Chapter II: The Regional Security Context and Bilateral Perceptions

'The fact is... that politically aware Papua New Guineans have a deep, intense and stubborn dislike of all things Indonesian.'


Despite recurrent border tensions, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have enjoyed officially friendly relations. Both have continued to accept the principles embodied in a 1974 Border Agreement. This agreement, negotiated between Australia (acting for Papua New Guinea) and Indonesia to establish administrative border arrangements¹ (hereafter referred to as the border agreement), came into force in 1974 and has been subject to review and renewal every five years. Its primary intent has been to maintain border harmony, by addressing the unstated but central concerns of each government. For Indonesia, the primary concern is to ensure Papua New Guinea engages in action to counteract the OPM; for Papua New Guinea, the issue is guaranteeing Papua New Guinea's sovereignty. Despite failure on both these issues, neither government has seriously questioned the utility of the border agreement. In 1986 Papua New Guinea initiated an additional friendship treaty with Indonesia² to provide a further guarantee of peace between the two countries, but this Treaty presented the relationship in the same terms as established by the border agreement [Blaskett, 1987]. Papua New Guinea has accepted that it is a country vulnerable to Indonesian incursion and to Australian pressure to forestall such incursion. It has not clearly identified the reasons for the failure of the Border Agreement and it has not considered all the options available to it to reshape the Agreement. This is because it has perceived the regional power structure as all-important in determining its foreign policy. It has been encouraged in this view by Indonesia, Australia and many political commentators who have all reinforced Papua New Guinea's vulnerability to Indonesia. Although commentators have begun to question the fairness of an agreement which requires a lesser power to assist its larger neighbour shore up its own internal security problem [see, for example, Dunn, 1984: 4; Zeipi, 1985: 31; May, 1987: 49], key Papua New Guineans have accepted Indonesian interpretations of its border security responsibilities.

¹ The full title of the border agreement is: 'Agreement between the Government of Australia (acting on its own behalf and on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea) and the Government of Indonesia concerning Administrative Border Arrangements as to the Border between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, Port Moresby, 13 November 1973'. Subsequent agreements have been titled; 'Basic Agreement between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Border Arrangements, Jakarta, 17 December 1979' and 'Basic Agreement between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Border Arrangements, Port Moresby, 29 October 1984'.

In a sense, the border agreement has reinforced Papua New Guinea's vulnerability to Indonesian pressure. When it accepted Australia's lead and acceded to the border agreement, it contracted to deny the use of its territory to any anti-Indonesian groups. This has been construed to mean that any use of Papua New Guinea's territory by the OPM is evidence of Papua New Guinea's deliberate lack of cooperation with Indonesia. Instances of OPM activity in Papua New Guinea have provided Indonesia with continued diplomatic leverage against Papua New Guinea.

The Indonesian perception of the border issue has dominated Papua New Guinean and Australian defence strategies relating to the border. Early Australian decisions on matters which arose in its border administration were influential in shaping later Papua New Guinean policies. In Australian-controlled Papua New Guinea, border policies were based on decisions made by the Administrator's Executive Council (AEC). As far as possible, public debate on border matters was avoided, as Indonesia was perceived to be a potential threat and the administration considered that public debate would create unnecessary tensions with Indonesia. The Australian policy was pragmatic.

Many of Australia's complex and contradictory views of Indonesia at both the official and unofficial level have been transferred to Papua New Guinean leaders. There is evidence of a variety of viewpoints held by the Papua New Guinean elite, although the overall orientation of policy remains remarkably similar to that established by the Australian administration.

As a small state in the Southwest Pacific region, Papua New Guinea has sought to strengthen its defences through a reliance on Australian assistance, with concomitant acceptance of the broad directions of Australian foreign policy as established by the Australian administration in pre-independence Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea has based its defence requirements and foreign policy upon considerations primarily relating to its internal security and to its relations with Indonesia. Conversely, Indonesia's defence policies have stemmed from its internal problems and relations with its northern neighbours. Until 1984 Indonesia saw little need to be concerned about its

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1 Article 7 of the 1973 Border Agreement is as follows:

Security.

1. In a spirit of goodwill and mutual understanding and so as to maintain and strengthen the good neighbouring and friendly relations already existing, the Governments on either side of the border agree to continue to cooperate with one another in order to prevent the use of their respective territories in or in the vicinity of their respective border areas for hostile activities against the other. To this end, each Government shall maintain its own procedures of notification and control.

2. The Governments shall keep each other informed and where appropriate consult as to developments in or in the vicinity of their respective border areas, which are relevant to their security.
standing with Pacific Island countries, but since has sought to improve its image and diversify its relations with the South Pacific, to offset growing international criticism of its policies in Irian Jaya and East Timor.

