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**A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW OF STUDIES
ON SINO-INDONESIAN RELATIONS
DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF THE COLD WAR,
1949–1967***

Keywords: international relations, Cold War, Sino-Indonesian Relations.

ABSTRACT: The Sino-Indonesian relationship is an important research topic in Cold War studies. Since the 1960s, a number of scholarly works have been published on the subject. The declassification of diplomatic documents in various countries, and particularly the opening of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives following the end of the Cold War, has led to new developments in the studies on Sino-Indonesian relations. Much of this research, however, has been focused on the period from 1949 to 1965, because soon after the Indonesian military coup of September 1965, Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations was suspended and was not restored until 1990. This article is a historiographical overview of the more controversial topics in Sino-Indonesian relations between 1949 through 1965 in scholarly publications that have come out over the past half decade. These topics include, among others, the establishment and evolution of Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations; the standpoint of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia –PKI) toward the Sino-Soviet split; China's reactions to the anti-Chinese movements that occurred in Indonesia between 1959 through 1961; and the cultural relations between Indonesia and China. The discussion here is limited to publications in the English and Chinese languages; this paper does not make any attempt to include relevant scholarly works that may have been published in Bahasa Indonesia or other languages.

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SINO-INDONESIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The establishment of Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations has attracted considerable attention from scholars. On 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), having gained victory over the Nationalist Party (Guomindang – GMD) in the Chinese Civil War, proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Following closely, in December 1949, the Republic of Indonesia gained its independence after four years of revolutionary war against the Dutch. These developments constituted important political and structural shifts in post-war Asia. The two new sovereign states promptly moved toward mutual recognition. On 11 January 1950, the Indonesian government sent a formal request for recognition to Beijing via the Dutch government. The PRC, however, did not reply until the end of March, almost three months later. However, when the Chinese government finally gave a favorable response, Indonesia did not to appoint an ambassador to Beijing until 1953. It is not surprising therefore the circumstances surrounding the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the Republic of Indonesia had generated interesting scholarly debates.

One interesting issue of scholarly dispute relates to the motivation of the Indonesian government in seeking diplomatic recognition from Beijing, especially after CCP leaders had called the Indonesian government a “lackey of imperialism”; and then the delay in setting up an Indonesian in Beijing. In an early study on post-war Sino-Indonesian relations, historian David Mozingo suggested that the leaders of newly independent Indonesia decided to seek diplomatic relations with Beijing because they believed that if Indonesia ignored the PRC, this would betray Jakarta's proclaimed commitment to an independent and non-aligned foreign policy in the Cold War. At the same time, they faced various external and domestic pressures. First, the American government, to which Jakarta looked toward for aid and diplomatic support at this time, made strong efforts to dissuade Indonesia from recognizing Communist China. Second, Indonesia had to take into consideration that the government of Nationalist China, now exiled to Taiwan but still a permanent member of the

United Nations Security Council, might veto Indonesia's application for UN membership if Jakarta recognized the PRC. Ultimately however, the Indonesian leaders, anxious as they were to demonstrate Indonesia's independent foreign policy, decided to establish diplomatic relations with Communist China. They hoped thereby that this expression of 'independence' would be acknowledged in Moscow and Beijing, and thus render it possible to achieve at least a limited normalization of relations with the Communist powers. The decision of the Indonesian government was thus more strongly influenced by Jakarta's desire to maintain an independent position rather than by the pressure of the United States and Nationalist China toward non-recognition of the PRC¹.

In contrast, the Indonesian scholar Rizal Sukma suggested a different conclusion. While Mozingo concentrated on the external factors, Sukma focused on Indonesia's domestic factors. Sukma enumerated the obstacles to Sino-Indonesian rapprochement, such as the Indonesian leaders' suspicions about the intentions of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), the Muslim community's anti-Communist attitude, and the general inclination among the Indonesian leadership to cooperate with the Western powers. Under these conditions, Premier Mohammad Hatta's decision to establish relations with the PRC seems to have been motivated by certain important domestic political considerations. The first factor was the Indonesian population's strong feeling of nationalism. In the sphere of economic development, Hatta's administration was mainly dependent on the foreign aid provided by the West, particularly the United States; but in the field of politics, the Indonesian population could not accept a close alliance, especially after the West had been seemingly opposed Indonesia's struggle for independence. Second, an exclusionary relationship with the Western powers would have exposed the Hatta cabinet to criticism from its political rivals, such as the Indonesian Socialist Party and the PKI. Third, Hatta's policy towards China was aimed at reinforcing Indonesia's independent position in the deepening Cold War².

¹ D. Mozingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia, 1949-1967*, Ithaca-London 1976, p. 86-89.

² R. Sukma, *Indonesia and China: The Politics of a Troubled Relationship*, London 1999, p. 21-23.

Using declassified Chinese Foreign Ministry archival sources, Chinese scholars presented different perspectives on the establishment of Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations. In a recent article, Chen Yande and Xu Zhenzheng pointed out that in the early stage of its national independence, the new Indonesian governments were threatened by various forms of rebellions. For the Indonesian leaders, it was an urgent task to gain recognition from the international community, because such conferral of legitimacy by the international community was thought to be conducive to domestic political stability. According to this logic, the successful normalization of relations with such major – and potentially dangerous – power as Communist China would be regarded as evidence of the new government's political ability, and thus would lessen the criticism from its political rivals. Anxious to modify his rightist and pro-Western public image, Hatta sought to adopt a more neutral and non-aligned position.³ In short, Chen and Liu attributed Indonesia's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC to the interplay of domestic and diplomatic considerations.

