The Borderlands of Southeast Asia:
Geopolitics, Terrorism, and Globalization

Edited by James Clad, Sean M. McDonald, and Bruce Vaughn
Chapter 9

Center-Periphery Relations and Borders in Western New Guinea

Patricia O’Brien and Bruce Vaughn

Border dynamics both within the region of Western New Guinea and between this peripheral region and its center in Jakarta are particularly interesting for several reasons. Borders drawn by the Dutch and the Republic of Indonesia have defined the region of Western New Guinea as part of larger political units of very different ethnic/linguistic/social and political character. Internal borders have been created within Western New Guinea to facilitate rule from Jakarta, and further subdivisions of the territory are being contemplated. Many in Western New Guinea continue to prefer greater autonomy despite efforts by Indonesia to integrate the territory more closely into the Republic of Indonesia, while a minority has fought for secession from Indonesia. An assessment of the importance of borders to the people of Western New Guinea as well as to the political powers that have asserted their control over the territory concludes that the borders, which delineate political and military control, have been, and remain, extremely important in this peripheral region. The peripheral nature, both geographically and politically, of the territory’s position relative to Jakarta is also instrumental to understanding its relative underdevelopment and the condition of its people.

Introduction

The region of Western New Guinea exists on the eastern periphery of the state of Indonesia. It is inhabited by a Melanesian people similar to the people of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and is situated on the western half of the island of New Guinea. New Guinea’s tribal groups are thought to speak some 15 percent of the world’s languages. The indigenous Melanesian people have a culture dating back, by some estimates, 40,000 years. This background differs significantly from the Malay character found on the rest of the Indonesian archipelago.
Western New Guinea at a Glance

**Population:** 2.3 million people, or approximately 1 percent of the total population of Indonesia

**Racial/ethnic backgrounds:** Approximately 1.2 million people are Melanesian with the balance having transmigrated from Malay and parts of Indonesia

**Religion:** Christian, Muslim, and Animist

**Languages:** With over 245 different tribal peoples, the inhabitants of the island of New Guinea speak approximately 15 percent of the world’s languages

**Area:** Some 422,000 square kilometers, which represents 21 percent of the land mass of Indonesia

**Location:** Between the Equator and 10 degrees south latitude

**Topography:** Coastal forests and swamps, central mountains, and highlands

**Key resources:** Gold, silver, copper, natural gas, oil, timber, and marine resources

**Administrative units:** Currently divided into the two main provinces of Papua and West Papua, with plans contemplated to further divide the province of Papua into two additional provinces, establishing a total of four provinces

Western New Guinea has wide-ranging topography. A central mountain chain contains peaks as high as 4,884 meters as well as permanent glaciers, though these are melting because of climate change. The region also has vast northern and southern coastal lowlands consisting of rainforests and wetlands that contain some of the world’s largest mangrove forests. Research has shown that coastal West Papua was incorporated into a pre-European world of archipelagic East Indies. In addition to significant trade relationships, “wars, depopulation, migration and the exchange of great numbers of prisoners of war and slaves by eastern Indonesian and local traders and dignitaries” took place, as well as the transmittance of a wide variety of trade goods into the interior of Papua.

A discussion of the region of Western New Guinea necessitates a definition of how this term is used. It is used here in a geographic sense to refer to the western half of the island of New Guinea, which is the world’s second largest island. This term for the region is less commonly used than the Republic of Indonesia’s former name for the territory, Irian Jaya, or West Papua. West Papua has generally become the preferred term used by activists sympathetic to the condition of Papuans inhabiting Western New Guinea, many of whom are thought to seek increased autonomy from central rule from Jakarta. To further complicate the issue, the government of Indonesia has divided the territory into two provinces now known as Papua and West Papua. This chapter employs the term Western New Guinea because it is geographically neutral and is not associated with either the government or advocate positions regarding the territory.

**The Borders of Western New Guinea**

Cartographic representations of the borders of Western New Guinea have gone through several phases. The Dutch extended their political and economic influence over much of what was to be known as Netherlands New Guinea during the period 1895 to 1962. During a brief United Nations (UN) transition period from 1962 to 1963, it was known as West New Guinea. The area was known as West Irian and was initially under Indonesian control from 1963 to 1973 and later was known as Irian Jaya from 1973 to 2000. In 2003, then-President Megawati Sukarnoputri directed that the province be subdivided into Papua, Central Irian Jaya, and West Irian Jaya provinces. A government for West Irian Jaya, the name of which was changed to West Papua on April 18, 2007, was installed in 2003, but the Indonesian courts stopped any further subdivision of the Papua province into Papua and Central Irian Jaya at that time due to the controversial nature of the proposal and its contravention of the Special Autonomy Law for the region. The creation of West Irian Jaya, now known as West Papua, by Megawati’s government was allowed to stand. Manokwari is the provincial capital of West Papua, while Jayapura is the capital of Papua.

