

JAKARTA KNOWS BEST: US DEFENSE POLICIES AND
SECURITY COOPERATION IN 1950s INDONESIA

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Art of War Scholars

by

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ABSTRACT

JAKARTA KNOWS BEST: US DEFENSE POLICIES AND SECURITY COOPERATION IN 1950s INDONESIA, by Major Richard W. B. Hutton, 120 pages.

This thesis explores U.S. defense policies and security cooperation activities and agreements between the United States and Indonesia from 1950 to 1959, the first decade of Indonesia's independence. It assesses the implementation and value of U.S. military assistance and training programs and the way defense policies influenced and contributed to both the development of the Indonesian military and broader U.S. foreign policy goals. This thesis argues defense policy makers in Washington, as well as attachés and senior commanders in the region, correctly assessed the importance of the Indonesian military to U.S. national objectives. This focus led to the successful implementation of defense policies over the course of the decade and solidified the military to military relationship. This enabled the U.S. to salvage the broader bilateral relationship nearly destroyed by ambiguous policies which supported both sides in a civil war inflamed by the CIA and State Department, who spearheaded a confrontational approach to Indonesia during the period. It concludes by arguing the very success of engagement-based defense policies made the U.S. military the primary vehicle through which foreign policy in Indonesia was implemented by the end of the decade.

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ACRONYMS

CGSC	U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MSA	Mutual Security Act
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
PRRI	<i>Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia</i> (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia)
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SOBSI	<i>Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia</i> (Central All-Indonesian Workers Organization)
TNI	<i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian National Military)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of September 30, 1965, soldiers affiliated with the September 30th Movement sympathetic to the Communist Party of Indonesia murdered their erstwhile adversary, Lieutenant General Ahmad Yani, the commander of the Indonesian Army, and five other general officers.¹ The complex series of events that followed, culminating in the killing of somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 real and alleged communists and the imposition of military rule under general Suharto, have been extensively examined by scholars and laypersons alike.² Less well known is that ten years prior to those events, in the summer of 1955 and as part of a large and enduring American defense program to train and educate foreign soldiers and officers, then colonel Ahmad Yani arrived to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to attend the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC). While studying military operations with his U.S. and international peers at Fort Leavenworth, Yani met U.S. Army major George Benson,

¹ Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 1. Yani's name is sometimes translated and written as Jani.

² Bernd Schaefer, "Introduction: Indonesia and the World in 1965," in *1965: Indonesia and the World*, ed. Bernd Schaeffer and Baskara Wardaya (Jakarta: Goethe-Institut, 2013), 1; Baskara Wardaya, "The 1965 Tragedy in Indonesia and its Context," in *1965: Indonesia and the World*, ed. Bernd Schaeffer and Baskara Wardaya (Jakarta: Goethe-Institut, 2013), 9. Estimates of the number of people killed in Indonesia in 1965-1966 vary. Though the exact number is unlikely to ever be known, most historians consider the range of 500,000 to 1,000,000 as reasonable. See Chandra Siddharth, "New Findings on the Indonesian Killings of 1965-66," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 76 no. 4 (November 2017): 1059-1086, for the most recent academic exploration of the killings themselves and estimated casualty figures.

bound for the army attaché office in Jakarta.³ After graduating CGSC himself in 1956, Yani returned home where, in the spring of 1958 and amidst the regional *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) and *Piagam Perjuangan Semesta* (Permesta) rebellions in Indonesia's outer islands, he enlisted Benson's aid in planning the successful invasion of rebel-held territory on Sumatra.⁴ Later, as commander of the Indonesian Army, Yani continued the tradition of schooling officers in American military doctrine and sending them to the United States to receive much of the same training and education that he received.⁵ Indeed, of the five other general officers murdered by the September 30th Movement alongside Yani, four had been trained in the United States.⁶

This study seeks to examine the U.S. defense efforts in Indonesia, be they the provision of funding and materiel or the training and education programs that brought such officers to the United States, and explore how they evolved over the course of the 1950s. Early in the decade they appear to have been, from an effects standpoint, relatively modest.⁷ Defense policy focused mostly on funding a small constabulary style

³ Brian Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army on the Development of the Indonesian Army, 1954-1964," *Indonesia* 47 (April 1989): 28, 40.

⁴ Baskara T. Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow: United States Policy Toward Indonesia, 1953-1963* (Jakarta: Pusat Sejarah dan Etika Politik/Center for History and Political Ethics, in collaboration with Galang Press, 2007), 198. The names of the rebel movements translate into English as the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Universal Struggle Charter. PRRI and Permesta will be used here.

⁵ Rudolph Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military: 1945-1965* (Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, 1978), 122-124.

⁶ H. W. Brands, "The Limits of Manipulation: How the United States Didn't Topple Sukarno," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 3 (December 1989): 804-805.

⁷ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 119.

force and providing assistance as post-conflict observers following the end of the Indonesian National Revolution. The Dutch, present in large numbers despite Indonesia's successful drive for independence, remained the lead foreign military influence in numbers and importance.⁸ Later, with more Indonesian officers conducting training in the United States and Soviet military aid beginning to flow into the country, U.S. defense policies grew in stature and importance, a reflection of both broader Cold War strategy and growing American concerns regarding Indonesia's development and direction.⁹

The increased prominence of the military to military relationship came at a time, however, when the broader bilateral relationship, for political reasons related more to the Cold War and American displeasure with Indonesian President Sukarno, became increasingly difficult. This meant the U.S. was increasingly disinclined to engage in just the sort of active defense policy and security cooperation measures the militaries, both American and Indonesian, were calling for. Tensions flared within Indonesia as well and reached a tipping point when, in the spring of 1957, regional commanders in Sumatra and Sulawesi declared themselves in open rebellion and launched the PRRI and Permesta movements. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), spearheading U.S. policy at the time, began providing support to the rebels at the same time the defense establishment in

⁸ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 980-981; Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Under Secretary of State (Smith) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 363-365.

⁹ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 44; Ragna Boden, "Cold War Economics: Soviet Aid to Indonesia," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 115-116.

Washington urged caution. The ambassador in Jakarta, with the full support of his service attachés, recommended continued engagement with the central government and its anti-communist military just as U.S. policies moved against the government.¹⁰ This policy bifurcation led to the United States providing advice and support to both sides in the conflict, which ended in humiliation for the American-backed rebels and vindication for the Indonesian Army. Finally, heeding defense recommendations to increase military assistance in order to advance U.S. interests in Indonesia from the summer of 1958 forward, the U.S. ramped up engagement with Indonesia's military. As a result, by the end of the decade the respective militaries had developed, independent of civilian oversight, a meaningful military relationship based on mutual interests and outlook.¹¹

Given that evolution and Indonesia's uneven development in the period, did defense policies advance American interests? American defense policies furthered U.S. national interests in 1950s Indonesia by creating strong bonds and lines of communication between the U.S. and Indonesian militaries that were able to both endure the crises of the 1950s and decisively secure U.S. interests by the end of the decade. In so doing, the U.S. military became the primary vehicle to advance U.S. national interests in Indonesia and set an example for how, for better or for worse, defense policies and

¹⁰ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955-1957), 475-480. The island of Sulawesi has also been referred to as Celebes, especially prior to Indonesian independence.

¹¹ George McTurnan Kahin and Audrey Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 17, 207.

interests could become decisive to achieving U.S. national objectives. In this case, that meant nurturing and supporting a force – though ostensibly a physical force, the Indonesian Army was by 1960 a national and political force as well – within Indonesia that was amenable to U.S. interests and capable of denying Indonesia to the communists.

Trusted lines of military communication, assiduously kept open by officers on both sides of the relationship, enabled the United States to put itself into such a position in 1958 and 1959. Years of relationship building, in both the United States and in Jakarta, and across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, created the conditions in which the U.S. military was able to preserve its influence despite the United States government's attempt to overthrow the Indonesian government. Though distinguishing between the U.S. "military" and the U.S. "government" may seem inconsequential, this study will demonstrate it was the very removal of the U.S. military from perceptions of national decision making that enabled it to continue to tacitly support the central government during the rebellions. That trust, demonstrated time and time again by the willingness of the Indonesian officers who trained in the U.S. to risk their careers by continuing to engage with the United States throughout the rebellions secured the military to military relationship and strengthened the Indonesian Army in the long run. This also created the conditions for the ascendancy of the military modernization policies that the United States, in Indonesia and elsewhere, increasingly embraced from the late 1950s forward.

The rise of the military to military relationship by the end of the decade rested more, however, on the increased influence of the Indonesian military in the country's internal affairs than it did on any sort of prescient defense policy or assessment in

Washington. By 1959, Major General Abdul Haris Nasution, the longtime commander of the Indonesian Army, was among the most powerful men in the country. He led an army that was an increasingly central part of the fabric of Indonesian politics, society, and daily life. By way of the rebellions, it had been cleansed of his rivals, was active in commerce and manufacturing, was expanding its presence into the Javanese countryside, and informally governed many of the outer islands. As a result, Nasution, himself disposed to the west, was second only to Sukarno in prestige and power. For him, quietly partnering with the U.S. was the surest way to gain the material and ideological support that the Indonesian Army needed if it was to stave off communism and maintain its exalted place in society. For the United States, quietly backing him was the best option it had if it wanted to exert influence in Indonesia at a time when Sukarno's drift towards the left and his denunciations of America dominated headlines and made overt political partnership unthinkable. These realities came together to make the military to military relationship the critical lever of U.S. foreign policy in Indonesia.

Exploring how and why these policies were crafted and created, how they were executed, and how they advanced U.S. national interests in 1950s Indonesia is a worthwhile examination for four reasons. First, defense policy (sometimes referred to as military or security policy) is merely a component of broader American foreign policy. This leads to cases, as here, where broad literature exists on general U.S. foreign policies but much less on the component parts of those policies, and how they affected both their host nation counterparts and the advancement of U.S. national interests. This study intends to fill this research gap while illustrating how the value of component studies can broaden the aperture on our understanding of the military's role in peacetime foreign

relations. Second, defense policies are often integral and, as they became in the case of Indonesia in the 1950s, decisive to the United States' ability to advance its interests overseas. Appreciating that role is necessary if one wants to understand how the military and defense establishment influences peacetime foreign policy and how central the military component of national power has been to U.S. national security outside of periods of major conflict. Third, this study endeavors to understand the weight that defense policies carry in foreign nations, where acquisitions of U.S. military equipment and training opportunities in the United States are highly sought after ends and can be the determining factors in an officer's career trajectory.¹² These policies often matter disproportionately more to the partner nation than to the United States, and can help form the cornerstone of a foreign security apparatus that includes arms, vehicles, and capabilities that assist regimes in maintaining security as they see it.

The last reason examining U.S. defense policies in 1950s Indonesia is worthwhile is the military was a fundamentally important and powerful organization in Indonesia in the 1950s. As was the case in many developing and post-colonial states, the military was among the dominant forces shaping Indonesia as a state and Indonesians as people in the period. It ruled much of the outer (non-Java) archipelago with territorial units that had considerable autonomy in their operations. It also did not assent to civilian oversight and viewed itself as both the guarantor of Indonesian sovereignty and the rightful heir of the

¹² Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958-1960), 314-315.

successful revolution, which it believed it had itself won.¹³ As a result, the Indonesian military effectively co-ruled the country. Set against the backdrop of ideological and strategic competition between the United States and the Soviet Union that defined the early Cold War, the Indonesian military gained enormously in money and materiel and became an important lever through which an outside power could attempt to exert influence within Indonesia.¹⁴ Given this prominence, examining U.S. defense policy in 1950s Indonesia can help to illuminate the way such policies influenced the rise of the Indonesian Army. In view of its takeover of the government in the wake of the September 30th Movement, such an examination is especially worthwhile.

This study will explore the military to military relationship over the period in a roughly chronological manner. Each chapter will demonstrate the way U.S. defense policies were implemented, explore their rationale, and evaluate how they served to advance U.S. national interests in the given period and beyond. Chapter 2 will explore the U.S.-Indonesia relationship during the Indonesian National Revolution of 1945-49, examine the U.S. military defense policies that were implemented during the conflict, and capture the complex feelings Indonesians had towards the United States upon their

¹³ Ulf Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power: Indonesian Military Politics, 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 45; Daniel Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2009), 89; Howard P. Jones, *Indonesia: The Possible Dream* (New York: Hoover Institution, 1971), 137-138; Ruth McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," *Indonesia* 11 (April 1971): 136; Guy Pauker, "The Role of the Military in Indonesia," in *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, ed. John H. Johnson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 205-206.

¹⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3-4.

independence in late 1949. Additionally, in reviewing the American vision for postwar Asia, it will outline U.S. national interests in Indonesia in the 1950s and describe the defense tools and mechanisms that the U.S. had at its disposal to advance its broader objectives. It will, in sum, provide the setting and context from which the dynamic relationships and policies of the 1950s unfolded.

Chapter 3 will explore the defense and military assistance policies of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations from 1950 to mid-1957. This will necessarily tell the story of the building of the bilateral and military to military relationships: what the policies were, why they were embraced, how they were implemented, and how they fit within broader conceptions of U.S. strategy and security. Answering such questions requires understanding the way Indonesian audiences, military and civilian alike, received such policies, and, thus, chapter 3 will also explore Indonesia's government and military structures in the period and ask why certain groups in the country responded favorably to U.S. overtures while others did not. To do this, it will examine aspects of Indonesian culture, both internal and external to the country's armed forces. In such analysis lies many of the obstacles U.S. policymakers and implementers faced in Indonesia, a post-colonial, heterogeneous, archipelagic nation founded in blood and steeped in a mystic culture foreign to Americans. Understanding that character will help us understand why Indonesians responded in the ways they did and why the U.S. position foundered at times yet remained able, over the course of the decade, to establish a resilient and durable relationship with the Indonesian military that could survive the tumult that seemed likely, at times, to engulf it.

Chapter 4 will advance the narrative through the contentious period from the spring of 1957 to the end of the decade. From mid-1957 to mid-1958, when defense policies were often in conflict with stated national interests, the United States found itself, to some extent without intending to do so, backing both sides in a conflict that nearly engulfed the country. Defense policies played a key role in mitigating what could have been a strategic disaster for the United States. Crucial here will be the way strategic decision-makers in Washington understood defense policy and the recommendations of the military and then, for the most part, simply ignored them. Important here is the role both defense and military leaders in Washington and attachés and regional commanders played in a crisis not of their making, in particular the way they were able to maintain, despite hostilities, open lines of communication with their Indonesian counterparts and preserve the foundations of a relationship they seemed to most presciently realize needed to be preserved. Such a channel proved decisive when, with the collapse of the U.S.-backed rebellions, the militaries emerged, on both sides of the Pacific, as the primary vehicle to advance mutual interests and strengthen bonds.

The conclusion will offer an assessment of that achievement and the broader magnitude of U.S. defense policies in 1950s Indonesia. It will parse lessons from the successes and failures and contextualize these events within defense and military policy dialogues that are taking place today. This will be done by exploring how and why the United States, in some places, came to consider foreign militaries as the most trusted partners available. For policy makers, the question of whether or not, in some cases, the primacy of the military instrument of national power is actually as dangerous an outcome as many commentators claim it to be is as germane today as it was in the 1950s.

The significance of these policies to Indonesia and its military must also be weighed, especially considering the fact the military to military relationship continued to blossom into the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and provided the United States a means with which to exert influence into Indonesia during the contentious early 1960s. And not least because of the actions of the Indonesian Army in response to the assassinations of Yani and the others. With tacit assistance from the United States, it purged the country of communists and established a western-oriented military dictatorship from 1965 that endured through the end of the Cold War. Though the details of those events and periods are not within the purview of this study, one must understand the events of the 1960s if one is to properly assess the significance and meaning of U.S. policies of the 1950s.

Through these lenses, then, Colonel Yani's stay at Fort Leavenworth and his subsequent experiences in and around the U.S. military provide a worthwhile opening from which one can explore both the personalities and realities that defined U.S. defense policies in 1950s Indonesia. Those policies and subsequent programs brought him to the U.S. and introduced him to its military and its people. They helped enable him and others to envision Indonesia's transformation from a revolutionary country with a revolutionary army to a modern state. And their growth from being a component of a broader policy in 1950 to the defining attribute of that policy in 1960 influenced both the practice of U.S. foreign relations and Indonesia itself for the remainder of the Cold War.

CHAPTER 2

INDONESIAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE COLD WAR

The United States and Indonesia: 1945-1949

Indonesia's independent 1950s was born from the violence, occupation, and revolution of its 1940s. In order to understand the 1950s, one must understand both the tumult of the 1940s and the role, negligible at first but growing by the end of the decade, the United States played in affecting Indonesia's trajectory, particularly with respect to its military. This chapter will chronicle the U.S. role in Indonesia in the 1940s and then examine U.S. foreign and defense policies in Indonesia and Asia writ large as of January 1950, Indonesia's first month as an independent nation, in order to place U.S. military aspirations aside Indonesian realities as the Cold War began to heat up.

The 1940s were built atop the edifice of Dutch colonial rule. Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies, was a Dutch colony and territory, parts of which – the original Spice Islands – had been under Dutch control from the early 17th century. Oppressive and based on resource extraction, Dutch colonial rule had, by the time of the Japanese invasion in 1942, gained control of all significant capital in the colonies, marginalized the agriculturally-productive native Indonesian population, co-opted the budding middle class into the Dutch administrative apparatus, and worked to destroy rising sentiments of Indonesian nationalism.¹⁵

¹⁵ George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), 29.

The successful Japanese invasion of, and period of subsequent rule over, Indonesia utterly transformed the country and its politics, shattered Indonesians' presumptions of the world in which they lived, and gave credence, in an indirect way, to the theretofore shuttered aspirations of early nationalists.¹⁶ As early as 1942, the Japanese set about eradicating the vestiges of white colonial rule. They established mass people's movements in the name of Asian independence and co-prosperity, organized volunteer paramilitary organizations (in which many future Indonesian army officers served) and freed nationalist political leaders, among them Sukarno.¹⁷ They consciously stoked Indonesian nationalist sentiment. In so doing, they laid the groundwork for Indonesia's unilateral declaration of independence in the days following the Japanese surrender.

