

Forum: Historical Security Council

Issue: Indonesian War of Independence

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Introduction

The Indonesian War of Independence is an ongoing armed conflict between the Dutch Empire and the Republic of Indonesia. The Perand Kemerdekaan Indonesia is considered to have started with the declaration of independence of Indonesia in 1945. The proclamation of Indonesian Independence was read on Friday, 17th August 1945 by Sukarno, the leader of the Indonesian independence movement. The Dutch Empire has been controlling the region under the name Dutch East Indies since early 19th century, and continued its administration until the Japanese Empire began its occupation of the islands in March 1942. The Japanese occupation lasted until the end of the war, September 1945, and provided grounds for the ongoing crisis. Netherlands had limited ability to protect its colonies due to German occupation during this period. The Japanese cultivated nationalist sentiment in the Indies through several educational and political programs, in addition to training Javanese and Sumatran troops and giving nationalist leaders like Sukarno a voice in regional politics. The Japanese withdrew from Indies after its defeat in the pacific, which was followed by the proclamation of independence, an emergency government and an ongoing diplomatic and military crisis.

Definition of Key Terms

Java/Javanese: The largest island of Indonesia, home to about 22000 people. Java is considered to be the economic center of Indies, with bustling port towns and trade outposts all throughout the area. Javanese is the term given to people from the island of Java.

Apartheid: Apartheid refers to a policy or system of segregation on grounds of race. It is recently put forward by the Afrikaner National Party in the Union of South Africa. The policy of the Dutch Empire in Indonesia is occasionally likened to that of Afrikaner Party's policy in South

Africa.

Merdaka: Merdaka is a word in Indonesian that refers to the state of being independent and free. It is also used colloquially to refer to being rich, prosperous and powerful. The term is increasingly used as a slogan and a symbol in pro-Independence literature.

General Overview

The National Awakening

Nationalist and pro-independence sentiment began in the region in the early 20th century, when several Marxist and Islamist parties began incorporating an independent Indonesia into their agendas and manifestos. An Indonesian cultural elite had formed due to educational policies by the Dutch, which led to greater awareness about a common national sentiment. Leading intellectuals of this elite, such as Tirta, Kartini and Semaun propagated the idea of a unified Indonesia. Among the works they produced, themes of modernity, national unity, identity and merdaka (freedom) were prevalent. The Empire, however, did not allow for free speech and freedom of assembly. Most indigenous movements for independence were thwarted and outlawed swiftly. The elite were allowed to produce works of their own, but also were required to “collaborate” with the government when it was necessary

The Dutch government installed several educational programs throughout their rule. Initially, they offered 3 years of vocational primary training for the indigenous, but beginning with the 20th century, they also founded several modern, middle-level educational facilities. The introduction of theoretical and modern education also helped build the new intellectual elite. These programs were introduced under what the Dutch called their “*Ethical Period*”, in which they were fulfilling their imperial responsibilities to the Indonesian people.

This period also saw the emergence of the first Indonesian political parties and groups. Among those founded were Sarekat Islam, which would go on to play a large role in the Independence Proclamation, and Communist Party of Indonesia, which espoused a European approach to politics. In comparison, the Communist Party of Indonesia held a much more pro-independence position than Sarekat Islam. The Communist Party attempted to overthrow Dutch rule in 1926

through grassroots uprisings in rural Indonesia, which led to the imperial forces disbanding the party, sending its leaders to exile and effectively neutralizing the Party.

Within the same framework, the Imperial government established a basic consultative parliament called the Volksraad. The Volksraad had 15 native Indonesians among its 39 members. In 1918, the Imperial forces acknowledged through the parliament that at some unspecified time in the future, Indonesians would have their own government. This acknowledgement was not followed up on in the following years.

The word “Indonesia” was coined in 1920 by an English pastoralist to generalize the culture and livelihood of the area. The newly cultivated cultural elite of Indonesia, especially prominent nationalists, quickly picked up on the term. Prior to the usage of this term, a collective usage of Balinese, Javanese and Sumatran was present.

