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Centre and Periphery in Indonesia: Environment, Politics and Human Rights in the Regional Press (Bali)

Carol Warren

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CENTRE AND PERIPHERY IN LATE NEW ORDER INDONESIA:
Politics, the Environment and Human Rights in the Regional Press (Bali)

Introduction

This working paper examines political dissent in the regional press of late New Order Indonesia. Taking the emerging environmental politics of tourism development in Bali as its point of departure, the study at the same time explores broader questions of centre-periphery relations in Indonesia. It focuses on the role of the regional media in forming and representing public opinion and in articulating the interests of marginalised political, economic and cultural groups1.

Bali is an interesting place in which to look at the question of regionalism in Indonesia for a number of reasons. The province has, by all the gross indicators of development, done very well in the past decade - moving from one of the lowest, to one of the highest income provinces in the nation2. In addition, the political views of most Balinese, since the traumatic bloodletting of 1965 at least, would appear quite conservative. Partly because of Bali's devastating experience of party politics in the 1960s; certainly, out of a defensive perception of their position as a minority religious culture in a predominantly Islamic society, the Balinese public has been inclined to accept the government party (Golkar) line and enthusiastically support the rhetoric of the national philosophy, Pancasila, in principle - though never without critical attention to divergence in practice3.

When central government was remote, blame for corruption and incompetence tended to be focused on intermediate bureaucracy. The paradox of Bali's development experience has been that the penetration of big capital, the rise of a local middle class and reduction or perforation of the gap between the centre and the provinces has dramatically altered popular understandings of the national political scene and intensified overtly contesting responses to it.

Popular perceptions of the New Order government have begun to shift over the last five years as indicated by the growth in support for the opposition PDI party in the 1992 election. The PDI doubled its vote province-wide to 20%4, but actually reached 40% in areas such as the village of my research, which sits on the fringe of one of the cinderella zone5 of tourist development. Nor is the official vote-count a real reflection of general disaffection with the current government, since many people indicated that they continued to vote Golkar, the government party, only for want of a realistic alternative6.
Regional economic development, which had been based on agricultural intensification, small-scale tourism, and handicraft export, began to take a very different direction in the late 1980s with an unprecedented investment boom, fed by deregulation of the banking system. Official figures show a ten-fold increase in foreign and domestic investment in major projects on Bali between 1987 and 1988, from US $17 million to $170 million, almost doubling again in 1989-90 (Kantor Statistik Bali 1991). As of 1991, approval had been granted for over 1.5 billion US dollars worth of new investments in star hotels for the already overbuilt Badung area alone (UNDP 1992 Appendix 3:21). In its wake, popular reaction to the effects of increasingly visible 'Big Capital' began to shake the sacred cow status of the tourist industry and government development policy itself. Initially these reactions found their way into the public domain as part of a growing concern with environmental impacts and coincided with the official proclamations of an 'openness' policy in 1990, relaxing to some extent the tight control over the press, characteristic of much of the New Order period.

By 1990 a number of acute environmental problems were receiving unprecedented attention in the local press. The unregulated mining of limestone and coral for hotel construction and extensions to the airport; the incursion of high class hotels into the remotest parts of the island against the provisions of the 1971 Master Plan for tourism; the erosion of beaches; dramatically increasing levels of plastic, sewage and air pollution; salination of underground aquifers; the diversion of water from farms to hotels and golf courses; the conversion of productive land - often forcibly resumed - to tourist facilities; and the complicity of the army and government officials in facilitating projects in breach of regional government regulations became subjects of front page news, political cartoons and letters to the editor in the regional press. Some of this reporting was in quite stirring language, and drew on the popular-nationalist tradition in which the main local newspaper, the Bali Post, has its roots.

The Bali Post is among the oldest of Indonesia's existing newspapers and one of a minority of regional papers still independent of the media conglomerates. Founded in 1948 during the revolution, it prides itself on its nationalist commitments, takes the national ideology of Pancasila as its motto and has an ethnically diverse editorial and reporting staff. Its chief editor, Ketut Nadha, a journalist during the Japanese occupation and one of the paper's founders, insists that it is a national paper which comes from the region (interview 1993), and its earlier names, Suluh Marhaen, Suluh Indonesia, Suara Indonesia, index the populist and nationalist commitments the paper adopted from its inception. The Bali Post is at the same time fiercely committed to maintaining local ownership and has staved off absorption by Jakarta-based media conglomerates in recent years with some difficulty. It is the emerging tension between the national and the regional-popular - both explicit commitments of this newspaper - that becomes most evident in an analysis of environmental reporting since 1990.
The importance of the revolutionary roots of Indonesian national identity and of the press in its formation cannot be overstated (Tickell 1987); neither can its connection with broader socialist and populist ideas which have been part of nationalist discourse from its early formulation in the 1920s (see Anderson 1990:137), and part of the 'pers perjuangan' (press of struggle) tradition of politically committed journalism which characterized the period from the revolution through the early New Order (see Hill 1991:2). These associations are the source of a deeply rooted tension in nationalist ideology, one which has become an overt contradiction under the New Order. From the outset these internal tensions meant that what Tickell (1993) calls the 'nationalist meta-narrative' has never been monolithic, and insured that the very rhetoric on which the New Order depended for its legitimacy remained a powerful source of critique.

In the early stages of the public debate on the environment and development that was building in Bali in the 1990s, the continuity of this linkage between revolutionary ideology and political critique was articulated by a still active member of the revolutionary Angkatan '45 generation. A member of the provincial parliament (DPRD), from the government party Golkar no less, he was reported in fiery language comparing greedy investors and blindly consenting government officials to 'traitors' in the revolution who were selling out their homeland (Bali Post 15/9/90). This was not, he insisted, 'daerahism' (regionalism), but what would become of Bali if the situation continued? He accused all parties of talking glibly about the environment, while sitting quiet and even facilitating its destruction. That very strong suspicion of capitalism is deeply ingrained in the public mind and has never been dissociated from the 'meta-narrative of the Indonesian nation'. Much of this paper is devoted to conveying a sense of the dissenting positions built around these other readings of nationalist discourse and presenting some of the voices marginalised in the boom period of the 1980s.

