

DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IN MAINTAINING PAPUA AS PART OF SOVEREIGNTY

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini meneliti tentang erbagai upaya menjaga NKRI wilayah Papua dilakukan, termasuk dengan menjalin kerja sama dan diplomasi baik secara bilateral maupun multilateral dengan negara- negara di Kawasan Selatan Selatan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan proses pemerintah Indonesia mempengaruhi negara- negara yang mendukung pembebasan Papua Barat dengan memberikan bantuan dan memunculkan pertarungan pengaruh untuk menggagalkan terlepasnya Papua dari Indonesia, termasuk dengan upaya mendekati Forum MSG (Melanessia Spearhead Grup).

Kata Kunci: *Strategi, Diplomasi, Indonesia, Papua, NKRI*

ABSTRACT

This study examines various efforts to maintain the territorial integrity of Papua within the Republic of Indonesia, including establishing bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with countries in the Southern region. The results of this research reveal how Indonesia influences countries supporting West Papua's independence by offering aid and engaging in power struggles to prevent Papua's separation from Indonesia, including through efforts to approach the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG).

Keywords: Indonesian diplomacy, Papua, Sovereignty

INTRODUCTION

Papua is one of Indonesia's regions with highly complex issues. Although problems in Papua have deep roots that extend beyond separatism and racism, they are often associated with these issues and the Free Papua Movement (OPM). After the signing of the New York Agreement on 15 August 1962, the administration of West Irian was handed over to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) and later to Indonesia on 1 May 1963. Papuan nationalists who had previously cooperated with the Dutch formed an underground movement aiming to separate Papua from Indonesia, which later became known as OPM (Hartono 2023). OPM, led by Sergeant Major Permanes Ferry Awom, started an uprising on 26 July 1965. This movement frequently

resorted to militant actions with the goal of separating from the Republic of Indonesia, resulting in numerous civilian and military casualties.

From an Indonesian legal perspective, OPM is considered an armed separatist group threatening the nation’s sovereignty and an act of rebellion (Hartono 2023). Domestically, the independence movement in Papua is driven by unarmed political factions like the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) and armed groups such as the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN/OPM). Meanwhile, overseas campaigns are spearheaded by entities such as the Federal Republic of West Papua (FRWP), the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL), and the National Parliament of West Papua (NPWP). The Indonesian government’s terminology, “Armed Criminal Group,” signifies that the state’s approach to OPM and similar groups is grounded in law enforcement. The root of Papua’s issues stems from socio-political disparities, which ultimately have economic consequences. Despite contributing significantly to the country, Papua is not receiving appropriate returns in terms of development. This development is not limited to infrastructure but includes human capital, such as education and healthcare. The International Crisis Group’s 2006 report stressed that “no genocide in West Papua” is taking place. It further clarified that although Papua faces numerous challenges, it is not a site of genocide (neither a killing field), a premis that must inform any perspective on Papua today (International Crisis Group, 2006).

The accusation of genocide has been debunked by several facts, particularly in response to claims made by ULMWP. These revelations serve to counter accusations of bias by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The Papua issue should be seen as a national problem requiring national conflict resolution strategies.

The political use of Papua’s issues in Vanuatu, where they serve as an electoral and political narrative to strengthen the political legitimacy of Vanuatu’s Prime Minister, Barak Sope (Temaluru, 2017), is another variable to consider. Vanuatu is expected to cease promoting the narrative of Papua’s independence, especially with comprehensive diplomacy toward MSG. Diplomacy in this context can be conducted by both state and non-state actors under governmental supervision. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must collaborate with other ministries and agencies relevant to economic relations. In essence,

Indonesia's diplomatic relations, supported by multilateral economic cooperation with MSG, primarily aim to position Indonesia as a leading economic state within MSG.

Research Question

How has Indonesia's diplomacy in maintaining Papua's territorial integrity fared from 2020 to 2024 in the face of international pressure?

Main Argument

The political mechanisms that determine a nation's existence may involve referendums that allow sovereignty to be transferred based on the will of the people. However, this is an undesirable outcome for the Indonesian government, which has held the status quo since the Act of Free Choice and the New York Agreement. Therefore, a special, non-military-centric strategy involving political diplomacy must be prepared.

