

# *Strong and weak media? On the Representation of 'Terorisme' in Contemporary Indonesia*

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It is as if bombings have become a trend in Indonesian society.

- *Tempo Interaktif*, 25 December 2000.<sup>1</sup>

To put it crudely: because the languages of Third World societies – including, of course, the societies that social anthropologists have traditionally studied – are ‘weaker’ in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English), they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around.

Talal Asad (1986: 157–8)

According to police records, there have been more than seventy bombings in Indonesia since 1998.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, these have included high-profile attacks both in the Balinese tourist center of Kuta and at the American-owned JW Marriott hotel in the capital city of Jakarta. In addition to the many smaller-scale bombings that have occurred sporadically in previous years across the archipelago, there have also been several comparatively spectacular bombings, including one at the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta and another in the parking garage of the Jakarta Stock Exchange, not to mention the spate of some twenty

<sup>1</sup> The original passage from *Tempo* reads, ‘Peristiwa peledakan bom seolah menjadi trend di masyarakat Indonesia’ (*Tempo* 2000a).

<sup>2</sup> The police records – which list 66 bombings – were cited in an article published by the *Jakarta Post* on 06 Nov 2002 (*Jakarta Post* 2002). There have been at least five serious bombings since then. However, figures given in a report (2001) from the Indonesian human rights advocacy group Kontras (The Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence) put the number much higher. A more recent article posted on Laksamana.net lists nine additional bombings since 12 Oct. 2002, with the following qualification: ‘The list is by no means complete, as dozens of explosions occurred over the past three years in the Maluku islands and Central Sulawesi amid deadly religious clashes’ (2003).

almost simultaneous church bombings on Christmas Eve of 2000. In this paper, I would like to examine the mainstream Indonesian print and online media coverage of three significant bombings, and consider critically some of the transformations that emerged in how this rather grim 'trend in Indonesian society' has been represented.<sup>3</sup>

### *Primary Definition*

I have limited my analysis here to the initial coverage of each of three incidents: (i) the bombing of the JW Marriott hotel on 5 August 2003, (ii) the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002 and, finally, (iii) the Christmas Eve bombings in 2000. In presenting the material, I have decided to work backward, from the most recent to the earliest of these bombings, in order to highlight the specificity of how each incident was covered. This approach emerges, in part, out of a desire to throw into relief the disjunctions between their respective configurations of precedent, motive and agency. I should acknowledge at the outset that, by limiting my analysis to the earliest coverage of these events, the reports are likely to be more superficial, and perhaps less well informed, than were I to include reports published over a longer period.<sup>4</sup> But, for reasons that will become apparent, I believe there is something important to be learned from an analysis of what happened in the immediate aftermath of such an event.

As this paper comprises but one step in a broader study of media, religion and violence in post New Order Indonesia,<sup>5</sup> there are two additional reasons for limiting my analysis to some of the earliest reporting. First, there is the complexity of the coverage itself. Representations of the Bali bombing alone have been anything but uniform over the last fifteen months. Since the twelfth of October 2002, I have compiled an archive of media materials that includes over 300 digital television recordings and some 45,000 articles, in both Indonesian and English, from sources in Australia, Indonesia,

<sup>3</sup> I plan to write a separate study of how such incidents are covered on television in Indonesia, and how 'on the scene' footage from Indonesia is rearticulated through the transnational media. To cite just one example, much of CNN's initial footage aired with their reports on the Bali bombing came from the Jakarta-based MetroTV.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks go to John MacDougall for making this point.

<sup>5</sup> The 'New Order' was the authoritarian régime lead by former Indonesian President Suharto, who resigned after 32 years on 21 May 1998.

Singapore, the UK and United States.<sup>6</sup> The collection is focused on the bombing, but also includes a wide range of materials related more generally to representations of religion, violence and 'the war on terror'. It is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive archive of its kind. As the subtitle for this paper suggests, I am especially interested in the idea of terrorism (Indonesian, *terorisme*), and how it has been mediated over the last several years.

The second reason for focusing on the initial coverage is related to what Jaap van Ginneken discussed in his excellent book on *Understanding global news* in terms of the 'primary definition' of a news story:

three major world news agencies, the major American, British and French news-gathering organizations [Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France-Presse], have a quasi monopoly in providing prime definitions of breaking news in the world periphery. Even if they are not actually the first on the spot, they are usually the first to inform the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup> (1998: 114; bracketed addition mine)

And, once the story is framed, 'there is a certain resistance to change. The Gestalt or configuration will tend to perpetuate itself' (1998: 113).<sup>8</sup> Although I am not concerned primarily with newswire agencies as such, a key component of my current research is an examination of the processes through which complex events such as these three bombings have been *made to make sense*.<sup>9</sup>

In examining representations of terrorism in Indonesia, it is important to remember that coverage of the Bali and Marriott bombings occurred against the backdrop of an ongoing national debate

<sup>6</sup> In addition to digital television recordings, I have systematically monitored on a daily basis the websites for the following publications since the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 2002: *Republika*, *Tempo* (daily and weekly editions), *Kompas* (online and print editions), *Media Indonesia* (online and print editions), *Bali Post*, *Denpasar Post*, *Jakarta Post*, *Straits Times*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Online*, *CNN.com*, *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*. For each of these publications, a snapshot of the front page as well as the full text and images for all relevant articles have been stored digitally for subsequent analysis. I also retrospectively examined the relevant articles published in the *Suara Pembaruan*, *Suara Merdeka*, the *Jawa Pos* and others.

<sup>7</sup> For events in Indonesia, the national newswire agency, Antara, as well as the Chinese agency, Xinhua, would be of at least equal relevance in this connection.

<sup>8</sup> An interesting comparison might be made with the earliest reporting on the outbreak of violence in Ambon – particularly with regard to the changing position of 'religion' in accounting for the conflict. I have written a brief overview of this early coverage which is available online at <http://www.berubah.org/conflictatambon.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> I take it as axiomatic that any given representation is underdetermined (Quine 1994) by the events it purports to explain.

surrounding the adoption of new counter-terrorism legislation. With former President Suharto's departure still not such a distant memory, the reform movement (*reformasi*) was understandably suspicious of anything that appeared to increase the state's capacity for surveillance, or that resembled more generally the ways of the repressive New Order régime.

Prior to the blasts in Bali, a newly drafted Anti-terrorism Bill faced sustained opposition in the Indonesian People's Representative Assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, or DPR) for – among other things – its perceived potential for draconian regress, as well as for its popular association with pressure from the United States on Indonesia to support 'the war on terror'. With political maneuvering already underway in anticipation of the 2004 Presidential elections, the debate on the Bill was showing little progress toward resolution (Lindsey 2002). Then everything changed. On the 18th of October, 2002 – six days after the bombing – President Megawati issued Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (*Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang*, or *Perpu*) Numbers 1/2002 and 2/2002. The first of these *Perpu* (1/2002) was in effect a revised version of the extant Anti-terrorism Bill, while the second *Perpu* (2/2002) provided for its retroactive application in cases connected with the Bali bombing. As various commentators have noted, 'the speed with which the anti-terrorism legislation was passed, and the mere fact that consensus was reached on quite controversial legislation, illustrates the extent of the bombing's impact on Indonesia's legislators' (Clarke 2003; with reference to Sebastian 2002: 3).<sup>10</sup>

While questions were raised from several quarters with respect to the specific powers granted to Indonesian police and security forces, there was also widespread concern regarding the potential malleability of 'terrorism' itself as a legal category under the new legislation. As Lindsey observed,

Perpu 1/2002 defines 'terrorism' as 'any violent act that could create terror or insecurity among the public, violate the public's freedom, cause the death of other people or cause the destruction of vital or strategic objects' (Articles 6 and 7). This broad definition is, however, then broken down into specific

<sup>10</sup> The most recent development, at the time of writing, has been the newly created Indonesian Constitutional Court's overruling of retrospective application of the new anti-terrorism legislation. However, it remains to be seen how this will play out *vis-à-vis* those already convicted in connection with the Bali bombing (see Winters and Galingging 2004).

acts ranging from minor issues such as 'issuing bogus threats' to more obvious major offenses such as 'using a nuclear weapon to create terror' (Articles 8–19). There [is] also a range of related offences linked to judicial procedure, for example, witness intimidation or perverting the course of justice (Articles 20–24).<sup>11</sup> (Lindsey 2002)

Given the abuses of power long associated with police and security forces in Indonesia (see, e.g., Liem Soei Liong 2002), it is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which the provisions of such legislation might be misused.

Terrorism-related legislation has been – perhaps for obvious reasons – a high-profile issue of late; and numerous studies have been published on the subject by think tanks, academics and the ever-growing field of 'terrorism experts'.<sup>12</sup> There is a smaller – but also growing – critical literature on the implications of new anti-terrorism legislation in Indonesia (see, e.g., Sebastian 2002, Clarke 2003). However, while these issues form part of the backdrop for my analysis, I am concerned in this paper primarily with the representation of terrorism in the Indonesian media. Although a number of studies have been published recently on the representation of terrorism in the Euro-american media (see, e.g., Nacos 2002, Zelizer and Allen 2002, Hess and Kalb 2003), comparatively little attention has been paid to coverage in the non-western media in general, and to Indonesian media in particular.<sup>13</sup>

### *Strong and Weak Media?*

When the earliest reports on the Marriott bombing hit the Indonesian press, there was little if any ambiguity in the representation of the event as an incident of *terorisme* ('terrorism'). In the national mainstream print media coverage – by which I mean publications such as *Kompas*, *Media Indonesia*, *Tempo*, etc. – the use of this word was

<sup>11</sup> In March 2003, the DPR passed the Perpus with 'minimal changes', and Perpu 1/2001 was renamed Law 15/2003 (Law and Bills Digest Group, Parliament of Australia 2003).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Cole 2002, Leone and Anrig 2003; current reports and additional information on anti-terrorism legislation in the United States may also be viewed both at <http://www.arl.org/info/frn/other/ATL.html> and [http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=usa\\_antiterror](http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=usa_antiterror).

<sup>13</sup> A notable exception would be Hobart (*forthcoming*).

uncontentious.<sup>14</sup> The lead story in the following morning's *Bali Post*, for example, began simply 'An act of terrorism rocked Jakarta' (2003a).<sup>15</sup> By contrast, approximately two and a half years beforehand, when bombs exploded in and near numerous churches around the country, the word 'terorisme' was hardly ever used. The terms *teror* ('terror') and *teroris* ('terrorist') – as well as the phrases *aksi teror* (≈'act of terror') and *teror bom* ('bomb terror') – occurred frequently in connection with the attacks. But, when considered alongside the coverage of more recent bombings, the almost complete absence of the abstract noun 'terorisme' is rather striking. The term was certainly in use at the time more generally;<sup>16</sup> and, as I have noted, it was even occasionally used in reference to these and other recent bombings in Indonesia. But, to use a rather crude gauge of its growth in prominence, examining more or less equally sized samples of reporting on the Christmas Eve bombings of 2000 and the Marriott bombing of 2003 – some 80 articles apiece – shows a striking disparity: the term 'terorisme' occurs only four times in the former, and twenty-seven in the latter.<sup>17</sup> In other words, for some reason, the term was used with far greater frequency in coverage of the Marriott bombing. So, to ask a rather old question: what's in a name?

One explanation for the increase in the word's prominence – especially if one has followed debates on security-related issues in

<sup>14</sup> A legitimate criticism of my approach in this paper would be to point out that I have chosen to focus on what many consider to be an élite media. For instance, I have not yet looked at tabloid publications and the more 'popular' press (e.g., *Pos Kota*, *Pikiran Rakyat*), nor have I examined the growing Islamic press (e.g., *Sabili*, *Saksi*). Such incidents have been represented rather differently in these media, and I shall be turning my attention to this in future research.

<sup>15</sup> The passage read: 'Aksi terorisme mengguncang Jakarta'. (*Bali Post* 2003a).

<sup>16</sup> *Kompas*, for instance, published a piece on 6 August 2000 entitled 'Terorisme menyebar ketakutan di masyarakat perkotaan' (2000c). The latter is an interesting piece, worthy of closer examination. Although it suggests that 'urban terrorism' is a comparatively recent phenomenon, it does not circumscribe the idea terrorism more generally as such:

Sejak abad ke-19 secara jelas tidak ada orang yang aman terhadap serangan teroris. Fakta sejarah menunjukkan, terorisme adalah bagian dari kehidupan. Tahun 1894, misalnya, seorang anarkis di Italia membunuh Presiden Perancis Sadi Carnot. Tiga tahun kemudian, seorang anarkis lain menusuk Ratu Elizabeth dari Austria, serta membunuh PM Spanyol Antonio Canovas. (*Kompas* 2000c)

<sup>17</sup> Taking roughly 28,000 words apiece from articles on each of the bombings published during roughly equal periods, and from the same publications, one finds an increase in usage of over 600%.

the region – would be that Indonesian officials have at long last abandoned their denial that terrorists are active in their country, and that the national media have followed suit. It is now, for instance, not uncommon to read in editorial and opinion columns that 'we Indonesians' must 'fight', 'combat' or 'wipe out terrorism'. Perhaps significantly, the term often used in this connection is *memerangi*, a verbal construction derived from the same term frequently used to discuss the American-led 'war on terror' (*perang melawan terorisme*). A change in the public attitude of officials is perhaps not entirely irrelevant in this connection, particularly insofar as reactions from public figures after such events tend to figure more centrally in the Indonesian media coverage than they do in their broadly Euro-American counterparts. But I think emphasizing this aspect of the situation runs the risk of oversimplifying what appears to be a rather more complex set of circumstances.

Apart from presupposing what is – at least in my opinion – an unlikely relationship between governmental officials and the national media, such an explanation would do little to explain other, concurrent changes in the way these kinds of events are represented. In addition to changes in terminology, for instance, there were other elements of the coverage – including, e.g., the prevalence of eyewitness accounts and the kinds of photographs that were published – that also differed rather markedly in the reporting on each of these bombings respectively. In the pages that follow, I would like to consider from a critical perspective how these changes in the coverage might be related – both to one another, as well as to other developments in the national and transnational media.

