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# The 1962 Military Confrontation on Salvaging West Papua: An Analysis on War Theory

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## Abstract

Based on the Round Table Conference between Indonesia and the Netherlands' representatives in 1949, West Papua will be delivered to Indonesia a year later. Nevertheless, the Dutch broke their promise to return West Papua to Indonesian sovereignty. The Dutch continued to insist on West Papua as their land and then increased their military presence in West Papua to prepare for defending the territory. Responding to this, initially, Indonesia made peaceful efforts, namely bilateral diplomacy within the Indonesian-Dutch Union ties, continued with trilateral diplomacy and diplomacy efforts using the Asian African Conference and United Nations organizations. However, Indonesian diplomatic efforts met with deadlock. Hence, another form of diplomacy, the military effort, has been displayed. This study's main aim is to review the 1962 military confrontation on salvaging West Papua in the analysis on war theory. Also, to prove that with sufficient military strength, the country will confidently step up to be the negotiating table winner. The Indonesian military strength at that time was playing a significant role as a deterrent effect. The research uses a qualitative descriptive phenomenology method, using data sources from several books and journals available. The result of the research shows that Indonesia absolutely needs a modern and more rigid military force to maintain its sovereignty, protect our Island and its natural resources. Without the deterrent effect of military power, Indonesia will be underestimated in international politics.

**Keywords:** War Theory, Deterrent Effect, Political Diplomacy

## 1. Introduction

The proclamation of independence of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945, was a historic milestone for the Indonesian as an independent country. However, the proclamation of independence had not yet freed Indonesia from Dutch colonialism. The Dutch military, NICA (Nederland's Indies Civil Administration), followed British military allies declared a war to regain control over Indonesia (Juli Suspurwanto, 2020). The Netherlands launched Military Aggression I on July 21, 1947. It also launched Military Aggression II on December 19, 1948, and succeeded in seizing the capital of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta. which has led to wars of independence in several regions in Indonesia. During the Independence War, the Indonesian military led by General Soedirman was able to crush the Dutch military and their British allies. This forced them

to sit down and negotiate the best solution. Finally, the war for independence has ended with the Round Table Conference / Konferensi Meja Bundar (KMB), which was held from August 23 up to November 2, 1949, in Hague, Netherlands.

The result of the KMB was that Indonesia received its recognition of independence from the Netherlands as the United Republic of Indonesia (Republik Indonesia Serikat / RIS). As in the period of December 27, 1949, up to August 17, 1950, the United Republic of Indonesia's Constitution applied (Santoso, 2013). However, in ceding the sovereignty, the West Papua region was not included, which stated that "Regarding West Papua region, the settlement was delayed a year after the sovereignty recognition." A year later had passed, and the Netherlands broke its assurance of returning the West Papua to Indonesia. This delay resulted in Indonesia still had to bear the lingering burden of colonialism. The protracted West Papua dispute has depleted Indonesia (Epa Juliarni, 2019). Between 1950 up to 1960, Indonesia had made peaceful efforts on salvaging the West Papua. However, the peaceful effort did not obtain a positive response from the Dutch. As a result, Indonesia has been forced to choose the path of confrontation or war on salvaging West Papua.

## **2. Method**

Creswell (2009) explained three main types of research designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. The research methodology used is a qualitative method by researching historical literature books of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, particularly the struggle on salvaging West Papua, revealed in descriptive and analytical statements. The research method is a scientific way to obtain data with specific purposes and uses. Descriptive problem formulation is a problem formulation that guides researchers to explore and take pictures of social situations that further will be studied in a comprehensive, extensive, and exhaustive analysis (Sugiyono. 2012. p 209). The research characteristics using literature study are as follows; 1) The research is not directly related to informants, respondents, or primary data from the field. However, this research is related to secondary data that previously found. 2). The data found is ready to be used; the researcher does not need to find out its validity data. 3) Data obtained can be proven reliable. It is because the references used are from national history or legitimate libraries. 4) Data from the literature study is not divided into time and space dimensions. Thus, the author decided to use literature study as a data collection method because of the four reasons above. The research process begins with literature selection related to the military confrontation on salvaging West Irian. The next process is to find out the relevant objectives, which come from these literatures. Then the authors combine each of these literatures into specific clusters, following existing research objectives. Furthermore, the authors analyzed each cluster, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each literature. In the last process, the writers provide views or new ideas based on the ideas discovered during the literature study.

