

Autonomy, Federalism or the Unthinkable? Indonesian Debates and the Future of West Papua

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Abstract

The Melanesian people of the Indonesian province of Papua/Irian Jaya have never accepted rule from Jakarta since they were forcibly incorporated into the unitary republic of Indonesia by President Sukarno during 1962-1963. However after the collapse of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998 it became possible for the Papuans to openly criticize Indonesian rule and for Indonesians to discuss forms of autonomy and federalism which would in principle moderate Papuans' hostility to their inclusion in the republic. Debates in Jakarta have produced a consensus in favour of offering "special autonomy" (not yet defined) to Papua-- and also to Aceh-- in addition to the "regional autonomy" which is being extended to all Indonesian provinces and regencies from January 1, 2001. Even this "ordinary" autonomy should entail a generous boost to Papua's provincial revenue and budget. However Indonesian debates and Jakarta's policy offerings have done little to reassure the Papuans, who continue to suffer violations of their rights at the same time that their new post-1998 leaders, who support a peaceful resolution of Papua's grievances, are being arrested and silenced. The Papuans remain intent on achieving independence—and with good reason.

Key Words: Papua, Indonesia, autonomy, federalism, secession

Introduction

The Dutch withheld sovereignty over West New Guinea when the rest of the Netherlands Indies was transformed into the republic of Indonesia during 1949-50. But by 1963 they no longer felt able to resist the multiple international pressures to relinquish sovereignty which they faced in New Guinea as President Sukarno stepped up a military campaign to forcibly "liberate" the territory, and Washington concluded that continuing Dutch sovereignty would radicalize Indonesian politics to the benefit of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* and its external supporter at the time, the People's Republic of China. Thus it was that the Dutch broke their promise of a separate self-determination for the Papuans and, together with Indonesia, signed the New York Agreement of 1962, which provided for a transitional UN authority in West New Guinea leading to Indonesian control of the territory in 1963 and for a so-called Act of Free Choice in 1969, which proved to be "free of choice" in practice. From that year West Papua became the 26th province of Indonesia, first as Irian Barat (West Irian), later as Irian Jaya ("victorious Irian"). And thus it was that Papua's strongly aroused desire for independence of the early 1960s was flouted

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over the following 40 years.

As a consequence Papua suffered not only ferocious repression of its independence movement, the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*), but also ruthless exploitation of its mineral and other bounteous resources, with almost no benefit flowing to the Papuan people themselves. Indonesia also encouraged both official (“*transmigrasi*”) and unofficial (“spontaneous”) immigration which threatened to make the Papuans a minority in their own land within a generation.

The Suharto New Order (1966-98) in Indonesia was followed by a period of partial liberalization and limited democratization under, first, Jusuf Habibie, and now, since October 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid. In the expanded political space available it became possible for the Papuans to openly air their grievances and for the Indonesians to debate alternatives to the unitary and highly centralized and authoritarian state of Suharto. At the height of Jakarta’s permissiveness the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya was actually renamed “Papua” by President Wahid (Gus Dur) on New Year’s Day 2000 in deference to Papuan wishes. It seemed that a *modus vivendi* leading to a negotiated settlement of some kind was possible. But following a symbolic “declaration of non-integration” by a specially convened *Kongres Rakyat Papua* in June 2000, a recalcitrant Indonesian parliament, Cabinet and Vice President have refused to go along with the President’s strategy of conciliating the Papuans through dialogue. The province has evidently been un-renamed and the new “post-OPM” leadership which emerged in Papua after 1998 has been decimated by arrests.

This article explores the Indonesian debates that have taken place and still continue around concepts of autonomy and federalism as well as independence—debates which, if followed through and resolved imaginatively and constructively, might yet save Papua from the renewed violence which seems inevitable if Jakarta resorts to all-out military and police repression of the Papuans for merely expressing their long-standing desire for independence.

Autonomy, Federalism or Independence for Papua?

Given a free choice the Papuan majority in Irian would plainly prefer independence to continuing incorporation in Indonesia. They seek a future oriented to their fellow Melanesians in the South Pacific islands where their plea for self-determination is belatedly beginning to attract serious support. Nauru and Vanuatu pushed the issue of Papuan self-determination at both the Millennium Summit in New York during September 2000 and at the Pacific Islands Forum heads of government meeting in Kiribati during October 2000. On the other hand the substantial Indonesian minority in Irian (about 800,000 of the 2.1 million people counted in the 2000 census) would clearly be happy with the regional autonomy which is being fitfully extended to all the 300 plus regencies and 32 provinces of *Indonesia Raya* from New Year’s Day 2001. Jakarta seems nevertheless determined to thrust an undefined special autonomy on her two most troublesome provinces, Papua and Aceh, from May 2001. In any case the Papuans are resisting any version of autonomy

loudly and strongly—particularly any imposed version (no decentralization without negotiation), and above all an imposed version including the proposal launched under President Habibie to split Irian into three separate provinces, which is still being pushed by the Irian governor (*koridor.com*, 9/1/01) but which has been widely condemned as a divide-and-rule tactic.

