

# Sukarno's Foreign Policy reassessed

PETER CHRISTIAN HAUSWEDELL

## Summary

Departing from an exposition of the diametrically exposed foreign policy aims of the Sukarno and Suharto governments, the article attempts to see Guided Democracy's foreign policy as shaped by the anti-colonial political socialization of the nationalist elite, the ideology of the "Indonesian Revolution", the domestic competition for power and the influences of the international system, rather than to follow the simple Western explanation of Sukarno as an anti-imperialist psychopath. The study focuses on his concept of the New Emerging Forces, the attempt to forge an international united front against the status quo and for a new world order beyond imperialism and capitalism. The failure of this venture is analyzed as the result of inherent contradictions within the strategy, as due to the weak capabilities of the alliance partners, and as a consequence of international counter-alignments. Finally an attempt is made to portray the mutual influences between the domestic policy of a transformation to the left and the foreign policy of confrontation under the Peking-Djakarta axis.

Seven years after the October 1, 1965 coup attempt and six years after the fall of Sukarno, Indonesia's foreign policy has departed fundamentally from its former direction. From a position of militant anti-imperialism, political and economic independence, and association with radical Afro-Asian socialist and bourgeois nationalist states, it has shifted to a strong pro-Western stand, and has been integrated into the capitalist world economy. Former conceptions for an autarcic, self-reliant economy with socialist intentions have been transformed into a de facto state-capitalist development plan heavily dependent on Western aid and advice. A revolutionary diplomacy and policy of confrontation has changed to a sober "foreign policy of development", where external relations are primarily used to procure the necessary credits for economic modernization.

The astonishing fact about this turnabout is that it is carried out with many of the old slogans: although the orientation has drastically changed, the ideological foundations and operative guidelines have not. According to official Indonesian pronouncements<sup>1</sup>, Indonesia considers her foreign policy still to be **bebas-aktif** (independent

<sup>1</sup> See for example: Adam Malik, **Politik luar negeri Indonesia dipimpin oleh falsafah Pantja-Sila**. Pidato Waperdam/Menlu Adam Malik dimuka sidang DPR-GR pada tanggal 5 Mei 1966. (Djakarta), Kementerian Penerangan, Direktorat Visuil, 1966; or: same author, **Kita mengabdikan politik luar negeri Indonesia kepada kepentingan nasional**. Pidato pada perajaan 17 Agustus 1966 di Irian Barat. (Djakarta), Departemen Penerangan, Direktorat Visuil (1966). See also: Departement Luar Negeri, Republik Indonesia, **Politik Luar Negeri R. I. Jang Bebas-Aktif dan Anti Imperialisme-Kolonialisme**. Djakarta, Direktorat-Djendral Research, Pengamanan dan Komunikasi, Research Publikasi, Vol. III, 1970, 56 p., stenciled.

and active)<sup>2</sup> and anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist<sup>3</sup> in principle. This coincides with the domestic scene, where the tenet is maintained that some kind of Indonesian socialism is the aim of the development policy, although the present trend clearly points to a capitalist revolutionary transformation of Indonesian society.

The importance of Indonesia's integration into the Western camp can hardly be underestimated. The destruction of the PKI was a decisive, unexpected gain for the United States anti-communist containment strategy, and a close observation of the special attention the US devotes to the country presently, leads to the impression that Indonesia will make up for the "losses" incurred in Vietnam, and may once be presented as a model of non-communist modernization.

The change from a foreign policy of militant anti-imperialism and economic modernization through domestic capital accumulation, to one of economic development with the aid of just those "imperialists", has progressed relatively smoothly, and is not seriously challenged by present domestic critics of the Suharto Government<sup>4</sup>. This is because the new economic policies have achieved relative economic stability and stable prices for the main staples and vital consumer goods (although to the slight detriment of the producing rural population, which, however, is politically negligible). They are also unopposed, because they provide lucrative kickbacks and various sources of income for quite a broad section of the Djakarta elite and upper middle class through the channeling of private investment and international aid via the Djakarta government bureaucracy, and the continuing boom for real estate and services catering to foreigners in the capital.

After the political bankruptcy and economic chaos of Sukarno's Guided Democracy the Government seems justified in its policy to invite the entry of Western capital, even if it necessitates concessions in terms of political independence. The present policy probably has the support of the majority of informed public opinion, because the alternative of the "Old Order", plans for an autarky (**berdikari**)<sup>5</sup>, was discredited

<sup>2</sup> The principle **bebas-aktif** was developed under the impact of the Cold War situation during the fifties, when the big powers tried to exert pressure to line up camp followers. The Indonesians decided to remain independent of any ties, and especially of military alliances with other countries, which could limit the nation's sovereignty, freedom of action, and impaired their national interest. For the development of the term see Anton Soewarso, Drs. J. M., **Politik Bebas-Aktif**. Mashab-Pemikiran Nasional Jang Historis dan Moral-Filosofis. Djakarta: Departemen Luar Negeri, Direktorat Djendral Research, Pengamanan dan Komunikasi, Research Publikasi, Th. I, No. 1, Sept. 1969, esp. pp. 12-14. For some background reading see Mohammad Hatta, **Dasar politik luar negeri Republik Indonesia**. Djakarta, Tintamas, 1953, and: Sunario, S. H., Indonesia's non-alignment policy in theory and practice. In: **Indonesian Review of International Affairs** I, No. 1 (July 1970), pp. 58-65.

<sup>3</sup> This was laid down in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Indonesian Republic.

<sup>4</sup> For some moderately dissenting and critical voices see: **Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia Dewasa Ini**. Diskusi oleh Ali Sastroamidjojo, Imron Rosjadi, Thee Kian Wie, Juwono Sudarsono, Goenawan Mohamad; Jajasan Indonesia, Djakarta, 1972, esp. the contribution by Juwono Sudarsono. On the question of foreign aid and its implications see also Mohammad Hatta, **Masalah Bantuan Perkembangan Ekonomi Bagi Indonesia**. (Djakarta), Penerbit Djambatan (1967). The present fiercest critic of foreign aid is the daily **Merdeka**.

<sup>5</sup> Self-reliance was one of the most prominent slogans in 1965. The main intention was to make Indonesia independent from imports and foreign aid, and to lay the foundation for true independence. The planning for autarky was, however, still much behind the ambitions. See Sukarno, **Self-reliance**. Policy address by the President/Great Leader of the Revolu-

through the bungling incompetence and the administrative immobility of the Sukarno regime.

Despite the bad performance record of Guided Democracy, even now quite a number of Indonesians are quick to assert their consent with Sukarno's main foreign policy line as a matter of national pride. They will argue that Sukarno sacrificed national interests for international ones, that his policy was characterized by a disastrous disparity between aims and capabilities, that he lost grip of reality, — but that his anti-imperialism was basically correct<sup>6</sup>. What matters in Indonesia today, and where they strongly disagree with him, was his conscious domestic and foreign alliance with the Left, clearly the main reason for his fall.

