

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF “WEST PAPUA” ISSUE AND ITS IMPACT ON INDONESIA’S POLICY TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

Floranesia Lantang¹ and Edwin M. B. Tambunan²

^{1,2} Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Pelita Harapan University
MH Thamrin Boulevard 1100, Kelapa Dua, Tangerang
Banten 15811, Indonesia

¹ Floranesia.lantang@uph.edu, ² Edwin.tambunan@uph.edu

Received: 12th May 2020/ **Revised:** 20th May 2020/ **Accepted:** 01st June 2020

How to Cite: Lantang, F. and Tambunan E. M. B. (2020). The Internationalization of “West Papua” Issue and Its Impact on Indonesia’s Policy to the South Pacific Region. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 8(1), 41-59, <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v8i1.6447>

ABSTRACT

This research argues that the internationalization of "West Papua" issue through social media has contributed to a shift of Indonesia's policy to the South Pacific region from ignorance to initiative approach. Underlying this argument is a growing concern of Indonesia regarding the use of social media by Papuan pro-independence activists that resulted to the increasing awareness and support towards the independence of West Papua from Pacific countries as human rights problems become the highlight of West Papua's issue. The method used in this research was qualitative research method focusing on descriptive analysis of the internationalization of West Papua issue on social media. This research results show that initiative approach from Indonesia is merely narrowing the gap of the issue instead of reducing the internationalization of the West Papua issue.

Keywords: *West Papua, Indonesia, South Pacific Region, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Papua or internationally known as "West Papua" remains a long-standing sensitive issue of Indonesia when dealing with the South Pacific region. The issue lies in the intersection of sovereignty and humanitarian values. While there are at least four major agendas of the Pacific countries to Papua such as human rights, development, limited access to media, and poverty, human rights remain becoming the centre of attention among countries in the region. The concern on human rights is escalating due to the use of social media platform by the Papuan

activist to mobilize their support and audiences towards West Papua issue. On the other side, The Indonesian government and public also use social media to disseminate positive progress in West Papua without revealing the whole picture of West Papua.

Social media, as part of online platforms, provide a space for individual and community to share their point of view through words, pictures, video, film, and graphic. According to Kaplan (2010), social media is a group of internet-based application aims to exchange contents made by the user (Encyclopedia of social network analysis and mining, 2014). Social media consists of platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WeChat, Tumblr, TikTok, Weibo, Google+, Reddit, Twitter, Snapchat, and many more platforms available online. Among these platforms, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are at the top three of the most used platforms until 2019 (Our World in data, 2019). As these platforms offer ease and speedway in disseminating information, it is inevitable that social interaction is now turning more to social media. For Papuan activists, the use of social media is effective and efficient due to the tight media restriction in West Papua.

This research elaborates on the use of social media in internationalize the issue of West Papua and how does it impact the Indonesian government policy to the South Pacific region. This research also provides the background of the problem in West Papua and response from the Indonesian government towards the problems. In addition, this research explains the use of social media platforms, mainly Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in disseminating West Papua issues. Eventually, a series of findings related to the shift of the Indonesian government's policy from offline to online initiatives to the South Pacific region is explained.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the West Papua's Problem

The Indonesia Institute of Science (LIPI) in 2011 addressed that state's human rights abuses is one of the four roots of the problem in Papua together with the failure of development, discrimination and marginalization towards Papuan people, and historical and political status of Papua (Widjojo, 2010). The concern on human rights is not without reason as many gross human rights violations remain unresolved in Papua since Papua was integrated into Indonesia. This was exacerbated with the claim from the Free West Papua (FWP) organization that the Indonesian government through the Indonesian Military (TNI) handpicked just 1.026 'representative' people, out of population of one million, and threatened to kill them and their family if they do not vote for integration into Indonesia. The FWP also added that the Indonesian military has systematically murdered and tortured Papuan.

The violations of human rights in Papua culminated when Papua was under President Soeharto's administration. During the New Order era, Papuan were oppressed and tortured by the state under a series of operation conducted by the Indonesian National Military (TNI). These operations were an order from President Soeharto in fighting the separatist groups, the

Free Papua Organization (OPM) (International Crisis Group, 2006). The operations include *Operasi Sadar* (1965-1967), *Operasi Barathayudha* (1967-1969), *Operasi Wibawa* (1969), operation in the Jayawijaya (1977), *Operasi Sapu Bersih I and II* (1981), *Operasi Galang I and II* (1982), *Operasi Tumpas* (1983-1984), *Operasi Sapu Bersih* (1985) (Tebay, 2009). Total of Papuan killed during these operations is estimated at 2348 people. However, many of the victims remain unreported. Additionally, around more than 10.000 Papuans were fleeing to Papua New Guinea to escape from the Indonesian military. Nonetheless, only around 7.500 Papuans succeeded to escape in PNG, particularly in the East Awin and the Western Province of PNG (Al Rahab, 2016).

