

# MEDIATING INDONESIA

## A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO INDONESIAN MASS MEDIA



DRAFT SYLLABUS PREPARED BY DR. RICHARD FOX

This provisional draft was written with a **graduate** Southeast Asian studies audience in mind. A similar – though more general – syllabus might be designed for an advanced undergraduate level seminar. I have designed the syllabus assuming roughly two hours of contact time per week, plus additional time to meet during office hours for those who require it.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

An informed analysis of the media has never been more important than it is today for understanding events in Southeast Asia. As this course will demonstrate, Indonesia is no exception. The course offers a critical introduction to the rapidly changing field of Indonesian mass media. As in many other fields of study, the analysis of media has tended to cross disciplinary boundaries. So we shall be drawing on perspectives from a range of disciplines including, among others, Anthropology as well as Media and Cultural Studies. A central aim of the course will be to problematize popular assumptions regarding modernity and ‘global media’ in the light of a careful analysis of relevant developments in Indonesia.

The course is divided into three parts, each of which focuses on a different aspect of what has made the contemporary Indonesian media scene what it is today. By the end of the course, you will not only have a broad overview of Indonesian media – from newsprint and radio to television and the Internet – but you will also have a critical understanding of how several important issues are being discussed in present-day Indonesia. These include matters such as the successes and failures of the reform movement, the causes and consequences of mass violence and ‘the war on terror’, as well as the very integrity of the Indonesian Republic itself. With reference to these and other related issues, the three parts of the course are entitled: (i.) *Mediating reform*, (ii.) *Mediating violence* and (iii.) *Mediating nation and state*. Between parts one and two, there will be a brief intermezzo in which we shall pause to consider recent developments in Indonesian cinema.

The organizing principle for the course is a media genealogy for *Reformasi*, the ideal of widespread political and more broadly social reform that emerged with the demise in 1998 of the former president Suharto's repressive New Order régime (*Orde Baru*).

**MEDIATING REFORM.** In addition to its far-reaching call to rid the country of what was popularly known by the acronym KKN – for *korupsi, kolusi & nepotisme* – the *reformasi* movement also pushed to abolish the draconian press laws that were enforced under the New Order. Although initially there was considerable success on this front, many have argued that hired muscle – e.g., in the form of state-sponsored ‘thugs’, or *preman* – is now doing the job that was previously entrusted to the (only somewhat more subtle) methods of the Ministry of Information. In weeks two through five, the course will trace a genealogy for the contemporary state of affairs, with a particular emphasis on popular debates in the Indonesian media regarding press freedom, political violence and national unity.

**MEDIATING VIOLENCE.** The rise and sustenance as well as the fall of the New Order were steeped in violence; and any attempt to understand the challenges faced by the reform movement will have to come to grips with the circumstances out of which it arose. Following Suharto's demise, violence has been a popular subject for scholarly inquiry; but media have rarely figured prominently in these recent analyses. Following the week on cinema, the second part of the course is designed to approach the problem of violence in Indonesia from the unique perspective offered by a critical analysis of the mass media. We shall begin with popular debates on the nature of Jemaah Islamiyah, the terrorist group allegedly linked to al-Qaeda, and examine various representations of violence, communal unrest, and criminality, with a special emphasis on their implication in public understandings of Indonesia as a nation.

**MEDIATING NATION AND STATE.** It is not difficult to imagine how the Internet, cell-phones and other new media might be deployed in contemporary efforts toward political reform. In the early days of *reformasi*, for instance, email and online instant messaging were important tools for coordinating nationwide protests and other events associated with the student movement. But media mattered long before that. Through the years, television, radio and newspapers – as well as language itself – have played an important role in the emergence of Indonesian ‘national consciousness’, to use Benedict Anderson's phrase. These and other media were also used in a decidedly deliberate fashion to further the aims of the Indonesian state. So, in the third and final part of the course, we shall consider the implication of various media in articulating men, women and children as subjects in need of ‘development’, ‘guidance’ and the more generalized paternal authority associated with the emergence of the modern Indonesian state.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Following a thematic and conceptual overview in the first week, the course begins with an analysis of the recent debates on the successes and failures of the reform movement. We shall focus on a series of developments that arose following an incident in which several journalists at one of Indonesia's leading magazines were physically attacked following the publication of an article that implicated one of Indonesia's leading

businessmen in a serious case of arson. In Week Three we shall consider popular representations of press freedom and responsibility that followed the relaxation of media laws with the demise of the New Order. In the fourth week we will examine several uses of the Internet in connection with the mass riots of 1998, with special emphasis on critical issues pertaining to the emergence of an online Chinese diasporic community. In Week Five we shall review the developments discussed in previous weeks, and contrast the contemporary situation with media policy and practice under the New Order. We shall pause in the sixth week to watch a recent film from one of Indonesia's leading filmmakers, and to discuss the politics of representing violence both of and under the New Order. In Week Seven, we shall trace the transformation of Indonesian discourses on 'terrorism' following the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002. We shall examine the idea of 'communal violence' the following week, through a careful analysis of the media coverage of the initial outbreak of violence in Ambon in 1999. We shall focus on the implicit assumptions in this coverage regarding the idea of Indonesia as a nation. We shall pursue a related theme in Week Nine by considering the representation of threats to national unity. In the tenth week we shall examine the idea of 'criminality' and how it has been articulated in relation to the Indonesian state. The following week we shall consider the implication of television in state-ideological discourses of modernity and development. In Week Twelve, we will examine the early emergence of an Indonesian-language press, and how newsprint contributed to the possibility of imagining a unified Indonesia. In the thirteenth week, we shall consider the history of Indonesian radio, and the transformation of a national and highly politicized medium into a local medium reduced largely to a form of entertainment. Finally, in Week Fourteen, we shall examine the emergence of the idea of the Indonesian language as an index of national unity, its subsequent dissemination through education and other state institutions, and how regional languages have fared as 'part of Indonesia's living culture'.

