Democratization and Regional Power Sharing in Papua/Irian Jaya

Increased Opportunities and Decreased Motivations for Violence

Timo Kivimäki and Ruben Thorning

Recent general theories on democratization and decentralization suggest that both trends support stabilization of the security situation in Papua/Irian Jaya. By alleviating the grievances that rebellious areas might have, and by offering channels for the non-violent expression of grievances, democratization and decentralization are supposed to lower tensions.[1] However, the case of conflict in Papua seems to contradict the traditional expectation of a positive correlation between democratization, decentralization, and stability.[2] Here, the period of democratization and decentralization has been marked by a steep increase in political violence. Furthermore, from the outside, the Papuan conflict does not appear rational because of the differ-

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1. For the contribution of alleviation of grievances, see Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); and for the contribution of non-violent channels of protest, see Michael D. Ward and Kristian S. Gleditsch, "Democratizing for Peace," *American Political Science Review* 92:51 (March 1998), pp. 51–61.

2. When Indonesia took over West Irian from the Dutch, they dubbed its easternmost province Irian Jaya (victorious Irian), but the territory has been referred to as "Papua Barat" (West Papua) by Papuan nationalists. In 2000 President Abdurrahman Wahid introduced the name "Papua," which was accepted by the Indonesian Parliament on January 7, 2002.

ences in how it has been framed by conflicting parties, and thus explaining the conflict seems exceptionally difficult.

This article tries to reveal some of the causal links in Papua between decentralization and autonomy on the one hand and conflict on the other. The analysis is restricted to conflict motivations of Papuan nationalists, and it will not analyze violence caused by Indonesian nationalists, be they regular policemen and military officials, rogue elements of the security apparatus, militia members, or transmigrants/migrants. This limited focus does not intend to imply that Papuan violence would only, or even primarily, be committed by Papuan nationalists. In fact, the separatist violence against the security apparatus and immigrants should be considered as low in intensity.

By analyzing the constructions of the various parties in the conflict in Papua, we can try to make sense of the violent strategies of the different agents. Instead of assuming that all agents in the Papuan conflict perceive the setting in a similar fashion, this study starts from the realization that there are several constructions and interpretations that each explain the behavior, roles, and immediate objectives of each agent. Only after the logic of the construction of each actor is revealed, can the influences of various elements of the decentralization process upon Papuan conflict potential be understood. Thus, various parties to the conflict can only be understood when their construction is explained. Their behavior can then often be understood as moves within their own construction. The fact that the Free Papua Movement (OPM, Organisasi Papua Merdeka), for example, must often confront the reality that its opponents' activities do not make sense in its own construction of the Papuan conflict, complicates the setting of the conflict itself. Very often, independence-minded Papuans are not merely acting within their construction of the physical setting but instead are demonstrating the justification for their interpretation of the situation in Papua. Thus, they are not merely resisting Indonesian colonialism but in fact also making moves to convince the international community, the U.N., the United States, or Indonesians of their view that Indonesian rule in Papua is an exemplification of colonialism. Similarly, the Papuan police are not merely restoring some sort of law and order: their activities can also be understood as an effort to demonstrate that, in their view, the activities of the OPM are to be interpreted as criminal.[3]

Thus, the strategy of this article is to explain why the general expectation in conflict studies of a positive causal relationship between people's empow-

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3. This method of understanding conflicts as socially constructed games and meta-games is explicated in greater detail in Timo Kivimäki, "U.S.-Indonesian Relations During the Economic Crisis: Where Has Indonesia's Bargaining Power Gone?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22:3 (December 2000), pp. 527–49. See also Timo Kivimäki, "'Reason' and 'Power' in Territorial Disputes: The South China Sea," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 1:30 (June 2002). The method is also known as institutional game theory.

erment and reduced conflict potential is not straightforward in Papua. This is done by following the processes of democratic decentralization and reinterpreting them within the various interpretations of the agents in the Papuan conflict. The first task is to reconstruct the agency structure by identifying all the violent actors (not only rebels, but also the security forces, etc.) and penetrate into their interpretation of what this conflict is all about. Secondly, we need to look at decentralization and autonomy and their consequences for the area. Finally, we analyze how these processes have contributed to arguments for, and against, violence within the warring camps. Whenever constructions that justify violence are strengthened or weakened by autonomy, decentralization, or democratization, influence from the independent variable to the dependent variable can be established.

Papuan decentralization and regional power sharing have taken place during a period of economic turbulence and political reform. The former has fueled the latter, but economic trouble has also made it difficult for the leadership to execute reform measures decisively. The case of the Papuan conflict seems to emphasize the need for consistency and the clarity of signals, both in democratization and decentralization. Otherwise, unclear signals and rapidly shifting developments might give, and have given, rise to the expectations of different parties, who all tend to interpret developments and signals as supporting their cause. This feeds the overconfidence of conflicting parties and again increases the conflict potential. Furthermore, inconsistency tends to cause a discrepancy between expected progress and real developments (relative deprivation), which has also been seen at the core of much of the political violence.[4]

Constructions of the Papuan Conflict: Parties, Objectives, Strategies, and Outcomes

Even when focusing on Papuan violence, one has also to understand the Indonesian nationalist construction of the Papuan conflict. This is because of the fact that Papuan violence occurs in the context of a relationship of escalating hostile interaction. Papuan grievances and the perception of justification for violence are, in part, related to the Papuan interpretations of the Indonesian nationalist perceptions and actions.