Even after the New Order Era, a series of human rights violations remain existing both in highlands and coastal of Papua. Biak Numfor tragedy in 1998, Abepura tragedy in 2000, Wasior tragedy in 2001, Wamena tragedy in 2003, Uncen tragedy in 2006, violent altercations against Yawan Wayeni in 2009 and Mako Tabuni in 2012, Paniai tragedy in 2014, and Mapenduma tragedy in 2016 (Erdianto, 2017) added the complexity of human rights violations in the region. Setara Institute reported that the human rights cases in Papua increased from 16 cases in 2015 to 68 cases in 2016. The highest cases occurred on 16th of May, 10th of April, and 9th of December, when the peaceful demonstration was carried out in 7 places in and outside Papua. These series of demonstration held as the support for Papuan people for the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) to be accepted as the full member of Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The demonstration ended with a repressive response and the arrest of protesters. Similarly, Amnesty International in its report in 2018 "*Sudah, Kasi Tinggal Dia Mati*" records 69 suspected killing cases by security forces in Papua between January 2010- February 2018. From 69 cases, 34 cases were involved police, 23 cases involved military, and 11 cases involved both police and military (Amnesty International, 2018).

In an effort to resolve a series of human rights violations in Papua, the Indonesian government has been working to formulate policy and conduct several actions. Under the 2001 special autonomy for Province Papua Chapter XII Article 46, The province of Papua has been given an authority to establish *Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). According to the law, the task of this Commission is to clarify the history of Papua, and to formulate reconciliation process in Papua. The establishment of this special Commission should be proposed by the governor and arranged under the Presidential Regulation (Pemerintah Provinsi Papua, 2001).

However, the truth and reconciliation commission law annulled in 2016 after enacted since 2014. Furthermore, despite the draft for establishing the Commission later proposed in 2015, there has been no effort in assessing this draft until recently. Instead, the Indonesian government, through the Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security affairs established their own team called as an integrated team in addressing Papuan human rights issues in 2016. Luhut explained that the team will work together with the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), legal experts, and eight Papuan representatives (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2016a). Shortly after the Commission was formed, series of demonstration held by Papuan in Indonesia and Australia. The Papuan rejected the establishment of Luhut's team as it was totally contradicted with the requirement in the 2001

special autonomy that the team should only be proposed by Governor and arranged by the President. On June 16th, 2019 in Yogyakarta, 300 Papuan students conducted a demonstration to reject Luhut's team and demand that Indonesian government give a right for self-determination (Sucahyo, 2016). The protests against Luhut's team were also coming from 2000 West Papua National Committee (KNPB) in Jayapura, and Free West Papua activists in Canberra (Rumagit, 2016; Tabloid Jubi, 2016).

Until recently, there has been no report from Luhut's special team in addressing human rights problems in Papua. While the progress on human rights remains a long-standing issue on the internationalization of West Papua, other issues such as the failure of development, poverty, gender, good governance, the welfare of indigenous of Papuan now emerge. These issues have become the concern of new actors, especially NGOs, youth organizations, and tribal chiefs in Papua and West Papua Provinces. Concerns on these issues are certainly related to the fact of the low level of the Human Development Index and prosperity in Papua and West Papua Provinces. The latest statistical report from the Provincial website reported that Papua remains at the bottom sequence of the Human Development Index in Indonesia, despite a slight incline from 57,25 to 58,05 in 2016 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Papua, 2019). Papua is still known as the poorest province in Indonesia with a percentage at 28,54, West Papua Province places the second last position with a percentage at 25,43. The poor people are concentrated in the rural area. The contribution of food commodity towards the poverty line is higher than non-commodity (housing, clothes, education, health) with comparison 75,36:24,64 (Berita Resmi Statistik Provinsi Papua, 2016). In response to this economic challenges, former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and the current President Jokowi has been implementing a series of acceleration program to support economic growth in Papua. Jokowi has made several policies such as the Trans-Papua road, one fuel price policy, infrastructure projects, and electricity projects. Considering the geographical challenge as the main factor of economic inequality in Papua, The Trans-Papua road is becoming the heart of Jokowi's development policies in Papua. This project is estimated to cost 12,5 trillion rupiah and targeted to be done by the end of 2019. The 4.325 kilometres of Trans-Papua road project will connect twelve main roads in Papua and West Papua Provinces mainly from big cities such as Merauke, Wamena, Jayapura, Timika, Nabire, Manokwari, Sorong (Presiden IR. H. Joko Widodo, 2015). This project aims to accelerate the distribution of goods and movement of people from one area to another area to become more effective and efficient.

Another realization of economic progress by President Jokowi to Papua is through the 'one fuel price policy'. Although Jokowi realized that the implementation of this policy will cause Indonesian state-owned energy company (Pertamina) to suffer losses of IDR 800 billion (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2016b), the matter of social justice is important to improve the welfare of the Indigenous People of Papua which for too long live with significant economic inequality. In October 2016, Jokowi launched this policy with the aims of reducing the fuel price in Papua that was previously ten times higher than the price in Java. While the average price of premium is IDR 6.450 per litre, the price in Papua could reach IDR 50.000-100.000 per litre (Amindoni, 2016). This initiative was considered as the most significant contribution from Jokowi, as for a long period of time, Papuans have been burdened under the

high cost of fuel. Additionally, this was the first time for Papuan to enjoy the equality of fuel price with other provinces in Indonesia.

Following this, Jokowi also launched five electrical infrastructures project in Papua and West Papua Province in order to address the power supply shortage in these two Provinces (Budiman, 2016). These electrical projects will be conducted in Waena, Genyem, Jayapura, Holtekamp, and Sentani. The estimated cost of this electricity project is 989 *milyar rupiah* (989 billion dollars) (“Presiden resmikan 6 infrastruktur”, 2016). Jokowi’s presence also ended up a thirteen-year struggle of *mama-mama Papua* or Papuan women in demand of a proper traditional market in Jayapura. *Pasar mama-mama* will accommodate more than 120 Papuan women to sell their goods, mainly fruits and vegetables to make a living for their family. This market consists of five floors standing on a 2,400 square-meter plot of land formerly belonging to land transportation company PT Damri (Somba, 2016).

