



## | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Indonesianization of West Papua: Development of Indonesia's Attitudes and Policies towards West Papua and the Dynamics of the Papua Freedom Movement

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## | ABSTRACT

The Indonesianization of Papua project, which has been going on since 1963, has not yet reached the ideal stage. The rise of the post-2000s separatist movement indicates a need to re-read the relationship between Indonesia and West Papua, an examination of past and current events. This study aims to examine the dynamics of Indonesia's attitude and policy towards West Papua, the discourse, and the tension between Indonesia and the Papua freedom movement. This study uses a historical approach by diachronically reviewing how the Indonesian occupation and the Indonesianization project began and its relation to resistance from the Papuan community with the manifestation of the existence of the Papua Freedom Organization. In addition, to capture the synchronic dimension of the current situation, the writer also interviewed several key figures in the integration-and-disintegration of Papua as the primary data source. Indonesia has had a very monochromatic perspective of Papua throughout history, and they tend to ignore Papua as an entity with a will. The military approach and inappropriate development carried out by the Indonesian Government caused the strengthening of the Papuan independence movement. At this point, the Indonesian Government needs a new approach to negotiate its position with the West Papuan community and change the militaristic approach still being used in West Papua. The development approach taken by the current President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, towards West Papua does not seem to be reflected when we see how the stigmatization of Papua continues in the Government's political communication practices related to Papua.

## | KEYWORDS

Indonesianization, West Papua, Dynamics, Freedom Movement, Papua Freedom Discourse |

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## 1. Introduction

The Indonesianization project of West Papua has occurred since 1963 when the integration process of West Papua as a part of Indonesia started (Gietzelt, 1989). However, after almost 60 years after the process started with the New York Agreement, integration hasn't reached its ideal phase (Wangge & Lawson, 2021; Druce, 2020). We can notice this from the rise of post-2000s separatist movements in West Papua, which occurred at the same time with the increasing amount of support from other countries (Lantang & Tambunan, 2020; Blades, 2018). There were also other opinions from Indonesia itself, which called for a referendum for the Papuans, and this created an even more complex situation (Price, 2020). The internal political condition related to West Papua as a geographic area and ethnic group has justified long-term colonialism with various violence-based approaches which occurred

during the integration process. This created a need for a review of the next steps to be made by Indonesia and West Papua (Lawson, 2017; Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2013; Kirsch, 2010; King, 2004).

In 1975, Roosman described the Indonesianization process of West Papua as follows:

*"...encompasses a complex system of programs which are aimed at adjusting the population of Irian Jaya to the cultural, economic, and political life of the Indonesians through assimilation with other ethnic groups and participation in the cultural, economic, and political life in Indonesia."* (Roosman, 1975).

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However, the process, which at first was meant to be ideal, as assimilation of various aspects between West Papua and Indonesia, faced numerous challenges related to the presence of natural resources in West Papua. Systematic exploitation of natural resources, destruction of resources and environment in West Papua, transmigration scheme, and forced relocation have created massive environmental damage which spread to various areas in West Papua, damaged the traditional subsistence farming practices, and also caused new diseases, malnutrition, and increasing death rate within the West Papua communities (Brusndige et al., 2004).

The security approach, which was supported by the military and the physical development done during the periods of Sukarno and Suharto, not only made the situation in Papua worse but also added fuel to the disparity and racism sentiments between the Papuans (who originated from Melanesian race). The transmigration design, which did not include proper assimilation, made the Papuans scared of economic domination from non-Papuans. Government officials and residents who were immigrants (read: settlers) often sees the natives as second-class citizens. (Suriadireja, 1987). Meanwhile, the fact that Freeport (a company that is mining copper and gold in Papua) has not been able to create significant development and welfare effect for the community are making the Papuan community feel exploited without any meaningful reciprocity (Leith, 2002).

Further studies from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences have shown there are four sources of conflicts in Papua, namely marginalization of indigenous people of Papuan; failed development; Human Rights violations and military violence; and the problematic integration process from Papua to Indonesia (Muridan, 2009). Efforts made by the Government of Indonesia by focusing on infrastructure development to expand economic connectivity in Papua are not supported by human approaches. Data shows that from early 2010 to April 2021, there were 299 violence cases in Papua, with 395 deaths and 1579 injuries due to gunshots, arrow wounds, or stabs from sharp weapons (Taher, 2021). These occurrences show the lack of civil rights and humanity.

The government's attitude, in their effort to fix the situation and obtain a mutual agreement with West Papuans communities, has never been optimal. One of the gestures that created a wave of protests, not only from West Papuans communities but also from the international community, was when the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Mahfud MD, made a vulgar statement on April 2021 that the Papua freedom movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka* or OPM), which was previously categorized as Armed Criminal Group (*Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata* or KKB), are terrorists (Robie, 2021). Even though there are other movements that called for Free Papua, as a step, this act had bigger implications. This can be seen as stigmatization towards a movement that calls for independence, created a psycho-social effect, and showed the aggressive side of the Indonesian Government towards one of their areas, which called for a referendum.

