

Ethnic Nationalism and Separatism in West Papua, Indonesia

Julius Cesar I. Trajano*

Abstract

This paper examines the political and socioeconomic causes of ethnic secessionism and conflicts in West Papua. It argues that a number of political and socioeconomic factors compelled the West Papuans to launch their armed struggles for self-determination and strengthened their ethnic nationalist sentiment. It attempts to analyze and explicate the relationship between the political and socioeconomic problems besetting West Papua and ethnic secessionism in that province. Lack of basic and social services, exploitation of their natural resources, weakening of local institutions, erosion of traditional culture and norms, uneven distribution of wealth, military atrocities, and discrimination, among others, have compelled the West Papuans to conduct anti-Indonesia, separatist activities and have reinforced their ethnic nationalist claims. Political and socioeconomic problems are among the sources of discontent and distrust that gave birth to the current rebellion in West Papua. Despite its abundant natural resources, West Papua is among the poorest provinces in the country. Widespread poverty and starvation in West Papua have been caused by the exploitative activities of transnational corporations as well as by the Indonesian central government. The policies of the Indonesian government give rise to appalling socioeconomic realities in that region. Horrendous political and socioeconomic realities in their homeland have compelled the West Papuans to secede from the Indonesian unitary state. Ethnic nationalism has prompted them to defend their political and socioeconomic rights. In some multiethnic states such as Indonesia, ethnic nationalism is the response of ethnic groups to situations of ethnic-structural inequality and uneven development. The common feeling among the West Papuans is that instead of getting a fair share from the enormous revenues earned by TNCs and by the central government, they suffer starvation, marginalization, and military atrocities. Consequently, the West Papuans perceive that their communities are being plundered, exploited, and treated unjustly by the Indonesians. In conclusion, the resistance and armed struggle of the West Papuans have been induced by the political and socioeconomic impact of Indonesian rule over their communities.

Keywords: secessionism, West Papua, ethnic nationalism.

* Julius Cesar I. Trajano is currently taking up Master of Arts in Asian Studies (Major in Southeast Asia Studies) at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences (Magna Cum Laude) from the aforesaid university. He works as a history researcher at Vibal Publishing House Inc., the leading publisher of academic materials in the Philippines. His research interests are in nationalism, ethnic separatism, ethno-national identities, security issues, comparative politics, democratization, and international relations. Send correspondence to the author at: julius.trajano@gmail.com.

Introduction

The idea that a unified Indonesia, having a territory that was congruent with its present boundary, existed during the precolonial times is a powerful tool for Indonesian nationalist leaders in uniting all ethnic communities into one single nation-state and in establishing Indonesia's peculiar identity and place in the world. The present territory and boundaries of Indonesia were actually demarcated by the Dutch. Undeniably, the Dutch colonialists had given Indonesia, formerly known as the Dutch East Indies, the shape it has today. Yet, ethnic loyalties and relationships were ignored when the Dutch were defining and delimiting the territory of the Dutch East Indies colony. Moreover, colonialists did not make any effort to promote the national unification of all Indonesian ethnic communities. Not only did the Dutch maintain the sharp divisions among diverse ethnonational entities, but through harsh colonial policies they aggravated existing ethnic conflicts and created deeper cleavages. Hence, the present social and ethnic conflicts in Indonesia can be traced back to the Dutch colonial rule.

The Indonesian unitary state relied considerably on the postcolonial nationalist project. The project had included resistance to Dutch colonialism and the adoption of a politically 'neutral' national language, Bahasa Indonesia, both of which have been used to unite all ethnolinguistic groups in Indonesia.¹ However, the perceived weakness of this nationalist project is its presumption on the dominance of and on the importance of the Javanese people/civilization in the history of Indonesia.

The idea of Javanese predominance could also be interpreted as an attempt of the Javanese to assert their superiority as well as to civilize the 'less culturally developed' non-Javanese ethnic groups. Some have concluded that the establishment of an Indonesian unitary state was in response to the attempts of the Dutch to destabilize the newly proclaimed republic. But it also mirrored the hegemonic thinking of the Javanese that they must lead Indonesia since they represent a little more than half of the total population of the country. The Javanese-controlled Indonesian politics, as many scholars have pointed out, could not tolerate genuine dissent, non-conformity, and regional alternatives. The unwillingness of Jakarta to grant political and economic rights to ethnic minorities has led to ethnic tensions and violence since the proclamation of country's independence in 1945.²

Although most people in the country are willing to acknowledge that they are Indonesian, they still associate themselves with their ethnic groups rather than with the Javanese-dominated central government. The dominance of the Javanese in the politics

¹ Damien Kingsbury, "Diversity in Unity," in *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 111.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

and economy has compelled the non-Javanese people to identify themselves primarily on the basis of their ethnocultural group.³

With the repressive regime of President Suharto, dissent was not tolerated and the Indonesian military had exercised brutal control over the country. Towards the end of his rule, Suharto's grip on the state started to slip as reflected in an increase in ethnic and racial violence. In addition, with the collapse of the New Order regime, the separatist movement in West Papua⁴ was given new hope that it could liberate the Papuan homeland and establish a Papuan nation-states.⁵ Indonesia's democratic transition as well as the very survival of the Indonesian unitary state have been threatened by ethnic tensions and conflicts.⁶ The lack of acceptance of a unitary state has most recently been demonstrated in the province of West Papua. Immediately after the Dutch turned over West Papua to Indonesia, a group of West Papuans launched an armed struggle for independence.

The main objective of this article is to explain why the West Papuans launched their armed struggles for self-determination and tried to secede from Indonesia. This paper examines the political and socioeconomic grievances of the West Papuans, and their response to the impact of Indonesian rule over their communities. This article attempts to analyze and explicate the relationship between democratization, ethnic identity, and ethnic separatism.

The emergence of separatism in West Papua

During the age of colonialism, the South Pacific island of Papua was an object of imperial domination, with the British, Dutch, German, and Japanese laying claim to parts of the islands at different times.⁷ In 1907, Dutch colonialists started to survey the natural wealth

³ Ibid., 111.

⁴ In this paper, the writer uses the name '**West Papua**' to refer to the western half of the island of New Guinea. The name **West Papua** has been used by Papuan separatists who want to secede from Indonesia and establish their own nation-state. The province of West Papua is in the most eastern part of Indonesia. It occupies the western half of the island of New Guinea. During the colonial period, the region was known as Dutch New Guinea. From 1969 to 1973, West Papua was known as West Irian or Irian Barat. It was then renamed Irian Jaya, which literally means "Victorious Irian", by former President Suharto. In 2003, it was controversially divided into two provinces: West Irian Jaya, which occupies the western part of the region, and Papua, which now occupies the eastern half. On 18 April 2007, West Irian Jaya was changed to West Papua. Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight: Endemic Abuse and Impunity in Papua's Central Highlands* (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 2007), p. 2.

⁵ Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling, "Introduction," in *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, eds. Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 1.

⁶ Rizal Sukma, "Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia: Causes and the Quest for Solution," in *Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia*, eds. Kusuma Snitwongse and W. Scott Thompson (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 1.

