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The Region in Review: International Issues and Events, 2011
NIC MACLELLAN

Melanesia in Review: Issues and Events, 2011
DAVID CHAPPELL, JON FRAENKEL, GORDON LEUA NANAU, HOWARD VAN TREASE, MURIDAN S WIDJOJO

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The year 2011 in the provinces of Papua and West Papua was politically noisy. Papua occupied the headlines of a number of national electronic and print media sources more often than in the previous year. First, the cycle of violence conducted by both the state apparatus and non-state armed groups predominated. On one side, the management of politics and security in the provinces was still colored by state repression and alleged human rights violations. Impunity was maintained and laws could not be enforced, as law enforcers often failed to indicate the perpetrators’ identity, calling them “unknown actors.” When perpetrators who are members of state security institutions have been identified and known publicly, the court has tended to punish them with light sentences. On the other side, the non-state armed groups became more aggressive. The year saw more members of the police and military becoming victims of attacks by the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka [OPM])–National Liberation Army (Tentara Pembebasan Nasiona [TPN]).

Second, the political impasse caused by mutual mistrust between the government and the pro-independence Papuans continued. The special autonomy law implemented in 2001 has failed to restore trust. The impasse is mainly due to independence demands being approached from the perspective of a security framework (securitization). Most of the government’s recent policies were also influenced by the securitization policy, which further undermined the spirit of reconciliation embedded in the special autonomy law.

Third, industrial relations conflicts between workers and the Freeport Indonesia mine intensified. The root of the conflict is wages, which are considered the lowest in relation to other Freeport companies outside Indonesia. A phenomenal strike of the workers’ association lasted roughly six months, and the company was forced to halt its operations for about one month. The strike began in July, and negotiations for a new wage structure were concluded at the end of December 2011. The strike ended and the workers enjoyed a wage increase of 37 percent. It was a Christmas gift for both sides.

Fourth, the political will of the government to employ peaceful means of solving the Papua conflict appeared more clearly at the end of the year. On 9 November 2011, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono stated that the government was prepared to hold open dialogue with Papuan leaders. This statement confirmed the previous policy in which the president appointed special envoys...
for Papua and a special unit under the president to handle the political and economic problems of Papua. Overall the new approach has not yet had a positive impact on the political situation in Papua, primarily because the old approaches have not been terminated.

The Papua People’s Assembly (Majelis Rakyat Papua [MRP]) also remained a protracted problem in Papua. The official term of MRP members should have ended in 2010, but the selection of new members for the 2011–2016 term did not start until April 2011. To make matters worse, the central government intervened by rejecting the appointments of Agus Alua and Hana Hikoyabi who had already been selected as members of MRP by the provincial committee. Alua and Hikoyabi were labeled “separatist” by Jakarta. As a matter of fact, these two Papuan leaders had an important role in facilitating the demonstration “returning” the special autonomy law to the central government in 2010. As a result of this, the inauguration was delayed. On 7 April, Agus Alua passed away after a long illness.

On 12 April, 73 members of MRP (40 Papua and 33 West Papua) were inaugurated by the Minister of Home Affairs Gamawan Fauzi in Jayapura. On 30 May, members of the MRP agreed to maintain only one MRP for both provinces. However, on 6–7 June the members of West Papua MRP, led by Vitalis Yumte, Z Abidin Bay, and Anike Sabami, decided to establish a separate MRP for West Papua province. Surprisingly this separate body was supported by all members of West Papuan origin. Despite the refusal of Papuan members of Parliament in Jakarta, the separation was encouraged by Jakarta as well as by the governor of West Papua. The newly established West Papua People’s Assembly was re-inaugurated by the governor of West Papua on 15 June. As a consequence, a number of MRP members who wanted to retain one MRP filed suit against the West Papua provincial government in the State Administration Court. As of this writing, the outcome of the lawsuit is unclear but two MRPs remain.

On 12 September, Timotius Murib was selected as MRP spokesperson and Hofni Simbiak and Engelberta Kotorok as his deputies for the 2011–2016 term. Members of MRP were inaugurated on 15 September by Acting Governor of Papua Syamsul Arif Rivai. On that occasion the governor said, “MRP is not a political body but a particular institution whose competence is to pursue goals related to affirmative action policy, and the protection and empowerment of indigenous Papuans.” As of this inauguration Papua now has two provincial MRPs, Papua and West Papua.

