

# **Between guns and dialogue: Papua after the exile's return**

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# **Between guns and dialogue: Papua after the exile's return**

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## **Introduction**

Richard Chauvel of Victoria University writes that although after half a century of exile Papuan politician Nicholaas Jouwe's visit to Jakarta and Jayapura reflected an "Indonesian strategy to persuade exiled Papuan political figures, refugees and asylum seekers to return to Indonesia", not all went according to plan. Chauvel argues that in light of the government's heavy handed military response to renewed violence in Papua, "the President's acknowledgement that the military approach is not appropriate for resolving problems in Papua" has done little to allay the fear among the Papuan community. Yet Chauvel concludes by arguing that an "optimistic reading of Nicolaas Jouwe's visit and the subsequent violence and destruction in Papua is that a re-elected Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono or a new President will feel sufficiently confident to engage in a dialogue with Papuan leaders to resolve peacefully Indonesia's last and most intractable regional conflict."

## **Essay: Between guns and dialogue: Papua after the exile's return**

This is the story of an 85 year old exiled Papuan politician's visit to the homeland he left in 1962. His departure almost half a century ago followed the recognition by the Dutch colonial power that their endeavour to establish West Papua as a state independent from Indonesia had failed.

Nicholaas Jouwe's visit to Jakarta and Jayapura at the invitation of the Indonesian President was a carefully choreographed affair. The security measures and management of the visit, successful and

otherwise, tell us as much about the state of Indonesia's Papua policy and the dynamics of Papuan politics as they do about the substance of Nicholaas Jouwe's discussions with Indonesian government figures and Papuan leaders. Nicholaas Jouwe urged his hosts to engage in a wide ranging dialogue with Papuan leaders and resolve peacefully the conflict that has engulfed Indonesian rule in his homeland since he went into exile. However, in the weeks following Nicholaas Jouwe's visit a series of violent incidents have occurred; the burning of the offices of the Election Commission and Cenderwasih University's administration and the deployment of even more Indonesian military and police to Papua all highlighting the inconvenient reality that the conflict in Papua remains prevalent.

Writing of Nicholaas Jouwe's visit to Jakarta and Papua, the Dutch journalist, Elske Schouten, posed the question: how could it be that the man most responsible for making the Morning Star flag (Bendera Bintang Kejora), the symbol of Papuan nationalism, came to be invited to Indonesia by the Indonesian President, while the Indonesian security forces remained determined to imprison for treason any Papuan unwise enough to raise the same flag? She mused that it could hardly be an election stunt, as it was unlikely that Presidential discussions with a spokesman for Papuan independence would attract many votes. [1]

There were at least two agendas driving Nicholaas Jouwe's visit. The Indonesian government sought to persuade the last surviving founding father of Papuan nationalism to abandon his 50 year old pursuit of independence, recognise that his homeland was part of Indonesia and give his blessing to the government's policy of special autonomy. Jouwe's objective in accepting the President's invitation was to push for a far reaching dialogue between Jakarta and Papua, something that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had shown little inclination to engage in. The dialogue agenda was one that Jouwe shared with broad sections of the Jayapura-based Papuan elite.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his 47 year long exile in The Netherlands, Nicholaas Jouwe is an important figure in the Papuan independence movement. He was a leading member of the New Guinea Council, a mainly elected representative body established by the Dutch in 1961 as an initial step along the road to an independent Papua. He was also a key member of the National Committee, which in October 1961 was the first group of Papuan leaders that asserted Papua's right to be independent and decided that the Morning Star flag would be the national flag and that West Papua be the name of the territory. Jouwe was an effective campaigner in exile against Indonesian rule in Papua and particularly against the Indonesian conduct of the controversial Act of Free Choice in 1969. Jouwe and his colleagues had generated sufficient international sympathy, especially among the newly independent African states, to dissuade Indonesia and its supporters from a full debate in the General Assembly about the conduct of the Act of Free Choice and the United Nations' role therein. Those involved in the post-Suharto revival of independence movement, have recognised the contribution of Nicholaas Jouwe's generation in creating the symbols of Papuan nationalism and organising the ceremony at which the Morning Star flag was raised for the first time. Post-Suharto, some Papuan nationalists have interpreted the flag-raising ceremony as a declaration of independence. [2]

