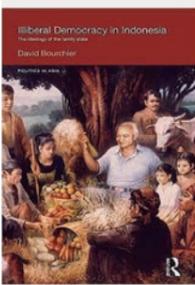


Authoritarian collectivism: The origins and course of New Order Ideology

David Bourchier's monograph makes a significant contribution to Indonesian studies by placing the ideological origins of the New Order state in a rigorously historicized transnational context. Organicist conceptions of authoritarian collectivism that inspired Suharto's Pancasila Democracy can ultimately be traced to the Anti-Enlightenment sentiments of European Romanticism. The deep humiliations suffered by German-speaking Central Europe at the hands of the Napoleonic war machine elicited a highly emotive reaction amongst social thinkers who found the primordial bonds of blood and soil to be far superior to the positivist individualism that embodied legal-rationalist discourse.

Mesrob G. Vartavarian



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LIBERALISM, WITH ITS EMPHASIS on competitiveness and the protection of individual rights, only created artificial divisions within an organic entity. The class conflicts and inequities that came with liberal ideologies were entirely unnatural. The same was true of socialist solutions to capitalist problems. Component parts could not turn against each other because they were all elements of a unified whole. Instead of perpetuating internal conflict, organicist thinking proposed to depoliticize difference by emphasizing the essential function each component part of the body politic had to play in serving the commonweal.

Bourchier stresses that the unification and growing power of Germany during the second half of the 19th century caused its ideational notions of national community to seep into neighbouring states. The Dutch gradually disregarded their liberal French intellectual heritage and incorporated organicist thinking into elite institutions of higher learning. Law faculties were particularly influenced by notions communal collectivism. These perceptions were only strengthened by colonial knowledge systems. Colonial intellectuals claimed that *adat*, or customary law, was a cultural essence that bound together the far-flung possession of the East Indies. While Dutch officials hoped to use such pronouncements to justify their domination of the entire archipelago, a nascent Indonesian intellectual elite saw it quite differently. The purported commonality of *adat* law shared by all archipelagic peoples would instead be used as the basis for the construction of a single nation. Indigenous elites sent to complete their education in the Netherlands thus immersed themselves in a colonial discourse that lauded the 'primordial' culture of the colonized.

Whatever the merits of these pseudo-historical musings, the debates in question remained highly arcane to the vast majority of colonial subjects across the archipelago. A second, and according to Bourchier far more consequential, stream of organicist thinking came by way of Japan. Japanese political thinkers had themselves been deeply influenced by ethno-nationalist ideologies emanating from German Central Europe. Once Japan embarked on imperial expansion, organicist tracts were readily exported to its colonial possessions. Indonesia proved no exception to this general trend. Wartime mobilization needs prompted Japanese occupation authorities to spread notions of militarized collectivism to broad segments of the general population, particularly on the island of Java. The transposition of Japanese notions of the family state soon triggered mass movements that took on a life of their own. By the time the Dutch attempted to reassert their control over the archipelago, they were faced with a heavily mobilized indigenous population determined to resist a return to colonial rule. As Bourchier admits, all this is very well understood and these sections of his monograph are more a summation of established views than a revision of accepted narratives (Chapter 4). Yet, he emphasizes the fact that most right-wing Indonesian nationalists who embraced organicist ideologies did so because they wanted to join a broad community of authoritarian states. Liberal democracy with its selfish individualism was in retreat across the globe and was being superseded by collectivist notions of social organization. Supomo, the main architect of Indonesia's highly authoritarian 1945 Constitution, essentially viewed the archipelago as a constituent member of the Greater

East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere; hence, it required a political philosophy that would put it in synch with its Japanese benefactors.

1945 was a key point of departure for subsequent developments. Bourchier posits that while the basic divisions between elite Indonesian collaborators and increasingly restless *pemuda* groups were important, fundamental cleavages also began to emerge within the nationalist movement itself. The romantic conservatism best exemplified by the writings of Supomo came to clash with Sukarno's brand of left-wing revolutionary collectivism (Chapter 4). Both types of solidarism found natural constituencies within the wider society. The aristocratic *paramong praja* (civil service) saw in Supomo's ideology an ideal mechanism for deactivating revolutionary radicalism while Sukarno increasingly appealed to younger generations who felt excluded from the fruits of liberation. However, both forms of political organization were left by the wayside as the 1950 Constitution instituted an era of parliamentary democracy. Sukarno was the first to attempt an implementation of his vision with the transition to Guided Democracy. Here, Bourchier misses out on an opportunity to examine linkages between Sukarno and Mao Zedong's own version of revolutionary romanticism. The sharp tilt to the left in 1963 together with the *Dwikora* campaign appear to have been inspired by Chinese precedents. Marxism could be just as emotive as nationalism.