- Indonesia's security concerns and the role of Irian Jaya in national integration

Indonesia's view of the border issue is closely related to the Republic's early history and difficulties in establishing hegemony within its territory. Controlling breakaway movements within the archipelago had been a major concern for the Republic in the 1950s, and the acquisition of West New Guinea in 1962 served to symbolise the unity and 'completeness' of the State. As one Indonesian argued in 1974:

The newly independent state cannot afford to let various components of its population have the freedom to resort to the principle of self-determination for, as Emerson had succinctly stated, "the prime requirement is not for more freedom but for discipline and hard work, not for opposition but for national consolidation of all forces and talents" [Bachtliar, 1974: 32, quoting Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation, 1962].

One study of Indonesian foreign policy published in 1971 noted how the campaign for West Irian had 'solidified the idea of an "Indonesian will" and inculcated the feeling of belonging to an Indonesian nation' [Reinhardt, 1971: 65]. There were additional reasons for ensuring that West Irian was incorporated into the Republic. Many Indonesian leaders who had stressed the importance of securing West Irian within the Republic would have lost face if their goal had not been achieved.

Following the New York Agreement,1 Indonesian control over West New Guinea, renamed West Irian, was accepted by the United Nations, although unofficial lobbying against Indonesian control continued. The New York Agreement made provision for the people of West New Guinea/West Irian to decide their own future in an act of self-determination to be held before the end of 1969. Following this UN-sponsored conclusion to the West Irian dispute, Indonesia's external concerns focussed upon Malaysia and then upon her northern neighbours, and upon establishing her relations with the superpowers [Weinstein, 1976; Macintyre, 1984]. From the early 1970s, Indonesia worked to establish, then to maintain and strongly influence, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as an economic, social and cultural association, with an implicit regional security function.

- Indonesia's perceptions of Papua New Guinea

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1 The New York Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia was the result of the United States' adjudication of the dispute over West New Guinea, resolved in Indonesia's favour on 15 August 1962.
Papua New Guinea was of interest to Indonesia in so far as Papua New Guinea's sympathy for the people of West Irian gave rise to fears that West New Guinean dissidents could launch attacks on Indonesian forces in West Irian, and launch anti-Indonesian propaganda campaigns for a world audience. These concerns, however, were to do with an outer province which had a symbolic rather than an actual significance for the central government.

While generally unconcerned with her eastern neighbour, during 1969 Indonesia nevertheless took more interest in Papua and New Guinea, as an act of self-determination [Pepera (the Determination of People's Opinion, as it was known in Indonesia), or the Act of Free Choice] was held in West Irian. The Act of Free Choice was the means by which Indonesia sought to gain final UN approval for its integration of West Irian; Indonesia was anxious to end all overseas and internal opposition to her incorporation of West Irian in the Indonesian Republic, and through public statements, delegations to the United Nations, and official overseas visits prior to 1969, made clear to the world its view that West Irian was irrevocably a part of Indonesia.

Aware of Australia's influence upon Papua New Guinean politicians, but not convinced of the stability of the new state, nor of its commitment to pro-Indonesian attitudes, Indonesia employed its own means to orient its eastern neighbour towards an appreciation of Indonesia's concerns. At no time did Papua New Guinea offer a military threat to Indonesia. Indonesia did not feel threatened by the small and remote territory, although it recognised that support for the resistance movement within West Irian could come from elements within the Australian Territory of Papua and New Guinea, and that such resistance could have the effect of encouraging local resistance to Indonesian rule in other parts of the Republic [see, for example, Department of Information [Indonesia], 1976; Sembiring in SMH, 12 April 1984].

 Indonesian government advisors and officials have been open regarding Indonesia's lack of interest in her eastern neighbour; Jusuf Wanandi, Director of Jakarta's Centre for Strategic and International Studies noted in 1984 that 'in its foreign policy Indonesia does not place high priority on Papua New Guinea' [FEER, 16 August 1984]. This is not to say that Indonesia merely ignored Papua New Guinea, for Indonesia was the first country to establish a consulate in Papua New Guinea and promoted early official exchange visits; rather, Papua New Guinea was never perceived as a threat to Indonesian sovereignty in the way in which Papua New Guinea saw itself threatened by Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea's Foreign Affairs Department was oriented towards border issues whereas that was not a major foreign affairs preoccupation for Indonesia.
Indonesia’s assessment of the minor importance of border affairs was determined not only through its closer attention to its northern neighbours; it was also due to its confidence in dealing with Papua New Guinea and Australia. Several senior Indonesian foreign affairs officials have stated that Indonesia does not need to maintain good relations with Australia, whereas Australia does need to ensure its relations with Indonesia remain sound [for example, this point was made by Mochtar at an address to the National Press Club, Canberra, 17 December 1985]. Its preeminence in ASEAN and its good relations with the United States have allowed Indonesia a certain unquestioned freedom of action in the region. One critic of Indonesia’s position in the region has suggested that American support for Indonesia has provided Indonesia with great powers:

For nearly two decades the Indonesian islands, spread across the "bridge" between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, have been chosen as the key to US strategy for regional stability in the area. Indonesia has served as US police power in the immediate region. That assigned role gave Indonesia its self-assuredness in relation to Papua New Guinea and Australia. Its position in US strategy made possible the invasion of East Timor. US support gave Indonesia a modern army of a quarter of a million men. It was the United States which bestowed on Indonesia the power to alternate between stances which insult or threaten her smaller neighbour, Papua New Guinea, which inherited a common land border [Sharp, 1982: 100].

