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1965 Communist Purge in Indonesia: U.S. Foreign Relations in Indonesia

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1965 COMMUNIST PURGE IN INDONESIA: U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS IN INDONESIA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the History

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All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
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1965 Communist Purge in Indonesia

U.S. Foreign Relations in Indonesia

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the United States' policy in Indonesia and the U.S. government's response to the massacre of up to one million Indonesians who were labeled communists by anti-communist forces in Indonesia in 1965-1966. The U.S. knew at the time that mass murder was occurring in the archipelago nation. However, President Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration kept silent in addition to providing covert support for the perpetrators of one of the worst massacres of the twentieth century. Through this support, the United States helped topple the incumbent Indonesian President Sukarno and his anti-Western policies, and welcomed the coup leader—General Suharto and his anti-Communist authoritarian regime that ruled Indonesia until 1998. The paper seeks to understand how and why the Johnson administration kept silent about the violence, as well as the level of support offered to the perpetrators of this massacre. The anti-communist purge that occurred in Indonesia from 1965-1966 and the United States' response to the killings reveal the Cold War objectives of the United States in Southeast Asia. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the United States' global outlook in the midst of the Cold War to understand the degree of their actions or inaction towards the conspicuous mass killings in Indonesia. Of particular interest in this paper is the depth and quantity of U.S. news coverage on the mass murder in Indonesia between October 1965 and August 1966. It is necessary to look at Johnson administration memorandum, telegrams, and conversations relating to international politics. It is equally important to look at the contemporary news coverage of Indonesia in the United States and abroad.

Preface

On September 17th, 2017 a mob attacked a small academic conference in Indonesia's capital city—Jakarta. This conference planned to hold a discussion on the anti-communist purge in 1965. The mob, however, believed the conference was a cover for a communist gathering.¹ Mass anti-communist demonstrations soon followed this mob violence. Less than two weeks after the mob's breakup of the academic conference, on September 29th, thousands of Indonesians protested against the threat of a communist revival in front of the DPR—House of Representatives.² The day of their demonstration marked the fifty-second anniversary of the September 30th Movement—the catalyst for the mass killing of between 500,000- 1,000,000 Indonesians. Yet, most people in the U.S. and Indonesia understand very little of the events that transpired over fifty years ago. Fewer still know the causes and outcomes of this massacre, one of the worst in the twentieth century. In order to comprehend what occurred in Indonesia in late 1965, it is necessary to understand the larger events that led up to September 30th, 1965, the historical figures behind these events, and the subsequent period following the mass murder.

¹ Joe Cochrane, "Indonesia Takes a Step Back from Reckoning with a Past Atrocity," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2017, Accessed December 1st, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/world/asia/indonesia-communist-purge.html>.

² Kate Lamb, "Beware the red peril: Indonesia still fighting ghosts of communism," *The Guardian*, September 30, 2017, Accessed December 1st, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/01/beware-the-red-peril-indonesia-still-fighting-ghosts-of-communism>.

Introduction

Southeast Asia in the early 1960s was an increasingly war torn region. Conflict raged throughout nearly every nation-state in the region. These conflicts are generally viewed as either Cold War conflicts—capitalism vs communism—or as continuing indigenous struggles against western imperialism. Indonesia is and long has been the largest and most geopolitically important nation in the landscape of Southeast Asia. At the height of the Cold War and America's war in Vietnam, Indonesia was arguably the prize nation over which communist and capitalist nations clashed throughout Southeast Asia. Indonesia—the largest and resource-rich country in Southeast Asia was also the site of international Cold War contention but with a much different outcome from Indochina, where communist-led movements of national liberation eventually prevailed. Southeast Asia was a uniquely important Cold War battlefield from the end of World War II and throughout the ensuing decades-long Cold War. The rapid advance of communist movements in the first decade of the Cold War provoked deep concern in the United States that the entire region was vulnerable communist domination.

Of course, at the local level, there was a much different perspective as the expulsion of western colonial rule by the Japanese appeared to open the door to independence. The great majority of Southeast Asians were simply fighting for their independence from Western colonial rule. The governments of war-torn Europe, however, felt it was a necessity to hold their colonial possessions to help rebuild their economies and international prestige. The U.S. weary of Soviet expansion in Europe was keen to oblige its European allies it had just fought to free from Nazi oppression. Yet, one by one, the colonized peoples of Asia rose up and demanded independence

in the decades after World War II. At the same time, the Soviet Union and communist China were expanding their reach and behaving increasingly hostile to the West.

The United States was the most powerful capitalist nation in the world following the defeat of imperial Japan in August 1945 and a nation that itself attained independence from European colonialism. Now it had to choose between American principles and American strategic interests. The Vietnam War has captured the spotlight of this dilemma for generations of American historians. However, although the U.S. did not intervene militarily outside Indochina, it acted in many of the same ways and with many of the same assumptions and goals throughout Southeast Asia and elsewhere in decolonizing Asia and Africa.

Indonesia drew U.S. attention, especially after October 1, 1965. In the middle of the night, on September 30, 1965 six Indonesian generals were abducted, tortured, and killed on the island of Java, Indonesia.³ The generals' executioners became collectively known as the 30 September Movement that was allegedly attempting a coup through the murder of these generals. It remains unconfirmed as to who was behind the attempted coup, in part, due to the movement's brief life span—lasting no longer than October 3rd on Java.⁴ The Indonesian army, after successfully defeating the forces behind the attempted coup, immediately attributed the high-profile executions of its generals to the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI)—Indonesian Communist Party. In its defense, the PKI claimed to have acted precisely to stop an American-backed coup d'état.⁵

³ John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, 3.

⁴ Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns, Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, 172.

⁵ October 6, 1965, 149. Intelligence Memorandum, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965–March 1966 (Documents 142-205), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed on January 7th, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d149>.

According to historian John Roosa's study of the 1965 mass killing, several foreign reporters were able to gain access to and investigate the sites where anti-communist violence was perpetrated in the months that followed the massacre.⁶ One of the reporters—Seth King, wrote a detailed account for *The New York Times* published as a special report in May 1966. According to his report:

The campaign [against the PKI] proceeded on two levels. By using their emergency powers, invoked during the one-day coup, the generals temporarily suspended all activities of the party [PKI] and ordered all party members dismissed from their government jobs. They began rounding up Communist leaders and party officials wherever they could get their hands on them. They stood by while anti-Communist mobs wrecked and burned Communist headquarters and party buildings... All this was on the official level. On the other level, the people themselves acted—in many cases with the army's direct encouragement... The flames were blown higher when Moslem leaders decreed a jihad, a holy war, against the PKI. This added a religious fiat to the tacit go-ahead from the army and the police. The communists had no one to protect them. Sometimes they fought back. Most of the time they ran and hid where they could until some other group ran them down. In many villages, the local Moslem groups slipped up to the houses of known Communists, surrounded each—and killed the entire family. The murders were usually silent and swift, done with knives in the steamy darkness; the bodies thrown into the nearest river or hidden in the jungle. Sometimes an entire family was carted away to the nearest jail, where it soon became too much of a burden to feed them. The pattern of these killings has often reflected the deep divisions of race, religion, and culture that still exist in Indonesia after 17 years as a nation. Among the xenophobic Moslems of northern Sumatra, the principal targets were the Javanese who had been imported to work on state-owned plantations. Many of them *were* Communists; all of them were suspected of being Communists, and the fact that they were Javanese strangers was enough. In East Java and the islands of Nusa Tenggara, where Hindu mysticism is interwoven with Mohammedanism, most of the executions have been by beheading. After chopping off the heads of their victims, the soldiers and vigilante groups carefully buried the bodies in one grave and the heads in another, thus satisfying their belief that decapitation and separate burial prevent the spirits of the dead from returning to haunt them. In these same areas, the killers made certain that whole families were slain—to prevent any future revenge.⁷

⁶ Roosa, 25.

⁷ Seth S. King, "The Great Purge in Indonesia," *New York Times* (1923-Current file); May 8, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. SM13, Accessed January 7, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/117087537/fulltextPDF/AC12E8248E294DA5PQ/1?accountid=14663>.

This description of the events outlines a combined state and civil vigilante campaign against the PKI and its leftist allies. Yet, this was far from being merely a political purge. As King highlighted in his investigation, there were religious, ethnic, and simple personal vendettas that fed into the extraordinary violence perpetrated throughout much of the archipelago. With support from militant Muslim groups and student groups, and facing no significant resistance by any armed group, the army oversaw this nation-wide anti-communist campaign through the ensuing months.