OPM is a part of West Papuans' political resistance. Basically, the OPM is a paramilitary organization that imitates the state's militarized approach and uses guerrilla violence as its main political tactic. Furthermore, OPM becomes a movement and symbolic statue of any kind of Papua freedom movement. OPM also took diplomatic steps, especially with their political leaders who are living in exile in the Netherlands, Australia, and other Pacific countries, creating a diplomatic profile related to West Papua. This dualism is proven effective for OPM, and they managed to survive for more than 50 years since they first raised the Morning Star (*Bintang Kejora*) flag, a representation of the West Papua independence, in 1965. (Burns, 1987; Tebay, 2005; Kirsch, 2010). The OPM became the milestone of resistance and a symbol of the Papua freedom movement. Apart from the OPM, there are other movements that show the diplomatic route of Free Papua's struggles.



**Figure 1. Indonesia Map – West Papua, 2021**

Efforts made by the Indonesian Government to obtain support from other countries related to their foreign policies are faced with their own militaristic approach. Other countries tend to support the freedom of West Papua, and in part, this is also caused by the Indonesian Government itself when they limit access for local and foreign journalists in West Papua. The area is dubbed a "blind spot" for the media, especially foreign journalists (Perrottet & Robie, 2011; Leadbeater, 2008). Indonesia even prohibited foreign journalists and media workers from entering West Papua. Only a handful of journalists managed to enter the West Papua area, and most of them didn't use the official route (Robie, 2013). When the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, declared he would allow journalists to enter West Papua on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, his statement was considered nothing more than lip service since there were still numerous obstacles to obtaining an entry permit to West Papua (Blades, 2016). Therefore, the imbalance of news reporting related to the situation in West Papua made the global communities more suspicious of Human Rights violations in West Papua (Adiprasetyo, 2021). The situation also contributed to the growth of sympathy towards the movements for West Papua's freedom from Indonesia.

The purpose of this study is to review the dynamics of Indonesia's attitude and policies towards West Papua and the tensions made with the movement and discourse of Papua freedom. Hopefully, with a better understanding of the complicated situation in West Papua, we will learn the most optimum way to provide choices and better conditions for the people of West Papua. This study uses a historical approach by diachronically reviewing the occupation of Indonesia and the start of the Indonesianization project, and the relations with resistance movements from West Papuan communities by manifesting the presence of various Papua freedom movements. In addition, to capture the synchronic dimensions of the current situation, key figures of the integration-disintegration Papua conflicts were also interviewed as the prime source of data.

## 2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach by trying to build a social reconstruction of reality and its dynamics and understanding the meanings of the situation in West Papua (Gumilar, 2005). This study includes the process, events, authenticity, and the freedom of explanation of the studies which took place (Harrison, 2007).

This study relies on the method of historical analysis, with documentation studies and interviews with the key figures of Papua freedom discourse (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Hopefully, with careful examinations of proofs and documents, this research can obtain an understanding of the past and read the patterns which occurred in the relations between Indonesia's Government attitude and policies for West Papua with the birth of the Papua freedom movement, a manifestation of the diachronic form of Papua freedom movement (Widdersheim, 2018). Interviews with key figures were conducted to obtain a synchronic description of the situation and also to get a perspective of history and events, which are described chronologically in this study. Below is the list of informants who were interviewed for this study in the period 2020-2021:

**Table 1. List of Main Interviewees**

No.	Name	Affiliation
1.	Buchtar Tabuni	Chief of National Committee of West Papua – Komite Nasional Papua Barat (KNPB)
2.	Filep Karma	Political Exiles of Papua, Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM)

3.	John Gobay	Deputy Secretary II, Board of Indigenous People of Papua
4.	Latifah Anum Siregar	Director of Democracy Alliance for Papua (AIDP)
5.	Laus Rumayon	Technical Expert of Papua in Deputy 5, President Staff Office
6.	Matheus Adadikam	Director of ELSHAM Papua
7.	Michael Manufandu	Ambassador of Papua's Guardian
8.	Nicholas Simion Messet	Papua Political Exiles former – Papua Freedom Movement
9.	Octavianus Mote	West Papuan Liberation Movement
10.	Ones Suhuniap	National Spokesman of KNPB

The interview process was done in-person and virtually (with the Zoom application). All the interviews were recorded, and each interview was transcribed verbatim and codified with NVivo 11 application to be analyzed and categorized based on the key findings.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 It Started with a Dispute

The efforts to integrate West Papua as a part of Indonesia have occurred since Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945. There was a debate on which areas should be a part of Indonesia after its independence from the Netherlands. Muhammad Hatta, Indonesia's Vice President, explained that ethnically and socially, residents of West Papua originated from the Melanesia race, while most of the Dutch East Indies' population originated from the Malay (Mongoloid) race. Hatta paid great care to ethnic positions, and he thought residents of West Papua had the right to be independent. Hatta was only Indonesia's founding father who believed that Papua could be independent.

"I want to state that I don't bother with Papua, and their fate can be decided by Papuans themselves. Papuans also have the right to be independent."

(Hatta in Bahar (Ed.), 1992).

At the same moment, Hatta also opposed Muhammad Yamin's views, who insisted that Papua was a part of Indonesia in the past. At the moment, Hatta considered Malaya and North Borneo (currently Malaysia) have closer resemblances with independent Indonesia compared to Papua. This is because most Malaya and North Borneo residents originated from the Malay race, similar to Indonesia (Chauvel, 2003).

