

The Palgrave Handbook of Political Norms in Southeast Asia

Edited by Gabriel Facal · Elsa Lafaye de Micheaux
Astrid Norén-Nilsson

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CHAPTER 33

Awas Polisi! Anarchists and Punks Transgressing Normative 'Politeness' While Resisting State Repression in Indonesia

Anne R. Kiss

Introduction

Anarchism in contemporary Indonesia shares numerous connections with punk counter culture, and punk has been recognised as re-introducing anarchist ideas to the archipelago in the aftermath of the post-1965 'red scare' repression of leftist politics, ideas, and organising. Repression against anarchists and punks has been an everyday reality for the movement(s) in Indonesia, but the state's framing of that repression has changed in recent years. Punks in Indonesia, as elsewhere in the world, respond to police harassment and violence through their lyrical expression, slogans, and imagery. This also extends to a wider critique of repressive state power, overlapping with and informed by anarchist analyses. Indeed, the anarchist movement in Indonesia has been at the forefront of highlighting and resisting the contemporary role of the police as enforcers of authoritarian neoliberal capitalism.

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the historical trajectory of anarchism in Indonesia since the early twentieth century, including the re-emergence of anarchism as an activist current, via punk, in the very late 1980s and into the 1990s, and its growing prominence in the first decades of the twenty-first century. Some of the forms of repression faced by punks and anarchists will be detailed, as well as the cultural and activist responses that those movements have produced, before charting a recent shift in the authorities'

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understanding of anarchism and how that has altered the form and scope of repression.

This repression is often justified by state and para-state actors as a response to transgression of particular sets of norms. Indeed, punk- and anarchist-informed activism and cultural production is often marked by its 'willingness to offend'. Disrupting social, political, legal and cultural norms of 'politeness' and 'deference' in Indonesia is not incidental, but essential to punk and anarchist politics—norms of politeness have helped to neuter expressions of dissent, deforming protest into submissive appeals to hierarchy, especially during the New Order regime (1966–1998) but continuing throughout its sucessor regimes. Transgressing that normative expectation of deference is part-and-parcel of meaningful resistance, while also prefiguring social relations that are not predicated on hierarchy and submission.

A Brief History of Anarchism in Indonesia (and Punk's Revitalising Role)

Marxism was the dominant ideology of the revolutionary left in Indonesia throughout much of the early-to-mid twentieth century and into the 1960s, as manifested in the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Communist Party of Indonesia). This was by 1965 the largest communist party in the world that hadn't yet seized power, with upwards of 3.5 million members (Bowen, 1990), and claiming 'a "family" of twenty million partisans' (Anderson, 1993: 5). However, anarchism has also been a significant political strand, not least within the wider movement opposing the Dutch colonial government—indeed anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism have been core tropes throughout the history of anarchism (Anderson, 2005).

Remarkably, anarchism even had some influence within the explicitly Marxist PKI, and this was such a strong influence that Darsono, a leading PKI figure, insisted that members should remember that 'the Communism of Marx and not the anarchism of Bakunin must govern the party' (Benda & McVey, 1960). Soekarno, too, engaged with anarchism—in 1932 he dedicated an article to the subject in his Partai Nasionalis Indonesia (PNI) journal *Fikiran Ra'jat* [*People's Thought*]. While he sympathised with the anti-colonial aspects of anarchism, and is reported to have quoted Bakunin in his speeches (Danu, 2015), he was essentially a nationalist and statist. The influence of anarchism across the ideologies of the PKI and PNI is noteworthy. According to Bima Satria Putra's (2018) writing on early twentieth-century anarcho-syndicalism, anarchist ideas have often coloured Marxist and social-democratic organisations in Indonesia—differences in political ideology within the Indonesian left were not as divisive as elsewhere in the world, because they had a common enemy in the 'invaders' of the Dutch East India Company and the myriad other colonialists.

The anarchist current within the PKI was suppressed by the Marxist orthodoxy, and, indeed, anarchist-minded activists organised independently within

their own specifically anarchist organisations (particularly anarcho-syndicalist unions—Putra, 2018). Despite the increased dominance of the Marxist PKI and the 'progressive nationalism' of Soekarno towards the mid-twentieth century, anarchism persisted to at least a minor extent within the political lexicon of Indonesia into the 1960s—the prominent student activist Soe Hok-Gie described himself as an anarchist in his correspondences with Benedict Anderson (1970), though this was likely a 'philosophical' anarchism rather than activist militancy.

After 1965, that all changed with the installation of the Suharto regime, and the ensuing 'red scare' and murder campaign—this 'political genocide' (Berenschot et al. in this volume), described by Anderson as 'the Indonesian holocaust' (1993: 9), physically destroyed any left wing political current in Indonesia (Van Klinken, 2017; Estrelita in this volume). Anarchists were directly affected by this bloody repression. But the infamous Temporary People's Consultative Assembly Decree of 1966 against the left specifically targeted the PKI and Marxism or Marxist–Leninism, *not anarchism*. This 'temporary' decree has never been rescinded—the ideology and symbols of the PKI remain illegal, shaping state repression of the left more widely.

The New Order's framing of the left has been inherited by subsequent regimes, resulting in a failure to understand anarchism as anything more than a synonym for chaos, violence, and especially rioting, as evident in the 2010 police procedure document on 'Anarchy Countermeasures', published by the then Chief of Police, Bambang Hendarso Danuri (Kepala Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, 2010). But this has also had unintended effects on 'recruitment' to leftist movements—as Berger puts it, anarchism presents an 'exciting, anti-authoritarian, *and legal*' form of activism (2013 [emphasis added]). For a prospective militant, the legality of an activist movement is not likely to be a crucial concern, but, as discussed below, it does affect the wider ecosystem of repression and the visibility of particular forms of leftist resistance, and thus their ability to publicise their activities, to organise candidly, and to attract people to the cause. The state's fascination with Marxism lends it a taboo quality, but also confines it to a historical moment and emphasises its defeat. As AMW (2018) puts it, the bloody and total repression of 1965, 'along with the earlier failed communist revolution in 1926', demonstrated 'the limits of what Marxism-Leninism could do in Indonesia':