## **The Indonesian script**

Nicholaas Jouwe's visit was part of an Indonesian strategy to persuade exiled Papuan political figures, refugees and asylum seekers to return to Indonesia and acknowledge Papua's integration with Indonesia and declare their support for the Special Autonomy policy. Two former figures in the pro independence movement, Franzalbert Yoku and Nicholas Messet, returned to Indonesia from Papua New Guinea in 2008. As leaders of the *Independent Group Supporting the Special Autonomous Region of Papua Within the Republic of Indonesia*(IGSSARPRI) they also helped

organize Jouwe's visit and were his chaperons for it. In February this year, the leading Jakarta daily, *Suara Pembaruan*, reported that of the thousands of refugees who had fled into PNG in 1984, some 708 wanted to return to Papua. The Catholic intellectual, Dr. Neles Tebay, described the return of the refugees as a victory for Indonesian diplomacy. [3] The Indonesian authorities in Australia have worked hard to persuade the 43 asylum seekers whose arrival in Australia so unsettled the Jakarta's relations with Canberra in 2006, to return home. Thus far four people have been welcomed home in Papua to some fanfare in the media. [4] The government sponsored visits of prominent international critics of Indonesian policy in Papua are part of the same strategy to marginalise foreign scrutiny of the Papua conflict. US Congressman Eni Faleomavaega's two visits in 2007 were examples of this endeavour.

Something of the Government's objectives for Jouwe's visit were outlined to the press prior to Jouwe's meeting with Welfare Minister Aburizal Bakrie. The Minister's spokesman, Rizal Mallarangeng, announced: "He [Jouwe] will symbolically surrender his 'Morning Star' pin. He will acknowledge the existence of the Republic of Indonesia and the end of his struggle." [5] The Indonesian Ambassador to The Netherlands, J.E. "Fany" Habibie, who appears to have been instrumental in arranging Jouwe's visit, said that Jouwe would call on all Papuan fighters in jungles and abroad to rebuild Papua within the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. [6]

## **Jouwe on Papua soil**

If this was Indonesia's script for Jouwe's visit, not everything went to plan. At the press conference following the meeting with Minister Bakrie on 19 March, Jouwe expressed his appreciation for Indonesia's efforts to develop Papua, but emphasized the need for constructive dialogue between two peoples who are "neighbours" and who needed each other. For his meeting with Bakrie, Jouwe had not worn his Morning Star pin that he had on his jacket when he had left Amsterdam and arrived at his Jakarta hotel. However, when presented with a pin of the Indonesian flag, Jouwe politely declined, saying: "This is not going to happen today." [7] The Jakarta Globe reported that Jouwe's reference to Indonesia as Papua's "neighbour" had created a stunned silence among the Indonesian officials. Jouwe's son, Nico, noted in his *Twitter* account of the press conference that "The old Jouwe pulled a classic one here, right in the heart of the Jakarta administration. Quite amazing and unforgettable." [8] In an interview on Dutch television after returning to The Netherlands, Nico Jouwe described the atmosphere at the end of the press conference as one of "panic" and "pandemonium". [9] As a public relations exercise, the press conference was further blemished by the behavior of Nicolas Messet, one of Jouwe's chaperons, who prevented two Indonesian journalists from interviewing Jouwe, calling them "bloody idiots". [10] The chaperons succeeded in alienating the local media in Jayapura when Jouwe arrived home a few days later. [11] Only Dutch journalists were permitted access to Jouwe in Jayapura, as in Jakarta.