However autonomy on the way to independence is not necessarily an evil. It is well known that Bishop Belo and the Fretilin leaders of East Timor would have preferred a much longer gestation period under Indonesian sovereignty than they were eventually given in 1999. Habibie's surprise proposal for a referendum on independence in January 1999 opened the way to the disruptions and disasters which were inflicted on the Timorese people by the Indonesian army (TNI) and its puppet Timorese militias throughout that year, but especially in the period after the August 30th referendum and before the arrival of the UN-sponsored and Australian-led International Force East Timor (InterFET) on September 20th (TAUDEVIN, 2000). The killings, wanton destruction and enforced expulsions of September 1999 seem to have fully justified the caution of Timor's leaders, but they have at least made a quick break from an Indonesia which, one year later, was showing signs of turning back the clock of *reformasi* as Gus Dur's leadership came under strong challenge not only from the parliament but also from a politically reviving military. Gus Dur was forced to share power with Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, was frustrated in his attempt to install a strongly pro-reform general at the head of the army and began to seem powerless to stop the return to a hard line against the aggrieved people of Aceh and Papua.

In any case, of course, there is always the chance that Gus Dur, who is clinically blind and in poor health, will die or become incapacitated in office even if he does succeed in continuing the reform effort and mastering the unresolved inter-communal conflicts and bloodshed which are a grave problem in several other provinces beside the two most troubled ones. In that event it might be a benefit indeed --for Aceh or Papua--to have already parted definitively with Indonesia for good. Nevertheless one distinguished expert in Jakarta, J. B. Kristiadi of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has made the reassuring suggestion that

If the Papuans want to be free, they should not separate themselves from Indonesia, just from the looting and bribery of the central government. Special autonomy can accommodate this...President Abdurrahman Wahid's government is democratic and not repressive (*Tempo*, 7/6/00).

But the Papuans can hardly be expected to take this seriously in the light of Indonesian history where "special autonomy" has been offered or instituted and ignored before—in both Papua and Aceh, actually. A few Papuans do envisage a long transition to independence, but the Papuan mood is undoubtedly for the earliest possible independence, which would liberate them not only from Indonesian looting and bribery but systematic violence as well. The Papua Presidium Council (PPC), which emerged as the effective voice of the Papuan people during a national consultation meeting in February 2000, largely yielded to this mood for most of the year 2000 until five of its key leaders were arrested in November—ironically just as they were attempting to moderate the campaign for independence

(KING, 2000; *Agence France Presse*, 29/11/00).

It was current Vice President of the PPC and the only senior leader not arrested in the November crackdown, Tom Beanal, who led the so-called Team 100 (*Tim Seratus*) of representatives of Papua's regions to Jakarta in February 1999 where they launched demand for immediate independence from then President Habibie. This demand may be viewed in retrospect as a necessary shock tactic which finally persuaded Jakarta that there was a problem and an issue—it signalled (perhaps) the end of the “only a handful of dissident Papuans want independence” mentality. Nevertheless when the PPC organized the Papuan People's Congress in Jayapura during May/June 2000 and declared that Papua had never been a part of Indonesia, Jakarta was once again professing shock about the independence demand and will presumably continue to do so. This is standard tactics, but there are important divisions in the Indonesian camp which it is important for the Papuan side to understand, exploit and perhaps in the longer term overcome. Equally, as the Papuan historian Benny Giay would insist, it is important for Papuans to understand and manage or overcome the divisions on their own side-- over the issue of autonomy versus independence, for instance--and to avoid becoming victims of Indonesian divide-and-rule tactics.²

Despite the divisions in its own ranks the Indonesian government during the course of 1999-2000 did produce proposals on regional autonomy which at least purported to address the grievances of its alienated provinces, and they are discussed below. Unfortunately the proposals themselves and the debate that developed around them only served to reinforce the impression that the government in Jakarta was incapable of overcoming its own divisions, hesitations and incompetence sufficiently to present proposals plausibly able to resolve what had become in essence a crisis of the unitary republic declared by Sukarno in 1945. We can usefully sum up divisions over the issues of autonomy and secession in elite Indonesian opinion under three headings.

1. The Soft Line: independence if need be

It is a moot point whether there is an Indonesian learning curve on Timor, Aceh and Papua—or only a “forgetting curve”. This is one problem for Papua and Papuans. Of course slow learning may be partly feigned as a tactic; but there is an Indonesian blind spot, affecting the vast majority of the Javanese citizenry at least, on the issue of granting self-determination/independence/secession to deeply alienated provinces. They are against it, regardless of its theoretical merits in the light of a generation or more of failed and disastrous repression in Papua, East Timor and Aceh. Nevertheless there *are* a very few advocates or tolerators of the limited, or even the extensive, breakup of the unitary republic, and we may label such as these **soft liners**. They think, for instance, that not only the Papuans but Indonesia itself would be better off if Papua were allowed to break away. And indeed there are proposals in circulation not just to free the most aggrieved provinces, Aceh and Papua, on the East Timor precedent, but for the whole of Indonesia to dissolve or

