

U.S. Communism Containment Policy for Indonesia: A Case Study of the 1965-1967 Attempted Coup D'état in Indonesia

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In the context of the 1945-1991 Cold War era, the United States (U.S) communism containment foreign policy was implemented globally from Europe to Asia. The goal of this policy was to contain the worldwide expansion of communism ideology. The inability of the Asian countries to be militarily and economically self-sufficient caused the power competition by the super power countries of the United States and the then-Soviet Union. With regard to the US communism containment policy in the South East Asian region, the US involvement in the 1965 attempted Indonesian coup d'état appears to have been inevitable given the fact that Indonesia was in the middle of the Cold War, with the Soviet Union as their powerful rival. This paper aims to describe, analyse and further understand the US role in Indonesia during the 1965 attempted Coup d'état that eventually overthrew Sukarno's leadership. 1965 was the year in which the Cold War reached its climax and the major role of the US in executing its Indonesian communism containment policy was very visible after the G30S 1965 movement in Jakarta. Essentially, this historical event was considered as one of the most controversial and mysterious events in Indonesia's political history. Not only did Sukarno lose his power through domestic pressure, but thousands of Indonesian people lost their lives in the post-coup massacre in Java and Bali. It is argued, although there is no concrete evidence, that the U.S was the real mastermind of the 1965 'abortive' coup in Jakarta.

Key words: *Containment Policy, 1965 Attempted Coup d'état, Indonesia, Abortive Coup, Exploited Conflict.*



Introduction

In the context of the 1945-1991 Cold War era, the United States (US) communism containment policy was implemented globally from Europe to Asia. The goal of this policy was to contain the world-wide expansion of communism in the region. In particular, the bipolarity rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union compelled some countries in the Asia Pacific region to choose a power-alliance with one of the two super powers as an essential play to determine future hegemonic power. The inability of the Asian powers to be militarily and economically self-sufficient caused the power struggle between the superpower countries in the region. During the Cold War period, there was a swing of US foreign policy between involvement and retrenchment, but there was the overriding principle of communism containment which did not allow the US to withdraw completely from Asian affairs. Indeed, the containment of communism remained the primary objective of US foreign policy through 9 successive US administrations until the very end of the Cold War.

Ultimately, as George Kennan articulated in 1946, as part of “containment” policy, the US political and military intervention in the Asia Pacific was intended to prevent, constrain and compel the acceptable behavior of communist authorities that had a dissimilar ideology- communism to the implementation of ‘Containment’ policy articulated by Kennan (1946). An example is the US intervention in the Korean War which occurred between 1950 and 1953 and was considered one of the bloodiest battles during the Cold War era and the ultimate event guided by the communism containment policy. Subsequently, the Cold War left its mark on Southeast Asia as well as Northeast Asia and in 1960, North Vietnam called for the liberation of the South and a guerrilla force, the Vietcong, was formed in South Vietnam. At first, the US sent only advisers but by 1965 there were over 100,000 American ground troops involved in the Vietnam War. Principally, the US communism containment policy attempted to stop the Soviet influenced domino effect of communism in South East Asia however, enormous casualties were a consequence of this policy and to date, no institution has an official record of how many people were killed during the Cold War period.

Apart from China - the biggest and most influential key player in the region – Indonesia and her geo-political and geo-strategic position were also considered vital factors during the Cold War period given that both rival super powers had interests in spreading their influence and power in Indonesia. Indonesia’s President, Sukarno, together with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) at that time, leaned towards Mao Tse Tung’s communism ideology (instead of Soviet) by implementing the notion of NASAKOM (Nationalist Religion and Communism) and the US still saw this as a significant threat to the US status-quo regarding the potential domino effect in the region. Therefore, based on US communism containment policy at that time, the US had to manage all risks (military and/or intelligence intervention) to protect its interests in Indonesia.



