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# Australian Indonesia-specialists and debates on West Papua: Implications for Australia-Indonesia relations<sup>1</sup>

FREDDY K. KALIDJERNIH

*This article explores the modes by which Australian scholars construct knowledge of Indonesia with particular reference to the debates on West Papua in the post-Suharto period. It examines their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards human rights issues with a view to analysing the underlying forces, motivations and implications of activism. This article casts doubt on a common, yet often unacknowledged, perception in Indonesia about Australian Indonesia-specialists who are categorised as: intellectuals who always see Indonesian government policies as ‘negative’.<sup>2</sup> I demonstrate that the theorisation of Indonesian society has been diverse in Australia as exemplified by the West Papua debates. Australian scholars’ social positions and mobility, not government policy, shape their beliefs, attitudes and knowledge construction of Indonesia. Thus, considering Australian scholars from a monolithic perspective misses the reality that contemporary intellectual culture in Australia is no longer based on a traditional class.<sup>3</sup> I argue there are two major opposing groups in West Papua studies which I label as the ‘affirmative revisionist’ scholars who tend to be more optimistic towards resolution of conflicts in West Papua and the ‘sceptical reformist’ scholars who are dubious about any major changes in West Papua. This latter group believes the people of West Papua should be given the opportunity to remain integrated with Indonesia or to opt for self-determination. They tend to use the perceived failure of Indonesia in the protection of human rights in West Papua to attack the Indonesian government and Australian governmental agencies dealing with Indonesia. This article argues that this criticism may adversely impact on future Australia-Indonesia relations.*

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### Are Indonesia-Specialists Anti- or Pro-Indonesia?<sup>4</sup>

As intellectuals, Australian scholars are often seen as having academic freedom to exercise their 'symbolic mastery' (Martin and Szelényi 1987) in knowledge construction.<sup>5</sup> They have access to information and freedom of expression that is made possible by Australia's practice of democracy and promotion of civil liberties. They are in a position to analyse their government's actions and critique if necessary its policies. In other words, they enjoy academic freedom in an atmosphere relatively free from 'fear of punishment or termination of employment for having offended some political, religious or social orthodoxy' (Meek 1995:5). However, Australian scholars studying Indonesian politics and history who are often seen as critical of Indonesian government policies, particularly those related to the protection and promotion of human rights, are often banned from entering Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> They are considered by the Indonesian government as encroaching upon Indonesia's internal affairs and thus a potential threat to domestic social or political order.<sup>7</sup>

In May 2006, for instance, it was reported that the Indonesian Government had blacklisted two staff from Deakin University (Australia) following the accusation of Indonesia's Ministry of National Education that the two academics had been promoting separatism in West Papua. It warned that the university academics would not be allowed any further contact with Indonesia's tertiary institutions. The concerned academics refuted the accusation, saying that the Indonesian Government had misinterpreted their work. Subsequently, Deakin University issued a statement indicating its support for the academic freedom of its staff.<sup>8</sup> By the same token, a few years before, the Indonesian Government raised its serious concern over the hoisting of the Papuan Morning Star's (*Bintang Kejora*) flag in a meeting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Australia). The institute was supposedly blacklisted by the Indonesian government and pressured to disassociate itself from a conference on West Papua in 2002.<sup>9</sup>

The term 'anti-Indonesia camp' has been used by Indonesian observers to refer to Australian academics who had been critical of Indonesia's policies. For instance, in his article entitled 'Indonesian Studies in Australia: An Anti-Indonesia Camp', that appeared in *Kompas*, a nation-wide newspaper in Indonesia, Subagio Sastrowardoyo—an Indonesian language teacher at the Salisbury College of Advanced Education and Flinders University between 1971 and 1981—argued that Australian academics teaching Indonesian studies, while claiming that they were concerned about the country and the people, tend to present negative pictures of it (notably the government) to their students, and they generally sought to discredit Indonesia (Sastrowardoyo 1984a and 1984b). Over the next several weeks, *Kompas* published three Australian and two Indonesian academics' responses. Anton Lucas and David T. Hill from Australia, for example, refuted Sastrowardoyo's accusation, implying that Sastrowardoyo had misinterpreted their and their colleagues' works and activities.

In an attempt to reconcile scholars involved in the polemic, Burhan Magenda (1984), an Indonesian political scientist, suggests a five-fold categorisation of Australian scholars studying Indonesia. The first category refers to those who do not want to make political comments (for example, scholars in Leiden University). He does not name any Australian scholars in his example. The second category spans the defenders of Indonesia, especially of the New Order government exemplified by Heinz Arndt and the 'instant specialists', who are consultants for short-term visits to Indonesia and a reference to the *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*. The third category covers those who are critical but foremost faithful Indonesian lobbies for Indonesian independence. They have spent a substantial period in Indonesia. Their love of Indonesia is indisputable. They were critical of Guided Democracy as well as New Order's policies. They can be said to have made Indonesia their second home. They were the first un-selfinterested (*tanpa pamrih*) supporters of the New Order regime's economic development. However, they were disappointed with its initial policy towards freedom of association and the political protection of the weak. Magenda's examples of the Australian scholars are Jamie Mackie, John Legge and Herbert Feith.

