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Capitalism, primitive accumulation and the 1960s massacres: revisiting the New Order and its violent genesis

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ABSTRACT This article offers a critique of Hilmar Farid’s (and to a lesser extent, Colm McNaughton’s) contribution in this journal about the 1960s anti-communist massacres, primitive accumulation and capitalist development in Indonesia. While agreeing that the massacres can be usefully tied to primitive accumulation it argues that Farid’s work displays some serious conceptual misunderstandings about the workings of capitalist development in Indonesia under the New Order as well as the social, political and economic underpinnings of that regime. As such, it finds that there are some major faults as well in his presentation of the logic of capitalist accumulation, the way it has been manifest historically in the Indonesian case and its role in the emergence of the New Order. Furthermore, the article suggests that a fundamental misreading may have been committed by Farid due to a fetish for New Order violence that hinders understanding of its political economy.

Keywords: Primitive Accumulation, Capitalist Development, Anti-communist Massacres, Indonesia, New Order

There are a few basic points I would like to make in this relatively brief contribution to the debate on “primitive accumulation” in Indonesia as instigated by Hilmar Farid’s nearly decade-old article on the subject and Colm McNaughton’s response to it. First, Farid’s essay—while exemplary in its intention to reinterpret the Indonesian massacres of half a century ago within a framework based on the concept of primitive accumulation—leads to some crucial misinterpretations of the nature of the New Order regime that emerged in its wake and of Indonesia’s ensuing rapid capitalist development.

Second, while McNaughton usefully widens the scope of analysis to incorporate recognition of what he calls the global/local dialectic—thereby placing the Indonesian events of 1965–66 more firmly in the Cold War context—it may be fairer to engage Farid’s article on its own level of analysis, that is, the development of Indonesian
capitalism in relation to a particularly distinctive historical conjuncture. In any case, I think we can be assured of Farid’s awareness—even if not overtly displayed in the article under discussion—of the basic contours of the global capitalism with which Indonesia’s economy became more closely integrated after these crucial years, and more precisely, the Cold War imperatives that permeated through Indonesian social and political struggles throughout the period in question.

Third, as McNaughton implies but does not elaborate further due to his overriding concern to place Indonesian developments within a broader “totality” that notionally points to the possibility of emancipatory politics, it is necessary to be aware of the complex relationship between the economic and political requisites of the New Order’s authoritarianism. In many ways, the relationship does not exactly fit caricatures of how national authoritarianisms relate to global imperialist interests. Inadequate attention to the nature of the relationship results in Farid’s evidently flawed understanding of the sorts of interests that underpinned the New Order at its inception and as it evolved, even while they competed for power and wealth through regime institutions and sought the continued marginalisation and exclusion of vast numbers of the Indonesian people.

Finally, due to his overly reductionist understanding of the social underpinnings of New Order rule, and therefore the kind of capitalist development that it cultivated and promoted, Farid’s interpretation of the anti-communist massacres and their resultant widespread social dislocations are faulty too in some major respects, especially from the point of view of political economy analysis. This is the case even if his essay remains laudable and significant as a quite novel attempt to conceive a key moment in the history of Indonesian capitalism in a way that inextricably links it to an outbreak of systematic violence and coercion.

**Primitive Accumulation and Global Capitalism**

For—as well summarised by McNaughton—Farid’s main aim is indeed to redirect discussion of the 1960s massacres away from “mere” considerations of the human rights abuses they involved to analysis of the origins of rapid capitalist development in Indonesia after the advent of the New Order (Farid 2005, 9). In Farid’s argument, the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), the accompanying forced separation of masses of the Indonesian peasantry from the land—and the
domestication of organised labour—were all part and parcel of a deliberate economic strategy (see below) pursued by those who had directed the expunging of communism from Indonesia’s body-politic.

