

Chapter 2: Diplomacy & struggle, 1945-59

a) Revolution, diplomasi/perjuangan & West New Guinea

The Republic of Indonesia was born furtively, in a discreet ceremony in which two nationalist leaders, Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta, issued a terse proclamation while their country was still occupied by the defeated Japanese army. It swiftly became a mass cause, however, and its hold on the hearts of a people who had been christened "Indonesians" within living memory was solidified under the hammer blows of Dutch attempts to reconquer their colony. The Republic was unable to win a military victory, but was strong enough to shift to guerrilla warfare when Dutch troops over-ran most of the country. This was *perjuangan* – struggle. Partisans of the Republic fought back and relied on mass mobilization of opinion, winning a clear victory by gaining the allegiance of virtually the entire country, even those leaders who were appointed to head Dutch-run puppet states.

Perjuangan alone, however, was not enough to gain independence. The other ingredient was *diplomasi*, in its Indonesian spelling. "The Indonesians have entered the international arena" through their revolution against colonialism, Sukarno said, and now needed to bring the world into their struggle. "This is what has become the basis of the foreign policy of the Republic."¹¹ This meant winning the support of the United States, Britain and other countries that could force the Netherlands to make concessions. But diplomacy by itself, Sukarno insisted, could win no victories. "The policy now adopted by the Indonesian Republic must be oriented to the international world," he declared. "For this, the prime condition is *diplomacy*. Yet no nation can enter the international arena by diplomacy alone. Behind that diplomacy, indeed the very basis of the diplomacy, must be a power force."¹² While some leaders stressed diplomacy and others struggle, Sukarno united the two streams into one. The strategy worked well: when the Dutch conquered the entire Republican territory but were unable to end the Indonesian revolution, the United Nations delivered the coup de grace to the Dutch colonial empire. Within months, the Dutch were forced to recognize Indonesian independence.

The one exception was West New Guinea, retained over vociferous Indonesian objections. New Guinea was the forgotten stepchild of the Dutch empire, its coast only brought under Dutch control in the early twentieth century and its interior still unknown in 1949. Its importance to Dutch and Indies

residents alike was purely in the imagination. For Indonesian nationalists, it was the home of the notorious Boven Digul prison camp, so remote that it needed no guards or perimeters — those who escaped were sure to be killed by disease, animals or native tribes. Hatta, half of the ruling duumvirate from the late 1940s to the late 1950s, was the most prominent nationalist exiled here by the Dutch, and wrote of it as a place where men like himself went to be martyred. “With proudly erected heads the condemned rebels mounted the Oppressor’s scaffold,” he wrote in 1929. “With admirable courage too the hundreds of exiles, fighters and defenders of oppressed Indonesia go to face a slow but certain death in the living grave of Upper Digoel.”¹³ The myth of Boven Digul grew with time. In 1957, Sukarno (never sent there himself) recalled all of West Irian as “the martyr place of the struggle for independence.”¹⁴

For the “Indies Dutchmen,” the Dutch-speaking Eurasians who felt most threatened by indigenous nationalism, New Guinea offered itself as a promised land to be colonized as Australian Queensland had been, a modern-day Canada snatched from the fires of revolution for Dutch Empire loyalists. Colonization started in 1930, and the first call for separation of New Guinea from the Indies came in 1946, a year after the revolution began.¹⁵ New Guinea was formerly severed from the Indies, but was largely irrelevant to Dutch policy making at first. It was only as the prospects of keeping control of the Indies receded that more and more Dutch policy makers looked to New Guinea as one area that could be held by the empire. This would maintain the cherished position of the Netherlands as a world power, conferred only by virtue of its colonial empire. It would also reduce the “trauma of decolonization” felt by many Dutchmen.¹⁶ The Catholic Party, the country’s largest, was also demanding New Guinea be preserved as a mission field.¹⁷ Merauke, the centre of the Catholic mission, was the only part of the Indies where the Dutch flag flew throughout the Second World War. Finally, there was the hope that New Guinea, like the Belgian Congo, might have untapped wealth that could help spur the postwar recovery of the metropolitan economy. Political necessities in the Dutch parliament made separation a reality. Dutch and Indonesian negotiators spent the latter part of 1949 thrashing out a treaty granting Indonesia independence, always conscious that a two-thirds vote in both chambers of the Dutch parliament would be needed. The only way to gain that majority was to hold on to New Guinea.¹⁸

b) Mapping Indonesia

Indonesia's borders were fluid in 1945. Two visions of the new state's territory contended in the Japanese-sponsored Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence, each linked to a stream in Indonesian political thought. (The third stream was more concerned with the goal of an Islamic state than borders.) The status of what was then called Papua was hotly debated, although delegates were clearly confused as to what exactly they meant by "Papua" – the whole island or just the Dutch half.