The fourth category is those who are 'radical Indonesia specialists' whom he also calls an 'action-oriented group'. They combine their Marxist and Neo-Marxist analysis with academic activities resulting in radical works. They are the motors of Indonesia 'concerned scholars'. Their critical attitudes towards the Indonesian government are comparable to their attitudes towards their own government. This group of people, followed by the late-comers who share their views are not specialists on Indonesia, are interested in various issues, such as East Timor, West Papua (Irian Jaya), environment and foreign capital in Indonesia. Dick Robison and Rex Mortimer are Magenda's examples. The last category comprises 'instant experts' on Indonesia. They are not Indonesia specialists by academic training, but can be said to have deep moral and political commitment towards the Third World (for example, Noam Chomsky). Magenda does not have any Australian scholars in his fifth category.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, along with some Australian senior diplomats in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, bureaucrats and journalists, some Australian scholars who are either close to the Indonesian government or who emphasise what is 'distinctive or different about Indonesia culture and a stress on continuity' (Reid 1981:7) have recently been labelled the 'Jakarta Lobby' whose intent is on appeasing Indonesia. They have been seen as converging Australian foreign policy objectives with investment stability in Indonesia. Fernandes (2004), for example, considers these groups to have influenced the Australian government to prevent the referendum on independence in East Timor. They have also worked consistently to prevent the self-determination of West Papua (Fernandes 2006). Furthermore, King (2004) argues that the 'Jakarta Lobby' has distorted overwhelmingly Australian policy towards misgovernment, human rights abuse and corruption in Indonesia, exemplified

by East Timor, Aceh and West Papua. In his view, Australians have been pushed to a view that the most important country to Australia is Indonesia even compared to super powers such as the United States of America. Therefore, Australia should give high priority to its relationship with Indonesia despite Indonesian repression in East Timor during Suharto's authoritarian rule.

Considering these two opposing views, along with Magenda's classification, it is necessary to examine the nature of Indonesian specialists' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes before we can draw a conclusion on whether Indonesian specialists are pro or anti-Indonesia and before we can state that the banning of critical scholars has yet to end in the post-Suharto period. To what extent was the Indonesian government justified in accusing Australian scholars of attempting to promote separatism in West Papua? To what extent are the scholars' arguments for their advocacy and criticism on human rights practices in West Papua justifiable? Their works and debates on the human rights issues in West Papua are particularly instructive and will be examined in this article.

There have been some big changes in Indonesian politics since the end of the New Order regime. The independence of East Timor and the reconciliation of Aceh conflicts provide two important examples. These two events have become crucial factors that play out in relation to West Papua. They set the tone for a divergent conception of how the issues of West Papua should be handled in the context of Australia-Indonesia relations. In Australia-Indonesia relations, I shall argue that we should recognise two issues surrounding the intellectual activism of the scholars. First, it is important to look at the extent to which scholars' social positions and mobility may have affected their intellectual practices.<sup>11</sup> This is to enable us to make explicit the inner workings of their mental world and better understand their intentions. Second, it is important to recognise the potentiality of 'hybridity' of discourse in which arguments of the Indonesia-specialists are derived from their own intellectual backgrounds (their work experience, occupational position, academic background, and so on) and the way Indonesian people give meanings to their own society. Social and political inquiry has never been value neutral. When a researcher begins to select a research question, s/he adopts, consciously or not, a particular value position of ethical, social and political significance (Stokes, Boreham and Hall 2004). This has not only afflicted Western scholars, but also local scholars studying Indonesia since the independence of the country.

In the Australian scholars' engagement with the human rights issues in West Papua, we can then ask to what extent are they capable of using their complex and sophisticated skills to produce theoretical knowledge and exercise their 'symbolic mastery' in their 'culture of critical discourse' (Gouldner 1979)? To what extent do they perform their role as cultural capital owners who have been able to claim authority independent from the institutions for which they work? How does it affect Australian government policy? To what extent does it strengthen or weaken Australia-Indonesia relations?

### West Papua – A Growing Study Area

West Papua was a region not very much studied by most Australian scholars. Until the end of Suharto's rule, the study of Indonesia and some important texts produced tended to center around Java and Bali. During the New Order period, for example, Australian scholars studying Indonesian politics focused primarily on 'the intricacies of "behind-the-scene" politics in Jakarta. They analysed the competition for power, resources and representation around President Suharto, his generals, and a small clique of the regime's clients' (Bertrand 2004:xiii). Studies on the outer islands were relatively few.<sup>12</sup> While the study of West Papua might have drawn interest from Australian scholars for decades, as John Legge, for example, did for Papua New Guinea (along with Fiji and Nigeria) in the 1940s and early 1950s, it was not until the demise of the New Order regime that intensive studies on the region began to flourish in Australia. Indeed, some Australian scholars had made a contribution to social science research on West Papua long before the fall of Suharto, but the numbers were considerably small. For example, Peter Worsley, an Australian leading scholar on millenarianism, studied in-depth the social and revolutionary aspects of the millenarian movements of West Papuan people to liberalise themselves from Dutch colonial oppression (Worsley 1968). Peter Hastings (1969) discussed the problems and prospects of West Papua. Ross Garnaut and Chris Manning (1974) also studied its economic transformation since early 1970s. Another often cited work is Robin Osborne's (1985) *Indonesia's Secret War: The Guerilla Struggle in Irian Jaya*.<sup>13</sup>

We may assume that the lack of research and enthusiasm for West Papua was due to its low priority status. The seriousness of West Papua's economic conditions and political aspirations did not attract many scholars compared to those who studied the dynamics of Jakarta's politics. Unlike Aceh and East Timor, two other troubled regions during Suharto's authoritarian rule, the political movements in West Papua were less unified. It seems that West Papuan leaders in exile did little and were unable to attract greater international support during that period. West Papua's human rights conditions and political resistance escaped most Australian scholars' attention before Suharto was forced to step down.

There had been some attempts by Papuan people to express their views, such as the Free Papua Organisation or *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM). However, unlike the Free Aceh Movement or *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) in Aceh, physical challenges were minimal at that time. Although there were some uprisings, with a few hundred members and less-equipped weapons, the Papuans could barely challenge Indonesia's claim for the region. It never threatened Indonesian control of Papua. It was after East Timor achieved its independence in 1999 that some scholars seem to have thought that West Papua may follow suit. This was heightened by the recent movements in the region, such as the *Musyawahah Besar Papua* (Papua Grand Consultation) and *Kongres*

*Papua II* (The Second Papua Congress) in 2000 that repudiated the Act of Free Choice<sup>14</sup>, the suppression of the demonstrations of university students in the region, the killing of Theys Eluay (member of the local provincial parliament and chairman of Papua Council Presidium) and a few other Papuan religious leaders, and the division of Papua province into three (Irian Jaya, Central Irian Jaya and West Irian Jaya) in 2003 and the sluggish implementation of Special Autonomy in West Papua.<sup>15</sup>