In so doing, I shall argue that, for mainstream Indonesian mass media, the Bali bombing has emerged as something of a watershed for the idea of 'terorisme', and that the changes that occurred in the wake of this tragic event might be constructively understood through analogy to Talal Asad's (1986) notion of strong and weak languages. He discussed the matter in a piece on 'The concept of cultural translation in British Social Anthropology', in which he explained,

Since the early nineteenth century there has been a growing volume of material translated from European languages—especially French and English—into Arabic. This includes scientific texts as well as 'social science', 'history', 'philosophy', and 'literature'. And from the nineteenth century, Arabic as a language has begun as a result to undergo a transformation (lexical, grammatical, semantic) that is far more radical than anything to be identified in European languages—a transformation that has pushed it to

approximate to the latter more closely than in the past. Such transformations signal inequalities in the power (i.e., in the capacities) of the respective languages in relation to the dominant forms of discourse that have been and are still being translated. (Asad 1986: 158; emphasis in original)

Underpinning Asad's approach to the idea of 'cultural translation' is an implicit theory of mediation, in which the medium itself undergoes (arguably violent) transformation through the process of coming to grips with a foreign discourse. On this account, power – perhaps not unproblematically – is discerned in its effects: by struggling to rearticulate the broadly Euro-American discourses of 'science', 'philosophy' etc., the medium of the Arabic language has been transformed – lexically, grammatically, semantically – that is to say, subtly, but no less significantly. Through the sedimented practices of translating a foreign discourse, it has become possible to make certain statements in Arabic that were previously unutterable – at least in those forms of life mediated by the Arabic language.<sup>18</sup> So, in coming to grips with 'the dominant forms of discourse' pertaining to 'terrorism', might a similar process of transformation be underway in the mainstream Indonesian mass media? In other words, might one extrapolate from Asad's argument regarding strong and weak languages, to another medium, to ask whether Indonesian mass media might emerge as a 'weak' medium *vis-à-vis* other, 'stronger' media?<sup>19</sup>

## I. JW Marriott Hotel, Jakarta

A bomb exploded in front of the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta around lunchtime on the fifth of August 2003. The blast killed twelve people

<sup>18</sup> Here, I follow Volosinov's argument regarding the necessary relationship between thought and language. 'The experiential, expressible element and its outward objectification are created, as we know, out of one and the same material. After all, there is no such thing as experience outside signs. Consequently, the very notion of a fundamental, qualitative difference between the inner and the outer element is invalid to begin with. Furthermore, the location of the organizing and formative center is not within (i.e., not in the material of inner signs) but outside. It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around *expression organizes experience*. Expression is what first gives experience its form and specificity of direction.' (1973: 85)

<sup>19</sup> As Lorraine Aragon pointed out to me, referring to Indonesian media as 'weak' has potentially derogatory connotations. This is, no doubt, the case. However, while it is possible to recognize the critical vibrancy and creativity of the Indonesian media scene (in which lies one of its many strengths), it is simultaneously important to recognize the relative *strength* of transnational media as evidenced, for instance, in the argument I have presented in this article.

and wounded some 150 others, destroying the hotel's façade, and seriously damaging numerous surrounding buildings. Although there had been a number of comparatively minor bombings in Indonesia in recent months, this was the most serious incident of its kind since the nightclub bombings that occurred in Bali almost ten months before.

*Be here now*

The earliest report of the Marriott bombing that I was able to find came from the Tempo News Room in Jakarta, and was posted online at about 1:30 pm (Jakarta time), a little less than an hour after the blast.<sup>20</sup>

## TEMPO

### Jakarta

#### **Bomb smashes JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta**

5 Aug 2003, 13:29:24 Jakarta Time

TEMPO Interaktif, Jakarta: The five star JW Marriott hotel that is located in the Mega Kuningan area of South Jakarta was severely damaged as the result of a bomb explosion, Tuesday (5/8) afternoon. The part of the hotel most seriously damaged was the entrance and the awning in front of the lobby. The hotel's lobby was destroyed and many of the hotel's windows were shattered.

The explosion also destroyed an adjacent section and the windows in front of the Plaza Mutiara located to the left of the Hotel Marriott. At the time this report was filed, the firemen were trying to extinguish several fires that were still blazing. The luxury cars that were parked in front of the lobby, like a black Mercedes Benz, looked destroyed and burnt-out with some of the flames still burning.

According to a witness at the location of the incident, the bomb exploded around 12:45 pm Jakarta Time. This estimate is based on two explosions that were heard at the time.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, police at the location of the incident

<sup>20</sup> The full Indonesian text of the article (Tempo 2003c) is reproduced in Appendix A.

<sup>21</sup> I believe that this reference to two explosions may be explained by other accounts in which reference was made to the sound of windows crashing to the ground from the upper floors of the hotel. Other reports refer to onlookers mistaking the latter for another explosion.

cannot yet provide information regarding the number of victims, but the news circulating is that there are three bodies laid out in front of the Marriott lobby.

At the moment, the Jakarta Regional Police Chief Makbul Padmanegara can be seen looking over the location of the incident. The police are still clearing the area around the hotel, and putting up a police line. Several journalists were also seen being pushed back in order to keep them away from the location of the incident.

At the moment, the atmosphere at the location is extremely chaotic, with thousands of people who work in the Mega Kuningan area coming out of the buildings and watching the scene. The masses that gathered, including among them several foreigners and staff of the Finnish Embassy, appear to be gathering outside the Menara Rajawali building that is located to the right side of the Marriott.

According to Sugianto, a security guard at the Menara Rajawali, the explosion was massive, its shockwave extremely strong, to the extent that several windows at the Bistro restaurant located at the Menara Rajawali were shattered. (Poernomo G. Ridho – Tempo News Room)

The report included several typos (see Appendix A) and a number of syntactically repetitive constructions, all suggesting a rather hasty write-up. This was breaking news, and it was presented explicitly as such through the use of phrases including 'At the time this report was filed...' and 'At the moment...' (*Saat ini*..., repeated in sequential paragraphs). We are told that the bomb exploded around 12:45, causing serious damage to the lobby and to adjacent areas around the JW Marriott Hotel. Although, at 13:29 local time, police could not (yet) provide details on the number of victims, 'the news circulating is that there are three (dead?) bodies laid out' in the hotel lobby.

If the 'now' of this news-in-progress emerged as an important aspect of the initial coverage, there was equal emphasis on the 'here'. In other words, establishing a presence 'on the scene' was bolstered not only through the indirect quotes from the security guard, Sugianto, and the 'witness at the site of the incident', but also through the use of visual imagery. Several aspects of the 'location of the incident' (*lokasi kejadian*) – a phrase that was itself repeated four times in the report – were introduced as having been 'seen' (*terlihat*) or having 'appeared' (*tampak*). Although the article also mentioned the sound of two explosions being heard (*terdengar*), visual detail seemed predominant in the report. In addition to the repeated references to shattered windows and the description of the police line with journalists being pushed back away from the blast site, there was also the black Mercedes that looked 'destroyed and burnt out' while fires were still burning and a

crowd gathered outside a nearby building. Through the predominance of such details, the report seemed to emphasize a sense of commotion, disaster and disorder, all contributing to the idea that 'the atmosphere at the location is extremely chaotic'.

This sense of chaos 'on the scene' marks an important point of regularity with the Euro-american coverage of the incident. *CNN.com*, for example, published the transcript of a televised report from Atika Shubert in Jakarta:

**Shubert:** What we know for sure is that a car drove in at around 12:30 [p.m. local time] and exploded near the lobby, right near the taxi stand, caused a major fire to break out in nearby cars and blew out what was most of the lobby and a first-floor restaurant that was there. It killed 10 people.

It's a chaotic scene at the moment. I'm looking straight into what used to be the lobby of the Marriott hotel. It's now partially destroyed. Columns had been blown out by the blast. The first-floor restaurant that was here – all of the glass walls had been blown in.

Police are saying most injured and killed were actually sitting in the restaurant having lunch when around 12:30 in the afternoon local time a car pulled up and exploded right in front of the restaurant and lobby. (CNN.com 2003; bracketed addition in original; header reads 'ON THE SCENE')

Such descriptions of chaos and disorder 'on the scene' occur throughout the mainstream western coverage of the Marriott bombing;<sup>22</sup> and, as I shall argue in the sections to follow, this was not the only point of similarity between the broadly western and Indonesian coverage.

### *Just like Bali*

There was considerable regularity across the Indonesian headlines on the morning after the bombing (06 Aug 2003). The front page of *Kompas* – the Jakarta-based newspaper with the largest national

<sup>22</sup> To cite but one example, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation posted an article entitled 'Eyewitness describes bomb scene chaos' (ABC News Online 2003b), the full text of which was reproduced in another article entitled 'Bomb blast rocks Jakarta hotel' (ABC News Online 2003a). The piece begins: 'An Australian in Jakarta says the scene at the Marriott Hotel, which has been targeted in a car bomb attack, is "chaotic". Greg Brown is an Australian businessman staying in a building across the street from the hotel. "Chaotic, because everyone was running from all over the place and then about three minutes later they all ran back again to have a good look," he said.' (ABC News Online 2003b)



Figure 1.

circulation – ran the headline 'Explosion at JW Marriott Hotel just like the bomb explosion in Bali'. For the *Jawa Pos*, which is published in Surabaya, it was 'Marriott bomb just like Bali', while the Semarang-based *Suara Merdeka* lead with "The explosion was just like the Bali bomb". (Figures 1, 2 and 3).

The screenshot shows the Jawa Pos website interface. The main headline is 'Bom Marriott Mirip Bali'. The text discusses a bomb explosion at the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, which occurred on August 12, 2003, and was very similar to the Bali bombing on October 12, 2002. The article quotes the National Chief of Police, Da'i Bachtiar, as saying the explosion was 'very similar' to the Bali bombing. A sidebar on the left lists other news items, and a sidebar on the right shows a table of data. A large image of the damaged JW Marriott lobby is on the right.

**Bom Marriott Mirip Bali**

JAKARTA - Ledakan bom di depan Hotel JW Marriott, Jakarta, kemarin mirip dengan bom Bali, 12 Oktober 2002. Bom yang menewaskan 16 orang dan 149 luka-luka ini sama-sama menggunakan mobil sebagai pembawa bom dengan daya ledak yang besar.

Kapolri Jenderal Pol Da'i Bachtiar mengakui adanya kemiripan tersebut. "Hasil olah TKP (tempat kejadian perkara, Red) sementara mengindikasikan kemiripan," katanya setelah mengikuti sidang kabinet khusus yang membahas bom Marriott di Istana Negara, tadi malam. Sebelumnya, dia sempat meninggalkan lokasi kejadian.

*Selanjutnya ...*

**BOM DAHSYAT**: Petugas mencoba memadamkan api ledakan bom di depan lobi Hotel JW Marriott.

Figure 2.

As indicated by the quotation marks around the *Suara Merdeka* headline, the comparison to Bali was attributed to the National Chief of Police, Da'i Bachtiar; and this attribution was noted in the lead articles for all three papers:

Jakarta, Kompas – National Chief of Police General Da'i Bachtiar explained, the bomb explosion that occurred in front of the lobby of the JW Marriott Hotel is very much like the explosion in Bali. As for instance with the modus operandi employed by the perpetrators, including among other things the use of a car bomb, though it cannot yet be determined whether it was a suicide bomb.<sup>23</sup> (*Kompas* 2003a)

<sup>23</sup> The passage read as follows: Jakarta, Kompas - Kepala Kepolisian RI Jenderal Polisi Da'i Bachtiar menegaskan, ledakan bom yang terjadi di depan lobi Hotel JW Marriott Jakarta sangat mirip dengan ledakan di Bali. Begitu pun dengan modus



Figure 3.

National Chief of Police Da'i Bachtiar noted the similarity. 'The provisional findings from the scene of the incident indicate a similarity', he said after attending a special cabinet meeting to discuss the Marriott bomb at the National Palace, last night.<sup>24</sup> (*Jawa Pos* 2003a)

The provisional findings from the scene of the incident indicate there is a similarity. For instance, the condition of the Kijang car that transported the bomb was destroyed to such an extent that the engine and chassis were

operandi yang digunakan para pelaku, antara lain menggunakan bom mobil, meski belum bisa menyimpulkan apakah itu merupakan bom bunuh diri. (*Kompas* 2003a)

<sup>24</sup> The passage read as follows: Kapolri Jenderal Pol Da'i Bachtiar mengakui adanya kemiripan tersebut. "Hasil olah TKP (tempat kejadian perkara, Red) sementara mengindikasikan kemiripan," katanya setelah mengikuti sidang kabinet khusus yang membahas bom Marriott di Istana Negara, tadi malam. (*Jawa Pos* 2003a)

separated. 'The situation is very much like the Bali bomb', said Da'i.<sup>25</sup> (*Suara Merdeka* 2003a)

The similarity to the Bali bombing – as well as the possibility of an organizational link between the two bombings – was a prominent theme in other newspapers as well. The Jakarta-based *Suara Pembaruan*, for instance, ran an article that morning entitled 'JI claims responsibility' (*JI klaim bertanggung jawab*),<sup>26</sup> explaining,

The Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) group claimed responsibility for the bombing of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta, Tuesday (5/8) afternoon. JI sent a bloody warning to President Megawati Soekarnoputri not to wage war on militants. 'This is a message for her and for all our enemies that, if they execute our Muslim brothers, we shall continue our campaign of terror in Indonesia and the region', a JI operative said to *The Straits Times*, a newspaper published in Singapore, at their offices, on Wednesday (6/8). It is unclear when and with whom the JI claim of responsibility was made [?]. JI, which is presumed to have been involved in the Bali bombing, was categorized as a terrorist organization by the United Nations.<sup>27</sup>

Officials and 'terrorism experts' were cited in a range of similar articles published that morning, speculating – with varying degrees of caution – on the possibility of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) involvement in the bombing. Among other possible motivations for the attack, it was pointed out that the notorious 'smiling bomber', Amrozi, was scheduled for sentencing two days later, and that Abu Bakar Ba'asyir was recently accused of being the leader of JI.<sup>28</sup> Although most of the

<sup>25</sup> The passage read as follows: Hasil olah TKP sementara, mengindikasikan ada kemiripan. Misalnya kondisi mobil Kijang pembawa bom yang hancur hingga tinggal kerangka dan mesinnya terlepas. 'Keadaan ini sangat mirip dengan bom Bali', kata Da'i. (*Suara Merdeka* 2003a).

<sup>26</sup> An article with the same headline was run the following morning by *Suara Merdeka* (2003b).

<sup>27</sup> The passage reads: Kelompok Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) mengklaim bertanggung jawab atas pemboman hotel JW Marriott di Jakarta, Selasa (5/8) siang. JI menyebutnya sebuah peringatan berdarah kepada Presiden Megawati Soekarnoputri untuk tidak memerangi para militer. 'Ini pesan untuk dia dan seluruh musuh-musuh kami bahwa, apabila mereka mengeksekusi saudara-saudara Muslim kami, maka kami akan terus melancarkan kampanye teror di Indonesia dan kawasan ini,' tukas seorang operator JI kepada *Straits Times*, sebuah media cetak yang terbit di Singapura, dalam situsnya, Rabu (6/8). Tidak jelas kapan dan siapa yang berbicara tentang klaim JI bertanggung jawab itu. JI yang diduga terlibat dalam peledakan bom Bali dikategorikan sebagai organisasi teroris oleh Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (PBB). (*Suara Pembaruan* 2003a).

<sup>28</sup> The *Bali Post* (2003), for example, ran an article entitled 'JI is angry about the Bali bomb trials'. With regard to the frame of reference, it is interesting to note that this article was posted to the 'Other countries' or 'International' (*Mancanegara*) news page of the *Bali Post* website.



Figure 4.

speculation was explicitly qualified with various permutations of 'wait and see', there seemed to be a general sense from the outset that, when all the evidence had been examined, this would emerge as yet another JI attack.

### *Smoke and cameras*

Not unlike the front page articles published by *Kompas*, the *Jawa Pos* and *Suara Merdeka* (see above), the *Suara pembaruan* (2003a) article on JI involvement in the bombing was accompanied by a large photograph depicting smoke and flames pouring out the front of the hotel. (Figure 4).

Similar images of fire and destruction-in-progress were run on the front pages of several other Indonesian papers, including *Media Indonesia* and the *Bali Post*, as well as *Suara Pembaruan* itself, which ran a separate – though decidedly similar – image to the photo that accompanied the article entitled 'JI claims responsibility'.

