

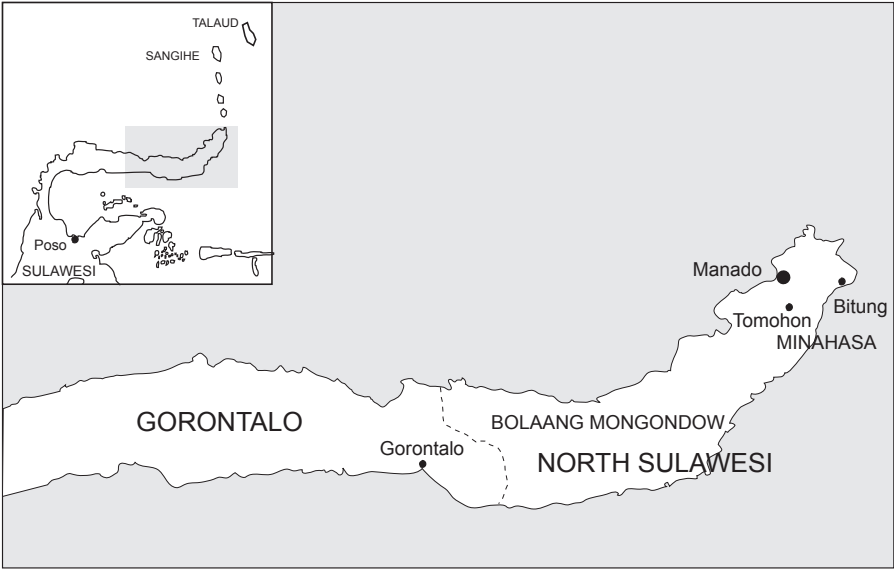
DAVID HENLEY, MARIA J.C. SCHOUTEN and ALEX J. ULAEN

Preserving the peace in post-New Order Minahasa

Indonesia has now muddled through six years since the fall of Soeharto, and its economy has grown every year for the last five.¹ East Timor has been liberated, free elections held, repressive laws abolished, and greater autonomy granted to the regions. Yet in the literature concerning the consequences of this Reformasi, pessimism prevails. Decentralization and the end of authoritarian rule from Jakarta, it is pointed out, have led to decentralized corruption, to the emergence of local kleptocracies, to environmental despoliation, and in the worst cases to ethnic strife and the breakdown of social order. Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken represent a widespread view when they write, in their introduction to this volume, of 'the agony of decentralization' and of Indonesia-watchers torn between 'professional optimism' and 'realistic pessimism'.

But if you happen to go to North Sulawesi, all the pessimism seems rather far-fetched. At the provincial airport the terminal is brand new and the dive tourists keep coming for the nearby Bunaken reefs. The city of Manado makes a more prosperous impression than in the past and boasts a complete new seafront on reclaimed land, with lavish shopping centres and entertainment venues. Loudspeakers on the steeples of numerous churches broadcast sugary evangelical music to match the amplified calls to prayer from the city's many mosques. Well-maintained roads lead up to the mountains and across the tranquil plateau of Minahasa. And this in a mixed but predominantly Christian area not so far from three other Christian enclaves where things have gone badly wrong in recent years: Poso, the North Moluccas, and Ambon. North Sulawesi, since Muslim Gorontalo divorced amicably from it in 2001 and became a separate province, is roughly 70% Christian, as is the

¹ This chapter is based on research carried out in North Sulawesi by David Henley in October and November 2003, by Maria Schouten in August, September and December 2004, and by Alex Ulaen intermittently throughout the period since the end of the New Order in 1998. Key interview informants are listed in the acknowledgements at the end of this chapter.



Map 12. North Sulawesi

provincial capital, Manado. In Minahasa, the area which forms the immediate hinterland of Manado and is home to the province's largest ethnic group, the figure is a little over 80% if the city and its port of Bitung are included, or 90% if they are not.

In North Sulawesi the impact of the Asian economic crisis which precipitated the fall of Soeharto was muted, and the subsequent recovery rapid. The provincial economy contracted by a mere 2.4% in 1998 (against 14% for Indonesia as a whole), then grew by almost 6% in 1999 – faster than in 1997 – and has continued to expand at similar rates since. This good performance results partly from the peace and order which has allowed North Sulawesi to benefit from the troubles elsewhere as Christian and Sino-Indonesian refugees (and potential refugees) from the Moluccas and Java have invested money in Manado. Government services still work tolerably well and if administrative corruption has worsened as a result of decentralization and democratization, it evidently has not done so sufficiently to deter inward investment. Neither is there much sign of political conflict or repression. Non-government organizations and political parties flourish, and state propaganda is limited to a softer version of the old Pancasila injunction to toleration of cultural and religious diversity. In an initiative supported by all of the province's significant religious organizations, 2002 was officially designated a Tahun Kasih or 'Year of Love' in North Sulawesi, and the years 2003 and 2004 obtained the same designation. 'Peace, in Manado', as one visiting journalist has noted, 'is something that many people are actively working at all the time' (Lynch 2003:29).