Thus, Indonesia has not hesitated to question Papua New Guinea’s commitment to border security and has pressed Papua New Guinea to remain within the letter of the security provisions of the Border Agreement. In 1984, after OPM activity on both sides of the border, Wanandi succinctly stated Indonesia’s view of the border problem:

The pursuit of OPM forces who flee to Papua New Guinea territory might create a number of problems because there are certain people in Port Moresby who openly support this rebellious organisation, not to mention other officials on the border who support it covertly. Papua New Guinea should not support or help these OPM elements because this is in fact an insignificant internal affair of Indonesia’s which should not be exaggerated by support from outside. Furthermore, the question of Melanesian culture is not a problem for Indonesia, and should not be made a political issue [FEER, 1984: 35-36].

This interpretation of Papua New Guinea’s obligations under the agreement with Indonesia has been supported by a number of Australian commentators. As Crouch put it in 1986:

The Indonesian government has asked for PNG’s cooperation in preventing PNG territory from being used as a sanctuary by the OPM but PNG governments have sometimes been reluctant and have not always taken consistent action against the OPM. Many PNG leaders, backed by public opinion, have in fact felt that they have no obligation to help Indonesia repress fellow Melanesians [Crouch, 1986: 25].

This view of the Papua New Guinean government as reluctant to keep its promises has been rejected by other commentators. It has been pointed out that many Papua New Guineans, including leaders, have expressed a strong sympathy for their 'Melanesian
brothers' living in Irian Jaya who share Papua New Guinean languages and cultures; yet, despite this sympathy, Papua New Guinea's governments have perceived a need to deal harshly with the OPM and have backed public statements supporting Indonesian sovereignty of Irian Jaya with exercises to contain OPM activity [May, 1987]. Commentators who have explained any OPM presence in Papua New Guinea in terms of official Papua New Guinean reluctance to undertake security measures against the OPM have tended to underestimate the difficulties involved in identifying OPM groups, and have largely accepted official Indonesian interpretations of OPM as small in number and without support in Irian Jaya. As such the view relates to the estimation of the strength of the OPM; in Crouch's opinion, the OPM is 'no more than an irritation' to Indonesia [Crouch, 1986: 26]; he fails to consider that there may be a groundswell of support for the OPM from the Papuans in Irian Jaya, or that even the strongest determination to defeat the OPM, coupled with sizeable defence allocations, may not be enough to sanitize the border.

There are additional factors which have contributed to this view of Papua New Guinean inaction on the matter of border security. It appears that the Australian government has urged Papua New Guinea to accept the terms of the border agreement as established in 1973 and while Australian government statements relating to the Irian Jaya issue have deplored any Indonesian violation of Papua New Guinea’s territory, they have also reinforced the Indonesian version of Papua New Guinea's laxity in securing the border. Officials have never publicly observed that the border terrain is so difficult that it could not be made secure by the deployment of existing Papua New Guinea Defence Force patrols; nor has there been any suggestion that Indonesia has not been able to control the OPM within its own territory, or that Indonesia’s inability to prevent OPM from crossing into Papua New Guinea has made it difficult for Papua New Guinea to carry out its obligations under the agreement. Perhaps these possibilities have not been entertained because of a mistaken belief in existing defence capabilities, or because of an incorrect assessment of the significance and strength of the OPM.

Whatever the reasons for rejecting such possibilities, the effect has been for commentators and Australian officials to reinforce Indonesian statements alleging Papua New Guinean inefficiency or unwillingness in its border security obligations. This has fuelled Indonesian suspicions of Papua New Guinea. The particular circumstances of suspicion between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea relate to Australian attitudes towards Indonesia in the years prior to Papua New Guinea's independence, and to Indonesia's sensitivity to international criticism of its policies in Irian Jaya.

- Australia's perceptions of Indonesia
In accepting or, at least being susceptible to the influence of, Australian viewpoints, Papua New Guineans 'inherited' very mixed perceptions of Indonesia. Margaret George has concluded from her study of Australian policy towards Indonesia in the late 1940s that 'Australia assumed a diplomatic posture towards Indonesia which contained at once realism and idealism, acceptance and intolerance, optimism and insecurity' [George, 1980: 168]. This description also applied to Australia's relations with Indonesia in later years. When Indonesia pressed its claims upon West New Guinea, Australia initially opposed her, perceiving the proposed change from Dutch control to Indonesian administration as a shift from a friendly power to a potentially hostile one. As the dispute over West New Guinea/West Irian gained momentum and involved the use of force, United States intervention in favour of Indonesian claims resolved the question [Bone, 1962; McMullen, 1981]. To some extent, Australia had to suspend her principles and face up to the political necessity of strengthening friendship with Indonesia and even to helping to ensure Indonesia's stability [Adil, 1973: 99]. Yet, Australian distrust of Indonesia remained, and was fuelled by the confrontation period with Malaysia and by Sukarno's increasing tolerance of communism. This distrust was transmitted to Papua New Guineans by West Papuans seeking independence who were critical of Indonesian pressures, and by Australian expatriates, some of whom sought to counteract support for Papua New Guinea's coming independence by arguing that Papua New Guinea needed Australia to protect it [see Wolfers, (ed.) 1976].

