

Forum: Historic Crisis Committee

Issue: Indonesian Communist Purge (1965)

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Introduction

Prior to the crisis, Indonesia was a country that experienced the effects of the ideological differences purported during the Cold War. After the Japanese left Indonesia in 1945, Kusno Sosrodihardjo (also known as 'Sukarno') declared himself as president of Indonesia and was officially made the president in 1949 when the country gained independence. Since the 1955 legislative elections, the "Partai Nasional Indonesia" (PNI), assumed power in Indonesia under Sukarno. Even though they did win most votes, they did not win a majority owing to the "Partai Kommunis Indonesia" (PKI). Even though the PKI had done really well, they only lost the 1955 elections by 6% of the votes¹. The PKI was a communist party that had a membership of 2 million by mid 1960s² making them the third largest Communist Party in the world.

Indonesia was a country that was being administered through Sukarno's policy of "Guided Democracy" (See Background Information). Through the course of history, Indonesia's army played a significant role in executive and administrative decisions, which proved that they were rather independent of the government. General Soedirman was the first commander of The Indonesian National Army ("Tentara Nasional Indonesia"). Amongst many high ranked officers in the army was Major Gen. Suharto who plays an important role in the crisis.

The principal trigger for the crisis occurred on the 30th of September 1965 when 6 Indonesian army generals³ were kidnapped and assassinated by a group of middle rank officers who started the "30th September Movement" organisation (also known as "Gerakan September

¹ Ricklefs M.C. "1955 Election Results." *Seasite.niu.edu*, 2001, www.seasite.niu.edu/Indonesian/Indonesian_Elections/Election_text.htm.

² Sprague, Ted. "PKI Membership Count." *Marxist.com*, 16 Oct. 2018, www.marxist.com/the-ideological-roots-of-the-indonesian-communist-party-s-defeat-in-1965-part-one.htm.

³ Holtzappel, Coen. "The 30 September Movement: A Political Movement of the Armed Forces or an Intelligence Operation?" *Tandfonline.com*, 2 Apr. 2008, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00472337985390201?journalCode=rjoc20.

Tiga Pulah” or “G30S”). The reason for these assassinations by the organisation was claimed to be to stop an attempted coup on President Sukarno. There was no clarity at that time as to who had carried out these assassinations. The members of the organisation were not only traced back to be other army officials under Suharto but also the PKI. In fact some people also believed that Sukarno himself orchestrated this whole movement.

The background and the time period during which this crisis takes place, proves that the causes for this were not only internal. The crisis takes place during the time of the Cold War. Owing to the roots of the tension possibly rising because of ideological differences between parties in Indonesia, support of these parties by rival capitalist and/or communist nations is a crucial aspect of the crisis. Furthermore, the PKI being the world’s third largest Communist party was able to deliver effective threats to ‘counter-revolutionary groups while being confident enough to ward off international pressure from prominent capitalist nations such as United States of America and the United Kingdom.

On the day after the 30th September Movement, President Sukarno downplayed the significance of this event by saying that it was, “nothing more than a ripple the wide ocean of the Indonesian Revolution.”¹ Unbeknownst to him, that this crisis could change the course of not only Indonesian but also world history, which could also be the spark leading to the downfall of his government.

Definition of Key Terms

Capitalism²

Capitalism is a free-market form or capitalistic economy may be characterized as an automatic self-regulating system motivated by self-interest of individuals and regulated by competitions.

¹ Friend, Theodore. “Indonesian Destinies.” Google Books, 2003, books.google.co.in/books?id=_w6Mn4xRLt8C&pg=PA108&lpg=PA108&dq=nothing more than a ripple the wide ocean of the Indonesian Revolution&source=bl&ots=4isVBPfPE-&sig=ACfU3U2SjBy8ZKYAPDLwCfXmb3_ourwaVw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiI3K6tmJ7jAhVl8XMBHYNLChkQ6AEwCnoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q=nothing+more+than+a+ripple+the+wide+ocean+of+the+Indonesian+Revolution&f=false, Page 108

² Seth, Tushar. “Capitalism.” Economicdiscussion.net, www.economicdiscussion.net/economic-problems/capitalist-economy-meaning-and-features-of-capitalist-economy/2062.