The political significance of Sukarno's foreign policy is generally underestimated in the West today, mainly because of the damage his personal style did to his reputation, and the distracting attention that was given to the circumstances of his fall. The most frequent images Westerners tend to associate with him are that of an irresponsible playboy politician, his vanity and conspicuous consumption, his economic and administrative incompetence besides rhetorical brilliance, the discrepancy between revolutionary rhetoric and national-bourgeois conservatism, his stubborn preoccupation with principles and unwillingness to compromise, and his emotional decisions. For the outside world he was often the "notorious troublemaker", hypersensitive towards all real or presumed imperialist plots, even a "paranoid" engaged in a gigantic anti-imperialist ego-trip to rectify the colonial sufferings of his people.

This essentially negative list of characteristics and peculiarities of the late President was the prevailing Western view of him during the time he held office. And it seems he earned it essentially, because he did not live up to the liberal-democratic Western standards and refused to comply with the rules of the game in a superpower dominated international system. After a severe colonial political socialization his foreign policy was not surprisingly marked by an intensive striving for absolute political and economic independence, and by a status quo challenge to the whole international system, to allocate to Indonesia and the other newly developing nations a position commensurate with the post-colonial world situation.

Although it finally collapsed prematurely, his concept of the "New Emerging Forces" (NEFO) — an International United Front against imperialism, capitalism and all forms of political domination and oppression — and the alliance with China were the first major departures from the international coalition patterns of the Cold War. Since the NEFO concept was based on the conviction that the major contradiction in world politics was no longer that between capitalism and socialism, but between

tion/Mandatory of the Provisional Madjelis Permusjawaratan Rakjat Sementara (MPRS) at the opening of the third general session of the Madjelis, Bandung, 11th April 1965. (Djakarta), Dept. of Information, Republic of Indonesia (1965), Special issue 6,502.

For the problem in general see Djambek, H. Moh. (ed.), **Doktrin ekonomi terpimpin dan pembangunan**. Kuliah ilmiah pendidikan Kader Revolusi Angkatan Dwikora, Djakarta, Jajasan Serbaguna (1965?).

<sup>6</sup> For a confirmation of this see Franklin B. Weinstein, *The Indonesian Elite's View of the World and the Foreign Policy of Development*, in: *Indonesia* no. 12. Okt. 1971, concluding that the new orientation of Indonesian foreign policy has not been accompanied by a comparable change of attitudes among the Indonesian elite, which still remains suspicious against all foreign countries.

imperialism and the newly independent countries and national liberation movements, NEFO also became the first political manifestation of the North-South conflict. Sukarno recognized this development and brought it into a political form, and the following study will deal with the historical-ideological origins, the implementation, and the disintegration of the International United Front.

### Indonesia and the International System

Indonesia's foreign policy of confrontation in the mid sixties was shaped not only by the political socialization of Sukarno and the national elite and the complex of thought, which later came to be called the "Ideology of the Indonesian Revolution", but also by the nature of the external environment, the international system, in which the nationalists had to operate to realize their aspirations.

After the proclamation of independence in 1945, the nationalists had solemnly pledged in the preamble of their constitution that the system of colonialism should be eradicated worldwide. But an observation of the region convinced them of the power realities and Indonesia's weakness to change them. In the prophetic words of his *Perjuangan Kita* in 1945<sup>7</sup>, Sjahrir had outlined that Indonesia was centered in the British and American sphere of interest in a world of capitalism and imperialism, and that these facts would limit her aspirations for a long time to come. The transfer of political sovereignty and the institution of a Western form of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia 1949/1950, as much as it was correctly attacked by the Indonesian Left as a compromise, was essentially sound "Realpolitik", for any more radical solution would have hardly assured the backing of the big capitalist powers for the cause of independence.

After the failure of parliamentary democracy, Sukarno shifted Indonesia's foreign policy from a position of nonalignment in the fifties to one of confrontation. This step has to be seen in the context of Indonesia's disappointment with the international system, especially in its seeming unwillingness to assist in the return of West Irian to Indonesian sovereignty.

Indonesia shared the fate of many of its fellow newly independent Afro-Asian states: After 1945 they had entered an international system into the making of which they did not have a voice. It was consequently built for and dominated by the big powers, and operated along traditional Western concepts of state interaction. For the newcomers "Realpolitik" meant to accept inequality and hierarchy as the essential features of the system. Most of the newly independent nations, however, entering the international forum from a high moral position after the sufferings under colonialism, were not willing to accept these facts, and advanced their idealist principles of a world without power politics and with full equality<sup>8</sup>. Only slowly they underwent the troublesome learning process that basically the international system is

<sup>7</sup> Sutan Sjahrir, *Our Struggle (Perjuangan Kita)*. Translated with an introduction by Benedict R. O'G. Anderson. Ithaca: N. Y., Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Translation Series, 1968, esp. pp. 23-25.

<sup>8</sup> A very sensitive and convincing study on the new states in the international system is Werner Levi, *The challenge of World Politics in South and Southeast Asia*. Englewood Cliffs. N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1968, esp. Chapters IV-VI.

Hobbes world, and that the weight of a nation's foreign policy is commensurate with its military, political and economic power.

Confronted with the reality of power politics in the international system, there were two options for the new states: they could either accept the "rules of the game", transverse the way from idealism to realism, and work for a slow evolutionary change to a more just world order which would — hopefully — finally allocate adequate representation and status to them, — or they could decide not to accept the status quo, to root out the old system once and for all, to "build the world anew", as Sukarno proclaimed. And it seems to be no coincidence that those states which became independent peacefully and through a slow transfer of power, generally took the first option for "realism", whereas those who had fought and sacrificed so much for it, often went the more challenging revolutionary road.

Sukarno always emphasized this division, for he differentiated between countries which got their independence "as a present", and those which had fought for it. He considered the leaders of the former as "mental arrivée", conservative, and charged that they had never really cut the umbilical cord with the former colonial power. He admired, however, the revolutionary consciousness, the fighting spirit, and the persistent antiimperialist principles of those, who, like him, had suffered in colonial prisons and led the struggle for independence, rather than having negotiated it in the comfortable chairs of White Hall or the Quai D'orsay. Since international relations were personal relations for Sukarno, it was no wonder that he linked himself with leaders like Nkrumah, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh, Nasser etc., and disliked Nehru, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Chiang Kai-shek and others<sup>9</sup>.

Probably a case can be made to explain these socialization experiences as the major variable effecting the later foreign policies of the more militant anti-imperialist leaders. But for Sukarno this explanation is not sufficient, for the man was more complex. If the colonial humiliations explain his zeal, his conceptual thinking about foreign policy was much more influenced by his Marxist approach to history<sup>10</sup> and the application of the dialectical method to solve its contradictions.

Under the impact of the colonial situation and especially influenced by Lenin's theory of imperialism<sup>11</sup>, Sukarno and most of his contemporaries in the nationalist

<sup>9</sup> See Sukarno, **After ten years still onward, never retreat!** Address at the solemn ceremony on the tenth anniversary of the First Asian-African Conference, Djakarta, 18 April 1965. (Djakarta), Executive Command Tenth Anniversary First Asian-African Conference (1965), p. 11. Sukarno classifies Chiang Kai-shek and Tunku Abdul Rahman here as "non-Asian Asians".