### **Some Recent Works and Debates on West Papua**

Australian scholars are among the foremost international scholars who have studied and written about Papua in the post-Suharto period. Among the diversity of scholars, Richard Chauvel (Associate Professor, Victoria University), Rodd McGibbon (Researcher, Office of National Assessments), Peter King (Professor, University of Sydney) and Clinton Fernandes (Senior Lecturer, University of New South Wales) stand out.<sup>16</sup> These four scholars have written book-length works on the subject. There are a few other scholars who have engaged in the debates through their essays and/or articles published in journals and nation-wide newspapers on the subject. They are, among others, Edward Aspinall (Fellow, Australian National University), Harold Crouch (Fellow (Emeritus Professor), Australian National University), Damien Kingsbury (Associate Professor, Deakin University) and Scott Burchill (Senior Lecturer, Deakin University).

If we look at the works of the scholars involved in the West Papua debates, we find a certain degree of agreement, but also differences of emphasis and concerns, attributable to their different roles, academic background and work experience, and interests in the conflict and conflict resolution process of West Papua. All seem to agree on a) the negative implications and effects of the conduct of the Act of Free Choice and its repudiation by the Papuan nationalists in the 2000 Papuan Congress, the security approach taken by Jakarta in handling conflict in West Papua, the coercive military treatment of the Papuans, the reluctance of Jakarta to fully implement the promised Special Autonomy; b) the centrality of ethnic or racial distinctiveness and historical precedence underlying the Papuan nationalist movements; c) the importance of Indonesia to initiate dialogues, the end of Indonesian military persecution in West Papua and the crucial role that Australia can play in the future of West Papua. They differ on a) how the conflict-resolution in West Papua should be carried out; b) whether the Australian government should intervene by taking East Timor as a precedence and model; c) whether there will be potential revival of Special Autonomy and other reforms under the current Indonesian government in West Papua.

It is apparent that Peter King (2004), Richard Chauvel (2005), and Clinton Fernandes (2006) suggest that the incorporation of West Papua into Indonesia is

a political construct. The emphasis of political unity in its ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity suggests that Indonesia contains seeds of fragmentation. Such cultural distinctiveness gives rise to potential secession. Chauvel (2003; 2005) shows that Indonesia legitimates its claim over Papua by means of civic nationalism. Against this background, as he suggests, the Papuans seem to have justified their ethno-historical nationalism. Chauvel, King and Fernandes consider that ethnically and culturally, Papuans are distinctively different from other Indonesians. In addition, Papuans have found political justifications for severe human rights abuses and economic exploitation by the Indonesian military. In fact, as Chauvel argues, West Papuan nationalism had been politically constructed as early as 1952, when the Netherlands set the agenda for West Papuans' self-determination. Or, a 'native political class' as McGibbon (2006) describes it. Its development was due to Indonesia's conduct of the Act of Free Choice and West Papuans' alienation from Indonesia. Chauvel believes that despite some small divisions between the pro-independence and pro-integration groups and the ability of Papuan nationalists to adapt to changing political circumstances, the rigidity of Papuans' demand for independence is obvious (Chauvel 2005).

On the other hand, Rodd McGibbon places little emphasis on West Papuan nationalism. His warning of the danger of the myth that Indonesia's manipulation in the conduct of Act of Free Choice suggests his position, namely West Papua is politically part of Indonesia. Its legitimation is internationally recognised. While McGibbon seems to believe that West Papua's incorporation into Indonesia is unquestionable, Peter King thinks the Act of Free Choice was conducted unfairly. This is reflected in the resolution of the Papuan Congress in 2000 in which Papuans' understanding of their history is that it was conducted with manipulation, repression and injustice. Like Fernandes, King is convinced that the historical injustice Papuans have experienced justifies Papuan self-determination.<sup>17</sup>

For Chauvel (2005), King (2004), Fernandes (2006) and McGibbon (2004b), West Papuans' struggle for self-determination is a rational choice explanation. While in part, it is functionally grounded on primordial sentiments, Papuan political consciousness has been primarily driven by economic exclusion and social marginalisation. The reassertion of Papuan nationalism was a response to the changing political landscape of post-Suharto Indonesia, securing the momentum to resolve their uncertain future. This is also reflected in the attempt of the Indonesian governments of post-Suharto to address the issues through Special Autonomy. To these scholars, the Special Autonomy is ostensibly a 'politics of recognition' of Jakarta as a counter tendency of the cultural, economic and political distinctiveness that the Papuan is stressing. King and Fernandes, in particular, imply that Papuan imagination of rights means individuals and groups are entitled to participation as well as a choice of self-determination in a wider Indonesian political and economic context. Until the Special Autonomy is genuinely implemented in which the Papuans can enjoy

a fair share of the wealth of their land through their participation in various aspects of life, they are not truly regarded as citizens of the Republic of Indonesia. Consequently, Papua—taking East Timor as an example—has the right to review their incorporation into Indonesia for their own objectives.

All the four scholars view human rights abuse by the Indonesian military as central to the problem of conflict and conflict resolution. King and Fernandes problematise the culture of impunity of the military. They believe the military and police continue to carry out their destabilising role in West Papua. Their presence in West Papua, suggests that the military, police and para-militia coordinators involved in the violation of human rights in East Timor are implementing the same coercive strategy in Papua. To King, the violations of human rights in West Papua are systematically carried out. Like Fernandes, he is determined that the approach claimed to secure national integrity masquerades Papua and Jakarta's elite and military business interests. Fernandes shows that human rights abuses in West Papua also relate to health, education, economic, population, environmental and ecological issues. He also indicates there has been racial discrimination and antagonism towards the Papuan. His view concurs with that of McGibbon (2004a), who demonstrates how the migration of non-Papuan settlers to West Papua has exacerbated the marginalisation, mistreatment and alienation of the indigenous population. To McGibbon and Chauvel, these human rights abuses coupled with the application of the security approach have fueled the growth of Papuan nationalism. However, unlike King and Fernandes, McGibbon rules out the myth that there has been genocide in West Papua.<sup>18</sup>