In constructing his narrative about a process of “primitive accumulation” that made possible a qualitatively new phase of Indonesian capitalism, he further suggests that such an observation has been essentially missing in the heretofore best-known accounts of the development of capitalism and the state in Indonesia, including Robison’s (1986) seminal work. He states, for example, that “One should understand primitive accumulation as something which, besides forming the starting point of capitalism, returns again and again, as the basis or basic precondition which is necessary for further phases of capital accumulation” (Farid 2005, 10). This is a useful premise, but it should be noted that, for Farid, what is important is not the emergence (however to be discerned) of social classes associated with capitalism but the resultant compulsion, exercised across the populace, to engage in capitalist social relationships (Farid 2005, 5).

While agreeing with the broad thrust of Farid’s interpretation, McNaughton offers a more global and long duree-inspired analysis of primitive accumulation in Indonesia, based on a well informed re-reading of Marx and Luxembourg but also the much more recent luminaries of world-systems theory. It appears that, for McNaughton, the logical imperatives for the violence in Indonesia are not just to be found in the need to unleash (what he conceives to be a more prolonged and on-going process of) violence as part of primitive accumulation domestically but also in the requirements of global capitalist accumulation.

I will not repeat the details of McNaughton’s alternative interpretation, except to note, once again, that it relies on linking the global and local contexts for the unfolding of events in Indonesia in the 1960s. In doing so, he attempts to weave together a narrative of violence that, at its base, reflected a convergence of particular domestic forces and that of international capital and the states representing its interests. In constructing this alternative narrative (or—in his words—in sublating Farid’s), it is quite plain (at least to this author) that McNaughton underestimates the degree to which some of its elements already serve as the background to Farid’s own account, although he would be correct in suggesting that the latter did not make more than rudimentary attempts to relate Indonesia’s 1960s to that of the broader region and the world. I think this background is strongly enough implied in Farid’s
references, though scattered, to the New Order’s reversal of Soekarno’s anti-imperialist policies and to concerted Western assistance for this undertaking (which McNaughton notes). Such an unintended slight notwithstanding, McNaughton’s endeavour to make clearer the application of the concept of primitive accumulation deployed by Farid—as the main “weapon” in disarming narrowly conceived human rights-based narratives of the Indonesian massacres—is no doubt useful for any future research that may be pursued along these lines.

At the same time, I would like to point to the possibility of incorporating the sort of endeavour undertaken by McNaughton within similarly broad historical analyses of the ruptures and crises of global capitalism—and more specifically of American Empire—quite independently of a world-systems theory that has traditionally relied on notions of cyclical patterns of hegemony and disruptions to global structural equilibria. Such a position is likely to be more straightforwardly useful in addressing Farid’s article at his own level of analysis, and therefore more or less on his own terms, for it pre-supposes the analytical primacy of domestic determinants—such as that of state and class—of capitalist development and modes of integration with the global capitalist economy.

The New Order and Indonesian Capitalism

Rather than proceeding at this stage to direct engagement with Farid’s treatment of primitive accumulation in Indonesia, it may be more useful to momentarily skip this task in order to provide a brief analysis of the development of the Indonesian state and capitalism under the aegis of the New Order (for a fuller treatment see Robison and Hadiz [2004] and Hadiz and Robison [2013]). For it is following such a discussion that a critique of Farid’s characterisation of primitive accumulation in Indonesia in the 1960s can be developed with a specific understanding of the Indonesian state and capitalism and of the bases of economic and political power that were ultimately fused in the long Soeharto era in the form of oligarchic rule. From here, the significant drawbacks of his analysis of primitive accumulation should become more apparent.