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4. For overconfidence, see Charles Gochman, "Studies of International Violence: Five Easy Pieces?" in *Explaining War, Selected Papers from the Correlates of War Project*, ed. David Singer (London: Sage, 1979). For relative deprivations, see Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

Indonesian Nationalist Constructions

In the basic setting, there is a fundamental difference between the Papuan-nationalist and Indonesian-nationalist perceptions of the agency structure in the Papuan conflict. For Indonesian nationalists, Papuans are first and foremost Indonesians, while their racial, religious, and cultural differences are less important. According to former President Sukarno,

> [a] nation is not only a matter of race or the color of skin. . . . Are Americans all white[?] . . . the Hawaiians are another race, and black Negroes are another race; the Papuans—yes—they, too are another race, and so are the Dayaks. But the Dayaks are happy as Indonesians.[5]

The different peoples inhabiting the islands of the former Dutch East Indies are united in Indonesia by their common history and, as Sukarno noted in his 1950 Independence speech, "In our present Constitution it is expressly laid down that the territory of our state comprises the entire former Netherlands Indies, that is from Sabang to Merauke. Thus . . . Irian is also Indonesian territory."[6] Indonesia's politics do not consider race, religion, or culture as relevant in regard to political rights; cultural, religious, and racial equality is the foundation of the concept of unity in diversity as expressed in the 1945 Constitution.[7] Finally, the Papuan integration into Indonesia was, according to the Indonesian-nationalist interpretation, decided by the Papuans themselves through their representatives in July 1969, as agreed in the New York Agreement, on August 15, 1962, Article XVIII between the Netherlands and Indonesia.[8]

The idea of West Papua separating from Indonesia is marginalized by Indonesian nationalists as illegal separatism. The territorial integrity of the country is held as sacred, and the separation of one part of Indonesia is seen as risking a snowball effect, causing other parts to follow suit. Beyond the

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5. Citation from Sukarno's comments in Ambassador Howard P. Jones's report to the U.S. president, in Department of State, series on Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–63 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1994), pp. 383–84.

6. Sukarno's Independence speech on August 17, 1950, quoted in George McTurner Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1953), pp. 165–66.

7. Constitution of Indonesia 1945, Chapter X, Article 26, sec. 1; Chapter XIII, Article 32; Chapter XV, Article 36.

8. Christopher J. McMullen, *Mediation in the West New Guinea Dispute, 1962: A Case Study* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), pp. 57–60; United Nations General Assembly 1969, *Official Records*, Agenda Item 98, Annexes, 24th Session; "Agreement Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands Concerning West New Guinea (West Irian)": Report by the Secretary-General Regarding the Act of Self-Determination in West Irian. Document 7723 (November 6, 1969), Annex I, report by the Representative of the Secretary-General in West Irian, Paragraph 11. This construction is real within the official Indonesian nationalist discourse, although it is not necessarily always believed in even among the Indonesian nationalists.

level of rhetoric, the separation of Papua is also rejected on economic grounds: the American firm Freeport International's gold-and-copper mining operation in Papua alone, accounts for 30% of Indonesia's export earnings. Furthermore, the security of the non-Papuan Indonesians motivates security-force action in the province. Questioning the territorial integrity of Indonesia is harmful, in this view, because, as one Indonesian diplomat put it: "How can Indonesia build its nation, how can Indonesians commit themselves and work for Indonesia if the very existence of Indonesia is challenged?"[9]

Papuans seldom experience the Indonesian commitment to ideas of racial equality and anti-colonialist nation building. For Papuan nationalists, Indonesian motivations are related to the exploitation of West Papua, and the nationalist discourse is just a smokescreen for exploitation. According to interviews with several activists and OPM members, Indonesian negotiators in the independence negotiation and the negotiation on West Papua explicitly admitted their lack of interest in the Papuan people and their interest in Papuan natural resources. This was particularly attributed to Indonesia's Foreign Minister Soebandrio. This reality of Papuan-nationalist construction of the Indonesian interests is not, however, supported by documentary analysis of the negotiations; in fact, it seems clear from the documentation that the opposite is true: Indonesian negotiators were nationalistically rather than economically motivated.[10]

While in terms of political rights Papuans are Indonesian, their cultural and economic differences as the educationally least developed area in Indonesia distinguish them from the rest of the Indonesians in the Indonesian political discourse, according to interviews conducted by the authors. Officially, Papuan underdevelopment does not make Papua a separate entity, because the level of development is irrelevant in the definition of Indonesian identity. However, in the state's "Unity in Diversity" discourse, Papuans are still treated as the "Stone Age people of Irian Jaya."[11] The argument in favor of Indonesian rather then Dutch rule in West Papua was partly based on Indone-

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9. Dino Patti Djalal (Indonesian diplomat and later spokesman of the Indonesian task force to implement the popular referendum in East Timor), "Indonesia and East Timor," paper presented at a seminar organized by the Conflict Transformation Group and the University of Helsinki, Helsinki, April 28, 1998.

10. See Timo Kivimäki, *Distribution of Benefits in Bargaining Between a Superpower and a Developing Country: A Study of Negotiation Processes between the U.S. and Indonesia* (Helsinki: Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, 1993), pp. 126–42. For an analysis of these two negotiation processes, see Timo Kivimäki, "Strength of Weakness: American-Indonesian Hegemonic Bargaining," *Journal of Peace Research* 30:4 (November 1993), pp. 392–93.

11. This conclusion is based on several interviews by Kivimäki among Indonesian nationalists. For the same conclusions, see Robert Mitton, *The Lost World of Irian Jaya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Robin Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

sia's logistic advantage in developing the backward Papuans.[12] In other words, while Papuans are politically equal in the nationalist Indonesian political doctrine, their cultural difference gives the Indonesian government special obligations to develop Papua. According to several Papuan nationalists, the basic Indonesian conception of the Papuans as primitive characterizes the Indonesian nationalist construction of the Papuan-Indonesian relationship: "They think we are primitive, that we need them to develop us, and this is the fundamental misunderstanding that has caused so many problems."[13] Responding to a group of prominent Papuans who were declaring their desire to remain within the Indonesian Republic, former President Abdurrahman Wahid was quoted in the Indonesian daily *Kompas* as saying, "I told Minister Alwi Shihab, it is only a matter of time when the others will follow. If necessary, we will make the OPM leader a member of the Assembly. If he later joins the meetings in Jakarta, he is permitted to wear a *koteka* (penis gourd, part of the traditional attire of Papuan highland tribes), if that's what he wants." His words were met with laughter from the audience.[14] While Wahid might not have intended his remark to be derogatory, it was found to be unnecessary and arrogant by the Papuan side.

