

State and Revolution in the Making of the Indonesian Republic

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Abstract

While much ink has been spilled in the effort of explaining the Indonesian National Revolution, major questions remain unanswered. What was the true character of the Indonesian revolution, and when did it end? This article builds a case for viewing Indonesia's revolution from a new perspective. Based on a revisionist reading of classic texts on the Revolution, I argue that the idea of a singular, elite-driven and Java-centric "revolution" dismisses the central meaning of the revolution itself, as it was simultaneously national and regional in scope, political and social in character, and it spanned more than the five years as it was previously examined.

Keywords: Revolution, regionalism, elite-driven, Java-centric

Introduction

In his speech to Indonesian *Marhaenist* youth leaders in front of the *Istana Negara* on December 20, 1966, President Soekarno claimed that “[The Indonesian] revolution is not over!”¹ Soekarno's proposition calls attention to at least two different perspectives on revolution. On the one hand, the Indonesian discourse of a continuous revolution resonates with other permanent leftist revolutions elsewhere, such as the Cultural Revolution in Maoist China, Cuban Revolution in Castroist Cuba, or the Bolivarian

¹ Soekarno, *Revolusi belum selesai: kumpulan pidato Presiden Soekarno, 30 September 1965, pelengkap Nawaksara*, ed. Budi Setiyono and Bonnie Triyana, Cetakan I (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2014), 759.

Revolution in contemporary Venezuela.² On the other hand, revolution as a political concept in Indonesia has a specific historical trajectory that needs to be reexamined. Scholars and politicians have grappled with the question of when the Indonesian Revolution really began and end quite differently. Soekarno's point becomes interesting when we realize that the Indonesian National Revolution ends in 1966, when he was overthrown by Soeharto's New Order. This essay argues that the fall of Soekarno's regime brought the Indonesian Revolution to its ultimate endpoint.

Soekarno's point of view about the continuous revolution runs counter to the views of several Indonesianists—such as George McTurnan Kahin and Benedict Anderson—who argued that the Indonesian National Revolution ended after the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch in 1950, or even before. In the epilogue to his *Java in a Time of Revolution* (1972), Anderson lamented that “the Indonesian revolution never became more than a ‘national revolution’; it ended in 1949, when the Dutch transferred legal sovereignty over the archipelago to Indonesian hands [...] what it might have been can only be glimpsed in the short-lived isolated social revolutions in the provinces, and in the memories of some of its survivors.”³ The transfer of sovereignty, however, did not automatically lead to political stabilization, territorial consolidation, bureaucratic centralization, or military professionalism. Anthony Reid writes that “the correct analogy [for the Indonesian revolution] is the French revolution rather than the Russian,” where there was “a profound breaking with the *ancien régime* without the guiding hand of a disciplined party intent on power.”⁴ What, then, was the true character of this so-called Indonesian revolution? Did it end in 1949 as Anderson suggested, or did the revolution remained incomplete until the late 1960s?

Sociologist Theda Skocpol proposes that social revolutions are “rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.”⁵ Skocpol's definition of a social revolution indicates that “social revolutions should be analyzed from a structural perspective, with special attention devoted to international contexts and to developments at home and abroad that affect the breakdown of the state organizations of old regimes and the buildup of new, revolutionary state organizations.”⁶ In other words, despite (or in addition to) the ostentatiously liberating, equalizing, and fraternizing propensity of a revolution, it is essentially a movement towards political and social change, enabled by a governmental *status quo*, towards a new form of state and social relations. That being said, the revolution itself ends when a new regime manages to properly control the state, stabilize its institutions, and provide the basis for the continuity of normal political, social, and economic processes.⁷

² Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Lilian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Richard Gott, *Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2011).

³ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946*, 1st Equinox ed (Jakarta: Equinox Pub, 2006), 409.

⁴ Anthony Reid, *To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), viii.

⁵ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Canto classics edition, Canto Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.