#### **COURSE ORIENTATION AND STRUCTURE**

Perhaps unlike most survey courses, **this course is taught backward**. That is to say, each week – and also through the course more generally – we shall start with issues on the contemporary scene and work back through the conditions under which certain key understandings of events were possible. An important advantage of this approach is that it takes into account the fact that the current state of affairs is not the outcome of a linear process of development. In tracing genealogies for present-day issues, the course will necessarily be selective. We shall cover some issues in depth and, by necessity, we will have to go over others more quickly. We will not, for instance, be looking in any detail at either the Dangdut music phenomenon of Inul Daratista ('FenomInul') or the recent debates on pornography; nor will we be able to consider at any length the important television genre of sinétron. Of course, time allowing, we can briefly touch on these and other issues if there is adequate interest.

You may note that there is no single week on gender, ethnicity or any of several issues often highlighted on survey courses of this kind. The reason for this is simple: **we shall address questions of ethnicity, gender and power each and every week**.

For each week, a list of key readings is provided, as well as a media session in which we shall either watch and discuss a film or a recorded television broadcast, examine newspapers and magazines etc.

In addition to the readings listed for each week, you may find the following books useful for general background and additional bibliographic information::

- 1) Columbijn, F. & T. Lindblad (eds) *Roots of violence in Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- 2) Hill, D.T. (1994) *The press in New Order Indonesia*. University of Western Australia Press in association with Asia Research Institute on Social, Political and Economic Change.
- 3) Kitley, P. (2000) *Television, nation and culture in Indonesia*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- 4) Ricklefs, M.C. (2001) Sections 4, 5 & 6 in: *A history of modern Indonesia since c.1200*. Third edition. Stanford: SUP.
- 5) Romano, A. (2002) *Politics and the press in Indonesia: Understanding an evolving political culture*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- 6) O'Rourke, K. (2002) *Reformasi. The struggle for power in post-Suharto Indonesia*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.
- 7) Sen, K & D. Hill (2000) *Media Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Oxford: OUP.

I have listed the following bibliographic entries to provide some sense of the philosophical background for the approach taken in presenting the course materials.

- 1) Butler, J. (1999 [1990]) *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity*. (Tenth Anniversary Edition.) New York and London: Routledge.
- 2) Collingwood, R.G. (1972 [1940]) *An essay on metaphysics*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America. Part One.
- 3) Foucault, M. (1977) Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews*. D.F. Bouchard, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 4) Laclau, E. (1990) 'The impossibility of society'. In: *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. London: Verso.
- 5) Quine, W.v.O. (1994 [1951]) Two dogmas of empiricism. In *From a logical point of view*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

## **COURSE SYNOPSIS**

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WEEK 1: Mediating Indonesia: Course overview and general orientation

### **I. Mediating Reform**

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WEEK 2: Tempo ini: Exposés, editors and thugs  
 WEEK 3: Indochoas! Rape, riots and the idea of accountability  
 WEEK 4: Tabloid fever: Some consequences of press reform  
 WEEK 5: Tempo Doeloe: Politics and the press under the New Order

### **Intermezzo**

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WEEK 6: Cinema: The repression of history and the history of repression

### **II. Mediating Violence**

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WEEK 7: From 'kelompok tertentu' to 'Jemaah Islamiyah':  
 Transnational media and the changing articulations of terror  
 WEEK 8: Ambon berdarah: National media and 'communal violence'  
 WEEK 9: Disintegrasi: Representing threats to national unity  
 WEEK 10: Television and tattoos: Representing 'kriminalitas' now and then

### III. Mediating Nation and State

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- WEEK 11: Pembangunan: Television and the project of national development  
WEEK 12: Imagining Indonesia: Newsprint and the idea of the nation  
WEEK 13: Merdeka! Radio and the revolution  
WEEK 14: Sumpah pemuda: One country, one nation, one language

#### WEEKLY SYNOPSES

##### Week 1

##### Mediating Indonesia: Course overview and general orientation

Why do media matter? One medium or another has usually played a central – if not always properly acknowledged – role in both popular and scholarly discourses on Indonesia. The call to use ‘one language’ across the archipelago, for instance, was an important aspect of the Indonesian independence movement of the early twentieth century. In Benedict Anderson’s (1983) now classic *Imagined communities*, newsprint figured prominently in the emergence of what he called ‘national consciousness’. And, in a different – though not entirely dissimilar – manner, classical Kawi texts were (and often still are) the medium of choice for scholars of the ancient religion and culture of Bali and Java, in which they see the roots of contemporary practice. Much of the relevant scholarly literature seems to presuppose that these ancient texts were constitutive of their times – and, for some, even of ours. But comparatively little attention has been paid – in modern as well as classical studies – to the practices that underpin mediation. Some of the key questions we shall be asking include: How has Indonesia been mediated at different times? What have been the most important media for imagining the nation during the era of *reformasi*? What were their conditions of possibility? And, considering the call for radical change, what are the implications for the future? Posing a series of critical questions, and presenting an overview of the material to be covered, this first week will set the agenda for the remainder of the course.

