

Merdeka and the Morning Star

Civil Resistance in West Papua

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Research horizons

There is a street in the heart of Jayapura, the picturesque capital of West Papua, called Jalan Irian, ‘Irian Street’ in English. It is not long, only a couple of hundred metres. Although it is set a block back from the waterfront, if you turn to the north from the eastern end of Jalan Irian you can still see the glistening calm azure expanse of Yos Sudarso Bay. The eastern shore of the bay points towards the independent country Papua New Guinea, visible where the mountains plunge into the sea. The border is a boat-ride away, a short drive by car, or a long walk through the jungles and mountains. There, Asia abruptly ends and Melanesian begins. But that is a political view – impermanent and partial – Papuans tell me. For them, the whole island of New Guinea, from Sorong in the north-west to Samarai in the south-east, is Melanesian land. Numerous Papuan tribes and clans straddle both sides of the border, food gardens on one side, homes on the other.

Jayapura – ‘victorious city’ in Sanskrit – was once known as Sukarnapura (‘Sukarno’s Town’) and, for a brief period, Kota Baru (‘New City’). Before that, it was called Hollandia by the Dutch. Independent-minded Papuans know it as Port Numbay. The city is nestled in a small valley surrounded by verdant, vertiginous hills cloaked with unplanned housing, rising upwards, eating up the forest, prone to landslides. In the central business district an orgy of modernist development is sprouting skyscrapers competing for space on the narrow valley floor. At one end of Jalan Irian is Imbi Square, most of which is taken up by a run-down park dominated by an enormous statue of Yos Sudarso. The figure – constructed in a Soviet-realist style once popular with Indonesian nationalists – depicts an Indonesian naval officer who died fighting the Dutch for control of West Papua. Sudarso, an anti-colonial hero for most Indonesians, stands defiantly in his uniform, hat on, feet apart. His arms are outstretched, muscles rippling, binoculars in one hand. Sudarso was killed in battle against the Dutch in the Arafura Sea in 1962 but he still stares intently in that park, ready to repel unseen enemies.

Across the road from Imbi Square’s park is a nondescript two-storey building on Jalan Irian. In the late 1950s and early 1960s it housed the Nieuw Guinea Raad, or West Papuan Parliament, the site where the now-banned Morning Star – the West Papuan national flag – was first raised, and then raised again in 1999 and 2000. But you would not

know that unless a Papuan furtively told you. Now the building is rundown, unused but not forgotten. I have tried to take pictures of the building a few times but every time I have gone to do so Papuan colleagues I was with urged me not to: ‘Not here. Not now. It is not safe. Too many people are watching,’ they’d say. More than five decades ago Papuans poured their hopes into that building, believing Dutch promises that they would soon be masters of their own destiny. I am told there is an arts centre on the second floor but it is rarely frequented by either Papuans or Indonesians and I have been cautioned not to go inside lest I attract unwarranted attention. In the transition from the colonial Dutch government to a new set of colonists, historical places like this building have become physically neglected.

The Morning Star

Mixed-heritage, Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko (1977) has written evocatively about the power of story in indigenous social movements. In her novel *Ceremony* one of the protagonists says:

I will tell you something about stories. They aren't just entertainment. Don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death. You don't have anything if you don't have stories. Their evil is mighty but it can't stand up to our stories. So they try to destroy the stories, let the stories be confused or forgotten. They would like that. They would be happy because we would be defenseless then.

An ocean and time away Silko's words resonate.

To the outside observer the West Papuan struggle might appear hopeless. But the Papuans have an irrepressible belief, anchored in story, that one day they will be free. The Morning Star, which appears on their flag, is central to this dangerous idea. It is underpinned by indigenous knowledge and shaped by a liberatory reading of sacred texts: the Bible and the Quran. Different groups have different versions of the story but the underlying message of coming change is the same.

One well-known rendition about the Morning Star comes from the island of Biak (also spelled Byak). There are many different versions of the story. Some are sung, some told, but they all share the same core narrative. Biak islanders sing of an epic of a woodcarver, a man who embodied great spiritual power named Manarmakeri (Rutherford 2003, pp. 146–59). *Manarmakeri* means both ‘scabious old man’ and ‘old man of the star’. Once a

warrior who glimpsed the coming of a new age, at the beginning of the story/song he is old, rejected and living in isolation. One retelling goes like this:

One day, on top of the mountain, Yamnaibori, a spirit from the land of souls spoke to Manarmakeri from a flat stone in his food garden, telling him he was like a flower about to open, ready to begin a long journey. Manarmakeri descended the mountain and travelled to the island of Meok Wundi where he took up the practise of distilling palm wine.

One morning he discovered his wine had been stolen. When it continued to happen he hatched a plan to catch the thief. Hiding, he caught Kumeseri (also called Mak Meser or Sampari), the Morning Star, stealing his wine. As light began to glow in the east Manarmakeri held the star tight, refusing to let go. Frightened because of the coming dawn, Kumeseri offered Manarmakeri a secret, the gift of transformation and renewal, to share with his people.

Manarmakeri refused to keep the secrets for his tribe alone. Instead he desired peace and prosperity for all people. To this Kumeseri agreed and Manarmakeri let the star go. Kumeseri told Manarmakeri to throw a particular fruit at the breasts of a young woman when he returned to his village. Manarmakeri did as Kumeseri said and a young woman, Insokari, soon became pregnant and gave birth to a son. No one one knew who the father was until Insokari's son, Konori, recognised the old man.

Manarmakeri appeared as *Manseren* Mangundi, 'the Lord Himself', with the power to perform miracles. He stood in the fire, burnt his old skin and was renewed as a young man. Seeing his skin was too light, he stepped back into the fire. This time, his skin was the right shade. He then drew a boat in the sand, which became real and left his village, to go on another journey. He travelled towards Sorong then overseas.