The "secular" nationalist stream led by Sukarno called for the unification of Malay peoples that would include British colonies in Malaya and Borneo, Portuguese Timor, and even the Philippines, had they not already been granted independence. Sukarno declared that Renan's definition of a nation, a people with the desire to live together, was out of date in the age of geopolitics. In addition, a nation was based on its territory. "Men cannot be separated from place Even a child if he looks at the map of the world can see that the Indonesian archipelago forms one unity."¹⁹ One orator from this camp, Mohammed Yamin, summed up this principle as "the areas which should be included in Indonesian territory are those which have given birth to the Indonesian people," again illustrating how the nationalist movement was creating the nation.²⁰

The competing vision was offered by Hatta, who insisted that the new state should have the borders of the Dutch East Indies – thus, a nation defined by territory and not by blood. He was even willing to pass on Dutch Papua. "I am inclined to say that I do not need Papua and that it should be left to the Papuan people themselves. I recognize that the Papuans have the right to be an independent nation...."²¹ The preparatory committee voted for the "Greater Indonesia" idea, but international realities interfered by the time Sukarno and Hatta declared independence: they were unwilling to face the Dutch and British at the same time, so avoided claiming Malaya and North Borneo. What remained of the larger vision was the belief Indonesia had a special place of regional leadership as a "real" nation, superior to "artificial" states like Malaya/Malaysia.

At the independence negotiations of 1949, the question of West New Guinea was left until last because it was the most contentious. It was the Dutch-appointed Federalist leaders, under Eastern Indonesia premier Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung, who were most determined to see the territory as part of their state and therefore of Indonesia. Hatta, leader of the Republican delegation, saw the question as

unimportant.²² The Dutch, meanwhile, were adamant on the point, with their resolve apparently strengthened by Australian urgings.²³ Talks on the item opened with a blunt Dutch statement that “the following decision will not meet the aspirations of the Indonesian delegations: i.e. the Netherlands will not transfer sovereignty over West Irian to Indonesia.”²⁴

When the issue caused deadlock, American and Australian mediators stepped in to suggest that the issue be postponed: sovereignty over Indonesia would be transferred immediately, with control of West New Guinea to be settled by talks over the next year.²⁵ The compromise was agreed to, and a two-part agreement signed. The first clause transferred sovereignty over Indonesia, while the second reserved the status quo of West New Guinea for one year, to be settled by negotiations.²⁶

c) Papuans in the Indonesian revolution

Nationalism seems to have been growing in this period in West Papua itself, but what type of nationalism is harder to say. With Dutch rule largely nominal, there was little anti-colonial activity before the Second World War. During the Pacific war, the much more intrusive Japanese presence stimulated some resistance. The Koreri millennial movement created a flag to symbolize indigenous struggle against foreigners, while the Mansren movement declared an independent West Papua bounded by Sorong, Merauke and Hollandia in 1942.²⁷ A further spur came with the arrival of American troops in 1945. Papuans saw enormous wealth, and they saw soldiers who were black like themselves on a level of apparent equality with white soldiers.

As the Indonesian revolution became the dominant theme in the Dutch Indies, Papuan nationalism began to be expressed through two different channels: one pro-Indonesian, the other pro-Dutch. The small Papuan elite struggled over how to respond to the independence proclamation, with allegiances shifting for some time. Eventually, the pro-Indonesian side formed the *Partai Kemerdekaan Indonesia Irian* (Irian Party for Indonesian Independence) and the pro-Dutch side responded with the *Gerakan Persatuan Nieuw-Guinee* (New Guinea Unity Movement).²⁸ There was also a movement for annexation by the United States.²⁹ Each in its own way, however, seems to have been an attempt to advance the Papuan cause as part of a larger unit, whether ruled from Jakarta or from The Hague. As Paul van der Veur writes, “both segments ... were indicative of a new Papuan consciousness, entangled in

the Netherlands-Indonesia conflict.”³⁰ The only formal Papuan presence in any of the 1945-9 talks was at the Dutch-convened Malino conference of 1946, in which Papuan delegate Frans Kaisiepo proposed a new name for his homeland to replace the eastern Indonesian term Papua, meaning frizzy-haired. Iryan (or Irian), in his local Biak language, meant cloudy or hot land.

