

Lowy Institute Paper 13

# **Pitfalls of Papua**

UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT AND ITS  
PLACE IN AUSTRALIA-INDONESIA RELATIONS

**Rodd McGibbon**

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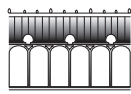
# **Pitfalls of Papua**

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## Executive summary

Australia's granting of temporary protection visas to 42 Papuan asylum seekers in April 2006 sparked diplomatic tensions culminating in the recall of the Indonesian ambassador.<sup>1</sup> The diplomatic imbroglio triggered by these events repeated a long history in which the bilateral relationship had been subject to fluctuating fortunes. The crisis also catapulted the Papua issue into the forefront of the Australian political debate and boosted support for the cause of West Papuan self-determination.

This study examines the utopian thinking, dangerous demands and misguided analysis that have emerged in recent public debates regarding Papua and sets the recent tensions over Papua in their proper historical setting. A constituency in Australia advocating West Papuan claims to self-determination has joined longtime opponents of the bilateral relationship to challenge Canberra's policy stance on Papua. These critics have repeatedly accused Australia of an unprincipled foreign policy stance that puts close relations with Jakarta ahead of human rights.

But contesting Indonesian sovereignty over Papua in ways promoted by supporters of the West Papuan cause promises to create more problems than it solves.

This constituency's policy prescriptions are giving rise to pressures that make resolving the Papua issue more difficult, not less. Their activities have generated unrealistic expectations among Papuans regarding international support that has complicated the conflict, reinforced suspicions in Jakarta that Australia cannot be trusted to

maintain its support for Indonesian sovereignty, and severely limited the scope for Australia to contribute to any potential settlement. Their flawed understandings derive from three basic errors: an exaggerated sense of Australia's foreign policy influence; the lack of a serious appreciation of the forces driving contemporary Indonesian politics; and the promotion of a one-sided account of the Papua conflict that takes for granted Papuan ethnic claims.

In seeking a corrective to these flaws, this study injects a strategic perspective into the debate over Papua. It argues that if a serious disruption to the Australia–Indonesia relationship is to be averted, political leaders on both sides will need to take decisive steps. Australian officials must do more to win the foreign policy debate by addressing public misgivings and misconceptions regarding relations with Indonesia. The key factor, however, will be Jakarta's ability to implement reform. Indonesian leaders will need to capitalise on present opportunities to resolve the conflict. If they can demonstrate their seriousness in addressing Papuan grievances, Indonesian leaders would strengthen the Australian Government's ability to counter domestic pressures over Papua. On the other hand, reports of gross human rights abuses reinforce community concerns in Australia regarding Papua and complicate the efforts to promote the bilateral relationship.

### **The Risks**

- Papua is a sensitive issue in Indonesia with widespread perceptions that Australia supports Papuan separatism

The Papua problem has the potential to disrupt bilateral relations beyond the usual turbulence experienced in the relationship. It touches a deep chord among Indonesia's political leaders who have expressed growing anxiety about the potential for foreign promoted separatist pressures emerging in Papua – more than 20% of Indonesia's territory – and presaging a break up of the state. These fears play on post-colonial anxieties about the Indonesian state's fragile sovereignty, and have been reinforced by the separation of East Timor. The latter has

been especially crucial in shaping perceptions that Australia has an interest in supporting the Papuan separatist cause. Indonesia also has concrete economic and political interests in defending its sovereignty in the province.

- The volatile security situation in the province is likely to persist and may deteriorate

The risk that Papua will pose a flashpoint in bilateral relations is heightened by the prospect of continuing trouble in the province. Unlike the decades-long conflict in Aceh, Jakarta has yet to address the Papua conflict in a comprehensive way. In the absence of government action, resentment continues to simmer in Papua and a significant segment of the population remains dangerously alienated from the state. While Indonesia has clamped down on pro-independence organisations, many Papuans continue to demand independence. An array of interests defending the status quo has become entrenched, particularly in the security and resources sector, militating against a straight-forward resolution to the conflict. The outlook is for continuing low-level conflict with the potential for a serious human rights incident that could spark international uproar and further refugee flows. Given its proximity, Papua New Guinea is a more likely destination for refugees than Australia, but this too cannot be ruled out. The border between Papua and Papua New Guinea will remain a potential flashpoint.

- Populist pressures could result in continuing tensions in the bilateral relationship

The asylum seeker case has shown how quickly turmoil in Papua can trigger tensions, sparking simultaneous nationalist anger in Jakarta and popular concerns over human rights in Australia. In both cases, policy-makers were forced to reflect popular anger in the posture they adopted in the dispute. Continuing troubles in Papua could force leaders on both sides down a dangerous path of responding to domestic pressures.

- Foreign pressure will trigger a nationalist backlash reducing the prospect for a long term resolution to the conflict

The factor more likely than any other to deflate pressures for Indonesian policy reform over Papua is the perception that Australia is interfering in Indonesia's domestic affairs. Such perceptions allow nationalists to take the political initiative and justify a repressive approach in countering foreign elements accused of wanting to see the break up of Indonesia.

Efforts by the West Papua constituency to contest Indonesian sovereignty, including calls for a UN review of Papua's political status, or the introduction of foreign forces to enforce a peace deal are folly. They lack realism and make the situation worse.

### **The Opportunities**

- A complex long-term challenge

No quick fix is in prospect. Historical grievances over Papua's incorporation into the Indonesian state have been exacerbated by a sense of deep-seated resentment over subsequent state policies, including systematic human rights abuses, growing economic inequalities and an influx of new settlers into the province. Papuan resistance has also reflected a broader sense of alienation among the indigenous population. Such sentiments have been deepened by the continuing lack of development in the territory's most remote regions. A comprehensive settlement must involve a long term process of institutional reform. This will require the Indonesian Government to pursue a range of local and national initiatives, including the reform of national and local institutions related to the security sector, legal system and local administrations.

- A domestically driven solution

A settlement to the conflict will need to be driven by domestic forces within Indonesia. This is based on recognition of the international

community's long-standing acceptance of Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua, the weakness of pro-independence forces in Papua and Indonesia's resolve and commitment to retain the territory. These political realities have been reinforced with the further recent decline in Papua's pro-independence movement and the consolidation of Indonesia's rule over Papua.

- Indonesian democracy offers new opportunities

Indonesia's fledgling democracy has created potential openings for new initiatives on Papua. The successful negotiation and enactment of the Law on Governing Aceh indicates the potential for reform, even if Indonesia's post-Suharto *reformasi* movement has lost energy in recent years. In Papua, democratic dynamics are being translated into the policy struggles over special autonomy. The critics' failure to appreciate that the political system that has developed in post-Suharto Indonesia is more than a façade blinds them to future openings for reform.

- The special autonomy law remains the basic framework, despite its troubled implementation

Special autonomy represents the most promising framework for resolving the conflict and ensuring the peaceful integration of Papua into the state. The law directly addresses many of the grievances deriving from the authoritarian mode of governance of the Suharto regime. The goals of modernisation, assimilation and political control have been replaced by an emphasis on autonomy, democracy and indigenous rights. At the same time, however, powerful interests in Indonesia's bureaucratic and security establishment have moved to undermine the law. The outcome of this struggle between opponents of special autonomy and reformers both in Papua and in the national government will shape Papua's future.

- A comprehensive resolution will need to address Papua's political identity

The special autonomy law includes provisions recognising Papua's special identity and addressing calls for a review of the history of Papua's incorporation into the state. These provisions offer the prospect of addressing historical grievances through a broader reconciliation process that reaffirms Indonesian sovereignty over the province. While few signs suggest that the government is ready to address this element of the conflict, confidence building between national leaders and Papua's political elite could facilitate a broader dialogue and reconciliation process.

- New development initiatives

The massive revenues flowing to Papua as a result of decentralisation and special autonomy laws represent an unprecedented opportunity for Papuans to address underdevelopment in the province. But the development challenge is daunting and the province remains the most remote and least developed in Indonesia. Moreover, serious questions are emerging over whether local and provincial governments have the capacity to absorb and utilise these new funds. The experience after five years of special autonomy is sobering with clear signs that levels of corruption have reached kleptocratic proportions. The new funds have so far shown few results in improving development.

A major source of local resentment is the deplorable state of remote Papuan communities that are ill-equipped to participate in the modern economy and gain access to state services. This has resulted in a widespread feeling that Papuans are second class citizens in their own land. The notoriously complex set of issues that arise when indigenous communities clash with the forces of modernity will require intelligent and empathetic handling by the Indonesian Government.

### **Recommendations for Australia**

- Remove the 'Australia Factor' in the Indonesian public debate

Australia needs to directly confront perceptions in Indonesia that it is

supporting Papuan separatism. This is a precondition for any longer term Australian role in helping to resolve the conflict. Perfunctory declarations of Australian support for Indonesia have done little to convince opinion leaders of its sincerity in supporting Indonesian territorial integrity. Better diplomatic outreach and concrete policy initiatives are required.

- Boost bilateral cooperation

Australian officials need to fashion an approach over Papua that can navigate between the contending pitfalls of policy inaction and policy overreach. The asylum seeker case clearly demonstrated the risk of inaction and a low-key approach to Papua. The adoption of controversial immigration measures as a substitute for a more robust foreign policy was largely shaped by the government's previous inaction over Papua.

On the other hand, Australia risks policy overreach in making precipitate diplomatic proposals that would surely be received as unwelcome intervention by Indonesia. The core problem is the perception that Australia poses a potential challenge to Indonesian sovereignty over Papua. To address this perception, Australian officials should be more proactive in pursuing confidence building measures with Jakarta. These should include new policy initiatives designed to deepen Australia's diplomatic and strategic engagement with Indonesia.

- Finalise negotiations over a security agreement with Indonesia, including a clause recognising Indonesian sovereignty over Papua
- Boost security cooperation on border security with Indonesia
- Initiate and institutionalise border liaison meetings that can help manage the Australian–Indonesian border, including discussion of managing the cross-border impact of Papua
- Explore further opportunities to boost defence cooperation
- Support Indonesian leadership in ASEAN, include backing for the development of an ASEAN security community

- Win the battle of ideas in Australia

One of the greatest political failures of contemporary foreign policy is weak public support for the bilateral relationship. Australians have largely failed to appreciate the value of having good relations with Indonesia and how crucial this has been to the country's security interests. Political leaders need to engage more vigorously in the public debate in Australia over Papua. Papua policy needs to be more effectively communicated within a larger framework of bilateral relations with Indonesia. Re-engaging in the public debate would include:

- Promoting greater knowledge about West Papua and countering inaccurate information
  - Building a better understanding of the importance of Indonesia to Australian security interests
  - Educating the public on Indonesia's new democracy
- Support democratic institution-building in Indonesia, including special autonomy for Papua

Australia should support current efforts to build democratic institutions in Indonesia because any resolution to the conflict depends on consolidating democratic rule. Support for the current administration and its main policy initiatives are crucial. We should take our cue for contributions by responding to openings in the political environment and supporting Indonesian reformers who are promoting special autonomy. Australia should also continue to monitor the human rights situation in Papua and to encourage the Indonesian Government in its effort to improve its human rights record.

- Boost aid for Papuan development

In line with the aid program's focus on eastern Indonesia, Australia should step up its assistance program in Papua, including promoting a major aid initiative for Papua among donors. The argument that Papua

is politically too sensitive for boosting Australian aid is not convincing. Increasing aid and directing it through multilateral mechanisms would reduce much of the political exposure, as would directing assistance into non-controversial areas to build confidence in Jakarta regarding Canberra's good intentions. Supporting humanitarian and development initiatives would also have the merit of addressing concerns from domestic constituencies. Australia could provide or increase help:

- with technical assistance in the health and education sectors to improve basic government service delivery
- to address and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS
- to develop early warning systems that might address potential natural disasters such as the outbreaks of disease and crop failures which resulted in hundreds of deaths in the central highlands recently





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# Chapter 1

## Origins of the conflict

### Acknowledgments

This study has benefited from comments on earlier drafts from Edward Aspinall, Richard Chauvel, Malcolm Cook, Allan Gyngell and Marcus Mietzner. Gratitude is also extended to the many interlocutors in Jakarta and Papua who have helped inform this study. All views and judgments remain the responsibility of the author.

This chapter traces the origins of the Papua conflict to two basic sources: the manner of Papua's incorporation into Indonesia during the 1960s and the mode of Jakarta's subsequent rule over the province, particularly during the New Order period. It examines the Papua conflict in terms of the complex histories of decolonisation, Cold War geopolitics and the evolution of the Indonesian state. It also outlines the evolution of Australia's policy from opposition to Indonesian rule over Papua to strong support for Suharto's New Order regime.

The troubled decolonisation process that resulted in Papua's incorporation into Indonesia produced a small pan-Papuan elite which, under the politically charged atmosphere of the Cold War, opposed Indonesian rule and asserted Papua's right to self-determination. The subsequent policies adopted by Indonesia expanded existing opposition and generated significant local resistance. While these policies were intended to strengthen Papua integration, they in fact alienated many Papuans from the state.

### **The West New Guinea dispute**

When it transferred sovereignty to the newly independent state of Indonesia in 1949, the Netherlands refused to relinquish the territory of Dutch or West New Guinea, known today as Papua. Dutch determination to retain the territory was shaped by a frustrated sense of imperialism and pressure from veteran groups and the Eurasian community to retain West New Guinea as a settlement area for Eurasians and other Dutch supporters in its old colony.<sup>2</sup> In opposing Indonesia's claim, officials argued that the peoples of West New Guinea were Melanesian and racially different from the other ethnic groups in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> They also claimed that the primitive state of Papua necessitated that the territory stay under Dutch control so that it could be prepared for self-determination after a period of development.<sup>4</sup>

Indonesia's claim to West New Guinea, on the other hand, was based upon the view that, as the successor to the Netherlands East Indies, the newly independent state should coincide with the same territorial boundaries. This reflected the legal principles shaping decolonisation practice in the post-War international order. Furthermore, the Indonesian commitment to maintaining existing boundaries was shaped by opposition to the 'divide and rule' practice of colonialism and emerging nationalist ideals of unity. Indonesia's nationalist project involved the construction of a multiethnic nation that held out the promise of uniting the colonised peoples of the Dutch East Indies under a successor state, a complete contrast to Dutch conceptions of its colony.

The failure of both sides to resolve their competing claims on West New Guinea triggered a dispute that would last over 12 years and bring the countries to the brink of war. After years of faltering diplomacy, Indonesia stepped up its campaign to reclaim the territory. By the late 1950s, President Sukarno began to issue increasingly bellicose statements, threatening to take West New Guinea by force. While both the Dutch and Indonesians sought to lobby members of the United Nations for their respective positions, neither side could claim UN support.

The West New Guinea issue became a central theme in Sukarno's efforts to promote nationalist mobilisation involving a larger campaign of seizing Dutch assets in the former colony. Sukarno exhorted the masses to support continuing revolution as part of his domestic political strategy to balance competing political forces as rivalry grew between the army and leftist organisations. Minor infiltrations into West New Guinea had been taking place since the 1950s. These increased in size and frequency following Sukarno's famous Trikora speech in December 1961, which triggered small scale skirmishes between the Dutch and Indonesian militaries.<sup>5</sup>

The dispute between the Dutch and Indonesia raised serious concerns in Washington where containing communism was already the all consuming priority. Recognising the importance of Indonesia to the security of Southeast Asia, the United States had remained neutral, refusing requests from its Dutch ally to become involved in the conflict. Sukarno's growing anti-imperialist rhetoric and his deft courting of the Soviets, however, raised fears in Washington that Indonesia was moving closer to the communist camp. The failure of regional rebellions associated with the PRRI-Permesta movement, which had been backed by the US in the 1950s shaped American policy going forward. This failure led to a critical reassessment of American policy toward Sukarno and American neutrality in the West New Guinea dispute.<sup>6</sup> Following the election of the new administration of John F. Kennedy, the United States abandoned its neutrality and promoted a resolution to the dispute on Indonesia's terms. American diplomats began to exert pressure on the Netherlands Government to negotiate with Indonesia to avert an armed conflict.

Isolated internationally and unwilling to go to war with Indonesia alone, the Dutch were forced to negotiate and accede to the US-mediated Bunker Plan. The Plan resulted in the New York Agreement, signed between Indonesia and the Netherlands on August 15, 1962, that transferred responsibility for the territory to Indonesia following a brief transitional period under the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA). The Plan also provided for 'an ascertainment' of the will of the Papuans on their future political status to be held under UN supervision.

### **Australian policy and relations with Indonesia**

Through virtually the whole dispute, Australia had backed the Dutch claims over West New Guinea. This policy was based on ensuring security from the unstable and dangerous region to Australia's north. The island of New Guinea that took in both the Australian-controlled territories of Papua and New Guinea in the east and Dutch New Guinea in the west was viewed as a key link in Australia's security cordon. Defence planners viewed Dutch control over West New Guinea as denying the presence of a potentially hostile Asian power on 'Australia's doorstep'. Shaped by these considerations, the objective of Australian policy throughout the 1950s was to prevent Indonesian control over West New Guinea.

This policy reflected traditional fears in Australia regarding Asia which were exacerbated by the collapse of old colonial empires and the emergence of new independent states in Asia and Africa. In the heightened climate of the Cold War, Australians were particularly concerned about the threat that Asian communism posed especially from China. As Sukarno launched his campaign to retake West New Guinea, Australian fears turned to Indonesia's so-called expansionist designs, and especially the security implications of managing a shared land border between Australia and Indonesia.

As the dispute progressed, the Dutch and Australian governments increasingly justified the need for maintaining Western control in terms of plans to prepare the province for eventual self-determination. As Sukarno stepped up his campaign against the 'imperial Western forces', Australian and Dutch officials emphasised the ethnic differences between 'Asian' Indonesia and 'Melanesian' West New Guinea, stressing the rights of Papuans to self determination.

In 1957, a joint declaration by Australia and the Netherlands to increase cooperation in administering their respective territories became the basis of a new policy initiative. Promoting self determination, this initiative canvassed the possible future establishment of a federation of Melanesia. As the dispute escalated, however, the Dutch looked to Australia to provide a military commitment to respond to any hostilities.

This request was steadfastly declined by Australia which was not prepared to become militarily engaged in the dispute, particularly with neither the US nor Britain signalling support for the Dutch. Australian officials sought to steer a course between support for Dutch control over West New Guinea and continued diplomacy with Indonesia to avoid a total breakdown in relations. In seeking to advance the latter, Australia hosted a visit by Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio, resulting in a joint declaration that indicated Australia's shift away from support for Papuan self-determination.

By the early 1960s, however, this policy of trying to have it both ways was becoming untenable. By the early months of 1962 the United States had shifted to overt support for Indonesia, even supplying arms. While the Australian relationship with Indonesia did not undergo a total breakdown, it did seriously deteriorate as the dispute escalated.

As a result, Australia was perilously isolated from two of its most important bilateral relationships, the United States and Indonesia. It was also promoting a policy at odds with the underlying currents driving post-war international relations, namely decolonisation and Cold War geopolitics. Instead of influencing the direction of growing efforts to resolve the dispute, Australian diplomats had become largely isolated. Australia's policies were blinkered by enduring fears of Asia and a failure to appreciate the dynamics of Indonesia's emerging political order. Widely held views of Sukarno's campaign as a product of territorial aggrandisement obscured domestic factors in Indonesia central to the dispute, namely his balancing of rival political forces through the unifying symbols of post-colonial nationalism.<sup>7</sup>

National elections and the appointment of a new foreign minister, Garfield Barwick, however, resulted in a strategic reorientation.<sup>8</sup> Barwick's appointment occurred soon after the installation of the Kennedy administration in Washington and its shift in support to Indonesia. In a submission to cabinet in June 1962, Barwick dropped Australia's opposition to Indonesia's claims over West New Guinea. Barwick's reversal set the future directions of foreign policy toward Indonesia. While encountering opposition from his ministerial colleagues, Barwick presented arguments that were indisputable.

Australians were simply unprepared to risk hostilities with Indonesia when one of its chief allies, Britain, was declaring neutrality and another, the United States, was supporting Indonesia. Moreover, the policy reorientation towards Indonesia was also based on Barwick's assessment that an independent Papua would not be in Australia's interest. The new realism in Australian policy reflected not only Cold War considerations but long-standing views held in the Department of External Affairs about the need to recognise the long-term importance of Indonesia for Australian security.

Officials such as Tom Critchley had long realised that a successful post-war foreign policy required the establishment of good relations with Indonesia as an emerging power in the region. This view had been reinforced by the clear signal that the US had sent during the dispute. In the event of hostilities in the region, US support for Australia would not be autonomic, but would be based on the United States' own national interests and considerations of the global balance of power.

Australia's reversal over West New Guinea marked an important step in the evolution of its foreign policy. First, as Nancy Viviani observed, it prevented a total 'policy failure' for Australia that could have done irreparable damage to bilateral relations with Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> Second, Barwick's new realism established the objective of building a long-term relationship with Indonesia as a core security interest. Third, the rejection of Papuan self-determination in favour of supporting Indonesian sovereignty has been maintained by successive policy-makers to the present. And finally, the new policy resulted in a divergence between Australia's policy establishment and the public over relations with Indonesia, a gulf that exists up to the present.<sup>10</sup>

### **West Papuan nationalism and the end of Dutch rule**

If the West New Guinea dispute set important new directions for Australian foreign policy, it had an even more seminal influence on the development of modern Papuan nationalism. The Dutch sought to develop a native political class as part of a deliberate strategy of denying Indonesia's claims over Papua. The political identity that was cultivated

among the emerging elite was conceived in terms of being separate from Indonesia and wedded to a political project of self-determination.

Following World War II, as Indonesia's independence struggle gathered momentum, the Dutch moved quickly to secure their administration in West New Guinea. As the dispute escalated in the early 1960s, the Netherlands Government announced a ten-year program to accelerate political development in the territory.<sup>11</sup> After decades of colonial neglect of the remote territory, the Dutch realised that a credible local leadership group was needed if its policy of development leading to self-determination was to remain credible. The plan included the establishment of the New Guinea Council which was installed in April 1961. The Council was partly elected and partly nominated, comprising a majority of Papuans with some Dutch and Eurasian representation. A series of district level elections took place across the territory that gave the Council popular legitimacy.

The stated aim of Dutch policy was to ready the territory for independence after a period of preparation under Dutch control. After decades of colonial neglect of the remote territory, the Dutch realised that a credible local leadership group was needed, if its policy of development leading to self-determination was to remain credible. As a result, the Dutch moved quickly to nurture the participation of Papuan leaders in public affairs.

The new Dutch policy, however, spurred new forms of political activism based on an explicitly nationalist agenda. In fact, Papuan nationalism soon spread throughout the small elite. By 1962, reports indicated that there was widespread support for Dutch plans for self-determination, and much, although not all, of the previous support for integration with Indonesia had weakened.<sup>12</sup> The rapid evolution of nationalist opinion was generated by the Dutch promise of self-determination. The launching of a ten-year development plan also raised expectations among Papuan leaders that the promise of political and economic development would result ultimately in independence. Additionally, the New Guinea Council provided a vehicle for mobilising nationalist opinion and a forum for debate and consensus building among Papuan leaders.



The other main source of Papuan nationalism was the troubled relations that Papuans had experienced with migrants from eastern Indonesia, also a product of colonial rule. Dutch colonialism in West New Guinea had relied on eastern Indonesians as colonial functionaries and wage labourers. Similarly, Christian missions in Papua employed teachers and church workers from Christian ethnic groups from eastern Indonesia such as the Toraja or the Minahasa in Sulawesi.

This distinctive form of indirect rule meant that Papuans were subjected to the administration of the state that was largely executed by migrants from eastern Indonesia. For many Papuans their first experience of the colonial state was with these unsympathetic low-ranking officials.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the Dutch recruitment of Papuans into official service in the 1950s heightened competition between Papuans and the so-called *Amberi*, the term Papuans applied to those non-Papuans mainly from eastern Indonesia.

Another factor accounting for the ethnic form that Papuan nationalism took was the sharp distinction Dutch officials made between the Asian peoples of Indonesia and the Melanesian population of West New Guinea. In canvassing possible political futures for West New Guinea, the Australian and Netherlands Government discussed the prospect of a greater Melanesian Federation between the eastern and western parts of the island. Such ideas found enthusiastic support among the emerging Papuan elite, reinforcing the emerging Papuan ethnic identity that the Dutch had cultivated.

It is unlikely that Papuan sentiment would have developed in these directions if it were not for the effects of Dutch colonial policy. Given different circumstances Papuan political opinion may not have been couched in the same ethnic terms. Indeed, it is quite possible that those Papuan leaders who had supported closer links with eastern Indonesia would have had a larger say in the political future of the territory. As it was, the highly charged atmosphere of the early 1960s produced a near consensus among Papuan leaders opposing Indonesia and supporting self-determination.

At the same time that the commitment to nationalism deepened among Papua's emerging elite, however, the Netherlands' retention of

West New Guinea was becoming increasingly untenable. As the Dutch position weakened, the colonial government became increasingly reluctant to consult with the Papuans and discouraged pro-independence sentiment. Ongoing negotiations among the main international parties essentially excluded Papuan leaders from any role in determining the territory's political future.

In response, several prominent members of the New Guinea Council initiated the formation of the Komite Nasional that issued a political manifesto declaring Papua's desire for independence, identifying the anthem and flag of the 'Papuan people', and proclaiming their land as 'West Papua'. On 1 December 1961, the Morning Star flag was flown alongside the Netherlands flag. While falling short of a declaration of independence, these actions have nevertheless been promoted by contemporary Papuan nationalists as the 'foundational moment' in which Papua was declared an independent state.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these local actions, however, the Dutch were finally persuaded by the threat of hostilities with Indonesia and growing US pressure to transfer control of the territory to Indonesia. This paved the way for the New York Agreement and an international resolution of the dispute. As part of the agreement an act to ascertain the popular will of the Papuans was to be held after a period of Indonesian administration. In reality, reference to this act represented a face-saving concession to the Netherlands Government. Soon after Indonesia took control of the territory, all relevant international parties recognised that the New York Agreement had essentially transferred full sovereignty to Indonesia. Given Indonesia's consistent opposition to Papuan self-determination, it was recognised that any future plebiscite would not give the Papuans a completely free choice.<sup>15</sup>

The agreement was in fact a major defeat for the Dutch, exposing the folly of its attempt to retain West New Guinea. The loss of national prestige, the long-term damage to relations with its former colony and the seizure of Dutch assets by the Indonesian Government were serious costs. As Lijphart argued in 1966:

Dutch policy was unwise because it lacked realistic foresight. Their insistence on granting the right of self-determination to the Papuans occurred in spite of their obvious inability to carry out their policies ... If the Dutch had shown a realistic awareness of this and had agreed to an early withdrawal ... they would have performed a greater service to the Papuans, ... to the Indonesians and to themselves.<sup>16</sup>

This lack of realism not only hurt Dutch prestige but created long-term problems for integrating Papua into the Indonesian state. The fast-tracking of Papuan political development during the height of the dispute had thrust Papuan leaders into the maelstrom of international politics. But no sooner had they been propelled into the centre of this deepening crisis than they were being excluded from negotiations which became monopolised by the key states party to the dispute. The result of these developments was a deep sense of betrayal and resentment among Papuan leaders and their growing attachment to the goal of self-determination.

Once Indonesian officials took control of the province in 1963, they soon realised the daunting challenge facing them. As General Nasution remarked in the early 1960s, Indonesia had been left with a 'Dutch time bomb'.<sup>17</sup> The Dutch legacy combined half a century of colonial neglect with a decade of promised economic development and self-determination producing exceedingly difficult conditions for Indonesia to institute its rule. While generating high expectations of economic and political change on the part of Papuan leaders, Dutch promises had remained largely unfulfilled. Papua remained one of the most remote and least developed regions in the world.

While elite resentment was deeply felt, Papuan nationalism remained limited in both its reach and development. Much of the territory was inaccessible, barely touched by administration and remote from the forces driving economic change. Papuan nationalism at this time lacked an essential ingredient, namely a strongly defined sense of nation. In the highly charged environment of the Cold War, however, the call for

self-determination had found expression in remote Papuan villages, but there was no indication that such communities thought of themselves beyond their own small communities. The vast majority of the native population identified primarily with their immediate face-to-face contacts of family, clan and tribe.

### **Early Indonesian rule and the Act of Free Choice**

In the light of these realities, there was nothing inevitable about Indonesian rule being rejected in the territory, although the challenges were formidable. In fact, as the reality set in that Papua was now under Indonesian control, many Papuan leaders resigned themselves to working within the framework of Indonesian rule. Local pragmatism provided a potential basis for Indonesia to pursue a 'policy of winning the Papuans over'.<sup>18</sup>

Deteriorating economic conditions, however, represented a pressing problem for the incoming administration. The withdrawal of the Dutch in early 1960s resulted in inevitable administrative and economic dislocation. Rather than focusing on economic management, the Sukarno regime continued to stir nationalist mobilisation amid confrontation over the formation of Malaysia. Additionally, Sukarno's authoritarian regime had imposed a 'political quarantine' on the province, repressing the political activities that the Dutch had promoted in their final years. By 1964, prevailing economic conditions and repressive policies began to erode the qualified support that some Papuan leaders had extended to Jakarta. The chronic economic scarcity being experienced by Papuans was also generating popular dissatisfaction. As a result, a cycle of rebellion broke out across the territory throughout the 1960s.

In 1965–66, growing rivalries in national politics between the Indonesian military and communist party finally came to a head when an alleged communist coup was foiled and triggered mass killings across Indonesia. These events gave the military a pretext to ease Sukarno from power and establish the new anticommunist regime under General Suharto. Known as the New Order, the regime gradually consolidated its power with strong Western backing. The new President focused on

rebuilding the economy, left in tatters by Sukarno, by putting a group of prominent US-trained economists in control of economic policy. The government also announced that it would fulfil its obligations under the New York Agreement by holding an Act of Free Choice. The new foreign minister, the pragmatic Adam Malik, soon toured Papua and concluded that serious economic problems were sparking popular dissatisfaction.