The change in name for the territory and increasing attempts to subdivide the region are likely due to a combination of factors. Some are motivated by a desire to more firmly assert Indonesia’s political control over this vast and diverse area. To others, it represents a peripheral region rich in natural resources with few people, most of whom are not viewed in the same light as the majority Malay populations who
inhabit the rest of the Indonesian archipelago. The fact that this mineral- and timber-rich region constitutes 21 percent of the land mass and approximately 1 percent of the population of Indonesia demonstrates the potential development opportunities of Western New Guinea for the state of Indonesia.

Internal borders now divide the territory of Western New Guinea into smaller administrative units to facilitate rule from the center in Jakarta. Many indigenous Papuans reportedly view the division of Western New Guinea as a divide-and-rule tactic aimed at thwarting efforts by Papuan separatists. The split also casts doubt over whether the Special Autonomy Law would pertain to West Papua.4

The Indonesian house of representatives initiated legislation in early 2008 to divide Papua into South Papua, Central Papua, and Barat Daya provinces and to recognize West Papua. This would have divided the region into four administrative provinces as opposed to the current two provinces. Such moves would cost the state money and have yet to demonstrate a benefit to the people. They have reportedly been opposed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono for these reasons. Governor Barnabas Suebu was thought to oppose such initiatives on the basis that Western New Guinea does not have the resources to staff new administrative units.5 The recently proposed administrative units would appear to separate the central highlands—the area of greatest concern for security forces—from other parts of Western New Guinea where lucrative mining and hydrocarbon projects are under way.

Maintaining the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia as the successor state of the Dutch East Indies is of considerable importance, and Jakarta has been sensitive to any move that might encourage the secession of Western New Guinea. Secession might lead to a further breakup of the Indonesian state, a diverse nation comprising thousands of islands and much ethnic and linguistic diversity. The Indonesian archipelago has over 17,000 islands, spans an area of ocean 5,000 kilometers across, and is strategically located between the Indian Ocean and the Southwest Pacific. Concerns about secession and state instability were heightened in the period after the financial crisis of 1997. The successful breakaway of East Timor beginning in 1999, a former Portuguese colony that had been incorporated into Indonesia in 1975, made this issue even more sensitive. The relative weakness of the center in the period of Reformasi (reform) following former President Suharto’s rule also added to fears of secession. The growing strength of the increasingly democratic state of Indonesia, particularly after the elections of 2004, could provide the basis for a more inclusive approach to Western New Guinea.

While most border concerns relative to Western New Guinea pertain to assertions of control over the territory by either the Dutch or the Indonesians, there are some international dimensions to the region’s external frontier as well. The region shares a land border only with Papua New Guinea to the east. In the mid-1980s, Australian Defence Minister Kim Beazley was reportedly concerned that Indonesia would launch an invasion across the PNG border.4 At times, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), or Free Papua Movement, was thought to have operated out of sanctuaries on the PNG side of the border with Indonesia.7 Problems remain over the disposition of Indonesian Papuan refugees living in and around Papua New Guinea’s national capital, Port Moresby, some of whom arrived in PNG over 30 years ago.8 There have also been claims that forces in Jakarta have sponsored Islamic militia groups in Papua and that they have been placed along the border of PNG.9 This could be destabilizing to inter-communal harmony between the largely Muslim Malay transmigrants and the indigenous Melanesian Christians and animists.10

**Dutch New Guinea Colonial Borders**

The division of the island of New Guinea into separate colonial entities dates to the early 19th century. In 1828, the Netherlands expanded its colonial entity of the Dutch East Indies to encompass the western half of the imperially unclaimed island of New Guinea, though its eastern boundary was not fixed by the Dutch at the 141st meridian until the entry of imperial competitors in the 1880s.11 The colonial presence in Dutch New Guinea remained limited to missionary work and small-scale commercial relations until the end of the 19th century. The Dutch presence was formalized by the establishment of administrative posts in Fak Fak and Manokwari in 1898 as a result of European claims over eastern New Guinea.12

Britain laid claim to southeastern New Guinea in 1884 as a British protectorate, and 4 years later the area was annexed as British New Guinea. In 1906, the territory was handed over to Australian control,
Table 9-1. Chronology of Key Events in Western New Guinea