While Chauvel and McGibbon seem to imply there has been some reform in West Papua, King and Fernandes emphasise that post-Suharto Indonesia has not seen significant reform in West Papua. King believes the failure to establish the promised 2001 Special Autonomy—that would ensure the flowing of revenues to the region to address the people's needs—contributes to the marginalisation of the Papuans. This failure is aggravated by the partition of West Papua into three provinces in 2003. While Chauvel (2006c) considers it a reflection of Jakarta's dilemma, i.e. between potential disintegration and greater regional autonomy, King (2004) sees this movement as Jakarta's strategy to weaken a more potentially unified Papuan that would challenge Jakarta for self-determination. His view is confirmed by McGibbon (2006) who argues that the Indonesian military, such as the National Resilience Institute (*Lemhanas*) has justified the partition as the best solution for overcoming the threat of national disintegration. By the same token, Fernandes (2006) considers Jakarta reluctant to grant political powers to representatives from customary, religious and women's groups.

Both King and Fernandes believe that Australian policy on West Papua has been dominated by the 'Jakarta lobby' whose intent is on appeasing Indonesia. Fernandes believes that these groups of people who converge Australian foreign policy objectives with investment stability in Indonesia have influenced the

Australian government to prevent the referendum on East Timor independence. The same groups of people have worked consistently to prevent the self-determination of West Papua. King and Fernandes consider that the public in Australia is in favour of self-determination of West Papua over Indonesian occupation. Therefore, it is a moral imperative for Australia to play a significant role in the protection of the minority community in Indonesia. Considering the human rights abuses, discrimination and the failure of reform of post-Suharto, particularly in West Papua, these two scholars indicate that West Papua's situation parallels that of East Timor, that is, prior to its independence. Both of them see Indonesian military's repressive forces continuing to persecute the Papuan, hence reflecting their culture of impunity. Australia's plan to reinforce its military links through joint exercises and training will threaten to undermine the future of West Papua.

### **From Separatism in Indonesia to Tension in Australia**

For scholars such as Peter King and Clinton Fernandes, the right for Papuan self-determination is grounded in their claims of historical injustice. The violations of fundamental human rights, military persecution and widespread discrimination of the Papuan should be recognised as an extreme situation, which reflects Indonesia's legitimation crisis over its territory claim of the region. Scott Burchill shares the same views as King and Fernandes on this issue. He considers that the future of Papua should be decided by the people of Papua, and not by outsiders such as people in Jakarta, Java or Australia. So far, the problem is that no question has been posed as to what people of West Papua want (Burchill 2006a and 2006b). By making this statement, Burchill seems to imply that a referendum will be necessary. Chauvel, who traces Papuans' rights to self-determination based on their political principle of ethno-linguistic and historical precedence, believes that to accommodate the Papuan's interest and values, the agreement on Aceh may serve as a model. He rejects perceptions in Indonesia that Australia is supporting the Papuans using the same strategy for the independence of East Timor. To him, Australia has an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Papuan conflict (Chauvel 2006b).

Edward Aspinall (2006c) argues that the self-determination thesis put forward by many commentators of West Papua may be more problematic. He is adamant that Australian supporters of Papuan rights for independence should examine their motives and prejudices. To him advocates for West Papua fail to filter their comments through a screen of Australian hubris and ignorance of Australia's history, the prejudice and deep-seated hostility and fear towards Indonesia (Aspinall 2006c:7). Aspinall does not deny that human rights problems have been severe in Papua. To him, the mistreatment of Papuans centres in the ongoing political unrest there. However, he points out that 'There have been some attempts to address Papuan grievances since the fall of Suharto,

but only in a halting and inconsistent way, and serious problems remain' (Aspinall 2006c:10). While Aspinall does not indicate who or what aspect has caused the sluggish reform in West Papua, Scott Burchill suggests that Indonesia's domestic power struggle, between the reformists and hardliners, particularly in the military, seems to have halted concessions for West Papua compared to those offered to Aceh. Like Fernandes, he considers Indonesia reluctant to grant a similar degree of autonomy for West Papua.

Like Aspinall, McGibbon also considers King, Burchill and Fernandes's arguments dangerous and unrealistic because they will damage Australian diplomatic goals, undermining Australia's economic relations and security outlook. Agreeing with Edward Aspinall (Aspinall 2006c) who criticises the simplification, distortion and myth-making of the debate about West Papua, McGibbon (2006:108–109) argues:

The emotive and moralistic critique that has emerged from the West Papua constituency tends to interpret Indonesia and the West Papua problem as 'a canvas upon which Australian political battles can be played out and Australian fears and fantasies projected'. It has also resulted in dangerous mythologising about Indonesia, about the Papua conflict and about the bilateral relationship ... Based on these myths, the case put forward by the critics has three basic flaws: it exaggerates Australia's foreign policy influence; it lacks a serious appreciation of the forces driving contemporary Indonesian politics; and it is based on a one-sided account of the Papua conflict that takes for granted Papuan ethnic nationalist claims.

... Many of these flaws are evident in Peter King's book-length study of recent developments. What distinguishes King's effort is that his work is informed by serious research. ... King claims that 'Australia's long-term interest' in the bilateral relationship is 'peaceful self-determination for Papua', making little mention of other strategic priorities such as counter-terrorism or people smuggling. In prioritising the goals of Papuan self-determination, King calls for Australia to engage more purposefully with Indonesian civil society, particularly in Papua. He urges the Australian Government to pursue a dual dialogue with the independence movement in Papua and with the Indonesian government. He also wants to see greater pressure coming from the Australian Government to develop 'its own initiatives' for resolving the conflict in Papua, and especially considering the idea of 'an Australian peacemaking role' in Papua.