> As a result, this made it less likely for leftist struggle to approach fighting capitalism from a socialist or communist point of view than from an anarchist one, which may explain the prominent role of anarchists of varying stripes in Indonesia today. (AMW, 2018)

In common with numerous authoritarian contexts around the world, the re-emergence of anarchism in the late twentieth century was concurrent with, and tied to, the spread of punk throughout Indonesia. From the mid-1990s and into the twenty-first century, anarchist punk has 'become the public face

of anarchism in Indonesia' (Berger, 2013). Punk first arrived in the very late 1980s, primarily via punks travelling from other places in the world (Donaghey, 2016: 93). By 1996, amidst the growing movement against the oligarchy President Suharto and his New Order regime, the first 'political' punk zine in Indonesia was produced in Bandung, titled *Submissive Riot* (Pickles, 2001: 51)—indeed, the title of this zine is suggestive of the norm of polite deference and its transgression by punks and anarchists. Punks and anarchists who participated in the anti-Suharto movement framed their struggle as anti-fascist, fighting against the militarist, capitalist, and totalitarian aspects of Suharto's regime. Wallach suggests that this alertness to fascism, and analysis of the Suharto regime as such, stemmed from the punks' engagement with Western punk culture (Wallach, 2008: 111) wherein anti-fascist and anti-totalitarian themes are prominent. Indeed, the collective in Bandung responsible for producing *Submissive Riot* developed into a highly organised activist group called *Front Anti-Fasis* (FAF, Anti-Fascist Front) in 1997, producing another zine titled *Militansi* [*Militancy*] (Prasetyo, 2017) (Figs. 33.1 and 33.2).

Anti-fascism has persisted as a core trope in punk in Indonesia, as evident in lyrics and imagery. Examples include song titles like 'Diskriminasi Yang Fasis' ['Fascist Discrimination'] by Kontroversi (2013) and 'Fasis Keparat' ['Fucking Fascist' or 'Fascist Bastard'] by RKA (2014), or songs like 'Redskins' by Full



Fig. 33.1 Front Anti-Fasis banner at a street demonstration c. late 1990s



Fig. 33.2 *Submissive Riot*, and *Militani* zine covers (courtesy of Frans Ari Prasetyo)

Time Skins (2010) or 'Smash Fascism' by Krass Kepala (2014). Islamic fundamentalist mobs are also identified as 'fascist' by punks and anarchists, for example in the ZudasKrust song 'You Called It Moral' (2009):

> Blind Forces of Dogmatic Existence Called Fascism …
> It's 'In The Name Of God' Written On Your Forehead.

Another example is the Standing Terrace song 'Hestek Enam Tiga Tiga' ['Hashtag Six Three Three'] (2015)—the lyrics to which indicate a direct, street-level approach to anti-fascism (Fig. 33.3):

> we all hate nazi scum, our trainers on their face.

The song appears on a compilation album of punk and Oi! bands singing about Persib Bandung FC and its fan culture, and the album cover art includes an anti-fascist action (or antifa) flag (see Fig. 33.4).

The late 1990s and 2000s saw significant changes for anarchist punk in Indonesia. Sean Martin-Iverson (2014) describes the post-Suharto Reformasi period immediately after 1998 as 'the highpoint … emphasising a radical and disruptive form of individual autonomy against the disciplining powers of the state', with an (arguable) shift from political activism to cultural production in the ensuing years—evidenced in the commercialisation of the DIY



Fig. 33.3 'Perangi Rasis! Perangi Fasis!' [Fight Racism! Fight Fascism!]. Detail from CD booklet of *Riot Connection* Oi! compilation (Various Artists, 2010)

ethic, and proliferation of 'distro' punk shops (Prasetyo, 2017). But even amid this period of supposed depoliticization, Martin-Iverson (2014) notes that 'Indonesian punks [continued to] participate in class-oriented political action, from solidarity with striking workers to participating in May Day demonstrations'.

After the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998, FAF joined with other anti-fascist groups across Indonesia to form *Jaringan Anti-Fasis Nusantara* (JAFNUS, the Archipelago Anti-Fascist Network). By 2007, this group evolved into *Jaringan Anti-Otoritarian* (JAO, Anti-Authoritarian Network) suggesting a development in analyses of the state, from framing it as (pseudo-)fascist to recognising it as a new expression of authoritarianism—now termed authoritarian neoliberalism. However, the formation of JAO also marked a significant tactical shift among anarchists, evidenced in the May Day rally of 2007, which adopted the now-familiar 'black bloc' aesthetic and 'gathered more than 100 people … mark[ing] the emergence of anarchism in the public eye' (Syahrianto, 2020). In recent years these protest actions have taken on increased significance for the anarchist movement and have occasioned highly visible repression by the state (Prasetyo, 2020b).



Fig. 33.4 Antifa flag on cover art of *Extratimes 2* Oi! and street punk compilation (Various Artists, 2015)

State (and Para-State) Repression of Punk and Anarchism

Berger writes that 'in some conditions, democratisation perversely incentivises opportunistic repression against some dissidents' (2019), and this can be identified in the repression of punks and anarchists in Indonesia today. Today's government targets 'weak' dissent with high-profile repression, while 'strong' manifestations of dissidence, such as Islamic fundamentalist mobs, are 'tolerat[ed], co-opt[ed] or absorb[ed]' (Berger, 2019)—this was clearly the approach of the Jokowi presidency after its authoritarian turn. The state's perception of punk and anarchist movements as 'weak' is partly down to their less numerous membership as compared with hardline religious groups, the ease with which they can be vilified in the public eye (building on existing prejudices), and their inability to inflict significant damage against the state itself (either because of a principle of non-violence, or because actions are necessarily limited to occasional small-scale property damage or rioting). By contrast, Islamic hardliners are conferred with some level of immunity from

repression through their presentation of extreme piousness, relying on the Muslim cultural identity integral to the Indonesian state (and much of the population at large). Punks and anarchists are easily portrayed as transgressing this social norm, which serves to justify repression meted out against them.