⁶ Skocpol, 5.

⁷ Arthur L. Stinchcombe, “Ending Revolutions and Building New Governments,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 49–73.

Both Anderson and Reid represents the classic definition of a “national revolution,” which is the emergence of a new nation-state through anti-colonial struggle. Skocpol’s definition, however, calls for a different focus on the idea of a “social revolution,” in which old institutions were dismantled and replaced with new ones, which in turn consolidated new social relations.

Based on these definitions, this paper will build a case for a new perspective on the Indonesian National Revolution by viewing it as a national and social revolution. Despite its ebbs and flows, Indonesia’s revolution spanned more than the five years that were widely argued by historians.⁸ Just as the French Revolution (1789-1799) and its subsequent “revolutions” have been causally linked to the *coup d’etat* of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in 1851 and the February and October Revolutions (1917) in Russia were perceived as direct predecessors to the rise of the Stalinist regime in the 1920s, it is imperative for us to question the discursive political concept of the Indonesian National Revolution and its subsequent relationship with its actual practice.⁹ To phrase the question differently, did the Indonesian National Revolution truly end with the country’s *de jure* independence from the Netherlands in 1949, or did it end with the rise of the authoritarian developmental state under Soeharto in 1966? It is only by considering the revolution as a *longue durée* process, we can comprehend Soekarno’s Old Order *vis-à-vis* Soeharto’s New Order as a single historical continuity.

In this essay, I will examine the concept of an Indonesian National Revolution in Indonesian historiography, and how this discursive historical concept was related to the reality of the so-called Revolution. I argue that the idea of a Java-centric Indonesian National Revolution solely driven by nationalistic elites through *perjuangan* (military struggle) or *diplomasi* (diplomacy) efforts dismisses the central significance of the concept of the Revolution itself. In a similar vein to Francois Furet, who argued that the French Revolution only ended with the advent of the French Third Republic in 1871, this paper argues that the Indonesian National Revolution was simultaneously national and regional in scope, political and social in character, and spanned more than the five years as it was previously examined.¹⁰

The Indonesian National Revolution and its Historiography

In engaging the events of the Indonesian National Revolution of 1945-1950, Indonesianists have been affected by overall trends in Southeast Asian historiography. These trends are reflected in two different approaches that historians of the Indonesian revolution have taken, namely those that tend to emphasize general trends in the changes and continuities in social and political structures¹¹ and those who

⁸ According to most historians, the Indonesian National Revolution happened in 1945 and ended in 1949. This is most prominently argued by Anthony Reid in his *Revolusi Nasional Indonesia [Indonesian National Revolution]* See Anthony Reid, *Revolusi Nasional Indonesia [Indonesian National Revolution]* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1996).

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The ancien régime and the French Revolution* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2008); Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1990); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 4th edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ See François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge; New York: Paris: Cambridge University Press; Editions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1981).

¹¹ This tradition is exemplified by the works of Harry J. Benda who was based in Yale University. Another example is the venerable Chinese-Indonesian historian Onghokham, who also graduated from Yale. Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. Van Hoeve, 1958); Onghokham, “The Inscrutable and the Paranoid: An

highlight particularities in historicizing political and social institutions.¹² In 1961, there emerged another line of decolonial thought, influenced by historian John R.W. Smail, who argues for a shift in perspective in viewing historical processes from a Eurocentric to an “autonomous” one.¹³ Smail’s proposition of an autonomous history subsequently characterized and shaped the emerging historiography of Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and thus the Indonesian National Revolution.