For the Bali Post, the 'pers perjuangan' style, repressed in the dry and formulaic reporting which characterises coverage of public affairs, has been revived in the 1990s' debates about local development and the environment, subsequently extending to a range of human rights issues as well. Tensions that had been building throughout 1990 climaxed during a weekend seminar on 'Culturally and Environmentally Sensitive Development' organised by Udayana University's Technical Faculty at the Bali Beach Hotel. The presence of Emil Salim, the high profile Minister for the Environment, precipitated the first muted volley between centre and periphery in a debate that to that point had largely revolved around the failure of regional government planning and law enforcement.

Over the three days of the seminar, the initially academic presentations of planning problems became increasingly confrontational, and reporting shifted from a news item on the bottom of the front page to the headlines. It was apparent in the staging and coverage of the seminar, that
environmental issues had become a vehicle for the expression of disaffection on much broader social and political questions. Corruption, press freedom, the power of global capital to override local interests, and increasing social inequalities were raised by participants in only mildly modulated tones, and remained a feature of print media coverage thereafter. The *Bali Post* reports that Salim appeared 'stunned' by the opinions expressed at the conference and stated that he intended to have a 'dialogue' with the Governor over contravention of regional planning regulations, urging the public to 'report to the centre if projects do not comply with the law'. But an academic participant caught him up, reminding him that major developments were in fact approved by central government. 'If you, Pak Minister, for example, were Governor and were ordered to make available 100 hectares [for a resort complex], what would you do?' (*Bali Post* 30/9/90).

This kind of contentious dialogue focused on regional issues has become frequent fare, taking a longstanding relationship between the bureaucracy, academia and the local media in new directions. Indeed the 'seminar' has become something of a convention for focusing attention on controversial local issues. These events are commonly organised by the *Bali Post* itself, creating an atmosphere in which invited academics, government officials and other prominent public figures frequently do make pointed or provocative statements.

**Style and audience**

The style of reporting on environmental issues, particularly of the 'Seminar' genre, deserves some attention, because it differs significantly from the colourless bureaucratic Indonesian which Gunawan Mohamad decries and which is typical of much of the other reporting in the paper - indeed in the New Order Indonesian press in general. This style remains in the *pers perjuangan* tradition of earlier journalism, and is important in understanding how a regional paper like the *Bali Post* engages its audience. The coverage of a 1992 seminar on regional tourism development is a good example. On this occasion, as has become practice, the seminar was given front page space in a feature series, with attraction grabbing colour photographs and inset format. Typically, the article is bylined and the journalist moves beyond descriptive reporting to interpretation from an explicitly popular perspective. Significantly also, this journalistic genre is peppered with local references and colloquial idioms. This particular seminar, sponsored by the Department of Tourism and the Balinese Provincial Government had as its theme 'Balinese Tourism in the Coming PJPTII' (PJPTII is the new 25-year development phase and the government's current propaganda vehicle). But the articles reporting the seminar are anything but the dry renditions of a dreary series of policy papers that might have been expected.
The second of the articles covering the seminar, titled 'Between Pan Kaler and the Environment,' typifies this populist style of reporting. Pan Kaler is the Balinese Marhaen (the common person) - the alternately victimized or wise-cracking peasant who turns up in folk tales, proverbs, and political cartoons in counterpoint to the powers that be. Yet the populist style of debate on regional environment and development issues and certainly the prominence of the political cartoon, offering some of the most incisive comment on these subjects, are indications as Anderson argues of analogous texts (1990:155) of Balinese in dialogue with themselves. It begins:

Beh, take it easy Pan Kaler. That advice became trendy a while ago as the land business began to take off like hot peanuts. The land grab is on from the shoreline of every beach to the ravine's edge. The investors, better known by the term 'orang Jakarta' have begun to invade... In fact, whenever a helicopter is sighted it means investors looking for land. "Beh, 'orang Jakarta' are land-hunting", people said. When the helicopters fly, land sails away. So seems the correlation. When the land boom hit the people, whether for economic reasons or because of intimidation, the provincial government was still playing chicken. Faced with Nusa Dua, Ubud, Jimbaran, etc., it became feint.... Then the issue of environmental protection faces us.... The reverberations increase with the Earth Summit in Rio... "We cannot expect to exploit nature beyond its limits, or else don't expect to see Bali that is 'still Bali'", warns ...a speaker.... There's a popular joke that Bali has begun to tip to the South. Come July and December holidays, tumplek-blek Bali seems about to sink. (Bali Post 19/9/92)

The journalist quotes prolifically from seminar participants on problems of wide-spread public concern: with water, the squeezing out of small local investors, the importation of labour despite local unemployment and underemployment, and the economic irrationality of the hotel building spree. The saying goes "build first, straighten out [permits] later". His conclusion returns to the centre-periphery theme with which the article began: 'It may be that Bali doesn't belong only to Balinese, but neither do Balinese want their land taken over by others'. (Bali Post 19/9/92) The first part in the series pressed the same theme. 'Bali hasn't yet lost its soul - the soul which is the land itself. The old people say, "As long as Gunung Agung hasn't exploded, we still have the Gods' favour". But will we wait until Gunung Agung explodes to put things right?' (Bali Post 18/9/92)