## **3. Results**

From the historical construction facts related to the dynamics of the struggle for West Papua, several essential things can be found as the results:

### **3.1 The Pre-Conflicts Constellation.**

On February 19, 1952, the Netherlands changed its constitution and officially incorporated West Papua into their territory (R.Z. Leirissa, 1992). Furthermore, the Netherlands replaced the name Nederland's Indies with Nederland's Nieuw Guinea. Then on October 29, 1952, the Netherlands government decided to never negotiate more with Indonesia regarding West Papua status. Moreover, the Netherlands strengthened the military bypassing the law that gave the Government authority to deploy military mobilization for depending West Papua. The peak of the policy of strengthening the military in West Papua was proven by the arrival of the Karel Doorman aircraft carrier and the troops in May 1960. By observing the Netherlands' attitude, the Indonesian Government was fearless, making West Papua return to Indonesia sovereignty. On August 17, 1960, Indonesia terminated its diplomatic relations with the Netherlands and set the military confrontation on salvaging West Papua.

Furthermore, at the United Nations General Assembly in April 1961, the Netherlands formed the Papua Council. Then, in September 1961, the Netherlands announced the Papua country establishment. The Netherlands in the XVI United Nations General Assembly in 1961 put forward a proposal for decolonization in West Papua, which was known as the "Plan of the Luns." Delivered by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns, the 'Luns Plan' called for the Netherlands withdrawal from the Region with replacement by; a commission. The commission's role was as administrative oversight and held voting to decide the final status of the Region (Rollings, 2010). The Luns plan was intended to transfer West Papua to the United Nations (UN) first. The Dutch also argued that West Papua close to the South Pacific region ethnic (Lantang & Tambunan, 2020) and promised to give independence. (Pamungkas, 2017). Such behavior of the Netherlands was clearly in contradiction by the Round Table Conference agreement. The Netherlands has acted unilaterally to determine the state and political status of West Papua. Since Indonesian diplomatic efforts were deadlocked, the military confrontation should be pursued.

### **3.2. The purpose and function of confrontation from the war perspective.**

With his book entitled "On War," Clausewitz has formulated a coherent and comprehensive war theory. The authors take the essence of what the war is all about; a duel on a large scale. War is like a duel but on an extensive scale. (Michael Howard and Peter Paret, 1976). War is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will (van der Dennen, 2005). War is simply the continuation of political relations by a mixture of other means or diplomacy by other means. Meanwhile, in his book, Sun Tzu, "The Art of War" argued that war should be carried out as "the last resort" even with the impression that Sun Tzu prefers victory without fighting. Hence to fight and conquer in all battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting (The Art of War Sun Tzu by Agopian, 1992).