² *Interview*, Jayapura, 22/2/00. Dr Benny Giay is director of a theological training college in Jayapura and was a member of the PPC until December 2000. He has published a book dedicated to slowing down the independence movement and introducing a more reflective note into its forums (GIAY, 2000).

devolve into a group of cooperating independent states. In George Aditjondro's version: 'Let go of the [1945] Constitution and the reality is that Indonesia might become a Commonwealth of States.' (*Jakarta Post [JP]*, 3/11/99) Political observer Soedjati Jiwandono agrees--the Papuans have a right to independence: 'Unity is something you cannot force and everybody should have the right to determine what they want, including the right to be free.' Ultimately, he said after the Papuan People's Congress, "unity should bring prosperity and thus it might be better if Indonesia split into three or four prosperous countries, rather than a single unity that is not thriving and costing the people more." (*JP*, 5/6/00)

Well known political commentator and (after October 2000) Presidential press secretary Wimar Witoelar endorses this pragmatic attitude:

Human dignity and liberty are far more important than any arrangement of statehood. For the younger political generation it does not matter too much what form of autonomy, what form of federalist status or even what form of independence is granted to the provinces. As long as the people of Aceh ... are good friends with the people of Indonesia, it is fine. (*JP*, 29/6/99)

George Aditjondro also argues that the net cost to Indonesia of "losing" Papua (together with Aceh) would be no more than the past—and in large part continuing-- cost of "KKN" (*Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme*) to the people. 'In a clean Indonesia Aceh and West Papua are not needed' is his beguiling formula.³

Professor Merle Ricklefs of Melbourne University has taken a cool and quite persuasive look at the costs and benefits of separating for both sides in the Aceh and Papua conflicts. (*Email interview: JP*, 17/6/00) I would disagree with Ricklefs, however, when he argues that secession is a less serious problem now than in the 1950s because it lacks outside support. The 50s "secession" movements were principally aimed at forcing a change of government and political orientation in Jakarta; and outside support in the contemporary situation, especially for Papua, will faithfully appear when attempts to suppress or punish a fully mobilized independence movement lead to gross human rights abuse, as they did in Timor. Together with George Aditjondro, I would also, disagree emphatically with Ricklefs' conclusion that the cost-benefit analysis for unitary (or rump) Indonesia as a whole "is clear enough—the costs would be greater than the benefits," especially because of loss of resources. But continuing the New Order's repression in Aceh and Papua will not only cost Indonesia crucial international economic and financial support in the long run but quite likely will unleash forces that terminate her own fledgling democracy as well.

In any case there is no guarantee that the giant resource projects in these provinces will continue to be cash cows for Jakarta in the teeth of local resentment over outside control and exploitation of them. Papua New Guinea's loss of the huge Bougainville copper mine to "secessionist" sabotage should be kept in mind. Ricklefs may be right that an inevitably inexperienced and inadequate Papuan leadership would be "prey to all sorts of unscrupulous

³ Address to the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (West Papua Project) Conference on *West Papua at the Crossroads: an Uncertain Future*, International House, University of Sydney, 19 April 2000.

outside influences” if it achieved independence. But Papua has already lived with unscrupulous--and violent—outside influence for nearly 40 years.

A balance sheet on the issue of secession for Papua needs to carefully weigh the past and ongoing and readily predictable costs of police and military repression. And those who urge that the OPM is only an “irritant” or a spent force with tiny and declining numbers are overlooking the strategic reality that Irian, like Timor and Aceh, was a designated Military Operations Zone (DOM) for many years before 1998; that it has a per capita military and police presence vastly higher than the Indonesian average, and that military arbitrariness, brutality and impunity were an important “motor” of Suharto’s New Order (TANTER, 1991). Military and military intelligence careers flourished in Irian and Timtim and Aceh, and with them the “socialization of brutality” also. The all-round costs to the Indonesian people were enormous. By exposing the reality of the Jakarta regime the OPM and kindred resistance organizations helped to force a choice between militarized dictatorship and democratic alternatives in 1998. The danger as Indonesia faces a new millennium is that the military will undergo a political revival on the back of the new repressions being launched in Papua and Aceh in defiance of the Indonesian President himself.

2. The Hard Line: the unitary state unadulterated

While the soft liners are sympathetic towards a federal formula as a potential solution to the problem of legitimizing *Indonesia Raya* and averting disintegration, the military by and large take a precisely opposite view--that federalism will exacerbate disunity and “could lead down the dark alley of extremist ethnic or religious prejudice,” in the words of TNI spokesman, Major General Sudradjat, who even mentions “ethnic cleansing such as might happen in Aceh.” (*JP*, 18/11/00) The view that even “ordinary autonomy” also has the potential to reinforce ethnic and regional exclusiveness is particularly favoured by the military. Thus for the military and also civilian **hard liners**, including Golkar Party diehards and most of Vice President Megawati’s PDI (P) [Democratic Party of Struggle] nationalists, the unitary 1945 constitution is an almost spiritual given which the state and the army must defend and uphold to the death, while for the soft liners-- who are oriented to civil society—schemes for autonomy, federation or secession must be judged pragmatically from the viewpoint of the aspirations and welfare of the provincial grassroots.