Although recognising the marginalisation, alienation and repression that have fuelled Papuan nationalism, McGibbon believes human rights abuse and discriminatory exclusion from Indonesia should not be interpreted to mean that the Papuan is automatically entitled to the rights of independence. He suggests that secessionist challenges could be countered with dialogue, and non-military solutions, such as genuine Special Autonomy. The Australian government can play a role through various types of assistance for the Papuan.

Meanwhile, Aspinall believes ‘Aceh has become a possible model for resolving conflicts in other parts of the world’ (Aspinall 2006a: 4). Although it is unstated in his foregoing essay, Aspinall’s attitude towards Papuan conflict seems to be that it can be resolved by means of Aceh’s model. If this is so, Aspinall’s expectation then resembles that of Chauvel’s. However, neither of the two scholars elaborate how the Aceh model can work in Papua. While King and Fernandes are adamant that the ‘Jakarta Lobby’ is working against Papuan self-determination, McGibbon rejects such labelling which is used to attack Canberra’s effort to maintain good relationships with Indonesia while maintaining Australia’s interests. Chauvel (2006a:4-5) however, criticises McGibbon who favours Papuan resolution through Special Autonomy and who urges the Australian government to engage in public debate for promoting support of Australia’s security interests in Australia-Indonesia relations. As Chauvel asserts:

Rodd McGibbon, in his Lowy Institute study, *Pitfalls of Papua*, identified two policy initiatives crucial for the resolution of the Papua conflict and consolidation of Australia’s relations with Indonesia. He argued that one of the greatest political failures of contemporary Australian policy was weak public policy support for the relationship with Indonesia. Australian leaders, he urged, needed to engage vigorously in the public debate about Papua and the importance of Indonesia to Australia’s security interests. With respect to Indonesia, McGibbon contended that special autonomy represents the most promising framework for resolution of the conflict and peace of Papua into Indonesia. How the struggle within the Indonesian government between opponents of supporters of special autonomy is resolved will be a major influence on Papua’s future.

In truth, these two policy initiatives are mutually dependent. If Alexander Downer and John Howard are to more vigorously argue the case for Papua’s integration into Indonesia, their persuasiveness will be dependent on the Indonesian government’s commitment to the effective implementation of special autonomy. As long as the impasse in Papua policy continues in Jakarta and as long as the high level of violence persists in the Indonesian governance of Papua, the more difficult it will be for Australian government leaders to argue the case for Papua’s integration into Indonesia.

King (2006) also rejects Aspinall and McGibbon’s criticism of the sympathisers of West Papua’s self-determination. To him, non-supporters of Papuan rights for independence should also examine their motives and prejudices.

In his article in *The Age*, ‘Nothing to Gain by Antagonising Jakarta’, after the Australian government’s granting asylum to 42 of the 43 Papuan asylum seekers, Harold Crouch (2006) expects that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Jusuf Kalla and Hassan Wirajuda who played an important role in the Aceh Peace agreement can bring change to West Papua. He does not deny that discontent and resistance are still widespread, often symbolically expressed through

singing the Papuan anthem and raising the Papuan flag, and the OPM—with obsolete weapons—who occasionally launch attacks without constituting a serious military challenge. Like McGibbon, he suggests that Indonesia has always been suspicious that certain elements in Australia support the separatism in West Papua as some Indonesian leaders ‘believe that Australia somehow plotted East Timor’s exit from Indonesia.’ Given there will be different approaches to handling various mini-crisis in Australia-Indonesia relations, however, Crouch (2006:1) considers they can be managed through various strands connecting the two neighbouring countries. As he further suggests:

The Australian Government, with partisan support, is right to downplay the present crisis. One lesson of the East Timor experience is that, while maintaining our position, we should avoid statements that stir up public opinion in Indonesia and make it more difficult for Indonesia’s leaders to preserve the warm relations that have been achieved in recent years.

On the other hand, Damien Kingsbury (2006) sees the contradictions in Australia’s policy towards Indonesia and the Indonesian military. To him, the Indonesian military’s violence towards the indigenous Papuan people and their request for funding of their budget from local sources due to the doubling of their permanent troops recently have worsened the security environment in West Papua. Consequently, Australia’s military links with Indonesia and the proposed security treaty (the Lombok Pact) do not assist Indonesian military reform, but complicate it by confirming the military’s impunity for their corrupt and brutal practices. Kingsbury suggests that the more appropriate step to be taken by Australia is to refuse to engage with the Indonesian military until it is under civilian authority. Australia’s moral intentions and legal obligations are to assist reducing Indonesia’s dependence on violence in West Papua. Therefore, the solution to the problem in Papua is for Australia to adopt a consistent policy towards Indonesia and not to help the Indonesian military sustain its corrupt and brutal practices.

### **Affirmative Revisionists versus Sceptical Reformists**

The foregoing debates and reviews of the Indonesia specialists have shown us their similarities and differences of attitudes. However, they still leave us with a question as to how we may capture the complexities of their ideological positions *vis-à-vis* the study of Indonesia. It is in this context we need to briefly consider their ideological positions because they contribute towards enriching our understanding of the driving forces of the scholars’ thoughts and actions. It also helps us locate the scholars’ positions within a wide spectrum of Australian scholars in the knowledge construction of Indonesia.

If we look at the scholars involved in the West Papua debates, Peter King, Clinton Fernandes, Damien Kingsbury and Scott Burchill are sceptical scholars

who do not seem to believe there will be a peaceful or permanent solution unless the Papuan people are given the opportunity to decide ultimately what political arrangement they want. They hope for a radical change through comprehensive reform in West Papua, particularly the demilitarisation of the Indonesian army in Papua, or as they seem to imply, a referendum as a last resort. Their critical attitudes towards the Indonesian government in handling Papuan issues are comparable to their attitudes towards Australian government's foreign policy. One of their aims seems to fit a catchphrase common in Australian liberal democracy: 'keeping the politicians honest'. Their works reflect their deep moral and political commitment towards oppressed people in conflict regions such as Papua, Aceh and East Timor. They can still be called an action-oriented group of concerned scholars. Peter King is an active advocate with his West Papua Project at the University of Sydney promoting peaceful dialogue for conflict resolution in West Papua and Melanesia. Damien Kingsbury is a consultant who was active as a political adviser to the Free Aceh Movement at the Helsinki peace talks. He is a regular commentator on regional political and security affairs in the Australian and international media. Kingsbury and Burchill are regular guests on Jon Faine's morning show on ABC 774. Fernandes gives the royalties from his *Reluctant Indonesians* to support the health needs of the West Papuan.

