

DIVERGENT INDEPENDENCE OUTCOMES: A COMPARITIVE
ANALYSIS OF WEST PAPUA WITH ACEH AND EAST TIMOR

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Political Science
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

May 2024

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Brooks Hogenauer for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Political Science to be taken May 2024

Title: Divergent Independence Outcomes: A Comparative Analysis of West Papua with
Aceh and East Timor

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This thesis compares the independence movements of West Papua with East Timor and Aceh due to their divergent outcomes. West Papua is the easternmost piece of territory under Indonesian rule and boasts one of the most valuable mines on earth. By evaluating these movements and regions through three main factors: prevalence of resource extractive industries, level of international support, and transmigration practices; my thesis attempts to explain the relative failure of West Papua's independence movement while East Timor and Aceh's succeeded. By conducting thorough literature review, I make historical and institutional arguments centering on the important differences and similarities between these movements.

Much research has been conducted on the independence movements of Aceh, East Timor, and West Papua, but scholarly material comparing the independence movements is minimal. It is important to compare these movements so we can understand the factors that harm independence movements against repressive governments as well as the elements that allow them to be successful. I find that established transmigration practices and extractive industries greatly impair independence movements, while international support can benefit a movement greatly. These findings suggest that Indonesia had a far greater interest in upholding their rule in West Papua compared to East Timor and Aceh, resulting in their current conditions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Primary Thesis Advisor, Yeling Tan, for her guidance and support with this project despite starting a new job and moving during the process of this thesis. I would also like to extend thanks to my Clark Honors College advisor, Catalina de Onis, for her understanding and advice throughout the course of this project. Additionally, I acknowledge my parents, Karen and Ken Hogenauer, for bringing me with them on business trips to Bali, Indonesia which inspired the subject of this thesis.

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Introduction

West Papua encompasses the western peninsulas of the island of New Guinea, making up an important fraction of Indonesia's territory. The region had been inhabited by Melanesians for thousands of years before the arrival of Western influence. In 1898, the Netherlands colonized the region, incorporating the region into the Dutch East Indies. The majority of Indonesia today shares a similar history, with many areas once being colonies of western nations. When Indonesia became independent in 1949, West Papua was not originally considered part of its territory. The Dutch government recognized its cultural, ethnic, and geographic differences from the rest of the territories, leaving it to be independent of the newly formed republic (Chauvel).

In 1961, West Papua had finally earned its independence from the Dutch Government, raising its flag, the Morning Star. However, the Indonesian government made it clear they intended to control the entirety of the former Dutch colonies, invading West Papua the same year. The Indonesian government encountered staunch resistance from the Netherlands and Papuans, choosing to seek support from the Soviet Union in its conquest (Chauvel). Collaboration between the Soviet Union and Indonesia motivated the United States to appease Indonesia, out of fear of the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. To appease the Indonesian government, the United States facilitated talks between the Indonesian and Dutch governments regarding the sovereign status of West Papua. These talks would culminate in the New York Agreement of 1962, handing control of West Papua over to the United Nations (Chauvel).

A year later, control of the nation would be transferred to Indonesia without the consent of the people or government of West Papua. However, the agreement ensured that West Papua had the right to vote on their independence from Indonesia. There would be no such vote until 1969, when most of the nation opposed Indonesian rule due to its abusive and repressive

governing style, killing “and [imprisoning] thousands of Papuans in the seven years it had occupied the country” (Monbiot). The New York Agreement required a vote regarding the independence of West Papua, named the ‘Act of Free Choice’. Despite its name, there was little free choice in this vote. The United Nations did little to ensure the validity of the plebiscite, disregarding the blatant manipulation of the vote by the Indonesian government. Believing the West Papuans to be uneducated and not civilized enough to participate in a democracy, the Indonesian government hand-selected 1,026 individuals to “represent” West Papua in the vote. These chosen representatives unanimously voted to remain a part of Indonesia, despite massive protests from Papuans (Wangge).

West Papua has remained under the control of the Indonesian government since this point. During this period, West Papuans experienced violence and torture at the hands of their oppressors while simultaneously foreign corporations extracted material resources located on the island. Mines owned by foreign entities plague West Papua, polluting water sources that thousands rely on and displacing communities who have lived in these locations for generations (Abigail). West Papua is home to over 5 million people, including more than 250 Indigenous tribes who boast unique traditions and languages. In recent years, the Indonesian government has implemented transmigration programs that have brought individuals from across Indonesia to work in camps cut into the jungles of West Papua. Programs like this, along with the extraction of valuable metals from the island have displaced many of these tribes, endangering their ways of life (Abigail). The distinct composition and history of the area are worth preserving, despite the Indonesian government’s efforts to enforce Indonesian “unity” on the region.

Since Indonesia assumed control of the territory, resistance movements have taken many forms in West Papua. Armed resistance movements such as the Free Papuan Movement and The West Papua National Liberation Army make up the more violent opposition to Indonesia's presence in West Papua. Student protesters and Indigenous Papuans utilize peaceful demonstrations to demonstrate their discontent with Indonesia's management of their land. Indonesia has recreated this story in other portions of its territory, specifically East Timor and Aceh. While independence movements in West Papua have failed, independence movements with the same goal as those in West Papua largely succeeded in East Timor and Aceh.

Comparison of the independence movements of East Timor and Aceh with those in West Papua offer a possible explanation for the relative failure of those in West Papua. With the support of international organizations, Acehnese rebel leaders were able to successfully negotiate the terms of their self-government directly with Indonesian leaders, differing from West Papua where government officials already in power brokered the supposed "self-government." In East Timor, the power of international media attention forced sufficient pressure onto Indonesia to reconsider their policies towards the independence movement in the territory. Acehnese independence fighters fomented resistance to the establishment of extractive corporations and practices in their territory, in turn weakening Indonesia's military presence in the territory. Meanwhile in East Timor, the nature of the extractive industries in place did not require an increased security presence. I assert that the failure of the independence movement in West Papua rests on the differing circumstances and Indonesian policies experienced by East Timor and Aceh. It is important to note that while I refer to the independence movement in West Papua as a failure, great progress has been made in coalition building with other social movements and Melanesian countries who understand the struggle of the West Papuan people.

Research Question

What explains the failure of the independence movement in West Papua compared to other similar movements in Indonesia?

Literature Review

Discourse on Colonialism in West Papua

This literature review first dives into the definition of an “industrial colony” as I define West Papua. Stephen Eichorn contends that “industrial colonialism” is a situation in which corporations have “free access to remove resources, e.g. land, timber, water and other natural resources, but also to resettle indigenous populations” (1003). The oppressive strategies utilized by the Indonesian military to reinforce this power dynamic will also become clear through this examination. Second, I will summarize the historical similarities and differences between East Timor and Aceh, and how revolution movements in these countries were able to find success, where West Papua has not.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a colony as “a country or area under the full or partial political control of another country, typically a distant one, and occupied by settlers from that country”. In a report done by Amnesty International in 2023 reviewing Indonesia’s treatment of the Papuan people, the oppressive presence of Indonesia’s military in West Papua is revealed. When considering this definition of colonization, the Indonesian military’s repression of revolution movements and general abuse of authority certainly depicts West Papua as a colony of Indonesia.

While West Papua is not distant from the rest of Indonesia, scholar Sophia Chao argues that West Papuans are culturally, linguistically, and socially very distant from the rest of Indonesia despite its diverse population. It should be noted that due to these stark differences, the

overwhelming majority of West Papuans objected to becoming part of Indonesia during the “Act of Free Choice” plebiscite sponsored by the UN. The Netherlands which had formerly colonized the West Papuans recommended that West Papua join the rest of Papua New Guinea due to their shared cultural ties. Despite the appearance of free choice for West Papuans, the Indonesian military hand-picked the 1,025 participants in the plebiscite who unanimously voted to join Indonesia. Chao also outlines the racist sentiments held by many Indonesians towards West Papuans, believing them to be inferior and less developed than the rest of Indonesia. Specifically, non-Papuan settlers refer to Papuans as *monkeyt* or *keras* meaning “monkey” or “ape” in Indonesian. This dehumanization of Papuans validates, in the minds of these settlers, the denial of their rights and dignity in the eye of the law. However, student protestors in West Papua have reclaimed these terms, utilizing them as symbols of anti-racism and colonial resistance in the region as seen in the widespread protests that took place in 2019 (Chao).

Finally, Eichorn connects the racism described by Sophia Chao to the oppressive foreign conglomerates currently operating in West Papua. Mining facilities and palm oil companies have displaced thousands of Indigenous peoples in West Papua while extracting many of the natural resources on the island. Moreover, these companies contaminate water sources and areas on which communities depend on with zero course for retribution. Nearly all the money from the extraction of these resources goes to Indonesian firms from other islands, or to foreign companies. In other words, these entities function as financial drains in West Papua, extracting their valuable resources while providing zero financial or economic benefits to the communities they operate in. Due to the military’s dependence on security contracts from these foreign firms, their uninhibited operation in West Papua has further empowered military presence in the region,

ensuring the survival of colonial power structures. Understanding these realities allows us to conclude that West Papua ultimately functions as a colony of Indonesia.

Discourse on Comparative Analysis of East Timor and Aceh and West Papua



Figure 1: Map of West Papua, East Timor, and Aceh

East Timor and Aceh share similar colonial histories to that of West Papua and for that reason make an apt comparison for West Papua, but the differences provide insight into the failure of West Papua's independence movement. Australia and the United States have remained indifferent to the human rights violations being perpetuated by the Indonesian military in West Papua (Martinkus). While the United States levied an arms embargo against Indonesia in 1991 in response to the massacre of 270 East Timorese during an anti-Indonesian demonstration, the U.S. reopened its military assistance to Indonesia in 2006, despite continued human rights violations in West Papua (Morrisey). It should also be noted that international attention to these events reversed the indifference of Australia and gained support from their military to begin the process

of gaining independence. As described by Stephanie Lawson, the struggle for self-determination in East Timor and Aceh was improved by obtaining the right to self-government from Indonesia.

In 2001, Indonesia passed the Special Autonomy Law which feigned the appearance of encouraging Papuan autonomy. However, unlike Aceh where a similar piece of legislation was negotiated between independence leaders and Indonesian officials, it empowered corrupt officials who authorized the presence of the Indonesian military and government (Barter). As explained by Barter, in Aceh and East Timor, revolutionary leaders were able to overcome oppression and censorship by the Indonesian military to take these positions of power away from the former corrupted officials.

Indonesia's government publicly states that West Papua is a willful member of Indonesia due to the plebiscite voted on by 'the people.' This is a colonial tactic on the side of Indonesia which feigns the autonomy of West Papua through the illegitimate vote that took place in 1969, and by employing the Special Autonomy Law of 2001. By conducting a comparison with the situations in East Timor and Aceh, the reasons behind West Papua's failure to achieve independence will emerge. Various revolutionary groups are active in West Papua, which range from peaceful to violent protesting the presence of Indonesia in their territory. The work of these activists and the rest of the public will ultimately decide the fate of the island. After all, it was the work of activists in East Timor who exposed the Indonesian military for their brutally violent ruling style and garnered the support of the public in Australia (Martinkus). The Australian rally behind East Timor provoked their government into action, and the activists in West Papua are seeking a similar course of action.

Research Strategies & Methods

In this thesis, I will be evaluating the factors that have made West Papua's struggle for independence unsuccessful compared to the resistance movements in East Timor and Aceh. By unsuccessful, I refer to the OPM's inability to achieve complete independence from Indonesia or obtain autonomy representative of the West Papuan people. I will ground my analysis in factors such as censorship, resource extraction, military presence, local politics, and the differing histories of these countries to explain why the revolutionary outcomes of these countries have differed from those in West Papua.