Despite this pattern of targeting the apparently 'weak' anarchist movement, the Indonesian police have 'very little to no knowledge about anarchism as a political concept' (Berger in Donaghey, 2016: 261). The New Order's suppression of 'anything that even smelled of Marxism' (Anderson, 1993: 5–6) has continued uninterrupted post Reformasi—as recently as 2020, Jokowi retrenched this anti-leftist stance, stating that the 'Temporary People's Consultative Assembly Decree No. 25/1966 on the banning of communism, Marxism, and Leninism in Indonesia is still binding and has no need to be questioned' (Prihatin, 2020, cited in Facal & Estrelita, 2020: 233–234). But, as noted above, anarchism has not been officially proscribed in the same way (with the caveat of some important recent shifts), and, because of this history of targeted repression of the PKI, 'the anarchists were careful to disassociate themselves from communists, espousing anarchism instead as a non-violent ideology based on the principle of social-justice' (Plottel, 2016: 27). So, state repression of anarchism, and the closely associated punk scene, has had a distinct trajectory.

In 2010, the Indonesian National Police published a procedure document on 'Anarchy Countermeasures' equating anarchy with rioting, a violation that 'is contrary to legal norms that results in chaos' (Kepala Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, 2010). The point about 'legal norms' has resonance with anarchism as a political philosophy. But the list of 'forms of actions that constitute … anarchy' in the document reveals the basic misapplication of the term, including mass fights, burning, destruction, threats, persecution, rape, loss of life, hostage taking, kidnapping, beatings, looting, confiscation, and theft—even proffering that 'anarchy' is characteristically 'sadistic' (Kepala Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, 2010). This confusion may be explained by the lack of nuanced vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia in this regard, with 'anarkis' carrying a double meaning of 'anarchic' *and* 'anarchist', muddying the distinction between anarchy-as-chaos and anarchism-as-political-philosophy (though even the distinct terms 'anarki' [anarchy] and 'anarkisme' [anarchism] are used interchangeably by the state and mainstream media). However, even while the document covers a scattergun sweep of riotous behaviour, some of the listed entries do in fact overlap with typical anarchist activisms and tactics. 'Forms of action' like sabotage and 'insulting officers', and characteristics including aggressiveness, spontaneity, having broad impact, and actions being carried out en masse (Kepala Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, 2010) could be used to describe some anarchist activisms.

Despite this misapplication of 'anarchy' by the state (or perhaps *because* of those incidental overlaps with actual anarchist tactics) activists have been caught up in the subsequent repression. A notable case was the arrest of four

anarchists in Malang in April 2012, who were then subjected to 'interrogation lasting several days', during which the 'police extracted information', as Berger euphemistically describes the ordeal (2013). Prior to the 2019 May Day demonstrations, the state remained generally ignorant about the anarchist movement and its philosophy, activism, and networks (and even now, fails to grasp this with any nuance). Further to the 'Anarchy Countermeasures', the state's confusion was confirmed in 2011 with the creation of a new 'anti-anarchy' police division to quell rioting and 'religious-based mob attacks' (Arnaz & Dessy, 2011). The equating of 'anarchy' with mob violence was evident again in 2016, when rioting football fans in Jakarta were described as 'suporter anarkis' by the then newly appointed chief of police, Tito Karnavian (Prastiwi, 2016). This mislabelling of anarchism does not mean, however, that anarchists have been free from repression (as exemplified by the Malang Four, others who have been incarcerated since then, and those who are in prison now [Jaringan Penerbit Anarkis, 2022]). Notably, repression against anarchists has often been experienced through the anarchist movement's association with punk (Fig. 33.5).

Punk in Indonesia has been regularly repressed because of its perceived transgression of religious norms, and punks are considered as low-status members of society lacking 'informal citizenship capital', and thus vulnerable



Fig. 33.5 The Aceh 64. These photos of shari'ah police abusing the abducted punks were taken and shared by the shari'ah police themselves, to boost the political reputation of the Banda Aceh mayor

to repression. As Pribadi notes, 'details of dress' and 'one's bodily deportment' (2022: 92–93) are aspects of etiquette that are deployed by the elite 'to distance themselves from people of lower status' (2022: 93). Pribadi celebrates these 'everyday practices' of politeness as a means of 'defining citizenship' (2022: 91) and 'enhanc[ing] agency' (2022: 90)—but the inverse is at work here too, and those deemed to be 'impertinent' face 'consequences' (2022: 93) including the effective stripping of this 'informal citizenship' for transgressing norms of 'dress' and 'deportment'. Two examples are instructive: the abduction of the 'Aceh 64' in 2011, and the disruption of Lady Fast music festival in Yogyakarta in 2016.

In December 2011, 64 punks were abducted at gunpoint by shari'ah 'Civil' police in Banda Aceh and interned for ten days at a bootcamp for religious re-education, which involved being dunked in a stagnant pond as part of 'cleansing' ritual, after having their heads shaved and clothes burnt. The mayor defended her actions to the international news media, insisting that '[t]he raid was necessary and would be repeated as punk constituted a "new social disease"' and that 'punk was in conflict with the Islamic and cultural traditions of Aceh and Indonesia, and hence must be "eliminated"' (Wilson, 2013). The punks were targeted in Aceh as 'anak punk'—that is to say, communities of punks who congregate and sometimes live on the streets (Martin-Iverson, 2014), whom the shari'ah police could bully with impunity. This targeting of 'weak' social actors, and the intertwinement of state and religious repression is also apparent in comparatively liberal places such as Yogyakarta. In 2016, during the first Lady Fast feminist punk festival, a group of men disrupted the festival 'shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is great") and accused the organisers of "corrupting morals, dressing inappropriately [and] being communists"' (Chapple, 2016). In this case the targeted community were perceived as vulnerable because of their feminist, LGBTQ, and left-leaning politics, and because they were predominantly women. The police stopped the mob's attack, but also halted the festival, and proceeded to detain the festival organisers (not the attackers), interrogating them about the purpose of the event.