Structuralists such as Harry J. Benda examine the importance of social, economic, and political structures and relationships in understanding history.¹⁴ Here, as one of the first historians writing about the revolution, George McTurnan Kahin exemplifies an early answer to Benda’s call for a structural analysis on the causes of the revolution. For Kahin, the Indonesian revolution—a relatively new phenomenon for its time—was enabled by the economic, social, and technological forces of modernity conditioned by the experience of colonialism in the twentieth century.¹⁵

Kahin emphasizes the importance of the elite bourgeois Indonesian nationalists who emerged under Dutch rule in the 1930s as the main actors of the revolution, thus positing that nationalism in itself is a contemporary phenomenon in 1945.¹⁶ For Kahin, the conclusion of the Revolution was evident: the achievement of political independence through the new Indonesian republican state, the enabling of social mobility through elections and political representation, diminishing economic inequalities, and so on.¹⁷

Kahin’s account was later supplemented by Benedict Anderson’s seminal work which emphasizes how certain cultural continuities within the revolutionary mass base actually enabled the outbreak of the revolution. Anderson argues that, rather than the bourgeois nationalists, it was the ideal of the youth (*pemuda*) that drove the revolution.¹⁸ While the cultural category of the traditional Javanese *pemuda* seemed “timeless,” Anderson rightly noted that *pemuda* ideals were activated by the Japanese occupation of Indonesia during the Second World War, only to explode after Japanese

Investigation into the Sources of the Brotdiningrat Affair,” in *Southeast Asian Transitions: Approaches through Social History*, 1978; Ongkhokham, “The Jago in Colonial Java, Ambivalent Champion of the People,” in *History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia*, ed. Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe, Senri Ethnological Studies (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984).

¹² This tradition is represented by the historians based in Cornell University, such as George McTurnan Kahin, Benedict Anderson, and Takashi Shiraishi. See George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Studies on Southeast Asia, no. 35 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2003); Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*; Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926*, Asia, East by South (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

¹³ John R.W. Smail, “On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia,” in *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John R.W. Smail*, ed. John R.W. Smail and Laurie J. Sears, Monograph, no. 11 (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 39–70.

¹⁴ Harry J. Benda, “The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3, no. 1 (March 1962): 112.

¹⁵ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 1.

¹⁶ According to Kahin, Indonesian nationalism was enabled by religious and linguistic homogeneity and the development of a vernacular press, radio, communications and transportations. Kahin, 38–40.

¹⁷ Kahin, 471–79.

¹⁸ *Pemuda* (Javanese for youth) is an imagined revolutionary spirit that has its roots in the traditional Javanese culture linked to revolutionary fervor. For Anderson, this youthful spirit was activated by the Japanese occupation, only to be unleashed during the *status quo* after the Japanese surrender in 1945. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, 1–6.

surrender and the Indonesian declaration of independence in August 1945.¹⁹ Consequently, in contrast to Kahin’s structuralist approach, Anderson provided an account that highlights a structural yet ideational factor that explained the revolution, embodied by the masses of urban and rural youth fighting against their Dutch and British enemies.

The Kahinist and Andersonian view on the Revolution was characterized by its excessive emphasis on the Republic’s main island of Java. While Anderson claims that, through the diminishing of *pemuda* ideals after 1946 and the transfer of legal sovereignty from the Dutch in 1949, “the revolution never became more than a ‘national revolution’;” this claim does not hold true for long.²⁰ With the emergence of historical works focusing on the regional dynamics of the revolution, such as those by Anthony Reid, Anton Lucas, John Smail, and William Frederick, it became clear that a social revolution did happen in the tumultuous period of Indonesian history. In his treatment of revolutionary North Sumatra, for instance, Reid examines the process of social revolution, which was characterized by spontaneous violence, regicide, and dispossession of power from the local aristocrats.²¹ In the revolutionary spirit of breaking down with the past, Reid notes that “the parallel hierarchies” of the *sultans*, *rajas* and *datuks* with the Dutch Assistant-Residents and *controleurs* were singlehandedly replaced with a “uniform administration of Resident, District heads, and subdistrict heads”.²²