<sup>10</sup> For the Marxist influence on Sukarno see Bernahrd Dahm, **Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence**. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969, pp. 127–173. Sukarno presents his own view about the impact of Marxism on his thinking on two occasions while receiving an honorary doctorate: **Pidato P. J. M. Presiden Sukarno pada Upatjara Pemberian Gelar Doktor Kehormatan oleh Universitas Hasanuddin di Makassar** (29th of April 1963), (Djakarta), Departemen Penerangan, R. I. (1963), Penerbitan Khusus No. 285, and: **Indonesia, ajam djantan sedjarah dunia baru!** (Acceptance speech for honorary doctorate, Padjadjaran University, Bandung, December 23, 1964). (Djakarta), Departemen Penerangan, R. I. (1965), Penerbitan Khusus 356. The collection of Sukarno's early articles and speeches, **Dibawah Bendera Revolusi**, Djilid Pertama, Tjetakan keempat, Panitia Penerbit Dibawah Bendera Revolusi, Djakarta, 1965, shows the influence of Marxism like a red thread.

<sup>11</sup> A very perceptive essay on the attractiveness of Marxism-Leninism to Asian intellectuals

movement had become particularly attracted to historical materialism to analyze Indonesia's problems. Since imperialism, which enslaved Indonesia, was an offspring of the world wide system of capitalism, that system had to be destroyed world wide to achieve true independence. The Indonesian revolution could therefore not be seen as geographically limited, for as much as it was a response to a fundamental antithesis in Indonesia, it was but a part of a larger, continuing and more fundamental antithesis in world politics between the forces of imperialism-capitalism, and the forces for a just social order, equality and lasting peace. These ideas finally found their political form in the concept of the New Emerging Forces (NEFO)<sup>12</sup>.

### The Development of the NEFO concept

Although Sukarno's thoughts for a united front of all colonized people against their oppressors dates back to the twenties and thirties, under the distracting influence of the Cold War in the fifties it took him some time to take the theme up again and view world politics in the dialectical terms of the NEFO opposing the OLDEFO (Old Establishing Forces).

In 1958, when Bertrand Russell had written that mankind was divided into two gigantic camps, the followers of the Declaration of Independence and those of the Communist Manifesto, Sukarno had labeled the statement as incorrect: a third, fast swelling camp of the African-Asian states had taken to the stage of history. In 1960, in his famous "To build the world anew" speech before the United Nations<sup>13</sup>, he spoke again of the weight of the African-Asian powers in world politics and reminded the organization to make structural rearrangements to allocate them a proper place. Only in 1961 in his speech to the Belgrade non-aligned conference<sup>14</sup>, and later, under the impact of peaceful coexistence between the super-powers, did his concept take final shape.

According to Sukarno the major contradiction in World Politics was no longer the East-West Cold War contradiction between Communism and Capitalism. It had been replaced by a new, more fundamental contradiction between the NEW EMERGING FORCES and the OLD ESTABLISHED FORCES. The NEFO, defined as the newly independent nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the socialist bloc, and the progressive organizations and individuals in the capitalist countries, were fighting internationally against Colonialism, Imperialism, Capitalism, and all defenders of the status quo. They wanted to build a new world order "without the exploitation of nation by nation and of man by man". Opposed to them were the

in the colonial countries is that of the late Harry J. Benda, *Reflections on Asian Communism*. In: *The Yale Review*, LVI (October 1969), pp. 1-16.

<sup>12</sup> The most comprehensive study on the development of the NEFO-concept is James Robert Angel, *The New Emerging Forces in Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Canberra: Australian National University, Ph. D. Thesis, 1970, 2 vols.

<sup>13</sup> Sukarno, *To build the world anew*. Address before the Fifteenth General Assembly of the United Nations on Friday, 30 September 1960. (Djakarta), Dept. of Information, Republic of Indonesia (1960), Special issue 68.

<sup>14</sup> Sukarno, *From non-alignment to coordinated accumulation of moral force, toward peace and social justice among nations*. (Djakarta), Dept. of Information (1961), Special issue 80.

Old Established Forces, a group of reactionaries and conservatives preventing the new nations from taking their legitimate role on the world stage. They controlled the new nations economically, intervened militarily and infiltrated their culture.

If the NEFO doctrine was the major expression of Sukarno's view of the world and his intention to change it, Indonesian foreign policy was also effected by the "Ideology of the Indonesian Revolution"<sup>15</sup>, which was extended after 1959, and, through a claim of universal validity, was used to legitimize foreign policy.

The most striking aspect of that ideology for the purposes of this study, was the assertion that the Indonesian Revolution was congruent with, and just a part of the greater ongoing "Revolution of Mankind" to end all exploitation and oppression<sup>16</sup>. Although the Indonesian Revolution was only a part of the world revolution against imperialism and capitalism, it was propagated as the "leading star", the "vanguard" of all other revolutions, the most "up to date" revolution. As Sukarno and Subandrio proclaimed, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution had been progressive at their time, but were now outdated. The French Revolution had only brought political democracy, but not social and economic equality, and the Russian Revolution lacked the belief in God. The Indonesian Revolution had now synthesized these two revolutions with the social demands of mankind in the 20th century and could therefore claim universal validity<sup>17</sup>. Its **Pantjasila** declaration of principles was really a higher sublimation, a "hogere optrekking" of the Communist Manifesto and the Declaration of Independence, and Sukarno proposed to have it written into the constitution of the United Nations.

The adoption of international means for domestic ends is nothing new in history. Deciding over whether the domestic or the international revolution should have priority, Sukarno and Subandrio adopted a Trotskyite<sup>18</sup> internationalist position and

<sup>15</sup> See Donald Weatherbee, **Ideology in Indonesia: Sukarno's Indonesian Revolution**. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph Series No. 8, 1966, for an introduction to the subject, which is a diffuse mixture of Sukarno's thoughts with the generalized experiences of the Indonesian Revolution. For an Indonesian collection of the major documents see **Bahan-bahan pokok indoktrinasi**, (Djakarta), Panitia Pembina Djiwa Revolusi, Tjet. 3, Prapantja, 1965, Sukarno's independence day speeches are also a major source: Sukarno, **Indonesia's Political Manifesto, 1959-1964**. Djakarta, Prapantja (1964).

<sup>16</sup> Whereas this was clearly in line with the Marxist reasoning mentioned above, the following claims are startling, if one realizes that the "Indonesian Revolution" was a heroic national independence struggle, but hardly a social revolution like the French, Russian, or Chinese, with which the Indonesians tried to rank theirs.

<sup>17</sup> See Sukarno, **Reflections upon the Indonesian Revolution**. (Djakarta), Dept. of Foreign Affairs, 1964, esp. pp. 10-11. See also Sukarno, **Pantja Sila, the basis of the State of the Republic of Indonesia**. (Djakarta), National Committee for the Commemoration of the Birth of Pantja Sila, (1964). See also Ratu Aminah Hidajat, **Peranan Politik luar negeri Republic Indonesia dan konfrontasi Nefo lawan Oldefo, menudju pembentukan dunia baru** (n. p., n. d.), pp. 14-15; and Chaerul Saleh, **The Proclamation of 17th of Augustus 1945: The Eruption into Being of the New Emerging Forces**. Bandung, Galunggung, n. d. (1964?), pp. 52-55.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that Sukarno was well aware of the Stalin-Trotsky controversy in the twenties about "socialism in one country" versus internationalism: see **Dibawah Bendera Revolusi**, Djilid I, . . . (see note 10), pp. 521-531. The "internationalist" foreign policy of Sukarno is also linked to Trotsky in Mohammad Sadli's contribution to **Kebangkitan Semangat '66: Mendjelajah Tracée Baru** (Simposium, diselenggarakan oleh Universitas Indonesia, 6. Mei 1966 - 9. Mei 1966 dengan Kerdjasama K.A.M.I. dan K.A.S.I.). Djakarta:

gave first priority to the advancement of the international aims, deliberately neglecting and postponing domestic priorities. It was argued that the international revolution would positively influence the development of the Indonesian Revolution, and that a restriction of the revolution to domestic proportions would bring the danger of isolation. It is apparent, how easily the ideology of the Indonesian Revolution could channel foreign policy into confrontation — both as a matter of principle, and on grounds of expediency.