Fernandes, Burchill and King are newcomers in Indonesian studies. Unlike Chauvel, Aspinall, Crouch and McGibbon, they were not specifically trained in Indonesian studies. Richard Chauvel, Edward Aspinall, Harold Crouch and Rodd McGibbon have spent substantial periods in Indonesia. They are no ordinary 'alterity' scholars in Anthony Reid's terminology (Reid 1981), who tend to stress the distinctive Indonesian culture and its continuity. It would be more appropriate to call them 'affirmative revisionists' who intend to create change, but at the same time, who want to see the change process rolling in a controllable way. Although these types of constructive scholars tend to reside in a university that is closely associated with the government and often work for its projects (Chauvel may be an exception as he has been working in a smaller university), such as 'national university' and 'government-sponsored research institute', it would be dangerous to view them as scholars who are inclined to collude with state power. Indeed, Chauvel and Aspinall expect that, the Aceh agreement may serve as a model *for* solving West Papua's problems. However, such imagining cannot be more hegemonic than, say, one that is proposed for self-determination or independence.

As to the diversity of ideas among these scholars, Chauvel and McGibbon have done research on Papua for the East-West Center-Washington, where Aspinall and Crouch were also involved. McGibbon is now working for the Office of National Assessments, an Australian government agency, but Chauvel, Aspinall and Crouch are not. We may be tempted to think that they represent the single agenda of those research institutes. However, as discussed, Chauvel and McGibbon have fundamental differences on certain issues. By

saying this, I do not intend to downplay that structure conditions actors' forms of thought and actions. However, I would argue, taking these scholars' debate over West Papua, that the creativity that the scholars bring to the interpretations that they make of various issues, their volition and capacity for innovation are of equal importance.<sup>19</sup>

Scholars like King, and to a certain degree Kingsbury, Burchill and Fernandes, who are tempted to see East Timor as a model for Papua can be called 'sceptical reformists'. These reformist scholars emphasise change or potentiality of change which they share with the affirmative revisionists. However, it would be misleading to see their view as representing Australian (Western) value terms, which are seen as positive in Reid's reformist sense (Reid 1981:7). These scholars are sceptical of the existing reform or attempted change in process. They want to see a quicker fix, thus pragmatically turn to East Timor to provide a blueprint for West Papua. They do not seem to care about whether or not the change process is controllable. Theoretically speaking, they may be right that individuals can never wholly control the collective forces they operate. Thus, any further implication of the processes of change they instigate is not their business. However, unlike East Timor, they overlook West Papua's position in the international setting. Apart from its distinctive racial and cultural character, politically, as part of Indonesia, West Papua is more comparable to Aceh (and other parts of Indonesia), as Aspinall has implied. Thus, despite international sympathy for the Free Aceh Movement, and some pressure to negotiate a mutually agreeable solution in Aceh, no state has supported the right of the people of Aceh to declare their independence unilaterally. To paraphrase Hurst Hannum (1993), the fact is that customary international law prohibits the use of force against the political unity or territorial integrity of any state. Therefore, individual states, such as Australia, have no right to intervene in favor of a national self-determination or secession movement within a state, notably in West Papua despite a new interpretation of the right to self-determination in the wake of the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia (Hannum 1993). As Hannum (2001:418) argues:

Historical injustice has been consistently rejected as legitimizing secession because of the impossibility of identifying an appropriate date after which unjust seizure of territory should not be recognized. . . . So far there is no agreement on the specific circumstances which might give rise to such a right of secession, and mere discrimination or repression probably would not suffice. . . . Physical attacks approaching genocide probably would qualify.

It is apparent that from an international legal perspective, the strongest argument for a group of people to choose to exercise self-determination is when genocide has occurred or at least, is perceived to have occurred. Like McGibbon, Aspinall considers human rights abuse is severe. However, both of them seem to reject the assumption that there has been genocide in West Papua so far. King, Kingsbury and Fernandes appear to suggest otherwise.

As most scholars suggest, international support will be needed to solve the conflict. However, the question is whether the US, the UN or other international great powers are willing to get involved. As the East Timor experience suggests, without the US's signal, Australia would not begin to get involved in the 1999 bloody resolution. Taking the collapse of the former Yugoslavia as an example, we may get an impression of how ambiguous the international great powers were in watching the horrors unfold. It seems that after the end of the Cold War, many of them were keen to reap the benefits of the new climate, and at the same time reduce significantly their defence spending (Finlan 2004). As Alastair Finlan (2004:65) points out, 'Clearly the US had the most disposable military power of all the states in the world, yet it chose to remain on the sidelines for much of the initial diplomacy'.

Aspinall and Chauvel seem to believe that Aceh's peaceful agreement, which is mediated by international organisations, will be able to serve as a model *for* West Papua. Even though some elements of Aceh's peaceful process may inspire a possible resolution in West Papua, in fact, West Papuans can propose a model *of* their own.<sup>20</sup> It is not necessary for them to import an Aceh model *for* their needs and aspirations.

### **Indonesia Specialists as Intellectuals in the Post-Suharto Period**

How should we relate political changes in the post-Suharto period with Indonesia specialists' intellectual activism exemplified by those involved in the West Papua debates? First, contemporary Indonesia specialists—established as well as new comers—are part of the new changes in Indonesia as well as their social mobility that open spaces of opportunities for their actions. These changes and movements are important in the understanding of the new intellectual conditions of scholars, because they create space for those who are not formerly trained in Indonesian studies to become non-Indonesian Indonesianists (and be part their intellectual circles). They have problematised various issues in Indonesia in their ways.