Social revolutionary patterns were also prevalent in the Javanese regions. In his examination of the Javanese *pasisir* (Northern Coast) areas of Brebes, Tegal, and Pemalang, historian Anton Lucas notes that the foundational elements of a social revolution were widely evident, from the “redistribution of wealth to the masses [to] the overthrow of old elites—village heads, *wedanas*, regents, and other traditional leaders that were considered as too harsh towards the people and loyal to the Dutch and the Japanese.”²³ Furthermore, in his discussion of the West Javanese city of Bandung, Smail characterizes the conditions “in Bandung as in most of Java and Sumatra, was one of extreme disorder, even anarchy; in these conditions the old order of Netherlands Indies society, already modified by the Japanese interregnum, was broken down and its pieces began to form into a new Indonesian order.”²⁴ In a similar note, Frederick examined the Eastern Javanese port city of Surabaya, only to find that the revolutionary movement was strategically inspired by Indonesian nationalists of the prewar *pergerakan* and “founded upon a leadership of highly educated youth and a followership of both educated and *kampung* middle class youth.”²⁵ A similar pattern

¹⁹ Jeff Goodwin also made a comparative argument with a similar vein in his book *No Other Way Out* (2001). Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*; Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103–5.

²⁰ Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*, 409.

²¹ Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 252–53.

²² Reid, 253.

²³ Anton E. Lucas, *Peristiwa tiga daerah: revolusi dalam revolusi*, Cet. I (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1989), 294.

²⁴ John R. W. Smail, *Bandung in the Early Revolution 1945-1946: A Study in the Social History of the Indonesian Revolution*, 1st Equinox ed (Jakarta: Equinox Pub, 2009), 11.

²⁵ The *kampung* is an autonomous, quasi-governmental village-level administrative unit found in many Indonesian municipalities during the period of Dutch colonization. The *kampung* is practically *terra incognita* for the NEI colonial administration as it lays beyond the reach of Dutch *ambtenaren*

was also observed in other areas such as West Sumatra and South Sulawesi, albeit with different sociological constituencies as Islamic *ulamas* and aristocratic *rajas* were also part of local elites in both areas.²⁶ Consequently, Reid, Lucas, Smail, and Frederick pointed out that, by taking a regional perspective, the Indonesian National Revolution ceases to be a purely national revolution, but rather simultaneously a national and social revolution.

Another approach is to examine how the revolutions shaped Indonesian social institutions, such as the armed forces. In their treatments of the history of the Indonesian army, Harold Crouch, Rudolf Mrázek, and Ulf Sundhaussen have examined how the centripetal forces of Javanese nationalism and centrifugal tendencies imposed by local particularities have shaped the Revolution. In explaining the rise of military authoritarian rule in 1966, Crouch argued that the Army's revolutionary origins and non-military activities enabled the politicization of the officer corps, simultaneously enabling army officers to acquire extramilitary interests and leading towards the military's participation in the political and economic elite of the 1950s-1960s that were threatened by Communists and Soekarno's chaos-inducing policies.²⁷ This line of argument is extended by Sundhaussen, who argues that military intervention in Indonesian politics, rather than purely motivated by military officers' personal interests, was both a response towards civilian meddling in military affairs and the incapacity of civilian leadership in managing the country.²⁸ Indeed, Indonesia in the 1950s-1960s has been characterized as a time when the nation-state successfully implemented parliamentary democracy and mass parties, although the experiment itself ended with failure under the burden of economic mismanagement and the threat of disintegration, paving the way for the military to fill this gap on governance.²⁹

The "pragmatic" arguments on the origins of military politics posited above is supplemented by Mrázek in trying to understand the interior "logic" of the army officers. In explaining how American military cooperation programs failed in Indonesia during the 1950s, Mrázek refers to the inherent fragmentation of the Indonesian army that had its roots in the revolution. Like Anderson,³⁰ Mrázek argues that the *jago-satria*³⁰

(administrators), and perceived as ethnically homogenous, religiously syncretic, and materially deprived. William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), 11–20, 294.