The prominence of these images of smoke and fire comprised another point of regularity between the Indonesian and broadly western coverage of the bombing. The *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, ran the same front-page photo attributed to the Associated Press. While the image is somewhat cropped in the *LA Times*, one can still see the smoke rising up from the rubble behind the policeman who, as the caption explains, was 'trying to keep order'.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, although attributed to a different source (Xinhua), what appears to be the same photo was also run on the front page of the leading English-language newspaper in Singapore, *The Straits Times*. Along similar lines, the Australian *Sydney Morning Herald* ran an image depicting what its caption described as 'rescue workers rush[ing] to help victims at Jakarta's Marriott Hotel, where at least 14 people were killed in yesterday's terrorist bomb attack'. The latter image frames the rescue workers against the backdrop of the destruction and conflagration at the Marriott, all under the headline 'Bomb carnage linked to Bali'.

The replication of press photographs (and footage) is a well-documented aspect of the news media industry. And, institutionally speaking, it can often be explained by the fact that a small number of photographic services – e.g., AP, Reuters and AFP, as well as Antara and Xinhua in Indonesia and Southeast Asia more generally – provide images for the vast majority of mainstream news media producers. But, in itself, knowledge of this aspect of the industry is of little help in trying to account critically for the *kinds of photographs* that were run on the front pages of these newspapers. Setting aside the western media for the moment, how do we account for the fact that five different Indonesian papers – owned by different companies and published in four separate cities – lead with such similar images of smoke pouring

<sup>29</sup> The caption for the image on the front page of *The New York Times* read: 'An Indonesian policeman tried to keep order in front of the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta yesterday after a car-bomb explosion killed at least 10 people'. The caption in the *Los Angeles Times* was more or less the same: 'JAKARTA ATTACK: A police officer tries to keep order in front of the JW Marriott Hotel in the Indonesian capitol. A minivan headed for the hotel blew up during the lunch-hour rush' (*LA Times*).

from the destroyed façade of the hotel?<sup>30</sup> It should be easy enough to find out whether this is how it has always been done in Indonesia. But, before turning to look at the coverage of earlier bombings, there are a few additional aspects of the reporting on the Marriott bombing that are worth examining.

### *Heady prose*

As in the initial report from the *Tempo* News Room (above), much of the early Indonesian coverage seems to focus on 'the location' or 'the site of the incident' (often simply 'TKP', or *tempat kejadian perkara*) as a primary source of information on what had happened. In the hours directly following the blasts, the online reporting displayed many well-documented aspects of 'breaking news', including an emphasis on the story's ongoing development and frequent updates on 'the latest data' (either from the hospital or regarding the initial stages of the investigation). Although commentary from government officials and others of similar stature was often cited, perhaps the most prominent sources quoted were 'eyewitnesses' and others who were (or had been) 'on the scene':

Bambang Triyanto (23), [a] security [guard?] for the JW Marriott Hotel, who at the time was in the area of the hotel lobby, said, the explosion came from a dark-colored Kijang Kapsul that pulled up in front of the hotel lobby. The car had tinted windows and there was a man inside, said Bambang. In addition to that, Bambang also saw there was a cardboard container [kardus?] in the car. But he was not at all suspicious. 'When I was looking the other way, the Kijang exploded', he said. The explosion caused his whole body and face to be burnt badly. Bambang was also hit by the roof of the car.<sup>31</sup> (*Kompas* 2003a)

<sup>30</sup> In a separate essay, I have discussed at some length the dominance of images of what I called 'horror and conflagration' in broadly western coverage of the Bali bombing (Fox, *forthcoming*).

<sup>31</sup> The passage reads: Bambang Triyanto (23), security Hotel JW Marriott yang saat itu berada di sekitar lobi hotel, mengatakan, ledakan berasal dari Kijang kapsul berwarna gelap yang melintas di depan lobi hotel. Di dalam mobil berkaca gelap, kata Bambang, ada satu orang lelaki. Selain itu, Bambang juga melihat ada kardus di dalam mobil. Tetapi dia tidak menaruh curiga sedikitpun. "Pada saat (saya) menengok ke tempat lain, tiba-tiba mobil kijang itu meledak," ujarnya. Ledakan itu mengakibatkan sekujur tubuh dan wajahnya hangus terbakar. Bambang juga sempat tertimpa kap mobil. (*Kompas* 2003a)

According to Suhartono, an eyewitness at the location of the explosion, there were four corpses inside three cars that were completely burnt out. 'Meanwhile other victims that were still living lay sprawled out in the road', said Suhartono who was on the second floor of the hotel at the time of the explosion.<sup>32</sup> (*Tempo* 2003a)

Similar quotes from eyewitnesses may be found throughout the coverage, with the *Jawa Pos* publishing an extended account of 'this terrible tragedy just as it happened', as narrated by one of their journalists, Kurniawan Muhamad, who happened to be on the second floor of the hotel at the time of the blast. His account begins as follows:

This was my first experience being in the midst of people panicking because of a bomb explosion. This was also my first time to hear first-hand the thundering sound of a bomb blast. My chest felt as if it wanted to collapse. My eyes spontaneously filled with tears. I witnessed with my own two eyes a person whose entire face was covered in blood as a result of being struck by fragments of iron and glass.

I also witnessed a white woman who was still dressed as if she were about to bathe (covered up in towels) screaming hysterically. Without anything on her feet, she ran out of the hotel toward the square behind the hotel. Her face looked red. 'Help... help... help..., my God... my God...', she kept screaming over and over, while waving her two hands in the air. Several security guards tried to calm the white woman down.<sup>33</sup> (*Jawa Pos* 2003b)

Written in the first person, Kurniawan's account of his escape from the building thoroughly – and quite deliberately – personalized the

<sup>32</sup> The passage reads: Menurut Suhartono, saksi mata yang berada di lokasi ledakan, empat mayat itu berada di tiga mobil yang hangus terbakar. "Sedangkan korban lainnya yang masih hidup bergelimpangan di jalan," kata Suhartono yang saat ledakan berada di lantai dua hotel itu. (*Tempo* 2003a)

<sup>33</sup> The passage read as follows: Ini adalah pengalaman pertama saya berada di tengah-tengah orang yang panik karena ledakan bom. Ini juga kali pertama saya mendengar langsung bunyi bom yang menggelegar. Dada saya terasa mau melesak. Mata saya, tanpa terasa, menangis penuh haru. Saya menyaksikan dengan mata kepala sendiri ada orang yang sekujur wajahnya berlumuran darah akibat terkena pecahan besi dan kaca.

Saya juga menyaksikan seorang wanita bule yang masih mengenakan pakaian mau mandi (yang terbuat dari handuk) sedang berteriak-teriak histeris. Tanpa alas kaki, dia berlari keluar hotel menuju lapangan di belakang hotel itu. Wajahnya terlihat merah. Help... help... help..., my God... my God..., begitu dia berkali-kali berteriak sambil kedua tangannya menggapai-gapai ke atas. Beberapa petugas sekuriti berusaha menenangkan bule wanita itu. (*Jawa Pos* 2003b)

incident as an 'experience' (*pengalaman*). He explained, 'Truly, this was the most horrifying event I have ever witnessed in person!!'.<sup>34</sup>

Much of the account is taken up with descriptions of the panic and injuries of those that Kurniawan saw on his way out of the building. Although, in the Indonesian coverage of the Marriott bombing, I have yet to find another article written so comprehensively in the first person,<sup>35</sup> similarly graphic descriptions are found throughout the early reporting:

The five corpses were transported in five ambulances, and are being held at the moment in the morgue at Doctor Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital. The condition of the victims suggests that they experienced serious burns, their bodies no longer intact. Journalists were permitted to view and take photographs of the victims. The condition of the five corpses appeared charred and not in one piece, with even their sex being difficult to discern with the naked eye. (*Media Indonesia* 2003b)<sup>36</sup>

The bomb that exploded not far from the hotel lobby made all the guests and the hotel employees panic. So when the explosion happened, they ran to get outside. Moans and shouts for help could be heard everywhere. Blood was splattered from the victims struck by shards of shattered glass.<sup>37</sup> (*Jawa Pos* 2003a)

On the corner of East Mega Kuningan Road, on the left side of the JW Marriott hotel there was a shoe that looked scorched and a piece of human flesh. On the sidewalk of Mega Kuningan Road clots of fresh blood can still be seen clearly. At the moment, police officers, firemen and paramedics are

<sup>34</sup> The passage reads: 'Sungguh, ini adalah peristiwa paling mengerikan yang pernah saya saksikan secara langsung!!' (*Jawa Pos* 2003b).

<sup>35</sup> To date, I have found two predominantly first-person accounts of events surrounding the Bali bombing, one published by *Detik.com* (2002) and the other by *Kompas* (2002c). However, it should be noted that they both listed the source of their material as the BBC.

<sup>36</sup> The passage reads: Kelima mayat itu diangkut dengan lima ambulans, dan kini disimpan di instalasi kamar mayat RSCM. Kondisi korban tampak mengalami luka bakar yang parah dengan tubuh yang tidak utuh lagi. Para wartawan diperkenankan untuk melihat dan mengambil gambar korban. Kondisi kelima mayat tampak hitam terbakar dan tidak utuh, bahkan jenis kelaminnya pun sulit diidentifikasi dengan kasat mata. (*Media Indonesia* 2003b)

<sup>37</sup> The passage reads: Bom yang meledak tak jauh dari lobi hotel itu membuat seluruh tamu dan pegawai hotel panik. Begitu ledakan terjadi, mereka berhamburan ke luar. Rintihan dan teriakan minta tolong terdengar di sana-sini. Darah berceciran dari korban yang terkena pecahan kaca. (*Jawa Pos* 2003a)

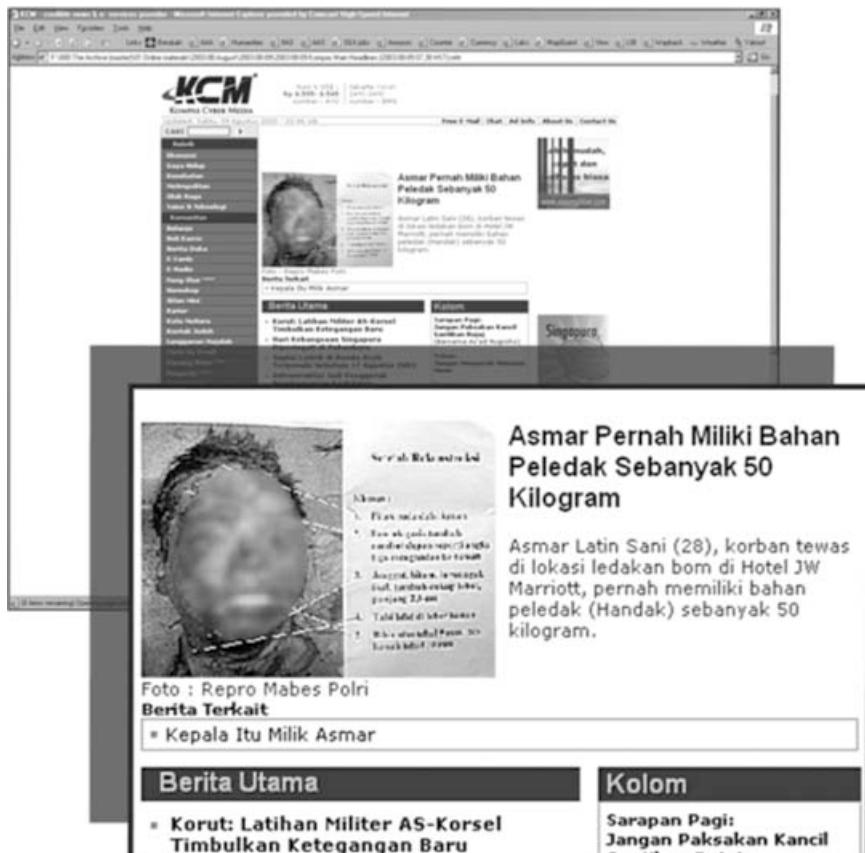


Figure 5.

still trying to sterilize the situation (*berusaha mensterilkan keadaan*).<sup>38</sup> (*Tempo* 2003b)

Bringing together these paired emphases on visuality and graphic detail, on 9 August 2003, *Kompas* published with the lead story on their homepage (<http://www.kompas.com/>) a police photograph of the severed head of the man presumed responsible for detonating the bomb (Figure 5).

<sup>38</sup> I am not entirely sure how literally to render the reference to 'sterilizing' (*mensterilakan*) the situation. Perhaps significantly, it does not – at least to my knowledge – occur in this apparently figurative sense in the Bali bombing coverage. Yet it is used in this sense on several occasions in the coverage of the Marriott bombing. I should additionally note that I have found two similar uses in coverage of an incident

The caption beneath the image read: 'Asmar Latin Sani (28), who was killed at the site of the bombing at the JW Marriott Hotel, once had in his possession as much as 50 kilograms of explosive material'.<sup>39</sup> So what is the relationship between the picture and its caption? The photograph was, I think, certainly as graphic as anything I have ever seen published in the mainstream western press. The name of the suspect was listed together with his previous misdeed alongside a photograph of the severed head – 'after reconstruction' – with notes on its distinguishing features ('top lip, 9mm thick', etc.). Yet, the image of the face is partially obscured through a slightly blurred section of the photograph, hiding the details of its main features. Was this done out of a sense of propriety? Respect for the dead? Or, perhaps, for the not yet proven guilty? To date, I have been unable to find evidence in support of an answer to these questions.

Setting aside Asmar's severed head for the moment, the detailed descriptions of the carnage – often accompanied by accounts of panic and commotion – comprised another point of regularity with the mainstream Euro-american reporting on the incident.

Blood stained pavements and pieces of skin lay strewn on the ground after a deadly bomb attack ripped through the luxury Marriott Hotel in Jakarta's main business district yesterday. A gaping hole could be seen in front of the American-owned five-star hotel following the blast, which left at least 14 people dead and more than 150 injured, police said. At least three foreigners were among the dead, witnesses said. The badly burned bodies of two people, both appearing to be male, lay on the driveway in front of the office building next to the hotel. They awaited an ambulance to carry them away, an AFP reporter at the scene said. (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2003)

The Marriott – a frequent venue for US Embassy functions and a popular destination for foreigners – was transformed into a bloody inferno when a vehicle packed with explosives blew up on the driveway leading to its front entrance. National police chief, Da'i Bachtiar, refused to speculate on the cause, but confirmed the vehicle was moving at the time of the explosion.

in Bandung from October 2002 (*Media Indonesia* 2002c and *Tempo* 2002d); and various derivations of the word 'steril' are also used in connection with the Bali bombing in reference to hospital conditions and caring for the victims. Interestingly, in the latter case, the word is often placed within 'inverted commas'. The passage cited above reads: Di sudut jalan Mega Kuningan Timur, sisi kiri Hotel JW Marriot terdapat sebuah sepatu yang tampak hangus dan potongan daging manusia. Pada trotoar, di jalan Mega Kuningan masih terlihat jelas gumpalan-gumpalan darah segar. Saat ini petugas kepolisian, pemadam kebakaran dan para medis masih berusaha mensterilkan keadaaan. (*Tempo* 2003b)

<sup>39</sup> *Republika* published on the previous morning's front page a 'sketch based on the outcome of the reconstruction' of the (as yet unidentified) perpetrator's head.