- Pre-independence Papua New Guinea's security perceptions

Papua New Guinea's leaders have accepted the general direction of policies as established by the Australian administration in pre-Independence Papua New Guinea. They have also largely accepted the Australian view of Papua New Guinea's realistic choices. In the years prior to Independence, emerging leaders were the recipients of advice and tuition from Australian government and academic circles regarding how Papua New Guinea should best conduct its defence policies and its relations with Indonesia. For example, the issue was discussed at some length during a seminar held in June 1972 at the University of Papua New Guinea, attended by several Papua New Guinean politicians and students, and Australian political scientists [Griffin (ed.), 1974]. Similar meetings were later held in 1975, 1976 and 1986 [Wolfers (ed.), 1976; Hastings, 1976; AIIA, 1986].

Despite Papua New Guinea's general acceptance of Australia's somewhat belated approval of Indonesian sovereignty over West New Guinea, on at least two occasions it was clear that the elected representatives of the Territory disagreed with the Australian
government as to how policy towards Indonesia should be approached: in 1969 the Indonesian government's manner of conducting the Act of Free Choice in West Irian was protested by the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly, and in 1973 members of the House of Assembly criticised the way in which the Australian-Indonesian agreement relating to the border was negotiated.

Other members thought that as there was a continuing and potentially escalating border problem with Indonesia, it was necessary to minimize those problems. As Indonesia's armed forces encountered separatist resistance in West Irian, the border area posed a security concern for authorities and border dwellers in Papua and New Guinea. Pragmatists argued that the only way to contain these disputes was to accommodate Indonesia by means of mutual agreement. Since 1969 Australian policy aimed at achieving administrative agreement and, despite the continuing demand for West Papuan independence on the part of many ex-West New Guineans permitted to live in Papua and New Guinea, most Papua New Guinean administrators and politicians who considered the issue accepted that agreement with Indonesia following Australia's example was preferable to a pro-West Papua policy and the risks such a policy entailed.

- The Defence of Independent Papua New Guinea

Some officials, politicians and commentators assume that Australia, because of its own defence, if not its cultural and economic ties with Papua New Guinea, would never leave Papua New Guinea unsupported in the event of an Indonesian invasion; other leaders consider that Australia would not want to involve itself in a war with Indonesia over Papua New Guinea. Some Papua New Guinean leaders assume that Australia has the military capability to counter and defeat any Indonesian invasion of Papua New Guinea; others maintain that Papua New Guinea would quickly fall to Indonesia even if Australia were to rally support. Some have assumed that Papua New Guinea's friendship with Indonesia will eventually be rewarded by Indonesian invasion; others have perceived Papua New Guinea's friendship with Indonesia as the only way of guaranteeing Papua New Guinea's survival as an independent sovereign state. There are many who have publicly stated their support for the OPM, and some who argue that unless Indonesia is prevented from pursuing policies of Melanesian genocide in the form of transmigration and military action, Papua New Guinea will eventually be an unsupported racial minority powerless against Indonesia; others see a policy of official support for the OPM as inviting Indonesian invasion and disaster for Papua New Guinea.

These differing points of view reflect the inconsistencies of history and changing defence perceptions.
There are several conflicting views of the Australia-Papua New Guinea relationship and of Papua New Guinea's defence options. Walsh and Munster have argued that Australia has pressed Papua New Guinea to accept Indonesia's requirements of it:

When Australia granted PNG independence, she not only failed to sign a defence treaty; she withdrew the umbrella of the ANZUS Treaty, which had previously applied. PNG appeasement of Indonesia is counselled as a form of wisdom by Australian expatriates still working in the PNG Foreign Affairs Department and in the intelligence service. Having given PNG independence, Australia is now encouraging Port Moresby to become a client of Djakarta [Walsh and Munster, 1982: 124].

What 'client of Djakarta' means is unclear, but many other commentators have drawn attention to the limited options available to Papua New Guinea because of the close ties it maintains with Australia. For example, Premdas has argued that Papua New Guinea has had no alternative but to accept Australian policy [Premdas, 1977: 10]. Mortimer went further: in 1979 he argued that Papua New Guinea had neither the power nor the desire to do anything more in its foreign policy than to ensure that it retained Australia's backing [Mortimer, 1979: 225-7].

It is helpful to briefly review key aspects of Australia's policy: in general, it has maintained officially friendly relations with Indonesia and refrained from any criticism of Indonesian policies in Irian Jaya. Yet a strong fear of Indonesia has been a continuing factor in Australian defence thinking. Australia's response to Pepera served as an example to Papua New Guinean leaders of how to deal with Indonesia. Many of the arguments used by Australia at this time were later to emerge in policy statements made by Papua New Guinean leaders.