Around 8,000 workers of PT Freeport Indonesia (PTFI) and its contractors went on strike over a wage hike from 4 July to 25 December 2011. Their wages of US$1.50 per hour were considered the lowest among Freeport’s companies outside Indonesia, which reached as high as US$15.00 per hour. Tribal leaders and elders of seven Papuan tribal groups living in Timika and the Freeport area supported the strike by threatening the chief executive officer of Freeport McMoran that if the company did not comply with workers’ demands,
the leaders would stop Freeport’s operations.

At the first negotiation on 12 July 2011, it was agreed that the dismissal of six leaders of the workers’ union (SPSI PTFI) would be rescinded and further negotiations on 20 July would turn to wage issues. That negotiation failed and resulted in the continuation of the strike. Two efforts at mediation ended in an impasse. The third involved officials from the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration in Jakarta on 22 September. The meeting was also attended by workers’ representatives, Freeport management, and the labor departments of Papua province and Mimika district. The main issue was wages and compensation for workers’ well-being. It soon became clear that, even with the involvement of the government, the negotiations would continue to be difficult. The strike had halted the operation of the mining company—whose daily production was 3,000,000 pounds of copper and 5,000 pounds of gold—resulting in the loss of millions of dollars per day.

On 12 December, the chief executive officer of Freeport Indonesia, Armando Mahler, and SPSI—represented by Sudiro—signed an agreement that raised wages to the equivalent of US$2.90 per hour, an increase of 37 percent—24 percent the first year and 13 percent the following year. Freeport also promised to improve housing, educational, and retirement allowances. However, as of 22 December workers had still not returned to work because there was not yet a guarantee that contractor companies would rehire workers they had fired. On 25 December the remaining problems were resolved, the blockade was dismissed, and the strike ended.

The long strike resulted in two workers losing their lives. On 10 October, police troops tried to stop thousands of workers who insisted on entering the mining area. A clash was unavoidable. One worker, Petrus Ayamiseba, was shot dead on the spot. Another worker, Leo Wandagau, was shot in the back; he passed away five days later. It was reported that eight workers and six police agents were injured. The death of Wandagau provoked more anger among workers. Thousands of them held a long march and carried his body to the local legislative building in Mimika.

Apart from the workers’ strike, mysterious shootings also took place in and around the sprawling Grasberg mine site. In 2011 at least nine different shootings occurred. There were eight casualties including Freeport employees and security agents on duty. The perpetrators were labeled as “unknown armed groups.” Some suspected OPM/TPN and others suspected an internal rivalry between the police and the army. By the end of 2011 no perpetrator of the shootings had been identified.

Due to the failure of the police to discover the perpetrators of the above-mentioned shootings and the violence it conducted against the striking workers, the police force’s relationship with Freeport Indonesia was questioned. It was reported that PTFI had allocated a budget of US$79.1 million for security agents for the period 2001–2010. The police headquarters’ spokesperson, Inspector General Saud Usman Nasution, explained that members of the Papua police received from Freeport
us$4.50 per day in addition to their official daily allowance us$6.00 per day. The police argued that the money it had received was legal according to Presidential Decree 63 Year 2004.

A number of civil society organizations, mainly Indonesian Corruption Watch, stated that the money Freeport had provided to the police was illegal. Some human rights organizations claimed that because of the money paid to the police, police agents tended to take the side of the company and to engage in abuses.

Jayapura, the capital of Papua province, experienced a degree of tension during July and August, when sixteen politically motivated incidents of violence occurred. Eleven people were killed—seven non-Papuans and four Papuans—and twenty-one people were wounded. Some non-Papuan associations threatened the government, “Should the police fail to arrest the perpetrator, we would do justice by our own hands.” Examples of the violence included a 6 July incident in the Skyline area in which a car was burned and the non-Papuan driver killed. The perpetrators were seven unidentified people. In August, an ambush took place in Nafri. Four non-Papuans were killed (including one army soldier) and eight other people were wounded. In another place, a Papuan of highland origin and two coastal Papuans were killed.

In the cases in which victims were non-Papuans, suspicion in Jayapura went to opm/tpn. However, the local opm commander, Lambert Pkikir, denied responsibility. He accused another opm fighter, Dani Kogoya, who had links with the Indonesian National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia [TNI]). This man had around fifty fighters and at least five guns, including an ssg, an M-16, an AK-47, and an airsoft gun. After the incident in Nafri, the police and military swept villages and searched for the perpetrators in the forest around Jayapura. Some said inhabitants complained that during the operation houses were burned and the residents felt intimidated.

