

## THE UNITY OF INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Since independence Indonesia's military has played an active role in defending the territorial integrity of Indonesia. For example, the military has been used to put down rebellions in various regions, such as Darul Islam in West Java in 1948, the Acehese rebellion that was led by Daud Beurueh in 1950, Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (PRRI), the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic) in West Sumatra in 1958, and Piagam Perjuangan Semesta Alam (Permesta) Charter of Universal Struggle in North Sulawesi in 1958. Disagreements with central government policies were the cause of these rebellions since they were intended to change the central government, not to achieve separatism. In addition, in 1961 a military operation was used to support the claim of Indonesia to West Irian (now Papua). By carrying out a military operation and negotiating with those giving support from the United States, in 1969 Indonesia succeeded in its goal of claiming Papua as a part of Indonesia. The success in pulling Papua into Indonesia's territory did not directly stop the military operation there because the military had to maintain order in the region to frustrate the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), Free Papuan Organisation, separatist movement that began in 1964 and continues to the present day.*

**Key words:** *independence, Organisasi Papua Merdeka(OPM), Acehese rebellion, Integration, nationalism*

### Introduction

Support, although given tacitly, was also given by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the United States and Australia to the Indonesian military to annex East Timor when the Portuguese left in 1975. As with Papua, the military operation continued in an attempt to destroy separatist hopes until East Timor gained independence from Indonesia in 1999. Moreover, in 1976 a military operation in Aceh attempted to quell the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, the Free Aceh Movement) led by Hasan Tiro. The movement continued until both

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GAM and Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to keep the peace in Aceh. The MOU was signed on 5 August 2005 in Helsinki.

From the facts above, it seems that the military has played the dominant role in maintaining Indonesian unity; however, this unity is a mental construct which preceded the creation of the military. According to Benedict Anderson, the process of creating Indonesian unity started before Indonesia used the military to maintain territory (Anderson, 1989). This unity was the product of social, political and cultural forces which had been forming an image of Indonesian community since the early twentieth century. Yet, the deformation of these social, political and cultural strategies by Indonesian government policies, especially after independence, put strain the image of community as part of Indonesian unity. In this essay I will argue that the policies of military operation that were used to preserve territorial integrity have actually sometimes eroded Indonesian unity. I will support Benedict Anderson's opinion by describing the process of creating the image of Indonesia unity and showing the fragmenting process destroying unity in some regions, especially in the separatist regions such as Aceh and Timor-Timur

### **The Image Process in Creating Unity**

The expropriation of authority from the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) to the Netherlands in the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the process of building identity among the Indonesian community. This was in response to the intervention of colonial rule in the social, political and economic circumstances of Indonesia at the end of the nineteenth century. The Dutch crown took over administration from the VOC and mounted a systematic campaign of conquest and annexations of indigenous rivals, turning its scattered archipelagic possession into an integrated empire that was known as the Netherlands Indies or now Indonesia (Cribb, 2000).

The Dutch colonial administration used local elites such as *Bupati*, local kingdoms, *ulebalang*, and *penghulu* to exploit the Indonesian people. The cultivation system policy is one example of a Dutch economic policy in Indonesia that used the local traditional elite. They helped the Dutch to force people onto plantations on behalf of the Dutch (or occasionally other powerful entrepreneurs) or to devote part of their own land to cultivation for the colonial authorities (Cribb, 2000: 137). As another example, in Aceh, *Ulebalang* became the buffer between the Dutch and the Muslim guerrilla fighters and attracted much economic advantage from taxes and salaries given by the Dutch (Morris, 1985). The Acehnese elite also became the controllers of villages and thus they had the opportunity to enrich themselves. In South Sulawesi, the Dutch recognised the authority of the local kingdom and let them continue their traditional rule on the condition that they should be loyal to the Dutch and adhere to Dutch sovereignty. The price they paid was allowing the Dutch to monopolise the economic sector of their society (Harvey, 1985). The colonial systems resulted in much resistance in

some regions that ended with the war. Resistance grew out of rejection of Dutch colonization among the people.