⁷ Yohanis G. Bonay and Jane McGrory, "West Papua: Building Peace Through an Understanding of Conflict," in *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*

of the West Papuans. Dutch colonialism in West Papua was primarily driven by the desire of profit-oriented Western capitalists, especially Dutch entrepreneurs, to acquire sources of raw materials and precious minerals. Geological exploration commenced when the Dutch military surveyed the northern region of West Papua and examined its natural resources. A large seepage of oil was discovered near the River Teer. In order to monopolize oil exploration activities in the area, the Dutch government prohibited the entry of other Western-owned petroleum corporations into the vast untapped region of West Papua, where fifteen oil seepages had been discovered and recorded by 1935. Oil exploration was conducted by the Royal Dutch Shell. Agricultural concessions granted to the Japanese in the area were later proven to have been used for oil exploration. Then, shortly after the Dutch discovered covert Japanese operations, the colonial government allowed American-owned Standard Oil Company to begin drilling in West Papua. Oil was finally found in 1936. An exploration company NNGPM was formed in 1935 by Shell (40%), Mobil (40%) and Chevron's Far Pacific investments (20%) to explore West Papua. In 1936, Jean Dozy of the NNGPM reported the world's richest gold and copper deposits in a mountain near Timika which he named Ertzberg (Mountain of Ore).⁸

Economic resources and natural wealth of West Papua were now being exploited and plundered by Dutch colonialists. The economic life of the West Papuans gradually changed during the Dutch colonial rule. Their ancestral lands and sources of basic needs were being converted into mines and oil fields. Their subsistence economy had been disrupted by Dutch colonial rule. The transmigration policy of the Dutch colonial government also created serious socioeconomic problems in West Papua.

West Papuans did not have direct contact with the Dutch colonial officials until 1949. Colonial bureaucracy in West Papua was dominated by the Javanese. The Javanese and other Indonesian ethnic groups were employed by the Dutch as civil servants, mercenaries, policemen, teachers, evangelists, military personnel, and traders. Javanese became involved in commercial activities in West Papua. In many cases, they assumed that they were superior to the Papuans. From their privilege position, they looked upon the West Papuans as primitive, an attitude which still predominates among the Indonesians today. Colonial administrators in West Papua were nearly all foreigners- a few Dutch and many Indonesians. Thus, the Indonesians, especially the Javanese, were regarded by the West Papuans as the visible face of colonial rule and the unavoidable resentments were directed against the Indonesians rather than the Dutch. Consequently, the anti-foreign thrust of prewar nationalist Papuan

Activities, eds. Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Slimmonds, and Hans van de Veen (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004), p. 438.

⁸ Tapol, *West Papua: The Obliteration of a People* (London: Tapol, 1985), pp. 9-10.

movement was initially directed against medium-ranking Indonesian colonial officials whom the Dutch brought in from the western islands, now Indonesia.⁹

West Papua remained under Dutch sovereignty even after the rest of the Dutch East Indies became part of the Republic of Indonesia with the declaration of Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945. The Netherlands promised the West Papuans national independence through a process of decolonization that would lead toward self-rule. The Dutch argued that West Papua was not a part of Indonesia because it was ethnically and culturally different from other parts of Indonesia. The Indonesian government regarded the Netherlands' concern for Papuan self-determination as a way to contain the Republic as well as to maintain a colonial outpost in the Pacific. In 1961, President Sukarno announced a military invasion to establish Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua.¹⁰ The Netherlands at first responded by accelerating the decolonization of the territory towards the promised self-rule. Dutch officials oversaw elections for a New Guinea Council, which inaugurated a flag and regalia for a future West Papuan state on 1 December 1961.¹¹ On that day, the *Bintang Kejora* (Morning Star) flag was raised at the Imbi Square in Jayapura, West Papua's capital, and the 'Hai Tanahku Papua' sung for the first time as West Papua's national anthem. This historic ceremony took place outside the New Guinea Council, which had been established earlier that year as the first West Papua-wide representative institution and as an initial step in the complicated process of decolonization that envisaged the establishment of an independent West Papuan nation-state. West Papua's *National Komite* also issued a manifesto declaring that the Papuans "demand an equal place among the free peoples of the world, among the family of nations."¹²

The Indonesian unilateral annexation of West Papuan attracted international attention amid Cold War anxieties. Seeking to win Jakarta's favor, the United States intervened to broker an agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia regarding the status and future of West Papua. Under the New York Agreement, which was signed by Dutch and Indonesian negotiators, West Papua's territorial supervision was transferred to United Nations Temporary Executive Authority in West New Guinea. West Papua was subsequently transferred to Indonesia in 1963 with the agreement that the Indonesian government shall hold a UN-supervised referendum, also known as the Act of Free Choice, to determine whether the Papuans would want to become part of Indonesia or to form their own nation-state.¹³

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰ Bonay and McGrory, *West Papua*, p. 438.

¹¹ Richard Chauvel, *Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation* (Washington D.C.: East West Center, 2005), p. 105.

¹² Richard Chauvel, "Papua and Indonesia: Where Contending Nationalisms Meet," in *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, eds. Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 115.

¹³ Bonay and McGrory, *West Papua*, p. 439.

In 1969, to carry out the Act of Free Choice, Indonesia carefully selected 1025 pro-Indonesia Papuan leaders who voted unanimously in favor of integration with Indonesia. Military coercion also silenced those denouncing the way Indonesia government conducted the referendum. Indeed, the 1969 plebiscite was widely regarded as fraudulent and unrepresentative. Hence, Indonesia turned the referendum into "act of no choice." The Indonesia's invasion of their homeland has been regarded by majority of the West Papuans as illegitimate. They continuously resist the Indonesian rule over their communities and deplore the denial of their right to self-determination.¹⁴

Formed in 1963, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM or Free Papua Movement) staged sustained anti-Indonesia guerrilla warfare from the late 1970s to 1984 and continues to be the main armed resistance organization in West Papua. OPM seeks an absolute separation of West Papua from the Republic of Indonesia. For decades, the Indonesian military has undertaken successive military operations to quell the West Papuan rebellion, resulting in widespread abuses of human rights, such as arbitrary killings, rape, torture, and intimidation.¹⁵

The situation in West Papua today is characterized by political intolerance for the aspiration of the West Papuans to have their own nation-state, free from Indonesian sovereignty. The Indonesian government remains highly intolerant of peacefully articulated pro-independence sentiments. This situation results in potential and actual conflict. Open armed conflict between the Papuan separatist armed movements and the Indonesian security forces continues. Atrocious ways of the Indonesian military to quell the rebellion remain unchanged. Despite reforms implemented during the post-Suharto period, Papuan indigenous communities still suffer from structural and state violence.¹⁶

Factors that gave rise to the separatist problem in West Papua

Politics of centralization and "Indonesianization"

The New Order regime of Suharto claimed that national development could only be attained through the strengthening of unity and conformity that required a strong and centralized state, buttressed by the military and politics of patronage. Pres. Suharto seemed to believe that only uniformity and direct central control- enforced by the military- could hold Indonesia together. Policies were formulated in the centre and imposed on the periphery which meant that all political and economic aspects were tightly controlled by the centre. However, the centralized system of government chiefly served the political and economic

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sukma, *Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*, p. 7.