#### Reading

- Sen, K & D. Hill (2000) ‘Introduction: Mediating politics and culture’. In: *Media Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Oxford: OUP.
- McCargo, D. (2003) ‘Media as an agent of stability? Suharto's Indonesia’. In: *Media and politics in Pacific Asia*. London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Sharpe, J. (2002) ‘Eliana Eliana: Independent cinema? A new wave of Indonesian films’. *Inside Indonesia*. 72: 17-8.
- Tickell, P., ed. (1996) Introduction & selected chapters. In: *The Indonesian Press: Its past, its people, its problems*. Victoria: Monash Center of Southeast Asian Studies.
- O’Rourke, K. (2002) Selected chapters from *Reformasi. The struggle for power in post-Suharto Indonesia*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.
- Spyer, P., et al. (2002) *Indonesian Mediations: The re-imagining and re-imaging of community(s) in transition; A position paper*. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen. Electronic document.

**Media session:** *Eliana Eliana*, a recent film by the Indonesian producer Riri Riza, set in contemporary Jakarta (subtitled).

## Part One: *Mediating Reform*



'Events of 2002' (*Peristiwa di tahun 2002*)  
BALI POST, 31 December 2002

To what extent can the *reformasi* movement rightfully claim to have broken with the corrupt and repressive ways of the past? About a year ago the *Jakarta Post* published a series of comments on the issue from government workers and members of the public. It included the following remark from a member of the Indonesian General Elections Commission:

To put it simply, in its fourth year the reform movement has yet to find a definite direction. The ideal goals expected by student movements to replace the (New Order) regime have not yet materialized. There have only been a few changes of personnel. There is only a shift in political configuration, but the attitude of the old regime remains. I think there are changes in some aspects, but they are not very clear. The system is changing, but the 'taste' remains the same.

The aftertaste of New Order repression has been a popular topic of late in Indonesian editorial and opinion columns. Over five years have now passed since the reform movement got under way, and yet many argue that little has changed for the majority of ordinary citizens that make up Indonesia's population of some 210 million. In this first part of the course, we shall examine key debates on the contemporary scene, and consider the extent to which the proponents of *reformasi* – and particularly developments in media – have succeeded in moving beyond the practices and presuppositions that underpinned the New Order.

## Week 2

### Tempo ini: Exposés, editors and thugs



The contemporary Indonesian media scene is ferociously competitive, with even the most serious publications often being accused of exaggerating and sensationalizing (as well as occasionally even outright lying) to get the attention of what is perceived as a fickle and easily distracted audience. Things are perhaps not so dissimilar in the Euro-american world. However, there have been several high-profile cases of late in which the offices of Indonesian publications with longstanding and distinguished reputations have been attacked violently by ‘supporters’ of those who were purportedly slandered. This week we are going to consider one such incident, as a way into thinking critically about some of the central issues in contemporary Indonesian media.

In March 2003, a gang of thugs attacked the Jakarta offices of Tempo magazine, assaulting several members of the editorial staff and doing considerable physical damage to the premises. The assault was allegedly part of a spontaneous groundswell of support for one of Indonesia's wealthiest businessmen, whom Tempo tentatively linked to a devastating act of arson at the country's main textile market. The ensuing legal battle gave rise to a series of debates on the accomplishments and failures of the reform movement – especially in the field of press reform. This week we take a closer look at these developments – particularly the kinds of assumptions that were being made regarding the place of the media in Indonesian society – and whether *reformasi* has succeeded in bringing greater transparency and accountability than there had been under the New Order.

#### Reading

- Tempo (2003) ‘The signs of thuggery all around us’, cover story. (18 March 2003)
- Sen, K & D. Hill (2000) ‘The press: Industry and ideology’. In *Media Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Oxford: OUP.
- Schulte Nordholt, H. (2002) ‘A genealogy of violence’. In F. Colombijn and Th. Lindblad (eds) *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- Lindsay, T. (2001) ‘The criminal state: Premanisme and the New Indonesia’. In: G. Lloyd and S. Smith (eds) *Indonesia today: Challenges of history*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Goenawan Mohamad (2002) Selections from *Conversations with difference; Essays from Tempo magazine*. Trans. J. Lindsay. Jakarta: Tempo, pp. 225-7.

**Media session:** Examining a collection of flyers, leaflets and posters that were recently distributed at ‘anti-premanisme’ demonstrations in Jakarta and Yogyakarta.

## Week 3

### Tabloid fever: Some consequences of press reform



As the interim successor to Suharto, one of B.J. Habibie's most important acts in office was to begin dismantling the bureaucratic mechanisms for press regulation. In the first week of Abdurrahman Wahid's administration, the Ministry of Information itself was closed (only to be reopened by his successor, Megawati Soekarnoputri), and publishers were no longer required to obtain the publishing permits which, under the previous régime, were rescinded for the slightest editorial indiscretion. (Tempo, for instance, was closed down no less than three times.) No longer subject to governmental control, the number of new magazines, journals and newspapers increased several hundred-fold as if overnight. And with this the competition grew fierce. Vying for readers – and their pocketbooks – editors became increasingly daring, with sensational headlines, racier content (sex, crime, the supernatural etc.) and photographs of women wearing little if any clothing. A far cry, perhaps, from many of their more 'extreme' western counterparts, this nevertheless marked a clear departure from what had gone before. And a series of debates were carried out in the national press – with officials and public figures alike weighing in – on how to balance this newfound 'press freedom' with the need for journalistic restraint. Did new styles of reporting exacerbate communal conflict? What were the social consequences of publishing 'pornographic' images? Was Indonesia falling victim to the decadence of 'the west'? This week we shall consider the debates on journalism and social responsibility that followed on the heels of the early post-New Order press reforms.