This chapter examines the anatomy of peace in post-Soeharto North Sulawesi, particularly Minahasa. Attention is paid to two spheres, civil society and the state, in which a combination of favourable institutions and prudent decisions has helped to prevent the kind of conflict that has occurred in some other parts of Indonesia, particularly in areas where there is a large Christian population, since the end of the New Order in 1998. Of primary importance here, we argue, is the existence in Minahasa of a rather robust civil society based largely on religious organizations. Potential conflicts, on the whole, have been avoided or suppressed thanks both to the internal discipline of these organizations and to the close mutual cooperation between them, especially at leadership level. A second crucial factor has been the role of a local state which maintains a more or less legitimate near-monopoly over the means of violence, and is able and willing to use this to prevent rather than foment conflict. Besides these political advantages and achievements, economic and demographic factors have also tended to favour the preservation of peace. The local economy has been a stabilizing influence in that it features a relatively egalitarian distribution of wealth, and proved resilient in the face of the international business crisis which struck in 1997. The clear demographic predominance of Christians within the province, and especially

within Minahasa, has helped to moderate both Christian fears and Muslim ambitions in regional politics.

The fact that peace and order have so far been maintained by this combination of a strong civil society, a relatively civilized state and a favourable set of economic and demographic conditions, we stress, does not mean that the long-standing tensions between the different religious groupings in Minahasa have been resolved. On the contrary, those tensions have been heightened since 1998 both by outbursts of religious conflict elsewhere in Indonesia, and by policy initiatives from Jakarta which are seen as hostile to Indonesian Christians. The ideological and political effort currently devoted to preserving the peace is in fact a measure of its fragility. At the end of the chapter we very briefly attempt to put the Minahasan experience in wider Indonesian context, and ask whether it offers lessons for other regions and for the future.

Civil society and religion: affinity or antithesis?

In a world increasingly divided by religious conflict, faith often seems the enemy of civility and it can be hard to remember that historically speaking religion has been an important force for integration and cooperation within societies, nations, and civilizations. Under the right circumstances the world religions, by providing institutions and norms of conduct which transcend kinship and local community, can support the development of social capital (networks and trust) and civil society (association and cooperation) among co-believers. This observation, often thought to originate with Max Weber, actually goes back much further. For early modern Europeans, in fact, the truth of it was self-evident: even John Locke, making a famous plea for religious tolerance in his *Letter concerning toleration* of 1689, warned that 'those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God', since 'promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist' (Locke 1961:93). Besides this link between religious ethics and social integration, the function of religious institutions themselves as buttresses of social order was equally obvious well before Weber and Marx made it a classic doctrine in sociology. Alexis de Tocqueville (1961:154-60), visiting the United States in the 1830s at a time when the federal government was weak and the disintegration of the country seemed imminent, concluded that mass membership of churches and church associations was the main thing still holding American society together.

In the context of modern Indonesia, some have argued that Islam and Islamic institutions play the same kind of role in promoting cooperation and generating a common identity among the members of their huge constitu-

ency (Van Bruinessen 2004; Hefner 2000). Jim Schiller, in his contribution to this volume, portrays Islamic teachers, Islamic *pesantren* schools and the Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama as guardians of stability and civility at the local level in Jepara (Central Java). In Minahasa, where Christianity rather than Islam is the majority faith, the Christian churches certainly play that role. The churches of Minahasa are among the most impressive examples of non-governmental institutions in Indonesia. The largest of them, the Protestant Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM), has some 650,000 members, more than three quarters of the population of Minahasa if this is taken to exclude the multi-ethnic towns of Manado and Bitung. The GMIM runs more than 800 schools and a major hospital, and supports diverse charitable and conservation activities. It offers opportunities for social mobility to women – more than half of its ministers are female – and, through its educational scholarships, to the underprivileged. It also owns businesses and plantations, and is very influential in provincial politics: no governor of North Sulawesi, it is sometimes claimed, could attain that position without first cultivating good relations with the head of the GMIM synod.

The organizational discipline of the GMIM is generally held to surpass that of the state itself. Instructions issued by its synod are followed faithfully and quickly by its clergy. Its lay membership is tightly organized into units of 15 to 25 households called *kolom*, meetings of which, held at least once a week, serve both religious and social purposes and are important occasions for the exchange of information. The leaders of the *kolom*, and of each local Protestant congregation as a whole, are lay people elected every five years in a lengthy process which requires the active participation of the local church members. During the New Order, these elections of lay church officials probably came closer to genuinely democratic procedures than did anything in the sphere of formal politics. Another way in which allegiance to church and congregation is expressed is through the sharing of material resources. The GMIM raises at least 40 billion rupiah every year in voluntary funding from local sources. Fund-raising is in fact a major reason for the existence of many church-affiliated associations, although this is never stated openly. The offertories during church services and other gatherings owe part of their success to the opportunities they provide for display. Minahasans consider gift-giving a major virtue, especially when the gift is for the church with its aura of sacredness. A well-publicized religious donation is therefore an effective tool for the enhancement of status, and in contrast with the usual practice in European churches, offertory giving in Minahasa is typically a public procedure. Much of the money collected goes to fund the construction of church buildings: the countless churches of Minahasa, often of a most peculiar architecture, are symbols of prosperity as well as piety, and are there to boost the prestige of their congregations and communities. Another part of the funds, however, is

earmarked for social institutions such as schools and health services, which are accessible to members of all faiths.