¹⁶ Bonay and McGrory, *West Papua*, p. 444.

interests of the centre, particularly the few members of the power elite. Centralization, which became the politics of uniformity rather than unity, soon undermined local institutions and local identity.

The Indonesian government has sought to "civilize" Papuans to make them think, act, and look like Indonesians. Attempts at "Indonesianization," by banning traditional Papuan apparel, hampering traditional governance, as well as restricting cultural practices and symbols, have undermined the identity and dignity of the West Papuans.¹⁷ West Papuan nationalists believe that "Indonesianization" or "depapuanization" is what the Indonesian government has trying to do since 1963. Depapuanization is being implemented through the spreading of Pancasila, the history of the Indonesian revolution, Islam, and the Javanese culture. Several West Papuan scholars have cited the building of mosques in Christian-dominated Papuan villages as well instances in which the Indonesian military, through its civic missions, provided material support to Papuan Muslims.¹⁸

Economic exploitation, oppression, and marginalization

The transmigration policy

The transmigration policy, which was implemented by the Indonesian government until 2000, involved the migration of typically poor Indonesian families from overpopulated islands such as Java, Bali, and Madura to less densely populated regions such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, and West Papua.¹⁹ The transmigration of people had been used by the Indonesian government to quell the Papuan independence movement and to effectively exploit the "potential" of West Papua.²⁰

The OPM has repeatedly denounced the forced relocation of the West Papuans caused by the influx of Indonesian transmigrants. Widespread poverty; forced eviction of Papuan indigenous peoples from their homes, communities, and ancestral lands; deforestation and soil damage at the rate of some 200,000 hectares per year; and destruction of traditional economies and means of sustainable resource use are the inevitable socioeconomic consequences of the transmigration policy.²¹

The Indonesian government took over all Papuan-owned fertile lands. Vast tracts of rainforest were taken away from the local tribal owners; trees were cut down without any

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 442.

¹⁸ Chauvel, *Constructing Papuan Nationalism*, p. 53.

¹⁹ There are two categories of Indonesian settlers: the government-sponsored/official transmigrants and the unofficial/spontaneous migrants.

²⁰ Tapol, West Papua, p. 52; Startts Publications, *The Historical Roots of the Free Papua Movement* (n.p., 2001), http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/areaser/startts/volunteers/transitions/Issue%2010_An%20Unnoticed%20War.htm. (accessed 1 January 2008).

²¹ Organisasi Papua Merdeka, *Statement Concerning the Right of Self-Determination of the West Papuan People*, (Geneva: The Working Group on Indigenous Populations Fifth Session, August 1987).

compensation from the government. Traditional Papuans believed that they were the real owners of the forest lands, which have economic and religious significance for them. They considered the forest as a source of food, of shelter in times of tribal conflict as well as a sacred place. West Papuans were forced to abandon their ancestral homelands to make room for transmigrants.²² The government appropriated large tracts of land from traditional owners to support the Indonesian settlers. For instance, the "Operation Clean Sweep", implemented in June 1981, was reportedly used to coerce West Papuans to vacate their lands for incoming transmigrants. Indonesian state laws have legitimized the confiscation of Papuan ancestral lands for the purpose of allocating those lands to transnational corporations and transmigrants. For instance, Basic Forestry Act of 1967 states that "[t]he rights of traditional law communities may not be allowed to stand in the way of transmigration sites." Consequently, the entire Papuan communities were being displaced and there was an increase feeling of marginalization by the indigenous population, especially in the mining towns where immigrants vastly outnumbered the Papuans.²³

In many cases, local people were threatened by the Indonesian security troops and were told that those not releasing their lands would be considered OPM guerrillas and be prosecuted. West Papuan tribes were forcibly relocated into the malaria-infested lowlands. Those who fled back to their ancestral lands were arrested and then the military transported them back to the lowlands. Many women and children died as a result of malaria and starvation.²⁴

The Indonesian government, moreover, was unwilling to give compensation to traditional Papuan landowners. Due to discriminatory laws and to all-pervading corruption in the Indonesian administration, Papuans did not receive compensation for the loss of their ancestral domains.²⁵

Other West Papuans were also being required to 'translocate' or to move into the transmigration compounds. It was a new form of pacification and a scheme that clearly aimed at dispersing the West Papuans and submerging them into alien communities. The government ordered that within the compounds, the Papuans should be thinly spread out— one Papuan family to every nine Javanese families. The Indonesian regime forced the indigenous people to become 'translocals', separating them from their natural means of production and sources of livelihood. The new strategy was a way of assimilating the semi-nomadic tribespeople and of ensuring that they would become the minority in each locality dominated by the Javanese.²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight*, p. 9.

²⁴ Organisasi Papua Merdeka.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Tapol, *West Papua*, pp. 62-63.

Indonesian transmigrants dominate the economic activities of West Papua. The ethnic division of the economy of the province finds a symbolic representation in the night market of Jayapura, the provincial capital. The shops are Indonesian-Chinese migrant-owned; settler traders run the market stalls in front of the shops. In front of the stalls sit Papuan traders, mainly highlanders, selling small quantities of fruits and vegetables.²⁷

Immigrant labor, mainly from South Sulawesi, Java, and Maluku, has substantially contributed to employment growth in most centers. The overall effect of the influx of skilled and unskilled immigrant labor has been to severely limit opportunities for employment of West Papuans in the government and private sector activities. Increased sea and air transportation links, rapid growth in labor demand, and relatively high wages and incomes have all encouraged the inflow of immigrant labor. The close social organization of transmigrant groups, facilitating expansion of marketing connections and distribution of capital from the larger traders to new businessmen, impedes the entry of less experienced West Papuans in the market trade. Papuan sellers of primary products have always been complaining the unfair trade practices of migrant traders.²⁸

The average number of newly arrived transmigrants in West Papua rose from around 3,500 per annum in 1980-1 to 4,500-5,000 per annum in 1983-4, and a much higher figure of about 8,500 annually in 1985 following the introduction of the *Umsini* regular passenger line service from Java through eastern Indonesia to Sorong and Jayapura in West Papua.²⁹

West Papua: Components of the Population, 1971-2005

	Number ('000)						Percentage			
	1971	1980	1986	1990	2000	2005 (est.)	1971	1990	2000	2005 (est.)
West Papuans	887	1,080	1,244	1,369	1,461	1,558	96	79	65	59
Immigrants	36	93	233	361	773	1,087	4	21	35	41
Total	923	1,173	1,477	1,730	2,234	2,646	100	100	100	100

Sources: Chris Manning and Michael Rumbiak, "Irian Jaya: Change, Migrants, and Indigenous Welfare," in *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia Since 1970*, ed. Hal Hill (Singapore: Oxford University Press,

²⁷ Chauvel, *Papua and Indonesia*, pp. 124-25.

