

Creating Datasets in Information-Poor Environments: Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003

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Indonesia has witnessed explosive group violence in recent years, but unlike its plentiful economic statistics, the data on conflict are remarkably sketchy. Because the New Order (1966–1998) wanted to give the appearance of order and stability, it did not believe in publishing reports on group conflict, nor did it allow researchers and nongovernmental organizations to probe the patterns and causes of conflict. This article is based on the first multiyear dataset ever constructed on group violence in Indonesia. Following, and adapting for Indonesian conditions, methodologies developed and used elsewhere, we cover the years 1990–2003, split the data into various categories, and identify the national, regional, and local patterns of collective violence. Much that we find is surprising, given the existing theories and common perceptions about violence in Indonesia. Of the several conclusions we draw, the most important one is that group violence in Indonesia is highly locally concentrated. Fifteen districts and cities (*kabupaten* and *kota*), in which a mere 6.5 percent of the country's population lived in 2000, account for as much as 85.5 percent of all deaths in group violence. Large-scale group violence is not as widespread as is normally believed. If we can figure out why so many districts remained reasonably quiet, even as the violent systemic shifts—such as the decline of the New Order—deeply shook fifteen districts causing a large number of deaths, it will advance our understanding of the causes of collective violence in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: Indonesia, riots, collective violence, ethnic conflict, communal conflict, New Order

Since 1998, as the so-called New Order (1966–1998) came apart and group violence in Indonesia flared up, some predictable questions have engaged the minds of scholars, policymakers, and civil society actors. How widespread is group violence in Indonesia? What

forms—ethnic, religious, economic—has it primarily taken? Have the group clashes of recent years been significantly more frequent, or worse, than those in the late New Order period?

Until recently, Indonesia lacked a statistical base to allow precise and professionally adequate responses to these questions. One often encountered an impressionistic contrast drawn between the chaos and violence of post-Suharto years and the stability and peace of the authoritarian New Order. Although the New Order had a remarkably bloody beginning in the massive anti-Communist killings of the mid-1960s, Suharto's Indonesia came to acquire the image of a calm, well-ordered society in the 1980s and 1990s. An orgy of tumult, brutality, and violence ended the New Order in May 1998, but the image of a peaceful New Order returned in several quarters, especially as Indonesia started going through the teething irritations of a fledgling democracy. In some quarters, comparisons were drawn between Indonesia and Nigeria, and the idea that Indonesia might become a "failed state" developed a constituency. According to a widely noted report, a "struggling state like Indonesia, whose weakness has allowed terrorism, corruption, and civil conflict to take root in alarming ways," has performed only slightly better than the comprehensively failed states of Afghanistan, Haiti, and Somalia.¹

Is this an accurate assessment? Is the image of a peaceful New Order, especially in its later years, correct? Is the violence of post-Suharto years spread over most of the country, or is it locally concentrated, leaving large parts of Indonesia relatively untouched? The last question is an important one. If group violence is locally concentrated and many parts of the country have remained peaceful, *having at best small group clashes but no large-scale killings or wanton destruction of property*, then the pessimism about the future of the country under a democratic dispensation is clearly less warranted. Indeed, in that case, patterns of Indonesian violence are no different from those identified elsewhere in the world, and the pessimism felt about Indonesia may have its roots in not placing the country in a systematic cross-country perspective.

This article, the first step of a two-part study, reports the findings from our dataset for the period 1990–2003. The second part of the study, currently under way, will be more fully causal in nature. It will concentrate in depth on six cities—four for understanding the roots of Muslim-Christian violence, and two for examining the observable implications of such violence for *Pribumi* (indigenous)–Chinese relations. Of the four cities chosen for Muslim-Christian relations, two (Ambon and Poso) have had a great deal of violence in recent years and two

(Manado and Palu) have experienced no, or very limited, violence. A similar pairing between the violence-ridden city of Solo and the peaceful Yogya, separated by a mere 60 kilometers, will probe Pribumi-Chinese relations. This design owes its origins to a study of Hindu-Muslim relations in India (Varshney 2002) and is based on the premise that to understand the causes of violence, it is often good to study peace and violence together. Of course, what became an explanation for India's Hindu-Muslim violence is now a hypothesis for Indonesia, to be tested and rejected if empirically invalid. Moreover, in the Indian study, variations across cities were the main object of analysis. In the Indonesian study, two kinds of variance, spatial and temporal, are at issue. We not only seek to explain why some cities had violence and others did not during a given time period; we also want to understand why cities with a long record of communal peace (Ambon, Poso) turned massively violent at a certain point.

Our dataset is a result of approximately 10,000 hours of work done by a team of fourteen researchers, most of them based in provincial capitals. We were able to cover more than 3,600 incidents of violence, of which more than a quarter—a little over 1,000 incidents—resulted in over 10,700 deaths during the period 1990–2003. We believe we have been able to create the most comprehensive dataset on collective violence in Indonesia available to scholars, policymakers, and activists thus far.²

Our attempt to be comprehensive, however, does not mean that we have been able to cover all acts of violence in Indonesia since 1990. We should specify what we have excluded, or had to exclude, from our dataset and why. First, we did not cover all forms of violence, only collective violence. We define the latter as violence perpetrated by a group on another group (as in riots), by a group on an individual (as in lynchings), by an individual on a group (as in terrorist acts), by the state on a group, or by a group on organs or agencies of the state. We did not cover violence between two individuals—attempted or actual homicides—unless they triggered a larger group clash. Our focus was on group violence, not on crime or violence per se.³

Second, we also had to confine ourselves to episodes of violence that fell short of secessionist wars. Even though the violence in Aceh and Papua would have been part of our definition of collective violence, we were unable to include it in our dataset.⁴ The insurgencies in these two provinces posed serious personal risks for our team and made systematic research in their provincial capitals impossible. There were sources of information in the national capital, but as we later show, the

Jakarta-based sources are an inadequate substitute for the provincial sources on the ground.

In other words, our database covers collective violence in Indonesia with the exception of those areas where a war of insurgency has been under way. Substantively, we reached three main conclusions. Of the three, the first two are relevant to the Indonesian debate, and the third is germane both to Indonesian discussions and to the larger comparative literature on ethnic conflict. The conclusions are:

1. There is no evidence that the late New Order (1990–1997) was peaceful. If we add to the findings reported in this article what we already know about the insurgencies during Suharto's rule and the other forms of group violence in the 1980s, the most striking difference between the New Order and the post-Suharto period is not that one was peaceful and the other has had a lot of violence. Rather, the New Order often used *state-perpetrated* violence to bring order, whereas clashes between social groups have been much more common since 1998.

2. Ethnocommunal violence is not the most common form of group violence in Indonesia. It is episodic, not routine, but when it does take place, it is immensely deadly and claims many more lives than the other forms of group violence such as lynchings and village brawls.

3. Overall, collective violence in Indonesia is locally concentrated, as in several other parts of the world (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Varshney 2002). A mere fifteen districts (*kabupaten*), holding 6.5 percent of Indonesia's total population in 2000, accounted for 85.5 percent of all deaths in collective violence. This result requires that we not only take note of the national-level factors that might have led to violence, but also pay special attention to local factors that kept peace in most of the country, even as fifteen districts repeatedly burned. Large-scale group violence is not as widespread in Indonesia as is often thought.

The article is organized as follows. The first section goes into the basic reasons for why a database was necessary, how it was constructed, what its limitations are, and how they might be remedied in the future. The following section outlines the existing theories of group violence in Indonesia and judges their applicability in light of our database. The next section presents a whole range of substantive results, concentrating on several questions: the level of violence before and after the end of the New Order and the types, relative intensity, and geographical distribution of the violence. The final section summarizes the conclusions.

A New Dataset: Why? How?

As already indicated, the existing statistics on collective violence in Indonesia are highly sketchy.⁵ Like many other governments in the developing world, the New Order, ruling Indonesia for over thirty years, until 1998, did not ever publish any figures on deaths or losses in ethnocommunal violence. In what William Liddle has aptly called a “Hobbesian bargain,” the entire rationale for the New Order was its offer to Indonesian citizens of “prosperity and stability in exchange for acceptance of authoritarian government” (Liddle 1999, 37). Thus, other than seeking to deliver prosperity to the masses, the New Order also had an interest in showing that peace and order prevailed under their rule. Supplying honest data on group violence was contrary to a key regime objective. No statistics were ever provided.