1545 Spanish sail to the north coast of New Guinea and claim the territory for the Spanish Crown, naming it Nueva Guinea.
1828 The Dutch claim the southwest coast of New Guinea.
1848 Dutch claims extend to the northwest coast.
1898 The Dutch assert control over what becomes the Netherlands New Guinea.
1945 Sukarno declares independence for Indonesia following the surrender of Japan.
1947 The Dutch launch a police action with 100,000 troops to reassert their authority.
1948 International opposition to a second Dutch police action mounts.
1949 The Dutch cede sovereignty over Netherlands East Indies to the new Indonesian Republic but retain control over Western New Guinea.
1961 Armed Indonesian infiltrators are captured by the Dutch.
1962 The Dutch agree to transfer authority over Netherlands New Guinea to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA).
1962 Indonesian and Dutch naval forces clash. The United States facilitates discussions between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Indonesia drops paratroopers into Western New Guinea. In August, the New York Agreement is signed by Indonesia and the Netherlands and a ceasefire is enforced. The UNTEA begins in October and the last Dutch troops leave in November. Indonesian security forces assert control over the territory.
1963 In May, the UNTEA transfers administration of the territory to Indonesia.
1965 OPM established. The first counterinsurgency operation against the OPM is conducted by Indonesian military forces.
1965–1998 Indonesia led by President Suharto.

1967–1969 Armed rebellion by Papuans against Indonesian rule occurs across the region.
1969 Indonesian troops cross the Papua New Guinea frontier in pursuit of rebels.
1969 “Act of Free Choice” leads to Indonesia’s annexation of Western New Guinea.
1980s Transmigration program leads to large numbers of non-Melanesian Indonesians moving to Western New Guinea from elsewhere in Indonesia.
2001 Special Autonomy Law grants special provisions to Western New Guinea, but the provisions are not fully implemented.
2003 A plan by President Megawati Sukarnoputri divides Western New Guinea into two provinces—Papua and West Irian Jaya. Her plan to further divide Papua in two does not go forward.
2004 Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono becomes Indonesia’s first directly elected president in free and fair elections.
2007 West Irian Jaya becomes known as West Papua. Legislation to divide Papua into three separate provinces is put forward.

and with the passage of the Papua Act it was thereafter known as the Territory of Papua. This initial British claim was followed within weeks by the German claim to the northeast quarter of the island and the Bismarck Archipelago. The main part of German New Guinea, established as a German protectorate from 1884 until 1914, was known as Kaiser Wilhelmsland. The borders of these territories were solidified to ensure “equitable divisions” between Britain and Germany.

German New Guinea fell to Australia in 1914, and until the outbreak of World War II the northeast quarter of the island continued to be administered by Australia, passing from military occupation to the League of Nations Mandated Territory of New Guinea in 1921. During World War II, when the northern half of New Guinea was occupied by Japanese forces, the two eastern regions were administered together and were
combined in 1949 by Australia as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. After the war they were administered as a UN trusteeship until both territories were granted full independence by Australia in 1975 and named Papua New Guinea. Despite the shifts in administrative control and the political flux caused by World War II, the borders of the eastern regions of Papua and New Guinea were roughly reestablished, though smaller administrative units were created within them, as was the division of the island into its eastern and western halves at the 141° meridian. These borders have had more meaning as administrative units than as barriers to traditional human currents until more recent, contested times.

The United Nations, the New York Agreement, and Handover to Indonesian Control

Through the 1950s, former President Sukarno agitated for the "unification" of Dutch New Guinea with the Republic of Indonesia. In 1959, Sukarno bedeviled the Dutch with small military incursions into Western New Guinea that resulted in skirmishes between Dutch and Indonesian forces. Diplomatically, Sukarno’s call for the incorporation of Western New Guinea into Indonesia, as opposed to Dutch pledges to guide the territory toward its own independence, rested upon the doctrine of uti possidetis juris, or the belief that the "territorial boundaries of a postcolonial state should match those of the colonial territories they replaced."16 Ironically, this doctrine swayed numerous newly independent African nations more than Dutch and Australian calls for Papuan self-determination. This support for Sukarno was solidified in 1960 when a border dispute erupted within days of the Independence of the Congo. The secession of the resource-rich Katanga province, believed to be supported by Belgium and other Western interests, provided a mirror for Sukarno’s West New Guinea scenario that not only swayed the United Nations against independence for West New Guinea but also convinced the newly elected U.S. President John F. Kennedy.17