²⁸ Chris Manning and Michael Rumbiak, "Irian Jaya: Change, Migrants, and Indigenous Welfare," in *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia Since 1970*, ed. Hal Hill (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 89-91.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

1991), 89; Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight: Endemic Abuse and Impunity in Papua's Central Highlands* (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 2007), 12; Jim Elsie, *Demographic Transition in West Papua*. Papua Post Interactives. <http://papuapost.multiply.com/journal/item/13>. Accessed 28 February 2010.

This table shows that the share of immigrants in the total population of West Papua was only 4 percent in 1971, but it gradually rose to about 21 percent in 1990. By 2000, when the government-supported transmigration programs ended, non-Papuan made up around 35 percent of the population. It was estimated in 2005 that transmigrants comprised 41 percent of the population of West Papua. This table likewise indicates that the Papuan population has diminished as a proportion of the population from 96 percent in 1971 to just 59 percent in 2005. Jim Elsie predicts that by 2011 out of a total population of 3.7 million, there would be 1.7 million Papuans, or 47.5 percent, and 1.98 million non-Papuan, or 53.5%. This non-Papuan majority will increase to 70.8% by 2020 out of a population of 6.7 million.³⁰

The influx of immigrants and the marginalization of the indigenous population led to violent and bloody ethnic clashes that claimed West Papuan and immigrant lives in the 1980s and 1990s. The OPM has maintained a low-level, armed guerrilla war targeting mainly members of the Indonesian security forces, but has also occasionally targeted Indonesian transmigrants and foreign workers.³¹

The current Indonesian government is now establishing food estates in West Papua. In doing so, the government is planning to take control vast tracts of Papuan ancestral lands. The planned Merauke food estate will comprise a 1.6 million hectare integrated food production zone where companies will grow, process and package their products in one location. The plan entails the revival of state-supported inflow of non-Papuan farm workers along the lines of decades of "transmigration policies" that have sown ethnic conflict in West Papua.³² Hence, the food estate plan will definitely worsen the separatist problem in this troubled province.

The transmigration programs of the Indonesian government in West Papua have indeed caused the deprivation and marginalization of the indigenous Papuans. Many of them are now considered "squatters" in their homeland. Thus, it is not surprising that West Papuans have demanded the separation of their homeland from the unitary state of Indonesia and the expulsion of soldiers and non-ethnic Papuans from their communities.

³⁰ Jim Elsie, *Demographic Transition in West Papua*. Papua Post Interactives. <http://papuapost.multiply.com/journal/item/13>. (Accessed 28 February 2010).

³¹ Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight*, 11.

³² West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-February 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

Exploitation of Natural Resources

The politics of the New Order's exploitation of resources in the name of development gravely affected the lives of ethnic minorities. The map of ethnic conflicts vividly shows that separatism generally occurs in resource-rich provinces.³³

There are considerable pieces of evidence to support West Papuan claims that the region's natural resources—petroleum, minerals, and timber—are being exploited by American, Japanese, and South African firms for the benefit primarily of the Indonesian central government in Jakarta, the military, foreign investors, and local (non-Papuan) officials. Only few benefits accrue to the indigenous population. The exploitation of natural resources has frequently caused havoc in the lives of the West Papuans by destroying their subsistence economy.³⁴

The struggle for the control of West Papuan natural wealth has significantly contributed to the conflict. Concessions given to foreign-owned oil and mining corporations without any consideration for the rights of the indigenous people, the involvement of the Indonesian security troops in guarding mining sites and resource extraction, and the huge amount of taxes and revenues which flow to the Indonesian government provide powerful motives for the OPM and the rest of the West Papuans to continue the struggle for independence. Civilians protesting against the impact of these activities upon their environment, livelihoods, and communities are often repressed by security force members, who have frequently responded to community protest with violent force.³⁵

The 1970s and early 1980s saw a rush of large investments in extractive industries in West Papua such as oil, mining, fisheries, and forestry. These industries account for almost all the increase in the value of provincial exports.³⁶

In 1972, Petromer Trend, an oil company controlled by Oppenheimer of South Africa, resumed drilling on the former exploration site of the Standard Oil. Rich oil deposits were discovered again, sulphur-free and of a light quality that was highly desirable to minimize refinery costs. Trend is said to be producing 170,000 barrels per day (b/d) from the Sorong oil well. Other transnational oil companies are also involved in the drilling of West Papuan oil. Membrano Shell controls an area of 14,657 square kilometers in Block G, also known as the Nauka Block, and produces an estimated output of 150,000 b/d. The "Consortium," which consists of Conoco, Total Oil, Chevron, and Texaco, has a concession in Block G covering an area of 43,755 square kilometers; the estimated output of the "Consortium" is 200,000 b/d. The estimated revenue of an oil company in West Papua is at least \$1 billion.³⁷

³³ Sukma, *Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*, p. 13.

³⁴ Drake, *National Integration in Indonesia*, 57.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, 12-13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Tapol, *West Papua*, 35.

Despite of this huge revenue, the oil drilling activities have had no significant impact on regional employment and indigenous income generation. The number of West Papuans employed in the industry has been steadily reduced. West Papuan employees have been discriminated by the Indonesian and Western supervisors. Most of the native workers have been replaced by Indonesian migrants.³⁸

American-owned Freeport Inc. is Indonesia's first large-scale mining corporation which has been operating for more than 30 years in West Papua. Freeport's Mt. Ertsberg mine is the second largest copper mine in the world and also has the largest proven gold deposit in existence. The company has already earned not less than \$100 billion from the extraction of West Papua's mineral resources. At least 1,448 tons of gold, not to mention vast amounts of copper and silver, have been scraped out of Ertzberg Mountain. The region around the mine is a military zone and closed off to outsiders as well as to the traditional land owners who were evicted by the Indonesian security forces and company officials. Prior to the establishment of the mining company, Ertzberg Mountain was communally owned by a West Papuan tribe and a traditional hunting ground as well. Freeport is now simply turning an entire mountain of gold and copper into an open pit.³⁹

In addition to extracting the wealth of West Papua, Freeport has done irreversible destruction to the surrounding environment. West Papua's unique rainforest has been destroyed due to mining activities. About 1.3 billion tons of tailing waste and 3.6 billion tons of waste rock have been dumped into the environment without proper treatment. The wastes have polluted Ajkwa River and caused Lake Wanagon to collapse. Freeport has already contaminated hundreds of hectares of land long way down to the Arafura Sea. It also has a long history of troubled relations with ethnic Papuans who, despite the mine's development programs, feel excluded from the economic benefits of the mine yet bear the brunt of its environmental impact. The company is allegedly rewarding the Indonesian military for violating the human rights of West Papuan activists and separatists.⁴⁰

Investment in resource-based industries has been viewed as a major potential stimulant to economic development. This expectation has been realized only to a limited extent. The hope that these industries might stimulate employment and generate indigenous incomes in West Papua has not been realized. The impact of these extractive activities on regional economic activities is small. Almost all government revenues accrue to the central government. Only in the Sorong region do foreign investments appear to have had significant impact on regional employment and income generation. The proportion of the indigenous population who have benefited from the growth of West Papua's GDP and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ JATAM (Indonesian Mining Advocacy Network), *The Failure of Indonesia's Mining Industry* (Jakarta: JATAM, 13 January 2006); Ghali Hassan, *West Papua's Cry for Independence* (n.p., 2006), <http://www.countercurrents.org/hassan250406.htm>, (Accessed 1 January 2008).