ANALYTICAL REVIEW

Arie Ruhyanto and Moh. Yamin (2018): Public Diplomacy of Indonesia and the Papua Issue: National Identity Construction in the Global Public Sphere

This research examines how the Indonesian government utilises public diplomacy to influence international perceptions of the Papua issue. The focus is on how Indonesia constructs its national identity in this context. The study investigates various public diplomacy strategies and campaigns implemented by Indonesia to maintain Papua as an integral part of the nation. The analysis includes how messages are conveyed, the target audience, and the impact on Indonesia's international image. The conclusion of this study highlights that Indonesia's public diplomacy plays a critical role in shaping global public opinion regarding the Papua conflict. By using diverse strategies and campaigns, Indonesia seeks to assert Papua as an inseparable part of its national identity in the eyes of the world.

Rachel D. Burr (2016): Indonesian Diplomacy and West Papua: A Critical Perspective in Pacific Affairs.

This research adopts a critical approach to Indonesia's diplomatic practices in response to the West Papua issue. The focus is not only on public diplomacy but also on cross-border diplomatic efforts and bilateral relations with other countries regarding Papua. This study analyses how Indonesian diplomacy concerning West Papua has shaped and

influenced the conflict dynamics and how this is reflected in Indonesia's image and reputation within the international community. The conclusion drawn from this research is that Indonesian diplomacy regarding West Papua can be viewed critically due to significant external challenges and pressures. This study highlights the complexity of cross-border diplomatic dynamics and bilateral relations influencing the West Papua conflict.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research methodology. The data gathered is descriptive, explaining Indonesian foreign policy efforts in diplomacy to maintain Papua from international pressure between 2020 and 2024. Qualitative research aims to understand and interpret phenomena experienced by the subjects in their social context (Moleong, 2010). In qualitative research, the researcher seeks meaning, understanding, and explanation of events either directly or indirectly and is studied holistically.

Qualitative methods are often termed "naturalistic" as they explain reality and wholeness that cannot be understood or separated from its context (Sugiono 2014). In line with this, this research produces descriptive data in the form of writing and information collected by the researcher, thus enabling them to find meaning in the study.

The research type is descriptive-analytical, useful for documenting, recording, and studying events in detail based on data and information systematically collected. The qualitative method involves discussions prioritising the research topic, i.e., events, phenomena, or occurrences in relevant data contexts. This helps highlight different viewpoints and understandings of the researcher about certain cases. It focuses on human behaviour as the subject of study.

The qualitative approach applied here involves analysing data relevant to the research questions to understand its content and meaning. Therefore, qualitative research is descriptive and factual, aiming to clarify specific situations or social contexts.

The data collection techniques in qualitative research are critical, as the goal is to gather data for analysis (Fraenkel 2003). The researcher utilises documents such as journal articles and books. Data was also sourced through the internet, including various

organisations, research institutions, and governmental websites relevant to the research. The research employed literature review techniques. Data collection involved gathering academic works such as journal articles, books, dissertations, news articles, and government websites relevant to the research (Sugiono 2014). These works were selected based on their relevance to the research topic.

The data analysis process is known as qualitative analysis, conducted interactively during the stages of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Bakry 2016). The data used in this research is not necessarily primary but derived from various sources.

Data Reduction, Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming data. This helps the researcher identify which phenomena are worth discussing, which research questions need to be explored, and which data will be prioritised throughout the research (Huberman, 1994).

The next step is data presentation, grouping, and summarising to support research conclusions. This process helps the researcher better understand the phenomena being investigated. Validation Data validation is part of the final stage of conclusion drawing. Once the researcher finishes collecting and analysing data, and the data aligns with the research's field notes and methodology, validation is conducted (Huberman, 1994).

DISCUSSION

Profile of Papua Province

Geographically, the island of Papua is located at the easternmost part of Indonesia, covering an area of 785,753 km². It is the largest province in Indonesia and home to the most extensive protected forest area. Papua hosts a rich variety of biodiversity, including 15,000-20,000 species of plants (55% endemic), 602 species of birds (52% endemic), 125 species of mammals (58% endemic), and 223 species of reptiles (35% endemic). Endemic animals and plants include the bird of paradise, tree kangaroos, rainbow fish, various species of butterflies, and many others. The island also boasts Puncak Jaya, the highest peak in Indonesia, at 4,884 meters above sea level (Devina, 2023).