Some say Manarmakeri went west – to Europe, to Australia, to the United States, to Palestine. Others say he went east to Melanesia and the Pacific Islands. Others say he did both and that the scabious old man is still travelling, recruiting support for a free West Papua, still speaking, still cajoling, still performing miracles, preparing the ground for freedom. Jacob Rumbiak, a West Papuan leader suggests to me, smiling as he does, 'Maybe he is trying to recruit you right now?' Whatever the case Manarmakeri/Manseren departed West Papua and is yet to return. When he left Papuans became poor and oppressed. But one day Manseren/Manarmakeri will come back. And when he does he will bring others with him. His return will herald a new age of freedom, peace and justice.

Manarmakeri becoming Manseren points to the path of transformation. An abiding belief in the power of transformation and the hope of a coming promised time is the reason

the Morning Star was chosen for the flag of West Papua, where it shines today. The Morning Star, of course, is also another name for the spirit and power of God. The rest of the flag is made up of the colours blue, white and red. Blue signifies 'faith', white 'peace', red 'courage' (Kamma 1972, p. 158). The seven blue stripes represent the seven regions of West Papua. The three colours are also said to be the Dutch tri-colour reversed – 'a metaphor for the turning round of the existing state of affairs' (Sharp 1994, p. 54). The Star, 'an indelible imprint of a divine power,' says anthropologist Nonie Sharp, represents the story of Manarmakeri, Manseren Mangundi and Kumeseri, the Morning Star.

Like all good stories its power lies in the ability of the reader to interpret it. It is at once a story of human interactions, the relationship between the human and the divine and a story of liberation and solidarity. It inspires Papuans to participate in what people of the north coast of West Papua call, *koreri*, literally the 'changing of one's skin', the art of renewal and transformation.

Outside the old Nieuw Guinea Raad, just around the corner from the main police station on Jalan Ahmad Yani, Papuan women line the footpath. Indonesian traders run the shops behind them. The women sell betel nut, fruit and vegetables and noken, the distinctive West Papuan string bag. Once I bought a noken on Jalan Irian from a woman from Paniai in the highlands. It was an exquisite work of beauty made for everyday use – woven twines painstakingly made from bark, tightly wrapped in yellows and black, orchid leaves that years later still retain their vibrant colours. Her friend sold me a more contemporary noken, colourfully emblazoned with the Morning Star and the words 'West Papua'. The woman teased me, smilingly asking if I recognised the flag boldly woven into the noken. I did. We both understood that by exposing such symbols, her through selling it and me buying it, that we were committing civil disobedience, an act in blatant defiance of a 2007 Indonesian law banning displays of Papuan nationalism.

On the surface Jalan Irian presents itself as a sanguine centre of consumerism dominated by local and international symbols of capitalism – Kentucky Fried Chicken and the Hotel Yasmin, a favourite haunt of the Papuan elite and Indonesian intelligence. But every now and then Papuans gather here to protest, drawn by the historical magnetism of the place: the anger of denied political dreams and irrepressible hope for a better future. The day of 4 June 2000 was one of those times. Then, for the first time since 1 May 1963 when the Indonesian government forcibly took control of West Papua, permission was granted for the Morning Star flag to be displayed. Tens of thousands of people stood

solemnly outside the old Nieuw Guinea Raad, fixated as the Papuan flag was raised beside the red and white Indonesian flag. Many participants were openly crying, expressing years of suppressed emotion. The Papuans present were civilians, all unarmed. Active members of the guerrilla forces were there but they were unarmed and represented a tiny fraction of those Papuans present. Indonesian police stood at the back, their guns lowered. Behind the gathered Papuans was the statue of Yos Sudarso and behind him the bay that bears his name. That day Papuans turned their backs on Sudarso's statue, intensely focusing on the Morning Star flag and their desire for a different kind of tomorrow.

In the past Papuans attending events like the 4 June flag raising were shot dead or arrested, tortured and thrown in jail. Back in 2000, perhaps they were encouraged to put their fear aside by the fall of former Indonesian dictator Suharto and a new Indonesian President, Abdurrahman Wahid. Wahid, affectionately known as Gus Dur, was deeply influenced by an inclusive vision of Islam, one that emphasised social justice, democracy, human rights and peace. While not supported by mainstream nationalist politicians or the army, Gus Dur took advantage of a weakened central government in the aftermath of Suharto's demise to extend the hand of detente to the Papuans. He unbanned the Morning Star flag – it would be banned again when he later lost power – and even went as far as funding a national gathering of Papuan independence activists organised by the PDP, the group that planned the June flag raising. A few months later, as the Army began to reassert their hold on power, security forces would again use lethal force to prevent flag raisings. But for the moment, in the uncertain freedom of the 'Papuan Spring' (Chauvel 2005), the masses gathered in Imbi Square, waiting and watching pensively as the flag was slowly raised.

On Jalan Irian that day in June, Papuans rejected their Indonesian identity and embraced a different way of being, a longing for a different kind of political community. They sang the banned national anthem, 'Hai Tanahku Papua', wore traditional dress and danced traditional Papuan dances. If, in some respects, the flag raising mirrored Indonesian nationalist rituals there was one vital difference. Indonesian nationalist events recount armed struggle against the Dutch and military defence of the state, thus legitimating the contemporary role of Indonesian security forces. Papuans, in turning their backs on Sudarso's statue, rejected being Indonesian and part of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia), while implicitly opposing armed struggle as the primary means of liberation. The flag raising outside the old Nieuw Guinea Raad was part

of a pattern of determined, civilian-led, mass-based, unarmed resistance, the primary method of struggle for Papuan self-determination.