As Plottel notes, whether the violence is 'at the hands of police officers … [or from] nongovernmental vigilante groups … seem[s] not to matter', and in practical terms there is 'collusion between the police and vigilante groups' (2016: 49). Wilson terms this collusion as a 'strategic partial-patronage' (2006: 289), echoing Berger's analysis of the state's simultaneous co-option of 'strong' dissent and repression of 'weak' dissent. It is clear that political repression intertwines closely with the religiously motivated repression of punk, and by extension anarchism. While it must be noted that some punks have been religiously recuperated by the intrusion of Islamists into underground scenes and via the hijrah trend (Papineau, 2020; Saefullah, 2017), the religious aspect of normative politeness in Indonesia is worth emphasising. Muslim piety was 'endorsed' by the Suharto regime (even while it 'restrain[ed] political Islam') (Pribadi, 2022: 101), because of its usefulness in inculcating humility and

deference within the population. Berenschot et al. concur, noting that politeness has been a result of the New Order's 'cleansing [of] political discourse in Indonesia' (in this volume, p. ?).

But the key point is that until very recently the authorities misunderstood punk and the anarchist movement that is closely associated with it because they were preoccupied with the outwardly visible contraventions of Islamic doctrine (and thus, transgression of religious norms), in the form of tattoos, piercings, women not wearing hijab, and so on, and in these normative transgressions these groups were identified as legitimate targets for repression. Repression was *not* because of the anti-statist and anti-capitalist political significance of anarchism as a philosophy and as a movement, which these state and para-state actors simply failed to grasp. The scope of repression may have been affected by the state's ignorance, but punks and anarchists have still been routinely repressed, and this lived experience is reflected in the punk scene's opposition to the police in Indonesia.

Punk (and Anarchist) Opposition to the Police

Worley et al. provide a loose definition of punk as 'exud[ing] an irreverent disregard for symbols of authority and pre-established hierarchies' and 'purport[ing] to provide a voice or means of expression for the disenfranchised [and] marginalised' (2014: 2). Senjury and Tenchis argue that 'this underdog anti-authoritarianism merges into anarchist-informed critique of the police as agents of state oppression' and that 'hatred for the police is one of the most pervasive lyrical tropes in punk' (2024: 239). This is as true in Indonesia as anywhere. The lyrics and imagery address three main themes: police prejudice against punks; experiences of police brutality; and (imagined) retributive violence against the police—all of which contain degrees of recognition of the police as agents of wider systemic repression (Figs. 33.6 and 33.7).

Anti-police imagery and lyrics have featured from early-on in the Indonesian scene's development, including the cover artwork of the 1997 compilation *Injak Balik!* [*Step Back!*], which features an image of police attacking a crowd of protestors (Various Artists, 2017 [1997]). Also in the late 1990s, The Inasubs sing 'police for still oppressed us' [*sic*] (1999a) and 'police and the people to believe we like the scum' [*sic*] (1999b). Demonstrating the pervasiveness of the anti-police theme across punk sub-genres, the pop-punk/ska-punk band UFO includes a sound clip of police attacking a crowd in the song 'Pak Polisi' ['Policeman'] (2000)—the title itself mocks the expectation of deference to the police. The Clown detail the everyday experience of money extortion in 'Police Brutality' (1999): 'If we rich we're free to go, if you poor you die in jail'. Milisi Kecoa [Cockroach Militia] later covered The Clown's song, and also penned their own response on this theme, describing the police as 'Parasites' (2011):

> They hunt you down, set you up, bully you around.



Fig. 33.6 A T-shirt produced by the band Jahat [Evil] in the early 2010s, in homage to the classic *Police Bastard* record cover (1989) by UK band Doom

> Of course they want your money, they'll suck you dry.
> They stop you in the street. They stop your show.
> Assholes in uniform, stay away from me!
> Cops, social parasites. We don't need them!
> They caught you, force you, beat you down.. Have fun!
> But if you pay the right price, they'll smile at you, they'll let you go and tell you not to come back.

Police harassment of punks is commonplace (Donaghey, 2016: 235). As noted above, this is usually based upon the outward aesthetic of punks, including tattoos (perceived as a marker of criminality), as reflected in the Brontak Bangsat [Rebellious Bastard] song 'Tatto Bukan Kriminals' ['Tattoos are not Criminal'] (c. 2017). Sri Aduh, writing for the Punk Is Not A Crime initiative in the wake of the abduction of the Aceh 64, connects the quotidian corruption of Indonesian police with wider systemic oppression (Fig. 33.8):



Fig. 33.7 Cover art from the *Injak Balik!* compilation (Various Artists, 2017)

> Ask anyone & they will tell you they want their children to grow up in a world free of tyranny & oppression. For many this includes a world free of corrupt & thieving police who persecute, beat, torture & murder people because of their race, religion, looks or lifestyle. A.C.A.B. (2012: 12)

The English-language acronym ACAB [All Cops Are Bastards] resonates with international punk influences—see Turtles.Jr, 'A.C.A.B.' (2012a)—but also has a practical evasive benefit as a veiled expression of anger against the police (a punk wearing a patch reading 'Polisi Anjing' [the police are dogs] was apprehended and beaten (Donaghey, 2016: 236)). The Kontrasosial [Counter Social] song 'Filthy Scum' echoes this evasive tactic, with the punks 'everyday hiding from the pigs' (2018). Police brutality and violence frequently appears

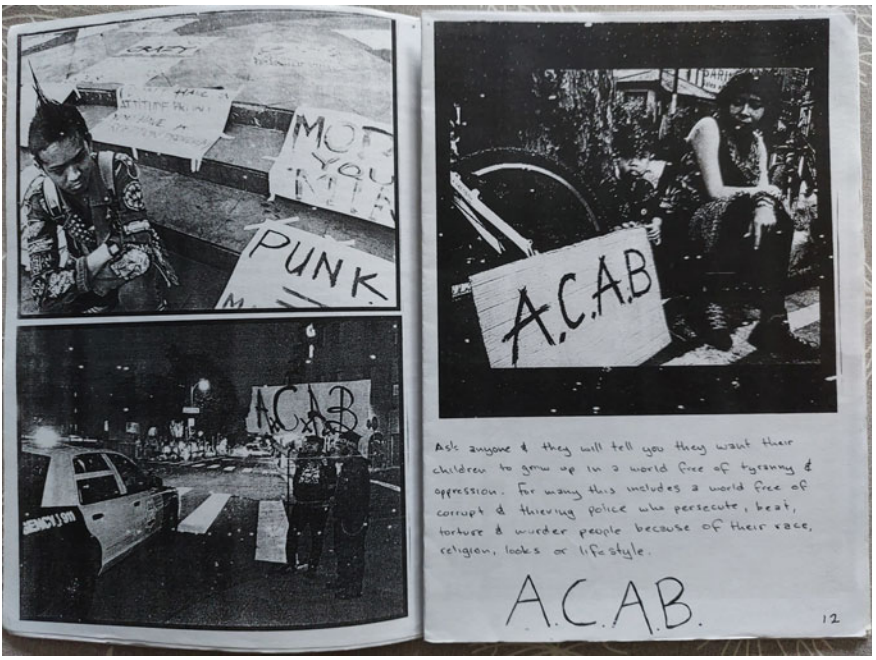


Fig. 33.8 'All Cops Are Bastards'. Pages from *Free Aceh Punx* zine (*Punk Is Not A Crime*, 2012)