A major flaw of Farid’s article, to my mind, can be found in its portrayal of the New Order that emerged after the orgy of violence as basically a military or militarised regime. Actually, Farid goes further than such a characterisation, for he
calls it no less than Soeharto’s “military state”—and one, moreover, “that was entirely dependent upon foreign aid and loans (until it finally overdosed in the late 1990s)” (Farid 2005, 4, 5). In this, he not only misrepresents the Asian Economic Crisis and the (shifting) economic bases of the New Order, but also repeats a mistake that has been committed, albeit in different forms, by other analysts of its political character. These have either overly simplified the New Order by reducing it to a case of militarism, and/or treated the Indonesian military as being subservient to, or in some sort of comprador relationship with the imagined-to-be monolithic forces of capital, especially international. This in spite of Farid’s apt reminder that “the army certainly did not simply serve as a kind of loyal attack dog for foreign and domestic capital” (Farid 2005, 5) and that it had its own institutional interests. Moreover, Farid makes the peculiarly sweeping claim that the New Order project, and its associated economic policies, had effectively nullified the “democratic ideals of an entire generation of nationalists” (Farid 2005, 10), thus ignoring the very strong and longstanding strands of highly conservative and integralistic politics within Indonesian nationalism, whose intellectual cousins helped give rise to fascism in other historical contexts (Bourchier 2015). In many ways, the New Order in fact represented the victory of those representing such strands and therefore, to state the obvious, these did not just come out of the blue in the mid-1960s.

In the works cited by McNaughton, Robison and I have offered analyses of the New Order that show how these sorts of characterisations are politically and analytically misleading. The New Order was in fact far more complex than many of its critics and analysts suggested in its internal composition and logic, certainly more so than they were sometimes willing to concede or “appreciate.”

More than just a military or military-dominated regime (Crouch 1988), it gradually fused a range of politico-bureaucratic and capitalist interests within an oligarchy that had effectively seized power over the state and its myriad institutions for itself, and was involved in a relationship with sections of international capital that was sometimes perceptibly conflicting. Such conflicts, while already seen during the oil boom period, were ultimately most apparent at the height of the Asian Economic Crisis. In the process, the military—while always feared by the people—had become increasingly and decisively side-lined during the last decade of Soeharto’s rule by the ever more sophisticated social alliances that came to be incubated and nurtured within the New Order as Indonesian capitalism evolved.
Reading Farid’s account, however, one would be forgiven for thinking that the military had maintained its dominant position within the New Order (Farid 2005, 5) till its end and that the relationship between the oligarchy and the military, as an institution that was nonetheless closely intertwined with it, was consistently harmonious. This is in spite of the details of such conflicts that have been provided by authors like Mietzner (2009) and Aspinall (2005). It should be pointed out as well that the source of the schism was nothing less fundamental than the subordination of the military to oligarchy, as seen in the ascendancy of the Soeharto family and those of select cronies within Indonesian capitalism. Such subordination involved the relative marginalisation of the military-as-capitalist institution—after the military-as-apparatus-of-violence had contributed so much to the very establishment of the New Order—including by the prior instigation and direction of large-scale massacres and dislocations in untold numbers of communities as described in vivid terms by Farid.

In fact, Farid’s references to the New Order that emerged in the wake of the massacres of the 1960s are strangely notable for the absence of competing interests—as if the regime (or “state” as Farid mistakenly refers to it) were merely a vessel for military power. Of course, this tendency may be a by-product of Farid’s accounting for the systematic and terrifying violence unleashed on Indonesian society that continues to traumatisé it (Farid 2005, 14) However, this is ultimately no substitute for an understanding of the sorts of social interests that were to drive the development of Indonesian capitalism, especially if there was supposed to have been a primitive accumulation process that was unleashed specifically to make that development possible. Startlingly, the military is more or less depicted by Farid only as an apparatus of violence, while even as early as Robison’s earliest works we have known it to represent a major, and at one time, far more powerful faction of state capital than it is today. Hadiz (1997), among others, has pointed out that the military’s impulse to destroy the PKI—an organisation ideologically inclined towards workers’ control over the means of production—partially emanated from its own role as manager-capitalist within the early post-colonial Indonesian economy. This role could be traced back at least to the nationalisation of foreign companies that was carried out in the 1950s, the authority over which was placed in the hands of the military in spite of the protestations of radical unions.