The diplomatic tussle surrounding Jouwe not surrendering his Morning Star flag requires some context. Nicholaas Jouwe's acceptance of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's invitation implied recognition of Indonesia's sovereignty over Papua. At a meeting with members of his own community and Dutch solidarity groups after his return to The Netherlands, Jouwe sought to reassure Indonesia. The international community recognises that Papua is an integral part of Indonesia. Jouwe conceded that Papuans could not achieve freedom through fighting. Freedom had been taken from Papuans by the United Nations and given to Indonesia. [12]

Nicholaas Jouwe was welcomed home by the Governor of Papua, Barnabas Suebu, and the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Freddy Numbery, the two most senior Papuans within the Indonesian government, members of his family, dancers from his own village and a garland of flowers. In what must have been a most emotional moment for Jouwe returning to his homeland after

47 years, he appealed to his ancestors in their mother tongue, lay on the ground and kissed the earth. [13] Reflecting something of the disparate Papuan responses to Jouwe's visit and kept outside the airport by security, was another welcoming party of dozens of pro-independence students. Their banners read: "Welcome, Immediately End Oppression" "You started it, You (who) should end it." [14] The spokesperson for the demonstrators, Viktor Yeimo, called on Jouwe to take responsibility for the independence movement he had initiated. He argued that the independence ideal had become part of the Papuan soul and that many Papuans had died, been imprisoned or fled for this ideal. He asserted that unlike Franz Albert Yoku and Nicholas Messet, Jouwe could not simply renounce the independence ideal. [15]

Apart from a visit to his own village, Kayu Pulo, located on an island in Jayapura's harbour, Jouwe's opportunity to interact with his fellow Papuans was limited. Jouwe's most important meeting was with Governor Suebu. The Governor explained his policies to develop Papuan village society through the direct allocation of funds to villages. Suebu argued that in the last analysis freedom (kemerdekaan) is found in people's welfare, with the provision of good education and good health services. For his part Jouwe considered that the Governor was implementing much of what he had struggled for and dreamt about. "Because what I have struggled for from the outside, he (Suebu) has worked for from the inside. That's good, that's the difference between us. He (Suebu) is more capable than I am because I have only expressed ideas, but he is a man of action. It's the difference between words and deeds. This is him, Governor Suebu." [16] It was as if Jouwe was anointing the Governor as his successor. Jouwe has a strong sense of himself being the leader of Papua. A Dutch television documentary made of Jouwe a few months before the visit to Indonesia was entitled "King without a country". He saw in Suebu someone doing some of the things he would have liked to have done. This is more explicit in son Nico's account of the meeting quoting his father saying: "That was my assignment, but you are carrying it out...Bas, go on. You're the right man in the right place... You are on the right track. Lead this nation." [17] Suebu's policies that Jouwe was endorsing were policies implemented under the Special Autonomy Law. One of the Indonesian government's objectives with the Jouwe visit was to secure his support for Special Autonomy. While Jouwe's endorsement was a personal one for Suebu, by the time Jouwe returned to The Netherlands Suebu was speaking of his desire to improve the implementation of the Special Autonomy Law. [18]

Nico Jouwe noted in his *Twitter* account of the visit: "Unfortunately I have seen Jayapura only from the inside of a car. With security all over." [19] It demonstrates how constrained political expression has become in Papua and how the security forces function that just after Jouwe returned to Jakarta, but before the Dutch journalists covering his visit could follow, on cue, there was a pro-independence demonstration in central Jayapura on 24 March. The demonstrators carried banners referring to the then forthcoming Indonesian parliamentary elections: "election no, referendum yes". Much to the displeasure of Governor Suebu, who regarded the Dutch journalists as guests of his government, the journalists were detained and interrogated by immigration officials because they had observed the demonstration. Elske Schouten's account of her interrogation borders on farce. Her interrogator asked her if she would become his *Face Book* friend. More seriously, she related a conversation with a Papuan human rights activist, who responded to the story of her detention by saying: "Now you yourself have experienced how the security forces here intimidate us." [20]