West Papua – Historical Analysis and Case Studies

For this thesis to be effective, the historical context of West Papua and its territory is required. Beginning with its first encounter with colonialism (with the Netherlands), and ending in the present day, describing, and understanding its relationship with the oppressive institutions that have robbed the people of West Papua of their agency is essential in theorizing their lack of success in resisting Indonesia's influence in the territory. I will do so by conducting historical analysis and case studies on the presence of Indonesian security forces within West Papua, along with the economic activities of foreign and domestic corporations. In conjunction with these topics, I will be exploring the actions of resistance groups within West Papua. Finally, I will conduct a discussion on the role of these institutions in marginalizing and isolating the West Papua people.

East Timor and Aceh – Comparative Analysis

After setting the stage for the current situation in West Papua, I will conduct comparative analysis of the histories, institutional landscape, and social realities of East Timor and Aceh to highlight the differences which have attributed to their divergent independence outcomes. I will

perform this analysis by examining their historical relationships with Indonesia, as well as the presence of Indonesian security forces and governmental agencies within these territories. I will also examine the prevalence and nature of extractive corporations within these regions, while evaluating the strength and activities of resistance and revolutionary movements. Finally, I will contextualize transmigration and its affect on the populations and resistance movements within Aceh and East Timor. By evaluating topics with great significance for the relative success of resistance and revolutionary movements in these localities I will assess how their similarities and differences with West Papua explain their divergent outcomes.

Significance & Implications

By completing this thesis, I hope to shed a spotlight on the egregious human rights violations facilitated by the Indonesian government against the people of West Papua. This is important considering the seeming global indifference to the crimes being committed in this territory. Especially in the United States, few have even heard of West Papua and fewer have heard of the atrocities which transpire every day. Through my work, I hope to paint a clear picture of the oppressive nature of the Indonesian government and how it has exploited West Papua for its abundant natural resources. As seen in the case of East Timor, spreading consciousness of the situation in West Papua can initiate processes that could liberate the territory.

Finally, by providing a road map and offering a comparison between countries that have successfully fought for their independence, I hope to emphasize the power of collective action against powerful enemies. Censorship and oppression by the Indonesian government has sought to discourage revolution movements in the territory.

By pointing to other areas where revolution was triumphant, the work of the Indonesia government to suppress revolutionary movements begin to appear weak.

List of Abbreviations

OPM	Free Papua Movement
UNTEA	United Nations Administration in West Papua
PVK	Papuan Volunteer Corps
TPNPB	The West Papua National Liberation Army
UDT	The União Democrática Timorese
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente
GAM	Free Aceh Movement
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militar
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DPRD	Provincial Parliament in West Papua
MRP	Native Papuan Assembly within West Papua

Historical Context: West Papua and Indonesian Government Relations

Dutch Colonization

West Papua is the western half of a larger island, with Papua New Guinea, an independent state, making up the eastern half. While Indonesia has claimed the island as part of its territory for more than 60 years now, the island boasts a variety of cultural differences from its Asian counterparts. The Indigenous people of West Papua describe themselves as Papuans and hold more cultural links to the people of Papua New Guinea as well as the islands of Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Solomons (Saltford 28). There is great cultural diversity in West Papua, with more than 250 different languages spoken in the territory. There is also great geographical diversity on the island, where tropical jungles, lakes, swamps, highlands, and snow-capped mountains dominate the landscape (Saltford 28). It is important to set the stage for the island to understand the nature of the Netherlands' occupation and colonization of the island.

The Dutch claimed West New Guinea in 1828 due to its positioning next to their other colonies in the East Indies. The Netherlands pursued a relatively non-existent presence in the territory, claiming it mostly to dissuade other European powers from encroaching on their colonies (especially the British). The border that exists between Papua New Guinea and West Papua was officially drawn in 1910, with the British and Germans claiming the eastern half of the island. The creation of the border had little effect on the Indigenous occupants of the island as the overwhelming majority had not met or seen a European in their life.

The Dutch government would maintain its minimal colonial presence except for the establishment of a nominal administration in the territory. While seemingly unimportant at the time, a heated debate took place in 1902 in the Dutch parliament surrounding the budget of the territory as one side believed it should be separate from the budget of its East Indies holdings

since they considered West Papua to be part of “Polynesia.” Despite the debate, the parliament decided to refrain from giving the territory its own budget. With West Papua included in the Netherland’s budget for the rest of their East Indies colonies, Indonesia had a claim to the territory (Saltford 29).

Integration into Indonesia and Act of Free Choice

The year 1949 marked the end of a four-year struggle for independence in the Dutch colonies, spearheaded by the leader of Indonesia’s nationalist movement, Koesno Sosrodihardjo. Better known as Sukarno, Indonesia’s future president declared Indonesian independence following the surrender of Japan in August 1945. However, the Netherlands would not recognize Indonesia’s independence until 1949 as Sukarno forced their hand through military and diplomatic measures.

Despite relinquishing control of most of their East Indies holdings to the Indonesian federation, the Dutch resisted handing over the territory of West Papua due to the significant cultural, social, and linguistic differences compared to the rest of Indonesia (Saltford 32). In fact, according to documents from the “Round Table Conference,” where negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands took place, Mohammed Hatta (Indonesia’s first Vice President) argued that Papuans deserved a right to their own state due to their cultural differences. Debate over ownership of West Papua would continue for years, but Indonesia’s claim would gain traction under the anti-colonial doctrine *uti possidetis juris* (Saltford 35).

Under this doctrine, it was thought that all former colonial boundaries should be retained under the creation of a new federation to avoid unnecessary boundary disputes and conflicts. This doctrine failed to consider the polyethnic and culturally diverse nature of these post-colonial states, perpetrating a system where the ethnic groups in power could subvert those that were

weaker in the post-colonial states. Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, utilized *uti possidetis juris* to convince the other members of the anti-colonial movement that West Papua's independence would be a direct attack against Indonesia's right to national unity (Saltford 36).

It was in the interest of Jakarta to retain control of West Papua for a variety of reasons, the main three being geological, political, and economic. West Papua served as the most eastern portion of the Dutch East Indies holdings and acted as a buffer against encroachment from Australia and Western influence in the mind of Indonesia. Politically, it was important for Indonesia to obtain control of West Papua to ensure national unity and establish the territorial integrity of the Indonesian state. In the eyes of Jakarta, allowing West Papua to be independent would threaten the nation's claim to the rest of their territory. Furthermore, Jakarta believed that allowing West Papua independence would lead to separatist movements in other portions of their territory (Barter). Economically, the Dutch had discovered massive deposits of ores such as gold and copper in the territory, along with coal and oil. The plethora of natural resources in West Papua added an additional facet to Indonesia's staunch fight for control of the region.

While West Papua's independence was debated on the international level, the Netherlands rapidly prepared Papuans for self-rule. Political parties and elected regional councils were formed, with the overwhelming majority in favor of Papuan independence. The Dutch participated in this endeavor to establish a political elite comprised of native Papuans to ensure a just ruling party in the territory (Saltford, 37). This would prove futile, though, as the United States wielded its influence in the United Nations to oversee the New York agreement in 1962 effectively passing control of the territory over to Jakarta before a plebiscite could take place.

The United States was incentivized to appease the Indonesian government through this agreement to ensure that Indonesia would not be inclined to further align with the Soviet Union

and China (Saltford 41). Despite increasing a country's power with a strong communist party, this was seen as a greater victory for the West as a seemingly small concession ensured Indonesia would refrain from growing their tie with the communist bloc.

While the West was concerned about the growth of communist ideology, Papuans watched any hope of independence or sovereignty wash away with the signing of the New York Agreement. It is important to note that this agreement included a clause that ensured Indonesian military forces already stationed in the country would be included in the United Nations Security Force, which oversaw passing rule of the territory over to Indonesia. This would greatly undermine the United Nation's ability to ensure a peaceful transfer of power in West Papua (Saltford 43). While the agreement enveloped the existing Indonesian military forces in the region into the forces overseeing the transfer of power, it strictly prohibited expansion of forces without U.N approval.

Not surprisingly, Indonesia facilitated numerous troop landings on the shores of West Papua by submarine and utilized paratroopers in direct opposition to the agreement they had signed. The Dutch forces remaining on the island apprehended Indonesian troops and exposed Indonesia for their aggressive use of military power. The Netherland's protection of the Papuan police and people sowed deep distrust between the Dutch and Indonesian governments. Sukarno frequently accused the Netherlands during this time of supplying Papuans with weapons to resist Indonesian control. While there was no evidence to back these claims, political resistance to the New York Agreement was prominent among the politically active in West Papua (Saltford 47).

The "Morning Star" flag and its adoption as the official flag of the territory in 1961 showcased the potency of nationalist sentiment among Papuans. However, once the New York Agreement had been signed, Jakarta made it clear that flying the flag would be deemed illegal as

it would be considered a direct attack against Indonesia's rule. The flag would become a symbol of Papuan independence during this time, and to this day is sported by Papuan revolutionary activists.

Once the United Nations took control over West Papua, Indonesia immediately began to request a speedier handover of power. The United Nations did little to resist Jakarta on this front, eventually agreeing to this request. This was not Indonesia's only effort in resisting Papuan self-determination. Indonesia began flying Papuan delegates to Jakarta on expense-paid trips, bribing, pressuring, and intimidating these delegates into accepting pro-Indonesia views (Saltford 59). This would greatly turn the tide in West Papua's struggle for independence and sovereignty from the Indonesian government. Civil unrest sparked in December of 1962 in reaction to the change of heart of the delegates sent to Jakarta, along with the heightened presence of the Indonesian military throughout the territory (Saltford, 66). Demonstrations were set to take place on December 1, 1962, but Indonesia and the United Nations administration in place caught wind of the plans.

While UNTEA (the United Nations administration in West Papua at this point) and Jakarta heavily pressured the Papuan activists to not participate in these demonstrations, little could be done to convince them. Indonesia found this to be an act of defiance against their "rightful rule," blaming the Netherlands for organizing the demonstrations to resist the eventual take-over by Indonesia (Saltford, 67). Indonesia's Foreign Minister threatened violence against Papuans who took part in the demonstrations, placing the diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands in jeopardy. The UNTEA would intervene, refusing to give the Papuan activists the permits to protest legally, after promising to do so, appeasing Indonesia and their wishes.

Once the last Dutch troops had left West Papua in November 1962, Indonesia's military presence became significantly more aggressive and prominent. While the violence initially remained between the Papuan Police and the Indonesian military, innocent civilians would quickly become victims of Indonesia's oppressive tactics (Saltford 71). On December 10, 1962 Indonesian troops fired into a crowd of Papuan demonstrators injuring two civilians. Abuses of power like this would become commonplace as UNTEA began a policy of appeasing the Indonesian government to the detriment of Papuan civil rights.

The United Nations at this time was engaged with the Cold War and was less concerned with the conflict taking place on the relatively small island of West Papua. As a result, the United Nations did little to reprimand Indonesia for its abusive military practices in the country, despite the presence of UNTEA. The raising of the Indonesian flag, beginning in 1963, became a major point of tension in the territory with Papuan nationalists flying the Morning Star flag in opposition to their oppressor's presence. Beyond flying the Morning Star flag, Papuan activists began destroying Indonesian flags being flown across the territory, further stoking the conflict between Papuan and Indonesian forces. Illegal arrests swept West Papua as demonstrators and activists were held captive by the Indonesian military for their actions, further cementing the negative view of the Indonesian military in the eyes of Papuans.

The Indonesian government began intimidations campaigns in the territory, as a way of disincentivizing anti-Indonesia sentiment and demonstrations in West Papua (Saltford 83). These campaigns were mainly focused on students and Papuan police as Jakarta viewed these groups as the most threatening groups to their eventual take-over.

The Indonesian military also clashed with the Papuan Volunteer Corps (PVK), which was the only military-trained group in West Papua during this time. With about 450 men, the PVK

was far smaller than the Indonesian military presence in West Papua during this time which was greater than 1,500 soldiers. The most major clash took place on February 17, 1963, when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on the group. In response, about a quarter of the PVK stormed the barracks, arming themselves and patrolling the town in search of Indonesian soldiers. The UNTEA condemned the PVK for their actions, labeling the group as a danger to the rest of the territory by instigating conflict with the Indonesians. To avoid any further conflict, the UNTEA deceived the PVK into disarming them, leaving them weaponless as the only military-trained anti-Indonesian group in the territory (Saltford 90).