What is very clear from editorials and news reporting beginning in 1990, is that the environment had become a legitimate umbrella for much broader criticism about political corruption, press freedom, democratisation, social inequality, and regional interests. Aside from the genuine emergence of environmental concerns in their own right in this period, such reports were also being used to test the water on other previously untouchable subjects. Subsequently, many of those issues have come out from under cover. The development of political expression in the regional press over the last few years deserves closer scrutiny since editorials, political cartoons and letters to the editor do at least indirectly give voice to the 'social imaginaries' of ordinary people, and suggest how these diverge from New Order constructions of nationalist orthodoxy and development ideology.
The regional independent press: a critical position

Not only do the editorials and feature articles in the Bali Post between 1990 and 1994 reflect a degree of freedom of expression that did not exist before, but a significant shift in the interpretation of some issues is also evident. A very strong position on the question of human rights and more sympathetic treatment of the East Timor issue than in the past, for example, seem to reflect a new ambivalence among the Balinese public at large toward current government practice and an associated tendency to view national unity in the conditional. Nationalist ideals remain too deeply held by the older generation of Balinese to even question the identity of national and local interest (as the statement from the DPR member of the 1945 generation quoted above indicates). But the nature of the relation of the periphery to the centre and the priority of national unity and security over all other considerations is no longer unchallenged. The press is increasingly insistent that the latter are contingent upon the practical application of the other principles of Pancasila: religious tolerance, humanitarianism, democracy, social justice, so often subordinated or selectively interpreted in New Order usage.20

Given the virtually automatic reflex reaction on the human rights issue as a foreign challenge to Indonesia's sovereignty,21 and given the centrality of the nationalist meta-narrative in modern Indonesia, the vehemence of recent editorials on the subject of human rights (hak asasi manusia - HAM) is particularly striking. Over the last year more than a dozen editorials explicitly took up the subject22, and many others raise the issue in connection with the labour movement, press freedom, East-Timor, religious tolerance, democratization and the contribution of NGOs to the national purpose23. Notable in these discussions is the way the human rights question is related to popular understandings of the meaning of Pancasila, as opposed to the New Order's appropriation of the concept in which national unity displaces social justice and democracy.

One editorial asserts 'that the government must take human rights questions seriously and not use Pancasila to confuse the issue, or claim the uniqueness of an Indonesian approach to human rights. This is a strategy to 'ice-box' the issue, leaving the little people to suffer. It goes on to stress the urgency of correcting the legal system and limiting the powers of the executive (Bali Post 12/12/92). Subsequent editorials on the universal relevance of the struggle for human rights argue that they cannot be separated from basic needs and social justice issues in development policy (Bali Post 18/1/93) and that 'Shameful accusations [from the West] may be painful. But an inability to prove ourselves 'clean' is more painful still.' (Bali Post 15/5/93).

The mantra-like status of Pancasila (Van Langenberg 1986:20) is itself no longer exempt from question. A yet more provocative editorial (Bali Post 14/10/92) challenges the way Pancasila has
been applied by the government and asserts that the uncritical and self-congratulatory use of national ideology amounts to 'mental masturbation' when in fact there is 'plenty of evidence that not all the babies born of this pregnant idea were healthy and beautiful'. It then points to the conglomerates and government tampering with the democratic process in recent elections as antithetic to these principles. The editorial specifically singles out the conglomerates which 'can hardly be regarded as in accord with Pancasila economics and whose share in the contribution to the nation we still have to doubt. The biggest contribution to development comes from the workers who have had the least reward, an indication of how lame is the kind of economy that supports the label Pancasila.' Then it challenges the extent of democratisation, when the government still 'engineers' elections and parliamentary processes (Bali Post 15/10/92). A subsequent feature article on the editorial page, 'Our Economy Beneath the Spectre of the Globalising Conglomerates' pursues the same theme, railing at the favoritism and political manipulation that hide behind the facade of the free market economy. Pointing to the evidence emerging from the Bank Summa and Astra affairs, the article argues that the power of the conglomerates must be overcome for the common good and 'so as not to taint Pancasila and our Constitution' (Bali Post 7/1/93).

Even 'development' (which Jeffrey Winters remarked was as a surprisingly unchallenged concept in the hegemonic underpinning of Indonesia's corporatist shell) comes under critical scrutiny:

Development can follow a direction that is mistaken and bring about the wrong outcomes. The shocking weakness in Indonesia is that Pancasila, which is no more than a political religion, has apparently been accorded a special treatment that is inappropriate.... [It] is meant as a vehicle for forming the collective identity of the Indonesian nation and as a basis for participation in the national development effort. Yet concepts of development in the spirit of Pancasila have to be debated and worked through, not just flipantly repeated over and over. The result is that our economy is overrun by the conglomerates, ...taking the form of wild capitalism, completely out of control.... Meanwhile the cooperatives that supposedly are given attention under a Pancasila economy are' whithering while the conglomerates are permitted to increase their power unfettered. (Bali Post 9/6/93)

The accompanying editorial warns that however reduced the proportion of those falling below the poverty line, the persistence of poverty and inequality will be 'the sensitive point that will... explode in social conflict.' Indeed the 1990s have seen a period of unprecedented labour activity and pressure from environment and human rights groups over issues of land alienation and low wages. While the right hand of the government, wearing the cloak of 'openness' appeared aimed at mollifying the rising tide of disillusion among the farmers and working class with its formulaic inclusion of a campaign against poverty and recognition of NGOs in the newest Five-Year Plan (GBHN 1993), the other still carries a big stick. An unexpected indication of the depth of tensions in the late New Order was the President's willingness to risk playing the latter hand in banning three of the most important weekly publications in June of this year. Two days later Suharto again used the well-worn 'threat to national stability and development' ploy. Blaming agitation on the
environment, human rights, democratisation and openness, he said, 'we must not exaggerate differences between ourselves'. *(The Australian 24/6/94)*

The subversive enemy theme had already been well rehearsed by Vice-President Try Sutrisno. He has devoted himself to conjuring the spectre of threats to Indonesian national security from the 'new traitors' - the human rights, environment and democratisation movements. On one occasion a *Bali Post* editorial (23/11/92) retorted, 'the government is too quick to blame disturbances on communists or liberals, subversives or radicals'. It castigates business, government and the political parties for ignoring workers, the ones whose low wages '... have subsidized the development Indonesia has achieved. Business had better straighten up and ask itself first why workers have turned militant. We can expect that in the future if the government and business...don't change their tack, cases of labour activism will...become increasingly 'destructive', and the number of 'agitators' will grow.' It goes on to praise those NGOs, intellectuals and religious leaders who have, unlike the government and political parties, taken these issues seriously.