In the early 1960s, the most prominent figure in Jakarta was President Sukarno who proclaimed Indonesian independence in 1945. Sukarno was an outspoken leader of non-alignment and anti-colonialism who adopted an increasingly pro-China stance as part of a wider rhetorical campaign against great power domination. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was rapidly growing in influence since they were backed up the Chinese pro-communist party to spread the communist doctrine. Concerns emerged in Washington that a threatening “quasi-communist” state was being established to Australia’s immediate north. Indonesia seemed to be posing a strategic threat to the “domino effect”, which it was feared would topple like a series of dominos under the influence of Chinese communism. Under these circumstances, a coup was attempted by a group of disaffected leftist army officers in 1965 and the Indonesian army used this incident as a pretext to assert its power. This was the end of the Sukarno era.

The aftermath of the 1965 attempted communist coup was considered the most violent in Indonesia’s contemporary history and thousands or perhaps millions of innocent people lost their lives because they were allegedly involved as PKI activists and sympathisers in the Java and Bali massacres. The subsequent government who ruled by authoritarian military power concealed these facts from public view in order to preserve the political status-quo. Propaganda emerged portraying the PKI as the group responsible for all atrocities including the failure of Sukarno’s revolution and previous PKI land reform in the Sumatra and Java regions.

With regard to the US communism containment policy, the US role in this matter appeared inevitable given the fact of the international bipolarity system with the Soviet Union as their powerful rival. Many Indonesian and international experts argue that the US (with the CIA as their frontline) played a major role in overthrowing Sukarno and eliminating his NASAKOM ideology and anti-western policy in order to maintain the status-quo in Indonesia. However, some viewers doubt the role of the US in this matter and regard Sukarno as the real mastermind of all atrocities. In addition, the Army also played an essential role in General Cannon’s coup processes. It is argued that he was the real mastermind behind the coup and acted solely to take over political power in Indonesia.

The primary objective of this article is to describe, analyse and understand the US role and reason in Indonesia during the 1965 attempted Coup d’état that eventually overthrew Sukarno’s leadership. In particular, this article also tries to describe and explain the Friend (2003) affairs in Jakarta as a starting point of communism’s deterioration in Indonesia in the following years, the resistance by the ABRI (the Indonesian armed forces) and the people which resulted in mass murders in Java and Bali and Sukarno’s political downfall in 1967. Essentially, the Coup was considered one of the most controversial and mysterious events in Indonesia’s political history. Not only did Sukarno lose his power but thousands of Indonesian people also lost their lives in the post-coup massacres in Java and Bali.



The atrocities of the 1965 killing spree began when 6 top elite Military Generals were killed by Tjakrabirawa troops (the President's personal army guard) on orders from the PKI leader, D.N. Aidit. This was initiated because the PKI saw the Army as an anti-revolutionary movement against the PKI and Indonesia's progress toward becoming a great communist country in South East Asia. The PKI accused the Army of having attempted to interrupt Sukarno's leadership and replace it with a military regime in Indonesia. In addition, the notion of a fifth force by way of arming peasants and workers proposed by Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En Lai at that time earned the full support of the PKI. However, the army led by General Ahmad Yani and A.H. Nasution bluntly rejected the idea because of the lack of coordination and potential for weapons mishandling posed. In principle, the PKI and the Army were Sukarno's political trinity in 1965 and were considered as the decisive power to his authority. However, the US saw this as a most fragile structure and tried to create conflict within this "tripod" to overthrow Sukarno.

Therefore, the research questions in this study is: Did the US's containment policy during the Cold War also have a major role in those events? This article will attempt to discuss the relevant argument regarding the role of the US containment policy in Indonesia in 1965 (in a correlation of abovementioned factors).

Brief Historical Paths to the 1965 Coup D'état

In the context of the Cold War in the Asia-Pacific between 1945 and 1991, the rivalry between communism and "free-world" capitalism contributed to the political and security complexity in the region. The Asia-Pacific region was considered a 'periphery' for the superpowers, that is, that the Soviet Union and the US declared their political interests in that region and inevitably plunged into a fierce ideological confrontation that lasted for half a century. The Cold War dynamic in the Asia-Pacific was undoubtedly more volatile than experienced by European counterparts. There were several undeclared wars and numerous civil wars involved in the course of events that contributed to the nature of the Cold War in Asia (Aldrich & Rawnsley, 2013).