in lyrics and imagery, including Krass Kepala's 2006 track 'Awas Polisi' ['Police Watch'] (2015a), which warns:

> Jangan sampai tertangkap ... Jika kau kena dipukul ditendang, Bahkan ditembak
> [Don't get caught ... If you get beaten you will be kicked, Even shot]

The cover artwork of Begundal Lowokwaru's [Lowokwaru Bastard] album *Nada Sumbang Pinggiran* [*Marginal Discordant Tone*] (2015) features a cartoon depiction of police disrupting a gig and chasing punks off stage with billy clubs, and the cover artwork of the Turtles.Jr album *Murder* (2012) features a punk resisting arrest by a police officer who is literally a 'pig' (Figs. 33.9 and 33.10).

While these reflections of police violence are far from celebratory, it is remarkable that Plottel's ethnography with punk squatters in Yogyakarta highlights '[t]he experience of being arrested and beaten … as a *foundation for their community*', reclaiming 'what would otherwise be a painful experience' (2016: 46–47 [emphasis added]). As Plottel puts it: 'punks, as some of the most radical and marginal members of society, are oftentimes the first to be targeted. Yet, punks subvert this aim by using violence as a rite of passage, a point of pride and a means of community building' (2016: 47). This echoes

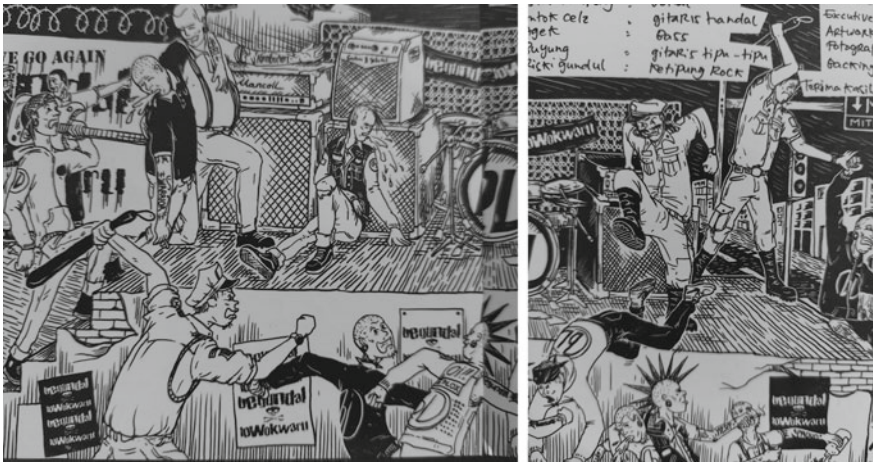


Fig. 33.9 Cover art from the Begundal Lowokwaru CD *Nada Sumbang Pinggiran* (2015)



Fig. 33.10 Cover art from the Turtles.Jr CD *Murder* (2012)

Berger's analysis of spectacular repression of 'weak' manifestations of dissent. But this 'collective experience of violence' is also a direct politicisation for punks and anarchists, and is often 'the means by which many of them come to develop anti-authoritarian ideas in the first place' (Plottel, 2016: 48). This recognition of the police as part of wider systemic repression is summed-up in typically blunt punk style in the inlay to Discount's *Terlahir Mati* [*Born Dead*] cassette (2008) which reads: 'Fuck government, fuck all system, fuck this country, fuck the police'.

Corcoran highlights 'descriptions of imagined scenes of retaliatory violence' against police in punk lyrics as another means of resistance (2020: 153). This is perhaps the lyrical trope that most blatantly transgresses the norm of deference to hierarchical authority, and there are numerous examples of this approach in Indonesia, including Turtles.Jr, who sing simply:

> i hate the system, fight the government, kick the police. (2012c)

And:

> police fuck off, fight police brutality, and burn it like dust. (2012b)

Krass Kepala recount the familiar scenario of police extortion, but in 'Police Violence' (2015b) they imagine resisting the police harassment: 'push and refuse … Boots on your pig face. That way maxe [*sic* – 'makes'] me go to jail'. Kontrasosial cover the song '124' by Swedish d-beat band Meanwhile, which is an account of 124 police being wounded when they tried to violently stop a protest march:

> There's no point in celebrating violence.
> But sometimes it's fucking justified. (2009a)

Brontak Bangsat take the 'police versus crowd' scenario from the cover artwork of *Injak Balik!*, but invert it so that the crowd are now the assailants, as depicted in cartoon form on the cover artwork of their album *Masih Tetap Tak Beraturan* [*Always Out of Order*] (c. 2017). Inhuman Infection sing:

> polisi you fuck you all, government you fuck you all …
> let's burn all, burn burn their fuckin' home, burn burn their uniform. (2011)

The 'burning' invocation here echoes the Turtles.Jr song 'police f.o.' (2012b), above, and anarchist activists actually did succeed in burning down a police kiosk during a protest in Yogyakarta in 2018 (AMV, 2018), in a rare connection between the imagined retribution of punk lyrics and actual street-level resistance (Fig. 33.11).