Kennedy differed on this issue from Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose policy had been to keep out of a negotiated settlement. By the beginning of 1962, the United States and Australia no longer supported the Dutch plan and instead shifted policy toward a handover of Papua to Indonesia. Australia’s sudden shift away from the Dutch reflected the absence of any international support, most notably from the United States, in the event of armed conflict with Indonesia over the territory.18 With this drastically altered international climate, talks ensued throughout 1962 without any Papuan representation at them, though they were suspended in August following the dropping of large contingents of Indonesian paratroopers into Western New Guinea.19

The New York Agreement, signed on August 15, 1962, included a cease-fire agreement as well as an arrangement in which the Netherlands would transfer control of West New Guinea to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) that administered the area from October 1, 1962 to May 1, 1963. From May 1, 1963, control of Western New Guinea was transferred to Indonesia; the UN was supposed to continue to monitor the area and ensure compliance with the New York Agreement.

Dissenting Papuan political organizations were banned by Indonesia, and the OPM was founded in the mid-1960s. Indonesian military presence was stepped up by President Suharto to meet the rising number of Papuan rebellions as well as to assure success in the "Indonesian-organized act of Papuan self-determination" known as the "Act of Free Choice," a staged plebiscite scheduled for 1969 in which 1,022 tribal elders (or fewer than 1 percent of the population) were selected to vote on the question of independence or integration into Indonesia.20 The predetermmed result—to integrate with Indonesia—was endorsed by the UN and has served as the basis for conflict in the region.21

The years that succeeded the "Act of Free Choice" have been characterized by increased rebel activity, an Indonesian military presence, the Indonesian government-sponsored program of transmigration of non-Papuans to the region, urbanization, and a considerable number of Papuan refugees fleeing across the border to the Australian-administered territory of Papua and New Guinea and then-independent Papua New Guinea because of Indonesian army (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) violence.22 Some estimates put the numbers of Papuans killed since the beginning of Indonesian rule at over 100,000.23 Others claim this number to be greatly exaggerated. Accurate data are very difficult to come by, in part because of the relative inaccessibility of the region to foreign journalists and researchers. The increased repression of Papuans from 1969 has also been exacerbated by the dramatic upsurge in the exploitation of Papuan resources. In 1973, the Freeport McMoRan–run Grasberg mine near Timika commenced operating what would become the biggest gold mine in the world, and it became
a leading player in the politics of the territory. Along with Freeport McMoRan, other multinational operations likewise significantly contributed to the litany of grievances of indigenous Papuans since 1969, particularly the gross disparity between the massive revenues being generated by Papuan resources and the grinding poverty experienced by the Papuan people.

**Special Autonomy Law**

Poor relations between Papuans, the Indonesian government, and the TNI made Western New Guinea one of the three main “troubled” areas of Indonesia—along with East Timor and Aceh—that became a focal point of world attention after the fall of President Suharto in 1998 and the accompanying democratization of Indonesia prompting the transitional Reformasi era from 1998 to 2001. For Western New Guinea, post-Suharto Reformasi resulted in a recognition for “the need for special autonomy” for the region “given the diversity of Papua and the dictates of participatory democracy in the newly emerging Indonesia.” Despite this, the benefits of the Special Autonomy Law have not reached the average Papuan. Some observers feel that “the Papuan political elite are too distracted by the fight over resources to implement real changes in the standard of living for Papuans.” Others assert that “while the Special Autonomy process has been marred by long delays and wavering commitment on the part of the Indonesian government, the latter cannot be blamed for all of Papua’s continuing problems, and an increasing portion of responsibility must rest with Papuan maladministration.”

Law No. 21 on the Special Autonomy of Papua granting greater autonomy to the Papuan Province of 2001 acknowledged, among other things, that development in the Papuan Province:

[has] not completely fulfilled the sense of justice, enabled the attainment of prosperity for the people, supported the upholding of the law, nor shown respect for human rights in the Papuan Province, in particular those of the Papuan community ... [and] that the management and utilization of the natural wealth of the Papuan Province have not been optimally utilized for improving the standards of living of the native community, thereby causing the formation of the gap between the Papuan Province and the other regions, and constituting a neglect of the fundamental human rights of the native inhabitants of Papua.

Given these premises, the Law on Special Autonomy made generous concessions in terms of governance; political, religious, and cultural protections; freedoms and human rights for Papuans; as well as an immense redistribution of Papua’s wealth generated from exploitation of natural resources back into the province. For instance, it allowed for 80 percent of forestry, fishing, and general mining and 70 percent of oil and gas revenue to be channeled back into provincial revenues.