The rise of Indonesian nationalism coincided with the victors' – the U.S., U.K., France, and the Netherlands – efforts to reimpose colonial rule across Asia. In Indonesia, the Dutch attempted to reclaim control over their former colony. Their forceful return helped set off the Indonesian national revolution, a political and military conflict that was fought from 1945 to 1949 and one which produced, ultimately, an independent Indonesia. To appreciate the role that the United States played in that conflict, one must first understand how Indonesia fit within emerging U.S. thoughts on the postwar structure of Asia.

¹⁶ Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, 11th ed. (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2013), 155-158.

¹⁷ Shigeru Satō, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 30-44, 50-52; Nugroho Notosusanto, "The Peta Army in Indonesia, 1943-1945," in *Japan in Asia, 1942-1945*, ed. William H. Newell (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), 39; Osborne, *Southeast Asia*, 162-164.

The United States began, even prior to the end of World War II, to set about establishing an international system of free trade, open markets, and alliances that would – in addition to securing the mainland United States, helping counter the spread of communism in Asia and Europe, and providing foreign markets for surplus domestic production – enable the U.S. to rebuild the key Eurasian centers of industrial power outside of the communist bloc: Western Europe, Germany, and Japan. Only in doing so, U.S. policymakers believed, could they keep such areas free and independent enough to advance and secure U.S. interests outside of the Western Hemisphere.¹⁸ Faced with communists in the Russian Far East, North Korea, and, as of 1949, mainland China, the United States built its Asia policy around rebuilding Japan as an industrial and economic engine to power and lead the non-communist Far East. U.S. planners saw Japan as the critical node in a “great crescent” that stretched in an arc from the Kuril Islands to the Iran/Pakistan border; one that needed to be developed and held in order to advance the nascent policies of containment that were then being conceptualized.

By 1948 they envisioned Japan as an industrial hub, sustained by trade with less developed states along an Asian economic defense perimeter. A secure Japan would help support Southeast Asia against Chinese communism, and vice versa. Above all else, the relationship required that Japan have access to secure, affordable raw materials and markets in Southeast Asia.¹⁹

Central to Indonesia and other nations within the Asian “periphery” were American conceptions of the resource abundance of the region and its important role to

¹⁸ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 8-9.

¹⁹ Michael Schaller, “Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (September 1982): 392-393.

play in the reindustrialization of the Asian “core,” Japan.²⁰ Given this, in the early years after World War II, the United States looked initially to its European allies to reestablish stability over their former colonies in Southeast Asia and develop them as resource producers for Japan within the larger American free trade system.²¹ Though officially neutral in the Dutch-Indonesian dispute, the U.S. was ambivalent about Indonesia’s ability to govern itself and, given its stated importance within the larger strategic context, it supported and enabled the return of Dutch administration to Indonesia. In particular, the reimposition of colonial control would reopen the flow of capital from the Indies to the Netherlands and hugely aid American reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Western Europe, its foremost strategic objective. That such a policy was in contravention of unstated U.S. sympathies for the aspiring Republican nationalists of Indonesia was unfortunate but necessary.²² As will be seen, U.S. sympathies often counted for little when balanced against the realities Cold War geopolitics brought to the equation.

That professed neutrality, however, was tested as early as 1946, as the Indonesian revolution wore on. It became clear to policymakers they had grossly underestimated the strength and potency of Indonesian nationalism and came to the conclusion, grudgingly over several years, that the Dutch would never be able to reassert any form of control that

²⁰ Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 164-167.

²¹ Robert McMahon, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia Since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), ix, 15, 21-23.

²² McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 27; Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 13-14; Andrew Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 6.

resembled their pre-war administration.²³ Focus now shifted to the possibility that, in fighting against “white,” “imperial,” and “capitalist,” forces, Indonesian Republicans would, as was seen elsewhere, embrace an ideology, communist or otherwise, hostile to American interests.²⁴ While U.S. defense policies were not, so to speak, clear or effectual upon the situation in any way, and U.S. soldiers were not involved in the fighting, the United States was seen as a party to the conflict. In an ironic twist, at just the time that the U.S. was beginning to understand the threat it actually faced, Dutch troops, by way of Marshall Plan funds that had been rerouted from Europe, were using U.S. lend-lease military equipment to suppress Indonesian aspirations.²⁵

An entire brigade of Dutch soldiers, trained, equipped, and transported by the United States, departed the eastern U.S. in 1945 bound not for postwar Europe but for occupation service in Indonesia. The Indonesians professed an abiding desire to remain independent of competing ideologies and adopt something of a middle path with respect to the United States and the Soviet Union.²⁶ They faced, however, a situation in which they fought Dutch soldiers wearing U.S. uniforms and driving U.S. jeeps, as well as

²³ Paul F. Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 27; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 5-6, 22.

²⁴ Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 14.

²⁵ Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 65; Frances Gouda with Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: U.S. Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 29. See also Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 20, and Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 14.

²⁶ Anak Gde Agung, *Twenty Years of Indonesian Foreign Policy, 1945-1965* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1973), 24-26.

Dutch aircrews attacking them from American bombers. Thus, the Dutch brought international politics to the Indonesian doorstep in ways that were inimical to broader American interests. This served to harden early Indonesian concerns regarding the United States and its military.²⁷

In late 1948, the Dutch initiated, to American and international outrage, a second police action against the Indonesian Republicans and expanded the conflict. It was then that American policy makers concluded that the importance of Indonesia to the American-led free world and postwar structure in Asia outweighed both Dutch colonial and economic interests and the role that the Netherlands itself played in the United States' Europe policy. To the United States, the continuation of the conflict only served to advance chaos and, with it, communism. George Kennan remarked that Indonesia was, "the most crucial issue at the moment in our struggle with the Kremlin," and that it represented the, "anchor in the chain of islands . . . we should develop as a politico-economic counterforce to communism in the Asian landmass."²⁸

As public opinion in the United States and in the Congress shifted against the Dutch, the United States learned that many of the gains being made by the Republican forces were in danger of being lost to the greater enemy. In September of 1948, prior to the Dutch second police action, Indonesian Republican forces crushed an attempted communist coup at Madiun. Despite not yet having coalesced into a single, unified force,

²⁷ Gouda and Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*, 29, 173, 178, 191; Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 75.

²⁸ Gouda and Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*, 25; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 42.

the Republican army succeeded in capturing or killing nearly the entire leadership of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), broke the rebels' military strength, and won, to the amazement of U.S. observers, what seemed to be a decisive victory against communism.²⁹ Just as the United States was beginning to believe in the anti-communist credentials of the Indonesian Republicans, however, the second Dutch police action, broke into Republican territory and upset the fragile equilibrium of the period. This action, "led to the escape of about 40,000 communists taken prisoner by the Republic after the Madiun uprising," which threatened not only increased resistance to the Dutch but also to the stability of any future independent Indonesia.³⁰

In early 1949, the United States brought its full power to bear upon Dutch aspirations in Indonesia and forced them to abandon their efforts. Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the Dutch, themselves heavily reliant upon U.S. Marshall Plan aid, that the United States, absent an agreement on Indonesia, would exclude the Netherlands from requests for Military Assistance Program funds. He also made clear that all economic assistance funds were, "gravely jeopardize[d] by continued Dutch intransigence." This left the place of the Netherlands in the soon to be formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and therefore within the U.S. economic and security blanket, in doubt.³¹ Worried that the Republican movement, heretofore dominated by moderates,

²⁹ Robert J. McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-1949* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 242-244; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 286-303.

³⁰ Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 65.

³¹ "Memorandum of Conversation with Dirk Stikker, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, March 31, 1949," Papers of Dean Acheson, Memoranda of Conversations File, Box 73, March 1949, Harry S. Truman Library; Department of State, *Foreign*

might fall into the hands of radical communists, the United States imposed its will upon the Dutch and helped secure Indonesia's independence. In the immediate aftermath of the negotiations, the U.S. attempted to arm the Indonesian forces in order that they, "would enable the Indonesian Republicans to liquidate their Commies."³² Colonialism was out and the Cold War was in.

Thus, in December 1949 the Republic of Indonesia officially gained its independence. The United States' role in this process was complex. Though it proved to be instrumental in favor of the Republic from late-1948, this reality was not widely known in Indonesia outside Republican political circles. What seems to have been more indelibly written onto the Indonesian psyche were perceptions of their own growing confidence, perseverance, strength, and sense of national accomplishment at defeating the Dutch, as they saw it, by themselves.³³ These factors helped strengthen their stridently independent and disassociated foreign policy that sought a middle way through the Cold War. If ordinary Indonesians thought anything about the U.S. in December 1949, they were more likely to remember the long American support for Dutch neo-colonial efforts and Americans' belief in capitalism, a system many Indonesians, given their coterminous

Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1949, vol. 4, *Western Europe*, "Requests from the Brussels Treaty Powers to the United States for Military Assistance" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 285-287; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 69; See also Leffler, McMahon, and Gardner for secondary accountings of the meeting and policy implications.

³² Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 302.

³³ Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 45.

understandings of the terms, had a hard time differentiating from colonialism.³⁴ As Indonesia entered its first independent year in 1950, the U.S. would have to actively earn Indonesian support if it wanted to establish its desired system of American security, free trade, and the containment of communism in maritime Southeast Asia.

Defining U.S. National Interests in Postwar Indonesia

Though the first full-fledged U.S. national security policy towards Indonesia was not written and adopted until late 1953, the Truman Administration had outlined its policy goals in various ways since Indonesia's independence.³⁵ Each iteration reflected in slightly different ways the core anti-communist pillars of the strategy. On December 28, 1949, the day after the formal transfer of sovereignty, President Truman welcomed Indonesia into the community of free nations and offered American sympathy and support for realizing its aspirations. The Australian Ambassador to the United States somewhat presciently noted that the U.S. attitude towards Indonesia was, "conditioned by its expectation that Indonesia would assist in the containment of communism in Southeast Asia."³⁶ The first official policy document, published on December 31, 1949, indicated as

³⁴ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 68; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 477-478.

³⁵ Soo Chun Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia, 1953-1961" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 1997), 55.

³⁶ Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 78.

much, stressing the need to lend American backing to non-communist forces throughout the region, Indonesia included.³⁷

Truman's approval of National Security Council Report 68 (NSC 68) in April of 1950 codified Indonesia's position relative to the U.S. Seen as auguring the beginning of a more global Cold War, the document emphasized the benefits of military, rather than mere economic, containment of communism and served notice that the United States would not countenance the loss of free territory to the Soviet bloc. It also indicated a U.S. belief in geopolitics as a zero-sum game; there would be no room for neutrality or the sort of independent foreign policy that Indonesia was keen on embracing.³⁸ NSC 68 and the policies that came after it enshrined U.S. offensive diplomacy in and aggressive anti-communist engagement with the "Third World" as necessary and total, as a core national security interest of the United States.

As early as 1951 official policies and correspondence highlighted these trends in Indonesia, with an emphasis on strengthening non-communist forces, promoting economic development, and securing Indonesia's place in the free world. "The objective of U.S. policy toward Indonesia is the maintenance and strengthening of a politically stable, economically healthy, non-communist state under a government friendly to the

³⁷ "Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to National Security, vol. 2, December 31, 1949," Papers of Harry S. Truman, NSC File, Box 11, Policies of the United States of America Relating to the National Security File, 1947-1952, Harry S. Truman Library.

³⁸ Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 355-360; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 79.

U.S.”³⁹ As the decade continued, however, U.S. policy objectives more directly confronted the question of communism. In 1952, it sought to, “prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit, and to assist them to develop the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.”⁴⁰ By 1953 and the writing of NSC 171/1, the United States’ first national security policy towards Indonesia, the stated U.S. objectives in Indonesia were clear – the preservation and maintenance of a non-communist Indonesia.

To prevent Indonesia from passing into the Communist orbit; to persuade Indonesia that its best interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliation with the rest of the free world; and to assist Indonesia to develop toward a stable, free government with the will and the ability to resist Communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world.⁴¹

³⁹ “Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to National Security, vol. 4, 1951: The United States Objectives, Policies, and Courses of Action in Asia,” Papers of Harry S. Truman, NSC File, Box 11, Policies of the United States of America Relating to the National Security File, 1947-1952, Harry S. Truman Library, 7; Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part 1, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to Mr. Robert Blum, Special Assistant to the Assistant Administrator for Program, Economic Cooperation Administration (Cleveland),” 771-776.

⁴⁰ “Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to National Security, vol. 5, 1952: United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia,” Papers of Harry S. Truman, NSC File, Box 11, Policies of the United States of America Relating to the National Security File, 1947-1952, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-2.

⁴¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Executive Secretary (Lay) to the National Security Council; United States Objectives and Courses of Action with respect to Indonesia,” 395-400; Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 55.

This linked the postwar security objectives of NSC 68 to the U.S.'s broader postwar vision of Southeast Asia as a resource base to support U.S. economic goals in Europe and Japan, two large and re-industrializing markets in great need of natural resources.⁴²

That resource potential and post-colonial status tied Indonesia to much of the rest of the newly independent "Third World" in the early 1950s, a world in which American and Soviet competition would increasingly focus. To make sense of this, the U.S. sought to imagine the Indonesian revolution (among others) as akin to its own and, thus, prevent it from implementing any of the radical social, economic, or cultural changes that revolutionary communism was imposing on other states. This was difficult as the Indonesian revolution was, in essence, anti-western and anti-capitalist.⁴³ The Soviets, correspondingly, worked to bring about just such change. They worked from early after World War II to discredit American neutrality during the revolution and firmly backed the Republicans, as they did other nationalist movements fighting against "imperialism" in the late 1940s and 1950s. Their objectives, to prevent Indonesia's participation in the U.S. alliance system, reduce western influence, get Indonesia to accept the Soviet industrialization and modernization model, and foster the long-term development of the

⁴² "Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to National Security, vol. 5, 1952: United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia," Papers of Harry S. Truman, NSC File, Box 11, Policies of the United States of America Relating to the National Security File, 1947-1952, Harry S. Truman Library, 1-2. See also Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 338-341, 434.

⁴³ David Painter, "Explaining US Relations with the Third World," *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 533.

PKI, demonstrated their own approach to the early Cold War that mirrored the aforementioned and opposing U.S. policies.⁴⁴

To encapsulate, then, United States national objectives in Indonesia in the 1950s were closely bound to the emerging Cold War strategy of containing and defeating communism in all forms and on all fronts for the preservation of American power and the maintenance of the American-led free world economic system. The U.S. saw Indonesia as a key actor in this system, a resource provider and market for Japan and part of the defensive perimeter around which the United States hoped to block communist expansion. Within Indonesia itself, the U.S. encouraged development, basic freedoms, and self-determination, but sought to limit the effects of revolutionary fervor on the wider populace. Given that, U.S. policies were inherently more conservative and less revolutionary than those embraced by the Communist Bloc. Though this created problems in the early bilateral relationship, the United States considered itself a willing partner and sympathetic friend of Indonesia as it entered its first decade of independence.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Bilveer Singh, *Bear and Garuda: Soviet-Indonesia Relations: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1994), 101, 151-152; Usha Mahajani, *Soviet and American Aid to Indonesia, 1949-1968* (Athens: Ohio University Southeast Asia Program, 1970), 5.

⁴⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State and Acting Secretary of Defense (Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay)," 371-383; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 87-88.

U.S. Defense and Military Objectives in 1950s Indonesia

Within the context of this wider policy, the U.S. defense establishment developed its own goals and objectives for Indonesia. These more focused goals were nested within the larger national strategy and are worth introducing here as they represent not the way that policies were necessarily implemented but the way that they were conceptualized and understood by military practitioners in Washington and Jakarta. In understanding them, one can gain a valuable glimpse at both the U.S. military's outlook on the world in the early 1950s and establish a basis of understanding, for contextual purposes, of the events which, once these policies were actually put into practice, were to come. However, the views from the Pentagon and the attaché office did not always align with those of the wider political, diplomatic, and policy apparatus in Washington.

Over the course of the 1950s, U.S. defense policies in Indonesia had three distinct objectives. First, to prevent the archipelago and its inherent military and natural resources so crucial to overall U.S. policies in Asia from falling to communist forces or those whose interests ran counter to the United States. This was embraced from the earliest moments of Indonesian independence and directed by defense leadership, and was continually highlighted and updated by studies which demonstrated the potential military applicability of Indonesia's vast resource and mineral wealth to any who controlled it.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Secretary of State" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 1092-1093; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State and Acting Secretary of Defense (Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay)," 371-383; "226th

Second, to be the primary trainer and arms provider of the Indonesian National Military (TNI), and particularly the Indonesian Army. Though the program would grow exponentially by the end of the decade, defense leaders realized as early as 1949 that Indonesia's military would need conditioning if it was to maintain its anti-communist sentiments.⁴⁷ Third, to foster and preserve strong relationships with TNI officers and to keep lines of communication between the national militaries open and dialogue robust. Though this took time to operationalize, by the mid-1950s, just as U.S. frustrations with Indonesian domestic politics were on the rise, Indonesian officers were arriving at U.S. service schools, particularly CGSC at Fort Leavenworth. The simultaneous nature of those political and military trends reinforced, for policymakers in Washington and attachés in Jakarta, the important need to nurture such military to military relationships.⁴⁸

Such, then, was the landscape of Indonesia and U.S. foreign and defense policy as the 1950s dawned. As will be seen, however, maintaining and making use of such an understanding and implementing such policies would prove to be difficult. Indonesia

Meeting of the NSC, December 1, 1954," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, National Security Council (NSC) Series, Box 6, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

⁴⁷ "Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to National Security, vol. 2, December 31, 1949: The Position of the United States with respect to Asia," Papers of Harry S. Truman, NSC File, Box 11, Policies of the United States of America Relating to the National Security File, 1947-1952, Harry S. Truman Library, 1; Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman," 964-966.