#### Reading

- Luwarso, L. (2002) 'Give freedom of the press a chance; Indonesia's free press needs time to mature'. *Inside Indonesia*. 72: 4-5.
- Marcus, D.L. (1998) 'Indonesia revolt was Net driven'. Electronic document.
- Goenawan Mohamad (1994) Selections from *Sidelines; Thought pieces from Tempo magazine*. Trans. J. Lindsay. Jakarta: Tempo, pp. 103-4.
- Lintner, B. & A. Craddock (1998) 'Internet Power – 2'. Electronic document.
- Hughes, K. (2001) Selections (in translation) from *Wajah pers Malang*. Electronic document.
- O'Rourke, K. (2002) Selected chapters from *Reformasi. The struggle for power in post-Suharto Indonesia*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.
- Romano, A. (2002) Selection from *Politics and the press in Indonesia: Understanding an evolving political culture*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

**Media session:** Examining hardcopies of several tabloid publications (many now out of print) from 1999, with selective translations.

## Week 4

### Indo-chaos! Rape, riots and the idea of accountability



The final days of the New Order saw several – albeit largely isolated – outbreaks of violence around the country; and Chinese Indonesians were often singled out on a systematic basis for particularly brutal treatment. This was not the first time that such a thing had happened. But it was the first time that it was possible to document and



disseminate – and even sometimes fabricate – evidence of looting, rape and murder in Jakarta. The Internet was an important aspect of this process; and we shall examine some of the practices through which ‘indigenous’ (*pribumi*) Indonesians were differentiated from their Chinese compatriots, and how an international Chinese community (*Hua Ren*) was mediated online in response to the crisis. We shall consider the way in which accountability was articulated in connection with the fledgling reform movement, and how it understood itself in opposition to the régime that preceded it.

### Reading

- Heryanto, A. (1999) ‘Race, riots and reporting’ In: A. Budiman, B. Hatley & Damien Kingsbury (eds) *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia?* Clayton: Monash Asia Institute.
- Ang, I. (2001) ‘Indonesia on my mind: Diaspora, the Internet and the struggle for hybridity’ and ‘Undoing diaspora: Questioning global Chineseness in the era of globalization’. In: *On not speaking Chinese; Living between Asia and the West*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sentot E. Baskoro (1998) ‘Peranan Internet dalam reformasi Indonesia’. Electronic document, in translation.
- Siegel, J.T. (2001) ‘Thoughts on the violence of May 13 and 14, 1998, in Jakarta’. In: Anderson, B. (ed) *Violence and the state in Suharto’s Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program.
- Huus, K. (1998) ‘Indonesia’s cyber politics. Electronic document.
- Shiraishi, T. (1997) ‘Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order’. In: D. Chirot & A. Reid (eds) *Essential outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the modern transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Sandyawan Sumardi (1998) ‘Mass rape in the recent riots: The climax of an uncivilized act in the nation’s life’. Jakarta: Volunteers for Humanity. Electronic document.
- Heryanto, A. (1998) ‘Flawed Media Coverage; Racialised state terrorism – not mass race riots – to blame for violence in Indonesia’. In: *Aliran Monthly*. 18(7): 11-13.

**Media session:** Selected US, British and Indonesian television news coverage of violence in Jakarta

### Week 5

#### Tempo Doeloe: Politics and the press under the New Order



The Indonesian media were radically depoliticized under the New Order. Or, perhaps more precisely, they were guided with a heavy hand toward a particular political end. The acronym ‘MISS SARA’ was commonly used – and still is – in reference to a series of topics that were marked as off-limits for discussion in the media. These included anything deemed seditious, insinuating, sensational, speculative, or likely to antagonize ethnic, religious, racial or ‘group’ tensions. The implementation of the SARA policy contributed to the discursive emergence of a sanitized and apparently pluralistic Indonesian nation.

Mass mediated representations of the many ‘culturally’, ‘linguistically’, ‘religiously’ and ‘ethnically’ differentiated groups generally gave the impression of Indonesians living in blissful tolerance of one another – even, and perhaps especially, when this was patently

not the case. Although self-censorship was the most common means to this end, a congeries of other practices emerged in this connection. This week we shall examine several aspects of New Order journalism. We will consider the implications of self-censorship as well as of less subtle modes of disciplining the press, including what were often called ‘telephone culture’, ‘envelope journalism’ and other dominant practices. In looking at these practices, and their consequences, we shall pay special attention to regularities and disjunctures with journalistic practice in the era of *reformasi*.

### Reading

- Hill, D.T. (1994) Selected chapters from *The press in New Order Indonesia*. University of Western Australia Press in association with Asia Research Institute on Social, Political and Economic Change.
- Goenawan Mohamad (1994) ‘SIUPP publishing permits’. In: *Sidelines; Thought pieces from Tempo magazine*. Trans. J. Lindsay. Jakarta: Tempo, pp. 103-4.
- Romano, A. (2002) Selected chapters from *Politics and the press in Indonesia: Understanding an evolving political culture*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Kitley, P.T. (1997) ‘New Order television rituals’. In: Hitchcock, M. & V.T. King (eds) *Images of Malay-Indonesian identity*. Oxford: OUP.
- Romano, Angela (1998) ‘I always throw the envelope away’. *Inside Indonesia*, No. 54, April – June 1998. Electronic document, available online at <http://insideindonesia.org/edit54/angela.htm>
- Vickers, A. (2001) ‘The New Order: Keeping up appearances’. In: G. Lloyd and S. Smith (eds) *Indonesia today; Challenges of history*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- Pemberton, J. (1994) ‘Recollections from “Beautiful Indonesia” (Somewhere beyond the Postmodern)’. *Public Culture*. 6(2): 241-62.