Similar forms of internal organization extending down to and below the village level, and similar combinations of religious, social, economic and political activities, are to be found among Minahasa's other Christian denominations – most importantly the Roman Catholic church, but also minority Protestant groups such as Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostals. The GMIM, however, is special not only because of its size, but also for historical reasons. It is regarded as the main heir to the Protestant missions of the nineteenth century which originally converted Minahasa to Christianity. Although the GMIM as such was not founded until 1934, this still makes it one of the oldest institutions in Minahasa. It is also perhaps the most truly Minahasan. Whereas the GMIM has its headquarters in Tomohon, in the heartland of Minahasa, almost all of the other churches are branches of larger organizations based elsewhere in the world. Particularly since Minahasa ceased to exist as an administrative unit in 2003 after falling victim to the nationwide *pemekaran* trend discussed in the introduction to this volume, the GMIM can also be said to form the central institutional focus of Minahasan ethnic identity. Over the last two years the old administrative district (*afdeling*, *kabupaten*) of Minahasa, dating from colonial times, has been progressively dismembered into three new districts and an autonomous township (*kota*).

Tension between religion and civil society arises when what civility calls for is not solidarity among co-believers, or what Robert Putnam (2000) calls the 'bonding' form of social capital, but rather the 'bridging' form which makes possible tolerance and cooperation between followers of different faiths. A system of cooperation which depends on encapsulating individuals within a more or less uniform institutional, ethical and cultural environment may prove worse than useless when it runs up against another such system with equally universal ambitions. The violent 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996) which, according to some observers, has developed across the world since 2001 exacerbates tensions between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, encouraging them to see themselves as members of global diasporas in conflict rather than as Indonesian citizens of different religious persuasion. In Minahasa things are not helped by a surprisingly direct identification with Israel: advertisements above Manado streets offer tours of the Holy Land on the same format as those advertising Haj packages to Saudia Arabia for Muslim pilgrims. In response to the threat (real and perceived) from *laskar jihad* organizations based in Java, Minahasan Christians have provided equal proof that social capital has its dark side by using it to create their own paramilitary groups. The most important of these, the Brigade Manguni or 'Owl Brigade' (the owl was an oracular bird in local pagan belief and has also become the symbol of Christian Minahasa), is led by a former

Jakarta gangster and reportedly sponsored by a retired Kopassus general.

Such militias enjoy considerable cultural appeal in Minahasa, where there is a general admiration for forceful people who dare to speak up for themselves. Brigade Manguni, nevertheless, has shown restraint by presenting itself as a critical complement to, rather than an opponent of, the government apparatus. The churches themselves have kept their distance from this and other paramilitary groups, and an attempt in 2002 to set up a militia directly affiliated to the GMIM was quickly disowned by the synod of that church. Moreover, since 1998 the leaders of all the major religious organizations in Minahasa – including, crucially, the Islamic groups, most importantly the local arm of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Council of Indonesian Islamic Scholars) – have cooperated intensively with each other to help prevent any outburst of the kind of religious violence afflicting other parts of Indonesia. When 15 truckloads of Brigade Manguni youths set off for Manado from Tomohon at Idul Fitri in December 2002 to ‘help the government’ impose order on ‘chaotic’ (*semrawut*) Muslim street traders, they were prevented from entering the city by local police warned of their approach by the head of the MUI, who had in turn been tipped off by a prominent member of the ‘Catholic’ militia Legium Christum.

The internal discipline of the individual religious groups and organizations, meanwhile, is used to good effect in preventing inflammatory reactions to events inside or outside Minahasa. The GMIM, for example, has been able to ensure that its preachers, sometimes despite themselves, keep stressing Christ’s injunction to turn the other cheek in the face of any provocation. Sermons and meditations at religious assemblies of all denominations frequently include positive references to people of other creeds, who are described as *saudara* (brothers and sisters) worthy of *kasih* (love). An important part of the cooperation to prevent violence has taken place in the framework of the provincial government’s Badan Kerjasama Antar Umat Beragama (BKSAUA, Organization for Inter-Faith Cooperation), an institution which was established early in the New Order period but became much more active and important after the fall of Soeharto. The BKSAUA has numerous local branches, even in villages where the only religious divides are between different Christian churches. The leader of a BKSAUA branch committee is typically an elderly, generally respected person. This is not a demanding job, but the prestige attached to the function is evident from the treatment the incumbents receive on formal occasions in the village.

To what extent the contribution of religious leaders and organizations to the preservation of the peace in Minahasa actually rests on religious principles, and to what extent on prudent self-interest, is a moot question to which we will return below. But whatever the motivations behind it, up to now it appears to have worked. A civil society of sorts exists in Minahasa, and there

is a good chance that it will continue to exist in the future. But this is not the kind of civil society in which individual citizens interact freely within the bounds of the law, political and associational life is based on secular, rational principles, and religion is a private affair. It is more like Dutch society in the time of *verzuiling* or 'pillarization', when religious orientations (Protestant, Catholic, or secular) determined which schools people went to, which associations they joined, and to a large extent also which political views they held. This is not to argue, as do Deborah James and Albert Schrauwens (2003:59), that the close association which exists between religious and political behaviour and institutions in many parts of Indonesia reflects 'the effects of a Dutch colonial culture'. Nevertheless the situation in the Netherlands half a century ago was similar to that of contemporary Minahasa in the sense that the different religious 'pillars', partly because of their very separation, were able to coexist in peace despite deep disagreements and prejudices, the political balance between them maintained by a constant process of accommodation and compromise between their respective elites (Lijphart 1968). In Holland, it was out of this framework that a more secular form of civil society ultimately evolved. But to expect a rapid secularization of political life in any part of Indonesia today would be unrealistic at best. And in Minahasa, where religious institutions are deeply intertwined with the maintenance of social stability, the provision of public goods, and indeed the redistribution of wealth, such a development would also be undesirable from any realistic point of view.