While the economy was clearly a challenge for Jakarta's new rulers, engineering the preferred outcome in the planned Act of Free Choice became their chief preoccupation. While he had abandoned his predecessor's popular nationalism, Suharto still struck a strongly nationalist pose in justifying the government's stance. In February 1969, he told a press conference that a result rejecting Indonesian rule would be regarded as treason since it would be a betrayal of Indonesia's nationalist destiny.<sup>19</sup> To ensure that the desired results were achieved, the Suharto regime imposed strict political control and stepped up military operations. From 1967 repeated clashes between Indonesian forces and locals occurred in the lead up to the Act of Free Choice. In 1967, the town of Manokwari was strafed by the Indonesian Air Force when a rebel leader proclaimed himself the leader of the Free Papua state and virtually won control of the town.<sup>20</sup> Following these hostilities, media reports emerged in Australia and other countries of imprisonment, torture and continuing rebellion.<sup>21</sup>

The Act of Free Choice took place throughout late July and early August of 1969 in a series of regional consultations that Indonesian intelligence officials closely stage-managed. The New York Agreement had made no mention of a plebiscite or referendum, referring instead to the 'ascertainment' of the will of the population.<sup>22</sup> Rejecting the principle of one man one vote the Indonesian authorities preferred a process of 'community consultation' or *musyawarah* which aimed at reaching a consensus among the government's hand picked delegates that supported Indonesian sovereignty. On this basis, Indonesia claimed that its conduct of the Act of Free Choice under United Nations supervision was legitimate and consistent with the agreement.

In reality, the Act was conducted by 'ascertaining' the will of 1022 Papuan delegates who had been coaxed, cajoled and threatened amid

a repressive security climate.<sup>23</sup> This process was clearly politically engineered to ensure a unanimous result in favour of Indonesia, a process made possible by international participation and acquiescence.<sup>24</sup> Papuan exiled leaders in Holland declared the Act a sham, as did many foreign journalists who visited the territory in the lead up to the Act. While Indonesian methods came under the spotlight, the United Nations was also subject to fierce criticisms for going along with the pretense that the Papuans were being given a choice.

### **International acquiescence**

Western governments, however, were quick to recognise the result, reflecting not just the long-held acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty, but increasingly closer ties between the West and the Suharto regime. The United Nations General Assembly voted in November 1969 to accept the result of the Act by eighty four to none, with thirty abstentions.

While the resolution allowed the Dutch to nurse their pride and was being heralded by the Americans as a model for Cold War dispute settlement, this was not the view taken by Papuan leaders.<sup>25</sup> The fact that the Papuan elite were not included in negotiations was to have great consequences in sowing the seeds of conflict for decades to come. The focus of Dutch policy for the remainder of the decade was to establish cordial diplomatic relations with Indonesia while providing aid to help stabilise Indonesia's economy.<sup>26</sup> The Dutch were also aiming to restore the investment opportunities that had been damaged by Sukarno's takeover of Dutch economic assets. In line with these policy interests, Foreign Minister Luns who had done so much to oppose Indonesia's claims in the early 1960s, offered repeated public statements supporting Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua.<sup>27</sup> For its part, the United States, the main architect of the resolution of the dispute, pursued a policy of non-involvement in preparations for the Act.<sup>28</sup> Support for the anti-communist regime of Suharto was the central element of US policy and it did not want to become drawn into renewed controversies over a dispute that it considered to have been resolved in the early 1960s.

Australia also acquiesced in Indonesia's actions. The authoritarian



orientation of Jakarta's new regime was regarded as a small price to pay when compared with the benefits of having an ideologically compatible government in Jakarta. Fears of an expansionist Indonesia, which were always overblown in Australia, were substantially eased by Suharto's economic rationalist and pro-Western government. Australia, long before the Act of Free Choice, had accepted the reality of Indonesian sovereignty over Papua. As early as 1965, Australia's foreign minister was playing down the significance of the Act stating that 'self-determination does not mean the holding of a plebiscite or direct consultations with the people' but rather an act of 'ascertainment'.<sup>29</sup> With the installation of the Suharto regime, Australian support for Indonesia's position over Papua became increasingly clear.<sup>30</sup>

The political engineering that the Act involved provoked a short-lived outcry in the Australian media which adopted much the same language that had been employed against Barwick in the early 1960s. Present-day critics have accused successive generations of Australian policy makers of forsaking the Papuans in an attempt to 'appease' Jakarta. Given the international consensus accepting Indonesia's claims over Papua that had prevailed since 1962, Australian opposition would have been token at best. In fact, Australia had borne the costs of opposing Indonesian sovereignty in the 1950s which included becoming internationally isolated from its main allies and bilateral relationships, including Indonesia. As a result, there were compelling strategic reasons for Australia to follow the line it did, including the opportunities for building better relations with Indonesia.

Notwithstanding improving relations between Jakarta and Canberra, the joint land border shared by both countries, with Papua in the west and Australian-administered territory in the east, was a source of some concern for Canberra. In the lead up to the Act of Free Choice, Australian patrols reported 'bursts of migration' across the border from the mid sixties onwards.<sup>31</sup> The presence of Indonesian troops in the region and reports that armed patrols were transgressing the border raised security concerns.<sup>32</sup> For its part, Indonesia protested that Papuan militants were directing attacks against Indonesian forces from within camps that emerged along the border in the Australia-administered

territory. Australia reacted by dismantling the camps, replacing them with border holding centres, while also moving to formalise border liaison arrangements with Indonesia. The government also sought to discourage flows over the border by denying permissive residence and encouraging many of the border crossers to return to Indonesia. Despite these initiatives, the management of the border would remain a constant challenge for Indonesia and Australia, and the newly independent state of Papua New Guinea.

### **New Order Rule in Papua**

With the incorporation of Papua into Indonesia, New Order officials turned their focus to economic development, but faced a difficult challenge in integrating Papua into the state. The government's pro-market policies, supported by Western powers and Japan, facilitated a large inflow of foreign assistance and investment into the country. The government couched its pro-market policies and anti-communist orientation in terms of the ideas of modernisation theory, fashionable in Western social science in the late 1960s and 1970s. The architects of the New Order, a mixture of military modernisers and US trained liberal economists, fashioned such ideas into their own strategy for economic progress and political order.<sup>33</sup>

New Order officials claimed that the path to modernisation led through various stages from backwardness to development — what they referred to as 'takeoff' (*tinggal landas*). Underpinning the regime's promotion of rapid economic growth was the supply of political stability and order through strong military rule. Dissent, whether in the form of ideological opposition to government or regional discontent with the centralised political system, was repressed with force by security forces.

While prosperity and order were important goals, modernisation was also intended to address the challenge of national integration. By promoting rapid socioeconomic change, government officials sought to speed the transition from traditional societies, which they saw as being based on divisive 'primordial' identities of ethnicity and religion to a modern nation-state. Modernisation aimed to restore 'national

resilience' by bolstering the country's economic base and bringing Indonesians together through trade and migration.

From the 1970s onwards, this strategy shaped the main demographic, economic and security policies of the New Order in Papua. Rapid urbanisation, particularly along the north coast, occurred and the cash economy expanded into new areas. New consumer goods were also introduced through eastern Indonesian trading networks and petty merchants. The reach of the state was extended throughout Papua with growing government expenditures and a larger military presence. But far from addressing the challenge that Papua posed to national integration through modernisation and assimilation, government policies actually exacerbated and deepened the Papua conflict.

### **Papua's changing demographics**

The completion of the Act of Free Choice enabled the government to lift the previous restrictions it had imposed on access to the territory, increasing the flow of goods and people into Papua. By the early 1970s, the government was actively promoting a movement of traders, farmers, wage labourers, and civil servants into Papua. This was to spur population growth which exceeded 3 % annually from 1970-2000, resulting in a near tripling of the total population that reached over 2.2 million. During this period hundreds of thousands of new migrants settled in Papua, transforming the social and demographic makeup of the province. By 2000, indigenous Papuans made up over 1.4 million of the population, while there were nearly 800,000 settlers, making up 35 % of the population.<sup>34</sup> The religious composition of the province had also changed over these three decades. While the province was overwhelmingly Christian in 1970 making up well over 90 % of the total population, by 2000 Christians made up 74 % of the population, and Muslims 25 %.

One of the main drivers of this flow of people was the government's national transmigration program which transferred people from densely populated provinces in Java and Bali to Indonesia's outer islands. Between 1974 and 1995, the government had settled nearly 200,000 people in Papua, the majority coming from Java.<sup>35</sup> Transmigration,

however, became highly contentious. The supply of land for transmigration settlements was often contested by local communities whose customary system of land ownership came into conflict with the state's system of land tenure. The settlement of large numbers of non-Papuan migrants side by side with local communities also intensified competition for resources, resulting in rising tensions.<sup>36</sup>

Papuan leaders were troubled by the process of social engineering implied by transmigration which they claimed was intended to 'Indonesianise' the province. Transmigration resulted in an influx that transformed the territory from one with a primarily Melanesian population engaged in hunting and gathering or subsistence agriculture to a potpourri of Indonesian ethnic groups of rice-growers, traders, and wage labourers alongside indigenous Papua communities. Furthermore, the visibility of transmigration settlements in border regions confirmed suspicions that the policy was being driven by the regime's security preoccupations and its efforts to police the border.

Other sources of migration had an even greater impact. For many Indonesians, reports of the province's resource boom turned Papua into a new frontier. Average per capita incomes in Papua were the highest in Indonesia. According to Freeport sources in 2003, wages in the Timika region were seventeen times the national average. Continuing improvements in sea and air transport throughout the 1980s and 1990s opened more links between Papua and the rest of Indonesia spurring further migration and reducing the province's isolation.

The migration patterns that resulted altered the basic ethnic and religious composition of the territory's population. In 1971, settlers comprised just 4 % of the urban population; in 1980, they made up 30 % of the total urban population, while in 2000, this figure had increased to over 66 %. While the new migrants dominated the towns, Papuans remained heavily rural in composition, with over 86 % living in rural areas. Out of the total population of Papuans, only 10 % lived in towns along the north coast and Timika, where economic growth and opportunity was greatest. The main concentration of Papuans was in the province's most remote areas including in the central highlands and the south where over 53 % of Papuans lived.

The changes promoted by the state, therefore, belied the expectations of officials who equated socioeconomic change with the development of civic attachments to the state that would eclipse ethnic and religious identities. Transmigration became a source of considerable controversy, with Papuan leaders and their supporters abroad accusing the government of carrying out a systematic policy of diluting the indigenous population by promoting an influx of migrants. The ensuing economic competition, from which migrants have fared much better than locals, created enduring resentments on the part of Papuans that reinforced the anti-*Amberi* sentiments that had emerged under Dutch colonialism.

### **Economic policy**

Unlike the Dutch, the Indonesian Government strongly promoted the exploitation of the province's resource base as a major element of its economic strategy. The Dutch had largely considered the territory an economic backwater with resources locked up in remote inaccessible regions. The negotiation of the Freeport McMoran contract in 1967 marked a watershed, not only in the history of Indonesia's relations with foreign capital, but also in the government's development policies toward Papua. The Freeport mining operations in the central highlands became the largest combined gold and copper mine in the world. The government's economic focus on Papua resulted in an impressive annual growth rate averaging 6.3% between 1973 and 1990.

The benefits from such rapid economic growth, however, bypassed most local communities. The uneven spread of benefits from economic development was reflected in the increasing disparity in wealth and development between urban and rural areas. In particular, the growth of the northern towns and Timika, the mining town that grew up around the Freeport mine, widened the gap between coastal areas and the hinterland. The improvement of transport links between the northern towns and the rest of Indonesia indicated the growing integration of urban centres into the national economy. However, economic interlinkages within Papua and between the province's main urban settlements remained underdeveloped. No one urban centre within the

territory was linked by road with another, while communications in remote communities remained rudimentary.

These patterns of uneven development were to have an adverse impact on remote regions in the south and central highlands, with large populations of native Papuans. For not only did these regions miss out on the rapid economic growth occurring in urban centres they also lagged well behind the rest of Indonesia on key social indicators.<sup>37</sup> The lack of access to basic health and education reflected decades of government neglect. Not surprisingly, this left remote communities feeling resentful and lamenting the enormous gap between the government's rhetoric on development and the realities on the ground.

The enclave nature of resource extraction industries also contributed to the unequal benefits that resulted from economic change. The enormous revenues being generated by the mining sector were directly channelled to the central government. Freeport was to become Indonesia's largest single taxpayer, sending tens of millions of dollars to the central government in royalties and taxation revenues. This situation left many Papuans feeling that the rhetoric of development merely masked Jakarta's real interest in the territory which was exploiting its rich resource base.

The exploitation of Papua's resources, however, did not only result in enormous state revenues for the New Order regime. The territory's high visibility resource projects attracted the crony interests of the Suharto regime. Logging, fisheries and mining were particularly lucrative and became dominated by outside economic interests linked in one way or another to the New Order regime. In the late 1990s, Bob Hasan, the Suharto children and Senior Minister Ginandjar made various moves to gain an interest in Papua's mining sector.<sup>38</sup> The security forces also developed an array of financial interests in the local economy, particularly in resource extraction, ranging from direct participation in logging, the protection of resource companies to the smuggling of wildlife.<sup>39</sup> The military's involvement became especially contentious with regular clashes occurring with the security forces as locals sought to defend their land and resources against encroachment from military protected businesses.

### **Security policy and political control**

The New Order regime faced a difficult security climate when it took over in the mid 1960s. As Suharto consolidated his authority throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a centralised state developed, underpinned by the repressive capacities of the armed forces at the same time as pursuing rational economic policies. The new regime relied not only on coercive means, but also establishing political institutions that channelled popular aspirations into a tightly controlled political system. Dissent outside this system was harshly suppressed. The media was subject to government censorship and political parties were amalgamated into two parties representing nationalism and Islam respectively along with the government's own Golkar party. Elections were held under rules and in circumstances that assured Golkar's landslide victories.

One of the most contentious policies of the New Order's rule was the lack of representation of Papuans in the provincial and local governments. The appointment of Eliezer Jan Bonay as governor in the early 1960s was the first of a long line of Papuans to be appointed to the post.<sup>40</sup> However, outside this post, the bureaucracy was dominated by non-Papuans. The appointment of so-called 'native sons' to lead the provincial administration was not common in other Indonesian regions where the government favoured outsiders, often former military commanders, to prevent regionalist sentiment from emerging in local government.

In contrast, Jakarta installed Bonay, a staunch Papuan nationalist who had been politically active before Indonesian rule. The appointment of Bonay and other Papuans to the governorship represented an early attempt to recognise Papuan sensitivities and to co-opt the Papuan political elite. But such policies faltered as the suspicions between the national elite and the Papuan leadership continued to surface. Papuans who tried to work within the system often reported encountering demeaning and even racist behaviour by their non-Papuan colleagues who often exhibited a dismissive attitude toward Papuans as primitive.

These perceptions were reinforced when Bonay, who was becoming increasingly critical of Jakarta's policy in Papua, was dismissed and jailed on corruption charges in the mid 1960s before fleeing into exile. The

appointment of a Papuan figurehead as governor merely masked the fact that other posts in the provincial and local administrations were taken by non-Papuans. The dominance of non-Papuans in the administration was based on the reluctance of Jakarta to entrust strategic posts to Papuans whose ultimate loyalty to the state was often questioned. Central government officials tended to view the pragmatism of the Papuan elite in participating in Indonesian administration as duplicity. These perceptions, combined with what was seen as the tokenism of Papuan representation in the government, established a long history of mistrust between the national and Papuan political elites that plagues relations to the present.

As a result, it was the coercive means of the state that secured the regime's control over Papua. The behaviour of security forces on the ground produced a wellspring of popular resentment across the territory. The fact that poorly trained and inexperienced troops were dropped into remote locations with few resources and believing that their mission was to wipe out separatists threatening the state was a recipe for military oppression. But the regular reports of torture, arbitrary detention, rape and summary killings perpetrated by the Indonesian security forces also indicated a systematic campaign to terrorise local populations into submitting to Indonesian rule.

The military's counter-insurgency presence in the province was justified on the basis of defending the nation against disintegrative forces. In defining its role in Papua, the armed forces took on three basic functions: to protect and defend strategic industries and installations, to defend Indonesia's unity against separatists and to patrol and defend Indonesia's border with the newly independent state of Papua New Guinea. Troop deployments were concentrated in areas close to resource projects and in the border region. The military's protection of strategic industries included the security it provided to resource projects such as Freeport which provided a lucrative source of income for its cash-strapped troops.

The military's reaction to security disturbances around resource projects was often indiscriminate. This encouraged, rather than deterred, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) which periodically

targeted resource projects, particularly Freeport. Local communities increasingly contested the presence of resource projects, asserting their customary rights over land and resources. As resistance continued over resource management, the military reacted with a predictably repressive response. Furthermore, given its vested interests in providing security to resource companies, rumours regularly emerged that the military were covertly triggering conflict as a pretext for demanding additional funds or justifying the maintenance of its role. As this conflict economy became increasingly entrenched, a series of human rights violations were documented in the Timika region as well as other regions across Papua.<sup>41</sup>

The military's heavy handed actions, however, were not just limited to Papua's remote regions. Papuans leaders and intellectuals who opposed government policies risked being labelled as separatists and therefore enemies of the state. Reports of imprisonment, torture and of deaths in custody emerged. The celebrated case of the imprisonment of cultural activist Arnold App in 1984 and his subsequent death at the hands of Indonesian security forces attracted strong international media attention, particularly in Australia.<sup>42</sup>

The repressive actions launched periodically by the military induced regular flows of Papuans across the border into Papua New Guinea (PNG). Throughout the years of the New Order, there was a fairly steady trickle into PNG. On several occasions, however, a crackdown by security forces triggered major flows, most notably the refugee crisis of 1984–85 in which 11,000 people were estimated to have crossed the border.<sup>43</sup> The OPM's operations in PNG represented a longstanding source of irritation for Indonesia. The PNG Government of Michael Somare adopted a pragmatic approach to the crisis, continuing the traditional approach in seeking good relations with its giant neighbour. This was reflected in the fact that PNG authorities had displayed few sympathies towards the OPM. Port Moresby's main policy response to the crisis was to initiate a process of repatriation to placate Indonesia. These policies, however, were at odds with PNG public opinion that reflected popular sympathy for the plight of Papuans over the border.

As the refugee crisis unfolded, concerns emerged in Canberra of

the prospect that refugee flows into Australian territories might upset bilateral relations with Indonesia. These concerns were heightened when five Papuans were found on Thursday Island in June 1985, but were refused Australian visas and resettled in third countries. As it turned out no other Papuan refugees made it to Australia.<sup>44</sup> The crisis had subsided by 1987 as military operations in Papua were scaled back, and the new PNG Government of Pais Wingti promised to dismantle the camps reportedly being used by the OPM. In the final months of 1986, the Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation was signed between Port Moresby and Jakarta. The agreement alleviated Jakarta's concerns by committing both governments to refusing to allow their territory to be used by others for hostile acts, a clear reference to OPM sanctuaries in PNG. Nevertheless Indonesian security policy continued to result in a continuing trickle of border crossers. The UNHCR privately noted that there were still 5000 Papuans 'of concern' in PNG in early 2006.<sup>45</sup>

# Chapter 2

## Rebellion, resistance and political opposition

This chapter examines how the grievances generated by New Order rule have been converted into popular opposition to the state. One important effect of the types of policies pursued by the New Order government was to convert a sense of nationalist identity among a small Dutch-cultivated elite into a more sustained and widespread movement against Indonesian rule. This chapter also outlines the evolution of the movement for independence from the emergence of the OPM to the Papuan Presidium Council (PDP).

The analysis shows how the Papuan quest for a shared identity has become complicated by the competing demands of clan and tribe and by the pull of regional and Indonesian loyalties. Papuans living in towns are as connected to the neighbouring islands of eastern Indonesian as they are to other urban centres of the province. Moreover, for all their resentment towards Jakarta, members of the Papuan elite and the small middle class enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle due to their participation in a wider Indonesian context. As a result of these factors and others, the pressure that pro-independence elements has exerted on the state has been largely episodic and lacked the necessary momentum to pose a serious challenge to Indonesian rule.



### Exile, rebellion and factionalism

The departure of the Dutch sparked an initial exile of nationalist leaders, primarily to the Netherlands. This was the first generation of exiles whose numbers would grow modestly over the years of Indonesian rule. The diaspora that emerged in subsequent decades was concentrated mainly in the Netherlands and Papua New Guinea. Exiles were also politically active in Australia, Senegal, some Pacific Island states, and several European countries, but in much smaller numbers. Even in terms of comparison closer to home, the Papuan exiles have never developed the unified leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) exiled in Stockholm or matched the successful international campaigning mounted by East Timor's Jose Ramos Horta. The experience of exile nevertheless had the familiar outcome of intensifying the nationalist commitments of those Papuans living abroad. While they sought to keep Papua in the international spotlight, from the 1970s onwards, developments in Papua largely receded from public view in Western countries.

The ineffectiveness of the Papuan international campaign raised frustrations among leaders in Papua who were becoming disillusioned with Jakarta's rule. Sukarno's suggestion that an Act of Free Choice would not be held 'heralded a period of large-scale uprisings against the Government'.<sup>46</sup> Clashes between Indonesian forces and local communities had been occurring since Indonesian forces entered the territory in the early 1960s. A mass uprising in the Bird's Head region of the Arfak Mountains and Manokwari town broke out in 1963 that would take Indonesian forces years to suppress. By 1964–5, the leaders of this rebellion began to refer to themselves as the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM), a name that would become synonymous among Papuans with resistance against Indonesian rule. The rebellion was eventually put down by Indonesian military forces, but only after air power was directed against rebel strongholds.<sup>47</sup>

Mass uprisings occurred throughout the 1960s and intensified in the lead up to the Act of Free Choice, including in the remote central highland region of Paniai in 1969, again provoking a harsh crackdown

from the military. While accounts of these uprisings illustrated their political nature, the critical economic conditions prevailing throughout the 1960s were also an important cause of the unrest. One visiting US embassy official described the situation in 1968, reporting that 'a state of semi-rebellion exists' which 'is beyond the capacity of the Indonesian army to eradicate altogether'.<sup>48</sup>

Following the Act of Free Choice the nature of resistance changed. Popular rebellions continued, but with less regularity. The locus of resistance turned to the small groups in remote jungle hideouts that identified themselves as the OPM, operating particularly along the border with New Guinea. A student leader, Jacob Prai fled to the jungle in 1968 and became an influential leader in the resistance, followed a year later by Seth Rumkorem a former soldier in the Indonesian armed forces. Under Rumkorem, the struggle was transformed into a low-level guerrilla insurgency.<sup>49</sup> In 1971, Rumkorem captured an Indonesian radio station and broadcast a declaration of West Papuan independence. A constitution was drawn up, with Rumkorem declaring himself president. These actions, however, represented more a gesture of defiance than the crowning achievement of Papuan nationalism as Rumkorem's declaration had little impact either in Indonesia or internationally.

Tensions soon developed between Rumkorem and Prai, resulting in rival claims to the leadership of pro-independence forces. Ideological differences drove the two leaders apart with Prai rejecting plans by the communist-leaning Rumkorem to seek weapons from the Soviet Union. The Prai-Rumkorem split in the 1970s not only led to armed clashes between their respective factions, but also dominated Papuan oppositional politics both domestically and abroad for decades.

The personal and ideological differences that emerged between Prai and Rumkorem reflected more general factional tensions that bedeviled the pro-independence movement. Indeed, factionalism reflected deeper divisions within Papuan society. The tendency toward social and political fragmentation constitutes an endemic condition of Papuan social life. Allegiance to clan and tribe represents the key source of identification for Papuans. The historical evolution of small, scattered

societies in remote and underdeveloped regions that spoke their own separate languages gave rise to a remarkable level of linguistic diversity that persists today. Reinforcing such divisions have been traditional rivalries among neighbouring tribes in which struggles over land, brides, and ritual warfare have been playing themselves out for centuries.

But beyond the micro-divisions of tribe and clan, broader splits in Papuan society developed between coastal versus interior and rural versus urban settlements. These divisions had their origins in the colonial period when Christian missions and the colonial government promoted educational opportunities for Papuans that favoured coastal tribes. The uneven spread of colonial administration gave coastal Papuans opportunities to participate in colonial education and administration at the cost of exclusion of the remote communities of the highlands and southern parts of Papua. These social conditions represented a serious obstacle to Papuan unity and the collective action needed to challenge Indonesian rule.

If factionalism was an obstacle to advancing the political struggle, the scattered nature of OPM military forces limited armed resistance. In fact, the resistance that emerged from the 1970s failed to pose a serious threat to Indonesia's control over the province. It is difficult to quantify with any great precision the strength of OPM forces over time due to the contending propaganda from the OPM and Indonesian security forces. The OPM has claimed to have variously had a force of 35,000 to 50,000 men.<sup>50</sup> The TNI (Indonesian armed forces), on the other hand, consistently claimed that the OPM numbered no more than several hundred. Detailed academic analyses of the OPM accepted the figure of 400–600 committed guerillas, with a pool of floating recruits that the OPM could draw on. In 2005, the TNI's public estimate of OPM forces totaled 620.<sup>51</sup>

There is less debate, however, over the OPM's shortage of weapons. Both government and pro-independence leaders have acknowledged the OPM's reliance on traditional weapons such as bows and arrows. Government estimates in 2005 claimed that the OPM possessed 150 modern weapons of varying vintage, including rifles left by the Dutch.<sup>52</sup> There have been isolated reports of various attempts by Papuan groups

to trade in weapons but there is little to indicate that this has resulted in a systematic attempt to arm OPM units.<sup>53</sup> Some reports suggest that marijuana crops have been grown in the border region, sparking concerns that a drugs-for-arms trade could emerge to pose serious security problems for both governments.<sup>54</sup> Again the evidence for this has been scant and there is nothing to indicate an enhancement of the OPM's weak military capacity.<sup>55</sup>

One must look more to the OPM's chronic shortage of funds as a limiting factor in developing a military and political capacity to challenge the Indonesian state. No state or other foreign entity has provided significant levels of support for the OPM's cause. Furthermore, Papuan exiles themselves have had few funds to support their cause, either internationally or domestically. The speculation regarding arms and marijuana smuggling has not been supported by sustained reporting, indicating that even if OPM smuggling has occurred, it has not been systematic. OPM forces rather depend on the goodwill of remote communities that provide them with logistical support. Unlike GAM in Aceh, for instance, there is little evidence to suggest OPM have taxed local communities. In light of these weaknesses, the sheer persistence of the OPM can be accounted for by three factors: the popular support base the OPM has enjoyed in villages which have provided logistical support; the skills of the guerrillas in adapting to their jungle bases; and the use of PNG territory as a sanctuary against Indonesian patrols.

### **The OPM's quixotic quest**

If the OPM's military and financial capacity was limited, so too was its organisational base. Several analysts have remarked that the OPM resembled a loosely-connected resistance movement rather than a unified organisation.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the OPM has served more as a common banner under which diverse local bands of leaders and their followers have launched largely uncoordinated acts of resistance. The tyranny of Papua's geography impeded the organisational development of the OPM, with communications limited by the territory's forbidding mountainous



terrain and lowland swamps. The OPM could never hope to achieve military parity with the Indonesian state. One Australian journalist who managed to meet with the rebels in the mid-1980s came away with the impression of their struggle as an ‘ultimately quixotic quest’.<sup>57</sup>

OPM activity in fact was largely intended to pose a symbolic challenge to Indonesian sovereignty. Unable to exact serious military costs on the government, the OPM engaged instead in sporadic acts of resistance designed to attract domestic and international attention to the plight of the Papuans. While the OPM posed little military threat to the rule of the New Order, it nevertheless occupied an important place in Papuan consciousness as the locus of opposition to the state. The OPM has been described by its supporters as a ‘state of mind’ symbolising local resistance.<sup>58</sup>

The evolution of the OPM in these directions was shaped by foiled rebellions during 1977 and 1984 that exacted enormous costs on the resistance. The events of both these years involved mass uprisings and a crackdown by Indonesian forces that resulted in a large ‘exodus’ of Papuans across the border into Papua New Guinea. In 1977, a mass rebellion erupted in several regions in the interior, gathering momentum with remarkable speed and soon spreading throughout the central highlands.<sup>59</sup> The ferocity with which this uprising was put down, however, underlined the enormous costs associated with frontal opposition to the regime.<sup>60</sup>

In 1984, a more organised effort among Papua’s resistance emerged, bringing together OPM forces, urban intellectuals and Papuan deserters from the Indonesian armed forces for the first time. The plan to stage a coordinated attack on Indonesian targets as a way to trigger a mass uprising reflected an unprecedented level of cooperation among Papua’s opposition forces. However, before the attack could be launched, Indonesian authorities uncovered the plan, provoking a new round of military repression. As the military used the foiled uprising as a pretext to launch renewed operations in the border region, many Papuans fled to Papua New Guinea, unleashing a torrent of refugees throughout 1984–5. An estimated 11,000 people were reported to have crossed the border during this period.<sup>61</sup>

The events of 1977 and 1984 clearly demonstrated that frontal opposition to the regime came at significant costs. 1984 was an unmitigated military disaster for the OPM. Directly challenging the regime required a level of organisation, strategy and unity that Papuan dissidents had been unable to develop. On the other hand, the exodus sparked by the 1984 uprising generated more world attention in a matter of months than had been produced by decades of military activities in the bush. While military repression was certainly a factor fueling the flight of the border-crossers, the OPM were instrumental in promoting the exodus, organising people movements and circulating reports of military brutalities.<sup>62</sup>

In light of these experiences, the OPM opted for continuing to engage in sporadic acts of resistance but increasingly sought out high-visibility targets to attack. Throughout the 1990s, different bands of OPM engaged in attacks on the most visible symbols of Indonesian rule, such as resource projects, transmigration settlements and police and government offices. In addition to targeting military personnel and government installations, the OPM began to increasingly engage in sabotage and kidnapping as their main modus operandi.