UNTEA by this time had already made clear that they were set on appeasing the Indonesian government as “once the Indonesians took over, the UN accepted that they would do whatever they pleased, regardless of anything promised in the Agreement.” (Saltford 92). This admission by the United Nations exposes the reality of the New York Agreement. Despite guaranteeing the Papuans a plebiscite for self-determination, the United Nations had little interest in securing Papuan self-determination or their human rights. Numerous delegates in the country observed Indonesia acting as the dominant leading force in the territory for several months before the supposed handover of power.

Once the formal hand-over of power took place, it took three days for Sukarno to ban all anti-Indonesian Papuan political parties and political action in the territory. Sukarno’s actions forced West Papua into political quarantine, effectively prohibiting journalists and other foreigners from visiting and ascertaining the situation in West Papua (Saltford 102). This did not stem the migration of Indonesians to the territory though, as it was reported that the non-Papuan population in territory had reached around 16,000 by 1964.

Papuans during this time reported losing their jobs, possessions, and housing as a result. This marked the beginning of Indonesia's colonization of the territory, as remarked upon by American observers who were approved for a 10-day field trip in West Papua. The observers noticed how Indonesian authorities "patronized the Papuans in an almost 'classical colonial sense' and were quick to complain how lazy the locals were and how 'like children they must be led'" (Saltford 105). Colonial rhetoric pervaded discussion in the territory and would become a staple of Indonesia's policies towards West Papua.

Beyond these policies, Papuan officials had been steadily removed from their positions of power in the territory. Despite broad popular support for Papuan independence, the Indonesian government had effectively removed any individual sharing this sentiment from wielding any power in West Papua. A German agricultural officer in 1967 estimated that "over 90 per cent of the Papuans wanted independence" (Saltford 105). The same officer remarked, "Many [Indonesian] officials go to West [Papua] solely to enrich themselves through embezzlement or, in the case of many of the soldiers, by simply stealing" (Saltford 105). It is theorized that the discontent with the Indonesian administration led to the formation of the Free Papuan Movement or OPM in 1965. Members of the OPM during this time raised the Morning Star Flag across the territory, risking incarceration for doing so. It was also reported that Papuan rebels attacked oil infrastructure belonging to the Shell Oil Company in Biak (Saltford 106).

Along with the establishment of the OPM, rebel movements against the Indonesian military and government in West Papua became more common. With Indonesian military forces being attacked by rebellion forces, Indonesia began its first counter-insurgency operation in the territory, Operation Sadar. As attacks increased against Indonesian military posts, the Indonesian military replied in force, publicly admitting to bombing the town of Manokwari and killing

nearly forty people. The increase in violence in the territory made it nearly impossible for foreigners and journalists to enter the country, making it difficult to confirm the extent of the violence in the territory. However, Papuan rebels allege that the Indonesian military shot and killed nearly 80 men and children as young as 10 in the Baliem Valley in 1966. They also accused the Indonesian military of hanging a ten-year-old boy in the same town to make an example of the Papuans who resisted Indonesia's presence in the territory (Saltford 107).

While violence against the Papuan people in the territory continued, interest in ensuring that the Papuans were afforded a right to self-determination faltered. In April 1964, the Dutch parliament agreed with the United States that a vote for self-determination in the territory was no longer necessary. While the United Nations remained steadfast in their support of a plebiscite, they held this position strictly to ensure a "legitimate" conclusion to the controversy in West Papua (Saltford 109). Other than the U.N., the only remaining country that seemed genuinely concerned about the Indonesian government's actions in West Papua was Australia, which shared a border with West Papua in the form of New Guinea. However, the Australian government too would end up siding with the U.N. in supporting an act of self-determination, or at least the appearance of one.

A notable political change of tide took place in Indonesia around 1965, affecting the situation in West Papua. While distrust of Indonesian officials remained and the economy of the territory had stagnated for the most part, Jakarta had averted its attention to other portions of its territory. Following a failed coup in September 1965, political power in Indonesia began to move from Sukarno to General Suharto (Saltford 116). Suharto held views much more aligned with the West, beginning the process of rejoining the United Nations in 1966. To appease the West and the United Nations, Suharto announced that Jakarta would permit a plebiscite in West Papua,

reversing Indonesia's stance for the second time in just a year. While this was a seemingly positive change in stance for Papuans, it would become clear that Indonesia had no intention of seeing to a truly legitimate vote for self-determination.

The changing of political tides in Indonesia did little to improve or worsen the situation in West Papua, but Suharto and his Western-friendly policies opened the territory to foreign investment. While the Dutch had reported the existence of minerals such as gold and copper in West Papua, exploration and documentation of these resources had already begun around this time. Prospectors found evidence of large veins of gold and copper, along with oil deposits throughout the territory. The first company to take advantage of this new opportunity, Freeport Sulphur, turned massive profits for their American, Japanese, and German investors to the tune of \$125 million a year by 1990. The company began construction of its mine in 1967, immediately following Suharto's opening up of Indonesia to the international community (Saltford 135).

Meanwhile, Indonesia did little to support the development of their newly acquired territory, neglecting to invest in the infrastructure of West Papua, leaving the people who lived there without a course for economic prosperity (Saltford 118). While many foreign onlookers at the time blamed the economic condition of West Papua for the Papuan's resistance to Indonesian rule, this blatantly ignored their strong nationalist sentiment (Saltford 124). Papuans quickly came to recognize the lack of similarities they shared with the 13,000 or so Indonesians that had moved to the territory since their acquisition of West Papua, which originally ignited their passion for self-determination.

Despite a genuine and widespread interest in an act of self-determination in the territory, the U.N. appeared comfortable with satisfying Indonesia's plan for an "appearance" of one. After

all, the loss of the territory would give fuel to Suharto's opposition in Jakarta. Instead of permitting the citizens of West Papua to vote for themselves, Indonesia reported to the U.N. that they had organized representative councils that would vote in the plebiscite. According to reports, 30 members of the original 54-member party were dismissed due to their anti-Indonesian sentiment. These members were quickly replaced with voting members who would be more sympathetic to the wishes of Jakarta (Saltford 128). Jakarta refused to provide each (voting age-eligible) individual on the island with a vote due to their "primitive nature," highlighting the racial undertones of Indonesia's heavy-handed approach to their newly acquired territory.

Armed rebellion in West Papua continued while discussions took place regarding the structure of the plebiscite. Specifically, rebel groups in the Manokwari area were proving to be a thorn in the side of the Indonesian administration in West Papua. In December 1968, Jakarta warned the rebels that a military operation of 6,000 troops and support from the Indonesian Air Force would begin if they did not surrender (Saltford 143). Some rebels returned to their villages following the announcement, but many remained in hiding in the jungle of Manokwari. The Indonesian military bombed and starved these groups, forcing the rebel leaders to surrender to Jakarta. This marked a temporary end to the conflict in West Papua, but human rights abuses at the hands of the military were still being reported. Basic political and non-political freedoms were being suppressed as well, as one reporter explained that a Papuan would be deemed OPM for expressing the need for economic development in the territory.

Before the plebiscite, a demonstration took place in front of the U.N headquarters protesting their acceptance of the use of regional councils for the plebiscite. These protesters were deemed members of the OPM, and many were taken to military bases and camps where

they were tortured for months (Saltford 159). This seems to be a commonplace practice by the Indonesian military, whose members have continued this form of oppression since then.

Rebellion would be re-ignited though, this time in the Western Central Highlands, with around 90 well-trained Papuan policemen leading the movement in coordination with the OPM. On April 26, 1969, the OPM was able to take control of a Catholic Mission center and sent word to the Indonesian military and U.N. that all Indonesian military personnel should evacuate the area so they could exercise their 'right of free choice' without the intimidation of the Indonesian military. Rebels had successfully gained temporary control of the area, the Morning Star flag flying throughout. Over the following month, Indonesia responded by utilizing their Airforce by strafing areas suspected of rebel activity and dropping paratroopers in the area. The increased military activity in the region forced much of the population in the area to flee, allowing Indonesian military personnel to loot citizens residences. Beyond being exposed to violence and looting, citizens who remained in rebel-controlled areas experienced intimidation and torture at the hands of the Indonesian military (Saltford 163).

Indonesia would eventually regain control of the rebel-controlled area, but only after fighting for months and gaining control immediately before the plebiscite. The strength and resolve of the rebel forces were a testament to the strong sense of nationalism felt by many Papuans before the plebiscite (and after).

Once the rebellion within West Papua was (mostly) dealt with in the eyes of Jakarta, Indonesia began holding the elections for the regional councils that would represent the Papuans in their vote for self-determination. Suspiciously, when the U.N. came to evaluate the validity of these elections, they encountered difficulty obtaining air transportation around the territory to the different locations where elections were taking place. As a result, the U.N officials charged with

ensuring that Papuans were able to vote in a democratic fashion were able to observe “barely 30 per cent of the elections” (Saltford 174). Indonesia had successfully duped the U.N. into sponsoring an election process that they were unable to oversee properly. Stories of Indonesian authorities terrorizing and intimidating Papuans into voting in favor of Indonesia at the unsupervised elections began to trickle out, creating controversy around the representatives that won these elections. The election in Jayapura, for example, had just 9 candidates for the nine seats available. These nine candidates had been decided by 100 elders who Indonesian authorities supposedly consulted with, but where these representatives accurately represented the 15,000 local inhabitants was another question.

This public and international blunder by the United Nations created conflict between the U.N. council overseeing the New York Agreement and Jakarta, as the lack of oversight of the elections meant the U.N. was unable to legitimize the results of the plebiscite. To revive the possibility of legitimacy, the U.N. requested that Jakarta hold fresh elections in the areas with a lack of U.N. supervision. This request by the United Nations marked the first and perhaps only time that the organization stood in stark opposition to the actions of Indonesia (Saltford 177). Jakarta accepted this request from the United Nations, but only in select regions where the United Nations had not been present.

The U.N. seemed satisfied with this concession from Jakarta, with nine fresh elections being held. Despite the concession, U.N. officials were only able to attend six of these elections. In the United Nation’s final report on the election of the representative assemblies, the U.N. admitted to being present at the election of just 195 of the 1,026 Assembly Representatives who would vote in the plebiscite on behalf of the Papuan people. This accounts for under twenty percent of the total representatives, exposing the outsized influence Indonesia had on the

eventual result of the plebiscite. The few foreign journalists who were able to observe these elections commented on their undemocratic nature. Despite these reports, the U.N. seemed satisfied with the fresh elections although they were symbolic more than anything, changing nothing from the original results.

The international community protested little surrounding the conditions of these elections, with the Dutch going as far as to defend Indonesia and its choices to the U.N. At this point it was clear that the international community had abandoned the Papuans, leaving them without a chance for political expression regarding their future. U.N. officials even asked for documents from Indonesia regarding which portions of the population each Assembly member represented, but never received such documents (Saltford 183). Additionally, prior to the act the U.N. had recommended to Jakarta that they release any “anti-state” prisoners they were holding, but as many as 250 were being held in Jayapura during the plebiscite. Most of these 250 were students who were arrested out of precaution for the disruption they might cause during and after the Act.

Leading up to the Act of Free Choice, many Assembly members after the fact reported that they had been held in isolation for several weeks in camps. In these camps, they described being threatened and bribed in an effort to ensure that they voted how Jakarta liked them to. According to stories, Assembly members were given speeches and were forced to practice in front of officials. One Assembly member supposedly refused to do so, being murdered in the process (Saltford 183).

The first portion of the Act took place in July 14, 1969, when the “Consultative Assembly” members for Merauke met to speak for those they represented. Of the 175 members, twenty gave speeches which were nearly identical in content, pledging their oath to Indonesia.

