**

The Indonesian military is a visible presence in the country and, since independence, has been one of the key forces for stability. As such, the army has been involved, either overtly or covertly, in responding to separatist movements and maintaining internal order. However, the army is not geared towards an offensive role and has not been involved in any major overseas adventures.

Indonesians in general are ambivalent towards the military. It costs about 50 million rupiah to get your child into the military, which is seen as a secure career with status. The Indonesian civil administration was, and largely still is, controlled by the military and it is seen as one of the few well-organised groups in the country.

Additionally, the military runs a parallel economy that is free from public scrutiny and that significantly reduces military accountability to, and dependence on, government. Army generals run businesses such as hotels, transport, and many others, and the operations of the army are financed partly by these businesses. For example, in 1992 General Rudini told the government that he would not require a fiscal allocation for defence for the next parliamentary term.

### **2000 and beyond**

The current president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, is the third leader since then – an indication that Indonesia is going through a new period of political instability and uncertainty. Regional separatism continues to be a challenge for the government as well as the reduction in food security, rising unemployment, increased cronyism and, more recently, the Bali bombing. Increased stability has led to international concern that Indonesia might ‘implode’ with potentially drastic consequences for Australia.

### **WHAT ARE INDONESIA'S CONCERNS ABOUT AUSTRALIA?**

Although it may not be immediately apparent to many Australians, Indonesians harbour several ongoing concerns regarding its nearest southern neighbour.

Some concerns that are worth considering are:

#### **1. That Australia wants to see the break up of Indonesia**

A number of issues have fuelled this perception. Australia's support for an independent East Timor greatly exacerbated tensions at an official level. There is a sense that too much Australian parliamentary and media time has been devoted to Indonesia's separatist movements – East Timor, West Papua, Aceh and Maluku. Added to this is a sense of alarm that Australia is increasing its forward defence capacity under the Howard government, adopting a ‘police’ role in support of the United States. Indonesians fear that this will cause us to interfere in areas critical to Indonesia's sense of nationality. They ask why Australia suddenly changed in 1999 and became the ‘good cop’ in East Timor. Was this at the behest of the United States? And, if so, will Australia be asked to act in a similar manner in West Papua or Maluku?

#### **2. That Australians are Islam-phobic and racist**

Another issue that fuels Indonesian mistrust of Australia is our perceived concentration of many aid activities in the Eastern part of Indonesia. Australians are seen as being uninterested in western, or greater, Indonesia – only the more Christianised east (East Timor, Bali and West Papua). Australia is viewed as generally Islam-phobic and, with the emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party during the 1990s, Australians are seen as having an unfavourable view of Asian culture, even blatantly racist. Our perceived mistreatment of our Aboriginal people is seen as further proof.

### 3. That Australians are ignorant of, and uninterested in, Indonesia

Many Indonesians believe that Australians are unable to appreciate the diversity of Indonesian life and thought. Instead, we perceive Indonesia mainly through a narrow social spectrum of human rights abuse, military expansionism and teeming millions in abject poverty. Indonesia's media reports extensively on Australian affairs while the converse rarely occurs.

Consequently, most Indonesians know more about Australian politics than Australians know about Indonesian politics. Australians are viewed as having little understanding of, or interest in, Indonesia's economic problems since the fall of Suharto, or how to help Indonesians address them.

#### ARE INDONESIA'S CONCERNS ABOUT AUSTRALIA JUSTIFIED AND, IF SO, HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THEM?

This is a difficult question to answer. However, it is one that is fundamental to our future relationship with Indonesia. One way to address the issue is to examine some of our own perceptions about Indonesia and to ask ourselves whether they are based on myth or fact.

Some of these perceptions are:

#### Perception # 1 That the Bali bombing deliberately targeted Australians

There are several aspects about the Bali tragedy that should be noted.

One is that many Indonesians died – possibly hundreds, but as the residential areas behind the clubs were simply vaporised with few records of who was in them it is impossible to estimate how many died. Thus both Australians and Indonesians suffered huge losses. For the Indonesians the subsequent tourist exodus and economic hardship, as well as a sense of social and cultural violation, made things much worse.

The issues are complex. We need to understand that Australians were the majority of the

'visible' tourists in the Kuta region, which is prone to loudness in a land where people speak quietly; objectionable in a land where overt conflict is avoided; and were often drunk on cheap booze and under the influence of readily available drugs. The Sari club was one of many that were closed to unaccompanied Indonesians, causing some local tension.

Many of those sentenced for the Bali bombing came from very poor families, and had grievances against the establishment. But others are far more complex characters with links to international terrorism. Many are educated in the West and react, perhaps at a deep level, to what they see as dangerous secular values, epitomised by the drugs, prostitution and blatant consumerism of the young foreign tourists in Bali.

At this point we have to stand aside and see ourselves through the eyes of others. Australian political grandstanding, condescension and bullying of an ancient nation proud of its cultures and religious traditions can provoke a complex mixture of reactions. Additionally, our public links with the United States in its perceived vendetta against Islam can create an atmosphere of mistrust that might lead to similar incidents happening in the future.