1927 saw the founding of Sukarno’s Indonesian National Party. The INP became the first primarily independence-focused party.

The Dutch Response

While the Dutch had made steps towards a freer Indonesia, the rise of the nationalist movements in the 20s was considered a significant problem by the government. The government arrested Sukarno in 1929 and banned the Indonesian National Party. They continued to place similar restrictive rules on pro-independence parties and succeeded, to some degree, to subdue the movement. The nationalist sentiment among the educated elite did not decrease throughout the 30s, however.

The Second World War

7 years ago, the Dutch themselves found themselves invaded by Führer Adolf Hitler’s forces. Following the invasion, they fell too weak to sustain their colonies in the Indies. The Dutch government of Indonesia continued its rule until in 1942, the Japanese Empire invaded the archipelago. The government did not have the military prowess to fend off an invasion by Japan, and after about a month of fighting, they surrendered, and thus ended 300 years of colonial rule

in the Indies. Under the Japanese rule, the independence movement flourished.

The Japanese cultivated nationalist sentiment in the Indies through several educational and political programs, in addition to training Javanese and Sumatran troops and giving nationalist leaders like Sukarno a voice in regional politics. On 7 September 1944, when Japan's soon-to-come loss became apparent, Japanese Prime Minister Koiso promised independence for Indonesians. These announcements made it clear for the nationalist movement that with the departure of the Japanese, they would finally achieve their decades long goal.

Empire of Japan withdrew from Indies after its defeat in the Pacific, which was followed by the proclamation of independence, an emergency government and an ongoing diplomatic and military crisis.

Proclamation of Independence

In 17 August 1945, two days after Japan surrendered, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, his lieutenant, proclaimed Indonesian independence and the governing body of Sukarno's party (which now was considered the leading body of the independence movement) elected Sukarno as president and Hatta as Vice-President. The news regarding independence was delivered to the outer islands, which followed a shift in the views of the general public towards republicanism.

The Japanese were bound by the agreement they signed to both withdraw from Indonesia and to maintain order; which they resolved by leaving their ammunition to Japanese-trained Indonesian troops. What followed the Japanese withdrawal was a rapid increase in local revolutionary cells promoting independence. By the end of the year, almost all large port cities had their own militias. The pro-independence cells established then are called *pemudas*.

Pemudas promote a sacrificial ideology, in which they proclaim under their custom oath that they would die for "full freedom". Pemudas hunt down groups and peoples they consider to be "spies" and quickly exterminate them.

In the August of 1946, Sukarno and his party established a central government, and quickly adopted a constitution which had been drafted during Japanese occupation. The Central Indonesian National Committee, which had previously controlled the revolution, was

incorporated into the government.

Support for the central government is fractured. Central Javanese provinces are staunchly pro-independence and republican, while outer islands are reluctant to support the new government.

In early 1946, when the Netherlands was reforming its military, received a ten million dollar loan from the US towards claiming the archipelago back. Several allied states also moved towards re-establishing dominance in the area, with Indonesia being put under the jurisdiction of Admiral Earl Mountbatten. Dutch generals returned to enclaves established by the allies. The Dutch army quickly moved towards subduing revolutionary activity in the enclaves and previously Japanese-navy controlled areas. By the end of 1946, two divisions of the Australian Army had taken Eastern Indonesia under its control.

In October of 1945, the Japanese tried to reintroduce their forces in some of the eastern Indonesian towns and cities. In Java, recently established republican police was killed and disbanded by Japanese forces, especially in Bandung. Two weeks later, the British invaded the city. Recently, in March 1946, the Javanese republican forces burned down several districts of Bandung in an effort to stall the progress of British forces.