Muhammad Yamin and Soekarno considered that politically, West Papua is related to and located in Tidore Sultanate; therefore, it can be considered a part of Indonesia. Both also agreed that Papua has huge natural resources, which can be inherited by Indonesia's future generations (Adams, 2014). Yamin even mentioned that Papua is a "*broeder volk*" (Rapport van de Commissie Nieuw-Guinea - Irian, 1950). Soekarno had the imagination to build Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke with a "Nusantara" imagination.

"Compared to our archipelago, West Irian is only a tiny part, but it is a part of our body. Will someone let one of their body parts be amputated without putting up a fight?"

(Soekarno in Adams, 2018)

The Netherlands insisted that West Papua should be separated from Indonesia because West Papua is independent (autonomy), economically and governmental, and was not included as a part of the Dutch East Indies (The Netherlands' occupation at that time). The Netherlands' cabinet, prior to the negotiation, has tried to avoid including Papua as a part of Indonesia. At the cabinet meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the minister for overseas territories, H. J. van Maarseveen provided a series of arguments: Indonesia has no moral rights over the area; the potential for development is bigger under the control of The Netherlands compared to Indonesia; the Netherlands needs a pied-à-terre in the Far East to receive pro-Netherlands people who go faced trouble in Indonesia (Chauvel & Bhakti, 2004). KPM (Dutch shipping company in Indonesia) must be able to use the ports in Papua; emigration to New Guinea offers a partial solution for overpopulation issues in the Netherlands; and Nugini is crucial for the Netherlands' navy (Ministerraad Notes, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949). Eventually, the Netherlands managed to pull out Papua from the sovereignty surrender efforts. Article 2 of

the agreement stated that Papua would remain under the Netherlands' rules - under the condition that at the end of the first year, the issue of Papua's future political status would be determined through negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Dichotomous views and disputes of control claims from both Indonesia and the Netherlands over West Papua were dominant issues from 1950 to 1960. Indonesia brought the issue of West Papua to the United Nations forums in 1954, 1955, 1957, and 1960 (Hartanto, 2005). However, Indonesia's diplomacy ended in a stalemate. Soekarno even stated, "Even within the United Nations there is no result at all. In fact, within the United Nations there were parties who said: I approve of the Dutch controlling West Irian" (*Di dalam PBB pun tiada hasil sama sekali. Malahan di dalam PBB itu ada pihak yang berkata: Menyetujui Belanda menguasai Irian Barat*) in Trikora's speech (Dirdjosuparto, 1998). The speech later marked the start of the military campaign to seize West Papua from the Netherlands.

### **3.2 A Dichotomous View of Papua and the Ignorance of Papua as an Entity**

The main problem from the perspective of Indonesia, which had just proclaimed its independence and sought to integrate West Papua as part of its territory, and the Netherlands, which was trying to build its colony, was that both of them positioned West Papua as a passive entity and tended to have no right to vote (Tudor, 2021). Given the situation in Indonesia's struggle for independence, West Papuans tended to be absent from the Indonesian nationalist movement, which was represented by an elite group from the lowlands who became the center of the colonial economy – which at that time was centered in Java and Sumatra (Anderson, 2015).

This situation is similar to what happened in India, Myanmar, and Vietnam, in which highlanders from the three now-sovereign countries didn't take part in the anti-colonial struggle (Michaud, 2000; Deka, 2005; Sadan, 2013). The difference is that in the three countries, the highlanders tend to experience colonization from the lowland countries/kingdoms, which both build resistance to western colonialism that attacks and oppresses them. Eventually, this created a continuity between people from the lowlands and highlands to form an alliance against European colonization. Meanwhile, what happened in Papua was very different. The remote location of Papua made the West Papuan community less likely to experience colonial oppression like the Dutch East Indies (Anderson, 2015). Relations between the Dutch and almost all Papuans tended to be absent from colony relationships, apart from the "*zending*" connection, where Dutch priests tried to spread religion to Papuan lands (Rutherford, 2006).

If the chronological order of typical colonial practices occurring in Southeast Asia is – first, lowland kingdoms were formed, then the highlands were colonized, and finally, Western colonialism dominated the lowland kingdoms (Scott, 2009) – what happened in West Papua was reversed, with lowland colonization in the plateau as the last phase. During the decolonization era that occurred after 1945, Assamese (India-Kachin), Montagnards (Vietnam), Kachin (Myanmar), Karen (Tibet), Wa (Northern Myanmar), and other highland tribes tried to distance themselves from the formation of states, effects of the decolonization. These ethnic groups tried to seek their own independence from the governments of European colonial powers, but their claims were not recognized by the post-colonial state (Anderson, 2015). In the context of West Papua, the Netherlands refused to include its territory in its negotiations with the new Indonesian republic (Bone, 1958).

The post-1945 Netherlands government steadfastly adhered to this position, which then prompted the psychological nuances of those seeking Indonesian independence to escape from the colony about the importance of Papua in the Indonesian nationalist spirit. West Papua was transformed as the "final battle" in an unfinished story of the Indonesian revolution. However, Papuans themselves became peripheral residents; their voices are marginalized in this high-level political game (van der Kroef 1968).