The most spectacular and daring of these incidents occurred in Mapnduma in the Baliem Valley in 1996 when a band of OPM guerillas took 26 people hostage, including Indonesian and foreign nationals. Several of the hostages were immediately released, but during a military rescue operation two Indonesians were killed by the OPM. The negotiations for the release of the hostages brought the OPM to international attention. The incident also elevated the band’s leader, Kelly Kwalik to instant notoriety in the Indonesian media. Within Papua, Kwalik became a folk hero as his profile appeared on ‘Most Wanted’ posters in local newspapers. The OPM’s goal of demonstrating its continued resistance and eliciting world attention had been spectacularly achieved.

But many educated Papuan leaders were becoming distinctly uncomfortable with the directions the OPM was taking. While achieving short-term gains in raising international attention, the OPM’s resort to kidnapping and sabotage allowed the Indonesian state to stigmatise

resistance, charging the OPM with acts of terrorism. Furthermore, international rights groups were also critical of the OPM's actions. In reaction to the Mapnduma incident, Amnesty International accused the OPM of committing 'human rights abuses including hostage-taking and summary executions'.<sup>63</sup>

### **The independence movement after Suharto**

The collapse of the Suharto regime in May 1998 transformed the political environment in Indonesia, including in Papua. The new President B J Habibie lifted the repressive political controls of the New Order period, including relaxing media controls, freeing political prisoners and loosening the heavy security presence. This process of liberalisation opened up a new democratic space for the first time in decades. The reformasi movement that had brought Suharto down continued to make sweeping demands for political reform. In Papua, the new openness resulted in a rising tide of political activism by student groups, NGOs and other actors in civil society including religious and community leaders.

Unlike the larger reformasi movement in the rest of Indonesia, however, Papuan activists were less concerned with the need for national reform than with Papua's own grievances. When national opposition leader Amien Rais floated the idea of federalism and later visited Jayapura, he attracted very little attention in the province. Local leaders were focused on a Papua-specific agenda which would eventually evolve into a widespread demand for independence. In the early period of the post-Suharto period, however, the focus was on the demand that human rights violators be prosecuted; that the government halt its controversial transmigration program; and that Papuans be given control over the management of natural resources.

The intense political activity that was taking hold soon resulted in growing efforts to establish a more organised movement for change. The emergence of Foreri, the Forum for the Reconciliation of Irian Jaya, after Suharto's fall was followed by the formation of the Team 100, a large grouping of Papuan leaders 'elected' through community

consultations to represent the province in a dialogue with President Habibie in Jakarta February 1999. But the unwieldy image of so many delegates representing the province underscored the continuing challenges of Papua's social fragmentation. Moreover, the difficulty of holding a meaningful dialogue with such a large group soon became evident. As a succession of speakers condemned Jakarta and demanded independence in a highly emotional atmosphere, President Habibie decided to abandon the dialogue.

The aborted dialogue, however, merely accelerated political mobilisation in the province.<sup>64</sup> A series of gross human rights violations further intensified the commitment of Papuan leaders to push their cause. Emboldened by the government's decision to hold a referendum in East Timor, a group of leaders was emerging whose clear goal was independence. This new group comprised urban intellectuals and tribal leaders not associated with the OPM. In fact, most of them had either directly participated in the institutions of New Order rule, such as the parliament or provincial bureaucracy, or organisations sanctioned by the regime, such as the churches or official customary associations. They essentially adopted a strategy of non-violent political activism, in contrast to the OPM's limited armed struggle which it was argued was no longer effective in an open democratic environment. As the OPM's tactics became increasingly anachronistic, the leadership of Papua's independence cause passed to this emerging group.

The most prominent leader to emerge was Theys Eluay. A tribal chief from the coastal region of Sentani, Eluay's reputation as a staunch supporter of Indonesia rule had been cemented by his participation in the Act of Free Choice and his role as a Golkar legislator. His apparent conversion to the independence cause had made him a controversial figure, particularly given his rumoured ongoing business relationship with TNI. The other main leader to emerge at this time was the popular highlander, Thom Beanal, himself a traditional leader of the Amungme tribe whose lands had covered the Freeport concession. Beanal had long been a staunch critic of the government and Freeport, although he courted controversy by accepting appointment to the board of Freeport in 2000.

With these two tribal leaders supported by a group of urban intellectuals, a period of intense political activity occurred, echoing the formation of Papuan political opinion during the early 1960s.<sup>65</sup> With the eclipse of the OPM, the impetus for the pro-independence cause moved to the towns. In December 1999, to mark the anniversary of the official flag-raising of the Morning Star in 1961, the new leadership organised ceremonies in towns across the province. This political momentum culminated in the convening of the Consultative Meeting (*Mubes*) held in February 2000. The *Mubes* involved an unprecedented gathering of pro-independence forces including exiles, tribal leaders, former political prisoners and OPM supporters. The *Mubes* legitimised the new political leadership, resulted in a reconciliation between OPM representatives and the urban leaders, and paved the way for the convening of the Papuan Congress.

The Congress resulted in the formation of the *Presidium Dewan Papua* (PDP) as the main independence grouping in the post-Suharto era. Theys Eluay was elected chairman of the PDP, his supporters immediately proclaiming him the President of West Papua. Thom Beanal accepted the vice-chairman role, despite strong sentiments among his supporters that a highlander should be the leader. Popular pressures arose on the floor of the Congress for an immediate declaration of independence. Congress organisers, however, argued that independence had already been declared under the Dutch, a claim contradicted by the historical record. PDP leaders, however, were less concerned about their historical fidelity than they were with avoiding a collision with the security forces. To have made a declaration would have courted confrontation with the authorities, as secessionist actions were illegal under Indonesia's tough sedition laws.

Whatever winds of reformasi had blown through Indonesia's political system, secessionist demands were opposed across the political spectrum in Jakarta. While Indonesian public opinion was sympathetic to the grievances voiced by Papuan leaders, a national consensus had emerged that Aceh and Papua constituted inseparable parts of the state. The Congress instead called for a referendum, a demand that provoked a strong reaction from many participants who

wanted an unequivocal and immediate declaration of independence. The call for a referendum not only disappointed many PDP supporters, but it appeared to contradict the leadership's main argument that independence had already been granted.

The holding of the *Mubes* and the Congress appeared at the time as a pivotal event in the evolution of the Papuan independence movement. The Indonesian state was facing enormous challenges to its sovereignty. It had been forced to relinquish East Timor, and remained reliant on international financial institutions for state financing. The government was inundated with protests from a resurgent civil society, with street protests a daily occurrence. Furthermore, separatist trouble in Aceh and communal violence in eastern Indonesia was stretching the capacity of the security forces to breaking point. Against the background of the centre's weakness, the *Mubes* signaled an extraordinary display of Papuan unity after decades of debilitating political factionalism. The tribal and regional diversity of Papuan society that had long translated into social fragmentation appeared to have been transcended.

With the election of Abdurrahman Wahid as president, Papuan leaders believed they had a sympathetic ally at the helm of Indonesia's new government. Furthermore, Tom Beanal was appointed to the board of Freeport, a signal widely interpreted as indicating that the company was hedging its bets on Papua's future and implicitly recognising the PDP as an influential political actor that it needed to accommodate. Reports of outflows of migrants from the province also indicated that conditions on the ground were shifting dramatically. In particular, the growing assertiveness of the PDP-linked militia, *Satgas Papua*, was viewed with some concern among settler communities who complained of growing ethnic Papuan chauvinism. After decades of scant attention from the international media, foreign journalists began to show a renewed interest in the history of exploitation and human rights abuses under the New Order regime.

This sense that the territory was on the verge of momentous political change triggered a nationalist reawakening. Enterprising businessmen sold West Papuan nationalist paraphernalia that circulated throughout

the territory in the form of badges, bags, shirts and other clothing displaying the Morning Star flag. The print media sector expanded considerably, with a slew of new media filled with the profiles and statements of the PDP leaders, reports on the OPM and exposés on human rights violations.

At the same time, Papuan intellectuals began to articulate a far-reaching critique of government policy. This critique explained the unsettling changes promoted by the New Order in terms of a deliberate and systematic policy of state discrimination. The late Michael Rumbiak (2002), Papua's leading demographer, concluded that the government was engaged in a policy of 'depopulation'.<sup>66</sup> Local human rights campaigners highlighted the systematic pattern of rights violations that had been perpetrated by the security forces. Papuan intellectuals such as John Rumbiak and Benny Giay argued that the Indonesian state had failed to provide security and protection to the Papuan population to continue to justify its sovereign right to govern.<sup>67</sup>

The unfolding events in East Timor underlined the insistence with which this argument was made. Giay in particular developed a powerful critique of Indonesian rule and the racist prejudices that Papuans had experienced as one of the most alienating features of state policy. One of the most insistent themes reflected in these critiques was the growing threat not only to Papuans' demographic viability but to traditional lifestyles and indigenous culture. The recognition of traditional land rights (*hak ulayat*) had long been a core demand of Papua's indigenous leaders.<sup>68</sup>

### **The decline of the movement**

In response, the government moved quickly to close down the democratic space that had opened up with reformasi. Prosecutions against Theys Eluay and other leaders of the PDP for subversion over the flag raising ceremony in 1999 were stepped up, and the leaders detained. At the same time, the security forces clamped down on public displays of Papuan nationalism, particularly targeting flag raising deemed as 'acts of subversion'.

Fears among locals of impending violence were realised as the security forces forcibly dispersed crowds and pulled down flags in a series of clashes with pro-independence supporters. The most deadly of these conflicts occurred in October 2000, in the central highlands town of Wamena, sparked by the security forces' attempts to lower Papuan independence flags. The incident triggered a confrontation between locals and the security forces and, in the ensuing unrest, local tribes turned their anger on migrant traders in the marketplace. Armed only with bows and arrows, tribal warriors exacted considerable loss of life. By the end of the fighting over 30 people were reportedly killed and hundreds of migrants had fled the area.

These events were to be a turning point in the decline of the political movement. The Wamena violence confirmed fears that continued nationalist mobilisation could lead to eruptions of communal violence, the deadly consequences of which were unfolding in the neighbouring Maluku islands. The outflow of migrants from Papua following the Wamena violence also raised concerns of the economic consequences of a large exodus of settlers. Finally, the government's growing crackdown indicated that Papuan pro-independence and the security forces were on a collision course. The events of East Timor loomed over Papuan politics as fears emerged that the military's scorched earth tactics might also be applied in Papua, concerns heightened by reports that pro-Indonesian militias were also being established and trained by TNI.

Amid these rising tensions, the fragile unity of the pro-independence movement came under growing strains. The detention of Theys Eluay and his colleagues triggered tensions between his group and Thom Beanal, who had avoided detention, provoking accusations from the Eluay camp that he had collaborated with the authorities.<sup>69</sup> Many highlanders, on the other hand, had deep reservations about Theys Eluay and were reluctant to acknowledge the leadership of a coastal tribal leader over their own. Additionally, the OPM's uneasy support for the PDP quickly crumbled. In December 2000, OPM commander Mathias Wenda withdrew the mandate the OPM had given to PDP to act on its behalf.<sup>70</sup> In a development that signaled the failure of a

non-violent political strategy, a band of OPM guerillas in the central highlands kidnapped a group of Danish and other nationals in 2001.

As internal factionalism re-surfaced, the credibility of the PDP's leadership came under growing challenge.<sup>71</sup> The PDP's mass supporters were growing increasingly impatient for change. Yet while maintaining a focus on independence, the grouping scaled back its activities to avoid a confrontation. At the same time it rejected a proposal for special autonomy that was being mooted by intellectuals, non-governmental organisations and the provincial government. This essentially left the organisation politically isolated, in spite of the fact that the central government had largely agreed to special autonomy due to the early pressure that the PDP was able to exert in giving expression to pro-independence opinion. As efforts toward special autonomy began to gather momentum, the PDP remained steadfast in its opposition to the process.

As the government clamped down on pro-independence activities, the PDP was unable to develop a larger agenda over which it could advocate the rights of indigenous communities. In the absence of a concrete programmatic agenda, the PDP lacked the means to address Papuan grievances, courting political decline. It was essentially gambling its whole political legitimacy on the demand for independence, a demand that was growing increasingly distant. There is something reminiscent here of the ways in which Papuan nationalist leaders from the mid 1960s tenaciously held to the goal of self determination despite clear signs of international acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty over the territory.

The final blow to the PDP was the murder of Theys Eluay by special forces in September 2001. The killers were praised by the hard-line Army Chief of Staff, Ryamizard Ryacudu, as 'heroes', reflecting the extent to which the political environment had shifted against secessionist movements in Indonesia. While he was a controversial figure right up until the end, Theys Eluay had brought leadership to the movement that it lacked and that it has missed ever since. Thom Beanal took over as leader, but while respected for his integrity, he lacked Eluay's ability to exploit political opportunities and project the cause of Papuan independence through the media.

Since the death of Theys Eluay, and under Beanal's leadership, the PDP has been in a period of 'cooling down' to quote PDP secretary-general Thaha Al Hamid.<sup>72</sup> Within a year of Eluay's death, the government had essentially taken the momentum from the pro-independence movement. Important nationalist anniversaries which had become important events around which to mobilise popular support have increasingly passed with little fanfare in recent years. The utopian moment celebrated by Papua's long-suffering population and popular expectations of imminent independence essentially ended with the detention of Papuan leaders, the Wamena unrest and Theys Eluay's murder.

As the popular movement 'cooled down', the PDP focused increasingly on international diplomacy to shore up its declining legitimacy. However, the results of PDP's international advocacy remained limited; its greatest success came when Vanuatu and Nauru called on the United Nations to support a referendum on self-determination in Papua at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. In the same year, several Papuan leaders were included on Nauru's delegation to the Pacific Islands Forum, which issued a statement of concern regarding the human rights situation in Papua.

While Nauru and especially Vanuatu have remained supporters of West Papuan self determination claims, the acceptance of Indonesia by the Pacific Islands Forum as a dialogue partner has represented a major set back especially when Papuan representation has been rejected. In 2003, Indonesia succeeded in getting the Forum to declare its support for Indonesia's territorial integrity. Meanwhile, non-governmental support for the West Papua cause, in countries such as Australia, has kept the issue from disappearing from the media. However, activist networks on West Papua have not matched the efficacy of the activism that kept East Timor's struggle for statehood in the international spotlight.



# Chapter 3

## Special autonomy and its opponents

In 2001, the Indonesian Government enacted the Law on Special Autonomy for Papua to address the local grievances accumulated over decades of New Order rule. The law represented the main policy framework through which the government has responded to rising Papuan demands. This chapter briefly examines the forces driving the drafting of the law, the concessions the government offered, and the law's troubled implementation. While special autonomy offers a new basis for governing Papua, the resolution of the conflict represents a long term and multi-dimensional challenge. In recognising native rights, devolving political authority to the province and redistributing revenues, the law contained wide-ranging concessions to Papuans. It also marked a significant departure from New Order rule.

The concessions offered in the law, however, provoked concerns among powerful interests in Jakarta that special autonomy would encourage independence demands. As a result, the Megawati Government delayed implementation of the law while pursuing a policy of sub-dividing the province, directly contravening special autonomy and eclipsing it as the main basis for policy. This reversal was supported by security and bureaucratic elements in Jakarta that had ideological, economic and

political interests in opposing special autonomy. The pursuit of these contradictory policies has resulted in legal confusion and policy drift. The government will need to move quickly to reverse this sense of drift and capitalise on demands for the consistent and full implementation of the special autonomy law, which remains the most viable avenue for resolving the conflict. Even if the government moves in these directions, however, the Papua problem is likely to remain a long-term challenge that defies simple prescriptions and quick fix solutions.

### **Enacting special autonomy**

In 1999, in an historic special session, Indonesia's highest law making body, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), convened to enact reforms that have been seminal to the post-Suharto political agenda. These included a decree calling on the government to introduce special autonomy for Aceh and Papua. The MPR decree was shaped by concerns among members over the gathering momentum of pro-independence movements in Aceh and Papua. The loss of East Timor had exacerbated these concerns, resulting in fears that the country was on the verge of disintegrating. Special autonomy was adopted to fashion a new approach to resolving challenges to Indonesia's territorial integrity. For a political elite strongly committed to Indonesia's unitary state, the decision to adopt the principle of special autonomy for Aceh and Papua constituted a far-reaching concession.

The other main impetus for special autonomy was the emergence of a coalition of Papuan intellectuals, non-governmental activists and provincial officials, i.e. Papua's provincial elite. This group not only initially mooted the proposal for special autonomy but drafted the early version of the law. While MPR members were driven by fears of the country disintegrating, Papua's provincial elite were more concerned about the likelihood of violent clashes occurring between independence supporters and the security forces. In response, this group introduced and supported special autonomy as a circuit breaker in the increasingly polarised environment in which opinion was split between pro-government supporters and the rising pro-independence movement.

In promoting special autonomy as a solution, the provincial elite were risking their credibility as pro-independence activity intensified. To promote the draft law, the provincial elite undertook a consultative process, garnering support from provincial officials, the churches and universities. However, in public consultations, vocal pro-independence supporters opposed the draft law, reflecting popular suspicion of special autonomy as a ruse to counter independence.

Notwithstanding such opposition, the law that was passed in 2001 offered far-reaching concessions to Papua. Crucially, the law included generous revenue-sharing provisions that transferred the bulk of revenues received from Papua's rich resource base back to the province. Special autonomy also mandated the establishment of a truth and reconciliation process to address local demands for a 'clarification' of the history of Papua's incorporation into the state.

This is a crucial provision of the law that directly addresses the controversies that have dogged Papua's incorporation into Indonesia. Additionally, the law obliged the government to establish human rights mechanisms in the form of special courts and a provincial rights commission. The law also recognised customary land rights for Papuans and made it obligatory for land users to consult and negotiate with traditional landowners.

The centrepiece of the special autonomy was the establishment of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP). The assembly comprised Papuan members from adat communities, women's organisations, and religious institutions in equal numbers to be elected by their respective constituencies. The law granted the MRP powers to review and veto authority over the selection of candidates for governor and review powers over government policy that impacted on indigenous communities.

Taken together, these concessions recognised Papuan ethnic and indigenous rights, representing a major departure from the traditional modes through which Jakarta had governed Papua. While Jakarta sought to keep pro-independence activity in check by maintaining its strong security presence in the province, special autonomy was a significant breakthrough. The granting of 'asymmetric autonomy' and recognition

of Papua's special rights were unthinkable under the New Order. In seeking to address the challenges to its territorial integrity, the post-Suharto state was seeking a prospective framework through which it could respond to the grievances that had fuelled the conflict. The law was explicitly intended to address the previous policy's failures. With the passing of special autonomy, the government now had a more accommodating set of concrete policies to offer the province.

### **International and provincial support**

The international community immediately welcomed the new initiative. Several donors offered technical assistance to support drafting and implementation of the laws. For the United States, Japan, and Australia, in particular, territorial integrity was an essential element of their respective policies toward Indonesia. The concern in Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra was that the Indonesian Government would be unable to contain challenges emerging on the periphery, presaging a breakup of the state with grave implications for regional stability. Special autonomy provided a means to pursue traditional policy objectives while also supporting a peaceful resolution to the conflicts. As human rights groups shifted their focus from East Timor to Papua, foreign governments claimed that their support for special autonomy would help ensure the peaceful integration of outlying regions into the state. International support for the laws helped to ease pressures on a government still reeling from the prolonged economic crisis.

If special autonomy generated international support for Jakarta, it also facilitated the civic participation of Papua's provincial elite, giving it a stake in defending Indonesian sovereignty. As Richard Chauvel and Ikrar Nusa Bhakti have argued, the special autonomy law represented 'one of the few occasions since 1963 that sections of the Papuan elite supported a central government policy (largely out of their own assessment of Papuan interests)'.<sup>73</sup> The laws required public education, the drafting of implementing regulations and the creation of new local institutions all of which required the leadership and participation of Papuan intellectuals, officials and activists.

But while the law was enthusiastically greeted by the international community and Papua's provincial elite, enforcement and implementation of new laws has been one of the weakest aspects of Indonesia's democratic process. Moreover, while the law represented a landmark piece of legislation in recognising indigenous rights, it was always going to take more than special autonomy to address grievances that had developed over decades of misrule and abuses. While it remains an important framework for the government to address the conflict, special autonomy alone will not be sufficient. Institutional change at the national and local levels will also be required.

### **Interests opposing special autonomy**

Even before the law was passed, special autonomy provoked strong opposition from the central bureaucracy. Officials feared that by granting special rights to Papua that they would invite a cascade of demands from other provinces for similar concessions. These fears played on larger opposition in Indonesia to federalism and challenges to the unitary state. The law also raised deep-seated suspicions that Papuan leaders would use the rights granted under special autonomy to step up their campaign for independence. This perception reflected the enduring suspicions over Papuan loyalty to the state and can be traced to the evolution of a Papuan elite that saw itself as separate from and opposed to Indonesia. Jakarta's suspicions, however, had the effect of undermining Papuan officials and intellectuals who were seeking solutions to the Papua conflict that would strengthen Indonesian rule over the territory.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the country's founding father, Sukarno, rose to Indonesia's presidency in 2001 which strengthened elements in Jakarta opposed to special autonomy. Ironically it was under Megawati that the special autonomy law for Papua was finally enacted by the parliament, although it had been Abdurrahman's Government that had sponsored the bill and defended its basic provisions against attempts to weaken them.

Under Megawati, an alliance of sorts, comprising ultranationalists in the parliament, bureaucracy and security agencies shaped policy



towards Papua. This group included old Sukarnoists from Megawati's own party, the PDI-P, which saw any deviation from the 1945 Constitution, including special autonomy, as a threat to the state. The parliament had become a venue for populist and nationalist agitation. Hostilities between government forces and rebels in Aceh, following several aborted ceasefires, had provoked a strong reaction from the parliament and unleashed a wave of nationalist sentiment from 2002 until 2004 against secessionist movements, including in Papua.<sup>74</sup> In particular, Commission 1 of the People's Representative Council (DPR) which deals with foreign policy and security became a staunch advocate for applying repressive measures in Aceh and Papua to quell separatist sentiment.

The Home Affairs Ministry, which had the core responsibility to ensure key articles of special autonomy were enacted, sought to delay the implementation of the law. Home Affairs officials were strongly committed to the unitary state and saw in special autonomy the seeds of national disintegration. Like TNI officers, Home Affairs officials saw themselves as inheritors and guardians of Indonesia's unitarian state traditions and the institutional glue that held the country together. Home affairs minister, Lt. Gen. Hari Sabarno, and his departmental secretary, General Siti Nurbaya, were both staunch opponents of the more far-reaching provisions of the law.<sup>75</sup> Under the auspices of Home Affairs, the government sponsored a number of inter-departmental committees and seminars on special autonomy that brought together conservative officials from state intelligence, the armed forces, the police and other ministries. Through such fora, a union of likeminded officials emerged that increasingly determined Papua policy under the Megawati Government.

Indonesian leaders across the political spectrum, but particularly in the security forces, expressed unease that Papua's rich resource base provided a strong incentive for foreign forces to promote Papua's secessionist cause. The legacy of East Timor's separation from Indonesia reinforced traditional perceptions that foreign interests were working to break up Indonesia. Megawati herself touched on these concerns in September 2003, claiming that foreign countries were 'eyeing off'

Papua.<sup>76</sup> The military went further by levelling charges against foreign NGOs, especially from Australia, although never giving specific names. 'The preconditions for this easternmost province [of Papua] separating are visible, like the pattern with East Timor previously', according to the military's official spokesman who added that 'a number of foreigners are suspected of being involved in stirring up the situation ... The Aceh demands did not get international support at all. But for Papua there are countries that are secretly providing support to separatists there'.<sup>77</sup>

Concrete economic interests also drove the political alliance opposed to special autonomy. Military and intelligence agencies were opposed to the recognition of local rights over land and resources enacted through the law.<sup>78</sup> Indonesia's largest political parties also recognised the economic potential of Papua and the political value in building alliances with local elites. Furthermore, the creation of new provinces and districts opened up a slew of rent-seeking opportunities for central government officials and the DPR which had the responsibility to draft and pass the necessary legislation for the new administrative units.

This process essentially involved the formation of informal alliances between local elites and Home Affairs officials and DPR committee members to push through the claim for new districts. These alliances and the economic interests that underpinned them became the basis for the Megawati Government's decision to partition the province, a policy that not only contravened the special autonomy law but provoked widespread local opposition.

### **Reversal, delay and partition**

The government's strategy was outlined in leaked documents from the National Resilience Institute (Lemhannas). The Institute was a government think tank that, while largely peripheral to the policy-making process, faithfully represented official positions.<sup>79</sup> The Lemhannas documents outlined the justification for the partition of Papua as 'the best solution to overcome the threat of national disintegration'. Partition represented a broader strategy of dividing the pro-independence movement, through 'isolating ... opportunistic

groups who claim to speak on behalf of all Papuans' and 'dividing the physical capacities' of armed groups into three fronts in each of the provinces. The establishment of new provinces would also encourage the elites in these provinces to 'compete with one another to get political attention from the central government,' rather than joining together against Jakarta. Furthermore, partition would undermine any future campaign for a referendum, as it was unlikely that the provinces would act in concert to make such demands, considering that each province would have autonomy from the others.

This divide-and-rule policy was aided by local elites in Papua. The government was inundated with demands to create new administrative units that would result in their local sponsors being appointed to strategic roles in the new governments. The convergence of central government and local interests gave rise to alliances that not only opened up access to the new revenue flows, but also undermined the implementation of special autonomy. Papuan delegations visited Jakarta to request partition throughout 2002, with reports emerging that the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) was chiefly responsible for organising these visits.<sup>80</sup> With the backing of not only BIN but also Home Affairs, local Papuan representatives met with Megawati in September 2002 to express their desire for the establishment of new provinces. One of the prime movers in this campaign was Jimmy Ijie from the shadowy Irian Jaya Crisis Centre. In a letter to BIN chief Hendropriyono, Ijie claimed that special autonomy was leading down a dangerous path to separation.<sup>81</sup>

Apart from Jimmy Ijie, former vice-governor of the province, Abraham Atururi, who had a military and intelligence background, was also instrumental in campaigning for a new province. Atururi had lost the 2000 gubernatorial election after aborted efforts to appoint him head of the newly proposed province of Irian Jaya Barat by the Habibie Government. The plan to create the new province was abandoned after popular opposition, leaving Atururi without an official position. By 2002, however, Atururi and Ijie were leading the campaign with backing from BIN for the creation of Irian Jaya Barat. In response to these plans, the Megawati Government assured Papuans that there were no plans to create new provinces.<sup>82</sup>

On 27 January 2003, however, Megawati issued a presidential decree instructing Home Affairs to accelerate efforts to sub-divide Papua into three provinces, including the province of Irian Jaya Barat and Irian Jaya Tengah. The latter was aborted when the governor-nominate rejected his appointment and popular opposition to the policy resulted in three days of rioting between the supporters and opponents of the new province.<sup>83</sup> However, in the notional capital of Irian Jaya Barat, Manokwari, Atururi moved quickly to install himself as governor, with Jimmy Ijie being elected as the Chairman of the Provincial Parliament (DPRD) following the 2004 legislative elections.

The government's decision to create Irian Jaya Barat provoked immediate controversy. The decision was a shock to Papuan leaders who had been reassured by the president that partition was not being considered. In fact, the coordinating minister for politics and security, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, claimed to have no knowledge of the law when the topic came up in discussions with the American Embassy.<sup>84</sup>

For their part, Papuan leaders in Jayapura widely viewed the new policy as a clear attempt to undermine the special autonomy law. The government had contravened the law by failing to consult with the MRP over sub-division, an explicit requirement of Article 76 (Indeed, the MRP had not been formed). The Papuan officials installed to head the new province were clients of Jakarta, with BIN and the Home Affairs Ministry their chief patrons. In carving out such a large part of Papua to create Irian Jaya Barat, the central government had deprived the Papua province of much of its territory.

Economic interests provided a particularly powerful incentive for partition. Irian Jaya Barat was host to the lucrative British Petroleum (BP) natural gas project, while the ill-fated Irian Jaya Tengah province had the Freeport mine within its boundaries, indicating the economic factors involved in policy struggles over Papua. Moreover, the creation of new governments in Papua provided the military with more entry points to access government funds. Speculation soon emerged that the military were planning to establish further area and regional commands in the province.

The economic forces driving the partition policy was also reflected in growing competition between Golkar and PDI-P, Indonesia's two

largest parties. Both were seeking opportunities to raise funds with 2004 legislative and presidential elections approaching. The province's rich resource base represented a lucrative target to help boost party coffers. Throughout 2002, as party rivalries grew, Papuan Governor Jaap Solossa, a Golkar official, was accused of channelling funds from special autonomy revenues into the Golkar war chest.<sup>85</sup> For his part, Solossa and his supporters accused the PDI-P of attempting to weaken Golkar's access to natural resource funds through carving out the territory from the province. Certainly, the creation of Irian Jaya Barat raised sensitive questions about the flow of revenue from the BP natural gas project in the western part of the province. Golkar supporters believed that the government's partition would result in PDI-P's own local clients gaining jurisdiction over the concession and access to additional funds.

These struggles were an important factor in the Megawati Government's partition strategy particularly in light of the considerable powers that special autonomy granted the provincial government in managing the revenues allocated from Papua's natural resource projects. The economic stake that vested interests had in the province's resource projects highlighted how special autonomy was becoming caught up in larger struggles over the control of revenue streams from Papua's rich resource projects.<sup>86</sup>

It was not just partition that reflected the strong opposition coming from Jakarta to special autonomy. The Megawati Government also employed delaying tactics to undermine the implementation of special autonomy. This was clear in the Home Affairs Ministry's failure to approve the implementing regulation that established the MRP, the centrepiece of the law. By February 2003, the ministry was openly declaring its misgivings over the draft regulation, claiming that the MRP was too powerful and should not be established as a 'political superbody'. Officials insisted that the MRP's function be limited to 'cultural representation' for native Papuans. Papuan advocates of the law, however, highlighted provisions that gave the MRP certain defined powers including veto rights over government legislation that impacted on native rights. By denying the MRP's formal powers, officials were essentially denying the key concession that had been granted in the

special autonomy law. By the end of Megawati's term in office the MRP had still not been established, reflecting her government's unambiguous efforts to undermine special autonomy.