The Indonesian idea of the "Stone Age Papuans" also seems to be at the core of the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI, Indonesian Defense Force) and police perceptions of the OPM. According to interview material, for the Indonesian nationalists, the organization did not *represent* Papuans but *comprised* Papuans and thus had wild, smelly, and somehow less than human connotations. Words referring to animal qualities, such as smelly, were often used by the TNI and police officers interviewed for this study, both in Papua and elsewhere. A Buginese police officer in Papua, interviewed by Ruben Thorning, also alluded to the practice of the police of referring to Papuans as *badan bau* (smelly bodies).

In addition to the legitimation of a paternalistic Indonesian attitude in Papua, the perception of the "Stone Age people of Papua" also makes it eas-

12. Sukarno, "Nasionalisme, Islamisme dan Marxisme" [Nationalism, Islam and Marxism], *Suluh Indonesia Muda* [Torch of Young Indonesia Magazine] (1926), reproduced in Sukarno: *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi* [Under the banner of revolution], edited by H. Mualliff Nasution (Jakarta: Panitya Penerbit, 1963) pp. 1–23; "President Sukarno Invalidates Luns' Arguments" *Aneta News Bulletin,* January 12, 1962, pp. 15–16. The Indonesian arguments about logistic advantages were usually presented as a response to the Dutch argument that a developing country like Indonesia could not develop Papua; see Albert E. Norman, *From Stone Age to the Atomic Age*: *A Tremendous Gap Must Be Bridged in New Guinea* (The Hague: Netherlands Information Service, 1954).

13. Note: to protect anonymity of interviewees, their names are identified only as coded designations, throughout this article. Papuan intellectual, "PI1," interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, NIAS, May 2001.

14. *Kompas*, February 28, 2000.

ier for security forces to conduct what they consider their duties in Papua.[15] In interviews with the police or the TNI people, combat situations against the OPM were often described by using metaphors of hunting, which again normalizes the killing of enemies. Nationalist Papuans often exaggerate Indonesian instrumentalist perceptions, and these perceptions are easily treated as the mainstream interpretations.

The Indonesian nationalist construction of the Papuan war uses its own myths to normalize violence against Papuan nationalists. Modern conceptions of the state as the entity holding the monopoly on legitimate violence serve a purpose for security forces in normalizing and legitimizing violence against Papuan separatists. Most modern Indonesian army personnel and police tend to resent the idea of treating the police or the military as parties to the conflict, since their violence is different from rebel violence: "When we resort to violence we do it out of duty in order to preserve law and order. It is not the same as it is with criminals and hooligans."[16] Yet, despite the modern concept of states as having monopolies on legitimate violence, the TNI and the police ideology tend to tolerate pro-Indonesia militias rather well. In Papua, the Satgas Merah Putih (SMP, Red and White Task Force) has been operating actively, and there is a strong rumor of an increasing presence of the Laskar Jihad. The SMP is an organization simulating police functions, mainly in defense of the transmigrant population. Its role differs from that of the police in that as an informal, secret organization, the SMP is less bound to the Indonesian international commitments in the fields of human rights protection, legality, etc. Laskar Jihad was originally a militia set up to defend fellow Moslems against expansive and violent Christians.

The religious rhetoric of Laskar Jihad offers its soldiers a way to transcend fears of fighting: "Allah safeguards us from harm, we even get shot, but we

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15. The strategies to de-normalize the normative context of fighting are not usually studied by conflict scholars. However, according to sociologists of violence, 75% of combat soldiers never even try to hit the enemy simply because they are psychologically unable to. See Randal Collins, *Micro Theory of Violence. Lecture at the University of Copenhagen*, March 23, 2001. If one studies the rhetoric of combat one quickly realizes that many violent groups have a specific way of getting around these psychological and moral obstacles of efficient fighting. See, for example, Donald Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 94–109. These rhetorical strategies sub-humanize the enemy, as in the case of the TNI in Papua. Some Malays in West Kalimantan consider their enemies, Madurans, as black dogs (Malay fighter "YD," interviewed by Syarif Ibrahim Alqadrie, January 2001, within the context of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network). This also normalizes the killing. The Laskar Jihad fighters feel that they cannot be harmed because of Allah's presence (Laskar Jihad fighter "LJ3," interviewed by Timo Kivimäki, February 2000), or because of magical substances (*air tolak bala*). In some cases, fighters feel that they more or less turn into animals, which again naturalizes hunting and killing (Malay fighter "YD").

16. Javanese policeman JP1, interviewed by Pius Suratman Kartasasmita, within the context of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, January 2001.

do not die."[17]   The rhetoric also offers a way to resolve the conflict of personal interests and religious obligations. For Laskar Jihad fighters, Indonesia is in a religious war, not only in the Moluccan Islands. In that area, communal clashes between Moslems and the Christian community have claimed thousands of casualties since January 1999. According to Laskar Jihad fighters, holy war (*jihad*) is going on everywhere in Indonesia because "rich externally supported unpatriotic Christians are trampling down the rights of the Moslem majority."[18]   The Papuan-nationalist interpretation of the perceptions of the pro-Indonesia militias is often very simplistic. Discussions frequently reveal a belief that violent pro-Jakarta militias are just extensions of the Indonesian army, and thus extreme views of militias are treated as official Indonesian views.[19]   Naturally, this gives additional strength to separatist motivations.

Papuan-Nationalist Constructions of the Conflict

The basic difference in the Papuan nationalist construction of the conflict is the perception of a fundamental difference between Indonesians/Asians and Papuans/Melanesians. The Papuan "nation-ness" is firmly based on the racial difference between Indonesians and Papuans.[20]   Furthermore, the difference in political and national identity is based on an interpretation of international law and the history of Papua. According to Papuan Nationalists, the procedure of self-determination of Papuan political status in 1969 was flawed by the unfair selection—by Indonesians—of 1,025 "representatives" of the people. These representatives later faced intimidation and coercion by the Indonesian police and were pressured not to reveal the real nature of the act of self-determination.[21]   Furthermore, the Papuan-nationalist claim to nationhood is based on arrangements made with the Netherlands during the Dutch-

17. Laskar Jihad Fighter LJ1, interviewed by Timo Kivimäki, February 2000.

18. Laskar Jihad Fighter LJ2, interviewed by Timo Kivimäki, February 2000.

19. While there often are links between Indonesian militias and the official military establishment, the simplified views portrayed in the media are often misleading. Indonesian militias often have an identity and history of their own. See Geoffrey Robinson, "People's War: Militias in East Timor and Indonesia," *Southeast Asia Research* 9:3 (November 2001), pp. 271–318.