Positioning itself as spokesman for the people, the paper challenges the myth that the provincialism of the rural population is the weak point holding back the development of democracy. Pointing to democratic and participatory traditions at local level, it warns the government against misguing the 'rakhyat'. 'The people may respond to authoritarian approaches with exaggerated 'hormat' (respect), but when the bureaucrats' backs are turned kritik tajam (sharply criticise) at every opportunity.' *(Bali Post 5/2/91)*

On this populist theme, the editorial commenting on the 1992 Independence Day address *(Bali Post 18/8/92)* took issue with the President's remarks that ABRI's involvement in government can not be separated from its military responsibilities *(dwifungsi)* because of its historic role in the independence struggle. The editorial points out that the 'rakhyat' and civil political leaders were equally important in the struggle and that those bearing arms played the same role in the American and French revolutions without expecting special political prerogatives. On the President's platitudes regarding the need for greater equality for the poor and for social solidarity, the paper says this is 'among kosong' (empty talk) unless public complaints about nepotism and corruption are heeded.

That editorial contrasts with the same paper's bland commentaries of earlier years and is notably stronger in its critical analysis of the President's speech than the editorial that appears in *Kompas* the same day. The latter is devoted mostly to an approving reiteration of Suharto's summation of Indonesia's achievements. It concludes with passing suggestion that the agenda for the next development phase (PLPTII) give a greater role to participation by Indonesian social institutions in order to make the pemerataan (equalising) and social welfare policies 'even more' successful. The
Jawa Pos (18/8/92) also reiterates much of the President's speech, approving his desire to increase the size of the pie in order to deal with those so far excluded, but not questioning whose interests the 'larger pie' may serve.

The comparison raises questions about the degree of critical treatment that can be expected from major papers with heavy commercial interests at stake. As Jacob Oetama, the head of the Kompas Gramedia group (itself financially burned by the loss of permits for two of its publications) said, 'we are becoming less critical because we have to survive' (quoted in Hill 1991:17). Some observers express the view that the commercialisation of the press has led to a changing ethos in which concerns for social justice and human rights have been displaced by middle class preoccupations with matters of life-style and private interest (Hill, forthcoming). This may be less easy for small, regional papers like the Bali Post, which depend to a far greater extent on the older-type middle class of teachers, lower-level bureaucrats and small business rather than the 'new rich' for their readership and advertising.27

This is not to say that the Bali Post is in the vanguard of a radical assault on the New Order. It exercises considerable self-censorship and many people, including some of its own journalists, complain bitterly that it is too cautious,28 devoting disproportionate copy to government news and bowing whenever pressure is exerted. For example, it completely dropped political cartoons during the 1992 election under pressure from the local military over several cartoons they regarded as 'hindering development'. At fault were a series on controversial tourism projects, playing on the 'Big Investor vs. Pan Kaler' theme. Only eight months later did cartoons reappear in the paper, considerably more muted in content.

The paper's editors are justifiably wary of the contradictions in government policy on press 'openness' and tread a very tight rope between principled advocacy and self-preservation. As one of the few remaining regional papers independent of the media conglomerates, the Bali Post has faced the pressure of competition over recent years. Nusra, a local competitor originally owned by the military into which Media Indonesia (connected with the Bimantara Group) invested heavily, initiated a major push in 1991-2 to take over circulation from the Bali Post, enlisting military muscle in its bid. During the election, village offices and public service departments that previously took the Bali Post, were 'invited' to replace it with Nusra. The effects of such tactics notwithstanding, the financially pressed Media Indonesia decided the paper was not commercially viable and allowed it to fold in late 1992, along with several other regional papers that had been absorbed into its empire. Still, the Bali Post has to face increasing competition from national papers such as Kompas and papers from other regions such as the Jawa Pos, an expanding offshoot of the Tempo Group with twenty other local publications under its wing.
The Bali paper is also gearing itself for relaxation of regulations against 'long distance' publishing using new technologies which will put Kompas and the Jawa Pos immediately on its doorstep. Its response has been to diversify its own publication range, adding a newspaper for schools, a separate weekend broadsheet for a rural and lower middle-class audience, and a book publishing wing which focuses on Balinese socio-cultural issues. These extend the already highly diverse content of the Bali Post to increase the attractiveness of the paper in new quarters. The paper had long adopted a policy of pitching its coverage to the broadest possible local readership, combining in its daily editions: front page national and international news, feature articles by intellectuals, a two-page English section, local government sections, including pages devoted to Nusa Tenggara Timor and Barat which are also part of its constituency, with chatty commentaries in its regular 'pojok' columns ('from the balai banjar [hamlet assembly hall]', 'from the capital'), and the odd mildly sensationalized coverage of murder, divorce and prostitution cases or local scandals (although would-be tabloid fare is discretely inserted among other local items on the second or third pages). Weekly sections include information on agricultural developments in its 'village edition'; poetry and literature sections by Balinese writers, book reviews, a campus feature page, and Balinese language stories in the weekend edition. The Bali Post has also followed the national trend toward technical modernisation and professionalisation, raising salaries, computerising typesetting and adding colour to news photographs and advertising.

