

A TALE OF TWO NARRATIVES: THE NEW ZEALAND PRINT MEDIA AND THE INDONESIAN-MALAYSIAN CONFRONTATION, 1963-1966

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During the mid-1960s, New Zealand became involved in the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation (1963-1966) because of its Commonwealth linkages and military commitments to Malaysia. The Confrontation (or *Konfrontasi*) was a political dispute and border conflict between the two aforementioned Southeast Asian countries. In September 1963, Britain had merged its former Southeast Asian territories – Malaya (which had already gained independence in 1957), Singapore, Sarawak, and North Borneo (Sabah) – into a new political federation called Malaysia. Indonesia’s charismatic, nationalist President Sukarno denounced the new federation as a “neo-colonialist conspiracy” and embarked on a policy of *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia; which utilized aggressive diplomacy, economic pressure, propaganda, and limited military incursions short of full-scale war. Sukarno’s Confrontation policy and deepening ties with Communist China deeply strained Indonesia’s relations with the West and drew the ire of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, which dispatched military forces to aid Malaysia. The Confrontation ended in August 1966 after the Indonesian Army seized power from President Sukarno following an alleged Communist coup attempt in September 1965. The “New Order” regime led by General Suharto ended *Konfrontasi*, repaired Indonesia’s relations with Malaysia and the West, and initiated a rightward shift that dominated Indonesia’s foreign policy and political landscape for the next thirty-two years.¹

In contrast to the Vietnam War which fractured New Zealand’s bipartisan foreign policy consensus and deepened domestic political divisions, New Zealand’s military involvement in the Confrontation generated little controversy. From the onset, Wellington had supported Malaysia due to its friendly ties with Kuala Lumpur, which dated back to the Malayan Emergency. The pro-Western Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman had also granted New Zealand forces continued access to military facilities

1 During the West New Guinea dispute (1950-1962), Indonesia had developed the *Konfrontasi* policy to drive out the Dutch from that territory. For a longer discussion on the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation and the 30 September coup attempt, see Jamie Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974); Soedjati Djiwandono, *Konfrontasi Revisited: Indonesia’s Foreign Policy Under Soekarno* (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1996); John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder and Suharto’s Coup d’état in Indonesia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

in Malaya and Singapore; thus allowing Wellington to fulfil its alliance obligations to Britain's Far East Strategic Reserve and the American-led Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).² New Zealand's two major political parties, National and Labour, and the general public also accepted the official narrative that New Zealand was aiding a beleaguered fellow Commonwealth member, Malaysia, against Communist-inspired Indonesian aggression.³ While New Zealand's diplomatic and military responses to the Confrontation have already been studied, little has been written about New Zealand media coverage of that conflict.⁴ In general, the mainstream print media adopted editorial standpoints supporting the Government's military involvement in the *Konfrontasi*. New Zealand's *Konfrontasi* involvement generated little controversy unlike other contemporary foreign policy issues like the Vietnam War, the Rhodesian Bush War/Second Chimurenga⁵, and sporting contacts with South Africa.⁶ While some readers churned out letters supporting Indonesia and criticising New Zealand's support for Malaysia, they were outnumbered by readers defending New Zealand's response to that conflict.⁷ One prominent critic of the Vietnam War, Keith Sinclair, a historian at the University of Auckland, acquiesced to New Zealand's involvement in the *Konfrontasi* on the grounds that New Zealand was assisting a democratic Malaysia against external aggression.⁸ Several newspapers like the *NZ Truth* and the *ODT* also published advertisements for and stories promoting New Zealand Army jobs in Peninsular

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- 2 John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian, and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-65* (Hampshire, England: Macmillan Press, 2000), 27-40.
 - 3 Andrew Lim, 'The Kiwi and the Garuda: New Zealand and Sukarno's Indonesia, 1945-1966,' MA thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, 2015, 118-122.
 - 4 Michael Green, 'Uneasy Partners: New Zealand and Indonesia,' in *Southeast Asia and New Zealand: A History of Regional and Bilateral Relations*, ed. Anthony L. Smith (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 163-170; Christopher Pugsley, *From emergency to confrontation: the New Zealand armed forces in Malaya and Borneo 1949-1966* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2003), 195-335.
 - 5 While Ian Smith regime called the conflict the Rhodesian Bush War, Zimbabweans have preferred the names: the Second Chimurenga (or revolutionary struggle) or the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle. See Fay Chung, *Reliving the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*, (Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2006).
 - 6 Letters, "Crisis in Vietnam," *New Zealand Listener (Listener)*, 4 June 1965, 10; Letters, "Rhodesia," *Otago Daily Times (ODT)*, 18 November 1965; Richard Thompson, "Race, Kinship and Policy: Africa and New Zealand," in Malcolm McKinnon, ed., *New Zealand in World Affairs Volume II, 1957-1972*, (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1991), 95-121.
 - 7 For some examples, see Letter to the editor, "Malaysia and Indonesia," *Press* (Christchurch), 14 April 1964; Letter to the editor, "Malaysia and Indonesia," *Press* (Christchurch), 15 April 1964, Letter to the editor, "Indonesia," *ODT*, 18 April 1964.
 - 8 Keith Sinclair, "Debate on Vietnam," letters, *Listener*, 9 July 1965, 10.

Malaysia and Singapore.⁹ By contrast, criticism of New Zealand's involvement in the *Konfrontasi* came mainly from left-wing publications like the Communist Party of New Zealand's (CPNZ) official organ, *People's Voice (PV)*, and the independent socialist magazine, *New Zealand Monthly Review (NZMR)*.¹⁰ However, such voices remained in the margins.

This journal article focuses on print media like newspapers and magazines rather than radio and television broadcast media. Television was still a new media and there was little political commentary on radio and television media. It examines a range of different sources including newspaper and magazine articles, editorials, letters, columns, and cartoons. Print media coverage of the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation in New Zealand can be divided into two major categories: firstly, mainstream print media coverage and secondly, left-wing media coverage. While the mainstream print media supported New Zealand's military involvement in the *Konfrontasi* and viewed Indonesia as the aggressor, the left-wing media opposed New Zealand's military involvement and sought to rationalise Indonesia's behaviour. To gauge mainstream print media coverage, this article has surveyed several prominent newspapers and magazines including *The Dominion*, the *New Zealand Herald (NZH)*, the *Christchurch Press*, the *Dunedin Otago Daily Times (ODT)*, the broadcasting guide and current affairs weekly *New Zealand Listener*, and the populist weekly tabloid *New Zealand Truth (NZ Truth)*. Critical analysis of mainstream print media coverage is also supplemented by a discussion based upon a paper presented by the *Auckland Star* editor Ian Harris during a "teach-in" held at the University of Auckland on 12 September 1965. Finally, this article ends with a discussion of left-wing media coverage of the *Konfrontasi* by sampling two prominent left-wing publications: the *People's Voice* and the *New Zealand Monthly Review*.

This article addresses several questions. First, how does media coverage contribute to our understanding of New Zealand's involvement in the Confrontation? Second, to what extent did it reflect the editorial leanings of the various publications? Third, how did media coverage shape readers' attitudes towards that conflict? Finally, how do the conflicting mainstream and left-wing narratives map on to political divisions within New Zealand?

Mainstream media coverage of *Konfrontasi*

In general, the mainstream press largely supported the New Zealand Government's military assistance towards Malaysia and viewed Indonesia as the aggressor. Several newspapers published editorials advocating New Zealand support for Malaysia and

9 "NZ Troops' morale is as high as ever," *New Zealand Truth (NZ Truth)*, 29 September 1964; Advertisement, "Here's Your Chance – Malaya, Here's Action! Variety! Adventure!," *NZ Truth*, 21 July 1964; Advertisement, "When the Chips are Down," *ODT*, 8 February 1965.