**Media session:** A range of broadcasts from Indonesian state television (TVRI).

### Intermezzo (Week 6)

#### Cinema: The repression of history and the history of repression



The production of films in Indonesia has long been subject to heavy bureaucratic control. Since the early 1970s, producers were required to submit their footage to the authorities for ‘guidance’ *prior* to editing, while the plot itself would require vetting by the Ministry of Information before shooting could even begin. Guidelines for production were gradually established, favoring storylines that centered on the restoration of social order (the good guys win, the baddies get their just desserts) and the depiction of Indonesians living in harmony together. Some have suggested that, as a result of such stringent controls, Indonesian cinema is effectively comatose. There has, however – at least lately – been reason to think otherwise. This week we shall watch ‘Unconcealed poetry’ (*Puisi tak terkuburkan*), a recent film by Garin Nugroho, Indonesia’s leading filmmaker. Based on the life of the Acehnese poet, Ibrahim Kadir – who plays himself in the film – the story is set in an Acehnese prison during the mass incarcerations and executions of suspected communists in 1965. Having watched the film, we shall consider recent developments in Indonesian cinema against the backdrop of Indonesia’s history of oppression and dissent.

## Reading

- Sen, K. (1985) 'Hidden from history: Aspects of Indonesian cinema 1955-65'. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*. 19(2): 1-50.
- Aripurnami, S. (1996) 'A feminist comment on the Sinetron presentation of Indonesian women'. In: *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia*. Sears, L.J. (ed), pp. 249-258. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Heider, K.G. (1991) Selected chapters from *Indonesian cinema: national culture on screen*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sen, K. (1994) Selected chapters from *Indonesian cinema: Framing the New Order*. London & New Jersey: Zed Books.

**Media session:** *Puisi tak terkuburkan* ('Unconcealed poetry'), a film by Garin Nugroho (subtitled).

## Part Two: *Mediating Violence*



'Happy New Year 2001!!!'  
*Kompas*, 31 December 2000.

Mass violence accompanied the inauguration and maintenance as well as the demise of Suharto's rule. And, in recent years, violence has become an increasingly prominent subject in scholarly studies of life in Indonesia. Consider the opening lines from the editors' introduction to a recent volume entitled *Roots of violence in Indonesia*:

Indonesia is a violent country. Both civilians and fighters are losing their lives in the armed conflict between the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement) and the army. In the final week before the fall of President Suharto in May 1998, people who protested against the regime were killed or disappeared, Chinese shop owners lost their lives and property and Chinese women were publicly raped in Jakarta. The same week the centre of Solo was reduced to ashes. Madurese transmigrants in *kabupaten* Sambas (West Kalimantan) have clashed repeatedly with long-standing Malay and Dayak residents since 1996, with the result that many Madurese have been driven from their homes, killed, and sometimes even decapitated. In a witch-hunt for *dukun santet* (practitioners of black magic) in Banyuwangi (East Java) set in motion in 1998, hundreds of people were murdered and others hanged themselves,

hounded by fear of being accused of sorcery. Churches and Chinese property were destroyed in Situbondo and Tasikmalaya in 1996. Christians attacked and killed Muslims in Poso (Central Sulawesi). Muslim-Christian conflicts in Maluku took a multitude of lives. After the referendum in East Timor, on 30 August 1999, proponents of Timorese independence were intimidated and killed, while Dili and other towns were thoroughly destroyed. The province of Papua is haunted by violence originating from the desire of part of the Papua population for independence. (Columbijn and Lindblad 2002: 1)

This is not necessarily to suggest that all of Indonesia is overrun with violent conflict; but it does raise some rather important questions. What, for instance, were the historical conditions under which conflicts could be represented in terms of religious and/or ethnic difference? Has Indonesia always been this violent? And why have scholars suddenly taken such an interest in the subject of late?

Many recent analyses of contemporary conflicts have focused on precedents that were set during the New Order. The latter studies have much to contribute to our understanding of the situation, and we shall consider selected examples each week. But it is not altogether clear that the contemporary state of affairs may be adequately accounted for in terms of its antecedents. So, how is one to formulate a critical account of discourses on violence in contemporary Indonesian society? In this second part of the course, we shall approach the problem by examining the ways in which conflict and violence – as well as the road to resolution – have been represented in the mainstream Indonesian media.

## Week 7

### From 'kelompok tertentu' to 'Jemaah Islamiyah': Transnational media and the changing articulations of terror



By one count, there have been 66 bombings in Indonesia over the last five years. Indonesian élite special forces officers were implicated in the bombing of the Jakarta Stock Exchange, and Tempo published an exposé linking certain elements of the military to the Christmas Eve bombings of 2000. Yet throughout the mainstream coverage, the most common phrase used to refer to those responsible for the bombings was simply a 'certain group', or *kelompok tertentu*. There were various arrests, and a great deal of speculation, but in the end – for whatever reason – very few of the cases were resolved.



When an enormous car bomb went off in Bali last October, leaving some 200 dead and countless others injured, commentators in the mainstream Euro-american media were at first cautious in attributing responsibility for the blasts. But their caution rapidly gave way to speculation, then 'expert opinions' were sought and invocations of al-Qaeda became the order of the day. Perhaps unsurprisingly, within hours of the blasts, the incident had been framed in terms of a familiar post-9.11 articulation of 'terror' and 'Islamic

extremism'. Although the Indonesian media were not always uncritical of this drive to set the bombing within the framework of the now seemingly ubiquitous 'war on terror', the gap between Indonesian and broadly western coverage seemed to grow progressively smaller as the days passed. It is now generally taken as a given that Jemaah Islamiyah, a 'local branch' or 'affiliate' of al-Qaeda, was responsible for the bombings in Bali. And it has since emerged that many of those responsible for the Bali bombing – members of 'Jemaah Islamiyah' – were also involved in the bombings on Christmas Eve. This week we shall examine the transformation of Indonesian representations of the bombing, from the initial days through the arrests and eventual trials of the Bali bombing suspects. Particular emphasis will be placed on the notion of 'terorisme', its transformation in the mainstream Indonesian media, and how this process might be related to journalistic practices associated with the broadly western coverage of events associated with 'the war on terror'.