⁴⁸ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 28, 44; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 115-116. TNI stands for *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Military).

itself, its politics and its people, would become more mystifying than the wise men of Washington could well have imagined.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE MILITARY TO MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

The U.S. viewed the Indonesian military in the early 1950s as something akin to a constabulary force, rather than a fully-fledged national military.⁴⁹ And that view was largely accurate, given the shortages in equipment, decentralized organization and structure, and civil responsibilities that continued to occupy the Indonesian military in the period.⁵⁰ With that reality, American defense policies from the beginning focused on military assistance (i.e., funding, arms, and equipment) and security cooperation (i.e., training, education, and personnel exchanges). They sought to enable the growth and professionalization of a small yet robust Indonesian army that could help stabilize and secure the country's internal territory. At the same time, American conceptions regarding the political and ideological utility of the Indonesian Army, beyond simply serving as a tool to resist external forces of communism, also developed.

The story of U.S. defense policies between 1950 and the 1957 outbreak of the regional rebellions and authoritarian government can be viewed through two lenses. First, the implementation of, challenges to, and reception of the policies themselves. Second, the realization that the United States was developing, and by 1957 – though this was not universally accepted at the time – had developed, in the Indonesian Army a lever through

⁴⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman” (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 964-966.

⁵⁰ McVey, “The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army,” 142.

which it might influence Indonesian domestic politics in furtherance of its own ends. Examining U.S. policy through these lenses also lays the material and ideological groundwork necessary to understand the more complex period that followed, when U.S. interests, and Indonesian military capabilities, were forced into the spotlight.

U.S. Military Assistance to Indonesia: 1950-1957

U.S. military assistance – that is, funding through grants, loans, or cash; arms; equipment; or other technical capabilities as needed – to Indonesia began almost as soon as the ink was dry on the transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands in December 1949. In fact, by June 1, 1950, Indonesia had already received from the United States, “50 walkie-talkies, 10 public address systems, several fingerprint cameras, 50 trucks, 50 jeeps, 50 motorcycles, 21,000 carbines, 1,000 submachine guns, 10,000 revolvers, 100 shotguns, 500 gas masks, and ammunition for all of the above.” This program, a legacy of the revolution, complemented the much larger Dutch military assistance program, which itself consisted mostly of grant materiel that the Dutch, upon the conclusion of Indonesian independence, used to support their own military training mission and program.⁵¹ Small numbers of U.S. military personnel were also on the ground in Indonesia at this time as military members of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia helping broker Indonesia’s transition to statehood. At the same time, U.S.

⁵¹ “Memorandum, Djakarta, Indonesia, September 22, 1950,” Student Research File, Pacific Rim: Indochina, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines, #31B, Box 2 of 2, B File, 12 of 15, Harry S. Truman Library; Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 30.

Army troop transports were ferrying roughly 10,000 Dutch soldiers a month back to the Netherlands.⁵²

From January 1950, the United States looked to formalize this already existing structure of military cooperation and assistance, both to support the development of the Indonesian military and to counter what it saw as forces of instability. Though it lacked evidence demonstrating this, it believed communists were active in the Javanese countryside. Goals were set at providing arms and equipment for 20,000 constabulary troops and providing naval capabilities to counter smuggling and illicit trade in the archipelago.⁵³ Authorized by Truman in January 1950 and agreed to by Indonesia in August of that year, it provided \$5 million in grant aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. This was effectively used, according to later U.S. reports, “in the suppression of guerilla bands of fanatic Moslems and bandits which plagued Indonesia.”⁵⁴ The agreement was important because it formalized and provided structure

⁵² Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 980-981; Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Acting Secretary of State,” 1020-1022

⁵³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman,” 964-966; Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 983-985; Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Secretary of State,” 1000-1005.

⁵⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Secretary of State,” 1051-1053; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 84; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State and the Acting Secretary of Defense (Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay),” 371-383.

to the early military to military relationship. It also served as something of a precedent; a framework through which future military cooperation and engagement could take place.

This agreement was also important for two other reasons. First, it was the last military agreement between the two countries prior to the 1951 passage of the Mutual Security Act (MSA), which grew out of a larger need in Washington for countries such as Indonesia to make a choice between the Soviet Union and the “free world.” MSA aid brought conditions and, for Indonesia, unwanted strings. Communist bloc countries interpreted any post-colonial state’s signing of the MSA as its explicit choice of sides in the Cold War, a political non-starter in Indonesia. Given that, Indonesia rebuffed U.S. efforts to send a mutual defense assistance program survey team to the country to begin negotiating MSA terms in late 1950. This meant the original, pre-MSA, 1950 agreement governed the military to military relationship for much of the decade.⁵⁵ Second, the military agreement constituted the bulk of the U.S. foreign aid to Indonesia in the early 1950s.⁵⁶ Though the amount of aid was relatively small, it was appropriate given the inconsiderable scope of the overall bilateral relationship at the time, and should not be discounted. It, in fact, served as the jumping off point between the U.S. and Indonesian

⁵⁵ McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 50; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 85-86.

⁵⁶ Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 71. The U.S. did, however, offer Indonesia 100 million dollars in repayable loans through the Export/Import Bank in the period, though this was non-military in nature and took a number of years to negotiate and came to fruition on a project-by-project level over the course of the decade. See, Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part 1, *Asia and the Pacific*, “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 586-587.

militaries as the two developed, fitfully over the years to come, a broader and enduring relationship.

Despite the limitations that Indonesia's reluctance to submit to MSA terms of aid imposed on the relationship, policymakers and practitioners on both sides continued to try and build the relationship. Efforts were made throughout 1951 to provide jeeps, armored personnel carriers, and even fire engines to the TNI using pre-MSA Marshall Plan funds administered by the Economic Cooperation Administration prior to the arrival of more stringent aid stipulations.⁵⁷ For their part, throughout 1951 and 1952 Indonesian Army officers repeatedly met with U.S. military attachés in Jakarta seeking non-MSA arrangements through which they could acquire arms and ammunition in their campaigns against, "insurrectionists . . . renegades and religious fanatics," in Java. The head of constabulary forces in Indonesia, a Sukarto, considered U.S. military aid so consequential in his fight that he informed his superiors he would resign if it was stopped.⁵⁸ Thus, pre-MSA military aid, though limited by statute to chiefly technical and administrative

⁵⁷ Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part 1, *Asia and the Pacific*, "The Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk) to Mr. John D. Small, Chairman, Munitions Board, Department of Defense," 607-609; Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part I, *Asia and the Pacific*, "Mr. John D. Small, Chairman, Munitions Board, Department of Defense to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Rusk)," 623.

⁵⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Department of State," 259-261; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Department of State," 269-270;

assistance, did not require MSA ratification and continued along the lines of the 1950 agreement.⁵⁹

Indeed, Indonesian officials felt strongly enough in the summer of 1953 about the need and potential for U.S. military cooperation that they, against the wishes of the outgoing U.S. Ambassador in Jakarta, requested that the U.S. send a semi-permanent military training mission to Indonesia.⁶⁰ Their rationale was simple. The Dutch, who had – at the request and invitation of TNI commanders – kept roughly 1,000 soldiers in Indonesia after the war ended to train and educate the developing force, would be going home in 1954, and the TNI Chiefs of Staff asked the United States to take over the mission. Their request of a 200-person team was met eagerly by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The U.S. Joint Chiefs, however, were unsure of how many personnel would actually be needed. They agreed with the conclusions of an internal Department of Defense study which argued that the potential mission was both feasible and, from a security cooperation perspective, worth doing. This was spelled out in a joint letter with the Department of State to the National Security Council.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum of Conversation, by David McK. Key, Advisor to the United States Delegation at the United Nations General Assembly,” 338-340; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 120. Most Indonesians go by a single name. Thus, Sukarto is no relation to either Sukarno or Suharto.

⁶⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Department of State,” 356-360.

⁶¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Under Secretary of State (Smith) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson),” 363-365; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nash) to the Under Secretary of State,” 370-371.

The Department of Defense on August 27, 1953, has stated that it considers the dispatch of a military training mission to Indonesia to be militarily feasible. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the dispatch of such a mission would be in consonance with paragraph 17 of NSC 124/2 and would contribute materially to the organization and development of the armed forces of Indonesia and would facilitate the establishment of a more comprehensive military liaison between Indonesia and the United States. The United States would not consider sending a mission unless it could count on a favorable political reception and the support of the Indonesian Government, at present a remote possibility. A successful mission could be a decisive factor in aligning Indonesia with the free world.⁶²

Important in this context is the qualification, “unless it could count on a favorable political reception and the support of the Indonesian Government, at present a remote possibility.”⁶³ Though in the summer of 1953 U.S. defense and military policymakers in the Pentagon were unwilling to send such a mission to a country that would not (at that time) overtly support its presence, by the end of the decade they had a very different perspective. It would take time, shared experience, and a greater degree of trust for them to appreciate the impact such cooperation could have on the Indonesian military and be willing to accept the risk that came with it, regardless of the political situation in Jakarta.

Owing to domestic political upheavals and a general movement to the left in Indonesian politics, the mission never took place. It represented, however, an early coming together of military leaders on both sides of the relationship, each of who determined, independent of their civilian governments, the inherent value of cooperation. The U.S. remained keen on the concept behind the mission well into 1954, and kept

⁶² Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State and the Acting Secretary of Defense (Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay),” 371-383.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

contingency plans in place to launch it in the event that the political climate in Jakarta shifted.⁶⁴ The JCS in fact, in an early recognition of the potential divergence between the interests of the Indonesian civilian government and the Indonesian military, proposed sending a smaller survey team to Indonesia to study the question of whether, regardless of political ramifications or realities, “such a mission to support the military would be worthwhile.”⁶⁵

Domestic politics and Cold War geopolitics on both sides of the Pacific scuttled any further chance of significant military assistance from 1954 until the outbreak of the regional rebellions in 1957. Just as Indonesia was politically drifting to the left, the U.S., fresh from the Korean War, the collapse of the French in Vietnam, and the era of McCarthyism, was drifting to the right. Despite significant back and forth – and continued willingness from each country’s military – political and civilian leaders were unable to come together at any one point to expand on the 1950 agreement.⁶⁶ For the

⁶⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 161st Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, September 9, 1953,” 384-386; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson),” 415-416; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 423-424.

⁶⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Secretary of Defense (Wilson) to the Secretary of State,” 464-466; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Paper Prepared for the Operations Coordinating Board,” 466-469.

⁶⁶ The sole caveat to this was a 1953 agreement for the United States to provide the remaining \$12,500 of military/constabulary equipment from the 1950 agreement that was still in the production pipeline at that time. See, Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State and the Acting Secretary of Defense (Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the

Republicans governing in Washington, who linked foreign aid to Franklin Roosevelt's hated New Deal, all aid was to be linked to pro-U.S. military and economic policies. Thus, countries such as Indonesia, which had not agreed to MSA stipulations, were ineligible for further military assistance.⁶⁷ This was ironic, given the fact that the Indonesian Army was one of the only in the world to have demonstrated its anti-communist bonafides on the battlefield, having crushed the communist uprising at Madiun in 1948.

So it was that in 1953, when it launched a regional military training mission to the region, the U.S. pointedly excluded Indonesia.⁶⁸ Washington's desire to link military aid to political pliability in Southeast Asia was most outwardly symbolized by the November 1954 formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). This collective defense organization meant to deter communism consisted of U.S. allies and, ironically, their former colonial masters in Europe. Indonesia, unsurprisingly, never joined SEATO nor appreciated its intrusion into a region that Sukarno increasingly wanted to influence and lead.⁶⁹ For their parts, successive Indonesian governments in the mid-1950s, despite needing military assistance, aware of TNI calls for greater partnership with the United States, and a general warming of relations by way of President Sukarno's official visit to

National Security Council (Lay)," 371-383, and Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 119, for details.

⁶⁷ Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 17.

⁶⁸ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 116-119.

⁶⁹ McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 66-67. The founding members of SEATO were United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan.

the United States in 1956, refused to sign any agreement that infringed upon their independent foreign policy or, as they saw it, sovereignty. Indonesian officers, despite visiting Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and seeing potentially useful parachute and artillery demonstrations with Sukarno, simply could not compel the civilian governments to change their policies.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, as the mid-1950s came to a close, the hope that some sort of expanded military assistance agreement might be reached endured. In late 1956, after productive negotiations with the embassy in Jakarta and, “trust in the U.S. motive,” the TNI Joint Chiefs of Staff began putting together wish lists of arms and equipment to forward to U.S. officials.⁷¹ By that time, however, the wheels of domestic confrontation were already in motion, and any Indonesian willingness to engage in substantive talks was met by a more retrenched U.S. which was not only less willing to consider aid and more outwardly critical of Indonesia’s perceived drift towards the left, but one that was increasingly considering inserting itself into the Indonesian political situation.

⁷⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State,” 219-220; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Memorandum of a Conversation, Between Foreign Minister Abdulgani and the Ambassador to Indonesia (Cumming), Salt Lake City, Utah, June 3, 1956,” 276-277.

⁷¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 302-303.

U.S.-Indonesian Security Cooperation, 1950-1957

As with its military assistance efforts, U.S. security cooperation – that is, combined exercises and training events; formalized military education and, in this case, tutelage; as well as personnel visits, exchanges, and survey missions – activities also began almost immediately upon Indonesia’s independence. These efforts proved, in the long run, much more important than military assistance in binding the militaries and defense establishments. In particular, the officer corps of the two countries were central in building and then maintaining the lines of communication between the two militaries. Those lines of communication were later to be decisive to U.S. efforts to recover its position and influence in Indonesia after the collapse of the regional rebellions in the last years of the decade.

Upon Indonesia’s independence in 1949, Sukarno recognized the perilous state of the TNI and the need for external assistance and training. Indeed, in January 1950, days after the formal transfer of sovereignty, he made inquiries about the feasibility of sending a senior TNI officer to the U.S. to research possibilities for just such an arrangement.⁷² The first military exchanges and training and education programs between the two militaries were initiated soon after, with the signing of the 1950 agreement. This allowed and finalized plans for the training of 40 Indonesian Army constabulary officers in the United States, where they trained in infantry and military police tactics, supply operations, and staff functions and unit administration, among much else.⁷³ When their

⁷² Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears*, 99.

⁷³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State and the Acting Secretary of Defense

training was finished, Indonesia brought these officers back and made them instructors at Indonesian military schools, in effect spreading the American knowledge out into the broader force in a “train-the-trainer” model. The U.S. military, eager to continue the program after training the initial group, indicated as much to their Indonesian counterparts, and later even investigated, from a legal perspective, the option of sending active duty Army officers to Indonesia on individual, private contracts to continue the training.⁷⁴

From 1951, the Indonesian Navy was sending informal requests through the U.S. embassy in Jakarta regarding the potential for a U.S. training mission, while the Indonesian Air Force at the time employed 20 American flying instructors at their school in Bandung, teaching new Indonesian pilots flight and air tactics basics.⁷⁵ Though the instructors were private flyers and not officially a part of the U.S. Air Force, they nonetheless served to imbue the Indonesian Air Force with aspects of American flying

(Anderson) to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay),” 371-383; Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 32; Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 94.

⁷⁴ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 94; Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part I, *Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Director, Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Lacy),” 703-705; Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part I, *Asia and the Pacific*, “The Ambassador in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Chief of Police, Republic of Indonesia (Sukanto),” 756-757; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, “The Under Secretary of State (Smith) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson),” 460-461.

⁷⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, part I, *Asia and the Pacific*, “The Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to Mr. Robert Blum, Special Assistant to the Assistant Administrator for Program, Economic Cooperation Administration (Cleveland),” 771-776; Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 30.

culture. Indonesian air cadets were also learning to fly under private contract in the United States; some 60 had completed training by the end of 1951. Such was the size of the program relative to the still small size of the Indonesian Air Force that the service was almost entirely dependent upon American instructors and their Indonesian trainees to maintain any sort of readiness or operational ability.⁷⁶ Again, though that may seem a matter of little practical consequence given the Indonesian Air Force's inability to sustain air operations or even project air power durably throughout its own country at the time, it represented, to the Indonesians, a signal commitment to their military development and, to the Americans, an investment in building partner capacity in a country with strategic importance and an opportunity to continue transmitting ideas and influence to Indonesian officers and cadets.

Building upon these early exchanges, the U.S. Army succeeded in establishing a larger, in fact the largest, combined training program with Indonesia in the period. It did so not by attempting to subvert Indonesian politics and push upon the country the politicized military training missions or survey teams, but by rather depoliticizing the issue and bringing Indonesian officers to the United States to train.⁷⁷ It argued that the technical aspects of the training could best be accomplished through extensive education and immersion into the U.S. military system. Interpreting this as, "technical training," despite its purely military character, perhaps bent the congressionally mandated rules to

⁷⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Under Secretary of State (Smith) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," 363-365; Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 92-93.

⁷⁷ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 30-31.

their breaking point, but in doing so it successfully implemented the training under the MSA's 511b program, which focused on economic and technical assistance, rather than the politically fraught 511a program, which focused on military assistance.⁷⁸ This carved out a space in which the U.S. Army – contrary, perhaps, to national policy – could continue to train and educate Indonesian Army officers, something both militaries were interested in, despite the fact that Indonesia never actually signed or agreed to meet the stringent political requirements of the MSA's 511a program.⁷⁹ So it was that the most impactful component of the military to military relationship in the 1950s took form and grew despite the antipathy of civilian governments on both sides of the Pacific.

The U.S. chose the Indonesian Army, rather than the Indonesian Navy or Air Force, to be the primary vehicle for such training and the medium through which U.S. influence could be best cultivated because, more than anything else, the U.S. was afraid of popular revolutionary movements within Indonesia as having the ability to move the country towards communism. Successfully combating that meant partnering with an organization that had the size, the scale, and the geographical reach to replicate and respond to the mass appeal of the PKI which was, at that time, growing in popularity and particularly active in the Javanese countryside. Amongst TNI forces, only the army

⁷⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Indonesia," 248.