Conflict management and the social contract: bringing the state back in

Although religious leaders in Minahasa are directly involved in maintaining the peace, when it comes to dealing with potential flashpoints such as the Idul Fitri incident mentioned above they are careful to rely on the police rather than their own followers to nip the trouble in the bud. That coercion and indeed violence will sometimes be necessary for this purpose is frankly acknowledged, even emphasized, by Christian and Islamic leaders alike. Their position, according to a statement issued by BKSAUA members in July 2001, is that any disturbance of public order should be *ditindak tegas* (firmly dealt with), by which they mean little less than that the police should shoot to kill before the trouble can escalate. The special *bimbingan rohani* or 'spiritual guidance' which the GMIM provides to members of the police force is designed not to increase their awareness of human rights, but to give them the courage and resolution to use force if necessary to maintain the peace. It is likely that religious organizations also supply more concrete (financial) forms of support to police personnel. They also work in close cooperation

with other organs of the state. Besides the official meetings of the BKSAUA, from 1999 to 2002 a small *rapat kordinasi*, described by some as 'the real DPRD' (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, provincial assembly) and comprising permanent representatives of the Protestant, Catholic and Muslim communities as well as the provincial government, the police, the judiciary and the military, was held at least once every month in Manado to coordinate security policy.

Many informants not themselves directly associated with the state have assured us that in Minahasa there is still considerable public respect for the institutions of government. This respect improves the prospects for peace by making people reluctant to take the law into their own hands. The attitude that only the state has the right to punish disturbers of the peace is found even in the ranks of the Minahasan paramilitary groups. Journalist Jake Lynch, reporting on a 'show of strength' staged by Brigade Manguni in response to the Bali bombing (and the simultaneous explosion outside the Philippine consulate in Manado) in October 2002, was surprised to find that the demonstrators were not bent on retaliating against Islamic terror themselves.

Their rampage through the streets, hundreds clinging to open-topped vehicles, wearing black t-shirts and shouting at the top of their voices, looked both spectacular and slightly sinister [...]. Listen carefully to these people, though, and they project a sort of muscular communitarianism, which may not be as threatening as their appearance suggests. What would they do, if, for instance, any of their members discovered 'outsiders' in Manado? Why, hand them over to the police, of course. If they keep their word [...] then that would at least represent a step forward from the situation in other, more troubled parts. In Poso, for instance, the trigger incident for the first round of rioting came when a Muslim man, injured in a street brawl with Christian youths, ran instead into a local Mosque to rouse fellow believers to take revenge. (Lynch 2003:30.)

Whether Manado's Muslim youths would take quite the same view is less clear: the composition of the local state in Minahasa, although far from homogeneous, reflects that of the population at large, in which Christians form a clear majority. Certainly it would be naive to assume that public support for the police as guardians of public order in Minahasa results entirely from trust in the impartiality of official justice. Soon after the fall of Soeharto, however, Muslims in the port town of Bitung on the east coast of Minahasa did hand over to the police a number of Islamic agitators who they said had recently arrived from outside the province to sow discord between local Muslims and Christians. And Muslims throughout North Sulawesi know that the police force in the province has since shown itself capable of acting – with the support of church leaders – against threats to the peace from Christian as well as Muslim quarters.

Both the trust which Minahasans still place in the (local) state as guardian of the peace, and the responsible attitude of the local authorities when it comes to fulfilling that expectation, can arguably be traced back to the (by colonial standards) unusually harmonious quasi-contractual relationship which developed between state and society in Minahasa during the period of Dutch rule. By the early twentieth century the special regard in which the Dutch held Minahasans as loyal soldiers and servants of the crown, combined with the lucidity and assertiveness with which Minahasans, thanks to colonial education, were able to raise their grievances, had already created a stable political system which involved reciprocity and representation, and which was widely regarded as legitimate despite its colonial character (Henley 1996:94-107). A widespread familiarity with bureaucratic structures and procedures also developed. In the mid-twentieth century came a long interlude of violence and repression, beginning in 1942 with the Japanese invasion and continuing through the suppression of the Permesta regional rebellion (1957-1961) up to the establishment of the New Order in 1965. The ideal of a benevolent social contract which included the state, nevertheless, survived: Permesta was directed only against the policies of the central government under Soekarno, and did not question the legitimacy of the Indonesian state as such. During the New Order a relatively favourable experience of economic development without severe political repression served to revive that ideal and continues, alongside an idealized collective memory of the region's unique colonial past, to colour Minahasan attitudes to the state today.

It is striking that the trust placed in the civil and police authorities does not extend to the army, which is regarded as a liability when dealing with conflicts because of its continuing involvement in power politics at the national level. While the preference for the police over the army seems to be present in Minahasa among Christians and Muslims alike, it is significant that Christians explain their attitude partly in terms of the support which the army is seen as having provided to Muslim protagonists in the recent Ambon conflicts. While it would be an exaggeration to say that people in this part of Indonesia have any very strong belief in the 'rule of law', all groups involved in preserving the peace in Minahasa have certainly been concerned to ensure that policemen, not soldiers, represent the coercive power of the state in situations where conflict suppression is called for.