Whether it can remain a viable independent voice in the face of commercial pressures that have eliminated some of the better heeled regionals backed by conglomerate capital depends upon its continued capacity to engage the broadest possible spectrum of the Balinese public. Optimistic forecasts from Dahlan Iskan, the head of the aggressive Jawa Pos collection of twenty regional publications, that the future belongs to regional press, contrast with others that predict the new commercial television stations will drain advertising away from print media and strangle the small papers (see Hill forthcoming).

The editors of the Bali Post recognise that the paper's survival depends upon its ability to play a role that the electronic and Jakarta-based print media do not - as some kind of sounding board for local interests. This produces considerable tension between the commitment to serve the national interest - not only a state-imposed obligation, but a cornerstone upon which this particular paper was founded - and the increasingly divergent interests of the region which is its constituency.

In this respect, the question of to what extent a newspaper, whose owners, editors, journalists and primary readers are unquestionably middle-class can claim to represent the 'popular' interest is of critical importance. I have indicated the way that certain styles and genres are adopted in addressing a popular audience and that the newspaper has a long line of readers, beyond initial subscribers. Crucial in assessing the paper's representational claims, at least in the current context, is the need to differentiate the economic base and cultural orientation of the old-style middle-classes from the
'New Rich' of capital-intensive entrepreneurs and the political and bureaucratic elites whom they patronise. While it is not possible to draw any absolute dichotomy between these groups, it is certainly the case that the rural ties and moderate incomes of journalists and academics who contribute to the paper insure that they hear the opinions of 'the people' from whom the life-styles of the New Rich are insulated.

The middle and 'other' classes on the periphery of the late New Order

The accelerated incorporation of peripheral populations - in both a geographic and class-based sense - into national and global structures through media penetration, bureaucratic intervention and intensified investment in large-scale development projects has had a double effect over the last decade. The same centripetal forces that are intensifying interaction and interdependence between socially and geographically disparate groups, are concurrently undermining the social structures and environmental bases of peripheral populations (see Hirsch 1993). People on the periphery now have a much deeper sense of processes operating at the centre and the ambiguous implications these have for their livelihoods.

Particularly visible over the last decade have been the effects of capital accumulation. Paradoxically in Bali, where regional development has taken it from one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia to one of the wealthiest, these changes have been accompanied by increasingly critical, even hostile, attitudes toward Indonesia's development strategy and the socio-economic disparities it has generated. That hostility is most acute, not among the new wealthy classes, whose relationship to these developments is at best ambivalent, but among ordinary people whose absolute standard of living has more or less stood still throughout the boom. The sharpest and most bitter criticisms among those with whom I spoke came from farmers, peddlers, taxi-drivers and waiters - not the art shop dealers, handicraft manufacturers or small hotel owners who may be cynical, but are not yet angry.

As space for the expression of opposition through the press, through labour strikes, and through activist social movements haltingly expands, the future of Indonesia will have a lot to do with the rhetorical and interpretive frames in which this dissent finds expression. A cause for deep concern is the likelihood that, if effective political channels do not emerge for turning frustration into structural change, other lines of reaction will be forged.

There are worrying indications of the potential for ethnic and religious conflicts that pose the most pessimistic of scenarios for Indonesia's future. In 1993, for example, there was a spate of public beatings and killings in Bali, in almost every reported case involving immigrants from other parts of Indonesia caught in the act of theft. The last time that this kind of customary local justice was
invoked in the village of my research was in 1963. It happened again in this village in 1992. The fact that a number of the reported cases involved temple and graveyard desecrations has begun to feed a normally repressed unease among Balinese, sensitive to their minority status in the Indonesian state.

The level of inter-island migration to Bali, mainly of Javanese seeking work in the booming construction industry, has become a serious social and political issue in this period. Although wages in Bali are still low (between US $1 and $2 per day for unskilled labour), they are not as low as those in rural Java. Local perception is that Jakarta investors favour Javanese contractors who bring in cheap and compliant labour from outside. The reconstruction of the Bali Beach Hotel in 1993 employed 2,500 workers, 40% of whom according to reports were from outside Bali (Bali Post 15/7/93). In 1991, 60,000 job-seekers came to Bali from other parts of the country (Editor 11/9/93:72), while 66,000 in Bali are officially registered as living below the poverty line (Bali Post 4/10/93) and Balinese are still being encouraged to transmigrate.

The association in the public mind between Jakarta investment, an influx of low-waged labourers threatening the incomes of the poorest sector of the local population, and conspiracy theories of a plot to destroy Balinese cultural autonomy is a dangerous political cocktail - a cocktail that, with different ingredients, has parallels throughout Indonesia. To date press reporting on inter-ethnic tensions has been deliberately understated. And public figures have so far resisted any temptation to use the issue as an overt political instrument, although several Balinese privately expressed the view that it is in the New Order's interest to keep such low-level ethnic conflicts brewing to strengthen its hand. But silence, too, feeds paranoia. And in the absence of a means of confronting the sources of popular discontent, a scenario that no one wants could be an unintended outcome.

Among the only-too-available discourses lurking in the background is one that would frame Indonesia's political and economic power games in ethnic-religious terms. Indeed, many Balinese interpreted the controversial BNR development at Tanah Lot in this way. The official Hindu religious body, Parisada Hindu Dharma, finally released a statement that the luxury residential resort and golf course development should be reconsidered in the light of prohibitions on use of sacred space surrounding the temple as defined in religious texts (a prescription that had in fact been encoded in regional government planning regulations as well). From 1993, reports in the press begin to refer to the potential for violence:

Some say the friendliness and openness of the Balinese could become a boomerang in the future, as these times grow wild. As people in the middle of this savage period are increasingly overrun in a climate far removed from the values of honesty...suspicions and questionmarks turn to anger, because Balinese have in no small degree begun to learn that the tricks that follow the 'first act' (lakon) are no more than deceits. For decades, Bali has been a lure, making many dream of a prosperity from tourism that has only to be plucked to shower them with dollars (Bali Post 12/07/93).
If ethnic conflict clouds Indonesia's horizons, it will not be the fault of the 'penghianat baru' identified by the regime, but of those who appropriated the vision of Indonesian nationhood to their private interests.