Papuan living standards continue to lag well behind the rest of Indonesia. According to a 2007 World Bank report, “Forty percent of Papuans still live below the poverty line, more than double the national average... one third of Papua’s children do not go to school... [and] nine out of ten villages do not have basic health services with a health center, doctor or midwife.” President Yudhoyono has acknowledged the continuing problems in Papua despite the new autonomy legal framework. In February 2007, he stated, “the improvement of peoples’ [sic] prosperity in the two Papua provinces is slow. Special autonomy has not been implemented in a good way.” He undertook to “issue a presidential decree to accelerate the development in the two Papuan provinces. Funds will come from the region and the central government.” The division of Western New Guinea into two provinces—West Papua and Papua—has been widely perceived as contravening the freedoms and protections dimensions of the new law. This division is symptomatic of the continuing abuses of Papuan human rights despite recognition of the problem by the Indonesian government.

The announcement by President Yudhoyono in May 2010 that Indonesia would institute a moratorium on logging of natural forests may have positive implications for Western New Guinea. Yudhoyono’s efforts are part of a larger commitment to reduce Indonesia’s carbon emissions by 26 percent by the year 2020. Norway signed a $1 billion deal with Indonesia to help Indonesia preserve its forests. Indonesia is the world’s third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, 85 percent of which come from deforestation. This commitment with Norway places the massive food development estate in Merauke, Papua, in question. In 2008, the government had released over a million hectares of land for agricultural development near Merauke. Much of this land is peat swamp, which when burned releases even more carbon. It
was thought that such a massive project would prove to be alienating for local Papuans, as such projects can lead to the migration of non-Papuan Indonesians to the area to take up new jobs.

**TNI and Conflict in Western New Guinea**

The Indonesian military continues to exert considerable influence in Western New Guinea. There was reportedly a plan in 2006 to deploy 35,000 additional troops along Indonesia's border with Papua New Guinea. These would be in addition to the 6,000 to 7,000 troops who were already thought to be stationed in Papua. At the end of 2007, it was estimated that there were some 12,000 Indonesian troops and 2,000 to 2,500 paramilitary police in the region. While this level of deployment is low when one considers the length of the land border with PNG, and that Papua and West Papua constitute 21 percent of the land area of Indonesia, it does raise questions given the poor state of relations between the TNI and indigenous Melanesian peoples in Papua and West Papua. There is concern as to what effect this will have on illegal logging and intercommunal harmony in these two eastern provinces.

Some officers who have been sent to Western New Guinea played a role in events in East Timor in the leadup to and wake of the 1999 referendum on independence. Colonel Burhanuddin Siagan, who was indicted in 2003 by UN investigators for murder and torture in East Timor and who was based in Papua in 2007, has stated, "In the interests of the Republic of Indonesia we are not afraid of human rights. . . . [A] nyone who tends towards separatism will be crushed." In August 2007, there were reports that Indonesian military operations had destroyed houses and crops in the remote Jamo Valley in Puncak Jaya. This led to the starvation of local inhabitants who had fled the security forces operations.

An International Crisis Group report on Radicalization and Dialogue in Papua, released in March 2010, found that there was an increase in political violence in 2009 and 2010 that was leading to increased radicalization of militants and formerly peaceful activists. Apparently, some activists have taken the view that dialogue with the Indonesian government should only take place within an international context. Such an internationalization of the conflict is not what the government in Jakarta wishes. Some militants have been increasingly drawn to the view that the East Timor experience has lessons on how the internationalization of the conflict can help their cause. A 2010 book by John Braithwaite and others at the Australian National University, *Anomie and Violence: Non-Truth and Reconciliation in Indonesian Peace Building*, has concluded that Papua is a "case with both high risks of escalation to more serious conflict and prospects for harnessing peace initiatives."

**Human Rights in Western New Guinea**

In this era of globalized media, Western New Guinea remains one of the most remote areas of the planet, one where information is not easily disseminated and journalists have limited and controlled access to media. The region's remoteness means that the operations of security forces there are not subject to the scrutiny they would experience were they closer to the core of Indonesia on Java. As a result, the increased openness of the media elsewhere in Indonesia that has occurred since the period of Reformasi has not similarly constrained security forces' abuses in remote areas. Security operations in Papua and West Papua are viewed by human rights advocates as operating with a large degree with impunity. Some go so far as describing the operations as genocide. Others characterize the situation as one where "chronic low level abuse on the part of security forces [is a] fact."