The state has many faces and its predatory aspects, so prominent in the recent history of Indonesia, have rightly been the focus of much attention among Indonesianists. But its more or less contractual role in the provision of public goods, the most fundamental of which is peace and order, should not be ignored either. In Minahasa, peace and order have been preserved

thanks partly to the local state's prudent and responsible use of the means of violence at its disposal. Among social scientists the contract approach to the state reached a low point of popularity under the influence of Marxism in the 1960s, when Robert Carneiro (1970:733) went so far as to declare that 'no such contract was ever subscribed to by human groups, and the Social Contract theory is today nothing more than a historical curiosity'. Today, however, some are arguing once again that the origins of state power must be sought in the demand for conflict resolution (Stone Sweet 2002; Henley 2004). The evidence of contemporary Minahasa confirms that civil society cannot replace the state, only complement it, and that the kind of state it needs to complement is one which is bound to society by a social contract, yet retains sufficient autonomy to intervene in society with force and impartiality when that is what fulfilment of its contract demands.

In Indonesia, the culture of civility remains vulnerable and incomplete if it is not accompanied by a transformation of state. This is to say, [...] civil society is not opposed to the state but deeply dependent on its civilization. The state must open itself to public participation. At the same time, independent courts and watchdog agencies must be ready to intervene when, as inevitably happens, some citizen or official tries to replace democratic proceduralism with nether-world violence. As vigilantes and hate groups regularly remind us, not all organizations in society are civil, and the state must act as a guardian of public civility as well as a vehicle of the popular will. (Hefner 2000:215.)

Discussion of decentralization and democratization in Indonesia, it seems to us, should focus in the first place on their implications, both positive and negative, for the endeavour to create a healthy relationship between state and society. On the positive side, these processes should in principle make it easier to check the predatory impulses to which states, given their control of means of coercion, are inevitably prone. On the negative side, closer engagement with society may weaken the state to the point where it no longer has the power to serve the public interest, or subvert its impartiality to the point where it no longer has the inclination to do so. This is not to suggest that the authoritarian states of the colonial or New Order periods acted with impartiality where the interests of their ruling elites were involved. But the centralization of power under those regimes at least meant that many regional issues – the protection of national parks, for instance – involved elite interests less directly than they do today, now that power is more widely dispersed. A related point is that the centralized corruption of the New Order state was at least more transparent and predictable, and hence less disadvantageous for business and investment, than today's decentralized corruption.

Economy and demography: the politics of prosperity and proportionality

Besides possessing a strong civil society and a relatively civilized local state, North Sulawesi benefits from an economic structure which discourages conflict. One of the more prosperous provinces of Indonesia, it also displays a comparatively even distribution of wealth. In 2001, with 11% of its population officially living under the poverty line, North Sulawesi had the fourth lowest poverty rate in the country after Jakarta, Bali and Riau. In the urban areas where its Muslim immigrants are concentrated, the figure was under 9% (*Statistik Indonesia* 2002:593-5). Many households still do endure hardship, and of the Muslims in Manado and the rest of Minahasa, many are labourers and petty traders belonging to the poorer sections of the population. Even so, by Indonesian standards their deprivation, whether measured in absolute terms or relative to other groups, is in most cases mild.

Income inequality in North Sulawesi is clearly low [...]. The greater part of the population falls within the medium income bracket [...]. One reason for this persistent pattern of even income distribution is that a characteristic feature of North Sulawesi is the small scale of its economic activities in almost every sector. Many actors contribute to economic output, and North Sulawesi effectively has what is referred to as a people's economy (*ekonomi rakyat*) without this having to be promoted by all kinds of plans and slogans. (Vekie A. Rumat 1999:10.)

This unplanned 'people's economy' reduces the scope for jealousy and resentment among the province's religious groups, and provides strong structural disincentives to civil conflict. Even during crises there are relatively few people in North Sulawesi who do not have something to lose, and when times are bad the enhanced fear of losing it tends to make people more rather than less inclined to defend the status quo. It is telling that in this province the financial crisis which began in 1997, and the political uncertainty created by the fall of Soeharto in 1998, fostered conservatism rather than radicalism in political life. After the 1999 general elections the former New Order state party Golkar, with 20 out of 45 seats, was still easily the largest faction in the provincial assembly. In the 2004 parliamentary election Golkar was again the most voted for party in North Sulawesi, and in the first round of the presidential election of the same year Golkar candidate Wiranto obtained more votes in the province than did any of his rivals.

The economic consequences of the Asian financial crisis which precipitated the fall of Soeharto, it is worth repeating, were in any case less serious in North Sulawesi than in some other parts of Indonesia. One reason for this was political stability itself, which made the province an attractive haven for capital belonging to Christians and Sino-Indonesians displaced or threatened by conflicts elsewhere. Other factors, however, had to do with

the diverse and partly export-oriented character of the provincial economy. Because the 1997 crisis was East Asian rather than global in scope, it had the effect of making many exports more, rather than less, profitable due to the falling value of the Indonesian rupiah relative to the US dollar. Nutmeg and cocoa growers in North Sulawesi, for instance, experienced boom times, and exports of coffee, fish, wood, furniture, and gold from the province also increased. For a time at the height of the crisis the weak rupiah brought traders from the Philippines, where the peso had lost less of its value, flocking to Manado and Bitung to buy a wide range of suddenly cheap Indonesian products. At the same time employment in the large and growing service and construction sectors enabled many others to share in the good fortune of the exporters, while savings and credit were available on a considerable scale to tide the least fortunate over. Among those worst affected by the crisis, it should be noted, were North Sulawesi's (mostly Christian) civil servants, whose privileged economic position was eroded as their salaries were overtaken by inflation.