While a series of economic policy implemented by President Jokowi in Papua and West Papua Provinces has contributed to reducing a little gap of poverty in the region, the security approach has to worsen Papua's view on Jakarta. Jokowi's political-security approaches to Papua is somehow contradictory to his goals in creating Papua as the "Land of Peace" (Atmanta, 2014). In Jokowi's first two years, there were an increasing military deployment as well as the establishment of a new military base in Papua. Currently, Papua still becomes the most heavily militarized regions in Indonesia with a number of militaries estimated at 45,000 troops plus an additional 650 soldiers stationed near the PNG border (Sebastian, 2015). In addition, according to the report from Indonesian Ministry of Defence, the enforcement includes a new military command area in Manokwari (Kodam XVIII Kasuari), West Papua Province, Naval base in Biak and Merauke, and border defence program empowerment (“Coordinating Minister Luhut ensures”, 2016c).

Recently in August 2019, around 6000 personnel of TNI and Indonesian Police were sent to Papua and West Papua to maintain security in the region due to a series of anarchist actions by demonstrators. The troops were deployed to areas such as Jayapura, Manokwari, Sorong, Paniai, Deiyai, Nabire, and Fakfak. This massive deployment is a response towards a series of demonstrations that led to anarchist acts in the Provinces. The demonstrators demand justice against act of racism towards Papuan students in Surabaya and criticize internet shutdown by the government in Papua and West Papua provinces (Sebastian, 2015).

For most non-Papuans in West Papua, the presence of the military is important as the activity of separatist groups is unpredictable and sometimes results in violence. There were many cases in the past where separatist group demonstrations in Papua have caused death or injury of innocent peoples, particularly against non-Papuan. However, for most of Papuan, the increasing presence of military forces will more likely escalate tension in the region. Not to mention a series of human rights violations towards Papuan which involving military in the Provinces.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative research method focusing on descriptive analysis. Sources of data used in this study were obtained from literature studies, especially on the analysis of the internationalization of West Papua issue on social media. Data analysis techniques in this study was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

ANALYSIS

West Papua Issues in Social Media

As the use of the internet becomes global, Papuan pro-independence activists also gain benefit in disseminating their interests, especially in echoing human rights problems in Papua. While previously their activities were hugely depending on offline activities such as demonstration and long march, the current trend is now also engaging social media, particularly since Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is popular. The increasing use of social media might also be related with the Indonesian government's regulations that prohibit any kind of self-determination activities and tight media restriction in Papua. In August 2014, for instance, two French reporters were arrested for filming a documentary on West Papua's independence movement in Wamena for Europe's Arte TV (Aljazeera, 2014). In such a situation, most of the activists deal with difficulties in disseminating their interest to the outside world. Thus, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Website have been helpful in making their issue known. However, since social media depends on the internet connection, the shutdown of the internet might become an issue for the activists. Indonesian government decision to restrict/cut off internet access in West Papua in late August to early September 2019 has triggered anger among activist and Papuan people in the Provinces.

Following the strategic logic of the Papuan pro-independence activists in social media, their ultimate goal is to gain support for the freedom of West Papua. They begin by addressing human rights violations through pictures and videos in order to attract the heart and the mind of the reader, then building a case by explaining that Papua is occupied by Indonesia due to abundant of natural resources instead of humanizing the people. Eventually, the activists invite the reader to take part in supporting Free West Papua.

Recently, there are many social media accounts used by the activists to disseminate information about West Papua. As provided in Table 1, some of the accounts are primary accounts-only broadcast information about West Papua, and the rest are secondary accounts - broadcast all information regarding self-determination around the world including West Papua.

Table 1 List of Primary Accounts in Social Media in Disseminating West Papua Issues
(Individual and Groups)

Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Website
Free West Papua Campaign Australia	@FreeWestPapua	Papua Merdeka	freewestpapua.org
Free West Papua Campaign West Papua News	@PurePapua	Free West Papua NL	ulmwp.org
West Papua Melbourne	@PapuanV	Free West Papua Campaign	ipwp.org
	@wellipPrai (personal account)	West Papua Liberation Organization	voiceofwestpapua
	@HermanWaingagaiaai (personal account)	Lewis Prai Wellip (personal account)	Bennywenda.org (personal account)
		Free West Papua TV on YouTube	humanrightspapua.org
		West Papua Media Alerts Wpna2010	

Facebook has been used both to disseminate information and organize upcoming activities by using a feature of Facebook Group. The activists broadcast their messages through video, pictures, and description of particular issue about West Papua. Problems such as human rights, self-independence, discrimination, and the lobby of the MSG for the independence of West Papua at the UN are still the centre of West Papua's issue on Facebook. Support from the local and foreign community by raising the West Papuan flag, body paintings, and mural art also often appears on Facebook, as seen in Figure 1.

Another important agenda of internationalizing West Papua issue is to gain support from foreign countries, especially the Pacific countries. This is not surprising as Pacific countries have become a more secure place for the activists rather than staying in Indonesia during Soeharto's administration. The activists remain to stay in the Pacific countries to have free travel access around the region. Most importantly, because the activists also gain support from the official and leader of the Pacific countries.