Merdeka and the Morning Star documents the decisive nonviolent resistance in West Papuans' long struggle for freedom, charting its trajectory from May 1998 to the Indonesian presidential elections on 9 July 2014. West Papuans are turning to civil resistance more often and in greater numbers rather than guerrilla war. But how viable are nonviolent strategies and tactics to enlarge the prospects for self-determination in West Papua? Bound up with the notion of viability is the question of success. Determining the likelihood of this in a struggle that is still ongoing is, of course, a fraught exercise. It is not about divining the future but exploring the dynamic interplay of internal and external factors that minimise and maximise the effectiveness of civil resistance.

For those new to West Papua or more familiar with romantic images of Papuan guerrillas clad in traditional clothes, a clutch of arrows and a bow in one hand, automatic rifle in the other – or indigenous people waging a last-ditch battle against the tide of modernity – I want to state at the outset that there is a nonviolent struggle in West Papua. Its leaders are savvy and sophisticated. They are as adept at walking the corridors of global power as maintaining ancient connections to land, language and culture. These unarmed civilian-led insurrectionary forces are far more numerous and widespread than the armed resistance (see Chapter 5).

Although many Papuans feel intense pride for the guerrillas in the mountains and jungles who continue to wage armed struggle, few Papuans are willing to risk their lives committing to a strategy of guerrilla war that has little prospect of success. Papuans also know they need international support, including the active assistance of Melanesian countries. That support will be far less forthcoming if the independence struggle is waged through violence. Nonviolent action is also more numerous and more regular than politically motivated violent action. Barely a week, or even a day, goes by without some kind of nonviolent protest in the cities and towns of West Papua, over violations of basic rights or demands for 'full freedom'.

Ironically, the security forces are often more cognisant of the power of nonviolent resistance than many Papuans. For example, the top-fifteen 'enemies of the state', writes the journalist Alan Nairn (2010), who cites leaked Indonesian Army documents, are all civilian leaders: church leaders, students, members of parliament and leaders of the Papuan Customary Council. The Indonesian military considers nonviolent resistance 'much more dangerous' because they have 'reached the outside world' with their 'obsession' with

merdeka ('independence/freedom') and persist in 'propagating the issue of severe human rights violations in Papua . . . murders and abductions that are done by the security forces' (ibid.). In the past decade that influence has become possible because the unarmed civilian movement has grown exponentially in strength, used mobile communication technologies to their advantage, and enacted better strategy, even as the movement faces considerable obstacles.

Papuans in 2015 desire freedom just as much, if not more, than Papuans who desired freedom back in 1963, when the Indonesian government first took over administrative control of the country. This desire is not just held by independence activists but members of the political elite and Indonesian bureaucracy who, even while being employed by the state, hold little commitment to it (Braithwaite, et al. 2010, pp. 133–34). Although there are diverging views about what freedom means and whether it can or cannot be achieved within the context of the Indonesian state, for most Papuans, freedom is independence from Indonesia (Kirksey 2012).

There are two major positions within the Papuan freedom movement about how to enlarge the possibilities of political freedom. Some parts of the movement favour dialogue between West Papua and Jakarta mediated by representatives from the international community. Some are starting to use the words political negotiations instead of dialogue. Other parts of the movement argue for a referendum on independence. The NFRWP wants recognition that they are already an independent nation. Of course, these positions are not mutually exclusive. If a strategy of recognition fails, the fallback position could be a referendum. A referendum could also be the result of political negotiations.

At the same time as demanding political independence Papuans want recognition of their basic rights as indigenous people living on their customary land. The struggle for independence and demands for basic rights cannot be separated. One influences the other. As a leader of the DAP (Dewan Adat Papua or National Council of Customary Chiefs in West Papua) cautioned, 'Clamouring for basic rights is not the enemy of independence' (MacLeod 2012). Internationally the struggle for independence is widely known, and it is around this goal that Papuan-led civil resistance, armed struggle and diplomacy has coalesced.

Can there be a strategy for success?

Since the fall of Suharto in May 1998, Papuans have relied primarily on civil resistance to oppose Indonesian rule. For them to secure further advances, Papuan challengers need to increase participation levels in the movement and enhance strategic skilfulness within three domains:

- inside West Papua, which will always remain the primary site of resistance
- inside Indonesia
- in the societies of Indonesia's international allies.

More Papuans need to move from passive sympathy to active involvement in the struggle, the circle of dissent needs to be enlarged and co-ordinated. This means not just increased numbers but also more social groups participating and greater unity as well. Papuan politicians, civil servants, church congregations and workers need to actively and collectively oppose Indonesian governmental rule by nonviolently raising political and economic costs for the Indonesian government's continued refusal to enter into a comprehensive problem-solving process. These social groups are sympathetic to the cause of freedom but they have not actively and consistently embraced it. But it is not just a numbers game; Papuans also need greater consensus about how freedom will be won and a coherent plan for achieving it.

A hypothesis – one that I developed at the conclusion of fourteen years of fieldwork, from 2002 to 2015 – of how the contours of freedom might be enlarged in West Papua can be expressed as an 'equation':

$$\{(mass + momentum) \times unity \text{ in three domains}\} + diplomacy \\ + political opportunities = merdeka ('freedom')$$

- **Mass** equals large numbers of people plus the numbers of organised diverse groups participating in the struggle.
- **Momentum** is strategy, a coherent plan for success. Strategy gives mass momentum. The effectiveness of mass and momentum is multiplied to the extent that there is unity between the different components of the struggle.

