



REALITY CHECK

DIVERSE VOICES ON INTERNAL CONFLICT

The Fund for Peace

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Since its inception, Indonesia has faced the challenge of creating a sense of national unity and integrity within an archipelago of six thousand inhabited islands with vast differences among its population. In the past five years, Indonesia has been confronted by a major financial crisis, ethnic violence, separatist movements, and a military intervention in East Timor, which formally gained its independence on May 20, 2002. Dr. Nono Anwar Makarim has witnessed his country's turbulent history as a student leader in the demonstrations against former President Sukarno, as a member of Parliament, as Editor-in-Chief of a Jakarta-based daily newspaper, and as a founding partner in the law firm of Makarim & Taira S. He is currently Chairman of the Executive Board of the Aksara Foundation, which he helped found in 1998, a non-profit organization promoting civil society development in Indonesia.

FFP: You were the chief founder of the Aksara Foundation in Indonesia. What gap did you feel the foundation could fill?

One of the unforgivable sins of our first president was to cut Indonesia from the Dutch language. With that he closed a window on the world for the Indonesian nation. If the people of my parent's generation speak English, French, German faultlessly, it is because they started out from the base of another Western language: Dutch. When I came back from the US after several years of study, I noticed that the discussions in seminars, symposia and panels were becoming symbols of

mediocrity. There was nothing I could do then, as I was beginning a law practice. You have to have finances, and you need an organization to launch certain things. Now through Aksara, I hope to make Indonesians talk and think smarter. I want to make it a little easier for those who are already active by showing interest in their activities. I want to provide reading material, to expose what is really happening to us. Basically, it is an effort to contribute a little, to raise the national discourse to a higher level.



Dr. Nono Anwar Makarim

FFP: Can you talk about nation-building in Indonesia?

We did not make our borders. We are a collection of almost entirely different nations. Dr. Brahimi¹ once said that among the Central Javanese, the East Javanese, and the West Javanese, there are more differences than among the Tunisian, the Moroccan, and the Algerian. It's that different – Java is one island, one of the smaller islands, and already there are very great differences. In the 1940s, there was a rallying point. It was getting the Dutch away, and getting the Americans to stop their subversive activities against our independence. You should read a

book written by Professor George McT. Kahin called *Subversion as Foreign Policy* that gives the record of what Eisenhower did.

There was a short period of nation-building under Sukarno. But then there was the arrest of the opposition, and that was not pretty. We didn't know at the time that you have to be patient, that you have to continue to muddle. A period of nation-building must

The Fund for Peace is issuing an occasional series of interviews featuring leading voices on issues related to internal war. The Regional Responses to Internal War program is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and is being carried out in partnership with the Stanley Foundation.

be followed by state-building, which is actually governance. In 1965, I was a student leader. I demonstrated and helped topple Sukarno because nation-building didn't bring in the goods, and people were suffering. I had to queue for rice, for shirts, for kerosene for cooking; I had to queue for gasoline, in an oil-rich country. Even salt – can you imagine? We are an archipelago! So, he was toppled.

We wanted an administrative government, no longer a solidarity-making government. We had had enough of that with its 600% galloping inflation. State-building occurred. The Berkeley mafia was wonderful.² They had been to your schools and came back to be leaders. They brought back concepts, and even though these concepts were sometimes wrong, these individuals and their ideas formed a coherent group. The first fifteen years of Suharto were wonderful years. He is not all evil. He was very successful, but as an orphan, he had this one weakness of being extremely permissive where his family was concerned. So, state-building stopped after the first 15 years. Even during the first 15 years, I was privy to the technocrats' complaints – for every single policy item, they had to maneuver left and right around other parties who were not interested in government. It was very difficult. And then you had the two prongs of bribes and co-optation, and all of a sudden, the crisis happened. When things broke down, his supporters pulled the rug out from under him.

You should realize that Indonesia is a country of minorities. The statistic that 95% of Indonesians are Muslim is misleading. We have figures from the 1955 general elections, which were relatively honest. At that time, the Muslim parties combined were a minority, and the Nationalist Party's support was larger than that of the Muslim parties combined. In 1999 (consider the growth in population), the Muslim political parties got fewer votes than in 1955. So, the Muslim majority is a cultural majority – it does not translate into a political majority.

