

I N T R O D U C T I O N

***The UN and Indonesia:
A Dynamic Relationship***

The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, its Charter having been ratified by the five Big Powers—China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States—as well as by the majority of the other 45 countries that participated in the drafting of that Charter.

Euphoria in the international community attended the birth of the United Nations. The general feeling was that at last the human race had in its hands the instrument that would banish all wars and ensure global security and stability.

For the human race was war-weary at that time. Millions and millions of human beings had been killed and whole populations had been displaced, while cities in Europe and Asia smouldered in bombed-out ruins. With the UN at work, or so the international community thought, there would be no more massive bloodshed and destruction.

Two months and a week earlier, the Republic of Indonesia had been born under obviously much less propitious circumstances. On 17 August 1945 the founding fathers of the Republic, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, proclaimed with little fanfare that “*We the Indonesian people declare herewith our independence.*” And a new Republic was born in Asia.

But the founding fathers had a grim task ahead of them. The country was still occupied by a Japanese military force—a defeated force but under orders by the victorious allies to administer the country and keep public order. The leaders of Indonesia had yet to

establish institutions for the administration of the state—a formidable task, considering that the state had no money. And they were bracing themselves for the return of the colonial rulers, the Dutch, who would, predictably, reassert their power over the country.

Any celebration that was launched to mark the historic occasion was therefore tempered by anticipations of an arduous and bloody struggle, which did take place soon enough.

No mere coincidence

Looking back to that time, Indonesians would never consider it important that the United Nations and their own Republic came into being in widely different ways. What mattered was that the two were born almost simultaneously in the wake of the Second World War, with both events being attended by the same kind of hope and optimism. Year after year, on the occasion of the anniversary of the founding of the World Organization, generations of Indonesian diplomats and high officials would be stressing that the near-simultaneous birth of the United Nations and Indonesia was no mere coincidence.

They would describe it as a “*coalescence of ideals and values.*” They would point out that the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of Indonesia embrace basically the same ideals and purposes such as peace, social justice, the essential equality of all human beings, and development.

The UN would be the chief instrument of the human race for the achievement of global peace and security as well as social and economic development. Indonesia, on the other hand, had mandated its Government to contribute to the making of a world of peace and justice. A common background, common purposes and common tasks—these made the United Nations and Indonesia natural allies and partners.

But first, Indonesia had to survive the threat of annihilation by the returning colonial forces. In that struggle of Indonesia to survive, the United Nations would figure prominently.

The UN to the rescue

On 21 July 1947, renegeing on the Linggarjati¹ agreement, which would create a United States of Indonesia in a union with the Netherlands, the Dutch launched a so-called “police action.” It was actually a military juggernaut that seized most of the areas controlled by the Republic.

The Republican Government withdrew to Yogyakarta² while its forces scattered to the hills. In a few more weeks, the Dutch forces could have crushed the young Republic, but on 30 July, India and Australia put the Indonesian conflict before the UN Security Council. UN intervention stopped the Dutch steamroller.

The Dutch would repeat the same resort to force in December 1948 after renegeing on a second agreement, the Reinville agreement. That second “police action” resulted in the capture of President Sukarno, Vice President Hatta and other officials of the Republic while, again, the Republican army took to the hills.

But on 24 December 1948, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling on both sides to cease hostilities. When the Netherlands refused to heed the resolution, it became a pariah in the international community and was eventually pressured by the United States into settling with and recognizing the new Republic.

Had the United Nations not intervened for Indonesia on these two occasions, the Indonesian Republic might have been forced to fight a protracted guerilla war during which it would have to wait a long time for undisputed international recognition, and in the process sacrifice many more lives. But the Republic was spared from such a tragedy, and on 28 September 1950 Indonesia became the 60th member of the United Nations.

Republic of Indonesia in the UN

And there in the United Nations, Indonesia promptly settled as a constant advocate of decolonization, disarmament and development—which came to be known as the three D’s of Indonesia’s work in the UN.

¹ It is also spelt Linggajati or Linggadjati. All are acceptable.

² Previously the spelling for this city was Jogjakarta.

Indonesia's participation in the UN became the chief venue by which the country pursued its independent and active foreign policy as prescribed by its 1945 constitution. It was not easy to pursue such a foreign policy even at that time, for the Cold War had begun to divide the world into two rival ideological camps—one led by the United States, the other by the Soviet Union—and newly fledged nations like Indonesia were under pressure to join one camp or the other.