²⁶ Audrey Kahin, "West Sumatra: Outpost of the Republic," in *Regional Dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: Unity from Diversity*, ed. Audrey Kahin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Barbara Sillars Harvey, "South Sulawesi: Puppets and Patriots," in *Regional Dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: Unity from Diversity*, ed. Audrey Kahin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

²⁷ Harold A. Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, 1st Equinox ed (Jakarta: Equinox Pub, 2007), 22.

²⁸ Ulf Sundhaussen, *The Road to Power: Indonesian Military Politics, 1945-1967* (Kuala Lumpur; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), ix–x.

²⁹ Herbert Feith argues that during the period of "Liberal" or "Constitutional" Democracy in Indonesia (1950-1957), the Republican leadership were divided into two types: the "administrators" and the "solidarity-makers." The former category are comprised of "men with administrative, legal, technical, and foreign language skills," such as the Dutch-educated pre-war elites such as Sjahrir and Hatta. The latter category includes those possessing "integrative skills[.]" such as "skills in cultural mediation, symbol manipulation, and mass organization." An example of this type of leader is Soekarno. This contentious division, rooted in the revolution, is at the core of the inefficiencies and failures of the Indonesian state of the 1950s. Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, 1st Equinox ed (Jakarta: Equinox Pub, 2007), 24–25.

³⁰ Like the *pemuda*, the *jago* and *satria* are two familiar concepts in Javanese traditional culture that represents an ideal of soldiership. The *jago*, literally the "fighting cock," is a "dynamic youngster to whom struggle is passion and obsession, who is fighting on every possible and impossible occasion

ideal representative of the military's *weltanschauung*, was rooted in Javanese cultural heritage, forcibly suspended by Dutch and Japanese colonial rule, and emerged during the revolution as the ideological basis of the military's role in politics, which culminated in Soeharto's New Order regime (1966-1998).³¹

Towards a Reconfiguration of the Historiography of the Indonesian National Revolution

Our discussion of the literature of the Indonesian National Revolution has clearly underlined that the Indonesian struggle for independence in 1945-1950 was a national and social revolution. The question of whether the revolution ended in 1950—during the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch in the Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Conference (RTC) of 1949—lays open to interpretation. Just as the Kahinian and Andersonian Java-centric and elite-focused assumptions argued by Kahin and Anderson subsequently collapse as regional analyses emerged in the historiography, the idea of a singular, Indonesian National Revolution that lasted only until the 1950s also collapses if examined through a wider angle of vision.

Through an overview of 1950s and 1960s Indonesia, I posit that the Revolution—identified by the dominance of revolutionary fervor in policy-making—ended only when Soeharto took over power through a military coup in 1966. In this section, I address two elements of a social revolution that have remained even beyond the previously assigned timespan of 1945-1950 in Indonesia, namely political and economic elements. One major exclusion from this argument is the cultural elements, to which we will turn lastly in this section.

Regarding political conditions, the situation in 1950s-1960s Indonesia was far from stable. M.C. Ricklefs has pointed out that “the history of the nation since 1950 has been partly a story of the failure of successive leadership groups to meet the high expectations generated by the successful struggle for independence.”³² While the RTC Agreements cemented the formation of Indonesian sovereignty that would be recognized on the world stage, it is clear that the Dutch-Indonesian agreements merely eliminated external threats against the nascent nation-state and did nothing toward stabilizing domestic and regional conflicts.

Domestic contestations of power between political parties, armed groups, and secessionist movements remained salient in the archipelago even after 1950, represented by the power struggle between the “administrators” and the “solidarity-makers” in the military, bureaucracy, and the political parties.³³ Political instability is represented by the frequent changes of parliamentary cabinets: from December 1949 to April 1957, there were seven cabinets in power. The country's top political party, the Islamic *Masyumi* and its runner-up, the *PNI* (Partai Nasional Indonesia, Nationalist

causing a strange mixture of unrest, benevolence, fear, and pride among the Javanese.” The other concept, the *satria*, is related to the Hindu warrior caste: the “enfant terrible of the elite, and, at the same time, its main defender, an indispensable attribute of the ruler's or nation's greatness and independence.” See Onghokham, “The Jago in Colonial Java, Ambivalent Champion of the People.”