The United States, currently fighting a war in Vietnam against communist expansion, was immediately concerned by the initial news reports of an attempted coup in Indonesia. President Johnson had significantly escalated the number of U.S. ground forces in Vietnam just two months before this attempted coup.⁸ From the United States' perspective, the murder of the six generals appeared to be an attempt by the PKI to take control in Indonesia—the fifth most populous nation in the world at the time.⁹ The United States and anti-communist forces in Indonesia feared a communist takeover given the size of the communist party in Indonesia, despite the lack of concrete intelligence on the level of communist involvement in the unsuccessful coup attempt. At the time of the coup, the PKI was the largest communist party outside of the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China. This was a source of great unease for the United States due to Indonesia's strategic value in Southeast Asia and their ongoing war in Vietnam. These factors help explain why the mass killings continued months after the coup had been suppressed, and why the U.S. government appears to have passively

⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, "U.S. Combat Units In Vietnam Spurt: 3-Division Strength Is Seen -- Marines at 30,000," *New York Times*, July 11, 1965, Accessed April 11, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116909213/1D1E634A61064F00PQ/10?accountid=14663>.

⁹ October 1, 1965, 142. Memorandum for President Johnson, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965–March 1966 (Documents 142-205), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 9th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d142>.

supported the forces responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people. The result of this tension was a bloody and horrific campaign against Indonesia's communists that resulted in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians. This massacre was carried out by the Indonesian military and militant Muslim factions with considerable indirect support from the United States. The United States offered the Indonesian government, which, after the failure of the September 30th Movement coup, the Indonesian army controlled, financial, diplomatic, military, and intelligence support to groups responsible for the arrest and execution of their fellow countrymen.¹⁰

As narrated above, in retrospect the PKI threat evaporated when the September 30th Movement was quickly thwarted by General Suharto—commander of Indonesia's Strategic Reserves Command.¹¹ Despite this fact, a CIA memo on October 6—one week following the failed coup—reveals the United States' misunderstanding of the finality of September 30th Movement. The Johnson administration remained wary of how events might play out in the coming weeks. Sukarno was still in power and his ties to PKI remained a source of great worry for the U.S.¹² The intelligence memo analyzing the aftermath of the attempted coup in Indonesia stated, "He [Sukarno] apparently hopes to conciliate the leftists and return the Communist Party to the favorable political position it enjoyed prior to the events of 1 October."¹³ It is not surprising, therefore, that the U.S. went on to support the anti-communist forces that rose to power that subsequently perpetrated the ensuing mass murder in Indonesia between 1965 and 1966.

¹⁰ June 17, 1966, 211. Memorandum Prepared for the 303 Committee, The United States and Suharto: April 1966–December 1968 (Documents 206-262), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed April 13, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d211>.

¹¹ Simpson, 172.

¹² October 6, 1965, 149. Intelligence Memorandum.

¹³ Ibid.

U.S. assistance came in the form of economic aid, a resumption of trade between the two nations, military equipment, intelligence support, and the formation of a political alliance between Indonesia's anti-communist forces and the United States. U.S. support helped the anti-communist forces led by General Suharto emerge victorious by April 1966. As reported in a NSC memo from Donald W. Roppa to Eugene Rostow, Special Assistant to President Lyndon Johnson, by April 1966 General Suharto, with the Indonesian military's backing, had effectively supplanted President Sukarno by April of 1966.¹⁴ Establishing his "New Order" regime, President Suharto remained in power past the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War. Throughout Suharto's time in power, his anti-communist political agenda continued to shape Indonesia's domestic and international policies. This thesis aims to show that the United States supported an authoritarian regime responsible for one of the greatest human rights atrocities of the post-World War II era with economic, military, and political benefits in Indonesia because the U.S. mistakenly feared Chinese communist expansion in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

The Cold War Outlook of the United States in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia was of immediate concern for the United States in the concluding months of World War II. The region held great importance for much of the world as the final years of European colonialization coincided with the early years of the Cold War. The Pacific War hastened the end of colonialization due to the Japanese conquest of the region and their own

¹⁴ April 18, 1966, 206. Memorandum From Donald W. Roppa of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), The United States and Suharto: April 1966–December 1968 (Documents 206-262), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 10th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d206>.

establishment of client anti-colonial regimes in the Allied Power's colonies. In Indonesia, Sukarno had collaborated with the Japanese during their wartime occupation. Sukarno had hoped this alliance would lead to Indonesia's independence. In return he authorized the Japanese Army's conscription of millions of Indonesians to work as laborers. Although slow to concede transfer of power, as the end of the war approached, Japan allowed Sukarno and other Indonesian nationalists to create a constitution. Two days after Japan's notice of surrender, Indonesia proclaimed independence on August 17th, 1945.¹⁵ The Netherlands, however, opposed Indonesia's independence by way of a conventional military campaign that successfully reoccupied much of the country. Following months of tense relations between the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch occupation forces, the Dutch launched attacks on Sukarno's forces on July 20, 1947.¹⁶ The Dutch invasion of Indonesia received widespread international criticism led by the U.S.¹⁷ This conflict coincided with the beginning of the French war in Indochina and not long after, a communist-led insurgency took hold in Malaysia. However, all of these conflicts continued, and the U.S. increasingly sided with European colonial powers as the Cold War intensified.

At the end of World War II in the Pacific, the United States was in a precarious position in Southeast Asia. The United States' general Cold War foreign policy in the region was to straddle the line between supporting its European wartime allies that acted as a western bulwark against communist expansion and fulfilling wartime promises made by President Roosevelt to see an end to Western colonialism. This would quickly prove to be a difficult task to achieve for

¹⁵ Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destinies*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, 27.

¹⁶ Gary R. Hess, *The United States' Emergence as a Southeast Asian Power, 1940-1950*, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987, 161.

¹⁷ Lucian Ashworth, "The 1945-1949 Dutch Indonesian Conflict: Lessons and Perspectives in the Study of Insurgency," Accessed, April 20, 2018, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/download/14879/15948>, 40.

the many presidential administrations that oversaw U.S. foreign policy throughout the decades-long Cold War. Before his death, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had called for the end of colonialization amongst its Western allies—France, England, and the Netherlands upon the end of World War II.¹⁸ Yet, FDR's successor—President Harry Truman pivoted towards a stauncher opposition to communist influence. Thus, despite the United States' military dominance in the Pacific after defeating the Japanese and possession of the most devastating weapon yet created—the atom bomb—the U.S. supported the return of Western colonial rule. Europe's colonies provided both much needed economic income for the devastated European allies and a bulwark against the spread of communism. As time would tell, however, supporting wars half way around the world to keep colonized people politically and socially submissive would prove to be an unwinnable task.

The communist victory in China in 1949 further ratcheted up the tension in the region. The leader of the Peoples Republic of China—Mao Zedong—openly confronted the United States. Mao Zedong spoke out against the presence of the United States in Asia and its ostensible support of imperialism in a speech on July 14, 1956:

Now U.S. imperialism is quite powerful, but in reality it isn't. It is very weak politically because it is divorced from the masses of the people and is disliked by everybody and by the American people too. In appearance it is very powerful but in reality it is nothing to be afraid of, it is a paper tiger. Outwardly a tiger, it is made of paper, unable to withstand the wind and the rain. I believe the United States is nothing but a paper tiger.¹⁹

This speech, of course, came after the military stalemate and political victory for the PRC on the Korean peninsula. Thus, under Mao's leadership, tension between the U.S. and China rapidly grew. Historian David Halberstam summarized American Cold War sentiments towards China in

¹⁸ Hess, 157.

¹⁹ "Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung," Accessed March 14, 2018, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_52.htm.

1972, “China, a beloved and somewhat mysterious ally, had gone Communist, and worse, that the new regime had engaged us in a brutal land war (smiling, dutiful, loyal Chinese had almost overnight become yellow hordes, mindless functional Communist ants, a shocking new reincarnation).”²⁰ Thus, by early 1950, American foreign policy makers were deeply concerned with how Chinese communists would influence and support communist expansion in Southeast Asia. The immediate threat was in French Indochina, where the communist-led Vietminh under Ho Chi Minh had mobilized broad support in opposition to continuing French colonial rule. In a memo to the Deputy under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Dean Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs laid out U.S. concerns about Chinese support in North Vietnam.

The Chinese Border: Organized units of the Chinese communist army are arriving at the Tonkin border. So far they have given no indication of desiring to cross that border in organized units, even in pursuit of nationalist forces. However, it seems probable that the Chinese communists will supply Ho Chi Minh with arms and military technicians. We do not know the present degree of cooperation between Ho Chi Minh’s communist forces in Indochina and those of the Chinese communists. Presumably, however, this cooperation will grow. It seems unlikely that the French will be able to seal the Indochina border.²¹

In comparison, Indonesia initially received less attention from the Truman administration, yet, the White House deemed the threat of internal communist takeover there too high to completely ignore. Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote to President Truman a summary of the communist threat in Indonesia in 1950.