What has been the purpose of this roundabout way of contributing to the debate on primitive accumulation in Indonesia as undertaken by Farid and McNaughton?
First, it points to the implausibility that the massacres were part of a consciously deployed economic strategy. While not the occurrence of spontaneous violence inferred by other analysts, or a mere “logical” outcome of long lingering social animosities—interpretations that Farid rightly eschews—it had very real sources in the contradictions of development of the early Indonesian post-colonial political economy. This aspect of the problem is virtually ignored by Farid in his zeal to underline the profound effect of the violence of the 1960s to the further development of Indonesian capitalism, while underscoring its organised and systematic nature.

As a result, Farid tends to ignore the structural context within which the massacres occurred. It must be remembered that in the absence of petty bourgeois elements capable of taking a vanguard role in capitalist accumulation—as witnessed consistently throughout the 1950s—it was the state itself and its corps of officials that eventually took up the task. The most developed part of the state was the military, which in the 1950s was already deeply embedded in the economy—and in politics and state administration—due to the “emergency” that was in response to a range of separatist movements. In these roles, the military had become increasingly embroiled in conflict with the PKI, which continued to preach revolutionary transformation all the way to its demise even if it was not immune to making strategic changes born of pragmatism. It was only in such a context that the military, as part of the state, was especially well suited to carry out the violence and displacement associated with primitive accumulation. This is the case even if the military’s position was to be eventually downgraded in the further development of Indonesian capitalism. Given such a role of the state, it is not difficult to see why Indonesia’s highly rapacious big bourgeoisie eventually crystallised out of state power itself once a regime was forged that made this possible through closer integration with the international economy—though one that was not free of important contradictions—as a close reading of New Order political economy would clearly show.

It should be apparent that the point of view offered here is quite different from Farid’s, who argues that “…Suharto and his allied army officers orchestrated the repression and pushed aside President Sukarno with an economic strategy already in mind” (Farid 2005, 4). Notwithstanding many years of American courting of key sections of the Indonesian military leadership in the 1950s and 1960s and of its small intelligentsia (Simpson 2010), such a level of conscious individual motivation is not necessary to recognise the fact that Soekarno’s “anti-imperialist” policies came to be
increasingly contrary to the interests of some powerful domestic social forces, including the military. Positing the existence of such conscious motivation, however, leads Farid to overlook the complexity of the relationship between the economic and political requisites of New Order rule, while simultaneously conferring a degree of prescience that the “clique” around Soeharto simply could not have had in any reasonable sense. It must be recalled, for example, that it wasn’t until the early 1970s that the New Order’s model of authoritarian state corporatism was well established and that beyond a general disposition toward capitalism and connecting with the world economy, development strategy underwent several important shifts in the three decades of New Order rule (Robison and Hadiz 2004). These shifts were the product of significant contests between sections of domestic and international capital as well as a powerful corps of state officials, including an economic technocracy whose influence constantly waxed and waned over the years (while being transformed from acolytes of Keynesian economics to a more distinctly neo-liberal economic theory).

Second, it is somewhat negligent to imply that the military did not have support from important societal elements in its destruction of Indonesian communism, as Farid does by glossing over the existence of such support. The Indonesian military, which itself was riven by important internal conflicts (exploited by Soeharto for his own political ascendancy), was obviously aided by others who were threatened by the PKI’s revolutionary agenda. Among these were the small urban, and of course, rural propertied (Tornquist 1984)—and even sections of the precariously salaried middle class whose material conditions of life were deteriorating in the midst of Soekarno’s hyper-inflationary economic policies. One needn’t dismiss such social conflicts (emerging from the contradictions of the post colonial economy) out of hand for the sake of preserving the view—no matter how correct—that the violence in Indonesia was largely directed against a confused and rudderless PKI and its purported supporters who were unable to significantly fight back (Farid 2005, 7). After all, from where did the paramilitary and youth organisations mobilised by the military, mentioned in the article, spring from?