When Indonesia brought the issue of West Papua to the United Nations in 1954, Indonesian representatives at the United Nations acknowledged that the concept of a referendum was "*the weak*" point of Indonesia's argument. The referendum and independence itself are written in the UN charter and became the basis for the independence of third-world countries in the 1950-1970s. Other delegates hoped that the voices of indigenous Papuans would be heard (Palar, 1954).

This "dispute" continued until it was brought up and discussed internationally at the Round Table Conference in The Hague (23 August–02 November 1949). The decision was reached after being mediated by United Nations Commission on Indonesia (UNCI). Along with the issue of Indonesia's full sovereignty, it was finally agreed that the Sovereign Delegation Charter consisted of two articles, namely:

Article 1: The Netherlands handed sovereignty over Indonesia to the RIS without further conditions as an independent and fully sovereign country. The sovereignty will be transferred no later than December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

Article 2: The Netherlands does not hand over the Residency of Papua (Nieuw Guinea) to Indonesia, but it is still under the control of the Kingdom of the Netherlands until the next to be discussed the following year.

(In Raweyai, 2002).

The military approach has continued since the transfer of power in West Papua, from the Netherlands to Indonesia. The situation and conditions in West Papua are under tougher control by the military. Administration and civilian tasks in West Papua are also carried out with a military approach. It did not stop there - indirect intervention and pressure were further supported by the opening of the XVII Cendrawasih KODAM (Military Regional Command) on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1963, which was designated to carry out special operations for 4 years before the implementation of the referendum (Supriatma, 2013).

### **3.3 Militarism Approach and Papua Freedom Discourse**

West Papua, which was under the Netherlands' rule, raised the Morning Star (*Bintang Kejora*) flag and declared itself a nation on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1961. In response to this, the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno, launched *Tri Komando Rakyat* (Trikorra) on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1961, in Yogyakarta because he considered this a part of the Netherlands' decolonization politics in West Papua. The first purpose first was to stop the formation of the Netherlands colonial state of Papua. The second purpose was to raise the Red and White flag in West Papua, the homeland of Indonesia. The third purpose was to mobilize the general public to defend the independence and unity of the homeland and nation (Drooglever, 2009).

In addition to military efforts, Trikorra also shows political momentum for the Indonesian government. Trikorra directly pressured the Netherlands' government to agree to the New York Agreement on the West Papua resolution. This agreement was then signed on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1962. The initiation of Trikorra has accelerated the development of the New York Agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands on West Irian or New Guinea (Tuhana, 2001).

The exclusion of Papuans from the New York Agreement in 1962, which led to the abandonment of the decolonization process promised by the Netherlands, made the Papuans deeply disappointed. There was an accumulation of frustration, discontent over ill-treatment, discrimination, political domination, and, most importantly, a broader desire for self-determination and independence in West Papua (Anderson, 2015).

In the period of 1961 to 1969, Indonesia carried out a series of military operations to claim Papua and confronted Papuan independence fighters. The separatist movement in the form of armed resistance for the first time occurred in Kebar, Manokwari, on July 26, 1965. This resistance was led by Johannes Djambuani, with 400 people from Karun and Ayamaru tribes. In addition, the Arfak Tribe in Afai, Manokwari, launched a resistance led by Major Titular Lodewick Mandatjan. This was followed by Titular Captain Barent Mandatjan and Titular First Lieutenant Irogi Maedogda, who asked residents to flee to the forest. This moment also marked the birth of the Papua freedom movement (OPM), and although the name is often applied generally to any organization in West Papua that has its own idea of separation, the OPM itself as an independent organization is growing stronger with bigger networks (Ondawame, 2000).

From 1961 to 1969 there were successive military operations: Jayawijaya Operation in 1961-1962 (Amiruddin, 2010); Wisnumurti Operation (1963-1965); Sadar Operation (1965); Baratayudha Operation (1966-1967); *Wibawa* Operation (1967); and Pepera Special Operation (1961-1969). The military operations ignited more violence in West Papua, and anger towards Indonesia's government was even more accumulated. Clashes and fights occurred everywhere in West Papua.

On August 15, 1968, with the aid of a Bolivian diplomat, Ortiz Sanz, the United Nations encouraged Indonesia to hold a referendum for the Papuans, named "*Penentuan Pendapat Rakyat*" (Pepera) – *the people's opinion decision*. Indonesia and the UN Team held several discussions, one of which was about the appropriate method to conduct the referendum by considering the context and condition of the West Papua people. On February 18, 1969, Indonesia submitted a memorandum of recommendation to Ortiz Sanz on how to implement the Indonesian version of the Act of Free Choice. This required consultation with the United Nations, in accordance with the New York Agreement (Drooglever, 2009).

Basically, the method used was "*Musyawaharah*," or discussion, not a one-man-one-vote as the common international practice. The proposition was written in *The Indonesian Observer* newspaper on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1969, and in *The Djakarta Post* on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1969. Here are the propositions:

1. The referendum will be organized by Consultative Assembly in each district with a democratic discussion system.
2. The Consultative Assembly consists of three representatives, namely the community (directly elected), functional (political, social, cultural, and religious representatives), and traditional (representatives from ethnic groups).

(In Raweyai, 2002).