During the Cold War, the US and Soviet Union used a world geopolitical map as a "grand chess board" for their virtual strategic battle ground. The Asia-Pacific region was one of the key regions that could determine both country's advance in the arms race. The actors in the play encompassed regional powers that could potentially emerge as future powerful states including China, India, Korea and Indonesia. The dynamics of the Cold War confrontation had created the bipolar order in the Asia-Pacific region.



With regard to the Anti-Soviet strategy in the Asia-Pacific, one strategy undertaken by the US was the Communism Containment Policy which was proposed by a realist State Department policy maker, George Kennan. The Containment Policy was an interventionist policy intended to halt the spread of communism in the Asia Pacific and other parts of the world. The US Communism Containment Policy had an interventionist nature derived from the domino theory applied in the region (McGrew, 2002). The Soviet Union on the other hand, carried out the Iron Curtain policy which was an isolationist policy set up by the Soviet Communist leadership after World War II. The Iron Curtain policy acted as a barrier to communication and the free exchange of ideas between the USSR (and its satellite states) and the rest of the world. The Iron Curtain policy was advantaged by US policy makers to expand their influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Stalin however struck up an alliance with China in 1950 which made the Iron Curtain policy of the Soviet Union an insignificant (or passive) mechanism (Goldstein, 2003).

One key event which occurred during the Cold War in the Asia Pacific was the Korean War of 1950-53, where the US joined UN forces involved in armed conflict. Many analysts believe that the war was a ground-test for the actual use of military equipment between the US and the Soviet Union. The US successfully established an alliance with South Korea and protected Japan and South East Asia from “communist expansion” (Yahuda, 2004). A final blow to the Soviet Union was the retreat of the armed forces of North Korea, one of its stronger allies. This was evidence of the US’s first step in winning the battle against the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the US political and military involvement in the Asia Pacific set about to overthrow established authority that was not ideology aligned to US policy as a part of its ‘Containment’ strategy and the Vietnam War, 1959 to 1975 is evidence of this. However, the interventionist policy of US forces had a devastating effect on the region’s stability as troops were deployed rapidly to the region (Holsti, 1972). Eventually, in an attempt to stop the domino effect on South East Asia, US forces were dispatched to the Vietnam War causing thousands of casualties on both sides.

Another US policy imposed on the Asia-Pacific region in securing regional dominance was the establishment of the ANZUS treaty between Australia, New Zealand and USA in 1951. The grip on the region was strengthened by establishing a security alliance with Japan thereby seizing almost all states in the Asia-Pacific and creating a South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). It is clear that these steps were strategically crucial for the US to win the Cold War against the Soviets (Yahuda, 2004). The US expanded the scope of its Containment Policy by expressing support for liberation movements in South East Asia and the US point of view was that Indonesia’s tendency towards China’s communism was of concern. To redress this challenge and prevent the spread of communist ideology to Indonesia, the US had to take action to overthrow the Sukarno regime which had a good relationship with communist China. Many analysts believe that, as the US’s main weapon, the CIA was consequently behind the coup d’état against Sukarno’s regime in 1965-1967 which resulted in the overthrow of his regime,

the outlawing of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and a huge loss of human life (Yahuda, 2004).

In an effort to appease and indeed garner the support of China, the US's February 1972 establishment of a de facto alliance with that country proved to be a major and significant shift in the Cold War confrontation. This alliance found positive expression in China's decision to warm its relations with the US as it split bitterly with the Soviet Union while the US moved toward withdrawal from Vietnam. The US President, Richard Nixon, a staunch anti-Communist, stunned the world when he recognized China and paid a goodwill visit (Yahuda, 2004). Thus, the US successfully seized China as its ally and as a key player in the region.