It took a great deal of political nimbleness and courage but Indonesia managed to never align itself with any power bloc. By working closely with like-minded developing countries and cooperating with the developed countries, when it perceived them to be in the right, Indonesia contributed to the solution of various international problems.

Indonesia would render a great service to the United Nations when it acted as the principal host to the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in April 1955. In that meeting of the first generation of leaders of the two continents, a tradition was launched among the nations of the developing world—a tradition of support, adherence and devotion to the role of the United Nations in the quest for global peace and justice.

The Bandung conferees adopted as their rallying call to action precisely the same purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter: the eradication of colonialism, peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for human rights, the end of racial discrimination, disarmament and promotion of economic development through cooperation.

On the basis of these principles as expressed in the Ten Principles or *Dasa Sila* Bandung, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) would be founded six years later. For many years, the Movement, with which Indonesia remains closely identified, would serve as the alternative to big power bloc politics in the United Nations.

Through the instrumentality of the NAM, which grew to include the overwhelming majority of the members of the United Nations, Indonesia and like-minded developing countries became

more effective advocates of peace and justice in international political and economic relations.

Subsequently, the Group of 77, which consists largely of the same countries that make up the NAM, became the negotiating arm of the Non-Aligned Movement in its efforts to help bring about a new international economic order that would be more just and equitable.

The first formal North-South dialogue, convened at the initiative of both the NAM and the G-77 was, of course, a United Nations event, but it was held in Paris as the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC). This was followed by a series of dialogues held in Geneva on various specific aspects of international economic relations.

Indonesia was particularly active in this process and even served as the spokesman of the G-77 in the negotiations on the Common Fund for Commodities. The agreement on the Common Fund for Commodities turned out to be the only concrete achievement of the entire dialogue process.

In general, the developing countries did not accomplish much during this process, which proved only that without the spirit of partnership, no constructive breakthrough could be accomplished to rectify the imbalances between the developed and developing world.

Irian Jaya³ in limbo

Having twice intervened to ensure the survival of the fledgling Indonesian Republic in the late 1940s, the United Nations, a little more than a decade later, would once again take a hand in an Indonesian crisis, this time to secure the integrity of the Republic, so that it would not be dismembered with one integral part remaining under colonial control.

In compliance with the Round Table Agreement of 1949, the Netherlands turned over the territory of the former Dutch East Indies to Indonesia in December of that year. Unfortunately, in the

³ Irian Jaya is also known as West New Guinea, the Netherlands New Guinea, West Guinea, West Irian, and West Papua. These terms are used in accordance with the relevant time-frame.

case of West Irian, its administrative control would be resolved within one year after the signing of the agreement.

But the bilateral negotiations of the following year broke down as the Netherlands started to renege on its treaty commitment to turn over all of the Dutch East Indies to Indonesia. The same happened in the attempts to complete the negotiations in the several years that followed. Finally in 1954, the matter was brought before the United Nations.

The West Irian issue in the UN

And there, in the General Assembly, year after year, Indonesia denounced the Netherlands for renegeing on its treaty commitment, while the Dutch contended that before West Irian could be turned over to Indonesia, the wishes of the Papuan people must first be determined.

Tired of the interminable cycle of debates, President Sukarno ordered the nationalization of all Dutch businesses in Indonesia, broke diplomatic relations with the Netherlands, and prepared a military effort to dislodge the Dutch from Irian Jaya. Major General Soeharto was named commander of the Indonesian force that would carry out the assault. A number of naval engagements did take place.

In 1961, India sponsored a UN resolution calling on both sides to negotiate, but neither side trusted the other enough to comply. To break the deadlock, the United States stepped in. President John F. Kennedy sent his brother Robert Kennedy, the US Attorney General, to both Jakarta and The Hague to persuade both sides to negotiate. And negotiations did take place under UN auspices, with an American mediator, Elsworth Bunker.

The negotiations were difficult and tense but finally both sides agreed that the Netherlands would turn over West Irian, not to Indonesia, but to a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA), which would administer the territory for a year, then hand it over to Indonesia. This took place on 1 May 1963. Thus for the very first time in its existence, the United Nations administered a territory. Not long after that the

relationship between the United Nations and Indonesia was severely tested well before that.