Figure 4.1. Map of West Papua Province

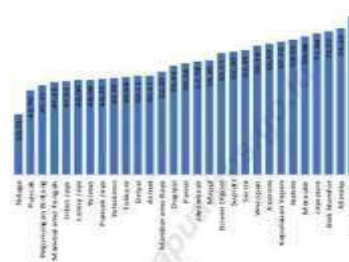


Source: RPJMD Papua 2018-2023

Papua has a long history before becoming part of Indonesia in 1963, following various negotiations. Initially called Irian, the name was changed to Papua during Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency. The island, originally divided into two provinces: Papua and West Papua has since been subdivided into six provinces: Papua, West Papua, Southwest Papua, South Papua, Papua Highlands, and Central Papua. Papua is the largest province, with a total area of 316,553.07 km².

The population of Papua in 2023 is approximately 5,678,170 people, with a gender ratio of 52.77% male and 47.23% female (BPS 2020). The percentage of the population living in poverty in September 2019 decreased by 0.98% compared to March 2019 (Wicaksana 2021). In 2019, the province's population was predominantly Protestant, with 2,354,511 adherents, followed by Roman Catholics (953,090) and Muslims (512,581) (BPS 2020). In 2016, Papua's Human Development Index (HDI) reached 58.05, an increase of 0.80 points from 57.25 in 2015. However, HDI levels varied significantly across districts. Nduga District recorded the lowest HDI at 30.75, reflecting disparities in health and education across the province.

Table 4.5. Human Development Index (HDI) Papua 2019



According to a 2010 study by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), there are four main factors contributing to the conflict in Papua. First, the marginalisation of indigenous Papuans as a result of discriminatory economic development since the New Order era. Second, the failure of development programmes, particularly in the fields of education, healthcare, and community empowerment. Third, differing perspectives on Papua's history and identity between the central government and the Papuan people. Fourth, the absence of justice concerning past state crimes against the Papuan people.

Since its integration in 1969, Papua has been part of Indonesia and continues to present challenges for the state, especially concerning the existing separatist movements. After Indonesia gained independence from the Netherlands in 1945, the new nation sought to incorporate Papua as part of its territory. Soekarno, Indonesia's first president, saw Papua as a region that shared a similar colonial experience with Indonesia. In his view, Papua was a "distant relative" that shared a dark past due to colonialism and thus required protection and development under Indonesia's governance (Adams, 1965, p. 34).

Soekarno's policy towards Papua was firm, aiming to incorporate the region into Indonesia, just like other former Dutch colonial territories. All negotiations urged the Netherlands to transfer sovereignty to Indonesia, but regarding Papua, the results were unsatisfactory, as the Dutch were still reluctant to relinquish the region.

After failing to achieve meaningful outcomes from a series of diplomatic negotiations and in response to the ongoing military and civilian operations by the Dutch, Soekarno eventually decided to take a more decisive step by planning a military operation to seize Papua.

Despite officially becoming part of Indonesia, Papua has continued to face challenges related to demands for independence, along with various socio-economic and human rights issues that persist to this day. The Indonesian government has sought to address these problems through special autonomy policies and various development programmes, but conflict and tensions in Papua remain one of the nation's most complex and sensitive issues.

Soekarno's successor, Soeharto, focused on securing the outcome of the referendum, in which Papuans chose to join Indonesia. Over his more than 30-year rule,

Soeharto's policies towards Papua can largely be divided into two categories: harsh military operations and softer approaches that aimed to instil and preserve Indonesian values and identity among the Papuan people. This approach is known as the "Indonesianisation of Papua" (Gietzelt, 1989).

Soeharto's hardline policy towards integrating Papua sparked widespread protests among Papuans, which eventually led to the formation of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), which sought independence from Indonesia. To counter this resistance, in early 1963, Soeharto declared Papua a Military Operations Zone (DOM), employing military and counter-insurgency strategies to manage the region. The imposition of martial law led to numerous cases of violence against local communities. This policy resulted in a significant population decrease in Papua, with estimates suggesting that between 100,000 and 300,000 people were killed or victimised under Soeharto's regime (Crocomber, 2007).