20. Jacob Prai, guerrilla leader of the Free Papua Movement from the establishment of the movement until 1978, interview by Timo Kivimäki, November 1999. Perception of the meaningfulness of the racial difference was clear also in most of the other interviews with Papuan nationalists.

21. Theys Eluay in Agence France Presse (AFP) report, Jakarta May 28, 2001. Theys Eluay was one of the "representatives" in the "act of self-determination." He was abducted and assassinated in November 2001. Most scholars of Papuan/Indonesian politics/history would also claim that a majority of West Papuans has never supported the merger with Indonesia (Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War*, p. xiv).

Indonesian negotiations over the political status of Papua in 1961–62. Because Papuans are seen as a nation, the right of the state based on anti-colonialist international laws is obvious to Papuan nationalists.[22]   The relationship with Indonesia is seen in the context of colonialism: Indonesia is seen as a colonial master occupying and exploiting the Papuan land and people.[23]   In the Papuan-nationalists' rhetoric, the idea of a modern Indonesian state using its monopoly of violence is rejected and replaced by the notion of an anti-colonialist battle. Formally, a declaration of independence has been made several times, first in 1961, then in 1976, and most recently in 1999.

Although Papuan nationalists seem to have the same overall goal and enjoy widespread support across the province, splits have been present since the early days of the independence movement.[24]   Firstly, the role of the OPM is perceived differently by different people. Many Papuan nationalists see the OPM historically as synonymous with the independence movement, whereas an increasing number of people today do not view the OPM as a central part of the struggle. Support of the OPM has also been unevenly spread geographically. Quarrels, often about leadership and strategy, led to factionalism, which is probably the movement's greatest weakness. The organization was traditionally divided into two main groups, the Victoria group originally under the leadership of Seth Rumkorem and the PEMKA (*Pemulihan Keadilan*, the command for the restoration of justice) group originally under the leadership of Jacob Prai. Both groups have had their military wings, the Victoria group's TPN (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional, National Liberation Army) and the PEMKA group's PAPENAL (Pasukan Pembebasan Nasional, National Liberation Group). They both also claim authority over the whole of West Papua: the Victoria group has established a provisional revolutionary government, and the PEMKA group a de facto government for the administration of West Papua. The main division in the independence movement of today is between the hardliners, known as "militants," and supporters of negotiation "diplomats." The latter faction is often associated with the so-called Papuan Presidium Council (PPC). The members of this council were elected in June 2000 by a forum of Papuan community leaders, the "second Papuan Congress," and to many Papuan nationalists, this council is considered as the de facto Papuan government. In addition, the independence

22. Otto Ondawame, spokesperson of the Free Papua Movement, correspondence with Timo Kivimäki, November–December 1999.

23. Prai interview; see also OPM, *The Basic Political Program of the OPM* (Malmö, Sweden: OPM International Information Office, 1998). While this document presents itself as an OPM document, it represents only one group, Jakob Prai's faction of the organization. However, ideologically different factions tend to share most of the opinions, while being divided on matters of persons.

24. Osborne, *Indonesia's Secret War;* Prai interview.

movement is divided into regional and political sub-factions. Factionalism between regions and groups of rebels has been exacerbated by the geographical setting of the struggle: the Papuan population consists of around 250 different tribal groups, many of them living in isolated areas.

The secession of East Timor after the U.N.-supervised referendum in 1999, and the subsequent establishment of the Papuan Presidium Council, left the independence movement more vulnerable than previously. So have apparent growing divisions within it. The main divide seems to be between those who support autonomy as a step toward independence, and those who reject anything except outright independence. The Papuan elite, government institutions, and moderate non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often belong to the first group, while the general public, the OPM, radical NGOs, and the politically active Papuan diaspora (which has continued factionalism abroad but seems united against autonomy) generally reject autonomy proposals.

The former side tends to accept diplomacy, while the latter has lost faith in dialogue. These perceptions also tend to be divided between elite and non-elite followers of independence. According to a well-educated elite activist, "We must take one step at a time. There are still too many differences amongst ourselves, and besides, we also have to be realistic towards what Indonesia can give us."[25] However, according to the less sophisticated, non-elite view, "Diplomacy doesn't work. Look, now they have arrested Theys and he has done nothing wrong. That's why we [the OPM] have to force them to listen to us."[26]

Differences between personalities also feed division. For example, the role of the late Theys Eluay, the former chairman of the Papuan Presidium Council who was assassinated in late 2001, also provoked divisions in the movement. While revered by many ordinary people in the Jayapura/Sentani area as a local leader of the independence struggle, and by the international media as the sole leader of the Papuan independence movement, many were also skeptical about his engagement in the effort. Distrust of Eluay stemmed from his alleged past as a member of Gerakan Merah/Putih (Red and White Movement, a nationalist Indonesian organization) and of Golkar (the ruling party under Suharto). As one independence-minded intellectual commented, "He [Eluay] is trying to get pardoned for past sins? Who is this man? What does

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25. Activist2, Papuan activist interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

26. OPM1, OPM fighter, interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

he want?"[27] According to a native activist, "He is just talking empty talk. There is nothing in it. He's an opportunist."[28]

Finally, the Papuan nationalist construction of the reality of the conflict is divided by ethnicity. When describing the conflict, many Papuans term it an ethnic conflict, emphasizing the racial and cultural differences between native Papuans and foreign Indonesians. One NGO activist interviewed explained how her group worked to "re-papuanize" the Papuans who, in their view, had been misled by Indonesianization campaigns. In practice, this NGO group was teaching Papuan communities to preserve traditional values: eat sweet potato instead of rice and refrain from intermarriage with foreigners because their Papuanness would suffer from gradual dilution. Also, with regard to religion, the differences are emphasized. The mainly Christian Papuans often refer to the Muslim immigration as a sort of Islamic fifth column. The reported increased presence of Laskar Jihad fighters in Papua is of particular concern to the Papuan population. However, ethnicity also divides Papuans, and does not simply make Papua different from Indonesia. The difficulties of communicating explain some of the ethnic and regional divisions within Papua: If Papuan groups are too far away from each other, and if they speak different languages, it is no wonder that they have difficulties in forming a Papuan identity. Furthermore, the racial tone of Papuan nationalism also makes it more difficult to avoid political factionalism ("tribalism") inside the movement: if ethnicity and race matter in relation to Indonesians, why would they not also matter in intra-Papuan affairs?