The remaining 155 members were asked to stand if they agreed with their colleagues, in which every single one stood. Blatant manipulation by the Indonesians was effective in acquiring their desired result (Saltford 188). On July 16, a similar procession took place just this time in Wamena. Like in Merauke, the Assembly members voted unanimously to remain a part of Indonesia. Even in these public ceremonies, there were signs of manipulation with massive Indonesian flags and maps portraying the size and power of the Papuans' oppressors (Saltford 188). Each proceeding Assembly meeting followed suit of the previous ones, ending up with unanimous votes to remain part of Indonesia.

Beyond intimidation of the Assembly members, allegations of bribery also fueled the explanations for the consecutive unanimous votes. Some Assembly members were promoted to Kepala Desa (head of their village) with a monthly salary of 150,000 rupiah in return for their loyalty to Indonesia. Others were promised money along with radios, clothes, and more. The U.N. mostly denied these claims, or at the very least ignored them (Saltford 192).

The Act of Free Choice was concluded, despite demonstrations taking place outside these votes emphasizing the representation feigned by these Assembly members. Jakarta had obtained complete control over West Papua, legitimized by the United Nations. Throughout this process, Indonesia displayed its willingness to use military force to strip the Papuan people of their self-determination, basic rights, and political expression. This willingness would not waver now that they had official rule over the territory.

West Papua under Indonesian Rule

The political environment of West Papua would not evolve much in the years following the Act of Free Choice. Rebel groups still attempted to attack Indonesian authority, when possible, but these groups suffered from a lack of international support and weaponry. The first

noticeable change in this dynamic took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s when a relaxation of Indonesian control followed the fall of the New Order Regime under President Suharto. The Papuan Spring Movement was characterized by increased activism from Independence leaders in West Papua, specifically church leaders, human rights activists, and representatives of rebel groups. These leaders took advantage of the relaxation, calling for self-determination, protection of their rights, and equitable redistribution of the resources in the territory (Chauvel 924).

This convergence of critique against the Indonesian government culminated in the Papuan People's Congress, which demanded dialogue with Indonesia surrounding their long-standing points of contention. The relaxation in direct control also resulted in increased visibility of the Morning Star flag throughout the territory. Display of the Morning Star flag frequently led to clashes with military security forces in the region, raising tensions in the territory. Tensions came to a climax in 2001 when widespread protest and unrest swept across West Papua, forcing Indonesia to reconcile with the Papuans. To mitigate separatist sentiment, Indonesia passed the Special Autonomy Law of 2001, supposedly creating a plan for self-government in West Papua. The provision also promised to empower Papuans by improving their political representation, growing their share of revenue from resource extraction in the territory, and protecting Indigenous culture (Barter 70).

Two weeks after the passing of the Special Autonomy Law, prominent Papuan leader Theys Eluay was assassinated by Indonesian special forces (Kopassus), reinforcing Indonesia's oppressive rule in the territory. To undergo a military operation of this nature immediately after granting Papuans the right to self-government and more localized rule proved to many Papuans that this law responded to counterinsurgency more than their need for re-organization. As a result, the law did little to institute equitable change in the politics or economics of West Papua,

and I plan to explore this more in comparison with Aceh and East Timor in later sections (Barter 71).

Tensions between Jakarta and Papuans re-ignited in 2018 due to numerous instances of violence between protesters and activists and Indonesian security forces surrounding the Freeport Mine. The Freeport mine was the largest-producing gold mine in the world before 2020 and the second most productive copper mine, making it one of the most resource-valuable pieces of land on the planet. United States corporation Freeport-McMoRan operates the mine, displacing Indigenous communities, polluting the surrounding environment, and hoarding profits in the process. The mine is a frequent target of Papuan activists as it serves as a symbol of the neglect of Papuan prosperity in favor of foreign enrichment. Numerous human rights abuses at the hands of Indonesian special forces have been reported, as their forces have been expanded to ensure security in the area (Chauvel 920).

Student protests in the summer of 2019 highlighted the racist nature of Indonesia's oppression of Papuans when students were verbally abused by a crowd following reports of acts of disrespect towards the Indonesian flag. The crowd reportedly surrounded the dormitory in Subraya, calling the students "monkey," "dog," "animal," and "pig." Videos of the event flooded social media, sparking anger and protest across Papua and internationally. The protests created international awareness surrounding the systemic racism and marginalization of the Papuan people. Indonesia responded by further ramping up police and military presence in West Papua, along with a targeted campaign of censorship to restrict international support of the Papuans. This empowerment of oppressive institutional structures coincided with the recent expansion of palm oil plantations, largely protested by local communities that they harm (Amnesty International).

Most recently, on September 15, 2023, Indonesian military personnel killed five teenagers in Yahukimo, claiming they were members of the West Papua National Liberation Army. The West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) is an armed resistance group within the region that frequently clashes with Indonesian military units. Leaders of both the TPNB and local churches have repudiated the claims that these teenagers were members of the armed group. Days later, five more Papuans were killed by a military patrol in the coastal region of Fakfak. Jakarta blamed both these massacres on the TPNB, citing the innocent loss of life as an unfortunate consequence of encounters with the armed freedom fighters (Douglas). Jakarta refers to these groups as ‘armed criminal groups,’ often blaming them for their military’s violent actions and abuses of power.

Since the arrival of Indonesia in West Papua, oppression of political expression and fundamental human rights have characterized its rule. Jakarta has shown an unwillingness to allow Papuans the right to self-govern, choosing to feign the appearance of self-rule instead. The military plays an active role in instilling fear across the region, while simultaneously reinforcing the marginalization and oppression of indigenous Papuans. The expansion of military and police structures has coincided with the protection of the resource-extraction-based economy of Indonesia. As a result, an analysis of Indonesia’s economy and the corporations that profit from the military’s actions is required to understand the close tie between resource extraction and the oppression of the Papuan people.

Historical Comparison with East Timor and Aceh

To accurately assess the divergent independence outcomes of East Timor and Aceh versus West Papua, their incorporation into Indonesia and ensuing conflicts should be compared as well. East Timor, like West Papua, has a history of colonization, beginning with the

Portuguese making the first Western contact in the sixteenth century. From this point forward, East Timor would remain under Portuguese rule until the mid-1970s aside from temporary occupation by the Japanese during World War II. Portugal did little to invest in the infrastructure of their colony, leaving the country relatively primitive and poor before declaring the territory independent following the Carnation Revolution which established a new ruling party in the Portuguese government (Joseph & Hamaguchi).

Despite finally gaining independence, the people of East Timor remained divided over who should rule with two parties vying for the position. The União Democrática Timorese (UDT) and Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN) both refused to make concessions to the other, with FRETILIN eventually self-proclaiming sovereignty and independence of Timor-Leste. Indonesia took advantage of the division in the territory, invading the country the following month and claiming it as part of its 27th province. The twenty-four years of Indonesian rule that followed saw the death of nearly a quarter of the East Timorese population, from either direct combat with the Indonesian military or famine and starvation (Joseph & Hamaguchi).

Like West Papua, the United Nations remained stagnant despite “condemning” Indonesia for invading East Timor and the atrocities that occurred thereafter. Without international support, the independence movement became unified under the armed wing of FRETILIN under the “National Unity” policy. International recognition of the oppressive nature of Indonesia’s rule exploded following the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991, where over 250 Timorese citizens peacefully marching were shot and killed in the streets of Dili, the territory’s capital, by Indonesian military forces (Fincher). The citizens were participating in the procession as a memorial for Sebastião Gomez, a pro-independence supporter also killed by the Indonesian

military. American journalists Amy Goodman and Allan Nairn witnessed the massacre, being beaten by military officers in the process. The journalists were able to smuggle the footage off the island, exposing Indonesia for the massacre and the atrocious realities being faced by the East Timorese people.

The footage of the events inspired an international outcry against the actions of the Indonesian government, reversing the attitude of many nations regarding Indonesia's rule over East Timor. With Bishops Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta jointly winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 for seeking a peaceful conclusion to the ongoing conflict, nations and international organizations faced increasing pressure to support initiatives that would benefit the independence movement in East Timor. The territory would remain part of Indonesia until Suharto's resignation in 1998 when the Indonesian government agreed to let the people of East Timor cast votes on special autonomy status within Indonesia or complete independence from the country.

The United Nations supervised the vote for East Timorese independence that went by the name of The Popular Consultation of 1999. The United Nations seemed to do a better job of ensuring the validity of this referendum (compared to the "Act of Free Choice" in West Papua), with nearly 78.5 percent of the East Timorese voting in favor of complete independence from Indonesia. The vote sparked conflict between Pro-Indonesian and Independence groups that caused widespread destruction and the displacement of nearly 200,000 East Timorese people (Joseph & Hamaguchi).

While the conflict only lasted a few weeks, the World Bank estimated that nearly 70 percent of the economic infrastructure in East Timor had been reduced to rubble. Still facing intense international pressure, Indonesia was forced to accept the deployment of an Australian-

led multinational force to the region to secure the area and provide relief assistance. Quickly after, a U.N. Transitional Administration was established in East Timor with similar goals and establishing long-term goals for the newly formed country. The U.N. successfully implemented governmental structures that launched a now successful democracy in East Timor. Seemingly rising from the ashes, East Timor successfully gained independence despite facing extreme oppression from the Indonesian military and government. A multitude of factors contributed to East Timor succeeding in their struggle for independence, but their ability to generate international support and resist the establishment of extractive industries in their territory contributed largely to their success.

Aceh differed from both East Timor and West Papua in that the Acehnese actively fought against Dutch occupation of Aceh. Aceh posed the greatest defiance to Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, only falling to the European colonizers after thirty years of brutal fighting in 1903 (Ross). The long history of violence against European colonizers led many of the Acehnese people to support the creation of the Indonesian republic in the late 1940s. A rebellion that took place from 1953-62 called for greater local autonomy and a more visible Islamic role in the national government. Following several years of negotiations, Aceh was granted the status of a “special region,” allowing the Acehnese greater autonomy over religious, cultural, and educational matters, effectively ending the rebellion. However, these privileges enjoyed by Aceh would be short lived with the rise of Suharto, who immediately revoked Aceh’s special autonomy.

Not surprisingly, Suharto’s choice to revoke Aceh’s autonomy seeded deep resentment on the side of the Acehnese towards Jakarta. The Acehnese expressed their discontent with Jakarta at the polls, with a Muslim-oriented party (the Development Unity Part) enjoying unique

popularity in the territory as one of the only two provinces that did not support Suharto's party (Golkar). Beyond expressing this dissatisfaction through elections, Jakarta's actions would inspire the foundation of GAM, a separatist rebel movement with the goal of gaining independence from Indonesia.

The guerrilla fighters blamed Javanese rule for their impoverished state, accusing Indonesia of misappropriating the revenue from Aceh's natural gas deposits, mirroring the Free Papua Movement's (OPM) claims surrounding the Freeport mine (Ross). GAM made the purposeful decision to fight for independence under the belief that they obtain more international support than attempting to regain their special autonomy, as foreign governments would consider autonomy within Indonesia a domestic issue. While GAM was originally very weak in its first incarnation from 1976-79, it set the tone for its next two incarnations which were far more impactful. The group's actions were halted by military action, where thirty men suspected of allegiance to the group were shot in public. Numerous other suspects were arrested and tortured, while family members of GAM members were held hostage if they evaded arrest. By 1980 the group had ceased to exist due to the effectiveness of the military's action against the group, and lack of backers for the group. Much like OPM, GAM suffered from a lack of international support initially while its claims against the natural gas field in Lhokseumawe incentivized the military to ensure their swift demise.

In 1989 grievances surrounding the gas plant ignited the first resurgence of GAM as rapid urbanization, land seizures, pollution, and loss of jobs to non-Acehnese incited deep resentment among the Acehnese against the Javanese elite. These grievances imitate many of the grievances felt by native Papuans towards Jakarta regarding the injustices fomented by Freeport through the Grasberg mine. This time, GAM had secured the backing of a foreign government, Libya, which

supported GAM by providing military training to around 1,000 GAM recruits. Not only this but defecting Indonesian military and police personnel also took up arms against the Indonesian presence in Aceh. The resurgent GAM forces were far better trained and effective this time around, targeting Indonesian police and army divisions, killing two dozen from 1989 to 1990. Later in 1990, GAM forces began targeting government, commercial, and non-Acehnese targets in the area (Ross).