Figure 1 Newest Cover Photo of Free West Papua Account as per August 5th, 2019.
Source: (Free West Papua Campaign, n.d)

Table 2 Secondary Accounts on Social Media in Disseminating West Papua Issues

Twitter	YouTube	Website
@youngsolwarapacific	Journeyman Pictures	Redpepper (UK)
@iAwareNow	Survival International	Radio New Zealand (RNZ)
	International Center on Nonviolent Conflict	
	The Calvary Church of All nations	
	Minority rights group international	
	Ibuka	

Beside the primary sources, other accounts which focusing on the advocacy of indigenous peoples and minority rights are now contribute in the internationalization of West Papua issue (see Table 2). These accounts are mainly found on YouTube, organization websites, and twitter.

"Young Solwara Pacific" account on Twitter claimed to be a platform for activists from Pacific countries to share a common concern on issues impacting Pacific people and islands (Youngsolwara Pacific, n.d). This account appears on the top list of “West Papua” keywords on Twitter even though this account was just recently joined Twitter on August 2019. Account "I Aware Now" reports a series of human rights atrocities by the Indonesian government. This account also contributes to sharing issues of West Papua on Twitter (Aware Now, n.d). On YouTube platform, most of the accounts spread the news of West Papua and often repost some of the videos from the primary sources account.

Beside the primary and secondary sources, traditional media also plays a dominant role in raising the internationalization of West Papua issue, as provided in Table 3. Medias such as

Aljazeera and SBS are now using social media platform, mainly YouTube, to publish documentary and disseminate issues from West Papua to the world. Mostly, their contents about West Papua seemingly only emphasizes on the unending violence in the region without providing progress from the Indonesian government.

Table 3 List of Media Broadcasting Papua's Issue

Media	Topic	Years	
Aljazeera	Papua: Indonesia's silent war	2008	
	101 east-Papua's Aids crisis	2008	
	Activist's death angers Papuan	2010	
	New evidence of torture in West Papua	2011	
	Indonesian forces raid Papuan independence gathering	2012	
	Violence escalating in Indonesia's Papua province	2012	
	Indonesian official defends policies in West Papua	2013	
	Goodbye Indonesia People & Power	2013	
	Amnesty: Indonesian forces behind unlawful killings in Papua	2018	
	Papua: Neglect threatens remote Indonesian tribes	2018	
	Papuan Indonesia admits slow response to Papua's health crisis	2018	
	SBS	Indonesia's Brutal Attack on West Papuan rally	2011
		Freedom Flotilla Journey to West Papua	2013
West Papua's Fight for Independence		2014	

While the information regarding West Papua issues on social media remains unbalance in providing a comprehensive situation in the region, it still has an influence on the public, even government official. Movements such as We Bleed Black and Red Movement, Fiji Solidarity Movement for West Papua's Freedom, and Walsolwara Voice for West Papua has been effective in gaining support from the public in the South Pacific region. Fiji Solidarity Movement, for example, managed to gather around 100 people in 2015. Similarly, the Wansolwara event in Madang, Papua New Guinea also succeed in campaigning West Papua issue for around 100 individuals representing the pacific islands (Titifanue et al. 2016). Social media even influence government official's perspective on the West Papua issue. This is proved by the statement made by Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister O'Neill being quoted saying, "Pictures of brutality against our people appear daily on the social media, and yet we take no notice". Furthermore, O'Neill also emphasizes that PNG, as a regional leader in the South Pacific region, must take the lead to become vocal in raising this concern through mature discussion with Indonesia (Garrett, 2015). Despite the concern on West Papua triggered through social media, a sense of belonging due to Melanesian origin become the major reason for supporting West Papuan.

The Shift of Indonesia's Policy to the South Pacific Region: From Ignorance to Initiative Approach

The increasing use of social media by the Papuan pro-independence activists has contributed to the growing concern on West Papua issue in the Pacific islands. Social media not only helps to disseminate content on ongoing problems in West Papua but also impact to social activism in the region. Nevertheless, it is important to note that support from the South Pacific region towards West Papua is not only triggered by social media, but also by the cultural similarity and historical relations even before West Papua became part of Indonesia.

Historically, the relations between West Papua and the South Pacific region has been shaped when West Papua was still under Dutch administration. During this time, the South Pacific region has become an important arena for the pro-independence movement. In 1950 until 1960, Papuan were involved in the establishment of the South Pacific Commission and Pacific Conference of Churches represented by Pastor Kabol and Maloali (Imparsial, 2017).

However, the relations between West Papua and South Pacific sharply declined shortly after Indonesia took over the region from the Dutch. Limited access to travel and oppression towards West Papuan under New Order Era depress the West Papua-South Pacific relations. This broken tie later reopened by Kiribati, under President Teburoro Tito, who declared its support for West Papuan self-determination together with Nauru and Vanuatu, and Tuvalu, at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit in New York. This support was the first step taken by the South Pacific countries after nearly 30 years of silence as their activities are always constrained by Australia and PNG, which reaffirm 'territorial integrity of Indonesia'. Uniquely, the support from President Teburoro Tito was made based on culture alone, despite a series of human rights violations in Papua. This cultural-based support still becomes the most profound foundation of Pacific countries in supporting Papuan pro-independence activists due to the similarity of the race between West Papua and South Pacific islands as part of the Melanesian race (Maclellan, 2015).