The second issue of debate related to the establishment of Sino-Indonesian relations focused on the question as to why the PRC delayed for over two months in responding to the Indonesian government's request for recognition. Mozingo suggested that there were two possible reasons of the delay. One was that the CCP felt offended that the Indonesian leaders did not send the request directly but had instead asked the Dutch officials who stayed in Mainland China to act as intermediaries. The more probable consideration affecting Beijing's decisions, Mozingo believed, was the relationship between Indonesia and Nationalist China (GDM). In 1949, the GDM government still maintained as many as seven consulates in Indonesia, and in the previous years it had consistently supported the cause of Indo-

³ Ch. Yande, X. Zhenzheng, *Yinni Duihua Guanxi de Beijing: 1950 Nian Yinni yu Zhongguo Jianjiao Qianhou* [Developing Relations with China around 1950: Background in Indonesia], *NanYang Wenti Yanjiu* [Southeast Asian Affairs], No. 3, September 2009, p. 20–29.

nesian independence. For this reason, the GMD leaders entertained hopes that the new Indonesian government would establish diplomatic relations with Taipei rather than with Beijing. Toward this aim, in December 1949 the Nationalist government in Taiwan immediately recognized the Republic of the United States of Indonesia upon its independence, and dispatched a special mission to Jakarta to discuss future relations between the two countries. Mozingo surmised that the CCP leaders preferred to withhold recognition until the question of Taiwanese-Indonesian relations was settled to their satisfaction. On 28 March 1950, shortly after the Indonesian government called upon the GMD government to close its consulates in Indonesia within a few months, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai informed Hatta that the PRC was willing to establish regular diplomatic relations with Jakarta. The GMD consulates in Indonesia were closed by April 1950⁴.

Chinese scholars, on the basis of Chinese archival materials, provided a different explanation. Zhang Xiaoxin, for instance, stressed that the CCP's delayed reply reflected the complex nature of the triangular relationship between the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the PRC. He pointed out that the Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Agreement of November 1949 stipulated that if any of the two parties had no diplomatic representative in a third country where the other party had such representative, the other party would be authorized to represent it in negotiations with the said third country; that is, Dutch officials had legal authority to represent the Indonesian government in negotiations with the PRC. According to Zhang, Chinese archival materials showed that Dutch officials did indeed made repeated attempts to negotiate with the CCP, and that the Dutch tried to link the issue of Sino-Indonesian relations with the Sino-Dutch relationship. The Dutch sought to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC and, on the basis of their status as Indonesia's representatives in China, had proposed to assist the CCP in establishing relations with Indonesia. Beijing's delayed response to Indonesia's request was caused by these Sino-Dutch negotiations. Since the PRC insisted on separating

⁴ Mozingo, *Chinese Policies toward Indonesia*, p. 90–93.

the issue of Sino-Indonesian relations from the question of Sino-Dutch relations, on 27 February 1950, the Dutch officials in China forwarded the Indonesian government's cable to Beijing but ceased to follow up on the matter⁵.

Another related issue of scholarly interest focused on the question as to why the Indonesian government did not appoint an ambassador to Beijing immediately after the establishment of Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations. While the PRC sent its first ambassador to Jakarta in June 1950, Indonesian had merely established a consulate in Beijing in August 1951, and delayed setting up a full embassy 1953. In answer to this question, Rizal Sukma suggested that Premier Hatta had sought to perform a balancing act vis-à-vis Indonesian domestic politics. On the one hand, his decision to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC was motivated by his concerns about left-wing criticism. On the other hand, he also feared that the right-wing Muslim parties might criticize him if his government maintained close relations with the Communist countries too quickly. As a compromise, the Indonesian leaders decided to establish diplomatic relations with China but decided to dispatch only a chargé d'affaires to Beijing so as to keep the relationship at a low level⁶.

While Sukma focused on the Indonesian domestic political context, Mason and Gao place this question within the context of the developing Cold War during the early 1950s and the Indonesian decision to follow a foreign policy of non-alignment. The United States had attempted to dissuade the Hatta government from establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC, suggesting to the Indonesians that China was no more than a Soviet satellite; and that Communism in China would not last long. Most of the Indonesian leaders, however, were convinced that the Mao Zedong government enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people, and the cause of Jiang Jieshi regime on the mainland was lost. Thus, although it was in no hurry to open diplomatic relations with

⁵ Z. Xiaoxi, *Lun Zhongguo yu Yindunixiya Jianjiao* [On the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Indonesia] *Dangdai Zhongguoshi Yanjiu* [Contemporary China History Studies], No. 1, January 2011, p. 91–98.

⁶ Sukma, *Indonesia and China*, p. 21–23.

China, the Hatta government promptly reciprocated when the PRC recognized Indonesia. However, while the PRC immediately proceeded to set up a full embassy in Jakarta in August 1950, the Indonesian had merely opened a consulate only after almost a year later. Mason and Gao suggested that this delay and discrepancies had much to do with U.S.-Indonesian relations. Indonesian looked importantly to the United States for economic aid; indeed, the US was the only power which had the resources to provide Indonesia the aid it required. Under these circumstances, the Indonesian leaders, having established diplomatic relations with Communist China, had good reason to refrain from any further acts that might offend the United States⁷.

SINO-SOVIET SPLIT: PKI'S RELATIONS WITH THE CCP AND THE CPSU

After the proclamation of the PRC, an informal 'division of labor' emerged between Moscow and Beijing: the Soviet leadership focused its attention to Europe, whereas the CCP was to provide assistance and guidance to the East Asian and Southeast Asian Communist parties, including the PKI. Before the Sino-Soviet split, the two Communist Great Powers cooperated to support the Communist movement in Indonesia, but the CCP had played a more active role. Since the circumstances of the Chinese revolution were more similar to the situation in Indonesia than the experiences of Soviet Russia, the PKI regarded the CCP as the more appropriate successful model of revolution to emulate. The Sino-Soviet split, however, complicated the PKI's relations with the two big Communist parties. For scholars, the PKI's changing relations with Beijing and Moscow offer an attractive subject that raises a number of questions.