The Papuan nationalist movement is also divided functionally into groups with different roles in the independence battle. The Papuan response to the pro-Indonesia militia group SMP is the black-clad Satgas Papua (SP, Papuan Task Force), a pro-Papuan, pro-independence civil militia, which was banned in late 2000 but continues its activity underground. Established on the initiative of the late Theys Eluay around the time of the first meeting of the Papuan Presidium Council in June 2000, the SP was given the task of maintaining peace and security during the gathering. Its job was mainly to make security checks at the entrance and it succeeded in confiscating a number of weapons. Subsequently, the SP has concentrated on providing security at (semi)official gatherings and demonstrations, for example, when then-Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri visited Papua in 2001. The SP also provides security

27. Int1, Papuan intellectual, interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.
28. NGO3, Papuan activist interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

for local communities or businesses, which in return pay for their protection with money or goods.[29]

An important feature of the SP is its significant influence on the mood of the Papuan public. By posing and marching in the streets in their black uniforms with the morning star flag openly visible, the SP is sure to have had a strong effect on the general feeling among the Papuans. A militia member who was interviewed also emphasized the SP's role of policing, in matters where the Indonesian police couldn't manage. An interesting fresh detail about the SP is that for several months it has sent groups of "cadet" members to OPM camps, to receive military training by OPM rebels.[30]

Concepts of Decentralization and Autonomy in the Papuan Context

In political science, there are many conceptions of autonomy. Generally, interpretations of political autonomy imply a greater or lesser authority over administrative, legislative, cultural, and personal matters in the territory subject to autonomy. The important thing is the relation to the mother state. Since autonomy is not synonymous with independence, it implies a connection with another authoritative entity, a state or a group of states. Most variations in conceptions stem from the differing levels of power distribution from the state to the autonomous entity. In this paper, we shall adopt Ruth Lapidoth's concept of an eclectic description of autonomy: "A territorial political autonomy is an arrangement aiming at granting to a group that differs from the majority of the population in the state, but that constitutes the majority in a specific region, a means by which it can express its distinct identity."[31] These powers are usually related to social affairs and cultural and economic matters. Lapidoth sees four main areas of power to be distributed:

- Powers reserved for the central authority
- Powers fully transferred to the autonomous entity
- Parallel powers
- Jointly exercised powers

For this article, the relation between autonomy and decentralization is the most relevant. For Lapidoth, the main differences are as follows: ". . . decentralization involves solely a delegation of powers, autonomy assumes a transfer of powers. Decentralization may include the limited participation of

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29. SP1, Satgas Papua militiaman, interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

30. SP1, Satgas Papua militiaman, interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

31. Ruth Lapidoth, *Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), p. 33.

locally elected [persons] in the regional authorities, whereas in . . . autonomy it is the basic assumption that all the transferred functions are exercised by locally elected representatives."[32] She further notes that the concept of decentralization is liable to government control and supervision. But in the case of autonomy, government interference can only be justified in extreme cases. To sum up, the difference between decentralization and autonomy is a comparison of levels of authority, diffused from state to substate entity.

In Papua, the options of distribution of power between Jakarta and Papua are perceived to be the following: (a) central authority, (b) decentralization within a unified state, (c) decentralization/autonomization within a federalist system, and (d) the complete separation of West Papua from Indonesia. The distinction between delegation and transfer of authority plays an important role in the debate, even if this distinction is not recognized. Radical Papuan nationalists have never believed in the genuineness of any power-sharing arrangements (they feel these mean decentralization rather than autonomization), while the "compromisers and diplomats," as well as the Indonesian nationalists, view every step toward greater autonomy as a step toward genuine freedom for Papua. Two different autonomy proposals have been debated. With regard to Papua, Law No. 21/2001, the so-called Special Autonomy Bill, was passed by the Indonesian parliament last year. This bill will give more autonomy to the country's easternmost province to manage its own affairs in the socio-cultural, political, and economic fields. Perhaps most importantly, it will give the province a greater portion of the revenue from its local natural resources. However, the Special Autonomy Bill was met with resistance in Papua. In December 2001, huge rallies and demonstrations were organized to oppose the bill. The Papuan Presidium Council rejected the Indonesian initiative, saying it was not the result of a genuine dialogue between the central authority and Papuans. Furthermore, the Council has argued that the bill should not be introduced before the murder is solved of Theys Eluay, the late chairman of the Council who was assassinated in late 2001. The other proposal was the Papuan Autonomy Proposal, which was put forward by the Papuan Presidium Council and rejected by the Indonesian parliament last year. The Papuan initiative was rejected because on several points it went against the principles of a unitary state, with provisions for a Papuan national anthem and flag.

The word "autonomy" has been adversely framed in Papuan political discourse. After the popular referendum in East Timor, where autonomy was contrasted with the option of independence, the word "autonomy" took on an almost precisely opposite meaning from the one Lapidoth has introduced: instead of meaning a process where the central authority loses some of its

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32. Lapidoth, ibid., p. 51.

powers permanently to the regional entity, "autonomy" has acquired a connotation suggesting some delegation of power as a quid pro quo for burying the independence option. Instead of being a process of autonomization, where the permanent loss of power would be from the central authority, autonomy proposals are seen by Papuan nationalists as meaning the loss of the dream of sovereignty. Without understanding the divergence of the term "autonomy" in the Papuan discourse from its use in standard political science discourse, one cannot really make sense of the fierce resistance of Papuan nationalists to the idea of autonomy.

