Ukraine: The Struggle for Power and Identity

By Karina V. Korostelina, Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution, ckoroste@gmu.edu

The decision of the Ukrainian president to turn away from the European Union has led to mass street protests. But that decision was only a triggering event, not the main motivation for the current unrest. Despite the mass media's presentation of the current situation in Ukraine as a conflict between a pro-Russian government and pro-European anti-totalitarian popular opposition, the reality is much more complex and multilayered. One dimension is ethnic and regional differences in the perception of the nation and the contested and controversial process of imagining a national community. The second dimension is antagonism of the people and the government in the extremely poor economic conditions, corruption, and impoverishment of the population. The third dimension is a contradiction between liberal ideology of the emerging civic society and primordial positions of the majority of the population. And finally, the fourth dimension is the support of, or opposition to, the influence of Russia on Ukrainian politics, economy, culture, and social processes.

A man waving a Ukrainian flag in front of riot police.
Photo: Flickr user Lubomyr Salamakha.

First, independent Ukraine inherited an unfinished process of nation-building complicated by historic, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences between regions. The contestation of Ukrainian national identity impacts internal conflicts between ethnic and regional groups. Undefined Ukrainian national identity influences foreign policy and defines the vector of international relations, including relations with Russia and the European Union.

Second, the absence of a clear national idea is strongly interconnected with the democratic and economic development of Ukraine. The promise of president, Yanukovich, to combat corruption as a major problem in Ukraine was never fulfilled: glaring conflicts of interest among senior officials, combined with delays in the passage of anticorruption legislation, fueled public skepticism about the leadership's ability to combat graft in 2010. According to Transparency International's corruption perceptions index, Ukraine's rank among the 178 surveyed countries changed from 134th in 2010 to 144th in 2012. The Heritage Foundation's 2013 index of economic freedom put Ukraine in the 161st place out of 177 surveyed states. Forbes placed Ukraine in the fourth place among the world's worst economies.

Third, the national identity is deeply rooted in ethnicity and culture while the civic foundations of national identity are less developed. Based on the legacy of Soviet ethno-federalism and the incorporation of ethnic identity into the state passport system, the development of the nation has become perceived in ethnic terms. Democracy is very weak and civic society is still in an embryonic state, having virtually no influence on the government.

commentary

Sudan at the Crossroads:

Using Education to Resolve 48 Years of Conflict

By Adeeb Yousif, S-CAR PhD Student, aabdela2@gmu.edu

After completing her Masters degree at George Mason University, Megan Greeley, an S-CAR alumna, joined an international NGO, with a field office located in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

Educating the Youth in Sudan. Photo: Adeeb Yousif.

Megan, who has always been very committed to the field of conflict resolution, engaged in other consultancy and peacebuilding matters outside of her official job. During one such consultancy, Megan met with the Director of the Peace and Development Studies at the University of Bahri in Khartoum about how to make the school more sustainable. Megan's suggestion was that she would liaise on behalf of the Director in contacting S-CAR for technical and professional assistance. She subsequently contacted faculty members at S-CAR, in particular Dr. Daniel Rothbart, who has done substantial work in the Sudan.

From the 6th to the 14th of February 2014, Dr. Buthaina Ahmed Elnaiem, a professor at the Department of Economics, College of Social and Economic Studies, University of Bahri visited S-CAR. During her visit, Dr. Buthaina had the opportunity to meet and interact with some faculty members as well as students. She concluded her visit with the statement "this is the right place to be to learn how to help resolve the Sudanese conflict." Some of the ideas that came out of that initial meeting involved a redesign of their curriculum, developing an online education, and finally getting a library resource center. Although nothing official has been done yet, a number of individuals kindly donated some books to the program at the University of Bahri. The feedback that came back from the University is that the book contributions have been making a great difference in increasing students' knowledge and skills about conflict analysis and resolution.