- Organised people and strategically applied extra-parliamentary collective action needs to take place across **three domains** – West Papua, Indonesia and internationally. Civilian-based nonviolent action in support of Papuan-led aspirations also needs to take place in Indonesia and the societies of Indonesia's elite allies, including Asian countries, the United States, Europe, Australia, Africa and, most importantly, the Pacific, particularly the Melanesian countries who are West Papuans natural allies.
- Extra-parliamentary civil resistance inside – and outside – the country (West Papua) needs to be augmented by skilled **diplomacy** outside West Papua that is deeply connected to and driven by the struggle inside the country. Conventional politicking (diplomacy) needs to make use of various national, sub-regional, regional and international processes and mechanisms, including forums like the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Committee for Decolonisation and other treaty and charter bodies of the United Nations. But because these processes and mechanisms are state centric, extremely resistant to the idea of challenging Indonesian sovereignty, West Papuans also need to go beyond diplomacy.
- Then there are a range of **political opportunities** and threats that influence outcomes and impacts. Examples of threats include the way the Indonesian government is developing militia groups in West Papua like Barisan Merah Putih (BMP or Red and White Garrison, in reference to the colours of the Indonesian flag) and the Lembaga Missi Reclasseur Republik Indonesia (LMRRI or Mission for Re-education for the Republic of Indonesia). Examples of opportunities include the 2014 visit to West Papua by a delegation of Melanesian Foreign Ministers and the 2014 presidential elections. Threats need to be minimised, opportunities exploited.

Expressed as an equation, it is more like a grand strategy, a conceptual framework, or big picture theory of change, the component parts of which need to be activated and maximised in a co-ordinated way. This requires iterative and interactive planning. An unarmed, unified mass of civilians driving resistance inside West Papua combined with co-ordinated transnational diplomacy and nonviolent solidarity outside West Papua is a promising framework to advance Papuan aspirations for freedom (see Chapter 6, where I expand on this theory of change in more detail).

As for the end game, *merdeka* equates to visions of freedom encapsulated in a thick description of self-determination (see Chapter 3). This does not mean more effective civil resistance is easy, or even likely to succeed. On this note there is good news and bad.

The good is that there is a great deal of clarity and agreement among Papuans about the root causes of conflict in West Papua: historical grievances and lack of political recognition, state violence and impunity, discrimination and racism, and economic marginalisation and neglect (see Giay 2000; Tebay 2005, 2006a; MacLeod 2007b; Widjojo 2009). The Indonesian government has compounded irresolution of the conflict through blocking open access to West Papua from media, international agencies and diplomats, although there are signs that the Indonesian government is succumbing to pressure to open up West Papua to foreign press. But open media access is not the only obstruction to a just peace. The Indonesian government continues to pursue a policy of large-scale industrialised development that disadvantages traditional landowners. It encourages unfettered migration of non-Papuans and refuses to recognising customary land rights. Then when there is resistance, or to pre-empt organising, the police and military are used as a tool to repress and divide Papuan dissent.

Papuans understand these strategies of rule. There is clarity, agreement and unity about the purpose of the West Papua freedom movement, at least at the broadest conception of strategy. Papuans want political self-determination and respect for their basic rights as indigenous peoples. They want to be masters of their own destiny, to live freely in the land of their ancestors. This emerging consensus is worth celebrating. It is the fruit of much struggle and discussion. It is also a sign that there has been significant progress around building greater trust and unity among Papuans, greatly assisted by the formation of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) in Port Vila in December 2014.

There is more good news. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan (2011) compiled and then analysed a data set of 323 conflicts (violent and nonviolent) between 1900 and 2006, all waged for maximalist political goals, national liberation, democracy and equal rights. The authors found that major nonviolent campaigns have achieved success 53 per cent of the time, compared with 26 per cent for violent resistance campaigns; 51 per cent of nonviolent transitions sustain a democratic transition, as opposed to 3 per cent of violent transitions; and the probability that a country will lapse into civil war after successful civil resistance is 28 per cent versus 43 per cent for a violent movement.

The bad news is that when this data – which includes anti-dictatorship, anti-occupation and secessionist struggles – is desegregated, anti-occupation struggles,

irrespective of the means used, fail far more often than they succeed. The success rate is 35 per cent for nonviolent campaigns and 36 per cent for violent campaigns (ibid., p. 73). This difference is not statistically significant. In other words, civil resistance and armed struggle have roughly an equal chance of succeeding in anti-occupation struggles. However, when we look at secessionist struggles (45 major campaigns from the total data set of 323) the margin for success – fully achieving the movement's stated political goals – dramatically decreases, falling to 10 per cent for violent struggles and 0 per cent for nonviolent struggles. This is not good news for the West Papuans – or people waging anti-colonial struggles in places such as Palestine, Tibet, Kanaky, Bougainville, Maohi Nui, Nagaland, Western Sahara and others.

One important caution: it is not easy to define the difference between secessionist and anti-occupation struggle. Anti-occupation struggles resist occupation by a foreign power backed up by an occupying military force. Secessionist struggles seek to separate territory from an existing state and establish a new state. Chenoweth and Stephan classify the Papuan struggle as an anti-occupation struggle, whereas many call it a secessionist struggle. They argue (ibid. pp. 69–73) that achieving Special Autonomy in 2001 constituted a partial success for the West Papuan freedom movement at the time. Most Papuans, from government and civil society, would now (in late 2015) declare Special Autonomy – and its successor Special Autonomy Plus – an abject failure, prompting a downgrade of Chenoweth and Stephan's classification to 'not yet successful'. Chenoweth and Stephan also classify the independence struggles in East Timor, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as examples of successful nonviolent anti-occupation struggles, whereas many other scholars classify them as secessionist struggles. In other words, there is good reason to say that the figure of 0 per cent for nonviolent secessionist struggles is contested and likely to be revised.