## **Jakarta: One meeting, two accounts**

Jouwe met with the President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on 26 March. In contrast to Jouwe's meeting with Minister Bakrie at the beginning of the visit, the meeting with the President was much more carefully managed. Nevertheless, in the press releases and briefings of each party, the respective and divergent agendas remained evident. In the light of the tight security arrangements surrounding Jouwe's visit, the detention of the Dutch journalists and the subsequent series of violent

incidents in Papua, the most significant statement attributed to the President in Jouwe's account of the discussion was: "Yudhoyono furthermore pointed out that he felt love for Papua and the Papuan people and also stated the military approach is no longer the way to resolve problems in Papua. After Nicolaas Jouwe raised the issue of human rights violations, the President promptly retorted that serious action would be taken against any of these violations." [21] Jouwe requested that the Papuan political prisoners, particularly those who were in jail because they had raised the Morning Star flag, be freed. IGSSARPRI's Franzalbert Yoku reported that the President had invited Jouwe to participate in further discussions to address Papua's problems and assist in Papua's further development within the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). [22] Notably, a key difference in the two sides' accounts of the conversation was the explicit framework of Papua as part of NKRI in Yoku's account and the absence of any mention of NKRI in Jouwe's press release.

Notwithstanding the different representations of Nicholaas Jouwe's discussion with the President, that there had been such a meeting is in itself significant. Papua has been a difficult policy issue for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. He was Abdurrahman Wahid's Security Minister in the last months of 2000, when Jakarta brought the "Papuan Spring" to a close, with pro-independence leaders detained and charged with treason. In his first State Speech as President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, recognised that the people of Aceh and Papua were still restless (*resah*) and committed his government to give special attention to the resolution of the conflict in Aceh and Papua. [23] Similar sentiments and the same commitment were repeated in the 2005 State speech. Some of his other statements suggested that the President had a preference for political rather than military solutions, and for accommodation rather than repression. [24] Much progress has been made in Aceh, but in respect to Papua the President has done little to resolve the contradictions in the policy he inherited from Megawati. As was made evident during the Jouwe visit, Special Autonomy remains the cornerstone for Jakarta's policy. Yet, the government has been highly ambivalent about implementing the Special Autonomy Law according to the spirit and letter as it had been legislated in 2001 for fear that it would empower the Papuan elite and become a stepping stone towards independence.

There were indications in Jouwe's discussions with both the President and Minister Bakrie that the government was open to further discussion on Papua. This was most explicit in the President's suggestion that Jouwe should be part of such discussions. The *Jakarta Post* reported Bakrie as saying that his meeting was a good start and that he hoped that there would be a settlement like the one negotiated with Aceh in 2005. [25] Similar references to the successful Aceh precedent have been made by the President and Foreign Minister. In another way, Nicholaas Jouwe's visit provides grounds for some optimism. The government's management of the visit marked a significant advance on US Congressman Eni Faleomavaega's visit to Biak and Manokwari in November 2007. The security arrangements for Jouwe's visit were tight, but he was not subjected to the sort of undiplomatic and counter-productive treatment metered out to Eni Faleomavaega and the US Ambassador, Cameron Hume. [26] Indeed, the respect that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his Ministers accorded Nicholaas Jouwe was appreciated and reciprocated. [27]

## **Time for dialogue, and problem solving on both sides**

There were also signs in the political atmosphere in both in Papua and in Jakarta that there was a greater preparedness for dialogue and negotiations to resolve the conflict in Papua. Although a desire for dialogue with Jakarta has been a long standing position shared broadly across the political spectrum in Papua, the Catholic intellectual, Dr Neles Tebay has developed the most comprehensive rationale for dialogue, with the publication in March 2009 of his book: *Dialog Jakarta Papua: Sebuah Perspektif Papua* (Jakarta-Papua Dialogue: a Papuan perspective). He acknowledges that the President and other Ministers have publicly committed the government to peaceful resolution of the