FfP: Stability has long been an ASEAN value, but at The Fund conference³ participants talked about the emergence of additional values. What is your perspective?

The voice of the ruling elites, the military in Indonesia, has always spoken about stability, and law and order. It is true that there are new winds blowing in Asia, but to say only that there is a change is to obscure the fact that those winds have always been there. I am worried that if the United States continues to stress only the

war on terrorism, it may weaken that part of the public that has always been for change. The war on terrorism increases the importance of the armed forces. And while I am not denying their importance, the vibrant but fragile forces pushing for change that have come up will become weaker if you only concentrate on the military sector.

FfP: Are you talking about civil society?

When you talk about civil society, you're talking actually about the product of a certain level of economic development that we have not yet reached. They are liberalizing forces. In launching this war on terrorism, which is an imperative, you have to take care that it does not extinguish completely these liberalizing forces. But a system like Indonesia cannot change from within. It is a system much like the Chinese system, with the same concept of power. The German sociologist, Max Weber, describes it very well as a patrimonial bureaucratic state. It can't be changed from within because the liberalizing forces coming out of such a system are by definition kept weak. We need help from the outside and this is done by the international community, including NGOs. We need more pressure from the outside, because it helps us breathe better. So, that linkage must be there, even at the risk of foreign domination, a risk that some of us are willing to take. In countries like Indonesia where power is in the process of becoming established, we need more help, not less.

FfP: How would you characterize change – is it coming from the bottom, or because of more openness at the top?

I may be wrong, but liberalizing forces most of the time, in my experience, do not come from the bottom. They come from within the fringes of the elite, from the universities, children of the middle class, people who have been educated, up to the tertiary level, particularly when they have been abroad. They think differently. They are less reverent to the powers that be.

Going back to the difficulty of actually developing civil society, I was probably one of the first co-founders of a people-to-people program in 1971. I directed an institute of social and economic research and education. We got money from a German foundation. And my plans were that this would be a training ground, in management, for people coming from the activist sector. Student leaders and labor leaders would come to this institute for two years and then go back to what they were doing. I was unrealistic – my thinking was based

on textbooks. The system and the level of economic development just did not allow that to happen. People would come and stay for four, five, six years because it paid well, and it became a career for them. If it becomes a career, it is tainted.

FfP: Let's talk about regional cooperation. How essential is it?

Before we can cooperate with our neighbors, we've got to assure them that our legal system is adhering to the rule of law and due process. Scandals are rampant. The courts are corrupt, the lawyers are corrupt, and prosecutors are taking advantage of this new mood of prosecuting people to extort. Businessmen have told me that they pay tariffs for having an air conditioner in a detention room, for going to the toilet regularly. That is why Aksara moved into the field of exposing corruption. We have just published four volumes on the subject of "stealing from the people."

In writing on corruption in Indonesia, it has come to our attention that international donors are not strict enough. In the past, it could be understood; there was the blockade against India, and we were economically growing at the rate of 8% a year for a quarter of a century. And we have been the only oil-producing developing country that has been successful in economic development. So we were the darlings of the World Bank. But at one point in time, the World Bank was pressured to write a favorable report about Indonesia, because Indonesia threatened to refuse international aid otherwise. It is amazing that the ultimate threat of pulling away from Indonesia has never been issued. It would greatly help us if it came to that.

FfP: In East Asia, some people see humanitarian emergencies in North Korea, Burma, and in Aceh in Indonesia. How would you define a humanitarian crisis?

If 6,000 people are killed in three months, that's a recognizable humanitarian crisis. But if 6,000 people are killed in four years, it's very difficult to see that. That is what is happening in Indonesia. Have you seen the CNN coverage of the mass killings of the Madurese by the Dayaks in Central and Western Kalimantan? From Aceh up to Irian, Indonesia is dotted with camps of internally displaced persons (IDP's). There is no money for them, and we have cut them adrift. There is no international funding because they do not fit within the legal definition of refugees. So what does Indonesia do? Let them die? Aksara made a special report about

this issue in *Tempo* magazine. One million people are currently displaced in Indonesia. People do not really feel what displacement is. Displacement means that one night you leave everything, your neighbors, your favorite things, and just go.

FfP: Has this changed with the Megawati regime?