Puddles of blood and shattered glass littered a two-block radius. The 33-storey hotel – which had a 77 per cent occupancy rate at the time of the blast – was decimated, its lobby covered in charred sofas, overturned tables and caved-in ceilings. (*Straits Times* 2003)

In passing, it is worth noting that the prominence of such anecdotal gore is a fairly common feature of the mainstream Euro-american media coverage of bombings and other tragic incidents. As they say: if it bleeds, it leads.<sup>40</sup>

### *Looks like terrorism*

The use of visual media was an important aspect of the Marriott bombing coverage. In a separate article (Fox, *forthcoming*) I have argued more generally that the dominance of images and descriptions of 'horror and conflagration' in the Euro-american media has helped to fill a gap that was left by the absence of publicly available evidence for the involvement of al-Qaeda – or even its existence as a coherent organization – in connection with the various attacks for which it is publicly held responsible.<sup>41</sup> Without wishing to draw the parallel too

<sup>40</sup> Consider, for instance, the opening paragraph of an article for the *Los Angeles Times* on the devastating suicide attack on a residential compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Blood is everywhere inside the bombed-out Al Hamra Oasis Village housing compound on the edge of Saudi Arabia's desert capital. It is sprayed in great arcs across walls, it sits in dried pools along hallways and it soaks beds clear through the mattress. Here and there among the crushed chairs and shattered glass, tiny crimson footprints can be seen where bloodied children ran to escape after the suicide bombing Monday that killed at least 13 residents and injured dozens of others here. (*Los Angeles Times* 2003)

<sup>41</sup> Questioning the existence of al-Qaeda as a coherent organization may sound something close to heresy these days. But Jason Burke made an interesting point in this connection: In the immediate aftermath of the double bombings of American embassies in east Africa in 1998, President Clinton merely described the target of the retaliatory missile attack he ordered as 'the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Usama (sic) bin Laden, perhaps the pre-eminent organizer and financer of international terrorism in the world today'. Sensibly, Clinton talks of 'the bin Laden network', not of 'al-Qaeda'. In fact, it is only during the FBI-led investigation into those bombings that the term first starts to be used to describe a traditionally structured terrorist organization. A related concept that starts appearing in legal documents prepared by the FBI is the idea that there are 'al-Qaeda members' who swear allegiance to the organisation, not to bin Laden, through a *bayat* or an oath. In fact, a *bayat* can only be a pledge of loyalty to an individual. The change is a significant one and the reasons behind the shift are obvious. The culture of the FBI is focused on achieving convictions and the teams working on the prosecution of those responsible for the East African Embassy bombings of August 1998 had to work within

closely, perhaps something similar was involved in *Kompas* publishing the image of Asmar Latin Sani's severed head. I do not necessarily mean to suggest that this young man – or an 'international terrorist network' more generally – was not involved in carrying out these various attacks. But, from a critical perspective, ordinary people – including most journalists, scholars and even, I suspect, a few 'terrorism experts' – have little grounds for an informed opinion one way or another. With that in mind, I believe it is worth looking more closely at the manner in which these events are represented.

In the earlier article, I argued that the prominence of 'eyewitnesses' – and, later, 'on the scene' reporting – in Euro-American coverage of the Bali bombing suggested a certain journalistic aesthetic of the visual ('show, don't tell', the adage goes), as well as a particular configuration of 'on the scene' authority that is, in certain respects, not entirely unlike that associated with the arrival scenes of traditional ethnographic tracts (Crapanzano 1986: 69f). This orientation was evident in the western coverage of the Marriott bombing, and it arguably constituted an important regularity with the Indonesian reporting on the incident. The personalized viewing subject (e.g., 'the eyewitness') and the anonymous object fit the traditional ethnographic mould rather nicely, and the affinity with ethnographic writing was to become even more pronounced in subsequent coverage, when the eyewitness accounts – that is, often the *same* eyewitness accounts – shifted from their position as sources of information to their deployment in a more fully anecdotal fashion. As with Malinowski's description of arriving in the Trobriand Islands (or the Geertzes' arrival on Bali *etc.*), the reporting garners authenticity through various rituals of presence and vision: being 'on the scene', citing 'eyewitnesses', 'live' coverage and so on. But, as with traditional ethnographic writing, the pretense to *being there* is usually not what it appears. As van Ginneken noted – and rather apropos of the reporting on these bombings – 'Very often live coverage of an unexpected event is really live coverage of the *aftermath* of an unexpected event' (1998: 112).

the extant laws, particularly those of conspiracy. Such laws were designed to deal with coherent and structured criminal enterprises not with amorphous and dispersed politico-religious movements where responsibility for any one single act is very difficult to pin down. Evidence that someone is a member of an organization is thus extremely useful. Unfortunately, in the case of 'al Qaeda', it completely misrepresents the nature of the entity under investigation. (2003: 11; parenthetical comment on quotation in original)

Nevertheless, it is perhaps difficult to overstate the importance of presence – and the visual – in the broadly western coverage of these bombings. Yet, at least for the western coverage, this association of representational authenticity with presence and vision in this connection is anything but fortuitous. Rather, it situates EurAm news media well within the more generally logocentric framework of western thought.<sup>42</sup> The question is: what is one to make of similar emphases when they are found in the Indonesian coverage? Is contemporary Indonesian thought – or, perhaps, less ambitiously, contemporary Indonesian news coverage of ‘terorisme’ – as fundamentally logocentric as its western counterparts? If so, has it always been that way? And, if not, how are these aspects of the coverage to be interpreted? As a first step toward answering these questions, I would like to have a closer look at the mainstream Indonesian coverage of the Bali bombing for comparison.

## II. Bali

In the first newswire reports from Bali on the night of the bombings, it was not altogether clear what had happened. It seemed that a bomb had exploded near the US Consulate in Renon, and a much larger explosion in Kuta was said to have destroyed several buildings, leaving numerous dead and many more seriously injured. There was an earlier report of a bombing at the Philippine Consulate in Manado, though it was uncertain whether it was linked in any way to the blasts in Kuta.

### *An explosion in Kuta*

As with the Marriott bombing, the earliest report that I have been able to find came from the Tempo News Room in Jakarta. It was posted

<sup>42</sup> Derrida's use of this term to characterize the broadly western *metaphysics of presence* was glossed with unusual clarity in the following translator's note to *Dissemination*: 'Logocentric' - that which is 'centered' on the 'Logos' (= speech, logic, reason, the Word of God) – is the term used by Derrida to characterize any signifying system governed by the notion of the self-presence of meaning; i.e. any system structured by a valorization of speech over writing, immediacy over distance, identity over difference, and (self-)presence over all forms of absence, ambiguity, simulation, substitution, or negativity. (Derrida 1981: 4; n.1)

online at midnight (Jakarta time), approximately two hours after the blast.<sup>43</sup>

## TEMPO

### National

#### **Explosion in Kuta killed approximately 10 people**

13 Oct 2002 00:00:35, Western Indonesian Time

TEMPO Interactive, Jakarta: A bomb exploded in front of the Sari Club, on Jalan Legian, Kuta, Bali, Saturday (12/10), around 11:10 Central Indonesian Time. As a result of the explosion, no less than 10 visitors to the Sari Club died and approximately forty others were injured.

Tonight ambulance workers went back and forth transporting the injured to Sanglah Hospital, Denpasar. Their number cannot be estimated with any certainty. In addition to those who died, tens of buildings in the vicinity were seriously damaged, among others the Paddy's Club building and the White Rose Hotel.

There was great commotion at the location of the incident. The electricity in the area was out and the tourists who were staying in the vicinity of the blast were milling about. A tourist from Australia was seen bawling because her child, who was 17 years old, had been in the Sari Club. Balinese Regional Police Chief, Brigadier General Budi Setiawan immediately lead his agency to the location to handle the case.

-Jalil Hakim – Tempo News Room<sup>44</sup> (*Tempo* 2002c)

Not entirely unlike the earliest report on the Marriott bombing, this initial account begins with what might be considered ‘the facts’ of the incident as they were known at the time: a bomb exploded in front of the Sari Club on Jalan Legian in Kuta around 11:10 pm leaving no less than ten dead, forty injured and tens of buildings destroyed. Although the number of victims was woefully underestimated, and the precise time of the explosions may or may not have been given accurately, the report does indicate some aspects of the scene following the blasts: tourists milling about and ambulances going to and from the hospital – presumably in the dark as a result of the electricity having gone out. One gets from reading these details a sense of the

<sup>43</sup> According to court testimony from an official from a government geophysics and weather station in Bali, the explosion registered on a seismograph at 23:08:31 that night (AFP 2003).

<sup>44</sup> The full Indonesian text of the article (*Tempo* 2002c) is reproduced in Appendix B.

commotion around the bombsite. But it is worth noting that – despite the apparent carnage – the tone of the reporting seems rather matter-of-fact, offering considerably less detailed information on 'the location of the incident' than there was in the initial report on the Marriott bombing.

Considering the location of the bombing (Bali is an approximately 90-minute flight from Jakarta), it would not be terribly surprising if, so soon after the blasts, there were little in the way of visual detail available to the journalists working the night shift in the *Tempo* News Room. It may be noted that the tourists 'milling about' and the bawling Australian woman were both introduced with the word *tampak* – to appear, be visible or obvious, in sight etc. – and, in the latter case, the woman was explicitly said to have been 'seen' (*terlihat*) – two terms that were also used in the earliest report on the Marriott bombing. However, when juxtaposed with the latter, visual representation seems comparatively limited in this first report on the Bali bombing. So the question is: was the comparative dearth of visual detail merely a consequence of time constraints and insufficient information? And, if so, can we expect in subsequent reports to see the same degree of emphasis on visuality and anecdotal gore that we saw in the Indonesian coverage of the Marriott bombing?

### *Physical damage and the loss of life*

In addition to noting the approximate times and locations of the explosions, the mainstream Indonesian reports that were posted online over the next twenty-four hours seemed to be concerned primarily with the number of victims and their countries of origin, the physical destruction – buildings, cars *etc.* – and the ongoing effort to get medical attention for those who were injured in the blasts. The arrival of the Australian foreign minister, as well as of medical (and the possibility of investigative) assistance, was also a prominent theme. Many of the early articles were devoted almost entirely to the comments made by governmental officials, and others of similar stature, from both Indonesia and abroad. While the Euro-american media cast the bombing clearly within the framework of 'the US-led war on terror' (Fox n.d. and *forthcoming*), the mainstream Indonesian media seemed on the whole to be more concerned at the outset with the impact the event would have on internal stability, the economy and the image of Indonesia in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Although limited in the initial report from the Tempo News Room, visual aspects of the event would become somewhat more pronounced in the Indonesian reports that were published the morning after the blasts (13/10). Eyewitnesses (*saksi mata*) were occasionally cited; however, more often than not, their comments were addressed to the physical damage in Kuta. Having described the destruction of the Sari Club, for instance, an article in *Kompas* went on to note:

Additionally, dozens of other buildings within a radius of ten to twenty meters sustained heavy damage. Meanwhile, shop windows as well as the windows in hotels and other places of entertainment that were within a radius of one kilometer were smashed. 'I saw the windows in the Kuta Square shopping complex, smashed' said Dadi who was there in Kuta Square, approximately one kilometer from the bombsite.<sup>45</sup>

There were also descriptions of the 'panic' (*kepanikan*) and commotion that followed the explosions as, for instance, in the opening lines of the lead article in Sunday morning's (13/10) edition of the *Jawa Pos*:

There was extraordinary panic in Bali last night. Two bombs exploded almost simultaneously in Kuta and Renon, Denpasar, 20 kilometers away. The first explosion occurred near the United States Consulate in Renon, and was followed by a truly massive explosion in a club for foreigners in the tourist center of Kuta.<sup>46</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that in comparison with the coverage of the Marriott bombing, these 'eyewitness' accounts occurred far less frequently in the mainstream Indonesian reporting on the Bali bombing. And – almost without exception – they did

<sup>45</sup> The passage read: Selain itu puluhan bangunan lainnya dalam radius 10 sampai 20-an meter rusak berat. Sedangkan kaca-kaca toko, hotel maupun tempat hiburan lainnya yang berada dalam radius satu kilometer, pecah. 'Saya melihat kaca-kaca di kompleks pertokoan Kuta Square, pecah,' tutur Dadi yang berada di Kuta Square, sekitar satu kilometer dari tempat ledakan. (*Kompas*, 13 October 2002)

Compare the following excerpt from Sunday morning's edition of the *Jawa Pos*: 'the explosion in Renon was smaller and did not result in any casualties. The explosion by the side of Jalan Renon, according to several eyewitnesses, occurred at 23:15 Central Indonesian Time. The explosion blasted the sidewalk and the jackfruit trees by side of the road. The leaves were blown off the trees'.

<sup>46</sup> The passage read: Kepanikan luar biasa terjadi di Bali tadi malam. Dua bom meledak hampir bersamaan di Kuta dan Renon, Denpasar, yang berjarak 20 km. Ledakan pertama terjadi di dekat Konsulat Amerika Serikat di Renon, disusul kemudian ledakan sangat dahsyat di klub orang asing di sentra wisata Kuta. (*Jawa Pos*)

not include explicit descriptions of bloodied victims and mutilated bodies.<sup>47</sup>

By contrast, perhaps the most striking aspect of the early Euro-American coverage of the bombing was the sense of horror and 'chaos' articulated through first-person accounts of the carnage. The earliest reports from both Reuters and CNN, for instance, reproduced the same three 'eyewitness' accounts, including that of 'a local photographer' who described seeing 'one man, who looked Indonesian, whose head had been blown off' (see Fox, *forthcoming*). This same anecdote would be cited more or less verbatim – among other places – in front-page articles in *The Sunday Times* and *The Telegraph on Sunday* in London, while similar passages could be found in many of the reports posted in the hours and days following the bombing.

Mr. Hawkins said he saw one man with his leg blown off and saw women and children screaming. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*)

Australian flight attendant Kylie Denae ... saw bodies being flung out of the open-air club. Body parts and glass were splattered everywhere and she witnessed a man's leg being blown off right in front of her. (*The Straits Times*)

New Zealander Lonny McDowell, 25, was at Paddy's when the blast blew chairs and concrete through the bar. He said he saw a man with no legs and another with a cable stuck through his stomach. (*CNN.com*)

In the previous section, I observed a distinct regularity in the prominence of eyewitness accounts and anecdotal gore across both the Euro-American and Indonesian coverage of the Marriott bombing. However, this regularity is not evident in their respective reporting on the Bali bombing that occurred ten months earlier. Rather, there appears to be a somewhat sharp disjuncture in this regard between the two; and, perhaps significantly, the disjuncture is mirrored in their uses of photographs and other images.

While scenes of horror and conflagration dominated the early coverage of the Bali bombing in Australia, Europe and America, decidedly less sensationalist images were predominant in the

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the most explicit description I have found from the earliest reports came from the Islamic daily *Republika*: 'Belum teridentifikasi itu terutama menyangkut serpihan-serpihan tubuh manusia, ada yang berupa kepala, potongan kaki, usus, otak dan bagian tubuh lainnya'.



Figure 6. The Tragedy of Black (lit.grey); *Bali Post*, 16 October 2002.

mainstream Indonesian coverage. Although there were exceptions to this general trend,<sup>48</sup> the vast majority of pictures that were published in the Indonesian press were scenes from 'the morning after'.

Most of the photographs published by the Indonesian press depicted the physical destruction of Kuta from various perspectives – e.g., from in amongst the rubble, from the air – including burnt-out buildings and the smoking remains of cars and other vehicles that were destroyed in the blast. There were also scenes from the hospital, as well as photographs of government and security officials. Perhaps most importantly: these all were images *after the fact*. And, as such, they differed from the images of what I would describe as *terror in progress* that dominated the broadly western coverage.

<sup>48</sup> The *Jawa Pos*, for instance, ran an image of people silhouetted against a blazing fire.

*Worst, if (perhaps) not the first*

The bombing was often described in the early Indonesian reports as the largest and/or most uncivilized bombing attack in Indonesian history.