Low success rates for secessionist struggles do not necessarily diminish the utility of unarmed resistance. Success or partial success by Palestine, Western Sahara, Kanaky, Maohi Nui, Bougainville, Tibet, Nagaland and a range of other self-determination and decolonisation struggles by unrepresented peoples will alter the statistics and make even the impossible seem possible. In a world where state borders, such as in Syria and Iraq, are being redrawn, political and economic turbulence is undermining the ability of so-called 'great powers' to continually assert their interests. The permanency of the post-colonial state and current global power arrangements cannot be guaranteed. A multifaceted crisis is accelerating that will dramatically alter current political and economic power arrangements.

Civil resistance in West Papua is, in many ways, a representation of a much wider and deeper transnational struggle to fundamentally transform political and economic power. All empires eventually fall.

Nonetheless, the statistics compiled by Chenoweth and Stephan combined with their rigorous analysis illustrates the undeniable reality that self-determination struggles are much harder to resolve than anti-dictatorship or national pro-democracy struggles, irrespective of the strategies – armed struggle, civil resistance or diplomacy – used. This is for a number of reasons. First, self-determination movements are pursuing difficult goals, more difficult than overthrowing a dictatorship, which is hard enough. Just ask activists engaged in the Arab Spring. Second, there are often much higher stakes involved. In the case of West Papua, that not only includes tearing at the fabric of Indonesian national identity, it also involves a contest of who controls the country's massive resource wealth, not to mention destabilising an important US, Australian and European ally and growing economic power. Third, self-determination struggles in West Papua involve starkly different interpretations of history. They are sites of vigorous contestation over whose values and identity is recognised and therefore respected. Finally, self-determination movements are strongly affected by variables outside their control, such as sources of power external to the occupied territory, as well as by the interests of the international community (Burrowes 1996).

This poses significant challenges for the struggle for freedom in West Papua and is a central puzzle around which this book is organised. There is a fundamental strategic imperative to extend the nonviolent battlefield from the occupied territory to the occupier's own society and the societies of their elite allies (Stephan and Mundy 2006). Fortunately, all occupiers have human and material resources over which they exercise tenuous control. In the case of West Papua the Indonesian government is more dependent on domestic and international support than ongoing Papuan subservience. Fifty years of occupation show that West Papua's land and resources is much more important to the Indonesian government than the Papuan people who, in the words of one Papuan, are treated as if they are 'half animals' (Karma 2014). Waging the struggle in these three domains is necessary to probe and ultimately exploit the Indonesian government's dependency relationships that maintain the occupation.

There are other challenges specific to the West Papuan context. Perhaps the most obvious challenge is continuing state violence and neglect towards Papuans by the Indonesian security forces and an inability to stem a tide of migration that marginalises

indigenous Papuans and their concerns. The Indonesian state is also unwilling to expend their political capital by investing in a peace process, including dialogue, with Papuans. That was the dominant narrative of Susilo Bambang Yudhuyono's (SBY's) presidency: positive rhetoric about the President's commitment to support resolution of the conflict coupled by a complete lack of follow-through on SBY's expressed commitment. To put it bluntly, West Papua has not yet become enough of a political problem – either domestically or internationally – to compel Jakarta to seriously tackle the root causes of violence.

Papuans know that the Indonesian state will do all they can to stop them realising their aspirations for self-determination. This includes continued preparedness to use extremely ruthless violence and deny open access to West Papua. The failure of the movement to hold SBY accountable to his expressed desire to address violence and inequality in West Papua is a missed opportunity that requires serious introspection by the movement.

There are also significant internal movement challenges. These include overcoming global isolation, inadequate political analyses, lack of strategic planning, lack of co-ordination and insufficient strategic capacity. The movement also struggles with a lack of resources and attracting sufficient domestic and international allies. Significant mistrust and disunity between various components of the struggle, both inside and outside West Papua, also hampers progress. In many ways West Papua is a worst-case scenario: an internationally isolated and internally divided indigenous people facing a genocidal occupying army.

In spite of these challenges, Papuans continue to dream, plan and act in pursuit of self-determination and decolonisation. Significant diplomacy, lobbying and legal work is being undertaken at the international level. This activity strengthens resistance to Indonesian rule inside West Papua. There have been some important local wins like the securing of a domestic market place and some affirmative action for indigenous women market sellers. There have been substantial improvements in wages and conditions for Freeport mine workers. The closing of BHP-Billiton's nickel mine on Gag Island and inter-religious conflict prevention work are all significant successes.

What is civil resistance?

Drawing on Gene Sharp (1973), Kurt Schock (2005), Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton-Ash (2009) and Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan (2011), I define civil resistance as

sustained, organised, unarmed and extra-parliamentary collective action in the pursuit of political, economic and social goals. It includes acts of commission and omission, or both (Sharp 1973). Conventional institutional actors can still engage in collective action that falls within the bounds of civil resistance if they do so in ways that transgress parliamentary politics. To advocates of civil resistance, such as the leader of the Indian independence movement, Mohandas Gandhi, civil resistance has been as much about laying the foundations for a new equitable, participatory, sustainable, peaceful and just post-conflict future as it is about resisting direct violence and systemic oppression. The term civil resistance foregrounds the strategic, organised and disciplined soul of political struggle waged by ordinary civilians who, lacking conventional political and military might, seek to construct and wield another type of power. In order to keep the focus on the political and strategic dynamics and trajectory of civil resistance in West Papua, I consciously let a discussion of Papuan philosophical views of civil resistance slip into the background, even as I recognise the central importance of the values, norms, dialogue and aesthetics to transforming conflict (Vinthagen 2015).