The catalyst for human rights abuses of the indigenous Papuan people of the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua, and particularly in the central highlands, is apparently related to security sweeps by police and security forces. These sweep operations have the objective of capturing or destroying cells of the pro-independence OPM. Other key political actors include the Paeuan Presidency Council and the Papuan People's Council. These operations "typically involve looting, destruction of property, and in some cases harm to civilians and displacement" and are probably related to perceptions by security forces of popular support by Papuans for OPM groups. Human Rights Watch has found that security forces "continue to engage in largely indiscriminate sweeping operations in pursuit of suspected militants, using excessive, often brutal, and at sometimes lethal force against civilians." According to one OPM fighter interviewed in April 2010, OPM is now seeking to provoke a Santa Cruz–type response by the TNI to mounting violence by the OPM. Santa Cruz was the site of a massacre by the TNI in East Timor in 1991. It has been reported that at least some OPM fighters are considering expelling transmigrants and seeking a merger with Papua New Guinea.
This problem of human rights abuses came to wider international attention in March 2006 when 42 refugees from Western New Guinea were granted temporary protection visas by the Australian government. Indonesia responded by withdrawing its ambassador from Canberra. President Yudhoyono also made direct calls to then—Prime Minister John Howard to return the asylum-seekers to Indonesia. Australia responded by passing a new migration bill "that would deter Papuan asylum seekers from coming to Australia."³⁹

Mineral, Natural Gas, and Timber Extraction in Western New Guinea

The Indonesian military and political elites have vested interests in reaping benefits from resource extraction industries. The wealth generated from these projects flows overwhelmingly to foreign multinational companies, the central government in Jakarta, and allegedly to Indonesian individuals in government and in the military who are in a position to gain financially from the process of production. Local communities that overwhelmingly bear the costs of production, such as environmental degradation, increased rates of HIV/AIDS transmission, and radical changes to their traditional way of life, reap little relative long-term economic advantage for their people. In many cases, these communities become politically and/or economically marginalized either from direct rule from the center or through the transmigration of Indonesians from other parts of the archipelago.

In Western New Guinea, the nexus between conflict, corruption, and environmental exploitation is clear. The struggle for control of Papua's abundant natural resources has contributed significantly to the conflict. Concessions given to mining companies without consideration for the rights of local people, and the involvement of state security forces in guarding mining sites, have provided fertile ground for conflict. The direct involvement of senior members of the police and army in resource extraction—such as where members of the military hold logging concessions themselves or receive payment from mining companies for security services—combined with the lucrative taxes that flow to the Indonesian state provides powerful motives for the state to retain tight control.⁴⁰

One of the most exploited natural resources of Western New Guinea is its forests. Deforestation is threatening to eliminate Indonesia's remaining forests, which are to a large extent found in Western New Guinea. About 10 percent of the world's remaining tropical forests, a total forested area of some 225 million acres, are found in Indonesia, a country that has already lost over 72 percent of its forests. This process of deforestation has made Indonesia the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming.

Illegal logging in Indonesia is estimated to fell some 5.2 million acres of forest each year with an estimated value of $4 billion.³¹ Ironically, rainforest clearing is also being carried out to establish palm plantations for biofuel projects ostensibly aimed at cleaner sources of energy. Such projects, which can displace local people, have been associated with human rights abuses.⁴² Palm oil projects are also associated with the influx of transmigrants who take the jobs the projects create away from the locals.⁴³

Global initiatives to address climate change may lead to increased international attention regarding the forests of Western New Guinea that could help end illegal logging and mitigate intercommunal strife. Such plans could also lead to payments to help protect the forests. There were negotiations under way in late 2007 to implement a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation scheme as part of the Kyoto Protocol that could earn Indonesia $10 billion a year for preserving its forests by selling carbon credits.⁴⁴

The vast mineral riches of Western Papua were suspected by the Dutch as early as the 1930s, but their exploitation did not commence in earnest until after World War II. By 1961, some 7.4 million milligram worth of oil was exported but the more inaccessibly located mineral resources of the region were not tapped. The economy of Dutch New Guinea was primarily structured around agricultural products. Under Indonesian rule, interest in tapping the natural wealth of the region grew exponentially as did the revenues from oil and mineral extraction, particularly from the 1970s.⁴⁵