The view that autonomization is in contradiction to the independence process is perfectly rational within the general construction of the Papuan conflict as a colonial battle. For those Indonesians who perceive Papuan conflict as a problem of law and order, autonomy is naturally a compromise with the "criminals" demanding independence. But for the Papuan radical nationalists, to accept autonomy (as they define it in the post-East Timor setting) would mean a compromise by their side, because waging a battle against the colonial master already implies the de jure independence of West Papua. Autonomy, for them, would mean an arrangement where Papuans would permanently surrender part of that de jure sovereignty to Indonesia. Despite fundamental differences between the Papuan-nationalist and Indonesian constructions, it seems that most of the violent Papuan-nationalist activities are motivated by such problems, currently being addressed in the Indonesian decentralization/autonomy debate.

Thus, some of the measures to decentralize power and democratize the structures of Indonesian political power might reduce grievances that motivate violence, and thus de-escalate conflict, while not resolving it. At the same time, certain elements of the democratization and decentralization/autonomization process tend to give rise to opportunities for violent mobilization among Papuan nationalists. How democratic decentralization creates violent opportunities while at the same time reducing grievances will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

From Aspirations to Expectations and Demands

Within the construction of a colonialist battle it is natural and perfectly rational to calculate the costs and opportunities of successful decolonization. Despite the nationalist rhetoric suggesting that independence is more important than anything else, even heroes of independence often calculate costs and benefits. An image of complete (irrational) commitment to the cause of independence naturally benefits the bargaining power of the freedom fighters, but in reality heroes of the anti-colonialist battle have always been rewarded with high positions and other benefits in a newly independent state. On the other

hand, the costs of the battle naturally depend on how far away on the horizon victory lies. Thus, calculations of "expected utility" of fighting depend heavily on how close Papuan independence is estimated to be. The process of democratization has opened up possibilities for a more open discussion and mobilization of opposition to the power of Jakarta in Papua. Furthermore, political and economic turbulence in Indonesia, with the increasing trend toward disintegration, and the experience of East Timorese secession, have strengthened the perception among Papuan nationalists that West Papuan independence is right around the corner. Ambiguous promises, especially those related to the Papuan Presidium Council, have further consolidated these feelings. Papua clearly exemplifies the general logic of the overconfidence of warring parties in their own power position in conflicts.[33] The process from these developments to the perception of increased opportunities deserves a closer look.

   In most interviews with Papuan nationalists, signals were interpreted in an overly optimistic manner (very different from how they were interpreted by Indonesian nationalists). A good example is a letter from the U.S. Senate dated May 22, 1998, in which a group of senators appealed to then-President B. J. Habibie to work for peace in Irian Jaya and to listen to the opinions of local people. This public letter was interpreted by the independence movement as a sign of U.S. support for the cause of the OPM, which it obviously was not. Consequently, the Reform Forum of Students and the People of Sorong (Forum Reformasi Mahasiswa dan Masyarakat Sorong Irian Jaya) presented a "Political Position Paper" at a pro-independence demonstration in Sorong on July 2, 1998, in which the district council and the "Indonesian occupiers" were asked to pay attention to appeals from American officials to the government of Indonesia regarding self-determination for the people of West Papua. A copy of the Senate letter was also publicized by the organizers of a demonstration in Biak in July 1998.[34] Copies were referred to and actually shown in several interviews by the authors of Papuan nationalists. While the United States has been rather careful with its declarations, and it might seem surprising that the OPM could possibly perceive Washington as supporting Papuan independence, there are several other international actors, including non-governmental human rights groups and environmental and church organizations, whose declarations and communications are more ambiguous, and sometimes even openly favorable and optimistic, toward the OPM's aspirations. As has been shown in the case of East Timor, in Papua

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33. Gochman, "Studies of International Violence," pp. 51–53.
34. Human Rights Watch, *World Report, Indonesia. Human Rights and Pro-Independence Actions in Irian Jaya* (Washington D.C.: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

as well these organizations, without intending to, have sometimes helped transform separatist aspirations into expectations that justify violence.[35]

All in all, it seems clear from our interviews with OPM and Satgas Papua members that former aspirations for Papuan independence have now evolved into *expectations* of independence. This development has materialized mainly because of recent developments in the domestic political situation in Indonesia. The fact that a growing part of the Papuan public[36] believes independence is approaching has a self-enhancing effect and causes more people to join the independence movement either as NGO workers, OPM informers or fighters, or simply as supporters who attend pro-independence rallies or wear items such as T-shirts featuring the Papuan flag and various independence slogans. In our interviews of Papuan nationalists, there seemed to be a perfect correlation between the radical preparedness to resort to an armed "anti-colonialist" struggle and a strong feeling that West Papuan independence is about to be realized. An exemplar of this logic is an OPM fighter interviewed for this study, who sold his kiosk to join the OPM. When asked why he gave up his easy life as a kiosk owner, he simply said that he felt West Papua would become independent very soon, and he wanted to be part of the decolonization process. He also seemed to think that it was none other than the president of Indonesia at the time, Abdurrahman Wahid, who supported the idea of West Papuan independence.[37]

Junctures Motivating Papuan Nationalism

At least four crucial junctures in recent times have motivated increased support for Papuan nationalism and secession.

East Timor's secession. This was crucial because many Papuans have identified their struggle with the East Timorese fight for independence. The relatively successful separation of East Timor is often mentioned as a reason to believe that Papua, too, would be able to separate from Indonesia, despite the fact that the new government in East Timor has steadfastly refused to offer any support or encouragement to secessionist movements within Indonesia.

Perceived general disintegration trend. The East Timor experience has also given birth to a general perception of a trend toward national disintegration, especially in Aceh and Papua. This escalating chain of appeals for separation or autonomy has in turn stimulated the Papuans' sense of the legitimacy of

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35. See Timo Kivimäki, "Kansainvälinen aktivismi johti kärsimättömään politiikkaan" [International activism and impatient policies] (in Finnish), *Ydin* [Core] no. 4 (June 2000), pp. 42–43.

36. This claim is based on Ruben Thorning's participatory observation during several month stays in Papua in the 1990s and 2000s.

37. OPM2, OPM fighter interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the framework of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, May 2001.

their case. The notion of disintegration has also enhanced motivation for anti-government action, by supporting a perception that the Indonesian state has weakened and might even be on the verge of collapsing. Many Papuans interviewed emphasized the importance, for the independence movement, of striking now, when the state is weak, and when foreign observers are eyeing the country.