In the reform era, recognising the extensive violence endured by Papuans over the preceding decades, President Gus Dur adopted a warmer, more open, and liberal approach to managing the region. Within the first two months of his presidency, he visited and held dialogues directly with Papuan tribes and their leaders. He rejected the name given to the region by Soekarno, "Irian," which stood for "Joining the Republic of Indonesia Against the Netherlands" ("Ikut Republik Indonesia Anti Nederland") (Wahyudi, 2022).

Gus Dur's administration restored the name "Papua" as a new way of referring to the region. Under his leadership, the Papuan people were able to hold their first General Papua Conference, a large and open political meeting attended by tribal leaders, key figures, and elements of the Papuan community. The meeting produced what was considered a bold and significant document known as the West Papua Political Communiqué, which articulated the strengths and weaknesses of the Papuan people and how to transform these into opportunities and strategic pillars (King, 2002).

Gus Dur's conciliatory policy towards Papua was not well received by military leaders and some political circles, including his vice president, Megawati Soekarnoputri (Wahyudi, 2022). Consequently, when Gus Dur's presidency ended in 2001 and he was

succeeded by Megawati Soekarnoputri, his harmonious approach to Papua changed significantly.

President Megawati's firm stance on integrating Papua mirrored Soekarno's approach, as she chose to continue her father's vision and honour the national heroes who had sacrificed their lives to reclaim Papua from the Dutch (Wahyudi, 2022). Under Megawati's leadership, Indonesia reaffirmed its presence in Papua and positioned itself as the central government, ensuring that the doctrines of independence and self-determination would not emerge (Fujikawa, 2017).

During the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), there was a return to a more cooperative and open regime concerning legal, social, and political issues in Papua. Throughout his 10-year presidency, SBY focused on achieving three key dimensions, which were considered the most effective solutions to Papua's issues.

First, he recognised Papua's uniqueness and its people, thus supporting the enactment of special regulations that granted greater regional autonomy to the Papuan people, such as optimising Law No. 21 of 2001 on Papua's Special Autonomy and issuing Presidential Decree No. 55 of 2004, which recognised and approved the establishment of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP).

Second, SBY consistently emphasised the principles of open dialogue, cooperation, and mutual trust as the underlying philosophy for managing Papua (Wahyudi, 2022). SBY issued Presidential Decree No. 5/2007 on "The Acceleration of Papua's Development Process," which focused on providing what was called a "New Deal for Papua," centred on food security, poverty alleviation, and efforts to improve education, healthcare services, and infrastructure.

This decree was later revised with the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 65/2011, which established a coordinating body, the UP4B or "Unit for the Acceleration of Development in Papua and West Papua Provinces," tasked with providing assistance. To date, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) has built a 71-kilometre cross-island road connecting several cities in Papua and West Papua. Additionally, Jokowi plans to complete major land infrastructure projects, including the development of large-scale airports and ports (Wahyudi, 2022).

Papua and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)

The issue in Papua is highly complex, with various organisations supporting Papua's independence, both domestically and internationally. The South Pacific nations are part of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). On 14 March 1988, MSG was established under the Agreed Principles of Cooperation Among Independent States of Melanesia in Port Vila as a sub-regional organisation in the South Pacific, comprising Vanuatu, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia.

The primary goal of MSG is to support decolonisation efforts and the freedom of all melanesian countries by fostering the cultural, political, social, and economic identity of the Melanesian people. Moreover, MSG aims to enhance economic cooperation among its member states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

This support reflects solidarity and shared experiences among Melanesian nations, as they strive to fight for the rights and freedom of Melanesian peoples, including the people of Papua. Support for Papua's independence has been extended by several countries in the South Pacific. The Cook Islands government expressed its support for Papua's independence during the UN Millennium Summit. Although this support was not significant, it aligned with New Zealand's stance on the Papua issue. Additionally, the government of Nauru openly supported Papua's independence during the South Pacific Forum in Kiribati in October 2000. Nauru also backed a UN resolution on self-determination for the people of Papua (Elisabeth, 2006). In September 2000, Nauru's President, Bernard Dowiyogo, stated at the UN Millennium Summit that Papua was under foreign domination and control, although he did not explicitly mention Indonesia (Elisabeth, 2006).