The attack that occurred at precisely 23:05 local time comprised the largest attack [in Indonesia] if seen in terms of the number of victims. However, whether it was the most powerful cannot be confirmed with certainty because the police have yet to release definite data. But, if seen in terms of the radius of destruction it caused and the sound of the explosion that could be heard within a radius of 10 kilometers, it would suggest that this was the most powerful bomb in Indonesia so far.<sup>49</sup> (*Bali Post* 2002a)

[The Indonesian Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs,] Dorodjatun acknowledged that the incident comprised the greatest tragedy in Indonesian history, especially for the tourism sector.<sup>50</sup> (*Kompas* 2002a)

The act of exploding the bomb in front of the Sari Club Café in the tourist center of Legian, Kuta, Bali, comprised the largest [bombing] in the course of the history of the Indonesian Nation. 'Apart from being the largest, this is also the most uncivilized act of terror', said the National Chief of Police.<sup>51</sup> (*Media Indonesia* 2002a)

The bombing was described as 'a tragedy' (*tragedi*), 'a disaster' (*malapetaka*), 'a lesson', 'a serious test' and 'a slap in the face for Indonesia' (*pelajaran / ujian berat bagi Indonesia, menampar muka Indonesia*), resulting in 'a sense of loss' or 'being stolen from' (*kecolongan*). The incident was dubbed 'Grief in Bali' (*Nestapa di Bali*) or, more frequently, 'Black Saturday' (*Sabtu Kelabu*). Yet, despite its superlative character – both as spectacle and with regard to its anticipated consequences – throughout most of the initial coverage, there seemed to be an implicit awareness of domestic precedent for the event.

<sup>49</sup> The passage read: Serangan yang terjadi tepat pukul 23.05 wita itu merupakan serangan yang terbesar kalau dilihat dari jumlah korban. Namun, apakah kekuatannya ini terbesar, belum dapat dipastikan karena pihak kepolisian belum mengeluarkan data pasti. Tetapi kalau dilihat dari radius kerusakan yang ditimbulkan dan bunyi ledakan yang terdengar sampai radius 10 kilometer, disinyalir kekuatan bom ini terbesar di Indonesia selama ini.

<sup>50</sup> The passage read: 'Dorodjatun mengakui bahwa peristiwa tersebut merupakan tragedi terbesar dalam sejarah di Indonesia, khususnya di bidang pariwisata'. (*Kompas* 2002a)

<sup>51</sup> The passage read: 'Aksi peledakan bom di depan Kafe Sari Club di kawasan wisata Legian, Kuta, Bali, merupakan yang terbesar sepanjang sejarah perjalanan Bangsa Indonesia. "Selain yang terbesar, ini aksi teror yang terbiadab," kata Kapolri'. (*Media Indonesia* 2002a)

In addition to the comparatively subtle references to previous incidents – in, e.g., the use of phrases such as ‘the most powerful bomb in Indonesia *so far*’), there were more explicit indications that this was an event *of a kind* that had happened before within the country. Evidence of this domestic frame of reference may be seen, among other places, in the ‘List of 2001–2002 BOMBINGS’ that was published by *Suara Merdeka*, at the end of an article entitled ‘Bomb explodes, Bali cries’ (*Bom meledak, Bali menangis*).

#### **LIST OF 2001–2002 BOMBINGS**

31–07–01 18.30 Church of Bethel Tabernakel Kristus Alfa Omega, Gajahmada Street, 114–118, Jakarta.

23–08–01 10.30 Plaza Atrium Senen, Central Jakarta

12–10–01 13.00 Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) Makassar Shopping Complex.

01–01–02 Type K–75 grenade, Bulungan Jakarta 1 Killed.

18–01–02 A fishing bomb exploded in a guardhouse at the State Electricity Enterprise complex in Cawang, East Jakarta.

13–02–02 21.18 Ambon post-Malino. Outskirts of Desa Batumerah

21.23 – Mardika, Kecamatan Sirimau.

09–06–02 A minor bomb exploded in the parking lot of the Hotel Jayakarta, Tamansari Jakarta, 3 seriously injured and 3 cars destroyed.

09–06–02 Two bombs were found in the parking lot of the Sarinah shopping center in Central Jakarta. The bomb was defused.

01–07–02 A large firecracker exploded in the Graha Cijantung shopping center in Central Jakarta, 1 seriously injured, 6 injured lightly.

17–08–02 10.00 Bomb exploded at Blang Padang Field in Aceh prior to the celebration of the Indonesian Republic’s 57<sup>th</sup> year, 20 people were injured.

(*Suara Merdeka* 2002)

In their coverage of the Bali bombing, lists of previous attacks were published in several newspapers in Europe, Australia and America. For instance, as a sidebar to an article on the bombing entitled ‘Finger points to the men with al-Qaeda links’, *The Daily Telegraph* in London published a list of ‘suspected Islamic militant terrorist attacks since September 11’. However, perhaps tellingly, there is not a single event common to these two lists. Although the *Suara Merdeka* article also refers to the attacks of 9.11, the link is made through their similarity in consequence – ‘lives needlessly cut short’ – not through the suspected perpetrators, as it predominantly was in the mainstream Euro-American coverage (see Fox, *forthcoming*).

More generally speaking, the earliest Indonesian coverage of the bombing might be described as ambivalent with regard to the appropriate frame of reference.<sup>52</sup> For instance, at the end of an article entitled 'England offers anti terrorist team' (*Inggris tawarkan tim anti teroris*), the *Bali Post* (2002d) also published a list of previous attacks.

### World terrorism attacks

13 August 1978: 200 dead as a result of an attack in Beirut on a building belonging to the Palestinian Liberation Front.

20 August 1978: 400 dead in an attack on a movie theater in Iran.

23 October 1983: Two suicide bombing attacks on the US Naval base in Beirut. 241 US Naval troops and 58 French commando soldiers were killed.

23 June 1985: An Air India Boeing 747 airplane with 329 passengers and crew crashed into the Irish Sea. It is thought that the plane was hijacked by a militant Sikh group.

21 December 1988: A PanAm Boeing 747 airplane exploded on Lockerbie killing 259 people. Last January a Libyan national, Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, was sentenced to life imprisonment by a special court.

7 August 1998: Two bombs exploded at the US Embassy offices in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224.

10 August 2001: Angola UNITA rebels attacked a train on its way from Zenza to Dondo causing 260 fatalities.

11 September 2001: 3 commercial planes were hijacked and crashed into the WTC and Pentagon buildings. An additional plane also crashed in Pennsylvania. The US Government has accused the al-Qaeda network and Osama bin Laden as being responsible for this attack that killed 3,021 and the 19 hijackers.

- List of 'World terrorism attacks', published at the end of an article in the *Bali post* (2002d) entitled 'England offers anti terrorist team'.

However, unlike the list of bombings published that morning in *Suara Merdeka*, the *Bali Post* listed a series of 'World terrorism attacks' (*Serangan terorisme dunia*), beginning with the Israeli attack on a PLO building in Beirut on 13 August 1978 (which it lists, perhaps significantly, as resulting in 200 deaths), and concluding with the attacks in New York City and Washington DC on 11 September 2001. The common factor linking the eight attacks that are listed in the *Bali Post* appears to be the number of casualties (over 200 in each case),

<sup>52</sup> An argument could also be made for a disjunction between different newspapers. In support of this, one might cite the list of Indonesian bombings that was published by *Suara Merdeka* after the Marriott bombing.

and possibly the extremism of their perpetrators. This would suggest that the idea of 'terorisme' was an available register for application at the time of the Bali bombing. But, as elsewhere, it was not made altogether explicit what counted as an instance of 'terorisme'.

### *Official condemnation*

From the outset, there was almost universal condemnation of the bombing as uncivilized (*biadab*), irresponsible (*tidak bertanggung jawab*) and/or inhumane (*tidak berperikemanusiaan* or *tanpa perikemanusiaan*). Numerous articles were devoted more or less entirely to responses from public figures and various organizations, with headlines such as 'The President strongly condemns the bombing'<sup>53</sup> (*Kompas*), 'Muhammidyah condemns the Bali bombing' (*Tempo*)<sup>54</sup> and '182 dead, the government strongly condemns the bombing in Bali' (*Media Indonesia*).<sup>55</sup> An article published by *Kompas* the morning after the blast, noted that,

Several members of the People's Representative Assembly (DPR) of Indonesia, who were contacted, strongly condemned as well as regretted the occurrence of the bomb explosion in Kuta, Bali. The chairman of the DPR Golkar Party Faction, Marzuki Achmad, and a member of the DPR First Commission of the United Development Party Faction, Aisyah Aminy, as well as the Secretary of the DPR Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle Faction, Tjahjo Kumolo, said this to the Antara news agency.

Marzuki said, his faction strongly condemns the bombing and considers it an uncivilized act and for this reason the government must apprehend the perpetrators. 'This brutal act must not be tolerated', he said.

He believes the bombing was done in a systematic fashion by an organized group in order to destroy the image of Indonesia abroad. 'We are concerned that this incident strengthens accusations that there is a terrorist network in Indonesia. Since Bali is an international tourist destination, the bombing can create an image of Bali as unsafe' he said.<sup>56</sup> (*Kompas* 2002b)

<sup>53</sup> Presiden kutuk keras aksi peledakan bom (*Kompas*).

<sup>54</sup> Muhammidyah kutuk pengeboman Bali (*Tempo*).

<sup>55</sup> 182 tewas, pemerintah kutuk keras pengeboman di Bali (*Media Indonesia*).

<sup>56</sup> The passage reads: Beberapa anggota DPR RI yang dihubungi mengutuk keras serta menyesalkan terjadinya ledakan bom di Kuta Bali. Ketua Fraksi Partai Golkar DPR RI Marzuki Achmad, anggota Komisi I DPR F-Partai Persatuan Pembangunan

As in this excerpt, the bombing was predominantly cast as an attempt to ruin the image of Indonesia (*menghancurkan / merusak / menjatuhkan citra Indonesia*) in the eyes of the rest of the world. Along similar lines, the bombing was also frequently represented as an effort to destabilize either Megawati's government or the country more generally. These attributions of motivation were often linked to concerns regarding the economic impact of the attack.<sup>57</sup>

Economists are also certain that investment activity in the financial sector (direct capital investment) will be disturbed following the tragedy of the bomb in Bali. Because Bali, which until now had been a national icon of security and stability, has been tainted. Indonesia's rating in terms of the security of investment will drop.

The emergence of all the panic is not excessive. As a result of the Bali tragedy, Indonesia has already been deemed no longer safe. When investments decline, the impact will follow. The government must know this. It is not enough for the government simply to comment that the perpetrator must be apprehended, without being able to guarantee security in the longer term.<sup>58</sup> (*Bali Post* 2002b)

Officials repeatedly called upon the government and/or police and security agencies to apprehend the perpetrators; and their call to

(F-PPP) Aisyah Aminy, dan Sekretaris F-PDIP DPR RI Tjahjo Kumolo mengatakan hal itu kepada Antara.

Marzuki mengatakan, fraksinya mengutuk keras tindakan pemboman itu dan menilai tindakan tersebut biadab karenanya pemerintah harus meringkus pelakunya. "Tindakan brutal tersebut sudah tak bisa ditolerir," katanya.

Dia menduga pemboman tersebut dilakukan secara sistematis oleh kelompok terorganisir untuk menghancurkan citra Indonesia di luar negeri. "Kita khawatir peristiwa itu memperkuat tudungan adanya jaringan teroris di Indonesia. Karena Bali merupakan tempat wisata internasional, pemboman tersebut bisa menciptakan citra Bali tak aman," katanya.

<sup>57</sup> It should also be noted that a similar attribution of motive underpinned many of the conspiracy theories suggesting that 'foreign machinations' (*rekayasa asing*) - often a thinly veiled reference to the CIA, Mossad or MI-6 - were behind the attack. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of these 'conspiracy theories' were complex, and I shall be returning to examine them in a separate essay.

<sup>58</sup> The passage read as follows: Para ekonom juga meyakini, kegiatan investasi di sektor real (penanaman modal langsung), akan terganggu menyusul tragedi bom di Bali. Sebab, Bali yang selama ini menjadi ikon nasional dalam hal keamanan dan stabilitas terkoyak. Rating Indonesia dalam hal keamanan investasi pun bakal jeblok. Munculnya semua kepanikan tersebut memang tidak berlebihan. Akibat tragedi Bali itu, Indonesia sudah dianggap tak lagi aman. Jika investasi merosot, dampaknya akan berantai. Pemerintah harus tahu hal ini. Pemerintah tak cukup hanya memberikan komentar bahwa pelakunya harus ditangkap, namun tak mampu memberikan jaminan keamanan dalam jangka panjang. (*Bali Post* 2002b)

action was often further qualified with the insistence that the case be handled quickly and efficiently. The latter emphasis, I believe, was in large part addressed to a sense of popular dissatisfaction with the way in which the investigation of the many previous bombings had been handled.

*The idea of 'terorisme'*

Almost two years before the Bali bombing – at a time when the term ‘terorisme’ was used with far less frequency – an article was published in *Tempo* that made the following observation:

Unfortunately the professionalism of the bombers is not matched by professionalism among the police. In handling these bombing cases, the police seem anything but professional. In many of the bombing cases the police are having trouble gathering evidence’ (*Tempo* 2000a).<sup>59</sup>

Two years later, similar sentiments seemed to be lurking just below the surface in a great deal of the commentary on what should be done in the wake of the Bali bombing. If the bombers themselves were frequently described as ‘highly professional’, they were very rarely identified with any specificity. Rather, in the early reporting, those responsible for the bombing were often referred to ambiguously as ‘a certain group’ (*kelompok / pihak tertentu*), ‘a certain organization’ (*organisasi tertentu*) or what might loosely be rendered as ‘the perpetrator(s) and mastermind’ (*pelaku dan dalang*).<sup>60</sup> There was also occasional reference to al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, but any link to the bombing in this connection was always – without exception, I believe – attributed directly to a government official or, more commonly, to a ‘terrorism expert’.<sup>61</sup>

This marked tendency toward ambiguity in the early coverage should not necessarily be understood in terms of ‘denial’. ‘Terorisme’ was, no doubt, a contentious issue. Yet, despite widespread reports to

<sup>59</sup> The passage reads: Sayangnya keprofesionalan pelaku peledakan tidak diimbangi oleh profesionalisme pihak Kepolisian. Dalam menangani kasus-kasus peledakan bom ini Kepolisian dinilai semakin tidak profesional saja. Dalam beberapa kasus peledakan bom ini polisi kesulitan mengumpulkan bukti-bukti (*Tempo* 2000a).

<sup>60</sup> The idea of ‘the *dalang*’, or the shadow puppeteer, has long been used as a metaphor for political manipulation from ‘behind the screen’.

<sup>61</sup> The issue of the various positions taken by government officials on this matter is adequately complex as to warrant a separate study.

the contrary in the mainstream western media,<sup>62</sup> numerous articles were published citing unambiguous declarations from officials that 'this is terrorism'.

