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“The Ford Foundation and the Construction of a Modernising Elite Knowledge Network for Indonesia”

American foundations construct policy-oriented intellectual-academic networks inside and beyond the United States to build specific types of expertise for specific purposes, particularly to develop and consolidate US hegemony in world affairs. The knowledge networks usually consist of interpenetrating research, teaching and administrative components, as well as, more controversially, key agencies and individuals within the American state (such as the State Department, CIA, US AID) and (in this case) the Indonesian state (Army, Police, key ministries).

Despite the fundamental importance of the Ford Foundation in the reconstruction of the post-colonial Indonesian state, academy, economy and society, there is no detailed empirical examination of its programmes in that pivotal country. This paper uses newly-researched foundation archive sources to consider the roles of philanthropy in constructing political-intellectual networks of area studies programmes in US elite universities prior to, and in coordination with, constructing US-Indonesian knowledge networks, and considers some of the political-economic consequences. The paper argues that “the knowledge network”, despite the foundations’ (stated) intention to solve social and economic problems, is the *principal long-term product of foundation sponsorship*. Networks function to train, socialise, inter-connect, cohere and discipline scholars and institutions: they are an end in themselves, not merely a

means to an end. Prestigious networks may be conceptualised, à la Bourdieu, as a field of power whose perpetuation (as socialisers of current and future generations) permits the scholars etc... within them to convert their intellectual products, ideas and practices into symbolic capital that is seen as legitimate in the wider global system, thereby reinforcing power relations and elite cohesiveness. US foundation-sponsored knowledge networks played a vital role in promoting American hegemony by, in the case of Suharto's Indonesia, fostering counter-elites (such as the group of economists known as "the Beautiful Berkeley Boys", Indonesia's equivalent of Chile's Friedmanite "Chicago Boys") armed with pro-US capitalistic free-market thinking, policies and networks that undermined and destroyed the Suharto regime and integrated Indonesia more neatly into the 'free world'.