The Introduction of modern Dutch schools also facilitated the growth of anti- Dutch sentiment. Schools gave places to students who came from different regions to share in the educative experience as “children of the colonized” by using the Dutch or Malay (Indonesian) language. Schools also brought together more and more young educated people from across the archipelago, and this shared experience cut across ethnic, regional and religious identities, and a sense of Indonesia gradually built up an awareness of Indonesian identity among them. Muhammad Hatta and other students in 1925 tried to express this Indonesian identity. They changed the name of their organization from Indische Vereeniging that was formed in 1908 to the *Perhimpunan Indonesia (PI)*. According to Taufik Abdullah, the name change was the result of the implementation of their imagination about their community, and they formed this image into a concept of nationalism that was declared in unity, freedom, and equality (Abdullah, 2002). This concept of the nation they called Indonesia. It was a place of unity for all the differentiated communities in opposition to colonization and in support of independence (Sudiyo, 1989).

In 1928 the PI's concept gained increased support from society through a declaration that was known as *Sumpah Pemuda* on 28 October 1928. The declaration had three principles: one homeland, Indonesia, one language, Bahasa Indonesia; and one nation, Indonesia. It was declared by people who represented various ethnic and Islamic organizations such as Pemoeda Soematera, Jong Java, Jong Celebes, Jong Batak Pemoeda Betawi, Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB), Sekar Roekoen and also by hundreds of people who gave their support to the event (Abdullah, 2002: 11).

With this step the word ‘Indonesia’ appeared as a national concept; although most people did not know each other, yet the feeling of brotherhood among them became a binding agent to draw them into unity. However, it could not have worked without the media that had been known in Indonesia since the end of the seventeenth century in spreading the modern idea of building community (Cribb, 2000: 145). They directly gave influence to the creation of Indonesian unity, although the idea of how to express that unity still was not clear. Nevertheless, the feeling of being part of Indonesia increased among society.

In 1942, when the Japanese overran the Dutch, Japanese policies helped people to corroborate more their image of being part of Indonesia by taking on anti-Dutch policies. Japan erased the Dutch influence in economic, political and cultural affairs (Aziz, 1955). *Bupati* who were pro- Dutch were discharged and they were replaced by Japanese and Indonesian nationalists. Speaking Dutch was forbidden, and it was changed to the Japanese language or the Indonesian language. For example, Java was renamed *Djawa*, and Batavia was renamed *Djakarta*, the Netherlands Indies were renamed *Hindia Timoer*, and Harmonieplein and Oranje Boulevard respectively became *Yamato Basi* and *Syoowa Doori* affairs (Aziz, 1955: 174). The word *Merdeka*, independence, became popular among Indonesians, and the Japanese gave promises to Indonesians of independence later. Soekarno, as one

of nationalists who cooperated with the Japanese, continually used the word in the newspaper *Asia Raya* to encourage people to help Japan in the Asian War. Independence, sovereignty and unity became a key point in all his statements in *Asia Raya*.

The imagination to be unified was more clear among Indonesians; however, how to create Indonesia was still complicated, especially after getting independence on 17 August 1945. Debating about unity, federalism and autonomy, the ideology of state, reorganisation and conflict in the Indonesian army, claiming territory, and the communist ideology issue became big problems for the new Indonesian government. In different areas there were different ideas and expectation of what it would mean to be part of a free and unified Indonesia. In Aceh, many people expected that being Indonesian would allow them to implement local government based on Islam, having something like regional autonomy (Morris, 1985: 113). In West Sumatra, as a place that had produced many nationalist figures such as Muhammad Hatta, Tan Malaka and Sutan Syahril, decentralisation was their expectation. They expected these West Sumatran figures would help them restore the autonomy that had once been a part of their cultural life (Kahin, 1985). In Java, the proclamation of Indonesian independence was regarded as freedom from colonization. They were satisfied with the current centralized system but wanted to remove from power the elite people who had gotten the advantages from the colonization (Kahin, 1985).