Civil resistance is also known as people power, nonviolent struggle, nonviolent resistance, unarmed resistance, nonviolent conflict, or political defiance. Papuans use a variety of Bahasa Indonesia/Logat Papua terms to describe the dynamics of civil resistance. The most common ones are *tindakan anti-kekerasan* ('action against violence'), *aksi non-kekerasan* ('action that is not violent'), *gerakan anti-kekerasan* ('movement against violence') and *perlawanan tanpa kekerasan* ('resistance without violence').

Civil resistance is in fact both action that is 'not violent' and action that is 'against violence' (Vinthagen 2015). April Carter, et al. (2013) argue that what is often defined broadly as civil resistance is in fact a continuum (see also Burrowes 1996; Stiehm 1968). On one end is the nonviolent resistance of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jnr, Aung San Suu Kyi and others; collective action underpinned by a clear ethical and value-based framework. At the other end is the pragmatic praxis of oppressed people who do not resort to armed struggle but whose collective unarmed defiance does not necessarily revolve around a conscious articulation of particular moral principles. Although I privilege the term civil resistance, I use it and the words nonviolent resistance and unarmed resistance interchangeably, to reflect the diversity of perspectives present within the Papuan movement for freedom. More importantly, even when the motivations of the protagonists vary, the underlining contest between different conceptions of political power remains.

When I use the phrase nonviolent action I refer to particular tactics that are nonviolent while civil resistance refers to a broader framework of political struggle.

It is also important to clarify what civil resistance is not (see Schock 2003). Civil resistance in West Papua, and elsewhere, is not the avoidance of conflict, submissiveness, inaction, or passive resistance – a descriptor that was put in the academic dustbin by scholars of nonviolent action a long time ago. Civil resistance is not the same as peaceful dialogue, or negotiation. It is, however, necessary for creating the preconditions for dialogue, political negotiations or some kind of problem-solving process to resolve the conflict.

Civil resistance goes beyond legal action. It is predominately concerned with extra-parliamentary action. Papuan leaders engaging in nonviolent action will, at times, engage in disruptive, potentially illegal and unarmed collective action. In other words, civil resistance is not always law abiding, particularly in a context like West Papua where the legal system criminalises basic rights like the freedom of expression. It is imprecise to only equate civil resistance with legally sanctioned collective action.

Civil resistance does not assume or expect the Indonesian government will respond to Papuan resistance in a lawful and peaceful fashion. Papuans would, of course, prefer the Indonesian security forces and government to adhere to the rule of law, including the Indonesian state's own constitution, which recognises the right to freedom of expression, but that has not been the experience of the last 50 plus years. Suharto was responsible for killing over half a million Indonesian citizens, yet ultimately a movement of unarmed people, mostly led by students, overthrew him. When resistance – unarmed or armed – threatens powerful vested interests, it will be met with violence by power-holders. Violence is not the decisive determinant in an asymmetrical conflict that pits a people against their rulers. State violence can be used to the movement's advantage to trigger greater support for the movement's goals (Martin 2007). Repression does not equal defeat as long as it does not lead to demobilisation. The key question is not the extent to which the state responds to a civil resistance movement with violence, even extremely ruthless repression, but whether challengers are resilient, and persist, even in the face of violence. And as Sharp (1973), Ralph Summy (1994), Robert Burrowes (1996, 2014), Schock (2005), Brian Martin (2007), Kristina Thalhammer, et al. (2007) and MacLeod (2015c) assert, there is much that can be done to strengthen movement resilience in the face of extremely ruthless repression.

Another misconception that surfaces in the West Papuan context is that civil resistance will result in high numbers of casualties. In fact, the historical record

overwhelmingly shows that although nonviolent movements should prepare for casualties, the number of deaths and injuries will almost certainly be far lower than if the struggle is waged through violent action (see Keyes 1991). Still the fear of a violent response from the state apparatus remains. Many Papuan activists organising large nonviolent demonstrations against Indonesian rule fear facing a ruthless military willing to kill large numbers of demonstrators. But from a dictator's point of view will this strengthen or weaken their rule? Roland Francisco (2005), a social movement scholar, looked at this question. He investigated the effect of massacres on mobilisation, asking, 'Does a massacre enhance stability and the endurance of a dictatorship?' Francisco found that massacres do not help dictators maintain control. Public killings of large numbers of demonstrators by the authorities nearly always increases mobilisation in the short term, and in the long term – and it may be a long time – massacres hurt dictatorships. The Indonesian government knows this (Setiawan 2014, pp. xiii–xiv). The 12 November 1991 Dili massacre hastened the end of the Indonesian occupation in East Timor. The effects of mass killings in places like the highlands in 1977, in Biak on 6 July 1998 and elsewhere continue to generate organised Papuan political opposition to Indonesian rule. As a result, the Indonesian government has changed its strategies of rule away from mass killings to using torture, random acts of brutalisation and the fear of mass killing to limit organised nonviolent resistance and mobilisation (Hernawan 2013). And just in case public killings do happen, the state maintains a ban on open media access.

The Indonesian state, for the most part, is cognisant of the reality that it is totally counterproductive for them to carry out massacres. For this reason there is a kind of mutual dependency between the violence of the state and the counter-violence of the resistance. The state needs the military to maintain control of West Papua's land and resource wealth. But to do this it has to criminalise Papuan resistance. It is far easier for the Indonesian state to justify their presence and use of violence against Papuans when resistance is violent.

There is an assumption that successful civil resistance in West Papua will require 'progressive leadership' in Jakarta – a 'partner' willing to facilitate change. Ending the Indonesian occupation of West Papua will require some level of negotiation with Jakarta. However, that does not mean the freedom movement has to convince the Indonesian government that the occupation is morally wrong. Ultimately, the Indonesian state will only negotiate under pressure. That pressure will come jointly from within West Papua, from within Indonesian society and internationally, as challengers raise the economic and political costs of the occupation and continually assert international norms surrounding

negotiation and nonviolent conflict resolution. In the event that an authoritarian ruler like Suharto, or his protégé Prabowo Subianto, does assume power in Indonesia that may not be all bad news for the people of West Papua. The evidence from the literature on revolutions indicates that a personalist dictatorship can, in fact, be beneficial because it can unite internal and external opposition (Foran 1997).