Since Indonesia is separated from the Asiatic mainland by water, the immediate Communist threat to the Archipelago is internal in character. Therefore, the type

²⁰ David Halberstam. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York, NY: Random House, 1972, 329.

²¹ January 5, 1950, 439. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Rusk), Policy of the United States with respect to Indochina; United States recognition of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as Associated States within the French Union; the extension of United States military assistance to French Union forces; United States economic, military, and diplomatic support for the Associated States (Documents 439-607), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1950, EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, VOLUME VI Accessed March 14, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d439>.

of assistance which the Republic of the United States of Indonesia will need is characteristic of police equipment traditionally used in a jungle country. The Indonesia Communist movement is in possession of Japanese arms; it probably receives arms from Communist centers on the mainland and it has in the past manufactured its own ammunition. It can be assumed in any event that Communist forces in Indonesia will be at least as well armed in the future as they have been in the past. Their activities will, of course, increase as Communist forces in other parts of Asia are increasingly successful.²²

Thus, President Truman approved economic support the Indonesian state and the equipment of its internal security forces.²³ His successors were steeped in the same strategy and theory that the Truman administration established. Consequently, multiple successive presidents maintained this pattern of varying degrees of support for anti-communist forces in Southeast Asia. The United States would continue to match communist advances blow for blow in Southeast Asia.

Halberstam stated as much in his analysis of Cold War escalation in Southeast Asia. He asserted that much of American policy in Southeast Asia during the Cold War years came from the last years of Truman's presidency when the U.S. provided military and economic aid to the French and thereby ending the neutral stance that had been in place since the end of the Second World War.²⁴

It did not take long for the Cold War belligerents to compete for influence in the largest Southeast Asia nation and arguably the greatest prize for foreign investment. Indonesia had an estimated population of 104 million in 1965,²⁵ and according to historian John Roosa, "The loss of Indonesia would have been a very large loss for the United States, much costlier than the loss

²² Dean Acheson, January 9, 1950, 608. Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, United States relations with Indonesia (Documents 608-685), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1950, EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, VOLUME VI, Accessed March 14 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d608>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Halberstam, 330.

²⁵ October 8, 1965, "After an Evening with Morning Star," *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=7&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54031786&db=tma>.

of Indochina.”²⁶ This is clear from the amount of foreign aid directed towards Indonesia from both communist and capitalist nations. In May 1956, Sukarno gained an assurance of 25 million U.S. dollars from the Eisenhower administration. In October, Sukarno gained an assurance of 100 million from the Soviet Union.²⁷ 1956 saw an uptick in U.S. aid to Indonesia. According to Donald Hindley, “From 1951 to 1955 inclusive, the United States, as the foremost donor, granted approximately \$7 million a year as technical assistance, and loaned \$91.8 million for various development projects.”²⁸

Foreign aid from China and the Soviet Union, however, soon overtook U.S. aid to Indonesia. According to Hindley, “Total trade with China increased from \$2.1 million in 1953 to \$16.1 million in 1955. Trade with the USSR remained virtually non-existent until the first Indonesian-Soviet trade agreement was signed in August 1956, shortly before the first Soviet aid agreement.”²⁹ Following the establishment of this agreement, Soviet aid poured into Indonesia. The Soviet Union signed agreements for a total of \$593.7 million economic development loans. \$582.5 million came after 1955 and \$450 million was designated for the military.³⁰ Furthermore, Hindley noted, “Indonesia has also been receiving aid from China: a credit of \$15 million in November 1956, a loan of \$20 million in April 1958, and a further loan of \$30 million early in 1961—a total of \$65 million.”³¹ All of this aid fails to include the exchange of specialists between the USSR and Indonesia and other gifts like a 200 bed hospital paid for by the USSR.³²

²⁶ Roosa, 14.

²⁷ Simpson, 24.

²⁸ Donald Hindley, “Foreign Aid to Indonesia and its Political Implications,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 36, No.2 (summer, 1963), p.107-119, Accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2754184.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A6dffe4ff447d606069a1dcae2bc5e9eb>, 107.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

U.S. aid to Indonesia paralleled communist support in Indonesia. U.S. aid to Indonesia was on a downward trend between 1952 and 1955.³³ However, U.S. aid to Indonesia rebounded in 1956. According to Hindley, the U.S., “made its first large sale to Indonesia of surplus agricultural commodities for rupiah payments...In all, the United States gave Indonesia \$545 million between November 1949 and the end of fiscal year 1961. Of this amount, \$377.2 million were given after 1955.”³⁴ On top of this, the Ford Foundation provided Indonesia with, “over \$13 million in grants.”³⁵ This increase in the level of aid demonstrates how Indonesia increasingly became an important battlefield for the Cold War competitors in Southeast Asia.

The United States’ primary concern in Indonesia was maintaining Indonesia’s diplomatic, economic, and political connections within the region and with the West as well. Indonesia celebrates August 17, 1945 as its day of independence. The Netherlands, however, did not recognize their independence until December 1949.³⁶ Nevertheless, as Indonesia gained official independence, the United States remained keenly aware of the new nation’s development. In a memo to President Johnson on June 8, 1966, the President's Special Assistant Rostow summarized U.S. aims in Indonesia prior to the destruction of the PKI.

Our traditional interest in Indonesia has been to keep the country out of the hands of Communists and out of the potential control of Communist China. As the Sukarno regime moved more and more under Communist and Chinese influence prior to October 1965, the United States inevitably became the number one officially pronounced enemy of the Sukarno regime, and was billed as the only threat to Indonesia's national security because of the presence of American forces in the Philippines, the South China Sea, Viet-Nam, and Thailand. The marked pro-Communist trend in Indonesia—accelerated in mid-1963—undoubtedly rested in part on the conclusion that the U.S. was losing ground in Southeast Asia. Conversely, although the U.S. had no direct part whatever in the anti-Communist takeover that began in October, unquestionably the fact that we were standing firm in Viet-Nam reinforced the courage of the anti-Communist

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 107.

leaders; to put it differently, without our evident determination, they would have been very much less likely to have acted.³⁷

Vietnam had drawn the national and global spotlight in the region due to increasing U.S. involvement in the conflict that originally was limited to France attempting to reestablish its colonial control in Vietnam, which the communist-led Viet Minh opposed. Beginning in 1950, the United States supported France towards the end of their war in Vietnam. However, after a humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu, France pulled out and signed the Geneva Accords of 1954. The agreement split Vietnam between north and south at the 17th parallel. With France washing its hands of its involvement, the United States stepped in as the main backer of South Vietnam. South Vietnam relied almost entirely on American support. As the military situation in South Vietnam deteriorated and North Vietnam continued to score gains against South Vietnam's military, the U.S. escalated its commitment in Vietnam, including a buildup of American troops in South Vietnam.

The United States' military escalation in Vietnam greatly accelerated during President Johnson's administration. In March 1965, President Johnson committed 1,200 U.S. Marines to defend airbases in Vietnam.³⁸ This order began a pattern of escalation that would ensue for nearly a decade. By the end of 1965, there would be more than 170,000 troops in South Vietnam, and the U.S. military leadership was requesting a surge in troop numbers between 350,000-

³⁷ Walt Rostow, June 8, 1966, 210. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, *The United States and Suharto: April 1966–December 1968* (Documents 206-262), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 10th, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d210>.

³⁸ Tad Szulc, "More Marines Due for Vietnam Duty," *New York Times*, March 2, 1965, Accessed April 14, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116769350/86A74874D1014460PQ/4?accountid=14663>.

400,000.³⁹ Thus, as U.S. increased troop numbers in Vietnam, its strategic interest in Indonesia became apparent.

The Johnson administration was eager to know how American involvement and success in Vietnam affected developments in Indonesia. Historian John Roosa cited Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's recommendation well after the fact that the U.S. should have scaled down its investment in Vietnam once it was clear that Indonesia was secured against communist control.⁴⁰ Indeed, White House memos at this time often sought a connection between the successful prevention of a communist takeover in Indonesia and the ongoing U.S. intervention in Vietnam. President Johnson was increasingly interested in how the U.S. presence in Vietnam had influenced the outcome in Indonesia. President Johnson explicitly asked for a report on the relationship between U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the events transpiring in Indonesia in May 1966. The report, however, stated that there was no evidence of a direct relationship between the two. However, the report did not rule out the possibility of a positive outcome in Indonesia stemming from U.S. presence in Vietnam.⁴¹

Not everyone in the administration agreed with the intelligence report. According to notes from the 557th NSC meeting, "Ambassador Lodge praised the decision to deploy U.S. troops to Vietnam. The recent overthrow of the Communists in Indonesia is a direct result of our having taken a firm stand in Vietnam."⁴² In addition, according to notes taken by W.J. Jorden at

³⁹ Charles Mohr, "U.S. Aides Urging Force of 350,000 for Vietnam War," *New York Times*, December 5, 1965, Accessed April 20, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116813674/EEAD10D311B04901PQ/2?accountid=14663>.