⁷⁹ Indonesia did, briefly and after significant pressure from the United States, agree to the 511a program in January 1952. Once word of the agreement, and its potential impact on Indonesia's independent foreign policy, became known, however, public and political opposition was so swift that the government fell. Only later in 1952 did a succeeding government, under new leadership, agree to the MSA's 511b program.

provided all of those things and so was, from the U.S. perspective, always the most important and favored of the services.⁸⁰

Following the first group of 40 officers in 1950, then, and with the full support of the State Department and the National Security Council, the U.S. Army expanded the program to meet Indonesian demand, opened avenues for relationship building between the respective armies, and extended American ideas and influence as far into the Indonesian military as it could. By 1954, Indonesia was sending 45 officers a year to the U.S. to study, free of charge, at U.S. Army schools, a number that increased to over 130 in 1955.⁸¹ To facilitate the program, the U.S. Military Air Transport Service provided free travel for Indonesian officers from U.S. airbases in the Philippines to the United States. By 1956, the program had expanded to such an extent that the U.S. was not only flying Indonesian Army officers to the U.S. from the Philippines, but training them at specially designed courses in the Philippines as well.⁸²

⁸⁰ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 93. As will be demonstrated later, the Soviet Union, already confident in the mass appeal and wide geographic scope of the PKI, chose to invest its money and resources in the smaller Indonesian Navy and Indonesian Air Force. Though this did not appreciably affect their combat capabilities, it did make them, and their senior leaders in particular, targets of the Indonesian Army when it began its purge of communists, leftists, and their sympathizers in the mid-1960s.

⁸¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "The Under Secretary of State (Smith) to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," 460-461; Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "Paper Prepared for the Operations Coordinating Board," 466-469; Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia," 73; Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 30.

⁸² Department of State, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 12, part 2, *East Asia and the Pacific*, "Paper Prepared for the Operations Coordinating Board," 466-469; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Memorandum from the Director of

A tour at CGSC at Fort Leavenworth was the most coveted of all such opportunities. Long the mid-career school house for aspiring senior leaders in the U.S. Army, CGSC by the mid-1950s was accepting and graduating Indonesian Army officers for the first time. It was under these auspices that then Colonel Ahmad Yani came to the United States in 1955 as part of a mid-decade wave of roughly 40 officers, the first from Indonesia, to study at the prestigious college. They were among the hundreds of Indonesian Army officers who came under the 511b program to study and train at various U.S. Army schools, which were seen as not only modern but, importantly for a post-colonial military still searching for an identity, not Dutch.⁸³ The American belief was that such exposure to the United States and training within the U.S. military system and alongside U.S. officers would consolidate the anti-communist position of the TNI, something that the U.S. wanted to nurture, especially given the organizational and popular gains the PKI was making across Indonesia in the mid-1950s. This was not only an army goal but an objective of national policy fully supported by the NSC.⁸⁴

The impacts of the training on the Indonesian Army officer corps were as the United States had hoped. Most officers would, after completing a U.S. military school, return to Indonesia for serve for at least a year as an instructor at the equivalent TNI school; the train-the-trainer model, thus, lived on. Then Colonel Yani, in fact, worked to

the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Young) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson),” 222-225.

⁸³ Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 39-41; Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 121-122.

⁸⁴ Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 74-75; Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 30.

just such ends when, after returning from CGSC in 1956, he helped to establish the Indonesian Military Academy in 1957 using U.S. texts and manuals. The school was built in the image of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Major George Benson, in fact, his former CGSC colleague and himself a West Point graduate, was at this time firmly in place in the U.S. Army Attaché Office in Jakarta. The U.S. Army provided the bulk of the materials to be used at both the new military academy and other Indonesian Army courses with U.S. trained instructors or roots, including the Indonesian Army staff college at Bandung. Benson, himself, had established meaningful relationships with numerous Indonesian officers during his time at Fort Leavenworth. He worked assiduously to build those relationships and deepen the institutional and educational connections between the two armies once he was on the ground in Jakarta.⁸⁵

As Yani and other graduates of U.S. courses returned and assumed positions of greater responsibility, their influence grew, based in no small part upon their performance. Only the best officers were selected to attend training in the U.S. in the first place – and they fully appreciated the U.S. Army model around which the Indonesian Army was being built. It was, thus, that U.S. influence began to spread over the entire establishment of the Indonesian Army. In 1956, U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Hugh Cumming reported all lines of command in the TNI flowed through officers that had been trained in the United States.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 38-40; Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 120-122; Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 33.

⁸⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs

Important to that training was also an idea, imbued in Indonesian officers by their counterparts in the United States and in many ways equally important to each military. That was the sense, and this was particularly strong in Indonesia, given its relative sovereign youthfulness, that the military was something more than simply the physical manifestation of the country's outward strength. This idea represented something of a guarantor of the independence its officers had fought so hard for and considered themselves so central to achieving. It gave them and the Indonesian Army an identity as a guardian of the revolution and, therefore, of the state itself. This conception compelled these officers to become increasingly involved in politics in the 1950s and to respond with force to anything that it saw as threatening the current order, or the army's predominant position within that order. It was fostered and in many ways was strengthened by the United States, which was increasingly eager, over the course of the decade, to foster TNI strength to further its own interests. It would also, as was seen in the 1960s, be decisive in preserving, as it saw it, the fundamental freedoms of the country from the internal communist threat.

The Indonesian Army in the 1950s

What, then, was the nature of the army that those officers returned to back in Indonesia? The Indonesian Army, by the middle of the decade, had many of the same misgivings about the role and importance of democracy in Indonesia the U.S. was then developing, and for the same reason: fear of the PKI and revolutionary communism. The

(Young) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)," 222-225; Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia," 74.

post-independence Indonesian Army formed in 1950 out of the heterogeneous militias and security forces that fought in the Indonesian National Revolution. Numbering roughly 200,000 men and with 5,000 officers at the start of the decade, the army was populated by veterans from both sides of the independence conflict, officers who had attended formal Dutch military training, guerrillas who had fought against the Japanese, volunteers who heeded Japan's message of independence and were trained to fight the Dutch, and various militias and distinctive regional forces that were scattered across the archipelago.⁸⁷ It was a polyglot and variegated force in 1950, and one that faced significant challenges as Indonesia's first independent decade got going.

The first question it faced was one of scale, and this necessarily became a question of how to balance army personnel, requirements, pay, and much else between Java and the outer islands. Proponents of a smaller army, among them Army Chief of Staff Nasution, preferred a modern, professionalized, and "rational" force that was well trained and educated along foreign lines. A veteran of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army from the colonial-era, Nasution was something of a conservative. A smaller force meant greater centralization and control from Jakarta, as well as fewer billets in the first place. He led a bloated force full of veterans, many eager to benefit themselves and less willing to engage in the sorts of soldiering he believed would be needed, both to pacify the country and to help develop and secure it.

⁸⁷ Herbert Feith, *The Wilopo Cabinet, 1952-1953: A Turning Point in Post-Revolutionary Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Modern Indonesia Project, 1958), 107-108; Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 53-54, 61.

Foremost, Nasution epitomized the belief among the officer corps that the army, having vanquished the Dutch, had a sacred role in protecting the Republic above and beyond its responsibilities as determined by the Indonesian government. That seems, to modern eyes, to undermine civilian control of the military. It did. It is important to remember, however, that officers like Nasution did not necessarily see themselves as subordinate to the government but rather, to some extent, as co-equals in the running of the country. Given the wide writ that military commanders enjoyed in many of the outer islands and provinces, that was true.⁸⁸

The alternative view argued that the army, rather than being a small, professional, and educated force, should be more akin to a mass movement that consisted of, and was embodied by, the larger populace. This position, espoused by Sukarno and numerous officers over the course of the decade, believed that in order to protect the revolution the army had to be a part of the revolution. This position opposed efforts to “rationalize” the army and decrease its size, and instead was for keeping a large and less-well trained force that spoke for, but lacked the power to challenge, the government. This position was, to some extent, adopted by many of the non-Javanese regional commanders. Outside of Java, these commanders recruited co-ethnics, co-religionists, and co-linguists to their units and created, in a sense, a series of very different regional armies around the archipelago. They fought against rotational assignments that took them away from their

⁸⁸ Kenneth J. Conboy and James Morrison, *Feet to the Fire: CIA Covert Operations in Indonesia, 1957-1958* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999), 3-4; Feith, *The Wilopo Cabinet*, 111-112; McVey, “The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army,” 145-146; Pauker, “The Role of the Military in Indonesia,” 205-206; Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 61.

home regions and resented the efforts of Nasution and others to control their operations, licit and illicit, from Jakarta. The ability to defend the nation against its external threats or project power were simply not priorities for them, which they considered less important than their commercial activities or efforts to provide employment to veterans.⁸⁹

Though this divide existed to some extent until 1965, it was particularly important in the 1950s as the army grew and searched for meaning and purpose amidst political turmoil and economic stagnation and the country lurched, it seemed, from one crisis to the next.⁹⁰ Those crises produced, in the views of Nasution and others, a profound distrust of democratic politics and, as they saw it, the corrosive role that political parties played in tearing at the fabric of the country. To make matters worse, the PKI continued to grow and, by the middle of the decade, had become something of an existential threat in the eyes of army leadership. The PKI was the mass organization that represented much of what Sukarno seemed to want and was developing the capability to reach deep into the countryside and influence villagers in pursuit of its political and ideological goals. Given the PKI's performance in the elections of 1955 and their growing popularity at the time, the army had to contend with the realistic possibility the PKI could come to power through democratic means.

That possibility, coupled with the poor performance of the civilian cabinets and their inability to provide the stability and funding that the army desired left it in a position

⁸⁹ Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 132-133; McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," 152; Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 65, 101.

⁹⁰ Daniel Lev, "Political Role of the Army in Indonesia," *Pacific Affairs* 36 (Winter 1963-1964): 349.

where it considered, from time to time, how much authority it would allow the civilian government to have over it, or how much it even wanted to work with the civilian government in the first place.⁹¹ Constant rumors of potential military coups were not unjustified, given the botched army attempt to force the resignation of the parliament in 1952 that led to Nasution's first ouster as Army Chief of Staff (he returned in 1955). That served more as a preamble to the frustrations that army leaders had with their civilian overseers as the decade progressed.⁹² By 1957, at just the time that the United States was doubting the efficacy of electoral politics in Indonesia, so was the Indonesian Army.

American attempts to reach and influence the Indonesian Army were also complicated by the fact that, since the time of Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union had been aggressively reaching out to developing countries and their militaries.⁹³ That opening coincided with the popular Indonesian backlash against the United States and the coming to office of a more leftist cabinet. By the end of 1954, and in pursuit of its goal of a balanced and independent foreign policy, Indonesia had refused to ratify the San Francisco Treaty which ended the American occupation of Japan, announced its opposition to SEATO, sent its first ambassador to the People's Republic of China, and

⁹¹ McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," 146; Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 88; Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 132-133; Pauker, "The Role of the Military in Indonesia," 222-223.

⁹² Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Mein) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)," 101-106; Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power*, 65-72.

⁹³ Boden, "Cold War Economics," 112; Singh, *Bear and Garuda*, 148.

opened formal trade relations with the Soviet Union.⁹⁴ In 1956, the Soviets agreed to provide \$100 million in low interest loans, with which Indonesia began purchasing half-ton trucks and other military vehicles. Transport ships and tankers for the Indonesian Navy were included in the transaction, and by 1957 Russian crews, captains, navigators, engineers, and radio operators were in Indonesia operating and training their counterparts.⁹⁵ Though Soviet aid in the 1950s paled in comparison to what it became in the 1960s, the single 1956 agreement still represented, from a purely monetary perspective, the largest foreign investment in the Indonesian military since independence. This came at a time when the United States, in terms of its military assistance program, had only ever passed the single, \$5 million grant in 1950.

Nasution and the Indonesian Army accepted these gifts for practical reasons. For Nasution himself, much of his political capital and currency derived from his ability to bring in foreign military assistance.⁹⁶ This was important given Indonesia's lack of a domestic military-industrial base and its unwillingness to invest in the sorts of technologies and capabilities he felt necessary for developing a modern army. For the army itself, it needed equipment and funding. More than that, though, despite its growing affinity for the U.S. Army and the western military model, political realities and Sukarno's unassailable position atop Indonesian society meant the Indonesian Army had

⁹⁴ Mahajani, *Soviet and American Aid to Indonesia, 1949-1968*, 7.

⁹⁵ Uri Ra'anan, *The USSR Arms the Third World; Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 187-196.

⁹⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 314-315.

to be able to accept aid and assistance from countries on both sides of the Cold War divide. To not do so would threaten not only the position of the top officers within the chain of command, but also run counter to Sukarno's policies and, to a large extent, the will of the Indonesian people who supported him. And yet, the Indonesian Army, by 1957 and the outbreak of the regional rebellions, understood that its interests, both material and ideological, could be better met by the United States, which shared its fear of and antipathy towards the PKI and was increasingly the schoolhouse of its officer corps.

Throughout this period, American conceptions of the political and ideological usefulness of the Indonesian Army, beyond simply serving as a tool to resist external forces of communism, developed alongside the Indonesian Army's conception of its own place, role, and responsibilities within Indonesian society. In Indonesia, U.S. trained officers and those with stronger connections to central army headquarters intuited the importance of the connection more quickly than their brethren outside of Java or those in competing cliques, and certainly more quickly than their navy and air force counterparts, who represented rival institutions as much as joint partners. This, however, was imperfectly understood in Washington at the time, and that helped produce, in many ways, confusion amongst American policymakers during the critical years of 1957 and 1958, when the army-to-army relationship was beginning to come into its own and would be tested by political realities on both sides of the Pacific.

CHAPTER 4

LIVING TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

The regional rebellions of 1957 and 1958, more than anything else, served to clarify the United States' position towards the Indonesian Army and its role in national development. That it did so by initially subverting the army and attempting to topple the central government of Sukarno should not, in retrospect, cloud our understanding of the way that the rebellions themselves served as catalysts. These events facilitated the coming together of U.S. policymakers around the idea that the army represented the best vehicle to advance U.S. interests in Indonesia. Thus, the army needed to be embraced, supported, and funded. Such a realization helped birth, in the last years of the decade, a renewed military to military relationship and an overt emphasis, within U.S. policy making circles, of the primacy of the Indonesian Army and Chief of Staff Abdul Haris Nasution in efforts to advance U.S. interests.

None of that was clear to policy makers in Washington, however, in the spring and summer of 1957. At that time, officials outside of Jakarta still did not grasp the closeness of the bilateral military relationship, harbored doubts about the ability of the army to stand up to communism, and were driven by real fears of Sukarno and the PKI. That situation created the conditions in which the National Security Council, spurred on by the CIA and with the support of the State Department, launched its ill-fated effort to support civil war in Indonesia and topple Sukarno. Ironically, the Indonesian Army, ideologically and doctrinally supportive of the United States, became the target of these rebellions. However, the conduct of U.S. assistance to the rebels and the conflict itself went on to produce a greater irony: that war against the Indonesian Army would create

the very conditions that would enable it to cement both of the two things it had long sought most: its relationship with the United States and its place as the ultimate arbiter of domestic life within Indonesia.

The U.S. Decision to Support the Rebels

The shift away from engagement and towards confrontation in Indonesia was decided in Washington with a certain suddenness, but the foundations for such a policy had been place since the Eisenhower Administration arrived in 1953. Having seen the west “lose” all of China in 1949, the Eisenhower Administration sought to mitigate the spread of communism in Indonesia by exploring ways the country could be broken up to preserve anti-communist forces and populations outside of Java – which it rightly saw as the wellspring of the PKI – in Indonesia’s outer islands. It considered ways that such geographic blocs, particularly the islands of Sumatra and Sulawesi, could serve as fulcrums to help prevent any potential source of Javanese communism from taking over the entire country. In the era of the domino theory and the French defeat in Indochina, the “loss” of Indonesia to communism had to be avoided.⁹⁷ In furtherance of this idea, the National Security Council, in NSC 5518, its 1955 policy statement on Indonesia, agreed, “to employ all feasible covert and all feasible overt means, including the use of armed force if necessary and appropriate, to prevent Indonesia or vital parts thereof from falling to Communism.”⁹⁸ U.S. policy, then, was not to break up Indonesia but to be prepared to

⁹⁷ Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 12, 16.

⁹⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “National Security Council Report: U.S. Policy Statement on Indonesia,” 153-157; Roland Challis,

intervene to ensure its breakup if doing so meant that vital parts of the country – i.e., Sumatra and Sulawesi – remained free of communism.

The outbreak of the rebellions in the winter and spring of 1956-1957 provided the first opportunity for the U.S. to substantively engage on the matter. The PRRI came together over the course of 1957 to challenge Indonesian control over Sumatra just as the Permesta rebel movement in Sulawesi was advancing its own similar cause. Though initially distinct from one another, the rebellions came together ideologically – though not in any meaningful material way – over the course of 1957 and 1958. Each was led by disgruntled local army officers unhappy with national politics, the centralization of power by the national government, and the predominant role of Javanese people in government. Additionally, each argued that national politics were frustrating efforts to economically develop the outer islands, producing stagnation. These regional commanders led units composed of co-ethnics, co-religionists, and co-linguists, and, additionally, had their own financial interests at heart, given that some units in the outer islands took active interests in commerce and smuggling.⁹⁹

The PRRI and Permesta rebels, therefore, sought to redress local grievances and institutional wrongs. They were not fighting for anti-communism, nor did they espouse especially revolutionary or counterrevolutionary ideologies. This was understood by

Shadow of a Revolution: Indonesia and the Generals (Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton, 2001), 42.

⁹⁹ Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 143-144; McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 86.