While the resurgent forces were better armed than the first form of GAM, Libya had done little to provide GAM with improved weaponry, forcing many of the guerilla fighters to share guns. Up until this point Jakarta had hardly reacted to these attacks but beginning in mid-1990 President Suharto deployed 6,000 troops to Aceh, labeled “counterinsurgency units” with the goal of wiping out GAM. Along with sending additional units, Suharto declared Aceh *Daerah Operasi Militar* or “DOM” meaning the military had permission to administer their operations with full license. By 1992, many of GAM’s most prominent leaders had been captured or killed by these newly deployed forces along with an additional 10,000 dead in their wake. While this marked the end of this form of GAM, the human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian military yielded even greater resentment towards Jakarta among the Acehnese (Ross).

This entrenched antipathy along with economic crisis in the region led to GAM’s final and most successful form. Extreme inflation of the Thailand currency sparked a run on the Indonesian rupiah, leading to economic turmoil across Indonesia and especially in Aceh. This turmoil forced President Suharto’s resignation in 1998, ending 30 years of authoritarian rule in Indonesia. The partial democracy that replaced it allowed the Acehnese to organize and express their displeasure with Jakarta, but this change did not provide adequate facilities to provide a peaceful solution. Despite announcing the end of DOM in Aceh, apologizing for the human

rights abuses which took place during that period, and granting the territory special autonomy, the Acehnese were fed up with Indonesian rule.

With the events of the 1990-98 conflict, more willing recruits were available than ever to GAM and inspired their third resurgence in early 1999. The rise in support for Acehnese independence inspired the unprecedented resurgence, with around 3,000 regular fighters and 20,000 in their militia, GAM had reportedly usurped control of nearly 80% of the territory's villages. Unsurprisingly, children of individuals who were tortured or killed by Indonesian military forces during the period of DOM comprised a large portion of GAM's new forces, inspired by the opportunity for revenge offered by GAM (Ross).

By obtaining voluntary donations, levying taxes, selling cannabis and timber, extorting entities, and kidnapping for ransom GAM had paved multiple outlets for raising funds. Notably, GAM targeted the Lhokseumawe gas facility in an attempt to extort ExxonMobil for money, kidnapping one of its senior executives in 2001 and fetching a \$500,000 ransom for doing so. These repeated attacks on the facility eventually led to its temporary closure in 2001. While the GAM movement was stronger than ever, the organization had little recourse for obtaining modern weaponry, getting most of their weapons from corrupt Indonesian military officials and deals with Thailand and Cambodia, and those deals were rare.

Understanding that unable to obtain modern weaponry it was unlikely GAM would be capable of beating the Indonesian military in the field, they developed numerous political tactics to draw international attention to their cause while simultaneously increasing popular support in the region. These tactics included spreading propaganda surrounding Jakarta's theft of Aceh's natural resources, provoking military repression to mobilize public opinion against Jakarta,

driving non-Acehnese out of the territory, and instigating international pressure on Indonesia through exposure of the human rights abuses taking place in Aceh.

The increased activity (and success) of GAM evoked another military response from Indonesia, resulting in the redeployment of security forces in Aceh in 2003 (Robby). The military operations resulted in the death of thousands of civilians, and with GAM's success in holding international attention, several countries including the United States, Japan, and the E.U. compelled Indonesia to negotiate with the leaders of GAM. Negotiations resulted in the withdrawal of Indonesian forces in 2004, beginning the stabilization of the situation in Aceh.

Later that year, a tsunami devastated Aceh resulting in the death of approximately 230,000 Acehnese. The disaster inspired more negotiations with Indonesia regarding the future of Aceh, resulting in concessions on both sides. GAM promised to disband the movement with the agreement that the Indonesian government would implement the autonomy system in Aceh, allowing the Acehnese to apply *shariah* and *adat* law alongside the Indonesian legal system. GAM had successfully negotiated Aceh's return to its status as a "special region" within Indonesia, although complete independence had been its original goal. Its return to autonomy though has allowed the Acehnese to profit off their natural resources, develop a legal system which aligns with the social values of the majority Islamic population, and avoid the human rights abuses consistent with Indonesian military presence.

Since 2006, Aceh has experienced a remarkable period of peace differing greatly from its prior experience under Indonesian rule. The lack of political violence can be attributed to a 2006 law that allowed GAM to become a political party that could run for political office throughout the territory. Following this decision, GAM backed candidates won consecutive gubernatorial elections highlighting the popularity of the party in the region. While Aceh has faced hardships

during this new period of special autonomy such as economic turmoil due to their dependency on natural resources, political violence has all but disappeared in the territory. The Acehnese have gained the ability to self-govern and establish their own set of laws in the territory, while West Papua remains politically oppressed by Jakarta, with harsh penalties being levied for flying the Morning Star flag. While the Acehnese enjoy a greater portion of the profits from their natural resources, Papuans enjoy close to none while experiencing displacement and pollution of their communities from the extractive projects in West Papua. The reasons behind the divergent outcomes between these current (and former) Indonesian territories and their revolutionary movements can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including their differential histories as I have portrayed, the establishment of extractive projects, their ability to garner international support, and the transmigration within these territories.

Presence of Extractive Industries

Overview of Mineral Resources and Corporations in West Papua

West Papua is an extremely resource-rich territory, with copper, gold, oil, lumber, and palm oil accounting for most of the exports from the region. Overview of West Papua's mineral wealth must begin with the Grasberg mine, which is the second-largest copper mine in the world and has the largest proven gold deposit on earth. Freeport McMoRon operates the mine with ore valued at \$100 billion in 2016, acting as Indonesia's most prominent taxpayer (paying \$9.3 billion between 1992 and 2009). The mine produces profits for Freeport McMoRon in the hundreds of millions annually, making it one of (if not the most) productive mine on the planet (Schulman).

Resource extraction in the region shows no sign of slowing down. Oil reserves have been discovered in West Papua, specifically an oil field in Bintuni Bay that has been valued at \$10 billion. BP is leading the development of the 'Tangguh' project in this region, expecting to extract nearly 14 trillion cubic meters of gas from the field. In 2020, Jakarta permitted 25 companies to seek out coal reserves on the island, highlighting the economy's dependency on carbon-based resources despite a pledge to cut emissions by 29% by 2030 (UNPO).

Indonesia seemed to curb its dependency on palm oil extraction in 2021, subjecting all 24 palm oil concessions in West Papua to permit review as part of its country-wide moratorium on palm oil. However, in 2022, it was reported that areas owned by the Ciliandy Anky Abadi group had resumed clearing and deforestation practices (EIA). Indonesia has been unable to halt these practices due to the lack of governmental structure in the territory, and an unwilling military. Palm oil companies also act as lumber companies as practices of deforestation lend to lumber collection.

Economic Importance of Mineral Extraction and its Consequences

Indonesia was born out of a deteriorating colonial system based on resource extraction. Once the Netherlands lost control of the territory, its colonial roots and processes remained. Despite the colonizers leaving, the institutions that exploited regions for their resources continued, and are still a prevalent facet of Indonesia's economy. Indonesia has successfully leveraged its abundant natural resources to become an important global player in the commodity market. From 2000 to 2004, resource-based commodities accounted for more than a third of the country's exports, highlighting its continued relevance in the economy of the country. While West Papua avoided resource extraction when the Dutch claimed the region, their actions in other regions invited Indonesia's dependency on natural resources. As a result, West Papua's territory is imperative to Jakarta and its rule due to its wealth of minerals and natural resources (Gellert 42).

Understanding the importance of mineral extraction to Indonesia might help to explain Jakarta's reluctance to allow the Papuans to self-govern. It should be noted too that the same countries that looked the other way as Indonesia robbed Papuans of their self-determination are those whose corporations profit off Indonesia's policies of repression in West Papua. Freeport McMoRon is a U.S.-based firm, and BP is a U.K.-based firm, both prominent members of the U.N. who profit and plan to profit off extracting resources from West Papua. Considering the frequent protests of locals in the communities where these corporations operate, it can be assumed that shutting down the operations of these corporations would be one of the first actions of a truly autonomous and representative Papuan government (Trajano).

Beyond displacing the people who have called these lands their home for thousands of years, the operations of these corporations have done little to improve the economic status of

West Papua. It remains one of the most impoverished regions of Indonesia with a poverty rate of 21.3 percent, nearly 12 percent higher than the country average. The average Papuan earns less than a dollar a day, with little course for improving their situation considering the lack of education programs in West Papua (worst literary rates in Indonesia). Jakarta has attempted to implement economic empowerment programs in the region to benefit small and medium enterprises provided by local government as well as PT Freeport, but rampant corruption and rent-seeking have rendered these programs ineffective (Friawan). After all, PT Freeports interests in empowering the Papuan people seem misaligned with their goal of maximizing profits from the mine as it would mean empowering the communities which protest their presence and pollution of their lands.

It is estimated that the Grasberg mine dumps nearly 200,000 tons of mine waste daily into the Aikwa Delta system, which numerous communities rely on for drinking water. The result of this large-scale pollution is evident in the highest infant, child, and maternal mortality rates in Indonesia along with the worst health indicators in the country (Schulman). Furthermore, less than 82% of West Papua have access to safe drinking water with corporations toxifying the once pure waterways. Outside of poisoning communities who rely on these natural areas for their livelihood, these rivers and jungles hold significant cultural and spiritual value to the Indigenous people who have resided in West Papua long before the arrival of these corporations and Indonesia (Schulman).

The military plays an important role in upholding these power dynamics which allow these corporations to continue their harmful operations in West Papua. By providing security and instilling fear in resistance groups that attempt to muddle with the ventures of these corporations,

the Military operates as Indonesia's most prominent actor in ensuring that business remains stable.

Indonesian Government's Role in Mineral Extraction

In 2005, the New York Times reported that Freeport Indonesia had paid both police officers and military units millions of dollars from 1998 to 2004. According to the report, nearly \$15 million was paid to security forces, with individual officers receiving thousands of dollars. A military spokesperson commenting on the matter suggested that the military did not benefit "institutionally" from the exchange and individuals did not pocket the money. The same spokesperson maintained that the money was used for supplies and equipment to improve the security capabilities of their forces in the form of vehicles, fuel, and meals (Aglionby). However, international watchdog Global Witness found evidence of the region's former military commander, Mahidin Simbolon, receiving upwards of \$245,000 directly from Freeport.

The structure of the military complex in Indonesia permits rampant self-enrichment and corruption. Since Suharto rose and fell from power, the military has operated independently from the government, removing many of the constraints that modern militaries face in countries of Indonesia's size. Suharto's 32-year military dictatorship cemented the organizational position of Indonesia's military, along with institutional structures that have continued its independence from the central government. For example, just a third of the military's budget is financed directly by the government. The other two-thirds are financed by security contracts with corporations such as Freeport and other mining and energy companies that operate in Indonesia.

Comparison with East Timor and Aceh

Resource extraction has played a vital role in the failure of West Papua's independence movements as explained through the direct support of an oppressive military presence in West Papua, along with pollution that has fractured and damaged communities throughout the territory. Understanding the histories of resource extraction in both Aceh and East Timor are vital in conducting a thorough comparison of these territories' different independence outcomes. Beginning with East Timor, the Portuguese colonized the island in the 16th century, retaining control of East Timor until 1975. The Portuguese established a colonial system of resource extraction early on, with sandalwood being the most exported resource from the island from 18th to the early 19th century. Intensive harvesting of the Sandalwood trees wiped out large swaths of the sandalwood forests in East Timor rendering the practice financially futile (Geraghty).