If a relatively even distribution of wealth has helped to keep religious tensions under control, when it comes to the crude politics of demography it is precisely the imbalance between the province's Christian and Muslim populations which has been an advantage in terms of preserving the peace. Although a small and sometimes vulnerable minority in the Indonesian nation as a whole, Christians still form a large and fairly confident majority within the confines of North Sulawesi. Their lack of fear of the local Islamic minority inclines them to tolerate that minority and to accept its participation in the public and political life of the province – on a level, that is, proportional to its numbers. If elsewhere the call for 'proportionality' in government is usually a call for the political marginalization of Christians, in Minahasa it is a reassuring recourse for the Christians themselves. At the same time, the awareness of being a minority themselves at the national level is an additional reason for Minahasan Christians to avoid even the semblance of threatening Muslims. Their concern is not only that this would lead to hostile external intervention in Minahasa, but also that it might provoke acts of vengeance against fellow Christians elsewhere in Indonesia. Within Minahasa, the potential vulnerability of the Muslim group inclines its members in a parallel way to prudence and moderation. This situation is intrinsically more stable than one like that of Ambon in which the two groups are more equally matched, so that every economic rivalry from street vendors to construction contractors, and every public appointment from governor downwards, threatens to become an explosive winner-takes-all contest between Christian and Islamic blocs.

Demographic situations, of course, are liable to change. Due to a combination of faster natural increase and slow but steady immigration of Muslims

from elsewhere, the Islamic part of North Sulawesi's population has long been growing more quickly than the Christian part. One reason why Minahasans were able to accept the separation of Gorontalo from North Sulawesi in 2001 with equanimity was that within what was left of the province, it restored a Christian majority which by that point had become vanishingly thin.

Percentage of population adhering to Islam in North Sulawesi, Minahasa and Manado, 1970-2002

	1970	1990	2000	2002
North Sulawesi	43.3	46.2	49.8	28.6
Minahasa including Manado	9.3	13.7	18.6	18.6
Minahasa excluding Manado	5.0	5.1	9.6	10.0
Manado city	25.0	28.1	31.4	31.2

Sources: Jones 1977; *Sulawesi Utara* 1991, 2001, 2003.

Preparations for the split began under the presidency of Habibie, whose father was from Gorontalo. Except for some mixed feelings among higher echelon civil servants about the reduced influence of 'Manado', most Minahasans have been almost as content to let Gorontalo go its own way as most Gorontaloese have been to see Gorontalo emerge from Minahasa's shadow. North Sulawesi in its new truncated form is solidly dominated by Minahasan and Sangirese Christians, and only its southern division of Bolaang Mongondow is predominantly Muslim. The fact that Gorontalo is a poor area with few natural resources was another reason for Minahasans not to regret its loss, but apparently did not temper Gorontaloese enthusiasm for separation. It should be added that in Gorontalo, where 98% of the population is Muslim, the religious factor as such is less often mentioned as a motive for the separation than it is in Minahasa – although some Islamic groups at national level rejoiced that 'the number of provinces with a Muslim basis has grown again' (Yogi W. Utomo 2000:76). Many Christian Minahasans still fear that in the long run, continued demographic change will still reduce them to a minority in their own land. A demagogue of any ability who advocated some form of ethnic cleansing as the only way to avert this fate would no doubt strike sensitive chords in public opinion. So far, however, no Minahasan leader of any description has chosen to blaze this one-way trail to conflict.

Underlying tensions

In some academic commentary on post-New Order conflicts in Indonesia, the religious tensions and ethnic identities involved in these conflicts are interpreted as rather recent by-products of economic competition, or as the results of deliberate attempts by either outsiders or local elites to create political cleavages (George Junus Aditjondro 2001; Van Klinken 2005). In the Minahasan context, however, such ideas are not very useful. Religious divisions in North Sulawesi are too intrinsic to the society to require any conscious construction in political contexts. At the first Indonesian general election almost 50 years ago in 1955, religion in North Sulawesi (at that time also including what is now Central Sulawesi) was already thoroughly politicized. Explicitly Islamic, Protestant and Catholic parties all appealed with success to their respective constituencies and the most successful secular party, the nationalist Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian Nationalist Party) secured only 13% of the provincial vote (*Pemilu Indonesia* 2000:40).

At least in terms of church attendance and participation in Christian organizations, Minahasa is a Christian country to a degree which is sometimes difficult for Europeans to understand. Accordingly the area's Muslims, who with some exceptions are not regarded as ethnic Minahasans, are constantly aware of their minority status. Within the category of Christians there also exists an important Catholic minority, which forms a distinct socio-religious 'pillar' with its own institutions closely paralleling those of the GMIM. Catholicism, however, has very little to do with ethnicity, and under present conditions there is no potential for serious conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Minahasa. The potential for Christian-Muslim violence, by contrast, is real, and has been increased by alarm among Minahasan Christians at what they see as threats to their safety and way of life.