⁴⁰ JATAM, *The Failure of Indonesia's Mining Industry*; Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight*, p. 13.

increasing revenues from extractive industries is extremely small. Take note that the huge revenue is being controlled only by the mining firms and by the government and that the West Papuans do not have the final say in the extraction of their own natural wealth. Furthermore, only a small portion, approximately 4 to 5 percent, of West Papua's provincial budget is allocated to basic and social services every year. Human rights organizations have already noted that the amount which the Indonesian government spends on education, health, and other services for the Papuans is smaller than the enormous amount of revenues earned from the extraction of Papua's natural wealth.⁴¹

Although Papua earns the third highest Gross Domestic Product, its Human Development Index (HDI), which reflects mortality rates of pregnant mothers as well as babies, has been falling to the bottom.⁴² West Papua has the biggest number of poor people with HDI index in the 29th rank among Indonesia's 30 provinces in the year 2006. The number of people living below the poverty line has increased to more than 35 percent of the total population, a clear indication that income from West Papua's resources has not benefited the indigenous population. For the year 2007, Indonesia's national poverty rate was 16.6 percent. The poverty rate in Jakarta in the same year was only 4.6 percent, the lowest among Indonesian provinces. But in the case of West Papua, the poverty level was almost 40.8 percent.⁴³ Ironically, poverty is concentrated around Freeport's mining concession.⁴⁴ It is not surprising that since its establishment, the OPM has been conducting attacks on Freeport's mining areas. This implies that West Papuans' socioeconomic grievances have been inducing OPM's separatist sentiment and legitimacy. In addition, the socioeconomic impact of Indonesian rule over West Papua has compelled the indigenous Papuans to continue the struggle for the liberation of their homeland. The exploitation of their natural resources and the annihilation of their communities and subsistence economy have stimulated the West Papuans to prolong their resistance in order to defend their socioeconomic rights.

Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (1977), an influential contribution to the growing literature on nationalism from the neo-Marxist camp, provides an interesting theory on ethnic nationalism which would be helpful to this research. Hechter discusses the concept of "internal colonialism" and its impact on ethnic nationalism. In the process of internal colonialism, the core (Jakarta) dominates the periphery (e.g., West Papua) politically and exploits it economically. Resources and power are distributed unequally between the core (dominant

⁴¹ Manning and Rumbiak, *Irian Jaya*, pp. 80-85, 93; The annual budget of West Papua in 2006 was 4 trillion Rupiah, making it one of the wealthiest provinces per capita in Indonesia. For more details, please see Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight*, p. 17.

⁴² The maternal mortality rate in Papua in 1995 was 1,025 per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in Indonesia. Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight*, p. 14.

⁴³ Papua Land of Peace, *Millenium Development Goals*, http://www.faithbasednetworkonwestpapua.org/millennium_development_goals, (accessed on 28 February 2010).

⁴⁴ JATAM, *The Failure of Indonesia's Mining Industry*.

ethnic group) and the periphery (ethnic minorities). This situation leads the Papuans to identify themselves with their group and contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic Papuan identity. Drawing on Marxism, Hechter identifies two further conditions for the emergence of group solidarity and ethnic nationalism. First, there must be substantial economic inequalities between individuals which are seen as part of a pattern of collective oppression. But this in itself is not sufficient for the development of collective solidarity since there must be an accompanying social awareness and definition of the situation as unjust and illegitimate, that is the second condition. He concludes that the greater the economic inequality between groups, the greater the chance that the disadvantaged group will resist political integration and seek independence, just like what the West Papua is trying to do.

Tom Nairn's *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (1997) is very much related to this study because it examines the emergence of ethnic nationalism. According to him, ethnic nationalism is the response of ethnic groups to situations of ethnic-structural inequality and uneven development. The dominant ethnic group redefines the moving frontier of development to suit themselves at the expense of minority ethnic groups. The uneven wave of development over state territories widens the gap between the dominant and minority ethnic groups and thus creates social conflicts. The dominant group economically exploits the minority groups and tries to perpetuate the unequal distribution of resources thru policies aiming at the institutionalization of the socioeconomic inequality. In this sense, it was the ethnically biased process of modernization and development that created West Papuan nationalism; from the system climate of nationalism Papuan separatist movement and claims then arose. Uneven development in Indonesia gave rise to ethnic nationalisms and separatist sentiments.

The past and current thinking of the Indonesian government

Instead of protecting the legitimate rights of the West Papuans, both the past and present policies crafted and implemented by Indonesian policy-makers and authorities towards West Papuan separatism gravely repressed and prosecuted the right of all West Papuans, including independence supporters, to peacefully express their political stance, aspirations, and views without fear of arrest and other forms of reprisal. Indonesian officials and even some political analysts have claimed that the country has achieved important progress in strengthening its democracy since the collapse of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998 by highlighting the successful conduct of local and national elections, the proliferation of NGOs and people's organizations which were previously outlawed by Suharto, the restoration of freedom of speech and association, and the reduced political role of the Indonesian military, amongst others. However, the transfer of power from Suharto's authoritarian regime to successive *Reformasi* democratic governments has not translated into substantial changes in so far as the level of socioeconomic development and human rights situation in West Papua are concerned.

The past thinking of the Jakarta-based authorities and policy-makers during the New Order regime towards West Papua was characterized by that of rampant militarization, discrimination, economic exploitation, and repression of the independence aspirations of the Papuans by all means. Official attempts towards conflict resolution were composed of successive military operations to crush Papuan separatism. Suharto was very notorious for arresting and incarcerating suspected communists, anti-dictatorship elements, and those who opposed his regime, including ethnic separatists and pro-independence activists. Suharto refused to distinguish between acts of terrorism/criminal violence and non-violent expression of ethnic separatist sentiments. This militarist stance of the New Order contributed to increased polarization and armed separatism in East Timor, Aceh, as well as in West Papua.⁴⁵ Since 1963, Indonesian military operations against the OPM have often claimed an unjustified toll in civilian casualties and injuries, forced displacement, and the destruction of property. The state security apparatus has sought to eliminate opponents of Indonesia rule through human rights violations, including forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and abduction. During this dark period, the democratic public arena was effectively suppressed by Suharto and his policy-makers, preventing interest groups, such as ethnic minority movements and human rights advocates, from expressing their interests, views, and grievance through democratic means. The lack of genuine democratic space in West Papua inevitably resulted in rising ethnic tensions and separatist activities.