⁴⁰ Roosa, 15.

⁴¹ Office of the Historian, 208. Editorial Note, The United States and Suharto: April 1966–December 1968 (Documents 206-262), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 15th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d208>.

⁴² Bromley Smith, May 10, 1966, 135. Summary Notes of the 557th Meeting of the National Security Council, Vietnam, 1966 March 9–June 28: Buddhist "Struggle Movement"; Emphasis on Non-Military Programs; Escalation of the Bombing (Documents 91-164), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968,

a National Security Council meeting on August 4th, 1966, Secretary of State Dean Rusk briefed President Johnson on the positive effect U.S. intervention in Vietnam had on Indonesia.

The Secretary noted that on his recent trip to Asia, he had met with many signs of a new mood and new confidence in Asia. He said the atmosphere was clearly attributable to two things:

- (1) Our obvious determination to stand fast in Viet-Nam and to help preserve the physical security of the area;
- (2) The abrupt reversal of Indonesia's course.⁴³

The Johnson administration was clearly concerned with how developments in Indonesia would influence the region. Despite disagreement about the tangible evidence of U.S. influence in Indonesia, the consensus was clearly in favor of continued U.S. determination in the region. A Special National Intelligence Estimate memo in September 1965 asserted,

[T]he overt accession to communism of a country like Indonesia—large, populous, rich in resources, and strategically situated—would have an important impact on other countries in South and East Asia. Peking would be especially gratified by the triumph of one of its closest associates and, for a time, would probably offer close cooperation in the Malaysian area. Both Peking and Hanoi would be encouraged in their struggle with the US in Vietnam, while the confidence of Laos, Thailand, and South Vietnam would be undermined.⁴⁴

In sum, the Johnson administration clearly acted upon the basis of the “domino theory.” They believed that the neighboring nations in Southeast Asia had great influence upon one another. If one fell, so to would its neighboring nations. It was this belief that spurred the White House to do everything possible to stabilize the region. Thus, The United States’ primary objectives in Southeast Asia during the Cold War can be summarized as economic growth,

VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed March 16, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v04/d135>.

⁴³ W. J. Jordan, August 4, 1966, 217. Notes of the 563rd Meeting of the National Security Council, The United States and Suharto: April 1966–December 1968 (Documents 206-262), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 7th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d217>.

⁴⁴ September 1, 1965, 137. Special National Intelligence Estimate, Sukarno's Confrontation With the United States December 1964–September 1965 (Documents 89-141), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed September 20, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d137>.

regional cooperation, and political stability. Indonesia was no exception. The U.S. aimed to maintain a domestically stable, economically sufficient, and regionally cooperative nation to help strengthen Southeast Asia against communist influence, particularly communist influence from the Peoples' Republic of China.

U.S. Interests in Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia

In addition to concern about the PKI's influence on Sukarno, the stability and regional cooperation that the U.S. sought in Indonesia grew increasingly uncertain during President Sukarno's presidency. Sukarno's confrontation with Malaysia, which came to a head by the fall of 1963, accelerated Indonesia's deteriorating relationship with the United States of America. Thus, it became difficult for the Johnson administration to maintain a relationship with Indonesia from 1963 onwards. The confrontation between the two neighboring Southeast Asian nations threatened to become a conventional war in September 1963 when all trade between the two stopped. This further damaged Indonesia's faltering financial situation.⁴⁵ Politically, the United States became very concerned with Sukarno's public support of the PKI and by extension—the Peoples' Republic of China during this period of confrontation. An intelligence memo in July 1965 put forth a pessimistic forecast for U.S. interests in Indonesia.

The principal development in Indonesia over the past year has been the sharply accelerated growth of the Communist Party (PKI) role in government. This trend is likely to continue as long as Sukarno is in control...The longer Sukarno lives, the better will be the PKI chances of maintaining or improving its position following his death...We look for a continuation of Indonesia's hostile attitude toward the US...Ties with Communist China are likely to become closer...⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Donald Hindley, "Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia: A Search for Motives," *Asian Survey*, vol. 4 No. 6 (Jun., 1964), p 904-913, Accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3023528.pdf>.

⁴⁶ July 1, 1965, 126. National Intelligence Memorandum, Sukarno's Confrontation With the United States December 1964–September 1965 (Documents 89-141), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 10th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d126>.

Yet, the White House had very few viable options in dealing with Sukarno due to a variety of reasons. Public opinion, the Gruening Amendment, the international community, and Cold War strategic interests in Indonesia and the greater Southeast Asian region created a difficult situation for the U.S. to effectively respond to Indonesia's political shift towards communism.

Scholars have often attributed Sukarno's policy of *Konfrontasi* (confrontation) to the war between Indonesia and Malaysia in the early 1960s. "Not long after its initial reaction to the Tunku's proposal in 1961, Jakarta soon became convinced that the Malaysia project was not an act of de-colonization but rather a manifestation of neo-colonialism in its back yard."⁴⁷ There was, furthermore, a deep distrust of Malay's peaceful achievement of independence amongst Indonesian elites.⁴⁸ Thus, according to Liow, Sukarno adopted a "radical foreign policy," in order "to divert domestic attention from the increasingly precarious political and economic situation in Indonesia..."⁴⁹ However, other, often contradictory factors also had influence in this rift between neighbors. Liow asserts, "The military viewed Malaysia as a potential Chinese fifth column at Indonesia's doorstep that would threaten the security of the archipelago, while the PKI saw Malaysia as a legacy of imperialism in Southeast Asia."⁵⁰ Whatever the truth of the matter, what is of importance here is the unique position this put the United States in in dealing with an increasingly hostile and anti-Western Indonesia.

Sukarno's confrontation with Malaysia accounted for twenty percent of Indonesia's 390 billion rupiah budget in 1964.⁵¹ This strained Indonesia's struggling economy and sent inflation

⁴⁷ Joseph Chinyong Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations*, New York City, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, 98.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 80.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 81.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 98.

⁵¹ December 24, 1965, "The Cutting Edge of Koti," *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=16&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54032568&db=tma>.

rates soaring. The United States could not simply use the financial carrot and stick of offering further aid or imposing sanctions. The Gruening Amendment prevented further U.S. aid to a nation hostile or likely to become hostile to the U.S. On the other hand, cutting all aid and trade to Indonesia in response to Sukarno's actions would ostensibly allow the Soviet Union or China to fill the gap. A memo summarizing an NSC meeting in January 1964 highlights the quandary in which the White House found itself. According to this NSC memo, "If we oppose Sukarno by cutting off all U.S. aid, he [Sukarno] might react by confiscating extensive U.S. investments in Indonesia. In the case of a showdown, he might ask help from China and even Russia."⁵² Thus, the U.S. had no clear economic solution other than to hold the line with Indonesia.

Sukarno's increasingly explicit anti-Western rhetoric and actions concerned the White House. In his August 17th, 1964 independence day speech, Sukarno vehemently attacked the United States' presence and agenda throughout the world. An intelligence memo from August 20th noted, "On foreign investment, Sukarno made it clear that American interests eventually would be taken over."⁵³ This memo was addressing Sukarno's speech on August 17th, 1964—Indonesia's independence day—which denounced American involvement as nothing more than neocolonialism. Sukarno took a distinctively pan-Asian stance in his speech calling for all non-Asian people to leave the continent. He went so far as to denounce Western intervention in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and naturally Malaysia.⁵⁴

⁵² Bromley Smith, January 7th, 1964, 8. Summary Record of the 521st National Security Council Meeting, Sukarno's Confrontation With Malaysia—January–November 1964 (Documents 1-88), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January, 7th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d8>.

⁵³ August 20th, 1964, 62. Current Intelligence Memorandum, Sukarno's Confrontation With Malaysia—January–November 1964 (Documents 1-88), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 7th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d62>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Sukarno's confrontation with the United States made it more difficult for the Johnson administration to legally maintain a relationship with Indonesia due to the Gruening

Amendment. Dean Rusk brought up his concern to the President in a memo on January 6, 1964:

One further matter concerning aid to Indonesia is the Gruening Amendment, Section 620(i) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1964 which, in pertinent part, provides—No assistance shall be provided under this or any other Act, and no sales shall be made under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, to any country which the President determines is engaging in or preparing for aggressive military efforts directed against etc.⁵⁵

The Gruening Amendment put President Johnson in a tight corner as evidenced by the debate within his administration. The question revolved around whether to continue aid to Indonesia despite Sukarno's hostility and hope to bring Sukarno to the negotiating table or to cut off aid and thereby risk losing any influence over Indonesia's trajectory. President Johnson made a decision and sent a memo stating,

In the light of Section 620(j) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, I hereby direct that the furnishing of assistance to Indonesia shall be only for such selective purposes and in such amounts as I may from time to time authorize. Pursuant to Section 620(j), I hereby determine, subject to my continuing review in the light of developments, that the furnishing of limited and provisional assistance to Indonesia as follows is essential to the national interest of the United States:

- (1) Assistance for training Indonesian specialists, officials and military personnel in the United States;
- (2) Technical assistance to educational and governmental institutions and agencies, including police;
- (3) Assistance for malaria eradication;
- (4) Assistance in the form of equipment and training for civic action programs; and
- (5) Transportation and communications equipment for police forces.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Dean Rusk, January 6, 1964, 4. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, Sukarno's Confrontation With Malaysia—January–November 1964 (Documents 1-88), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed March 16, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d4>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk became responsible for observing Sukarno in order to determine if “Indonesia is ‘engaged in or preparing for aggressive military efforts.’”⁵⁷ Thereby, President Johnson was able to legally navigate around the Gruening Amendment in order to improve his negotiation capabilities with Sukarno.