10 "News Fraud by Holyoake: War hoax against Indonesian and 'Malaysian' people," *People's Voice (PV)* XXI, no. 35 (16 September 1964), 1; "At Home and Abroad: Malaysia," *New Zealand Monthly Review (NZMR)* IV, no. 38 (September 1963), 3.

condemning Indonesian aggression.¹¹ Several New Zealand cartoonists including the *NZH*'s Gordon Minhinnick, the *ODT*'s Sid Scales, and the *Taranaki Daily News*' George Henderson, published cartoons mocking Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* policies.¹² Discussion of mainstream print media coverage follows a chronological approach; focusing on how various media publications responded to important events and developments during that conflict.

Media coverage of the Confrontation began with the Brunei Revolt of December 1962. Like Sarawak and North Borneo, Brunei was a British territory on Borneo, which had considered joining Malaysia. The revolt was an unsuccessful uprising by Bruneian nationalists led by A.M. Azahari who were opposed to Brunei's merger into Malaysia. Despite the failure of the revolt, Brunei abandoned its plans to join Malaysia and remained a British protectorate until 1984. Most importantly, the Brunei revolt proved to be a major catalyst of the *Konfrontasi* since it gave the Indonesian President Sukarno the perfect opportunity to denounce Malaysia as a British "neo-colonialist conspiracy." Sukarno alleged that the Malaysian people had not been properly consulted and that Malaysia was a proxy for British imperialism in Southeast Asia. In response, Australia and New Zealand dispatched military aircraft and naval frigates to assist Anglo-Malaysian military operations in Brunei.¹³

Owing to Jakarta's support for the Bruneian rebels, the New Zealand media viewed the failed Brunei Revolt as an indicator of Indonesian expansionism in Southeast Asia. A *New Zealand Herald* editorial published on 17 December concluded that the Brunei revolt lacked popular support and insinuated that Sukarno's anti-colonial rhetoric cloaked his expansionist ambitions.¹⁴ The *Herald*'s fierce rhetoric towards Sukarno reflected its long-held distaste towards the Sukarno regime which dated back to the Indonesian Revolution (1945-49). Under its editor Leslie Munro (a future National politician and External Affairs official), the conservative Auckland morning newspaper had disparaged Sukarno's Indonesian nationalists as pro-Japanese quislings. The *Herald*'s anti-Sukarno leanings were further reflected in the editor's decision to use the old Dutch-style spelling of his name (Soekarno) rather than the modern Indonesian spelling (Sukarno). The *Herald*'s views were echoed by *The Press* which expounded on the expansionist theme by highlighting Indonesian sabotage.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the *Otago Daily Times* urged the British authorities to exercise caution in implementing

11 Editorial, "Fruits of Appeasement," *New Zealand Herald (NZH)*, 20 September 1963; Editorial, "Aiding Malaysia," *Southland Times (ST)*, 14 April 1964.

12 Gordon Minhinnick, "Better not interfere – old boy, he might lose his temper," cartoon, *NZH*, 7 January 1964; Sid Scales, "Confrontation – neo-colonialism, and now Scottish Imperialism!," cartoon, *ODT*, 18 September 1963; George Henderson, "Mark my words, no Kiwi is the simple country lad he looks," cartoon, *Taranaki Daily News (TDN)*, 17 April 1964.

13 Green, "Uneasy Partners," 163-167; Pugsley, *From emergency to confrontation*, 196-197, 239-240.

14 Editorial, *NZH*, 17 December 1962.

15 Editorial, "Brunei Aftermath," *Press* (Christchurch), 20 December 1962.

the Malaysia Plan due to the strong anti-federation feelings within Sarawak and North Borneo and the overlapping Indonesian and Filipino territorial claims over British Borneo.¹⁶ While mainstream print media opinion largely favoured the proposed Malaysian federation, one dissenting reader blamed the outbreak of the Brunei Revolt on the Sultan of Brunei's decision to suspend the Bruneian constitution. According to this correspondent, the act of sending planes to ferry British reinforcements to Brunei amounted to New Zealand fighting against the Bruneian people, who were resisting coercive integration into Malaysia.¹⁷ This admonition was an isolated one, drowned out by the pro-interventionist standpoint of the mainstream print media.

In April 1963, Indonesian forces launched several incursions into British Borneo. Filipino mediation efforts between Malaysia and Indonesia produced the Manila Accord on 31 July 1963; which stipulated that the Philippines and Indonesia would recognise the formation of Malaysia provided the United Nations (UN) could ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of Sarawak and Sabah. While a UN ascertainment mission found majority support for Malaysia, the Manila Accord floundered due to a joint Anglo-Malaysian decision to proceed with the formation on Malaysia on 16 September without waiting for the UN to release its results. The Indonesians regarded this as act of bad faith on the part of Whitehall and Kuala Lumpur and retaliated by accelerating their *Konfrontasi* campaign and severing all relations with Malaya.¹⁸ The Confrontation was also complicated by the revival of the Philippines' territorial claim to Sabah, which was based on the former Sultanate of Sulu's historical suzerainty over that territory.¹⁹ Anticipating these escalating *Konfrontasi* tensions, a *New Zealand Listener* editorial published on 6 August 1963 stated that Indonesia had to be "restrained from reckless adventure."²⁰ Following the creation of Malaysia, the media called on the New Zealand Government to support Malaysia against Indonesian aggression. The *New Zealand Herald* published three editorials calling for New Zealand to fulfil its defence obligations to Malaysia and praised the results of the United Nations Ascertainment Mission for vindicating majority support for Malaysia in Sarawak and Sabah.²¹ The

16 Editorial, "A Broil in Brunei," *ODT*, 11 December 1962.

17 Harry Richardson, letter, "Imperialism," *Dominion* (Wellington), 28 December 1962.

18 Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute*, 3-4, 221-234; Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, 65-73.

19 For a longer discussion on the North Borneo/Sabah dispute, please consult James P. Ongkili, *Modernization in East Malaysia, 1960-1970*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972); Nicholas Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah: A Study of British policy towards the Philippines and North Borneo from the late eighteenth century* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978), 191-197; Erwin S. Fernandez, "Philippine-Malaysia Dispute over Sabah: A Bibliographic Survey," *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 7, no. 1 (December 2007), 53-64.

20 Editorial, "A Place for Dissenters," *Listener*, 6 August 1963, 10.

21 Editorial, "Obligation to Aid Malaysia," *NZH*, 2 September 1963; Editorial, "Future Links with Malaysia," *NZH*, 12 September 1963; Editorial, "Nationhood Confirmed for Malaysia," *NZH*, 16 September 1963.