The University of Bahri is not a new school in the Sudan, although its original name has changed. The school used to be called the University of Juba, which was founded in 1975 as part of the Addis Ababa Agreement that ended the first war, fought between 1956 and 1972. Unfortunately, the second war, which was fought between 1983 and 2005, forced people to migrate. The University of Juba, the only institution in South Sudan at that time, had to do the same. The secession of South Sudan from the Sudan in 2011 meant that the school had been permanently relocated to Khartoum. The Sudanese government subsequently renamed the school to the University of Bahri.

Being Sudanese, the question that I continually ask myself is why my country, throughout the 58-years of independence, has been embroiled in protracted civil conflicts for about 48 years. The only seemingly peaceful period was a ten-year break which Johann Galtung, a peace researcher, might even refer to as the "negative peace" period. Millions of lives have been lost during this period, of which many have been women and children. Coupled with that, many people have been forced to flee their homes, with some becoming internally displaced persons or refugees in other countries. The conflict has also affected infrastructure, the economy, and the environmental as well as education and health systems. The current exploration between the S-CAR and the University of Bahri, I believe, is a step in the right direction as it offers hope for Sudan in terms of looking for avenues to stem the tide of perpetual violence that is plaguing the country. The general objectives of the proposed collaboration should provide the platform for an alternative to the use of violence to resolve conflicts. Education is vital, as it can be a gateway to development, security, prosperity, understanding, acceptance, respect and peaceful coexistence.

I cannot think of a better sustainable solution for the conflict in Sudan, or in any other African country, than education and human rights education. The majority of people need to learn and be fully aware of their rights and how to put their rights and duties into practice. Neither humanitarian intervention nor political solutions can exist if there is no respect for human rights, respect for each other, in a multi-racial, multi-culture, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society with everyone equally enjoying peaceful co-existence and development. ■

S-CAR Speaks:

The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution's Weekly Video Podcast Project

By Gedeon Patrick Hakizimana, S-CAR PhD Student, ghakizim@gmu.edu

As students, faculty members, scholars, and practitioners of the S-CAR community, continue to look to engage in and undertake initiatives to tackle both domestic and global issues, the focus of the weekly video podcast project, dubbed S-CAR Speaks, will look to engage with those individuals about their work and their efforts in both the field and in academia.

This project, which was started in the Spring of 2012 by Cassie Ammen, the Communications and Events Associate at S-CAR and Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, a PhD student at S-CAR, was designed to be a monthly video podcast series. Their work for that academic year included a session with students talking about the KONY 2012 video, a discussion on Somalia's current problems, the Russian elections and subsequent riots, and an initiative to create a platform for talking about gun regulation in the state of Virginia, among many others. With the popular and a very successful first year of the S-CAR Speaks project, the format was changed from a monthly podcast series to a weekly one, due to the number of initiatives that students and faculty were undertaking. This expansion also led to Catherine Walsh and Soolmaz Abooali joining the team.

For this academic year, S-CAR Speaks will primarily focus on projects as well as commentaries from individuals familiar with

Patrick Hakizimana, S-CAR Speaks Producer. Photo: S-CAR

Soolmaz Abooali, S-CAR Speaks Host. Photo: Soolmaz Abooali

Catherine Walsh, S-CAR Speaks Host. Photo: S-CAR

Cassie Ammen, S-CAR Speaks Producer. Photo: Mason Creative Services

current developments surrounding issues such as the ongoing 'Arab spring' unrest still unravelling in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the breakout of civil war in South Sudan, the religious conflict taking place in the Central African Republic between Christians and Muslims, and, more recently, the unrest that turned most parts of the Ukraine into a war-zone. As scholars committed to conflict resolution, we must engage in conversations, analysis, the study and the reflection of actions and inactions in order to develop better develop theories or revise old ones to continuously improve upon our work. Thus, S-CAR Speaks is a platform for the S-CAR community to discuss and analyze current conflicts and their resolution as well as present their projects that they are engaged in all over the world. The vison is that one would be able to apply theory to practice from the classroom experience to a real life event. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

S-CAR Speaks is usually recorded on Monday or Tuesday. The videos are edited and put on the website and are usually about 15 - 20 minutes long. Individuals can also publish their analysis and projects in S-CAR News following the podcast. for this academic year, the format for S-CAR Speaks will be modified to accommodate individuals who are not affiliated to S-CAR but whose work are related to the field and the school. Individuals can also personally reach out to such individuals and either decide to interview them or have one of our hosts do it. For more information, please contact Patrick Hakizimana at ghakizim@gmu.edu or The John Burton library at scarlib@gmu.edu.

initiatives

Community, Transparency, and the S-CAR Student Association

By Dilafruz Khonikboyeva, S-CAR MS Student, dkhonikb@gmu.edu

WHAT should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured."