How can one, under such conditions, determine the basic patterns of violence in a society? Viewing newspaper reports as a source is about the only other option that is known to researchers. In 2002, following this idea, and on the basis of reports in two capital city news sources—primarily *Kompas*, supplemented by *Antara*—the United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery (UNSFIR) compiled the only all-Indonesia database (Database I hereafter) available for the late New Order period and the period after its collapse, covering the years 1990–2001 (Tadjoeeddin 2002).

How reliable were the newspaper reports used as evidence? Such a question is quite easily answerable in countries where the press is free. Not all newspapers may be trustworthy in such countries, but typically countries with a free press also tend to have a newspaper or two, which can be called journals of record. In the United States, the *New York Times* has long performed this role, and in India, until recently, the *Times of India* did. For Indonesia, it is sometimes argued, *Kompas* is a journal of record (Liddle 1999).⁶

Whether or not this claim is correct for the standard economic and political reporting, its validity, as we argue in this article, is highly questionable on ethnic or religious violence. Neither *Kompas* nor *Antara* reported any incidents of group conflict anywhere in Indonesia in 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1994 (Tadjoeeddin 2002). From what we already knew, however imperfectly, the absence of group violence in these years appeared to be an artifact of government regulations. As a principle, the New Order did not allow press freedom in its more than three decades of existence. Indeed, on ethnocommunal issues, the government had a so-called SARA policy. SARA was an acronym for ethnic (*suku*), religious

(*agama*), racial (*ras*), and intergroup (*antar-golongan*) differences. These differences were not to be discussed in the public realm.

In other words, a database constructed from *Kompas* and *Antara* simply could not be viewed as reliable unless cross-checked. But how was this to be done? There are, of course, several ways of running reliability checks on newspaper reports. The most promising and time-tested method is cross-checking the capital city news sources with reports in provincial newspapers. That is the path we chose.

Toward Provincial Newspapers

Are provincial newspapers any more reliable than national newspapers on violence? The case for provincial newspapers is not entirely unambiguous.⁷ But a theoretical intuition buttressed the conjecture that reportage in provincial newspapers might be more accurate. We know from the available literature that a highly centralized system, as the New Order undoubtedly was, is better able to censor the capital city than the provincial centers and the hinterlands. No authoritarian system is equally authoritarian all over a country. Indeed, this is one of the greatest differences between authoritarian and totalitarian systems.⁸ The Suharto regime was always characterized as authoritarian, and rightly so. It did not have the Soviet-style, ideologically monolithic, totalitarian capacities, penetrating all aspects of social, economic, and political life in Indonesia. Unlike the Communist systems, all available non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were not politically obliterated. For example, two of the biggest NGOs—the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah—might have been pushed by the government, but they continued to be organizationally independent of the government for much of the New Order period (Hefner 2000).⁹

Interviews with the regional management of *Kompas* newspaper group confirmed our conceptual hunch.¹⁰ According to their own self-assessment, the provincial newspapers were likely to be better at reporting provincial violence than *Kompas* in Jakarta. Not only were the regional newspapers closer to the ground, but newspapers were not required, in principle, to send their reports to the information officer *before* publishing them. The New Order issued a “negative list” prohibiting certain kinds of reporting. This, in effect, meant that quite a lot of the regional reporting escaped the censors because reporting was not to be screened by the provincial authorities beforehand.

There were thus good reasons to move toward provincial newspapers, but we thought another check was necessary. Our previous expe-

rience of gathering such statistics had shown that small incidents of violence tend to outnumber the larger riots by a huge margin, but it is the much fewer incidents of large-scale violence, not the more frequent smaller incidents, that basically determine the overall statistics in a dataset.¹¹ Datasets on violence tend to have what might be called a big-incident effect.¹²

The implications were clear: if there were doubts about the veracity of reports appearing in provincial newspapers about big riots, it was important to subject such reports to what might be called a local-knowledge check. Interviews with key local community actors, who tend to be well informed, would allow us to do that.

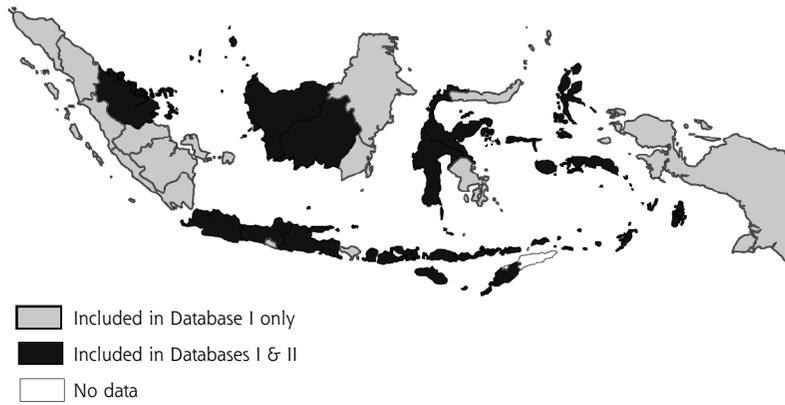
This method was deployed for a number of big incidents once our team developed skepticism. For example, we simply could not convince ourselves that 8,000–10,000 people had died on the Maluku Islands during clashes in 1999–2001. This estimate, the most commonly cited in newspaper reports, has acquired the status of conventional wisdom. Through our methods, requiring local knowledge checks for violence of this magnitude, we could only reach a figure of 4,779. For us, generating statistics was also simultaneously an act of interpretation.

Which Provinces?

Our research team covered fourteen provinces: Riau, Jakarta, Central Java, West Java, East Java, Banten, Central Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, East Nusatenggara, West Nusatenggara, Maluku, and North Maluku. We chose these provinces because in Database I, they accounted for 96.4 percent of all deaths (Tadjoeeddin 2002). According to the 2000 census, 72.4 percent of the Indonesian population lived in these provinces. Given such magnitudes, covering these fourteen provinces, as opposed to all twenty-eight provinces in 2003–2004, appeared to be the most rational use of our resources, time, and energy.¹³ Figure 1 represents the provincial coverage in our study.

Further, following standard norms of large-scale empirical research, it also seemed sensible to rely on the argument that for Database II, the share of the remaining provinces in the overall death toll could be *assumed* to be 3.6 percent. Even if careful newspaper research in the remaining provinces was carried out, the odds that the magnitude of deaths was considerably higher or lower than 3.6 percent were miniscule. The remaining provinces were most unlikely to alter our all-Indonesia projections seriously.

Figure 1 Spatial Coverage, UNSFIR Violence Dataset, Indonesian Provinces, 1990–2003



Note: Map based on administrative boundaries from 1998.

The details of our methodology are contained in Appendixes 1 and 2. We covered four categories of collective violence: (1) ethnocommunal (interethnic, interreligious, and intrareligious); (2) state versus community (attacks by government machinery on civilians and vice versa—so long as such attacks were not demonstrably for ethnocommunal reasons); (3) economic (conflicts over land, industrial relations, natural resources—so long as such conflicts were not unmistakably linked to ethnocommunal groupings); and (4) other (lynchings, inter-village brawls, etc.).