For the Papua territory, the desire to be a part of Indonesia mostly come from Jakarta. Soekarno, with his romantic memory of being a political prisoner in Digul, wanted Papua to be a part of Indonesia, although Muhammad Hatta had a different opinion about Papuan territory. He realized Papua still belonged to Dutch authority and it would be better for Papuans to make their own decision; however, the claim to the Papua region got much support from other leaders of Indonesia (Israr, 2006). On the other side, the Dutch still held onto their control. According to Cribb, it was partly to salvage what they saw as their imperial prestige, partly because of the potential minerals wealth of the region and partly because they saw the Melanesian inhabitants of New Guinea (Papua) as ethnically entirely different from the broadly Malay majority in Indonesia (Cribb, 1999).

In Papua itself, the reaction to the Indonesian proclamation came from the small Papuan elite who had received police training and school administration during Japanese colonization. Some of them were Frans and Markus Kaisiepo, Nicolaas Jouwe, Martin Indey, Lukas Rumkorem, and Silas Pare-Pare; however, they did not share single opinion about being a part of Indonesia (van der Veur, 1963: 54-73). They were divided into two groups, pro-Indonesia and pro-Dutch, however, these opinions decreased gradually. People rejected the outside world: no Indonesia, no Dutch and no Japanese, they only wanted their own people and no more crying for their own people, although the pro-Indonesian element still existed until the Act of Free Choice that was done in 1969 (van der Veur, 1963: 66,77). Indonesia succeeded in holding the Act of Free Choice, and it also got support from the United States and the United Nations, although the actual fairness of this act has become an international issue.

The exception is East Timor; it had no connection with Indonesian colonization historically. The expectation to be a part of Indonesia from the East Timor people was very lacking. It was forced to become a part of Indonesia because the New Order government was afraid it would fall to communism. East Timor was a region of Portuguese colonisation that had been abandoned by Portugal in 1975. East Timor was left by Portugal with two big parties: Fretilin (the leftist party) and UDT. Fretilin was radical and wanted immediate independence, and UDT desired gradual independence. In the middle of August 1975, civil war broke out. Fretilin was able to control the situation and controlled most of the territory and declared the Democratic Republic of East Timor on 28 November 1975. Indonesia could not tolerate the leftist party and, with the communism issue and stability and security of the Indonesian region, Indonesia came to East Timor with a military operation and forced them to be a part of Indonesia by using the Balibo declaration of integration that was signed by UDT and Apodeti on 30 November 1975.

In other words, the concept of Indonesia had existed in the Indonesian imagination since early in the twenty century and spreading widely among people. However, Indonesia has been still faced with military conflict and the competition of parties, the dreams of some people to build an Islamic state, some regional rebellions in West Java, Aceh, West Sumatra and other places which did not agree with central government policies and conflict over ideology that left many communists as victims after the Coup d'état in 1965. However, until President Soekarno fell, most of these conflicts only reflected disagreements with central government policies, and separatism was not a big issue. The spirit of separatism, however, increased gradually among regions during President Soeharto's years, and precisely because the military operations were used to control politics and the economy in most Indonesian regions.

### **The Eroding Process of Indonesian Unity in Aceh**

According to Benedict Anderson, after the Daud Beureueh rebellion, Aceh lived peacefully under the civilian governor who was loyal to the local people; however, things changed in 1970 when natural gas was found in Aceh (Anderson, 1999). It was the biggest deposit in the world. Jakarta changed its political and economic strategy in Aceh. First, Jakarta (central government) replaced the local-son civilian leaders with military personnel, who often came from Java and had more loyalty to the central government than to the local people. Second, local government military facilitated the annexation of the economic process in Aceh to investors who come from Java, more than to local sons. Most of them had connections with Soeharto: Exxon Mobile, Pertamina, Osprey Maritime Ltd, and PT Humpuus Aromatic are the companies that gained much advantage from the gas and oil in Aceh. Some of these companies were owned by President Soeharto's son (Elsam, 2006). The other investors who came from Java also gained advantages from the Acehnese forests. About 75 percent of Acehnese land

was appropriated for the forest companies. Elsam recorded 44 companies which have plundered the Acehese forest and have already exploited about 60% of the available forest ((Elsam, 2006: 1).

Military and civil officials had important functions in controlling the annexation of the economy in Aceh. John F. McCarthy identified how official patronage shared between military and the official local leader, Bupati, helped the companies to gain more profit for the companies and for themselves (McCarthy, 2006). How about the Acehese people? They were rejected from the economic and political development and inherited environmental problems and lost their land without fair compensation or concessions. This resulted in a disappointing image of Indonesian unity. People started to realize that the advantages of the Acehese natural resources were going only to Java and not to the people of Aceh.