It is one of the oldest economic systems and its origin is at the time of mid-eighteenth century in England in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. It is that system, where private individuals own the means of production, profit is the main motive and there is no interference by the government in the economic activities of the economy. Hence, it is known as free market economy.

Communism¹

Communism is a political and economic ideology that positions itself in opposition to liberal democracy and capitalism, advocating instead a classless system in which the means of production are owned communally and private property is nonexistent or severely curtailed.

Coup d'état²

A Coup d'état is often a violent, always sudden and unlawful replacement of an existing government. Being a French origin word, it is a change in government (which) issues from the threat or use of force against the incumbent regime. It is a sudden, forceful stroke in politics; especially, the sudden, forcible overthrow of a government.

Hyper Inflation³

Hyperinflation is a term to describe rapid, excessive, and out-of-control price increases in an economy. While inflation is a measure of the pace of rising prices for goods and services, hyperinflation is rapidly increasing inflation.

Hyperinflation occurs when prices have risen by more than 50% per month over a period of time. Hyperinflation causes consumers and businesses to need more money to buy products due to higher prices.

Non-Alignment⁴

Non-alignment means attempt by a nation to keep itself aloof from military blocs. It means trying to view the things as far as possible, not from military point of view though that has

¹ Chen, James. "Communism." *Investopedia.com*, 29 Apr. 2019, www.investopedia.com/terms/c/communism.asp.

² "Coup D'état." *Britannica.com*, www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat.

³ Kenton, Will. "Understanding Hyperinflation." *Investopedia.com*, www.investopedia.com/terms/h/hyperinflation.asp.

⁴ Dinesh. "Non-Alignment in International Relation." *Yourarticlelibrary.com*, www.yourarticlelibrary.com/international-politics/non-alignment-in-international-relation/48508.

to come in sometimes, but we must have independent viewpoint and must have friendly relations with all countries.

Isolationism stands for policy of aloofness, but non-alignment stands for aloofness only from cold war military alliances and not from international relations. Non-alignment simply denotes a foreign policy that opposes cold war and aggressive power politics, further standing for independence in foreign relations based on such principles as peace, friendship and cooperation with all.

Background Information

Governance by President Sukarno

Sukarno's primary attempt was to create a unified government based on nationalism, communism and religion as this represented the three main factions: The military, the communists (PKI) and Islamic parties respectively. On the other hand, this attempt ended as a huge failure. Sukarno had declared himself as the President of Indonesia when the Japanese had left in 1945 and officially became the President in 1949, once Indonesia gained their independence. Formerly, he gained his popularity and support by preaching racial and religious tolerance in this country with many conflicting factions. These ideologies had become the cornerstone of Indonesia's identity.

Guided Democracy¹

Guided democracy, also called managed democracy, is a formally democratic government that functions as a de facto autocracy. Such governments are legitimized by elections that are free and fair, but do not change the state's policies, motives, and goals. In other words, the government controls elections so that the people can exercise all their rights without truly changing public policy. While they follow basic democratic principles, there can be major deviations towards authoritarianism. Under managed democracy, the state's continuous use of propaganda techniques prevents the electorate from having a significant impact on policy. The concepts of a "guided democracy" were developed in the 20th century by Walter Lippmann in his seminal work 'Public Opinion' (1922) and by Edward Bernays in his

¹ "Guided Democracy." *Revolvy.com*, www.revolvy.com/page/Guided-democracy.

work 'Crystallizing Public Opinion'. After World War II, the term was used in Indonesia for the approach to government under the Sukarno administration from 1957 onwards.