After some investigation, the police suspected a group of Papuan highlanders living in Kotaraja. On 31 August a joint operation of police and military was conducted to arrest the perpetrators of the Skyline and Nafri incidents. The operation resulted in fifteen suspects being taken into custody, of whom thirteen were later released. The remaining two, Ekimari Kogoya and Panius Kogoya, would soon face trial. Baptist church leaders complained that the police violated standard operating procedures, conducted torture, and detained a child seven or eight years old. When the head of Jayapura Police Resort was brought to court for a pretrial hearing, the police were accused of a criminal code violation by arresting citizens without a warrant. However, the judge rejected the charges.

The Paniai highlands, where the Mee ethnic groups live, has been a site of opm struggle for a long time. While it had been quiet for a while this year, some clashes did take place between the opm fighters and the police. Tensions started in February in Nabire where the police arrested two locals—suspected as opm/tpn members—who had a bag containing a revolver, military helmet, and IDR80 million (10,000 Indonesian Rupiah equals
approximately US$1.10). On 13–14 April in Moanemani, local Papuans clashed with local police and set fire to a police post because the police had confiscated a sum of gambling money. As a consequence two local Papuans, Otniel Yobe and Agus Pigay, were injured. A month later another Papuan, Derek Adii, was allegedly tortured to death after having argued with a military member. Hundreds of Papuans organized a march and occupied the port of Nabire in protest.

Real armed contact between Brimob (police unit) and the OPM/TPN took place at the end of July. When Brimob conducted operations in Madi village, Enarotali, of Paniai district, they confiscated 40,000 bullets, IDR 50 million in cash, twelve mobile phones, ten bows and arrows, and a motorbike. A month later Deiyai, Dogiyai, and Nabire districts were on high alert. On 15 August the situation was exacerbated when the OPM/TPN fighters under John Yogi seized two rifles belonging to a local police post in Komopa. On the night before Indonesian Independence Day, 17 August, armed contact occurred in Madi subdistrict. The police did not succeed in getting their rifles back. After the violence, the Independence Day ceremony became quite tense.

In the beginning of September 2011, Paniai Police Resort ordered John Yogi’s fighters to return the two rifles that had been seized before 7 September or the police would launch a sweeping operation through the Madi area. This threat was criticized by Kingmi church leader Benny Giay, provincial Parliament member Ruben Magay, and Matius Murib of the Papuan human rights commission. The critics were concerned about the possibility of excessive force being used in the sweep, victimizing innocent civilians. It was suggested that the police give religious leaders a chance to negotiate with John Yogi.

At the end of the year, the police lost their patience. On 13 December, Brimob troops under Matoa Task Force 2011 launched an operation targeting the headquarters of John and Salmon Yogi’s OPM in Eduda, Dagouto, and Komopa. Those three villages had been under Yogi control for years, a legacy of John and Salmon’s father Tadius Yogi, who had started the resistance in 1982. According to the police estimate, Yogi’s group had 800 men and fifty weapons. The police were sure that Yogi was responsible for seizing the rifles, burning two bridges, and confiscating villagers’ stocks. At the end of December the villages were still occupied by the police. No OPM fighter was reported in detention. During the attack two alleged OPM members were killed, and a number of houses were burned.

The cycle of violence in Puncak Jaya did not stop either, as OPM/TPN guerillas became more aggressive. More police/tni members were victimized without significant retaliation. On 11 May, a tni post in Gurage was shot at a few times, but there were no casualties. Five attackers ambushed a police post at Mulia airport on 24 June and a policeman on duty, Briptu M Yazin, was shot dead after the attacker seized his revolver. On 12 July in the Kalome subdistrict of Tingginambut, two army soldiers and a civilian were shot by an unknown person, and on 4 August an army helicopter was sprayed with bullets.
A wounded soldier who was being evacuated in the helicopter was killed instantly.

During the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day on 17 August, shooting exchanges took place outside Mulia between TNI and the OPM/TPN. The attack, conducted by Goliat Tabuni (who is thought to control a hundred men), was meant to disturb the celebration. As TNI commander Major General Erfi Triassunu put it, “After the sweeping, one revolver was found.” Two months later, on 24 October, a police post chief, Dominggu Awes, was shot dead in the forehead with his own gun. The attackers seized his gun and escaped. After the investigation, Police Resort Chief Alex Korwa said that this raid was conducted by a new OPM group of about sixty men, equipped with six rifles and two revolvers.