The United States believed President Sukarno’s swing towards his communist supporters was increasingly determined by his confrontation with Malaysia. According to a national intelligence memo from July 1st, 1965, “The principal development in Indonesia over the past year has been the sharply accelerated growth of the Communist Party (PKI) role in government.”⁵⁸ Thus, America’s perspective of the problem in Indonesia centered on the PKI: “This trend [growing Communist influence in the Indonesian government] is likely to continue as long as Sukarno is in control...The longer Sukarno lives, the better will be the PKI chances of maintaining or improving its position following his death.”⁵⁹ To be clear, Sukarno had never been a perfect partner for U.S. policy makers. This poor relationship can be attributed to many factors that date back to Sukarno’s cooperation with Japan during the Second World War. In addition, Sukarno openly advocated for pan-Asian beliefs in direct opposition to Western values, and the CIA’s support for the PRRI rebellion further strained relations. Thus, the White House had little established trust with Sukarno as began a new campaign to confront Western interests in the region.

In an effort to maintain regional stability, and in response to the suspected cooperation between Sukarno and the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC), the United States advocated for

⁵⁷ Dean Rusk, January 7, 1964, 7. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, Sukarno's Confrontation With Malaysia—January–November 1964 (Documents 1-88), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed March 16, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d7>.

⁵⁸ July 1, 1965, 126. National Intelligence Memorandum.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

regional alliances of its own. One such alliance was the Greater Malayan Confederation (Maphilindo) which included Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. President Johnson turned to this confederation to solve the regional crisis that he inherited from President John F. Kennedy. Johnson's administration, specifically sought support from the only Maphilindo member not directly involved in the conflict—the Philippines. The Johnson administration's theory was that with greater pressure from neighboring nations, the U.S. could prevent Sukarno from launching a full-scale war with British-supported-Malaysia and thereby breaking ties with Western backers. This strategic interest was important enough that President Johnson himself wrote to Filipino President Macapagal, "I am delighted to learn that you plan to meet with President Sukarno in the next few days. Your increasing role in working for the security of Southeast Asia can be of decisive importance in the dangerous situation between Indonesia and Malaysia."⁶⁰ President Johnson and his administration were not only concerned about Indonesia's movement to the left, but also the potential regional upheaval that would occur if the largest nation in Southeast Asia turned into a communist state. Such a development would drastically change the regional and global balance shaped by the Cold War. Despite regional and international support for a diplomatic solution to the dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia, Sukarno remained adamant in his international confrontation and left-leaning political platform.

The rise of mass anti-American sentiment in Indonesia only further raised the stakes in Washington. In Yogyakarta on August 16th, 1964 a mob of Indonesian youth besieged and claimed the Thomas Jefferson Library as property of Indonesia.⁶¹ In February 1965, 17,000

⁶⁰ Dean Rusk, January 6, 1964, 3. Sukarno's Confrontation With Malaysia—January–November 1964 (Documents 1-88), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1964–1968, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed January 10th, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d3>.

⁶¹ Geoffrey Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Accessed January 7, 2018, [https://books.google.com/books?id=jW0wDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA101&lpg=PA101&dq=Thomas Jefferson library](https://books.google.com/books?id=jW0wDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA101&lpg=PA101&dq=Thomas%20Jefferson%20library)

Indonesians protested against U.S. aggression against North Vietnam. According to a New York Times report, “The Indonesian Government took control of the United States Information Service library in Jakarta today after four hours of officially sponsored demonstrations protesting air strikes by the United States against North Vietnam.”⁶² The Johnson administration attributed this anti-Western sentiment to President Sukarno’s nonalignment rhetoric and agenda. Thus, while the problem was clearly Sukarno, Washington remained uncertain as to how to respond to the increasingly anti-American popular movement in Indonesia.

In order to achieve regional stability, the U.S. needed a sympathetic president in Indonesia. It is apparent from multiple internal Johnson administration memos that President Sukarno was the biggest obstacle in their way to establishing geopolitical stability in the region. However, Sukarno was still very popular in Indonesia, and any potential American intervention in Indonesia would only risk further worsening relations with the Indonesian population. Thus, Washington realized something had to be done, but the appropriate action required was debated within the White House. For the time, the general policy was to sit and wait, but the problem was clear—President Sukarno and his relationship with his PKI supporters had to be finished.

America’s Perspective of the Anti-Communist Purge

The United States quandary in Indonesia was solved for them when Sukarno was internally removed from power in a process that played out over months during which PKI members and their supporters were massacred as was described earlier. It took months for

YogyakartaIndonesia&source=bl&ots=GtWPH1pLRj&sig=FUj_7fnTXNVmG3MNzNXxZYWLPfE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi23OKi0cbYAhWG4iYKHxeCBdEQ6AEIQTAD#v=onepage&q=Thomas%20Jefferson%20library%20yogyakarta%20indonesia&f=false.

⁶² Neil Sheehan, “Indonesia Seizes Third U.S. Library,” *New York Times*, February 16, 1965, Accessed March 16, 2016, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116751163/390D56AA4532422CPQ/8?accountid=14663>.

Sukarno to fully relinquish national leadership as communal violence perpetrated a mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians in the process. However, by August 1966, Sukarno was forced out of office, and the widespread killing had largely stopped.

Growing political divisions within Indonesia were well known leading up to October 1st, 1965. This is reflected in Sukarno's efforts to unify the disparate elements within Indonesia as well as the reporting of the September 30th coup attempt and its aftermath. Most observers identified the attempted coup as a communist plot to gain power in the country. An article published by Time Magazine reported,

Those who suspect a direct Communist role recall that about two weeks before the Sept. 30 coup, Djakarta's Reds began preparing a foundation of some sort. Editorials in Communist newspapers, which had long grumbled about the soaring cost of living but never pressed for remedies, suddenly called for 'immediate action,' and their campaign against 'capitalist bureaucrats' was abruptly stepped up. A few days before the coup, Communist cadres were issued special orders, and some were given arms. Top leaders were told not to sleep in their homes for a few nights. When the coup came, the official Communist paper came out flatly in support of the uprising.⁶³

Foreign observers were ostensibly unsurprised by the outbreak of violence in Indonesia. An article in Time Magazine stated, "A showdown between the Reds and the nationalist-minded officers has long been expected...Defense Minister Nasution has long complained of Sukarno's wooing of the Communists, and successfully blocked a Red plan to have arms issued to its own militia."⁶⁴

The September 30 Movement is widely believed to have triggered this wave of killing that coincided with Suharto's overthrow of Sukarno in 1965-1966. Following the murder of six

⁶³ October 15, 1965, "Wanted: A Magician," *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=8&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#db=tma&AN=54031851>.

⁶⁴ October 8, 1965, "After an Evening with Morning Star," *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=9&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54031786&db=tma>.

Indonesian generals, Major General Suharto—head of the Strategic Reserve Command (KOSTRAD) defeated the Lieutenant Colonel Untung’s forces on the island of Java. Major General Suharto attributed the attempted coup to Untung and the PKI, and, “took control of the army.”⁶⁵ Quickly defeating the forces behind the attempted coup, Suharto led an anti-communist campaign that perpetrated the murder of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians over the ensuing months. As historian Brad Simpson stated in *Economists with Guns*, it is important to recognize the lack of knowledge about the people behind the September 30th Movement and their intentions in murdering the six Indonesian generals on the night of September 30th, 1965.⁶⁶ The political motives of the conspirators of the attempted coup on September 30, 1965 may never be known. However, the result was clear—mass violence erupted throughout the archipelago. The significance of the September 30 Movement is evident in its aftermath rather than the intent of those behind the attempted coup.

Despite the large numbers of the PKI and its substantial influence throughout Indonesia, they were massacred. Civil war did not ensue because the PKI was simply not supplied or trained to fight the Indonesian army.