Establishment of the Papuan Presidium Council.   Another important motivating factor was the establishment of the PPC (Dewan Papua) in June 2000. The fact that Papuans were now able to openly discuss matters of separation and Papuan nationalism, with perceived support from Wahid, gave many Papuans reason to believe that independence was approaching. Among the people interviewed, several noted that this event directly motivated their joining the independence movement.[38]

Ambiguous promises.   The Papuan community in general and the independence movement in particular have received a large number of ambiguous promises from the Indonesian political elite. Many of the promises coming from former President Wahid have also worked as a motivational factor for Papuan nationalism. Such promises and concessions include legalization of the Papuan flag (as a cultural flag), support for the PPC, acceptance of the name change from Irian Jaya to Papua, among others. The ambiguity of the promises lies in the fact that many were later withdrawn, changed, or simply not kept. A good example is related to President Wahid's acceptance of the legalization of Papuan flag raisings. The positive presidential attitude was rarely reflected in the practice of security forces stationed in the province, who maintained their practice of clamping down on such events. Also, the name change to Papua caused much debate in Parliament, and today the province still is mostly referred to as Irian Jaya in official discourse, although it has been officially renamed Papua. Wahid's stance on developments in Papua has worked as a motivational factor for the Papuans in two ways. By expressing understanding for Papuan grief and making statements that could be interpreted as being directly supportive of Papuan separation he has, in the Papuan context, enhanced the legitimacy for separation. On the other hand, Wahid's concessions and compromises too often dissolved into ambiguity, with two effects. Papuans either simply interpreted Wahid's statements as supportive of their own side, ignoring the ambiguity and the opposition from Parliament which often followed, or they perceived the statements as invalid, thus causing confusion and distrust which again led to a shrinking of state legitimacy. In other words, what followed was simply an increase in the perceived opportunities for an anti-colonial fight as a result of growing over-

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38. Interviews, SP1 and OPM1, May 2001.

confidence on the Papuan-nationalist side, or alternatively, an increase of distrust vis-à-vis the inconsistency of the Indonesian approach in Papua. Whether the policies of President Megawati Sukarnoputri are perceived as more consistent remains to be seen.

Increasing Papuan Confidence

Growing Papuan confidence is transforming the traditional desires of an oppressed people into the new demands of a determined revolutionary movement. This increasing confidence is important when analyzing the Papuan case. The strengthening of the Papuan position vis-à-vis the Indonesian authorities in turn legitimizes further action on the part of the Papuans. The concessions by the state in the reformation era, in Papuan eyes, validate the justness of their cause. Thus, concessions from Indonesia, which are meant to appease secessionists, in this way encourage and legitimize a continued struggle. It is partly these concessions that have given the Papuans the confidence to anticipate the coming of independence, and thus to justify their demands of the Indonesian authorities. The increased focus on separatism in Papua has also strengthened the positions of Papuans in exile who, in many cases, have been advocating Papuan independence for decades. The relatively small Papuan diaspora, particularly in Australia, the Netherlands, and Sweden, is supported by what seems to be a growing number of church organizations, plus NGOs interested in human rights, cultural rights, and environmental issues in Papua. These actors have supported independence activities such as solidarity meetings and conferences on human rights in Indonesia.

Potential for the Alleviation of Grievances by Compromises

The explicit disputes between Indonesian and Papuan nationalists might be tied to conflicting demands and values concerning the political status of Papua. However, much of the violence, especially on the Papuan side, has been related to questions of power distribution, such as political decision-making power, the question of revenues and land rights, control over the coercive apparatus, and over cultural and educational institutions, and symbols. All these are matters that can be discussed within the context of an autonomy proposal. Thus, even though the decentralization/autonomization process can never settle any of the disputes of Papuan and Indonesian nationalists, it might alleviate some of the grievances and in turn lower the intensity of violence in Papua.

The main grievances among many Papuans are related to human-rights abuses and the perception of an Indonesian colonialist attitude. The difficulty of complying with human rights norms is clearly related to the fact that

Papuans are portrayed in some Indonesian political rhetoric as less developed than Indonesians, and sometimes even as something less than human. Many Papuans interviewed expressed feelings of being looked down on by Indonesians, sometimes expressed through physical or verbal abuse. The interviewees also said they found it difficult to compete economically or within the educational system. Indonesians, be they transmigrants/migrants, government officials, or security personnel, are generally seen to have a superior attitude toward Papuans. This has caused deep resentment in the Papuan community and appears to spark Papuan activity aimed at rectifying their sense of lost dignity. To initiate actual steps to democratically survey the human rights practices and to probe violators, as promised by President Megawati in her Independence Day speech, would be a big step forward in decreasing the intensity of Papuan rebellious violence.[39]

The establishment of a Papuan police force is another demand put forward in the Papuan Autonomy proposal, but enrolling greater numbers of Papuans into local police/army units is not likely to be enough.[40] A change in the security apparatus's operating style is even more crucial. Papuans in the security forces often feel pressured to undertake harsh methods toward fellow Papuans in order to prove their institutional loyalty.[41] There seems to be a willingness on the part of the central Indonesian administration to take measures to Papuanize the local military and police presence. In many parts of Indonesia, there is also a growing trend toward favoring *putra daerah* (sons of the region) for jobs and appointments. While this trend could substantially reduce violence between the central administration and the Papuans, the non-racial logic of the Indonesian credo "Unity in Diversity" cannot accommodate too much farfetched affirmative action in favor of the Papuans.

The racialist conception of cultural rights, widely shared among Papuan nationalists, does not go well with the Indonesian non-racialism. While non-racial order is held by Indonesian nationalists as the only fair solution, for Papuan nationalists it is often perceived as a smokescreen for Asian dominance of Melanesian Papuans. Many Papuans say they fear the influx of transmigrants, and there are many myths concerning their numbers and religious affiliations. In this suspicious setting, intermarriage between natives and transmigrants is also seen as a problem because it would in their view

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39. *Jakarta Post*, September 18, 2001.

40. Ethnically based demands for the establishment of a Papuan police force were made public and explicit in the Autonomy Proposal by a group of independence-minded community leaders, the so-called Team of 100. There have also been demands to keep the Papuan Presidium Council Papuanized and give it more power in the administration of Papua. Also the Papuanization of the institutions of governor and vice governor has been explicitly demanded.