A Papuan delegation led by anti-Japanese guerrilla Johan Ariks travelled to The Hague for Indonesian independence negotiations, where it petitioned the two sides plus the United Nations, United States and Canada for separation of Papua from Indonesia, but attracted little attention.³¹ The small group of early Papuan nationalists, faced with a dilemma over which side to back, had been forced into the international arena.

d) Sukarno and West Irian, 1950-3

Sukarno never travelled to West Irian until it became an Indonesian province, but made it uniquely his issue. This is not to say that other political leaders did not hope for the transfer of West Irian, but that Sukarno identified himself more and more with the issue, which he saw as a means to rediscover the unity of purpose of revolutionary days. Each escalating step in his campaign was declared on days of revolutionary significance, usually in his annual address to the nation on August 17, the anniversary of the Republic’s 1945 declaration of independence.

This started in the midst of deteriorating Dutch-Indonesian relations in 1950, during negotiations that were supposed to settle West Irian’s final status. “The Irian question,” Sukarno declared on 17 August 1950,

... is a question of colonialism or non-colonialism, a question of colonialism or independence.... In our present Constitution it is expressly laid down that the territory of our state comprises the entire former Netherlands Indies, that is from Sabang to Merauke.... This is not a trifling question; this is a major issue.... Because we have pledged that we will fight [*berjuang*, usually translated as struggle] until the end of time as long as one part of our Country — no matter how small that part may be — is not yet free!”³²

At this time, however, the government apparatus was not in Sukarno’s hands. Most power in the 1949 and 1950 draft constitutions was vested in the office of the prime minister and cabinet, held by men who preferred economic stabilization to continuing revolution, diplomacy to struggle as a method for getting Irian. Early cabinets were dominated by the Muslim-based Masyumi party, which leaned to the

pro-Western side of non-alignment. The campaign for West Irian, then, was restricted to bilateral diplomatic efforts to persuade the Netherlands to hand over the territory. Indonesia's political leaders were mostly Dutch-educated and saw no reason that they could not now work in close cooperation with the Netherlands, as India did with Great Britain. They wanted West Irian, but did not see it as worth a rupture with the West. Arguments made by Indonesia in this period rested on the country's status as successor state to the Netherlands East Indies. This was bolstered by the one-time Dutch recognition of part of West Irian as subject to the Sultan of Tidore, by legal arguments stemming from the 1945-9 period, and by the arguments that Papuans had been part of the Indonesian revolution.³³

In a 1950 constitutional crisis, this view won out, but Sukarno would henceforth use Irian as a club to beat his opponents, a means to place himself as a figure enunciating the national will for the "return of West Irian to the fold of the motherland," and a way to play politics despite the constitutional limitations placed on the office of the president. West Irian also provided the occasion for a rapprochement between Sukarno and the PKI, the Communist party that had rebelled in 1948.³⁴ The PKI would henceforth use West Irian militancy as an anti-imperialist issue to both increase its support and cement its relationship with the President as an ally against the religious and conservative parties who held power.

The Netherlands, on the other hand, was less and less willing to consider a hand-over. Hatta believed he had been implicitly promised a two-stage transfer as part of the 1949 compromise: once tensions in the Dutch parliament had a year to cool, his Dutch friends assured him, the hand-over of West Irian would present no real difficulties.³⁵ Events in the intervening year, however, had the reverse effect. Republican partisans had swept away the patchwork federalist structure set up by the Dutch, substituting a unitary state. Jakarta had crushed an attempted secession, the "Republic of the South Moluccas." Many Dutchmen felt powerless to help the peoples who had remained loyal. Handing over New Guinea in this setting looked like appeasement.³⁶

The very day the one-year negotiations period ended, the Dutch government brought in "an old-style colonial constitution for West New Guinea with every appearance of permanence."³⁷ Even some limited concessions offered in 1951 contributed to the collapse of the Dutch cabinet. Future cabinets survived only by agreeing to put differences among the governing parties on New Guinea into "cold

storage.”³⁸ From this point on, Dutch governments proved unwilling to discuss the issue with Indonesia, arguing there was no point in talks since Indonesia insisted on discussing only the means of transfer.³⁹ This strategy ensured political cohesion in the Netherlands, but also helped to radicalize Indonesian policy. In 1953, Indonesia’s fourth cabinet in as many years fell and was replaced by one that for the first time excluded the Masyumi party.