Third—and this is a point that merges with one raised by McNaughton but is to be developed in the section to follow—primitive accumulation continued in Indonesia after the massacres and social dislocations of the period scrutinised by Farid. It has a major part in the evolution of the exceptionally predatory form of capitalism that has come to be identified with the practices of a state-enforced and pervasive politics of
plunder. From this point of view, primitive accumulation in Indonesia, under the aegis of the state, could be usefully compared to and contrasted with subsequent phases of primitive accumulation in post-Soviet Russia and in contemporary China (Holstrom and Smith 2000). In fact, these may serve as the more appropriate comparisons (on the matter of primitive accumulation) than the case of Chile that both Farid and McNaughton refer to, notwithstanding the fact that the military coup plotters against Allende are well known to have been inspired by events in Jakarta in the preceding decade.

Primitive Accumulation in Indonesia

One of the major shortcomings in the literature on Indonesian capitalism that Farid seeks to address in his essay is inadequate analysis of the pre-conditions of capitalist development. He states (Farid 2005, 5) that:

It is widely understood in the literature on the political economy of Indonesia that the mid-1960s represents a dramatic historical break, that the economy under the New Order was radically different from the pre-1965 economy. A noted scholar on Indonesian contemporary politics, Richard Robison, for instance, noted that the expansion of capitalism after the mid-1960s was possible “only after the political victory of the military over the PKI and the Sukarno regime, which in turn secured a victory at the social level for the propertied classes over the threat posed by the landless and the urban workers” (Robison 1986, 109). Yet the focus in Robison’s studies, as in so many others, is on the capitalist development itself, not on those pre-conditions for the development, and pays little attention to how the army’s continuing use of violence helped to create those landless workers. I do not view capitalism as solely a matter of the bourgeoisie, as Robison’s studies of Indonesia’s “business class” imply. Nor do I view the working class as only those people who are today working in a factory for a wage. Rather, following Marx himself, I see capital as a social relation which involves the formation of a working class and its reproduction year-in year-out as a populace willing to work under the command of those who control the capital.
As mentioned earlier, this is a laudable endeavour, and Farid has carried out much of it with considerable aplomb. The observations he makes about coerced involvement into wage labour relations after 1965—at least on one occasion at gunpoint—are powerful and contribute to a fuller account of Indonesian capitalist development. No doubt 1965 was a turning point in the history of Indonesian capitalism in many respects, even if Farid rightly does not suggest that it marked its beginnings. However, what came afterwards was no less important in terms of primitive accumulation and Indonesian capitalism, even if it had less overtly bloody manifestations. But Farid makes statements that serve to obscure his awareness of this fact, which I do not doubt, such as in the following (Farid 2005, 2):

The military state that resulted from this generalized terror campaign devoted itself over the following years to promoting the interests of domestic and foreign capital. It expropriated people for development projects and maintained a docile populace, thus repeating the same sort of violence that it committed in its early years.

In the process, Farid’s clearly expressed emphasis on the social relational aspects of capitalism is oddly left unexplored in the rest of the article except in the aforementioned anecdotes about the coerced incorporation of sections of the Indonesian population into capitalist social relations in the form of wage labour compelled to work for the owners of capital. As a consequence, it remains unclear to me why the specific events described—as much as they might have represented more widespread practices—were pivotal in the spread of capitalist social relationships in Indonesia in any theoretically rigorous explanation. As Farid acknowledges, these social relationships had already existed due to their introduction during colonial times. Did the violence then produce a rupture whereby a previously slower process of proliferation was somehow accelerated? Even if this were the case, trauma and fear only go so far in explaining this because the compulsion to work for capital, as Farid no doubt understands, is rooted in the basic necessity to materially survive within the prevailing capitalist system. Hence the internalisation of terror is only of limited value as explication for the virtually continual growth of capitalist social relationships in Indonesia since the New Order was in fuller swing.
This can be appreciated more fully in political economy analysis that would actually scrutinise the lag between the destruction of the PKI and rapid industrialisation in Indonesia, which only took place when the New Order “model” of organising political and economic power came to be securely established. The latter actually took some time to achieve, perhaps up to around 1973, when a state corporatist system was finally entrenched and when windfall oil revenues were about to allow the state to act as engine of development in lieu of a domestic big bourgeoisie. But Farid, rather resentfully dismisses various possible indicators of industrialisation, social change and class formation as unimportant (Farid 2005, 5, 9), especially those of a quantitative nature. I am not sure why, for it seems to me that this is akin to throwing out the baby with the bathwater (especially if one were interested in a dynamic analysis, rather than snapshot accounts, of social transformations). But it should be possible, surely, to utilise these indicative data without falling into hyper-empiricism.