³¹ Rudolf Mrázek, *The United States and the Indonesian Military 1945-1965. Volume 1.*, *Dissertationes Orientales*, No.39 (Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1978), 176.

³² M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 4th ed (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 273.

³³ Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, 25–26.

Party), were not able to effectively consolidate its control over the government due to this constant instability.

According to Feith, the cabinets of Hatta, Natsir, Sukiman, and Wilopo (1949-1953) that were concerned with establishing order and a rule-based state-society relation, were challenged by former revolutionaries “who sought to participate in radical nationalist politics in order to achieve personal integration such as they had experienced in the Revolution itself.”³⁴ When these “solidarity-makers” took over, such as during the cabinets of Ali Sastroamidjojo and Burhanuddin Harahap, their revolutionary approach to politics also failed to get things done. Furthermore, all of these political problems happened concurrently with armed rebellions and uprisings—mostly related to regional autonomy and army demobilization—in the regions.³⁵

The economic conditions of Indonesia during the 1950s-1960s were substantially affected by the revolutionary tone of politics that were still predominant in the country. Economic historian Anne Booth has pointed out that while the Natsir cabinet (September 1950-March 1951) did “achieve some progress in improving administration [and] establishing economic growth” through tax policy reforms, it failed to foster sufficient political support. In general, this was “to be the fate of most of the cabinets of the 1950-1957 period; they were in office for too short a period to be able to implement effective economic policies, even where there was a clear vision about what policies were needed.”³⁶ According to Booth, per capita GDP during much of the 1950s was lower than the Dutch period before the war, and inflation was rampant. Both of these were influenced by high state expenditure and counterintuitive monetary and fiscal policies, such as the implementation of high trade tariffs in a country reliant on raw materials exports.³⁷ Furthermore, the inflationary effects of high tariffs were exacerbated by the maintaining of an artificially high exchange rate of the Indonesian rupiah, thus encouraging the proliferation of black markets and smuggling, which is a familiar feature for those who survived the revolution.³⁸

The plummeting value of the Rupiah, the diminishing per capita income, and the incompetency of economic policymakers were further aggravated by the continuously increasing size of the bureaucracy resulting in the continuous increase of state expenditure. Under the revolutionary logic of egalitarianism, the government provided civil service positions to both former federal officials and guerilla fighters. Unbridled expansion of the governmental sector led to the swelling numbers of bureaucrats compared to the Dutch era : in 1930, the colonial civil service wielded approximately 145.000 personnel, while in 1950, the rank-and-file of the Indonesian bureaucracy

³⁴ Feith, 556.

³⁵ This includes the Westerling Affair / *Angkatan Perang Ratu Adil* Uprising in Bandung, West Java (January 1950), Andi Aziz Affair in South Celebes (March-August 1950), Republic of South Moluccas rebellion in the Moluccas (July-November 1950), The Kahar Muzakkar Affair in South Celebes (August 1953), the *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* (Islamic State/Islamic Army of Indonesia) rebellion in West Java, South Celebes, and Aceh (August 1949-1957). See Saleh As'ad Djamhari, *Ichthisar Sedjarah Perjuangan ABRI (1945-Sekarang) [An Overview of the History of the Struggle of the ABRI (1945-Now)]* (Jakarta: Pusat Sejarah ABRI, Departemen Pertahanan-Kemaman [Centre for the History of the Armed Forces, Department of Defence and Security], 1971), 65–75.