e) Anti-colonial resurgence: West Irian in the UN, 1953-7

The new government was headed by Ali Sastroamijoyo, ambassador to the United States and a member of the left wing of the Nationalist Party (PNI). Ali’s government moved Indonesian foreign policy to the centre of its agenda, stressing a far more assertive policy. Instead of following, Indonesia would now seek to lead.⁴⁰ Ali’s foreign policy was two-pronged: it sought to build a stronger third world bloc which by necessity would be united by anti-colonialism, and it turned up the heat in the fight for West Irian. These two goals were linked in the government’s major foreign policy initiatives: moving the campaign for West Irian into the United Nations, and hosting the Bandung conference of Asian and African states in 1955. Ali’s policies accorded well with Sukarno’s. In a 1956 speech to the Canadian parliament, for example, Sukarno warned his audience not to underestimate the Asian-African “nationalist torrent ... whose object is the greater freedom, the greater liberation, of mankind. I say this in all seriousness: any attempt to stand in the way of that torrent will be in vain.” Part of Indonesia, he added, “still suffers under colonialism, that plague on mankind’s fulfillment.... Until West Irian is rejoined to the rest of my country Indonesia will feel herself incomplete and insecure.”⁴¹

The terms of the West Irian debate shifted in 1954 when Indonesia took the question to the UN General Assembly. In response, the Netherlands raised the question of self-determination for the Papuans, apparently for the first time.⁴² An eight-power resolution drafted by India that called for further bilateral talks received two-thirds of the vote in committee, enough to pass a resolution. When the resolution came to the General Assembly, however, twelve abstainers shifted to the Dutch side: nine Latin American states plus Canada, Israel and Taiwan, most of them states that Ambassador Sujarwo Condronegoro called states “independent in name only.” The most careful study of the vote indicates that this shift likely came with the tacit backing of the United States.⁴³ The United States did not even support

negotiations when a strongly pro-Western cabinet took over briefly in 1955-6 and tried to negotiate with the Netherlands.⁴⁴ This cabinet then unilaterally abrogated the Dutch-Indonesian Union.⁴⁵ While the number of co-sponsors of Indonesian resolutions grew in 1956 and 1957, the Indonesian majority actually eroded, never reaching the two-thirds mark again.⁴⁶

f) Back to the rails of revolution: Economic confrontation, Irian & national unity, 1957-9

In the late 1950s, under the hammer blows of regional rebellion and martial law, parliamentary democracy collapsed in Indonesia. In this period, which ended with Sukarno's declaration of "guided democracy" in 1959, the country looked on the verge of splitting apart into its constituent regions and opposed political currents. The struggle for West Irian was used as a unifying factor in an attempt to hold all these forces together, as well as the pretext for mobilizations by all forces contending for power. The most successful mobilizers formed the new triangle of power: the army, the PKI, and at the pivot, Sukarno and his courtiers.

West Irian was used by both sides in the lead-up to a regional rebellion that broke out in 1958, in an effort to restore crumbling national unity. "The claim to West Irian is a national claim backed by every Indonesian party without exception," Hatta wrote in a 1957 article in *Foreign Affairs*, raising an issue he had not thought worth mentioning in the same journal in 1953.⁴⁷ Hatta and Sukarno both sent messages to a November 1957 rally in Jakarta in the lead-up to another UN vote, with Hatta noting differences on many national issues but unity on the Irian claim. The difference came in methods. Hatta wanted a 5-minute national strike "to show to the world that the entire Indonesian people, all the 84 million Indonesians, are one with respect to the West Irian issue." Sukarno called for confrontation. "Although our claim is just," he said, "West Irian will never come under our control if our claim is not substantiated with power."⁴⁸

The symbols of the revolution, when Indonesians were united, began to be recalled as national unity crumbled. In October 1957, a West Irian Liberation Campaign was founded, with provincial branches chaired by the governor and assisted by the provincial military commander, a sign of the joint civil-military authority that was emerging throughout the country. Campaign waves were held on October 28, the anniversary of the Youth Pledge that had defined the basis of modern Indonesia in the