Australian support for the Dutch in West New Guinea (inspired by a fear of Indonesian communism under Sukarno and by racial and cultural prejudice) and disapproval of Indonesia's rejection of the principle of self-determination for West New Guineans left a legacy of distrust of Indonesia [Verrier, 1976: 200, 375; Verrier, 1974: 295.; Bernard, 1963: 312-3.; Hasluck, 1976: 373]. In the early 1960s when the conflict between Indonesia and the Dutch escalated, Australia reacted by strengthening its defence facilities in Papua New Guinea. Australia increased her defence appropriation, upgraded the West New Guinea-Territory of Papua and New Guinea border facilities, and encouraged political education in the Territory [Souter, 1963: 233; Herlihy, 1979: 115; Herlihy, 1981: 171]. Immediately after the New York Agreement, Australia's defence expenditure was increased by £20 million [Verrier, 1976: 187. Ryan, 1969: 259 estimates that the figure was 'more than $60,000,000' in the seven months following the New York Agreement]. Occasional border patrols by the Defence Force were planned by the
Australian authorities to secure the border. To safeguard against a possible Indonesian threat to Papua and New Guinea, defence force budgets had been greatly increased and defence facilities and air strips throughout the Territory were improved [Verrier, 1976: 196; Mediansky 1970: 38]. Border patrols increased in number, but remained infrequent and insufficient to either control or monitor all border movement.

After the New York Agreement in 1962, Australian analysts reassessed the importance of the island of New Guinea in the light of the changed circumstances; in 1965, Millar stated the Australian view of the importance of the eastern half of the island: 'In military semantics, Papua and New Guinea is "essential" to the defence of Australia, but not "vital". We could lose it and fight on, but we would fight on under far greater difficulties' [Millar, 1965: 150]. Albinski has argued that 'Papua New Guinea's perceived security value to Australia declined considerably after the mid-1960s' [Albinski, 1977: 228], implying that Australia had come to view its geo-political situation differently and that the strategic value of the island of New Guinea was lessened. Others have suggested that in the face of Indonesian demands for West New Guinea, Australia saw no other option but to jettison the idea of an inviolable New Guinea [Viviani, 1973]. As a result of this assessment, in response to Indonesian control of West New Guinea, Australia's policies became conciliatory to Indonesia. When Sukarno was deposed by the anti-Communist Suharto, one strong motive for opposing Indonesia was removed.

While Australia was prepared to accommodate to an Indonesian-controlled West New Guinea, Papua New Guinean leaders were critical of Indonesian policies in the area. Australia found some of the Papua New Guinean elite to be effective in opposing the pragmatism of Australian policy, and critical of Australian manipulation of its colony. After the build up of border defences in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea following the Dutch hand over of West New Guinea, a Papuan Member of the House of Assembly, Gaudi Mirau, asked if the Territory had been made a fortress merely to protect Australia, and pointed out that the way in which Australia had used the Territory's strategic position for diplomatic purposes in dealing with Southeast Asia meant that it was being aligned against some of its neighbours and that this would pose problems for the future [Ryan, 1969: 262].

As the Act of Free Choice approached and as Indonesia launched border incursions in 1969, Australian administrators were made aware of a strong anti-Indonesian feeling in the Territory, counter to the administration's policies. In May, a demonstration against Indonesia's presence in West Irian was held in Port Moresby [Nelson, 1974: 43]. The following month, in a discussion in the House of Assembly over the recent border
incursions, criticism was aimed at Australia and at the UN for their policies towards Indonesia.

A variety of opinion was expressed during this debate, although clearly some key leaders accepted the need to remain friends with Indonesia. The Act of Free Choice was seen by several members (among them Chatterton, Somare, Middleton, and Voutas) as a sham but at the same time Indonesia's power and its proximity to Papua New Guinea caused several members to reflect on political events in West New Guinea with caution. Ebia Olewale, for example, commented that 'instead of getting frightened of it we should be asking how we can make friends with Indonesia', and he continued: 'we should be looking at the problem in such a way, I do not know how, but there should be a way whereby in tackling this problem we are not going to make an enemy of Indonesia, and at the same time we are not going to make an enemy of West Irian'. Both he and Somare were aware that the problem of Indonesia in West Irian was an enduring one for Papua New Guinea. Somare stated that the 'people who live in the border areas are becoming really terrified at what is happening because these problems do not relate only to the present time but it looks as if they will be remaining with us for a long time to come'. Like Olewale, Somare sought friendship with Indonesia, but stated that he wanted the UN to advise the West Irianese of 'the best course of action so that their wishes may be known'. As he put it, 'It is true that our foreign affairs are controlled by the Australian Government, but our future problems still concern our people. It is we, the people of this country, who will have to face up to these problems' [House of Assembly Debates, Vol. II, No. 5, 25 June 1969]. In the same debate, Traimya Kambipi (Kompiam-Baiyer) criticised Australia for its handling of a problem which would remain with Papua New Guinea for many years to come. He had recently visited Australia to express his concern at the situation of the people of West New Guinea, and as he saw it, 'the Australian Government did not appear to be concerned about our feelings and I am afraid that the Australian Government will have the same attitude towards future problems in Papua and New Guinea' [House of Assembly Debates, Vol. II, No. 5, 27 June 1969].