A decision was also required on whether the conflicts should be categorized according to forms or according to substance or cause. The latter is nearly always tempting, but as conflict scholars have long known, it can be grossly misleading and can corrupt results irredeemably. Only research can establish the substance, or causes, of conflict. An assumed, or quickly established, cause cannot be the basis of coding. We must begin with the form that conflicts take and let later research determine the substance.¹⁴

Finally, we concentrated on deaths as the only indicator of the severity of violence. The other possibilities were (1) injuries, (2) violations of freedom, (3) property loss, and (4) internally displaced persons (IDPs). Statistically speaking, the ideal situation would have been to construct a composite index that incorporated all of the above. But unlike in the field of human development, where a composite human de-

velopment index has been created and largely accepted, it has not been possible to construct such composite indices for ethnic conflict. There are at least three reasons why this is so. First, the data on injuries, property loss, and violations of freedom, if not on IDPs, typically tend to be unreliably collected. Second, it is not clear how to assign weights to the various components if multiple components are to be included in the index. How many injuries, for example, would be equal to a death, and why? Third, figures on death are more comparable across cases and time, while injuries always require further specification.¹⁵ The tragic finality of death makes the numbers on death more analytically usable.¹⁶

Caveats

Even with meticulous research, no researcher investigating a national-level database can vouch for complete accuracy with respect to each incident covered. Stated another way, after cross-checks with local knowledge, we can certainly get reasonable statistics but still cannot guarantee absolute precision.¹⁷ Such statistics, of course, may not be good enough to tackle all questions that may potentially come to mind. Some questions, for example, are always about fine gradations, while others are about broad trends and patterns. The method outlined above promises us advances on the latter, not on the former.

Greater precision is possible in conflict research—but only in case studies or ethnographies—confined to one or two cases, one or two villages, or one or two districts (or a small number of them). While we do gain accuracy that way, we should note the well-known problem that it is impossible to know how representative or exceptional the village or district is that we have so deeply and accurately studied. In order for anyone to answer the latter question, a larger comparative picture is inevitably needed. That is what our dataset aims to provide. Ethnographers may be more accurate, but they can't establish generalizability; the database builders may be less accurate, but they can present each case in its larger perspective. There are trade-offs here.

Existing Theories of Group Violence in Indonesia

As is well known, large-*n* datasets are generally better at theory testing than they are at theory building. It is therefore possible to take a look at the available theories of collective violence in Indonesia and ask which ones our dataset finds plausible.

Of the various theories of group violence that have emerged in the literature since the fall of Suharto, three can be tested with our dataset. The first is the popular view, not accepted by many scholars yet, that Indonesia under Suharto was on the whole relatively peaceful because it had the political, administrative, and military mechanisms to discipline eruptions of social disaffection, and it is the end of the New Order and the collapse of its disciplinary mechanisms that account for the violence of post-Suharto years. A second view focuses on a longer time period. Some scholars suggest that “violence is embedded” in Indonesian society and history. “The present violence is not simply, or not only, the legacy of the New Order” (Colombijn and Lindblad 2002, 3). The New Order was an instance of a longer historical tradition of violence. Finally, a third argument turns the first argument on its head, while not directly engaging the second. Violence, in this view, did not erupt after 1998 because the New Order’s disciplinary mechanisms collapsed; rather, violence was one of the fundamental pillars on which the New Order rested. In the end, the problem of legitimacy led to the collapse of the New Order and also left a violent trail. The New Order, in short, is itself the cause of the violence, both during its life span and after its death (Bertrand 2004).¹⁸

Let us take each view in turn and ask what our dataset, or other research, says about their validity.

The New Order and Its Disciplinary Mechanisms

In July 2000, when Lorraine Aragon was doing research on Muslim-Christian violence in Poso, she was repeatedly, and wistfully, told by some citizens of Sulawesi that “for thirty-three years under Suharto, Indonesia was a peaceful place, but now . . . there are disturbances everywhere” (Aragon 2001, 78). Whether or not this view is correct—and we will have more to say on this matter shortly—an analyst needs to know what mechanisms might exist between the purported causes and the observed consequence. What features of the New Order—political, military, administrative, ideological—could have produced the peace and stability?

Aragon herself mentions the “military control mechanism that prevented expressions of . . . communal dissatisfaction” (Aragon 2001, 78–79). Tajima (in this issue) speaks of how, in 1999, the separation of a well-equipped military from the police, the withdrawal of the military from the civilian realm, and the handover of responsibility for internal law and order to an ill-equipped police created vacuums in the security

environment on the ground, leading to a lot of violence between groups.

Liddle goes a step further and gives the most plausible accounting of the possible mechanisms in the available literature:

There is, particularly at the elite level, a strong Hobbesian streak in the modern Indonesian political culture: the belief that most Indonesians cannot be entrusted with extensive personal liberties or with the right to participate in political life on their own terms but must instead be persuaded or forced in their own interest to accept the superior wisdom of a paternalistic elite. In the late 1960s, as the New Order began to take shape, Suharto took advantage of this belief, offering prosperity and stability in exchange for acceptance of authoritarian government. (Liddle 1999, 37)

A “Hobbesian bargain” thus ensured peace: a heavily state-controlled society that accepted controls on freedom to avoid chaos and end poverty. In the argument above, Liddle is not necessarily laying out his own view but presenting the logic of the conventional wisdom that one often encounters in some elite or intellectual circles in Indonesia.

In order for the core of this argument to hold, one will have to demonstrate that the New Order was indeed peaceful. Presumably, its early roots in the massacre of several hundred thousand Communists in the mid-1960s are not part of the argument, nor are the largely anti-Chinese killings in West Kalimantan in 1967–1973 (Davidson and Kammen 2002; Davidson 2008). Thus, for “the New Order was peaceful” argument to have any validity, we will have to start the empirical examination from the mid-1970s, not before. Was it peaceful after that?

The evidence from the 1990s is contained in our dataset and analyzed in the next section. It shows considerable collective violence. The 1980s, not part of the dataset, present a gory picture, too. Theodore Friend’s account taps into new sources for the infamous Tanjung Priok incident (1984) and also goes into the trail of violence it touched off:

After his fourth election (in 1983), Suharto . . . rejected . . . that social organizations religious in nature remain based on their religion and their respective religious beliefs. Instead he said, it was time for Indonesia to consolidate politically, accepting the national ideology, Pancasila, must become the sole basis of all social and political organizations.

When the government, in 1984, sent to the Assembly five draft bills for that purpose, the port area of Tanjung Priok, in North Jakarta, felt especially challenged. Tanjung Priok was populated mostly by men, many of them young, out of school, and out of work. . . . At the

urging of the lay preachers . . . this vulnerable group found a noble and uplifting goal in the defense of Islam. . . .

On September 12, Amir Biki, a student activist in 1966, now prominent in Tanjung Priok, built up a crowd of 1,500 and led a march. . . . Army soldiers blocked the roadway. Armored vehicles and military trucks moved in to the rear, preventing retreat. The crowd surged forward. The soldiers fired into the crowd. . . . In half an hour, perhaps 63 (officials say 18; some say hundreds) were killed and many more severely wounded. (Friend 2003, 190–191)

Why kill so many by blocking both the front and the rear of a demonstration? General Benny Moerdani, the commander of the army at the time, explained:

Toward the end of a generously long interview he appeared to answer a question I had not yet asked, about the management of the Tanjung Priok incident. “I am a soldier,” he avowed, uncued by me. “If I am told to shoot, I shoot.” I believe he was saying: No one could have ordered me how to handle Tanjung Priok incident except Suharto. (Friend 2003, 194)

Was this an isolated act of violence in the 1980s? Hardly.

There followed a series of fires and explosions in Jakarta: Sarinah Jaya department store in suburban Kebayoran was burned to the ground. . . . Bank Central Asia branches were bombed, killing two. . . . [T]he Marine Corps dump on Jakarta’s outskirts began exploding, eventually destroying 1,500 houses, leaving fifteen dead and twenty six wounded. . . .

As a continuing consequence of Tanjung Priok, in July 1985, fires in Jakarta destroyed a major shopping complex, a nine-story office building, and a building housing the state radio and television stations. Clashes arose between the armed forces and groups of aroused Muslims, most notably in Lampung, South Sumatra, in 1989. The estimates of death toll there ran from 41 to over 100. (Friend 2003, 192–193)

Islamic groups, even if peacefully protesting, were not the only targets of state-sponsored violence in the New Order. Labor strikers were also targeted.