The key problem for the hard liners is that their position lacks both pragmatic and philosophical depth. Given the rather unhappy history of unitary Indonesia since 1949 (and bearing in mind that the economic successes of the high Suharto period also involved an accumulation of problems for any future democratic regime) it is far from self-evident that a unitary state of all the post-1999 components of Indonesia is an incontrovertible good. The hard line position is buttressed by two controvertible propositions:

- (i) That any the demand for independence or self-determination, even a non-violent one, is treasonable. However such demands should be viewed as legitimate in a constitutional democracy if they are pursued non-violently- as the post-Suharto leadership in Papua has been attempting.
- (ii) That any defection from the unitary state will involve a “domino” effect leading to

national disintegration. This argument was used against the East Timor resistance for a generation—and indeed Timor’s departure may have marginally encouraged Acehese and Papuan “separatists”. But the contrary argument also has force. Compared to those coming from within Aceh and Papua independence demands in such provinces as Riau and West Kalimantan are marked by feebleness, lack of conviction and a “bargaining” orientation. It is quite likely that the departure of the two remaining deeply aggrieved provinces would permit a constitutional consolidation of *Indonesia Raya* in the absence of the debilitating militarization, brutality and illegality being constantly inflicted on Acehese and Papuans in the name of Indonesia indivisible. Of course many problems of inter-ethnic and inter-communal violence would remain, not least in Maluku, but the particular problem of “relegitimization of the military” could be largely overcome by admitting defeat (or the meaninglessness of “victory”) in Aceh and Papua.

3. The Soft Hard Line: “regional autonomy,” “special autonomy” and federalism

In between the extremes of soft and hard we have a large group of people I shall call **soft hard liners** who are strongly determined to preserve Indonesian unity, although not at any price and not necessarily the unitary state. For the Indonesian government, independence demands are to be assuaged above all by the offer of “regional autonomy” to all provinces and “special autonomy”—so far undefined—to the most troublesome ones, Aceh and Papua/Irian. (*JP*, 20/10/00) The new laws and regulations on regional autonomy were conceived as a large concession not only to Aceh and Papua but to all of the other resource rich provinces which are also showing secessionist symptoms.

Under the Habibie administration’s Law No 25 on fiscal balance between the central government and regional administrations promulgated in April 1999, Aceh and Irian, for example, which have in the past received around one per cent of the enormous revenues generated by “their” mining, oil and natural gas projects, will (together with all other provinces) receive—15 per cent of “their” gross oil revenues accruing to the state; 30 per cent of those for gas, and no less than 80 per cent of those for mining, forestry and fishing. (*JP*, 24/4/00) Under Law 22/1999 on regional autonomy, which was previously passed in the same session of the DPR (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*—the House of Representatives), substantive provincial autonomy was expected to be instituted, but in the light of the actual text of the law and the regulations finally promulgated under Gus Dur’s presidency the regional autonomy plan is clearly not designed primarily as a power sharing scheme. In the words of a responsible bureaucrat it is more an attempt “to promote democracy, empower the people and to ensure equal distribution of wealth.” ‘In any case’, this official explained, ‘the emphasis is on devolution to *kabupaten* (regency) and *kotamadya* (city) level rather than provinces, and the national government is insisting on promulgating guidelines for inter-provincial finance reallocation to ensure poverty alleviation.’ (*JP*, 8/5/00)

Although autonomy was supposed to be fully launched from January 1st 2001, unresolved contradictions and anomalies emerged strongly in the last months of 2000. Gus Dur himself declared that “the legislation has happened too quickly” (*DetikWorld.com*, 2/11/00); a senior legislator reported that only 20 per cent of regencies were ready for

autonomy, and a senior planning official said that the whole process of achieving regional autonomy might take ten years (*Tempo Interaktif*, 7/11/00). It also emerged that the government was contemplating the exercise of a veto over theoretically liberal provisions for local tax raising (*JP*, 17/10/00), and to cap all this the government came under pressure from the IMF, which has extended a multi-billion dollar credit lifeline to Indonesia since the fiscal collapse of 1997-8, to prohibit borrowing by local governments from external sources and to reserve income generated from high crude oil prices to repay loans rather than subsidize newly autonomous regions (*Indonesian Observer*[*IO*], 22/11/00; *Kompas*, 1/12/00).