National Chief of Police General Da'i Bachtiar said that the explosion of a bomb on Legian Road, Kuta, Bali, indicates that indeed there is terrorist activity in Indonesia. This was said by the National Chief of Police when he visited the location of the explosion at the Sari Club discotheque, on Legian Road, Sunday (13/10), around 11:30 local time.<sup>63</sup> (*Tempo* 2002b)

Minister of Defense Matori Abdul Djalil is convinced that the bombing incident in the tourist center of Legian Kuta, Bali, was done by terrorists. 'I'm certain there are terrorists in Indonesia, after seeing various phenomena and especially the bombing in Bali last night', said the Minister, to journalists, in Bengkulu, on Sunday (13/10).<sup>64</sup> (*Kompas* 2002b)

[In a press release] the government has asked that the community (*masyarakat*) remain calm and increase its vigilance. The bombing incident is yet another reminder for the Indonesian nation that terrorism comprises a real danger and comprises a potential threat to national security.<sup>65</sup> (*Media Indonesia* 2002b)

On the whole, remarks from officials seemed both cautious and deliberate. The incident itself was often described as 'bomb terror' (*teror bom*), a 'terrorist act' (*aksi / tindakan teroris*) or an 'act of terrorism' (*aksi / tindakan terorisme*). There was also fairly frequent reference to the idea that Indonesia would have to 'fight', 'combat' or 'wipe out terrorism' (*memerangi / memberantas / menanggulangi terorisme*). Further, there was a great deal of criticism of those who had claimed in the past that Indonesia was free of terrorism. An editorial column published

<sup>62</sup> As Zachery Abuza said in an interview on *The news hour with Jim Lehrer*, 'I hope the Indonesian government is going to stop being in denial about this. The Singaporeans have been very helpful. The Malaysians have cracked down, the Filipinos, but the weak link in all of this has been the Indonesians' (*PBS* 2002).

<sup>63</sup> The passage read: Kapolri Jenderal Polisi Da'i Bachtiar menyatakan, ledakan bom di Jl. Legian, Kuta, Bali, ini menunjukkan bahwa memang ada kegiatan terorisme di Indonesia. Hal ini disampaikan Kapolri saat meninjau lokasi ledakan di diskotik Sari Club, Jl. Legian, Minggu (13/10), sekitar pukul 11.30 Wita. (*Tempo* 2002b)

<sup>64</sup> The passage read: Menteri Pertahanan Matori Abdul Djalil, berkeyakinan peristiwa pengemboman di kawasan wisata Legian Kuta, Bali, dilakukan teroris. "Saya yakin teroris ada di Indonesia, setelah melihat berbagai fenomena yang ada khususnya pemboman di Bali tadi malam," kata Menhan, kepada wartawan, di Bengkulu, Minggu (13/10). (*Kompas* 2002b)

<sup>65</sup> The passage read: '...pemerintah meminta masyarakat tetap tenang dan meningkatkan kewaspadaannya. Peristiwa pengeboman itu, sekali lagi menjadi peringatan bagi bangsa Indonesia bahwa terorisme merupakan bahaya nyata dan merupakan ancaman potensial bagi keamanan nasional' (*Media Indonesia* 2002b).

in the *Bali Post* two days after the bombing (14/10) took stock of the situation:

In the old days we preferred to deny the presence of terrorism on our own soil. We always answered each accusation of the existence of such acts of savagery by explaining that there is no terrorism in Indonesia. This denial was perhaps meant to carry a declaration that the Indonesian nation is in no way a terrorist nation.

When the issue of international terrorism (*terorisme internasional*) entered our lives, many of our officials underscored in a positive manner the possibility of there being world terrorism (*terorisme dunia*) operating in Indonesia. Yet, this confirmation [?] that was more political in nature was balanced out from those in government circles and the National Intelligence Agency (BIN). According to these two institutions, there was indeed terrorism in Indonesia, but with regard to what extent it was connected with an international terrorist network, there was still no proof. Because of that, the security agency and BIN could only take a stance of vigilance and endeavor to continue investigating the matter.

Domestic terrorism had already surfaced in the era of the New Order. Numerous cases had occurred but they did not stand out as cases of terrorism, but on the contrary they tended to be suppressed as cases of ordinary crime, when they were not simply made to disappear.

The issue of terrorism stood out even more in the era of reform. Killings, arson, rape and the bombing of public places and places of worship, in an indirect manner convinced our nation that there indeed is terrorism on this earth. Because of that, when a number of officials strongly denied there was terrorism in our Homeland, many ordinary people just smiled knowingly.

The accusation that Indonesia is a hotbed of terrorism in Southeast Asia is indeed painful. To a certain extent we can understand how a number of officials and public figures would be offended. But, the case of the bombing in Kuta precludes denying any longer the fact that terrorism indeed exists in the country and in the midst of our national life.

In other words, the Kuta Tragedy has forced us to be realistic. We must admit, certainly based on fact and knowledge, that Indonesia is no longer an area free from terrorism. On the contrary, we acknowledge in awareness that there is terrorism and that it comprises a serious threat to our national life.<sup>66</sup> (*Bali Post* 2002c)

The Bali bombing emerges unambiguously from this account as an act of 'terorisme'. It may be noted, however, that – at least in this editorial – it is not made altogether explicit what constitutes the

<sup>66</sup> The full Indonesian text of the article is reproduced in Appendix C.

criteria for judging it as such. 'Killings, arson, rape and the bombing of public places and places of worship' are listed as acts of terrorism; and we are told that there was terrorism in Indonesia under the former President Suharto's repressive New Order régime. We may also recall that another article published in the same newspaper that morning (*Bali Post* 2002d) listed the 1978 Israeli attack on a PLO building in Beirut alongside the Lockerbie tragedy and 9.11. As many have pointed out, the US, Israel and several other states have committed acts that would – in most respects – qualify as 'terrorism'. So what, then, is this thing called terrorism?<sup>67</sup> Or, perhaps, might it make more sense to ask *when* is terrorism?<sup>68</sup> From a pragmatic perspective, I am interested in the conditions under which a particular event can emerge as an act of terrorism. And, in this regard, the Bali bombing appears to have marked a point of transformation – not only for Indonesian anti-terrorism legislation (see above), but also for the mainstream Indonesian mass media.

### III. Christmas Eve 2000

On Christmas Eve of 2000, some thirty bombs exploded over a period of approximately five and a half hours at twenty churches in ten cities across the archipelago. The homes of several priests, as well as a number of public buildings, were also bombed that same evening.<sup>69</sup> It was on the morning after these bombings that the piece on *Tempo Interaktif* remarked that 'It is as if bombings have become a trend in Indonesian society' (see above).

#### *Bombs?*

The earliest report on any of these bombings that I have been able to find was posted to the *Detik.com* website a few minutes before seven

<sup>67</sup> I have borrowed the phrasing of this question from the title of Chalmers' (1978) introduction to the philosophy and history of the natural sciences: *What is this thing called science?*

<sup>68</sup> This shift follows Nelson Goodman's approach to 'Art' in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978: 57ff).

<sup>69</sup> Police statistics for the bombing, as well as for several previous bombings, were published by *Tempo* (2000a) in an article entitled 'Perkembangan beberapa kasus peledakan bom'.

o'clock PM (Jakarta Time), on Christmas Eve. That would put the time of publication around three hours after the blast.

## **DETIK.COM**

### **Explosion in Bandung**

#### **Detonator that was found explodes**

Sunday, 24/12/2000 18:57:00

Reporter: Arifin Asydhad

Detik.com - Bandung, Before the local residents' panic could subside following the explosion at Jalan Terusan Jakarta No. 43-45, Antapani, Bandung, there was another explosion. This time it came from three detonators that the police had succeeded in finding while looking for other evidence. Two police officers were blown back and the Bandung City Regional Chief of Police himself was injured in the foot.

This was the Detik.com report from Bandung as of 18:45 Western Indonesian Time (24/12/2000) in connection with the case of the explosion that killed two people. The discovery of evidence in the form of three detonators and some other equipment had not yet been investigated. When these things were about to be put into a bag, they suddenly exploded.

The two police officers that had been blown back [by the explosion] experienced fairly serious injuries, requiring that they be rushed to hospital. One of them was a member of the Bomb Squad who was in the process of conducting the investigation. Meanwhile the Bandung City Regional Chief of Police, Senior Superintendent Timur Pradopo, only suffered minor injuries.

With the discovery of the three detonators, the strength of this explosion in a car showroom is thought to have come from a bomb. The first explosion occurred at 16:00 Western Indonesian Time. Two people are confirmed dead and several others suffered burns. They are being cared for at the Hasan Sadikin Hospital and the St. Yusuf Hospital.

With the explosion of the detonator that was successfully recovered by the police, the investigation is being intensified. The police have also widened the area within the police line.<sup>70</sup> (Detik.com 2000b)

The incident in Bandung was the first of several bombs that would be reported that evening. This initial report opens with the 'panic' of local residents and, as its title suggests, it is concerned primarily with the explosion of the recovered detonators. But, it also mentions the injuries and loss of life resulting from both explosions, together

<sup>70</sup> The full Indonesian text of the article is reproduced in Appendix D.

with some cursory comments on the investigation.<sup>71</sup> Presented as 'the *Detik.com* report from Bandung as of 18:45', this is a story in progress. And, in this regard, it was not entirely unlike the early reports on the bombings at the Marriott hotel and in Bali. Yet, this initial account of the incident in Bandung was comparatively light on visual detail. Although the explosion of the detonators is described at some length, there is none of the emphasis on visual imagery that we saw in the initial report on the Marriott bombing, or – for that matter – in some of the later, more visually oriented passages in the coverage of the Bali bombings.

### *A terrorist's responsibility*

Despite having announced an extended holiday break between the celebration of Christmas and the Muslim holiday of Idul Fitri, several of the leading Jakarta-based dailies published special editions of their papers on the morning of the twenty-sixth, for distribution free of charge in order 'to keep readers informed' (*Jakarta Post* 2000a). For instance, *Kompas* published an eight-page edition, with the following message displayed in a text box beneath the masthead:

IN ORDER to provide a more complete account of the numerous bombings that occurred on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, *Kompas* has decided to distribute publicly a special edition with limited circulation. This special edition consists of eight pages and comprises a part of our service to the general public. Limitations on our lines of distribution have meant that this special edition cannot reach all of our readers. We apologize for this limitation. Hopefully our effort will contribute to preserving us all from unwanted misfortune.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> It should be noted that this was not the first report from *Detik.com* on the incident itself. A separate report on the initial explosion – i.e., the one that occurred in the car showroom before the detonators exploded – was posted almost two hours earlier. Coming roughly an hour after the blast, that first report (*Detik.com* 2000a) cited the Central Bandung District Police Chief, Superintendent Subagyo Hadi Saputra, explicitly denying that the explosion had been caused by a bomb.

<sup>72</sup> The passage reads: UNTUK memberi gambaran yang lebih utuh tentang berbagai aksi pengeboman yang terjadi tanggal 24 Desember lalu, *Kompas* memutuskan untuk menurunkan edisi khusus yang diedarkan terbatas di tempat-tempat umum. Edisi khusus ini terdiri dari delapan halaman dan merupakan bagian dari pelayanan kami kepada masyarakat umum. Keterbatasan jalur distribusi membuat edisi khusus ini tidak bisa benjangkau seluruh pembaca. Kami mohon maaf atas keterbatasan ini. Mudah-mudahan usaha ini bisa memberi sumbangan untuk menghindarkan kita semua dari malapetaka yang tidak kita inginkan.

Much of the coverage in this special edition focused on reactions to the bombings from government officials and other public figures. Their commentary was – on the whole – fairly uniform, showing pronounced regularity with the commentary on the Bali bombing that I addressed in the previous section. Many were quoted at length, ‘strongly condemning’ (*mengutuk keras*) this ‘terrorist action’ (*aksi teroris*) that was consistently referred to as ‘uncivilized’ (*biadab*), ‘inhumane’<sup>73</sup> (*antikemanusiaan* or *tidak berperikemanusiaan*) and not in line with the teachings of any of the world’s religions. Many of the public figures interviewed extended their condolences to the victims’ families; and some apologized for what they considered to be a failure on the part of the Indonesian security apparatus.

Throughout the coverage, there was a strong sense that the motivation for these bombings was ‘political’. The cartoon on the Opinion page of the special edition from *Kompas*, for instance, depicted a bomb flying over the Cathedral Church (which was bombed on Christmas Eve) and the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta (which had been bombed the previous year). In the lower right corner of the cartoon, two characters are depicted looking perplexed, asking ironically ‘a just and civilized humanity?’ – a phrase taken from the second of the Five National Precepts (*Pancasila*) as laid out in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution.

The idea of ‘political’ motivation was also a prominent theme in the lead story published on the front page, which began as follows:

#### **SERIES OF BOMBINGS DENOUNCED**

#### **15 people killed, 96 injured**

Jakarta, *Kompas* – The series of bombings that occurred almost simultaneously in ten cities, Sunday (24/12) evening, disturbed the serenity of the Christian community as they performed their Christmas services. This shocking incident that took 15 lives and injured 96 others was denounced immediately from various quarters.

President Abdurrahman Wahid immediately reacted strongly to the incident as an attempt by an organized group to destabilize the government.

‘Their method is to destabilize the government, creating a sense of fear and panic so that the government cannot function. This is an effort on the part of various factions to create a chaotic situation’, said the President at Halim

<sup>73</sup> Or, perhaps, even ‘anti-human’.

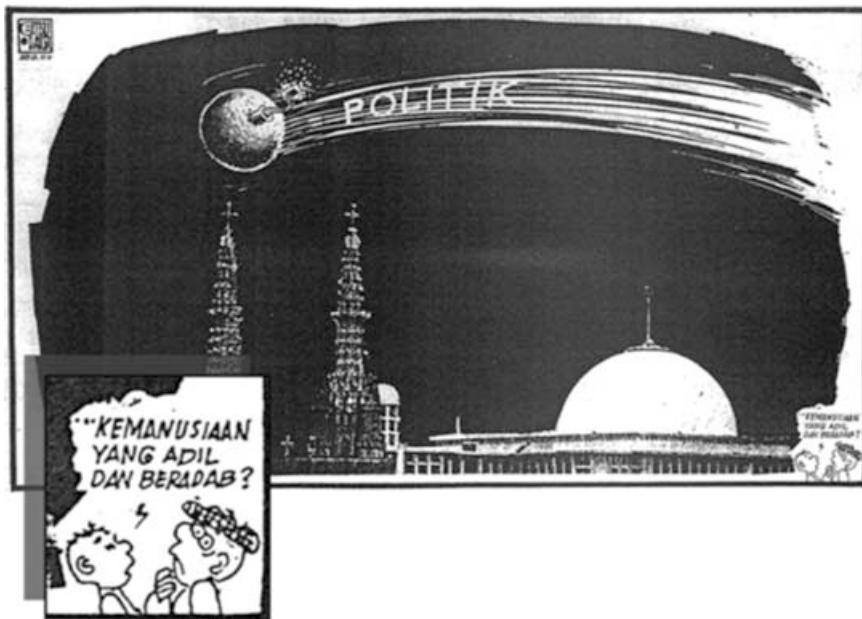


Figure 7.