In Sidoardjo, south of Surabaya, in May 1993, 500 workers went on strike seeking to implement the East Java governor’s edict for a 20

per cent raise in wages. . . . The walkout awoke the local military and administration. . . . When thirteen co-workers were interrogated at military headquarters and forced to resign, a young female activist, Marsinah, exclaimed to another group of co-workers that she would take the District Military Command to court. That night she was abducted. On May 8, 1993, her body was found, raped and beaten. The murder had taken place at the army headquarters. (Friend 2003, 206–207)¹⁹

It should be noted that in our account in this article, we have not been able to include insurgencies in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua. It is widely accepted that the civil war in East Timor was especially brutal. “A figure of 200,000 deaths in East Timor as a result of the Indonesian occupation has become more or less entrenched as conventional wisdom” (Cribb 2002, 229).²⁰ Since at no time did East Timor’s population exceed 800,000, the proportion killed is remarkably large. Had it been possible to include civil wars in our dataset, much greater violence would have marked our statistical account of the late New Order.

To summarize, the overall picture is, first, not one of peace and, second, state-sponsored violence appears to be a principal mechanism of ensuring order, if not the only one.²¹ It should, of course, be noted that by virtue of their monopoly over coercion, even Weberian states in modern times have often used coercion to impose order. But the New Order state did not deploy coercion in a law-bound, Weberian style. Force was more brutally used.²²

Violence Embedded in History and Culture?

Putting the New Order in a historical perspective, some scholars speak of the many episodes of mass violence in the country right through its modern history, arguing that group violence has a long lineage in Indonesia. The New Order was simply the newest link in a long historical chain.

Lynching, or mob justice—an important form of violence in Indonesia—did not all of a sudden erupt after 1998: “In 1904 it was reported from the interior of Central Java that a thief caught red-handed by villagers did not come away alive. . . . Around 1909 witches in Poso (Central Sulawesi) were killed by a small group of young men. . . . In 1882 a pickpocket at the market of Pariaman (West Sumatra) was killed by bystanders. . . . In 1853 the Supreme Court ruled that inhabitants of a house who killed a burglar were not liable to punishment” (Colombijn 2002, 315–316). Others speak of the historical tradition in the

Javanese community of “cattle theft, extortion, opium smuggling, violence and especially intimidation” as daily phenomena, and the *Jago* phenomenon, referring to “the local strongmen who, operating in the shadow of the official colonial government during the nineteenth century, in fact controlled the Javanese countryside” (Nordholt 2002, 39).

Benedict Anderson also argues:

Violence in 20th century Indonesia has never been the legitimate monopoly of the state. It has been deployed, under differing circumstances, with differing kinds of legitimation, by revolutionaries, middle classes, villagers, ethnic groups, corporate apparatuses, quasi-official gangsters, the CIA and so on. . . . It is . . . a manifestation of the absence of a Law by which monopoly could be generally justified. . . . Today after three decades of corrupt, cynical and arbitrary dictatorship, under which elites were completely immune to legal punishment, while judges, police, prosecutors, and even defense advocates treated cases simply as commercial transactions, or as political shows of force, very little of (legal) seriousness . . . exists, except among young intellectuals, professionals and middle class reformers. Nothing shows its general marginality better than the spread of vigilante justice, “mob attacks” on police stations and jails, and ever-increasing middle class demands for stepped-up security. These middle classes are quite aware of what has happened here and there to the Chinese, and how “structurally Chinese” they have themselves become. There is not much in modern Indonesian history to give them long-term assurances. (Anderson 2001, 18–19)

Anderson does not suggest that violence is embedded in Indonesian culture, arguing instead that it is the inability of the state to acquire—in the Weberian sense—a legitimate monopoly of violence that accounts for repeated acts of citizen violence. But the picture that emerges is one of frequent episodes of group violence in the modern history of Indonesia.

To be sure, this is a much-needed historical perspective and these arguments are of great intellectual significance. But one serious reservation is in order. If collective violence in Indonesia is as locally concentrated as we argue here, then an intriguing question is left unresolved by this historical perspective. Why did a mere fifteen districts, which contain only 6.5 percent of Indonesia’s total population, have as much as 85.5 percent of all deaths in collective violence (short of civil wars) between 1990 and 2003? Why did so many either remain quiet or witness only small acts of violence? Clearly, even if the overall violence is great, the intra-Indonesian variation is so substantial that an argument about a “stubborn culture of violence” needs serious local or re-

gional adjustments. The remarkable variations suggest that despite such history and despite the absence of a tradition of rule of law, large parts of Indonesia were able to live their life quite peacefully in the 1990s. Both mechanisms—those sustaining violence and those preventing violence—appear to have been present.

Critical Junctures and the Violence of the New Order

The third argument focuses on the institutions of the New Order and seeks to show how at certain “critical junctures,” including, as it turned out, the 1990s, institutional change or its possibility led to a great deal of violence. This perspective also draws linkages between the violence of recent years and the institutions and policies of the New Order, suggesting how the authoritarianism of the New Order produced the violence that accompanied its demise and what followed thereafter.

Jacques Bertrand (2004; also this issue) argues that the institutions of the New Order created profound social and political exclusions: Dayaks and Papuans on grounds of lack of modernity, the Chinese for lack of indigenesness, the East Timorese for historical reasons, and Islam on grounds of ideology. At a fundamental level, coercion is necessary to sustain such a variety of exclusions. Coercion, however, cannot keep a system going forever. Especially at critical junctures, violence in response to these exclusions, or in justification of them, is more or less inevitable.

Critical junctures are defined by Bertrand as those moments when, due to a variety of reasons, a political system comes under strain and begins to lose, or loses, its legitimacy and when group dynamics—between the winners and losers of the existing system—starts to change. The New Order’s renegotiation with Islam in the early 1990s was one such moment, and it led to a change in Muslim-Christian relations. The declining legitimacy of the system by the mid-1990s was yet another moment of violent group renegotiation.

A great merit of this argument is its focus on the institutional characteristics of the New Order and its ability to demonstrate how some groups were clearly excluded from the institutions of power and had no normal ways of reversing such exclusions. The group-specific nature of the argument allows it to show why only some groups were the targets, or perpetrators, of attacks; why violence was concentrated in some geographical regions of Indonesia; and why violence was not more generalized. The argument also gives a good account of the timing of violence.

Our dataset, however, does raise some issues for this argument. If violence was *locally*, not simply *regionally*, concentrated, we would

need to go beyond an argument that focuses entirely on groups and provinces. In 1998, the Chinese were targeted in some parts of Indonesia, not everywhere they lived—especially not in West Kalimantan, where a great deal of anti-Chinese violence took place during the decade after Suharto's rise to power (Davidson 2008). Similarly, despite what should have been a changing relationship everywhere between Muslims and Christians as a result of Suharto permitting a greater role to Islam in the power structure, Muslim-Christian violence took place primarily in the Malukus, in parts of Central Sulawesi, and in some towns of Java. Much of Central Sulawesi and almost all of North Sulawesi remained quiet, in addition to several other parts where both Muslims and Christians live in large numbers.

Once we recognize these particularities, in our analytic focus we not only will have to stress changes that the New Order brought about at a systemic level, or how exclusionary its policies with respect to some groups and geographical regions were, but we will also have to incorporate into our explanations the local differences existing within such regions or groups that presumably kept many towns or districts peaceful, even as violence broke out elsewhere in the region. Institutional factors at the national or regional level are best viewed as sparks, which were turned into fires in some places, not others.²³ The transformation of sparks into fires would not have come about without some local-level factors, which need to be identified.