The government of Tuvalu also supported Papua's independence, albeit to a limited extent. A similar position was taken by the government of Vanuatu, a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). Vanuatu's argument, like Nauru's, was based on historical factors and geographical proximity (Elisabeth, 2006). In Vanuatu, there is a representative office for the Papuan people, led by Dr. John Ondowame. The Vanuatu government is committed to promoting the identity and basic rights of the Melanesian race in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly for the Papuan people, and encouraging

the reopening of cases of injustice in Papua, while advocating for the social welfare of the Papuan people (Elisabeth, 2006).

Domestically, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) was established in 1965, led by Ferry Awom, and has a presence in almost every region of Papua, as well as in Victoria and Papua New Guinea. OPM employs physical armed resistance as part of its struggle against the Indonesian military.

Several political organisations, including the National Federal Republic of West Papua (NFRPB), applied for Papua to become a member of MSG in 2013 in Kanaky, New Caledonia. During the MSG Leader Summit, it was suggested that the various organisations representing Papua merge into a single entity. Consequently, in 2014, three political organisations—NFRPB, the National Parliament of West Papua (PNWP), and the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL) united to form the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) in Saralana, Port Vila, Vanuatu. ULMWP applied for Papua’s membership at the MSG Leader Summit in June 2015 in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and was granted observer status. MSG leaders promised that ULMWP would be accepted as a full member by July 2016, but the volatile political dynamics meant that ULMWP’s status remained unchanged (Wetipo, 2016).

The support from South Pacific nations and MSG for Papua’s independence, as well as the emergence of liberation organisations, poses a threat to Indonesia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Indonesia has national interests in addressing this insecurity, specifically how to protect its sovereignty from both internal and external threats. Therefore, Indonesia decided to join MSG.

The South Pacific region holds significant importance for Indonesia, especially considering the issues in Papua. The sense of solidarity among Melanesian nations has led to substantial support from South Pacific countries, particularly in Melanesia, for Papua’s desire to separate from Indonesia and establish its own state.

If Indonesia’s relations with South Pacific countries are not well managed, there is concern that these nations may increasingly support Papua’s independence. Indonesia itself has strong ties with the South Pacific due to the presence of 11 million Indonesians of Melanesian descent, spread across Papua, Maluku, and Nusa Tenggara. At the 18th Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Summit in Fiji in March 2011, Indonesia was

accepted as an observer member of MSG. Subsequently, Indonesia sought to elevate its membership to full status, arguing that it has the largest Melanesian community compared to the Melanesian populations of other South Pacific nations.

As a country with geographical, racial, and cultural ties to the Melanesian community, Indonesia believes it is appropriate to be a full member of MSG. Indonesia's observer status was later upgraded to associate member at the 20th MSG Summit in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 24 to 26 June 2015 (Nugraha, 2018).

Full membership for Indonesia in MSG is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, it allows Indonesia to maintain constructive dialogue between the Papuan people and the Indonesian government within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), ensuring unity and cohesion as outlined in the third principle of Pancasila. Secondly, it enables Indonesia to shift the concept of Melanesian Socialism and Solidarity within MSG, particularly the sub-concept of support for Papua's independence, towards full support for justice and the welfare of the Papuan people (Munandar, 2017). Consequently, local traditions in Papua have been mobilised and expressed in the new cultural language of Melanesia (Bekarekar, 2017).

Indonesia's presence in MSG is seen as a significant obstacle to Papua's efforts to achieve independence. In June 2013, the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL) applied for membership in MSG during a summit in Noumea. After various considerations by MSG member states, WPNCL was eventually granted observer status in June 2015 (Bekarekar, 2017).

Within the sub-regional MSG organisation, there are two conflicting interests. On one side is the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL), which seeks independence for Papua, and on the other is Indonesia, which aims to maintain Papua as part of its sovereign territory. Indonesia's diplomatic efforts, through cooperation with MSG member states, have successfully raised Indonesia's status to associate member and hindered the elevation of WPNCL's status within MSG. Indonesia's involvement in MSG demonstrates its commitment to maintaining its presence in the South Pacific region. Indonesia's general interest in its relations with Pacific nations is to ensure regional stability, which is closely tied to the insecurity that Indonesia feels regarding Papua.

On the other hand, MSG member states view Indonesia as a valuable partner in enhancing cooperation. Indonesia's engagement with MSG seeks to secure the support of MSG members in preventing the Free Papua Movement from becoming a full member and in slowing down the movement for Papua's independence. Indonesia also aims to play a leading role in promoting stability in the South Pacific (Tampubolon, 2015). Indonesia's diplomatic Strategy in Maintaining Papua's Sovereignty Regarding issues surrounding Papua or West Papua, often accompanied by demands for a referendum, these political narratives are frequently voiced by Vanuatu at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), driven by the shared racial ties between Vanuatu and Papua (the Melanesian Brotherhood).

