Caroline Hughes, *Dependent Communities: Aid and Politics in Cambodia and East Timor*. Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. 265 pp. Hardbound: ISBN 978-0-87727-778-1; paperbound: ISBN 978-0-87727-748-4.

Caroline Hughes, professor of governance at Murdoch University, is a well-established Cambodia specialist and has written, apart from the present volume under review and other titles, *The Political Economy of Cambodia's Transition, 1991–2001*. This book, *Dependent Communities: Aid and Politics in Cambodia and East Timor,* makes an important contribution to the little-researched area of linkages between the politics of massive international intervention in national and local political arenas, and the subsequent politics of aid-dependent development.

The comparison between Cambodia and Timor Leste is particularly appropriate as both those countries experienced massive international interventions in the wake of disastrous Cold-War–induced civil war. Subsequently, both of them received massive inflows of aid. For Cambodia, that aid equaled 112.6 percent of its national budget, a level exceeded only in Afghanistan. The level of aid to Cambodia continues unabated today. Timor Leste similarly became heavily aid-dependent after its 1999 turmoil.

Chapter II compares the decades of disastrous civil wars in Cambodia with the one of Timor Leste in the context of the Cold War. In this context it is crucial for analysis of aid and dependence to identify in either case which side was favored by the powers that be; i. e., the West (in political matters) or the North (in economic matters) which control the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the spigot of aid.

In Cambodia, the West clearly favored the resistance forces, even if they included the Khmer Rouge, over the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) that was established after the Vietnamese intervention in 1979. Lavish aid was bestowed on the former in their refugee camps, while Cambodia under the PRK was isolated politically and economically.

In Timor Leste, the case was not so clear. When the Suharto regime in Indonesia, a staunch ally of the West, invaded the country using the obviously leftist Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Indepenente (FRETILIN) with the excuse of fighting communism, the United States tacitly approved that invasion even though the United Nations had never recognized Indonesian sovereignty over Timor Leste. However, subsequent large-scale human rights abuses by the Suharto regime in Timor Leste, including the killing of an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people during the subsequent two decades, tilted the support of the West in favor of the resistance forces.

Hughes compares the experiences of the large-scale peacekeeping operations deployed by the United Nations in both Cambodia and Timor Leste. Those

interventions shared the common characteristic of some form of executive power not usually present in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In the case of Cambodia, those powers were quite limited; in Timor Leste, they were much more intrusive.

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) immediately left Cambodia after the successful elections and a new royal government had been established in 1993. Thereupon a totally new aid picture emerged, dominated by bilateral donors and the UN family of agencies plus the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

UNTAC accorded legitimate status to all four warring factions, including the Khmer Rouge. All of them, including the de facto government of PRK (later renamed State of Cambodia [SOC]), were reduced to being "existing administrative structures" which UNTAC was supposed to control—an impossible job. How could a handful of international officers control a bureaucracy that had been in power for 11 years? The present reviewer, as the UNTAC-appointed "shadow governor" of Siemreap, observed this anomaly firsthand in attempting to administer the SOC, with its well-established bureaucracy, with the help of a few others who didn't speak Cambodian.

Unlike UNTAC, the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) had real executive powers. Because Timor Leste had never been a country and because the Indonesian provincial authorities were evacuated along with 300,000 Timorese, UNTAET actually became the government and had cabinet ministers along with Timorese. After independence had been achieved in 2002, it was replaced by the United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor (UNMISET), which continued to provide executive support until its mandate ended in 2005. However, in the following year of 2006, when the political situation once more became volatile, the new and larger United Nations Integrated Mission of Timor Leste (UNMIT) was established with a mandate until 2010.

Most of the book under review is devoted to a comparative analysis of two issues: (a) the international policies that focused on rebuilding state institutions to accommodate the global market; and (b) the dilemmas of politicians in Cambodia and Timor Leste who struggled to satisfy both wealthy foreign benefactors and constituents at home. Hughes's critical attitude towards international polices generally known as the "Washington Consensus" was applied to the political rather than economic effects of independence.

Timor Leste became heavily aid-dependent following 1999, due not only to the destruction wrought by departing Indonesian armed forces, but as well due to the effects on the Timorese economy after being suddenly wrenched from the Indonesian economy. Sadly, however, after the external threat of human rights abuses had disappeared, donors simply lost interest in the plight of the country. Thus the first Timorese government had

to focus on Timorese vulnerability to compassion fatigue. The elites focused on "branding" Timor Leste as a nation for "prudence"; In other words, East Timor had to advertise for and solicit aid. Hence, the author asserts, in Timor Leste, the political leaders discretion of action was minimal. The finances of the government were transparent for all to see and the bureaucracy was organized to prevent misappropriation of funds entrusted to a generally clean administration.