### Reading

- Goenawan Mohamad (2002) 'Bombs'. In: *Conversations with difference; Essays from Tempo magazine*. Trans. J. Lindsay. Jakarta: Tempo, pp. 225-7.
- Noorhaidi Hasan (n.d.) 'The voices of the repressed: Anti-Westernism and the struggle for the public sphere in Indonesia. Paper to the Third International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 3), National University of Singapore. Singapore (19-22 August 2003).
- Fealy, G. (2003) 'Tall tales; Conspiracy theories in post-bomb Indonesia'. *Inside Indonesia*. 74: 6-8.
- Fox, R. (n.d.) Strong and weak media? On the articulation of 'terorisme' in contemporary Indonesia. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Sri Yunanto et al. (2003) Selected chapters from *Militant Islamic movements in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*. Jakarta: The Ridep Institute.
- Thayer, C.A. (n.d.) 'Political terrorism and militant Islam in Southeast Asia'. Paper to Forum on Regional Security and Political Developments, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore (July 24, 2003).

**Media session:** Indonesian, Singaporean, British and US television news coverage of the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002

## Week 8

### Ambon berdarah: National media and 'communal violence'



This week we shall examine media coverage of the conflict that began in early 1999 in Ambon, the capital city of the eastern Indonesian province of Maluku. Many commentators have argued that it was state intervention that led to the persistence and intensification – rather than amelioration – of the violence; and, furthermore, that state-related interests were involved in perpetuating the conflict to financial advantage through schemes of protection and extortion and the manipulation of Islamic militias such as the Laskar Jihad. Scholars and other researchers have written at length on these aspects of the situation which, in the most general terms, they have attributed to an institutional hangover from certain elements of the New Order. This may well be the case, but there remains the question of media representation.

The accounts published on the first two days of the conflict were anything but consistent. In these initial reports, the sources cited by prominent media services were almost exclusively local, and the conflict was cast – albeit somewhat erratically – as occurring between the residents of rival Muslim and Christian villages. However, the chaotic circumstances described in these initial reports gradually gave way in successive days to the articulation of a more clearly defined threat to ‘regional security’ in which the Muslim and Christian residents of rival villages were lumped together in ‘rampaging mobs’, ‘rival gangs’, and amorphous masses of ‘rioters’ pitted against the police, troops and security forces who were represented as the legitimate instruments of the state in an effort to restore order. The latter development arose concurrently with a shift in the sources of information cited in news agency reports, away from ordinary residents of Ambon (‘church sources’, ‘shopkeepers’ etc.), to governmental officials and other Jakarta-based authorities. This week we shall examine critically the mass mediated transformation of a dangerously indeterminate mêlée of violence into a set of familiar (‘communal’) circumstances amenable to governmental intervention.

### Reading

- Aditjondro, G. (2001) ‘Guns, pamphlets and handy-talkies: How the military exploited local ethno-religious tensions in Maluku to preserve their political and economic privileges’. In: I. Wessel & G. Wimhöfer (eds) *Violence in Indonesia*. Hamburg: Abera.
- Fox, R. (n.d.) ‘Conflict@Ambon.Net’. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Bubandt, N. (2000) ‘Conspiracy theories, apocalyptic narratives and the discursive construction of “the violence in Maluku”’. *Anthropologi Indonesia*. 63: 15-31.
- Hill, D. & K. Sen (2002) Netizens in combat: Conflict on the Internet in Indonesia. *Asian Studies Review*. 26(2): 165-87.
- ICG (2002) *Indonesia: The search for peace in Maluku*. Jakarta & Brussels: International Crisis Group. 8 February 2002. Electronic document, available online at [www.crisisweb.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400544\\_08022002.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400544_08022002.pdf)

**Media session:** Indonesian and Euro-american newswire reports on the initial days of conflict in Ambon

## Week 9

### Disintegrasi: Violence and threats to national unity



A bill was introduced last year that would have required all Indonesian students to receive their mandatory religious instruction from someone of their own faith. The idea ostensibly was that Hindus should be taught by a Hindu, Muslims by a Muslim and so on. It was not long before the debate in the legislative assembly poured over into the media, and mass demonstrations ensued, with many suggesting that this emendation to the National Education System (*Sisdiknas*) comprised a serious threat to national unity.

The fear of national disintegration has long been a powerful trope in Indonesia, with media coverage of separatist movements providing a particularly interesting point for closer examination. Despite widespread awareness of military brutality, those considered separatists often get little sympathy in the media. This week we shall examine popular representations of violence in Aceh and West Papua – both

before and after the 1999 referendum on East Timorese independence – and consider how they are related to the popular imagination of Indonesian national unity.

### Reading

- Robinson, G. (2001) 'Rawan is as Rawan does: The origins of disorder in New Order Aceh'. In: Anderson, B. (ed) *Violence and the state in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program.
- Kirsch, S. (2002) 'Rumour and other narratives of political violence in West Papua'. *Critique of anthropology*. 22(1): 53-79.
- Kammen, D. (2001) 'The trouble with normal: The Indonesian military, paramilitaries, and the final solution in East Timor'. In: Anderson, B. (ed) *Violence and the state in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program. Or: Robinson, G. (2002) 'The fruitless search for a smoking gun; Tracing the origins of violence in East Timor'. In Columbij, F. & T. Lindblad (eds) *Roots of violence in Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- Heryanto, A. (1999) 'Where communism never dies; Violence, trauma, and narration in the last Cold War capitalist authoritarian state'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 2(2): 147-77.
- Hefner, R. (1999) 'Islam and nation in the post-Suharto era'. In: A. Schwarz & J. Paris (eds) *The politics of post-Suharto Indonesia*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

**Media session:** A multimedia presentation produced by the Ridep Institute, a Jakarta-based human rights advocacy group.