The geopolitical environment in the 1970s created the period of tri-polarity when three powerful states -the US, the Soviet Union and China played an important role in the Cold War. Eventually the US created a new and necessary balance of power by establishing its de facto alliance with the People's Republic of China as a strategy to restrain the growing military strength of the Soviet Union (Yahuda, 2004). The dynamic of the Cold War confrontation in the Asia-Pacific was dominated by the US and eventually the Soviet collapsed in 1989, marked with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Political State of Indonesia during the 1960s

In the complex Indonesian political situation prior to the attempted coup in 1965, Sukarno as national leader played a determining role in Indonesian domestic affairs. Under the regime of Guided Democracy and NASAKOM slogans, Indonesia implemented an isolationist policy against the West (the US and the Britain) as one of Sukarno's Anti-Colonialism projects in the 1960s. The complexity of Indonesia's political outlook at that time became apparent when 'left-oriented' Sukarno declared a confrontation against Malaysia (*konfrontasi*) following Indonesia's withdrawal from the UN and sought communist countries such as Soviet Union, China, North Vietnam and North Korea as its mutual allies for the revolution towards NASAKOM goals. At the same time, the growing influence of communism in Indonesia seemed inevitable. After the 1955 national elections, the PKI emerged as the fourth largest parliamentary party with 16% of the national vote. Within a few years of the 1948 *Madiun* Affair that had ravaged the party, the PKI increased its standing both as an independent political party and inside the government (Kingsbury, 1998). Under chairman Aidit, the PKI had a mutual link to the Chinese Communist Party which had a radical and doctrinary approach towards communal society as its primary objective. The PKI congress in September 1959 asserted their resistance against the danger of military or individual dictatorship in reference to corrupt military generals (capitalist-bureaucrats) who they blamed for the failing economic situation (Kingsbury, 1998).

Two years later, and as an expression of their resistance, the PKI began perpetrating many unilateral actions for land reform laws, promulgated by the government, in Java and Sumatra under the slogan of the agrarian revolution. The campaign had a definite and precise political objective within the party's overall strategic plan: it was carried out by mobilizing peasants in rural areas to go to the villages and to educate the villages. This movement was inspired by the same program in China in the early fifties (Mortimer, 2006). However, the later movements adopted a more radical and violent stance in the process. In 1963, as Aidit called for a controversial rural offensive under the theme of class struggle in the countryside, the disputes between the PKI and anti-communist organizations led to an open confrontation in East Java, claiming scores of casualties. Radical land reforms, such as confiscation of all landlord holdings, and the compassion for the landless and poor peasants fueled PKI's drive to power (Mortimer, 2006). Since the era of Guided Democracy, the PKI grand plan was to eliminate their political enemies including the Army and other anti-communist parties like the PNI, *Masyumi* and *Murba*, in an attempt to accomplish revolutionary movement in the communal society.

In the midst of a confused political context, with low levels of economic development and little infrastructure within a rapidly declining economic sector, the overall political state in Indonesia in the pre-1965 attempted coup was unstable (Kingsbury, 1998). Between 1959 and 1965, the general rate of inflation reached 500% and the price of rice, which was in short supply, had risen by 900%. The budget deficit had risen to 300% of government revenues and if foreign debt repayments for 1966 were to be made on schedule, they would have amounted to almost the total of the nation's export income (Kingsbury, 1998). At that stage, the enmity between the PKI and the Army was at its climax since both sides relied on Sukarno's supremacy as a balancer.

On the other hand, the Army's position was considered as an obstacle by the PKI. Under Guided Democracy, the Army could intervene in political affairs that were dominated by the civilian party. During the revolution (1958-1966), the Army (ABRI) influenced civilian government politically by installing their candidates in the administrative structure, from the Cabinet level to local administrative regions in villages, as well as functioning as a national guard (Kingsbury, 1998). Ideological differences between the PKI and the Army had been a flashpoint since Sukarno imposed the Guided Democracy system in 1958. In addition, the PKI adopted the NASAKOM idea by mobilizing mass support and instigated a class struggle in the countryside whilst the Army did not totally uphold the NASAKOM campaign. The climax of the tension occurred in 1965 when the PKI was about to receive shipments of arms from China in an attempt to establish a PKI-based 'fifth force' (Kingsbury, 1998). This plan was supported by Sukarno and did not imply the establishment of militia to challenge or replace the army but intended to reduce the Army's monopoly of weapons and the management of violence in the name of the Republic (Kingsbury, 1998). However, the Army disagreed with the 'fifth force'



establishment due to the lack of weaponry coordination and its potential mishandling. The significant political power of the Army in the government impeded the PKI's intention to arm peasants in the 'fifth force' division (Kingsbury, 1998).