In any case Aceh and Papua were being excluded from the January 1 devolution “big bang” (or protracted whimper) on the grounds that it would be necessary to exercise “tighter controls” over them in the short term with a view to negotiating the terms of a more radical special autonomy for the longer term. So said the Coordinating Minister for Social, Political and Security Affairs, Bambang Susilo Yudhoyono. (*IO*, 24/10/00) Gus Dur himself was advising these two most restive and discontented provinces that: ‘If they want self autonomy they need to stop the troubles in their areas and return them to normality.’ (*DetikWorld.com*, 2/11/00) His message was clear if absurd: a political solution of the grievances of Papua and Aceh must be conditional on them...ceasing to express their grievances! In any case the plausibility and credibility of ordinary autonomy, let alone the special autonomy offer by the government, were clearly dubious. Neither has gained much support in Aceh or Papua with the passage of time, particularly as the leaders with whom special autonomy would have to be negotiated in Papua were being progressively interrogated, threatened, arrested and jailed towards the end of 2000. The *Jakarta Post* editorialized movingly at this time about an apparent return to the habits of the Suharto period in dealing with peaceful opposition. (*JP*, 7/12/00)

As for the option of federalism, which would confer not merely fiscal and other rights under ordinary law but rights of “substantive independence” from the center under constitutional law, thus ending the unitary state of the 1945 constitution, there was a lively debate about it in the aftermath of the overthrow of Suharto’s New Order—a debate which ran on into late 1999. PAN (People’s Mandate Party) leader, MPR (People’s Consultative Assembly) President and “voice of the outer islands,” Amien Rais, was still saying in November 1999 that he was committed to federalism in principle as “the middle option [between the unitary state and secession] which is the best way the dissatisfaction of the regions can be resolved.” (*JP*, 18/11/99) Anhar Gonggong, director of history and traditional values at the Ministry of National Education, agreed: ‘Due to the rapid changes taking place our country will have been torn apart if we do not speed up the formation of a federal state.’ (*JP*, 15/11/99) Interviewed by the *Jakarta Post*, the distinguished Australian scholar Herb Feith helpfully pointed out that Mohammad Hatta, Sumatran co-father of independence with the Javanese Sukarno, was actually a “federalist” in principle. (He also opposed the inclusion of Papua in the fledgling republic.) But Feith was uncertain of his own ultimate attitude, and was only prepared to recommend “a greater degree of federalism” and a high degree of flexibility in dealing with Aceh and Papua from his vantage point at Gadjah Mada

University, Yogyakarta. (*JP*, 18/10/99) Less hesitantly, the *Jakarta Post* editorialized in December 1999, at the time of a million strong demonstration in Banda Aceh for a referendum on independence, that federalism “could in the end become what saves our national unity.” (*JP*, 10/10/00)

Surveying the history of center-region relations in 1992, Ann Booth had also seen devolution as a republic-saving exercise. While sympathetic to federalism, what she in fact recommended then was a sharp increase in the autonomous powers, including taxation powers, of the provinces and regencies, and a big boost in the center’s allocation of mineral, petroleum and gas revenues to the neglected and impoverished but resource rich eastern provinces and Aceh. (BOOTH, 1992: 45-6) Her suggestions rather strikingly anticipate what has been attempted since the overthrow of Suharto, who might well have improved his survival chances if he had taken her advice. More strikingly she also called for the option of “civilized divorce” for alienated provinces—and not only for their sakes but also to strengthen the Indonesian state and Indonesia’s international reputation. She had East Timor chiefly in mind (BOOTH, 1992: 46), and was inclined to doubt that divorce would be necessary in the case of Irian—as, more recently, is Robert Cribb in his post-Suharto survey of “prospects for the disintegration of Indonesia.” (CRIBB, 1999)

But both authors have trouble getting Papua into realistic focus as a challenge or threat to *Indonesia Raya*. Ann Booth’s remark that “experienced observers argue that popular sympathy for the secessionist aims of the OPM is quite limited” (BOOTH, 1991:43) is probably an evasion. (The very existence of “experienced observers” of the OPM in the 1980s is to be doubted.) And Robert Cribb not only fails to notice that the West Papuans were in full scale rebellion against Jakarta already in the mid-1960s (CRIBB, 1999: 177) but also that Irian was already a powerful contender to be what he calls a “nation-of-intent” in 1963 when it was incorporated into the republic. At that time—to apply his own criterion—its provincial boundaries made it “ethnically relatively coherent and more or less coterminous with the local ethnically dominant group.” (CRIBB, 1999: 175) Later of course transmigration and spontaneous migration drastically changed the ethnic balance in the province, but this has only served to reinforce “independence intention” on the part of the Papuans. In discounting Papua as a likely source of Indonesian disintegration both authors seem to have succumbed to a serious global deficit in Papuan political studies which has only recently begun to be remedied.⁴

In any case neither local politicians and pundits, nor academics foreign and domestic, have ever really given the federal solution to Indonesia’s woes serious attention, which is not altogether surprising when it is recalled that the federal option has a strong historical association with Dutch attempts to restore their own imperium by methods of divide and rule between 1945 and 1949. The Dutch constructed a façade of federal arrangements to hold together the parts of the archipelago which they did succeed in reoccupying at that time, and the Netherlands Indies actually achieved “recognized independence” as “The

4 Recently completed Australian Ph D theses on the way to publication include ELMSLIE, 2000, ONDAWAME, 2000 and LEITH, 2000.