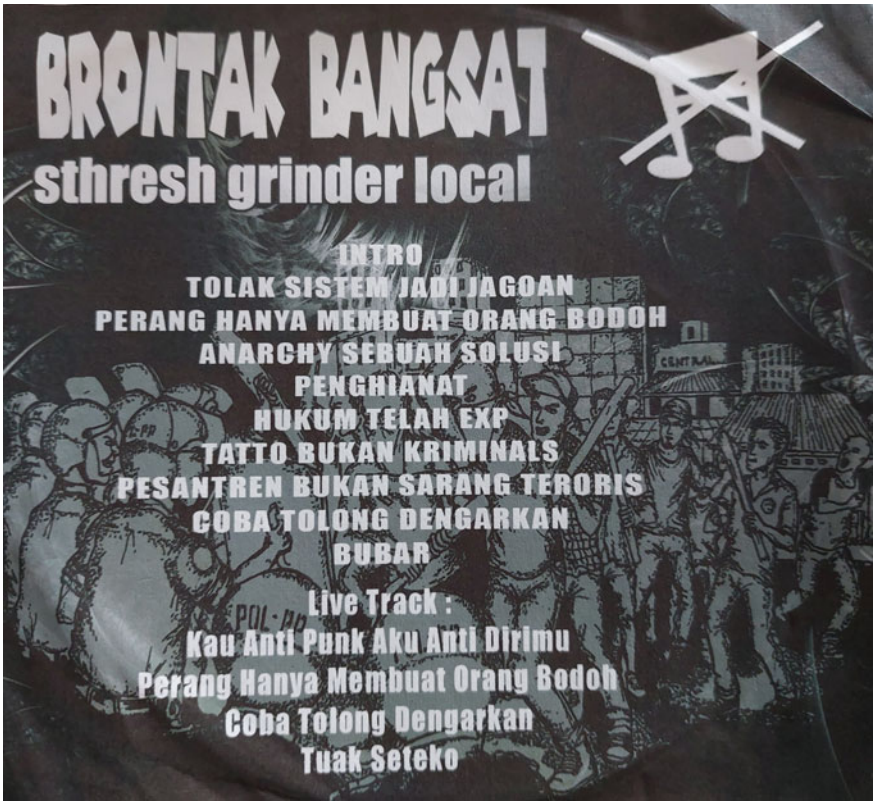


Fig. 33.11 Cover art from the Brontak Bangsat CD *Masih Tetap Tak Beraturan* (c. 2017)

As an amorphous and non-doctrinaire philosophy, there are of course complexities around anarchist attitudes to politeness. Classical anarchist theorist Mikhail Bakunin laments 'the academy', writing that while 'an academician' 'gains in *politeness*, in utilitarian and practical wisdom' they lose 'spontaneity … revolutionary hardihood, and that troublesome and savage energy': 'In a word, [they] become[] corrupted' (Bakunin, 1871 [emphasis added]). The accusation is clear—the elitism of the academy inculcates politeness, but this is at the expense of the capacity to 'destroy old tottering worlds and lay the foundations of new' (Bakunin, 1871). However, the anarchist-adjacent Enlightenment philosopher William Godwin, writing in the 1790s, 'appropriated politeness in the service of his antiauthoritarian political agenda … as an ideological bulwark to liberty rather than simply a means of [elitist] social exclusion or a form of dissimulation as radicals of the period had more commonly characterized it' (Kazmi, 2012: 104). So while both Bakunin and Godwin recognise the elitist underpinnings of politeness and firmly reject that

aspect of it, Godwin considers that this idiomatic form of interpersonal relations can be harnessed towards social harmony, while Bakunin and most other radicals see it as irredeemably anti-revolutionary.

Punk's resuscitating role punk for anarchism in Indonesia should be recalled here. While non-punk anarchisms certainly exist and proliferate in contemporary Indonesia, their geneses all arguably owe something to punk, and its 'spiky' attitude. Guerra and Silva discussing the Portuguese context write that '[t]here is a rudeness in punk' (2015: 219), Xiao and Stanyer point to the 'conspicuous rudeness' of participants on a punk chat forum in China (2017: 12), and Wiedlack identifies a 'willingness to offend' as a key component of queer punk (2015), and this rude, offensive spikiness is evident in the lyrical exhortations of punk bands in Indonesia.

The impoliteness of 'decidedly offensive and confrontational language' (Wiedlack, 2013b: 34), and 'angry lyrics, angry voices, or angry music' carries more than just aesthetic value, and these 'expressions of anger … *exceed these rules* and norms insofar as they violate them … such violations are breaking taboos' (Wiedlack, 2013a: 8 [emphasis added]). The title of *Submissive Riot* zine thus counterposes the norm of 'submissiveness' with the transgressive political behaviour of rioting. Even Pribadi's otherwise conservative analysis recognises that 'violating public norms … can serve as a thrilling moment of political possibility' (2022: 108), and this is exactly the point: punk and anarchist transgression of normative politeness disrupts the hierarchical imposition of deference and humility as a socio-cultural virtue, and in doing so points towards social relations that not only violate polite norms, but *exceed them*.

Resistance to Neoliberalism (and Neoliberal Policing)

The influence of neoliberal capitalism in Indonesia has been impactful, both on the foci of anarchist resistance and on the scope and function of repressive policing. Despite the aspirations for a post-dictatorship social restructuring, neoliberalism (with a neo-colonial flavour) has been accelerated in post-Reformasi Indonesia. The environmental and social damage caused by Indonesia's extractivist economy has been a motivation for activist resistance by groups linked to the anarchist movement, and by the anarchist-associated punk scene. For example, the Kontrasosial song 'Imperial Abad 21' ['21st Century Imperial'] (2009b) combines these anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and environmental concerns (Fig. 33.12).

Berger notes that 'Indonesia's new anarchists' take neoliberal capitalism as a focused target, including symbolic actions against branches of McDonalds and ATM/cash machines, declaring their motivations via an accompanying note which read '[w]e are aware of what you multinationals have done to the people of Kulon Progo, Takalar, Bima, and other places' (Berger, 2013). These 'insurrectionary'-style actions remain marginal within the scope of anarchist activisms in Indonesia, despite the disproportionate attention they receive



Fig. 33.12 Anti-neoliberal stickers, posters, zines, and patches. The slogans read 'Lawan! Kejahatan Korporasi' ['Fight! Corporate Crime'] and 'Hantam Neo-Liberalism' ['Beat Neo-Liberalism']. (Courtesy of Jim Donaghey)

from the media (and academia), but the framing of their actions highlights rural land struggles as a core concern of the wider movement. Kulon Progo, near Yogyakarta, has been a particular focus. The *Farm or Die* zine (2012) was produced by anarchist activists involved in the long-running campaign against the ruinous effects of corporate iron mining there. In it, The Unrest Collective write:

> Corporations have been stripping the 'third world' … of their natural resources for 100's of years. Indonesia is just one of the most recent on the list of countries being sold out from under the people by their own government to these corporations in order to make a profit … It's time we all know exactly what is going on in the struggle of peasants and indigenous people in Indonesia against these corporate powers who would seek to crush them under weight of their greed and industry. (2012: n.p.)