The West Papua-South Pacific relations gained a momentum in 2015 when United Liberation Movement for West Papua was approved as a member of Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), and became an observer, under the support of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and *Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste* (FLNKS) (LIPI, 2017). The issue of human rights in Papua also raised by countries such as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Nauru, Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu to be investigated by the United Nations (Human Rights and Peace for Papua, 2019). More recently, this issue also raised by Papuan pro-independence activist, Benny Wenda, to be discussed in 2019 Pacific Islands Forum in Vanuatu (The Guardian, 2019).

In response to the internationalization of West Papua issue, the Indonesian government has just conducted a series of offline and online initiatives, especially to the South Pacific Region. Previously, there is no significant effort made by the Indonesian government to address the West Papua issue. The Indonesian government tends to ignore this issue by switching the concern on human rights to ongoing development progress in Papua. However, since social

media is widely used to spread the West Papua issues, the Indonesian government is now beginning to put a more serious concern towards West Papua issues. Offline initiatives such as economic, cultural, and educational cooperation have now become the focus of the government. Additionally, social media is also used to counter the information from the Papuan pro-independence activists in social media.

In the economic sector, the Indonesian government initiated a multilateral forum to strengthen relations with South Pacific countries. The Indonesia South Pacific Forum (ISPF) was held in March in Jakarta and attended by 15 South Pacific countries. This forum aims to facilitate Indonesian entrepreneurs to exchange, expand, and strengthen their relationship and friendship with the South Pacific countries. The main goal of this forum is to accelerate business growth by investing in the region (Indonesia South Pacific Forum, 2019). It is explained that the ISPF will provide a platform of dialogue between Indonesia and South Pacific region, especially to accelerate business cooperation and people to people contact between academics and civil society (Marsudi, 2019).

In the cultural sector, Indonesia initiated the 2019 Pacific Exposition which was held in July 2019 in Auckland, New Zealand, with support from Australia and New Zealand. This event was attended by 20 member countries of the South Pacific region, including Indonesia, represented by various artists and high officials from Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and North Maluku. Range of activities such as Tourism forum, Business Investment Forum, Pacific Arts and Cultural Festival, and Sound of Pacific Concert enliven this event (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2019c).

In the education sector, Indonesia also strengthens its cooperation with Papua New Guinea and at the same time encourage people to people relations between Indonesia-South Pacific countries by annual program Journalist Visit Program (JVP). The participants are journalists which has a big influence and high rating of the subscriber in their own country. In JVP 2019, South Pacific countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu attended this program in three cities in Indonesia namely Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and West Papua. Participants represent various media platform from electronic, online, and printed media. The topic discussed in this program is development, infrastructure, creative industry, and transportation. The output of this program is a publication made by the participants to be shared in their own country (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2019b).

According to the report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, one of the participants from Vanuatu has a different view of Indonesia before joining the program. Vanuatu's journalist claimed that the international media does not provide balance information about Indonesia and tends to spread the negative content of Indonesia. The JVP 2019 is a good initiative in showing the reality of Indonesia instead of merely depends on online news. Similarly, Solomon Islands' journalist argued that the output of this program would be shared to the government in each country as this program helps the journalist to have a better understanding about Indonesia-Pacific relations (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2019a).

Besides conducting offline initiatives, a series of websites are now used by the supporter of Indonesia to counter information of West Papua issues from the Papuan pro-independence activists. However, the information provided by the websites also framing an unbalance information of West Papua issues. In contrast with the Papuan pro-independence information, Indonesia's online initiatives aim to convince the readers that human rights violations are no more an issue in the region. There are several websites used to disseminate positive progress in West Papua without framing the reality of human rights violations in the region, which are:

- 1) kitorangpapua.news;
- 2) papuanews.id;
- 3) westpapuaupdate.com;
- 4) westpapaterrace.com;
- 5) onwestpapua.com;
- 6) freewestpapua.co.nz;
- 7) westpapuaarchive.com;
- 8) cenderawasi-pos.com;
- 9) tabluidjubi.online;
- 10) harianpapua.com;
- 11) kabarpapua.net;
- 12) freewestpapua-indonesia.com;
- 13) papuatoday.id; detikpapua.online;
- 14) papuainframe.co.id;
- 15) papuamaju.com; and
- 16) kabarpapua.online,

Nevertheless, a collaboration report has revealed that these websites are fictitious as they have no clear addresses, sources, and contact person ("Free West Papua supporters", 2016; Zuhra, 2018). There are six agendas of these fictitious media which mainly to convince the reader about: zero human rights violations in Papua; The Indonesian government has done a lot of improvement in Papua; foreign intervention is an effort to occupy Papua; TNI and Police in Papua are working better; Papuans are now live in a peaceful condition; and the pro-self-determination groups in Papua are criminals (Zuhra, 2018).

Assessing the Impact of Indonesia's Initiative (Offline and Online) Approach to the South Pacific Region

Series of offline initiatives by the Indonesian government and online initiative were conducted by the supporter of Indonesia mark a new chapter of Indonesia-South Pacific relations. In practice, the offline initiative not only encouraged the government to government relations but also people to people contact. Most importantly, it also helps the public and government in the South Pacific countries to obtain balanced information regarding the West Papua issue. This is proven by the testimony given by the participant of the Journalist Visit Program in 2019 from Vanuatu and Solomon Islands who fulfilled Indonesia's invitation to visit West Papua. Journalists from Solomon Island and Vanuatu both agreed that the JVP 2019

provides a better understanding of Indonesia-Pacific relations since media mostly disseminate negative content about Indonesia. Similarly, The Salomon Islands is now reviewing its position on West Papua issue after a visit to the region in 2018. The delegation of the Solomon Islands explained to the media that the visit helps the country to have a balanced picture of the condition in West Papua. The delegation further addresses that there have been lots of improvements since the era of democracy in Indonesia (Dateline Pacific, 2018).