From the war theories as mentioned above, it is concluded that the military confrontation on salvaging West Papua is a duel (war) on a large scale of land, sea, and air. It's the "last resort" between the Indonesian military and Netherlands military to fulfill the Will. The Authors overview on Salvaging of West Papua, from the War perspective, as follows; 1) Overview of the purpose and function of the war from the Indonesian point of view, in which the war aims on salvaging West Papua to Indonesian sovereignty. This war followed the contents of the Round Table Conference agreement held in The Hague, Netherlands, from August 23 up to November 2 1949. The function of the war for West Papua from the Indonesian side was that the war was used to strengthen the unity as a nation and to strengthen the Indonesian military. The Indonesian Navy's strength increased quickly, which was previously only covered at a moderate level and was not strong enough for cross-sea operations to Papua, moreover dispelling Netherlands forces from West Papua. In 1961, the Indonesian Navy's strength had reached the "Deterrent Effect" stage when pitted against the adversary, compared to the Netherlands' military. 2) Overview of the purpose and function of the war from the Netherlands' perspective. The war was to defend West Papua as part of the Netherlands colonialism. If the West Papua region could be maintained, it came with the natural resources that could be exploited; plantations and industries could be established to improve the Netherlands' economy and prosperity after the destruction of World War II. Meanwhile, the function of the struggle for West Papua from the Netherlands side, among others, was that the Netherlands could test its primary weapon system, namely the Karel Doorman aircraft carrier; it was proven that the ship was able to sail from Europe around the African continent to avoid the Suez Canal. The sophistication of the carrier Karel Doorman, which is capable of transporting a dozen Hawker Hunter aircraft, equipped with destroyers and tankers. The Netherlands' war function's last point was to prove that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Allies are not automatically willing to assist the Netherlands' in keeping West Papua.

### **3.3. The Causes of War Perspective.**

A military campaign is defined as prolonged military action with a regional or strategic objective, incorporating many troops as part of a greater war effort (Ahlawat et al., 2018). A general theory about the causes of war is difficult to establish due to the various factors that triggered conflict over time and space. There are two kinds of causes of war, namely the old theory and modern theory. The modern theory, which, according to a relevant author, is the theory of the causes of war due to demographic causes (Coccia & National, 2019). This theory

argues that the population of high-density states tends to pour out in countries with scarce populations. Differences in population levels cause the high demographic pressure of a country against other countries. To illustrate the importance of understanding, which was also the reason behind the conflict; It is necessary to pay attention to which aspects of a lack of commitment to an agreement, the war may last for an extended period. (Jackson & Morelli, 2011). Moreover, the small powers also have weaknesses in ensuring their territorial area's integrity, maintaining their natural resources, etc (Larosa, 2019).

During confrontation, the causes of war salvaging of West Papua, as follows; 1) The cause from the Indonesian perspective. Indonesia's peaceful diplomacy efforts to salvaging West Papua to Indonesian sovereignty, both bilaterally with the Netherlands, Tri-Lateral, and by involving UN organizations, have met an impasse. The Indonesian - Netherlands confrontation was also caused by the absence of an influential global institution to solve the West Papua issue. 2) The cause of the war from the Netherlands' Perspective is dominant due to economic and demographic reasons. The Netherlands was determined to war because it required a larger area to allow the movement of Netherlands citizens to Papua and increase their sources of income so that the people would be living auspiciously. Apart from economic reasons, the war itself was closely related to colonialism and imperialism.

#### **4. Discussion**

From the historical construction facts related to the dynamics of the struggle for West Papua, several essential which will be discussed further as the Indonesian Military Campaign Strategy, as follows;

##### **4.1 The establishment of Mandala Command.**

Observing the influence of strategic environmental developments that have emerged in the global, regional and national scope, Indonesia's defence architecture must be constructed and adapted to the patterns, forms, and nature of the threats faced (Risman et al., 2018). The art of fighting is an old accomplishment of mankind (Samuel P Huntington, 1967). On December 19, 1961, President Soekarno announced the Tri Komando Rakyat (Trikorra) operation. Trikorra marked the official start of the Indonesian military confrontation with the Netherlands to salvage West Papua to Indonesian sovereignty. This was also a warning to the Dutch that Indonesia would do anything to salvaging Papua's territory, even if it were a military confrontation. The contents of Trikorra's call; a). Aborted the formation of the Dutch-made Papuan puppet state; b). Raise the Red and White in West Papua, the homeland of Indonesia; c). Prepare for general mobilization in order to defend the independence and unity of the homeland and nation.