By 1993, expressions of dissent and frustration were everywhere. Last year, I spent one morning speaking to a group of radical student activists involved in peasant resistance to several major development projects, and the same afternoon interviewed a loan restructuring consultant for the Bank of Indonesia. Both, from their very different points of reference, painted an unpromising picture of Indonesia's next ten years; neither saw the outcome of the economic boom of the last decade leading to a smooth take-over by a now confident middle class with liberal inclinations. They saw the 'New Rich' as living in a corrupt and fairy tale world which had completely lost touch with the concerns and experience of ordinary Indonesians (see also Mardani 1993: 355). Their concerns were echoed by people from all walks of life. I quote below only a few of the many voices of frustration from the margins I heard in Bali in 1993:

A taxi driver -
Farmers all over the island are being thrown off good land to build five-star hotels with no one to fill them; [The investors] bring in cheap labour from outside by the thousands to build those hotels, when there are not enough jobs to go around in the first place, and while poor people here are still being told to transmigrate to other islands. Is that development?

A restaurant worker -
It's hard to be optimistic when the whole system is built on corruption. Today, the only way to find a job, or pass exams or get an identity card, is to pay someone off. And it all starts with the family at the top...

The organiser of a small local NGO -
In my opinion the role of the NGOs as an advocate for grassroots groups is crucial, especially in the struggle [for fairer distribution]....This is not as easy as you might imagine, all the more if we connect it with the emergence of the new middle class in Bali, who don't want to notice this repression. They're much more interested in their ...Toyota Kijang, BMW, Mercedes etc. - a blindness that is engineered (direkayasa).38

Much of the current interest in the middle class and political change in Indonesia is focused on the 'new rich' and in Jakarta, assuming that this is where Indonesia's future will be decided. Understanding perspectives of the vast majority of Indonesians who live outside the centre and outside elite circles is essential if we are not to find our fixation on the powers that be, to borrow Gunawan Mohammad's apt analogy, a shot that has missed the moving target39. We have to look at the regional press, NGOs, at labour, environment and land tenure conflicts, and at what the woman and man on the street are saying, if we are not to fall victim to the kind of 'engineered blindness' that comes of elite-centrism. The unpredictability of the political and economic tidal waves of the 1980s should suggest to us that focusing on palace intrigue and market indicators is too narrow an approach for interpreting Indonesia in the 1990s.
There is evidence of a growing chasm, in social, economic as well as cultural terms between the new rich on the one hand and on the other, an alliance of important elements of the old middle class, workers and farmers who have been bypassed in either relative or absolute terms in the push for growth. For this latter group, much of the old rhetoric of social justice, welfare and participation provides common ground on which to challenge late New Order claims to authority. The regional press has provided an important forum in Bali for drawing together this alliance between the middle and 'other' classes on the periphery. To date the absence of clearly delineated political alternatives has meant that the press alongside non-government organisations with labour, environment and human rights agendas offer the only avenues for social action and political expression of dissent. They deserve much more careful consideration from outside interpreters of Indonesian society and especially from those who influence Australian policy at this critical juncture in Indonesian history.

NOTES

1. In several respects Bali straddles some of the dichotomies often used to characterise Indonesian society. It shares elements of Javanese culture and disproportionate investment in recent years; but culturally, politically and economically it remains on the periphery. It has a small, predominately non-Muslim ethnic minority population with little influence in the national sphere, and the large-scale investment in the tourism industry is not local.

2. In 1980 Bali's per capita income was two-thirds the national figure at US$308 to US$456. By 1990, Balinese per capita income reached US$592 to a national figure of US$560 (Statistik Bali 1984, 1991; Asian Development Bank 1987; UNDP 1993) Over the decade 1980-90 real per capita income in Bali rose by 4% annually. The fact that incomes increased by only 1.4% in the agricultural sector and actually declined in manufacturing and construction (-0.1) is indicative of the maldistribution of income growth across social class, economic sector and region (See UNDP Annex 2, 1992:14). Although current per capita income is reported to have reached 1.5 million rupiah for Bali as a whole, the average for the Jembrana regency is Rp 900,000, barely a third of Badung's 2.5 million (Editor 11/9/93:71). Workers in handicraft industries, and the majority of those employed at the lower end of the market for tourist services typically receive less than Rp 60,000 per month (US$30), basically unchanged by the economic boom of the late 1980s.

3. See Warren (1993:278-87) for examples of local interpretations of national ideology and its application as the basis for a critique of government policy.

4. The PDI took 11% and 15% of the national vote in the 1987 and 1992 elections respectively; for Bali province, the figures are 11% and 20%.

5. This community has seen the dramatic growth of an export-oriented handicraft industry over the last decade. These economic changes have spawned a small, new middle-class who own automobiles, telephones and satellite dishes and a large majority of the population whose incomes now depend on some combination of farming and piece-work at low wages. The vote in this village leapt from 21% to PDI in 1987, to 41% in 1992.
6. Some said they regarded the opposition parties as equally corrupt and unlikely to be in a position to really change the system. Others feared that a decline in Golkar's strength could only ultimately advantage the Muslim PPP, a possibility that provokes anxiety among this Hindu minority religious culture, despite the forced commitment of the PPP to Pancasila principles since the ORMNAS laws of 1985.

7. 'Pengemban Pengamal Pancasila' - Contributing to the Great Work of Pancasila.