### Indonesia, China, and the Big Powers

The foreign policy of confrontation tended to isolate Indonesia from the major Western powers, to estrange a considerable number of more moderate friends in the Afro-Asian group, to solidify her relations with socialist anti-imperialist Asian powers like China, North Vietnam and North Korea, and by force of that and other reasons, to cool off her relations with the Soviet Union.

Indonesian-Soviet relations<sup>19</sup>, at a peak after the Soviet support for the regaining of West Irian, worsened steadily after the beginning of the Chinese-Indonesian rapprochement and the Soviet unwillingness, to come out with more than verbal support against Malaysia. For the Soviet Union, her relations to Indonesia were controlled by greater priorities: The conflict with China, and the growing international collaboration with the US, including a tacit containment policy of both powers in Asia against China. Although Sukarno included the Soviet Union for optical reasons among the NEFO-powers, by force of her own policies, and measured with the yardstick of militant anti-imperialism, she could more easily be classified as OLDEFO.

The Malaysia policy, Indonesia's international strategy, and her domestic drift to the left also caused almost a break in her relations with the United States<sup>20</sup>. Despite US earlier involvement in the PRRI-Permesta rebellion against him<sup>21</sup>, Sukarno's relationship with the United States was that of an admiring, but disappointed lover. The long struggle for West Irian had considerably influenced his anti-American views, for he was not willing to accept that the US faced a dilemma of choice between a NATO-partner and anti-colonial principles. The final American pressure on

1966, various pagings, stenciled. For Subandrio's thoughts on foreign policy and the Indonesian Revolution see: Subandrio, **Kemerdekaan nasional dan revolusi dunia**; tiga pidato pokok. (Djakarta), Departemen Luar Negeri, Republik Indonesia (1963), and: **Keep the Bandung spirit bright**. A review of the achievements of Dasa Sila (speech before the Afro-Asian Journalists Association, Djakarta, April 20, 1965). (Djakarta, 1965), Government Printing Office.

<sup>19</sup> There are few studies on Indonesian-Soviet relations. One concentrating on the military aid is Uri Ra'anani, **The U.S.S.R. arms the Third World: Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Relations**. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969.

<sup>20</sup> See Frederick P. Bunnell, **The Kennedy Initiatives in Indonesia, 1962–1963**. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University, Ph. D. Thesis, September 1969, for an account of the relations under the Kennedy Presidency. The memoirs of the former American Ambassador in Indonesia (1957–1965) contain some interesting insights: Howard Palfrey Jones, **Indonesia: The Possible Dream**. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971.

<sup>21</sup> See Daniel S. Lev: America, Indonesia and the Rebellion of 1958. In: **United Asia** (Bombay), Vol. 17, no. 4, July–August 1965, pp. 305–309.

the Dutch to give in, came too late to change his mind. American involvement in Vietnam later seems to have strongly reinforced his judgement<sup>22</sup>.

In addition it was simply a question of personalities: Sukarno's flashy style of politics, his emotional outbursts and anti-colonial hypersensitivity were tolerated, though not exactly liked by Kennedy, whom he admired; they did not impress Eisenhower or Johnson, who largely thought him a crypto-Communist and irresponsible politician; and they were strongly resented by sober American Senators, who voted against any further aid to Indonesia as the appeasement of a demagogue.

In the beginning the Americans had been critical of the British insensitivity towards Indonesia when establishing Malaysia. They had tried to mediate, but in the light of their own engagement in Vietnam, and realizing that Sukarno was against all foreign presence in the area, Washington discovered its community of interests with Britain and came out in support of Malaysia.

With the relations to the two super-powers on a level of animosity or considerable strain, Indonesia could improve her ties to the third great power, China<sup>23</sup>. During 1963–1965 the informal diplomatic alliance with that country, the so-called "poros Peking-Djakarta" (Peking-Djakarta axis), was the most spectacular aspect of Indonesian foreign policy.

It has often been asserted that Indonesia, being isolated through the confrontation policy, was driven into China's arm, became a transmission belt for Chinese intentions in the Afro-Asian world, and conducted a foreign policy mainly for Chinese interests<sup>24</sup>. This is not only an insult to Indonesian nationalism and Sukarno's independent-mindedness, but also simply falsifies the historical record, where the Indonesian alliance partners (Sukarno and the PKI), through their autonomy and unpredictability, to the very end could never be really controlled by the Chinese. Sino-Indonesian cooperation in world politics was not forced on Indonesia as a necessity, nor did it grow out of desperation. It had long been growing on the basis of common anti-imperialist aims and a shared perception of the international situation.

China and Indonesia came together in the early sixties as defectors from their respective camps. Indonesia had left the non-aligned position and China the Soviet Bloc. At a time when Sukarno had already finished his analysis of the world situation in NEFO-OLDEFO terms and proposed an International United Front against the OLDEFO, the Chinese were still rethinking their position. After they had left the Soviet Bloc they were militarily weaker, but they had gained new flexibility. The

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Soedjatmoko, former ambassador to the US, Djakarta, December 1971. See also Sukarno, **After ten years . . .** (see note 9), p. 10, for a scathing attack on the US role in Vietnam. Sukarno's speech to the Conference of Peoples of Indochina in Phnom Penh, March 4, 1965 also reveals his thoughts about the US in Vietnam: **Asian problems solved by Asians. Les problèmes asiatiques résolus par les asiatiques.** (Djakarta), Executive Command Tenth Anniversary First Asian-African Conference, (1965).

<sup>23</sup> On the background of Sino-Indonesian relations see David P. Mazingo, *Sino-Indonesian Relations: An Overview 1955–1965*. Santa Monica, Calif.: The RAND Corporation, Memorandum RM–4,641–PR, July 1965.

<sup>24</sup> For such a view see for example **Politik Luar Negeri R. I. jang Bebas-Aktif** (see above note 1), p. 30. The study of Sheldon W. Simon, **The Broken Triangle: Peking, Djakarta and the PKI**. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969, also sees Indonesia "penetrated" by China, and Sukarno and the PKI as under Chinese influence.

signing of the test-ban treaty 1963 in Moscow, and the joint American-Soviet containment of China in Asia confronted the Chinese with the task to look for a foreign policy strategy to break the Soviet-American condominium, and to alter the setting of world politics to China's favour.