Marxist Ideology

Karl Marx saw capitalism as an outmoded economic system that exploited workers, which would eventually rise against the rich because the poor were so unfairly treated. Marx thought that the economic system of communism would replace capitalism. Communism is based on principles meant to correct the problems caused by capitalism. Marx believed that private ownership encouraged greed and motivated people to knock out the competition, no matter what the consequences. Property should be shared, and the people should ultimately control the economy. The goals are to eliminate the gap between the rich and poor and bring about economic equality. According to Karl Marx, in his 'Das Kapital', the capitalist on an average takes twelve hours work from the worker and pays him wages equal to six hours work.

Growing Authoritarianism

The distribution of power in the Indonesian government dictated Sukarno's presidency significantly as it was uncertain it was correctly distributed. As per historic events, it seemed that the power Sukarno possessed played an overriding role compared to any other authority relating to the nation's governance. After introducing the system of 'Guided Democracy' in 1957, Sukarno assumed even greater authority than before. He also consolidated the number of political parties in the nation by reducing the count from 60 to 11¹. In 1960, he suspended the parliament and established a new one, which only played an advisory role. Even vice-president Mohammad Hatta retired, as he could no longer work with Sukarno.

Sukarno's relations with other political factions

Millions adored Sukarno but without the support of the PKI or of that of the military, it would take Sukarno a hard time to survive as Indonesia's central power. Most of the questionable executive actions that he carried out were by playing the military and the powerful communists off one another in a way that he earned himself the comparisons to a traditional Indonesian puppet master.

Relation with the Army

¹ Hays, Jeffrey. "Sukarno As President." *Factsanddetails.com*, June 2015, http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/History_and_Religion/sub6_1c/entry-3957.html

Even though the relationship between Sukarno and the military was tenuous at times, they both needed the support of each other. The military played a very big supporting role in insuring that Sukarno can establish himself as 'President for Life'. However, the growing relations of the President with the PKI did pose a threat to the army's socio-political interests.

Relation with the PKI

In September 1948, The PKI started an armed rebellion against President Sukarno and his nationalistic policies and ideologies. The situation rose to such an extent that it was crucial for him to ask the citizens, through a nation-wide radio report, to choose between him and Musso (one of the leaders of the PKI). However, Sukarno was able to establish friendly relations with the PKI, which also became the government's strongest political support and supported the communists' demands for a "fifth force". Even though Sukarno's principles may have aggressively clashed with PKI's Communist approach, he started protecting them from Anti-Communist parties and influential groups.

Establishment of the Fifth Force

The rapid growth of the PKI and Sukarno's support aroused the hostility of Islamic groups and also that of the military. Probably the most serious point of contention between these factions was the communist party's desire to establish a "Fifth Force" in the Indonesian Government. This force would consist of armed workers and peasants, which would work in conjunction with the other four branches of the regular armed forces. Many military officers were even more hostile after they learnt that the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, gave out a statement mentioning how the People's Republic of China was willing to supply provisions such as weaponry to the Fifth Force¹. The army chief, Ahmad Yani, rejected the formation of the Fifth Force. On the contrary, Sukarno approved this idea on 17th May 1965, and in August, he asked the army not to interfere with this or Indonesia's alliances with China².

Prevalent Economic Crisis

Sukarno was paying much more attention to his domestic and international policies compared to administering the economy. Caught between the PKI and the army and conflicting ideologies along with international matters such as military confrontation with Malaysia, the

¹ Hays, Jeffrey. "Sukarno As President." *Factsanddetails.com*, June 2015, http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/History_and_Religion/sub6_1c/entry-3957.html

² Ibid

economy deteriorated rapidly. The government indulged in printing money to run the army, which led to hyperinflation by almost 600% in the year of 1965¹. Being under debt, the country not only owed money to the Western bloc but also to the USSR. Concentrating the money on the army, infrastructure such as roads and railways collapsed. His lack of interest in the economy distanced him from his people.