Jakarta's policy reversal essentially alienated the group of officials and intellectuals who promoted special autonomy as a solution to the conflict. At a time when independence sentiment was at a peak, the provincial elite had sought to persuade Papuans that special autonomy within the framework of Indonesian rule was a more viable path to take than the demand for independence. In emasculating the law, Jakarta undermined and sidelined local advocates of special autonomy. In treating all Papuans with suspicion, the Megawati Government had missed an opportunity to capitalise on the historic opportunity that special autonomy offered. The government had failed to appreciate how Papuan pragmatism had promoted a long history of participation in Indonesian administration. The Megawati Government opted instead for promoting old-style patron-client networks based on political alliances between local elites seeking access to office and Jakarta's security and bureaucratic establishment.

In setting off a scramble for resources among competing local elites, Jakarta effectively exploited personal, regional and tribal divisions within Papuan society. Indeed, the main effect of the decision to establish the province of Irian Jaya Barat was to set off a chain reaction of demands from local officials and their supporters throughout Papua. A host of local leaders, with supporters in tow, made visits to Jakarta to demand the establishment of their own province. Papuan elites outside Jayapura saw an opening to stake their own claims to governorships linked to the establishment of new provinces. Far from resisting Jakarta's efforts to divide the Papuan leadership, therefore, sub-provincial elites enthusiastically participated in the sub-division policy. While this galvanised opposition to Jakarta from Jayapura's political elite, it also exposed the difficulties of sustaining pan-Papuan unity in the face of external incentives to break ranks.

# Chapter 4

## Current prospects for addressing the conflict

The victory of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his running mate Yusuf Kalla in the 2004 presidential election raised hopes of a revival of the special autonomy process. Yudhoyono had won an overwhelming majority in Papua where he had campaigned on a platform of resolving the conflict through the consistent implementation of special autonomy. This chapter examines the fate of the law under the Yudhoyono–Kalla Government, as well as other reform measures crucial to improving the situation on Papua. It identifies the opportunities for, and constraints to, achieving a lasting resolution to the conflict.

After two years in office, the Yudhoyono–Kalla administration has shown an ability to pursue reform in select areas. Indonesia's new presidential system, and the ability of the government to establish workable legislative-executive relations, has produced greater political stability than in the past.<sup>87</sup> While Yudhoyono has proven himself a methodical and calculating political strategist, willing to take decisive action only when he is confident of a positive outcome, Vice President Yusuf Kalla is a mercurial political operator willing to take risks and do political deals. This combination, while leading

to speculation of rivalry between the two, has been conducive to securing several key policy breakthroughs such as the Aceh peace process.

The enactment of the Law on Governing Aceh in July 2006 has exemplified the government's growing authority. Vice-President Kalla was able to ensure support from the DPR for passage of the law owing largely to his chairmanship of the DPR's largest party, Golkar. Additionally, the President's strategy of easing hard-line officers out of senior positions and asserting authority over the military also represented a crucial precondition for securing the Aceh breakthrough and preventing the military from becoming a spoiler in the process. If the government can maintain workable legislative-executive relations and continue to build its authority, it would be well positioned to pursue reform in other areas.

In relation to the Papua issue, the government is moving toward revising the special autonomy law. This will no doubt replay many of the struggles over special autonomy and partition discussed in the last chapter. The central government, the provincial authorities and the MRP are in agreement on the need to focus the revision on reconciling the existence of Irian Jaya Barat with the special autonomy law. Additional new provinces are likely to become a contentious issue during the revision process. If the outcome of the revised law is a replay of Indonesia's history of divide and rule, the government will only deepen the conflict. But if the revision results in national and local leaders recommitting to the basic principles and concessions of special autonomy, the government could begin to address some of Papua's core grievances.

Whatever the outcome of this process, however, there will be no quick fixes to resolving the Papua conflict. While a consistent implementation of special autonomy is necessary, this will need to be accompanied by other reforms of both national and local level institutions. Reform of the security sector and the judicial system, a long term challenge, are crucial to breaking the culture of impunity that continues to plague civil-military relations and which is at the root of human rights abuses.

Papuan leaders have also long called for a national dialogue with Jakarta. They have claimed that a dialogue with all elements of Papuan

society is required for reconciliation and a 'straightening' of the history of Papua's incorporation into the state. An official recognition of the historical grievances generating local opposition would help address the questions of political identity at stake in the conflict. There are few signs, however, that either the present government or the larger national elite are willing to accede to this demand. This is despite a specific provision in the special autonomy law that refers to a process of 'historical clarification'. The demand for a dialogue based on historical clarification is in fact a major stumbling block at present to any kind of dialogue being agreed to by Jakarta. This is because of concerns that Papuan leaders would use the occasion to challenge Indonesian sovereignty over the province.

If these national reform issues represent long-term challenges, the more immediate agenda shaping present developments relates to local governance. The massive resources now at the disposal of local governments due to decentralisation and special autonomy represent an unprecedented opportunity for Papuan leaders to promote local development and to address the crisis in education and health that has afflicted local communities, particularly in remote areas. But this presupposes some government capacity which will take time to develop, particularly since many of Papua's local governments are newly formed.

In addition to these obstacles, the government is faced with two further impediments to its efforts to improving condition in the remote province. The first is that it is likely to come up against resistance from the array of interests charted in the last chapter. This will involve political struggles on multiple fronts. The second is that while the government has effectively weakened the main opposition organisations in Papua, pro-independence opinion has not disappeared and has survived among key elements of the Papuan community. This complicates Jakarta's task and underlines the importance of forging a partnership with the provincial elite.

### **Special autonomy and partition**

Claiming victory as Indonesia's first directly elected president, Yudhoyono came to office with a strong popular mandate. The government's outward



looking orientation was reflected in its cooperation with international agencies and foreign militaries in responding to the Indian Ocean tsunami that wrought such devastation in Aceh and Nias in December 2004. Capitalising on these conditions, the government assisted by the mediation of the Finish NGO, CMI, backed by the European Union (EU), successfully negotiated a peace deal with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The agreement represented the most promising initiative to establish a sustainable peace in the history of the conflict.<sup>88</sup>

The progress registered by the government in its first year in office raised optimism that the government would revive Papuan special autonomy through reversing the partition of the province. There was even speculation that the government was interested in pursuing a dialogue with Papuan leaders to begin a process of reconciliation. The vice-presidential staff of Yusuf Kalla was reported to have made tentative efforts to contact mediators, including informal discussions with CMI, and several Papuan opinion makers.<sup>89</sup> However, by September 2006 these efforts had shown few results, although back channel efforts were reportedly continuing to be made by the government.

More concrete results came just one month into the government's term with the issuing of the long awaited regulation establishing the MRP in October 2004. Yudhoyono had been steadfast in publicly supporting special autonomy since the enactment of the law, but had been sidelined in his role as coordinating minister for politics and security in the Megawati Government. On taking office, the Yudhoyono Government had moved immediately to issue the MRP regulation opening the way for the election of members of the new Assembly. While this process was drawn out, raising further charges that the bureaucracy was continuing its delaying tactics, the MRP was officially inaugurated on 31 October 2005. Despite the controversy over the way some candidates were nominated including charges of government interference in several regions, the membership of the MRP was widely regarded as credible with a mandate to represent the whole province.<sup>90</sup>

Under the Yudhoyono administration, many of the senior officials who had opposed special autonomy in the Megawati Government were replaced. Hardliners in the military were removed, most notably Army

Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ryamizard. BIN Chief Hendropriyono and Home Affairs Minister Hari Sabarno were also replaced with conservative retired military figures but without the same history of opposition to Papuan autonomy. The Secretary-General of Home Affairs, a well-known opponent of special autonomy, was replaced with an official who had spent his early career in Papua and was widely respected there.

While the architects of the partition policy had been removed from government, there was still a widespread ambivalence in the central bureaucracy toward Papuan special autonomy. Furthermore resolving the Irian Jaya Barat controversy proved a difficult challenge for the new government. Jakarta's local clients in Manokwari had shown an impressive determination in setting up a government and a local representative council (DPRD) that enjoyed some support among local tribes and was functional by Papuan standards. The infrastructure that had been put in place meant that dismantling the province would provoke a good deal of resistance.

Crucially, the Constitutional Court ruled in late 2004 that, while the creation of Irian Jaya Barat had been legally flawed, the existence of the new province should nevertheless be recognised as it already had its own government, DPRD and had participated in national elections. For Papuan leaders in Jayapura this decision contributed to the legal confusion. The Constitutional Court was obviously attempting to reconcile legal principles with political realities but in doing so created further controversy.

In response, Yudhoyono made clear the government's policy of recognising Irian Jaya Barat, disappointing the hopes of his Papuan supporters who had expected that he would reverse Megawati's divisive legacy over the new province. In supporting the consolidation of Irian Jaya Barat, the government claimed that the legal status of the province was based upon the regional autonomy (decentralisation) law that regulated regional affairs throughout Indonesia. The government instructed the MRP to 'reconcile' the two provinces and it initially appeared that the MRP leadership was willing to support the government's efforts to find a solution to the impasse. In reflecting broader elite opinion in Jayapura, the MRP ultimately opposed the continued existence of the province,

arguing that it had divided Papua and was evidence that Jakarta did not want to resolve the conflict.<sup>91</sup>

The provincial elite were especially incensed at repeated efforts by the Home Affairs Ministry to conduct separate gubernatorial elections for the two provinces. Realising that this move would bestow popular legitimacy on Irian Jaya Barat and provide the final step in its institutionalisation, provincial leaders denounced the government's plans. They argued that elections should go ahead only after the two provinces had been reconciled under the special autonomy law. Under this pressure, the government postponed its plans for elections for months, in the hope that a solution to the impasse could be found.

By early 2006, the government, especially Vice-President Yusuf Kalla, was growing impatient with the MRP's failure to support the reconciliation of the two provinces.<sup>92</sup> In March 2006, separate gubernatorial elections for Irian Jaya Barat were held under the regional autonomy law just one day after those in the Papua province. The government's decision to hold the election despite the controversy it sparked in Jayapura reflected its determination in consolidating the province's existence.

The incumbent Abraham Atururi won in a landslide victory, with the predicted boycott of the election failing to eventuate. The election and the result made the province of Irian Jaya Barat an undeniable political reality. But at the same time, it deepened a sense of alienation among Papua's provincial elite. The province continued to stir controversy among Jayapura-based leaders as questions emerged over whether the new province would eventually be regulated under the Special Autonomy Law. This involved important financial issues over whether revenues from special autonomy should also flow to Irian Jaya Barat. It also involved the question of jurisdiction over the BP natural gas project in Bintuni Bay expected to be a lucrative source of royalties in the coming years. These issues are still the subject of ongoing struggles among competing elites.

It is likely these battles will be played out over the government's plan to revise the law to reconcile partition of Irian Jaya Barat and special autonomy.<sup>93</sup> If this process involves a broader dialogue with Papuan

leaders, it could result in reviving confidence in special autonomy. One of the key issues here will be whether the government opts for retaining a single special autonomy law, including a single MRP, to cover the whole territory of Papua (*tanah Papua*), as proposed by the MRP and other Papuan leaders. The alternative being canvassed, including from officials in Manokwari, is that Irian Jaya Barat and any additional provinces that may be formed, are accorded their own law and their own MRP. The former option would maintain the establishment of territory-wide institutions and the recognition of the cultural unity of Papuans, a core principle of special autonomy. If the latter option is realised, on the other hand, it would be interpreted as perpetuating Jakarta's divide and rule strategy.

While these battles will shape the future of special autonomy, the inaction of the provincial government and MRP in drafting the implementing regulations for the law is also a serious problem. The funds that have been dispersed under special autonomy since 2001 have been part of the routine state budget due to the lack of a regulatory framework for special autonomy. As a result, special autonomy funds have been allocated as routine budget expenditure and not reserved for special purposes of improving health and education as outlined in the law. This underscores the urgency of drafting the necessary implementing regulations and strengthening the MRP to make special autonomy a reality.

### **Welfare and development**

While the Yudhoyono Government's main focus on Papua has been on the legal and political problems encountered in implementing the law, it has also emphasised plans to boost welfare and development particularly in remote regions. Yudhoyono has stressed how revenue transfers under the autonomy laws to Papua provide an unprecedented opportunity to boost welfare outcomes. A draft presidential instruction on Papua that circulated in July 2006 reflected the government's thinking. The main thrust of the instruction was to order central government agencies to accelerate the delivery of programs and services. But the

instruction's stress on the central government has been viewed with skepticism from provincial officials. The history of New Order rule has indicated that top-down development driven by central government ministries has not been a successful model for raising the welfare of local communities. Some Papuan leaders described the instruction as a return to 'paternalism' while others argued that vague instructions issued to central ministries would not result in concrete actions.<sup>94</sup>

While the official instruction had not been issued by September 2006, it was clear that boosting local development and welfare were important elements in Yudhoyono's strategy for Papua. Yudhoyono's visit to the central highlands region of Yahukimo in July 2006, a region that had experienced drought and mass starvation the year before, was a signal of the government's seriousness in addressing Papua's development gap. During his visit, Yudhoyono said: 'we want residents of this region to be able to enjoy a standing on par with our compatriots in other regions. We are committed that the starvation that occurred in the past never happen again.'<sup>95</sup>

To assure his audience that he was not making hollow promises, Yudhoyono pointed out that central government transfers to local government had doubled in the past year reaching a staggering Rp.16 trillion (USD 1.6 billion). In his state of the nation address to mark Indonesia's independence anniversary, Yudhoyono said the government 'preferred dialogue and a persuasive approach' to Papua, stressing that it had 'taken more concrete action to enhance people's welfare particularly in the field of health, education, basic infrastructure, housing and food security'.<sup>96</sup>

Papua's first directly elected governor, Barnabas Suebu, who was sworn in on 25 July 2006, also boosted the prospects for accelerating local development in Papua. Suebu's victory was significant as his campaign was characterised by a programmatic agenda that emphasised the need for revitalising community development initiatives.<sup>97</sup> While his rival candidates also trumpeted development, good governance and anti-corruption, it was Suebu who could most confidently articulate a concrete vision for Papua. In particular, Suebu was able to capitalise on his previous tenure as governor when he had focused on village level

development and had been a tireless visitor to many of the province's more remote regions. As one of the chief supporters of the special autonomy law, Suebu also campaigned on the need to step up efforts to implement the law and criticised the central government for its backsliding over autonomy.

What distinguished Suebu's campaign, however, was his pledge to directly distribute special autonomy funds to villages, with each receiving directly between USD 10,000–30,000. Suebu's pledge proved a clever tactic in addressing growing popular criticisms that special autonomy had only benefited local officials who had enriched themselves from central government transfers under the new autonomy laws. Significantly, Suebu's main rival in the gubernatorial elections was Lukas Enembe who sought to tap into highlander discontent on the campaign trail. Enembe campaign's revolved around a simple appeal to the tribal groups of the interior and their desire to 'break the monopolistic grip of coastal Papua on the governorship'.<sup>98</sup> Suebu's victory over Enembe essentially signalled that Papuans had preferred programmatic politics over primordial appeals, an encouraging result for those concerned with development outcomes and effective governance.

On taking office, Suebu immediately outlined his main priorities and program directions.<sup>99</sup> His approach was based upon promoting 'sustainable, growth-oriented and human centered' development. Suebu outlined four priority agendas: restructuring and reforming regional government, promoting welfare for the most disadvantaged and remote communities, including directing funds to villages; promoting security and peace through upholding human rights; and accelerating the building of basic infrastructure throughout the territory.

The emerging environment appeared conducive to the promotion of a major new development push. The international community and the Indonesian Government were increasingly recognising the importance of boosting community based development in the province. The national significance of Papua was widely recognised in the donor community. Moreover, the development priorities identified by the donor community such as poverty alleviation and improving basic health and education to remote communities were also being echoed by national and local



leaders. One suggestion circulating within donor circles has been for the creation of a common trust fund to pool assistance under Indonesian Government aegis, a proposal that would boost the government's development agenda in Papua. The possible convergence of interests between the national leadership, the new governor and international donors could boost the prospects for stepping up development initiatives in Papua.

### Local governance

Plans on community development, however, are being jeopardised by the low capacity of local governments in Papua. This is because weak governments have been unable to deliver services and allocate resources in a transparent and accountable way. One basic problem is the weakness of newly established governments in sub-divided districts, particularly those in remote areas. Basic service delivery in these areas is virtually non-existent and has been left to church networks which are themselves thinly stretched. As a result, the new revenues transferred to the province under both special autonomy and decentralisation laws have not resulted in discernible improvements in basic welfare indicators. Furthermore, the lack of government transparency and the weakness of the media, civil society and law enforcement agencies as mechanisms for accountability have resulted in systemic corruption throughout Papua.

The district of Jayawijaya, a remote central highlands region, represents perhaps the most striking example of weak government capacity and growing corruption. David Hubi, until recently the district head or *bupati* of Jayawijaya, has long been at the centre of controversy. Like many other *bupatis* he was plagued by corruption allegations throughout his tenure, including an allegedly fictitious purchase of an aircraft for official duties. In 2000 he faced strong public criticism for being absent from the remote region in favour of spending time in Jakarta and Jayapura.<sup>100</sup> The government's problems under his leadership, however, became fully apparent when in April 2004, the Jayawijaya Government was faced with protests by civil servants

who had not been paid due to a lack of the funds to provide salaries.<sup>101</sup> Following this, government contractors held protests in November accusing the government of breach of contract for not fulfilling payment schedules.<sup>102</sup> By 2005, with President Yudhoyono personally giving his approval, the government moved to prosecute Hubi. By mid-2006 Hubi was still waiting trial for corruption, but had mobilised his supporters to resist being taken into custody. Ensuing clashes with the security forces left at least one of the protestors dead. Hubi was accused of embezzling Rp.100 billion or approximately USD 10 million.<sup>103</sup>

The Hubi case was noteworthy because it echoed the experience of local governments throughout Papua. In Paniai, for instance, another central highlands district, the *bupati* stands accused by the local assembly of causing losses to the state through corruption of Rp.67 billion or approximately USD 6 million.<sup>104</sup> Several studies, based upon detailed analyses of official budgets, have highlighted the corrosive impact of widespread corruption on governance and development in Papua.<sup>105</sup> One of the mitigating factors made in defence of Papuan officials is the fact that corruption is not limited to Papua but is endemic throughout Indonesia. Moreover, some officials claim that corruption starts in Jakarta with local funds being used to pay central government officials to release the transfers for the regions and to obtain other necessary cooperation from the centre.<sup>106</sup>

These problems highlight that local governance has become a core issue to address in fashioning a comprehensive resolution to the grievances driving the Papua conflict. Promoting the transparent and accountable use of funds will be crucial given the amount of new revenues now being transferred to the province. If special autonomy is to alleviate the grievances driving the conflict then fundamental governance reform is required.

### Rebuilding centre-region relations

One of the more urgent and immediate tasks for improving conditions in Papua is to rebuild trust not only between Jakarta and Papua, but between Jayapura and the regions. In emasculating special autonomy,

the Megawati Government sidelined the provincial elite and abandoned the only viable framework it had at its disposal to address Papuan grievance while recognising Indonesian sovereignty over the province. In its first two years of office the Yudhoyono Government has proven unable to repair these damaged relations. The Papuan provincial elite – comprising office-holders in universities, churches, NGOs and the provincial government – have in fact increasingly couched their criticisms in strident anti-Jakarta terms.

The election of Barnabas Suebu to the governorship may offer a new opportunity to repair relations which had broken down altogether under previous governor Jaap Solossa. Suebu's previous career as Governor and diplomat allowed him to develop a strong network of contacts in Jakarta. But Suebu has also been a staunch critic of Jakarta's broken promises, raising doubts about his ability to develop the trust of key officials in the national bureaucracy. More importantly, there is little indication that the Indonesian political elite has abandoned its deep-seated suspicions toward Papuan leaders.

This is the chief difference between Aceh and Papua which underscores why it is unlikely that the Aceh peace settlement will become a direct model for Papua. While Yudhoyono and Kalla celebrated GAM's acceptance of peace as a case of brothers returning to the fold, it would be hard to imagine a similar response coming from Indonesian leaders in relation to Papua. While the Acehnese have always been defined as part of the Indonesian cultural and national mainstream, Papuans have tended to be defined as outsiders by Jakarta. Yudhoyono has said that while the government had a relatively straightforward process in reaching out to GAM as its chief dialogue partner, the problem with Papua is that there is not a single group one can negotiate with.

If there are few indications of improving relations between national and Papuan provincial leaders, there are some encouraging signs of a possible reconciliation between Jayapura and Manokwari. Suebu is reported to have good relations with officials in Irian Jaya Barat, namely Governor Atururi. Speculation has emerged that Suebu could broker a reconciliation between the governments of Papua and Irian Jaya Barat provinces. Furthermore, the MRP has finally accepted the existence of

the new province as long as it becomes regulated under a revised special autonomy law.<sup>107</sup> The revision process will present an opportunity to forge a dialogue between competing Papuan elites, but on the other hand could become a potential fault-line for new conflicts to emerge.

### **Local democracy**

While provoking controversy over the partition issue, the 2006 gubernatorial elections in both provinces included spirited but peaceful campaigning, reflecting a broader enthusiasm for democracy among local communities. Papuans have embraced democracy since 2004, enthusiastically participating in legislative and executive elections. A strong desire for local representation has been evident. During the 2004 legislative elections, the contest for local assemblies prompted political competition and interest from constituents while the seats for the national parliament attracted relatively little attention. As elsewhere in Indonesia, politics in Papua has become local.

The recent Papuan elections have also been noteworthy for the absence of independence as an issue raised by candidates. While this is partly the result of Indonesia's clampdown on separatist agitation, it also reflects a shift in political discourse away from nationalist mobilisation to concrete issues of government service delivery, corruption and other locally important issues.

The resonance of local politics in Papua represents an opportunity that Jakarta could capitalise on to bolster prospects for a settlement to the conflict. The continued evolution of local democracy could help to change the terms of political debate from the contentious relationship between centre and region to a focus on the everyday issues that impact on people's lives. This reflects the desire from local communities to have a say in their own governments and to ensure that their representatives, and not outsiders, are making decisions over the allocation of resources and provision of services. The enthusiasm with which local communities have taken to electoral politics underlines the importance of the government promoting civic participation through local democracy. This could offer the opportunity for the government

to promote a stronger sense of citizenship among Papuans, promoting more voluntary modes of incorporation into the state rather than relying on coercive measures.

### **Accountability and reconciliation**

Accountability for past human rights abuses is an important element in shaping the prospects for a long-term resolution of the conflict. The Yudhoyono Government's record on these issues is less than exemplary. Like its predecessors, the Yudhoyono Government has done little to ensure accountability for past rights violations. Indeed, it would appear that one of the key features of Indonesia's transition to a civilian democracy has been a tacit agreement by post-Suharto leaders to desist from calling the military to account for its past behaviour. This is not withstanding major investigations in recent years that have found compelling and detailed evidence of gross violations in several cases in Papua, most notably in Wasior and Wamena in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

Both of these cases, however, have languished in the judicial system. The relevant case files have been circulating between the Attorney General's office, the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) and the DPR as each institution has blamed the others for delays in bringing the cases to trial. These delaying tactics have not only reinforced the sense of impunity that the security forces have enjoyed. They have also indicated how Indonesia's new human rights law has been subverted by a largely unreformed judicial system and the lack of political will in bringing crimes involving the military to trial. Additionally there is the sensitive issue of abuses carried out in Papua since 1963, particularly during the New Order period.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the special autonomy law's dictates, the central government has so far rejected the need for a Commission on Papua's integration into Indonesia, particularly in light of national sensitivities about Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua. President Yudhoyono has consistently stressed that there has never been a 'manipulation of history' that must be revised, saying that the legitimacy of Papua as an integral part of Indonesia is unquestionable.<sup>109</sup> The best that

Papuans could hope to achieve in light of present conditions is that the special autonomy law be fully implemented and result in a process of reconciliation that recognises Papuan grievances within the overall framework of Indonesian sovereignty.

### **Security outlook and prospects of continuing violence**

The TNI has slightly increased troop numbers in the past several years by increasing battalion sizes and plans further increases in the following years.<sup>110</sup> Such plans have provoked concerns that a 'military buildup' will usher in a new phase of repression in the province.<sup>111</sup> There are strong incentives for the military to maintain a significant presence in Papua. Illegal logging and other illicit economic activities have generated a lucrative source of funds for military units stationed in Papua. The process of administrative sub-division has also created a raft of new governments giving cash-strapped local military units additional points of access to finance. Local government budgetary support has traditionally been extended to the military operating in local regions.<sup>112</sup>

While acknowledging that the OPM represents a dwindling threat, the military plans to maintain deployment of forces with a counter-insurgency role. The TNI remains concerned that the OPM is continuing to use PNG territory in the porous border region to replenish its strength. While President Yudhoyono has managed to ease hardliners out of senior levels of the military, the TNI has a notorious track record for covert operations, not least demonstrated by its history in East Timor, which continues to provoke fears of military-inspired violence in Papua. Of particular concern is the stationing of several of the TNI's main counter-insurgency specialists with experience in East Timor as commanders in Papua. It is hardly surprising, however, that officers with experience in Aceh and East Timor have also been stationed in Papua and it is difficult to discern a deliberate pattern to the deployments here.

While counter-insurgency operations remain part of the military's goals in Papua, the plans to increase troop numbers appear to be driven primarily by larger national moves to enhance border security across

the archipelago.<sup>113</sup> This would have at least one positive outcome in encouraging the armed forces to play a more conventional defence role. There are doubts, in any case, that the TNI has the necessary resources to realise its ambitious plans of increasing troop levels. Proposals for new military commands, such as the formation of a division of the Strategic Reserve Force, Kostrad, in Sorong, have been advanced for many years without having been realised.<sup>114</sup>

At present levels, the government's security and intelligence measures have resulted in a paralysis of the independence movement. Nationalist anniversaries, once commemorated with much anticipation, have passed with little fanfare in more recent times. At the peak of the reformasi period of 1999–2000 with the state still reeling from the economic crisis and facing societal pressures, Papua's independence demands appeared stronger and more organised than was the case. In fact, the security measures applied by the government from the end of 2000 did much to expose the fragile unity forged among Papuan leaders and their supporters.<sup>115</sup>

Yet, recent events and emerging trends within Papua give Jakarta little reason for comfort. While Megawati's policy of sub-dividing the province triggered rivalries between competing local elites, it galvanised unity among Papua's provincial leaders and intellectuals in opposition to Jakarta. This segment of the elite, which in the immediate post-Suharto period represented a potential strategic partner, has become a staunch government critic. Once moderate figures in the universities, NGOs and government, who sought a new basis for governing Papua through special autonomy, are now increasingly skeptical toward Jakarta's motive. It will take a systematic attempt to rebuild confidence for Jakarta to win back this important group of Papuan leaders.

In terms of popular politics, Jakarta (and Canberra for that matter) also has good reason to be concerned about the future security outlook. The government's suppression of pro-independence activity has been effective in weakening both the OPM and PDP as the main organisations representing the West Papuan cause. Isolated reports that OPM commanders had gathered in PNG in July 2006 to declare an end to their armed struggle hardly caused a ripple in either Papua or Jakarta, reflecting

the extent to which the organisation had become increasingly irrelevant in the post-Suharto period.<sup>116</sup> The announcement however did represent another sign of the weakening of organised resistance in Papua.

These developments though are unlikely to put an end to Papuan opposition to Indonesian rule. There are still influential groups in Papua challenging Indonesia's sovereignty over the territory. The Papuan Adat (Customary Law) Council, a body representing Papua's traditional tribal groupings, whose general chairman is also the PDP chair, Tom Beanal, held its fourth Assembly on 26 June 2006 calling for an international dialogue to be established between the central government and the Papuan people with third-party mediation.<sup>117</sup> The council reiterated its call for a review of the 1969 Act of Free Choice, a demand that Papuan tribal leaders have tenaciously held to for over three decades, indicating the enduring appeal of the nationalist struggle. In a further signal that pro-independence opinion has continued to galvanise Papuans into action, hundreds staged a rally calling for a referendum in Manokwari on 15 August 2006, upstaging planned Indonesian independence day celebrations.<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, while Jakarta has successfully clamped down on pro-independence activity since 2000, it remains unclear how long it can suppress the widespread sense of alienation that persists throughout the territory. Resentment continues to simmer, and unorganised opposition to the state has been a feature of developments in 2006, likely to result in further instability in Papua. The Abepura riots in March 2006 may in fact anticipate a new, more radicalised form of resistance emerging if Jakarta does not move to reverse the current policy drift over Papua and bolster its backing for moderate local leaders. The riots resulted in five members of the security forces being beaten to death, after students held demonstrations across the province against environmental and security concerns at the Freeport mine.

These events reflected the resurgence of the student movement, and their support by radical nationalist groups. Moderate leaders, including from the MRP, sought meetings with the students to urge restraint but they were repeatedly rebuked. The young students, radical nationalists and rural highlanders that emerged to lead the Abepura

protests had lost confidence with leaders who had once represented a moderating force in Papuan politics. The depth of anger, particularly among certain sections of the highlander community, has produced a growing impatience with calls for compromise. With the decline of the PDP, radicals are now unencumbered by any institutional attachments. In this vacuum, highlander anger could well result in an escalation of demands and radicalisation of activism.

If this occurs, it is likely to result in further unrest and a security crackdown, impacting adversely on Indonesia's relations with the international community. The significance of the Abepura protests may well turn out to be their elevation of radical elements in the student movement and highlander community and the eclipse of the more pragmatic leadership of moderate intellectuals and the PDP. If this becomes the trend, then Papua may return to a cycle of rebellion and repression that marked the early years of Indonesian rule in the territory. The possibility of growing instability in the border region (and unconfirmed reports of military force buildup there) pose a potential challenge for Australia. This is not only because of the risks of refugee flows from Papua into Papua New Guinea or Australian territory, but also because of potential future tensions that may arise between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea over managing the border.