Sukarno, to whom the rebels still pledged loyalty.¹⁰⁰ As an example, despite their being in open rebellion and having evicted the legitimate civil administrations in the areas under their control, for the duration of the conflicts many of the dissidents' family members continued to live and study openly in Java. The Indonesian national airline even continued to make its routine flights to and from the "occupied" cities on Sumatra and Sulawesi.¹⁰¹ This was, within Indonesia, an effort to negotiate change within the system.

To U.S. policymakers in Washington, however, these rebellions were seen through the lens of the Cold War and interpreted as a challenge to the system. Events, given the strong performance of the PKI in the 1955 general elections, Sukarno's successful visit to Moscow, his movement away from the west and vigorous leadership of the non-aligned movement, as well as the U.S inability to accept Indonesia as existing anywhere outside the communist-noncommunist dichotomy, created for U.S. policymakers a compelling reality. Indonesia, as a state, was embracing communism and threatening U.S. interests in Asia. This was compounded by the collapse of the Indonesian cabinet in March 1957 and Sukarno's open desire for a *gotong-rojong* (mutual help) cabinet and unity government comprised of the four major political parties, which would have brought the PKI into government for the first time.¹⁰² Additionally, Sukarno's declaration of martial law throughout the country was interpreted not only as a

¹⁰⁰ Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 65-66.

¹⁰¹ Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 22.

¹⁰² John M. Allison, *Ambassador from the Prairie or Allison in Wonderland* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 299.

bold power grab, but also as a sign of the inherent chaos engulfing Indonesia that could only lead to instability and communist gain.¹⁰³

The rebels, therefore, became convenient props; vehicles that presented themselves at just the time the U.S. was seeking instruments to gain influence in Indonesia and safeguard its interests. Allen Dulles, then Director of the CIA, was the chief proponent – along with his brother John Foster, the Secretary of State – of the early plan to support the rebels and topple Sukarno. They insisted, incorrectly and in contravention to military reports, in a February 1957 meeting of the National Security Council that the Indonesian Army in Java had been infiltrated by communists, whereas the rebel groups, particularly in Sumatra, were anti-communist.¹⁰⁴ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in fact, were arguing as late as the summer of 1957 that the best way to counter a potentially communist Java was through the predominately non-communist military itself, not through rebels far from the seats of power.¹⁰⁵ Subsequent meetings in March 1957 saw Dulles enjoin his NSC colleagues to, for the first time, conceptualize what the breakup of Indonesia might look like, and how the U.S. might go about using the overt and covert means NSC 5518 outlined to prevent vital parts of the country from falling to

¹⁰³ McMahan, *The Limits of Empire*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ “314th Meeting of the NSC, February 28, 1957,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 8, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 475-480.

¹⁰⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 333rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 1, 1957,” 400-402.

communism.¹⁰⁶ Asia experts in the State Department argued the breakup of Indonesia would not serve U.S. interests, could only be made viable with financial investments of a size that the U.S. would never make, and would further destabilize the region and expand the ability of communists to operate. By August 1957, however, the NSC considered Sukarno as having crossed the point of no return.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, as early as 1956, CIA operations officers had been arguing that it was time to hold Sukarno's "feet to the fire."¹⁰⁸

On August 1, 1957, then, the NSC formed the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee on Indonesia, to study the issue and make policy recommendations on how to proceed. Headed by Hugh Cumming, who had been ambassador to Indonesia until March 1957, the committee issued its first report on September, one that echoed the fears of Allen Dulles and brought the U.S. closer to supporting civil war.¹⁰⁹ Cumming's committee argued Indonesia was on the verge of going communist, the army was not as politically reliable as had been suspected, and a dramatic change in policy was needed. This policy shift required providing huge amounts of covert support to the rebel groups

¹⁰⁶ "315th Meeting of the NSC, March 6, 1957," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 8, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library; "316th Meeting of the NSC, March 14, 1957," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 8, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹⁰⁷ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Memorandum from the Deputy Director of the Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs (Mein) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson)," 381-385; "333rd Meeting of the NSC, August 1, 1957," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 9, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹⁰⁸ Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 85.

¹⁰⁹ Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 16-17.

and strengthening their determination, will, and cohesion. Though this was couched in terms of keeping U.S. options open, the committee also recommended continued engagement, militarily and otherwise, with the government of Indonesia. While the U.S. did not confer upon the rebels belligerency status, in reality the rebellions provided the opening the interventionists sought to change the status quo in Indonesia.¹¹⁰ This two-pronged approach became official U.S. government policy from September 1957 forward.

The CIA and NSC attached themselves to the rebel groups because they were, in a sense, the perfect counterbalance to Sukarno. Though they were simply aggrieved local actors, they became, willingly in the sense that they sought U.S. support but unwillingly in that they never intended for the rebellions to take the form that they did, pawns of the United States, who incorrectly perceived them as a vanguard for anticommunism. They were the local agents who could potentially advance U.S. interests in particular areas to achieve a larger effect. Ironically, NSC decision-makers seemed to dismiss reports from the military that the Indonesian Army, modeled after and largely trained by the U.S., might itself have been a much better vehicle to advance U.S. interests.

The NSC ignored or misinterpreted several things in reaching the conclusions that it did. First, it believed communist sympathizers within the Indonesian Army was purging pro-western officers from the ranks. This lacked context. Attachés reported from late-

¹¹⁰ “Special Report on Indonesia: The Implication of U.S. Security of Recent Developments in Indonesia, Especially Communists Political Gains in Java,” Disaster File Series, Box 58, Indonesia (3), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Report Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee on Indonesia for the National Security Council,” 436-440; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 151-152.

1956 many Indonesian Army officers were being relieved of their duties, but despite the fact several U.S. trained officers were among the large number of those relieved, there was no distinct connection between western sympathies and reassignment or relief. Rather, the factional nature of the Indonesian Army and the divisions between Jakarta and the outer islands split the force and created, from time to time, the need to reassign and relieve officers. This factionalism was not ideological, but focused more so on the promotions, personal grievances, and different thoughts on the role and nature of the army itself within the officer corps. The CIA's misinterpretation of this, along with the misperception that the rebel leaders were anti-communist in nature, led the NSC to conclude the communist-anti-communist dichotomy lay at the heart of the rebellions, which was incorrect.¹¹¹

Second, U.S. policymakers failed to see the hand of the Indonesian Army in thwarting Sukarno's attempt to create his *gotong-rojong* cabinet in the spring of 1957. The army's unwillingness to countenance a place for the PKI in government single-handedly forced Sukarno to abandon his plans and bring in a nominally non-partisan government.¹¹² Understanding this would have signaled to Washington the dominant place that anti-communists held in the army's upper echelons. The army's anti-

¹¹¹ "Special Report on Indonesia: The Implication of U.S. Security of Recent Developments in Indonesia, Especially Communists Political Gains in Java," Disaster Files Series, Box 58, Indonesia (3), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 329-331; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Report Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee on Indonesia for the National Security Council," 436-440.

¹¹² Allison, *Ambassador from the Prairie*, 299.

communist bonafides were further burnished in the fall of 1957 when the embassy reported that Nasution had begun to purge PKI sympathizers from the army. It concluded that, “The army, despite its factionalism and internal conflicts, will probably continue to be a better potential force for providing national unification and a stable non-Communist government.” In fact, by the time the rebellions were effectively ending in the spring of 1958, this view had come full circle and been accepted by the Dulles brothers and the NSC. And should U.S. policymakers have feared that Sukarno would have simply replace Nasution with a more pliable officer, two realities would have tempered their fears. The first was that U.S. trained and pro-U.S. officers dominated the top ranks of the army already; to replace Nasution would have simply elevated another western-oriented officer into command.¹¹³

The second reality represented the final critical factor U.S. policymakers failed to grasp: by the spring of 1957, the army was effectively running the country. Sukarno lacked both the ability and the desire to replace Nasution. The growth of army’s capability came, in fact, at the outset of the rebellions themselves. In responding to the rebellions, in March 1957 Sukarno declared martial law. Counter to his intentions, this greatly strengthened Nasution and the army, as they were the only institution capable of imposing direct rule across the archipelago. Martial law was the army’s political charter, and it used its immense powers to intervene in village life and greatly expand its

¹¹³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 475-480; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Mein) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson),” 101-106; “365th Meeting of the NSC, May 8, 1958,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 10, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

commercial and economic activities, though now under the auspices of, rather than in contravention to, the state itself.¹¹⁴ This increased Nasution's ability to intervene in domestic life as he saw fit and opened the door for his future efforts to undermine the PKI, as martial law more easily allowed for the army to install officers in the countryside to monitor the peace, down even to the village level.¹¹⁵

In December 1957, Sukarno further incensed Washington when he nationalized Dutch businesses and assets within Indonesia, in response to what he saw as Dutch intransigence and obstinacy over the sovereignty of Netherlands New Guinea. If the declaration of martial law was the army's political charter, then the expropriation of Dutch businesses was its economic charter. The army, "with glee," seized Dutch assets across the country and began to operate them itself.¹¹⁶ This action, however, was imperfectly understood in Washington. U.S. policy makers believed that *Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* (SOBSI), a leftist union affiliated with the PKI, was responsible for the nationalizations.¹¹⁷ While SOBSI and other labor unions were a part of the nationalization process, only the army had the scale, reach, and wherewithal to take control over and then run such industry. Over time, the army even took control of the

¹¹⁴ Lev, "Political Role of the Army in Indonesia," 350, 351; McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," 147.

¹¹⁵ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 34-37.

¹¹⁶ Lev, "Political Role of the Army in Indonesia," 350, 351; McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," 147-148.

¹¹⁷ "348th Meeting of the NSC, December 12, 1957," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 9, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. SOBSI (*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia*) was the Central All-Indonesian Workers Organization.

SOBSI-nationalized industries and succeeded in placing officers on the boards of numerous others, further entrenching its place in the economy.¹¹⁸ The process, then, greatly expanded the army's operational reach and access to capital. Washington's inability to understand that process, however, led it believe the opposite: that nationalization was leading not to the growth of the army, but of the PKI. That, compounded with its misinterpretation of army politics helps explain why the United States placed its faith in inchoate rebel groups in 1957 rather than in the largest and most competent national organization in Indonesia at the time, the one that it had spent years cultivating and developing, and the only one with the ability to actually influence Indonesia towards U.S. ends: the army itself.

The Department of Defense and the PRRI/Permesta Rebellions

The story of U.S. support to the rebels, chiefly through the CIA, but with support from other actors within the national security establishment, including the Department of Defense, has been told elsewhere. The current study attempts to explain not the day-to-day unfolding of the rebellions, but the way that U.S. defense policy makers and those charged with implementing defense policy on the ground interpreted and took part in events during the crisis. It also outlines the ways the military to military relationship evolved from mid-1957 to mid-1958.

¹¹⁸ David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz, "Introduction," in *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, eds. David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 5; Vedi R. Hadiz, "Mirroring the Past or Reflecting the Future? Class and Religious Pluralism in Indonesian Labor," in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 272.

Department of Defense and military involvement in the effort to support the rebels began early on. Retired Marine Corps general Graves Erskine, then head of the Department of Defense's Special Operations Office, was briefed in early 1957 of CIA plans to assist the PRRI/Permesta rebels. Hugh Cumming's Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee on Indonesia articulated the policy that enabled covert support to the rebels to proceed. This committee included Department of Defense officials and representatives from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹¹⁹ The defense establish was, if nothing else, aware and not opposed to the early plans. When the committee produced its report in early September 1957, however, the NSC adopted its policy recommendations with the following caveat, at the behest of defense officials: "Because of the adverse repercussions within the UN and SEATO and in Asia generally, the employment of U.S. armed forces is neither feasible nor appropriate while the Indonesian situation remains one of political fluidity."¹²⁰ While this did not materially affect U.S. policy in any way at the time, it should be seen as the Pentagon's first attempt to circumscribe and place boundaries upon the policy itself, and reflected an early reticence, in comparison to the CIA, State Department, and Ad Hoc Committee, of the value of expansive operations against the

¹¹⁹ Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia, 1953-1961," 205, 207.

¹²⁰ "337th Meeting of the NSC, September 22, 1957," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 9, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. That the NSC accepted the committee's policy recommendations should not itself be a surprise; it chartered the committee to research the issue in the first place and put Cumming, one of the architects of the confrontational approach, at its head. The committee can, thus, best be described as producing the policy recommendations that the NSC, under the direction of Allen and John Foster Dulles, wanted it to produce. Realistically speaking, it was never going to recommend anything else.

Indonesian state. As will be seen, many more such attempts were made in the months that followed.

Aware that officials in Washington – including Cumming, his predecessor in Jakarta – were moving towards implementing a policy of confrontation, the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, John Allison, in consultation and with the backing of his team of service attachés, issued the clearest counter-proposal that a field mission, charged with implementing but not developing policy, could. In their cable from October 11, 1957, Allison and his attachés argued strenuously, and with evidence, that moderate, pro-western officers still dominated the senior ranks of the Indonesian Army and Navy and that the best way to enforce anti-communism was to provide them, the U.S.'s natural and already longstanding partners, with military assistance and training opportunities. They outlined the work they had done with their Indonesian military counterparts in ensuring Indonesia's legal ability to purchase equipment.

They also discussed the robust efforts by military leaders, in spite of significant political opposition, to continue efforts to purchase American materiel, the prominent role played by U.S. trained officers in working to establish a more modern Indonesian Army, and their likely role as the primary trainers and instructors of future generations of soldiers and officers. They highlighted the creation of the new Indonesian military academy on the West Point model, to include the purchase and use of U.S. Army and West Point materials in the curriculum, the recent purging, by Nasution himself, of all officers and commanders with pro-PKI sympathies, and, finally, the need to provide, at the very least, token amounts of arms and equipment to demonstrate to both the army and

its critics in Indonesian political life the value of the relationship and the truth of America's stated commitment to Indonesia's defense and security.

They also reiterated their view that the army, not the rebels or any other political party or movement, represented the surest bet to advance U.S. interests and containing communism. "The army, despite its factionalism and internal conflicts, will probably continue to be a better potential force for providing national unification and a stable non-Communist government."¹²¹ They interpreted – correctly, in hindsight – the important optics that could be gained or lost in any such transaction, and the very important effect such a seemingly small transaction could have on the larger relationship. Their recommendations represented the first military argument against backing the rebels and deepening the national confrontation with Indonesia.

In early November 1957, working level representatives of the State Department, CIA, Department of Defense, Army, Navy, and Air Force met to discuss the embassy's recommendations and agreed with nearly everything Allison and his service attachés put forward. They recommended to NSC principals the United States agree to provide military assistance to the army and move forward with the planning of, at least, a token shipment of arms and materiel. While acknowledging the risks inherent in such a strategy at a time that the U.S. was already materially aiding the PRRI/Permesta rebels, the group argued that, after years of temporizing over further military assistance, the time had come for the United States to firmly support a pro-western, U.S. trained armed forces eager to deepen their reliance on the United States.

¹²¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 475-480.

Failure to do so, they argued, would “only serve to confirm the fear that many of them now have that we are not prepared to assist them.” “There is general agreement that the Indonesian armed forces, particularly the army, represent the most important single force for providing a stable, non-communist government in Indonesia. The Service Attachés and the Embassy regard the army officer corps as predominantly Western-oriented and anti-communist.” As a testament to this, they acknowledged the hundreds of Indonesian officers who had trained the United States in the preceding years and the sunk investments the U.S. had already made to afford itself just such an opportunity to exert influence.¹²²

Secretary of State Dulles, however, as one of the creators of the confrontational strategy, continued on with his plan, believing that, “the central government would use our arms to destroy the only element in the country in which we can put any hope.”¹²³ The service attachés boldly responded with further cables of their own and set off a furious campaign to counter the confrontational approach. Initiated in Jakarta at the service desks but eventually coming as well from regional commanders in Hawaii and the policymakers, up to and including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the Pentagon, they sought to bring defense and military perspectives to the situation and move the NSC away from the Dulles approach of subversion, confrontation, and war.

¹²² Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs (Mein) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson),” 496-500.

¹²³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 475-480 (citation 13).

In their cable from November 28, 1957, Allison and his attachés implored policy makers to approve the token military assistance package and make good faith efforts, at the national level, to maintain the strong ties that they had developed at the army-army level. Their argument, that the biggest winner of any impasse or U.S. recalcitrance would be the PKI, was bolstered by their assessment that the dominant clique of pro-U.S. officers would be in danger of losing their preeminence within their system if such agreements were not soon reached. Sukarno himself noted to Nasution that the, “Americans are just playing with us, we will get nothing.” This demonstrates not just his growing antipathy towards U.S. policies, but Nasution’s faith in his American counterparts and his willingness to risk political capital on them. The embassy’s cable was itself a response to a telegram from Washington on November 25, which stated that a formal decision on the token military aid had been postponed but, given Sukarno’s fiery anti-American rhetoric, approval was unlikely. Appreciation of the fact that Nasution represented not Sukarno so much as an alternative center of power in need of cultivation seems, for whatever reason and despite much military reporting on the subject, either not to have penetrated the policy making circles of Washington or to have been assessed as a less viable means of achieving American objectives.¹²⁴

When, on December 7, the NSC decided against proffering the military assistance, its rationale was that the U.S. had reached the point of no return with Sukarno, and would only consider such assistance if or when he, “be relegated to a less dominant

¹²⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 521-522; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 515-516.

position in [the] political scene.” Absent was any understanding of the possibility the military assistance package could help bring about such a desired reality.¹²⁵ As December wore on, movements within the Department of Defense reflected the national commitment to a policy of confrontation. Despite their reservations with the policy, regional commanders at U.S. Pacific Command, under direction from the NSC, began to prepare and position forces in the area of Indonesia in the event there was a breakdown in order. Though such forces were prepared to respond to contingencies, they lacked any sort of durable offensive capability that could have been construed as decisive. An invasion or U.S. military overthrow of Sukarno was never considered nor resourced. They were, rather, in the area as an insurance policy in the event of turmoil and, ironically, helped create turmoil through their assistance to CIA operations with the rebels in Sumatra and Sulawesi.¹²⁶

It was not until December 20, 1957, that the attachés’ messages began to influence civilian policy makers in Washington. On that day, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Mansfield Sprague told Under Secretary of State Christian Herter the Pentagon was interested in providing military assistance to Nasution and the Indonesian Army and would begin planning for doing so, in the event

¹²⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Message from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Ambassador in Indonesia (Allison),” 534-535.