⁷ R. Mason, G. Yanjie, *Lengzhan Chuqi Meiguo yu Yinni Guanxi zhong de Zhongguo Yinsu Fenxi* [Analysis of the China Factor in U.S.-Indonesian Relations during the Early Cold War], *Zhonggong Dangshi Yanjiu* ["Journal of Chinese Communist Party History Studies"], No. 9, September 2012, p. 106–113.

One early work on the PKI's attitude toward the Sino-Soviet split is Antonie C.A. Dake's *In the Spirit of Red Benteng*. According to Dake, the PKI initially sought to stay neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute. As such, the PKI adopted a centrist position on such hotly disputed questions like war and peace, the sole exception being its sharp criticism of Yugoslavia's revisionism. During the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 the PKI disagreed with various aspects of Soviet policies, but PKI General Secretary D.N. Aidit still tried to mediate between Beijing and Moscow⁸.

When did the PKI started to adopt a pro-Chinese stance in the Sino-Soviet dispute? Dake pointed out that during the Conference of African and Asian Journalists, held in Jakarta on 24–30 April 1963, the PKI's relations with the CPSU was already strained. During the conference, the Soviet delegation, which participated as an observer, demanded full membership status, but the overwhelming majority of the participants objected to this Soviet request. The PKI, and particularly its pro-Chinese wing, played a prominent role at the conference; indeed acted as a front for the CCP to block Soviet participation. Following the conference, the PKI expressed the opinion that its relations with the CPSU were only formal and had departed from the standards of relations between fraternal parties. At the end of 1963, the PKI formally declared its decision to side with the CCP⁹.

Chinese archival sources suggest different explanation. Consulting documents from the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives, Zhou Taomo concluded that the PKI started to side with the CCP as early as the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October 1961. At that conference, Aidit refrained from joining Khrushchev's verbal attack on the Albanian Communist leadership, and later he told the CCP leaders that he also disagreed with the CPSU's criticism of Stalin¹⁰. Zhou pointed out that the cooperation

⁸ A.C.A. Dake, *In the Spirit of Red Benteng: Indonesian Communists between Moscow and Peking, 1959–1965*, Hague 1973, p. 126–133.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 210–211.

¹⁰ Z. Taomo, *Ambivalent Alliance: Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1960–1965*. *Cold War International History*, Project Working Paper, No. 67, Washington, August 2013, p. 17–18.

between the PKI and the CCP was based on a shared interest, that is, that both sides sought to push Sukarno further to the left in his foreign and domestic policies. For instance, the PKI urged Sukarno not to invite the Soviets to a second Bandung Conference, while China supplied small arms for the Fifth Force, an Indonesia militia composed mainly of PKI members, at Sukarno's request¹¹.

What are the factors that led the PKI's decision to take sides with the CCP the Sino-Soviet dispute? According to Dake, there were five inter-related factors that motivated the PKI's disassociation from Moscow in the autumn of 1963. First, the radical foreign policy of Sukarno, stimulated as it was by the rapid deterioration of Indonesian-Malaysian relations, induced the PKI to pursue a radical and confrontational policy, rather than the 'peaceful co-existence' advocated by the Soviet Union. Second, the leadership of the PKI sought to increase the cohesion within the party, and at that time, most of its leaders opposed the line of the CPSU. Third, the PKI complained that the Soviets pursued a policy of "too little aid, too much interference"; namely, that the PKI thought that the Soviets ought to provide more economic assistance to Indonesia than they did, and that the erroneous advice of the CPSU had been responsible for the PKI's failed revolts in 1926 and again in 1948. Fourth, during the onset of *konfrantasi* between Indonesian and Malaysia, the Soviets did not support Indonesia as strongly as they had done during the Dutch-Indonesian conflict over West Irian (1961–1962), whereas the PRC consistently supported Indonesia's "Crush Malaysia" campaign. Fifth, the increasingly close relationship between the Chinese and Indonesian governments also influenced the PKI's decision¹².

Rex Mortimer offered another explanation for the PKI-CPSU conflict in his book, *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno*. He suggested that the PKI abandoned its earlier endorsement of Soviet policies in favor of a close identification with the CCP's standpoint after making several attempts to pursue a middle-of-the-road course between the two disputants. According to Mortimer, the main factor that induced the PKI to adopt a pro-Chinese

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 19

¹² Dake, *In the Spirit of Red Benteng*, p. 226–229, p. 457–458.

position was China's encouragement of the struggle for national liberation that constituted a vital element of the PKI's domestic strategy. At the same time, the PKI only partially followed China's policies, and it pursued a considerably more flexible policy toward other Communist parties than the CCP did. The party's identification with the CCP's strategy did not mean that it lost its capability of independent action. On the contrary, the PKI leaders sought to insulate the party from the crisis of the international Communist movement, and to enhance its reputation as a genuine representative of Indonesian national interests¹³.

Using declassified documents from the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives, Zeng Yuleng study largely endorsed Dake's explanation. Zeng's research also revealed that the PKI had other grouses CPSU's policies. First, the PKI disagreed with certain terms incorporated in the political line of the CPSU, such as the expression "the state of proletarian dictatorship and the state of the whole people." The PKI considered the interjection of the word "and" was inappropriate on the ground that it would make people think that the so-called "state of the whole people" was different from the "state of proletarian dictatorship." The PKI also expressed its disagreement over such issues as the problem of nationalism and the question of Social Democracy. The PKI also refused to follow the CPSU's lead in criticizing Albania and disagreed with Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin. In addition, the PKI's analysis of the global political situation endorsed emphasis on the struggle for national liberation rather than the reliance on peaceful coexistence advocated by the Soviet Union¹⁴.