### **Indonesia's democratic politics and Papua policy**

In assessing the prospects for policy openings over Papua, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of Indonesia's multiparty system. Unlike the past, multiple constituencies now have the potential to shape the policy process. The parliament comprises a plurality of larger and smaller parties, none dominating over the others, reflecting Indonesia's immense social diversity. A free and independent media sector has expanded the voices and range of ideas that inform public debate. While reformers have confronted powerful interests, policy remains in a state of flux over many issues including centre-region relations. Indonesian political debate is characterised by continuing political controversies over Islamic values, pluralism and regionalism.

As Indonesia's first popularly elected president, Yudhoyono has had to take into account the views of the electorate and respond to popular constituencies in ways never imagined by his predecessors. Megawati and Abdurrahman in effect inherited their right to lead over essentially stable constituencies deeply rooted in Indonesian society. Founded on secular nationalism and traditional Islam respectively, these constituencies provided post-Suharto leaders with a mass base. In contrast, Yudhoyono's political elevation to the presidency was made possible by his direct appeal to, and active winning over of, the voters.

As a result, Yudhoyono will be partly assessed on showing results in fulfilling the promise he made during the campaign to resolve the conflicts in Aceh and Papua peacefully. Indeed, the government's success in Aceh has increased the prestige of the government and enhanced its leverage over the military. Progress on Aceh has prompted speculation that Yudhoyono will move onto resolving Papua once the Aceh peace deal is secure. There are clear electoral incentives for the government in doing so. Realisation of progress on both conflicts by the end of its first term in government in 2009 would represent a remarkable achievement for the Yudhoyono Government that could also translate into a compelling re-election message.

Moreover, while Indonesia's new democratic politics could result in policy openings over Papua, democracy has also strengthened the influence of nationalist constituencies that have resisted reform. Developments in Papua in the first half of 2006 exemplify the contradictory effects of democratisation for policy reform. The emergence of popular protests in February and March against the Freeport mine galvanised broader national attention. The company had in fact attracted opposition from a variety of sources, becoming a lightning rod for popular criticisms in the post-Suharto era.

While partly driven by economic nationalists attacking foreign mining interests, these criticisms reflected broader reformasi sentiments. Freeport conjured up associations with the crony practices of the Suharto regime, symbolising all that was rejected during the reformasi movement. A diverse range of local, national and international constituencies joined together in criticising Freeport operations. The



national parliament became a venue for populist sentiment, highlighting enduring Papuan complaints that the wealth generated from Freeport's operations resulted in few benefits for local tribes whose customary lands covered Freeport's mining concession.

This opposition exerted considerable pressure on the government over Papua. In fact, the growing criticisms and demonstrations against Freeport, culminating in the Abepura riots, provoked widespread debate among Jakarta's political elite. Attention toward the Freeport issue put the spotlight on the government's continuing policy failures over Papua.<sup>119</sup> The DPR's Commission on foreign policy and security affairs (Commission 1), for instance, urged the government to consider implementing a national dialogue with all elements of Papuan society, a long held demand of Papuan leaders.<sup>120</sup> Local sentiment had essentially been converted into a larger national constituency demanding immediate action. More recently, a DPR team has also been set up to monitor the government's implementation of special autonomy.<sup>121</sup>

The directions that the national debate was taking, however, were largely diverted by the international controversy over 43 Papuans seeking political asylum in Australia. The group was led by Herman Wanggai a prominent independence leader in the province, and the boat that carried them prominently displayed the West Papuan flag. Wanggai's activities had reportedly led to several periods of detention and so his fears of persecution seem reasonable. But in light of the independence movement's longstanding attempts to attract international attention and the way the group has carried on its political activism for independence since landing in Australia suggests that there were strong political motives for the asylum attempt.

In light of these dynamics, attention in the Indonesian parliament soon turned from the government's policy failures to charges that Australia was interfering in Indonesian affairs and was supporting Papua's separatist movement. These developments reflected the sensitivities surrounding the Papua issue, and how events triggering nationalist dynamics serve to undermine the prospects for policy reform over Papua. The dual threat of separatism from the state and perceived

foreign involvement has found enduring and widespread resonance in the parliament, media and in official circles.

This study now turns to how these sentiments have been reflected in Australia-Indonesia relations. The next two chapters examine the broader bilateral relationship and the foreign policy implications of the Papua conflict. This will be followed by a conclusion that examines specific recommendations for Australian policy makers. These recommendations are based on the prevailing constraints and opportunities in addressing the Papua conflict identified in the foregoing analysis.



# Chapter 5

## **Australia, Indonesia and the Papua conflict**

This study has presented an overview of the Papua conflict in terms of the basic challenge it has posed to national integration. These themes have been examined in relation to the international environment. Essentially this has involved looking at the conflict from the inside out. In contrast, the next two chapters reverse this gaze by examining Papua as a foreign policy issue. They address the conflict from the outside in by examining the sensitivities and controversies that the Papua issue has raised in Australia–Indonesia bilateral relations.

### **Australia–Indonesia relations**

One of the main features of the bilateral relationship has been the tensions that have periodically emerged as a result of differences in the cultures, histories and legal-political traditions of the two countries. These tensions have, however, not altered the basic orientation of Australian Governments since the early 1960s of recognising the importance of Indonesia to Australia's long-term security interests. This position was reinforced by the rise of a pro-Western regime in Jakarta in the mid-1960s, which was welcomed enthusiastically as preventing the emergence of a

hostile communist state on 'Australia's doorstep'. In the 1970s, Prime Minister Whitlam put new emphasis on the relationship with Indonesia, which included Australia's controversial acquiescence to the Indonesian takeover of East Timor. The subsequent Fraser and Hawke Governments maintained close relations with Jakarta and rejected public pressure to reverse Australia's support for Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. While Australia was one of the few states in the international community to oppose Indonesian claims over Papua, it was conversely one of the few to recognise Indonesia's sovereignty over East Timor.

It was with the advent of the Keating Government that the official relationship between the two countries reached its apotheosis. The progress achieved during these years was due largely to the close relationships forged by Prime Minister Keating and Foreign Minister Gareth Evans with President Suharto and Foreign Minister Ali Alatas respectively. But while much was done at senior political levels, the evolution of the bilateral relationship was notable for the emphasis on building 'the relationship, layer by layer, across a wide range of activities, including defence, culture and commerce'.<sup>122</sup> From the early 1990s, the stress was on developing a 'web' of connections between the two countries that could withstand the buffeting that had periodically upset relations. In Evans terms, the goal was to promote a 'thickening' of interactions between Australians and Indonesians to a point that only 'a very large storm' would be able to derail the relationship.<sup>123</sup>

The successful negotiation of a security agreement on maintaining security between the two countries in 1995 marked a high point in the evolution of the relationship. The treaty represented the culmination of relations between senior officials, particularly Keating and Suharto. The treaty signified an unprecedented commitment by the two countries to consult regularly on security matters and in the event of 'adverse challenges' to 'consider measures that might be taken individually or jointly'. It was the first bilateral security treaty Australia had secured with an Asian country and the only such treaty to have ever been signed by Indonesia.<sup>124</sup>

As cooperation at the official level was stepped up, however, misgivings over the engagement with Indonesia were being expressed outside official

circles. Beyond a small policy, business and academic elite, Australians and Indonesians tended to have little knowledge or understanding of the other's society. Mutual incomprehension has dominated popular conceptions. A 1986 Newspoll survey found that 31% of respondents regarded Indonesia as the 'most likely threat' to Australia, 10 points higher than the Soviet Union.<sup>125</sup> In the 2005 Lowy Institute poll on Australians' views of the world, respondents were ambivalent towards Indonesia. When asked about their feelings towards a list of fifteen countries and regions, Indonesia finished 12th, the lowest-ranked East Asian country. Only the Middle East, Iran and Iraq fared worse than Indonesia. The enormous differences in history, culture, political systems and levels of economic prosperity have made the relationship vulnerable to misunderstandings and populist pressures. The relationship has long been complicated by this gulf between official desires for engagement and public opinion based largely on ignorance and indifference.

This gulf was manifested in Australia by critics in the media and outside government who had long played up the differences between the two countries and regularly claimed that Australia was appeasing Indonesia. The charge in fact has had a long history.<sup>126</sup> Since the early 1960s, with the resolution of the West Irian Jaya dispute, Australian officials have confronted public criticisms of appeasement and 'kowtowing' to Indonesia. Critics especially attacked Australia's support for the New Order regime, which had come to power following mass killings that wiped out communists and leftists throughout the country. Australian officials were condemned for remaining silent on the killings. The close diplomatic engagement Canberra has developed with Jakarta has been a source of controversy ever since.

### **Australia and East Timor**

It was Indonesia's takeover of East Timor in 1975, however, that generated widespread public criticisms regarding Australia's 'complicity' with Indonesia. The East Timor issue in fact galvanised a small group of activists in Australia and around the world, including exiles such as the indefatigable Jose Ramos Horta. But the East Timor issue had

resonance beyond these activist circles and into the broader Australian community. The media, the churches and even the Returned Services League (RSL) were active in raising East Timor's plight. The killing of five Australian journalists in the lead up to the invasion created ongoing controversy, leading to accusations that the government was involved in a cover-up to protect Indonesia's interests. The controversy was important in shaping media perceptions of Indonesia. Meanwhile, the churches' interest in East Timor was based on a sense of social justice and solidarity with the long suffering Catholic majority in the territory. The RSL, for its part, accused the government of betraying the people that had fought beside Australian forces in resisting the Japanese advance during World War II.

The East Timor issue also appealed to broader community values and sentiment. Australians reacted to developments in East Timor on the basis of concerns over social justice and identification with East Timorese as victims of oppression. And there were plenty of reasons to be concerned in light of the flow of reports that indicated systematic human rights abuses by the security forces. Such reports offended Australians' basic democratic sensibilities. In fact, the authoritarian nature of the New Order regime and Australia's close relations with Suharto had always sat uneasily with many Australians. Much of the popular criticism of the bilateral relationship derived from widespread aversion to the Suharto regime in Australia.

In particular, the 1991 Dili massacre galvanised public opinion, sparking deepening criticism of the Australian Government for its support of Indonesia. Australian officials were accused of engaging in the worst act of appeasement since 'allowing' Jakarta to take over the territory in 1975. The tabloid press could not avoid allusions to Munich and Nazi Germany. In reality these events had put Australian officials in an invidious position, caught between fierce public reaction and the fact that its diplomacy could have little immediate impact on events of the ground. This dilemma highlighted the gap between popular assumptions that Australia could impose its influence on events and the reality that Australia's diplomacy was constrained by prevailing international realities and strategic necessities.

East Timor continued to attract popular attention following the fall of the Suharto regime. Under Suharto's successor B J Habibie, the Indonesian Government began to examine various proposals to seek a resolution to East Timor including wide-ranging autonomy. In this context, and with pro-independence agitation growing in the territory, John Howard sent a letter to Habibie suggesting that Jakarta consider an autonomy package based on the New Caledonia model. The letter was interpreted in Jakarta as a weakening of Australia's support for Indonesia's sovereignty over East Timor. Facing multiple challenges in keeping the state together, Habibie used the letter as a pretext to reverse Indonesian policy over the province, announcing that the government would hold a referendum on the province's status.

The subsequent events surrounding East Timor's independence seriously strained Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Australia's role in intervening over East Timor provoked a nationalist backlash in Indonesia. The military which had been humiliated by the behaviour of its troops and their forced withdrawal stirred nationalist outpourings against Australia. To signal its position, the government revoked the security agreement signed in 1995, signaling a deterioration in the relationship. The national parliament and media became an arena for expressing populist anti-Australian sentiments. Australia was widely seen to have withdrawn its support at a time when the country had been most severely weakened through economic crisis and regime change.

While nationalist politicians in the DPR and military linked spokesmen accused Australia of working to break Indonesia apart, the newly elected president Abdurrahman Wahid also reflected popular sentiment. He asked publicly 'do they not realize that they have erred? I don't need to mince words or use diplomatic language. I am using the people's language'. If Australia wished to be friends with Indonesia and its population of 200 million, he continued, then Indonesians would reciprocate, but conversely 'if they want to separate from us, we won't mind'.<sup>127</sup>

Indonesian anger against Australia was mirrored in the wave of nationalism that swept Australia following the intervention in East Timor. The East Timor decision was followed by an intervention force to restore order in the Solomon Islands and a more interventionist posture

towards Papua New Guinea.<sup>128</sup> In becoming a force for stabilising weak states around it, Australia did not escape the hubris of rising patriotism. The Australian press especially played up the iconic image of Australian diggers as saviours of East Timor. Even the business community got into the act, with Telstra running an advertising campaign during the East Timor operation showing brave Australian soldiers sending emails back home to proud families. The government itself did little to present a more sober analysis of events and could not resist the temptation of basking in the deflected glory of East Timor's post-independence celebrations. One Australian minister, Tony Abbott, wrote of how Australia had 'liberated' East Timor.<sup>129</sup>

### **Contemporary relations**

Recent relations have been shaped by the threat of terrorism and growing frustrations over a number of high profile legal cases in Indonesia. The Indonesian Government's refusal to disband the terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), responsible for the Bali bombings that killed 88 Australians in 2002 was greeted with disbelief by grieving families. Outrage from the media and victims' families followed the lenient sentence given to JI's leader Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, despite authorities jailing him for a second time after he was judged to have had no operational role in the bombings, although it was well known he was the group's leader and co-founder.

Following Ba'asyir's jailing, a number of drug cases including the sentencing of Schapelle Corby to 20 years imprisonment in Indonesia unleashed a torrent of anger from the Australian media, despite a strong prosecution case and Corby's defence being built around an improbable conspiracy theory. The Corby case galvanised simmering popular frustrations among many Australians about injustices and corruption in Indonesia's unreformed legal system.

In response to the risk that populist sentiments could derail the bilateral relationship, Australian and Indonesian officials sought to place the relationship on an upward trajectory after the low of East Timor. The Bali bombing underscored how important a stable and

cooperative Indonesia was to Australia. It reminded Australians of the fragile security they enjoyed and underlined the need for Australia to engage with its near northern neighbour.

Australian officials responded decisively to the Bali bombing, immediately offering support to Indonesia in investigating and prosecuting the crime. The need to counter terrorism presented an opportunity for officials to step up joint cooperation on security matters, particularly between the two country's police forces. A raft of counter-terrorism arrangements were put in place between security agencies, representing an unprecedented level of cooperation between the two countries. On the basis of this cooperation, Indonesia made significant progress in countering the threat of local terror networks, and by 2006 had arrested, detained and sentenced more suspected Islamicist terrorists than any other country.

The election of the former General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as President in September 2004 precipitated a further improvement in relations. Australian responses to the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 were warmly received in Indonesia. The Howard Government's immediate response in making the largest single aid pledge in Australian history marked an important step in the improving relationship.

During his official visit to Australia in March 2005, Yudhoyono impressed a traditionally wary Australian public with his stature and commitment to building a democratic Indonesia that would continue to contribute to regional security and stability. He was the first Indonesian president to show an ability to communicate with the Australian public. As a result, expectations emerged that Indonesia's new democracy would usher in a period of improved relations. As both Hugh White and Paul Kelly observed, with Indonesia having both abandoned authoritarian rule in favour of democracy and accepted East Timor's separation, two of the most contentious issues that had traditionally upset relations had now been removed.<sup>130</sup> In their place, regional terrorism and Papua surfaced as potentially volatile issues in the relationship.

### Controversies over Papua

The positive atmospherics of the presidential visit and the removal of some of the structural impediments to achieving a more stable relationship, however, did not ease a sense of foreboding regarding Papua. Australian officials worried that Papua could begin to generate the same kind of dynamics that had once marked the East Timor issue. Australian media reporting of developments in Papua were starting to look like a replay of the history of East Timor. With special autonomy faltering and the Indonesian security clampdown, there were concerns that a human rights incident could galvanise opposition to Jakarta and to Australia's engagement with Indonesia in much the same way that the Dili Massacre had done in the early 1990s. Moreover, the risks over Papua were exacerbated by the problems of managing the border between PNG and Indonesia. Australia's 2000 Defence White Paper states 'that Australia would be prepared to commit forces to resist external aggression against Papua New Guinea'.

On the Indonesian side, Papua remains a highly sensitive issue. Since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has struggled with keeping the nation together and forging unity out the country's enormous diversity. This struggle translated into sensitivities about Indonesia's territorial integrity. While facing a rebellion launched by the Darul Islam movement in the 1950s, the government also had to overcome serious regional rebellions secretly backed by the United States. The anxieties produced by these events were re-ignited by East Timor's separation from Indonesia in 1999. These existential challenges have shaped contemporary fears that Papua could separate with foreign support, particularly given the territory's contested history. Due to the part Australia played in East Timor's independence, Indonesians have remained highly suspicious of Australia's motives in Papua. In fact, the perceptions fostered in Indonesia regarding Australia's role in East Timor combined with traditional anxieties about its territorial integrity have been translated into accusations from parliament and the security forces that Australia is promoting separatism in Papua.

The Australian Government's response to these accusations, however, has been marked more by inaction than good policy. With Papua remaining such a sensitive issue, there was good reason for Australia to tread cautiously. But Australia's response to the Papua problem lacked imagination and was limited to publicly declaring its support for Indonesia's territorial integrity. This policy had little effect in either persuading Indonesia of Australia's good intentions or in shaping Australian public opinion. In fact, making perfunctory declarations of support only reinforced Indonesians' deep mistrust of Australia's intentions, particularly as similar statements had been made over East Timor. There were few new initiatives on public diplomacy, security cooperation or development assistance that may have provided a more robust policy response.

Moreover, in treading gingerly on the Papua issue, Australian political leaders largely vacated the public debate on Papua to NGO critics and church groups. Australian leaders failed to counter the attacks by critics who refused to acknowledge strategic considerations and the constraints of Australian diplomacy. There was a major failure to make the case for why Indonesia was an essential link in Australian security and the reasons why Australian activism over Papua would be counter-productive for Papua's cause. In the absence of a well articulated government position on Papua, the critics were free to establish the terms of public debate. In failing to address these undercurrents of Australia-Indonesia relations, the government was contributing to the conditions for a potential crisis to erupt between the two countries.

This was realised in January 2006 when a boatload of 43 Papuan asylum seekers arrived in Australia. The case captured the attention of the Australian media for several months. It also prompted a telephone call from President Yudhoyono to Prime Minister Howard to express Indonesian concerns and declare that he would personally guarantee the safety of the Papuans if returned to Indonesia. Claiming persecution and genocide by the Indonesian Government, the Papuan asylum seekers arrived in Australia prominently displaying the Morning Star flag, which stoked anxieties among Indonesian officials about Australia's real intentions over Papua. Given that the independence movement's goal had long sought to internationalise the Papua conflict, questions



were soon raised about the political motives of the asylum seekers whose leader was a widely recognised pro-independence figure.

The decision by the independent refugee review board to grant temporary protection visas to 42 of the asylum seekers triggered a strong protest from Indonesia. The response from the Indonesian parliament was predictably one of outrage. 'We question the decision to grant visas and political asylum at a time when the security situation in Papua province is tense,' said member of the House Commission I, Effendy Mara Sakti, of the Indonesian Democratic Party–Struggle (PDI–P). Another House Commission member, Yudy Chrisnandy of the Golkar Party, said the granting of political asylum and temporary visas was unethical and could disrupt relations between the two countries.<sup>131</sup>

It was President Yudhoyono's reaction, however, that surprised Australian leaders in its vehemence.<sup>132</sup> Signaling a rift in relations, Indonesia promptly withdrew its ambassador to Australia. Yudhoyono also canvassed the possibility of reviewing other aspects of the relationship, including cooperation over people-smuggling and counter-terrorism. Yudhoyono's response was no doubt prompted by the need to address popular constituencies in a new democratic era. It also revealed the deep sensitivities that the Papua issue provoked among Indonesian leaders.

The Australian Government's handling of the issue indicated that it had been caught flatfooted, despite the unmistakable signals Jakarta had been sending. The granting of temporary protection visas found support from within the Australian community, met international obligations and was part of domestic policy. The government needed to step up its diplomatic efforts to defend and explain this policy to the most senior levels of the Indonesian Government. It also needed to mount a better defence of the overall relationship with Indonesia among the Australian public. However, Australia was reaping the consequences of its previous policy inaction. Indonesia's response, on the other hand, was shaped by widespread, and deeply entrenched, perceptions that Australia could not be trusted over its declared support for territorial integrity. These anxieties and perceptions were especially projected onto the Papua issue and provided the framework through which Indonesian policy-makers interpreted the asylum seeker case.

Australian political leaders were slow to react. The Embassy's diplomatic outreach to key opinion makers in Jakarta was not matched by a more sustained political response to Indonesian sensitivities. An immediate visit by senior political leaders may have done more to minimise the fallout. As events transpired, however, it was not until mid-April that a senior Australian official, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Michael L'Estrange, visited Jakarta to explain Australia's policy. Indonesian politicians derided Australia's efforts as too little too late, questioning why it had taken so long to respond to the issue and why a senior political leader had not been sent. The fact that neither the prime minister nor the foreign minister had personally handled the diplomacy was interpreted as a sign that Australia lacked understanding of Indonesian sensitivities over Papua. Foreign Minister Downer met his counterpart in Jakarta the week following L'Estrange's visit.

The government belatedly realised the seriousness of the rift that had emerged by announcing a bold and controversial initiative prior to L'Estrange's visit. A review of immigration policy was announced to ensure that all boat arrivals would be processed offshore in immigration centres in Nauru or other locations. The government presented the Revised Migration Bill to the parliament amid considerable public controversy and opposition in June. While subsequently denying that there was a connection between immigration changes and relations with Indonesia, the policy review was a clear attempt to deter further Papuan asylum seekers and to placate Jakarta. In these terms, the announcement of the policy achieved its goals, with the Indonesian Ambassador returning to his post in June.

While temporarily placating Jakarta, the new policy was so unpopular that the government could not deliver on it and was forced to back down. Indeed, the bill had provoked fierce criticism from community groups, galvanising a new round of opposition to the government over its immigration stance, long a source of public controversy. The government's proposal had also sparked a backbench revolt from its own party members who were opposed to a further tightening of the immigration laws. By August, Prime Minister Howard had announced



that the government would not pursue passage of the bill through the parliament, provoking short-lived criticism in Jakarta.

The government's botched response centred on applying immigration measures to what was a foreign policy challenge. This had the unintended effect of entangling the government's approach to Papua with the controversial domestic debate over immigration law. By undertaking stronger diplomatic outreach at senior levels of government with a greater sense of urgency the Howard Government may have been able to manage the fallout with Jakarta and certainly avoid much of the domestic controversy it provoked. But as it was, the government's conflation of the two issues brought the Papuan issue to the attention of pro-immigration constituencies in Australia that had hitherto paid little attention to it. Australia's policy had the unintended effect of expanding the potential domestic constituency supporting Papua's cause. It was hardly surprising to find as a result that a survey conducted by the Newspoll group at the height of the controversy found that over 76% of the respondents supported self-determination for the people of West Papua.<sup>133</sup>

In the domestic controversy it created, the policy also eroded support for maintaining good relations with Indonesia. The new policy resulted in a renewed round of criticisms that the government was seeking to 'appease' Jakarta. Sensing the popular mood, the Labor opposition launched a vigorous attack on the government's policy. Shadow ministers claimed that the Howard Government's appeasement of Jakarta not only meant that Australia risked violating its commitment to international migration conventions, but that Australian immigration policy was being made by Jakarta not Canberra.

In the midst of the controversies surrounding the immigration debate, the release of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir from a short jail sentence in Indonesia and his provocative statements thereafter intensified the pressures on the government over Indonesia. John Howard took the step of writing to President Yudhoyono to express Australia's 'hostility and disgust' at the release and calling on Jakarta to 'monitor' the radical's movements. Predictably, the response from the Indonesian Government was to reject any Australian effort to 'intervene' in Indonesian affairs and to remind Australia publicly that it would not 'be dictated to.'

The consequence of Howard's diplomacy, which wanted to ensure that tight surveillance would be carried out on Ba'asyir, made that task all the more difficult for the responsible Indonesian authorities. Indeed, in so publicly putting pressure on Indonesia, Howard risked undermining the Indonesian Government and security forces in clamping down on the threat of extremist groups.<sup>134</sup> The Howard letter reinforced the impression that the Indonesian Government was doing the bidding of Australia and the United States in its efforts on counter terrorism. This undermined Indonesian efforts to avoid domestic impressions that the campaign against terrorism was merely a Western undertaking being carried out by a pliant Indonesia.

When Prime Minister Howard and President Yudhoyono met on the Indonesian island of Batam in late June 2006, they essentially agreed to put the issues of the Papua asylum seekers and Ba'asyir's release behind them in order to restore good relations. The meeting was characterised by goodwill on both sides and reflected the strong commitment that officials have in maintaining a close bilateral relationship. Both governments have recognised the key interests at stake in maintaining cooperation. But the resolution to the dispute did not reflect any great degree of 'ballast' in the relationship. Rather, Australian officials were aided by the fact that Indonesia has many competing priorities, and as a result the controversy over Papua soon faded away. Moreover, the restoration of relations was made easier by the neat symmetry that existed between the Ba'asyir issue and the asylum seekers issue. In both cases, the two countries agreed not to interfere in the domestic developments of the other.

Populist pressures in both countries still have the potential to strain the bilateral relationship. The Papua conflict is likely to continue to stoke populism on both sides of the Arafura Sea, representing a potential flashpoint. The underlying differences and broader public misapprehension about the relationship indicates that further difficulties await officials. For this reason, the next chapter focuses on the West Papua constituency in Australia and the potential for it to shape policy outcomes. It shows how unrealistic and counter-productive proposals are being put forward by critics of Australian policy. The study then

concludes by proposing concrete recommendations on how Australia can more adequately respond to the pitfalls of Papua.

## Chapter 6

### The West Papua constituency and the challenge to bilateral relations

To better understand how the Papua conflict may shape future relations, it is necessary to examine the constituencies that are developing over the Papua issue in Australia. It is important to distinguish between narrowly based interest groups and broader public opinion. The former are passionate about the Papuan cause, while the latter is still characterised by basic ignorance punctuated by temporary interest when controversies such as the 2006 asylum seeker case emerge. In addition, there is a need to distinguish between ideologically driven groups that make up the West Papua constituency from others concerned about the Papua situation who have grounded their criticisms in detailed empirical analyses. While there is significant overlap here, the former tend to include both prominent supporters of West Papuan self determination claims and implacable opponents of official policy. The latter are more concerned about the specific impact of policies, especially over human rights and the environment, and focus their efforts on pressuring governments to reform.

The first part of the chapter identifies the main elements of the West Papua constituency as well as international human rights and environmental networks. The remaining part of the chapter subjects the arguments that have emerged to scrutiny, exposing the faulty analysis and unrealistic thinking of the West Papua constituency which has played an important role in shaping the public debate in Australia.

### **Australia's West Papua constituency**

The West Papua constituency lacks the coherence to be viewed as an intellectual or political movement, but it is also more diverse and broadly based than a mere lobby group. It can be characterised as a loose grouping of activists and other individuals who cohere around a view of Indonesian rule in Papua as being fundamentally illegitimate and subject to challenge. Many of these individuals, though not all, are vocal ideological supporters of the West Papuan cause involving self-determination and/or independence. Some have even been accused by the Indonesian Government of actively encouraging pro-independence activities in Papua.

Others are implacable critics of Australian foreign policy and opponents of the Indonesian state. In all likelihood, the constituency numbers in the scores of individuals. While the Indonesian Government has tended to over-estimate the power of these academics and activists<sup>135</sup>, the influence of the constituency is disproportionate to the small base of activists and academics that subscribe to the cause. This is because their views of the Papua conflict have been able to shape the mainstream public debate, due to a lack of basic knowledge about Papua in the media, unlike the East Timor situation where the media had long had an active interest in the territory.<sup>136</sup>

The leading element of the emerging lobby over West Papua has consisted of a group of academics and activists, including several well known Papuan exiles such as John Otto Ondawame.<sup>137</sup> The Australian West Papua Association is the most vocal and energetic Papuan solidarity group and leading element of the constituency. These activists have been supported by journalists and academics who have traditionally been

critical of Indonesia such as John Pilger and Scott Burchill. Additionally, several experts on international law have also become involved in the Papua issue. Long-term Papua watchers such as John Wing, Peter King and Jim Elmslie have also played an important role in advancing the West Papua cause in Australia. Wing and King have been involved in the University of Sydney's West Papua project, which has published a widely cited study implying that Indonesia has carried out genocide in Papua. Additionally, the West Papua cause has also attracted activists who were once involved in promoting East Timorese independence.

Individual church activists such as John Barr and Peter Woods represent another part of this West Papuan activist network. On its website, the Australian West Papua Association of Melbourne states that it is 'under the patronage of the Most Reverend Hilton Deakin, Catholic Bishop for Melbourne'.<sup>138</sup> Spurred by claims that Indonesia is promoting Islamicisation of the province, a small group of church figures have been active in promoting the cause, especially opposing military abuses and the influx of non-Melanesian migrants into the province.<sup>139</sup> While faith is an important part of their activism, church activists have also responded to basic social justice issues. It was noteworthy that the 42 Papuans granted asylum gave their first public statements in a church service in Melbourne in which they accused Indonesia of persecution and genocide. While the churches may turn out to be an important source of support for the West Papuan cause, the Papua issue has yet to galvanise the kind of reaction from the churches that East Timor did.