Before *Pepera* took place, the people of West Papua sent a petition to Ortiz Sanz, which was mostly a statement of anti-Indonesian stance. He received many petitions from the people of West Papua, which he then reported to the UN General Assembly. The petition includes those who are pro-Indonesian, anti-Indonesian, and neutral. In the United Nations archives in New York, from his

first visit to West Papua (22 August 1968) until 30 April 1969, there were 156 of 179 petitions — 59 pro-Indonesian petitions, 95 anti-Indonesian petitions, and 2 neutral petitions (Drooglever, 2009).

Indonesia established "*Dewan Musyawarah Pepera*" (DMP) –*Board of Pepera* – in each district, and the process ended in June 1969. It was the DMP who would choose whether Papua would become part of Indonesia or become independent. In practice, this stage is considered manipulative. The election of council members has been arranged by Indonesia so that there are no free and open opportunities for other West Papua people. The people appointed were people who were not openly opposed to Indonesia. The election of the council, which was tasked to organize, ratify and inaugurate the representatives in the council, was under Indonesian control (Raweyai, 2002).

Moreover, *Pepera* was still being manipulated after the election of DMP members by indoctrinating and intimidating them. They were gathered in the school barracks a few weeks before *Pepera* was held and were not allowed to have contact with the outside world. They were pampered with various gifts of luxury goods and money. "There was no other choice, only to join Indonesia. Dare to speak of an independent Papua, die," (*Tidak ada pilihan lain, hanya ikut Indonesia. Berani bicara Papua merdeka, mati*) said Filep Karma, a Papua Freedom activist who has been detained by Indonesia since 2004 (interview, 2 March 2021). This statement was based on his father's experience, one of the secretaries of the Jayapura Regency DMP.

*Pepera* was implemented in eight separate districts, starting in Merauke and ending in Jayapura on August 2, 1969. The number of councils for each district was different depending on the size of the population. As a result, all DMP voted unanimously to become part of Indonesia, which means West Papua is integrated with Indonesia. Pupilan's study (2009) describes that both the determination of representation and the *Pepera* process were considered fraudulent and deprived West Papuans of the opportunity to determine their own destiny. The majority of West Papuan people felt they were not subject to and were not involved in self-determination, which is very important for their future (Muridan, 2009).

After *Pepera*, Indonesia's military operations continued in West Papua. To stop resistance from those who wanted independence and freedom for West Papua, a series of operations were carried out. Successive operations were carried out after the *Pepera* was implemented until the reform era in 1998: Tumpas Operation (1967-1970); Pamungkas Operation (1971-1977); Koteka Operation (1977-1978); Senyum Operation (1979-1980); Gagak I and II Operations (1985-1986); Cassowary Operation (1987-1989); Rajawali I and II Operations (1989-1995). The military approach, which was full of violence, made resistance flared up and grew more negative sentiment toward the central government.

Oktavianus Mote from the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), a West Papuan liberation organization, which has taken many diplomatic routes abroad, stated:

"It cannot be categorized as a violent movement because then people have to admit that Indonesia is invading Papua and have to understand that. If Indonesia hadn't invaded Papua, this violence wouldn't have happened. So it was actually the Indonesian military which created the violence."

(Oktavianus Mote, United Liberation Movement for West Papua, in the interview)

### **3.4 Indonesianization and the Failure of Development and Investment Model in Papua**

Gietzelt (1989) explained that one of the New Order's strategies in carrying out the Indonesianization project of West Papua was through efforts to increase development and boost economic growth, which relied mostly on foreign investment. These assumptions closely followed the modernization theory and assumed that economic growth would be the forerunner of social, political, and cultural change (Gietzelt, 1989).

In West Papua, from 1970 to the 1980s, development projects which included mining operations first started. The projects were a classic example of regional development, and labor was drawn from the rural sector to a highly developed capital-intensive industrial sector. This absorption of the modern sector tended to occur in the service industry because skilled labor was imported from outside West Papua. This left marginalized workers to earn a living on the outskirts of economic enclaves. In the oil fields near Sorong, non-Melanesian laborers, predominantly Javanese from nearby transmigration settlements, earned above-average wages (Carter, 1984), while indigenous Papuans were intimidated by Indonesian authorities, with more than two-thirds of their wages commanded by the military (Gietzelt, 1989).

In 1967, the Freeport McMoran Company from the United States signed a Contract of Work with the Suharto government. This contract was a permit to explore the land of West Papua in the form of copper and gold mining. Chronologically, the contract was signed when the 1969 *Pepera* had not yet been implemented; therefore, legally, West Papua was not yet a legal part of Indonesia because back then, it was still a disputed area. This fact indicated that *Pepera* 1969 was organized by Indonesia with the help of the United States to ensure West Papua integrated with Indonesia because Indonesia had signed a Contract of Work with the

United States (Kusumaryati, 2021). To confirm that the land of West Papua is in the grip of the sovereignty of the Suharto regime, the manipulation of free choice in Papua has been designed and implemented (Paharizal & Yuwono, 2016).

Although the existence of Freeport McMoran was a sign of more investment in West Papua, economically, the existence of the company didn't affect the economy and the general welfare of West Papuans. Trained workers tend to be imported from Java and abroad, leaving only remnants for the natives (Kusumaryati, 2021). This phenomenon later ignited more anger from the Papuan people because they saw and felt for themselves that the development project did not have a significant effect on them. Nicholas Simion Messet (former Pro-Papua Merdeka exile) stated in his interview:

"Yes, now Papua is being exploited by Jakarta, we can see that, and it's real. Big companies that entered Papua, from the start, were there any Papuans there? That's my question, were there any Papuans sitting there as commissioners or something else."