conflict in Papua in the manner of Aceh, in the same way Bakrie expressed this hope after his discussions with Jouwe. However, Neles Tebay argues that the government has misunderstood the conflict in Papua by identifying it with the flying of the Morning Star flag. This argument provides some insight into the “pin incident” fiasco, that occurred at the press conference after Jouwe’s meeting with Bakrie, when Jouwe declined to accept a pin of the Indonesian national flag and renounce his Papuan Morning Star flag. Neles Tebay contends that criminalising the use of the Morning Star flag and other expressions of Papuan nationalism will not solve the Papua conflict as it does not recognise the political nature of the conflict that demands a political solution. Jakarta’s obsession with the smoke of Papuan nationalism ignores the source of the fire. [28] He argues that the Indonesian government and Papuans think of each other as enemies and relations are characterised by mutual distrust and suspicion. If a dialogue is to be possible, he reasons, both the Government and the Papuan leaders have to assume a new role as problem solvers. They have to identify problems and discuss peaceful solutions that are acceptable to both sides. In his book, Neles Tebay identified fifteen conditions for successful dialogue, including that the government demonstrate the seriousness of its commitment to negotiate, that Papuans recognise publicly that independence will not be part of the negotiations, that the objectives of the dialogue are clarified along with the role of a facilitator and monitoring of the implementation of an agreement. [29]

In 2008 researchers from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) produced a “Papua Road Map” that recognised that the objective of the government’s Papua policy was to paralyse the independence movement through the use of military and intelligence operations. The LIPI researchers acknowledge that since the fall of Suharto state violence against Papuans has continued. They advocate a ‘justice approach’ that has as its objective the development of a constructive and progressive phase for Papua as part of Indonesia. The ‘justice approach’ has four components: recognition, development, dialogue and reconciliation. [30] Although LIPI is a government research institution, the opinions of its researchers do not necessarily reflect government policy. The policy advocated in the Road Map is at odds with the approach of those parts of the government that have consistently endeavoured to undermine and limit the implementation of the Special Autonomy Law. However, the Road Map might not be too far removed from the policy considerations of more enlightened sections of the government, hopefully including the President’s office.

Both the approaches of Neles Tebay and the LIPI researchers require significant shifts in attitude by both the Indonesian government and the Papuan leaders. For the Government, the demand for dialogue has been interpreted as negotiations for the independence of Papua and the further disintegration of Indonesia. Implicit in the thinking of many, if not most, Papuan advocates of dialogue, is the assumption that the outcome will be independence. Neles Tebay recognises, like the Acehnese negotiators in 2004 and 2005, that dialogue is only possible with Jakarta on the basis that independence is not on the agenda. Neles Tebay and other Papuan leaders have not yet engaged in the task of convincing their fellow Papuans that independence can no longer be the objective. Given the widespread and deep resentment in Papuan society against Indonesia and mistrust of the government’s intentions, this will be no easy task.

## **The persistence of military enforcers**

Nicholaas Jouwe returned to his home in Delft. He had not ended oppression in Papua as demanded of him by the student demonstrators who welcomed him in Jayapura, but he had not quite succumbed to the national symbol swapping diplomacy of the Indonesian government. Jouwe had engaged the Indonesian President and some of his Ministers in a discussion about peaceful resolution, abuses of human rights and the presence and behaviour of the Indonesian security forces in Papua. It is unlikely that these subjects were prioritised in the briefing notes when Susilo

Bambang Yudhoyono issued the invitation to Jouwe.