Most of these threats have originated from outside the region. Perhaps the most concrete of them was successfully averted in 1999 when six busloads (the first 300 of what was said to be an 800-man contingent) of *laskar jihad* militants, sent from Java via South Sulawesi to defend Muslim interests in Minahasa, were intercepted on their way to Manado and turned back by the provincial authorities. But the fact that elsewhere in Indonesia the militants were not sent home, and violence did erupt, continued to exert an unsettling influence. This was partly because of fears that the conflicts in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi might be contagious, or reflect a nationwide anti-Christian conspiracy. It was also because many of the 80,000 refugees whom these conflicts brought to Minahasa came with such vengeful feelings toward Islam, and so little left to lose, that they were perceived as a real danger to the delicate peace between Muslims and Christians which people in North Sulawesi were working hard to maintain.

When renewed violence broke out in Ambon during April 2004, the police and military in North Sulawesi were kept on standby. The governor, via the medium of other prominent figures, urged the citizens of his province not to succumb to provocation (*jangan terprovokasi*). The disturbances in Ambon, he declared, were related not to religious differences but to the activities of a political group, the RMS (Republik Maluku Selatan, Republic of the South Moluccas). During this episode a Protestant leader in Manado wrote an open letter expressing his feelings, undoubtedly shared by the majority of Minahasans, on the limits to Christian solidarity where non-Minahasan refugees are concerned. Should things come to a Christian exodus from Ambon, he warned, the refugees must not be welcomed too hastily in Minahasa. Those who had arrived a few years earlier from Maluku Utara, he reminded his readers, had become a burden for the regional government and an unwelcome source of economic competition for the poorer part of the Minahasan population. A further large influx of refugees would inevitably lead to public disturbances and the return of Brigade Manguni thugs (*preman*) to the streets. Later in 2004 acts of violence against Christians in Palu (Central Sulawesi) once again raised the tension in Minahasa, provoking angry protests and Brigade Manguni motorcades.

North Sulawesi is a small part of a very big country, and the comfortable predominance which Minahasan Christians appear to enjoy within their own province contrasts with their status as a small and potentially vulnerable minority in the Indonesian nation as a whole. Just as the achievement of Minahasan civil society in preventing clashes between religious groups might be undone by failures of civility elsewhere in Indonesia, so the working relationship between local state and society in Minahasa periodically threatens to be eclipsed by policy initiatives from the centre of the state, Jakarta, which are perceived as hostile to Christians. The parliamentary debate in 2000 over the 'Jakarta Charter', a proposal to make Islamic law the law of the state for Indonesian Muslims, prompted talk of outright secession in Minahasa at the time, and its repercussions are still felt today even though the outcome of the debate was that parliament rejected the idea. Draft bills potentially affecting religious education in schools, and the position of Christian personnel in the health service, have generated similar anxieties and helped to ensure that theories of Muslim conspiracies against Christians remain favourite topics of conversation in small gatherings.

If Christian Minahasans are not particularly afraid of North Sulawesi's Muslim minority, then, they certainly fear the potential implications of Indonesia's Muslim majority both for national politics and for local Christian-Muslim relations, and few have much real respect for Islam in general. Antipathy toward Islam, in fact, is probably stronger in Minahasa today than it has ever been. In Sonder, a rural area in central Minahasa where the

Muslim population is particularly small, people are proud to tell visitors that there is not a single mosque in the subdistrict. Some local academics argue that genuine tolerance toward Islam cannot be expected in the foreseeable future, and that sights should be lowered to a target of what they call *akseptansi* – a contraction of *toleransi* (tolerance) and *akseptasi* (acceptance) which signifies passive resignation in the face of an unavoidable reality. Nevertheless it is against this background of private antipathy that the intensive public campaign for religious tolerance in North Sulawesi must be understood and appreciated. The apparently idealistic character of the provincial elites' joint peace propaganda effort – as part of which, to give just one illustration, Manado's most respected Islamic leader is regularly to be heard on the local Catholic radio station discussing the theme of 'living together in a plural society' – reflects not naivety, but urgent necessity.

Under the New Order the government of North Sulawesi, a province of unusual ethnic diversity even by Indonesian standards, had already begun to develop its own local variant of the national Pancasila ideology of 'unity in diversity'. This featured the slogans *torang samua basudara*, meaning 'we are all family' in the Manado dialect of Malay, and Bohusami, an acronym indicating the unity of the province's (then) four divisions and major ethnic groups, Bolaang Mongondow, Gorontalo (Hulondalo), Sangir-Talaud, and Minahasa. But it is only since the fall of Soeharto and the grim lessons of Ambon, Halmahera and Poso that the ideological campaign for religious harmony in North Sulawesi has really taken off. The new provincial slogan is *baku-baku baik, baku-baku sayang*, 'be good to each another and love one another', and the repeated references to love (*kasih, sayang*) in the campaign reflect a partly Christian inspiration. There are also references, however, to the culture and identity of pre-Christian Minahasa, which are portrayed as inherently tolerant and pluralistic in the same way as Indonesian national identity is tolerant and pluralistic according to Pancasila. In February 2003, an elaborate monument to religious tolerance was inaugurated by governor A.J. Sondakh – himself, needless to say, a Golkar politician – near Kawangkoan in central Minahasa. Called Bukit Kasih or 'Hill of Love', this is a kind of religious theme park, smaller in scale but even more ambitious in its symbolism than Jakarta's Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature), containing juxtaposed replicas of a mosque, Protestant and Catholic churches, and Hindu and Buddhist temples. It also includes statues of Minahasan ancestor figures, and was deliberately built near the Watu Pinawetengan or 'Stone of Division' which marks the origin and ritual centre of Minahasa according to the modern interpretation of Minahasan paganism. In his inaugural speech, Sondakh described Bukit Kasih as dedicated to 'the spirit of the Minahasan people' (Ponsen 2003:63).