1920s, and again on November 10, newly minted as Heroes' Day to mark the anniversary of the 1946 Battle of Surabaya against British troops.⁴⁹ Heroes' Day would soon become the occasion for continued evocations of revolutionary unity in the struggle for West Irian. The holiday was also used to declare recently deceased fighters as "heroes of the revolution." As Klaus Schreiner has noted, "the election of recently deceased persons to the status of a National Hero strengthened the ties between the legitimizing past and the ongoing revolutionary process suggesting a continuity between the two periods."⁵⁰ Even the Sumatra-based rebels campaigned for the acquisition of West Irian and placed this in this and their entire struggle in the revolutionary mold.⁵¹

Although employed by both sides, West Irian was used most successfully as a mobilizing tool by Sukarno, the central army command and the PKI, following the defeat of the moderate 1957 draft UN resolution on West Irian, sponsored by 21 Asian and African states.⁵² In presenting it, foreign minister Subandrio placed his central emphasis, for the first time, on the threat to international peace. Most significantly, he announced that Indonesia was bringing the issue to the multilateral forum for the last time. "The patience of a people is not inexhaustible."⁵³

On Nov. 27, 1957, the vote failed, once again on Latin American votes that looked to Washington on most matters.⁵⁴ The next day, there was an assassination attempt against Sukarno, against the background of escalating American encouragement to the dissidents in Sumatra. Sukarno now authorized a new phase of economic confrontation against the Netherlands, with seizures of Dutch enterprises by student activists and then by the PKI-affiliated trade unions. Actual management of the Dutch enterprises was quickly handed to the army, which instantly gained commanding economic power in addition to the political power already conferred by martial law. The confiscations should have come as no surprise. Sukarno had been warning for months of actions that would "startle the world," while the threat of nationalizations was mentioned to the U.S. government as early as 1951 and repeated by both Subandrio and Juanda weeks before the event.⁵⁵

Dutch businesses were valued at \$1.3 billion (14% of Dutch national income, according to the Indonesian government; according to the Dutch 3.1% of their income but half of Indonesia's). The confiscations were accompanied by the expulsion of 47,000 Dutch nationals.⁵⁶ It seemed like a completion of decolonization, as economic control by the former colonial power finally ended, symbolically enough

as part of the struggle to complete the territorial extent of the revolution. It was in 1957, too, that Indonesia began to complain of Dutch subversive activities aimed at re-colonizing Indonesia, with New Guinea used as a base.⁵⁷ The new phase of economic confrontation aided the PKI immensely as an anti-imperialist issue on which to mobilize.⁵⁸ The army countered in 1958 by founding the National Front for the Liberation of West Irian as its mass political vehicle to compete with the PKI. Both strong national actors, then, continued to use the Irian issue to advance their own cause.

So did Sukarno. In 1959, he announced a new “guided democracy,” presenting the new system as a return to the days of the revolution, when Indonesians were united: “All failures, all jammings and deadlocks are at bottom caused because we, deliberately or not, consciously or not, have deviated from the Spirit, from the Principles, and from the objectives of the Revolution!” Guided democracy, then, would return Indonesia “back to the rails of the revolution.”⁵⁹ With undivided control, Sukarno would raise the temperature of confrontation another notch.

g) The last emerald: West New Guinea under the Dutch

Dutch writers had long portrayed the Indies as an equatorial “girdle of emeralds” that made their nation great in the world. With just one emerald left, Dutch colonialists wanted to prove they could succeed next to an Indonesia that was failing. One parliamentarian called for a Dutch-led “model state in Southeast Asia which would stand out like a lighthouse above the decayed area around it.”⁶⁰ The Dutch colonial ideology in the Indies had rested on the belief that the Netherlands was providing efficient economic development while at the same time preserving traditional cultures; the same style was replicated by many of the same colonial civil servants in Netherlands New Guinea.

Cultural preservation of this “earthly paradise for anthropological research” was stressed, leading to a virtual government by anthropologists.⁶¹ At home, this was backed up by academic organizations and journals and by Dutch nationalist groups.⁶² Gradually, the rhetoric of cultural protection of the Papuan replaced that of a Eurasian homeland.⁶³ In parallel with all this, the Dutch also pledged to provide economic development.⁶⁴ The common thread in these two Dutch themes was paternalism and the duplication of Indies government policies. Self-government was to be through tightly-controlled regional councils, political uprisings were blamed on the lack of jobs, and the

government generally followed what Papuan nationalist leader Nicolaas Jouwe called a “friendly Santa Claus attitude.”⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, Indonesians were not impressed with Dutch efforts to follow policies in New Guinea that they remembered all too well themselves.⁶⁶

h) “Neutrality” favours the Dutch: the United States, Australia & West New Guinea to 1959