Peking also arrived at the conclusion that the main contradiction in world politics existed between the newly independent states and national liberation movements with imperialism (and revisionism), and in 1963/1964 decided likewise for an International United Front<sup>25</sup>. Trying to turn this strategy against the two superpowers, China wanted to form a coalition mainly with the bourgeois nationalist governments of the Third World (the "first intermediate zone"), but also with the governments of secondary capitalist powers (the "second intermediate zone"), like France, where the contradictions with the camp leader could be exploited. If one compares this strategy with Sukarno's NEFO, one will realize a striking similarity, for the geographical zones and political forces of his United Front overlapped to a considerable degree with that of the Chinese.

Indonesia became China's major partner in the joint venture of the International United Front, and before their bilateral relations are analyzed, one should explain some of the Chinese operative guidelines, for they have a direct bearing on the approach they adopted towards Indonesia.

China's strategy was a "Realpolitik" approach for cooperation with other governments to wield power in the international system and limit Soviet-American influence. Or, to say it in Communist terms, in order to be effective, she would predominantly work for a United Front from above with bourgeois-nationalist regimes, rather than a United Front from below with Communist parties and leftist insurgents, for these had little influence in world affairs and were ineffective against the Soviet Union or the United States. Applied to the Indonesian case, it meant that the Chinese should stress the foreign policy aspect of the cooperation and cultivate their relations with Sukarno, but refrain from interfering in domestic politics, and avoid the impression that China was working through the local Chinese or Communist Party to further revolutionary aims. We shall see later to what extent these Chinese guidelines were changed through the Indonesian domestic situation of 1965.

In military and economic terms the alliance potential of the two nations was considerable, when compared with other states in the region. It was, however, no match for the potential the US and Great Britain could muster as the dominant external powers of the region. The absence of any Chinese or Indonesian maritime or air power worth mentioning, made the pooling of military resources impossible. The geographical separation of the two countries was aggravated by the low degree of transport facilities and communication, and further impeded by the buffer of British and American military power interposed between them. As much as the low degree of military power limited their capability, it also meant that both alliance partners had little coercive means to influence each other. The special character of this alliance was then its emphasis on political-diplomatic cooperation, which was based

<sup>25</sup> For Chinese foreign policy in the sixties see Michael B. Yahuda, *Chinese Foreign Policy after 1963: The Maoist Phases*. In: *China Quarterly*, No. 36 (October–December 1968), pp. 93–114; David P. Mazingo, *China's Foreign Policy and the Cultural Revolution*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University, International Relations of East Asia Project, 1970.

on the convergence of ideological motivations and the strategic objectives of the decisional elites.

Sino-Indonesian relations were, however, also characterized by considerable alliance handicaps. The strength of indigenous Indonesian nationalism and deep rooted anti-Chinese and anti-Communist sentiments made the alliance a very vulnerable structure from the start, which hardly enjoyed wider elite or public support. Since many Indonesians perceived a correlation between the China policy, Sukarno's move to the left, and the domestic advances of the PKI, it was easily predictable when the margin of tolerance would be drawn, by Indonesia's strong anti-Communist forces.

### **The implementation of the United Front and the "Djakarta-Phnom Penh-Hanoi-Peking-Pyongyang Axis"**

The main international forum where Indonesia and China tried to implement their joint strategy was that of their fellow Asian-African states. As one will recall, during that time there were two conflicting groups in the Afro-Asian world. The non-aligned states under Indian, Yugoslavian and Egyptian leadership saw their major task as the prevention of nuclear war between the superpowers, and in furthering the thought of peaceful coexistence. They regarded the issues of colonialism and imperialism as of declining importance, and entered into the second decade of independence with concepts of the priority of economic development.

The other group, as it came to be led by Indonesia and China, but also mostly backed by Pakistan, Ghana, Algeria, Mali and Guinea, did not share the views of the former group. For them the anti-imperialist struggle took precedence. They reminded the other states that the major dangers were the infringement of their political sovereignty through imperialist military intervention and political subversion, the economic dependency on the former colonial powers, and the penetration of their cultures by them<sup>26</sup>. The international system of capitalism and imperialism had therefore to be rooted out, before they could turn to domestic concerns.

Indonesia and China wanted to use the second Afro-Asian conference in Algiers as a forum to swing the non-aligned countries over to a more militant anti-imperialist position. The postponing of that conference was not only due to the overthrow of Ben Bella, but also to the disagreement between the two groups. Since the conference never took place, one cannot exactly measure the strength of the opposing factions, but it seems highly unlikely that the Indonesia-China line of specifically preventing Soviet and Malaysian participation in the conference, and generally proposing militant anti-imperialism (especially against the US in Vietnam), economic self-reliance, and absolute political and economic independence from the Western and Soviet Bloc, would have won out. Most of the African-Asian states on grounds of economic **Realpolitik** were reluctant to follow Chinese-Indonesian proposals: it

<sup>26</sup> See: **Neo-colonialism, a threat to world peace**. Djakarta: Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 1964, and: **New Forces build a new world**, (Djakarta), Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia - Executive Command Tenth Anniversary First Asian-African Conference (1965).

would have simply cut them off from Soviet and Western aid, and the two countries were in no position to replace it.

Although her uncompromising line estranged many former friends, Indonesia also won some new allies. They were smaller in quantity, but qualitatively they were "comrades in arms", as Sukarno used to say. While the relations with China blossomed in 1964/1965 with the exchange of various delegations, credit agreements, economic projects and frequent consultations of the leaders, 1964 also saw the establishment of full diplomatic relations with North Korea and North Vietnam, and the recognition of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Cuba had been recognized before, and an exchange of ambassadors with Albania was prepared in 1965.

The exchange of ambassadors with Hanoi had been overdue with Sukarno's anti-imperialist principles, and one wonders why it did not happen earlier. Already for a long time there had been widespread sympathy for Ho Chi Minh's anti-imperialist patriotism in Indonesia<sup>27</sup>, and the country felt close to Vietnam and Algeria as the other countries with a violent independence struggle. Although there were – there still are – enormous cross pressures among many Indonesians to weigh Vietnamese anti-imperialism against Vietnamese Communism, at that time generally the anti-imperialist label won out.

North Korea was for the first time visited by Sukarno in 1964 and caught his attention mainly because of the social and economic discipline of a party regime, and the achievements of its autarcic bootstrap-economy. The visit strengthened his belief in a self-reliant economy to gain true political independence, and measures for its implementation were introduced 1965 in Indonesia<sup>28</sup>.

The relations to all these countries with the addition of Cambodia were linked together by Sukarno in his 1965 independence day speech as the "Djakarta–Phnom Penh–Hanoi–Peking–Pyöngyang Axis"<sup>29</sup> to represent the core of the anti-imperialist forces in the area. His term was not only resented by some of the powers he included<sup>30</sup>, but also misleading about the degree of cooperation and policy co-ordination these countries had actually achieved. His verbal boasting was, however,

<sup>27</sup> See for example the toasts and speeches during the visits of Sukarno in North Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh in Indonesia during 1959: **President Ho Chi Minh's visit to Indonesia**, (February 27–March 8, 1959). Hanoi, Foreign Languages Publishing house, 1959. Or: **Soekarno-Presiden Republik Indonesia di Vietnam** (24 Djuni–29 Djuni 1959). (Djakarta), Pemuda, 1959. See also the speech of Muhammed Yamin presenting a honorary doctor's degree to Ho Chi Minh at Padjadjaran University, Bandung, March 2, 1959: **Presiden Hô Chi Minh**. Uraian menjelaskan . . ., (Bandung), Universitas Padjadjaran, (1959). For a very sympathetic account of the NLF see Nj. Arudji Kartawinata, **Kemenangan rakjat Vietsel diambang pintu**. Djakarta, (1965?).