Battle of Surabaya

The city of Surabaya was one of the bloodiest of battles between republicans and the Allied forces. The pemuda in Surabaya was especially roused up during the reclaiming of lands by the Japanese, and in the autumn of 1945, they mobbed up the locals and killed European and pro-Dutch civilians and military forces. British reinforcement followed, and the city was soon captured as republican forces were both overwhelmed and neutralized in thousands. However, reports of pro-independence mobs revolting in the countrysides and other major cities increased following the war.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The Pemuda

The Pemuda are the republican paramilitary group that act as the de facto police force of the Indonesian Central Government. Their leading cadres are largely made up of the troops trained by the departing Japanese forces, and their ammunition was collected from deserted Japanese bases. They are not completely dependent on the central republican government, mainly since they adapt their actions and agenda based on local conditions. The pemuda is made up of different localized factions, and thus they are not particularly organized in an army sense.

Sukarno & Hatta Government

Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta make up the ideological and political leaders of the Indonesian independence movement. Especially after the independence proclamation, they have been positioned at the center of the Indonesian struggle. Sukarno is the current president of Indonesia, and Mohammad Hatta is the vice president. The government leads certain factions of the pemuda, as well as a mediator between the Allied forces and local mobs when they are not in control of the military action.

Allied Forces & Netherlands Indies Civil Administration

The Allied Forces returned to Indonesia following the defeat of the Japanese, and quickly started occupying towns and cities across the islands. The British are an especially strong force in the Eastern Islands, and the newly established Indies Civil Administration of Netherlands have started to maintain strong presence in Jakarta, the most populous city of Indonesia, especially after defeating the republican forces during a bloody recapture of the city.

Timeline of Events

May 1908	Day of National Awakening
1920	The word "Indonesia" comes into everyday use.
March 1927	Sukarno establishes the Indonesian National Party.
June 1942	The Japanese Invasion of Indonesia and end of Dutch rule
7 September 1944	The Japanese Prime Minister promises independence for Indonesian
17 August 1945	Independence Proclamation by Sukarno and Hatta
Autumn 1945	The Battle of Surabaya
August 1946	The Establishment of the Central Government and the Adoption of the Constitution
Autumn 1946	The British and Allied Forces capture the eastern Islands

UN Involvement

The United Nations is yet to take action on the issue of Indonesian independence. There have been an attempt by the British to broker an agreement between the Dutch and the Indonesian, but this is not yet brought before the United Nations Security Council, which is currently in its second year. The attempt is further outlined in the Possible Solutions section.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The earliest reconciliatory attempt by the Dutch was undertaken in the 20s, when proto-parliaments were established at a local level with considerable Indonesian participation. The Ethical Period oversaw many improvements on behalf of the Indonesian side, all of which

are outlined in the Background Information part.

Currently, as death tolls continue to rise due to battles, occupations and skirmishes all over the archipelago, attempts to resolve the issue are yet to emerge.

Possible Solutions

The most promising solution that appears on the horizon is an agreement that is to be brokered by the British. Currently, the Australian diplomatic forces that are deployed at the area are conducting talks with the Netherlands and Indonesia. The aim of this agreement is to ensure that the Dutch side recognize the Indonesian Republic as the authority over the major islands of Java, Madura and Sumatra. The Central National Committee of Indonesia aims to amend the agreement so as to ensure further Eastern territory. The Dutch side have not lifted their naval blockades and the conflict continues. Diplomatic intervention by the UNSC is likely to prove helpful for the situation, as neither sides are willing to accept the agreement as it is today.

A diplomatic intervention would most likely prevent the Dutch to pursue further action to reclaim their administrative powers, as well as making sure the pro-Independence movement doesn't win momentum in the absence of the Empire. Meanwhile, rural areas that lack proper infrastructure and vulnerable to invasion must be supported to prevent the pemuda in gaining further power in the area. Furthermore, local pemuda should be involved in possible negotiations as well, but this should be brokered carefully as this might be seen as ignoring the authority of the Sukarno government. The Sukarno government should respond positively to attempts at finding a common ground. Current situation in Jakarta also requires response. Occasional outbreaks of communal and civilian violence cause fiscal and political harm and play into the societal fault lines. Ensuring that the Sukarno government has at least minimal diplomatic presence in the area should be enough to quell nationalist discomfort.

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