A short separation, then resumption of intensive work

During the last hours of the year 1964, President Sukarno issued instructions to the Indonesian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York to pull out of the Organization. This was in protest at Malaysia taking a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Sukarno was then pursuing a policy of confrontation with Malaysia, which he considered to be a British colonial device for surrounding and encroaching on Indonesia.

That act of withdrawal stunned the whole world. The framers of the UN Charter had not anticipated a situation where a member would walk out of the UN. Nobody had ever thought any country would do what Indonesia did. All Indonesian diplomats and officials who heard of the decision were shocked for hours.

However, the UN Secretary-General at that time, U Thant of Myanmar, in his wisdom came up with a formula of withdrawal that did not actually remove Indonesia from UN membership, although it would cease to take part in the Organization's activities. This meant that Indonesia could resume its participation anytime without having to reapply for membership, as it never ceased to be a member.

And this was precisely what happened after Indonesia had gone through the political turmoil of 1965 and the New Order had been on the rise for several months. Indonesia officially resumed its work in the UN during the General Assembly session on 28 September 1966.

So involved was Indonesia in the work of the United Nations that in 1970, it was elected President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which coordinates the work of the Organization and its specialized agencies in the cause of social and economic development. This was a time when the countries of the developing world were beginning to clamour for more equitable economic relations with the developed world.

Making maximum use of the presidency of the ECOSOC, Indonesia became a leading advocate of the rationalization of the

international economic order and thereby helped bring about the North-South dialogue of the 1970s. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, this dialogue failed for lack of the spirit of partnership. Indonesia filled other positions of influence in the UN.

Presidency of the General Assembly

In 1971, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik was elected President of the UN General Assembly. He served during an eventful year that saw the entry of the People's Republic of China into UN membership at the expense of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Two other momentous events took place in that year—the eruption of war between India and Pakistan, and the election of a new UN Secretary-General to succeed U Thant—but it was the issue of Chinese membership in the UN that Indonesia agonized over.

For at that time, Indonesia's relations with the People's Republic of China were at its lowest, in view of the latter's suspected involvement in the communist-inspired coup attempt in Indonesia in 1965. In fact, Indonesia had frozen relations with the People's Republic of China on that matter. Moreover, there was a vigorous American campaign against the entry of the People's Republic of China into the UN. On the other hand, Indonesia had never recognized Taiwan.

The tendency of the Indonesian Government's position was therefore to abstain during the voting. In the end, however, Adam Malik, as President of the General Assembly, exercising his own sound judgment, decided to help the People's Republic of China get into the UN.⁴ In addition to that achievement, Indonesia also enjoyed measurable success in other areas of the UN agenda.

⁴ The irony was that while Indonesia was agonizing over the issue, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was in Beijing clearly indicating to the Chinese authorities that the United States would soon recognize their Government.

Disarmament and peacekeeping

Indonesia's vigorous involvement in disarmament started with the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 (SSOD-I) and through all the SSOD's that followed. This was, of course, Indonesia's way of contributing to the achievement of global peace, security and stability.

Indonesia's voice for disarmament was eminently credible because it was a large country that obviously had no ambitions of becoming a nuclear power. A considerable number of large countries did entertain such ambitions, but Indonesia was above suspicion.

Indonesia's diligence in the cause of disarmament was rewarded in 1986 with the chairmanship of the UN First Committee, which was in charge of security and disarmament matters. Indonesia also served as chairman of a UN-mandated commission to prepare the UN position on naval disarmament.

In the mid-1980s, it became clear that the three nuclear powers negotiating a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)—the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union—were losing interest in this vital endeavour. Indonesia and other countries firmly committed to disarmament clamoured for resumption of negotiations. The nuclear powers were not responsive at all.

The staunch advocates of non-proliferation convened a conference toward a CTBT anyway, and they elected Indonesia as chairman of this conference. Neither the United States nor the United Kingdom attended.

Year after year, this group met in order to press the nuclear powers to negotiate a CTBT and finally, in the 1990s, the nuclear powers agreed to a Conference on Disarmament where they would resume talking about stopping all nuclear tests. Indonesia participated energetically in this Conference but the CTBT that was concluded in 1996 was still very deficient. Nevertheless, Indonesia promptly signed the Treaty since it was in any case an improvement over a situation where there was no CTBT at all.