Moreover, the support provided by MSG places Vanuatu as the *primus inter pares* in the region. From this, the author observes that Vanuatu is not truly advocating for Papua for Papua's sake, but rather to achieve its own national interests, with Papua's independence not being the primary goal.

These narratives are not solely led by the rational actor Vanuatu, but also by non-state actors like the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), which was also formed by Vanuatu as a facilitator to campaign for Papua's independence politics alongside other Pacific countries.

Diplomacy Between Indonesia and Vanuatu

Although bilateral relations between Indonesia and Vanuatu are generally positive, as indicated by the ongoing cooperation in the oil and gas sector, Indonesia's efforts have not significantly changed Vanuatu's stance towards Indonesia, particularly regarding Papua. Hence, the author suggests that in addition to bilateral relations, public diplomacy is also needed for Indonesia to address Vanuatu and its connection to the Papua issue. Public diplomacy encompasses three dimensions: 1) News Management, 2) Strategic Communication, and 3) Relationship Building (Leonard, Stead, & Smewing, 2002).

The News Management dimension refers to Indonesia's response to Vanuatu's reports regarding issues in Papua, such as separatism, independence, genocide, and others, which are viewed as interconnected. Several steps can be taken by Indonesia in managing

Vanuatu’s reports, which are seen as placing Indonesia in a difficult position regarding Papua, such as:

- a. Refuting the reports by providing evidence that these reports are baseless accusations. Simply dismissing Vanuatu’s accusations without concrete rebuttals would be a futile and counterproductive effort, particularly when improving Indonesia’s international perception regarding its relationship with Papua.
- b. Opening up information channels related to Papua and its issues. This point emphasises transparency from the Indonesian government towards the public, including society, NGOs, the press, academics, activists, and other countries. This approach is intended to counter claims that Indonesia appears to be hiding any news or information related to Papua from the outside world.

In 2015, Indonesia organised the Indonesian Melanesian Brotherhood in Ambon as an effort to assert that Melanesia, in terms of race, culture, and heritage, is not "outside" Indonesia, but rather "part of" Indonesia. This event involved academics, cultural figures, and the media (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015).

The Indonesian government has sought to establish positive relations with Vanuatu through cooperation and bilateral relations to encourage Vanuatu to adopt a more amicable stance towards Indonesia in addressing the Papua issue. Some examples of bilateral cooperation between Vanuatu and Indonesia include the Development Cooperation Agreement (DCA) signed on 20 December 2011. However, in 2013, Vanuatu’s Prime Minister announced the termination of the DCA as a form of support for the West Papua National Council for Liberation (WPNCL)’s membership in MSG. This once again demonstrates Vanuatu’s close ties with non-state actors interested in “liberating” Papua from Indonesia.

In addition to the DCA, Indonesia has provided technical assistance to Vanuatu in hosting the 91st Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) Council of Ministers and the 37th ACP- EU Council of Ministers Meeting in Port Vila in 2012. Indonesia has also provided opportunities for Vanuatu’s brightest youth to participate in scholarship and training programmes in areas such as micro-hydro energy, fisheries, and the management of maritime protected areas (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Furthermore, Indonesia provided foreign aid amounting to USD 2 million, in the form

of food, maternal and child care packages, medicines, tents, camp beds, blankets, and cleaning supplies, as aid to Vanuatu when the country was severely impacted by Cyclone Pam, which hit the Pacific region in 2015. Indonesia also contributed USD 450,000 in cash through BNPB. Additionally, Indonesia sent a team of 19 people to assist victims on the ground. Indonesia also helped Vanuatu strengthen its police force by providing scholarships for four Vanuatu police officers to attend the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC). Indonesia also provided full uniforms, including caps, berets, belts, badges, and whistles to the Vanuatu Police (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

This certainly requires accurate targeting, given that Vanuatu and MSG present both opportunities and challenges. The challenge lies in Vanuatu's dominance in spreading propaganda regarding Indonesia in Papua. The opportunity lies in Indonesia's potential to exert influence over South Pacific countries that are part of the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

In this regard, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed several projections to implement precise diplomacy aligned with Indonesia's national interests. These projections fall into two sub-categories: Development and Humanitarian Partnerships, and Solid, Respectful, and Mutually Beneficial Partnerships (Wicaksana, 2021).