[PKI] had tried to persuade Sukarno to let them arm and train their members against the ‘neocolonialists’ but the generals had blocked them. When the time came to fight, even in self-defense, the PKI had neither the equipment nor the training. And finally, since the party had been legal, participating openly in a kind of national front, both P.K.I. leaders and rank-and-file members were well-known to their enemies.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Simpson, 172.

⁶⁶ Simpson, 173.

⁶⁷ Seth S. King, “The Great Purge in Indonesia,” *New York Times* (1923-Current file); May 8, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. SM13, Accessed January 7th, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/117087537/fulltextPDF/AC12E8248E294DA5PQ/1?accountid=14663>.

Without Sukarno's support, the PKI was little more than a body count for the army in the wake of September 30, 1965. Indeed, the anti-communist campaign of late 1965 and early 1966 decimated the PKI. According to King,

These convulsive efforts of the past six months have indeed shattered the PKI. Those of its members who survive are in hiding or have managed to escape abroad. Although there has never been any official confirmation, Aidit is presumed dead, killed by the army in Solo on Nov. 22, M.H. Lukman and Njoto, the No. 2 and 3 men in the party, have not been seen since late October, and it is widely believed here that they also are dead.⁶⁸

It also appears that the PKI itself was uninformed of the plans to take control in Jakarta. Time Magazine reported, “[C]ommunist headquarters seemed as confused as everyone else. One Red newspaper did come out in support of the 30th of September Movement, but the others were silent... Whether Untung's coup represented a one-man aberration or was part of a faultily executed Communist plot remained to be seen.”⁶⁹

The United States, nonetheless, saw the PKI as a great threat and acted to ensure their destruction. According to a CIA memo, “[I]f the PKI can build even small areas of resistance in Central Java and West Sumatra, they will have the ideal bases from which to mount campaigns of harassment, subversion and sabotage as the emergent non-Communist government attempts to grapple with responsibilities already close to overpowering.”⁷⁰ Thus, the CIA recommended the support of the anti-communist forces in Indonesia after careful consideration of their intentions. This support would include covert deliveries of arms and medicine.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ October 8, 1965, “After an Evening with Morning Star,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=7&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54031786&db=tma>.

⁷⁰ November 9, 1965, 172. Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, 1964–1968, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965–March 1966 (Documents 142-205), FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, VOLUME XXVI, INDONESIA; MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE; PHILIPPINES, Accessed April 11, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d172>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The killing was largely carried out by Indonesian civilians rather than the military. However, the military condoned the violence, supported, and possibly supplied anti-Communists with the means to carry out such a large scale murder throughout the country. Time Magazine reported, “[T]he army bosses are taking no chances. To back up their firm control of military power—including, ironically, Red-supplied MIGs, patrol boats and artillery—they are busy training some 24,000 anti-Communist youths in villages from Bali to West Irian. Most of the trainees are drilling with bamboo sticks, but arms may be supplied later.”⁷²

Time Magazine published an in-depth article on the Indonesian mass murder in mid-December.

According to accounts brought out of Indonesia by Western diplomats and independent travelers, Communists, Red sympathizers and their families are being massacred by the thousands. Backlands army units are reported to have executed thousands of Communists after interrogation in remote rural jails. Moslems, whose political influence had waned as the Communists gained favor with Sukarno, had begun a ‘holy war’ in East Java against Indonesian Reds even before the abortive September coup. Armed with wide-bladed knives called parangs, Moslem bands crept at night into the homes of Communists, killing entire families and burying the bodies in shallow graves. Resentment against Communists that swept the country after the coup attempt heightened the Moslems' fervor and persuaded the army to turn its head as the holy war spread quickly to western Borneo and Sumatra. In Central Java the army even gave military training to Moslem youths. The murder campaign became so brazen in parts of rural East Java that Moslem bands placed the heads of victims on poles and paraded them through villages. The killings have been on such a scale that the disposal of the corpses has created a serious sanitation problem in East Java and northern Sumatra, where the humid air bears the reek of decaying flesh. Travelers from those areas tell of small rivers and streams that have been literally clogged with bodies; river transportation has at places been impeded.⁷³

⁷² December 3, 1965, “The Light that Fails,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=13&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54032359&db=tma>.

⁷³ December 17, 1965, “Silent Settlement,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=15&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54032496&db=tma>.

As this communal violence unfolded, a political battle was taking place in Jakarta. Sukarno, without his support from the political left, was caving to military pressure. It was clear as early as March 1966 that Suharto had assumed de facto control of Jakarta. General Suharto announced the arrest of fifteen top officials within Sukarno's administration. Subandrio was amongst these fifteen officials. This was a substantial public blow to the PKI. Without its top member in public office, there was no one left to exert leverage at the top level of government.⁷⁴ King reported on how Sukarno's policy of playing off both the political left and right came back to haunt Sukarno as he witnessed the political purge of the left play out.

The destruction of the PKI has left all political power in the hands of the Moslem generals and their supporters in the seven legal political parties, four of which are either Moslem or Christian. Sukarno had attained his great position of authority by standing with one foot on the shoulder of the Communists and the other on the armed forces. With the Communists gone, he became entirely dependent on the generals. In February, together with Dr. Subandrio, his Foreign Minister and architect of the Jakarta-Peking alliance, Sukarno made one last wild bid to split the generals and revive the leftists. It failed completely. Dr. Subandrio is now in jail, and Sukarno remains President only because the generals choose to keep him.⁷⁵

In the aftermath of the domestic turmoil, the army demanded several concessions from Sukarno, and in return they allowed Sukarno to stay in power. According to a memo from the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia, these demands included, "(I) Appointment of Suharto head army, (II) all persons involved in Sept 30 movement to be punished in accordance with Indo law, (III) Indo air force to be retooled, (IV) all mass organizations and political parties which supported Sept 30 movement to be banned, and (V) replacement of PKI, Subandrio's intelligence

⁷⁴ Seth S. King, "Sukarno Yields on Purge of Leftists," *New York Times*, March 19th, 1966, Accessed January 5, 2018,

<https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/117462979/409D82BDC6074167PQ/6?accountid=14663>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

organization.”⁷⁶ Sukarno agreed to appoint Suharto as the head of the army; however, the army did not wait for his approval to carry out punitive measures against suspected agents of the September 30th Movement.⁷⁷ Thus, Suharto and his allies maintained the image that Sukarno was still at the head of the government. Suharto, in fact, announced the arrests of top PKI leadership in the name of Sukarno. “All the actions were taken in the name of Mr. Sukarno, General Suharto declared. In announcing the dismissal of the 15 ministers, he said the country was still being governed under the 1945 Constitution.”⁷⁸

Sukarno remained in office through the summer of 1966, but increasingly faced calls to step down in June 1966. By July 1966, Suharto was constitutionally appointed leader in Indonesia.⁷⁹ Sukarno’s title was all that was left to him until the Provisional People’s Consultative Congress stripped him of it, “and ordered national elections within years.”⁸⁰ He died under house arrest a few years later.

U.S. Response towards Turmoil in Indonesia

Even at the height of the bloodshed in Indonesia, the United States maintained a general policy of *laissez faire* towards Indonesia. Yet, there were exceptions as this policy responded to Indonesian political developments. According to President Johnson’s special assistant Rostow:

⁷⁶ Green, October 17, 1965, 156. Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965-March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Accessed January 4th, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d156>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ July 1, 1966, “The Unmaking of a President,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=7ed494a6-578b-4875-a1b2-52e27d5f117d%40sessionmgr104>.

⁸⁰ July 15, 1966, “Vengeance with a Smile,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=37&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54034545&db=tma>.

Until late March, our major policy on developments in Indonesia was silence...Nonetheless, we have recently been quietly pointing out that we take a favorable view of the new regime and have also been noting that its succession would have been less likely without our continued firmness in Viet-Nam and in the area. We should continue to applaud and claim credit only to this extremely limited extent.⁸¹

The justification for this silence was that, “The anti-Communist leaders wanted no cheers from us. This policy remains generally sound, particularly in the light of the wholesale killings that have accompanied the transition (even though it is perfectly clear that a Communist takeover would have been at least as bloody).”⁸² The White House knew that they were in a controversial position, and due to political considerations, there was little need for public involvement in Indonesian affairs. The open support of the United States would have only risked alienating the Indonesian populace from the anti-communist Indonesian army. Furthermore, the international community would have had much more ammunition in denouncing the international reach of the United States.