(Nicholas Simion Messet, Former Papuan Exile, Pro-Papua Merdeka, in an interview).

Prior to the 1977 general election, OPM groups in Papua resisted, especially at Kobagma, Bokondini, Mulia, Ilaga, Pyramid, and Jayawijaya Regency. The series of resistance were triggered by their dissatisfaction with the development policies in Papua and the placement of ABRI units in almost all areas of Papua. More military operations took place to break the resistance before the 1977 General Election, and the 1978 MPR General Assembly took place. Conflicts also broke out in Enarotali, Biak, and Mimika, as well as along the border with Papua New Guinea (PNG). In the Freeport area in Timika in July 1977, the OPM launched an attack on Freeport's pipelines and facilities because they were disappointed with the company's presence. They stated that Freeport had caused misery to the community, confiscated customary lands of indigenous peoples, and damaged the environment (Osborne, 2001). More attacks were reciprocated, and OPM carried out vandalism because they felt the company's presence was disturbing them. Mutual retaliation occurred, and Indonesian military forces also retaliated against the attack. As a result, elections were postponed in several mountainous areas. According to Osborne (2001), the military operations in 1977–1978 were the worst operations in Papua's history. This era is considered by Papuans as the start of "Military Operations Area" status.

The Indonesianization project in Papua, with a development trajectory, also continued with the transmigration process, which occurred massively in the 1980-2000 period (Gietzelt, 1989; Anderson, 2015; McNamee, 2020). The Indonesian government did this unilaterally, with the goal of creating an equitable distribution of national development and distribution of the population throughout Indonesia, and Papua was one of its targeted territories. Many transmigrates from Java were placed in Arso, Koya, Nimbogran, Taja, Lereh Merauke, Nabire, Manokwari, and several areas that still provided land for plantations and agriculture (Broek, Hermawan & Kabayong, 2003). However, the large number of transmigrates, who mostly originated from Java, disturbed indigenous Papuans. The situation worsened when the number of migrants grew rapidly and became the majority in several transmigration target areas compared to the Papuan population. Transmigration created implications, namely the expropriation of land, as well as cultural clashes between West Papuans and transmigrates (Anderson, 2015; McNamee, 2020).

The cultural differences between transmigrates and indigenous Papuans have created repeated incidents. In general, the transmigrates didn't receive enough introduction to the local culture. As a result, transmigrates and indigenous people were culturally separated, with ineffective assimilation (Broek, Hermawan & Kabayong, 2003). The segregation of the Papuan community and migrants was getting stronger. In addition, native Papuans were stigmatized by the transmigrates from Java. They were considered primitive people in terms of livelihood, culture, language, etc. The land of the indigenous Papuans changed owners without any compensation to the customary owners or their families. Indigenous peoples' rights were sidelined in the efforts to manage natural resources on their own lands. The claim of residents' land was not accompanied by a process of land liberation or relinquishment of customary land rights, and there were no compensations to allow the customary owners to live properly and be treated fairly (Raweyai, 2002). Some people didn't receive compensation at all, even though their customary lands were used by transmigrates or companies. This happened, for instance, to the people of Moi, Sorong (Oktafiani & Yogaswara, 2020).

Conflicts between transmigrates or migrants with the local people of West Papua were described by all informants in this study. They underlined the economic gap, which continues to widen, and development and investment, which have no significant effect on the local population, like the following statement:

"There is social jealousy among all the people living around the land of West Papua. Second, there is economic injustice because all goods come from outside, and the price is very high. Social injustice is occurring, the rich are getting richer, the poor are poor, so there is a gap, and economic injustice has created a gap."

(Michael Manufandu – Ambassador of Civil Service Papua, in the interview)



"Yes. This means you're creating great buildings, nice roads, and bridges, but for whom. It's not useful for Papuans; the number of people is starting to decrease. It only benefits friends or migrants and also the interests of foreign investors. Nothing here is built for the Papuans."

(Ones Suhuniap – National Spokesperson of the West Papua National Committee, KNPB, in the interview)

Cultural clashes and the marginalization of Papuans worsened, supported by the increasing amount of investments and companies' establishments. Natural resource exploitation was carried out without affirming the needs of indigenous Papuans. The government worked alongside investors to open up business opportunities, but the affirmation of the indigenous people of Papua was very low. Indigenous people of Papua had to compete with corporations and migrants on unequal battlefields (Elsmlie, 2003; Rumbiak, 2004; Chao, 2018). In terms of regulations, they prioritized certain qualifications that are more likely to profit immigrants. This created an obstacle for the indigenous people of Papua to be able to compete.