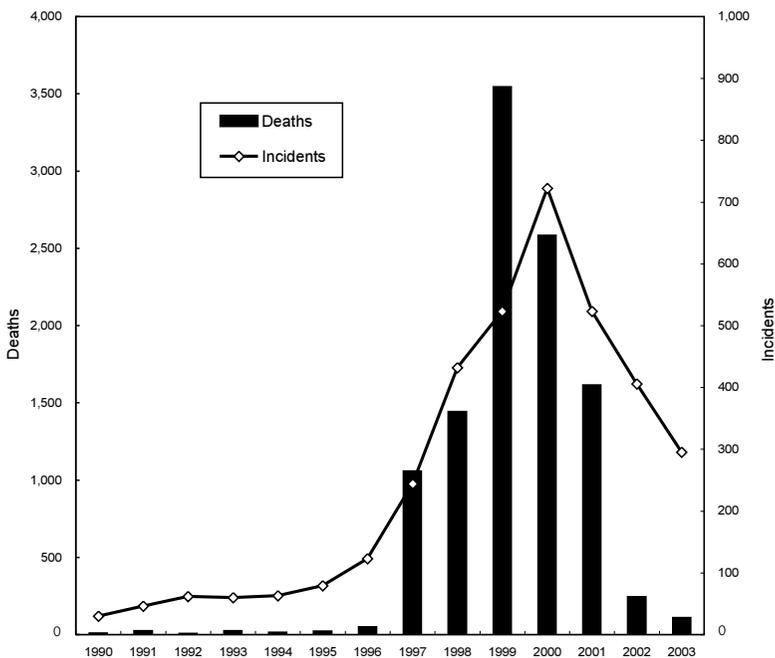
Results

Let us first briefly note the differences between Database I (Tadjoeddin 2002) and Database II, the basis of our analysis here. Our hunch about the utility of provincial newspapers was right. For the period 1990–2001, in fourteen provinces, we have 10,402 deaths in Database II, more than twice as many as in Database I, where the total was 4,662 deaths. It should be clear that for conflict, if not for other subjects, *Kompas* cannot be viewed as a journal of record for all of Indonesia.²⁴

National Trends

Let us now look at the broad national trends. Figure 2 shows the aggregate picture. The years 1997–2001 have been the most violent, but it should be noted that high levels of collective violence were in evidence more than a year before the May 1998 events that caught the

Figure 2 Deaths and Incidents of Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003



world's attention. The Madurese-Dayak conflict began in West Kalimantan in December 1996, acquiring huge proportions in 1997, killing over a thousand people.²⁵

Let us now turn to a question already posed in the previous section: How much violence took place during the late New Order? This question, of course, raises a prior issue: If we treat 1990 as the beginning of the late New Order, when did the New Order really end—on May 22, 1998, when Suharto formally resigned, or on May 13, 1998, when virtually uncontrolled anti-Chinese violence erupted in several parts of the country, especially in the capital city? If we suppose that the May 22 resignation of Suharto ended the New Order, both formally and in actuality, then much of the May 1998 violence would have to be included in our assessment as part of the rioting that took place before the end of the New Order. But if we treat the May 1998 incidents as exceptional, for those were one of the principal immediate causes of the end of the New Order, we will have to find another, more “normal” dividing line, as it

were. There are no good and well-known theoretical ways of selecting a normal cutoff point on a matter like this.

In the absence of a theoretically obvious dividing line, let us first see the results with various possible cutoff points (Table 1). If April 30, 1998, is taken as the cutoff point—before the exceptionally high violence of May 1998 erupted—the late New Order shares of deaths and incidents are 11.5 and 22.3 percent, respectively. If, however, we stick to May 22, 1998, as a dividing line, the late New Order share shoots up to 23.0 percent of all deaths and 23.5 percent of all incidents.

Whichever cutoff one picks, the late New Order was simply not peaceful. Even the lower estimate—11.5 percent of all deaths—records 1,214 deaths and 707 incidents. We should also note that although enough care has been taken to make our statistics as reflective of the realities as possible for the 1990–1997 period, we know that Indonesia’s newspapers have been remarkably free since the end of the New Order and that they were less free before. Thus, one has to take seriously the possibility that despite our best efforts, our figures for 1990–1997 could be an underestimate.

Two more considerations are relevant for our assessment of whether the New Order was peaceful. First, we should also think of the violence not covered in this dataset. The civil wars in Aceh and Papua, and especially in East Timor, produced many deaths. In the 1990s, there were two particularly brutal episodes in East Timor. In one of them, “on 12 November 1991 Indonesian forces shot and killed between 100 and 180 East Timorese at a funeral in Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili” (Cribb 2002, 228). The second episode consisted of a large number of killings and property destruction by pro-Indonesia militia, some allied with the Indonesian military, after East Timor voted for independence in August 1999 (Kammen 2001). Estimates of casualties after the independence

Table 1 New Order and After: Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003

Cutoff Points	Deaths				Incidents			
	Pre	Percentage	Post	Percentage	Pre	Percentage	Post	Percentage
April 30, 1998	1,242	11.5	9,516	88.5	804	22.3	2,804	77.7
May 21, 1998	2,473	23.0	8,285	77.0	848	23.5	2,760	76.5

vote vary from 1,200 to 1,500. In addition, approximately 550,000 people were forced to migrate.²⁶

It is always hard to estimate the exact magnitude of deaths in civil wars and insurgencies. But we do know that, on the whole, insurgencies tend to be more violent than riots (Kalyvas 2006). According to an admittedly conservative estimate, “a rough estimate for the toll of deadly violence associated with Indonesia’s transition of 1998 is almost 19,000 victims, of which over half died due to communal conflict and most of the remainder in secessionist violence” (van Klinken 2007, 4). The latter figures could well be higher.

Second, as Bertrand (2004) argues, if the post-1998 violence is in large measure, if not entirely, a legacy of the New Order, the question of the formal *share* of the New Order in the overall collective violence is less important than its *role* in precipitating as well as perpetrating violence. In other words, the violence of the New Order, analytically speaking, did not end with its formal demise in May 1998. Its terrible effects continued even after its death.

Disaggregating Violence

Let us now look at some specific features of the overall picture of violence. If we go by categories of violence—ethnocommunal, state versus community, economic, other—a striking finding emerges. Ethnocommunal violence accounts for only 16.6 percent of all incidents of violence, but its share of deaths is almost 89.3 percent. That essentially means that an ethnocommunal form of group violence is not very common in Indonesia, but when it does take place, it is much more deadly than other forms of violence. The incidence of economic and state versus community clashes is not far behind that of ethnocommunal strife, but the magnitude of deaths associated with them is a great deal smaller (Table 2).

Within the category of ethnocommunal violence, some further distributions are noteworthy. Interreligious violence has caused the largest

Table 2 Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003, by Category

Category	Deaths	Percentage	Incidents	Percentage
Ethnocommunal	9,612	89.3	599	16.6
State-community	105	1.0	423	11.7
Economic	78	0.7	444	12.3
Other	963	9.0	2,142	59.4
Total (14 provinces)	10,758	100.0	3,608	100.0

destruction of lives, followed by interethnic conflict. The three biggest takers of lives in Indonesia are Muslim-Christian, Madurese-Dayak/Malay,²⁷ and anti-Chinese violence, suggesting that these three have been the greatest cleavages of Indonesian society, at least since 1990 (Table 3).²⁸

Two other patterns are noteworthy. While Madurese-Dayak riots, both in their frequency and intensity, were not affected by the end of the Suharto era in 1998 (Figure 3), the other two big cleavages show a contrasting pattern. There was very little deadly anti-Chinese violence after the fall of Suharto in 1998 (Figure 4)—the major exception being a rather big incident in Riau in February 2001, triggered by a gambling dispute.²⁹ Contrariwise, as Figure 5 shows, most of the deadly Muslim-Christian strife took place after 1998.

Did Muslim-Christian violence not exist at all before 1998? To be sure, there were many Muslim-Christian clashes before 1998. They have been recorded in the literature as well as in our dataset, especially the incidents in 1996–1997 in Tasikmalaya (West Java), Banjarmasin (South Kalimantan), Situbondo (East Java), and Ujung Pandang (South Sulawesi).³⁰ Theodore Friend also notes that during 1992–1997, roughly 500 churches, an average of 100 churches a year, were burned (Friend 2003, 299). Muslim-Christian violence before 1998 led to very few deaths, but it inflicted a lot of damage on buildings and property, both private and public. Since 1998, a significantly large loss of lives has been added to the property destruction. Muslim-Christian violence, which began well before the end of the New Order, is therefore not a post-1998 phenomenon. It simply changed its form after 1998, becoming more fatal.