NZH's calls for New Zealand to make a stronger contribution to Malaysia's defence were echoed by other newspapers including the *ODT* and *The Dominion*.²²

Following a mob attack which destroyed the British Embassy in Jakarta on 18 September 1963, a fourth *NZH* editorial on 20 September called on Western governments to abandon their "policy of appeasement" towards Sukarno, implying that Sukarno was becoming an "Asian Hitler."²³ On the same day, *The Press* editorial trumpeted that Sukarno's anti-colonial rhetoric masked his expansionist ambitions. In addition, *The Press* praised Prime Minister Holyoake for offering New Zealand's full support to Malaysia, which it lauded as a stabilizing influence in an unstable region.²⁴ The *Southland Times* editorialised on 24 September that Sukarno's "foreign adventures" in West New Guinea and Malaysia distracted Indonesia from tackling its developmental and economic problems.²⁵ In September 1963, the *ODT* published two of Sid Scales' cartoons depicting Sukarno as a hate-filled demagogue and the "Big Bad Wolf" in the story of Red Riding Hood. The latter cartoon insinuated that Western attempts to appease Sukarno with economic aid failed to satisfy his expansionistic ambitions.²⁶ The mainstream print media largely agreed with the Holyoake Government's favourable view of Malaysia, one motivated by New Zealand's longstanding defence interests in Malaya which dated back to World War Two, and its desire for a strong British and American security presence in Southeast Asia.²⁷

When Prime Minister Holyoake paid a brief state visit to Indonesia on 18 April 1964, the New Zealand media reacted negatively. Holyoake had visited Jakarta to reiterate New Zealand's desire to continue peaceful relations with Indonesia despite its military support for Malaysia; two increasingly irreconcilable goals in the light of President Sukarno's uncompromising opposition to Malaysia. An *NZH* editorial chided Holyoake for not condemning Indonesia's Confrontation policies and urged New Zealand to use its military aid to Malaysia to secure good behaviour concessions from the Indonesians.²⁸ A day later, the *NZH* editorialised on recent reports of North Korean military assistance to Indonesia. In the leader writer's view, Jakarta's receipt

22 Editorial, "Defence for Malaysia," *ODT*, 3 September 1963; Editorial, "Malaysia, a Fledgling Worth Protecting," *Dominion*, 17 September 1963.

23 Editorial, "Fruits of Appeasement," *NZH*, 20 September 1963.

24 Editorial, "Indonesian Threat to Malaysia," *Press* (Christchurch), 20 September 1963.

25 Editorial, "Keeping Indonesia Within Bounds," *ST*, 24 September 1963.

26 Sid Scales, "Confrontation – neo-colonialism, and now Scottish Imperialism!," cartoon, *ODT*, 18 September 1963; Sid Scales, "Oh grandma – what big eyes you have!," *ODT*, 26 September 1963.

27 For a longer discussion of New Zealand's defence interests in Malaysia and Singapore, see Ian McGibbon, "The Defence Dimension," in *Southeast Asia and New Zealand: A History of Regional and Bilateral Relations*, ed. Anthony L. Smith (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 7-22.

28 Editorial, "Policy towards Indonesia," *NZH*, 21 April 1964.

of this assistance shattered any illusion that Western diplomacy and aid could dissuade Indonesia's drift towards Communism.²⁹ This *NZH* editorial exposed the Cold War outlook underpinning mainstream New Zealand discourses of international events. The *ODT* and *Southland Times* viewed Holyoake's visit as wasteful expenditure in the light of New Zealand's avowed support for Malaysia.³⁰ The only major newspaper to cast a positive spin on the Jakarta visit was *The Dominion*, which saw it as a conciliatory gesture to convince Sukarno to end the Confrontation. Ultimately, *The Dominion* editorial's hopes proved to be ill-founded as tensions between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Western powers only worsened in 1964.³¹

The mainstream print media's opposition to Holyoake's Jakarta visit showed that these newspapers took a harsher stance against Indonesia than the New Zealand Government, which had turned down a British request to send New Zealand ground forces to Malaysian Borneo in September 1963. Despite his objections to Indonesia's Confrontation policy, Prime Minister Holyoake still strove to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with Indonesia.³² The Holyoake visit also generated some discussion in the letters sections of the *ODT* and the *Press*. The *ODT* reader 'R. E. K' urged the Prime Minister to abandon his efforts to pursue friendly relations with Indonesia in the light of Sukarno's drift towards Communism.³³ Meanwhile, the *Press* reader P. J. Alley, a relative of the New Zealand Communist and China-based expatriate Rewi Alley, denounced Malaysia as an artificially-contrived colonial puppet state and denounced the Confrontation as another unnecessary "foreign war". The following day, Alley's letter attracted an immediate rebuke from another reader known as "Caractacus", who argued that New Zealand was obligated to assist Malaysia against Indonesian aggression.³⁴

Holyoake's visit was also lampooned by several newspaper cartoonists. Scales depicted Holyoake as a hopeless snake charmer being ensnared by a serpentine Sukarno in the presence of New Zealand's disapproving allies, Australia and Britain. Scales' cartoon implied that the Holyoake Government's "independent line" towards Indonesia breached the Commonwealth alliance arrayed against Indonesia.³⁵ However, the notion that New Zealand took an "independent line" must be treated with caution: Wellington's "independent line" simply amounted to visiting Sukarno to clarify New Zealand's pro-

29 Editorial, "Communist Aid for Soekarno," *NZH*, 22 April 1964.

30 Editorial, "Where Do We Stand?," *ODT*, 21 April 1964; Editorial, "Aiding Malaysia," *ST*, 14 April 1964.

31 Editorial, "Mr Holyoake Among the Indonesians," *Dominion*, 23 April 1964.

32 Green, "Uneasy Partners," 164-168.

33 Letter to the editor, "Indonesia," *ODT*, 18 April 1964.

34 Letter to the editor, "Malaysia and Indonesia," *Press* (Christchurch), 14 April 1964; Letter to the editor, "Malaysia and Indonesia," *Press* (Christchurch), 15 April 1964.

35 Sid Scales, "Fancies himself as a bit of a snake charmer," cartoon, *ODT*, 16 April 1964.

Malaysian policy.³⁶ Meanwhile, the *Taranaki Daily News*' cartoonist George Henderson depicted a fearful Adolf Hitler cautioning the Indonesian President not to underestimate the New Zealand Prime Minister; citing New Zealand's wartime prowess during World War II. By implying that Sukarno was a wannabe Hitler with megalomaniacal ambitions, Henderson suggested that contemporary diplomatic efforts to broker peace between Indonesia and Malaysia were doomed to meet the same failure as Western appeasement of Hitler.³⁷ Meanwhile, the *New Zealand Truth* published a crude cartoon depicting a malevolent-looking Sukarno rebuffing an invitation from a timid Holyoake to pay a visit to New Zealand on the grounds that he was "tied up" with *Konfrontasi* in Borneo. The caption also referred to reports of North Korean assistance to Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* campaign.³⁸ The *Truth* cartoonist decried the futility of Holyoake's efforts to maintain peaceful relations with Indonesia despite Jakarta's aggression towards Malaysia, a key Southeast Asian ally. Finally, the cartoon argued that Sukarno's willingness to fraternise with a Communist regime made him untrustworthy given New Zealand's opposition to the spread of Communism. Together, these three cartoons captured the underlying anti-Sukarno current that dominated New Zealand media coverage of the *Konfrontasi*. In their cartoonists' view, Sukarno was part of a long line of historic adversaries of which included Hitler and the Communist regimes and unpopular anti-British independence leaders such as Kenyatta (Kenya) and Makarios (Cyprus).

While the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation generated little controversy within the letters sections of most mainstream print media publications, the *New Zealand Listener* published a sharp exchange of letters discussing the conflict between July and September 1964. P. J. Alley disparaged the mainstream media's coverage of the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation. He argued that Indonesia was fighting against colonialism and that Malaysia was an artificial state created to bolster British interests in the region.³⁹ Alley's letter attracted two critical responses. Robert P. Montfort argued that Indonesian aggression against Malaysia violated the "Bandung Principles"; produced at the Bandung Asian-African Conference in April 1955 which sought to promote peaceful cooperation among newly-independent Third World countries. In response to Alley's assertion that the Western powers were pitting Asians against Asians, Monfort observed

36 Barry Gustafson, *Kiwi Keith: A Biography of Keith Holyoake* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007), 220; Green, "Uneasy Partners," 165-166.