The PKI gained more influence in Sukarno's government and the armed forces were required to compete with what they had previously considered to be an untrustworthy organisation. Moreover, according to Kingsbury (1998), there were various policy differences between the Army and the PKI: PKI members claimed they were the true revolutionaries but the army had played the primary role in the revolution; the PKI wanted military training for the civilian population but the army did not want civilian military training; the PKI wanted to rely on 'the people' for political mobilization but the army wanted to exercise greater administrative control; the PKI was in favour of *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) with Malaysia but the army was against it; the PKI opposed Western 'imperialism' but the army was more friendly towards the West; The PKI wished to give more power to trade unions and peasant organizations but the army wanted to restrict their influence; The PKI looked to communist countries for economic inspiration and self-sufficiency but the army looked to Western aid; and The PKI wanted to reduce army representation in the government but the army wanted to reduce PKI representation in the government.

As the hostility became apparent, Sukarno acted as both national leader and a political balancer between the PKI and the Army, both considered majority factions in Sukarno's government. This rivalry had created a political trinity since the era of Guided Democracy (1958) which continued until the height of tension between the Army and PKI in 1965 and later would lead to Sukarno's political catastrophe. This 'fragile' political trinity is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Indonesia’s Political Trinity 1958-1965



The balance of power on the national level in Figure 1 above was perceived as domestic – political tension from 1958-1965. On the one hand, the mutual respect between the PKI and Sukarno existed on account of the common ground in the NASAKOM to achieve its revolutionary goal of communal society (communistic). On the other hand, the Army did not approve the NASAKOM idea except *Pancasila* as its guidelines. This tension was compounded by the experience that the Army depended on Sukarno’s Guided Democracy in order to keep its position in the government, while Sukarno was in favour of the Army’s effort against Malaysia on the basis of the policy of *Konfrontasi*. Evidence indicates that as national leader, Sukarno played a decisive role in maintaining the ‘Balance of Power’ between these two opposing factions in order to retain the status-quo and national security.

On the international level, the Soviet and China’s communist expansion in Asia was brought into line at the beginning of the Cold War era. Both countries established a Treaty of Friendship in the 1950s in order to create a nuclear regime in the context of Asia-Pacific’s regional balance of power. However, the ideological differences and territorial disputes that had taken place from 1957 until 1963 were considered turning points in alignment between the Soviets and Chinese and the Chinese national leaders saw Sukarno’s anti-colonialism campaign- and its



plan to establish the New Emerging Forces (NEFOs) in Jakarta - as an alternative to the UN- and the PKI-backed radical communist movement in Indonesia. Furthermore, the victory of the Chinese communist party in the Civil War in 1949 was a staunch inspiration for the PKI leaders' drive to power. Thus, China began supporting the PKI by proposing revolutionary programs, one of which was establishment of the 'fifth force' division of the communal society.

The Chinese communist leaders were in favour of Sukarno's NASAKOM idea. The establishment of "Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Hanoi-Peking-Pyongyang axis" would mean the communist expansion towards Southeast Asia had succeeded. On the contrary, the US support to the army was perceived as a counterforce against the growing influence of communism in Indonesia. In 1958, Washington saw the Army's anti-communist outlook as a prospective partner in containing communism in Indonesia (Wardaya, 2006). The US then sent 7 million US dollars of military aid to strengthen Indonesian military's course towards the US (Wardaya, 2006). In the 1960s, the US imposed a supportive policy towards the Indonesian Army through the NSC (National Security Council) 6023 by establishing mutual cooperation with the non-communist military leaders and political parties. Some of this cooperation included weaponry and continuous military training for the Indonesian Army (Wardaya, 2006). The objective was part of the US communism containment policy, imposed to restrain widespread communist expansion in South East Asia. Hence, factors at both domestic and global levels contributed significantly to the complexity of the 1965 attempted coup d'état in Indonesia.