Zeng pointed out that the CCP made great efforts to win over the PKI, which also influenced the PKI's attitude toward the Sino-Soviet dispute. For instance, *Hongqi* (Red Flag), an ideological magazine of the CCP, published a lengthy report on the PKI, and the Chinese authorities arranged a high-level reception for Aidit when he visited Beijing. These

¹³ Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959–1965*, Ithaca – London 1974.

¹⁴ Z. Yuleng, *Geming Waijiao Shiye xia de Zhongguo dui Yinni Waijiao Zhengce, 1961–1965* [Chinese Diplomacy toward Indonesia under the Perspective of Revolutionary Diplomacy, 1961–1965], PhD Thesis Xiamen University, PRC, 2012), p. 37–41.

Chinese gestures played a significant role in that at the end of 1963, Aidit started to criticize the political line of the CPSU, calling it a “subjective line” that “would weaken the cause of revolution in the world”¹⁵.

The triangular relationship between the PKI, the CCP and the CPSU¹⁶ is indeed pedantic and requires meticulous analysis. The role of theoretical issues in the disagreements between the PKI and the CPSU should not be exaggerated. In contrast with the Sino-Soviet dispute, the theoretical disagreements between the PKI and the CPSU were not about the Soviet Union’s status as the leader of the international Communist movement, as it was between the CCP and the CPSU. The theoretical standpoint of the PKI was different not only from that of the CPSU but also from the position of the CCP. The PKI insisted on gaining power by means of elections, an approach sharply different from the CCP’s radical strategy. The PKI, as its own leaders insisted, was independent of both the CCP and the CPSU.

TOWARD THE JAKARTA-BEIJING AXIS

On August 17, 1965, when President Sukarno announced the establishment of the “Jakarta-Beijing Axis,” Sino-Indonesian cooperation was at its peak. The two states established an alliance against “imperialism” and “neo-colonialism.” In light of Jakarta’s earlier cooperation with the Western powers, the creation of the Sino-Indonesian alliance constituted a dramatic change in Indonesian foreign policies. Understandably, the evolution of Sino-Indonesian relations attracted great attention from the scholars in the field.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 41–45.

¹⁶ On the relations between the CPSU and the PKI, see among others, I. Gaiduk, *Soviet Cold War Strategy and the Prospects of Revolution in South and Southeast Asia*, in: Ch. E. Goscha, Ch. F. Ostermann (eds.), *Connecting Histories. Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Washington DC and Stanford CA: Woodrow Wilson Press and Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 123–136; L.M. Efimova, *New Evidence on the establishment of Soviet-Indonesian Diplomatic Relations, 1949–1953*, “Indonesia and the Malay World”, No. 85, 2001, p. 215–233.

Rizal Sukma described the pre-1967 Sino-Indonesian relationship as “unstable relations,” and divided the period from 1949 to 1965 into two phases. He called the first phase, which lasted from 1949 to 1956, a “time of suspicion.” During this period, the establishment of diplomatic relations did not lead to an immediate thaw in Sino-Indonesian relations. The Indonesian government and the majority of the Indonesian political elite harbored suspicions about China’s intentions toward Indonesia. These suspicions were confirmed when the first Chinese ambassador to Jakarta, Wang Renshu, made efforts to reorient the loyalty of the Chinese minority toward the PRC, and undermine the Guomintang’s influence among the ethnic Chinese. The increasing loyalty among Indonesian Chinese toward Beijing aroused the suspicions of the Indonesian leaders, who were concerned about the nationality and political reliability of the ethnic Chinese. Consequently, in July 1951 the Indonesian authorities denied entry to most of the newly appointed Chinese diplomatic staff (of nineteen officials, only three were allowed to enter Indonesia). An even more serious diplomatic incident occurred in August 1951 when the pro-American Sukiman cabinet launched a campaign against Indonesian Communists, which was known as the “August Raid”¹⁷.

According to Sukma, a favorable opportunity for better relations between the two countries did not emerge until June 1953, when Ali Sastroamidjojo became Premier, when Sino-Indonesian relations started to improve. For instance, in October 1953 Indonesia sent its first ambassador to Beijing. In December, the first Sino-Indonesian trade agreement was signed, and both countries began to show interest in cultural exchanges. During the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955, the two governments concluded a treaty on dual nationality relating to the Chinese community in Indonesia. China expressed support to Indonesia’s efforts to regain West Irian, whereas Indonesia recognized China’s right to regain Taiwan¹⁸.

¹⁷ Sukma, *Indonesia and China*, 24–25; see also R. Mason, *Containment and the Challenge of Non-alignment; the Cold War and U.S Policy toward Indonesia, 1950–1952*, in: Ch. E. Goscha, Ch. F. Ostermann (eds.), *Connecting Histories...*, p. 57–60.

¹⁸ Sukma, *Indonesia and China*, p. 26–27; also see Mason and Gao, *China Factor...*, p. 110–13.

The second phase, as defined by Sukma, lasted from 1957 to 1965. In this period, Sino-Indonesian relations became closer due to the transformation of Indonesia's domestic and foreign policy. After 1957, revolution and struggle against international imperialism became a central theme in Indonesian foreign policy. Sukarno perceived imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism as the main enemies of the Indonesian revolution. Indonesia gradually emerged as among the leading voice within the Non-Aligned Movement. The radicalization of Indonesia's foreign policy largely coincided with the post-1958 radicalization of Chinese foreign policy. U.S. involvement in Indonesia's Outer Islands rebellions caused Sukarno to regard China as a potential ally¹⁹. Furthermore, China strongly endorsed Indonesia's standpoint on the question of West Irian. The Chinese press frequently likened the Dutch occupation of West Irian to the problem of Taiwan. The growing convergence of Indonesian and Chinese perceptions provided a new opportunity for the PKI to move closer to President Sukarno, and enhance its political influence with the President. In 1959–1961, the anti-Chinese campaign hindered the process of Sino-Indonesian rapprochement, but the CCP leaders made various concessions to avoid the breakdown of Sino-Indonesian friendship. By the end of 1961, the Indonesian-Chinese relationship was restored as if nothing had happened in 1959–60²⁰.