Republic of the United States of Indonesia;” but the federal constitutional arrangements incorporated in the transfer of sovereignty negotiated with the Dutch in 1949 were soon dismantled by popular consensus. (KAHIN, 1952) In 1959 Sukarno took the initiative to simply restore the unitary and strongly presidential constitution of 1945 which was associated with Indonesia’s original declaration of independence. Sukarno’s object was to tame Indonesia’s chaotic party factionalism and parliamentarism in the name of Guided Democracy (FEITH, 1962), and given the equally chaotic state of Indonesian government and politics at the beginning of the new millennium, the 1959 precedent is worth pondering as a danger.

For whatever reasons, the debate on federalism yielded no schemes for federation in 1998-9 and evaporated altogether when prospects for the further disintegration of the unitary state in the wake of East Timor’s defection began to loom large in the course of the year 2000. What Papuans and Acehnese would require above all from a federal solution would be a constitutional guarantee of their own insulation from the “security approach” which has been the main source of their misery for 30 years or so. But it seems that such a guarantee cannot realistically be expected from Jakarta, with or without federalism; nor could it be trusted if it were offered, as I have suggested above. In addition Papua, geographically speaking, as an island (or half-island archipelago) which shares no land border with any other Indonesian province, has a rare advantage, and a special incentive to try for independence. While an independent East Timor or Aceh must realistically anticipate considerable interference across its land border, an independent Papua might (particularly with Australian support) be able to insulate itself from the kind of destabilization that a pre-independent East Timor is still experiencing.

Testing the Arguments in Papua: history, sociology and policy

The three schools of thought (or sentiment) which I am considering deploy some quite distinctive philosophy, historiography and sociology in defence of their positions. It will be interesting to test some of it against actual developments in one current hotspot, Papua. Speaking of philosophy, the military hard liners are almost tautology worshippers— a firm defence of the unitary republic will uphold the unitary state. Any hard line military sociology is likely to be rather ad hoc and opportunistic, since in fact a large part of the army’s *raison d’être* has derived from its *dwifungsi* (dual function) role, which still means that TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*--the Indonesian armed forces) combines military and “socio-political”, including civilian administrative, functions right down to the village level under the *kodam* (territorial command) system.⁵ *Dwifungsi* was supposed to disappear under *reformasi*, but there has been considerable backsliding, including the sidelining of the leading military advocate of military reform, General Agus Wirahidikusumah, in mid-2000. Eliminating *dwifungsi* remains a highly controversial and divisive issue within TNI. (*JP*, 16/6/00) Hence the considerable flurry of sociology on the military front in 1998, not least in Papua, was short-lived, and is now an abundant source of irony. According to national

⁵ For an explanation of key terms in the *kodam* equation see TAUDEVIN, 1999: Glossary

army chief Subagyo Hadisiswoyo as early as April 1998: ‘The OPM are no longer enemies; they are our brethren who have been because of their limitations influenced by separatist ideas which are against the state ideology *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution.’ (*JP* 8/4/98) The army in this period was theoretically committed to a “persuasion” policy in Papua, a rejection of the old “security approach,” and its first priority was supposed to be development; but we need not take this too seriously.

Neither in Papua nor elsewhere is the army seriously investigating or assuming responsibility for the brutality and repression of the New Order and New New Order (Habibie) period. Particularly striking is the refusal of the semi-disgraced General Wiranto to accept any responsibility for the destruction and mayhem in East Timor when he was still armed forces commander. J. Soedjati Djiwandono, in an article urging the pointlessness of attributing blame for Timor, neatly if inadvertently sums up the general military attitude: ‘History is a jigsaw puzzle formed by the complex interaction of innumerable factors and therefore never fully revealed or understood.’ (*JP*, 28/12/00) The not very complex interaction of TNI and its bloody militia puppets in Timor is unfortunately finding echoes in Papua. By mid-2000 red and white (*Merah Putih*) militias were already active in Jayapura and Fak Fak. Moreover the report of the Jayapura-based Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace on the Nabire killings (and torture) of February /March 2000 is an impressive case study in the continuing brutality, hypocrisy, duplicity and illegality associated with the supposedly “persuasive” approach, and persisting popular distrust of the military and police in Papua. (Catholic Office for Justice and Peace, 2000) “Bloody Nabire” was to be followed by “Bloody Sorong” in July and “Bloody Wamena” in October.⁶

Our soft liners, as defined above, with rather better scholarly resources and credentials at hand than the military hard liners, blame the crisis of the unitary republic precisely on the behaviour of all those hard liners, and particularly the military ones, who were active in the Suharto years—when Aceh, Irian and East Timor were thoroughly alienated from the republic. It is of course ironic that the military, especially the elite forces *Kopassus* (the army’s special forces) and *Kostrad* (the army’s Strategic Reserve Command), who did so much to create the alienation which Jakarta’s democratic leadership must deal with, are now themselves advocating more repression to preserve the unitary republic. In Papua itself, according to Cornelis Lay of Gadjah Mada University in June 2000, just one more round of military violence would be fatal: ‘Once the government sends in its troops Papua will be liberated.’ (*JP*, 10/6/00) The new round was not long in coming when a crackdown on flag raising in the province led to many more deaths in several different places before the end of the year.