¹²⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Stump),” 533; Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 192-193; Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia, 1953-1961,” 209-210; Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, “Telegram from the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Stump), to the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke),” 548.

the policy abandoning such assistance were to change. Herter agreed to the idea.¹²⁷ It was, then, military pressure that brought, if not a change in policy, then at least an acknowledgment at the higher levels of the defense establishment that a future reappraisal would very likely be necessary. New energy from Jakarta came immediately on the heels on that conversation. On December 21st, the Army Attaché, Colonel Robert Collier, cabled that he and his deputy, the aforementioned George Benson, had met with Colonel Yani, then Deputy Chief of Staff, to discuss military assistance. Yani imparted on them the army's continued earnest and immediate desire for U.S. equipment and assistance. Efforts to secure a deal elsewhere would be prepared only in the event the U.S. remained unwilling to cooperate.¹²⁸ The attachés, again, strongly recommended moving forward. Similar messages followed on December 23rd.¹²⁹

On December 26th, evidence of defense and military officials' changing position on the Indonesia situation and their support for military assistance was communicated to Secretary of State Dulles by John Irwin, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Irwin told Dulles the military had concluded the

¹²⁷ "Memorandum, December 20, 1957," Papers of Christian A. Herter, 1957-1961, Box 3, Chronological File - December 1957 (2), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹²⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Telegram from the Army Attaché in Indonesia (Collier) to the Department of Army," 558-559. As evidence of their desire for U.S. equipment, Yani and his Indonesian counterparts explained that Soviet equipment, in particular innocuous items such as windshield wipers, could not hold up to the tropical conditions in Indonesia, and did provide the support systems needed to ensure maintenance and capability. Only American equipment, they stated, was reliable, durable, and effective enough.

¹²⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Telegram from the Army Attaché in Indonesia (Collier) to the Department of the Army," 561-562.

Indonesian Army had not, contrary to the opinion of the CIA, been compromised or infiltrated by communists. That, as an anti-communist organization, it would be decisive to any future struggle over or within the country. Given those assertions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff drafted a \$7 million military assistance program and recommended its immediate approval under emergency measures, even arguing that if the aid needed to be given in grant, rather than loan, form, the U.S. should still move ahead.

Given that this recommendation was posited barely a month after Dulles had denied almost identical requests for military assistance, and on the same day that Dulles reiterated the confrontational policy in a joint State Department-CIA meeting on Indonesia, it appears the reporting out of Jakarta was beginning to seriously influence thinking within the Pentagon.¹³⁰ At the same time in Hawaii, Admiral Felix Stump, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Pacific Command, aware of the importance of the Indonesian Army and its anti-communist bonafides, sought other ways to seek accommodation with Nasution, chiefly by extolling the U.S. to exert pressure on the Netherlands to compromise over issues concerning Netherlands New Guinea and to strike up a dialogue on the issue with Indonesia.

Taken together, these actions reflect a military and defense bureaucracy that had woken up both to the importance of the Indonesian Army and the need to preserve and strengthen bilateral military relations and lines of communication in a time of crisis.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, vol. 22, *Southeast Asia*, "Letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Irwin) to the Secretary of State," 566-567.

¹³¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum of Conversation," 4.

Though that crisis was, to some extent, of American making, it was not of U.S. military making. The CIA and the Dulles brothers, not the military, had pushed the NSC towards supporting the rebels and fomenting war. The Pentagon, then, at the recommendation of their personnel on the ground, was not subverting U.S. policy, but rather trying to change it for the better, or at least working to ensure that alternative policy options remained viable and Nasution and the Indonesian Army not be cast aside.

This was further codified on February 10, 1958, when the JCS made their thoughts and recommendations on the matter official to the NSC itself. In their letter, the JCS argued against the fantasy that the U.S. could build a rump state out of Indonesia's outer islands, assessing both Java's dominance of political, economic, military, and social life in the archipelago, as well as its historical role as the center as precluding the emergence of any viable outer island state. Explicit in such an understanding was an important realization: Java was, in a sense, Indonesia. To influence Indonesia, one had to influence Java or those within it. They continued by arguing, adroitly, that nationalism, not communism, was the dominant factor driving Indonesian politics, and any contest for power in Indonesia could only be won by a group with an ironclad sense of, and duty towards, that nationalist spirit. The conclusion, that of the trusted national institutions amenable to working with the United States only the army had the breadth, strength, and nationalist credentials, was natural and, in retrospect, obvious. To wit, if the NSC was not going to change U.S. policy as the JCS recommended it should, then at the very least a token package of military aid and assistance needed to be proffered to the Indonesian Army to maintain the relationships that the U.S. had built and provide succor to its advocates within the army itself. "An immediate token military aid program, with

particular reference to the Indonesian Army, is necessary to forestall direct Communist Bloc influence in Indonesian military affairs.”¹³²

As February turned into March 1958 and the conflict dragged on, defense reporting on the conflict became more sanguine. After Dulles’ refusal to reconsider the policy, and as it had told its U.S. partners it would, the Indonesian military was forced to seek support elsewhere. Soviet equipment, in particular aircraft, was purchased and trained crews were expected to arrive that spring, further lengthening the odds that the rebels would achieve any sort of tactical gains on the battlefield.¹³³ The Soviets, then, seemed to be at the cusp of enabling Indonesian victory. It was this fear, not of rebel collapse but of the contribution to success that communism would be perceived as having made, that drove the JCS to draft a notable memorandum to Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy on April 8. This memo seemed to call, and has been argued as calling for, overt military support to the rebels, as “Defeat of the dissidents would almost certainly lead to Communist domination of Indonesia.”

In fact, a close reading of defense policies and memoranda in the run-up to this demonstrates the very opposite: the Joint Chiefs were arguing for, “a relaxation of restrictions on United States policy toward Indonesia and accelerated efforts to prevent the fall of this nation to Communism,” but not to militarily assist the rebels so much as to

¹³² Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Special Assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Security Affairs (Triebel) to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Cutler),” 30-34.

¹³³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Editorial Note,” 80-81.

ensure the, “suppression of the pro-Communist elements of the Sukarno government.” The wording of the memorandum, while ambiguous, clearly opens the door to a flexible U.S. policy. “Overt measures as required,” in this case, did not necessarily mean sending soldiers and marines onto the beaches of Sumatra and Sulawesi, something the JCS never seriously considered, so much as the public proffering of military aid to the Indonesian Army the JCS had been advocating for months.¹³⁴

The JCS had, by April 1958, fully come to realize several things. First, military victory for the rebels was impossible without overt U.S. military support. Second, overt U.S. support would not create any sort of viable and durable state that could support U.S. interests out of Indonesia’s disparate, divided, and dispersed outer islands, but would instead sow the seeds for regional chaos and the advancement of Soviet goals. As they had made clear in their memorandum from February 10: Java was Indonesia and no viable solution for the breakup of the country existed. Third and last, only in backing the large, pro-American, Java-based Indonesian Army could the United States hope to decisively influence the situation or achieve any of its objectives. These were the conclusions that (the since relieved, owing to his disagreement over the direction of U.S. policy) Ambassador Allison and his team of military attachés had reached and relayed to Washington in the summer and fall of 1957.

The supposed shift, then, in defense policy from the latter half of April 1958 from a policy of confrontation to a policy of engagement was fictional; the JCS had supported

¹³⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McElroy,” 94-95.

engaging with Nasution and the army all along.¹³⁵ This is supported not only by the preceding communiques, but by subsequent events. On April 12, attaché cables attested to the detrimental ways U.S. policy was affecting their most trusted asset: the U.S.-trained officer corps. Yani himself reported that U.S., “assistance to rebels has placed pro-American officers in [the] Indonesian Army in [an] untenable position and unless something is done to support them their influence in [the] picture will seriously deteriorate.” Anti-communist commanders and units, in action and taking casualties against rebels armed by the United States, were becoming anti-American and discovering newfound sympathy for socialism. The building of pressure on such officers was demonstrated even in Indonesian cabinet meetings where, in the presence of Sukarno, the results of U.S. efforts to build a reliable officer corps were demonstrated.

Last week after Cabinet meeting at which Colonel Sukendro briefed the Cabinet on current situation Minister Hanafi asked Sukendro in the presence of Sukarno, ‘What are these good friends of yours, the Americans, in which you have put so much faith, doing to you? Dropping weapons they are helping to kill our brothers. Don’t you think you have trusted them too much?’

Sukarno said, ‘What the Americans are doing is not Sukendro’s fault.’ Sukendro said, ‘The Americans who brought the weapons to Sumatra are not my friends. My friends are the official Americans and they have had nothing to do with this.’

Hanafi said, ‘Prove it,’ and walked away.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McElroy,” 94-95; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 174-175; Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 192-193; Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 264.

¹³⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 98.

Assistant Army Attaché George Benson, in what can only be described as auspicious timing, had just provided such proof. In advance of the Indonesian Army's April 17 assault upon Padang, a large coastal city in West Sumatra and one of the centers of rebel activity, Colonel Yani – fresh from Fort Leavenworth, imbued with American tactics, and selected to command the assault – asked Benson, who was unaware of the CIA's in backing the rebels, to assist him in planning the operation. Benson provided maps and counsel to Yani over a period of evenings just prior to Yani's launching of the offensive. "The irony in all this was bemusing. Here was an openly pro-American officer in an anti-communist army ready to carry out a major offensive—with the help of a U.S. Army major—against a rebel force supported by a different branch of the American government."¹³⁷ On April 17, Padang fell and the retreat of the rebels in Sumatra began in full force. Yani, however, was not the only U.S.-trained officer to distinguish himself on the battlefield. As Andi Jusuf, a pro-American officer, later told Benson, "In Army Headquarters, they refer to the operational commanders as 'the sons of Eisenhower,' Yani, Rukmito, Huhnholz, and myself, all U.S. trained."¹³⁸

As the pro-American Indonesian officer corps attempted to hold its own, key U.S. officers, above and beyond the attachés, began to move more forcefully to evince a change in policy. On April 15, further attaché cables reiterated a potential plan for aiding pro-U.S. officers and providing military assistance to the army, further expounded on their understanding of the conflict as anything but an anti-communist and communist

¹³⁷ Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 93-95; Wardaya, *A Cold War Shadow*, 198.

¹³⁸ Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 163-165, 176.

showdown for the future of the country, and reiterated the central role that the army would likely play in determining Indonesia's path forward. They included concrete recommendations, from inviting Nasution to the United States to increasing Indonesian attendance at the Command and General Staff College; anything that they believed could help the situation.¹³⁹ This spurred action at higher levels. On April 18, General Maxwell Taylor, Chief of Staff of the Army, told Secretary of Defense McElroy that the JCS felt that the U.S. should ally itself with Nasution rather than countenance sending U.S. troops to support the rebels, whose "defeat and ultimate liquidation" was close at hand. Taylor had long believed that Benson's reporting of the situation in Indonesia was more accurate than the CIA's, and he worked from then on to ensure not only that Indonesian officers could continue to train at Fort Leavenworth and elsewhere in the United States, but that they be apportioned more slots for doing so.¹⁴⁰ Also on April 18, Admiral Arleigh Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations, reached out to Under Secretary of State Christian Herter with a confidential message from Nasution, sent by way of their mutual friend Colonel Jack Berlin, representative of the Standard Vacuum Oil Company in Indonesia. Nasution, at great risk, had Berlin pass on to Burke specific requests for military assistance. Included, importantly, was the qualifier that any such offer would be most valuable if it came before the arrival of the already agreed upon Soviet equipment, as it would serve to

¹³⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 111-113.

¹⁴⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McElroy," 120; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 174; Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 29, 31.

blunt the positive effects and perception the Soviets were sure to enjoy once their equipment arrived.¹⁴¹

In the face of both continued recommendations from defense and military officials and the reality of the battlefield, in which the U.S.-trained Indonesian Army routed rebel garrison after rebel garrison, policymakers in Washington were becoming disillusioned with the rebel cause and slowly began to understand they had perhaps been backing the wrong side in the conflict.¹⁴² This point was hammered home when it became clear that the officers who had led the operations against the rebels, the aforementioned ‘sons of Eisenhower,’ were all U.S. trained.¹⁴³ In early May, at just the same time that Admiral Stump in Hawaii was reporting back to Washington the need to work with Nasution and foster anti-communist sentiment in Java, Under Secretary Herter authorized Stump to invite the Indonesian military to attend SEATO naval exercises in the area as well as weapons testing and demonstrations in Hawaii.¹⁴⁴ Secretary Dulles himself, the chief confrontationist in Washington, at the May 8 NSC meeting noted the

¹⁴¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Letter from the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke) to the Under Secretary of State (Herter),” 117-119.

¹⁴² Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 158, 159; Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 268; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 175.

¹⁴³ Mrazek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military*, 173.

¹⁴⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Stump) to the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke),” 145; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 141-143.

anti-communist nature of Nasution and the Indonesian Army and the hope that conversations between the militaries might “amount to something.”¹⁴⁵

On May 9, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, aware of the slow changes that were then taking place in the policy (due in small part to their own urging), again wrote to Secretary of Defense McElroy imploring him to press the NSC about implementing the grant military aid program as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁶ Just one day later the Chief of Naval Intelligence, Admiral Laurence Frost, further bolstered the case for military engagement when, during a visit to Indonesia, he concluded that the attachés’ reporting had been accurate and stressed to his superiors the need to support Nasution, who he assessed as solidly anti-communist. Taking his cue, perhaps, from his intelligence chief, Admiral Burke as Chief of Naval Operations wrote to Dulles on May 13, urging him demonstrate support for Nasution, whom he saw as the linchpin of the country and the one person indispensable to U.S. interests.¹⁴⁷

The movement towards a new policy, however, gained irreversible momentum on May 18 when a CIA pilot, Allen Pope, was shot down over eastern Indonesia and captured. Found with documentation confirming his and the United States’ role in aiding

¹⁴⁵ “365th Meeting of the NSC, May 8, 1958,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 10, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹⁴⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McElroy,” 155-156.

¹⁴⁷ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 157-159; Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 177; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke) to Secretary of State Dulles,” 167-168.

the rebels, his capture upended the U.S. calculus for good and put to lie token Eisenhower Administration efforts to cast those aiding the rebels as mere soldiers of fortune. Two days later, on May 20, Dulles implicitly ended the policy of confrontation when, at his normally scheduled press conference, he made a point of stating that the U.S. considered the rebellions to be a matter internal to Indonesia.¹⁴⁸ After more than five months, then, of continuous warnings and recommendations to change course and engage with the Indonesian Army, it was the very shortcomings and dangers of the confrontational policy that helped military and defense communities realize their goal of engagement with Indonesia.

This series of events is important within the broader scope of U.S.-Indonesian relations not because it shows the prescience of the U.S. military or the wisdom of the service attachés. It is important because it demonstrates the overarching U.S. defense policies towards Indonesia in the 1950s – engagement over restraint, collaboration over confrontation, influence through training and shared experience – were embraced and implemented at all levels of the establishment from Jakarta to Hawaii to Fort Leavenworth to the Pentagon. Those policies succeeded in overcoming the failures of broader U.S. foreign policy and created the conditions for the U.S. to substantively advance its national interests alongside a credible partner – the Indonesian Army.

The foundations for that transformative shift, however, were lain not in 1957 or 1958 around the Joint Chiefs of Staff conference room. They were put down much earlier in the decade, by events within both the United States and Indonesia. In the U.S., the

¹⁴⁸ Kahin and Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, 179-182.

welcoming and embracing of Indonesian officers to American military schools, the development of enduring personal relationships, and the continuous transparency and professionalism exhibited by American officers built an enduring trust remembered in Jakarta. In Indonesia, the army's rise to a position of prominence in society and government and the ascension of officers trained in the American system to run that army solidified the ability of the Nasution and others to both shield their institution from domestic partisan politics and exhibited to the United States their willingness to engage. Furthermore, their success in the field validated the earlier U.S. investment and demonstrated how valuable a tool they might be to U.S. policy makers.

In the end, success was manifested and made clear by acts great and small. Nasution and Yani understood, in the heat of the crisis in the spring of 1958, that Benson and his colleagues at the U.S. Embassy were unaware of their own government's role in aiding the rebels. The faith they had in the U.S. was built on actions they saw their partners exhibit during the crisis. The lines of communication and trust did not break. That certainty allowed Yani to trust Benson when asking for his support, and exemplified the durability of the military to military channel throughout the crisis.¹⁴⁹ It allowed Colonel Sukendro to stand up to his own cabinet ministers and defend his American friends in front of Sukarno himself.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears*, 197; Conboy and Morrison, *Feet to the Fire*, 93-95.

¹⁵⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 98.

Nasution's entreaty to Burke, at great personal risk, by way of Standard Vacuum Oil Company's man in Indonesia was a demonstration of faith and trust in the American military and officer corps. He signaled he had not yet given up hope in the United States and it should not yet give up hope in him.¹⁵¹ U.S. faith was demonstrated by the – aforementioned and well-documented – continuous support that the service attachés, regional commanders, and military and civilian leaders in the Pentagon gave to Nasution and the Indonesian Army, in the face of sustained doubt and disparagement from their superiors and policymakers in the CIA, State Department, and NSC. There was no great change in defense policy or recommendations in April 1958 because they had made their belief and trust in Nasution evident before the crisis even began.