## Week 10

### Television and tattoos: Representing 'kriminalitas' now and then



Always depicted as on the edge of Indonesian society – but not quite outside of it – the image of 'the criminal' played an important role in the emergence and transformation of Indonesian nationalism. Often cast as a threat to national integrity, the idea of criminality has figured prominently in the popular imagination during various periods of Indonesian history. During the *Petrus* or 'mysterious killings' of the mid-1980s, for instance, the dead bodies of petty thieves and others – almost always young men – turned up in public places, often with hands bound and showing signs of torture. The local paper would usually carry a short report the following morning indicating that a 'tattooed corpse' had been found. In time, the tattoos on these bodies emerged as an index of their criminality, and many went to great lengths to remove their own tattoos for fear of being mistaken for a criminal.

More recently, television programs depicting the pursuit and apprehension of criminals have become increasingly popular in Indonesia. These programs often include elaborate reenactments of the crime as well as footage in which the culprit is injured in pursuit. This week we shall examine 'criminal' television programming in contemporary Indonesia, and consider the relationship between criminality, violence and the state in popular understandings of Indonesia as a unified nation.

## Reading

- Siegal, J. (1998) Introduction and selected chapters from *A new criminal type in Jakarta; Counter-revolution today*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Bourchier, D. (1990) 'Crime, law and state authority in Indonesia'. In: A. Budiman (ed) *State and civil society in Indonesia*. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, Asia Institute.
- Barker, J. (2001) 'State of fear: Controlling the criminal contagion in Suharto's New Order'. In: Anderson, B. (ed) *Violence and the state in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program.
- Columbijn, F. (2002) 'Maling, maling! The lynching of petty criminals'. In Columbijn, F. & T. Lindblad (eds) *Roots of violence in Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.

**Media session:** A recent episode of *Kriminal*, an Indonesian 'crime TV' series.

## Part Three: *Mediating Nation and State*



On screen: 'Don't buy lipstick. Instead, buy vegetable and fruit seedlings, fish fry, and rabbit kittens'. *Berita Buana*, 8 January 1981 (reproduced in Kitley 1999: 67).

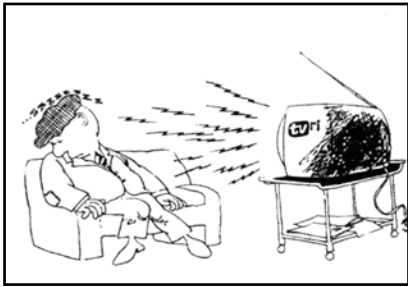
From an institutional perspective, the Indonesian state was preceded by a deliberately articulated sense of Indonesian national unity. As Benedict Anderson famously argued in the early eighties, all national communities are, in an important sense, *imagined*: 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1983: 6). But, from a pragmatic perspective, could a similar argument be made with regard to state institutions such as education and development? How, for instance, might a critical emphasis on the mediation of these institutions impinge on their status as



objects of study? Anderson's observations on the rise of nationalism were underpinned by a theory of mediation: the nation – and nationalism, by extension – is only possible with the emergence of a sense of national simultaneity, which itself requires a medium for articulating the (national) masses. In this third and final part of the course, we shall consider the use of various media in articulating men, women and children as the subjects of state-sponsored 'development' and 'guidance'.

## Week 11

### Pembangunan: Television and the project of national development



From its earliest days, Indonesian television was caught up in state-ideological discourses of modernity and development (*pembangunan*), as well as in the broader drive to articulate Indonesia itself as a coherent and unified national community. By the late 1970's the government had planned to have a television set in every village in order to facilitate the dissemination of the message of national development. Programming was often didactic in tone, addressing its viewers based on what Philip Kitley has called 'the retarded child model of audiencehood'. The picture became more complicated in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the emergence of commercial channels and an increasingly varied range of material being produced (as well as imported) and broadcast. With the demise of the New Order, this complexity increased exponentially following the removal (or at least relaxation) of most legal barriers to the growth of private television. This week we shall examine the uses to which television was put within the broader historical framework of New Order discourses of national development. Special attention will be given to the way in which Indonesian citizens were articulated as a national audience through didactic television programming, and we shall consider regularities and disjunctures with certain trends in *reformasi*-era television production.

#### Reading

- Kitley, P. (2000) 'Good news: National development and the culture of news'. In: *Television, nation and culture in Indonesia*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Hobart, M (n.d.) 'Black umbrellas: The implication of mass media in development'. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Fox, R. (n.d.) 'Imagining the *agamic* audience: Religious authority and its televisual addressees in late New Order Indonesia'. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Strassler, K. (1999) 'Stories of culture: difference, nation and childhood in "children of a Thousand islands," an Indonesian television series'. Online publication available at <http://cc.joensuu.fi/sights/karens.htm>.

**Media session:** An episode of the early 1990s Indonesian television series *Budi Pekerti* (subtitled).

## Week 12

### Imagining Indonesia: Newsprint and the idea of the nation



In his now classic *Imagined communities*, Benedict Anderson (1983) sought the origins of the idea of a national community in the emerging dominance of print-capitalism and, in particular, in the rise of the national newspaper as a popular genre. In Indonesia, the emergence of a national readership – not just for newspapers, but other forms of print media as well – brought with it the potential for a sense of ongoing national simultaneity: that is to say, a very particular sort of commonality or ‘community’. To cite a contemporary example, sitting down to a nationally syndicated morning paper in Lombok, for instance, one might be aware that one is reading the same front page as traffic wardens in Jakarta and provincial administrators in Sulawesi. This week we shall look at the history of Indonesian newspapers, and consider several key contemporary publications in relation to some of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century ‘Malay language press’. We will be paying special attention to the importance of language in the articulation of a national readership.