The Australian Greens and Democrats, two minor political parties in the Senate, have also become vocal critics of Australian policy over Papua. In defending their small parliamentary representation, both parties have seized upon the Papua conflict to criticise the government. Through their advocacy over Papua, both parties have been able to develop a profile on international affairs that they have otherwise lacked. Their posture on Papua has attracted considerable attention from the media. The Greens leader, Bob Brown, for instance, attracted headline news for his attacks on the government over Papua, tabling proposals in the senate calling on the government to investigate genocide claims. This proposal was rejected by the government. Kerry Nettle from the

Greens Party and Andrew Bartlett from the Democrats have also been active in relation to Papua.

While the Greens and Democrats have supported the West Papuan cause, there has been strong bipartisan support by Australia's main party groupings, the Liberal-National Party Coalition and the Australian Labor Party (ALP), for Indonesia's territorial unity. Additionally, both parties have recognised the deep sensitivities Papua has raised among Indonesian policy makers. Such recognition, however, has not stopped Labor from playing the populist card over both the revised migration bill and the release of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir for electoral gain.

In addition to these specific constituencies, various other discontents have periodically contributed to the public debate. Some figures within the trade union movement have had a fleeting dalliance with the West Papua campaign including former Australian Council for Trade Unions (ACTU) head Greg Sword. In 2000, union members and the Australia West Papua Association issued a joint declaration calling for a re-examination of the Act of Free Choice and a United Nations-supervised referendum on independence for Papua. Such activism represented more of a passing interest than sustained advocacy. The businessman Ian Melrose has become a recent convert to the cause of West Papuan self-determination, his activism sparked by recent developments in East Timor. He funded the national poll cited in chapter 5 that asked about support for Papuan self-determination with 76% of Australians answering in the affirmative.

A group of mainly former lower-level officials in the intelligence, defence and foreign affairs area has also contributed critical views on Australia's relations with Indonesia. This group has had the shared experience of becoming alienated or dissatisfied while in government, with some complaining that their views were not listened to by more senior officers. This group has highlighted the existence of a strong 'Indonesia lobby' in official circles, and includes former DFAT officials such as Bruce Haigh, reassigned or former intelligence officers such as Clinton Fernandes and former aid workers such as Lance Taudevin.

The West Papua constituency shares a common critique of the bilateral relationship. The theme of appeasement levelled at Australian

officials in their dealings with Indonesia has become a core idea of the constituency and one that has found larger resonance in the public debate. As Paul Kelly has noted, the appeasement theme has in fact become a kind of 'grand narrative' adopted by the critics in interpreting Australia's foreign policy history.<sup>140</sup> In recent years, this critique has moved from East Timor onto Papua, representing the latest opportunity for the narrative's retelling in which Australia's posture over Papua is criticised for repeating the mistakes of East Timor.<sup>141</sup>

None of this is to suggest that the constituency is not moved by high-minded intentions. The obvious commitment on the part of these activists to addressing injustice is admirable and driven by genuine concerns over human rights. While largely well-meaning, the West Papua constituency tends to take reports coming from within Papua at face value. Many are far removed from Papuan political developments and have had little exposure to the province, relying solely on their Papuan activist networks for information. Even those activists who have undertaken field trips to the province often make few attempts to seek corroborating accounts or subject the logic of Papuan claims to critical scrutiny.

Exemplary here is the account by Nick Chesterfield, among the most energetic activists for the West Papua cause and a regular commentator on Papua in Australia's mainstream media.<sup>142</sup> In a bizarre account of a visit he made to the border region in April-June 2006, Chesterfield gives the reader his 'intelligence and security assessment' of the local situation replete with cloak-and-dagger anecdotes. In one part of the report, Chesterfield claims that he worked with the PNG police to capture and interrogate an Indonesian minister's brother who had infiltrated into PNG to kidnap the wife of Herman Wanggai, the leader of the Papuan asylum seekers in Australia.<sup>143</sup> In another twist, he claims that 'the TNI were the real culprits of the Bali bombings and the Jemaah Islamiyah is just a Kopassus operation', a fact that 'has been proven', although no references or detailed justifications are supplied.<sup>144</sup> The report is in fact filled with countless unsubstantiated accusations.<sup>145</sup>

In identifying the diverse elements within the West Papua constituency, however, this does not imply that the journalists, academics and

church activists that support the West Papuan cause all share the same conspiratorial ideas. What they do have in common, however, is a shared activism over West Papua supported by claims often based on flimsy evidence. Part of the problem is the willingness to take the claims of local Papuan interlocutors at face value, while always wanting to believe the worst about the Indonesian Government. This inclination has been shaped by how the events in East Timor exposed the brutal tactics employed by the Indonesian military, but it hardly advances our understanding of the complex dynamics driving the Papua conflict. It is entirely understandable that Papuan activist groups working in difficult conditions often circulate unsubstantiated claims. But the same extenuating circumstances do not apply to Australian activists whose privileged position should oblige them to seek out accurate and corroborated reporting.

### **International networks**

While the West Papua constituency has sought to challenge Indonesian rule in Papua and to criticise Australian policy, international environmental and human rights groups are more concerned with advocating over specific issues. While in practice there is much overlap, two basic differences tend to separate the West Papua constituency from broader rights and environmental networks. The first is that while the West Papua constituency is ideologically driven by opposition to the Indonesian state, rights and environmental groups tend to advocate for specific policy reforms.<sup>146</sup>

The second difference, alluded to above, is the burden of proof that each group is prepared to accept in formulating their advocacy campaigns. Supporters of the West Papuan cause tend to accept uncorroborated reports from independence activists in Papua as the basis for claiming that Indonesia has engaged in genocidal behaviour. In contrast, environmental and human rights groups have produced empirically grounded studies and detailed reports on inter alia resource company pollution, illegal logging and systematic human rights abuses.<sup>147</sup>

Not only have rights and environmental groups consequently enjoyed more credibility in policy circles but they also have broader reach across

international constituencies. The global environmental movement has an especially effective track record in mobilising community campaigns. Environmental issues related to the Freeport mine and illegal logging have found strong resonance among environmental groups and could become the basis for a more sustained campaign. Pressures on Papua's forests from logging will be a salient issue in the future, indicating that an international environmental campaign could gain momentum. In light of the interests involved in the political economy of illegal logging, including the military and police, any campaign would also expose larger issues of governance and military abuses. This could increase pressures on the Indonesian Government for reform.

### **The question of human rights and genocide**

It is important to recognise that both the international rights activists and Australia's West Papua constituency raise legitimate concerns about human rights abuses in Papua. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have provided detailed accounts of specific abuses particularly in the post-Suharto period. But there is nothing approaching an overview of Papua's human rights situation that might provide for a full accounting of rights violations. The absence of a larger overview poses difficulties in grasping the scale of rights violations in the province.

Many Papuan solidarity groups accept and use the range of 100,000–150,000 for the total number of people who have died due to Indonesia's rule in the territory.<sup>148</sup> These are remarkably high figures, particularly considering that they approach the total number of deaths during the East Timor conflict. And yet while East Timor's formidable resistance movement sparked sustained international attention, the low-level conflict that has plagued Papua has attracted little coverage in comparison, indicating doubts that these two conflicts have unfolded on a similar scale.

The challenge of understanding the degree of violence has been complicated by the tendency of Papuan groups to circulate exaggerated reports of violence in the province. Some examples have been touched on



above. Another example particularly relevant to this study was the report circulating at the height of the asylum seeker case which suggested that youths killed in a dispute with security forces in the central highlands settlement of Waghete in January were family members of the asylum seekers. The charge being made here, which turned out to be untrue, was that the security forces had engaged in reprisal killings. These reports circulated widely in the Australian media and were fanned by activists, without a later acknowledgement that they were false.<sup>149</sup>

Arguably the most influential report by the West Papua constituency is the widely cited *Genocide in West Papua? The role of the Indonesian state apparatus and a needs assessment of the Papuan people*.<sup>150</sup> Despite being the main source for repeated claims that Indonesia has perpetrated genocide in Papua, nowhere does the report define genocide or identify a set of criteria against which to assess this explosive claim. The report is in fact suggestive in tone and fails to prosecute the case with any great intellectual rigour. We are neither presented with new evidence that might illuminate the scale of violence, nor does the study provide a new synthesis that might put existing documentation of abuses from ACFOA, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty or local NGOs such as Alliansi Demokrasi untuk Papua into a larger context.

The weakest part of the report, however, is that it provides no evidence whatsoever of a 'deliberate intent' to eliminate a group of people which is central to the United Nations definition of genocide. Instead the report discusses separate themes such as illegal logging, the spread of HIV/AIDS and human rights abuses, implying, but failing to make the case, that such policy impacts have added up to genocide. The evidence presented is quite flimsy. Claims of Islamic militia groups being active in Papua, for instance, are based on a single eyewitness account. The report has only 35 footnotes, of which six are citing a single Baptist priest (with no corroborating evidence) who has a history of making explosive claims about abuses.

Despite the absence of an overview on human rights conditions in Papua, it is possible to put the situation in some perspective by discussing existing documentation. Recorded human rights monitoring during the Suharto period is scant. The best report comes from the

Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) covering abuses during an especially intense period of operations over nearly a year from 1994–5 in the region of Freeport mining concession of Timika.<sup>151</sup>

The report gives a sobering picture of rule under the New Order in a region that experienced some of the worst military excesses. It includes documented cases of summary executions, arbitrary arrest, torture and property destruction. Thirty seven people are documented as having either been killed or disappeared by the security forces. The report provides strong evidence of state violence against indigenous communities, but hardly of genocidal proportions. Earlier rebellions, in which it is fair to assume that local resistance and state violence were greater in scale, occurred infrequently after the mid 1970s and have been covered by Robin Osborne's widely cited work of journalism. Osborne details several occasions in which local communities reported military strafing of their settlements from the air.

More detailed reporting is available on the post-Suharto period. In fact, despite claims by activists that the government has 'closed off' the province, coverage by foreign media and human rights groups has been extensive. Human Rights Watch produced a detailed report of the 1998 Biak incident and rights abuses resulting from the clamp down on pro-independence activity from 1999–2000.<sup>152</sup> In more recent years the two worst cases have been Wasior in 2001 and Wamena in 2003. The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) has reported evidence that the Indonesian military (TNI) committed gross rights abuses in both cases. Komnas HAM recorded that TNI personnel had tortured 48 people, killed seven, and forcibly evacuated some 7,000 residents in Wamena between April and June 2003. In the previous case in the Wasior regency evidence showed 16 people being tortured, three killed and dozens of homes burned down by police.<sup>153</sup>

What can be concluded from these varying reports is that repeated violations have taken place in the past, indicating a systematic pattern of rights violations by Indonesia's security forces since the 1960s. But there is no evidence of genocide. Documented cases of violations have continued after the fall of Suharto particularly from 1999–2003. The abuses conducted under the New Order were carried out as part of a



policy of repression by the regime to counter local opposition to its rule.

Recent abuses, on the other hand, have primarily been the product of the continuing culture of impunity enjoyed by the security forces and the resistance that civilian politicians are encountering in asserting civilian supremacy over the armed forces. Since President Yudhoyono has gradually imposed his authority over the armed forces, including installing a new TNI leadership, there has not been a repeat of the gross abuses that occurred under the Megawati Government. The killing of five security forces by protestors in Abepura in March 2006 elicited a crackdown by the police that saw mass arrests and beatings of detainees but this hardly reached the levels of previous abuses. The new government, in fact, appears sincere in trying to avoid further rights abuses. Immediately on taking office, President Yudhoyono publicly instructed the military to prevent any serious violation of rights in their operations in Papua.<sup>154</sup> Given the province's continued volatility, however, the possibility of future abuses cannot be ruled out.

If this analysis of present conditions is correct, then the improvement of the human rights situation in Papua is best advanced through democratic reform including asserting greater civilian supremacy over the military and continued institution building related to human rights. If the present government continues to pursue incremental reform of the military, it would hold out the prospect of breaking the culture of impunity enjoyed by the security forces. Current deliberations by the DPR on a bill regulating military justice could result in military personnel facing civilian courts, but latest reports suggest that the government will only agree to this after a transitional period of several years. On the other hand, circulating unsubstantiated claims of genocide will do little except raise unrealistic expectations in Papua of international support. A renewal of pro-independence activity encouraged by solidarity groups will undermine civilian attempts to insist on military restraint in Papua.

### **The seven myths of the West Papua constituency**

The above analysis indicates that the views and proposals put forward by Australia's West Papua constituency need to be subject to critical

scrutiny. This is urgently needed as West Papuan supporters and other critics of Australian policy have engaged in myth-making that is shaping the public debate over Papua. They have also adopted political positions that are not only unrealistic but potentially dangerous. This critique of the bilateral relationship has found resonance in the Australian media and community, representing a serious failure of political leaders to mount the case for the importance of Indonesia to Australia's long-term security interests.

- Myth 1: Indonesia has engaged in genocide in Papua, making it a moral imperative for Australia to intervene

The flimsy evidence adopted by University of Sydney's West Papua Project indicates the ideologically driven nature of the genocide charge which allows critics to argue that Australia has a moral imperative to intervene in the Papua conflict. Demands are made that Australia press Indonesia into conceding to Papuan demands for self-determination. Encouraged by events in East Timor, some critics advocate that Australia lead international efforts to formulate and enforce a peace agreement in Papua. One recent suggestion by a Deakin University academic discusses the possibility of sending foreign monitors from the European Union and the United States into Papua to enforce the peace. This proposal even canvasses international economic sanctions on Indonesia for violations of the peace.<sup>155</sup> The basis for this argument is that 'Indonesia remains highly vulnerable to pressure' and that foreign pressure was what made it possible for Australia to send in troops to East Timor in 1999.

Of course such suggestions presuppose that Australia, either alone or working with other powerful actors, is in a position to impose its will over domestic developments in Indonesia. This is a claim bereft of analytical perspective. It fails to understand the nationalist dynamics in Indonesia. It ignores Indonesia's resolve in defending its sovereignty and the consolidation of central control since 1999. And it also fails to recognise the deep-seated sensitivities provoked by any hint of efforts to interfere in domestic politics. There is a failure to appreciate that

any attempt to intervene would arouse nationalist passions in Jakarta, making it all the more difficult to resolve the Papuan conflict.

Simply put, the critics exaggerate Australia's ability to project power in world affairs and underestimate the risks of a fallout with Indonesia. They fail to appreciate the consequences of Australia attempting to play regional hegemon to Southeast Asia, misunderstanding the power relations between Australia and Indonesia. Southeast Asia's largest state, and the world's fourth most populous, does not accept definitions that incorporate it within Australia's 'sphere of influence.' Of course, appreciating the constraints in the international environment is not an argument for an isolationist policy but rather for the judicious use of policy instruments that influence outcomes on the basis of realistic understandings.

- Myth 2: Australian policy is dominated by a Jakarta lobby which is intent on appeasing Indonesia

One of the chief charges made by the constituency is that Australian policy has been hijacked by the so-called Jakarta lobby, comprising a group of officials, journalists and academics who have been prepared to promote relations with Jakarta at any cost. The charge that a 'lobby' exists which aims to 'appease' Jakarta is either intended to convey that Indonesia's interests are being promoted ahead of Australia's own or that Australia's democratic values are being fundamentally compromised by forging close relations with Indonesia. The idea of a 'Jakarta lobby' has become a useful label for the critics, who have rarely acknowledged the constraints under which policy makers must operate. Moreover, the charge of appeasement misses a fundamental point: namely, that the maintenance of good bilateral relations primarily advances Australia's interests. Indonesia is an essential link in Australian security arrangements in ways that Australia is not to Indonesia, given that the latter's preoccupation with internal unity and domestic threats to its territorial integrity.

The fact that the appeasement claim has gone largely unchallenged, with a few notable exceptions,<sup>156</sup> reflects the impoverished state of the public debate. It also highlights the failure of political leaders to mount

the case as to why the bilateral relationship is so crucial. Indeed, the critics of the bilateral relationship have seldom been called upon to confront the basic strategic reality that a stable, democratic Indonesia is of fundamental importance to Australian security interests. Neither has the case been effectively put to the Australian public by their leaders that the relationship with Jakarta has come with an enormous strategic payoff for Australia.

- Myth 3: Papua parallels the East Timor situation

The critics claim that Australia's support for Indonesia over Papua promises to replay the tragedy of East Timor. They claim that Australia is backing the same military forces that perpetrated violence in East Timor and that Papua will eventually enjoy the same fate as East Timor in separating from Indonesia. But while the Papua issue has catalysed many of the same networks that East Timor once activated, there are many more differences than similarities between the two cases. While East Timor's annexation by Indonesia was condemned by the international community, the incorporation of Papua into Indonesia was accepted by the major international parties to the dispute in a United Nations-sanctioned process. Furthermore, the Papuan independence movement has displayed little of the unity of purpose, coherence of leadership or the sustained advocacy that was achieved by the Timorese resistance.

There are also differences between the respective places occupied by Papua and East Timor in the larger Indonesia state. Unlike the tiny, poverty-stricken island of East Timor, Papua comprises over one fifth of Indonesia's land mass and is one of the country's most resource-rich provinces. In contrast to Foreign Minister Ali Alatas's description of East Timor as a 'pebble in the shoe', Jakarta has an enormous stake in defending its sovereignty over Papua.

Unlike East Timor, Papua occupies an important place in Indonesia's nationalist history. Many of Indonesia's founding fathers were exiled to Papua by the Dutch. In reflecting contemporary opinion, former President Megawati has declared that without Papua 'Indonesia is not complete'.<sup>157</sup> This can be contrasted with the Suharto regime's takeover

of East Timor which was conducted with little reference to nationalist symbols but rather through an invasion that was intentionally played down in official media coverage. The military operations were greeted with little fanfare in Indonesia, indeed the government deliberately avoided efforts to whip up a larger nationalist campaign.

Finally, the East Timor analogy is based on a view that fails to contextualise the specific circumstances under which East Timor attained its independence. The decision taken by President Habibie represented a convergence of forces in which the Asian economic crisis precipitated a dramatic economic reversal that not only resulted in the collapse of the Suharto regime but a sudden weakening of central authority. The erratic leadership of B J Habibie was translated into a decision to allow a referendum which was taken independently of the key policy actors within the government. The crisis of sovereignty that Indonesia experienced during this period has been largely overcome as political stability has returned. One of the most important themes of recent Indonesian politics has been the ability of the government to re-consolidate its hold over the entire country, including Papua.

- Myth 4: Indonesia is a Javanese empire where democracy is a facade

Many critics see Indonesia as no more than a Javanese construct held together through repression and coercion. John Saltford, for instance, in his work on the Act of Free Choice, cites Papua's violent incorporation into a 'centralized Javanese empire' in the 1960s.<sup>158</sup> Australian journalist Mark Aarons at the height of the asylum seeker crisis claimed that Indonesia was a 'West Javanese empire', confusing the Sundanese of West Java with the Javanese of the east and central parts of the island.<sup>159</sup> This error demonstrated a basic lack of familiarity with Indonesia. But a deeper flaw in Aaron's understanding is related to the lack of acknowledgement of the social democratic goals that have been central to the Indonesian nationalist project. While military actions have subverted such ideals, they nevertheless remain a legacy of Indonesia's nationalist struggle to which many contemporary leaders still subscribe.

The image of Indonesia as a Javanese empire also obscures the multiethnic basis of the state. The founding principles of Indonesia were based on a multiethnic creed and a deep commitment to religious and ethnic pluralism. Indonesia stood as an antidote to the racial and ethnic divisions of Dutch colonialism. The nationalist project launched by Sukarno and other leaders was promoted in a common struggle that was intended to unite the diverse peoples of the archipelago.

It was not Javanese (or Sundanese), that was adopted as the country's official language but Indonesian taken from Malay that had served as the language of trade and multiethnic interaction across the archipelago. Furthermore, prominent minority groups such as the Acehnese have been disproportionately represented in the upper echelons of business, military and bureaucratic elites. Papuans in contrast have been underrepresented at such levels, but they have by no means been excluded, with Papuans having served as cabinet ministers, ambassadors, generals and officials. While it is true that under the New Order unity was enforced on the regions through a tightly controlled political system, this was inspired less by Javanese ethnocentrism than an authoritarian type of civic nationalism.

The charge of Indonesia being a Javanese empire has been fuelled by criticisms that the transmigration program deliberately flooded Papua with Javanese peasants. These views fail to acknowledge that the transmigration has largely been discontinued in recent years. They are also based upon an exaggerated and anachronistic understanding of migration patterns in Papua which since the 1980s have not been dominated by Javanese. In fact one of the most striking themes of previous migration patterns has been the ethnic diversity of the settler community in Papua. The 2000 census shows that non-Javanese comprise 62% of the settler population in Papua. Javanese tended to dominate the first wave of migration during the 1970s, but subsequent people movements into Papua comprised migrants from throughout the archipelago including from as far afield as Aceh and North Sumatra. The largest group of migrants since the 1980s has come from eastern Indonesia dominated by ethnic groups from South Sulawesi.<sup>160</sup>

In addition to the ‘Javanese empire’ stereotype, the critics also tend to stress what they see as Indonesia’s inherently anti-democratic tendencies. Peter King, for instance, describes how the Suharto ‘dictatorship’ gave way to a series of governments that presided over ‘a barely reformed political system’.<sup>161</sup> This sweeping judgment obscures the kinds of changes that have resulted from democratisation, including far-reaching constitutional amendments and the establishment of a democratic electoral system, including direct elections for the executive. The critics also fail to acknowledge the country’s newly created constitutional court and the functioning of a vibrant media sector. A more balanced view of contemporary Indonesia would note that considerable resistance is facing reformers, but that significant democratic institution building has taken place since 1998. In adopting such an anachronistic understanding of Indonesia, the critics are blinded to the prospects for political change within Indonesia that could provide openings for addressing Papuan grievances.

- Myth 5: Indonesia has latent expansionist tendencies

The reluctance to recognise that changes are taking place in Indonesian society seems to indicate deeper suspicions regarding the foundations of the Indonesian state. These suspicions are also reflected in the link made, at least implicitly, between doubts about Indonesia being a real democracy and its latent expansionist goals. In presenting the state as an ethnic empire and a largely unreformed dictatorship, it is a small step to claim that Indonesia harbours expansionist goals. Jacob Rumbiak a leading figure in the Australia West Papua Association has claimed that ‘Before PNG was independent, the Indonesian military government already had a long standing plan to annex PNG. The TNI have gradually come to control the economy of PNG with the help of corrupt figures in the PNG Government’.<sup>162</sup> Peter King’s analysis of Indonesia’s rule refers to the ‘Indonesian *lebensraum*’, an outrageous allusion to Nazi Germany that also finds expression in the ‘appeasement’ charge. Such claims invoke fears that go back to the West New Guinea dispute and Sukarno’s confrontation campaign.<sup>163</sup> This fear of a strong expansionist

Jakarta in fact misses the real risk for Australia which is that a weak Indonesia becomes the source of regional instability.

- Myth 6: Recent evidence exposes Indonesia’s manipulation of the Act of Free Choice and the international community’s complicity.

There is little disputing the fact that Indonesia’s Act of Free Choice was not a genuinely democratic plebiscite. The unanimous result supporting Papua’s incorporation into Indonesia involving 1022 hand-picked Papuan ‘delegates’ was politically engineered by the New Order regime and acquiesced to by the United Nations and major powers. Contemporary critics claim they have ‘exposed’ the sham Act of Free Choice. They have highlighted the American Government’s recent release of official papers from this time, claiming a revelatory discovery that the Act had not been a democratic process and the US and other Western governments knew about it.<sup>164</sup> There is the strong whiff of conspiracy here.

In contrast to such claims, however, there was in fact a widespread appreciation years before the Act was held that Indonesian sovereignty over Papua had been accepted by the international community. The New York Agreement does not mention self-determination, including instead a provision for ‘ascertaining’ the popular will without any mention of the mechanism to be adopted. This article was a face-saving device for the Dutch who had been forced into a humiliating back down over Papua. The Act of Free Choice was not a conspiracy between the actors that has been exposed by the recent release of secret papers, but an open act of *realpolitik* that was accepted by the main international actors at the time.

In focusing on the so-called ‘betrayal’ of 1969, the critics skirt over the earlier consensus among the international community based upon compelling Cold War considerations. By tracing the origins of the conflict to the Act of Free Choice, the critics simply ignore the ways international support for Indonesian sovereignty over Papua reflected prevailing legal and political necessities. The international community

acceded to Indonesia's demands over Papua to avoid the real risk that the dispute would be drawn into the 'vortex of the Cold War'.<sup>165</sup> Sukarno's courting of the communist bloc threatened to transform the dispute into a proxy war between communist and anti-communist blocs in which Indonesia would be driven into the former camp.

Furthermore, the dispute's resolution upheld an important principle that underpinned post-war decolonisation, that new states would adopt the boundaries of their colonial predecessors. This decision was made on the basis of wanting to avoid the chaos and conflict that would result in the balkanisation of states in Asia and Africa. It explains why Papuan claims for self-determination found very little support among states that had themselves championed the principle in their own struggles for independence.

None of this is to deny that the Papuans emerged as losers from the larger geopolitical resolution that occurred. But it was prior to the Act of Free Choice that a more fundamental betrayal had been perpetrated by the Dutch who had generated expectations of self-determination that they could not possibly deliver on. While the New York Agreement was viewed as an acceptable settlement to the dispute, which included tacit acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty over Papua, its greatest weakness was that it essentially excluded Papuan voices from participating in the negotiations. It was this problem that generated continuing demands for self-determination throughout the 1960s, demands that continue to be made to the present.

- Myth 7: As Melanesian Christians, Papuans are essentially different from Indonesians. On the basis of these religious and ethnic differences, Papua's incorporation into Indonesia should be challenged.

Another common view among the critics is that there is a basic ethnic incompatibility between Melanesians and Asians. The prominent Uniting Church activist John Barr, for instance, has characterised the Papua conflict as essentially related to cultural identity in which 'it's really about being Papuan as against being Asian, and of course that

happens to be Christian and Muslim'.<sup>166</sup> Such stark dichotomies have fuelled a belief that bringing together Pacific islanders and Asians within a common state in Indonesia is a recipe for oppression and conflict. On the basis of this racial distinction, Australia is urged to support the independence of Papua. But this attempt to identify ethnic difference as the basis of legitimacy for Papuan independence claims is fraught with contradictions. Many coastal Papuans share a common history and other linkages with neighbouring islanders in eastern Indonesia. And what about the nearly 800,000 settlers from other parts of Indonesia who live in Papua, many for generations?

As Edward Aspinall has argued, Australians would presumably 'be repelled by suggestions that different ethnic (or religious) groups cannot coexist in Australia. Yet it is apparently inherently absurd to imagine that Melanesians and Southeast Asians can coexist in Indonesia. It is worth remembering that Indonesia was a country founded on a multicultural ideal. Indonesian nationalists fought the racist exclusivism of Dutch colonialism while we were still in the grip of White Australia'.<sup>167</sup>

This failure to recognise Indonesia's multiculturalism also shapes the analysis of developments within Papua. Hence Peter King claims 'the long years of forced *integrasi* have produced a wall of incomprehension and resentment that divides the indigenous from the immigrant communities in Irian itself'.<sup>168</sup> Yet a more balanced analysis would have made reference to the cross-cultural and cross-ethnic mechanisms that have developed through the churches, leadership councils (*muspida*) and public institutions through which Papuans and settlers negotiate their difference in everyday interactions.<sup>169</sup> It is these cross-cultural bridges that have been so effectively utilised to prevent the province from descending into the kind of communal violence that occurred in the neighbouring Maluku islands.

This is not to deny that Indonesia has had a troubled history in living up to its multicultural, pluralist ideals. Indeed, Benny Giay has argued that the Suharto regime's rule over Papua has exposed serious shortcomings in the multiethnic and pluralist ideals of Indonesian nationalism.<sup>170</sup> Giay has argued that Papuans have been subject to



systematic patterns of state discrimination. But recognising the power of Giay's critique of Indonesian rule does not justify the crude Asian versus Melanesian dichotomy that often underpins the arguments of West Papuan supporters in Australia.

### **Inviting adversity**

The emotive and moralistic critique that has emerged from the West Papua constituency tends to interpret Indonesia and the Papua problem as 'a canvas upon which Australian political battles can be played out and Australian fears and fantasies projected'.<sup>171</sup> It has also resulted in dangerous mythologising about Indonesia, about the Papua conflict and about the bilateral relationship as outlined above. Based on these myths, the case put forward by the critics has three basic flaws: it exaggerates Australia's foreign policy influence; it lacks a serious appreciation of the forces driving contemporary Indonesian politics; and it is based on a one-sided account of the Papua conflict that takes for granted Papuan ethnic nationalist claims.

Many of these flaws are evident in Peter King's book-length study of recent developments. What distinguishes King's effort is that his work is informed by serious research. King is no intellectual lightweight and his work lends academic credibility to activist claims over Papua. Furthermore, unlike other critics of official policy, King is prepared to offer concrete policy alternatives. In fact, in King's analysis we are presented with the logical policy conclusions of the critics' case against current foreign policies.<sup>172</sup>

King claims that 'Australia's long-term interest' in the bilateral relationship is 'peaceful self-determination for Papua', making little mention of other strategic priorities such as counter-terrorism or people smuggling. In prioritising the goal of Papuan self determination, King calls for Australia to engage more purposefully with Indonesian civil society, particularly in Papua. He urges the Australian Government to pursue a dual dialogue with the independence movement in Papua and with the Indonesian Government. He also wants to see greater pressure coming from the Australian Government to develop 'its own initiatives'

for resolving the conflict in Papua, and especially considering the idea of 'an Australian peacemaking role' in Papua.

While reflecting a genuine commitment to the Papuan cause, such proposals are dangerously utopian. In supporting Papuan self-determination and directly engaging the independence movement, Australia would rupture its relationship with Indonesia. Indonesian anxieties about Australia's role in Papua are not only shaped by the legacies of East Timor but are also a reaction to activities by West Papua lobby groups within Australia. Moreover, an approach by Australian officials to pro-independence leaders would fuel wild expectations in Papua and likely trigger pro-independence activity that Indonesia would feel compelled to suppress with military force. King and likeminded critics of Australian policy simply ignore the unrealistic expectations set off in Papua and the nationalist dynamics triggered in Jakarta by a push for intervention. King plays down the consequences of falling out with Indonesia, arguing unconvincingly that the result could even 'be a deeper and more productive relationship with Indonesia – just possibly a more relaxed and more neighbourly one in the end'.