<sup>28</sup> See note 5.

<sup>29</sup> Sukarno, **Reach to the stars! A year of self-reliance**; address on the twentieth anniversary of independence, 17. August, 1965. (Djakarta), Dept. of Information, Republic of Indonesia (1965?).

<sup>30</sup> Prince Silhanouk of Cambodia reminded Sukarno that Cambodia's principle was neutrality, and that the axis was more image than reality. See his editorial in **Le Sangkum**; revue politique illustré, January 1966, as quoted in: Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia, Phnom-Penh, **Laporan Tahunan 1965**, various pagings, terbatas. The Chinese were also unwilling to have the term written into any resolution or communiqué: interview with a member of a delegation to China in 1965, Djakarta, February 1972.

taken at face value by some Western observers to claim that a gigantic North-South pincer movement was launched by China and Indonesia to defeat the US in Vietnam<sup>31</sup>.

If one looks at Indonesia's stated foreign policy principles during that time, she was indeed engaged in an all out world-wide struggle against the Western powers. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals a selective approach to confrontation and a good measure of **Realpolitik**. During that time her bilateral relations with Japan<sup>32</sup>, France, the Netherlands and West Germany were kept at a normal level, and the economic interchanges were actually increased.

The major step of Indonesia's defiance of the international system came when Sukarno decided to pull her out of the United Nations, after Malaysia had been given a temporary seat in the Security Council. Sukarno saw this as a personal humiliation and made a rash, impulsive decision, seemingly without even consulting his closest advisers<sup>33</sup>. The move tended to increase Indonesia's isolation and caused intensified relations with China as the only major partner left.

The Chinese were seemingly as surprised as everybody else about the decision, and since their whole strategy at the time was to use — not to destroy — the existing international system for their own benefit, they may not have liked it. But Sukarno's abrupt decision left them with a **fait accompli**, and they had no choice but to go along. In 1965 they started backing Sukarno's pet project, the "Conference of the New Emerging Forces" (CONEFO), scheduled for August 1966.

### The Linkage Between Domestic and Foreign Policy

Until now Indonesian foreign policy has been seen as shaped by the idiosyncracies of President Sukarno, the political socialization of the nationalist elite, the ideology of the Indonesian Revolution, and by the international system. External relations were, however, also influenced by the domestic competition for power. The events around October 1, 1965, also decided the fate of Sukarno's foreign policy, and it seems therefore justified to look at the interrelationship between domestic and foreign policy under the impact of the NEFO confrontation strategy.

It should be said beforehand that the border demarcation between foreign policy and domestic policy is difficult to maintain in an ever more interdependent world. For analytical purposes the division should probably be kept, but the demarcation should be loose enough as to perceive mutual influences. Since both Indonesian foreign and domestic policy at that time showed a tendency towards the Left, and

<sup>31</sup> For this speculation see its inventor Arnold C. Brackman, **The Communist Collapse in Indonesia**. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969, esp. pp. 190–203.

<sup>32</sup> Indonesia's relations with Japan were not only shaped by Sukarno's preferences for the night life in Tokio, but also by the historical relationship, where Japanese guilt about the occupation could be transformed into economic aid. The Japanese also understood that international relations for Sukarno were essentially personal relations. The problem of the Indonesian foreign ministry — even now — has always been that the Japanese work through the Palace and bypass the Foreign Ministry. One can talk about the "Peking–Djakarta axis", but the "Tokio–Djakarta axis" has always been more important.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews with several former high officials in the Government and Foreign Ministry, Djakarta, 1972.

Sukarno and Subandrio did not respect a border line between the domestic and international revolution, there are indeed strong justifications to analyze the two fields in an integrated manner.

Since the intensified anti-imperialist foreign policy preceded the beginning of the distinct domestic shift to the Left 1964–65, one might, indeed, be tempted to see foreign policy as the causal factor for the domestic transformations. But the chronological sequence should not lead to premature conclusions, for as much influence as there was, because the confrontation policy proved to be highly beneficial for the PKI, the domestic events also developed their own dynamics.

In order to explain the swing to the Left, one first has to look at Sukarno, the kingpin in the conservative-bureaucratic system of Guided Democracy<sup>34</sup>, for without his consent these developments would have hardly occurred. A popular explanation in the West for the increased cooperation of the President with the PKI and his tendency to favour them as his successors, is that he had either become a Communist, was a crypto-Communist, or was naive on Communism. But these labels do not fit, nor do they give historical justice to the man: intense Nationalism was undoubtedly the strongest element in his own NASAKOM composition. One has to look for other explanations, and several informed guesses may be advanced.

One of the red threads of Sukarno's personality was his concern with his place in history. He wanted to go down into the history books as the progressive founding father of the Republic, or, to use a comparison he often invoked himself, he wanted to be an Indonesian Sun Yat Sen, and not a Chiang Kai Shek<sup>35</sup>. Feeling that his time was running out, and looking over the tasks still unaccomplished and transformations not yet achieved, he turned towards those, who, according to his estimate, had the most reliable record of anti-imperialism and social progressiveness, and whom he could entrust with finishing his image of the Indonesian Revolution: the PKI.

There was also the reason of expediency, namely the organizational question. In the late years of Guided Democracy Sukarno faced the question Castro faced the day he seized power: He needed an organization, a political party, to carry out the revolutionary social transformations he envisaged. The problem of organization had, indeed, been the central problem of the Indonesian Revolution since 1945. In a historic decision of lasting consequences the liberal socialists Sjahrir and Hatta had pressured for a democratic multi-party system in Indonesia against Sukarno's long hedged ideal of a single-party system with a **marhaenist** vanguard party<sup>36</sup>. Ever since then, the Indonesian Revolution has been characterized by an excess of ideology and the absence of thorough organization.

In the late years of Guided Democracy, like already long before, the PKI had offered itself as the organizational weapon he needed as a transmission belt for his ideas,

<sup>34</sup> A very reliable introduction to the system of Guided Democracy is still Herbert Feith, *Dynamics of Guided Democracy*. In: Ruth McVey (ed.), **Indonesia**. New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1963, pp. 309–409.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ruslan Abdulgani, former Information Minister, Djakarta, December 1971.

<sup>36</sup> For the decision in 1945 see George McTurnan Kahin, **Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia**. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952, p. 154. For Sukarno's early thoughts on the marhaenist vanguard party see his **Mentjapai Indonesia Merdeka** in: **Dibawah Bendera Revolusi**, Djilid I, . . . (see note 10), esp. pp. 304–307.

and he seems to have taken up the offer. The charge of naivety about Communism normally comes right here: how was the man thinking he could ride the tiger, why was he so sure he could handle them? The answer seems that the ego of the President was just too strong to conceive the idea that he could ever be controlled by anybody. In 1948, during the rebellion of the Communist Party and sympathizing troops at Madiun, it had taken him a historic radio speech to crush them. How much easier would the situation be for him under Guided Democracy, where the PKI had already adjusted, even compromised its ideology to Sukarnoism<sup>37</sup>, and where the army was just waiting for a chance to eliminate the Communists? If one analyzes the impact of Castro on the Cuban Communist Party, one can well imagine how Sukarno, in an even more traditional and semi-feudal society than Cuba, was so sure he could control the PKI.