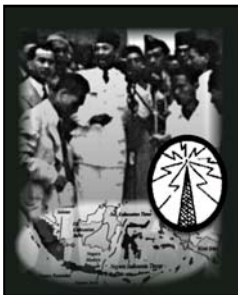
#### Reading

- Adam, A.B. (1995) Selected chapters from *The vernacular press and the emergence of modern Indonesian consciousness (1855-1913)*. Ithaca: Cornell University.
- Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1996) Excerpts from *The Buru quartet*.
- Sen, K & D. Hill (2000) ‘The press: Industry and ideology’. In *Media Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Oxford: OUP.
- Anderson, B. (1983) Introduction and selected chapters from *Imagined communities; Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.
- Ricklefs, M.C. (2001) Selected chapters from *A history of modern Indonesia since c.1200*. Third edition. Stanford: SUP.

**Media session:** A series of front pages from Indonesian newspapers from different historical periods.

## Week 13

### Merdeka! Radio and the revolution



In one sense, radio might be described as the first medium of the Republic. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, Sukarno declared Indonesian independence; and that evening his address was broadcast over the airwaves using a radio station that had previously been under the control of Japanese occupational forces. Shortly thereafter, a series of stations were brought together under the aegis of the state radio authority, *Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI)*. During the struggle for independence, radio broadcasting emerged as an important tool for keeping both Indonesians and the international community at large abreast of important developments across the archipelago. Sen and Hill have argued that subsequently, in the

early years of the Republic, radio remained an important national medium: ‘with no television (until 1962), low literacy levels and a relatively diverse and free press, the RRI was the state’s primary and most centralised medium for mobilising public opinion’ (2000: 82).

The predominantly national (and political) character of radio, however, would not last. Despite the importance in the mid 1960s of private radio broadcasts in mediating Sukarno’s demise – and thereby setting the stage for Suharto’s rise to power – regulations established under the New Order would move to limit private radio stations to largely apolitical material broadcast within a locally circumscribed region. This week we shall consider the disjuncture between the early constitution of a politicized national radio audience and the subsequent shift to addressing depoliticized local listeners.

### Reading

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|-------------------------|--|
| Wild, C. (1991)         | ‘Radio midwife: Some thoughts on the role of broadcasting during the Indonesian struggle for Independence’. <i>Indonesia Circle</i> . 55: 34-42.   |
| Sen, K & D. Hill (2000) | ‘Radio: Revolutions and regulations’. In <i>Media Culture and Politics in Indonesia</i> . Oxford: OUP.   |
| McDaniel, D.O. (1994)   | Excerpts from <i>Broadcasting in the Malay world: Radio, television and video in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore</i> . Norwood: Ablex.   |
| Susanto, A. (1978)      | Excerpt from ‘The mass communications system in Indonesia’. In Jackson, K.D. & L.W. Pye (eds) <i>Political power and communications in Indonesia</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. |
| Henschke, R. (2002)     | ‘Power to the people; Indonesians are seeking a public voice through radio’. <i>Inside Indonesia</i> . 72: 21-2.   |

**Media session:** Selected recordings from a recent radio call-in program (with transcripts, *in translation*).

## Week 14

### Sumpah pemuda: One country, one nation, one language



We shall conclude the course with a review of the material covered, drawing out significant themes and discussing their implications for the future of the reform movement. Throughout the course, language has played an important role in our analysis of events. So this week we shall address directly the question of language and its implication in mediating Indonesia.

Each year, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, Indonesia commemorates the ‘youth pledge’ (*sumpah pemuda*) of 1928, in which a group of students and other youth activists made a public commitment to the idea of an independent Indonesia as ‘one country, one nation, one language’. Although early proponents of Independence spoke a number of regional languages, the Malay that was previously used throughout the archipelago for administration, trading (and, increasingly, in newspapers and periodicals) was articulated as a unifying principle for Indonesian unity. Seventeen years later, this *Bahasa Indonesia* (‘Indonesian language’) was

legislated as the national language in the 36<sup>th</sup> Article of the 1945 Constitution, which was subsequently qualified as follows: ‘Regional languages that are well preserved by the people, such as the Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and other languages, will be respected and preserved by the state. Such regional languages comprise part of Indonesia’s living culture’. This week we shall consider the emergence of the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) as an index of national unity, its subsequent dissemination through education and other state institutions and how regional languages have fared as ‘part of Indonesia’s living culture’.

### Reading

- Heryanto, A. (1995) *Language of development and development of language: The case of Indonesia*. Pacific Linguistics series D-86. Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. Canberra: ANU.
- Errington, J. (1996) ‘Indonesian(’s) development: On the state of a language of state. In: B. Schieffelin, K. Woolard & P. Kroskrity (eds) *Language ideologies: Practice and theory*. Oxford: OUP. Or (1986) ‘Continuity and Change in Indonesian Language Development’. *Journal of Asian Studies*. 45(2).
- Ricklefs, M.C. (2001) Chapters from Section IV, ‘The emergence of the idea of Indonesia’. In: *A history of modern Indonesia since c.1200*. Third edition. Stanford: SUP.
- van Niel, R. (1960) Excerpt from *The emergence of the modern Indonesian elite*. The Hague: W. van Hoeve.

**Media session:** The course will conclude with a viewing of Garin Nugroho’s (1994) controversial film *Surat untuk bidadari* (‘Letter for an angel’). As we shall discuss ahead of the viewing, his use of language was of particular interest.