The "counterculture's novelist" has many things to teach us as students at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and world citizens, but this particular Kurt Vonnegut quote is the most poignant for us. A sense of community as we enter, grow, and prepare to leave S-CAR is of paramount importance in quelling the loneliness of academic writing, job searching, and finding our place within the field.

We would like to help fulfill this desire for a strong, coherent sense of community in our academic life and career trajectories. Throughout February, we have campaigned, staged, and completed an election of an Interim Executive Committee. This group, consisting of a President, MS/Certificate Liaison, PhD Liaison, and a Treasurer, will oversee a Constitutional Committee that will lay the framework for an accountable, transparent, and fully functioning Student Association in Fall 2014. We have official school recognition and funding to support students. Most importantly, we hope we have your trust and buy-in to create a community to deal with the challenges present at S-CAR, in Washington DC, and in the field.

Your newly elected officials are Alexandra Schaerrer, Van Schmidt, David Younes, and myself. As a first year PhD candidate and international student, Alexandra is very aware of the concerns of her cohort, particularly access to advisory options, dissertation processes, publishing opportunities, and funding availability. As the PhD Liaison, the hope is that she is able to set a precedent in access and unity of information to aid incoming classes.

Van Schmidt is not only a second-year MS student but also a previous certificate student. He has experienced the challenges involved in starting and working through both programs. As the MS/Certificate Liaison, he would like to be a source as well as a collector of information that leads to an institutional knowledge to aid students in both programs.

David Younes is a second year MS student who brings a wealth of knowledge from his time in the Peace Corps and the Department of Treasury's Office of the Inspector General. In his role as treasurer, David will emphasize fiscal responsibility, effective oversight, and complete transparency in dealing with funding provided by GMU to the Student Association.

As a former undergraduate alum and a current second year MS student, the need for community has gained urgency as I have come to realize the importance of a strong Student Association as the basis for a strong Alumni Network. In my role as President, I hope to marry this knowledge of S-CAR with my position as the Chief of Media Relations and Strategy at USAID's Center for International Development to ensure that students are aware of the Student Association and engage because they realize it exists to serve them and their needs.

From picking classes to writing a thesis or dissertation, a community like the Student Association should be able to provide information about publishing and support students through funding. This support and service, we hope, will incorporate a strong Alumni Network that can guide students through grants, writing, and area expertise.

The learning process and need for community continue past our time as active students at Mason.

As we strive to provide a foundation for future incoming students and ourselves as alumni, we hope you will engage with us to tell us what your wants, needs, and expectations are. With this sense of community, we can confidently move forward in the "many things" we should be doing with our lives. Feel free to talk to each of us individually or write us: scarstudentassociation@gmail.com or https://www.facebook.com/scarsagmu?fref=ts. ◾

S-CAR Student Association Executive Team. From left to right: David Younes, Dilafruz Khonikboyeva, Alexandra Schaerrer and Van Schmidt.
Photo: S-CAR.

Scholar Opinion: The Struggle for West Papuan Independence

By Herman Wainggai, S-CAR Visiting Scholar, hwaingga@gmu.edu

New Guinea, the world's second largest island, sits on the Pacific Rim, a few degrees south of the equator and approximately 150km north of Australia. Originally connected to the mainland of Australia, this island for over a thousand years was home to hundreds of groups of Melanesian and Austronesian people. In 1885, the island and its people were divided by a partition agreement between the Dutch, English, and German colonial governments. This partition split the island into Papua New Guinea (in the east) and Indonesian-occupied West Papua (in the west), and it remains so even to this day. Among the many problems that indigenous Papuans are currently facing are that Indonesia, with the help of multinational corporations, has been extracting the natural resources of the land rapaciously without any benefit ensuing for the people in terms of improving their standard of living. Many of the leaders who have been involved in peaceful campaigns for freedom for West Papua have either died in prison or now live in exile. Despite the Indonesian occupation, enforced by the military for over fifty years in what has been a no-go zone to the international community, the people of this forgotten land have been struggling for freedom from oppression and they have confidence that the moral and legal injustice of their country's theft will be eventually overturned.