Corporations, which were permitted to manage the land, made it impossible for local people to cultivate their land. This created an ugly situation since local people live on their land. Land clearing has made it difficult for residents to find sago, their staple food. This occurred, for instance, in the Muting indigenous community, Merauke Regency. As of 2017, Forest Watch Indonesia recorded 189.3 thousand hectares/year of reduction in forest area (deforestation) in Papua between 2013 to 2017. Until 2017, the area of natural forests in Papua covered up to 33.7 million hectares, or 81% of the land (Forest Watch Indonesia & Regnskogfondet, 2019). Meanwhile, Greenpeace recorded that since the 2000s, from the entire rainforest of Papua, 685,388 hectares were owned by private companies' concessions. It is estimated that 71.2 million tons of carbon stored in Papua's forests have been released from forest areas since 2000. The division of Papua into two provinces (Papua Province and West Papua Province) in 2003 did not create a big contribution to this complex situation.

Most indigenous people of Papua live below the poverty line. There are no regulations that have managed to change this situation. Papua's Human Development Index (HDI) has always been consistently placed at the bottom part. This can be seen in the basic sectors, namely education, health, and the economy. In the education sector, there have been no significant achievements in West Papua. In 2019, BPS data (2019) showed that in Papua, most Papuan children go to school for 7 to 15 years. This condition is worsened by the lack of educational facilities, qualitatively and quantitatively, such as school facilities and educational materials.

The health sector in Papua Province and West Papua Province is also listed as one of the worst in Indonesia. Malnutrition and measles have become annual unresolved issues. In Papua Province, up to November 2019, 1,050 children suffered from malnutrition, which caused fatalities. Not to mention the health facilities and facilities that are far from adequate (Efriandi, 2021). The infant mortality rate is also concerning. In 2018, 195 cases of infant mortality were reported in West Papua Province, an increase from 2017 (Health Department, 2019).

In the economic sector, according to BPS data (2020), 26.64% of the population of Papua Province live below the poverty line (4.47% poverty in urban areas and 35.5% poverty in rural areas). Meanwhile, the poor population in West Papua Province in 2019 reached 22.17% (5.63% poverty in urban areas and 34.19% poverty in rural areas). This percentage makes Papua the region with the poorest population in Indonesia.

The ineffectiveness of development projects in improving the welfare and condition of the Papuan people becomes the fuel for the Papua freedom movement and discourse. The Indonesianization project didn't proceed effectively, and the development didn't help in improving the lives of local Papuans. Instead, it created economic disparity and further sentiments on both sides. Rebellions and resistance to the Indonesian government from various resistance movements at the grassroots level have consistently emerged, although they occur sporadically under different leaderships. In the 1980s, West Papua was completely closed to foreign media and journalists, so it was difficult for prosecution and operations to get proper coverage from the international community (Adiprasetyo, 2021; Blades, 2016; Robie, 2013; Perrottet & Robie, 2011; Leadbeater, 2008).

### ***3.5 A Half-Hearted Change of Approach and Diversification of the Papuan Independence Movement***

The resistance movement has changed significantly, and there has been a shift in the methods of struggle carried out by Papuan independence fighters after the reform in Indonesia, which marked the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998. The Papua freedom movement (of which OPM is a part) was stopped when a meeting was held between President BJ Habibie (the President who replaced Suharto before the 1999 general elections) with 100 Papuan leaders who also belonged to the OPM group, namely Theys Hiyo Eluay (Broek, Hermawan & Kabayong, 2003). However, the peace efforts from these Papuan leaders did not bear fruit until the consolidation was resumed in the 2000s.

On the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Papuan Independence in Jayapura, President Abdurrahman Wahid (the 4<sup>th</sup> Indonesian President) allowed the Papuan flag to be raised alongside Indonesia's flag. The song "*Hai Tanahku, Papua*" was also sung, in addition to the national anthem (Anwar et al. 2005). This momentum spurred the "*Musyawahar Besar*" (Mubes) – general discussion- and the Second Papuan Congress in 2000. These meetings later created the Presidium of the Papuan Council (PDP) (Anwar et al. 2005). After the Mubes and Papua, II Congress took place, the intensity of attacks carried out by resistance movements in West Papua decreased.

In the Mubes and Papuan Congress in 2000, it was decided that a new institution would be formed, namely the Papuan People's Assembly (*Majelis Rakyat Papua* or MRP). This is a form of accommodation provided by the Indonesian government for the Papuan people. In addition, another institution formed was the Presidium of the Papuan Council (*Presidium Dewan Papua* or PDP). The PDP was born in the era of democratic transition when there was more space for the movement, more open than in the OPM era. This momentum then changed the resistance strategy, creating a non-violent movement that utilized political lobbying, a more recognized and tolerant approach. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) was also established abroad. This momentum also provided more space for the communities, especially for Papuan leaders, to be actively involved in the struggle for Papuan independence through foreign channels (Rusdiarti & Pamungkas, 2017).

During the same period, the President of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, pushed for Papua to become a region with Special Autonomy (*Otonomi Khusus*). Until finally, the Special Autonomy for Papua Province was officially listed by the Republic of Indonesia through Law Number 21 of 2001 (State Gazette of 2001 No. 135 and Supplement to State Gazette No. 4151), which was amended by Perpu No. 1 of 2008 (Statute Book of 2008 No. 57 and Statute Book of No. 4843). Law 21/2001, which consists of 79 articles, regulates the authorities of the Papua Province in carrying out Special Autonomy, from territorial aspects, government, politics, economy, law enforcement, customs to human rights and reconciliation (Malak, 2012).