Hasan Tiro, one of the Acehese people who rejected the joint economic development in Aceh, built a military movement against Jakarta's domination, which is usually associated with Java. Tiro used the disappointment of the Acehese people to build anti-Javanese attitudes and create an opinion that Java or the central government had colonized the Acehese people. He succeeded in raising past Acehese glory and building the spirit of an Acehese nation and form the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF). In 4 December 1976 this organisation declared the Negara Aceh Merdeka (NAM), the Acehese Nation Freedom that was known as Gerakan Merdeka (GAM), Free Acehese Movement.

The central government reacted with a military operation against the Tiro movement. It was seen as a good way to finish the movement until 1979 however in 1989 the GAM succeeded to arrange again their organisation and continually against the Indonesia government. Indonesia controlled it with the military operation again. Aceh was identified as a *Daerah Operasi Militer* (DOM), a Military Operation Area. In carrying out the operation with name the Jaring Merah Operation, the military used two strategies: first institutionalised terror and second mass mobilisation against GAM (Robinson, 2003). The military imposed a curfew. They looked for GAM member in people's houses, and they caught people that they accused of having a relationship with GAM. They raped women and burnt houses or killed people publicly and they also intimidated, abducted tortured people or throw human bodies into river, road and others public areas also extorted money (LIPI, 2001). Aceh become a killing field during the DOM. Military build little police offices to execute, kill, and intimidate people. The others of the centre of killing fields were also found in mountains and rivers ((LIPI, 2001: 39). According to Ricklefs, in the approximately ten years of rule by the DOM, 2,000 people were killed, some people suffered violence, and many women were sexually violated.

People were forced to be spies and to join paramilitary forces to catch GAM members. About 60,000 forced to be members of paramilitary (Rahmany, 2001: 19). They were put in the front lines of the military operation, and this made people have no choice: They had to kill GAM members who sometimes had family

relationships with them. It looked like what the Dutch had done in the past with the political aim of *divide et impera*. Military operation successfully reduced the GAM movement. The military operation, which intended to preserve Indonesia's territorial integrity, actually drove people away from the idea of Indonesia.

On 26 December 2004, however, a tsunami struck Aceh. The conflict changed drastically. About 80,000 died, and others lost their property. The tsunami forced GAM and the Indonesian Government to start a dialogue to create peace in Aceh. The independence spirit in Aceh decreased rapidly. "Kami lelah berperang" (we are tired to fighting), said one GAM member (Ahmad Arif and Prasetyo, 2006). With help from the international community, Indonesia and GAM signed an MOU to keep peace in Aceh and give a special autonomous status to Aceh.

### **Timor-Timur's Desire for Freedom**

..... *Yang kami tentang bukan integrasinya, tapi cara-cara represif and invasif untuk memaksa rakyat Timtim bersatu dengan Indonsia.* We did not oppose integration, but repressive and invasive means to force the Timtim (East Timor) people to be united with Indonesia (Xanana Gusmao, interview with Matra magazine December 1988, edited by Tri Agus S.Siswawiharjo) (Siswawihardjo, 1999)

On 7 December 1975, the Indonesian military invited Dili after Fretilin declared independence. On 17 December 1975, Indonesia formed a *Majelis Rakyat* or People's Council, with 37 member who supported the integration into Indonesia. On 15 July 1976, the Indonesian House of Representative approved a bill of integration for East Timor into Indonesia, which was then promulgated as ACT Number 7/1976, although the process of integration was not accepted by the United Natio (DPR RI, 1988: 11).

From the beginning of the campaign until formal integration, the military ruled the brutal operation in East Timor. The Indonesian army made little headway in the insuring guerrilla war, until a series of systematic bombings and encirclement campaigns was launched 1977 (Berger, 2001). About 60,000 people or 10 percent people were killed in the integration campaign included five of Australian Journalists (Ricklefs, 2001). The East Timor people also suffered from starvation. The military also forced people to move from their lands to hamper the Fretilin movement. They were put into unfertile areas by the military, and they did not get back to their own lands because when they went back, the military had taken the lands. The military personnel also dominated all branches of local government, while a formidable intelligence structure closely monitored the population (Berger, 2001: 1011).