While there have been many initiatives made by the Indonesian government to the South Pacific countries, it is somehow merely narrowing the gap of information on the West Papua issue. The initiatives have not yet cover and even resolve the underground issue and human rights problems in West Papua, thus causing the internationalization of West Papua issue remains a long-standing topic discussed in the South Pacific countries. There are five factors underlying this argument: (1) the increasing awareness of bias information from public in social media; (2) the unresolved past human rights violations by the Indonesian government; (3) the increasing use of military approach in Papua despite the progress of development in the region; (4) the increasing number of social justice problems exacerbated by corruption, collusion, and nepotism in Indonesia; (5) the emergence of new actors in supporting Papuan independence complicate the effort in conducting diplomacy and peaceful resolution.

As the number of internet users in the South Pacific islands is increasing, online efforts must be taken seriously. This is important because the internet is more likely to become the first source of information for the public due to its access which is only limited by the availability of the network. All information shared on the internet could be easily accessed by the public and shared to other people. In fact, individuals and even government official in the pacific region has been influenced by online news and pictures shared on the internet. The use of social media even triggers the rise of social activism in supporting West Papuan independence in countries such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea. This shows that the power of social media has impacted the public in the PNG, although the government confirms their recognition of the territorial integrity of Indonesia. On the other side, the use of social media by the supporter of Indonesia seemingly not as effective as the public becoming aware of fictitious media.

Another factor that weakens Indonesia's initiative approaches is the unresolved human rights in West Papua. The violations against human rights in the region even continue to increase since West Papua became part of Indonesia. While there has been a series of policies made by the Indonesian government to resolve this case, it is seemingly lack of willingness to implement this policy into action. Following this, Indonesia's response towards South Pacific countries' concern on human rights in West Papua in the international forum which tends to deny series of past human rights violations in the region will more likely show its weakness in strengthening human rights in the country.

The other factor which is still related to human rights violations is the increasing use of the military approach in the Provinces. While the deployment of troops to the Provinces is expected to reduce the tension of conflict, it is somehow aggravating the trust issue between Papuan and non-Papuan in the Provinces. On the other side, this military approach does not

address the core of the problem, instead of exacerbating the problem. In the case of series demonstrations due to act of racism towards Papuan students in Surabaya, the government is supposed to arrest the perpetrators who accused the Papuan students of throwing the Indonesian flag, instead of unilaterally accusing and arresting them. In addition, Imparsial reported that military is not only involved in killing Papuans but also in securing illegal logging business, supplying liquor in the Provinces, even forcing the Papuan to give their customary land rights (Imparsial, 2011). These practices are no longer even public secret as Papuan are becoming aware of military involvement in many sectors in the Provinces.

Alongside the increasing use of military approach, social justice problems which exacerbated by corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) in Indonesia tend to escalate the issue of West Papua overseas. The high number of KKN in Indonesia by elites and officials in Jakarta exacerbates public confidence in the accountability of the government sector. Thus, it seems likely to build assumption that development progress in West Papua will hugely depend on the leadership and good governance factors. This means that the change in leadership and governance could impact the progress in West Papua. Despite the fact that KKN also ranks high in the local level, especially in West Papua, progress at the central level will be seen more as an indicator of good governance progress in Indonesia.

The last but the most important factor which is believed to hamper Indonesia's initiatives in declining South Pacific countries support towards West Papua issue is the emergence of new actors especially NGOs and Youth organizations. LIPI map that OPM is not the only actor fighting for independence. Other actors such as *Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua* (TPNP), *Presidium Dewan Papua* (PDP), *Dewan Musyawarah Masyarakat Koteka* (DEMMAK), *Panel Papua*, *Satgas Papua*, *Dewan Revolusioner OPM*, *Komite Nasional Papua Barat* (KNPB), *Font Nasional Mahasiswa Papua*, *Gerakan Mahasiswa Pemuda dan Rakyat Papua* (GEMPAR), *Garda Papua*, *Asosiasi Mahasiswa Pegunungan Tengah Papua*, *Gerakan Rakyat Demokratik Papua* (GARDEP), and *Forum Independen Mahasiswa* have been actively voicing the independence of West Papua in many sectors (LIPI, 2017). These new actors have tendency to complicate Indonesia's initiative progress and peace process in the region. Therefore, interests of these actors must be also taken into consideration especially in formulating policy to the West Papua.

CONCLUSION

The internationalization of the West Papua issue has become the concern of Indonesia in the South Pacific region, especially since Jokowi took power. This growing concern is not only because of the statement made by the South Pacific countries in the international forum such as United Nations General Assembly but also caused by the circulation of news and photo regarding human rights violations in West Papua.

The use of social media has become the major tool for the Papuan pro-independence activists and new actors such as NGOs and Youth organization in voicing the issue of West Papua. As a result, public and government official in the South Pacific countries such as PNG,

Fiji, and Vanuatu are also influenced by the dissemination of information in social media. Series of support from demonstration, mural arts, and statement from the government official has been shown by the Pacific islanders to the Papuan peoples.

