

Chapter IX: Conclusion

'In the majority of cases, relations between governments are dynamic: they vary over time on a scale ranging from mutually advantageous cooperation all the way to hostility and declared war. The end of the scale leading to conflict contains a number of stages that are preliminary to war, during which one foreign-policy elite employs nonmilitary methods to influence the behaviour of another. Under this heading we can include economic and psychological warfare, destabilizing schemes usually employed to weaken unfriendly governments, and, somewhat higher on the scale toward war, covert penetration through, among other things, bribery or blackmail of the target state's key decision makers.'

- Theodore A. Coulombis and James H. Wolfe. 1986. Introduction to International Relations: Power and Justice, p. 172.

'There is always the possibility, however remote, that Indonesia might lose its patience with what it saw as Port Moresby's continued acquiescence in the use of PNG territory by the OPM for anti-Indonesian activities, and decide to resolve the problem itself, by military means. It is imperative, then, that the border-crossers problem be resolved.'

- Stephen V. Harris and Colin Brown. 1985. Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia: The Irian Jaya Problem of 1984, p. 62

This thesis has sought to expose some fallacious assumptions dominant in government thinking about Indonesia-Papua New Guinea tensions. It contends that it is the internal conflict resulting from clashes between Indonesian authorities and independence movements (generally referred to as the OPM) in Irian Jaya which is the basic cause of border tensions between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The thesis questions views of the relationship which suggest that the two governments can fully control anti-Indonesian activities in the border region. Evidence has been produced to counter widely accepted views that Indonesia has full control in its territory. This suggests that Papua New Guinea's ineffectiveness in countering all OPM activity within its border is not necessarily due to Papua New Guinea's unwillingness: indeed, in addition to the constabulary's role in border security, regular (if infrequent) border patrols are undertaken and the PNGDF has been deployed to track OPM on several occasions.

Previous accounts of government responses to border tensions have tended to survey key events in the border story before proceeding to analysis of the governments' different positions, yet commentators have frequently not been aware of all significant exchanges between the two governments. This study has attempted to redress the general ignorance of border events by offering a chronology to act as a reference for detailed discussion of the relationship. Similarly, a brief survey of the border locale and populations is presented as a guide to the would-be analyst of inter-state relations. This information

indicates that these relations are directly affected by the activities of the OPM in the border region and that there have been repeated instances of border incursions by Indonesian troops.

In contrast to most commentators who have supported the Border Agreement as the only means available to both countries to ensure border peace, it is suggested that the Agreement does not address the basic cause of tension between the two countries. Evidence has been presented here of the one-sided nature of the obligations under the Agreement, and of the way in which the Agreement has generally been invoked to uphold Indonesia's interests. Papua New Guinea has protested against several Indonesian troop incursions into its territory, but has not sought to command Indonesia's compliance with other articles of the Border Agreement. Indonesia has been at fault in carrying out several of its obligations under the Agreement, but these indiscretions have received scant attention, presumably due to Papua New Guinea's accepted minimal capacity to pressure Indonesia.

Prevailing views of the border security issue rest on an underestimation of the strength and salience of anti-Indonesian feeling in Irian Jaya and support for the OPM, and upon a belief that Papua New Guinea has strong sympathy for the OPM which has been influential in deterring it from countering OPM activity. Many commentators have assumed that because of the continued presence of anti-Indonesian elements in the border area, Indonesia is correct in alleging that Papua New Guinea has shirked its border security responsibilities. In holding these views, commentators have noted that Papua New Guinea is far less powerful than Indonesia and they have urged Papua New Guinea to adopt a cautious approach in her border policies.

Other findings have emerged from this discussion. In its efforts to avoid the possibility of conflict with its larger neighbour, Papua New Guinea has adopted a range of policies, some of which have contradicted the officially upheld means of securing border peace. With more to lose from any escalation of border conflict, Papua New Guinea has been more imaginative in seeking remedies to a problem not of its making. Papua New Guinea began its formal relationship with Indonesia when it acted as understudy to Australia in negotiating the Border Agreement, and it has never deviated from a policy officially supporting Indonesia in Irian Jaya. But it has also sought to reduce border tensions by direct dealing with the OPM, and by advising Indonesia of the need for it to redress local grievances. Papua New Guinea has attempted to persuade Indonesia to adopt a policy of 'balanced border development' with a view to reducing the possibility of future refugee flows into Papua New Guinea, but Indonesia has pursued its own development strategies

without regard to the Papua New Guinean position and contrary to the agreement that the governments consult on these issues..