Like other nations, Papuans search for democracy, justice, and equality, but West Papua continues to be haunted by what has been called a "memoria passionis," or a collective 'memory of suffering.' On one hand, this refers to the complexities of the suffering experiences of the West Papuans under the control of the Indonesian government. On the other hand, the Memoria Passionis is a theological term referring to the redemptive sufferings of Jesus. This faith-construct imbues many West Papuans with a sense of identity, purpose, and meaning in a life of afflictions and subjugation. In that sense, it is analogous to the early black American experience of slavery in America, finding cultural expression in their spirituality. An example is the notion that "nobody knows the trouble I have seen, nobody knows but Jesus." This has enabled them to celebrate 'life in the midst of death' and transform defeat into hope of victory, hate into love, violence into peace and the inhuman dispensing of wrong into commitment to justice. The ongoing conflict, as such, inspires West Papuans to endeavor to solve their 'memoria passionis' through non-violence.

2012 Demonstration for independence.
Photo: Herman Wainggaii.

In 1962, the Kennedy administration devised the New York Agreement, signed between the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the United Nations, whereby the Indonesian governance replaced a relatively benign Dutch-colonial administration. The Papuans themselves had no say in this decision, which satiated President Sukarno's appetite for more land (416,000 square kilometers), pacified President Kennedy's fear of communism, and allowed American business interests to initiate the Freeport-McMoran gold and copper mine. During this transition period from Dutch colonial administration to Indonesian administration there were approximately 700,000 indigenous West Papuans and around 300 tribes, speaking at least 250 languages. Under Indonesian rule, the Papuan population has threatened to be overwhelmed by non-Papuans, mostly government-sponsored internal transmigrants and free settlers. A demographic study in 2010 titled "Slow motion genocide or not?" showed the indigenous population at 48%, down from 96.09% in 1971, with an annual growth rate of only 1.84%, compared to a non-Papuan rate of 10.82%. A statistic that increases the motivation of the independence activists is the projection that by 2020, West Papuans will be "a small and rapidly dwindling minority," the Melanesian proportion constituting, at most, 28% of the total population.

From the beginning of the Indonesian soldiers marching in, the West Papuans endured a harsh and authoritarian rule under President Suharto. Large scale atrocities were carried out, particularly in the highlands where there were low level military resistance. In the 1980's, arrests and incarceration of nonviolent political prisoners continued, where some leaders were sent to lengthy prison sentences of ten and twelve years. More recently, on October 19, 2011, over three hundred civilians were arrested at the conclusion of the Third West Papuan National Congress, including Edison Waromi and Forkorus Yaboisembut, the appointed Prime Minister and President, respectively. Waromi and Yaboisembut are two of over fifty political prisoners currently in West Papuan gaols. Despite this re-run of suppression of their aspirations, this will not deter Melanesians from nonviolent struggle until self-determination within a democratic framework is achieved, and recognition, respect, and support from the international community is gained. Although West Papua was granted the "Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua in the form of a Separate Government" in 2001, little has changed. Special Autonomy was touted to the international community as a "decentralization" program, but after more than a decade, the level of hardship in relation to sickness,

Christy Cheesman, CAR Undergraduate Student

By Innocent Rugaragu, S-CAR PhD Student, irugarag@gmu.edu

Christy Cheesman is a Conflict Analysis and Resolution major at George Mason University. Her concentration is in community organizations and she intends to work for a non-profit organization in DC in the very near future. Christy is a sophomore from Williamsburg, Virginia, and last semester she completed a non-profit studies minor as well as an internship with The National Center for State Courts Arlington Office. She is also a proud member of the Mindful Living LLC and a sister of Gamma Phi Beta.