In response to this growing concern on West Papua issue, the Indonesian government, as well as the supporter of Indonesia have been conducting offline and online initiatives especially in countering unbalance information regarding West Papua issue. Under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Indonesian government initiated bilateral and multilateral forum and cooperation to strengthening Indonesia ties with the region. Cooperation in economic, business, and educational sector become the heart of these initiatives. Besides these offline initiatives, social media is also used by the supporter of Indonesia in framing Indonesia's positive images to social media users. While Indonesia's offline initiatives have marked closer relations with the South Pacific region, it is somehow merely narrowing the gap of information on the West Papua issue.

The concern on the West Papua issue will always become a long-standing issue for the South Pacific region due to five main factors. Firstly, the use of social media as a counter-propaganda seemingly will not be effective as social media users are becoming aware of fictitious media. Secondly, the unresolved past human rights violations will continue to bring down Indonesia's position in the international forum, especially in the South Pacific region. Thirdly, the increasing use of military approach despite the progress of development in the region will impact on trust issue between Papuan to Indonesia. Fourthly, the increasing number of social justices exacerbated by KKN adds the escalation of West Papua issue as the pro-independence activist are now fighting not only for independence but also for soft issues such as the failure of development and poverty. Lastly, the emergence of new actors in supporting the independence of West Papua, mainly NGOs and Youth organizations in Papua tends to complicate the initiatives process of the Indonesian government in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Floranesia Lantang is a lecturer of International Relations at the Pelita Harapan University. She received her Master of National Security Policy from the Australian National University. Her research interests include societal security, border management, Papua, and Indonesia-Australia relations.

Edwin M.B Tambunan is a lecturer of International Relations at the Pelita Harapan University and a member of *Forum Akademisi untuk Papua Damai*. He received his Doctoral degree at Flinders University specializing in conflict resolution.

REFERENCES

- 2 tahun pemerintahan Jokowi-JK, bangun perbatasan untuk antisipasi konflik antar negara. (2016b, October 27th). *Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia*. <http://setkab.go.id/2-tahun-pemerintahan-jokowi-jk-bangun-perbatasan-untuk-antisipasi-konflik-antar-negara/>
- 6.000 pasukan gabungan TNI-Polri dikirim, Kapolri sebut Papua mulai kondusif. (2019, September 1st). *Tribun News*. <https://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2019/09/01/6000-pasukan-gabungan-tni-polri-dikirim-kapolri-sebut-papua-mulai-kondusif>
- Al Rahab, A. (2016). Operasi-operasi militer di Papua pagar makan tanaman? *Jurnal Penelitian Politik*, 3(1), 3-23. <http://ejournal.politik.lipi.go.id/index.php/jpp/article/view/420/234>
- Amindoni, A. (2016, October 18th). One-fuel price policy will create social justice in Papua: Jokowi. *The Jakarta Post*. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/10/18/one-fuel-price-policy-will-create-social-justice-in-papua-jokowi.html>
- Amnesty International. (2018). *Sudah, Kasi Tinggal Dia Mati: Pembunuhan dan Impunitas di Papua*. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA2181982018INDONESIAN.PDF>
- Atmanta, D. (2014, December 30th). Jokowi's Christmas peace for Papua: Will it last long? *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/12/30/jokowi-s-christmas-peace-papua-will-it-last-long.html>
- Aware Now. (n.d). *Aware Now*. https://twitter.com/aware_now
- Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Papua. (2019, May 16th). *Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (IPM) provinsi Papua tahun 2018*. <https://papua.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2019/05/06/424/indeks-pembangunan-manusia--ipm--provinsi-papua-tahun-2018.html>
- Berita Resmi Statistik Provinsi Papua. (2016, Maret 5th). *Keadaan kemiskinan di provinsi Papua Maret 2016*. http://papua.bps.go.id/website/brs_ind/brsInd-20160718145603.pdf
- Budiman, A. (2016, October 17th). Jokowi inaugurates electricity infrastructures in Papua. *Tempo.co*. <https://en.tempo.co/read/news/2016/10/17/056812761/Jokowi-Inaugurates-Electricity-Infrastructures-in-Papua>
- Coordinating Minister Luhut ensures integrated team address Papuan human rights issues work independently. (2016c, June 20th). *Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia*.

<http://setkab.go.id/en/minister-ensures-integrated-team-address-papuan-human-rights-issues-independently/>

Encyclopedia of social network analysis and mining. (2014). *Social media, definition, and history*.

https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-1-4614-6170-8_95#howtocite

Erdianto, K. (2017, May 19th). *Pemerintah Prioritaskan Penuntasan Lima Kasus Pelanggaran HAM di Papua*.

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2017/01/30/20540371/pemerintah.prioritaskan.penuntasan.lima.kasus.pelanggaran.ham.di.papua>.

Free West Papua Campaign. (n.d). *Free West Papua Campaign*.

<https://www.facebook.com/freewestpapua/>

Free West Papua supporters rally against Minister Panjaitan in Canberra. (2016, June 9th). *Tabloid Jubi*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.tabloidjubi.com/eng/2016/06/09/free-west-papua-supporters-rally-against-minister-panjaitan-in-canberra/>

Garrett, J. (2015, February 6th). Papua New Guinea's prime minister Peter O'Neill vows to speak out against Melanesian 'oppression' in West Papua. *ABC News*.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-06/png-pm-vows-to-speak-out-against-oppression-in-west-papua/6074572>

Human Rights and Peace for Papua. (2019). International Debate on West Papua.

<http://humanrightspapua.org/resources/210-international-debate-on-west-papua#a2013>

Imparsial. (2011). *Sekuritisasi Papua: Implikasi Pendekatan Keamanan terhadap Kondisi HAM di Papua*. Jakarta: Imparsial.