The Garuda

Another UN activity to which Indonesia diligently contributed is peacekeeping. When the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) rushed to the Middle East in 1956 to interpose itself between the Arabs and the Israelis, an Indonesian contingent (named Garuda I) was part of it. Another Indonesian contingent (Garuda II) was also with the UN force that was sent to stop brutal tribal warfare in the Congo between 1960 and 1964.

Garuda contingents were with the UN forces that went to Cyprus in 1953, to the Middle East in 1973, and at various times to Vietnam, to Iraq, to Cambodia and Bosnia. At one time in the Middle East, the commander of the UN Forces was an Indonesian officer.

The biggest Indonesian contingent in a UN military force went to Cambodia to serve with the UN Transitional Administration in Cambodia (UNTAC) in the early 1990s. At that time, UNTAC was overseeing the implementation of the Paris Peace Agreements that were concluded by an 18-nation conference in which Indonesia served as Co-chairman together with France.

The revival of the North-South dialogue

In 1992, Indonesia was elected chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and immediately, in a departure from its reputation as adversarial to the developed world, the Movement adopted a constructive approach in dealing with the developed countries and international financial institutions. It moved at once for the resumption of the North-South dialogue, this time in a spirit of true partnership. In July 1994, Indonesia took the initiative of meeting the chairman of the Group of Seven most industrialized nations of the world on the eve of the Group's Tokyo summit to present the concerns of the developing world. The G-7 responded positively to this initiative and included these concerns in its agenda.

From that point on, it became a tradition in the G-7 (today known as the G-8, with the addition of Russia) to inform the NAM chairman, and subsequently also the chairman of the G-77, of the results of their summit deliberations on matters of concern to the developing world. At the same time, the G-8 had also become

altogether receptive to the concerns conveyed to the Group by both the NAM and the G-77.

In 1994, Indonesia as chairman of the NAM and other developing countries as well as such developed countries as the United States and Canada sponsored a resolution On International Cooperation for Development on the Basis of Partnership. This was meant to serve as the framework in which the North-South dialogue would be carried out once again.

Another result of the 1994 Indonesian initiative with the G-7 was the new focus that was given to the external debt burden of the poorest countries in the world. Since then there have been a number of debt relief initiatives by the World Bank, which, although by no means sufficient, provided considerable breathing space for the highly indebted developing countries.

It was also in the 1990s that Indonesia and other developing countries, particularly those in the NAM, strove to rectify the misinterpretation of human rights that was being foisted on the world by some developed countries. Human rights issues were then, as today, being used as an excuse for limiting trade and other economic activities of the developing countries.

With the advent of the new millennium, Indonesia, serving as President of the ECOSOC for the second time, took an active role toward the formulation of the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations. Often referred to as the Charter of the United Nations for the Third Millennium, the declaration spelled out in concrete terms the economic and social goals that the World Organization and its members intend to achieve in the early part of the present century. Among these are goals towards which Indonesia has been known to have taken strong policy initiatives, such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the achievement of universal primary education, and the building of a global partnership for development.

During Indonesia's second presidency of the ECOSOC, the United Nations gave due attention to a new concern of the developing world: the need to bridge the digital divide between the developed and the developing world. As a result, a number of

initiatives toward this end have been launched, including those by the UN itself and the G-8, and these are ongoing.

The East Timor tragedy

Over the years, while Indonesia was deeply involved in the work of the United Nations, there was one issue on which it was forced by domestic circumstances to gradually take a defensive stance: the problem of East Timor.

Before 1974, the East Timor issue was to Indonesia just one of several decolonization issues pending in the UN. But in 1974, the repressive Caetano regime in Portugal was overthrown in a coup and the new regime vowed to restore democratic rights not only to the people of Portugal but also to the people of its overseas territories, including East Timor.

A decolonization process was launched in East Timor, but the colonial authorities bungled it so badly that civil war broke out in the territory. Instead of stopping the violence, the colonial authorities simply abandoned East Timor. By giving access to the arms they were leaving behind to a leftist minority, the colonial authorities gave the upper hand to this faction in that civil war.

In the uneven fight, the factions representing the majority of the East Timorese people were decimated and suffered atrocities. In their desperation they appealed to the Indonesian Government for deliverance from the carnage.