Land grabbing, as a process of neoliberal capitalist accumulation, has also affected urban communities. In 2018 the Forum Solidaritas Melawan Penggusuran [Solidarity Forum Resisting Eviction] in Tamansari, Bandung, highlighted their recognition of neoliberalism as the ideology behind the dispossession of kampongs by the city government, as well as identifying this practice as an extension of Suharto-era corruption: 'development … has now become a regime that works no differently from the New Order regime … [of] cronies, oligarchs and predators … eager to carry out the mandate of global capitalism which requires primitive accumulation' (Forum Solidaritas Melawan Penggusuran, 2018: 5) (Figs. 33.13 and 33.14).



Fig. 33.13 'Lawan! Kapitalis Nusantara' [Fight! Capitalist Nusantara] placard in Kulon Progo. Image from The Unrest Collective's *Farm or Die!* zine (2012)

The campaign against the expansion of Yogyakarta airport is another key struggle combining environmental and anti-neoliberal analyses. In all these cases, neoliberal 'development' projects are being resisted, and the police and other state forces act as the enforcers of this economic/ideological agenda. Indeed, as part of the 'authoritarian turn', 'Jokowi and his government have come to treat law enforcement and security services as tools for the repression of opposition' (Power, 2018: 335). The increased role of the 'security agencies' in political processes (Jayasuriya, 2020: 43), especially in the repression of West Papua, but also against protest movements in Indonesia itself, is a throwback to the dwifungsi [dual function] dictum of the New Order era (Prasetyo, 2020a) wherein the police and army had prominent roles in governing society. Senjury and Tenchis write that the 'grounding of anarchist opposition to the police is clear – police are the antithesis of anarchist values of mutual aid, freedom, and equality, and are an embodiment of the state's repressive power' (2024: 239). This aspect of anarchist political philosophy has placed the movement at the forefront of resistance to the police's reformed role as enforcers of authoritarian neoliberalism.



Fig. 33.14 Images from Tamansari anti-eviction campaign, Bandung, 2019. The slogan reads 'Negara Andalah Budak Kapitalisme' ['Your Country is a Slave to Capitalism'] (courtesy of Frans Ari Prasetyo)

Recent Changes in Police Repression

The anarchist movement's direct confrontation of the police as enforcers of neoliberal authoritarianism has accelerated the Indonesian state's reframing of anarchism as a 'new "ideological spectre"', as termed by Police Chief Tito Karnavian (quoted in Needle 'n' Bitch Collective, 2019). Berger's fascination with insurrectionary anarchism led him to assert that '[i]f insurrectionary anarchist cells keep multiplying, and violence leads to deaths or injuries, the police and media will start to pay much closer attention to anarchist ideology and Indonesia's harmless community of anarcho-punks could lose the relative freedom that they currently enjoy' (2013). This has instead come to pass because of the increasing size and effectiveness of anarchist May Day demonstrations, especially those of 2018 and 2019, across most major Indonesian cities.

The Yogyakarta May Day demonstration of 2018, which protested 'the Sultanate and the construction of the Yogyakarta airport project', resulted in the burning down of police kiosk at a road junction. 69 demonstrators were arrested, of whom eleven were detained *for up to seven months* and suffered beatings and torture 'during interrogation without access to legal council' (AMV, 2018). This is a clear escalation from the days-long detention of the anarchists in Malang in 2012. The following May Day demonstrations, in 2019, were even larger, with particularly vibrant attendance in cities including

Surabaya, Makassar, Yogyakarta, Malang, Jakarta, and Bandung. In a further escalation of the state's repressive response, in Bandung alone the police 'arrested 619 of the estimated 1000 protesters for vandalism and destruction of public property' (Needle 'n' Bitch Collective, 2019). They had their heads shaved, were sprayed with paint, and were subjected to 're-education', echoing the shari'ah police abduction of the Aceh 64 in 2011. Across Indonesia during these demonstrations, the National Human Rights Commission reported that 'ten people were killed by the authorities with firearms … 32 people were reported missing, and dozens of others were injured by the excessive use of tear gas' (Persada, 2019, cited in Facal & Estrelita, 2020: 229). As Facal and Estrelita put it, 'this authoritarian style manifests itself in alternating phases of low-key brutality and crises of ostentatious repression' (2020: 226). This spectacle of 'ostentatious repression' was repeated some months later, during the anti-Omnibus Law protests of September 2019, during which police killed five people involved in demonstrations in Kedari and Jakarta (Prasetyo, 2020a: 9). In Bandung alone, 429 people were injured. As Prasetyo puts it: 'Bandung's city police is instituting terror against its citizens in the public space of their own city' (2020a: 10), and this applies to Indonesia as a whole. According to the Palang Hitam Anarkis (Anarchist Black Cross prisoner support network in Indonesia), seven anarchists are currently known to be incarcerated in Indonesia, either awaiting trial or serving prison sentences of nine months to *fifteen years* (Jaringan Penerbit Anarkis, 2022).[1]