Above all else, it was imperative that the United States’ supply of equipment to the Indonesian military remained covert. This covert aid to the Indonesian army included Washington’s effort to, “Spread the story of PKI’s guilt, treachery and brutality (this priority effort is perhaps most needed immediate assistance we can give army if we can find way to do it without identifying it as solely or largely US effort).”⁸³ The White House remained concerned that a reversal in Indonesian politics would occur. Yet, there was also the acknowledgement that if word got out about America’s supply of equipment to those responsible for the mass murder of

⁸¹ Walt Rostow, June 8, 1966, 210. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Green, October 5, 1965, 147 Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965-March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Accessed on January 4th, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d147>.

hundreds of thousands of Indonesians, there would be widespread criticism of U.S. involvement in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

The United States' lack of accurate knowledge about the reality on the ground in Indonesia, let alone the possible global ramifications and actors involved in the Indonesian conflict was another reason the U.S. did not take a public stance. A telegram from Dean Rusk to the U.S. embassy in Indonesia laid out the United States' lack of information about the conflict:

We are not at all clear as to who is calling the shots within the military. As examples: although it appears to be Nasution, Suharto seems to be taking a stronger line vis-a-vis Sukarno. We do not know who else is playing what role, or what degree of unity exists among the military leaders, or what their strength is. We have no real knowledge of the military plans and intentions or what debates are going on in the inner circle...⁸⁴

Unsurprisingly, there was far too much uncertainty for the United States to charge into unknown waters without further intelligence. Finally, the wait and see strategy could no longer be pursued. Too much was at stake and inaction could be just as dangerous. This put the United States in a difficult situation. “[W]e do not wish to give the army impression that we are trying to inject ourselves into Indo internal situation, or that we which to channel army’s actions for our—as opposed to Indo’s—benefit, or that we encouraging action against Sukarno or, in fact, anyone except PKI.”⁸⁵

The United States' chief concern about the role of the People's Republic of China in Indonesia paralleled the actions of anti-communist forces in Indonesia. The United States' fear of Chinese influence in Indonesia is apparent in internal Johnson administration memos.

Ambassador Green wrote in a telegram to the Department of State that the Indonesian military

⁸⁴ Dean Rusk, October 13th, 1965, 153. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Indonesia, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965-March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Accessed on January 4th, 2018. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d153>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

was, “rounding up suspect Chinese businessmen and seeking to find out through Chinese just what role ChiCom⁸⁶ Embassy here played in aborted coup. Aide cautioned however that, even if army got the goods on Peking, Djakarta would have to be very careful about its relations with China.”⁸⁷ After taking power, the Indonesian military broke its ties with the PRC, albeit cautiously. In announcing the arrests of Sukarno’s fifteen leftist officials, Suharto stressed the threat to these officials safety from student groups. Suharto also made the announcement in the name of Sukarno and stated that these were temporary measures.⁸⁸

American economic aid to Indonesia is the most illustrative evidence of U.S. policy in Indonesia during this period of political turmoil and ethnic violence. Cutting most of its financial ties with Sukarno’s administration and resuming trade cautiously at first and then establishing strong ties with Suharto’s administration clearly shows that the United States supported Indonesia’s anti-communist government above all else during the Cold War.

The United States all but stopped its aid to Indonesia at the height of Sukarno’s confrontation with the West. In 1963, the U.S. provided over 50 million dollars in aid to Indonesia, with an additional 85 million requested for 1964. In comparison, the United States was providing South Vietnam with over 16,000 U.S. military advisers and 500 million dollars in 1963.⁸⁹ As Sukarno continued his confrontation with the West, the Johnson administration took steps to cut its financial ties with Indonesia. Secretary of State Dean Rusk recommended the President,

⁸⁶ ChiCom is short for Chinese Communists and here refers to the Peoples’ Republic of China

⁸⁷ Green, October 14, 1965 154. Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965-March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Accessed January 4th, 2018.
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d154>.

⁸⁸ King, “Sukarno Yields on Purge of Leftists,” *New York Times*, March 19th, 1966.

⁸⁹ “America Commits 1961-1964,” The History Place, Accessed March 14, 2018,
<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1961.html>.

[A]gainst completely cutting off aid at this time. Doing so would not, in our judgment, change Sukarno's behavior, but would wreck the Thai and Filipino efforts at reconciliation. It would also trigger a violent reaction. In all probability, Sukarno would seize the \$500 million American oil properties, encourage Communist hoodlums to burn our Embassy, and break diplomatic relations.⁹⁰

Rather, Rusk called for a more cautious approach that would allow the United States to react proportionally to the actions of Sukarno. Rusk proposed, “[A] policy of very tight control over all aspects of both aid and trade with Indonesia, with progressive cuts in our aid programs as the situation and Indonesian behavior warrant.”⁹¹ This policy proved to be effective. It did not cause Sukarno to mollify his anti-western rhetoric, but it did allow the U.S. to maintain influence in the country without further antagonizing the Indonesian people. Furthermore, it placated Malaysian and British concerns. The White House worried that continued support for Indonesia in the midst of its confrontation with Malaysia would alienate British and Malaysian allies in the region. Dean Rusk worried, “[A]ny aid to Indonesia will produce continuing resentment from the United Kingdom and from Malaysia, and continuing pressure on us by them.”⁹²

However, as soon as it was clear that Sukarno was on his way out, the aid resumed. “The agreement to sell 50,000 tons of PL-480 Title IV rice to the Indonesian Government was signed yesterday and publicly announced today. This limited resumption of aid marks a turning point on the road back to cooperative relations now that Sukarno's power has been circumscribed. The change in the Djakarta atmosphere and the break with many of Sukarno's discredited policies continue to be reflected in the economic realism, a lessening of tension over Malaysia and the unabated drive to root out communist influence from the ministries that have so far characterized

⁹⁰ Dean Rusk, January 6, 1964, 4. Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

General Suharto's new administration.”⁹³ This statement could not more clearly detail all of the United States’ objectives in Indonesia at the time. Yet, if Suharto was truly the answer to all of the United States’ problems in the region, there still remained the need to justify the renewed alliance with Suharto’s Indonesia to the international community.

As part of its efforts to stabilize Indonesia in the regional and international communities, The United States sought to bring Indonesia back into various international organizations. Chief amongst these was the United Nations. On April 4th, 1966 Indonesia publicly declared its intent to rejoin the UN.⁹⁴ This was announced by Subandrio’s successor—Malik who had been in office less than two weeks before making this announcement.

The United States covertly provided military technology to the Indonesian army. According to a memo to the 303 Committee, the purpose of this aid was to “[P]rovide a system of communications between anti-Communist military leaders for use under conditions of unrest and rebellion, at a time when normal communications channels may be manned or usurped by politically unreliable personnel.”⁹⁵ Of course, this assistance was strictly off the books, with much of the details still classified. Nonetheless, it is clear that Washington was well aware of the possible negative outcomes if their presence was known to their opposition: “Exposure of this activity might provide President Sukarno and residual leftists in the Indonesian political scene with embarrassing ammunition to use against General Suharto and his associates.”⁹⁶

Once again, secrecy remained paramount for the anti-communist actions in Indonesia. Of course, the maintenance of covert violence against suspected communists hinged upon

⁹³ Donald W. Ropa, April 18, 1966, 206. Memorandum from Donald W. Ropa of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow).

⁹⁴ “Indonesia Planning to Rejoin the U.N.,” *New York Times* (1923-Current file); April 4, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 1, Accessed January 7th, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/117587648/717F1DAEDA5D4DD3PQ/5?accountid=14663>.

⁹⁵ June 17, 1966, 211. Memorandum Prepared for the 303 Committee.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

controlling media coverage of events in Indonesia. According to Roosa, the Indonesian army effectively censored Indonesian media coverage of the massacre. Thus, there was no mention of the killings in Indonesian newspapers or radio broadcasts.⁹⁷ Likewise, foreign news agencies were obstructed by anti-communist forces in an attempt to prevent international condemnation of the violence. Thus, most of the reporting at the time covered political developments in Jakarta, rather than the widespread violence throughout the country.⁹⁸

The United States fully realized the important role that media had to play in Indonesia. As early as October 17, 1965, Ambassador Green sent a telegram to State about the internal struggle over Indonesia's only news organization—*Antara*. According to Ambassador Green, the Indonesian army, “[S]eems dissatisfied with activities of Indonesia's sole news agency, Antara, and continues to interrogate and harass its staff which, of course, was heavily Communist infected.”⁹⁹ Through this censorship campaign the army increased its national influence. Without a counter to the military's narrative, Sukarno and PKI supporters were incapable of garnering public support. Furthermore, because the United States' maintained covert support for the Indonesian army, Sukarno had little evidence to support his anti-Western rhetoric.