As the first step in implementing Trikorra was the establishment of an Operations Command, which was given the name Komando Mandala Salvaging of West Papua. As commander-in-chief was Brigadier General Soeharto, who was later promoted to Major General. As Deputy Commander I was Colonel Subono; As Deputy Commander II was Air Colonel Leo Wattimena. Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was Colonel Ahmad Tahir. The Mandala Command, which is headquartered in Makassar, has two tasks, namely; a). Planning, preparing, and carrying out military operations to return West Papua to the Republic of Indonesia; b). develop the military situation in the West Papua region following the development of the struggle in the diplomatic field so that in a short time, a *de facto* free area or elements of the Indonesian Government can be created in the West Papua region. To carry out this goal, the Mandala Command made a strategy by dividing the West Papua Salvaging operation into three phases, namely; 1) Infiltration phase. It was starting in early January 1962 until the end of 1962, by bringing in 10 companies around the target to create a *de facto* free area. 2). Exploitation Phase. Starting in early January 1963 until the end of 1963, it occupied all important enemy defence posts by carrying out open attacks on opposing military bases. 3). Consolidation Phase. It was implemented on January 1, 1964, by upholding the Republic of Indonesia's absolute power throughout West Papua. Papua has a comprehensive geographical condition and diverse topography. (Prabowo, 2020). With all the limitations that exist, must be able to find the best strategy, especially in securing sea areas (Prakoso et al., 2020).

## 4.2. Armament Mobilization

As a newly independent country, Indonesia has also become a battleground for the cultivation of influence carried out by two opposing countries after World War II, namely the United States and the Soviet Union. Conflict between the two superpowers was the main attraction of world politics at that time (Marsono et al., 2018). These two war-winning countries then compete with each other to find influence and expand hegemony throughout the world. President Soekarno shrewdly used this as a strategy to strengthen military power to return the West Papua region through a gun battle against the Dutch.

Likewise, in Indonesia's historical perspective, maritime policies have been carried out long before the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Hidayat & Sidhha, 2018). Aware of Indonesia's geography as a maritime country, President Soekarno prepared the Navy's strength that was calculated more superior to the strength of the Dutch Navy in West Papua. Even the forces of the Indonesian Navy at that time became the leading force in the Region. The Navy military equipment as a result of Soekarno's forced diplomacy included obtaining the most advanced weaponry of its time, namely; 12 Whiskey-class submarines, 1 unit Sverdlov-class heavy cruiser named KRI Irian, 8 units of light-class frigates, 8 units of Skory-class destroyers, 16 units of missile-guided Komar-class fast attack ships, 16 Kroonstad-class submarine hunters, 6 T-43 class minesweepers, 18 BK-class gunboats (Akbar, 2017 p. 82). These Whiskey-class submarines of the Soviet Union were equipped with the most advanced torpedoes of their time, which would have knocked out Dutch carriers. Type SAET-50, a new type of torpedo that can find its target. America and the Soviets only owned this technology at that time, and Indonesia was the only one outside the US and the Soviet Union that had this type of torpedo.

Mobilization of weaponry was also carried out in the air. During the preparation for the confrontation to salvaging West Papua, the Indonesian Air Force made the Indonesian Air Power the most vital force in the southern earth, namely by having; Supersonic fighter MiG-21 Fishbed 20 units, MiG-15 fighter 30 units, High subsonic MiG-17 fighter 49 units, Supersonic fighter MiG-19 10 units, Tupolev Tu-16 long-range bomber 24 units, Ilyucine Medium Bomber - 28 18 units, B-25 Mitchell 4 tactical bomber, B-26 Invader 2 tactical bomber, MI-6 9 transport helicopter, MI-4 41 ground attack helicopter helicopters (Akbar, 2017 p. 86). One of the weapons that add to Indonesia's military strength's deterrent effect is a sophisticated Soviet bomber, the Tu (Tupolev) -16 long-range strategic bomber. The number of bombers that were brought back from the Soviets itself was up to 24. Indonesia acquired these weapons to destroy the most wanted target, namely the Dutch aircraft carrier, Karel Doorman. It made Indonesia the only country in Asia with strategic bombers, apart from America, Russia, and Britain.