Whether or not the information provided here can be used to improve relations between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea remains to be seen. Some commentators have argued that there is little option for Papua New Guinea but to accept Indonesia's interpretation of the Border Agreement as it relates to border security. Those who are of this opinion would argue that increased awareness of the causes of border tension need provide no better basis for countering tensions, for the ultimate determination of the course of Indonesia-Papua New Guinea relations rests with Indonesia, the stronger power. However, there are some commentators working within the realist paradigm who would suggest the possibility that the lesser state can judiciously apply diplomacy to persuade the other state to adopt policies more to its liking. For example, it is plain that Indonesia is not itself upholding all aspects of the Border Agreement; this could provide Papua New Guinea with some leverage against complying with Indonesia's interpretation of the Agreement.

This approach will not remove the root cause of border tension. The study of international relations has deadlocked over the issue of whether or not realism is an adequate model for understanding the nature of inter-state relationships; it will remain an important means of understanding state behaviours as long as states continue to act as if states and the power balance between them were the only issues determining inter-state relations. Yet, if states seek resolution of the conflicts between them, a more useful perspective is to focus on removing the causes of those conflicts. This requires an intimate knowledge of those causes.

This study suggests that if discussion between the two countries remains focussed upon fulfilling the Border Agreement as it stands, there may be temporary peace bought by Papua New Guinea at the cost of accommodating Indonesia's views of the border tensions, but there is no guarantee that there will be enduring peace. It is apparent that the power of Papua New Guinea to force its wishes upon Indonesia is not equal to that which Indonesia can apply to Papua New Guinea. It seems that it is Papua New Guinea's vulnerability which suggests that the onus is on Papua New Guinea to accept the Indonesian interpretation of the Border Agreement and to implement it accordingly, or at least, to appear to implement it. The complexity of the border developments and the disparity in power between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea may deter other countries or bodies from accepting Papua New Guinea's interpretation of events. There have already been several occasions when Indonesian forces have directly contravened the Agreement by intruding into Papua New Guinean territory, regardless of Papua New

Guinea's protestations. Indeed, the 1988 border incursions, regardless of the existence of the Friendship Treaty, suggest that Papua New Guinea cannot buy Indonesia's good will while the OPM remain a force in the border region. To remove support for the OPM would involve redressing at least some of the movement's more prominent concerns - such as fear of loss of land and culture in the face of increased transmigration. To continue to use coercion is to provoke the local people into greater support of those who advocate violent means to oppose Indonesia in Irian Jaya.

It is certainly in Papua New Guinea's interests that the causes of tension between it and Indonesia are removed; it is less apparent that Indonesia would benefit. Indonesia as the greater power has benefitted from the realist perspective which respects state power as the primary, if not the only, determinant of order in international relations.

There is a growing, but uneasy, appreciation of the pointlessness of the realist approach in resolving the border conflict. Foreign Minister Namaliu found he was not well-received in Jakarta when he sought to direct Indonesia's attention 'to the existence of a distinctive set of common cultural characteristics in Irian Jaya, and to aspects of administration and development in the province of which a growing number of well-informed Indonesians are also becoming increasingly critical' [Namaliu, Address, 20 July 1984]. Harold Crouch pointed to the basis of the border problems, but retreated from the consequences:

It is not the job of Australia or PNG to lecture Indonesia on how to deal with problems within her own territory but in this case it cannot be denied that the spillover effects of developments in Irian Jaya make Australia and PNG interested parties whose views should be taken into account. If, contrary to official Indonesian expectation, the OPM movement continues to grow, it is to be hoped that Indonesia will take heed of the sources of resentment and initiate appropriate policy reforms.

Neither the Australian nor the PNG governments can do a great deal to influence the course of the OPM's development in the long run. The critical factor lies in conditions within Irian Jaya itself [Crouch, 1986: 20].

The immediate task is for commentators and policy advisors to grasp the nettle and consider how best to improve conditions within Irian Jaya itself. As Couloumbis and Wolfe have pointed out in a recent account of how human rights affect international relations:

Arguments regarding sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs are at best fig leaves behind which one attempts to hide the ill treatment of ethnic minorities or majorities [Couloumbis and Wolfe, 1986: 380].

If current policy makers work within the realist framework, supporting the status quo, and fail to provide the antidote to international tension, it remains for commentators and

policy analysts to devise the appropriate means to increase acceptance of a new perspective aimed at achieving conflict resolution.