The US Communism Containment Policy in the 1965 Attempted Coup D'état in Indonesia

In the context of the 1965 attempted coup in Indonesia, the covert operations conducted by the CIA are not the single factor that initiated the 30th September 1965 (G30S/1965 movement/*Gestapu Affair*) movement. As previously discussed, elements such as the internal conflict in the Army, Sukarno's attempt to oust military generals that defied his NASAKOM idea, PKI's effort to overhaul the 'Council of General' attempted coup and General Soharito's coup against Sukarno's leadership, all seemed to contribute to the complexity of the 1965 attempted coup in Indonesia. Presumably, the CIA's covert operation in the G30S/1965 movement was a manifestation of the US communism containment policy to restrain communist expansion in Indonesia.

Evidence that the CIA was the main actor in instigating the G30S 1965 coup that eventually overthrew President Sukarno is hard to find in the literature. Evidence however of Sukarno's removal by the US as part of its decade-long goal is clear in the veracity of official accounts of the CIA's effort to infuriate the 1958 *PRRI-Permesta* Revolt in Sumatra (Morris & Mauzy, 1976). Moreover, the G30S 1965 movement and the ousting of Sukarno by some prominent CIA members and US policy makers was a great "success" since it ultimately created a pro-



Western military regime of General Soharato in Indonesia (Morris & Mauzy, 1976). Other evidence, in the form of an internal memorandum, dated 30 December, 1964 and issued by the British Foreign Office, seems to suggest that there was an attempt by the West to dispose of Sukarno “a premature PKI coup may be the most helpful solution for the west-provided the coup failed” (Hilton, 2001).

The US Strategic Interest in Indonesia During the Cold War Era

The mid-1960s was the height of the Cold War in terms of rivalry between the Communists (Soviets/China) and the West (the US/Britain). On a global scale, both blocks had strategic interest in Indonesia to defend their hegemonic power. For the US in particular, Indonesia’s geographical position was considered a strategic pivot in the South East Asia region. After Asian countries like China (1948) and Vietnam (1959) fell into the hands of the Communist block the US feared the “domino effect” of Indonesia becoming vulnerable to communism in the same way (Wardaya, 2006). That fear was not well founded on the basis that Indonesia had proven its loyalty to the West in crushing the PKI-backed revolt in the *Madiun Affairs* in 1948 and the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955 (Wardaya, 2006). Indonesia also saw the US as their mutual partner in supporting independence movements against the Dutch. As discussed previously, the US applied pressure via the US Marshall Plan on the Dutch to accommodate Indonesia’s total independence efforts in 1950 and it can be stated that the US and Indonesia had brief period of mutual respect from 1945 until 1960.

The Truman administration (1945-1953) had strategic interest in Indonesia to contain the rise of communism. Firstly, as stated by Wardaya (2006), the US policy makers in Truman’s government saw Indonesia’s geographical position as a “buffer zone” located between Singapore, the Philippines and Australia, against the communist expansion in that region (Wardaya, 2006). Thus, Indonesia’s vast region as a “buffer zone” had a function to contain the communist domino effect in the South Asia region. The US was also determined to secure its interest in Indonesia by favouring Indonesia’s interest in the independence movements. During that time, some US industries already operated in oil and latex in Sumatra. The US State Department’s official, Stanley Hornbeck regarded Indonesia as the most prosperous archipelago in the world and a region that was politically, economically and strategically crucial for the world (Wardaya, 2006)

The US was intent on supplementing the above by means of a position of national security which would counter further communist expansion (Duiker, 1994). Hornbeck (2006) regarded the area as advantageously important because of its raw materials and its position as a crossroad between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. He argues that should Indonesia fall, communist occupation would expand to the remaining regions, such as Japan, India and Australia. The



US should therefore use the Philippines and Indonesia as front-line bases for the defence of the Western Hemisphere.