Extracting the immense natural resources of Western New Guinea is intimately intertwined with the expansion of Indonesian control, secured by the TNI, and the accompanying upsurge in human rights abuses. This history is also shaped by the significant roles played by multinational companies, though only one of a number of corporate players in Papua—U.S.-based Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold, Inc.—has had a colossal impact on the history of Papua since it began investing in mining operations in 1967. Its main operation, the Grasberg deposit, became the "largest gold and most profitable copper
mine in the world" in the 1990s, thereby making the company the largest taxpayer in Indonesia. Freeport McMoRan has paid the TNI to provide security for the mine. The military's large presence around the mine has reportedly exacerbated conflict with local populations. The relationship between Freeport McMoRan and the TNI gained international attention in August 2002 when two U.S. citizens and an Indonesian employee of the mine were killed in an ambush near Timika. While many suspected TNI involvement, Anthonius Wamang, who is believed to have been an OPM operational commander as well as an informant for the TNI, was arrested for the crime in January 2006 along with 11 others.46

The excessive costs borne by local Papuans for Freeport's mining operations can also be measured in company employment practices, where only 20 to 26 percent of workers are Papuan, and even fewer come from the Amungme and Kamoro groups, the traditional landowners in the area. The mine has been a major driver of transmigration to Papua, mostly from Java. In addition to the disruptive impact of this transmigration for Papuan rights, the Grasberg mine has also had a fundamental impact on the spread of HIV/AIDS. The nearby town of Timika is the service town and residence for approximately 12,000 male employees of the mine. Timika also has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS in West Papua, the province with the highest rate in the nation of Indonesia. Along with the social and political dimensions of Freeport McMoRan’s operations, the mine has led to a massive degradation of the ecosystem of the highlands, river systems, and distant coastal areas where tailings are piped. The company's favored status with the TNI and the Indonesian government has resulted in widespread accusations that it circumvents the existing environmental protection laws of Indonesia, which are far weaker than those enforced in the United States, the company's home country.47

**International Support for Independence or Autonomy in Western New Guinea**

Respect for the borders and territorial integrity of Indonesia has been a key objective of Indonesian foreign relations, particularly with Australia and the United States. Indonesia's sensitivity on the issue is understandable given the pivotal role that Australia played in assisting East Timor achieve its independence, and because of the support by Australia for the Papuan people. Support by some Members of Congress for the plight of the people of Western New Guinea as well as past U.S. Government support for secession elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago may also contribute to Indonesian concerns.48 Indonesian sensitivities over Western New Guinea are strong, as is their sense that it is an integral part of Indonesia because of the territory’s common control under the Dutch. This differs somewhat from Indonesia’s perceptions of East Timor, which was controlled by the Portuguese until 1975.

In 2006, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda and Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer signed a security treaty on the island of Lombok that replaced a previous treaty between Prime Minister Paul Keating and Indonesian President Suharto that was abandoned as a result of Australia’s support of East Timor’s independence. The new treaty binds both states in an agreement not to support separatists in each country. The clause was reportedly included at the urging of Indonesia following the previously mentioned diplomatic controversy surrounding Australia’s granting of temporary protection visas to the group of 42 Western New Guinean asylum seekers who entered Australia in January 2006. The new security treaty addresses border protection, defense, counterterrorism cooperation, law enforcement, and other issues.49 Critics of the treaty in Australia have felt that the document will facilitate the suppression of the Papuan independence movement.50 There is a tendency in strategic circles in Australia to focus first on establishing and maintaining good bilateral relations with Indonesia. Many who hold this view would argue that it is the most effective way to help positively influence the situation in Western New Guinea.51

Australia has been a center of support for Western New Guinean human rights activists. This is not surprising, given that some 77 percent of Australians support an act of self-determination for Western New Guinea52 and that Australia has a long historical relationship with Western New Guinea's eastern neighbor, Papua New Guinea. In March 2007, the University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies produced a report prepared by the Western New Guinea Project that describes Western New Guinea as a “humanitarian emergency,” where the “outlook for the Western New Guinean People is worsening.” The report, authored by Jim Elmslie, Peter King, and Jake Lynch, was critical of the security treaty between Australia and Indonesia and viewed that
document as tantamount to a decision by Australia “to take sides with the corrupt Indonesian military against the Western New Guinean people.” While some have criticized this conclusion on the basis of a lack of evidence of deliberate intent, there is a general view that a “systematic pattern of rights violations by Indonesian security forces” has occurred.

Attention to Papua and West Papua by the U.S. Congress has caused concern for the government of Indonesia. It has perceived congressional attention in the form of proposed legislation as a challenge to Indonesian sovereignty over the area. Such sensitivity is understandable on the part of the Indonesians, given past Central Intelligence Agency covert operations in Indonesia that sought to destabilize or overthrow the regime of former President Sukarno by providing support to separatist military elements in the outer islands of Sumatra and Sulawesi. Congressman Eni Faleomavaega, who was born on American Samoa and is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, spoke out on behalf of the Papuan people at a time when the administration of President George W. Bush had focused on establishing closer relations with Indonesia. Other Members of Congress have taken the view that Indonesia’s importance to the United States in the struggle against violent Islamist militants and its increasing geopolitical importance in the region outweigh concerns over Papua and West Papua. Following a brief visit to the region in November 2007, Faleomavaega stated, “Clearly the Papuans in these two provinces are still being intimidated, harassed, and abused by the TNI.”