Social mobility contributes towards different perspectives that never before have been identified in the study of Indonesia by Australian scholars. A case in point is a scholar like Clinton Fernandes, who is a former Australian army officer and a specialist in intelligence. He turned his Ph.D. thesis on Australia's role in the East Timor's struggle for independence into a published book, *Reluctant Savior*. With his military knowledge and experiences together with his access to certain information that ordinary researchers do not have, Fernandes could produce a different type of critical work compared to a military observer such as Harold Crouch. If we rely merely on a post-colonial perspective, such as of Philpott (2000), we may miss a potential work such as Rodd McGibbon's *Pitfalls of Papua*, and ignore the reality in the new social

movements that a 'positive text' can be produced. It is in this context that existing arguments—about the driving forces that potentially influence their beliefs and attitudes towards a certain issue such as personal love, interests and concerns (in the name of humanity)—cannot fully explain the extent to which Australian scholars may or may not construct hegemonic or relatively autonomous discourse about Indonesia.

By the same token, Indonesia specialists are bound by professional codes of ethics and other idealised models of behaviour which reflect their acceptance in their intellectual circles, and professional membership. In this case, the more they can develop cooperation, across departments, schools and universities, the stronger their social capital is. With strong social capital, it is more possible for them to achieve a common identity that will put them in a strong position to negotiate with the Australian government.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the recent political changes in Indonesia have enabled new roles for academics and intellectuals in Indonesia as well as foreign scholars of Indonesia. They have opened up greater opportunities for those without specific formal training and qualification in Indonesian studies, such as Scott Burchill and Peter King, to assume the functions traditionally associated with 'Indonesianists' and enter the public debate on Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> They are mostly trained in international relations, government, politics, defence and history, with no specialty or focus. Their concerns are Indonesian human rights issues linked to Australian government policy, Australia-Indonesia relations and Australia's national interests. They operate by means of their own notions and get a perverse satisfaction from speaking, writing and repackaging certain human rights issues in Indonesia. Unlike those who have formal training in Indonesian studies, they do not share the conventional wisdom of the tradition in the field (that is, that of Indonesianists).<sup>23</sup>

It is in this context that those with formal training of Indonesian studies or with longer experience in the field tend to think those without sufficiently formal training and qualification moonlight as intellectuals in a narrow sense, often writing about subjects beyond their expertise. The affirmative revisionists, for example, want to see change in human rights practices in Indonesia but emphasise the continuity of distinctive or different Indonesian culture, as well as historical and political stances. However, the sceptical reformists, who are more radical than most Indonesianists in challenging old ideas that preserve oppressive power, are often criticised for producing confusing statements that will potentially endanger Australia-Indonesia relations. On the other hand, the sceptical reformists tend to group affirmative revisionists, as prescriptive scholars on the right who actually affect Australian policy. Peter King (2006:135) refers to the affirmative revisionists as a 'hegemonic coterie of Australian National University Indonesianists'.

### Concluding Remarks

West Papua debates have revealed the degree to which Indonesia-specialists (and the Australian government) should give credence to internal and external factors in explaining West Papua's condition. The affirmative revisionists consider the recent years' warm relationship between Indonesia and Australia should be maintained. They are concerned about the negative impacts of Australia's intervention. To them, Australia should view West Papuan issues in a more positive way. Special autonomy, security cooperation, assisting Indonesia in developing various strategies in West Papua, building diplomacy and winning public debates in Australia should be pursued to solve problems.

On the other hand, the sceptical reformists think the attempted reform has failed. The breakdown is reflected in the partition of West Papua into three provinces and the continuing application of the security approach resulting in violence and human rights abuses. In their view, the Indonesian government intends to retain its power and continue policing the West Papuan population. The Indonesian government's offer, notably for special autonomy, is no longer a persuasive indicator for conflict resolution. Therefore, they see the 'realistic' solution to be West Papua's self-determination and the responsibility of Australian and international great powers' intervention.

The debates on West Papua have created space for some Indonesia-specialists to generate a hybrid text, because of the nature of 'epistemic situatedness', that is the production of knowledge conditioned by its spatial and temporal aspects. In the construction of knowledge about West Papua in particular and Indonesia in general, Indonesia specialists have a moral responsibility for giving meaning to society. Such existential awareness pushed them to a reflexive sense of solution. The positive side of the constructivist movements of some scholars is that they can transcend both the universalist outlook and particularist values and aspirations in their frameworks that can reduce suspicion of any regimes in Indonesia about the 'threatening effects' of their works. Despite the nature of its work, notably a policy study, and some criticism from Richard Chauvel, Rodd McGibbon's *Pitfalls of Papua* can be regarded as an example of a hybrid discourse.

This study also demonstrates the emergence of a diversity of Indonesian society theorisation. Different opinions and opposing views have increasingly become a practice. Apart from Australian government policies, recent political changes in Indonesia have opened up wider opportunities for scholars to study the dynamics of Indonesian society and its politics. Contrary to assumption, discussions on West Papuan human rights issues in Australia can no longer be seen as the enterprise of the traditional Indonesianists. There is a wide range of individuals who have become involved in the study of Indonesia. Opposing views among Indonesianists and non-Indonesianists in Australian scholarship, thus, will inevitably result in deepened tensions and conflicts.

This study shows that not all Australian scholars view Indonesian governments' policies as 'negative'. There are many, such as the 'affirmative revisionists', who view Indonesia in a more positive way. Subagio Sastrowardoyo's concerns about the radical views of Australian scholars are more applicable to the 'sceptical reformists'. If this group of scholars does not have sufficient astuteness, but only knowledge and experience of Indonesian social and political issues, their criticism of the Indonesian government will endanger Australia-Indonesia relations. Indeed, as cross-border intellectuals, to a certain extent, they are also constrained by the culture and structure of the country that they study.