Overview of the crisis

On 30th December 1965, a self-proclaimed organization of the Indonesian Armed Forces captured 6 army generals from Jakarta and took them to the outskirts near Lubang Buaya and executed them. Following this massacre they took over the radio stations the next morning and at 7:10 am, they announced that this movement (G30S) was to counter a planned coup by these 6 army generals and anticipated to form a revolutionary council. They also announced that they had insured President Sukarno's safety by taking him to the Halim Air Base according to protocol. Suharto was one of the army generals who were not targeted by these conspirators as he was portrayed, as a simple soldier who these officers thought was a Sukarno-loyalist. On learning about this movement, he activated the KOSTRAD and RPKAD (Indonesian special armed forces) to reinstate control of the Merdeka Square. By 9:00pm, over the national radio he announced that those 6 army generals were in fact "counter revolutionaries" and that the G30S was attempting a coup against Sukarno. As most of the blame for the G30S fell on the army itself, Suharto had to find a way to avoid these possible rumours. He further added that the G30S was in fact planned and started by the PKI itself. Not only the army and the PKI were rumoured to have carried out this movement, but the blame also fell on the People's Republic of China. On October 1st, he issued an ultimatum to the members of the G30S (including air force commander Omar Dhani and Aidit himself) to disperse from the Halim Air Force Base by 2nd October.

This is the point where our crisis will commence. The crisis will begin when Suharto provides the ultimatum to the PKI to clear the Halim Air Force Base. The delegate of Indonesia will be representing the current government (Sukarno), who is under the safety of the PKI at the moment because of the possible threat due to the army's power. Consequently, this crisis begins at the point before there is any mention of Sukarno leaving Aidit from the Halim Air Force Base and being shifted elsewhere.

¹ Temple, Jonathan. "Indonesia's Growth: an Overview." *Semanticsscholar.org*, 15 Aug. 2001, pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ae79/2a56d5f80000fd6533acf7a7acce539b6175.pdf.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Australia

All the Capitalist bent nations such as USA, Western Europe and Australia did not like Sukarno's friendly relations with communism mainly owing to their involvement with Communist China and the PKI. The relations of Indonesia with Australia were strained because of the Indonesian-Malaysia Confrontation (1962). Even though the Australian Government did not want to get involved in this conflict, their role aggravated against Indonesia in 1965 by deploying their special forces in Borneo. These two nations did share unfortunate violence during this time.

The United Kingdom

The British MI6 Intelligence worked to bring Sukarno down due to his Communist bent. They supported anti-Sukarno rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi. In 1962, British Prime Minister MacMillan sent U.S. President Kennedy a memo that said that he was willing to, "liquidate President Sukarno depending on the situation and available opportunities." They were allocated 100,000 pounds to do anything to get rid of Sukarno. Along with this, the MI6 also sent in a propaganda campaign that blamed the coup attempt on Communist China and pointed out PKI atrocities. In response to a Communist threat, they burnt down the British Embassy in Jakarta.

People's Republic of China

Sukarno did not make many amicable relationships in the west after he nationalized western assets and shook hands with the Communist PKI. On the contrary, he had nothing to regret because of the Communist support he was attracting (especially through USSR and PRC). As time went Sukarno kept becoming more dependent on the Communists for financial and other forms of support and aid. Communist nations such as these anticipated supporting Sukarno during the coup because a possible change in government can gravely deteriorate their relations with Indonesia.

The People's Republic of China was calling for a global revolution. With Sukarno's government supporting the Indonesian Communists, these two South East Asian governments also spoke about building a 'Peking-Jakarta' axis to oppose imperialism in international politics. Further strengthening in these two countries' relationship was sensed when Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, gave out a statement mentioning how the People's Republic of China was willing to

supply provisions such as weaponry to the Fifth Force. Due to the western propaganda, many believed and was rumoured that they were responsible for the coup attempt on President Sukarno, which did not find adequate ratification.