"Conflict Analysis and Resolution is important to me because I have learned that the majority of conflicts can

Christy Cheesman.
Photo: Christy Cheesman.

be solved if people work together," she said. She would as such like to take the practices she has learned and encourage more non-profit organizations to collaborate in the work of conflict analysts and resolutionists. As she said, "when one combines minds and resources, anything is possible." Christy also noted that she took every moment as an opportunity to learn. "I have grown the most in situations where I was out of my comfort zone, and I would like to keep pushing myself. I am eager to experience new things and learn about cultures other than my own. The more I see the more I realize I know nothing!" ◼

Ihsan Gunduz, S-CAR MS Student

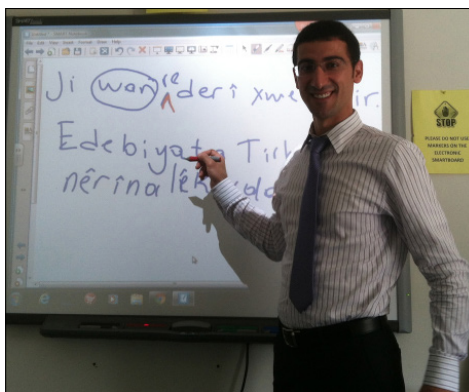By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, S-CAR PhD Student and Newsletter Editor, kdegraft@gmu.edu

The words, "In cases of protracted conflict, an act of violence always has unanticipated consequences. Its effects far exceed the objectives of strategists and perpetrators" were what first drew Ihsan Gundiz to the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. As he said "I felt a very deep connection in reading the book titled *Identity, Morality, and Threat* authored by Daniel Rothbart and Karina Korostelina [both professors at S-CAR], as it explained a lot about the conflict that I was born into."

Ihsan grew up in a conflict zone as an internally displaced person in Turkey because of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The conflict, as he indicated, had its origins in the Turkish nation-state building after World War I and the exclusion of the minorities such as Kurds from this monolithic creation of the nation state. Ihsan's views on the conflict has been more about finding ways to have both Kurds and Turks learn to live together peacefully and find a way to reconstruct the national identity of Turkey to include all minorities because "the violence has done nothing but

Ihsan Gunduz teaching. Photo: Ihsan Gunduz.

to put a social boundary between both Turkish and Kurdish communities, which is hurting both our national identities and with it cultural, social, political, and economic development."

Ihsan's work thus far has been on teaching history in Turkish high schools, working for a non-profit organization called the American Kurdish Information Network (AKIN), and working as a language analyst and a consultant for various organizations. "These experiences, coupled with my current pursuit of a Masters degree at S-CAR, are positioning me to be better equipped to try to find creative ways for which the Turkish-Kurdish conflict will be a thing of the past."

Ihsan is focusing his studies on revision of history textbooks, peacebuilding, and identity, but after school, one of the projects he aims to undertake is to write a manual for history teachers on how to promote peace and teach more inclusive history of all the people of Turkey. "Perhaps this may be the first course for reconciliation for both Kurds and Turks if they can read about one another." ◼
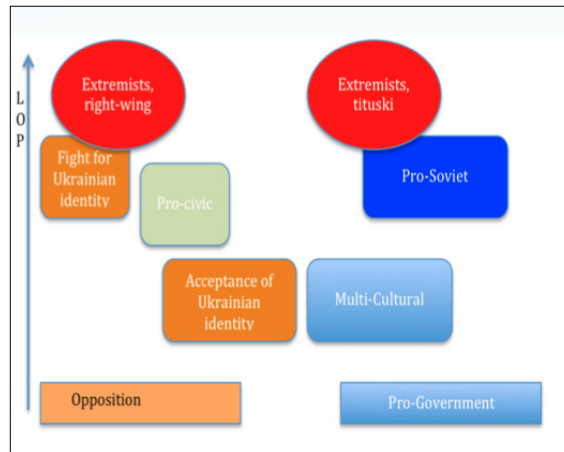
Ukraine: The Struggle for Power and Identity

Finally, Ukrainian identity depends on the establishment of a clear distinction from Russia, at the same time this identity remains closely tied to Russia. It is extremely sensitive to changes in Russian policy. The arrogant imperial actions of Russia strengthen the divide between the two countries while economic cooperation increases positive sentiments toward Russia. While in 2012, 83% of the Ukrainian population had positive attitudes toward Russia (with regional differences of 91% in Eastern and Southern regions and 63% in Western regions), only 14% wanted to reunite with Russia.