37 George Duncan Henderson, "Mark my words, no Kiwi is the simple country lad he looks," cartoon, *TDN*, 17 April 1964.

38 Cartoon, "I don't think I'll be visiting you yet, Keith. I'm a bit tied up in Borneo, and then the Aussies, the British, and the Tunku are giving me trouble," *NZ Truth*, 28 April 1964.

39 P.J. Alley, letter, "Indonesia and Malaysia," *Listener*, 10 July 1964, 9.

that the Soviets were doing the same thing by selling arms to the Indonesian military.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, M. TRFW denounced Alley as a Communist propagandist and rubbished the Indonesian argument that a small country like Malaysia could threaten 100 million Indonesians.⁴¹ A third reader, Y. T. Hsieh, sprang to Alley's defence by arguing that Indonesia was not entirely responsible for all of Malaysia's internal problems, which he blamed on an unrepresentative electoral system and Kuala Lumpur's anti-Communist policies. Hsieh also lamented that people who questioned the official New Zealand view on *Konfrontasi* were smeared as Communists or Sinophiles.⁴² In response to the exchange between government supporters and Indonesian "apologists", a fourth *Listener* reader, N. Y. K. Foo, urged Malaysia, Indonesia, and their international backers to resolve their differences peacefully. He argued that the political feuding between Sukarno and the Tunku were caused by "rotten economic circumstances."⁴³ This exchange showed that some readers were prepared to question the official view that New Zealand was aiding its Commonwealth ally Malaysia against Indonesian aggression.

In September 1964, the mainstream media supported Holyoake's decision to send New Zealand troops from the 1st Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment battalion against Indonesian infiltrators in Peninsular Malaysia. This marked a new escalation of *Konfrontasi* tensions since Indonesian incursions hitherto had been limited to Borneo. In response, Malaysia lodged a complaint against Indonesia at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). While a Soviet veto narrowly saved Indonesia from condemnation in the UNSC, Jakarta found itself isolated internationally due to its failure to win over Afro-Asian support and growing American opposition to its *Konfrontasi* campaign.⁴⁴

40 Robert P. Monfort, letter, "Indonesia and Malaysia," *Listener*, 31 July 1964, 8; The Bandung Asian-African Conference held in April 1955 was attended by 29 Asian and African nations and later gave rise to the Non-Aligned Movement. The Bandung conference sought to promote peaceful political, economic, and cultural cooperation and dialogue among Third World countries and to create a third non-aligned bloc independent of the Western and Communist blocs. In Monfort's view, Indonesia violated the articles concerning: 1) upholding the United Nations Charter; 2) respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity; 3) recognising the equality of all nations; 4) abstaining from interference in the internal affairs of a foreign country; 5) respecting the right of each nation to self or collective defence according to the UN Charter; 6) abstaining from exerting pressures on other countries; 7) refraining from using aggression or force to violate the territorial integrity and political independence of other countries; 8) and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. See "Final Communique of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955," reproduced by the Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago, last accessed on 3 October 2015, http://franke.uchicago.edu/Final_Communique_Bandung_1955.pdf; Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005).

41 M. TRFW, letter, "Indonesia and Malaysia," *Listener*, 31 July 1964, 8.

42 Y.T. Hsieh, letter, "Indonesia and Malaysia," *Listener*, 14 August 1964.

43 N.Y.K. Foo, letter, "Indonesia and Malaysia," *Listener*, 11 September 1964.

44 Green, "Uneasy Partners," 166; Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung, *Twenty years Indonesian foreign policy, 1945-1965* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 491-495, 500-503.

Several newspapers including the *New Zealand Herald*, *The Press*, and *Dominion* published editorials which denounced Indonesia's recent incursions into peninsular Malaysia and argued that world opinion was turning against Indonesia in light of the September UNSC meeting.⁴⁵ However, a follow-up *Dominion* editorial on 17 September cautioned against Commonwealth airstrikes on Indonesian territory because it would lead to full-scale hostilities with Indonesia.⁴⁶ Despite the Security Council's failed attempt to censure Indonesia, the mainstream print media viewed Indonesia's growing international isolation as a vindication of Malaysia's cause.

In response to the substantial build-up of Indonesian military forces in Borneo, Australia and New Zealand finally dispatched ground reinforcements to Malaysian Borneo in February 1965.⁴⁷ As before, the mainstream media largely supported New Zealand's increased involvement in the *Konfrontasi*. *The Press* on 6 February reiterated that New Zealand troops were responding to a Malaysia request for aid against foreign aggression. In the light of the United Nations' inaction, New Zealand, Britain, and Australia were doing the right thing by standing up to Indonesian aggression on Malaysia's behalf.⁴⁸ The *Press*'s pro-Malaysia sentiments were echoed by the *New Zealand Herald*. On 6 February, the *NZH* angrily denounced Sukarno's Confrontation policy as one of "blatant imperialism" and berated New Zealand's leaders for their reluctance to take a strong stance against Indonesia.⁴⁹ Two days later, the *NZH* published a second editorial urging New Zealand and its Commonwealth partners Britain and Australia to issue a joint declaration of purpose to counter Sukarno's anti-Malaysian propaganda among the Afro-Asian countries. In the editor's view, such a declaration would assure the international community that the three Commonwealth powers harboured no ill intentions towards Indonesia.⁵⁰ The pro-interventionist approach of the mainstream newspapers reflected their view that the *Konfrontasi* was a 'just war' that involved New Zealand aiding an ally against a hostile expansionistic neighbour.

There was little effort by the media to understand the Indonesian perspective because of New Zealand's long-standing Commonwealth ties to Britain and Malaysia. These shortcomings were noticed by Ian Harris, an assistant editor at the *Auckland Star* newspaper who presented a paper on the conflict during a "teach-in" at the University

45 Editorial, "Fragrant Indonesian Aggression," *NZH*, 5 September 1964; Editorial, "Russia's Veto," *Press* (Christchurch), 19 September 1964; Editorial, "Unhappy Birthday for Malaysia," *Dominion*, 2 September 1964.

46 Editorial, "NZ's Role in Malaysia's Defence," *Dominion*, 17 September 1964.

47 Kalimantan is the Indonesian name for the island of Borneo. "Army, Not Volunteers," *Press* (Christchurch), 4 January 1965; "Troops in Borneo and 40 SAS Men," *Press* (Christchurch), 5 February 1965.