With Jouwe safely back in Delft, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was left with the conflict in Papua still festering. In the two weeks after Jouwe left Indonesia events on the ground in Papua highlighted the magnitude of the governance problems Indonesia faces in Papua. Even by the standards of Papua, the pattern and intensity of violence and destruction has been remarkable and the fear generated among Papuans and Indonesian immigrants disturbing. Following the pro- independence demonstration in Jayapura that led to the detention of the Dutch journalists, there has been an attack on the police station in Abepura on the outskirts of Jayapura, both the Vice-Chancellor's office at Cenderawasih University, and the office of the provincial Electoral Office have been burnt and three Indonesian immigrant motor bike taxi riders have been killed and two wounded in the central highlands town of Wamena, leading many immigrants to seek refuge in police and military compounds. This list of incidents is not exhaustive, but sufficient to illustrate something of the scale of the tensions and conflicts. At the time of writing, it is not known who was responsible for these incidents or, as many Papuans suspect, to what extent the security forces were directly and indirectly involved. In contrast to the President's acknowledgement to Jouwe that the military approach is not appropriate for resolving problems in Papua, the Government's response - knee jerk reaction - was to send more police and military units. As was the case after the demonstrations in March 2006, the security forces' sweeping operations and curtailment of movement have generated fear among Papuans. These developments especially in Jayapura and Wamena prompted Governor Suebu to appeal for calm and a cessation of what he described as "terrorist actions". He asked those responsible for the violence to cease as it only made society afraid and apprehensive. [31] In a detailed report of the violence and destruction in Jayapura, Wamena and Nabire in early April, the human rights office of the largest Protestant Church in Papua concluded that these events had ignited significant ethnic tensions. Fortunately, Papuan society realised that they were pushed towards civil conflict by certain interests that wanted to create a cycle of violence that could be used as the legal justification to kill, torture and imprison many Papuans. [32]

It is unlikely that, during the campaign for the Presidential elections, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono or any other candidates will want to promote the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Papua as an issue in the campaign. The optimistic reading of Nicolaas Jouwe's visit and the subsequent violence and destruction in Papua is that a re-elected Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono or a new President will feel sufficiently confident to engage in a dialogue with Papuan leaders along the lines advocated by Neles Tebay and the LIPI researchers to resolve peacefully Indonesia's last and most intractable regional conflict. One of the constructive consequences of Nicholaas Jouwe's visit might be that it became a circuit breaker for Indonesian policy makers and enforcers.

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- [13] Elske Schouten, "[De koning van Papoea is terug](#)" (The King of Papua is back), 22-3-09. See also the You Tube Video of Jouwe's arrival in Jayapura, "[Nicolaas Jouwe kust de grond in Papua](#)".
- [14] "[Protesters, supporters greet OPM founder](#)", Jakarta Post, 23-3-09.
- [15] "[Tokoh Pencetus OPM Tiba di Jayapura](#)", Cenderawasih Pos, 23-3-2009.
- [16] [Tokoh OPM Pertemuan Tertutup dengan Gubernur: Nicholas: Gubernur Sudah Lakukan yang Saya Mimpi](#), Cenderawasih Pos, 24-3-09. Franzalbert Yoku, one of Jouwe's chaperons, represented the discussion between the Governor and Jouwe much more in terms that Indonesia, with its policy of Special Autonomy, had addressed many of the grievances that had led to demands for independence. Yoku argued that Papua need no longer to think of associating with Papua New Guinea or Australia, Indonesia could provided for all Papua's needs.
- [17] [NicoJouwe](#) account on Twitter.
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- [26] [News Release, Congressman Eni F. H. Faleomavaega](#), 17-12-2007. Eni Faleomavaega had been



a staunch critic of Indonesian policy in Papua. With an invitation to visit Indonesia and Papua, the government had hoped to persuade the Congressman to support the Special Autonomy policy.

[27] "[Mr. Nicolaas Jouwe \(sr\) gave his report and talk about his vision on West Papua](#)", 18-4-2009, Molukse Museum, Utrecht.

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Associate Professor Richard Chauvel teaches at Victoria University, Melbourne. His research has focused on political and social change in eastern Indonesia, most particularly in Maluku and Papua, together with Australia-Indonesia relations. He was a consultant for the International Crisis Group in Papua and his report was published as [Indonesia: Ending Repression in Irian Jaya](#) 20 September 2001, ICG Asia Report No 23, Jakarta/Brussels. Two volumes of essays on Papua were published as *The Land of Papua and the Indonesian State*, (Monash University). He is the author of two policy papers on Papua for the [East West Center Washington's](#) project on "The Dynamics and Management of Internal Conflict in Asia"; [The Papua Conflict: Jakarta's Perceptions and Policies](#) (with Ikrar Nusa Bhakti) and [Constructing Papuan Nationalism: History, Ethnicity, and Adaptation](#).  
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