The Portuguese quickly pivoted to utilizing the fertile soil of East Timor to cultivate coffee, making it the most important cash crop for East Timor until Indonesia took over in 1975. The Portuguese exploitation of East Timor as an agrarian economy resulted in limited industrial development, harsh labor practices, and little overall development for the Timorese people as most of the wealth created from these practices flowed to the colonial elite (Geraghty). Revolution in Portugal in April 1974 led to the establishment of a new government in Portugal, which reversed more than 300 years of colonial oppression. The new government promoted the self-determination of their colonies, leading to the temporary independence of East Timor.

The colonial structures for extraction set up during colonization by the Portuguese did not disintegrate during the brief independence or when Indonesia invaded the island in 1975, claiming East Timor as its 27th province. East Timor does not hold the same level of resource endowment as West Papua, with oil deposits in the sea being the most valuable resource the

country boasts (Pederson & Arneberg). The lack of valuable resources in East Timor compared to West Papua begins to explain the established presence of foreign corporations in West Papua, while East Timor was largely able to avoid their influence. This is not to say that they weren't present at all, before Indonesia invaded East Timor, Australia and Portugal were engaged in negotiations regarding the maritime boundary between East Timor and Australia. This boundary was important as it was the site of most of the oil deposits mentioned before. Negotiations over rights to the oil fields would come to a head under Indonesian rule though, where Australia and Indonesia agreed to split the fields evenly. While both sides could not agree on a permanent boundary, Indonesian and Australian corporations began profiting from the oil fields (Rothwell).

A permanent boundary would not be established even in 2002 by the Timor Sea Treaty, which ensured East Timor would assert control over 90% of the oil deposits in question. Of course, the establishment of this treaty only came after Indonesia's withdrawal from the country in 1999. While East Timor boasts fewer valuable resources than West Papua, they were valuable enough for these colonial powers to fervently fight over them. The divergent realities of resource extraction in West Papua and East Timor rest in the nature of the resource extraction processes in these two territories, not necessarily the level to which they were executed.

As explained, after Portuguese colonization, the most prevalent form of resource extraction in East Timor took place at sea where Indonesian and other international corporations extracted oil. In West Papua, mining makes up most of the resource extraction taking place, directly in the communities of native Papuans and more importantly, rebel groups that attack these operations. The vulnerability of mining operations on land incentivizes companies such as Freeport to support the military far more compared to sea-based oil drilling companies who worry less about the security of their operations. While there are a multitude of factors that

affected East Timor's eventual securement of independence, a lack of financial support for the military from outside sources certainly played a role in Indonesia's departure from the territory. With Jakarta footing the bill for just a third of the military's budget, support from corporations (or other entities) plays a prominent role in the military's decision-making. In Aceh's case, it seems that the Free Aceh Movement's (GAM) ability to resist the establishment of industrial drilling and mining of their gas and oil-rich lands contributed to their success in weakening the military's presence in Aceh.

Many Acehnese trace the beginning of anti-Indonesian sentiment in the territory to Jakarta's persistent attempts to exploit their prominent oil and gas assets. Conflict over the rights to these resources culminated in violence between civilians and the Indonesian military, resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians (Miller). The oil fields were originally discovered in 1971, following Aceh's incorporation into the North Sumatran province of Indonesia. The industrial extraction of the oil on the outskirts of Lhokseumawe began shortly after, facilitated by cooperation between Americans and Indonesia's state oil company, Pertamina (Tabacco).

Like West Papua, most of the wealth generated from this plant flowed primarily to the Javanese elite with hardly any noticeable improvement to the local economy of the area. Additionally, local communities were forced to relocate while skilled non-Acehnese were employed to operate the plant (Miller). Naturally, this created great resistance to the presence of the operations of the oil company in Aceh instigating the revolutionary movements that followed. Pro-independence rebels in Aceh viewed the gas plant as a symbol of Jakarta's exploitation of the Acehnese land, resulting in targeted attacks against Pertamina company personnel and Indonesian military forces that provided security (Tabacco).

While the gas plant in Lhokseumawe operated from 1976 to 2001, GAM executed three different concerted operations at closing the plant. While the first two were stymied by Suharto and his military through violent measures, the third successfully shut down operations of the gas plant in 2001. The persistent violence that swirled around the plant dissuaded other foreign resource companies from investing in the area, as GAM ensured the area was too insecure for private corporations to establish manufacturing and mining businesses. The lack of foreign investment and the prevalence of pro-independence movements in Aceh led to the withdrawal of Indonesia's military in 1998, paving the way for the signing of Aceh's "Special Autonomy" law in 2001 which gave Aceh control of 70 percent of its oil and gas revenues (Ross).

When comparing the divergent independence outcomes of Aceh and East Timor with West Papua, Aceh and East Timor's experiences with resource extraction demonstrate the importance of foreign investment in the military's ability to suppress independence movements. Without the economic support of corporations such as Freeport, the Indonesian military seemed to be hindered in both East Timor and Aceh. It is no coincidence that East Timor and Aceh have been able to avoid the establishment of powerful extractive corporations in their territories and have undergone wholly different independence movements. A clear link between oppression of separatist movements in Indonesia and foreign investment by extractive industries exists, and it is backed by the incentive and funding structures of the Indonesian military.

Garnering International Attention and Support

International Support of Free Papua Movement

As discussed before, West Papua had little support from the international community in Indonesia's claiming of the territory. While the Dutch originally recommended that West Papua should be separate from Indonesia, they offered little concrete action in supporting the OPM or other activists who strived for independence from Jakarta. The United States avoided conflict with Indonesia out of fear of pushing Jakarta and General Suharto closer to the Soviet Union. The United Nations intentionally did little to ensure the Papuan's right to self-determination outlined in the New York Agreement as the U.N. sought a rapid and controversy-free resolution to West Papua's membership in Indonesia. With international powers acting indifferent to the suppression of their political expression, Papuans had no course of action against the more powerful Jakarta. Unlike Aceh, where the USA, Japan, and the E.U. pushed Indonesia to engage in peace talks with GAM leaders in Sweden following reports of human rights abuses by the Indonesian military, West Papua and the OPM have struggled to garner international attention and support.

While the United States levied an arms embargo on Indonesia following reports of their rampant human rights abuses in East Timor in 1999, it would do little in improving the condition or treatment of West Papuans. Many international governments support the freedom of West Papua, but a lack of news coverage and journalism in the territory makes it decidedly difficult to evaluate the situation in the region. After seeing the effect that publications of journalists had in East Timor, Indonesia has halted international traveling to the region by journalists and others through a variety of practices. Up until May 2015, foreign media members were banned entirely from entering the region and to this day remains nearly impossible for journalists to obtain the

necessary permits and visas. As a result, foreign governments are hesitant to get involved as the situation is considered a domestic one, posing great barriers to OPM obtaining the international support it needs.

Members of the OPM and other Papuan activists counter Indonesian censorship by using social media, exposing the atrocities they experience under Indonesian rule (Titifanue). Since 2007, mobile phone subscriptions have increased exponentially in Papua, meaning more individuals have access to the internet (and social media) than each year prior (Titifanue). With the media blackout in the territory, social media acts as the sole outlet for the dissemination of Papuan's discontent with their treatment under Indonesian rule. This dissemination of information has proved effective in garnering international attention, especially within Melanesia as demonstrated by Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill stating, "Pictures of brutality of our people appear daily on the social media, and yet we take no notice" (Garret). Not only has social media permitted OPM activists the ability to reach wider audiences, but it has also improved coordination among activists which could prove extremely dangerous otherwise.

OPM activists are able to share event locations throughout Melanesia, and more, through Facebook which promotes participation across social groups. Events such as the Fiji Solidarity Movement for West Papua's Freedom on February 20, 2015, demonstrate the effectiveness of social coordination through Facebook where nearly 100 people showed up to event (Titifanue). While social media has proven a valuable resource to Papuan activists, as seen through the growing popularity of the Free Papuan movement in Melanesia with prominent politicians displaying support for the cause because of the media flowing from West Papua, OPM still suffers from a lack of concrete support and action from foreign governments. Furthermore, in

2019, Jakarta began restricting internet access in West Papua in response to its increased usage by Papuan activists (Lantang).

Along with censoring these activists, Indonesia has conducted a series of initiatives to improve their relationships with South Pacific countries in effort to reduce support of the OPM by these countries (Lantang). Jakarta initiated the Indonesian South Pacific Forum, which was attended by fifteen South Pacific countries to facilitate business relationships with these countries. In 2019, Indonesia also initiated the 2019 Pacific Exposition in Auckland, New Zealand, which inspired increased collaboration between South Pacific countries and Jakarta. These initiatives have inspired a change in rhetoric from some Melanesian countries, including Vanuatu, which has criticized international media for not providing balanced information regarding the situation in West Papua, accusing journalists of solely spreading negative information regarding Indonesia.

While social media has proven to be an effective resource for OPM activists in disseminating information from the territory, online communication has been unable to gain traction significant enough to elicit international intervention in West Papua. Indonesia's initiative in improving their relations with South Pacific countries could be blamed for the lack of intervention but cannot explain the lack of support from other regions. With Western nations facilitating active business operations in West Papua (Freeport Mine, etc.) and the suppression of formal journalism in the territory by Indonesia, Western nations (and others) seem disincentivized to intervene in the domestic conflicts of Indonesia.

International Support of East Timor and Aceh

It is well documented that GAM sought out international attention and support throughout its various incarnations in its fight against Jakarta. GAM's leader, Hasan Muhammad

di Tiro, made the conscious decision to ensure that the organization's goal was independence, not autonomy within Indonesia. He believed many countries would consider a struggle for autonomy a domestic issue, disincentivizing them to offer support (Ross). Additionally, despite the importance of Islam to the native Acehnese, de Tiro also refrained from playing into this aspect of the movement to ensure they did not turn off non-Islamic foreign backers. While the first incarnation of GAM would not benefit from these decisions in any tangible way, it was a clear goal of GAM to attract international support in any way possible as they understood it as imperative to the success of their mission.

GAM's second incarnation in 1989 experienced marginally improved success in attracting international support, contacting the Libyan government sometime around 1986. Libya's dictator at the time, Muammar Qaddafi, actively sought out insurgencies across the world and agreed to help train Acehnese fighters from Malaysia in the late 1980s. Beginning in 1989, the Libya-trained Acehnese entered Aceh with the intention of reviving GAM operations in the region. Despite receiving military training from Libya, GAM still struggled to attract international support for their cause, particularly in acquiring weapons to fight the better equipped Indonesian security forces. In June 1990, Suharto would deploy 6,000 additional troops to aid the already present security forces in the region, effectively wiping out the second incarnation of GAM.

While Indonesia had militarily hampered GAM, it had inadvertently increased its popularity and social coordination power in the territory due to the atrocities committed by the military, along with economic struggles experienced across Indonesia. A report published by Amnesty International in 1990 outlined the atrocities committed against the Acehnese by Indonesian security forces, garnering significant international attention. Increased attention to the

human rights abuses in Aceh along with East Timor led to a wide range criticism of Indonesia, specifically from Western governments (Oishi). The criticism turned into concrete action from the U.S. government, which banned military aid and temporarily ended the International Military Education and Training program with Indonesia in October 1992. United States actions weakened the Indonesian military, putting great strain on Suharto's administration and popularity within Indonesia.

As discussed, economic turmoil would result in Suharto's eventual resignation in 1998, introducing a new style of government in Indonesia. The new government under B.J Habibie offered drastic change to the policies of Suharto, ushering in a period of democratization across Indonesia along with a reformation of military policies. While the new administration offered a beneficial overhaul for the wishes of GAM, international organizations such as the Henry Dunant Center played a crucial role in moderating peace talks and negotiations between Jakarta and GAM. While the nature of these peace talks played a vital part in Aceh's assumption of their autonomy, as will be discussed in the next section, the support of international associations ensured effective communication and bargaining between GAM and Indonesia. While violence would continue between the two factions following these, it set the stage for the eventual peaceful resolution of this issue. With increased international interest surrounding the situation in Aceh, Jakarta could not rely on their military to pursue a violent resolution to the issue without hurting their national interests (Oishi).