Finally, civil resistance movements do not need charismatic leaders to succeed. In many contexts a collective leadership structure is more effective than a single charismatic leader like King or Gandhi. The movements in Chile (1983–88), the Philippines (1986) and Serbia (2000) were all led by some form of collective leadership. Effective leadership is essential. However, there are various models of leadership that provide cohesion while encouraging the kind of local self-organisation, innovation, co-ordination and organisational resilience necessary for long-term struggle. What is vital in a collective and group-centred form of leadership is a shared vision and strategy, underpinned by a decentralised network structure that facilitates effective communication and co-ordination among all the components of the struggle.

False or partial understandings of the power of civil resistance can lead challengers away from seriously exploring or developing nonviolent extra-parliamentary collective action to its full potential. A false or partial understanding of civil resistance might also result in people in key social institutions – the media, academia, civil society, religious institutions, and policy communities, in particular – to discount, overlook or misunderstand the dynamics of civil resistance. This would be a mistake because unarmed collective action is a potent force for change that deserves more attention. The dangers of accepting any one of these misconceptions should now be clear.

What is self-determination?

At the Lae meeting (referred to in the Prologue) I rose to deliver my presentation and took a deep breath before acknowledging the traditional owners of the land we were staying on. I acknowledged the sweat and tears of those in the room, and the sacrifice of people who have since passed on. In formal Indonesian I thanked the organisers for the invitation, then with all the courage I could muster, I told those present that ‘I don’t support independence’.

You could have heard a pin drop. This was a meeting of independence activists and resistance leaders. Many had spent years in jail for their political beliefs. To my left was Richard Yoweni, the leader of the TPN (West Papua National Liberation Army) faction of

the north coast who later headed up the WPNCL (West Papua National Coalition for Liberation), a man considered by many in the room to be the Supreme Commander of the guerrillas. I don't think I will ever forget his intense gaze on me at that moment. Kelly Kwalik, the legendary guerrilla leader who would be killed by Indonesian troops in December 2009, had sent a representative who was now sitting directly in front of me and eyeing me suspiciously.

'I am an outsider' I continued:

It is not my role to campaign for independence. It is up to you as Melanesians living in the land of your ancestors. And while I am committed to standing in solidarity with you in the pursuit of peace with justice, ultimately it would not be Australians like me who would pay the political costs for campaigning for independence. It will be people like you. For me as an outsider, to argue for independence would be to assume a colonial mantle. I have no right as an outsider to presume that I can speak on behalf of what you, as West Papuans, want. Instead, I am committed to accompanying you on your journey.

The principle that guides that journey is self-determination, a founding principle of both indigenous politics and international relations. Self-determination has been enshrined in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter and is recognised as a right of all peoples in the first article common to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which both entered into force in 1976. Paragraph 1 of the ICCPR and the ICESCR provides, 'All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.' The term self-determination is also central to the UN Charter and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In practice, however, there has been a failure to apply this right beyond post-Second World War cases of decolonisation, as articulated from the perspective of the great powers. There are two competing perspectives at stake: those who see self-determination as a right and those who regard it as a principle. These are old arguments in international relations.

Many Papuans backup their deep-seated desires for self-determination with a reference to international law, citing Article 1, Section 1, of both the ICCPR and the ICESCR and more recently The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples. Many Papuans will argue that West Papua remains a trust territory of the United Nations because the United Nations never fulfilled their obligations under the 1962, New York Agreement and UN Charter.

The exact legal meaning of self-determination in the above three international human rights instruments, however, is contested. Western states like Australia, Canada and New Zealand rule out the creation of independent nations within existing state borders (and have poor records when it comes to more limited indicators of self-determination and wellbeing of their indigenous populations). The meaning of self-determination for those countries with secessionist struggles where the borders were defined during the colonial era is even more contentious. The Indonesian government argues that self-determination was already granted to West Papuans when the territory was finally handed over to the Indonesian government to administer on 1 May 1963, following a protracted campaign against the Netherlands. According to Jakarta any remaining question of legitimacy was settled when the United Nations accepted the results of the 1969 Act of Free Choice (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations New York 2003). The doctrine of *uti possidetis juris*, also known as the successor state principle, the convention that the ‘territories of post-colonial states should match those of the colonial territories they replaced’ (Saltford 2003), has also been invoked by the Indonesian government. They insist that its territorial integrity is defined by the borders they won from the Dutch during the war of liberation (Drooglever 2009). In practice, however, whether a particular state’s rights and legitimacy over contested territory is recognised and upheld by the international community varies over time. It depends a lot more on politics than law, particularly the nature of conflict and resistance unfolding in the territory in question (Matsuno 2011).

Colonial boundaries are not inviolable. The recent cases of East Timor, Kosovo, Sudan and Crimea are all evidence of this. Akihisa Matsuno argues that in both Kosovo and South Sudan there was no firm ruling on self-determination by the International Court but the right to secession was recognised. In the case of Kosovo, statehood was affirmed as a political remedy to address years of state violence by the Serbian government towards Kosovar Albanians. In East Timor, the 1999 referendum was a delayed exercise of the right to self-determination and subsequent independence. Although the Indonesian government referred to the August 1999 referendum as a ‘popular consultation’ and domestic process, in reality it has created a precedent for a future determination of the collective will of whether Papuans want to remain in Indonesia or separate from it. Equally, the post-

referendum violence unleashed by the Indonesian military underlines a possible response to the desire to separate from Indonesia. Matsuno argues that the referendum East Timor effectively amounts 'to recognition [by the Indonesian government] of the right to secession, although it has never been presented as such' (ibid., p. 186).