³⁶ Anne Booth, *Economic Change in Modern Indonesia: Colonial and Post-Colonial Comparisons* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 40.

³⁷ Booth, 42–44.

³⁸ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 274.

boasted more than 807.000 personnel, leading to inefficiency, low salaries, and maladministration.³⁹

The emergence of Soekarno's Guided Democracy (1957-1966) did not help much in terms of the national economy. Here again, the revolutionary logic predominated over properly calculated policymaking. When Soekarno announced its *Konsepsi* (Concept) in 1957 and issued the Presidential Decree of July 1959, it is clear that the political impasse created by parliamentary politics was its primary target. This effort on centralization under Soekarno, however, led to a negative response from the regions, eventually culminating with the PRRI-Permesta rebellion in Sumatra and Celebes, a rebellion that was only solved by dispatching Army battalions to the regions.⁴⁰

The shift from political to military confrontations during the early period of Guided Democracy subsequently became the basis for the revival of Soekarno's "revolutionary state" in domestic politics and foreign policy—exemplified by the West New Guinea Campaign (acquired by Indonesia in 1962) and the *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) against Malaysia in 1963.⁴¹ Consequently, in managing these external conflicts, Soekarno relied heavily on the military, and also the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI) as his revolutionary mass base.⁴² However, economic conditions only became worse under the expanding military expenditures of the Guided Democracy period, a trend that was only reversed well after the advent of the New Order in 1966.⁴³ With similar consolidating effects as Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup* in 1851, nominal political, social, and economic stability was only achieved with the advent of Soeharto's military dictatorship in 1966, albeit with more massive human costs: Soekarno was deposed, the PKI was banned and its sympathizers were massacred.

A Cultural Approach towards the Indonesian National Revolution

If the end of the military phase of the Indonesian National Revolution in 1950 did not result in immediate political and economic consolidation, what was its immediately observable effect in Indonesian society? Henk Schulte Nordholt points out that, during the 1950s, "the debate about Indonesia's national culture [oscillated] between an outwardly oriented modernity and an inward-looking nativism," which was exemplified in the discussion on culture precipitated by organizations such as Lekra⁴⁴ and the newspaper *Mimbar Indonesia*.⁴⁵ These discussions in the public sphere, debating the

³⁹ Ricklefs, 275.

⁴⁰ Ricklefs, 298–300.

⁴¹ According to Armstrong, the "revolutionary state" is defined as not only a state undergoing a revolution internally, but also "one whose relations with other states are revolutionary because it stands, in some sense, for fundamental change in the principles on the basis of which states conduct their relations with each other." While Soekarno's foreign policy is based on its anti-colonial ideals, its predecessors during the Liberal Democracy period also shaped its foreign policy around the revolutionary ideal. J. D. Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

⁴² Nicholas Tarling, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, UK New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 105.

⁴³ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 304–11.

⁴⁴ Lekra is the PKI-affiliated *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, Institute of People's Culture.

⁴⁵ Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, Modernity, and the Post-Colonial State," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde* 167, no. 4 (2011): 389.

terms of Indonesia's progress, development, and modernity in the revolutionary language of Bahasa Indonesia, were derived from questions that emerged before and after the revolution. Consider, for instance, Soekarno's speech in 1959, where he claims that "the spirit, the principles, and the objective of the Revolution which we launched in 1945 had now been infected by "dangerous diseases and dualisms":

"dualism in men's perspective on society—a just and prosperous society or a capitalist society; dualism between 'the Revolution is over' and 'the Revolution is not yet completed'; and dualism as regarding democracy: Shall democracy serve the People, or the People democracy?..."⁴⁶