No, it has become worse. It has become worse particularly because power is starting to get established now. You see, the predecessor of Megawati, my friend Abdurrahman Wahid had an opportunity. When Timor occurred, when the Australian soldiers came in, that was the time to come up with a scheme for reorganizing

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the armed forces. Instead, he chose to engage in an ego-boosting battle to remove one general. That would have been the time, but of course we were not ready, we did not have a plan.

FfP: Tell us your views about East Timor.

We have contradictory feelings on the subject of East Timor, even among the liberal community in Indonesia. It is a painful subject, but at the same time, there is a realization that we had no business to be in East Timor in the first place. Sukarno's concept of nationalism, of a common fate, translates politically into the former Dutch colony, which East Timor was not a part of. But to see the swaggering, gun-toting Australians and their tanks was very painful. At the time, when asked "What are you doing these days?" the response was invariably "Australia-bashing" even among liberal intellectuals.

FfP: What about the other countries involved? The international force was led by the Australians but there were many countries involved, and other ASEAN⁴ countries pressured the Indonesian government to agree to the international force.

That was not felt as pressure. Singapore came in with a medical team. But the tanks and the loading of

battleships – no matter what the Australian government says, it was definitely sabre-rattling. It was a statement of, “Let’s show the Asians.”

FfP: The question of providing arms and training to the Indonesian military is being considered again in the United States. There are some in the US Senate who say let’s not make the Indonesian military more effective at what they do, we don’t like what they do. What is your view?

I think people should understand that it is the only army that we have, we don’t have another. I think people should also understand that the police are not accustomed to handling disorder. The police are not trained or equipped for those types of situations, nor do they have a background in such operations. So if that attitude of skepticism towards the Indonesian military continues, the American government, or Congress, should also get used to the idea of chaos continuing. Continuing chaos has this very funny result, you know – chaos begets chaos, and the situation becomes increasingly unstable. I don’t count out separatism and breakup as a possibility in the future.

FfP: You’re no fan of the military, but you would still like to see the resumption of military-to-military ties, including training and equipment?

Yes, but it should not be a simple friendly relationship. It should be a continuing engagement with strong demands for reform. The IMF and the World Bank are prodding, persuading and pressuring the civilian government on a daily basis to do things, to perform, to act. Why should the military, the most potent and best organized force in the country, the only political force, be left alone when the civilian government is engaged on a daily basis?

FfP: What about the Indonesian military’s response that, “You need us because of your war on terrorism, so let us do what we do”?

You know that is the attitude of shunned groups, groups that are attacked all the time. That attitude would probably soften, if there is a friendlier, more serious

persuasion for change, reform and professionalism. After all, it is in the army’s best interest – look how ineffective they have been. I say to them, “Look to yourselves – what can you do? You can’t do anything, you can’t solve Aceh, you can’t solve Maluku, you created a debacle in East Timor. You’re a mess!” They accept that from me, grudgingly.

FfP: For an average person in the region, what do you think is the biggest threat to individual human security?

The clearest answer I can give you is an example. A very powerful bomb went off in the residence of the Philippine ambassador in Jakarta.⁵ The ambassador was severely wounded. The residence is on the main boulevard and my mother-in-law lives on a street parallel to that. Nobody dared to go there, but my driver and I went and saw the mess, and I was shocked to see what had happened to that place. At that moment, I felt a sense of powerlessness, because my first impulse was to ask myself, “Who’s my connection?” This is the way the Asian mind thinks – not to call the police, not to follow the standard procedure or the rule of law, but to look for a friend in the government. And I felt powerless because I don’t have any – these are new people. That is the basic threat – powerlessness.

--Washington, DC, July 17, 2002

¹ Dr. Lakhdar Brahimi was the chairman of the independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, which was established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999 and issued its report on proposed reforms for peace operations in August 2000.

² The “Berkeley mafia” was a group of Indonesian technocrats and economic advisors to the government, many of whom were trained at the University of California, Berkeley.

³ In July 2002, The Fund for Peace organized a meeting of 24 Asian opinion leaders who spent three days discussing regional responses to internal war, including such key issues as legitimacy, sovereignty, and the role of regional actors. The Conference on East Asia was the third of four regional conferences.

⁴ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

⁵ On August 1, 2000, a car bomb exploded outside of the residence of the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia in Jakarta. The explosion killed two and injured twenty-one people, including Philippine ambassador Leonides Caday.

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