The US strategic interests in Indonesia at that time made it inevitable for the US to conduct covert operations in Indonesia to influence its political development (Sulastomo, 2006). However, Sukarno's NASAKOM project and his anti-colonialism campaign against the West posed as a flashpoint for the US-Indonesia's mutual partnership. Some elements such as Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* policy against Malaysia and their withdrawal from the UN also contributed to the aggravation of the US-Indonesia's relationship. All of these factors therefore combined to force the US to remove Sukarno from office in order to retain their national security and economic investments in Indonesia.

The US Involvement in the Post-G30S/1965 Killings

Another significant event in 1965 as well as the attempted coup was the large-scale massacre of the PKI's members and sympathizers in Java and Bali during the period of 1965-1966. Although official figures for casualties are hard to come by, Kingsbury (1998) claims that approximately 400,000 to over 1 million people died in the massacre following the G30S 1965 movement (Kingsbury, 1998). Under Army supervision, groups of anti-communist youth in Central and East Java, Bali and northern Sumatra killed or arrested alleged PKI sympathisers between October 1965 and June 1966 (Langenberg, 1990) and this was regarded as the greatest outbreak of violence in Indonesian post-colonial history.

The US containment policy was blamed for the systematic killings following the abortive coup of 1965. After the G30S 1965 movement, the communist influence derived from Sukarno and the PKI was totally eliminated from Indonesia's political sphere. Not only was the idea of Marxism-Leninism banned from the Indonesian political outlook but over one million PKI members and supporters were killed in the process. US involvement appeared to be in the form of systematic destruction of the PKI, reported by the US ambassador in Jakarta Marshall Green, in numerous memos to the US State Department in response to the G30S 1965 movement. He added that "What actually happened is still obscure. We can help shape developments to our advantages ... spread the story of the communist guilt, treachery and brutality (Hilton, 2001)." Following his memo, the British propaganda agency or the so-called "The Phoenix Program" in Singapore, wrote a memo to the Foreign Affairs office in London, urging that "We should have no hesitation in doing what we can surreptitiously to blacken the PKI in the eyes of the Indonesian people" (Hilton, 2001). In terms of US support to the Army-backed systematic destruction of the PKI sympathizers, Marshall Green's follow up claims to the US State Department, 4 November 1965 Jakarta, suggested the untruth that "The Army is doing a first class job here of moving against the communists, and by all current indications is the emerging authority in Indonesia. (Hilton, 2001)

One of the prominent allies in the Asia-Pacific, Australia responded to the army-backed, systematic destruction the PKI sympathizers. On 5th November 1965, Keith Sahn, Australian ambassador to Jakarta, wrote a memo to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra indicating Western support in the violence: “Do not suggest that the Army is acting alone against the PKI ... I can live with this even if we must be a bit dishonest for a while.” (Hilton, 2001). These events and misinformation painted an ill-conceived, misleading picture of what had in fact happened on the ground.

The US goal to eliminate the PKI from any Indonesian political activity was propelled by financial support to the Army through the NSC (National Security Council) 6023, imposed in the 1960s. However, evidence that in the post-G30S 1965 movement, the US had channelled secret financial assistance to the Army to centrally organize the killings is found in the recorded words of Green who on 2nd December 1965, wrote to the US State Department from Jakarta: “This is to confirm my earlier concurrence that we provide ... fifty million rupiahs. The chances of detection of subsequent revelation of our support in this instance are as minimal as any black bag operation can be.” (Hilton, 2001). Furthermore, as part of the US Communism Containment Policy in Indonesia, the US had once again relied heavily on the CIA covert operations to eliminate the PKI members and sympathizers. Blum argues that, twenty-five years after the attempted coup of 1965 in Indonesia, “American diplomats disclosed that they had systematically compiled comprehensive lists of ‘Communist’ operatives, from top echelons down to village cadres, and turned over as many as 5,000 names to the Indonesian army, which hunted those persons down and killed them.