Cambodia, on the other hand, never had to beg for aid. Throughout the post-conflict period, until today, donors have continued to provide massive aid to the country. Hughes describes the feeling of mutual distrust that developed between the donors and Hun Sen, who reemerged as the only strongman after 1998. In this context, the donors channeled the bulk of their aid through the growing numbers and power of Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to the Cambodian government through project aid, rather than program aid, leaving the government with little leverage or control over such aid. Often project aid goes to pay fat-cat foreign "experts" fantastic salaries so that the money mostly goes right back to the host country.

At the receiving end, the ability of Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to flout donor demands for "conditionality" was a fascinating story which Hughes attributes to three factors: firstly, Cambodian politicians simply removed a large proportion of the de facto government budget from the books and therefore beyond the purview of donors, distributing it through a shadow state of patronage networks that linked the party, the bureaucracy, and the military ever more tightly as time went by. Their leeway has expanded recently with two new sources of funds: the People's Republic of China as a source of aid and investment, and oil reserves from the Gulf of Thailand.

Secondly, the government retains its maneuverability in an aid-dependent context because Hun Sen, after having consolidated power in 1998 and beyond, has achieved a degree of moral authority in the eyes of the donors because what he is doing appears to them to be working. Hughes does not commit the folly of other Western writers on Cambodia, of engaging in Hun Sen bashing. For instance, unlike the conventional wisdom of such writers, she did not label the clashes of 5–6 July 1997 as a coup d'état by Hun Sen, rather calling it the outbreak of hostilities. She argues that Prince Norodom Ranariddh, co-premier with Hun Sen and his adversary, decried his own lack of power and was attempting to build up his party's military forces. Ironically, the donors were relieved that the destabilizing era of having two premiers ended in 1998, even if the winner Hun Sen was not their favorite.

Thirdly, the Cambodian government's ability to resist pressure for reform has resulted from the demobilizing tactics of donors themselves with respect to Cambodian civil society. The donors supported the establishment of civil society including labor unions,

among other groups, but have left these organizations weakly defended against government tactics that include violence and the prohibition of protest marches.

Chapter VIII, the last, analyses the key question of whether a dependent community which emerges from an act of international intervention to end a war can offer ordinary people a meaningful framework within which to imagine their own citizenship and organize participation. Based on Hughes's personal fieldwork in Cambodia from 1996 to 2003 and in Timor Leste in 2005, the analysis provides new insights into the problem.

In Cambodia at the end of the 1990s, the CPP succeeded in maintaining the loyalty of the people, particularly in rural areas. Two factors that helped the CPP contributed to the success of the decentralization process. The first was the election of commune councils in 2002, which resulted in an overwhelming CPP victory. The CPP retained control of the councils which they had held since 1980. Second was the expansion of a village-based participatory development program called SEILA ("Foundation Stone"), that had been operating successfully in the northwestern provinces, to the whole country. The UNDP executed the Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project (CARERE), which was the forerunner of SEILA, in the whole country. SEILA involves provincial development committees to support capital investment projects proposed by communities. Finally Hun Sen himself is forever present in the rural areas giving speeches at inauguration ceremonies of projects associated with himself, including many schools bearing his name.

The story of Timor Leste reveals an entirely different picture. Hughes's analysis is helped by detailed interviews in two villages, Laleila and Tibar. The village interviewees drew comparisons between the post-independence era and the Indonesian era, remarking the sense of isolation that had come with independence. Government intended to promote local control, as opposed to facilitating broader national or regional control; that in fact encouraged political fragmentation, particularly since local persons had no opportunity to provide input in planning and thereby assert some control over the selection and designs of the projects to be funded.

Hughes observes that the FRETILIN government of 2002–2007 in Timor Leste more closely resembled that of the Cambodian resistance, the FUNCINPEC and its allies, rather than the CPP; although they did not receive lavish aid like the resistance in Cambodia. Most of the FRETILIN central committee members who survived Indonesia's 25-year occupation had spent the war in exile. When FRETILIN exiles returned they found that their views on the question of nationhood were significantly out of step with those of resistance forces at home. Hughes emphasizes that the return of FRETILIN exiles to Timor Leste and their accession to power put two contrasting forms of nationalism on a collision course. For those of the 1970s resistance movement,

the "Indonesianization" of Timor Leste was to be resisted, as it represented oppression and "de-culturization". They demanded that aspects of Portuguese culture including the Portuguese language be adopted. The Timorese who had stayed in country, on the other hand, insisted that independence also meant rejecting Portuguese colonialism and language in favor of Tetum, which everybody spoke.

Hughes's book is highly recommended for general readers and a must for those interested in post-conflict countries.

Benny Widyono