Following a massive tsunami that hit Aceh in December 2004, resulting in the death of 160,000 people in Aceh, peace talks were revived between both sides (though this was agreed upon beforehand). GAM once again received international support from former Finnish President Ahtisaari, who agreed to mediate the process between the two parties. Although GAM

would abandon their original goals of independence, government elections agreed upon during these talks would go smoothly in the territory, with Irwandi Jusuf, a GAM backed candidate, being elected Governor of the Aceh provincial government. However, for peace to remain the agreements made during the Helsinki convention needed to be upheld in practice.

Once again, GAM received international support from the AMM, a joint organization made up of five ASEAN member countries and the European Union in ensuring that Indonesia would uphold the policies they agreed upon during negotiations. The international monitoring of the AMM improved confidence among the Acehnese and GAM that Indonesia would hold true to its word and ensured successful implementation of the special autonomy promised to Aceh. Both sides underwent the vital early portion of executing the new form of autonomy in Aceh without tension or conflict, permitting a successful revolution by GAM and the Acehnese despite not accomplishing their original goals.

International support in the form of peace-making organizations and pressure from other countries played an unquestionably decisive role in the success of GAM and Acehnese independence activists. Without international intervention and attention in the conflict, Indonesia would have been less incentivized to undergo the effort of negotiating with GAM and most likely would have opted for the violent route as seen in West Papua. While they were unable to achieve full independence, they acquired a level of separation from the Indonesian government that has allowed the Acehnese to self-govern and implement laws that align with the values of the majority Islamic population. More than that, special autonomy has also permitted the Acehnese greater control over their natural resources, namely natural gas, improving the economic prospects of the region and the people in it.

Much like Aceh, international attention and intervention was fundamental in East Timor's fight for independence. International attention played a vital role in East Timor's struggle for independence from Indonesia, as discussed earlier, but international organizations (specifically the United Nations) were crucial in rebuilding infrastructure and establishing a functional government following the widespread destruction caused by Indonesian-backed militias after the 1999 referendum where the East Timorese overwhelmingly voted to become independent (Margesson & Vaughn).

U.N. security forces originally left East Timor in 2005, believing the region to be secure and established enough to be self-sufficient but President Jose Ramos-Horta called on the U.N. to return to the territory following a rise in political violence throughout East Timor. A failed assassination attempt on President Ramos-Horta led to the reintroduction of foreign peacekeepers from various U.N. members. While overall the political atmosphere of the country had become far less charged after gaining independence from Indonesia, massive loss of infrastructure caused by the Indonesian-backed militias divided portions of East Timor's population. The division led to mutinies within the security forces of East Timor, instigating the political violence that forced the United Nations' return to East Timor.

The United Nations' presence in East Timor provided a period of peace which allowed the governmental institutions of East Timor to rebuild and improve democratic governance overall. The U.N. pointed to the economic and overall security issues facing the territory as areas that threatened the strengthening of democracy in the region, leading to the establishment of various programs which aimed to improve these areas. While poverty and government spending inefficiencies still face East Timor, the percentage of East Timorese living in poverty has

decreased moderately (from 50% in 2007, to 42% in 2014), and political violence has all but vanished in East Timor (World Bank).

East Timor still faces grave issues in improving the livelihood and prosperity of its population, but the United Nations provided peacekeeping assistance which at the very least has eased political violence in the region. The importance of support with establishing a government after achieving independence cannot be understated, as it is crucial to a territory remaining independent. However, this thesis should focus on the international support that backed the East Timorese in gaining independence, as international support for a newly formed government will not be relevant without West Papua and the OPM gaining independence in the first place.

While in prison for his beliefs in the 1990s surrounding East Timorese independence, East Timor's future Prime Minister, Xanan Gusmão, made frequent pleas to foreign governments and organizations to internationalize the struggle of the East Timorese under Indonesian rule (Geraghty). Gusmão and other East Timorese independence activists received much needed assistance when footage of the Santa Cruz Massacre on November 12th, 1991 garnered international attention. Max Stahl, a foreign journalist, filmed Indonesian military shooting at, arresting, and maiming independence protesters (mostly students). In all, Indonesian security forces killed more than 100 protestors, instigating international outrage surrounding the situation in East Timor. Gusmão would be moved to Jakarta's Cipinang prison where he would continue to support the independence movement in East Timor with the help of international supporters such as Australian activist Kristy Sword who helped to spread his commentary on the situation to international media.

With more international attention than ever, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta won the Nobel peace prize in 1996 for their effort in searching for a peaceful

resolution to the conflict between Indonesia and independence activists. Once again, a spotlight shown on Indonesia as international awareness about their transgressions against the East Timorese entered national headlines across the world. Meanwhile another international organization, the Catholic Church, simultaneously worked in the shadows to support the Indigenous East Timorese during Indonesian occupation.

The Catholic Church resisted Indonesia's attempts to bring the church under the regulation of the state, and as a result, backed Independence efforts. While these efforts took the form of religious and social contributions, they gave credence to the struggle of the Indigenous peoples in East Timor. Specifically, the Church opted to use Tetun, the local Indigenous language, challenging attempts from Indonesia to augment use of Indonesian in the region instead of Portuguese. Church officials also criticized Indonesian population control laws that sought to control fertility through various practices including sterilization programs. Finally, the Church ensured that Jakarta's attempts to convert the East Timorese population to Islam encountered staunch opposition. These efforts by the Catholic Church brought about a meteoric rise in the percentage of self-identifying Catholics in the region, growing from 13 percent in 1953 to 90 percent in 1990 (Lundry). While this monumental expansion can partly be explained by Indonesian requirements to belong to one of five acknowledged religions (Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, or Islam), its widespread support showcases the Church's defense of native populations.

The Catholic Church became a symbol for defiance of Indonesian rule, providing native peoples a space for organization of protests against Indonesian occupation. Acting as a pillar for political mobilization and political communications, the Church provided a much-needed base of

sorts for independence activists in East Timor. While the Church originally acted a symbol of East Timor's colonization, it evolved into an emblem of antagonism of Indonesian occupation.

While a variety of factors played into the success of East Timor's independence movement, the international community played an unmistakable role in directly resisting Indonesian occupation (the Catholic Church) and pressuring Indonesian authorities into considering relinquishing East Timor. Following Suharto's resignation, Indonesia's next President, Habibie, encountered severe pressure from both the United States and Australia to alter their stance regarding the independence efforts in East Timor. To ensure continued aid from the IMF and World Bank, Habibie allowed East Timor to vote on a referendum for independence from Indonesia in August 1999 (Geraghty).

Comparison with East Timor and Aceh

West Papua throughout its history has rarely enjoyed effective support from the international community, and when international organizations have intervened, they have done little to validate the yearning for self-determination of West Papuans. While the United Nations oversaw the legitimate referendum vote for East Timor, they sat idly by as Indonesia hand-picked and coerced the delegates chosen to vote for the West Papuan people. Of course, the U.N. employed a similar stance when Indonesia originally claimed these regions, but they played a role in either the establishment of a new government in the post-independence period or moderating peace talks between independence activists and Indonesian authorities. Pressure from the U.N. and other foreign governments played a crucial role in forcing Indonesia's hand when it came to relinquishing territories that were rebelling. While East Timor and Aceh received significant support from international organizations once knowledge of the atrocities committed

by Indonesia became widespread, West Papua has failed to receive the same level of international backing.

A multitude of reasons can begin to explain why international organizations and entities have been hesitant in offering the same level of assistance to the OPM as seen in East Timor and Aceh. For starters, Jakarta's insistence on restricting journalism, especially from international media outlets, has stifled information surrounding the struggles of West Papuans from reaching international audiences. Additionally, while OPM activists have been active on social media attempting to internationalize their struggle for independence, they have been unsuccessful in garnering significant enough attention to motivate international organizations into action.

It is also important to note that countries such as the United States, which assisted both East Timor and Aceh, have business dealings in West Papua in the extractive industries that plague the territory. While this was also the case in Aceh with the Lhokseumawe oil fields and the oil deposits in the sea at East Timor's border with Australia, Freeport and Indonesia profit far more from the Grasberg mine than the oil deposits mentioned. As one of the greatest gold and copper deposits on earth, Freeport and the governments who stand to benefit from its continued operations may begin to explain their hesitancy to intervene along with Indonesia's insistence on retaining the territory through oppression, censorship, and refusal of true self-determination.

The lack of international involvement in West Papua permitted the current state of political affairs in West Papua, with rampant corruption and political authorities that do not represent the population. As seen in Aceh, the presence and mediation of international governments and organizations ensured effective communication between independence activists and the Indonesian government. While Acehnese independence activists were unable to achieve their goal of independence, they did negotiate alterations to the political structures of Aceh as a

special autonomy, allowing for political candidates with GAM backgrounds to hold office within the region. Arguably more importantly, international mediation meant that Indonesia would have to follow through with implementation of the agreement or else face condemnation from the international community. Without international mediation, Indigenous West Papuans negotiated the “special autonomy” bill of 2001, which promised many of the same alterations seen in East Timor. However, without transnational mediation the Indonesian government did little to implement the changes promised in the bill.

In fact, they undermined the bill shortly after its passing by dividing West Papua into three separate provinces on September 16, 1999, but was only implemented in 2003 after the signing of the 2001 bill. Dividing West Papua created contradictory laws as the 2001 bill considered West Papua as a single entity, further upsetting pro-independence West Papuans who had identified as a singular political unit before the formation of the three new provinces (West Irian Jaya, Central Irian Jaya, and the rump of Irian Jaya) (Halmin). Furthermore, the division did not obtain approval of the two prominent West Papuan legislative bodies, the DPRD (provincial parliament) and the MRP, an assembly made up of native Papuans of customary and religious relevance who serve for five years. This clearly violated the language of the “special autonomy” bill, which stated approval from these entities were required for decisions of this stature. Beyond Indonesia immediately violating the terms of the bill, the bill simultaneously empowered corrupt officials who have no plan of representing Indigenous Papuans.

In Aceh, GAM-backed candidates took the reigns of the government following the signing of their special autonomy bill, but in West Papua autonomy empowered provincial politicians who were amiable to the Indonesian government. Without international mediators to ensure the delegates sent to negotiate autonomy with Indonesia truly represented the wishes of

the Papuan people, 100 Papuan politicians met in Jakarta who overwhelmingly were made up of wealthy individuals from coastal areas (Wangge). Unlike in Aceh, where GAM leaders negotiated the terms of their autonomy, separatist leaders were barred from participating in the talks. As a result, members of separatist groups, like OPM, could not participate in political elections within West Papua, leading to the failure of autonomy and continued political violence within the territory.

Transmigration and its Effect on Independence Outcomes

Transmigration in West Papua

Since its inception, Indonesia employed a transmigration program throughout its regions, moving poor Indonesian families from overpopulated regions and islands to less densely populated areas like West Papua until 2000. In West Papua, the program has undermined the independence movements in the region while simultaneously taking advantage of the natural endowment of the territory. Indonesia appropriated large pieces of Indigenous land in the name of this program, displacing many native families from their ancestral lands. Numerous acts and operations have worked to popularize this practice throughout West Papua, such as the Basic Forestry Act of 1967, which established that the “rights of traditional law communities may not be allowed to stand in the way of transmigration sites” (Trajano). Jakarta had effectively robbed the West Papuan people of their sovereignty, threatening Papuans that resisted relinquishing their lands the same treatment of OPM guerrillas.

Many of these communities relocated without choice to the malaria-infested lowlands of West Papua, where numerous women and children died from the disease as well as starvation. In the name of the transmigration program, Indonesia refused to compensate Papuans for their traditional lands, further tormenting the Indigenous population. Jakarta clearly aimed to disperse and plunge native West Papuans in communities where they would be the overwhelming minority. Within these transmigration localities, Jakarta ordered that a maximum of 10 percent of households could be native Papuan with the rest being Javanese.