Perdanakusuma Air Force Base, in Jakarta, Tuesday (25/12) morning, before leaving for Irian Jaya.<sup>74</sup>

The story went on to cite several other public figures, including government and security officials, as well as the Cardinal of Jakarta, who urged the Catholic community not to rush to conclusions regarding who might have been behind the bombings. He enjoined them to refrain specifically from blaming another religious group

<sup>74</sup> The passage reads: **Rentetan Pengeboman Dikecam**

**15 Orang Meninggal, 96 Luka-luka**

Jakarta, Kompas – Rentetan peledakan bom yang terjadi hampir bersamaan di sepuluh kota, Minggu (24/12) malam, telah mengganggu keheningan umat Kristen saat melakukan kebaktian Natal. Peristiwa mengagetkan yang menelan korban 15 jiwa dan 96 orang luka-luka itu langsung dikecam oleh berbagai kalangan. Presiden Abdurrahman Wahid langsung bereaksi keras atas peristiwa pengeboman itu sebagai upaya menggoyang pemerintah yang dilakukan oleh kelompok teroris. 'Langkah mereka adalah menggoyang pemerintah, menciptakan rasa takut dan panik agar pemerintah tak jalan. Ini adalah upaya yang timbul dari berbagai golongan untuk menciptakan keadaan yang kalut', kata Presiden di Pankalan TNI AU Halim Perdanakusuma, Jakarta, Senin (25/12) pagi, sebelum bertolak ke Irian Jaya.

(read: Muslims) for the attacks.<sup>75</sup> When asked if anyone had claimed responsibility for the bombings, a senior Jakarta Police official replied wryly, 'Where have you ever seen a terrorist who's responsible?'.<sup>76</sup>

*On the politics of provocation*

When the 'perpetrators' were said to be motivated by a desire 'to spread terror', public figures responded by encouraging Indonesian 'society' – the *masyarakat* – not to be provoked. The phrase most commonly employed in this connection was *jangan terpancing*.

The Governor of Riau, Saleh Djasit, gathered together all of the religious leaders on Tuesday afternoon. Supported by these religious leaders, he called for society (*masyarakat*) not to be provoked emotionally (*terpancing emosional*), especially at a time when religious adherents were celebrating their holy days. (*Kompas* 2000b)<sup>77</sup>

'What's important is that the community not be provoked (*terpancing*). I reckon these are efforts to terrorize and sow discord. Everyone must show restraint, and not be provoked' (*terpancing*).

- Chief of Regional Riau Police (as cited in *Tempo* 2000c)<sup>78</sup>

Through these admonitions, Indonesian society was invariably represented as a passive and irrational mass, internally differentiated along ethnic and religious lines, and always on the verge of being

<sup>75</sup> The passage reads: Uskup Agung Jakarta Mgr Kardinal Julius Darmaatmadja sangat menyesalkan seangkaian kejadian pengeboman. Julius mengimbau umat Katolik tidak mengambil konklusi mengenai siapa pelaku pengeboman. 'Kita tidak perlu mengarahkan kecurigaan. Apalagi kalau umat Katolik mengira kelompok agama tertentu. Jangan membuat penilaian sendiri siapa yang memusuhi', katanya. This sentiment is also frequently encountered in officials' reactions to the Bali bombing. However, perhaps significantly, it seemed less common following the bombing ten months later at the Marriott hotel.

<sup>76</sup> The passage reads: 'Saat ditanya apakah sudah ada pihak yang menyatakan bertanggung jawab dalam pengeboman itu, Montolalu menjawab, "Mana ada (teroris) yang bertanggung jawab?". The parenthetical 'teroris' is in the original.

<sup>77</sup> The passage reads: Gubernur Riau Saleh Djasit mengumpulkan semua pemuka agama, Senin sore. Didukung oleh pemuka-pemuka agama tersebut, ia menyerukan agar masyarakat tidak terpancing emosional, apalagi di tengah waktu pemeluk agama yang sedang menjalani hari-hari suci. (*Kompas* 2000b)

<sup>78</sup> 'Yang terpenting, umat jangan sampai terpancing. Saya kira, ini upaya upaya teror dan memecah belah. Semua harus menahan diri, jangan terpancing'. (*Tempo* 2000c)

provoked into bouts of internecine conflict.<sup>79</sup> Such articulations of the masses in Indonesia have a long history of precedents. The entry under 'masses' in Kurniawan Junaedhie's *Ensiklopedi pers Indonesia* is perhaps rather instructive in this connection:

### THE MASSES

A segment of the population that cannot always be seen and occasionally can be seen. Made up of all segments of the population. Its character is anonymous-heterogeneous. Among them there is no interaction and exchange of experience as a result of their isolation from one another apart from their similarity in feeling and thought. Unable to think critically, readily convinced and fairly easily influenced, quick to take offence, fanatical, enthusiastic, daring, and capable of acting without giving a thought to responsibility.<sup>80</sup> (Kurniawan Junaedhie 1991: 160)

It is a little difficult to know precisely how one should read this entry in Kurniawan Junaedhie's *Indonesian Press Encyclopedia*. It is an otherwise serious book and, whether it is commenting on prevalent assumptions or putting such an account forward itself, the passage provides more or less equal support for the currency of such assumptions regarding Indonesian society. While unspecified *agents provocateurs* were (and are) usually represented as playing an instrumental role in 'stirring things up' or 'pitting one against the other' (*mengadu domba*) among the masses, agency is generally rather hazily attributed to a *dalang* or 'puppeteer', who is thought to be running things from behind the scenes – or, more precisely, from behind the screen.<sup>81</sup> The general idea is that, if society shows restraint, these machinations will be rendered ineffective.

The frequently encountered phrase, *jangan terpancing* – which I have rendered as 'do not be provoked' – is a fishing metaphor that draws on the Indonesian saying *memancing di air keruh*, or 'fishing in murky

<sup>79</sup> This articulation of the Indonesian masses has a long and complex history, deserving a monograph in its own right.

<sup>80</sup> The passage reads: **MASSA**  
Sekumpulan orang banyak yang tidak selalu bisa dilihat kadangkala juga bisa dilihat. Terdiri dari segala lapisan dalam masyarakat dan orang. Sifatnya, anonim-heterogen. Di antara mereka tidak terdapat interaksi dan pertukaran pengalaman akibat terpisah satu sama lain kecuali persamaan perasaan dan pikiran. Tidak dapat berpikir kritis, mudah percaya dan amat gampang dipengaruhi, mudah tersinggung, fanatik, bersemangat, berani, dan dapat berbuat tanpa memikirkan tanggung jawab. (Kurniawan Junaedhie 1991: 160)

<sup>81</sup> See note 60, above.

water'. As an Indonesian journalist recently explained to me,

This expression ... means to exploit an already dodgy situation. To be specific: if there is a tension in one village over a 'lurah' (village head) election, for example, digging up dirt on one of the election's candidates to provoke confrontation between rivaling masses would be considered 'memancing di air keruh'.

The political connection is anything but accidental. Recalling Gus Dur's remark – among others – the bombings were repeatedly cast as 'an attempt by an organized group to destabilize the government', a theme that was also taken up by Adi Sasano, the Chairman of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI), as cited in an article from *Tempo*:

When asked about the possibility of there being those who wish to discredit the government, according to Adi there is an issue that is more serious than the question of being for or against the government. 'There is something that is happening with this country', he explained. The point (?), according to Adi, is that the bombings that occurred last night were not just acts of violence that occurred on this occasion alone. 'These acts of violence are already so familiar for us, as with what has been happening in Maluku over the last two years', he said.<sup>82</sup> (*Tempo* 2000b)

In positing a political motive for the Christmas Eve bombings, parallels frequently were drawn with violence in other parts of the country – and particularly in Maluku:

Mr. Munir, the Coordinator of Kontras (the Commission for Missing Persons and Acts of Violence), said that through this series of terror bombings there has been a systematic politicization of conflict. This may be seen in the choice of time and place to create extraordinary terror. According to him, this terror creates a fear in the midst of society. 'The presence of this fear can give rise to an inter-religious cycle [of revenge], and this is what is going on in Maluku', he said. (*Tempo* 2000d)<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> The passage reads: Ketika ditanyakan tentang kemungkinan adanya pihak-pihak yang ingin mendeskreditkan pemerintah, menurut Adi ada masalah yang lebih mendalam dari sekedar pro atau kontra pemerintah. "Ada sesuatu yang terjadi dengan bangsa ini," ujarnya. Pasalnya, menurut Adi, peledakan bom yang terjadi semalam bukan hanya aksi kekerasan yang terjadi saat ini saja. "Aksi-aksi kekerasan sudah begitu akrab dengan kita, seperti yang terjadi di Maluku selama dua tahun belakangan ini," ujarnya pula. (*Tempo* 2000b)

<sup>83</sup> The passage read as follows: Dalam kesempatan itu, Koordinator Kontras, Munir, mengungkapkan bahwa dalam rangkaian teror bom ini tengah terjadi politisasi konflik yang sistematis. Hal ini terlihat pada pilihan waktu dan tempat untuk menciptakan teror yang luar biasa. Menurut dia, teror ini menciptakan suatu ketakutan di tengah masyarakat. "Adanya ketakutan ini bisa menimbulkan

Many went further, to propose the possibility of an organizational link between the bombings and the violence in Maluku. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, for instance, the editorial column in the *Jakarta Post* suggested:

The timing and the targets were chosen to create the impression of a religiously motivated campaign. With Idul Fitri, the Muslim holiday, coming only two days after Christmas, the perpetrators were clearly trying to antagonize relations between the Christians, the country's largest minority religious group, and Muslims, who make up more than 80 percent of Indonesia's population. We have seen this type of campaign work with such devastating effect in Maluku, North Maluku and in Central Sulawesi, where Muslims and Christians have been fighting each other. Now the perpetrators are trying to expand their war theater to the rest of the country, including Jakarta. Let us hope that enough cool heads prevail in Jakarta and the rest of the country to prevent a religious conflict from erupting. This is a campaign clearly designed to terrorize and to provoke a bigger conflict, rather than to commit mass murders. (2000b)

This general configuration of provocation and inter-religious antagonism has figured prominently in popular representations of the 'communal' violence that has arisen in several parts of Indonesia in the years following the demise of the New Order.

The articulation of the Indonesian masses in terms of 'ethnically', 'religiously' and otherwise differentiated groups is rooted in a history far too complex to address properly in this paper.<sup>84</sup> The drive to maintain a governable unity between these variously differentiated groups is evident, among other places, in a long-standing press policy that originated in the early days of the New Order régime and, on the basis of which,

a range of topics [were] widely recognised as off limits [for public discussion], and have been dubbed with the mnemonic 'MISS SARA' which refers to anything deemed seditious, insinuating, sensational, speculative, or likely to antagonise ethnic, religious, racial or 'group' (class) tensions. (Hill 1994: 45)<sup>85</sup>

"balas-membalas antar agama, dan hal ini yang tengah terjadi di Maluku," ujarnya. (*Tempo* 2000d)

<sup>84</sup> In passing I should note, however, that this history will have to be addressed by the reform movement (*reformasi*) if it hopes to overcome the legacy of violence and repression left behind by the New Order.

<sup>85</sup> The acronym 'MISS SARA' stands for Menghasut, Insinuasi, Sensasi, Spekulasi, Suku, Agama, Ras, Aliran. Also see International Centre Against Censorship (1996: 11). In this connexion, Adam Schwarz described how, in journalistic circles, when sensitive issues arose, editors could 'expect to receive telephone calls from the

The implementation of the SARA policy contributed to the discursive emergence of a sanitized and ostensibly pluralistic Indonesian nation. Under the New Order – and, to a certain extent, through the era of *reformasi* as well – the mainstream mass media has displayed Indonesia's many 'culturally', 'religiously' and 'ethnically' differentiated groups predominantly as living in blissful tolerance of one another – even, and perhaps especially, when this has patently not been the case. Calls to inter-group tolerance have been a mainstay of state-sponsored crisis management in Indonesia, and they figured prominently in the aftermath of both the Christmas Eve and Bali bombings, if somewhat less so in the aftermath of the bombing at the Marriott hotel. So what might this have to do with terrorism?

### *Agents of terror*

In addition to the calls for tolerance, the terms *teror* ('terror') and *teroris* ('terrorist') – as well as the phrases *aksi teror* (≈ 'act of terror') and *teror bom* ('bomb terror') – were used frequently in connection with the attacks. Looking back at the front page of the *Kompas* special edition, for instance, another of the articles bears the headline 'Perpetrators thought to be a terrorist organization' (*Pelaku diduga organisasi teroris*). The article concludes with a quote from then Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: 'Let's stop laying the blame on one another. Terrorism (*terorisme*) is not only the enemy of the government, but it is (also) the enemy of the nation, the enemy of the entire Indonesian people'.<sup>86</sup> Although such use of the abstract noun '*terorisme*' was at this point far less common than the adjectival and concrete substantive uses of '*teror*' and '*teroris*', Yudhoyono's remarks were still – more or less – in line with the other representations of the bombings found throughout the early coverage. For instance, the article cited above from *Tempo* again cited the Chairman of ICMI, Adi Sasano:

military "encouraging" placid reporting or, at times, no reporting at all' (1994: 240). The Indonesian term *budaya telepon* ('telephone culture') is used in reference to this practice of instructing editors to remove sensitive news items from their magazines, newspapers etc. (see Echols & Shadily 1997: 91).

<sup>86</sup> Yudhoyono was at the time the Coordinating Minister for Political, Social and Security Affairs. The original text reads: 'Marilah kita berhenti untuk saling menyalahkan. Terorisme bukan hanya musuh pemerintah, tetapi musuh bangsa, musuh semua rakyat Indonesia', tandas Yudhoyono'. (*Kompas* 26/12/2000, p.5)

Adi is convinced the bombings were organized with precision and to a high professional standard. The act is thought to have been intended to spread terror in society. 'We mustn't submit to terror', said the former Minister for Cooperatives. (*Tempo* 2000b)<sup>87</sup>

There was vague discussion of possible links to elements associated with the family of former President Suharto and/or the Indonesian military (TNI). However, there was little clear indication of who specifically might be responsible for 'spreading terror in society'. Rather, as in most of the early Bali bombing coverage, the perpetrators were generally referred to with elliptical phrases such as *kelompok tertentu* ('a certain group'), *pelaku dan dalang* (roughly, 'perpetrator and mastermind'), *kelompok terorganisir* ('an organized group') and *mereka yang tidak bertanggung jawab* (≈ 'those who are irresponsible'). And, as in much of the early coverage of the Bali bombing, the incident was cast clearly in terms of domestic precedent, with both *Kompas* and *Tempo* – among others – running lists of previous bombings.

Although no one was terribly specific in naming names, there was nevertheless a broad consensus that, whoever the perpetrators may have been, they were undoubtedly 'sophisticated', 'professional', 'well-organized' and 'trained' – even 'trained in a military fashion'. Here the emphasis was on the presumed technical sophistication of the bombers, as suggested by the near simultaneity of the explosions. As in the *Jakarta Post* editorial cited above, 'Either the government is completely inept, or the perpetrators are truly professional in their work, or, God forbid, both' (2000b). The editorial concluded, 'We do not know who they are and what they really want. We only know what they are capable of. And we know they can strike again, any time, anywhere' (2000b). This rather vague sense of sophisticated but unspecified perpetrators was also evident in the early coverage of the Bali bombing. But, in retrospect, it sat uncomfortably alongside the strong articulation of 'terorisme' that would eventually emerge as the dominant frame of reference for reporting on the car bomb that exploded two and a half years later in front of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta.

<sup>87</sup> The passage reads: Adi meyakini peledakan bom ini merupakan aksi yang terorganisir dengan rapi dan sangat profesional. Aksi ini diduga bertujuan untuk menebar teror di masyarakat. "Seharusnya kita tidak boleh tunduk kepada teror," kata mantan Menteri Koperasi ini.