The group which I have called “soft hard liners” accept the sophisticated sociology and historiography of the soft liners but are not yet ready to abandon the republic-saving methods of the hard liners. A new deal on resources and taxation revenue; deconcentration (if not real devolution) of power; sincere deference to the civil rights sensitivities and national symbols of the outraged provincial peoples; deepening and accelerating the

6 For a reflective survey of political developments in Papua over the year 2000 see VAN DEN BROEK, 2001

process of reform, and restructuring and democratization of the republic at large—all of this, they argue, can win back the hearts and minds of the victims of the New Order, in Papua and elsewhere, and consolidate an Indonesian republic of the willing.

Meantime, they believe specifically about Papua that the independence movement is not as strong as it looks or claims to be. In Gus Dur's view, the leaders of the Papua Presidium Council which emerged in February 2000 were representative (and acceptable) so long as they confined their activity to a discussion of the issues of Papuan self-determination. But once they "unnaturally" excluded the silent majority of the province (which wants to remain Indonesian of course) in setting up the Papuan People's Congress, and launched their "declaration of non-integration" with Indonesia on June 1st, the President and the republic were betrayed. The Congress had to be repudiated, even though Gus Dur had actually supplied funding for it. (*JP*, 1/6/00) Understandably, perhaps, the President was ambiguous about whether it was a Papuan or an Irianese majority that was opposed to separation—a rather crucial point when it is remembered that perhaps 40 per cent of the present population of Papua/Irian originated outside the province. We should also note here a local view of how Jakarta does its opinion formation offered by Ismael Daud Raja, a member of the new Presidium elected at the Congress—and presumably a Papuan Muslim: 'They invite people financed by the intelligence to Jakarta to say that they do not want to secede.' (*Agence France Presse*, 2/6/00)

Nevertheless Gus Dur was still happy to see the Papuans' Morning Star flag flying alongside the Indonesian *Merah Putih*, so long as it was neither higher nor bigger, despite the huge symbolic freight which it carries for the Papuans after 35 years of martyrdom associated with flag raising ceremonies and demonstrations. (*JP*, 8/6/00) Gus Dur was also ready for more dialogue with the PPC in due course. (*Kompas*, 9/6/00) While the "treasonous" Papuan leaders were able to brief him on the outcome of the Congress in July, his own grip on power was steadily weakening, and by year's end he was having difficulty sustaining the temporarily constructive myth that a serious dialogue on autonomy could be sustained with leaders who had come to regard autonomy as a threat to their cherished goal of independence. Majority opinion in his own government was that such leaders should be silenced—and that was indeed happening.

By contrast, at the other end of New Guinea island the government of Papua New Guinea had shown through the peace process which it had initiated with a would-be independent province of North Solomons (Bougainville) in 1997 that it was possible to negotiate constructively about autonomy at least for a time with leaders who were fundamentally intent on secession in the long run. Maybe this was merely a kind of holding operation on both sides, but it could be seen as a way to proceed slowly towards independence with minimum pain and danger all round, and in January 2001 the PNG approach was apparently crowned with success when moderate Bougainville leaders and the Port Moresby government reached agreement to hold a referendum on independence within ten to 15 years after establishing an elected provincial government under "special autonomy" arrangements which were only being offered to Bougainvilleans. (*The National* [Port Moresby], 2/2/01)

Thus has Bougainville apparently been rescued from the trauma of nine years of war and government blockade. The process began when the PNG government of Sir Julius Chan, which had brought in foreign mercenaries to try to end the war in 1997, had been driven from power by a species of “people power” spearheaded, amazingly enough, by the mutinous commander of the government’s own defence force. All of this could be a lesson for Indonesia’s civilian leaders seeking quick military solutions to long-running secession problems. It is always possible that the Indonesian government can develop something constructive from the mood that emerges from time to time in Jayapura in favour of building a “New Papua” (title of Benny Giay’s new book) in the here and now rather than aiming at immediate independence. (VAN DEN BROEK, 2001)

In this perspective a good agenda item for follow-up summits between Jakarta and the Papuan leaders (when released from jail) would be a suggestion by Gus Dur’s Minister for Regional Autonomy, Ryaas Rasyid, that the government should invite the Papuans to draft their own concept of far reaching autonomy. (*Kompas*, 7/6/00) One way to avoid another Timor debacle would be precisely to negotiate (and not impose) an autonomy arrangement whose first priority should be to insulate Papua at least a little from the threat of the kind of military revanchism that Timor had to endure after the August 1999 referendum. A first step could be a complete military withdrawal from the province.