The economic effects of the transmigration process reinforced the oppressive nature of practice, with transmigrants dominating the economic activity of West Papua. The massive increase in immigrant labor, both skilled and unskilled, has made it nearly impossible for

Papuans to compete in the labor market. The ethnic groups that migrated to West Papua were far more familiar with each other and tend to cooperate in business, while West Papuans struggle to compete with migrant enterprises. Beyond displacing Indigenous Papuans, the transmigration program has also created ethnic barriers to the West Papuan economy, further afflicting West Papuans.

West Papua: Components of the Population, 1971-2005

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

Table 1: West Papua: Components of the Population, 1971-2005 (Manning & Rumbiak)

The table above demonstrates the progressive “dilution” of the West Papuan population, with West Papuans making up 96 percent of the population in 1971 but dropping rapidly to 65 percent by the end of the transmigration program and falling further since. Beyond further disadvantaging West Papuans financially, the dilution of the West Papuan population has caused significant damage to their ability to politically organize and demonstrate the popularity of their independence movement. Non-Papuan ethnic groups in the territory had little incentive to identify with the independence movement due to the economic and cultural prosperity they had experienced in the territory. As a result, Independence activists have called for the removal of non-ethnic Papuans from their ancestral lands, and the OPM has conducted several operations against Indonesian transmigrants and foreign workers to instill fear among them.

These actions by Papuans separatists have hardly been successful in discouraging migration to the country, with just 51 percent of the population having native Papuan roots today. This concerted effort by the Indonesian government has greatly suppressed the voices of separatists and their ability to peacefully organize and express their opinions. Following the fall of the Suharto's regime, many Papuans hoped that the militarization and coercion of their territory would end. Despite promises of peace from following Presidents, Indonesia has sustained its utilization of security forces in the region often blaming the OPM for citizen deaths by these forces (Amnesty International).

Like the extractive industries that have polluted and contaminated the ancestral lands of Papuans, transmigration programs have stripped Indigenous Papuans of their rights and sovereignty. The forced relocation of these communities has rendered Indigenous groups minorities in their own land, weakening their political power and ability to organize. Furthermore, the success of non-Papuan ethnic groups has amplified ethnic animosity within the region, as seen in the 2019 student protests. The legacies of the transmigration program have greatly hindered the effectiveness of separatist movements in West Papua, while the native populations of East Timor and Aceh were largely able to avoid marginalization through this program.

Transmigration in Aceh and East Timor

Like the Indigenous West Papuans, the native Acehnese celebrate a culture and ethnicity which differed greatly from the rest of Indonesia, with the pillar of the culture being its adherence to Islam. Also, like West Papua, Aceh experienced immigration of non-Acehnese and non-Muslim migrants into the territory, mostly made up of Javanese skilled workers. The influx of skilled workers, like in West Papua, created resentment between the ethnic groups in Aceh,

especially between the Acehnese and the Javanese. With economic conditions in the province deteriorating, GAM garnered significant popularity in Aceh. While tempers wouldn't boil over until the 1970s, they began to flare in the early 1970s following the establishment of the Lhokseumawe Industrial Zone which instigated the migration of more skilled foreign laborers. This caused further disdain among the Acehnese as profits from the Lhokseumawe gas plant flowed out of Aceh, seemingly into the hands of the Javanese. GAM would lean on anti-Javanese rhetoric to mobilize Acehnese resentment towards Indonesia.

Some scholars claim that Indonesia created the transmigration program to keep Indigenous populations at bay, especially in regions where Independence movements were strong (Barter & Cote). While Jakarta has never blatantly stated this, it doesn't seem far reached considering transmigration and displacement from transmigration takes place in the regions with prevalent separatist movements. After 1999, GAM attacked Javanese individuals in Aceh, forcing over 150,000 to flee the country into North Sumatra. Talks between Indonesia's government and GAM representatives were already underway, but the forced removal of Javanese migrants may have played a role in Indonesia's appeasement of Aceh's wishes. The same could be said about East Timor, where by 1998 not even 3,000 transmigrants had arrived in East Timor (Barter & Cote).

While East Timor did not experience transmigration at a substantial rate, East Timor's shared identity certainly played a role in its successful independence as East Timorese independence activists carried out numerous protests which eventually gained significant international support. Although the events of East Timorese gained transnational attention due to the atrocities committed by the Indonesian military, the political abilities of the independence activists benefited from the shared identity of most East Timorese at the time. This can be seen in

the overwhelming majority of East Timorese who self-identify as Catholic, as the Catholic Church acted as a space for political organization against Indonesian occupation.

It is important to note that the transmigration that took place in Aceh went about in a fundamentally different way than what took place in West Papua. In Aceh, the vast majority of Javanese transmigrants settled in non-Acehnese areas, meaning they did little to disrupt the social structures or ancestral lands of the Acehnese. According to reports from communities where Acehnese and Javanese did overlap, relations seemed to be overall cordial. Furthermore, according to the 2000 census, only 7.3 percent of the population was Javanese, meaning at its peak Javanese individuals made up just 10 percent of the population before thousands were forced to flee. This means, like East Timor, the native Acehnese continued to be the overwhelming ethnic majority in Aceh. We can make similar conclusions then surrounding the negligible effect of transmigration on GAMs ability to politically mobilize their supporters. In fact, their unharmed presence may have provided GAM with the perfect scapegoat for the declining economic conditions in the region (Barter & Cote).

Comparison with East Timor and Aceh

East Timor and Aceh experienced transmigration at a significantly slower rate compared to West Papua, and this is showcased in the current population statistics of the regions. Indigenous West Papuans make up the smallest portion of their population, compared to both Aceh and East Timor. In East Timor, numerous Indigenous groups make up more than 90 percent of the overall population. In Aceh, Indigenous Acehnese make up more than 70 percent of the overall population, but migration from India accounts for much of the remaining population. Only 9 percent of the provincial population in Aceh is Javanese, reinforcing the insignificant effect of transmigration on the independence movements of both Aceh and East

Timor. As expressed earlier, the arrival of Javanese may have benefited GAM and its ability to politically mobilize its supporters.

Beyond the sheer population numbers in these territories, the way transmigration took place in these regions explains how transmigration ill-effected West Papua while barely harming the independence movements of Aceh and East Timor. As discussed, in West Papua, Indonesia utilized transmigration as a form of political and social repression. Not only did transmigration sites forcefully displace Indigenous populations from their ancestral lands, but they also infiltrated Papuan communities by making them minorities in their own communities. This has clearly affected OPM's ability to mobilize their supporters as they are buried in communities where they are isolated from other native Papuans which are more likely to support their cause. Compare this to the fashion of transmigration in Aceh and East Timor, where transmigration hardly isolated or displaced portions of the native community.

The effect of isolation and displacement through transmigration on OPM's ability to political mobilize Papuans can be seen most prominently in the urban areas of West Papua. By 2000, Indonesian settlers accounted for 66 percent of the population in urban centers, where OPM leaders had found the most support (McGibbon). By isolating Papuans in urban areas, Jakarta successfully sequestered the OPM by neutralizing hypothetical centers for political mobilization and revolution. Instead, many of the communities where Indigenous Papuans remain are spread out across rural West Papua, thus making it far more difficult to mobilize these groups. Indonesian security forces are aware of this fact, resulting in sweeps of remote villages formerly or currently controlled by the OPM, seeking to prohibit access to churches and humanitarian aid from international organizations. Like in East Timor, Churches have acted as the sole international outlet for news regarding conflict and displacement of Papuans, actively

supporting OPM. While Churches have provided some level of international support, Indonesian urban elite still make-up much of the church leadership in urban areas (Hedman).

Protests such as the ones sparked by the arrest of 43 West Papuan students in August 2019 have erupted across Papua, with thousands of people attending these riots. However, OPM encounters staunch resistance from Indonesians in urban areas, along with difficulty organizing due to the oppressive presence of Indonesian security forces. While marginalized young Indigenous Papuans have mobilized their age group and others, they still operate in areas where they are isolated in their own communities as evidenced by the pervasive racism West Papuans encounter in cities.

Overall, both the level and nature of transmigration in West Papua explains its detrimental effect on the independence efforts of activists within the region. While Aceh and East Timor maintained their ethnic and cultural majority within their territories, West Papuans have experienced the deterioration of their customs and social cohesiveness. Indonesians dominate the economic sphere in West Papua, further marginalizing and isolating Indigenous communities. While transmigration displaced numerous indigenous communities throughout the region, its infiltration of urban centers has further sequestered native populations in West Papua. As a result, the independence movement in West Papua has suffered while the ones in East Timor and Aceh avoided any harm and might have even benefitted from the process.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have posited three main factors which explain the divergent independence outcomes of West Papua with East Timor and Aceh. The presence and context of extractive industries in their territories, their ability to garner international support and attention, and the effects of transmigration on these regions offer important distinctions between the histories of these current and former territories of Indonesia. These distinctions explain the relative success of East Timor and Aceh's independence movements while West Papua's has largely failed.

In West Papua, an extractive regime offers the military lucrative contracts to provide security, especially Freeport who operates the Grasberg mine. Beyond displacing Indigenous communities and polluting their ancestral lands, the presence of these extractive industries has empowered the military in a style not seen in both East Timor and Aceh. In East Timor, extractive industries mostly operated on the sea boundary between East Timor and Australia, not requiring the same level of security as the Grasberg mine or other logging and palm-oil operations in West Papua. In Aceh, the Lhokseumawe gas plant operated as its most prominent extractive industry which presided in an area not previously inhabited. Additionally, GAM operatives levied successful attacks against the plant and in the surrounding area eventually forcing its temporary closure. Since the extractive industries in both East Timor and Aceh were unable to offer the same lucrative contracts to the Indonesian military, the military presence in both territories were unable to repress the independence movements as seen in West Papua.

The independence movements in East Timor and Aceh were both more successful than OPM in obtaining support and attention from the international community. In East Timor, international journalism and its exposure of the Santa Cruz Massacre in 1991 garnered unprecedented attention regarding the East Timorese struggle against Indonesian occupation. As

a result, pressure from the international community would force Indonesia into reconsidering their military operations and stance towards the island. This international pressure would result in calls for a plebiscite on Independence in East Timor, overseen by the United Nations, culminating in its eventual independence from Indonesia. Aceh rode the coattails of East Timor's exposure of Indonesia's policies while occupying territories, parlaying the international pressure on Indonesia into a referendum on autonomy within the Indonesian state. While GAM did not achieve its goal of independence, international mediation of the talks between Indonesian and East Timorese leaders allowed politicians with GAM backgrounds to win elections throughout the territory, establishing true autonomy in the region.

Like Aceh, West Papua also received special autonomy status from Indonesia, but a lack of international mediation led to politicians privy to Indonesian rule, the majority being coastal elite, facilitating the conversations with Indonesia. As a result, special autonomy status empowered corrupt political leaders who would appease Indonesian oppression of independence movements such as the OPM in West Papua. While OPM has enjoyed broad support from other Melanesian countries, they have been unable to place sufficient pressure on Indonesia to reconsider its policies in the territory. Censorship and restriction of journalism in West Papua has also played a large role in restricting information coming from the region, further impairing OPM's ability to garner international attention and support.

Finally, transmigration took place at a higher rate and with greater malignant intent in West Papua compared with East Timor and Aceh. Indigenous populations still make up most of the population within both these countries, while indigenous West Papuans are nearly a minority within their own region. More importantly, urban areas where political mobilization is key to any political movement, West Papuans are massively outnumbered by Indonesians who also

dominate the social and economic spheres in the region. Centers of transmigration also displaced numerous Indigenous communities throughout the region, further marginalizing and isolating the OPM movement within West Papua. In both Aceh and East Timor, urban areas remained dominated by native populations, allowing independence leaders to mobilize supporters of their movements much more efficiently.

A multitude of factors affected the Free Papua Movement's ability to follow the footsteps of the successful movements in East Timor and Aceh, but I assert that the main factors I have mentioned best explain the divergence of these outcomes. While the Free Papua Movement has failed up until this point, its use of social media and international relations with Melanesian countries are cause for hope with regards to eventual independence. Aceh and East Timor have proven that obtaining autonomy and independence from Indonesia is possible, but the realities of the region will make it far more difficult.

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