## 4.3. Military Confrontation

In a speech before the XV General Assembly on September 30, 1960, President Soekarno criticized the UN's inability to handle the West Papua issue and warned of imperialism and colonialism that threatened peace. Regarding this matter, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Subandrio, also stated to the UN General Assembly as follows, "The United Nations, unable, or more correctly not wanting, to lend its assistance in the solution of this problem, left my Government with no other alternative than to find this solution in our way... My Government thus embarked on a policy of total confrontation vis-à-vis the Netherlands, not only politically but also economically and militarily..." In 1961, the tension in the West Papua region increased. Indonesia began to infiltrate its guerrillas into the hinterland of West Papua and also increasingly active in building, deploying, and demonstrating its great military strength. Indonesia's continued to build up its military arsenal were seen as preparation for aggression against the Dutch position in West Irian. The Dutch then responded by sending their Carrier ship "Karel Doorman" to West Papua to defend its territory.

On December 19, 1961, President Sukarno decreed the establishment of Tri Komando Rakyat (Trikor) (Peoples Triple Command), calling for the total mobilization of the Indonesian people. The operational command of Trikor was called Komando Mandala Pembebasan Irian Barat or the Mandala Command for the liberation of

West Irian. The Mandala Command primary task was to regain control of West Irian by January 1 1963. it was to be carried out by combined land, sea, and air operations in West Irian. For Mandala Command, the main task was to plan a full-scale joint amphibious assault to seizing West Irian by conquering Biak, the enemy's main power base. This attack never eventuated due to a negotiated settlement brought about by US pressure on the Dutch. Mandala Command attributed the result to "our strong determination and drastic action taken. With the Jayawijaya Operation, we broke through the diplomatic impasse and returned West Irian to the protection of the Republic of Indonesia". The agreement by the Dutch to begin direct negotiations with Jakarta was based on a request by UN Secretary-General U Thant. The Dutch were also obviously motivated by the threat on salvaging of West Irian by the Republic of Indonesia. Notably, the Dutch also agreed to begin talks based on dropping a pre-condition regarding the Papuan right to self-determination. These developments were to set the style of confrontational tactics in future negotiations with the Dutch and indeed the US, leading to the New York Agreement of 1962.

Based on the literature, the only open battle between Indonesia and the Dutch military happened in Arafuru Sea. On January 15, 1962, three Torpedo Boats from the Indonesian Navy (ALRI), namely RI Macan Tutul, RI Harimau, and KRI Macan Kumbang began to launch routine operations by inspecting the front of the border for further plans. Before reached to hit its target, it seemed the Dutch Navy observed their movement on patrol. At 21:15 The MTB patrol with the direction of 2390 or southwest, in the sky as high as 3000 feet, two unlighted planes were seen flying across ALRI patrol formation. From his shadow could be seen clearly that it were Dutch Firefly and Neptune aircraft. Meanwhile, the radar detected two ships moving rapidly, approaching MTB with a distance of precisely seven miles. Everything was clear that the two of them were The Dutch warships because it was a moonlit night.

The situation became tense when the Dutch warship started firing flares, followed by that cannon fire fell on either side of the ALRI MTB Warshipst. Meanwhile, the Dutch planes continued to drop flares so that the atmosphere is getting brighter. Seeing the dangerous condition, Commodore Yos Soedarso immediately took over and ordered a counterattack. Because of less weaponry and position, Commodore Yos Soedarso ordered KRI Macan Tutul, the ship he was riding to maneuver in such a way, thus becoming one-only target shoot by the Dutch for the saving other ships. After going through a fierce battle, finally at 9:35 p.m. KRI Macan Tutul, which was hit by Dutch boat gunfire, began to catch fire and explode. Sometime before drowned, Commodore Yos Soedarso sent messages to the troops on another ship, namely "Fire the spirit of battle" (Sadhyoko, 2015).