The defense policy recommendations forwarded from Benson and his colleagues up the chain of command, and later endorsed and advocated for by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others in Washington, eventually ensured the proper policies were implemented. If nothing else, they represented a sort of early dissent channel in which respectful non-concurrence with policy could be put forward and elaborated.¹⁵² Over time, and as they developed their own structure, such recommendations became a viable, and, to many, an increasingly preferable, alternative to the confrontational stance of

¹⁵¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Letter from the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke) to the Under Secretary of State (Herter)," 117-119.

¹⁵² The State Department defines the dissent channel as, "a serious policy channel reserved only for consideration of responsible dissenting and alternative views on substantive foreign policy issues that cannot be communicated in a full and timely manner through regular operating channels or procedures." It was formally established in 1971, at the height of the Vietnam War (State Department Foreign Affairs Manual, 2 FAM 070, Dissent Channel).

Secretary Dulles and the CIA. If not formally put into writing until the fall of 1957 by the service attachés at the direction of Ambassador Allison or put into practice until Secretary Dulles' decision to move forward with military assistance after the collapse of the rebel movements in late April and early May of 1958, their roots lay deeper, and earlier, in the relationship.¹⁵³ Founded upon the trust defense and military officials placed in their former Indonesian partners and colleagues who had trained the United States in the pre-crisis years, the policies of engagement and support to Nasution and the Indonesian Army survived the crises of 1957 and 1958 and emerged ready to lead U.S. policies to the end of the decade. And not only because they survived, but because they represented the surest path forward for the achievement of national objectives. These defense policies came to dominate U.S. diplomatic efforts in Indonesia and, uniquely, took on a primacy not often favored in the practice of U.S. foreign relations at that time.

Another Day: U.S.-Indonesian Military Relations, 1958-1959

By the summer of 1958, after Dulles' belated recognition that the military assistance program should proceed and the U.S. should seek partnership and not war with the Indonesian Army, Nasution had become the U.S.'s primary interlocutor in Indonesia. This reflected Washington's continued reticence towards the populist Sukarno, Nasution's ability to positively affect Indonesian policy and decision-making, and American recognition of the fact he was the official best placed to advance mutual interests. More than anything else, however, it reflected the tremendous rise in stature and

¹⁵³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Editorial Note," 125.

importance in the Indonesian Army. Nasution and the army became the primary interlocutors for the U.S. because the situation on the ground demanded it.

As has been discussed, Sukarno's declaration of martial law in March 1957 and the nationalization and expropriation of Dutch assets in Indonesia in December 1957 increased the power and influence of the Indonesian Army tremendously. Martial law, its "political charter," gave the army the ability to insert itself into village life throughout the archipelago and the wherewithal to meddle in politics at the local level. This upended the PKI's grip on the peasantry and weakened them institutionally. Nationalization of Dutch assets, the army's "economic charter," gave it control over business and commercial ventures that, in order to maintain employment and economic stability, it continued to operate and profit from. Only the Indonesian Army was large enough and strong enough to do these things at the national level. Finally, Nasution and the army's exemplary performance against the rebels in the regional crises of 1957 and 1958 – chiefly their ability to project power, demonstrate effective combined arms operations, and secure decisive victories – greatly enhanced the prestige, legitimacy, and national credentials of the institution and its pro-American leaders.

In short, by the summer of 1958 the Indonesian Army wielded as much power within Indonesia as Sukarno and could no longer be hobbled by the partisanship or attacks from the left that had so weakened it in the middle of the decade. This power was demonstrated as early as the summer of 1958 when the army successfully pressured Sukarno to further postpone the long-delayed elections of 1959. Nasution would not

countenance the gains that the PKI was forecast to make and so had them pushed back.¹⁵⁴

Guided Democracy, then, the brainchild of Sukarno and the means by which he meant to bring stability to the fractious country, served the interests of the army more than any other single group, as excellently summarized by historian Daniel Lev.

[Army] officers were contemptuous of the old political system and most of its civilian leaders. They were angry at the confusion of political parties, the corruption, the ideological strife, the political instability, all of which they believed, in simplistic fashion, was to blame for the lack of progress in the country and for the divisions within the army and the nation. Nasution and many others sought a highly disciplined social order, a government undisturbed by parliamentary politics, and a reorganization of political activity down to a minimum of nationally unified and consolidated groups under the control and direction of a powerful government executive. These at least were a few elements in the thinking of politically conscious army leaders.¹⁵⁵

Guided Democracy helped bring those elements into being and in so doing served the interests of the army while suppressing the capabilities of the PKI. Its ability to do those two things also explained, somewhat counterintuitively, why Guided Democracy, an inherently unaccountable and undemocratic system built on rent control and the stifling of basic freedoms, so successfully advanced the interests of the United States that it, albeit tacitly, supported the system. By supporting a system that kept the army close to the central levers of power and denied the PKI the opportunity to gain through democratic elections, the United States found itself well on its way to embracing a path of military modernization and rule that came about in the 1960s.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ 380th Meeting of the NSC, September 25, 1958,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 10, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. The elections were postponed to 1960 but, owing to army pressure, never ended up taking place.

¹⁵⁵ Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy*, 76-77.

¹⁵⁶ Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 305; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of

This support for military modernization in Indonesia occurred at the same time the U.S. was supporting military government and development in many other parts of the world. This included Thailand, South Vietnam, South Korea, and the Philippines in Asia alone, to say nothing of numerous other states and regimes in Africa and Latin America.¹⁵⁷ Why was such a broad policy supporting foreign militaries adopted by the United States? Certainly the post-war march of communism and leftist politics into parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia and the ensuing capitalist crisis of confidence played a part. The black and white imagining of the world into opposing camps, as best stated in NSC-68, also created incentives for the United States to contest communism, and seek partners in doing so, everywhere. One could argue this was the case with Indonesia. The fact that foreign militaries, particularly their officer corps', were often politically conservative – owing to their already earned social status and privilege – likely played a part. Too many other reasons exist for a full vetting here, but it is important to state that

State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons) to Acting Secretary of State Dillon,” 413; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Editorial Note,” 457-459.

¹⁵⁷ Numerous works chronicle U.S. support to military regimes and modernization theory and ideology in the Cold War. With respect to Indonesia itself, see Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) for one such notable work. Among much else discussing other parts of the world or the world itself from the lens of U.S. foreign policy, see Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and Latham’s, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), as well as Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

in the case of Indonesia, the U.S. belief in military modernization, even if it did begin the 1950s, was still far from being realized when the decade ended.

Recognizing this growth in military power and its centrality, U.S. policymakers shifted their resources and attentions from Sukarno to Nasution. That focus was evident from Dulles' initial approval of assistance in late April 1958, which specifically mentioned the need to work with "trusted Army leaders, rather than Sukarno."¹⁵⁸ By the end of the summer, each side had communicated to the other, through cables, invitations, meetings, and exchanges at the working level in Jakarta, their commitment to the bilateral, and increasingly personal, military relationship. Plans and engagements moved forward at a brisk pace from nearly the cessation of hostilities forward.¹⁵⁹ This post-conflict transformation was well understood by the United States.

There is much evidence that General Nasution taking on greatly increased share of responsibility for management Indonesian affairs, and it not beyond realm of possibility this trend will continue to point where his influence will be decisive in all questions. Therefore it is vital to our interest that we reinforce, especially at this time, his confidence in US willingness to see him through.¹⁶⁰

As 1958 became 1959, such recognition was codified in NSC policy documents and implemented at the embassy where, increasingly, the army attachés became the

¹⁵⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Editorial Note," 125.

¹⁵⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 235; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum of Conversation," 255-256; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 257-258.

¹⁶⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 310-312.

primary agents for all aspects of U.S. foreign policy in Indonesia. They did so for two reasons. First, they had the relationships and the history with Nasution and his staff, who were themselves running more and more of the country. Benson and his colleagues now drew from the bank of trust that they had built during the crisis and did so with Indonesian partners who ruled much of the country without interference from Sukarno or Jakarta, who controlled farms, businesses, and industries, and who staffed bureaucratic positions throughout the Indonesian government far beyond the traditional purview of the military. Second, they were charged with implementing the military assistance policies that had become, for better or for worse, the cornerstones of U.S. foreign policy in Indonesia from the collapse of the rebellions. The American strategic objective remained the integration of Indonesia into the world as a stable, economically viable, and pro-western state with the ability to resist communism from within and without. Bolstering Nasution and the army were seen as the key way of doing that, and the military assistance program would be the primary vehicle to achieve that.¹⁶¹

The military assistance program that was tentatively approved by Dulles in late April 1958 was the token aid program the JCS had been advocating for since 1957. With the rebels effectively defeated and the recognition of Nasution's importance understood, U.S. policy moved with a haste unseen by its Indonesian recipients. In May, mere weeks after the change in policy, Indonesian Army Chief of Intelligence Lieutenant Colonel

¹⁶¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "National Security Council Report," 334-344; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 435-438; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "National Security Council Report," 571-583; Brian Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 31-32.

Sukendro visited Hawaii to attend Admiral Stump's aforementioned weapons demonstrations. There he delivered Indonesia's aid requests which included training and equipment for up to six infantry battalions with amphibious and airborne capabilities. Sukendro developed a rapport with Stump and the implicit *quid pro quo*, American aid in exchange for moves against the PKI and communist sympathizers, was never questioned.¹⁶²

Further negotiations continued during the summer and on August 13, with Army Major General Russell Vittrup, the Army's deputy commander for operations in the Pacific, visiting, the token military aid package was approved. Though small, this program represented the firm commitment of the United States to the Indonesian Army moving forward and carried much weight in Jakarta. As a sign of the seriousness which distinguished this from the tortuously long and never completed pre-conflict discussions concerning military aid, this was approved in weeks. In order to demonstrate solidarity with Indonesia in advance of its August 17 Independence Day celebrations, equipment began arriving only two days later. The military hardware, spread around the services so as not to highlight the prominence of Nasution or embarrass Sukarno, included four helicopters for the Indonesian Air Force, six Higgins boats for the Army, and one 173-foot, PC-461 class submarine chaser for the Indonesian Navy.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 214-216.

¹⁶³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to Secretary of State Dulles," 252-254; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Editorial Note," 260-261; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Letter from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Irwin) to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Dillon)," 292-294; Department of State, *FRUS*,

Further hardware, in addition to increased slots in stateside U.S. military schools, was approved in the autumn of 1958, and saw military bridges, tank landing ships, minesweepers, cash, and equipment for marine forces arrive in Indonesia.¹⁶⁴ Though the U.S. had similar relationships and aid programs with countries all over the world, what made the program in Indonesia unique was its centrality to overall U.S. policy. Bolstering and strengthening the military became the cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, made clear by the primacy of the Pentagon and uniformed personnel in carrying out the policy. The new deference civilian policymakers, Dulles included, paid heed to the JCS and defense recommendations, and the way that Nasution himself was kept abreast of events and forthcoming aid as the processes themselves unfolded speak to the centrality of the security cooperation work to broader U.S. foreign policy objectives.¹⁶⁵

Admiral Harry Felt, the new commander of US Pacific Command, for instance, successfully pressed the Pentagon to avoid selling any military equipment to the Netherlands, a NATO ally, which might be used in any potential defense of Netherlands New Guinea, should conflict erupt, as that would adversely affect Nasution and the pro-U.S. clique of officers.¹⁶⁶ In the fall of 1958, and in the face of increased Soviet military

1958-1960, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands," 264-265; Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia," 296-297.

¹⁶⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia," 303-304.

¹⁶⁵ Lu, "United States Relations with Indonesia," 298; Challis, *Shadow of a Revolution*, 47.

¹⁶⁶ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (Felt) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," 351-352; "395th

assistance, the U.S. agreed to equip 20 infantry battalions, conscious of the fact it needed to support Nasution by regularly approving and delivering new aid.¹⁶⁷ Later, the Pentagon sped Export/Import Bank approval for the loan of Lockheed Electra aircraft and the purchase of early Lockheed C-130 B's to Indonesia, knowing that Sukarno loved the aircraft and saw their arrival as something of a litmus test of U.S. support. The military, in fact, arranged a special flight for the delighted president on a C-124 Globemaster transport aircraft that had brought much of the equipment to Indonesia in the first place.¹⁶⁸

Later in 1959, Eisenhower, as Indonesia was still not a party to the Mutual Security Act which governed military assistance, provided Indonesia with a presidential exemption that allowed military aid to bust congressionally mandated caps, a ritual that continued into the 1960s until a stable, longer-term agreement could be reached. Said Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, in late 1959, of the relationship, "Indonesia [is] more

Meeting of the NSC, January 26, 1959" Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 11, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹⁶⁷ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 314-315; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Secretary of State Dulles," 316-318; Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears*, 163.

¹⁶⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," 320-322; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Dillon)," 355-358; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to Acting Secretary of State Herter," 361-362; Jones, *Indonesia*, 154.

friendly to us at present than it [has] ever been.”¹⁶⁹ Throughout this period, the U.S., on a grant basis, provided the Indonesian Army with excess stock that would not otherwise be used, while also increasing the opportunities for Indonesian officers to train in the United States. More Indonesian Army officers, for instance, attended U.S. military schools in 1959 than in all other years of the decade combined.¹⁷⁰

These actions formed the backbone of overall U.S. policy and the military was the unquestioned policy leader of that policy. This was made clear by the telegrams and cables between Jakarta and Washington and the way that policymakers seemed to understand the situation. Dulles acknowledged the military’s special role in assisting Nasution and firming up his place atop the hierarchy of Indonesian national actors. Nasution himself, through the attaché office in Jakarta, was kept abreast of developments internal to the U.S. government as if he himself were a part of the U.S. military bureaucracy.¹⁷¹ At no time, for instance, did the United States attempt to tie such military assistance to its imprisoned pilot, World War II veteran Allen Pope. Secretary of State

¹⁶⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 454-455; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from Secretary of State Herter to President Eisenhower,” 584-586; Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia,” 299; “429th Meeting of the NSC, December 15, 1959,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 12, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

¹⁷⁰ Lu, “United States Relations with Indonesia, 1953-1961,” 299; Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 41, 44.

¹⁷¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) the Secretary of State Dulles,” 316-318; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum of Discussion at the 395th Meeting of the National Security Council,” 326-330; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 454-455.

Christian Herter, in fact, explicitly discussed the need not to make this any sort of *quid pro quo* relationship in his meetings with Eisenhower, given the importance of Nasution and the bilateral military relationship writ large. Given that the Soviet Union was expanding its own military assistance to Indonesia at the same time that the U.S. was initiating all of this activity, one can understand why these programs were maintained at the levels that they were.¹⁷²

What, then, was the state of the military relationship between the United States and Indonesia at the end of the 1950s? Strong, to say the least. Perhaps even increasingly united, within the confines that political realities allowed. A more appropriate question, perhaps, is had U.S. defense policy accomplished what it sought out to do at the beginning of the decade? Looking back to chapter 2 and the defense and security goals that the U.S. laid out, one can see that U.S. defense policies were broadly successful in accomplishing their goals.

First, Indonesia, despite the growth and increased prominence of the PKI over the course of the decade, had not fallen to communism or others whose interests ran counter to the United States. While Sukarno's interests could hardly be described as aligning with those of the U.S. and the PKI was openly hostile, the steady presence of Nasution and

¹⁷² "436th Meeting of the NSC, March 10, 1960," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC Series, Box 12, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. Though the amount of Soviet military aid to Indonesia was greater than that of the United States, it was not as great as it might first appear. When the Soviets announced a \$250 million aid package, for instance, that money was spread out over a number of years and was closer in number to U.S. aid than a superficial comparison might at first demonstrate. Its value, however, lay not only in the aid itself but the perception that such a large number created, despite the middling value, in the end, of much of the equipment that the Soviets gave or sold to Indonesia.

the army at the decade's end demonstrate that, whether or not the contribution of U.S. defense policies was decisive or even significant to the achievement, Indonesia was not a communist state or communist proxy in 1959. Given the uncertain situation that policymakers were presented with in 1950, that counts as a U.S. success.

Second, defense policies succeeded in making the U.S. the primary trainer, as well as arms provider and equipper, of the Indonesian Army, though not of the Indonesian Navy or Air Force. This study has well and fully documented the important role that U.S. training provided to Indonesian military, especially Army, officers. By the decade's end, the U.S. had also established itself as the arms and equipment provider of choice to the Army. The Indonesian Navy and Air Force, however, more consistently sought and received training and equipment from the Soviet bloc than the U.S. This reflected, perhaps, U.S. attention and focus on the Army at the expense of the other services, but is also likely attributed to the Soviets' greater willingness to make large, capital intensive commitments that better met the needs of the more resource intensive services such as the Navy and Air Force, as opposed to the Indonesian Army, which was manpower heavy and resource light throughout the decade.

Third, defense policies succeeded in fostering and preserving strong relationships with army officers and senior leaders and in keeping lines of communication between the national militaries open and dialogue robust. As this chapter discussed in detail, this was most evident during and immediately after the crisis of the regional rebellions and the emergence of Nasution as a strengthened figure on the Indonesian national stage. This, perhaps, marks the greatest success that U.S. defense policies had in the decade. It could

be argued such relationships and lines of communication were at their strongest as the decade itself ended.

There was, additionally, a fourth and final goal of U.S. defense policies that was not elucidated at the start of the decade but achieved nonetheless. U.S. defense policies sought to support and bolster, when needed and in ad hoc and not always defined ways, those Indonesian military leaders who might be most useful or influential for the advancement of U.S. national interests. As U.S. military, diplomatic, and national security reporting has made clear, this was consciously done from at least December 1957 forward, and always with the goal of strengthening Nasution and the pro-U.S. officers around him in army central headquarters. The success in that latter period makes up, perhaps, for the U.S.'s failure, at the strategic level, to recognize earlier in the decade the value of Nasution and his likeminded officers to U.S. national interests. It is this last point, additionally, that is best brought home by two final pieces of evidence symbolizing the trust that existed between the militaries and the tightness of the relationship as the 1960s dawned.