*What is this thing called terrorism?*

I began with coverage of the bombing that occurred on 5 August 2003 at the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta. There was a pronounced regularity discernible between the mainstream Indonesian and Euro-american coverage of the attack. Photographs of smoke, fire and destruction accompanied articles with graphic descriptions of horror and human casualty. A sense of chaos and disorder was articulated through eyewitness accounts and what I referred to as 'anecdotal gore' – detailed descriptions of charred remains, body parts and other aspects of the carnage. Tropes of presence and vision dominated the reporting, and the event was cast unambiguously as an incident of terrorism. Although there were pious nods from various officials regarding the need to wait for evidence, the 'al-Qaeda-linked terror network', Jemaah Islamiyah, was implicitly (and often explicitly) presumed responsible for the attack. Represented as 'just like Bali', the bombing of the Marriott hotel took its place at once within the emergent framework of 'the war on terror'.

The early coverage of the Bali bombing was more complicated. There was, in the first instance, a fairly marked disjuncture between the mainstream Indonesian and Euro-american reporting. With occasional exception, the images that were published by the Indonesian press depicted scenes of 'the morning after'. There were occasionally photographs of burnt remains, but even these sat in stark contrast to the images of terror-in-progress that dominated the broadly western coverage. This disjuncture was mirrored in the comparatively limited visual imagery found in the early Indonesian coverage, which clearly differentiated it, not only from its western counterparts, but also from the Indonesian coverage of the subsequent bombing at the Marriott hotel. In passing, it may be noted that a not inconsiderable period of time had passed before 'the war on terror' was able to emerge in (largely) unchallenged dominance as the frame of reference for mainstream reporting on the Bali bombing. In the early coverage, there was a certain degree of ambivalence regarding whether the bombing was symptomatic of something new or simply yet another bombing (as many Indonesian journalists assumed when they were first contacted by their editors).

If the Marriott bombing was cast in terms of an interpretive framework that surfaced in connection with coverage of the Bali bombing, and the Bali bombing only found that frame of reference after a period of ambivalence, the coverage of the Christmas Eve

bombings of 2000 was rooted firmly in domestic precedent – the dozens of bombings that had occurred across the archipelago following the demise of the New Order. As *Tempo* put it on Christmas day, 'It is as if bombings have become a trend in Indonesian society'. Unfortunately, I have been unable to compile sufficient materials to be able to comment on the photographs and other images that were published in the immediate aftermath of these earlier bombings.<sup>88</sup> Yet, along with the dearth of visual imagery and anecdotal gore, there was also comparatively little talk of 'terorisme'. In a front-page article for the special edition of *Kompas* (see above), then Minister for Political and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was already at this point speaking in terms of 'terorisme'; but he was one of the few. Although there were frequent invocations of 'aksi teror' and 'teror bom', I believe the absence of the abstract noun 'terorisme' was indicative of a broader set of circumstances.

On the morning of 25 December 2000, a more proximate context for interpreting this string of bombings was found in the numerous conflicts underway in other parts of the country, such as Maluku and central Sulawesi. The fear of 'communal conflict' and violence was predominantly represented in terms of longstanding assumptions regarding the nature of internal 'religious', 'ethnic' and other divisions. Under the New Order, this articulation of Indonesian society underwrote state intervention in the periphery and, by extension, the lucrative business opportunities provided by the military's territorial structure (see Mietzner 2003). With the emergence of 'terorisme' – and, perhaps more specifically, 'the war on terror' – as a framework for understanding violence in Indonesia, popular fears of 'communal' conflict may no longer retain their status as the default explanation. In other words, not unlike the medium of the Arabic language, mainstream Indonesian mass media seem to be undergoing certain transformations as a result of efforts to come to grips with a foreign discourse – the broadly western (read: American) discourse on terrorism. So, *when* is terrorism?

From a critical media perspective, it would appear that the idea of terrorism/terorisme seems to emerge when there is (i.) a spectacular attack, resulting in (ii.) substantial physical damage and (iii.) significant loss of life (optional), with (iv.) little if any publicly

<sup>88</sup> The problem is due, in part, to the holiday-time interruption in newspaper service in Jakarta.

available evidence for who is responsible, and (v.) a complete lack of serious discussion of the alleged perpetrators' possible motivations for carrying out the attack, but, perhaps in its place, (vi.) a surfeit of images and descriptions of 'horror and conflagration'.<sup>89</sup>

Sometime between Christmas Eve of 2000 and the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2003, this mode of representing violence emerged in dominance in the mainstream Indonesian mass media. How did this transformation come about? Although there is a great deal of (often well-intentioned) talk among the Euro-American urban intellectual élite about the power of 'global media', there has been little ethnographic work done to examine the practices through which this power-to-transform emerges. There is of course the growing importance of newswire agencies, which is simultaneously challenged and fortified through the growing accessibility of the Internet to media practitioners in developing nations. There is also a range of institutions that are working to internationalize broadly western conventions of journalistic practice. I am thinking, here, about the various programs for 'educating' reporters in countries like Indonesia by inviting them to attend courses in Europe and America. Through these and other processes, mainstream Indonesian mass media seem to be changing. Why? In short, I believe, to put it crudely: because the media of third world societies are 'weaker' in relation to western media (and today, especially to Euro-American mass media), they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around. Of course, while this variation on Asad's theme may characterize the situation rather well, the ethnographic work on the practices underpinning this process remains to be done.

<sup>89</sup> Mark Hobart pointed out to me that, taken together, these elements exhibit many of the features of a *Bakhtinian* chronotope – a particular configuration of spatial and temporal relations that determines the possibilities for representing human action. As Morson and Emerson explained, 'Chronotopes provide the ground for particular kinds of activity and carry with them a particular sense of experience' (1990: 426). They are 'the very ground for representing' (1990: 370). For Bakhtin, 'Genres (and their attendant chronotopes) constitute a part of a particular society's contribution to understanding actions and events' (Morson & Emerson 1990: 371). That leaves one with the rather uncomfortable question of what the chronotope of mass mediated terrorism has contributed to our understanding of actions and events in the contemporary world.

## Appendix A

The following is the original text for the earliest online report I was able to find on the Marriott bombing. Downloaded on 8 Aug 2003, from <http://www.tempo.co.id/news/2003/8/5/1,1,3,id.html>

### TEMPO

#### Jakarta

##### **Bom Luluh Lantakkan Hotel JW Marriot (sic) Jakarta**

5 Aug 2003 13:29:24 WIB

TEMPO Interaktif, Jakarta: Hotel bintang lima JW Marriot yang terletak di kawasan Mega Kuningan, Jakarta Selatan, luluh rantak (sic) akibat ledakan bom, Selasa (5/8) siang. Bagian paling parah dari hotel ini adalah di bagian entrance dan kanopi di depan lobinya. Lobi hotel ini hancur berantakan dan sebagian besar kaca-kaca hotel pecah.

Ledakan juga menghancurkan bagian depan dan kaca-kaca depan Paza (sic) Mutiara yang terletak di sebelah kiri Hotel Marriot. Saat berita ini dilaporkan, masih ada beberapa kobaran api yang tengah berusaha dipadamkan petugas. Mobil-mobil mewah yang diparkir di muka lobi, seperti sebuah Mercedes Benz warna hitam, terlihat hancur dan hangus dengan sebagian api masih berkobar.

Menurut seorang saksi di lokasi kejadian, bom meledak sekitar pukul 12.45 WIB. Ini berdasar dari dua kali ledakan yang terdengar saat itu. Sementara polisi di lokasi kejadian belum bisa memberi informasi mengenai jumlah korban, namun kabar yang beredar ada tiga tubuh manusia tergeletak di muka lobi Marriot.

Saat ini Kapolda Metro Jaya Irjen Polisi Makbul Padmanegara terlihat meninjau lokasi kejadian. Polisi masih mengosongkan areal hotel, dengan membentangkan garis polisi. Beberapa wartawan juga terlihat dihalau untuk menjauh dari lokasi kejadian.

Saat ini suasana di lokasi sangat kacau, ribuan orang yang berkantor di sekitar Mega Kuningan keluar dari gedung dan menonton lokasi. Massa yang berkumpul, termasuk beberapa di antaranya orang asing dan staf kedutaan Finlandia, tampak berkumpul di luar gedung Menara Rajawali yang terletak di sebelah kanan Marriot.

Menurut Sugiatno, petugas keamanan Menara Rajawali, ledakan sangat dasyat, getarannya sangat kuat, hingga beberapa kaca-kaca di restoran Bistro yang terletak di Menara Rajawali pecah. (Poernomo G. Ridho – TNR) (Tempo 2003c)

## Appendix B

The following is the original text for the earliest online report I was able to find on the Bali bombing. Downloaded on 12 Oct 2002 (EST), from <http://www.tempo.co.id/news/2002/10/12/1,1,25,id>

### TEMPO

#### National

##### **Ledakan di Kuta Menewaskan Sekitar 10 Orang**

13 Oct 2002 0:0:35 WIB

TEMPO Interaktif, Jakarta: Sebuah bom meledak di depan Sari Klub, Jl. Legian, Kuta, Bali, Sabtu (12/10), sekitar pukul 11.10 Wita. Akibat ledakan ini, tak kurang dari 10 orang pengunjung Sari Klub meninggal dan sekitar 40 lainnya luka-luka.

Hingga malam ini, petugas ambulans mondar mandir mengangkut korban yang luka-luka ke Rumah Sakit Sanglah, Denpasar. Jumlahnya, belum bisa diperkirakan secara pasti. Selain korban meninggal, puluhan bangunan yang berada di sekitar lokasi, rusak parah, beberapa di antaranya bangunan Padis Club dan Hotel White Rose.

Suasana di lokasi kejadian sangat hiruk pikuk. Sebab, listrik di sekitar lokasi padam dan para turis yang sedang berada di sekitar area ledakan tampak lalu lalang. Tampak seorang turis asal Australia terlihat meraung-raung karena anaknya, yang berumur 17 tahun, berada di Sari Club. Kapolda Bali Brigjen Pol. Budi Setiawan langsung memimpin aparatnya di lokasi untuk menangani kasus ini. (Jalil Hakim-Tempo News Room; *Tempo* 2002c)

## Appendix C

The following is the original text for the excerpt from *Bali Post* 2002c. Downloaded on 14 Oct 2002, from <http://www.balipost.co.id/balipostcetak/2002/10/14/01.htm>

Di waktu lalu kita lebih senang menolak eksistensi terorisme di Tanah Air. Tiap tudingan adanya tindak keberingasan tersebut selalu kita jawab dengan penegasan bahwa di Indonesia tidak ada terorisme. Penolakan ini mungkin mengandung implikasi pernyataan bahwa bangsa Indonesia sama sekali bukan bangsa teroris.

Ketika isu terorisme internasional memasuki wilayah kehidupan kita, banyak pejabat kita secara positif menegaskan kemungkinan adanya terorisme dunia yang beroperasi di Indonesia. Namun, penegasan yang lebih bersifat politik

itu mendapat keseimbangan dari pihak pemerintah maupun Badan Intelijen Nasional (BIN). Menurut kedua lembaga tersebut, terorisme memang ada di Indonesia, namun sejauh mana kaitannya dengan jaringan terorisme internasional, masih belum ada bukti. Karena itu, pihak aparat keamanan dan BIN hanya bisa bersikap waspada dan berupaya terus menyelidikinya.

Terorisme domestik sebenarnya sudah sempat muncul ke permukaan di masa Orde Baru. Banyak kasus sempat muncul namun tidak sempat mencuat sebagai kasus terorisme, sebaliknya cenderung ditekan menjadi kasus kejahatan biasa, kalau bukan ditenggelamkan begitu saja.

Era reformasi turut mendorong isu terorisme lebih mencuat lagi. Peristiwa pembunuhan, pembakaran, perkosaan, pengeboman tempat-tempat umum dan ibadah, secara tidak langsung meyakinkan bangsa kita bahwa di bumi Pertiwi ini memang ada terorisme. Oleh karena itu, ketika sejumlah pejabat membantah keras adanya terorisme di Tanah Air, banyak rakyat kecil tersenyum penuh pengertian.

Tudingan bahwa Indonesia merupakan sarang terorisme di Asia Tenggara memang menyakitkan. Sampai batas tertentu kita bisa memahami ketersinggungan sejumlah pejabat dan tokoh masyarakat. Namun, kasus pengeboman di Kuta ini membuat tidak bisa lagi menolak kenyataan bahwa terorisme memang eksis di negara dan di tengah kehidupan bangsa kita.

Dengan kata lain, Tragedi Kuta ini memaksa kita harus bersikap realistik. Kita harus mengakui, tentu saja berdasarkan kenyataan dan kesadaran, bahwa Indonesia bukan lagi sebuah kawasan bebas terorisme. Sebaliknya, kita mengakui secara sadar bahwa terorisme ada dan merupakan ancaman serius bagi kehidupan bangsa kita. (*Bali Post* 2002c)

## Appendix D

The following is the original text for Detik.com 2000b, the earliest online report I was able to find on the Christmas Eve bombings of 2000. Downloaded 27 Jan 2004 from <http://www.detik.com/peristiwa/2000/12/24/20001224-175404.shtml>

### DETIK.COM

#### Ledakan di Bandung

#### Detonator yang Ditemukan Meledak

Minggu, 24/12/2000 18:57:00

Reporter: Arifin Asyhad

Detik.com - Bandung, Belum habis kepanikan warga akibat ledakan di Jalan Terusan Jakarta No. 43-45, Antapani, Bandung, sebuah ledakan mengguncang lagi. Kali ini bersumber dari tiga detonator yang berhasil ditemukan polisi berikut barang bukti lain. Dua orang polisi terpental dan Kapolwiltabes Bandung sendiri terluka di kaki.

Demikian laporan Detik.com dari Bandung hingga pukul 18.45 WIB, Minggu (24/12/2000) berkenaan dengan kasus ledakan yang menewaskan dua orang. Temuan barang bukti berupa tiga buah detonator dan sejumlah peralatan lain itu sendiri belum sempat diselidiki. Ketika barang-barang itu hendak dimasukkan ke dalam tas, tiba-tiba meledak.

Dua polisi yang terpental mengalami luka cukup serius, hingga harus dilarikan ke rumah sakit. Salah satu dari mereka adalah anggota Tim Jihandak yang sedang melakukan penyelidikan. Sedangkan Kapolwiltabes Senior Superintendent Timur Pradopo hanya mengalami luka ringan.

Dengan ditemukannya tiga detonator itu, maka ledakan di sebuah showroom mobil itu diduga keras bersumber dari bom. Ledakan pertama kali terjadi pukul 16.00 WIB. Dua orang dipastikan tewas dan sejumlah orang lainnya luka bakar. Mereka dirawat di rumah sakit Hasan Sadikin dan RS St. Yusuf.

Dengan meledaknya detonator yang berhasil ditemukan polisi itu, maka penyelidikan makin diintensifkan. Polisi juga memperluas area police line. (smu) (Detik.com 2000b)

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lorraine Aragon, Talal Asad, Andi Faisal Bakti, Mark Hobart and John MacDougall for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I also wish to thank Ronald Lukens Bull for organizing the panel on which it was originally presented. I was assisted in my research at various points by several people including Johnnie Reyes in the Asia Division of the Library of Congress, Professor Rubie Watson at Harvard, and my research assistant, Rosmi Julitasari, in Jakarta. Thanks also go to Sidney Jones, Devi Asmarani, Don Greenlees, Dirk Vlasblom and John Aglionbi in Jakarta, as well as Rohan Gunaratna in Singapore. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Judith, for reading several drafts of this paper. Without her help, I could never have compiled the extensive archive on which this work is based – nor would the work have been nearly as enjoyable. I, of course, accept full responsibility for any mistakes or shortcomings in my analysis.

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