An illustration of the positions of the different groups in the current conflict. The LOP is the level of participation in the current unrest. Diagram: Karina V. Korostelina.

This complexity of issues is reflected in the high heterogeneity of the opposition. There are several opposition groups with very different narratives. The most active is the group promoting the "Struggle for Ukrainian Ethnic Identity." They describe Ukraine as a homogenous culture of ethnic Ukrainians with enclaves of pro-Soviet Russians that have resulted from colonization and immigration. Ukraine for them is a post-colonial, post-genocidal society that was able to survive, preserve its culture and language, and achieve independence. They believe that Ukrainian culture, language, and history remain under threat from the pro-Soviet population and the present government, which is supported by Russia. The major divide in the society is between authentic Ukrainian democratic values and pro-Soviet Russian totalitarian ideals. They join the opposition to protect Ukrainian language and history from pro-Soviet influences and to create policies that empower the Ukrainian ethnic group. Some of this group, including members of the "Svoboda" party, are involved in extremist actions.

They are joined by a group that promotes Ukraine as multicultural civic state with coequal ethnic groups that should build a civic, not ethnic, concept of national identity. This society for them is the product of the efforts of all Ukrainian citizens, united by the idea of independence. They see the threat to their ideas from both Ukrainian and Russian nationalists as well as the pro-Soviet population. They protest paternalistic and totalitarian government and believe that Ukraine's common identity should be grounded in inclusive ideas of citizenship and should reflect the plural voices of Ukrainian history.

The third group that forms the opposition shares the narrative "Recognition of Ukrainian Ethnic Identity." They see Ukraine as a homogenous culture of ethnic Ukrainians with small ethnic minority groups: Russians, Crimean Tatars, and Hungarians. The society is united by the deep democratic traditions of Ukrainian culture, which differs from Russian totalitarianism. The Russian-speaking population enjoys sufficient opportunities in Ukraine; tensions are provoked only when Russia is trying to manipulate the issues. They are on the streets to defend Ukrainian independence from the Russian influence in politics, economics, and culture in Ukraine.

The population that supports the government is also heterogeneous. One group supports a vision of Ukraine as a country with a dual identity comprising two coequal ethnic groups. People supporting this narrative are proud of their Ukrainian-Russian culture and heritage, see the country as divided by regional differences, and believe that Ukrainian nationalists are the ones responsible for escalating tensions in the country. They see the opposition as a threat to the Russian language and culture as well as the position of Russians in the structure of power.

The second pro-government group professes a pro-Soviet narrative and provides positive assessment of the history of the Soviet Union. Ukraine is thus portrayed as a multicultural society where all internal conflicts are provoked by nationalists. They believe that Soviet Ukraine was a tolerant brotherly nation based on the common identity of the Soviet people (Sovetskii narod), but now nationalists are imposing their vision of history and society on the whole country and are ruining the peaceful nation. Some of the most extremist pro-government activists belong to this category and some, including the "Tatuski" group, are being paid by the country leadership.

To address this complexity and mitigate the conflict, it is important to introduce both agonistic dialogue and develop a shared society. Agonistic dialogue rests on the ideas of agonistic pluralism that converts antagonism into agonism that implies a deep respect and concern for the other, promotes engagement of adversaries across profound differences, and involves a vibrant clash of democratic political positions. In divided societies, agonistic dialogue becomes an essential practice that contributes to building relationships and expands understanding between groups. Dialogue in divided society should not illuminate conflict, but rather transform the nature of that conflict. Thus, agonistic dialogue practice is less about finding the 'truth' or some form of consensus about the history of the conflict, but rather about seeking accommodation of conflicting positions.