48 Editorial, "Easing the Strain on Malaysia," *Press*, 6 February 1965.

49 Editorial, "More Military Aid to Malaysia," *NZH*, 6 February 1965.

50 The Indonesian Revolution is the Indonesian name for their post-war independence struggle against the Dutch. Editorial, "British in Indonesia," *NZH*, 12 November 1945; Editorial, "Indonesian Truce Ended," *NZH*, 21 December 1948.

of Auckland on 12 September 1965. Having lived and taught in Indonesia between 1961 and 1963, Harris was able to provide an Indonesian insight into the Confrontation that was unavailable to many New Zealanders. In his view, Indonesian hostility towards Malaysia was not motivated by territorial ambitions but rather by anti-colonialism. Harris pointed out that the Indonesian suspicions towards Malaysia were rooted in the two country's divergent decolonization experiences. While Indonesia had fought for independence from the Dutch, the British had granted independence to Malaysia under a highly-favourable political arrangement that protected Britain's substantial economic and strategic interests in that country including the Singapore naval base. In Indonesia's view, Malaysia was not "truly independent" as long as the British dominated the Malaysian economy and maintained troops and bases in Malaysia. According to Harris' analysis, the main goal of Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* policy was not to conquer Malaysia but rather to discredit Malaysia as a "colonially-propped up show."⁵¹

Unlike most of those writing in the mainstream media, Harris took the time to examine the various Indonesian motivations for embarking on Confrontation against Malaysia and her Commonwealth protectors. Identifiable grievances included: first, Singapore's toleration of illegal trading from Sumatra which exacted a heavy fiscal toll on the Indonesian state; second, the opaque nature of the consultation process behind the creation of Malaysia; and third, ill-feeling towards Kuala Lumpur for supporting separatist rebels in Sumatra and North Sulawesi in 1958. In addition, two powerful Indonesian political actors – the Indonesian Army and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) – supported the Confrontation since it benefited their interests to do so. The Indonesian Army wanted to preserve the powerful national role it had gained during the West New Guinea dispute. Meanwhile, the PKI wanted to boost its political credentials by supporting President Sukarno, who had gained a venerated place in Indonesian society due to his role as its premier independence leader and Indonesia's first President.⁵² While Harris' account provided a nuanced understanding of the Confrontation, he failed to anticipate that growing tensions between the Army and the PKI would alter the course of the Confrontation; a topic discussed below.

The 30th September coup attempt

By September 1965, Indonesia's deteriorating relations with the Western powers and the Indonesian Army's growing opposition to the mounting costs of *Konfrontasi* had led President Sukarno to drift further to the Left. Sukarno forged closer ties with Communist China and the Indonesian Communist Party; earning the ire of the conservative Indonesian Army leadership. Tensions between the Indonesian Army and the PKI culminated in the 30 September coup attempt, a major turning point in

51 I.W. Harris, "Confrontation," in *New Zealand and South-East Asia: Lectures Given at a "Teach-In" on South East Asia, University of Auckland, 12 September 1965*, ed. Michael Bassett and Robert Nola, 25-28.

52 Harris, "Confrontation," 25-29.

Indonesian history.⁵³ On the night of 30 September a group of pro-Sukarno junior army officers led by Lieutenant-Colonel Untung Syamsuri, calling themselves the 30 September Movement, kidnapped and murdered six high-ranking army generals, who were rumoured to be plotting with the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to overthrow President Sukarno. The following day, the coup participants announced on national radio that they had taken pre-emptive action to safeguard President Sukarno. However, General Suharto, the commander of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (*Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Dara*; KOSTRAD) routed the 30 September Movement and seized control of the Indonesian Army. Alleging that the 30 September Movement was a Communist coup attempt, the Army and its right-wing allies unleashed a massive pogrom which killed around half a million Communists and left-wing sympathisers over a period of five months, effectively destroying the PKI and paving the way for an Army takeover of Indonesia.⁵⁴

There has been considerable debate about the origins of the 30 September Movement within Indonesian society and academic circles. While the Indonesian Army and its supporters claimed that the movement was a plot by the PKI and Communist China to overthrow the Indonesian Government, left-wing opponents have countered that the Indonesian Army and its Western backers (primarily the United States and Britain) engineered the coup attempt to destroy the PKI and overthrow President Sukarno.⁵⁵ Various academic studies have examined and debated the role of internal tensions within the Indonesian Army, the relationship between the junior army officers and the PKI, Sukarno and Suharto's foreknowledge of the coup, Western involvement in the coup, and the culpability of the PKI.⁵⁶ Despite the controversy around the coup attempt's origins, there is a general consensus that it ushered in a right-ward shift in Indonesia which benefited the right-wing Indonesian Army leadership and its Western backers. Due to their shared interests in halting the spread of Communism and ending the Confrontation, the United States, Britain, Australia, and Malaysia covertly supported the Indonesian Army's anti-Communist campaign and efforts to undermine Sukarno by secretly channelling funds and supplies to the Army, disseminating anti-PKI and

53 Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debauch* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 221-230; Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 149-160.

54 Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 24-42; Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959-1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 387-392, 413-417.

55 Bradley Simpson, *Economists With Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations 1960-1968* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 173-174.

56 For a longer discussion on this debate, see Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1971); Crouch, *The Army and Politics*, 101-134; Peter Dale Scott, "The United States and the Overthrow of Sukarno, 1965-1967," *Pacific Affairs* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 239-264; Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, 106, 202-225.

anti-Sukarno propaganda, and winding down Commonwealth military operations in Borneo.⁵⁷ While New Zealand was mainly a spectator in the aftermath of the coup attempt, the Holyoake Government was sympathetic to the Indonesian Army and supported its Western allies' policies towards Indonesia.⁵⁸

The mainstream New Zealand media largely accepted the official Indonesian Army narrative that the 30 September coup attempt was a failed attempt by the Indonesian Communist Party to overthrow the Indonesian government and impose Communist rule on the archipelago. This narrative supported contemporary New Zealand society's fears of a Communist 'domino effect' sweeping through Asia. As discussed above, contemporary Western media coverage of the 30 September coup attempt was influenced by a sustained propaganda campaign mounted by the British, American, Australian, and Malaysian governments to discredit the PKI and President Sukarno while aiding the Indonesian Army's efforts to consolidate its power. These slanted reports were circulated by several reputable Western media and news agencies like the BBC, Radio Australia, the Voice of America, Reuters, and the Associated Press.⁵⁹ These reports inevitably trickled down to the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA), New Zealand's main news agency since 1879.⁶⁰ Since most daily newspapers sourced their international news reports from the NZPA, Reuters, and the Associated Press, they needed little encouragement in persisting with their anti-Sukarno and anti-PKI slant following the coup attempt.⁶¹ An *ODT* editorial, published on 7 October 1965, viewed the 30 September coup attempt as the culmination of Sukarno's "dangerous" left-ward drift.⁶² The *ODT* also wrongly predicted that right-wing Muslim leaders would be the main victors when the dust settled. In fact, it was the Indonesian Army that emerged as the main victor.⁶³ An *ODT* cartoon by Sid Scales reinforced the theme of Communist treachery by depicting the PKI as a back-biting serpent attacking an unsuspecting Sukarno, who was preoccupied with his "wasteful" Confrontation with Malaysia.⁶⁴ An *NZ Herald* editorial, published in November 1965, welcomed the

57 David Easter, "Keep the Indonesian Pot Boiling: Western Covert Intervention in Indonesia, October 1965-March 1966," *Cold War History* 5, no. 1 (February 2005), 62-69; Simpson, *Economists With Guns*, 171-206.

58 Green, "Uneasy Partners," 168-170; Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno*, 174-177.

59 Easter, "Keep the Indonesian Pot Boiling," 62-69; Simpson, *Economists With Guns*, 178-180.

60 "New Zealand Press Association to close," *The Guardian*, 29 August 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/29/new-zealand-press-association-close>.

61 For some examples see: Associated Press, "Army Generals Hold Power in Indonesia," *ODT*, 15 October 1965; New Zealand Press Association (NZPA), "Communist plot to grab Indonesia found by Army," *Dominion*, 4 November 1965; NZPA and Reuters, "PKI Ready to Kill and Kidnap," *Press*, 12 November 1965.