In addition to the deployment of murderous violence, the state has also sought to attack the anarchist movement via the media, using the high-profile afforded by their spectacular repressions as a platform to do so. Plottel correctly notes that 'the co-existence of a diverse range of tactics reflects the diversity of the Indonesian anarchist movement strengthened through its breadth' (2016: 22), but this diversity has been ignored in the state's exclusive (and bizarrely specific) denouncement of 'anarcho-syndicalism'. In the media, police chief Karnavian identified 'anarcho-syndicalism' as a new threat 'alongside [Marxist-Leninist] communism and Islamic extremism' (quoted in Needle 'n' Bitch Collective, 2019). Anarcho-syndicalism—an anarchist strategy of organising workers to resist oppression as producers, and to reshape production itself in a democratic and self-managed manner, usually via trades unions—had particular resonance in Indonesia in the early-to-mid twentieth century. But it is unlikely that the subtleties of anarcho-syndicalist strategy were foremost in Karnavian's mind, and it seems that this specific terminology was intended to suggest a gloss of nuanced understanding of the movement by the police, or perhaps to distinguish these 'anarchists' from the 'anarchy' of fundamentalist Islamic mobs and football hooligans. In any case, Karnavian slandered the anarchist movement in Indonesia as a 'foreign doctrine' (Sani,

[1] They are: Bima Satria Putra, Carolous Krisna Putra Pratama, Fahmi Fikri Salman, Rian Ardian, Jon Sondang Pakpahan, Job Gocklas Silitonga, Fadli Hari Ando (Information from Palang Hitam Anarkis [Anarchist Black Cross—Indonesia]).

2019),[2] 'presented as a nebula of conspiracy' (Facal & Estrelita, 2020: 231) (Fig. 33.15).

Their transgression of the political and social norms of politeness and deference justifies Karnavian's (and by extension the state's) view that anarchists have forfeited the protections and obligations due to them as citizens, especially with regard to the loosely defined agency of 'informal citizenship'. Moreover, because polite discourse is hierarchically determined—that is to say, deference to the powerful is predicated on fundamental power imbalances (in this case favouring the state and the police)—then it is a *double* offence when the powerless 'lower classes' refuse their submissive role. For anarchists, then, this impoliteness and the attendant rejection of hierarchical politeness is unapologetically intentional. From an anarchist (and punk-anarchist) perspective it is politically virtuous to cause offence to those elites who expect deference (Wiedlack, 2015: 184).

On the basis of the newly recognised threat of 'anarcho-syndicalism', Karnavian ordered 'police personnel to map out the group's members' (Sani, 2019). This has included sending at least four police officers to the criminology departments of Western universities, where they have been using those institutional resources to carry out research into the anarchist movement in



Fig. 33.15 Images from May Day 2019 in Bandung (courtesy of Frans Ari Prasetyo)

[2] Actually, anarchists in Indonesia have been keen to 'indigenise' their movement, citing historical examples such as the Baduy of Banten, the Samin of Central Java (Plottel, 2016: 41), the Dayak of Kalimantan (Putra, 2021), and practices of nagari-nagari in Minangkabau (Cahyana, 2019).

Indonesia, including a police chief from Magelang who was sent to study a Master's degree at the University of Leeds, in the UK, in 2021 (Atmasari, 2021). So, while the state's newly professed understanding of anarchism rings hollow at the moment, this may soon change, but in any case the tactic of spectacular repression will likely continue in Indonesia because of its usefulness in 'frighten[ing] and demoraliz[ing] opposition social movements' (Facal & Estrelita, 2020: 226)—akin to fascism, state terrorism is part-and-parcel of contemporary authoritarian neoliberalism.

Conclusion—the 'neo-New Order'?

As early as 2002, Robison identified on the part of investors in Indonesia a 'sense of nostalgia for "the good old days" of Soeharto when things were certain' (Robison, 2002: 109, cited in Springer, 2009: 274). Two decades on, Jayasuriya noted the Jokowi presidency's 'conscious return to the older language – if not the political allies – of the previous … New Order regime[]' (2020: 52). This sense of turning back the clock on democratisation is well recognised by people in Indonesia, encapsulated in the #ReformasiDikorupsi slogan that accompanied the widespread protests following Jokowi's re-election in 2019 (Prasetyo, 2020a). But, as Jayasuriya argues, while 'echoes of the New Order' are evident in Jokowi's populist authoritarianism, it is also 'now linked to neoliberalism' (2020: 50)—this is more accurately termed, then, the '*neo*-New Order' (Prasetyo, 2020a: 3 [emphasis added]).

Like authoritarian or 'disciplinary' neoliberal regimes elsewhere in the world, a 'variety of regulatory, surveillance and policing mechanisms' are deployed to ensure that 'neoliberal reforms are instituted and "locked in", in spite of what the population base might desire' (Springer, 2009: 271–272, citing Gill, 1995). Springer warns that the attendant threats of this authoritarian shift should be taken seriously, and this is exactly what anarchists and punks in Indonesia are doing. Anarchism, and its overlap with punk counter culture, has been especially alert to the contemporary contours of authoritarian neoliberalism. Their role in resisting neoliberal 'development', and in opposing the authoritarian enforcement of that agenda, has put them in the firing line—and, as a 'weak' manifestation of dissent, the state has targeted them with high-profile, spectacular bouts of exemplary repression. This vulnerability comes chiefly from the identification of punk and anarchism as transgressing social, political, legal, and cultural norms. Some other forms of protest seek to insert themselves into this normative landscape by heeding expectations of politeness, but punk and anarchism are 'willing to offend' with rude language, 'shocking' aesthetics and behaviour, confrontational protest, and disrespect for hierarchical authority. Wiedlack celebrates the punk/anarchist understanding of 'anger as a legitimate form of political articulation' (2013a: 8), and this 'impoliteness', in its rejection of elitist deference, is in fact an essential component of anarchist and punk resistance.

Other protest movements might take a lesson from this—as Berenschot et al. note, contemporary campaigns for agrarian reform in Indonesia, while 'making claims modestly' via polite discourse, have 'not been very successful in disseminating [their] ideas' (in this volume, p. ?), and land grabbing continues apace. The norm of politeness serves the state and its extractivist corporate bedfellows by inculcating deference as a socio-cultural virtue. 'Impoliteness' has arguably left punks and anarchists vulnerable to state repression (in forfeiting their informally conferred agency and citizenship by transgressing norms). But adhering to norms of politeness in dealing with the state, while it may avoid the most brutal expressions of violent repression, has actually curtailed the effectiveness of other forms of protest in the post-New Order era. It is clear, then, that the norm of politeness bolsters the Indonesian state's repertoire of repression, and contemporary resistance movements would benefit from shaking off this Suharto-era hangover, as punks and anarchists have endeavoured to do.

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