According to Sukma, the quick restoration of Sino-Indonesian partnership was not surprising. Beijing and Jakarta had established an “international united front” designed to drive the United States and Britain out from Southeast Asia. China provided strong support to Sukarno's West Irian campaign, to his conception of the struggle between the New Emerging Forces (NEFO) and Old Established Forces (OLDEFO) and later to Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia. In 1965, with the establishment

¹⁹ On the Indonesian Outer Island rebellions during the late 1950, see Audrey Kabin, *Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Policy, 1926–1998*, Amsterdam 1999; B.S. Harvey, *Permesta: Half a Rebellion*, Ithaca 1977. On the American perspective and involvement, see G. McTurnnan, A. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: the Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debauch in Indonesia*, New York 1995; P.E. Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S. Indonesia Relations*, Boulder 1997.

²⁰ Sukma, *Indonesia and China*, p. 27–31.

of the “Jakarta-Beijing Axis,” Sino-Indonesian cooperation reached its peak. At the same time, however, dissatisfaction with the Sino-Indonesian alliance and its implications for Indonesia’s domestic politics was growing steadily among the military officers and anti-Communist forces in Indonesia, foreshadowing the clash between these Indonesians political forces in 1965²¹.

The role the PKI played in the relations between Beijing and Jakarta is suggested in the book by Sheldon W. Simon, *The Broken Triangle: Peking, Djakarta and the PKI*. Simon pointed out that Beijing could exert an influence over Indonesia by two means: by cooperating with the Indonesian government in the latter’s campaign to eliminate Western influence in Southeast Asia, and by using the PKI to foster political changes within Indonesia. To influence the Indonesian government through the PKI, Beijing could choose between two possible approaches. The first option was to use the PKI as a satellite organization of the CCP, while the second option was to demonstrate the common goals of the two parties, and coordinate their strategies for Indonesian development. In the first half of the 1960s, Beijing chose the second option and created an effective working relationship with the PKI. The joint efforts of the CCP and the PKI were unceremoniously halted by the Indonesian coup in 1965 and the takeover of the government by the Indonesian military, ushering in the New Order under General Suharto²².

OVERSEAS CHINESE AND THE SINO-INDONESIAN RELATIONSHIP

The disputed status of the Chinese minority in Indonesia had strongly influenced post-1949 Sino-Indonesian relations. When the PRC was proclaimed, there were approx. 2.7 million ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. In the first years after the Communist takeover in China, the CCP maintained the principle of descent, that is, it regarded overseas Chinese as

²¹ Ibidem, p. 31–33.

²² S.W. Sheldon, *The Broken Triangle: Peking, Djakarta and the PKI*, Baltimore 1969.

citizens of the PRC. However, this principle was strongly opposed by the Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. To solve the problem, on 23 April 1955, after protracted negotiations since 1953, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Indonesian Foreign Minister Sunario signed a treaty ending the dual nationality of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia²³. The treaty did not, however, lead to an immediate change in the anti-Chinese sentiments among the indigenous Indonesian population. In 1959, President Sukarno promulgated Presidential Decree No.10 that prohibited the rural business activities of Chinese retailers effective from 1 January 1960.²⁴ This decree brought the anti-Chinese campaign to the climax. For Communist Chinese leaders, the campaign posed a serious challenge to Sino-Indonesian relations which since the African-Asian Conference in Bandung in April 1955 had been generally harmonious. This subject generated vigorous academic debates about the CCP's attitude toward the anti-Chinese campaign and about the PKI's position in the Sino-Indonesian dispute.

Concerning the attitude of the CCP's toward the anti-Chinese campaign in Indonesia, Dake stressed that although China provided some support to the ethnic Chinese through the PRC consulates in Indonesia and criticized the campaign in a few statements, the Chinese leaders decided to resolve the dispute by means of a compromise. Dake enumerated several factors that influenced the attitude of the Chinese government. First, the Chinese leaders realized that the anti-Chinese actions were not confined to measures taken by local military commanders but constituted a nationwide government policy. Under such circumstances, Beijing

²³ W. Lin, *Xin Zhongguo Shouci Daguimo Haiwai Cheqiao Shimo* [The Story of the First Large-scale Evacuation of Overseas Chinese in New China], *Dangan Chunqiu*, [Memories and Archives], No. 5, May 2012, p. 17–18; I. Ramanathan, *China and the Ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia, 1949–1992*, New Delhi 1994, p. 83; Z. Enlai, *Nianpu* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai], Beijing 1998, p. 646. The treaty on dual nationality did not enter into force until 1960. For details, see Z. Lumin, *Yindunxiya Huazu Zhengzhi Diwei De Bianqian* [Vicissitudes of the Political Status of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia], Beijing 2008 and H. Kunzhang, *Yinni Huaren Huaqiao Shi* [The History of Overseas Chinese in Indonesia], Guangzhou 2005, p. 20.

²⁴ X. Tiantang, *Zhengzhi Xuanwo Zhong de Huaren* [The Overseas Chinese in a Political Vortex], Hong Kong 2004, p. 713.

sought to find a way to prevent a general deterioration of Sino-Indonesian relations. Second, the Sino-Soviet split, combined with the USSR's neutral position in the Sino-Indian border conflict and the Soviet's rapprochement with the United States, made the Chinese leaders realize that they might become isolated internationally. Anxious to maintain cordial relations with the Asian countries, China decided to downplay its disagreements with Indonesia. Third, ideological position rendered it difficult for the Chinese government to offer protection to the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, because most of the victims of the anti-Chinese campaign were retailers, that is, 'capitalists' and 'monopolists'. For the CCP leaders, who were engaged in contest with Moscow for the leadership of the international Communist movement, it was somewhat a 'contradiction' to provide public support to a group of 'capitalist exploiters'. Finally, the Chinese leaders were of the opinion that the problem of the Chinese minority in Indonesia was less important for the PRC than the border dispute with India, and therefore it did not necessitate a strong action²⁵.