At the request of President Yudhoyono, Congressman Faleomavaega and Congressman Donald Payne reportedly suspended their support for Papua’s and West Papua’s right to self-determination in 2005 in order to give President Yudhoyono time to implement Special Autonomy legislation for the two provinces. After 3 years, they wrote to President Yudhoyono to say that “continued refusal by your military to allow our access to Jayapura and other parts of Indonesia will inevitably call into question the seriousness of your government’s assurances to us regarding your intent to implement Special Autonomy and to end unreasonable restrictions on international access to West Papua.”

The development of a Comprehensive Partnership between the United States and Indonesia, which was expected when President Obama visited Indonesia in November 2010, may provide a dialogue framework within which the two nations can develop confidence in their dealings with one another. This could potentially provide a venue to discuss constructive ways for the United States and the international community to assist Indonesia in fostering peaceful and sustainable development in Western New Guinea. Such development could defuse mounting conflict by bringing together various stakeholders to focus on forest preservation and the empowerment of indigenous people while reaffirming Indonesian sovereignty and developing intercommunal dialogue between Papuans, transmigrants, the TNI, police, and other state actors.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on an analysis of the history of borders in Western New Guinea, one can conclude that the salience of national and subnational borders remains central to the course of political, cultural, demographic, and economic developments in the territory. Borders have become the focus of those seeking greater autonomy, or independence, as well as those from the center who seek to more firmly extend central state control, whether for reasons of national sovereignty or less noble aims. The situation of the people of Western New Guinea is very much dependent on the manner in which the extension of central government control takes place. If it is simply to install a new tier of elites who will be better positioned to exploit the people and the ample natural resources of the region, then these new borders will work to the detriment of the people. If they can bring new levels of government that can provide new services, such as health and education, then they could be a positive factor. The extreme power differential between the Papuan people and the Malay people of the rest of the Indonesian Archipelago means that the course of political development of Western New Guinea depends principally on the larger democratic development of Indonesia. If graft and corruption can be minimized and the rule of law and respect for minority peoples can be extended, the plight of the Papuan people may be alleviated by increased political involvement by Jakarta in the affairs of Papua. That said, there is the very real fear that the region will be used by elites and the military for little more than exploitation for personal gain. Such an outcome would be to the detriment of the people, the environment of Western New Guinea in particular, and to the world at large because of the role that the world's great forests play in carbon sequestration.
The following recommendations are put forward based on the above analysis. They are made with the knowledge that the general trend in Indonesian governance since the democratic elections of 2004, which brought President Yudhoyono to power, is positive. That said, abuses continue, and much remains to be done to improve the condition of the Melanesian Papuan people living in Western New Guinea.

- Continue to encourage a peaceful resolution of the conflict with respect for the territorial integrity of Indonesia and understanding of the plight of the Papuan people.
- Stop the transmigration of people from elsewhere in Indonesia to Western New Guinea.
- Continue the positive trend of increasing openness of the media in Indonesia to include Papua and West Papua by allowing unrestricted access to Western New Guinea by Indonesian and foreign journalists and academics.
- Continue the positive trend of getting the military and police out of the business of protecting businesses, including multinational corporations.
- Place special emphasis on improving local health, job training, and education opportunities.
- Continue the positive current trend toward increasingly democratic government at the national level in Indonesia to the local level in Papua and West Papua.
- Place renewed emphasis on local customs and culture and observe past commitments to do so.
- Work to minimize the negative impact of corrupt practices at the national, provincial, and local levels.
- Ensure that a reasonable amount of wealth generated by mineral and other resource extraction industries remains in Western New Guinea and flows to local communities.
- Implement programs to mitigate detrimental effects of resource extraction industries and move quickly to preserve intact forests and fisheries and to develop sustainable development strategies.
- Partner with the international community to preserve Western New Guinea.
Annex VIII, Law No. 21 on the Special Autonomy of Papua granting greater autonomy to the Papuan Province, "considering" points f and g in "Questioning the Unquestionable," 105.

Article 34 b and c, Law No. 21 on the Special Autonomy of Papua granting greater autonomy to the Papuan Province in "Questioning the Unquestionable," 119.


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