The Soviet Union

Initially Indonesia was an enemy of Communist ideologies with one of the reasons owing The USSR attacking nationalist leaders such as Sukarno from 1945-1949. On the other hand, by 1954, Indonesia also established friendly relations with USSR who were not able to establish diplomatic representation in the former. Indonesia received huge amount of financial aid from The Soviet Union. It was in great interest to stay in good relations with Indonesia because of their position in the Cold War. Having USA be able to suppress communism in Indonesia would be a strong point of contention between the two blocs. Closer to 1965, with the head of states of these Communist nations visiting Indonesia, Sukarno had established friendly relations with these communist states. However, the army did not share Sukarno's sentiments as they were at odds with the communist PKI.

United States of America

The US played a pivotal role in determining the future of South East Asia in the 1960s. Furthermore, USA was draining away its resources into the Vietnamese War even though it lacked the power to push away the communism in Vietnam. Even though the US-Indonesian relations were well built, after the 1950s, they were seen to decline after Indonesia increased their involvement with China, which was followed by Sukarno denouncing Western Aid. Indonesia recognized international recognition for being the country to stand up to the authoritative west (especially USA) and accused their nations to be imperialist. Sukarno did respect the Declaration of Independence but followed on by saying that the west did not permit a middle road. He believed that USA's role of providing aid to all countries is hypocritical and mainly revolves around their idea of stopping those countries from converting to communist nations. USA did share common belief with the army.

In 1958, the C.I.A. was rumoured to support an anti-Sukarno coup in Indonesia with fleet of B-26 bombers. They also spread rumours that he was a Japanese collaborator and helped produce pornographic films in order to make him look bad in the eyes of the Islamic conservatives.

Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand

The Indonesian crisis was not the only prevalent agenda for the International Community to solve during the 1960s. Along with the Vietnamese War and the Malaysian Conflict, Southeast Asia had a handful of problems to resolve.

As Sukarno saw his security of power lying in the support of the PKI and Communist nations, he started strengthening his relations with more communist nations such as North Korea and North Vietnam. North Vietnam itself was a staunch enemy of the US because of USA's capitalist ideology and also owing to the long drawn Vietnamese War. In 1965, Indonesia initiated a war with Malaysia, on the grounds that Kuala Lumpur was increasing their friendliness to the Western bloc. This Malaysian Confrontation was to keep Malaysia Communist bent. Even Thailand was supporting the Western bloc although they did have many Communist rebels. If Indonesia had effectively joined a communist rank this would influence countries such as Thailand and Malaysia to follow who were involved in their own crises owing to the aforementioned Communist rebels. This turn in events could lead to the blocking of the Strait of Malacca, which would cause separation between Japan, Philippines and Australia from their Western Capitalist Allies.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
May 23 rd , 1914	The birth of the 'Partai Kommunis Indonesia' (PKI)
August 17 th , 1945	Proclamation of Indonesian Independence by Sukarno-Hatta after Japan surrendered in World War II
September 27 th , 1950	Indonesia becomes the 60 th member of the United Nations
December 15 th , 1955	The Elections are held to the legislative assembly where PNI win with majority of the votes (Sukarno officially sworn in as the President)
February 21 st , 1957	Sukarno announces his 'conception' on the nature of Indonesia and the system of 'Guided Democracy'
July 5 th , 1959	Sukarno dissolves the Constituent Assembly and amends the constitution of 1945 to provide stronger presidential power to Indonesia

May 18 th , 1963	Parliament re-elects Sukarno as 'President for Life'
January 14 th , 1965	The PKI calls for the establishment of the 'Fifth Force'
September 30 th , 1965	An abortive coup in Jakarta leads to the murder of 6 army generals (The 30 th September Movement)
October 1 st , 1965	Sukarno is taken to the Halim Air Base via protocol to safeguard him, along with the PKI leader Aidit
October 1 st , 1965	Suharto gains control over the radio stations and Merdeka Square
October 1 st , 1965	Suharto issues an ultimatum to Aidit and the PKI to Disperse from the Halim Air Force Base by 2 nd October. [Starting Point of the crisis]