In reality the costs would be enormous and would undermine Australia's security interests. In fact, the policy prescriptions favoured by supporters of the West Papua cause would jeopardise the array of activities, interests and interactions that are encompassed in relations between the two countries. There would be the following consequences:

- Australia's security outlook would be seriously undermined

The grave consequences of a rupture in relations with Indonesia over Papua are not well appreciated in the broader public debate in Australia. A worst case scenario includes the possibility of Australia being drawn into hostilities with its populous northern neighbour. The tricky management of the border between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia and the potential for tensions to rise between these two countries could result in Australia having to decide whether it intervenes in a possible dispute between its two northern neighbours. The emergence of an

Indonesian Government mistrustful of Australian intent could also involve growing security risks in East Timor.

If Australia–Indonesia relations were to experience a serious downturn, this would multiply Australia’s defence vulnerabilities. Official threat assessments have long identified that an attack on mainland Australia would almost certainly come *through* the Indonesian archipelago. An Indonesian Government unfriendly to Australia would turn what is a benign defence environment into a vulnerable strategic position, requiring extensive increases in Australian defence expenditures.

- Diplomatic relations would be damaged and Australian diplomatic goals threatened

A breakdown in relations would also do serious damage to Australia’s larger diplomatic objectives. Indonesia has the influence to block Australia’s participation in important regional fora, which would result in our being excluded from efforts to shape the evolving security and economic architecture in the Asian region. Excluded from the emerging institutions of Asian regionalism, Australia would have little influence in promoting an open trading system so important to its economic interests. Nor would it have a significant role in contributing to regional adjustments being made as a result of changing Great Power engagement in Southeast Asia. Australia could be downgraded from a partner in regional institutions to being an isolated observer on the sidelines. Moreover, Indonesia would almost certainly turn inwards. This would reduce the positive role that Indonesia has traditionally played as an anchor of regional security in Southeast Asia. It would probably also complicate Indonesia’s democratic transition by giving impetus to ultranationalists in the security forces.

- Cooperation over non-traditional security threats, including terrorism, would be challenged

During the Papuan asylum controversy, President Yudhoyono publicly stated that Indonesia might consider stopping cooperation with

Australia on a range of issues. In the event of a more serious rupture in the relationship the following would be challenged:

- *The crucial cooperation that has been forged between Australia and Indonesia on counter-terrorism that has resulted in a safer Australia would come under threat.*
- *Bilateral collaboration on illegal fishing that threatens to deplete northern Australian fish stocks would likely be halted.*
- *Australia’s partnership with Indonesia on countering people trafficking that has stemmed the flow of boat loads of illegal immigrants would also come under strain.*
- *Securing Australia’s maritime trade routes would also be complicated if Australia were to be seen as a threat to Indonesia’s territorial integrity.*

- Economic relations would be severed

While Indonesia is not a major economic partner, a rift in the bilateral relationship would still put growing economic interests at risk. While it failed to gather momentum, the campaign to boycott Australian goods during the recent Papua controversy indicated that economic ties could come under strain.

- Australia would have no role in contributing to a lasting resolution to the conflict

Support for Papuan self-determination would simply sideline Australia from any role in supporting special autonomy or other initiatives that seek a realistic solution for the Papua conflict. If the Papua conflict were to trigger a fallout between Indonesia and Australia, it is almost certain that the position of hard-line nationalists in Jakarta would be strengthened. This would undermine reformers while diminishing the prospects for a lasting settlement to the conflict in the foreseeable future.

In light of these considerable risks, it is all the more remarkable, and a reflection of a major political failure, that there is not a broader

recognition of the strategic benefits that Australia has gained by having had a friendly political regime entrenched in Jakarta.

### **Of fears and fantasies**

The proposal put forward by the critics for Australia to impose itself in a 'peace-making role' demonstrates a troubling lack of realism. It also reflects the sort of hubris that is increasingly entering debates about Australia's role in the region. Australia's East Timor intervention set off a round of jingoistic patriotism that defined Australia as the saviour of the region. More recently, it has triggered some distinctly American-sounding arguments about the burden now being on Australia to promote and consolidate democracy in the region. This has marked a significant departure from the usually restrained realist tradition of Australia foreign policy in favour of promoting more idealistic commitments.

The flaws in this vision, or at least the practical constraints on it, are twofold. First, the deployment of Australian forces for prolonged periods beyond existing commitments in Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor and the Solomon Islands, risks strategic over-reach. Secondly, playing the role of regional hegemon in the Pacific may have helped Australia stabilise a volatile region. But defining Australia's status in similar terms in Southeast Asia is unrealistic and would be rejected by regional states. The enduring commitment required by Australia to support state-building in the Solomon Islands and East Timor should caution against the kind of hubris that projects Australia as the guardian of justice and democracy in the region broadly defined.

The challenge posed by state-building among Australia's neighbours highlights the need to avoid the emergence of another Melanesian crisis. Australia will need to underwrite the security and political stability of East Timor and other states in our immediate region at substantial costs to the taxpayer. These realities underline the strategic imperative of ensuring stable political regimes where possible.

They also shed a different light on both the Papua problem and the value of Australia's relationship with Indonesia. A challenge to Indonesian authority in Papua would almost certainly expose the deep

divisions within Papuan society, divisions that could erupt into open conflict that would be exceedingly difficult for any outside force to put a lid on. In fact the combination of conditions present in contemporary Papua including deep-seated social divisions, low levels of education and a rich natural resource base make Papua a prime candidate to become a conflict-ridden failed state if it were to attain independence.

That Indonesia has successfully kept together a nation of such immense cultural and ethnic diversity represents a considerable achievement. The regimes that have been in power in Jakarta since the mid 1960s have had a pro-Western orientation and have sought, for the most part, to engage constructively in the world. The achievements of the Indonesian state should be recognised as presenting Australia with enormous strategic benefits. This fact can be appreciated by imagining the consequences of alternative scenarios. Australia's security outlook would dramatically deteriorate if Indonesia were itself to become a failed state disintegrating into ten or more East Timors.

The failure to appreciate these basic strategic facts by the Australian public can be ascribed to two factors: namely, the failure of political leaders to make the case for why relations with Indonesia are so important; and long standing suspicions and fears regarding Indonesia and the region deeply rooted in Australian history and culture. There is a constant balancing act of ensuring a responsible foreign policy, but one that is not too much out of step with popular sentiment. What might make perfect sense from a policy perspective can often prove unacceptable to the electorate. This makes the challenge of winning the foreign policy debate over the dangerous and misplaced arguments of the critics all the more crucial to ensuring Australian security interests.

A major factor militating against a more realistic debate emerging, however, relates to traditional fears of Indonesia that have shaped Australians' view of the world. Public opinion polling has illustrated the persistence of these fears in shaping popular perceptions. Nearly one third of Australians have ranked Indonesia as the major threat to Australia.<sup>173</sup> This percentage has stayed relatively stable since the 1960s. These threat perceptions derive from old fears of an expansionist Indonesia, antipathy toward what is perceived as a continuing military-

dominated government, a general perception of chaos resulting from East Timor, as well more recent concerns over Islamic extremism.

In light of widespread Australian perceptions of the Indonesia threat, it is paradoxical that Australia's generous aid to Indonesia has found widespread community approval. Australia has a good track record of providing assistance to Indonesia during times of need, most recently during the Indian Ocean tsunami response in 2005 and the Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006. Such aid not only addressed humanitarian needs but constituted good policy, generating goodwill among Indonesian leaders and the Indonesian populace and countering negative images about Australia. It has also reflected a genuine and widespread commitment to humanitarian principles from within the Australian community.

The fact that the bilateral relationship has found greatest public support at times when Indonesia is in crisis may also reflect the darker side of Australian fears. This probably reflects the fact that the community tends to feel most comfortable in dealing with Indonesia as a neighbour in need.<sup>174</sup> When the relationship turns to being one of an equal partnership, however, there are fewer signs of public support, although business and government elites clearly see the advantages in an economically strong Indonesia. Australia's decisive pledges of aid to Indonesia have resulted in a virtuous circle of good policy and strong public support. However, popular sentiments may in fact be at odds with Australia's long-term security interests which would be seriously undermined by the prospects of a weak Indonesia. Australian interests are served by the emergence a confident democratic Indonesia with a capacity to secure its own borders to enforce the rule of law, and to stay internationally engaged.

It remains to be seen whether Australia's immigration controversy will result in a more sustained interest in Australia regarding Papua. The prospect for continuing volatility in the province suggests that the issue will remain a potential source of controversy in bilateral relations. It is important, however, to see the potential for the Papua issue to galvanise public attention in Australia in perspective. There was little Australian military involvement in Papua during World War II, unlike the enduring connections that were forged from the campaign

of Australian soldiers in East Timor. Nor have many Australians sought to develop a deeper understanding of Papua in the same ways they have with East Timor.

For the vast majority of Australians, Papua remains a veritable black hole. Even with the asylum seeker case, Papua has yet to seep into Australian consciousness in the way East Timor did, nor have activists been able to galvanise enduring community interest. Continuing democratic reform in Indonesia and well-targeted diplomacy by Australia that recognises risks while remaining open to potential opportunities would help neutralise the Papua issue as a potential flashpoint in bilateral relations.

# Conclusion

## Policy recommendations

This study has shown how the Papua problem constitutes a complex long-term challenge that defies simple prescriptions and quick fix solutions. Indonesia's national leadership has consistently declared that a resolution of the Papua conflict is a key priority for the government. The enacting of the Law on Governing Aceh, as we have seen, highlights the possibilities that now exist in Indonesia's fledgling democracy for reform and political change. Papuan leaders have lamented the relative inaction of the Yudhoyono Government, as policy struggles have emerged on multiple fronts involving deeply entrenched interests opposing a settlement in Papua. But many Papuan leaders are still prepared to take a wait and see approach to what the government might offer, particularly over the revision of special autonomy. At the same time, the security outlook in Papua, while improving, remains potentially volatile. Future human rights incidents in the province would put pressure on Australia-Indonesia relations. As a result, the policy options for Australia centre on incremental and long-term initiatives, reflecting the prospects for reform from within Indonesia itself.



- Formulating a strategic approach to Papua

If the goal of Australian policy is to avert a crisis in bilateral relations through promoting a lasting resolution to the conflict, then it is important to support reformers in Indonesia who share the same goals. In doing so, however, it is important to recognise the significant constraints inherent in Australia's position. Trying to formulate the right policy settings that balance these elements and working on how this is to be achieved amounts to developing a *strategic* approach to the Papua problem.

The Papua issue needs to be incorporated into a broader strategic framework of engagement with Indonesia and balanced against the array of interests encompassed by cooperation forged with Indonesia. In fact, it is through a more sustained and confident strategic and diplomatic engagement in which Australia and Indonesia become strategic partners in the region that confidence in the relationship will be renewed. It is only then that Australia will be able to ease anxieties about its intentions.

In terms of the prevailing constraints, it is clear that widespread views have emerged in Indonesia that groups within Australia, and the Australian Government itself, are promoting West Papuan independence. Policy needs to be crafted so as to neutralise the negative impact that such impressions of Australia could have in undermining the prospects for reform and hardening policy positions in Jakarta. In other words, Australian officials should be working to remove Australia as a factor in domestic policy struggles over Papua. This is not, however, a proposal for inaction over Papua.

Australian officials need to develop a less passive stance on Papua that directly addresses the concerns of the Indonesian policy elite. Australian diplomats and policy-makers need to counter perceptions of Australia as an untrustworthy and fickle neighbour. Australian officials need to reassure Indonesia that groups in Australia pushing for Papuan independence will not result in a reversal of Australian policy. Reassuring Indonesia's elite of Australian good intentions will require something more than diplomatic outreach. Only through rebuilding

confidence with Jakarta will Australia be able to play a constructive long-term role in supporting a lasting resolution to the conflict.

This will not only require responding to Indonesian policy concerns but also addressing a domestic audience. If officials can address these different audiences, they could position Australia as a long-term strategic partner with Indonesia in the region. This would allow Australia to offer more direct support to Indonesia to pursue new policy initiatives on Papua as identified above. Of course, media and community demands that Australia take a more interventionist stand on Papua merely complicates and undermines efforts to forge a longer term engagement with Indonesia over Papua.

It is crucial therefore for Australia to articulate a policy that has both short-term and long-term components and that not only addresses Indonesian anxieties but also responds to humanitarian concerns in the Australian community. In adding this dimension to Australian policy, officials could more easily counter criticisms that policy is being driven by cynical *realpolitik* motives at the expense of the oppressed Papuan community. Addressing humanitarian concerns among sections of the Australian community is an important factor in winning the public debate over Papua and promoting more sustainable relations with Indonesia. This would in turn allow Australian policy makers to publicly promote a more confident and assertive defence of its policy based upon close bilateral relations with Indonesia.

- Supporting the consolidation of Indonesian democracy, including promoting special autonomy

Australia should be supporting current efforts to build democratic institutions in Indonesia both at the centre and in Papua. Opportunities to support institutional strengthening span a range of areas including, but not limited to: improving the elections framework, institutionalising the party system; strengthening human rights mechanisms; safeguarding media freedoms and supporting reform efforts in the judicial and security sectors. AusAID programs could be extended in these areas, as well as increasing the engagement of relevant Australian government departments

and agencies. A resolution to the conflict cannot be separated from these efforts to consolidate democratic rule at the centre.

In Papua the main policy initiative to emerge from Indonesia's new democratic system is special autonomy. The centrepiece of Australia's Papua policy should continue to be its support for special autonomy which represents the most viable and promising framework for resolving the Papua conflict. As an overarching framework for governance of the province, there are a wide range of technical issues that need assistance from donors. Legal drafting is one area of assistance that should be considered, for not only is it routine and non-controversial, drafting of the implementing regulations for special autonomy has only just began. Furthermore, promoting governance reform is an important counterpart to the implementation of special autonomy, particularly on performance budgeting and transparent planning within local governments. Australia's experience on governance reform in Melanesian societies could be usefully extended to Papua. Engaging health and educational specialists to support improved service delivery in remote regions would also make an important contribution

- Building confidence through diplomacy

In seeking to build confidence and counter perceptions that it cannot be trusted over Papua, Australia should widen its engagement with different sectors of the Indonesian community in light of the new democratic forces that have emerged in recent years. The Australian embassy has cultivated a wide-ranging set of contacts among Indonesian society and should continue with this approach. It should also continue to monitor the human rights situation in Papua and to encourage the Indonesian Government to persist with current efforts at improving its human rights record.

Apart from diplomatic outreach to Indonesian opinion makers, however, concrete new policy initiatives are required to boost confidence. The provision of Australian aid to Indonesia has shown how well timed policy responses can demonstrate Australia's commitment to engagement, changing perceptions and generating goodwill in the

bilateral relationship. Australia should, however, go beyond initiatives in the area of development assistance and step up concrete diplomatic engagement. Developing opportunities in which Australia and Indonesia can participate as diplomatic and strategic partners would significantly deepen relations and advance Australia's broader security interests. Promoting Indonesia's diplomatic engagement in regional and world affairs subjects its government to international norms and boosts the fortunes of reformers in Indonesia.

To this end, Australia needs to examine proposals being canvassed that Indonesia play a more assertive diplomatic role, after years of looking inwards due to the economic and political crisis that has plagued the country. Australia should identify opportunities where it could provide diplomatic backing for Indonesian initiatives that have realistic prospects. Indonesia's involvement in Myanmar might present one such opportunity, recalling the considerable success Australia and Indonesia achieved in the Cambodia settlement under Foreign Ministers Gareth Evans and Ali Alatas.

Australia's backing of new Indonesian diplomatic initiatives, particularly in allowing for a resumption of its leadership role in ASEAN, also provides opportunities. In particular, Australia should consider greater support for Indonesia's push to transform ASEAN into a security community, including encouraging the development of an ASEAN peace keeping capacity, a proposal that was canvassed by Megawati during her tenure as president. Such an initiative would suit Indonesia's emerging post-transition foreign policy while also serving Canberra's regional interests.

In addition to greater official engagement, Indonesia's emerging democracy provides opportunities for both countries to develop stronger links between community groups, parliamentarians, universities and policy institutes. Developing dialogues and increasing interactions between these elements could bolster second track diplomacy, increasing understandings within influential societal groups that could then play a moderating influence in the event of crises emerging in the relationship.

- Building confidence through security cooperation

There are also opportunities for Australia to build confidence with the Indonesian Government by stepping up security cooperation such as current negotiations over a security agreement with Jakarta. Allan Gyngell argues that a security treaty with Indonesia plugs the gap in the Australia's regional security arrangements.<sup>175</sup> The Five Powers Defence Arrangement provides a mechanism through which Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom can engage Singapore and Malaysia over defence and security issues in the immediate Southeast Asian region.

In securing a treaty with Indonesia, Australia would ensure coverage of its immediate environment in Southeast Asia. Taken together, these regional institutional arrangements would improve Australia's security outlook. An agreement would also provide an overall framework for existing bilateral cooperation on policing, immigration, illegal fishing, border protection and people smuggling. The agreement would also represent an important signal of intent of long-term engagement between Australia and Indonesia.

The Indonesian Government has requested that a specific clause be added to the agreement committing Australia to supporting Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua. In that this already reflects official policy and could ease Jakarta's anxieties, the clause would be a welcome addition. But bolstering the resilience of the relationship to withstand popular pressures will hinge more on the concrete activities that are covered by the agreement than the symbolism it represents.

One of the most important opportunities for security cooperation between the two countries is in the area of border security. Australia's long coastline and traditional fears have produced a strong border protection capacity. In extending the benefit of this experience to relevant Indonesian authorities, Australian assistance could help plug some of the gaps in Indonesian state capacity to police its borders against terrorist cells and illegal activities. An initiative of this kind would find strong support in Jakarta, given that border security has become one of the chief anxieties to emerge after the fall of Suharto

and separation of East Timor. The problem of weak state capacity has heightened traditional nationalist anxieties in Indonesia regarding its territorial integrity. Capacity building of the security forces and civilian agencies would help the government reduce some of these pressures.<sup>176</sup> It would also have the additional merit of the boosting the external defence capacities of the security forces, helping to offset an emphasis on internal security, a particularly contentious issue in Papua.

The government should consider the following:

- Increase support to and cooperation among immigration authorities
- Institutionalise border liaison meetings designed to assist in addressing issues over territories where Australia and Indonesia share a border, including discussion of managing the cross-border impact of Papua on Papua New Guinea and Australia
- Work with the security forces to develop a greater capacity for surveillance to protect Papua's fishing zones now under serious threat from foreign trawlers

- Winning the foreign policy debate

In alleviating the risk of Papua becoming a flashpoint in bilateral relations, political leaders need to mount a more compelling defence of Australia's current policy. This policy focuses on support for Indonesia's territorial integrity and recognition of the primacy of domestic Indonesian forces in resolving the conflict. While the directions of this policy are supported by the analysis presented in this study, the articulation of Australia's policy has been far from convincing. This reflects a larger failure in which political leaders have not been able to explain and generate more support for Australia's relationship with Indonesia.

One of the major problems in the public debate is a lack of understanding of the profound changes that have occurred in Indonesia since 1998. Popular perceptions of Indonesia remain dominated by negative images of the military's atrocious behaviour in East Timor or of the unrepentant triumphalism of the Bali bombers. While these are

important realities of present-day Indonesia, more positive developments such as Indonesia's successful democratic transition are also salient. In fact, President Yudhoyono's attempts to define the current democratic transition as the evolution of an alternative kind of open Muslim society may in fact prove to have a more enduring and widespread influence than the negative trends that have accompanied the vast political changes taking place. It is imperative therefore for Australian political leaders to step up efforts to explain recent changes in Indonesia so as to produce a better informed public debate in Australia. In the absence of sustained efforts in this direction, however, the critical view of Indonesia promoted by an increasingly vocal pro-West Papua constituency has gone largely unchallenged in the public debate.

The government needs to show why supporting Indonesia's territorial integrity is the right policy. It needs to make the case on three different levels. First, the government must show why good relations with Indonesia are essential to Australia, highlighting the array of policy interests at stake in the bilateral relationship. Secondly, a case needs to be mounted against the critics of Australian policy that exposes their erroneous analysis and unrealistic policy perspectives. Finally, political leaders need to show how supporting special autonomy is the best stance for a lasting resolution to the conflict and hence for positive human rights outcomes.

It is particularly important to address the humanitarian concerns over Papua that have emerged in Australia. Public opinion appears to support the view that the government is following an unprincipled stand over Papua, no doubt fuelled by the government's clumsy response to the Papua asylum case by unsuccessfully proposing controversial immigration policies. In making a stronger public case for the merits of Australian foreign policy, officials would alleviate pressures on the government to challenge Indonesian rule. This would in turn ease concerns in Jakarta that populist sentiments might unduly influence Australian policy over Papua.

The real agenda for winning the foreign policy debate is in shaping the media scripts that form public views on Australia's relationship with Indonesia. Given the media-saturated environment in which

both foreign policies and public perceptions are shaped, the 24 hour news cycle has become an important part of international diplomacy. In this context, the kind of case being put forward by Australia's West Papua constituency has the merit of being a simple and easily digestible message.

In seeking to provide a more balanced account, the Australian Government needs to re-engage in the public debate by communicating its policy in compelling terms. The complexities of the Papua conflict undoubtedly get lost in a media-driven debate that prefers five second sound bites over judicious analysis. Part of the problem with the government's recent commentary on foreign policy, however, is its tendency to play up populist sentiments. A certain amount of triumphalism is evident in popular representations of the East Timor intervention as a case of Australia 'saving' East Timor. Apart from the distorted view of history it reflects,<sup>177</sup> this depiction complicates the government's task in putting the case for good policy regarding Papua. If Australia 'saved' East Timor, then why shouldn't it save Papua? In reinforcing popular perceptions on East Timor, the government is undermining the case for its own posture toward Papua.

In light of the prevalence of failed states in Melanesia, Australian officials need to communicate to the public how a push for Papuan independence would prove an unwanted and even unmanageable challenge for Australia. The fact that Papuan leaders themselves have raised fears that an independent Papua could descend into tribal conflict raises serious doubts over the viability of a prospective Papuan state. Officials need to inject these strategic facts into the debate in order to show how the best possible policy option for Australia is to support a resolution of the Papua conflict within the Indonesian state. Winning the foreign policy debate domestically will help reduce populist pressures on our relationship with Indonesia. This will in turn ease anxieties in Jakarta about Australia.

- Contributing to the long term resolution of the Papua conflict

If Australia can first build a renewed confidence in the bilateral relationship among opinion leaders in Indonesia, then it would be possible to canvass more direct ways that it could play a role in resolving the Papuan dispute. But a direct role is not in immediate prospect before Indonesian perceptions over Australia can be adequately addressed. As Australia increasingly builds confidence, it could support the implementation of some of the more far-reaching provisions of special autonomy through capacity building of the new institutions mandated under the law such as the MRP, human rights courts and a provincial human rights commission.

- Planning a long-term assistance strategy

A new initiative in Australia's development assistance program could address some of these issues as well as the larger development challenges faced in Papua. Launching an initiative of this kind, however, is dependent on the improvement in bilateral relations to ensure such measures are not misconstrued. AusAID has long had a program to address development challenges in eastern Indonesia, including programs that have been carried out in Papua. AusAID has supported the Support Office for Eastern Indonesia (SOFEI), a World Bank initiative to coordinate and carry out joint programs in eastern Indonesia, including in Papua. There is much more, however, that could be done. Australia should be promoting a larger multilateral initiative for Papua and more of Australia's assistance should be allocated to Papua. AusAID should consider funding the Papua Development Program established by the United Nations Development Program. The UNDP mechanism allows donors like Australia to pool resources under Indonesian Government auspices to tackle some of the most difficult developmental problems facing Papua. By channelling Australia's support through multilateral mechanisms already negotiated with Indonesia, Australia could play a role in addressing governance and development issues while minimising its political exposure.

- Providing interim assistance

Australia should also offer to step up its assistance in non-controversial areas to build confidence with Jakarta regarding Canberra's good intentions. For instance, the Indonesian Government is confronted with difficult humanitarian challenges in Papua that could spark a humanitarian and political crisis. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Papua is regularly cited as a 'time bomb' by health professionals. Recent outbreaks of diarrhea and crop failures in the central highlands, resulting in hundreds of deaths, have highlighted the vulnerabilities of the region to humanitarian crises. The Australian Defence Forces' support role in assisting disaster relief operations in Papua in 1997 after drought resulted in mass starvation demonstrates the kind of cooperation that could be forged.

Rather than merely responding to such catastrophes, Australia could be assisting in building a preventative capacity. For instance, AusAID could be providing support to establish more effective early warning systems in the health sector. Support could also be extended to promote public health campaigns to bolster a preventive approach. Furthermore, Australia should consider offering assistance that would build the capacity of government agencies to respond to health crises in remote communities. Supporting humanitarian initiatives would not only address concerns from constituencies in Australia, but could assist the Indonesian Government to avert a potential political crisis resulting from the humanitarian challenges it faces in Papua.



# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The name of the territory has changed repeatedly since the 1960s, reflecting Papua's tumultuous history. Under Dutch rule, Papua was known variously as Dutch New Guinea or West New Guinea. In his campaign to wrest control of the territory from the Dutch, Sukarno renamed the province Irian Barat or West Irian. The name was then changed to Irian Jaya under the Suharto regime. In 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid, in an effort at reconciliation with local leaders, renamed the province Papua. To make matters more complicated, Papuan nationalists refer to the territory as 'West Papua'. Activists in Australia follow this nomenclature. As a result, I define the grouping of activists and academics that sympathise or are directly involved in supporting the West Papua nationalist movement as the West Papua constituency.
- <sup>2</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The trauma of decolonization: The Dutch and West New Guinea*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966. p 288.
- <sup>3</sup> C L M Penders, *The West New Guinea debacle: Dutch decolonisation and Indonesia 1945–1962*, Adelaide, Crawford House, 2002.
- <sup>4</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The trauma of decolonization*. p 23.
- <sup>5</sup> See Richard Chauvel, *Essays on West Papua, Volume One*, Working Paper No. 120, Monash Asia Institute, Melbourne, 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> Richard Chauvel, *Essays on West Papua, Volume One*.
- <sup>7</sup> See J. A. C. Mackie, Does Indonesia have expansionist designs on Papua New Guinea? in *Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea*

- border and West Papuan nationalism* R. J. May (ed.) Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986.
- <sup>8</sup> Nancy Vivianni, Australian attitudes and policies towards Indonesia, 1950 to 1965, PhD dissertation, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, 1973. p 263; Richard Chauvel, *Essays on West Papua, Volume One*.
- <sup>9</sup> Nancy Vivianni, Australian attitudes and policies towards Indonesia. p 263.
- <sup>10</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 5 the charge of appeasement made against Barwick has become a common theme of the media and government critics since the 1960s. The charge has reappeared regularly over East Timor and, more recently, over the government's policies on Papua.
- <sup>11</sup> The Netherlands dramatically increased expenditures to the territory, spending over three times per capita what Australia was spending on its side of the border, raising serious concerns in Canberra about the disparity that was emerging. Sean Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, politics and history since 1975*, Sydney, ABC Books, 2000. p 203.
- <sup>12</sup> June Raye Verrier, Australia, Papua New Guinea and the West New Guinea question, 1949–1969, PhD dissertation, Monash University, 1976. p 218.
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Chauvel, *Essays on West Papua, Volume One*. Working Paper 120. p 13; Robin Osbourne, *Indonesia's secret war: The guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1985. p 19.
- <sup>14</sup> See Richard Chauvel, *Constructing Papuan nationalism: History, ethnicity, and adaptation*, Policy Studies 14, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2005. p 8. The notion of a foundational moment comes from David Webster as cited by Chauvel.
- <sup>15</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The trauma of decolonization*. p 21.
- <sup>16</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The trauma of decolonization*. p 35.
- <sup>17</sup> Sean Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, politics and history*. p 204.
- <sup>18</sup> Justus M van der Kroef, West New Guinea: The uncertain future, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 8 No. 8, August 1968. p 694.
- <sup>19</sup> June Raye Verrier, Australia, Papua New Guinea and the West New Guinea question, 1949–1969, p 272.
- <sup>20</sup> Justus M van der Kroef, West New Guinea: The uncertain future. p 700.
- <sup>21</sup> Justus M van der Kroef, West New Guinea: The uncertain future. p 701.
- <sup>22</sup> William Henderson, *West New Guinea: The dispute and its settlement*,

- South Orange, NJ, Seton Hall University Press, 1973; John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969: The anatomy of betrayal*, London, Routledge Curzon, 2003. p 93–4.
- <sup>23</sup> John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969*.
- <sup>24</sup> John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969*, p 180.
- <sup>25</sup> For a view of the process as a model for dispute resolution see Terrence Markin, *The West New Guinea Dispute. How the Kennedy Administration resolved that 'other' Southeast Asian conflict*, unpublished PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore Maryland USA, 1996.
- <sup>26</sup> Justus M van der Kroef, West New Guinea: The uncertain future. p 706.
- <sup>27</sup> John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969*, p 154.
- <sup>28</sup> Terrence Markin, *The West New Guinea dispute. How the Kennedy Administration resolved that 'other' Southeast Asian conflict*. pp 479–480.
- <sup>29</sup> Paul Hasluck cited in William Henderson, *West New Guinea: The dispute and its settlement*, South Orange, NJ, Seton Hall University Press, 1973. p 228.
- <sup>30</sup> In his first speech as foreign minister in 1969, Gordon Freeth reinforced Australia's earlier support for Indonesia, publicly backing the Indonesian mechanism of *musyawarah* (or consultation) rather than the principle of one man one vote in the Act of Free Choice. June Verrier, *The origins of the border problem and the border problem to 1969 in Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea border and West Papuan nationalism* R J May (ed.) Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986. p 46.
- <sup>31</sup> June Verrier, *The origins of the border problem and the border problem to 1969*, p 42.
- <sup>32</sup> The account here draws on June Verrier, *The origins of the border problem and the border problem to 1969*, p 38.
- <sup>33</sup> Ali Moertopo, *Dasar-dasar Pemikiran tentang Akselerasi Modernisasi Pembangunan*
- <sup>25</sup> *Tahun*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, 1972. p 24.
- <sup>34</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all figures are taken from my 2004 paper which analysed census and transmigration data for Papua. See Rodd McGibbon, *Plural society in peril: Migration, economic change and the Papua conflict*,

- Policy Studies 13, East–West Center, Washington, DC, 2004.
- <sup>35</sup> Final report data distribution transmigrant by location 2004, Depbakertrans RI. The government initially set remarkably ambitious targets for Papua that prompted growing fears that local communities would be ‘swamped’ by non-indigenous settlers from other parts of Indonesia. Even after revising forecasts downwards, the government still set an ambitious target of 700,000 to be settled over a five year period in the early 1980s. The government in fact never came close to realising these plans, although the eventual total still involved a mass movement of new settlers into Papua.
- <sup>36</sup> As Manning and Rumbiak concluded in the late 1980s, most Papuans close to the transmigration settlements ‘have yet to derive significant economic benefits either through trade and wage labour or through adoption of new farming practices’. Chris Manning and Michael Rumbiak, Irian Jaya: Economic change, migrants, and indigenous welfare, in *Unity and diversity: Regional economic development in Indonesia since 1970*. H. Hill (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.
- <sup>37</sup> A recent needs assessment by the UNDP underscored the prevalence of widespread poverty, limited economic opportunities, the spread of diseases and the poor level of education in Papua’s remote regions. Overall, Papua ranked as the lowest province in the 2004 Human Development Index that has become a standard international measure for development levels. See United Nations Development Program (UNDP) *Papua needs assessment: An overview of findings and implications for the programming of development assistance*. United Nations Development Program, Jakarta, August 2005.
- <sup>38</sup> Denise Leith, *The politics of power: Freeport in Suharto’s Indonesia*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2003. pp 73–82.
- <sup>39</sup> See ICG *Indonesia: Resources and conflict in Papua*, Asia Report 39. International Crisis Group, Jakarta/Brussels, 2002.
- <sup>40</sup> Richard Chauvel and Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, *The Papua conflict: Jakarta’s perceptions and politics*, Policy Studies 5. East–West Center, Washington DC, 2004. p 4.
- <sup>41</sup> Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) *Trouble at Freeport: Eyewitness accounts of West Papuan resistance to the Freeport–McMoran mine in Irian Jaya, Indonesia and Indonesian military repression June 1994–February 1995*, ACFOA, Canberra, 1995.