8. Initially called Suara Indonesia (Voice of Indonesia), the paper first changed its name to the Bali Post in 1959 when all newspapers were required by law to affiliate with a political party. The paper became associated with the PNI in that period of turbulent political activity, changing its name again in 1963 to Suluh Indonesia (Torch of Indonesia), and in 1965 to Suluh Marhaen (Torch of the People). It reverted to the Bali Post under the New Order.

9. See also Liddle (1982) on the way anti-capitalist traditions of Indonesian nationalism feed into notions of a 'Pancasila Economy'. In the same vein, Budiman (1982) argues Marxist socialism to be compatible with the social justice principle. Max Lane (1982) asserts the continuity of democratic and socialist ideas on political culture and popular consciousness in the New Order period. It is clear from field research that these ideas remain part of the framework through which ordinary Balinese interpret their relation to the state (see Warren 1993:271-89).

10. The origins of these internal tensions are already evident, however, in the period of 'Guided Democracy' under Sukarno (see Reeve 1985; A. Goenawan in Tickell:1987).

11. Anderson (1990:188) says of the dilemma of the 1945 generation, 'Little in the post-revolutionary experience has allowed for the creation of a new moral stance that would permit them to deal with their present circumstances with inner tranquility. Pembangunan (development) has no more than instrumental implications, and derives whatever moral thrust it has from the revolutionary ethos of the past.'

12. On the alleged depoliticization of the Indonesian press, see Hill (1992) and Dhakidae (1991). Gunawan Mohammed (1993) denies however, that real depoliticization ever took place, though party-political partisanship did. In the Bali Post, political cartoons carried much of the critical punch generally missing from editorials and news reports in the late 1970s and 1980s. Populist reporting styles continued to find expression in stories of village level politics and local adat disputes and in occasional letters to the editors concerning such 'in-house' issues as did not appear to touch on central government policy.

13. The irony of holding the conference at the high-rise hotel whose construction precipitated the only regulation which has been observed in regional planning since - limiting the height of construction of tourist complexes to 15 meters - was not lost on participants.

14. 'For the most part,[the] carnival of expression seems absent from the Indonesian language today. Our language has been ripped from the world, stripped of shape, smell, colour and form, cleansed of the grit and graffiti, the rumpus and commotion, that make up real life. The language that we see forms a landscape almost barren of vegetation, dotted by sparse clumps of bamboo and threatened by blight, a landscape in which only the poorest of transmigrants might find a home.' (Jakarta Post 5/6/92 quoted in Schwartz, forthcoming)

15. In fact, cartoons in the Bali Post were already conveying explicit messages of social criticism years before some of these issues were taken up in written articles. See Warren (1993: illustration 21) for a graphic depiction of corruption in Indonesian development programming. Indicative of both their popular appeal and the use of this genre to test the limits of the 'openness' policy, the paper was forced to remove political cartoons during the 1992 election.

16. Luxury hotels require 3,900 litres of water per room per day, by comparison with an average of 77 liters person per day used by Balinese. The 15,000 star hotel rooms currently in operation in Bali consume 58.5 million liters of water, enough to satisfy the water needs of 760,000 Balinese. With approved development projects scheduled to double the number of luxury
hotel rooms, these alone will consume an amount of water equivalent to half the Balinese population. (Martopo and Suyono n.d.:11; UNDP Annex 3:20-21) The UNDP projects that on current rates of use and present policies of hotel development the water supply would be in deficit in just over a decade, and demand would reach four times potential supply by the middle of the next century (UNDP 1992 Vol I:207-13).

17. 64% of 3-star hotels, 76% of 4 and 5-star hotels were owned by non-Balinese Indonesians either outright or as joint ventures with overseas partners as of 1991 (UNDP Annex 3).

18. 60,000 migrants from other parts of Indonesia were seeking work in Bali in 1991 (Editor 11/9/93: 73) while that many Balinese are listed as living under the poverty line (Bali Post 4/10/93). Non-Balinese Indonesians account for about 17 percent of the workforce in the hotel industry (UNDP Annex 3, 1992:27).

19. In 1990 alone the number of starred hotel rooms rose by 77 percent. The total number of officially registered hotel rooms of all classes jumped from 13,000 in 1989 to 21,000 in 1990. Occupancy rates however, dropped from 53 to 36% in the same period. Despite oversupply, hotel construction projects which would add another 29,000 rooms have already received approval and estimates of projects awaiting approval (where in some cases building has already begun, the permit process notwithstanding) range from 18,000 to 43,000 further rooms (UNDP 1992 Annex 3:6-7; 19-23). Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of tourism in Lombok and eastern Indonesia will inevitably impact upon tourist demand in Bali.

20. See, for example, the editorial 'Censorship of the Press Contravenes the Law' (Bali Post 1/6/92) which argues for the equivalent authority of the press, on grounds of equal age and maturity, to leaders who claim the sole right to decide what is good for the sake of 'keamanan' (security). In doing so they transgress the musyawarah (consensus) principle of Pancasila, the editorial asserts.

21. See Heryanto (Jakarta Jakarta, 26/6-2/7) for a critical discussion of the 'uniqueness of Eastern Culture' argument on human rights, which he reminds us is, like nationalism and the Indonesian nation itself, a product of Western colonialism.

22. For example, 'Penerapan HAM di Indonesia dan Kendalanya' Bali Post 12/12/92; 'Perjuangan Hak Asasi Manusia relevan Sepanjang Sejarah' 28/1/93; 'Kembali Hak Asasi Manusia Kita Dipermasalahkan' 15/5/93; 'Peranan LSM dalam Masyarakat yang Membangun'17/5/93; 'Tugas Berat Komisi HAM Kita'18/6/93.


24. His point was raised in general discussions concluding the 'Indonesia - Paradigms for the Future' Conference at Murdoch University, July, 1993.

