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Notes

1. A linguistic group found mainly in Jammu that had Muslims as well as Hindus among its members.
2. Loosely translatable as “Kashmiriness”.

Southeast Asia

ARIEL HERYANTO. *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. 223 pp. US\$65.00, paper.

Surprisingly, there are few serious and comprehensive studies of state violence in Indonesia during the Suharto era. This is not because most scholarly treatments ignored or downplayed the repressiveness of the Suharto regime (although, as Heryanto points out in the book under review, some certainly did). More commonly, scholars noted the role played by repression in maintaining the regime, but did so only in passing, before getting on with whatever was the real business of their research. Where close studies were made of state violence, they mostly focused only on its most overt or brutal manifestations, such as the structure and functioning of the military apparatus, or periods and places where violence was greatest (the 1965–66 killings or East Timor, for example). Missing from all this was a study of the role that repression played in the lives of ordinary citizens.

Ariel Heryanto’s book fills this gap. Its analysis of repression and the discourse that authorised it in the Suharto years is subtle and theoretically sophisticated, and yet avoids euphemism and equivocation. A central thesis of the book is that the regime practised a form of “state terrorism”, a term rarely used by other analysts of Indonesian politics. This state terrorism originated in the 1965–66 massacres of hundreds of thousands of leftists, an event that Heryanto argues was of foundational significance for Suharto’s New Order regime: it “played a determining role in shaping all levels of Indonesian life” (p. 9). For the following decades, the agents of the state kept alive the spectre of the massacre, through incessant propaganda campaigns, anti-communist vigilance and persecution of alleged communists.

State terrorism, Heryanto argues, produced a constant fear that permeated people’s daily lives without always necessarily being overt. As he puts it, “When overt terror recedes from the surface, it does not evaporate into a metaphysical world and disappear but resides, self-reproduces and re-emerges on the surface of fantasy, memory, jokes and rumour” (p. 23). Indeed, one key argument he advances is that the state’s anti-communist discourse and the surveillance, propaganda, witch-hunts and violence it generated were not merely instrumental: repression was not simply a tool used by regime leaders to stay in power. Instead, the discourse outgrew the will of its creators. It reproduced itself in the population at large and among victims. Their complicity in their own repression was essential to the functioning of the system. State officials, too, were themselves subject to the “totalizing disposition” (p. 11) at the heart of the discourse: their anxious hyper-obedience to its repressive logic produced public spectacles and panics such as those that occurred when some of their number discovered images of hammers and sickles lurking in children’s video games or items of clothing (pp. 144–46).

The book is the product of almost twenty years of research and, in many cases, intimate involvement with the incidents described in the book. One of its strengths is thus that its author is able to illustrate his arguments with beautifully observed vignettes, ranging from an observation of his own son playing a “cops and robbers” style game involving communists and generals (p. 147) to an account of an intra-university factional fight in which

accusations that staff members had “unclean” (i.e. communist-tainted) pasts were used to discredit and ultimately victimise rivals (pp. 38–40).

The core of the book, and the most engrossing discussion, is found in two central chapters: chapter 3 presents a series of close observations of the arrests and interrogations of three young men from Yogyakarta in the late 1980s, who were accused of harbouring communist sympathies after one of them was caught selling books written by the famous novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer; chapter 4 discusses the ensuing Kafkaesque anti-subversion trials. Drawing on direct communications with the men and an almost forensic reconstruction of aspects of their arrests, interrogations and trials, Heryanto reveals not only the threats and violence they experienced, but also the complicity, carelessness, naivete and fear that made them implicate themselves or their friends and stumble ever deeper into the mire of accusation and persecution. He is also able to point out the incoherence and inconsistencies in the actions of the officials involved, yet explain how they were drawn on by a series of accidents and the logic of the state’s anti-communist discourse, such that “the construction of communist threats was neither a wholly poor fabrication made by zealous state agents, nor a result of a discovery by clever intelligence work” (p. 89).

Through such close observation, Heryanto is able to develop his central argument that anti-communist campaigns could take on a life of their own, fearfully reproduced and propagated by victims, ordinary citizens and officials alike. Heryanto has long been one of the most theoretically challenging, original and stimulating scholars writing on Indonesian politics, and this book is the culmination of his work so far. In it, he engages subtly with complex theories about power, discourse and identity. Overall, Heryanto’s inclination is to highlight the “complexities, ambiguities, contradictions, and subtleties of state repression itself and the responses it evoked” (p. 64) rather than to provide simple models or posit straightforward causal explanations. This approach, and the author’s engagement with difficult theoretical concepts, will not be to the taste of all readers. However, there is no denying that Heryanto is presenting an important re-evaluation of the New Order regime (his treatment of post New Order developments is a little less compelling) and a corrective to those (especially foreign) scholars who were for too long sanguine about the part played by violence in the regime. In doing so, he has produced a study of the micro-politics of state terrorism that will be essential reading for specialists in Indonesian politics, as well as of great interest to students of violence, power, discourse and identity in postcolonial states more generally.

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ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG. *State-led Modernization and the New Middle Class in Malaysia*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 247 pp. £68.00, hardcover.

This book provides a timely analysis for those engaged with Southeast Asian development, and necessarily concerned with the strong emergence of the middle class in that region. The growth of the class is a major phenomenon, having critical implications for future progress. Malaysia itself has seen big increases in the class, with the combination of “professional and technical”, “administrative and managerial”, “clerical”,