A third reason for the motivation of Sukarno's alliance with the Left is obvious for anybody reading the early Sukarno, especially during 1928–1933<sup>38</sup>. As much as he was a fervent nationalist, his intentions for a social transformation towards some kind of socialism adjusted to Indonesian conditions were pronounced equally as strong. From 1945 till the return of West Irian in 1962, the nationalist, anti-imperialist part of the revolution had taken precedence over the social transformations which he felt necessary. So he proclaimed that the Indonesian Revolution was not yet finished, while strong elements in Indonesian society insisted that it was.

The question arises as to how serious one should consider Sukarno's alliance with the Left, his profession to be a social revolutionary. Although for a long time he could be seen as a conservative<sup>39</sup> in the midst of a rather conservative bourgeois-nationalist elite operating through a deceptive smokescreen of revolutionary rhetoric, in the late years of Guided Democracy he seemed to live up to his radical pretensions. There is a central quote in his 1965 independence day speech which seems to explain a lot about his motivations: "There are leaders who are afraid they will meet Ben Bella's fate. They only prove that they are leaders who represent vested interests. Ben Bella's overthrow must serve as a warning to leaders everywhere that as soon as a leader separates himself from the people's interests he will be overthrown."<sup>40</sup>

After the coup, when he could have easily remained in office by simply dissociating himself from the PKI and China, he went down with his principles rather than to compromise.

If one turns to the Communist Party, one can ascertain that the linkage between foreign and domestic policy proved to be beneficial. Characterizing the then state of the Indonesian Revolution as the "national-democratic" phase, with imperialism and feudalism as the main enemies, they concentrated on the anti-imperialist

<sup>37</sup> For a thorough study see Rex Alfred Mortimer, **The Ideology of the Communist Party of Indonesia under Guided Democracy**, 1959–65. Monash University, Ph. D. thesis, 1970, 2 vols.

<sup>38</sup> See his writings in **Dibawah Bendera Revolusi**, Djilid I, . . . (see note 10).

<sup>39</sup> For the view of Sukarno as a conservative see Jan M. Pluvier, **Confrontations**. A study in Indonesian Politics. Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur—London—Melbourne, 1965. The book was, however, seemingly written before the domestic transformation of 1964/65 happened.

<sup>40</sup> Sukarno, **Reach to the Stars!** . . . (see note 29), this quote taken from the radio version, Djakarta Domestic Service, August 17, 1965.

struggle. The confrontation against Malaysia offered them a chance to show their militancy, to outflank the other contenders for power through nationalist agitation, and to seize the leadership of the national revolution under the cover of an anti-imperialist United Front. They hoped for — and were probably influenced by a situation analogous to that in China of 1936, where a Communist Party, through strategic brilliance and helped by the shortsightedness of its major adversary, had captured the leadership in an anti-Japanese United Front and achieved final victory against its domestic opponents.

The trouble for the PKI was that Malaysia and its British-American allies could not be compared to Japan, that there has been no invasion of Indonesian territory (although the PKI may have hoped for that), and that the Indonesian army was of different historical origin. Indonesians started to wonder why a foreign policy of confrontation had to be adopted at the cost of a ruined economy and state budget, just to provide the Sukarnoists with ego-satisfaction and the PKI with a vehicle to power.

In 1964 finally a yet unstructured opposition sprang up. Mainly consisting of some of the non-Communist parties, the Moslem groups, students and intellectuals, the army, and a majority of the press. This opposition criticized mainly the advance of the PKI and the foreign policy trend, but also Sukarno and his style of government. The latter, however, with much less vehemence than it now pretends to have done at that time.

Opposition was very difficult in 1964/1965. Not that Sukarno and the PKI already had control of the government apparatus — where the army made sure that the demands for a NASAKOM proportional representation remained dead letter — or the physical means of coercion, but they controlled the coining and definition of political slogans, laying down who passed as a “revolutionary”. Taking place in an atmosphere of overheated, agitational politics, with indoctrination courses, embassy burnings, boycotts, loyalty oaths, and constant rallies, the PKI-Sukarno strategy was one to create a bipolarisation of society, “a crystallization of forces” as they called it, to separate the “progressives” from the “reactionaries”.

By the end of 1964 then the anti-PKI forces had suffered a major setback. Their common platform — for it had hardly an organizational form — the **Badan Pendukung Sukarnoisme** (Body to support Sukarnoism, BPS), which had tried to institutionalize Sukarno's writings as the only legitimate state ideology<sup>41</sup> — with the intention to outlaw the PKI program — was in the end dissolved, although it had the backing of the army. Like its predecessors, the **Liga Demokrasi**<sup>42</sup> several years before, the army had backed this coalition of civilian forces half-heartedly, first because it did not think very much of party politics, secondly because it implied an open challenge

<sup>41</sup> For a collection of newspaper articles intended to purify Sukarno's thoughts from Communist influences see Juti, **Beladjar memahami Sukarno-isme**. Djilid 1. Djakarta, 1964. Juti (Sajuti Melik) was together with Adam Malik and the late Sumantoro one of the founders of the BPS. For a communist view see: “**BPS**” **aksi dan reaksi**. Djakarta, Rakjat (1965). The domestic issues of controversy are well documented in **Polemik Merdeka—Harian Rakjat**. (Djakarta), Harian Rakjat, (1964) (the Communist printing); and: **Polemik HR-Merdeka**. Djakarta, Merdeka Press, (1965) (the **Merdeka** version). See also: **Benarkah ini dokumen palsu PKI?** Djakarta, Fakta, (1965?).

<sup>42</sup> For the relation between the army and the **Liga Demokrasi** see Daniel S. Lev, The Political Role of the Army in Indonesia. In: **Pacific Affairs** 36 (Winter 1963–64), pp. 349–364.

to the President. And once Sukarno returned from his trip abroad, he decided the matter with his authority. The BPS did probably also fail, because its initiators at that time still thought they could separate Sukarno from the Left. But he had already taken sides and suspected ulterior motives with those who wanted to use him against the PKI.

After the demise of the BPS, the army was the only anticommunist organizational basis left for the opposition. If the foreign policy — domestic policy linkage had improved the position of the PKI, it had worsened the position of the army. Although it shared many suspicions against Malaysia, the anti-Communist generals around Nasution and Yani tended to look at confrontation through the general framework of the PKI strategy and the relations with China. Being highly suspicious about Chinese intentions in the area, they felt increasingly that Indonesia was fighting against a potential ally of the same ethnic and cultural heritage. The army feared that if there would be a military conflict with Malaysia, it would have to do the fighting in the border areas, while the PKI would be unchecked in the capital. So parts of the army in 1965 slowly and secretly began to disengage from or soft-pedal the confrontation to devote its vigilance to the domestic scene<sup>43</sup>. Here it felt that its position was slowly eroded, especially since the PKI had taken the political initiative with the Malaysia campaign and advanced several demands which, if fulfilled, would have cracked the army's organizational unity and *esprit de corps*<sup>44</sup>. The China alliance finally tended to isolate the army from its major sources of sophisticated weaponry and officers training, the Soviet Union and the United States.