Table 3 Distribution of Ethnocommunal Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003

	Deaths	Percentage	Incidents	Percentage
Ethnic	4,122	43	140	23
Anti-Chinese	1,259	13	32	5
Madurese-Dayak/Malay	2,764	29	70	12
Other	99	1	38	6
Religious (Muslim-Christian)	5,452	57	433	72
Sectarian	38	0	26	4
Intra-Muslim	38	0	22	4
Intra-Christian	—	0	3	1
Total Ethnocommunal Violence	9,612	100	599	100

Figure 3 Madurese vs. Dayak/Malay Violence, 1990–2003

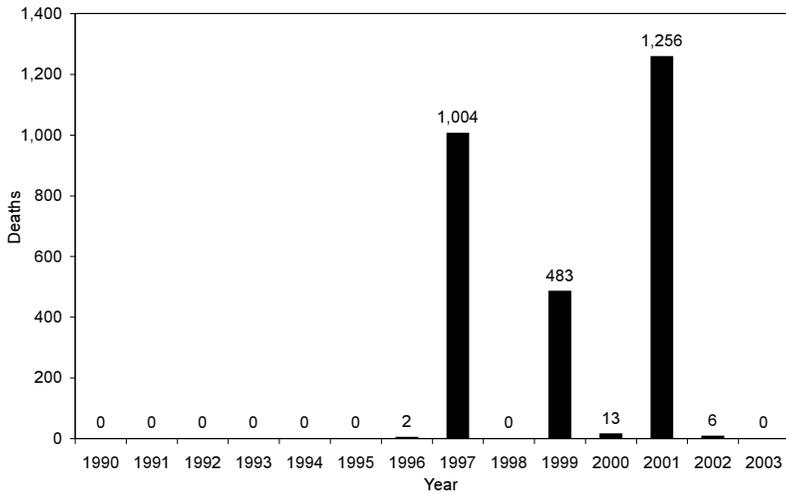
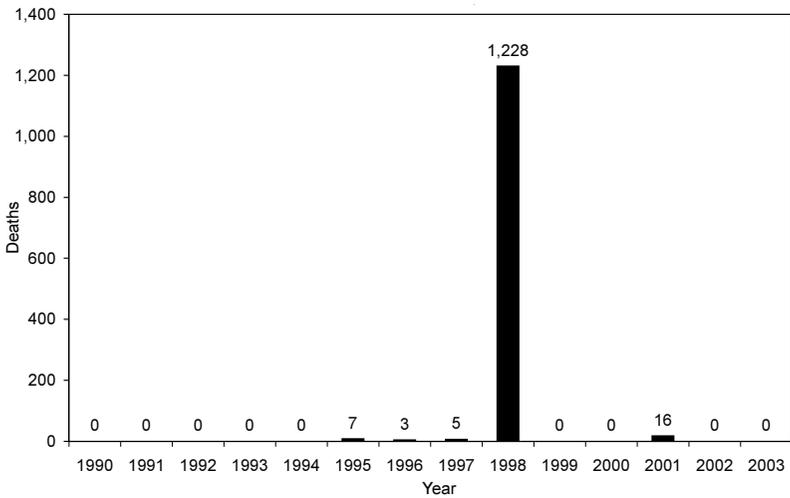
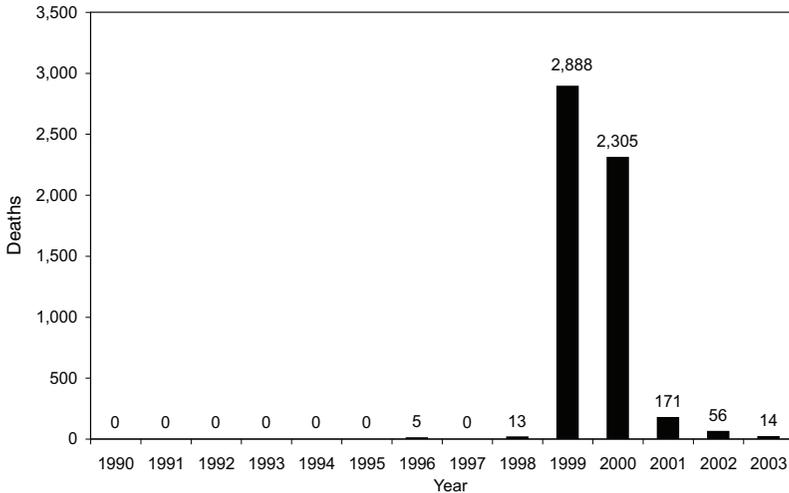


Figure 4 Anti-Chinese Violence, 1990–2003



Whether or not Indonesia also had Muslim-Christian violence in the 1970s and 1980s remains unclear. Bertrand (2004) and Robert Hefner (2000) suggest the possibility that the rise of violence in the 1990s is linked to Suharto’s embrace of Islam and of Muslim intellectuals in the late 1980s. In a similar fashion, one can say that while anti-

Figure 5 Muslim-Christian Violence, 1990–2003

Chinese violence has a long tradition in Indonesia (Coppel 1983), its decline after May 1998 may well have something to do with the peculiar position occupied by the Chinese during the New Order.

In Anderson's well-known formulation, the New Order allowed the Chinese to flourish economically, but it politically marginalized them (Anderson 1990).³¹ We know from the larger comparative literature that such combinations of economic privilege and political marginality make a group extremely vulnerable: their riches are resented, but they have no political, legal, or institutional protection when resentments against their riches rise. Structural ambivalences of this kind have often been associated with explosive violence in several parts of the world: other than the Chinese under the New Order, the Indians in East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s are a case in point. While it would be foolhardy to predict that anti-Chinese violence has come to an end, the possibility that the end of a political system that gave the Chinese such an ambivalent position in the structure of political power and economic privilege has something to do with the recent decline is sufficiently analytically intriguing to require further thought.³²

Provincial Distribution of Violence

The provincial distribution of group violence in Indonesia has two notable features. First, in terms of deaths, as is well known, North Maluku,

Maluku, Jakarta, and West and Central Kalimantan have been the worst provinces, but it is less well known that these are not the provinces with the highest number of incidents (Table 4). Java has the highest number of incidents, mostly small. Java appears to have much more routine group violence than any other part of Indonesia. This may, in part, be construed as an artifact of Java's size, which accounts for roughly 40 percent of Indonesia's total population. However, it should be noted that a bigger province could well be more peaceful than a smaller one. Though elsewhere *town* size appears to have a positive relationship with violence (Varshney 2002), we have no theory or evidence to conclude that *province* size and violence are integrally connected.

Second, as Table 5 shows, of all provinces, Java also has the largest number of incidents falling in the "Other" category (69.9 percent). The sheer size of a residual category in the Javanese case requires that we break it up and look inside. The three largest subcategories in terms of death and incidents are *dukun santet* (killings of persons who allegedly practice *santet*/black magic), intervillage or intergroup brawls, and vigilante killings (called "popular justice" killings in our database).

Indeed, if we wish to identify the routine forms of conflict in Java, another exercise seems to be necessary. We know that in terms of deaths, most ethnocommunal violence in Java took place in one week in May 1998, so to get more normal patterns of violence, we may wish to leave

**Table 4 Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003:
Provincial Distribution**

Province	Database II			
	Deaths	Percentage	Incidents	Percentage
North Maluku	2,794	25.0	72	1.7
Maluku	2,046	18.3	332	7.8
West Kalimantan	1,515	13.6	78	1.8
Jakarta	1,322	11.8	178	4.2
Central Kalimantan	1,284	11.5	62	1.5
Central Sulawesi	669	6.0	101	2.4
West Java	256	2.3	871	20.4
East Java	254	2.3	655	15.3
Central Java	165	1.5	506	11.9
South Sulawesi	118	1.1	223	5.2
West Nusatenggara	109	1.0	198	4.6
Riau	100	0.9	165	3.9
East Nusatenggara	89	0.8	55	1.3
Banten	37	0.3	112	2.6
Total	10,758	96.4	3,608	84.5

Table 5 Collective Violence in Java, 1990–2003

Category	Deaths	Percentage	Incidents	Percentage
Ethnocommunal	1,247	61.3	54	2.3
State-community	54	2.7	282	12.1
Economic	24	1.2	362	15.6
Other	709	34.9	1,624	69.9
Dukun santet	256	12.6	200	8.6
Intergroup/ intervillage brawls	176	8.7	478	20.6
“Popular justice”	147	7.2	448	19.3
Total	2,034	100	2,322	100

Table 6 Collective Violence in Java, 1990–2003 (excluding May 1998 anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta and Solo)

Category	Deaths	Percentage	Incidents	Percentage
Ethnocommunal	26	3	52	2
State-community	54	7	282	12
Economic	24	3	362	16
Other	709	87	1,624	70
Dukun santet	256	31	200	9
Intergroup/ intervillage brawls	176	22	478	21
“Popular justice”	147	18	448	19
Total	813	100	2,320	100

out the May 1998 incidents of Jakarta and Solo altogether. We do so in Table 6. Java’s primary everyday conflicts are not ethnocommunal but are centered on santet, intergroup/intervillage brawls, and vigilante justice, accounting for 87 percent of all deaths. Indeed, if we treat santet killings as part of vigilante (or “popular justice”) violence—in that the person allegedly practicing black magic is killed by a group for bringing undue harm—then the share of vigilantism is even higher.