- <sup>42</sup> Robin Osbourne, *Indonesia’s secret war: The guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*.
- <sup>43</sup> See *Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea border and West Papuan nationalism* R J May (ed.), Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986; and Stephen V Harris and Colin Brown, *Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia: The Papua Jaya problem of 1984*, Australia–Asia Papers No 29, Centre for the Study of Australian–Asian Relations, Griffith University, Brisbane, February 1985.
- <sup>44</sup> Peter Hastings, Prospects: A state of mind, in *Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea border and West Papuan nationalism* R J May (ed.), Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986. p 218.
- <sup>45</sup> Confidential correspondence, United Nations Official, 10 April 2006.
- <sup>46</sup> Jim Elmslie, *Irian Jaya under the gun: Indonesian economic development versus West Papuan nationalism*, Adelaide, Crawford House, 2002. p 35.
- <sup>47</sup> See Robin Osbourne, *Indonesia’s secret war: The guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*.
- <sup>48</sup> cited in John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969*, p 92.
- <sup>49</sup> Robin Osbourne, OPM and the quest for West Papuan unity, in *Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea border and West Papuan nationalism* R J May (ed.), Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986. And Jim Elmslie, *Irian Jaya under the gun: Indonesian economic development versus West Papuan nationalism*, p 37.
- <sup>50</sup> For the former figure see Ralph P Premdas, The Organisasi Papua Merdeka in Irian Jaya: Continuity and change in Papua New Guinea’s relations with Indonesia, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 25 No. 10, October 1985. p 1061, for the latter see Jim Elmslie, *Irian Jaya under the gun: Indonesian economic development versus West Papuan nationalism*, Adelaide, Crawford House, 2002. p 53. The latter seeks to validate these claims by a convoluted argument on the different age cohorts from the census data, drawing a very long bow indeed.
- <sup>51</sup> P. Premdas, The Organisasi Papua Merdeka, p 1061. For the 2005 TNI defence estimate see Ed McWilliams, Memorandum: Response to efforts to deny crimes against humanity in West Papua, November 2005 at <http://www.etan.org/news/2005/11mcfet.htm> accessed on 24 August 2006.
- <sup>52</sup> Ed McWilliams, Memorandum.
- <sup>53</sup> For a considered appraisal of the existing evidence see Philip Alpers, *Gun-*

- running in Papua New Guinea: From arrows to assault weapons, Small Arms Survey, Special Report No 5, Geneva, June 2005.
- <sup>54</sup> Paul Daley, Australians in PNG guns-for-drugs deals, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August 2000 at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/0009/09/text/world1.html> accessed 4 January 2004.
- <sup>55</sup> It is certainly not due to problems in the supply of weapons that the OPM is so poorly armed. Both Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have a thriving trade in illegal arms. Weapons from the TNI, for instance, have ended up being illegally traded, fuelling religious and ethnic conflict across the country.
- <sup>56</sup> See for instance Ian Bell, Herb Feith, and Ron Hatley, The West Papuan challenge to Indonesian authority in Irian Jaya: Old problems, new possibilities, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26 No. 5, May 1986, and Ralph P Premdas, The Organisasi Papua Merdeka in Irian Jaya: Continuity and change in Papua New Guinea's relations with Indonesia, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 25 No. 10, Oct. 1985. pp 1055–1074.
- <sup>57</sup> Robin Osborne, OPM and the quest for West Papuan unity. p 61.
- <sup>58</sup> Peter Hastings, Prospects: A state of mind, in *Between two nations: The Indonesia–Papua New Guinea border and West Papuan nationalism* R J May (ed.), Bathurst, NSW, Robert Brown and Associates, 1986.
- <sup>59</sup> For a detailed account see Robin Osbourne, *Indonesia's secret war: The guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1985.
- <sup>60</sup> OPM forces in the Timika region sabotaged Freeport facilities, forcing the company into a temporary closure of operations The security forces acted with an all out assault on the strongholds of resistance, sparking an exodus of highlanders to Papua New Guinea estimated by one journalist to be 3000 people. (see Robin Osborne, OPM and the Quest for West Papuan Unity, p 61). Papuan activists accused the military of using air power by strafing urban settlements and dropping ordinance on Papuan villages (see Robin Osbourne, *Indonesia's secret war: The guerilla struggle in Irian Jaya*. And Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, *West Papua: The obliteration of a people*, 3rd ed. London, TAPOL, 1988).
- <sup>61</sup> For a detailed account see Stephen V Harris and Colin Brown, *Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia: The Irian Jaya problem of 1984*, Australia–Asia Papers No. 29, Centre for the Study of Australian–Asian Relations, Griffith University, Brisbane, February 1985.

- <sup>62</sup> Ian Bell, Herb Feith, and Ron Hatley, The West Papuan challenge to Indonesian authority in Irian Jaya: Old problems, new possibilities, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26 No. 5, May 1986. p 547.
- <sup>63</sup> Amnesty International Report: Indonesia and East Timor 1997 accessed via <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar97/ASA21.htm> on 20 May 2006.
- <sup>64</sup> The efforts at developing a pro-independence movement are documented by Agus Alua. See *Dialog Nasional, Papua dan Indonesia 26 Februari 1999, Kembalikan Kedaulatan Papua Barat, Pulang dan Renungkan Dulu*, Seri Pendidikan Politik Papua No. 2 Jayapura: Sekretariat Presidium Dewan Papua dan Biro Penelitian STFT Fajar Timur 2002; *MUBES Papua 2000, 23–26 Februari, Jalan Sejarah, Jalan Kebenaran*, Seri Pendidikan Politik Papua No. 3 Jayapura: Sekretariat Presidium Dewan Papua dan Biro Penelitian STFT Fajar Timur, 2002; and *Kongres Papua 2000 21 Mei–04 Juni, Marilah Kita Meluruskan Sejarah Papua Barat*, Seri Pendidikan Politik Papua No. 4 Jayapura: Sekretariat Presidium Dewan Papua dan Biro Penelitian STFT Fajar Timur, 2002.
- <sup>65</sup> Richard Chauvel has coined the term the Papua Spring to describe this period. See his *Essays on West Papua, Volume Two*, Working Paper, Monash Asia Institute, Melbourne, 2003.
- <sup>66</sup> Michael Rumbiak, Dampak Pembangunan Terhadap Depopulasi Penduduk Asli Tanah Papua, Paper presented to Conference on State Crimes in Papua, Jakarta, 2002.
- <sup>67</sup> For an example of Benny Giay's thinking see Benny Giay, *Menuju Papua Baru: Beberapa pokok pikiran sekitar Emansipasi Orang Papua*, Jayapura, Deiyai, 2000.
- <sup>68</sup> In 1999, for instance, Tom Beanal appeared before the UN Commission on Human Rights to highlight the threat to the indigenous people of Papua: 'Millions of hectares of Papuan lands have been plundered by the Indonesian Government and handed over to foreign companies and transmigrants. Our forests, mountains, sago gardens, indigenous lands, sacred places, all the natural resources are being plundered, squeezed, crushed and then annihilated. The indigenous people who are the traditional owners of the lands are becoming squatters ... because their ancestral lands are being used by government and companies'.
- <sup>69</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy*

- or chaos? Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2003. p 61.
- <sup>70</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy or chaos?* p 62.
- <sup>71</sup> Concerns over the PDP leadership's less than pristine reputation have plagued it since the organisation was formed, particularly over the funding sources that the PDP had attracted. While President Abdurrahman had generously supported the Congress, PDP leaders were also receiving funds from Freeport, Suharto family linked cronies, and military linked businesses. In fact the links between Theys Eluay and both the armed forces and the Suharto family became a source of much speculation. Similarly, Thom Beanal's role as a Freeport Commissioner attracted widespread criticism.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview with Thaha Al Hamid, Jayapura, 22 September 2004.
- <sup>73</sup> Richard Chauvel and Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, *The Papua conflict: Jakarta's perceptions and politics*, Policy Studies 5, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2004. p 33.
- <sup>74</sup> See for instance Sidney Jones, Update on Aceh, Presentation at the USINDO Open Forum, June 11, Washington DC, 2003.
- <sup>75</sup> Hari Sabarno represented the latest in a long line of former military officers serving as home affairs minister, reflecting the symbiotic relationship between home affairs and the military.
- Siti Nurbaya had widely reported links with the head of State Intelligence, Hendropriyono, going back to the cooperation they forged when posted in the province of Lampung. Hendropriyono, himself a former general, was to become a major influence in devising the government's policy towards Papua. These political alliances underpinned the bureaucratic resistance to special autonomy that emerged.
- <sup>76</sup> *Kompas*, September 25, 2003, Foreigners fanned separatism: Megawati, *Jakarta Post*, September 24, 2003.
- <sup>77</sup> Papua juga rawan aksi Separatisme, *Kompas*, 21 August 2003.
- <sup>78</sup> For a broader discussion on resources and the conflict in Papua see ICG, *Indonesia: Resources and conflict in Papua*, Asia Report No 39, International Crisis Group (ICG) Jakarta/Brussels, 13 September 2002.
- <sup>79</sup> Confidential leaked Lemhannas document, n.d.
- <sup>80</sup> Confidential interview, Papuan tribal chief, 16 February 2003.

- <sup>81</sup> ICG, *Papua: The dangers of shutting down dialogue*, Asia Briefing No. 47, International Crisis Group, Jakarta/Brussels, 23 March 2006.
- <sup>82</sup> Interview with DPRD Chairman Jon Ibo, Jayapura, 9 May 2003.
- <sup>83</sup> See Rodd McGibbon, *Secessionist challenges in Aceh and Papua: Is special autonomy the solution?* Policy Studies 10, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2004. pp 59–64.
- <sup>84</sup> Confidential communication, Jakarta, 3 February 2003.
- <sup>85</sup> ICG, *Dividing Papua: How not to do it*, Asia Briefing No. 24, International Crisis Group, Jakarta/Brussels, 2003. p 9.
- <sup>86</sup> ICG, *Dividing Papua: How not to do it*.
- <sup>87</sup> This is not to exaggerate the political stability that the government has achieved. Much of it depends on the vice-president's chairmanship over Golkar and his relationship with the president.
- <sup>88</sup> See Ed Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A more promising basis for peace in Aceh?* Policy Studies No 20, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2005; and International Crisis Group, *Aceh: A new chance for peace*, Asia Briefing No. 40, Jakarta/Brussels, 2005.
- <sup>89</sup> These reports circulated widely in Jakarta and Papua and were conveyed to the author in confidential interviews with Western diplomats and key Papuan leaders, interviews 20 and 21 August 2006, Jakarta.
- <sup>90</sup> For an overview of the process see ICG Papua: *The dangers of shutting down dialogue*, Asia Briefing No. 47, Jakarta/Brussels, 23 March 2006.
- <sup>91</sup> Again these events are described in ICG *Papua: The dangers of shutting down dialogue*, Asia Briefing No. 47, Jakarta/Brussels, 23 March 2006.
- <sup>92</sup> ICG *Papua: The dangers of shutting down dialogue*, pp 11–15.
- <sup>93</sup> Perlukah Revisi UU Otsus? *Tifa Papua*, No. 18, Week 1 August 2006, p 5; Revisi Otsus Papua Harus Libatkan Semua Pihak, *Kompas*, 14 August 2006.
- <sup>94</sup> Confidential interviews with Jayapura-based provincial officials, Jayapura, 24–25 July 2005.
- <sup>95</sup> President Kunjungi Jayapura dan Yahukimo, *Tifa Papua*, No. 18, Week 1 August 2006, p 9.
- <sup>96</sup> See President Yudhoyono's 16<sup>th</sup> December Speech to the MPR, *Antara News Agency*, 16 August 2006.
- <sup>97</sup> The following section on Suebu's campaign is drawn largely from Marcus Mietzner, *Autonomy democracy and internal conflict: The 2006*



gubernatorial elections in Papua, Seminar Presentation RSPAS, Australian National University, 15 May 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Marcus Mietzner, *Autonomy democracy and internal conflict*, p 7.

<sup>99</sup> Membangun Papua Baru: Visi, Misi dan Program, *Tifa Papua*, No. 18, Week 1, August 2006. p 11–14.

<sup>100</sup> Hubi Diminta untuk segera ke Wamena, *Kompas*, 28 October 2000.

<sup>101</sup> SKP, Papua Aktual 2004: April–June, Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian, Keuskupan Jayapura, Papua, July 2004.

<sup>102</sup> SKP, Papua Aktual 2004: October–December, Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian, Keuskupan Jayapura, Papua, February 2005.

<sup>103</sup> Papuan students demand graft probe, *The Jakarta Post*, 19 July 2005.

<sup>104</sup> Bupati Paniai dan Ketua DPRD Saling Tudung, *Tifa Papua*, No. 17 Week 3/4, July 2006, p 3.

<sup>105</sup> World Bank, Papua public expenditure analysis overview report: Regional service delivery in Indonesia's most remote region, World Bank/Indonesia, Jakarta, 2005; Agus Sumule, Peluang Korupsi Dalam APBD Papua 2006, *Suara Pembaruan*, 19 June 2006; ICS dan Fitra Soroti APBD, *Tifa Papua*, No. 14, Week 3/4, June 2006 pp 4–5.

<sup>106</sup> Confidential interview with senior Papuan civil servant Jayapura, 24 July 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Perlukah Revisi UU Otsus? *Tifa Papua*, No. 18, Week 1 August 2006, p 5.

<sup>108</sup> Public pressure to establish a truth commission to expose abuses during both the New Order and post-New Order period has waxed and waned. While many human rights groups and the media have repeatedly called for a commission, influential social groups such as Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) have remained cool about the idea, concerned about its role in mobilising anti-communists in the 1965–66 massacres that brought the New Order to power. Successive governments and the DPR have failed to prioritise the issue and a draft bill to establish such a commission has languished in various drafting committees for years.

The Yudhoyono Government has renewed efforts to establish the commission. Yudhoyono is nominating commissioners directly. For any commission to have credibility, it will need to detail the abuses that resulted from decades of counter-insurgency operations in Papua and Aceh, but

given the tacit transitional agreement made between civilian and military officers it would appear that the process will likely result in amnesties for crimes committed.

<sup>109</sup> Yudhoyono says peace in Aceh can lead to peace in Papua next year, *Asian Political News*, 22 August 2005.

<sup>110</sup> Matt Davies, TNI Operations in Papua: Restructuring and Reasserting Sovereignty, Seminar Presentation, Indonesia Study Group, RSPAS, Australian National University, 14 June 2006.

<sup>111</sup> Matt Davies, TNI Operations in Papua: Restructuring and Reasserting Sovereignty,

<sup>112</sup> Marcus Mietzner, Business as usual? The Indonesian Armed Forces and local politics in the post-Soeharto era, in Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (eds), *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Democratisation and Decentralisation*, Singapore: ISEAS.

<sup>113</sup> The government's emphasis on border security was signaled in President Yudhoyono speech to the Regional Representative Assembly in August 2006, *Antara News Agency*, 26 August 2006.

<sup>114</sup> For the history of proposals for expanded military commands see David Bourchier, *Combat zone, Inside Indonesia*, July–September 2002.

<sup>115</sup> The PDP's emergence in the 'utopian moment' of 1999–2000 obscured the basic organisational and strategic weaknesses that had plagued Papuan nationalism since the 1960s.

<sup>116</sup> Steve Marshall, Papua fighters promise non-violent future, Australian Broadcasting Corporation <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2006/s1699050.htm> 27 July 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Gugatan Dewan Adat Papua, *Tifa Papua*, No. 14, Week 3/4, June 2006, p 6.

<sup>118</sup> Di Manokwari, Ratusan Massa Tuntut Referendum di Papua, *Cendrawasih Pos*, 16 August 2006.

<sup>119</sup> For an English language example of the kind of commentary emerging over Papua see *Losing Papua*, *Jakarta Post*, March 20, 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Integrasi: Pemerintah Perlu Segera Gelar Dialog Soal Papua, *Kompas*, 12 May 2006.

<sup>121</sup> Tim DPR Pantai Aceh dan Papua, *Kompas*, 18 July 2006.

<sup>122</sup> Cited in Rawdon Dalrymple, *Continental drift: Australia's search for regional identity*, Hampshire, Ashgate, 2003, p 177.

- <sup>123</sup> Rawdon Dalrymple, *Continental drift: Australia's search for regional identity*, p 177.
- <sup>124</sup> David Goldsworthy, (ed.) *Facing north: A century of Australian engagement with Asia*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2001.
- <sup>125</sup> David Goldsworthy, Regional relations, in *Facing north: A century of Australian engagement with Asia*, David Goldsworthy (ed.), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p 155.
- <sup>126</sup> See Paul Kelly, No appeasing the critics, *The Australian*, 22 April 2006.
- <sup>127</sup> Let things with Australia cool down first, says President, *Antara News Agency*, 27 October 1999.
- <sup>128</sup> This included the introduction of a slew of advisors to help halt PNG's slide into lawlessness and growing ungovernability.
- <sup>129</sup> Hugh White, The new Australia–Indonesia strategic relationship: A note of caution, in *Different societies, shared futures: Australia, Indonesia and the region*, John Monfries (ed.), Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006.
- <sup>130</sup> Hugh White, The new Australia–Indonesia strategic relationship: A note of caution, and Paul Kelly, An Australian view: The outlook for the relationship, in *Different societies, shared futures: Australia, Indonesia and the region*, John Monfries (ed.), Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006.
- <sup>131</sup> DPR denounces Australia's decision to grant visas to 42 Papuans, *Antara News Agency*, 23 March 2006.
- <sup>132</sup> See for instance, Indonesia's President issues warning over Papua, ABC News Online, 5 April 2006 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200604/s1609416.htm>
- <sup>133</sup> Most Australians back Papua, *The Australian*, 19 April 2006.
- <sup>134</sup> See Greg Fealy, This is no way to win the war on terrorism, *The Australian*, 29 June 2006.
- <sup>135</sup> The Indonesian Government accused Deakin university academics Scott Burchill and Damien Kingsbury of promoting West Papuan separatism. It threatened to suspend Indonesian accreditation of Deakin University as well as RMIT which could threaten the significant Indonesian student enrolments

- in these universities. See Indonesia lashes unis, *The Age*, 22 May 2006.
- <sup>136</sup> Exemplary here is the coverage of the asylum seeker case by Kenneth Davidson in *The Age*, a widely respected and experienced journalist, who promoted an understandably sympathetic view of Papua, but without an acknowledgement of the complexities of the conflict. In one piece, he quotes a former intelligence officer, Clinton Fernandes and critic of Australia's policy over Papua to make the rather convoluted and dubious argument that the Pacific solution will mean Australia cooperating with the TNI in turning back Papuan asylum seekers. In doing so, Davidson argues that this will complicate President Yudhoyono's attempts to impose civilian supremacy over the armed forces. Kenneth Davidson, Australia's stance not helping Indonesian democrats, *The Age*, 20 April 2006.
- <sup>137</sup> While this chapter is concerned with Australian groups, the West Papuan constituency is not limited to Australia. There are international Papuan solidarity groups active in Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands. These groups have had some success in eliciting support from individual parliamentarians such as Lord Avebury in the House of Lords. In the United States, Eni H Faleomavaega, America Samoa's representative to the US Congress has campaigned for the West Papuan cause, owing his enhanced public profile largely to his advocacy over Papua. On the whole, however, Papua is an issue of peripheral concern in Europe and the United States, while Papuan solidarity groups have remained small and political lobbying limited to a few individual members.
- <sup>138</sup> See <http://www.awpa-melb.asn.au/> accessed on 24 August 2006
- <sup>139</sup> A typical example of the churches' activism over Papua is the ABC radio interview with Susan Connolly and John Barr, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories/s1613596.htm> accessed 18 June 2006.
- <sup>140</sup> Paul Kelly, No appeasing the critics, *The Australian*, 22 April 2006.
- <sup>141</sup> Scott Burchill, Remaking the mistakes of East Timor, *The Age*, 15 March 2006.
- <sup>142</sup> Nick Chesterfield, Security assessment and intelligence profile: West Papua border mission May/June 2006, Free West Papua Campaign Pacifica, Melbourne, 2006. Accessed at <http://freewestpapua.com> on 18 August 2006.
- <sup>143</sup> Nick Chesterfield, Security assessment and intelligence profile, pp 6–7.
- <sup>144</sup> Nick Chesterfield, Security assessment and intelligence profile, p 7, 29.

- <sup>145</sup> Another claim he makes (p 25) is that credible eye witness descriptions placed the notorious East Timorese militia leader, now in an Indonesian jail, Eurico Gutierrez, in militia camps along the border region. The eye witness from the Arso region described a 'short, stocky Timorese man with a Billy Ray Cyrus haircut and a bad attitude'. This hardly sounds like the kind of cultural reference that people living in the remote border region would make.
- <sup>146</sup> To take a recent example of the reports put out by international rights groups see *Human Rights Watch Too high a price: The Human Rights cost of the Indonesian Military's Economic Activities* 18 (5c): June 2006.
- <sup>147</sup> The best example of recent years is the report by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and the Indonesian NGO Telapak see *The last frontier: Illegal logging in Papua and China's massive timber theft*, February 2005. Accessed via <http://www.eia-international.org> on 28 August 2006
- <sup>148</sup> The figure of 100,000 is regularly cited by the West Papua constituency. A recent example is expatriate Australian journalist John Pilger, see The secret war against the defenseless people of West Papua, *The New Statesman*, 9 March 2006. The 150,000 figure is cited as early as 1987, see Malcolm Gault Williams, Organisasi Papua Merdeka: The Free Papua Movement lives, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1987.
- <sup>149</sup> Reports of the death of Wamena-based activist Yefeth Yalemakan in 2003 is another prominent example. While there was no evidence linking his death to foul play, Papuan solidarity groups still launched a campaign accusing the Indonesian Government of poisoning the activist. See for instance <http://www.etan.org/news.htm>
- Yet another example was the report by ELSHAM that 3000 Laskar Jihad militia members had established a training camp in the remote region of Fak-Fak in 2002. While accepted as fact by Papuan solidarity groups, local police, officials and NGOs all rejected the claim, indicating the report's lack of credibility. The author visited Fak-Fak soon after the allegations were aired and found universal skepticism among official and non-government sources. While the militia group Laskar Jihad sought to establish a foothold in Sorong, their attempts met with strong community and official resistance and there is little evidence to suggest the large-scale existence of Islamic militias in Papua.

- <sup>150</sup> John Wing with Peter King, *Genocide in West Papua? The role of the Indonesian state apparatus and a needs assessment of the Papuan people*, A report prepared for the West Papua Project at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, and ELSHAM Jayapura, Papua, August 2005 West Papua Project, Sydney University.
- <sup>151</sup> Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) *Trouble at Freeport: Eyewitness accounts of West Papuan resistance to the Freeport-McMoran Mine in Irian Jaya, Indonesia and Indonesian military repression June 1994-February 1995*, Canberra, ACFOA, 1995.
- <sup>152</sup> Human Rights Watch, Human rights and pro-independence actions in Papua, 1999-2000, New York, HRW, 2000.
- <sup>153</sup> Findings cited in *Jakarta Post*, 15 November 2003.
- <sup>154</sup> President wants no civilian victims in military operation in Papua, *Tempo Interactive*, 5 November 2004.
- <sup>155</sup> Damien Kingsbury, The trouble with territory's future, *The Australian*, 6 April 2006.
- <sup>156</sup> Paul Kelly, No appeasing the critics, *The Australian*, 22 April 2006; Ambassador scolds Pro-Papuan mob, *The Australian*, 10 March 2006.
- <sup>157</sup> Richard Chauvel and Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, *The Papua conflict: Jakarta's perceptions and politics*, p 51.
- <sup>158</sup> John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian takeover of West Papua, 1962-1969*, p 5.
- <sup>159</sup> The claims were made on the ABC Radio National's Light Night Live on 28 April 2006. Download available <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/lnl/s1624215.htm> accessed on 15 May 2006.
- <sup>160</sup> These themes are examined in more detail in Rodd McGibbon, *Plural society in peril: Migration, economic change and the Papua conflict*, Policy Studies 13, East-West Center, Washington, DC, 2004.
- <sup>161</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy or chaos?* p 169.
- <sup>162</sup> Rumbiak's comments are cited in <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0608/S00306.htm> accessed on 24 August 2006.
- <sup>163</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy or chaos?* p 138. In another reference he refers to Indonesia's 'minor holocaust' in referring to a violent raid by security forces on student dormitories. p 62.

- <sup>164</sup> The documents included declassified records from the US State Department and the Richard Nixon Presidential Material collections at the National Archives and Records Administration. The documents were compiled and released by a Washington-based non-governmental organisation, the National Security Archive. See <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>
- <sup>165</sup> William Henderson, *West New Guinea: The dispute and its settlement*, South Orange, NJ. Seton Hall University Press, p 6.
- <sup>166</sup> Barr cited in an ABC Religion Report interview accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/reprpt/stories/s1613596.htm> on 24 August 2006.
- <sup>167</sup> Edward Aspinall, Selective outrage and unacknowledged fantasies: Rethinking Papua, Indonesia and Australia, *Austral Policy Forum* 06-15A, 4 May 2006, accessed at <http://nautilus.rmit.edu.au/forum-reports/> on 6 June 2006.
- <sup>168</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy or chaos?* p 36.
- <sup>169</sup> I explore these factors in detail in *Plural society in peril: Migration, economic change and the Papua conflict*, Policy Studies No. 13, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2004.
- <sup>170</sup> Benny Giay, *Menuju Papua Baru: Beberapa pokok pikiran sekitar Emansipasi Orang Papua*, Jayapura, Deiyai, 2000.
- <sup>171</sup> Edward Aspinall, Selective outrage and unacknowledged fantasies: rethinking Papua, Indonesia and Australia.
- <sup>172</sup> Peter King, *West Papua and Indonesia since Soeharto: Independence, autonomy or chaos?* p 170.
- <sup>173</sup> Ian McAllister and John Ravenhill, Australian attitudes towards closer engagement with Asia, *Pacific Review*, Vol. 11, 1998, pp 119–141.
- <sup>174</sup> The Australian aid program actually has a strong emphasis on ‘capacity building’ and aid professionals seek to prevent the emergence of the kinds of dependency syndromes that popular perceptions of Indonesia appear to celebrate.
- <sup>175</sup> Geoffrey Barker, Treaty won’t bring true accord, *The Australian Financial Review*, 15 June 2006. p 61.
- <sup>176</sup> The sensitivity of the issue was underlined in 2005 when a dispute broke out between Malaysia and Indonesia over disputed sovereignty over outlying islands that soon escalated, resulting in warships being sent to the region and a wave of nationalist populism in Indonesia

- <sup>177</sup> Neither Howard’s letter to Habibie nor Australia’s pressure to introduce an international intervention force in East Timor represented the main influence in shaping developments. Howard’s letter was merely a pretext used by Habibie who saw East Timor as having become a major international problem for Indonesia. In the eyes of Habibie and his advisors, the East Timor issue had done disproportionate damage to Indonesia’s international standing, particularly in light of the relative insignificance the territory had for Indonesia. For a President struggling to contain multiple challenges and crises, Howard’s letter allowed Habibie to address the problem once and for all. In terms of pressures for an introduction of an international force to restore order it was US diplomacy that was the decisive factor. Australia’s willingness to bear the burden of leading this force no doubt took the onus off the UN and major countries, but it was US pressure that ultimately persuaded Indonesia into agreeing to an international force.

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