Another soft hard liner is Admiral Freddy Numberi, the only Papuan in the first Gus Dur Cabinet (as Minister for State Administration). Between 1998 and early 2000 he was simultaneously governor of his own province. It is an interesting point of course whether Freddy should be regarded as Indonesian or Papuan for our purposes, but after all the career of Seth Rumkorem, one of the two outstanding OPM leaders of the 1970s, began in Indonesian military intelligence, and “de-Indonesianization” seems to be an irresistible tendency among Papuans who attempt to serve the master in Jakarta. An “Indonesian” Papuan would be one who has fully “internalized” the unitary republic as it exists and who regards himself (there are very few herself) as a good Indonesian. It is doubtful that many such persons exist. In any case, like Gus Dur, Freddy Numberi regards Papuan opinion as malleable—for Gus Dur education will overcome the ignorance of the Papuans about the new Indonesia; for Freddy the hugely lucrative and disruptive Freeport copper and gold mine in the southern mountains is the key to Papua’s alienation, and while he was governor he actually asked PT Freeport Indonesia to hand over 20 per cent of its profit to the Papuans immediately. (*Kompas*, 7/6/00) ‘While half the Irianese backed independence,’ he has been reported as saying, ‘many could be persuaded to change their views if they received a greater share of the territory’s wealth.’ (*JP*, 11/6/00) Another version of supposed Papuan malleability has been offered by a DPR member from Gus Dur’s own PKB (National Awakening Party), who interprets the *Kongres Papua* “declaration of non-integration” as “a maneuver to gain more serious attention from the central government.” (*JP*, 5/6/00)

But in fact even some Papuan members of the official provincial elite have already thrown in their lot completely with the Congress and its leaders. The local DPRD speaker who attended key Congress sessions went on to argue that it is too late for the government to continue rejecting *aspirasi Merdeka*. (*JP*, 14/6/00) It is stretching credulity to think that

such people can be dislodged from their deep underlying commitment to independence by the kinds of concessions that the center can plausibly offer. Nevertheless, for the soft hard liners, solving the Papuan problem remains an exercise in finding or identifying those substantial concessions which will finally move the Papuan leadership or dominant Papuan opinion into the Indonesian camp. That Papuan mass opinion (even more than elite opinion) might be alienated beyond repair is still a conclusion not to be faced.

In any case the soft hard line tends to merge ominously with the military hard line under pressure. In the face of the June declaration of non-integration “reformed” Golkar leader and Speaker of the DPR, Akbar Tandjung, who now goes along with much critique of the New Order, nevertheless still regards Papuan flag raising as illegal and the Congress as completely unacceptable: ‘The result is separatism and it violates the law and could be categorized as treason’. (*Kompas* 7/6/00) Hence a need for “strict action to keep the country’s territorial integrity.” (*JP*, 5/6/00) Academics are not immune from the hard line contagion. For Padjadjaran University constitutional law expert Sri Sumantri: ‘TNI [not the police or courts, notice] is entitled to take action’ against the declarers of independence (*ibid*).

Of course the game of hard and soft line--of carrot (mostly symbolic) and stick (mostly real)-- can be played by one player alone, or two can tango in contradictory tandem. Thus in the immediate aftermath of the June Congress declaration was Gus Dur promising to continue dialogue with the Congress leaders while national police chief General Rusihardjo was having them interrogated with a view to laying treason charges and threatening to bring in *Brimob* mobile police from Maluku. (*IO*, 12/6/00) By December the extra police and several battalions of *Kostrad* were engaged in active repression, most of the top Papuan leaders were in jail and Gus Dur’s orders to release them were being flouted by his own cabinet and the police commander in Papua. (*koridor.com*, 10/12/00) When they were released in March 2001 they still faced treason charges.

Conclusion

If this situation was rather surreal the attitudes of actors on all sides were unreal. Does Gus Dur really believe in a pro-Indonesian majority in Papua? How much does even the President of the Papua Presidium Council, Chief Theys Eluay, believe in a declaration of independence (as the “declaration of non-integration” is usually called) which in his *post hoc* interpretation does not actually repudiate Jakarta’s authority? (*Kompas*, 10/6/00) Do the generals really believe in a final solution of the Papua problem by force, or are they merely intent on reviving their prestige and political fortunes? By definition a settlement in Papua must appeal to the interests of all parties or at least a critical mass of “stakeholders.” In the Timor case the Indonesian military were never convinced that the province should be given up, and even now a large fraction of Indonesian opinion is behind attempts by the military to obstruct Indonesian government cooperation with UNTAET (the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor) to bring the guilty of 1999 to justice.

In Papua too in the end the military will probably not relent, and it will be arguments which appeal to the international community which tip the balance in the domestic debate, for not only the Indonesian government and economy but the whole of Indonesian society is in a weak, divided and dependent state following the crash of 1997-8 and the failure of *reformasi* since then. The current fit of nationalism over Timor, Aceh and Papua is ultimately not affordable. This could actually be a source of strength for the Gus Dur presidency, eventually permitting him to get a peace and reconciliation process back on track under threat of renewed IMF and even UN sanctions. (Of course he would first have to survive the current parliamentary campaign to impeach him for his own apparent dabbling in KKN.) Repression in Papua and elsewhere is a blind alley for Indonesia, and the challenge of West Papuan self-determination is also a challenge to resume genuine reform in Indonesia itself. At the point where this is realized a more constructive discussion of the modalities and connections of autonomy, self-determination and independence for Papua will be possible.

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