Mozingo's explanation of the CCP's attitude toward the anti-Chinese campaign differed with Dake's. Mozingo suggested that the protection of overseas Chinese was only a secondary consideration for the CCP leaders²⁶. Like Dake, Mozingo pointed out that the CCP's reaction to the campaign was influenced by such factors as the Sino-Soviet split and Sino-Indian border conflict. He also emphasized that following the Sino-Soviet split, both Communist Great Powers made strong efforts to gain the support of the Asian and African countries. Having gotten involved in a conflict with India, the Chinese leaders could not afford to aggravate their dispute with Indonesia. Moreover, it could raise serious doubts among the non-aligned countries about the sincerity of China's commitment to peaceful coexistence and the Bandung principles²⁷. Furthermore, Mozingo investigated the effect that the West Irian dispute produced on the CCP's decision. He pointed out that in January 1960, during the high tide of the anti-Chinese campaign, Khrushchev visited Indonesia. The

²⁵ Dake, *In the Spirit of Red Benteng*, p. 53–55.

²⁶ Mozingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia*, p. 162.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 163–164.

Soviet leader granted a loan worth 250 million dollars to the Indonesian government, and promised to provide massive military aid to support of Sukarno's campaign to recover West Irian. These Soviet actions, which were warmly applauded by the PKI, induced the Chinese government to adopt a flexible and generous attitude toward Indonesia, lest it be outcompeted by the USSR²⁸.

Using Chinese archival documents, Zhou Taomo offered another explanation. He pointed out that Indonesia's anti-Chinese campaign created a serious dilemma for the Chinese government. On the one hand, Beijing lacked a sufficient legal basis to intervene on behalf of Indonesian ethnic Chinese. While both the PRC and Indonesia ratified the treaty on dual nationality as early as 1957, the instruments of ratification were not exchanged until January 1960, and thus the treaty was not yet in force. Under such conditions, any unilateral Chinese action to protect the ethnic Chinese would have been regarded as interference in Indonesia's internal affairs. On the other hand, the PRC's inability (or unwillingness) to assist the victims of the campaign would have damaged the reputation of the CCP leadership, creating the impression that Beijing could not provide more protection to overseas Chinese than the GMD regime had done²⁹. Facing this dilemma, the CCP leadership, concerned as it was about the unity of Afro-Asian countries and the Sino-Soviet split, decided to make a compromise with Indonesia³⁰.

Dai Fan, another Chinese scholar, in a recent study agreed with the view that China settled the dispute with Indonesia by means of a compromise but attributed that the main motive of Beijing's flexibility was the preoccupation of the CCP leadership's with the struggle against imperialism and colonialism. Anxious to maintain a united front of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, China had to make some concessions to solve the dispute. Dai also pointed out that the PRC government lacked sufficient leverage to influence Indonesian domestic politics, and if Beijing had

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 184–185.

²⁹ Z. Taomo, Huaqiao Wenti de Zhengzhi Xuanwo: Jixi 1959–1962 Nian Zhongguo dui Yindunixiya Zhengce [Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1959–1962], *Lengzhan Zhongguoshi Yanjiu* [Cold War International History Studies], No. 9, June 2010, p. 155–174.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 155–174.

adopted a strongly critical attitude toward the dispute, this would have triggered an even more violent campaign against overseas Chinese in Indonesia. Such a scenario would have caused great damage both to the ethnic Chinese community and to Sino-Indonesian relations³¹.

Closely related to the issue of the anti-Chinese campaign is the question as to why the PRC government initially decided to repatriate overseas Chinese and why it soon switched to a policy that encouraged ethnic Chinese to stay in Indonesia. According to Mazingo, the CCP leadership had hoped that repatriating certain elements of the Indonesian Chinese community would inflict serious damage on the Indonesian economy. By putting pressure on Jakarta, Beijing sought to settle the dispute in a negotiated way. The Indonesian government did not agree to negotiate however. Instead, Beijing was forced to accept the conditions imposed by Jakarta, which prevented the ethnic Chinese from leaving the country with their capital and personal belongings. By April 1960, when China found out that most of the returnees were elderly persons or unskilled workers, and that the repatriation process incurred high economic and social costs, the Chinese embassy halted the repatriation campaign and, instead, began to persuade other potential repatriates to stay in Indonesia³².

Indian scholar Indira Ramanathan, on the other hand, was of the view that the repatriation of the Indonesian ethnic Chinese was merely a kind of face-saving policy on the part of the PRC, implemented after the PRC failed to persuade President Sukarno to put an end to the anti-Chinese campaign. Concerning the reason of why China ultimately abandoned the policy of repatriation, Ramanathan, like Mazingo, emphasized the high economic costs of repatriation as the main reason. The Chinese authorities found out that not all repatriates were useful for the “socialist construction” in China; that repatriation was not an effective instrument to put economic pressure on Indonesia; and that the costs of resettlement were very high³³.

³¹ D. Fan, *Qiaowu yu Waijiao: Dui Zhongguo Qiaowu Zhengce de Sikao* [Foreign Policy and Overseas Chinese Policy: Understanding China's Overseas Chinese Policy], *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asia], No.1, January 2012, p. 83–90.

³² Mazingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia*, p. 173–175.

³³ Ramanathan, *China and the Ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia*, p. 101.

On the basis Chinese archival documents, Dai Fan also came to the same conclusion³⁴.