The collapse of Suharto's long-entrenched authoritarianism and the start of the democracy project raised renewed hopes among many about the peaceful resolution of West Papuan separatism. The progress of democracy project, however, is noticeably absent in West Papua. Present policy-makers and government officials have failed to deliver the promises of *Reformasi* to that problematic area in Indonesia. In his 2005 speech, Pres. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono promised that he would solve Papuan separatism "peacefully, fairly and with dignity." In 2006, he said he would use "persuasion and dialogue" rather than violence in dealing with Papuan activists and separatists. Like the Suharto regime, the current Indonesian government utilizes the so-called "security approach" through which government forces use Dutch colonial and Suharto-era laws and regulations to criminalize free speech and peaceful dissent. A major component of the "security approach" of the Indonesian government is the deployment of almost 1000 Kopassus (Special Forces Command) troops whose mission is to monitor, conduct covert operations against and intimidate the Papuans.⁴⁶

While the ethnic conflicts in East Timor and Aceh have already been resolved and thousands of Acehnese and East Timorese political prisoners since the end of Suharto regime, the practice of lumping together peaceful pro-independence activists and armed militants and considering both as criminals in West Papua is still being continued by post-Suharto

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Prosecuting Political Aspirations: Indonesia's Political Prisoners* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2010), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁶ For further details, please read West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-July 2010* (New York: East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

administrations, including the current Yudhoyono government.⁴⁷ Those who are displaying Papua's Morning Star Flag or challenging the 1969 Act of Free Choice are imprisoned on charges of "subversion" or "treason."⁴⁸ In addition, the Suharto-era Transmigration Policy, which created decades of ethnic conflicts in West Papua, is reintroduced by the current government. New transmigrants will be given generous government subsidies to out-compete and marginalize local Papuans.⁴⁹

Democratization, identity, and separatism

It is now imperative to have an analysis on the linkages between Indonesian democratization, ethnic identity, and separatism in West Papua. Clearly, the fragility of *Reformasi* is reflected in West Papua where the abusive military still causes havoc to Papuan communities. Political scientists argue that democratization is viewed as the movement from authoritarianism to a stable democracy, which ideally should transform various aspects of national life for the better. As we have already observed, however, the liberating light of Indonesian democratization is strikingly absent in West Papua. Even though *Reformasi* was relatively successful in many parts of the archipelago, it failed to eliminate the remnants of authoritarian rule in West Papua. Political scientist J. Shola Omotola (2008) explains that the effective functioning and strength of a democratic society primarily depends on the institutionalization of important elements such as an unrestricted democratic political space, where no interest group would be barred from participating in the democratic process, as well as the availability of multiple avenues for citizens, regardless of their ethnic affiliation, to express and represent their views and interests. There should also be an open, free, and independent press that serves as an alternative source of information while holding the Indonesian government accountable for its actions and excesses. There should also be rule of law, which includes political equality of all citizens and the protection of their human rights as well as those of ethnic minorities.⁵⁰

Obviously, these key elements cannot be observed in West Papua. The available democratic political space is lacking in West Papua as the activists are not even allowed to have peaceful rallies. Moreover, the provincial government and local legislative bodies still are controlled by non-Papuans and the central government.⁵¹ The rule of law is not properly

⁴⁷ According to Nazarudin Bunas, chief of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in Jayapura, Papua, as of February 2010, there were 48 Papuan prisoners convicted of treason. For further details, please see Human Rights Watch, *Prosecuting Political Aspiration*, p. 28.

⁴⁸ For further details, please read West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-April 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

⁴⁹ For further details, please read West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-June 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

⁵⁰ J. Shola Omotola, *Democratization, Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 23(1): 75, 2008.

⁵¹ In 2001, in an effort to resolve the separatist problem in West Papua, Jakarta enacted the Special Autonomy Law, giving West Papua a "special autonomy" status and granting limited local legislative bodies such as the Papuan People's Assembly. But the control remains in the hands of Jakarta.

observed in the province since civil and political rights of the Papuans are not being respected by the security forces and they are not considered politically equal with the non-Papuans.⁵² Press freedom is still under attack in West Papua. Independent media activities are censored and media practitioners have been subjected to state violence through unlawful arrest and detention even under the so-called *reformasi*-democratic setup. In February 2010, Indonesia's Attorney-General Office ordered the banning of books that discuss human rights violation in West Papua and Indonesian occupation of that area.⁵³ Indeed, the democracy dividends have not been received by all provinces and ethnic groups; those who are in the periphery, i.e., the ethnic minorities, remain under an undemocratic setup in their respective provinces. There are no available avenues for the West Papuans to articulate their views and interests, forcing them to demand for independence and continue their struggle. They think that the only way to enjoy their rights is liberate themselves from the pseudo-democratic government of Indonesia. So, in a way, the incompleteness of Indonesian democratization sharpens the ethnic identity of the West Papuans and bolsters their separatist stance. This article therefore suggests that there is the tendency for democratization, or the perversion of it in the case of West Papua, to strengthen ethnic identities.

Osaghae (1994) defines ethnic identity as "primarily the political community that inspires belief in common identity." The construction of a collective identity, particularly ethnicity, can help a group gain access to and/or control over resources. For Attahiru Jega (2000), identity acts as a rallying and organizing principle of social action in state-society relations. The single most significant influence on the strength of identity is the perceived existence of an external threat to that identity. He further explains that perceived or actual threats to an identity generate a reaction from the affected ethnic group to counter those threats, which bolsters their identity. In the case of West Papua, efforts to suppress ethnic identity have often backfired, bolstering ethnic feelings and exacerbating ethnic conflict.⁵⁴ The strengthening of Papuan identity is indeed very crucial for the OPM leadership and the rest of the Papuans to come together and be united in liberating their homeland so that they will be able to control their natural wealth and resources. The outlawing of public display of symbols of Papuan nationalism and identity is, without doubt, further compelled the OPM and the Papuans to continue their demand for referendum and independence.⁵⁵ In December 2007, the Indonesian government issued Government Regulation 77/2007, which regulates

⁵² For further details, see Human Rights Watch, *Prosecuting Political Aspiration*, 27-42.

⁵³ West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-February 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

⁵⁴ Lijphart (1995) also observed this failure of suppressing ethnic differences and identities in other multiethnic nations.

⁵⁵On 14 June 2010, the Papuan People's Council (Majelis Rakyat Papua or MRP, a body formed by the Indonesian government in 2005) passed resolution, rejecting "Special Autonomy" and demanding a referendum on Papuans' political future. For further details, see West Papua Action Team, *West Papua Report-July 2010*.

regional symbols. Article 6 of the regulation bans display of separatist flags or logos. The Papuan Morning Flag, a symbol sacred among the Papuans, is considered banned under this regulation. The significance of the Morning Star Flag to Papuan society should not be underestimated. This is one important source of their pride, ethnonationalism, independence aspiration, and identity. On 1 December 1961, a date which has a symbolic meaning for the Papuans, the Morning Star was allowed to fly alongside the Dutch flag and the song, *Hai Tanah Papua (My Land of Papua)*, was adopted as the national anthem.⁵⁶ Another symbol of Papuan identity is their ancestral domain. Most of their ancestral lands have already been taken over by the government, transmigrants, and multinational corporations. For the Papuans, identity and recognition of their attachment to their ancestral lands are vital to their sense of self-worth.⁵⁷ They feel that it is their primary responsibility to protect and defend the symbols of their identity. The militarization of West Papua has, undeniably, further reinforced the anti-Indonesia sentiment as well as the ethno-nationalism of the West Papuans. They regard the Indonesian armed forces as a new colonial army trying to subjugate their identity.