62 Editorial, "Clash in Indonesia," *ODT*, 5 October 1965.

63 Editorial, "Clash in Indonesia," *ODT*, 5 October 1965; Simpson, *Economists With Guns*, 252-256.

64 Sid Scales, "Commofrontation," *ODT*, 6 October 1965.

Indonesian Army's takeover as a respite to Sukarno's disastrous "foreign adventures" and Indonesia's deteriorating economy.⁶⁵

New Zealand media coverage of the 30 September coup and its tumultuous aftermath focused on three major themes: namely the "threat" of Indonesian Communism; the growing Indonesian opposition to President Sukarno's leadership; and the Indonesian Army's efforts to "restore order and stability." Contemporary newspapers published reports of the Indonesian Army's crackdown on the Communists, and the mass incarceration and execution of PKI members and supporters.⁶⁶ However, these were accompanied by reports from Army sources describing the alleged Communist coup attempt and under-handed Communist tactics such as killing, kidnapping, and arson. These reports helped make the Indonesian Army's heavy-handed suppression of the Indonesian Communists more palatable to mainstream New Zealand readers, who had been conditioned by the media and Government to view Communism as a threat to world security.⁶⁷ Newspaper reports, editorials, and cartoons also castigated Sukarno's policies; namely his attempts to defend the PKI, his economic mismanagement and his unwillingness to end hostilities with Malaysia.⁶⁸ Another *ODT* cartoon by Sid Scales depicted President Sukarno as Emperor Nero fiddling the tune of Confrontation while the Indonesian economy was burning around him.⁶⁹ The mainstream newspapers thus presented Sukarno as an incompetent leader who was out of touch with reality. Therefore, the negative media coverage of Sukarno and the PKI helped to legitimise the Indonesian Army's seizure of political power and ruthless crackdown against the Communists.

By contrast, the New Zealand media along with its Western counterparts painted the new Indonesian military leader, Major-General Suharto, in a positive light. Several media including the *New Zealand Herald* took pains to highlight the positive features of Suharto's New Order; namely his efforts to restore law and order, repair Indonesia's frayed relations with Malaysia and the Western powers, and to "fix" Indonesia's ailing economy by implementing Western free market policies.⁷⁰ Such skewed reports almost

65 Editorial, "Army Tales Control in Indonesia," *NZH*, 24 November 1965.

66 "Intensified Round-Up of Indonesian Red Supporters," *Dominion*, 3 November 1965; "Top Communist Reported To Be Dead," *ODT*, 30 November 1965; "100,000 Arrests in Indonesia Since October," *Dominion*, 21 December 1965; "PKI leaders executed," *Dominion*, 26 December 1965; Denis Warner, "Mercy to none," *Dominion*, 6 January 1966.

67 "Communist plot to grab Indonesia found by Army," *Dominion*, 4 November 1965; "PKI ready to kidnap and kill," *Press* (Christchurch), 12 November 1965; "Some Indonesians told to drown Communists," *Press* (Christchurch), 10 December 1965.

68 "Keep to the Left, urges Sukarno," *Dominion*, 2 December 1965; Editorial, "End in sight for Confrontation?," *Dominion*, 13 December 1965; Editorial, "The Sukarno Enigma," *Press* (Christchurch), 25 February 1965.

69 Sid Scales, "Neronesia," *ODT*, 24 February 1966.

70 Editorial, "Indonesian Enigma," *NZH*, 21 March 1966; "Tension Easing In Jakarta After Takeover," *NZH*, 21 March 1966; "Three Men Face Big Tasks In Indonesia," *NZH*, 29 March 1966.

certainly helped to legitimise the New Order regime in the eyes of the New Zealand public. Following General Suharto's acquisition of executive powers on 11 March 1966, the *Otago Daily Times* editorialised that the Army's takeover marked the end of the "troublesome" President Sukarno's political career; while Sukarno remained head of state, all political powers now rested with General Suharto. Despite acknowledging President Sukarno's role in securing Indonesia's independence, the *ODT* contended that his vociferous nationalism and pro-Communist leanings threatened Australia and New Zealand.⁷¹ The *ODT* and the *NZH* also welcomed Suharto's rejection of Communism; namely the eradication of the PKI and the deterioration of Indonesia's relations with Communist China.⁷² Reflecting Wellington's warm attitude towards the new Indonesian regime, the *ODT* also lauded Suharto's political ascension as the beginning of a new era in New Zealand-Indonesian relations.⁷³ Such sympathetic coverage helped to legitimize the Suharto regime among their readers, who represented mainstream New Zealand. Any lingering uneasiness about the Indonesian Army's ruthlessness in destroying the Indonesian Communists was dissipated by the idea that the former had prevented a Communist takeover; a greater evil in the eyes of many Westerners in a world still dominated by Cold War fears.

Left-wing media coverage

In contrast to the mainstream print media, left-wing media like the *People's Voice (PV)* and the *New Zealand Monthly Review (NZMR)* criticized New Zealand's involvement in the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation. They questioned Malaysia's legitimacy and reports of Indonesian aggression, and attacked Western policies towards the conflict. The *People's Voice* was the official organ of the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ), which maintained a warm relationship with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) for the duration of the *Konfrontasi*.⁷⁴ Consequently, the CPNZ adopted the PKI's and Sukarno's view that Malaysia was a British "neo-colonialist conspiracy" which threatened Indonesia. Like the PKI, the CPNZ, under the leadership of its Secretary-General Victor G. Wilcox, had sided with Beijing during the Sino-Soviet dispute and rejected the Soviet policy of "peaceful co-existence" with the West in favour of the

71 Editorial, "New Indonesian Leader," *ODT*, 15 March 1966.

72 "New Indonesian Cabinet Contains No Communists," *ODT*, 29 March 1966; Editorial, "Chinese Losses in Indonesia," *NZH*, 24 March 1966.

73 Editorial, "Hate-in-a-mist," *ODT*, 19 March 1966.

74 In April 1964 a senior PKI official, M.H. Lukman, attended the annual congress of the CPNZ with two Albanian delegates. In June and September 1964 CPNZ representatives attended PKI events in Jakarta. See Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism under Sukarno*, 350; "Wilcox back from talks in Indonesia," *PV* XXI, no. 23 (17 June 1964), 8.

Maoist doctrine of using revolutionary struggle to advance Communism.⁷⁵ The *People's Voice's* pro-Sukarno and pro-PKI slant thus reflected the contemporary views and policies of its parent organization. Meanwhile, the *NZMR* was an independent socialist monthly magazine that opposed the Vietnam War. While the *NZMR* did not openly voice support for the Indonesian government, it was sympathetic to its grievances against the British and Malaysians.⁷⁶ These two left-wing periodicals thereby contextualised their opposition to New Zealand's involvement in the Confrontation within the context of anti-imperialism, Third World nationalism, and the Cold War. They provided an alternative counterpoint to the pro-Malaysian stance of the Government and the mainstream print media.

From the beginning, the *PV* attacked Malaysia as an illegitimate political creation that had been imposed by the British against the wishes of its inhabitants.⁷⁷ The *PV* also argued that Australian and New Zealand forces in the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve were protecting Britain's lucrative economic investments in Malaysia rather than the Malaysians themselves.⁷⁸ Thus, the *PV* surmised that New Zealand's military involvement in Malaysia was meant to help Britain and America to prop up "tyranny" in Asia.⁷⁹ Whereas the mainstream print media derided President Sukarno as a "sawdust Mussolini" and an "Asian Hitler", some *People's Voice* contributors like Len Parker, a New Zealand delegate at the International Youth Solidarity Conference in Jakarta in January 1964, lauded him as a principled anti-colonialist leader. Rejecting charges of Indonesian aggression, the *PV* presented the *Konfrontasi* as a "national liberation" struggle against the British, their Malayan puppets, and international capitalism.⁸⁰

The *NZMR* avoided supporting Indonesia during the Confrontation, but its contributors questioned the official Government and media record of Indonesian aggression towards Malaysia. In September 1963 one columnist suggested that Malaysia had been created to protect British commercial interests.⁸¹ Later, in April 1964, another *NZMR* columnist suggested that Indonesia had acted against Malaysia since the latter

75 Djiwandono, *Konfrontasi Revisited*, 135-145; Ron Smith, *Working Class Son: My Fight Against Capitalism and War* (Wellington: Ron Smith, 1994), 122-138; "Soviet and N.Z. Communist Party Talks: Discussions in Indonesia," *PV* XX, no. 36 (18 September 1963), 1.