From the publications cited above, it does appear that there is a scholarly with regard to China's priorities. They agreed that the Chinese government decided to subordinate the interests of the Indonesian ethnic Chinese to the larger aim of preventing deterioration in Sino-Indonesian relations. They also agreed on that the high cost of resettlement was also a main factor behind the abandonment of repatriation. The role of the Chinese embassy in Jakarta remains unclear however: if the Chinese government sought to solve the dispute by means of a compromise, why then did the Chinese consulates in Indonesia provided support to the ethnic Chinese against the campaign launched by the Indonesian government? Did the Chinese embassy act without authorization from the central government; or did the CCP leadership pursue a two-pronged policy? It is also worth investigating as to why Sukarno eventually decided to halt the anti-Chinese campaign.

Yet another point of contention among scholars relating to the anti-Chinese campaign is the position that the PKI adopted during the conflict. Dake stressed that the PKI cautiously monitored developments during the campaign. Aidit and his followers were well aware that the anti-Chinese measures enjoyed substantial popular support, and they could not afford to antagonize the political force behind the campaign: the army. At the same time, the Chinese government disagreed with the campaign; and the Indonesian ethnic Chinese community constituted an important source of funds for the PKI treasury. Therefore, the PKI formulated a compromise position. On the one hand, the party criticized the "misguided and dangerous chauvinism and radicalism against foreigners of Chinese origin," and blamed "a small circle of the upper strata of the Indonesian bourgeoisie" for the excesses of the campaign. On the other hand, the PKI did not malign President Sukarno, nor did it condemn the impending ban on Chinese retail trade and other official measures. Dake concluded that the

³⁴ F. Dai, *Understanding China's Overseas Chinese Policy*, p. 83–90.

PKI leaders tried to express their disagreement with the anti-Chinese campaign but they did not dare to directly offend Sukarno and the army³⁵.

Australian scholar J.A.C. Mackie reached a similar conclusion but stressed that the PKI found itself in an awkward position during the anti-Chinese campaign. Had the PKI tried to defend the Chinese community, the anti-communist opponents of the party were likely to interpret this attitude as a sign of the PKI's subservience to Beijing, or as opportunism dictated by the need to obtain funds from Chinese businessmen³⁶. This conclusion was repeated by Sukma, who also noted that the PKI's attempts to protect the interests of the ethnic Chinese seriously impaired its popularity in the villages³⁷.

On the basis of Chinese archival materials, Zhou Taomo pointed out that during the anti-Chinese campaign, the PKI was the only Indonesian political group that supported the overseas Chinese and the PRC. The PKI basically agreed with Presidential Decree No. 10 but at the same time it kept stressing such issues as Sino-Indonesian friendship, the economic contribution of ethnic Chinese to Indonesia, and the 'imperialist conspiracy to disturb Sino-Indonesian relations.' The Chinese government, Zhou pointed out, was generally satisfied with the PKI's performance during the crisis. Zhou's main argument is clear: that the PKI's attitude toward the dispute was not motivated by such conceptions as Sino-Indonesian friendship or PKI-CCP solidarity but rather by the party's concerns about its own political survival. Since the army used the anti-Chinese campaign to put pressure on the PKI, the leaders of the party understood that if the PKI surrendered to the Army, it would be destroyed completely³⁸.

Thus, despite their larger interpretative differences, the scholars cited above agreed that the anti-Chinese campaign created a dilemma for the PKI. There was also a consensus that the PKI sought to support the PRC

³⁵ Dake, *In the Spirit of Red Benteng*, p. 51.

³⁶ J.A.C. Mackie, 'Anti-Chinese Outbreaks in Indonesia, 1959–68', in: J.A.C. Mackie (ed.), *The Chinese in Indonesia: Five Essays*, Melbourne 1976, p. 79.

³⁷ Sukma, *Indonesia and China*, p. 29.

³⁸ Z. Taomo, *Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1959–1962*, p. 155–74.

and the ethnic Chinese but it made efforts to avoid open conflict with the Indonesian government and the army.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN CHINA AND INDONESIA

The cultural exchange between China and Indonesia is also an important aspect of Sino-Indonesian relations, all the more so because cultural contacts between the two countries were very extensive. However, very little research has been done on this topic. In pioneering an essay on the Indonesian views on China which appeared in 1963, Carl Taylor examined Indonesian publications about China from the 1947–1960 period, including high school history textbooks, ethnographical studies, encyclopedias, and comments on current events. Taylor found that most Indonesian publications described China as an imperialist state with a historical tradition of expansionism and military aggression. In these publications, the terms used to describe Chinese domination over other Asian peoples were invariably the same that Indonesian authors employed to describe European colonialism. Indonesian authors were of the opinion that China was “big in every way,” and looked down condescendingly on neighboring cultures as ‘barbaric.’ Taylor concluded that Indonesian attitudes toward China were strongly ambivalent. On the one hand, China was admired for its industriousness, size, and importance – qualities that Indonesia sought to emulate. On the other hand, China was feared because of the commercial skills of the Chinese population and the expansionist tendencies of the Chinese state³⁹.

Compared to the paucity of the related works written by non-Chinese scholars, Chinese scholars made a substantial contribution to the examination of Sino-Indonesian cultural exchange. Of the works published in mainland China, the following books deserve particular attention: *Zhongguo Yinni guanxishi Jianbian* (A short history of Sino-Indonesian rela-

³⁹ C. Taylor, Indonesian Views of China, “Asian Survey”, Vol. 3, March 1963, p. 165–172.

tions) by Huang Aling; *Yinni huaren zhi mingyun* (The fate of the Chinese in Indonesia) by You Luzhong; and *Zhongguo Yindunixiya wenhua jiaoliu* (Cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia) by Kong Zhiyuan. All these works provided information on Sino-Indonesian cultural exchange, including the exchange visits of important religious figure, artists, and scholars⁴⁰.