In the existing accounts of group conflict in Java, the anti-Chinese violence and Muslim-Christian clashes, especially in 1995–1997, have dominated the discussion (Purdey 2006; Mas’oed, Maksum, and Soehadha 2000; Sidel 2006). In Java, both of these conflicts, while fatal in a big way, are primarily episodic in nature, whereas santet, vigilantism, and intervillage and intergroup brawls are the routine forms of group violence. Given our earlier analysis, these conclusions also apply to Indonesia in general. Ethnocommunal violence is deadly, but episodic.

District-Level Distribution of Violence

Disaggregating the results further, and going down to the district/city (*kabupaten/kota*) level, generates the most analytically intriguing finding of our statistical exercise. Fifteen districts and cities, holding a mere 6.5 percent of the population in 2000, had 85.5 percent of all deaths (Table 7). Fatal group violence in Indonesia is thus highly locally concentrated. Smaller acts of violence may be widespread, as is true in many parts of the world, but large-scale collective violence is not. This result is consistent with data on group violence in several other parts of the world: Africa (Fearon and Laitin 1996), Hindu-Muslim conflict in countries such as India (Varshney 2002), racial violence in the United States in the 1960s (Horowitz 1983), Protestant-Christian violence in Northern Ireland (Poole 1990).

If we place the districtwise disaggregation in Table 7 against the backdrop of Figure 2, two features of Indonesia's violence stand out: its remarkable geographical variation and its temporal concentration around the end of the New Order. This juxtaposition suggests an important conclusion. The notion of "critical junctures"—the decline and end of the New Order—is of great significance in terms of timing, but this systemic transformation did not produce collective violence everywhere.³³ Group violence had local theaters.

Some of the local questions that need to be explored systematically are: how the New Order upset a traditional local equilibrium of communities—communities rooted in traditional (*adat*) forms of governance—in the process of installing uniform, all-Indonesia forms of local institutions; how migration altered local equilibria; whether different ethnic or religious communities are integrated or segregated in different local settings; how the patterns of local governance have vastly varied; and how economic penetration of previously self-sufficient communities led to dramatically new results, marginalizing some communities and privileging others.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let us recapitulate the three larger findings of our dataset. First, to call the late New Order a peaceful period in Indonesia's recent history is essentially incorrect. The New Order was at its heart an intrinsically violent system. The state used violence with impunity to

Table 7 Distribution by Kabupaten/Kota: Collective Violence in Indonesia, 1990–2003

	Deaths		Incidents		Population (2000)	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
	Indonesia	11,160	100.0	4,270	100.0	206,264,595
Total 14 Provinces	10,758	96.4	3,608	84.5	149,309,365	72.4
1 Maluku Utara	2,410	21.6	60	1.4	432,295	0.2
2 Jakarta (5 districts)	1,322	11.8	178	4.2	8,389,443	4.1
3 Kotawaringin Timur	1,229	11.0	24	0.6	526,556	0.3
4 Kota Ambon	1,097	9.8	190	4.4	190,511	0.1
5 Poso	655	5.9	32	0.7	210,780	0.1
6 Maluku Tengah	632	5.7	115	2.7	523,122	0.3
7 Landak	455	4.1	4	0.1	556,684	0.3
8 Sambas	428	3.8	16	0.4	454,449	0.2
9 Pontianak	425	3.8	8	0.2	631,773	0.3
10 Halmahera Tengah	311	2.8	6	0.1	147,509	0.1
11 Maluku Tenggara	168	1.5	12	0.3	186,922	0.1
12 Buru	149	1.3	15	0.4	111,385	0.1
13 Bengkulu	132	1.2	19	0.4	328,379	0.2
14 Kota Ternate	73	0.7	6	0.1	152,649	0.1
15 Sanggau	59	0.5	5	0.1	508,676	0.2
Total 15 districts	9,545	85.5	690	16.2	13,351,133	6.5
Others	1,615	14.5	3,580	83.8	192,913,462	93.5

Note: These data refer to conditions in 2000. The districts of North Maluku, Halmahera Tengah, Maluku Tengah, and Kotawaringin Timur have since split due to the formation of new districts.

impose stability. Violence between groups may have been lower before 1998 than after the end of the New Order, but state-perpetrated violence was substantial. Second, ethnocommunal violence was not a common form of violence in Indonesia during this period, but when it took place, it took many more lives than the more routine forms of violence, such as lynching. Third, contrary to popular conception, large-scale collective violence in Indonesia is not widespread. Such violence has high local concentrations. The fall of the New Order did lead to high degrees of violence, but many parts of the country were left untouched. The dogs that did not bark simply escaped the attention of the press, the activists, and the intelligentsia, distorting the picture of violence considerably. For an adequate understanding of group violence in Indonesia, attention needs to be paid not simply to national-level factors, such as the changing fortunes of the New Order and the changing political dynamics at the national level, but also to local-level factors.

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Appendix 1 Template for Recording Each Incident of Collective Violence

Record:	serial number		
Province:	text	Village:	text
Kab./Kota:	text	Neighborhood:	text
Subdistrict:	text	Rural/Urban:	rural or urban
Coding issues:	yes/no		
Date:	date	Duration in days:	number
Killed:	number	Injured:	number
Arrests:	number	Shops:	number
Houses:	number	Public buildings:	number

Source:	text	Source date:	dates
Coding issues 2:	yes/no		
Category:	text	Subcategory 1:	text
Coding issues 3:	yes/no	Subcategory 2:	text
Reported Cause:	text		
Local precipitating event:	text		
Militia involvement:	yes/no		
Related to migration issue:	yes/no		
Link with outside event:	text		
Types of arms used:	text		
Coding issues 4:	yes/no		
<i>Security reaction</i>		<i>Policing arrangement</i>	
Fire shots:	yes/no	Police deployed:	yes/no
Arrests made:	yes/no	Army deployed:	yes/no
Prosecution:	yes/no	Other security forces deployed:	yes/no
Conviction:	yes/no		
Coding issues 4:	yes/no		
Narrative:			
<i>Summary of incident (story) and explanation for coding issues</i>			

Appendix 2 Categories of Collective Violence

1. Ethnocommunal

Subcategory 1

- *Ethnocommunal/ethnic*
- *Ethnocommunal/religious*
- *Ethnocommunal/sectarian*

Subcategory 2

(Anti-Chinese, Madurese-Dayak-Madurese-Malay, etc.)
(Muslim-Christian, etc.)
(Intra-Muslim, Intra-Christian, etc.)

2. Separatist

3. State-community

4. Economic

Subcategory 1

- *Economic/land base*
- *Economic/industrial relation*
- *Economic/natural resources*
- *Economic/others*

5. Others

Subcategory 1

- *Others/dukun santet*
- *Others/political parties and factions*
- *Others/intergroup/village brawls*
- *Others/terrorist violence*
- *Others/“popular justice”*
- *Others/between state agencies*
- *Others/others*

Notes

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1. Center for Global Development (2004, 7). This report was produced by a commission headed by two US members of Congress. It led to many articles in the press, including Martin Wolf (2004). It should be clarified that though most scholars of Indonesia did not identify with this characterization, some went even further, contemplating the imminent disintegration of the country. A leading historian of Indonesia wrote: "The Indonesian experiment . . . is under challenge today as never before, and all over the Asia-Pacific region defense analysts are pondering the question of whether the early 21st century will see the disintegration of Indonesia in the way that the late 20th century saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. For the first time since the Second World War, there is a serious possibility that the extended archipelago . . . could be divided not into five or six states . . . but into a dozen or more" (Robert Cribb cited in Emmerson 2005, 26). For the debate about Indonesia's territorial and national integrity in general, see the extensive discussion in Emmerson (2005).