These kinds of discourses about the emergence of a culturally appropriate political consciousness penetrated the body politic even further than the elitist parliamentary debates that took place in Jakarta regarding military authority or the merits of fiscal policy. Indeed, Nordholt points out that these ideas of nationalist modernity and progress were evident in the regional cities such as Medan (North Sumatra).⁴⁷ I agree with Nordholt that the immediate, finished "product" of the Indonesian National Revolution is cultural, that is, the ideological discourse of an Indonesian nation-state: "both nation and state were very much associated with modernity... Revolution and modernity, mediated through an urban elite and represented by the state—that was what national culture was about."⁴⁸ The consciousness fostered by this emerging national culture, a phenomenon that was never as total as it was after the end of the "armed revolution" in 1949, led to the birth of a true national consciousness in Indonesia. The rise of this national consciousness, however, were not accompanied by the appearance of strong institutions or a reestablishment of social order, as both of these are inherently essential elements of revolutionary politics. Consequently, it was only in terms of cultural factors that the Revolution was simultaneously in progress and already complete.

Conclusion

From our discussion above, it is clear that the Indonesian National Revolution is by no means "singular." The revolution is simultaneously political and social in character, national and regional in scope, and spanning a longer period of time, from 1945 to 1966. While revolutionary warfare ended after the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch in 1950, revolutionary rhetoric remained in the forefront of Indonesian politics throughout the 1950s-1960s. In terms of economics, a similar pattern is evident, as the war economy inherited from the days of the revolution remained pertinent until the late 1960s. All of these were evident in Soekarno's approach towards political rule, in which he relies on the maintenance of revolutionary fervor through rhetoric and charisma in leading Indonesian society towards modernity, ultimately leading to the confrontational foreign policy used in the military campaigns against the Dutch in Papua (1961-1962) and *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia (1963-1966). Contentious politics and domestic social movements shaped mobilizations for war and political conflict in the

⁴⁶ Cited in Tarling, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, 4:105.

⁴⁷ Nordholt, "Indonesia in the 1950s: Nation, Modernity, and the Post-Colonial State," 391–92.

⁴⁸ Nordholt, 394.

aftermath of the war; in turn the long term effects of war and revolution informed the values and stances of peace time.⁴⁹

It was only after Soeharto's *coup* in 1965 that the country was led into a completely different direction from Soekarno's revolutionary approach. Some of the first policies implemented by the Soeharto government was to end *Konfrontasi*, establish domestic political stability, and to rebuild the economy through technocratic rule.⁵⁰ This path was taken as a response toward the excessive political and economic mismanagement under the pressure of revolutionary politics during the Revolution, Liberal Democracy, and Guided Democracy periods.

Ironically, the revolution was also the primary cause for the formation of an Indonesian national culture. Revolutionary consciousness, as it was in Indonesia and other places, imposed itself upon the people as a form of modernity. This national idea of modernity subsequently shaped the worldviews of the various groups and actors of the Revolution, and it was from this consciousness that the society has managed to influence and shape the form of the state and how it relates to them.

If revolutionary politics remained pertinent in Indonesia well after the actual fighting ended in 1950, then the state itself also remained in a revolutionary and politically unstable state. Consequently, the revolutionary state continuously enabled the perpetual competition between different social groups trying to secure and stabilize the state and its resources—a process that underlies the Indonesian National Revolution, the parliamentary debates of Liberal Democracy, and Soekarno's "guidance" of political parties and the Army during Guided Democracy. This long process only ended after Soeharto's New Order emerged in 1966. In other words, it was exactly the predominance of revolutionary politics that paved the way for the emergence of its own demise: the great counter-revolution of 1965-1966 and the rise of the New Order bureaucratic authoritarian state under Soeharto.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sidney G. Tarrow, *War, States, and Contention: A Comparative Historical Study* (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 5.

⁵⁰ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 330–32.

⁵¹ The bureaucratic-authoritarian state is defined as an authoritarian state where rule was conducted by an oligarchic and trans-nationalized bourgeoisie through bureaucratic institutions dominated by the Army in pursuing "order" and "normalization" of the economy by suppressing political democracy and citizenship. Guillermo A. O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 31–33.

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