The Americans would then check off the names of those who had been killed or captured (Blum, 2003).” Robert Martens, former member of the US Embassy’s political section in Jakarta, stated in 1990: “It really was a big help to the army. They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that’s not all bad. There’s a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment (Blum, 2003)”. Marshall Green, US ambassador to Indonesia at the time of the coup, said: “I know we had a lot more information [about the PKI] than the Indonesian themselves (Blum, 2003)”. In reply, Martens said: “Told me on a number of occasions that ... the government did not have very good information on the Communist setup, and he gave me the impression that this information was superior to anything they had (Blum, 2003)”. Howard Federspiel, who in 1965 was an Indonesia expert at the US State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, said: “No one cared, as long as they were Communists, that they were being butchered ... no one was getting much worked up about it (Blum, 2003).

From those US officials’ testimonials, it appears that the US and the CIA were involved in the mass killings in Indonesia by providing a list of the PKI members to the Indonesian Army that

had to be eliminated. Blum also claimed that former deputy CIA station chief in Indonesia, Joseph Lazarsky and former diplomat Edward Masters, who was Marten's boss, confirmed that CIA officers contributed to drawing up the death lists of the PKI members (Blum, 2003). Finally, in his effort to provide the list of the PKI leaders to the Indonesian government, Marshall Green wrote a memo from the US embassy in Jakarta to the US State Department in Washington dated on 10th August 1966: "A sanitized version of the list (the PKI leaders) ... has been made available to the Indonesian government last December (1965) ... and is apparently being used by security authorities who seem to lack even the simplest overt information on PKI leadership (Ahmad & Mazlan, 2015; Hilton, 2001, Lynn, 2015)." These declassified documents are strong evidence that that the US Communism Containment Policy in the 1965 attempted coup in Indonesia did not halt precisely with the G30S 1965 movement in Jakarta that killed six top military Generals. Apart from the overthrow of Sukarno, the establishment of the Western-support military regime under Suharto and the abolition of the PKI influence from Indonesia's political sphere, this US policy to contain the communist expansion in Indonesia intended to contain the growing influence of communism in Indonesia and more than one million people alleged PKI members were killed and arrested without fair trial. Consequently, it was considered the bloodiest mass murder that occurred in the Cold War era.

Conclusion

In the bipolar order of the Cold War era, the intense zero-sum confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union created connections among Asian nations. This was the era when Asian nations were compelled to come into line with the world superpower domination. For both competing superpowers, the Asia Pacific region was an arena to attempt to preserve equilibrium after the end of World War II. On the one hand, Soviet communism prevailed to expand its influence throughout the region. In 1949, the Russian inspired-Communist party come to rule China which led to the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, creating a powerful communist state in the region. The establishment of a communist state in Vietnam in 1956 raised great concern for the US and the potential of the "domino effect" became a real concern for US foreign policy makers. In Indonesia, Sukarno's anti-colonial campaign and the growing influence of the local communist party (PKI) also contributed to US concern in the region.

The CIA played an important role to oust Sukarno and the PKI. It can be concluded firstly that through its provocateur agent, Syam Kamaruzamman (the leader of the PKI's politburo), the CIA successfully exploited the General of Council rumour and prompted communist-educated Military junior officers (Untung, Latief and Supardjo) to outdo the Army's attempt to liquidate Sukarno. Secondly, according to the literature review, it is apparent that the coup itself was "designed" to fail and thirdly, it is safe to say that the US exploited the ongoing conflict between the PKI and the Army which was very visible after the G30S 1965 movement in



Jakarta. Finally, the CIA played a significant role to provide a “death list” of the alleged PKI members and sympathizers to the Indonesian army after they took power.

Although there is no concrete evidence that the US was the real mastermind of the 1965 ‘abortive’ coup in Jakarta, it was certainly the climax of the Cold War. There is however, much evidence that the US played a major role in executing its communism containment policy in Indonesia as was found visible after the G30S 1965 movement in Jakarta (Hor, 2016; Phye, 2015; Selvina, 2016). Furthermore, the bipolarity confrontation and communist expansion in Indonesia demanded that the US formulate an interventionist policy to stop the growing influence of communism. The US itself gained substantial advantage when Indonesia became finally protected and insulated from the communist threat. This outcome meant that eventually, the US could re-establish mutual cooperation with Indonesia under the latter’s pro-western military regime.



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