Imparsial. (2017). *Oase Gagasan Papua Bermartabat: Waa...Waa...Waa...* Jakarta: Imparsial.

Indonesia anger as West Papua independence raised at Pacific Forum. (2019, August 12th). *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/12/indonesia-angered-as-west-papua-independence-raises-its-head-at-pacific-forum>

Indonesia South Pacific Forum. (2019). What is the Indonesia-South Pacific Forum?

<https://ispf.kemlu.go.id/about/what-is-the-indo-pacific>

International Crisis Group. (2006). *Papua: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions*.

<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4517d6884.pdf>

Kaplan, A. M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2019a, July 8th). *Jurnalis Pasifik dan Afrika Kunjungi Indonesia*.
<https://kemlu.go.id/portal/i/read/442/berita/jurnalis-pasifik-dan-afrika-kunjungi-indonesia>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2019b, July 11th). *Everything Starts from Friendship: Through 2019 Pacific Exposition, Indonesia initiates Pacific momentum*.
<https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/450/berita/everything-starts-from-friendship-through-2019-pacific-exposition-indonesia-initiates-pacific-momentum>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2019c, July 16th). *Membuka Pikiran dan Memberi Perspektif Baru Tentang Indonesia*.
<https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/462/berita/membuka-pikiran-dan-memberi-perspektif-baru-tentang-indonesia>
- Launching single fuel price policy, President Jokowi: This is a matter of social justice, not money. (2016a, October 18th). *Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia*.
<http://setkab.go.id/en/launching-single-fuel-price-policy-president-jokowi-this-is-a-matter-of-social-justice-not-money/>
- LIPI. (2017). *Updating Papua Road Map: Proses Perdamaian, Politik Kaum Muda, dan Diaspora Papua*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Maclellan, N. (2015). Pacific diplomacy and decolonization in the 21st century. In Greg Fry and Sandra Tarter (eds.), *The New Pacific diplomacy* (pp. 263-281). Canberra: ANU press.
- Marsudi, R. L. P. (2019, March 21st). *New era of Indonesia-South Pacific engagement*".
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/03/21/new-era-of-indonesia-south-pacific-engagement.html>
- Our world in data. (2019). *The rise of social media*. <https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media>
- Pemerintah Provinsi Papua. (2001, November 21st). *UU 21 Tahun 2001- Otonomi Khusus Bagi Provinsi Papua*. <https://walhi.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/uu-otonomi-khusus-papua.pdf>
- Presiden Ir. H. Joko Widodo, (2015, April 4th) "*Presiden Prioritaskan Pembangunan Infrastruktur Papua*".
<http://presidenri.go.id/infrastruktur/presiden-prioritaskan-pembangunan-infrastruktur-papua.html>
- Presiden resmikan 6 infrastruktur kelistrikan Papua dan Papua Barat. (2016, October 18th). *Direktorat Jenderal Energi Baru Terbarukan dan Konservasi Energi (EBTKE)*.
<http://ebtke.esdm.go.id/post/2016/10/18/1385/presiden.resmikan.6.infrastruktur.kelistrikan.papua.dan.papua.barat>
- Rumagit, A. (2016, June 15th). *Masyarakat Papua gelar demo tolak tim pencari fakta*. *Antara*

- Papua. <https://papua.antaranews.com/berita/455871/masyarakat-papua-gelar-demo-tolak-tim-pencari-fakta>
- Sebastian, L. C., & Syailendra, E. A. (2015, June 12th). *Can Jokowi Bring Peace to West Papua? The Diplomat*. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/jokowis-challenges-in-negotiating-peace-in-papua/>
- Somba, N. D. (2016). Papua's 'Pasar Mama Mama' ready to open before Christmas. *The Jakarta Post*. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/12/07/papuas-pasar-mama-mama-ready-to-open-before-christmas.html>
- Solomons govt approaches new position on West Papua. (2018, May 23rd). *Dateline Pacific*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/2018646165/solomons-govt-approaches-new-position-on-west-papua>
- Sucahyo, N. (2016, June 16th). Masyarakat Papua tolak tim bentukan Menko Polhukam. *VOA*. <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/masyarakat-papua-menolak-tim-bentukan-menko-polhukam/3379084.html>
- Tebay, N. (2009). *Dialogue between Jakarta and Papua: A perspective from Papua*. Mission. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/droi/dv/508_nelestebay/508_nelestebay_en.pdf
- Titifanue, J., Tarai, J., Kant, R. & Finau, G. (2016). From social networking to activism: The role of social media in the free West Papua campaign. *Pacific Studies Journal*, 39(3), 255-280.
- West Papua: A no-go zone for foreign journalists. (2014, September 22th). *Aljazeera America*. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/22/west-papua-mediablackout.html>
- Widjojo, M. S. (2010, August 12th). LIPI temukan empat akar masalah di Papua. *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*. Retrieved from: <http://lipi.go.id/berita/lipi-temukan-empat-akar-masalah-di-papua/4422>
- Youngsolwara Pacific. (n.d). *Youngsolwara Pacific*. <https://twitter.com/YoungsolwaraP>
- Zuhra, W. U. N. (2018, Desember 6th). Media siluman di Papua: Propaganda, hoaks, hingga narasumber fiktif. *Tirto.id*. <https://tirto.id/media-siluman-di-papua-propaganda-hoaks-hingga-narasumber-fiktif-da5B>