25. In November 1992 Sutrisno gave a speech to the military academy claiming that renewed vigilance was needed to deal with a new generation of communists who were taking advantage of the human rights, environment and democratisation movements (Kompas 17/11/92; See also Adam Schwartz, forthcoming). At that time, his remarks received limited attention in the press. But when, in 1992, he reiterated the warning against threats to Indonesian security posed by "new traitors" who provide misleading information to outside interests, now as Vice-President of Indonesia, it produced shock-waves. The magazine Editor (11/9/93) devoted its cover story, featuring critical responses by academics, members of the Petisi 50 group, and NGO activists, to this 'political bomb'.

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26. They are the NGOs that feel committed to help the fate of workers, intellectuals and religious leaders who feel that repairing the economy has to begin with fixing the condition of workers. Now, political organisations and their ilk have yet to give any thought to the fate of workers. But the time will come, when they will be competing with one another to be seen as the workers' heroes! (Bali Post 23/11/92)

27. This is especially the case for the Bali Post which stakes its credibility on its financial independence and its revolutionary ethos. The promotional material produced by the newspaper (1992) for advertisers stresses that it is 'not just a newspaper business'. It has a 'philosophy' and 'mission' 'born in the atmosphere of struggle for the independence of the Indonesian nation'.

28. An outspoken academic commented, 'The editor is not bold. I often send letters to the Bali Post about monopolies, etc. that never get published.' (interview 1992). On the other hand, the same academic, who has a reputation as an outspoken maverick, is frequently quoted in press reports on controversial issues, speaking in 'tough' terms. It is also the case that radical critics depend on the newspaper for information on local conflict cases for mobilizing action. This was clearly the case in precipitating the unprecedented wave of student demonstrations and popular reaction against the BNR development at Tanah Lot (see Warren 1994).

29. Since 1980 it participated in the Koran Masuk Desa programme of the Department of Information, publishing a weekly special Edisi Pedesaan which covers agricultural and other items of interest to rural readers. Publication of the desa edition and circulation to village offices continued after the subsidy from the Department ended. In the community where I worked there was considerable irritation at the replacement of the Bali Post by Nusra, which village leaders complained 'lacked substance'.

30. Its advertising literature claims a circulation of 82,000 which undoubtedly overstates the true figure, but not its readership. The latter is perhaps as high as 200,000, given a minimum five readers for a more conservative estimate of 40-50,000 purchasing a copy. If we include the very end of the line users who might read an item posted at the hamlet meeting house or wrapped around eggs brought home from the market, the multiplier effect becomes much greater. In this respect, and taking account of the important role of kabar angin (gossip) which news items may feed, it would be a mistake to consider the consumers of print media information as even predominantly middle class - although these are certainly the primary paying customers. Newspapers were read avidly wherever they were left lying around - in shops, schools and the village office. One villager who runs a successful export-oriented cottage industry employing a half dozen workers said he stopped subscribing to the paper because it 'distracted his labourers'.

31. Presentation to the 'Indonesia - Paradigms for the Future' Conference at Murdoch University, July 1993.

32. The rise of the middle class, the growth of NGOs and social movements outside the formal political arena, and the rapid restructuring of the economic base of Southeast Asian societies are among a number of trends that have increased the importance of environment and human rights issues as sites of political contest.

33. See also Anderson (1992) on the paradox of national disintegration in the context of global integration.

34. The difference, more in the tone of criticism than in the substance, is very difficult to convey in transcripts of comments and interviews. I recall watching a television program on Hatta and Sukarno one evening in a Sanur homestay alongside staff who kept up a running commentary on the contrast between the leadership of the Old and New Orders as they had come to see it. The night watchman, a middle-aged and otherwise jovial person, was particularly angry and agitated: 'But this one [Suharto] is not the same kind of leader! the money!' he said with disgust. After repeating the negative comparison a second time, he pointed to the big hotels in Sanur as evidence. For him as for many Balinese these have become icons of the corruption and inequities of the recent development boom. Village leaders in rural communities referred to seething popular discontent as the main reason for the swing toward the PDI in the last election.
35. In 1963 the volcano Gunung Agung exploded, to refer back to the metaphor employed by the author of 'Pan Kaler and the Environment' above. Whether or not he intended to imply a foreboding connection between the physical and social eruptions of the earlier period and the present, it is an apt and chilling allusion.

36. A haunting subtext in the ongoing debates on the meaning of Pancasila and nationalism are parallels with the fate of Yugoslavia. An article in the Gadjah Mada University student magazine, *Balairung*, explicitly makes the comparison between regional and political disparities in Indonesia and the causes of separatism in the former Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (Dwipayana 1994:86).

37. See Heryanto (1994) on such mis-readings of the Medan riots. The public, free to construct its own interpretations of the meaning of these events in the broader context, entertain a series of alternative constructions, sometimes in ethnically coded and more rarely in explicit class terms. Occasionally, 'pity' was expressed for those whose acts may also have been generated by an experience of exclusion. But such comments, whether from speakers urban or rural, educated or not, were invariably followed by rationalisation of the need to protect Balinese religion and customary law. Some did recognise the tension between Pancasila principles protecting the dignity of their religion and the humanitarianism which would preclude inhumane treatment of accused.

38. I should mention too that this young, educated member of the middle class, but not the 'new rich', while providing a very sophisticated class-based analysis of the situation in Indonesia, also subscribed to a Javanese-Muslim conspiracy theory.


40. Why, as one Balinese critic remarked, would the Suharto family display its wealth so brazenly, if they had any sense of how 'the people' reacted? His remark was provoked by television and newspaper coverage of the opening of several controversial five-star hotels by the President at the World Tourism Organisation Conference in Bali. Suharto was flanked by two of his sons whose substantial investments in two of the hotels were openly reported (See *Bali Post* 3/10/93).
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