The question of the lack of international support for West Papuan independence

Major regional players in the Asia-Pacific such as the United States, Australia, and the ASEAN member-states refused to provide support for West Papuan independence and instead granted assistance to Indonesian armed forces just to protect their security and economic interests.

Indonesia-United States security and economic relations have been shaped by realist American defense planners and US-owned corporations. During the Suharto regime, US military and political support for Jakarta had been traded in exchange for Indonesian allegiance to the West in the Cold War and the opening of the country's resource-rich provinces such as West Papua to American companies. The controversial US-owned Freeport-McMoran mining company has been implicated in human rights violations and environmental destruction in West Papua since the New Order regime.⁵⁸ In July 2010, Indonesian defense ministry confirmed that the US government has already lifted an embargo banning weapon sales to Indonesian military. The Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus) is now under consideration for US military training and assistance for the first time in 12 years. The US Congress imposed an embargo that banned international military education and training (IMET) and military equipment sales to Indonesia almost two decades ago in response to repeated human rights abuses committed by the Kopassus in West Papua and

⁵⁶ John Wing and Peter King, *Genocide in West Papua?* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2005), p. 20.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁸ Denise Leith, Freeport and Suharto, *The Contemporary Pacific* 14(1): 69-100, 2002.

Timor Leste (then East Timor).⁵⁹ But it must be remembered that most of the human rights crimes in West Papua occurred while the U.S. was most deeply engaged with the Indonesian military. Evolving international politics and global financial crisis compel the US government to expand its security cooperation with Indonesia and to lift the embargo so as to convince this Southeast Asian nation to be its one important ally in the region now that China is bolstering her relations with ASEAN member-states. The selling of US-made weapons and the assurance from the Indonesian government of the unhampered operations of US-owned corporations, such as the Freeport, will definitely help the US stimulate her economy. It is easy to understand the reasons why the US has refused to interfere in Indonesia's controversial issues and to support the separatist movements in the country.

Meanwhile, Australian foreign policy towards Indonesia has always been pragmatic. Australian support for "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity" can be interpreted in Jakarta as implicit support for repressive tactics to maintain control over Papua. The Australian government still is supporting the Indonesian annexation of West Papua for 2 primary reasons. Firstly, Australian mining corporations have huge investments in Indonesia. It must be noted that West Papua has extensive mineral deposits including nickel, gold and copper as well as oil, natural gas, valuable tropical timber and fisheries. Secondly, Australia supports Indonesia in an attempt to quell the escalation of violence in West Papua and prevent the conflict from crossing the West Papuan or Indonesian borders. The worsening of conflict in West Papua will definitely affect the regional stability as well as the security situation in Indonesian waters. It must be remembered the unhindered passage of Australian cargo ships and oil tankers thru Indonesian archipelagic waters is very crucial for the Australians. Thirdly, being the most populous Muslim country in the world and the major base of operation of *Jemaah Islamiyah*, Indonesia is being convinced to be a part of the "war against terror" in Southeast Asia.⁶⁰

Even with the formal ratification ASEAN Charter, ASEAN's founding principles of non-interference in member countries' internal affairs and consensus decision-making remain the two main fundamental obstacles for ASEAN to play a more proactive role in resolving ethnic problems and separatism in the region.⁶¹ Hence, any of the 10 ASEAN member-states cannot even denounce the alleged human rights violations being committed by the Indonesian government against the Papuans.

⁵⁹ Jakarta Post, US has ended lethal weapon sales ban on Indonesia: military, *Jakarta Post*, 6 July 2010.

⁶⁰ For further details, see Jason MacLeod, *Standing Up for West Papua* (Sydney: Jason MacLeod, 2003), pp. 8-9.

⁶¹ Mely Caballero-Anthony, "The ASEAN Charter: An Opportunity Missed or One that Cannot be Missed." In *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), pp. 71-85.

What future lies for West Papua should it manage to gain independence

Similar to what happened in East Timor, West Papua will be facing great socioeconomic challenges, a 'time bomb' of widespread poverty. There will be a need to fight poverty, hunger, maternal and infant mortality, and improve access to health care and education. It will be important if West Papua redouble its effort to ensure that development benefits will be felt equally in rural and urban areas and among various ethnic nationalities. Since the Indonesian government failed to invest in basic and social services, the West Papuan government will have to get the necessary funds to improve the level of human development and living standards in West Papua. But where would the young nation get its funds?

An independent West Papua will be able to expel foreign-owned extractive companies such as the Freeport mining corporation and eventually gain control over her natural resources. By nationalizing the extraction of Papua's natural resources, West Papua will be able to earn sufficient funds that can be used in providing basic and social services and constructing the needed infrastructures.

It will be a great challenge for West Papua to establish strong political and democratic institutions, including a professional military, that will help consolidate the gains of the past and ensure a smooth transition to the recovery and development phase. But that will take years which might cause frustrations, or worse, rebellion initiated by the military. This happened in East Timor in 2006 when frustrations and a dispute about discrimination within the military spiraled wildly out of control and resulted in communal and gang violence.

Under an independent West Papua, there is a hope that human rights violations committed by both state and non-state actors will be reduced dramatically. Demilitarization, or the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian security forces, will definitely decrease the number of cases of forced disappearances, extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, intimidation, and sweeping military operations against besieged/displaced civilian population.

However, there is also a possibility that West Papua will have to deal with security threats and challenges courtesy of Indonesia. This prognosis is based on what the Indonesian military did immediately after the conduct of the historic referendum in East Timor in 1999.⁶² Infuriated militias and mercenaries backed by the Indonesian military may go on a bloody retaliatory rampage to destabilize West Papua. This event will only be prevented if West Papua will be able to establish strong armed forces and police units within a short period of time or if an international peacekeeping force will be stationed in West Papua.

⁶² Adam Gartrell, How East Timor won its independence, *AAP General News Wire*, 30 August 2009.

It will be also a difficult task for the West Papuan government to govern a multiethnic nation-state. Because of the transmigration programs implemented by the Indonesian government, West Papua is no longer a homogenous region. Hence, it will be a challenge for the new government to maintain a harmonious relationship between the Papuans and non-Papuans and to quell ethnic clashes or communal violence that may arise.

Conclusion

Independence campaigns of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka guerrillas have been driven by the strong Papuan ethnic nationalism. Horrendous political and socioeconomic realities in their homeland have compelled the West Papuans to secede from the Indonesian unitary state. Ethnic nationalism has prompted them to defend their political and socioeconomic rights. The presence of exploitative mining corporations and abusive Indonesian security forces serve as a rallying point for West Papuan separatists.