In economic sectors, the military become a key point institution in giving permission for companies to operate their capital in East Timor. Most of the companies came from those linked with President Soeharto and the military.

They had a monopoly on forest assets, agriculture, (especially coffee) and also entertainment.

In the imagination of Indonesia they were hero who had given freedom to East Timor people and gave much prosperity to them. Yet to the East Timorese, Indonesia was devil. The government spoke people routinely emphasised that Indonesian government was expending considerable sums on basic infrastructure, contrasting this record of colonial neglect under Portugal (Berger, 2001: 1011). It seems that the East Timor people are nothing without Indonesia contributions.

As was the case with Dutch education, the Indonesian education also resulted in young educated people who tried to question Indonesian policies in East Timor. In the 1980s their movement become more radical after making connections with Fretelin guerrillas in the forest (Berger, 2001: 1011). The Indonesian military labelled the young radical groups as anti-integration groups, however the label was not very appropriate because the expectation of radical group not only to against the integration concept but also had moved to ask the independence.

Indonesian military formed paramilitary units which came from the pro-integration people as a reaction against the anti-integration people. The pro-integration groups got training and were given guns such as SKS, M 16, Mauser, G-3, grenades, and pistols, and they also got salaries. Some of the paramilitary organisations were Mahidi (*Hidup Mati Demi Integrasi*, Live or Die for Integration), *Besi Merah Putih* (Iron Red and White), *Aitarik*, *Gada Paksi*, *Darah Merah* (Blood Red), AHI (*Aku Hidup untuk Integrasi*, I live for Integration), *Lak Saur Merah Putih* and others (Crouch, 2000). They were formed to care for community security, or in other words, the military involved them in civil war. According to Andriyanto, the pro-integration paramilitary and military burned houses, killed people and raped women brutally (Andriyanto, 1999).

The tension between the two groups increased rapidly. In October 1989, the turbulence happened in Dili when the Pope John Paul II visited this area. About 140 young activities anti-integration were caught by military. Although the incident was captured by media however the international reaction was so weakly and the violence still continued in East Timor (Ricklefs, 2008: 391). On 12 November 1991, the conflict tension more-more increased when the anti-integration people celebrated a mass for Sebastiao Gomes Rangel, a young person from an anti-integration group who was killed by the military. The clash among between two groups out of control but most people believed that the military had played a role in creating chaos in this demonstration. The military took action by shooting about 271 people and wounding about 382 people, and about 250 went missing (Ricklefs, 2008: 395). This incident captured by the international media became a big headline issue in the international world. Ali Alatas, minister for foreign affairs in Indonesia, recognised that the Dili incident was a *turning point* in starting the process toward East Timor's independence.

## **Conclusion**

A sense of shared Indonesian community started early in the twentieth century as a rejection of Dutch colonialism. Modern educational institutions and the media played important roles in furthering the development of the Indonesian 'imagined community.' Though anti-Dutch organisations often started out with ethnic, regional, or religious identities, over time they tended to merge into a united effort with a shared Indonesian identity. This unity became clearer during the period of Japanese occupation. Japan offered more opportunities to Indonesians to develop nationalism among the people by using the Indonesian language and by eliminating Dutch influence in the Indonesian community.

When Indonesian independence was declared, however, the nature of Indonesian unity was still a complicated one. People from many different regions (and even within regions) have very different expectations of the new state. Concerns over local autonomy, the role of Islamic ideology, debates over federalism, hopes about Islamic law, and conflicts over the reorganisation of the new nation's military were all problems faced in those years. However, a desire to be a part of Indonesia still existed in the imaginations of the people.

Since that time, this shared sense of Indonesian-ness has often been harmed by the operations of the Indonesian military. Though the military has played a role in maintaining (and even expanding) Indonesia's territorial integrity, the social, economic, and political disruption and exploitation which have accompanied these operations have actually been a threat to people's shared identity as Indonesians. Military brutality and exploitation has seriously weakened the national identity and maybe it will lead Indonesia to fragmentation.

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