The powerlessness of the police continued and on 2 December two members of Brimob, Bripda Ferly and Bripda Eko, were shot dead. Another Brimob member who was trying to pick up a wounded fellow officer was also shot in the thigh. The shooting incident happened in Wandigobak village of the Mulia subdistrict. A civilian was also victimized. On 18 December, a motorbike taxi rider, Abdul Kolik (a migrant from East Java), was shot six times and killed in Usir village, Mulia subdistrict.

During 2011, eight local elections (two provinces, five districts, and one municipality) were supposed to be held in Papua and West Papua provinces. Despite many difficulties, disputes, and violent clashes (especially in Lanny Jaya district), four elections (Jayapura municipality, Sarmi district, Lanny Jaya district, and West Papua province) were held and new leaders were successfully elected. Compared to 2010, more violence occurred at this year’s local elections. Maybrat district, Puncak district, and Papua province failed to hold elections, mostly due to the incompetence of the Local Election Committee (KPU) and poor preparation. There was a legal question about whether one of the strongest gubernatorial candidates, the incumbent Barnabas Suebu (who had also been governor of Papua province in the 1980s), was eligible to run. Governors are only allowed to serve a maximum of two terms, but Suebu argued that his term in the 1980s had been under a different political system. The Supreme Court found in Suebu’s favor, clearing the way for his candidacy, but most of the other candidates were understandably opposed to the ruling. In Papua province, apart from this legal limbo, there was long debate about the criteria to determine which indigenous Papuans were eligible. The worst election process was that in Puncak district, where more than twenty-seven people were killed and a number of government buildings damaged during clashes between supporters of various candidates. By the end of the year the district head of Jayapura was yet to be determined, as a second round of voting was scheduled in 2012.

The Papua Peace Conference (KPP) was organized by the Papua Peace Network (PPN) from 5 to 7 July in Abepura, Jayapura. The conference, which ran smoothly, was organized as a way for Papuans to discuss prospects for a dialogue process as the best way to solve the Papua conflict. About
eight hundred participants came from different districts all over Papua, with the PPN providing transport and accommodation. Both parties to the conflict were present, including pro-independence leaders such as Socrates Sofyan Yoman and Forkorus Yaboisembut and the Indonesian coordinating minister of political and legal affairs accompanied by ten high officials. Moreover, Papua Governor Bas Suebu, Papua Military Commander Erfi Triassunu, and Papua Police Chief Bekto Suprapto each contributed a speech. The conference succeeded in formulating indicators of peace in Papua.

KPP participants, who were mostly supporters of independence, also announced a “peace declaration.” The declaration emphasized that dialogue was the best means to end the Papua conflict. However, stark differences of opinion over the meaning of “dialogue” were apparent. On one side, in the mind of Papuans, dialogue meant negotiation, which would be mediated by a neutral third party outside Indonesia. On the other hand, the central government viewed dialogue as a series of “constructive communications” between Papuan leaders and the government in order to improve policies for Papua and West Papua provinces.

Since the beginning, the Indonesian government has insisted that the Papua problem is a domestic affair and has rejected internationalization. This position was underlined by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa when he said, “Concerns about human rights violations are being handled by the Jakarta Government and do not require an external party to resolve the issue.” Despite differences regarding the meaning of “dialogue,” the PPN succeeded in widening the dialogue discourse, not only among civil society and religious organizations, but also in government and military institutions. Talk about dialogue became common after President Yudhoyono himself stated on 9 November that his government was prepared to hold open dialogue with Papuan leaders.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton raised the issue of the Papua problem, especially the protection of human rights, and showed her support for open dialogue before Foreign Affairs Minister Natalegawa in a speech at the East-West Center in Hawai‘i. The statement interestingly incited many rumors in Papua, spread among Papuans via short messages, concerning US involvement in the cause. It was rumored that the US government had discussed the Papua People Congress III and the future of Papua independence in the White House and that the US military had deployed ships to one of the ports in Papua in order to help Papua pursue its independence from Indonesia.

