region. It also makes persuasive arguments for how to study regimes and transitions. However, in its theoretical approach and efforts to shed light on the dynamics of Central Asian politics, it falls short.

–Scott Radnitz

FATAL ERRORS

John Roosa: *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 329.)

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The murder in 1965 of six Indonesian generals and the subsequent mass murder of half a million supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) changed the course of Indonesia's political history and also triggered much debate. There is no question that the assassination of the generals became the "pretext for mass murder," but consensus is yet to be reached among scholars on the origins and goals of the movement that carried out the initial assassinations. John Roosa's reexamination of these events is based on new evidence not available to earlier participants in the debate. These data include a written analysis of the movement's failure by one of its leaders, the author's interviews with former PKI officials released after President Suharto's fall in 1998, and declassified U.S. State Department documents (recalled immediately after release but too late to retrieve all the copies).

The earlier versions of the origins of the so-called coup attempt covered a range of incompatible explanations: a PKI bid for power; a movement of "leftist" officers to protect President Sukarno from a "rightist" military plot; a joint operation by "leftist" officers and the PKI to foil the same military plot; a scheme masterminded by General Suharto to provoke the PKI into action that would give the military the pretext to eliminate the communist threat. While each interpretation has some merit, Roosa argues that all contain unexplained anomalies.

Roosa rejects the military's claim that the PKI as an institution carried out the "attempted coup" but argues, on the basis of his interviews with released PKI prisoners, that the movement was initiated by the PKI leader, Aidit, through the party's secret "Special Bureau," which had long cultivated sympathetic "Sukarnoist" military officers. Aidit's preemptive strike was motivated by a real concern that the military itself was planning its own strike against the PKI. That Aidit had cause for concern is confirmed by communications between the U.S. embassy in Jakarta and Washington as revealed in the State Department documents. The embassy reported signs that the military was thinking about a coup and indicated that the U.S. would welcome it.

Roosa's interviews with PKI members yield a fascinating picture of Aidit's secret agent, the mysterious Syam who headed the Special Bureau. According to the military, Syam was a communist who infiltrated the military, but others

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wondered whether he was really an army agent who had penetrated the PKI. Roosa's research shows quite conclusively that Syam worked for the PKI and was completely loyal to Aidit. Syam was eventually executed in 1986—a poor reward if he had been working for Suharto. On the question of whether it was Syam (representing Aidit) or dissident military officers who really led the movement, Roosa relies heavily on the analysis by Brigadier Supardjo, the most senior military officer involved in the movement, who described Syam as being in charge when the military participants lapsed into despondency after it became clear that the operation would fail (203). But, even if Syam was the dominant leader on the day of the operation, this does not prove that the movement originated exclusively with Syam and Aidit. Supardjo himself refers to an earlier plan that involved only military officers, without PKI participation (93). And Roosa gives no detailed information about the movement that took control of Central Java on the same day and its interaction with the group in Jakarta. Roosa himself notes that previously the Special Bureau "had complex give-and-take relations with its military contacts" (131).

Roosa mentions the many "oddities" of the movement, the apparently inexplicable mistakes of its leaders, and its lack of an "underlying rationale." But these "mistakes" followed from a plan that was not necessarily irrational at the time of its formulation although it came unstuck during its implementation. The movement seems to have been triggered by President Sukarno's sudden illness on August 4, 1965. Although Sukarno soon recovered, the PKI had been alerted to the possibility that he might not recover next time. Fearing a military coup if the president were to die or become incapacitated, it suddenly became a matter of great urgency to make preparations. Aidit adopted a preemptive strategy that depended on getting Sukarno's blessings. The plan was to abduct seven rightist generals from their homes in the middle of the night and to present them to Sukarno next morning in the expectation that he would at least dismiss and possibly arrest them. The plan, however, went awry from the very beginning, starting a chain reaction that led to disaster for the plotters. Bands of soldiers led by NCOs were sent to the homes of the generals to arrest them. The initial error lay in failing to anticipate that generals might not simply accept orders from NCOs in the middle of the night. As it happened, three resisted and were killed while the most senior escaped. This made it impossible to bring the traitors to the president for judgment. And when Sukarno heard that some had been killed, it became impossible to win his endorsement for the movement. Without that endorsement, the movement's strategy lost its rationale.

Roosa points out several weaknesses in the rebels' strategy. The movement did not have sufficient troops under its command; it did not utilize the PKI's capacity to mobilize its massive base of supporters; it did not have a contingency plan to cope with unexpected obstacles; it did not even provide food and drink for the main body of the movement's troops who were left hungry and thirsty all day in front of the presidential palace. It could be

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argued, however, that the fundamental cause of the failure of the movement was not these factors but the accidental murders right at the beginning of the operation and the resulting unwillingness of President Sukarno to endorse the movement. If the generals had been successfully arrested and brought to Sukarno, the outcome of the movement could have been very different.

Roosa's account shows that senior Indonesian generals were not confident enough simply to attack the PKI, which enjoyed the protection of the president. They were, therefore, looking for ways to induce the PKI to take action that would justify retaliation and the military's own ascension to power. Roosa, however, rejects the speculation that the movement was a result of military manipulation and concludes that the "pretext for mass murder" was the PKI leader's own work. However, this conclusion might place too much of the blame on Aidit and Syam alone. Even if the decision to launch the movement was made by them, the fear of a pending military coup was shared by many party members who, under the circumstances, could hardly have expected the party leader to risk compromising his planned response by asking for their approval in advance.

Roosa acknowledges that his book is unable to explain all the remaining gray areas in the story. His "only claim . . . is that events *probably* happened in this way" (202–3). However, his stimulating and thoroughly researched book provides solid evidence to support interpretations that had previously been based only on speculation. It is an important addition to Indonesia coup literature.

–Harold Crouch

SECRET MEANS

William J. Daugherty: *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006. Pp. xxvii, 223. $19.95, paper.)

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William J. Daugherty, a former senior officer in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), has written a provocative and timely book describing how all U.S. presidents since Harry S Truman—even those like Jimmy Carter who had publicly disdained covert action—have employed covert action as a "tool for presidential statecraft" (3).

Yet in the public eye and in the groves of academe, the CIA has been successfully depicted as a rogue agency staffed by wild-eyed, out-of-control operatives and self-serving bureaucrats who seek to assassinate any and all enemies of the United States. That caricature, Daugherty assures us, exists only in movies and espionage novels. Most covert actions are designed for the achievement of long-term goals: political action such as the secret funding of political parties, support for civic and political organizations

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