#### **4.4. Political Diplomacy**

One thing that cannot be denied is the war costs and casualties (Wattimena, Reza A.A, 2018). Therefore, two things are needed. The first is a compelling reason for the existence of the military itself. The military's existence is costly and makes war seem the only way for any problems that arise. The second is a more professional military management, especially in the relationship between the military and civilians in the political diplomacy stage. Besides the practices of diplomacy, the policy of prestige uses military demonstrations as a means to achieve its purpose (Hans J. Morgenthau, 1948).

After President Soekarno announced Trikora on December 19 1961, the newly elected United States President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was worried about their allies Dutch in West Papua. Based on reports from the U-2 spy plane belonging to the United States that lurked directly in secret from the air, it appears that massive preparations have been made in the deployment of Indonesian military forces in the campaign to salvaging West Papua. This spy plane was flown from the Philippines to Darwin on a reconnaissance mission. From an altitude of 7000 feet, this spy plane managed to identify the military force prepared by Indonesia. At that time, through his observations, it proved to the Americans that Indonesia was already equipped with hundreds of advanced combat aircraft and several dozen bombers. This intelligence data was used as the basis for the United States considering to urge the Dutch to end their stance in maintaining West Papua. President Kennedy asked the UN Secretary-General U Than's help and sent his diplomat named Elsworth Bunker to approach Indonesia and Netherlands. Following the task of the UN Secretary-General (U Than), Elsworth Bunker also researched this

issue and submitted a proposal known as the "Bunker Proposal." The contents of the Bunker Proposal are as follows; The Netherlands must hand over sovereignty over West Papua to Indonesia through the United Nations within a period of no later than two years. This proposal caused a reaction from the Indonesian side, asking that the submission time be shortened. Meanwhile, the Dutch agreed through the UN, but it directly handed over to the Free Papua State.

After the Jayawijaya operation carried out the infiltration surrounding several vital cities in West Papua, the Dutch and their allies realized that Indonesia was not playing games to salvaging West Papua. On August 15, 1962, at the UN headquarters, negotiations were held, which resulted in a resolution to cease firing on August 18 1962. The Netherlands was finally willing to surrender West Papua to Indonesia through the New York Agreement. The main contents of the agreement are a). At the latest October 1 1962, the United Nations (UNTEA) interim Government will accept the handover of the Government from the Netherlands, and since then, the Red and White flag (Indonesian national flag) has been allowed to fly in West Papua. b). On December 31, 1962, the Red and White flag flew beside the UN flag. c). The repatriation of members of the Dutch civilians and military personnel had to be completed by May 1 1963. d). No later than May 1, 1963, the Indonesian Government officially accepted the West Papua government's handover from the United Nations. And e). Indonesia must accept the obligation to hold a Free Voting in West Papua, no later than the end of 1969.

Under the New York agreement, on May 1 1963, the ceremony took the place of West Papua from UNTEA to the Indonesian Government. The ceremony took place in Hollandia (Jayapura). In that ceremony, the UN flag was lowered, and a red and white flag was flown, which marked the official status of West Papua as the 26th province of Indonesia. According to the New York agreement, one of the obligations of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia is to determine the opinion of the people in West Papua no later than the end of 1969. This Act is to determine whether the people of West Papua vote, join the Republic of Indonesia, or became an independent country. The determination of people's opinions was finally carried out on March 24 up to August 4 1969. After the voting was implemented, it was found that they voted unanimously in support of joining the Indonesian archipelago, West Papua is internationally recognized as a province of Indonesia (Kuitenbrouwer, 2016). These results were brought by UN Ambassador Ortiz Sanz to be reported at the 24th UN General Assembly in November 1969. Since then, West Papua has de Jure been recognized as part of the Republic of Indonesia's Unitary State.

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