Some members blamed the Australian government for unquestioningly accepting Indonesia's claims that the Act of Free Choice would represent the true feelings of the people of Irian Jaya. One member, Tony Voutas, pointed out that he could not blame Australia for supporting Indonesia, for it could 'only choose between the safety and security of the Australian people and our own Territory here as opposed to the rights of an undetermined number of a small minority elsewhere' [House of Assembly Debates, Vol. II, No. 5, 27 June 1969]. Other members pointed to the United Nations' inability and unwillingness to insist that a free decision by the Irianese people be held; as Paul Langro put it, 'I do not think the United Nations is doing a good job by keeping its eye
on one side of the country only. Our elections have always been free and anyone who wished to observe them was welcomed, yet our Indonesian neighbours in West Irian have refused to let any foreign newsmen in to watch the coming elections'. In a motion which passed the House, it was indicated that members' sympathies lay with the Irianese people, and some members pointed out that 'the West Irianese people are our friends, our people' [Maneke and Kambipi in House of Assembly Debates, Vol. II, No. 5, 27 June 1969].

Such awkward and unwelcome criticisms of Australian policies placed a question in the minds of Australia's Defence officials. Would Papua New Guinea, as an independent state, strive to overturn the United Nations' decision over West New Guinea and provoke war with Indonesia? Should Australia offer a defence commitment to Papua New Guinea given such a possibility? Papua New Guinea was an unknown quantity. In addition to the border issue, widespread disorder in Papua New Guinea was predicted by many mistaken Australian political commentators, and, as J.A.C. Mackie warned in 1974:

Australia should be very chary about undertaking defence commitments to New Guinea. It would be positively irresponsible to enter into any commitment guaranteeing her security since we would be incapable of honouring such a guarantee if Indonesia were ever to put it to a test. New Guinea will have to work out her own political accommodations with Indonesia in the event of disputes [Mackie, 1974: 14].

This position was obviously reflective of Australian concerns to ensure that it was not unnecessarily involved in a conflict where it could not rely on American support. The fact that Indonesia had adopted a pro-American stance was highly significant [Albinski, 1977: 228]. In 1965, Millar had suggested that:

even after independence it would be surprising if Papua and New Guinea did not expect and need us to go on helping in its defence, and we should accept this as an obligation, if the circumstances of independence permit, in the way that Britain did for us for so long [Millar, 1965: 150].

Such an obligation proved to be too heavy for Australia, despite the fact that Australia's defence policies owed much to Australia's colonial origins which:

[nurtured Australians] in the notion that external security was a matter to be entrusted to a powerful patron. Fidelity to and endorsement of the patron's policies seemed to offer the most economical assurance of protection [Swan, 1988:74].

Papua New Guinea was similarly tutored in the need for a senior defence partner, and to accept the constraints ensuing from the relationship, but was denied a formal security guarantee [Albinski, 1977: 228].
Papua New Guinea did, however, inherit a defence force from Australia. In the early 1970s, Papua New Guinea's defence forces consisted of the Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR), containing two battalions of 3,280 regular troops, of which 2,700 were indigenous [Griffin, 1974: 52]. Ninety per cent of the officers were Australian [Standish, 1974: 132]. The Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) which emerged from the PIR retained the strength and character of the PIR, except that the percentage of Australian officers was gradually reduced (from a figure of 465 loan personnel in 1975, the number was reduced to only 30 in 1988 [Maketu, 1988: 8-9]) although Australian personnel still provided significant specialist expertise.

This legacy occasioned considerable debate: there was a difference of opinion between the Canberra Defence Department and the Papua New Guinean serving officers [Barnett, 1981: 71]. When questioned in 1972 regarding his views as to whether Papua New Guinea would require a defence force after gaining independence, Somare replied:

Speaking personally I think that we do probably need a defence force for two reasons - firstly for patrolling our borders and territorial waters and secondly to react in the first instance to any armed aggression. While we would not hope to defeat any sizeable force, Papua New Guinea defence force could engage the enemy until Australian troops arrive [Somare in 'The Sword and the State', ABC TV, 1972].

Despite Somare's apparent willingness to rely upon, even automatically expect, Australian support in a crisis, Australian and Papua New Guinea authorities agreed that there would be no formal commitment on Australia's part to assist Papua New Guinea in the event of external attack or civil disorder. Kiki explained that Papua New Guinea wished to be independent of Australia in this regard:

These are things which we should be able to cope with ourselves. We do not want to be left with no alternative but to invite, or permit, foreign forces to come in and deal with the situation [SMH, 7 December 1974, quoted in Albinski, 1977: 228].