In some multiethnic states such as Indonesia, ethnic nationalism is the response of ethnic groups to situations of ethnic-structural inequality and uneven development. The uneven wave of development over state territories widens the gap between the dominant and minority ethnic groups and thus creates social conflicts. The dominant ethnic group, the Javanese, redefines the moving frontier of development to suit themselves at the expense of the West Papuans. The dominant group economically exploits the West Papuans, and tries to perpetuate the unequal distribution of resources and power thru policies aiming at the institutionalization of the stratified system and socioeconomic inequality. Through the Indonesian government, the dominant ethnic group controls the economic resources in West Papua at the expense of the indigenous peoples there. The dominant role of the Indonesians in the economy as well as in the political arena has profoundly strengthened ethnic nationalisms of the West Papuans.

The concept of "internal colonialism" can also be used to analyze ethnic separatism. Jakarta, the core of the Indonesian state, politically dominates and economically exploits the periphery, which includes West Papua. The necessary condition for the development of ethnic separatist sentiment is that there must be substantial economic inequalities between the core and the periphery. But there must be an accompanying social awareness that the situation is unjust and illegitimate. The common feeling among the West Papuans is that instead of getting a fair share from the enormous revenues earned by TNCs and by the central government, they suffer starvation, marginalization, and military atrocities. Consequently, the West Papuans perceive that their communities are being plundered, exploited, and treated unjustly by the Indonesians. In conclusion, the resistance and armed struggle of the West Papuans have been induced by the political and socioeconomic impact of Indonesian rule over their communities. Despite its abundant natural resources, West Papua is among the poorest provinces in the country. It has experienced very high poverty rates for most of the past three to four decades of Indonesian rule. High GDP growth

rate in West Papua, primarily the result of the extraction of oil, timber, copper, gold, and other precious minerals, has not translated into lower poverty levels. Incomes and revenues earned from natural resource extraction are being controlled only by foreign corporations and by the Indonesian government. Profits are not invested back into West Papua in the form of basic and social services that could have minimized increasing poverty rates in the province.

This article has explored the linkages between Indonesian democratization, identity, and ethnic separatism. It has shown that Indonesian democratization, due largely to its tendencies to limit the reach of social justice, fairness, and equity, have resulted in the bolstering of West Papuan identity and therefore the worsening of ethnic separatist problem in West Papua. Democratic institutions have not been established in West Papua, barring the Papuans from actively participating in political processes. There are no available avenues for the West Papuans to articulate their views and interests, forcing them to demand for independence and continue their struggle.

Bibliography

Bonay, Yohanis G., and Jane McGrory. "West Papua: Building Peace Through an Understanding of Conflict." In *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Edited by Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds, and Hans van de Veen. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004.

Caballero-Anthony, Mely . "The ASEAN Charter: An Opportunity Missed or One that Cannot be Missed." In *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008*, 71-85. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008.

Chauvel, Richard. *Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation*. Washington D.C.: East West Center, 2005.

_____. "Papua and Indonesia: Where Contending Nationalisms Meet." In *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*. Edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Crouch, Harold. "Political Transition and Communal Violence." In *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Edited by Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds, and Hans van de Veen. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004.

Drake, Cristine. *National Integration in Indonesia: Patterns and Policies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.

Elsie, Jim. *Demographic Transition in West Papua*. Papua Post Interactives. <http://papuapost.multiply.com/journal/item/13>. (Accessed 28 February 2010).

Gartrell, Adam. How East Timor won its independence. *AAP General News Wire*, 30 August 2009.

Hassan, Ghali. *West Papua's Cry for Independence*. n.p., 2006.
<http://www.countercurrents.org/hassan250406.htm>. (Accessed 1 January 2008).

Hechter, Michael. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Human Rights Watch. *Out of Sight: Endemic Abuse and Impunity in Papua's Central Highlands*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2007.

_____. Free Papuan Activists. (21 July 2009).
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/07/21/indonesia-free-papuan-activists>. (Accessed 28 February 2010).

_____. *Papuans in Merauke Face Abuses by Indonesian Special Forces*. (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009).

_____. *Prosecuting Political Aspirations: Indonesia's Political Prisoners*. (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Jakarta Post. US has ended lethal weapon sales ban on Indonesia: military. *Jakarta Post*, 6 July 2010.

JATAM (Indonesian Mining Advocacy Network). *The Failure of Indonesia's Mining Industry*. Jakarta: JATAM, 2006.

Jega, Atahiru M. Identity Transformation and Politics of Identity Under Crisis and Adjustment. In *Identity Transformation and identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, 11-25. Kano: Center for Research and Documentations, 2000.

Kingsbury, Damien. "Diversity in Unity." In *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*. Edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

_____ and Harry Aveling. "Introduction." In *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, Edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Leith, Denise. Freeport and Suharto. *The Contemporary Pacific* 14(1): 69-100, 2002.

Lijphart, Arend. Multiethnic Democracy. In *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, ed. Lipset M. Seymour, vol. 3. London: Routledge, 1995.

MacLeod, Jason. *Standing Up for West Papua*. Sydney: Jason MacLeod, 2003.

Malley, Michael. "Indonesia: Violence and Reforms Beyond Jakarta." In *Southeast Asian Affairs 2001*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001.

Manning, Chris, and Michael Rumbiak. "Irian Jaya: Change, Migrants, and Indigenous Welfare." In *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia Since 1970*. Edited by Hal Hill. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Omotola, J. Shola. "Democratization, Identity, and Ethnic Conflict." *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 23(1): 75, 2008.

Organisasi Papua Merdeka. "Statement Concerning the Right of Self-Determination of the West Papuan People." Geneva: The Working Group on Indigenous Populations Fifth Session, August 1987.

Osaghae, Eghosa E. "Ethnicity in Africa or African Ethnicity." In *African Perspectives on Development, Controversies, Dilemma, and Openings*, ed. Edward Mburgu, 136-36. London: James Currey, 1994.

Papua Land of Peace. *Millennium Development Goals*.
http://www.faithbasednetworkonwestpapua.org/millennium_development_goals. (Accessed 28 February 2010).

Smith, Anthony. "Indonesia: Transforming the Leviathan." In *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*. Edited by John Funston. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001.

Startts Publications. *The Historical Roots of the Free Papua Movement*. n.p., 2001.
http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/areaser/startts/volunteers/transitions/Issue%2010_An%20Unnoticed%20War.htm. (Accessed 1 January 2008).

Sukma, Rizal. "Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia: Causes and the Quest for Solution." In *Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia*. Edited by Kusuma Snitwongse and W. Scott Thompson. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005.

Tapol. *West Papua: The Obliteration of a People*. London: Tapol, 1985.

West Papua Action Team. *West Papua Report-February 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

_____. *West Papua Report-April 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

_____. *West Papua Report-June 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

_____. *West Papua Report-July 2010* (New York:East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, 2010).

Wing, John, and Peter King. *Genocide in West Papua?* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2005).