## Notes

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2. 'Indonesia specialists' refer to both scholars who have and who do not have formal Indonesian studies or training who get involved in the study of Indonesia and Indonesian society. Whenever I use 'Indonesianists', I refer to scholars who have formal Indonesia studies or training. By Australian scholars, I mean scholars who are Australian by 'residence'.
3. For an excellent discussion on contemporary intellectual culture, see Eyerman (1994).
4. The conceptual categories of 'pro-' and 'anti-' Indonesia should not be taken as black and white. They are used in this work to help identify or classify scholars from a wide spectrum ranging from one who is apolitical, critical to one who is overly critical towards Indonesian government.
5. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Martin and Szélenyi suggest that while exercising their authority, intellectuals, as owners of cultural capital, can challenge other authorities, including the owners of economic capital, such as the institutions that hire them. Thus, they have 'symbolic mastery', rather than merely 'practical mastery' because of their cultural capital which is seen to be 'genuinely autonomous' from material production (Martin and Szélenyi 1987:16-18).
6. During New Order Indonesia there were several cases banning Australian scholars from entering Indonesia. The Indonesian government did not provide reasons for their actions. Generally, scholars were informed by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*) that they had failed to get research approval.
7. Indonesia is not alone in censoring Australian academics. For an account of the dismissal of academics from Australian universities, perceived as an attack on academic freedom, see, for example, Martin (2002).
8. See ABC Online (2006).

9. In February 2005, Edward Aspinall of the Australian National University was also banned from Indonesia. He was accused by the Indonesian government of harbouring anti-Indonesia sentiments, particularly in the support of the Free Aceh Movement. See smh.com.au (2005).
10. Subagio Sastrowardoyo and Burhan Magenda's characterizations of Australian scholars of Indonesia are over 20 years old and refer to the attitudes of scholars to Indonesia under the New Order government. So far, it seems that no observer has made the same assessments of Australian scholars in the post-Suharto period. There are now much larger numbers of Indonesian postgraduate students at Australian universities, researching under the supervision of Australian academics, with diverse values and views on Indonesia.
11. This examination of the scholars' social position and mobility may seem a bit thin. Of course, it is also possible to explore the links in terms of intellectual influences, institutional associations and doctoral supervision of these scholars to Burhan Magenda's third category of Western scholars in the mid New Order era of Indonesia. However, that is the subject of another separate study.
12. I do not deny that Australian scholars have made a significant contribution to political and social science research on Indonesia, outside Java and Bali in the New Order period. For example, Anthony Reid on Aceh, James Fox on Rote and Richard Chauvel on Maluku. However, scholars tended to research Java and Bali.
13. There were some, but not many papers on West Papua written by Australian scholars in the New Order period which contributed to our understanding of the situation of the region at that time. For example, the work of Herbert Feith (with Ian Bell and Ron Hatley) (Bell, Feith and Hatley 1986), Peter Hastings (Hastings 1986) and Stephen Harris and Colin Brown (Harris and Brown 1985).
14. When the Dutch ended their hostilities and transferred full sovereignty to Indonesia in 1949, West Papua was not relinquished to the new state. For more than a decade Indonesia and the Netherlands made claims for the region, and were involved in an armed-conflict in January 1962. The dispute raised serious concerns with US authorities. Based on proposals from the United Nations and a retired US Ambassador, West Papua was transferred to the United Nation's jurisdiction (United Nations Temporary Executive Authority), subsequently to Indonesia with the condition that after a period of Indonesian administration, the Papuan may opt for self-determination. An agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia was signed in New York in August 1962 with Indonesia's commitment to implementing an Act of Free Choice in 1969 to determine whether the Papuan wished to remain part of Indonesia or choose independence. In mid 1969 the Act of Free Choice was conducted in which 1,205 Papuan tribal leaders voted unanimously on behalf of their people to join Indonesia. After it was conducted, the United Nation Assembly adopted Resolution 2504 in November 1969 by a vote of 84 to 0 in favour of Indonesia with 30 abstentions.
15. The central government's attempt to establish Central Irian Jaya was abandoned, or at least put on the backburner, after riots in 2003.
16. Chauvel published several pieces on Papua in the late Suharto period.
17. It might be worth noting that these scholars' views, as well as those of many Papuan intellectuals and politicians, on the Act of Free Choice have been influenced by the work of John Saltford and more recently Pieter Drooglever. See, for example, Saltford (2003).
18. For a debate on genocide, see (King 2006) and Aspinall (2006b).
19. Needless to say, some variations occur among scholars within each category, either the 'affirmative revisionist' or the 'sceptical reformists'.
20. For the importance of the distinction between model *for* and model *of*, see chapter seven of Winichakul (1994).
21. This may not be an explicit pattern of behaviour encouraged by corporate politics of Australian universities. With collegial governance on the slide since the introduction of new regulatory frameworks in Australian higher education in mid 1990s, what we can expect is that scholars can cooperate (rather than only compete in the new funding mechanism) in

- order to accumulate social capital not only to negotiate with the Australian government, but also to serve many other purposes.
22. Peter King, Scott Burchill and Clinton Fernandes, among other scholars, are just a few examples of the 'new generation' of non-Indonesianists who have recently got involved in the study of Indonesia.
  23. By making the distinction between Indonesianists and non-Indonesianists, I have no intention of echoing the disapproval of Dutch scholars of the U.S. and Australian post-war scholars of Indonesia, George McT Kahin, Herbert Feith, Benedict Anderson, John Legge and Jamie Mckie, to mention a few. In the eyes of the Leiden and Utrecht establishment, these interlopers were not trained in Javanese and other regional languages, Sankrit and Arabic, customary law and civil service. On the contrary, I want to point out that non-Indonesianists have played a significant role in Australian public and academic debates about Indonesia and Australia-Indonesia relations long before the fall of Suharto. For example, Peter Hastings, Denis Warner, Bruce Grant, Jim Dunn, Hamish McDonald, David Jenkins, Paul Dibb and Richard Woolcott. Moreover, there are fairly broad political and/or ideological spectrums among both the 'Indonesianists' and 'non-Indonesianist' observers and scholars.

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