In the Development and Humanitarian Partnerships sub-category, one of the key projections is the implementation of the Regional Partnership Strategy, a cooperation between the Indonesian government and the Pacific region, which has been formulated with UNDP. In addition, Indonesia targets the Development Cooperation Fund (LDKPI) as the focal point for development cooperation between the Indonesian government and the Pacific region. In this context, these centres are intended to serve as knowledge hubs and footprints for Indonesia's South-South Cooperation (KSST) in the Pacific. Examples include the Disaster Risk Management Training Centre in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, the Peacekeeping Training Centre in Nadi, Fiji, and the Hydroponic Food Crop Training Centre in Funafuti, Tuvalu (Wicaksana, 2021).

Moreover, the medium-to-long-term goal of these projections is to increase Indonesia's diplomatic footprint in the Pacific. This includes the possibility of opening

an Indonesian Representative Office in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and assigning Indonesian government staff to the MSG Secretariat (Wicaksana, 2021).

Indonesia’s Diplomacy Towards Papua New Guinea

Border areas are not merely lines separating one country from another, but they are also symbols of a country’s sovereignty. This is also true for Indonesia in its relations with neighbouring countries.

The Indonesia– Papua New Guinea (PNG) border features two main crossing points: in Skouw, Muara Tami District, Jayapura City, and in Sota District, Merauke Regency. Although Skouw is equipped with various inspection facilities such as customs, immigration, police posts, quarantine, and a TNI border post, the utilisation of these border crossings has not been maximised.

Indonesia and PNG’s relationship in the context of border security is characterised by cooperation to ensure the security of the region. This is a priority due to the activities of separatist groups like the Free Papua Movement (OPM), which use border areas as operational bases. To ensure border security, Indonesia and PNG have established a joint body known as the Joint Border Committee (JBC). The MOU on the establishment of the JBC was signed in Port Moresby on 4 August 1982 and ratified on 15 November 1993 in Rabaul.

The Joint Border Committee (JBC) serves as an intergovernmental forum to address unresolved issues in the sub-committee forum, holding meetings once a year. The committee within the JBC is the Joint Technical Sub-Committee on Security Matters along the Common Border Area (JSCS), chaired by the Deputy Assistant for Operations of the TNI Chief of Staff. One example of cooperation between the TNI and the PNG military is the construction of border markers.

Relations between the two countries increased in 2021, particularly in trade. Indonesia’s exports to PNG amounted to USD 139 million, while PNG’s exports to Indonesia reached USD 32.9 million. Indonesia’s main exports to PNG include wheat and meslin flour (USD 11 million), pasta and couscous (USD 10.6 million), and fertiliser (USD 9.26 million). PNG’s exports to Indonesia include vanilla (USD 20.1 million) and cocoa beans (USD 7.99 million) (OEC, 2020).

In March 2022, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea agreed to cooperate in several areas, including the energy sector, with PLN and PNG Power assisting in supplying electricity from Jayapura (Indonesia) to Panimo (PNG), as well as opening flight routes between Jayapura and Port Moresby, and Merauke and Port Moresby. Other areas of cooperation include customs and maritime collaboration between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (OEC, 2020).

In higher multilateral forums, Indonesia also supports PNG's bid for observer status in ASEAN. Indonesia has backed PNG's membership in APEC, while the PNG government has officially prohibited separatist activities by the OPM within its borders.

PNG played a significant role in removing the Irian Jaya and East Timor issues from the UN Decolonisation Committee's agenda. One of the most important agreements between Indonesia and PNG is the Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship, and Cooperation, signed in Port Moresby on 27 October 1986. This treaty has served as the foundation for subsequent positive developments in the two countries' relations (Sudana, 2024).

Indonesia-Fiji Security Diplomacy

To enhance cooperation between Fiji and Indonesia, one strategy is to strengthen security cooperation, particularly in combating drug trafficking. Drug-related issues are a critical security concern for Fiji, especially concerning cocaine and methamphetamine. In Fiji, drug-related problems are escalating. In 2017, Fiji arrested 685 individuals for drug-related offences, and this number increased to 1,061 cases in 2018. The drugs in question were suspected of transiting through routes from Latin America and the United States to Australia and New Zealand, with Fiji acting as a crucial transit point in this trafficking network (Lyons, 2019).