### China and the attempted coup

The attempted coup of October 1, 1965, brought in its wake the end of the foreign policy of confrontation. Although this study does not cover the coup it is within the field of inquiry to investigate the never really substantiated official Indonesian charges that Communist China had foreknowledge of the coup, helped planning it, and smuggled weapons into the country. Was there really a synchronization between China and the PKI?

It was indicated before that China's international aims necessitated non-interference and careful approach to Indonesian domestic politics. In fact, it could have even meant that the PKI was asked not to "rock the boat" for the greater aim of preserving the Sino-Indonesian alliance, which rested only on a fragile consensus.

In 1963 and 1964 the Chinese basically seem to have operated along these lines,

<sup>43</sup> Much of the army's contacts to end confrontation still remain secret. Some material can be found in Franklin B. Weinstein, **Indonesia abandons Confrontation: An Inquiry into the Functions of Indonesian Foreign Policy**. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Interim Report Series, 1969.

<sup>44</sup> These demands were essentially: Aidit's call for arming workers and peasants against Malaysia, Chou En-lai's proposal to Sukarno to create a militia force, and the PKI demands for NASAKOM political officers in the army.

<sup>45</sup> For a careful argument on China's relation to the Indonesian Coup see David P. Mozingo, *China's Policy toward Indonesia*. In: Tang Tsou (ed.), **China in Crisis**, Vol. 2, *China's Policies in Asia and America's Alternatives*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 333–352, esp. pp. 339–343.

but the transformation of the domestic scene in Indonesia may have eroded their cautiousness. However, since the Chinese were strongly interested in the preservation of the Sukarno government in Indonesia and knew about the strength of the anti-communist forces, it seems highly unlikely that they were planning for a coup which would have necessarily endangered the position of Sukarno, their main guarantee for good relations with Peking. It remains highly speculative, to what extent the Chinese were informed and gave their consent for any PKI action.

Rather than seeing a synchronization between Chinese and PKI strategies, one can discover sources of conflict. What seems to have happened is that the PKI, its domestic aims conflicting with the role prescribed to it by Peking in the interest of maintaining the alliance, got impatient and optimistic, and embarked on a strategy the Chinese could not control. A careful reading of the documents<sup>46</sup> in mid-1965 seems to reveal a dialogue along the following lines.

What the Chinese may have told the PKI was this: Cultivate the contradiction between Indonesia and foreign imperialism and build a United Front around that issue to gain power, but postpone and calm down the domestic class struggle, because it will antagonize and unite your prospective bourgeois allies in the United Front. Since the army has the guns, don't provoke a domestic situation that will give them legitimate reason for use.

What the PKI seems to have answered may be this: Your assessment of the situation is overly pessimistic. We are strong enough not only to oppose foreign imperialism, but the time has come to advance the domestic class struggle. We are in the midst of a revolutionary situation and have Sukarno's backing. The size of the "pro-people" forces, the progressive elements in the Government, state apparatus and the Armed Forces is increasing, while the "reactionaries" and the "die-hards" are becoming isolated.

With these existing differences and the unpredictabilities of the Indonesian situation, where the kidney stones of a President were the most important factor determining a "revolutionary situation", it is very difficult to assess, to what extent Chinese and PKI plans were still coordinated or already working at cross purposes.

### Sukarno's foreign policy in perspective

The grand design of the Indonesian-Chinese attempt to bring about a new balance of forces and new patterns of alignment in the international system through an International United Front of the New Emerging Forces did not materialize. The main reasons for its failure were the low political-economic capabilities of the two

<sup>46</sup> For the Chinese side see especially Peng Chen, **Speech at the Aliarcham Academy of Social Sciences in Indonesia**, May 25, 1965. Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1965. For the PKI analysis of the Indonesian domestic situation see especially D. N. Aidit, **Perhebat Ofensif Revolusioner Disegala Bidang!** (Laporan Politik kepada Sidang Pleno Ke-IV CC PKI jang Diperluas rangka 11 Mei 1965), Djakarta, Jajasan Pembaruan 1965, and also: **Tesis 45 Tahun PKI**, 23. Mei 1920-23 Mei 1965. Djakarta, Jajasan "Pembaruan", 1965. For a later self-criticism of the PKI analysis in 1965 see: Build the PKI along the Marxist-Leninist line to lead the People's Democratic Revolution in Indonesia. In: Indonesian Tribune (Tirana), Vol. I, No. 3, Jan. 1967, pp. 6-29.

powers, a strategy built on faulty premises, the domestic instability of the decisional elites, and the counter-alignments in a still super-power dominated international system.

Like the domestic NASAKOM coalition, the NEFO group represented basically wishful thinking, for it wanted to contain too many conflicting elements unable to agree on a common enemy and joint action. The inclusion of the Soviet Bloc in the front was merely for the sake of numbers, for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe never backed the NEFO confrontation course and were necessarily highly suspicious of the Chinese intentions. The NEFO concept still saw Asian-African solidarity as the basic common denominator, when it had actually already faded, after the euphoria of the first Bandung Conference had given way to power politics also among Asian-African states.

The disparity between the ambitious aims and the low capabilities of the two NEFO powers was particularly apparent. China and Indonesia were economically too weak to lure the Afro-Asian states into their bloc and away from the dependence on Soviet and Western aid. Sukarno's declared aim "to end the exploitation of nation by nation and man by man" was simply a gigantic task. And even if the aim for a new world order of justice and equality was shared by many of the developing nations, the second aim, which pointed to revolutionary social transformations, was clearly not. To end the "exploitation of man by man" had overtones of an international class struggle, and since China was involved, some prospective allies got rather suspicious. So the twofold quality of the NEFO concept as one of nations, as well as of social forces, was really at cross purposes.

The failure of NEFO should not deceive about its political significance. It was the first political manifestation of the growing North-South conflict in world politics and presented an alternative to the hitherto fixed Cold War patterns of alignment in the international system. It was also a radical anti-status-quo-challenge of the two Asian powers against the inequalities of the system, which in its distribution of power represented the mid forties, but had hardly adjusted to the rise of the Third World. In its particular manifestation of the "Peking—Djakarta axis", the common denominator of Asian nationalism and anti-imperialism was strong enough to build a bridge between a bourgeois nationalist and a communist regime.

An evaluation of Sukarno's foreign policy has to assess the man himself. Whatever one may think of the late President, for example that his revolutionary political socialization did not prepare him for the later more sober and responsible skills of statecraft, like administration and economic development; that he underestimated the material rewards of nationalism and in an elitary manner simply equated his interest in a psychologically rewarding anti-imperialist crusade with the national interest; that he lost sense of political proportions and was unwilling to engage in the give and take of compromises which govern the interactions of states in the international system; that despite his professed Marxism he was decidedly an idealist when insisting on "nation- and characterbuilding", on restructuring the world, on ending exploitation everywhere and in any form without effecting the necessary economic and organizational transformations first, — despite all this criticism, it will probably be his unbending principles of anti-imperialist Indonesian nationalism and absolute independence, which will be emphasized in the writing of Indonesian history books.