The Special Autonomy basically did not slow down the efforts and resistance to liberate Papua. In the post-reform period, it was easier for domestic Papua Freedom fighters to interact with Papua Freedom fighters who lived abroad. This created a diversified route of resistance through armed efforts and through diplomacy. Also, in Indonesia, there are more NGOs supporting the freedom of Papua by showing human rights violations in West Papua. Organizations initiated by leaders of freedom fighters abroad also played a significant role. After 2000, several large organizations emerged, and they stated themselves as the political wing of Papuan freedom fighters. In addition to the OPM, there are the West Papua National Committee (KNPB), the West Papua National Parliament (PNPB), the Federal Republic of West Papua (NRFPB), and West Papua. Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL) (Ondawame & King, 2002). In 2014, these organizations formed a larger forum abroad, namely the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), with the aim of carrying out an international campaign.

At the same time, various political organizations emerged to support the Papuan independence struggle, with links to domestic Papua freedom fighters. First, there was the West Papua Freedom Campaign, founded by Benny Wenda in 2000 in England. Previously, Benny Wenda was a suspect in the attack on the police station in Abepura. He fled to Papua New Guinea and eventually obtained political asylum in the UK. The second was the West Papua National Authority (WPNA) which was established in 2004 with the aim of being a forum for the political wing of the OPM. This organization was formed by Edison Waromi, Herman Wanggai, and Jacob Rumbiak. Third, the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL) was established in 2005 by OPM Pemka, Otto Ondawame. In this organization, Mathias Wenda became the highest leader. The purpose of this organization was to serve as the political wing of the OPM, but the idea was rejected by the domestic OPM, namely Goliath Tabuni and Kelly Kwalik. Fourth, the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) was formed in 2008 with the chairman Buchtar Tabuni. This organization was formed as a forum for the political aspirations of the local people of Papua and built relations with the armed OPM in the Victor Yeimo era in 2012 (MacLeod, 2013; Macleod, 2015).

Buchtar Tabuni, one of our informants in this study, explained the diplomatic efforts of the KNPB:

"Right now, our struggle is still about psychological warfare, and lately, we are supported by Spain, so the 83 countries are the governments who speak, yes, they really understand the issue of Papua. The principle will be conveyed to them later, that we want a referendum, not independence."

Buchtar Tabuni – Chairman of West Papua National Committee (KNPB)

#### **4. Conclusion: A Need to Re-Read and Discover New Approaches for West Papua**

Although there were a lot of dynamics related to the attitude of the Indonesian government and the Papua freedom movement, the tensions in West Papua and the issues or discourses related to it have never completely ended. The attack on the Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya, which then sparked massive demonstrations and the burning of government buildings in Papua, shows how vulnerable social, cultural, and political relations between the Papuan community and Indonesia are (Adiprasetyo, 2021).

However, unfortunately, these vulnerabilities are often not properly addressed by the government. The labeling of terrorists for the Papua Freedom Organization (OPM) does not provide a way out; it tends to exacerbate existing conflicts (Robie, 2021). A new approach is needed by the Indonesian government to negotiate positions with the West Papua community, and the militarism approach needs to be changed.

The development approach taken by the current President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, towards West Papua, claimed by government representatives (Laus Rumayon, in an interview, 2021), does not seem to work properly since stigmatization still occurs in the government's communication practices related to West Papua. This was acknowledged by two of the informants we interviewed, Latifah Anum Siregar from the Alliance for Democracy for Papua and ELSHAM Papua.

"Out of numerous cases which we attended, the demands are for the state to admit their mistakes in the past, namely related to the history of the integration of Papua into the Republic of Indonesia, they argue that the integration process contains legal defects, is full of coercion/intimidation, torture and enforced disappearances. In addition, various alleged cases of human rights violations were not resolved by the state. The government is also considered to disrespect our existence, including the culture and customs of indigenous people of Papua."

(Latifah Anum Siregar, Director of Alliance for Democracy for Papua, AIDP, in the interview)

"I think so. The approach of this country must be completely changed. Because the impression of my experience so far has always been the violence of military forces. The state can build buildings up to the sky, and the Papuans won't hear that. Because what is needed is the truth that comes from history, justice for Papuans as Indonesian citizens, and also the human rights violations that have occurred in the past. I personally want peace, and I want to forgive."

(Matheus Adadikam, Director of ELSHAM Papua, in the interview)

There is an urgent need to re-read the Papua conflict. Especially since the racism discourse still affects social relations between the local people in West Papua and Indonesia in general. The escalation of the crisis that got bigger after the Surabaya incident was caused by the stigmatization of the local people in West Papua. The real problem has been nurtured and rooted for years. A fruitful dialogue is needed so that readings related to West Papua can be carried out, especially considering what the local people of West Papua want and achieve. John Gobay, Deputy Secretary II of the Board of Indigenous People of Papua, stated:

"Even though there is no guarantee when you want to reduce the number of violence, that's one of the strategies: to have a dialogue using your heart, to understand the spirit, to learn that we both have the same feelings. So, therefore, it is a stigma that this is OPM; if your brothers are sending it, that's it. It's already a doctrinal stigma, so it doesn't matter who it is; maybe there is something that needs to be clarified, those who are consumed by the stigma, with specific kinds of characteristics, and they end up shooting."

(John Gobay, Deputy Secretary II, *the* Board of Indigenous People of Papua, in the interview)

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