The ethnic distinctiveness of the resisting population, levels of violence, contemporary failure of governance (not only historical grievances) and the extent to which the resisting population was able – either violently or nonviolently – to disrupt the occupation and render their territory ungovernable, were all factors contributing to independence for Kosovo, Southern Sudan and East Timor. The right to self-determination may be receding in its ability to resonate with the international community but other norms are coming to the fore. These include fundamental moral concerns over secession and the sustainability of an occupying government to continue their rule without ongoing turmoil and violence. Norms concerning human rights and responsibility to protect are also being used to frame international intervention. What scholars like Matsuno are arguing is that legality is no longer the only, or even the most important, issue at stake in determining state borders. The ability of a state to protect their citizens and function as a governing authority is perhaps more important. The cases of Kosovo, Sudan and East Timor all demonstrate that questions of political legitimacy – not just in framing intervention but also in challenging state rule – are of fundamental importance in the political contestation over state boundaries.

How has a commitment to self-determination influenced this particular research project? The principle of self-determination operated as a kind of compass to help navigate the research journey. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) was my principle guide on this journey. She argues that researchers working with indigenous people need to 'privilege Indigenous concerns, Indigenous practices and Indigenous participation' (ibid., p. 107). Peter Reason and Bill Torbert argue this inevitably involves 'turning to action' (cited in Kincheloe and McLaren 2005, pp. 314–15). Drawing from her experience as a Maori researcher/activist/educator, Smith outlines an indigenous research agenda that contributes to indigenous people's aspirations for self-determination. She is clear that research practice requires respect. Researches and research needs to make tangible contributions to host communities. Smith reinforces the notion of self-determination as a political and also ethical concept. She defines self-determination in broad terms:

Self-determination in a research agenda becomes more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice, which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilizing of peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical elements of a strategic research agenda (1999, p. 116).

Self-determination, therefore, exists as an ideal, process and outcome. As an ideal, self-determination refers to the realisation of the collective aspirations of indigenous peoples living within defined cultural, linguistic and geographic territories and the ability of those peoples and groups to fully participate in the decisions that affect their lives. As a process, it refers to the difficult, contested and ongoing practice of securing, maintaining and fulfilling desires for political, economic, social and cultural rights that impact on people's and groups' abilities to determine their own future. This requires ongoing struggle, one that does not end with attaining a cherished political goal (Scheiner 2006). As an outcome, self-determination refers to the claim to the right of self-government within the boundaries of a given territory. That may include independence or it may not. In West Papua, self-determination includes Papuans' participation in a referendum over the territory's political status but it is also not limited by this.

More localised demands for self-determination can be translated into demands for greater administrative and legislative rule, local indigenous control over land and resources and the ability to define and direct development activity. This includes the right to say no to development, exercise control over migration and the freedom to express distinct cultural and religious identities. Respecting a population's development rights requires that a state's security forces are brought under civilian control and subject to stringent human rights mechanisms and laws. Support for self-determination as an ideal, process and outcome is about aligning a research agenda with indigenous and community-led visions and strategies entwined in the pursuit of real and tangible benefits for the host community. It is, as Mario Blaser, et al. (2004) assert, about aligning a 'research project' with a community's 'life project'.

In this sense, the goal of self-determination is both more and less than a simple demand for independence. As an outcome, one milestone in the long struggle for freedom could be an independent state. But while independence may result in the removal of an

aggressive occupying military and police force it will clearly not resolve other causes of conflict and violence. These include ongoing questions of corruption, capacity and governance; entrenched racism; horizontal conflict between competing ethnic groups; demands for justice and equality in the health and education sectors; and desires for equitable development and local visions of self-determination in an economy currently heavily dependent on the resource extraction sector. There are other more limited political arrangements that point to possible political outcomes that reflect aspirations for self-determination. These include some kind of genuine and equitable autonomy or self-government arrangement based on creative and mutually agreeable solutions to core grievances that meet human needs (qualitatively different from the current form of Special Autonomy). Other options are free association with Indonesia along the lines of some Micronesian countries and a comprehensive land rights-based approach, possibly echoing similar arrangements adopted by the Canadian government and Inuit in Canada. There could also be some sort of genuine federal realignment of the Indonesian State or something else that reflects indigenous beliefs and traditions in West Papua. As Kevin Clements, Volker Boege, Anne Brown and Wendy Foley (2007) remind us, between the modern Westphalian state and traditional forms of governance is a world of political hybridity (and possibility).

It is important to acknowledge, however, that Smith's more expansive interpretation of self-determination is not widely shared by some Papuan nationalists struggling for liberation. A number of Papuan and solidarity activists, for example, frame self-determination in far more limited terms: as a process, the right to a referendum on sovereignty, and as a goal, the right to separate statehood. The danger of doing so is that they play into a zero-sum game: independence or nothing. It is a game in which, failing seismic geopolitical shifts and/or economic collapse, the interests of the Indonesian state, transnational capital and the international community, at least at this stage, are nearly always aligned. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that virtually all Papuans I have met, including pragmatic individuals who work for the state, harbour independence dreams even while they cultivate allies from within government and the security forces and work towards more limited campaign objectives. The research process and outputs have, in small ways, attempted to unsettle this all or nothing view – not to repudiate Papuan demands for independence, which are, understandable and many would argue (including myself), legitimate, but to make space for other, more expansive and localised perceptions. To do this we need to resist narrowing or restricting the definition of self-determination – on either end of the spectrum.