In June 1958, Dulles and the Department of State, in conjunction with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, directed the Army Attaché in Jakarta to advise and provide counsel to Nasution, with the disclaimer that, “the Indonesian Government is not to know. Sukarno remains the dominant personality and it is a calculated risk to attempt to strengthen Nasution’s position [vis-a-vis Sukarno].”¹⁷³ Such a commitment, from the U.S. side,

¹⁷³ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting,” 230-231.

demonstrated the stakes involved and the risks policymakers, to say nothing of those on the ground, were willing to take to achieve their desired ends so soon after the collapse of the rebellions. It reflected, however, an even greater commitment from Nasution and the Indonesian Army. Here was a sitting Army Chief of Staff agreeing to take counsel and receive support from a foreign government without even informing his own superiors, a willful deception at best and much more than that at worst. That he would do so says something about the security that Nasution felt with respect to his position in the country and the role that the U.S. played in securing that for him.

The codification of the support relationship and the intertwining of defense objectives and destinies was finalized just after this period when, in 1960 and for the first time, the U.S. put in writing – and delivered, by way of Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, in person to Nasution himself – its explicit policy of supporting Nasution and the Indonesian Army in the event of any sort of crisis with Sukarno and the PKI. The below text demonstrates that U.S. defense policy makers considered, in the end, some sort of confrontation between the army and the PKI or Sukarno likely, and that U.S. interests would best be served by clarifying its position in advance of any contingency. It also reflects, in hindsight perhaps, a confidence borne out of the trials of the 1950s; a belief that if the military to military relationship had endured all that it had, and not only prospered but thrived, that continued trust and partnership would bring stability, mutual gain, and confidence to face the trials and confrontations to come. When those trials and confrontations came in the 1960s, then, the partners were ready.

In such circumstances if there is a crisis and those who oppose the Communists and who work for the true independence of the country want to know where the United States stands, they can be sure that the United States stands with them....

I would further tell General Nasution that we are not asking for any comment from him but merely wish to assure him that in the event of such a contingency we will back him up; but that if he does have any suggestions, we will take them into consideration in our planning for such a contingency.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant),” 545-546; Challis, *Shadow of a Revolution*, 48; Roadnight, *United States Policy Towards Indonesia*, 177.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Given the fractious nature of the overall bilateral relationship between Indonesia and the United States at the beginning of the 1960s, it may seem incongruous to say the military to military relationship was strong and U.S. defense policy makers had been successful, in spite of the fact the U.S. helped prosecute a war against Indonesia, in achieving much of what they sought out to do in the 1950s. The evidence, however, clearly demonstrates that to be the case. What that success really meant and looked like in the longer run for each country was quite different, however. The significance of those successes in the 1950s lay less in where things stood in January 1960, itself not any sort of end, than in where they contributed to taking each country over the course of the decade that followed.

With respect to the United States, the significance and meaning of its defense policy successes raise several conclusions. First was the way that the bonds of trust and lines of communication with the Indonesian Army were kept open before and during the crisis years. This deliberate effort, by U.S. officers and their U.S.-trained Indonesian counterparts, made any successes late in the decade possible. Built on the plains of Kansas and in the heat of Jakarta, those connections weathered the storms of war and rebellion and kept alive the United States' ability to influence events in Indonesia. It was on upon the hard work of those officers that strong military to military gains were made in the last years of the decade.

Second, U.S. effort in Indonesia, in particular its support for Nasution's policy of getting the army out of the barracks and into the countryside to challenge the PKI was

part of a broader alignment of U.S. foreign policy. This coupled U.S. policies with the ideas of modernization theory and the concept that militaries had productive roles to play in developing post-conflict, post-colonial, and Third World states.¹⁷⁵ While this policy was not completely realized until the Kennedy Administration came into office in 1961, one can see its seeds in the 1950s. Defense policies and support for Nasution in Indonesia, in particular the Pentagon's emphasis on protecting his place in the Indonesian hierarchy and role in running the country, as well as its support for the expansion of the army's role in Indonesia's civilian government, were being elucidated before the regional rebellions even began. Concluding, however, that U.S. support for the Indonesian Army enabled its success is problematic. It puts the cart before the horse. Popular and significant institutional support did not begin until after the Indonesian Army had already found success on the battlefield. Nasution, additionally, was never trained in the United States and was certainly not a product of its military tradition. His ideas and inclinations were his own. Finally, one might argue that Yani and the other officers who were sent to Fort Leavenworth went not be exposed and attracted to western ideologies, but rather to reinforce ideological leanings they already possessed. It is difficult, therefore, to say that U.S. support for the Indonesian Army made possible its growth and success.

¹⁷⁵ Modernization theory posited that with outside assistance, "traditional" countries could be developed along the lines of first-world, ostensibly western, countries. It was based on the idea that successful western development could be universalized and successfully applied to post-colonial and Third World states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. See Walt Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960), one of the formative works on the subject in the period, as an example.

The evidence presented here demonstrates, in some ways, the reverse: U.S. support for the Indonesian Army did not metastasize in the late 1950s to enable its success, but rather came because it was already successful. By the time the truly large amounts of American military aid, officer exchanges, and security cooperation activities began the Indonesian Army had already defeated the rebels and entrenched itself in the social and economic life of the country. Given that success and its conservative nature, the Indonesian Army became the best, in fact perhaps the only, vehicle to advance U.S. policy objectives and modernization efforts. By 1958, it was the only institution in Indonesia with the nationalist credentials, size, resources, and operational reach to challenge Sukarno and the PKI. Perhaps the U.S. choice to back military government and its modernization approaches was not, in the case of Indonesia, much of a choice at all.

The final conclusion that one must reach is the fact that by the end of the 1950s the U.S. military, not the State Department or other civilian agencies, was the primary vehicle for the implementation of broader U.S. foreign policy in Indonesia. This occurred for several reasons. First, attachés, senior regional commanders, and defense policy makers grasped much earlier than their counterparts at the CIA, State Department, and National Security Council the importance of Nasution and the Indonesian Army for advancing U.S. interests in Indonesia. That prescience put them in a position to greatly influence and control the policy swing from confrontation to engagement that took place in the spring and summer of 1958. Second, the military, chiefly the U.S. Army, was the organ of government that had trained and developed relationships and trust with Indonesian counterparts through deliberate effort and investment for the greater part of the decade. The Indonesian Army's knowledge that its U.S. counterpart did not broadly

support or participate in the regional rebellions, despite the confrontational U.S. national policy, reinforced its trust in the U.S. Army. Finally, it should not be surprising that Indonesian officers such as Yani chose to continue to work most closely with their U.S. Army counterparts as they rose to power and prominence over the course of the decade.

And U.S. prospects and ability to influence in Indonesia rose with them. In positing connections to the modern day, one must then consider, in this case, the strong likelihood that the rise of the U.S. military to a preponderant position in the exercise of foreign relations in Indonesia by the end of the 1950s resulted in positive outcomes for the United States. The broader question to ask is whether such dominance, together with its associated outcomes and gains, was itself a positive development for the U.S. as a whole. While military considerations, particularly in times of war, have often dominated the exercise of U.S. foreign policy, the idea that the U.S. military should be the primary agent of policy, and military, rather than civilian leadership can be a positive outcome runs counter to both the tradition and spirit of American government and much literature on the subject.¹⁷⁶

While a more complete examination of this phenomenon is not the subject of this historical case study and awaits the attention of another scholar, the fact that U.S. experiences in 1950s Indonesia can raise such a question demonstrates the important way examining past policies can inform those still grappling with such questions today. Much

¹⁷⁶ See Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), and Robert Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts: On the Ground with the American Military, from Mongolia to the Philippines to Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Random House, 2005), among much else.

has been written on the expansion of concepts of hard power and coercion in traditional diplomacy, the militarization of foreign affairs, and the increased prominence of military “proconsuls” in the execution of foreign policy. Generally speaking, contemporary scholars and commentators are skeptical of the efficacy of this prominence, of the new reality of “endless” war, and of the corrosive effects this has on both the military and the civilian leadership and bureaucracy. In the post-Cold War era, the military has taken on many missions that can only loosely be defined as war. At the same time, the civilian foreign affairs establishment, particularly the State Department, have seen their budgets reduced and their ability to influence decision makers in both Washington and overseas diminished by the prominence of those in uniform.¹⁷⁷

Does an example, then, of successful military primacy in policy execution present a counter-narrative? Is this a case study, perhaps, arguing for military leadership in the exercise of foreign affairs? In a word, no. The case of U.S. defense policy in the 1950s has shown, if nothing else, that it was a situation and time unique to Indonesia. It should not serve as any sort of precedent or example to be emulated. This study does demonstrate, however, that by maintaining policies of defense engagement and keeping the door to communicate and collaborate open, the U.S. military was in position to take advantage of any change that arose within Indonesia to advance broader American interests. Thus, when the situation did change and Indonesian Army emerged from the rebellions victorious and capable, the United States was ready. Given that, the case of the dominant U.S. military role in broader policy execution at the end of the 1950s in

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Indonesia does show that, in a particular place and at a particular time, and when certain conditions exist, the military can be the most effective vehicle to advance U.S. national interests overseas.

It is, however, in Indonesia where this story must end, for that is where U.S. designs, for all of their merit or lack thereof, were actually put into practice. That is where the costs and benefits were measured not on maps or charts but in lives and treasure. The significance of U.S. defense policies in the 1950s only grew as the 1960s dawned and saw them continue and, to a large extent, expand significantly while transitioning from an ad hoc series of military agreements to a codified and entrenched military assistance program.

The U.S. desire to transform their token aid programs, which despite coming with fewer strings attached than Mutual Security Act assistance, still had to be annually approved and appropriated, started as soon as the token programs themselves started. In early October 1958, less than two months after the first official U.S. military assistance began arriving in Jakarta, officials in the Pentagon were keen on exploring the option to establish a more permanent military assistance program.¹⁷⁸ General Maxwell Taylor, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, visit Indonesia in November 1958 and reiterated the official desire to explore and work towards such a program, a sentiment echoed by the embassy

¹⁷⁸ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of for International Security Affairs (Irwin) to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Dillon),” 292-294.

in its communications with Washington later that year.¹⁷⁹ The Department of Defense's official support for a longer-term program began in the spring of 1960 when it requested official approval to begin, in conjunction with Nasution and through the attachés, to develop one.¹⁸⁰ The embassy in Jakarta later gave the plan its full support, and U.S. commanders in the Pacific had already created a detailed plan concerning what equipment to provide, who to provide it to, what ancillary and personnel requirements would come with it, and how to manage the potential fallout within Indonesia.¹⁸¹ Though State Department deliberations over the idea continued through much of 1960, delay was not based on substantive policy disagreements over the program so much as over how to structure it to avoid the MSA issues that so roiled the bilateral relationship in 1952.¹⁸²

The solution to this problem – how to bind Indonesia to the United States in a way that did not infringe upon its conceptions of its own independence – was to make the

¹⁷⁹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Editorial Note,” 300; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” 310-312.

¹⁸⁰ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Irwin) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson),” 362-363.

¹⁸¹ Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Irwin) to the Assistant of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons),” 452-454.

¹⁸² Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Irwin),” 367-368; Department of State, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 17, *Indonesia*, “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia,” 424-427; “National Security Council: U.S. Policy on Indonesia, December 19, 1960,” Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Disaster Files Series, Box 58, Indonesia (1), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

military assistance program a direct U.S. Army-Indonesian Army agreement rather than a national bilateral one.¹⁸³ This created a more enduring structure within the annual funding appropriations Congress approved and the President signed. It satisfied U.S. defense policy makers as it worked towards the same ends but allowed them to direct more specifically the programs to which funds and equipment would go. Nasution, who pushed for the army-army agreement, liked it because it allowed him to keep the program within his own institutional walls and away from Sukarno and the civilian government.

These programs in the early 1960s built upon and codified much of what began in the late 1950s in the heads of U.S. attachés and policy makers, to say nothing of Indonesian officers themselves. These were the realized efforts of the early programs during the years of the PRRI and Permesta rebellions, which, owing to Sukarno's declaration of martial law and the nationalization of Dutch economic capital, began bringing the army out into the countryside where it could more effectively challenge the PKI. They did this through the doctrine of territorial warfare, in which, "every area of the country is organized and equipped independently to defend itself against foreign attack with a minimum of central tactical direction and logistical support." In some places, the army replaced village heads, trained administrative officials, and put whole village administrations through indoctrination sessions to further their ends and attempt to affect rural ideologies.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 35.

¹⁸⁴ Lev, "Political Role of the Army in Indonesia," 362.

The U.S. Army was the partner actor in this, with efforts being led by the seemingly omnipresent George Benson. He returned to Indonesia as a lieutenant colonel to run the civic action program from 1962 onwards at the special request of generals Nasution and Yani. The Fort Leavenworth, connection, it seems, continued to run deep and pay dividends for the United States.¹⁸⁵ The U.S. defined the civic action as, “the use of a military on projects useful to local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communication, health, sanitation and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population.”¹⁸⁶

In reality it was a combined U.S. Army-Indonesian Army operation to canvass the country with soldiers, collect information on peasant sympathies and sensitivities, provide cover for covert operations against the PKI, establish a rural support structure and chain of loyalties to undermine the PKI’s strength in the countryside while maintaining conventional military dominance, and a *modus operandi* to bring about the penetration of army officers into all fields of government activities and responsibilities.¹⁸⁷ To that end, the U.S. Army supported efforts by the Indonesian Army to establish itself as a “social-political” force that participated in the ideological, political, social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects of rural life; namely, life itself.

¹⁸⁵ Evans, “The Influence of the U.S. Army,” 36; Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears*, 198.

¹⁸⁶ John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto’s Coup D’Etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 183.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

To support these and other efforts, in particular the building of roads and infrastructure projects, the U.S. also provided funds as well as equipment, including heavy engineering equipment and farm tools, to the Indonesian Army. It also trained their officers in the use of equipment at different sites throughout Indonesia and the United States.¹⁸⁸ In short, by the mid-1960s the U.S. Army had helped establish the Indonesian Army as the operational force it had always sought in a partner in Indonesia. This army would have the wherewithal and capabilities to defeat the PKI if and when the requirement arose.

To ensure the ideological underpinnings of the officer corps, the U.S. brought more and more Indonesian Army officers to the U.S. to train, on a scale that far eclipsed anything accomplished in the 1950s. Between 1960 and 1965, 2,600 Indonesian Army officers trained in the United States, more than 1,000 in 1962 alone. No other country sent as many officers to U.S. military schools in the period. The example, then, that Yani and other forerunners in the 1950s, those who were now Nasution's lieutenants running the day-to-day operations of the army, had set become imbued throughout the service.

Assignment to the U.S., in particular CGSC, was the most plum of all, and marked those selected for future promotion and command. This came despite the fact that the Soviet Union was also seeking to train Indonesian officers and remained a major arms contributor to the Indonesian military.¹⁸⁹ In short, the 1950s investment in educating Indonesian officers in the hopes of creating a cadre of pro-American officers and future

¹⁸⁸ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 37, 42.

¹⁸⁹ Evans, "The Influence of the U.S. Army," 39, 44; McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," 166-171.

leaders paid off in spades and reflects, to some extent, the great success post-independence military planners and policy makers in the early 1950s hoped to achieve.

Where, then, did all of this lead Indonesia in the 1960s? As the army worked more closely with the United States, the PKI successfully prodded Sukarno into adopting a more confrontational approach to the west. Though this approach did see the return of Netherlands New Guinea to Indonesia, it also brought about Sukarno's policy of confrontation with Malaysia. This undeclared war of small engagements on the island of Borneo was brought about by Sukarno's push for renewed revolution across Southeast Asia. His anger at the formation of Malaysia, and his desire, over time, to achieve the political unification of all Malay peoples fueled him. The army, which opposed all-out war with Britain over Malaysia, publicly backed Sukarno and the policy but worked to undermine it and helped, over time, to reduce the efficacy of the operation and scuttle attempts to expand it.¹⁹⁰ As the 1960s wore on, its contest with the PKI for power within the country, despite each being under the auspices of Sukarno, grew heated and culminated in late 1965 with the September 30th Movement, the assassination of Yani and the army's extermination of the PKI that was to follow.

Like Yani, the September 30th Movement also targeted Nasution that night, though he narrowly escaped. Sukarno, who did not seem to have been involved in the power grab but muddled his response to it, over time lost the initiative to senior, pro-American, army officers, setting the stage for the well documented purges and killings

¹⁹⁰ Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 187-188.

that took place through 1966 and 1967, the destruction of the PKI as a political organization, and the seizure of power by the army in the person of General Suharto.

While the role of the United States government and military in those events has been discussed elsewhere, it should be noted here that U.S. defense policies in the 1950s helped to create the conditions in which the Indonesian Army was able to respond to them in the way that it did. U.S. military assistance and security cooperation throughout the decade built a relationship able to endure political upheaval and war and emerge stronger for it. The trust U.S. officers such as George Benson and Indonesian officers such as Ahmad Yani had in one another was built during that period and represented the signal success of U.S. defense policies of the 1950s: the growth of the relationship and continued pro-western orientation of the Indonesian Army itself. That growth enabled the Indonesian Army to become what it needed to be if it was ever going to overcome the challenge of the PKI. So, ironically enough, did the then-counterproductive policies of confrontation and support for the PRRI and Permesta rebels.

In a way, then, it could be argued that U.S. government support for confrontation and rebellion helped produce the battlefields that the Indonesian Army needed in order to prove itself, justify its leadership, and demonstrate its commitment to Sukarno and the nationalist cause. At the same time, it could be argued that U.S. military support for the army itself helped them not only win the war but bring the two institutions together. Both militaries emerged from the conflict more operationally and ideologically united than they had been before. A stronger and more pro-western Indonesian Army then; just the sort of tool that the United States might have thought useful to have in the Cold War.

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