Bourchier's account of the army's gradual empowerment and eventual seizure of control again conforms to standard narratives. Much more interesting is his account of the essential role played by military lawyers in converting political parties into docile functionalist groups. A number of these officials were heavily influenced by Catholic integralist doctrines that emanated from early-20th century papal pronouncements against growing working class radicalism. Others were inspired by corporatist strategies of social demobilization occurring in a Cold War Latin American context. In Indonesia's case, internal conflict had to be circumvented for the sake of national development from which all would benefit. Catholic and *abangan* officials within Suharto's inner circle also shared a common aversion towards political Islam which threatened their privileged positions in the upper reaches of the New Order state.

Suharto utilized a combination of coercion, corruption, and socio-economic investment to neutralize the political opposition. Bourchier stresses that once the economy had been placed on a path of high development, indubitably aided by the oil shocks of the 1970s, Suharto increasingly grew mistrustful of his military colleagues and began to narrow his regime's client base. All the while, he launched intensive ideological campaigns to reconstruct the education system. Schools

inculcated notions of Indonesia as a family state functioning according to the primordial precepts of *gotong royong* (communal work). Students and government employees were compelled to attend lengthy discussions on the centrality of Pancasila Democracy to the Indonesian state.

Much had changed by the 1990s. A wave of democratic revolutions across Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia had left the New Order state looking like a Cold War relic. The partial liberalization of public discourse that took place after 1989 only made Suharto more suspicious of disgruntled elites and increasingly reliant upon a small coterie of palace cronies and immediate family. Indonesia had indeed become a family state, but, one in which only Suharto's wife, children, and in-laws seemed to benefit. Such a narrow support base could not possibly control such a vast and increasingly complex society. When the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 hit, Suharto had few friends left and was thus compelled to step aside.

The most worrying finding in Bourchier's analysis comes in an extensive epilogue which contends that while the New Order may have died politically its organicist ideological tenets have seen a revival in recent years. The callous indifference to socio-economic inequalities that typified Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency generated tremendous resentment among the tens of millions of ordinary Indonesians denied the benefits of growth. This situation was made to order for the oligarchic populism that nearly brought Prabowo Subianto to power (Epilogue). Governments led by technocratic experts who claim to know what is best for people with whom they have little in common have generated understandable anger within electorates across the globe. Hence, the underprivileged search for candidates who will at least give voice to their grievances. Thus, Suharto's most important legacy for the future of Indonesia might be an ideological one. The precepts of authoritarian collectivism he did so much to embed into systems of social thought might long outlast a former First Family now seemingly gone to seed.

New Order modalities of domination

There is no denying that Bourchier has written an important book. By focusing on processes of ideational formation, it is an important counterweight to thoroughly statist /administrative interpretations of the New Order. However, it might have been more interesting if Bourchier had engaged in a deeper discussion of the lineages of Indonesian state power. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras not only established the foundations of modern liberal thought, they were also a time of intensified state-building. Indeed, nearly 20 years of French occupation radically altered administrative modalities within the Netherlands. This had an almost immediate effect on the Dutch imperial sphere. Colonial administrators began to apply concepts of sovereignty over populations and within social spheres that had previously been left to their own devices. The construction of this steel frame of administrative power was long and bloody, with many reverses along the way. Yet, by the 1930s the Dutch had managed to create a formidable coercive-extractive apparatus which proved highly effective at crushing resistance whilst simultaneously enriching multinational corporations. This apparatus was not merely something imposed upon the Indonesian archipelago by outsiders for the sake of more efficient exploitation. It was also set of practices harnessed by Suharto and his cohorts to the New Order project. A more extensive examination of how coercive governmentality intertwined with organicist collectivism to produce an extremely oppressive system would have been well worth the effort.

Reviewed by Mesrob G. Vartavarian,
Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles
(mvartavarian@gmail.com).
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Below: On 5 July 1959, Sukarno reinstated the 1945 constitution by presidential decree. It established a presidential system which he believed would make it easier to implement the principles of guided democracy. Courtesy wikipedia.