To combat this issue, Indonesia has engaged in cooperation with Fiji to jointly address drug smuggling and disrupt these trafficking routes. However, Indonesia-Fiji security diplomacy extends beyond tackling drug-related issues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia provided significant aid to Fiji. Most COVID-19 cases in Fiji stemmed from tourists quarantined in border areas, as the country is highly dependent on its tourism industry. As in many countries, Fiji's healthcare infrastructure was

unprepared to handle the sudden crisis. Indonesia’s support included tents, food, and water, totalling 13 tonnes, for the people of Kadavu Island, Fiji (Perwita, Arkan, Rossiana, & Pertiwi, 2022).

Indonesia – New Zealand Relations

New Zealand has maintained diplomatic relations with Indonesia for over 60 years. As Comprehensive Partners, both nations continue to emphasise the importance of strong, trust-based relations and goodwill, forming the foundation of their partnership. The main platform for discussions between New Zealand and Indonesia is the **Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC)**, led by the foreign ministers of both countries, which meets annually to review the progress of bilateral relations and set new goals. Additionally, New Zealand and Indonesia collaborate in various regional and international forums, such as APEC, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the East Asia Summit. New Zealand views Indonesia as a key partner in combating transnational organised crime, including terrorism, human trafficking, and illegal fishing (Irfanuddin & KY, 2021). In the context of the Papua conflict, New Zealand consistently supports Indonesia’s sovereignty over Papua, considering the conflict an internal issue that international parties should not interfere with. Indonesia’s Ambassador to New Zealand confirmed that New Zealand does not delve deeply into the Papua issue, instead focusing on strengthening bilateral relations. While New Zealand remains aware of the Papua conflict, it does not make it a central issue in its relations with Indonesia.

The dynamics of international relations surrounding the Papua conflict can be categorised into two main groups: countries that support Indonesia and those that oppose it. Understanding the positions and strategies of these nations is crucial for developing effective approaches to preventing the internationalisation of the Papua conflict. Papua New Guinea (PNG) ranks as the second- largest export market for New Zealand in the Pacific, following Fiji. PNG is an important trading partner for New Zealand, particularly in electronic goods, meat, dairy, and other animal products. In 2018, PNG imported NZD \$166 million worth of goods from New Zealand, making it a significant player in New Zealand’s Pacific foreign policy (Irfanuddin & KY, 2021).

Given New Zealand’s close ties with PNG and the broader Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) member states, it plays a crucial role in regional politics. New Zealand holds considerable influence over the foreign policy of MSG member countries.

This strategic position makes New Zealand a valuable ally for Indonesia in enhancing its diplomatic relations within the broader Pacific region. By leveraging the strong Indonesia–New Zealand partnership, Indonesia can bolster its diplomatic power in dealings with MSG nations. Indonesia’s diplomatic aspirations include filling trade gaps left by New Zealand in the Pacific. By expanding its presence in this region, Indonesia hopes to secure a strategic position among MSG countries.

CONCLUSION

The issue of Papua is highly complex, involving support from various organisations both domestically and internationally, particularly from South Pacific countries that are part of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). Support for Papua’s independence is rooted in the solidarity shared among Melanesian nations, and MSG itself was established to promote the decolonisation and independence of Melanesian countries. Some nations, such as Nauru, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, explicitly support Papua’s independence, while domestically, organisations like the Free Papua Movement (OPM) continue to resist the Indonesian government.

In response, Indonesia has engaged in MSG and elevated its status within the organisation as part of its diplomatic efforts to counter the separatist movement in Papua. Indonesia’s full membership in MSG is seen as crucial for maintaining constructive dialogue, suppressing international support for Papua’s independence, and ensuring regional stability in the South Pacific.

Indonesia faces significant diplomatic challenges, particularly from countries like Vanuatu, which frequently brings up the Papua referendum issue at international forums. However, Indonesia’s diplomatic strategy, both bilaterally and multilaterally, aims to maintain Papua’s sovereignty while fostering cooperation and regional stability through diplomatic engagement with Pacific nations.

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