41. Papuan TNI soldier "PTN1," interviewed by Ruben Thorning within the context of the Indonesian Conflict Studies Network, April 2001.

eventually lead to the racial dilution of Papua. Transmigration is often re-
ferred to as a deliberate attempt, via government policy, to "turn Papuans into
a racial and cultural minority in their own land."[42] It is clear that years of
transmigration into the sparsely populated province have created a Papuan
perception of a serious societal security threat from Indonesia. Since trans-
migrants are easier targets than the Indonesian government itself, they occa-
sionally become "displaced targets" of Papuan frustration toward
Indonesia.[43] Perhaps the clearest example of this was the so-called Wamena
Tragedy, which refers to a violent incident in the highland town of Wamena
on October 6, 2001. Papuans, apparently frustrated about the security forces'
brutal dispersal of a flag-raising crowd, went on a rampage that left more
than 20 transmigrants dead and several dozen wounded.

Within a polity where race is not an issue, and where there is no formal
system of racial classification, except for Chinese and other citizens of for-
eign descent, it is difficult to set racial limitations to migration policies. The
halting of transmigration programs after the eruption of serious violence has
simply been a reaction to the acute problems violence has spawned. Within
the construction of the Indonesian polity as "Unity in Diversity," it will be
difficult to make any permanent decisions on the rights of Indonesians based
on racial differences. Besides the transmigration program, there are free mi-
grants in Papua too, some of them also resented by some Papuans, and
preventing their entry would not be possible either, as long as Indonesia sub-
scribes to the non-racial notion of state and citizenship.

Another problem with some of the cultural grievances that make it difficult
within the existing constructions of the Papuan reality to end the "Indonesian
superiority complex" is that many of the demands concerning racial empow-
erment of the Papuans are very political, instead of being merely cultural.
Part of the inter-textual reality of Papuan vs. Indonesian conflict is that the
Papuans have to articulate and demonstrate their interpretation of reality in a
way that is physically safe for themselves. Going public with demands for
independence is a risky strategy, while the promotion of Papuan culture can
in fact promote the same Papuan nationalist interests in a safer way. While
the activists in the cultural NGOs tend to admit that their work is part of the
political independence battle, they also need to decorate their messages with
cultural signals in order to avoid looking subversive to the Indonesian state
seeking to protect its political unity via cultural diversity.

To strongly support the cultural empowerment of Papuans would then
mean that Indonesians would actually have to support activities that in fact

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42. Papuan activist, "NGO1," interviewed by Ruben Thorning in the context of the Indone-
sian Conflict Studies Network, April 2001.
43. For an excellent analysis of scapegoating and selecting "realistic," displaced targets for
frustrated aggression, see Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, pp. 136–42.

contradict their own political objectives. Demands related to desires for symbolic or culturally related concessions from the Indonesian state, would, if granted, assuage wounded Papuan pride and dignity, but at the same time these concessions would give opportunities to the Papuan mobilization for independence. This was exemplified when then-President Wahid took a tolerant stand on the question of flag raisings. For Indonesians, this was justified in the name of cultural tolerance, but many Papuan cultural activists pointed out that their flag was not something cultural, but a political symbol of independent West Papua. As a result, the frequency of flag raisings and other kinds of Papuan nationalist mobilization increased.

Within the opposing constructions of the Papuan conflict, it seems that economic grievances may be the easiest to address. This could be done by allocating a greater amount of revenue for development in the province, as is demanded in the Papuan autonomy proposal. Infrastructure, health, and education facilities should be given high priority. Also, the alleged discrimination when employing government officials or public servants should be taken into consideration. Many Papuans interviewed said it was hard to advance in the public sector, and one of their most vehement demands was for improvement of education.

Democratic Decentralization: A Way to Peace in Papua?

Repressive action by non-Papuan Indonesian forces (especially violence that does not only punish diehard militant guerrillas but targets "bystanders" as well) reinforces the perception of an anti-colonialist battle. Such repression furthermore bolsters the grievances motivating violent retaliation among Papuans, within the anti-colonialist construction. The economic exploitation of Papua for the benefit of Jakarta, and the widely perceived corruption of officials in Papua, reinforce the myths within which Papuan resistance is seen as necessary and rational by the Papuan nationalists. At the same time, measures of regional empowerment might also increase the potential for conflict. Compromises that give an impression of Indonesian weakness increase the perceived utility of rebellious violence by strengthening the illusion that West Papuan independence is near. Compromises can lead to overconfidence, if Papuans consider their own position strengthened vis-à-vis a weakened state.

At present, a great part of the Papuan public is bound to support a declaration of independence, and they are likely to mobilize to defend it, if crucial demands in the Papuan Autonomy Proposal are ignored. Therefore, a policy attempting to alleviate grievances would decrease the conflict potential and work positively against the myths of colonialist construction. Repressive methods are likely to increase resistance and the conflict potential. Many of the decentralization measures could easily reduce the grievances that moti-

vate separatist violence in Papua. While this might not solve the disputes or the overall conflict, it could potentially lower the intensity of rebellious violence. However, only some of the concessions toward regional empowerment in the province are actually available for Indonesia, given the limitations of the Indonesian-nationalist construction of reality. While some of the grievances could clearly be addressed within the framework of decentralization, it seems unlikely that any decisions could immediately reduce political tensions. This is largely because, as has often been pointed out in our interviews, Papuan nationals do not have much confidence in the government. This impression can only be reversed by actually implementing policy changes. During this era of reform, the Papuans have received plenty of concessions in the shape of verbal regrets and apologies from Indonesian presidents ranging from Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie to Megawati Sukarnoputri. Yet, concrete actions have not been forthcoming to the extent deemed satisfactory by the Papuans. In some cases, the opposite has been the case, as human rights abuses by the security forces seem to have increased during the past years.

While terminating the anti-Indonesian myths and the more emotional part of the conflict is a long-term project, concrete measures to empower Papuans economically and educationally, as well as to return some control over the local political and security apparatus, could be a starting point in seeking a Papuan peace. Such steps would gradually reverse distrust and lower the tension in Papua, thereby creating the foundations for a wider peace.