Because of this appeal and the tacit encouragement of Western powers that were fearful of the establishment of a communist enclave so close to Indonesia, the decision was taken by Indonesia to enter East Timor. On 7 December 1975, the decision was carried out. Routed, the FRETILIN took to the hills and engaged in guerilla warfare while the decolonization process was completed in a political exercise in which the leaders of the East Timorese people chose independence through integration with Indonesia as its 27th province.

And after that, year after year in the UN General Assembly, Portugal would denounce Indonesia for annexing East Timor and Indonesia would maintain that the decolonization process had been completed—the people of East Timor had made their choice.

In 1983, in a bid to bring about a peaceful political settlement of the issue, the UN General Assembly mandated Tripartite Talks—negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. On two occasions, the Tripartite Talks came close to a breakthrough—in 1986 and in 1991, but each time, after raising so much hope by agreeing to a formula for settling the issue, the Portuguese backed out at the last moment.

Then came the Santa Cruz incident of November 1991 in which scores of anti-integrationist demonstrators were killed and wounded, and the Indonesian position in the negotiations on East Timor began to weaken. Even before the incident, Indonesia was losing moral ground in the debate over East Timor as reports of human rights violations in the province and the general repressiveness of civilian and military officials occasioned international criticisms against Indonesia.

Still, Indonesia persevered in negotiating for a just and honourable political solution to the issue. The Tripartite Talks were resumed. In May 1998, President Soeharto fell from power and his successor, President B.J. Habibie, installed a reform development cabinet. In September of that year, Indonesia, in the spirit of national reform, offered special status and wide-ranging autonomy as a solution to the East Timor issue.

In view of this new offer, the Tripartite Talks were making some progress, when suddenly President Habibie changed his mind and decided to give the East Timorese an immediate chance to opt for independence in a political exercise that would be held shortly thereafter. This was the so-called “second option.” On the basis of an agreement signed in New York in May 1999, that political exercise was carried out in East Timor on 30 August 1999.

The East Timorese electorate voted overwhelmingly to separate from Indonesia and become an independent state. When that result became clear, the pro-integrationist militia in East Timor went on a rampage of killing and destruction that made it necessary for an International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) to be rushed to the territory and put a stop to the bloodbath. Tens of

thousands of refugees streamed into the Indonesian part of Timor island, and Dili, the capital, was reduced to smouldering rubble.

Initially, a UN force kept the peace while a United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET) ran the government apparatus, until East Timor became an independent state in May 2002. However, the United Nations Mission of Interim Support to East Timor (UNMISET) remains in place and its mandate will end in 2005.

The need for reform

Meanwhile, Indonesia has taken to the path of national reform and transition to a more fully democratic system. It has not been an easy task. Indonesia is facing so many challenges, including threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity that are posed by separatist movements in some provinces, notably in Aceh, in Irian Jaya and recently in the Maluku—threats that could possibly become United Nations concerns in the future.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that Indonesia has yet to consolidate its recovery from the devastation of the Asian financial and economic crisis and the political and social turmoil that attended the crisis in Indonesia. As much as it wants to, Indonesia has therefore been unable to make progress in national reform to the extent that would inspire investor confidence. Yet it is fully committed to reform and democratization.

In like manner, the task of reforming the United Nations is far from completed. It is true that a number of efficiency measures have improved the workings of the General Assembly and the Secretariat, but the reform of the Security Council has been blocked for many years. The problem is compounded by the fact that the world today has only one superpower and a new surge of unilateralism threatens to sideline the United Nations.

The euphoria that attended its birth has not been justified by its performance in preventing conflict in almost six decades, yet there has been no world war since then and its record in promoting social development through its specialized agencies is nothing short of commendable.

Thus, for better or for worse, the lives and fortunes of the United Nations and the Republic of Indonesia have been intimately intertwined. The UN has not only aided Indonesia's national development, it has been a factor in its survival. Indonesia is just one of many countries working in and with the UN, but a particularly consistent and devoted one.

It is the purpose of this book to present in some detail not just the events in the relationship between the United Nations and Indonesia but also the dynamism of that relationship between an Organization comprising many nations and a developing country with a large multi-ethnic population, both burdened by challenges, both driven by the same ideals and goals.

This is the story of a relationship that has not always been a happy one: the withdrawal of Indonesia from the UN in 1965 and the tragedy of East Timor in 1999 were notably unhappy episodes in that relationship. But it is a solid relationship that has stood the test of time and circumstance and, as this book will try to prove, has a chance for a better future.