In fact, the U.S. had already considered a covert program of disinformation targeting the PKI prior to October 1, 1965. As early as February 1965, the White House was considering an option to support moderate and anti-communist Indonesians against communist agents in the country:

The main thrust of this program is designed to exploit factionalism within the PKI itself, to emphasize traditional Indonesian distrust of Mainland China and

⁹⁷ Roosa, 24-25.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Green, October 17th, 1965, 156. Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, Coup and Counter Reaction: October 1965-March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. Accessed January 4th, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d156>.

to portray the PKI as an instrument of Red Chinese imperialism. Specific types of activity envisaged include covert liaison with and support to existing anti-Communist groups, particularly among the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*],² black letter operations, media operations, including possibly black radio, and political action within existing Indonesian organizations and institutions.¹⁰⁰

Media Coverage of the Indonesian Purge

The purge in Indonesia received attention from foreign newspapers despite the Indonesian military's attempts at preventing access to the sites of the mass murder. U.S. newspapers reported on the Indonesian purge, albeit with varying degrees of quality and attention. Time Magazine published 26 stories with Indonesia as the subject between October 1965 and August 1966. U.S. News & World Report published 16 stories about Indonesia in the same period of time. The New York Times published 900 articles, at least mentioning Indonesia. Less than forty of these articles mentioned the purge directly, however. U.S. newspapers did cover the violence in Indonesia, and followed up on the story over the course of the following year.

Time Magazine's reporting was the most direct in detailing the violence occurring as a result of the failed coup. In an article published on October 12, 1965, Time Magazine detailed the death of between 200 and 600 people in Java. The methods of execution included clubbing, stabbing and burial.¹⁰¹ The reporting accurately accounted for the nature of the violence in the country. These were the methods of a mob, not an organized military. However, the Indonesian

¹⁰⁰ February 23, 1965, 110. Memorandum Prepared for the 303 Committee, Sukarno's Confrontation With the United States December 1964–September 1965, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines, Accessed January 7th, 2018
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v26/d110>.

¹⁰¹ November 12, 1965, "Gathering in the Paddies," *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018,
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=12&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54032130&db=tma>.

military would have certainly have given consent to this violence as they sought to purge communist elements from the country. Time Magazine made this clear as well. By January 1966, Time Magazine estimated, “Since the Communists' coup attempt last September, the army has looked the other way while Moslem mobs killed at least 100,000 members and supporters of Indonesia's pro-Peking Communist Party. And now the purge was spreading south from Sumatra and Java to Bali.”¹⁰² The amount of violence and its nature was evident according to Time Magazine.

Time magazine continued to update readers on events in Indonesia. In an article published on July 15, 1966, Time reported that 400,000 people had died in ongoing violence in Indonesia.¹⁰³ Here, Time Magazine reported on the nature of the violence in Indonesia.

Amok is a Javanese word, and it describes what happened at the collapse of the Communist coup. In a national explosion of pent-up hatred, Indonesia embarked on an orgy of slaughter that took more lives than the U.S. has lost in all wars in this century. The army was responsible for much of the killing, but Nationalist and Moslem mobs took the greatest toll. The slaughter began on Oct. 15 in Sukarno's home town of Blitar, quickly spread through Java and the other major islands, and did not end until last month in the rubber plantations of the Sumatran rain forest. During the eight months the terror lasted, to be a known Communist was usually to become a dead Communist.¹⁰⁴

Not all U.S. newspapers reported similarly to Time Magazine. U.S. News & World Report agreed with the White House's estimate of the importance of the developments in Indonesia. An article published on October 11, 1965 stated, “[T]he U.S., deeply involved in Vietnam, has one more danger zone in Southeast Asia to worry about...What all this means is that a country the United States once hoped it could nurse

¹⁰² January 14, 1966, “A Message from Morning Star,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=17&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54032784&db=tma>.

¹⁰³ July 15, 1966, “Vengeance with a Smile,” *Time Magazine*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=35&sid=fa956b77-8963-4012-9bc3-facb597a4c99%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=#AN=54034545&db=tma>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

into responsible nationhood through aid and appeasement will continue to be a tinderbox of trouble in Southeast Asia, a part of the world that already holds the rank of No. 1 crisis area.”¹⁰⁵

U.S. News and World Report took a decidedly more anti-communist stance in their reporting. Their articles put the attempted coup squarely on the shoulders of the PKI and ignored the extrajudicial murder taking place. “A week after the rebellion collapsed, the Indonesian Army was still uncovering large caches of weapons in the hands of Communist Party members and sympathizers. Most of the fighting that still flared sporadically in Java pitted Communist-infiltrated units against forces controlled by the Army commanders who held power in Jakarta.”¹⁰⁶ This report characterized the violence as a civil war rather than the more accurate description of it as a massacre of suspected communists at the hands of Indonesian mobs. Furthermore, the reporting lacked details about the extent and nature of the killings.

“Deadly reaction. Now, throughout the country, there is a strong reaction against Communist intimidation and excesses of the past two years. Moslem groups are getting their innings. One example: In Semarang, in Central Java, Moslem youths poured into Communist villages a few days ago to avenge fellow Moslems who had been assassinated. They took a heavy toll. Another: In Atjeh, at the extreme northern tip of Sumatra, the Army sat in its barracks for 48 hours while local Moslem groups wiped out the small Communist Party to a man.”¹⁰⁷

There was also far less reporting and follow up on the events in Indonesia following the attempted coup. Only in late January 1966 did U.S. News and World report publish an article with an estimate of the murder that had taken place since October 1965. However, the few

¹⁰⁵ October 11, 1965, “BLOWUP IN INDONESIA: WHAT IT MEANS TO U.S. AND REDS,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Accessed April 6, 2018, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=8&sid=4d3c662c-517e-4369-b826-f266ad397cfb%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=#AN=89262026&db=rel>.

¹⁰⁶ October 18, 1965, “One Place Communists Met a Setback,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Accessed April 7, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=ee9f7528-18ed-4c5e-9a98-05a4bc91168c%40sessionmgr103>.

¹⁰⁷ November 1, 1965, “Indonesia: The Reds are on the Run But,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Accessed April 7 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=ee9f7528-18ed-4c5e-9a98-05a4bc91168c%40sessionmgr103>.

reports published did offer accurate descriptions of the scale and manner of the violence in Indonesia.

Newsweek reported on the domestic upheaval in Indonesia similarly to U.S. News and World Report. There was little to no mention of the violence taking place in Indonesia. When there was mention of the violence, it was portrayed as a civil war rather than a massacre. Much of the reporting focused on Sukarno and the purge of top leftist officials from his cabinet rather than the mass murder taking place throughout the archipelago. In sum, U.S. newspapers reported on events occurring in Indonesia with monthly updates, at the very least. Not all papers publicized the amount of violence in the country. Many articles failed to characterize the violence in Indonesia.

In comparison, Australian newspapers largely ignored the mass murder occurring just miles away from their own borders. According to Professor Richard Tanter, Australian newspapers rarely reported on the killings in Indonesia. Professor Tanter studied the major newspapers of Melbourne Australia between October 1st, 1965 and August 30th, 1966.¹⁰⁸ According to his findings, the Sun published more than one hundred articles on Indonesia, but only four mentioned the massacres between November 1965 and August 1966.¹⁰⁹ Thus, like the reporting from Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report, Melbourne-based newspapers failed to report on the scale and characterizations of the violence in Indonesia. Furthermore, the lack of follow up on the story of the extrajudicial killings taking place in Indonesia points to a lack of interest in the massacre of Indonesians suspected of being communists.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Tanter, "Witness Denied: the Australian Response to the Indonesian Holocaust, 1965-1966," Accessed April 4, 2018, <http://nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Witness-Denied.pdf>, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Tanter, 7.

Conclusion

The United States was not responsible for the overthrow of Sukarno and the mass murder that took place in Indonesia between 1965 and 1966. Yet, the United States certainly knew about the violence and chose to support Suharto's violent regime regardless of its humanitarian cost. The United States' fear of communist expansion at the height of the Cold War far outweighed any humanitarian concerns the Johnson administration may have harbored. This Cold War outlook prompted the United States to provide communication technology, intelligence, financial assistance, and diplomatic overtures to the people responsible for one of the worst massacres of the twentieth century. All of this support was offered with the goal of disposing of a hostile leader in exchange for a cooperative anti-communist state in Southeast Asia.

It may not be surprising to those familiar with U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War that America supported a strong-handed military junta responsible for genocide. Indeed, the United States propped up and supported dictators and military regimes around the globe. Many Southeast Asian nations experienced dramatic change during the Cold War; changes that continue to affect the region today. The massacre that took place in Indonesia between 1965 and 1966 is relevant history in the world today. This period of violence and persecution of minority and political groups in Indonesia continues to shape Indonesia's political, religious, and social discussions. As recent as October 2017, anti-communist and anti-Chinese rhetoric and mass mobilization has shown how much the past continues to shape Indonesia. Unfortunately, this history has remained taboo amongst Indonesians. Without serious discussion of the events of 1965-1966, this history will remain ripe for the political elite's exploitation of minority groups.

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