In any case, it was from then to the 1990s that various state policies compelled ever-larger numbers of the peasantry to leave the land as well as produced fuller-scale modern capitalist enterprises, all the way to giant conglomerates. After a relatively short period in which foreign aid was especially crucial in the reorganisation of the Indonesian economy and its institutions, such policies were robustly executed first under import substitution industrialisation propelled by the state largely through bountiful oil revenues and then for a time, when these had dissipated, under export-led industrialisation based on low-wage manufactured exports. It was at this latter stage that economic sectors were opened up to foreign capital in many areas previously closed to it, through a raft of policy changes that also allowed by now big domestic businesses (and the banks they had established as cash cows) to access new sources of finance and spread their tentacles throughout the economy. Of course, these strategies were accompanied variously by the plundering of Indonesia’s natural resources, transformations in land use, the extra-economically achieved mass expulsions of local communities to make way for factories, middle class housing projects and tourist resorts, not to mention plantations and mining operations, as well as generally ever-greater pressures for engagement in the capitalist economy at all levels of society.

Surely, this aspect of the history capitalism in Indonesia cannot be ignored if Farid is truly interested, as he claims to be, in the matter of the reproduction of the
capitalist system (Farid 2005, 3, 8)—for it is in such developments that we really see how it became socially more and more difficult for people to live and work in ways disengaged from the capitalist economy. Ironically, for all of Farid’s disdain for formal measures of capitalist development, he backs up his argument about the importance of coercion into wage labour in the aftermath of 1965 by suggesting that at least three million people would have been affected by the New Order’s “clean environment” policy—whereby anyone associated or related to known communists were continually harassed if not suppressed. This is what Farid proposes made the “reproduction of the capital relation much easier” (Farid 2005, 13)—because such affected individuals would have compliantly settled for any form of low wage employment. The sum total of this explanation for capitalist reproduction, to my mind, amounts to a rather bizarre form of Marxist analysis.

Perhaps McNaughton makes an astute observation, therefore, when he suggests that Farid effectively conflates different understandings of primitive accumulation. He is also certainly correct that Farid neglects to theoretically explain the foreign investment and aid that poured into Indonesia from the point of view of the requisites of capitalist accumulation—whether at a national or global scale. But more significantly, how is the continual and systematic plunder of Indonesian natural resources over several decades—which has contributed directly or indirectly to the concentration of wealth and social inequalities that we now associate so strongly with the Indonesian political economy—to be conceptualised in relation to the primitive accumulation of the particularly violent period that Farid describes? Incidentally, such plunder has not been linked only to capital accumulation by politically well-connected domestic capitalists but also foreign multinationals—and this shows that international capital has no intrinsic need for regularised and transparent markets as World Bank economists might opine. One might ask, more specifically, how Farid might relate the on-going plunder of Papuan resources—especially as executed by entities like Freeport-McMoran (Tebay 2005, 11–13)—in collaboration with Indonesian security forces, state officials and capitalists—to his conceptualisation of primitive accumulation that seems to be quite excessively narrow for broader application. Are such practices simply a repetition of a well-tried strategy on Java in the 1960s or do they implicate mechanics of primitive accumulation arising from far more developed social alliances involving the state, including its coercive apparatus and different factions of capital?
A key contribution that McNaughton makes to the discussion is to skilfully elaborate on the many facets of primitive accumulation and how these might contribute to dissimilar though related conceptualisations of primitive accumulation. Such is the case in spite of some niggling reservations I might have about what seems like a somewhat un-nuanced understanding of the ways in which “colonial, neo-colonial and imperialist relations feed into a world system of capitalist accumulation.”