Just as Pancasila itself has always embodied a large measure of wishful

thinking, so this Minahasan neo-Pancasilaism, with its emphasis on harmony and inclusion, is partly an oblique confirmation that the potential for discord is strong. In 2002, JAJAK (Jaringan Kerja Kasih, the 'Labour of Love Network'), an elite NGO backed by the provincial government and involving diverse North Sulawesi religious and intellectual figures, published a booklet entitled *Kasih mengubah dunia* ('Love changes the world') in connection with the province's official Year of Love. In his introduction to this anthology Suhendro Boroma, editor of the influential *Manado Post* newspaper and himself a Muslim from Bolaang Mongondow, frankly acknowledges the extent to which it is the threat of violence, graphically illustrated by events in nearby regions, which keeps the eyes of people in North Sulawesi focused on the prize of peace.

The growing challenge we face in 2002 has to do with a weakening in the values of brotherhood and familial solidarity (*persaudaraan dan kekeluargaan*) which have served the Indonesian nation since its struggle for independence. Some areas in our immediate vicinity, including Ambon, Maluku and most recently Poso, have seen discord, conflict, enmity, and killing among fellow Indonesians. This is a concern and a challenge for the government and people of North Sulawesi, who must protect and maintain their own secure, peaceful and harmonious way of life [...]. We have all known the beauty and happiness of an existence built on love, togetherness and solidarity. That existence has enabled us not only to live our own lives and practice our own faiths in peace, but also to pursue all kinds of social and economic activities without hindrance. Government and society have been able to concentrate uninterruptedly on the task of developing North Sulawesi and improving its standards of living. Our foremost aim now must be to [...] maintain and enhance the environment of peace and prosperity [...] in the province. (Suhendro Boroma 2002:7.)

Despite its apparently hyperbolic idealism, then, the ideological campaign to preserve the peace in Minahasa is ultimately founded on a very pragmatic understanding that the price of failure to preserve that peace would be intolerably high for all parties.

Concluding remarks

Before Soeharto it was conventional to assume that the acknowledgement and politicization of ethnic and religious identities in Indonesia was a necessary and inevitable stage in the 'integrative revolution' (Geertz 1963) which would eventually bring about 'national integration' (Liddle 1970) on a democratic basis. The New Order's success in controlling regional and sectarian politics led many commentators to change their minds on this point. Now, however, there is an increasing consensus that New Order policies, par-

ticularly with regard to transmigration and the control of natural resources, generated more ethnic and religious tensions than they defused, and in the long run exacerbated those tensions by denying them any legitimate political expression. Whatever their precise triggers, the episodes of violence in Kalimantan, Sulawesi and the Moluccas since 1998 show that ethnic and religious differences remain potential lines of battle in future civil conflicts. By whatever means, the tensions surrounding those differences will clearly have to be dealt with after all. Against this background, the good news from post-Soeharto Minahasa is that even old, deep religious and ethnic divides need not lead to violent conflict provided the society so divided is also a civil society, provided economic and demographic conditions are favourable, and provided the state is able to play its proper role as ultimate guardian of the peace. Religious institutions, moreover, can themselves be supportive, up to a point, of civil society and a civilized state.

Most parts of Indonesia, sceptics will immediately point out, are not much like this. Minahasa's long tradition of contractual reciprocity between (local) state and society, in particular, is all too anomalous in the Indonesian context. It is hard to see how such a relationship, based as it is on trust, precedent, and a specific cultural environment, could be created at short notice anywhere else. Consultation between the leaders of different religious groups might be intensified in other provinces, but unless the leaders in question were inspired by the same level of commitment to peace which has animated their counterparts in Manado, and enjoyed similar degrees of authority over their respective followers, such consultation might still not accomplish much. And that economic equality moderates social conflict is little more than an abstract truism for regions which lack Minahasa's background of smallholder export agriculture developed in the absence of big business. The problem with trying to learn lessons from history is that history, being partly an accumulation of accidents, is seldom very replicable.

A different kind of cause for optimism, on the other hand, may be discerned in the fact that violent social conflict in post-Soeharto Indonesia, despite all journalistic and also academic alarmism, has actually been restricted to rather few and localized episodes, many of them deliberately fanned for political reasons by military interference (George Junus Aditjondro 2001; Liem Soei Liong 2002). This is not to deny that in some of the affected areas violence, as many chapters in the present volume attest, has been both acute and recurrent. The sustained rise of mob justice since 1998 is also a worrying trend (Colombijn 2005:250-1; Van Dijk 2002). Yet given the New Order's legacy of accumulated political tensions and resentments, the additional pressures brought to bear by economic problems and institutional changes, and the weakened and splintered condition of the state in many regions, the level of public order in Indonesia today can actually be described as

surprisingly high. While the threat of lynching parties and the presence of mafia-style protection rackets undoubtedly have something to do with this, Indonesia is far from the condition of anomie found in many African countries where the state is weak and at the mercy of interest groups (Van der Veen 2004). If peaceful public behaviour even in the absence of effective state conflict management or law enforcement is anything to go by, then society in many other parts of Indonesia besides Minahasa is more civil than it is usually given credit for. The origins of this pervasive Indonesian civility deserve further investigation.

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