76 Roberto Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005), 69-71; Freda Cook, "They have suffered enough," *NZMR* IV, no. 34 (May 1963), 6-7.

77 "Rule by Terror and Deceit," *PV* XX, no. 6 (20 February 1963), 7; "Unpopular Malaysian scheme aimed against S.E. Asia independence," *PV* XX, no. 28 (24 July 1963), 2.

78 "Heavy Cost to NZ," *PV* XX, no. 6 (20 February 1963), 7.

79 "Stop Govt. Propping up Tyranny: South Korea, South Vietnam and now Malaysia," *PV* XX, no. 43 (6 November 1963), 1.

80 "What Sukarno wants," *PV* XXI, no. 10 (25 March 1964), 6-8; "What's [*sic*] background of setting up of Malaysia?," *PV* XXI, no. 4 (12 February 1964), 4; "What's [*sic*] background of setting up of Malaysia?, Part 2," *PV* XXI, no. 5 (19 February 1964), 4.

81 "At Home and Abroad: Malaysia," *NZMR* IV, no. 38 (September 1963), 3.

had breached the Manila Accord, which had been ratified by the Filipino, Indonesian, and Malaysian Governments in July 1963.⁸² Throughout the duration of *Konfrontasi*, both the *PV* and *NZMR* questioned the legitimacy of Malaysia and sought to rationalise Indonesia's aggression towards its neighbour.

As the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation deepened throughout 1964, both the *People's Voice* and the *NZMR* criticised New Zealand's escalating military involvement in Malaysia. Following Indonesian paratrooper landings in peninsular Malaysia in September 1964 the *PV* dismissed initial news reports as Malaysian propaganda and claimed that New Zealand troops were being used to suppress the Malaysian people.⁸³ Reflecting the CPNZ's warm fraternal relationship with the PKI, the *PV* also published an interview with Mula Naibaho, the editor of the PKI's newspaper *Harian Rakjat* (*People's Daily*) that same month. This interview presented Indonesia's Confrontation against Malaysia as a principled struggle against British "neo-colonialism" rather than an expansionist campaign. Naibaho urged New Zealanders not to send their soldiers overseas to die for "foreign monopoly" projects; which implied that New Zealand was a lackey to Western imperialism.⁸⁴

The more moderate *NZMR*'s contributors argued that it was folly for New Zealand to pursue a solely military approach to the Confrontation by sending troops to aid Malaysia. One contributor, L. F. J. Ross, a peace activist and anti-nuclear campaigner, argued that the United Nations was the best forum to resolve the *Konfrontasi*. In his view, the New Zealand Government's refusal to consider diplomacy and peacekeeping forces amounted to a dereliction of its United Nations' obligations to "seek peaceful solutions to disputes."⁸⁵ In a similar vein, another *NZMR* contributor, Mark D. Sadler, a Christchurch resident and active letter-writer, criticised the visiting Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew for advocating Commonwealth military strikes on Indonesian territory. In Sadler's view, such actions would lead to a full-scale war with Indonesia.⁸⁶ While the *People's Voice* saw the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation within the context of revolutionary struggle, the *NZMR*'s anti-military and pacifist leanings led it to criticize the Government's allegedly "militaristic" response to that conflict.

82 "At Home and Abroad: The Malaysia/Indonesia situation," *NZMR* IV, no. 43 (March 1964), 3.

83 "News Fraud by Holyoake: War hoax against Indonesian and 'Malaysian' people," *PV* XXI, no. 35 (16 September 1964), 1.

84 "Indonesian visitor to N.Z. answers questions about clash with Malaysia," *PV* XXI, no. 35 (16 September 1964), 2.

85 L.F.J. Ross, "NZ Foreign Policy and the drift towards War in Asia," *NZMR* V, no.45 (May 1964), 8-9; Murray Horton, "Obituary: Larry Ross," Converge: New Zealand's Online Community Network, last accessed 28 January 2015, <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/30/17.html>.

86 Mark D. Sadler, "Malaysia – the need for Caution," *NZMR* V, no. 55 (April 1965), 8-9; For a record of Lee Kuan Yew's visit to New Zealand, see Lee Kuan Yew, *Malaysia – Age of Revolution*, (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 1-20.

In January 1965 Indonesia formally withdrew from the United Nations to protest Malaysia being granted a temporary seat in the United Nations Security Council. In response, the *People's Voice* denounced the UN as a "Western-dominated" international organization that was hostile to Third World aspirations.⁸⁷ By contrast, the Communist newspaper lauded Sukarno's attempts to create a rival international forum called the Conference of New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) that would include Communist China, which had been excluded from the UN. This showed that the CPNZ accepted Sukarno's New Emerging Forces worldview of a bipolar international struggle between the Western Powers (the "Old Established Forces") and the Third World (the "New Emerging Forces").⁸⁸ Later, the *People's Voice* welcomed Singapore's departure from Malaysia in August 1965 as proof that the federation was an artificially contrived British "political creation."⁸⁹ As discussed earlier, the *PV's* stance on Indonesia's deepening pro-Beijing alignment reflected the CPNZ's camaraderie with the Chinese Communist Party, which viewed President Sukarno and the PKI as key allies against Western imperialism in Southeast Asia. Thus, both the CPNZ and PKI preferred to overthrow the 'capitalistic' international system rather than to reform it. By contrast, the *NZMR* devoted more attention to New Zealand's escalating involvement in the Vietnam War, which showed that it did not share the *PV's* revolutionary zeal.

Both the CPNZ's *People's Voice* and the *NZMR* devoted substantial space to the 30 September "coup attempt" and the subsequent anti-Communist mass killings of 1965-1966. Both publications rejected the official Indonesian Army account that the PKI had staged an unsuccessful coup attempt against the Indonesian Government. While the *PV's* contributors repeated the PKI's assertion that the 30 September "coup attempt" was merely an "internal army affair", the *NZMR's* editor argued that the "30 September Movement" was an attempt by loyalist officers to forestall a Central Intelligence Agency-sponsored coup attempt against President Sukarno. Both publications also asserted that the Indonesian Army and its Western allies had exploited the "coup attempt" as an opportunity to move against the PKI and President Sukarno.⁹⁰ The *PV* and the *NZMR* also slammed the New Zealand Government and its Western allies for not condemning the Indonesian Army's anti-Communist mass killings. While the *PV* contrasted Wellington's silence on the Indonesian mass killings with its vociferous condemnation of the Soviet suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, the *NZMR's* editor in November 1965 slammed the United States and its allies including New Zealand as "ogres" for implicitly condoning the Army's heavy-handed actions.⁹¹

87 "Indonesia and U.N. C.P Statement," *PV* XXII, no. 5 (10 February 1965), 8.

88 "Indonesia's formidable charge sheet against United Nations role," *PV* XXII, no. 4 (10 February 1965), 2.

89 "Singapore withdrawal CPNZ statement," *PV* XXII, no. 31 (18 August 1965), 1.