Ultimately, I would be inclined toward a conceptualisation of primitive accumulation in Indonesia that minimally proceeds from the more explicit position that it has been a continual process manifested in a diversity of ways. That while often less “dramatic,” it has included the politics of plunder of a range of terrestrial and maritime socially-owned resources (oil, minerals, arable land, forests and many others) for the purposes of private accumulation, alongside the continual systemic exclusion of large sections of the Indonesian population from the riches they yield. Power relations facilitating massive levels of corruption and abuse continuing in the present democratic period clearly have much to do with this. Furthermore, such a conceptualisation should more overtly recognise that such processes have taken place alongside the highly exacerbated separation of direct producers from control over the means of production to the point that material survival is implausible without direct or indirect engagement in the capitalist economy and its associated social relationships. This is so even if it is achieved without necessarily the sort of generalised physical violence to which Farid gives primacy in his explanation of the mechanics of primitive accumulation in Indonesia in 1965–66.

**Conclusion**

This has been a relatively brief and perhaps all too cursory intervention into the thought-provoking debate on primitive accumulation between Farid and McNaughton—in spite of the decade-long lag between their essays. I should perhaps make it clearer, at this point, that I found many more things to applaud in both than to criticise, although for the purposes of hopefully advancing debate I have necessarily focussed on what I perceive to be their shortcomings. I have done so especially with regard to Farid’s article.
To summarise, his is an important and novel interpretation of the 1960s massacres in Indonesia but one that is riddled by ambiguities in conceptualisation and a misreading of certain aspects of the development of the Indonesian political economy over the last half a century. In this article, I have highlighted the most important of such flaws, and perhaps in a rather roundabout way, attempted to pinpoint some observations that may contribute toward rectifying them. In doing so, I have elected to engage with Farid’s ideas on their own terms—at their own level of analysis—by providing primacy to the domestic determinants of capitalist development and global economic integration, paying attention to their associated social struggles (some of which I found to have been either too simplified or ignored by Farid in his essay). This is a strategy that is different from that chosen by McNaughton in his own stimulating essay but one which I hope would no less encourage further discussion. I have suggested that it is too simplistic to conceive of a one to one correspondence between the economic and political requisites of the New Order, though the destruction of the PKI clearly paved the way for the trajectory that the regime would go on. Such an observation would need to be accommodated in explanations of the violence of 1965–66 that link it to primitive accumulation but is largely absent in Farid’s article. In the process, I am also suggesting that we do not replace capitalism’s commodity fetishism with a fetish for its violence—something I fear may have been inadvertently “accomplished” by Farid.

Notes

1 See Wallerstein’s (2008) comments on the global financial crisis; and compare to those by Resnick and Wolff (2010); also see Panitch and Gindin (2012) on the political economy of Empire.

2 A recent example can be found in an otherwise theoretically sophisticated and historically rich work by Slater (2010), whereby the Indonesian authoritarian trajectory is placed in the same category with Burma—that of “militarism.”

3 Perhaps it is worth repeating here that Robison and Hadiz (2004, 43) had understood the New Order as embodying a metamorphosis of state and class power, which resulted in evolution toward the following: (1) A regulatory apparatus imposing a framework of fiscal and monetary discipline and highly organised political repression aimed at preventing the economic and social disorder that had corroded
the previous regime. Within this was established: (2) A system of organising state
and society relations characterised primarily by the disorganisation of civil society
and the dominance of state-created corporatist institutions; and (3) An extensive and
complex system of patronage, personified by Soeharto himself, and the apex of
which lay at Cendana Palace. This system of patronage penetrated all layers of
society from Jakarta down to the provinces, kabupaten, towns and villages. (4)
During its heyday it became a capitalist oligarchy that fused public authority and
private interest, epitomised in the rise of such families as the Soehartos.

4 As seen from its enthusiastic and successful participation in parliamentary
democracy in the 1950s and then the alliance it struck with Soekarno in the
subsequent illiberal period known as Guided Democracy.

5 See McNaughton’s essay in this volume.

6 See McNaughton’s essay in this volume.

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