In September, while the media published a lot of commentary about the Jakarta-Papua dialogue, a number of pro-Independence Papuan leaders declared themselves the “Papua Collective Leadership” and announced their plan to organize the Papua People Congress III on 16–19 October 2011. The collective leadership consisted of Forkorus Yaboisembut (Papua Customary Council [DAP]), Edison Waromi (West Papua National Authority), Albert Kailele, and Eliezer Awom (Tapol/Napol). The plan saw
both supporters and detractors within pro-independence groups. The West Papua National Committee (KNPB), the Papua Presidium Council (PDP), and various factions of OPM/TPN, especially those under the leadership of Lambert Pkikir (Jayapura) and Salmon Yogi (Paniai), openly rejected the congress, while the DAP, with Forkorus acting as chairman, also formally rejected the plan. The DAP, whose chairman Forkorus unilaterally supported the congress but did not have the support of the council as a whole, also formally rejected the plan. It was evident that the legitimacy of the congress among the pro-independence groups was very low.

The congress failed to get a permit from the police and did not have a large enough budget to rent the venue. However, the congress went ahead, using Zakheus field instead of a big building at Universitas Cenderawasih and planned for around 5,000 participants. On the first day, 17 October, the Morning Star flag (the controversial symbol of an independent Papua) had already been hoisted but the police did not react. Approximately 2,200 security forces (police and military) watched the event. Previously the organizing committee had stated that the agenda of the congress would focus on special autonomy and that a number of Indonesian high officials would be invited. But on the contrary, the congress stated that Papuans rejected the sovereignty of Indonesia over Papua and proclaimed the Federal State of West Papua on 19 October 2011. This verbal statement was taken as a subversive act by the police, who then finally disrupted the congress by force.

The police and military action provoked a violent clash and took six Papuan lives. About 250 Papuans were interrogated and released, with only five suspects being arrested; Forkorus Yaboisembut (president of the newly proclaimed state), Edison Waromi (prime minister), August Kraar, Dominikus Surabut, and Selfius Bobii were charged with subversive acts under Article 106.

Law 21/2001 on Papua special autonomy has been in place since 2001, but implementation of it is considered to have failed. Realizing the problem, in 2007 the president issued Presidential Decree 5/2007, which sought to accelerate development in Papua. The decree, however, did not have any significant effect on the implementation of special autonomy. This year the government realized that one of the most important problems not being addressed is the political one. With this in mind, the president launched Presidential Regulations 65 and 66/2011, which established the Unit for Acceleration of Development in Papua and West Papua (UP4B) and included political policies (human rights, reconciliation, and dialogue).

The main task of UP4B is to help the president coordinate and synchronize plans in an effort to facilitate and control the implementation of accelerated development in Papua and West Papua provinces in the 2011–2014 period. It is intended to coordinate, synchronize, and evaluate plans for budget and program implementation among ministries, government institutions, private companies, funding agencies, and other sectors referred to in various action plans. It is also supposed to assure the implementation
of sustainable development, improved institutional capacity building, and increasing the synergy among local government officials and customary associations, nongovernmental organizations, and religious organizations. Finally, it is to develop constructive communication with Papuan communities.

The president appointed Bambang Darmono to head up the up4B unit, which was given an initial term of only three years. This retired army general was Operation Commander in Aceh during Aceh martial law 2002–2003. He was also a representative of Indonesia in the Aceh Monitoring Mission in 2005. Besides addressing social and economic issues, the unit is tasked with a political target—preparing “dialogue” between the government and the leaders of Papua. The president also appointed Farid Husain, a well-known peacemaker during the Aceh peace process, to help with this peace agenda. Husain was assigned to make approaches to pro-independence leaders.

MURIDAN S WIDJOJO

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Political developments throughout 2011 again confirmed the adage that in Solomon Islands politics “anything is possible.”

After the national general elections and the election of the prime minister in late 2010, the ruling National Coalition for Rural Advancement (NCRA) and the official Opposition were closely matched in terms of membership strength. For instance, at one point in February 2011, then-Opposition leader Steve Abana claimed that the two sides were even, at 24–24 (SIBC, 3 Feb 2011), but there were uncertainties over the real allegiances of some members of Parliament. Prime Minister Danny Philip and his advisers were very tactful in maneuvering through this volatile environment after the 2010 elections. Even as citizens anticipated an immediate fall of government, new ministers from the Opposition side of the House were sworn in to replace those who defected.

The first sign of a crack in the Philip-led NCRA government appeared when Minister for Forestry Bodo Dettke was relieved of his portfolio. It was alleged that Dettke was overseas when his sacking was announced, and he protested, asserting that he had been sacked for ordering the seizure of logs from MV Pacific Banghu in the Western Province a few months earlier. Despite that assertion, people felt that his initial appointment as minister for forestry had bordered on a conflict of interest, as he owns the Success Logging Company (The Age, 1 Sept 2010). Nevertheless his ministerial appointment had gone through, along with those of some