90 "Notes and Comments: Are They Ogres?," *NZMR* VI, no. 62 (November 1965), 1-2; "What's happening in Indonesia?," *PV* XXII, no. 42 (3 November 1965), 4-5.

91 "Indonesian blood-bath," *PV* XXIII, no. 1 (26 January 1966), 1; "Notes and Comments: Are They Ogres?," *NZMR* VI, no. 62 (November 1965), 1-2

In their view, New Zealand and its Western allies' opportunistic response to events in Indonesia confirmed their suspicion that they favoured the new right-wing Army-dominated regime.

Both left-wing publications also viewed the new Suharto regime in a highly-negative light. They took great pains to paint Suharto's New Order regime as a reactionary military dictatorship built on mass murder and political opportunism. Reflecting its Communist orientation, the *People's Voice* denounced the New Order for reversing Sukarno's policies and realigning Indonesian with the Western "imperialist powers."⁹² Meanwhile, the *NZMR* described General Suharto's assumption of executive powers in March 1966 as a coup d'état and denounced the General as a Fascist.⁹³ The left-wing media's opposition to Indonesia's rightward tilt reflected its hostility towards right-wing dictatorships that were friendly to Western imperialism and capitalism, which were deemed as sources of international strife and poverty. While the New Zealand Government and mainstream print media welcomed the demise of Sukarno and the PKI as a prelude to ending *Konfrontasi*, the *PV* and the *NZMR* mourned Indonesia's new right-ward political and foreign policy reorientation as the demise of the revolutionary idealism of the Sukarno period.

Conclusion

Four major conclusions can be drawn from this study of New Zealand media coverage of the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation. First, media coverage of the conflict reflected New Zealand's status as a military participant in that conflict on the same side as Britain, Malaysia, and Australia. While the mainstream print media acted as "cheerleaders" for the Holyoake Government's pro-Malaysian policies, left-wing media like the *People's Voice* and the *New Zealand Monthly Review* provided an outlet for opponents of the Government's policies to vent their opposition. Second, the pro-Malaysian editorial standpoints adopted by the mainstream print media showed that they accepted the Government's rationale that New Zealand's *Konfrontasi* involvement was to support a fellow Commonwealth ally, Malaysia, and contain Communist-inspired Indonesian expansionism. Meanwhile, left-wing media coverage reflected the ideological standpoints of their owners, contributors, and audience. Third, while there is little quantitative evidence to determine how media coverage shaped readers' attitudes towards the Confrontation, most mainstream editorial and letter-writing opinion supported New Zealand's military involvement, with the exception of some dissenters. Left-wing media coverage presumably reinforced the ideological views of their readers, who decried New Zealand's alleged complicity in Western imperialism.

92 "Notes and Comments: Tension in Indonesia," *NZMR* VI, no. 66 (April 1966), 2-3; "Indonesia's military regime dons parliamentary disguise to legalise massacres," *PV* XXIII, no. 26 (20 July 1966), 2; "Indonesia right-wing regime begging for more U.S. 'aid,'" *PV* XXIII, no. 35 (21 September 1966), 2; "US tightens its grip on Indonesia," *PV* XXIII, no. 30 (17 August 1966), 2.

93 "Notes and Comments: Tension in Indonesia," *NZMR* VI, no. 66 (April 1966), 2-3.

Finally, the bipolar nature of the New Zealand print media's Confrontation coverage reflected two ideologically-opposed views of New Zealand's place in the world, which were rooted in contemporary left-right political divisions. On one hand, a majority "liberal-democratic" discourse which saw New Zealand as a member of both the Commonwealth family of nations and the Western "Free World." On the other hand, a minority "left-wing" discourse saw New Zealand as a "lackey" of British and American imperialism and urged New Zealand to take a more independent foreign policy. Both had different views of the Confrontation: with one viewing it as a "just cause" linked to supporting the Commonwealth and fighting Communism, and the other viewing it as a British "imperialist" adventure against Indonesia.

With few exceptions, the mainstream New Zealand print media adopted editorial standpoints supporting the Government's policies towards the *Konfrontasi*. Voices defending Indonesian actions or questioning Government policy towards the *Konfrontasi* like the letter-writer P. J. Alley and the assistant editor Ian Harris remained on the margins. The mainstream print media also welcomed General Suharto's triumph over President Sukarno and his PKI allies as a prelude to ending the *Konfrontasi*. While independent of the Government, the mainstream print media still accepted the official Cold War narrative that Communism was a threat to liberal democracy and capitalism. This showed that the mainstream print media subscribed to the dominant liberal democratic discourse that governed New Zealand society. During the 1960s, such considerations led the mainstream print media to accept the Holyoake Government's rationale that New Zealand forces in Malaysia and South Vietnam were being used to aid beleaguered democratic governments against Communist-inspired expansionism. While certainly not a Communist, Sukarno was still regarded as a "fellow traveller" due to his fraternisation with the PKI and Communist China and strident anti-Western rhetoric. Following the *Konfrontasi*, the mainstream print media continued to support the Government's Vietnam policy amidst strident opposition from a vocal anti-war movement. While mainstream newspapers occasionally questioned the wisdom of American policy, especially in the Vietnam War's later stages, few took an anti-war editorial stance.⁹⁴

By contrast, the main contribution of left-wing media like the *People's Voice* and the *New Zealand Monthly Review* to public discourses of the *Konfrontasi* was to construct an alternative narrative from the mainstream print media's one which switched the role of aggressor and victims. The British-inspired creation of Malaysia was presented as a provocation against Indonesia while Indonesia's actions were rationalised as nationalist resistance against Western imperialism. The New Zealand Government was viewed as a willing accomplice to Western imperialism in Southeast Asia. Indonesia's rightward shift following the 30 September coup attempt was mourned as a defeat for left-wing progressive forces in that country. The *People's Voice's* coverage was coloured by the pro-Maoist leanings of the CPNZ, which viewed international relations as a bipolar clash between the forces of Socialism and Western imperialism. By contrast, the

94 Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, 111-112, 358; Editorial, "New Indonesian Leader," *ODT*, 15 March 1966.

NZMR, while still suspicious of Malaysia, was mainly opposed to the Government's militaristic response to the conflict and its rejection of diplomacy with Indonesia. While both left-wing publications were staunchly opposed to Western imperialism, there was a discernible difference between the *People's Voice's* uncompromisingly Marxist standpoint and the NZMR's more moderate, "broad church" socialist orientation.⁹⁵

While left-wing groups and their media opposed both of New Zealand's *Konfrontasi* and Vietnam involvements, they experienced differing levels of success in harnessing opposition to both conflicts. The *Konfrontasi* generated little controversy among the general public due to New Zealand's Commonwealth ties to Britain and Malaysia, minimal Commonwealth casualties incurred during the fighting, and Indonesia's isolated international position. By contrast, in Vietnam, New Zealand and its Western allies were forced to prop up a weak, unpopular anti-Communist regime in Saigon against a strongly, determined Communist opposition which enjoyed widespread grassroots support. Unlike the *Konfrontasi*, the Vietnam War shattered New Zealand's bipartisan foreign policy consensus, sparked the emergence of a vocal anti-war movement, and made left-wing critiques of New Zealand's foreign and security policies more acceptable to the general public.⁹⁶

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95 NZMR V, no. 48 (August 1948), 21; "God defend New Zealand – against unpatriotic policies of Holyoake and Nordmeyer," *PV* XX, no. 44 (13 November 1963), 3; "A real defence policy," *PV* XX, no. 44 (13 November 1963), 3.

96 Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*, 155-156, 104.