An article by Chinese Indonesian scholar Sun Ailing, titled *Zhongguo dangdai hongse jingdian zai yinni de chanbo he yingxiang* [The spread and impact of contemporary Chinese revolutionary classics in Indonesia] concluded that a great number of contemporary Chinese literary and artistic works found an audience among the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia during the 1950s and 1960s. Examining the relationship between the vicissitudes of Chinese schools in Indonesia and the spread of contemporary Chinese revolutionary classics, the author concluded that the 1950s and the early 1960s constituted a “boom time” both for the development of ethnic Chinese schools and for the spread of Chinese revolutionary classics. However, after the coup of September 1965, the Suharto regime closed the Chinese minority schools in Indonesia, and the influence of Chinese revolutionary classics on overseas Chinese came to an abrupt end. Sun Ailing pointed out that when the *yangbanxi* (revolutionary model operas produced during the Chinese Cultural Revolution) were introduced to Indonesia, General Suharto did not take seriously the people who were fond of such operas, because he believed that people of this kind were unlikely to gain any substantial influence⁴¹. Sun’s observation raises an important question: how did the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia think about the Cultural Revolution in general, and about the revolutionary operas in particular?

⁴⁰ H. Aling, *Zhongguo Yinni Guanxishi Jianbian* [A short history of Sino-Indonesian relations], Beijing 1987; Y. Luzhong, *Yinni Huaren Zhi Mingyun* [The fate of the Chinese in Indonesia], Hong Kong 2003; K. Zhiyuan, *Zhongguo Yindunixiya Wenhua Jiaoliu* [Cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia], Beijing 1999.

⁴¹ S. Ailing, *Zhongguo dangdai hongse jingdian zai yinni de chanbo he yingxiang* [The spread and impact of contemporary Chinese revolutionary classics in Indonesia, *Hainan Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* [“Journal of Hainan Normal University”], June 2006, p. 33–39.

The most recent discourse to date on Sino-Indonesian cultural relations is *China and the Shaping of Indonesia, 1949–1965*, written by Liu Hong, a Chinese scholar at the Nanyang Technology University in Singapore. Liu investigated how Indonesian intellectuals constructed and presented various images of China, and how these images influence Indonesian perceptions of China. He observed that in the long history of pre-1949 Sino-Indonesian interactions, the image of China gradually transformed from “a powerful state and advanced civilization” to “a weakening nation,” with 1900 as watershed. The image of a weakening Chinese nation was partly suggested by the massive outflow of Chinese immigrants who could not survive in mainland China. After the Chinese Communists came to power in October 1949 and sought to build a new China, the Indonesian intellectuals’ views of China were divided into two contending attitudes. While most Indonesian observers believed that China was independent of Soviet influence, a smaller number of Indonesian authors insisted that China was but a tool of the Soviet empire. Concerning the role that China might play in the international arena, Indonesian intellectuals were similarly divided. Some regarded China as an independent and peaceful power, while others considered it a “threatening red dragon” that posed a threat to Indonesia⁴².

When Indonesian intellectuals encountered serious obstacles in their own process of nation-building during the 1950s, their views of China and its development underwent a profound change. In their opinion, China made “amazing” progress in many respects, including egalitarianism, discipline, collectivism, strong leadership, high spirit, social harmony, and economic development, which stood in a sharp contrast with the lack of progress in Indonesia. Although Indonesian intellectuals were aware of the severe restrictions on the freedom of expression in China, their perceptions of China remained favorable. They began to depict China as a goal-oriented and harmonious society experiencing rapid economic progress. Particularly in the period from 1963 to 1965, the positive image of China became a major factor shaping Indonesian cultural policies. For

⁴² L. Hong, *China and the Shaping of Indonesia 1949–1965*, Singapore 2011.

Indonesia, China served as a viable alternative to Western-centric notions of modernization.⁴³

Liu Hong did not analyze how the Indonesian intellectuals' perceptions of China influenced the development of Sino-Indonesian relations, but he did make a major contribution to the related studies. His book was not confined to describing the impact that Sino-Indonesian cultural exchange made on the Indonesia elites but also discussed the relationship between Sino-Indonesian cultural exchange and Indonesia's domestic development. His research provides a new perspective to the emergence of the pre-1965 Sino-Indonesian Alliance.

CONCLUSION

The Cold War in Asia was certainly much more dynamic than merely a confrontation between the American-led Western bloc against the Sino-Soviet bloc. In addition to the broader Cold War context, there were the relations between the respective Cold War belligerents and the newly emerged Asian states. Indonesia and Vietnam for instance had served as both prizes and battlegrounds for this Cold War confrontation. And as this essay suggests, neither was the Sino-Soviet bloc of one mind in their approach toward Indonesia. The conflict between the PRC and the Soviet Union over Indonesia was certainly as intense as the conflict between the PRC and the United States. A review of Sino-Indonesian relations offers a glimpse of how much more involved and dynamic the Cold War had been in Southeast Asia.

Research on Sino-Indonesian relations between 1949 through 1965, which was basically the Sukarno period, has made considerable progress in the recent decades. Until the declassification of archival materials in China and former communist countries in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War, the history of the international relation of Indonesia had been largely written and understood from the Western perspectives. The opening of archives in these countries provided important correction

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 271.

to the speculations concerning Communist policies and perspectives on the part of Western scholars. This is especially true with the declassification of the Chinese Foreign Ministry archival documents.

Since the opening of the Foreign Ministry archives in the PRC some two decades ago, Chinese scholars have produced many important studies on various aspects of Sino-Indonesian relations. Chinese interest here is understandable: Indonesia lay in what the Chinese had traditionally regarded as the 'southern sea' and, indeed, the PRC had invested much diplomatic in trying to win Indonesia over. That effort, however, was abruptly halted when the Indonesian military ousted Sukarno in the coup in 1965. Apart from aiming to understand that misadventure, Chinese scholars were also eager to provide their side of the story.

Despite the commendable progress in the field, there is still much lacuna in the historiography that needs to be filled. Sustained interest and further research in the topic, building upon what has already been done, is certainly the way forward.

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