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9th December 1948 **(A/RES/260III)**
- Basic Agreement for the provision of technical advisory assistance or other services by the World Health Organization, Signed at Djakarta, 28th March 1951
- Admission of the Republic of Indonesia to Membership in the United Nations, 28 September 1950 **(A/RES/491V)**

Possible Actions

Initially, President Sukarno was taken to the Halim Air Base after the Movement to insure his safety. When threatened by the Army and Suharto, instead of surrendering their position, the PKI can stand back and continue to hold the Halim Air Base. Considering that Sukarno has good domestic relations with PKI and Dipa Nusantara Aidit (Senior Leader of PKI) he can be told not to leave. Owing to the Party being the third largest communist party in the world, it can take this to its advantage to provide resistance.

As of this point, Suharto is in control of majority of the Indonesian Army thus leaving the PKI, which is in support of Sukarno, virtually powerless to defend the base (Reason being the lack of public support owing to most of the blame for the G30S falling on them). Sukarno is on good terms with the major communist nations such as (People's Republic of China) PRC.

Knowing that Suharto poses a threat to the 'communist-based' relations between the respective countries and Sukarno, they can provide resources and military support to the PKI to protect the potential fall of the prevalent government.

Being aware of the fact that the 30th September Movement had happened only a day ago compared to the crisis' starting point, neither the countries nor does Sukarno himself have any clarity regarding the party or group that propelled these forces. As most blame PKI and China, they are under the spotlight for most of the part. However, certain sources also believed that the army was responsible, with some blaming Suharto for this whole strategy with the help of Capitalist nations in order to overthrow the government and the PKI. Infact, even Sukarno was blamed for a self-derived attempt on the coup. This demands an immediate investigation on this attempted coup in order to avoid any sort of loopholes in the international action to follow. Such an investigation could be internal or through third-party intervention.

Third Party countries, which mainly include the countries part of the Non-Alignment Movement, can formally push for the peaceful terms by placing economic sanctions and/or allowing military occupation in war-stricken areas to allow a ceasefire.

Indonesia is potentially on the verge of a civil war and genocide. To avoid the possibility of a full-scale war or long-term international involvement, the role of the different components in the government must be rectified. As it's the goal of any NAM country to avoid the cause of war, once the internal disputes subside, the army and the majority parties must carry out diplomatic talks to secure the economic, humanitarian or international status of Indonesia. Other countries following a Non-Aligned status, if required, could also mediate these bilateral talks. Furthermore, Indonesia is facing a severe economic crisis with a 500% hyperinflation in prices and other debts. As Indonesia is caught up in a strong administrative crisis and potential humanitarian crisis, the other countries following the Non Aligned Movement can help Indonesia with economic aid and participate effectively to help the nation.

Lastly, The Non-Aligned Movement believes in refraining from involving itself in any cause, which may lead to war. An integral way to do so is to reduce the power and involvement of other Indonesian militias/parties/organizations such as 'Nahdlatul Ulama' (NU) and 'Barisan Tani Indonesia' (BTI) in further aggravating this issue at hand. The only way that their influence in this already prevalent crisis can be halted is through other NAM countries. The reason why Indonesia cannot internally reduce this influence is because at this point of time, all parties and

the army are power hungry and they would rather take the support than risk these militias becoming allies with their own opposition.

However, this list of possible actions is most certainly exhaustive – innovative and effective solutions developed by the Non-Aligned Movement should aim to find ways in which to reduce violence on the grassroots level, foster cooperation between internal Indonesian parties, consider socio-economic properties of the crisis etc.

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