American and Australian policy aimed at a stable and pro-Western Indonesia. Throughout the 1950s, however, American policy was more influenced by the demands of European strategy which demanded a friendly Netherlands. Thus the U.S. position was one of “neutrality,” which meant no pressure on the Dutch to negotiate⁶⁷, then abstaining on all votes in the UN while seeking to remove the issue from the agenda. The most the Far East division of the state department could do was prevent an outright shift to the Dutch side or a move to make West New Guinea a UN trust territory.⁶⁸ Assistant secretary of state (Far East) Walter Robertson noted that both sides were “psychopathic on the issue [so] our best position was to remain neutral.”⁶⁹

In practice, however, this position favoured the status quo, that of Dutch control. There was little effort to hide this. Dean Rusk, undersecretary of state in the Truman administration, argued in 1949 for support for the Dutch position.⁷⁰ Eisenhower’s secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, always suggested to the Dutch that he was on their side, and as indicated above the U.S. may have used its influence to prevent passage of a UN resolution. Especially influential in policy was Hugh S. Cumming, ambassador 1953-7 and then director of the state department’s intelligence unit. Cumming was a key figure in a back channel that linked the CIA field offices in Indonesia to the state department, bypassed the U.S. embassy entirely, and even ignored reports from his own intelligence bureau.⁷¹ Ambassador John Allison, the senior American diplomat in Asia, was out of the loop, so it was no surprise that Allison’s proposal for the United States to involve itself in the New Guinea question was ignored in Washington, with Allison himself soon fired. In essence, Allison proposed to swap West New Guinea for the restoration of Dutch economic interests in Indonesia, a shift to a pro-U.S. foreign policy and strict control of the PKI.⁷² Allison’s plan was the first to accept the offer made by Sukarno to every American to enter his office throughout the decade: if the United States would support the Indonesian claim, then Indonesia would instantly become a close friend to the U.S.⁷³

Allison's successor, Howard P. Jones, embarked on a rapprochement with the Indonesian army command, which he soon realized was the strongest anti-communist element in the country. Both the United States and Britain, concerned with ensuring a non-Communist Indonesia, resumed arms sales over strong Australian objections.⁷⁴ New Guinea itself was not seen as a strategic priority by the United States.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Indonesia's natural resources and position on the sea lanes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to conclude that "a hostile Indonesia would present a most serious problem."⁷⁶ Indonesia was part of an offshore island chain "of crucial strategic importance to the United States."⁷⁷

Australia, on the other hand, saw the whole of New Guinea as crucial to its security, since, in one foreign minister's words, "we cannot alter our geography which for all time makes this area of supreme consequence to Australia."⁷⁸ The same adamant stance was supported by the opposition Labour Party, which even on occasion pressed for Australian control of the whole island.⁷⁹ One senator declared that "New Guinea has been sanctified by the blood and bones of our gallant boys who died there.... That area is sacred to Australia."⁸⁰ The greatest fear seems to have been an Indonesian claim to Australia's half of New Guinea. But more generally its geography led its leaders, partisans of a "white Australia" policy which foreign minister Richard Casey called "the heart of our being," to a desperate fear of Indonesia. Bruce Grant has noted that Indonesia "acted as a 'locum' for the abstract threats which Australians sensed in their bones. Indonesia gave substance to what has long been called in Australia 'the threat from the north.'"⁸¹

Dutch-Australian administrative cooperation grew steadily through the 1950s. In November 1957, Australia and the Netherlands signed a pact that was generally seen as the first step towards an eventual federation of their colonies.⁸² The only limits Australia placed on its support for the Dutch position were military. While ensuring that its own colony was part of the SEATO defence area, Australia blocked a similar commitment to the Dutch and barred their participation in ANZUS.⁸³ However, in all other matters Australia stood as the number one Dutch ally. While the United States ignored Australian misgivings in pursuit of its goals in Indonesia, Australian representations over West New Guinea may have prevented an American move to intervene in the issue.⁸⁴ However, Australia stepped back from the front lines in 1959 when Casey signed a joint communiqué with Subandrio promising that "if any

agreement were reached between the Netherlands and Indonesia as parties principal, arrived at by peaceful processes and in accordance with internationally accepted principles, Australia would not oppose such an agreement.”⁸⁵