But it is likely that Kiki was putting on a bold face; there seems to be no reason why Papua New Guinea would not have jumped at the chance to formalise a mutual defence commitment of this type with Australia. As Papua New Guinea had such a limited defence arrangement, matching its limited diplomatic experience, its first foreign policy was extremely cautious, revolving upon the notion of 'universalism', or 'friends to all and enemies to none'. This policy did not acknowledge that there were certain stances presupposed by the defence relations it did have with Australia.

Hank Nelson noted in a study of Papua New Guinea's early foreign policies that: 'To emphasise that Papua New Guinea's policy is not determined by Australia, its spokesmen have several times quoted President Nyere of Tanzania: "We do not want our friends to
choose our enemies for us" [Nelson, 1978: 175]. In reality, Papua New Guinea could not cut the ties it had to Australia. It owed the political education of its leaders to Australia, and thus inherited an Australian outlook along with Australian administrative and parliamentary structures.

Although some commentators have criticised Australia's role in shaping Papua New Guinea political activity prior to independence, given the nature of the Papua New Guinea-Australian relationship, and Papua New Guinea's reliance on Australia for defence and leadership, there seems to have been no alternative but that Papua New Guinea should adopt a similar outlook to Australia, especially in foreign policy matters. In discharging its 'duty' to Papua New Guinea, Australia acted in its own interest by ensuring that Papua New Guinea would not only follow Australia's lead, but would not constitute a regional disturbance. However, Papua New Guinea's reliance on Australia is relevant to the study of the Papua New Guinea-Indonesian relationship, in that Australia continued to exert an influence on Papua New Guinea and its foreign policy.

Many Papua New Guineans were critical of this policy. Despite tacit acceptance of the need to appease Indonesia and follow Australia's defence requirements, suspicion of Indonesia remained strong. Paul Langro, deputy leader of the Opposition, and member for West Sepik, voiced the sentiments of many when he offered Parliament his criticism of Indonesia: 'The world should know the Indonesian affairs with this country as it knows what has happened in East Timor. If Indonesia had taken East Timor simply because it did not like to see a free state as its neighbour, I warn you that one day it will happen here in Papua New Guinea' [NPD, 9 December 1976].

Okuk, another important Opposition leader attacked the notion of universalism in Parliament:

Obviously Indonesia will win if ever there is a fight. Therefore we should have an agreement signed concerning this. If Indonesia tried to fight us, we could not stop them with our universalism policy of friends to all and enemies to none because they would not take any notice of this policy... Therefore we should have an agreement not to fight, and if Indonesia happens to attack us we should have another agreement for Australia to come to our help... With our policy as it stands, will anybody come to our help if we are attacked? [NPD, 17 August 1978].

The universalism policy was recognised as a tentative approach to the formulation of Papua New Guinea's foreign policy and a policy review was undertaken in 1980-81. The resulting policy was laid out in a Foreign Policy White Paper tabled in November 1981. It proposed an 'active and selective engagement', with an emphasis on Papua New Guinea's relations with countries perceived to affect Papua New Guinea's interests most directly (that is, Australia, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands and other countries of the
South Pacific) [Wolfers, 1983: 176]. Foreign Minister Levi stated that the policy took account of the fact that Papua New Guinea needed to rely on a good relationship and on consultation with Australia [Draft Hansard, 9 November 1981].

Many Papua New Guineans have perceived that the Australia-Papua New Guinea defence arrangements are a reflection of Australia’s reluctance to side automatically with Papua New Guinea in the event of a conflict against Indonesia as an American ally. Lawyer Bernard Narokobi commented in 1983:

The hard reality of the international world of politics is that Australia will take the side that America takes. That is a sad truth and if Indonesia is an enemy of the Communist bloc then Indonesia is a friend of America, and Australia is a friend of America, and Australia is therefore a friend of Indonesia. In that context there is no possibility for a long and sustained support for Papua New Guinea [Narokobi, 1983: 107].

Gabriel Lafitte, a political analyst working for the Melanesian Alliance party in Papua New Guinea in 1987 similarly observed:

From what I can gather from having talked to a lot of people in the decision-making elite in Port Moresby I think there’s this basic recognition that Indonesia is huge, the border between PNG and Indonesia is quite literally the border between the Pacific and Asia and that everybody in PNG knows that no matter how much their hearts identify with [the refugees from Irian Jaya] ... nonetheless the political reality is that Indonesia as well as PNG are both parts of the Western Alliance and that if the Western Alliance (Australian and the United States) ever ultimately have to choose between Indonesia and PNG everybody knows, although nobody ever says it, in Australia either for that matter, that we and the US would always choose Indonesia. So PNG is alone... ['Dispatches', repeat radio broadcast, 17 October 1988 of a late 1987 programme].

As Father John Momis, Melanesian Alliance leader, succinctly stated in an interview, ‘in the event of an Indonesian invasion, PNG would have no hope. Even with Australian assistance, we’d be sunk’ [Momis, interview, Canberra, 5 May 1986].