The development of shared power and shared society will ensure legitimacy of the new government. A simple transfer of power to the opposition will lead to a new swing of pendulum and decrease its legitimacy for Ukrainian population. The new government should be formed as a coalition of all parties and major groups in Ukrainian society and should promote the idea of shared society. A shared society supports equality of all cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, recognizing their values and interdependence. This approach addresses divisions between groups and creates positive connections between communities. Accountable governments and inclusive decision-making, including administration, representative bodies, an accessible judicial system, free and fair elections, and equal access to basic services, help develop trust and positive social engagement. The development of a shared society in Ukraine must be collaborative, adaptive to social environment, and include all stakeholders in the consensus-oriented efforts to build a peaceful and inclusive society. ■

The Struggle for West Papuan Independence

maternal deaths, poverty, and education in Papua are still the worst in Indonesia. This is largely the result of embezzlement and corruption by Indonesian government officials. The Indonesian Forum for Budget Transparency claims that $US9m allocated for the development of public facilities —schools, health centers, bridges, hospitals, irrigation networks — has been embezzled. The elected representative body of Papuans rejected Special Autonomy in 2010. Various schemes have been put up since to try and 'solve the Papuan problem' and the Papuan people have met the current proposal for a Special Autonomy Plus with scepticism and indifference. Indonesia's colonization and military occupation of West Papua was achieved by, and still continues, thanks to the governments of the UK, Australia and the US, and it is facilitated by the world's largest copper and gold mine owned by Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold, Inc., a US corporation.

In addition, for more than 50 years, some of the world's largest transnational mining corporations have been exploiting West Papua's oil and minerals, including Union Oil, Amoco, Agip, Conoco, Phillips, Esso, Texaco, Mobil, Shell, Petromer Trend Exploration, Atlantic Richfield, Sun Oil and Freeport, Oppenheimer, Total SA, Ingold, Marathon Oil, Bird's Head Peninsula, Dominion Mining; Aneka Tambang, BHP, Cudgen RZ, and Rio Tinto (formerly RTZ-CRA). The exploitation of natural resources by extractive industries has a history of resulting in catastrophic damage to human and environmental health and local ways of life. Mystifyingly, the mainstream global media has, with occasional exceptions, virtually ignored the military and corporate injustices perpetrated upon the indigenous population of West Papua.

West Papuans have resisted the Indonesian occupation since the 1960s, but resistance and self-determination were taken to a new level when 5,000 academics, church leaders, and senior tribal leaders established the Federal Republic of West Papua (FRWP) on 19 October 2011. During a four-day congress, registered representatives and thousands who had not registered flocked to participate in the debates and processes. The organization of an independent West Papuan political force was an integral and courageous step in a long and costly liberation struggle.

The Indonesian government responded predictably: military and police, many in armored vehicles, as well as snipers, hidden up in trees around the field, opened fire. Four students and two PETAPA (Guardians of the Land of Papua, a civil guard organization) were assassinated. Participants, including the executives of the new state, were kicked and beaten with batons, bamboo sticks, and rifle butts; then tortured into leaping, like frogs, across the oval. 800 were arrested and 300 detained. Indonesian intelligence's notorious interrogation techniques resulted in at least twelve fractured skulls. President Yaboisembut, Prime Minister Waromi, and three organizers of the congress, had committed treason under Article 106 Article of the Indonesian Criminal Code , and were incarcerated for three years (2012—2015).

Since then, more activists and journalists have been tortured, assassinated, and thrown into jails, where they are denied access to medical and legal services and rarely allowed to exercise or shower more than once a week. After the Sydney Morning Herald published its investigation, "They're taking our children; West Papua's youth removed to Islamic religious schools in Java for re-education" (4 May 2013), President Yudhoyono offered to release all fifty Papuan political prisoners (rather than launch an enquiry into the stolen children). The offer of release has been rejected by the prisoners, including the now famous long-term detainee Filip Karma, yet the hopes for independence of the thirty political prisoners in Abepura Prison are not dashed. They have demanded instead that "the whole of Papua be released." ∎

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