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WEST PAPUA AND THE PARADOX OF PLENTY

A case study of one of the world's least known conflicts

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ABSTRACT

The conflict in West Papua is frequently described as one of the world's most forgotten conflicts. This thesis is made up of two research questions. The first question aims to understand if the conflict in West Papua has simply been forgotten by the international community or if it is instead more deliberately ignored. The subsequent research question looks to find the causal factors behind the conflict being either forgotten or ignored. The study was carried out through a qualitative case-study combining document based research with semi-structured interviews with West Papuan experts. The combined data was analysed according to Virgil Hawkins theory on what makes stealth conflicts, with the purpose of seeing to what extent the findings of the study correlate to Hawkins theory. The study found that even though the conflict can be considered to never have been known in some parts of the world, the conflict is more deliberately ignored by the international community at large. The conflict in West Papua largely fit Hawkins formula on what makes a conflict be a stealth conflict, with the number one factor behind the conflict in West Papua being largely ignored deriving from the national/political interest of the states making up the international community not acknowledging the conflict. This case study of West Papua shows a severe infringement of the international system, resulting in the victims of 'forgotten' conflicts not getting the protection they are entitled to.

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