As a result of such perceptions, there is an appreciation of the need for Papua New Guinea to bolster its defences in as many ways as possible. Different approaches have been favoured by different leaders. According to Paias Wingti,

Empty idealism is a luxury that a country like ours cannot afford. Instead, we must struggle with the harsh realities of today’s world and use to the best advantage the level of influence that we can exert.

We must be realistic in dealing with the historical fact that in 1969 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by 84 votes to none (with 30 abstentions) than an Act of Free Choice had been conducted in Irian Jaya. What especially disturbs me is that some politicians, who know the practical facts of the situation, still choose to mislead our own people. They continue to use independence for Irian Jaya as an electoral issue when they know that there is nothing we can do [Post-Courier, 5 September 1986].
Wingti’s administration moved to formalise agreements with the regional governments of most importance to its foreign policy, clearly believing that more formal arrangements were stronger arrangements. It initiated a ‘Melanesian Spearhead’ agreement, to strengthen Melanesian cooperation on such matters as national independence, economic and technical cooperation, arms control and human rights. Although the Spearhead group stated its support for independence for all Melanesian countries [a clear reference to New Caledonia], this policy was not extended to Irian Jaya: in the words of the Foreign Minister, Akoka Doi, Irian Jaya was a ‘mistake done by the colonial powers so let it stay as it is’ [Islands Business, April 1988: 26]. If there was a principle behind the Wingti government’s view of the Irian Jaya independence issue, clearly it was ‘there is nothing we can do’.

Through a Joint Statement of Principles agreement, Wingti sought stronger commitments from Australia to consult Papua New Guinea about defence cooperation in the event of an armed attack on Papua New Guinea. While the new agreement did not bind Australia to automatically assist Papua New Guinea, some Papua New Guineans have viewed the agreement optimistically. As Defence Secretary Mokis noted in 1988:

Although history proves that such commitments [as the Joint Declaration of Principles between Australia and Papua New Guinea] do not provide total guarantee, it is nevertheless significant to note that defence and security commitment between the two countries is now given a higher profile. Given PNG’s strategic importance to Australia, and Australia’s investment in the Country, it would seem inconceivable to see Australia not making any commitment to maintain the security of PNG. Although our security policy suggests that Papua New Guinea must diversify its defence relations with friendly allies for purposes of developing diplomacy and for equipment compatibility and training opportunities, Australia it seems will remain PNG’s most important ally and friend [Mokis, 1988: 10].

Thus Papua New Guinea’s defence and foreign policy did not deviate from the need for friendly relations with Indonesia, and for a defence relationship in which Australia plays the most significant part. In following this policy, it has shied clear of attacking Indonesia on its internal policies in Irian Jaya. In 1981 Peter King pointed out that Papua New Guinea could use its relationship with Australia to push for reforms in Irian Jaya:

The PNG government’s worst nightmare is to face a border conflict against Indonesia without Australian backing. Yet Australian opinion is by no means convinced of the need or desirability of unconditional friendship with the Suharto regime, and PNG in a pinch could exploit a sympathetic Australian public opinion against the strategic and ideological predilections of the Australian government. Thus PNG, in the van of independent Melanesian opinion, could with a little courage manoeuvre to keep faith with the West Papuan cause... PNG should certainly avoid letting an ASEAN political and security connection get in the way of her relations with the [South Pacific] Forum while Indonesian repression persists in Jayapura [King, 1981: 343]
King's view has not been taken up by other commentators or by Papua New Guinean leaders. Many recent leaders in Papua New Guinea believe that Papua New Guinea has no choice but to act in full accord with Indonesian border security requirements. Indeed, many influential Papua New Guinean leaders seem to have almost fully accepted the Indonesian view of the border issue. Stephen Mokis, the Secretary for Defence, in December 1988 stated openly that:

In view of recent current border tension, Indonesia could conceivably become so frustrated with PNG's handling of border issues, and PNG's reluctance to cooperate on such matters gives little choice but for Indonesia to raid OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka - Free Papua Movement) camps and ambush infiltration routes on the PNG side of the border [Mokis, 1988: 11].

Mokis did not go on to indicate the reasons for PNG's reluctance, nor did he criticise the assumptions of agreement. Mokis did, however, go on to point to difficulties in ensuring border security while keeping within the terms of the border agreement, noting Indonesia's contravention of the agreement.

Just as the Defence secretary appears to have accepted key Indonesian arguments, former Defence Minister Pokasui indicated that in May 1988 he agreed in principle to Indonesian requirements for border security:

I had talks with my counterpart in Indonesia and we both agreed that there must be a Border Liaison Committee like the one now set up between Indonesia and Malaysia and Malaysia and Thailand [Draft Hansard, 6 September 1988].

Pokasui's acceptance of these requirements (involving joint military exercises and the right of hot pursuit by troops across the border) suggests that the Indonesian view of the border problem is no longer questioned by key Papua New Guinean Defence experts, although the acceptance of this position has involved an admission that Papua New Guinea has deliberately refused to cooperate with Indonesian to act against the OPM. Such a position requires further investigation in the light of more detailed knowledge of the border situation.