2. There are two other datasets available. The first was based on an Indonesian government survey, PODES, for 2003 only, when questions about conflict were first asked by the government (Barron, Kaiser, and Pradhan 2004). The second dataset, created by the World Bank and based on the reading of local newspapers, focuses on fourteen districts in two provinces, East Java and Nusa Tenggara Timur, for 2001–2003 (Barron and Sharpe this issue). Due to the number of years, the geographical areas, and the type of conflicts covered, there are important differences among the three datasets. That is why they do not answer the same questions equally well and are usable in quite different ways.

3. The World Bank dataset contains individual-on-individual violence as well.

4. For a whole variety of logistical reasons, we were also unable to cover East Timor, where an insurgency raged at varying levels of intensity between 1975 and 1999.

5. However, some of the major episodes of violence after 1998 have been well covered. In particular, the studies sponsored by the Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group give us valuable information. See also

Davidson (2008), Purdey (2006), Sidel (2006), van Klinken (2007), and Wilson (2008).

6. Anderson presents a different view: “It is telling that the largest-circulation newspapers in Jakarta under the Suharto regime were controlled by Catholics and Protestants: the most easily intimidated and therefore the most tolerated. It was not long before the obsequious Catholic *Kompas* was quietly mocked as *Kempes* (flat, like a tire), and the Protestant *Sinar Harapan* (Light of Hope) as *Sirna Harapan* (all hope is gone)” (Anderson 2008, 49).

7. In commenting on our earlier draft, William Liddle questioned the reliability of provincial newspapers, citing their lower-quality staff, but Benedict Anderson argued that provincial newspapers were more reliable than their capital city counterparts on provincial matters. To quote Anderson, “Jakarta newspapers and TV have a deep-seated problem. This is that it is in the nature of these ‘national’ media to think that if they report something in the provinces it should have ‘national significance.’ Some boys fighting over girls in Mataram will not be mentioned by them, even if it leads to deaths, unless it can be said to be a ‘sign’ of something national. . . . That is why they do such a bad job of regional reporting” (Anderson, personal communication). Indonesia is, of course, not the only country where such scholarly differences on the reliability of newspapers exist. Be that as it may, it is best not to judge this matter theoretically but have empirical research address it. That is what we do later, starting with a conceptual conjecture.

8. The distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism was underlined by Kirkpatrick (1982).

9. Also, the early 1990s witnessed what came to be known as a period of relative openness, *keterbukaan*. This period came to an end in June 1994, when three major newspapers and magazines (*Tempo*, *Editor*, and *Detik*) were closed down after they reported disagreements at the highest echelons of government on policy (Bertrand 2004, 444).

10. These interviews were conducted in the Jakarta headquarters of the *Kompas* group of newspapers in December 2002.

11. Steven Wilkinson and one of us (Varshney) have created a dataset on Hindu-Muslim riots in India (1950–1995). It is publicly available at the Inter-University Consortium on Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Ann Arbor, Michigan, <http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR-STUDY/04342.xml> (Varshney and Wilkinson, 2005).

12. Consider an example. If in 80 percent of the incidents only one person per incident is killed, but in the remaining 20 percent of incidents, thirty (or more) people per incident are killed, then in the final tally, assuming an average of thirty deaths per big incident, the smaller incidents will account for a little over 10 percent of all deaths (80 in total of 680). However, if lynchings are as common as suggested by Welsh (this issue), this conclusion, generally true in many parts of the world, may have to be modified for Indonesia.

13. The number of provinces has gone up since then.

14. In situations where the ethnic and religious classifications coincide, this procedure does create some obvious issues for resolution. When churches were attacked in Java during 1995–1997, was it a case of anti-*Christian* riot-

ing or anti-*Chinese* rioting? There is a huge intersection between these two categories—Christian and Chinese—as also between Pribumi and Muslim, on Java island. Such problems can only be resolved through careful case studies. Until such time as that has been satisfactorily done, we should stick to the idea of forms of violence as a basis for initial classification. An attack on a church would be a sign of religious violence, not ethnic violence, until proven otherwise. For thoughts on the Chinese-Christian conflation on Java, see Sidel (2006).

15. Was it a small wound or a big one? Was someone incapacitated? Did the injury have serious psychological consequences? Until one can specify the nature of injury, the data on injury are not strictly comparable across cases, apart from being less meticulously collected.

16. People can be badly or mildly injured, but they cannot be a half or a quarter dead.

17. In other words, professional social scientists cannot promise the truth, but they can provide their best estimation of it. The situation is akin to what happens in a court of law. Only that claim is accepted that can be proved with evidence, even if the truth is different.

18. A fourth important theory is that the decentralization of governmental powers announced in 1999 led to large-scale communal violence (van Klinken, 2007). Our dataset does show that violence reached its peak in 1999, but whether it can be causally linked to decentralization is something the dataset cannot test for. To test the theory, we will need, at the very least, a great deal of information on *when* decentralization was implemented in *which parts* of Indonesia.

19. The essays in Anderson (2001) provide further illustrations of violence in the 1980s.

20. East Timor's Truth Commission finds 100,000 deaths as the more plausible figure. See Roosa (2007–2008).

21. Liddle (1997) argues that state coercion, persuasion, and exchange constituted the foundations of the New Order, not coercion alone.

22. See, for example, Ryter (2001) and Kammen (2001).

23. For a fuller development of the idea of sparks and fires in ethnic violence, see Varshney and Gubler (2008).

24. It turns out that even for the island of Java, *Kompas* has seriously underreported violence. From the perspective of conflict, if not for other subjects, *Kompas* should be basically viewed as a newspaper covering Jakarta well. That is why only for 1998 did the two datasets come close on deaths: an overwhelming proportion of group violence took place in Jakarta that year. Whenever Jakarta's proportions were lower in the total violence, the differences between the two databases were large. The other use of *Kompas* is as a supplementary check for very big incidents, such as those in Maluku or Kalimantan, if the regional newspapers do not have full archives or clear reporting *and the incident was large enough to be treated as something of national significance*. This is especially relevant to Maluku, where after January 1999, the local press ceased to be neutral and newspapers became either Christian newspapers (for example, *Suara Maluku*) or Muslim newspapers (for example, *Ambon Ekspres*, which was

born in June 1999 after Muslims of Ambon realized that they needed a paper to represent their concerns).

25. For a comprehensive treatment of the 1996–1997 Madurese-Dayak violence, see Peluso and Harwell (2001) and Davidson (2008). For a comparison of East Kalimantan’s peace and Central Kalimantan’s violence, see van Klinken (2002).

26. As cited in Webster (2007–2008, 589). These estimates are based on East Timor’s Truth Commission report. See also Roosa (2007–2008).

27. For how Malays got involved in what was essentially a Madurese-Dayak conflict, see Davidson (2008).

28. It should be noted that during the anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta in May 1998, many non-Chinese, trapped in malls, were killed. Thus, the reported number of those killed in May 1998 here includes both Pribumi and Chinese. By anti-Chinese riots, we do not mean that all those killed were Chinese. For details, see Purdey (2006).

29. In Selat Panjang. Based on *Riau Post*, February 11, 2001, we can say that after a gambling dispute, many Chinese houses were burned and many Chinese killed. Our estimate is sixteen deaths. Hundreds of Chinese fled to Karimun island. The city of Selat Panjang was “dead for ten days” due to the destruction caused.

30. Mas’oed, Maksun, and Soehadha (2000). This research effort was led by Loekman Soetrisno at the Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta. Also see Sidel (2006).

31. Anderson (2008) provides further reflections on this formulation.

32. For the most detailed account of anti-Chinese violence during 1996–1999 and the legal changes in the position of the Chinese since 2000, see Purdey (2006).

33. See also Bertrand (in this issue).

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